

Nick Kordić: Bosanski "Bomber" sa tetovačom Maple Leaf-a

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Tekst prenosimo u cjelosti.

One proud Canadian: Bomber grateful to have escaped war-torn Yugoslavia

By KIRK PENTON, SUN MEDIA

Nick Kordic is celebrating his 26th birthday today.

Who knows if the Winnipeg Blue Bomber would have experienced his 26th birthday had he remained in his native country.

Kordic was born Oct. 21, 1983, in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia. The city and nation were in their glory, with the Winter Olympics just a few months away.

Life continued to be grand for the first nine years of Kordic's life. Then in early 1990s, with Yugoslavia in turmoil, it all started to fall apart. Civil war had begun.

"One minute you're playing with your brother or talking to your parents, the next minute the bomb alarms were going off in the building and then we're rushing everyone downstairs from the apartment into the bomb shelter," Kordic said.

"... We're playing around, trying to be distracted from it and you hear F-18s fly over top of your building. You don't really know what's going on as a kid. You're not educated about it. But you can see the fear in your parents' eyes, because they are educated about it and they know what's going on.

"At the time it wasn't scary. I was eight years old. I didn't really know what's going on. Looking back at it now, I'm very fortunate and lucky to have gotten out of that."

Kordic's father got the family out of Yugoslavia almost immediately, within a few months of the war's commencement. They lived in neighbouring Hungary for a year and applied for visas in the U.S, Canada and Australia.

Canada called back first, so the family moved to Mississauga, Ont., and then a year later to Toronto. Soon they officially became Canadians, and now Kordic is a backup safety and special teamer with the Bombers.

"I was blessed that I was born in a wonderful country and I got to travel a lot as a kid and got to see a lot of things," said Kordic, who was released in mid-July but re-signed last month. "(But) I was fortunate to leave the country at the start of the war and not have to live through the war."

His extended family wasn't so lucky. Kordic lost one of his grandfathers in the fighting, which lasted from 1991 to 1995 and resulted in six countries on the land that used to be Yugoslavia.

The population of Sarajevo, which is now the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was cut by nearly 40% during the Siege of Sarajevo. Of the 12,000 people who were killed and 50,000 that were wounded in the city, 85% were civilians.

UNICEF issued a report following the war that indicated 40% of children in the city had been shot at by snipers and that 51% of citizens had seen someone killed.

Kordic, who speaks his native tongue when he's with his family, went back to Sarajevo in 1997. The reality of what his life could have been like really hit home.

"At the time it was crazy to see it, just because of how war torn it was," he said. "It was only two years after the war. Now the nation's rebuilt itself. It's been 20 years.

"But in '97 it wasn't easy to see, because I could see the building I grew up in and the playground I played in, and life goes on, but you still see bullet holes, you still see the burned-out buildings.

"It's still an image there, but luckily I got to get away from it and I didn't have to live through it."

Kordic, who played his college ball at Western Ontario, plans to visit relatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina after this season, his second in the CFL. But he will always be happy to come home.

"Thankfully, to this day I'm a Canadian. I'm blessed that I'm here," said Kordic, who has seven special teams tackles in six games. "People ask me: So what are you? Are you Croatian? Are you Serbian? I just say I'm Canadian, because more than half of my life I've spent living here, and that's part of me.

"I'm definitely not ashamed of the past and where I grew up and where I was born, but I've got the Canadian Maple Leaf tattooed on my body, because that's what I am. I'm Canadian."

Izvor : <http://www.winnipegsun.com/sports/football/2009/10/21/11470246-sun.html>