

**TT No.36: Ian Hill - Berlin Weekend Travels - Saturday 6th & Sunday 7th September 2008.**

(1) Sat 6th September; Berlin Liga; **SV Empor Berlin v BFC Viktoria 89**; Result: 2-2; Admission 6 euros; Programme: 24pp 1 euro; Attendance: 250 (h/c).

One problem with booking discount airline tickets in advance is that, to get the best deals, you need to book as early as possible. I booked this flight before the German Football fixtures had been published. As there are always lots of games in the Berlin area, I knew there would be a decent game being played somewhere. What I hadn't planned on was a weekend of World Cup qualifying fixtures! This resulted in no games being played in the top five divisions of German football.

Panic set in. Would there be any games being played in Berlin and would I get a programme? The excellent fussball.de website listed two games being played on Saturday in the Berlin Liga - Adlershofer BC v VfB Concordia Britz (2pm kick off) and SV Empor Berlin v BFC Viktoria (3pm). I decided to visit both grounds. For the latest information on the venues where games are played (there always seem to be a lot of changes in Berlin) check the fussball.de website. If you click on the game it also provides you with a Goggle map showing the location of the ground. Usually I rely on the Fubball - Woche newspaper but as I found out some of the venues for games played that weekend were not correct.

Adlerhofer was the first ground visited as they have moved up the road this season to a new ground. This is quite an easy ground to get to. Take the S Bahn to Aldershof then tram 60 to the ground. I arrived early at this East Berlin venue. It was basically a large clubhouse with a four-lane, athletics track with a football pitch in the middle. Block paving and a hand rail was provided with the other three sides consisting of grass with a small bank along one side of the ground. Entry was 5 euros and on a small table scarves, badges and stickers were on sale but no programmes. Both teams warmed up on an adjacent astro-turf pitch. I later realised that this was the venue for the game. The pitch was not railed off and the only spectator facilities were some park benches. A small BBQ sold sausages and there was a beer caravan next to the pitch. Very disappointing. The game was terrible. The pitch had a very high bounce and it was no wonder the game finished 0-0.

I decided not to watch all the game and made my way to SV Empor. A quick trip on the S Bahn and U Bahn took me to the Fredrich-Ludwig-Jahn-Sportpark. The game was not played in the main stadium but in the smaller Reiter Stadium in the complex. The FLJS does appear to have a regular club using it this season but the main Berlin clubs seem to use it during the season at some point. Last season Berlin Ankraspor 07 used it but they have now moved to the Poststadion after their merger with Yesilyurt. This season Hertha have used the FLJS for their Intertoto Cup games, Union are using it while their ground redevelopment takes place,

Hertha reserves use it for "high risk" games (usually against old East German Clubs (Sachsen Leipzig, 1FC Magdeburg etc) and Empor will use it if they get home game in the Berlin Cup against one of the bigger Berlin clubs. Last season they played Union there.

The Reiter Stadium is very basic. It's an athletics-track that has seen better days, with four steps of overgrown shale terracing on one side. A few benches are plonked here for spectators. There is a small storage building on the half way line and that's about it. Spectators are catered for by the customary beer caravan and BBQ.

A larger than normal crowd was in attendance. Empor usually get around 80 - 90 people per game. Today there was a junior football festival taking place with the teams paraded to the crowd. My entry ticket was number 5 but there were well over 100 people in the ground. The bonus was that a programme was available for 1 euro. It was a nice A5 issue consisting of pre-printed colour and photocopied B/W pages.

The game wasn't brilliant with Viktoria winning 3-2.

Sunday offered the choice of more games in the Berlin Liga and below. There were two bonuses though. Hertha Amateurs II had a home game at 10.30am and Hertha Amateurs (Hertha's Reserve/Under 23 side) had a Regionalla North League game against SV Wilhemshaven.

(2) Sun 7th September; Landesliga 2; **Hertha Berlin Amateur II** v VfB Sperder Neukolin; Result: 4-4; Admission 3.50 euros; Programme: 12pp 30 cents; Attendance: 50 (h/c).

Just to make things confusing. Hertha Amateurs II or "Ama Zweek Blatt" play their games at two different grounds - Hanne Sobeck Sportanlage (which is very close to the Oesler Street U Bahn) and the Ungarnstrabe Ground. Luckily, I followed the advice of fussball.de and picked the right ground. What I hadn't realised was that I had visited this ground a couple of years ago when Yesilyurt played here. I didn't expect a programme so it was nice to see a 12-page b/w photocopied issue on sale at the pay-booth. Now if you want to see an entertaining game in Berlin then Ama Zweek Blatt are the team to watch. So far this season they have played 4 games which have resulted in 10 goals being scored and 23 conceded. An average of 8 goals per game. This was a great game. Both teams were very attacking, there was lots of comedy defending and numerous chances missed. Sperder also had a player sent off before half time. This game should really have finished about 8-8 but in, Zhan Xu, Hertha have a terrible centre forward and he could have easily scored a hat-trick. Three times clean through on goal, his best miss was when he stood on the ball and fell flat on his backside.

The Hanne Sobeck Ground is nice for this level of football. It is terraced on three sides without cover and with a few bench seats on one side of the ground. There is a small kiosk selling beer and as ever sausages. Although the crowd was small everyone seemed to know each other. The programme also acts as a raffle ticket

with the turnstile operator being surrounded at half time as she chose the lucky winners.

(3) Sun 7th September; Regionalliga Nord; **Hertha Berlin II** v SV Wilhemshaven; Result 1-3; Admission 6 euros: Programme; 24 pp 1 euro; Attendance; 300.

Hertha Reserves played this game at the Amateur Stadion which is in the Olympic Stadion complex. This is a vast site with numerous sports facilities available. The ground itself is dominated by a seated stand on one side. With two sides of the ground terraced and one end not open to spectators. It is a clean modern facility. The usual beer and sausages were available but also home-made cakes in a small shop at the end of the grandstand.

The strange thing about this game was that there were no away supporters. When Wilhemshaven scored all that could be heard was their players and bench celebrating. This was a dull game to watch and it was more like a pre-season fixture. Wilhemshaven won the comfortably with Hertha scoring a last-minute consolation goal.

Entrance to the ground is by ticket which you must buy from a small mobile shop outside the ground which also sells programmes. There were no programmes on sale inside the ground.

At the end of the game I decided to take the U Bahn to Blisserstrasse to watch the end of the 1FC Wilmersdorf v SE Kladnow game. The ground is about 10-minutes-walk from the U Bahn station and is located in the Volkspark. Luckily for me on the edge of it. With 30 minutes left the elderly gate people tried to charge me 5 euros to get into this Landesliga II game. They did get a little physical when I didn't understand what was being said to me. Eventually we compromised and I was let in for free. What was surprising about this game was that there was quite a decent crowd of around 150. Unfortunately, the pitch is Astro-turf but it is in a nice woodland setting with a very popular bar/clubhouse. The only spectator facilities consist of some park benches. A programme was available but they were sold out when I got there. Wilmerdorf won the game 6-0 and I was lucky to see three of their goals.

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