



## Center for the Study of the Southwest Texas State University San Marcos

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### Memoir: My Life with Soccer

I appreciate soccer, or fuball as it is called in Germany, but I would consider myself a fan from afar. A fan from a distance. Watching, observing, but removed from the traditional emotional investment given to the sport, and detached from the religious fervor held by most of the world.

I am originally from Germany. I was born in Ochsenfurt, but moved around a lot due to my father being in the military. Although my father is American, I am very much German. My parents didn't marry until I was older, my father was emotionally distant, never around, and had very little influence on how I was raised. We never lived on an army base, but rather small villages and farms in the German countryside. Germany's national sport is soccer. Everyone plays, or watches soccer, and why not? Germany is a powerhouse in the sport and has won four World Cups. In 1990, soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall, after my father's services were no

longer needed, Germany won its third FIFA World Cup Championship, and we moved to Texas to the tune of “olé, olé olé olé Wir sind die Champions olé”.

Being a minority in the South can be problematic. Being a minority from another country who can barely speak the native language in the South is downright unpleasant. I had a difficult time adjusting to the loud, boisterous, and more abrasive American culture. My mother had little understanding of the American school system, so instead of putting me in ESL classes, I was stuck into a classroom with native English speakers my age. I was shy, distant, leery, and had few friends outside the children of military parents that moved from Germany. I only played soccer my first year in the U.S., the Purple Devils. It was uneventful. I quickly assimilated into American culture, Michael Jordon, Mike Tyson, and Michael Jackson. I went from being tested for a learning disability for struggling my first year in school, to winning an award signed by George H. W. Bush for a paper I wrote and started reading at a college level by the fourth grade.

To this day I don't have many friends. The few I have, along with family, I keep close. Everyone else, I keep at a distance, where I can watch from afar, with no need to make an emotional investment. I don't keep up with soccer, but I do watch the World Cup every four years. My youngest brother had just moved in with me to avoid going to jail. My wife didn't have to work and my two sons were out of school. Wearing the crest with three stars, we huddle around the TV to watch Germany decimate Brazil in Brazil on their way to a fourth.