

TT No.243: Ian Hill - Sunday 13th February 2011; **Hallescher FC** v ZFC Meuselwitz; German Regionalliga NORD; Result: 3-1; Att: 1,214; Admission: 11 Euros; Programme: 1 Euro: Rating: 3.

Hallescher FC

Hallescher are currently playing at the temporary ground of Stadion am Bildungszentrum which is located in the suburb of Halle - Neustadt. This is due to their home Kurt Wabbel stadium being rebuilt. The new build should be ready for next season.

The club's roots are in the 1946 formation of SG Glaucha in Soviet-occupied East Germany around the core of Hallescher Fußball-Club Wacker which was founded in 1900. Wacker had participated in the playoff rounds for the German championship in 1921, 1928, and 1934, when it won the Gauliga Mitte.

As was common in the East at the time, the club would undergo frequent name changes, the first one was to SG Freimfelde Halle in 1948. In the following year they won the eastern championship as ZSG Union Halle and repeated this success in 1952.

A succession of further name changes followed: BSG Turbine Halle (1953); SC Chemie Halle-Leuna (1957); SC Chemie Halle (1958); and FC Chemie Halle (1966).

The last name change reflects the separation of football departments from their parent sports clubs all across East Germany, forming football clubs, as sports bureaucrats strove to build a powerful national football team. As BSG Turbine Halle the side won its first East German Cup in 1956, and a second one in 1962, this time as SC Chemie Halle. The club played in the premier DDR-Oberliga as a middling side, with the occasional lapse that would drop them to the second tier DDR-Liga. Their best result in this period was third place Oberliga finish in

1970-71 that earned them a first-round UEFA Cup appearance.

With German reunification in 1990, and the merger of the country's eastern and western leagues, the club entered the 2. Bundesliga, as Hallescher FC. A steady decline followed that saw the club in Verbandsliga Sachsen-Anhalt (V) by the 1995-96 season. They play in NOFV-Oberliga Süd (IV) and promoted to Regionalliga Nord (IV) in 2007-2008 as champions.

Getting There

I Caught a S-Bahn train from Leipzig Hauptbahnhof to Halle Hbf which takes about 30 minutes. I then caught a train from Halle Hbf to Nitelben which is near to the stadium. A few Hallescher supporters were on the train and got off at the stop before (which I also did) which is Halle Neustadt. From here it is about a 10-minute walk to Stadion am Bildungszentrum.

Halle - Neustadt

The railway station is underground and I was not expecting to find myself in one of the most run-down estates in Europe. A derelict tower block greets you as you hit daylight and there are numerous blocks in the same condition which are all designed in the same way. The whole area was very eerily quiet.

Halle Neustadt was built in the 1960's to house the staff of two large chemical plants around Halle. In its heyday 92,000 people lived here. Since the fall of the Berlin wall people have moved out and the population has decreased to 48,000 in 2007. Some of the tower blocks or "slabs" as they are known have been taken over by housing associations who have refurbished some of them. The others that have not are left to rot and decay. Demolition funding has been made available to demolish the abandoned blocks but the demolition crews cannot keep pace with the number of people leaving the area. The area is described as a place for very poor people and called a ghetto for immigrant families with most trying to leave the area as soon as they can. It is known to the locals as Hanoi. The railway station hall itself is vandalised, graffitied and it was locked up. The whole area is extremely depressing and I wouldn't want to be there in the dark. I didn't have any problems there and if you want to visit an example of socialist housing it is the place to go.

Stadion am Bildungszentrum

The only word to describe it is awful. The capacity is supposed to be 5,010 which would probably not be the case in the UK. The pitch is surrounded by a shale unmarked running track, there are no floodlights and the only permanent stand is an uncovered seated one which is quite a way from the pitch. Two temporary seated stands are located next to the corners and are angled to face the pitch. I sat in one of the stands and the view was quite good. Everyone had to spend time cleaning their seats as they were either wet or covered in wet dirt. The other three sides of the ground have mainly raised flat standing or a few steps of terracing but a high mesh fence obscures your view somewhat.

Refreshment stalls and a covered souvenir table are located behind one of the corners from where you cannot see the pitch.

Near to the stadium is the clubhouse of what appears to be a motorcycle football team. I think it's called motofootball. Each team has four outfield players and a goalkeeper. I watched a clip on Youtube and the ball is a lot larger than a normal football with the pitch appearing to be some form of shale.

The Game

This was a comfortable win for Hallescher that should have been more emphatic against a poor Meuselwitz side. Unfortunately, the match officials were poor especially one of the male assistants who definitely did not understand the offside rule.

Trouble

There was a bit of scuffling going on at half time as a gang of chavs tried to enter the ground. This caused quite a lot of very large stewards to come running to the turnstile area. The gang, apart from their leader "King Chav", looked quite young but the King Chav looked like a very evil character. It's a bit unfortunate to have a face like that but he was obviously well known to the stewards who were not letting him in. I'm sure if they had taken his hood down, he would have had a couple of horns on top of his head. The strange thing was 20 minutes later King Chav and his mates were in the ground, so I don't know what happened there.

There were also a lot of people hanging about outside the ground at half time. Maybe they couldn't afford to get in? If they had walked around the other side of the ground, they could have watched through a wire fence for free.

Getting back

My return to England depended on me catching a train from Leipzig to Berlin. Unfortunately, I had got the wrong time for the train from Halle Neustadt and couldn't get back to Halle Hbf in time. Luckily, I spotted a tram stop near the railway station. A tram arrived and travelled quickly to Halle and dropped me right outside station. As I was getting off the tram, King Chav, jumped off, screamed in my face and ran off. I never want to see this bloke ever again! Thankfully I caught the train back to Leipzig with seconds to spare.

The Programme

Programmes are available for 1 euro from a table outside of the stadium. They are not available inside. The 28-page A5 colour issue looks like it has been printed using a laser printer. It's a nice issue for the price. A supporter's group also issued an eight-page A5 photocopied fanzine programme free of charge outside the ground.

Hallescher FC Website

The club have quite a good website which includes a web camera of the new stadium being built and programme covers from all their games from the last five seasons.

Overall

I wish I'd done a little bit more research before visiting Halle Neustadt as, after reading about it on the internet, it is quite interesting if you like social history. I wouldn't like to be a regular visitor to this stadium but it was an enjoyable and interesting visit.

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