

ATP 250

16.-25.7.2021.

PLAVA LAGUNA CROATIA OPEN **UMAG**

DAILY NEWS

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THE DEFENDING CHAMPION STARTED WITH A VICTORY, ALL FOUR LEADING SEEDS IN THE QUARTERFINALS

The main favorites lived up to expectations and on Friday the quarter-final program at the Plava Laguna Croatia Open will be marked by top tennis! After the first (Albert Ramos-Vinolas) and fourth seed (Richard Gasquet) made it to the third round on Wednesday, the day after they were joined by the two remaining players who were free at the start, Dušan Lajović (2nd) and Filip Krajinović (3rd). This is the first time since 2012 that all four leading seeds entered the quarterfinals in Umag!

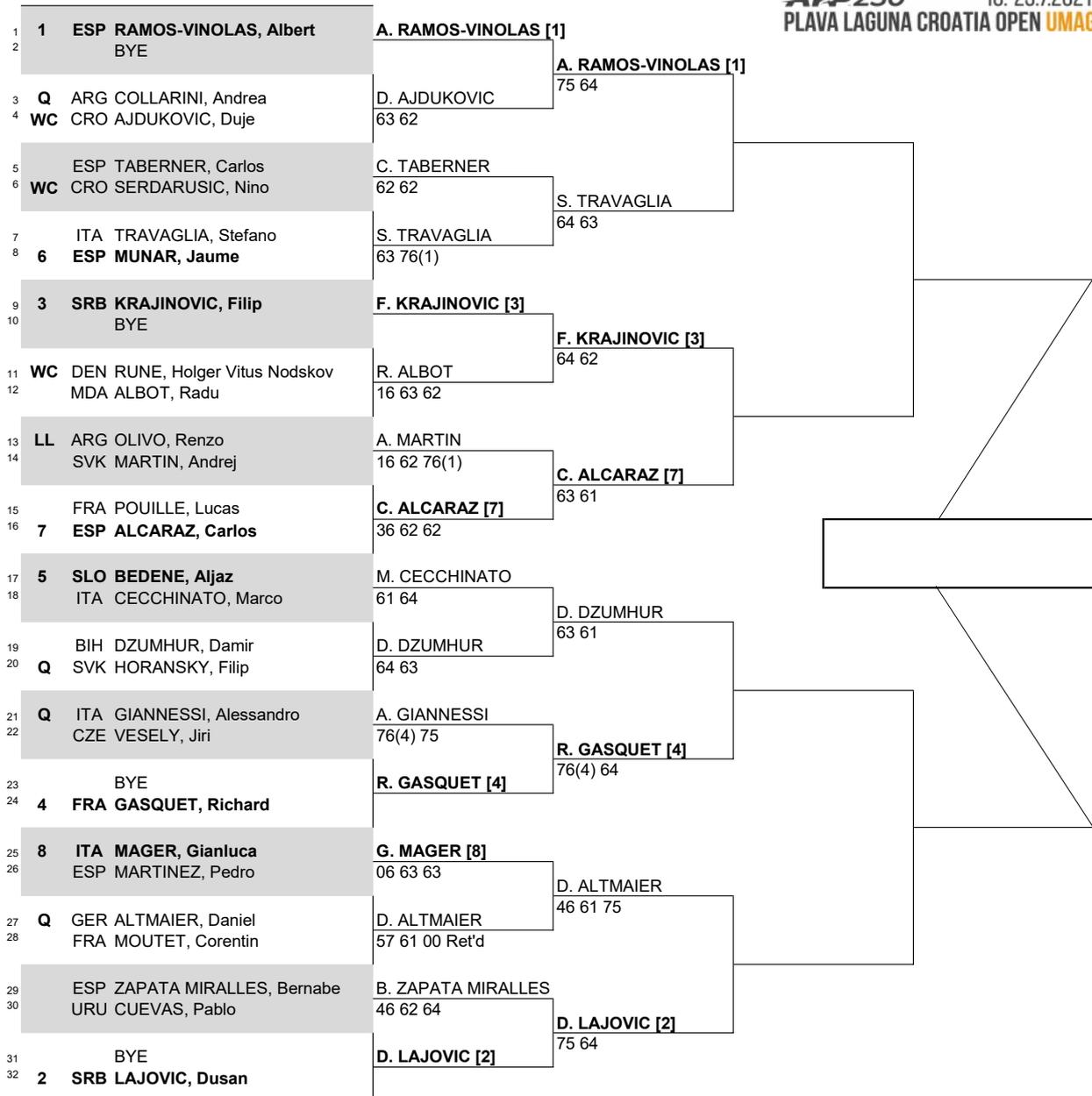
Defending champion from 2019, Lajović (pictured) did not lose the set, but that does not mean that he easily reached the victory against increasingly better Spaniard Bernabe Zapata Miralles, who just recently reached the best placement in his career (120th). He won with a score 7:5, 6:4, and probably the key moment happened in the tenth game of the first set, when the Spaniard had two set points with a 5:4 lead. **(continued on p. 6)**



RASPORED MEČEVA – PETAK, 23. SRPNJA 2021.

STADION GORAN IVANIŠEVIĆ	GRANDSTAND
<p>16:30 Damir Džumhur (BIH) vs. Richard Gasquet (FRA)</p> <p><i>ne prije 19:00</i> Daniel Altmaier (GER) vs. Dušan Lajović (SRB)</p> <p><i>slijedi</i> Filip Krajinović (SRB) vs Carlos Alcaraz (ESP)</p>	<p>17:00 Radu Albot (MDA) Pedro Martinez (ESP) vs. Fernando Romboli (BRA) David Vega Hernandez (ESP)</p> <p><i>ne prije 19:00</i> Albert Ramos-Vinolas (ESP) vs. Stefano Travaglia (ITA)</p> <p><i>slijedi</i> Tomislav Brkić (BIH) Nikola Čačić (SRB) vs. Ivan Sabanov (CRO) Matej Sabanov (CRO)</p>

STATUS NAT MAIN DRAW SINGLES





„After more than a year of living in pandemic circumstances, we are looking forward to the return of the ATP tournament in Umag, which will bring together the tennis elite and offer many visitors attractive and diverse content. This additionally positions Croatia as a well-prepared and organized, but also a significant sports and tourist destination. Precisely for this reason, this year the Croatian National Tourist Board is again the oldest and most prestigious tournament in Croatia, which presents Umag, Istria and Croatia in the most beautiful way. At this moment, safety and a good epidemiological situation are the main messages we send to the world and that is why I wish everyone a safe and pleasant stay in our country while adhering to all prescribed epidemiological measures, but also enjoy top tennis and long-awaited vacation.“

Director of the Croatian National Tourist Board Kristijan Staničić

Photo: Marko Todorov/Cropix



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		ATP250 16-25.7.2021 PLAVA LAGUNA CROATIA OPEN UMAC	
1	BIH BRKIC, Tomislav SRB CACIC, Nikola	T. BRKIC N. CACIC [1]	
2	WC CRO AJDUKOVIC, Duje CRO NINCEVIC, Frane	64 36 10-8	T. BRKIC N. CACIC [1]
3	CZE JEBAVY, Roman CZE VESELY, Jiri	R. JEBAVY J. VESELY	62 62
4	ESP TABERNER, Carlos ESP ZAPATA MIRALLES, Bernabe	75 63	
5	4 VEN MARTINEZ, Luis David NZL SITAK, Artem	I. SABANOV M. SABANOV	
6	CRO SABANOV, Ivan CRO SABANOV, Matej	36 76(1) 10-6	I. SABANOV M. SABANOV
7	ITA CARUSO, Salvatore ITA MAGER, Gianluca	D. DZUMHUR A. SANCIC	75 60
8	BIH DZUMHUR, Damir CRO SANCIC, Antonio	67(6) 62 10-6	
9	MDA ALBOT, Radu ESP MARTINEZ, Pedro	R. ALBOT P. MARTINEZ	
10	GER BEGEMANN, Andre SVK ZELENAY, Igor	64 76(5)	R. ALBOT P. MARTINEZ
11	ITA CECCHINATO, Marco ITA TRAVAGLIA, Stefano	M. CECCHINATO S. TRAVAGLIA	64 61
12	3 BRA MATOS, Rafael BLR VASILEVSKI, Andrei	75 64	
13	PR ESP LOPEZ, Marc ESP MUNAR, Jaume	F. ROMBOLI D. VEGA HERNANDEZ	
14	BRA ROMBOLI, Fernando ESP VEGA HERNANDEZ, David	75 46 10-5	F. ROMBOLI D. VEGA HERNANDEZ
15	WC CRO KALENDER, Admir CRO POLJICAK, Mili	A. KALENDER M. POLJICAK	36 75 16-14
16	2 URU CUEVAS, Pablo FRA MARTIN, Fabrice	63 64	



COLUMN BY GORAN IVANIŠEVIĆ

THE MEDALS SHINE THE SAME

The tennis tournament at the Olympic Games in Tokyo will start any moment, and when it does, we will carefully follow our ace, in what will be, I hope, a real medal hunt. I saw the draw and I would say the chances are not bad for the first round to be successful for everyone. Čila is playing against Brazilian Menezes in the first round, I think it is completely clear who is the favorite here. After that, the opponent should be the Spaniard Carreno Busta, very uncomfortable on concrete court, but not invincible.

French Garcia, who is good, is waiting for Donna Vekić, but if Donna plays a real match, I see no reason not to win. And then we move to doubles, where Mektići and Pavić are the first seeds, but I would not say that they got lucky with this draw, it will not be easy for them. Demoliner and Melo, that's a good couple. Soares was supposed to be there, but he dropped out due to illness, but even with the change in the pair, he is no less a dangerous opponent. It's different with Čilić and Dodig, I don't think Nishioka and Daniel should endanger them.

It will be a significantly different Olympics than any other. There will not be the Olympic atmosphere we are used to. There is no audience, no

renown Olympic village... I don't even know what to call it. But again, all athletes come to win a medal and if they succeed in that, those medals will always be gold, silver and bronze, with or without the audience, with or without a mask. The medals will always shine the same.

Clearly, there is always a difference in the feeling when comparing playing in the Olympics and playing in tournaments. I don't know if it's proper to say "the difference is heaven and earth" - it both is and isn't. Out there you play not for yourself, but for your country, for the athletes who are with you... The feeling is fantastic when you climb on the podium, when the anthem is playing, it's hard to describe, it has to be experienced. It is more than anything.

On the other hand, we all know that the Olympic medal in tennis is not like in other sports, we stick more to the Grand Slam tournament, but we are still drawn by the desire to better represent our country. Look at Novak Djokovic, who is the best in the world, he won everything that can be won under the sun and now he desperately wants an Olympic medal. I wish him to succeed.



TOMISLAV POLJAK, TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR

PERFECTLY; KEY PLAYERS ARE WINNING

After the fourth day of the tournament we can say that things, as far as tennis is concerned, are going almost perfectly. The vast majority of key players win and that makes us very happy.

Let's start with the youngest: Carlos Alcaraz once again showed fantastic tennis. He really dominated over Andrej Martin, winning 11 of the last 12 games. He has shown a whole arsenal of his solutions, incredible maturity, and impresses with ease by which he plays. It's almost amazing how it works. He announced the right things for Friday, when Filip Krajinović will be waiting for him in the evening match.

Last week's series 500 tournament finalist quite routinely defeated Radu Albot, who is not on that level. Filip has shown that he feels good here, and Friday's match could be the match of the tournament, if both live up to expectations.

Before that, our current winner Dušan Lajović, who started successfully, will be playing. It was not an easy task, Bernabe Zapata Miralles also had two set points in the first section in which the title defender was a little lost.

Now he is awaited by Daniel Altmaier,

the only qualifier in the quarterfinals and a player who has won four matches in these few days in the manner that he lost the first set in each. King of turnarounds, we already call him that. Subjectively speaking, I am very happy for him because he is our client, we take care of his career in Starwing, and I am glad that after problems with a series of injuries he is showing great tennis again, kind of like when he got to Roland Garros round of 16 as a qualifier last year, defeating, among others, the Italian Berrettini.

The remaining two quarterfinal pairs are known from the day before. The program will be opened on Friday by Richard Gasquet and Damir Džumhur, and there is also a match Travaglia – Ramos-Vinolas. There is something to be said about the fact that the first seed will play at the Grandstand on Friday, and not at the stadium, which we are certainly sorry about.

For doubles, big congratulations to the Sabanov brothers, now the first seeds are waiting for them. Bad luck of the day are our guys, Admir Kalender and Mili Poljičak, who had four match points and were close to reaching the semifinals in their debut on the ATP Tour. But their time is yet to come.

FINALS IN HAMBURG, A GOOD START IN UMAG



Filip Krajinović, a 29-year-old tennis player from Serbia, did not have much time to enjoy another top result: on Sunday he played in the final of the tournament in Hamburg, and a week brings new challenges to him, this time in Umag. At this year's Plava Laguna Croatia Open, he is the best ranked player (34th), but not the first seed, because the list of placed tennis players was

made, as usual, according to the ranking list from last week.

"I took a day off on Monday, arrived in Umag on Tuesday, had one training session and all in all I am satisfied with how it went. I can't wait for the quarterfinals," said Krajinović, who, as one of the four leading seeds, had the privilege of being free in the first round. In

the eighth finals on Thursday, he defeated Moldovan Albot 6:4, 6:2.

On Friday, he will play against the excellent young Spaniard Carlos Alcaraz, but there are no more weak opponents in the finals. He says it is important to him that he is in good shape.

"In my career I played in the finals of the Masters 1000 series, now a finalist in the 500 rank and that means a lot to me. Hamburg has a nice tradition, it is a strong tournament, and I beat Stefanos Tsitsipas there, who currently had the best results on Earth after Novak Đoković. I played well, which is quite important, and came with a lot of confidence. I hope to win a tournament soon, I have played four finals so far."

One of those appearances in the finals, and certainly the most significant one, is the 2017 at the Bercy Hall in Paris, at the Masters 1000 series tournament. This way he became the first qualifier in tournaments of this rank since the Pole Janowicz in the same place in 2012, and also the lowest ranked finalist (he was 77th) in the Masters 1000 series since the American Mardy Fish in Indian Wells in 2008.

"I play better tennis today than I did then, for sure. I have more experience, more victories over tennis players ranked among the top ten... On the other hand, I have never played in such a big final and I am still waiting for the first title."

THE DEFENDING CHAMPION STARTED WITH A VICTORY, ALL FOUR LEADING SEEDS IN THE QUARTERFINALS



(continued from p. 1)

Lajović got away, punished him with a break in the next game and after that he more or less kept the match under control.

"On the one hand, there was pressure, because it was the first match after winning the title, and on the other hand, I had a good feeling on the court. Although not one, but

two years have passed, the good feeling and emotions are still there. That helped me in a way, because part of the euphoria was still there. But it was not easy, this guy plays very good tennis on clay, especially in these conditions, where it is difficult to score the ball. It's not bad that I started with a difficult match, so I think I'm ready. Although this was the first match for me, I can say that I have already

approached the finals, because that is the quarterfinals," said Lajović.

This is his third entry into the quarterfinals of Umag and the third quarterfinal on clay this year. His next opponent will be the tennis player who has surprised the most so far - it is the German Daniel Altmaier, who arrived from the qualifications. On Thursday, after a great fight and a match that lasted an hour and 50 minutes, he knocked out the eighth seed, the Italian Gianluca Mager (4:6, 6:1, 7:5).

18-year-old Spaniard Carlos Alcaraz also made it to the quarterfinals at the end of the evening program, defeating the 2016 Umag finalist, Slovak Andrej Martin 6:3, 6:1. At the beginning of the match, it didn't seem that the outcome could be like that, because the Slovak started furiously and took

the lead 3:1, but it didn't take long for Alcaraz's answer: he won five games in a row. In the second half, Martin made a break in the opening game, and after that came an even longer series for Spanish tennis players, who did not lose a game until the end of the match.

In the doubles competition, the first seed Tomislav Brkić and Nikola Čaćić passed the second round smoothly, and on Friday, the Croatian duo, Ivan and Matej Sabanov, are waiting for them in the fight for the finals. Admir Kalender and Mili Poljičak needed very little to get in the semifinals, but the young Croatian tennis players suffered a defeat in a dramatic match, missing as many as four match points. In the end, the Brazilian Romboli and the Spaniard Vega Hernandez celebrated with the result 3:6, 7:5, 16:14.

NEW STRONG CROATIAN ACES IN COUPLES COMPETITION

THE TWINS FROM SUBOTICA ARE GETTING BETTER



Nikola Mektić and Mate Pavić have been the best pair in the world for some time now, Ivan Dodig has the status of a legend when it comes to the doubles competition, and Franko Škugor was not so long ago among the twenty leading players in the world. But as much as the sky is clear when it comes to Croatian doubles, it seems that there could be some new names flying. These are, of course, the Sabanov brothers, Ivan and Matej, who have been gradually making their

way to high positions for several years, but this year they have made the biggest move. In April, they received a wild card and won the ATP tournament in Belgrade, and now they are doing great in Umag as well: on Thursday, they defeated Antonio Šančić and Damir Džumhur 7:5, 6:0, and advanced to the semifinals.

This is their second appearance in Umag, after they stopped at the first hurdle in 2018, with an 8:10 defeat in the third set. Now

circumstances have changed, people have expectations

"It was our first ATP tournament in our career, so we were under pressure and we were nervous. But with the performance itself, in the end, after we had time to think, we were actually satisfied. And in general we like to play here, we have full support and we use it," said 29-year-old Matej Sabanov.

Just this week, the twins from Subotica reached the best placement on the ATP list of doubles players, 109th place. Looking from the outskirts, it doesn't look like anything particular, especially not from the perspective of the players from the first sentence of this text, but those who know a little more about the background are aware of how difficult it is to break through, even with good results, due to a slightly changed ranking system compared to years previous to corona virus.

"We are rising very slowly in the rankings, although we have solid results at the level of the ATP tournament. Points are not lost in full, but only half. As an example, last year it took 800 points to enter the top 100, and now 1100. ATP Challenger is hard to progress at this level, so we try to take every opportunity we have in ATP tournaments. So far, we are doing well, and we hope that there will be more good results by the end of the year," said Ivan.

Entering the semifinals will bring the Sabanov brothers close to entering the top 100, and they say that is their goal by the end of the season.

"When we made plans at the beginning of the year, that was one of our goals. We were lucky to receive wild card in Belgrade and win the tournament. We were in the semifinals at the second ATP tournament in Belgrade, we played in two finals at the ATP Challengers... We hope that we will reach the finals in Umag on Friday," added Ivan.

PORSCHE AS THE OFFICIAL VIP CAR AT THE 31ST PLAVA LAGUNA CROATIA OPEN UMAG TOURNAMENT



Porsche Centar Zagreb took care of the selected guests and partners of the tournament; giving Porsche Cayenne and Porsche Panamera the role of VIP transfer and offered their customers a special feeling of luxury, comfort and convenience.

While Porsche Inter Auto provided the selected cars for the main stars of the tournament - the players themselves. Seat, Cupra, Škoda, and Volkswagen brands provided players with the most important thing: comfort and spaciousness to always feel relaxed, comfortable, and ready for upcoming matches.



ITF WHEELCHAIR CROATIA OPEN UMAG BY HEP



A very important ITF WHEELCHAIR CROATIA OPEN UMAG by HEP tournament will be played on Friday at Umag Tennis Academy.

This is a wheelchair tennis tournament that is being held for the second time this year during the Plava Laguna Croatia Open. Wheelchair tennis is one of the most developed and fastest growing sports for people with disabilities in the world, and during the Plava Laguna Croatia Open Umag visitors will have the opportunity to watch some of the best tennis players in the world.

The organizer of this tournament is Anto Joskić, the best Croatian wheelchair tennis player, who stated on this occasion: "It all started in 2018 when I participated in one of the Conversations about Sports forums, after which the director of the executive board of the tournament Arlen Brozić and our sponsor HEP proposed holding this tournament. I hope that this tournament of ours will become part of the tradition of the Umag tournament."

A draw was held today, which brings us interesting matches. 11

competitors are participating in the tournament, and already in the first round we have a Croatian derby Miloš - Maretić. Sven Maretić emphasized that they never played against each other, so I expect a good match, which I hope will not be ruined by the heat.

Anto Joskić about the expectations from the tournament: "We have 11 competitors from five countries. We have four players from Croatia - besides me there are Sven Maretić from Split, Dražen Mikšić and Jozo Miloš. Sponsorship from HEP is very important to us, wit-



hout them we would not be able to organize the tournament, so I thank them from the bottom of my heart once again. The Croatian Wheelchair Tennis Association is organizing this tournament in order to promote sports because we want as many people with disabilities as possible to get involved with sports," said Joskić.



SELECTION OF OFFICIAL SOUVENIRS

If you're looking for the right gift to take with friends or family, you don't have to look far. Right at the entrance to the ATP zone, next to the welcome office, there is an official souvenir shop where you can buy men's, women's and children's T-shirts, hats and caps, tennis balls in small and large sizes, a great gadget for collecting autographs during the tournament and best memories in Umag.

Here you can buy beach towels, but also umbrellas to remember the great atmosphere of Umag and the most beautiful summer memories even on rainy days.



OSCAR'S CORNER

In the second round of the tournament, four matches were played.

I would like to single out my comment on Dušan Lajović's game against Bernabe Zapata Miralles. Lajović defeated the Spanish tennis player with an excellent game in an hour and a half. We will be able to follow Lajović in the quarterfinals against French tennis player Richard Gasquet, which makes us extremely happy.

The match between Gianluca Mager and German Daniel Altmaier was exciting and uncertain, and ended with the victory of the German tennis player.

Gasquet, Altmaier and Krajinović have off to the quarterfinals, and we want all of them to play good matches.

Written by Oskar Visintin

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PHOTO BY MAJA DANICA PEČANČIĆ

PHOTO BY BROTHERSIDE

NENO BELAN AND FIUMENSI



Neno Belan & Fiumensi entertained the audience after exciting tennis matches. At the Dance Arena, those gathered enjoyed Nena's biggest hits until 2 in the morning. Good music, great eno-gastronomic offer, and exciting tennis matches were a guarantee of good fun for this beautiful Umag evening.

Tonight, the popular cellist Ana Rucner will perform at the Dance Arena, who will bring additional passion with her extravagance before the end of the tournament.



DELICACIES THAT SPAN THE ADRIATIC

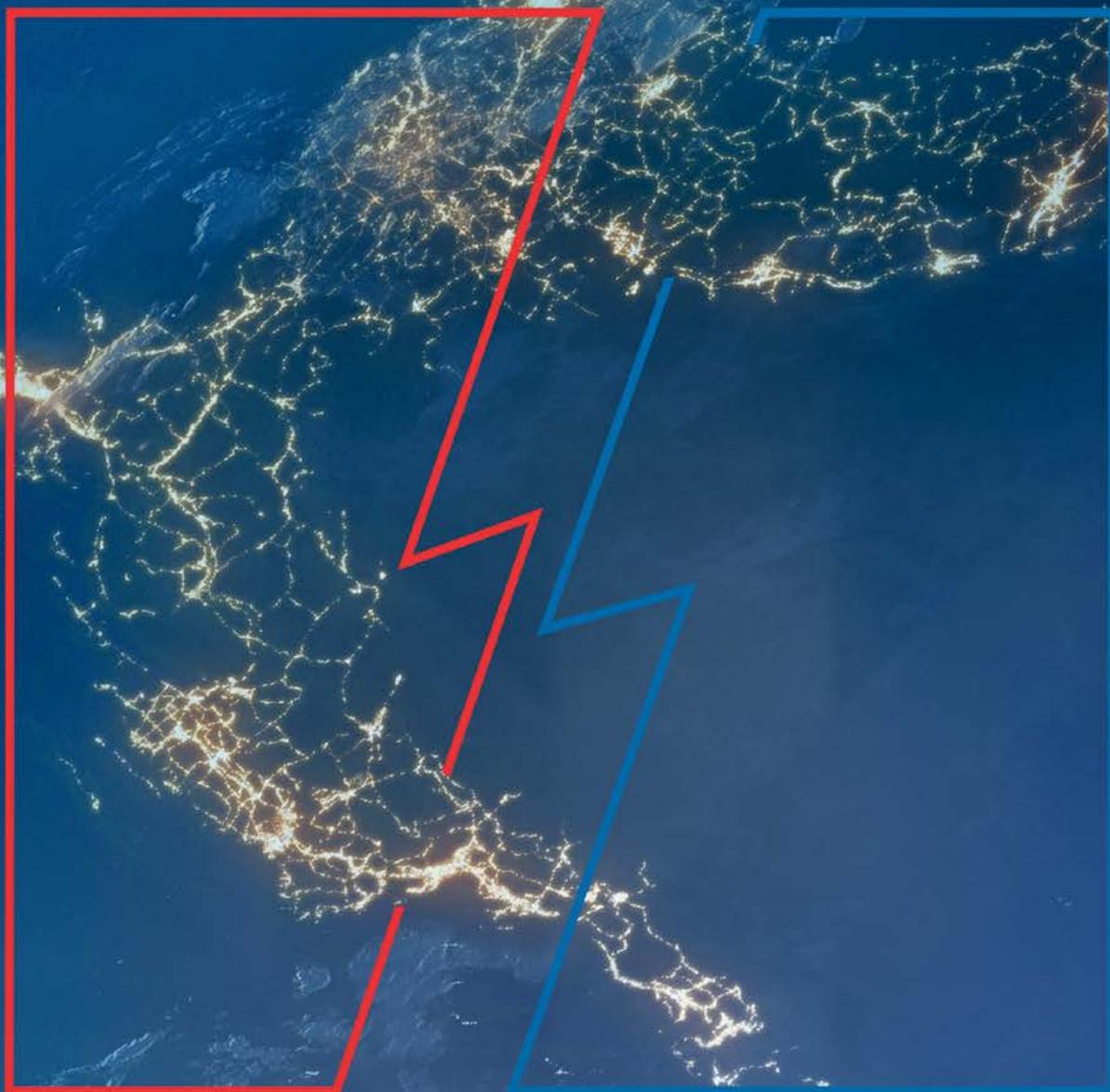


Photo: Maja Danica Pečanić / CNTB

Croats love prosciutto and have cultivated two supreme varieties – Dalmatian and Istrian. Both varieties are dried in the Bura wind and aged for at least a year. Istrian pršut is brushed with laurel leaves, rosemary, pepper, and garlic, while Dalmatian pršut is coated with a blend of hard flour and lard, and then slowly cold smoked. With delicacies such as these you must definitely taste some top Croatian wines – Istrian Teran with Istrian pršut, and Dalmatian Plavac Mali with Dalmatian pršut.

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