

## THE ACTIVITY OF SPORT AND RECREATION CLUB OF THE BLIND AND THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED "PODKARPACIE" IN PRZEMYŚL

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### Abstract:

The following article aims at showing the activity of Sport and Recreation Club of the Blind and the Visually Impaired "Podkarpacie" in Przemyśl (PKSiRNiS). The authors were interested mainly in organisational, recreational, sport and touristic activity of beforehand mentioned club.

Sport and Recreation Club of the Blind and the Visually Impaired "Podkarpacie" in Przemyśl is the only sport and recreational club for the blind and the visually impaired operating on the territory of Podkarpackie Voivodeship.

The article covers a chronological period between 1951 and 2015 when sport and recreational activities for the blind and the visually impaired originated on the territory of Przemyśl.

The main source of information used in the article was chronicles, statute, newsletters and brochures owned by Sport and Recreation Club of the Blind and the Visually Impaired "Podkarpacie" in Przemyśl.

The inquiry concerning the subject revealed that there are no published materials covering the topic described in this article.

While writing the article the following research methods and techniques have been used: analysis of source materials being the basis for information researched as well as free-form interviews.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The history of Sport and Recreation Club of the Blind and the Visually Impaired "Podkarpacie" in Przemyśl is connected with the creation of the branch of Polish Society of the Blind in Przemyśl (the first one in Rzeszów Voivodeship<sup>28</sup>) in 1951. The initiators of the branch's creation were Edward Wencel and Stanisław Szymański, who at the same time was the first president of the branch. In 1951 the Cooperative of the Blind "Start" in Przemyśl was created in which, altogether with the Central Union of Work Cooperative's Sport Association, the Sport Association was established. On 15th March 1994 the Sport Association was nominated as an association and registered under the name of Przemyśl Physical Culture, Sport and Tourism Club of The Blind and the Disabled's Cooperative "Start" in Przemyśl. The Club received a legal personality and was recorded in the Registry of Sport Associations. Three years later the name of the club was changed to Sport Club of the Blind and the Visually Impaired in Przemyśl. On 21st February 2004 the club changed its name again to

<sup>28</sup> Rzeszów Voivodeship - the administrative region of Poland covering the region of southeast Poland. Rzeszów Voivodeship existed in the years of 1945- 1975 and 1975-1998.

currently used one, that is Sport and Recreation Club of the Blind and the Visually Impaired "Podkarpacie" in Przemyśl<sup>29</sup>.

Sport and Recreation Club of the Blind and the Visually Impaired "Podkarpacie" in Przemyśl is a public benefit organisation<sup>30</sup>. It was registered in the company records with the following tax identification number: 7951366224. The company's National Court Register number is 0000015183. The Association patented also its original logo (pic. 1.).



Picture 1. The logo of Sport and Recreation Club of the Blind and the Visually Impaired "Podkarpacie" in Przemyśl

Stanisław Sęk has been the President of the club since 1994. He has a Master's degree in revalidation, he has graduated from the Faculty of Social Prevention and Resocialization in the University of Warsaw. His adventure with sport has begun with athletics, followed by canoeing (he participated in 3rd Polish Championship of the Blind Cooperative on Malta Lake in Poznań). His favourite sport discipline is chess. After graduating from a vocational school and a secondary school, he started working for the Cooperative of the Blind „Start” in Przemyśl. On 11th June 2008 during the final of 7th Polish Championship of Women in International Draughts in Łańcut, he was awarded a silver medal by the Ministry of Sport.

Beside the President, the Board of the club contains: deputy President - Stanisław Mazur, Treasurer - Jerzy Andrejko, Secretary - Zbigniew Sebzda and members: Ewa Lekowska, Franciszek Mazur, Krystyna Myśliwiec, Jolanta Krok-Sabaj and Krzysztof Paszyna. The audit committee is created by: Piotr Dynda, Jerzy Saczyński, Halina Budziak.

<sup>29</sup> The interview carried out with the Board member Jerzy Andrejko on 29th February 2016

<sup>30</sup> Public benefit organisation (OPP) – the term introduced in Poland on 1st January 2004 on the basis of public benefit activity and voluntary services bill. The status of OPP can be acquired by a non-governmental organisation (except for political parties, trade unions, employers' organisations and professional self-governments) operating in areas of so-called public benefit which has been defined by a bill concerning public benefit activity and voluntary services.



**Photo 1.** The board of the Club. From the left: J. Andrejko, S. Sęk, S. Mazur,  
Source: The archive of PKSiRNiS „Podkarpacie”.

## **2. THE CLUB'S AIMS AND THE SCOPE OF ACTIVITY**

The activity of the club is based on its statute's assumptions which aimed at: development and organisation of general physical culture in the environment of the blind and the visually impaired in terms of various sport disciplines. The Club's activity covers the environment of the blind (children, the youth and adults) from all over Podkarpackie Voivodeship. A blind or visually impaired person with significant or medium degree of disability due to sight damage can become a member of the Club. People who do not meet these requirements can become extraordinary members. The club has no age restrictions. The Club also cooperates with people who are not members but are willing to practice sport and tourism.

The activity of the Club is based particularly on: organising sport competitions among the blind and the visually impaired in the field of practised sport disciplines, working on professional and social integration and reintegration of those at risk of social exclusion. The club aims also at protection and promotion of health, encouraging and popularising tourism and sightseeing as well as strengthening of institutional potential in the disabled environment. The idea of the club's activity is also promotion and organisation of voluntary services as well as preparation and education of staff helping the blind and the visually impaired in the area of sport, education and social integration.

The association cooperated with national, foreign and international organisations and institutions of the same or similar activity profile, it can be also a member of these<sup>31</sup>.

The club cooperates with a whole-Poland Physical Culture, Sport and Tourism Association of the Blind and the Visually Impaired "Cross" (SKFSiTNiS). In 1994 PKSiRNiS "Podkarpacie" was enlisted in the rank of 39 Clubs being a part of SKFSiTNiS „Cross" operating on the territory of Poland<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> The Statute of Sport and Recreation Club of the Blind and the Visually Impaired "Podkarpacie"

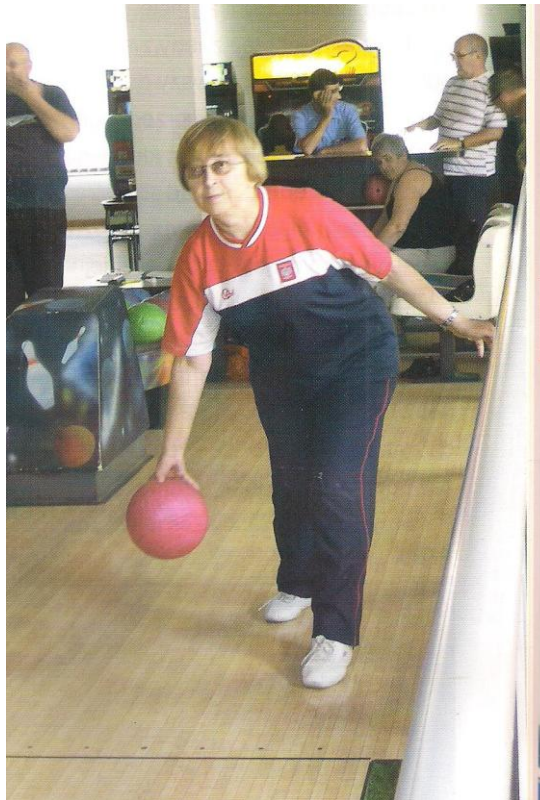
<sup>32</sup> Physical Culture, Sport and Tourism Association of the Blind and the Visually Impaired "Cross" is of all-Poland range and currently unites over 4000 members in 39 local branches located on the territory of whole Poland. The clubs exist in all bigger cities of Poland and operates on the territory of the whole country. In each club being a part of "Cross" there are sport sections that organise classes and trainings when the participants improve their qualifications under the guidance of instructors and trainers so the best of the contestants can represent their clubs during all-Poland and international competitions.

Since 2003 PKSiRNiS "Podkarpacie" has been cooperating also with the Physical Culture Association "Olimp" (ZKF) taking care of people with sight disabilities.

The primary aim of ZKF "Olimp" activity is organising free time of the disabled by executing various forms of recreational, rehabilitation and touristic activities. The main purpose of the organisation is also arrangement of sport competitions for the blind and the visually impaired as well as broad acting for the benefit of the blind and visually impaired so they can have a free access to various sport disciplines. The club developed its activity particularly in the following disciplines: chess, draughts, bowling, pneumatic and laser shooting<sup>33</sup>.

PKSiRNiS „Podkarpacie” organises the classes in three centres in the city. The classes in chess and draughts take place in three-room venue on Mickiewicz Street, on Cathedral Street there is a club's library, where also cultural classes and IT courses are organised, while adepts of laser shooting are trained on Batory Street.

Until 2000 only two sections operated in PKSiRNiS "**Podkarpacie**". These included the following: international draughts and chess. In the first few years of club's activity the classes took place in club's headquarters on 12 Wybrzeże Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II Street. Acquiring the access to the Internet (2005) allowed also for the classes to be conducted online for those who could not personally participate in the meetings. Additionally, it enabled instructing and training consultations among participants in the field. Simultaneously, a specialist computer room, a library and a reading room were commissioned. In 2006 the headquarter of the club was moved to 3a Katedralna Street, one year later acquiring premises suitable for the club's needs on 20 Mickiewicza Street, which remains the club's headquarter to this day.



**Photo 2.** Bowling section instructor Jolanta Sabaj,  
source: "Cross", 9/2009, p. 33.

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<sup>33</sup> Informative newsletter of Physical Culture Association OLIMP.

Sport and Recreation Club of the Blind and the Visually Impaired "Podkarpacie" in Przemyśl has the following sections: international draughts, chess, tandem cycling, athletics, bowling, bridge, tourism, dance, indoor football, canoeing, pneumatic and laser shooting, indoor rowing, showdown, skiing and biathlon. What is more, the club organises trainings in using a computer with specialist software, social rehabilitation and cultural and educational classes.

The Association conducts classes also outside Przemyśl. In Rzeszów there are swimming classes led by instructor Artur Szymański, in the Youth Community Centre there are bowling and draughts classes conducted by instructors: Piotr Sęk and Jolanta Sabaj.

Laser shooters outside Przemyśl, using advice of the club instructor Zbigniew Sebzda, once a month practice their skills in rented premises on the territory of Rzeszów, Sanok, Jasło and Krosno. During the summertime canoeing trainings conducted by instructor Miłosz Szczudło take place on Wisłok River in Rzeszów<sup>34</sup>.

The beginnings of international draughts date back to 1995 in the headquarters of Polish Association of the Blind (PZN) in Nysa. It was also the place where activists of PZN decided to create a sport which would be cost-free, would not require a lot of stamina taking into consideration sight diseases and could be trained by people in all age groups. Additionally, the assumption was also that the sport should be easily accessible, without the need of renting special stadiums or premises. In 1970s Edward Witkowski designed a few international draughts' boards. The main drawback of those boards was their size and weight as well as the lack of special holes for the stones. To meet the growing interest in the game, the boards have been modified and international draughts with Braille print have been produced. Rules of the game and training materials were arranged, also a producer of the project and the maker of a new gaming set was found. Jerzy Gorczyński was the leader of all works connected with this project. In 1995 the first three sets of draughts were made in school workshops of Technical Education School Complex in Głucholazy. According to accounts in the club in Przemyśl, draughts has also developed, the club possessed Braille draughts boards of own production as well. Przemyśl draughts were, however, heavier, not pegged and more expensive.

In 1996 the first draughts match, Przemyśl vs. Opole, was organised. It took place in Namysłów in Opolian Silesia which marks the beginning of this beautiful sport discipline in Poland. Opole had larger than Przemyśl number of contestants, but Przemyśl presented stronger gaming abilities which was reflected in the results of the first tournament<sup>35</sup> (table 1.).

International draughts found a lot of interest among the club's beneficiaries and soon it gained quite a lot of fame. The players, being the pioneers in the environment of the blind, gained the first draughts categories. The first leader of the section was Stanisław Mazur. In the first few years of section's activity the following people were successful: Stanisław Mazur- 3rd place in Polish Championship in International Draughts for the disabled, Zofia Zrywar -1st place in women's category of the same championship and Antoni Szczurek-distinguished by the judges of the Polish Draughts Society. In 2014 the club's contestants took part in 4th European Championship, and in International Championship in Innsbruck in 2015<sup>36</sup>.

The level of the club's engagement in the development of draughts is proved by preparation of harmonious team, 38 contestant licences as well as thorough sport documentation.

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<sup>34</sup> A. Amarowicz, *Pod szyldem "Podkarpacia"*, "Cross", 9/2009, pp. 31–36.

<sup>35</sup> Jerzy Gorczyński, A typescript owned by PKSiRNiS "Podkarpacie"

<sup>36</sup> A. Amarowicz, „Szaszki” *po przemysku*”, „Życie podkarpackie” 2001, p. 42.

**Table 1.** The results of the first tournament according to the winning list:

1.	Mazur	Stanisław	Przemyśl
2.	Rembisz	Stanisław	Przemyśl
3.	Gorczyński	Jerzy	Opole
4.	Jagięła	Andrzej	Przemyśl
5.	Kaczmarek	Ryszard	Opole
6.	Kuźma	Bolesław	Przemyśl
7.	Czulak	Stefan	Opole
8.	Strzałkowski	Mieczysław	Opole
9.	Komarow	Mikołaj	Opole
10.	Malina	Franciszek	Opole
11.	Januszkiewicz	Jan	Opole
12.	Klimowicz	Bolesław	Opole
13.	Perucki	Zbigniew	Opole
14.	Tarasek	Józef	Opole
15.	Par	Dariusz	Opole
16.	Pietrusiński	Marian	Opole
17.	Kuczyński	Wacław	Opole
18.	Andrzejewski	Kazimierz	Opole
19.	Tomaś	Stanisław	Opole

Source: Own elaboration based on Jerzy Gorczyński's typescript, the typescript owned by PKSiRNiS "Podkarpacie".

Chess section was established along with draughts section in 1991. Its first leader was Franciszek Mazur. The board for the blind is significantly different than commonly used board. Black squares are convex, the figures have sharp edges and white squares are concaved. The figures are put in the holes in the squares, which prevents them from accidental moving. The players use Braille to read figures' layout by the use of players' hands. Chess in Przemyśl have a long tradition as the first team chess championship took place as soon as 1956 with a transitive cup of Polish Association of the Blind's (PZN) Board being the reward<sup>37</sup>. Every year the players in the section take part in Polish Team Championship of Voivodeship's Spartakiade of the Blind for "Podkarpacie Cup", All-Poland Chess Tournament for the Blind and Visually Impaired for Przemyśl Area Cup, Voivodeship's Spartakiade for the Blind, All-Poland Chess Tournament for "Podkarpacie Cup", many times gaining high places during the competitions<sup>38</sup>.



**Photo 3.** Chess Tournament for "Podkarpacie Cup" 2015. source: the archive of PKSiRNiS „Podkarpacie”.

<sup>37</sup>M. Grygiel, *Szachy, warcaby, integracja*, „Nowiny”, 16th June, 1999, p. 5.

<sup>38</sup> The conversation with the secretary of the Club Wojciech Łuc took place on 29.02.2016

There is no clear data concerning the origins of bowling<sup>39</sup>. Most probably, the creation of the section took place in the second half of 1990s. The classes take place in Galeria Nowy Świat in Rzeszów with Jolanta Sabaj being a trainer of the section. The group of practising bowling systematically unites 30 people with as many as 9 players being qualified for Polish Bowling Championship final in 2009. Jolanta Sabaj is the most honoured member of the club in classic bowling. In 2008 she was qualified for the tight team, which was an opportunity for participating in European Championship<sup>40</sup>.

The section of tandem cycling<sup>41</sup> was created in 2002. The section's trainings took place in the Olszany Centre. The club owned 5 two-person bicycles. The collapsible tandem bikes in the possession of the club were not, however, professional equipment suitable for championships. This fact precluded the cyclist of Przemyśl from taking part in All-Poland cycling championships and having achievements. In spite of these difficulties, tandem team created by Marcin Kosterkiewicz and Daniel Rusin was first in 1st race of Przemyśl Area organised in 2002. The team of Marcin Kosterkiewicz and Daniel Rusin won also the second edition of the race in 2003. During Polish Championship in Individual Cycling with measured time the beforehand mentioned team had 4th place, qualifying for the national team. The duo proved their skills and good sport condition in 2004 while winning, among others, individual cycling with measured time during all-Poland tandem cycling race in Polanica. The competitors succeeded also during Polish Championship in Przemyśl, gaining 5th vice-championship in individual cycling with measured time and 3rd place in team cycling together with a second pair - Mariusz Kubas and Bartosz Szuban. In 2005, while preparing to European Championship, 4th Race in Przemyśl was organised which took place on 20.05-22.05.2005<sup>42</sup>. The members of "Podkarpacie" Club have had no major successes after 2005.

In 2004 dancing section was created that existed until 2010.



**Photo 4.** A member of the Club Barbara Rup during laser shooting contest, source: the archive of PKSiRNiS „Podkarpacie”.

Laser shooting section was created in 2008. Its leader is Zbigniew Sebzda. Since 2010 the section has been joined with pneumatic shooting section. Championships are divided into

<sup>39</sup> Bowling - a type of ball game (called bowling balls) where a bowling ball is used in order to knock over 9-10 heavy pins.

Ten-pin bowling is a bowling variation. It was created on the basis of classic bowling.

<sup>40</sup> A. Amarowicz, *Pod szyldem „Podkarpacia”*, "Cross", 9/2009, pp. 31–36.

<sup>41</sup> Tandem cycling is characterised by a person with a healthy eye-sight driving the bike, while the person riding on the back is blind. Tandem cycling races take places both on roads and tracks.

<sup>42</sup> The chronicle of PKSiRNiS „Podkarpacie”

three categories: standing position, kneeling position and prone position. Every year the members took part in both all-Poland and international contests. The section's success of the last years is participation in Polish Cup in Jakuszyce, when the contestants from the club gained first places<sup>43</sup>.

The dynamics of laser shooting development among visually impaired in Poland is enormous. This discipline has become very attractive in a few past years. In laser shooting the contestant hear, while targeting, saccadically changing sounds which are similar to a higher pitched tweet.

In 2010 a section of canoeing was created. It was terminated in 2014. Miłosz Szczudło was the section's instructor.

Showdown section originates in 2010. Showdown is a discipline created in 1960s for people with sight dysfunctions. Initially the discipline was not popular in Poland, it was practiced mainly in Czech, Holland and Sweden. Małgorzata Zubik-Borysławska was the section's trainer. The classes take place in Przemyśl, in the headquarters of "Podkarpacie" club. Showdown is, informally speaking, a table tennis for the blind. The game is of integration character, it can be played by a blind person with a blind person, a blind person with a person having a healthy eye-sight as well as by two people with healthy eye-sight. The game is played on a table encircled by a band, divided into two halves with a special board hung around 15 centimetres above the table. The players play wearing gloves and special goggles that prevent from peeking. The bats are rectangular in shape, the ball is 6 centimetres in diameter, having small balls inside in order to create sound. To score 2 points, the ball should be put into a semicircular hole placed on the verge of the table occupied by a player<sup>44</sup>.



**Photo 5.** „Podkarpacie Cup” tournament – showdown, 2015.  
source: the archive of PKSiRNiS „Podkarpacie”

Bridge started to be played in "Podkarpacie" club in 2010. The classes take place in Jasło. Maria Lorenc is the trainer of the section. The blind and the visually impaired in Poland have played bridge since 1970s. At the beginning, it was friendly bridge, its sport variation began with the first match in sport bridge played in 1995 in a city by the river Łyna. Since 1998 Polish team championship have been played and since 2002 – Polish individual championships and Polish Cup team championships<sup>45</sup>.

Indoor rowing section was created in 2010. Its trainer is Urszula Zariczna. The classes take place in Przemyśl, in the club's headquarters.

<sup>43</sup> The conversation with the Board member Jerzy Andrejko on 29.02.2016

<sup>44</sup> D. Pietrasik, *Showdown*, "Cross" 9/2009, p. 22–25.

<sup>45</sup> P. Łożyński, *Od wista do brydża*, „Cross” 1/2009, p.11.





**Photo 6.** Classes of indoor rowing section.  
Source: the archive of PKSiRNiS „Podkarpacie”

Biathlon section started its first trainings in the winter of 2014/2015. The section's leader is Kazimierz Cetnarski. Biathlon is a new sport discipline trained by the blind and the visually impaired. Biathlon trainings and contests require special shooting positions. For the time being, in Poland there are two such positions produced by EcoAims company in Finland. They have a certificate of International Paralympic Committee (IPC).

On 23-25 February 2016 in Jakuszyce the first Polish Cup in the history of the visually disabled sport took place. At the start line there were 18 competitors from 7 Polish clubs, including "Podkarpacie" Club in Przemyśl, represented by 6 people. The first place was won by "Podkarpacie" club's representative Piotr Grabowski, the third place by Bogdan Konieczny. The remaining contestants from "Podkarpacie" in Przemyśl gained the following positions: Zbigniew Żygłowicz – 4, Paweł Gil – 5, Paweł Jacek – 10, Jerzy Skwirut – 12.

There are no source materials concerning the origins and the activity of skiing, athletics and indoor football sections.

## **SUMMARY**

During the 20-year activity of Sport and Recreation Club of the Blind and the Visually Impaired "Podkarpacie" in Przemyśl the number of beneficiaries has systematically increased. New sport disciplines have appeared. The club members have had significant successes both on national and international arenas.

The most significant achievements of "Podkarpacie" Club in Przemyśl were individual successes of members who won Polish Individual Championships in pneumatic shooting (Krzysztof Paszyna, Adam Kielar), laser shooting (Jerzy Sypień), international draughts for the blind and visually impaired (Zofia Zywar, Iwona Flak, Stanisław Mazur, Andrzej Jagieła) and Polish Team Championships in pneumatic shooting, laser shooting, international draughts and indoor football. Disciplines such as tandem cycling, dancing, swimming, athletics, bridge or canoeing are practised recreationally.

The significance of Recreation and Sport Club in Przemyśl is constantly growing due to the enormous engagement of its activists, volunteers and club's members' work.