Magiczny Kraków

Sacred War

2011-04-12

***Cracovia* is a Kraków sports club. *Wisła* is also a sports club from Kraków. *Cracovia* and *Wisła* together denote simply the *sacred war*.**

When looking for the origins of Polish football, one has to mention the year 1889. Then **Dr. Henryk Jordan**, a world renowned gynaecologist known as the *stork of the Habsburg family* due to his attendance at the births of the imperial family, opened a city park with 12 sports pitches. It was there that Dr. Jordan enforced his idea of harmonious development of personality of the young generation of Poles through the simultaneous exercises of body and soul. The idea itself was not a novelty in Kraków, because it was successfully spread by the *Sokół* gymnastic society established in 1867, but the notion to realise it in the open air and expose children to various "winds, fluxions and rheumatisms" seemed extremely suspicious. Even more so when, on a sunny day, Dr. Jordan took a bunch of lads to the Błonia Green and then taught them to play a new game, 'ball kicked with feet,' the suspicion turned into outrage. At first, the only pleased party consisted of the beginner footballers who enjoyed the new game so much that, against all prohibition and outrage, they kicked the ball between the posts whenever they had the opportunity. It may be that the famed Kraków conservatism caused the new game to catch on faster in Lviv. A dozen-plus years later, one could see considerable difference. On the **6th of June 1906** Kraków's Błonia Green hosted football matches between a jumble of students of Kraków gymnasia and two teams from Lviv: *Czarni* and *Pogonia*. The guests won both matches (2:0 and 4:0). The honour of Kraków was polluted. In the same year, Kraków football became organised in four teams: ***Biało Czerwoni (White and Red)*** (also known as *Mazurzy*), ***Cracovia*** known as the *academic* team, ***Czerwoni (Red)*** and ***Wisła.*** The players for these teams were recruited from the Kraków gymnasia and practical schools. Eventually, it turned out that organisational and personnel problems forced the clubs to merge. In **1907** *the White and Red* joined *Cracovia* forming today's ***Cracovia****,* while *the Red* was incorporated with the *Wisła* to establish the present-day ***Wisła*.**

- So who was here first?

- Who is better here: players wearing jerseys in white-and-red stripes or players in red jerseys with a white star on their chest? is the second question. Kraków became divided into the supporters of Wisełka (diminutive for Wisła) and Pasy (literally: Stripes), and, since the primacy has not been settled till the present day, the teams have to fight on the pitch every year. The tradition of this rivalry dates back to 1907. The fortune has been changeably kind to Cracovia whose field is situated south of the Błonia Green or to Wisła whose stadium lies on the other side. This was the origin of the *sacred war*. Initially, the scales turned to *Cracovia* that became the first champion of Poland in **1921**. *Wisła* made up for the losses in **1927** becoming the first champion of regular matches of the *Polish League*. While playing against *Wisła, Cracovia* sent for attack its ace, **Józef Kałuża,** while *Wisła* put up the unfailing **Henryk Reyman** against *Cracovia*. Also the fans did not spare their throats at the stands. *Wisła* was continuously supported by a well-known Kraków painter, Vlastimil Hofman, while *Cracovia* enjoyed the support of Zbigniew Nowakowski, a columnist who in one of his articles wrote this telling sentence: *... when I die, bury me in the penalty box of Cracovia because even after my death I will defend it...*. The supremacy of one club over the other remained unsettled, but it is known

that their fierce matches greatly increased the sports value of both teams. In the pre-war period no-one, apart from the Warsaw's Polonia and Chorzów's Ruch, could put up an equal fight to the rivals on both sides of the Błonia Green. After the war the fate of both clubs followed different paths. *Cracovia* won its last title of the champion of Poland in **1948**, defeating *Wisła* in the deciding match 3 goals to 1, but in the next years, as a cooperative club, started to sink to the 2nd and then 3rd league. *Wisła* acquired more serious tough troublesome patron in the form of the civic militia, and achieved great success at the domestic pitches as a guard's sports society winning the title of the champion of Poland in **1978**. In recent years *Wisła* gained a strong sponsor, *Telefonika* of Myślenice, and won another national champion title in 1999. But regardless of the league both Kraków teams play at there is always a time when the level of their players' game raises to the world cup heights. This time is obviously the time of the Kraków's derby because the *Sacred War* is still on.

By the way it is worth mentioning that every year the first goals scored in Poland and maybe in Europe take place in Kraków. It all started in the 1930s on a New Year's Day morning when the *Cracovia* footballers were returning from the New Year's Eve ball. They were in excellent moods and the ball revelry could not drain the forces out of players who were well-prepared for such trials. And then somebody came up with an idea to … play football. Why not? Soon the gates of the stadium were opened, and the footballers of the multiple champion of Poland were kicking the ball in the clouds of the fresh snow. When next year the match was repeated for the second time, it was obvious that a new tradition was born in Kraków. Every year on New Year's Day at noon the players of the first and second teams of *Cracovia* come out on the snowy or sometimes muddy grass of the stadium and play a match against each other. It is the first match in the New Year, so the goals scored during this game are always the first in a given year. This gives the victor's palm to *Cracovia* at least once a year.

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