64 - WOMEN'S ATHLETICS AT THE OLIMPIC GAMES: THE BRASILIANS PARTICIPATION AT THE MARATHON COMPETITION.

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When we based ourselves on historical records to analyze the female participation in sport we realize that the role of the women is related to its social role in the history of mankind. Traditionally, as social history has shown, men have assumed a position of superiority also manifested in the privilege to participate in sports activities. In ancient Greece, only in Sparta sport was allowed to women, and even so in order to prepare them to motherhood (Howell, 1981).

When Pierre de Coubertin idealized the modern Olympic Games he kept alive the ancient Greek tradition which does not allowed any female to participants in the Games. According to the French Baron, who was completely against to the female sports practicing and physical activities, these sort activities were indecent and grotesque when practiced by a woman. At the time, medical speech alleged that physical activity could compromise maternal functions (Devide, 2003 p. 362). Traditional beliefs prescribed that physical fatigue and competition derived from sports practicing were contrary to the nature of the woman, who should stay at home taking care of the children.

Despite this prohibition, in the first edition of the Olympic Games (OG) held in Athens – 1896 -, Stamati Revithi, a Greek woman from a poor neighborhood, complete the marathon running event in the day after the official event took place. She had to run her last lap outside the stadium hence she was not allowed be inside the venue.

Stamati finished her journey in approximately four hour and thirty minutes. She was faster than many men (Miragaya, 2002). The organizers called her Melpomene, the Greek goddess of tragedy. This attitude was suggested only because of drama and not towards her extraordinary achievement. Although she had no international acknowledged, she caused the spark that led to the gradual acceptance of women in the Games.

Until 1912 the women participation were reduced to modalities that highlighted the distinction, grace, beauty, and 'natural' lightness of feminine movements. The Athletics and contact sports were forbidden to women because they were considered inappropriate due to their 'fragility'. Contrarily to the ideology of the French Baron and several of his contemporaries, in the Games of 1928 held in Amsterdam, female athletes were officially allowed to participate for the first time in the 100 meters, 800 meters and 4x100 meters relay. But at the end of the 800 meters the controversy revived when several participants could not finish the competition due to fatigue. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) steering committee extinguished the 800 meters competition for women based on the opinion of some physicians who claimed that women were unable to run this distance or superior. Women were allowed to dispute competitions longer no than 200 meters. A severe financial crisis struck Brazil at that time and they did not send any delegation those Games. Brazilian women debuted in athletics only twenty years later.

In the 50's there was an intensification of the female participation in the Games, but the medical assumptions still conserved the idea that long distance events could be harmful to women's health, e.g., the marathon. In agreement with this analysis, in the scope of body practices, these restrictions prevailed. So as this that from 1941 to 1975 the Brazilian Law 3.199 included an article that stated: "women will not be allowed to practice sports incompatible with the conditions of their nature" (Adelman, 2003 p. 362). In agreement with this analysis, in the scope of body practices, these restrictions prevailed. So as this that from 1941 to 1975 the Brazilian Law 3.199 included an article that stated: "women will not be allowed to practice sports incompatible with the conditions of their nature" (Adelman, 2003). These prohibitions and the social imaginary of that time prevented women to dedicate to modalities that required vigorous and exhaustive training so as the Athletics.

According to Alonso (2003), it was from the questioning of the social roles stirred up by the feminist movement in the 1960s - that criticized the assumptions that women should dedicate themselves exclusively to home assessments, family and cultivate femininity - which women became to participate more in sports activities.

In this same period, the OG in Rome - 1960, there was the return of the 800 meters running competition. It sparked the inclusion of longer distances competitions for women in athletics. In the 70's the development of the fitness movement caused greater acceptance of physical strength and women's muscles. At that time the female culture of beauty embodies the sports notion of an 'active woman'. It favored a new vision towards the bodies and the training of the female runners.

In the 80's, the medical opinion changed in favor of the female participation in long distance competitions and physical endurance as well. This decision illustrates the physiological and punctual character of controversal medical decisions regarding the 1928 and 1960 polemics.

In 1984, the Los Angeles OG was suggested the inclusion of the Olympic marathon in the female athletics program. Even though the inclusion of the women's marathon had occurred in late schedule, there are female records in this kind of competitions since 1926. Lawson (1997 apud Matthiesen, 2012) points that Violet Piercy as the first woman to record the best worldwide mark in a marathon. She finished the competition in 3h40min22s, October 3rd, 1926, in London. There are also those who think that the American Kathrine Switzer broke the taboo that women were unable to run the marathon finishing the Boston Marathon disguised among men.

The first women's Olympic marathon under intense heat of 27° C (122° F). Among the 50 athletes, the Brazilian Eleonora Mendonca bravely finished the journey of 42 kilometers in 2h52m19s, getting the 44th place. This veteran was the last to get into the stadium and she was welcomed with applauses due to her effort. Besides the sporting aspect, Eleonora also excelled at the political aspect as president of the International Runner's Committee, created in 1978, which pushed the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to realize this women's marathon, in addition to the competitions of 5,000 and 10,000 meters. In Seoul 1988 the athlete Angélica de Almeida represented Brazil. The 23 year old athlete finished the competition in 2h43min40s and was placed 44th.

In the 90 women's sports continues to grow incorporating values of specialization and standardization, until then only experienced by men. In Barcelona Olympics, in 92 Janet Mayal and Marcia Narloch defended the country completing the race in 3h00min23s (31th) and 2h44min32s (17th) respectively. The 17th position achieved by Marcia is the best mark of Brazil in in an Olympic marathon.

In Atlanta 1996, the Brazilian delegation counted on three athletes to compete in the marathon. Carmen Furtado de Oliveira, Marcia Narloch and Solange Cordeiro de Souza. Carmen stills has the South American best mark 2h27min41s (1994), she did not complete the race. Marcia and Solange reached 39th (2h39min33s) and 60th (2h56min23s) respectively.

In Sydney 2000 no Brazilian woman competed in the marathon. In the following Games in Atlanta, Marcia Narloch and Marlene Teixeira were the representatives but did not complete the race. The difficult route with many hills, and the intense heat caused many dropouts including the British Paula Radcliffe, who had the world and the favorite to the dispute.

In Beijing 2008, Marily dos Santos was the only representative. The athlete was the first Brazilian to reach the index in the women's marathon. For these Games, the Brazilian Athletics Federation has established the mark 2h37min00 as the index. Marily completed the Olympic event in 2h38min10s in the 51th position.

In London 2012, there was only one Brazilian who participated in the marathon. Her name was Adriana Aparecida da Silva. She had a mark of 2h33m15s. It is very far from her personal record (2h29m17s), Adriana end up this competition in the 47th place. With this mark she established the best result of Brazil in Olympic marathons ever. She became second place in Brazil's female marathon history only behind Carmen de Oliveira.

Since the inclusion of the female Olympic marathon, Brazil was represented seven times out of the eight editions. But when we consider the athletes achievements in this discipline, we could verify the low performance is recurrent. According to a survey conducted by Toledo et al (1994), three fundamental aspects (historically) have made harder the insertion of women in athletics, in Brazil and other Latin countries: 1) The lack of the athletics culture; 2) The lack of adequate venues and equipment for training, and; 3) Insufficient level of professional qualification. Second the last author these factors may have contributed to low participation and performance of women in athletics. It was also listed as challenges faced in other sports as the literature suggests (Devide 2011, 2003; Miragaya, 2002; Goellner, 2004; 2008). Those last authors group pointed that minimizing these sort of questions could be a way out to improve the athletics level in the country. Although, it may be more evident among women.

The first problem pointed by Toledo et al (1994) above could be related to the fact that athletics are not much emphasized by the media in general. As a possible result, a few athletes have become to idols. The young people seem to be not attracted to the practicing it and potential sponsors seem to be not interested in sponsoring it as well. In concern to the Brazilian female athletics athletes, this problem seems to be maximized, because a few women have their international expression acknowledged. Thus their results have been less emphasized than men in similar levels.

Besides that, women athletes still have to struggle against social stereotypes of femininity very ground yet in our society. Certain sports modalities do not suit to that image and it could lead in certain ways women drop out sport. In the case of athletics, the question could come into notice: 'would be the systematic involvement in an activity that requires great physical effort and high degree of competitive a social and cultural behavior acceptable as feminine? And what to expect from the female interest in the Marathon considered as the hardest of athletics tests?'

The second aspect raised is directly related to the investment programs of public administration. There is a lack of training centers, athletics tracks and specialized technicians working on. Parallel to the lack of facilities, there isn't either access to equipment, in terms of quality and quantity which are required for the development of our athletes to their full potential. Even in places where there are good coaches, the lack of material prevents the development of many competitions.

Finally, the third aspect relates to the fact that coaches have a poor formation and find difficulties to they keep up to date, since courses are relatively scarce, and national literature is relatively not very large. What is still visible, however, is the use of inappropriate initiation methods which do not provide the youngsters the necessary tools for a post-specialization.

Furthermore, despite these shortcomings, it is a common practice yet demanding from young people, at the expense of intense training without the necessary basis results which could lead to the destruction of our talents. This poor formation of the coaches also seems to produce a lean understand about the peculiarities of women's training, mainly in their psycho-social and cultural aspects.

The probability of finding a sports talent within a certain population do not depend on gender. When minimum conditions are not offered for women to participate in sport as the same way as men do, we are significantly reducing the chances of success in international events. Let it be said, success is very scarce among female athletics athletes.

Women had to struggle hard to assure their place in the sports world: since the hierarchy prestige of men; relative less exposure of women athletes by the media; lower female awarding in relation to men; minor female participation in sports mega events like the Olympics. Despite this, the female rates in major international events are getting closer to men especially in running.

It is possible that through the dissemination of this history of exclusion, inclusion and hardship faced by female athletes we may contribute to not only the marathon, but athletics as a whole. We hope its various disciplines to be more appreciated, widespread, and, why not more practiced. Besides spreading this sport modality we would provide more visibility to this history yet so little known.

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ATHLETICS WOMEN'S OLYMPIC GAMES: THE PARTICIPATION OF BRAZILIAN IN EVIDENCE OF MARATHON.

ABSTRACT

Investigates the historical and socio-cultural causes that raised difficulties to women's participation in athletics, especially Brazilian women in the Olympic marathon. In the Olympics, few feminine athletes from our country obtained an index to participate in the marathon. The lack of sporting culture in Athletics, the shortage of equipment and training sites, besides the small supply of professionals able to training people in this sport reinforces the perpetuation of that situation in Brazil. The article also points out that the study of the history of women's Olympic marathon is the study of women's struggle for equal conditions and, therefore, could integrate, as the other competitions of Athletics, the content of PE lessons. It is suggested that this could contribute to the Athletics, in its diverse forms, be better known, appreciated and practiced by men and women.

KEYWORDS: Athletics, Olympic Marathon; Brazilian athletes.

A**THLÉTISME FÉMININ DES JEUX OLYMPIQUES: LA PARTICIPATION DU BRÉSIL EN PREUVE DE MARATHON.**

RÉSUMÉ

Enquête sur les causes des facteurs historiques et socio-culturelles qui entravent la participation des femmes dans le sport, particulièrement les femmes brésiliennes dans le marathon olympique. Dans les Jeux Olympiques, les athlètes étaient quelques-uns qui ont réussi à indexer le pays pour participer au marathon. Le manque de culture sportive no atletismo, de l'équipement et de la formation de l'offre locale et peu de professionnels capables de commencer la formation en athlétisme dans notre pays contribue à la perpétuation de cette situation. L'histoire des femmes olympique du marathon est l'histoire de la lutte des femmes pour l'égalité des conditions et doit donc intégrer, comme les autres éléments de l'athlétisme, le contenu des cours d'éducation physique. Cela a certainement contribuer à l'athlétisme dans son ensemble, ont été plus apprécié, car pas connue et pratiquée. En plus de la diffusion du sport, donnerait plus de visibilité à cette histoire, encore si peu connu.

MOTS-CLÉS: Athlétisme, Marathon Olympique, des athlètes brésiliens.

ATLETISMO FEMENINO EN LOS JUEGOS OLÍMPICOS: LA PARTICIPACIÓN DE LAS BRASILEÑAS EN LAS PRUEBAS DE MARATÓN.

RESUMEN

Investiga los factores históricos y socioculturales que obstaculizan la participación de las mujeres en los deportes, especialmente a las mujeres brasileñas en el Maratón Olímpico. En los Juegos Olímpicos, pocas atletas del país lograron índice para participar en el Maratón. La falta de cultura deportiva en el Atletismo, la escasez de equipamientos y locales de etrenamiento, además de una pequeña oferta de profesionales capaces de empezar la formación en este deporte colaboran a la perpetuación de esta situación en Brasil. El artículo señala, además, que el estudio de la historia del Maratón Olímpico femenino es el estudio de la lucha de las mujeres por la igualdad de condiciones y, por tanto, podría integrar, como las demás pruebas del Atletismo, el contenido de las clases de Educación Física. Esto puede ayudar que el Atletismo, en sus distintas competiciónes, sea más conocido, apreciado y practicado por hombres y mujeres.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Atletismo; Maratón Olímpica; atletas brasileñas

ATLETISMO FEMININO NOS JOGOS OLÍMPICOS: A PARTICIPAÇÃO DAS BRASILEIRAS NAS PROVAS DE MARATONA.

RESUMO

Investiga as causas histórico-sócio-culturais que dificultaram a participação das mulheres no atletismo, especialmente as mulheres brasileiras na maratona olímpica. Em Jogos Olímpicos, poucas foram as atletas do país que conseguiram índice para participação na maratona. A falta de cultura esportiva no Atletismo, a escassez de equipamentos e locais de treinamentos, além da pequena oferta de profissionais aptos para iniciar a formação nesse esporte colaboram com a perpetuação desse quadro no Brasil. O artigo aponta ainda que o estudo da história da maratona olímpica feminina é o estudo da luta das mulheres pela equidade de condições e, por essa razão, poderia integrar, como as das demais provas do Atletismo, o conteúdo das aulas de Educação Física. Sugere-se que isso poderia contribuir para que o Atletismo, em suas diversas modalidades, seja mais conhecido, apreciado e praticado por homens e mulheres.

PALAVRAS CHAVE: Atletismo, Maratona olímpica; atletas brasileiras.