

# Spirit of Bosnia / Duh Bosne

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## Spasić (More Than a Game)

Saša Skenderija

*To Adin*

While the country I was born in was approaching  
its forced landing  
our life and football appetites were soaring high.  
Deaf and blind to the questions  
that'd started exploding  
right in our faces,  
we contemplated a starry future  
for ourselves,  
for posterity,  
for our national football team.

Asked why he kept a player  
in the center of the defense  
who didn't belong there at all  
(with so many better players available)  
the national team manager  
(a man quite charming and wise)  
once replied:  
This way, the other players on the pitch always know  
where the danger's coming from and so  
I get the maximum out of them.

The coach liked to be on top  
of the weak spots of the team  
and would rather create them himself  
than discover them on the pitch  
in the middle of a crucial match:  
Every real championship team has to have its own Spasić.

I'm not sure  
if he said it exactly like that,  
but it's how my friends and I recalled it  
or embellished it,

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anyway.

When the country  
 I was born in  
 was forcibly landing us and dislanding,  
 we were cheering each other up  
 by contemplating  
 the championship strategy -  
 creating and cherishing our own Spasićes  
 with the belief that this was the best way  
 to get the maximum out of ourselves  
 for the World Cup  
 which was just  
 (out of earshot of the guns)  
 going on -  
 without us.

We completely lost sight  
 of our opponents,  
 we neglected our own strengths  
 squandering them on tedious B-league  
 games of survival,  
 or taking them for granted  
 until we eventually atrophied  
 from the endless waiting to take our part  
 in the World Cup Finals.

We're still around.

If you take a closer look, you might still spot us  
 hunched down on the second-string benches  
 of other countries with championship aspirations  
 standing by  
 with eyes and ears wide open  
 for the slightest hint of forced landings  
 in a coach's wise and seductive words.

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*Translation by Wayles Browne and Sasha Skenderija - © 2009 Wayles Browne and Sasha Skenderija*

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