

Week 4
Sjeverna Hrvatska v Biograd na Moru
Danny Rogic

It was hot enough out this weekend at the Richmond Picnic Grounds that you could have worn Hawaiian shorts and no one would have noticed. The fourth week of the HLjNT schedule pitted the powerful Sjeverna Hrvats against an undermanned Biograd na Moru. Although the numbers were stacked against Biograd, they were the team that flew out of the starting blocks. A few great chances by Rob Mrcic and Mike Baldin were blocked by Mathieu Belanic in the Sjeverna goal. It should be mentioned that Baldin was at the Roxy both Friday and Saturday nights beforehand and had to play in two other games afterwards. What a trooper! With the introduction of a fashionably late Maarten Koorn, the game really started to turn in Sjeverna's favour. Koorn found a wide open Daniel Fajfar who raced in alone toward the Biograd net. His shot was blocked by the outstretched leg of goalkeeper Dennis Mrcic to keep the game scoreless. As luck would have it, Biograd was first to chalk one up on the scoreboard. Ante Krapic made a great run down the wing and cut the ball back to Danny Rogic in the middle. Rogic took one step and hit a low ball that somehow found its way through a crowd of players and into the bottom corner of the Sjeverna net. Near the end of the half, Sjeverna's Ivo Luketic trotted out of bounds near the half-line to take a kick-in. Unexpectedly, Luketic sent a ball destined for the top corner using the pitching wedge he was given for his Birthday. Biograd's net-minder Dennis Mrcic back-pedaled his bike like it had no brakes and somehow touched the ball onto the crossbar and out of harm's way. When asked about the "would-be goal of the year", Luketic explained that he had been hitting the links lately and that he would like to thank Callaway Golf for all their support. Half-time came and went and the players took the field once again. Both teams took turns creating chances and counterattacking. However, Sjeverna seemed a bit fresher with the inclusion of their many subs compared to the depleted ranks of the Biograd squad. This seemed to spur Sjeverna forward more often in the second half as Biograd was reaching for the oxygen tanks proudly provided by Richmond General Hospital. However, John "I run marathons on Friday nights when the kids go to bed" Mrcic seemed fresher than the afternoon's raznice. Mrcic looked like Franz Beckenbauer playing for the New York Cosmos as he stifled various opposing attacks and took a few howitzers from the blue line. Hrvoje Pavic was a monster in the Sjeverna backline and even made a few "So You

Think You Can Dance” waltzes into the Biograd half himself. Late in the second half, Maarten Koorn received a pass with his back to goal. Surrounded by a pack of Biograd hounds, Koorn broke some ankles and did the “Macarena” before he unleashed a Dutch Rocket into the top corner for the tying goal with nearly no time left. Biograd’s keeper Dennis Mrsic kindly asked what his players were doing and if they would pick up the effort in a very positive tone of voice. This quick pep talk seemed to inspire Rob Mrsic the most. Mrsic then did what most onlookers at the Richmond Picnic Grounds would explain as the unexplainable. Mrsic somehow dipsy-doodle-dangled his way into the Sjeverna box where he and Ivo Luketic had a nice “How do you do?” in the corner. After asking how the family was, Mrsic accidentally fainted from dehydration and fell to the ground. All spectators and the Sjeverna opposition players scrambled to see if he was alright, while the referee made the “Call heard ‘round the world”. The ref had given Biograd a penalty. The Sjeverna players were obviously quite amused with the call and had a few laughs and giggles while voicing their pleasure to the official. Not understanding the jokes, the ref ordered them to leave his comfort zone. Danny Rogic stepped up to take the penalty and narrowly beat Sjeverna’s keeper Belanic to clinch the three points for Biograd na Moru. The whistle blew and a few of the Sjeverna players expressed their appreciation to the official and how well he handled the last few minutes of the game. Honourable mention must go to Sjeverna’s young Davor Maric who was a constant annoyance to the Biograd players with his outstanding work rate. Sjeverna Hrvatska played a fantastic game but much to their chagrin, Biograd remain undefeated on the season. Next week should be a dandy. Don’t forget your sunglasses...