



PROMINENT ACTIVISTS AND CYCLISTS OF THE PEOPLE'S ZARZEWIE PRUDNIK SPORTING CLUB IN THE OPOLE PROVINCE (SOUTH-WESTERN REGION OF POLAND), 1955-1990

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Abstract

The article presents biographical sketches of cyclists and activists of People's Sports Club in Prudnik. Cycling activists such as Tadeusz Niebylski, Jan Gruszczyński, Alicja Ćwierz and Roman Dejka organized many events aimed at promotion and further development of this sport in Poland. The sketches focus on the competitors' career beginnings, interests and, most of all, their sporting successes. Cyclists such as Franciszek Surmiński or Jan Kubal laid the foundations of professional cycle racing in Prudnik. For all the mentioned cyclists the path to sporting championship was never easy. For many of them even owning a good bicycle was almost impossible, and their knowledge about racing at that time was based only on their own day-to-day experience. They were competitors, coaches, and mechanics in one person. All those hardships, however, did not discourage them from cycle racing. They also practiced many other complementary sports in winter. The 1970s constituted a success story for such cyclists as Stanisław Szozda, a double Olympic vice-champion, or Bogdan Bezdziętny - an exceptionally talented bronze medal winner in junior team world championships.

Key words: *sporting career, cyclist, racing, Łąka Prudnicka, Zarzewie Prudnik People's Sport Club, Opole region, organizer*

Sport in the rural areas of the Opole region after World War II

The People's Sport Teams in the region of Opole Silesia were established, like elsewhere in post-WWII Poland, by the decree on physical education offices and councils issued by the Polish National Unity Government in January 1946. In the decree the Rural Self-Help Association was placed in charge of physical education in rural areas.

The role of the church in the newly established structures is worth mentioning as the church officials were initially not interested in such initiatives. They feared that due to the dynamic post-war social changes, churchgoers would move away from the church. In particular, women's interest in physical activity was criticized [1]. Fortunately, such attitudes were not common. Henryk Mainka, a parson from Czarnowąż (a village close to Opole) in the years 1932–1975, who encouraged training

sport and participation in tournaments, expressed a supportive attitude towards physical activity and sports training, in particular, among the youth. In his opinion, it was important to promote a positive image of the village. Similar attitudes prevailed in Markowice Raciborskie where Parson Leon Urbański encouraged sports training. His pastoral mission lasted from 1932 to 1950. The church's progressive attitude was most probably caused by the fact that it noticed a problem of moral decline, also in rural areas. It mainly concerned the youth smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol. The experiences of war and poor life perspectives for people in the rural areas were often the reasons for such behaviours. The church noted an opportunity to distract the youth from such temptations through training sports. The observed benefits

of sports training included increased stamina and the youth, contributing to better farm work.

For a number of reasons the rebuilding of sports facilities in Opole Silesia after the end of the World War II was slow. First of all the Poles who arrived in the area along with the local population had doubts concerning the future of the Regained Lands and stability of the Polish-German border on the Oder-Neissen rivers. It was a strong factor ingrained in the mentality of the local population, which additionally was incited over the years by demands and threats from revisionists from the Federal Republic of Germany. The situation improved only in the early 1970s. Lack of funds was yet another reason. Firstly, the post-war reconstruction focused on industrial facilities and a speedy launch of industrial production.

The reconstruction in Opole Silesia concerned cement and smelting plants and the repair of the rolling stock, river ports, and many mechanical plants such as the pre-war "Tempo" plant in former Oppeln (today's Opole). Secondly, the reconstruction efforts focused on the surviving housing infrastructure. It was an extremely important issue in the context of encouraging people to settle in the regained areas. It was only after 1950, when the Opole Province was established, when the development of sports and recreation facilities sped up. The Provincial People's Sport Teams Association in Opole began its activities on 1 September 1952 [2].

The beginnings of cycle racing in the Prudnik district

The beginnings of cycle racing in the Prudnik district go back to the establishment of a cycle racing section in 1955 in the Łąka Prudnicka People's Sport Team at the initiative of Andrzej Trybuła and Horst Treimer. The section, together with the communal People's Sport Teams organized a number of events aimed at promoting cycling in the local area. The best cyclists of that time included Erwin Chmiel, Jan Kubal, Antoni Knichnicki and Fryderyk Til. In fact, in 1955 Franciszek Surmiński, one of the most prominent figures of Polish cycling, started his successful career in Łąka Prudnicka. The cycle racing section of the Zarzewie Prudnik People's Sport Team was

founded in 1955. Cycle racing developed dynamically after 1958 in the Opole Province, which soon included 16 sections associating 131 licensed racing cyclists (cycling licenses were introduced by the Polish Cycle Racing Association in 1957).

The Łąka Prudnicka People's Sport Team cycle racing section was taken over by the Zarzewie Prudnik People's Sport Team in 1964, and in the years 1965-1969 it became the club's largest section next to the motorist, artistic gymnastics, acrobatics and weight-lifting sections.

The Club Management comprised:

- Józef Szymczyk: President
- Jerzy Grzeszkiewicz: Vice-President for Sport and Tourism
- Maria Kowalska: Vice-President for Women's Affairs
- Bolesław Folipowicz: Vice-President for Organizational Issues
- Franciszek Ryszkiewicz: Vice-President for Finance
- Karol Koziarowski: Treasurer
- Maria Mielnik: Secretary
- Stanisław Mielnik: Member
- Janusz Radziwnowski: Member

The Club Audit Committee consisted of:

- Piotr Stanis: Chair
- Józef Wrzeszcz: Member
- Wanda Żądło: Member

The section comprised 12 competitors led by Franciszek Surmiński, Erwin Chmiel, Jan Kubal, Jerzy Wiśniewski, Józef Paradowski, Jan Genteman and Fryderyk Til. They were the first cyclists who proudly and successfully represented the Zarzewie Prudnik People's Sport Team in local, national, and international races.

From the very beginning the rural clubs of the Opole Province clubs competed against urban clubs such as Start Olesno, Start Kłodnica, Unia Kędzierzyn and Piast Brzeg, and the rural cyclists from the Prudnik, Zabelków or Włókniarz Niemodlin People's Sport Teams were often successful against their urban counterparts [3].

Founding activists of cycle racing in Prudnik

Tadeusz Niebylski (born 16 March 1927)

Tadeusz Niebylski arrived in Łąka Prudnicka in 1945. As a young boy he had lost two fingers of the left hand while attempting to unload an unexploded shell. The accident made cycling a challenge to him; however, he managed to overcome all hardships. Niebylski cycled in the neighbouring villages encouraging young people to train football and cycling. He was one of the first sports promoters in the Prudnik district. In 1955 Tadeusz Niebylski started his work in the People's Sport Clubs (LZS), first as a secretary of the association, and then as a chairman of the People's Sport Club Community's Council. He remained active in the People's Sport Clubs until 1975. Upon his arrival in the Recovered Territories after WWII he completed the last two grades of the primary school in Prudnik and then continued his education and worked in the quality control department of the Frotex textile factory. In 1975 Tadeusz Niebylski became the Director of the Sport and Recreation Centre in Prudnik, and a year later he graduated from the Economic and Technical School in Prudnik.

In 1964 thanks to Tadeusz Niebylski's efforts a well-functioning Zarzewie multi-section club was founded on the basis of the People's Sport Club in Łąka Prudnicka. Niebylski was the manager of the cycle racing team from the beginning of club activities and witnessed the greatest sporting successes of the club members. He was the organizer and co-organizer of multiple road and street cycling races. His greatest success came in 1968 with the organization of a popular cross-country cycling race in Prudnik. He also organized cycle races for children aimed at promotion of cycling at the local and regional level.

For his many years of his work and sporting activities Tadeusz Niebylski received the following awards:

- Silver Cross of Merit (1971)
- Gold Cross of Merit (1979)
- Order of Polonia Restituta (1987)

In 1971, he received the "Meritorius to the Opolskie Region" award as well as the 20th, 30th and 40th anniversary medals of the People's Sport Clubs. Tadeusz Niebylski died on 20 December 1991.

Jan Gruszczyński (born 14 July 1939)

Jan Gruszczyński has been a long-time activist of the People's Sport Club in Prudnik. He was involved in cycle racing from the very beginnings of the team. In 1968, Gruszczyński was one of the organizers of Poland's cross-country championship cycle race in Prudnik. In the years 1983-1987 he was a manager of the cycle racing team which at that time was reactivated and despite multiple hardships he achieved good sporting results, especially with youth groups. Jan Gruszczyński was a physical education teacher by profession, and a very successful organizer of sports life which obviously included cycle racing as well as many other sport disciplines. He is retired.

Alicja Ćwierz (born 30 March 1948)

Alicja Ćwierz has been a member of the People's Sport Clubs since 1962. She began working in the People's Sport Clubs in Prudnik after 1966 as a rural sport instructor. Later on she became the club secretary. From the very beginning Alicja Ćwierz was directly involved in all activities of the cycle racing team. Together with Tadeusz Niebylski, Jan Gruszczyński and Roman Dejka she organized cycling races for children as well as multiple junior and senior cycling national championships. In 1975-1997 she worked in the Sport and Recreation Centre in Prudnik where she was responsible for the organization of sporting events. In 1997 Alicja Ćwierz retired but is still active and shares her experience in organization of such events. In 2016, she was appointed a member of the club's management board. She is a cheerful person brimming with a positive attitude.

Roman Dejka (born 22 April 1951)

Roman Dejka was one of sports activists who after years of cycling successes of the Zarzewie Prudnik People's Sport Club tried to restore the strong position of the club in the years 1982 – 1990. It was an extremely difficult

time with regard to the financing of sports in Poland, but inevitably a system change was coming.

Roman Dejka was the team coordinator and organizer of cycling races. In the years 1984 – 1989 he was a co-organizer of two annual national races in Prudnik: a road cycling race for the opening of the season and a street criterium. Given the club's achievements, Dejka, despite many difficulties, was adamant to continue the great successes from the past. He worked hard to promote cycle racing in Prudnik and managed to design a system of training selection of children and youths. Unfortunately the early political and economic transformation in Poland in the years 1989 – 1990 resulted in the collapse of the club's finances. Roman Dejka died on 21 August 2016.

Outstanding cyclists of the Zarzewie Prudnik People's Sport Club and their sporting achievements

Franciszek Surmiński (born 5 December 1934)

Franciszek Surmiński started his sporting career in 1955. Apart from cycle racing he also practiced cross-country skiing and table tennis, and practiced many other sports as complementary aids for his preparation for the next cycling season. Surmiński was a versatile cyclist, who often competed in street criteriums, road races, and cross-country races. On his birthday in 1956 he was conscripted for military service in Kłodzko. On his service completion in 1958 he returned to Prudnik and was employed in the Community Council of the People's Sport Club, and then sent to a sport instructor's course to Osowo near Gdynia to receive the necessary qualifications. Franciszek Surmiński worked first in the People's Sport Club in Łąka Prudnicka and then in Prudnik, which later changed its name to Zarzewie Prudnik People's Sport Club. He successfully combined his professional career with the position of cycle racing instructor. In 1974 he completed an instructor's course in Teresin. His whole sporting career was marked by versatility. Surmiński's greatest cross-country racing successes included:

- Polish Vice-Champion in 1962 and 1966;

- bronze medallist of the Polish Championships in 1967 and 1968;
- Polish Champion in 1969

In 1967 he represented Poland in cross-country world championships but withdrew during the competition. Surmiński's cross-country racing achievements included:

- bronze medal in team road racing in 1960;
- Polish championship in team road racing in 1961;
- the first place in the Małopolska mountain race in 1963 (a year before he came third in and in 1967 he second in the same year).

In 1963 Surmiński won the Race of Friendship between Poland and Czechoslovakia, and won the third place in the Colonel W F. Skopenko Memorial in 1963 and 1966. Franciszek Surmiński was also successful in cycling races abroad:

- the second place in the race around England in 1962 (he won the team event a year later);
- the first place (team event) in the Tour de l'Avenir race in France in 1963;
- the first place (team event) in the St. Laurent race around Canada in 1965.

Surmiński repeated the success of his team in the race around England in 1965, and two years later his team took the second place. In 1969 he competed in the race around Serbia where he took the third place and won in the team event. Also in 1969 he won the team race in Moscow. For his sports and coaching achievements Franciszek Surmiński was awarded the Order of Polonia Restituta in 2000.

Jan Kubal (born 19 June 1943)

Jan Kubal started his sporting career in 1962. While in the 3rd Elementary School in Prudnik, he practiced weight lifting as a preparation for spring cycling races, but he was

also interested in acrobatics and boxing. As a young boy Jan Kubal was both a coach and a mechanic. Kubal was a versatile cyclist who liked street races, cross-country, and road races. He participated in many national races and provincial races and his greatest successes in Poland included:

- the 15th place with a representation of the People's Sport Club of the Opole Province in the first All Poland 4-Stage Cycle Race for the Golden Circle Cup in Poznań from 29-30 June to 1 July 1962;
- the 3rd place in the 45-km national race of the Association of the People's Sport Clubs in pairs together with Franciszek Surmiński in Toruń, on 3 September 1966;
- the 6th place in the 75-km national individual race organized also in Toruń on 4 September 1966;
- the 10th place in the second stage of the 16th national race around Mazovia, in Płońsk, on 21 September 1966.

Jan Kubal's main successes in the Opole Province included:

- the 1st place in the Commune Sport Athletic Meeting at a distance of 20km in Prudnik, on 24 September 1962;
- the 1st place in cross-country championships in Kędzierzyn, on 7 January 1962;
- the 5th place in the 50-km criterium, Prudnik, 4 August 1963;
- the 3rd place in the 60-km criterium for the PKKFiT Cup in Prudnik, 6 June 1965.

Unfortunately the talents of this humble and extremely ambitious cyclist were not sufficiently tapped. In the 1960s, like many of his colleagues, Kubal could not dream of take full advantage of modern training knowledge since the funds for sports equipment were

limited. These were the beginnings of cycle racing in the Prudnik district and Jan Kubal was one of the first cyclists who achieved success both in the Opolskie Province and on a national level. After he completed his career in April 1969, Jan Kupal started working in a military unit in Prudnik, and after 1974 he continued his professional career in the Customs Office in Głuchołazy. He retired in 2005.

Erwin Chmiel (born 1 December 1944)

Edwin Chmiel became interested in cycle racing at an early age. He started his professional career in the People's Sport Club in Łąka Prudnicka, and after the team's takeover in 1964 he trained in the Zarzewie Prudnik People's Sport Club. He represented the Opole region in 1967 at the 4th Central Athletic Meeting in the Polish People's Republic.

Erwin Chmiel's sports achievements led to his successful selection for the representation of the Association of the People's Sport Clubs. He graduated from the National Technical School in Nysa and was awarded a counsellor's diploma. He worked then in the Basic Vocational School of Industrial Equipment. While actively competing Chmiel received a cycle racing instructor certificate and then a coach's diploma of the second and of the first class. After he completed his sporting career in 1970 Erwin Chmiel worked as a coach in the Zieloni Opole club and in the Ziemia Opolska People's Sport Clubs. Initially he coached a few teams in the State Agricultural Farm in Frączków and later became the club head coach. The results of his work were highly appreciated by the authorities of the Polish Cycling Federation and in 1986 he became an assistant of the Polish national team coach, Waclaw Skarul. Erwin Chmiel displayed exceptional cycling training skills, and was both demanding and caring to his trainees. He became the laureate of the Trybuna Opolska newspaper plebiscite for the best coach of the Opole region in 1988. Erwin Chmiel died tragically in a road accident on 4 August 1991 near Grabin.

Jerzy Wiśniewski (born 28 March 1949)

Jerzy Wiśniewski began training cycle racing in 1966. He had also trained football, ice

hockey, basketball as well as cross-country skiing taking full advantage of the physical features of the Opole region. Wiśniewski lived in Łąka Prudnicka which is surrounded by numerous ponds, ideal for ice hockey. He always remembered getting his first skates on Christmas, which allowed him to indulge in his passion for ice hockey. Jerzy Wiśniewski's greatest cycling successes were 1000m and 3000m provincial championships and 1000m and 4000m team provincial championships. He also took part in cycling sprint races at the distance of 200m and excelled at time trials. Jerzy Wiśniewski works in the Culture Centre in Tułowice as a gym coach.

Józef Paradowski (born 17 April 1949)

Józef Paradowski started cycle racing in 1968. He was a great road cyclist, especially in mountain stages and long flat stages; however, not as good in finishes. He was an assistant of Franciszek Surmiński. In the years 1969-1971 Paradowski completed his military service in the Legia Warszawa sports club and then returned to Prudnik and resumed racing. In 1971, he joined the newly founded Ziemia Opolska People's Sport Club, he continued to race until the end of 1973. Paradowski was a farmer. He lived with his parents-in-law and often helped on the farm. As a person he was exceptionally friendly and honest. Paradowski worked as a mechanic and was a graduate of the Basic Vocational School. Later on, he moved to Prężynka, a small town near Prudnik, where he lived together with his wife. Józef Paradowski died on 17 August 2014.

Stanisław Szozda (born 25 September 1950)

Stanisław Szozda began his life-long adventure with cycle racing in Prudnik, although he had been earlier successful at artistic gymnastics, football, hand ball, and cross-country skiing. Szozda's cycling coach was Franciszek Surmiński, and he also cooperated with the Polish national cycling team coach Henryk Łasak. Szozda was regarded as a highly talented competitor and a successor to Polish legendary road cyclist Ryszard Szurkowski. In the opinion of some, however, Szozda should have outpaced the Polish King of the Roads as far as his

achievements were concerned. Hardly of an ironman's appearance once Stanisław Szozda set off on his bicycle he could not be defeated. He was a natural born cyclist and cycling was his life passion. He was a hard, ambitious, and extreme fighter and never resigned from pursuing his victory. Szozda tortured his rivals with pace changes which he endured himself. He achieved his first victory when he was 17 years old in a race for non-associated cyclists in Prudnik. At the 2nd National Youth Athletic Meeting in 1969 he came second. Stanisław Szozda was asked at a cyclists' ball which was organized in the "Varsovia" restaurant in Warsaw concluding the 75th Anniversary of the Polish Cycling Federation plebiscite organized by the Kurier Polski newspaper, why the readers cast so many votes for him. He replied, "Maybe, because I loved racing. Not only for the victories. I often smiled, I had no problems, I fought to the end as long as I had any strength left". His pursued his goals constantly, although several times it seemed impossible.

Stanisław Szozda completed his sporting career in 1979. He later moved to the USA, where he tried to work as a coach. After a few years he returned to Poland and worked occasionally, together with Czesław Lang, as a commentator of the Tour de Pologne race.

Stanisław Szozda's greatest cycling achievements include:

- the 11th place in the individual race at the Montreal Summer Olympics in 1976;
- two-time Olympic Vice-Champion in team racing (1972 and 1976);
- the world vice-champion in individual racing (1973);
- the 4th place in the world championships in individual racing (1974);
- two-time world champion in team racing (1973 and 1975);
- the 3rd place in world championships in team racing (1971 and 1977);
- the 7th place in world championships in team racing (1974);

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- Poland's champion in individual racing (1973);
- Poland's vice-champion in individual racing (1971 and 1974);
- Poland's champion in pairs (1970 and 1974);
- the 3rd place in Poland's championships in pairs (1975);
- Poland's championship in team racing (1974);
- Poland's vice-championship in team racing (1973 and 1976);
- winner of the Peace Race (1974);
- the 2nd place in the Peace Race (1973 and 1976);
- winner of the Tour de Pologne (1971);
- the 4th place in the Tour de Pologne (1973);

- winner of the Lesser Poland Mountain Race (1976);
- winner of the Piast Castle Route race (1977).

Stanisław Szozda was also successful in a number of international races such as:

- Tour of Algeria (1973);
- Vuelta a Toledo, Spain (1973 and 1974);
- Tour de Vaucluse, France (1973);
- Ruben Granitier Breton, France (1974);
- Settimana Berbamasca, Italy (1974);
- Tour of Styria, Austria (1976)

In the Polish Cycling Federation classification, Stanisław Szozda was always ranked as a top

Table 1. Stanisław Szozda in The Polish Cycling Federation classification

1970	10 th place	1974	1 st place
1971	5 th place	1975	2 nd place
1972	2 nd place	1976	3 rd place
1973	2 nd place	1977	8 th place

He received 10 medals (gold, silver and bronze) for superb sporting achievements and in 1988, he was awarded the Order of Polonia Restituta. Stanisław Szozda died on 23 September 2013. He was awarded posthumously the Officer's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta.

Stanisław Babula (born 5 February 1951)

Stanisław Babula took up cycling after his graduation from the Basic Vocational School in 1969. He purchased his first Huragan bicycle from his own savings. In autumn and winter he read books on bicycle mechanics and then modified and prepared his equipment for the coming cycling season. In the spring he won his first cycling challenge, i.e. 3 x 5 km race. A week later Babula took part in a road race to Olesno in which he came 5th. Along his racing career Stanisław Babula was also a farmer. He was self-trained and cycle racing was his passion. Much later Babula's first cycle racing coaches were Alfred Til and Franciszek Surmiński.

In 1974 Stanisław Babula became Poland's vice-champion in individual time trial, losing only to Tadeusz Matynik. He won the Opole regional championships twice as well as several time trials. With his team he was ranked 5th in a 100 km race in Poland's National Championships in 1973. During a race in the former German Democratic Republic Babula suffered a serious ACL tear, and soon after concluded his sporting career. He has been retired since 2016.

Emil Łysek (born 8 June 1952)

Emil Łysek started his adventure with cycling in 1968. He was exceptionally talented in sports, including ice hockey and football. He was an outstanding cross-country cyclist. It was Emil Łysek's first coach Jerzy Wiśniewski who convinced him to take up cycling. Emil Łysek excelled at both road cycling and criteriums and was a member of Poland's youth national team. Łysek's main achievements in the years 1971-1972 included:

- the 2nd place in the Poland Junior Championships in cross-country cycling;
- the 1st place in Poland's zonal championships;
- the 1st place in the Opole provincial championships

In 1975 Emil Łysek was ranked first in the individual championships of the Opole region in the senior category in a road race with a mass start. Emil Łysek worked in various companies in Prudnik, including a furniture plant. He then moved to the United Kingdom. He died on 16 March 2005.

Henryk Jagielski (born 20 July 1953)

Henryk Jagielski took part in his race for non-associated cyclists in May 1967. As a young boy he liked playing handball, football, basketball and volleyball in school sporting clubs. Henryk Jagielski's first cycling coach in the Piast Gliwice Sports Club was Janusz Nawrot. In the years 1968 -1973 Jagielski was a student of the Technical School of Motor Vehicle Engineering. He often said that his greatest success after a race was to be unhurt. Henryk Jagielski's main cycling successes include:

- the 1st place in the Opole street criterium (1976);
- the 3rd place in the Opole region mountain championships in Prudnik (1976);
- the 3rd place in the Głucholazy mountain championships (1976).

In 1974 he completed a cycle racing coach course in Teresin together with Jerzy Wiśniewski, Franciszek Surmiński, and Erwin Chmiel. Since 1975 Henryk Jagielski has been managing a driving school business. Together with his son Radosław and Stanisław Szozda's son, also Radosław, they have been co-organizers of the Stanisław Szozda Memorial.

Andrzej Orzechowski (born 28 May 1955)

In his youth Andrzej Orzechowski played dodgeball and football. He started training cycle racing at the age of 14. One year later he got his first racing bicycle from his

mother and enrolled in the Zarzewie cycle racing team. His first coach was Franciszek Surmiński. Orzechowski was ranked third in his first cross-country race. He was very successful in the youth and junior categories, and won Poland' vice-championship in pair time trial in Nowy Sącz (1974). Andrzej Orzechowski completed his military service in the years 1975-1976, during which he represented the Legia Warszawa sports club. Following an accident his military service was shortened and he was discharged in 1976. In Prudnik it was coach Franciszek Surmiński who convinced him to resume racing. He started training but bad luck haunted him. During one of training sessions in Rudziczka he was hit by a car. After that accident he gave up his sporting career. Throughout his career Andrzej Orzechowski helped his parents on a farm. He owns a carpentry workshop in Rudziczka near Prudnik.

Marek Kuglin (10 April 1956)

Marek Kuglin revealed his cycling talent at the beginning of 1974. He was one of competitors who prepared for the World Championships and the Peace Race. In the years 1979-1980 he was one of the top Polish cyclists, and almost qualified for the Moscow Olympics in 1980. In 1979 he was ranked 10th in Poland' individual racing championships and was the regional cross-country racing champion. Marek Kuglin was a member of Poland's national senior team in races in Italy, France and Algeria. He currently works in Germany and visits his home town from time to time.

Jan Witkowski (born 28 April 1956)

Jan Witkowski started racing at the age of 15. Earlier, like many of his peers, he played football, basketball, and practiced swimming. His first coach, Jerzy Wiśniewski, taught Witkowski the cycle racing basics and later Franciszek Surmiński continued working on Witkowski's cycling talent and skills.

Jan Witkowski's main achievements include:

- People's Sport Clubs "Golden Circle" national junior championship in a stage race in Prudnik (1974)

- the 3rd in the Bydgoszcz Land stage race in Bydgoszcz (1974)

After his 1974 successes Witkowski was called up to the Poland national junior team. In the years 1975-1977 he did his military service in Łódź, during which he represented the Orzeł Łódź Military Sports Club (WKS). After the completion of his military service Witkowski returned to Prudnik, where after three years he ended his sporting career. Jan Witkowski works in the Municipal Services Company in Prudnik.

Janusz Jagielski (born 25 May 1957)

Janusz Jagielski developed his interest in cycle racing in 1970. His first cycling coach was Franciszek Surmiński. Jagielski's greatest success was winning the Poland team racing zone championship. In the youth category he won the provincial track racing championship three times, and won four medals (2 gold, 1 silver and 1 bronze) in the provincial Youth Athletic Meeting. In 1977 he underwent a knee operation. As a result of post-operation complications Jagielski was forced to give up his sporting career. However, he did not give up his passion for cycle racing. In 1981 he became a cycle racing commissaire, and since 1996 he has been a national commissaire, officiating the Peace Race five times. Since 2012 Janusz Jagielski has been working in the Water and Sewage Company in Prudnik.

Kazimierz Mazepa (26 July 1957)

Kazimierz Mazepa began his sporting career in 1971. At that time, he attended the Basic Vocational School in Prudnik. Earlier he had practiced basketball, swimming and football. Mazepa's first cycling coach, Franciszek Surmiński, prepared him for the Poland national championships in cross-country racing in 1974 in Jelenia Góra, where Mazepa won the vice-championship. He was then called up to the junior national team and took part in the world championships in Belgium (1975). After that he won in the entire Tarnów-Poprad 5-stage race, and received the best mountain cyclist title. In the years 1978-1980 Kazimierz Mazepa completed his military service in Prudnik. After his discharge from the

military service he continued his sporting career in Zarzewie, again under coach Franciszek Surmiński. Mazepa ended his career in 1983. Today, he is in catering business but still does cycling, including mountain cycling, as a member of the Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Association.

Bogdan Bezdziety (born October 1958)

Bogdan Bezdziety enrolled in the Zarzewie Prudnik People's Sport Club in 1972 and started racing in spring 1973. At the very beginning of his cycle racing career he was coached by Jerzy Wiśniewski and later by Franciszek Surmiński. Bezdziety's cycling talent was revealed in 1975 when he became the Poland's Mountain Racing Junior Champion. In the years 1975 – 1976 he became the best cyclist in the junior category in Poland and was soon assigned to the national team. Bogdan Bezdziety's greatest successes in the years 1975-1976 comprise:

- Junior Poland Championship from a mass start (1976);
- Junior Poland vice-championship in cross-country race (1976);
- 3rd place in team Junior World Team Championships (1976);

He also participated in the European championships in Jelenia Góra where he was ranked 13th. When it seemed that Bezdziety's career would naturally take off as a senior in 1980 it unexpectedly ended. At that time he was a member of the junior Olympic team. In the years 1978-1980 while representing Legia Warszawa he took part in an international race in Vilnius. After the race he had an ice-cream and contracted food poisoning after which he spent five months in hospital, out of which for three months he was bedridden. After his illness, which the doctors could not fully diagnose, Bezdziety could not return to cycle racing. Due to his health condition, he was discharged from further military service and did not receive a doctor's permit to continue his sporting career.

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