

# Interview



Photo: Facebook / Sebastian Grenzing

## Stefan Utz

Whoever talks or hears about Electric Wheelchair Hockey in Germany knows about a very certain person for sure: Stefan Utz. Being an active player at the Munich Animals for 27 years as well as the EWH board chief in the German wheelchair sports federation DRS for 12 years he symbolizes a real establishment in German EWH. With the World Championships 2014 in his home town Munich he has fulfilled his longtime dream; in an interview with [EWH2014.com](http://EWH2014.com) he tells about his expectations of the WC, the obstacles, that had to get overcome, and about his life characterized by EWH.

**EWH2014.com:** In exactly 50 days the IWAS World Championships in electric wheelchair hockey will take place in your home town Munich. What is the state of affairs in your organizing team? Do you have to face bigger problems or does everything go its way?

*Stefan Utz:* My organizing committee is doing an excellent job, so I feel quite confident concerning the preparation. Nonetheless, we are still looking for funds to raise our budget.

**EWH2014.com:** Germans are rumored to have good organizational skills. What is it that teams, officials and audience may expect from the WC?

*Stefan Utz:* This WC shall become an unforgettable event both for the sports men and for all EWH fans. The ice sports stadium, where the competition is going to take place, is located in the famous Olympic Park and the participants will be accommodated in a four-star hotel nearby. You can even reach the sports venue from the accommodation in only 15 minutes by wheelchair driving through the beautiful park. With this extraordinary sports area right in the heart of Munich and with the luxurious hotel the athletes certainly will be comfortable. We will put a lot of accents for a successful event and I am convinced that the participants will glowingly talk about this experience for a long time.

EWH2014.com: Please explain in about two or three short sentences why also EWH laymen should attend the matches in the Olympic ice sports stadium.

*Stefan Utz: Electric wheelchair hockey is a very attractive sport with outstanding athletes that control their wheelchairs on the highest level. Everybody has to see this fascinating sport with its quick maneuvers and tactical variants.*

EWH2014.com: The World Championships are the first time in Germany. What is the benefit for German electric wheelchair hockey and what does that personally mean to you as you come from Munich, the WC host city?

*Stefan Utz: I love my home town Munich. 27 years ago I started playing electric wheelchair hockey with the Munich Animals and therefore the WC definitely means a highlight in my personal EWH history. As it has always been my dream to host World Championships in Germany, it has come full circle now – and it's even my EWH birthplace Munich! What is more exciting than to experience this?*

EWH2014.com: Being honest, how hard has it been to get the WC to Germany? After all, there have always been rumors about other bids for the host of the WC.

*Stefan Utz: Firstly I'd like to note that I wasn't the only one in charge of the organization and the bid. I profit a brilliant and well working team around me. Of course, we had to overcome several difficult hurdles. The main issue always has been to collect the funds for this big event. Hence, it became clear very soon, that without the support of the municipal of Munich and the department of education and sport it would be impossible to submit a balanced cost estimate. Nevertheless, this was essential so that our national disabled sports federation (DBS) could successfully place our bid and IWAS (International Wheelchair and Amputee Sports Federation). Finally, we succeeded thanks to a great support of the municipal politics, which guaranteed a financial aid for the WC 2014. Furthermore, we benefit of a support by the Federal Ministry of the Interior as well as by the Free State of Bavaria. They obviously have been bids of other EWH nations, too, but I don't want to speculate why they recalled their bid. There might be different reasons.*

EWH2014.com: Which were the biggest difficulties that have had to be overcome on the way to the announcement?

*Stefan Utz: It was very difficult to convince the municipal of Munich of the concepts of the EWH WC. Eventually, we made it into the municipal council, which agreed to that mentioned support.*

EWH2014.com: You hold a lot of appointments in national electric wheelchair hockey. Do you still have a private life at all or do you live electric wheelchair hockey 24 hours a day?

*Stefan Utz: I definitely live electric wheelchair hockey, but my private life remains important, of course. Thus, I often take the liberty to follow my hobbies without neglecting the WC duties.*

[EWH2014.com](#): Beneath the several appointments that you hold you actively play EWH, even in the national team. Will we see you in the WC 2014 on the competition field?

*Stefan Utz: It has always been my dream to win the EWH WC title my own country. Now I can really make it! And we even can defend the title of 2010. This would be crazy and really amazing! A few days ago I have been nominated for the German WC roster, but if I really will play a match is a question that you have to ask to our national coach.*

[EWH2014.com](#): Last question. Germany is the defending champion, but could not convince at the European Championships 2012 in Finland? Who is going to win this tournament?

*Stefan Utz: I feel the daily euphoria by preparing the WC. Of course, I wish Germany will make their way to the final. It would be a blast for the tournament, because the attention of the people and media is even higher. And then... headline in the newspapers: "German national side defends World Championship 2014 on their own ground." I think that sounds really good. (laughs)*



Stefan Utz with his brother Roland (right) at the WC 2010 in Italy (Foto: Wolfram Wroz)