

SPORT IN RELATION BETWEEN THE TOWN'S INHABITANTS AND THE EDUCATIONAL CENTRE'S OFFICERS AND CONSCRIPTS

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I'd like to present a part of my own experience in co-operation of the army and the community with regard to sport. I don't intend the following presentation to be a scientific discussion, but rather a presentation of examples of activities linking town's inhabitants with Slovenian conscripts in the first years of the country's independence.

Slovenia is an internationally recognised independent state since 1991. The origins of independent military schooling for conscripts are in 1990, but the regular schooling for conscripts began in 1992. In Slovenia, the duration of military training is seven months. From 1992 to 1996, the first part of the military training in Slovenia was organised in Educational Centres, in which the conscripts acquired basic military skills. After three months, they proceeded to combat units. In Educational Centres, 100 people took care 350 conscripts. The sports activities were organised by an university-educated officer with a degree in physical education. Due to the change to the uniform type of schooling in 1996, the Educational Centres were abolished.

One of the seven Educational Centres was located in Slovenska Bistrica, a town in north-eastern Slovenia with approximately 7000 inhabitants and with relatively well-developed sports activities. Some of the town's sports clubs compete on the state level. It is worth mentioning the Judo Club (that was one of the top clubs in former Yugoslavia) and Volleyball and Basketball clubs and young athletes who represented Slovenia at the Junior World and European Championships.

The barracks used to be on the outskirts of the town, but by now the location is in the very centre of Slovenska Bistrica. Sports facilities at the barracks include a football field with a running track and handball, basketball and volleyball courts. There are no indoor sports facilities. The barracks' northern fence is next to the town's sports park. Sports facilities there include a multipurpose sports hall, gym used for judo practice, indoor tennis courts, football stadium with running track, swimming pool, asphalt covered basketball and handball courts, tennis courts, fitness centre.

Around the town, there are a number of fish ponds, orienteering map, ski slope, cross-country slopes and an airfield. The nearest indoor swimming pool is twenty kilometres away and the schools in the vicinity have five gyms.

The chief users of sports facilities are primary school pupils. The town's primary school has almost 1300 pupils, which makes it the largest primary school in the state. Its pupils have been very successful at sports competitions.

Even though - as a new institution - we had no traditional links with the town, the conscripts and officers established many contacts with the town's inhabitants and started to co-operate in a number of ways. We most frequently co-operated with the primary school and some of the sports clubs.

CO-OPERATION WITH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Co-operation with the town's primary school was initially suggested by one of the physical education teachers. He learned that some of our programmes included interesting novelties that could be used in schools as well. He expressed a particular interest in orienteering which -though known in Slovenia - was a novelty in Slovenska Bistrica. As orienteering is a part of the physical education plan for conscripts, we made an orienteering map, now also used by the school's pupils and available to all of the town's inhabitants. We organised a competition on the state level on this map. The Educational Centre's officers were pleased to accept the teacher's suggestion. First, we organised an orienteering course for the teachers, who were then able to instruct their pupils. At the end of the school year a competition in orienteering was organised for the pupils and the officers helped to carry it out. They prepared the competitors at the start, supervised them during the competition, announced the results and prepared the refreshments.

The pupils have shown a high degree of motivation for work with the conscripts. The conscripts were taught by the Athletics Club's referees how to carry out organising and refereeing, enabling them to perform these tasks at the pupils' athletics competitions. Usually, some of the conscripts were well-known athletes, who distributed medals. For bigger school competitions, the pupils were allowed to use the sports facilities at the barracks.

CO-OPERATION WITH SPORTS CLUBS

We co-operated with sports clubs in a number of ways. Our co-operation included the following:

- shared training
- presentations of activities
- exchange of knowledge
- competitions
- assistance with the organisation of competitions

FOOTBALL

Football players, who spent the first part of their military training as conscripts at the Slovenska Bistrica Educational Centre, trained at the local club. Moreover, we established a military football team that played successfully with other clubs, including the current state champion FC Maribor.

Military teams took part in the local football league. The members of the town's Football Club refereed the matches at the military tournaments, organised in our Educational Centre. The teams of all Educational Centres in Slovenia took part in these tournaments.

JUDO

Some of the Educational Centre's officers were judokas. At their suggestion, the members of the Judo Club regularly presented their activities to the conscripts and organised judo lessons for officers, so they could learn the basics of judo, the skill that was usefully employed in conscripts' workouts. Judo Club's facilities were used by conscripts practising combat sports, taught by officers and Judo Club members. The army contributed part of the equipment for the Judo Club gym. For a while we had a very good judo team, formed from conscripts and officers, which competed with the top three teams in the state league at the tournament at the town's sports hall.

KARATE

With the help of the Karate Club, a presentation of various self-defence techniques was organised for conscripts and officers. A regular course was organised for the officers. Thereby they improved their skill in combat sports.

In co-operation with the judo and karate clubs, we organised a course of combat sports for military instructors from the entire state.

ATHLETICS

Co-operation of the army and athletes was particularly strong in organising running events. We helped organise cross country meets, ranging from school to state level competitions. Together, we organised the state championship in mountain run. Our co-operation in organising the annual »Autumn Run« is particularly important. The »Autumn Run« takes place at the Štatenberg Castle and by now, it developed into a military track event holiday. Every year, about three hundred runners (conscripts, officers and civilians) run on the ten kilometres track. This year, some of the neighbouring countries' soldiers are expected to take part in the event. Next year, we would like to invite competitors from the CISM member countries as well.

SPORTS CLIMBING

Sports climbers organised a presentation and competitions on at the sports hall for the conscripts. The most enthusiastic conscripts were able to train at the club. The army contributed part of the climbing equipment.

SHOOTING

Members of the Shooting Club regularly invited the military teams to their competitions. We practised shooting with air rifles at the town's shooting range while the members of the Shooting Club used the army shooting range and tried out military rifles.

Officers, police officers and hunters competed biannually in shooting with automatic rifle, shotgun and pistol.

SKIING

Every autumn, before the first snow, we helped with the preparation of the nearest ski slope, enabling the inhabitants of Slovenska Bistrica to ski more pleasantly and safely (and earned some free admission tickets). With the help of the Ski Club, we organised a competition of officers in giant slalom and cross-country skiing every winter.

TENNIS

Tennis course was organised for the officers at the Tennis Club. Most of them continued to play tennis regularly on the club's tennis courts and on indoor tennis courts.

SWIMMING

During the summer, we assessed the conscripts' swimming skills at the town's swimming pool and organised a competition for the best swimmers. For the conscripts, who couldn't swim, we organised swimming lessons. We were allowed to use the pool at times when it is closed to visitors.

OTHER FORMS OF CO-OPERATION

MILITARY SPORTS COMPETITIONS

The Slovenska Bistrica Educational Centre had led the way in organising the state military competitions. On the state level, we organised military pentathlon, orienteering, a football tournament and a number of track events. In these activities, we received immeasurable assistance from athletes and trainers from civilian sports clubs and the town's sport union with their valuable experience and expert knowledge.

MILITARY SPORTS CLUB

Since only the formally registered clubs are allowed to compete at the state level, we set up a military sports club. In contrast to some countries, military sports clubs in Slovenia didn't have an important tradition. Some of the other Educational Centres followed our lead. The club members competed in rafting, shooting and orienteering. Membership was available to the town's inhabitants as well. From a club that included a number of sports, the exclusively orienteering club developed. Its members have been successful in competitions at home and as members of the national military team.

ALL-STATE CAMPAIGNS IN THE LOCAL AREA

Sports associations organise campaigns with the intention of stimulating people for sports activities. We helped carry out some of these actions.

MONTH OF SPORT

Month of Sport is a campaign, organised by the Ministry for Education and Sport. The motto of the campaign is: »Recreation is outside your door. Open them.« It is advertised with large posters and over TV and radio. Every Slovenian family receives a booklet with information on local sports activities, sports clubs, schools, therefore, on »the sport for all« activities, taking place throughout the year and on additional events in the scope of the campaign. Army contributes to the campaign as well. At the Educational Centre, we organised the so-called »days of open doors«. We competed in basketball, football, volleyball and shooting with civilian teams.

WIND IN YOUR HAIR - SPORT AGAINST DRUGS

Wind in Your Hair - Sport Against Drugs is a campaign organised by the Slovenian Sports Union. The purpose of the campaign is to warn against the dangers of drug abuse and to motivate the children to live healthily. During the campaign, military teams play against schoolchildren's teams. Players of well-known clubs, who are in the army at the time and are playing in the military teams, represent a special attraction.

All of our more important sports activities, that were connected throughout with our living and working environment, were covered by the local media (local radio stations, local newspaper and the town's cable television).
