



BOUNCINGS

14 Oct 06



Byki

1 : 1 (a.e.t.)

2 : 4 (PKs)

Thunder

A Team - NSL 1st Division
Hawthorne Sports Complex - 8 October 2006

Byki pay the penalty

The Byki ended their season in disappointing fashion last Sunday when Chicago Thunder won the battle at the penalty spot following a match that had ended 1:1 after extra time at the Hawthorne Sports Center in Cicero. Thunder go on to face the Albanian Stars in the semifinal round. After a satisfying 9-4-3 record in the regular season, Sunday's result was a bitter pill to swallow for a side that had given their all for two grueling, nail-biting hours.

The Byki had crafted an equalizer in the 86th minute to extend the contest, but came up short in the shootout tiebreaker. "The two teams were evenly matched and I'm very pleased with the way we played," said George Gorecki afterwards. "Penalties are a roll of the dice and today was simply not our day."

The unpredictability of penalties could have been removed from the equation if the Byki had taken care of business on the field and finished their chances better. They did a great

job of nullifying Thunder's preferred approach of playing the long ball to their speedy forwards. Although the Byki did not dominate possession in the game, they certainly had opportunities to put more than one goal on the scoreboard.

The Byki had the first early salvo. Matt Fleming drove a strong cross to the far post from a corner kick. Sweeper Andrew Dennis outjumped everyone to win the ball, including the goalkeeper, but his header went over the bar.

After that attempt, the match settled into a midfield battle in which both sides sought to establish a rhythm. Gorecki had emphasized the importance of negating the speed of the Thunder forwards by pressuring Thunder's defenders when they won the ball. Because of their tendency to play long passes over the defense, the Byki figured that taking away that aspect of their game would frustrate them. The Byki did very well at applying this pressure, evidenced by the stream of harsh words exchanged by the Thunder fullbacks when they were forced into easy turnovers.

The Byki also did well in adapting to the Field Turf surface at Hawthorne. In the two matches that they played there last season, the Byki looked a little lost in trying to implement their style of ball possession. They looked reasonably comfortable versus Thunder, which was probably due to the several practice session held on the artificial turf at Northwestern University. The Byki have been training at NU since the beginning of September.

Things began to heat up in the latter stages of the first half. In the 33rd minute, Fleming curled a tantalizing ball over the Thunder backline for Zach Dance. The striker was well-positioned for a shot on goal, but was confounded when he was unable to control the bounce of the ball.

After a quiet first half, Thunder grabbed the lead ten minutes before the break. After putting the Byki under

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significant stress for an extended stretch, Thunder pounced on a loose ball on the right side of the box that the Byki failed to clear. Jorge de la Cruz charged hard off his line to intervene and was beaten when the Thunder forward alertly lobbed the ball over his outstretched arms.

The Byki looked dangerous in the 40th minute when Jeff Samp sent in an inviting cross from the left wing. The keeper came out to punch the ball to safety and managed to win out over the aggressive Dance, who made a strong bid to win the challenge.

Things looked promising for an equalizer at the stroke of halftime. Fleming sent a free kick from the deep right corner into the crowded penalty area. The keeper made a daring lunge through the tangle of bodies to kick the ball clear.

The Byki turned up the heat to start the second half. After only eight minutes, the equalizer was in the back of the net, but was eventually negated when the assistant referee raised his flag for offside. Gabi Dziekiewicz started the play by heaving a long throw-in from the right side into the penalty area. Joe Gambino flicked the ball along to Dance, who was alone on the doorstep of the Thunder goal as he nodded the ball home. Some of the Byki were not pleased to have a goal taken away. "I couldn't tell from where I was standing," said Gorecki. "But we always complain about our regular-season games where we don't have linesmen and the referee misses calls. Ironically, Zach's goal might have stood if there hadn't been a linesman there."

A minute later, Thunder's goalie shanked yet another clearance. Fleming latched onto the loose ball, dribbled along the edge of the box and fired a hard shot that the keeper managed to save.

In the 67th minute, Dance was on the loose again, probing for a shot inside the box. A hustling defender saved Thunder by knocking the ball away for a corner.

As the clock ticked inexorably toward the 90:00 mark, Gorecki shifted tactics and sent three forwards to put more pressure on Thunder's goal. When that didn't work, Gorecki sent a fourth player forward for the final ten minutes.

The Byki got their goal four minutes from time during a flurry in the crowded Thunder penalty area. Dennis, sent to the front from his sweeper spot, blasted a shot towards goal that was blocked. The loose ball floated to Dance, who calmly stuck his chest into the ball's path to gently guide it home. It was yet another fantastic finish from a Byki side who had shown lots of heart and determination all season long to pull results seemingly out of nowhere.

The Byki carried momentum into the extra session. In the 95th minute, Minos Bouzoukis and Ahmed Goudeaux worked a slick give-and-go play in the right corner. Bouzoukis launched a cross towards the goal, and the goalie desperately tipped the ball away.

Three minutes later, Dance deftly accepted a pass outside the box and quickly turned to take the ball to goal. He dribbled past one defender and shot narrowly wide of the post.

In the 104th minute, Dance chased down a long pass on the right wing. The keeper had come out to try win the ball and almost made a fatal error. Dance got there first and centered a diagonal pass back for Brian Nash. Nash struck the ball immediately and was denied by a defender sticking his leg out to block the shot.

With both teams physically spent, the lottery of penalty kicks would decide who would advance to the semifinals. The Byki had been practicing penalty kicks since the beginning of September, so Gorecki felt confident that the pressure would be on Thunder.

Thunder started things off with a weak shot that was an easy save for de la Cruz. Gambino led off for the Byki and was shocked when the keeper made a diving save on his shot. "I always hit my penalties to the same spot," said Gambino. "But the field had a small indentation by the penalty spot and when I moved the ball away, the referee made me move it back. That threw off my angle and I tried to compensate and the keeper got a hand on it."

The Byki and Thunder traded goals for the next two rounds, as Chad Daniel and Dance buried their opportunities.

Thunder took a decisive 3:2 lead in the shootout on their fourth attempt. When the Thunder keeper made the save on Samp's spot kick, the Byki were painted into a corner for the fifth and final kick. Thunder's shooter did his job and the Byki were left to ponder what might have been.

"Penalties are a tough way to decide a game," said Gorecki. "It's a roll of the dice. I thought we had prepared well, but fatigue of both mind and body can have a debilitating effect. I give Thunder credit for playing tough for 120 minutes. But we did not deserve to be eliminated."

BYKI SCORING SUMMARY

Dance 14 (Dennis); 86th; 1:1.

BYKI LINEUP (4-4-2): de la Cruz – Dennis, Dziekiewicz, Daniel, Rose – Bouzoukis, Delaunay, Samp, Fleming – Gambino, Dance (c). **Bench:** Ciszewski, Elliott, Goudeaux, Nash, Smart.

Disjointed Byki stumble in opener

The Byki were not at all happy last Thursday following the curtain-raising match of the indoor season when they dropped a 5:3 decision to Galaxy in the Schaumburg Rec League. The match was dominated by the sloppy play of the Byki, who spent most of the evening giving the ball away. Thanks to inattentive marking in the first half, the Byki were mired in a 3:0 hole at the break and were never able to recover, despite a brief resurgence in the second half.

The team came into the Rec League with high hopes, after having captured second place there last winter. Coaches Wei Zhang and Eric Tower are seeking to build continuity for the club's Over 30 program and have put together a squad that, on paper, looks stronger than the 2006 outdoor team. Unfortunately, this match wasn't played on paper and Byki ineptitude sends a compelling message that there is still much work to be done.

Galaxy wasted no time catching the Byki flat-footed. They snatched the lead within the first two minutes when they played a simple through ball on the right side. The Byki were slow to react and the Galaxy forward sprinted in alone on goalkeeper Ryan Eliasek. He drew Eliasek out of his goal and slipped the ball inside the far post.

The score went to 2:0 a few minutes later when the Byki were totally asleep on a corner kick. Galaxy put the ball in play quickly and sent a cross to the far post. With Byki defenders standing around and gawking, an unmarked Galaxy player gleefully headed past Eliasek.

The Byki frustrated themselves throughout most of the first half. On offense, their spacing was very poor. Anytime a Byki player had the ball, he had few options to make a clean pass. This led to excessive dribbling or easy giveaways. Zhang identified this situation as the team's biggest problem as halftime approached.

Galaxy upped their lead to 3:0 when they led the attack down the left wing. When a Galaxy player was tied up in the corner, he dropped the ball back to a teammate just outside the box. He fired a shot from distance that Eliasek could not grab. Once again, lax marking made it easy pickings for Galaxy.

Zhang did not mince words with his halftime comments. The Byki appeared to pay attention and came out of the gate after the break with a commitment to ball possession. Early passes played to feet forced Galaxy to drop into a defensive stance. That didn't bother the Byki, who simply kept moving the ball with simple passes.

The Byki also increased defensive pressure by tightening up the space in the Galaxy half of the field. The aggressive play paid dividends within the first minute of the second half,

when an errant clearance landed at the feet of Marek Ciszewski. Last year's scoring linchpin in the Rec League immediately converted the mistake into a goal. He made a quick sprint past a defender and fired the ball into the net to bring the Byki to within 3:1.

Confidence soared for the Byki a few minutes later. Newcomer Brett Frischmann drove a kick-in from the right side towards the far post. Defender Steven Pedlow had pushed forward and ran behind the Galaxy defense unnoticed. His precise header gave the keeper no chance and the Byki were suddenly back in business, down only 3:2.

But Galaxy regained a two-goal cushion with 10 minutes left when the Byki defense had a decisive letdown. George Gorecki allowed a Galaxy forward to nutmeg him at midfield, springing him on a breakaway. He slid the ball under the diving Eliasek to make it 4:2. "An inexcusable mistake," a dejected Gorecki said afterwards. "I didn't realize that I didn't have weak-side help, but I should have positioned myself better on a guy who was probably half my age."

The Byki kept plugging away and pulled to within 4:3 with 3:36 left in the contest. Midfielder Nick Elmkinssi dribbled the ball up the middle of the field, drawing defenders toward him. At just the right moment, he threaded a precise through pass for Ciszewski, who attacked the space behind the last defender. With the keeper at his mercy, Ciszewski slotted the ball into the back of the net.

The Byki were in scramble mode for the remaining minutes, as they desperately sought an equalizer. They could not put together enough sustained pressure on the Galaxy goal, as Galaxy did a good job of killing off the clock. They scored an empty-net goal in the dying minutes when the Byki pushed all seven players in the Galaxy half of the field.

"I thought everybody played hard out there," said Zhang afterwards. "We just need to correct some fundamental mistakes and we'll play better."

BYKI SCORING SUMMARY

1st: None.

2nd: Ciszewski 1; 1:00; 3:1. Pedlow 1 (Frischmann); 5:00; 3:2. Ciszewski 2 (Elmkinssi); 21:24; 4:2.

BYKI LINEUP (2-3-1): Eliasek – Tower, Pedlow – Garcia, Elmkinssi, Jedrzejowski – Ciszewski. **Bench:** Frischmann, Gorecki, Hunter, Parra.

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MAJOR DIVISION

Red Section	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts	Blue Section	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Winged Bull	16	10	2	4	42	21	32	RWB Adria	16	13	1	2	43	16	40
Honduras SC	16	10	1	5	39	24	31	KF Ulqin	16	10	4	2	34	17	34
Jahbat FC	16	8	3	5	33	24	27	SAC Wisla	16	9	2	5	30	15	29
CKS Warta	16	6	3	7	30	31	21	Gazelle SC	16	8	5	3	33	18	29
BH Lilies	16	4	3	9	28	44	15	NK Prijedor	16	3	1	12	19	47	10
West Indies Jets	16	1	3	12	7	32	6	FK Kozarac	16	0	0	16	10	59	0

FIRST DIVISION

Red Section	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts	Blue Section	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
FC Romania	16	14	2	0	83	24	44	Albanians FC	16	11	1	4	40	31	34
Stare Byki FC	16	9	4	3	37	29	31	Royal FC	16	9	3	4	51	25	30
Deportivo Colomex	16	8	4	4	47	27	28	Chicago Thunder	16	9	2	5	40	37	29
Winged Bull B	16	6	3	7	39	45	21	West Bosnia	16	7	2	7	25	28	23
Transilvania Vampires	16	3	3	10	25	46	12	HNNK Hrvatska	16	5	1	10	32	42	16
SC BiH	16	0	0	16	10	50	0	Turkish FC	16	2	1	13	23	68	7

SECOND DIVISION

Red Section	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts	Blue Section	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Lemont FC	14	11	2	1	36	15	35	Stare Byki B	16	10	4	2	34	12	34
Melrose Park SC	14	9	2	3	45	33	29	FK Podrinje	16	7	7	2	46	26	28
GR-04	14	5	3	6	41	53	18	Real Independiente	16	6	4	6	24	29	22
CKS Warta B	14	4	1	9	29	34	13	Tilza FC	16	1	3	12	12	29	6
								Lake Shore SC	16	2	0	14	27	63	6

OVER 30 DIVISION

Red Section	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts	Blue Section	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Winged Bull	16	13	0	3	58	20	39	SAC Wisla	16	13	1	2	63	19	40
Arabian FC	16	12	3	1	56	25	39	Lake Shore A	15	11	2	2	49	23	35
Gato Verde	16	9	0	7	28	30	27	Hellas SC	16	10	2	4	54	35	32
Stare Byki FC	16	4	1	11	32	48	13	West Indies Jets	16	7	2	7	26	39	23
Melrose Park SC	15	2	0	13	8	55	6	CD Taximaroa	16	5	1	10	26	21	16
Lake Shore B	16	1	0	15	8	43	3	Tanners SC	16	2	0	14	21	71	6