

HAZEN IN SERBIA

(Professional paper)

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Abstract

Sports ball games are the dominant sport activity in Serbia, and handball is one of the most successful ones. Handball teams from Serbia were the five-time champions of Europe, in both categories, and female and male players and coaches, as members of the national team of the former Yugoslavia, won 20 medals at major international competitions. Female and male handball players rank first on the list of holders of national recognition for their achievements in sport. At the same time, it is not well-known that, before the advent of today's handball on the territory of Serbia, there were similar sports games which can be regarded as its predecessors. One of these is HAZEN. This sports game that originates in the Czech Republic, was highly developed in Serbia in the first half of the twentieth century, more precisely, in the period between the two world wars. Hazen was mostly women sport, although there were exceptions. Hazen's basic rules were very similar to today's handball. The team consisted of six players and a goalkeeper, and the very structure of the game was not significantly different from the modern handball. Due to its simplicity and attractiveness, during this period, Hazen spread very much among female youth of Serbia, so that teams were established in a number of cities, which is evidenced by numerous saved documents. From a large number of Hazen teams from Serbia, the team with most success was "BSK" Belgrade, which in 1925 became the champion of Yugoslavia. The attempt to renew Hazen in Serbia after World War II failed. However, many Hazen players became successful handball players, which contributed greatly to women's handball, with 9 medals at the Olympics and World Championships, becoming our most successful women's sports game.

Keywords: *the emergence and development of Hazen, handball, female, Hazen teams*

Hazen is a sports game with a ball which, to a great extent, can be considered the forerunner of today's *handball*. It originates from the Czech Republic, and was first documented in the late nineteenth century, more precisely in 1892. Rules of the new game were created based on the game called *ilova*. At this stage, it was popularized thanks to sports pedagogues Anton Kristof and Vaclav Karas. Anton Kristof organized the first Hazen team in the Strahov Academy in 1907, and after this more and more teams appeared. The printed rules of the game, called Hazen (*cilova*), appeared in 1908. Surely, the author was Christoph Anton. It is worth mentioning that one (original) copy of these rules is kept in the Library of the Department of Sports Games, Faculty of Sport and Physical Education, University of Belgrade.

On 'Svesokolski rally', held in 1912, the *Hazen* match was played, before a record of 70,000 spectators! After this, the interest for this game extremely increased.

All the time being, Hazen was played mostly by women, although there were exceptions. Playing court

size changed, so that the length was 45-51 meters, and the width 25-34 meters. According to the claims of some experts, the ideal size of the court for playing Hazen was 48mX32m. The Czech Olympic Committee acknowledged *Hazen* as a sport in 1911.

Rules of the game evolved over time so that the Czech Jaro Trantina 1918 issued the revised rules for Hazen. This dynamic and very interesting game experienced extreme expansion in the number of countries in the period between the two world wars.

The team consisted of seven players, one of which was a goalkeeper. The ball used was weighing 300-350 grams, with a circumference of 62-68 cm (according to some authors: 68-71 cm.).

The goal dimensions are interesting. They were 2.40 meters high (according to some sources: 2.44 and 2.60), and 2 meters wide. Tripod cross-section was 8-10 cm. As in today's handball, the ball in play could be carried 3 steps maximum and kept no longer than 3 seconds. It was not allowed that the ball touched the play-

er's lower leg.

The playing court was divided into three parts, of which the middle was the longest. The rules did not allow all the players to enter every part of the court, so that the technical-tactical preparation of the team had to be subordinated to this.

Goal area was initially rectangular sized 6m x 12m, and later received a circular shape with a 6-meter radius.

In the former (first) Yugoslavia *Hazen* "arrived" thanks to students who stayed in Prague and had the opportunity to get acquainted with it. In the period between the two world wars *Hazen* got affirmed among very young women in many regions of the country. Very quickly, a lot of teams were formed, and most of them were in Serbia. Mass interest positively influenced the improving quality, so that, on the fourth Women's sports games, which were organized in 1934 in London, the national team of Yugoslavia won - the first place. This result is even more valuable since in the finals they defeated the national team of Czechoslovakia (6:4), the homeland of this sport.

Yugoslavia *Hazen* national team played its first official match against the selection of Czechoslovakia in 1924. On that occasion, the Czech girls beat 8-3. The last game played by the Yugoslavia *Hazen* national team was in 1935.

State championships in *Hazen*, intermittently, were held in the period 1925-1938. The team "Concordia" Zagreb won the highest number of championship titles, and among teams from Serbia only the team "BSK" Belgrade managed to win a state championship.

According to available sources, *Hazen* in Serbia appeared (around) in 1920. That year, according to Jovan Ružić, matches between *Hazen* teams of "BSK" and "Yugoslavia" were already played.

At the same time, the team "Birčanin" was founded in Valjevo, however no data have been saved about it which. When talking about this town, reliable traces were found a few years later. In the "Voice of Valjevo," from 1928 there was an announcement of a *Hazen* match between Belgrade's "Falcon" and domestic "Vardar", which supposed to take place at 6 pm, on the "Cave".

This information, as well as a photo of teams participating, is kept in the archive of Valjevo.

Upon his arrival in Belgrade, in 1921, Czech Stanjek gathered a large number of girls and boys, and formed a mixed *Hazen* team after the teams of his homeland. Since they had no their own playground, the "BSK" management offered them hospitality and so *Hazen* players become part of this, already affirmed, sports club. In the fall of 1921 was played in Zemun, and a video recording of this match was preserved.

After this, the rapid popularization of *Hazen* continued, so the same year (1921) another club - "Yugoslavia" appeared in Belgrade.

In 1922, the Belgrade "BSK" played in Zagreb and played a match against the local "HAŠK", and that was the base of a big future rivalry, which, unfortunate-

ly, later began to get political background as well.

According to the most extensive (available) written document, in the period 1921-1930, the following *Hazen* teams existed in Serbia:

1921 - „Banat“ (Pančevo), „BSK“ (Beograd), „HA-KOAH“ (Zemun), „Yugoslavia“ (Beograd).

1922 - „Viktorija“ (Novi Sad), „Juda Makabi“ (Novi Sad), „NAK“ (Novi Sad).

1923 - „Soko“ (Beograd), „Subotički telov SK“ (Suotica), „Somborski SK“ (Sombor), „Sand“ (Subotica).

1924 - „Vitez“ (Zemun), „Vojvodina“ (Pančevo), „Vitorija“ (Požarevac), „Zlatokosić“ (Knjaževac), „Jdinstvo“ (Knjaževac), „Jedinstvo“ (Beograd), „Kokordia“ (Knjaževac), „Obilić“ (Veliki Bečkerek), „PSK“ (Pančevo), „Car Lazar“ (Kruševac), „Čehoslovački SK“ (Beograd), „Šumadija“ (Kragujevac).

1925 - „Amater“ (Sombor), „ZAŠK“ (Zemun), „Konkordia“ (Indija), „Zlatibor“ (Užice), „Sindelić“ (Niš).

1926 - „Bosanc“ (Šabac), „Građanski“ (Sremska Mitrovica), „Jedinstvo“ (Novi Bečej), „Mačva“ (Šabac), „Hajduk“ (Sremska Mitrovica), „Čukarički SK“ (Belgrade), „Timok“ (Zaječar).

1927 - „Balkan“ (Ruma), „VSK“ (Valjevo), „Đ. Smederevac“ (Smederevo), „Soko“ (Vršac), „Sremac“ (Ruma), „Sparta“ (Zemun), „Trgovački AS“ (Vršac)

1928 - „Braničevo“ (Požarevac), „Viktorija“ (Vršac), „Vardar“ (Valjevo), „Grafičar“ (Niš), „Momčilo“ (Leskovac), „Pobeda“ (Leskovac), „Pobeda“ (Niš) On photo 2.10 are *Hazen* players of „Pobeda“, „Radnički“ (Vršac), „Hajduk Veljko“ (Negotin), „Radnički“ (Niš).

1929 - „Biser“ (Vršac), „Brđan“ (Beograd), „Kosovo“ (V. Kikinda), „Radnički“ (Stari Bečej), „Slavija“ (Požarevac), „Srbija“ (V. Kikinda), „Radnički“ (Bela Crkva).

1930 - „Botić“ (Novi Sad), „Budućnost“ (V. Gradište), „Ibar“ (Kraljevo), „Radnički“ (Novi Sad), „Soko“ (Stari Bečej), „Slovački ŠK“ (Bački Petrovac).

Hence, in the first decade of *Hazen* existence in Serbia, there were more than 60 clubs in nearly 30 cities. *Hazen* was also affirmed in other parts of the former Yugoslavia, particularly in Croatia and Slovenia, but the fact is undeniable that it was most spread in Serbia. Belgrade, being the largest city of the former state, quickly became one of the most stable *Hazen* centers in terms of organization.

One of the problems *Hazen* had to face at an early stage of development in Serbia were the referees. There were very few of them, or they were insufficiently trained. Therefore, it often happened that, during the match, a conflict erupted between the players and even they had to voluntarily leave the court. However, the basic problem, which later led to closure of a large number of *Hazen* clubs, were not referees but the lack of young people, which was not given much taught.

Hazen Championships were organized within three main sub-associations: Ljubljana, Zagreb, Belgrade. In the area of Belgrade sub-associations (BHP) two teams dominated by quality, "BSK" and "Yugoslavia".

Besides the already-mentioned rules of the game and although very similar to today's handball, *Hazen* differed from it. When taking a free throw, the opposing

players had to be 4 meters away, and the ball was not allowed to hit the ground (dribbling) more than 2 times.

Additionally, the ball could not be passed to another player in a distance of less than 2 meters. Penalty was performed in front of the line outside the goal area, i.e. from a distance of 6 meters.

The ball technique, basically, was the same as in today's handball and a goal scored as, the so called "Shrauba", was considered a special attraction.

Tactics, as in all other sports games, was limited to: rules of the game, the players and the technical training of players and their physical condition.

In the period from 1930 until the Second World War, *Hazen* in Serbia continued to be affirmed, so new centers appeared as wečč. For example, in 1931 in Jagodina the first *Hazen* match was played between two already affirmed teams Belgrade "BSK" - and the host team "Sokolka.

The guests beat 8-3 and it is interesting that the goalkeeper of the host team was from Belgrade! It was the first match between female teams which was played in Jagodina and more than 300 spectators were present. As many times before, *Hazen* Jagodina "come to life", thanks to a Czech named - Jozef Bekerusu, the director of the local brewery and the senior officer of the Falcon Society.

For better understanding of the situation in female sport in Serbia at the time, especially in the countryside, it should be noted that Jagodina *hazen* players, in the period from 1931 to 1939 had played only 13 matches!

Among problems the *Hazen* was faced with, were the reactions of a part of the population of that time, which considered as "unethical to run around the field in skirts above knees."

After World War II, *Hazen* in Serbia, as well as at the entire Yugoslav territory, "lived" a relatively short time. On the territory of modern Serbia *Hazena* was (partially) restored, during a short period of time, primarily in Vojvodina. During that time, firstly, there were mass promotions (youth work actions), and then the rapid expansion of *big handball*. However, *Hazen* players, without problems, became – Handball players! This can be proved by the fact that the first women's championship of Yugoslavia, in small handball, played in 1953, was won by a team from Nova Gradiska, consisted entirely of former *Hazen* players!

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CONCLUSION

Hazen is a sports ball game, very similar to today's handball (rules, techniques, etc.), and therefore must be considered as one of its predecessors.

Between the two World wars *Hazen* was widespread and the most popular sports game for women in Serbia, which is a relatively little known.

Attempts to restore *Hazen* in Serbia after the World War II have failed.

Hazen in Serbia after the Second World War, was first replaced by *big handball*, and then by *small (modern) handball*.

Although, the existence of *Hazen* in the territory of Serbia lasted for a relatively short time (two decades), it significantly contributed to later, highly successful, development of particularly female handball in this territory.

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