

TT No. 115: Ian Hill - Sat 21st November 2009; **Dynamo Berlin** v Germania Schoneiche; German Oberliga Nord-Ost/Nord; Res: 4-1; Att: 1250 (est.); Admission: 10 euros; Prog: 1.5 euros (24pp); FGIF Rating: 4*.

I had previously been to a Dynamo Berlin game three years ago. The game was played at the Friedrich-Ludwig-Jahn-Sportpark as their home ground the Stadion im Sportforum was closed, for the season, due the Dynamo supporters rioting during a game against Union Berlin. I hadn't much experience of the Dynamo supporters as I mistakenly ended up in the away end with the Hansa Rostock supporters. This nearly led to me being forced onto a train to Rostock by the Polizei.

The Sportforum is easily reached by tram from Alexanderplatz. Departing the tram outside the Sportforum complex I suddenly stood out like a sore thumb as I was the only person with hair. Next to the tram stop was a stall selling various items of Dynamo merchandise with the old club logo on them. It seems like a defiant stand by the supporters and I for one would not like to argue with them. The club's administrators have changed the club logo this season to lessen the connections with the ex-East German club but it seems a completely useless exercise.

The current club replaced the old Dynamo Berlin which went bankrupt in 2002. The predecessor side to the current-day club was established in 1949 as Sportgemeinde Deutsche Volkspolizei Berlin. In March 1953 this team assumed the place of SC Volkspolizei Potsdam in the DDR-Liga, East Germany's tier two competition. The Potsdam and Berlin sides were later formally merged and after 27 March 1953 played as part of the larger Sportvereinigung Dynamo sports club under the name SG Dynamo Berlin. After a 14th place result in the 1953-54 season the team was sent down to the Bezirksliga Berlin (III). The club was again re-named, being christened Sport Club Dynamo Berlin on 1 October 1954.

In late 1954 the team members of Dynamo Dresden, one of the better teams in East Germany at the time, were ordered to leave for the capital to establish a competitive side in Berlin while the Dresden club was left to carry on using its second team players. Initially a local side, the team was promoted to the DDR-Liga (II) in 1957 and captured the division championship that year to immediately advance to the DDR Oberliga. Dynamo enjoyed some success in the late 50s and early 60s with a number of top-three finishes and an East German Cup win in 1959. However, by 1963 their form had dropped and they had become a lower table side leading to their relegation in 1967.

The club was re-established on 15 January 1966 as Berliner Fußballclub Dynamo (BFC Dynamo) when the football department was disassociated as a football club in a general re-organisation of football in the country. Dynamo Berlin quickly returned to first division play after a single season's absence and would soon become infamous under the patronage of Erich Mielke, head of East Germany's

Stasi (the secret police), for the various means used to manipulate the outcome of the team's games and ensure its dominance.

Playing in the DDR-Oberliga BFC won ten consecutive titles from 1979 to 1988 assisted by crooked referees, unfair player transfers from other teams and assorted other unsportsmanlike practices. Dynamo was reviled by many of the citizens of Berlin and the cheating was so blatant that it incurred the unofficially expressed displeasure of the country's ruling Politburo. Alleged Manipulation of the 1986 championship match between Dynamo and Lokomotive Leipzig which ended in a 1:1 draw led to nationwide protests, but resulted only in sanctions against referee Bernd Stumpf.

After German re-unification in 1990 the side was re-named FC Berlin in an attempt to re-package it and distance it from its un-savoury past, but in 1999, they again took up the name BFC Dynamo. Without its powerful patron and the papered crowds that it brought, the side quickly fell to tier III and since the 2000-01 season has toiled in IV or V division leagues. The team went bankrupt in 2001-02 but was required by the DFB (Deutscher Fussball Bund or German Football Association) to play out the balance of its games for the season as "mandatory friendlies", which did not count in league standings, using available third string players - not an uncommon practice in these types of circumstances. The farce was played out in a series of lopsided defeats.

The club recovered to win the Verbandsliga Berlin (V) championship in 2004 and return to fourth division play in the Oberliga Nordost-Nord (IV) where they have settled in as upper-table side, finishing in the top-six in three out of the last four seasons.

It's hard to work out who actually supports this club. The majority of their supporters are skinheads who all seem to know each other. There are some older supporters (ex Stasi?) but they are in the minority. It appears that the disaffected youth of East Berlin have rallied around the club as there is still a lot of "Ostalgie" in Berlin. I was eyed up and down a few times in the ground as I was obviously a stranger but there was no hassle at all.

The Sportforum is an oval ground with terracing (shale and concrete block) on three sides of the ground with seating down one side. The only cover is over some VIP seats. The ground does not have floodlights so it's early kick offs in winter.

Behind the seated area is a club bar and beer stall. The official club shop is located here along with the obligatory sausage stall and a curious ex-army looking trailer which dispensed large bowls of soup with a sausage dunked in it.

I quite enjoyed the game as both teams played attacking football. Germania actually took the lead but league leaders Dynamo hit back with four goals and a missed penalty to win the game 4-1. It will be interesting to see if Dynamo gain promotion as this would set up some tasty fixtures against former East German sides such as Chemnitzer, Sachsen Leipzig, Magdeburg and Hallescher. I doubt if these games would be played at the Sportforum.

The match programme has improved and is on sale as you enter the ground from a table. A visit to the bar is also worthwhile as there are lots of old pictures from the old Dynamo club. I've got to say it is a bit intimidating going to a Dynamo game but it's something completely different to the norm and well worth a visit. To sum up a unique club with a fascinating history but probably for all the wrong reasons.

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