

ȘTIINȚA CLUJ, THE REVELATION TEAM OF THE 1953 AND 1954 EDITIONS OF THE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL REPUBLICAN CHAMPIONSHIP

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ABSTRACT. The approaching 100th anniversary of the Universitatea Club from Cluj-Napoca gives us reason to look at and reveal the accomplishments of the women's basketball team, Știința Cluj between the years 1949 – 1954. This was a reference period for the history of the basketball section of the Universitatea Club from Cluj. This research draws upon sources such as mass-media articles and other written documents. The first part of the paper focuses on the aspects that have led to the practicing of basketball in the schools and higher education institutions of Cluj and also on the events that made the women's basketball teams from Victor Babes University and Bolyai Janos University participate in local competitions. Then, the paper focuses on the remarkable results of the team and the winning of two national championships titles in 1953 and 1954.

Keywords: *History of sports, women's basketball, Știința Cluj*

REZUMAT. *Echipa „Știința Cluj”, revelația campionatului republican de baschet feminin (1953-1954).* Ne-am propus ca, acum când se apropie un secol de existență a Clubului Universitatea din Cluj-Napoca, pe baza unei documentări realizate prin intermediul unor articole de presă și a altor documente, să elaborăm o lucrare, prin intermediul căreia să facem cunoscute realizările echipei feminine de baschet Știința Cluj între anii 1949 – 1954, una din perioadele de referință în istoria secției de baschet din cadrul clubului universitar clujean. În prima parte a lucrării sunt abordate aspecte care au condus la practicarea baschetului în școlile și unitățile de învățământ superior din Cluj și la participarea echipelor feminine de baschet de la Universitatea Victor Babeș și Bolyai János în competițiile locale. În continuare, lucrarea se referă la rezultatele care au făcut posibilă cucerirea celor două titluri de campioane naționale din anii 1953 și 1954.

Cuvinte cheie: *istoria sportului, baschet feminin, Știința Cluj*

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Introduction

Even though it wasn't among the seven sports which were listed when the Students' Sportive Society of the Cluj University was established, basketball quickly became one of the departments with the best results. Over the years, female basketball became the sport with the most valuable accomplishments of all team sports. Despite some chapters dedicated to these results in anniversary tomes (**1995; **2010) and some articles published by the local and national press, these results, which should be regarded as high performances, have benefited from very little publicity. The team's supporters, especially the young ones, know very little about them, compared to how much they are worth and that they mean for the history of this successful sport.

Having this in mind, we find that the elaboration of a work which highlights reference periods in the history of successful sports, among which basketball holds a lead position, is of great interest to the supporters of this discipline, especially on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Universitatea Cluj Club.

This paper was written in sign of appreciation and recognition of the merits of the coaches and female players who have dedicated their best years to basketball and to this club, who have excelled in this sport and who have influenced the history of basketball in Cluj.

The period preceeding the great results of 1953 and 1954

There are clues that before the First World War, as a result of a visit conducted by teachers from Transylvania to institutions of education in Budapest, students from Cluj, Oradea and other cities were introduced to the game of basketball. Also, after the basketball tournament World University Games in Budapest, the practice of basketball started spreading across the most important cities of Transylvania. Although given this situation, basketball wasn't among the constitutive sports of the Universitatea Cluj Club.

After 1945, basketball became very popular among students of Cluj. After the fusion of the basketball departments of the two universities, Victor Babes and Bolyai Janos, the women's team, having as players Bodor, Coroiu, Dan, Deák, Hirsch, Kovács, Molnár, Neagu, Pop, Salcă, Schiling, Simu, Stan, Stoica și Tasnádi took part in the local championship, without qualifying for the next level (**1995).

The most remarkable performance of this period was the one accomplished in 1951, when, under the training of Francisc Barabas, the students of Victor Babes University win the first place in the Republican University Championship of the Republic of Romania (** The sports annual report 1951).

The first big success on a national level of the female basketball team from Cluj

After the appointment of young Alexandru Serban as coach, the women's basketball team Știința Cluj makes visible progress. As a result of a few successful transfers, the team Știința Cluj is reinforced with valuable players and as a result it becomes the champion of the city of Cluj, to the prejudice of Flamura Rosie Cluj. (Popular Sport, 17th of September 1953).

Thus the team makes it to the finals of the Women's Republican Basketball Championship together with Locomotiva Bucharest, Constructorul Bucharest, Știința Institutul de Cultură Fizică București, Progresul Oradea, Flamura Roșie Oradea, Progresul Arad, Progresul Școala Medie Tehnică de Cultură Fizică Galați, Știința Iași and Progresul Târgu Mureș, which took place between 4 - 11 of October, in Oradea (Popular Sport, 26th September 1953).

After the draw was made, Știința Cluj team was assigned to the first group, together with Locomotiva Bucharest, Constructorul Bucharest, Flamura Rosie Oradea and Știința Iași, the latter being disqualified for not showing up. (Ghisa, 1953) Locomotiva Bucharest was the most powerful team of the group, winning all three games played, final scores: 35 - 30 with Știința Cluj, 55 - 42 with Constructorul Bucharest and 52 - 42 with Flamura Rosie Oradea, and so making its way to the first place. The second place was given to the team with the best field score percentage, considering that each of the three teams (Știința Cluj, Flacăra Rosie Oradea and Constructorul Bucharest) had gained one victory: Flamura Rosie Oradea - Știința Cluj 42 - 39 (Faklya, 6th October 1953) Constructorul Bucharest - Flamura Roșie Oradea 44 - 37 (Faklya, 7th October 1953) Știința Cluj - Constructorul Bucharest 52 - 30 (Faklya, 8th October 1953)

After overcoming great emotions, the students' team from Cluj finally got the results that won them the second place.

So, from the first group, Locomotiva Bucharest and Știința Cluj, and Știința Institutul de Cultură Fizică Bucharest and Progresul Oradea, from the second group, qualified for the semi-finals, for the positions I to IV (Faklya 8 october).

On the first day of the tournament, Știința IGC Bucharest won the game against Știința Cluj, with the score 38 - 34 (15 - 18), and Progresul Oradea defeated Locomotiva Bucharest 51 - 47 (31 - 13).

On the second day Progresul went on to beat Știința ICF 44 - 42 (15 - 19) and Știința Cluj defeated Locomotiva Bucharest 51 - 40 (28 - 25). (Faklya 10th of October 1953).

On the last day, Știința ICF won the game against Locomotiva 51 - 40 (28 - 25) and Știința Cluj went on to beat Progresul Oradea, 40 - 28 (24 - 20) the public's favourite.

Having the same number of points, the tie-break between the first three teams was decided by the score percentage. The fourth edition of the Republican Championship of Basketball ended with the players of Știința Cluj winning the gold medal, while Știința ICF Bucharest got the second place and Progresul Oradea the third place. The order of the other teams was the following: Progresul Targu-Mures, Flamura Rosie Oradea, Constructorul Bucharest, Progresul Arad and Progresul Școala Medie Tehnica de Cultura Fizica Galati (Faklya, 13th October 1953)

The players that took the team to victory were: Elza Sebestyén, Ana Albu, Elisabeta Cristea, Márta Papp, Suzana Tóth, Suzana Șerban, Georgeta Moldovan, Ana Bereczki, Frida Halmágyi, Ileana Rostaș și Éva Kiss. (The sports annual report 1953)

In 1954 the history repeats itself for Știința Cluj

In 1954, the competition changed its organization, having the ten participant teams compete against each other in both home and away matches. Due to previous results, to good scores obtained in checkup games, and to the valuable players of the teams, the main favorites to win the championship were: Știința Cluj, Știința Institutul de Cultură Fizică, Progresul Oradea, Locomotiva Bucharest and Constructorul Bucharest.

Știința Cluj's players imposed their dominance throughout the whole competition. Even though none of the players stood out individually, the team was very powerful as a whole, having remarkable collective strength, solid psychological training, brave defense and a good shot score percentage, especially due to free throws. (Albulescu, 1981) The players from Cluj won all the 18 games that they played. The only games which were won by a tight score were the matches played away, with Constructorul Bucharest 40 – 39 and with Știința Institutul de Cultura Fizica Bucharest 33 – 29.

So, for the second time in a row, Știința Cluj having Alexandru Șerban as coach became the Republican champion. The players of the winning lot were: Ana Albu, Ana Bereczki, Elisabeta Cristea, Frida Halmágyi, Éva Kiss, Georgeta Moldovan Márta Papp, Ileana Rostaș, Antoanela Rădulescu, Elza Sebestyén, Suzana Șerban și Suzana Tóth (The sports annual report, 1954).

The team coached by Leon Teodorescu won the second place. The players from Știința Institutul de Cultură Fizică proved themselves to be a homogeneous team, very well trained physically and tactically, with a spectacular game, based on high-speed attack and counter-attack. It is worth mentioning that the students' team from Bucharest finished the competition with the highest score percentage 1173 – 563 and also with three victories in which it scored over one hundred points, setting the record of the championship in the game played with Știința Iasi: 117 – 18.

The third place was won by the Locomotiva Bucharest players, trained by Magda Niculescu.

Conclusions

Compared to other sport branches, the female basketball department was established twenty five years after the sports club Universitatea Cluj was founded.

During the first years of its existence, the female basketball team went through structural changes, as well as team member changes, in what concerns players and coaches as well. It was a period of reorganization for the entire Romanian sport, not only basketball.

Throughout the first years, the students' team from Cluj played in local competitions, but without notable results. The first remarkable success was achieved in 1952, when the team won the first place in the University Republican Championship. The editions of 1953 and 1954 were once again glorious years, when Stiinta Cluj was among the national champions, with results that honour Universitatea Club.

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