

## **KuBus 69**

### **In Forward Gear – Women’s Soccer in Germany**

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**00'03"**

Once upon a time, the English soccer player Gary Lineker said: "Soccer is a man's game and in the end the Germans win."

**00'19"**

But times have changed.

**00'21"**

In Finland they now say: "Soccer is a woman's game and in the end the Germans win."

**00'25"**

The German national women's team has won one World Cup, six European Championships, and is now number one in the FIFA World Rankings. Tina Theune-Meyer coached the team to all of these victories.

**00'42"**

How does she explain their success?

**00'47" Interview Transcript (IT): Tina Theune–Meyer, former national team coach**

"We've enjoyed success for quite a long time now. We've consistently won titles since 1989, and I put this down to the very good infrastructure we have in Germany. The foundation for this is the German Football Association, the GFA. They have a woman who's responsible for women's soccer and a woman who's responsible for girls' soccer. There are people who consistently promote the cause, who are articulate and convincing, and who push the right ideas at the right time. As a result of their efforts, we now have two national league divisions here and girls' soccer is well-structured, with a system for fostering up-and-coming talent. We have female coaches who are certified by the GFA. All in all, we have a very broad infrastructure."

**01'35"**

No one would raise their eyebrows about women's soccer today, but it was once frowned upon. The road to official recognition was long and hard. Women's soccer was once seen as a kind of fairground attraction, but those days are over. The president of the club FFC Frankfurt, former coach and player Monika Staab, remembers how it all began:

**02'03" IT: Monika Staab, FFC Frankfurt president**

"I started playing in 1969/'70. There was no girls' soccer back then. I had to play with the women, with the adults, for ten years. We weren't officially allowed to play in the GFA. We weren't allowed to play two 45-minute halves like the men. We only played for 25 minutes, and this increased to 30, 35, 40, and then to 45 minutes. We had to play with a lighter ball and without cleats. They had a plan to make us wear chest protectors, but then thankfully decided against it as the men hardly wore any protection anyway. They dropped the idea. They realized that women were very serious about soccer.

And then we started winning championships and trophies: first we won the German League Championship, then the Cup, and the national team – which was only established in 1980 – has also been very successful. We established ourselves in the men's domain and are still accepted today due to the quality of our playing."

**03'00"**

One of the most outstanding players in Germany is World and five-time German Player of the Year, Birgit Prinz:

**03'11" IT: Birgit Prinz, FFC Frankfurt player**

"I decided to play soccer. I don't think you decide to play women's soccer as such. I simply tried out lots of different kinds of sports, I always used to play soccer with the boys in the schoolyard. And then one day I just joined a club."

**03'28" IT: Monika Staab, FFC Frankfurt president**

"I discovered Birgit while I was coaching the district team. She was 12 and played soccer with the boys. I was immediately struck by her amazing penetration skills. To me, there's nobody else like her in women's soccer. I don't know anyone who's better at getting what they want. Everyone wants to win, but her incredible drive to score goals and win, her ability to actually make it happen, is unparalleled. No other sportswoman has accomplished as much as

Birgit Prinz. I can't even count her accomplishments. I think she's the best female player in the world."

**04'07"**

Prinz and FFC Frankfurt effortlessly dominated German women's soccer for quite some time: 5 Championships and 5 Cups in the last 7 years speak for themselves.

**04'18"**

But the women from the banking metropolis in the West now have competition from the East:

**04'25"**

from Potsdam, the royal seat of the last German Kaiser.

**04'32"**

When another "Kaiser," Franz Beckenbauer, stated after the German men's World Cup victory in Rome in 1990 that: "Reunified Germany will be unbeatable for years," he was wrong.

**04'45"**

But in the case of the women, he was right. Reunification marked the beginning of German women's soccer's success story. The person largely responsible for this success at Turbine Potsdam is Bernd Schröder. Involved in coaching women's soccer in East Germany from its infancy, he built up the young, successful Turbine team. This is his philosophy:

**05'10" IT: Bernd Schröder, FFC Turbine Potsdam coach**

"We began almost 35 years ago. We always treated women's soccer, which was never an Olympic sport in East Germany, like a professional sport. We've always taken it seriously and put a great deal of effort and passion into the game. And that's something which hasn't changed to this day. It's important that I as coach embody these principles myself, of course, but the most important thing is that the players realize that soccer is a serious sport, that they know what our aims are and understand that it's a professional sport."

**05'40"**

Turbine Potsdam, East Germany's permanent champions are now serious rivals to FFC Frankfurt. After coming runner-up several times, their efforts were finally rewarded when they won the Championship and Cup "double" in 2004. Turbine and national team player Navina Omilade, who was born and raised in Germany, talks about her career.

**06'09" IT: Navina Omilade, FFC Turbine Potsdam player**

"I started playing when I was six and joined a club when I was seven.

I started out playing soccer with the neighborhood children and with my older brother. When I was seven, I joined a club with a boy from the neighborhood who was the same age as me and played with him on the boys' team. I started off on the "F" youth team. Girls were allowed to play with the boys until the "D" team. So once I reached 12, I had to switch to the girls' team."

**06'47" IT: Bernd Schröder, FFC Turbine Potsdam coach**

"Our basic philosophy is that women's soccer should be different to men's soccer. Why should it be different? Because there would be no reason to go and watch it if it were exactly the same as men's soccer. Women's soccer needs to be more attractive than men's soccer – which isn't exactly a difficult task. It should be good, offensive soccer, and the whole thing has to take place... in a more pleasant setting. The girls have to present themselves differently: They should be more refined than the men. They shouldn't spit all the time. We have to take the good from men's soccer and leave out the bad. My philosophy is to score as many goals as possible and to let in as few as possible – something we've always succeeded in doing – and most of all, to play a different kind of soccer with passion and energy. Whenever we win a big game, we have to speak to the press from the town hall balcony, and I always say for whom and for what we play: for our city, for our region, for our country, for the East. Lately, I've been saying that we play for Germany."

**08'07" IT: Navina Omilade, FFC Turbine Potsdam player**

We're like a big family. We train twice a day, five times a week.

At weekends, of course, we have matches – either at home or away. If we've got an away game coming up, we're together for seven days, and it really feels like you're part of a big family. I really feel at home here, and I have many friends on the team. It's very pleasant. We often do things together in our spare time. You might shake your head and ask, "Don't you all get sick of each other?" But spending so much time together, is, what makes such a great team. It makes us gel, and it's like being part of a family."

**08'49" IT: Bernd Schröder, FFC Turbine Potsdam coach**

Fortunately for us, one of the most important people from the sports academy, Coach Steffen Kreishe, also helps us train for the German Soccer League. He helps us to see better, what happens here every day. And all of us – from the general manager to the coaches – we all share the same philosophy. This means we all know which system we're playing. That's something which is taught at the sports academy. There's no other club in Germany which is close on a human level to the individual components of sport, school and club."

**09'24"**

The sports academy's home is here at the Olympic base in Potsdam. Every year, new talent is scouted for the upcoming school year, with up to ten talented girls being accepted. Besides athletic ability, academic performance and personal qualities are also important. The director and coach is Steffen Kreishe.

**09'46" IT: Steffen Kreishe, Potsdam Sports Academy coach**

"We've been offering places to girls here at Potsdam Sports Academy since 1997. We started with twelve girls, most of whom had just started the seventh grade. And we started with these girls. Since then, women's soccer has been an integral part of the syllabus at Potsdam and we now offer places in the seventh grade to ten girls each year. "

**10'09"**

These players are 14 and 15 years old and will soon be eligible for the first team.

**10'17"**

In Frankfurt, they've taken the lessons learnt in Potsdam a step further:

it is no longer enough to wait for new talent to come along – here, the strategy is to actively seek out and foster new talent. In 2004, the first girls' sports academy in Germany was founded. Director of the school is Monika Staab.

**10'43" IT: Monika Staab, FFC Frankfurt president**

"We thought: there are so many places in Germany where boys can train. Girls are allowed to train there too, but I kept noticing that the girls were in a very small minority. So we thought: Why not have a school just for girls? It was a great success last year. Forty girls per week came during the summer, Easter and fall holidays. We did it again this year, but this time we did it even better by implementing a plan for fostering new talent. Every week we discovered three to four really talented young players between the ages of six and ten. We now

train with them once a week for two hours in a very structured way. This is how we guarantee that fresh talent from outside our club can be found. And they come to us and really work very hard."

**11'39" IT: Steffen Kreishe, Potsdam Sports Academy coach**

"The FIFA President, Blatter, said: "The future of soccer is female."

I wouldn't put it as simply as that, but here in Potsdam, if you look at the press and the media attention we've attracted, you can see that our success and the quality of the playing has generated a great deal of interest."

**11'56" IT: Bernd Schröder, FFC Turbine Potsdam coach**

"I believe that women's soccer has a great future, and this means that we as a club, as the national team, are seen as role models."

**12'03" IT: Monika Staab, FFC Frankfurt president**

"There are more than 250,000 girls playing soccer in this country... That's almost a million women in total – a very large number. So, because the quantity is right, the quality is right as a result. And in Birgit Prinz, we've definitely created one of the first idols in Germany. These idols can now make a living from soccer; they have sponsors and do commercials. Everything is going in that direction, and Mr. Blatter is right when he says that in 30 years' time we'll have reached the stage the men were at in 1964, when the present men's soccer league was founded. Today, all female soccer players in the first division have contracts. They can't live on the small wages they earn, but they have enough to go on vacation."

**12'45"**

In Germany, the future of women's soccer has already begun.

**12'56" END**

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