



Branik Sportsground Stand

IRN 14290

Location Maribor

Address Mladinska Cesta 27a

Planning and completion 1960–1965

Architect Boris Pipan and assistants

Investor Communal People's Committee of Maribor–Centre

Contractor Tehnogradnje construction company

Building type Sports building

Other buildings by the same architect Series of Drava power plants, the type with columns, Mariborski Otok 1948, Vuzenica 1948–1956, Vuhred 1954–1959, Ožbalt 1957–1960; Senj power plant, Croatia 1965; planning and construction of the Drava bridges, Ptuj 1959, Podvelka 1960, Maribor 1963; three Euphrates bridges, Syria 1963–1970; roof above the stadium stand in Ljudski Vrt, Maribor 1963

The first sports society in Slovenia, the Maribor Sports Society, was established in 1900. Despite the change of name, it continued uninterrupted in the inter-war period and in the altered circumstances after the Second World War. In 1920 the Town Council assigned Ljudski Vrt (Public Gardens) to the Society and thus turned it into the central sports venue of the city. The football club was already among the most successful and popular sports clubs at that time. The buildings and playgrounds that were destroyed during the war were renovated with voluntary work.

Extensive works in the entire Ljudski Vrt began in 1949, and the main architect of the then construction committee for the sports ground was Milan Černigoj. In 1949 the newly established football society was obliged to construct a stadium. The mound for spectators consisting of concrete steps with seats on the western part was finished in 1952. Several years later the construction committee planned the largest project in the sports ground – a new stand. The preliminary design was made by Milan Černigoj himself, but engineer Boris Pipan was soon to join him (*Večer*, 1960).

Pipan with his team of experts from the construction company Tehnogradnje as the main contractor undertook the construction of one of the boldest structures in the sports architecture of the then Yugoslavia and even Europe. Engineers Pipan and Žnidarič drafted the plans without reference to any relevant literature of similar buildings. The stand in the form of an elegant curve, 138m long and 16.81m high, is unique since it has no standard supports (Pirkovič 1982: 83). The supporting curve executed in concrete in September 1961 was slanted in such a manner as to reach a few metres above the race tracks. The contemporary newspapers praised it on account of its fine line as more elegant than the stand in Bilbao, Spain, the only comparable building with the roof supported by a curved structure instead of supports (*Večer*, 1961).

The solution in Maribor is based on the bold concept of a pre-stressed reinforced concrete curve as the central superstructure, the slant of which additionally complicated its execution. Two strong isolated foundations were located at its sides. The back supporting element was a smaller curve of reinforced concrete resting on columns.

◀ Supporting curve ... "on account of its fine line it was praised as more elegant than the stand in Bilbao, Spain, the only comparable building..."

The roof structure was erected between them as a system of supporting steel load-bearing cables forming a network with metal plates serving as the roof covering placed directly on it.

The chief architect of the structure, Boris Pipan, was assisted by Milan Černigoj who undertook the planning of basement rooms, the distribution of changing rooms, club rooms, toilets, repositories, sick-room, two 24m gymnasia and a press room. His other assistants were engineers Vlado Emeršič and Leopold Hvastja, with engineer Franjo Runovec as construction site supervisor and subsequently en-



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gineer Jože Mušič.

The use of prestressed concrete facilitated several important achievements for Tehnogradnje. Boris Pipan as the manager of long standing (1953–1965) and head of the planning took credit for that. He had used the technique of prestressed piers in the construction of bridges since 1953. He introduced a series of innovations in the technical solutions, assembly and equipment and reached the international level of innovation by employing the system of a free cantilever construction of bridges with prestressed piers – the achievement that facilitated the subsequent construction of bridges across the Euphrates in Syria. Pipan also introduced a new method of sealing construction pits and successfully managed large construction sites of the Drava power plants by using cable cranes.

The 40th anniversary of the beginning of the construction of the stand in Ljudski Vrt in Maribor was in 2000 – not the usually long period before a building is decreed a scheduled monument. Although the stand is recorded as part of the architectural heritage, it would undoubtedly merit the title of a national monument. The title is easily

acquired in theory, but the practice of protection is the actual problem. The football stadium is frequently used by the audience and players. The function of the building must therefore be adapted to the needs and safety precautions of public premises. The protection of the building should therefore be consequent in practice as well as on paper. At present, the stand is not yet in danger of transformation due to safety precautions. However, it could easily happen in the future that it would be removed on account of lack of knowledge of its aesthetic, historical and functional value.



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EVA PEZDIČEK

Literature

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PIRKOVIČ, JELKA, *Izgradnja sodobnega Maribora: Mariborska arhitektura in urbanizem med leti 1918 in 1976*, Ljubljana, 1982.

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1. SSK Maribor, SŠD Polet, MŠD Branik: 1919–1979, Maribor 1980.

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