

STUDIES IN PHYSICAL CULTURE AND TOURISM
Vol. 18, No. 1, 2011

BOOK REVIEWS

Zbigniew Czajkowski, *Understanding Fencing. The Unity of Theory and Practice*, SKA SwordPlay Books, Staten Island, New York, 2005.

Reviewing of *Understanding Fencing. The Unity of Theory and Practice* by Zbigniew Czajkowski is a great pleasure and high honor. On February 5, 2011 Professor Zbigniew Czajkowski – the recipient of the first degree honoris causa from the University School of Physical Education in Katowice – celebrated his 90th birthday. Professor Czajkowski's fencing career has spanned seventy-six years, and he is still actively involved in fencing coaching. He has authored several hundred publications (monographs, articles and reviews), supervised numerous master's theses and has been still writing new training course curricula at the University School of Physical Education in Katowice as well as at universities in the United States, United Kingdom, Russia, Ireland, Canada, Germany, Sweden and other countries.

Professor Zbigniew Czajkowski's bio-graphy could constitute a fascinating movie script in which life-threatening moments are intermingled with a life of foil, epee and saber fencer, fencing coach and referee, and author of popular books and articles. His life and activities have been already subject to a number of publications.

Zbigniew Czajkowski was born on February 5, 1921 in Modlin, Poland. His father, Bolesław Czajkowski, was an officer in the historic Józef Piłsudski's Brigade I of the Polish Legions. In 1934, following the family tradition, Zbigniew Czajkowski joined the Marshal Piłsudski Cadet Corps in Lvov, where he received general education as well as military and sport training with a particular emphasis on fencing. For four years, his fencing master in the Corps was the famous Jan Pieczyński, and Czajkowski took active part in a number of epee, saber and foil tournaments. Later on, he trained with fencing master Władysław Łabędziewski in the Dynamo Fencing Club in Lvov. After just a few weeks of saber, epee and foil training Czajkowski assisted his coach in conducting training sessions.

For Zbigniew Czajkowski the outbreak of World War Two on September 1, 1939 and the subsequent Soviet invasion of Poland on September 17 signified the beginning of a long ordeal. After his dramatic escape from Lvov he was arrested by the Soviets and sent to the Vorkuta forced labor camp.

On his 21st birthday Czajkowski joined the newly formed Polish Armed Forces in the Soviet Union and then evacuated through the Persian Corridor, Indian Ocean and the Atlantic to Plymouth in England. He served on the Polish destroyer ORP *Słazak* commanded by Romuald Tymiński, the Polish Navy epee champion from before the war. During his military service, Czajkowski continued to train fencing in a Royal Navy club in Plymouth. Following D-Day, Zbigniew Czajkowski fought near La Havre as a member of the crew of another Polish destroyer ORP *Blyskawica*. In late 1944 he left the navy to take up medical studies at the University of Edinburgh, where he met a renowned Polish physiologist Professor Włodzimierz Missiuro from Vilnius. During his studies Czajkowski trained fencing in the prestigious Scottish Fencing Club and the Edinburgh University Club. He also founded the fencing section of the Polish Student Association of Great Britain and won many Scottish saber and foil championships as well as achieved great successes in all three fencing weapons at various international tournaments in England and Scotland.

In 1949 he returned to Poland to continue his medical studies in Kraków. On his return, Czajkowski began training fencing in the Budowlani Club in Kraków with famous Polish fencing masters Stanisław Sołtan, Tadeusz Friedrich and Adam Papee. From 1953 to 1980 he worked in the Piast fencing club in Gliwice, and it was where he attained his highest coaching successes.

During his coaching career Zbigniew Czajkowski worked with the most renowned Polish fencers such as Jerzy Pawłowski, Wojciech Zabłocki and the world foil, saber and epee champion Ryszard Parulski. His most spectacular coaching achievement was his pupil Egon Franke's gold medal in foil at the Tokyo Olympics in 1964. Zbigniew Czajkowski was the Poland national team coach in three fencing weapons: men's foil, men's epee and women's epee. He was also the head of the training section of the Polish Fencing Association. He took part in five Olympic fencing tournaments and innumerable world and university championships.

In October 1985, Zbigniew Czajkowski became a tenured professor at the University School of Physical Education in Katowice and soon made the university Department of Fencing a leading scientific center in Poland and abroad. Professor Czajkowski conducted research in the areas of psychology and motor control as well as lectures and methodology courses for athletes and coaches from Poland and abroad. His department attracted visiting coaches from the United States, Australia, Japan, United Kingdom, Palestine and many other countries. He also developed the university fencing section, where many future elite Polish fencers trained.

Professor Czajkowski has been an extremely productive author and researcher. His numerous monographs and research papers have been concerned with the impact of psychomotor abilities on fencing training and combat, the influence of athlete's personality on sport success, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in sport, training and competitive efficiency, methodology of motor skills training, fencing exercises and the circulatory system of children and adolescents, psychological and tactical profiling, training individualization and fencing history. He has been a regular contributor to such scholarly journals as "Sport Wyczynowy" (since 1964), "Fencing Master", "News Bulletin of the British Academy of Fencing", "Bulletin-Academie der Fecht kunst Österreich", "The Sword" and "American Fencing Magazine".

Throughout seventy-five years of his scientific activity Zbigniew Czajkowski has written more than 30 books and hundreds of articles and reports. Czajkowski's most important publications include *Nowa szermierka* (New fencing) (1951, 1954), *Szermierka na florety* (Foil fencing) (1954), *Teoria i metodyka współczesnej szermierki* (Theory

and methodology of modern fencing) (1968), *Szermierka na szpady* (Epee fencing) (1977), *Taktyka szermierki* (Fencing tactics) (1982), *Nauczanie nawyków i odpowiedzi ruchowych w treningu sportowym* (Motor habits and responses in sport training) (1982), *Taktyka i psychologia w szermierce* (Tactics and psychology in fencing) (1984), *Trening szermierza* (Fencer's training) (1988), *Motywacja w sporcie* (Motivation in sport) (1989), *Nauczanie techniki sportowej* (Learning sport technique) (1991), *Poradnik trenera* (Coach's manual) (1994), *Nawyki czuciowo-ruchowe w działalności sportowej* (Sensorimotor responses in sport) (1995), *Psychologia sprzymierzeńcem trenera* (Psychology as coach's aid) (1997) and *Theory, Practice and Methodology of Fencing: Chosen Aspects* (2001).

In all his publications Zbigniew Czajkowski demonstrates his profound knowledge and experience as well as excellent writing skills. Many of his books have appealed to a wide readership and have appeared in many editions. He also authored a remarkable training video on women's epee. Czajkowski's coherent concept of motor habits and classification of sensorimotor responses has been undoubtedly an original contribution to the development of motor learning theory and research. What is a bit surprising is that Zbigniew Czajkowski's ideas have been well-known in many countries for more than 30 years, but they have been given recognition in Poland only recently.

Since 1970 Zbigniew Czajkowski has been holding an honorary professorship from the British Academy of Fencing. As an ardent advocate of the inclusion of women's epee into the Olympic and World Championships programs he received an official word of thanks from the FIE president. His unquestionable leadership in the international fencing community was officially acknowledged at the 1st International Congress on Science and Technology in Fencing in Barcelona in 2008. In 2009 Zbigniew Czajkowski was inducted into the Polish Gloria Optimis Hall of Fame of Sport at a special ceremony at the University School of Physical Education in Warsaw and was honored with a special commemorating plaque. His name can be found among such famous inductees as a Polish WWII hero commander Major Henryk Dobrzański, Olympic athlete and prominent Polish WWII resistance member Professor Halina Szwarz, Olympic champions Egon Franke, Józef Zapędzki

and Józef Schmidt, legendary sports commentator Bogdan Tomaszewski and actor Daniel Olbrychski.

In his whole life Professor Zbigniew Czajkowski has been living by the rule of unity of theory and practice, following his favorite Leonardo da Vinci's maxim: "He who loves practice without theory is like the sailor who boards ship without a rudder and compass and never knows where he may cast". It is no coincidence that the title of Czajkowski's book under review makes a clear reference to da Vinci's famous adage.

Understanding Fencing. The Unity of Theory and Practice has 378 pages and is divided into seventeen chapters. The author had, in fact, completed the book three years before its publication by SKA SwordPlay Books. It can be assumed that the long publishing process had a great effect on the quality of the final product in all aspects. The volume contains 12 tables and 14 diagrams presenting Czajkowski's most important methodological and scientific conceptions and classifications. It includes only four photographs, clearly due to the publisher's limits. One of Professor Czajkowski's passions is, in fact, photography and his archives contain innumerable photographs documenting his fencing, coaching and academic activities. Each chapter is preceded with an apt motto illustrating its guiding principle. Chapter mottos have, in fact, been Zbigniew Czajkowski's characteristic trademarks found in many of his previous publications. The ample bibliography contains publications in English, Polish, French, Russian and German. For the reader's convenience each chapter is followed by a respective references section. Many chapters also contain interesting remarks and summaries.

The main body of the text is preceded by four introductory essays on Professor Zbigniew Czajkowski written by Editor-in-Chief of "The Sword" Richard Cohen, Polish fencing historian Professor Maciej Łuczak from the University School of Physical Education in Poznań, founder of the Sheridan Fencing Academy in New York, Jason Sheridan, and American fencing master Michael D'Asaro. The essays include the authors' personal recollections from meetings with Professor Zbigniew Czajkowski. Richard Cohen points to the great master's reflective nature, fondness of pipe-smoking, great sense of humor and passion for history, literature and travel. He also uses a number of quotes from the Polish press praising Czajkowski's greatest coaching successes and calls

him the creator of Polish fencers' successes and the father of the Polish fencing school.

In the first chapter "Characteristics of Fencing As a Sport", Czajkowski defines fencing not as a sport but an art of wielding a weapon, following Moliere's saying that "The essence of fencing is to give, but by no means to receive". He then discusses transformations in fencing at the turn of the 19th century, which turned it from a dueling art into a sport. The modern sport aspects of fencing are then discussed in the later part of the chapter, and they include teaching and learning motor habits and various types of sensorimotor responses, development of fencers' energetic and fitness predispositions and coordination abilities. Czajkowski stresses the significance of development of somatic traits, muscles, joints and ligaments, central nervous system as well as cardiorespiratory system. Among the benefits of fencing practice Czajkowski mentions improvement of general fitness and the body's adaptative functions and efficiency. He concludes that successful development of the aforementioned characteristics is conditioned by a proper level of psychological preparation, focusing primarily on such aspects as improvement of perception, attention concentration, imagination, analytical thinking, spatial orientation, reaction speed, emotional control and positive motivation. Following George Silver, Czajkowski duly notes that the successful implementation of these ideas today is the responsibility of modern teachers-trainers, just like it used to be in the hands of fencing masters centuries ago.

Chapter Two "Fencing Actions: Terminology, Classification and Application" only appears to be one of many standard discussions of classification of fencing actions that can be found in many works on fencing. According to David Tishler, one of the most famous Russian fencing theorists and practitioners, "The terminology and classification of fencing actions introduced some years ago by Professor Zbigniew Czajkowski is very logical, comprehensive, takes into account the modern development of fencing and has great practical value". In my opinion, Zbigniew Czajkowski's most innovative contribution to the basic classification of fencing actions is the inclusion of preparatory actions and the introduction of a tactical classification of fencing actions. Czajkowski was also a precursor of the psychological distinctions between first intention and

second intention fencing actions, and between foreseen, unforeseen and partly foreseen actions. Czajkowski exemplifies all types of defensive, offensive and offensive-defensive actions in all three fencing weapons: saber, foil and epee.

Chapters Three “Some Remarks on Tactics in Fencing” and Four “The Value of Timing in Tactics” focus on the significance of tactics in modern fencing. Czajkowski describes here in detail various types of preparatory actions, including concealing the fencer’s own intentions. He explains the rules of maneuvering on the piste and forcing one’s own tactical initiative on the opponent. A short subchapter contains an in-depth analysis of the concept of timing in fencing, which Czajkowski associates with the notion of surprise as the choice of the most appropriate moment to commence offensive actions. In his analysis of historical connotations of the term “fencing tempo” he uses a great number of references to famous French, Italian and Hungarian authors.

Chapter Five, “Elementary Conception of Motor Responses in Fencing” refers to the main idea of the book, i.e. combining theory and practice. The chapter effectively combines sport and motor control theory with coaching practice. As one of the world famous motor control experts, Zbigniew Czajkowski is the author of the concept of sensorimotor responses, which can be successfully applied in motor learning based on intrinsic and extrinsic feedback. Czajkowski’s model of psychomotor reaction consisting of three phases: preparatory period, latent period and executory period, stresses the significance of psychological traits such as attention concentration and divisibility and motor memory as factors determining the efficiency of technical-tactical actions in sport combat. He effectively applies the model to fencing by introducing new types of sensorimotor responses such as reactions to a moving object, switching reactions, anticipatory reactions and intuitive reactions. In the final part of the chapter Czajkowski claims that anticipatory and intuitive reactions are the dominating ones and characteristic of most talented fencers.

The three subsequent chapters (Chapter 6: “Motivation and Arousal in Fencing”, Chapter 7: “The Main Types of Fencers: Tactics and Psychology”, Chapter 8: “The Main Types of Fencers: “Warrior” and “Technician””) constitute a coherent entity and reflect the author’s profound knowledge of temperament and personality

determinants of human activity in conjunction with aspects of exercise physiology. The author has published numerous books and articles on these themes, which have been very popular not only in the sport community. For Czajkowski, the starting point in discussing these issues is the one-hundred year-old Yerkes-Dodson law regarding the relationship between optimal arousal and optimal performance implemented in stressful situations in sport competition and training. Czajkowski seeks a close link between the Yerkes-Dodson law and aspects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in adolescents and adults. Particularly valuable are his observations concerning the process of learning and perfecting sport techniques, which applies the knowledge of motivation and stimulation with regard to the level of difficulty of technical elements as well as to fencers’ level of advancement. The practical implications to coaches regarding fencing tactics and accounting for fencers’ personality and temperament types are very interesting. Czajkowski observes that although the world elite fencers include both the extravert and introvert types, the former are clearly in the majority. The differences between these two types are visible in combat tactics and choices of the most effective fencing actions. While sanguine and phlegmatic fencers prefer a more passive combat style, mostly relying on defensive and offensive-defensive actions, choleric fencers often hold the initiative and prefer offensive actions, especially short and intensive engagements. Such an analysis of fencing bouts points to the necessity to design individual training schemes for particular fencers, involving properly selected individual fencing lessons with the coach.

Chapters Nine (“Knowledge, Skills, Personality, and Work of the Coach”) and Ten (“Directing the Process of Training, Taking Competition and the Athlete’s Personality Dimensions as a Model”) are devoted to more practical aspects of fencing coaching at each level of fencer’s sport development. Czajkowski emphasizes here the significance of interaction and inspiration between the coach and the fencer throughout the latter’s entire sport career as well as the necessity of constant improvement. He underlines the role of the managerial and more democratic coaching style based on partnership between the fencer and the coach, disfavoring the autocratic-dictatorial style. He also enumerates the assets of the most successful fencing coaches such

as extensive knowledge, high levels of technical and methodological skills, ability to motivate learners and to be a role model, and effective planning and programming abilities. According to Zbigniew Czajkowski, the main task for any coach at the beginning of a sporting career is to make his or her learner become infatuated with fencing. At the specialist and championship stages of fencing training coaches must know how to individualize training sessions in order to 'elicit' all the necessary attributes of sport talent from fencers without their pigeonholing in accordance with the so-called "sport champion" model. Czajkowski concludes the chapter with his well-known creed that the basis for a successful coach-athlete relationship is replacement of extrinsic (financial) motivation with intrinsic motivation and achievement motivation.

Chapter Eleven "Periods and Stages of Training" constitutes an introduction to four subsequent methodological chapters (12, 13, 14, 15) devoted to the development of fencers' general fitness, motor habits and individual foil, epee and saber fencing lessons. The chapter outlines Czajkowski's conception of training stages, with particular attention paid to novice fencers. The introductory fencing training stage should be devoted to swordplay, improvement of learner's motivation and interest in the new sport, development of perception and concentration and preparation for prospective tactical training through learning to feel fencing tempo. In the author's opinion the most important aspects of the introductory training stage include gradation of difficulty in learning basic technical elements, speed training and movement coordination. The training of novice fencers should be in 20% technical and specialist and in 80% aimed at their general physical development. At the advanced stage, this ratio should be reversed. At the championship level, the specialist component of fencing training includes development of psychomotor abilities and their impact on technical and tactical skills in combination with high resistance to stress.

Chapter Twelve on "Energy Skills, Energy Abilities, Sensory-Motor Skills, and Competition Results at Different Stages of Training" presents the author's views on relationships between fencers' physical preparation and acquisition of motor habits being the foundation of fencing technique. Czajkowski makes a clear distinction between general fitness training, based on specific

metabolic processes, and motor learning, which, in Poland, have been often regarded as one and the same. Fencing is defined by Czajkowski as a speed-endurance sport, predominantly based on anaerobic processes and specific endurance allowing fencers to take part in multiple sequential bouts during competition. He recommends preparation exercises specific for fencing, without the need of adopting often inadequate exercises from other sports, e.g. track and field athletics. In fencing, sport results are most highly correlated with fencers' psychomotor traits, mostly with visual and motor coordination, attention divisibility, arousal as a temperament trait as well as movement precision.

Chapters 13, 14, 15 are, in fact, three consecutive parts of a greater section titled "Modern Concepts of the Individual Lesson". They describe the planning and importance of different types of individual fencing lessons with the coach. Each individual lesson is divided into three parts: a warm-up, main part and conclusion. The objective of the main part is to teach a fencer new technical elements separately and in combination, while the conclusion focuses on perfecting the new movements through developing technical motor habits. Zbigniew Czajkowski presents his original purpose-oriented division of individual fencing lessons into teaching, perfecting, mixed, warm-up, correctional, demonstration, methodological, etc.

Chapter 14 discusses methods used by coaches during individual fencing lessons, e.g. repetitions of selected attacks, actions at the coach's signal, choice of anticipated and unanticipated actions and training bouts with the coach. These methods correspond to the aforementioned classification of sensorimotor responses and constitute a practical interpretation of motor habits as psychomotor reactions. They also contribute a great variety of technical possibilities to the development of learners' individual predispositions to fencing training.

In Chapter 15 Czajkowski discusses factors to be taken into account by coaches in their selection of exercises. The specificity of technical-tactical actions in saber, foil and epee is presented with regard to changing fencing rules and tournament regulations. Czajkowski underlines the significance of the proper choice of training exercises and lists various aspects of such choices: plausibility of exercises in real combat, adaptation of exercises to the learner's nervous system type,

inclusion of simple and compound exercises, matching exercises with the learner's fitness level and compliance with the current fencing tactical rules. In the later part of the chapter Czajkowski provides detailed examples of individual fencing lessons in all three weapons with regard to fencer's advancement level. He discusses the technical aspects of defensive, offensive-defensive and offensive exercises, weapon positions and all kinds of actions on the opponent's blade. According to Czajkowski, each fencing coach must apply those exercises that can be fully transferred into real fencing competition and are not "art for the art's sake". He concludes that although individual lessons are crucial part of fencing training they must be accompanied by general fitness training, footwork exercises, pair exercises, training bouts, queue exercises and fencing dummy training. In other words, individual lessons must not dominate but rather supplement the whole process of fencing training.

The last two chapters: "Just Before Competition" and "At the Competition" discuss negative emotional states in fencers before combat such as excessive arousal, lack of self-confidence, fear of failure, sleepiness and apathy. In Czajkowski's view a coach during competition should follow three general principles. In accordance with the medical precept of nonmaleficence, a coach should not induce moods of excessive nervousness in his fencers but self-confidence and ability to control emotions. Finally, in critical situations, a coach should also affect fencers' decisions by way of positive motivation, avoiding detailed technical and tactical advice.

Czajkowski's guidelines and instructions are illustrated with examples of fencing coaching successes from his amazing career. He dedicates these examples to young fencing coaches, and following Roger Crosnier, observes that without practical experience the fencing master's knowledge is not enough to provide full assistance to young fencers.

After reading *Understanding Fencing. The Unity of Theory and Practice* – definitely Zbigniew

Czajkowski's most important publication so far – one may gain the impression that all the author's ideas seem to have been well-known. Indeed, individual themes of the book were discussed earlier in his numerous publications, however; Czajkowski's book constitutes the very quintessence of his contributions to fencing. One may thus say that his long years of coaching experience have "added luster" to the voluminous book and made it a great publishing success. Opinions on the Internet forums and message boards show that the readers of Zbigniew Czajkowski's book are not only fencing enthusiasts or former fencers but also very young people, prospective fencers, sport lovers, scientists and researchers.

The book has already had three editions in the United States. A few months ago it was published in German (*Fechten Verstehen. Die Einheit von Theorie und Praxis*, Jörg Mewes, Verlag der Bergischen Bücherstube, 2010, translated by Sabine Isbanner, pp. 478) with a new interesting layout and cover. The book's popularity buzz on the Internet heralds a great interest in Czajkowski's publications among German-language readers for many years to come. Recently, also Italian and Czech publishers have expressed their desire to publish *Understanding Fencing. The Unity of Theory and Practice* in their countries.

In conclusion, it must be noted that Professor Zbigniew Czajkowski's book has been ranked as one of the most renowned and prestigious fencing publications of the last five years. It has been successfully competing with famous works by Hungarian, Russian and American authors. Moreover, it has been voted the best book on fencing ever by members of the International Fencing Academy.

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