

## PAGES FROM NAGYVÁRAD CITY'S FOOTBALL HISTORY (1901 – 1919)

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**ABSTRACT.** In the first part, the paper refers to the events which led to the establishment of the first sports associations of Nagyvárad city, followed by the presentation of the school sports associations and clubs that had football departments, the football fields, the very first round-ball game in the city's history, and the attendance of the teams to regional football championships. Within the documentation phase, I consulted specialized books, monographs, encyclopedias and sports sections of newspapers published in Oradea referring to the studied topic.

**Keywords:** *football, sports association, Nagyvárad, Oradea*

**REZUMAT.** *File din istoria fotbalului oraşului Nagyvárad (1901 – 1919).* În prima parte, lucrarea se referă la evenimentele care au condus la constituirea primelor asociații sportive din oraşul Nagyvárad după care sunt prezentate asociațiile și cluburile sportive școlare cu secții de fotbal, terenurile de fotbal, primul meci cu balonul rotund din istoria oraşului și participarea echipelor în campionatele regionale de fotbal. În cadrul activității de documentare am consultat cărți de specialitate, lucrări monografice, enciclopedii și rubricile de sport din presa orădeană care se referă la tema studiată.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *fotbal, asociație sportivă, Nagyvárad, Oradea*

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## Introduction

The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century captures the society of Nagyvárad city (in Romanian called Oradea) in a profound transformation process. The momentum of the industrial development made possible an architectural remodeling, and at the same time, a remodeling of the society.

In 1900, 91.3% of the population of Nagyvárad was of Hungarian nationality, 5.1% of Romanian nationality, 2.4% German nationality and 1.2% of other nationalities (Magyar Királyi Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 1902). Between 1901-1919, the mayor of Nagyvárad was Rimler Károly.

The cosmopolitan aspect of Oradea, reflected by the architectural language sometimes sober, sometimes full of life, was going to transform the city of Sebes Körös (nowadays called Crișul Repede River) into a genuinely rising city. It was the favorite place of the poet Ady Endre, who called Nagyvárad the little Paris from the banks of Peța.

In this context, the appearance of sports associations meant to manage and promote the game, within the limits imposed by the regulations, was not surprising.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the most active sports associations of the city were Polgári Lövészegylet (in Romanian, Asociația Civică de Tir (The Civic Shooting Sports Association)), established in 1835, having 220 members, Tornaegylet (in Romanian, Asociația de Gimnastică (The Gymnastics Association)) established in 1871, and Nagyvárad Torna Kör (in Romanian, Cercul de Gimnastică din Oradea (The Gymnastics Club of Oradea)), established in 1889, having 40 members (Fehér, 1897), (Rácz, 1871) & (Hügel, 1889). None of these three associations had a football department.

The round-ball game became known in Nagyvárad at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At first, it didn't take any organizational form (sports associations or teams), people were simply playing football. Until then, it was regarded as a hobby of the aristocrats, but after several sports associations had been established, football became more and more popular.

Beyond the Carpathians, in the Kingdom of Romania, "football was played randomly by ad-hoc teams for recreational purposes; later, the first teams organized in clubs or societies were established, who were playing friendly matches amongst themselves; followed by the organization of competitions taking the form of cups" (Ghibu & Todan, 1970, p. 290).

### School sports associations and clubs with football departments between 1901-1919

The establishment of sports associations and football departments in Nagyvárad contributed to the development of the round-ball game. Until the end of 1919, in Nagyvárad, there were 29 school sports associations or sports clubs with football departments (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Containing school sports associations and sports clubs with football departments between 1901-1919 (Török, 1937), (Ujhelyi, 1925), (Sas, 1901 – 1918) & (Hegedüs, 1918 – 1919)

School sports clubs and sports associations	The year when the football department was established	The first departments in chronological order
Nagyvárad Torna Kör	1901 (1889*)	Gymnastics, Fencing, Tourism, Football
Nagyvárad Atlétikai Club	1910	Football, fencing, gymnastics, boxing, athletics, skating, boxing, free wrestling, swimming and tennis
Nagyvárad Sport Egylet	1911 (1906*)	Gymnastics, athletics, free wrestling, tennis, kayaking, skating, fencing, football, water polo, hockey, table tennis, motorcycling, clay pigeon shooting
Bihari Vivó Club	1912 (1910*)	Fencing, football
Törekvés Munkás Testedző Egyesület	1912	Football, athletics, free wrestling, gymnastics, swimming, boxing, tennis, table tennis, cycling and fencing
Nagyvárad Egyletértés Sport Kör	1912	Football, athletics, swimming, fencing, tennis, tourism
Nagyvárad Sport Club	1912	Football, Tourism
Várad-velencei Athletikai Club	1912	Football
Nagyvárad Premontrei Főgimnázium Testgyakorló Kör	1912	Football
Nagyvárad Felső Kereskedelmi Torna Kör	1912	Football
Nagyvárad Magántisztviselők Egyesülete	1912	Football
Nagyvárad Állami Főreáliskolai Torna Club	1912	Football

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School sports clubs and sports associations	The year when the football department was established	The first departments in chronological order
Nagyvárad	1913	Football
Magánalkalmazottak Sport Egyesülete		
Velencei Törekvés	1913	Football
Nagyvárad Város Villamos Művének Alkalmazottjai	1914	Football
Orthodox Izraelita Polgári Fiúiskola***	1914	Football
Felső Kereskedelmi Iskola Torna Egylet	1914	Football
Nagyvárad Községi Polgári Fiúiskola***	1914	Football
Nagyvárad Testvériség NFC**	1916 1918	Football Football
Nagyvárad Kereskedelmi Alkalmazottak Sport Egylet	1919	Football
Magyar Államvasutak Testgyakorlók Köre	1919	Football, gymnastics, athletics
Nagyvárad Pénzügyi Tisztviselők Fa és Fémipar***	1919	Football
Vasutas Sport Kör***	1919	Football
Nagyvárad Önkéntes Tűzoltóegylet Football Csapata	1919	Football
Nyomdászok***	1919	Football
Csillagváros***	1919	Football
OSK**	1919	Football

Note: \* = The year when the sports association was established (in case it was established before the establishment of the football department), \*\* = The full name did not appear in the local newspapers, \*\*\* = the team was active on that year, we don't know the year when it was established

In 1901, next to gymnastics and athletics, Nagyvárad Torna Kör introduces football among its activities (Ionescu & Tudoran, 1984).

In 1906, Nagyvárad Sport Egylet was established (in Romanian, Asociația Sportivă din Oradea (The Sports Associations of Oradea)) (Illustration 1), which was the second sports association in Oradea to have a football department.



**Illustration 1. a-b** The Nagyvárad Sport Egylet Medal  
(from the collection of the National Museum of Banat)

Round shaped medal, made out of metal: bronze, undated, diameter 30x30 mm, weight 10.40 grams (Illustration 1). The front side (Illustration 1a) presents the coat of arms of Nagyvárad city, with an inscription in capital letters under the heraldic composition saying “NAGYVÁRADI SPORT EGYLET”, delimited by a dot on each of its sides. The back side (Illustration 1b) presents a thick edge, inside of which there is a discus thrower (a work which resembles the Discobolus of Myron), and a four-line inscription saying “ÉP TESTBEN ÉP LÉLEK”.

In that same year, Nagyvárad Sport Egylet takes over the football activity from Nagyvárad Torna Kör and attends a series of games, some of which were international, in the company of clubs from Austria-Hungary (Chirilă & Ionescu, 1999).

In the center of Nagyvárad, in a booth of Emke Café (currently, Astoria Restaurant) on May the 26<sup>th</sup>, 1910, the founding meeting of the Nagyvárad Atlétikai Club took place (in Romanian, Clubul Athletic Oradea (Oradea Athletics Club)). In the following years, other sports associations appeared as well which placed their focus on the round-ball game: Törekvés Munkás Testedző Egyesület (in Romanian, Asociația de Cultură Fizică a Muncitorilor Stăruința Oradea (Stăruința Association for Workmen’s Physical Training)) (1912), Nagyvárad Egyetértés Sport Kör (in Romanian, Înțelegerea Oradea (Înțelegerea Oradea Sports Club)) (1912), Nagyvárad Sport Club (in Romanian, Clubul Sportiv din Oradea (Oradea Sports Club)) (1912) etc. (Török, 1937).

In 1913, Várad-velencei Athletikai Club (in Romanian, Clubul Athletic Velența (Velența Athletics Club)) merged with Törekvés Munkás Testedző Egyesület, and in 1919, Magyar Államvasutak Testgyakorlók Köre (in Romanian, Asociația de Cultură Fizică a Căilor Ferate Maghiare (Hungarian Railways Association for Physical Training)) merged with Nagyváradai Egyetértés Sport Kör (Török, 1937).

In the first two years following its establishment, the rivalry between Nagyváradai Atlétikai Club and Nagyváradai Sport Egylet led to the improvement of the playing style. The manager of Nagyváradai Sport Egylet, Niessner Aladár, also made a significant contribution to the development of local football. He was the first player from Oradea to be selected to play for the national team of Hungary. This happened on April the 5<sup>th</sup>, 1903 in a game against Czechoslovakia which was held in Budapest and won by the Hungarians with a score of 2 – 1.

### The first shots with a football

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the round-ball game appeared on the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and in 1901 the first football championship of Hungary took place under the tutelage of Magyar Labdarúgó Szövetség (in Romanian, Federația Maghiară de Fotbal (The Hungarian Football Federation)), which was founded on January the 19<sup>th</sup>, 1901. On the banks of Sebes Körös, football appeared a little bit later.



**Picture 1.** Sportsfield in Rhédey Kert 1900 (Borovszky, 1901)

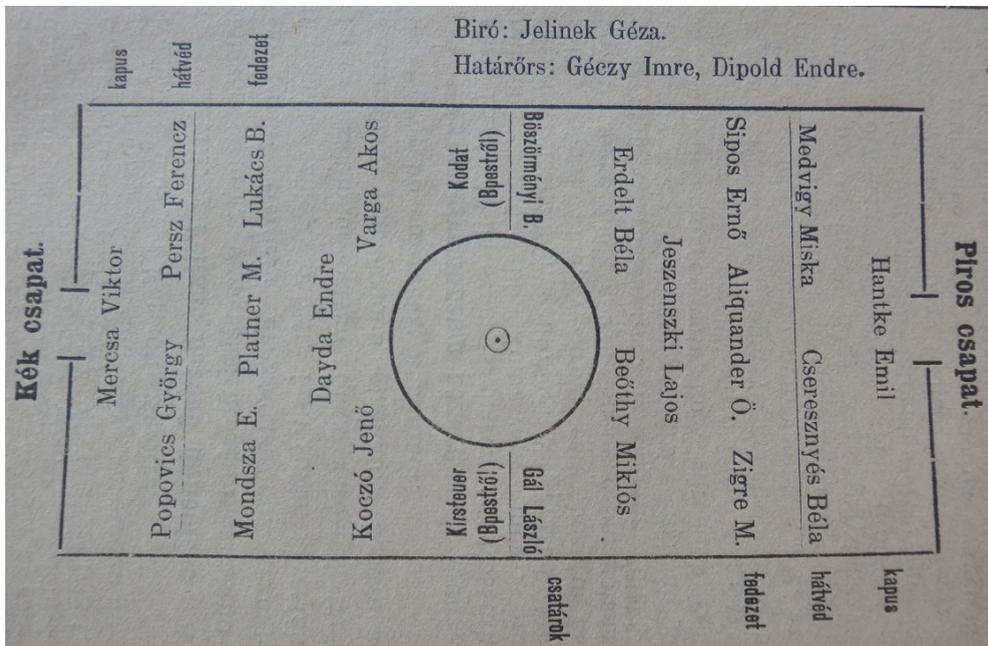


**Picture 2.** Mezey Mihály around 1900 (From the album of Mezey András)

The first sports movements of the city are related to the individual actions of a few intellectuals who returned home after finalizing their studies in the West.

The local paper “Nagyvárad”, in its edition from April the 27th, 1902, describes the history and regulations of football. At the same time, it presents the young people who were practicing football every Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday in Rhédey Kert (Picture 1) coordinated by Mezey Mihály (Picture 2), the director of the Nagyvárad Torna Kör sports association, and Jelinek Géza, the secretary of the same (Sas, 1902a).

Nagyvárad Torna Kör organized the very first football match in the history of this city. This game took place on June the 1<sup>st</sup>, 1902 on Sport-tér in Grädina Rhédey (Rhédey Garden) (Dési, 1902).



**Picture 3.** The line-up of the teams attending the game of June the 1<sup>st</sup>, 1902 (Sas, 1902b)

The June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1902 issue of Nagyvárad Napló newspaper presents the events: “Two teams were standing face to face: a blue one and a red one, each defending its own goal. Two blonde players from the blue team stood out due to their skills: Kirsteuer and Kodat who came from Budapest at the invitation of Nagyvárad Torna Kör. It is only natural that our athletes do not treat the art of

football in the most impeccable way because they are still beginners, but they have demonstrated that they have both the talent and the will to do so, and they can reach a high level in a short time.” The score was 2-0 in favor of the blue team. The price of an entrance ticket was 1 forint (Sas, 1902c, p. 1) (Picture 3).

Zigre Miklós (Nicolae) and Koczó Jenő were lawyers, and Alliquander Ödön (Picture 4) was working as an engineer.



**Picture 4.** Alliquander Ödön around 1950  
(from the album of Alliquander Éva)

This match marked the beginning of the journey of the beautiful game with the round ball, which developed and improved with each year.

### **The football fields of Nagyvárad**

The gathered documentation shows that the first football games took place on the Balassi Tér (currently named, „Piața Ion Creangă”), but after several complaints from the residents of the area regarding disorderly conduct, the game was moved behind the Bóné fountain (currently, the land behind Rulikowski Kázmér cemetery) (Török, 1937).

Since the people of Oradea became more and more interested in this sport, between 1885-1910, the Polgári Lövészegylet association leased Grădina Rhédey from the city hall of Nagyvárad under the condition that it would maintain its green spaces (Lakatos, 1911a) & (Borovsky, 1901).

The city's sports arena called Sport-tér (Sporttér) or Sport Pavillon (currently called, Stadionul Tineretului (Youth Stadium)) from Grădina Rhédey, was inaugurated on June the 4<sup>th</sup>, 1895 (Picture 5 & 6). At the same time, a ground floor building and two small towers were placed in service for dancing, a new restaurant and a buffet, a project which belonged to Rimanóczy Kálmán. Here, in summer people were practicing cycling, and in winter, they were skating (Fehér, 1897).

“Sporttér was provided with a bicycle track with grandstands, lawn tennis courts (grass courts), a synthetic ice skating rink, a heated locker room and a kiosk” (Némethy & Biró, 1901, p. 56).

Although initially Sporttér was destined for several types of sports (skating, athletics, cycling, football and gymnastics), due to lack of interest, the Polgári Lövészegylet association used it mostly for their own goals, building additional tennis courts (Lakatos, 1911b).



**Picture 5.** Sport Pavillon in 1898 (Péter, 2002)

According to studies, in 1910, Mikló Béla also brought a “football” into the city and searched for young people eager to prove themselves on Füzes street (currently called, Sf. Apostol Andrei Street), the trench of Nagyvárad

Fortress, the Bunyitay Liget (currently called, Parcul Ion Constantin Brătianu (Ion Constantin Brătianu Park)) (Picture 7) and Nagy Vásár tér (currently called, Parcul 1 Decembrie (1 Decembrie Park)). He learned the secrets of football in Vienna (Török, 1937).



**Picture 6.** Sporttér (Kemény, 1912)



**Picture 7.** Insula Dóry (Dóry Island) and Bunyitay liget (Kemény, 1912)

Because the lease agreement for Grădina Rhédey concluded between the Polgári Lövészegylet association and the City Hall of Nagyvárad expired on January the 1<sup>st</sup>, 1910, Nagyvárad Atlétikai Club requested from the City Hall the right to use Sporttér and the Dóri lake and island from Városliget (Bunyitay Liget), for sports related purposes (Sas, 1910) (Picture 6 & 7).

In the first year of activity, in 1910, the playing field of Nagyvárad Atlétikai Club was in Városliget – Bunyitay Liget. Although women and girls had free access to the matches, they still preferred boat rides, tennis or the diabolo game (Jakobovits, 1943). “In the first weeks, the team received two locker rooms from mister Pankolics. The team’s warehouse was in one of the rooms, having on stock a ball, a string and a pump. In the first year of activity, the players were marking the lines, and the firefighters were pulling ropes around the field. The matches were attended by two linesmen, one at each goal, because, back in those days, the football goals didn’t have nets.” (Jakobovits, 1943, p. 53).

At the City Council meeting, they discussed taking over Sporttér from Polgári Lövészegylet and assigning it to the local sports associations. “Given the importance of sports and physical education, the council proposes to fulfill the request. In this sense, it proposes for the city to buy from Polgári Lövészegylet the building of Sporttér for the amount of 25.000 crowns. For the city to spend 7.000 crowns to refurbish the buildings, 7.600 crowns to build an athletics field,

8.000 crowns to build 20 tennis courts. For the renovated Sporttér along with the newly built additional facilities, to be put at the disposal of the three local sports associations. These associations assumed the obligation to repay 5% of the invested amount” (Sas, 1911a, p. 2).

Thus, in the summer of 1911, the football teams moved to the new stadium named „Sporttér”, which spurred the clubs towards other meridians. Football goals with wire nets were set up, and football fans could weekly watch interesting games with other local and regional teams (Jakobovits, 1943).

The inaugural match of the football field was played against the Aradi Testgyakorlók Köre team, on Szent István’s day, on August the 20<sup>th</sup>, 1911. The two teams appeared with two groups of players. Nagyváradi Atlétikai Club: The first team (Robogó, Sebő, Szvertka, Muharos, Felhő, Farkas, Fenyő II, Kovács I, Milodanovics, Hanni, Bátki). The second team: Kun Ármin, Schmidt Béla, Friss József, Horváth Ferenc, Mikló Béla, Kovács László, Jancsó Béla, Uray Tibor. The away team’s tenured players won the game by 9-1, and the only goal of the home team was scored by Kovács (Sas, 1911b) & (Sas, 1911c).

In 1912, an article appeared in the Nemzeti Sport newspaper, according to which the City Hall of Nagyvárad allocated 55.000 crowns for the building of an iron-reinforced concrete grandstand with 1500 seats, toilets, locker rooms and warehouses on the premises of Sporttér, and the three sports associations renting it, were to repay annually the expenses (Friedrich, 1912).

The outbreak of the First World War and the following years, led to a decline in football. The local teams continued their activity only with their junior teams.

### **The attendance of the teams to Hungary’s regional football championships**

Starting from 1901, the Hungarian Football Federation (Magyar Labdarúgó Szövetség) organized football championships only for the teams from Budapest, but the 1907-1908 season marked the very first championship for teams from outside of Hungary’s capital city. The winners of the regional series were playing an elimination based final tournament.

In football history, the region represented by the territory of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire is known as the “Danubian School”. This is about a certain playing style, characterized by short and repeated passes, by the technicality of the players, with a primary emphasis on the technical-tactical factor in relation to the physical one (Angelescu & Cristea, 2011).

The 1911-1912 football season marked the first time attendance of the football clubs of Nagyvárad to Hungary’s regional football championship. The Nagyváradi Sport Egylet and Nagyváradi Atlétikai Club teams played in the

central region's group along with Debreceni Kereskedelmi Alkalmazottak Sport Egyesülete, Debreceni Munkás Testedző Egyesület, Debreceni Torna Egylet, Miskolci Munkás Testedző Egyesület and Miskolci Sport Egyesület. Under the command of coach Szabó Andor, the NAC team finished the season on the second place ahead of the local team Nagyváradi Sport Egylet („Vidéki bajnokság – Középmagyarországi kerület”, n.d.).



**Picture 8.** Nagyváradi Atlétikai Club – Miskolci Atlétikai Club (Katz, 1911)

In the 1912-1913 edition of the regional football championship, Eastern region, in the Nagyváradvidéki group, out of the total of nine teams, five were from Nagyvárad: Nagyváradi Atlétikai Club (the winner), Nagyváradi Sport Egylet, Törekvés Munkás Testedző Egyesület, Bihari Vivó Club and Nagyváradi Sport Club (Dénes, Sándor & Bába, 2013).

In the Eastern zone championship, Nagyvárad group, in the 1913-1914 competition year, Nagyváradi Atlétikai Club has finished on the first place, winning all 16 matches of the championship against Debreceni Kereskedelmi Alkalmazottak Sport Egyesülete, Debreceni Torna Egylet, Debreceni Vasutas Sport Club, Bihari Vivó Club, Törekvés Munkás Testedző Egyesület, Nagyváradi Egyetértés Sport Kör, Debreceni Nyomdászok Sport Club, Nagyváradi Sport Club and Nagyváradi Sport Egylet („Vidéki bajnokság – Keleti kerület, Nagyváradi alosztály”, n.d.).

Upon the outbreak of the First World War, the players of the team were called to serve in the war, and for 4 years the football teams continued their activity with the junior players. In all four seasons, the teams had charitable matches with regional or local military teams.

## Conclusions

The new football field of Grădina Rhédey, named „Sporttér”, built in 1911, meant a development of local football. In the three championship seasons (1911-1914), the Nagyváradi Atlétikai Club team had the best results (twice first place and once second place).

Up until the outbreak of the First World War, 18 school sports associations and clubs were established in Nagyvárad. The years that followed represented a decline in football. The local teams continued their activity only with the junior teams.

The names of the following students, who were among the first ones to play football, are part of Nagyvárad city's history: Friedländer Sándor, Várady József, Rottenberg, Pankolics Károly, Jakabovits (Jakobovits) Elemér and Elekes (Török, 1937).

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Poza Alliquander Ödön în jurul anului 1950 - Albumul lui Alliquander Éva

