# TOKYO 2020. OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC QUALIFICATIONS OF STUDENTS, GRADUATES AND EMPLOYEES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SZCZECIN

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Albiract The aim of this article is to present an analysis of the current qualifying standards for the 32<sup>nd</sup> Summer Olympics and the 16<sup>th</sup> Paralympics, Tokyo 2020 (2021). The article takes account of athletes who are students and graduates of the University of Szczecin in their respective sports disciplines, as well as sports restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the article presents trainers, physiotherapists, employees and graduates of the University of Szczecin who are working with athletes who meet the qualifying standards or plan to compete in sports events to meet the standards, for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. If their athletes qualify for the Games, they will become members of, or potential candidates for, the coaching and medical staff of the Polish Olympic and Paralympic team participating in Tokyo 2020 (2021).

This article serves as a continuation of research and analyses on the participation of student athletes, coaches and physiotherapists who are graduates of the Higher School of Pedagogy in Szczecin (later: University of Szczecin), in the Summer Olympics and Paralympics. For the first time in the history of the modern Olympic Games, the event has been postponed: Tokyo 2020, although retaining its name, will take place the following year. This decision is a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic. The research material consisted of 14 individuals: eight athletes, five trainers, and one physiotherapist. Out of the eight analysed athletes, four of them – Patryk Dobek, Michał Gadowski, Piotr Lisek and Marcin Lewandowski – have already achieved qualifying standards which enables them to participate in the Olympic Games. The Paralympic qualifications in rowing, won by Michał Gadowski, have guaranteed coach Tomasz Kaźmierczak and physiotherapist Beata Buryta's participation in the 16th Paralympics Tokyo 2020 (2021).

Key words athletes, qualifications, students, graduates, employees, Olympians, Paralympians, coaches, physiotherapists

## Introduction

For many countries and athletes, the last few months of the year before the Olympics and Paralympics take place are the final chance to compete in high ranking sporting events to achieve qualifying standards (individual, personal and national). The indicators and qualification standards for Olympic and Paralympic disciplines are established by the International Sports Federations of a given sport and approved (or even increased) by Polish sports associations (e.g. www.pzla.pl). In January, February and March 2020, many athletes trained intensively and

prepared for the qualifying rounds of Tokyo 2020. The Olympic Games were to be held from July 24th to August 9th; and the Paralympic Games, August 25th to September 6th. Unfortunately, on March 24th, 2020, the Prime Minister of Japan spoke to the President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to propose a postponement of the 2020 Tokyo Games, due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. In its decision, the International Olympic Committee also took into account the demands of national committees, including the Polish Olympic Committee, and changed the date of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Summer Olympic Games to July 23<sup>rd</sup> to August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021 (Urbaś, 2020), although it would still be officially referred to as Tokyo 2020. The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) complied with the decision of the IOC and moved the date of the 16th Summer Paralympic Games to August 24th to September 5th, 2021. All athletes who, prior to the announcement of the postponement, achieved qualifying standards in their disciplines are guaranteed to participate in the largest global sports event in 2021 in the capital of Japan (www.olimpiiski.pl). Other athletes who did not qualify (including national teams, relay teams, and rowing teams) will still have a chance to achieve qualifying standards for Tokyo in the final months of 2020 up until June 2021. It should be noted that athletes who achieve qualifying standards in some sports disciplines (e.g. in canoeing or rowing) are not quaranteed to participate in the Olympics/Paralympics. The obtained qualifications are attributed to the country represented by the athlete and so, for example, the authorities of the Polish sports association of a given discipline (e.g. the Polish Canoe Association) decide which individual athletes will represent the sport at the Games.

The purpose of this article is to:

- Perform an up-to-date analysis of the qualifying standards for the 32<sup>nd</sup> Summer Olympic Games and 16<sup>th</sup> Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 (2021) of athletes who are students and graduates of the University of Szczecin in various sports disciplines, taking into account the restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Present trainers, physiotherapists, employees and graduates of the University of Szczecin working with athletes who achieved qualifying standards, or plan to compete in sports events to meet the standards, for the Tokyo Games. With their athletes qualifying for the Games, they will become members of (or potential candidates for) the coaching and medical staff of the Polish Olympic and Paralympic team participating in Tokyo 2020 (2021).
- Continue the research and analyses on the participation of student athletes, coaches and physiotherapists who are graduates of the Higher School of Pedagogy in Szczecin (later: University of Szczecin), in the Summer Olympics and Paralympics.

## **Materials and methods**

The research material included 14 individuals: eight athletes, five trainers, and one physiotherapist, who were or had been cooperating with the University of Szczecin: Institute of Physical Culture (IKF), Institute of Physical Culture of the Faculty of Natural Sciences (IKF WNP), Department of Physical Culture and Health Promotion (WKFiPZ) and Department of Health and Physical Culture (WKFiZ). Among the group of athletes currently studying in the 2019/2020 academic year at the Department of Health and Physical Culture are: Patryk Dobek, Michał Gadowski and Katarzyna Mądrowska (Table 1). The following athletes: Piotr Lisek, Marcin Lewandowski (student of a second major: Public Health), Paulina Woźniak, and Krystian Zalewski – quit studying at their own behest (for personal, sports-related, and other reasons). In the analysis of the research results, other than Marcin Lewandowski, they

were included in the group of former students of WKFiPZ US, WKFiZ US. The group of athletes who graduated from the University of Szczecin includes Masters in physical education – Anna Harkowska and Marcin Lewandowski.

The analysed research material also included five trainers: Tomasz Kaźmierczak, Jacek Kostrzeba, Tomasz Lewandowski (Marcin Lewandowski's brother), Grzegorz Musztafaga, and Miłosz Stępiński (Table 2). They are all graduates of the University of Szczecin (Eider, 2019a). Miłosz Stępiński, PhD and professor at the University of Szczecin, is a lecturer at the Institute of Physical Culture Sciences of WKFiZ US, and the coach of the Poland women's national football team. The remaining coaches are mainly trainers of single sports disciplines. In their professional work, they have achieved significant successes and performed coaching duties at the Olympic and Paralympic Games (Eider, 2019a). The research material also included Beata Buryta, MSc, a lecturer at the Institute of Physical Culture Sciences at WKFiZ US. As a physiotherapist, she has been working with disabled rowers for many years, e.g. as a participant of the Polish Medical Mission at the 15th Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro 2016 (Eider, Eider, 2017).

 Table 1. Research material – athletes

First name	Sports discipline	Student status			
and surname*	Olympic	Paralympic	Current student	Former student	Graduate
Patryk Dobek	Athletics – 400 m hurdles	-	WKFiZ US	-	WKFiPZ US"
Michał Gadowski	-	Rowing	WKFiZ US	-	-
Anna Harkowska	-	Cycling	-	-	IKFWNP US***
Marcin Lewandowski	Athletics - 800 m 1500 m	-	_	WKFiZ US"	WKFiPZ US***
Piotr Lisek	Athletics - pole vault	-	-	WKFiZ US	-
Katarzyna Mądrowska	Wrestling – 62 kg	_	WKFiZ US	-	WKFiPZ US*
Paulina Woźniak	-	Swimming	-	WKFiZ US	_
Krystian Zalewski	Athletics - 3,000 m steeplechase	_	_	WKFiZ US	_

Legend:

WKFiPZ US - Faculty of Physical Culture and Health Promotion US.

WKFiZ US - Faculty of Health and Physical Culture US.

IKFWNP US - Institute of Physical Culture, Department of Natural Sciences US.

Source: Archival documentation... (2020); Eider (2019b); www.wikipedia.pl.

 Table 2. Research material – trainers, physiotherapist

First name and surname*	On anter discontinue	Current trainer of		University status		
First name and surname	Sports discipline -	Olympic	Paralympic	Current employee	Graduate	
Tomasz Kaźmierczak	Rowing	-	Rowing	-	IKF WNP US	
Jacek Kostrzeba	Athletics	Athletics	-	_	IKF US	
Tomasz Lewandowski	Athletics	Athletics	-	_	IKF WNP US	
Grzegorz Musztafaga	Swimming	-	Swimming	_	IKF WNP US	
Miłosz Stępiński	Football	Football	-	INoKF WKFiZ US IKF W		
Beata Buryta	_	-	Physiotherapist of disabled rowers	_	IKF WNP US	

\*Alphabetically ordered.

Source: Buryta (2020); Archival documentation... (2020); Eider (2019a).

Alphabetically ordered.

<sup>&</sup>quot; Completed Bachelor's studies

<sup>...</sup> Completed Master's studies.

The research also used archival documentation of WKFiZ US, oral accounts of athletes, coaches, physiotherapists, other studies by the author of this study, as well as websites, social media profiles, databases and other digital collections of information about players and coaches<sup>1</sup>.

## Results

Table 3 indicates which athletes have already achieved qualifying standards (as of March 24th, 2020) for the 32nd Summer Olympics or the 16th Paralympics – Tokyo 2020 (2021). The group of students (as of August 31st, 2020) from the Faculty of Physical Culture and Health includes Patryk Dobek, Michał Gadowski, and Katarzyna Madrowska (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Qualifications gained for the 32<sup>nd</sup> Olympic Games, 16<sup>th</sup> Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 by the analysed athletes – students and graduates of the University of Szczecin, as of August 31, 2020

The analysed	First and last name	Qualifications obtained in their disciplines						
group of athletes		Olympic	Yes	No	Paralympic	Yes	No	
Current students	Patryk Dobek	Athletics   400 metres hurdles	Yes	-	-	-	-	
	Michał Gadowski	=	-	-	Rowing	Yes	_	
	Katarzyna Mądrowska	Wrestling 62 kg	Yes	-	-	-	-	
Former students -	Piotr Lisek	Athletics   Pole vault	Yes	_	-	_	_	
	Paulina Woźniak	-	-	_	Swimming	-	No	
	Krystian Zalewski	Athletics   3,000 metres steeplechase   marathon	-	No	-	-	-	
University of Szczecin graduates	Anna Harkowska	-	-	-	Cycling	-	No	
	Marcin Lewandowski	Athletics   800 metres   1,500 metres	Yes	Yes	-	-	-	

<sup>\*</sup> Alphabetically ordered

Source: Dobek (2020); Kaźmierczak (2020); Krupecki (2020); Mądrowska (2020); Terczyński (2020); Zalewski (2020); www.olimpijski.pl; www. paralympic.pl; www.pzla.pl.

Patryk Dobek is a member of the Municipal Athletics Club (MKL) in Szczecin, and his club coach is Valentyn Bondarenko. He has already participated in the 400 m hurdles in the Rio de Janeiro 2016 Olympic Games (Eider, 2019b). At the 8<sup>th</sup> European Team Athletics Championships held in Bydgoszcz (August 9<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup>, 2019), Patryk Dobek won his qualifying race on the first day of the championships in the 400 m hurdles with a very good time – 48.80 s (the Polish Athletics Association established the qualifying standard at 48.90 s). Thanks to this result, he secured a personal qualification for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. It should be noted that on the second day of the championship – on August 10<sup>th</sup> – he won the final race with a time of 48.87 s (Dobek, 2020), which was a still a better result than the required minimum for the Olympic Games.

The second athlete – a current student of WKFiZ US – is Michał Gadowski, a member of the Disabled Sports Club (KSI) "Start" in Szczecin; he is a two-time Paralympic rowing participant (London 2012, Rio de Janeiro 2016). His national team and club trainer is Tomasz Kaźmierczak: a graduate of IKF WNP US (Kaźmierczak, 2020), a disabled rowing trainer at the Paralympics in Beijing 2008, London 2012, Rio de Janeiro 2016, and the president

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The information contained in this article is current as of August 31, 2020.

of KSI 'Start' Szczecin. At the Para-Rowing World Championship held in Linz (Austria) on August 25th–September 1st, 2019, the Polish mixed double PR2 Mix2x Michał Gadowski and Jolanta Majka Pawlak landed third place in the semi-final, and then took 4th place in the A-final (Krupecki, 2020). Thanks to these results, they secured their participation at the Paralympic Games in Tokyo by placing in the top 8 (Kaźmierczak, 2020). Their trainer, Tomasz Kaźmierczak, will also be called to serve as a coach during the 16th Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020.

The third athlete is the WKFiZ US student, wrestler Katarzyna Mądrowska, a member of the People's Sports Club (LKS) Feniks Pesta Stargard. Mariusz Kucharczyk is her club coach, while Piotr Krajewski is her national team coach. In the year before the Olympics, she competed in the World Championship in Nur-Sultan in Kazakhstan (September 14<sup>th</sup> – September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020), during which she did not achieve the qualifying standard of a place in the top 6 in her weight category below 62 kg. Katarzyna Mądrowska will also participate in two wrestling tournaments – the European Wrestling Championships (March 2021) and the global (April/May 2021). In both tournaments, the two best participants in each weight category will qualify (Mądrowska, 2020).

The group of former students of WKFiPZ US, WKFiZ US includes Piotr Lisek, Paulina Woźniak, and Krystian Zalewski. Piotr Lisek is a member of the Pole Training Centre (OSOT) in Szczecin (Iwińska, 2019); his club and national team trainer is Marcin Szczepański. In 2019, in his discipline of the pole vault, Piotr obtained results that exceeded the qualifying standards set by PZLA (5.80 m) (www.pzla.pl) numerous times. On June 13th, 2019, at the Diamond League Competition in Oslo, he achieved a result of 5.81 m, while on July 12th, 2019, during the Diamond League in Monaco, he won first place with a perfect result of 6.02 m, thus improving on the Polish record he had set on July 5th, 2019 in Lausanne (6.01 m). At the World Championships held in Doha (Qatar), on October 1st, 2019, he won a bronze medal with a score of 5.87 m. This pole vaulter is part of a group of Polish athletes who have already achieved personal qualifications for Tokyo 2020 (2021), and have a great chance of winning an Olympic medal. Piotr Lisek has already participated in the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro 2016, where he won fourth place, with a result of 5.75 m (Eider, 2019b).

Paulina Woźniak is a disabled swimmer and a member of KSI "Start" Szczecin. For many years, Grzegorz Musztafaga has been her club coach, while Wojciech Sajdel is her national team coach (Grzegorz Musztafaga cooperates with the national team as well). A year ago, Paulina and her parents left for Germany (near Hamburg), where she continues to train according to coach recommendations (Kaźmierczak, 2020). Her sports achievements already include two Paralympic medals in the 100 m classic style competition; a silver medal (Beijing 2008) and a bronze medal (London 2012) (Eider, Eider, 2012). In the spring of 2021, she plans to take part in swimming competitions and gain a personal Paralympic qualification, or to gain a high enough place in the world rankings to be awarded a place in the Polish national swimming team, by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) thus guaranteeing her participation in the 16th Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 (Eider, 2019b). One of the former students of WKFIPZ US and WKFiZ US is also Krystian Zalewski, who mainly specializes in the 3,000 m steeplechase and is a member of the Student Sports Club (UKS) Barnim Goleniów. His club and national team coach is Jacek Kostrzeba from Goleniów (an IKF US graduate). Krystian Zalewski competed in the 3,000 m steeplechase at the 31st Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro (2016). At the time that the postponement of the games was announced, he did not obtain the qualifying standard (PZLA requirement: 8:22.00). After the 2019 season, he and his coach decided that they would prepare for the marathon in Tokyo (running distance 42.195 km, PZLA requirement: 2:11.30 hours). He plans to participate in the athletics competition in Valencia on December 6th, 2020, fight for the Olympic qualification and

obtain a result within the top 80 (Zalewski, 2020). If Krystian Zalewski does not qualify, his trainer Jacek Kostrzewa will go to Tokyo anyway, as he also trains other runners.

The analysed group of University of Szczecin graduates includes two accomplished athletes: Anna Harkowska and Marcin Lewandowski. Anna Harkowska is a member of the Olsztyn Sports Club (OKS) "Warmia i Mazury". Marian Kowalski is her club and national team coach. She is preparing for the Tokyo Paralympics cycling competition and has great medal chances. At the London Paralympic Games 2012, she won three silver medals (mass start race, individual time trial, 3,000 m) and two at the Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro 2016 (mass start race and individual time trial) (Eider, 2019a; Szaj, 2016). At the time of announcing the postponement, she did not obtain the personal Paralympic qualification in her cycling discipline.

It should be noted that in June 2021, the number of places allocated to Poland for individual disciplines will be known. This will be based on world rankings in certain competitions and the limits, as well as any wild cards that will be awarded to our cycling team by the International Paralympic Committee (Eider, 2019b; www.paraolympic.org).

Marcin Lewandowski also graduated from the University of Szczecin, having received a Master's degree in Physical Education (Eider, 2015; www.wikipedia.pl). He is a member of the Athletics Section of the Military Sports Club (SL WKS) "Zawisza Bydgoszcz", and his long-standing club and national team coach is Tomasz Lewandowski (Iwińska, 2019). Since March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020, he has been training under the supervision of Piotr Rostwoski (Terczyński, 2020). He is an accomplished and experienced athlete in the 800 m race (Beijing 2008, London 2012, Rio de Janeiro 2016) and the 1,500 m race. He won 6<sup>th</sup> place in the finals of the 800 m in Rio de Janeiro, his highest ranking so far. He is preparing to compete in the 32<sup>nd</sup> Olympic Games in the 1,500 m race (Lewandowski, 2019). In 2019, Marcin Lewandowski won a personal qualification at several sports competitions, including, on August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019, during the Diamond League in Paris where he set a Polish record in the 1,500 m race with a time of 3:31.95 min (PZLA requirement: 3:35.00). At the World Championships in Doha (Qatar), he won a bronze medal in his discipline, the 1,500 m race (October 6, 2019), setting a new Polish record (3:31.46 min). It should be noted that he also achieved the qualifying standard in the 800m race but is not planning on participating in the competition in Tokyo. His long-time coach and brother – Tomasz Lewandowski – a graduate of IKF WNP US, is no longer a member of the PZLA coaching staff as he now works with other runners in Norway. For this reason, Tomasz's participation in Tokyo 2020 as the coach of his brother Marcin or other Polish runners, is no longer valid.

# Discussion

2019 was a pre-Olympic year for many athletes; they prepared for the next season and planned to participate in the 32nd Olympic Games or the 15<sup>th</sup> Paralympic Games. They took part in selected sports competitions, where they obtained Olympic and Paralympic qualifications (individual, national, relay, tournament, ranking etc.) or failed to meet the qualifying standards. Many athletes planned to participate in subsequent sports events in 2020 to achieve the qualifying standards in their respective disciplines. Unfortunately, in March 2020, due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the International Olympic Committee made a historic decision to reschedule the 32<sup>nd</sup> Olympic Games from 2020 to 2021. All sports events, league competitions, club training sessions, training camps, sports and recreational activities in fitness clubs, physical education classes at school, etc. were suspended, while sports and recreation facilities were closed. As well as this, the celebrations of the 56<sup>th</sup> Central Olympian Days Ceremonies, which were to be held in Wałcz on April 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup>, 2020, were moved to the later date of October 15<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (Eider, Wańkiewicz, Skalski, 2020). For the first time in the history of the modern Olympic Games, the world's

biggest sporting event has been postponed to the year after – although it has kept its name of Tokyo 2020. It should be noted that the Japanese capital had already hosted the 18th Olympic Games in 1964.

Moreover, the 16<sup>th</sup> Summer Paralympics Games have also been re-scheduled to 2021, which means that the athletes who have not yet achieved qualification standards will still have a chance to do so during competitions postponed to other dates in 2020 and the first half of 2021. These athletes include Katarzyna Mądrowska (wrestling), Paulina Woźniak (disabled swimming), Krystian Zalewski (athletics, marathon), Anna Harkowska (disabled cycling). Of the coaches who are graduates of the University of Szczecin, Tomasz Kaźmierczak (disabled rowing) and Beata Buryta (physiotherapist, in the Paralympic discipline) can be certain of their participation in the Tokyo Olympics. Jacek Kostrzeba (athletics) and Grzegorz Musztafaga (disabled swimming) have a chance to go to Tokyo, provided that their trainees qualify for the competition.

Miłosz Stępiński (trainer-analyst in Czesław Michniewicz's coaching staff) will not perform his role at the Olympic men's football tournament in Tokyo. The Polish representation for the U21 at the 2019 European Championships in June 2019, held in Italy and San Marino, did not secure a place among the four best teams which was the requirement to compete (Stępiński, 2019).

# **Conclusions**

- 1. For the first time in the history of the modern Olympic Games, the event has been postponed to the following year Tokyo 2020 (2021).
- 2. The main cause of re-scheduling the largest sports event of the four-year period was the global COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3. Out of the analysed eight athletes, four of them Patryk Dobek, Michał Gadowski, Piotr Lisek and Marcin Lewandowski have already achieved qualifying standards which enables them to participate in the Olympic Games, Tokyo 2020.
- 4. The Paralympic qualification won by Michał Gadowski in rowing, guaranteed coach Tomasz Kaźmierczak and physiotherapist Beata Buryta's participation in the 16<sup>th</sup> Paralympics Tokyo 2020 (2021).

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