Research on Current Situation and Development Path of Marathon Events in Hubei Province

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Abstract: This paper studies and analyzes the basic situation of the marathon in Hubei Province in recent years by means of literature, field investigation and comparative analysis. It is concluded that: the number, scale and scope of marathon events in Hubei Province are increasing year by year. Inadequacies: low overall cultural literacy of participants, poor quality of the event service, further upgrading for the coverage and project setting, and lack of marketization of the event. Suggestions: improve the cultural literacy of participants in the event; comprehensively improve the service quality of the event; rationally adjust the event items and coverage; deeply explore the level of event development and realize the sustainable development of the marathon in Hubei Province.

Key words: Hubei Province, marathon, status quo, development path.

As the “Lowest Entrance Level” sport, marathon is not only a competitive competition, but also a physical fitness activity for all people. To promote the popularization of competitive sports when the citizens attach importance to healthy living, the development of marathon in China is the result driven by government’s requests, social needs and individual needs, etc. [1]. The Chinese Athletics Association has completely cancelled the approval of marathon events, leading to the national marathon to spring up, based on which, the research on the development status of the marathon in Hubei Province in recent years is aimed at finding a path for the long-term development of the event.

1. Basic Situation of the Development of Marathon Events in Hubei Province

Hubei Province is known as “The Transportation Junction of nine Provinces” and “The Province of Thousand Lakes” with suitable temperature all year round. The basic situation of the marathon events in Hubei Province in recent years is shown in Fig. 1. In general, the number of events in Hubei province, the number of participants, and the cities of events are increasing year by year. The level of events upgrades rapidly, and partial existence of event pause status quo, such as the Jingmen Marathon and the Wufeng Marathon, has been closed [2, 3]. In such cases, how to promote the stable development of the marathon event in Hubei Province has become an urgent problem to be solved.

In terms of the province’s events and geographical distribution in 2016, the province held a total of 8 marathon events. Wuhan and Yichang respectively held 3 and 2 events in the forefront of the province, involving Wuhan, Yichang, Huangshi, Xianning, and Jingmen five cities; on the aspects of scale of the events, the total number of events in the province in the whole year was more than 82,500 participants, among which, Wuhan Marathon and Yichang Marathon had a maximum scale of more than 20,000 people. Huangshi Half Marathon and Xianning Marathon have more than 10,000 participants, respectively, about 15,000 and 10,000 people, and the number of other events is below 10,000; in regard to to events level, the Wuhan Marathon, Yichang Marathon, Huangshi Half Marathon, Wuhan Houguan Lake Marathon, and Yuanan field Marathon, are the annual bronze medal event of the Chinese Athletics Association. Yuanan field
Marathon, Yichang Marathon was even awarded as the natural ecological characteristic event of the year.

In terms of the province’s events and geographical distribution in 2017, the province held a total of 14 marathon events. Wuhan, Yichang respectively added Hanyang Women’s Half Marathon and Wufeng Half Marathon, with 4 and 3 events leading the province while Jingmen Marathon was suspended. Other new events involved 4 cities including Shenlongjia, Jingzhou, Xiangyang and Enshi; on the aspects of the scale of the event, the province’s events have more than 126,000 participants in total. On the basis of last year, the Jingzhou Marathon, Xiangyang Marathon added new events of 10,000 people scale; in regard to the event level, Wuhan Marathon, across “One City, Two Rivers, Three Towns, Four Bridges and Five Lakes” [4], known as “The Most Beautiful Track”, was given cross-level award as the gold medal event of China Association of Athletics and became the first member of the Chinese Marathon Grand Slam. Yuanan field Marathon, Yichang Marathon, Huangshi half Marathon and Wuhan Houguan Lake Marathon have all upgraded to become the silver medal event of China Association of Athletics. Shayang Marathon, Shenlongjia Marathon, Jingzhou Marathon, Xiangyang Marathon, Xianning Marathon were awarded as the bronze medal event of the China Association of Athletics and Shenlongjia Marathon was named the most beautiful track event of the year. Yichang Marathon and Huangshi Half Marathon were named the natural ecological characteristic event of the year.

In terms of the province’s events and geographical distribution in 2018, the province held a total of 22 marathon events. Wuhan added 4 new events, ranking first in the province with total 8 events in the year. The Wufeng Marathon and the Jingmen Marathon were suspended. On the basis of last year, other new events involved four fields in Huanggang, Qianjiang, Tianmen and Ezhou; on the aspects of the scale of the events, the newly added 10,000-person events are the Wuhan Houguan Lake half Marathon, Qianjiang Marathon, Ezhou Marathon and Huanggang Half Marathon. The scale of the Wuhan Marathon, Jingzhou Marathon and Xiangyang Marathon have also increased significantly; in regard to the event level, Wuhan Marathon, after cross-level award as the gold...
medal event of China Association of Athletics, realized two consecutive jumps, to become the IAAF bronze event and one of the fastest upgrading marathon events in China. Yichang Marathon, after the award of the silver medal event, has also become one of the sites of national championship series and “I Want to Join the Olympic” series. The rest of the rating events did not change.

2. Inadequacies of Marathon Events in Hubei Province

2.1 Low Overall Cultural Literacy of the Spectators and Participants

In recent years, the marathon in Hubei Province has shown some issues, such as participants littering, wasting supplies, disrespecting referees and volunteers defecating everywhere, running replacing others, and disobeying the rules, etc.; spectators not complying with traffic control during the event, blocking the track, interfering with volunteers and referees, and grabbing supplies; relevant departments of the events such as: medical care and security, leave their posts and watch the event, without special circumstances or any permission, fail to stick to their posts, etc., which have seriously affected the overall image of the event, in the era with self-media highly developed. These issues, on a shallow level, reflect that the cultural literacy of the spectators and participants is not high, and they have not considered the adverse effects of their own actions on the event; on a deep level, they reflect the lack of cultural precipitation and the deficiency in awareness and connotation of marathon events in the province. The events lacking of cultural precipitation may be extremely popular with the support of local governments in a short period of time, but it will eventually be abandoned by the trend of the times and the participants. The reason is: it has been a short time from the establishment of the marathon in Hubei Province, and in early times the participants and spectators of the events are still in a stage of low recognition about the production of new things, while the short-term development of the event cannot solve the event-related issues that require long-term cultural precipitation.

2.2 Poor Quality of the Event Service

The event service includes three stages: before-event, during-event and after-event service. Before the event: the official website is the way for participants to obtain information on the event. By searching the official website of the event, it can be found that the construction of some marathon official websites in Hubei Province needs to be improved. For example, the registrations before the event, and the results checking after the event of Xianning Marathon and Yuanan Field Marathon are completed by means of Apps like “Love Burning” and “I Wanna Participate”, etc., which do not involve much information about the venue of the event and the event itself, while Wuhan Marathon has a good publicity for the whole event and it is worth referring. During the event: the service of the supply station, access package, toilet, medical care, and security directly affected the subjective feelings of the participants. There were also different levels of access package confusion, supplies and toilet problems in Hubei Province. After the event: relaxation, marathon finish package, transportation (ferry), evacuation, and event fairs, etc. also have an important impact on the participants, such as: in 2018, Jingzhou Marathon Half-Way Marathon ended in low ferry efficiency due to urban construction and not smooth evacuation. The reason why the quality of the event service in Hubei Province is not high: some events have not established official websites of the events and lack for long-term view of development of the events; the design of some tracks is not backward-looking enough; the professional competence and proficiency of the event staff need to be improved.

2.3 Further Upgrading for the Coverage and Project Setting of the Events

There are 17 jurisdictions in Hubei Province. By the
end of 2018, there were still no marathon events in the 4 cities including Shiyan, Xiantao, Suizhou and Xiaogan. Shiyan, China’s automobile city, city of the Taoist tourist sanctuary, Suizhou, the hometown of Yan emperor shennong and chime bells classical music, Xiantao, the hometown of Asian gymnastics, city of Jingchu non-legacy culture, and Xiaogan, the hometown of Chinese filial piety culture, all have unique cultural heritage and humanistic foundation [5]. With the continuous development and promotion of the “National Fitness Program”, local residents are also eager to have marathon events in their own hometowns to meet their own needs, spread local history and culture, and enhance city popularity and influence. At the same time, Wuhan Marathon should follow the example of Beijing Marathon to cancel some short-distance projects year by year, and only set up the full marathon project in the end, to enhance the influence of the event; cities already held events including Huangshi, Shayang, Huanggang, Tianmen and Ezhou currently do not have full marathon projects. The above cities are able to expand the overall influence of the marathon in Hubei Province by adding full marathon project according to local conditions, under the premise of complying with the conditions of the city.

2.4 Lack of Marketization of the Events

In 2014, the State Council clearly stipulated the abolition of the examination and approval of commercial and mass sports events, actively introduced social capital, and hosted events through the market system. The market-oriented operation of marathon events ushered in a new era [6]. However, the market operation level of the marathon in Hubei Province is not high enough. Basically, all the events have government subsidies, and the development capability and level of the event itself are limited. The reasons may be as follows: some marathon events are mainly carried out by the government to promote the city’s popularity to attract investment, supplemented by profit. The funds for the event come from the government, and the participation of business operation is not enough; Some of the event operators are still immature, and the business operation mode of the event is still in the exploratory stage; the nature of the event sponsorship development channel is not purely market-oriented, and there are administrative features and the sponsorship funds of the event sponsors cannot cover the total expenditure of the event; The main channels of event income still remain in the registration fee and sponsorship fee. The extent to develop products by the event itself is not enough. In 2018, Jingzhou Marathon and other events have developed marketing channels for souvenirs related to the event, but the research results have not yet formed a complete commercial chain.

3. Development Path of Marathon Events in Hubei Province

3.1 Improve the Cultural Literacy of the Participants

A well-organized, civilized and harmonious marathon requires all participants in the event to improve their cultural literacy. First of all, the organizers of the event establish a civilized competition system, the electronic file of civilized participation commitment book and the registration are completed simultaneously, and the penalties for violating the rules and regulations of the event are formulated to constrain the behavior of the participants. Secondly, the cultural propaganda departments in the city of the event actively use the propaganda role of public opinion, encourage citizens to watch the event with civilization, and formulate a system to conduct community notification and criticism for behavior violating civilized spectating. Thirdly, the organization and management departments of the events should establish supervision and management institutions of various departments and the reward and punishment system for the staff of various departments of the event. Finally, the improvement of cultural literacy mainly depends on the participants’ awareness of the event and
the improvement of their comprehensive quality. To strengthen the construction of spiritual civilization is an important way to improve cultural accomplishment.

3.2 Comprehensively Improve the Quality of Event Service

The marathon service includes three aspects: before-event, during-event and after-event [7]. The before-event service includes registration staggering the peak period, receiving marathon packages, security, medical care, routes, etc. Depending on the stability and timely update of the official website, it is a prerequisite for improving the quality of service. Therefore, the primary task to improve the quality of the service in the province is to fully establish the official websites of the provincial marathon series, timely inform the participants of events information and promote the characteristics of the event. The during-event service includes the starting point and terminal order, access efficiency, replenishment, medical assistance, security level, toilet, and accommodation arrangements, etc. Therefore, the clear separation of labor and mutual complementation by the organizing committee, competition team and other departments is the key to improving the quality of service during the event; the after-event service includes marathon finish package, transportation, performance inquiry, urban cultural propaganda, food tasting, etc. Therefore, the humanized service provided by the organizer is a supplement to improve the quality of after-event services. Only by doing the service work well in each of the three parts: before-event, during-event and after-event, can the overall service quality of the province’s marathon be fully improved [8].

3.3 Rationally Adjust the Event Items and Coverage

The development of anything has its universality. In recent years, the coverage of marathon in Hubei Province has developed from 5 cities to 13 cities, indicating the universality of the marathon event development. Whether to improve the level of competitive sports or enrich the mass sports life, the 17 jurisdictions in Hubei Province have organized the marathon events. The development of anything has its own particularity. In terms of the scale of the event and the setting of the items, it should fully examine whether the comprehensive conditions of the host city, such as terrain, hardware, and software, etc. match with the scale of the event and the event items. At the same time, while the assessment of event projects is being carried out, we should fully consider the capacity of the city’s event scale, such as hotel accommodation, catering, and transportation, etc. Therefore, we should make a concrete analysis of the specific issues, adapting to local conditions and carry out the marathon event step by step. Only in this way can we promote the sustainable development of the marathon events in Hubei Province.

3.4 Deeply Explore the Level of Events Development

A good market-oriented operation level is one of the conditions for ensuring the long-term development of the events. Combined with the current development status of the marathon events in Hubei Province, it is necessary to deeply explore the financial source of the events [9]. For example, to transform government functions, from directly participating in the operation of the event to providing comprehensive services for the event, one can achieve a transition from a tangible hand to an intangible participation, introducing sponsorship and qualified event operators; The event operators set up special marathon science training and competition departments to provide professional guidance and help to marathon runners; to conduct corresponding market research according to the needs of runners, and excavate resources of the events from sports equipment, fashion design, audio-visual equipment, and personal image design, etc.; at the same time, optimize the qualifications of the event development and operation teams, and coordinate various resources while allowing the participants of
relevant interests to fully appreciate the rewards given by the events.

References


