

The school of a street-ball taught me about life and basketball about a passion

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Bakir Srna is the guy who made his first basketball steps in his neighborhood, in the street. He attended our basketball school and trained many new members. He changed clubs and his surroundings but did not leave Bosnia and Herzegovina. His basketball path brought him to BC Bosna, which was a special challenge for him. Currently, he is a successful coach of the BC BURCH. This time we will talk to Bakir about a professional basketball in our country, his beginnings, successes, and achievements.

Interview, new KK BURCH coach Bakir Srna

Bakir, did we hear correctly, or those are just rumors that you are the new coach of BC Burch?

As for the questions about whether I am a coach of BC BURCH or those are just rumors, I would say yes to both. Namely, a few weeks before BC BURCH and I began our cooperation, there were stories that this is a possible destination where I will continue the basketball coach's career. However, the fact that I am present here as a new coach of BC BURCH leaves me in the belief that all those who have decided on the engagement of a new coach in BC BURCH have recognized in me the fundamental human, sporting, and coaching qualities. These qualities were the reason why they chose me, and I am very happy and pleased with this opportunity and I thank the management for their trust. Especially I would like to emphasize that I am satisfied with the optimal conditions provided by the International Burch University for the successful work of the basketball team. This year, the team will focus on confirming the achieved level, and on a further development of BC BURCH and every individual taking part in our team's work.

Why basketball? Where does a love for it come from?

I remember, like most boys, playing the marbles with the passion which later developed into love with the sport, but dominated in sports with the ball. The love for basketball appeared at the age 11-12. Later it was "heated" with the first post-war successes of the basketball team. With that, I mean anthological victories in Skenderija and Gripe against neighboring Croatia as well as a victory over Lithuania as guests. I noticed that basketball is something mysterious after the defeat of Lithuania, and in some late 90's in Skenderija when Sabonis demonstrated his high intellectual capacity which becomes magic when brought to a court. The desire to reach my maximum in basketball, to enjoy the beauty of basketball games and the sweetness of victory, to learn from the defeat and to create new motives, both for myself and for the players, personal basketball training and progress as a coach, as well as basketball development of the players I train are my guide in this game called basketball.

With which emotions do you visit your first court today? Do you remember the pain or

passion for sport from that young age?

The court where I played the streetball most frequently is in Lužani, a settlement on Ilidža, where I grew up. Almost every day I pass by that court that links me to some of the most beautiful memories in my life which are related to my personal and basketball maturation. The school of a streetball has taught me much more about life than about basketball itself. This way of maturation, which my generation passed through is slowly fading away.

What was your basketball path?

I started my career in BC ILIDŽA, where I passed through the youth categories. Afterwards, I went to BC BOŠNJAK from Hadžici where I played in an A1 league for a couple of seasons. I have the beautiful experiences from that time, both in the competition and in the sense of socializing. We played numerous tournaments and went to camps. Honestly, the desire to engage in a coaching job had been developing in me for a long time before the decision to bring my career as a basketball player to an end.

The first steps of your career were in BC Impuls, so what were the impressions and experiences in that club?

I got the first chance for coaching in BC IMPULS from Ilidža as a basketball school coach with the aim of gathering as many children from the street as possible and developing their passion for the club. I'm sure I would never know the real value, the potential, and the beauty of a coach's call in basketball if I skipped any of the stages of development from that period which would have limited my further coaching development. Soon I took the first team in the A2 league. Due to problems in finding a long-term acceptable way of functioning, and uncertainty in the further development of this project, I left BC IMPULS after 3 years in the club. Nevertheless, I am grateful to it for the first given opportunity.

After BC Impuls, you continued your career in BC Novi Grad who competed in the A1 league. Can you tell us more about that?

Shortly after leaving BC IMPULS, I received an invitation from the BC NOVI GRAD to compete in the A1 league. The experience gained in this club, both in basketball and in interpersonal relationships, was of a great value in further profiling of my professional call as a basketball coach.

After Novi Grad, you came to the legendary BC Bosna, so what impressions do you have from that period, and do you think that BC Bosna will ever succeed in restoring the old glow?

At the end of April 2010, I left BC Novi Grad and entered a period that is perhaps the most difficult when it comes to my coaching career. At the beginning of June, BC Bosna invited me to engage in a youth sector. I did not have any doubts. It was a great honor for me to become a member of the staff of such a giant team, and I began to work with a great emotion. We won a state championship with the pioneers of Bosna that year, but something that I discovered and

felt for the first time in the work is the system in BC Bosna. Looking at Bosna from the current perspective, I see that certain positive things happen in its senior team, however, I claim that we cannot achieve significant results in the regional or European competitions. When I say domestic, I mean of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina and possibly the Ex-Yu region.

You have spent the last six years in OKK SPARS

In August 2011, I got an opportunity to work in OKK SPARS, which, after many years of careful and hard work, both in the previous period and in the year of 2011, is now moving towards somewhat more active access to young talents throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina and beyond. Numerous medals from state competitions, international tournaments; many senior and youth representatives of our and neighboring countries speak for themselves when it comes to SPARS. The high concentration of ambition of the club manager, coaches, and players, with the responsibility of working with talented players, has contributed to the overall quick success of the club and every individual in it.

Can you give us the most interesting details from your career?

There were many interesting events, both on the playground and outside. I can hardly choose one specific now, but that could go on for some time so I will leave it for another occasion.

Is it difficult to coordinate education and sports? What should be prioritized, and how much one should be studying to become a successful athlete?

The big problem that I faced as the coach of younger generations was the coordination of school obligations and sports demands. It is difficult to coordinate school obligations while training twice a day. Through the engagement within SPARS, I have had the opportunity to travel a lot and see how the strongest clubs in Europe are struggling with this problem. Most of them try solving it by instructing their players to finish their studies part-time. I do not support this idea completely. Although the idea has its foundation in world trends in areas which are striving for quick success and quick results, I find it completely dehumanizing because in the long run it leaves a negative trace on the individual and I am sure that in the end it will reflect in the sports field and leave negative consequences.

After taking the leadership of BC Burch, what can you tell us about these guys?

We have not started training yet, and I still have not managed to feel the pulse of the guys. At the moment, I am engaged in planning and organizing preparations for which we are a little late for justified reasons. However, I am convinced that with the help and energy of the people in management, we will quickly step into the pace and reach the point where we will focus on the activities in the basketball field. My focus is on finding adequate players for the team, as well as staff in order to enter the training process with the best personnel. Of course, I have some knowledge about the guys who are here and I'm sure of the mutual cooperation.

How does one ordinary day in the life of Bakir Srna look?

I usually get up very early in order to be able to comply with my mornings, with the aim of making the coming day more effective. From 8 to 10 in the morning I have a training with the guys. After that, we dedicate ourselves to the fulfillment of the obligations at the university. I would certainly do the preparation for the training in the first part of the day, so in that way, I am free for the lunch after which I also have a short break. After that, from 6 to 8 pm we have the second training. It's important to carefully select people with whom you enter the season respecting equally sporting and human qualities.

How do you prepare for the match?

The psychological aspect of the preparation, both for the training and for the game, is very important for both players and coaches. In order to achieve good results, one must focus on the very approach to training each individual, taking into account all the specificities that each game brings in itself. I try to occupy my brain as much as possible with things that make me relax and find the needed peace. Of course, over the years the coach also improves the methods of organizing and running both training and match. In the senior competition, the players are already mature enough to understand the segment of the basketball that requires some preparation in the realization of the training and running the match. And when they understand all this, then we are in a quite comfortable position.

What is the feeling of being a team coach and what qualities are needed to become part of KK Burch?

It is early to talk about it. For now, I recognize a lot of nice things that I knew partly and partly discovered during the two weeks spent at Burch. However, there are also small hidden traps that each environment carries by its specificity. I'll let you know about one of them: the guys who play for BC Burch are in most cases not only students of Burch University but also residents of the campus where the boarding school is located. It is a positive thing if the synergy of their social surrounding made of their friends, students, and professors from the games is adequately channeled to the working week at the university. However, if it goes into a useless analysis and comments on possible conditionally stated bad moves in the game, it can come from the best intentions to the bad consequences. It is up to me to point out and fight against these and other events explicitly in protecting the interests of young players and BC BURCH.

Whose support should basketball players have?

Young players must learn that only by their work, dedication, renunciation, and pure conscience they can do the most for themselves. All of the above will help them overcome the possible difficult moments that must be in every business. Naturally, their parents' support is crucial, as well as of their friends, club management, trainers, etc. I am convinced that without the mentioned above it will be hard for anyone to master not only sports but also academic obligations.

What is your message for young players who will wear the colors of the BC Burch jersey?

It is difficult for a message to be stronger than personal conviction and experience. However, Burch offers a wide range of opportunities suitable for the upbringing of a young man. In addition to the A1 League this year, we will start with the team in the A2 league as well as with the junior team. We have a vision of how it should look for a year and for a longer period. What I want to say is that sport is an important segment in the upbringing of a young man. I would even say a need. The management of the University, as well as the management of the club, have made every effort and a significant number of young players have provided attention and space to usefully complement academic activities. It is up to us to perfect this time by appreciating your needs and possibilities.

When will we see some Cheerleaders in the court?

An interesting question. I do not think I'm really the ideal person to answer it, however, once you've already asked that, it belongs to the domain mentioned earlier. It can be of benefit to the overall project of BC BURCH if this segment is accompanied by other things that are the more important factor in the context of the situation where we are currently a basketball club. I would not skip any of the stairs of the success of our team.