



ANALYSIS OF EUROPEAN TOP 16 WOMEN IN 2020

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to analyze the European Cup "Top 16" - women: competitive workload; participants and effectiveness of serve and receive. The minimum time for training on the pre-competition day is 2 hours. Approximately this is the possible competitive load per day (2 matches up to 50-60 minutes). The warm-up time before a match is equal to the approximate set time for one match (50 min) by program. One part of the participants (25%) play 4 matches, 50% of them compete in 1 match, and the remaining 25% in 2 matches. There are 16 athletes from 13 countries take part in 16 matches. The total played points is 1621: only 49% are won after own service, the other 51% are won after opponent service. The half of the players (50%) are playing with the left hand and 88% of them are attack style of play, only 2 participants are defensive. There is a PTT player, class 10. Fifty percent of the competitors are between 25-30 years old, and the oldest participant is 57 years old. Half of the competitors (50%) who drop out in the first round have the lowest ITTF ranking - after the first 60.

Key words: competitive workload, elite women table tennis players, service and receive

INTRODUCTION

The modern table tennis is characterized by tough and multi-day competitions - World, European and official international tournaments. In 1971, the first individual European championship for the best 12 competitors was held in Zadar, Serbia (then Yugoslavia). European Table Tennis Union /ETTU/ turns the experimental tournament into an annual one - at the beginning of February each year. In 2015, the name of the tournaments is changed: ‘ITTF European Cup Top 16’ and the number of participating athletes increases to 16. The competition becomes part of the calendar of the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) among all continents.

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The study of these competitions is important for defining the main trends in table tennis. The analysis of competitive performance has a significant role in sports science. An important part is the collection and systematization of specific information about competitive behavior and technical and tactical performance. This method first appeared in racket sports in the 1970s and 1980s (1, 2).

Italian researchers from the University of Bologna (3) study the implementation of the technique and tactics during 20 international meetings of elite athletes in Europe: 10 cadets and 10 juniors. The most commonly used strokes are top spin and serve. In conclusion, the authors share that the analysis of the competitive load in elite athletes helps to develop a useful technical and tactical model of training for all ages.

Venelina Tsvetkova examines the competitive load of table tennis U12 table tennis players (4). The most popular table tennis competition for U12 is the first stage of National Tournament "Young Olympian" where 193 children participate / 128 boys and 65 girls / from 40 sports clubs in the country. In the third stage of National Tournament "Young Olympian" only 32 children from 17 clubs participate, but the competitive load is high - 9 matches in one day and a half.

A study of the tactical combinations of the final match between China and Germany during the Men's World Team Table Tennis Championships in 2010 found that 53% of the points are won by own service (5).

Analyze of the serve activities of elite European table tennis players (6) shows that the percentage of point won directly with serve is 11.6%, points won with 3rd stroke - 22.4% and points won with 5th stroke after serve (10.9%). Lost points after serve are mostly after 3rd stroke (25.0%) and after 5th stroke (22.4%) and serve errors are noted in 1.5% of all analyzed 1466 points.

The serve receive of elite European table tennis players has gained the same importance as a serve in table tennis (7). Percentage of point won directly with receive is 24.5%, then follow point won in rallies after receiving (23.6%), lost point after received are 40.6% while receive errors are 11.7%. In the 2nd phase of the game are the most of active receive, while in 3rd phase the most of receive is with passive strokes. Results show an association between match outcomes and receive stroke type, outcome and placement zone, and the relation between use of active and passive receive and phase of the game.

METHODS

The object of the study are 16 matches and 16 table tennis players participating in the European Cup Top 16, held in Montreux, Switzerland, 08-09.02.2020. A study of the athletes was conducted: observation of the game and their style of play in the sports matches from videos in internet and the ranking system of the ITTF. The results of the study are subjected to mathematical and statistical processing with the program Excell. Alternative analysis is applied for establishing the percentages of the indicators for

played points. Published statistics on the ITTF website were used.

RESULTS

Preparations for the European Women's Cup "Top 16" (2020) include a day of training. There are 2 halls – for training and competition. There are 5 tennis tables in the training hall and 2 in the competition hall (8, 9) but only one is used for women tournament. A schedule has been made for the implementation of the activity. The athletes are distributed one by one at a table in the gym. They have the opportunity to train with your sparring partner or coach within an hour. Then, they transfer to the competition hall, where are able to train with an opponent for another 60 minutes. For example, Mikhailova Polina and Moret Rachel train from 12:00 to 13:00 on **Tables 1 and 2**, after that they move to partner each other at Table 1 in the competition hall from 13:00 to 14:00 (8).

During the first day of competition there is an individual schedule for practice in the training hall as well (9). Competitors are given the opportunity to warm up one hour and 15 minutes before the match within 50 minutes. On the second day of the competition, there is no schedule for the training hall. Only 4 athletes participate. For example, the first match is between Madarsz Dora and Pesotska Margaryta at 9:30. Their warm-up schedule is 8:15 - 9:05 on **Tables 3 and 4**.

The European Women's Cup "Top 16" (2020) is held on an elimination system with a match for 3rd place. Thus, the total number of matches is 16, which are played at only one table. According to the program (10), on the first day the competition starts at 9:30, for a match are set 50 minutes and two breaks are planned (for lunch and between the rounds). The last match is scheduled to start at 20:50. All matches in round 16 and quarter-final are scheduled for the first day. The competitors who win in the quarterfinals will have the opportunity to compete on the second day playing 2 more matches (semifinals and finals). But those who lose in their matches are left with a workload of 1-2 matches and their warm-up.

On the second day of competition, the semi-final matches start at 9:45. After the lunch break from 14:15 is the match for 3rd place, and from 15:55

- the final. The competitors have the same workload, but the finalists have more time to recover.

Table 1. Participating women in European cup „Top 16“ in 2020

No	player	country	playing hand	style of play	age	ITTF ranking	matches
1.	Polcanova Sofia	Austria	left	offensive	26	14	4
2.	Solja Petrissa	Germany	left	offensive	26	19	4
3.	Szocs Bernadette	Romania	right	offensive	25	22	1
4.	Han Ying	Germany	right	defensive	37	27	2
5.	Samara Elizabeta	Romania	left	offensive	31	34	2
6.	Ekholm Matilda	Sweden	left	offensive	38	35	1
7.	Pesotska Margaryta	Ukraine	right	offensive	29	37	4
8.	Mikhailova Polina	Russia	right	deffensive	34	43	1
9.	Ni Xia Lian	Luxembourg	left	offensive	57	46	2
10.	Eerland Britt	Netherlands	right	offensive	26	47	4
11.	Matelova Hana	Czech Republic	right	offensive	30	50	1
12.	Balazova Barbora	Slovakia	left	offensive	28	52	2
13.	Partyka Natalia	Poland	left	offensive	31	61	1
14.	Noskova Yana	Russia	right	offensive	27	64	1
15.	Madarasz Dora	Hungary	right	offensive	27	66	1
16.	Moret Rachel	Switzerland	left	offensive	31	82	1

Table 1 systematizes the data of the participating competitors. The regulation allows up to 2 participants from country by an ITTF ranking. Thus, 16 athletes from 13 countries are participating. The maximum quota is done by Germany, Romania and Russia. Two athletes are with Asian origin - Ni Xia Lian and Han Ying, but they compete for the national teams of Luxembourg and Germany.

The playing hand ratio ‘left-right’ is 50% -50%. A distinguished competitor is Ni Xia Lian (Luxembourg) as the oldest participant - 57 years old. Her grip is a penhold (Chinese version), she uses only one side of the racket.

Another outstanding player is the left handed player Natalia Partyka from Poland. Natalia is one of the best European athletes, 61st in the ITTF rankings for February, 2020, and at the same time she is the leader in the rankings for Table Tennis (PTT), class 10.

Regarding the age aspects of the competition, we notice that 50% of the competitors are between

25-30 years old and the youngest is Szocs Bernadette from Romania. Five participants (31%) are aged 30-35, two (12.5%) in the range of 35-40 years and only one competitor over 50 years.

The prevailing style of play is offensive - 88%. Only two players - Polina Mikhailova from Russia and Ying Han from Germany, have a defensive style of play.

The competitors with the highest ITTF ranking are ranked 1st (Solya Petrissa) and 3rd (Polkanova Sofia), and 50% of the competitors who drop out in the first round have the lowest ranking - after the first 60.

Table 2 shows the played point and the points won by service and receive by rounds. The total played points are 1621. Most of them are played in first round because there were 8 matches, and 51% of the points are won after own service.

Table 2. Played points and points won by service and receive in European Women Top 16

variables	Round 16	quarterfinals	semifinals	finals	SUM
Service	51%	50%	43%	44%	49%
Receive	49%	50%	57%	56%	51%
Points	742	469	192	218	1621

The total played matches in quarterfinals, semifinals and finals were 8 as well, but the points won after opponent's service are more (57% in semifinals). Most of the points are won by service receive (51%) in the competition. The players were used more active and effective receive.

CONCLUSION

In accordance with the competitive workload the minimum time for training on the pre-competition day is 2 hours. Approximately this is the possible competitive load per day (2 matches up to 50-60 minutes). The warm-up time before a match is equal to the approximate set time for one match (50 min) by program. One part of the participants (25%) play 4 matches, 50% of them compete in 1 match, and the remaining 25% in 2 matches.

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