



Walking through the storms to the Glory of Rome

Borussia Moenchengladbach Remembered

By The Old Codgers

**[With a little bit of help from their friends
in Germany]**

The UEFA Cup Final started it; the European Cup Final capped it. Forever and a day Liverpool and Borussia Moenchengladbach would be linked and a bond was formed between the fans of the two clubs that now, over thirty years on, has never been broken.

The UEFA Cup win over two legs in 1973 was to be the start of something fantastic, something that would be like a wondrous journey and for the next eleven years Liverpool would rule Europe in a way that could have only ever have envisaged in our dreams. It was also the first European trophy to find it's way into the Anfield cabinet.

The UEFA Cup back then was just as hard to win as the European Cup, maybe even harder because several of the teams in it were the amongst the best in their respective countries, teams qualified if they had finished second or third in their national leagues and very often they were emerging teams who would be soon the Champions of their homelands. Back in 72/73 Liverpool did exactly that; they would end the season as First Division Champions for the third time under Bill Shankly. Borussia Moenchengladbach were themselves a team that was emerging as a major force in West German football and it should be remembered that around this time the West Germans were just about at the strongest they would ever be. They had a superb national team and had been runners-up in the World Cup in 1966, reached the semi finals in 1970 and, of course, would win the trophy in 1974.

The 1973 UEFA Cup Final win was unique in some way because on the day of the first leg at Anfield, Merseyside was subjected to a downpour of monsoon proportions and after twenty-five minutes the game was abandoned and would be 'replayed' the following night. For the ill-fated first game Shanks had left John Toshack out of the side but in those twenty-five minutes he noticed that the Germans were a bit weak in the air so for the re-scheduled fixture Big Tosh was selected in place of Brian Hall. The tactic worked and the Reds stormed to a 3-0 win and it was safely assumed that the margin would be sufficient. Ray Clemence had also played a massive part by making an acrobatic save from a Jupp Heynckes penalty. Bill Shankly said, afterwards, "Tonight we played football that was world class against world class opposition. The second leg will not be easy, but there's not a team on the planet that I would expect to overcome a three-goal deficit when we are playing as well as this." Oh, and just to mention that admission to the 'replayed' game was just 10p...can you imagine getting into a Cup Final of any sort for 10p? It cost less to get into Anfield that night than it did for a pint of lager in the Albert!

Borussia Moenchengladbach must have been pretty close to that other planet because they had some of us quaking in our boots as they reduced the deficit to a single goal by halftime when we went to Germany for the second leg. Heynckes scored twice and the

'impossible' looked likely. There was even another thunderstorm only this time it looked as if we would be swept away. Thankfully, if nothing else, the Gladbach storm abated as the Germans tired. They were still always attacking but the Reds defended better and without so much panic. At the end of the game as thousands of visiting fans celebrated this first European trophy the penalty save of Clem at Anfield had been the difference between the two sides. Shanks was overjoyed and even went as far as to say the win meant as much, if not more than the FA Cup win over Leeds in 65.

Yes the success meant so much, as did the winning of the same trophy in 1976 but the European Cup Final of 1977 when once again Liverpool triumphed against our friends from Germany superseded just about everything. It was the icing on the cake for many Liverpoolians but it also cemented the friendship between the two clubs and the two sets of supporters.

Twelve months later we would meet again only this time in the semi-finals of the European Cup and over in Germany the first leg ended in a 2-1 win for our rivals. Back at Anfield, 50,000 Liverpoolians roared the Reds to Wembley as the deficit was wiped out with Liverpool winning 3-0.

As we continued to dominate both domestically and in Europe, winning another three European Cups Borussia Moenchengladbach didn't share the same good fortunes. We asked one of their fans Thomas 'Jonny' Polcher to tell us about the ups and downs of Borussia Moenchengladbach since our meetings in the 70's so over to him.

Jonny: After the glory times of the 70's it went downhill for Borussia, financially we could not compete with the Bokelberg stadium (34,000 capacity with only 8,700 seats) against the clubs with bigger stadiums like Bayern. Even so until the mid 80's we were in the UEFA Cup every year. However, then came a phase where we started to fight against relegation. But there was a glimpse of hope between 1994 and 1997. In 1995 we won the German Cup and then in 1996 we knocked Arsenal out of the UEFA Cup. But that all came at a big cost and we had huge debts and we knew that things could not go on like that. In 1999 we were relegated to the German League 2 and were nearly bankrupt. Only with the sale of players were we able to stop our club from being forced down another league.

However, in the Liga 2 there was a small wonder. The club, players and fans came closer together in the hard times. The number of fans at the games stayed the same even though there were more Monday night games. There were still more than a few thousand of fans at away games as well. Also we had the luck of having a good manager Hans Meyer who brought us back on course. And after two years in 2001 we were back in the top flight. And there we still remain today and hope that with the new stadium we can climb up the league table and maybe be back in Europe in a few years. At the moment we are only just off the relegation places but "hope never dies"...with hope in your heart etc.

Every season Anfield receives a visit from fans of Borussia Moenchengladbach. If you get to any of the games they attend you can't have missed them. They turn up [and I'm not being respectful] looking like refugees from a Heavy Metal Rock concert from the 70's. So we asked Jonny to tell us about not only their trips to Anfield but also how the link between the two clubs has been forged.

Jonny: For example the way we celebrated in the 1977 Roma final together. After the Hillsborough disaster every real fan had been horrified with what happened. As the only German organization the Gladbach fan project raised money for the families (21,000DM) and in 1991 at a big event in Moenchengladbach the money was given to officials of LFC and the Hillsborough Family Group. Though this Gladbach became closer linked with Liverpool, first with the *LFC International Supporters Club* and the *Hillsborough Family Group*. Then also with the *LFC SC Merseyside Branch*, who we played Football against on visits until 2001 for the 'Friendship-Cup.' As a result the yearly visit to Anfield and an away game in England/Europe means I've made a lot of friends and contacts with LFC supporters (Greetings to the guys from Albert Pub!) also we have good contacts with the *LFC SC Branch German-Reds* and there are a few Gladbach fans in the German Reds SC.

Jonny went on to talk about their new ground.

Jonny: From 1919 until 2004 the Bokelberg stadium was our home with a 34,000 capacity and as said earlier only 8,700 of those were seats with roof covering. This was too small for the top flight and the plans to extend did not go down well with the residents around the ground. Since the 80's there was the call for a new ground to be built. And then in August 2004 the dream came true A 54,000 capacity stadium, the all covered Borussia Park was finished. Saying the goodbyes to the Bokelberg was hard but we had to move with time. And after just nine home games it still does not feel like home. But be sure that it will come.

Borussia fans often sing 'YNWA' so we asked what it means to them.

Jonny: 'You'll Never Walk Alone' is the one and only football song. Personally to me it means that it brings us closer together in mourning after the loss of the lives in the Hillsborough disaster. From our own view it also it connects us with our battle over relegation because this brought Borussia fans together and this song was sung very often to give us hope. And when I finally leave



this earth I want this song to be sung.

I notice one of your banners has 'Mythos 2001.' What is that one about, Mythos happens to be my favourite Greek Beer.

Jonny: Mythos 2001 is the name Borussia fans club and has nothing to do with beer. The word Mythos is from the "Mythos Legend...Borussia" it is about the glorious past history and was mainly spoken about when we were fighting against relegation.

So there it is, an update on one of the best friendships in European football. Some of us went over to Borussia Moenchengladbach in 1995 for a mini tournament involving the host club, ourselves, Ajax and Fiorentina. Unfortunately we didn't get the chance to meet our former adversaries as we got the mother and father of a beating off a rampant Ajax in the first game. We got treated well though and naturally we had a drink or two. It's always good to see the lads when they come over here although one or two of the games they get to don't ever quite reach the excitement of those European clashes, Southampton this season for example and I do recall a couple of not quite so thrilling goalless draws.

Those games aside, it all started when we walked through a storm at Anfield and survived one in the Bokelberg. The relationship continued with the glory of Rome and although some may not understand it the friendship that was bonded forever that night came about despite our media being just about as anti-Germany [or jealous] as they could be when it came to football. Our team became Kings of Europe against a German that side contained some of Europe's finest players, what Shankly said in 1973 was still applicable in 1977, Borussia Moenchengladbach were world class, so were Liverpool and so were the fans of both sides. Long may it remain that way and may we never walk alone.



Visit Jonny's website

www.jonny-soccer.de

at: and www.eifelpower

Or:

www.geocities.com/championsweb/borussiamoenchengladbach.htm

Private Homepage

www.jonnys-reich.de

Supportersclub FP-MG

Mönchengladbach www.fanprojekt.de

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