

FOOTBALL LIFE IN NIŠ DURING THE GERMAN OCCUPATION 1941-1944. YEARS

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ABSTRACT

Every end is also a new beginning. Therefore, football as a part of the social milieu, with the collapse of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, finds a way to position itself in the community in new conditions and circumstances in Serbia. Immediately after the military collapse of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the first matches began to be played. Interestingly, the initiator of those meetings was the German army. This was the case in Serbia, but also in Niš, where football was played in an organized manner from 1942 to the fall of 1944.

Key words: Football, German occupation, Niš, sports workers.

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INTRODUCTION

Football clubs in Nis, in the four war years 1941-1944. year, they shared the good and the bad with other citizens who mercilessly endured the hardships of the occupation. From June 1941, he revives football life and gathers all those football players who were not in captivity, classified in clubs that existed even before the war. Some clubs change their names, and until the Allied bombings in 1943, competitions for the Niš Cup continued, with some of their established course. Football is one of the few libertarian ages in enslaved Nis.

OPPORTUNITIES IN SERBIA

The occupation administration wanted things in Serbia to return to normal as soon as possible so that the occupied territory could be included in the German defense-economic system as soon as possible. One of the moves in that normalization campaign were football matches between teams of German military units and domestic clubs. Football also had a humanitarian dimension, especially when a huge number of refugees from NDH and Slovenia arrived in Serbia. According to custom, football tournaments were organized every year, during religious holidays and whenever they could fit into a gap in the competition calendar, most often around Christmas, All Saints' Day or All Saints' Day (Worldpress, 2012).

The clubs ensured a good attendance with their participation, and the revenue from the tickets went to the exiles. Well-known Belgrade clubs also traveled to the interior, played friendly matches with local clubs, in order to help repair the playground and purchase equipment. The game was also played to help the poor, prisoners (a large number of pre-war players spent the war in German prisoner of war camps), for the reconstruction of Smederevo, which was destroyed in the explosion of ammunition stored in the fortress in June 1941. The fact that at one point "SK 1913" found itself on the verge of being shut down due to financial difficulties shows how much solidarity there was. A charity match was organized with the biggest rival „BSK“, and the club continued to live on the income. Completely unimaginable for today's conditions. The authorities showed great determination in dealing with workers' clubs, which they saw as meeting places for communist and partisan supporters, and they were not far wrong in that assessment. All sports associations marked as class (labor, artisan, trade...) had to be registered with the Serbian Labor Union (a kind of state union), so only then could they request a work permit from the Ministry of Education, which also covered sports. And during the occupation in Belgrade, for a little more than three difficult and painful years, when 12,000 people came to one game, football was bigger than life.

The territory of Serbia was occupied by German troops, and there were two domestic armed formations called the Serbian State Guard and the Serbian Volunteer Corps. Serbia was governed as the supreme authority by the German Military Administration, which was subordinated to puppet Serbian governments - initially

the Commissioner's Government headed by Milan Acimović, and then the Government of National Salvation headed by Milan Nedić. Banat, which had autonomy and in practice represented a territory with a special status governed by the local German national minority, was also under the authority of the Serbian government. The civil commissar of the Banat was Joseph Sepp Lapp. In the administrative sense, Serbia was originally divided into banovina, and then into 14 districts, among which was the Banat (Wikipedia, 2019).

The opportunities for social life in Serbia to return, at least partially, to the former trends little by little, made it possible for sport to take its place.

SPORTS AND LIFE OPPORTUNITIES IN NIŠ

„When the Germans were convinced that „Germany is winning on all fronts” they became ndmen, and some even harsh. They were showing their superiority. They rarely went to pubs, but they went to matches” (Ilić, 1995). This was precisely where the key to future football work in occupied Niš, but also in other parts of Serbia, was. It was necessary to use that part of the mood, to find goodwill and agreement with the German occupying forces, that football and other parts of sports, incorporated into an integral part of life in war-torn Serbia. At the time of the so-called Acimović administration, the football workers of Niš prepared step by step, to first revive the work of the clubs, to repair the playgrounds, if there was any damage during the April bombings and destruction, and only then have dared to ask for the organization of the first matches. “The clubs learned that the championship is organized by the Niš Football Sub-Association, and the NLP was waiting for the decisions of the JNS. Since the Yugoslav Football Association did not start its work, neither competitions nor other football activities were organized (Ilić, 1995). Training and matches could not be discussed, because (Ilić, 1995), “as organizing by groups was strictly prohibited, the board members and club presidents did not have the courage to appear on the playing fields.” However, the energy and self-immolation of the football players in Niš were not for an understatement. Persistence, in the sense that sport brings people together, that sports events are an expression of the libertarian spirit of the Serbian people, and on occasions when there are no war operations in the cities themselves, they enable at least a little peacetime habits and some outlines of social life. It was necessary, therefore, to set in motion the imagination and the will, so that the wheel of sports history gets a different dynamic, to create opportunities for the creation of new quality in adversity. Only, those new circumstances that were in favor of the football sport and in which people, at least for that hour and a half to two, could hang out, under the auspices of the newly formed Serbian Football Association and the renewed Nis Football Sub-Association. As a result, the official commissar administration led by Milan Acimović and its lower-ranking authorities began to look favorably on the gatherings of the citizens of Niš, on the occasion of sports events. Football Nis showed another woman that life is stronger than any occupation and misfortune. „The first football match in Niš after the collapse of the old Yugoslavia was played on June 9, 1941. „Građanski” and „Pobeda” met. The match ended with the victory of „Građanski” with

3:0 (1:0). The best player on the field was the goalkeeper of „Građanski” Beneš, who managed to save one penalty. In the pregame of the main game, a combined team was formed from the reserve players of „Građanski” and „Pobeda”, which defeated „Radnički” (Niš) with 2:1 (Stamenković, 1941). This time, on June 21, „Građanski” and „Železničar” met. „In front of 3000 spectators, a match between my rivals Građanski and Železničar was played in Niš. Građanski won with 1:0.” (Novo vreme, 1941). Thus, social sports workers from football deliberately and tactically, by playing friendly matches, created an environment for more serious competitions that began in the second half of the summer. Of course, there is not a lot of information about these activities. This is what we came to in the course of several months of research about the Niš clubs „Pobeda”, „Građanski” and „Yugoslavia” / „Serbia”. Already at the end of July, „Građanski” and „Železničar” played again and showed a similar balance of forces, as in the match on June 21. This time it was not a friendly match, but a qualifying match for the future championship of the Serbian League. „Greens” recorded a 2:1 (1:0) victory. „As is known, according to the schedule of the SLS (Serbian Football Association), Niš should give two clubs for the final matches for the championship of the Niš Football Association (Novo vreme, 1941).

Since all the games between the six clubs from Niš were played, from which „Pobeda” came out as a finalist, the issue of the second participant for the sub-federal championship had to be resolved. Therefore, this last match between „Građanski” and „Železničar” was played on Friday. Although, according to all forecasts, „Železničar” was the favorite, it still won „Građanski” with a score of 2:1 (1:0) and thus qualified for the sub-federal championship. The match was very exciting. The pace from start to finish was very sharp and was dictated by the young players of „Građanski”. One cannot talk about any technique and group play at all, and yet. „Železničar” was above his winner only in this. The audience was over 1000. The judge was good Mr. Weiss from Belgrade.”

On this occasion, the reporter of the newspaper „Novo vreme” introduces us to the previous results achieved by the Niš clubs in mutual duels: „Pobeda” - „Sindelić” 4:0 and 6:0, „Građanski” - „Hajduk” 2:2 and 2:1, „Železničar” - „Emperor Konstantin” 4:0 and 2:2, „Pobeda” - „Građanski” 3:0” (Novo vreme, 1941). Here are the other results of „Građanski”, which we found in the capital section „Football in Kingdom of Yugoslavia” Milorad Sijić from Kruševac. „Građanski” - „Srbija” 4:2, „Sindelić” - „Građanski” 2:1, „Građanski” - „Beograd mala” 2:1 (Sijić, 2014). At the beginning of the occupation, the sports workers did not manage to organize their work at first by clubs.

At the beginning of the occupation, sports workers at first did not manage to organize their work in clubs. However, since the beginning of June, „Pobeda”, „Građanski”, „Železničar” have taken important steps in terms of the organization of training sessions and matches. They managed to get some kind of favor from the German local authorities (Feldkommandanture 809 in Niš, Stamenković, 1941) and through matches with members of the German military units, to create an environment in which Niš clubs could once again play against each other. However, even before and

after that first game, the clubs were followed by the usual misfortunes, characteristic of the scarce occupation times. "Equipment and props could not be provided. No leather - no ball. There are no other props either. The patching of everything that could be patched began" (Ilić, 1995).

And as if everything, at least in the circumstances that were favorable to football, moved forward. Because, whether he wanted to or not, the common world, trying to save his own life, also looked back at the sporting events in society.

It is unclear at what point Niš "Yugoslavia" changed its name to "Serbia", it is most likely June 1941. Even under that name, there were sports fortunes and difficulties, ups and downs, as well as when the club was called "Yugoslavia".

The summer of 1941 was marked by the competition for the Niš Cup in Niš. This competition was designed by the Niš Football Sub-Association, in order to shorten the break between the unfinished season 1940:/41. year and the autumn season from the 1941/42 championship. Given that, if we have found the table of this cup competition, we can conclude that the football officials of Nis made a lot of efforts to bring the championship to an end. The "Serbia" team achieved average results: "Emperor Konstantin" - "Serbia" 5:3, "Civilian" - "Serbia" 4:2, "Serbia" - "Železničar" 3:0, "Pobeda" - "Serbia" 10:2 and "Serbia" - "Belgrade mala" 4:1 (Sijić, 2014).

„Sindelić” is, based on the table we have, from won all eight points in four games and took first place, followed by „Pobeda” and „Hajduk” with 6 each, „Građanski” with 5, while „Serbia” won fifth place with four points, ahead of „Beograd mala” and “ Emperor Konstantin” with 3 each and the last placed „Železničar”, former NLP champion, who collected only one point. The newspaper „Novo vreme”, one of the main media promoters of sports in occupied Serbia, brought readers a decent number of articles about football events in Niš. Here is the text, which illustrates quite well the opportunities in Niš football sport and competition at the city level. „While the playing of Southern League games has stopped due to certain difficulties, there are particularly fierce battles for the first two places, because they give them the opportunity to enter the Southern League. The NLP Championship is divided into two parts. Seven clubs from Niš are fighting each other. The first of them automatically enters the final competition, while the runner-up should play against the champions of Leskovac, Aleksinac, Zaječar and Kruševac. The first-placed of them and the champion of Niš meet in the final battle and give the definitive champion of NLP, who has to fight for entry into the Southern League with the last one from the league. Clubs from Niš regularly play matches and it is already possible to predict which of them will take first place” (Novo vreme, 1941). In the summer of 1941, competitions began in the South Group of the Serbian League, which was formed by the Serbian Football Association, which somehow managed to organize this league championship. As the last champion of Niš „before the war”, „Železničar” directly entered the unique and the Southern League (Ilić, 1995). Qualifications were played for the other places. After the qualifications in which a large number of clubs participated, the SLS Northern League was formed from the following clubs: „BSK”, „Yugoslavia” (it has not yet changed its name to FC “1913”), „Jedinstvo” (Zemun), „Vitez” (Zemun). BASK

(Belgrade Academic Sports Club), „PAK” (Panceva Academic Club), „Sloga”, „Obilić”, „Čukarički” and „Mitić” (Nišlija Vlada Mitić who was a pre-war merchant and rich man and lived in Belgrade and had your club). In the SLS South League, the following teams played: „Radnički”, „Šumadija” and „KPSK” from Kragujevac, „Železničar”, „Pobeda”, „Građanski” from Niš, then the representative of Kragujevac and the representative of Kruševac. The leading clubs in Nedić’s Serbia, the Belgrade-based „BSK” and „Yugoslavija” were in a difficult financial situation, which separated them from the competition in the Sverena League of the Serbian Football Federation. „They thought that by visiting the province they would earn funds for the maintenance of the clubs.” Thus, on July 27 and 28, 1941, „BSK” visited Niš and played against „Pobeda”. They won 5:0. The next day, he beat the Niš national team 5:1. ... On August 17, „Yugoslavia” played, also with „Pobeda” and won with 7:4 (1:1)” (Ilić, 1995). In the SLS Southern League, „Pobeda” and „Železničar” emerged as favorites . The contest started on August 31st but the contest never ended. As the press of the time wrote, the Southern League capitulated. The reasons for that should be sought in the very unfavorable conditions for the competition (Ilić, 1995). Here are the results we reached: „Pobeda” - „Šumadija” 3:1, Čačak - „Radnički” 2:1, Kruševac - KPSK 4:0, Čačak - Šumadija 2:1, Kruševac - „Pobeda” 4:0, Čačak - KPSK 3:2, „Pobeda” - „Radnički” 5:0 and „Pobeda” - „Železničar” 10:0. „Pobeda” also participated in the finals of the competition of the Niš football sub-association. In the semi-finals, they defeated the Zaječar „Železničar” team in Niš, while the result of the duel in Zaječar, unfortunately, remains unknown. In the final matches, the team from Kruševac was more successful and became the champion of the sub-association (Sijić, 2014): „Pobeda” - „Kruševac” 1:1, „Kruševac” - „Pobeda” 2:1 (August 9, 1941) (Sijić, 2014). And then, “in the fall of 1941, competitions within the NLP began in the first class of teams in the city of Nis. The first part of the competition ended in January 1942. Seven clubs from Niš took part in the competition” (Stamenković, 1941). After fierce battles, the first place was won by „Emperor Constantine” with 9 points, as much as „Građanski” had with a lower goal difference.” „Serbia” team collected 5 points.

1942.

In Niš, „Radnički” continued to work despite occasional arrests and interrogations of club members and sympathizers, until February 1942, when the match between Radnički and the „Emperor Konstantin” team was interrupted because Andra Milutinović, the secretary of the Special Police in Nišu, insisted that the Radnicki players take off their red jerseys, which they refused. Soon, almost the entire team and the management of the club were arrested in the raid, which practically disbanded the club.

When it comes to 1942, at the end of the previous year and the beginning of the mentioned year, a competition for the winter cup was held. That „Christmas tournament”, previously under the auspices of Dragisa Cvetković, once an active sports worker in the ranks of “Pobeda”, had bad luck with the weather. A large number of matches were postponed or not even played. In the end, “Pobeda” triumphed. In

that calendar year, 1942, „Pobeda” had a very good team and it is not surprising that they mostly won in almost all championship and cup matches. Despite the success in the championship in Nis, „Pobeda” was the first, and „Sidelic” the second place, apart from the matches for the title of champion of the sub-association, in the spring of 1943, there was no higher level of competition, i.e. „state leagues”. Therefore, „Pobeda” confirmed its dominance from 1941 and 1942 in 1943. What was interesting, however, in the period of 1942 and 1943, on the sports fields in „Nedić’s” Serbia (Ilić, 1995). The establishment of the State Sports Committee, a body whose aim was to strictly control events in sports during the occupation, is interesting. “The president and secretary of the „State Sports Association” were appointed by the Minister of Education and Religion for a term of four years. Other members have been appointed. The members of the sports association were obliged to submit to the Minister of Education and Religion a list of the names of three candidates, who, in the opinion of the sports association, could become members of the „State Sports Committee”. The minister will, of course, choose one of those three or return the proposal to the federation for further consideration. Only people who corresponded to the authorities of the time could enter the sports committee” (Ilić, 1995). In the late winter of 1942, the state administration tried to introduce more order into the work of sports clubs and organizations and thus help itself and young people who are engaged in by sport. In this sense, it adopted the Decree on State Control of Sports Organizations. The decree entered into force on March 3, 1942. On the basis of the aforementioned Regulation, the State Sports Committee was formed with Milivoj V. Aračić, at the head (Stamenković, 1941), who in fact was supposed to create a precise sports environment with his plan and program of work, to manage the sport as a household and to create mechanisms to control all the pores of Serbian sport. After the snowy winter, it’s football time. „At the beginning of spring, with the arrival of beautiful days, from some time ago, Niš’s leading clubs started regular training” (Novo vreme, 1942). Therefore, there are no friendly matches until mid-April 1942. The season is opened on April 15 by „Građanski “ and „Pobeda”. „Građanski” won 4:3 (Novo vreme, 1942).

Already on April 30, a friendly match was played between „Sindelić” and „Građanski”. It was 5:3 (3:3) for „Sindelić”. “In the first half, the game was equal, while in the second, „Sindelić” was significantly superior, especially towards the end. Both teams missed several chances to score more goals. The result is realistic and fully matches the game. “Civic” played significantly weaker than last week when they beat “Emperor Constantine” and the excellent team of “Pobeda”. Arsenijević refereed without error” (Novo vreme, 1942). The next friendly match, which we find in the press in connection with the „greens” („Građanski”), is a duel played on May 8 in Niš between „Beograd mala” and „Građanski” in which “ „Beograd mala” won 3:1. „Građanski” was better in the first half, and Belgrade was weak in the second half. The game was not particularly interesting. Regner was the judge” (Novo vreme, 1942). During the summer, „Građanski” competed with other clubs from the city for the „Niški Pehar”. In the spring part of the Nis championship, if expected, the results achieved by the players of „S(e)rbia” were variable. The press noted, in the second half

of May, a very high, even catastrophic defeat of „Serbia” in the duel with „Pobeda”. It was even 12:0. This season, 1941/42. year, „Serbia” finished in the lower part of the table, and „Pobeda” triumphed, which until the first place, most often performed in the composition of: Branislav Jovanović „Kengur”, M. Janković „Ciri”, Miodrag Popović „Šebi”, Radoš Gvozdenović „Mlekadžija”, Vitomir Vitko Belić, Nikola Jovanović „Muknja”, Vivijen Rankin, Branislav Đogatović, Božidar Gojković Buda, Dušan Jocić Duci „Gumeni” and Božidar Miljković „Agent” (Novo vreme, 1942). The coach of Pobeda in 1942 was Milutin Petrović, who later left for other clubs. During July and August, the „Niš Podsavez” organized a competition for the Niš Cup. It was played according to a single point system. The following competed: „Pobeda”, „Sindelić”, „Železničar”, „Građanski”, „Emperor Konstantin”, „S(e)rbija”, „Hajduk” and „Obilić”. Among other things, „Serbia” lost (Novo vreme, 1942) to „Železničar” with 1:0. The match was played in the last week of June. One look at the competition table for the Niš Cup, shows us the average games and mediocre placement, which the players of „Serbia” recorded in this competition. „Pobeda” is in first place with 8 points, „Hajduk” is in second place and „Sindelić” is in third place with the same number of points and a slightly lower goal difference. „Građanski” won the fourth place with 5 points, while the fifth-placed „Serbia” won 4 points. Followed by „Beograd mala”, „Emperor Konstantin” and „Železničar” with 3 each (Novo vreme, 1942).

Before we turn to the events related to the autumn competition of the first class of Nis in the season 1942/43. year, it should be pointed out that in our research through Nis, we met one of the earliest fellow citizens, who as a boy watched the matches of „Građanski” during the occupation. We are talking about Branko Stanković (born in 1931 in Niš) from the settlement „Crni put” (near the former Niš machine industry), a retired construction technician. „As a boy, with my older brother, from the age of ten and later, I used to go to football matches in another part of Nis, where there were four playgrounds, „Sindelić”, „Železničar”, „Građanski” and „Pobeda”. Since we preferred to go to „Građanski” matches, and our neighborhood near Crni put mostly supported „Građanski” and we were fans of this club. Some “green” players also lived there. In order not to pay the entrance fee, we entered the game through some holes in the wooden stalls, and the older fans jumped over those high stalls. During the occupation, the following goalkeepers played for „Građanski”: Beneš, one of the brothers Čortanović and Prok. In defense, Kobac was the right back, as well as Ciri, Ratko „Džapalo” from „Black road” on the left back, but also one of the Topalović brothers. One of the Čortanović brothers, Džoma Belić and his brother Vitko Belić, played in the half-line, and Stojan-Stole, a railway employee who lived near the waste, played in the center-half position. In the rush, the following played: Jovica on the right wing, one of the Topalovićs in the half-back position, a non-commissioned officer of the Serbian State Guard with the nickname Tank, he played in the role of center forward, Dragutin Radović from the Mostovska workshop was in the left half-back position and Ivko Glišović (his real name is either Svetislav), on the left wing, but not only him, there were others” (Stanković, 2018). Our interlocutor remembered some other details: “ „Građanski” had an official room in the space between the current police department and the theater, another building near the intersection. The club was managed by an

industrialist who worked with leather. He was tall, big (engineer Miodrag Milojković, director of the „Balkan” leather factory (Sijić, 2014)). In one period, the tailor Kocić was also the president of „Građanski”. Radomir Rade Smiljković also stood out in the work of the club, after arriving from Skopje in the spring of 1941. „Građanski”, Branko Stanković, answers: „Of course.” Come on, Stole, the girls love you and Benesh kids are not a joke, thank you penalty kicks, they are just a part of those memories that fade a bit.” „Građanski”. Stanković answered us: „There were small, wooden tribunes, from the very fence of the Hygiene Institute, on the right side of the playground. Behind the bleachers was a room for the minutes and changing rooms. The grandstand was not covered” (Stanković, 2018).

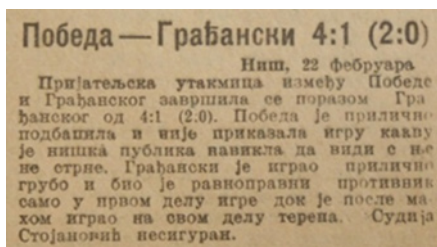
In the autumn season, the competitive 1942/43. , „Serbia” (former „Yugoslavia”) left an even weaker impression. Only a few results from this period are available. „Pobeda” - „S(e)rbia” 12:1, „Pobeda” - „Serbia” 5:1 and „Sindelić” - „Serbia” 4:0 (Sijić, 2014). Then, „Hajduk with great difficulty defeated Serbia with a narrow score of 3:2” (Novo vreme, 1942).

And at the end of November, „Serbia” “made a surprise and unexpectedly won a victory over Obilić by 2:0” (Novo vreme, 1942), so that after the seventh round it took seventh place with 2 points, which means one place and a point more than the last placed „Obilić”. In the final table, published by „Novo vreme” in May 1943, „Serbia” won the last, eighth place with 4 points from 14 games. She recorded 1 win, 2 draws and 11 losses with a goal difference of 20:51 (Sijić, 2014).

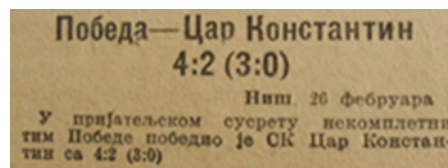
In connection with the year 1942 and regarding the attitude of the establishment towards the victim phenomenon in the civil war, especially when it was about the opposing side, we also found this in the literature: „How many clubs paid respect to their deceased or fallen members with a minute of silence and how it became a practice at almost every game of the „National sports committee” through the „Serbian Football Association” ordered that every mailing with a minute of silence must be reported. Permission had to be sought because mail was given to some who, in the opinion of the sports committee, did not deserve it. These were members of enemy formations (partisans) who were called the worst derogatory names in the media of the time. However, the clubs continued to deliver mail, and they also wore a black fleur around their arm” (Ilić, 1995).

1943.

In the third year of the war, despite all the adversities and difficulties that oppressed the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia under occupation, the football workers in Nis, in accordance with the circumstances and difficulties, tried to hold competitions and create, at least an apparent image, that civil life in the interior of Serbia it can work. This year, 1943, was, if for no other reason, than in terms of results, a year to be proud of. In support of that, here are some illustrations from the newspaper „Novo vreme”, which show how „Pobeda” played in the spring part of the competition of the Nis championship and what performance it had in friendly matches.



„Novo vreme“ from January 30, 1943.



„Nove Vreme“ from February 23, 1943.

That „Građanski“ could not cope with the better ones is also illustrated by the fact that after ten days, it was defeated again in the preparatory cycle. This time from Victory with 4:1 (2:0). „Pobeda“ was quite a failure and did not show the kind of game that the Nis audience is used to seeing from his side. „Građanski“ played quite rough and was an equal opponent only in the first part of the game, while after that he mostly played on his own part of the field. Judge Stojanović is uncertain (Novo vreme, 1943). Among the few news, information and reports about the activities and results of the matches of „Građanski“, we learn about two spring defeats. The first is in a duel with «Pobeda» of 5:0, from the end of April (Novo vreme, 1943). „For the entire time of the game, Pobeda was much more dominant.» The final score is 5:0 for Pobeda. Goals scored: Miljković 3, and Stanković and Gojković one each.» The group table of the Niš Niš Football Sub-Association looked like this after this duel:

1. „Pobeda»	13 10 3 0 67:18 23
2. „Sindelić»	11 8 1 2 27:16 17
3. „Železničar»	13 7 3 3 38:20 17
4. „Građanski»	13 5 2 6 31:27 12
5. „Hajduk»	11 4 3 4 18:36 11
6. „Emperor Constantine»	12 2 3 7 24:39 7
7. „Obilić»	12 1 4 7 13:25 6
8. „Serbia»	13 1 2 10 20:47 4 (Novo vreme, 1943)

This third year of the war was marked by the election of a new administration of the Nis sub-association, Pobeda's triumphant march through the Nis championship, the last place of „Serbia» and the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the existence of «Pobeda», in which, in mid-June, the first team of „Serbia» participated. Also on that occasion, the Niš audience could see the veterans of „Yugoslavia» or „Serbia». The Niš football sub-association elected new members of the board. „President Đura Spasić, official of the National Bank, vice-presidents Eng. Pavle Vasić and Drag. Milojković, treasurer of the City Administration, secretaries Andra Milutinović, police chief, R. Dinić, private clerk and A. Nešić, clerk of the District Office; cashiers: Dear. P. Stojanović, assistant manager of City Excise and Mile Cvetković, merchant. Board members: Sveta Nikolić, St. Marković, Ž. Arsenijević, D. Cvetković, Kr. Stojanović, Gr. Srecković, Sl. Mihailović, Božidar Mitrović (all from Niš) B. Naumović, B. Marinković (Leskovac), R. Stefanović and Eng. Ivković (Zaječar), A. Bukey (Aleksinac) and P.

Milošević (Knjaževac) (Novo vreme, 1943). Since we have already seen the table of the Niš championship, we will mention some more results that we have reached, and they concern the performance of „Serbia» in the spring of 1943. „Železničar» - „Serbia» 4:2 (1:2). Then, „Obilić and Serbia shared the points.» The result is 2:2 (Novo vreme, 1943).

On All Souls' Day 1943, Sports Club „Pobeda», one of the best teams in Nis until 1944, celebrated its 20th anniversary. The celebration was held at the „Železničar» playground, since the „Pobeda» playground was out of order in February 1942 due to the collapsed tribune. As part of the two-day celebration, on the first day, in the main game, Belgrade „BSK», the multiple champion of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, won 7:3 (Ilic,1995) against the celebrating team. Before that match, the Niš clubs „Hajduk» and „Serbia» met. Hajduk won 3:2 (0:2) (Novo vreme, 1943). During the second day of the ceremony, the Sport Club „Serbia» once again played an important role. In the exhibition match, „the former football stars of Serbia and Pobeda performed. Serbia won with 3:0 (Ilic,1995). The main match followed, in which the combined team „Hajduk» - „S(e)rbija» and „BSK» from Belgrade met. „BSK» won with 7:1 (4:1) (Ilic,1995), and in the combined team of two Nis clubs, the colors of „Serbia» were represented by: „Milinković, Jocić, Trajković and Milutinović (Ilic,1995). New war championship 1943/44. year, brought SK „Srbija» the greatest success. The club finally found quality players and managed to get involved in the fight for the top in the Nis championship. With a bit of luck, „Serbia» could have been the champion. Here are the results, in chronological order: October 16: „Serbia» - „Hajduk» 2:1, October 17: „Obilić» - „Serbia» 0:0, October 24: „Serbia» - E. Konstantin» 3: 0, November 14: „Serbia» - „Građanski» 3:1 (Sijić, 2014), November 28: „Serbia» - «Pobeda» 3:0, December 12: „Sindelić» - «Serbia» 1:0, December 26 : „Serbia» - „Železničar» 1:0 (Tomić, 2023). In the autumn table „Serbia» is with 10 points, three less than the leading „Sindelić» took second place. In 7 games, they had 4 wins, 2 draws, and one loss, with a goal difference of 12:4. There is no information about what happened on the football fields of Niš in July and August, and in September, the Niš clubs participated in a major campaign by the Red Cross of Serbia and sports clubs to help poor Serbian children. In this sense, there was a headline in the newspaper „Novo vreme»: «On the 11th and 12th, matches will be held throughout Serbia for the benefit of Serbian children... The four best clubs from Nis will participate: „Pobeda», „Sindelić», „Železničar », „Građanski» (Novo vreme, 1943). In October, the new Nis championship started. First, „Građanski» recorded a disastrous defeat against «Sindelić» with 5:0 (Sijić, 2014) on October 16. In the following days, more precisely on October 20, during the Allied bombing of Niš, „major material damage was caused to important strategic facilities (the Red Cross furnace, the Railway workshop, the Niš railway station, Crveni krst, Popovac and other facilities). A large number of citizens of Niš were killed in the bombing of Niš... After the Allied bombing, Niš was plastered with posters with mostly the following content:

„Sports playground Železničar.

A friendly meeting of eminent representatives of our football will be held on Sunday, October 31, for the benefit of the victims of the bombing, with the approval of

the German military authorities. „Građanski» - „Hajduk» starting at 1 p.m. „Sindelić» - „Pobeda» starting at 2:45 p.m. Sportsmen of Niš! Everyone knows the fate of the unfortunate families during the bombing of our city, let's do everything to ease their bad fate and provide help in the difficult winter days that are approaching. Let's prove that a warm Serbian heart beats in our chests and that we sympathize with their pain. The matches are organized by the Special Section of the District Committee of the Red Cross for assistance to those injured during the bombing, in cooperation with the Niš Football Sub-Association. Entrance prices: boxes 100 dinars, tribune 60 dinars, standing 40 dinars“ (Stamenković, 1972).

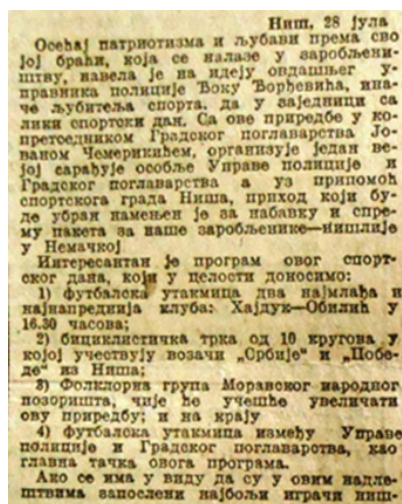
In the middle of November, the defeat in the duel with „Serbia» by 3:1 (14.11.1943), in the beginning of December in the meeting with „Pobeda» by 5:1 (5.12.1943). Finally, a turning point happened: 12.12.1943. Građanski-Obilić 4:1 and 26.12.1943. Građanski-Hajduk 1:0. In the autumn standings, „Građanski» took 5th place in the competition of eight clubs with 6 points. Ranking: „Sindelić» 13, „Srbija» 10, „Pobeda» 10, „Železničar» 9, „Građanski» 6, „Hajduk» 3, „E.Konstantin» 3 and „Obilić» 2. It is also worth mentioning that is „at the meeting of the Steering Committee of the Niš Football Association, held on November 16, 1943... the following decisions were made:) The holding of the regular annual assembly of the Civic Association - Niš, scheduled for November 28, 1943 in Niš, is approved. The NLP delegate is Mr. Nešić III, secretary of the post union (Football club "Hajduk Veljko", ...). On this occasion, a new administration of „Građanski» was constituted, and the president was elected „engineer Miodrag Milojković, director of the Balkan Leather Factory (Sijić, 2014).

In a study by young researchers-historians from the Institute for the Recent History of Serbia in Belgrade, we find some of the plausible reasons for the disappearance of those clubs, which, with their „psychological» or ideological profile, deviated from the established stereotypes of the early phase of socialism in Serbia. In Yugoslavia, in 1945 and in the following years, political decrees abolished all pre-war football clubs and other sports associations that had greater support, i.e. fan base, above all the big and popular Belgrade clubs BSK and Yugoslavia, Zagreb's HAŠK, Građanski and Konkordija, Sarajevo's SAŠK, Niš' Pobeda and many others. Decrees on the abolition of pre-war clubs and the confiscation of their property were passed either by republican governments or competent ministries, most often the Ministry of Education, under various excuses and explanations, which, however, ultimately came down to the same thing - political ineligibility. Sports clubs were considered a bastion of the bourgeois way of life and a rallying point for reactionary forces. A small number of sports clubs were shut down because they were characterized as openly nationalist. The same happened in smaller communities, where civil clubs were also abolished. Their place was taken by ilist workers' clubs, which in the pre-war period mainly competed in the lower classes, or new clubs were founded that had the support of the new authorities and their individual structures (Zec, 2014).

Football and philanthropy

The peculiarity of the period between June 1941 and October 1944, in which sports Niš survived its troubles and difficulties, was reflected in the noble actions of football

clubs, which organized humanitarian matches in cooperation with SLS and NLP. That time was characterized by the fact that a large number of Nišli were in German and Norwegian concentration and labor camps, there were many displaced Serbs from the then Independent State of Croatia, as well as people who died in various ways in the horrors of war. In this sense, in those four years, a lot of events, competitions and tournaments were held that had a humanitarian character and from which funds were collected and sent to and paid to those affected by the disaster of war. It is known that „Železničar» played in favor of the Red Cross with „Pobeda» and lost 5:8 (Ilić, 1995). the end of september 1943, a sports day was held in Niš for the benefit of prisoners of war, organized by Đorđe Đorđević, then manager of the Niš Police Department.



Đorđe Đorđević, then manager of the Administration of the Police Station in Niš. „Novo vreme” from 7/29/1943.

About sports workers at the time of the German occupation of Niš

In all that «political nightmare» and historical whirlwind from 1941 to 1944, a great role was played in favor of sports by sports workers, who tried to, as so they normalize the situation in local areas, to return the youth to the playgrounds, to revive the clubs and draw the attention of the occupiers to sport as a healthy lifestyle, which cannot be killed by any form of terror, that sports activities are above repression and the ever-present dominance of the „German element» in Serbian reality. For these and similar reasons, we give them recognition, which they certainly deserve. What they raised from the ashes and dust, everything that could be raised, that they believed in the Serbian tomorrow through sporting struggles, regardless of whether it was „Nedić», communist, Ravnogorje or some other political provenance. We congratulate them, on some kind of vision, which perhaps was not, could not even be, nor written, let alone implemented, in which the spirit of creativity was hidden in spite of occupation norms and strict rules of submission and disobedience at all costs, embodied in the NOB movement. It was not some doctrine, platform or manifesto, but a human expression of a kind of protest, «wrapped» in regulations. It was not at all easy to put that creative rebellion into action and to stick to the regulations to the end.

Again, football, based on those principles, achieved its goal, which was demonstrated in the period after the occupation and in the post-war reconstruction of the country, in which the sporting substance of the Serbian nation was not drastically damaged, but only diminished by the departure of those who paid their lives for freedom or by their disappearance. helped the myth about the disobedience of forces loyal to General Mihailović. Be that as it may, some future research should „shed new light» on those figures, who, by their authority, are not exclusively members of the regime of General Milan Đ. Nedić, in an order in which the highest price in the world was paid, „One hundred Serbian heads for one German life.» To bring closer to us those people of character, who, under the guise of „loyalty» to the order in occupied Serbia, thought they were above and beyond the order, they were people from sports, people for competition, people focused on true values that neither money, nor fire, nor water, nor blood, nor ice, can do anything in time (Lalet and Baletzarević, 2018). I guess that was their mission and vision. Borivoje Baltezarević is certainly in that galaxy, a business man, merchant, court clerk during the German occupation, a good host, husband and father of a family, sports worker, member of the «Pobeda» management. He was a member of the falconry society in Nis, a member of the board of the Moravian Circle of Riders „Knez Mihailo», a member of the board of the Nis Aero Club, a man with many ideas and creative attitudes, an example and reputation, worthy of all respect, in his street Jug-Bogdanova, a neighborhood „Žožina kapija» (the part around „Shojka»), Niš and beyond. Borivoje Baltezarević, one of the people who left a „trace in infinity», remains as a „recalcitrant beacon» over the „darkness» of the early forties and as if „watching over» the current town on Nišava, representing a kind of signpost in the wilderness. Side by side with him is Danilo Dača Nikolić in „Železničar», who took care of the youth of this club, and Novica Mladenović, goalkeeper and economist of „Železničar (Ilić, 1995).



Borivoje Baltezarević 1913-1969.

All in all, football achieved its goal in occupied Nis. As a social phenomenon that gathers, primarily, young people, eager to progress and prove themselves, if only for a moment, it turned the attention of war-torn people to something else, everyday and ordinary, that went beyond suffering, hunger and fear. Aware of that fact, despite all the subsequent social turbulence, sports and especially football players in occupied Niš could stand proudly because the joy that football caused in the masses was the beacon of freedom that showed many people the way to a brighter tomorrow. So, sport and life won.

CONCLUSION

During the German occupation of Nis and all the hardships the civilian population faced, football was one of the few bright spots in the gloomy social life. Sports workers in Niš football clubs took advantage of the chance to use that little bit of freedom between the «hammer and the anvil» and organize events for a little leisure and to afford such pleasure to football fans. From the football fields, we went to the forest, in two opposing movements. And all this happened from June 1942 to September 1944, with the fact that there were much fewer games in that year than in the previous two. Bright examples of football players in Nis have overcome all divisions and left a clear trail that should be followed.

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