



OM Assessing the Justification in Seeking Compensation for Sports Injury

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Abstract

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BACKGROUND: This paper shows the role of occupational medicine in assessing the justification for seeking compensation for a sports injury.

CASE PRESENTATION: A 23-year-old female candidate applied for admission to the Police. Starting in 2022, the Academy tightened the admission criteria and started testing candidates by professional selection. The candidate was injured at the “Marine” training ground, breaking both lower leg bones. She is now seeking compensation from the Ministry of the Interior. Like for other jobs with special working condition, it is known that before hiring future police officers, they have to pass the preliminary occupational medicine examination. The same applies to enrolment in sports clubs, for practicing sports and before entering competitions. The candidate asks whether she should have had a medical examination before applying for training as a police officer, that is, before psychophysical testing. Only candidates who pass the tests can be admitted to the Police Academy at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which are followed by a medical examination and the signing of an employment contract. The state cannot be expected to pay trainers for potential candidates and their training, for only about a quarter of candidates pass the selection.

CONCLUSION: The candidates themselves must be aware of their psychophysical capabilities, and it is to be expected that sportswomen, even amateurs, skilled and at least moderately fit, will apply for the above mentioned position of policewoman, bearing in mind the complexity of the future profession.

Introduction

Occupational medicine expert in Croatia, Rijeka, was requested by the Municipal Court to assess the justification for the financial compensation claim by a 23-year-old female candidate for the Police Academy admission, who injured herself while performing the “Marine” exercise, fracturing both lower bones of her right leg.

“Tactical athletes” are military personnel, police officers, fire fighters, paratroopers, and pilots [1]. It is known that they often suffer from osteoarthritis of the knees, ankles, and spine.

Professional orientation and later professional selection are needed to minimize such type of illnesses [2]. Selection means choosing the most capable from the group of capable, not only for the mentioned occupation but also for other special occupations, for drivers, train conductors, medical specialists, and others [3].

The mentioned candidate should have been aware that at least average psychophysical ability and emotional stability are required from a policewoman [4]. It is completely logical that female athletes or at least sports-minded, fast, agile, and dexterous people will apply for such a profession.

Case Report

This is a case of an average 23-year-old woman who applied for admission to the Police Academy, to become a police officer. During the psychophysical ability test at the “Marine” training ground, she was injured and fractured the bones of her lower leg.

The emphasis is not placed on the person, she was neither examined by the occupational medicine nor was this requested from the Court, but rather the professional explanation of the Occupational Medicine expert, whether her request for financial compensation from the Ministry of the Interior is justified or not.

The polygon mastering exercise as the second in a series of six sets for mastering is shown on the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fvWXvTn87Zw>

Discussion

The candidate is right when stating that exercise “Marine” requires previous training and strength to be able to repeat it 10 times as prescribed by the Ministry of Interior. She untruthfully stated that the bar, which stood

at a height of 40 cm above the floor axis, was fixed to the supports and that she fell due to that. The trainer present, a professor of kinesiology, as well as one of the candidates who performed the exercise before her, stated that the bar is movable, precisely so that if the candidate catches it, there will be no injury, but the bar falls on the floor. During the fourth attempt to jump, the candidate fell, collapsing the bar (obstacle), and during the fifth attempt, when she fell she injured herself. In her statement, she claimed that she was forced to continue jumping, even though it was obvious that she was no longer able to perform the exercise. This is also untrue, participation in selection testing was voluntary, she herself had to judge when she should have stopped and admitted to herself that she was not capable of doing the assigned task. The desire to become a police officer was greater than her abilities.

A young amateur female athlete, to be able to successfully master such exercises, needs to train, especially do stretching, strength, balance, agility, and safe landing exercises (she was injured during this) for at least 3 consecutive months [5]. The candidate states that the Police Academy announced a competition for the admission of candidates with a preliminary test only 15 days before the event, and put all the said exercises on the Internet under the mentioned link. She claims that 15 days of preparation is too little to master such an exercise, and she is right. However, on the other hand, the Ministry of Interior as an employer has a right to tighten the criteria for admission to the police service. Taking into consideration the geopolitical changes, Croatia entering the Schengen zone, the increased influx of refugees, the increase in crime, and the demands on police officers are also increasing.

Polygon exercises are performed in a large volleyball hall, with a lot of air, on a flat and dry floor. If the candidate is not mentally and physically fit enough, not only that in practice, in a conflict with criminals, in addition to her leg she can break other parts of her body, she can also be shot, thrown from a skyscraper or a cliff, which means she can lose her life, if she is not perfectly prepared for all situations.

This means that the applicant is already expected to have at least average psychophysical fitness or even above average, and therefore, if she knew that she was going through the selection process, she should have started doing general athletics exercises long before the last 15 days. In addition, although she stated that she is an athlete, she did not mention what sport she practices.

Almost every sport can lead to musculoskeletal injuries, so it is clear that all athletes include neuromuscular training as a preventive part of sports injuries [6].

For example, soccer players develop osteoarthritis, neurocognitive impairment and cardiovascular diseases [7].

The question arises whether the candidate would have passed the occupational medicine examination if

she had been referred to occupational medicine before conducting the selective exercise test at the Police Academy. The answer is almost 100% positive that she would, because the main part of the check-up includes the loco motor apparatus, cardiovascular system, EKG, spirometry, and 3 min step endurance test. Almost certainly, the candidate would receive a certificate that she was capable of entering the Police Academy.

Everything else is up to the candidate, who at the age of 23 should be mature enough after seeing on internet which exercises that she was expected to complete, to decide whether to sign up for the test or not.

Hence, if she practiced the "Marine" exercise for 15 days intensively and if she was able to perform it in the sports hall or at home, if, as she states, she was an athlete already before (in the Republic of Croatia, athletes are trained by qualified kinesiologist, which automatically confirms correct training and qualifications) then there was no obstacle for her to apply for the Police Academy competition. When she started facing problems she should not have continued jumping. Had she been forced jumping further, she would have to prove it in court. She has already stated untruths refuted by the witnesses, that the bar was movable, so that in the event of the foot contact collapses the bar, not the candidate.

This is an unfortunate case of landing on one leg at a wrong angle, instead of landing on both legs, which resulted in a fractured lower leg.

The mental stability of a person in such situations is of great importance, coping with stressful situations and reacting (even if she was being persuaded to continue jumping), she had to stop [8]. Before performing polygon exercises, she wrote a psycho-test, in which she apparently passed, because otherwise she would not have had access to polygon exercises.

The candidate states that she was already exhausted during the psycho-test because it lasted 1.5 h and that there was not enough air in the room where the test took place in June, when the outside temperature was high.

It could also be considered that the candidate could have finished the test earlier, if she had good cognitive abilities, she would spend less time in such a room. It is assumed that a healthy young person should not be exhausted after 1.5 h of staying in a warm room (during the season before onset of summer-transitional season).

Conclusion

If the candidate was an athlete as she states that she was (in any sports club there are trainers who carry out injury prevention programs primarily for the

lower extremities, strengthening the muscles of the upper leg and lower leg, protecting the hips, knees, and lower leg), she should have performed the exercise without special effort and injury [9]. Finally, excessive training can lead to “overstrain” of the locomotor apparatus, which as the other extreme can lead to injuries [10]. The Republic of Croatia has an extremely good Faculty of Kinesiology, which produces graduated kinesiologists, as well as top athletes, who are known all over the world. Such kinesiologists professional trainers, always train athletes, even amateurs, in the best possible way, to achieve the best possible sports results, and above all to avoid serious injuries.

Occupational medicine expert reported to the court that the financial claim should be rejected as completely pointless, that is, that the candidate has no right to compensation of 6500 Euros for the resulting injury.

Regardless of the fact that the candidate is in wrong, this case should encourage the government, that is, the Ministry of Interior, to announce enrolment examinations for the above mentioned professions at least 3 months in advance, so that the candidates can get additional training, and so that such cases do not happen again.

Since this is a matter of selection, the majority of candidates will be rejected, and therefore, the Ministry of Interior cannot bear the costs for a large number of candidates who express an interest in the honorable and respected profession of a police officer. The cost of such additional training should be directed to a sports club or the candidates should pay for it themselves. The mentioned training is not mandatory, but it is highly recommended, even for amateur athletes, so that they achieve what they want, but also not injure themselves.

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