

The coach's role in shaping the attitudes and values of a competitor in Poland after World War II on the example of Wunderteam

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Summary

The purpose of this publication is to present the concept of sport philosophy, implemented on the basis of certain values between individuals and trainers – Jan Mulak and the Wunderteam – in historically and politically challenging conditions. The article shows certain values, which were headed via outstanding individual cooperation with other great personalities from the world of sports in a way to fulfill a masterpiece – the Wunderteam. The project of creating Polish athletics team was not a programme of self-improvement of outstanding individuals, but was joint international work, which was to serve the Polish society. That concept of genius of Jan Mulak as a coordinator, and his cooperators, initiated huge progress in Polish sports.

Keywords: Wunderteam, values, coach, team, Mulak

The turn of the forties and fifties of the twentieth century in Poland was an extremely difficult period, that on the one hand, aroused hope in society because the war had come to an end, while on the other, it had to deal with huge losses, pain, hunger, orphan-hood and malnutrition. The war caused great damage both to infrastructure, economy, industry, and above all, it had negative impact on the mentality of the liberated man. With the end of hostilities, an intensive reconstruction of the Polish state in almost all fields began. This movement was also very visible in sports.

This article shows the influence of extraordinary coaching individuals on shaping the attitudes of Polish athletes in the fifties and sixties of the twentieth century. The research material consisted of available literature, press releases, archival newsreels and chronicle news, electronic publishing, and above all, interviews

with eyewitnesses of creating the Polish athletics team. Eminent experts spoke on this matter, and above all, witnesses of those events:

These interviews supported by source materials are a valuable information base about the formation of prominent sports personalities of the Polish national athletic team during a challenging historical period.

Difficult post-war times, when lack of money was a cause of trouble, people were malnourished, mentally and physically mutilated, there was no equipment, sport centres, facilities or qualified staff, but this did not discourage the initiators ready to rebuild Polish sport. Although the victims of war were many leading players, coaches and activists who died at extermination camps or on the battlefield, those who remained, undertook the intensive process of building Polish sport. Liberation and the end of the ban on sports was the cause of the explosion of events within recreation and sport nature. Clubs renewed their activities, sections became reactivated, and district sport associations organized a number of competitions. According to Stefan Pietkiewicz (2009), following clubs began or renewed their activities at that time.

In 1948, Stanisław Zakrzewski, who was main organizer and training course leader at the Warsaw Academy of Physical Education and Waclaw Gąssowski, Antoni Morończyk, Karol Hoffman, Marian Hoffman and Włodzimierz Druźbiak, took on the initiative to organize the second unification course at AWF Warsaw. Its goal was to coach the pre-war players who could take care of young training people. Originators also wanted to unify the system of sports training in Poland and give

Tab. 1. Persons giving interviews to the author in 2014

Marian Bukowiec	Dariusz Piotrowski
Zbigniew Deluga	Jerzy Skucha
Urszula Figwer	Henryk Sozański
Marek Józwik	Edward Stawiarz
Jaroslawa Józwiakowska	Zbigniew Tomkowski
Andrzej Majkowski	Zenon Ważny
Edward Młeczko	Kazimierz Zimny
Maciej Petruczenko	Ryszard Żukowski

Tab. 2. Renovation of sports clubs in Poland according to S. Pietkiewicz (2009)

Warsaw	February/ May 14 th	KKS Orzeł/ Legia, Sarmata, Skra, Syrena
Cracow	March	AZS, Cracovia, HKS, PKS, Legia, Wisła
Łódź	April	AZS, DKS, HKS, ŁKS
Silesia	May 12 th	AKS Chorzów, AZS Gliwice, Ligoza, Krywałt, Pogoń Katowice, and ZZK Bielsko
Gdańsk Coast	May 16'	Gedania, Flota, Lechia, PKS, Płomień, Milicyjny Klub Sportowy in Gdańsk, MKS in Sopot, RKS OMTUR
Szczecin	May 18'	Błękitni, Pionier
Gorzów Wielkopolski	June 17 th	AKS
Poznań	July	Warta, AZS, KSM OMTUR
Pomeranian	September 12 th	ZMW, KKS, GKS Grudziądz, HKS, Pomorzanie Toruń, Zryw Włocławek
Kielce		Lechia Kielce, Broń Radom, Ogniwo Skarżysko, KSZO Ostrowiec, Pronit Pionki, Star Starachowice

relevant powers to people promising success in coaching. Between October 10th-29th, 1949, the second unification course was held, the leader of which was Maurice Baquet. The workshop brought together a large number of participants. From the report of the course eyewitness – Zenon Ważny – an interesting picture of the participants was outlined:

“Among them there were the pre-war leading players: Witold Gerutto, Grzegorz Dunecki, Tadeusz Starzyński, Józef Zylewicz and Jan Mulak. And that was also the first course, to which we – students, were invited. There were four of us: Alexander Ogłobin, Stanisław Dobrowolski, Andrzej Krzesiński and me” - an interview with Zenon Ważny on August 26th 2014 in Warsaw. He is a Polish athlete, pole vaulter, player of clubs: “Ogniwo” Warsaw, “AZS” Warsaw, and “Legia” Warsaw, member of Wunderteam. Two-time Olympian from Helsinki (1952) and Melbourne (1956). Finalist of the European Championships in Stockholm (1958). Three-time Polish record-holder and four-time Polish champion. Professor of physical education, employee of the Academy of Physical Education in Warsaw, in 1981-1983 Vice President of Polish Athletics Association.

This training course has become a symbol and cornerstone for the construction of Polish sport training system, because it was the meeting point of coaches and trainers from the Polish athletic environment, who built the power of Polish athletics – the Wunderteam. In recognition of outstanding performances of Polish athletes (13-14.07.1957), on Neckarstadion in Stuttgart, the name “Sport” was used by journalists in Zurich for the first time. This name has become a symbol of Polish national athletics team in the fifties and sixties of the twentieth century.

A team of trainers and activists, who sparing no efforts have set themselves a clear goal and with methodical precision implemented it, is considered creators of the success of this extraordinary phenomenon. They were: outstanding pre-war intellectualist and polyglot – Waław Gąssowski, a representative of the pre-war intelligence, a similar class man – Witold Gerutto – the pre-war European runner up in the decathlon. But there was also a whole group of random individuals, who were looking for their place in sport, because they were people without any profession. A simple worker Paweł Kozubek, who later became the coach of the national team in the hammer throw. Tadeusz Starzyński – later educator of the world record holder in the triple jump Józef Szmidt, who was a railwayman with no education and had never coached before. He was only trained under Mulak’s aegis and gradually pursued great sport. Zygmunt Zabierzowski was another representative of the pre-war intelligence and also one of the participants, and most of the heroes from the Warsaw Uprising, and later a coach with huge merit in Cuba. “It was such a jumble of extremely interesting people who would have never probably got along with each other if not for the leadership of Mulak, who was able to organize it all. His leadership was clear due to his organizational skills. He was able to take control over all, maybe because he did not have bad habits: he did not drink nor smoke, and men from that period, especially after the war circumstances, were usually people with nicotine and alcohol addiction.” – an interview of the author with Maciej Petruczenko – press journalist and TV commentator on November 5th, 2015 in Warsaw.

This genius of Jan Mulak manifested primarily in excellent work organization. He took over the helm of

the team leader and built a coaching collective. He could find a common goal for trainers of different athletics disciplines. People from different backgrounds with strong, decisive attitudes, through the authority of Jan Mulak, did not compete with each other, to the contrary, they became a team of friends seeking to lift Polish athletics to the heights of Europe and even the world (Mulak 2006).

Where did Jan Mulak acquire the experience to lead the team and the desire to shape human characters? According to Józef Tischner (1993), every acquired value of human experience, his intellect, ability to make informed choices, influences decision-making. Values are the basis of all choices, they determine attitudes towards people and things and affect emotions and self-esteem. Józef Tischner (2000) in "Świat ludzkiej nadziei" [The World of Human Hope] has shown values as a natural, appropriate human environment. In "Etyka wartości i nadziei" [The Ethics of Values and Hope] (Tischner 2001) he emphasized that man lives among values. They are a kind of background that appears before and behind a human being and inspires his actions.

Similarly, Józef Lipiec (2001) emphasizes that Man in a given area is within the range of the various influences, interactions of both we consider positive and those that have a negative or even destructive effect. These signals reach the unit and continue to operate among it, and there is no way to determine the limits of this effect. According to Józef Lipiec, this area or perhaps the more accurate term – this world – is boundless.

Jan Mulak's value in the world was influenced by many of the experiences he had accumulated through his life. Since his school years, he had paid great attention to learning, gaining knowledge and taking care of his body. As a student, he learned sports rivalry and his passion for recreation. These activities simultaneously complemented the social functions of a sports activist (Woltman, Zaborniak 2006). Already in junior high school, he became president of the School Sports Club. His first successes in sports were in swimming and athletics. On his way, he met outstanding pre-war sports coaches A. Cejzik and J. Kałuża (Mulak 2006). As a teenager, he became a "Skra Warszawa" player, and in less than twenty years, he became its vice president. At the same time, he led a sports section in *Dziennik Ludowy* [The People's Daily]. He also spent the war years very actively, he was active in the opposition, political and military conspiracy (Mulak 1984). He did it so that after the war, he would rebuild structures in the PPS ranks (Mulak 1990). He acted in strict leadership of the party. As an opponent of the PPS and PPR reunification in 1948, he was declared an enemy of the people and of the Soviet Union and therefore, he had to resign from active politics. He found his place in sport. Throughout his life, he was guided by values, and even in the face of heavy war experiences, when his and his family's life was threatened, he never did anything against his self-implemented rules (Mulak 1990).

Roman Ingarden (1987) believed that a person's life without value cannot be happy. Only the ability to live,

to surrender and to realize values will make him happy. Mulak, in his life, followed the instructions dictated by his own value system. Such values were posted by Józef Lipiec (2014, p. 21):

"Courage (in toil of fight), dignity (of each player), freedom (in the self-realization and focused worthy purposes), friendship and respect (beyond all divisions), justice (in evaluations), equality (at the start and measures of actions) and finally, the most famous of them, honesty in the game (i.e. fair play), requesting not only discipline from themselves and others, but also responsibility for the equal treatment of one's self and others (...)"

Reference to these values by coaches and realization of a common goal became the basis of wonderful friendships in sports. The result of this collaboration was the creation of Polish athletics schools. During the first sport camps in the Karkonosze Mountains, Jan Mulak introduced the principle of information exchange between coaches. Evening coaching team meetings, sharing insights and analysis of progress gave rise to cooperation of professional teams that, in the fifties and sixties of the twentieth century, created the Polish training concept. Through the exchange of coaching insights, creating an atmosphere of friendship, cooperation and shared responsibility, expertise in various disciplines was systematized and popularized. Experience through open discussion, often very turbulent, was gained, which resulted in the creation of an excellent team of professionals, athletics coaches. Common discussions were the basis for building the Polish school in the triple jump, javelin, hammer throw and races. Due to the actual synthesis of skills, the "Polish training concept" was created." The role of Jan Mulak was not to be underestimated in this activity.

Mulak being neither an outstanding runner, nor a great specialist, was self-taught, but his running school involved interval training, running in nature, and the Karkonosze Mountains, which he invented for athletics. And there were other places for athletes: at first Walcz, then Spała with Gerutto and Wunderteam (Mulak 2006). "Of course, it was not Mulak only, but also Starzyński, Szelest, Kozubek, Zieleniewski, Gąssowski and many others. It was a great team, on which none were outstanding players, but Jan Mulak perfectly combined it all." – an interview of the author with Andrzej Majkowski on 14th September 2015 in Warsaw. He is a Polish diplomat, an official, the former Undersecretary of State in the President's Office. In 1969-1972, President of the Polish Athletics Association.

The fact that they all believed in success despite that this belief seemed unreal when analysing the reality, was illustrious for Jan Mulak and his team. They began working with young athletes from raising overall physical fitness and creating individualized training plans. For those players, personal plans that far exceeded their current capabilities were prepared, but militarized in the system of preparation, which in most cases, provided the first opportunity for systematic, intensive training, which brought forward more than the expected assump-

tions. A significant role in the planning of sport training by Jan Mulak was played by Baquet training, i.e. proposal to take athletic training outside the sport stadium using “fartlek” [running fun], especially that Mulak had very similar insights from their running training. The use of natural terrain conditions, height differences: run-downs or run-ups, diverse grounds: soft, hard, sand, meadow, ploughed field, track or bog, required the player to match muscle tone to changing conditions. According to the authors of this concept, the lack of monotony encouraged harder work, and changing the ground caused the player to quickly focus on a difficult surface to be able to relax when the terrain is easy. This method, according to Jan Mulak, was considered the most effective (Pietkiewicz, 2006). When analysing contemporary training methods, the fact that Mulak relied on the “fartlek” Swedish form of improvised training, popular on its basis, he developed the Large and Small Fun Race, where the Small Fun Race was “fartlek” supplemented with terrain athletics, and in the case of the Large Fun Race, it was completed with work on the pace. The use of this method allowed better results because it affected the asthenic generation that was only “recharging its batteries” after the war. Organisms malnourished, nervous and often ravaged by disease could participate in training, which gave them the opportunity to be close to nature and allowed to adjust the pace and intensity to the individual condition of a player. He placed a lot of importance on the growth of motor abilities among sportsmen and the improvement of co-ordination, which was obtained through the use of a variety of exercises, and in particular, activities using hurdles.

Action set forth was to improve physical condition, to deal with the increase in intensity. The task of trainers Zygmunt Szelest, Witold Gerutto and Jan Mulak was to develop the largest possible battery for improving for field, hurdle exercises, which were to serve all, both runners and technical competition players. Trainers did their job creating a specific set of specialist exercises, which was regularly replenished for many years. They were the masters of using the advantages of the field brought by mild and varied routes of the Karkonosze Mountains. They were also the authors of new groups of exercises that, due to the lack of equipment, were based on what was provided by nature.

“Is it possible to imagine that the javelin goes into the forest and within the framework of training, pounds an axe into a tree? And then all the specialized training Mr Szelest ran, was like the story with the axe. And so they trained. It was not specialized training as understood today, but it was based on natural predispositions and natural conditions of training.” – an interview of the author with Henryk Sozański on August 26th 2014 in Warsaw. He is a Polish athlete, former Polish junior record-holder in the high jump, representative of the country.

Also, sport camps attended by representatives of the Polish Athletics in the fifties of the twentieth century were much different than current standards. The story of the first sport meeting for Polish athletes in the beau-

tiful forests of the Karkonosze Mountains was told in an interview by a participant of that memorable event – Zenon Ważny. In January 1952, during preparation for the Olympic Games in Helsinki, one of the organizers was Jan Mulak – a man with charisma. Then, a winter camp was organized in the Karkonosze Mountains in Sosnówka. Athletes lived there in houses, where besides cots, there was virtually nothing. Zenon Ważny with Janusz Sidło and Andrzej Krzesiński along with three other residents, lived in a house named Konwalijka (*Little lily-of-the-valley*). The house consisted of three small rooms with a large room – living room – in the middle, and with a little stove in its centre. It was a metal-cast stove with an oven for heating. It was the only source of heat then, and it was winter, and the only source that was used for water heating. There was no running water, but there was snow all around. “We took a huge metal bowl, acquired a lot of snow, left it on the stove and we went training. When we returned sweated, we took off the clothes and hung around. The bowl with hot water served us to wash up with a wet towel and soap. Those were our conditions for Olympic preparation ..., but what was just so interesting? There were no complaints that the conditions are bad. No one complained.” – an interview of the author with Zenon Ważny on September 26th 2014.

Preparation at sport centres, which are today famous for excellent conditions, and in which representatives prepare for the most important sporting events of the twenty-first century, looked similarly. But before that, future Wunderteam masters were the authors of their training base buildings. Spała or Wałcz are centres, which once had been built – racecourses, springboards, viewpoints – and created by famous Polish athletes competing for medals at major sporting events: the Olympics and European Championships: Elżbieta Duńska, Jerzy Chromik, Zdzisław Krzyszkowiak, Janusz Sidło, Zenon Ważny, Henryk Grabowski, Gerard Mach, etc. To implement training – as Urszula Figwer said in an interview – first a place had to be prepared:

“In the morning, we came to the stadium and did not know what to do, whether to ride a roller, because the pitch was so furrowed by wild boars that it was impossible to get around. There were a lot of wild boars then and instead of training, we took shovels and rollers in order to prepare a place for training. We had no room, no gym, but the imagination of coaches allowed to replace such a lack of what could be found in the area. There was often no hot water. I remember the jumping track, the one where Elizabeth Krzesińska or triple jumper Joseph Schmidt trained; it was such a primitive sandpit. Despite these difficult conditions, it turned out to be a very high form in sport and climbing to the top can be achieved”.

Although the fact that coaches’ meetings were held in Spartan conditions, coach Mulak claimed they were good, because such work shaped good character. At that time, it was common practice for players to prepare a track, jump, or viewpoint for training by them-

selves. The duty of the runners was to water, to brush or to roll the track. Zenon Ważny talked about preparing the landing area. They were preparing a place to train pole vault of the tiles from the burned Mościcki Palace in Spala. They broke these tiles into meal and they made a jump. High jumpers had a recess and a sandbox at the old tennis court – they trained there.

Athletes acted out the role of judges during competitions. Kazimierz Zimny also talked about primitive conditions, staggered bunks that served for sleeping. Initially, the roof was covered with a thatch, and then after the fire, the storey was build and military baths created. The food was also primitive: cabbage or pork with sauerkraut. "I had pull in the kitchen with the boss, and I also appeared from behind getting a glass or a cup of cream. As the summer was very hot, instead of different drinks, we used to eat a spoonful of salt to maintain some water in the body. We coped as we could". - an interview of the author with Kazimierz Zimny on May 23th 2015.

All the players recall the period of training and competing on the Wunderteam with nostalgia and at the same time, pay attention to the excellent atmosphere that prevailed within the team. This fact is also confirmed by the statement of the excellent Polish athlete Jarosława Józwiakowska:

"The Wunderteam was the best time of my life. It was a great sports team, everyone was treated like family, cheering on one another, and encouraged one another when something went wrong. We just felt a unique bond between us. The starts were set in a different way then because we had a lot of interstate meetings and matches every year. These matches approaching us meant that we were a unity. In general, contact between coach and players was almost paternal, and this was true virtually in all disciplines, not only in racing."

The atmosphere on the team of Polish athletes and care of coaches about players was illustrated in an interview by Zenon Ważny:

"Coaches who led training sessions with us – it was a group that had only been developed – formed a kind of a mini environment. Besides, the times were different. A man tried to find colleagues, friends, because then it was called life". There, in this environment of coaches, a certain concept had been created, some kind of programme or project of athletic development, which was tested. The headquarters were located in the cottage, which was called *Little chocolate*, where trainers lived. There, Jan Mulak convened daily evening meetings with coaches lasting several hours, late into the night. During these meetings, they created a concept of how to build athletics, how to prepare players, and what the teaching methodology should be like. The pre-war knowledge was such that training had to start six weeks before the competition. During the first few years after the war, knowledge from the Soviet Union was used, but it did not correspond to the mentality of Poles, nor the concept stating that everyone is the same. In the Soviet Union, all performed the same job, and here in Poland, coaches noticed that everyone was different.

The development of players was possible thanks to continuous improvement of the coaching staff. Care for the individual sections was gradually passed on to younger coaches or instructors, who together with Jan Mulak and Witold Gerutto, constantly improved their skills. They were sure of their professionalism and were not afraid to experiment. They were most often players, who for various reasons, had to resign from their sporting career. These included: Tadeusz Kępka, Zygmunt Zaremba (long-distance), Emil Dudziński, Andrzej Piotrowski and Zygmunt Zabierzowski (sprints), Emil Kozubek (hammer), Zygmunt Szelest (javelin) and Tadeusz Starybrat-Starzynski (triple jump). The other jumpers were continuously supervised by Marian Hoffman, Karol Hoffman and Antoni Morończyk (pole vault). Hurdlers and second-raters, who ended their career early, joined the coaching staff: Edward Bugała, Hubert Gralka, Roman Korban, Edmund Potrzebowski and Włodzimierz Puzio (Mulak 2006). The extended staff did not allow for direct competition between players, but thus, too early depletion of the body did not occur. Systematic improvement of physical fitness and harmonious pursuit of specialization was characteristic of the training thinking of Jan Mulak. Due to this, sport careers of players did not explode prematurely to burnout (Mulak 1988) as quickly as it has happened in the example of players from France or Germany. In these countries, the athletics staff changed every two or three years, while in Poland, players had beautiful, long careers. Examples of such long-lasting sporting careers were: Janusz Sidło Olympic Games (1952 Helsinki, 1956 Melbourne, 1960 Rome, 1964 Tokyo, 1968 Mexico), Tadeusz Rut (1956, 1960, 1964), Olgierd Ciepły (1960, 1964), Edmund Piątkowski (1960, 1964, 1968), Józef Szmidt (1960, 1964, 1968), Ważny Zenon (1952, 1956), Jerzy Chromik (1956, 1960), Zdzisław Krzyszkowiak (1956, 1960), Kazimierz Zimny (1956, 1960), Marian Foik (1956, 1960, 1964), and among women: Elżbieta Krzesińska (1952, 1956, 1960), Urszula Figwer (1956, 1960), Teresa Ciepły (1960, 1964), Barbara Sobotta (1956, 1960, 1964) and Maria Piątkowska (1952, 1960, 1964). (Głuszek, 1988, p. 73- 80)

It is essential that trainers, in addition to working on improving physical fitness, were involved in shaping social attitudes and the development of their young subordinates. The athletic teams accepted very young people, usually from small towns or villages. For them, the adventure with sports, with athletics, opened new perspectives, gave them a chance for a so-called "better life". Therefore, coaches who were authorities for these young players, had a special role to play. Despite the enormity of the work they were putting into physical preparation, they did not neglect the spiritual realm. A particular person marked out by interviewers was John Mulak. As a man of many interests, having recognized life experience as a prominent political PPS activist and an active participant in the Warsaw Uprising behind him, he took on the role of educator and teacher with great reverence.

He activated young players to get to know other, non-sport related values such as culture, architecture, nature. In the intervals between starts or camps, he familiarized them with art and monuments, visiting places, where they were currently staying. He was himself a very well-read man who developed their interests and passions. Together with his colleagues, he showed them Poland, Europe and the world, but also taught them about life in this world. As mentioned by Urszula Figwer (April 8th 2015 in Cracow): "he always knew a lot about each city. He always had impressive knowledge of the places we were staying". Jan Mulak highly appreciated aesthetic values, which are the basis for the development of creative activity. He wanted to show his pupils a different way of development of human personality, which would awake the ability to see beauty and in addition, to train the body, educating the young, post-war generation. As a committed educator, he wanted to raise motivation, to bring perspective, and to show something more than what young people could learn in their hometowns and from school. For Jan Mulak and coaches from the training staff of the postwar Polish athletes, man was very important (Mulak 1984). They were aware of the comprehensive impact of the coach on a player and knew how effective it is to shape a man through sport. They knew how important such personality traits as diligence, conscientiousness, sensitivity to the needs of others, openness, patience, responsibility, creative thinking, consistency, ability to observe, ability to react in the case of the destructive impact of individual on a group, no evidence of selfish features and resistance to stress are. Trust in the relationship between players is essential, because a player is often brought to the limit of human capabilities with simultaneous maximum mental and physical requirements. They wanted to use their own example to inculcate the virtue allowing young athletes to make the right choices in life. Their value system was based on honour, national pride, beauty, joy, fame, respect and amateurishness, and they exposed these attributes within their educational work.

The great determination of Jan Mulak and his colleagues brought about excellent results. Members of the Wunderteam athletics team gained great successes in sport both on the European arena and world-wide stadiums; they were Olympic Champions: Elżbieta Krzesińska in long jump (Melbourne 1956), Zdzisław Krzyszkowiak in the 3000 m steeplechase (Rome 1960), Józef Szmidt in the triple jump (1960), the women's 4 x 100m relay with Teresa Cieply, Irena Kirszenstein, Halina, Górecka, and Ewa Kłobukowska (Tokyo 1964), Józef Szmidt in the triple jump (Tokyo 1964).

Olympic runner-ups: Janusz Sidło in the javelin throw (Melbourne 1956), Jaroslawa Józwiakowska in the high jump (Rome 1960), Elżbieta Krzesińska in the long jump (Rome 1960), Irena Kirszenstein in the 200 m run and the long jump (Tokyo 1964), Teresa Cieply in the 80 m hurdle race (Tokyo 1964), men's 4 x 100m relay with Andrzej Zieliński, Wiesław Maniak, Marian, Foik and Marian Dudziak (Tokyo 1964).

Bronze medals at the Olympic Games were won by: Teresa Wiczorek, Barbara Janiszewska, Celina Jesionowska, Halina Richter in the women's 4 x 100m relay (Rome 1960), Kazimierz Zimny in the 5,000 m run (Rome 1960), Tadeusz Rut in the hammer throw (Rome 1960), Ewa Kłobukowska in the 100 m run (Tokyo 1964), Andrzej Badeński in the 400 m run (Tokyo 1964) (Głuszek 1988).

Many of the medals were also occupied by Polish athletes of the fifties and sixties of the twentieth century at the European Championships winning athletics international matches. However, they were gained not only in sports by joining the athletics team of Wunderteam. After the end of their careers, most of the young athletes started to work in their chosen fields with success (Mulak 1988). They were, among others, scientists, doctors, sport activists, teachers – systematically implementing the selected target just as they learned from their coaches. Just as in a sport floodplain, they were fighting for their place on earth and even beyond. Friendships that had been established at the time of their competition remained in their adulthood. They were happy to meet after years reminiscing about their successes. They drew conclusions and wanted to share their experiences from a new perspective. In memoirs, they worshiped their coaches to give thanks their selfless work. Extremely eloquent are the words of Urszula Figwer, who as a guest at one of the seminars by Prof. Józef Lipiec, Ph.D. in Cracow, who said: "we became those as he shaped us" about Jan Mulak.

The first, post-war training team, which consisted mostly of pre-war players, worked in an atmosphere of cordiality, friendship and kindness. Each member of the staff carried out their tasks and willingly faced confrontation and exchanged information with other coaches believing that their common experiences and observations would help the whole group of athletes of all disciplines to rise to a sufficiently high level of fitness (Mulak 1978). Among the trainers, the obvious leader - coordinator after the departure of Waclaw Gąssowski (1952), became Jan Mulak who unified a group of excellent professionals and motivated others to undertake various activities, e.g. dissemination of developed knowledge and skills. This work brought about more and better results. Players who were then the asthenic post-war generation, had to undergo specialized training that enabled them to rise their organisms to a higher level without the risk of overloading and excessive overexploitation. The group of coaches – the best specialists in Polish athletics – developed methods and measures to ensure the proper development of players. Success did not come immediately, they had to wait a few years for it, but they had a rational premises that testified the validity of their choices. Jan Mulak, together with the team of coaches, achieved great success, which probably exceeded the expectations of various professionals, which was a great surprise.

Man was important to Mulak. That is why he cared for the trainer to be a proper educator at the same time (Mulak 1988). Essential qualities a trainer should have

and the values that should guide him/her according to Mulak are: sensitivity to others, openness, patience, responsibility, creative thinking, consistency, observation, ability to react in the event of destructive influence of an individual towards the group, resistance to stress. The times in which he was living were not easy, even ruthless. To succeed, he often faced power. He was a strong man with strong character, always acting in accordance with his values. He was a trainer – a teacher (Woltman, Zaborniak 2006), who was selfless, diligent, solid, reliable, accurate, disciplined and honest. He was distinguished by dignity, honour, prudence, ambition and respect. He was brave, he could stand against anyone, often defending his co-workers (Mulak 2006). For athletes, he was an authority who, by his own example, taught them to choose the right path in life. Jan Mulak was a positivist who, despite circumstances and conditions, tried to achieve a goal. He believed that even in extremely difficult conditions, the conditions of Polska Ludowa [The People's Republic], people should live actively and to do their work, especially in such areas that may become a showcase of the Polish nation on an international stage. And sport gave that possibility.

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- Jaroslawa Józwiakowska on May 23th, 2015 in Warsaw.
- Andrzej Majkowski on September 14th, 2015 in Warsaw.
- Maciej Petruczenko on November 5th, 2015 in Warsaw.
- Henryk Sozański on August 26th, 2014 in Warsaw.
- Zenon Ważny on August 26th, 2014 in Warsaw.
- Kazimierz Zimny on May 23th, 2015 in Warsaw.