



75 Years of Sportfriends History 1933-2008

On June 11, 1933, at the President Palace in Passaic, Nineteen German-American soccer players met and created Sportfriends Soccer Club.

"It was on a Saturday night. After we formed we went to Grand View Park in Singac. We all went on the rides. We had a few drinks. We had a great time," recalls founder and honorary president Heinz Klaus.

Another of the founders, Alfred Vollprecht, remembers: "We didn't have much money. We had no goals. We had nothing so we made a collection."

The players had previously been affiliated with the Workers Turnverin in Passaic, playing in the Eastern District Soccer League. Sportfriends founder and first president Paul Geyer explains why the group decided to go out on its own: "We made the honors in handball and soccer in the league and we never received anything. We could not show anything for it."

Sportfriends first game was played in Newark Stadium where they played Newark to a 4-4 tie. We played in the German-American Football Association, later renamed the Cosmopolitan League. The club quickly won the respect of its opponents. "They called us a team which played entirely too hard soccer because we were a little tough," says founder Alfred Fritsch.

By 1936, Sportfriends was making a run for the New Jersey State Cup title. They reached the State Cup Finals by beating Savoia 2-1 in a semi-final replay after the first match ended in a 2-2 tie. In the finals Sportfriends lost to the Trenton Highlanders.

In 1937 Sportfriends once again made it to the finals only to lose to the same Trenton team that had beaten them the year before.

Sportfriends first league title was won in College Point in 1941. The victory was overshadowed by another event that day - the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

The war years were a difficult time for local soccer clubs. Many folded. Some others merged. A few German clubs that included Nazi sympathizers were forbidden to play. "During the war it was sometimes very rough to have a team," according to Vollprecht. "Sometimes we only had seven, eight guys. But we managed to get through it."

In the early 50' s Sportfreunde fielded four teams - a first team, a reserve team, a B team and a Junior team. In 1954, the Juniors won the New Jersey division of the German-American League. The reserve team won back-to-back championships in 1956 and 1957.



**Sportfreunde von Passaic, Inc.
1936 State Champions**

Back Row: M. Schmidt, P. Geyer, E. Lenzner, A. Kohler, W. Hertzog,
J. VanBoven, W. Thierfelder, H. Fuge, F. Krause
2nd Row: R. Vogel, H. Haenle, A. Eckerstein, G. Toth, H. Stumpf,
Front Row: A. Fritsche, H. Klaus, R. Sezensy

Playing conditions could best be described as "pioneer soccer." According to Hans Kleine, "you had to have a gang of volunteer members to prepare for every Sunday' s match. Somebody had to go mark the field. You did not go into a shed to pull out the lime or the corner flags that had to be in somebody' s trunk. The goalposts we had stored in the Polish People' s Home in the cellar. Somebody had to drag the goalposts out, find the holes in the ground or pipes, and insert them. Ofcourse outsiders considered us not only foreigners, but also crazy people. The real problem we had, and it was an annual ritual,

was in the springtime we were kicked out of the ballpark because of baseball season. In the fall we could never get started because of the football season.”

That problem was solved in 1957 when the club acquired the field it is still using as home base. “We looked at it and the price was right,” Klaus says. “It was what we could afford, but it was like a jungle in here.”



**Sportfreunde of Passaic Juniors
New Jersey State Champions 1953 - 1954**

**Top Row L to R: Vice President-O. Engmann, S. Stadler, A. Fersch, F. Stadler, A. Pfeiffer, M. Brandl,
President-H. Klaus**

2nd Row L to R: Trainer-H. Langheinrich, P. Krause, J. Liebchen, H. Kleine, V. Pluto, Mgr-A. Vollprecht

Front Row L to R: F. Ruppert, J. Baumgartner, J. Schneider



Sportfreunde of Passaic Reserve Team 1956-1957
On the Way to the Championship - German American League

**Back Row L to R: Tony Fersch, Walter Dasenbrock, Larry Brandecker, Henry Pfefferkorn,
 John Frank, Eno Leffredo, Steve Koch**
Front Row L to R: Martin Brandl, Joe Baumgartner, Jonny W. Liebchen, Hans Kleine, Sal Amorelli



Sportfreunde of Passaic Reserve Team 1956-1957
German American League Champions

**Top Row: N. Lavrov-Treasurer, W. Dasenbrock, J. Frank, R. Fersch, T. Brandl,
 S. Amorelli, E. Loffredo-Manager, W. Brendli-Vice President**
**2nd Row: A. Vollprecht-Secretary, W. Kiedrowski, A. Pfeiffer, S. Koch,
 W. Hertzog-President**
Bottom Row: L. Brandecker, A. Zetelski, H. Kleine-Captain



**Sportfreunde of Passaic Junior Team
1966-1967 New Jersey State Champions
United States Challenge Cup Semi-Finalists**

Kleine adds, “In those days Little Falls and Totowa were considered the western outposts of civilization and a place like Wayne, by golly, that was off in the sticks. At first it sounded like a dream.”

“The labor that has been done on the field, from the day we bought the property, was all done voluntarily,” Walter Dasenbrock asserts. “The result “, comments Zetelski, “was one of the best fields in the metropolitan area.”

For much of the 1960’ s and 1970’ s Sportfriends was in a state of flux. The wave of immigrants who stocked the club’ s playing rosters in the early 50’ s had stopped. Sportfriends was weakened when members left to join new clubs such as Haledon and Vistula. The practice of paying players, since discontinued, led to some instability and created financial problems for the club.



Sportfriends Reserve Team (Year Unknown Late 1950's / Early 1960's)

**Back Row L to R: Adolf Gieger, Alex Langheinrich, Martin Brandl, Joe Baumgartner, Jack Schuderboom,
Nick Lavron, Frank Himmelsbach, V. Pluto, Alfred Vollprecht, Eno Leffredo**

Front Row L to R: Tony Pfeiffer, Frank Konrad, Joe Lauber, Walter Szyhmohl, Fred Schieswol, Emrich Unger, (unknown)

Attendance at the club dances began to dwindle. At times there was a lack of leadership. Interest among the membership was waning. It was a time when many members feared for the survival of the club, but it was also a time when the foundation for the organization that exists today was being built.

The dances, which were the primary fundraisers for the club since its founding, began to attract a larger following when outside bands were brought in. A one-day soccer tournament was held during the summer and in later years the club teamed with Edelweiss-Passaic to sponsor a beer festival. In 1975 the Old Timers and Ladies Auxiliary were founded. The youth movement gradually grew and Sportfriends built itself a home.

After four decades in the President Palace, the club left the President Street site in 1974, moving into the Garden Building on Howe Avenue in Passaic. Sportfriends stayed in the Garden Building for only a short time but it was the experience of running a clubhouse there that gave many members a vision of operating a facility of their own. A fund drive was started for a clubhouse of our own. Zetelski, who took over as president in 1975, remembers how the last \$10,000 of the needed funds were secured in a Bon Voyage party for the old-timers in the Garden Building in 1977: "I pulled all the men in the room into the side room and explained to them the situation. I said, you fellows are going to be gone for three weeks. We cannot afford to wait three weeks. I need five individuals to put up \$10,000 and we will pay six-percent interest. So there were five people who put their hands up and I said, I need it tonight."

“The building was built with labor strictly donated by the membership. Larry Erli was our builder, always was and probably always will be. We had sketches drawn, but they were entirely different than what we put up. The building went up quickly.”

As the children of the Sportfriends’ players of the 50’ s began to reach playing age, the club began to take interest in developing younger teams. By the mid 70’ s the club consistently sponsored six to eight youth teams ranging in ages from under 10 to under 19.

In 1972-73, Sportfriends Boys (under 12) won the German American League championship under Manager Marty Brandl.



Sportfriends S.C. First Youth Team 1967

Farchers Grove - Union, NJ

Top Row L to R: Richard Brendli, Henry Baumgartner, Paul Zetelski, Martin Brandl

**Middle Row L to R: Gregor Reusch, Sr. (Coach), I. Brandl(?), I. Mustuc(?), Bobby Brendli,
Joe Seider, Frank Konrad (Coach)**

Bottom Row L to R: Erwin Brandl, John Paulik, Steve Klics, Richard Klics, Richard Nagel



1st Over 30 Team Sportfriends S.C. (Late 1970's Early 1980's)

Back Row L to R: Gregor Reusch, Sr.-Coach, Helmut Schneider, Martin Brandl, Frank Himmelsbach,
Eric Latowic, Hans Kleine, Martin Brandl, Al Jurkiewicz, Paul Geyer-Asst. Coach
Front Row L to R: Willy Brandl, Myron ?, Larry Brandecker, Gregor Reusch, Jr, Charles Welsch, Lotzi Timar



Sportfriends Junior "River Rats" 1980-1981 Champions Cosmopolitan Jr. Soccer League New Jersey & New York Division

Back Row L to R: President-Ady Zetelski, Robert Brandl, Myron Domaradz, Ken Brandli, Tommy Kretsch,
Jim Stadler, Al Brunetti, Enzo Caruso, Coach Bernhard Vollmin, Asst. Coach Martin Brandl
Front Row L to R: Gerard Mingo, Kurt Hoernlein, Severin Palydowycz, Stephen Lorig, Vincent Porta,
Michael Spaziano, Michael Vollmin, Stan Kaziol, Sam Haddad, Peter Vinton

The 80' s were good to the club in terms of soccer success. The decade started with Sportfriends Junior Team going undefeated in the 1979-80 and 1980-81 seasons and capturing the Overall League Championship in the 80-81 season for Coach Bernhard Vollmin.

Not to be out done in the 1982-83 season, the First Team won the Cosmopolitan League Second Division Championship with a 12-1-3 record. Along with the league title, Coach Al Jurkiewicz' s squad gained promotion to the First Division.

In the 1983-84 season Sportfriends teams again walked away with a number of championships. The First team, under Coach Gordon Vinton, won the Cosmopolitan League Division 1 Blue Championship as well as the New Jersey State Senior Division Cup and the Dab summer tournament. In the youth ranks Sportfriends captured the Cosmopolitan Junior Soccer League Intermediate (under 16) Championship under Coaches Mike Schimpf and James Auriemma.

In 1984-85 it was the Reserve Team that continued Sportfriends winning ways, winning the Cosmopolitan League First Division Reserve Championship for Coach Myron Domaradz, a feat they would repeat again in the 1985-86 season. In the youth ranks another Championship was won, this time by the Sportfriends Youth (under 14) Team. The team coached by Felix Schimpf won both the C.J.S.L. Youth Overall Championship and the United Youth Indoor Tournament.

In 1987 the Sportfriends Old-timers sponsored an Over 30 Team in the United Soccer League. The Over 30 would go undefeated in league play (34-0) and capture the championship for Coach Bernhard Vollmin.

Between the years 1988 and 1990 Sportfriends teams had a reversal of fortune. The First and Reserve Teams struggled to stay in the First Division through a series of player and coaching changes. Even the youth movement fell on hard times as local programs took away many players and forced the club to stop sponsoring youth teams under 14.

In 1990 a resurgence took place. The First Team, while not winning, finished in the upper third of the league. The Reserve Team would win the League Championship in dramatic fashion beating rival Croatia 2-1 in the last game of the season. The Over 30 Team won the first of what would become three straight Championships.

The 1991-92 season would again see the League Championship come down to the last day, however, this time both the First and Reserve Teams needed wins to secure the Championships. The games were played at Sportfriends Oval with the Reserves playing first. The Reserves won the game and the Championship for Coach Jim Erli by beating S.C. Gjoa 1-0 on a goal by Ken Brendli. Now it was up to the First team to complete the sweep and win Sportfriends first-ever 1st Division Crown. In a tight and sometimes nasty game Mike Vollmin scored both Sportfriends goals in the 2-0 victory that brought the Championship to Coach Franz Reiss. The Over 30 would then complete the "Triple Crown" by winning their second straight League Championship.

The 1992-93 season did not end well for Sportfriends as it saw the First Team fall out of the First Division for the first time in 10 years. On a bright note the Over 30 won their third straight Championship and retired the league trophy.



**Sportfriends Reserve Team
Cosmopolitan League Division I
1990-1991 & 1991-1992 Reserve Champions**

**Back Row L to R: Blaise Massa, Wendel Brendli, Eric Reiss, Ken Brendli, Bill Mulder,
Stephen Reiss, James Fett, James Aluotto, Zennon Ulczak, Ron Bivona**

**Front Row L to R: Coach Jim Erli, James Brendli, James Auriemma, Mike Shimpf,
Luigi Longo, Joseph Stepien, Rich Gill (not pictured- Franco Dichio)**

In 1995 the Sportfriends Reserve Team wins the Cosmopolitan Soccer Leagues 2nd Division "B" Championship. The Over 30 in their inaugural 1994-1995 season with the North Jersey Soccer League wins the "B" Division Championship. That same year Sportfriends established our 1st Women's Open Team.

In 1996 our Sportfriends U19 Team is undefeated in league play and wins the Lipton League Championship and the Cup Championship. The Over 30 Teams win the 1996-1997 N.J.S.L. Championship and finish as runner-ups in the 1996-1997 N.J. State Championship.

During 1999 circumstances forced Sportfriends to change leagues. We left the Cosmopolitan Soccer League and joined the North Jersey Soccer League. The club, while not having any teams in the C.S.L. votes to remain affiliated. The Over 30 Team continues to make a strong showing in N.J.S.L. play. They again repeat as runners-up in the 1998-1999 N.J. State Championship. Our last living Sportfriends Founder Alfred Meyer passes away on June 27, 1999. The Club establishes the Sportfriends Scholarship Program. This program

was completely funded by donations and tips to the kitchen and bar during our periods of limited operation. These monies were then awarded on a yearly basis in the form of a \$500.00 scholarship to a deserving local High School player chosen by the scholarship committee.

Sportfriends has had it's share of success and disappointments. The one thing that always seemed to pull the club through the hard times was the dedication of its membership and players. This dedication has made possible the purchase of the field and the building of the clubhouse. It has seen Sportfriends through the tough times as well as the good times.

In the year 2000 we started the millennium with the Over 30 "Open" Teams dividing into two teams - Sportfriends S.C. "Old Timers" and Sportfreunde F.C. and entered into the Over 30 Division of the North Jersey Soccer League. The Sportfriends S.C. Over 30 win the 1999–2000 N.J.S.L. Championship but again repeat as runner-ups in the 2000 N.J. State Championships. This has proven to be a competitive and successful move. The Sportfreunde F.C. struggled their first year but managed to make it to the finals of the Mel Smith Cup and lost to P. Blues 2-1. Sportfreunde decided to go with a new coach at the end of their season and entered into a Summer League called the MLS Tournament. It was a 7 v 7 tournament held in Secaucus in which they went undefeated and won the tournament.

In the fall of 2001 the club reestablished its youth movement with an U12 team "Sportfriends River Rats" coached by Over 30 players and former junior team players Al Brunetti and Vinny Porta and an U13 Team "Sportfriends United" coached by Ed Luyster, Patrick Cochrane and Jerry Diglio. They competed in the Northern County League. This resurgence of our youth movement no doubt will bring in new members which will definitely instill much needed fresh and innovative ideas on how to continue the "Sportfriends Spirit".

The 2001 and 2002 seasons have brought in some new "Hardware" by our youth teams. The U12 became Champions in two Roxbury Tournaments, one Chatham Tournament, one Pequannock Tournament and 2nd place in the Parsippany Tournament. They also captured two League Division Championships. The U13's also managed to accumulate some "Hardware" by becoming Champions & took 2nd Place in two Pequannock Tournaments and two more 2nd Place finishes in the Chatham Tournaments.

The Sportfriends S.C. "Old Timers" Over 30 win the 2001–2002 N.J.S.L. Mel Smith Cup Championship and again repeat as runner-ups in the 2002 N.J. State Championship.

The N.J.S.L. Over 30 league decided to divide up into a "World" and "US" Divisions. Sportfriends S.C. into the "World Division" and our Sportfreunde F.C. into the "US Division". The Sportfreunde F.C. Team finished in the middle of the pack and secured a 2nd place finish in the Montclair Indoor League in late of 2002.

The year 2002 may have proven to be our most ambitious and challenging. We submitted an application to the USSF for a monetary grant. We were seeking funds to expand the clubhouse, upgrade the field lights and improve the existing field conditions. Plans also called for the possible addition of two more youth teams. The U12 and U13 teams have not only brought in concerned members but also have added a positive amount of notoriety within the league. This year the Sportfriends finally acquired the much talked about adjacent property for the express purpose of establishing a 2nd field.

In the summer of 2002 Sportfreunde F.C. entered into the Morris County Summer league which was a competitive 11 v 11. Sportfreunde made it to the semi finals and lost to Ballyowen after knocking off the Ridge

Rovers in the Quarter finals. This summer league gave our team the much needed confidence as they went into the 2002-2003 N.J.S.L. regular season.

The 2002-2003 season was a good one for Sportfreunde F.C. They were able to bring home its first of three League Championships. That Championship was followed up in 2003-2004 with the second N.J.S.L. US Division Championship.

The beginning of 2003 the Executive Board appoints a "Property Development Committee" to oversee and implement the procedures needed to make our dream of a 2nd filed a reality.
2003 Sportfriends Soccer Club celebrates its 70th Anniversary.



Sportfreunde F.C. Over 30

2003 N.J.S.L. US Division Champions

Back Row Left to Right: Sergio Bordenabe, Marc Bernarducci, Joe Terranova, Rich McGregor, Bill Mulder, Klever Alvarez, Mike Rabboh, Pablo Blanco, Fred Barnes

Front Row Left to Right: Marc Foti, Jamie Brendli, Jim Fett, Paddy Flynn, Claudio Zamarra, Dan Miglino, Rich Gill

The spring of 2003, Sportfriends continues to grow its youth program with the addition of a U15 Premier Division team. They moved up one flight and played in the U16 Division. The Sportfriends S.C. Over 30 team won the Mel Smith Cup and came up one penalty shot shy of winning the NJ State Championship.

The 2003 fall season brought in another U13 youth team to our expanding youth movement. We have successfully established a network of youth teams which will continue our great soccer tradition. Our youth movement now consists of U13, U14, U15 and U16 teams.

The club marked its 70th anniversary with a gala event held at the Scottish Rite Hall in Lincoln Park that was attended by 250 people. President Ady Zetelski was honored and presented with a tribute from the Executive Board and club membership not only for his 50 years of continued membership but also for his unwavering and devoted 28 years of service to the Sportfriends Soccer Club as its President.

Spring of 2004 saw the continued growth of our youth teams on the pitch. In April the club hosted two U14 teams from the Rosario Soccer Club from Argentina which brought back many great memories of when the club hosted numerous teams from Germany. We had four youth teams playing in the Northern Counties Soccer Association and they all played in Premier Divisions. The U17 Boys Team became Champions. U16 "River Rats" finished tied for 1st place. Our U14 Boys placed 3rd. Sportfriends F.C. won its 2nd N.J.S.L. Over 30 Division title. In one of the more memorable Sportfriends Soccer Cup finals our lads lost to the White Eagles 6-5 in overtime. September 26, 2004 marked a significant day in the clubs history as our Over 30 teams "Sportfriends S.C. & Sportfreunde F.C." played each other for the first time in league competition. The end of the Fall season gave the U14 Boys a 3rd place finish in their Premier Division.

Spring of 2005 our youth teams are still participating in NCSA. The U19, U16 and U14 Boys teams still played in their Premier Divisions. Our U14 Boys became Division Champions. U17 Boys dropped down to "A" Division with new a head coach and won 2nd Place.

2005 Sportfriends S.C. Over 30 captured its 2nd Sportfriends Soccer Cup title since 1987 by defeating perennial nemesis Macedonia 3-2. Sportfreunde F.C. entered into the NJSL Fall Tuesday night league which they were able to win in penalty kicks over Strikers FC.

In 2006 Sportfriends S.C. successfully defended their Sportfriends Cup title by defeating first time participant N.J. Strikers with a dominating 10-4 victory. Both Over 30 teams also captured their respective Division Championships. Sportfriends S.C. winning the World Division while the Sportfreunde F.C. captured the US Division for the third time. It marked the first time since the '91-'92 season that there was a dual championship in the club.

In 2005 & 2006 the Entertainment Committee took on the venture of combining our Beefsteak and Anniversary Dances into one event and organized Tricky Tray Beefsteak Fundraisers with the help of the youth teams. Both years were a huge success and they were an enormous undertaking. It took a lot of man power and volunteers from all the teams, parents and players. All our teams, young and old, put forth huge amounts of time to make these fundraisers a huge success. We raised close to \$17,000.00 on these 2 events. All funds generated from the Tricky Tray portion were earmarked for Field Development fund.

Spring of 2006, Sportfriends youth teams are still going strong. The U17 "United" Boys played their last season together in the NCSA League before they all went off to pursue college. They came in 2nd Place in the "A" Division. Some of these young men started with our new First Team in 2007. Our U16 "River Rats", U15 and U13 Boys teams switched leagues to MAPS (Mid Atlantic Premier Soccer).

2007 would prove to be a pivotal year in the clubs history. After several years of red tape from local and state agencies it became apparent that our goal of adding another field was not going to happen anytime soon. The Executive Board, with the approval of it's club members at its semi annual meeting, allocated \$32,000 to upgrade our existing field and surrounding areas. It included seeding the field, upgrading the sprinkler system and building a well. The field was shut down for the fall season and work began in September.

Spring of 2007, the two remaining youth teams, U17 "River Rats" and the U16 Boys, were still playing in the MAPS League. The U16 Team finished in 2nd Place in the NJYS State Cup. Our continued commitment by the members of Sportfriends in maintaining and growing grass on our field is tedious and hard work. It is beautiful and has changed the look of our club.

It was a memorable Spring season for the Sportfriends S.C. Over 30 team in 2007 as they captured, after several times being the runner-ups, the New Jersey Over 30 State Cup Championship defeating Neptune. The 2007-2008 season also marked the renewal of a Sportfriends First Team into active competition again playing in North Jersey Soccer League. In their first season together they captured the NJSL 3rd Division Championship

as well as the NJSL Summer League Championship. This First Team also went on to the semi-finals of the Sportfriends Soccer Cup losing to eventual winners Scoglitti.



**Sportfriends S.C. "Old Timers" Over 30
2007 N.J. State Cup Over 30 Champions**

**Back Row Left to Right: Wendel Brendli, Gus Muraco, Cesar Cuevas, Ken Brendli, Franco Maffei,
George Valencia, Dennis Skabich, Richard Greenfield, Harry Abt
Front Row: Christian DaSilva, John Ricca, Matt Myers, Vinny Porta, Rob Krzanowski,
Coach Myron Domaradz, Juan Cardenas, Cesar Gomas
(Not Pictured: Adel Rifaat, Stan Matlak, Stan Lembryk, Chris Queliz)**

The year 2008 marks the 75th Anniversary of the club. What better way to start off the year by being honored by the New Jersey Soccer Association at it's annual Hall of Fame and Awards Night on March 29, 2008 with a plaque not only from the NJSA, but also one from the New Jersey Assembly. We also received a plaque from the USSF acknowledging our contribution to soccer in this country. All 3 of these awards are on display in our trophy case. On Sunday, April 20th a triple header was played to reopen the newly renovated grass field. Spring of 2008 the U18 "River Rats" competes in the Metro Youth Soccer League for its final season together, as they too are off to tackle college.

Our 27th Annual N.J. Sportfriends Soccer Cup took on a whole new look for 2008. Our new Players Committee Chairman decided to go big and bold in his efforts to enlarge the tournament, and boy did it pay off! The tournament ran from July through August for 6 consecutive weeks. It was our most successful summer tournament for revenue to date. With our newly refurbished "Grass" field the tournament brought back teams that dropped out because of the dirt field. The tournament Chairman changed our format to run both Friday and Saturday nights for 6 weeks. It was a "Huge" undertaking by all the members who volunteered their time to help run things smoothly.

The payoff of developing a youth movement becomes apparent as the Sportfriends SC First Team gets into its third season with at least six players who had competed for our youth teams over the last seven years. The team continues to improve and hopes to someday soon boast a roster of all Sportfriends youth players and compete in the Premier division of the North Jersey Soccer League.

Fall 2008: The most recent additions to our new wave of youth teams began play in the NCSA this September. The teams are doing very well, each leading their respective divisions. The U12 Sportfriends boys team is being lead by coach Ray Thomas. The other team is our U8 Sportfriends girls team coached by long time member, Jim Fett.

2008 Spring and Fall Seasons comprised of the following teams: Sportfriends S.C. "Old Timers" Over 30, Sportfreunde F.C. Over 30, Men's Open Team, Women's Open Team, U12 Boys and U8 Girls Team. In Spring of 2009 another Girls U15 team will join our Sportfriends family. Hopefully this new girls team will develop into a feeder system for our Women's team.

To be continued.....

