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The Anfield Wrap

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KLOPP is the first to admit that he had an unremarkable playing career. As a youngster he played for several lower league clubs, and in 1987 moved from 1. FC Pforzheim to Eintracht Frankfurt, where he multitasked expertly by playing for the amateur side, studying sport science and coaching the club's under-13 team.

Over the next couple of years he would also play for Viktoria Sindlingen and Rot-Weiss Frankfurt, before eventually ending up at FSV Mainz 05 in 1990, where he would remain for the rest of his career.

As a young VfB Stuttgart fan, Klopp's favourite player was centre-back Karlheinz Förster. He was an unspectacular, no-nonsense kind of defender, and Klopp was drawn to that. He was dedicated, intelligent, and above all else, played at full throttle. He was also only 5ft 10in, not ideal for a centre-back, but he made up for this with his attitude and it earned him 81 caps for West Germany. He was Stuttgart through and through, making over 300 appearances for Die Roten, and even managed over 100 appearances at his only other senior club, Olympique de Marseille.

Klopp began playing life as a striker, and has often described himself as an average player, but he eventually became a defender who embodied everything that he had loved about Förster. He wasn't as successful and never made an appearance for the national side, but he played with heart, desire, passion and commitment, and also managed to score 52 goals in 346 appearances.

Zierner says of his former teammate, 'He was not a good technical player, but he always played with aggression. He was a big team man, a very good friend of all the players.'

'He had many, many ideas, but he also got many ideas from Wolfgang Frank. He would speak many times with him about tactics. At this time, we already knew he was born to make a trainer.'

Wolfgang Frank had two spells in the 1990s as manager at Mainz, and he was one of the first coaches in Germany to stop utilising the sweeper position. Frank preferred to use a four-man backline with a diamond midfield, and strongly believed in a high press, immaculate organisation of the defence and overloading the flanks.

Klopp has said that Frank was the coach he learned most from during his playing days, and had an on-air catch-up with his old boss on the German football review show *Sky90* in March 2013. Frank sadly passed away just six months later.

Early on in his playing days Klopp decided he would eventually go into coaching, and twice a week would make the 250-mile round trip to Cologne to take classes at the fabled coaching school of Erich Rutemöller.

Rutemöller trained his students through the Deutscher Fußball-Bund (DFB) Football Teacher course, the German FA's equivalent to UEFA's top coaching qualification, with other graduates including Thomas Tuchel, Mirko Slomka, Christian Streich and Paul Lambert.

Klopp had been a striker at Rot-Weiss Frankfurt, noted for his pace and ability in the air, which is why Mainz manager Robert Jung brought him to Die Nullfünger (the 05s). In 11 years at the Rhine club he made 325 appearances, and over that time gradually moved from striker to right midfield, and finally to right-back.

It was Frank who moved Klopp to defence, and it was he who had more influence on how Klopp would develop both as a player and as a future coach than anyone.

As a player, Frank himself had been a striker, playing for the likes of Stuttgart and Borussia Dortmund. He went on to manage in Switzerland and at German second division side Rot-Weiss Essen, who he guided to the 1994 DFB-Pokal (German Cup) Final. Once he became Mainz boss, Frank's effect was immediate. His influence on the players he managed became apparent in later years as a large number of them would go on to become coaches themselves.

Frank was a big fan of Klopp, as Klopp was of Frank, who believed that Klopp's passion and desire came from his own frustrations at his

limited technical ability. What Klopp lacked in skill, he more than made up for in intelligence and effort.

In the early 1990s football was obsessed with the '*libero*' system – the use of a sweeper – and no country encompassed the system as much as Germany. From the legendary Franz Beckenbauer to Lothar Matthäus and Matthias Sammer, the idea of using any other system was practically unthinkable. Some coaches had tried back fours, but were quickly shouted back down and eventually relented. That was apart from Frank. He was convinced the *libero* system was dated and on its way out, and had enjoyed success with a back four in Switzerland where there was less resistance to change.

Mainz had been struggling so badly before Frank's arrival that they were willing to try anything. Frank himself was influenced by the great Milan coach Arrigo Sacchi and showed his players drills that the Italian used in making a back-four system as solid and effective as the sweeper one. The players embraced the ideas and practised hard in training. In their first game utilising it against FC Saarbrücken, they found themselves 4-0 up after half an hour. They ended up winning 5-0.

Frank's tactics didn't just involve a back four, but zonal marking, high pressing, and a dedication to winning the ball as high up the pitch as possible. It was clear years later where Klopp had first found what would be the inspiration to his own football philosophy.

A bad run of results saw Frank leave the club after a couple of years, but following a series of other managerial failures, he returned in the late '90s. The fans were so happy to have him back they chanted 'Messiah! Messiah!' at his first home game, and enjoyed another near three years using his preferred pressing tactics. However, after flirting with a move to MSV Duisburg, he was out the door again.

More managers came and went, including Eckhard Krautzun, who had got the job after a conversation with Klopp gave him enough inside information on the state of the team to impress in his interview. However, Krautzun was less successful once in charge, and it wasn't long before Mainz sporting director Christian Heidel decided he might need to make a change.

He couldn't find a manager that inspired him, and could not figure out who would be best to take the reins after Krautzun. It was pointed out to him that the dressing room was full of leaders, including Klopp. Heidel decided to offer Klopp the role of player-manager, which Klopp said yes to immediately, though he made one demand, that the role of player was removed. Klopp was now a manager.

The initial public reaction was not as effusive as Heidel had been. At his first press conference the assembled journalists jokingly asked if Klopp was lost when they saw him sat next to Heidel. He had sceptics to convince, and convince them he did.

On the training pitch Klopp was mirroring his mentor, Frank, making sure the players were well drilled in a back-four system and that the main philosophy of the team was of high pressing and counter-pressing (known as '*gegenpressing*' in Germany), and results turned around immediately. He won six of his first seven games.

While Klopp followed Frank's principles, he also added his own. The young coach allowed his players more freedom to express their individual abilities, but with the caveat that the team always came first.

He steered Mainz clear of relegation from the second division and in his first two seasons nearly led them to unlikely promotions. They were both heartbreaking scenarios as failure to win on the last day of the 2001/02 season stopped them going up, and the following year it was an injury-time goal from Klopp's former club, Eintracht Frankfurt, that denied them on goal difference.

Some suggested it was a curse, but the manager and his team would not be kept down. In 2003/04 they enjoyed the fortune of results elsewhere themselves and a 3-0 win over Eintracht Trier saw them earn the club's first ever promotion to the Bundesliga.

Against all the odds, they managed to spend three seasons in the top division, finishing 11th in their first two.

Coming top of the fair play league in their first season meant a place in the UEFA Cup in 2005/06. Klopp led them to a historic 4-0 win over FC Mika of Armenia in the club's first ever European game, before overcoming Icelandic outfit Keflavík in the final qualifying round. They were eventually eliminated by Sevilla in the first round, but had represented themselves well.

However, by the third season the players who had been overachieving were being poached by bigger clubs. Mainz only gathered 11 points in the first half of the 2006/07 season, and despite a slight recovery, including winning five of their first six games after the winter break, they were relegated at the season's end.

The following year, their fate again came down to the final day of the season. They needed to win and hope that Hoffenheim didn't if they were to gain immediate promotion back to the Bundesliga. Klopp's men battered Hamburg 5-1, but unfortunately Hoffenheim went one better and won 5-0 against Greuther Fürth. Klopp was in

tears, and not just because he hadn't managed to get his team back to the top flight. He had promised Heidel that he would resign if he didn't gain promotion. After his final game at Bruchwegstadion, Klopp and his players sat on the pitch as the Mainz fans sang 'You'll Never Walk Alone'. It was an omen of things to come later in his career.

Somewhere close to 20,000 people gathered in Guttenbergplatz in Mainz town centre to say goodbye to their iconic boss. They chanted his name as an emotional Klopp gave an impassioned speech to the club that had raised him in football. The loudspeakers belted out the Trude Herr song 'Niemand geht man so ganz' ('Nobody ever completely leaves').

It was inevitable that Klopp wouldn't be out of work for long. He'd made a name for himself. Not just in the way he had overachieved at Mainz with his revolutionary style of football, but with his cult of personality. He had taken to press conferences straight away. His infectious enthusiasm charmed all who observed, and it wasn't just in his work at Mainz.

The 2006 World Cup in Germany took the country by storm, not just in the way the national side came so close to glory before dramatic elimination by Italy in the semi-finals, but the overall spirit of the competition. At the centre of the national coverage was Klopp, who had agreed to be a pundit for the summer. The way he talked about the game, broke it down in common sense terms compared to other pundits, and did it all with an obvious love for the sport meant that he had become close to a national darling by the tournament's end. Interest in him was high, and once he became available, Bundesliga clubs started circling.

Hamburg, Bayer Leverkusen and Bayern Munich had all shown an interest due to his results and popularity. Bayern felt he was more of a motivator than a tactician, and decided to go with Jürgen Klinsmann instead. However, another club made their interest known and straight away Klopp knew it had the potential to be the perfect match.

As new Borussia Dortmund manager, he had a big job on his hands. He replaced the outgoing Thomas Doll, who had struggled with an ageing squad. BVB were one of the biggest clubs in Germany – they had won the Champions League just 11 years earlier – but were coming fresh off a 13th-place finish in the league. Klopp was tasked with overhauling the squad, filling it with new young talent and getting them to play the kind of football he had brought in at Mainz, but to a higher level.

The biggest early move of this new era was when Klopp got rid of elder statesmen centre-backs Christian Worns and Robert Kovač and replaced them with two teenagers, Mats Hummels and Neven Subotić, the latter of which had followed him from Mainz.

It was a curious change as Dortmund had shipped 62 goals the previous season, but the necessary improvement would not just be down to Hummels and Subotić. Klopp made sure to drill into everyone that every single player on the pitch had a responsibility to defend.

His first competitive game saw him come up against Bayern Munich in the T-Home Supercup – the German equivalent to the Community Shield. Dortmund won 2-1.

From there optimism flowed. Dortmund did indeed play like a higher-level version of Mainz. It was far from a faultless season but an eventual sixth-place finish was a lot better than what had gone before.

Klopp was building, slowly but surely, and assured fans that success would follow. The next season saw a slight improvement as they finished fifth and earned European qualification, but it was from there that everything clicked for Klopp and BVB.

Dortmund started the 2010/11 season with a 2-0 loss to Bayer Leverkusen, but went on to win 14 of their next 15 games, and the young exhilarating team that Klopp had put together over three years went on to win the league with two weeks to spare after a 2-0 win over Nürnberg.

The likes of Hummels, Subotić, Roman Weidenfeller, Sven Bender, Łukasz Piszczek, Marcel Schmelzer, Kevin Großkreutz, Shinji Kagawa, Nuri Şahin, Mario Götze and Lucas Barrios had either been brought through the youth system or been signed for comparative peanuts compared to what Bayern had spent on their squad, but Dortmund had overcome them with ease.

The following season needed to be one of continuity, though two big changes were necessary. Şahin left for Real Madrid and was replaced by İlkay Gündoğan, while Barrios made room for an unknown young Polish striker by the name of Robert Lewandowski.

As often happens in football when a team achieves unexpected success, what follows quickly is scepticism as to whether it was a fluke. Dortmund did nothing to quell the questions at the start of the 2011/12 season as they experienced early defeats to Hoffenheim, Hertha Berlin and Hannover. They suffered more defeats in the first six games than they had in the entire previous campaign.

The surprise factor had gone, and teams were playing Dortmund with the same determination to stop them as they did with Bayern.

They needed to evolve, and Klopp made sure they did. They started to move the ball around more, were less reliant on trying to counter-attack as they weren't being given the space to do so, and they needed to use more weapons.

After an inauspicious start, Lewandowski went on to cement the place of centre-forward. Barrios was out injured after a muscle tear during the summer, but failed to ever get back into the team due to the form of the Pole, who scored 22 times in his first proper season.

Once the goals started flowing, the points followed. Dortmund soared back towards the top of the league and found themselves in a three-way title race with Bayern and Borussia Mönchengladbach. A Dortmund home win over Bayern on matchday 30 saw them go six points clear, which was followed by a derby victory at Schalke 04 and then another three points against Gladbach that clinched a second consecutive Bundesliga title. A week after their last league game of the season – a 4-0 win over Freiburg – they took on Bayern again, this time in the DFB-Pokal Final. They hammered Jupp Heynckes's men 5-2 in Berlin to secure the double.

This was no fluke, this was a genuinely top-class team that Klopp had built and coached to the top of German football.

All over the world people were fascinated by the resurgence of BVB. Klopp had revived them and turned them into a German powerhouse again, and without lavishly spending money, but by finding hungry and talented players and coaching them, instilling his tactics and fearing no one.

It would turn out to be Klopp's last league title win with Dortmund, but it didn't stop his team impressing further. After domestic success, the next stop was Europe, and the 2012/13 season saw them very nearly get all the way to the summit.

Dortmund embarked on a daunting Champions League campaign as they drew Ajax, Manchester City and Real Madrid in the group stages. They ended up topping the group.

After beating Shakhtar Donetsk in the last 16, they took on the newly-rich Spanish side Málaga. After a 0-0 in Spain, the second leg provided enough drama to last a lifetime. Klopp's men went 2-1 down with eight minutes to play. They needed two goals to go through, and got them in the 91st and 93rd minutes.

In the semi-final they made the world sit up and take notice as they hammered the mighty Real Madrid 4-1 in the first leg, with all four goals scored by Lewandowski, before eventually securing a 4-3 aggregate win.

Inevitably, they were to play Bayern in the final at Wembley Stadium. Every non-Bayern fan seemed to want Dortmund to triumph. They had become the football hipster's favourite team, and the second team of many who just enjoyed watching them overachieve against the odds with exciting fast-paced football.

Klopp had beaten Heynckes in the DFB-Pokal Final the year before, but Bayern and their team of megastars went in as favourites having beaten Klopp's men to the Bundesliga title by 25 points and scored nearly 100 goals in their 34 league games.

This was a special Bayern team, and despite a spirited fightback to 1-1 having gone a goal down, Dortmund succumbed to a late Arjen Robben strike and were denied Champions League glory. It was another kick in the teeth for Klopp after he had learned just a few weeks earlier that one of his star players, Götze, had decided to leave Dortmund to join Bayern.

This was an issue that Klopp needed to deal with. As great as the spirit was that he had built at the club, it was inevitable that with success would come admirers, and he was fighting a losing battle to keep hold of his star players. Since the first title win he had lost Şahin to Real Madrid, Kagawa to Manchester United, Götze to Bayern and a year later, Lewandowski followed.

The likes of Marco Reus, Henrikh Mkhitaryan and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang came in as replacements and were largely success stories, but they weren't quite able to replicate the heights of their predecessors in terms of trophies.

The 2013/14 season saw a slightly improved league campaign, but it was ultimately another runners-up spot as Pep Guardiola steamrolled Bayern to the title. There was also another final defeat in the DFB-Pokal to their old enemy.

Dortmund were still playing entertaining football and winning plenty of games, but Bayern's relentless suffocation of the league meant the motivation of thinking the title was possible was rarely there. However, no one anticipated what would happen the following season.

The 2014/15 campaign began with a trophy, beating Bayern 2-0 in the German Supercup, but the league campaign started as it meant to go on, with a dour 2-0 loss at home to Bayer Leverkusen. The opening goal of the game came just nine seconds into the season.

Nothing seemed to work for Dortmund. Teams had started realising that sitting deep and forcing Klopp's side to break their parked bus was stifling them. There were also numerous injuries to deal with,

and despite the returns of Şahin and Kagawa, they could not rediscover the form that had brought them so much success years earlier.

At the halfway stage of the season, Dortmund were second from bottom of the league. However, one of the reasons Klopp had cited for the difficulties was the lack of time he'd had with his players in pre-season following the 2014 World Cup. He now had six weeks to work with them in training and to try and get them prepared for the second half of the campaign.

Dortmund did recover and managed to climb their way from 17th to 7th in the final Bundesliga table.

A few weeks before the end of the season, the club called a press conference. No one was certain why, but the media assembled. There were rumours, there was speculation, and soon enough it was confirmed by CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke. At the end of the season, Jürgen Klopp would be leaving Borussia Dortmund.

Klopp explained, 'This decision feels absolutely right ... I believe that BVB needs a change. There will be other influences on the team, which will be positive.

'It's not that I'm tired, I've not had contact with another club but don't plan to take a sabbatical.

'I always said in that moment where I believe I am not the perfect coach any more for this extraordinary club, I will say so. I really think the decision is the right one. This club deserves to be coached from the 100 per cent right manager.'

Fittingly in his last game at Signal Iduna Park, his team won 3-2 against Werder Bremen. It allowed there to be nothing but bittersweet smiles in his final goodbye to the fans in the stadium where he had resided for seven years. Klopp was in tears, as were the fans, who unfurled a large banner across the legendary Yellow Wall part of the stadium that simply read 'Danke Jürgen'.

There was though one more game to go. It would have been the perfect way to say goodbye to win one last trophy, but unfortunately despite going 1-0 up, Klopp's team were beaten 3-1 by Wolfsburg in the DFB-Pokal Final. The Dortmund chapter of Klopp's career was at an end.

In spite of making it clear in his goodbye press conference that he did not want to take a sabbatical from football, he decided that before he came back to the game he wanted to have a long holiday to spend time with his family.

Stories of an immediate return would not cease of course. In fact both Klopp and Fenerbahçe felt forced to release separate statements

that he would not be joining the Turkish club straight after he packed his bags in Dortmund, such was the level of media reporting that Istanbul would be his next destination.

There had been extensive media coverage in Germany around the future of Klopp, and many felt it almost inevitable that he was merely biding his time until he could come back and manage Bayern once Dortmund had moved on and Pep Guardiola had vacated his seat. Even BVB sporting director Michael Zorc felt it was possible, telling *Sport Bild* ahead of *Der Klassiker* that Klopp to Bayern was 'factually conceivable'.

Instead of the Allianz Arena hotseat though, Klopp was offered the chance of taking charge of the Mexican national side, but Mexico Football Federation general secretary Guillermo Cantú revealed that he turned them down. 'We sought him out through his agent, but he told us it would not be possible because he wants to continue to take a break for right now,' Cantú said on TV Azteca.

Just over a week later, Klopp was officially announced as Liverpool manager.