

## Minnesota ODP Germany Tour: Feb. 28–March 10, 2019

Journal by Ben Summers (2003)

The 2019 ODP Germany trip was something I will never forget. My trip was better than I could have ever hoped for. Missing seven days of school to go on this trip was completely worth it!

We started the journey with a long plane ride across the Atlantic Ocean which left all of us tired once we landed in Frankfurt. Despite the jet lag, we hopped on a bus and traveled north for two hours to Wedau. Once we arrived, it was straight to business at the training grounds for our first team practice.

Each day, we had at least one team practice or game against a German opponent. Our German opponents brought great competition to our ODP team by showing us ways of playing we had never encountered back home in the U.S. Each of our practices were either played on a beautiful turf field or a well-maintained grass field at our complex. The best part of the complex for players was the cleat cleaning station for those muddy German days!

Another aspect of our trip was sightseeing around different German cities. We traveled to Cologne and Frankfurt to get a sense of German culture. Shopping, eating local foods and purely exploring what Germany had to offer were some of the things we did in those two cities. All the players enjoyed this time as it was spectacular to experience a culture completely different from ours.

When all of us players talked about the trip before we left, we all agreed that the two Bundesliga games we were going to see would

be an amazing experience and that was the case! We attended a match between Bayer Leverkusen and Freiburg as well as Mainz and Borussia Monchengladbach. Like lots of soccer fans say, the atmosphere at these Bundesliga games was insane! The home and away fans constantly cheered their team no matter what the score line happened to be. This brought an aspect to the match which was unlike any MLS game I had ever been to.

If you were to ask any player what their favorite part of the trip was, a common answer would arise, Borussia Dortmund training. We got to watch Dortmund train at their magnificent training grounds, something I will never forget. One of the best parts was after they had finished training they walked around giving out autographs and taking pictures with all the fans. I took pictures with some of my idols like Marco Reus, Jadon Sancho, and Christian Pulisic. It was a surreal feeling standing next to some of the best players in the world at the sport I love. Not only did we take pictures with world famous players, we also got to interview arguably the best American soccer player in the world right now, Christian Pulisic. We asked him multiple questions about life on and off the pitch. He provided us with great knowledge on how we can reach that next step in our soccer careers.

Overall, the 2019 ODP Germany Trip was a once in a lifetime experience that will be remembered for the rest of my life.