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## "The position of handball is completely different" - Eisenachs new signing Azat Valiullin

Until recently Azat Valliulin played with Lok Tscheljabinsk in front of on average 200 spectators in Russias 1. league. By now the 2,05m tall left back player appears in front of several thousand spectators week by week. In his debut he scored the winning goal against TuS Nettelstedt-Lübbecke at the last second. He contributed eight goals to the 33:31 win a few days ago against HBW Balinge-Weilsteden. But the particular curiosity is that he did not start to play handball until university six years ago. Before that he played mainly football. So Azat Valliulins handball career was definitely a late starter. Successes until now? The tall guy shakes his head. "A sixth place at the students WC perhaps." In an interview the new recruit speaks of his move to Germany and Eisenach, the atmosphere in German arenas and his new surroundings in Eisenach.

How did your transfer to Germany happen?

Azat Valiullin:

Sergej Budanov, one of Velimir Petkovics former players made the contact. To play in the worlds strongest league is a dream for each handballer. I was in Eisenach for two weeks at the beginning of the year for test training. That is how my transfer came about. But there was no other offer from Germany.

The transfer from Tscheljabinsk to Germany, was that not something of a culture shock?

Azat Valiullin:

I would not go that far. It was of course a huge change, plenty of new impressions, new surroundings, people with a different mentality and culture and very different architecture.

Did you always play on leftback?

Azat Valiullin:

Yes, that was always my position.

Were you handball professional from the outset?

Azat Valiullin:

I finished my studies in engineering and then turned handball professional with Lok Tscheljabinsk.

How was the training regime at home? Was that a big change?

Azat Valiullin:

We trained five days a week with two sessions per day, early and late. The intensity in comparison to Velimir Petkovics training was different.

How many goals did you score for Lok Tscheljabinsk?

Azat Valiullin:

I did not play that long, in the 20 matches I played I scored around 3-4 goals per match.

You played in front of a few hundred spectators in Tscheljabinsk, now there are several thousand. Does that take some getting used to or is it even intimidating?

Azat Valiullin:

In Germany handball has a huge standing, that is particularly true for Eisenach, The value of the sport is very different from Tscheljabinsk. A huge difference, you cannot compare it. To play in front of 5000 or more spectators does not scare me, quite the contrary, it motivates me, it is huge fun!

How do you get on with your new teammates, with the town and people?

Azat Valiullin:

The town of Eisenach and its people live and breathe handball, for their ThSV. That is evident every day. The interest in the sport in Tscheljabinsk is very shallow. I came from a city with millions of inhabitants into a small town. Eisenach is small and pretty, has all the advantages of a small town. I get on really well with my teammates, and have also already made contacts outside handball.

You are very much judged by your goals. Do you watch the reactions, the position of the opposing goalkeepers during your preparation for the matches?

Azat Valiullin:

That is part of our routine during video analysis. Our coach introduces us to the matchplay of the opponents goalkeepers, which system to play in order to score successfully.

You were voted into the team of the week by handball periodical 'Handballwoche'. Which value does that have for you?

Azat Valiullin:

The main thing is that the team won. Not my personal success is relevant but the teams. I am happy if I can contribute to our teams success and the nomination is further motivation for me to work even harder.

You still have a long handball career ahead of you at 25 years old. Have you ever thought about what might come after handball?

Azat Valiullin:

I am only at the beginning of my career. I do not think so much about the time after handball. But by way of my studies that I finished I have a good basis for a professional career after my time as a handball professional.

What can you tell us about your private life?

Azat Valiullin:

I am a married man, my wife is just visiting here in Eisenach. But her main residence will continue to be in Tscheljabinsk for now. googletag.cmd.push(function() { googletag.display('div-gpt-ad-1380148910362-0'); });