

## THE SPORT LIFE OF THE FIRST TRADE ACADEMY OF CLUJ (1878-1919)

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**ABSTRACT.** The sports life of the first Trade Academy of Cluj was an important chapter of the local sport history in the period before 1918. When the institution was founded special attention was paid to the teaching of physical education, and 35 years later the sports club of the institution grew into a well-known association nationwide, mostly due to football and skiing. The sports life at the academy started with providing physical exercise. From the moment when the institutions' sports club was founded the students started taking up the fashionable sports of the time such as skating, cycling and football. As football was gaining ground, more and more people played this team game, and by 1905 the team of the academy had become the best football association in Transylvania. But together with the closing of the institution in 1919, the sports association ceased, as well.

**Keywords:** Academy of Trade in Cluj, physical education, football, skiing, fencing, athletics, skating, cycling.

**REZUMAT.** *Viața sportivă din prima Academie de Studii Economice din Cluj (1878-1919).* Viața sportivă a primei Academii de Studii Economice a însemnat un capitol important al istoriei sportului din perioada interbelică a orașului Cluj. Din momentul înființării institutului educația fizică a beneficiat de o atenție specială, iar după 35 de ani clubul sportive al academiei a fost cunoscut pe plan național, în special rezultatelor excelente obținute la fotbal și schi. Începutul activităților sportive o constituie introducerea orelor de educație fizică. Din momentul în care clubul sportive a luat ființă studenții au început să practice sporturile vremii: patinajul, ciclismul și fotbalul. Odată cu răspândirea jocului de fotbal din ce în ce mai mulți tineri au început să practice acest sport, iar în 1905 echipa academiei a devenit cea mai puternică echipă din Transilvania. Dar după dizolvarea instituției în 1919 clubul sportive a dispărut din viața sportive locală.

**Cuvinte cheie:** Academia de Studii Economice, educație fizică, fotbal, schi, scrimă, atletism, patinaj, ciclism

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**Sándor Kiss**

The idea of establishing a trade school came from János Herzl, a civilian school teacher, in 1878. In the first two years the institution operated in the building of the civilian boy school and under its government. In the 1880/81 school year they rented the Wesselényi-house in the centre of the town, and a year later moved in the rooms taken in lease at the Catholic Vicarage. In 1885 the Hungarian Minister of Religion and Education raised the rank of the institution to Academy and moved it in 1887 in a new building, situated on the corner of the Emil Isac street (in present the building of Polytechnic Institution). The number of students grew, so in 1893 the institute got a new building in Emil Isac street, at number 19<sup>th</sup>. (Sas 2003, 186-187)

Beginning with 1887/88 school year, the institute undertook educational tasks as well, when they became a boarding school. *A strong character, reliable behavior, knowledge of the duty and accuracy in work is indispensable in every course of life, but above all in a trading career* – admitted the Institute's management. (The Almanac of the institute from the 1902-03 year, ed. by Sándor Kiss, 7.) Sports and physical exercise were a great way of achieving this goal. The management realized this, and made a serious financial effort to introduce sports in the life of the students even if it wasn't in the curriculum. In this way they provided besides training a healthy life also. The students had the opportunity to exercise – athletics, gymnastics, football, skating, skiing, cycling, fencing etc – and the results were obvious: the professionals *that left the institute preferred to attend sports sites after work, than smoky coffee houses*. (The Almanac of the institute from the 1905-06 year, ed. by Sándor Kiss, 73.) The principal, Sándor Kiss held on to his principles: beside promoting and sponsoring physical exercises, the sport circle of the school and the preparation for competitions, he always remunerated the exceptional achievements.

Sándor Kiss (Sâncraiu (Covasna), 1849 – Cluj, 1914) he got his history-geography teacher degree at the University of Cluj. He started his career at the Trading School in 1879, later he became the principal of the institution. In recognition of his work, in 1894 he was named Knight of the Order of Franz Joseph, by the ruler itself. (Szinyeyi VI., 388.)

With the change of the power after the I World War, the Trading Academy was liquidated, and its place was taken over by a new Romanian school founded by the Romanian Ministry of Education.

### **The evolution of the sport life**

The management of the Trading School emphasized the importance of sports from the beginning by creating ways for students to work out. The principal Sándor Kiss knew that besides teaching, there is a real need for physical training, hygiene and the protection of health. (Kiss 1896, 235) The institute respected this principle throughout its activity and created the possibility of physical exercise.

At the beginning the institute was not prepared to undertake the teaching of physical exercise as they were lacking a proper gym and a specialized trainer. This was a general problem in all Transylvanian and Hungarian schools, and the resolution came from the local Gymnastics and Fencing Associations. The school paid a fee and in return the association provided a gym and a trainer, so the students could exercise once a week in the local gym, called Tornavívóda - the building of the Athletic and Fencing Club, established in 1873, which was the first modern gym in Cluj. It was at the Széchenyi Square until the end of the 1930's, when it was demolished. Now the market hall is standing in its place. (Killyéni 2010, 10-20) The management of the Trading School decided to participate, so their students attended the activities of the Tornavívóda.

The sport specialists emphasized the sport achievements of the Trading School, and presented them to other schools as an example worth following. It is a fact, that due to the work of Sándor Kiss and Oktáv Hangay by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the institute became a genuine sport centre. Their sport association created the proper ground for the rooting of football. Beginning with 1905, the sport circle was conducted by Róbert Kuntner, the



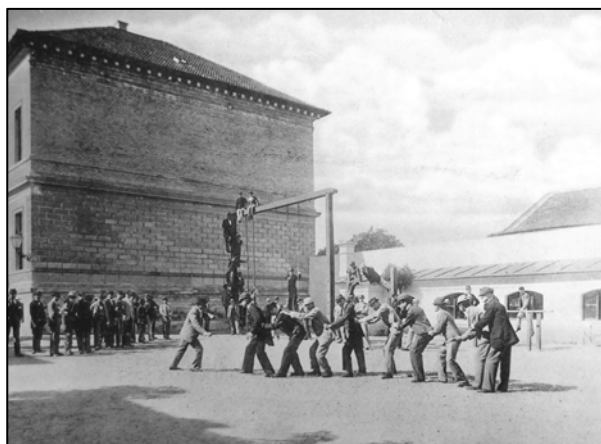
**Oktáv Hangay**

(Várpalota, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1850 - Cluj,  
11<sup>th</sup> March 1916)

He learned at the University of Zürich and Munich. He got his teacher degree in 1888 at the University of Cluj and worked as a teacher at the Trading School beginning with 1889. (Killyéni 2006, 65)

teacher of the school and Hangay. Kuntner was a very enthusiastic coach, who became a football player if the team needed. So it was no surprise, that the team was the best football team in Transylvania until 1914. Under these circumstances it was normal, that in the 1905/06 school year 116 students played football, 46 were fencing and 103 were gymnasts or athletes. (The Almanac of the institute from the 1905-06 year, ed. by Sándor Kiss, 73) The biggest challenge was the reinforcement of the team as at every end of the school year the team lost the graduate students. The key to this problem the sport association. With this, Kuntner and Hangay were able to assure the after growth. The two leaders with the help of the enthusiastic principal, Sándor Kiss founded a sport association which was exemplary, acknowledged and respected all over Hungary.

The majority of the students were boarders, so the management decided to provide the possibility to work out for them as well. As a first step, they placed in the court of the institute gym equipments, so the students could exercise in spring and fall under teacher's supervision. In 1895 the management decided to restore the old equipment, and purchased new ones: two barriers, a stretching pad, a climber and a swing. (The Almanac of the institute from the 1895-96 year, ed. by Sándor Kiss, 79)



**Sport equipment in the Academy's court  
(middle of 1890's)**

gymnasts, and nine of them were awarded. The team members had red shirts, blue hats and blue belts at the presentation, and had nice programs on the free exercise and in the gymnastic competition. From the team Zoltán Benedek, Ferenc Fűszfás, László, Guzman, Ferenc Holbráda, Béla Kovács, Gyula Köhler, Gyula Novák, Károly Schwimmer and Ernő Toperczer were awarded with prizes and diplomas. (Kiss 1896, 467)

In the Tornavívóda Lajos Nyárádi was the trainer until 1880, followed by Károly Albert. After the sudden death of Albert, the institute sought some intermediate resolutions before approaching Gyula László, the sport teacher of the Unitarian College. From 1908 Ferenc Rázsó became the permanent trainer.

It did not take long for the results to emerge. In 1894 on the regional gymnastic competition the school was represented by a team of 50

In 27-28<sup>th</sup> of May 1905 a national gymnastics competition for high schools was held in Budapest, where 122 schools participated. At the opening ceremony the 32 students of the Trading Academy wore red hats and shirts with white belt, and were led by Gyula Wachsmann. The yearbook of the institute related about the outstanding achievements: *We can be proud of the final results, our students won in every competition they participated. The equitation team got the highest degree. Wachsmann Gyula was first in (running) climbing, Leitner János got bronze. They played füleslabda against the players from Miskolc, and they got mention. In tug of war our youth overtook the muscular students from Szentgothárd. The four honorable mention and the 22 medals brought home will be a memorable achievement in the history of the school.* (The Almanac of the institute from the 1904-05 year, ed. by Sándor Kiss, 75)

In the 1905/06 school year a dream came true, when the school's gym was inaugurated. Starting with 1908/09 school year, Ferenc Rázsó qualified sport teacher was hired, and a new era begun in the sport life of the academy. Ferenc Rázsó and his students prepared with enthusiasm for the national sport competition for 1909, but unfortunately it was called off in the last minute. It was a poor consolation that on 23 May 1909 the institute organized a gymnastic, athletic and fencing competition. László Benedek, Tivadar Gajzágó, Simon Harnik, Endre Márton, Béla Reisch and Ferenc Szalay were awarded in more than one competition number. (The Almanac of the institute from the 1908-09 year, ed. by Sándor Kiss, 64)

In the 1909/10 school year the team of the school had success on several sport competitions organized by associations countrywide. The sport teacher of the school summarized these achievements: *sporting is on such level in our school, that only a few institutes can equal us... all sports are practiced: Hangay Oktáv trained winter sports, Kuntner Róbert outside activities, Bagaméri József fencing and László Gyula gymnastics.* (The Almanac of the institute from the 1910-11 year, ed. by Sándor Kiss, 64) The school was proud that they managed to reduce the number of exempted students by the introduction of Swedish gymnastics.

Gymnastic training became harder at the end of the 1880's. In the Tornavívóda there was only one teacher for a lot of students (for example Károly Albert trained 2500 students in 40 hours/week) and the gym was not suitable for so many students. So in 1889, the institute equipped a fencing room in the school building, where the master Zoltán Páska led the trainings. Unfortunately this room was liquidated because the school needed the classroom. (Kiss 1896, 235)

In the new building of the school, beginning with 1893/94 school year a fencing room was equipped, where Mihály Kóváry fencing master trained with rigorous discipline the older students in sabre and foil fencing. (The Almanac of the institute from the 1893-94 year, ed. by Sándor Kiss, 119) In the next school year we can see fencing in the curriculum as an extraordinary

course, taught by Artúr Kóváry, four times a week. In 1897, at the fencing competition organized to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Tornavívóda, 44 students of the Trading School participated. The remarkable achievements of Aladár Farkas and Dezső Csíky were awarded by the organizers. Artúr Kóváry received the recognition of his work. In 1898 the fencing competition of the high schools from Cluj was won by the team of the Trading Academy, and in individual competition Gyula Trojkó became the winner.

Beginning with 1900, the institute invited József Bagaméri fencing master and for a shorter period of time László Gerentsér university trainer to teach Italian fencing. Fencing was always a competition number at the gymnastic contest organized at the end of the school year, and the best fencer was always awarded, by the management.

In 1890, the institute did not have a proper building, the sporting possibilities were limited, and there was no fencing room, so the management accepted in 1891 the suggestion of Hangay to create a sport team. The idea was implemented, and so the Sphaira Sport Circle was organized mainly from the border students. Hangay initially wanted to organize a sport circle on Cluj level, but the conditions were not appropriate.

At the beginning of each year the members of the sport circle elected their officials. In 1897 the officials were: governor and ski master: Ferenc Nagy, bicycle master: Ferenc Appl, ball master: Gyula Trojkó, skating master: Kálmán Regényi, managers: Ferenc Szász, Sándor Klein, Gyula Grosz and Kornél Schwarcz. (The Almanac of the institute from the 1897-98 year, ed. by Sándor Kiss, 86) The circle was led for years by Oktáv Hangay.

The most popular sports were athletics: running, walking, high and long-jump, wrestling, shot-put, but they enjoyed cycling, skating in winter, and when time permitted: hiking.

The sport circle organized gymnastic competitions at the end of each school year. In 1894 the students competed in 150 and 200 meter sprint, high-jump and shot-put. After this, the competition was organized annually, with numbers in: gymnastic, fencing and athletics. By 1910 the athletes of the school were known on city level, due to their results on local competitions. We can emphasize the results of Ádám Bod with his 172 cm high jump and Ferenc Szalay's 619 cm long jump. (The Almanac of the institute from the 1910-11 year, ed. by Sándor Kiss, 66)

The introduction of skiing can be linked with the sport circle and with Oktáv Hangay in the 1894/95 school year. The steam of the academy was the first in Hungary to promote skiing. On the Millennium in 1896 the school presented the introduction of the Norwegian sport in pictures. The sport circle was ignored by the judges from Budapest, even if it was the only association with this character. (The Almanac of the institute from the 1896-97 year, ed. by Sándor Kiss, 137)

The skiers made the distance between the school and the margin of the city in the first winter. Three students—Ernő Toperczer, Vilmos Hulita and Lajos Birkás – had great success with their achievement: they skied from Cluj to Turda and back. (Kiss 1896, 468) Next winter the snow was also great, so under the conduction of Hangay they made a trip to Leghia, where they had great opportunities to ski. The sport became known, the skiers bought their own skies and two sleds. In winter they skied two-three times a week downhill on Hoia woods.



**Sándor Hirschfeld**

Skating was very popular among the borders of the school; neay 70 % of them skated. The Central Park was near, and the Skating Association gave price reduction for the students of the school.

*The Skating Association of Kolozsvár gave a reduction of price to 2 forint for the students of the Trading School thanks to the intervention of Hangay Oktáv. The generosity of the leaders towards the students living far from their parents paid off, as 86 borders enrolled to the Skating Association, paying them 173 forints. Because the skating rink with its beautiful illumination and pavilion was at 5 minute distance from the school, the students attended it on a daily base, and sometimes the routine of the boarding school was changed so the students could spend as much as possible outdoor - as the yearbook of the school related. (The Almanac of the institute from the 1896-97 year, ed. by Sándor Kiss, 137) The school organized skating competition for its students, in 1896 Jenő Mátéj, Béla Brutsy and Andor Melicskó were the winners.*

In 1897 the skating association refused the price reduction for the students, so a part of the students went to the rinks from the court of the Tornavívóda and of the Diána Bath.

Cycling appeared in Cluj in the mid 1880's and became popular by the 1890's. In the 1896/97 school year, the Trading School embraced this sport, and 54 of its students became cyclers. The management of the school disposed a smaller room for the keeping of bicycles and skis. In cycle Ferenc Appl emerged, by being the best cycler in Cluj in the 1890's. Appl, as the leader of the Cycling Association, participated in several contests at the Millennium in 1896 and won. Beside this he was awarded in other contests, defeating well known cyclers from Budapest.

Appl had his greatest success in 1898 at the competition of the Bicycle Association of Cluj. Ferenc Greiner cyclist, the significant member of MTK (and of Hungary) participated and won every number in the competition until the 5000 meter race. At this last number, the local favorite Appl and Greiner fought a huge battle, but the race ended with the victory of Appl, to the delight of the spectators. (Ellenzék, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1898) The enthusiastic crowd ran into the course, carried the winner on their shoulders all around, celebrating him, like a hero. The principal of the Trading Academy wrote in the yearbook of the school about this cyclist and the student of the institute: *the sportsman, who brought two silver and three bronze medals beside the Special Award of Women from Kolozsvár, contributed consistently to the sport fame of the institute.* (The Almanac of the institute from the 1896-97 year, ed. by Sándor Kiss, 137)

This line of successes was soon interrupted by the introduction of the bicycle tax. The police monitored and penalized the cyclists who did not pay the new tax, so by 1900 the cyclist group of 28 students ceased.

### **The nationally renowned football team**

In 1896 football appeared in Cluj and was initially played by high school and university students. In 1902/03 the football team of the Trading Academy was established, and in the next 10 years they ruled the Transylvanian football life. The players of the first team were: Ernő Koncz, István Tóth, Ferenc Lesska, Ferenc Szilágyi, Bálint Törley, Hugó Weiner, Ottó Mixich, János Fleischer, József Epstein, István Zombory, Henrik Gross, Ernő Kósa, Béla Fuchs, Kázmér Kapsza and Gyula Waschmann. (The Almanac of the institute from the 1902-03 year, ed. by Sándor Kiss, 124)

In the 1904/05 school year, the team of the Trading School defeated twice the other football team of Cluj: the team of Athelitic Club with 3-1 and 3-2. The captain of the team was: Dezső Törley, the players were: János Wellisz – Manó Goldman, Dezső Törley – János Leitner, József Friedel – Sándor Beretvás, Ottó Róth, Kázmér Kapsza, Nándor Lukács, Jenő Strauch. (The Almanac of the institute from the 1904-05 year, ed. by Sándor Kiss, 75-76)

In 1905 Kuntner Róbert, the former football player in Budapest (BTC), became the teacher of the institute and the co-president of the sport circle. The young teacher played in the team as well, but his big achievement was the organization of this sport. 116 students of the institute played this game, Kuntner organized two selected teams. He introduced and conducted the trainings in an exemplary way, taught techniques and tactics so teamwork took over the individual playing. In the first year, the team managed to become the best one in Transylvania. The team with yellow-blue dress stepping on the football field was formed by: Brunner – Strauch, Vámos – Jeremiás, Leitner, Ábrahám – Beretvás, Róth, Kuntner, Daumé, Weiszfeiler. (The Almanac of the institute from the 1905-06 year, ed. by Sándor Kiss, 74)



The 1906/07 school year brought new successes. At the beginning of the school year many feared, because the best players of the last year's team finished and left the school. The new players rose to the expectation, so the generation change did not influence the success of the team. On the first championship organized by Athletic Club of Cluj, the team of the Trading School was the second out of six teams. They were defeated in the finals by the ACC Football Team, in the second continuance of the match. On June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1907, the team went to Budapest, where they were the guests of Törekvés Sport Club, a second league team. The Törekvés won with a 7:2 score, but the Trading School Team played well. It was obvious the difference between the standards of Cluj and Budapest. The organizers and the specialists praised the play of the team, which was formed by: Gajzágó – Strauch, Voith – Fehér, Bíró, Bárány – Daumé, Róth, Kuntner, Ábrahám, Lager. (The Almanac of the institute from the 1906-07 year, ed. by Sándor Kiss, 80)

In the fall of 1907 Kuntner established the Sport Association of the Trading Academy (SATA), so the football team received the rank of association. This was an important step, because the new rank allowed the former students to play in the team. With this, Kuntner laid the institutional football on modern principles. Beside this, he asked the admission of the three football teams –ACC, Trade Academy and Vasas from Cluj into the Hungarian Football Association (HFA) and consequently the organization of the Transylvanian Championship for these three teams. HFA was happy to accept the admitting teams, and announced the championship in two rounds for the spring of 1908. According to the rules of HFA, only certified players could participate in the championship. So the engagement of the players started, which led to the emulation of associations. The leaders of the clubs often accused each other with inveigle of players. (Killyéni 2006, 27)



**Kuntner Róbert**

(Budapest, 15 November 1882 – Budapest, 27<sup>th</sup> November 1954) University professor; he got his university degree in Budapest and Zürich. Beginning with 1905 he is a teacher at the Trading Academy, between 1913-19 he was the principal of the Upper School of Trades in Bratislava. From 1922 he is a professor at the Polytechnic of Budapest, between 1939-40 is the dean of the Faculty of Economics. Between 1948-50 he is a professor at the University of Economics of Budapest. (Killyéni 2006, 83)

The eastern regional championship was played by the three teams in the spring of 1908; the winner according to the goal rate was Sport Association of the Trading Academy. The achievement was noticed by the newspaper also: *the team of the Trading School won by merit, it is a real result. It is a well disciplined team, with many good players and good playing manners. The team is formed by: Gajzágó – Voith, Daumé – Héczey, Holacsek, Fehér – Hegyi, Nászta, Brunnhuber, Strauch, Veisz.* (Nemzeti Sport, 30<sup>th</sup> May 1908)

The curiosity of the match was, that Géza Dávid, the student of the Cathlic Gymnasium and the goalkeeper of the Athletic Club let in a slow ball, which could have been fenced off by any goalkeeper. Rudolf Koncz, the ACC captain of that



**The football-team of the Sport Association of the Trading Academy**

time evoked this championship after a few decades: *after the match we heard some dubious things about that bizarre goal let in by Dávid Géza. Later we used another goalkeeper. Years later we found out, that he was a big card player and he admitted, that he deliberately let in that goal after the bribe of Kuntner.* (according to Rudolf Koncz's autobiography – existing as a manuscript)

SATA played its first international match in November 1909. They defeated with 5-4 the Romanian Selected Team (correctly we should name it the selected team of Bucharest, because the players were foreign diplomats). In the spring following, on 1-2 May 1910, the Romanian Selection Team came to Cluj for a rematch, but was defeated by the SATA with 8-2.

In the 1910's the SATA joined the Hungarian pool, but the results did not reach the level of the elite teams of Budapest. It was obvious, that Transylvania's best team was progressing mostly in technique and was gaining experience. The sport circle had his best season before the I World War in 1911-12. They won seventeen matches, and played one stand-off. They lost only three matches against first league teams from Budapest. (Ellenzék, 24<sup>th</sup> July 1912)

In the summer of 1912 KKASK proved its value on a national level. On the first meeting for the Best Regional Champion title, they won with a 4-2 score against the champion of South-Hungary: the „Bácska” Subotica Sport Association. (Ellenzék, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1912) They defeated the North- Hungarian Champion, the Athletic Club of Bratislava with 5-2, so the players from Cluj had their first chance to play a competition match on foreign land, as the final match took place in Budapest. The Western champion, the Tatabányai Sport Club proved to be stronger, as they won with a 9-1 score on an unusual sized, sandy football field. The Academy's team was: Welser II. – Welser I, Walter I – Petrán, Marci I, Stotter– Katona, Nászta, Sárossy, Nagy József, Klein. (Ellenzék, 12<sup>th</sup> August 1912)

A decree emitted in February 1913 by the Ministry of Culture prohibited students to be members of sports societies, stating that adult company affected their education. This had a negative impact on the life of the sport circle. The Minister of Culture asked the trainers and principals to implement the decree in the high schools; otherwise they will face disciplinary actions. (Ellenzék, 12<sup>th</sup> February 1913) This decision meant significant disadvantage for the SATA, as the team playing in the championship had six graduate student players out of 13. (Ellenzék, 24<sup>th</sup> July 1912) In the Transylvanian Championship in 1914 the team had no remarkable results, and during the war the competitions were suspended.

The Sport Association of the Trading Academy had a national reputation, but unfortunately after the war, with the ceasing of the Trading Academy, the Sport Circle also was also dissolved. This was the end of a beautiful chapter in the sports life of Cluj.

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