



**Interview conducted on 3/04/2019 by Kinga Mielnicka
at University of Nicolaus Copernicus in Toruń**

Could you introduce yourself?

My name is Anna Błaszowska, I am an employee of the Nicolaus Copernicus University, and more precisely of the University Sports Center. I run classes in the field of gym, but also bocci training. Boccia is a paralympic discipline. It is a team game. We train and take part in the Integrational Polish Championships, which is the final result of our effort. The disability section at the University in Toruń was established in 2015. I train students who are required to pass classes in physical education, but also students who have a disability certificate or medical exemption. Classes are open, we accept everyone and we integrate.

Does training people with disabilities require more effort?

I do not know if it can be perceived in terms of effort. This is a different type of cooperation and under no circumstances is it a worse kind. These people often teach me much more than I do for them. Being with people with disabilities opens eyes to many things that are not problems for us in our everyday life, but for them there are challenges and I learn these challenges with them.

Do you also focus on mental power while training?

Cooperation with people with various disabilities has its specific character. In addition to sports training, we talk a lot with each other. I always try to make these classes very integrative. So we organize a different kind of occasional meetings. There are fewer students than in other groups, so we remember whose birthday is on that very day to celebrate it together. We talk about various things. It seems to me that I have close contact with students, especially with those who I go to the Integration Polish Championship. So, if

something happens, and I can help, no matter what it concerns, I try to help. This work requires to understand different problems, sometimes a little more patience and my time - I am not just a coach for contracted hours, I should look after the student if they need my help.

Do your players have any special achievements?

Yes, we have a bronze medalist from 2018 in the Integration Polish Championships. We took the seventh place as a team. These are just the beginnings, because only last year we started participating in this kind of the competitions. Previously, we only trained and went to various sports events but I have got hopes and aspirations concerning my team. I must say.

Do you think that this discipline should be more popular?

I think that it is already very popular anyway. Maybe not in Poland but in the European Union countries: France, Italy and Spain are the leaders in this discipline. It seems to me that in general, doing sport by people with disabilities is becoming more and more popular. First of all, the mentality of the disabled people have changed- they want to leave the house, integrate with people around. I am glad that has modernized and I hope it will be even better.

How did it happen that you chose this form of activity?

The story is quite interesting. I come from sports family myself. My dad trained martial arts, my mother was a ballet dancer, my brother played table tennis professionally. I first trained a modern dance, and then for 12 years I was involved in athletics - I ran sprints. All my life was subordinated to sport. And studying, which has always been close to me. I always knew that I wanted to become a lecturer at the university. I've also always worked with people with disabilities. My parents were always close to people in need, too. We drove to Hospice Hope, to disabled children. I trained dance then and I often danced for these children. And it was in my blood. As a student, I took part in various volunteering actions for people with disabilities. It seems to me that which we can share with others ourselves. This is basically the power driving our lives. When I started working at the University of Nicolaus Copernicus, I realized that people with disabilities can only have physical education classes in a theoretical

dimension. I thought it would be nice to give the students a choice. The beginnings were not easy, because a few students were interested in participating in these classes. The university authorities' faith in this idea and spreading the information around resulted in a large group, about 20 people, regularly participating in training.

What disabilities do the people, you train, have ?

First of all, motor disabilities, but disabilities are coupled. They are mainly people with quadriplegic or bilateral cerebral palsy. There are also people with amputations of limbs, sometimes after cancer. Every year due to a new group of students, I learn about new diseases. Young people seem to be weak and suffer from various dysfunctions and I did not expect that.

Thank you for talking to us so sincerely.