



## **Weekly Briefing**

**Bosnia-Herzegovina social briefing:**  
**The last farewell of the Strauss of Yugoslav football**  
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# The last farewell of the Strauss of Yugoslav football

## Summary

*Ivica Osim is one of the greatest legends not only of sports in Bosnia and Herzegovina, not only in the countries that emerged from the disintegration of Yugoslavia, but also beyond, in the world. He was immensely loved in Austria and Japan, the countries where he achieved remarkable results. He had the status of a demigod in Sarajevo, and was one of the few who could bring a dose of common sense to the politically poisoned national football. He possessed virtues that many Bosnians believe he has or at least appreciates: modesty, knowledge, insight, experience imbued with his own defeats, style. That is why his Sarajevo funeral is an event that, probably for the last time, gathered the former Yugoslavia in one place.*

## Introduction

Ivica Osim died on May 1, and was buried in his native Sarajevo on May 14<sup>1</sup>. Former player and coach of Sarajevo "Željezničar", last selector of the national team of socialist Yugoslavia national team, coach of Sturm Graz, coach of the national team of Japan, president of the Committee for Normalization of the Football Association of BiH... Wordly, legend of sports in BiH and former Yugoslavia. His death shook the entire area of the former common state of the South Slavs, and the commemoration brought together the football cream. A member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina also spoke at the commemoration, which speaks of the importance of Ivica Osim's personality. The charisma he possessed was built through decades of coaching work that crossed the boundaries of sports.

## FC Željezničar

Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is one of those cities that have city football derbies. Football club "Željezničar" is an older rival, founded in 1921, which had gathered, as the name suggests, railway and generally children of the workers from Sarajevo neighborhoods. Football club "Sarajevo" was founded several decades later. That rivalry is still alive today, it goes along the lines that has pass through families, settlements, nations... The

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<sup>1</sup> Thousands of people attend football legend Ivica Osim's funeral (PHOTO).

<https://ba.n1info.com/english/news/thousands-attend-football-legend-ivica-osims-funeral-in-sarajevo-photo/>

successes of both teams in the former Yugoslavia can be counted on the fingers of one hand, and those on the international scene are even rarer. Therefore, every fan of FC "Željezničar", but also many others, remember the match with the Hungarian Videoton (today's "Fehervar") from city Szekesfehervar. Željezničar's coach was Ivica Osim, and the Sarajevo team had a 2-0 lead minutes before the end of the second game, a result that led him to the UEFA Cup final (Today's Champions League), at Real Madrid. Three minutes before the end of the game, Videoton right-back Czuhay scored the only goal of his career, and took the Hungarians to the final. Ivica Osim's video of him holding his head is one of the most famous videos in the history of BiH. One of the mainstream media says: one of the most famous but also the saddest games ever<sup>2</sup>.

### **Yugoslav national team**

*Always at the top, but never the best*, is the description of Yugoslav football in the decades before the collapse of the state. The last selector was Ivica Osim, who was the leader of the national team to the World Cup in Italy in 1990. Apart from that, he also nurtured racing football, and preferred "workers" among football players more than "stars". The victory in the round of 16 against favored Spain was celebrated by the whole country, the defeat on penalties by Maradona's Argentina in the quarterfinals was again marked on the streets by citizens in Belgrade, Sarajevo...<sup>3</sup> Two years later, when the siege of Sarajevo began and the war resigned as coach and left Belgrade. Both his words and his emotional address have been recorded in the history of not only sports, but also general and popular culture.

“This is a private gesture of mine, a personal decision, and you can interpret it as you wish. I will not say why I am resigning and I do not want to explain anything. You know very well why I am leaving. If nothing else, this is the only thing I can do for that city, so that you also remember that I was born in Sarajevo, and you know what is happening there”<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> The day when Grbavica celebrated and mourned: Videoton shattered hopes for the grand finale  
<https://faktor.ba/vijest/dan-kada-je-grbavica-slavila-i-tugovala-videoton-srusio-nadu-o-velikom-finalu/80583>

<sup>3</sup> Ivica Osim: a Yugoslavian football giant who twice rejected Real Madrid,  
<https://www.theguardian.com/football/2022/may/02/ivica-osim-yugoslavian-football-coach-dies-aged-80>

<sup>4</sup> The famous resignation of Ivica Osim in Belgrade: Let you also remember that I was born in Sarajevo.  
<https://sport.avaz.ba/nogomet/738943/cuvena-ostavka-ivice-osima-u-beogradu-da-se-i-vi-sjetite-da-sam-se-rodio-u-sarajevu>

## **Austria and Japan**

Osim's coaching career took him to Sturm Graz, Austria, and to Tokyo, Japan, where he led the Japanese national team with great success. What status he enjoys in these South European circles is also shown by the farewell that Sturm fans, several thousand of them, prepared at the stadium for the "coach of the century"<sup>5</sup>, as well as the fact that the Ambassador of Japan to BiH Makato Ito spoke at the commemoration in Sarajevo on May 14.

His coffin was placed on the field of Mercury Arena. The ex-Yugoslav songs 'Ima neka tajna veza' and 'Život je more' were performed, and Sturm fans thundered from the stands. Torches were lit, the name of Ivica Osim was chanted and in Sturm they once again showed what this man meant to them<sup>6</sup>.

## **Commemoration**

The commemoration was held at the National Theater in Sarajevo, one of the interiors reserved for the most important events of various kinds in the BiH capital. The commemoration began with the intonation of the anthem of Bosnia and Herzegovina, after which photographs from the life of Ivica Osim were shown, and significant statements of the legend of Bosnia and Herzegovina were also shown. football<sup>7</sup>.

The president of FC Željezničar Oro Ibrišimović, the mayor of Sarajevo Benamina Karić, the football player and former coach of FC Željezničar Enver Hadžiabdić, the former football player of Željezničar and the representative of Yugoslavia Mehmed Baždarević, the vice president of the Football Association of Serbia Nenad Bjeković, the former football player of FC Sarajevo Hadžibegić, technical director of the Japanese national team Yasuharu Sorimachi, the aforementioned Japanese ambassador Makato, president of the BiH Football Association Vico Zeljković, UEFA representative and former representative of Osim's Yugoslavia and Croatia Zvonimir Boban, and BiH Presidency member Željko Komšić. Among the many stars of the former football fields Hadžibegić is famous because he missed crucial penalty kick against Argentina in 1990's.

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<sup>5</sup> Legendary coach Ivica Osim is dead. <https://www.archysport.com/2022/05/legendary-coach-ivica-osim-is-dead/>

<sup>6</sup> Unreal scenes in Graz: This shows who Ivica Osim was and what he was. <https://sportsport.ba/fudbal/ivica-osim-sturm-oprostaj/424717>

<sup>7</sup> Commemoration held for Ivica Osim: You were the best citizen of the world in Sarajevo and the best Sarajevan on the planet. <https://www.klix.ba/sport/nogomet/odrzana-komemoracija-za-ivicu-osima-bio-si-najbolji-gradjanin-svijeta-u-sarajevu-i-najbolji-sarajlija-na-planeti/220514008>

“You performed miracles on and off the field. You have brought many joys to all of us who live for football. You were the most successful selector. I had the honor of being your associate on the national team bench”, Hadžibegić said<sup>8</sup>.

“From Austria to Japan he will be the best and most honorable in everything. You were the best Sarajevan on the planet. He loved all the cities in the world, but his Sarajevo the most. He hugged all the good people on the planet, but his Sarajevans were the most cordial”, Mayor Karić said<sup>9</sup>.

Member of BiH Presidency said Osim was not only sport legend but great man which contributed to the country in the most difficult moments.

“He never forgot his city, and most importantly, he never betrayed it. We must not forget this fact in our memory. What he has acquired during his long career with his work, character and ability all over the world speaks volumes about what a man he was. I had the honor to meet him and see what kind of man he was, but also what kind of clue he gave bh. football and Bosnia and Herzegovina as a homeland”, Komšić said<sup>10</sup>.

Yugoslav media fought for the statements of Serb Dragan Stojković Piksi, Slovene Srećko Katanec, Bosnians Safet Sušić and Predrag Pašić, Herzegovinians Blaž Slišković and Dušan Bajević... Mr. Stojković, who scored two goals in that famous Yugoslav game against Spain, said Ivica Osim will get street with his name in Belgrade.

"Osim absolutely deserved it and I am very glad that Belgrade and Serbia will repay the wonderful man and the fantastic football expert in an adequate way", said Stojković<sup>11</sup>.

Among those present were the President of the ruling party, Party of Democratic Action (*Stranka demokratske akcije* – SDA) Bakir Izetbegović, Prime Minister of the Federation of BiH Fadil Novalić Governor of Bank BiH Sakib Softić, former High Representative to BiH Valentin Inzko and many others. This list speaks of the significance of Osim's death in the regional context.

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<sup>8</sup> Hadžibegić told an anecdote from Italy about Pixie and Osim: "The boss didn't even turn around".  
<https://radiosarajevo.ba/sport/nogomet/hadzibegic-ispricao-anegdotu-iz-italije-o-piksiju-i-osimu-sef-se-nije-ni-okrenuo/456845>

<sup>9</sup> Benjamina Karić about Ivica Osim: You were the best Sarajevan on the planet.  
<https://sport.avaz.ba/nogomet/742381/benjamina-karic-o-ivici-osimu-bio-si-najbolji-sarajlija-sirom-planete>

<sup>10</sup> Željko Komšić on Ivica Osim: Let this difficult Bosnian country be easy for you.  
<https://radiosarajevo.ba/sport/nogomet/komsic-o-osimu-neka-ti-je-laka-ova-teska-bosanska-zemlja/456850>

<sup>11</sup> Piksi Stojković: Ivica Osim will get a street in Belgrade.  
<https://balkans.aljazeera.net/news/balkan/2022/5/14/stojkovic-ivica-osim-ce-dobiti-ulicu-u-beogradu>

"The football player we called Strauss from Grbavica, a virtuoso with a perfect sense of the gap and the rhythm of the game, so tall and staunch loved the duel and dribble that becomes like a musical chord when a double pass is played or extended to the line with the ball," said Ivica Saric, famous opera singer and Osim's cousin<sup>12</sup>.

## **Conclusion**

"He was our idol. A man from whom we can learn a lot. We came from Graz to see him off to his eternal rest," said a man who came from Austria to attend the funeral together with his child<sup>13</sup>.

With death of Ivica Osim, it definitely goes down part of history of Bosnia and Herzegovina. What goes? Joint sporting successes and failures of the former Yugoslavia goes definitely for the last time, It goes a time of real gentlemen also. Osim was unreservedly respected in all parts of the former Yugoslavia and by people in different parts of the ideological spectrum. Therefore, this is probably the last Sarajevo funeral that could gather such a remarkable men.

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<sup>12</sup> Ivica Osim was buried in the Alley of the Greats in Sarajevo. <https://mondo.ba/Sport/Fudbal/a1132156/Ivica-Osim-sahranjen-u-Aleji-velikana-u-Sarajevu.html>

<sup>13</sup> Thousands of people attend football legend Ivica Osim's funeral. <https://ba.n1info.com/english/news/thousands-attend-football-legend-ivica-osims-funeral-in-sarajevo-photo/>