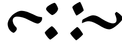
INTRODUCTION



Historical Perspectives on the German Football Nation

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OLIVER KNABE, and ALAN MCDOUGALL

According to the *British Medical Journal*, the chance of being killed playing football is eighteen times greater than if you go riding and twenty times greater than if you do gymnastics. . . . And such a sport is supposed to be desirable, even necessary for our German people?[1]

—Karl Planck, *Fußlümmelei: Über Stauchballspiel und englische Krankheit* [Football loutishness: on the crush ball game and English disease], 1898

There is great enthusiasm for football in Germany and therefore your victory in Bern has made such a strong impression on us. We are not as rich as other nations in national symbols and events which provide a strong collective experience. Therefore, we are all the more grateful for every event that mediates such a real sense of community to us.[2]

—Interior Minister Gerhard Schröder's address to the West German football team after the "Miracle of Bern," 1954

Football currently rules in almost every corner of the country. It occupies heads and hearts, it turns Germany into another place, just as in a summer fairy tale, a spellbound, happy country under a black, red, and gold scarf. There has not been a party like this since November 1989. But at that time, the Germans celebrated with themselves and now they celebrate with the entire world.[3]

—Kurbjuweit et al.,"Deutschland, ein Sommermärchen" [Germany: A summer fairy tale], 2006

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Football nations, much like the societies in which they emerge and evolve, are never static entities. This is certainly true for the history of the world's game in modern Germany. The quotations from Karl Planck, Gerhard Schröder, and Kurbjuweit et al. in the weekly news magazine *Der Spiegel* chart football's fluctuating place in German culture and society, from skepticism and hostility in the Wilhelmine era to mass cultural and commercial power in the age of Angela Merkel. When the Stuttgart gymnastics teacher Karl Planck published his notorious essay on the "English disease" in 1898, football had only a shaky foothold in the sports landscape. The sport arrived in Germany as it had in many parts of the world in the final quarter of the nineteenth century: via a network of British expatriates and Anglophile Germans, many of whom were teachers, who extolled the virtues of the kicking game established by the English Football Association in 1863. The game, however, was not an overnight success and took time to grow out of its predominantly middle-class enclaves. Divisions emerged between football clubs associated with the country's powerful socialist movement, Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD; Social Democratic Party of Germany), was Europe's largest socialist party by the late nineteenth century and those associated with the conservative *Turnen* (gymnastics) movement, which originated in Prussia's military conflicts against Napoleonic France in the early nineteenth century. It was through the *Turnen* movement, as Munich mayor Wilhelm Georg von Borscht claimed in 1910, that "a serious national tone was first sounded. Founded in a time of the deepest humiliation of our fatherland, it sought not only to build a new, warlike generation through physical training, but also to foster German morals and love of the fatherland."[4] In Wilhelmine Germany, gymnastics, not football, was the center of the German sports nation, as evidenced by its astounding eight hundred thousand members at the turn of the twentieth century. Many *Turnen* leaders, though not all, saw the ball-kicking English import as a feckless, rootless, and commercial activity. It was, as Planck argued, un-German.

Football, however, was not to be denied in Germany, any more than it was in other parts of the world. Early advocates, such as the Braunschweig teacher Konrad Koch, pushed to Germanize the game. Koch complained in 1897 about players mimicking English manners on the field and the widespread use of English words to describe the game.[5] In 1902 a list of terms drawn up by Koch for the Deutscher Fußball-Bund (DFB; German Football Association), founded two years earlier in Leipzig, replaced various Anglicisms with German words. The word "corner," for example, became "*Eckball*," "goal" became "*Tor*," and "striker" became "*Stürmer*."[6] As Nils Havemann and other historians have shown, the DFB sought from the outset to showcase its nationalist credentials, and emerged as an ambitious competitor on the patriotic grounds that the *Turnen* had long claimed as its own. The DFB's attempt to make football the idealized representative of the German nation was far from unproblematic, but

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the sport grew rapidly under its stewardship. DFB membership was just under 190,000 in 1914. By 1928 it was greater than 865,000. Two years earlier, DFB president Ferdinand Hueppe claimed with some justification that "football has become the German national game."[7] Though cultural critics such as Theodor Adorno, Bertolt Brecht, and Siegfried Kracauer wrote more frequently about music, boxing, and cinema, football was at the very least their equal at the heart of Weimar mass culture.

By the time that the Christian Democrat Gerhard Schröder, interior minister of the recently formed Bundesrepublik Deutschland (BRD; Federal Republic of Germany), addressed the West German team that unexpectedly beat Hungary to win the 1954 World Cup, football's position as Germany's most popular sport was unassailable. As the train carrying the triumphant players, the Red Flash, returned from Switzerland to Germany, hundreds of thousands of people lined the route. At the final destination of Munich, more than five hundred thousand people were there to welcome them home.[8] But this was no unalloyed moment of national jubilation. World War II, defeat, occupation, and the Iron Curtain of the Cold War had left Germany divided (there was no longer one football nation) and, as Schröder indicated, in search of usable national symbols. Here he referred, with an obliqueness typical of politicians in 1950s West Germany, to the twelve years of Nazi dictatorship, which had left its mark on football, just as it had on every other aspect of German culture and society. No period in the country's football history has been written about more extensively. Verlag die Werkstatt has published a series of "under the swastika" club histories for teams including Borussia Dortmund, Eintracht Braunschweig, Kaiserslautern, and 1860 Munich; the histories are focused exclusively on their experiences in the Nazi era.[9] The club histories inspired a sporting *Historikerstreit* (historians' debate), following the 2005 publication of Nils Havemann's *Fußball unterm Hakenkreuz* [Football under the swastika], a richly researched history of the DFB in the Third Reich that, some critics argued, downplayed the organization's ideological commitment to Nazism. Indeed, the skeletons of the Nazi past still rattle around club cupboards. Germany's richest and most successful team, football club (FC) Bayern Munich, has long traded on its anti-Nazi reputation. Recent research by Markwart Herzog has undercut this "heroic history," suggesting that Bayern behaved no worse (but also no better) than most clubs in acquiescing to the Nazi *Gleichschaltung* (Nazification) of football.[10]

The shadows of the Nazi past explain the complex German response to the Miracle of Bern, which, in playing terms, marked the beginning of a transformation in the country's international football reputation. The prevailing narrative today is that 4 July 1954 marked "the real birthday of the Federal Republic."[11] This was the moment when Germans, or West Germans at least, could show the world that—as the businessman in Günter Grass's story for 1954 in *Mein*

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Jahrhundert (*My Century*) boasts, —"We're back, losers no more."[12] The sense of a national purpose rediscovered through sport carried uncomfortable echoes of the past. The DFB boss Peco Bauwens notoriously invoked the "Führer principle" in his victory speech to the team in Munich. As recent research attests, however, the nationalistic hubris of Bauwens was only one part of the story, considering that many newspapers voiced embarrassment at his speech. Moreover, Bavarian state radio broke off live transmission as gaffe followed gaffe. Rudolf Oswald has described the popular mood in 1954 as euphoric but almost "anti-national."[13] Like Schröder, other leading political figures—such as Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and President Theodor Heuss—offered muted responses to the heroics of captain Fritz Walter and his team.

Such downplaying of national football triumphs arguably anticipated the public reaction to West Germany's second World Cup win over the Netherlands twenty years later. This victory on home soil seemed to symbolize a certain denationalization of postwar football, a development that frustrated the DFB chair Hermann Neuberger. Why, he asked in October 1974, had Germans not taken that year's win to their hearts as they had the victory in Switzerland? "The jubilant, almost exuberant joy that was felt in the days of the triumph in Bern was not felt everywhere—and certainly not for a long time. The question echoed on all sides about whether it's possible any more here to feel or express heartfelt joy."[14] Theories abound as to why this result played out as it did—for example, the loss to East Germany in the first round may have put a damper on the joy of victory. In the end, the rather bloodless win in 1974, over a popular and talented Dutch team, helped to set the template for stereotypes about the (West) German national team that would last into the early twenty-first century, especially in the English-speaking world: remorseless, machine-like, highly successful, and deeply unlovable. As the England striker Gary Lineker famously lamented in 1990, "Football is a simple game. Twenty-two men chase a ball for 90 minutes and at the end, the Germans always win."[15]

When Germany hosted the World Cup for the second time in 2006—and the first time as a unified nation—the national narrative had once more shifted, as had international perspectives about the national football team Die Mannschaft. *Der Spiegel* captured the feelgood mood of "partyotism" in its 18 June article on what they termed "Germany's summer fairy tale," which appeared only nine days into the tournament when it was still in the group stage of play. Reworking a strand of the usable national past, Heinrich Heine's 1844 poem, "Germany: A Winter's Tale," the magazine provided the signature line for a happily renationalized football nation. The German team that reached the semifinals in 2006, like the team that won the World Cup in Brazil eight years later, was—so the popular line went—a product of, and reflection of, Germany's new multicultural identity. Mainstays of the side that beat Argentina 1–0 in Rio's Maracanã Stadium in July 2014 included attacking midfielder

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Mesut Özil, the grandson of a Turkish *Gastarbeiter* (guest worker), and Jérôme Boateng, a central defender with a German mother and a Ghanaian father. The national team coach Joachim Löw even praised Özil in 2010 as "a perfect example of integration."[16] This chimed with wider messaging from the DFB of the twenty-first century, which emphasized the organization's antiracism initiatives and increased willingness to confront the Nazi past (hence its commissioning of Havemann's *Fußball unterm Hakenkreuz* in 2005).

And yet, shadows and questions remained. As *Der Spiegel* noted in its *Sommermärchen* (Summer fairy tale) essay, "In Germany, there's always a big 'but' when it comes to Germany."[17] Part of the revival of nationalism in German football, as Kay Schiller and others have noted, had less to do with overcoming the Nazi past than it did with football's increasingly modish place in German society (to be a football fan in the 2010s was very different from being a football supporter in the 1980s) and increased commercial value. It is no coincidence that the elevation of the miracle of Bern to a foundational moment in modern German history took root in the early 2000s, when 6 million Germans watched Sönke Wortmann's sentimental film of the same name, including the then German chancellor, the SPD's Gerhard Schröder, who was apparently moved to tears. Renationalization, as Christiane Eisenberg first suggested in the late 1990s, was more about commerce than about nationalism, as a network of media, political, and business interests combined to place and then keep football omnipresent in German life.[18]

The success of Wortmann's 2003 film marked an exception in cinematic representations of football after several failed attempts to portray it accurately and prominently in feature films. While the first football film, *Die elf Teufel* (The Eleven Devils), was made as early as 1927 with Gustav Fröhlich starring as team captain, role model for the young, and hero for the masses in a sentimental love story including a happy ending both on the pitch and beyond, German film never truly succeeded in implementing football in fictional narratives. The discrepancy regarding performance, movements, and athleticism between professional football players and actors has consistently proven itself to be irreconcilable on the big screen as well as on the theater stage. That is not to say, however, that football disappeared from cultural production in Weimar Germany. The theater was also exposed to the game in 1927 with the staging of Melchior Vischer's drama, *Fußballspieler und Indianer* (Football players and indians), originally published in 1924), a piece thought to have been inspired by canonical writer Bertolt Brecht and his love of sports. Though football did appear in the cinematic and literary landscape of the Weimar Republic, the years and decades thereafter saw relatively low production of films and plays based on football. In addition to modestly successful feature films such as Joachim Hasler's 1973 Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft (DEFA; East German state film studio) comedy *Nicht schummeln, Liebling!* (*Don't Cheat, Darling!*),

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Adolf Winkelmann's 1993 *Nordkurve* (*North Curve*) and, more recently, Sebastian Grobler's *Der ganz große Traum* (*Lessons of a Dream*) from 2011, several football documentaries were made through the decades, most notably Aysun Bademsoy's football trilogy consisting of the short *Mädchen am Ball* (*Girls on the Pitch*, 1995), and the feature-length documentaries *Nach dem Spiel* (*After the Game*, 1997) and *Ich geh jetzt rein* (*In the Game*, 2008). Wigbert Wicker's 1973 *Libero* (*Sweeper*) tried, quite unsuccessfully, to merge the real-life football career of Germany's all-time best Libero (a now-defunct position in modern football akin to the sweeper) Franz Beckenbauer with an engaging fictional story in what today would be considered a mockumentary. Though production of football films and literature remained small, it was a consistent presence in cultural production in Germany throughout the twentieth century, becoming mainstream again with the success of *Das Wunder von Bern* (*The Miracle of Bern*) in 2003. Considering the overwhelming positive reception of the film, director Sönke Wortmann was the obvious choice to helm the documentary on the 2006 World Cup entitled *Deutschland: Ein Sommermärchen* (Germany: a summer fairy tale) which, once again, became a huge commercial success. The documentary reflects the zeitgeist of the early days of the Merkel chancellorship, when Germany began to actively promote a diverse, multiethnic, and polycultural Germany, perhaps best portrayed by Germany's national team under the reign of Jürgen Klinsmann and assistant manager Joachim Löw. This new era of German football saw the implementation of radical changes, including changes in roster creation, a fresh and modern style of football play and tactics, as well as a total rebranding of the national team as Die Mannschaft.

The year 2006 may well have been the pinnacle of football as a paradigmatic form of entertainment in Germany for what Gunter Gebauer calls a *Gesellschaft des Spektakels* (society of the spectacle), a reference to Guy Debord's *Société du spectacle* (society of the spectacle). Gebauer approaches football, and sports in general, as fully intertwined with other forms of cultural aesthetics such as music, fashion, and art. Indeed, the zeitgeist of German football is utterly apparent in music like Beckenbauer's infamous song "Gute Freunde kann niemand trennen" (No one can separate good friends) from 1966, and "Fußball ist unser Leben" (Football is our life), which accompanied the West German team in the 1974 World Cup and was sung solely by the players themselves. Songs also reflect political leanings or naivety, the latter as evidenced by Udo Jürgens' "Buenos Dias Argentina" (Good day, Argentina) from 1978, which features the national team as background singers and highlights a painful moment of ignorance toward the political cruelty of the Argentinian dictatorship, with whom many governments, including Germany, secretly collaborated to fight communism and left-wing radicalism in the world. On the other hand, *Schlager* (pop) singer Peter Alexander perfectly embodied the conservative mindset that was prominent in West Germany under Chancellor Helmut Kohl and feigned

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multilingualism with "Mexico mi amor" (Mexico, my love) in 1986, long before Germany truly began to embrace diversity. The trend continues in 2006, when Xavier Naidoo's motivational and feelgood song "Dieser Weg" (This path) became the unofficial tournament anthem, accompanying the German team from the locker room to the bus to the field, and likewise becoming a huge hit in Germany. Naidoo, born in Germany to South African parents, added to the positive image promoted at the time that Germany was a new, open, modern, and diverse society. The fact that Naidoo is known today more for spreading right-wing conspiracy theories during the Covid-19 pandemic and widely shunned speaks to the fact that public discourses on issues such as nation, migration, democracy, solidarity, and unity among an ever-increasingly diverse population have significantly changed in Germany since 2006.

Debates about German identity and footballers with a migrant background, however, were never far from the surface. The recent decline of the German national team, and the roughly parallel rise of the anti-immigrant group Alternative für Deutschland (AfD; Alternative for Germany), have upset the "happy nationalist" narrative that led up to the 2014 World Cup victory. The once beloved faces of Germany's multicultural team became the scapegoats for failure. Mesut Özil, once the face of diversity for German football, fell particularly hard: When he retired from international football after Germany's first-round exit in the 2018 World Cup in Russia, Özil alleged that racial discrimination in the DFB had left him feeling unwanted: "I used to wear the German shirt with such pride and excitement, but now I don't."[19] Two years earlier, the AfD politician Alexander Gauland said of Jérôme Boateng, "People like him as a football player. But they don't want to have a Boateng as their neighbor."[20] Though Gauland's comment was widely criticized, including by members of his right-wing populist party, it suggested that, among a growing minority of the population, older perceptions of German national identity—that is, those based on race rather than citizenship—still hold traction.

As this historical overview suggests, football's place in the German nation has not always been secure. Our understanding of Germany as a football nation must, then, be a fluid one, and must be conditioned by four factors that complicate the popular narrative. It is first worth emphasizing that the history of the German football nation is a classic game of two halves. For the first half of the twentieth century, Germany was not the football superpower that we know today. If one were to consider a successful German-speaking football nation before World War II—that is to say, one that had global influence on playing styles and football culture—it would more likely have been Austria rather than Germany. The German national team did defeat Austria to finish third at the 1934 World Cup in Italy, but it lost embarrassingly at the 1936 Berlin Olympics to Norway, the only time that Hitler ever attended a game. With the annexed Austrian team unhappily in tow following the *Anschluß* (Annexation

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of Austria), it then lost equally embarrassingly to Switzerland in the first round of the 1938 World Cup in France. Many involved in football leagues throughout Europe, like Rapid Vienna's Hans Pesser, subsequently dismissed the militaristically regimented "strength-through-kicking football" of the German team coached by Otto Nerz.[21]

Germany's rise to stardom out of the middle ranks of European football began only after West Germany's unexpected 1954 victory in Bern under Nerz's successor Sepp Herberger. Shortly thereafter in 1963, the DFB introduced a professional league, the Bundesliga, in West Germany, the last major football nation to do so. By the 1970s West German football had entered its golden age. FC Bayern Munich, promoted to the Bundesliga only in 1965, won the continent's premier competition, the European Cup, three years in succession (1974–76). West Germany, coached by Helmut Schön, won the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) European championship in 1972 in Belgium and the World Cup held on their home soil in 1974. Despite the occasional blip, Germany has dined at world football's top table ever since. European champions in 1980 and 1996 and world champions in 1990 and 2014, the national team has been a perennial contender for major honors. The Bundesliga, meanwhile, enjoys a reputation as the most fan-friendly, cheapest, and authentic of the big five European leagues (compared to those in England, France, Italy, and Spain). Its leading teams, notably FC Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund, are among the world's wealthiest and most successful clubs. From humble beginnings in Leipzig in 1900, the DFB—home in 2020 to almost twenty-five thousand clubs and 7.2 million members[22]—is today the largest sports association in the world.

German football history is not only a story of two halves: it is also a story that can be told from multiple national perspectives. In the 1920s and 1930s, Vienna, not Berlin or Munich, was the center of the German-speaking football world. It was Austria's *Wunderteam* (wonder team) that won international plaudits for its elegant short passing style (coined the Danubian whirl) rather than the more leaden play of the Germans. Football was no less popular in Germany than it was in Austria. It was arguably nationalized with greater success in first the Weimar Republic and then the Third Reich than in Austria, where the game's mass appeal was disproportionately concentrated on Vienna. But it was only after the 1954 World Cup, where Germany thrashed Austria 6–1 en route to securing the title ("the most devastating defeat since Königgratz," lamented one Austrian football writer[23]) that Austria took a backseat to its larger neighbor and adopted the underdog role. By this time, there was no longer a single German nation, whether greater or otherwise. When the European football association, UEFA, was founded just before the tournament in Switzerland in 1954, it featured—in addition to the Austrian and Swiss federations—three associations that represented post–World War II Germany.

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The DFB, tainted by Nazism and disbanded in 1945, was re-founded in 1950 to lead football in the newly formed Federal Republic of Germany. From 1950 to 1956, the French-occupied Saarland was run by a separate organization, the Saarländischer Fußball Bund (SFB; Saarland Football Association). On the eastern side of the Iron Curtain, the communist Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR or GDR; German Democratic Republic) was represented in UEFA conference rooms and executive committees by the Deutscher Fußball-Verband der DDR (DFV; East German Football Association), as the country's football federation was officially called from 1958.

The postwar history of football in Germany is often synonymous with the history of football in West Germany, leaving football of the DDR by the wayside. This is in part because of the international success of West German football and in part because sport in East Germany was primarily associated with the country's Olympic "medal machine." But football was the GDR's number one sport and, contrary to stereotypes, East German football was far from terrible. It enjoyed a golden age of its own in the 1970s, beginning with a victory over West Germany in the 1972 Olympic games and attaining its peak in the *annus mirabilis* of 1974. FC Magdeburg, whose entire line-up was born within thirty kilometers of the club's Ernst Grube Stadium, defeated Italian heavyweight Associazione Calcio Milan (AC Milan; Milan Football Association) to win the European Cup Winners' Cup in May. Only a month later, the DDR-Auswahl (players selected to the GDR national team) defeated the heavily favored, and eventual champions, West Germany at the World Cup in the BRD. The "us vs. us" clash in Hamburg revealed the complexity of footballing nationalism, particularly in East Germany. Many GDR citizens took pride in giving their louder and larger neighbors "a bloody nose" in the group stage but happily supported West Germany in the final against the Netherlands.[24]

The German unification that began with the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 was meant to resolve split identities and usher in a new era of football dominance. After West Germany won Italia 1990, the team coach Franz Beckenbauer declared with characteristic confidence, "I'm sorry for the other countries, but now that we will be able to incorporate all the great players from the East, the German team will be unbeatable for a long time to come."[25] But national unity would prove no smoother in football than in other areas of post-*Wende* society.[26] Though a united German team won the 1996 European championship, the squad included a mere three former GDR players. Only one of the three, the Borussia Dortmund star Matthias Sammer, played the entire tournament and was subsequently voted player of the tournament. The power imbalance between East and West only furthered the notion that East German football had been swallowed up by the DFB. Only two former GDR Oberliga (GDR first league)-clubs qualified for the 1991–92 Bundesliga. With

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odd exceptions, notably Hansa Rostock, Energie Cottbus, and Union Berlin, few have spent much time in the top division since. Many of the GDR's best teams went bankrupt or fell down the football pyramid into semiprofessional anonymity. Author Frank Willmann declared *Ostfußball* (football in East Germany) dead in 2009.[27] The post-unification German football nation retains a distinctly Western bias.

The *Mauer im Kopf* (wall in the head) in contemporary football is part of a wider history that continues to make sportive nationalism, despite the patriotic glee of 2006 and 2014, a uniquely sensitive topic in Germany. Supporters of East Germany's most successful, and most unpopular, club, Berliner FC Dynamo (BFC) challenged the post-*Wende* narrative of integration from both sides. At the club's home ground, GDR flags and banners that honored the club's former president, *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit* (Ministry for State Security, or Stasi) boss Erich Mielke, were displayed by a dwindling fan base with a reputation for far-right views and behavior, including an attack on an asylum shelter in Greifswald in 1991. While the media mainly focused on the links between neo-Nazism and football hooliganism in the five states of the former GDR, the connections also existed, albeit unilluminated, in the former West Germany. Even at organizations such as Borussia Dortmund, where many Ultras rejected the club's neo-Nazi following, a minority continued to oppose Germany's turn toward multiculturalism and football's antiracist and antifascist initiatives. There was always the fear that, as a Swiss newspaper cautioned after Germany's semifinal defeat to Italy in 2006, Germany's new, celebratory, and inclusive nationalism "gradually reveals another face."[28] While many scholars either welcomed or downplayed the patriotic resurgence that bloomed in 2006, others remained skeptical. The social psychologist, Dagmar Schediwy, for example, did not view the "new patriotism" in relaxed terms, but as an alarming development "precisely in view of German history."[29] For all of late-modern Germany's progress toward more acceptable or normal forms of sportive nationalism, the German football nation—as Mesut Özil might attest—remains a work in progress.

It is worth iterating that, for all of the agonizing debates about sportive nationalism, the story of the German football nation is rich in international influences. British expatriate colonies in such cities as Dresden, Karlsruhe, and Stuttgart first brought football (and rugby) to Germany in the 1860s and 1870s. Though the kicking game was, to some degree, Germanized by the early twentieth century, the British influence remained significant, in everything from club names to coaching. It was only after World War I that the German game came into its own as a mass participatory and spectator sport. Despite the DFB's apparent conservatism—it announced in 1925 a boycott of countries including Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary where professional football existed—outside influences remained strong. The coach who introduced the

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short-passing spinning top style of play to Germany's most successful inter-war club, Schalke 04, was an Austrian, Gustav Wieser. The national team coach from 1926 to 1936, Otto Nerz, sought advice from Europe's leading coaches and based German tactics at the 1934 World Cup on Arsenal's innovative WM formation. Aside from Nerz, an antisemite, who acquiesced to the Nazi takeover of football, the key figures in the Weimar era did not conform to conservative or racialized ideas of German nationhood. The founder of what became Germany's leading football magazine, *kicker*, was a Swiss-educated German Jew, Walther Bensemann. Germany's leading sports journalist was an Austrian Jew, Willy Meisl, brother of Hugo, the coach of Austria's *Wunderteam*.

On both sides of the Iron Curtain, postwar German football developed a reputation for insularity that was not wholly undeserved. In West Germany the DFB opposed full-blown professionalism until the introduction of the Bundesliga in 1963. The GDR Oberliga was one of the world's most closeted leagues. But neither half of the German football nation was shut off from the world entirely. Though overseas players were banned from the GDR's top division, two of the national team's earliest coaches were Hungarians. The DFV constantly sought administrative and coaching contacts with the outside world, both communist and capitalist. In West Germany, by the 1970s overseas players and coaches were common sights. Two of the key coaches in Bayern Munich's rise to the top of German football were Croats: Zlatko Čajkovski (1963–68) and Branko Zebec (1968–70). Between 1972 and 1992, the Croatian club Hajduk Split alone exported twelve players to the Bundesliga.[30]

As happened in other leading football nations, German football became increasingly cosmopolitan from the 1990s onward. This was in part for external reasons: the 1995 Bosman Ruling, which allowed the free movement of European Union (EU) footballers once their contracts had expired; a sharp increase in the migration of footballers from the global South, especially from Africa; and the intense commercialization of the world game, driven above all by expanded television coverage. Internal factors also played their part. Following Germany's embarrassing early exit from the 2000 European championship, the DFB looked to France—who won the 1998 World Cup with a multiethnic team—for inspiration in reconfiguring the country's youth football structures. Reform to the German nationality law in 1999, meanwhile, moved the country away from the principle of *jus sanguinis*, making it easier for children born in Germany to immigrant families to claim citizenship—and to play football for Germany.[31]

Germany's national team had always featured players with foreign backgrounds, from Camillo Ugi (the son of an Italian and Germany's most capped footballer before World War I) to post-1945 players such as Jürgen Grabowski (1966–74) and Pierre Littbarski (1981–90), both of whom had Polish family roots. The difference after 2000, though, was twofold. The German national

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team, in simple terms, began to *look* different, as second- and third-generation immigrants made their mark. Though the first black player, Erwin Kostedde, made his appearance for the national team against Malta in 1974, it was only in the twenty-first century that black players—Gerald Asamoah (born in Ghana), David Odonkor and Jérôme Boateng (born in Germany to Ghanaian fathers), Leroy Sané (son of Senegalese star and Bundesliga stalwart Souleymane Sané), and Antonio Rüdiger (whose mother was born in Sierra Leone)—featured regularly in national team selections. Not only did the German team look different, but the difference was also acknowledged and even celebrated, becoming a central part of the narratives around stars of the national team. People knew that Miroslav Klose, Germany's record goal scorer, and the popular Lukas Podolski were born in Poland, or that Sami Khedira, a mainstay of the midfield for more than a decade, was born in Stuttgart to a Tunisian mother and German father.

The increased diversity of the national team perfectly reflected the more open-minded and multicultural image of Germany that both the DFB and the governments of Chancellors Schröder and Merkel sought to project. It also complemented the increasing internationalism and diversity of the Bundesliga. Beginning in the 2006–7 season, the DFB and the Deutsche Fußball Liga (DFL; German Professional League) lifted all restrictions on foreign (i.e., non-EU) players. By the 2009–10 season, 45 percent of all players in Germany's top division were non-Germans. Figures compiled by the Football Observatory in 2020 show that the top ten exporting countries brought a total of 168 players to the Bundesliga. France led the way with thirty-six players, followed by Austria with thirty-one, the Netherlands with twenty-three, and Switzerland with nineteen. Four countries, including Brazil and Spain, had eleven players on the books at Bundesliga clubs.[32] German players, in return, looked abroad in larger numbers. In 2021, according to the Football Observatory, there were 442 expatriate German footballers playing in fifty-eight countries worldwide.[33] German stars played for the world's richest clubs in the world's richest leagues: Toni Kroos, for example, at Real Madrid; or Antonio Rüdiger, Timo Werner, and Kai Havertz, who all played for the 2021 Champions League's winners, Chelsea FC. The story of the German football nation is thus inextricably linked to football's ever-shifting transnational flows and ever-expanding paths of international exchange.

The push toward a multicultural and multinational football community in Germany, as well as the changing dynamic of heritage among national players, has led to subsequent campaigns of open-mindedness and cultural diversity, which explicitly reject racism and xenophobia. These campaigns, however well-intended, have often been prescripted and orchestrated by organizations like the DFB (#WeRemember, "#Never again"), the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA; International Federation of Association Foot-

Football Nation
The Playing Fields of German Culture, History, and Society
Edited by Rebeccah Dawson, Bastian Heinsohn, Oliver Knabe, and Alan McDougall
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ball) ("Stop Racism. Stop Violence"), and the UEFA ("No to racism"). Ultimately, such movements run the risk of turning athletes into PR mouthpieces, while calls for equality and social justice are transformed into publicity stunts. Yet, alongside the diversification of the German national team, some players like goalkeeper and captain Manuel Neuer believe a shift in political agency *among players* is in progress, as issues related to minority populations, such as the Black Lives Matter movement, have recently assumed a dominant discourse in the locker room. In 2021, during the UEFA Euro 2020 tournament,[34] the German team, after deliberations among the players, decided to take a knee together with their English opponents before the round of sixteen match, a gesture not uncommon in the Bundesliga since 2018. Captain Manuel Neuer, who had previously argued against former teammate Özil in his own race debate, stated after the England game that a sociopolitical conscience within the national team has started to emerge. "In the past, we often did not take a political stance and instead, as it has always been, we followed directives. Now, each individual player has—also thanks to social media—more leverage to make a change. This has been developing for the past few years. We want to put a face to the national team and show people that there are important issues beyond football that we want to point out and that we support."[35] That the captain and one of the most recognizable players of the national team has voiced the intent to use their popularity for good signifies a symbolic transfer of power from football institutions to the players themselves.

This sociopolitical consciousness is also mirrored in debates surrounding another social justice cause, which gained wide attention through Die Mannschaft in the 2020 European Championship: the struggle for equality for members of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer plus (LGBTQ+) communities. By wearing the rainbow flag as his captain's armband, Neuer fueled ongoing debates about politics in football stadiums but also triggered an outpouring of public support in a nation that has yet to see the coming-out of an active player in any men's professional league. The game against Hungary in particular, a country that had just days earlier passed an anti-LGBTQ+ bill under Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, turned into a stage where progressive democratic ideals clashed with authoritarian conservatism. This historic fixture, associated predominantly with the 1954 World Cup final and its resulting, mythical founding of the Federal Republic, has now been charged further with the ideological fight for equality, human rights, and tolerance. While UEFA tried to uphold the myth of the game as a politically free zone by banning Munich from illuminating the match venue in rainbow colors, there were nationwide demonstrations of solidarity in the streets and across social media platforms. Even the conservative political party Christian Social Union (CSU) whose members had voted overwhelmingly against marriage equality legislation in 2017, proclaimed solidarity via Twitter by sharing a picture of its party chairman

Football Nation
The Playing Fields of German Culture, History, and Society
Edited by Rebeccah Dawson, Bastian Heinsohn, Oliver Knabe, and Alan McDougall
https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/DawsonFootball
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and general secretary with rainbow-colored Covid masks inside the arena right before kick-off.[36] Similarly, then-chancellor Angela Merkel, who had also voted against same-sex-marriage in 2017, went public with her criticism of Orbán's week-old bill just in time for the match to begin.

As Germany's football players discover the political potential of their bodies and the long reach of their messages, critical questions about the ultimate impact of such gestures and public campaigns remain. Will they be temporary phenomena, or can they extend to other social justice debates, such as equal rights for women and disability communities? Only time will tell if they can contribute to shifting sociopolitical discourses and achieve permanent changes or if they turn out to be solely performative moralism. What these moments of politicized football can provide us with today, however, are insights into the nation's self-perception and its vision for the future: How does Germany imagine itself as a community?[37] Or, to use Manuel Neuer's words, what should the face of the team look like that represents the German nation? It will be fascinating to see how the developing diversification and multinational platforms play into the progression of the German football nation away from the past and into the future.

Football Nation brings together an international and interdisciplinary group of scholars to discuss how German football shapes, and is shaped by, German culture, history, and society. Part I of the book examines the tensions and convergences between nationalizing tendencies and international cultural exchange in the history of German football. It begins with Thomas Adam's chapter (chapter 1) on the contested origins of football in the education system in Braunschweig, where Konrad Koch introduced the English game as an outdoor activity that would develop initiative and teamwork among his pupils. Subsequently, Adam shows how, from the very beginning, the German football nation was divided in two, between the conservative football movement tied to the *Turnen* and the socialist football movement linked to the powerful SPD. It was not until the Nazis came to power in 1933 that a single German football *Volksgemeinschaft* (people's community) came into existence through a combination of repression and acquiescence. In the second chapter in this section, Alan McDougall (chapter 2) provides a revisionist history of East German football. Frequently dismissed as insular and unsuccessful, GDR football, McDougall argues, was in fact far more international, and somewhat more successful, than popular accounts dictate. Ultimately, however, McDougall reveals the insecurities that defined the socialist state and limited the GDR's impact on the international stage. Finally, Stephan Schindler's chapter (chapter 3) ushers the discussion about the German football nation into the twenty-first century. He examines the contradictions between local (fan) interests and transnational (player) identities in postindustrial German football, a process of "glocalization" that requires constant negotiations between local, national, and global identities.

Football Nation
The Playing Fields of German Culture, History, and Society
Edited by Rebeccah Dawson, Bastian Heinsohn, Oliver Knabe, and Alan McDougall
https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/DawsonFootball
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Part II of *Football Nation* uses race, exclusion, and otherness to examine cultural representations of football in identity formation, from theater in the Weimar Republic, via a memoir from post-*Wende* eastern Germany, to discourses on racism in the twenty-first century. It begins with Kay Schiller's chapter (chapter 4), which progresses into Weimar Germany, where the Austrian Jew Willy Meisl forged a career as a star sports journalist. Highlighting the centrality of sports journalism to mass culture, Schiller illustrates the overlapping identities (Austrian patriot, Zionist, anti-Nazi, and liberal internationalist) that shaped Meisl's writing and, consequently, his understanding of the Austrian and German football nations. Rebeccah Dawson's (chapter 5) study of *Fußballspieler und Indianer*, a 1924 drama by Dada playwright Melchior Vischer, continues the discussion of culture during the Weimar era. Vischer's play, Dawson argues, shows football as both a window into corrupt, modernist athletic society and as a possible (albeit difficult) means of returning to a primal, precapitalist order. A disillusioned sense of identity is also central to the section's final chapter by Kate Zambon (chapter 6). It examines how Mesut Özil's announcement of his retirement from international football in 2018—in an explosive series of Twitter posts written in English—disrupted national narratives of integration in German football and opened discussion on the struggle that athletes of color face in the public sphere.

Turning the reader's attention to two iconic events in German football history, Friederike Emonds (chapter 7) begins Part III by examining the social construction of the masculinity myth via the 1954 Miracle of Bern and the 2006 *Sommermärchen*, two seminal World Cup moments that reveal how deeply male social values are inscribed on German football discourses. Kaleigh Bangor's chapter (chapter 8) shifts the ground from West to East and from men to women in her reading of Joachim Hasler's 1972 football musical, *Don't Cheat, Darling!* A commercial production from DEFA, the East German state film studio, the film, Bangor argues, exemplifies René Girard's concept of the double bind. Her reading demonstrates how the film both supports and objectifies women footballers, a contradiction that undermines any progressive messages about gender equity. The section's penultimate chapter continues the East German theme, with the focus moving to the post-*Wende* landscapes of the football stadium in Oliver Knabe's analysis (chapter 9) of Andreas Gläser's 2002 memoir, *Der BFC war schuld am Mauerbau* [BFC is to blame for the wall]. Knabe's reading of the stadium as a multilayered metaphor for lost or reduced East German identities speaks powerfully to those on the losing end of Germany's (football) unification.

The fourth and final part of *Football Nation* focuses on fandom and spectators, ranging across the disciplines of film studies, sociology, and philosophy. It kicks off with Bastian Heinsohn's chapter (chapter 10) on two early German football films, Zoltan Korda's *Die elf Teufel* (1927) and Robert Stemmle's *Das*

Football Nation
The Playing Fields of German Culture, History, and Society
Edited by Rebeccah Dawson, Bastian Heinsohn, Oliver Knabe, and Alan McDougall
https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/DawsonFootball
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große Spiel [*The Big Game*] (1942). Heinsohn's comparative analysis shows how *Die elf Teufel* served an educational purpose for cinema audiences that foreshadowed the militarized emphasis on the heroic collective in Stemmle's later blockbuster film, which featured the German national team coach, Sepp Herberger. Jumping to a more contemporary topic, Pavel Brunssen (chapter 11) next analyzes structural anti-Semitism in the widespread campaigns among German fans against the unpopular Bundesliga club RasenBallsport Leipzig (RB Leipzig). Looking at another strand of fan activism, Fabian Fritz (chapter 12) examines the interactions between football supporters and social workers in Hamburg's two major clubs, Hamburger Sport-Verein (Hamburger SV; Hamburg Sports Club) and FC St. Pauli. Part IV next presents Alex Holznienkemper's reflection (chapter 13) on football's aesthetic appeal to supporters. It shows how contingency and unpredictability shape fans' participation in football via an idea central to late-modern sentiments of German spectatorship and the late-modern distinctiveness of the German football nation. *Mitbestimmung* (codetermination) gives fans the right to participate in, as well as influence, football policies and discourses in ways that were not always possible in earlier periods of German history—and are not always possible elsewhere in the contemporary football world.

The volume concludes with Timm Beichelt's reflections (conclusion) on the meaning of football in contemporary Germany. In it, Beichelt introduces how a variety of factors—from the declining importance of church, family, and work to the increased acceptance of emotional display in public life—have combined to give football a unique cultural position in late-modern Germany, a cultural position that has been both challenged and reinforced by the Covid-19 pandemic.

This collection, then, offers insight into how manifold academic disciplines approach and understand the complexities of football culture and football history, revealing how and why Germany has developed into the football nation known worldwide today.

Authors

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Football Nation
The Playing Fields of German Culture, History, and Society
Edited by Rebeccah Dawson, Bastian Heinsohn, Oliver Knabe, and Alan McDougall
https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/DawsonFootball
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Oliver Knabe is lecturer of German at the University of Dayton. Dr. Knabe specializes in twentieth- and twenty-first-century German literature and cinema, with a particular focus on politics and social justice. He teaches courses on both international and German football in English and German to undergraduates. He is the organizer of two consecutive football events at the German Studies Association convention (2018 and 2019) and is currently investigating East German football stadiums and their portrayal in German film and literature. His ongoing book project focuses on the game of football as a realm for social (in)justice.

Alan McDougall is professor of history at the University of Guelph (Canada). Dr. McDougall is the author of *The People's Game: Football, State and Society in East Germany* (Cambridge University Press, 2014) and *Contested Fields: A Global History of Modern Football* (University of Toronto Press, 2020).

Notes

1. Planck, *Fußlümmelei*, 19.
2. Quoted in Schiller, "Siegen für Deutschland?," 181.
3. Kurbjuweit et al., "Deutschland, ein Sommermärchen."
4. Quoted in Havemann, *Fußball unterm Hakenkreuz*, 32.
5. Ibid., 34.
6. Hesse-Lichtenberger, *Tor!*, 23.
7. Havemann, *Fußball unterm Hakenkreuz*, 36, 62.
8. Herzog, "Win Globally—Party Locally," 127–29.

Football Nation
The Playing Fields of German Culture, History, and Society
Edited by Rebeccah Dawson, Bastian Heinsohn, Oliver Knabe, and Alan McDougall
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9. See Kolbe, *Der BVB in der NS-Zeit*; Gizler,*"Es ist für's Vaterland"*; Herzog, *Der "Betze"* ; Löffelmeier, *Die "Löwen."*
10. Herzog, "FC Bayern Munich," 131–52.
11. A 2004 claim in the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, quoted in Brüggemeier, "Das Wunder von Bern," 189.
12. Grass, *My Century*, 192.
13. Oswald, "Das Wunder von Bern,'" 88–101.
14. Quoted in Schiller, *WM 74*, 188.
15. Quoted in Moore, *What You Think*, 117.
16. Quoted in Schiller, "'Siegen für Deutschland?,'" 191.
17. Kurbjuweit et al., "Deutschland, ein Sommermärchen."
18. Eisenberg, "Deutschland," 94–129.
19. In addition to Kate Zambon's essay in this volume, see van Campenhout and van Houtum, "'I Am German When We Win."
20. Oltermann, "German Rightwing."
21. Quoted in Hesse-Lichtenberger, *Tor!*, 70.
22. "Mitglieder-Statistik 2020."
23. Horak, "Germany vs. Austria," 30.
24. On East German responses to the 1974 World Cup, see Schiller, *WM 74*, 134–43; and McDougall, *The People's Game*, 85–92.
25. Quoted in Hesse, "Celebrating Germany's Improbable Run."
26. The term *Wende* is used to describe the period of political change in the time proceeding and immediately following the reunification of East and West Germany.
27. Quoted in Raack, "Was hat euch bloß so ruiniert?," 21.
28. Raithel, "The German Nation," 366.
29. Raithel, "The German Nation," 367.
30. Lanfranchi and Taylor, *Moving with the Ball*, 121–22.
31. Schiller, "'Siegen für Deutschland?,'" 188.
32. CIES Football Observatory, "Football's Major Migratory Routes Revealed."
33. Association of Origin of Expatriate Players, "Atlas of Migration."
34. The European Championship was initially scheduled for 2020 but was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic by one year. Despite this delay, the UEFA kept the initial name of the tournament.
35. Hartmann, "Neuer über das Niederknien."
36. Blume, "Gemeinsam Haltung."
37. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

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Football Nation
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Football Nation
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