



Foreword

Mr. Thomas Hitzlsperger



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Football is the most beautiful sport on earth. Along with your team, you do whatever it takes to win. You celebrate the win, but also share the disappointment with a loss.

As a boy I dreamed of becoming a professional football player and that dream came true. Born in Munich, I played for some major professional Clubs like FC Bayern Munich, Aston Villa, VfB Stuttgart and SS Lazio. I played 52 times for the German National team and scored 6 goals.

Day in and day out, there was nothing else in my life other than football. I did not have time for anything else. Only late in my football career, was I clear about my homosexuality.

I didn't know any other football player that was openly gay.

When I considered coming out publicly, I wasn't sure whether there would be negative reactions. Today I can say, that the response was overwhelmingly positive and some call me a "Hero".

Soon after stepping away from football I decided to work as a football expert for German and foreign TV stations. In the summer of 2016, I joined my former club VfB Stuttgart. In neither of my jobs after my football career did it matter whether I was gay or straight.

To talk about it openly has been very helpful, as I know it is not easy for everyone.

That is why "Heroes of Football" has a special toolkit created for everyone who loves football and wants to know more about it.

Player, coach, father, mother or a fan, this toolkit is for everyone. It is designed to help people talk about all the elements regarding sexual orientation and gender identity in football.

Read the toolkit, look at the videos, play the games or experience the virtual reality movie. Whoever you are, whomever you love, above all you love football, and you are always part of a "team".

**Yours in Sport,
Thomas Hitzlsperger**