

Week 6 – Derby Week  
Danny Rogic

Zadar v Biograd na Moru

Derby Weekend began with the Dalmatian Duel between the young Zadarians and the “fit for their age” Biograd squad. The game started off with a lot of possession in the middle of the park for both teams with few chances. Zadar’s Zvonimir Bebic and Biograd’s Dennis Mrsic were once again massive in goal for their squads. Biograd seemed to have a flurry of chances with no pay-off until an awkward shot by Mike Baldin was deflected high into the air. Putting his body and adulthood on the line, young John Rogic was able to run on to the ball that seemed to float in the air for minutes. He proceeded to head the ball into the net for the opening goal. This spark ignited the Biograd Bad Boys into a feeding frenzy on Zvonimir Bebic’s goal, but he seemed up for the task making save after miraculous save. But Bebic was hard done by when Mike Baldin’s deflected shot somehow found the corner of the net for his team’s second goal of the match. Just before half-time, Marin Mrsic scored a peach of a goal likely to be seen on the HLjNT highlights mixtape due out some time before Christmas and would be a perfect gift for anyone’s stocking stuffers. Mrsic, after controlling an immaculate chip from his cousin John Mrsic, brought the ball down like a feather on a cushion. He turned to find the sprawling Zadar keeper drifting towards him. Mrsic rounded him like a merry-go-round and put the ball in the back of the ol’ onion bag for Biograd’s third marker. After the half, Zadar seemed to put all the pressure on Biograd’s backline. Numerous chances by brothers Kresimir and Antonio Bebic went agonizingly awry. Daniel Laus and Salvatore “Double Sal” Salov were massive in the Zadar midfield and made life very difficult for Biograd’s midfield. With no subs, Zadar pushed and pushed for some glimmer of hope. However, it was Biograd who scored next. Marko Mrsic received a pass from the opposite wing and fired a low and hard cannon that burned a path into the grass en route to goal for the 4-0 tally. However, Zadar did find a life-line off the ensuing kick-off. Kresimir Bebic took little time to respond and his fine individual effort paid dividends. His shot was deflected by a Biograd defender into the bottom corner of the net. With little time left however, Mike Baldin scored his second goal of the game on a wide-open shot after receiving a clever pass from Rob Mrsic. Biograd beat their arch-nemesis Zadar in a fast-paced and feisty opening game to the Derby Weekend.

## Like v Vila Velebit

In this year's Potato Cup, the Licans played host to the Velebit villagers in a hard-fought game. Some would describe it as a somewhat comical game as both sides did their best to entertain the crowd for the two o'clock prime-time scheduled game. Both teams seemed to have their game-plans in place. Young Lika was looking through its skillful and fit ranks to pass and run the ball up the field. Velebit was relying on Petar Sulentic to do most of the ball-carrying and playing the ball up the field to Mike Kovac in the box. The styles seemed to contradict each other like one would suspect, but I guess that's why we love those rambunctious Licani. The opening goal of the game was scored off a free-kick that was placed in what seemed to be a harmless area in the middle of the field. Michael Cvitkovich hit a low drive that tippy-toed its way through a maze of players into the bottom corner of the net. The Velebit players were left shaking their heads as if they were looking for Waldo on the set play. Shortly after, Velebit had a glorious chance to equalize on a hilarious kafuffle of a play. Yes, I said a kafuffle of a play! A free-kick was nailed into the box by the tree-trunk legs of Petar Sulentic and the ball pinballed around in the box, probably megging about six or sevens players before it was somehow cleared out of danger. The rest of the half saw many chances go wanting. Marko Bajic in the Lika goal and Michael Milkovich in the Velebit goal both made some important stops. Both teams had glorious chances just before the half. Lika's Mike "I'd rather not shower alone" Prpic was somehow left unmarked at the top of the Velebit box. Prpic fired an A-Rod homer from close-in that kept rising like it was in his easy-bake oven. The shot went off the crossbar and out of play, much to his dismay I must say... Mike Kovac had a great chance for Velebit with his back to goal. He turned and was about to fire, but could not pull the trigger before Bajic in the Lika goal got down and smothered the hot potato. Half-time went as quickly as the raznice. Quite unfortunate for many, I might add. The second half was a shadow of the first and was filled with shots from left field and the interstate with not much troubling either keeper. A slide in the Velebit box gave Lika a penalty that Mike Prpic decided he should take credit for. He stepped up and put the ghosts in the closet as he made it two for the Licans. Velebit pressured for the last part of the game, but found little resistance against the youthful side the Licans put out every week. Late in the match, the insurance marker came for Lika when a poor clearance fell to the feet of Michael Japuncic who could have made his bed and slept in it for a bit before scoring in the wide open net. The 3-0 result and the Potato Cup went to Lika on this day.

Hajduk v Dalmatinska Zagora

The third game of the day saw the rowdy Hajduk team take on the youthful and exuberant Dalmantinska Zagora side. Both teams put on clinics in how to keep possession during the first half. It was great soccer to see in a league that is sometimes known for its kick-and-run style. Both teams had great chances to open the scoring, but were unsuccessful. Dal-Zag in particular missed a flurry of open-net chances with players sliding into home base with their eyes closed instead of with their eyes on the prize. This was a day where Dal-Zag's Johnny Botica and Hajduk's Sandro "The Ragin' Cajun" Rajic were putting their skills on display. Both young guns were making runs not seen since the Miracle Mile at Empire Stadium. The first goal of the match for Dal-Zag came when Josip "My Stuff should be Bottled by the" Litre made a fantastic run and put away his breakaway chance. Hajduk's Jure "Be my Valentine" Vuletin was putting on his best Wendell Clark impersonation and was hitting everything in sight while making glorious chances happen for his team. Much to his and Hajduk's chagrin, Litre scored his second goal of the game with a low hammer that rippled the mesh. Hajduk's Mike Arbulic was playing his power-forward role to a T, but was unfortunate not to score on the day. Antony Lulic also had a great performance and capped it off with a fine individual effort while scoring Dal-Zag's third goal. His turn in the middle of the park was so bright that it could have been seen from outer space. The only blemish was that his shot was deflected on its path into the net. This seemed to be enough for Hajduk's Sandro Rajic and the rage really did come out. Rajic made a solitary run down the middle of the park and made the moguls look like a walk in the meadow. He did his little turn on the Catwalk before absolutely impaling the ball into the net for Hajduk's only goal of the game. But it was Josip Litre's day when he got his hat-trick with a bobbling shot that snuck its way under the Hajduk keeper. His third and Dal-Zag's fourth put Baka to bed and sent their weird Uncle Hajduk packing. 4 to 1 and this game was done!

In what could be called the game of the year thus far, Kordun and Herceg-Bosna played a game that shocked and amazed the crowd. People as far as Surrey were told of what went down at the Richmond Grounds from four to five o'clock on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2009. Not only was a fashion trend introduced that could start a revolution, but a game was contested that had even The Man-With-No-Hands biting his nails. If you were not there and did not hear, jean shorts are back, baby! And they are better than ever!!! The match started out with fire and brimstone under the pot. And it must be said that Tomislav "Tom-Kat" Katinic has a flowing mane that a thoroughbred at Woodbine would be jealous of. Back to the action, Herceg-Bosna got off to a great start when Anto Steko made a miraculous run down the wing. His cross-shot somehow found its way to Goran Cisija at the back post for the easiest of tap-ins followed by the most difficult of celebrations. What a start to the greatest game ever played! Darko Jelic then bent the frame of the crossbar like he was testing out the Saturn's side-doors. Had his shot from absolutely nowhere found the back of the net instead of destroying the framework, Luka Rapo would be telling tales of the goal for a millenia! Kordun then found its way back into the game when a shot by Robyn Hart made its way through the Herceg-Bosna keeper to an unmarked Miro Bezjak who slotted his first goal of the match. Kreso Brzica made up for his bad luck in the Herceg-Bosna net soon after. A hammer on net by Matthew "Chooch" Caculovic was palmed down by Brzica to the feet of Tomas "Pigeon" Holub. Holub was at the doorstep and all he had to do was tuck the mail under the doorslot. But Brzica stood on his head and did some other things that are a little too risqué for this report before making another massive save to keep the score level. The half-time whistle came, but the fans wanted more and Tata dressed in his worst Saint Nick suit brought the presents! A goal-festa of a second half is what he brought for Christmas. Not a pair of his old shin-pads... Phil Mandic's shot from well out somehow found the corner for Herceg-Bosna's second goal. Then Phil Mandic sent a perfect pass through the box to the back post where Bruno "Pitbull" Maras was on hand to make it 3-1 for the Herceg-Bosniaks. This seemed to rattle the Pigeon Coop and Tomas Holub had seen enough! He went on a stampede and was brought down in the box instead of asking for shots at Cowboy's in Calgary. Martin Perko stepped up and cut Kordun's deficit to just a single tally. Later on, Bruno Maras doing what Bruno Maras does, outran all the Kordun players to a bouncing ball, played hop-skotch over the keeper and doubled Herceg-Bosna's lead. You would think that this was when the Kordun heads dropped, but fear not! Kordun collect-called Stella and got their Groove back! Miro Bezjak somehow found himself in the middle of the Herceg-Bosna box one-on-one with the keeper. He put the ball between the keeper's legs with a fine finish to make it 3-2 for Herceg-Bosna with little time left. With the whistle in the ref's mouth and literally no time left, a wide Martin Perko put a ball into the middle of the park. Who should come galloping out of the box like a noble steed? Who else but Tom Katinic who volleyed a goal that could defeat empires into the top corner for the tying goal that sent the game into penalties! IT WAS SHEER PANDEMONIUM PEOPLE!!! Kordun then went on to win the PK's 3-2. Kordun win the Sampajn Kup and the bragging rights as the winners of possibly the greatest game ever played in the HLjNT...

Sjeverna Hrvatska v NK Zagreb

The last game of the Derby Weekend saw Sjeverna Hrvatska go up against NK Zagreb. Rudi Gasparac decided to show up and his vastly boosted the confidence in a young Sjeverna team. Maarten Koorn was his usual dominant self in all over the park for Sjeverna while Joe Havlicek was a key contributor to most of the action on Zagreb's side. Maarten had a few great chances throughout the match, but the Zagreb keeper managed to make a couple of massive saves to keep his team in the game. Daniel Fajfar was also unlucky not to break the goose-egg. In the second half, Zagreb put on some intense pressure but were unable to find any clear-cut chances on goal. Maarten Koorn broke the deadlock on Zagreb's gate when he unleashed a rocket that deflected and found its way into the back of the net past the bewildered keeper. With the game seeming to be in the books, NK Zagreb pulled a rabbit out of the trousers and tied up the game. Joe Havlicek won a contest by the Sjeverna's corner flag and centred for Zagreb's #12 who slotted the tying goal. The whistle blew and the game was off to the spot kicks. Sjeverna went on to win the game in PK's and that is all she wrote for Derby Weekend.

Congratulations to the winners. Beers for the losers. So everyone wins in the end... Next week is another scorcher in Richmond. Bring your visors!