

Deutsch-Israelische Fußballfreundschaft. 8. Sporthistorische Konferenz Irsee

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50 years ago, the Federal Republic of Germany and the equally young State of Israel established diplomatic relations. The eighth sports-historical conference hosted by the Schwabenakademie Irsee therefore addressed issues related to *German-Israeli football friendship*. Directed by MARKWART HERZOG (Irsee) and MANFRED LÄMMER (Cologne) academics, representatives of politics and sports as well as eyewitnesses debated if and how sport, in particular football, contributes to international rapprochement. Or whether it gets overwhelmed when it tries?

The first day got off to a controversial start when the delegates discussed the role of sport as bringer of peace. Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, WILLI LEMKE (Geneva) has no doubt that sport constitutes a particularly apt confidence-building measure, which also encourages dialogue. According to the former *Bundesliga* manager, „the UN concern themselves with using sport for peace. It is our aim that everyone may play sports in an atmosphere of security and peace.“ Unfortunately, the media do not report this. To the contrary, every so often there is unjustified criticism directed at countries such as Russia and Qatar, when they host important sports events. „How dare we attack host countries?“ asked the special adviser. He is certain that working conditions will eventually change even in Qatar. In general, he declared it to be wrong to pass judgement on other cultures. For Lemke it is important that sport does not shy away from conflict. To the contrary, sport must act as a beacon of peace.

The sports and cultural scientist SVEN GÜLDENPFENNIG (Vohburg an der Donau) considered the role of sport with a greater degree of scepticism. Not convinced that sport

can change the world, GÜLDENPFENNIG stated, „Sport labours under expectations it cannot meet.“ Institutions and federations need to keep negotiating so that they support sport as a cultural asset and present it with publicity. The scholar considers the motto „peace through sport“ absurd. Reality is quite different, he argued. Therefore, the slogan should run „No sports without peace“. In GÜLDENPFENNIG's estimate, „sport is not a political missionary; it is forced to accept the current circumstances in diverse countries.“ In Syria for example, sport cannot achieve anything. Whoever expects such an outcome distorts and overstretches the powers of sport. Rather, sport needs to negotiate a safe path through an unsafe world; it cannot change the world for the better. „Sport does neither legitimise nor does it delegitimise. It is important to make that clear!“ declared GÜLDENPFENNIG.

The second day of the conference looked at the role of Jews in German sports from the foundation of the German Empire to 1945. Conference convenor MARKWART HERZOG (Irsee) reminded delegates of the times when Jewish players, coaches, physicians, functionaries and sponsors were active in football, before being marginalised by the Nazis from 1933 onwards. Their expertise helped to increase professionalism and gave important impulse to sports journalism. In 1920, the journalist Walter Bensemann founded the sports magazine *Der Kicker*, which is still published today. Moreover, Bensemann and the two brothers Fred and G. Randolph „Gus“ Manning were founding members of the DFB (German football association). This same Gus Manning was going to play a decisive role for German football, without which its history would have taken a different turn. Having immigrated to the US in 1905, Manning eventually became president of the United States Football Association and was a member of the executive committee of FIFA from 1948. His commitment enabled the German football association to join FIFA, a vital prerequisite for the „miracle of Bern“ of 1954.

Next, the sports and cultural scientist ROBIN STREPPELHOFF (Bonn) discussed the difficult relationship between the Federal Republic and the State of Israel. During the post-war period and after the foundation of

the two new states a deep rift existed between the country of the perpetrators and that of the victims. The two states entertained no diplomatic relationship. Nonetheless, intermittent efforts tried to establish sporting relations. Although German and Israeli teams played no matches yet, between 1958 and 1965 most of the non-German participants at coaches' training courses in the Federal Republic came from Israel. In spite of these endeavours, it would take considerable time until the first match took place on the playing field.

An important factor were personal relationships between representatives of the two countries. MANFRED LÄMMER (Cologne) explained that the time was right in 1969. The first German-Israeli football match took place with Bayern Hof playing Hapoel Nahariya in Israel. That same year German and Israeli teams played an international in Frechen. According to Lämmer, „the summer of 1969 constituted the final breakthrough as regards sports relations, and football was the focus of attention.“ In 1963, Lämmer was among the first group of German sports students allowed to visit Israel since the Holocaust. Other important matches followed, further contributing to German-Israeli football friendship. Borussia Mönchengladbach played 27 matches in Israel, the first of which, against the Israeli national team, seemed to happen under an unlucky star. Afraid of an attack the „Fohlen“ (foals) travelled to Israel in secret, on a plane of the German Air Force without insignia. In spite of a 6-0 victory against the Israeli national team, Gladbach became the favourite club in Israel. More *Bundesliga* clubs and teams of the DFB followed Gladbach's example. The German youth national team played the Israeli side 55 times, more often than any other team. The encounters were not limited to playing matches, since German coaches taught their expertise in Israel and Israelis enrolled in German sports colleges. As Lämmer put it, „a result of these contacts was a closer economic collaboration.“ Such collaboration eventually led towards political confidence building.

MOSHE ZIMMERMANN (Jerusalem) reported on the changing image of German football in Israeli media and public opinion. Israeli media reactions to the German vic-

tory of the 1954 World Cup were very emotional, according to Zimmermann. The reason may have been that most Israelis were fans of the Hungarian team, then the best in the world. „The weight of history played a secondary role,“ in Zimmermann's view. When Germany lost against England in 1966, Israeli sympathies were with the English, even though the former occupying forces in Israel still counted as enemies. Between 1968 and 1970, the image of German football finally improved. After all, by now quite a few German teams had played in Israel. In spite of these efforts, Israeli public opinion was unanimously in favour of The Netherlands, Zimmermann explained: „this happened, for we thought in political terms.“ Jewish Israelis then regarded the Dutch as helpers of Anne Frank facing the ugly Germans on the pitch. The Arab minority in Israel, however, backed the German national team. New ammunition contributed to volatile German-Israeli relations after German Unification. During the 1994 World Championship in the United States, Israel started a debate, which compared contemporary Germany to its Nazi predecessor. Bulgaria's victory against the German team called forth a certain glee in Israel. Zimmermann explained this animosity as a reaction to the Unification as well as to the racist riots in its aftermath. In addition, Israel had lost its enemies: after the collapse of the Soviet Union and during a short-lived peace with the Palestinians, old enemy stereotypes came in handy. A completely different atmosphere reigned in 2006, according to Zimmermann, when the World Championship took place in Germany. „The Unification had not brought a return of the Third Reich, while the Palestinians had resumed their role as archenemy. Germany was less needed as bogeyman.“ In recent years, greater equanimity towards Germany is noticeable in Israeli media and public opinion. „Let bygones, be bygones,“ seems now the dominant attitude. During the 2014 World Cup overt declarations in favour of the German national team were made. In Israel, the German national jersey is worn in public without causing offence from the political class or the population.

The DFB continues its work on German-Israeli relations. Since 2008, the team of

under-18s regularly travels to Israel to visit the Holocaust memorial Yad Vashem, as the managing director of DFB cultural foundation, OLLIVER TIETZ (Frankfurt am Main) reported: „It is a sign abroad that Germany has not forgotten its past. At home, the visit is supposed to show that the past should be relevant to us all. Not in the sense of guilt but of responsibility.“

During a round table of witnesses, MICHAEL NEES (Tel Aviv) spoke about his positive experience as technical director and coach of the youth national teams and U-21 national team coach, whereas pioneers of German-Israeli football friendship presented their memories of earlier times. One of them: MORDECHAI „MOTTI“ SPIEGLER (Netanya). The „Beckenbauer of Israel“ was team captain during the first international between Germany and Israel in 1969. „We were just proud to play the German team,“ said Spiegler. The sport was in the lime-light, everything else played a supporting role. HERBERT LAUMEN (Wegberg) who played the Israeli national team with Borussia Mönchengladbach in 1970 remembers similar feelings: „It was a sports event. It was as simple as that.“ He described that the team showed some initial reluctance about travelling to Israel but that these reservations were soon gone. „The population was very friendly and after the match even more enthusiastic,“ according to Laumen, in spite of Gladbach's 6-0 victory against Israel. Also UWE „KLIMA“ KLIMASCHEFSKI (Homburg an der Saar) has positive memories about his time in Israel. He was the first German football coach working in Israel. After careful deliberation and some prompting from Hennes Weisweiler, he ventured to move to Haifa. There were no issues about his German nationality. „If you are successful, it does not matter where you come from,“ remembers Klimaschewski.

On the final day FELIX ROTTMANN (Brighton, UK) presented the project *Football for Peace* (F4P). F4P exists in diverse countries torn by conflicts between different communities. In Israel, Jewish and Arab children and youths are supposed to learn ways of peaceful cooperation through playing sports. „Football for Peace aims at establishing contact be-

tween them. Of particular importance are key values such as respect, responsibility and justice,“ reported Rottmann. The project uses football as a tool to build bridges.

The final round table discussion debated whether this goal matches what happens in reality. Vice-president of DFB, EUGEN GEHLENBORG (Frankfurt am Main) described football as an excellent point of departure to reach this goal. Nonetheless, he also warned against a tendency „of dumping every aspiration on football.“ Peace educator ULI JÄGER (Tübingen) judges the role of football as being capable of further development. In his view, sport is very well suited to bring people together. „We have not yet reached football's full potential.“ For football to be more than a mere door opener, to allow it to act as bringer of peace, it needs to be accompanied by an educational programme.“

The former general secretary of DFB, HORST R. SCHMIDT (Frankfurt am Main) also underlined the importance of football's educational values. It was necessary to play even conflict-ridden matches, for example Egypt against Israel: „after a while such matches will become matter of fact.“ Schmidt is, however, well aware of the limits of sport. During the World Championship in South Africa, blacks and whites had celebrated together in the stadiums. Unfortunately, this had turned out to be a short-lived reality. Moreover, sport occasionally brings forth feelings of discord. Zimmermann confirmed this observation in his final statement that football often acts as catalyst of conflict in the Near East. The fear that football may fuel unrest often makes joint projects between Arab and Jewish Israelis impossible.

The three-day conference proved that it is hard to answer the question whether football may contribute to peace. There are certainly many positive examples in favour of such a theory: outstanding among these is the German-Israeli football friendship. Nonetheless, this friendship could hardly have developed in this form without the successful establishment of political relations. It is obvious that the football friendship contributed to a stronger confidence between the two countries, although the conference also showed that sport is still often misused or sometimes

even fuels conflict. In order to ensure that such abuse will stop eventually, sport and politics still have a long way to go.

Conference Overview:

Wilfried „Willi“ Lemke (Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, Geneva), Janusköpfiger Sport – Hindernis oder Brücke der Verständigung zwischen Völkern und Nationen?

Sven Güldenpfennig (Vohburg an der Donau), Sport – Nutznießer, Tributpflichtiger, Störfaktor des Friedens

Markwart Herzog (Schwabenakademie Irsee), Rückblick. Juden im deutschen Sport vom Kaiserreich bis 1945

Moshe Zimmermann (Hebräische Universität Jerusalem), Zwischen Sport und Politik. Entwicklung und Strukturen des Fußballsports in Israel

Robin Streppelhoff (Bundesinstitut für Sportwissenschaft, Bonn), „Schwierige Anfänge.“ Die Beziehungen zwischen Deutschland und Israel in Wissenschaft, Kultur und Sport vor 1965

Manfred Lämmer (Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln), Deutsch-israelische Fußballbegegnungen – ein Beitrag zur politischen Vertrauensbildung

Moshe Zimmermann (Hebräische Universität Jerusalem), Erstaunlicher Wandel. Der deutsche Fußball in den Medien und in der öffentlichen Meinung Israels

Markwart Herzog (Schwabenakademie Irsee), Führung durch Kloster Irsee mit Besuch der Euthanasie-Gedenkstätten

Olliver Tietz (DFB-Kulturstiftung, Frankfurt am Main), Yad Vashem. Deutsch-israelische Fußballjugend-Begegnungen – Erinnerungskultur in pädagogischer Verantwortung

Round Table Discussion. Erinnerungen und Erfahrungen

Chair: Manfred Lämmer

Mordechai „Motti“ Spiegler (Netanya) / Uwe Klimaschefski (Homburg an der Saar) / Her-

bert Laumen (Wegberg) / Michael Nees (The Israel Football Association, Tel Aviv)

Felix Rottmann (Football 4 Peace, Brighton), „Football for Peace“. Bilanz einer 10-jährigen Kampagne

Public Panel Discussion. Fußball – Motor der Verständigung?

Chair: Markwart Herzog (Schwabenakademie Irsee)

Eugen Gehlenborg (Frankfurt am Main) / Uli Jäger (Berghof Foundation/Peace Education, Tübingen) / Sven Güldenpfennig (Vohburg an der Donau) / Horst R. Schmidt (Frankfurt am Main), Moshe Zimmermann (Jerusalem)

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