

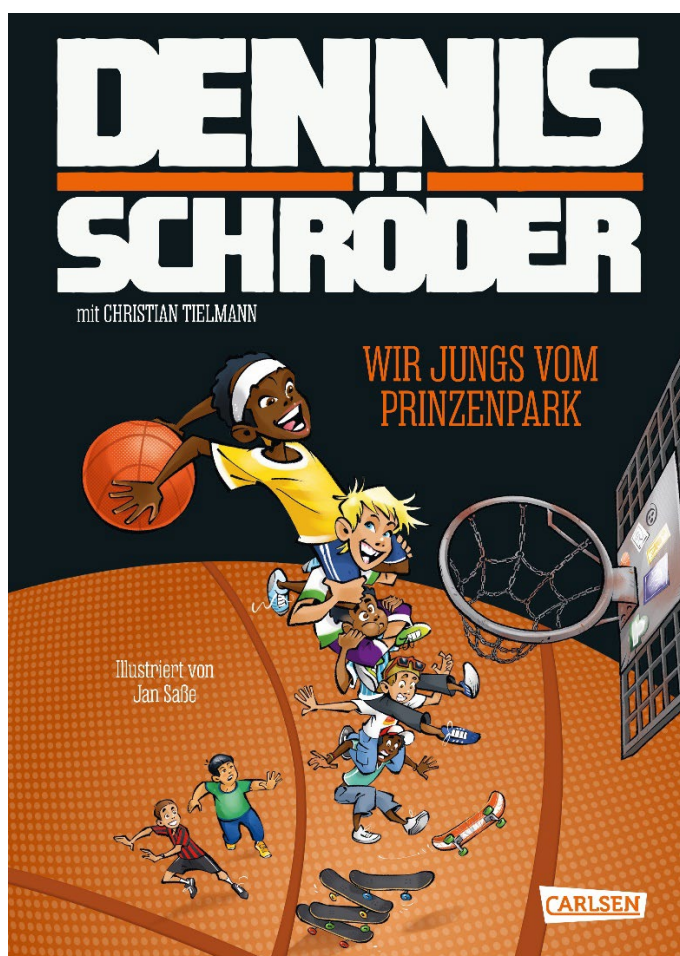
# **Dennis Schröder/Christian Thielmann: We Boys from Prince Park**

Illustrations by Jan Saße

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## **Wir Jungs vom Prinzenpark**

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ENGLISH SAMPLE TRANSLATION

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I thought Che was so cool. He was big. He was my brother. And I could always count on him.

Whenever Che got something, I naturally wanted it, too. Didn't matter what it was: super-cool shoes, super-cool t-shirts, or super-cool shoelaces. That's why my parents just bought two of everything: one for Che and one for me. That's also how I got started on my fourth sport, after power-crying in babyhood, followed by table tennis and then soccer.

Anyway, I remember exactly how it happened. It was a gloriously rainy Christmas. Not one flake of snow. Only rain. On the streets, squares, and roofs of Braunschweig. Rain in Kaiser Street, where we were living back then. And rain in the park. But that didn't bother Che and me one bit. Because we'd gotten the best presents: skateboards!

We were thrilled. We knew about skateboards from a computer game. And we could already do the most important tricks. The ollie, for instance. To do an ollie, you jump into the air while still on your skateboard. Yep, we knew all about it. We could do it. In the computer game on the screen, at least.

Naturally, we wanted to try out these tricks with real skateboards right away. And naturally, our parents would be fine with that. After all, they'd given us the boards. That's why they'd be happy if we were happy. And when we showed them all the stuff we could do with these cool presents, they'd be dancing for joy. I could just picture it.

Our Kaiser Street apartment wasn't all that big. We had a kitchen and a living room, and Che and I shared a bedroom. None of the rooms were what you'd call enormous, none of them had a floor suitable for skating. Because the fact is, you need a little elbow room to do an ollie. You need to build momentum, and before you lift up, you need to know pretty much where you're gonna come down. In short, conditions were not exactly ideal. Not for us. Not for the skateboards. And also not ...

[THUD, CLATTER; OUTSIDE! NOW!!]

... for our Christmas tree.

It turned out that doing an ollie in real life wasn't quite as simple as in a computer game.

"We need to practice," Che said.

"Definitely!" I agreed.

"Not in here!" said our mother.

Our mother is a wise woman.

She knows that there are kids who need to move a lot. And she also knows that a lot of apartments just aren't cut out for those kinds of kids. And because she's wise, she had the very good idea – in spite of Christmas, lousy weather, and the holiday spirit – of sending us outside to skate in the street.

So out we went into Braunschweig's drizzling rain.

On Christmas Eve.

And on Christmas Day.

And on the day after Christmas, Boxing Day.

And if there were a third Christmas holiday in Germany, we'd have gone outside again. Rain or sunshine, night or fog. Because we had discovered a new sport: skateboarding!

Unfortunately, Braunschweig's Kaiser Street fell just a wee bit short of being child-friendly. True, there was room. But most of that room was already reserved for others: The pavement was for cars to drive on; the curb plus half the sidewalk was for cars to park on; and the space around the streetlights was for dogs to "do their business" on – both the small and big varieties.

Skating on the street was too dangerous, skating on the sidewalk too tight a squeeze, and skating around the streetlight poles was just too icky!

Luckily, Che knew our hometown like the back of his hand. So we set out with our boards. Down Kaiser Street to the Muehle Youth Center. Here was a bit of room to practice in, because there weren't any cars or streetlight poles (or Christmas trees!) in the way.

It's not all that hard to get on a skateboard ...

The difficulty comes in staying on it. But just because you can't do something perfectly the first time doesn't mean it's no fun – not by a long shot. We practiced standing on the board. Riding on the board. And staying on the board.

In the youth center was a counselor, Simon. He was a really great guy because he was the one who gave us this piece of advice: "Guys, go to Prince Park! There's more room there than there is here!"

Prince-Albrecht-Park – Prince Park. That was the big wide world for me. So we grabbed our boards and off we went.

Prince Park had a skatepark. It contained a concrete table-tennis table, and in the corners were a couple of basketball hoops with chain nets. And of course there were also a few skaters riding around.

[WHOOSH]

They really knew their stuff. We noticed that right away. Even the way they looked around, checking things out, was laid-back and cool. And the tricks they could do! Man, that was something! They could all do the ollie, smooth and elegant.

They could do flips. And these kids were really into doing slides, too.

["OLLIE" POP; "FLIP" CLACK; "SLIDE" SSSSKKKRRR]

We watched all the stuff they were doing. And we were thinking only one thing: We wanna do that, too! So we started practicing again. The ollie took a while. After a few attempts, we'd at least figured out that a couple of scrapes and scratches were just part of the process.

But eventually, I did it - with lots of power and patience. The tail snapped down, the nose popped up, and I flew a little ways through the air! I could do an ollie! And so could Che.

I was ecstatic.

Che was ecstatic.

And the other skaters nodded in respect.

From then on, Che and I basically had only one thing on our minds:  
skateboarding!

[TICK TACK]

[TACK TICK]

This went on until late spring, and it was an all-round super time for me with my fourth sport, skating.

Che's buddy, Luca, was always with us. True, I was five years younger than Che and more or less the little squirt of Prince Park, but that didn't bother Luca at all – he'd gotten used to it. And the other skaters were friendly and easy-going. Most of them. But not all. Because one day, they just showed up:

[THE WESTSIDE GANG; BEN, SAM, ENNIS]

Their names were Sam, Ben, and Ennis. They were older than Che and taller than Luca. And they acted like Prince Park belonged to them. I don't know what they had against us. But I do know that one day they brought something along. For their skate breaks.

It was something that would change my life. It was orange and round and it was a ball. A basketball. The show-offs from Westside would toss it back and forth amongst themselves and then aim it at the basket, which was hanging pretty high up. That is to say, awfully darn high. At least for me.

"You guys want the ball?" asked Sam, the Westside show-off whose ball it was.

"Sure," said Che, holding his hands out to catch it.

"Okay, then. Come and get it!" Sam called. But Che's hands just clapped air when Sam suddenly pulled the ball back. Then he turned around, dribbled twice – and shot a quick basket.

Sam, Ben, and Ennis laughed at us.

"Ha! Gotcha!" Ennis whooped.

Ben rolled his eyes in contempt. "Geez, you guys've never even seen a basketball." Che, Luca, and I just stood there looking like dopes. We had the skateboards, yes. But these guys from Westside had the basketball.

[WHOOSH; RATTLE; I WANNA DO THAT TOO!]

“Let’s play a round,” Sam suggested. “Three on three.”

And because even the likes of Sam, Ben and Ennis had a trace of fairness in them, they gave us the ball to put into play. Of course we had absolutely no idea what to do. Sam’s cronies Ennis and Ben explained the most important basketball rules to us: “You throw the ball into the basket. You can’t go more than two steps while holding the ball. After that you have to pass it off,” said Ennis.

I was told to throw the ball into play. Of course. I was the little twerp. Always the last picked whenever soccer teams were chosen. But not by Che. Because Che knew I had a favorite word: “Faster!”

So I threw Che my first ever basketball pass faster than those Westside guys could follow it. Che took a shot. And he hit: first the air, then the backboard, then the rim, and finally Luca’s nose. Ouch! Luca wasn’t having an easy time of it, either.

I could hardly lay a hand on that ball. After all, Sam and his cronies were a lot taller than me. I could jump around all I liked – they just held the ball up so high that I couldn’t reach it.

My only chance of getting the ball was on the rebound, when the Westsiders missed yet another shot and the ball boomeranged off the backboard. And whenever I had the ball, I just had to be faster than the Westside Gang. That was the only way I could escape them.

So there you have them, the first five sports in my life: power-crying, table tennis, soccer, skateboarding, and basketball. But the best of all for Che, Luca, and me back then was, without a doubt ...

[CLA CLOCK; THUNK]

... the skateboard.

And that wouldn’t change until what happened in May. But that’s another story

...

[ROLLROLLROLL]

English translation by Rebecca Heier