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**KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER ABOUT FOOTBALL INFRASTRUCTURE IN  
VARNA, ODESA, BURGAS, AND MYKOLAIV AT THE END OF 19<sup>th</sup> AND  
AT THE BEGINNING OF 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURIES**

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**Mykolenko D. Knowledge Transfer about Football Infrastructure in Varna,  
Odesa, Burgas, and Mykolaiv at the End of 19<sup>th</sup> and at the Beginning of 20<sup>th</sup>  
Centuries**

Infrastructure is one of the main parts of football industry in contemporary time. Pitches, stadiums, sporting goods stores, museums of different teams and clubs are very important now. These facilities began to appear in Central-Eastern Europe at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. The aim of this research is the comparison of knowledge transfer about football infrastructure in Odesa, Mykolaiv, Varna, and Burgas. This article shows participants and ways to disseminate knowledge about football infrastructure, location of football pitches and stadiums in four port cities. It also illustrates the importance of local educational institutions and businesses in disseminating such information. More generally, the comparison provides insight into the influence of industrialization level on the speed and the scale of the implementation of knowledge in practice. British entrepreneurs built the first pitch in Odesa. Swiss teachers demonstrated for the first time the rules for equipping grounds in Varna. In Mykolaiv and Burgas, the transfer of knowledge about the construction of football infrastructure originated from Britain and the Ottoman Empire. Societies of these cities equipped pitches thanks to the information gained from British sailors and Ottoman football fans. Educational institutions were important in the creation of the first sports facilities in all cities. However, in Varna, Mykolaiv, and Burgas their role was more prominent, than in Odesa, where entrepreneurs were the leading force. Not only maritime trade, but also the growth of industry, foreign investment, and education became important factors in the development of sports in the port cities of Ukraine

and Bulgaria. Population also influenced the speed and extent of the dissemination of knowledge about football.

**Keywords:** football; infrastructure; Odesa; Mykolaiv; Varna; Burgas; stadium; football pitch

### **Миколенко Д. Передача знань про футбольну інфраструктуру у Варні, Одесі, Бургасі та Миколаєві наприкінці ХІХ – на початку ХХ ст.**

Інфраструктура є однією з головних частин футбольної індустрії сучасності. Поля, стадіони, спортивні магазини, музеї різних команд і клубів зараз дуже важливі. Ці об'єкти почали з'являтися в Центральній-Східній Європі наприкінці ХІХ – на початку ХХ ст. Метою цього дослідження є порівняння трансферу знань про футбольну інфраструктуру між Одесою, Миколаєвом, Варною та Бургасом. Ця стаття показує учасників та шляхи поширення знань про футбольну інфраструктуру, розташування футбольних полів і стадіонів у чотирьох портових містах. Це також ілюструє важливість місцевих навчальних закладів і підприємств у поширенні такої інформації. У більш загальному плані порівняння дає уявлення про вплив рівня індустріалізації на швидкість і масштаб впровадження знань на практиці. Британські підприємці побудували перший майданчик в Одесі. Швейцарські вчителі вперше продемонстрували правила облаштування майданчиків у Варні. У Миколаєві та Бургасі передача знань про будівництво футбольної інфраструктури забезпечувалась з Великої Британії та Османської імперії. Товариства цих міст обладнали поля завдяки інформації, отриманій від британських моряків і османських футбольних уболівальників. Важливе значення у створенні перших спортивних споруд у всіх містах мали навчальні заклади. Однак у Варні, Миколаєві та Бургасі їхня роль була більш помітною, ніж в Одесі, де підприємці були провідною силою. Важливими чинниками розвитку спорту в портових містах України та Болгарії стали не лише морська торгівля, а й зростання промисловості, іноземні інвестиції та освіта. Населення також вплинуло на швидкість і масштаби поширення знань про футбол.

Ключові слова: футбол; інфраструктура; Одеса; Миколаїв; Варна; Бургас; стадіон; футбольне поле.

Football is a big industry in Europe today. It consists of stadiums with the bench for spectator, pitches for trainees, sporting goods stores, museums of clubs and teams. It is very hard to imagine today that one hundred and fifty year ago football wasn't the most popular sport in Europe; stadiums and pitches began to

appear; developed sport infrastructure only on the British Isles, but knowledge about this game spread to the East of the continent. Football competitions began to be regularly held on pitches and stadiums of Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Russian Empire, and the Balkan countries. Football infrastructure was the place to preserve and disseminate sport culture.

It is very important question how did knowledge about football spread in regions of Europe and international sea trade, quantity of population, industrialisation, administrative statues, and educational system? This topic was discovered in researches, but some aspects of hasn't been studied yet. All these issues are rather superficially studied in Ukrainian Bulgarian popular and scientific literature (Kurasa 2008; Verbytskyi, Bondarenko 2014; Ĭotov 2013; Mykolenko 2022a; Mykolenko 2022b).

The aim of this article is to compare knowledge about of football infrastructure in the port cities of Central-East Europe. At the same time, it is very important to pay attention to the geography of distribution, urban conditions, and factors that influenced this process, such as the development of trade and business in general, the level of industrialization. We selected four examples for this. There are Varna, Odesa, Burgas, and Mykolaiv. The first one is the main Bulgarian port on the Black sea, the second one is the big Ukrainian city, commercial and business centre in the South of the Russian empire, the third one an important trade midpoint in the Northern part of Black Sea coastal area at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We used several types of historical sources to solve tasks. They are the press (Sandomirskiy 1901), the photographs (Futbol'nyy klub "Vega" 2012; Futbol'nyy klub OKF 2012), and the memoirs (Krikunov, Gorelyuk).

Football on the Black Sea coast of Ukraine appeared in the second half of the 19th century. British sailors brought it here. Several factors contributed to the spread of this game. There was the development of trade, communications industry in Ukraine. Foreign employees, engineers, sale representatives, and workers, who permanently or temporarily lived in Ukraine, contributed to the transfer of

knowledge about the rules of the game and arrangement of corresponding infrastructure.

Odesa was the biggest Ukrainian city and port at the end of the 19 and at the beginning of the 20 century with population 193500 in 1873, 403800 in 1897, 449700 in 1907, 504600 in 1915. Trade ships from Britain arrived regularly. Seamen's team showed the game with ball local people. They also presented football rules and requirements for pitches. Often the locals helped visitors from the British Isles to choose a suitable venue and then followed the competition. After that permanent pitches began to appear.

However, foreigners permanently residing in Odesa contributed to the spread and consolidation of knowledge about football and the infrastructure necessary for this game. "Odesa British Athletic Club" (OBAC) was the first sport club in the city, which was founded by British engineers and workers of the Indo-European telegraph, employees of commercial firm's steamship companies around 1878 (Kolomiets 2007). There were 40 members in the association. English General Consul D. Smith was elected as the head of the club to football OBAC had tennis and cricket sections. In 1884, club built a closed football pitch in the city, the first and the only at that time. It was located opposite the current Odesa film studio on French Boulevard, Falz-Fein's dacha. This pitch a model for similar facilities in the city. However, until 1894, the club's football team consisted of Englishmen only (Odessa u istokov 2009).

Sports society of other national communities of Odessa was also established in the city. In 1892, the German sports club "Turn-Verein" ("Турн-Ферайн") with a football section was founded in Odesa.

Knowledge about the rules of the game and the arrangement of football pitches quickly spread in the city at the beginning of the 20th century. In different parts of Odesa boys played football the streets and squares of Moldavanka, Slobodka, Sakhalinchyk, Holopuzovka, and Peresypa. Most often, they used wastelands and the balls made from rags, and ran barefoot. The amateur teams had incredible names. There were "Cherny yashchik" ("Черный ящик"), "Shanghai"

(“Шанхай”), “Zhestyanoy Chaynik” (“Жестяной чайник”), “Швейцарская долина” (Ovchinnikova 2018).

he favorite place of the competition in Odesa. It was place in Oleksandrivsky Park, which was also called “Black Sea”. Today it’s T. G. Shevchenko Park. Local authorities planned to make a pond in the shape of the Black Sea at this place. However, this project wasn’t implemented due to lack of funding (Stadion nashego kluba 2007).

This field was surrounded by gentle slopes, so there was no need to run on the outgoing ball, it returned to the players on its own (Stadion nashego kluba 2007). There was a similar field of smaller sizes nearby, which was called Azov Sea experienced players played football on it. Stationary football goals half an hour before the start of match, players installed the bars, and a thick rope over them (Istoriya 2012).

However, at the beginning of the 20th century football still was less popular than other sports. A guide to Odesa in 1901 testifies on this fact. Equestrian, sailing, cycling, and gymnastics were mentioned in this edition, was completely ignored (Sandomirskiy 1901).

Nevertheless, football infrastructure continued to develop in the city. practice of arranging football pitches at the dachas of the founders and sponsors of the teams spread in Odesa. For example, “Odesa association of football” (“Одесский кружок футбола”) that was founded by British, Germans, and locals on October 24, 1908, played their matches on land plot of general’s wife Onoprienko. “Sporting Club” (“Спортинг Клуб”)<sup>1\*</sup> that was organized in February 1911, trained and hosted rivals on “Dacha Gayevsky and Levinson” near French Boulevard.

Educational institutions of the city also joined the football movement. In 1908, D. Peters, the lecturer at the private Jungmeister Gymnasium, created a football team that regularly played matches with local British community. There

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<sup>1\*</sup> This team was called “Yuzhnoye sportivnoye obshchestva” (“Южное спортивное общество”) and after “Stade d’Odessa” (“Одесский стандарт”) for the first time of its existence.

were no shops and workshops in the city where sportsmen could buy boots and other equipment at that time. Therefore, D. Peters used to order these goods in Great Britain. These imported products were very expensive on the market of the Russian Empire. For example, British boots made of leather and rubber cost 40 rubbles (Odesskiy futbol v shlepantsakh 2008). In the same year graduates of the third gymnasium founded the “Sheremetiev Sports Association” (“Шереметьевский кружок спорта”), which played home matches on the pitch near Mykhailivska Square.

In 1911, ОВАС, “Odesa association of football”, “Sporting Club”, and “Sheremetiev Sports Association” became founders of the Odesa Football League (Pervyy chempionat Odessy po futbolu 2019). The sports society of the Greek community of the city “Victoria” (“Виктория”) also took part in the foundation of these competitions. However, it lost place due financial problems “Turn-Verein” (Kamenetskiy 2009).

That time ОВАС built a new football home pitch located in the Malofontan road area, not far from the Black Sea coast. This field had a fence and allowed a paid match to be held. Therefore, the final of the Russian Empire Football Championship of the 1913 was played there.

New football teams were organized after beginning of regular competition in the city. On September 27, 1912, the Englishman John Gerd, engineer Valentin Kryzhanovsky, and Alexander Livshits founded football club “Vega” (“Вера”). Isaak Tarnopol, who provided his own dacha for arranging a pitch play football, became the chairman of the founding committee. A year later, on September 6, 1913, “Florida” (“Флорида”) sports club was registered in Odesa. The Brit William Caruana, the Greek Mikhail Mangel, as well as several Odesans became its founders. The club also had its own football pitch located near the Dyukovsky garden between the Yalovikov and Brodsky factories.

The sale of Russian-made boots began in stores of Odesa and other cities of the Empire in 1912. It was in this year that the factory from St. Petersburg “Treugolnik” (“Треугольник”) began to produce sports shoes, which were in high

demand. The city's football infrastructure continued to develop (Odesskiy futbol v shlepantsakh 2008).

Thus, British business played a key role in the transfer of knowledge about football infrastructure in Odesa. It created the first football pitches, which locals used as a model for arranging their own sport fields.

Population of the city at the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century increased quite quickly. There were 64600 people in 1863, 92012 in 1897, and already 105000 in 1911. The city had rather a large Commercial Port and customs that started to function in 1862. Grain, iron ore, and coal were exported through the port. Foreign investors actively organized their firms in the city. Vessels from different European countries regularly arrived there teams of merchant sailors, mostly British, regularly organized football matches. Local port workers and employees of the elevator<sup>2\*</sup> were present at these competitions the end of the 19 century.

At the beginning of the next century, street teams were formed in the city thanks to the knowledge about the rules of the game and the organization of football pitches received from British sailors. Subsequently, in 1900–1901, the football teams of the city gymnasium and real school played against each other in the area of the engineering barracks town (today it's "Savage Garden" ("Дикий сад"). "Tehnika" ("Техніка") team was created in the mechanical and technical school in 1906. Two years after, Englishman Charles Clavell Bate, an employee of a grain trading company, organized "Zebra" football team. Initially it matches only with the teams of English sailors on Mykolaiv Admiralty Square. The team didn't have a specially pitch (Verbytskyi, Bondarenko 2014, 80).

The British, who lived temporarily or permanently in Mykolaiv, also played a key role in popularizing football in the city, brought the first balls the city, arranged public matches for local residents. The students of the gymnasium, located near Admiralty Square, followed these games. They two amateur teams in 1909 and regularly played football in the square.

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<sup>2\*</sup> It was built in Mykolaiv port in 1893.

In 1912 “Zebra” changed name to “Nikolaev Athletic Club” and officially registered with the city authorities. The British continued to play in this team. At the same time, the Mykolaiv Football League was created. “Nikolaev Athletic Club” and such local teams as “Diagor” (“Диагор”), “Gamari” (“Гамари”), “Spor” (“Спор”), “Femida” (“Фемида”), “Vesuvius” (“Везувий”), and “Nikolaev football club” (“Николаевский кружок футбола”) joined there. Teams of Commercial, Technical school and Realschule, as well as Alexandrovskaya and Verevskaya gymnasiums took part in the championship of educational institutions (Kurasa 2008, 70).

In February 1913, “Athletic Club” was reorganized into “Nikolaev Sports Club”. The revised statute was approved on April 30, 1913. According to the statute, the aim of the club was to spread football, tennis, croquet, hockey, cricket, fencing, skating, gymnastics in Mykolaiv. rented football pitch at the intersection of Sadova (Садова) and Prykordonna (Прикордонна) streets. Also, club had three tennis courts. In the same year, the club “Union” (“Унион”) equipped its own pitch, had no seats for spectators. It continues to function today<sup>3\*</sup> pupils of the Third Sports School conduct their training here.

The next year, “Nikolaev Sports Club” built its own football pitch on Kurierskaya Street, the intersection of Makarov and Artilleristska streets now. places for spectators, benches, and even lodges. Two matches with the famous Turkish club “Fenerbahce” were played here in June of 1914. Tickets for the match were sold in advance at the St. Petersburg Confectionery. They weren’t cheap he tickets price was 8 rubbles for all seats in lodge, 1 rubble 50 kopecks for seat, 75 kopecks for seat on bench, 40 kopecks for student, from 15 to 30 kopecks for standing places (Dvoynisyuk 2014).

Most foreign entrepreneurs, engineers, and workers left the city after the outbreak of the First World War. But the memory and knowledge about the rules for arranging the football infrastructure remained in the city.

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<sup>3\*</sup> This place is on modern Sodova Street.



Unlike Ukraine, Bulgaria had been nation state since 1879. Market relations gradually developed in this country, the volume of foreign investments increased, cities grew, infrastructure was equipped. The main Black Sea ports of Bulgaria were Burgas and Varna.

The population of Varna was significantly less than in Odesa and Mykolaiv, only 16000 people in 1852, 24555 in 1878, 33687 in 1896, and 41419 in 1910. The total number of ships that arrived in Varna was 1507 in 1865. Their tonnage was 220930. The port was reconstructed in 1906. A pier 600 meters long appeared in the city (Popova, 80). Foreigners founded their enterprises in the city. A cotton factory began operating in 1899.

Sailors of merchant ships from Great Britain played football matches with each other in the city. These competitions took place on spaces not intended for football. Local residents also had an opportunity to watch these competitions. However, all this didn't lead to creation of local clubs and sports infrastructure. More thoroughly football was introduced in Varna by a group of nine Swiss athletes and teachers which arrived in this city in 1894. Louis-Emil Eyer. Minister of Education Georgi Zhivkov invited them develop sports in Bulgaria. On May 14, 1894, Georges de Regibus, who worked as a teacher in the male gymnasium "Ferdinand I" and had the skills of boxer, wrestler, gymnast, and football player, demonstrated football on a wasteland near this educational institution. According to witnesses, Regibus prepared a ball specially brought from Switzerland, used cloth to mark football goals, and organized the first soccer match in Bulgaria among his students. The game, which was called "ritnitop", became very popular in gymnasium. The students played football more and more often, and Regibus took part as referee and player in matches (Georgiev 2022).

Thus, educational institutions and teachers, first of all, contributed to the transfer of knowledge about the arrangement of football infrastructure and their distribution in the city. In addition, football matches were organized by English sailors arriving at the port. For this he chose the place in the Sea Garden of Varna. After that, local teams began to form in the city. There was a special pitch for

playing ball. Local associations also began to play at this place. For example, “Atlas” was founded by local Greek youths in autumn 1907. At the beginning of the next year this squad was registered as a football club. This society didn’t accept representatives of other ethnic groups into its membership. It gained wide popularity in the city thanks to regular games with teams of British sailors (Ѓotov 2013).

Other association “Sport” (“Спорт”) was organized in the spring of 1909 by representatives of the Bulgarian majority. A few months later it was renamed “Sportist” football association (Футболистично дружество “Спортист”). The creators were Vasil and Stefan Tonshev, Nikola Nitsov, Kircho Angelov, Boyan Popov, Nikola Popov, and Stefan Danchev, the playing coach of the team. was a graduate of the Constantinople Lyceum learning the rules of football and acquired the skills of the game in the capital of the Ottoman Empire. The premise of the club was located on Deremahlesi Street, “Stefan Stambolov” street now. After the “Atlas” stopped its activities in 1911, “Sportist” continued to play matches with the British sailors in the Sea Garden. In those days, there were no workshops for the manufacture of balls and other football equipment in Varna. The locals often stole leather balls from the crews of British ships (Batcharov 2019).

Pupils of First secondary school for boys created the sports association “Galata” (“Галата”) in March 3, 1913 was renamed to “Raka Ticha” (“Река Тича”). Next year group of players from “Sportist” joined the team “Raka Ticha” together they formed “Cherno more” (“Черно море”). These football clubs regularly played matches with teams from foreign merchant ships. Thus, they popularized football in the city, because the local public followed these competitions.

Second Bulgarian port demonstrated another example of the spread of knowledge about the arrangement of football infrastructure. The population of this city grew rapidly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but it was significantly less than in Varna, 2950 in 1878, 5000 in 1892, 10703 in 1900, 15000 in 1906, and 21170 in 1920.

Wool, butter, cheese were exported through the port. British merchant ships also regularly came there at the end of the 19th century. Their sailors also arranged football matches in the local port. In 1903–1904, the French company “Batignolles” equipped the harbor and modernized the port. This contributed to the further development of the city. In the 1900s, there were permanently living foreigners in the city, eighteen companies from Western Europe, the food industry for the production of meat, butter, sugar.

In 1905, a group of Bulgarian students from the Robert College of Istanbul created a sports club in Burgas named “SC Strela” (“СК Стрела”). This association was registered officially in May, 1912. Stefan Ilic became the first president of the club. Initially, the team played and trained on a primitively equipped football field.

In the period between 1918–1919, “SC Strela” had a of 200 members, slowly growing into an association with big importance the city. Some changes took place on August 1, 1919, when club’s name was changed to “SC Chernomorets” (“СК Черноморец”) (FK Chernomorets Burgas 2015).

Thus, there were four directs of dissemination of knowledge about the arrangement of football infrastructure. The first one was from Britain to Odessa and Mykolaiv, the second one was from Switzerland to Varna, the third one was from the Ottoman Empire to Burgas. Regular arrivals of British ships in Odesa, Mykolaiv, Varna, and Burgas didn’t lead to the development of football infrastructure. The first pitches were equipped by foreigners who permanently lived in Bulgarian and Ukrainian cities. At the same time, British entrepreneurs built the first pitch in Odesa. Swiss teachers demonstrated for the first time the rules for equipping grounds in Varna. In Mykolaiv and Burgas, the transfer of knowledge about the construction of football infrastructure originated from Britain and the Ottoman Empire. societies of these cities equipped pitches thanks to the information gained from British sailors and Ottoman football fans. Educational institutions were important in the creation of the first sports facilities in all cities. However, in Varna, Mykolaiv, and Burgas their role was more prominent, than in

Odesa, where entrepreneurs were the leading force. Not only maritime trade, but also the growth of industry, foreign investment, and education became important factors in the development of sports in the port cities of Ukraine and Bulgaria. Population also influenced the speed and extent of the dissemination of knowledge about football.

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*Date of submission – 15.10.2023*