

TT No.206: Ian Hill - Sat 12th Feb 2011; **Lokomotive Leipzig** v VfB Auerbach 1906; German NOFV - Oberliga Süd; Result: 1-3; Att: 2,049; Admission: 8 Euros; Programme: 1 euro; Rating: 3*.

Football in Leipzig

As you will see from the history of Lokomotive Leipzig football in the city can be a bit confusing. Their old rivals Chemie Leipzig play in the same league but are officially known as Sachsen Leipzig. The whole football harmony was completely broken a couple of years ago by the arrival of Red Bull Leipzig who play at the 45,000 capacity Central Stadion. To say that this club is unpopular in Germany is a bit of an understatement. They are known by most supporters as "Das Produkt" - no translation needed.

Leipzig

I found Leipzig to be a really friendly place, unlike Erfurt the previous evening. There is a lot of building work going on in the Centre so you have a mix of old and new. Don't be put off by the large amount of derelict industrial buildings as you enter the city by train - it is well worth a visit.

Getting There

Travelling by tram is really easy in Leipzig with tickets purchased from machines, which translate into English, or from manned booths outside the Central Station. My journey should have been an easy one but unfortunately due to "Tram Works" (the line was being dug up) I had to jump off the tram and follow the rest of the Lok supporters onto a bus. This stopped near to the tram stop. You then walk through a small park, turn right and you are at the ground.

The club does have a large skin head following (as do a lot of the old East German clubs) and you do get some curious looks if you are not wearing the Lok colours on the way to the ground. I didn't experience any problems and didn't see any so.

Lokomotive Leipzig

Prepare to be confused. The club was formed on 26 May 1896 as VfB Leipzig out of the football department of gymnastics club Allgemeine Turnverein 1845 Leipzig. However, they lay claim to an earlier date of origin by reaching back to a club that was incorporated into VfB in 1898 - Sport Club Sportbrüder Leipzig - which was one of four football clubs formed in Leipzig in 1893. The union lasted until 2 May 1900 when the two sides went their separate ways again.

VfB Leipzig was one of the original eighty-six teams that came together in the city in 1900 to form the German Football Association (Deutscher Fußball Bund). They were immediately successful at their chosen sport and made their way to the first German national championship final held in 1903. Their opponents were DFC Prag, an ethnically German side out of what is today Prague in Czech Republic, but

which was then part of the Austria-Hungary. The DFB had invited "German" clubs of this sort from other countries in order to boost numbers in their new national association.

Prag had made their way to the final under circumstances that had allowed them to avoid playing a single playoff game, while Leipzig had come through some hard-fought matches. Arriving in Hamburg for the match, the heavily favoured Pragers took themselves off on an ill-advised pub crawl the night before the contest and so arrived to the pitch in less than ideal game-shape. The contest against VfB Leipzig was delayed half an hour as officials scrambled to find a football that was in good enough condition to play the match. The host Altona club provided a new ball and eleven minutes in Prag scored the first goal. At the end of the first half the score stood at (1:1), but Leipzig then pulled away to emerge as the first winners of the Viktoria Meisterschaftstrophäe (Victoria Championship Trophy), representative of German football supremacy, on the strength of a decisive 7-2 victory.

Leipzig played themselves into another final appearance in 1904, but the match was never contested. A protest by FV Karlsruhe over their disputed semi-final with Britannia Berlin was never resolved and the DFB called off the final only hours before its scheduled start. There would be no champion that year. The following season Leipzig found themselves unable to cover the expense of travelling to participate in their scheduled first round playoff match and so were eliminated from that year's competition. They did, however, go on to raise the Viktoria again in 1906 and 1913 and also played in the 1911 and 1914 finals.

In the period leading up to World War II, VfB was unable to repeat their early success. After the re-organisation of German football leagues under the Third Reich in 1933, the club found itself in Gauliga Sachsen, one of sixteen upper tier divisions. While they earned good results within their own division, they were unable to advance in the playoff rounds. In 1937, they captured the Tschammerpokal, known today as the German Cup, in a match against FC Schalke 04, the dominant side of the era.

In the aftermath of the war the club was dissolved by the occupying Allied authorities, like most other organisations in Germany, including sports and football clubs. Club members reconstituted the team in 1946 as SG Probstheida under the auspices of the occupying Soviets. After playing as BSG Erich Zeigner Probstheida and then BSG Einheit Ost, the club merged with SC Rotation Leipzig in 1954 and played in the DDR-Oberliga, East Germany's top flight league, but earned only mediocre results. In 1963 Leipzig's two most important clubs - SC Rotation and SC Lokomotive Leipzig - were put together resulting in two new sides being founded - SC Leipzig and BSG Chemie Leipzig. East German football went through a general re-organisation in 1965, creating football clubs as centres of high-level football, during which SC Leipzig was transformed into 1. FC Lokomotive Leipzig, while rivals Chemie Leipzig continued as a Betriebssportgemeinschaft (BSG), or a company team. Playing as Lokomotive, the club's fortunes improved somewhat as they almost always finished well up the league table, but they were unable to

capture the top honour in the DDR with losing final appearances in 1967, 1986, and 1988.

Lok earned a clutch of East German Cups with victories in 1976, 1981, 1986 and 1987 against failed appearances in the Cup final in 1970, 1973 and 1977. They also won the UEFA Intertoto Cup in 1966 and made an appearance in the 1987 final of the UEFA Cup Winners' Cup falling 0:1 to Johan Cruyff's Ajax Amsterdam after a Marco Van Basten goal.

Re-unification in 1990 was followed by the merger of the football leagues of the two Germanys. A poor season led to a seventh-place finish in the transitional league, but an unexpectedly strong playoff propelled the club into the 2. Bundesliga.

FC Lokomotive made a grasp at their former glory by re-claiming the name VfB Leipzig. A third-place finish in 1993 advanced the team to the top flight Bundesliga where they finished dead-last in the 1994 season.

The new VfB began a steady slide down through the 2. Bundesliga into the Regionalliga Nordost (III) by 1998 and then further still to the Oberliga Nordost/Süd (IV) by 2001. They were bankrupted in 2004, their results were annulled and the club was dissolved.

In 2004, the club was re-established by a group of fans as 1. FC Lokomotive Leipzig. The renewed side had to start in the lowest league eleventh-tier 3. Kreisklasse, Staffel 2 in 2004-05. Even so, they continued to receive solidly enthusiastic fan support: their game against Eintracht Großdeuben's second team in the Leipzig Zentralstadion on 9 October 2004 broke the world record for lower-league attendance with an astounding 12,421 spectators in the stands. Thanks to a merger with SSV Torgau, the club could play in the seventh-tier Bezirksklasse Leipzig, Staffel 2 in 2005-06. Finishing this league as champion, the team qualified for the sixth-tier Bezirksliga. In 2006 Lok Leipzig also played a friendly match vs. FC United of Manchester (4-4) and qualified for the Landespokal 2006-07 by winning the Bezirkspokal. Lokomotive Leipzig finished as champions of their group and promoted to fifth-tier Landesliga Sachsen Group for 2007-08 season. The club finished 2nd to FC Erzgebirge Aue II and missed out on direct promotion to NOFV-Oberliga Süd by 2 points in 2007-08 season. It still had the chance to regain Oberliga status through a relegation play-off with FC Schönberg 95, winning game one 2-1 at Schönberg. In the return leg, in front of almost 10,000 spectators, the club lost 0-1 but still gained Oberliga promotion on the away-goal rule.

The Bruno Plache Stadion

This is a fantastic old venue, which currently, has a capacity of 4,999. Until a few years ago 13,500 spectators could be accommodated in venue which was built in 1922. Tickets are purchased outside the ground at ticket booths. These are prominently decorated with the club crests of Lokomotive and VfB Leipzig. Programmes are also available here and for some reason they were giving away the programme from the derby game against Sachsen Leipzig when you purchased one

for today's fixture. That game was played the previous weekend at the Central Stadion with a crowd of 10,600.

The stadium is dominated by an old main stand. The whole place is a bit ramshackle and this adds to its charm. A narrow, abandoned cinder running track surrounds the pitch but this does not affect viewing as much as a full sized one. The rest of the ground is made up of concrete block and cinder terracing with high metal fencing around the pitch. Behind one goal is a very old-fashioned score board which is large in size but only displays the score. Part of the terracing looks like it has collapsed to the right of the scoreboard and is fenced off.

Behind the main stand is a training pitch which looks like it may be used for reserve team games and a run-down indoor sports hall. Underneath the stand is a crammed supporter's bar and further along a VIP area. At the entrance to the VIP area is a small hall with some glass cases displaying club memorabilia including a lot of old programmes from European fixtures. The jewel in the crown though is a programme from a cup final played in 1911. The VIP area is full of trophies etc but unfortunately, I couldn't blag my way in for a look around.

A lack of German and English led to me purchasing a ticket to stand on the terraces. There are strict ticket controls for the other ticketed areas of the ground such as the stand and the paddock below it. After the game I managed to get into these areas to take some photos. In the paddock is a stall selling various match programmes from earlier in the season and club stickers. There is a club shop as you enter through the turnstiles with various goods displayed on trestle tables.

The Game

I'd never heard of VfB Auerbach before the game but I took a total dislike to them due to their diving and fake injury tactics. Somehow, they managed to win the game 3-1 mainly due to the help of a very poor refereeing display and a referee's assistant who basically put his flag every time Lokomotive went forward.

Out of interest I looked up the history VfB Auerbach and as you can see, they are an old club:

The club was founded as the Auerbacher Fußball Club on 17 May 1906 making it the second-oldest side in Vogtland. They won their first title in the second class Gau Vogtland, part of the VMBV (Verband Mitteldeutschland Ballspiel Verein or Federation of Central German Ballgame Clubs), in 1908. AFC was officially registered on 20 June 1913 and after World War I on 18 April 1919, with the introduction of departments for athletics, tennis, and winter sports re-named itself as the sportsclub VfB Auerbach 1906.

In the aftermath of World War II occupying Allied authorities ordered the dissolution of existing organizations in the country, including sports and football clubs. In the fall of 1945, the club was re-established as the football department of Sport- und Kultur-Kartell Auerbach i.V. A new sportsclub known as BSG KWU Auerbach was created out of SuKK Auerbach in 1949 and re-named BSG Einheit Auerbach on 6 January 1951. BSG was an unheralded local side in and out of the

lower division Bezirksliga Karl-Marx-Stadt (today Chemnitz) in East Germany. In 1989, shortly before the end of the DDR-era BSG was the largest sports club in Auerbach with departments for bowling, boxing, fencing, gymnastics, hiking, roller skating, tennis, and table tennis.

The club returned to its roots after German re-unification when it was re-established as VfB Auerbach and continued to play in what was now the sixth division Bezirksliga Chemnitz. By the mid-90s they were playing in the Landesliga Sachsen (V), and after three second place finishes (1996, 2001, 2002), finally captured the division title in 2003 to earn promotion to the NOFV-Oberliga Süd (IV).

Match Programme

A nice A5 full colour 32-page glossy issue was available for 1 euro.

Overall

Lokomotive are in a bit of a relegation scrap at the present moment and hopefully this historic club will survive and prosper. I really enjoyed my visit and may go back in the future.

07/20