

PHYSICAL FITNESS BADGES AND THEIR IMPORTANCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD IN POLAND (1919-1939)

Leonard NOWAK

Eugeniusz Piasecki University School of Physical Education

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Abstract:

The first propagators of the Physical Fitness Badge in Poland were Walerian Sikorski and Eugeniusz Piasecki. Sikorski gave the first lecture on a sports badge at a meeting of the Supreme Council of Physical Education and Military Preparation as early as in 1925. And Piasecki made efforts to win the Union of Polish Sports Associations for the idea.

The state nature of the badge, its role and educational importance allowed for it to be accepted and incorporated into the system of those state education tools in school which prepare young people physically and spiritually for citizen and military service.

The newly created badge resulted in an increased interest in sport, and school youth willingly engaged in the acquisition of the norms. One of the things that confirmed the correctness of the choice was an increasing number of obtained State Sports Badges (SSBs) in schools in 1932 and 1933.

However, in the following years the number of obtained SSBs in schools in Poland showed a falling tendency. This situation stemmed from a new unfavorable ruling from the State Office for Physical Education and Military Preparation (SOPEMP), that the SSB could only be applied for by candidates who showed previous fitness preparation.

Until 1939 the SSB was a significant supplement to the program of Physical Education in schools, and offered chances of maintaining physical fitness for a longer period of life.

INTRODUCTION

A low level of physical education and sport in Polish schools forced the educational authorities toward intensive efforts to stimulate their development as early as at the beginning of the interwar period. An opportunity to improve physical fitness and keep it at a high level for a longer period of life was created by young people's interest in sport despite their poor physical development. And the motivation to improve physical fitness was to be the introduction of a sports badge. It was assumed that [...] *every healthy person who will exercise, can obtain the diploma together with the physical fitness badge as early as from the age of 16¹*. In this situation, the badge would have a social value. According to the guidelines of the State Office for Physical Education and Military Preparation (SOPEMP) such a state should be achieved that every man drafted into military service would be a holder of the State Sports

¹ J. Baran: *Myśl przewodnia Państwowej Odznaki Sportowej*. „Wychowanie Fizyczne”, 1930, z. 3, s. 98-99.

Badge (SSB). *The number of badges obtained was supposed to be a future measure of physical efficiency and the level of physical development of society [...], and, consequently, as it was assumed, [...] physical efficiency is also a sign of health; all in all, this is a realistic basis for military preparation of the nation*².

The first propagators of the SSB in Poland were Walerian Sikorski and Eugeniusz Piasecki. Sikorski gave the first lecture on a sports badge prepared along the lines of the Swedish *Idrottsmärke* at a meeting of the Supreme Council of Physical Education and Military Preparation as early as in 1925, and Piasecki made efforts to win the Union of Polish Sports Associations for the idea.

The Lviv and Poznan School District Boards took action in order to introduce the sports badge. In 1926, the badge of the Lviv Regional Athletics Association and the physical fitness badge of the Union of Polish Youth were created. The Polish Athletic Union already had its own badge, but it had inappropriate regulations containing numerous errors, especially in the selection of exercise for young people. Therefore, the Union of Polish Sports Associations (hereinafter referred to as UPSA) appointed a committee in order to develop a uniform project for all units in the country.

At the inaugural meeting of the Scientific Council of Physical Education - SCPE (February 15, 1927), the director of the SOPEMP lieutenant colonel Juliusz Ulrych, reporting the work program of the Government of the Republic of Poland in the field of Physical Education and the tasks of the SCPE, presented a project of the physical education badge to the Scientific Council³.

At the second meeting of the SCPE in 1928, lieutenant colonel assistant professor Ph.D. Władysław Dybowski, taking up the issue of the sports badge, said that drawing on the Norwegian or any other project was not realistic. The results of anthropometric surveys conducted in Lviv, Plock and Poznan, had confirmed poor health of Polish youth, for whom different norms ought to be established.

In the absence of unanimity concerning the proposals submitted by the various sports associations interested in the introduction of the sports badge, new regulations were proposed by a member of the Committee for the Measurement of Physical Education Progress at the SCPE, Władysław Dybowski, assuming a division of physical exercise into six groups and [...] *age categories in accordance with what was indicated in the fitness card, common to all sports*⁴. After almost two years of work of the Committee the project received general acceptance of sports associations and the management board of the UPSA. It was then submitted to the SOPEMP, which put it forward to the SCPE and the Medical Board operating at the SCPE. Changes introduced by the Medical Board were comprehensively analyzed and also took into account women's postulates raised by female members of the Scientific Council.

The question of the name of the badge caused a lively discussion. The Medical Board proposed the formula: *Regulations for the State Badge of Sports - Physical Fitness*⁵. During the preparatory work the above issue was hotly debated between Stanisław Ciechanowski and Władysław Dybowski, representing the UPSA. Finally, the SSB was treated as a badge of physical fitness and sports. This concept was supported both by the Minister of Religious Denominations and Public Education (MRDPE) Sławomir Czerwiński and by Zygmunt Wyrobek. Dybowski, on the other hand, concluded at the end of the discussion that [...] *if we*

² Ibid.

³ Centralne Archiwum Państwowe (CAW), nr I-300.69, t. 172; Pierwsze posiedzenie Rady Naukowej Wychowania Fizycznego (15 II 1927 r.). Referat dyrektora PUWFiPW – J. Ulrycha na temat: programu prac Rządu RP w zakresie wychowania fizycznego oraz zadań Rady Naukowej Wychowania Fizycznego.

⁴ Ibid., Drugie posiedzenie Rady Naukowej Wychowania Fizycznego (16 IV 1928 r.), s. 33.

⁵ Ibid.

abandon the name of the State Badge of Sports and Physical Fitness, then we voluntarily lose half of the interest that this badge might awake among young people. The depths that the Union of Polish Sports Associations can penetrate are very often unreachable for an organization of physical education and military preparation⁶. As a result of multifarious discussions an amendment was adopted in the SCPE vote and the name was established to be the State Badge of Sports and Physical Fitness.

Piasecki, who was one of the initiators of the badge, felt that both the badge itself and the regulations that had been developed contained many ambiguities.

In the course of the debate some concerns emerged as well about possible negative effects of the introduction of the badge into the school grounds. In this situation, E. Piasecki supported the idea of the SSB functioning in school, quoting positive examples of its existence in other countries: [...] *I should think that we do not need to fear that the introduction of this item into the school grounds might bring other results than improving our youth's sports emulation and giving it a far better shape than it has had so far, in the school championships, etc.*⁷. As a result, the Scientific Council approved the regulations for the SSB and instructed the Medical Board to prepare fitness tables.

In 1929, the first term of the Scientific Council expired; by the order of the Minister of Military Affairs of July 27, 1929 a new composition of the SCPE was established for the next two years.

At the request of the SCPE and in accordance with § 5 and 6 of the regulation of the Council of Ministers of June 27, 1930, the State Sports Badge⁸ was established as a special incentive and measure leading to dissemination of physical education and sport. The conditions required for obtaining the badge were determined by the regulation of the Minister of Military Affairs of December 15, 1930, issued in consultation with the Ministers of Internal Affairs and the Minister of Religious Denominations and Public Education, as well as by the regulations for the SSB announced on December 22, 1930 by the director of the SOPEMP⁹.

The state nature of the badge, its role and educational importance allowed for it to be accepted and incorporated into the system of those state education tools in school which prepare young people physically and spiritually for citizen and military service. In the system of physical education tools in school, it was predicted that the SSB should play one of the major roles as a test of vigor and comprehensive physical efficiency of the youth. The badge was available to all male students from the age of 14, and female students from the age of 16, after reaching the average level of physical fitness.

According to § 8 of the Regulations for the SSB, the superintendent of a school district was obliged to appoint a board supervising the course of obtaining the badge¹⁰. It was to be composed of the school principal or his deputy (the chairperson of the board organizing the test), a school doctor and a corporeal exercise teacher (as the manager of the test¹¹).

The SSB was divided into three classes: bronze, silver and gold. Each class had four degrees. A badge of each class and each degree was awarded for a period of two years. During the period of validity of a badge one could apply for only one next degree of the badge. Under the Regulations for the SSB one could not apply for and obtain several consecutive

⁶ Ibid., s. 36.

⁷ Ibid., s. 35.

⁸ CAW, nr I-300.28, t. 93; Dz.Urz. RP „Monitor Polski”, 1930 Nr 169, poz. 255, tamże, z dnia 14 marca 1932 r. Nr 134, poz. 165. (Rozporządzenie Ministra Spraw Wojskowych z dnia 18 kwietnia 1932 r. o Państwowej Odznace Sportowej); L. Szymański: *Kultura fizyczna w polityce II Rzeczypospolitej*. Studia i Monografie AWF we Wrocławiu, z. 47, Wrocław 1995, s. 125.

⁹ Biblioteka AWF-W-wa (B. AWF), nr I 14137. Regulamin Państwowej Odznaki Sportowej. Warszawa 1932, s. 1-20; Dz.Urz. MWRiOP, 1931 nr 4-5, poz. 50, s. 177.

¹⁰ B. AWF, nr I 14137. Regulamin Państwowej Odznaki Sportowej ..., s. 6.

¹¹ Dz.Urz. MWRiOP, 1931 nr 4-5, poz. 50, s. 177.

degrees during a single validity period. Also, those who obtained the badge for the first time were not to be allowed to have another test to obtain the next degree in the first year of validity of the badge.

An SSB test consisted of six basic groups of physical exercises, from each of which the candidate had to choose one exercise. The selection of exercises for the groups was as follows:

Group I – gymnastics, swimming;

Group II – high jump, long jump, pole vault;

Group III – skating, swimming;

Group IV – throws (discus, javelin, grenade) and shot put, fencing;

Group V – marches, runs, tours (hiking, cycling, skiing, horseback riding, water), sports games;

Group VI – archery, shooting (small-bore, short, military firearms), sports games¹².

Schools were given instructions on how to carry out SSB tests and what the role of the corporeal exercise teacher should be during such tests. Teachers and school principals were required to submit annual reports on carrying out the tests.

In Walerian Sikorski's opinion, the SSB was promoted very diligently in schools, where the principle was believed that every sixth grader should hold such a badge¹³. In one of his articles Sikorski stressed the importance of the SSB in the evolution of inter-school competitions, the organization of which helped to improve physical fitness and health, pointing out that:

1. *Physical education should, first and foremost, create better conditions for mental work;*
2. *Acquisition of skills should correspond, both as far as kind and degree are concerned, to the state of health and the needs of life in its various manifestations. In any case the training itself, the skill obtained or competitions ought not to interfere with mental work¹⁴.*

The SSB conditions were in complete accord with the above assumptions. The minima to be freely chosen from six different groups were adjusted to age categories and took into account the life needs of the young generation.

Marian Krawczyk, a well-known pedagogue, also spoke positively about the virtues of the SSB, stating in one of his articles that [...] *Most of all it should be desired that schools' whole athletic effort be focused on the SSB, so that sporting preparations harmonize completely with the preparatory work for the Badge contests, and the struggle to obtain it satisfies all competitive aspirations of our youth. For that to be so, the SSB must become suitably popular, and yet honorable¹⁵.*

In the circular of the MRDPE of March 17, 1931 the necessity of 100%, if possible, implementation of the SSB was emphasized, and, following the example of the Poznan School District, it was planned to set up a committee whose task would be to award an annual prize "The White Ribbon of the School District Superintendent" passed on after each school year. The prize could be won by the school which was able to demonstrate the highest percentage of students in grades 5, 6, 7 and 8 who had obtained the badge.

The directors of all schools were required to report on the SSB tests on or before December 15 of each year¹⁶. These requirements imposed additional responsibilities in physical education and military preparation on school managers, principals and inspectors,

¹² „Wychowanie Fizyczne”, 1931, z. 3, s. 113-114.

¹³ W. Sikorski: *Młodzież szkolna a kluby sportowe*. „Wychowanie Fizyczne”, 1931, z. 5, s. 213.

¹⁴ W. Sikorski: *POS a zawody międzyszkolne*. „Wychowanie Fizyczne”, 1931, z. 4, s. 165.

¹⁵ M. Krawczyk: *Znaczenie sportu dla wychowania fizycznego w szkole*. „Wychowanie Fizyczne”, 1931, z. 6, s. 257-258.

¹⁶ Biblioteka Związku Nauczycielstwa Polskiego (B. ZNP), nr 41, Dz.Urz. KOSP, 1933, § 10, s. 239-240.

and forced them to take an interest in the number of obtained SSBs. And Physical Education teachers were required to make sure that each student from grade 6 had the SSB¹⁷.

Students were rather skeptical of the SSB's requirements, complaining about too high norms, a large number of participants, the tests being time-consuming and an excessive daily workload. Also, the attitude of Physical Education teachers toward those contests was not always enthusiastic. According to people involved in the competitions, talks about the advisability of obtaining the SSBs should be organized for younger students¹⁸.

In the first year of the existence of the badge, students who wished to fulfill the norms of the six basic groups of physical exercises most often chose long jump, 60-meter run and 800-meter (girls) or 3,000-meter run (boys). Furthermore, shot put was the most popular choice from Group 6 (both with girls and boys), as well as discus throw (preferred by boys). High jump, 100-meter dash and javelin, however, enjoyed little interest.

The decisive factor in achieving the SSB norms was physical preparation of the candidate and their knowledge of the technique needed in the events or sports disciplines which they had chosen. In order to properly prepare the youth, it was postulated that in each school before the beginning of the season the students should be divided into appropriate groups, depending on which exercises from the six SSB groups they choose.

Despite some organizational shortcomings and generally poor fitness preparation of the school youth, students already began to fulfill the norms for the sports badge in the first year, and the total of 7,999 obtained SSBs held promise for further progress.

The introduction of the sports badge resulted in an increased interest in sport, and school youth willingly engaged in the fulfillment of the norms. In the opinion of the organizers, this interest depended to a large extent on the involvement of physical education teachers. Some teachers were convinced that the idea of obtaining the SSB was going to contribute to the dissemination of physical education, especially in elementary schools, which lacked professional staff and experienced great negligence. But at the same time a lot of physical education teachers felt that the sports badge would not solve all the problems related to physical fitness and health among the youth of elementary schools.

As regards the problem of competition in school youth's sport exercise, which was first presented in March 1933 at a meeting of the Committee of Physical Education of Children and Youth at the MRDPE, it was agreed that the most important thing was the care and promotion of entertainment sport in school, mostly in the form of physical activity fun and games. One of the tools was to be the widespread promotion of the SSB.

The vice-chairman of the Scientific Council of Physical Education (the director of the Health Department in the Ministry of Military Affairs) General Stanislaw Rouppert appointed a special committee for the development of a sports badge for the youngest, becoming its chairperson himself. The committee was composed of S. Ciechanowski, W. Dybowski, K. Muszałówna, H. Olszewska, E. Piasecki, W. Sikorski, Z. Wyrobek, as well as some representatives of the SOPEMP and the MRDPE.

On behalf of the SOPEMP M. Miłobędzka presented the main framework of the badge project. Maria Uklejska and Walerian Sikorski expressed their views regarding the project. The latter also presented a proposal for a set of exercises and raised the following suggestions:

1. *The Physical Fitness Badge (PFB) could be awarded from 9 years of age at the earliest, but it would be with greater educational benefit if it was awarded after a child turns 12;*
2. *It should be called the Physical Fitness Badge;*
3. *The school manager or principal should have the right to award the PFB;*

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ L. Górski: *O powagę POS-u na terenie gimnazjum*. „Wychowanie Fizyczne w Szkole”, 1933/34 nr 8, s. 207-211.

4. In awarding the badge, the same age categories for girls and boys should be observed, but with different minima for the exercises¹⁹.

M. Uklejska, advocating the introduction of badges for children from age 9, put forward the following proposals:

- a) *Base the requirements for obtaining the badge on existing knowledge of children's physical and mental development,*
- b) *Be aware of the educational goals, in accordance with general education, and choose such requirements which will lead to the achievement of these goals,*
- c) *Achieve the social virtues of physical education,*
- d) *Consider the abilities of the widest possible range of children: urban and rural, proletarian and wealthy (intellectual), strong and weak²⁰.*

As a result of an extensive discussion a sub-committee was selected, composed of S. Ciechanowski, K. Muszałówna, H. Olszewska, E. Piasecki and W. Sikorski, who were instructed to redraft the badge project.

After holding several meetings and introducing multiple amendments to the regulations and the set of exercises for the badge, Sikorski was made responsible for final editorial changes. The committee proposed that the School Physical Fitness Badge should be available for children only after they are 12 years old, and that it should be a single badge obtained only once.

On December 12, 1933 at the Scientific Council of Physical Education in Warsaw the committees for the measurement of physical education of the SCPE and for the School Physical Fitness Badge held their meetings. During the deliberations of the latter committee the badge project was presented by inspector Walerian Sikorski, relationships between sport and education were discussed by Zygmunt Gilewicz, and a project of the regulations for school youth's sport competition were presented by inspector Zygmunt Wyrobek²¹.

The project of the School Physical Fitness Badge prepared by W. Sikorski and W. Dybowski consisted of six points:

- I. *The School Physical Fitness Badge can be obtained by any physically healthy elementary school student after turning 12 years old.*
- II. *The School Physical Fitness Badge is a reward for gaining average but comprehensive physical fitness corresponding to the age of the student. At the same time it is a preparation for the State Sports Badge.*
- III. *The School Physical Fitness Badge is awarded by the School Inspector at the request of the School Principal.*
- IV. *The School Physical Fitness Badge test is conducted by one of the teachers at a given school in the presence of the Principal.*
- V. *The test consists of exercises from the following groups:*
 - 1) *swimming (using any stroke, swimming 15 m for girls and 20 m for boys), or correct performance of gymnastic exercises designed for the seventh grade of elementary school, or ability to ski in gently undulating terrain,*
 - 2) *running high jump to the height of 80 cm for boys and 75 cm for girls, or long jump: 230 cm for boys and 180 cm for girls; left and right foot take-off is valid,*
 - 3) *50-meter run in 10 secs for boys and 12 secs for girls,*

¹⁹ B. AWF, nr II 17345, s. 49-50; Protokół Plenarnego Posiedzenia Rady Naukowej Wychowania Fizycznego w Warszawie w dniu 12 grudnia 1936 r.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ CAW, nr I-300.69, t. 172; Pismo wiceprzewodniczącego Rady Naukowej Wychowania Fizycznego S. Roupperta do dyrektora PUWFIPW.

- 4) *hitting a ball with a palant bat so that it covers a distance of at least 25 m (at least 3 good hits out of 5); the bat: flat for girls, round for boys; or accurate pitches from a distance of 15 m; at least 3 accurate pitches out of 5 at a living target (a student, standing at attention with their back turned on the pitcher),*
- 5) *the ability to send and read three words consisting of 3-4 sounds, using the Morse code signals; acoustic and optical signaling,*
- 6) *the ability to make a regular palant ball from scraps of cloth.*

VI. *The Badge bears a brown eagle in a semicircle of laurel leaves, with letters: SPFB. The right to wear it is obtained by those who receive a certification of passing the tests in accordance with the regulations²².*

Following a motion proposed by Helena Olszewska the SPFB committee suggested that the badge should be tried in the field prior to its introduction.

The SSB, in the opinion of the state authorities, ought to occupy an important position in the system of physical education and serve as a test of vigor and comprehensive physical efficiency of the youth. One of the things that confirmed the correctness of this assumption was an increase in the number of obtained SSBs (see Tab. 1).

In the opinion of the Regional Committees of Physical Education and Military Preparation, schools did not do everything in their capacity as far as the SSB propaganda is concerned. Although the number of SSBs obtained by the school youth in 1933 was higher by 6,875 compared with 1932, a 19% increase in SSBs in the third year of their existence was still too low in comparison with the total number of youth at school age²³.

At vacation physical education courses there was usually no time for preparation and achieving or even renewing the SSB norms. The overloaded program prevented course participants from taking part in SSB exercises²⁴.

Table 1. List of SSBs obtained in schools between 1931 and 1933 (by province)

Lp.	Province	Number of SSBs in schools		
		1931	1932	1933
1.	Białostockie	888	1339	1516
2.	Kieleckie	426	2765	3633
3.	Krakowskie	251	2659	3700
4.	Lubelskie	355	1712	1580
5.	Lwowskie (Lviv)	1210	2971	3641
6.	Łódzkie	282	2528	3317
7.	Nowogrodzkie	243	751	800
8.	Poleskie	297	768	799
9.	Pomorskie	554	2633	2865
10.	Poznańskie	1599	6248	6239
11.	Stanisławowskie	49	1270	1120
12.	Śląskie	350	1360	2911
13.	Tarnopolskie	240	841	814
14.	Warszawa (city)	448	2576	3163
15.	Warszawskie	472	2620	4756
16.	Wileńskie	145	1966	634
17.	Wołyńskie	190	619	1033
Total		7999	35646	42521

²² Tamże, Projekt Szkolnej Odznaki Sprawności Fizycznej (SOSF) dla dzieci po 12. roku życia.

²³ CAW, nr I-300.69, t. 141. Ogólny wykaz porównawczy zdobytych POS w województwach w latach 1931, 1932 i 1933.

²⁴ Organizacja wakacyjnych kursów wychowania fizycznego. „Wychowanie Fizyczne w Szkole”, 1934/35 nr 8, s. 230, 233.

Source: CAW, Departament Piechoty, No. I-300.28, t. 93; tamże, No. I-300.69, t. 141, p. 4: Ogólny wykaz SSB uzyskanych w latach 1931-1933.

Looking at the example of the summer physical education course in Wymyślin, attended by a number of Physical Education teachers from all over Poland, it can be concluded that the majority of participants, despite the fact that their physical fitness increased during the course, would not have been able to take the test to achieve the SSB norms if it had not been for a few days' training to master the gymnastic pattern. This would confirm earlier observations about teachers' reluctant attitude toward students' achieving or confirming the badge norms.

To facilitate the work of Physical Education teachers in the operation to disseminate the SSB, it was suggested in the press that part of their duties should be entrusted to school youth, who would do them willingly, preparing themselves at the same time for future social work.

On the basis of individually filled in score sheets a group of selected students could prepare test protocols and draw up SSB certificates. The teachers would be left with checking the accuracy of the work done by the students and submitting the documentation to the Regional Committees of Physical Education and Military Preparation. A design of an SSB fitness test score sheet and an individual test card were published in the "Physical Education in School" journal²⁵.

With respect to carrying out SSB tests, school physicians included in the boards were responsible for admission of students to the test. During the preparatory period the doctors were obliged to examine the youth before they took the fitness tests. Conducting training (preparatory exercise) with young people without a doctor's permission was prohibited²⁶, and admitting them to the tests entailed liability to a lawsuit²⁷.

In 1935 the SOPEMP prepared a report on the SSB tests. It showed that the SSB propaganda in schools had not been sufficient, the requirement of medical examination had been disregarded, and candidates under the age described in the regulations had been admitted to the tests.

In this situation, on the basis of the letter of the MRDPE of October 3, 1934, it was ordered: *School inspectors and directors shall take, using corporeal exercise teachers, intensified action to raise school youth's awareness of the importance of the SSB for health and corporeal fitness both of individuals and the whole society, and especially of national importance of the badge being widespread, and they shall encourage young people to obtain it, giving information about the conditions required from candidates who want to take the SSB test*²⁸.

The Warsaw School District Board requested school inspectors and directors to take special care of the youth who participate in the SSB tests, and, in particular, instructed them to comply with the following guidelines:

- a) *Candidates for the tests and preparatory exercises should, with no exceptions, first undergo medical examinations; each candidate must submit a medical certificate confirming their good health; failure to do so may result in liability to a lawsuit for the Chairperson of the Board, or the tests organizers;*
- b) *Individuals under the appropriate age (in accordance with the SSB regulations) may not participate in the test;*

²⁵ S. Tur: *O powagę POS*. „Wychowanie Fizyczne w Szkole”, 1934/35 nr 2, s. 55.

²⁶ Dz.Urz. KOSLw., 1934 nr 8, poz. 11, s. 463.

²⁷ CAW, nr I-300.69, t. 141, s. 4.

²⁸ B. ZNP, nr 41, Dz.Urz. KOSW, 1935 nr 1, poz. 9, s. 8; Państwowa Odznaka Sportowa, okólnik MWRiOP z dnia 10 I 1935 r. (Nr 0. 26208/34) do inspektorów szkolnych oraz dyrekcji szkół średnich ogólnokształcących, zawodowych i zakładów kształcenia nauczycieli.

- c) *Young people holding SSB cards still valid for one year, may not participate in the test again;*
- d) *It should be ensured that only young people who have undergone appropriate training enroll for the tests;*
- e) *Please be acquainted with the content of the circular of the MRDPE of May 29, 1934 No. I.WF 2043/34 on accident prevention among school youth during corporeal exercise (Dz.Urz.KOS Warszawskiego, 1934 nr 7, poz. 111)²⁹.*

The number of obtained SSBs in schools in Poland in the last years amounted to: 41,842 in 1934 and was lower by 679 in comparison with the previous year, 33,955 in 1935 and was lower by as many as 7,887 badges.

The declining number of badges obtained by the youth compared with previous years was caused by the SOPEMP regulation stating that [...] *the SSB may only be applied for by candidates who show previous fitness training*³⁰ (appropriate preparation).

Until 1939 the SSB was a significant supplement to the program of Physical Education in schools in Poland. Its continuation and popularization was to prevent one-sidedness in physical education and school sport, and the primary objective was to raise the level of fitness of the broadest masses of society. Obtaining the consecutive classes and degrees, awarded for two-year periods, offered chances of maintaining physical fitness for a longer period of life.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ B. AWF, nr II 17345, s. 87; Protokół Plenarnego Posiedzenia Rady Naukowej Wychowania Fizycznego w Warszawie w dniu 12 grudnia 1936 r.