

Week 5
Kordun v Biograd na Moru
Danny Rogic

Tickets were sold out months in advance to the match that took place at the Richmond Picnic Grounds this weekend. A hung over and horribly depleted line-up of Biograd na Moru was thrown to the lions of Kordun. Full of youth and vigor, Kordun looked as though they had called their cousins and their cousins' cousins to play as they had enough players to fill the entire region of Kordun. But the few sly villagers from the small Dalmatian coastal town of Biograd had a few tricks of their own up their sleeves. Biograd was relaxed and in good spirits before the game started and some players were even seen having a few Marlboro's and Turkish coffees. The match started with Kordun pressuring the defensive minded players of Biograd. Kordun had many established former, current and future stars of the Croatian community in their ranks who were constantly taking it to the Biograd players. However, Biograd's clever formation of 4 - 0.5 - 0.5 was doing its job of keeping the Kordun players at bay. Biograd in fact had the best chance of the opening stages when the wily Ante Krapic made a run down the right flank and cut the ball back to an onrushing Danny Rogic. Danny Rogic unleashed a shot that may have gone over two zip codes had it not ricocheted off the crossbar and out of harm's way. This seemed to wake up the mighty Kordun as they started to advance more and more toward the Biograd goal. Dennis Mrsic was monumental in keeping out a few great chances and keeping Biograd in the match. As luck would have it, Biograd took the lead midway through the first half. Danny Rogic had the ball near the half line and spotted one of the nominee's for Young Player of the Year in Ante Krapic who was sneaking in behind the Kordun backline. Rogic needled a pass through the fabric of the Kordun defence to a wide open Krapic who waved to the fans and did a bow before tucking the ball into the net for the opening goal of the match. This awakened the feisty Kordun players who made one pass after the opening kick-off before scoring. Matthew "Chooch" Caculovic passed a ball toward Johnny "Skills Corner" Cindric who dummied it like he failed math three times. The dummy was a move never seen by the Biograd defence and froze them like last week's Sarma. Tomas "Pigeon" Holub accepted the gift given to him by Cindric and proceeded to slot the ball into the corner for the tying goal. The Biograd players were seen post-match asking Johnny Cindric to sign his rookie card for them. Back to the game, Kordun continued to pressure while Biograd was forced to rely on counterattacks to stage any type of offence. With nearly no time remaining, Martin Perko unlocked the key to Biograd's defence. Perko's pass picked out Holub at the top of the box with his back to goal. Holub, or Pigeon as he is widely recognized, tapped his heels together two times and wished he were back on the beaches of Oz. This trick seemed to work as Pigeon turned his scarecrow of a defender like he had no brain. Pigeon then tucked the ball into the far corner for his second goal of the game just before the referee blew for the end of the first half. Half-time in the Biograd corner stayed as PG-13 as you would have expected. The second half restarted and the same type of soccer seemed to continue. Biograd's long ball tactics to their lone striker Marin Mrsic seemed to be the only thing working for the tired and over-worked team. Kordun continued to throw everything they had including the kitchen sink and the bidet at Biograd's backline. The Misplay of the Day came when Johnny Mrsic looking like Nikolas Lidstrom played a ball destined for Marin Mrsic in the box. The ball asked its GPS for directions to Marin Mrsic, but took a wrong turn and ended up gliding

gracefully over the keeper and into the Kordun net for the tying goal. This seemed to wake up the Biogradians. Soon after, a Biograd corner kick was making its way towards Ante Krapic who was nudged off of his path. The ref blew for a penalty and Danny Rogic stepped up to make it 3-2 for the somehow refreshed Biograd squad. Luck almost changed for Biograd when Brad Haga won a ball in the middle of the park. He sent an immaculate ball forward for Pigeon who put his glorious chance for a hat-trick wide. Nearing the end of the match, Ante Krapic made another one of his remarkable runs forward with the ball. After KY-jellying his way through a few Kordun players, he played a ball into the Kordun box. Danny Rogic was seen ravaged and defiled while making his way to the net. Rogic somehow got the nail of his pinky toe on to the ball to earn his second goal of the match. Biograd were somehow up two goals with little time left! Kordun threw caution to the wind and placed all their players in the Biograd box for the closing stages. Robin Hart made a Biograd defender look silly when he flicked a ball over his marker. The Biograd defender got a hand to it and the ref whistled for a free kick inches outside of the box. A quick pass on the ensuing free-kick found a wide open Mario Jakic who chalked up Kordun's third goal. Both teams knew little time was left and gave all they had in the last moments. The whistle blew and the Biograd players hit the turf in exhaustion while the Kordun players shook their heads in amazement. The final result finished 4-3 in favour of Biograd na Moru on a day when the chips were stacked very highly against them. Honourable mention must go to Brad Haga who seemed to win every ball all over the park and Tomas "Pigeon" Holub for his huge two goal performance. Biograd's whole line-up must be applauded for a performance perhaps never before seen in the HLjNT. Down a man all match with no subs, the underdogs on the day had unbelievable performances from their whole squad. Dennis, Marko, Marin, and Johnny Mrcic along with Danny Rogic and Ante Krapic played brilliantly in a game that could prove to be a rematch in the finals. Stay tuned for Derby Weekend next week at the Richmond Grounds. There will be game reports on all games for these important rival matches. It's gonna be a wild weekend. Leave the wives at home...