

# Successful performance of the Polish national cycle speedway team on the international arena in the years 1995-2019

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## Summary

Cycle speedway came to Poland from England at the beginning of the 1990s. The first Polish club which entered into the register of associations of physical culture as a cycle speedway club was the Rawicz "Pavart" Sports Club (1994). A year later, also in Rawicz, the Provisional Polish Society of Cycle Speedway was established (since 1997 - Polish Society of Cycle Speedway), and beginning from 30 November 2005 - the Polish Federation of Cycle Speedway Clubs. Considering the present state of research, there are no works that, in a synthetic way, would present the successes of Polish cycle speedway riders on the international arena. For this reason, an attempt has been made to elaborate on the subject.

Since 1995, Polish cycle speedway riders have been participating in world and European championships (including Individual and Team World Championships and Individual and Team European Championships).

**Keywords:** cycle speedway, sport, European Championship, World Championship, international success, Poland

The aim of this paper is to present the successes of the Polish national team in cycle speedway on the international arena. The time periods of the paper cover the years 1995-2019. The initial date is 1995 - the first time Poles participated in an international event, and the closing date is marked by 2019 - the year up to which the preliminary research of source materials was conducted. As far as the present state of research is concerned it can be concluded that the development of Polish cycle speedway is the subject of only a few works (Bakota, 2015ab; Bakota, Ortenburger, Płomiński, 2018; Szymański, 2006). The following research problems have been put forward in the study:

1. How successful were Poles in cycle speedway on the international arena?
2. What was their contribution to the achievements of Polish sport?

The primary research method used in this paper was analysis of historical sources. Also, the methods of induction and deduction have been used. The source materials were mainly obtained from the Repository of Records of the Polish Federation of Cycle Speedway Clubs

in Bydgoszcz, and were complemented with accounts and literature.

Cycle speedway (bicycle racing on shale tracks)<sup>1</sup> came to Poland from England at the beginning of the 1990s. The first section of this discipline was established at "Unia" Leszno. In 1994, the Rawicz "Pavart" Sports Club was created. It was the first club in Poland which was entered in the register of physical culture associations as a cycle speedway club (Lipoński, 2001, p. 594). A year later, also in Rawicz, the Provisional Polish Society of Cycle Speedway was established (since 1997, Polish Society of Cycle Speedway), and beginning from 30 November 2005 - the Polish Federation of Cycle Speedway Clubs (Bakota, 2015a, p. 114).

In 1995, Andrzej Włodarczyk (President of "Pavart" Rawicz and the father of the two-time gold medallist at the Olympic Games and four-time World Champion in the hammer throw - Anita Włodarczyk), was appointed the President of the Provisional Polish Society of Speedway Cycling. In 2000, Częstochowa became a new seat of the Polish Society of Speedway Cycling. This change had been preceded with a meeting at which

<sup>1</sup> In cycle speedway competitions, a special bicycle is used which does not have brakes, derailleurs, or elements which could be hazardous during a race (e.g. mirrors, fenders, trunk). Initially, cycle speedway riders raced on Wigry-type bicycles, which were later replaced with large frame bikes. The size of the bicycle depends on such factors as age and needs, but also the skills of competitors (Szymański, 2006, p. 48). In addition to the bicycle, an important element is also the venue where a competition is held. Cycle speedway tracks have a gravel surface and their length measured at their inner edge should fall within the range of 60-92 m. The difference in relation to speedway tracks is, e.g. a concrete coating at the start (Regulations of Cycle Speedway Sport - version 2020, pp. 27-28).

Janusz Danek from Częstochowa was appointed the President (Szymański, 2006, p. 28). Subsequent changes occurred in 2009 when the seat of the Polish Federation of Cycle Speedway Clubs was moved to Bydgoszcz, and Janusz Bąk was appointed the President (Bakota, 2015b, pp. 281-282). He was replaced on 25 January 2015 by Krzysztof Niedzielski (Report on the activities of the Polish Federation of Cycle Speedway Clubs for the years 2015-2017, p. 6). Next, since 22 May 2018, the President of the Polish Federation of Cycle Speedway Clubs has been Marcin Niedzielski (written account given by Maciej Laskowski).

In cycle speedway sport, there are two Polish national teams:

- the senior national team with a coach and head of the team and the professional team appointed by name;
- the junior (competitors up to 18 years of age) national team with a coach and head of the team and the professional team appointed by name. In addition, in 2011, for a series of test matches with the United Kingdom, a women's team was appointed (Bakota, 2015b, p. 285).

Since 1995, cycle speedway riders from Poland have been participating in world and European championships. In 1995-2005, seniors competing in the World Team Championship (WTCh) won the world championship once (1999), vice-championship twice (2003, 2005) and stood on the lowest step of the podium twice (1995, 2001). In turn, juniors in WTCh in 1999 and 2003 won the world championship, and in 1997 - the bronze medal. Poles won top places in European Championships as well. In 1996-2004, seniors competing in the European Team Championships (ETCh) stood on the highest step of the podium twice (2000, 2004), and achieved 2nd place twice (1996, 2002). In the discussed period, it was also the juniors who were successful in ETCh and won 1<sup>st</sup> place four times (1996, 1998, 2000, 2004) and in 2002 - 2<sup>nd</sup>. In addition to team successes, there were also individual ones. In the Individual World Championships (IWCh), taking the years 1995-2005 into account, the following competitors stood on the podium in the senior category: Damian Woźny (2<sup>nd</sup> place in 1999), K. Włodarczyk (3<sup>rd</sup> place in 1999) and Łukasz Nowacki (3<sup>rd</sup> place in 2003). In turn, the following performed best in the junior category: T. Walkowiak (3<sup>rd</sup> place in 1997), J. Włodarczyk (1<sup>st</sup> place in 1999), D. Kubiak (2<sup>nd</sup> place in 1999), K. Kowalski (1<sup>st</sup> place in 2003), M. Skowronek (2<sup>nd</sup> place in 2003) and Maciej Ganczarek (3<sup>rd</sup> place in 2003) (written account given by Euzebiusz Szudra).

Cycle speedway riders from Poland were also successful in the Individual European Championships (IECh). In the years 1996-2004, in the category of seniors, the best results were achieved by the following: D. Woźny (3<sup>rd</sup> place in 2000), K. Szymański (1<sup>st</sup> place in 2002), Marcin Puk (2<sup>nd</sup> place in 2002), D. Zaręba (1<sup>st</sup> place in 2004), Marcin Szymański (2<sup>nd</sup> place in 2004) and M. Szymczak (3<sup>rd</sup> place in 2004). Whereas in the junior category, the following riders stood on the podium: K. Włodarczyk (1<sup>st</sup> place in 1996), D. Kubiak

(1<sup>st</sup> place in 1998), T. Walkowiak (2<sup>nd</sup> place in 1998), L. Ilak (1<sup>st</sup> place in 2000), T. Wojtasik (2<sup>nd</sup> place in 2000), Ł. Łaniecki (3<sup>rd</sup> place in 2000), Rafał Duliński (1<sup>st</sup> place in 2002), M. Skowronek (3<sup>rd</sup> place in 2002), Remigiusz Burchardt (1<sup>st</sup> place in 2004), D. Augustyński (2<sup>nd</sup> place in 2004) and A. Poprawski (3<sup>rd</sup> place in 2004) (written account given by E. Szudra).

It is also worth mentioning that in 1997, "Pavart" Rawicz won 1<sup>st</sup> place in the European Cup of Club Teams. In turn, in 2003, "Szawer" Leszno obtained 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place - "Orzeł" Gniezno. The Poles achieved unprecedented success in the European Cup of Club Teams in 2005. Three Polish clubs stood on the podium: "Szawer" Leszno (1<sup>st</sup> place), "Lwy" Częstochowa (2<sup>nd</sup>) and Speedway Association of Toruń (3<sup>rd</sup>). In 2005, Poles also won 1<sup>st</sup> place in the World Championships of Pairs, held in Australia (written account given by E. Szudra).

During the IECh in 2006 in Wednesfield (England), the winner was D. Woźny. Whereas in the junior category - Bartłomiej Parol's performance was the best (2<sup>nd</sup> place). Poles achieved considerable success on the team. In the category of both seniors and juniors - they assumed 1<sup>st</sup> place (written account given by E. Szudra).

In 2007 during WTCh held in Częstochowa, the Poles won 1<sup>st</sup> place. Cycle speedway riders from Poland were also successful at the World Championships of Pairs (1<sup>st</sup> place - M. Szymański, M. Ganczarek, R. Duliński). In turn, at the WTCh of juniors - held in Poole (England) - they reached 2<sup>nd</sup> place. Next, at the World Championships of Junior Pairs, they won 1<sup>st</sup> place (ex aequo with the English) (written account given by E. Szudra).

A year later (in 2008), the Polish national team obtained 1<sup>st</sup> place at the ETCh in Rawicz. Similarly, Poles stood on the highest step of the podium in the ETCh of Juniors, which was organised in 2008 in Ostrów Wielkopolski (written account given by E. Szudra).

At the turn of February/March 2009, representatives of Poland in cycle speedway participated in IWCh and WTCh. They were organised in Australia (Adelaide). From among the Poles, it was only Ł. Nowacki who stood on the podium. He assumed 3<sup>rd</sup> place. In turn, the Polish national team came in 2<sup>nd</sup> at the WTCh. The Poles stood on the highest step of the podium in the World Championships of Pairs (M. Szymański, M. Ganczarek and Ł. Nowacki) and in the World Championships of Club Teams (with LKS "Szawer" Leszno as the winner) (Report on the activities of the Polish Federation of Cycle Speedway Clubs for the period 2009-2011, pp. 3-4).

On 23-25 July 2010, the IECh and ETCh were held in Poland. During these championships, the Poles achieved tremendous success. At the IECh, they covered the first 3 positions: Marcin Paradziński (1<sup>st</sup> place), M. Ganczarek (2<sup>nd</sup>) and M. Szymański (3<sup>rd</sup>). In turn, in the IECh of Juniors, the winner was Sebastian Morawiak. Szymon Kowalczyk took home the medal for 2<sup>nd</sup> place, while 4<sup>th</sup> position was held by Patryk Piechota. At the ETCh, the Polish national team achieved 1<sup>st</sup> place. Sim-

ilarly, juniors stood on the highest step of the podium (Report on the activities of the Polish Federation of Cycle Speedway Clubs for the period 2009-2011, pp. 3-4).

After two years (on 17-25 April 2011), the IWCh and WTCh were organised once more and hosted by the city of Edenton (USA). At the IWCh, 2 representatives of Poland stood on the podium: Ł. Nowacki (1<sup>st</sup> place) and R. Duliński (2<sup>nd</sup>). Next, at the Junior IWCh, P. Piechota came in 2<sup>nd</sup>. At the WTCh, Poles stood on the lowest step of the podium. Similarly they stood on the podium at the World Championships of Pairs (2<sup>nd</sup> place – Ł. Nowacki, Przemysław Binkowski and M. Paradziński) and in the World Championships of Junior Pairs (3<sup>rd</sup> place – P. Piechota alone) (Report on the activities of the Polish Federation of Cycle Speedway Clubs for the period 2009-2011, pp. 3-4).

On 3-5 August 2012, Polish senior and junior national teams took part in the European Championships in England. At the IECh, 2 Poles stood on the podium. The highest step of the podium was taken by M. Szymański, and the lowest one by Ł. Nowacki. In turn, at the ETCh, the Polish national team won a silver medal. During these championships, Poles also won medals in the junior category. At the IECh of Juniors, P. Piechota assumed 2<sup>nd</sup> place (he competed in the finals in a substitute position), and Sebastian Paruzel was ranked in 3<sup>rd</sup> place. The Junior ETCh ended with a huge success. The Polish national team won the gold medal. It is also worth noting that for the first time, the Women's IECh was held. Among the best Polish women was Sandra Tamborska. She was positioned in 3<sup>rd</sup> place. In turn, Zaneta Siemianowska came in 10<sup>th</sup> (Report on the activities of the Polish Federation of Cycle Speedway Clubs for the year 2012, unpub.).

In 2013 – during the IWCh and WTCh held in Australia - the performance of the Polish national team was fairly successful. In the World Championships of Junior Pairs (with the team composed of: Arkadiusz Szymański, Michał Sassek and Bartosz Grabowski), as well as in the World Championships of Senior Pairs (M. Szymański, P. Binkowski and Ł. Nowacki), the Poles were unrivalled. Both teams came in 1<sup>st</sup> place. Similarly, the highest step of the podium went to the Polish national team in the category of juniors and seniors in the WTCh. At the Women's IWCh, S. Tamborska won 3<sup>rd</sup> place. In turn, at the IWCh of Juniors, the Poles occupied the first 3 places: B. Grabowski (1<sup>st</sup>), A. Szymański (2<sup>nd</sup>) and Łukasz Marchlewski (3<sup>rd</sup>). The seniors came out slightly worse. It was only M. Szymański who stood on the podium, taking home the gold. In 2013, the Poles were also successful in the United Kingdom – Poland test matches organised in England. In match No. 1 (Exeter, 25 July), the UK's national team won (93:85), but the Poles won the other 3 matches: match No. 2 (Newport, 26 July) – 82:96 for Poland and match No. 3 (Poole, 27 July) – 87: 90 for Poland (Report on the activities of the Polish Federation of Cycle Speedway Clubs for the year 2013, pp. 3-4).

At the European Championships of Club Teams, which took place on 3-5 May 2014 in Exeter, 3 Pol-

ish teams took part and all were placed on the podium (1<sup>st</sup> place Ostrów Wielkopolski, 2<sup>nd</sup> – Toruń, and 3<sup>rd</sup> – Leszno). The British favourites (Poole, Wednesfield and Sheffield) were eliminated in the semi-finals (Report on the activities of the Polish Federation of Cycle Speedway Clubs for the period 2012-2014, unpub.).

At the European Championships held on 15-17 August 2014, which were hosted by 3 Polish cities: Bydgoszcz, Toruń and Maksymilianowo; the Polish national team was ranked in 1<sup>st</sup> place both in the ETCh and ETCh of Juniors. Poles also achieved success in individual competitions. They occupied the first 3 places in the junior category (1<sup>st</sup> – B. Grabowski, 2<sup>nd</sup> – M. Sassek, and 3<sup>rd</sup> – Dawid Zachmyc), and in the senior category (1<sup>st</sup> place – M. Paradziński, 2<sup>nd</sup> – S. Paruzel, and 3<sup>rd</sup> - P. Binkowski). It is also worth mentioning that in Women's IECh, Ż. Siemianowska assumed 1<sup>st</sup> place, and S. Tamborska – 4<sup>th</sup>. Also, the IECh of Veterans were held. Among Poles, Krzysztof Zawadzki was classified in the highest position (6<sup>th</sup> place) (Report on the activities of the Polish Federation of Cycle Speedway Clubs for the period 2012-2014, unpub.).

On 27 July – 9 August 2015, the Polish senior and junior national teams took part in the World Championships in England. At IWCh, 2 Poles stood on the podium: B. Grabowski (1<sup>st</sup> place) and M. Szymański (3<sup>rd</sup>). The Poles performed equally well in the WTCh. They won a gold medal (with the team composed of: P. Binkowski, Grzegorz Głuchowski, B. Grabowski, Marcin Kołata and M. Szymański). In turn, at the IWCh of Juniors, it was only M. Sassek who won a place (2<sup>nd</sup>) on the podium. As for the team competition, juniors, similarly to seniors, won a gold medal (with the team composed of: Dawid Bas, Radosław Kochanek, Krzysztof Marczak, Artur Reszelewski and M. Sassek). The Poles also won medals in the World Championships of Pairs (gold medal – P. Binkowski, B. Grabowski and M. Szymański), and the World Championships of Junior Pairs (silver medal – D. Bas, R. Kochanek and M. Sassek). As for the Women's IWCh, Ż. Siemianowska proved to be the best among Polish female competitors. She ranked 5<sup>th</sup> (Report on the activities of the Polish Federation of Cycle Speedway Clubs for the years 2015-2017, pp. 2-5).

A year later, the European Championships were also held in England. They were organised on 29-31 August. At these championships, it was the seniors who performed much better. At the IECh, the Poles were ranked in the first 3 places: Ł. Nowacki (1<sup>st</sup>), D. Bas (2<sup>nd</sup>) and P. Binkowski (3<sup>rd</sup>). They also gave a sensational performance winning the gold medal at the ETCh (with the team comprising: D. Bas, P. Binkowski, G. Głuchowski, S. Kowalczyk and M. Paradziński). The juniors came out slightly worse. In the IECh of Juniors, from among the Poles, the best was Mateusz Pacek (6<sup>th</sup> place). As for the ETCh of Juniors, they won the silver medal (with the national team composed of: Patryk Katarzyński, M. Pacek, Szymon Porożyński, Mateusz Radomski and Bartosz Wojtal). As for the Women's IECh, S. Tamborska assumed 8<sup>th</sup> place (Report on the activities of the Polish

Federation of Cycle Speedway Clubs for the years 2015-2017, pp. 2-5).

On 13 November – 3 December 2017, cycle speedway riders from Poland participated in the World Championships, which were held in Australia. At the IWCh, the only Pole on the podium was B. Grabowski (3<sup>rd</sup> place). As for the WTCh, seniors won the silver medal (with the national team including: D. Bas, Kamil Bielica, Paweł Cegielski, B. Grabowski and Ł. Nowacki). Also, in the junior competition, only one Pole stood on the podium in the IWCh of Juniors - Damian Pelaczyk (2<sup>nd</sup> place). In turn, at the WTCh of Juniors, similarly to their older colleagues, cycle speedway riders won a silver medal (with the national team composed of: P. Katarzyński, Jakub Kościecha, D. Pelaczyk, Maciej Stefański and Szymon Tywczyński). Poles also stood on the podium at the World Championships of Pairs (silver medal – M. Kołata, Mateusz Ludwiczak and B. Grabowski) and at the World Championships of Junior Pairs (silver medal – D. Pelaczyk, J. Kościecha and M. Stefański). In turn, at the Women's IWCh, for the first time in the history of Polish cycle speedway, the gold medal went to Ż. Siemianowska (Report on the activities of the Polish Federation of Cycle Speedway Clubs for the years 2015-2017, pp. 2-5).

In 2018, the hosts of the European Championships were Częstochowa and Poczesna. In the IECh, the Poles outclassed their rivals. They took the first 3 places on the podium: M. Szymański (1<sup>st</sup>), B. Grabowski (2<sup>nd</sup>) and R. Burchardt (3<sup>rd</sup>). Also, the ETCh ended with the success of Poles. They won a gold medal (with the team members: D. Bas, R. Burchardt, B. Grabowski, S. Paruzel and M. Szymański). The juniors gave a very good performance too. At the IECh of Juniors, the winner was J. Kościecha. The runner-up was Wojciech Małecki. In turn, at the ETCh of Juniors, similarly to their older colleagues, the cycle speedway riders won a gold medal (with the national team composed of: J. Kościecha, Marcel Krzykowski, W. Małecki, Mikołaj Michalski and D. Pelaczyk). As for the IECh of Veterans, Dominik Rycharski was ranked in 3<sup>rd</sup> position, and in the Women's IECh, the best Polish female competitor was Izabella Krawczyk (coming in 12<sup>th</sup> place) (written account given by Konrad Cinkowski).

In 2019 - for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time in history – Poles hosted the World Championships in cycle speedway. The event was organised by the Polish Federation of Cycle Speedway Clubs. Competitions were held on 6 tracks: in Kalety, Leszno, Poczesna, Świętochłowice, Toruń and Żołędowo. In the Open category of the IWCh, 2 Poles stood on the podium: M. Szymański (2<sup>nd</sup> place) and D. Bas (3<sup>rd</sup>). In turn, in the Open category of the WTCh, Poles came in second to none (with the winning team composed of: D. Bas, R. Burchardt, R. Duliński, B. Grabowski and M. Szymański). Similarly, Poles won 2 medals at the IWCh of Juniors. First place was awarded to M. Krzykowski, and M. Reszelewski stood on the lowest step of the podium. In turn, they won the world vice-championship position in the WTCh of Juniors. Poles also won medals

at the IWCh of Boys U16 (1<sup>st</sup> place – Radosław Morawiak, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place – M. Krzykowski); and at the IWCh of Girls U16 (3<sup>rd</sup> place – Zuzanna Klett). As for the IWCh of Veterans, the Polish team won 3 medals: D. Rycharski (1<sup>st</sup> place), Michał Kastrau (2<sup>nd</sup>) and M. Puk (3<sup>rd</sup>). As for the WTCh of Veterans, they won a bronze medal. The Poles also won at the World Championships of Pairs (B. Grabowski, D. Bas and M. Szymański) and at the World Championships of Veteran Pairs (Arkadiusz Słysz, M. Puk and Aleksander Zieliński). In turn, 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the World Championships of Junior Pairs was assumed by M. Krzykowski, R. Morawiak and Mikołaj Menz. It is also worth mentioning that the vice-champion title at the WTCh was won by Polish women (written account given by K. Cinkowski).

To conclude, it must be noted that sport plays a very important role in human life. Among others, it promotes improvement of physical fitness and mental well-being, but also the formation of social relationships (Wąsik, 2018). Not only is this phenomenon related to people without disabilities, but also to those disabled (Płomiński, 2017).

Cycle speedway in Poland is a rapidly developing sports discipline. A manifestation of the intensive development of this discipline in Poland includes the successes of cycle speedway riders at the European and World Championships. Based on the data provided, it may be concluded that both external conditions (e.g. qualified training staff and creating cycle speedway forms at schools) and intrinsic ones (e.g. the willingness to take on challenges in the form of competitions), conducive to the optimisation of human functioning in situations of pressure, play a role in this development. It is also worth mentioning that cycle speedway riders' accomplishments have made a significant contribution to the successes of Polish sport, but this contribution is not hardly recognised by anyone, and little is said about it (e.g. in the years 2000-2013, *Chronicles of Polish Sport* were published which have never devoted attention to such a sports discipline as cycle speedway).

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