Victorious inauguration of SPR Olkusz!

By **Admin** - October 10, 2024



Olkusz

SPR Olkusz stunned the entire Polish handball community! In the opening game of the Central League season, and thus in their debut match directly behind the Orlen Superliga, Maciej Haupa's men defeated one of the main promotion favorites away from home. The 26-25 score in favor of *the "Silver Lionesses"* was hailed as a major surprise, but considering the events on the pitch, it was hardly a surprise. In the match against MTS Żory, the better organized and motivated team, with no real weaknesses, prevailed.

Even before the opening whistle, there was much talk about the chances of both teams. Most experts and handball fans gathered in the hall on Folwarecka Street were betting on a home victory, and a convincing one at that. Only a few, and even those, were secretly hoping for a different scenario, in which the newcomer would fight on equal terms with the contender to win the entire league. In the end, the latter, who were in the vast minority, were right. Moreover, the Lionesses convinced their initial skeptics, proving they were serious about making a name for themselves in the Central League, not just about remaining there.

Wiktoria Sioła found the net in the opening moments of the match. Aleksandra Sójka responded by beating Patrycja Cierpioł. In the following minutes, goals from newcomers to the SPR squad – Paulina Kulik and Marta Wroniewicz – gave the Olkusz team a 3-1 and then 4-2 lead. However, Żory regained control of the situation, and thanks to their leaders, Sójka and Marta Wołczyk, they tied the score at 4-1. Shortly after, a goal from Iga Barska closed out the first quarter, giving Anna Niewiadomska's team a one-goal lead – 6-5. The Lionesses held on bravely, but were still unable to avoid further losses. Furthermore, within the aforementioned 15 minutes, Sioła had already received two two-minute suspensions, leaving her future in doubt. Fortunately, our pivot managed to control her emotions, and by staying on the court, her performance earned her a significant accolade for the remainder of the match. But before we talk about the finale of this duel, let's take a look at the second part of the first part.

In the 23rd minute, Katarzyna Wyrzychowska's spectacular goal gave MTS a three-goal lead of 10-7. Wiktoria Kozyra and Magdalena Barczyk closed the gap somewhat, but the home side quickly regained their largest lead of the match after Barska's double. The Lionesses had the final possession of the first half. First, Daria Opelt was beaten by Paul Masiud, and just before halftime, Oliwia Sołościuk made it 12-11.

Despite a narrow halfway deficit, the first quarter of the match promised even greater excitement after the break. No one was disappointed, as after the break, we continued to witness a fantastic spectacle, not only on the pitch but also off. The organization of the match in Żory was top-notch in every respect. And since we had a celebration in the stands, the players didn't want to be left behind, providing a great advertisement for women's handball to the packed arena.

From the start of the second half, the score hovered around a draw, with the home team slightly favoring the home team. Sójka played the main role in MTS's attack in the absence of the injured Olesia Donets, while Sioła, Wroniewicz, Sołościuk, Barczyk, and Kozyra contributed points for the Liwice. Despite a difficult start, the latter earned the title of unsung heroine of the match in the second half-hour, playing arguably one of the best games of her life. The 19-year-old successfully replaced Paula Masiuda, who was playing in the match with a proverbial "plaster-cutter." The opponents couldn't find a way to counter coach Haupa's somewhat sloppy play. As in many cases, they couldn't find a way to counter the fantastically talented Patrycja Cierpioł between the posts. The SPR goalkeeper, at times, defended like a dream, deflecting unbelievable shots. Hence the MVP award awarded by the organizers.

We'll return to this award later, but for now, we'll try to capture the emotions on the pitch, which were abundant in the closing stages of Sunday's match. Confidently heading for their Silver Lionesses, the team led 22-19 in the 49th minute. Kozyra fired up the visitors, but even she couldn't stop the Żory team, who mustered one more surge. Two goals from Sójka's seven-meter line and a goal from Barska tied the game at 22-22. Once again, the Olkusz team masterfully withstood the pressure. Barczyk and Kozyra restored their belief in victory. Belief that never wavered. Then Sioła added a crucial goal from the hoop, and then Wyrzychowska added her name to the scoresheet, and that was it, although MTS could have equalized in the final moments of the match and forced a penalty shootout. However, the Lionesses saved the last ball and were able to celebrate.

Watching this match from the sidelines, or more precisely, from behind the goal, it's hard to call it a surprise, as the team that, from the overall perspective, more deserved it won. A more complete team, knowing exactly what to do and how to play at a given moment. Moreover, a team with immense character and imagination, at times seemingly lacking a nervous system. The Polish handball community quickly transformed the match against Żory from a match of "two worlds," pitting the favorite against the newcomer, into a highlight of the LCK's first round.

Finally, it's time for individual awards. By decision of the organizers, and likely not only them, Patrycja Cierpioł was named MVP for the visiting team. "Pata" once again demonstrated her expertise and the ability to help her team in difficult moments. Without a trophy, but nominated for the "Seven of the 1st Round" in the official ZPRP program "Centralnie o ręcznej," Wiktoria Sioła and her namesake, Kozyra, five years her junior, finished the match. In fact, the entire team deserved the distinction and great words of appreciation. It was a truly perfect start to the season.

MTS Żory 25:26 (12:11) SPR Olkusz

MTS Żory line-up: Piotrowska, Opelt – Sójka (8), Wyrzychowska (6), Barska (4), Wołczyk (3), Reichel (2), Pędziwiatr (2), Gruca, Maziarek, Kanicka, Opara and Opelt, Gembalczyk, Herian.

SPR Olkusz: Cierpioł, Kwiatkowska – Kozyra (7), O. Sołościuk (5), Barczyk (4), Sioła (4), Wroniewicz (3), Kulik (2), Masiuda (1), Kuźnik and N. Sołośćuk, Szydełko.

SPR Olkusz (PK)