



ATLETIKA

From a notebook to a magazine

The magazine was first published as 'Instruktor lehké atletiky' (Athletics' instructor) on 15 January 1949. From the second year it dropped the instructor from the name of the monthly magazine and also doubled the number of pages (from 16 to 32). The big break came in 1957, when the first editor Jan Novotný was replaced by Alfréd Janecký.

Under Janecký, the longest serving chief (1957-1981), 'Lehká atletika' (back then the word light was added to distinguish athletics from 'heavy' athletics, i.e. weightlifting and wrestling) grew from the A5 notebook format to the classic A4 magazine format, reduced the number of pages (32 to 24), and received a more solid cover, on which, in addition to the printing ink, the new red colour appeared.

Sophisticated 'ATLETIKA'

In 1969, exactly twenty years into its existence and halfway through Janecký's leadership, the word 'light' disappeared from the title. From then until now, we see only 'ATLETIKA' in the masthead. In terms of size, the magazine has returned to 32 pages, but visually it has not undergone a major transformation.

Even in the next two decades – larger photographs, for example, appeared almost exclusively on the cover pages. But the content was all the more sophisticated, ranging from methodology to statistics, and even special Olympic issues were published. The credit for this goes to Janecký and the third editor-in-chief, Alexandr Žurman.

From rescue to a full-colour magazine

With the social changes at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s (the Velvet Revolution) came the most dramatic moments in the magazine's history. It was saved from extinction by the fact that the federation (then the Czech and Slovak Athletic Union) took over its preparation in 1991. Before that, the magazine had been published by the ČSTV (Czechoslovak Union of Physical Education), under which all sports were under, but for most of the time it was produced by the Olympia publishing house, a specialist in sports periodicals.

However, when Olympia ceased publishing, ATLETIKA found itself on the verge of closure. It was finally published in the critical year 1991, when only nine issues were published, ironically with the first full-colour cover. The magazine was relaunched by Vladimír Víšek, and in the same year it was taken over by the collective around František Macák. Thanks to his efforts, the magazine stabilized and the following year it was back on the track of a monthly magazine. A few years later, the magazine was published four times a year in colour both on cover and inside.

Magazine in the digital era

Macák's successor Adam Pražák brought significant changes. Under his guidance, the magazine was published in full colour in every issue in 2006 for the first time and returned (after 15 years) from 16 to 32 pages. The 2010 edition was also a turning point, in which the magazine responded to the growing importance of news coverage on its own website, Atletika.cz, by reducing the periodicity – from a monthly to a quarterly. The fourth issue in 2011 was also published electronically for the first time, so now readers can read it not only from paper but also from display.

After Pražák, Michal Procházka is the seventh editor-in-chief. In 2016, after almost six decades, the format is changing from the classic A4 to 230x300 mm (the difference is mainly in width). The inspiration was the French athletics' magazine Athletisme, the oldest athletics magazine, celebrating its centenary back in 2021.

However, in 77th year, ATLETIKA is also a commemorative magazine; many other magazines with earlier birth dates are not. The support of the publisher, the Czech Athletic Federation, has been and will be crucial in the years to come.

Michal Procházka for World Athletics Heritage

