

TT No.83: Ian Hill - Berlin Weekend Travels (Saturday 1st and Sunday 2nd September 2007).

Saturday 1st September 2007: Verbandsliga Berlin; **Lichtenburg 47** 5-0
Lichtenrader BC; Attendance: 122; Admission: 5 euros; Programme: A5, 24 pages
full colour, 1 euro; FGIF Match Rating: 4*.

Lichtenburg 47 are located in the east of Berlin and play at the Hans Zosckhe Stadium which has a capacity of 10,000. If this ground was located in England the capacity would be around 3000 or even closed down due to grass on some of the terraces. The ground was built in 1951 and was adjacent to the Stasi headquarters. Local lore has it that Stasi boss Erich Mielke ordered the ground to be torn down after witnessing the close defeat of his pet club, Dynamo Berlin, from an office window. The building was saved when Zoschke's widow Elfried appealed to Communist party boss Erich Honecker.

The club has yo-yo'd between the second and third divisions of the old East German league with only one season (1950 - 51) spent in the top division.

The stadium is terraced on four sides with seats on top of the terrace along one side of the pitch. Behind one of the goals is a scoreboard and the opposite end is a set-back clubhouse with dressing rooms. The standard German BBQ takes place next to the clubhouse with various sausages and burgers available. It is hemmed in by blocks of flats and has quite an intimate feel to it. The clubhouse is very welcoming and very well used by the locals.

Two entrance points are located at opposite ends of the ground with programmes available from a window where you buy an entrance ticket. The programme is excellent for a club at this level. Very colourful and with lots of reading material.

Crowds do not flock to this level of football and the majority of spectators will not be seeing their 50th birthday again. The usual average attendance is around 200 but the attendance dropped to 122 for this game although a head count suggested that around 200 people were watching the game. Lichtenburg play their home games on a Saturday and are one of the few clubs to do so in the Verbandsliga. Their home games also coincide with Hertha Berlin fixtures so they will never get big crowds.

The game was very good to watch with both sides playing very attack minded. The referee also let quite a few strong challenges go unpunished which added a bit of spice to the game. Lichtenburg took a 4-0 halftime lead. The second half was more settled with a more even contest with only one further goal being scored by the home side.

Sunday 2nd September 2007; Regionalliga Nord; **SV Babelsberg 03** 1-1 Rot Weis Erfurt; Attendance: 3496; Admission: 8 euros; Programme: A5, 34 pages, full colour glossy issue, 1.50 euros; FGIF Match Rating: 2*.

The second game of my Berlin weekend was a visit to another former East German club, SV Babelsburg 03. Babelsburg had just been promoted to the Regionaliga, as Oberliga Nordost Nord champions and have made a good start to their season.

Babelsburg is near to Potsdam and the ground can be easily reached from the centre of Berlin on the S-Bahn. Get off at the Babelsburg stop and the ground is a nice 10-minute walk away. Babelsburg is also the centre of the German film industry and it is a nice small town.

That can't be said of their Karl Liebknecht ground which is very uninspiring. The ground has a low main stand along one side with the other three made up of terracing. Views are obscured by a thick security fence around the pitch.

What is good about a visit here is that the supporters club run a great club shop with lots of old club nostalgia items available. New BSG Motor Babelsburg replica shirts were available as this was the name of the club in the East German league system until 1991. They also have a large stock of programmes available for sale at reasonable prices. Talking of programmes, the "Nullldrei" programme is excellent. It is available for sale outside the ground but only from one seller.

Rot Weis Erfurt brought a large travelling support with them to watch what was a very ordinary game. Both sides cancelled each other out and a draw was a fair result on the day.

06/20