

BOOK
REGULARLY
UPDATED



Luka Dončić

THE STORY SO FAR

Duško Dragić

INTRO TO LUKA

Me and Luka Doncic alias Donke Jr. back in 2003

Basketball is anecdotes for me. For some it's the wins, for some it's the stats, for some it's the game itself. But for me, it's the anecdotes. Maybe it has to do something with the fact I like to laugh a lot. So this book basically starts with an anecdote.

It was back in 2003 in our hometown Ljubljana. I was a 22 year old college student at the Faculty of Economics, working part time at a tennis club named Šport Plus. Four year old kids from a nearby kindergarten came to this club's balloons in the winter time for recreation. I set up a playground for them with blocks made out of foam. And if I wouldn't have done that, they would've just uncontrollably run around, scream and do all the nasty things kids at that age do. Like in that movie Kindergarten Cop with Arnold Schwarzenegger. Everybody followed my instructions. Everybody listened. Except for one kid – Luka Doncic. When these little rascals had to go under a block, Luka went over. When they had to go over, Luka went under. When they had to go through a block, Luka just flipped it. He was all over the place! The playground soon looked like someone threw a hand grenade on it. My mom once asked me: "How was work, sweaty?" And I was like: "They're horrible enough, but this kid, Doncic..."

I didn't want to yell at him like Arnold. I just let him do his thing and 'cleaned up' after him. Soon you could see me on that same playground, playing with him, rolling him over or under a block etc. In fact, after a while I got so used to him, that when I saw his group coming through the door of the balloon, I said to my co-workers: "Here's my Terminator." This went on for about 6 months.

It's interesting that I met his father Sasha Doncic – also a successful basketball player – only after I met Luka. It was two years later, in the 2005/2006 season, when Sasha, nicknamed Donke, was playing for Geoplin Slovan in Ljubljana. I started seeing Luka once more towards the end of 2015. During halftime at one of the home games of Geoplin Slovan Donke Jr. picked up the basketball ball and I just couldn't believe it. Left arm, right arm, through the legs... And he wasn't even 7 years old, mind you. I said to myself: "Well, look at you, little Sasha... Just grow up tall as your dad and you got yourself a career there, lad." I was right. But I never thought he would progress so quickly.

I have to mention that four countries had a significant part in Luka's life: Yugoslavia (birthplace of his parents), Slovenia (Luka's birthplace), Spain (he went there when he was twelve and became a developed basketball player in the club Real Madrid) and USA (where he gained the world's attention). So, it's not surprising that Luka speaks four languages: Slovene, English, Spanish, and 'former Yugoslavian' (the latter language is basically spoken in Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia).



Luka celebrating his fourth birthday with his mom Mirjam.



Tennis balloon where I watched over Luka back in 2003.



Arnold in Kindergarten Cop.



The tennis balloons are located near Ilirija's speedway track and the latter lies in the Northern part of Ljubljana.



Flag of former Yugoslavia. Its breakup in 1991 formed 7 new countries, including Slovenia.



Flag of Slovenia, birthplace of Luka Doncic.



Flag of Spain, a country where Luka learned to speak Spanish.



Flag of USA. English became the fourth language Luka was able to speak, the third being 'former Yugoslavian'.

THE BEGINNING

How this book got started

It was 29th December 2018. I was driving towards the city of Šenčur for the 12th round of the regular basketball season in the Slovenian Premier A League. Basketball club Šenčur GGD was playing against Ljubljana's Ilirija – and the latter team was being coached by none other than Luka's father Sasha Doncic. While son Luka just scored his personal-high 34 points in NBA against New Orleans a day earlier, on the other side of Atlantic father Sasha started the season in the national championship with 11 losses. When I saw this information on RTV teletext, I said to myself: "Jesus!" Other teams scored at least four wins.

Šenčur GGD was the second worst team on the table, so I knew Sasha had best chances for his first win of the season against this team. I said to myself: "I have to get him in a good mood. You know how it is with some coaches when they lose." I had a good feeling Ilirija would win. But it was close – too close. And even if I always tell myself I have to be professional, I always seem to give-in to emotions and the game got to me. It got to Sasha as well. He was yelling, I tell you. So a fan from the stands shouted out: "Take it easy, Sasha." I smiled and immediately said: "Ha! Here we go." They won. And I was happy for Sasha (I'm always happy for the winner). We arranged to meet and Sasha gave me some useful information. This information can not be found on the internet and this has always been my goal as a writer – to put as much unknown information to readers as possible.

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE BASKETBALL CLUB ILIRIJA

Goran Dragic, the 2018 NBA All Star attendant, began his career there. Ilirija's games were played in the street named Vodnikova cesta (Vodnik's Street), before the team moved to Tivoli hall. The latter building was famous because of the 1970 World Basketball Championship and because of the most successful Slovenian club of all time – Olimpija (which had its headquarters there before the club moved to Stožice in the second decade of the 21st century). Ilirija's biggest successes were second place in the second Yugoslav league in 1976 and first places in the republic's league in years 1969, 1971, 1972, 1973 and in the 1981/1982 season.



Sasha's team Ilirija beating Šenčur on 29th December 2018.



Logo of team Ilirija.



On 29th December 2017, exactly a year before I went to Šenčur, Sasha's Ilirija made a sensation when beating Olimpija, the latter club being the most successful Slovenian team of all time. Sasha is the one in the grey suit.



Luka scored 34 points against New Orleans on 28th December 2018, his highest score in NBA in 2018, while a day later his dad's team Ilirija back in Slovenia scored its first win of the season after 11 straight losses.

MY FIRST WORDS ABOUT LUKA IN 2006

My first live basketball game not before 2005

Since I finished high school in 2000, I've been publishing articles in numerous newspapers and magazines. My first sport was Formula One though – I even wrote a book about the history of this sport. I loved Formula One because I could basically do all the other sports (tennis, soccer, basketball...) myself. I was the guy who, instead of buying a ticket to go watch a game, rather went to the nearest playground for recreation. My first live basketball game wasn't seen until June 2005, when I bought two tickets for the final game of the Slovenian championship between Ljubljana's clubs Geoplin Slovan and Union Olimpija. I bought the tickets because of two reasons. The first reason was that one of the players at Geoplin Slovan had the same last name as I did and I wanted to check him out. This player (Goran Dragic) would later on play in NBA. And the second reason was taking my dad to a game.

Between 2004 and 2007 I worked for a Slovenian daily sports newspaper Ekipa as an editor for motorsports. In October 2005 the basketball editor of this newspaper Igor Djurovic needed a correspondent at Kodeljevo for the home games of team Geoplin Slovan, so I decided to help him. I can even clearly remember one of the plays of my first game as a correspondent for this team. Goran Dragic stole the ball from the opponent and Igor – who was there to teach me how I would work later on – immediately said to me: "Watch this!" Goran dunked. A Dragic who dunks? I just lifted my eyebrows. But I have to mention, we're not related. At least not up to the 10th generation (which is, by the way, the first generation in Serbia to be allowed to marry with a relative; this is an unwritten rule, the Church allows from the 5th and in some cases even from the 4th generation). Anyway, Goran Dragic and Sasha Doncic were teammates at Geoplin Slovan. And Sasha, together with his wife Mirjam Poterbin, regularly brought Luka to home games. If my memory serves me right, I saw Donke Jr. for the first time since 2003 at a home game against team Vojvodina from Serbia. This was in December of 2005. I remember this game because Sasha Doncic scored 28 points – a season high for Donke Sr. Luka was shooting some hoops during halftime of this game and I immediately saw great potential in the kid. I even wrote about it when I had my first 'one to one' interview with Sasha on 9th January 2006. During this interview I mentioned to Donke Sr. that I have noticed Luka having great basketball skills at a very young age and asked Sasha if Donke Jr. was going to follow the footsteps of his father. Sasha replied: "He is going to have to make that decision on his own. I'm not going to force him into anything, but I will support him, if he will need my help. Yes, he's very good for his age. He can dribble with both arms. He's currently very busy, for besides basketball he attends soccer and judo practices as well." These skills of Luka even before he was 7 years old were, in my opinion, mostly self-taught. So Kevin Durant's statement published on 14th January 2019 wasn't quite accurate. Kevin stated that Luka progressed with such quickness because during Luka's time in Spain Donke Jr. didn't have to focus on his studies. But Luka was a developed basketball player even before he turned 7. He's elegance while handling the ball was such that I immediately knew he would make it.

My second interview with Sasha, in which Luka was mentioned once more, was in the same month, January 2006. One of the more interesting things about this interview was Sasha's statement that he once went paragliding from Triglav (highest Slovenian mountain with a height of 2864 meters above sea level). Sasha also said in this interview that he only gets jealous when it comes to his wife Mirjam and that he will try and do everything necessary to point his son Luka in the right direction.



Ob polčasih domačih tekem smo zasledili vašega sina Luko, ki za svoja leta odlično obvlada žogo. Ali bo šel po očetovih stopinjah?
 Odločitev bo moral sprejeti sam. Jaz ga vsekakor ne bom silil v igranje košarke, a mu bom gotovo nudil podporo, če jo bo potreboval. Res, za svoja leta odlično preigrava, lahko pa vodi tako z levo kot z desno roko. Trenutno je polno zaposlen, saj se poleg košarke ukvarja tudi z nogometom in judom.

My first published words about Luka during my first interview with his father Sasha on 9th January 2006.



nih operacijah?
 Nič nimam proti plastičnim operacijam, a pri nas so slednje, vsaj za večino, še vedno stvar luksuza.
 Kateri dan si boste zapomnili za vse življenje?
 Osemindvajseti februar 1999, to je dan rojstva mojega sina Luke.
 Katero lastnost pri drugih ljudeh najbolj cenite?
 Iskrenost.
 Katera lastnost vas pri drugih ljudeh najbolj moti?
 Hinavščina.
 Opišite se z nekaj besedami.
 Nerad se opisujem, to prepuščam drugim.
 Kaj si mislite o tetoviranju?
 Tetovaže nimam, a nimam nič proti, če jo kdo ima. Seveda pa mora biti okusna.
 Bi si upali skočiti z bungee jumpingom ali padalom?

My second interview with Sasha in January 2006 when he said that 28th February 1999, which is Luka's birthday, is and will remain the date he will never forget (look at the first full question on the right picture).



Cover of the newspaper Ekipa (left picture) prior to the last (fifth and final) game of the Slovenian championship between Geoplin Slovan and Union Olimpija on 7th June 2006 (in the 2005/2006 season), a week before Sasha's 32nd birthday. And the article or better yet preview on that game (right picture). Sasha Dončić (bottom left in the right picture) made a statement before the game, saying there are no secrets between the two teams. "The winner will become the club who will make fewer mistakes," he added. The stands at Kodeljevo, where the game took place, were made out of benches and not seats back then, so you could really squeeze a lot of fans in there. And boy, did they squeeze for that game. If the hall could take 2200 spectators, then I think there were 2500 of them. During halftime of that final game of the 2005/2006 season I saw little Luka playing with the ball again, having great skills once more. After the game, which Slovan lost, Sasha picked up Luka and embraced him. It must have been tough for Donke Sr., for this was his fourth loss in the finals of the Slovenian championship.



On 23rd June 2006, 13 days after the finals, Slovenian newspaper Žurnal reported how Sasha Dončić celebrated his 32nd birthday together with his friends at a picnic. Amongst friends were players whom he played against in the finals just a couple of days earlier. Young Luka can be seen far right covering the face of Goran Dragić.



In 2006 the well known restaurant in Ljubljana called Flamenco got a new owner. It was to be none other than Luka's father Sasha Doncic. Lots of famous Slovenian people came to Sasha's opening ceremony of that restaurant, including Miss Slovenia Rebeka Dremelj and soccer coach Srečko Katanec, the first who managed to get a tiny little Luka's home country called Slovenia to the European Championship (it was back in 2000).



In March 2007, 15 months after my first interview with Sasha Doncic, I had my third conversation with Luka's father, this time for newspaper Dnevnik. Once again, Sasha talked about Luka. When asked why he mostly played for the Slovenian clubs, Sasha answered: "I like Slovenia, I miss nothing here. I live a fine life, I have a son who is 8 years old now and it means a lot to me having him around, together with my wife Mirjam and friends. I have a way of life that suits me. You can't buy happiness with money." This interview was originally very long and had to be shortened. Sasha was always good at interviews and thus made life easier for journalists.



On 10th February 2009 I had my fourth interview with Sasha Dončić. Luka, who was now 10 years old, was mentioned once more. Sasha was now playing for Geoplin Slovan once again, after negotiations with Union Olimpija, where he played in the 2007/2008 season, failed to bear fruit. When I asked Sasha where he saw himself in the future, he replied: "I will try to play basketball for a little while longer. After I finish my career I see myself as a coach. I have two more exams before I get my license to coach a team. I gave my youth to basketball and because my son also loves this sport, I would like to be close to him. I want to help him, so that he doesn't make the same mistakes as I did. The plan is to stay in basketball, but I can't predict what will happen to me."



Left picture: my report of the game between Geoplin Slovan and Vojvodina in December 2005 when I basically started seeing Donke Jr. regularly again and noticed he had great basketball skills. I remember this game because of Donke Sr. as well. He scored 28 points which was his best result of the season. On the right picture: Sasha's words from January 2006 when he said that if it wasn't for his wife Mirjam, life in the early '90s would have been a lot more difficult for him. But you can read more about this on the page 'Blood is thicker than water'.

A WORD OR TWO ABOUT IGOR DJUROVIC

Igor wrote Doncic's biography, Luka was unhappy

Igor Djurovic is probably the best basketball journalist in Slovenia or even the best in the region of former Yugoslavia. In early years of his life he even played some basketball himself. He played for team Olimpija against Drazen Petrovic in that memorable game when Drazen scored a record high 112 points for his club Cibona. Also, there isn't a journalist in Slovenia that can tell you so many anecdotes as Igor can. For example, when Dream Team played at the 1992 Summer Olympics, Igor went to Barcelona without having accreditation or tickets for the games. I asked him: "So what did you during those long days there?" He answered: "I went to see things which were for free... Like... equestrian events." I was probably the first to write about Luka Doncic in newspapers back in 2006, but Igor Djurovic was the first to write a book about him. In December 2018 I read that he and Serbian journalist Vlada Stankovic wrote approximately 200 pages about this young talented player. Luka Doncic immediately gave a statement about this book. He said: "A few days ago some news came up to me that they are trying to release my biography on the day of my 20th birthday, that's 28th February 2019. I didn't cooperate in the making of it with Vladimir Stankovic and Igor Djurovic, as a matter of fact I actively opposed to creating the work because, in my opinion, I am way too young for such publication. Mr. Stankovic came in contact with us some while ago while I was still playing in Real Madrid. He expressed his request for me to participate in creation of it but I respectfully declined. Even so, it seems that the issuance is in fact ready to be published and I am strictly opposed to advertising and releasing it in my name." Igor went to the States to see Luka in January of 2019 for authorization of the book and later said it would be published with or without Luka's approval. Luka was even more against publication of this book when he read it. This was Luka's statement made in February 2019: "Now that I have read it, I'm even more against its publication. It's nothing but former articles about me and stats and some things written about me aren't true. I appreciate the effort the two writers made, but my opinion about it is the same. I am against it." I found out about the biography a couple of days after I decided it would be a good thing to give the American and world's readers something more about Luka Doncic. This Igor's project made the whole thing a bit complicated, but not too difficult. Later on I read that the release of the book was to be withheld.

An interesting thing about Igor is that he had an acrobatic group called Hip Hoopers with a famous mascot – a rabbit. Once in a while I wore that mascot's suit at various shows (All Star games, street basketball, etc.).

It's funny how the basketball world is connected. Igor played against Drazen Petrovic, Drazen played against Michael Jordan, and at one time I played with Igor against some Slovenian veteran players... Then Michael Jordan played against Kobe Bryant, Kobe Bryant played against LeBron James, LeBron James played against Luka Doncic, Luka Doncic played against my friend Matjaž Trobec when Donke Jr. was a youngster, and Matjaž Trobec played against me.



Cibona — SMELT Olimpija 158:77 (77:34)

● ZAGREB — „Dvojka“ Doma sportova „Zagreb“. Gledalaca oko 2000. Suci: Stevanov (Novi Sad) i Ninkov (Beograd)

CIBONA: 13 ličnih grešaka, 27-29 (93%) slobodna bacanja, 60-83 (72%) gađanje iz igre, 35 skokova

Anzulović 16 (1-2), Bečić, Čutura, Pavličević, Petrović 112 (22-22), Rizman 14 (2-2), Vukičević, Ušić, Ivo Nakić 12, Šuštarac 4 (2-3)

SMELT OLIMPIJA: 17 ličnih grešaka, 5-7 (71,4%) slobodna bacanja, 35-69 (50,7%) ubacaja iz igre, 12 skokova, Strazišar (32) i Novina (36) pet ličnih grešaka

Zorić 8, Đurović 8, Merzelj, Maček 16, Siražišar 6, Strmole 9 (1-1), Erjavec 15 (1-2), Kralj, Novina 15 (3-4)

Tri poena: 10x3 Petrović, 3x3 Anzulović

Igor during a home game and the box-score where you can see the record 112 points of Petrovic. Igor? 8 points.



Petrovic and Jordan playing for their national teams (left picture) and Drazen in NBA (right picture).



Igor's acrobatic group Hip Hoopers (the guy in the rabbit costume is me, funny enough).

LUKA'S HOME CITY LJUBLJANA

Donke Jr. lived in Topniska Street

To know Luka you must first know which town he came from. And I'm not going to give you a classic tour of the city. No, I'm going to write about all the things you don't know, all the things you can't find on internet, and about all of those little details which a tourist agency will not mention.

Ljubljana is one of the smallest capital cities in the world, with a population of less than 300 thousand. The city is shaped like a star if you look at it from above. You know, like the star you once found on the flag of former Yugoslavia. Or better yet like stars on the US flag. Anyway, five main roads in the directions of the star's edges go in and out of the city and we also have one highway that circles around the city.

This highway around the city is around 30 kilometers long and the main roads cross the highway at 5 different locations. From these locations to the center of the city you have to drive around 5 kilometers, so it's really impossible to get lost and you can even walk the distances. These five main roads from the city center are: Smartinska cesta (takes you kind of up to the right in the direction of Hungary), Dunajska cesta (takes you up towards Austria), Celovska cesta (takes you kind of up to the left towards Austria and Italy, but it's better if I write towards Germany's Munich), Trzaska cesta (takes you kind of down to the left towards Croatia and the Slovenian coastline) and Dolenjska cesta (takes you towards Zagreb in Croatia). You'll get the idea.

Luka lived with his family in Topniška ulica or Topniska Street and this is kind of up and to the right from the city center – about 1 or 2 kilometers away from it.

Luka attended grammar school of Miran Jarc (Osnovna šola Mirana Jarca) in Ipavčeva ulica or Ipavceva Street (not far from Topniska Street).

When in Ljubljana, you urgently have to hook up with a local guy if you're in town and since I'm from Ljubljana as well, consider me as your tour guide. The view from the Ljubljana Castle is spectacular and a first. Don't waste time with photographing monuments, bridges and fountains. No. Eat at the best restaurants such as Romeo, Julia, Kaval, buy some bear and go bake in the sun on 'the beaches' of the river Ljubljanica which runs through the city center.



Emblem of Ljubljana (left picture), restaurant Julia (middle picture) and pancakes from Romeo (right picture).



Ljubljanski grad or The Castle of Ljubljana has a magnificent view and is a must when you come to Ljubljana.



The beautiful 'beaches' (left picture) of the river Ljubljanica (right picture) where you can 'bake' in the sun.

LUKA'S HOME COUNTRY SLOVENIA

Luka eventually decided to play for Slovenia

Once again I will give you information you can not find on internet. Example: Slovenia's capital city is only 135 kilometers away from another big metropolitan area (Zagreb, Croatia); Ljubljana also lies around 500 kilometers from major cities such as Belgrade (Serbia), Budapest (Hungary), Vienna (Austria) and Milano (Italy); from Slovenia's center of the country you only have a little over 100 kilometers to the coastline during summer and far less than 100 kilometers to the nearest ski resort in the winter time.

We have beautiful caves such as Škocjanske jame and the more 'popular' caves in Postojna, a town only 50 kilometers from the capital city. And if you want to see half of Slovenia right in front of you, you just drive from Ljubljana towards Rašica. This hill is only 5 kilometers outside the town and maps.google even has a 360 degree view from its tower (just write 'Razgledni stolp na Rašici' into maps.google.com). People mostly do know how to speak English and you would really have to be unlucky to get a youngster who doesn't understand or speak this language.

Slovenians are a very friendly nation for foreigners or should I say tourists, so you don't have to worry about not being able to communicate. Living here? Well, that's a different story – if you allow me to be a bit humorous.

Luka was linked to play for other national teams, including Serbia and Spain, but on 22nd September 2016 he announced he would play for the Slovenian national team for the rest of his career.

Places to see in Slovenia are: Bled with its delicious desert called Kremšnita, Piran at the seaside, town Ljubljana and several other places.

In summer you can easily climb Triglav, the highest mountain in the region of former Yugoslavia.



Slovenian flag is similar to Slovakian (the emblem of the latter is different).



City of Piran at the coast and lake Bled with an island inside of the lake itself (right picture).



Waterfall Peričnik freezes during the winter time (left picture) and the caves of Škocjanske jame (right picture)

BLOOD IS THICKER THAN WATER

Father Sasha and mother Mirjam active in sports

Luka was very lucky of having both parents active in sports. Sasha Doncic was a successful basketball player and Mirjam Poterbin was a hurdler back in the days. Having a father taking him to games and a mother that took him outside for walks and near a basketball court regularly, Luka quickly learned what the world of sport meant. Sasha, in his own words, comes from a family with tall relatives, so predisposition was a key factor even in his career, let alone in Luka's. Donke Sr. was born in Šempeter pri Gorici in former Yugoslavia and started playing basketball in his school in Jesenice. His path then took him to Olimpija in Ljubljana. He didn't play for their senior team, because he was a minor, but he did train with it. He then went to Belgrade to play for Crvena Zvezda or Red Star coached by the legendary Duško Vujošević. The latter trained this team in years 1991 and 1992, which were turbulent because of the outburst of wars between several former Yugoslav republics. Had it not been for these wars, Sasha's career might have had a different, perhaps far better path. There's nothing worse then for a young player not being able to train hard due to extreme circumstances. Sasha had to work to survive and his jobs were diverse. He even painted fences. Sasha later admitted: "It was very hard for me when I came back to Slovenia from Belgrade in 1991. Basically I came just for a visit, but circumstances were such that I had to stay. If it wasn't for Mirjam and some other friends, it would have been even harder." Sasha's memories of this period are faint, though. As I have investigated, he played only one game for Red Star, and even this wasn't in the 1991/1992 season, but a season later when the coach was Vladislav Lučić. This is according to the Red Star's official website. "I can't really remember in detail that turbulent period in my life and Yugoslavia in general. I'm sure I played more games, these might have been in the Cup," said Sasha.

Information about Sasha's early life can't be found in the world's best encyclopedia Wikipedia. Also, what you can not find, is what kind of a player was Sasha. In my mind, he was the best – despite others having better skills than him. During games he was hugging with referees. He lifted arms of his teammates when they made a foul, as if 'Don't pretend you didn't make one'. And so on. He constantly reminded viewers that basketball is first a game, only then a business. My memories of him during work on the court itself are also very good. He could force an opponent to make a foul, when others couldn't. And he played good defense, never intentionally hurting a player from the other side. I can't remember him ever getting a technical or unsporting foul. His son got two in a single game in his first NBA season with Dallas and was ejected because of that during the game against Indiana in January 2019. Sasha was the kind of player who always said: "It's better to play in front of fans whistling to you, then in an empty hall."

I think Sasha must have been the best player to play inside of Slovenia, the first one that a coach of a competitive Slovenian club would take into consideration when forming a team. He was also good-hearted. In June 2007 I organized a charity tournament and Sasha attended it along with many other excellent players. He once stated that basketball lost its beauty when it became more physical, but when his son became a developed player at Real Madrid, he said: "Luka brought back the romance to this sport." I also think that there isn't a Slovenian player who played in more finals of the Slovenian national championship than he did. He won two out of six, the first one in 2007 when he was 33 years old!

After the end of his career as a player he started coaching. He made a real story at Ilirija, bringing the club first from the third league into second, and then from the second league into first, having 49 straight wins in the process! He didn't stop there – when he once reached the first league, he beat much stronger teams than his own, even Olimpija.



Sasha playing for Pivovarna Laško against Partizan back in the '90s (left picture) and at Slovan (right picture).



First and only titles for Sasha came in seasons 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 with clubs Helios and Union Olimpija.



Mirjam in 2011.



My charity event (Sasha is with Zoran, brother of Goran Dragic).

EARLY LIFE OF LUKA

Soccer, judo and school runs

Luka Doncic was born in Ljubljana on 28th February 1999 to before mentioned Sasha Doncic and Mirjam Poterbin. He was born not that long after Sasha sustained an injury on his face and had to wear a mask during games. Years later, Sasha, in an emotional letter to his son, explained how he was encouraging his wife Mirjam to give birth on 28th and not 29th February. Donke Sr. explained: "I didn't want him to celebrate his birthday every 4 years." Luka didn't seem to stand out in early years amongst his peers, at least not with height. When I watched over him for 6 months during my work at Šport Plus, he didn't seem to be any bigger or higher compared to other kids. At least this is how I remembered him. But boy, did he have a lot of energy.

Two years later, during my season as a correspondent for the home games of Geoplin Slovan, he still didn't seem higher or bigger compared to youngsters his age. During these home games of Geoplin Slovan, where he watched his dad having his best season up to then, he was in charge of sweeping the court with a mop when asked by the referee. During halftimes he quickly put the mop aside and grabbed a ball. So did other kids who were there as helpers or spectators (usually as sons and daughters of players). I could see him and other rascals sweating with effort to score a basket.

Luka also trained soccer and judo during that time. His father said to me that he even got a bronze medal in judo and was good in running too – when schools organized the so called 'cross' runs. But his mother denied this. Considering the fact this sort of information isn't that relevant in a life of a future basketball player, it's not that important to write about soccer and judo, rather than explain to readers that Luka obviously had very good physical predispositions for sports. According to Luka Bassin, Sasha's assistant at Ilirija in January 2019, Donke Sr. took 'little Donke' to watch Sasha's practices as early as 2001 when Luka's dad was playing for Loka Kava.



Luka right after his birth in 1999 (left picture) and with father Sasha when the latter played for Krka in 2001.



At Kodeljevo (club Slovan) on the court and on the grandstands together with his father Sasha. You can clearly see benches instead of seats, so you can imagine how it was in the finals of 2005/2006 when the hall was full.

THE STORY WITH CLUBS BEGINS

Playing for Ljubljana's Olimpija from 2007 to 2012

With the development of social media and possibility to translate things with google translate, you can find basically everything you need to know about Luka Doncic yourself. Wikipedia has such thorough description of him that I will deliberately distance myself from things you already know and can read about on the internet. In the 2007/2008 season father Sasha Doncic played for team Olimpija. Olimpija was called Union Olimpija back then, due to the sponsorship of Union – a company which manufactures mostly beer. Olimpija is now called Petrol Olimpija after a company which mostly sells gas. Anyway, Wikipedia reports that Luka started playing for Olimpija when he was 8 years old, which means in October of 2007, and that Olimpija's basketball school coach Grega Brezovec invited Luka to practice with players of his age.

I met Grega Brezovec as early as 2004. He was the guy mostly known for ŠKL or Šolska Košarkarska Liga (in translation: Basketball School League), a competition between Slovenian schools. What is mostly important to write about this period of Luka's life is that he started growing faster than most of his peers. This is why (and Wikipedia writes about this!) they constantly moved him up to train with older kids. But having height alone doesn't cut it because of the lack of muscle tissue, at least this is what experts of that time were saying back then, so Luka, in his own words, had to work harder at everything.

You can find lots of photos of Luka from this period on the internet links at the end of this book and see the progress in the making for yourself. His mother Mirjam Poterbin also posted lots of photos of her son from that time on her Facebook profile. Mind you, clubs in Slovenia usually have practices at schools until these kids reach a certain age, only then do they start with training sessions in the halls of those clubs.

Looking at the first table below, you'll probably ask yourselves why you can't see larger cities. Maribor and Celje are renowned for soccer and handball, while clubs Krka and Helios basically made it because of major companies in that area (Krka is a pharmaceutical company, Helios develops mostly paint). Tajfun is probably going to remain the so called 'one-off'.

NUMBER OF TITLES IN THE SLOVENIAN PREMIER LEAGUE (up to season end 2018)

17	Olimpija (Ljubljana, largest city in Slovenia)
7	Krka (Novo mesto, 8 th largest city in Slovenia)
2	Helios (Domžale, 15 th largest city in Slovenia)
1	Tajfun (Šentjur, 42 nd largest city in Slovenia)

NUMBER OF TITLES IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAV PREMIER LEAGUE (up to season end 1991)

12	Crvena Zvezda (Belgrade, Serbia)
6	Olimpija (Ljubljana, Slovenia)
	Zadar (Zadar, Croatia)
	Split (Split, Croatia)
4	Partizan (Belgrade, Serbia)
	OKK Beograd (Belgrade, Serbia)
3	Bosna (Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina)
	Cibona (Zagreb, Croatia)
1	Yugoslav Army (Belgrade, Serbia)
	Proleter Zrenjanin (Zrenjanin, Serbia)
	Radnički Belgrade (Belgrade, Serbia)



Olimpija's team logo (left) and Luka with his dad in June of 2007 when Sasha won the title with this team.



Logo of ŠKL (left picture) and Goran Dragic with Grega Brezovec on the right (Luka is the highest of the kids).



According to the Spanish Wikipedia Luka Dončić officially became a member of the club Olimpija in 2010.

MOVE TO THE SPANISH REAL MADRID IN 2012

The only club to play for professionally before NBA

Like before when I was writing about Luka at Olimpija I will once again skip a long description and statistics of Luka Doncic when the latter moved to Real Madrid. I will rather translate words of his mother speaking about that time and also of Sasha when the latter wrote to his son in July of 2018. Luka went to Spain at the age of 13. Mother Mirjam stated: "I can not describe you my feelings when your kid goes from home at that age. I was in Madrid every week, but still. On the other hand, it was this period of his life that made him mature much sooner than expected." Father Sasha's words in the before mentioned letter about this period of Luka's life were: "Dear Luka, can you imagine having a son of your own and living without him? Can you imagine how he builds his life so far away from you? You were 13 years old, Real Madrid came here to Slovenia to put you into their team and take you so far away from us. It hurt. It hurt a lot... At the same time I was excited, for I would never forgive myself of not letting you go. I didn't want to be the one to blame of missing such a great opportunity." Before Luka went to Madrid, he swept the floor at Olimpija's home games in Stožice hall and on 8th February 2019 Facebook's site NBA Slovenija posted a video of him from that time. The source of this video was POP TV and the reporter mentioned how Luka had a height of 170 centimeters at the age of 12. This was in the 2011/2012 season, Olimpija's season before last in EuroLeague, and the video showed him sitting next to the court and watching his idol Ricky Rubio play for team Barcelona. Both of them would play against each other in Luka's first NBA season! Luka achieved one more notable record before going to Madrid. At the Lido di Roma Tournament he erupted with a monster's triple double of 54 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists. I posted the link of this video of him watching Ricky Rubio at the end of this book; together with the video of the 2013 Minicopa tournament where he already played for Real. You can basically see all videos of Luka on youtube.com, like his professional debut (for Real Madrid) in 2015. You just have to type-in the right words.

NUMBER OF TITLES IN EUROLEAGUE (up to season end 2018)

10	Real Madrid (Madrid, Spain)
7	CSKA Moscow (Moscow, Russia)
6	Maccabi Tel Aviv (Tel Aviv, Israel)
	Panathinaikos (Athens, Greece)
5	Varese (Varese, Italy)
3	Olympiacos (Piraeus, Greece)
	Olimpia Milano (Milan, Italy)
	Rigas ASK (Riga, Latvia)
	Split (Split, Croatia)
2	FC Barcelona (Barcelona, Spain)
	Virtus Bologna (Bologna, Italy)
	Cantù (Cantù, Italy)
	Cibona (Zagreb, Croatia)
1	Fenerbahçe (Istanbul, Turkey)
	Dinamo Tbilisi (Tbilisi, Georgia)
	Joventut Badalona (Badalona, Spain)
	Žalgiris (Kaunas, Lithuania)
	Bosna (Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina)
	Virtus Roma (Rome, Italy)
	Partizan (Belgrade, Serbia)
	Limoges CSP (Limoges, France)



Logo of Real Madrid (left) and Luka with his mom back in 2012 and 2013 (right picture: at Santiago Bernabeu).



Luka giving an interview after a youth game in May 2014 and again with mom in 2015.



Father Sasha showing his son a move or two. Or was it the other way around?

SEASON END 2015 WITH REAL MADRID

At first he only played in the Spanish ACB league

The 2014/2015 season was the first for Luka in the senior team of Real Madrid. His first game was towards the end of the season, in April, which is logical for young players to have their debuts, but not a rule of course. At the age of only 16 years and 2 months he became the youngest player of Real Madrid to play in the Spanish ACB league. Sasha Doncic remembered Luka from these early years playing for Real Madrid and said: “It was a tournament of cadets in Barcelona when he still didn’t know how to speak Spanish that well. He played against bigger rivals, but they chose him as the MVP of the tournament. In a few months time coach Pablo Laso put him into the senior team for the first time. And that first attack against one of the Spanish teams... he was in the corner... three points shot made! These great moments a father never forgets.”

This three point shot made was special because of something else too. It was the first time Luka ever touched a ball in his professional career. First touch and already a three point shot made. It doesn’t happen that often... You can see all of this on youtube.com if you type in ‘Luka Doncic debut Real Madrid’ into the search box.

In this debut season for young Doncic his club Real Madrid won everything that could be won: the EuroLeague, the Spanish Liga ACB league, the Spanish cup Copa Del Rey and the Spanish SuperCup named Supercopa de España de Baloncesto. Having teammates like Felipe Reyes (ACB MVP), Sergio Llull (ACB finals MVP) and Andrés Nocioni (EuroLeague Final Four MVP) gave Luka not only all possible titles in his first season as a professional basketball player, but the chance to learn from the best and eventually surpass them. In this season Luka also attended Euroleague Basketball Adidas Next Generation Tournament and won the MVP award there. This is an ‘under-18’ tournament, held every year at different locations (the link to it is at the end of this book).

YOUNGEST ACB PLAYERS

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 st | Ricky Rubio (Spain, born 1990) |
| 2 nd | Ángel Rebolo (Spain, born 1975) |
| 3 rd | Luka Doncic (Slovenia, born 1999) |



Coach Pablo Laso gave young Luka the first opportunity to prove himself only at the end of 2014/2015 season.



With teammate Andres Nocioni (right) celebrating the win of EuroLeague, the second strongest competition in the world after NBA.



Luka at the Next Generation Tournament.

SEASON END 2016 WITH REAL MADRID

The season of EuroLeague debut for Donke Jr.

This is the season where Luka became a regular member of Real Madrid's senior team. His average time on court in the Spanish ACB league increased from 5 to 13 minutes per game. He also debuted in EuroLeague with an average time of 11 minutes per game.

One of the things he did this season was that he changed the number of his jersey from 17 to 7. Number 7 would stay with him throughout his career at Real Madrid, while in his first season of NBA he just added one more 7 to have 77 on his jersey (which is basically the number with which he played at the EuroBasket 2017). His father Sasha also wasn't too attached to a number at first, but as he got older, Donke Sr. always wore a jersey with the number 4. In Sasha's own words during that interview I made with him in 2007 (in which he also explained he wasn't the superstitious type of a player but always liked to have his facial hair shaved before a game) the number 4 didn't have a special meaning for him. Or a reason (other than he always played in that position – that's 4 for 'power forward'). But with years it kind of got stuck with him.

This second season for Luka in the Spanish club wasn't as successful as the first one, for Real Madrid failed to win the Supercopa (they lost in semifinals) and the Euroleague (they dropped out in quarterfinals). In Supercopa Real Madrid lost against Unicaja with a margin of 25 points. And in EuroLeague they lost all three games in the quarterfinals against Fenerbahçe who would go on to the finals.

In EuroLeague Luka became the 12th youngest player since the 2000/2001 season to debut in this competition. He was 16 years and 229 days old when that happened. Ricky Rubio for instance was 5th youngest with 16 years and 3 days of age.

YOUNGEST EUROLEAGUE PLAYERS (since 2000)

1 st	Aleksandar Ugrinoski (Macedonia, born 1988)	Age: 15 years and 266 days
2 nd	Can Mutaf (Turkey, born 1991)	Age: 15 years and 318 days
12 th	Luka Doncic (Slovenia, born 1999)	Age: 16 years and 229 days)



Together with his teammates (Luka is the one with the number 7 on his jersey).



Dunking during an important game against Tenerife.



Luka with Cristiano Ronaldo, one of the most loved and hated soccer players (left picture). And shaking hands with teammate Sergio Rodríguez on the right picture.

SEASON END 2017 WITH REAL MADRID

Season of establishment and rise to fame and fortune

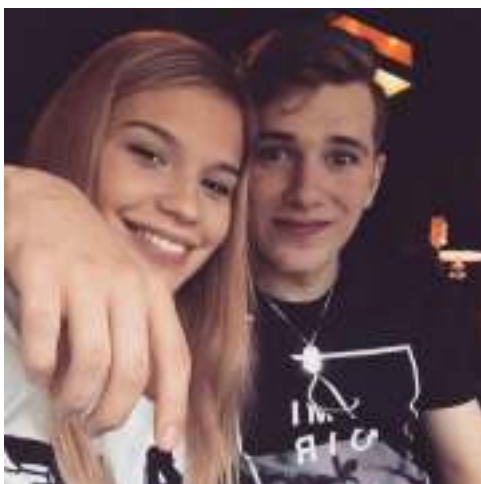
The basketball world, like Formula One racing for instance, is full of these stories. Example: a police officer stopped a Formula 1 driver and didn't recognize him. "You drive like Juan Manuel Fangio," said the policeman. And the driver replied: "Sir, I am Juan Manuel Fangio!" It's the same in basketball. Matjaž Trobec, a friend of mine, during this 2017/2018 season told me a story of how he once played against Luka Dončić. "He was like 12 or something back then and I was 4 years older. I beat him. Not with ease, but I beat him... Today I wouldn't score a single basket," said Matjaž. I had a similar story in the 2013/2014 season. I beat the whole Geoplin Slovan team in the half-court shots (for drinks, mind you!), but in a 'one on one' match I wouldn't score a single basket against any of their players. Matjaž was in Slovenia's reality TV show called Kmetija (The Farm) which he almost won. Funny! Anyway, what I'm trying to say is that Luka really 'grew up' in this season. He was now playing 20 minutes per game (compared to 13 in the previous season) in both ACB league and EuroLeague. Yet, the season proved to be slightly worse again, for in the ACB league, despite being first in the regular part of the season, Real Madrid lost in the finals with a result 1:3 against Valencia, the latter club being third after the regular part of the season. In EuroLeague competition Real Madrid reached the Final Four, but lost against Fenerbahçe in semifinals and then lost again in the game for third place against CSKA Moscow. This was the season where the format of 4 groups didn't exist anymore. EuroLeague had a single group with 16 teams playing in a round-robin format. Real was at the top with 23 victories and 7 losses, so it was a bit unlucky for Luka and his team to finish fourth. Luka won the Best Young Player Award and was put in the Best All-Young Team. In EuroLeague he was proclaimed as the Rising Star of the competition. But what probably made Luka happiest is the fact that in this season Donke Jr. finally surpassed his idol Vassilis Spanoulis in PIR.

COMPARISON WITH HIS IDOL VASSILIS SPANOULIS

	POINTS	PIR
VASSILIS SPANOULIS	12.6	11.9
LUKA DONČIĆ	7.8	13.3



In a preseason game (and win) against Oklahoma City Thunder (left picture) in October 2016. ‘Westbrook who?’ was one of the comments about this picture on Facebook. The right picture is Luka in January 2017.



Not only thinking about the ball (June '17).



Doncicmania starts.

EUROBASKET 2017 – SLOVENIA ON TOP

Luka's first EuroBasket, Slovenia's first medal

Fourteen years passed since a team won the EuroBasket competition without a single loss. It was back in 2003 when Lithuania stepped on the throne, but the latter team played in a format where you only needed 6 games to become the champion. Slovenia played in a format with 9 games and won all 9 of them! The final game smashed all records in TV ratings in Slovenia. At one time the game was watched by 96 percent of all TV viewers.

Slovenians were desperate to win a medal at a major competition for years. At one point they were literally demanding a medal, mostly because of the fact so many Slovenian players played in NBA (Radoslav Nesterović, Beno Udrih, Primož Brezec, Boštjan Nachbar, Saša Vujačić...) and other major leagues across Europe (with EuroLeague being the first of them; followed by the Spanish league, Turkish league, Russian league, Adriatic league etc.). Prior to the championship nobody, at least not amongst ordinary people, expected anything from the Slovenian national team. With names like Čančar, Zagorac, the inexperienced Doncic, and on top of that a naturalized Randolph, everybody more or less laughed. But experts knew that Slovenians would be tough opponent for everybody.

Luka was the fourth best rebounder of the tournament with 8.1 rebounds per game, but what I have to point out here is the following: the ones that were better rebounders, and these were Jonas Valančiūnas (12.0), Gabriel Olaseni (11.2) and Zaza Pachulia (9.2) were players which were at least 10 centimeters taller than Luka. Which means that for a guard Luka gets a lot of rebounds. This immediately reminded me of Goran Dragic who also gets a lot of rebounds for a guard. Both of them were best rebounders of the Slovenian team in the finals against Serbia, with 7 rebounds each. They had two and three more than their main centers Gašper Vidmar and Anthony Randolph.

Luka was put in the All Tournament Team, next to Goran Dragic (who was MVP), Pau Gasol, Bogdan Bogdanović and Alexey Shved.

Slovenia wasn't lucky, as one would or might think. It beat countries like France and Greece (in the group) and later on Spain and Serbia. It was a fairytale.

The most interesting story for me though (besides little Doncic) at that championship was that of Luka's teammate Saša Zagorac. I had an interview with him in the 2005/2006 season, when he came from Barcelona disappointed not to get into the first team. He was down and I tried to persuade him to play for Geoplin Slovan where he would play alongside Donke Sr. and Goran Dragic. Slovan played in the strong Adriatic League (basically former Yugoslavian 1st League) along with teams like Partizan, Crvena Zvezda, Budućnost, Cibona and Union Olimpija. But Zagorac chose Postojna, a club that did play in the 1st Slovenian League, but was more or less fighting to stay in it. Eleven years later, at the age of 33, Saša got the gold medal at the 2017 EuroBasket. Who would've thought.



Luka first wore the 77 number for his national team. It would later become his trademark number in NBA.



Luka's teammate in the national team was Goran Dragic who played with Luka's dad for three seasons – first at Slovan for two seasons (from 2004 to 2006) and then at Olimpija in the 2007/2008 season (right picture).



Who would've thought a tiny little country named Slovenia would win the EuroBasket 2017 competition.

SEASON END 2018 WITH REAL MADRID

MVP season and looking towards playing in NBA

The first thing I noticed when I started writing this book in January 2019 (when Luka already played in NBA) was the fact that every year, despite getting better and better each year, his percentage of free throws made got worse each season. In the 3 seasons of EuroLeague competition and first half of the first NBA season it dropped from 88 percent to 73 percent. This could be an anomaly, of course, but what is interesting to me is, that in the Spanish ACB league that percentage never reached more than 80 percent. Anyway, the 2017/2018 season was the season in which words like ‘youngest’ – ‘record’ – ‘MVP’ were most common when someone wrote or reported about Luka Dončić.

Real Madrid won the two most important competitions of that season, the EuroLeague and the Spanish ACB league. The EuroLeague was especially interesting, because a year before Luka didn’t score a single point against Fenerbahçe in the semifinals which Real Madrid lost. In 17 minutes and 19 seconds of play he only managed 2 rebounds and 3 assists. But this time against the same team (and this time in the finals!) in 28 minutes and 41 seconds of play he managed 15 points, 3 rebounds and 4 assists to bring Real Madrid’s its 10th EuroLeague title, making it the most successful team in this competition.

Luka was the MVP of EuroLeague, the MVP of the Final Four tournament and he was also put into the All-EuroLeague Team. Talk about getting everything at once.

The coach of Fenerbahçe Željko Obradović, who managed to get his team on the Final Four tournament every year in the past 4 seasons and is the most successful coach with 9 titles in EuroLeague (the second best coach only had 4 titles while these words were written down in February 2019), said: “I think Luka will achieve a lot in NBA.”

COMPARISON WITH HIS IDOL VASSILIS SPANOULIS

	POINTS	PIR
VASSILIS SPANOULIS	14.0	11.9
LUKA DONČIĆ	16.0	21.5



Christmas dinner with friends and family and Luka with trophies of the EuroLeague competition (right picture).



Luka and his teammates enjoying after winning the 2018 Final Four tournament and thus EuroLeague.



Proud mom always there by her son's side.

NBA DRAFT IN JUNE OF 2018

Luka was the third pick in the first round

Right after the end of 2017/2018 season with Real Madrid in May 2018 Luka Doncic went to the 2018 NBA draft which was held in June. He got selected by Atlanta Hawks as the third pick of the first round and was later traded to Dallas Mavericks.

The last time a European basketball player got picked as third in the first round was back in 2011 when Enes Kanter from Turkey got selected by Utah Jazz. Before that the Italian Andrea Bargnani was selected as the first pick back in 2006 and the Brit Ben Gordon as the third pick in 2004. Darko Miličić from Serbia and Montenegro was selected as the second in 2003. Like Luka, Pau Gasol from Spain also got selected as the third (this was in 2001), also by Atlanta Hawks and was also traded (to Vancouver).

Luka's father Sasha didn't go the draft and later publicly explained to Luka why. "What does it mean to be a good father? Now I know the answer to that question. I was never perfect. You know I was in Ljubljana on the night of the draft and not by your side, Luka. We both know why, but let this be our little secret, a secret which connects us. I impatiently waited to hear your name. And when I did, oh, my God... You can not understand how I felt at that moment. As a father I was very proud. Son, you made me proud again once more," said Sasha.

At this point, I have to mention that there were numerous Slovenian players which weren't drafted at the NBA drafts. Marko Tušek, Jaka Lakovič, Matjaž Smodiš, Mirza Begić, Zoran Dragic and many more fell into the category 'undrafted' and were forced to play elsewhere. Also, some were drafted, but never played in NBA.

CHRONOLOGY OF SLOVENIAN PLAYERS AT THE NBA DRAFTS:

1997	Marko Milić (2 nd round, 33 rd pick)
1998	Radoslav Nesterović (1 st round, 17 th pick)
2000	Primož Brezec (1 st round, 27 th pick)
2002	Boštjan Nachbar (1 st round, 15 th pick)
2003	*Sani Bečirović (2 nd round, 46 th pick)
2004	Saša Vujašić (1 st round, 27 th pick) Beno Udrih (1 st round, 28 th pick)
2005	*Erazem Lorbek (2 nd round, 46 th pick) Uroš Slokar (2 nd round, 5 th pick)
2008	Goran Dragic (2 nd round, 45 th pick)
2009	*Emir Predžić (2 nd round, 57 th pick)
2017	*Vlatko Čančar (2 nd round, 49 th pick)
2018	Luka Doncic (1 st round, 3 rd pick)

*never played in NBA



Draft's logo and Luka Dončić together with his mother Mirjam Poterbin at the ceremony (right picture).



Deandre Ayton from Bahamas (left picture) and Marvin Bagley III from USA got picked as first and second.

SHORT HISTORY OF SLOVENIANS IN NBA

The first to play in USA was Milić, Doncic tenth

Marko Milić, Radoslav Nesterović, Beno Udrih, Primož Brezec, Saša Vujačić, Boštjan Nachbar, Uroš Slokar, Goran Dragic, Zoran Dragić and Luka Doncic. This is the list of Slovenian players in a chronological order to play in the NBA.

The first one to go across the Atlantic was Marko Milić. Milić was already a major star in Slovenia and Europe when his path took him to the States. He was best known in the minds and hearts of Slovenians for that famous dunk over a car at the 1995 Slovenian All Star. His NBA career was short lived, though, and he never really showed his real talent.

Radoslav Nesterović was next and he is, together with Beno Udrih and Saša Vujačić, one of three Slovenians up to 2019 to win the NBA title.

An honorable mention of the whole NBA story is Boris Gorenc. In 1997 he was invited to train with Chicago Bulls for two months and already signed with them, before he injured his knees. An anecdote still circles around, of how Boris once played against Michael Jordan one on one. They played to 11. Boris led 10:0 when Jordan won 11:10.

An interesting story is Zoran Dragić. He was undrafted at the 2011 NBA draft, but then played a few games for Phoenix Suns and Miami Heat with his brother in the 2014/2015 season.

MOST SUCCESFUL ACHIEVEMENTS OF SLOVENIANS IN NBA

Beno Udrih	2 titles (2005, 2007)
Saša Vujačić	2 titles (2009, 2010)
Radoslav Nesterović	1 title (2005)
Goran Dragic	All Star (2018)
Luka Doncic	Rookie of the month (2018, 2019)



Marko Milić jumping over the car at the 1995 Slovenian All Star in Ljubljana. He would go on to play in NBA.



Milić playing for the Suns (left picture) and Beno Udrih and Radoslav Nesterović for Spurs (right picture)



Saša Vujčić alongside one of the greatest basketball players Kobe Bryant.



Boštjan Nachbar (left picture) and Uroš Slokar (right picture).



Primož Brezec at the time playing for Toronto.



Brothers Zoran Dragić (left picture) and Goran Dragić both played for Suns at one point of their careers.

SLOVENIA'S SPORTSMAN OF THE YEAR 2018

Luka's first title, 7 needed to beat the record of Svet

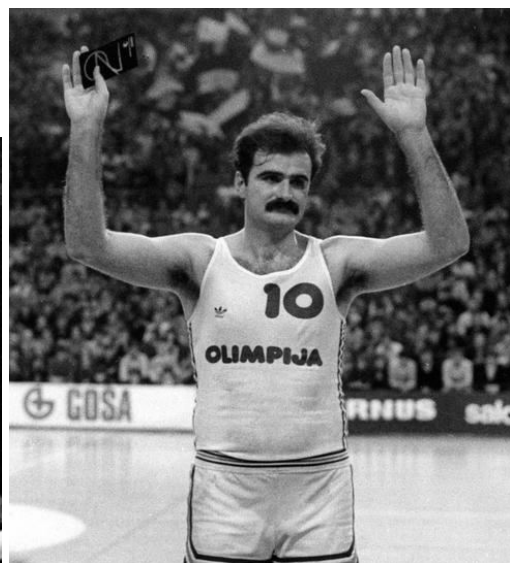
It took more than 40 years for a basketball player to receive the award for the best Slovenian sportsman. It was Goran Dragic in 2017. Before him only two players received this honorable title. The first one was the legendary Ivo Daneu in 1969 (the latter became a world champion with Yugoslavia in 1970) and the second one was Vinko Jelovac who received this award twice (in 1973 and 1974).

They started giving out this award in 1968 and 50 years later Luka Doncic took over the honorable title from Goran Dragic. In a country which is most known for its successes in winter sports, Slovenia proudly handed over the award to one of its youngest athletes. Luka Doncic has a chance to beat a long lasting 'record' of skiers Bojan Križaj who received this award 5 times and Mateja Svet who received it 7 times. Mateja's story is especially interesting, because she officially retired from skiing at the age of only 21.

Luka wasn't present at the ceremony, the award was given out to his mother Mirjam, but Donke Jr. did thank everybody in Slovenia for voting for him. Luka received 260 votes to beat the bicycle rider Primož Roglič (163 votes) and the biathlon competitor Jakov Fak (116 votes).



Mother Mirjam Poterbin and the host are watching Luka Doncic on big screen at the ceremony in Ljubljana.



Ivo Daneu (with the ball) and Vinko Jelovac (right picture) were the first basketball players to receive the award.



Goran Dragic also wasn't able to personally receive the award.

SEASON END 2019 WITH DALLAS MAVERICKS

What a start to his first season in NBA for Donke Jr.

Two million Euros or a little over 2 million dollars was the transfer fee for Luka Doncic. His 3 year contract with Dallas Mavericks would bring him 18.5 million dollars.

Many people thought he would have a tough time adapting to the American way of playing basketball, but he proved them wrong. In a country where the cheapest NBA ticket costs around 15 dollars and the most expensive one almost 4 thousand dollars he quickly became the new hero of the league. From NBA's smallest city (Salt Lake City, team: Utah Jazz) with a population of 1.2 million people to the largest one (New York, teams: Knicks, Brooklyn Nets) with a population of 20.2 million Luka Doncic time after time showed what he was made of. The most interesting thing for me was that his team Dallas Mavericks, despite being almost last at one point, held the second highest game attendance in the league (right after 76ers).

Luka had a record after record, youngest this, youngest that, the media just couldn't stop writing about this player. The only thing as an investigative reporter which seemed a bit 'off' for me (in February of 2019 when these lines were written down) was the fact that his field goal percentage was a bit lower than in the 2017/2018 season. But these percentages vary for each player during their careers and don't really matter that much. What does matter is that from 2018 onwards, Americans and the whole world got to know Luka Doncic and this book basically wants to give them everything they didn't know about him so far, because in the future, they can basically track his achievements themselves.

LIST OF BIGGEST BASKETBALL ARENAS

IN THE WORLD	IN EUROLEAGUE	IN NBA
Philippine Arena (Philippines) 55 000 seats	Stark Arena (Serbia) 24 232 seats	United Center (Chicago) 20 917 seats
Paris La Défense Arena (France) 40 000 seats	Nikos Galis Olympic (Greece) 19 250 seats	Quicken Loans Arena (Cleveland) 20 562 seats
Carrier Dome (Syracuse, USA) 35 500 seats	Arena Zagreb (Croatia) 16 000 seats	Little Caesars Arena (Detroit) 20 491 seats



Logo of Luka's Dallas Mavericks (left) and the start of playing against the biggest superstars (James Harden).



Luka was able to make back to back blockades against the big man LeBron James during the game in LA.



The Alfa and Omega Stephen Curry and the rising star Luka Dončić alias Donke Jr.

LUKA DONCIC'S RECORDS AND MOVES

Donke Jr. with a double ankle breaker crossover

One of the youngest or youngest – that's what characterizes Luka Doncic as a player. Whether it was in the Spanish ACB league, in EuroLeague, in the national team or now in NBA, this word (youngest) totally fit him. Winning the European Championship (and not only winning, but being the key player!) at the age of only 17 – boy, I didn't even know how to walk when I was that age (if you allow me to be a bit humorous). On 11th January 2019 Real Madrid Basket posted on Facebook a video with his best moves and one immediately reminded me of that famous Michael Jordan move against Bryon Russell in 1998. It was against Barcelona, when Luka unintentionally made a fool out of one of their players. The move was later named double ankle breaker crossover. Luka's full-court shot against Barcelona was officially proclaimed as the best move of the 2017/2018 EuroLeague season. As for his records and development of the latter ones, well, you can see one of those developments below.

LUKA'S HIGHEST SINGLE GAME SCORES BY SEASONS

Season end 2019	35 points	Age: 19	in NBA
Season end 2018	33 points	Age: 18	in Europe
Season end 2017	23 points	Age: 17	in Europe
Season end 2016	15 points	Age: 16	in Europe
Season end 2015	played only 5 games	Age: 15	in Europe



Luka Dončić's double ankle breaker crossover during the game against Barcelona in the 2017/2018 season.



Michael Jordan's famous 1998 move against Bryon Russell looks a lot like Luka's crossover.



The full court shot of Luka Dončić in the same game as he had done his double ankle breaker crossover.

LUKA DONCIC ON THE INTERNET

Links to info and photos of him and other links

FATHER SASHA DONCIC WIKIPEDIA (Slovenian and English version)

https://sl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sa%C5%A1a_Don%C4%8Di%C4%87
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sa%C5%A1a_Don%C4%8Di%C4%87

MOTHER MIRJAM POTERBIN FACEBOOK SITE

<https://www.facebook.com/mirjam.poterbin>

LUKA DONCIC – OFFICIAL SITE

<https://lukadoncic.com/?v=ce774d9cab3a>

LUKA DONCIC WIKIPEDIA

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luka_Don%C4%8Di%C4%87

LUKA DONCIC – PHOTOGALERY OF THE TIME WHEN HE PLAYED FOR OLIMPIJA

<https://siol.net/galleries/gallery-195397/?image=15>

LUKA DONCIC – TWITTER

<https://twitter.com/luka7doncic/media>

LUKA DONCIC – FACEBOOK

<https://www.facebook.com/luka7doncic>

ADDIDAS NEXT GENERATION TOURNAMENT

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euroleague_Basketball_Next_Generation_Tournament

LUKA DONCIC DOUBLE ANKLE BREAKER CROSSOVER AND FULL-COURT SHOT

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2fAsO0q7p2E>

AN INTERESTING ARTICLE ABOUT THE YEAR 1999 WHEN LUKA WAS BORN

<https://siol.net/sportal/kosarka/ko-se-rodil-luka-doncic-464337>

AN INTERESTING INTERVIEW WITH SASHA DONCIC

<https://www.dnevnik.si/1042755956>

ARTICLES ABOUT LUKA DONCIC'S BIOGRAPHY WRITTEN BY IGOR DJUROVIC

<https://www.dnevnik.si/1042854825>

<https://www.slovenskenovice.si/sport/timeout/luka-doncic-pravi-da-podatki-ne-drzijo-148393>

SLOVENIA'S SPORTSMAN OF THE YEAR (Slovenian and English version)

https://sl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slovenski_%C5%A1portnik_leta

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slovenian_Sportsperson_of_the_Year

LIST OF YOUNGEST EUROLEAGUE PLAYERS

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_youngest_EuroLeague_players_since_the_2000%E2%80%932001_season

EUROLEAGUE WIKIPEDIA

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/EuroLeague>

PRICES OF NBA TICKETS

[https://www.ticketnetwork.com/en/nbabasketball?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=NB+A+Europe&utm_content=c&tnk=GOO-\[NBA+Europe\]-\[NBA+General\]-\[nbatickets+-+p\]-\[c\]&gclid=Cj0KCQiA-onjBRDSARIsAEZXcKZvMTbAaB3Fa04RHN_lbNRRRA0JFujGZDOsYghEPMiUV5NYs0LiBYvoaAtBdEALw_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds](https://www.ticketnetwork.com/en/nbabasketball?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=NB+A+Europe&utm_content=c&tnk=GOO-[NBA+Europe]-[NBA+General]-[nbatickets+-+p]-[c]&gclid=Cj0KCQiA-onjBRDSARIsAEZXcKZvMTbAaB3Fa04RHN_lbNRRRA0JFujGZDOsYghEPMiUV5NYs0LiBYvoaAtBdEALw_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds)

PRICES OF DALLAS MAVERICKS TICKETS

<https://www.ticketnetwork.com/en/sports/tickets/nba/dallas-mavericks/c/99000270>

PRICES OF EUROLEAGUE TICKETS

https://www.viagogo.com/ww/Sports-Tickets/Basketball/Euroleague-Basketball-2018-19-Tickets?AffiliateID=49&adposition=1t1&PCID=PSROWGOOSPOEUROL08A46D12E&AdID=324047453494&MetroRegionID=&psc=&psc=&ps=&ps=&ps_p=0&ps_c=1062543243&ps_ag=48904682861&ps_tg=kwd-304271742841&ps_ad=324047453494&ps_adp=1t1&ps_fi=&ps_fi=&ps_li=&ps_li=&ps_lp=9062551&ps_n=g&ps_d=c&gclid=Cj0KCOiAnY_jBRDdARIsAIEqpJ1yMh9aSc12E2byZiKHcUZgxxGdTZ_awkuNgi6We3HuL_UbaA6RB3XYaAq-YEALw_wcB

NBA ATTENDENCE

<http://www.espn.com/nba/attendance>

BIGGEST NBA ARENAS

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_National_Basketball_Association_arenas

BIGGEST ARENAS IN THE WORLD

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_basketball_arenas

LIST OF BIGGEST EUROLEAGUE ARENAS

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_EuroLeague_arenas

LIST OF US CITIES BY NUMBER OF PROFESSIONAL SPORTS FRANCHISES

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_American_and_Canadian_cities_by_number_of_major_professional_sports_franchises

PREMIER A SLOVENIAN BASKETBALL LEAGUE

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Premier_A_Slovenian_Basketball_League

FIRST FEDERAL BASKETBALL LEAGUE (OR YUGOSLAVIA'S FIRST LEAGUE)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Federal_Basketball_League

LIST OF SLOVENIAN CITIES BY POPULATION

https://sl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seznam_mest_v_Sloveniji

1970 WORLD CUP FINAL IN TIVOLI HALL (YUGOSLAVIA VS USA)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MjT3t49XPNA>

LINK TO THE VIDEO OF A 12 YEAR OLD LUKA IN THE 2011/2012 SEASON

<https://www.facebook.com/slovenianba/videos/291321654858575/>

MINICOPA TOURNAMENT VIDEO FROM 2013

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mIHUirZkjhl>

Title of the book: Luka Dončić THE STORY SO FAR

Author: Duško Dragić

Design: Duško Dragić

Photo editor: Duško Dragić

E-mail: duskodragic@hotmail.com

© **Publisher:** selfpublishment, 2019

Ljubljana, 2019

Način dostopa (URL): <https://www.facebook.com/duskodragic.sales>

Kataložni zapis o publikaciji (CIP) pripravili v Narodni in univerzitetni knjižnici v Ljubljani

COBISS.SI-ID=299238144

ISBN 978-961-290-131-8 (pdf)