

# Ian Joy

*Abram Goldman-Armstrong of the Whipsaw (WS) interviewed Timbers left back and captain Ian Joy (Ian) on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April, 2010 at PGE Park. Ian Joy brings his experience and passion to the Timbers, and we have witnessed in the early part of the season.*

**WS: So you were born in the States and grew up in Scotland?**

**Ian:** Yeah, I was born in San Diego in '81, my dad played soccer there, we lived in San Diego for two years and he finished up his career and we moved back to Scotland, where my mother was born. I went to school in Scotland, so that's where football really began for me.

**WS: How did growing up in Scotland help shape your life as a footballer?**



*photo by: Steven Lenhart*

**Ian:** When you grow up in Europe, every kid is pushed towards football. It's life and death, football over there is what every kid knows, what every kid learns, and every kid wants to be. In America or in other countries you have rock and roll stars and basketball players, and baseball and the other sports, in Europe all we had was football. We were told and taught through school and coaches and high school that soccer was the way to go. It gave me a great advantage growing up playing football every single day as a kid. I became good at it and got given a lot of great opportunities. I was very fortunate being given those opportunities. I turned professional when I was 16 years old, here in the States that is virtually unheard of. I started off playing club football in Scotland, Saturday and Sunday, I'd play two games at the weekend, and play for school in midweek, and just got scouted by a number of different teams. When I was 12-13 I went to Falkirk in Scotland, Motherwell in Scotland, Man. United, West Ham United, Blackburn Rovers, and tried and sampled which teams I liked. In the schoolboy years, which is between 13-15, I decided I wanted to go to Man. United, so every time I had a school holiday I went down and trained at Man. United for 10 days. It was an unbelievable experience, it opened many doors for me.

**WS: Was there a club that you looked up to or followed when you were a kid?**

**Ian:** My dad's from Manchester, so I was always pushed toward Man. United, and my grandparents lived in Manchester, so it was a home away from home for me. All my friends supported Glasgow Rangers because they were such a successful team and were in the Champions League. It was one or the other in Scotland, you either supported Celtic or you supported Rangers, neither of them really jumped out to me,

I just wanted to see good players. When Rangers were in the Champions League, my father was a big Paul Gascoigne fan, so we'd go and watch them. Other times we'd go and watch the local teams in Scotland like Falkirk and St. Johnstone. There was never really one team that stood out besides Man United.

**WS: From training with Man United where did you go from there?**

**Ian:** Man. United was a schoolboy thing. My first professional contract was with Tranmere Rovers. I wanted to be given the chance to turn professional earlier. I figured my best opportunity to make it as a professional in soccer was to make a jump down to make a jump back up. At Manchester United it was very difficult with so many players and very little opportunity. I signed a three-year contract with Tranmere when I was 15, and started on my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. It was a very, very enjoyable time, learning football as a man's game, as a professional and earning money for it for the first time. It was a big eye opener I left home, and was away from my family for three years. It changed me from a boy to a man. There are some good experiences and some bad experiences when you turn professional. You realize what you want if you want to keep playing football professionally, or just for fun. You realize what people expect from you. My first coach was John Aldridge, the top goalscorer for Liverpool for many years, and I thought he was going to be a fantastic guy. His character was terrible, and he treated people like shit. I learned the hard way from the way he treated people, not just me, but my friends on the team, and it made me grow up very quickly. It made me realize this was no longer fun and games, people want results and they want them quick. I had to get my ass into gear and start getting more professional.

I never really got to play for the first team at Tranmere, the coach had a few problems

with me, and I decided it wasn't for me.

I moved back home and played for a local team, Montrose, and we were the worst team in Scotland, we were awful. We played at division three level, and were bottom of the league for months and months, but it was the most enjoyable time I'd had in football in a long time. I needed it, it gave me that love and enjoyment of football. It was a time I'll never forget, even if we were fucking shit.

I went to Birmingham played for Kidderminster from age 18-19. The opportunity to go back to the States came up, I wanted to break into the US under-20 team. I was at Columbus, but I failed the physical and it killed the whole deal. I went to HSV in Hamburg for a week's trial, and played for the reserve team. I was there for a year and a half playing for the reserve team.

We would play on a Sunday, and St. Pauli would play on a Friday, and the team that we would play on Sunday happened to be St. Pauli's next opponent, so the coach from St. Pauli was in the stands watching every game.

At the end of that season I got a phone call from [St. Pauli Coach] Stanislavski and he said would I be interested in coming over to the other side of Hamburg and playing for St. Pauli.

I'd been fortunate to go and watch 2 or 3 games at St. Pauli while I was at Hamburg and the atmosphere just fucking blew my mind. It was just unbelievable. I took my dad, when I was still at playing at Hamburg [HSV] we went to watch St. Pauli who were playing in the third division and there were 20,000 fans at the game, it was sold out. The half time show was a rock and roll band playing on top of the air hangar (St. Pauli's Millerntor Stadium is next to a giant WWII bunker). There was a rock and roll band playing 200 feet up in the air.

Once I knew that St. Pauli was interested



photo by: Steven Lenhart

there was no other option for me and I signed for St. Pauli. That didn't go down too well the Hamburg [HSV] fans, I'd given a couple of my shirts to the fans. The next time we played there with St. Pauli they had my shirt on a stick and set it on fire. Immediately when I went to St. Pauli I had a great deal of success, and I felt like I was at home. The fans opened my mind to many different things, and a different culture, that I'd never seen before in life. How I live my life is how they live their lives. It was more than just a football club it was a passion for life. It was a way to demonstrate what you thought about political beliefs. Everything that they believed in I believe in it was more than just winning football games it was also to show how you live your life.

**WS: Are their lessons that other clubs can take from Sankt Pauli?**

**Ian:** Being a footballer its amazing on the field to have passionate fans. Everybody

can have a guy who wants to buy a shirt and come to the games with his family and wave a scarf around and cheer and want the team to win, but when it's in your blood and it's something that you strongly believe in, you actually believe that it's more than just a soccer club. Every single player on that team played for the fans because the fans backed the team no matter what, through thick and thin, whether they won, whether they lost it never mattered. St. Pauli, my first year was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> division, they'd been relegated two years in succession, from the first to the second, and the second to the third before I arrived, but every single game in the third division was sold out. It was just a passion that was in everybody's everyday life. Until you actually go to Hamburg you can't realize how big it actually is and what it means to the people

It was a privilege to play for St. Pauli, because everybody wanted to. In Germany everybody knows St. Pauli, everywhere I go in the States, people ask me about St. Pauli everbody knows The fans that I've met everywhere all over the world that I've traveled they all know. It's a sense of pride to say you've actually been there and done it.

*Joy played for St. Pauli 2005-2008, beating the likes of Werder-Bremen, and Hertha Berlin in a cup campaign in 2005-2006, the next season they focused on league success. As a result, the team was promoted to the second division.*

**Ian:** We partied on the Reeperbahn in front of 100,000 fans, all you could see was brown and white (St. Pauli colors). After 6 months in the second division, I was struggling in my marriage, my wife didn't speak German, so I thought the only way to save my marriage was to find a team in an English-speaking country. *Joy then signed with Real Salt Lake*

**Ian:** Unfortunately after two months my wife moved back to Germany with my daughter and I was stuck in the States on a four-year contract and couldn't get out of it. I made a promise to Salt Lake to stay for a year and we had a good season in 2008. In the end of 2008 I went and trained with Düsseldorf, but it wasn't for me, I came back to Salt Lake and tore my hamstring in preseason, and did my rehabilitation in Germany. The St. Pauli coach recommended a doctor in Munich, and I signed with FC Ingolstadt, a nearby club and did his rehabilitation.

2010 started, and I was looking to find the best deal for me. Europe was an option, but I wanted to come back to MLS. Unfortunately when you go a whole year being injured, there's a big question mark next to your name, the MLS teams didn't want to give me the money I had been earning. Justin Thompson gave me the opportunity, and recommended me to Gavin. I just loved it. I love Portland, I have a fantastic feeling about this city. I loved Gavin and Amos's professionalism and I realized this was where I wanted to play. I had to take a massive pay cut from my MLS salary. But after six months not earning anything and getting healthy it's worth playing basically for nothing in an environment you really want to be in. When you have Gavin and Amos here, and fantastic backing with the fans it's a special place to play in and a place that's been very warm to me.

**WS: Is there an expectation that the players will go with the team MLS?**

**Ian:** Everybody who's here has a chance. I'm here because I want to play for one year to prove my fitness and enjoy my football for a year. All I'm focused on is having a great season this year. Of course there's a nice golden card hanging for many young guys here, the opportunity to

play Major League Soccer is big time. The only way that we're going to get there is if we have a successful year and we play good soccer. This year is more important than thinking about next year.

**WS: How is coming in to a new team and being given the captain's arm band?**

**Ian:** I knew that Gavin liked my leadership qualities, he liked my experience, and the way I communicate, and the confidence that I give to the players around me. He told me he was going to use what I've learned in football and use it to motivate other guys. I've been very fortunate to play at a high level, the younger guys here are looking to learn from the best possible people they can. Gavin and Amos are fantastic with the guys here, but when you have a guy who's thrown in there and who is one of them, who is a player and has played at a high level, it gives them someone to look up to and to motivate them.

There are 10-12 guys here who given the confidence, who can definitely make the jump up to Major League Soccer. If you give them the confidence and the motivation, and give them the belief that they can perform and can be good players, I think that's why I'm here, to try and help motivate them and give them that opportunity.

When I come in here every day I want to win, whether it's playing soccer-tennis, whether its playing fucking poker, it doesn't matter I want to win everything I can get my hands on. It's a passion that's inside you, to win. Not everybody has that, not everybody can show that everyday, some guys come in to training and are flat, they don't want to be here, they're tired, they had a busy night the night before, or they've got problems at home. Then you have people like myself who come

Ian Joy continued

into training every day no matter what problems I have in my life and have a smile on my face and turn around and say "let's have a fucking great day today."

**WS: Where did your nickname "Killer" originate?**

**Ian:** It originated at St. Pauli, from tackles that I put in at training. The head coach there Stanislavski was a very aggressive central defender, he played over 200 games in the Bundesliga for St. Pauli, and was "St. Pauligott," a St. Pauli hero, and he used

to love watching me train because I played to win. I used to tackle guys like fucking crazy. One day he called the

guys in and said "everybody watch your legs today the Killer is coming to get you." It stuck, and the fans began to call me Killer.

**WS: How have you taken to the atmosphere in Portland and the city?**

**Ian:** Justin had told me the fans here are fantastic, Gavin told me "you ain't gonna believe the fans here" and you never know what to expect. I was on twitter and facebook and one day I had 25 twitter messages saying "we're following you and welcome to Portland", so I knew there was something going on. I never really knew what to expect until the Seattle match (March 11). As much as people send me messages saying "you ain't seen nothing yet." "you're gonna love us," or "we're passionate and we love football," you don't really know what you're gonna get until you actually walk onto the field and feel

the heartbeat from the fans. That's when I realized that you're not just playing here for a football team, you're playing here for the fans as well, and you're playing here for a passion. That's why I play football. I play football for that desire and that passion, its something that bleeds in from the people who come to watch football here, and the people who work in the organization, from Meritt to Gavin to Amos, to the players, everybody wants to win. It's blowing my mind the first fucking home

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game I just couldn't believe it. In Seattle, in San Jose, there must have been 200 (Timbers) fans in San Jose. The fans just blew

me away in the first game, it was hard to focus on the game.

When you think of football in America you think: "families, hotdogs, beers, have a good time, want to see goals." It's not like that here. There's an expectancy that the fans and the players are one, and you win together as one, you celebrate together as one, and you go forward together as one. That counts on the field and off the field, how you celebrate goals, how you celebrate victories, and how you live your life outside of soccer bleeds through from the fans and the owners of this organization.

**WS: It will be interesting to see when we go into MLS, how it grows, I remember when there were like 40 of us in 107, there weren't many behind the pony wall (indicating the pony wall in 107)**

**Ian:** That's your hardcore, that's your heartbeat, your 5-6 rows from 2001 is your heartbeat and it just spreads. It's like a religion, it's like a following. When people here about you they say OK, but when they see you they want to be one, and when they are one they try to get their friends to be one. It's something you believe in it, it's a political belief, it's a passion, it's a fun thing to do at the weekend, and it's a fucking great time. When you come to watch a football game you're not here just to have a great time, you're here to let loose.

Next year you guys are gonna go crazy, because you're gonna see a major league team. You're gonna get more fans who want to come watch it and when they come to a game and see you guys (Timbers Army) running around like lunatics they'll want to experience it. That's what happened with my girlfriend I brought her here and said you've got to see this, and she said "I'm going there, I want to watch a game from there." That's what's going to happen, I can only see the Timbers Army exploding through the seams in years to come. It's famous, I've heard about the Timbers Army before, I just never knew what to expect, because I played for fucking St. Pauli, when you look at the fans there you think fuck this can't get any better. I'd heard of the Timbers Army, because the St. Pauli fans did a fanzine like this (indicates Whipsaw) where they voted the top ten fans in the world and they voted the Timbers Army in the Top 10. That's not just for soccer reasons that's for how people live their life here, how the city's run, and what their beliefs are.

I miss (St. Pauli), I definitely miss it, but I'm now I'm here. When I was in St. Pauli



*photo by Shedbhoy*

and was things weren't going well for my family, I said to myself "I there was a St. Pauli in America I would fucking love it, it would be perfect. And to me it feels like it here. It's kind of like a home away from home here. I've enjoyed the first 2-3 months here, and I have no vision of leaving here, I want to stay here for as long as I can.

**WS: What neighborhood do you live in?**

**Ian:** I live up (West) Burnside with the guys, they put all of the guys up there. I'm gonna move downtown next year if I can. I want to be closer to the city life. I love seeing the different culture. Nothing gives me more pleasure than walking the streets with my girlfriend and seeing different cultures and different people.

**WS:** A bit of a change from Salt Lake...

**Ian:** Definitely. It's more realistic around here. It's very European, it's got a great European feel to it around here. It's enjoyable to actually walk around the streets and people say "hey Ian" or "do you play for the Timbers?" and that's good, that's something you don't get in America, I could walk around Salt Lake fucking naked and nobody'd know who I was. And yet I walk around the streets after two months of being here people are already saying "well done on Saturday Ian," or "well done in the game."