



# BOUNCINGS

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11 Nov 08



## Oldboys shake off rust in new indoor league

STARE BYKI FC 1 : 11 JAMES JOYCE

The Byki old-timers ushered in a new chapter in their history in late October when they debuted in the Over 30 Division of the newly formed Chicago Premier Soccer League. It was a less than memorable first week for the Byki, as they dropped two of the three games played.

The CPSL is a recreational indoor league established at the Max McCook facility in McCook. The matches are played seven-a-side on Field Turf with no boards surrounding the field. The CPSL is a start-up operation and coach Eric Tower preached patience to his teammates as league organizer Oscar Ponce works out all of the details.

One of those details would be a schedule, which the Byki received only after two weeks of nagging Ponce about it. With six teams competing, each team will play all of their opponents twice. In a strange quirk, the Byki played both of their matches against a club called James Joyce within a week of one another. Only adding to the confusion was the realization that their second match against the Joyces was to have been played in December, rather than last Tuesday.

But the Byki can probably survive these quirks if they can put together a coherent squad. Lack of cohesion was evident in the early going, as some Byki were looking to

attain match fitness, others were trying to shake off the rust, and others were just trying to learn the names of their teammates.

The roster comprises mostly players from the Over 40 group, but the team have quite a few Over 30s, so the group was recast as the Over 30 Blue Team, to more accurately reflect their make-up. Two long-time Byki veterans returned to the fray after long absences. Kris Zadlo, out for three years following Achilles tendon surgery and a nightmare job that had him commuting between Houston and Chicago, eagerly awaited the opportunity to get back into things. Also rejoining the Byki was Ted Piotrowski, whose last action with the Byki came in 1995, after 172 appearances with the club, dating back to 1983. Piotrowski chose to return to glory following the highly popular Reunion Game of last July, which brought many original Byki back together.

The team kicked off the season on October 28, when they took on James Joyce. It was clear from the outset that the Byki would be starting off in survival mode. With all of the new faces and players who had been dormant since last April, the team would have to do some work before they could start playing in an interconnected manner.

Although they held the Joyces scoreless for the first 15 minutes of the match, the disconnect between teammates was obvious. The Byki conceded seven goals in the final ten minutes of the first half, as the game quickly got away from them. The mistakes were fundamental and numerous and the Joyces took full advantage of Byki turnovers that became easy scoring chances.

The Byki scored their consolation goal early in the second half. Tony Gallo won a loose ball at midfield and cranked a shot from long distance. The keeper made the save, but the ball popped out of his hands high in the air and floated behind him.

The Joyces put away four more goals to give the Byki a thorough 11:1 pasting. The shell-shocked Byki had to shake off the bitter taste of that defeat quickly because their next match was scheduled in just two days' time. The last-minute arrangement was necessary because the league actually started up on October 21, which was only a day after the Byki registered their team. Ponce graciously allowed the Byki

### Sponsor Corner

The Byki have two bars sponsoring the club during the indoor season:

**Roosters Barn & Grill**  
122 W Lake St in Bloomingdale

**Slager's on 47th**  
9308 47th St in Brookfield

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to reschedule the match because of the late timing of their entry into the league.

#### BYKI SCORING SUMMARY

Gallo 1; 27:41; 1:7.

**BYKI LINEUP (3-2-1):** Fukar – Gorecki, Zadlo, Cooper – Gallo, Tower – Brough. **Bench:** Bolesta, Mansur P Sr, Neighbors, Piotrowski, Towsey, Wiecek.

#### STARE BYKI FC 3 : 0 ARABIAN EAGLES (FORFEIT)

In their second match, the Byki squared off against the Arabian Eagles, a team filled with players from Arabian FC, a longtime opponent in Over 30 play in the NSL. Although the Eagles only brought a couple of players from their regular squad, the Byki knew that they would have their hands full.

The Eagles scored twice in the first nine minutes and the Byki replied immediately when Jay Brough blasted a shot from midfield on the ensuing kickoff after the Eagles' second goal. But the match was turned completely on its head two minutes later when an Eagles player got into a confrontation with Byki goalkeeper Dean Fukar.

The Eagles player who started the problems is a well-known troublemaker in the NSL. "This guy is good for at least a yellow card every time we have played them," recalled George Gorecki. "We have seen this act many times."

Fukar had grown weary of the complaining to the referee by this Eagles player and yelled at him to pipe down. The player took exception to this treatment and ran 60 yards down the field to go nose-to-nose with Fukar. After some nasty words were exchanged, the Eagles player and a teammate shoved Fukar a couple of times. When Fukar refused to take the bait, the Eagles player went ballistic and screamed to the referee that Fukar was drunk and should to be removed from the field. The bemused referee didn't know how to deal with the situation and only intervention from security prevented the incident from escalating. The Eagles marched off the field and refused to continue, which caused the match to be terminated.

The Byki are still waiting for Ponce to make a ruling on the outcome of the match. "I told Oscar that our position is simple," said Gorecki. "The match did not go to completion due to the actions of the Eagles. Thus, the only reasonable consequence is that they forfeit the points to us. Any other outcome, like replaying the game, harms us because we were ready to play last Thursday. And any punishment less than a forfeit validates their childish and petulant behavior."

**BYKI LINEUP (3-2-1):** Fukar – Gorecki, Zadlo, Cooper – Gambino, Tower – Brough. **Bench:** Mansur P Sr, Neighbors, Piotrowski, Stamatakos, Wiecek.

#### STARE BYKI FC 4 : 8 JAMES JOYCE

The Byki returned to action last Tuesday, when they were surprised to find the James Joyce team waiting for them at

Max McCook. Neither team expected a rematch so soon and both managers were eager to get answers from Ponce. The only thing they got was dubious explanation of the competition format and Ponce donning the referee shirt to fill in for a late-running arbiter.

The Byki could not have started the match in a more frustrating fashion, conceding two goals after just 1:14 had elapsed. Terrible marking allowed the Joyces all the time and space that they wanted and they beat Fukar from ridiculously close range. The score swelled to a mortifying 5:0 by the middle of the first half, as the Byki defense was a shambles and their attack consisted of poor passes that frequently gave away possession to the Joyces.

The Byki pulled one back with 9:46 left before the break. Tower, who had a hand in all of the Byki goals, set up Paul Mansur, who was open on the right side of the box. Mansur picked his spot and drilled a shot past the goalie, who had given away too much of the near side of the goal.

Two more brain cramps by the Byki made it 7:1 at halftime. The players took a hard look at their situation and concluded that the only way back was to work harder on defense. To their credit, the Byki began turning things around in the second half and it all started with tighter marking. The Byki stayed close to the Joyces, communicated better with one another to help make sure that all opponents were accounted for, and simply put out a little old-fashioned effort and hustle.

Nick Elmkinssi scored the first of his two goals on the night 6:41 into the second half. He and Tower worked a nifty give-and-go and Elmkinssi finished the play off with a first-time blast that found the back of the net.

Slick passing ignited an impressive counterattack several minutes later. After a Byki steal at midfield, Mansur slid the ball to Tower, who quickly spotted Elmkinssi on the right. The pass was inch-perfect and removed Elmkinssi's marker out of the play. Elmkinssi teed the ball up on the right side of the area and blistered a shot past the keeper.

With four minutes to go, the Byki threatened to make a game of it. Another Joyce turnover created by Byki pressure sprang Tower on a dribbling run up the middle. He shook off the challenge of two defenders and poked a shot past the keeper to bring the Byki to within 7:4. The Joyces scored a late goal to secure the victory.

The Byki saw their second-half comeback as a sign of progress. Stout defending, coupled with several sparkling saves from Fukar, allowed the Byki a deserved 3:1 edge in the second half. Stuffing the opponents' offense allowed the Byki to do some creative things with the ball. The team still have a long way to go before they are signing from the same song book.

#### BYKI SCORING SUMMARY

Mansur 1 (Tower); 15:14; 1:5. Elmkinssi 1 (Tower); 31:41; 2:7. Elmkinssi 2 (Tower); 41:00; 3:7. Tower 1; 46:00; 4:7.

**BYKI LINEUP (3-2-1):** Fukar – Bolesta, Brough, Wiecek – Gambino, Tower – Piotrowski. **Bench:** Elmkinssi, Gorecki, Mansur P Sr, Zadlo.



# This week in Byki history



## Promotion – How Great Does It Feel?

Soccer's promotion-relegation structure provides up and coming team with the opportunity to compete with the next best set of teams in their league. This self-perpetuating structure cleanly and efficiently determines which teams belong and also ensures that the competition does not get stale.

The Byki have tasted promotion twice in their history. After joining the National Soccer League in 1996, they began play in the 2nd Division, which is the third tier of competition. The first question asked by many of the players who were on the 1996 roster was, "What will it take to get promoted?" The Byki quickly found out that the process of rising to the top would be neither easy nor straightforward.

The 1996 squad was largely made up of some original Byki, along with some players who had been with the club for about four or five years. The Byki had only played in recreational leagues for 12 years and the players didn't know what would be expected of them in a competitive league. A 6-1-9 record that first year taught a stark lesson. The thrashing that they experienced in their first indoor season in the NSL (2-0-14 record) let everyone know that the climb out of the basement was going to take some hard work.

By 1997, the team had introduced a group of newcomers who provided a talent upgrade. The Byki marginally improved to 7-2-7 that year, but the quality of their play became increasingly impressive. Things were booming in 1998, when a squad steeped in technical skill and molded to play as a fighting unit finished at the top of the table at 10-3-1. The Byki capped it off by winning the

2nd Division championship in thrilling fashion over KF Ulqin. The game ended 1:1 after normal time, and then 2:2 after extra time. The Byki won the penalty shootout 5:4 and took home more hardware than they could carry from the NSL banquet that year.

In addition to winning the Overall Championship, coach **Howard Hartenstein** was selected as 2nd Division Coach of the Year and the NSL's Executive Board unanimously chose the Byki as 2nd Division Team of the Year. **Manou Chahmirzadi** took Goalkeeper of the Year honors in a season during which he was a key contributor in many tight games. No save was bigger than the one he made in the penalty shootout versus KF Ulqin in the final. With the teams knotted up at 4:4 after four kicks apiece, Ulqin sent the 2nd Division's leading scorer to the spot and Manou stoned him, diving to the right to



The Byki celebrate their first trophy in the NSL.

block the ball. **Ted Snodgrass** stroked the final kick of the game into the back of the net to seal the deal.

"When you lose just one game and win the championship, you know you had a great season," said **George Gorecki**. "But for me, the best award was winning Team of the Year. It was an acknowledgement by people who matter that your team was great for reasons other than on-field performance."

It was a time when the Byki felt as though they were on top of the world. Many of the team's veterans had experienced a lot of the highs and lows over the years, but their achievements in the magical season were a hearty reward for all of the work.

The Byki did not get close to the promotion picture again until 2006. The scenario was once again the 2nd Division, as the club's B Team found the right combination of talent and teamwork to land themselves at the top of the table. It seemed almost unlikely because the club's B Team had experienced a lot of frustration over the years. Formed in 1999 as a way to ensure the strength of the A Team, the Byki B Team suffered from high turnover and a poor level of commitment.

Things changed significantly when **Joe Gambino** and **Russ Haynes** took control of the squad in 2005. Although no one expected miracles in 2006 after a 5-2-9 campaign in 2005, success came quickly for the B Team. Thanks to hotshot goalie **Ryan Eliasek**, a rock-solid defensive line and hard-working lunch bucket attitude, the B Team went 10-4-2 and clinched promotion with two games left in the season.

A first-place finish earned the Byki a bye into the playoff semifinals, where they met Melrose Park. After a scoreless first half, the Byki took control of the contest when **Abraham Ruiz** pounced on a Melrose mistake in the 48th minute. After Melrose equalized, the Byki ramped up the pressure and won the game when **Ari Pirillis** knocked home a shot by **Josh Zwickl** that rebounded off of the goalpost.

The victory set up the mother of all finals, Byki versus Lemont FC. The sides had battled on many occasions in their 2nd Division days, but a turning point for the Byki came in an early-season showdown with Lemont. **Eric Tower** discovered some bulletin-board material on Lemont's website in advance of the match. The scouting report read, "This team [referring to the Byki] will not beat us on talent, so let's not beat ourselves." It was all the Byki needed to get into a competitive lather and they blitzed their stunned opponents 4:1. The Byki went on to earn 17 points in their next nine matches, establishing them as the team to beat.

Both the Byki and Lemont had gotten the big prize before the final, promotion to the 1st Division. But once you've reached the final, there's no reason not to go home with the biggest trophy. It was a nail-biting match between two evenly matched teams. The Byki broke the ice after the hour mark when **Luis Arredondo's** first-time blast beat the keeper. Lemont equalized in the 80th minute when the referee's harsh decision on Ryan Eliasek's slide tackle on a Lemont player on the edge of the box resulted in a penalty kick. The score stayed that way until the final minute of extra time, when Lemont scored an unlikely goal to take the title.

Despite finishing runners-up, the players had achieved something quite extraordinary. They transformed their squad from a bunch of perennial also-rans into champions of their group. Ryan picked up the Goalkeeper of the Year award for his stellar work between the pipes. The NSL honored Joe Gambino as Coach of the Year and the team shared Team of the Year with Lemont.

All Byki players will recall their favorite matches with fondness, but anyone who played for a Byki squad that earned promotion will recall their favorite games in a most special way.