

## Fan interview

**Andre Kruger is that rarest of soccer creatures: a German (living in Hanover) who prefers to support New Zealand and Australian soccer teams rather than his own country. Maybe it's just that wicked German sense of humour popping up again, but Andre has shown where his heart lies by contributing to Australian fanzine *Studs Up* for many years and now explains his attachment to New Zealand. To give you the full flavour of a foreign speaking fan who supports the All Whites, we've decided not to correct the odd grammatical error.**

**Sitter!:** Why has a German football fan got such a fascination with Australian and New Zealand football?

**Andre:** It started when I was around five years old. My parents bought me an Australian flag. Every morning I went in front of the house to put it up, in the evening down. As kids, we played in Australian colours against other parts of the city, I think we won the World Cup many times for Australia. New Zealand is so close, and because of Australia, I followed the Kiwi Soccer too.

My wish is, that in the future there is a chance that two teams from Oceania can reach the World Cup, maybe over Asia. I hate the situation of the finals between these two countries. It's always Australia or New Zealand at the moment, but as we all know, since 1982 there was no team from that part of the world at the World Cup.

**Sitter!:** Tell us a little bit about your website. Will you look at including some

New Zealand content?

**Andre:** My head is full of ideas, but I am married and I have to work, so I have not enough time for my website, The Southern Cross (<http://www.ak-tsc.de>). The main reason for my page is, to bring down everything about Peter Wilson and the Australian World Cup adventure 1974.

Now I have a few other hobby's on this page and I will write also more about the history. No statistics, but story's about the past and a lot of photos. In my plan is a big site about New Zealand in Spain 1982, as a tribute to a fantastic team. But I need time. I have the goals from the final versus China on tape, and I will put this on my page in the near future.

**Sitter!:** You have a good knowledge of the Australian and New Zealand game. Who are your favourite players from this part of the world and why?

**Andre:** My top favourite player is Aussie Peter Wilson. I like him because he was a rock in the defence and he played so many games for his country. I



am in contact with him since 74, it looks like that I am the only person who speak with him about football, because he lives the life of a recluse.

My hero from New Zealand was Brian Turner. I am sure, if I am not a Wilson collector, I collect everything about Brian. In the early days it was a close race. I love Turner for the way he played, and the best is, he played on every position in the National team.

When I say every, I mean it, because Brian Turner played also once at goal for his home country. It was in 1980 on a Tour when they played versus Al Ahli in Dubai, when the keepers are out of injury. I am sure not many players in World Football have this kind of record. I am searching since 30 years for a pic, seeing Wilson and Turner on one photo, at the moment with out any success.

**Sitter!:** You live in Hanover. Do you support the local Zweite liga side '96?

**Andre:** I support them, because it's my home team, but I go not to many games. We had a long time of poor soccer here, bad games and a lot of miss management. That changed in the last few years. Now, 96 won the second League and went straight up to the 1. Bundesliga. I will go to a few coming matches, like against Bayern, Dortmund or Leverkusen.

**Sitter!:** Our assistant editor Grant Stantiall sent you a Kingz scarf and an All Whites shirt. Where do you wear these and do people give you strange looks wearing this stuff on holiday or at matches in Germany?

**Andre:** I was wearing the shirt on my Caribbean sea trip. On Trinidad, British Virgin Island and Barbados I run around with the shirt. A few people thought it was the German jersey.

**Sitter!:** Wynton Rufer. New Zealanders really don't have much of an idea just how well respected Kiwi Rufer is in your

homeland. Can you give us some insight into what exactly German fans think about him?

**Andre:** The people here, especially in Bremen, loves Wynton Alan Whai Rufer. He was a brilliant player and a Sportsman you will find no other here. But it was not only the Rufer on the field, it was also the friendly, nice person. He never talked bad things in the Newspapers or on TV, he was never angry about opponents or players who kicked him. He talked also a lot about peace and Jesus, and he asked for help for the poor and sick people around the world.

I remember a story a few years ago, when Werder Bremen was with the team bus on the way home after an away game. In front of the bus there was an bad accident, where one or two people get killed. The whole team of Werder was shocked to see the place with the crashed cars. Wynton went out the bus and he made at the street a divine service with all the players. He had a speech for the killed people and for God help to give their families enough power to get out of this situation.

This story was in every newspaper and many people will never forget this. On the field Rufer had brilliant ideas, he was fast and power full, always dangerous. He was one of the best foreigners the German first Division ever had, and we had a lot.

**Sitter!:** It's the 20th anniversary of the New Zealand side that first qualified for the 1982 World Cup finals in Spain. What memories of that World Cup do you have in respect of the New Zealand side. Did any players impress you?

**Andre:** Of course. I followed the qualification, and I was unhappy about the bad performance from the Socceroos. My friend (Rudi) Gutendorf made a lot of mistakes, but also without that, the Kiwi side was much stronger. Up today I say, it

was the strongest team Oceania ever had.

After the first bad results against Saudi Arabia (2-2) and Kuwait (1-2), I thought that's it. Then New Zealand reached the 2-2 in Kuwait, when they got the second goal against them in the last minute. For the last game they needed a 5 goal win, so that sounds impossible. I was at that time on Skiing in Austria and from a Mountain I called a Sportmagazine, they told me New Zealand won 5-0. It was for me a sensation and it shows the fantastic team spirit. I was very happy when they won the final game versus China.

I watched all New Zealand games at the World Cup, they played a great tournament with two fantastic goals. The names of a few players are still like music in my ears. Sumner, Woodin, Herbert, Doods, Elrik to name just a few and

of course Grant Turner. I never forget his brilliant header against Australia in Sydney.

**Sitter!:** The 1999 Confederation Cup in Mexico. Germany v New Zealand. Who were you supporting?

**Andre:** New Zealand, with no doubt. In any sport I am with Australia and New Zealand. If they play each other, I hope the better will win. Against Germany, the Kiwis are just the underdogs, so every close result is like a win. In Mexico, Deutschland had a poor team, but many people were shocked here when they scored just two goals.

**Sitter!:** Germany and New Zealand's home shirts are practically the same colour. Which one do you prefer?

**Andre:** I have no German shirt, and I never had one. For me the Kiwi tricot has more fashion, more style. Once, when I was wearing it, some one said to me "oh what

a beautiful shirt" and I said, yes, it looks like our German home tricot. The guy answered, "no it's much nicer, do you sale it?"

**Sitter!:** Can you recommend any good cheap Germany players that could play for the Football Kingz?

**Andre:** Good yes, cheap...no. Soccer is since Bosman went to the court a big business here. You can earn a lot of money, also if you are a second or third grade player. Kingz player Levent Osman was in Hanover two years ago for a few

week trial. He got no contract, but was very close. We have some very good players in our third Leagues, but the big clubs prefer to buy the cheap players from the eastern part of Europe.

**Sitter!:** What is your best moment in football with regards to Australian and New Zealand soccer?

**Andre:** The two World Cups, 1974 and 82. The game Australia versus Uruguay, because I saw it live in Melbourne where I met a lot of my old soccer heroes. I was a special guest. Someone told me Steve Sumner was there, but I was too late to meet him.

**Sitter!:** If New Zealand was to play Germany, in Germany, who would you support?

**Andre:** Believe me, I will go there with my Kiwi shirt and a flag. But that means nothing what they are doing down on the ground. I have no influence to the result, but I wish that New Zealand will win to show the world that you can play also a good soccer on the other side of the planet.

Hope this is well. Please change the many mistakes I made. And ask me, if you are not sure what I mean, I am just a German. :-)

***"The names of a few  
players are still like  
music in my ears.  
Sumner, Woodin,  
Herbert, Doods, Elrik  
to name just a few..."***

---