



Herr. Zellmer popped on my radar more than a year ago. His FB profile looks something like this. Michael "Mize" Zellmer, a two time Olympian Water Polo Goalie from Hannover, Germany and currently lives in Huntington Beach, California. I used to study in California. I currently live in Germany. Also Goalkeeper. Honestly I don't know who added who over Facebook, but for the

whole duration of our “friendship” I was always paying attention to what Herr Zellmer was doing with his goalkeeper academy.

I had no specific opinion about him. On his FB I have seen videos which show how he works with the young goalkeepers and I would read what he would write. By now you probably know that I rarely agree with anybody haha and with Herr Zellmer is not any different, but I must admit that he never said, or wrote anything what I was completely against. **German goalkeeper schools are legendary in more sports and what is so specific about them is making the basics the most important element of your game.**

A goalkeeper never stops working on his basics. Herr Zellmer never stops working on his goalkeepers basics. At least that was my impression. I never met Herr Zellmer, nor have we seen each other. I thought that he went to US because he found himself a job there and on the side he founded a goalkeeper academy. The other day I saw him posting some home exercises for goalkeepers. I wanted to share it on my timeline too, but instead I decided to DM him. DM for those who don't know is an acronym derived from Direct Message. I introduced myself, said that I write for this media outlet and asked Herr Zellmer if he was willing to do an interview with me. To my excitement he responded writing that he knows who I am and that he regularly reads what I write on my blog and share on my Facebook. He was kind enough to accept my offer and that same week we have faceted for some 30 minutes. Facetiming for those who don't know is same as talking over Skype, but over some other platform. WhatsApp in our case. It was an interesting talk where I found out that

**Mize has only one job and that's being a Water Polo coach running his own goalkeeper academy**

. I repeated myself thinking that he did not understand my German. To my amazement once again he explained to me that he is a full time Water Polo coach running his own goalkeeper academy and currently living in Huntington Beach, California.

### 1. Hello, Mize. Wie gehts? How are you? How's Huntington Beach?

Thank you or better “Danke”. I really appreciate the opportunity to talk with you about my Water Polo life and especially how it came that I started my **Water Polo Academy – The Perfect Goalie here in Southern California!** You

already mentioned in your introduction that being a Water Polo Goalie Coach is my main job (on a side note: I am still active in some other projects). That is something I never expected even to be possible and that was definitely not my intention when I decided to move to California. I never saw myself as a coach and I pictured myself to be daily at the beach playing some Beach Volleyball!!

**2. Yes, you really sound like an American Dream gone bad haha, but before we start speaking about your present, I think that it is only fitting that we go to the beginnings of your Water Polo journey. How did young Mize got himself involved with Water Polo? Could you explain to us what did Water Polo mean to you as you were a kid “back in the day”.**

Not too many people know that I am from a little village in northwestern Germany named Hude. There was a senior WP team playing in a lower division (only 3 or 4 other teams where within 100 km reach) without any age group program. My buddy and I (we were 9 or so) have been curious what this sport was about. The coach liked the idea of building a team around us and so he started to develop an on federal state level competitive youth program. In fact, I was also a talented soccer field player (I started playing soccer with 5 years) and so my challenge was to manage both activities side by side. This led me to the situation that I had to decide in 1992 if I wanted to play the Northern German Championships in soccer or Water Polo because the events have been scheduled for the same weekend. Of course, as a goalie I decided to be there for my WP team. We won the competition and for the same time my soccer team claimed the gold medal as well. So, this has been a real double-gold weekend for me!! **This success in Water Polo was already with the club SPVG Laatzen**

(close to Hannover) where I transferred to in 1990 and spent my major youth water polo career at. Laatzen is about 150 km away from my home village Hude so I travelled from the age of 13 on my own for 2-3 times a week by train to Hannover to practice with my team! Can you believe that?

**3. Mize is this one of those stories you tell your kids when you want to teach them a lesson? “Listen Kinder, when your Vater was 13 he had to go by train 2-3 times per week. 150 km hin und 150 km Zurueck” haha. How did your life later develop? Have you worked**

**and studied, or were you fully focused on Water Polo? Which clubs have you played for and how professional was professional water polo in you hay day? How did young Mize became a two time Olympian?**

In January 1995 I received the offer to transfer school to have even better training conditions for Water Polo and finish my degree (Abitur) in Hannover. I moved into an apartment with 7 other high-performance athletes from all kind of sports that has been organized by the Olympic Center in Hannover. This was a great step in my life because I left my home (at the age of 17), decided to terminate my soccer career and focus just on Water Polo from that point on. Perhaps my parents don't like to hear that too much but reviewing my life I would say the best time started from now. I loved living on my own and being kind of fully responsible for my decisions and activities. For sure, I still got great support from my parents and they would help me with everything I needed. In fall 1995 I transferred to the first division team of Waspo Hannover and made it within the first season to the starter goalie. Waspo Hannover had to rebuild the team after winning the German Championship in 1993 and was at that time ranked between 6 and 8, I would say. From that point we had only one objective and that was getting back to the title! **With players like Lars Tomanek, Sven Reinhardt, Marc Politze and Soeren Mackeben only to mention a few names we won our first title with the German Cup in 1998**

(which after all was my greatest memory in Water Polo) and challenged the reigning champion Spandau 04 three consecutive times from 2000 to 2002 in the play-off finals for the German Championships - unfortunately not with a successful outcome. But in two of these three years we went into the decisive fifth match and lost after over-time, so it has been at least close!! My real international career started in 1996 with playing the Junior European Championships. In 1997 I had the honor to participate in the Junior World Championships and also in the Senior European Championships. From there on, I never missed an international highlight (where we qualified for) until the end of my international career after the Olympics in 2008 when I applied to change my position to be the newly installed professional team-manager for the Men's National Team.







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