The “Korona” Sports Club – Football and Gymnastic Beginnings of the Podgórze Sports Club

Małgorzata Orlewicz-Musiał
AWF University of Physical Education Kraków

Summary
The centenary of the “Korona” Sports Club in Kraków is a great excuse to verify knowledge about the genesis of this organisation, to clarify who its creator was and how he contributed to the club’s further development. The article introduces the topic of creating the Podgórze Gymnastics Society “Sokół” and the children’s football team, which, establishing cooperation in 1923, formed an organisational unit under the name the “Korona” Sokół Sports Club. At first, the history of T.G. (Gymnastics Society) “Sokół” in Podgórze, the beginnings of creating the infrastructure by sports facility creators and the way the society operates, is shown. It continued to show how the young footballers brought the team to life, under what conditions they trained, how they changed the club’s name and eventually got the opportunity to use the sports facilities they connected with the Podgórze “Sokół”. Two-track activity in the field of gymnastics and sport culminated in the merger of these organisational units. The work was based created on materials available in the Kraków and K.S. (Sports Club) “Korona” archives.

The year of 2019 is the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the “Korona” Sports Club located in the Podgórze district of Kraków. The celebrated century refers to the idea of creating a sports club in Podgórze - also called Old Podgórze - once a separate town near Kraków, which on July 4, 1915, was annexed to royal Kraków. However, the origins of K.S. “Korona” go back to years earlier than those indicated by the anniversary celebrations - 1919, and the path of the club creation was very complex, thus, it is difficult to clearly indicate when the idea of creating the organisation actually appeared. In connection with this and the anniversary, it is worth presenting its genesis in light of preserved archival documents. The discussion on the creation of the club draws attention to several problems related to the birth of the association.

In the initial period, the fate of the “Korona” Sports Club was extremely complicated, and among the existing studies that appeared periodically on the occasion of following anniversaries, one can see numerous distortions of facts related to the beginnings of this association1. Anniversary books were published on the occasion of celebrating subsequent anniversaries, but their credibility may be questioned, as each time, they were dedicated to the state authorities of the People’s Republic of Poland (e.g. Józef Cyrankiewicz), and their merits in the field of sport and organisational activities of the club were glorified. These books also contain numerous memories of former players and activists that shed light on club activities. Unfortunately, the memories do not have exact dates related to the described events. Moreover, they lack agreement as to the presentation of many facts. Articles on websites of the football clubs related to the “Football Clubs in Kraków”2 category contribute to the deepening and consolidation of errors, while on the website titled “The Małopolska Voivodeship. The oldest football clubs”, K.S. “Korona” has been omitted3. Due to frequent references to these pages in popular articles, the problem is duplicated. Why all these misconceptions? It is worth reaching into the archives here to clarify and correct some facts.

The objective of this study is to verify the facts and show the complicated path of creating this merited Kraków sports club. The query that was carried out at the National Archives in Kraków did not bring the expected results. The collection shows numerous deficiencies among the oldest club registration documents and “Księga protokołów KS “Korona” [Eng. The Book of KS “Korona” Protocols] preserved in the club archive was created as a manuscript, which was supplemented in later years4, therefore, numerous inconsistencies in


4 Księga protokołów KS “Korona”[Eng. The K.S. “Korona” Book of Protocols] – was probably not written systematically – the signatures on the back of the title page indicate the years 1931-32.
the name of the club can be noticed, and this text refers to documents that do not exist in Polish archives. The lack of the first statute accepted by the authorities or documents from the founding meeting is a clear obstacle, while no documents confirming the official name of the organisation can be found. The name of the club changed several times: 1920 - K.S. “Polonia”, the proposed K.S. “Krakus” and K.S. “Korona”, 1922 – K.S. “Podgórze”, 1923 – “Korona Sokół Sports Club”. It was particularly important to mention the name “Sokół” [Eng. Falcon], which would indicate another clue in the club’s activity, thus it is necessary to analyse the connections between K.S. “Korona” and the “Sokół” Gymnastics Society.

The beginnings of the club are the intertwining fate of two organisations. The first of them, gymnastics, chronologically older, was created in the 19th century, while the sports part was established on the basis of the Podgórze football team, created after Poland regained independence. Accurate reports on the activities of the “Sokół” Gymnastics Society were included in “Przewodnik Gimnastyczny >Sokół<” [Eng. Sokół Gymnastics Guide] from 1892, hence, the path of club creation can be precisely recreated through gymnastic roots. To understand the history of K.S. “Korona”, it is necessary to trace both paths and consequences resulting from joint actions.

The “Sokół” Gymnastics Society in Podgórze

Activities within the framework of physical culture in Podgórze were initiated by the broadly operating “Sokół” Gymnastics Society in Poland.

The “Sokół” Gymnastics Society in Kraków-Podgórze was established in 1891. As was written in the leading organisational journal “Przewodnik Gimnastyczny Sokół” [Eng. The Sokół Gymnastics Guide]:

... In October 1891, upon the initiative of the current president Waclaw Adamski, a committee was formed which, on the one hand, dealt with the drafting of statutes for the newly formed society, at the first meeting of the general assembly, our society was established as a branch of the Sokół society in Lviv.

Among the people involved in creating the shape of the new organisation and later, the future management, were the following leaders: Dr. Waclaw Adamski was appointed the president of T.G. “Sokół”, together with vice president Franciszek Maryjewski, while the faculty included: Dr. Samuel Aronson, Dr. Tadeusz Bednarski, Józef Emilewicz, Dr. Izidor Feuereiser, Kazimierz Janusz, Roman Klein Ignacy Kranz, Józef Kryłowski, Władysław Liban, Franciszek Rehman, Teodor Rybak and Józef Stepień. Dr. Karol Górski, Władysław Markwiciński and Emil Serkowski comprised the court of honour. The Audit Committee was represented by Gustaw Baruch and Gustaw Rosenzweig. The faculty was constituted on January 7, 1892 and chose Roman Klein Director, Tadeusz Bednarski as secretary, Franciszek Rehman as treasurer, Józef Kryłowski as host and Ignacy Kranz as librarian. The faculty held 10 meetings discussing administrative and gymnastics matters, creating composition and construction committee.

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Edifice of the Podgórze “Sokół”, Kraków, ul. Sokolska (view from 2017) Photo by author

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8 Ibid.
The Podgórze "Sokół", according to the reports of "Przewodnik Gimnastyczny >Sokół<" [Eng. Sokół Gymnastics Guide], first focused on the implementation of gymnastics classes, both for adults and children (emphasizing exercises conducted especially for girls). They practiced eight times a week and the first class leaders were dh Kazimierz Homiński and dh Roman Sworzeniowski. The average number of exercisers – according to the estimates at the time – was 16 people per hour, with 81 declared members belonging to the association. The following year, Roman Sworzeniowski continued gymnastics classes at the Podgórze association, and in 1892, "Sokół" consisted of 1 honorary member, 6 founders and 121 ordinary members.

The Society's priority was to own its own location. This was immediately implemented. The plan of the building, which was to later be the seat of the Society in Podgórze, was made by Eng. Józef Kryłowski, who also supervised the finishing of the facility together with Stanisław Serkowski.

The current year (1892) can be confidently called a happy one for our aspirations, for the matter of physical education, because in no year did Societies come into existence as much as this year, and especially in recent days. We have already reported the creation of a new gymnastics Society in Podgórze, which will rapidly come into force with the cordial support of the noble mayor of this city, who promised to make the gymnasium of the people's school available for training free of cost. In the spring of 1893, after only a year of activity, the society started building its own edifice.

The actions of Wacław Adamski, who was also the president and mayor of Podgórze, led to the fact that the Municipal Council gave, as described: ...the most beautiful square next to the green belt with an area of 644 (?) as well as sand, stone and lime needed to build the building. This being

Hence, why the idea to celebrate the 100th anniversary of K.S. Korona in 2019? The second route leads through an amateur, children's football team, which dates back to 1910. The originators, teenage boys from Podgórze, from their early childhood, dreamed only of being able to play football, which is found in numerous preserved memoirs. As recalled years later by Rudolf Lowas (born in 1903, thus 7 years old in 1910): ...together with our peers in the autumn of 1910, we decided to establish a "real" sports club. In addition to youthful enthusiasm, we also had football, being my property. It can be seen that the hier-

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9 Ibid., issue 8, p. 108.
10 Ibid., p. 109.
12 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
archy of importance in youth groups depended on who owned the ball at the time, which would explain why the lucky leader at the head of the group was Rudolf Lowas.

The chaos of World War 1 did not destroy the plans to create the Podgórze club. It should also be mentioned that in 1915, Podgórze was joined to Kraków. An informal group of young people played matches with friendly teams from neighbouring streets. However, it took several years before the idea of creating a club became a reality. The idea of establishing a sports organisation was born in 1919, gaining the universal approval of supporters of Podgórze football and as early as January 1, 1920 (recorded in the first protocol16 - a group of founders: Rudolf Lowas, Roman Lowas, Tadeusz Komorek, Tadeusz Micinski, Jan Nowak, and Stanislaw Wojdylla)—and an association was established bearing the name: the “Polonia” Sports Club19. The name “Korona” was also taken into account. The beginnings of the football team were recalled by one of its co-founders – Tadeusz Wroński: ... We gathered a team consisting of students from the Podgórze gymnasium and we played a match with the students of the 1st Gymnasium named after St. Anna (today’s Nowodworek (one of Kraków’s most highly ranked, its league high-schools). We played on Błonia (a large green plot of land open to the public in Kraków) and we won 8:1. It gave us impetus to found a club. A sport lover from Podgórze Rudolf Kro- pacz helped set up the club. We wanted the club to be called “Po- lonia” or “Korakus”, but such clubs had already once existed. It was agreed that the club would be called the Korona Sports Club and was registered under that name20.

However, this name could not be registered, as it was reserved for the “Polonia Kraków” club existing since 1912.

There was another suggestion: ... “Korona” (Eng. Crown). Because the name “Podgórz” was taken by others, those from Zabłocie, so for us, from ul. Kołłątaj, there was nothing else ... We gathered a team consisting of students from the Podgórze gymnasium and we played a match with the students of the 1st Gymnasium named after St. Anna (today’s Nowodworek (one of Kraków’s most highly ranked, its league high-schools). We played on Błonia (a large green plot of land open to the public in Kraków) and we won 8:1. It gave us impetus to found a club. A sport lover from Podgórze Rudolf Kro- pacz helped set up the club. We wanted the club to be called “Po- lonia” or “Korakus”, but such clubs had already once existed. It was agreed that the club would be called the Korona Sports Club and was registered under that name20.

On April 18, 1920, footballers still performed under the name the “Polonia” Sports Club”, playing a match with the Railway Sports Club “Olsza” Kraków, which dates back to 1920. The first “spring season of the club” began with training on April 4, 1920, and two weeks later, playing a match with K.K.S. “Olsza”. The match ended with a score of 0:4, which was rather predictable after such a short time of team training. No rematch was held.

On April 22, 1920, for the emerging new football formation, the name “Korona” Sports Club was proposed. Creating the unit, a draft of the new Statute was written. Its writing was modelled on the statute of K.S. “Podgórze”, existing since 1913. The immaturity associated with organisational activities should be blamed on the young age of the organisation’s founders. Rudolf Lowas was only 17 years old at the time. As it appears in the record of the Protocol Book: During non-seasonal moments, i.e. up to April 4, 1920, the statute was developed, which did not come into force in the first version. With the consent of the board, the spring season was opened on April 4 (1920).

The necessity of registering and belonging to the POZPN club forced a change of the name proposed by the founders. As recorded during the meeting on April 26, 1920, reconstructed after 11 years and signed in pencil by Rudolf Lowas:

... On April 22 (1920), six members of the club were at the meeting with Włochewek, secretary of the “Podgórz” Sports Club. “Podgórz”. The result of the meeting was that our club changed its name to K.S. “Korona” and signed up for POZPN22.

Lowas, being a co-founder of the organisation, accepted these events and signed the report document years later. However, it is difficult to determine from the available documents whether this record was not a certain simplification of the more complex process of creating a club on the basis of an existing football team.

The birth of the club colours was a coincidence The first president Karol Jachimczak donated 12 old military shirts altered by my sister. The club did not have shirts, so my mother, from military shirts (12 military shirts donated by Karol Jachimczak – author’s comment23), made shirts, decorating them with red collars. Such shirts were also worn by those who put up posters, which is why the first players of K.S. “Korona” were called ‘posterers’. So we changed the shirts to green, which were used by our Club for many years24.

Tadeusz Mitusiński described the rules of the amateur team at the time: It was our referee who used 1 penalty for 3 corners, which gave great opportunities ... And at the same time, the wingers were unchanging and it was not allowed to play in hordes. Today it’s allowed – and that’s why it’s bad25.

The fate of the young team was again carried away by the vortex of history and its activity was suspended during the Polish-Bolshevik war. The decision regarding temporary cessation of sports activities is mentioned by the lapidary report of the meeting from July 11, 1920 ... go help endangered homeland - the whole K.S. “Korona” joins the army – the season was cancelled until further notice26.

The initiated legislative steps were returned to after the end of war actions. Again, young people tried to...
create a new, correct document, but the lack of experience meant that they encountered a legislative problem on part of the authorities and the police. Rudolf Lowas submitted the following document: Letter L XIII 15438 February 2, 1921 – Statute with 5 annexes – among them: Application by Rudolf Lowas in Krakow ul. Krasickiego 14. II floor, In the ideals of the heads. Register protocol.

K.S. “Korona” Statute from 1921:

The office’s comments on the document highlighted a number of shortcomings: The statute does not regulate how the founders first formed the association and does not include at the end neither the date nor signatures of the founders who ... [continued on page 4 – no page], reply date March 22, 1921. And here is a gap in the club’s documentation. There is no document in the archives showing the further legislative process. Ultimately, the name of the club included in the application on the statute: Statute of the “Korona” association sports club in Kraków XXII. On a copy of the statute – as the most important shortcoming – the lack of a stamp is indicated and not substantive errors related to the declared activity of the organisation. The documents in the archives do not allow to determine whether and to what extent the indicated remarks were followed.

In the memoirs of T. Mitusiński, the issue of the club IDs appears:

... And when Rudek Lowas put together the first (shoddy) ID – the club became an organisation that was ‘not too shabby’ – as assessed by athletic Kasprzyk Teofil27.

However, it is difficult to find out when this event took place because the author of the memoirs, when writing about the work done by the printer (i.e. the adult R. Lowas), does not cite any date.

A return to sports activities showed another phenomenon - contracts related to commitment to play on the team for several years: February 13, 1921 – players signed a declaration of loyalty to their own club: I commit to playing in the “Korona” sports Club for … years ...

The next step towards continuing the club’s activity was the proposal to merge (the existing unit) with K.S. “Podgórze”. The pretext for that was the meeting of the Liquidation Committee on 24 June, 1922 during which

The illegality of the General Meeting was alleged, because not all of the interested parties were notified about it, so due to the lack of quorum, it was not legally valid. The choices were made on the basis of unspecified regulations and not the statute\(^\text{28}\). An additional difficulty in the registration process was the lack of consistency in the names of organisational units.

Many financial problems generated new solutions. As Kazimierz Rusinek recalled, one of them was looking for sponsors:

“We were looking for “rich” people in poor Podgórze to fund our account. We came up with the idea of acquiring so-called “honorary presidents” for the club, and from the presidents appointed by us, we were supposed to take out non-repayable loans. This was managed. Such an honorary president was Eng. Dostal. We found another president from the Jelonów family: Jan. He was not very rich, but he had influence in the town hall, a native of Podgórze, Bolciu Majer; Dr. Stubr Oskar was even more wealthy than him\(^\text{29}\).

The need for access to sports facilities, especially during the winter season, resulted in the next step. Probably the origin of the idea of tying the fate of “Korona” preferring football with the Gymnastics Society. Tadeusz Wroński suggested that it was he who played the main role in establishing a new joint association:

“... I played football in K.S. “Korona” for several years. I mainly contributed to the fact that being the Chief of Podgórze Sokół, I connected “Korona” to “Sokół”, and since then, the club was called: the “Korona Sokół Korona Sports Club”\(^\text{30}\).

During the General meeting of K.S. “Korona” on January 14, 1923: Colleague Panikow, as a delegate from the department of K.S. Korona, regarding the merger of K.S.

Issue of joining K.S. “Korona” with T.S. “Sokół”.


“Korona” and S.K.S. “Sokół” in Kraków. The phenomenon was not noticed or recorded in ‘sokolian’ journals or magazines\(^\text{31}\).

After numerous perturbations, an organisation combining gymnastics and sports activities was established. The football team was merged with the “Sokół” Gymnastics Society, then called the Sokół “Korona” Sports Club. T.G. “Sokół”, showing reluctance towards sport until now, and after regaining independence, was looking for new ways to find itself in the new reality, and accepted the previously unwelcome sport\(^\text{32}\). Cooperation with the “Korona” football team was a form of implementing the latest ‘sokolian’ trends.

The merger of “Korona” and “Sokół” laid the foundations for creating a multi-section club. In addition to gymnastics and football, there was also interest in other sports.

On October 13 and 14, 1923, members of “Korona” (or already “Sokół”), took part in inter-club track-and-field competitions organised by Z.K.S. “Makkabi”. The event was attended by the competitors of “Korona”:: Wagner - disc, Plebańczyk – 1,500-m, 4 x 100, as was noted by “Nowy Dziennik” [Eng. The New News]\(^\text{33}\).

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\(^{28}\) Księga protokołów KS “Korona” [Eng. KS “Korona” Book of Protocols], op. cit.

\(^{29}\) Kazimierz Rusinek, memoirs, Pół wieku… [Eng. Half a Century…], op. cit.

\(^{30}\) Statement by Tadeusz Wroński, interview for Jerzy Berezeowski, 15 October, 1994 in Kraków.

\(^{31}\) Przewodnik gimnastyczny “Sokół” [Eng. The “Sokół” Gymnastics Guide] – the monthly appearing in Lviv 1921,1922 and 1923, did not include any information on cooperation with “Korona”.

\(^{32}\) The first sports congress showed “Sokół’s” the path of action with using sport as a means to entourage youth, "Przegląd Sokół" [Eng. The “Sokół’s” Review], Warsaw 1923, August.

\(^{33}\) “Nowy Dziennik” [Eng. The New News], Kraków, 1923.
However, the ‘sokolian’ magazines, unfavourable towards Jewish subjects, did not note this fact. The further development of the section was dynamic. Up until 1939, “Korona”, apart from football (1919), created the following sport sections: track-and-field (1923), women’s and men’s gymnastics (1923), and shooting and bowling, which is mentioned by Kazimierz Rusinek.

This event may have drawn attention to the desire to be interested in other sports disciplines in Podgórze and not only in football. This may be an abuse, but it is difficult to exclude the relationship between the starts of track-and-field athletes and the creation of new sports sections of K.S. “Korona” in the future.

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The club’s further fate was also turbulent. In the early years of existence, the name of the club was subject to modification, functioning as: 1919 – the “Polonia” Sports Club, 1920 – the “Korona” Sports Club, and in 1923 – the “Korona” Sokół Sports Club. The end of World War 2 also brought changes to the names, which were: in 1945 – the “Korona” Sports Club; 1948 – the “Wilkońniarz–Korona” Sports Club; 1957 – the “Korona” Outdoor Sports Club, and in 1962 – the “Korona” Sports Club.

In 1939, the Sokół building was destroyed. On July 31, 1947, officers of the Security Office withdrew the organisation’s permission to operate. The “Sokół” Gymnastics Society ceased to exist.

A paradox may be the intertwining of the fate of K.S. “Korona” and T.G. “Sokół”. These fates are not indifferent to the history of Polish ‘sokoliry’. Wearing the name of the Sokół “Korona” Sports Club for many years, it became an involuntary continuator of its legacy in the field of gymnastics, in the broad sense.

Further history is the development of the sports infrastructure of the so-called “sports complex” initiated by a former footballer and later a politician - Kazimierz Rusinek. Tadeusz Wroński recalled the further fate of “Korona”: “It was only after the war that thanks to Kazimierz Rusinek, later deputy minister, Aleksander Witkowski, Marian Plebańczyk and many other activists, the “Korona” sports centre was established. Although the famous Dr. Bolesław Drohner wanted to see a hospital in the place of “Korona” in Podgórze, Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz convinced MP Drohner that a sports facility is needed in the labour district of Podgórze ...”.

Finally, in 1960, a new facility of the Sports Complex “Korona” was commissioned and in 1966, a 25-m swimming pool was opened on W. Pstrowski Street (currently Kalwaryjska) in Kraków. Thanks to them, it was possible to further develop the section. Individual sport sections over the past 100 years have been presented in the anniversary album 100 Years of K.S. Korona Kraków 1919-2019.

A reminder of the distant fate of the “Korona” Sports Club on the 100th anniversary of its creation allows to understand its genesis. Unfortunately, the lack of original documents in the archives is an unsolved problem regarding the first registration of this meritorious club in Kraków. The preserved documents, with a few exceptions, are secondary sources, thus the beginnings of the formal activity of the “Korona” Sports Club in Kraków are still an open issue.

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