

Tiger in our school!

Tiger, **Dariusz Michalczewski**, the world famous former boxer visited our school to tell us about his career, his ups and downs and the foundation established by him to help talented children live up to their maximum potential.



Dariusz Michalczewski holds the record for the most consecutive successful world title defenses at light-heavyweight. He is two weight world champion and 23 successful defenses of his WBO title and picked up three other belts along the way. We were happy, excited and proud that we could host him and his manager in our school, interview him and ask about his healthy habits, ability to push his limits, capability to concentrate, control emotions, and win. Also we wanted to know how to lead healthy life after finishing one's career as a professional athlete. Thank you for coming to our school and thank you for all you do for young people funding stipends which allow them pursue their dreams.



- Do you do any sports now?

- I don't do any boxing, but I do sports, it is important for me to have a good condition. I do some running, I go to the gym regularly.

- How many hours a day did you practice?

- I had 10 training sessions a week. Sunday was the only day I didn't practice. If you want to succeed, you have to work. There is no other way.

Why did you choose boxing as your favourite sport discipline?

- My grandfather and my father were boxers, boxing had been always popular in my family.

- Why did you leave Poland and ran to Germany?

- The were completely different then. You do not remember that but your parents know they were really hard. If you wanted to make money doing what you liked it was the best way. Many people fled from Poland. I was both lucky and unlucky to find

- What was your heaviest fight?

- My coach decided I was going to fight with the youngest and the strongest boxers of all the 4 federations. I had been preparing for the fight for 9 months. I was thinking about that all the time, while having breakfast, taking a shower, chatting with friends. I was considering how to start the fight, how to react, what his response could be. I was practicing my concentration skills. Than I had to keep asking myself— did I do literally everything, didn't I cheat my coach, did I keep the diet straight. I had to control my emotions. The more feelings the weaker you are.

- In 1997 you became the champion of two federations—WBA (World Boxing Association) and IBF (International Boxing Federation), but before that you had lost one of two fights you have ever done.



- Yes, it was in 1996, I fought with Graciano "Rocky" Rocchigian and I was on par with him. It was an equal fight, but finally he knocked me on the break during round seven. Initially the result was a technical draw, but later it was changed into disqualification. There are a lot of rules which must be obeyed in boxing. You aren't allowed to hit with your head, shoulders, elbows, you can't punch below the belt. And, you can't throw a punch after a signal 'stop' given by a judge. He did and that led to his disqualification. Another fight I lost was with a Mexican Julio Cesar Gonzales. It was due to a controversial split decision. However, I have to admit that at this time I wasn't as much dedicated to boxing as before. I started running my own business. Mentally, I was doing something else. And, you know, in boxing as in any other sport, if you want to succeed you have to give 1000% of yourself. Dedicate 1000% yourself to training and mental approach.

- When did you come back to the country?

- In 2002 in Brunsvik I fought again under Polish colours. I was one of the heaviest fights I have ever had. I fought against Jamaican Richard Hall. In the beginning he was better, he hit me strongly, I wasn't able to see as my eyes were swollen. In the fifth round I started hitting back and finally I won in the tenth round.

- Why did you fund your foundation, Equal Opportunities?



- I come from a poor family. It was my uncle who took me to the first boxing training. I didn't have money for practice, good clothes, proper food. My uncle paid for it, even if he wasn't a very rich man. He noticed something valuable and worth investing in me. This money which I got then was much more important to me than millions I earned afterwards. Because of that I decided to raise my foundation. Its aim is helping young, prospective and give opportunities they weren't given at their birth. Boxing is a good way to turn kids' feelings of isolation, aggression, a sense of rebellion into sport fights, playing fair, following rules, observing a diet, taking care of one's body.

- Why are you called 'Tiger'?

- I was quite an aggressive fighter and I preferred an offensive style of boxing. Secondly, one of the Romanian boxers also escaped from his country and we started fighting for Germans together. The name was used to tell us apart.

- Today is a funeral of Muhammad Ali, one of the greatest boxers of all the times. Did you fight with him?

- No, I didn't, but I met him once. We met in the USA, we had breakfast together. He was ill, he was trembling, but I think he was one of the few athletes of the century. A great sportsman, great man. An amazing person to follow.

-What are your strongest points?

- My left hook. Absolutely. I prefer a brave, courageous style of fighting. I always punch with my right hand but my left is more precise. When you practice as I did, a left hook is killing. For me my left hook was the key, it opened sesame. My mum used



- Is boxing healthy sport? Why have you got this scar on your neck?

- It's after cutting off a tumor. I had a growth on my neck. Is boxing healthy? I've had two elbows broken, two knees, broken a disc, two bridges, my nose was broken 8 times.



- Have you ever been afraid of your opponent?

- No, I felt jitters of course, but no fear. I can only be afraid that I haven't done everything that I should have done. I always asked myself—didn't I skip some punches and told the coach I did, Didn't I miss any training, Maybe I didn't keep to my diet rules. But it's not fear. The worst thing is letting down my family and friends.

- How do you prepare mentally to the fight?

- I try not to go to bed too late. I know I have to give all of me. I have to make sure I have done everything I could have done to prepare physically.



- When you look at the eyes of your opponent before the fight have you got a premonition, can you sense a loss or a victory?

- No, it's not looking at one's eyes, it's not feeling that you can win. It's not emotions which win, it's physical preparation.

- We would like to thank you for coming, being with us and answering your questions. It was an amazing meeting.

- Thank you.

Dariusz Michalczewski was born on 5th of May in 1968 and he is one of the most famous boxers in the world. He was invincible for 12 years. His boxing nickname is "Tiger".

He started boxing when he was twelve years old. He started carrier in his family town, where his uncle escorted him on trainings to the boxing hall. At the beginning he represented "Stocznowiec Gdansk" and in years 1987-1988 he represented a club "Czarni Slupsk". In 1985 he became a Polish junior champion and in next year he won a gold medal in Polish youth championship in weight lightly-average.

24th of April he didn't return from the travel his crew to RFN, whereby he was disqualified for life by PZB, and there he started his professional carrier. In July this year he got German citizenship and he continued his amateur carrier. First he became a champion of Deutschland, and in 1991 in Goterborg he became a champion of Europe in weight heavy-average.

22th of May 1993 he became intercontinental champion of IBF in weight heavy-average.

0th September 1994 he became a champion of world WBO in weight heavy-average.

17th of December 1994 he became champion of world WBO in weight junior-heavy. 1

3th of June 1997 in Oberhausen he won against Virgil Hill and became a champion of WBA and IBF in weight heave-average.

In 2002 federation WBO announced Michalczewski "Champion of all time". 1th of June 2015 he ended his boxing carrier.

In 2003 he set up a charitable foundation "Rowne Szanse" and he supports financially boxing clubs In Poland. He takes care of health and takes a lot of exercises. He engages in social activities and supports young people who want to start boxing and other sports. He is a very tolerant guy, because he lived in multicultural society in Hamburg.

