

Munich



Irish



Rovers



IN CONVERSATION WITH
ANNA SOPHIA VOLLMERHAUSEN
OF THE MUNICH IRISH ROVERS

GRASSROOTS SPOTLIGHT

IN A CITY THAT HARBOURS A LOVE OF FOOTBALL AT ITS CORE, LOCAL GRASSROOTS CLUB MUNICH IRISH ROVERS STANDS OUT. NOT JUST FOR THEIR PASSION ON THE PITCH, BUT FOR THE WAY THEY'VE FOSTERED A WELCOMING, TIGHT-KNIT COMMUNITY OF EXPATS. QUEENZINE SAT DOWN WITH ANNA SOPHIA VOLLMERHAUSEN, CLUB SECRETARY, TO EXPLORE HOW GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL CAN BE THE PERFECT WAY TO FIND YOUR FOOTING WHEN MOVING TO A NEW CITY.

ANNA SOPHIA'S FOOTBALL JOURNEY BEGAN IN CANADA AT THE AGE OF FIVE, AND SINCE MOVING TO MUNICH, SHE'S FOUND A SECOND HOME WITH THE ROVERS. ANNA SOPHIA HELPED QUEENZINE UNDERSTAND WHAT IT'S LIKE TO PLAY FOR THE CLUB AND WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS.

THE CLUB GREW OUT OF A WEEKLY KICK-ABOUT ORGANISED BY A GROUP OF IRISH GRADUATES LIVING AND WORKING IN MUNICH IN 1985. FIVE YEARS LATER, THE ROVERS AFFILIATED AS PART OF TSV SOLLN, ONE OF MUNICH'S LARGEST AMATEUR CLUBS. AFTER SEVERAL SEASONS PLAYING AS AN AFFILIATE, AND WITH NO FURTHER PROMOTION UP THE RANKS POSSIBLE FOR THE ROVERS FIRST TEAM, THE TIME HAD COME TO BECOME AN INDEPENDENT CLUB.

A DECADE LATER, MUNICH IRISH ROVERS FC WAS OFFICIALLY FOUNDED AND ENTERED INTO THE BAVARIAN FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION'S (BFV) LEAGUE SYSTEM. THE WOMEN'S TEAM WAS THEN FORMED IN 2008, AND THEN EXPANDED INTO AN 11-A-SIDE TEAM IN 2014/15. CURRENTLY, THE ROVERS COUNT OVER 100 ACTIVE MEMBERS IN THEIR RANKS AND RUN TWO MEN'S TEAMS, A WOMEN'S TEAM AND AN OVER-32S MEN'S TEAM.

CLUB CULTURE

"IT'S VERY WELCOMING AND ALL ABOUT BALANCING FUN OFF THE PITCH WITH SUCCESS," SAYS ANNA SOPHIA OF THE CLUB'S CULTURE. "AS MUCH AS WE ENJOY

WINNING GAMES, IT NEVER COMES AT THE EXPENSE OF PEOPLE'S ENJOYMENT OF THE GAME."

THE CLUB BOASTS PLAYERS FROM 20 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES, FOSTERING A REAL EXPAT COMMUNITY IN MUNICH. "IT'S A VERY DIVERSE GROUP! AND BECAUSE OF THAT IT'S VERY EASY TO TALK TO EVERYONE - EACH PLAYER HAS THEIR OWN UNIQUE STORY TO SHARE."



THERE IS AN EMPHASIS ON ORGANISING SOCIAL EVENTS FOR MEMBERS, WITH A BIG ONE BEING THE ANNUAL OKTOBERFEST VISIT, "WE HAVE A REGULAR RESERVATION AT ONE OF THE MAIN TENTS - SOMETHING THAT CAN'T BE MISSED AS A MUNICH-BASED TEAM!"

THE CLUB TAKES PART IN OTHER CLUB TRADITIONS AND RITUALS AS WELL,

INCLUDING PARTICIPATING IN THE ANNUAL ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE, "IT'S THE BIGGEST PADDY'S DAY FESTIVAL IN MAINLAND EUROPE. WE WALK IN THE PARADE ALONGSIDE OTHER CLUBS AND ASSOCIATIONS, AS WELL AS RUN A BAR TO HELP THE CLUB MAKE THE MONEY IT NEEDS TO OPERATE EACH YEAR."

ANNA SOPHIA HAS PLAYED FOR ALL SORTS OF CLUBS DURING HER CAREER, BUT IT SEEMS THAT THE MUNICH IRISH ROVERS OFFERS SOMETHING UNIQUE, "THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY HERE IS UNMATCHED," SHE SAYS. "EVEN COMPARED TO OTHER CLUBS I'VE BEEN A PART OF, THE SUPPORT AND CAMARADERIE IS SOMETHING REALLY SPECIAL."

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

A PARTICULARLY MEMORABLE OCCURRENCE, THAT HIGHLIGHTED HOW MUCH ANNA SOPHIA VALUES THE ROVERS COMMUNITY, HAPPENED DURING A MID-SEASON TRIP TO ITALY IN FEBRUARY 2024. "A SUDDEN SNOWSTORM HAD HIT PARTS OF AUSTRIA AND ITALY, WHICH SOME OF THE TEAM HAD MANAGED TO AVOID BY LEAVING EARLIER IN THE DAY," SHE REMEMBERS. "BUT, BY THE TIME MY BUS LEFT MUNICH, THE BLIZZARD WAS IN FULL SWING. WE GOT AS FAR AS INNSBRUCK, BUT WEREN'T ABLE TO CONTINUE ON FROM THERE AS PLANNED.

I WAS CONSIDERING TURNING AROUND AT THAT POINT, WHEN THE GIRLS TOLD ME THAT EVERYONE WAS FRANTICALLY LOOKING UP ALTERNATIVE ROUTES FOR ME TO BE ABLE TO JOIN THEM. AFTER GETTING ON TWO MORE TRAINS AND TAKING A TAXI, I FINALLY ARRIVED IN ROVERETO, NEARLY SIX



HOURS LATER! SEEING HOW THE TEAM HAD BANDED TOGETHER TO HELP ME OUT, ALL SO THAT I WOULDN'T HAVE TO MISS THE PRE-SEASON FIXTURE WE'D ARRANGED, REALLY SPEAKS TO THE TEAM SPIRIT WE HAVE AND HOW EVERYONE ON THE TEAM IS WILLING TO HELP EACH OTHER."

HEROES OF THE GAME

TALKING ABOUT ROLE MODELS AND INSPIRATION FOR ANNA SOPHIA GROWING UP PLAYING FOOTBALL, "THERE WEREN'T ALWAYS A LOT OF OPPORTUNITIES TO WATCH WOMEN'S FOOTBALL, ESPECIALLY NOT ON TV," SHE REMINISCES. "TOGETHER WITH MY TEAMMATES, WE WOULD SOMETIMES WATCH THE CANADIAN WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAM PLAY IN TORONTO, AND I REALLY ADMIRED PLAYERS LIKE DESIREE SCOTT, DIANA MATHESON AND CHRISTINE SINCLAIR."

THERE'S NO LACK OF FOOTBALL TALENT PRODUCED IN MUNICH, "KLARA BÜHL IS ONE OF MY FAVOURITE PLAYERS TO WATCH BECAUSE SHE'S SUCH A FORCE DOWN THE LEFT WING, IN ADDITION TO BEING SKILLED



ON THE BALL. SHE'S THE LATEST OF LOTS OF GREAT PLAYERS TO HAVE COME FROM MUNICH. I ALSO LIKED WATCHING PHILIPP LAHM BECAUSE OF HIS ABILITY TO READ THE GAME AND HIS QUIET LEADERSHIP STYLE," ADDS ANNA SOPHIA.

AS FOR SUCCESS STORIES WITHIN THE CLUB, ONE FORMER ROVERS PLAYER, SHEEVA SEYFI, GOT RECRUITED TO SPEND HALF A SEASON PLAYING IN THE SECOND DIVISION WITH BAYERN MÜNCHEN'S SECOND WOMEN'S TEAM, "WHICH WAS REALLY COOL TO SEE AND TESTAMENT TO HER SKILLS AS A PLAYER."

EXPATS IN MUNICH

DUE TO BEING THE ONLY ENGLISH-SPEAKING CLUB IN MUNICH, THE ROVERS CATER TO THE LARGE EXPAT COMMUNITY AND PROVIDE A PLACE FOR PEOPLE TO GET INVOLVED AND MAKE FRIENDS IN A NEW CITY.

MUNICH IS A CITY WITH FOOTBALL AT ITS CORE, FROM THE GRASSROOTS TO THE TOPFLIGHT, WHERE "ON ANY GIVEN DAY, YOU CAN FIND CLUBS TRAINING ON PITCHES ACROSS THE CITY OR PEOPLE JUST HAVING A KICK-ABOUT ON MUNICIPAL PITCHES. IT'S NOT UNCOMMON TO COME ACROSS PEOPLE AT THE GYM OR ON THE STREET WEARING WORKOUT GEAR FEATURING THE LOGO OF AN AMATEUR CLUB."

LOOKING AHEAD

THEIR NEW HEAD COACH, DAVE MCCALL, ARRIVED LAST YEAR FROM IRELAND, SO THIS SEASON MARKS A NEW CHAPTER FOR THE CLUB UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP. "HE HAS A LOT OF EXPERIENCE COACHING GIRLS' AND WOMEN'S FOOTBALL. WE'RE CURRENTLY JUST THREE POINTS OFF FIRST PLACE. SO, THIS SEASON, WE'RE GOING TO GIVE IT OUR ALL TO TRY AND ACHIEVE PROMOTION."

BUT TO ANNA SOPHIA, IMPROVEMENT IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS "KEEPING THE TEAM SPIRIT AND SENSE OF COMMUNITY THAT MAKE THE MUNICH IRISH ROVERS WHAT IT IS."

GET INVOLVED

KEEN TO GET INVOLVED? ANNA SOPHIA WOULD ENCOURAGE ANYONE TO GET IN TOUCH - "ANYONE THAT'S INTERESTED IS WELCOME TO COME DOWN TO A TRAINING SESSION!"

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