



Meet LA Galaxy's Baggio Hušidić, a High-Performance Plant-Powered Athlete

By Stephanie Gray Winnard
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Twenty-eight-year-old Adis “Baggio” Hušidić is a starting midfielder for major-league soccer team the [LA Galaxy](#). He’s also a passionate whole-food, plant-based (WFPB) eater. He was born in Bosnia and experienced great strife as a young child, witnessing great violence during the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. When he was seven years old, Baggio escaped to a refugee camp, along with his parents and brother, and eventually fled to Hamburg, Germany. Germany was hard for Baggio, too. Playing soccer was his only respite from the beatings he’d get from classmates and the after-school fights. After three and a half years in Germany, Baggio’s family won a visa lottery to immigrate to the United States, and they moved to government housing in Chicago when Baggio was eleven years old. Eventually, with much hard work and perseverance, Baggio’s family was able to make a better life for themselves.

Baggio was an All-American soccer player at the University of Chicago, played three seasons with the Chicago Fire, and then moved to Sweden to play for Hammarby. This is his second season with the LA Galaxy. He currently lives in Los Angeles with his fiancée and their dog and cat.

SW: How long have you been a whole-food, plant-based eater?

BH: I first started to eat a vegetarian diet three years ago, while I was living in Stockholm. Once I moved to California, I adopted the whole-food, plant-based way of eating.

SW: What made you decide to eat this way?

BH: I was watching a documentary in which an old man said something powerful that strongly influenced me: “I didn’t want my family to visit me at my bed. I wanted to play with my grandkids outside. I wanted to be part of their lives. If I can provide the proper nutrition for my body, there is no excuse.” Another big part of why I eat the way I do is because of *The China Study* by Dr. T. Colin Campbell. This book kickstarted my thirst for more knowledge about nutrition. I started reading books with forewords by Dr. Campbell, and my knowledge base grew with each next author.

SW: Do you think eating this way helps you with your performance as a professional athlete? If so, in what way?

BH: No doubt in my mind, it does!! I’ve always been a very fit player, but when I was consuming a lot of meat and dairy (saturated fats), my muscles cramped around the same time EVERY single game. Once I switched to a vegetarian diet, I noticed that the cramping would start a bit later in the games, and once I fully transitioned to a WFPB diet, it vanished completely. I’m able to run the longest distance per game of any player on my team. My recovery rate is much faster. My muscles recover much quicker than most other players. My energy level is high; I nap once a year. I sleep very well, averaging around 9 ½ hours a night. I’m always happy, I have clear skin and no body odor, and I rarely ever get ill. I could go on and on.

SW: What do your teammates and coaches think of you eating this way? Are they supportive?

BH: Most people are skeptical. The first year was a bit difficult, because it’s very rare for an athlete to eat this way and play such a high-endurance sport. The coaches

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didn't know much about how I ate, so it wasn't a problem. As long as I was playing well, that's all that mattered. Last year I didn't miss one training session, and I played in every single game. You can call it lucky, but I know for a fact that I was able to do that because I was putting the right foods into my body. We have a sports nutritionist who is very supportive of my choice to eat this way and always offers vegetarian options. I've been noticing more and more players starting to eat a bit more veggies and fruit when they sit next to me. At this moment, the whole staff is supportive because I'm doing well, and all the data indicates that whatever I'm doing is working. My recovery rate is good, my endurance is superb, and I perform well. That's all they can ask from a player.



SW: What are some of your favorite foods to eat, especially to fuel up for a game?

BH: I love everything about eating this way. I love to cook, so I've been experimenting with loads of different styles and recipes. I'll go through different phases when it comes to cooking. Sometimes I'll be into Asian dishes, Latin food, or American. I love making different kinds of bean burgers. That's my go-to when I don't have much in the fridge/pantry. I always keep some beans and garbanzo flour in the house in case I get hungry. My pre-game meal lately has been tempeh burritos with beans, spinach, peppers, tomatoes, corn, and any veggies I have lying around. I also love fruit and eat as much as I can, whenever I can. Often, I have a banana when I get to the stadium, and I'm ready to go.

SW: When you travel, is it challenging to eat a whole-

food, plant-based diet? Do you have any tips for eating healthfully while traveling?

BH: When we travel it can be a little difficult. We eat together as a team, and our nutritionist does a great job of having different options for me to eat. I've learned the importance of preparing for trips and loading up on a few "must-have" items. I bring homemade granola for breakfast and a big bag of organic raw unsalted nuts for the trip; Don't forget your normal snacks. I do an online search to find the nearest health-food store to where I am staying. Whole Foods Markets are everywhere now, so I can always stop and grab a few items if I forgot or didn't want to bring my food.

SW: Do you have any companion animals?

BH: I do have a four-year-old German Shepherd named Nyte and a cat named Nesta. I love animals!!! They are one of the reasons I eat the way I do.

SW: Do you have any advice for someone who would like to adopt a whole-food, plant-based diet?

BH: My advice would be to do it 100% for a month or so. Don't cheat. If you're thinking about giving yourself a cheat day, you'll most likely overeat meat and dairy, because it's your one chance to do so. Do it long enough where your body will thank you.



All photos courtesy of LA Galaxy.