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THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE OF YUGOSLAV BOXERS

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Abstract. Our intention is to examine a corpus of Yugoslav senior (N=104) and junior (N=57) boxers by using the Cattell questionnaires 16 PF and HSPO, Eysenck MPI questionnaire, the Spielberg questionnaire of the traits of the general anxiety STAI, Test of the Motive of the sports achievement MSP by Havelka and Lazarevic, as well as Martens' test of the traits of the sports competitive anxiety SCAT, in order to try to find out if they possess, compared to the athletes of the other branches of sport, the specific profile of the personal dispositions. Our intention also tends to establish if it is formed under the influence of the specific demands of this sport, or whether a certain specificity of boxers could be identified already at the junior age. The data analysis confirms that adult boxers, compared to all other athletes, statistically significantly differ on 7 out of 16 factors of the personality, on one out of two Eysenck dimensions or typological characteristics of personality, on 2 factors of motivation and in the degree of the demonstration of the traits of the sports competition anxiety. The psychological profile of the traits of the personality of young boxers shows far less specificity compared to all other young athletes, and the recorded differences result from the specificity of their socio-economic status, educational and other socialization influences.

Key words: psychological profile, boxers, comparison, specificity, differences

1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary psychologists in their practical work and research turn more and more to constructing and applying those psychological techniques, methods and procedures which attempt to enable every athlete to build himself\herself a unique plan of successful competitive performance which will help him\her to use his\her sports potentials completely. Also, the task of the psychology of sports is to help every trainer or coach to completely familiarize, develop and use his\her own expert, pedagogical and psychologi-

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cal potentials in order to be successful in training and competitive guidance of the athletes and sports teams.

In order to successfully respond to these tasks, the psychology of the sports should continue to deal with the numerous and complex questions of the relations between the personality and the sports activity, so it could improve the process of the sports directing and selection of the young people for those sports in which there are best prospects for their successful sports development and top competitive accomplishments.

According to Weiberg and Gould (1999) more than 1000 papers in the field of the personality of the athletes were published until 1992. This number shows how important the personality in sports and exercise is in the field of research and practice. For example, the research workers were interested in the reason why some students love the P.E. classes or to go in for sports, while the other students don't feel like even putting on the sports equipment; why some persons regularly attend different fitness, aerobics and other programmes, while the others don't like to go out; if the decision to go in for sports and success can be predicted by the type of the personality of the athlete etc.

The psychologists, who work in sports, have always used certain psychological tests in order to identify those characteristics of personality, motivation and abilities by which the athletes differ from persons who do not go in for sports (Lazarević et al., 1977; Havelka, & Lazarević, 1981); which differentiate successful from less successful athletes (Havelka, & Lazarević, 1981; Bačanac, & Mihajlović, 2001); athletes of different branches of sport (Bačanac et al., 1989; Bačanac, & Mijatović, 1990; Bačanac, & Mihajlović, 2001); athletes with different positions in the team; athletes of different sex (Ogilvie, & Tutko, 1970; Bojanić, 1977; Bačanac, 1995; Bačanac et al. 1989) etc. Taking into consideration the evident faults of this kind of research: they were carried out without a good theoretical basis, using an inadequate statistical design, with methodological mistakes, on insufficiently representative samples etc. (Fisher, 1984; Fisher et al., 1977; Morgan, according to Silva, 1984), the obtained results were often inconsistent or even contradictory.

However, psychologists who support the different, situation approach, think that it is neither possible to explain the complex behaviour of athletes, only on the basis of the traits of the personality, nor their competitive success can be reliably predicted. While the supporters of the approach of the traits think that the causes of the behaviour are generally found in the personality and that the role of the situational or environmental factors is minimal, the supporters of the situational approach think that behaviour is mainly determined by the environment or situation. This approach comes from the theories of social learning. In such theories the behaviour is explained in the terms of learning by observing (observational study), or learning by the model (modeling), and learning by the social confirmation (rewarding, feedback). Not even the situational approach can completely predict somebody's behaviour. It is certain that the situation can influence somebody's behaviour, but it cannot direct the behaviour of all people.

Today, the greatest number of the researchers use, the so-called interactive approach, because it takes into consideration both the situation and the personality as the determinants of the behaviour, i.e. the variables which together influence the behaviour. In other words, it is useful to know the characteristics of the personality as well as the characteristics of the situation in order to understand the behaviour. Beside the independent influence of these factors, they, in time, mutually interact, and influence the behaviour of a person in a unique way. In the opinion of the psychologists who favour the interactional

approach, it is possible to explain twice as much of behaviour by the interaction of the personality and situation, than only by observing the traits, or only by the situations (Fisher et al.,1977). Psychologists who use the interactional approach think that the study of personality of the athletes belonging to different branches of sport, having different level of skill, who take part in different levels of the sports competition, can help to understanding and predict better their behaviour, increasing the competitive efficiency, more successful selection and orientation of the young athletes, solving the problems which appear in certain periods of their sports career.

Disregarding the frequent contradictory and inconsistent results, studies of the personality of the athletes, those from the positions of the approach of the traits, situation, and mostly those from the positions of the interaction approach, refer to the following:

- Athletes differ from the persons who do not go in for sports according to the degree of possessing and showing the certain traits of personality, the ability and motivation:
- Top athletes, masters of a certain sport, the champions, possess certain psychological specificity which differentiates them from the athletes of the lower level of the skill, success, efficiency (Kroll pyramidal model on the connection between the personality and performance; Morgan's model of the successful athletes' "iceberg");
- Athletes who go in for different branches of sports possess, more or less, specific
 psychological profiles which are coordinated with the nature of the certain sports
 activity, i.e. training and competitive demands of the certain sports;
- There are characteristic combination of psychological characteristics connected to certain roles in the game, for example, forward or defense positions in some sports games;
- Sports activity certainly contributes to reducing or complete erasing of the traditional differences in sex, which exist in the majority of modern cultures, because women who go in for sport adopt, in a more emphasized manner, the androgenic concept of the sex role. They successfully merge masculine and feminine characteristics, and that androgenic concept contributes to their success in sports, without reducing their femininity.

Our intention has been to use the results of a long term follow-up of athletes of different sport branches at the Republic Institute of Sports, and to find the basic characteristics of the psychological profile of Yugoslav boxing¹ seniors and juniors, which are connected to being successful in going in for sports, at the older age, as well as to choosing this sport at the younger age.

We actually wanted to:

• Test if the boxers, by the degree of expressing certain primary or typological traits (dimensions) of personality, as well as by those that are specific depending on the situation (they appear before the performance or during the performance) differ from athletes who go in for other sports, i.e. if it is possible to talk about the "profile of the personality of the successful boxer", i.e. about the model of the champion in boxing and if it is different from the model of the champion in other sports;

¹ The results were prepared and presented on the Seminar of the Olympic Solidarity in Boxing in Belgrade in 1998.

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See if the young boxers at the very start of going in for this sport significantly differ, by their psychological characteristics, from their peers who choose other sports activities. The question is: if that possible specificity of their psychological structure is the basic determinant of their decision to go in for boxing or it is "acquired" later, i.e. it is a consequence of their systematical going in for this sport.

Having in mind the information on the characteristics of the environment where our young boxers are recruited from, the data on socio-economical and educational status of their families (Bačanac, & Radović, 1989), the specificity of the box as the sports activity, we assumed the following:

- 1. That boxers older than 18 who at the same time have confirmed their high competitive success and have a long boxing experience will differ by the degree of certain dispositions of the personality and motivation from the first-class athletes who go in for other branches of sports;
- 2. That young boxers, at the very start of going in for this sport, will not significantly differ from the peer athletes who choose some other sports activities, by the characteristics of their psychological profile.

2. METHOD

2.1 Subjects

16

This research includes Yugoslav boxers older than 18 who were tested during longer period of time, as members of the national selections, at the Republic Institute for Sports till 1998 (N=104). The other sample (N=57) includes young, talented boxers who were tested in three camps of the Ministry for Youth and Sports: in 1990 in Palić, in 1997 and 1998 in Karataš. All the relevant data on these two sub samples are presented in Table 1.

 Age
 Sp. experience

 M
 SD
 M
 SD

 Seniors
 21.48
 3.84
 6.18
 3.01
 104

1.62

2.54

1.60

57

Table 1. Structure of the sample of the tested boxers

2.2 Instruments and Variables

Juniors

15.61

Depending on the age, the primary traits or factors of personality were examined by Cattell's questionnaires 16 PF or HSPQ, which measure the following 16, i.e. 14 dispositions of the personality: A: reserved – outgoing; B: low – high crystallized intelligence; C: emotional instability – higher ego strength; D: phlegmatic temperament – excitable; E: submissiveness – domination; F: seriousness, sober – enthusiastic, happy-go-lucky; G: disregards rules – conscientious, responsibility; H: threat sensitive, shy-venture, uninhibited; I: tough-minded – tender-minded; J: liking group action – circumspect individualism; L: trusting – suspicious; M: practical – imaginative; N: naiveté – cleverness; O: self-assured – apprehensive; Q1: conservative – experimenting; Q2: group dependent – self-sufficient; Q3: uncontrolled – controlled; Q4: relaxed – tense.

Typological characteristics or dimensions of personality: Neuroticism – stability (N) and Extraversion – introversion (E) were measured with the Eysenck's questionnaire MPI (Maudsley Personality Inventory);

The level of the trait of the general anxiety was measured with Spielberger's questionnaire STAI (Spielberger Trait Anxiety Inventory);

The degree of the demonstration of the trait of the sports competition anxiety was measured with Martens' questionnaire SCAT (Sport Competition Anxiety Test);

The level of the motive of the sports achievement (P), positive emotional reactions in the situations of the achievement (PE) and negative emotional expressing during the sports performance (NE), were measured with MSP questionnaire of Havelka and Lazarević².

The chosen tests are the usual part of the battery for the estimation of the psychological status of the athletes which have been used in the Republic Institute for Sports, and the choice of it depends on the age of the athletes, the available time, the aims of the research and, of course, on the theoretical and practical direction of the sports psychologist. We find this battery rather economical – simple to use and process, and it is also widely accepted in work with first-class athletes, so the obtained results can be compared to the results of the similar domestic and foreign research.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data on the degree of the demonstration of the measured psychological characteristics of the boxers, seniors and juniors, are presented in Tables 2 and 3, and their graphic survey can be found in the Figures 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

The survey and the analysis of the obtained results help us come to conclusion that the profiles of the personalities of Yugoslav boxers seniors and juniors, are basically normal, because most of the traits, i.e. the dispositions of the personality are developed on average, just as it is a case with the athletes of the other branches of sports.

However, top Yugoslav boxers of the senior age (Table 2, Figures 1-3) statistically significantly differ from the other athletes in 7 primary personality traits, on 1 dimension or typological character of the personality, 2 factors of motivation and trait of the sports competition anxiety. We think that the obtained differences definitely confirm our first hypothesis on the specificity of the psychological profile of the successful boxers compared to the rest of the Yugoslav athletes of the same, high competitive level.

These differences are registered on Cattell's A, B, F, G, N, O and Q1 factors of personality, trait of general anxiety (At), dimension neuroticism-stability (N), the degree of the motive of the sports achievement, (P), factor of the negative emotional reactions in the situations of the sports performance (NE), and the level of the sports trait competition anxiety (Ac). To be more specific, compared to the athletes of the other branches of sport, the boxers are more reserved, shy, less communicative and sociable (A); more careful, quiet, more devoted, they take life more seriously (F); They are less burdened with the moral norms and standards of the socially desirable behaviour, they are less conscientious, responsible and reliable, they have tendency to neglect the rules and obligations, to be indulgent to themselves, they do not have a complete control over their

² More detailed description of the characteristics of the instruments and variables mentioned above can be found in the appropriate literature.

social behaviour (G); They are more openhearted, socially naïve, less skillful in contacts and behaviour toward the other people, they are often rudely direct, clumsy and spontaneously sincere (N); They are less self-confident, they are burdened with the feeling of guilt and being less valuable, they have tendency to fear, discouragement, self-reproach, they do not feel completely accepted and fit into the society (O); They are less inclined to experimenting, checking, critical and analytical approach to the problems – they completely trust the things they have learned, they stick to the things that are already known and organized – they are more conservative in thinking and behaviour (Q1).

Table 2. The comparative results of the psychological characteristics of the boxers and other Yugoslav athletes

Tests/variables		1.Boxers N=104		2.Other athletes N=277		t - test	
16 PF		M	SD	M M	SD	t	
A I O PF		11.55	2.94	14.45	2.90	8.62	p .01
A B		5.84	2.27	7.91	2.18	8.03	.01
C		16.49	3.44	16.96	4.04	1.13	.01
E E		13.84	3.44	14.01	3.94	0.42	
F E		14.45	2.94	15.19	3.82	2.01	.05
G G		12.73	3.29	13.19	3.74	3.14	.03
H		13.11	3.75	13.90	4.29	0.23	.01
I		8.14	2.69	7.75	3.14	1.21	
L L		10.72	2.09	10.50	3.14	0.63	
M		12.14	3.09	11.87	3.32	0.03	
N N		9.69	2.54	10.38	2.43	2.38	.02
O N		11.29	3.36	10.36	3.61	2.63	.02
Q1		9.48	2.67	10.29	2.49	2.67	.01
1	Q1 Q2		2.43	10.29	3.01	1.10	.01
Q3		9.77 12.28	3.08	11.80	3.41	1.31	
Q3 Q4		11.39	3.84	11.68	4.62	0.61	
							0.1
MSP $N_1=94$ $N_2=264$	P	17.90	4.26	16.31	4.86	3.00	.01
	PE	8.77	2.42	8.72	2.36	0.16	
	NE	4.38	2.49	3.37	2.35	3.43	.01
$STAI - At$ $N_1 = 40$ $N_2 = 152$		37.02	8.08	35.06	8.20	1.36	
SCAT - Ac $N_1 = 76$ $N_2 = 152$		17.47	3.62	19.01	4.61	2.75	.01
$MPI \\ N_1 = 54 \\ N_2 = 264$	E	26.98	5.47	27.47	9.16	0.52	
	N	18.50	7.87	13.92	9.85	3.72	.01

Also, senior boxers are characterized by the stronger motive of sports achievement (P), clearer striving for success and overcoming the existing standards of success, than the athletes of the other branches of sport. In the situations of the competitive performance, they show more symptoms of the negative emotional state (NE), i.e., they more often feel fear, inhibition, discouragement, cowardice, they lose self-confidence and are

more burdened with negative expectations. It happens during the match, although just before the match they show statistically significantly lower levels of the competition anxiety (Ac), lower level of the general arousing (activation), somatic and cognitive anxiety (At).

Table 3. The comparative results of the young boxers and other young athletes with the data on the statistical significance of the obtained differences

Tests/variables	1.Young boxers N=57		2.Other your	ng sp. N=242	t - test	
16 PF	M	SD	M	SD	t	p
A	10.84	3.11	10.95	3.42	0.23	
В	5.33	2.02	7.23	1.87	8.12	.01
C	11.51	2.95	10.66	4.05	1.81	
D	8.95	3.53	7.80	3.88	2.16	.05
Е	9.25	2.82	9.98	3.51	0.61	
F	9.26	3.60	10.16	4.03	1.65	
G	11.12	3.18	10.81	3.91	0.64	
Н	11.58	3.36	11.43	4.21	0.29	
I	8.79	2.87	9.41	4.09	1.34	
J	9.77	2.54	8.34	2.96	3.71	.01
O	8.53	2.90	6.51	3.56	4.52	.01
Q2	9.47	2.95	8.71	3.22	1.73	
Q3	11.12	2.80	11.08	3.77	0.10	
Q4	8.26	3.56	7.64	3.87	1.17	
SCAT- Ac N ₁₌ 34 N ₂₌ 152	18.15	4.48	19.01	4.61	1.01	

We could say that it is difficult for boxers to maintain the optimal state of the arousing before start, somatic and cognitive anxiety during the match. During the match, their excitement rises, (while with the most of the other athletes, especially those ones who go in for the collective sports, the level of excitement drops and optimizes already after the first moments of the competitive performance) and probably is the consequence of the feedback on the opponent's performance or/and his own mistakes and omissions. These information additionally disturb and discourage them, make them insecure about the positive result, and some of them feel cowardly and have the tendency to give up. If we keep in mind the nature of the competitive performance in this sport, then this kind of behaviour can be completely understandable, because the boxer, unlike in most other sports, cannot expect help from anyone, he is alone in the ring, left to the opponent and inexorable referee's decisions. Besides that, when "things become bad", the panic rises, because there is a real fear of injuries, physical as well as psychological (to feel incompetent in this sport, vulnerable, less important in front of the spectators). That's why the psychological preparation of the boxers for the competition is of great importance, and in that preparation there is a special place for the situational or "simulated" training, the right defining of the competitive aims, making the mental plan of the competitive performance and adopting those psychological techniques which will help them, relatively quickly and effectively establish the disturbed concentration, get rid of the negative thoughts and restore the lost self-confidence.

On the typological trait or dimension of personality neuroticism-stability, the boxers show a raised, but still average level of neurotic symptoms. The results of t-test show that

it is significantly higher than at the athletes of the other branches of sport. It could be one of the reasons why, in the situations of the strong stress and frustrations (which boxing match certainly is), they have the tendency to react more emotionally, they succumb to the negative autosuggestion, they repeat the inadequate actions, they are more nervous, irritated, vulnerable, more sensitive to pain and effort, less persistent, they have tendency to discourage themselves more quickly and they lose self-confidence. And , to remind you, the raised neuroticism refers to the instability, i.e. the high reactivity of the vegetative nervous system which is too active, labile and which reacts to the outer stimulus too strongly and lengthy.

So, when senior boxers are in question, we can conclude that they possess a specific psychological profile which, by the degree of the expression of some traits and dimensions of the personality, factors of motivation and situational specific traits (sports competition anxiety) significantly differs from the psychological profile of the other Yugoslav athletes. The specificity of the psychological structure of the boxers, among other things, is, certainly caused in high degree by the characteristic demands of the training and competitive activities in this sport, which is completely different from the demands which other sports (collective, above all, the number of which is the greatest in the comparative sample) set for their participants.

But we must have in mind that a certain structure of personality can direct a person straight to this sport, not any other, i.e. that the certain psychological specificity of the potential boxers exists even before their going in for this sport. It is confirmed by the results obtained in examining boxers at the very beginning of their going in for boxing (the average length of the sports training period is about 2,5 years – see the Table 1), and which are presented in Table 2 and Figures 4 and 5. At the same time, these results only partially confirm our other hypothesis connected to expectation that the young boxers at the very beginning of going in for this sport will not significantly differ from the peers that go in for other sports activities.

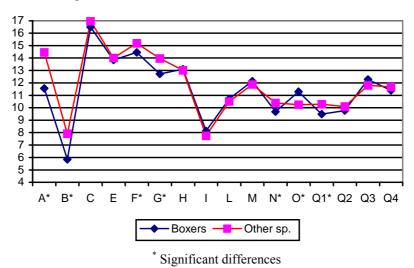
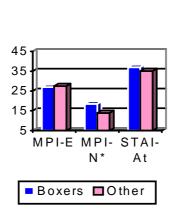


Fig. 1. The graphic survey of the comparative results of the boxers and other athletes on Cattell 16 PF



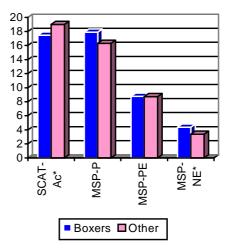


Fig. 2. The comparative results of the boxers and other atlletes on MPI and STAI

Fig. 3. The comparative results of the boxers and other athletes on SCAT and questionnaire MSP

The truth is that young boxers differ in fewer characteristics of personality (only 4 dispositions) from other young athletes, fewer than it was the case with older and more experienced boxers. After examining senior boxers, we have concluded that we can talk about a "model of personality of the successful boxer" i.e. "model of champion in boxing", which is different from the models of a champion in other sports. Beside that, the results obtained on the young boxers allow us to conclude that the specific "model of a boxer" can be in a way expected at the very beginning of their going in for this sport. It seems that the boxing is more "attractive" for those young people who already have a special combination of the psychological characteristics, and that going in for this sport additionally influences the specificity to become more expressive and determined in time.

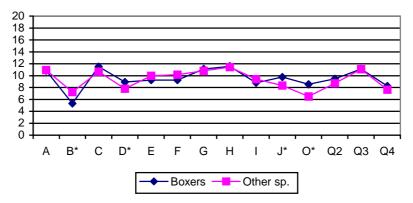


Fig. 4. The comparative profile of the personality of the boxers juniors and other young athletes

The specificity of the young boxers compared to other young athletes is noted in their lower crystallized intelligence (B); greater irritation, unrest, impatience, tendency to draw attention to themselves (even with inadequate actions), overactive behaviour (D); more expressive tendency to feel guilt, unrest, sensitivity to criticism and approval of other people, the feeling of one's own less value and being less unaccepted (O), and finally in their greater tendency to work individually, more uncompromising, rigid, to have more tendency to delinquent kinds of behaviour – but those of non-gang kind (J).

If we look more carefully at boxers - other young athletes at the noted differences, especially those ones on the factors of the crystallized intelligence (B), carefulness and individualism (J) and tendency to feel guilty (O) we can explain them having in mind strong influences of the socio-economical factors which, through the family, peers, closer and further social environment make the process of socialization of young boxers obviously different from the socialization influences in which their peers, who prefer other sports activities, grow up. A very low socio economical status of the families from which our boxers are recruited, low educational level of their parents, low residential and material status influence them to adopt very early, the utilitarian orientation and to start to fight to satisfy the elementary existential needs. That is why they neglect their own education, or interrupt it completely, which negatively reflects in the level of the general knowledge and neglecting the intellectual interests, so their accomplishments on the classical tests of intelligence are rather low. We know that the majority of the tests of intelligence are not independent from the culture, which is especially emphasized at the crystallized intelligence which is more than other factors of intelligence, dependent on the cultural frames and it is the result of the investment of the fluid intelligence into learning and one's own education. Of course, it will be greater if the socio - cultural conditions are more favorable. That is why we cannot say that the young boxers are less intelligent than their peers, but only that they are characterized by the lower level of the crystallized intelligence, conditioned by the negative social and educational influences.

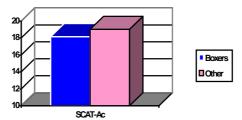


Fig. 5. The graphic survey of the comparative results on SCAT-Ac of theyoung boxers and their peers who go in for other sports

Their extremely negative socio economical status, beside making the majority of the other sports activities unreachable to them, has a strong influence on the formation of their personalities, on more emphasized development of certain dispositions of the temper, motivation and abilities. That is why the psychological profile of the young boxers is rather specific, different from the psychological profile of the other young athletes.

4. CONCLUSION

The results of the research of the psychological characteristics of the young and older boxers of the high competitive success and their comparison to the athletes of other branches of sport, refer to the following:

- The boxers of the high level of competitive achievement have a specific psychological profile which, by the degree of expressing the certain personality traits, motivation and capability, significantly differs from the psychological profile of the other successful athletes, so we could talk about the "model of the personality of the successful boxer" i.e. model of the champion in boxing which is different from the model of the champion of the other branches of sport.
- At some persons' younger age, we can already identify, to a certain degree, specific combination of the psychological characteristics of a personality which makes boxing more attractive to them than the other sports activities.
- The highly specificity of the psychological profile of successful boxers can be explained not only by the systematic influences of the long exposure to the characteristic demands of the training and competitive activity in this sport, but by the fact that boxing itself is more attractive and accessible to people who, to a certain degree, have this specific combination of the psychological and social characteristics even before they have chosen to go in for this sport.

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PSIHOLOŠKI PROFIL JUGOSLOVENSKIH BOKSERA

Ljubica Bačanac

Naša namera je da ispitivanjem jugoslovenskih boksera seniora (N=104) i juniora (N=57) Cattell-ovim upitnicima 16 PF i HSPO, Eysenck-ovim MPI upitnikom, Spilbergerovim upitnikom crte opšte anksioznosti (STAI), Testom Motiva sportskog postignuća (MSP) Havelke i Lazarevića, kao i Martensovim testom crte sportske takmičarske anskioznosti (SCAT), pokušamo utvrditi da li oni u odnosu na sportiste drugih sportskih grana poseduju specifičan profil personalnih dispozicija, da li je on oblikovan pod uticajem specifičnih zahteva ovog sporta ili se određene specifičnosti boksera mogu identifikovati već na juniorskom uzrastu.

Analiza podataka potvrđuje da se odrasli boskseri od ostalih sportista statistički značajno razlikuju na 7 od 16 faktora ličnosti, na jednoj od dve Eysenkove dimenzije ili tipološka svojstva ličnosti, na dva faktora motivacije i u stepenu ispoljavanja crte sportske takmičarske anksioznosti. Psihološki profil crta ličnosti mladih boksera pokazuje daleko manje specifičnosti u odnosu na ostale mlade sportiste, a evidentirane razlike, prevashodno proizilaze iz specifičnosti njihovog socio-ekonomskog statusa, obrazovnih, vaspitnih i drugih socijalizacijskih uticaja.

Ključne reči: Psihološki profil, bokseri, poređenje, specifičnosti, razlike