PIRATES
PUNKS
& POLITICS

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In memory of Helen and Elijah
YNWA

Also by Nick Davidson
Team Shirts to Ticket Stubs:
A Visual History of Watford Football Club 1977–2002

By Nick Davidson & Shaun Hunt
Modern Football is Rubbish
Modern Football is Still Rubbish

CONTENTS

They're not a team, we are a club
Sankt Pauli 'til I die, Sankt Pauli 'til I die,
The Totenkopf's the flag I fly,
Sankt Pauli 'til I die, Sankt Pauli 'til I die,
And when I dream:
I'm wearing brown and white,
standing under Millerntor lights,
singin': Sankt Pauli 'til I die

Swearing At Motorists

FOREWORD

I WILL NEVER forget the moment I first stepped foot into the Millerntor; I just knew that I belonged to this club. Everything about the place was special: the green grass, the towering floodlights, the intimidating Totenkopf hoodies being worn by almost everyone inside but more importantly the incredible atmosphere. I'm sure that is a feeling recognisable to those people reading this who have visited our club.

As a player, the first thing you do when you sign to play for FC St. Pauli is take a tour around the district. It is a tradition that will live with the club forever, so that every player who is lucky enough to wear that shirt knows that you don't just represent a football club, you represent a community, a political movement, a religion. The walk around St. Pauli made me proud to be a KiezKicker because I knew that if I could help our club have success we could give our fans the opportunity on a national level to have their voice heard and they did not disappoint. Being part of the squad that won promotion from the wilderness of the Regionalliga back to 2. Bundesliga in 2006–07 was one of the highlights of my professional career.

The fight against racism, homophobia, sexism, discrimination and other political movements is a world issue that fans of FC St. Pauli will forever stand up for and it makes me proud to represent FC St. Pauli for the rest of my life.

This book explains why FC St. Pauli is a special club to support; it is also a very special club to play for. Whether you are a player or supporter, there is no better feeling than being at the Millerntor when it is full to the brim, floodlights on, Hamburger Dom whirring and spinning in the background as the opening clang of *Hells Bells* kicks in. Even now it makes me want to pull on that Number 3 shirt and get on the pitch.

I hope you enjoy the book and it helps you to understand the unique atmosphere and culture of St. Pauli.

Forza!

Ian Joy
FC St. Pauli 2005–06 to 2007–08

Ian Joy grew up in Scotland and spent time on the books of Manchester United and Tranmere Rovers as a youngster. He made his professional debut for Montrose in a career that also took in clubs in England, Germany and the United States. Joy arrived in Hamburg for the 2004–05 season playing for Hambuger SV's reserve team. A year later, he journeyed across town to join FC St. Pauli. His time at the Millerntor saw him play 87 times for the club, scoring one goal. He slotted into the side at left back and quickly became a popular figure both in the dressing-room and on the terraces, where his no-nonsense tackling was particularly appreciated by the fans.

Joy helped the club escape from the Regionalliga, winning promotion to 2. Bundesliga in 2007. He went on to play for Real Salt Lake in the MLS and captained the Portland Timbers in the USSF Division 2 Professional League. Since retiring from professional foootball in 2010, Joy has worked as sports presenter on US television. Ian's time at FC St. Pauli left a mark on him in more ways than one: he has an enormous Totenkopf (skull and crossbones) tattooed across his back. He remains a huge fan of the club and all it stands for.

MATCH
...AND I KNOW WHY I STAND HERE

FC St. Pauli 1 Bayer Leverkusen 0
DFB Pokal first round
Saturday 4 August 2007, 3.30pm, Millerntor Stadion

A SWELTERING HOT afternoon in August. Whatever the weather the football season has always started this way. My old man and I find ourselves in a tightly packed crowd, edging our way closer to the narrow stadium entrance. It takes ages to get into the ground, but no one is complaining, after all, there is still an hour and a half until kick-off. The sun is beating down and has turned the neck of the bloke in front of us lobster pink, but the weather only adds to the mood and the crowd around us has that air of optimism that the first Saturday of a new season always brings.

We've started so many seasons this way, a father–son bond stretching back over a quarter of a century to 1982, when my Dad took me to my first ever match at Vicarage Road. Only this season is slightly different. We've not parked the car in our usual spot at the bottom of Whippendell Road, or made the familiar trek through the streets of west Watford. We've not stopped at our regular newsagent, round the corner from the ground, to buy our chewing-gum (for the tension) and the Mars Bars (for half-time sustenance). And, unusually, we can't understand more than the odd word uttered by the crowd that surrounds us. We are a long way from Vicarage Road. A long way from Watford FC.

We are at the Millerntor Stadium in Hamburg to watch FC St. Pauli play Bayer Leverkusen in the first round of the German cup. FC St. Pauli are on a high, having secured promotion back to the second division after four seasons in the relative wilderness of the Regionalliga (the regionalised third tier of German football) but Leverkusen are formidable opposition and will provide a real test.

Over the last few years things have changed for my Dad and me. We stopped our Watford season tickets a couple of years back and, as each season passed, we found ourselves going to fewer and fewer games. There were reasons: we'd both moved further away; I've got young kids and couldn't afford – or justify – the time or expense of watching football every other Saturday; and, on top of all that, my old man beat cancer although he lost a kidney in the process. But truth be told, the real reason I packed it in was because I fell out of love with English football. Watford's season in the Premier League in 1999–2000 was the beginning of the end. It wasn't the 1980s any more. Watford simply couldn't compete. In 1982–83 we'd marked our debut season in the top flight with a runners' up spot behind Liverpool. Seventeen years later we finished bottom with 24 points and a paltry six wins. So, by the time Gianluca Vialli replaced Graham Taylor as manager and the fall-out from the ITV Digital debacle began to bite, I'd lost faith. Football had sold itself down the river. The Premiership had distorted everything. Salaries and admission prices had gone through the roof, kick-off times were at the mercy of television executives and the very soul of football had been sold to the highest bidder.

There's nothing unique about my disillusionment. I'm sure many of you who have picked up this book have been on a similar journey. The specific club and time frame may be different, but the feelings of despondency are pretty universal. However, like most football fans, I found kicking a lifetime's habit wasn't easy. I might have found it surprisingly painless to quit following Watford, but I still needed a fix of football. I'm a fairly all-or-nothing type person, and once I'd got out of the routine of going every other Saturday, I found it easy to completely switch off from Watford – I know that sounds awful; a football club is supposed to be for life, but it was true. Once I'd broken the habit, following the scores on *5Live* or the internet left me cold.

Yet, I couldn't kick football altogether. I tried our local non-league club for a couple of seasons, even doing a stint on the committee. I enjoyed the total lack of pretension that I found in the lower reaches of the football pyramid. I was a sucker for the romanticism of it all and loved travelling to the windswept outposts of the United Counties League, occasionally taking my Dad with me – he got to Ford Sports Daventry but, quite rightly, drew the line at a cross-country trip to St. Neots on a Tuesday night. So, often I went on my own, just enjoying the relative solitude of a midweek away game at Step 5 of the non-league pyramid. I got onto the committee which had its advantages: sandwiches and cups of tea at away games (a flash of a dog-eared pass marked 'Committee Member' gets you past an old bloke in a blazer and into the inner sanctum of Northampton Spencer FC). Non-league also threw up unusual opportunities: I got to run the line in a friendly against Kettering Town (pre-Gazza) but, sadly, these curios were totally offset by the *politics* – relentless, petty, small-town politics. For me, a relative outsider, the club was riven with fissures: long-running feuds went head-to-head with daily squabbles, making the atmosphere at committee meetings unbearable.

I'm pretty sure I didn't know the half of what was going on, but I knew enough to realise that being a committee member wasn't for me, something that came to a head when at one particularly prickly meeting, the club captain – also a police officer – was stationed at the door to act as a deterrent to trouble-makers. I stopped enjoying the football and took to sneaking into the ground just before kick-off in the hope of not being spotted and drawn back in to that week's instalment of the club soap opera – not easy when the average attendance for the season was 46.

Perhaps, too, this lack of a crowd played a bigger part than I imagined. There's something to be said for the intimacy of non-league, being close to the pitch, marvelling at your centre-forward's ability to construct a sentence entirely out of swearwords, but after a while I began to miss the atmosphere, the sense of belonging that I used to have standing on a terrace and singing my heart out. But, more than anything, it was the incessant politics and infighting that put me off – after 20 years of following Watford, my dalliance with non-league football lasted, all told, about 18 months.

In a roundabout way, this is how I ended up queuing to get into St. Pauli's ramshackle Millerntor stadium on the first Saturday of the 2007–08 season. At about the same time my enthusiasm for the local non-league scene was waning, I read an article in *FourFourTwo* magazine about the German 'Kult club' FC St. Pauli.

Ironically, just as politics drove me away from non-league football, it was politics that attracted me to FC St. Pauli. The article described St. Pauli fans as staunchly left-wing, fighting (metaphorically, but sometimes physically) against racism, fascism and homophobia in football. They were also opposed to the continued commercialisation of the game. As an old-school socialist, I was fascinated. Could football and The Left really flourish? I had my doubts. Aside from a photocopied '*Reclaim the Game*' pamphlet produced by the Socialist Party, I'd picked up in the early 1990s from the sadly defunct *Sportspages* bookshop on Charing Cross Road, I'd never seen any real evidence of a collective left-wing interest in football. The pamphlet itself was a bit of a disappointment – it seemed more like an ill-conceived attempt to appeal to football fans, rather than something written by supporters genuinely concerned about the ills of the game. Perhaps, the fanzine movement of the late 1980s and '90s was as political as things got? True, when it started it did feel like it was a reaction to the ludicrous policies of the Tory government on ID cards and all-seater stadia, but – in the main – the fanzine movement was never overtly political; cheap political points instead were scored with the aid of satire, wit and sarcasm. Fanzines tended to rally around club specific issues rather than coming together to look at the bigger picture. As a result, while we were worrying about problems with club chairmen, ground moves or rubbish pies, Sky TV and the Premier League crept up on our blindside and changed the game forever. Magazines such as *When Saturday Comes* documented the upheaval, but no organised opposition to these sweeping changes took root. In Britain, politics in football usually boiled down to the pathetic attempts of the National Front to recruit on the terraces. Undoubtedly, the far right were a real problem in football grounds in the 1970s and '80s, and they still reared their ugly heads in more recent times under the guises of the British National Party and the English Defence League. Supporting Watford, I'd been lucky. Only once had I come into contact with the far-right at

football, when in the autumn of 1994, the BNP tried their luck setting up a stall on Vicarage Road on matchday. They were given short shrift and were never seen again. Much to my delight, Watford fans did their bit when needed to rid the club of the BNP, but any link to politics stopped there. Of course, there are British clubs considered slightly more left-wing than others – AFC Wimbledon, and Celtic spring to mind – but these links never seemed to be based on much more than a 'feeling' or as opposition to the politics of rival fans. So, to discover FC St. Pauli and their proud tradition of left-wing support was something of a revelation. Fortuitously, it also came at a time when I'd started to become interested in German football.

The 2006 World Cup had proved a tremendous showcase for the country and its football. Not so much the national team's run to the semi-finals, more the excellence of their stadiums and the passion of the supporters. I loved the fact that many of the state-of-the-art stadiums used for that summer's World Cup could be converted back and forth from all-seater to a mix of seats and terracing, and I loved the fact that ticket prices appeared to be so ridiculously cheap.

I also loved the fact that I knew so little about the Bundesliga. A mate of mine, with whom I'd regularly gone to Watford games, had regaled me with stories of trips to Schalke 04 and had baulked when I'd suggested a trip to watch their arch rivals Borussia Dortmund – a game I'd fancied making just because I'd read about the terrace that could accommodate 25,000 fans at their Westfalenstadion stadium home. I knew nothing of the rivalry with Schalke, only that, after a decade of watching football in increasingly uniform and passionless all-seater stadia, I wanted to witness Dortmund's 'Yellow Wall' first hand. My only other knowledge of German club football was rooted firmly in the past: Keegan signing for Hamburger SV; Tony Woodcock playing for 1FC Köln (and later, Fortuna Köln); memories of Borussia Mönchengladbach competing in Europe via snatches of Ron Jones' radio commentaries on *Midweek Sports Special* on a crappy radio while doing my homework; or Watford's one foray into Europe in the 1983–84 UEFA cup that paired us with Kaiserslautern. How I'd longed to be in the Fritz-Walter stadium in Kaiserslautern for Watford's European debut. I'd not even dared ask my Dad if we could go, there was no way we could have afforded it, or got it past my Mum. In the days before

budget airlines a select few Hornets fans had paid to fly on the same plane as the players, while the bulk of the travelling supporters had gone on a three-day round coach trip to the Rhineland. Mum would never have let me bunk three days off school so, again, I relied on the radio (I still have a cassette recording of Mike Vince's commentary of the game for Chiltern Radio in the loft somewhere) and waited patiently for the return leg at Vicarage Road. I often wonder if the fact that the second leg and Watford's remarkable 3-0 win (overturning a 3-1 deficit from the first game) had some subconscious impact on my interest in German football. But if so, it was a long time coming, waiting nearly a quarter of a century to manifest itself.

Of course, I'd come across West Germany (and later a reunified Germany) watching international football. I knew all the stereotypes but I'd never been much of a follower of the England team, so managed to side-step the rivalry with the Germans and the predictable references to the war, 'ruthless German efficiency' and the endless renditions of 'The Great Escape'. In fact, my only real prejudice against the Germans came as a result of Harald 'Toni' Schumacher's brutal challenge on Patrick Battiston in the semi-final of the 1982 World Cup. I was only ten, but had fallen head-over-heels in love with the French, their *Carré Magique* of Platini, Giresse, Genghini and Tigana and the free-flowing locks of striker Dominique Rocheteau. I watched in horror as Schumacher clattered into Battiston, sending teeth flying and knocking him unconscious. I couldn't believe that Schumacher was still on the pitch let alone the nonchalant way he took the resultant goal kick without a second thought for the opponent he had injured. Then, of course, in true pantomime villain style, he saved Max Bossis' penalty after clearly moving off his line, leaving Hamburger SV's Horst Hrubesch to convert the spot-kick that sent West Germany to the World Cup final. I even read Schumacher's autobiography *Blowing The Whistle* on its release in 1987 to try to see if he showed any remorse, but as far as I can recall (I really wish I still had my copy) he dealt with the Battiston incident fairly swiftly before moving on to make some sensational allegations against his fellow professionals that ended up costing him his place in the German national side.

So, as you can see, my knowledge of German football was pretty threadbare, although in a way, this only helped to fuel my obsession. It

is far too easy these days to be a font of all knowledge about the Premier League; the news coverage is all-encompassing, available 24 hours a day via the internet or *Sky Sports News* (well, at least until they pulled it from Freeview). There's something quite refreshing about diving headlong into the unknown and trying to accumulate knowledge about a football club in a language you can't decipher, especially when that club is playing in the third, regionalised, tier of German football.

The article in *FourFourTwo* pricked my conscience. It sketched an outline of FC St. Pauli as a club at one with its fans, fans who took a firm stance against the far-right extremists that had allied themselves to other clubs in the 1980s and 1990's. It was only a couple of pages (and just as with Schumacher's book, I've long since thrown the article away) but it had me hooked. I needed to find out more about this club that seemed at odds with the conventions of modern football; where left-wing politics and football went hand-in-hand.

I guess, from there on in, I was lucky. I Googled FC St. Pauli and found some great clips on YouTube that convinced me even more that I'd found something special. Then, I stumbled across the FC St. Pauli UK Messageboard, a fans forum – *in English* – that provided a wealth of background information on the club and the district, but more importantly was buzzing with like-minded individuals, who contributed regular reports on trips to the Millerntor stadium. The message board is also blessed with regular news updates and match reports from fans living in Hamburg. As a result, I found myself checking its pages daily and after a short period of lurking, towards the end of October 2006, I took the plunge and started posting various rambling contributions of my own. I was also lucky to get hold of an old video called *'And I Know Why I Stand Here'* – a documentary made in 1991 and dubbed into English, that explained in detail the birth of the club's fan culture. Put together by those involved with the influential fanzine, *Millerntor Roar!* it explained how the unique supporter culture was born out of the changes happening in the wider St. Pauli district and through opposition to plans to transform the Millerntor stadium into a 'Sport-Dome' complete with underground parking and a shopping mall. I found it fascinating that back at the tailend of the 1980s, when many supporters were getting into the fanzine scene in the UK, motivated by the treatment of football fans by clubs and the

authorities and the police and government's shameful response to the Hillsborough disaster, that much the same thing was happening in Germany. Of course, despite the boom in football fanzines, English football took a very different path with the birth of the Premier League and distortion of the game by TV money. But, as I was becoming increasingly aware, German fans in general and FC St. Pauli fans in particular didn't give up that easily.

I had started following FC St. Pauli at an opportune moment. The club had been relegated to the Regionalliga Nord (the regionalised third tier of German football, akin to the old Third Division North–South set up in the UK) in 2003, and had finished eighth, seventh and sixth in the following three seasons. Despite another mid-table finish, the 2005–06 campaign had been augmented by a memorable run to the semi-finals of the German Cup, beating Bundesliga sides Hertha Berlin and Werder Bremen before falling to a 3-0 defeat at the hands of Bayern Munich. Perhaps more significantly, the club had almost gone out of existence in 2003 and was only saved by a remarkable, fan-led, 'Retter' (saviour) campaign that saw thousands of T-shirts sold to fans across Germany; a beer kick-back scheme that had fans literally downing Astra beer to raise funds for the club; and a friendly game against Bayern.

In the autumn of 2006, as my obsession intensified, FC St. Pauli were their usual inconsistent selves. Going into the winter break, they had won only one of their previous eight matches, drawing four. FC St. Pauli sat 12th out of 19 teams; another season in the Regionalliga beckoned. However, something had changed. After a disappointing home draw against Rot-Weiss Erfurt, the club parted company with Andreas Bergmann, the suave-looking architect of the previous season's cup run – a man with more than a hint of José Mourinho about him (in appearance, if not in demeanour). He was replaced by former Millerntor defensive stalwarts Holger Stanislawski and André Trulsen. When the season restarted in February 2007, the team seemed to have found the knack of converting those earlier draws into wins, and went on an impressive run that saw them top the table with six games to go, hanging on to claim promotion in the penultimate game of the season against Dynamo Dresden.

By this stage, I had given up looking up the results the following

day on the internet and had taken to following the dramatic climax to the season on a 'live-ticker' service – real-time website updates, that could possibly be described as the internet generation's equivalent of watching matches on Ceefax.

For the final game against Dresden, I even managed to find a live-stream from a Hamburg radio station and was at least able to get a feel for what was happening on the pitch via my extremely limited German and the inflection of the commentator's voice. In Hamburg, the game was a complete sell-out, and thousands more watched the action unfold on giant screens on the Reeperbahn. The match itself was a nervy affair. FC St. Pauli needed a draw to secure promotion back to the second division and, true to their early season form, went ahead twice before being pegged back in stoppage time of both halves. The game finished 2-2 and FC St. Pauli were up. Although I wasn't entirely sure what had happened as, with the last kick of the game, I was convinced from the hysteria in the stadium that Michél Mazingu-Dinzey, who had been put clean through on goal with seconds to play, had fired home the winner for FC St. Pauli (he hadn't; somehow his shot had careered back off the post). Not that anyone inside the ground or on the surrounding streets cared; the club was back in the Bundesliga 2 after four long seasons in the regional wilderness. I carried on listening to the radio stream for an hour or so after the final whistle as they seemingly interviewed half of Hamburg. The party on the Reeperbahn continued until the following morning.

Now, three months on from the victory over Dynamo Dresden, my Dad and I slowly edge closer to the turnstiles. The mood is still jovial and we strike up a conversation with the bloke in front of us in the queue (the one with the sunburnt neck). Naturally he speaks fabulous English, and was extremely impressed that we have travelled to watch the game. I give him a stripped down version of the story above, and he and his mate seem genuinely pleased that the club have such a following in the UK. He wants us to stand with him in the middle of the Gegengerade, the crumbling terrace that runs down one side of the pitch (literal translation 'the back straight') but I am already a bit worried about my Dad going the distance in the heat, and he suggests that once inside the ground we make our way to the North end of the terrace, where we might still bag a spot behind a crush barrier.

As we finally make our way through the security check – it turns out there were no turnstiles as such, just some makeshift barriers funnelling fans through into the stadium – I have to admit I've not felt so excited about a match since I was a kid. But I am nervous too. Nervous that the experience wouldn't be as good as what I'd been led to believe from various recounts or YouTube video clips. We then find ourselves in the concourse underneath the seated upper section of the Gegengerade. The seats were installed as a temporary measure in 1988. They are supported by what looks like rusting metal pillars, giving the structure the look of an elongated Meccano stand at Northampton Town's old County Ground. It is anything but modern, but I love it. Already, the underbelly of the Gegengerade was a complete antidote to the pre-cast concrete uniformity of most modern English league grounds.

There is still about 50 minutes to go until kick-off, but we decide we'd better take our place on the terrace. As I walk up the shallow steps, between the makeshift metal struts supporting the 'temporary' seating above, I really feel as if I am ten years old again, sensing the expectation of the crowd and being almost blinded by the brilliant green of the playing surface. It really is like stepping back in time: no taking your seat five minutes before kick-off, here the terrace is already heaving. We decide to heed the advice of our friend in the queue and head for the far end, where there are still a few spaces left. We are not early enough to bag a crush barrier, but we get a fairly decent spot halfway up next to the fence that separates the home fans on the Gegengerade from their comrades on the Nordkurve. It seems perfect until we realise that we are right in the middle of the thoroughfare to the beer kiosk at the back of the terrace. Never mind, 'when on a terrace in Germany' and all that: we decide to get a couple of beers to quench our thirst. Only towards the end of the game do we realise that we are in the middle of a fabulously ingenious beer distribution system that sees cups being handed down then along the rows to their intended recipients, with the person due to buy the next round shuffling into position on the end of the row.

As kick-off approaches, there is no space left, except right down the front at pitch level, where the view is pretty much obscured by kids clinging gallantly to their premium spot on the fence. The game is a sell-out, as you'd expect of a cup-tie against Bundesliga opposition, and tickets are at even more of a premium due to the demolition of the

Südkurve terrace towards the end of the previous season. Slowly, and only after a lot of wrangling, the club got the go-ahead and the funds to start modernising the stadium – an upgrade that was required by the German FA in order for the club to retain their licence. Then, out of nowhere, comes the moment I'm waiting for: the clang of the bells at the start of AC/DC's *Hell's Bells* rings out over the loudspeakers. It is a moment I'd watched countless times on YouTube, but witnessing it live sends shivers down my spine. As the teams emerge from the tunnel at the other end of the Gegengerade, I strain to get a better view, and as I do I am showered in confetti – not ripped-up bits of yellow pages like at home but a storm of what look like paper drinks coasters. The noise and the atmosphere are incredible; craning my neck I can see that much of the terrace has been covered in huge red, white and brown stripes, and an enormous banner proclaiming 'You'll Never Walk Alone'.

It is like nothing I've seen before, not even at cup semi-finals or vital promotion–relegation fixtures. I try to drink in as much of it as I can. The match hasn't kicked off yet, but I am pretty sure that I won't go home disappointed that the experience hadn't matched up to my expectations. Even my Dad, who doesn't know too much about St. Pauli but was keen to experience something new, appears impressed (although this might be down to being allowed to have a pint and a smoke on the terrace, in full view of the pitch!).

The game eventually starts and is pretty scrappy with few clear-cut chances. We are sweltering on a terrace totally devoid of shade, so it is no surprise that as the game wears on the players start to tire. But if I'm honest, I'm watching the crowd as much as the players; the nature of the support seems very different to back home. Maybe some things are lost in translation, but I see or hear very little goading of opposition players or fans and the majority of the noise is devoted to supporting the team. We are right by the corner flag and there is none of the moronic gesticulating at opponents when they come over to take a throw or a corner. Indeed, we go an entire 90 minutes without anyone making the 'wanker' hand gesture that's so ubiquitous among British football fans. The chanting is also, pretty much, non-stop. True, not everyone joins in all the time, but for almost the entire game there is noise coming from some part of the ground.

The other thing that is noticeably different to anything I've experienced at football in recent years is that virtually everyone around us is smoking: usually tobacco, but there are also several sweet-smelling spliffs being passed around. The vibe is definitely a party one and, anyway, my Dad is just pleased to be able to have a puff on his pipe – tobacco only, I presume – without being made to feel like a social pariah.

The first half ends scoreless, and after much deliberation we decide against getting another beer from the kiosk behind us. But as we are debating this, a woman in her twenties with blonde dreadlocked hair held in place by a skull and crossbones headscarf, asks us politely if we are English. She, too, is intrigued to find out that we have come from the UK to watch St. Pauli. She tells her group of friends about us, and everyone is keen to say hello and shake our hands. They, too, are impressed by the fact that FC St. Pauli has a sizeable following back in Britain. My Dad spends the second half chatting to the group and trying to follow the action, and as usual the language barrier is only one way – as everyone speaks excellent English.

The second half continues in much the same vein as the first, although as time goes on, the game starts to open up. Suddenly, the St. Pauli number five, Björn Brunnemann, identifiable by his shock of punk-rock peroxide hair, bursts through the middle only to shoot straight at the keeper. Then, Charles Takyi releases fellow midfielder Timo Schultz, who collides with the keeper, as the ball spills to the on-rushing Ralph Gunesch. Everyone around us holds their breath, but Gunesch blazes his shot high, wide and into the Nordkurve. Even so, Bayer look rattled. As the action on the pitch intensifies – St. Pauli are attacking the Nordkurve with which we are standing roughly in line – so does the noise. It's interesting to note that songs are not just sung in German, but also in English and French. As the pressure builds on the Leverkusen goal, I pick up on another curio, the jangling of car keys as St. Pauli take a corner – I've no idea what it signifies, but it is strangely effective.

Then on 87 minutes it happens. Takyi – very much the playmaker in the St. Pauli side – floats a free-kick into the box, it is half cleared but is headed back across the area by René Schnitzler. The ball bounces through a crowd of players but the St. Pauli number 17, a part-time

policeman, Fabian Boll slides in and fires the ball into the back of the net. It isn't a classic goal, but it is a vital one. The terrace around us goes absolutely mental. It is literally raining beer as every plastic cup is thrown into the air in pure joy. We hug everyone around us. I look up to see my Dad being mobbed by his new friends. Somewhere in the bedlam, Blur's *Song 2* is being played, and I vaguely remember 'Whoo-whooing' along to the chorus. No one can quite believe it, we are 1-0 up against Bayer Leverkusen with under three minutes to go. There's isn't even time for the obligatory last, heart-in-mouth, chance for the visitors, or if there is we didn't notice. Our German friends are convinced my Dad is a lucky mascot and are already trying to persuade him to come back for the next round. I am covered in beer and as high as a kite on the pure adrenalin of a last-gasp winner. At some point the final whistle blows and the celebrations start up again. I realise that I haven't felt like this for years.

What happens after the final whistle is just as remarkable as the 90 minutes that preceded it. Back home, there'd be a bit of a celebration, the players would wander half-heartedly over to the home end to applaud the fans (although there's always one or two in every team that scurry off down the tunnel at the earliest opportunity, however historic the result). Then the fans would start the slow process of shuffling out of the stadium. Not here. Instead, people are getting more drinks in, perhaps to replace those lost in the beer storm that had greeted the winning goal, but also to extend the party. One thing is for sure, no one around us is leaving. The team, too, are still on the pitch. They emerge from a post-match huddle and head over to the fans on the Gegengerade. The team form a long line and hold hands. Suddenly, the crowd and the team are as one, lifting their hands together in unison, accompanied by a guttural, 'Waaay! Waaay! Waaay!' from the fans. Some of the team come to the fence in front of us and 'high-five' the hands reaching through the railings. Timo Schultz spends a couple of minutes chatting to fans on the terrace. Then, the team moves on and goes through the same procedure with the fans on the Nordkurve and the seated Haupttribüne on the opposite side of the pitch to us. We ask the girl with the dreadlocks if this prolonged celebration with the fans is due to the nature of the win over Bundesliga opposition. She seems puzzled, and replies: 'No, it is like this every time we win a game.'

Finally, after what seems like a good quarter-of-an-hour after the final whistle, the players leave the pitch. Again, I imagine that people will start to head home. Maybe our close proximity to the beer kiosk had something to do with it, but nobody around us looks like they are ready to leave just yet. With the football over, I take the opportunity to talk to the girl and her boyfriend in more depth. I explain my disillusionment with English football, and my affinity with the politics and fan culture of St. Pauli. Again they seem a little surprised, not that English football has no St. Pauli equivalent, but that English supporters in general are so passive. They are more shocked, however, when I explain that we got to Hamburg by train, and have to catch the overnight sleeper back to Köln, then get back to London via Brussels. The shock isn't particularly down to the time or distance of such a rail trip (Germany is rather fond of its railways) but because we aren't staying in Hamburg to continue the party that night.

It is now about 40 minutes after the final whistle, and most people are finally starting to exit the stadium. We consider following suit. Our hosts don't want to see us go, but the sun has taken its toll and we both need to get something to eat and to sit down somewhere and take stock. Before we leave, we exchange more hugs and kisses with those around us – which leads to the surreal situation of seeing my old man hugged, first, by our dreadlocked translator, then by a man with more piercings and tattoos than seems humanly possible, and finally by a six-foot Rastafarian. To the casual observer – or cliché-seeking journalist – it represents the perfect stereotypical cross-section of St. Pauli's supporter base, but I've not made any of it up. It's exactly how it happens.

We say our goodbyes – promising to return for the second round of the cup – and make our way through the debris of confetti and scrunched-up plastic beer glasses that litter the Gegengerade. As we get to the top of the gently shelving terrace, we turn and lean on a crush barrier. Pockets of fans are milling about, deep in conversation, finishing their drinks. The August sun is still warm, but hazy clouds are starting to gather high in the sky above. I think back to the video produced by the *Millerntor Roar!* fanzine, and consider that now I too know exactly why they stand here. I also know that I want to stand here again – soon. After an afternoon spent with the fans of St. Pauli on the Gegengerade, no other football experience would feel quite the same.

As we leave the ground, exiting underneath those rusty girders supporting the 'temporary' Gegentribune seating above, there are fans everywhere, loitering outside the stadium drinking more beer. A sound system is blasting out something akin to industrial house from what looks like a freight container that has migrated the short distance from the docks (I find out that this is the legendary AFM supporters 'container' that lets a different group of fans provide the music for each game. The AFM is the 'Abteilung Fördernde Mitglieder', of which more later). It looks like the party is about to get in full swing – just like our friends in the ground said it would. Sadly, we have to get our bags from the hotel, find some food and think about getting ourselves to the central station to start the long journey back to London. On the plus side, we are both absolutely buzzing. I am relieved that the Millerntor really was as mind-blowing as other fans had described it. And I am really glad that I'd experienced it with my old man. After all, I'm forever grateful to him for taking me to my first football match all those years ago – now it feels like I've returned the favour.