Stefan Frei

Stefan Frei (born 20 April 1986) is a Swiss-American footballer who currently plays as a goalkeeper for Seattle Sounders FC in Major League Soccer. Frei has been named one of the best, or perhaps, the best goalkeeper in the MLS after the 2016 MLS Championship.

Contents

Youth and college

Frei moved from Switzerland to the United States in the late 1990s, attended De La Salle High School in Concord, California, and played college soccer at the University of California, Berkeley. In 2008, he was named to the All-Pac-10 first team and the NSCAA Far West All-Region team, and was also named to Top Drawer Soccer's Team of the Season.[1] During his college years, Frei also played with both San Francisco Seals and San Jose Frogs in the USL Premier Development League.

Club career

Stefan Frei			
Frei playing for the Seattle Sounders in 2014			
Personal information			
Full name	Stefan Frei		
Date of birth	20 April 1986		
Place of birth	Altstätten, Switzerland		
Height	6 ft 3 in (1.91 m)		
Playing position(s)	Goalkeeper		
Club information			
Current team	Seattle Sounders FC		
Number	24		
College career			
Years	Team	Apps	(Gls)
2005–2008	California Golden Bears	47	(0)
Senior career*			
Years	Team	Apps	(Gls)
2006	San Francisco Seals	6	(0)
2007–2008	San Jose Frogs	18	(0)
2009–2013	Toronto FC	82	(0)
2014–	Seattle Sounders FC	200	(0)

Toronto FC

Frei was named MVP at the 2009 MLS Player Combine in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and signed a Generation Adidas contract. He was drafted in the first round (13th overall) of the 2009 MLS SuperDraft by Toronto FC.[2]

He made his professional debut on 21 March 2009, in Toronto's first game of the 2009 MLS season against Kansas City Wizards,[3] and soon established himself as the team's first choice goalkeeper.[4] Shortly after Frei was named Toronto FC Player of the Month for April 2009. Frei also won MLS's Save of the Week for week 15 and then three times consecutively for week 24, 25 and 26 of the 2009 season.

Frei with Toronto FC in 2010

He played in 3 games of the 2009 Canadian Championship going 3–0 and ultimately making key saves in the deciding game that ensured Toronto FC would win by at least 4 goals on goal differential and their first trophy.

On 25 April 2010, Frei picked up his first clean sheet of the 2010 season in a 2–0 home win over Seattle Sounders FC.[5] Frei had another standout season as Toronto's first choice keeper. He finished the season with a 1.32 goals against average and a 70% save percentage, he improved all statistics from his rookie season. It was announced on 18 November 2010 that Frei would graduate from the MLS Generation Adidas program at the end of the 2010 season.[6]

In January 2011, after the hire of Aron Winter as the club's new coach, he stated in an interview that Julian De Guzman, Dwayne De Rosario and Stefan would be the key players of the upcoming season and he was impressed with Frei's abilities.[7] Frei recorded his first clean sheet of the 2011 season in the second game of the year in a 2–0 home victory over Portland Timbers on 26 March. Frei also earned his third assist since playing with Toronto setting up the second goal for Javier Martina, it was later awarded the Goal of the Week in MLS.[8][9] Following the departure of Toronto captain Dwayne De Rosario in early April, Coach Winter named Maicon Santos as the replacement captain while Frei would become vice captain. On 13 April against Los Angeles Galaxy Frei wore the captain's armband for the first time with Toronto due to an injury to Santos, the game ended in a 0–0 home draw.[10] Frei started most games in the first half of 2011 but faced some injuries, after resting a few games backup keeper Miloš Kocić strung together several strong performances creating a highly competitive environment at the position. At the end of the season it was announced that Frei would be training with Liverpool, and return to Toronto before pre-season training.[11][12]

After making his season debut against Los Angeles Galaxy on 7 March in the 2011–12 CONCACAF Champions League quarterfinals first leg, Frei sat out the second leg with Kocić being given the start. Much speculation began to arise with rumors of Frei being traded, however the following week he sustained a broken fibula during training.[13] Two weeks later the club announced that Frei would have to undergo surgery to repair ligaments in his left ankle, he is expected to be out for four to six months putting his entire season in jeopardy.[14]

Following a year of recovery, Frei entered the 2013 pre-season as the first choice keeper, however, he suffered a minor injury in training allowing back up Joe Bendik to start in the season opener.[15] Bendik continued to put in strong performances forcing coach Ryan Nelsen to stick with him, Frei earned his first

start in over a year in a Canadian Championship match against Montreal Impact on 24 April 2013, the game ended in a 2–0 home victory for Toronto.[16]

Seattle Sounders

Frei was traded to Seattle Sounders FC on 10 December 2013 in exchange for a conditional pick in the 2015 MLS SuperDraft.[17]

Frei was one of the best goalkeepers in the league during the 2016 MLS Season, keeping eight clean-sheets in 33 appearances (the joint fourth-most kept by a goalkeeper that season), as Seattle qualified for the playoffs after finishing fourth in the Western Conference. He only conceded three goals in the MLS Cup playoffs, keeping four clean sheets in six postseason matches. Frei was named MLS Cup 2016 MVP after making seven saves in regular play, and another in the 5–4 penalty shoot-out victory in the final against his former club, Toronto, following a 0–0 draw after extra-time; his decisive save on Jozy Altidore's header in the second half of extra-time was later described by the MLSSoccer.com reporter Sam Stejskal as "one of the best saves in MLS Cup history."[18]

Throughout the 2017 MLS season, Frei confirmed himself as one of the league's best goalkeepers once again: he started 33 games throughout the regular season, making 84 saves over the course of the year for a 69.4 per cent save percentage, and averaging 1.09 goals against per game, while also managing to keep 13 clean sheets, more than any other goalkeeper. In the Playoffs, Frei only made four saves en route to the MLS Cup final, but kept four consecutive clean sheets, as Seattle reached the final without conceding a goal.[19][20] On 9 December 2017 he started in the 2017 MLS Cup Final against his former club Toronto FC at BMO Field, a rematch of the previous season's final; Toronto won the match 2–0 to complete an unprecedented treble of the MLS Cup, the Supporters' Shield, and the Canadian Championship, but Frei drew praise in the media for his performance throughout the match, following a string of impressive saves to keep the score level at half time, and made nine stops overall within the first hour of play.[21][22]

On 10 November 2019, Frei started for Seattle in the 2019 MLS Cup Final, which ended in a 3–1 home win over Toronto FC.[23]

International career

Frei was a member of the Swiss U-15 national team.

In January 2017, Frei was called into camp for the United States national team by Bruce Arena.[24] Frei became a U.S. citizen in June 2017.[25]

Personal life

Stefan is a second-cousin of the retired captain of, and all-time leading scorer for, the Swiss national football team, Alexander Frei, an accomplished striker twice voted Swiss player of the year, who used to play for Axpo Super League club FC Basel and is now a youth coach for FC Basel.[26]

Frei announced on Twitter that he has officially become a U.S. citizen on 13 June 2017.[27] He lives with his wife, Jennifer, and two dogs in Queen Anne.[28] Frei began painting in his spare time and has collaborated with companies and charitable organizations for his pieces.[28]

Career statistics

As of matches played on 20 February 2020

Club	Season	MLS		Playoffs		Cup[a]		Champions League		Total	
		Apps	Goals	Apps	Goals	Apps	Goals	Apps	Goals	Apps	Goals
Toronto FC	2009	26	0			3	0	—		29	0
	2010	28	0			2	0	1	0	30	0
	2011	27	0	—		4	0	—		31	0
	2012	0	0			0	0	1	0	1	0
	2013	1	0			0	0	—		1	0
	Totals	**82**	**0**	**—**		**9**	**0**	**2**	**0**	**93**	**0**
Seattle Sounders FC	2014	34	0	4	0	1	0	—		39	0
	2015	31	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	35	0
	2016	33	0	6	0	0	0	2	0	41	0
	2017	33	0	4	0	0	0	—		38	0
	2018	33	0	2	0	0	0	4	0	39	0
	2019	34	0	4	0	0	0	—		38	0
	2020	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
	Totals	**198**	**0**	**23**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**8**	**0**	**230**	**0**
Career totals		**280**	**0**	**23**	**0**	**10**	**0**	**10**	**0**	**323**	**0**
References:[29][30][31][32]											

a. Appearances in the Canadian Championship and U.S. Open Cup.

Honors

Club

Toronto FC[33]

- Canadian Championship: 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012

Seattle Sounders[33]

- MLS Cup: 2016, 2019
- MLS Supporters' Shield: 2014
- U.S. Open Cup: 2014

Individual

- NCAA First-Team All-American: 2007[34]
- Red Patch Boys Player of the Year: 2010[35]
- MLS Cup MVP: 2016[18]
- MLS All-Star: 2017[36][37]
- MLS Save of the Year Award: 2018[38]
- MLS Goalkeeper of the Year Award: 2017 (Third Place),[39] 2018 (Second Place)[40]

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