

## THE GERMAN SOCIETY'S

### ***Friday Film Fest Series***



## **Das Wunder von Bern**

### **Credits:**

Director: Sönke Wortmann  
Producers: Tom Spiess, Sönke Wortmann, Hanno Huth  
Production Co: Little Shark Entertainment/ Cologne & Senator  
Film Produktion/Berlin, Seven Pictures Film/Munich  
Music: Marcel Barsotti

**Cast:** Peter Lohmeyer (Richard Lubanski), Louis Klamroth (Matthias Lubanski), , Johanna Gastorf (Christa Lubanski), Sascha Göpel (Helmut Rahn), Peter Franke (Sepp Herberger), Knut Hartwig (Fritz Walter), Katharina Wackernagel (Annette Ackermann, Lucas Gregorowicz (Paul Ackermann))

Length: 118 minutes  
Language: German / Swiss German with English  
Subtitles

First Screening: 2003  
Awards: Prix du Public UBS Locarno 2003, German Film Awards 2004 for Best Picture (Silver), German Film of the Year, Actor of the Year

### **Precis – Karl Moehlmann**

On July 4, 1954, the German national team beat the highly favored Hungarian team 3-2 in the final of the World Cup in Bern, Switzerland. The players and their coach Sepp Herberger became national heroes. More than just an athletic triumph, the stunning victory engendered for the first time in post war Germany "a kind of collective happiness and a counter-image to the Nazi-era" (Sönke Wortmann). The victory cry "Wir sind wieder wer" epitomized the boost which the championship gave to the battered psyche and confidence of the nation, a psychological boost paralleling the sense of security provided by the economic and political improvements of the nineteen fifties.

Two miracles are chronicled in director Wortmann's film: one collective and public, one individual and private. The former is the miraculous triumph of the German national team (underdogs in every sense of the word) in Bern, Switzerland; and the latter the miracle of an individual named Richard Lubanski.

Lubanski returns to his hometown of Essen in 1954 as one of the last prisoners of war released from the Soviet Union, a bitter shell of a man traumatized by the years of conflict and captivity. Imprinted with the strict educational methods and ideals of his own youth, he attempts to be a good father (i.e. strong and authoritative) by exuding an aloof and sometimes violent demeanor towards his own children. The predictable result is his growing alienation from his own family, especially from 11 year old Matthias, the son whom he had never seen before his return from captivity.

Matthias has found an ersatz father in Essen striker and national player Helmut Rahn, for whom he carries the bag to every practice. Rahn imbues the boy with the belief

that he can only win the big game when Matthias is present as a mascot, and Matthias thus dreams of going to the World Cup in Switzerland. Richard Lubanski is determined to extinguish such foolish dreaming from his son's heart, but Mathias' innocent hope and yearning proves stronger than his father's grim and withered weltanschauung, and the capacity to love is revived in the father's heart.

Exposing the emotional vulnerabilities and psychic wounds he had previously suppressed, Lubanski begins to speak of his terrible experiences during the war and subsequent imprisonment, and finds himself growing closer to his family through this catharsis. His image of what it means to be a good father and a good man is altered, thus laying the foundation for the other miracle in Bern.

In some limited sense the movie might be construed as a German version of William Wyler's "The Best Years Of Our Lives", dealing with the problems of a family in post war Germany and about the concomitant problems of the reintegration of prisoners of war into a society that has dramatically changed. Knowing that a pure soccer movie could easily descend into kino-kitsch, Wortmann effectively intertwines the story of the German national team with the story of the Lubanski family through the innocent figure of Mathias. The melodramatic, fairy tale aspect of Matthias's connection to the success of the German team is Sonke Wortmann's unabashed and surprisingly successful narrative technique for portraying the emotions and mood of Germany in the fifties.

Wortmann (who played soccer in the second league himself) was frustrated that no one had ever realistically portrayed scenes from great soccer games such as the 1954 championship. His innovative approach involved using good amateur soccer players instead of actors to reenact great moments from such games. With the help of Horst Eckel (1 of 3 surviving players of the 1954 team) and a 7,3 million Euro budget, his approach allows viewers to virtually relive the dramatic final game.

## Die Mannschaft

Sepp Herberger – Bundestrainer (1897-1977)  
Fritz Walter – Kapitän (1920 – 2002)  
Jupp Posipal – Verteidiger (1927 – 1997)  
Toni Turek – Torwart (1919 – 1984)  
Werner Liebrich – Mittelläufer (1927 – 1995)  
Charly Mai – Verteidiger (1928 – 1993)  
Max Morlock – Stürmer (1925 – 1994)  
Werner Kohlmeyer – Verteidiger (1924 – 1974)  
Helmut Rahn – Stürmer (1929 – 2003)  
Horst Eckel – Rechter Läufer (1932 - )  
Ottmar Walter – Stürmer (1924 - )  
Hans Schäfer – Linksaussen (1927 - )

## Biography and Filmography

Sönke Wortmann was born in Marl in 1959. He attended Munich's Academy for Television & Film. After his first term assignment **Nachtfahrer (1985)**, he was invited to London's Royal College of Art. His graduation film, **Drei D (1988)**, received the Eastman Promotional Award at the Hof Film Days and was nominated for a student Oscar in 1990. The same year, he made his first TV movie, **Eine Wahnsinnsehe**. His comedy **Alone Among Women (Allein unter Frauen, 1991)** won the Hypo-Award at the Munich Filmfest in 1991. His other films include: **Little Sharks (Kleine Haie, 1992)**, **Mr. Bluesman (1993)**, **Maybe, Maybe Not (Der bewegte Mann, 1994)**, **The Superwife (Das Superweib 1996)**, **Campus (Der Campus 1998)**, **St. Pauli Night 1999**, **The Hollywood Sign 2000** and **Das Wunder von Bern (2003)**.