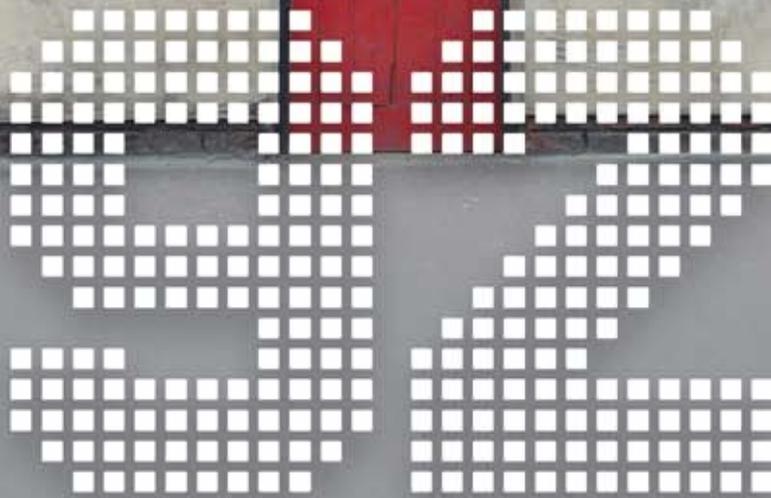


FLORIAN SAUER

HOME SUPPORTERS ONLY
ADMITTED TO THIS AREA
OF THE GROUND



English sample translation

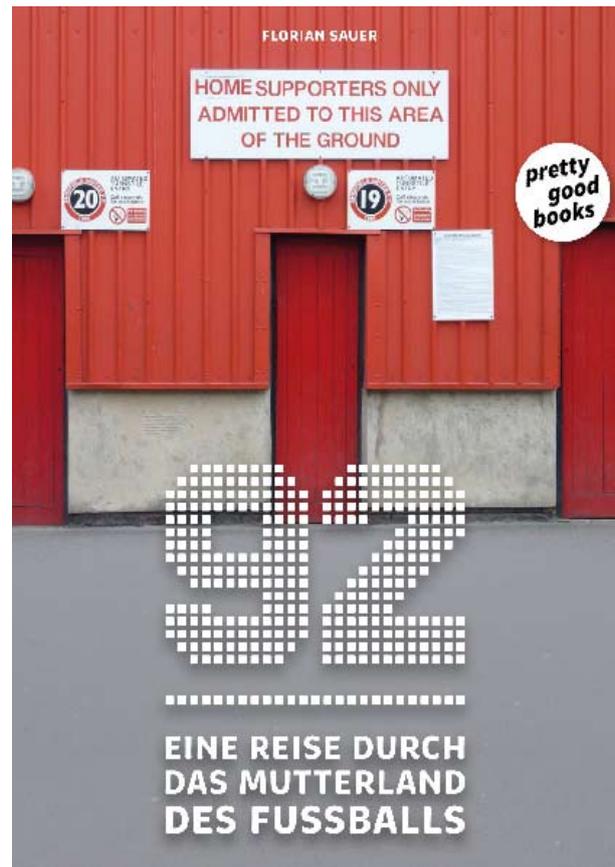


EINE REISE DURCH
DAS MUTTERLAND
DES FUSSBALLS

pretty
good
books

A journey through the motherland of football

- first and only German-language title about the „92 Club“ (published in 2017)
- many additional information, statistics and photographs (taken by the author: no additional royalties apply)
- website www.92club.de features bonus material
- book reviews published by 11FREUNDE, ballesterer ...
- enticing the reader to plan the first or the next journey to England



„92 - a journey through the motherland of football“ by Florian Sauer. 22 Euro (D) / 22.60 Euro (AT) / 22 CHF, 540 pages, numerous (>100) photographs, general map
ISBN 978-3-945942-03-1

Anfield, Old Trafford, Stamford Bridge. Every football fan is familiar with the names of England's well known football grounds. However, the motherland of football has more to offer. 92 clubs compete in four divisions of professional football. And the grounds are as diverse as the clubs themselves. Every ground has its very own flair, every club has its own unique story.

Everyone who managed to visit a match in all 92 grounds is entitled to become a member of the famous „92 Club“ (existing since the 1970s), which brings avid football fans together who have travelled the motherland of football in its entirety. This book invites its readers to join Florian Sauer on his way to the „92 Club“ and his journey through the English stadiums. In 92 entertaining and lively written chapters, a deep insight into English football and its special attraction is given. Of interest for veterans of British football travels, as well as for England novices, many interesting stories around the clubs and the stadiums can be found in the book, enticing the reader to plan the next tour to the motherland of football.

Florian Sauer was born 1979 in Aschaffenburg. Beside the passion for the beautiful game in general and the FC Bayern Munich in particular, English football has appealed to him ever since. Since 2007 he runs the website www.fussballinlondon.de, since 2014 he is a member of the „92 Club“. Sauer lives and works in Vienna, Austria.

This is Anfield

03.03.2009, Anfield, Premier League

Liverpool FC – AFC Sunderland, 2:0, att. 41 500

The climax of the necessarily extended tour was scheduled for Tuesday night – a real queen stage on the way through the football grounds of England: Anfield.

The tension all around the visit of this match already started a few weeks earlier. After it was clear that the match fitted into the new tour schedule, I tried to sort the ticket situation. Fortunately, the match (probably on account of the midweek matchday and the relatively unattractive opponent AFC Sunderland) went to general sale. I spent what felt like an eternity on the completely overloaded ticket website and in the waiting loop of the undermanned ticket hotline. However, at the end of the day I got hold of a ticket and was looking forward to the match in Liverpool. Too stingy for another night at the hotel, I booked a bed in a hostel dorm in the city centre of Manchester. I deposited my junk there and set off to Liverpool by train – by the way the oldest passenger train connection of the world (dates back to 1830). For me it was the second visit within four days to the „Scousers“ as the people of Liverpool are called affectionately and also call themselves with pride, probably derived from the popular sailor’s dish Lobsouse.

Liverpool FC is regarded as one of, if not even the most famous English football club - a synonym for and epitome of English football. This first and foremost goes back to the success of the club. In club history the „Reds“, as the team is also called on account of the red jerseys, accumulated more than 40 titles, thereof eight European cup victories and 18 League titles. Until being surpassed by archrival Manchester United in 2011, Liverpool was English record champion, although the last League title dates back more than 25 years by now.

The first title dates all the way back to the season 1900/01, remarkably less than ten years after the foundation of the club. In today’s football world, this would be looked at probably rather critically by many fans. After the owner of Anfield, the businessman and later mayor John Houlding had fallen out with Everton FC in 1892 which resulted in their move to Goodison Park, he founded a new club for the pure reasons that his stadium did not remain unused. He was however not allowed to „keep“ the name Everton FC, therefore a generic name was chosen for the new club: Liverpool FC. At that time, creative naming

such as „lawn ball sport“ [a hint at RB Leipzig] was not necessary. However, the overall process strongly reminds of examples from our times. It goes to show that these outgrowths are only partly phenomenons of so called „modern football“ and that the dust settles on such things after a few decades.

The most successful years of the „Reds“ were the late 70s and early 80s. When the legendary Bill Shankly stepped down in 1974 after fifteen years as a Liverpool manager in which he had led the team from the second division to the top flight of English football, he handed over a promising base for further success. Between 1976 and 1986 the club went on to win eight League titles and five European cups.

The European dominance found a tragic end with the European champion’s cup final in 1985 in Brussels, generally known as the „Heysel Disaster“: After riots in the stadium before kick-off mainly provoked by Liverpool fans, 39 spectators died in a mass panic and nearly 500 more were injured. The final against Juventus almost became irrelevant, Liverpool lost 0:1 and was subsequently (like all English clubs) excluded from the European cup competitions for a number of years. A small commemorative plaque at Anfield still reminds of the disaster. However, the bigger memorial was established for the victims of the Hillsborough disaster of Sheffield, the mass panic in the Liverpool section during the 1989 FA-Cup-semi-final during which 96 supporters of the „Reds“ lost their lives. I went to the Hillsborough memorial for a short visit of course. Till this day the stone memorial (on which the names of all victims and their date of birth are engraved in golden font) are surrounded and covered by numerous flowers and fan scarfs, many of other, partly international clubs, in sympathy for the victims. An everlasting light burns and has even found its way into the official club crest: Two torches were inserted in recollection of the victims of Hillsborough. The memorial is located directly next to the Shankly Gates, probably one of the most iconic places of English stadium culture, which is also part of the club crest. The writing „You’ll never walk alone“ as well as the art-hammered decoration can be found on the club crest, as well as on the gate at the stadium area entrance. Hence, the gate with the iconic saying is often to be seen in pictures or television broadcasts if an outside view of Anfield is shown.

The Shankly Gates lead to the area behind the main stand where my seat was located. I had consciously picked a seat rather close to the goal to have the best view of the most legendary stand of the ground, the „Kop“, the stand of the most fanatic Liverpool supporters and the cradle of football chanting. The

name „Kop“ is derived from a hill in South Africa. The spy Kop is well-known by many Britons from the Buer War (1899-1902) and the battle around this very mountain. This probably goes back to the fact that the standing terraces of the early years did not have much in common with the modern stands but were more or less elevations of earthwork – hence the analogy to the mound in South Africa. The stand changed of course with the years and was altered and developed. In its heydays it held 30.000 spectators but had to be converted to an all-seater stand as a result of the Hillsborough disaster and the Taylor-report. It still accommodates 12.000 spectators today and is one-tiered only. The two-tiered Centenary stand on the long pitch side as well as the smaller, also two-tiered Anfield Road stand behind the goal are completing the ground. A quite well-known landmark of the ground is not visible from the seats of any stand: the „This is Anfield“ sign in the player’s tunnel which was installed by manager Bill Shankly to unmistakably make clear to the opposing team what to expect the next 90 minutes.

Though the Premier League match against Sunderland was not the first choice from the football menu, I still expected a solid and respectable match. However, the Anfield factor was curtailed a little bit: The

fact that the game went to general sale led to a high percentage of Asians in the stands around me – the downside of international television marketing. A club which over decades defines itself via the cohesion of the working class town Liverpool and whose hymn „You’ll never walk alone“ is then joined in by singing Japanese pre-kick off ... This is probably an image to get used to. However, the atmosphere suffers extremely and mainly stays alive due to the stadium itself. And even this got endangered meanwhile. The capacity of the ground is not gigantic. Anfield features roughly 45.000 seats – not enough to keep up with the rivals in terms of gate revenue. However the extension options have always been limited. The ground is located in a pure residential area, with local residents next to the stadium. It has been considered to build a new stadium at nearby Stanley Park, particularly after the club was taken over in 2010 by new owners from the States, the Fenway Sports Group. It is probably a lucky coincidence that the US company owns besides Liverpool FC the renowned baseball team Boston Red Sox playing in the venerable Fenway Park and therefore faces the exact same challenge: In both cases the stadium is an essential part of the identity of the clubs and their fans. Luckily the plan to build a new stadium was rejected quickly. Meanwhile



the main stand was expanded and thus the capacity raised to 60.000 seats. It would have been a pity if this flagship of English football culture had disappeared. Then, finally, after the intonation of „You’ll never walk alone“ it was football time. I had one eye on the pitch where, nevertheless, some well known names could be seen in the Liverpool jersey – to all at the head skipper Steven Gerrard – but also two players who later transferred to FC Bayern Munich: Xabi Alonso and Pepe Reina. Latter prevented the sure lead of Sunderland but the visiting side could not capitalize on a one-to-one-situation after just five minutes. No goals in the first half, however, the match was rather entertaining with many situations in the box and promising finishes. My other eye was directed primarily at the Kop, which unfortunately stayed behind the expectations. Though there were a few block banners at the beginning, the support developed rather moderately during the game. There was nothing special, not the shine of the most legendary terrace of the past days. The mood changed for the better in the second half, catalysed by the developments on the pitch: A few minutes after the second half whistle Liverpool scored the opening goal and drove the match home in the 60th minute, to a 2:0 final score.

Whether I would see the final whistle, was not quite clear at first. I had a very ambitious and sporty job ahead of me: 20 minutes after the official end time, the train from Sandhills station was due to depart in the direction of the city centre. I had to catch this one as it was the last reasonable connection back to Man-

chester. Walking distance: 2 kilometres, so quite feasible, however the injury time was not included yet. This then indeed stretched and stretched like chewing gum, and, all in all, with the final whistle I had only 12 minutes left to get to Sandhills.

No time for complaining, I jogged bravely past the main stand, Kop and Bill Shankly statue and managed to arrive at the platform just in time for the planned departure of the train – which, as I found out, was delayed by five minutes. My tongue was grateful and on the short journey to Liverpool Lime Street, getting back to breath was first priority.

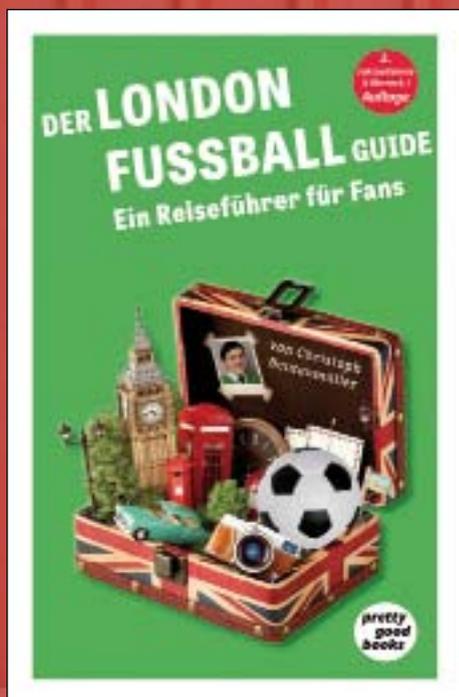
The train back to Manchester was then quite packed: Numerous fans, from Liverpool as well as from Sunderland were aboard as well as a horde of Germans. However, I was probably the only one who had seen the entire match until the final whistle – a small satisfaction.

The rest of the tour went by in auto pilot: A night in the eight-bedded hostel dorm which showed me once again that low budget accomodation is the wrong end to start saving. The next morning I hopped on the bus to Nottingham and headed via East Midlands airport back to Bratislava and Vienna. All in all, I was really enthusiastic after our successful trip to the British Isle. Everything had worked out logistically quite nicely despite the initial problems with SkyEurope. The grounds and matches were first class and definitely increased the appetite for more. Buddy Rolfes was also hooked and we still had more than enough grounds and destinations waiting for us.



Welcome to London, the capital of football

*** *rights also available* ***



2nd, updated & extended edition (October 2017)
3rd edition in preparation (February 2019)

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