

TT No.63: Ian Hill - Berlin Hopping Weekend (from 2nd to 4th October 2009) - feat. games at: **Tennis Borussia Berlin** (Regionalliga Nord); **VfB Hermsdorf** (Berlin - Liga) and **Hertha Berlin BSC** (Bundesliga 1).

MATCH A - Fri 2nd October 2009; Tennis Borussia Berlin v Hertha Berlin II; Regionalliga Nord; Score 0-2; Admn:13 euros; Programme: 50 cents, 16 pages A5; Att: 704; Match Rating: 2.

Due to their league status and crowd size Tennis Borussia Berlin could be classed as the "third" club in Berlin behind Hertha and Union. The club was founded in 1902 and takes its name from its origins as a tennis and ping-pong club. "Borussia" is a Latinized version of Prussia. In 1903 the club took up football and quickly developed a rivalry with Berlin's leading side Hertha BSC Berlin. They won their first city league championship in 1932 in the Oberliga Berlin-Brandenburg and repeated in 1941, this time by defeating Hertha (8:2) in the Gauliga Berlin-Brandenburg.

After World War II and into the early 50's, TeBe emerged as Berlin's top side but were unable to keep up their form and earn selection to the Germany's new professional league, the Bundesliga, formed in 1963. The team played in tier II leagues throughout the 60's and 70's with the exception of two short-lived forays into the Bundesliga in 1974-75 and 1976-77. Most of the 80's were spent playing in the tier III Oberliga or Regionalliga.

Through most of its history Tennis Borussia has been afflicted by financial problems but has managed to hang on while many other of Berlin's clubs folded or disappeared in mergers. In 1997-98, a deep-pocketed sponsor brought expensive new talent to the team as they made a run at a return to 2. Bundesliga which they achieved, winning the Regionalliga Nordost. While initially successful, the sponsorship collapsed in 2000 as the team's finances failed. They were refused a license and relegated to Regionalliga Nord (III) where they finished last in 2000-01 and so slipped further still to NOFV-Oberliga Nord (IV) the following season. Tennis Borussia continued playing in the fourth tier - fifth after the introduction of the 3rd Liga in 2008 - until in 2009 they won the Oberliga championship and gained promotion again to the Regionalliga Nord.

Arriving in Berlin for a long weekend on the Friday morning I was met with the bonus of Tennis Borussia being at home for a Friday evening game. This was a re-visit as I'd been to one of their games a couple of years ago. The club play at the 15,000 capacity Mommsenstadion Stadion in North West Berlin and is easily accessible by U Bahn. The ground is an athletics stadium which is dominated by a large grandstand down one side of the pitch and a large electronic scoreboard behind one goal. The scoreboard is quite strange as it only uses orange bulbs.

It's not the best ground for viewing due to the running track but a visit here is always a laid-back affair. TeBe as they are known were also laid back as Hertha's

Under 23 team won this game quite comfortably. One important aspect for me is a match programme. TeBe's are available from the turnstiles or inside the ground. This year's programme is a bit disappointing as they have reverted back to a traditional A5 size issue. A few seasons ago they produced a very good half A5 size job but still it's a good issue and in full colour. You can also download copies of their programmes from the last few seasons on their excellent website.

Food and drink here, as expected, is the usual beer, coke and sausage fayre. The sausage shed was throwing out quite a lot of smoke at one time and it looked like it was on fire at one point. This was probably the most exciting thing that happened all game. Don't let this poor game put you off. The club play a lot of their games on a Friday night so in terms of hopping they are worth a visit.

MATCH B - Sun 4th October 2009; VfB Hermsdorf v Frohnauer SC 1946 e.V; Berlin - Liga; Score 0-2; Admn: Unsure; Euros; Programme: 50 cents 28 pages A5; Att: 250 (HC); Match Rating: 1.

Sunday morning was spent looking for a game before the main event of the day - Hertha Berlin v Hamburg. There are numerous opportunities to see a game on Sunday's in the Berlin area. The best way to find out what is happening is to buy a copy of the FusBall- Woche newspaper. It's a weekly issue that gives the details of all the games in and around Berlin from the Bundesliga down to the lowest levels of organised leagues. It also informs the ground where the games will be played. If you can pick up a copy of the newspapers annual, that gives details of all games for the season and directions to clubs ground. It is a really good read and only 4 euros. Both items can usually be picked up at the newsagents in at the Hauptbahnhof and Zoo Gardens railway stations.

My first ground visit of the day was the home of Berliner SC who play in the Landesliga. The ground is located in a sports complex near to the Israeli Embassy. Hence the presence of machine gun totting Politzi near the ground. The ground has no cover and is enclosed by a running track. Uncovered seating is located down one length of the pitch. It was a bit hard to take this game seriously as people were doing their early morning jogging sessions on the track as the game took place. The club charge to get in but I accidentally entered through a side gate along with a few others and there were no programmes or team-sheets available.

The Berlin - Liga is a bit hit and miss as far as programmes are concerned. Luckily, I guessed correct as my afternoon game was at VfB Hermsdorf for the North Berlin derby against Frohnauer. The side was founded as Hermsdorfer Sport Club on June 16, 1916 in the Restaurant Knoblich. With the on-set of World War I, the club came close to folding as large number of the club's members were called away to the army. In order to continue to play, many of the remaining footballers joined Berliner FC Favorit 1896. After the conflict the club resumed play in 1919, but abandoned their old name to play as Verein für Bewegungsspiele Hermsdorf 1916 in order to avoid being confused with a similarly named tennis club.

Through the 20s and into the early 30s VfB Hermsdorf played second division football for the most part with only a single season appearance 1932-33 in the

upper tier Oberliga Berlin. Following the outbreak of World War II, it became increasingly difficult to field a side and the club suspended play in 1943.

VfB and Turn- und Sportvereinigung 1899 Hermsdorf were brought together following the war on June 1, 1945 as Sportgruppe Hermsdorf. TSV was the product of the 1920 merger of Deutscher Turnverein Theodor Körner Hermsdorf (June 14, 1866) and Turnverein Jahn Hermsdorf (1906). In May 1947 the club re-adopted its traditional name.

After a number of seasons in lower division play Hermsdorf climbed to the Amateurliga Berlin (II) in 1955 where they had an unremarkable eight-year run. Following the establishment of the Bundesliga, Germany's new professional first division league, the country's football competition was re-structured and Hermsdorf became a third division side. They qualified for the Regionalliga Berlin (II) in 1965 and played at that level for three seasons before being relegated to the Amateurliga Berlin (III) and then slipping to lower level play by the late 60s. Hermsdorf made a single season re-appearance in the Amateurliga in 1970-71 before falling to lower level local competition.

The club has now progressed to the Berlin-Liga and I was quite surprised about how poor their Seebad Stabe ground is. First of all, we had confusion at the turnstile and I ended up paying 11 euro's, to get in and buy three programmes. Suitably ripped off I was quite peeved (to put it politely). The ground is a fenced off pitch and has a few park benches. There is a little hard standing and no floodlights. There is a small multi-sport clubhouse and what looked like a converted ships container selling refreshments. Programmes are on sale at the entrance and to be fair it's not a bad effort - a good one for the collection but expensive. A poor game ensued thanks to a strong wind running down the pitch. This resulted in a 0-0 result. I wouldn't recommend a visit here unless you want a programme as that is all it has to recommend it.

On my way to the Olympic Stadion I popped into the Goschenstrabe home of Wittenauer Concordia of the Landesliga. Located at the back of a sports complex this is a great old ground. Despite having a running track, the ground has terracing on three sides and uncovered seating on one other. The opposite side of the ground is quite raised with an unusual high stone wall with a garage door facing onto the pitch. Standing is located above this area. Unfortunately, the club do not produce a programme.

MATCH C - Sun 4th October 2009; Hertha Berlin BSC v Hamburger SV; Bundesliga; Score 1-3; Adm:25.50 Euros; Programme: 2 Euros 100 pages B4; Att: 49,208; Match Rating: 4.

Football can be a cruel game and there are also some really jammy teams around. Step forward Hamburg, top of the league and playing Hertha at the bottom. In my opinion a draw would have been a fair result but Hamburg ended up winning 3-1.

Friedhelm Funkel's reign as the new Hertha coach got off to a disappointing start. Hertha made a good start and even took the lead on 9 minutes through Arne

Friedrich, but an own goal by Kaka and two howling mistakes by substitute keeper Sascha Burchert allowed the visitors back into the game. The win took HSV to second place in the Bundesliga table while Hertha remained rock bottom.

Hertha sat back and waited for HSV to come at them. When the visitors did have the ball early on, Hertha allowed them no time to settle and challenged for possession immediately. On seven minutes Ebert curled a corner onto the head of Ramos at the near post. His header from six metres out was scrambled away by an HSV defender. Another corner moments later was more successful. Ramos back headed the ball to the far post where Arne Friedrich was waiting unmarked to nod his side into the lead from only four metres out. The Hertha skipper then ran the full length of the pitch to celebrate at the Hertha end of the Olympic stadium! It was a rare but more than welcome goal by the Germany international.

HSV were forced to take the initiative and although they tried, Hertha matched them with determination and grit. When a team is rock bottom of the Bundesliga table, Lady Luck rarely smiles on them. It was probably par for the course then that HSV equalised before they mounted any telling attacks. On 24 minutes the former Hertha defender Jerome Boateng sent a harmless long ball into the Berlin box, where keeper Ochs came out to meet it. Kaka did not see his keeper leave his goal line and headed the ball into his own net from 11 metres out. A killer blow for Hertha to say the least.

What then followed towards the end of the first half left both sets of fans shaking their heads in disbelief. Ochs was taken off with a thigh problem and was replaced by Burchert on 30 minutes. Only nine minutes later the game was turned on its head. On 38 minutes the 19-year-old keeper came way out of his area to reach a cross-field ball meant for Berg, heading the ball away, but only to the feet of Jarolim who produced a superb lob from 25 metres out to give HSV the lead. Moments later an almost identical goal was scored as Burchert once again ventured out as Berg was played into space. This time the ball fell to the feet of Zé Roberto. The Brazilian veteran lobbed the ball home while standing inside the centre circle. HSV somehow led 3-1 at halftime.

Both teams emerged unchanged for the second half. Hertha nerves were understandably frayed and it was all too easy for HSV to sit back and defend their lead. Tough tackling became the name of the game and HSV's Croatian striker Petric had to be taken off following a brutal tackle by Kaka. Hertha created few scoring chances in the second half. One of them came as Kakar blasted the ball over the bar from six metres out following a corner taken by Ebert. Five minutes from time Domovchyski tested keeper Rost with a fierce shot from the edge of the area. Rost punched the ball to the head of Kacar who headed wide.

The league leaders brought a large drunk support with them and there was a great atmosphere inside the Olympic Stadion. This was soon killed off when they took their 3-1 lead. The Hamburgers partied on the S-Bahn back to the Centre of Berlin and you would have thought they had won the league. I enjoy a laugh at football

but some of these clowns went way over the top. Hopefully what goes around comes around for this team and its unpleasant supporters. Old-man moan, over!!

Despite the athletics track at the Olympic Stadion a Hertha game should be on everyone's list of grounds to visit. It's a good stadium, very historic and for paper chasers like me they produce an excellent 100-page programme. I've heard that some people find it hard to pick up a programme at their games. They are usually sold in advance at their shops at the Hauptbahnhof Station and in the Europa Centre near the Zoo Gardens Station. They can also be picked up from the souvenir stalls outside the ground and inside right at the front of the stadium.

Overall, a very good day out.

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