

## Zahradníček's blog for English speaking students

### Part nineteen: Kometa, or Zbrojovka?

In my last blog I have mentioned the ice-hockey match between students of Masaryk University and the students of Brno University of Technology. In fact, university sport teams do not have such a big tradition in Czechia and sport does not play such a big role in the "University teambuilding". Nevertheless, at least at the Masaryk University in might change quite quickly, because the former Dean and now Rector (= Chancellor) of the University has his personal experience from Mayo Clinic and he tends to implement it also in Brno.

In the meantime, we can look, what is the role of sports in Brno as a city, if not at the University.

Well, fans of cricket may be frustrated. Brno Cricket Club exist, but is quite small and the players are mostly foreigners, almost with roots in India. It might improve, but to be honest, it is not very likely that cricket, although so popular in the countries like India or Pakistan, would become an important sport in Brno.

On the other hand, we already have examples of sports that became considerably popular, although they were not very common in Czechia. One of them is baseball, where Czech sportsmen start to be now something better than in history. What is interesting, the Czech extra-league of baseball contains two teams from Brno, and between 1993 and 2014 all winners were from Brno; just in last years also teams from Prague and Ostrava improve.

But of course, there exist also sports that have local tradition in Czechia. One of them is basketball – in 2019 world mastership Czech man took the 6<sup>th</sup> place, that means better than U. S. players (7<sup>th</sup>). Brno had some good teams in history, but rather in the league of women – the team from Brno-Žabovřesky won many times the Czech league and several times it had even medals from the European Basketball League. Unfortunately at the moment some other teams are in much better condition.

Unlike basketball, that is popular mostly among students, football (or soccer, if you want) is popular among all people not only in Czechia, but worldwide; only in some countries it is beaten by other sports, like cricket in India or rugby in the New Zealand – by the way, rugby exists also here, but its role is marginal). Brno as a city has a bad luck: its best team, Zbrojovka, is recently only in the second league, and its attempt to get to the first league was not successful. On the other hand, one success of football in Brno still exists – another team, Líšeň (from eastern suburbs of Brno) moved to the second league this year after being in the third league before. So after long years, football fans were able to see a "derby", although just in the second league.

The most popular sport in Brno and one the two most popular sports in Czechia (together with football) is ice-hockey. Nobody knows exactly why: this sport is very popular in Canada, Sweden, Finland or Russia, that means countries with lakes covered by ice during the winter; but Czech winters are quite mild and the period of naturally frozen ponds is quite short. Nevertheless, the popularity of the ice hockey is not on its decrease.

In Brno, many people are fans of Kometa (a Comet). The history of its name is funny – in 1953, when the club has been founded, its name was Rudá Hvězda (Red Star), because this was the name of all sport clubs led by the Home Office; red star has been one of typical communist symbols. "Kometa" had been originally just a parody to the "Red star" name, but it became so popular that people used it even when the name changed several times, and starting from 1994 it is the official name of the club. Kometa is one of the most successful ice-hockey teams in Czechoslovakia (in 50s and 60s), but also now in Czechia, winning the cup also in 2016/17 and 2017/18.

Well, there are also other sports, like gymnastics or athletics. The first golden medal from Olympic games for Czechoslovakia was the one from Paris 1924 for Bedřich Šupčík, living that time in Brno. His medal was from rope climbing, that is no more an Olympic sport. But so or so, this is already far history.