



Drazen: The Remarkable Life and Legacy of the Mozart of Basketball

Todd Spehr

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Drazen Petrovic died young, the victim of a devastating car accident on a wet German road in 1993. His influence on European and American basketball, however, remains strong even today.

A Croatian national, Petrovic was a legend in his own country, turning professional at fifteen and joining the Yugoslav national team as a teenager. His flashy, provocative style made him beloved by fans and despised by his rivals. He could have had a long and distinguished career in his homeland, but Petrovic wanted more.

One of the first Europeans to break into the American National Basketball Association, Petrovic battled against xenophobia and the long-held belief that Europeans could not attain stardom in the world's best league. After initial difficulty in Portland, his contributions to the New Jersey Nets breathed life into a dormant franchise and made him an NBA star.

As Yugoslav forces invaded Croatia, Petrovic's success was a matter of pride, comfort, and inspiration in his homeland—and a source of conflicted emotions for the young man as his friends and family faced the dangers of war.

Written by basketball writer Todd Spehr, *Drazen* is a tribute to the determination and spirit Petrovic brought to every aspect of his short, brilliant life.

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