



**Jolanta E. Kowalska**

University of Lodz, Poland

ORCID 0000-0002-2708-2873

**Piotr Kędzia**

University of Lodz, Poland

ORCID 0000-0003-1708-5373

## **Education through sport with the principle of fair play in pre-war Łódź – a city of cultural differences**

### **Wychowanie przez sport wraz z zasadą fair play w przedwojennej Łodzi - miście różnic kulturowych**

**Abstract:** The educational aspects of sports were recognized during the development of sports along with its educational values, character formation, including the adherence to the fair play principle, primarily in English schools. Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic Games, based his philosophy of Olympism on them, aiming for the development of athletes from different nations. Łódź, a multicultural place – a *small center of games* at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, was such a place. Sport and various forms of physical activity were the foundation for bringing together people from different social, cultural, and religious backgrounds in this rapidly growing industrial city.

The Western European genealogy of fair play contains elements of medieval chivalric ethos, ethical virtues of Renaissance courtiers, and the moral ideals of a 19th-century English gentleman. The supplement to the fair play idea also includes the ethical sports contexts present in the histories of local sports communities. The overview of selected documents presented in this article testifies to the significant role of sport, along with the fair play principle, in the creation of a common, multicultural, industrial city. It also encourages

a brief presentation of pioneering actions aimed at popularizing sports with the fair play principle during the development of Łódź.

**Keywords:** sport, fair play, education, multicultural Lodz.

### **Introduction**

Sport, associated with improving physical and mental health, with well-being and personality development, is increasingly becoming an instrument for social advancement. In sports, noble competition, originating from various traditions at the turn of the centuries, would not be possible without the application of the fair play principle. Ancient Hellas is considered the homeland of athletic competition in the modern sense of the word. A country where highly developed culture, science, and art played a significant role in the history of European culture. The educational system in Athens was based on these ideals and was called *kalokagathia*, which in Greek meant *kalos* - beautiful, *kagathos* - good. The priority of the body in education gave a background to the entire Greek culture to such an extent that it encompassed the sphere of intellectual, artistic, and spiritual creativity, referring to literature, art, and theater.

Physical activity and participation in sports, combined with fair play, offer many educational and upbringing opportunities. Sports participants shape self-determination (committing themselves by accepting the rules) and internalize the canons of socially accepted behavior, attitudes, and actions – fair play is an important factor in socializing young people (Skoczylas, 2001, p. 246). As emphasized by Piotr Kędzia, elevating the fair play principle to the status of an ethical norm is an expression of intergenerational human striving for broadly understood social justice. „Today’s meaning of fair play contains elements of medieval chivalric ethos, ethical values of Renaissance courtiers, and the ethical canon of a 19th-century English gentleman” (Kędzia, 2012, p. 7). How to strive for victory, to be the best, operating only within the boundaries set by the main principle of sport – fair play? „In the ethos of the medieval knightly class, honor and fame played a significant role. Thus, we should look for justifications for those behaviors we describe with the word fair here” (Müller, 1995, p. 76). Fair play is now discussed not only in the context of sports competition but increasingly to illustrate a fair situation or human activity, as

sport in the 19th century – also the beginnings of its development  
in free Poland – was elitist, and members of sports clubs were usually

gentlemen. It was then recognized that honorable behavior arises from the essence of this social class and belongs to the inborn canon of behaviors (Czechowski and Kowalska, 2019, p. 611).

Pierre de Coubertin, the creator of the modern Olympic Games, „drew attention to the need to recognize the deepest spiritual elements in sports, common to all people regardless of their beliefs and convictions. He wanted to emphasize the importance of practicing sports for comprehensive respect in human relations” (Czechowski and Kowalska, 2019, pp. 608-609). So, how did sports originate in Łódź? To answer this question, based on source materials, including those made available for study at the State Archive in Łódź, selected documents concerning the development of sports in Łódź were analyzed, including: reports on the activities of the Łódź branch of the Polish YMCA, the Book of Protocols of the Sports Commission, and Łódź's daily newspapers, namely *Kurjer Łódzki* and *Łódzkie Echo Wieczorne*. The aim of this article is therefore to highlight the role of sports and fair play as a form of interaction among the residents of Łódź, a city characterized by diversity in terms of nationality, religion, and social background.

Thus, what were the beginnings of the establishment of the city, a multicultural city with educational and cultural differences?

### **The beginnings of the formation of the city of Łódź and the birth of sports in Łódź**

The dynamic development of Łódź took place in the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century when it transformed from a small town into one of the most important industrial centers globally, distinguished by its unique spatial and architectural characteristics. Before 1821, Łódź was a poor town with entirely wooden buildings. In 1820, a decree issued by the viceroy of the Kingdom of Poland, General Józef Zajączek, designated Łódź, located in the central lands of Poland, as a special zone. Rajmund Rembieliński selected Łódź to become an industrial center, thus elevating it to the status of an industrial city. Settlers and craftsmen (weavers, clothiers) were granted benefits and financial assistance by the state, provided with plots for construction, perpetually leased land, exemption from rent for six years, and military service. People from various countries, with different religions, started to settle in Łódź during this time (Stefański, 2016, p. 7; 36-37). In 1826, Łódź had 27 masters of the textile craft, and within three years, the number of workers reached 700, with a population of 4,723 people living in 369 houses. „The greatest development of the city occurred in the 1870s – that's when the largest fortunes were made, and the most investments

were made” (Szymański & Torański, 2016, p. 21). Over the next 20 years, the population of Łódź and the number of houses increased fourfold, factory workers tenfold, and production fifteenfold (Pyć, 2008, p. 12). Alongside Poles, Germans, Jews (craftsmen, workers, manufacturers), and Russians (representatives of the administration, military, and police) lived here. Not only factories were built, but also houses, tenements, residences, public buildings, parks, and sports clubs.

The memories of people and their achievements fade over time. However, the connection of the inhabitants with their city, regardless of nationality, is evidenced by their deeds, erected structures, examples of creativity (in diaries, poetry, or music), and established sports clubs. Worth mentioning are the Geyers, with Ludwig Geyer being a visionary entrepreneur and known as the *first Lodzermensch*. His white factory, the first plastered industrial facility in Łódź, still stands today and houses the Central Museum of Textiles, the largest in Europe and unique in the world, dedicated to the textile industry and all its aspects (Muzeum Włókiennictwa). From 1922-1923, an informal football section operated at Ludwik Geyer’s factory as part of the Sports and Educational Circle. A resolution by the Council of Ministers on November 10, 1926, created legal conditions obliging the organization of sports centers at industrial plants. In 1927, a group of workers illegally and independently adapted the factory grounds for gymnastic exercises, later transformed into a football field and equipped with facilities for light athletics. These actions received approval from the Geyer factory owners, Gustav Wilhelm, and Robert Geyer, who donated the area to the club. The sports facility hosted physical education classes for the youth from the Geyer factory and unemployed youth from the vicinity (Kędzia, 2020).

A significant role in the development of industrial Łódź was played by Karol Scheibler and his family, the creator of an industrial empire – almost a small town – with its own school, fire brigade, power plant, and hospital (in the area of *Księży Młyn*). He was the first to open a fully mechanized spinning mill in Łódź. Utilizing their estates not only in Łódź but also in its surroundings, Scheibler and his family engaged in hunting. Scheibler established the first organization dedicated to hunting sports, the Animal Care Society, and subsequent family members popularized this discipline mainly within bourgeois circles (Śmiechowicz, 2023, p. 592).

Another family, the Heinzls, highly meritorious for the city, contributed to the creation of, among other things, the railway line from Pabianice – through Łódź – to Zgierz. Towards the end of the 19th century, they played a role in the development of equestrian sports, especially for the wealthier

part of society and women, as well as in cycling sports (Śmiechowicz, 2023, p. 593).

Conventionally, the date of the birth of sports in Łódź is considered, as suggested by Anna Śmiechowicz, to be June 7, 1824. This marks the establishment of the Shooting Society initiated by German craftsmen, which annually organized shooting competitions for the title of *rooster king* in Łódź until the end of the 19th century (Śmiechowicz, 2023, p. 591). At the end of the 19th century, lawn tennis became popular among the wealthy German population, and chess among the Jewish community. For all layers of society, especially workers, football became prevalent. The first football team operated within the German association *Union* from 1906. In 1908, the football club *Victoria*, which united the German population, was founded, as well as the *Łódzki Klub Sportowy*, with its statute first registered in 1909. Sections for track and field athletics and tennis also operated within this club (Śmiechowicz, 2023, p. 597-598). In 1910, employees of the Z.T.A administration founded the *J. Heinzel and J. Kunitzer Society of Physical Development Enthusiasts* in Widzew. During the interwar period, the *Łódzki Klub Sportowy* and the *Workers' Sports Society Widzew* in Łódź developed vigorous sports and educational-cultural activities. The most promoted form of entertainment by German immigrants to Łódź was gymnastics, while various forms of outdoor recreation, characterized by strong national and social divisions, were practiced in the city. As A. Śmiechowicz writes (2023, p. 602): „Similar to sports, they were characterized by strong national and social divisions. Their selection depended on the nurtured cultural patterns in individual circles, rooted in, for example, religion or living conditions”.

### **Educational dimension of sports and fair play in pre-war Łódź**

When analyzing the educational dimension of the activities of the first sports associations in Łódź, it is essential to pay attention to their ideological diversity. For instance, in the Polish YMCA, the pedagogy of sports work focused on the development of the spirit, mind, and body of young people. In the Gymnastic Society *Sokół*, patriotism was nurtured, while the Workers' Sports Club of the Workers' University Society and the Workers' Sports Society *Widzew* promoted class struggle. To understand the beginnings of the emergence of sports ethics awareness in Łódź, it is worth going back to the early 20th century. Founded in 1905 in Łódź, the Gymnastic Society *Sokół* was one of the most meritorious sports associations operating in Polish territories. The members of the Society adopted the *10 Commandments of Sokół* as their moral imperative. This Decalogue popularized values such

as patriotism, obedience, honesty, goodness, brotherhood, modesty, and sacrifice (Bogusz, 1995, pp. 148-149). It is also noteworthy that the *Sokół* activists made efforts to participate in the Olympic movement. On February 15, 1920, during the Congress of the District Council III - Łódź District of the Mazovian Union of Gymnastic Societies *Sokół*, a delegation of observers was appointed for the VII Olympic Games in Antwerp. Although this delegation's journey did not materialize due to the outbreak of the Polish-Bolshevik war, in 1922, the District Council organized, as part of cyclical Mazovian District Gatherings, the so-called Sports Games. The program of the competitions mainly included track and field events, weightlifting, gymnastics exercises, swimming, shooting, sports games, and football (Bogusz, 1995, p. 18).

In addition to moral commandments, internal regulations of sports associations also defined standards of fair play conduct. In point 1 of the Sports Section *Resursa* Sports Regulations, it was stated:

Every member of the Sports Section of the *Resursa*' Society, when traveling in uniform and under its emblem, represents the Society externally. Therefore, by his behavior, he is responsible for the honor and good name of the Society, and he should conduct himself with dignity so as not to bring harm to the sport and himself. He is obliged to observe the rules of proper riding, which protect both the rider and encountered individuals from accidents, and in collective riding, they are a necessary condition for maintaining order (APŁ, TRRŁ, *Księga Protokołów Komisji Sportowej*, sign. 29, p. 2).

The ethical profile of the Polish YMCA in Łódź was primarily shaped by the central authorities of this international organization. In 1933, the headquarters of this organization defined the personality profile of the *Imciarz* (a YMCA member). It was advocated that members of each branch should be distinguished by such qualities as reliability, honesty, a sense of cooperation, social awareness, the ability to engage in friendly relationships, and a democratic approach in social life (Ognisko Łódzkie Polskiej YMCA. Zestawienie przychodu i rozchodu za 1932/1933 r. i budżet na rok 1933/34. W: APŁ, PYŁ, *Protokoły z posiedzeń i uchwały Rady Krajowej Polskiej YMCA 1928-1939*, sign. 4, p. 16). The physical development of youth was sought to be realized through „(...) participation in social and sports life in a noble spirit, where personal benefits give way to noble competition (...)” (APŁ, PYŁ, *Sprawozdania z dorocznych zebrań członków rzeczywistych Polskiej YMCA w Łodzi*, 1928, sign. 6, p. 54).

In the Polish YMCA, the significant role of instructors and coaches in building an educational work ethos was recognized. Their function was emphasized during the World Congress in Toronto and Cleveland: „A sports instructor is a modern apostle, a person of great values of character, mind, and heart. The YMCA must have such instructors. The selection of instructors is the most crucial issue in physical education matters” (*Streszczenia i programy pogadanek wygłoszonych w Polskiej YMCA w Łodzi, 1929-1930*, sign. 80, b.p.s).

In addition to top-down demands and imperatives, the agenda of the YMCA branch in Łódź, particularly the Character and Sports Commission, played a crucial role in shaping the moral sensitivity of its members. In one of the points of the report titled *Flaws and deficiencies in character*, it highlighted the necessity of educational work in the following areas:

- 1) Inability to cooperate; 2) Insufficient dedication to others;
- 3) Lack of proper and well-behaved athletes; 4) Inappropriate behavior towards other teams during competitions; 5) The need to develop greater honesty, which is essential in the newly emerging state of Poland; 6) The necessity to eliminate international antagonisms;
- 7) Lack of understanding that sport is for people, not people for sport/ fear of spreading professionalism/ (...); 8) Inappropriate treatment of women and alcoholism; 9) Lack of democracy; 10) Lack of perseverance in work; 11) Lack of courage and independence; 12) Indifference to nature (*Sprawozdanie z działalności Ogniska Łódzkiego Polskiej YMCA*, sign. 21, p. 1).

Considerable attention was also given to sanctioning ethical standards in factory and workers' associations. In 1930, during the II General Assembly of members of the Sports and Educational Circle of the *L. Geyer* Factory, its chairman A. Michałowski noted: „Due to the social interaction of Circle members, the Community cannot tolerate unethical and immoral individuals, as each member, through improper conduct, simultaneously lowers the ethics of the Circle” (APŁ, LG, *Geyer*, sign. 985, p. 3). Another controversial issue was the relationships between factory workers and laborers. The association's leadership sought to ensure equal treatment of both groups, especially the laborers. Juliusz Wende, the head of physical education at the Circle, stated: „There are no such differences in treatment. If such an individual were to be found, the community would turn away from them, as no one should care about such an individual” (APŁ, LG, *Geyer*, sign. 985, p. 9). Concern for adherence to ethical principles in *Geyer* was also expressed



by the association's leadership through the establishment of a special distinction for a player who demonstrated exemplary moral behavior. In 1930, the General Assembly of the Circle awarded the *special badge for the most disciplined athlete* to Alfred Ślaski (APŁ, LG, Geyer, sign. 985, p. 1).

In the Polish sports press of the interwar period, issues related to the moral conduct of players, coaches, referees, and spectators were frequently addressed in match reports (Kowalska, 2020, p. 63).

### **Educating the audience for the enjoyment of sports events in pre-war Łódź**

The origins of educational efforts aimed at cultivating a cultured appreciation of sports events in Łódź can be traced along with the development of sports and recreation during the interwar period. An analysis of source opinions regarding the behavior of the Łódź audience indicates a wide range of views. In the pages of *Kurjer Łódzki* (1936, p. 5), on one hand, the behavior of fans was described as characterized by decency and sportsmanship, while on the other hand, it was often negatively judged. The Łódź audience was accused of capriciousness, apathy, and, in some cases, even savagery. To counteract undesirable behaviors of Łódź sports club supporters, a public discussion was conducted through the Łódź press, urging for *audience education*. A significant contribution to promoting new standards of fan behavior and fair play principles came from one of the leading sports associations in Łódź – *Łódzki Klub Sportowy* (ŁKS). In 1928, in a message to the club's supporters published in *Łódzkie Echo Wieczorne* (1928, p. 7), the Board appealed for the limitation of negative emotions during sports competitions. A few years later, in 1933, the authorities of ŁKS canceled a football match against the German team *Blau Weiss* in Łódź. This decision was made under the influence of protests from the Łódź Jewish community, which brought attention to the persecution of their people in Germany (Bogusz, 2007, p. 404). Towards the end of the thirties, ŁKS activists opposed the so-called *Aryan paragraph*, which aimed to exclude non-Christian associations, officials, and referees from the Polish Football Association (*Żydzi*).

It is worth adding that in Łódź in the interwar period, the custom of using various items to emphasize group identity developed, and the tradition of organizing football matches between fans of Łódź teams was inaugurated (Bogusiak Paradowski, 2008, p. 338). Football matches for the *Fans' Cup* were also organized, with fans of Łódź teams as its sponsors (*Kurjer Łódzki*, 1935, p. 5).



## Conclusion

Considering the manifestations of sports and fair play in the sports culture as a form of interaction among the residents of Łódź, a city diverse in terms of nationality, religion, and social background, it is essential to point out that the emergence of numerous sports associations and educational and upbringing programs may indicate, as A. Śmiechowicz suggests, a „lack of willingness or rather real possibilities to create a common ground for spending free time in the city” (Śmiechowicz, 2023, p. 604). This contributed to people living more *next to each other than with each other* in groups.

It is worth exploring the history (often very interesting but also tragic) of both well-known and lesser-known individuals associated with sports in Łódź. As highlighted by Paulina Tobiasz-Lis (2008, p. 195): „time in the city’s space is a fundamental attribute of urban reality and human cognition. It sets the rhythm of the city, the continuity and passing of generations, and their social relations embedded in space”. The old Łódź, with its smoking chimneys from numerous factories, bustling with life and trade, and the buzz of many languages (Polish, German, Jewish, and Russian), no longer exists. What remains are magnificent buildings as visible signs of passing time, the greatness of this city, and many shared matters such as the development of education, culture, art, and sports.

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