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RED

Stal Mielec 1 : 1 Byki

(AET, Mielec advance on PKs 5:4)

NSL 1st Division - The Odeum - 20 March 2011

PK heartbreak ends Byki season

The Red Team suffered soccer's cruelest fate on March 20 when they fell short in a penalty shootout in their quarterfinal playoff match versus Stal Mielec. The sides remained knotted at 1:1 through extra time and Mielec prevailed 5:4 in the shootout. Mielec went on to win the 1st Division's overall championship when they beat RWB Adria B and Zaglebie SC.

The Byki had qualified for the postseason on the last day of the competition under bizarre circumstances, but came ready to play against Mielec, who had tied the Byki 3:3 in the only meeting between the teams in the regular season. "Our players could not have played much better than they did today, but it simply wasn't enough to push us past Mielec," said coach George Gorecki. "Little things here or there could have turned things our way."

Mielec played a conservative style, which was forced by a short bench comprising only two substitutes. It was an effective strategy of "bend, don't break." The Byki had opportunities, but Mielec did well to recover defensively and were helped by excellent goalkeeping.

The Byki had the only good chance in the early minutes. Ammin Mehreioskouei stole the ball at midfield and slid a pass to Klemens Kuqi, whose powerful shot forced the goalie to make a diving save.

The end of the first half saw all of the scoring action. With 4:52 to go, Bryan Lopez shot from the top of the area and was blocked by a defender. Todd Trowbridge pounced on the rebound and slammed the return shot off of the post.

The Byki grabbed the lead 0:25 later. Trowbridge controlled the ball deep in the Mielec end and knocked

it back for Kuqi, who made no mistake with a first-time rocket into the back of the net.

Mielec came looking for an equalizer immediately. A Mielec player fired a shot from long range with 3:42 left. Marty Lupou made the save, but the rebound was loose in the box and the Mielec follow-up went high and out of play.

The tying goal came on the counter with 1:16 left. The Byki tried to contain a 3 v 3 situation and a shot from the right wing found the far post, barely eluding the full-stretch Lupou.

The Byki created several dangerous opportunities after the break, but could not find the back of the net. Midway through the second half, Lupou's long throw was inadvertently headed along by a Mielec player to Labeat Rrahmani, who was presented with a surprise breakaway. The goalkeeper read the angle perfectly and saved Rrahmani's shot.

With 5:17 left, Kuqi took his marker one on one and sprinted into space. He drilled a shot that the keeper could only parry to safety. There was no better chance to win the game than the opportunity for Mehreioskouei with only 0:08 left in regulation. A careless turnover by a Mielec defender in his own end left the keeper to fend off Mehreioskouei solo. Mehreioskouei feinted the goalie to the turf, but was unable to turn the corner in time and the netminder reached out to grab the shot attempt.

Neither side came close to ending the contest in the five-minute, golden goal extra period, although the Byki survived a couple of nervous moments at the very end.

In the shootout, both teams scored on their first four kicks. Kuqi, Matt Ahrens, Mehreioskouei and Mike Stamatinos converted for the Byki. A miracle leg save by the keeper denied Trowbridge in the final round.



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Mielec scored on their final attempt to eliminate the Byki.

“A playoff appearance was not in the cards for this team,” said Gorecki. “Nearly half of our roster played in the 2nd Division last winter, so they stepped up in a big way against 1st Division competition.”

BYKI LINEUP (2-2-1): Marty Lupou – Mike Lupou, Stamatinos (c) – Mehreioskouei, Martinez – Kuqi. **Bench:** Ahrens, Barsotti, Gambino, Lopez, Rrahmani, Trowbridge.

BYKI SCORING SUMMARY
0:1 – Kuqi 23 (Trowbridge); 14:33.

Penalty shootout:

Kuqi (goal)
Ahrens (goal)
Mehreioskouei (goal)
Stamatinos (goal)
Trowbridge (shot saved)

Byki Man of the Match: Aaron Barsotti

loading their roster to the max, lost to six-man RWB Adria B 5:2, leaving the Byki a clear path to third place if they could beat cellar dwellers Srpska.

The Byki have spent the season coming up with puzzling results, one of which was a 2:2 draw with the Serbs earlier in the season. And the Byki were lucky to even get the point in that one. A goal from Jesus Martinez in the dying seconds spared the Byki from complete embarrassment that night. “Our first match with Srpska should have taught us a few lessons about taking an opponent too lightly,” said coach George Gorecki. “The two points lost in that match would have come in very handy as we struggle to get to playoff position.”

The Byki turned out to be poor students, as Srpska were in the lead after just 1:28. The Byki eventually brought things to 2:2 by the break and then exploded for a five-goal second half that put things right. Doing things the easy way has not come naturally to this team.

Slack marking opened the door for a Srpska lead in the fourth minute. Moments later, goalie Marty Lupou was forced into a reflex save to kick a shot to safety.

The Byki leveled the affair at the 6:57 mark. Mike Stamatinos gave the ball to Klemens Kuqi at midfield and the striker tore through three defenders, faked the keeper to the turf and slotted home his 21st goal of the season.

Rather than righting the ship, the Byki had to chase Srpska all over again just 0:33 later. They worked a give-and-go at the arc and the flat-footed Byki were staring at a 2:1 deficit as Gorecki tried to keep his own pot from boiling over.

The Byki began to do a better job of maintaining possession in the latter stages of the opening half. Kuqi nearly had the keeper beaten with a shot from the right corner and was denied by a kick save. With 2:36 left, the keeper found another miracle up his sleeve, stoning an unmarked Kuqi, alone in the penalty area.

The score went to 2:2 with 1:24 left. Kuqi fired a shot that ricocheted high off of the

RED

Srpska B 2 : 7 Byki

NSL 1st Division - The Odeum - 18 March 2011

Byki wake up, qualify for playoffs

The Red Team came into the NSL regular-season finale on March 18 in fifth place in the 1st Division’s Red Section, but had realistic hopes of passing Hellenic United and CKS Warta and qualifying for the NSL playoffs. The Byki did their part, beating relegated FK Republika Srpska 7:2, and then saw Hellenic and Warta lose their matches. The Byki finished the season with 21 points from 16 matches, two better than Hellenic and Warta.

The evening, however, was full of surprises and twists, and the Byki were not completely certain of their position in the table until the following morning. Hellenic began the circus when they lost to Zaglebie SC, who had already locked up second place in the Red Section. But Hellenic had an opportunity to reverse their result against Zaglebie when it was learned that Zaglebie had fielded suspended players in their match. A victory for Hellenic would have clinched third place outright and would have rendered moot the results posted by the Byki and by Warta. The Greeks remarkably chose not to file a protest that they certainly would have won. Warta,

Byki Stats

RED TEAM, NSL 1ST DIVISION

Player	G	A	Pts
Kuqi	23	7	30
Ciszewski	7	5	12
Stamatinos	7	3	10
Mehreioskouei	3	4	7
Trowbridge	2	5	7
Rrahmani	3	3	6
Martinez	3	2	5
Ahrens	2	2	4
Frantz	1	2	3
Lopez	1	2	3
Lupou, Mike	0	2	2
Gibbs	1	0	1
Karam	0	1	1
Kekus	0	1	1

Goalie	Min	GA	GAA
Gambino	24	1	1.58
Lupou, Marty	567	39	2.61
Barsotti	52	9	6.58

Final record: 6-4-7

back boards, landing squarely at the feet of Marek Ciszewski, who boomed a first-timer into the back of the net.

Gorecki used the short halftime break to go into full tirade mode, detailing his team's shortcomings. Whether the rant got the Byki thinking straight is uncertain, but a three-goal burst in the first eight minutes of the second half put the game out of reach.

The Byki were focused right from the kickoff, spraying shots all over the Srpska goal. Matt Ahrens ended the shooting gallery with a massive blast, giving the Byki a lead after just 0:32 had elapsed in the second half.

The lead doubled with 12:14 to go in the game. Ammin Mehreioskouei led the counterattack and dished off to Ciszewski, who nailed a rocket from the right flank.

Mike Stamatinos made it 5:2 a minute later. After receiving a pass from Mehreioskouei, Stamatinos put a move on his marker at the top of the area and fired home his seventh goal of the season.

The remainder of the match was played at training speed. Srpska's players knew that their window of opportunity for an upset had closed shut and there would

be no more joy this season. For their part, the Byki displayed the energetic two-way play that has been the key ingredient in their victories this season.

The score swelled to 6:2 with 7:17 to go. Ahrens pushed the counterattack and made a simple lay-off to Martinez, who coolly waited for the stranded keeper to commit and fired past him. Martinez played provider for Kuqi's second goal of the night with 0:39 left. Martinez stole the ball and immediately dribbled to goal. He passed off to Kuqi, who faked the keeper out of the way and rolled the ball into the empty net.

BYKI LINEUP (2-2-1): Marty Lupou – Mike Lupou, Stamatinos (c) – Ahrens, Martinez – Kuqi. **Bench:** Barsotti, Ciszewski, Mehreioskouei, Rrahmani.

BYKI SCORING SUMMARY

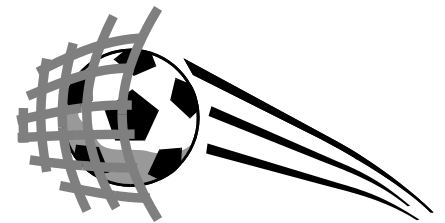
1:1 – Kuqi 21 (Stamatinos); 6:57.
2:2 – Ciszewski 6 (Kuqi); 17:36.
2:3 – Ahrens 2; 19:32.
2:4 – Ciszewski 7 (Mehreioskouei); 25:46.
2:5 – Stamatinos 7 (Mehreioskouei); 26:46.
2:6 – Martinez 3 (Ahrens); 30:43.
2:7 – Kuqi 22 (Martinez); 37:21.

Byki Man of the Match: Klemens Kuqi



BYKI

bits & pieces



The Chicago Fire kicked off the 2011 MLS season on March 19, hoping to rebound from last year's disappointing campaign, one that ended with the Fire missing the playoffs for only the second time in the club's history. A major housecleaning of the roster took place, with ten new players added to the club. With four points from their first two matches, the team have given their fans some hope that the results on the field will be better this season.

Although the Fire missed out on the post-season in 2010, the Byki kept intact their streak of attending the Fire's annual Kickoff Luncheon. The Byki and their fans have now taken part in the event, which benefits the Chicago Fire Foundation, for 12 consecutive years.

The Fire Luncheon has always been great fun for the Byki, who buy out a table early in order to

guarantee that a Fire player or coach will join them for lunch. The Byki have had some notable lunch partners in the past: **Peter Nowak** (three times), **Jesse Marsch**, and **Chris Rolfe**. Some players have even extended their graciousness by joining the Byki for a beer after the event. The Byki who had the good fortune to sit in and listen to Peter Nowak talk soccer in the Hilton hotel bar in 2000



The King snags a scarf picture with the vivacious Amy Freeze, who emceed the Fire Luncheon.



Matt Treter, Mark Sokolowski, and George Gorecki introduce MLS Commissioner Don Garber to the joys of the Byki scarf.

had a treat that they will likely remember for quite a long time.

Before the event began, fans got a chance to mingle with the players in the lobby outside the ballroom. Original Byk **Mark Sokolowski**, who normally uses the pre-luncheon period to go into autograph-hound mode, changed course this time and instead pursued the bubbly and curvaceous **Amy Freeze** for a photo op. Amy, a sometime sideline reporter for Fire games that are broadcast locally, was the emcee for the luncheon.

Midfielder **Baggio Husidic** joined the Byki at this year's luncheon and the youngster was an affable, if soft spoken, third-year pro. Baggio expressed confidence in the new players in the Fire roster, especially praising Uruguayan striker **Diego Chaves**, who has scored two goals in as many matches in the young season. Byki fan

Laurie Gorecki was so impressed with Baggio's scouting report that she added Chaves to her MLS fantasy team.

Laurie's hubby, **George**, however, got into a spirited back-and-forth with Baggio regarding the type of player who could make an impact in MLS. When George suggested that German international striker **Miroslav Klose** could score 25 to 30 goals if he played in MLS, Baggio shot down that idea, claiming that big-name players usually don't make an impact in MLS, citing recent examples like **David Beckham** and **Thierry Henry**. Baggio, a mere babe who has not yet reached 24 years of age, can be

forgiven if he does not recall the MLS success of top international players like **Carlos Valderrama** and **Hristo Stoichkov**. Baggio, however, played alongside one such star player, Mexican legend **Cuauhtémoc Blanco**, so perhaps he should have known better about the impact of top-shelf foreign talent,.

In addition to the photos shown here, the complete set can be found at the Byki page on Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Stare-Byki-Football-Club/145395415501646?sk=photos>



Baggio Husidic (center) shows off his new Byki scarf. The Byki (l to r) pose with their new pal: Steven Pedlow, Mark Sokolowski, George Gorecki, James Vlahakis, Stef Wiecek and Matt Treter.

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MAJOR DIVISION

Red Section	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts	Blue Section	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
B-H Lilies	16	9	3	4	59	61	30	RWB Adria	16	15	0	1	122	39	45
Hellenic United Blue	16	9	3	4	64	42	30	FK Kozarac	16	14	1	1	95	37	43
Tricycles SC A	16	8	0	8	51	54	24	Albanian Stars	16	8	2	6	77	61	26
Chicago Pride	16	7	2	7	59	70	23	SAC Wisla	16	5	1	10	67	80	16
KF Tirana	16	4	3	9	47	72	15	FK Republika Srpska A	16	3	1	12	47	98	10
CKS Warta A	16	3	2	11	48	78	11	Podlasie SC	16	1	2	13	51	95	5

FIRST DIVISION

Red Section	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts	Blue Section	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
RWB Adria B	16	13	1	2	69	36	40	Chicago Thunder	16	12	2	2	66	38	38
Zaglebie SC	16	11	2	3	77	36	35	Stal Mielec	16	10	4	2	70	40	34
Stare Byki FC	16	6	3	7	52	48	21	Winged Bull A	16	7	2	7	62	68	23
Hellenic United White	16	6	1	9	53	49	19	FK Podrinje	16	6	0	10	44	48	18
CKS Warta B	16	6	1	9	40	74	19	West Bosnia SC	16	4	2	10	44	72	14
FK Republika Srpska B	16	1	3	12	40	81	6	Pitbulls SC	16	2	3	11	30	57	9

SECOND DIVISION

Red Section	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts	Blue Section	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Assyrian FC	16	16	0	0	102	36	48	Independiente FC	16	13	0	3	63	19	39
Tricycles SC B	16	8	2	6	49	47	26	NK Prijedor	16	10	1	5	63	39	31
Gremio FC	16	8	1	7	63	57	25	Naperville Strikers	16	9	3	4	58	48	30
HNK Primorac	16	6	4	6	76	64	22	Gremio B	16	10	0	6	51	39	30
Winged Bull B	16	7	1	8	56	61	22	Turkish FC	16	4	0	12	34	73	12
Chicago Inter RB A	15	6	3	6	40	52	21	Chicago Inter RB B	15	2	1	12	29	78	7
Chasquis	16	4	0	12	62	78	12	Chicago Thunder B	16	0	0	16	22	77	0