


# STADIONGESCHICHTEN



## Stories of a Stadium

- 1** Take your marks, set, go!  
Athletics at the Waldstadion
  - 2** At times over 80,000 seats  
The stadium's history
  - 3** More than 3,500 trees  
The "public garden" stadium
  - 4** Speeding up the ramp  
Memories of the cycle track
  - 5** Diving into sporting history  
The stadium pool in the city forest
  - 6** Water tanks and green power  
The stadium and the environment
  - 7** Sport and music  
Multifunctional uses – yesterday and today
  - 8** Nordwestkurve  
Home of Eintracht fans
  - 9** Health temple  
Exercise in the Winter Sports Hall
  - 10** The rebirth of Hellas  
Culture in the stadium
  - 11** The white sport  
World class tennis on Center Court
-  **Eintracht Frankfurt Museum**



In 1925, the "Frankfurter Stadion" was opened in the "Stadtwald" (or Frankfurt's "city forest"). It had originally been the location of a military shooting range, which was no longer permitted to be used after World War I. The 42-hectare grounds became a new home for many sportsmen and women. In addition to the actual stadium, there was a cycle race track, an open-air swimming facility, a tennis complex, an open-air theatre in the forest and a riding arena at the location where the winter sports hall was later built. In recent decades, much has changed on the grounds of the Frankfurt Stadium. Today, not much remains of the original buildings. The "Stories of a Stadium" project is aimed at recalling the diverse uses of the Frankfurt Stadium in the past and reviving some of its stories, both large and small. We hope you enjoy discovering the history of the Frankfurt Stadium!



## 1 Take your marks, set, go!

Athletics at the Waldstadion



Since 1938, the bronze statue “Läuferin am Start” (“Female athlete at the start”) behind the main entrance has recalled the history of athletics at the stadium. Athletes had ideal competition conditions on the main track. Around the central playing field, there was a 500-metre track plus pits and throwing rings.

The highlight of the stadium’s athletics history came on August 12, 1939, when Rudolf Harbig set a new 400-metre world record. Shortly afterwards, World War II transformed all aspects of life.

The first German Athletics Championships after the war were held in Frankfurt at the Waldstadion in August 1946. The stadium was converted between 1953 and 1955 to create a 400-metre track that conformed to standard international distances. In 1955, 1976, 1988 and 1997, the German Athletics Championships were held in the stadium. The 1997 championships were the last in the history of the Waldstadion, as the conversion between 2002 and 2005 removed the race track to create a multifunctional football arena.

## 2 At times over 80,000 seats

The stadium’s history



Construction work for the Frankfurt Stadium began in 1921, but due to the chaos of inflation, building measures were interrupted several times. The stadium was finally officially opened on May 21, 1925, with a capacity of over 35,000 people.

After the NSDAP took power, the stadium was also used for political rallies, for instance the regional Hessen-Nassau National Socialist Party conference in 1933.

The stadium experienced three major conversion phases: In 1938, its capacity was initially increased to 50,000 people, and then to 80,000 in 1955. The stadium was massively converted prior to the World Cup in 1974. The old main stand was demolished and replaced by a functional structure, while the opposite stand was given a roof. The “new” Waldstadion then had a capacity of 60,000.

In 2002, the bulldozers rolled in again. In preparation for the World Cup in 2006, the entire stadium was renovated once more. Today, the Commerzbank-Arena has a capacity of 51,500 for league games.

## 3 More than 3,500 trees

The “public garden” stadium



In 1925, an “exercise ground” was established to the left of Einmarschallee. At the front end at the level of the stadium hotel, the area was heightened using embankments. Over the years, that exercise ground became known as the “Festwiese” (“Festival Field”). Today, the Festwiese is part of the stadium pool and is used as an additional place to sunbathe and play during the bathing season, or as an event location.

The hotel connected to the former exercise ground was part of the stadium’s prestigious entrance area. After the last lease for the stadium hotel ended in 2001, catering services were no longer provided.

From the very beginning, the entire grounds of the stadium were conceived as a “public garden”. In addition to buildings and sports facilities, the locals could also use the area as a park. That park character has remained to this day: The responsible foresters check the 3,500 trees regularly and there are 3.6 kilometres of footpaths.

## 4 Speeding up the ramp

Memories of the cycle track



The cycle track was opened on September 13, 1925 and fulfilled the dream of cycling sport enthusiasts. The oval that was sunken into the terrain provided seats for 20,700 spectators. A tunnel connected the changing rooms, washrooms and workshops that were built on the lower level of the main stand to the rest of the interior. Another spectator tunnel provided access from the entrance at Mörfelder Landstrasse to the interior, which was also used for boxing events and as an artificial ice rink between 1960 and 1993.

Frankfurt’s cycle track sport particularly flourished in the post-war period. Motor-paced races covered distances of 10 to 70 kilometres, even 100 km for professionals. Towards the end of the 1950s, interest in track racing declined. After the 4th stage of the Deutschland Cup motor-paced race in 1993, the cycle track closed its doors for the last time. Where once cyclists battled against each other in exciting races, there is now a car park after the cycle track was demolished in 2002.

**5**

## Diving into sporting history

The stadium pool in the city forest



Frankfurt's first artificial outdoor swimming pool was opened on July 5, 1925. The 22-metre pool made of reinforced concrete was divided by a jetty with eight starting blocks into a 100-metre long swimming pool and an 18-metre long diving pool. The 10-metre diving tower became a landmark of the stadium baths. After the end of the war, the American military government confiscated the stadium baths in May 1945 and renamed it the "Victory Pool". It was reopened to the public for the 1950 bathing season. The pool was completely overhauled between 1985 and 1987. A new "fun pool" was built between the main pool and the lawn. The old diving tower was dismantled and an identical new tower was equipped with a floor surface that was suitable for competitions.

**6**

## Water tanks and green power

The stadium and the environment



Environmental protection is a big issue for the Frankfurt Stadium. The stadium is powered by eco-power from hydroelectric sources, especially eco-friendly natural gas and water. That means it can cover its entire energy requirements in a carbon-neutral way. When the arena was built, two water tanks for process water with a storage capacity of around 400 m<sup>3</sup> were sunken into the ground. The rainwater flowing from the stadium roof is stored in those tanks and used to irrigate the pitch and flush the toilets. The Commerzbank-Arena is the only World Cup stadium that has received two "Ökoprofit" certificates for its ecological commitment. Since 2014, the Commerzbank-Arena has also been awarded the internationally leading BREEAM® certificate as a pilot project for existing buildings in the field of sports venues.

**7**

## Sport and music

Multifunctional uses – yesterday & today



At the stadium's first official game on June 7, 1925, FSV Frankfurt was beaten 1-0 by 1. FC Nürnberg in the final of the German Championships. The first international game was played in 1930, when Germany was beaten 2-0 by Italy. In 1974, the World Cup was opened in the Waldstadion, which hosted a total of five games during the competition. In 2005, the completely renovated Commerzbank-Arena presented the Confederations Cup, followed by the World Cup in 2006. The stadium was also a venue during the 1988 European Championships. In 2003 and 2008 the UEFA Women's Cup Final was played in the stadium and in 2011, Frankfurt was a venue of the Women's World Cup. In the 1991/92 season and from 1995 to 2007, the stadium was also the home of the American football team Frankfurt Galaxy. The stadium even presented boxing events. Max Schmeling, Muhammad Ali as well as Wladimir Klitschko fought in Frankfurt. The stadium was the venue for music concerts: Madonna, Prince, Bruce Springsteen, Tina Turner, the Rolling Stones, Depeche Mode and many other renowned artists have performed there.

**8**

## Nordwestkurve

Home of Eintracht fans



Since 1925, the stadium has also been the home of Eintracht. Until the Bundesliga was founded in 1963, Eintracht played its league games on the club's own grounds in the Riederwald. But important games for the German Championship have always been played in the Waldstadion. During the European Cup season of 1959/60, when Eintracht became the first German team to reach the final, they played against Young Boys Bern, Vienna SK and Glasgow Rangers. On April 13, 1960, 77,000 fans cheered their 6-1 semi-final victory against the professionals from Glasgow. Eintracht Frankfurt celebrated its greatest success on May 21, 1980. In its second UEFA Cup final, the team beat Borussia Mönchengladbach 1:0 to win the cup. The "North-West Stand" is the home of Eintracht fans. In the 1970s, fans would gather in the legendary "G Block", but in the mid-1990s, there was a massive shift to the opposite stand. Once the new stand behind the goal had been completed, local supporters moved to the "Nordwestkurve".

## 9 Health temple

Exercise in the winter sports hall



Inspired by the motto of professional sportsmen “Nieder mit dem Kampfrekord, freie Bahn dem Massensport!” (“Breaking records and mass participation!”), the stadium was primarily intended as a place of exercise for the general public. One precondition for all-year training was decided on in 1926 with the construction of a “winter sports hall”. Within a very short time, a sports hall was built in the south-western corners of the stadium, with an adjoining open-air 400-metre running track. At the time in 1927, the hall’s 25-metre breadth, 50-length and 12-metre height made it Germany’s largest sports hall. During World War II, the winter sports hall was used as a granary, a furniture depot for air-raid victims and a collection point for the army postal service. After the war, the American military government used the neighbouring hall. In 1949, the sports hall was returned to the stadium company. The stadium hall was completely overhauled in 2005 and made brighter by adding windows and glass doors to the eastern wall.

## 10 Rebirth of Hellas

Cultural events in the stadium



When the stadium was opened in 1925, it was not only intended as a venue for sports events. Studios for artists were also established in the main stand. In 1928, to the north-west of the “Festival Field”, the “Waldtheater”, an open-air theatre was opened with a capacity of 1,200. The Waldtheater’s premiere was a performance of the Shakespeare comedy “The Taming of the Shrew”. In addition to other cultural events, the Waldtheater also held open-air church services. After the Waldtheater was demolished, a hockey pitch replaced it from 1960 onwards. In 1996, it made way for a golf training facility. Today, the TV compound is housed where the former Waldtheater was situated. In 1990, the “Frankfurter Sportsmuseum” was opened at the former cycle track’s location. Following on from that tradition, the Eintracht Frankfurt Museum was opened in 2007 in the main stand.

## 11 The white sport

World class tennis on Center Court



The first tennis tournament in the Waldstadion was held in 1928. Twelve hard courts and two lawn courts were grouped around a central tournament court. In the 1970s, there were increasing complaints about the condition of the tournament court, but it took until the late 1980s for the arena to be converted into a new Center Court. The stadium had over 5,200 seats and 200 standing places, while subsequent extension work increased that capacity to 8,800 spectators. The new Center Court was opened on May 9, 1991 with an exhibition match between Steffi Graf and Jana Novotna. The indoor tennis court, which was completed in December 1991, rounded off the facility with a total of 20 courts. The Waldstadion became the centre of the tennis world when it hosted the 30th Federation Cup in 1992. Germany won the title with Steffi Graf, Sabine Hack, Anke Huber and Barbara Rittner. The Federation Cup was also held in Frankfurt in 1993 and 1994.

# STADIUMGESCHICHTEN



### Stories of a Stadium