



# HEARTS



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THE SCHALKE GROUP AT EDINBURGH CASTLE, APRIL 2023



ENJOYING SCOTTISH HOSPITALITY IN BENSON'S - MICHAEL (BEARDED) IN THE BLUE SCHALKE TOP



SUPPORTERS FROM BOTH CLUBS AT THE OLD SCHALKE STADIUM



FLAG DAY AT THE APRIL 2023 FOH PLOT CEREMONY BENSON'S - MICHAEL (BEARDED) IN THE BLUE SCHALKE TOP

# FOUNDATION OF HEARTS

## THE GREAT LINK WITH SCHALKE 04 – GOING STRONG SINCE 2004

An interview with Michael Fryczewski, Schalke 04 fan and pledger to the Foundation of Hearts

There will be many of us who remember a November night at Murrayfield in 2004 when Hearts took on Schalke 04, then sitting second in the Bundesliga, in the UEFA Cup. A pretty even match was decided shortly after half time when Patrick Kisnorbo was sent off by the Russian referee, who judged that the Australian midfielder had dived in the box and waved a second yellow card. German pressure increased, a drive from Cassio Lincoln beat goalkeeper Craig Gordon, and that was that.

Well, not quite that. For a group of German supporters who had come to follow their team, the match sparked a love affair with Edinburgh and with Hearts which continues to this day. One of them, Michael



Fryczewski, not only makes regular trips back to our city to watch Hearts, but actually pledges to the Foundation of Hearts.

"For us, there was great friendship, great rapport, with the Hearts fans in 2004. We really had a good time with the Hearts supporters in the pubs and around the place, and beyond that, among the people of Edinburgh. For example, we got lost a couple of times in the city and everyone was so friendly and happy to help. And, of course, Edinburgh is a really beautiful city, so it was a pleasure to be there in 2004 and to return since then.

"It was a shame for us that the match was not at Tynecastle so the following day some of us went along to the stadium and discovered that it was open. We sneaked in and were on the pitch for ten minutes or so before someone turned up and asked us to leave!

"After that, we got involved in following Hearts' results. The growing use of social media was good for this. It also helped that I like the colour maroon.

"Then when the difficult time came for you with Mr Romanov and administration, we stayed in touch and wanted to help. I loved the idea of the Foundation of Hearts and the fans coming together to save their club. That's when I started to pledge. This is the kind of concept that I support. For me, Schalke's priority is to be a genuine community club, one that is based in a working-class town, Gelsenkirchen, and in an area which has had many social problems.

"The football club is actually the biggest employer here so it is very important. Its community values are actually more significant to me than success on the pitch. Of course, we want to win, but I would rather have a club which is maybe a bit rough around the edges on the playing front but has great values. I see this community aspect also with Hearts."

Germany, of course, has its 50+1 rule which theoretically prevents big business taking over clubs as members hold 51 per cent ownership. It's not a concept which Michael believes is working well, however. "You look at RB Leipzig, owned by Red Bull with their money. They get round the system and there are other examples here –





THE MAGNIFICENT VELTINS ARENA, HOME TO SCHALKE 04

Hoffenheim and Bayer Leverkusen. It's not great."

Schalke's home is the amazing Veltins Arena, a magnificent 62,000-seater multi-purpose stadium with cutting-edge technology which was opened in 2001 and which has staged some of Europe's top entertainment events, from Bruce Springsteen concerts and operas to the world ice hockey championships, a world championship boxing match between Wladimir Klitschko and Ruslan Chagaev, five World Cup matches in 2006, and a Champions League Final. The club itself has an impressive record, winning the UEFA Cup in 1997 (beating Inter Milan on penalties in the final), being champions of Germany seven times, and winning the German Cup five times. The glory days, however, seem a bit distant right now as the team is experiencing a tough season and is battling relegation.

On football stadiums, Michael is a big fan of reinstating standing sections, something that exists in Schalke's own wonderfully impressive arena. "It means that people can get together – meet up with friends, socialise, and make a noise. It really helps the atmosphere and I think it would be very good if that happened at Tynecastle."

Comparing German and Scottish football, Michael talks about some of the behaviour of top-flight players, feigning injury, rolling around theatrically. We've all seen it and it annoys him. "In Scottish football, there is more honesty and I like it that way. They play hard and fight for their team-mates. That's good."

Most recently, Michael and a group of Schalke fans came to Edinburgh in April, took in the St Mirren match at Tynecastle (sorry, tut mir leid, folks!), then came along to the Foundation plot ceremony on the Sunday. "That was a very good day

for us," says Michael. "Very calm and among nice people. We were well looked after."

Looking ahead as a Foundation pledger, Michael revels in the fact of fan ownership here. "You have had ups and downs like us, but now you are in control. You won't ever sell your club."

Next trip for Michael and his Schalke friends is likely to be the first home derby in the new season. He and they will be very welcome guests – guests who not only support the club and pledge to the Foundation but share many of the core values which are at the heart of both FoH's approach and that at Schalke 04. What a pleasure it is to have such a positive and genuine link with another great club and with great fans.

***If you'd like to join Michael and become a co-owner of your club or find out more, visit [www.foundationofhearts.org](http://www.foundationofhearts.org)***







## HEARTS

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2. MICHAEL SMITH
3. STEPHEN KINGSLEY
4. CRAIG HALKETT
5. PETER HARING
6. BENI BANINGIME
7. JORGE GRANT
8. ORESTIS KIOMOURTZOGLU
9. LAWRENCE SHANKLAND
10. LIAM BOYCE
11. GARY MACKAY-STEVEN
12. NATHANIEL ATKINSON
13. ROSS STEWART
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15. KYE ROWLES
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18. BARRIE MCKAY
19. ALEX COCHRANE
20. LEWIS NEILSON
21. TOBY SIBBICK
23. HARRY STONE
28. ZANDER CLARK
29. STEPHEN HUMPHRYS
30. JOSH GINNELLY
39. FINLAY POLLOCK
61. GARANG KUOL
72. JAMES HILL
88. YUTARO ODA



## HIBS

MANAGER: LEE JOHNSON

1. DAVID MARSHALL
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10. JAIR TAVARES
11. JOE NEWELL
12. CHRIS CADDEN
13. MATTHEW HOPPE
14. JAMES JEGGO
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16. LEWIS STEVENSON
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30. RUNAR HAUGE
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32. JOSH CAMPBELL
33. ROCKY BUSHIRI
39. JOSH O'CONNOR
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47. MURRAY AIKEN
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