

STAL PONIATOWA IS A GREAT CLUB IN A SMALL TOWN (1951-2001)

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Keywords:

- Stal Poniatowa,
- football,
- football club,
- Lubelszczyzna,
- team sport.

Abstract:

The aim of the article is to collect and arrange facts about the sport life of Poniatowa, with particular emphasis on the football section of a Workers Sport Club "Stal Poniatowa". Football plays an essential role in life of the inhabitants of this small town and the main role in the club's activity. The sport's club tradition and the club's foundation dates back to 1951 and is significantly associated with the creation of the Sport's Club early Installation device Manufacturing Factory. Until 1995, RKS "Stal" club Poniatowa was a factory club fully supported by donations and employee membership fees. The employees were the main initiators of sports activities. Thanks to the constant care and financial help, the club had further funds which insured proper development. However, as the situation financial situation worsened at the plant, they had to permanently acquire stable funds for the club. Among them were many representatives of the province or youth of Poland such as: footballers Ryszard Ochodek and Andrzej Pereseda, volleyball player Ewa Kamińska. Big successes (Jasiukiewiczza or Kamińska) were recorded in local sport history. This article is about what role the club played in promoting physical culture and how it can continue to do so even now, however, it depends on the people who are willing to sacrifice themselves for the club. As sport of such value that it can not be separated from social life.

INTRODUCTION

This article aims to provide information about the development and activities of the Workers Sports Club "Stal" Poniatowa. In particular, the history of the sports club especially the football section that has been and is the foundation of the club's life and the entire sports environment in Poniatowa¹. The article focuses on the profiles of the most renowned trainers of the club sports activists. Based on the available materials, you can try to establish as accurately as possible the circumstances of the creation of the RKS club "Stal" Poniatowa and

¹ Eastern Journal nr 88-180 z 1995.

its activity in the span of a half century as well as the sports and social achievements of that period².

Most of the facts described can be supported and described meticulously through the club chronicle from the very beginning of club existence including annual reports on the club's activities and various archival materials³. The local press was analyzed, for example the "Kurier Lubelski", "Dziennik Eastern", "Głos Edy" and "Sztandar Ludu". It's also important to show the most principal facts from the history of the Poniatowa city and Electromechanical factory "EDA", which was the main inspirer of the uprising and development of the "Stal" Poniatowa sports club⁴. The events that had a direct impact on the development of the city or the factory plants were significant as well as news about the geographical conditions or tourist attractions related to Poniatowa. It was fundamentally impacted by the development of education which implemented in the core curriculum of schools as well as out-of-school physical education classes were serious contributions to popularizing sport among young people from Poniatowa. The year 1951, was characterized by the development of the club itself, which was very dynamic until 1967. During the formation of the club you can see the first organizational problems encountered but also the first sports successes⁵. Descriptions of the first trainings or sportswear equipment can illustrate what the then-coaches were facing working for the club. Everything in its entirety can document what the club played in RKS "Stal" Poniatowa, in a small-town environment, where life revolved around one big industrial plant that was the only one animator of economic, cultural and social time⁶.

The city's history and geographical location

The city of Poniatowa has only 11,000 inhabitants and is located around 40 km. to the south-west of Lublin. The administrative is situated in the commune covering, apart from the city itself, 17 village councils. Poniatowa is a relatively small city, but the mention of its existence is noted by Jan Długosz. Information about the fate of the Poniatów village can be found there, this was the later city of Poniatów. The next mention about Poniatowa comes from 1581. Wise was then part of the Kłodnica parish. In the seventeenth century, it belonged to the Poniatowski family, whose coat of arms was patronized by a ciolek. According to the records in 1827, the number of inhabitants of Poniatowa was 269 people. In the second half of the nineteenth century, immediately after enfranchisement, residents of and in particular, the peasants were moved to radical decisions. During the years of tsarist enfranchisement decrees, 1864-1865 peasants from Poniatowa, like in other places, started joining independent court lands to their own fields. This situation led to a conflict between the heirs and the peasants. Striking agreement, they demanded improvement of material and living conditions⁷.

The breakthrough year for the city of Poniatowa was 1937 in which, under the construction of the Central Industrial District, in Poniatowa, the construction of a factory for military communication devices, (State Tele I Radiotechnical Plant Filina No. 2) began. The plant belonged to the same group of enterprises of the Polish authorities as the factory in Świdnik, Kraśnik or the steel mill in Stalowa Wola, aimed at investing in the areas agricultural⁸. The first production began a dozen or so days before the outbreak of World War

² Archive of the City of Poniatowa (2000), red. E. Ranuszkiewicz, wyd. Bydgoszcz 1999, p.1.

³ Communication from OZPS in Lublin.

⁴ Eda's voice from the day 1.09.1981 r.

⁵ Communication from OZPN in Lublin.

⁶ Pastwa R., Opole Lubelskie and around, Lublin, pp. 40-41.

⁷ Ibidem, pp. 44-47.

⁸ Archive of the RKS "Stal" Poniatowa Club, Chronicle 1.

II. At the beginning of the occupation, the Nazis only took the larger machinery from plant. After the outbreak of the Soviet-German war the liquidated factory was isolated and intended for special purposes. In 1941, on the premises of former factories, a POW camp was established, it was a branch of the camp located in Dęblin. During the period from August 1941 until mid-1942, 18 thousand people incurred death in the Poniatowa camp. In place of the liquidated POW camp, a labor camp for the Jews was created in 1942. Jewish people were brought here from the Warsaw Ghetto. In general, at the same time the loudest campaign to liquidate Jews in Lubelszczyzna happened on 3 November 1943, the Nazis murdered about 15,000 people in Poniatowa that day. The liberation of Poland found Poniatowa, like most cities in the state of complete ruin⁹. After the war, the plant, residential buildings and neglected road were rebuilt. Production first started on July 22, 1949. In each subsequent year, the Installation Equipment Manufacturing Plant, expanded which directly affected the development of the city. The city began to offer medical care and a hospital was organized as well as a health clinic or sanatorium for tuberculosis. A network of commercial and service outlets of various industries formed, the water recreational center was expanded, a Jordanian park was created, a sports center, a building for the primary school and a high school or a nursery was also built. The successful expansion of the factory coincided with the expansion of the industry sector. And so on July 18, 1962 by the decision of Council Poniatowa received city rights. In 1975, due to the change in production the plant also changed its name to: Mechanized Household Equipment Factory Predom EDA. The development of EDA plants marked the development of the entire city¹⁰.

Establishment and beginnings of the club's activity (1951-1967)

In 1951, at the then Installation Equipment Manufacturing, the "Stal" Sports Club was organized. The name was taken from Stalinist reform of physical culture system in Poland. So the associations which worked at the plant were also referred to in this way. Existing sports clubs were dissolved and turned into sports clubs. On January 1, 1951 in the general budget of the Central Council of Trade Unions resources were reserved for the development of a trade union sport¹¹.

The "Stal" sports club founded by Marian Godziszewski had sections for: football, handball, volleyball, table tennis and chess. The club operated until 1956. In October of that year after the VIII Plenum, the PZPR Central Committee made radical changes in social and political life in Poland. The previously binding system (bureaucratic centralism) collapsed, what caused deep changes in various sectors, including: cultural and/or physical culture. At this time all sports clubs returned to the original form of the sports club federation operating under the patronage of central trade unions, respectively. Therefore, it was decided in Poniatowa to create "Stal" club¹². In response sport fields were built, among others, for football, volleyball and basketball. The initiator of many projects was the engineer Władysław Połęcz, a man who was interested in the club and its development. At the time, the club did not have its own sports facilities such as a cloakroom was located in the back Factory's House of Culture. Trainings were held after work in particular for employees of the plant. The manager covered the entire cost for the away games for the team. The only available means of transport for the players was lorry. Despite such unfavorable conditions, the team succeeded in its fight for advancement to "A" class¹³. Władysław Zieliński recalled that along with the

⁹ Archive of the RKS "Stal" Poniatowa Club, Chronicle 1.

¹⁰ Archive of the City of Poniatowa (2000), red. E. Ranuszkiewicz, wyd. Bydgoszcz 1999, p.2.

¹¹ Reports on the activities of the RKS "Stal" Poniatowa club in 1972-1982.

¹² Interview with F. Dudkowski 27.10.1999.

¹³ Interview with S. Kaczyński 5.05.1999.

development of the plant, the demand for sport grew and developed as well. The Club received more and more donations, which made allowed for more and more new players in joining the club. "Stal" Poniatowa began to play in the "A" class, and received more and more recognition among fans as well as played a more significant role in Lubelszczyzna¹⁴.

Football is the leading discipline in Poniatowa. This team sport has attracted attracts tons of fans and enjoys the greatest interest amongst children and youth from Poniatowa. The beginnings of the sport sector's activity including football as a leading sport discipline are also marks the start of sport in Poniatowa which dates back to 1951. At that time, three alumni graduates of ZSZ in Kazimierz overlooking the Vistula - Jan Werner, Kazimierz Popiołek, Edward Dzieński - already as employees of the Installation Equipment Manufacturing Plant, decided to organize a football group so that they could spend time activity after work. It was this event that became the cornerstone of Poniatowa's "Stal". The interest of the fans, who were mostly employees or the players themselves aroused enthusiasm and gained attention of the ZWSI management. The board of local plants, wanting to facilitate the trainings, made the basement of its worker's hotel available to its "players" and ensured transport for away games. The president's functions were entrusted to Marian Rodzikowi. The first official match dates back to May 1, 1951 in Opole Lubelskie. For a year, "Stal" played only friendly matches, and finally in 1953 it began to fight for league points in class "B" and at that point Edward Borkowski was the president¹⁵.



Stoją od lewej: Jan Werner, Mieczysław Drzewoński, Edward Dzieński, Tadeusz Łopacki, Stanisław Kozak, Kazimierz Popiołek, Ryszard Strzelec, Mariusz Stępień, Jerzy Króskiewicz, Wacław Dragun, Zbigniew Strawa.

FIGURE 1: "Stal" Poniatowa team, Opole Lubelskie 1951

Source: archive of S.Kozak

¹⁴ Ambroź M., Błaszczak B., Jerzyna K., Smoga P., Wojnicki L.(1989), *40 years of Electromechanical Plant in Poniatowa*, Poniatowa, wyd. Zakłady Elektromaszynowe EDA, s. 7.

¹⁵ Ibidem, pp.7-10.

In 1954, the "Stal" team won and advanced to the "A" class games before the first significant match with "Stal" Kraśnik, the management of the plants organized a three-day preparatory camp for the players in Kluczkowice, who apparently gave the expected effect in which the players of Poniatowa "Stal" could enjoy the victory as the favored opponent 1: 2¹⁶. In 1957, when Józef Bińczak sat in the president's chair and as the first secretary of the PZPR communist party committee, "Stal" Poniatowa played with such teams as: "Chełmianka" Chełm, "Orlęta" Łuków, "Łada" Biłgoraj, "Orlęta" Łuków, "Lublinianka" Lublin, "Wisła" Puławy, "Podlasie" Biała Podlaska, "Budowlani" Lublin or "Lewart" Lubartów. The team from Poniatowa took a good fourth place. Playing a better game in 1958 attracted better known surnames, such as: Mieczysław Bednarczuk, Gajkoś, Biedniuk, Kazanowski, Kuś, Piwkowski, Mazurek, Ryszard Rybicki or Tupaj, at that point Eugeniusz Zborkowski was trainer of the team¹⁷.



Stoją od lewej: Mieczysław Bednarczuk, Zygmunt Seweryn, Zbigniew Bińkowski, Jerzy Ciastoch, Marian Olech, Mieczysław Wilk, Jerzy Mazurek, Henryk Ciuryło, Jan Mikoda, Wiesław Ryciak, Ryszard Rybicki, Zygmunt Kuś.

FIGURE 2: The "Stal" Poniatowa team at a grouping in Karpacze, 1958

Source: archive of S.Kozak

¹⁶ One-day trip of the Society of the Poniatowa Friends: 25 years of the City of Poniatowa, Poniatowa 1987.

¹⁷ Ibidem, pp.10-11.

The news success and advancement to the regional league has been spread across not only in Powiatowa but along the Lubelszczyzna region as well. Before the start of the new season the team was strengthened by the arrival of two new players: J. Starka aka "Ślęzy" from Wrocław and J. Bębna known as "Ruch" from Skarżysko. The organization of groupings before important league matches had already become a tradition at that point. The matches started on 5th April and already showed the character and strength that the team had at the start of the league. "Stal" Poniatoła's first match was played against "Hetman" Zamość with a goalless draw. The second match was against "Motor" Lublin in which the players won 1: 3, the best goal scorers were: Bębna, Seweryn, Ryszard Rybicki. The rematch was also won by the players from "Stal" very much to their audience's satisfaction with 2: 0. The year 1961 brought with it the reorganization of the league, its transition occurred during the "fall-spring" time frame, which is why the teams from the district league had to play three rounds. During the 1961/1962 season, another team entered the competition to "Stal" Poniatoła in Class "A". In the 1962/1963 season the team had to come to terms with the demands of the higher league and subsequently fell to Class "A"¹⁸.

In 1964, under the leadership of trainer Witold Brol, the team in a magnificent style, advanced to the District league by winning almost all matches. The match with "Lublinianka" Lublin against "Stal" Poniatoła started of the 1966/1967 season and brought much success, after a fierce battle between the team and a good match. The fans could enjoy the 1: 1 tie and in the end the team took a strong 5th place. Some proof of distinction for the players was the fact that Henry Sola was called up to the youth team representation of Lubelszczyzna by OZPN¹⁹. In 1967, during the December deliberations of the Provincial Federation of Sports, an application was made to unify the names of sports clubs patronized by the Production Plant. Therefore, that same year the resolution was adopted changing the name to Worker's Sports Club "Stal" Poniatoła, then the club registers its activities, the club received its statute, which includes all aims of the club, rights and obligations and the founding of the club as an association. In the multidirectional activity of the plant, the Directorate and the Council of the company found a lot of time for sport. It was proved by the fact that 85% of the employees declared to pay regular contributions to the club. Thanks to this, the club could safely exist and develop its activity²⁰.

The activity of the sports sector in football during 1968-1983

The main goals and activities were targeted at the youth and their fight in District league while seniors fell to the background. This type of philosophy from the board was to bring the most desired effect in the form of advancement to the Inter-Provincial League already in the early seventies. The "Stal" junior team in 1971- 1972 was actively played by footballer Ryszard Kuśnierz. Its very well-trained youth was to be the backbone of the team for Poniatoła. In this lineup of RKS "Stal" Poniatoła was to win the league championship, what they also won was same place in a very strong Inter-Provincial league, where besides clubs from the Lubelszczyzna, there were also clubs from other provinces, including: Olsztyn, Łódź, Warsaw and Białystok. This event was unprecedented for sport in Poniatoła, which quickly became part its history. A significant contribution to this sports success of "Stal" was made by the Plant Electromechanical EDA²¹.

¹⁸ People's Banner No. 9 from 1960.

¹⁹ Interviews with J. Mikoda 2.02.2001.

²⁰ Banner of the People "Sports Echo" No. 14 from 1967.

²¹ Ibidem No. 14 from 1967.

The management covered not only the cost of upkeeping the club, but also training and preparation trips. Club policy greatly contributed to the success and the level the club now represented, thanks to accurate decisions and proper development of the local youth. It was the youth who played there, who contributed to the development of the club and they appeared on the wider football arena on the "eastern front". Preparations for the first season of 1972/73 began with a freshly baked trainer Zygmunt Kuś. After returning from the preparation camp for the season, footballers and the whole training staff found a new pitch, thoroughly modernized, the whole pitch has been fenced and 1,200 stands have been built there along with a sports pavilion with cloakrooms for both teams and a room for referees and a warehouse for sports equipment. The "Stal" team, with a big loss in the autumn part of the season was not able to rebound and change its position in rankings and ended the season by taking last place in the league, resulting in being dropped from the District League of the "Poniatowa" team. It's this golden era in Poniatowa's football that spawned players such as Ryszard Ochodek - the representative of the Polish juniors or Roman Grzeszczyk - he was appointed to the Junior representation in Lubelszczyzna. The game of junior teams influenced entire team's game and resulted in ranking third place at the end of the 1974/75 season²².

Achievements of the football section in 1983-2001

The 1983-1984 season of RKS "Stal" Poniatowa performed in a good company of teams from the third league. The team from Poniatowa could compete in the third league, with such teams as: "Siarka" Tarnobrzeg, "KSZO" Ostrowiec, "Avia" Świdnik, "Hetman" Zamość, "Lublinianka" Lublin, "Chelmska" Chelmska etc. The first meeting "Stal" played against was Nowa Sarzyna "Union", winning 3-0. After such a successful performance, nobody expected that the "Stal" team could have some problems with other teams in the league. However, after losing its best forward in the District League, Eugeniusz Gajc, this change was very much felt, especially considering the small number of goals scored for the rest of the season. The player himself decided to change club colors and went to Mielec thus playing in the I league²³.

Due to the EDA plants good care of the team, kindness or sympathy of the environment, serious treatment of duties by players, the developed style of the game caused a dynamic increase in the sports level among most of the players. During the 1984/1985 season, the club ran two teams of seniors and seven youth groups, which would give a measurable effect in the form of trained players, representing the team from their area. The 1985/1986 season was the third and at the same time the last performance of RKS "Stal" Poniatowa in the third league, the team played very poorly and had lost most of its matches. The games from the 1986/1987 season in the District League were a kind of rebirth for the team from Poniatowa, which on 29th June in its last match, secured the title of champions of the District League. However, the excitement of staying at this level proved to be short lived as it turned out to be too early for the team from Poniatowa who only played in the III league for one year and then again fell to the District League. During the 1989/1990 season, a reorganization was to take place of the league, it was planned to combine two leagues from Lublin and Chelmska the hopes of creating an Interprovincial league²⁴. The team managed to qualify for the league

²² Kurier Lubelski No. 45-295 from 1980.

²³ One-day trip of the Society of the Poniatowa Friends: 25 years of the City of Poniatowa, Poniatowa 1987.

²⁴ Eastern Journal nr 77-120 z 1990r.

taking III place in its ranking²⁵. However, after only a year OZPN decided to liquidate the Interprovincial League, which was seen in RKS "Stal" Poniatoŵa game in the League District until the 1993/1994 season²⁶. The year 1998 came with a powerblow, when the club from Poniatoŵa loses its main sponsor EDA Plant S.A. In that situation, the club's management made efforts to acquire a strategic sponsor which was the Poniatoŵa Town and Commune Office. In this situation the club has changed the name from the Workers Sports Club to the City Sports Club "Stal" Poniatoŵa along with the change of name the club adopted a new statute by resolution²⁷.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the article was to make the club from Poniatoŵa visible in its shaping of Lublin's football and the arrangement of all the facts that make up the history of the Municipal Sports Club "Stal" Poniatoŵa with particular emphasis on the football sector through which together with residents played a central role in shaping sports attitudes in the city. Sports tradition goes back to the year 1951 and is associated with the creation of the Sports Club at the then Installation Equipment Manufacturing Plant. Up until 1995, RKS "Stal" Poniatoŵa, was a factory club fully supported by donating subsidies. As this was a worker plant, employees were its main initiators of sports activities thanks to their constant commitment and determination and as a result the Sports Club was created, and then the "Stal" sports club. From the beginning the sport club's activity was associated with the local plant. Thanks to the constant financial fluctuation the club could continue to grow, but along with the deterioration of the financial situation the years of stable establishment for the club had passed. This had influenced 'Stal' results and they started to lack adequate resources for maintaining the club at an appropriate level. Activity of RKS "Stal" Poniatoŵa was of enormous importance to Poniatoŵa's social life. From the very beginning, the club dealt mainly with propagating physical culture and qualified sports. Throughout the history of the club trainers, many talented players came out. There were many of them were representatives of the province, youth representatives of Poland, footballers such as Andrzej Peresada and Ryszard Ochodek and volleyball player Ewa Kamińska. Players like: Sławomir Wójtowicz, Roman Dębiński or Eugeniusz Gajec played in first-league teams. Undoubtedly, the volleyball player who made the greatest career was Zbigniew Jasiukiewicz who won by being acquired by the first league "Resovia" Rzeszów. While playing in Rzeszów he was appointed to the Poland's National Team, he participated in the Olympic Games in Mexico and Montreal. The years 1968-1970 were the best years in terms of performance for this player who gained his nickname the "bombardier" in the Wagner squad until 1976.

Even such great achievements of athletes who contributed to to make the club famous, they were not able to protect themselves from liquidation, everything was a direct decision of finances. Currently, the club only works a football section that has permanently integrated into the image framework the city of Poniatoŵa. The club plays a very important role in promoting physical culture and it can continue to do so, with the help of people for whom the good club and the Poniatoŵski community are the most important.

²⁵ Eastern Journal nr 100-200 z 1991r.

²⁶ Eastern Journal nr 88-180 z 1995r.

²⁷ Ibidem.

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