

Road to Zero Waste: TSG Hoffenheim and PreZero make resource conservation the standard

Under the motto "Zero Time to Waste", the German sports world came together in a forum at the PreZero Arena to learn more about the circular economy model of TSG Hoffenheim's venue. New milestone: water as a resource.

Neckarsulm, November 14, 2024. On November 12, 2024, TSG Hoffenheim and its sustainability partner PreZero gave more than 100 representatives from stadiums, clubs, associations and companies from all over Germany an in-depth insight into the circular economy. For more than a year now, the PreZero Arena has been the first DIN SPEC 91436-certified Road to Zero Waste Arena in the Bundesliga - currently with a silver level of maturity. Gold is the goal. In addition to the milestones of reusable cups, separation systems and grass paper, the topic of water is now on the sustainable to-do list. "We have followed an intensive and instructive path to this point, which we would take again at any time," says Marcus Sagitz, Titular Managing Director Marketing & Corporate Affairs at PreZero. "With the PreZero Arena flagship project, we want to show other stadium operators and clubs how it can work for them too, so that we can all agree on a common standard."

"Zero time to waste" - the fact that this does not only apply to the topic of water was discussed by a high-caliber panel of experts from business, politics and sustainability. For example, there are still few standards in the area of sustainability and the circular economy that clubs, associations and stadium operators can use as a guide. Anna Goldhofer, Co-Founder CRITICAL FRIENDS, Katja Suhr, Head of Circular Economy Team at GIZ, Silke Schmidt-Stegemann, Federal Ministry for the Environment, and Dr. Günther Bachmann, former Secretary General of the German Council for Sustainable Development, Chairman of the German Sustainability Award Foundation, gave their views. Jennifer Kettemann, member of the executive committee of the Handball Bundesliga e.V., clearly demonstrated that the PreZero Arena serves as a role model beyond soccer. The number 2 ball sport in Germany can take away impulses, but also give them. For example, the HBL supports the clubs in reducing their carbon footprint by focusing heavily on digitalization and remote working, among other things. Lukas Märtens gave a special perspective on water as a resource. For the gold medal winner in the 400-metre freestyle, it is obvious that water is a valuable resource that can be reused in any sports facility. He also knows the challenges of the last mile, when the bar is raised from silver to gold.

"We are delighted to be able to look back on a lasting and particularly valuable partnership with PreZero, which is not limited to the exchange of pure advertising messages, but in which the shared vision of zero waste is actually lived," says Dr. Markus Schütz, Chairman of the Management Board of TSG Hoffenheim. "For us as TSG Hoffenheim, it is important that we make a contribution to positively shaping our society, especially in these times, and also that we encourage others to create added value from which everyone can benefit."

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At national and international level, the first PreZero partners are following the TSG Hoffenheim model. In addition to the newest member of the family, the SAP Garden in Munich, top clubs such as RCD Mallorca, RB Leipzig, VfB Stuttgart and FC Bayern are also on the "Road to Zero Waste". Incidentally, PreZero's own company headquarters has already achieved Gold status.

Further quotes for editorial use: (in the order in which they appear in the forum)

Stefan Wagner, Head of Sustainability TSG Hoffenheim:

With the "Zero Waste" vision, together with our partner PreZero, we are setting ourselves the highest possible target in relation to this important topic, against which we can and want to be measured. Without such goals, we all tend to be satisfied with what we have achieved and remain in our comfort zone. We see that this is not enough when it comes to the sustainable development of our society. As a Bundesliga club with such a strong partner, we therefore see a special responsibility to stand up for the highest possible level of ambition.

Anneke Siebert, Coordinator CSR TSG Hoffenheim:

The milestones we have achieved so far on our way to becoming a zero waste club were only possible because of the shared vision and commitment of PreZero and TSG. This confirms and gives hope: for a sustainable future, ambitious goals must be pursued, which can be achieved if we work together with our stakeholders in a collaborative, transparent and continuous manner.

Marcus Bocklisch, Head of EcoSolutions GreenCycle GmbH:

For me personally, the topic of the circular economy is more than just a term. For me, it is a mandate to act and I want to change the status quo. This is only possible together as a team. Whether in PreZero, in cooperation with TSG or beyond that in society. Only together can we get the ball rolling and establish a sustainable standard for waste and recycling management that focuses on resource conservation, waste prevention and continuous improvement. The Road to Zero Waste is not a sprint, but a long-term project - every small and large step brings us closer together to the goal of closing loops.

Jennifer Kettemann, Member of the Executive Committee of the Handball Bundesliga e.V.:

Soccer plays a pioneering role in sport when it comes to sustainability, but sustainability is a concern for society as a whole that we can only drive forward by joining forces. While sustainability in handball has not yet been directly integrated into licensing, the Handball Bundesliga has been working on a comprehensive sustainability certificate. This certificate gradually implements measures in the areas of governance as well as environmental and social sustainability, with the requirements for the clubs being continuously increased. One key point, for example, is that handball clubs are not usually the operators of their venues - which is why hall operators must be involved in the process of sustainable transformation. In addition to increased cooperation with hall operators, this also involves concrete measures such as dispensing with disposable clapping cards, the use of an innovative learning platform for further training and the introduction of upcycling processes in merchandising.

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Anna Goldhofer, Co-Founder CRITICAL FRIENDS:

In a world of unprecedented challenges, business and sustainability must go hand in hand. With the CHANGEMAKER ACADEMY, we offer young people the knowledge and tools to help shape a Beautiful Economy - an economy in harmony with social and planetary boundaries. The path to real transformation begins with courage, inner strength and resilience and a clear vision that engages, inspires and connects people.

Lukas Märten, gold medal winner in the 400-meter freestyle at the 2024 Olympics:

For me as a swimmer, water is not just my sports equipment, but one of the most important resources on our planet. I come from near Magdeburg, where there are many lakes and moors. It's shocking to see how these landscapes are drying up and animals like the otter are threatened with extinction. It is important to me that we finally realize how important it is to protect these habitats. Without water, there is no life. Not even for us.

Dr. Günther Bachmann, former Secretary General of the German Council for Sustainable Development, Chairman of the German Sustainability Award Foundation:

The "basic law of sustainability" is that no matter how brilliant initiatives and concepts may be, they only have an effect when they are anchored in everyday life. If you like, this is a test of language and credibility. Many a policy fails this test. Obligations alone (deposit on cans, waste separation) are not enough. Creating a sense of purpose and performing yourself is what counts. This is a huge opportunity for sport, TSG and the PreZero Foundation.

Katja Suhr, Head of Circular Economy Team at GIZ:

Circular economy and waste do not stop at borders: starting from raw material extraction in developing and emerging countries, to processing in others, and use and consumption in yet others. It is a global issue that can only be tackled in close cooperation with partners. In the spirit of team play, we are working on global circular economy projects with our PREVENT Waste Alliance, for example. PREVENT is an international cooperation platform with over 550 members from business, science, civil society and government institutions.

Silke Schmidt-Stegemann, Federal Ministry for the Environment:

Every sport should be practiced as well as possible according to its requirements and have as little impact on the environment as possible. We at the Federal Ministry for the Environment are committed to this. The avoidance of waste and the efficient use of natural resources is a key task for the future of climate and environmental protection. In the "Circular EURO 2024" project, we have developed options for avoiding waste and conserving resources at sporting events. These recommendations can be used both for (major) events and in everyday life, e.g. by sports clubs.

Further press information: www.prezero-arena.com

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