

## On Main Characteristics of Competitive Calisthenics from the Perspective of Sports Training

Fang LI<sup>1,a</sup>, Hui-Ping GAO<sup>2,b</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Sports Art, Wuhan Sports University, Wuhan, Hubei, China

<sup>2</sup>Sect. of P.E., Shandong Technology and Business University, Yantai, Shandong, China

<sup>a</sup>510290238@qq.com, <sup>b</sup>2372543541@qq.com

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**Abstract.** The thesis demonstrates the essential characteristics, skill characteristics and competitive characteristics of competitive calisthenics from the perspective of sports training on the purpose of enabling coaches and athletes to better understand and grasp the essence and regularity of the event and providing theoretical basis and practical reference for its teaching, training and competition.

### Introduction

Competitive calisthenics is a sports competitive event that integrates gymnastics, artistic gymnastics with simple movements in dance with musical accompaniment. It is a perform event, integrating its own dance style with temperament in artistic conception and rhythm of music, that fully presents human body's qualities such as strength, pliability, endurance, coordination, and flexibility as well as musical expressive force through successive completion of complex and high-strength movements with perfect integration of whole-set movements, music and its expressive force. On one hand, body-building aerobics and competitive calisthenics both have restrictions to competition rules. The game events of the latter include men's single, women's single, mix-double, triple and six-person while the number of players of the former is normally between six and eight. On the other hand, they differ in content, venue, and time in competitions. A mastery of competitive characteristics of competitive calisthenics is essential for coaches to grasp the essence and regulation of the game event and it is also an integral part of calisthenics' instruction and training. The purpose of the thesis is to study the calisthenics' competitive characteristics as well as its development trend thus providing reference to its teaching, training and competition.

### Substantive Characteristics of Competitive Calisthenics

According to the categorization of competitive sports events in Prof. Tian Maijiu's 'The Theory of Event-group Training' from Beijing Sport University, competitive calisthenics belongs to the beauty-display group. The competitive calisthenics is a high-level competitive event organizing athletes to compete and be trained according to the regulations and rules of the game on the purpose of competing and winning. The final score of set movements consist of execution score, difficulty score and artistic score. Therefore, the style of complete sets of choreography, the level of difficulty, the combination of music and actions and the quality of competition serve as decisive factors for the final score of athletes. The difference between the competitive calisthenics and body-building calisthenics lie in that the former has strict regulations for its costume, venue, time, choreography, the number of difficult movements and difficulty groups; while the latter has relatively looser restrictions in those aspects. The substantive characteristics of competitive calisthenics are reflected in the following four aspects.

### High Artistry of Competitive Calisthenics

The artistry of competitive calisthenics is reflected on the characteristics of 'health, strength and beauty' and they are the highest pursuit of art for humans. Competitive callisthenic is not a simple combination of every single movement, nor a pile-up of difficult movements, but an integration of

human body's beauty, music beauty, movements and athletes' style, making up a perfect and harmonious artistic conception. Meanwhile, competitive calisthenics is more of healthy and optimistic appearance, firm and proper movements and elegant figuration to make human body in moderate and harmonious growth, aiming at keeping practitioners in physical beauty and in good manners. The coordination, smoothness, the integration of flexibility and music, which are reflected in its movements, will give practitioners' mind and body the enjoyment of beauty as well as the influence of the art when practitioners' competitive skills are fully displayed presented and enhanced.

### **Accuracy of Strength in Competitive Calisthenics**

The accuracy of strength refers that the force that practitioners make is an integration of strength, dynamics, elastic force and vigor. The dynamics and strength that it requires must reach a high level. Either long-time muscle's strength or instant control force will illustrate the accuracy of strength. Different from gymnastics' solidification and mechanization and dance sports' grace and lyricism, competitive calisthenics shows a kind of natural, cheerful strength and wild, frenetic emotional dynamics. Moreover, the changeability and flexibility of body movements, the elasticity of moving feet, firm and accurate strength from arms and various difficult movements make its unique strength style.

### **Intense Rhythm of Competitive Calisthenics**

The intense rhythm of competitive calisthenics mainly refers to the integration of several kinds of rhythms. The first is circadian rhythms including respiratory rhythm, and heart rate rhythm. The second is sport rhythm including the speed of movements, the intensity of strength, extent of strength and its intensity. The third is time and space rhythm including space rhythm and time rhythm. The fourth is color rhythm including costume, the color of light, and the rhythm of darkness and brightness. The last one is music rhythm as to whether the music is quick or slow and whether the emotion is intense or weak. The most important is the music rhythm, which serves as emotional attachment to competitive calisthenics and the soul of movements. The balanced and harmonious combination of various rhythms makes competitive calisthenics more worth-seeing and rhythmical.

### **Continuous Innovation of Competitive Calisthenics**

The innovation of Competitive Calisthenics is mainly reflected on the transition and combination of basic movements, difficult movements, strength coordination and lifting. The diversity and innovation of competitive calisthenics' movements are determined by complexion of human body, richness of human's emotion and variety of human's character and style. Through changing times of joints' activities and the combination forms of transition and difficulty, practitioners will make a perfect integration of music and choreography of set movements, personal temperament of athletes and set styles.

### **Technical Characteristics of Competitive Calisthenics**

Competitive Calisthenics belongs to the skill-based difficulty and beauty event-group. Sports techniques are decisive factors to competitive calisthenics which can be manifested by the precise judgment of time and space, flexible control of posture, a good mastery of difficult movements and the coordination with their partners. The movements are various, numerous and the technical innovation of movements is in high pace. According to the characteristics and competitive rules of competitive calisthenics, the technical characteristics are mainly reflected on the quality of basic movements, types of difficult movements, the smoothness of linking movements and delicacy of inter-operative movements.

### **Quality of Basic Movements**

Basic movements refer to highly-coordinated frequent movements which is the combination of five basic types of footwork and arm's movements with the music accompaniment showing a trail

of vigorous and rhythmical highly-intense movements. Basic movements is an elementary part of calisthenics techniques, which is decisive to the art score of athletes in competition. High-quality technical characteristics are reflected on a balanced distribution of upper and lower limb's movements, a more complex synchronized coordination of movements and the cohesiveness and clarity of combination performance.

### **Types of Difficult Movements**

The difficulty level of competitive calisthenics can be divided into four groups as follows; dynamic strength, static strength, jumping and leaping, balance and pliability. Competitive rules serve as levers for technical development and the changes of the rules lead to the changes of requirements for set difficult movements. According to the code of technique points (2009-2012) for competitive calisthenics, set movements must contain at least one movement from every group as mentioned above and twelve difficult movements at most. The completion of two successive movements can get 0.1 additional point. The choice of difficult movements is multifaceted thus athletes can adopt their good points and avoid their shortcomings to choose based on their own characters. The rule that in set movements there can just appear twelve difficult movements at most puts more stress on the artistry, making competitive calisthenics not just a highly-difficult competition. The changes of rules make techniques of competitive calisthenics more rational, artistic and creative.

### **Smoothness of Connective Movements**

Transition and connection are used in connective movements between difficulty levels themselves, movements themselves as well as between movements and difficulty levels. It is ruled that athletes can take turns to accomplish their movements or do it in several times but it is not allowed for any player to stop for no more than eight beats. Transition and connection make the transition of basic movements and difficult movements dynamic, smooth and natural. Athletes can perform more flexibly and smoothly in the process of mutual transformation in the air and on the ground. Besides, the set choreography will be more artistic and athletes will be more advantageous in competitions.

### **Delicacy of Inter-operative Movements**

Inter-operative movements refer to the inter-operation and interaction between individuals and groups in the process of formation change. The inter-operation of double, triple, and six-people between athletes and practitioners is reflected on the former-latter inter-operation of difficult movements, the change of formation, and the inter-operation of lifting ways. The balance of the body should be kept in the process of accomplishing a combination of difficult movements, transitive connections, jumping and falling and high-difficulty basic movements. The athletes' own characters should be taken into consideration and good points should be adopted for the design of inter-operative movements to make movements beautiful in cooperation, smooth in connection and natural in transition.

### **Competitive Characteristics of Competitive Calisthenics**

Competitive calisthenics is a sports event with the integration of calisthenics, dance and music in pursuit of human's high-intensity sport abilities and a perfect complexion of movements. It is a close combination of physical education and art with its own unique characteristics.

### **Creation in Art**

Since people's pursuit of beauty keeps increasing with the development of times, only a well-designed and creative choreography can meet their curiosity and pursuit of beauty. Creation is one of the significant characteristics of competitive calisthenics and only a delicate and creative choreography can be attractive. According to 'International Competition Rules' (2009-2012), Creativity takes up two points in score of set movements, clarifying that set movements must be

creative. The smoothness of choreography, transitive connection and the use and transformation of space is a concrete reflection of creation in art. Creation in art requires the choreography of set movements to be novel and diverse and to reflect a perfect integration of the music style, movements and athletes' performance. Therefore, creation in art is an important part for the development of competitive calisthenics as well as ground for excellent score.

### **Perfection in Technique**

According to 'FIG International Competition Rules' (2009-2012), although the criterion for the number of difficult movements and its completion has been lowered down, yet the requirements for the quality of movements' technical completion has been raised. The deduction of points for mis-performances of various degrees in set movements in competitions adds the possibility to the deduction of points for the quality of movements' completion. Athletes need not only a good body and excellent skills, but more training on body posture and shape in daily practice as well to show their movements perfectly. Due attention should also be paid to the accumulation of movement materials and body language. Therefore, a standard and perfect completion of technical movements is a concrete manifest of athletes' body skills and body-building shape as well as the essence of excellent final score.

### **Diversity of Difficult Movements**

According to 'FIG International Competition Rules' (2009-2012), difficult movements are divided into four categories and ten groups and the points tend to be between 0.1 and 1.0. (Difficult movements are optional but 0.1 point and 0.2 point can be neglected in international high-standard competitions). It is stipulated in set movements that points should be deducted in case of more than 12 difficult movements, more than 2 times of crab falling, more than 6 ground movements, difficult repetitive movements and a lack of difficult movements. 0.1 point will be added for the transition of two standard difficult movements. Therefore, the diversity of difficult movements is an external reflection of athletes' body qualities as well as is the key to achieve excellency.

### **Conclusion**

There exists a progressive and extended relationship among competitive calisthenics' substantive characteristics, techniques' characteristics and competitive characteristics. Techniques' characteristic is a reflection of substantive characteristics while competitive characteristics is comprehensive embodiment of substantive characteristics and techniques' characteristics. A proper handle of the relationship among the three is the key to learn about competitive calisthenics and it is also the basis for enhancement of teaching, training and improvement of competitive abilities.

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