

Dr Sergei Petrovich Novikov (1949-2021), Judo Olympic champion, creative science of martial arts expert

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Abstract

The biography of Serhiy Petrovych Novikov is a tangle of multiple events linked to the political and social consequences of the generation born after the end of the Second World War on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain. He was Ukrainian, born on December 15, 1949. His greatest sporting achievements are credited to the Soviet Union. Before he won the gold medal in the men's heavyweight division (+93 kg) during at the 1976 Summer Olympics, was a bronze medallist at the World Judo Championships (1973) and runner-up in 1975. He was also a gold medallist at the European Championships in 1973, 1974 and 1976. A sporting career, even a multi-year one with many successes, is only one of many parts of his life. Among the many sports stars, no matter how long it has been and how extensive their achievements, there are few who have also made a significant contribution to science or in other fields. In 2000, Dr Novikov founded the International Unifight Federation (registered in Paris). This new sport, a compilation of well-known combat sports (two rounds) preceded by a competition on a specific obstacle course, has not gained the attention of either the media or the CISM authorities (the abbreviation comes from French: Conseil International du Sport Militaire). Many years later, through electronic media, the bloody neo-gladiatorsism MMA (mixed martial arts) was promoted. Dr Novikov was a member of Editorial Board of Archives of Budo from the very beginning of the journal. He died April 16, 2021 and was buried in Kuntsevsky Cemetery in Moscow.

Keywords: combat sports • Conseil International du Sport Militaire • UNIFIGHT

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Neo-gladiator – a person who trains mix martial arts (MMA) and similar forms of hand-to-hand fighting that do not meet the definition of sport according to the Olympic Charter [17].

Częstochowa declaration 2015: HMA against MMA – "continuous improvement of health through martial arts as one of the most attractive form of physical activity for a human, accessible during entire life should constantly exist in public space, especially in electronic media, to balance permanent degradation of mental and social health by enhancing the promotion of mixed martial arts – contemporary, bloody gladiatorship, significant tool of education to aggression in a macro scale".

Gdansk 2nd HMA World Congress Resolution
– Article 1 The white flag with five interlocking "Olympic rings" is the most recognizable symbol in the global public space. Neither did the resurrected idea of Olympia, "Citius, Altius, Fortius" save humanity from the horrors of two world wars, nor did the declared mission of the International Olympic Committee (IOC): "1. (...) the promotion of ethics and (...) ensuring that, in sport, the spirit of fair play prevails and violence is banned" (Olympic Charter, p. 18) stop the pathology of permanently educating contemporary man in aggression. **Article 2** Likewise, symbols (a sword pointed downwards surrounded by five rings) and motto ("Friendship through Sport") of Conseil International du Sport Militaire (CISM) did not stop soldiers from killing each other and murdering people after 1948 (the year of establishing CISM, the second largest multi-sport discipline organization after the IOC, and also the year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights). **Article 3** Although there are five identical combat sports in the Olympic Games and the Military World Games, their potential is still not used to meet the second of the Fundamental Principles of Olympism: "(...) to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity" (Olympic Charter, p. 13). **Article 4** Boxing

INTRODUCTION

The biography of Serhiy Petrovych Novikov is a tangle of multiple events linked to the political and social consequences of the generation born after the end of the Second World War on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain. He was Ukrainian, born on December 15, 1949. His greatest sporting achievements are credited to the Soviet Union. 1976 Summer Olympics, was a bronze medallist at the World Judo Championships (1973) and runner-up in 1975. He was also a gold medallist at the European Championships in 1973, 1974 and 1976. Graduate of the Kyiv National University of Physical Education (doctor of pedagogical sciences) and Kyiv College of Ministry of Interior (university degree in law). He died on April 16, 2021. and was buried in Kuntsevsky Cemetery in Moscow.

This short introductory paragraph (abstracting from the Iron Curtain allusion) contains information that is reproduced in obituaries dedicated to Serhiy Petrovych Novikov and that survives in the historical annals of the sport. What he left behind outside sport no longer attracts as much attention, either from contemporary mainstream media hungry for ephemeral sensationalism, or from historians and philosophers of science. We are talking here, somewhat sarcastically, about historians and philosophers of science using journalistic phraseology – which is also, in a sense, mainstream. Sergei Novikov has not been nominated for a Nobel Prize or any other prestigious prize in the field of science, yet he is also making a significant contribution to science.

Through sport to science and the singular fulfilment of its social mission

A sporting career, even a multi-year one with many successes, is only one of many parts of his life. Among the many sports stars, no matter how long it has been and how extensive their achievements, there are few who have also made a significant contribution to science or in other fields.

Dr Sergei Novikov is one of the pioneers of a new sub-discipline of science – the science of martial arts [1, 2] – not only by the fact that, since the first volume was published *Archives of Budo* (2005) he was a member of Editorial Board. The authors of the first publication in *Archives of Budo* were Brazilian scientists, and the work concerned judo athletes [3], but the co-author of the second was Sergei Novikov, and the work is dedicated to hand-to-hand fight [4].

This is, in a sense, a symbolic compilation of the first papers published in a journal dedicated to combat sports and martial arts from a health and personal safety perspective (defence art), which was awarded the *5-year Impact Factor* counting backwards from the first volume, i.e. issued in 2005 [1, 2]. Dr Novikov was an Olympic champion in judo, yet he focused his scientific passions in an original way on the hand-to-hand fight (combat). In 2000, he founded the International Unifight Federation and registered in Paris [5] – Figure 1. This new sport is a compilation of well-known combat sports (two rounds in a boxing ring on tatami mats – Figure 2), preceded by a competition on a specific obstacle course (Figure 3) as the first round.

The paths of combat sports and martial arts experts outside the Iron Curtain could not be further apart. In the same year (2000) when Sergei Novikov officially registered UNIFIGHT, a scientific conference dedicated to 'Educational and utilitarian aspects of combat sports' was held at the Józef Piłsudski Academy of Physical Education in Warsaw (on its 70th anniversary). Three years later (27-28 October 2003), an international conference „Extreme Sports in the Training of Soldiers and Anti-Terrorist Formations” took place. This time, the first part took place in Warsaw, and in Paweł Włodkowic University College in Płock, the workshop part during which Sergei Novikov presented UNIFIGHT for the first time in Poland [6].



Figure 1. The symbol of UNIFIGHT.



Figure 2. Fragments of the fight in the ring (Source: from DEMO *unifight* received from S. Novikov).



Figure 3. Elements of the obstacle course and *unifight* ring.

Other Polish accents

On the initiative of Jan Harasymowicz, Dean of the Faculty of Physical Education (2006-2019), the Polish Federation “UNIFIGHT” attached to Paweł Włodkowic University College in Płock, Poland is established.. However, despite the sporting successes and the promotion of *unifight* at important scientific events, the social affairs coordinators have shown no interest in this unique project. Łukasz Smorzewski, a judoka trained by Jan Harasymowicz, won a bronze medal at the world championships in Prague (2009) and a silver medal in Moscow (2011). Medal successes were also achieved by *unifight* athletes from Elbląg.

The popular children’s and young people’s *unifight* competition (www.unifight.ru) was held for the first time in Płock on 19 September 2010 in the format of the European Twin Cities Tournament (Figure 4). Children aged 10-11 years are not allowed to use blows. Sporting competition in UNIFIGHT from the 13 age consists of different variants [7-9]. The conference presentations,

especially those dedicated to society’s dispatch service communities (military, police, etc.) aroused great interest, unfortunately not resulting in implementation decisions [10, 11].

Unique health benefits of UNIFIGHT

An important element of the promotion of health through *unifight* is the rule which recognises as the winner after the first round (obstacle course) the competitor who has demonstrated an advantage over his rival in a very simple way – the loser needed 50% more time than the winner to overcome the obstacle course. It is no secret that many times combat sports athletes compete with untreated injuries. Having to walk in an overhanging position on your shoulders up

and wrestling cultivate the traditions of ancient Olympism. Judo and taekwondo have given martial arts humanistic and health attractiveness. Fencing combines this tradition with modernity in the spirit of chivalry. Aiming dynamic offensive and defensive actions directly at the opponent’s body (irrespective of the protectors used) in such a way as not to hurt is a measure of respecting those knightly rules. This rule harmonizes with the principle of respect for the opponent’s as well as one’s own corporeality and dignity over the vain victory at all costs.

Article 5 For the civilized individual and the society for whom human health and dignity are the common good, participation, in any role, in brutal shows of people massacring each other cannot be a standard of the quality of life. Neo gladiatorship camouflaged under the banner of martial arts or combat sports is a slight to the Fundamental Principles of Olympism, but also to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Therefore, this Resolution should inspire as many actors of Knowledge Society as possible jointly to oppose any deformations of the mission of Olympism and sport. The expansion of the pathology of unauthorized naming neo gladiators as combat sports athletes will soon turn the Fundamental Principles of Olympism into their own caricature – objective indicators are a testament to the devastation of all dimensions of health by the practice of legal bloody pageants [22].



Figure 4. Poster informing about the first *unifight* tournament for children of Płock’s European partner cities (19.09.2010).

a several-metre ladder placed in horizontal position is a significant disincentive to take the risk of taking off. This obstacle course is not only of positive health significance, but also utilitarian and educational. It is a factor that enforces the right balance of training measures – general physical fitness, technical, tactical, mental [5, 7].

A failed marriage with CISM

We are left with the rhetorical question of why the CISM authorities ignored the efforts of Dr Sergei Novikov supported by the CISM Judo Committee between 2000 and 2007 [12] to include unifight in the organisation's global sports. We abstract from the winter version of UNIFIGHT (*Winter Universal Fight*), which additionally makes the sport extremely attractive not only from the perspective of sporting spectacle, but above all because of its application value for military training. The obstacle course was replaced here by a cross-country skiing competition (over a distance of 2 x 200 metres) combined with target shooting, and the ring fight by a snow fight limited to throws and upsets [13, 14].

Two of the most important *unifight* promotions took place during the study day, an obligatory element of every CISM World Championships, (and therefore also in judo): In Baku (Azerbaijan 2004), a professional lecture by Dr Sergei Novikov was enhanced by demonstrations of *unifight* technical

elements performed by champions. On the other hand, a showmatch was held in Saint Petersburg (Russia 2005) involving two teams of five (Figure 5). One of the teams featured a Belgian judoka, who achieved medal success the following day in a judo tournament [15].

CONCLUSIONS

The authors of the Declaration entitled „Sport and Fair Play in the 21st Century” – announced by The International Committee for Fair Play in December 2007 at UNESCO headquarters in Paris – remind us that sport must be a vehicle for positive values. Competition must not lead to brutality or endanger the health of athletes. The authors of the Declaration speak out against all forms of violent, aggressive behaviour in sport, against doping and the aggressive commercialisation of sport – stating unequivocally that these phenomena “are a negation of traditional norms and the pedagogical model of sport”. Unfortunately, through the electronic media, bloody neo-gladiatorsism MMA (mixed martial arts) is effectively promoted [16, 17]. In a sense, a continuation of this UNESCO Declaration is the Cześćochowa declaration 2015: HMA against MMA and Gdansk 2nd HMA World Congress Resolution 2018 (see glossary).



Figure 5. Dr Sergei Novikov (first from the left - next to him: Prof. Segiei Ashkinazji, official representative of the CISM) before the *unifight* demonstration tournament during the study day of Saint Petersburg Judo Military World Championships 2005.

Dr Sergei Novikov bore witness to two ideals inherited from judo founder Jigoro Kano. Firstly, he proved that he was capable of winning nobly all the way to the Olympic judo championship. Secondly, that the most important thing is judo in mind. The latter ideal was fulfilled by his determination to create a modern combat sport with undeniable health and utilitarian qualities. Maybe it is not too late and the most influential global social affairs coordinators can afford to reflect that combat sports and martial arts do not need to be a straightforward route to escalating violence

and aggression. It is thanks to Dr Sergei Novikov, Olympic Judo Champion, among others, that there is an alternative. On the pages of *Archives of Budo* and *Archives of Budo Science of Martial Arts and Extreme Sports* anyone can find reliable scientific evidence that combat sports and martial arts recommended by authors from all over the world for health and strengthening personal security [18-21]. One condition must be met – they must be used competently, i.e. with respect for the other person's dignity. Dr Novikov was a member from the very beginning of the above-mentioned journals.

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