Official Personal Site Tzvetan Vassilev

Botev Plovdiv Professional Football Club



Botev Plovdiv is a football club with faithful followers that vies with Bulgaria's top clubs in the A Division. Until just two or three years ago, however, the club was playing in the C Division while managed by a fans association and facing financial straits that appeared terminal. How did the transformation happen?

Good times came when Tzvetan Vassilev decided to reach out and turn Botev Plovdiv into a public limited company. The banker acquired 90% of the assets of PFC Botev Plovdiv AD, leaving 10% for the fans. Meanwhile, Botev Plovdiv improved its performance, making it into B Division.

Beside financing the club, Vassilev immediately began investing into Botev Plovdiv's Children's and Youth Academy and into the reconstruction of the Hristo Botev Stadium. Tzvetan Vassilev's ambition is to have the stadium comply with the UEFA licensing conditions very soon.

Professional player contracts were signed and coaches' pay increased. Children, who had paid monthly coaching fees, were given free coaching instead. The club's management entered into agreement with three communities near the city of Plovdiv to hire suitable grounds for the Academy.

Tzvetan Vassilev first met the club's fans at the PFC Botev Plovdiv Christmas party in late 2011.

"*I decided to invest into Botev Plovdiv for the sake of the club's history and the incredible fans that never stopped cheering the team in its most difficult years. All of us have the great desire to see Botev Plovdiv return to the elite of Bulgarian football on the eve of its centennial. A massive amount of work awaits us in the year to come,*" said Vassilev, quoted by the club's official website botevplovdiv.bg.

In March 2012, thousands of Botev Plovdiv fans celebrated the centennial of their club in the city's

main square. The City Art Gallery held an exhibition of trophies and awards won by the team and its players over the decades. Owner Tzvetan Vassilev awarded Botev Plovdiv veterans badges of honor.

Coach changes and increased investments in the club followed in pursuit of the goal for the team to perform in A Division. A concept project for a 8.5 million leva sports and recovery complex in Komatevo was approved and the facility is to host the team and the Academy. The ground lease owed to the local community for the concession was for 4.7 million leva, which is half the price.

The super-modern center will cover a floor area of some 66 034 sq. meters. It shall comprise five soccer fields, multi-function sports arena, running track, sports rehabilitation center, car park, 2 000-seater terraces and other facilities.

In late May 2012, Botev Plovdiv continued its ascent, entering A Division after a victory over Sportist Svoge. Tzvetan Vassilev had fulfilled the promise given before the fans that the club would enter the national football elite for its centennial!

"*Many thanks to the boys, the sports technique staff, the fans, and to everyone who makes us rejoice this day. Botev is a Bulgarian football emblem and returning to A Division was its due. It was a difficult road and a complex one, but what matters is, we succeeded. This success shall not be the club's last: victory lies ahead. Botev is doomed to succeed!*" said Vassilev, quoted by Plovdiv radio station, and invited the citizens of Plovdiv to celebrate the victory at the Central square of the city.

In the beginning of 2013 Stanimir Stoilov was appointed as Head Coach. In the following months Botev Plovdiv won over long-term leaders in A Division such as Levski and Litex.

The legendary British performers Deep Purple for the 100th anniversary of the club on Tzvetan Vassilev's initiative. On 3 June 2013 at the Hristo Botev Stadium the group made a spectacular show which ended with fireworks and entusiastic songs by Botev Plovdiv fans in praise of the team.

The team ranked fourth in the football championship of Bulgaria. Just before drawing the lots for the European championships 2013/2014 CSKA, which was third, refused to participate in the UEFA Europe League.

Thus Botev Plovdiv got a chance to take the place of CSKA in the prestigious tournament and to prove that it deserves it. The team set a record in its history — played 6 consecutive games in a European competition without a loss. The club first beat the Kazakhstan Astana team with a total score of 6:0 (1:0 win as a guest and 5:0 victory as a host), then Zrinski (Mostar), with a total score of

3:1 (1:1 as a guest and 2:0 as a host) and twice finished even with the German Stuttgart team (1:1 as a guest and 0:0 as a host).

The Botev Plovdiv project was a long-term one, with success resulting from following a clear program. Tzvetan Vassilev proved this, while continuing to control the entire process, from attracting top players and coaches, to developing the club's own Academy, building the Komatevo base, and investing in the main Hristo Botev Stadium.

Upon signing the concession contract, Plovdiv Municipality set a three-year deadline for the completion of the construction of the training base in Komatevo. The good organization, the enthusiasm about Botev Plovdiv's success, and Tzvetan Vassilev's ambition to provide the best conditions possible for the development of the team accelerated the project and it was completed for only 15 months. The most modern sports facility in Bulgaria was opened on 18 September 2013 in Komatevo. The facility includes 5 football fields with lighting, a grandstand with 2 000 seats, multifunctional sports field, running track, sandpit, rehabilitation center with swimming pools and Jacuzzis, hotel section, restaurant, shopping center, and parking area.

"*The new facility means that Botev's development approach is different from the strategies of other teams,*" Tzvetan Vassilev said in an interview for sporta.bg at the opening ceremony. He added: "It shows the project's long-term strategy played its role. It is no coincidence that it even preceded the construction of the new stadium which, of course, both the team and the public need and I hope we will accomplish that in a short period of time. In my opinion, it will give us the opportunity to compare our team and our football with the best European examples."

Meanwhile, the football team was granted concession of *Hristo Botev* stadium for 35 years. The minimal investment required by the Municipality is 14 million leva, but once again Tzvetan Vassilev's plans are more ambitious — he decided to invest about 20 million leva, so that the new stadium will be able to host matches from the European championships and games of the national team. Although the deadline for the reconstruction is the end of 2016, the stadium is expected to be ready two years in advance — at the end of 2014, and its capacity to be 18 000 seats.

Tzvetan Vassilev shared his expectations for the future of the club: "*For me the development trend is what matters. For the team the trend is positive. We develop the Children and Youth's Academy as well as an excellent training complex, which is to open soon. Our strategy is to attract players to whom we can make offers compatible with the leading clubs in Europe.*"

The banker stressed that the Botev Plovdiv project is a long-term one in which pursuing the title was not an end in itself, while an organic implementation of plans to create conditions for the emergence of a European class club was what really mattered.

OTHERS ON THE BOTEV PLOVDIV PROJECT:

Stefka Kostadinova before the *7 Dni Sport* newspaper:

"*Dozens of soccer legends have set off on their way to stardom from the Hristo Botev Stadium. That's why it is so noble of Tzvetan Vassilev to reach out to soccer and return the fans to the stadium.*"

Football legend Georgi Slavkov in an interview before the Blitz Agency:

"*At Botev, they are now working completely professionally and across a broad front. Their boss Tzvetan Vassilev sets the ideal example for club owners.*"

The *Presa* newspaper:

"*After the purgatory of amateur soccer, today Botev is a significant factor in the elite, owner Tzvetan Vassilev and manager Stanimir Stoilov posting serious long term ambitions.*"

CSKA executive director Georgi Iliev — "Maykala" in an interview with the *Standart* newspaper:

"*I take off my hat to Tzvetan Vassilev at Botev. He spent something like ten or twelve million leva to get results. That's the way! Now, even if you went to Botev ten years from now, what's built will still be built then. And that matters more than any title.*"

The *7 Dni Sport* newspaper, author — Iliyan Radkov:

"*Botev are back from exile! The bright future for which the Canaries' (Kanarchetata's in Bulgarian) many fans dreamed, begins today. Botev came back from the dead to show all Bulgarian clubs what ought to be done to get a side climbing and return to the elite stronger and more fearsome to competitors even before the start of the season. Financial paradise and the correct club development strategy after banker Tzvetan Vassilev started financing the club made fans dream that their club will return to the top of Bulgarian football very soon.*"

Midseason review by the football24.bg website, author — Veselin Georgiev:

"*Botev managed to get back to what was always its rightful place: A Division. The Canaries (Kanarchetata in Bulgarian) set off on the long road back from the Southeastern C Division, via B Division, and on to favorites for the A Division cup. Tzvetan Vassilev's investment made the dream come true.*"

Botev Plovdiv fans in an address on the bultras.com website:

"*We succeeded in attracting an honorable man like Tzvetan Vassilev into the service of the yellow-and-black idea by investing into our club, our city, and our children.*"

A webcafe.bg website analysis, author — Didro:

"*The saviors from Corporate Commercial Bank AD returned the club into the elite, while the stadium and its surroundings are a hive of activity. Botev sets a fresh example to others dragged back from the brink. May things there continue as they began!*"

A comment on the www.sportal.bg sports website, author — Biser Toshev:

"*Sooner or later, things sort themselves out and everything goes accordingly when a club looks ahead and shows the strong desire to develop. It also helps to have an ambitious owner with serious money, and most of all the readiness to invest it. Sure enough this is about Botev Plovdiv and Tzvetan Vassilev who is one of the few serous investors in Bulgarian sport at the moment.*"