

COACHING & KINESIOLOGY

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An Update on the Rule and Scoring Equipment Modification Issues of the World Taekwondo (WT) Competition System

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Abstract

Background. A couple of earlier studies described the rule and scoring equipment modification issues of the World Taekwondo (WT) competition system, initiated after the turn of the millennium as a result of multiple scandals and irregularities concerning match-fixing, lack of transparency, and nepotism in taekwondo institutions. Moreover, taekwondo matches were generally perceived as not being interesting to watch for spectators. However, these earlier studies were highly critical of the Protector & Scoring System (PSS) and the complicated, ever-changing *Competition Rules and Interpretations*, introduced progressively as a consequence of these issues and scandals.

Problem and Aim. This study aims to find out if taekwondo experts support the criticism voiced in these earlier studies.

Method. This present study puts the criticism voiced in these articles to the test by means of an anonymous survey of relevant taekwondo experts, such as (present and former) national team coaches and domestic (South) Korean middle-, high school, and university team coaches.

Results. The survey provides mixed results; on some issues, the results are in agreement with the criticism expressed in the earlier studies, but on other positions, they diverge. The most important findings are that the majority of coaches prefer the PSS to a conventional, human judging system, despite the negative effects of the PSS on taekwondo techniques applied in competitions. In agreement with findings in previous articles, the majority of coaches perceive the general competition rules as too complicated, but they strongly support the present, multiple points scoring rules.

Conclusion. The domestic Korean coaches appear relatively satisfied with the state of affairs of domestic and international taekwondo institutions. On the other hand, half of the national team coaches, especially the non-Asian ones, are not pleased with their domestic taekwondo federations, but, are generally also supportive of the WT leadership and the Kukkiwon.

Note on Romanization and Names

The Romanization of Korean words was conducted according to the McCune-Reischauer system. However, foreign words assimilated into the English language were left according to their common usage. Korean names are according to tradition, family name first.

Introduction

Diverse activities, such as forms and demonstration training and competitions, are assembled under the common name 'taekwondo,' but they have, in fact, no relationship with the Olympic Games. It should be emphasized that the sole taekwondo activity connected to the Olympics is sparring, which represents the topic of this study.

Academic articles about taekwondo usually concern history [e.g. Capener 1995; Kang, Lee 1999; Gillis 2008; Moenig 2015a], philosophy [e.g. Kim, Back 2000; Dziwenka, Johnson 2015], and education [e.g. Johnson 2016], which are studies falling in the category of humanities. Studies in the field of natural sciences often deal with biomechanics [e.g. Harun, Xiongn.d.], medical issues, such as injuries, injury prevention, or physical profiles of athletes [e.g. Sant'Ana 2014; Bridge *et al.* 2014], impact results on the electronic body protector [e.g. Woo *et al.* 2013], and statistical works regarding game style and patterns [e.g. Kazemiet *al.* 2013; Menescardi *et al.* 2012]. However, these are just a few examples of publications in the field. All things considered, there are many other studies; some are of higher quality and many are of questionable significance.

A lesser explored subject is the impact of the introduction of new electronic, protective scoring equipment in combination with the modification of the rules on the game style and the general direction of taekwondo sparring.¹ This article expands on a couple of former studies [Moenig 2015b, 2017] with a questionnaire given to relevant taekwondo experts, such as national team coaches (or head coaches, or heads of teams) and domestic, Korean middle and high school and university team coaches (or head coaches), regarding their attitudes on some of these issues. This study aims to find out if the criticism presented in the earlier studies resonates among those in these relevant groups of taekwondo experts and leaders.

Initially, this study provides a short summary of the content of the earlier works and explains the criticism voiced about the current taekwondo competition system. Subsequently, the questions of the survey and the

results are presented. In conclusion, this article discusses the results of this study, its implications, and possible directions.

Background: A Brief Summary of the Earlier Studies

Two former articles, *Rule and equipment modification issues in World Taekwondo Federation (WTF) competition* [Moenig 2015b], and *Dominant features and negative trends in the current World Taekwondo Federation (WTF) competition system* [Moenig 2017], discussed the topic of this study in detail. This present study expands on the content of these two earlier works. The earlier articles are briefly summarized and updated as follows.

With the turn of the millennium, several embarrassing scandals in the former World Taekwondo Federation (WTF, now renamed World Taekwondo, WT) were exposed to the public. These included match-fixing, nepotism, and corruption by the WTF leadership. For instance, the WTF's longtime leader, Kim Un-yong (1931-2017), was convicted of embezzlement and bribery, and incarcerated in 2004. Prior to Kim's downfall, taekwondo became an official Olympic sport in the 2000 Sydney Olympics, but taekwondo officials worried whether its status would continue, since match-fixing accusations surfaced even in the 2000 Sydney event. For instance, Lee Chong Woo (1929-2015), who held a number of the most important positions in the WTF and Kukkiwon, admitted in an interview in 2002 to match-fixing in the Sydney Olympics and other games in favor of Korean athletes [Yook 2002]. As a result of accusations of rampant improprieties, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) insisted on more transparency in taekwondo's scoring method and decision-making process concerning match outcomes, in addition to reforms regarding general accountability. As a consequence, the WTF progressively introduced electronic, protective scoring equipment and made numerous rule and administrative modifications after the turn of the millennium. Regarding scoring and match outcome accountability, the WTF's reforms can be categorized into two major topics, the introduction of electronic, protective scoring equipment and the overhaul of the competition rules.

The Protector & Scoring System (PSS)

In all combat sports, human scoring decisions of matches are often regarded as very subjective and susceptible to bias. This often leads to endless arguments between judges, coaches, and athletes regarding scoring and match outcomes. Taekwondo tournaments had their fair share of endless squabbles and (sometimes even physical) fights in this regard. As a result, the taekwondo leadership longed for an objective, non-human, electronic decision-making process.

¹ Kailian [2010, Appendix A: 429] also explored the topic of rules and scoring, but in the pre-PSS era. He describes the differences between the newly introduced (transitional) electronic scoring system, and the legacy, paper & pencil method—especially, how the old, paper & pencil allowed a fighter to randomly gain and lose points.

The gradually evolving system consisted initially of an automatic, electronically scoring body protector only, first experimented with in 2005 and 2006. However, the system left kicking techniques to the head and punches to the body still determined by human judges. This represented a hybrid and incomplete system. Electronic scoring was only later, first again in experimental tournaments in 2013 and 2014, expanded to the head gear as well.



Figure 1. Shortcomings of the electronic, protective scoring equipment: the face area [Source: Courtesy of Peter Bolz]

The system is now referred to as Protector & Scoring System, or short PSS. Over the years, the former WTF (now the WT) and the regional taekwondo federations awarded (and also repealed) several companies the rights to provide their PSS equipment to officially sanctioned WTF (now the WT) tournaments [Hong n.d.].² However, each system arguably had its shortcomings, and pros and cons, and the WT seems scheduled to pick yet another new system in the near future. In this case, schools, clubs, and national associations will be forced once again to acquire a very expensive system, often not sufficiently affordable by many clubs and poorer nations.

However, at present, the system is still relying on human judges for scoring punches, and likewise for kicking techniques to the part of the face which is not covered by the headgear. Moreover, the center referee has the power to award points to the opponent for prohibited actions and is, therefore, able to influence the match in various ways. In addition, in the case of a tie, human judges decide the winner according to superiority. Therefore, the vision of a completely objective, independent of humans, scoring system seems to be an illusion.

A very negative outcome of the PSS is that humans seem no longer in charge of the desired usage and direction of technique in matches; instead, the electronic scoring system dictates it. The electronic scoring system has no aesthetic considerations but simply indicates

² For example, the European Taekwondo Union (ETU) used the Adidas system at the 2008 European Championships in Rome. However, the Adidas system was rejected by the WTF.

scoring points automatically. Moreover, all the systems developed so far appear not reliable enough, as they all have numerous glitches and shortcomings. Athletes have been adapting to the various PSS systems and the constant rule changes, which has given rise to a variety of non-conventional, bizarre kicking techniques, such as the so-called monkey kick and donkey kick. These undesired, unaesthetic and, actually, also very unrealistic (for real fighting) techniques were only able to arise by the use of an automated, electronic system where human decision making is excluded. Human judges would neither recognize nor score such techniques as the monkey kick. Most of these unconventional kicking techniques also lack impact force and score only because of the shortcomings and the low impact level of the PSS. Even though some of these techniques, such as the monkey kick, are now prohibited and their use leads to point deductions, the problem of technical distortion of scoring in taekwondo matches is by no means resolved, and athletes keep using a variety of kicking techniques which were not recognized as ‘proper’ or ‘real’ techniques in the past.



Figure 2. The electronic body protector (or e-chest gear), e-head gear, foot protector (socks with sensors), as well as a variety of electronic equipment, such as monitors, judging triggers, transmitters and receivers, and software are all together referred to as Protector & Scoring System, or PSS [Source: Courtesy of Peter Bolz]

Another much undesired outcome of the system is an overreliance by athletes on stationary kicking techniques with the front leg. A limited comparison of the 2007 World Taekwondo Championships (era of conventional, human scoring) and 2015 World Taekwondo Championships (era of PSS scoring) final matches revealed a change in the ratio of front leg/ back leg use in matches from approximately 1 (front leg) - 5 (back leg) to 3 (front leg) - 1 (back leg). This represents an enormous transformation of game style. In the PSS era, athletes can score points with relatively forceless and weak kicking techniques on the electronics body protector and head gear, because of the seemingly non-resolvable shortcomings of the PSS and the low impact level for scoring. Moreover, athletes rely heavily on these techniques, since

the way to the target (the scoring area of the opponent) is shorter and therefore faster with the front leg in comparison to the back leg. In a game where impact force is not an issue, front leg kicks are as good (or even better) as back leg kicks.

Once again, many of the matches are dreadful to watch for spectators, and the goal to make taekwondo tournaments more interesting to watch was not achieved. On a positive note, the PSS significantly reduced arguments about scoring decisions and match outcomes. Moreover, accusations of match manipulations have been largely alleviated. However, overall, the articles [Moenig 2015b, 2017] concluded that the introduction of the PSS brought countless non-anticipated, negative outcomes to taekwondo matches, and the taekwondo leadership and community should contemplate doing away with the PSS and returning to a conventional, human scoring system once again. According to the studies, this course is often suggested in private by many taekwondo leaders and former athletes, but almost never raised in public because of fear of challenging the taekwondo establishment and the 'official' position.

Far-Reaching and Consequential Rule Modifications during the Past Two Decades

Already during the 1990s, taekwondo competitions were generally perceived as not interesting to watch for spectators. Athletes often had a very defensive game style and many matches lacked sufficient action. Moreover, spectacular techniques, such as high and spinning kicks, were not often executed by athletes, since much easier, simple roundhouse-kicks to the body were awarded the same, uniform score of one point each. As a result of these shortcomings, a comprehensive overhaul of the rules and competition system was initiated around the turn of the millennium. The most important scoring rule modification has been the suspension of a uniform, single scoring point for all techniques, which formerly included punches and kicking techniques; although scoring awards for punches were rather rare. With the beginning of the new millennium, multiple scoring points for different techniques has been progressively introduced and modified several times. At present, scoring points from one to five points are awarded, depending on the perceived difficulty of the technique. As a result, scoring decisions in taekwondo matches are very complicated to follow for non-taekwondo experts

Other far-reaching rule modifications [see: World Taekwondo 2019] were introduced progressively as follows:

- The reduction of three-minute rounds to two-minute rounds in international games.

- The introduction of a 'sudden death' rule, now coined "Golden Point," in which in case of a tie, an additional one-minute round ("golden round") determines the winner after the first point scored or "Decision of Superiority."

- The introduction of a so-called 'stall rule.' This means warnings or point deductions are given to athletes for passivity or a "non-engaging style" after five seconds of inaction.

- The addition of a video replay system and the right of coaches to petition, which leads to the potential to overturn decisions.

- The experimentation, at first by the Korea Taekwondo Association (KTA) and then later by the WTF, with an altered shape (the octagon) of the court, which actually reduced the competition area.

- The introduction of diverse protective equipment, such as light, protective gloves and a mouth piece.

- The start of a Grand Prix competition system, which are tournaments showcasing elite (often more or less professional) athletes, exhibited in several countries. This system was modeled after judo, and the surrounding spectacle (light shows and music) seems somehow styled after the former K-1 tournaments in Japan.

- Lastly, the introduction of a ranking system in connection with an overhaul of the qualification system for the Olympic Games and the Grand Prix.

There have been many more minor rules and procedural modifications over the years. Overall, constant rule modifications seem to be a never-ending and ongoing process. Actually, a very often used method of modification by WT officials is by simply changing the latest 'interpretations,' which is a very convenient way of changing the rules for every event.

Subsequent to the publication of the articles [Moenig 2015b, 2017], very recent and far-reaching changes to the rules have been the ban of certain undesired techniques, as for example, the so-called 'monkey kick,' and the ban of the unconditioned lifting of the leg to "block... or kicking in the air for more than 3 seconds to impede [the] opponent." Moreover, the rules now permit to push the opponent, but only in certain, very restricted manners. In addition, former warnings (*kyōnggo*) and full point deductions (*kam-chōm*) for "prohibited acts" have been replaced with immediate, uniform full point awards for the opponent, thereby, giving the center referee, potentially, undue authority to influence matches [see latest *Competition Rules & Interpretation* of World Taekwondo May 15, 2019].

Rule modifications impact the desired physical attributes of athletes, which have transformed considerably from taekwondo's beginnings during the 1960s to the present. Physical strength and power were highly desired attributes of athletes during the first decade of taekwondo competitions. However, during the 1970s, the trend shifted toward speed with the increasing popularity of the 'snap,' instep roundhouse-kick, and this tendency only accelerated during the 1980s the 1990s. However, in the current system, reach, meaning athletes need to have very long legs and be very tall and lean relative to their weight division, seems to be the most desired physical

attribute of athletes. This is, arguably, a direct outcome of the introduction of the PSS. Obviously, longer reach has been always an advantage in all full-contact, striking combat sports, but can be compensated with superior technique, strength, or speed. In the current taekwondo competition system, however, tall athletes relative to others in their weight division are typically victorious, since the PSS awards points for relatively forceless kicking techniques. For instance, simple contact with the foot to the headgear of the opponent is awarded with multiple points, which is much easier to do for tall athletes than the shorter ones. Accordingly, already comparatively tall and lean athletes are forced to do further extreme weight cutting with potential harm to their health. Moreover, as a result of the PSS, the current competition system represents more of a light-contact, point game than a full-contact combat sport, so power and strength are no longer dominant factors in deciding matches. Thus, reach, meaning long legs, seems to cancel out the application of superior technique and speed to a great extent. In summary, the articles argue that the dominant physical features and attributes of athletes have transformed from the 1960s to the present as follows:

Power and strength (1960s and 1970s) >
> speed (pre-PSS era) > reach (PSS era)



Figure 3. Long reach, the deciding factor of match outcomes in the PSS era [Source: Courtesy of Peter Bolz]

One issue perhaps not sufficiently discussed in the two articles [Moenig 2015b, 2017] is the impact of the so-called ‘stall rule,’ which means point awards for the opponent when an athlete displays a “non-engaging style.” The time period of inaction is limited to five seconds only [World Taekwondo 2019]. The stall rule appears to have had a major affect on game style and training, since athletes are now required to kick and attack almost constantly without sufficient breaks. Constant attacking comes at the expense of tactics, stepping, and feint motions, which are mostly absent in most current matches. Moreover, as a result of these changes, athletes seem to do more cardio training and much greater repetition of kicking techniques in a set during practice. This has led to, in turn, in combination with the preferred

body type of athletes (very tall but lanky, consequently, having also less muscle mass), a less explosive execution of technique.

The articles [Moenig 2015b, 2017] argue that many rule changes were not well-thought through in the first place and rule changes are often merely a reaction to undesired outcomes of prior rule changes and scoring equipment modifications. Overall, the WT rule system appears not to have made taekwondo competitions spectator-friendly due to its complicated nature and constant changes. Moreover, many of the rule modifications, in combination with the PSS, have resulted in taekwondo no longer being a true full-contact combat sport, but rather a light-contact, point game. This course may have been desired by the taekwondo leadership, since they do not want to see bloody knockouts and brutal injuries at the Olympics. Both articles suggested reevaluating the current complicated rules and, especially, the scoring rules, and making them simpler and more spectator friendly.

Method

The aim of the survey was to explore the opinions of taekwondo experts regarding the issues discussed in the two articles. A questionnaire was distributed among current national team coaches, head coaches, and heads of teams. In addition, a slightly modified version of the questionnaire was given to domestic (South) Korean middle school, high school, and university coaches and head coaches. The subjects of this study were selected for their leading positions in the taekwondo coaching community. National team coaches and domestic Korean coaches of middle schools, high schools, and universities represent the elite of the taekwondo competition community.

The intent of the two-way survey was to explore the general attitudes of taekwondo experts on these issues and the potential differences in opinion between domestic Korean and international coaches. One present head coach of a national team, who requested not to be named, distributed the questionnaire via Whats APP, which hosts a group connecting all heads of teams worldwide. However, the participation rate of the Whats APP survey was very low. As a result, the questionnaire was mostly distributed by email through the personal contacts of the researchers.

Content and Results of the Survey

The International Survey

Many national team coaches were very reluctant to answer the questionnaire, or outright refused to participate in the survey. The reason for this attitude, we speculate, was that many coaches did not want to be identified as having participated, out of fear of some kind of retribution by the WT for expressing critical

opinions. As a result, the survey was expanded to include former national team coaches, head coaches, and heads of teams. In addition, one participant was a head coach of a national military team. In the survey, it was optional for the participants to give permission to disclose their country of coaching. The participants, who agreed to give permission to reveal their countries of coaching, were from the Netherlands, Germany, the U.S.A., Ireland, Greece, Thailand, and Malaysia. The other participants declined to disclose their countries of coaching or past coaching. Even though the survey was anonymous and the disclosure of the country of coaching was optional, only 14 (7 present and 7 former) coaches participated, which weakened the results of the study.

Questionnaire of the international survey of (present or former) National Team Coaches, Head Coaches, and Heads of Teams (Including results)

1. Has the PSS (Protector & Scoring System) contributed positively to the development of taekwondo techniques? 5 Yes 9 No (a ratio of 36% to 64%)³
2. Were taekwondo games more interesting to watch for spectators before the use of the electronic body protector? 10 Yes 4 No (a ratio of 71% to 29%)
3. Should the PSS be replaced with a conventional (human judges) scoring system again? 4 Yes 10 No (a ratio of 29% to 71%)
4. Are the rules too complicated? 9 Yes 5 No (a ratio of 64% to 36%)
5. Should the scoring rules be simplified (for example, all high kicks 2 points and all other techniques 1 point only)? 4 Yes 10 No (a ratio of 29% to 71%)
6. Are there too many G-1 tournaments? 4 Yes 10 No (a ratio of 29% to 71%)
7. Are there too many G (1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 20) tournaments in general? 8 Yes 6 No (a ratio of 57% to 43%)
8. Are you satisfied with the WT Ranking system? 11 Yes 3 No (a ratio of 79% to 21%)
9. Are you satisfied with the WT Olympic Ranking system? 8 Yes 6 No (a ratio of 57% to 43%)
10. Are you satisfied with the qualification system for the Olympics? 3 Yes 10 No (one participant gave no answer for this question) (a ratio of 23% to 77%)
11. Are you satisfied with the leadership of your country's taekwondo organization? 8 Yes 6 No (a ratio of 57% to 43%)
12. Are you satisfied with the leadership of the WT? 9 Yes 5 No (a ratio of 64% to 36%)
13. Are you satisfied with the role of the Kukkiwon regarding belt testing? 11 Yes 3 No (a ratio of 79% to 21%)
14. Should there be a WT black belt (Dan) instead of the Kukkiwon black belt? 5 Yes 9 No (a ratio of 36% to 64%)

³ The percentage points were rounded up or down.

The Domestic Korean Survey

The domestic Korean survey produced better results. However, domestic, Korean coaches were also concerned about negative repercussions and declined to disclose their teams' school names, since some of the topics of the questionnaire are quite sensitive issues, some felt, especially the questions about the PSS. On the other hand, the domestic, Korean coaches were not as reluctant as the national team coaches to participate in the survey. 33 domestic, Korean coaches and head coaches from various university, high school, and middle school teams participated in the survey. These teams are representative of the nationwide, Korean taekwondo competition scene. The questions for the domestic Korean coaches were slightly different from those in the international questionnaire. Questions regarding the Kukkiwon and WT *dan* issue were omitted since this subject concerns only international tournaments. Moreover, there is no discussion or perceived problem regarding a Kukkiwon *dan* versus a WT *dan* in the Korean taekwondo community. In addition, questions regarding ranking system, tournaments, and qualification issues had to be adjusted for a domestic, Korean audience and circumstances. Overall, the number of questions was reduced to ten.

Questionnaire for domestic Korean coaches and head coaches

(English translation, including results)

1. Has the PSS (Protector & Scoring System) contributed positively to the development of taekwondo techniques? 19 Yes 14 No (a ratio of 60% to 40%)
2. Were taekwondo games more interesting to watch for spectators before the use of the electronic body protector? 24 Yes 9 No (a ratio of 73% to 27%)
3. Should the PSS be replaced with a conventional (human judges) scoring system again? 13 Yes 20 No (a ratio of 40% to 60%)
4. Are the rules too complicated? 20 Yes 13 No (a ratio of 60% to 40%)
5. Should the scoring rules be simplified (for example, all high kicks 2 points and all other techniques 1 point only)? 7 Yes 26 No (a ratio of 21% to 79%)
6. Are there too many tournaments every year? 16 Yes 17 No (an almost even split of 48% to 52%)
7. Are you satisfied with the Korean ranking system? 23 Yes 10 No (a ratio of 70% to 30%)
8. Are you satisfied with the qualification system for the Korean national team? 20 Yes 13 No (a ratio of 60% to 40%)
9. Are you satisfied with the role of the Korea Taekwondo Association in regard to coaches? 21 Yes 12 No (a ratio of 64% to 36%)

⁴ The Korean term *chidocha* (지도자) was used in the original Korean survey, which has more of the meaning of 'instructor.' However, in the context of this survey, it was clear that it referred to coaches.

10. Are you satisfied with the leadership of the WT? 19
Yes 14 No (a ratio of 58% to 42%)

Conclusion and Discussion

The results of the survey only partly support the criticism voiced in the two earlier articles [Moenig 2015b, 2017]. A clear majority of national team coaches and domestic Korean coaches would not agree to return to a conventional (human judges) scoring system, but want to keep the PSS. Many coaches might harbor deep distrust toward judges and referees. The majority of coaches might prefer PSS scoring to human scoring, because, perhaps in their minds, the general acceptance of match outcomes in the PSS era outweigh all other issues. They do not want a return to the endless arguments and fights regarding match outcomes as in the former conventional, human scoring era.

On the question whether the PSS contributed positively to the development of taekwondo techniques, the domestic Korean coaches agreed. Considering the overuse of front leg kicking techniques and the rise of very unconventional, bizarre kicking techniques, the opinion of the domestic Korean coaches appears somewhat surprising and in opposition to that of the international coaches, who strongly disagreed. However, in agreement with their international peers, domestic Korean coaches seem to think that taekwondo matches were much more interesting to watch in the pre-PSS era, which is a somewhat contradictory position when compared to their standpoint on the PSS' influence on techniques.

Some of the participants thought that the questionnaire was too simple, because many of the topics in the questionnaire are not simply black or white issues, but fall somewhat in between. One participant voiced the following opinion:

I think the survey is a bit simple, and most of the questions are not really YES-NO only questions[;] for example, the ones about electronic scoring. Taekwondo now is not very interesting to watch, but it is a lot fairer in the judging, and whether it should be human- or electronic scoring is also too simple[;] most people I know would prefer a combination of the two. A lot of coaches feel that the WT tried too hard to settle two issues at the same time; fairness and spectator friendliness in the Olympics, and maybe the[y] messed them both up.

Actually, the questionnaire was kept simple on purpose, because the participants were asked to consider the pros and cons and clearly take a position. Moreover, the present system, in fact, represents a combination of human and electronic scoring. Punches are still awarded by human judges, the face area is not included in PSS scoring, and the center referee can influence the match by giving

point awards for certain prohibited acts by the opponent. Years ago, a hybrid scoring system was suggested, awarding points only if the PSS and, simultaneously, a human judge would indicate points. These critical coaches had perhaps such a scoring system in mind.

The authors of this study had the impression that older coaches seem to have more unfavorable attitudes toward the PSS, which is reflected in the answers of some of the participants and also in personal conversations with taekwondo leaders over the years. The topic of the PSS might be less relevant for younger athletes and coaches, who basically grew up with the PSS and had probably not had much exposure (except during training) to the former conventional, human scoring system during competition.

Regarding the general rules, a majority of the participants agreed with the former studies that the rules are by and large too complicated and should be simplified, although most participants strongly favor the present, multiple points scoring rules in comparison to a simpler system.

On questions of ranking, qualification, and tournaments, a majority of the participants seemed generally satisfied. Outstanding was only the strong dissatisfaction by national team coaches with the qualification system for the Olympics, and the opinion that there are generally too many G tournaments.

On the issue of a Kukkiwon *dan* versus WT *dan* [on the controversial issues of the Kukkiwon, see a detailed discussion in: Moenig, Kim 2017], the WT actually tried to introduce its own *dan* certificates recently; however, parts of the old guard rejected the proposal. A WT *dan* was not strongly supported by a majority of the international participants; the Asian participants, especially, rejected a WT *dan* and were very supportive of the Kukkiwon. A WT *dan* would certainly represent a grave competition for the Kukkiwon *dan*, which likely drained the Kukkiwon's revenues in the long run. As a result, a potential WT *dan* would only accelerate the Kukkiwon's demise in the near future. At the moment, as a consequence of the COVID-19 crisis, the WT and the Kukkiwon are in dire financial distress, due to strongly reduced revenues. The WT currently receives no revenues from competitions and cash-starved national federations, has only limited support from cash-strapped sponsors, and, after all, the Olympic Games are postponed or might be even canceled completely [World Taekwondo 2020]. Likewise, the Kukkiwon receives no revenues from *dan* promotional tests, since these events are all canceled as well. Both organizations rely at the moment solely on Korean government support. In line with the Kukkiwon result, the Asian participants also had a generally more favorable view of the WT leadership compared to their non-Asian counterparts.

However, the results of the international survey present only a limited picture, because of the low participation rate. The WT could easily make a broader follow-up sur-

vey, which would provide more extensive and relevant results. In fact, some WT members sometimes ask coaches at Heads of Teams meetings or other events about their opinions orally, or sometimes views are surveyed per Whats APP, which hosts a group of exclusively heads of national teams.⁵ However, these efforts appear not very structured and regular. Moreover, the WT leadership might not want to ask very self-critical questions, because of political reasons related to the course that the leadership kept for many years, as for example the unconditional support for the PPS, and the reluctance to admit mistakes. After all, the taekwondo institutions and the community are generally very conservative and authoritarian, which possibly also intimidates many potential participants. Regarding this present study, some national team coaches complained that the survey was not sufficiently anonymous, because the survey solely relied on personal trust that their identities would not be revealed, which demonstrates their reluctance to voice their opinions freely.

The domestic Korean survey presented a more representative picture, because of the relatively higher participation rate in comparison to the international study. Most results of the domestic Korean survey, such as the preference of the PSS over human judges, largely corresponded to the results of the international survey. However, in general, the domestic Korean coaches and national team coaches of Asian countries seem to have a more favorable view of their official, domestic taekwondo institutions than their non-Asian peers. Moreover, a majority of all participants holds favorable views of the WT. By and large, the Korean coaching community seems to be relatively satisfied with the current state of affairs. In conclusion, the official taekwondo institutions, such as the WT and domestic federations of individual countries, could easily regularly do similar surveys. In addition, elite athletes should be surveyed as well. Such regular, critical and informative surveys would probably help to improve taekwondo and its general recognition, popularity, and legitimacy.

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Aktualizacja zasad i problemów związanych z modyfikacją sprzętu punktującego w systemie zawodów World Taekwondo (WT)

Słowa kluczowe: sparing taekwondo, Protector & Scoring System (PSS), regulamin zawodów, trenerzy, igrzyska olimpijskie

Streszczenie

Tło. Kilka wcześniejszych opracowań dotyczyło kwestii modyfikacji zasad i sprzętu systemu punktującego w czasie zawodów World Taekwondo (WT), zapoczątkowanego na przełomie ubiegłego tysiąclecia w wyniku licznych afer i nieprawidłowości dotyczących ustawiania zawodów, braku przejrzystości i nepotyzmu w instytucjach taekwondo. Ponadto zawody taekwondo były ogólnie postrzegane jako nieciekawe dla widzów. Jednak te wcześniejsze badania były bardzo krytyczne wobec

systemu punktującego Protector & Scoring System (PSS) oraz skomplikowanych, ciągle zmieniających się zasad zawodów i interpretacji, wprowadzanych stopniowo w wyniku tych problemów i skandali.

Problem i cel. Niniejsze badanie miało na celu sprawdzenie, czy eksperci taekwondo popierają krytykę wyrażoną w tych wcześniejszych badaniach.

Metoda. Badanie poddaje próbie krytykę wyrażoną w tych artykułach za pomocą anonimowej ankiety przeprowadzonej wśród odpowiednich ekspertów taekwondo, takich jak (obecni i byli) trenerzy reprezentacji narodowych oraz krajowi (południowokoreańscy) trenerzy drużyn gimnazjalnych, średnich i uniwersyteckich.

Wyniki. Ankieta daje mieszane wyniki; w niektórych kwestiach wyniki są zgodne z krytyką wyrażoną we wcześniejszych badaniach, ale w innych stanowiskach są rozbieżne. Najważniejsze ustalenia są takie, że większość trenerów woli PSS od konwencjonalnego, ludzkiego systemu sędziowania, pomimo negatywnego wpływu PSS na techniki taekwondo stosowane w zawodach. Zgodnie z ustaleniami zawartymi w poprzednich artykułach, większość trenerów postrzega ogólne zasady rywalizacji jako zbyt skomplikowane, ale zdecydowanie popiera obecne zasady wielokrotnej punktacji.

Wniosek. Lokalni koreańscy trenerzy wydają się względnie zadowoleni ze stanu rzeczy w krajowych i międzynarodowych instytucjach taekwondo. Z drugiej strony połowa trenerów reprezentacji narodowych, zwłaszcza spoza Azji, nie jest zadowolona ze swoich krajowych federacji taekwondo, ale generalnie wspiera również kierownictwo WT i Kukkiwon.