

## YOUTH SPORTING ACTIVITY SEEN THROUGH COMPETITIONS OF SCHOOL SPORTING ASSOCIATIONS IN THE POŽEGA-SLAVONIA COUNTY (CROATIA)

KORALJKA JOSIPA NEFEROVIĆ  
Samobor Primary School  
Croatia

### ABSTRACT

In the school year of 1999/2000, sport professionals in Požega-Slavonia County initiated a project of gathering and systematization of data from the County competitions of school sporting associations. The aim was to edit yearbooks and to point out those who take the credit for the achievements in the domain of school sport. The analysis of these sources showed that the response to the competitions and the rate of occurrence goes in favour of the male population, although the representation of female population in the County high-schools is bigger. The most represented sports among male students are five-a-side soccer (94%), table tennis (94%) and cross-country running (83%), and among female students volleyball (89%), table tennis (79%) and cross-country running (68%). However, the participation of high-school students in the competitions is decreasing over the last decade, in spite of the increasing number of high-schools and their attendants as well as the increasing number of sports and possible competitors. At this point it amounts 10% of the male population and 7% of the female population. Considering the statistic indicators and poor infrastructural conditions in that community regarding sports, several questions appear. The most significant are real possibility of developing the habit of doing sports with young people in schools of Požega-Slavonia County, the competition purposefulness of their school sporting associations, and present motivation of its most important participators – students and teachers. In order to stop the negative trend, the common effort of the experts and civil authorities is needed as well as the initiatives which would stimulate the change of existing attitude of youth towards school sports activities.

**Keywords:** Croatian school sport, youth sporting competition, high-school sporting associations

### INTRODUCTION

School Sporting Associations (SSA) in the Republic of Croatia (CRO) are essential organizational units for school sports, constituted of various sport sections in which pupils, during extracurricular school activities, participate in training sessions in one or several sports. Their official competition scheme has been developed as the *State Championship of School Sporting Associations of the Republic of Croatia* (SC SSA), which includes four levels: 1) municipal and city competitions, 2) county competitions, 3) semi-final (regional) competitions and 4) final (state) competitions. Until the school year 2007/2008, preliminaries and implementation activities of such competitions were under the competence of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. Starting from 2008/2009 this duty has been entrusted to the Croatian School Sports Federation (CSSF) and their constituents – County School Sports Federations (COSSF) – consisted of SSA of individual counties and cities (comp. Primorac and assoc., 2009; Milanović and assoc., 2011; [S.n.], 2011).

This paper considers the second level of the SC SSA featuring the Požega-Slavonia County (PSC), the territory of the Eastern (Pannonian) Croatia with the population of approximately 78 000 or 1.8% of the total population of CRO (comp. Ostroški, 2011). In the school year 1999/2000, local sport professionals launched the Project of gathering, systematic arrangement and publication of data obtained from county competitions, in the effort to single out talented pupils and deserving educational workers. Despite these initiatives, a downward trend in sport activities in the above mentioned competitions has been marked among female high school students (Neferović and Geršić, 2013). The purpose of this study is to compare competitive categories of female and male high school students of the PSC and establish differences among these categories having taken into consideration the response of SSA teams, the number of participants and the extent to which individual sports are represented at such events.

### METHODS

The research has been based on the statistical analysis of ten competitive school years, with time sequences divided in two series: from 1999/2000 to 2005/2006 and from 2009/2010 to 2011/2012. Competition years have been selected according to the criterion of availability of the information, and at annual level the following variables have been analyzed: a) the total number of students of both sexes enrolled in county high schools (TNHSS), b) a possible number of competitors in each sport according to competition rulebooks (PNC), c) the logged number of competitors according to the number of members constituting teams of SSA (LNC), d) the real number of competitors according to the number of involved individuals (RNC), e) the rate of occurrence of each competitor during competition (ROC), f) a possible occurrence number of SSA teams (PONT), g) the accomplished occurrence number of SSA teams (AONT).

The above mentioned sport yearbooks of the PSC were the main source for the obtained data. If the relevant information was omitted in the yearbooks, the material was found in official competition documents (for example, the SSA team log sheet or match minute books) kept in the archives of the School Sports Federation of the PSC. The information on the number of students of individual high schools was obtained via questionnaires/tables, filled out by county high schools' administrative staff according to official records disposed by the same.

The matrices of data have been developed in the *Microsoft Excel* software and statistical parameters have been calculated including the arithmetic mean (AM) and the relative frequency (RF).

### RESULTS

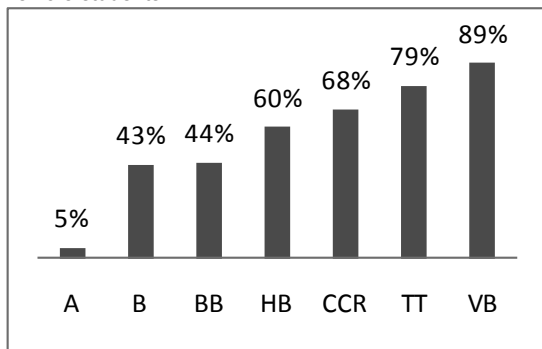
Table 1 PNC for each high school sport team according to the SSA SC Rulebook

Sport		School year										Total
		1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	
1	FSS	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	10	10	116
2	HB	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	14	14	124
3	BB	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	120
4	VB	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	120
5	TT	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	31
6	CCR	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	37
7	A					10	10	10	12	12	12	66
8	B								3	3	4	10
Total	Male	55	55	55	55	64	64	64	70	70	72	624
	Female	43	43	43	43	52	52	52	58	60	62	508

Table 2 Categorical data for high school students of the PSC

SY	TNHSS		LNC		RNC		PNC	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1999/00	1749	1751	259	186	185	142	330	258
2000/01	1834	1782	262	180	209	145	330	258
2001/02	1922	1789	284	185	222	148	330	258
2002/03	1856	1908	280	174	215	141	330	258
2003/04	1836	1904	311	210	219	168	384	312
2004/05	1836	1919	292	146	211	133	384	312
2005/06	1826	1890	202	107	157	100	384	312
2009/10	1878	1925	319	173	235	145	490	406
2010/11	1857	1944	228	171	174	139	490	420
2011/12	1916	1921	312	175	197	143	504	434
Total	18510	18733	2749	1707	2024	1404	3956	3228
	37243		4456		3428		7184	

Female students



Male students

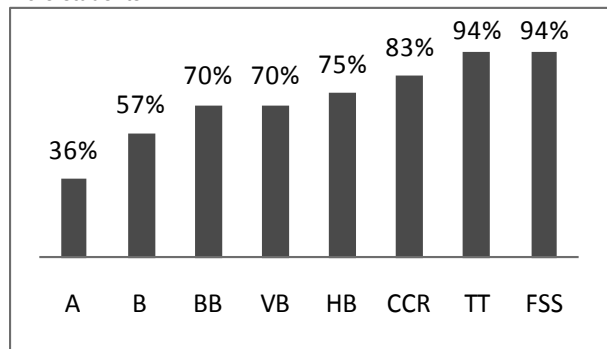
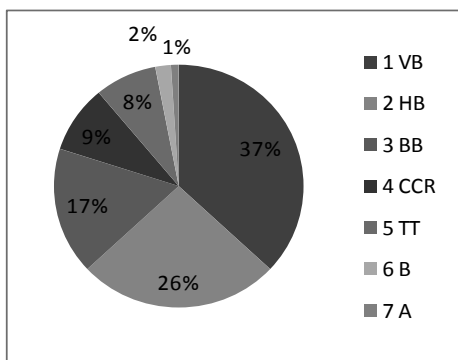


Figure 1

RF of total representation of individual sports at the SSA county competitions according to AONT/PONT

Female students



Male students

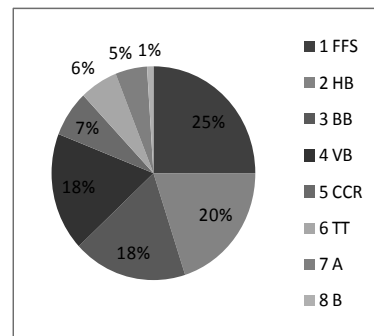


Figure 2

RF of total representation of individual sports at the SSA county competitions according to LNC

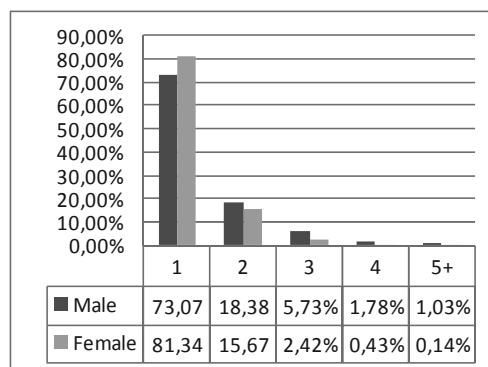


Figure 3

RF of total ROC at the SSA county competitions

**DISCUSSION**

The CSSF is a national umbrella society that coordinates the SSA SC and issues its Annual Schedule and the Rulebook. According to the current rules, numbers in terms of the number of sports and competitors in the competition in the category of male students have been continuously higher compared to the category covering female students' participation, but these numbers have gone up in both categories during the analyzed period. Currently, male population may compete in eight sports: five-a-side soccer (FSS), handball (HB), basketball (BB), volleyball (VB), table tennis (TT), cross country running (CCR), athletics (A), and badminton (B). Female population has one sport less, and generally inability to compete in sport(s) that could be more attractive to them.

The system of the SSA county competitions is under the competence of the COSSF and in PSC it encompasses seven high schools of which each has competition teams in both categories. According to the AONT, the three most represented sports among male teams are: five-a-side soccer, table tennis and cross-country running; while prevailing among female teams are: volleyball, table tennis and cross-country running. The ratio between the TNHSS and the PNC shows that during the analyzed period on average 21% of the total population of male students and 17% of the total population of female students could be included in the county competitions, and that their response according to the RNC in the school year 2011/2012 was 10% in the male category and 7% in the female category. Naturally, the largest number of participants has been oriented towards team ball sports, among which five-a-side soccer, volleyball and handball are dominating in this county.

From the aspect of involvement of students according to sex, the 59% of male population versus the 41% female populations' ratio is within the limits of the state average (comp. Primorac and assocs, op. cit.). Since, according to the SSA Rulebook, the number of an individual competitor's performances must be limited to one sport only in the final stage of the competition, at county level pupils may play for their SSA at several events during a single competition year. Male students in that respect have shown more versatility, but the frequency of appearance of the same competitor is up to seven (7) appearances in the male category and up to six (6) appearances in the female category.

However, the total RNC in both categories gives a discouraging figure for the analyzed period, i.e., only 9% of the total population of county high school students was involved in the second level of the SSA SC, and without it one cannot reach the semi-final or final stage of the competition. The reasons for such a poor involvement of youth in the SSA SC in the PSC may be described under general and specific terms. Some general reasons would be: 1) the current high school curriculum in CRO does not include the prescribed quota of hours intended for the SSA activities; 2) the duties of high-school teachers' engagement in the SSA activities and in the conducting of competitions have not been prescribed as job related duties, and as such have not been appropriately evaluated; 3) therefore, school sports include mostly pupils competing for their schools' SSA, but training in local sport clubs outside schools or those included in competitions with a minimum number of training hours at school. As specific reasons one may list: 1) the current lack of essential material, technical and infrastructure conditions for sports to become more widely popular, which means the deficit of school sport halls and athletic stadium; 2) the provisions of the Sports Act prescribing for county school sports to be funded from budgets of local and regional self-government units, without, however, defining the amount of annual financial assets, leaving thereby room for a long term unsanctioned negligent attitude towards investments in school sports by local authorities. Briefly, in the PSC the system of the school sports has been very poorly developed and the strategic objective of the Croatian school sports for the period from 2009 to 2014 has been left pro tempore unaccomplished (comp. Milanović Litre and assocs, op. cit.; Primorac and assocs, op. cit.; Milanović and assocs, op. cit.).

**CONCLUSION**

This research has shown that actual competition rules and the response of high school students to the SC SSA in PSC are more favorable to the male population, although the representation of female population in the county high schools is bigger. However, the RF of the participation of high-school students, both male and female, has decreased over the last decade, in spite of the increasing number of high schools and their participants as well as the increasing number of sports and possible competitors.

Based on the statistical indicators, financial problems and infrastructural conditions for the sports in that community, several questions appear. The most significant among these issues are actual options for young people in schools of the PSC to develop sport training habits, the usefulness and purpose of SSA county competitions, and the current motivation of its most important participators – students and teachers. In order to stop the negative trend, the shared effort of sport professionals and county authorities is needed as well as initiatives which would stimulate the change in the existing attitude of youth towards school sports activities.

**SOURCES**

- Knez, Blanka (Ed.). 2000. *Školska športska natjecanja Požeško-slavonske županije 1999./2000. godine*. Požega: ŠŠS PSŽ-ZŠUIS PSŽ.
- Knez, Blanka (Ed.). 2001. *Školska športska natjecanja Požeško-slavonske županije 2000./2001. godine*. Požega: ŠŠS PSŽ-ZŠUIS PSŽ.
- Knez, Blanka (Ed.). 2002. *Školska športska natjecanja Požeško-slavonske županije 2001./2002. godine*. Požega: ŠŠS PSŽ-ZŠUIS PSŽ.
- Knez, Blanka, and Josip Neferović (Eds.). 2003. *Zajednica športskih udruga i saveza Požeško-slavonske županije: Sport 2002./2003.* Požega: ŠŠS PSŽ-ZŠUIS PSŽ.
- Knez, Blanka, and Josip Neferović (Eds.). 2004. *Zajednica športskih udruga i saveza Požeško-slavonske županije: Šport 2003./2004.* Požega: ŠŠS PSŽ-ZŠUIS PSŽ.
- Knez, Blanka, and Josip Neferović (Eds.). 2005. *Zajednica športskih udruga i saveza Požeško-slavonske županije: Šport 2004./2005.* Požega: ŠŠS PSŽ-ZŠUIS PSŽ.
- Knez, Blanka, and Josip Neferović (Eds.). 2006. *Zajednica športskih udruga i saveza Požeško-slavonske županije: [Šport] 2005./2006.* Požega: ŠŠS PSŽ-ZŠUIS PSŽ.
- Neferović, Josip, and Blanka Knez (Eds.). 2010. *Zajednica športskih udruga i saveza Požeško-slavonske županije: Šport 2009./2010.* Požega: ZŠUIS PSŽ.
- Neferović, Josip, and Blanka Knez (Eds.). 2011. *Zajednica športskih udruga i saveza Požeško-slavonske županije: Šport 2010./2011.* Požega: ZŠUIS PSŽ.
- Neferović, Josip, and Blanka Knez (Eds.). 2012. *Zajednica športskih udruga i saveza Požeško-slavonske županije: Šport 2011./2012.* Požega: ZŠUIS PSŽ.
- [S.n.]. *Propisnik državnog prvenstva školskih športskih klubova osnovnih i srednjih škola Republike Hrvatske*. [S.a.]. Zagreb: MZOŠ RH.
- [S.n.]. *Propisnik državnog prvenstva školskih športskih klubova osnovnih i srednjih škola Republike Hrvatske*. 2005. Zagreb: MZOŠ RH.
- [S.n.]. *Propisnik Državnog prvenstva školskih športskih društava Republike Hrvatske za školsku godinu 2009./2010.* 2009. Zagreb: HŠŠS.
- [S.n.]. *Propisnik Državnog prvenstva školskih športskih društava Republike Hrvatske za školsku godinu 2010./2011.* 2010. Zagreb: HŠŠS.

[S.n.]. *Propisnik Državnog prvenstva školskih športskih društava Republike Hrvatske za školsku godinu 2011./2012.* 2011. Zagreb: HŠŠS.

#### REFERENCES

Milanović, Dragan, Hrvoje Čustonja, and Zrinko Čustonja. 2011. "Školski šport u Hrvatskoj i zemljama Europske unije." In *Physical Education in the 21st Century - Pupils' Competencies*. Proceedings of the 6<sup>th</sup> FIEP European Congress, Poreč, Croatia, 18-21 of June 2011, edited by I. Prskalo and D. Novak. Zagreb: Croatian Kinesiology Association, pp. 27-42.

Milanović Litre, Ivan, et al. (Eds.) 2007. *Sports Act*. Zagreb: Ministry of Science, Education and Sports RC.

Neferović, Koraljka Josipa, and Tajana Geršić. 2013. "Sportska aktivnost učenica srednjih škola Požeško-slavonske županije kroz prizmu natjecanja školskih sportskih društava". In *Organizacijski oblici rada u područjima edukacije, sporta, sportske rekreacije i kineziterapije*. Proceedings of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Summer school of kinesiologists of the Republic of Croatia, Poreč, 25-29 of June 2013, edited by V. Findak. Zagreb: Croatian Kinesiology Association, pp. 93-98.

Ostroški, Ljiljana (Ed.). 2011. *Popis 2011: Jer zemlju čine ljudi/Census of population, Households, and Dwellings 2011: First Results by Settlements*. Zagreb: Croatian Bureau of Statistic.

Primorac, Dragan, et al. (Eds.) 2009. *Strategija razvoja školskoga športa u Republici Hrvatskoj 2009. – 2014.* Zagreb: Ministarstvo znanosti, obrazovanja i športa RH – Hrvatski školski športski savez.