



Firesport UK Football Section

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GERMANY 2019

The work for this trip started in late 2015. The section was part of a groundbreaking and historic game in Dublin in June 2016. The section is rightly proud to have been part of that success. For the first time teams from Dublin Fire Brigade and Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue combined to play the FIRESPORT UK team at Dalymount Park, Dublin. We had made a commitment the previous season to this fixture and from there we then invited the German Fire Service Team to the UK for a game. In 2018 they travelled to Scotland, on October 10th, we hosted the game at Murray Park, Glasgow Rangers training ground, and our visitors nicked a 1-0 win. The groundwork had been done, and on that trip, we made an agreement to do all we could to try and resurrect a European Championship.

Fast forward 9 months and on June 24th the UK squad assembled in Essen, Germany for the first step towards a new European Championship Tournament.

Monday night was a get together with a few beers to relax before the hard work began. Tuesday started with a team meeting followed by a squad meeting. We had a leg stretch and light training session planned for Tuesday afternoon, which went ahead in 37 degrees. That was followed by the opening game, which considering the heat, was an entertaining 2-2 between the Czech Republic and Germany.

Wednesday was game day. A relaxed morning for the squad until we met up at lunchtime to travel to the ground for a 15.00 kick off.

The temperature had dropped to 34 but it was still punishing against a very well organized and technically gifted Czech team. We worked hard and took the lead midway through the first half, the Czech's quickly equalized to go in 1-1 at half time. The second half followed a similar pattern and we regained the lead. It looked like we would hold on for the win until a sloppy late goal gave the Czech's a 2-2 draw. It was set up perfectly for the final game as we prepared to face the hosts.

After the game we were taken back to the Fire Station at Gelsenkirchen for drinks and refreshments.

Another relaxed morning on Thursday, before a team meeting going through set pieces and some tactical details as we prepared for the game Vs Germany.

The game was a contrast of styles. Germany were slow and precise and kept possession for long periods, we look far more dangerous when we broke quickly and attacked with pace. Chances were few and far between, with both sides lacking real quality in front of goal as we went in 0-0 at the break.

The 2nd half followed a similar pattern, and as legs tired, after 2 games in 2 days, both sides started to make changes.

The most significant change was made by the hosts who brought on their star man, who has played over 150 games in the Bundesliga for local side Schalke. This proved to be the turning point as he found space at the far post and finished from an acute angle to give Germany a 1-0 lead. As the game wore on, we pressed higher up the park as the hosts dropped deeper and deeper. We created a few half chances but just couldn't find the finish we needed and lost the game 1-0 to the only moment of real quality.

A disappointing finish but we did all we could and every player gave everything they had in trying to get back into the game.

Once again, we were hosted at the fire station for some food, drinks and a presentation.

We also had a conversation about moving forward and have already started talking about travelling to Prague in 2021. Our hosts were fantastic and some lifelong friendships and connections were established for future generations.

Everyone involved in this trip, is and was, an absolute tribute to themselves, their services and UK FIRESPORT. The work done over the last 3 years cannot be underestimated in moving the section forward and improving the reputation and profile of both UK FIRESPORT and the UK FIRESPORT Football Section

Best Regards

Liam Wheeler

FIRESPORT UK Football Section Secretary