

Creating Great Talent: Maciej Muzaj

Halina Muzaj, Physical Therapist, MNRI® Core Specialist, Mother, Poland

Maciej Muzaj is a 19-year-old young adult who is 6' 8" in height. He is a member of the Polish National Volleyball Team and a candidate for the Olympic Team. He's a member Skra Belchatow (for 7-time winners of the Polish Volleyball Championships).

Maciej grew up in an athletic family with a passion for sports. His father is a volleyball player while his mother is a track and field athlete, volleyball player, and archer.

Maciej was born by C-section in the 38th week of gestation. He weighed 3859 g (8.48 lb) and measured 65 cm (25.9 inches). From the very beginning it was known that he will be a very tall man. Maciej was allergic to cow's milk protein and needed a special diet. Even now he only eats goat's milk products that are considered by many doctors to be good for development of the lungs.



Maciej Muzaj in a volleyball uniform.



Halina Muzaj

Being both a physical therapist as well as Maciej's mother provided me with more knowledge and awareness that a child born by C-section requires more stimulation of his development. From the very beginning I was using a lot of tactile stimulation, stroking, squeezing, rubbing, and hugging. I played with him by rolling, spinning, tumbling, creeping, crawling, jumping, and stretching. I used toys with sound and lights to stimulate his vision and auditory systems. All of our games and activities were bringing my son lots of joy and happiness.

Maciej's development was faster than many of the children in his age group. He started teething early and, at the age of 9 months, was walking independently. He had a good memory and, at the age of 2, was able to repeat songs and/or rhymes. He was much taller than other children.

Maciej's growth was fast and needed special attention in order to prevent development of any asymmetries. While in kindergarten we used therapeutic gymnastics and age-appropriate motor games to facilitate proper alignment, strength, and coordination.

My son demonstrated amazing abilities for visual and motor skills. He was able to 'see' a movement and was able to repeat it without the need for much repetition nor practice. (For example at the age of 4 he was able to dribble a basketball without looking at it).

From an early age, these skills were an indication of him becoming a great athlete. Being an active athlete myself, I introduced my son to many sports. Early on he learned how to ride a bicycle, ski, and swim.

At the age of 9, Maciej was diagnosed with dyslexia and dysgraphia (even today he has challenges when reading a traditional clock). At that time I included in his movement routines, Brain Gym® exercises by Paul Denison Ph.D and the MNRI® Dynamic and Postural Reflex Integration program of S. Masgutova, Ph.D.

These new exercises improved his coordination, attention, and self-confidence.

At the age of 10 Maciej started playing tennis. I chose that sport for him because for the majority of the year practice and games take place outdoors. Additionally, it is a sport that includes many reciprocal, homologous, homolateral movements that develop great motor and visual-motor coordination. Maciek was doing very well and quickly excelled at his skills and led in his group. He enjoyed tennis but it wasn't his favorite sport.

At the age of 13 Maciej independently chose volleyball as a sport that he wanted to practice. He started attending a school with special emphasis on sports and athletic achievements. He participated in practices taking place 6 times a week. His height in 7th grade was 168 cm (5.5 ft) while in 11th grade it was 200cm (6.56 ft). During those years Maciek's growth was approximately 1 cm (0.39 inches) per month.

Because of the rapid growth I decided to continue using Dynamic and Postural Reflex Integration exercises at least once a month. The most crucial reflexes that we worked on were: Asymmetrical Tonic Neck Reflex, Symmetrical Tonic Neck Reflex, Moro, Hand Grasp, Hands Supporting, Flying and Landing, and Trunk Extension.

I strongly believe that thanks to reflex integration his growth was symmetrical, his body stayed healthy and strong, and his athletic talent could continue successfully developing.

At the age of 14 my son was selected for Regional representation in volleyball and the following years continued in Junior representation to finally become selected as one of 8 young athletes among 200 applying to be accepted to the elite sport school Szkoła Mistrzostwa Sportowego in Spala, Poland.

During the first year in Spala, Maciej was selected to represent Poland's Junior Volleyball. He participated in numerous international tournaments. At the age of 18 he became a professional volleyball player for the KPS Skra Belchatow Club (7-time winner of the Polish Volleyball Championships).

That same year Maciej was injured during practice. The strong impact of a ball hitting his face caused asymmetry of the facial bones. It triggered difficulties in balance and problems with his visual-motor coordination. His body's center mass had shifted. During that time I once again used the MNRI® Dynamic and Postural Reflex Integration exercises and Oral-Facial Reflex integration program. After application of the above techniques, his symmetry, coordination, and balance quickly returned to normal.

At the age of 19, despite his diagnosis of dyslexia and the intensity of volleyball practices, competitions and tournaments, Maciej passed the final high school exit exam called Matura and advanced to the Polish Senior National Volleyball Team.

Currently Maciej is a member of the Olympic Volleyball Team to represent Poland during Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

As Maciej's mother I am extremely proud and happy knowing that he will represent our country while participating in the highest rank of international sporting events. I am deeply grateful to Dr. Svetlana Masgutova, whom I met in 1998, for sharing her knowledge and skills. They allowed me to support the development, talent, and success of my son but also many, many other children.



We congratulate Maciej for his great results in sports and thank his mother, Halina, for being such a great Mother to care so much for his health, development, and talents. – MNRI® Team.