

THE TOUR OF THE FOOTBALL TEAM ATHLETIC CLUB ORADEA IN COUNTRIES OF WESTERN EUROPE AND NORTH AFRICA, DECEMBER 1932 – MARCH 1933

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ABSTRACT. At the beginning of '30, the Athletic Club Oradea, through the value of its components, through its place occupied in the hierarchy of the domestic championship, through the number of matches and the results obtained with teams from different countries, it was the best team in Romania at that time and it was the most well-known Romanian team in the Central and Western Europe. We wanted to present an important moment in the history of the Athletic Club Oradea. Based on the information found in different sources, documents from the local archives, articles in the press at that time, photos from personal albums, discussions with different people, the work approaches some issues related to the tour in 1932/ 1933 in Western Europe and North Africa. In the first part of this article, we present the context in which it has been decided the tour's organization and the way it was prepared. Foreword, the European part of the championship is approached, the games played in France and Luxembourg. Our presentation continues with the games in Morocco and Algeria. Through its duration, through the number of games played and the results obtained, this tour has been the most important one carried out up to that date by a Romanian football team. Besides its sport value, the tour had an important contribution in promoting Romanian football in countries of the Western Europe and North Africa.

Key words: sport history, football, Oradea

REZUMAT. Turneul echipei de fotbal Clubul Athletic Oradea în țări ale Europei de Vest și Africa de Nord, decembrie 1932 – martie 1933. La începutul anilor '30, Clubul Athletic Oradea, prin valoarea componenților săi, prin locul ocupat în ierarhia campionatului intern, prin numărul întâlnirilor și a rezultatelor obținute cu echipe din diferite țări, era una din grupările cele mai bune din România și se număra printre cele mai cunoscute echipe românești în Europa Centrală și de Vest. Ne-am propus să prezentăm un moment important din istoria Clubului

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Athletic Oradea. Pe baza informațiilor aflate în diferite surse, documente din arhive locale, articole din presa vremii, fotografii din albume personale, discuții cu diferite persoane, lucrarea abordează aspecte legate de turneul din 1932/1933 în Europa de Vest și Africa de Nord. În prima parte a lucrării, autorii prezintă contextul în care s-a decis organizarea turneului și a decurs pregătirea acestuia. În continuare este abordată partea europeană a turneului, jocurile disputate în Franța și Luxemburg. Prezentarea continuă cu jocurile din Maroc și Algeria. Prin durata sa, prin numărul jocurilor disputate și rezultatele obținute, acest turneu a fost cel mai de seamă efectuat până la acea dată de o echipă de fotbal din România. Pe lângă valoarea sa sportivă, turneul a avut o contribuție importantă la promovarea fotbalului românesc în țări din Europa de Vest și Africa de Nord.

Cuvinte cheie: istoria sportului, fotbal, Oradea

Introduction

After the First World War, in Europe, as a result of signing the Treaty of Versailles, the formation of the League of Nations, the victory of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, and under the influence of some actions that proclaimed the peoples' rights to self-determination and offer warranties for political and territorial independence of nations, (Bolintineanu & Malița, 1970) the big empires, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman and Tzarist Russia, collapsed and disintegrated. On their ruins have occurred a series of independent states, Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, the Kingdom of Serbs Croats and Slovenes, Poland, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, and others have extended their territory to its former extension, Romania. (Giurcăneanu, 1983)

The governments of these countries acted to consolidate the state's independence, to strengthen the national unity, to assert these countries on international level. Within these actions, besides the efforts on the political, diplomatic, economic and cultural level, sport played an important role, representing a propaganda instrument, a way of asserting and projecting country's image on international level (Kun, 1984).

Beginning with 1922, the Romanian national football team has also entered this tendency, participating in the Challenge Cup King Alexander I, in the tour of the Olympic Games in Paris, 1924, and it played more and more friendly matches with the teams representing Poland, Czechoslovakia, Turkey and Austria. (Angelescu & Cristea, 2009)

Romanian football club teams entered later in international arena. The first football club in our country that has become well-known outside country's borders was Ripensia Timisoara. Thus, under the leadership of manager Belis,

Ripensia Timisoara played numerous international football matches: Beogradski SK Belgrade, WAC Vienna, the clubs' selected team in Belgrade, in 1930, Bastya Szeged Budapest 11 Budapest, Vasas Budapest, Ujpest Budapest, Kispest Budapest, and youth selected team of Hungary, Ferencváros Budapest, Syegedi Sport Egylet, Wienar SC Vienna, FC Seté, Belgrade's selected team, in 1931. In the period 28 March and 8 May 1932, Ripensia conducted a tour in France. In 1933, the Timisoara's team toured in Southern France and in the Netherlands. (Alexiu, 1992)

The managers of the Athletic Club Oradea, one of the most valuable Romanian teams at that time, understood that this team to make a progress and that its value to be recognized abroad, it was necessary that besides the results obtained on national level, it had to have connections with the football in other countries, especially the one in Central and Western Europe.

Also, they realized before other Romanian club managers that these actions are beneficial, they contributing both in team's training and gaining competition experience for players, but also for promoting Oradea's football and Romanian football. Following the example of Ripensie Timisoara, during 13 January and 23 February 1932, the team of the Athletic Football Club Oradea undertake a tour in France and Switzerland, besides sport results, 6 victories, 2 ties and 4 defeats, it succeeded to promote Romanian football in Europe and to ensure a financial success, both for the club and players. (Sports Arena, Oct. 5, 1936)

Preparing the tour

Being encouraged by the results and successes obtained in the previous year, by the sympathy gained by the team of the Athletic Club Oradea among the spectators from France and Switzerland, by the positive appreciation of the press from these countries towards Oradea's players, Pelle János, the club's manager, Popper Ernő, the president of the football division, and Szabó Andor, together with other leaders of the group, decided that, the same as in 1933, the team should carry out a tour of training and promotion. (Nagyvárad, Oct. 13, 1932 c)

The assignment of organizing the tour in 1933 was given to Szabó Andor, helped by Székely Miklós, a good speaker of French. Connections with some representatives of different French clubs were achieved in the previous year (Nagyvárad, Dec. 4, 1931), the good relationships established with the consular legations from France (Nagyvárad, Jan. 26 1932 b) and Switzerland (Nagyvárad, Feb. 16, 1932 d), the support received from different people from Oradea settled in French towns (Heller, 1981) eased a lot the formalities in obtaining visas, the connection with the future adversaries and organize the tour.

Organizing the travelling and setting up the program started in the autumn of 1932. To succeed in this, a full correspondence was exchanged, numerous phone calls were made and a lot of telegrams were sent on the address of some French

teams from Paris, Montreuil, Lyon, Lorien, Angers, Brest, Lille, Tours, Marseille, and to the football's leaders from Luxembourg, Morocco and Algeria. (Nagyvárad, Nov. 27 1932 a)

Asking for support from senator Crisan, from Romania's affair representative in Paris, and even from the Prime Minister Iuliu Maniu, the collective passport and the necessary visas were obtained for all the members of the delegation. (Nagyvárad, Dec. 14, 1932 g)

The European part of the tour. France and Luxembourg

On Wednesday evening, Dec. 14 1932, the delegation of the Athletic Club Oradea, conducted by Szabó Andor, having in its component the following players Czinczér István, Bartha Iosif, Rummer, Chiroiu II Vasile, Braun Coloman, Moravázt Iosif, Glanczmann Andrei, Kovács Miklós, Rónnay Francisc, Kocsis Elemér, Chiroiu I, Roșculeț Nicolae, Takács și Kráusz Andrei, left with the fast train of Budapest to France. (Nagyvárad, Dec. 15, 1932 e)

In the first part of the tour, 18 December 1932 – 5 January 1933, the Atletic Club Oradea, played 7 matches with Red Star - Club Francais Paris, FC Montreuil, Racing Lenois, FC Angers, FC Lorientaise, Brestoise, Olimpique Lille, all ending with the victory of Oradea's team.

In Luxembourg, the delegation of the Athletic Club Oradea had a great reception. Sport articles from newspapers made an eulogistic presentation of Oradea's team, recalling some of the results obtained by the team on international level, 3 - 2 with WAC Vienna, 1 - 0 with Amateur Vienna, 4 - 2 with Ferencváros Budapest, 2 - 2 with Nemzeti Budapest, 6 - 2 with III-ik Kerület Budapest, 2 - 0 with Bocskay Debrecen and 3 - 1 with Slavia Prague. (Nagyvárad, Jan 8. 1933 d). Delegation's members were visited by the Romanian Consul in Luxembourg. After the match won with 5 - 1 (3 - 0) against the Luxembourg's team, the local newspapers wrote on Sunday, January 8, that the people from Luxembourg had the privilege to be fascinated by the beautiful game of Oradea's team. (Nagyvárad, Jan. 10, 1933 e)

The Tour continued with two games in mainland France, 13 - 0 with FC Tours, 3 - 3 with Olimpique Marseille, and a match on the island of Corsica, 10 - 0 with the Ajaccio's team (Nagyvárad, Jan. 28, 1933 a). Thus, the first tour ended with a special balance. In the 11 games disputed, the Athletic Club Oradea obtained 10 victories and 1 tie.

As an appreciation of this tour, and due to the fact that the Athletic Club Oradea had an important role in promoting Romanian football and image in these countries, Oradea's delegation was supported by Romania's affair representative in France and Romania's Consul in Luxembourg. (Nagyvárad, Jan. 8, 1933 d)

The second part of the tour. The matches in Morocco and Algeria

From Corsica, the delegation of the Athletic Club Oradea, travelled by boat in North Africa, where it played 12 matches in Morocco and Algeria. In Morocco, Oradea's team continued the series of evolutions appreciated by the spectators, who knew very well this game especially that, in the previous years, there have been touring teams from countries with a developed football, France, Hungary and others. (Dec. 20, 1932 f) Among the adversaries encountered there were North Morocco's team, 2 - 0, Rabat's team, 4 - 1, Casablanca's team, 3 - 2, national team of Morocco, 3 - 2. (Nagyvárad, Feb. 16, 1933 b)

Beginning with 17 February 1933, the tour continued in Algeria, where the Athletic Club Oradea played the Maskara, 1 - 1, and Sidi - Bell - Abbes, 7 - 0, making here, through its playing and the results obtained a good propaganda for Romanian football. (Nagyvárad, Feb. 25, 1933 g)

Tour's final

Coming back in Europe, the team of the Athletic Club Oradea met Gallia Sport Perreguaise, winning with 3 - 2. (Nagyvárad, Feb. 28, 1933 f)

Through its duration, the number of matches and the results obtained, this was the longest and the most important tour performed at that time by a Romanian football team. Its balance was a success, both on sport and financial plan and under the aspect of promoting Oradea's team and Romanian football. The tour took place during 14 December 1932 and 6 March 1933. During this time, the football team of the Athletic Club Oradea played in 4 countries, meeting with the national teams of Luxembourg and Morocco, local teams and club teams in France, Morocco and Algeria. From 25 matches played, Oradea's tea, won 21 and obtained 4 ties, having a goal average of 110 goals scored and only 25 goals received. For Oradea's team, the tour, besides the indisputable sport value, through 120.000 Lei that entered the club's account and the bonuses between 20.000 and 30.000 Lei paid to each player, it also represented a financial success. (Arena Sporturilor, Oct. 5, 1936)

Returning in the country, on Monday, 6 March 1933, the delegation of the Athletic Club Oradea was waited in the train station by thousand of enthusiast supporters. Players, coach and the tour's leaders were welcomed by dr. Pelle János, the president of the Athletic Club Oradea and the local council person, by Oradea's sport leaders, among which Löwenstein Rezsö, the president of the Association Physical Culture of Workers Perseverance Oradea, Poenaru Bordea, the president of Crișana Club Oradea. (Nagyvárad, Mar. 7, 1933 c)

Short after the return in the country, as a gesture of recognition, appreciation and reward for the way the team performed, for the results obtained and for the contribution they had for the promotion of the club and of Romanian

football, the management of the Athletic Club Oradea celebrated this special event in the club's history. To the banquet that took place on the evening of 9 March, 350 guests participated. Alongside the sports, their family members, supporters of the football team, the event was honoured by the presence of representatives of the local administration, managers of the most important sport clubs in Oradea, members of the Newspapermen' Club from Oradea.

Conclusions

The tours of the Romanian football teams at the end of '20 and beginning of '30 were among the efforts made on sport level to affirm Romania on the international arena and to project Romania's image abroad.

This tour represented a continuation of the actions that targeted the diversification in players' training, enriching the international competition calendar, promoting Oradea's team and Romanian football.

Through its duration, 14 December 1932 – 6 March 1933, through its 25 matches played in France, Luxembourg, Morocco, and Algeria, through its results obtained, 21 victories and 4 ties, this action represented the longest tour a Romanian football team undertook at that time.

Team's playing, the results obtained made the tour to be a success, also expressed by the sympathy showed by the public which followed the team's evolution, by the appreciation made the press in those countries.

Besides its sport value and as a promoting action, the tour represented, through the sum of money that entered the club's account and through the sums paid to players, a great financial success.

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