

Babelsberg 03

“Football connects the world, always and everywhere.” This can be read on a T-shirt from the assortment of the Babelsberger Merchandising. This is the motto that fans and the sports club have lived and acted on since Babelsberg 03 re-formed after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Already during the refugee wave in the nineties, due to the Balkankrieg at that time, fans of the club played football with refugees, cooked and celebrated together. This year, for example, the antiracist stadium festival “Der Ball ist bunt” (The ball is colourful), which is annually initiated by fans and the sports club, was celebrated for the 14th time.

In May 2014, fugitives from many different nations came to us and asked for training times on our practice ground. Many of the refugees themselves played football in their homeland and it would mean a lot to them if they could get this opportunity in Potsdam. According to the self-understanding of our members, fans, and members of the club, only a full integration into the existing club structures could be considered. This included, among other things, the registration of the team for the regular game operation. Thus, the refugee and integration project “Welcome United 03” emerged, which was formerly called “Refugees Welcome Team”.

Welcome United 03 is already in its third year. In the first year of existence, Welcome United 03 received test match teams from different parts of our republic. But we have also travelled to friendship matches to Berlin or Leipzig and have got to know new places and perspectives together with our players. The team is trained by Sven George, who has captured the hearts of the players with a lot of empathy, but also with clear rules. The assistant coach, Ejike Nahuzo Uzoukwu, is himself a refugee and provides great help to Sven George.

Sports development

As expected, the project has continued to develop and, above all, its integrative character has been strengthened. But let's start with the sporting field. Already after the first season, our team got into the first county league B. In the previous season, we have visited many other clubs to play our league games. Opportunities to talk to fans and members of the other clubs was very often used on the field edge of the games. Our conclusion is that a “relaxation process” has always taken place when we have played with our team in other places. From partly unusual fantasies, unfounded fears or open rejection at first, acceptance and partly also respect for the performance of the team were increasingly developed. If our team was sometimes perceived as “exotic” in the run-up, the picture changed very quickly. After almost every game, our players talk shop with the players of the opposing club. Such moments give us new strength and are, of course, confirmation of our work.

Football for minor unaccompanied refugees

Welcome United 03, however, does not only consist of the first team in the game operation of the first county league B, but also includes the training of about 30-40 minor unaccompanied refugees. The young kickers are supervised by a three-headed coach team,

including Saad Osama Hosari. Mr. Hosari is a refugee himself and comes from Aleppo in Syria. With the underage kickers, we go to numerous tournaments or even organize sporty competitions ourselves. Babelsberg 03 provides the young people with sports equipment and also covers all additional costs. This year, we want to take a bus trip to Hamburg with all players, coaches, trainers, and responsible persons involved in the project to participate in a friendly match. In principle, however, the same tenets apply as in our regular game operation. Players who are talented will be integrated into our respective junior team, so they have all the opportunities for a possible career in football. Apart from this organized project, children and teenagers have been integrated into our junior team for a long time.