



Football in the Stuttgart Arena: A journey through the stadium's history

Stuttgart has already celebrated many great moments in international football. The final chapter of the 2006 "summer fairytale" was written in Baden-Württemberg's state capital with the celebration of unforgettable victories over Brazil and Italy. The highest attendance for a sporting spectacle was recorded at a legendary friendly game – with more than 100,000 spectators on a particularly memorable occasion. Here we look back at the most important international matches from nine decades of Stuttgart stadium history:

Brazil on the Neckar: How the "Selecao" fared in the Stuttgart Arena

The German national team's most frequent opponents in Stuttgart were Brazil, with four encounters between the record world champions and the home team taking place here. It was also here that the Germans achieved their first ever victory against the South American virtuosos. On **June 16, 1968**, the "Selecao" played in front of 74,164 spectators in Stuttgart. Back then, the Stuttgart Arena was called the Neckarstadion, the national coach was Helmut Schön, and the German defense was organized by Berti Vogts. Sigi Held gave Germany the lead in the eighth minute, and HSV legend Gert "Charlie" Dörfel made it 2-0 (56') before Brazil scored two minutes later to make it 2-1.

Even more goals were scored against the same opponents on **August 10, 2011**, in Germany's furious 3-2 victory. 54,767 spectators watched the duel between the football heavyweights – and Bastian Schweinsteiger on his very best form. The FC Bayern Munich playmaker scored, as did 19-year-old Mario Götze and substitute André Schürrle. The goals for Brazil were scored by Robinho and young star Neymar.

The international match of 1950: A memorable day in Stuttgart's football history

The meeting that took place in Stuttgart on **November 22, 1950**, was historic in every respect: The first international match for a German national team after the Second World War, it was a friendly against Switzerland. The German Football Association officially registered 96,400 spectators, and indeed the 80,000-capacity arena was hugely overcrowded. Estimates published in the newspapers varied between 103,000 and 120,000 fans – outside of Berlin, no international match in Germany has ever been played in front of such a large crowd.

The English referee didn't want to blow the whistle at first. Then it looked like the match might have to be called off as the spectators crowded right up to the edge of the pitch and chaotic conditions prevailed in the stands after rain had turned parts of the spectator area into a muddy wasteland. According to contemporaries, it was so cramped in the standing area that the predominantly male spectators couldn't even take off their hats during the Swiss national anthem. The Federal Republic, founded a year earlier, did not even have an anthem yet, and instead there was a minute's silence. "Dead silence reigns in the 115,000-strong crowd," wrote "Sport Magazin" at the time.

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With ticket prices starting at 50 pfennigs, the crowds were probably so big partly because the radio stations only broadcast the second half – and there was no television back then. The result (a 1-0 victory for the Germans after a penalty) was almost a minor matter on the day.

Historic duel: Germany against the autonomous Saarland in Stuttgart

October 11, 1953, was also a special day in German international match history. In qualifying for the 1954 World Cup, the German national team played against the then autonomous Saarland in Stuttgart. Germany won 3-0 against the Saarland team coached by future national coach Helmut Schön, qualified for the World Cup, and one year later celebrated their triumphant first World Cup title in the "miracle of Bern". Saarland joined the Federal Republic on January 1, 1957, as the tenth federal state and from then on no longer had its own national team.

2006: The Stuttgart Arena as the stage for the summer fairytale

Most fans still remember the match for third place at the 2006 World Cup – the final chapter of the summer fairytale. Bastian Schweinsteiger made another strong appearance on the evening of **July 8, 2006**: In the 3-1 win against Portugal, he scored goals to take the score to 1-0 and 3-0. Germany clinched the World Cup bronze and became the "champions of hearts". It was also Jürgen Klinsmann's farewell as coach of the German national team as well as Oliver Kahn's 86th and final match in the national jersey.

1994: Klinsmann's return to Stuttgart and the win against Italy

Jürgen Klinsmann always had a very special relationship with Stuttgart. From 1984 to 1989, he scored 94 goals here in 186 competitive matches for VfB – including an unusually spectacular one: His overhead kick in the 3-0 win against Bayern Munich was voted "goal of the year" in 1987. He later said that the goal had "opened more doors than any other in my career". By **March 23, 1994**, he had long since become an internationally celebrated star striker and returned to the Stuttgart Arena with the national team. In the thrilling friendly against Italy, Klinsmann turned a 1-0 deficit (Baggio) into a 2-1 victory in the eternal prestige duel with two goals in front of 52,800 spectators.

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1988: Memorable encounters in Stuttgart at the first European Football Championship in Germany

Stuttgart has already hosted two European Football Championship matches. On the one previous occasion the tournament was held in Germany in 1988, two memorable duels took place here. On June 12, Ireland faced arch-rivals England at the Neckarstadion. The "Boys in Green", coached by England's legendary 1966 world champion Jack Charlton, sensationally won the first European Championship match in Ireland's football history 1-0 – with a header from the diminutive Ray Houghton who is just 1.70 meters tall.

On June 22, football heavyweights the USSR and Italy met in the European Championship semi-final at the same venue in front of 61,606 spectators. The clearly superior Soviet Union won 2-0 with a double strike in the 58th and 62nd minute – and lost the final against the Netherlands in Munich three days later with a score of 2-0.

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