

STRUCTURE OF RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS TRAININGS CENTER IN BRAZIL

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Abstract

This study was elaborated with the purpose of knowing and describing the context of rhythmic gymnastics (RG) training centers (TC) in Brazil. This paper discusses the training centers, contextualizing the topic of this study, and configuring its scenario in Brazil. Qualitative research has been used, in order to meet the needs of the study. Data collection was done by non-participant observation, by means of a field journal, as well as by the description of the obtained data. Finally, data discussion was done, showing similarities and differences between the training centers assessed, always approaching the discussion of the physical structure of these places, and aiming, at the end of the discussion, to focus on the usefulness of these centers for the growth and development of the sport.

Keywords: *rhythmic gymnastics, training centers, structure.*

INTRODUCTION

Rhythmic gymnastics has been developing over the decades. Its inclusion in the Olympic Games (OG) took place in 1984 in Los Angeles/USA, only with individual routines. In that occasion, Canada won the Olympic medal and Brazil had its first representative, gymnast Rosane Favilla, who was invited to take part in the competition but did not make it to the finals.

In the 1988 the Olympic Games held in Seoul/Korea, the champion gymnast was from former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). In these games no Brazilian gymnast was eligible to take part. In 1992, the Games were held in Barcelona/Spain, and the champion was from Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). In this edition of the Olympic Games there was a Brazilian gymnast, Marta Cristina Schonhorst, who finished the

competition in 51st place, with individual performances. As time passed, RG has drawn more and more admirers and, consequently, more support. In Atlanta/USA, 1996, FIG, the International Gymnastics Federation, introduced group routine competitions, and in this occasion the Spanish group won the competition.

Table 1 describes the Brazilian participation in Pan-American and Olympic Games as of 1995.

In the 1990s the Brazilian RG presented an increase in international results, getting good ranking in the South-American and Pan-American games, as well as good results in the world classification cups in both, individual and group competitions. The third place in the Pan-American Games in Mar Del Plata (Argentina/1995) and the first place in the Winnipeg (Canada/1999)

Pan-American Games, both in group competition category, support the idea of technical growth experienced by the

Brazilian gymnasts in the international scenario.

Table 1. *Brazilian participation in the Pan-American and Olympic Games and in World Competitions.*

Competition	Venue	Year	Category	Ranking	Observations
Pan-American Games	Mar Del Plata (ARG)	1995	Group	3rd place	
Pan-American Games	Winnipeg (CAN)	1999	Group	Champion	
World Cup (Olympic Classification)	Osaka (JPN)	1999	Group	8th place	Classification for the OG
			Individual	34th place	
Olympic Games	Sidney (AUS)	2000	Group	8th place	
Pan-American Games	Santo Domingo (DOM)	2003	Group	Champion	Classification for the OG
World Cup (Olympic Classification)	Budapest (HUN)	2003	Group	9th place	
			Individual	27th place	
Olympic Games	Atenas (GRE)	2004	Group	8th place	
Pan-American Games	Rio de Janeiro (BRA)	2007	Group	Champion	
World Cup (Olympic Classification)	Patras (GRE)	2007	Group	11th place	Classification for the OG
			Individual	21st place	
Olympic Games	Pequim (CHN)	2008	Group	12th place	
World Cup	Mie (JPN)	2009	Group	21st place	
			Individual	29th place	
World Cup	Moscou (RUS)	2010	Group	26th place	Not Classified for Olympic Classification Cup
			Individual	22nd place	39 groups
Pan-American Games	Guadalajara (MEX)	2011	Group	1st place	Not Classified for Olympic Games
			Individual	3rd place	General Classification

Such classification, together with the ranking achieved in the World Cup in the same year (Osaka/Japan), helped the Brazilian group to guarantee its qualification in the Olympic Games held in Sidney/Australia (2000). During these games in Sydney/Australia, the Russian group won the gold medal, but the Brazilian group, for the first time, got 8th place. There were no Brazilian gymnasts in individual competition.

Despite not having gymnasts in the individual competition, these games were the moment in which the Brazilian RG consolidated its position among the international competitors, being respected and thus listed among the 10 best groups in the world.

This status was reinforced when, in 2003 (Santo Domingo/Dominican Republic), the Brazilian group won the Pan-American 1st place for the second time and once again was classified for the Olympic Games held in Athens/Greece, 2004. During these games the Russian team reestablished its leading position in RG, and Brazil was again represented by its group which again achieved the 8th place, reassuring its position in the world. Once again, there were no Brazilian gymnasts in the individual competition.

In 2007, during the Pan-American games in Rio de Janeiro/Brazil, the national group won first place for the third time and was again eligible for the following Olympic Games, in Beijing/China. However, in the World Cup (qualifying for the Olympic Games) of that year, the group ranked 11th and 12th in the Olympic Games in 2008.

Table 1 provides a brief picture of the Brazilian RG in the world scenario. It is possible to observe the importance of the group competition for the development of the sport nationally and internationally.

Nevertheless, despite the evolution that took place and that enabled the Brazilian group to participate in three editions of the Olympic Games, it is also noticeable an improvement in regard to the individual category.

Nowadays, the best gymnasts compete in the individual category, while the remaining "B" gymnasts comprise the group category, allowing more improvement in the individual category in international competitions.

Currently, the Brazilian gymnasts seek for internal restructuring of its organization, taking advantage of the change of the head of the Brazilian Gymnastic Confederation to also reorganize the technical committees

and renew the gymnasts who comprise the national representative team.

In 2009, the permanent national gymnasts who would represent Brazil in both, group and individual competitions, were defined. However, after their performance along the year, the team suffered some changes after the qualifying cup held in Aracaju, SE / Brazil, headquarters of the Brazilian Gymnastics

Confederation (CBG) and of the National Training Center (CNT).

The results achieved by the Brazilian Rhythmic Gymnastics National Team in the year 2010 required another revamp, changing some gymnasts. The following table relates the gymnasts who currently belong to the permanent national team with their geographical location.

Table 2. *Gymnasts from the 2012 national team and their locations.*

Gymnast	Category	Club	State
Angélica Kwieczynski	Individual	Sadia	PR
Rafaela Pedral Costa	Individual	Arquidiocesano	SE
Eliane Rosa Sampaio	Individual	GNU	RS
Drielly Neves Daltoe -	Individual	Clube dos Oficiais	ES
Emanuelle Leal Lopes Lima*	Individual	Clube dos Oficiais	ES
Natalia Gaudio	Individual	Escola de Campeãs	ES
Amanda Pflieger	Group	Norsul	SC
Beatriz Pomini	Group	UNOPAR	PR
Débora Falda	Group	UNOPAR	PR
Isabelle Andriotto	Group	UNOPAR	PR
Jéssica Sayonara Maier	Group	Guairacás	SC
Bianca Mendonça	Group	UDESC	SC
Carolina Garcia	Group	Escola de Campeãs	ES
Dayane Amaral	Group	Agir	PR
Fabielle Cassol	Group	Agir	PR
Bruna Bialecki	Group	Agir	PR
Mayra Gmach	Group	Sadia	PR

Source: Adapted from: CBG, 2012"Place Table 2 here"

Table 2 shows a real picture of the Brazilian Rhythmic Gymnastics and how it is distributed throughout the Brazilian territory. Notice that gymnasts who stand out in the national scenario come mainly from the south of the country, where we can see twelve gymnasts. The northeast region is represented in this table by one gymnast who competes individually. The southeast region, that in the past was responsible for 90% of the composition of the national team, currently has only four gymnasts join it, all from the State of Espírito Santo.

It is clear that the Brazilian RG stands out in the States of Santa Catarina (SC), Espírito Santo (ES) and Paraná (PR), which are states that have invested more in Training Centers and whose gymnasts have achieved the best results in recent Brazilian competitions. It is necessary to mention that Sadia (PR), Agir (PR), UNOPAR (PR) and

Clube dos Oficiais (ES) teams have their own training centers, what probably implies better results in important national championships.

Training Centers are understood as areas destined to sports practice and aimed to incentive the development and engagement of high performance athletes in Brazil, providing infrastructure compatible with their needs.

It is worth stressing the need to better understand what these Training Centers mean, since this will help understand the purpose of these centers as well as their specific function. After in loco visits, associated with my experience as gymnast and coach, I was able to notice that the increase in the number of training centers may bring significant experiences to gymnastics.

Such centers are, in general, designed to make possible an evolvement of the sport in all its scenarios: educational, leisure and high performance. After investigating which sports would share this concept of training centers, it was verified that different team and individual sports share it. There is not, however, unanimous consensus, since different sports have different structural requirements, inherent to their practice.

There are in Brazil, nowadays, 18 different federations recognized by the Brazilian Gymnastics Confederation, with 224 branches associated or linked to them (Schiavon, 2009). It is noticed a higher number of entities linked to the federations from the south and southeast regions, but it is not possible to precisely know which of them are responsible the rhythmic gymnastics.

Nevertheless, when analyzing data related to national championships (Brazilian Gymnastics Confederation [CBG](2012)) it is noticeable that the entities located in the south and southeast regions have better performance, with the States of Paraná and Espírito Santo standing out, reassuring one of the premises from Sports Pedagogy which expresses that the higher the number of participants, the better the results achieved, thus corroborating the presence of gymnasts from these states in the national team.

It is important to stress that the Brazilian championship comprises the elite of the national competitions and is responsible for the selection of gymnasts to represent Brazil in international competitions. The good performance presented by entities such as Sadia (PR), UNOPAR (PR). Agir (PR) and Oficiais (ES) show that they take turns in the different categories and competitions.

What would be, however, the justification for this occurrence? What factors contribute for the constant good performance of these teams in the different competing age groups? It is believed that investment in infrastructure, coach capacitation, and other structural matters would be helpful; nevertheless, matters of

training methodology, pressure, planning and other interests are other factors that might affect their good performance.

The main goal of this research is to get to know and describe the environment of the rhythmic gymnastics training centers and, thus, address the following specific objectives:

1. Check the physical structure of the training centers through inspection visits;
2. Survey the organization of the training centers through supporting documentation and oral reports;

METHODS

Aiming at understanding the training centers, the approach of our study was qualitative since the number of training centers studied is small, comprised of only three. Addressing the objectives of the qualitative research, our goal was to interpret the data on physical structure and training content through a descriptive research, following the reasoning of observing, describing, and thus understanding.

Indirect and direct documentation was the means used to carry out the research. First we carried out a bibliographical research and after, in accordance with Marconi and Lakatos (2003), we gathered data in loco.

In our study we carried out direct documentation through field journal that, according to Chizzoti (2003), is used to gather information on the problem surveyed. During our study we observed the facts as they spontaneously occurred in the environment under investigation, with all relevant data being recorded.

Once the data was collected, it was possible to delimit the subjects of the study. After gathering information on the teams that stand out in the Brazilian scenario it was possible to determine which training centers would be analyzed. Then, we observed the organization that:

- pioneered the implementation of a training Center in Brazil;

- hosts or hosted the Brazilian national Rhythmic Gymnastics team;
- has gymnasts comprising the Brazilian team;
- has physical structure specific and exclusively for Rhythmic Gymnastics.

DISCUSSION

Once the criteria for choosing the training centers that would be analyzed was defined, we found five centers that met the criteria, three from the State of Paraná, one in Vitória, in the State of Espírito Santo, and another from the State of Sergipe. It is important to point out that the training center in Vitória (ES) was the previous headquarters of the Brazilian group team from 2005 to 2008, before it was transferred to Aracaju (Sergipe). From this moment on the training center in Vitoria has become “Clube dos Oficiais do Exército”.

So, we carried out our study analyzing two centers from the south of Brazil and one from the northeast. Nevertheless, the remaining training centers can become future research environments.

The first one, in Londrina (PR), is located in a University – Universidade do Norte do Paraná (UNOPAR). The second one is located in Toledo (PR), a training center sponsored by the group Sadia/Toledo City Hall/SESI. And the third one, the national training center in Aracaju, headquarter of the Brazilian group gymnasts, supported by the Brazilian Gymnastics Confederation (CBG).

The methodology chosen was the non-participant observation, by means of a field journal, in order to register the physical structure of the centers. These registries were done using images (photos) taken with a Sony Ericsson – DSC-W30 digital camera. In order to make it possible to quantify the infrastructure of the training centers, guidelines were prepared aiming to observe necessary items for the implantation and sustainability of a training center.

Prior to this study it was necessary to present the scope of our project to the Ethics

Committee of the Medical Science School at Unicamp, as well as all authorizations provided by the centers visited.

In the present study, from data interpretation and tabulation, and from the images registered it was possible to point out relevant points regarding the organizational and physical structures of the training centers. Finally, we present and discuss the data collected during our study.

UNOPAR – North Parana University

From the observation protocol it was verified the presence of three kinds of gymnasiums that make up UNOPAR training center (figure 1). Two of them are considered to be for multiple uses; however the third one is used only by the RG competing group. So, the first two are shared with other sports, whereas the later is exclusive for rhythmic gymnastics.



Figure1. UNOPAR gym halls.

The specific area destined for RG has two types of ballet bars, one fixed on the wall along the back of the room and the side wall and other two that are movable, manufactured exclusively for rhythmic gymnastics. The mirror, which is an important item for the gymnasts' development, also occupies the back wall of the room, allowing several athletes to use it at the same time. The carpet, essential for the practice of RG, occupies the entire training area; in order to meet the demands from the international competitions, the training center has acquired an official carpeted floor, simulating an ideal competitive situation.

All apparatus are distributed throughout the gymnasium and can be seen on figure 2.



Figure 2. Apparatus available in UNOPAR.

There is a total of five wall bars distributed along the gymnasium, and the same happen to beams and chairs. The official apparatus and other important sporting accessories are located in the storage room. The rhythmic gymnastics center is also equipped with sound system and chairs for the coaches.

Sadia/Toledo City Hall / SESI

The gymnasium was rebuilt, financed by a partnership between Sadia/Toledo City Hall/SESI, for rhythmic gymnastics usage. It was named “Centro de Excelência no Treinamento de Ginástica Rítmica de Toledo”, and opened on April 7, 2010, aimed at both, training and competition. It features bleachers for the audience as well as ramps to allow wheelchair access, and heating/cooling system.

Regarding its general structure, the training center has areas to please the professionals and gymnasts, and the audience whenever there is a competition there. There are rooms (figure 3) for administration, storage, kitchen and dining, physical therapy, maintenance, ballet, dressing rooms, as well as male and female restrooms and restroom accessible to wheelchairs.



Figure 3. Centro de Excelência no Treinamento de Ginástica Rítmica de Toledo – Sadia.

The ballet classroom is rectangular and presents one wall covered by mirrors and two other walls have ballet bars. This room also has air-conditioning, a desk, a chair and a portable sound system.

The specific training area, shown in figure 4, was conceived, according to the officials, to be an international training center, equipped with three official carpeted floors placed on a special wooden platform for absorbing impact. These areas can be separated, when necessary, by screens that carry the logo of the partnership funding, allowing not only to separate gymnasts by competitive categories, helping their concentration, but also to hold a special area for sport initiation, which takes place twice a week.



Figure 4. Centro de Excelência no Treinamento da Ginástica Rítmica – Sadia.

In this center there is equipment to be used during physical preparation, such as wall bars (total of ten, with mirror behind), mats, and beams for RG, as we can see on figure 5.



Figure 5. *Centro de Excelência no Treinamento de Ginástica Rítmica de Toledo – Sadia.*

Rhythmic Gymnastic National Training Center/Centro Nacional de Treinamento de Ginástica Rítmica (CNT) – Aracaju (SE)

Centro Nacional de Treinamento was the last training center visited. It is a center exclusively built for practicing rhythmic gymnastics.

CNT was built in 2006 by the Government of Sergipe, with support from the Brazilian Gymnastics Confederation that at that time was based in Curitiba (PR), in order to house the Brazilian individual gymnasts, however housing nowadays the group.

The ventilation is done through a large door and windows made from hollow cement blocks aimed at allowing intense air circulation.

Although some rooms are under repair, the operational structure of the center holds seven different rooms, besides the training area itself. There is an anteroom for visitors since the entrance to the TC is restricted. The seven rooms are comprised of two restrooms (being one of them exclusively for the Brazilian team), a dressing room, a general storeroom, kitchen, storage for equipment, and a room under repair.

The center has two official carpet floors and carpeted areas for warming up and also for ballet practice. There are benches that simulate bleachers in case of sporadic presentations or open practice, as can be observed on figure 6.



Figure 6. *Rhythmic Gymnastic National Training Center - Aracaju (SE).*

Regarding equipment for training, there are two tables (one for each carpeted floor) where there are two sound system available (a portable radio and a mini system), and other relevant documents about the gymnasts training. There are other equipment such as treadmill, indoor cycling bikes, mats, plinth (Gymnastics apparatus), wall bars, a cot and plastic chairs to help with the training.

Following the presentation of the three training centers, we will proceed with the discussion.

In regard to similarities:

- All three centers have infrastructure specific and exclusively for rhythmic gymnastics;
- They all have official carpeted floor and adequate height for practicing RG;
- Ballet bars and mirrors are available in all the training centers;
- Benches, mats, wall bars, among other equipment are present in all the three locations;
- There are tables and chairs and other important accessories for the sports in all centers;
- They all have storeroom, or storage.

In regard to differences:

- Considering the number of official carpeted floors.
 - UNOPAR – 1
 - Sadia/ Toledo City Hall/SESI – 3
 - CNT – 2

- Only two of them have dressing room for gymnasts;
- The two centers financed by private initiative have a significant amount of equipment/material available;
- Considering light, sound and ventilation systems:
 - UNOPAR and CNT depend on fans and air gaps whereas the Sadia/Toledo City Hall/SESI training center has a heating/cooling system;
 - All three training centers have bleachers, however in UNOPAR the bleachers are in an auxiliary multi sports gymnasium;
- Ballet exclusive and fully equipped classroom was found in only one of the TC;

CONCLUSIONS

After data presentation and discussion it is possible to design an overview about the physical structure of the different rhythmic gymnastics training centers in Brazil and to make considerations about the implications of these initiatives for the promotion of GR in the country.

The goal of visiting and describing the rhythmic gymnastics training centers was accomplished by visiting three TC, allowing us to get to know different actual realities of the Brazilian rhythmic gymnastics.

By checking out the different centers it was possible to observe their physical structure and also compare the equipment they provide. Despite differences in size, quality and quantity of equipment (which was not focus of this survey), all centers presented specific infrastructure for the practice of rhythmic gymnastics, as well as adequate height for high performance gymnasts, official carpeted floor, and also infrastructure for ballet classes.

The storage room, however, was an item observed. Although it is comprised of small apparatus, their correct storing is necessary for better care and, consequently, better performance of the gymnasts. UNOPAR and Sadia/Toledo City Hall/SESI training centers present a similar organizational structure and both host

competitive categories, from initiation to high performance levels.

Regarding the gymnasts, it was noticed that most athletes who make up the Brazilian team come from the South and Southeast regions of the country. Nevertheless, the presence of gymnasts from the Northeast shows that other regions and states are being able to promote RG in Brazil, having also gymnasts who participate in National Cups and even in the Brazilian RG Championship.

The current configurations of the Rhythmic Gymnastics Brazilian team, in both categories, individual and group, meet the expectations of this study. The construction and maintenance of RG training centers can contribute to the development and improvement of this sport. Thus, the creation of new centers would improve the technical level of our gymnasts, incentive a bigger number of athletes, therefore making the sport more competitive, and consequently improving our national representation.

It is important to stress that this statement is ratified by the fact that there are today 10 gymnasts in the Brazilian team, in individual and group competitions, who come from these training centers.

It is our expectation that this survey will spur the creation of new training centers in Brazil, since we believe that this may promote de democratization of RG in the country, thus allowing children to practice this sport, stimulating their participation in regional, state and national events, generating the development of rhythmic gymnastics and consequently better national and international results.

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