

# What about racing?

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## An interview with Mr. Jerzy Budny, the President of Polish Jockey Club

On 7th September 2006 Mr. Jerzy Budny came to terms of the post of President of the Polish Jockey Club. The interview took place in August.

**Izabella Pawelec-Zawadzka: For many people an institution called the Polish Jockey Club is rather an abstract notion. Could you, please, introduce to our readers its status, tasks and aims, as well the legal acts responsible for establishing it.**

Jerzy Budny: By the Livestock Nationalization Act from 1950 appointed was the State Racecourse (PTWK), completely monopolizing horse racing in Poland. That enterprise, established by the Ministry of Agriculture, supervised the tracks in Warsaw, Wrocław and Sopot. From the sixties, after liquidation of Racing Committee, PTWK became as well the organizer of races, employer for all workers taking part in training of racehorses, donor of licenses for trainers, riders and judges, as well as the supervising organ of races through the Stewards Commission.



Jerzy Budny. Fot. Tomasz Celner.

After privatization of significant part of purebred and thoroughbred horses breeding, when the market economy was introduced, PTWK ceased to exist, whereas appointed were three independent race tracks.

In such circumstances nobody knew, who can fulfill the duties of a racing authority. Breeders associations weren't allowed to issue administrative decisions, so it proved necessary to enact a new racing law. A new act, passed by the Parliament in 2001, established also a new structure, named the Polish Jockey Club. Its President and Council, consisting of 15 - 25 persons, are recommended by the breeders associations and appointed by the Minister of Agriculture. Terms of the President and Council last four years, whereas the tasks of the Club are following: establishing conditions of races and supervising their fulfilling, activities oriented to strengthening and improving the horse breeding and development of racing industry.

Those duties are performed through: initiating and evaluating of legal solutions concerning races, giving opinions on projects of racing rules, supervising of adherence to racing rules, granting of licenses for training, riding, driving and judging, appointing of the Judges, Steward and Appeal Commissions, and supervising of judicatures of both commissions, membership of international racing and breeding organizations, conducting of professional training, accepting of race programs for separate tracks, elaborating of statistical materials concerning breeding and performance value of horses, issuing „The Racing News”, promoting racing.

Moreover, according to the Catch 12 of the Racing Act, the Club is the only owner of about 138 area of Służewiec race course including buildings. The Ministry of Agriculture entrusted it with conducting of studbooks of English Thoroughbreds and Purebred Arabian horses, evaluating the performance value of those breeds, registering and issuing passports for them. The Club has many duties in different directions, but it isn't entitled for organizing races. Such a function would stand in contradiction to its supervising duties.

**I P-Z: The horse racing in Poland survive a serious crisis, if not a collapse. What is the reason of such a situation?**

JB: The races fulfill at least 3 functions: serve the estimation of performance value of horses, necessary for their breeding program; because of the competitive element, they make an exciting sport performance; they provide an excellent basis for betting.

One should emphasize, that to create necessary and adequate conditions for the horses to ask them of maximum effort, maintaining of the turf in a condition ensuring the safety of horses and riders, as well as providing a satisfying aesthetic level, demands high costs. The betting makes the main income for the races organizers.

The quality of races is influenced by the level of prizes, arousing competition and forcing professional training and riding. The main reason for all failures of races lies in too low level of prizes and excessive, needless savings.

For example, the sum of prize money for the racing season 2005 were lower by 40% per horse, comparing to the season 2001. During the same period the turnover per start decreased by 44%. An average Swede or Frenchman spends for betting 1000 times more money than an average Pole.

**I P-Z: The racecourse at Sluzewiec is considered as one of the most picturesque and functional tracks in Europe. Why, despite an excellent location, rich natural environment and broad space, none was willing to invest in a kind of enterprise, mostly profitable all over the world?**

JB: There are many reasons for it. One of them is, that races are supervised by three ministries: of Treasury, Finance and Agriculture. That's why every initiative should be accepted by those administration bodies. Foreign investors don't trust our law regulations because of their uncertain stability, whereas for Polish investors the image of races, created by the media, doesn't seem attractive and its location, almost in the center of Warsaw, looks more suitable for other kinds of investment.

**I P-Z: How, in your opinion, the horse races in Poland may be saved and risen to a world level?**

JB: The only chance, because of current condition of the place, is mobilization a huge capital, using sport and leisure-time-usefulness of the spot. The races must be sponsored from the properly organized betting, providing suitable turnover. This, in turn, would enable creating a stable racing program with a precised sum of prize money, what should guarantee, at least partial, payability of maintaining the horses in training for at least two seasons. Realization of such a program should be supervised by the Government, the more, that the Warsaw racecourse is enrolled into the list of the national monuments.