

Lifesaving sport and athletes with disabilities

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Introduction

People with physical and mental disabilities can be involved in sport programs included lifesaving according to their level of disability. This concept supported by the experience acquired in lifesaving activities since 2003 and until 2007 at University of Rome 'Foro Italico' – at that time IUSM. During these four years, athletes with different level of physical and mental disabilities belonged to two relevant Italian national organizations involved in sport activities (swimming) – the CIP (Italian Paralympic Committee) and SOI (Special Olympics – Italian branch). Different specific events were proposed.

Material and Methods

50 athletes with physical and mental disabilities belonging to CIP (Department n.2 Aquatic Sport, now FINP – CIP and Department n.9 Sports for Athletes with Mental Disability) and SOI were involved in the study(1)(2). 30 athletes showing different levels of physical disability, classified from S2 to S10 in according to IPC 'International Paralympic Committee' parameters. The events proposed in according with the 'Competition Manual of FIN Lifesaving Section' (3) were:
25 meters swimming with obstacles (2m – horizontal)
50 meters swimming with obstacles (2m – horizontal)
25 meters small heavy bag (1kg) carry – 50 meters small heavy bag (3kg) carry

Results

All the athletes completed successfully the 25 and 50 meters swimming with obstacles. Not all the athletes with physical disability classified IPC Swimming from S2 to S5 could completed the 25 meters small heavy bag (1kg).

Discussion and Conclusion

The study showed how all the athletes involved in this project had reacted with extreme interest to the lifesaving sport activities and it has been really useful for its social impact: as a matter of fact, it increased water self confidence for all the athletes involved.

The introduction of lifesaving sport in connection with athletes with physical disabilities needs specific and different parameters from IPC Swimming physical parameters.

About Athletes with Mental Disabilities

Since 2007/2008 CIP (Department n.9 Sports for Athletes with Mental Disability) now FISDIR – CIP has recognised Lifesaving as experimental sport discipline and organized several pool regional championship and the annual pool national championship.

FISDIR Athletes take part to the competitions in two different categories: basis and advanced (4). The events for basis category are:

- 25 meters swimming with obstacles (2m – horizontal)
- 25 meters small heavy bag (1kg) carry
- 4x25 meters swimming with obstacles (2m – horizontal) relay
- 4x25 meters small heavy bag (1kg) carry

The events for advanced category are:

- 50 meters swimming with obstacles (2m – horizontal)
- 50 meters small heavy bag (3kg) carry
- 4x50 meters swimming with obstacles (2m – horizontal)
- 4x25 meters small heavy bag (3kg) carry

This study develops and should move the concept of Lifesaving as 'Lifesavers' Sport' (in according with ILS rules)(5) in 'Water Safety Sport'.

References

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