

VareseNews

The night of Sarajevo, half a century ago. And from that moment on, Ignis was a legend

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Sarajevo, the beginning and the end. **Sarajevo and the magic night**, the one when **Ignis Varese became legend**. Let's go back **exactly fifty years**, April 9th, 1970: in Sarajevo there is the Champions' Cup final, a trophy that until then was the concern of Soviet teams and Real Madrid, with the only winning incursion of Milan in '66.

And also that time, the **Red Army is the main contender** for the title, a name that alone is scary, even more if the opponent, also strong, is making **its debut** in a match like this. Of course, **Varese is not there by chance**: it has already won an Intercontinental (in '66) and a Cup Winners' Cup (in '67) as well as three national titles. **But the Cup of Champions is a huge thing**, especially if you're facing the battleship of Belov and members. True: in the quarter final round, in the face of a clear KO in Moscow, **Ignis reacted with an amazing internal victory**, 79-59 led by a **wonderful Jones** (30 points), "the Cup American" who will instead be the protagonist (despite himself and no fault of his own) in negative in Sarajevo.

But a final is precisely another matter. At **Skenderija**, a brand-new sports stadium, there are over **6,000 people**, at least **300 coming from the Pre-Alps** by plane, with the neutral public ready, however, to give strength to the Ignis led by coach Aza Nikolic, born in that city. And it was precisely the classic **"wings of enthusiasm"** that **drove the Gialloblu** throughout the entire first half: Varese immediately took the lead and remained ahead with a discreet authority until the **"experience hit"** of the Soviets by

coach Alachachan. Inside Medvedev, man of the bench, just to catch the panther Jones, and the move works: brawl and double expulsion, but the American Gialloblu is much more important in the economy of the match. More: Dino Meneghin, a young man already big but not yet a Myth (yes, capital), already has three fouls and this is a nice rebus since on the other side the pivot Andreev is relentless.

So Varese lost ground, hearing the **gallop behind the Cossack cavalry**, it found itself ahead but by a single throw, **52-50**, when it had already reached 27?, with Ignis always in front until then. But even the **Red Army was having its own problems** with fouls, those of the other – strong – along Zarmukamedov while Nikolic had the right card: if Meneghin is an inexperienced beast, **Flaborea is a long course captain**, no longer explosive but extremely intelligent. His “hooks”, **the hook shots, were not very marchable**, the Army took the throw and when 5? to the siren the advantage was wide in favour of Varese. The Soviets went down, **Varese celebrated** the continental title for the first time. Four more will follow, and nine more finals.

Sarajevo, the beginning and the end, we said. The **tenth final will be in Grenoble against Bosna**, the city's team trained, we are in 1979, by a very young Boscia Tanjevic. In France there will be a burning disappointment almost as if to balance out the total joy of April 9, 1970. “But that of Sarajevo was really the Varese Basketball party: we won other finals and other cups, but that success was incredible and allowed Ignis to start its extraordinary series. It was an exciting evening.” **The voice is that of Ottorino Flaborea**, who we interviewed ten years ago on the occasion of his 40th anniversary ([HERE is the complete article](#)), is the voice of the interview. “Captain Hook” only mentions the following victories: that team didn't even come back to Varese, **it stopped in Gorizia for the last Serie A match** that served to sew the **fourth Scudetto** on the shirts. And at the end of the season, the Gialloblu people were able to celebrate that **great slam** that was repeated in 1973. Sarajevo, April 9, 1970, half a century ago: the legend began.

Sarajevo, palasport Skenderia

Champions Cup Final 1969-70

Ignis Varese – Red Army Moscow 79-74 (44-34)

Ignis: Rusconi 8, Flaborea 14, Paschini, Bulgheroni, Vittori 6, Ossola 4, Meneghin 20, Jones 8, Raga 19, Malagoli, Consonni. All. Nikolic.

Red Army: Ghilgner, Blik 1, Shelikov 2, Medvedev, Kapranov 2, Jliuk 2, Belov 21, Kovirkin, Zarmukamedov 14, Andreev 12, Milocerdov 2, Sidjakin 18. All. Alachachan.

Referee: Aznar (Spa) and Szabo (Ung).

Notes: Free throws: Ignis 13-19, A. Rossa 14-18. Spectators: about 6,500. Outgoing 5 fouls: Meneghin, Bilk, Zarmukamedov, Kapranov. Expelled: Jones and Medvedev.

di Translated by Belloni & Coppola (Reviewed by Prof. Robert Clarke)