The story is about the World Cup Final in 1954…….

There are two stories here:

1. About the game
2. How I was able to watch it -- LIVE…in 1954

**The game at the Wankdorf Stadium in Bern, Switzerland: July 4, 1954**

It was amazing. Germans had nothing to cheer/feel good about, ever since the end of World War 2. The West German National team was doing well, until they played Hungary whose team was composed of 100% military players – professionals – because that’s all the Hungarian players did: play soccer. They had not lost an international game for a long time. They, clearly, were the planet’s best team and were favored to win the 1954 World Cup – EASY, by a huge margin.

In Group play: the German Coach, Sepp Herberger, decided to play a B team against the Hungarians. Lots of reserves, NOT the stars. I think the score was 8:3….and Puskas, the “Messi” of the Hungarian team, was injured by the German “rottweiler” (Liebrich) and did not play in the next two Hungarian Group games. Hungary advanced anyway – their “soldiers” were that good!

The Final on July 4: it was “Fritz Walter” weather…raining…soft turf….and Adi Dassler, the shoe provider for Germany’s team, had brought many pairs of shoes for each player – indoor type…huge cleats…cangeroo leather for hot weather..etc… all the shoes were black and had 3 white stripes… Adi’s master stroke – the marketing genius selling his “BRAND”. No one had seen the 3 stripe models until the World Cup….I’ll let you guess what all soccer players wanted to buy, after the WCup! Adidas shoes had wait time to get a pair of months!

Puskas played in the Final, but was not 100 % -- yet: he scored, at 6’ and Czibor at 8’… it was 2:0 Hungary….everyone thought “game over”…but then the Hungarian Majors and Sergeants started to slide on the field – as it got softer and softer…. the German players switched shoes to Adi’s long, high cleats – so their footing was vastly superior….Max Morlock made it 2:1….then Fritz Walter, the greatest German player and true Gentleman, hit two corners and Rahn made it 2:2… after a corner and a potential foul by Schaefer on the keeper (Grosics)r, which the English referee, Ling, did not whistle. This is unbelievable!

At one point, the announcer on the broadcast screamed “Toni, you are a Fussball Gott!” when the German keeper (Toni Turek) made another great save. The game went back and forth and the superior footing of the German team helped the players, a LOT! Puskas’ injury/fitness hurt Hungary.

Then, and I’ll never forget it: Rahn gets the ball and beats Grosics, the Hungarian keeper, from about 20 with a low shot. Really??? This is unbelievable….. Germany (known not as West Germany but as the Federal Republic then) wins the 1954 World Cup in Bern. Hungary had a few chances late in the game, but Turek stopped them all.

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You have to put this in perspective: for the Germans, this was the VERY first positive experience for the whole country (West Germany, that is) after the war. Smiles everywhere in what were difficult days in the post-war years for all Germans. The soccer team put smiles on their faces for the first time….and, basically, it was the start to recovery from WW II.

**Now the story about how I watched my first-ever game on Television on July 4, 1954: you’ll love this!**

Our family had been flown from Berlin to Munich on PanAm (the only airline allowed to fly over East Germany) and we were in a refugee camp ( in a former Army Barracks camp) in Freimann, a suburb of Munich. Four people in one room, with no running water and only one bed. Difficult for our parents and my sister and I to co-exist. I spent much of my free time going to the Tiergarten Park and playing soccer there with some other kids. School authorities were looking for a place for me in a high school….didn’t find any because so many schools had not been rebuilt….and not enough teachers were available (most killed during the war as soldiers or via bombs).

I learned that the World Cup Final would be broadcast on July 4 – it was a Sunday. We did not have a radio for the broadcast and (ed. Comment here: no one had a TV then – TV in Germany was non-existent). One of my young soccer player friends said he was trying to go to downtown Munich to be with others for the Final. I asked him “where”? He said at the Kaufhof (which is like Macy’s)…so I decided to try and get there, too. Neither one of us had money for streetcar fare. But how? But I KNEW that all street cars were heading toward downtown Munich from Freimann -- probably about 10 kilometers or more away….so I decided, aged 14, to simply hop on the street car and whenever the conductor came to check for my ticket, I jumped off -- while the streetcar was moving. I didn’t have a ticket! Then I waited for the next street car….

So I made it to downtown Munich….here I am, the kid from East Germany, and I’d never been in downtown Munich before. All alone. I asked several people where the Kaufhof was. They told me. That’s like asking someone in St. Louis where the Arch or Busch stadium is.

So here is this Kaufhof building, with huge glass windows…Back in 60’s and 70’s: in downtown St. Louis, we used to have similar windows with running toy trains/Christmas decorations downtown at Stix and Famous…..In Munich on July 4: hundreds of people were sitting in chairs or just on the ground – on the side walk and in the street, all staring at this window…I asked why they all were looking at this huge window: “because they will broadcast the Fussball World Cup Final” OK…I was in the right place…..but: what did they mean by saying “show”? Hmmmmm….they used words like “show” and “Fernsehen” (that’s the German word for TV I’d never even heard before)……

All I wanted was to HEAR the game…..hmmm….so I made my way to the front….my goal was to “hear” what I thought would be the radio broadcast….. some people, sitting down on the asphalt, didn’t like that I was pushing past them, but they didn’t really mind…hey, I was 14 years old!..

So I sat down, on the asphalt in the street like everyone else…and waited…and then: the greatest miracle of my life happened!

The Kaufhof window had a box behind it….about the size of a case of beer…..and, all of a sudden, there was what sounded like a broken-up radio broadcast – it was from Bern and the Soccer Final!...but then

the “box” had some silver and black lines going vertically up and down – on what looked like a small movie screen…and some sratchy sounds…and then: whoa! … there were soccer players running around the field….I couldn’t believe it!....that these were players who would actually PLAY in the WC final!...No way!....I HAD NEVER SEEN A LIVE TV PICTURE IN MY LIFE!.... the players were small, but you knew that the white shirt players were the German stars…..just by the way each one ran…

I didn’t know what TV was…and here I was: watching the WC Final in 1954 from Switzerland, LIVE…no kidding: LIVE! … I asked the people next to me: “when will the radio broadcast start”?....They looked at me kind of funny explained that THIS was the broadcast: LIVE…and you could actually see what was happening LIVE!

Can you imagine my mind at that moment?

I had never seen TV – didn’t know what that was……and now I’m watching the WC Final from Switzerland, LIVE! A whole new world opened up at that moment!

And Germany beat Hungary 3:2 in a great game…with the Assist from Adi Dassler. Guess what every soccer player who watched the game wanted the next day: shoes with the three white marks. Why? Because every soccer player that saw the game was convinced the German team won because the Hungarians were slipping/sliding and the German team wasn’t.

About 15 years later: Monsanto assigned me to work in Sales/Marketing in Germany for some years…one of my jobs was to sell plastics to Adidas to use in soccer/other shoes…..so I met Adi Dassler at his headquarters in Herzogenaurach, many times…he insisted:

1. Help us get adidas shoes/more going in the US
2. Don’t ever stop and try to sel your Monsanto plastics to Puma (his brother and he parted ways) because if you do, you’ll never be welcome at adidas again
3. So we had a different salesman cover Adi’s brother’s competitor at Puma – which is only a mile or so down the road from the original Adidas factory.
4. He offered me the adidas distribution opportunity in Midwest USA and (stupid me!), I turned it down over a nice glass of Riesling in Herzogenaurach….as Sinatra sang “regrets, I have a few”…..

There you have it…if anyone ever asks you what adidas stands for: tell them it’s for Adi Dassler who helped Germany win the 1954 World Cup and scored one of the greatest BRAND awareness successes ever: the 3 white stripes!