

TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL EVOLUTION OF VOLLEYBALL IN POLAND BEFORE 1952

Stanisław ZABORNIAK^{1ABEFG}, Wojciech BAJOREK^{1ABEFG}, Paweł KRÓL^{1ABEFG},
Marian RZEPKO^{1ABEFG}

1. Faculty of Physical Education University of Rzeszów

Keywords:

- history of volleyball,
- technical evolution,
- tactical evolution,
- regulations

Abstract:

In 1949, the FIVB's technical committee introduced a series of changes into the rules of the game of volleyball. The changes obliged PZS's (Polish Volleyball Association) division to implement changes in Polish volleyball competitions .

Technical and tactical evolution of volleyball in Poland before 1952 was developing based on the patterns of solutions which were used by winning teams of the USSR and CSR e.g. during European Championships and meetings between countries. Polish coaches obtained theoretical assumptions in the form of articles in the press.

INTRODUCTION

The first years after the World War II some innovative tactical solutions started to be used in the tactic of the game of volleyball. One example was the description of the procedure for the defence used by the best European male volleyball teams those days, i.e. the Soviet Union (USSR) and Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (CSR) in 1949, published in the No. 2 of the weekly "Sportowiec" ("The Athlete")¹.

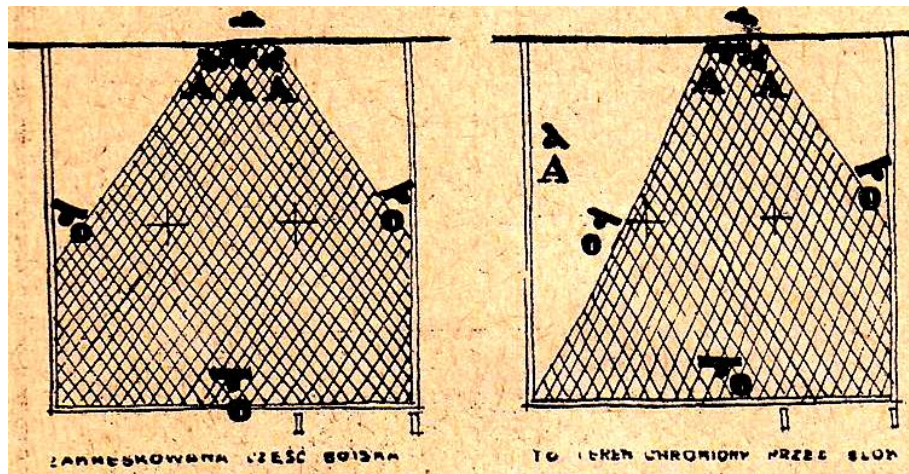
The tactical solutions used by European leaders in volleyball and published in the press were transferred and adopted in training of many Polish volleyball teams.



¹ „Sportowiec”, 1949 No. 2, p. 10.

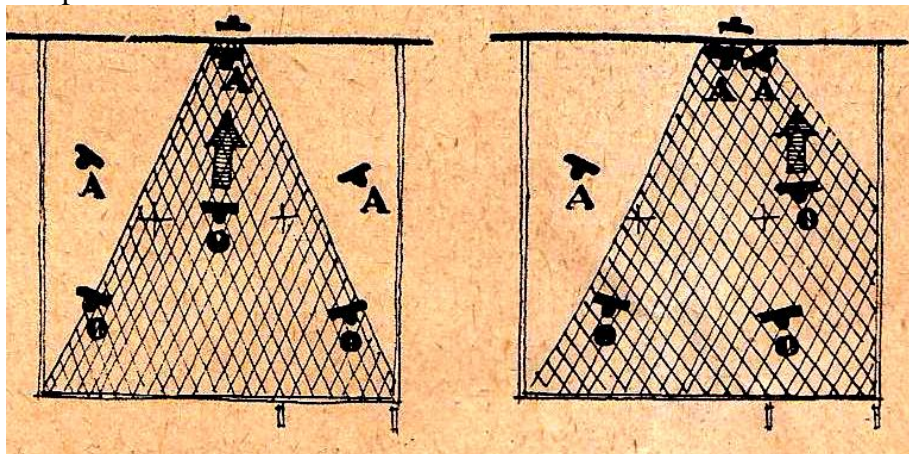
A volleyball game on the local court, "Sportowiec", 1949 No. 2 p. 10.

Volleyball players considered blocks with two or three players, termed multiblocks, as the most effective. They assumed that the block could be avoided with an effective spike or a dink.



Block defence formation of volleyball players from the CSR (the shaded area represents covering with the block): A - attacker, O - defender, "Sportowiec", 1949, No. 2 p. 10.

Their formation during a block with three players is illustrated in Fig. 1 and, with two players, in Fig. 2. With this layout, wingers of the team took positions near the side lines, near the middle of the court. Therefore, they protected the areas not covered by blockers and were ready to bounce the ball that could get through the hands of the blockers or the ball oriented to the attack area (front half of the court). The task of the middle defender, positioned in the middle of the transverse line in the back part of the court was always to bounce the ball oriented even on back corners of the court, which allowed for slower flight of the ball. With double block, an attack winger moves to the position with respect to their defense winger so that the most exposed area of the court is covered.



Block defense formation of volleyball players from the USSR (the shaded area represents covering with the block): A - attacker, O - defender, "Sportowiec", 1949, No. 2 p. 10.

Slightly different defense was used by the players from USSR, who avoided a double block since they argued that engagement of up to three players for this block reduces the number of players who defend their own court. They used block with one player or engaged two players (Fig. 4 and 5), terming this procedure as *clean defense*. Similar solution in the defense was used by Polish players. Single block or double block was explained by coaches through opportunities for increasing the opportunities for defending the balls from the

opponent by a dink. The defenders were arranged evenly on the field thus protecting their own court. In order to protect this formation, middle defender stood directly behind one or two blockers. Other defenders went to the back corner of the field ².



Spiking the ball on a local volleyball court
LZS Dąbrowa, „Sportowiec”, 1949 No. 7, p. 9.

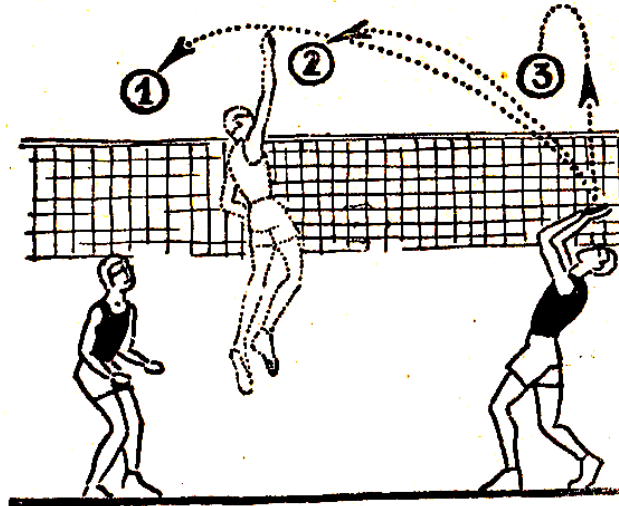
This defense system was used by Soviet and Czech players during Prague World Championships in 1949.

The main component of the attack used in the initial period of volleyball development was spiking. Coaching the players was focused on comprehensive training (similar abilities of spiking and setting the ball)³. In 1950, Romuald Wirszyło recommended in his article to use the three basic forms of ball spiking, depending on the ball setting position:

1. After setting the ball over the head, the spiking was made from jumping with both legs: this method was used by higher attackers and the technique required good jumping skills,
2. For setting the ball between a spiking player and a setter, the spiking player hit the ball after a short approach and a jump performed mainly with two legs,
3. For setting the ball over the setter, which allows for a successful approach (4-5 steps) and jumping with one leg, closer to the net, see figure below.

² R. Wirszyło: *Siatkówka – jeden czy dwóch graczy na obronie*, „Sportowiec”, 1949 No. 2, p. 10; W. [R. Wirszyło]: *Skrót przepisów piłki siatkowej*, Sportowiec”, 1949 No. 4, p. 15.

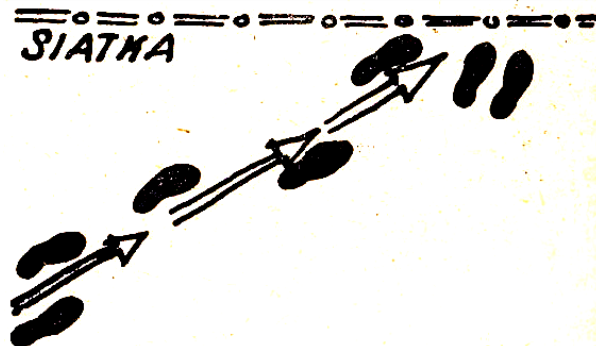
³ A system of specialization in the volleyball team (i.e. three attackers and three setters) was adopted in 1936 in Poland from the best volleyball team SK "Kaler" Talin, R. Wirszyło: *Technika nowoczesnej siatkówki*, „Sportowiec”, 1951 No. 1, p. 7.



Jumping with one leg, closer to the net, proposed by R. Wirszylło: *Ścięcia w siatkówce*, „Sportowiec”, 1950 No. 6, p. 12.

The requirement was that the jump for the spike should be as high as possible rather than driven forward in order to avoid hooking the net. Two forms of the approach were used:

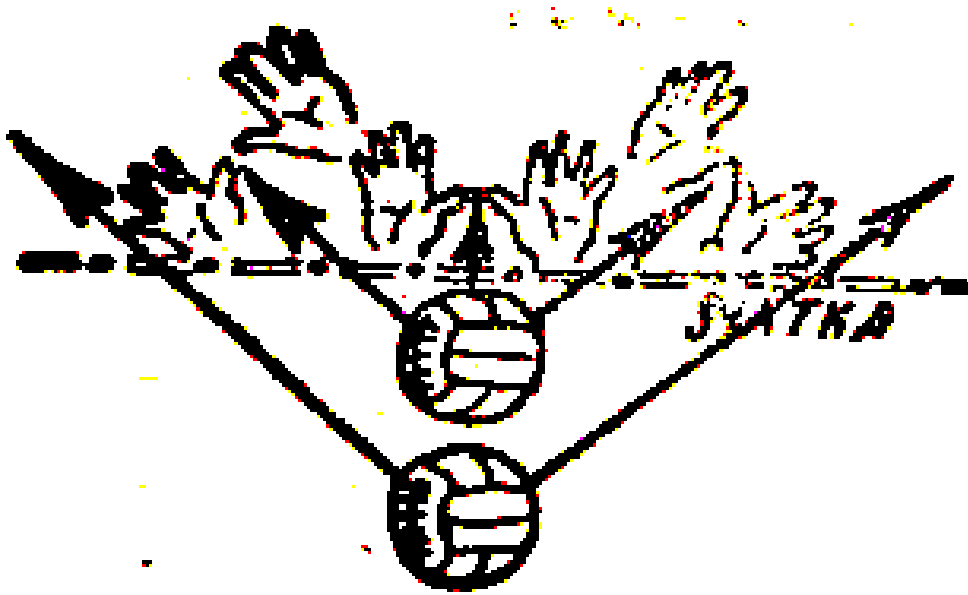
- a) approach could be performed parallel to the net
- b) it was performed at the acute angle, see Fig. below⁴.



Approach at the acute angle, proposed by R. Wirszylło: *Ścięcia w siatkówce*, „Sportowiec”, 1950 No. 6, p. 12.

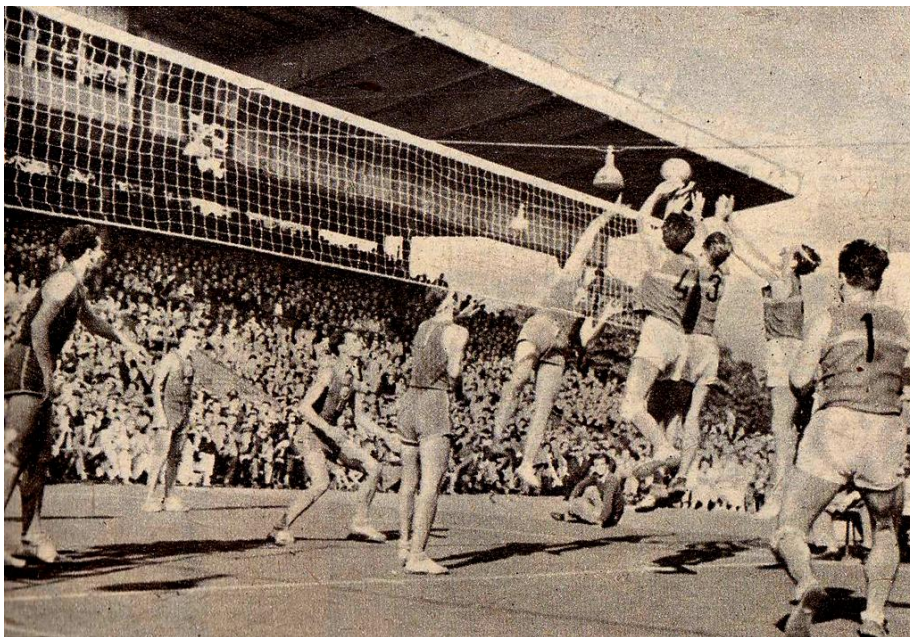
According to this author [R.W.], performing the spikes was easier for the ball set closer to the net, which allowed spiking the ball more perpendicularly, behind the ball. However, R. Wirszylło argued that closer setting the ball with respect to the net will make it easier to block the spiking, see figure below.

⁴ R. Wirszylło: *Ścięcia w siatkówce*, „Sportowiec”, 1950 No. 6, p. 14; Idem: *Technika nowoczesnej siatkówki*, „Sportowiec”, 1951 No. 1, p. 7.



Spiking from the close setting the ball is easier to be blocked,
W. Wirszylło: *Ścięcia...*, op. cit.

In 1948-1949 and later, in order to avoid the block, players used spiking from over the vertical stripe i.e. from extreme points on the court, also termed "spiking from the post."

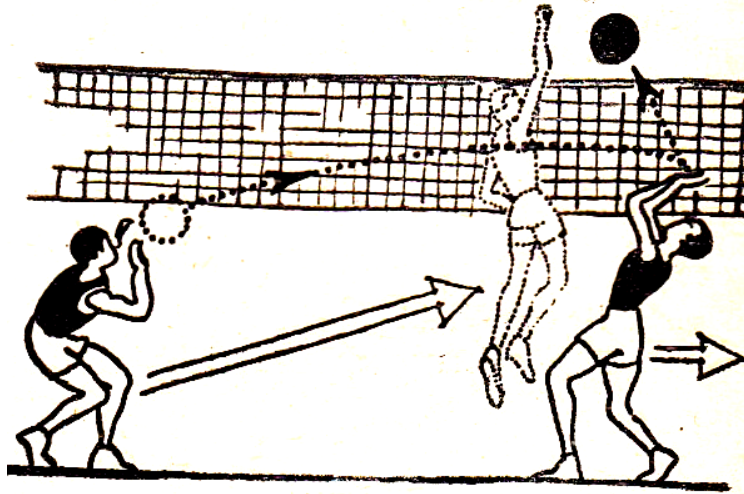


Spiking the ball from the post, at the edge of the net, Phot. Kraus, „Sportowiec”, 1951 No. 1, p. 7.

During setting the ball in order to make it difficult for the opponent to perform the block, various setting techniques were used i.e. high setting and low setting, and also with respect to the net and a setter: long and close setting. The moment of spiking was also chosen depending on the moment of:

- a) falling the ball in its highest point, which gave more time for the spiking player to prepare to spiking; in this variant, the author emphasized longer time that defenders also had before the spike,
- b) during flight of the ball in its highest point.

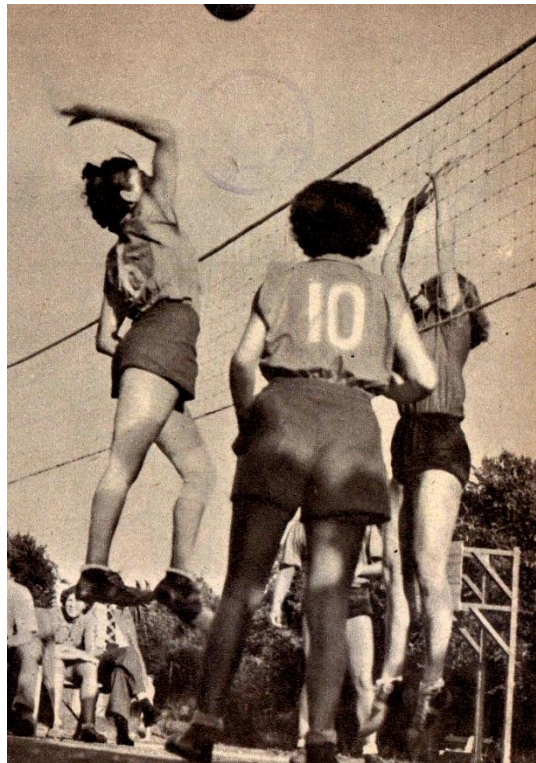
- c) spiking from a very short setting and hitting the ball over the net at the moment of going up, termed "Łódź spike" (which may have been a precursor of short spikes). Performing the spike consisted in hitting the ball which was set flat, as soon as it was going up, directly under the net⁵.



Method of low setting used by Polish volleyball players in 1948-1949, termed "Łódź spike",

R. Wirszylło: *Ścięcia...*, op. cit.

The technique of this spike required, according to the above author, a perfect timing during the action between the setter and spiker i.e. ... *the spiking player has to start their jump at the moment where their partner is beginning the setting...*⁶.

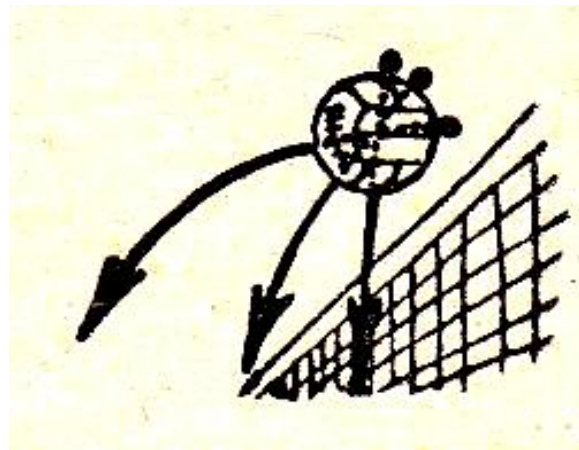


Spiking the ball in the middle of the net length, Phot. Kraus, „Sportowiec”, 1951 No. 1, p. 7.

⁵ R. Wirszylło: *Technika...*, op. cit.

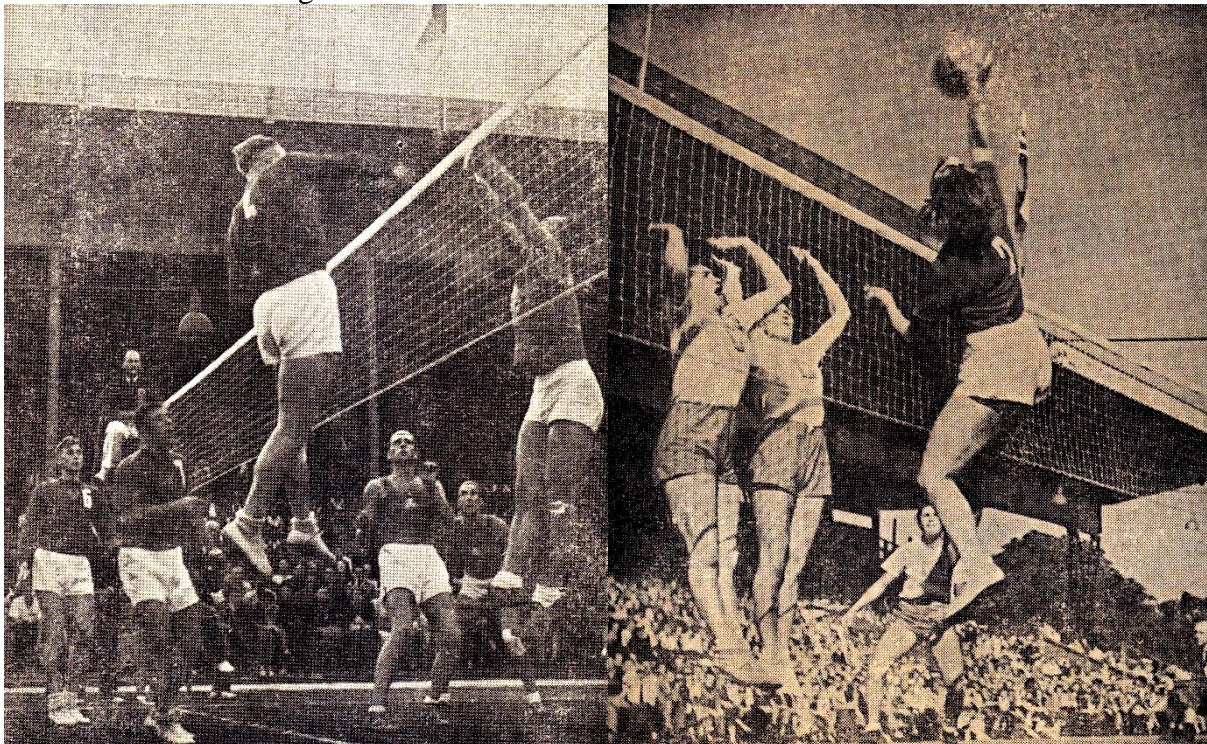
⁶ R. Wirszylło: *Ścięcie...*, op. cit.

The analysis of the spiking technique was also oriented at the place of hitting the ball (see figure below).



Direction of moving the ball depending on the place of hitting the ball, R. Wirszylło: *Ścięcie...*, op. cit.

It was recommended that the ball should be hit as from the top as possible, which ensured the perpendicular direction of the ball to the ground and closer on the other side of the net. The opportunity for driving the ball more to the further part of the court was also described by hitting the ball closer to its center. The emphasis was also on the opportunity of hitting the ball in its side, which made it rotate and change direction of flight, which the author termed "false flight" that made it difficult to defend the attack⁷.



The example of a correct jumping to the spike performed with both legs (on the left) by Rewa, the volleyball player from the USSR and, on the right, by the USSR's female volleyball player during a match between Poland and the USSR in 1949. W. Wirszylło: *Ścięcia...*, op. cit.

⁷ Ibidem.

The most characteristic feature of the volleyball tactics in the first years after the World War II (1945-1952) was a variety of techniques, including:

- various methods of defending and setting the ball,
- attack from the first and the second ball,
- single block, double block and triple block,
- tactically varied setting,
- spiking the ball over the whole length of the net,
- spiking the ball both from one and the second edge of the net ("spiking from the post") and from the center,
- moving the ball from the one wing of the court to the other (in order to extend the opponent's players that block the spike)⁸.

Combination of technical and tactical players and the use of these features during the volleyball game, especially oriented to the weakest points of the opponent's defense was the major goal of the training.

⁸ Ibidem.