

## THE QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF IOAN CHIRILĂ'S ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN THE ROMANIAN SPORTS NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

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**ABSTRACT.** The article focuses on the journalistic work of Ioan Chirilă, who debuted in 1951, and in the nearly 50 years he spent in the field of sports journalism, wrote almost 4,700 articles. The materials covered a variety of sports, from athletics or boxing, to football – his favorite subject –, gymnastics, tennis, swimming, rugby and basketball to chess or snooker. Although most of his articles can be classified as reportages, he did not refrain from writing any news, interviews, chronicles, reviews or editorials. The current study includes the qualitative analysis of Ioan Chirilă's articles published in the Romanian sports newspapers and magazines.

**Keywords:** *Ioan Chirilă, sports journalism, Romania, Gazeta Sporturilor, ProSport*

### Qualitative analysis of Ioan Chirilă's articles

Ioan Chirilă debuted in 1951, and in the nearly 50 years he spent in the field of sports journalism, he wrote almost 4,700 articles. Most of the materials signed by Ioan Chirilă appeared in the newspaper *Sportul popular*, known after 1989 as *Gazeta Sporturilor*, for which he wrote most of his career. (Agenția de presă Rador, 2014) In addition to this, the

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columnist also published in the magazines *Sport* – called *Sportul Ilustrat* after 1990 – and *Fotbal*, but also in the newspaper *ProSport*, of which he was part of the editorial team since 1997. ([www.ioanchirila.ro](http://www.ioanchirila.ro))

### 1. *Sportul popular*

In the pages of the newspaper *Sportul popular* (MTS), Ioan Chirilă wrote over 3,300 articles, belonging to several journalistic genres and covering a variety of sports, from athletics or boxing, to football – his favorite subject –, gymnastics, tennis, swimming, rugby and basketball to chess or snooker. Most of his articles can be classified as reportages, but he did not refrain from writing any news, interviews, chronicles, reviews or editorials, personal, subjective notes being present in almost all his materials, given that he did not graduate from a journalism faculty and he used to write only about topics that interested him, in which he could get emotionally involved.

Of the more than 3,300 articles published in the newspaper *Sportul popular*, just over 600 have been classified, over time, in different headings – these representing 18% of the total number of materials written by Ioan Chirilă in the mentioned newspaper.

Some of the headings were permanent, being kept in the pages of the newspaper for decades, while others were temporary headings, taking the form of series.

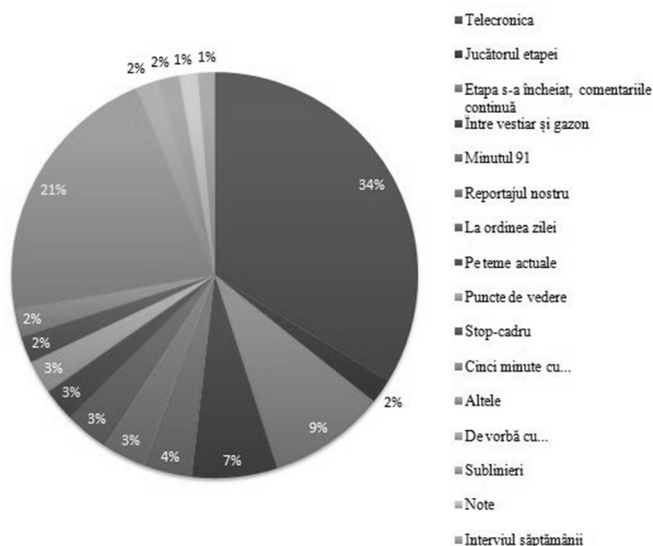
Also, regarding these sections, it is noted that some of them were exclusively of Ioan Chirilă, he being the only one who wrote within them, while for others most of the editorial staff wrote, one by one, according to a schedule.

In the figure below, it is noted that Ioan Chirilă wrote for more than 20 sections, only three of them gathering a higher number of articles.

The section in which Ioan Chirilă wrote most articles was “Telecronica”, a weekly section, in which he signed articles between 1993–1996. This section was not exclusively his, being in the pages of the newspaper since the '70s, when it had another author.

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Most of the articles in this section have as main topic the TV broadcasts that target the world of sport, the author commenting on either football matches, different tennis tournaments or other competitions of sports that he loves and that interest him – Ioan Chirilă not agreeing to write about things he doesn't like.



**Figure 1.** Headings in which Ioan Chirilă wrote in the newspaper Gazeta Sporturilor

The articles in “Telecronica” were also about television, tourism or culture. In addition, some materials have been shaped around the memories of the journalist. This happened when he did not find anything interesting on television or when certain events during the week reminded him of different moments he lived while in the service of sport.

Most of the materials published in this section took the form of reportages, written in the style that characterized Ioan Chirilă – slightly subjective, sprinkled with personal impressions –, but there were also some interviews.

The other two sections that collected a higher number of articles are “Între vestiar și gazon” and “Etapa s-a încheiat, comentariile continuă”, both of them being exclusively dedicated to football. For the section “Etapa s-a încheiat, comentariile continuă”, Ioan Chirilă wrote between 1978 and 1989. Most of the articles in this category were reportages about the matches from the previous stage of Division A.

Thus, the author was not only Chirilă, but all the journalists appointed to the matches of the previous days. This section was composed of several reports, usually from the most interesting or important matches played during the latest stage of the national championship.

Although he has been writing for 21 years for this section, the number of articles signed by Ioan Chirilă does not exceed 10% of the total number of materials included in headings. This may be due to the fact that the authors of the reportages from the “Etapa s-a încheiat, comentariile continuă” were randomly chosen, based on the importance of the match they attended to. Ioan Chirilă never wanted to stand out and only participate in high stake matches, so sometimes he only wrote the match chronicle.

In another train of thoughts, there were also rounds in which the columnist did not participate in any match, either because he was traveling, or because he was responsible for managing the chronicles in the newsroom – times when he wrote a general report, an introduction of everything that happened in that round of Division A.

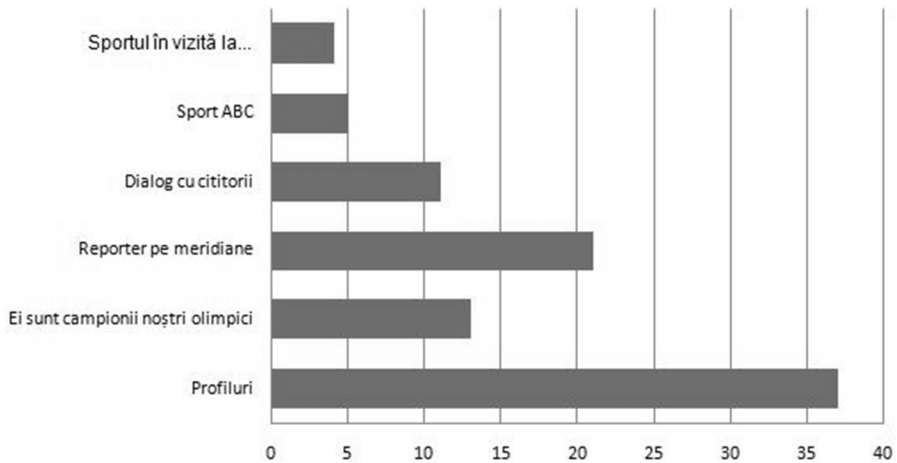
The third section rich in articles signed by Ioan Chirilă is entitled “Între vestiar și gazon”, and it is also dedicated exclusively to football. For this one, the journalist wrote between 1991-1996, in this period gathering over 40 materials, most of them being news, written based either on the statements taken immediately after the match – from players and coaches – or on the facts noticed at the end of the game.

Being quite similar to the heading “Etapa s-a încheiat, comentariile continuă”, in this case the authors were also multiple, different from issue to issue, depending on the match they attended in the recently ended stage of the championship. In addition, the main reason for which

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the percentage of the news included in this section is reduced is the absence of Ioan Chirilă from the matches as he got older, since 1991 the number of match chronicles written by him being also decline.

Regarding the series, according to the figure below, it is noted that Ioan Chirilă's articles can be classified in six such sections, which are characterized by a shorter time span and by the fact that almost all the articles had the same author – with the exception of the series “Dialog cu cititorii”, from the 1970s, in which several journalists wrote.



**Figure 2.** Series that Ioan Chirilă wrote in the newspaper  
Gazeta Sporturilor

The series with the most articles is “Profiluri”, in which Ioan Chirilă wrote 37 materials, between 1981 and 1983. Each of them targeted a county in Romania, the author writing about the best performers there. The columnist traveled the country from one end to the other, documented the performances obtained by the athletes from each county and gave them a brief characterization.

For the most part, the articles in this series have been reportages, targeting the performers from several sports disciplines, from football, rowing, athletics, rugby, basketball and even boxing to shooting, chess or skiing. Also, the materials did not only bring into attention athletes from individual disciplines, but also whole teams, which were noticed in different competitions.



Figure 3. Examples of rankings made for the heading “Profiluri”

The next series with over 20 articles signed by Ioan Chirilă is “Reporter pe meridiane”, for which the journalist wrote in 1991, between July and October.



Figure 4. The emblem of the series “Reporter pe meridiane”

The materials in this series were reportages, mostly about football or about the trips he made in the service of sport, reminding of the events he went through, the difficulties he encountered and the friendships he tied with other reporters or sportsmen.

Although for the most part they were not illustrated, the reportages made up for the lack of photographs through the colorful story of Ioan Chirilă, which brought to the readers' eyes the happenings as films full of details, which have the power of transposing the audience there, in the middle of events, giving them the feeling of active participation.

The third series that has raised a greater number of articles written by Ioan Chirilă in the pages of the newspaper *Sportul* is "Ei sunt campionii noștri olimpici". Thus, within this heading, from December 1979 to April 1980 - at the opening of the Moscow Olympics - the columnist conducted interviews with Romanian athletes who were medaled at the Olympic Games between 1952-1972.



Figure 5. The emblem of the series "Ei sunt campionii noștri olimpici"

All interviews, wide materials that started on the front page of the newspaper, then continued on another one, were illustrated with photographs of the Romanian champions. In terms of the articles' content, the questions mainly concerned both the details of how they reached the Olympic performance, what this success meant for them, which were the factors that helped them to obtain the much-desired medal, and the aspects of how the Romanian athletes of the respective disciplines are presented at the moment.

## ***2. ProSport***

In the pages of the newspaper *ProSport*, Ioan Chirilă wrote over 250 articles, belonging to several journalistic genres and covering a variety of sports, from athletics or tennis, to football, gymnastics, rugby and to basketball or skiing. Most of his articles can be included in the editorial genre, but he did not stay away from reportages or interviews.

Of the more than 250 articles published in this newspaper, just over 190 have been classified, over time, in different sections – these representing 73% of the total number of materials written by Ioan Chirilă in the mentioned daily publication.

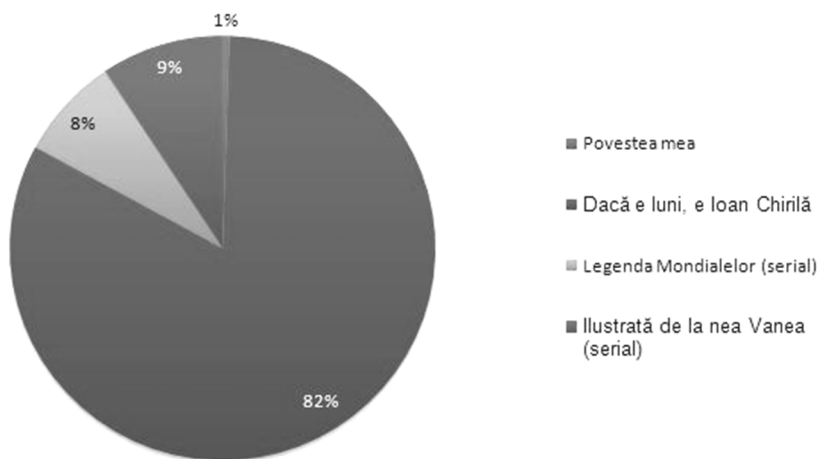
Some of the headings were permanent, being kept in the pages of the newspaper at least during the entire period when the journalist was part of the newsroom, others were temporary headings, taking the form of series.

Also, regarding these sections, it is noted that for some of them most of the editorial staff wrote, one by one, according to a schedule, while for other two series the one and only author was Ioan Chirilă.

As you can see in the figure below, during the 29 months spent at *ProSport*, the columnist wrote in two sections and two series, the latter in 1998, related to the World Football Championship that took place in France.

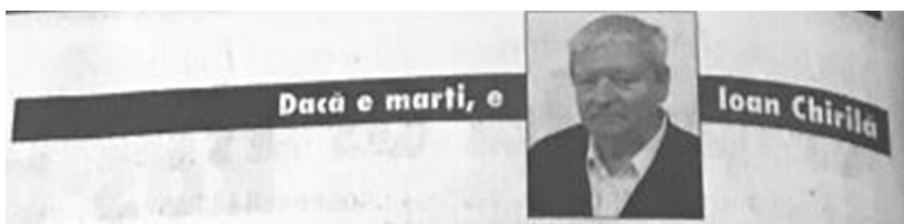


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**Figure 6.** Headings in which Ioan Chirilă wrote in the newspaper ProSport

The section he wrote most for was “Dacă e luni, e Ioan Chirilă”. This spread throughout the period in which the journalist was part of this newsroom, he being the one who opened every week with an editorial. This was, however, a daily heading, each day another important journalist being the author of the material. I should mention that, when one of his colleagues could not write the weekly material for which he was responsible, Ioan Chirilă was in charge of the respective column, at that moment the heading changing his name into “Dacă e marți, e Ioan Chirilă” or “Dacă e joi, e Ioan Chirilă” and so on.



**Figure 7.** The emblem of the heading “Dacă e luni, e Ioan Chirilă”

The materials within this heading are editorials – except for one, which took the shape of an interview with the football player Ilie Balaci –, the majority having soccer as the subject, Ioan Chirilă, however, also dealing with events in sport in general, cycling or tennis, about which he expressed his opinion in the pages of the daily newspaper.

Having reached a professional maturity and having a vast experience, memory and general knowledge, Ioan Chirilă approached the subjects with ease, without encountering any difficulty. Moreover, the fact that he could talk about any subject stands out from the ease with which replaced his colleagues when needed, without hesitation.

Regarding the illustrations, all the materials within this section had, at the top of the heading, a small portrait of the author, a few of them also containing an illustrative photograph for the subject.

The second section for which he wrote in the pages of the newspaper *ProSport* is “Povestea mea”, where Ioan Chirilă wrote one material, in 1997. The column was about Princess Diana, being drafted after her death and commenting on the commercial exploitation around the subject, which was created after the emotions had subsided.

Once again, through this editorial, the journalist proves the variety of subjects he is interested in, being able to discuss any topic, from culture, to literature, art, music, theater or tourism.

Regarding the series that Ioan Chirilă wrote in the daily publication *ProSport*, it is noted that both were written in 1998 and aimed at the most important international football competition – World Cup.

First of all, before the World Football Championship in France, the columnist published the series called “Legendele Mondialului”, in which, throughout 15 episodes, he presented each edition of the World Cup that had already taken place. These episodes resulted in extensive, richly illustrated reports, in which the author recalled the most important moments of each competition, the aspects that attracted his attention or the way in which the competition has evolved over time.

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Figure 8. The emblem of the series “Legendele Mondialului”

The materials appeared at the beginning of the year, before the great football competition took place in France, serving as a preface to the 16th edition of the World Cup. In contrast, the other series wrote on the pages of *ProSport* was published during the competition, being represented by short or medium-sized articles, illustrated with suggestive photographs for the subject and always bearing the hand signature of Ioan Chirilă.



Figure 9. The emblem and the signature of the series “Ilustrată de la Nea Vanea”

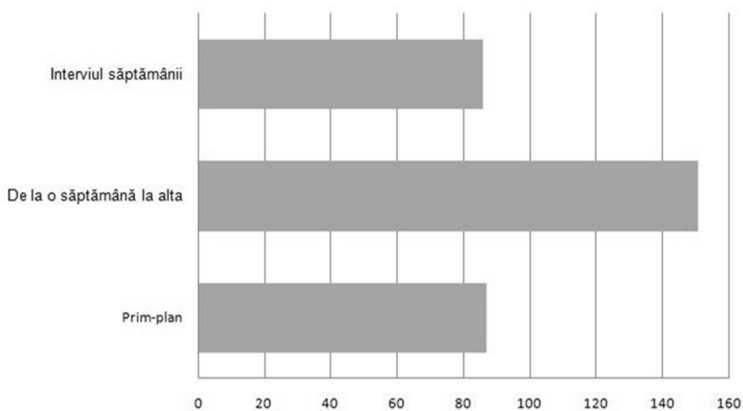
The way he chose to sign the articles is a new one, bringing a personal note to these writings, which we can easily place in the editorial journalistic genre, being sprinkled with personal ideas.

These articles, with an almost daily frequency between June 10 and July 2, 1998, had the role of a postcard, sent by the columnist from France, to help us, the readers back home, to enter the atmosphere of the final tournament and to enjoy almost the same experiences as him. It should be mentioned that in addition to the information about football – the main reason why Ioan Chirilă went to France in the summer of 1998 – the articles also referred to different touristic landmarks or places he traveled to during this trip.

### 3. *Fotbal*

If in the magazines *Sport* and *Sportul ilustrat*, none of the articles written by Ioan Chirilă were included in any headings or series, regarding the materials published in the magazine *Fotbal* this happened in 59% of cases, respectively in over 320 articles from those about 550 signed by the master.

If in the case of the newspapers *Gazeta Sporturilor* and *ProSport* the sections could be divided into permanent and serial, here we are talking only about series, headings which, although they were consistent – gathering between 10 and 23% of the articles –, they did not extend to more than three years.



**Figure 10.** Series that Ioan Chirilă wrote in the weekly magazine *Fotbal*

As it can be seen in the figure above, the series “De la o săptămână la alta” gathered the most articles, over 150, and it was published between 1991 and 1995. The articles in this section were usually written on one of the last pages of the weekly *Fotbal*, with the subject being European soccer – especially Italian football – or Romanian players and coaches.



**Figure 11.** The emblem of the series “De la o săptămână la alta”

The articles gathered in this section were rarely illustrated, attracting the readers' attention by the way the title was drafted and, sometimes, by the author's profile, always sketched between the title of the section and the article's title. It is important to say, however, that, after the '90s, Ioan Chirilă had a maturity and experience that gathered around him a community of readers who were looking for his texts on the pages of the various sports publications to purely enjoy his articles.

Another series published in the pages of the weekly magazine, which gathered about 90 articles, was “Prim-plan”. Published between September 1971 – January 1973, these materials were small sized, being short characterizations of some important footballers of those years. Each report was always accompanied by a cartoon of the sportsman, surprised either during a match or in a static profile.

The characterizations of the great footballers of the 1970s were achieved either through the author's presentation, from newspaper passages or through discussions and interviews. Among the protagonists of this section were Cornel Dinu, Rică Răducanu, Flavius Domide, Ion Oblemenco, Nicolae Pescaru and Mircea Sandu.



Figure 12. The emblem of the series “Prim-plan”

The materials under the heading “Prim-plan” were signed with the full name of the author only until February 1972. Later, it also appeared the series “Interviul săptămânii”.

The articles in the two series were usually printed on the same page, the characterization being signed with the initials I. Ch. and the interview, a much larger material, with the full name of the author.

In addition to the period in which they were published simultaneously, the two headings also share a similar number of articles – over 85. However, the period of appearance is slightly different: the series “Prim-plan” appeared during the period September 1971 – January 1973, and the other between February 1972 – January 1974.

The materials belonging to the series “Interviul săptămânii” were large in size, occupying almost the page entirely. Each of the interviews was illustrated with a large photograph of the subject, their names being written in white letters on a black background, and the title being made up of an interesting quote, meant to arouse readers' interest.

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**Figure 13.** The emblem of the series “Interviul săptămânii”

Also, most of the times, the interviews were preceded by an introductory paragraph, in which Ioan Chirilă presented either the context that determined him to take that interview, or the protagonist, outlining him an image or reinforcing the one existing in the mind of the readers, something meant to give credibility to the character and truthfulness to the material.

Among the characters interviewed by the columnist on the pages of the weekly magazine *Fotbal* are Rudy Wetzer, Silviu Bindea, Lazăr Sfera, Coloman Braun-Bogdan, Mircea Lucescu or Ilie Năstase – with whom he discussed about football, taking into consideration the fact that the well-known tennis player focused only on football until the age of 10.

## Conclusions

Regardless of the publication for which he wrote, Ioan Chirilă succeeded, throughout his career, to be appreciated and to impose his style, grouping his articles in various sections or serials. In this way, those who wanted to read them, found his materials much easier and faster.

Most of the sections – whether we talk about the permanent ones or about those that we have noted in the present paper as serial – have focused on football topics. This only highlights – once again – the unstoppable passion of Ioan Chirilă for the royal sport, that he served for more than four decades.

Also, there were sections dedicated to sport in general or in which he also wrote about tourism, proving his interest for a wide range of topics. The vastness of his knowledge is also revealed by the variety of journalistic genres used in these headings, most of them being broad materials.

Despite the fact that many of the articles in the sections have not been illustrated, they have always managed to attract attention. First of all, this was due to the name that Ioan Chirilă has built over the years, and secondly, that the names of the headings and the titles of the materials were written in different colors or fonts.

In conclusion, the journalist managed to bring to life some exciting headings both in the pages of the newspapers *Gazeta Sporturilor* and *ProSport*, as well as in the weekly magazine *Fotbal*, using his style that has imposed him as an authority and approaching attractive topics. In this way, Ioan Chirilă added value to the publications he worked for, inspiring other generations of journalists.

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