

XXXVI UEFA
Ordinary Congress
Istanbul 22 March 2012

- Request to Congress to approve this agreement on minimum player contract requirements



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Ordinary Congress
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WE CARE ABOUT FOOTBALL

XXXVI UEFA Ordinary Congress



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36th Ordinary UEFA Congress in Istanbul

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IN THE ISSUE

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EUROPEAN FOOTBALL UNITES AT THE UEFA CONGRESS IN ISTANBUL 4

The 36th Ordinary UEFA Congress sealed the unity of European football with the signing of memorandums of understanding between UEFA and the associations of leagues, clubs and players.



UEFA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETS IN ISTANBUL 8

In Istanbul, ahead of the UEFA Congress, the Executive Committee held its second meeting of the year, during which, among other business, it appointed hosts for the finals and final rounds of various UEFA competitions.



EUROPEAN COMMISSION SUPPORTS FINANCIAL FAIR PLAY 10

The financial fair play rules introduced by UEFA for clubs participating in its competitions have received strong support from the European Commission.



SPORTS MINISTERS MEET IN BELGRADE 12

The recent Council of Europe sports ministers conference gave the UEFA president an opportunity to remind the politicians about UEFA's priorities and to call for joint action in these areas.



CLUB COMPETITIONS MOVE INTO THE HOME STRAIGHT 14

The countdown is on for UEFA EURO 2012, but football fans have much to look forward to between now and then, with this season's UEFA club competition finals in Bucharest and Munich just around the corner.



NEWS FROM MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS 19

Cover:

*The UEFA Congress
in full swing*
Photo: UEFA



EUROPEAN UNION

Family reunions are often seen as boring obligations that are best kept rare. Well, this is not the case in football, as demonstrated by the 36th Ordinary UEFA Congress, beautifully hosted by the Turkish Football Federation in the magical city of Istanbul.

The inclusion and active participation of members and stakeholders are the essential core of UEFA's governance system. Just like in a football team, the road to success is paved with cooperation and solidarity between all players. And just like in a football match, all the action takes place in front of everyone, in complete openness and transparency.

Good governance is not just a question of tactics and strategies; for it to bear fruit it has to be translated into concrete action on the field. And this cannot be done only on game day; it has to be practised day in, day out. It is more about hard work than sheer magic. Consequently, for UEFA, meeting our members once a year is not enough and we have therefore multiplied the opportunities to exchange ideas.

One such opportunity was the national associations' strategy meeting held in Cyprus last September. By the time of the UEFA Congress, six months later, that meeting had produced 14 Executive Committee decisions, 9 tangible results and 9 ongoing actions – the finalisation of the centralisation of commercial rights for the European Qualifiers and the new format of the European Under-21 Championship being just two of them.

Another important outcome of the strategy meeting was the intensification of our cooperation with key stakeholders, which has materialised in the signing of new memorandums of understanding with the clubs (ECA), the leagues (EPFL) and the players (FIFPro Division Europe). These memorandums have led, among many other things, to the adoption of common positions on matters such as the international match calendar and insurance for players on national team duty.

European football has reasserted its unity, not in the form of a written treaty, but by rolling up its sleeves and getting things done on the ground. And the best bit is, the game is far from over. Welcome to the team!

Gianni Infantino
UEFA General Secretary

UNDER THE BANNER OF FOOTBALL UNITY



Left to right: Sergey Pryadkin (EPFL), Philippe Piat (FIFPro Division Europe), Michel Platini (UEFA) and Karl-Heinz Rummenigge (ECA): all the members of the European football family on the same wavelength

The UEFA Congress held at the Istanbul Congress Centre on 22 March, bringing together delegates from all 53 member associations, marked the beginning of a new era in the history of UEFA general meetings. For the first time, it was also attended by representatives of leagues, clubs and players, there to demonstrate their desire to work together by signing memorandums of understanding with European football's governing body.

As the UEFA president, Michel Platini, stressed, these agreements, which required "many months of tough negotiations, [...] guarantee that, for many years to come, football will remain the game we know and love: one in which clubs and national teams coexist in harmony".

Having been invited to address the national association representatives, Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, chairman of the European Club Association (ECA), Sergey Pryadkin, representative of the Association of European Professional Football Leagues (EPFL), and Philippe Piat, president of the professional players' union FIFPro Division Europe, each in turn expressed their satisfaction with the agreements.

"This is a historic day for football which shows that a spirit of loyalty and fair play exists," Rummenigge said. "It is a great achievement to have reached fair and equitable compromises, which will enable us to work with continuity, loyalty and a balance between the interests of the national associations and the clubs. The ECA wants to meet its obligations fully." Sergey Pryadkin mentioned the excellent relations between UEFA and the EPFL,

expressing a desire to continue "working and talking together in order to meet the huge challenges we face". Philippe Piat then affirmed that "FIFPro is with UEFA 100% to eradicate violence, racism and the threat of match fixing".

All three thanked UEFA, and particularly its president for the key part he had played in achieving this unity within the European football family.

Memorandums of understanding

The agreements, the full texts of which are available on UEFA.com, follow on from previous memorandums of understanding signed in 2007 (FIFPro Division Europe), 2008 (ECA) and 1998 and 2005 (EPFL).

The memorandum of understanding with the EPFL particularly concerns the international match calendar, fixture clashes, the release of players, a solidarity payment from UEFA Champions League revenue, respect for financial fair play and EPFL representation in international football structures, especially the Professional Football Strategy Council (PFSC).

The agreement with the European Club Association covers matters such as ECA representation in the PFSC and the UEFA Club Competitions Committee, a procedure for amendments to the UEFA club competition regulations, the international match calendar, the release of players for national team duty, participation in UEFA competitions, respect for financial fair play, insurance to cover player injuries sustained during UEFA competitions, exclusive referral of disputes to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) and a share in the revenue from UEFA European Football Championship final rounds, which will amount to €100 million for 2012 and €150 million for 2016 (when there will be 24 teams). The agreement is valid until 31 May 2018.

Minimum requirements for player contracts

As far as the players are concerned, the main issue is their protection and an important step in this direction was taken with the approval, first by the Executive Committee and then by the Congress, of an agreement on minimum requirements for standard player contracts in the professional football sector in the European Union and the rest of UEFA's territory. Placed under the banner of European social dialogue between employers (in this case, the ECA and EPFL) and employees (FIFPro Division Europe), this document will be officially signed in Brussels, in principle in April this year. Given the specificity of sport, UEFA is involved and its president chairs the sectoral social dialogue committee. The agreement should enter into force no later than three years after the date of signature and the parties undertake to do everything possible to guarantee its implementation.

Amendments to the UEFA Statutes

Twenty-one amendments to the UEFA statutes and two new provisions were submitted to the Congress, which approved them all unanimously. They mainly concern the possibility to call a second ordinary UEFA Congress in the same year, the guaranteed presence of a woman on the Executive Committee, with the same rights and duties as the other members, the recognition of the Club Financial Control Body as a UEFA Organ for the Administration of Justice, the extension of the terms of office of committee and expert panel members from two to four years (which means that the term of current members is extended until 2015), and the creation of new disciplinary measures against associations and clubs, namely the withholding of revenues from a UEFA competition, a ban on registering new players in UEFA competitions and a restriction on the number of players that a club may register for participation in these competitions.

Statutory tasks

The delegates also carried out the usual statutory tasks of approving the annual report of the president and Executive Committee, the annual report of the administration (later supplemented by an oral report on the committees' activities), the consolidated accounts for 2010/11 (now in euros) and the budget for 2012/13.

The Congress also provided an opportunity to review the measures taken following the strategy meeting of national association presidents and general secretaries held in Cyprus last September. These had resulted in 14 Executive Committee decisions, 9 tangible results and 9 ongoing actions, all in the space of around six months. The UEFA general secretary, Gianni Infantino, presented this update, informing the delegates, among other things, that European Under-21 Championship final rounds would be held in even-numbered years again from 2016 onwards, that the number of teams participating in the European Women's Championship final round would increase to 16 from 2017, that the number of final round participants in the European Women's Under-17 Championship would increase to eight from 2014, that the international match calendar would comprise nine double dates and, finally, that associations would be supported in setting up small youth development tournaments.

Another item on the agenda of the strategy meeting in Cyprus, the centralised marketing of media rights for European qualifying matches, was presented in more detail in the light of the information that had been given to the Executive Committee the previous day.

New graphic identity

UEFA's revamped logo and new graphic identity were also unveiled during the Congress and in the meeting documents the delegates received. The new look is designed to strengthen perception of the values linked to UEFA and its activities. The design of UEFA-direct has also been adapted accordingly. ●



All UEFA's member associations were represented in Istanbul

A WONDERFUL THING THAT WE MUST PRESERVE

The UEFA president, Michel Platini, was able to announce a “*marvellous victory for UEFA and for football*” in his opening speech to the national association delegates.



The FIFA president, Joseph S. Blatter, presents a commemorative pennant to the UEFA president, Michel Platini

His exchange of correspondence with the vice-president of the European Commission and commissioner responsible for competition, Joaquín Almunia, and the joint declaration by the European Commission and UEFA (see pages 10-11) constitute strong support for the measures adopted by UEFA to ensure financial fair play in European club competitions. The UEFA president stressed that, “Our peaceful relations with different institutions help us tremendously in our efforts. A great deal of groundwork has been put in over the last few years and it is starting to bear fruit.”

Heading in the right direction

Michel Platini had previously emphasised the team work carried out in recent years, adding that, “If there is one thing that gives me absolute confi-



Yildirim Demirören, president of the Turkish Football Federation

dence for the projects we have to implement in the years ahead, it is that I know I can continue to rely on you, on all of you. [...] Thanks to you, things are happening. [...] Also, and in particular, I feel that together we are continuing to move forward. Not only that: we are heading in the right direction.”

The president nonetheless referred to the problems that football is still facing, particularly the countless legal procedures, flouting of player contracts, club debt, violence, match fixing and illegal betting, doping, trafficking of young players and money laundering. “These scourges exist. They exist in society and they exist in football, too. What is worse, they seem to be taking root or being trivialised. It is up to us to fight them, with the help of the public authorities, to which I renew my call



Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish prime minister

today. [...] So let us protect the players, let us protect the game, let us clean up football. This is our aim. This should be our obsession.” This clarion call was clearly grounded in the conviction he had expressed a little earlier: “Football is a wonderful thing, a treasure we must preserve.”

Turkish development programme

The Turkish prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a guest of honour at the UEFA Congress, drew attention to the Turks’ passion for football and the efforts being made to develop it further. “Eighteen new stadiums will be built”, he announced, “and 352 natural and artificial pitches will be laid.” These measures will go hand in hand with improvements to the country’s rail network. “Half the Turkish population is under 30 years old,” he continued, “and young people need to be given the facilities they need to practise sport.”

“The language of football and sport is the language of peace,” the prime minister said, highlighting everything that he had learned from playing football himself: coordination, team spirit, discipline and, of course, communication. He also called for cooperation: “Let us work together, let us make the necessary investments, let us defend the values of sport and let us fight against match fixing, as



well as against racism, which goes against the spirit of sport." He ended by saying, "The beauty and cleanness of sport must remain our objective."

The president of the Turkish Football Federation, Yildirim Demirören, also stressed the importance of football in Turkey: "Turkey is the sixth largest football country in Europe and wants to be on the front line in the search for solutions to the problems European football faces." He also expressed his support for financial fair play and mentioned the projects currently under way to develop football in his country.

Message from the FIFA president

As is the tradition, the FIFA president, Joseph S. Blatter, attended the UEFA Congress alongside representatives of the other confederations. He once again reiterated the important role played by European football in the world game, said he was pleased to see a woman on the UEFA Executive Committee and mentioned the forthcoming FIFA competitions to be held in Europe. He also pointed out that 300 million people were involved in football: "We have problems. [...] Are we responsible for all the evils in our world? No, but we must remain vigilant." Referring to the measures taken to combat illegal betting (early warning system and cooperation with Interpol), he reminded the delegates of the danger posed to the sport "if the results are decided in advance."

The FIFA president finished on a positive note with regard to the international match calendar, "where a balance between clubs and national asso-

ciations must be found, while taking player's interests into account." He also announced the establishment of worldwide insurance for players in all matches played under the international calendar and the FIFA reform procedure under way, which would be discussed at the FIFA Congress in Budapest on 24 and 25 May. ●

The UEFA Executive Committee, shortly before the memorandums of understanding were signed, reinforcing the unity of European football

FIVE NEW ADDITIONS TO THE CIRCLE OF FORMER COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The UEFA *Amicale des anciens*, which comprises former committee members who served for at least 12 years, welcomed five new members: Dane Jost (Slovakia), Jean-Marie Philips (Belgium), Pekka Hämäläinen (Finland), Henk Kesler (Netherlands) and Ralph Zloczower (Switzerland).

A small number of the circle of former committee members present in Istanbul had participated in the 1978 Ordinary UEFA Congress, which had also been held in the Turkish city. UEFA's first vice-president, Senes Erzik, who presented the activities of the UEFA committees, spoke with feeling about that earlier Congress, which he himself had helped organise. He was proud of his successors at the Turkish Football Federation, who had contributed to the perfectly smooth organisation of the 2012 edition and the events surrounding it.

LISBON AND TURIN TO HOST 2014 FINALS



The Estádio da Luz, venue for the UEFA EURO 2004 final, has been given the opportunity to host another big event in European football

With the UEFA president, Michel Platini, in the chair, the Executive Committee met in Istanbul on 20 and 21 March, ahead of the 36th Ordinary UEFA Congress.

Many decisions were made at this second Executive Committee meeting of the year, many of which concerned finals and final rounds. For the club competitions, it was decided that the 2014 UEFA Champions League final would be played at the Estádio da Luz in Lisbon (capacity: 65,000), previously the venue for the EURO 2004 final. The Portuguese capital has not hosted a European Champion Clubs' Cup or Champions League final since 1967, when Celtic took home the trophy at the expense of FC Internazionale Milano at the National Stadium. The UEFA Europa League final in 2014 will take place at the Juventus Stadium in Turin. Inaugurated in November 2011, the arena in Piedmont can hold up to 41,000 spectators. Italy has not yet hosted a Europa League final, and the country's last UEFA Cup final was before it changed from a two-legged tie to a single match in 1998.

Under-21s in the Czech Republic

On national team competitions, the Executive Committee held a secret ballot to decide which association would host the final round of the European Under-21 Championship in 2015, the

last before the tournament switches back to even-numbered years as of 2016. The outcome of the secret ballot was that the Football Association of the Czech Republic will host the 2015 final round.

For the youth competitions, hosts were appointed for the 2014, 2015 and 2016 final rounds. Consequently, the final round of the European Women's Under-17 Championship will take place in England in 2014, Iceland in 2015 and Belarus in 2016, while Norway will organise the women's Under-19 final round in 2014, with Israel hosting in 2015 and Slovakia 2016. In the men's youth competitions, the Under-17s will head to Malta in 2014, Bulgaria in 2015 and Azerbaijan in 2016, while the Under-19s will be hosted by Hungary, Greece and Germany in 2014, 2015 and 2016 respectively. No fewer than 26 national associations submitted bids to host one or other of these tournaments.

In addition, the final round of the 2015/16 European Futsal Championship was awarded to the Football Association of Serbia. The matches will take place in Belgrade, at the 18,386-capacity Belgrade Arena and the 6,000-seat Pionir Arena. While on the topic of futsal, the Executive Com-

mittee also approved the 2012/13 UEFA Futsal Cup regulations.

Changes to the regulations

Other regulations approved included those for the 2012/13–2014/15 cycle of the UEFA Champions League, UEFA Europa League and UEFA Super Cup. One of the biggest changes here concerns player eligibility, whereby as of next season, players who play for one club during qualifying rounds or play-off matches will be entitled to play for another club as of the group stage, regardless of whether their former club remains in the competition or not.

The Executive Committee also approved the regulations for the 2012/13 UEFA Women's Champions League and amendments to the 2011–13 European Women's Championship regulations. In the case of the Women's EURO, the main change relates to the qualifying criteria for the quarter-finals, which will be played, as before, by the winners of the three groups, the runners-up and the two best third-placed teams. Under the new regulations, if the three third-placed teams all finish on the same number of points, lots will be drawn to determine which go through, to avoid any intrigues on the last matchday caused by the old goal difference criterion. The Executive Committee also approved the match schedule for the final round, which will be held in Sweden from 10 to 28 July 2013.

Test competition

Still on the topic of competitions, the Executive Committee responded favourably to the request made by a working group set up to deal with the issue of cross-border leagues and competitions. The group, headed by Executive Committee member Michael van Praag, obtained approval for the formation of the BeNe women's league as a three-year pilot project bringing together teams from Belgium and the Netherlands. This competition will complement the two countries' domestic competitions and have no bearing on the allocation of places in the UEFA Women's Champions League. The Executive Committee also heard, but rejected, a request from the Football Association of Wales, which wanted Welsh clubs playing in English leagues to be able to qualify for UEFA competitions through the Welsh Cup, albeit under certain conditions. Taking these two decisions, the Executive Committee underlined its attachment to competitions in Europe retaining their national identity.

With regard to UEFA's centralised marketing of media rights for the European qualifying matches for UEFA EURO 2016 and the 2018 FIFA World Cup, the Executive Committee adopted a set of commercial regulations. In doing so, the committee agreed that the national associations would continue to manage their own marketing rights unless they asked UEFA to do so on their behalf. As part of the new centralised system, 37 national associations have chosen to play their home matches with an official European Qualifiers match ball.

This centralisation project also goes hand in hand with the adoption of a new international match calendar, by agreement with FIFA. UEFA is

thus set to introduce "weeks of football", with matches spread between Thursday and the following Tuesday, providing more opportunities to broadcast games and generating added value for national team football.

Turning to medical matters, the Executive Committee adopted the 2012 edition of the UEFA Anti-Doping Regulations and approved the principle of minimum medical requirements for UEFA competitions.

On refereeing, meanwhile, two more associations – the Football Federation of Kazakhstan and the Football Federation of Montenegro – were admitted to the UEFA Convention on Referee Education and Organisation, bringing the total number of signatories to 50.

Finally, the Executive Committee was delighted to hear of the European Commission's support for the principles of financial fair play (see pages 10-11) and rounded off its intense and busy meeting by approving of a roadmap relating to the Gibraltar Football Association's (GFA) request for UEFA membership. This roadmap defines a timetable and areas in which UEFA may assist the GFA between now and when its request is put to the vote at the Ordinary UEFA Congress in 2013. ●



A busy meeting for the Executive Committee in Istanbul

EURO 2020 BID PROCEDURE

In Istanbul, the Executive Committee also defined the bid procedure to determine who will host UEFA EURO 2020. First, a letter was sent to all the national associations at the end of March, giving them until 15 May to declare their interest in staging the tournament. If more than one association wishes to bid, regulations will be approved at the Executive Committee's next meeting in Kyiv in June. The bidding process will then be launched and the Executive Committee will vote on the bids in 2013/14.

If only one association declares an interest, UEFA will make every effort to obtain the necessary guarantees and confirmations from this association as soon as possible so that it can be appointed to host EURO 2020.

FINANCIAL FAIR PLAY GETS THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S STAMP OF APPROVAL

Question: What do the dates 21 March 2012 and 28 May 2008 have in common? Answer: Both are historical milestones for European football and relations between UEFA and the EU.



The UEFA president next to José Manuel Barroso and with Marcello Lippi and Sir Bobby Charlton in Brussels in March 2007

On 28 May 2008 the European Commission declared UEFA's home-grown player rule to be in compliance with the EU principle of free movement of workers. Four years later, on 21 March this year, UEFA and the European Commission confirmed, in a joint statement, that UEFA's financial fair play rules were in line with EU competition policy. There have also been various smaller landmarks between these major developments.

Since May 2008, the home-grown (or locally trained) player rule has become an integral part of the UEFA club competition regulations, and the term has found a place in the vocabulary of every serious football commentator and fan. The rule is also replicated in many national leagues in Europe. UEFA's financial fair play rules are now following in these footsteps, with the statement issued in March 2012 confirming their sustainability vis-à-vis EU policy, in practice paving the way for their durability and sustainable future. It is now clear that UEFA's financial fair play rules are here to stay.

A long way

The EU's official endorsement of the rules was covered prominently by the European media: "European Commission closes the last loophole in UEFA's

financial fair play regulations," was the gist of the headlines. All this did not happen by accident; it required months of work, years even. So how did we get here? What was needed for the EU's executive body to issue a "joint statement" with UEFA, a text usually published by the EU and a state body, for example in the context of the Open Skies air traffic agreement between the EU and the United States? How did UEFA, a sports organisation, achieve such a thing?

First, there is, of course, no denying that football is close to the heart of many European citizens and hence naturally interests the politicians, too. Also, the context is crucial – Europe is battling with serious economic problems and UEFA's financial fair play rules strike a common chord with politicians, as they address many issues politics is trying to solve in the broader field of finance.

Compatibility with the EU principles

However, the popularity of football and the financial context alone are not enough to explain the breakthrough achieved on 21 March. On the issue of financial fair play, UEFA has been in talks with European Commission officials ever since the rules were in their first-draft form. It was always

clear that such overarching rules governing club finances were likely to be assessed by the EU at some point. The rules were, of course, drafted in the interests of European football, not politics, but they had to be compatible with the principles of the EU in order to have a credible future.

Political momentum

In addition to UEFA's services keeping a close eye on the development of the actual rules, it was vital for the process to create political momentum by organising suitable high-profile meetings in connection with the issue. Here, the UEFA president's inspiring leadership and unrivalled public profile have, of course, been crucial. Just after being elected UEFA president, Michel Platini sent a strong message to Brussels in March 2007 by meeting the president of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, under the European media spotlight, ahead of a gala match between Manchester United FC and a European All Stars team at Old Trafford.

The issue of financial fair play has been personally spearheaded by the UEFA president, who is sometimes seen as an enviable figure in the world of politics, where brave thought leadership is called for, especially at the moment. The UEFA president first met the European Commission vice-president and commissioner responsible for EU competition policy, Joaquín Almunia, a key figure for the success of the financial fair play rules, on 14 September 2010. They discussed the financial fair play concept and the concrete ways in which the two organisations could work together. The issue was taken up at the highest possible level again in Brussels on 14 June last year, when the UEFA president presented the financial fair play rules to the European Commission president, José Manuel Barroso, who was very supportive of them.

Active dialogue

In addition to maintaining active dialogue with the European Commission, UEFA has also been in close contact with the European Parliament and key MEPs. It was no accident that a European Parliament resolution on sport, drafted by Spanish MEP Santiago Fisas and adopted on 2 February this year, was unequivocal in its support for UEFA's financial fair play. It reads: "[The European Parliament] clearly states its support for licensing systems and financial fair play, as they encourage clubs to compete within their actual financial means." The European Parliament has been given more legislative powers in recent years and the directly elected MEPs are listened to carefully by the European Commission.

The UEFA president met Joaquín Almunia again in December, this time together with European Commission vice-president and EU justice commissioner Viviane Reding. The financial fair play rules were on the agenda once again and it was agreed that the relevant services of the European Commission and UEFA would together examine how the rules fitted within the context of EU competition policy. This work was complemented by an exchange of letters at the highest level, between Michel Platini and Joaquín Almunia.

Strong assurance

As they say, the rest is history. The EU does not have the competence to pass laws on sport. However, for European football to have a sustainable



Joaquín Almunia, vice-president of the European Commission

future where it does not have to constantly worry about its rules being contested by politicians or lawyers, sport needs to work together with these bodies, without compromising its own principles. The joint UEFA-EC statement is the strongest possible assurance European football can have of this sustainability. It was achieved through courageous leadership, hard work, persistence, patience and a long-term vision. UEFA and its partners, who, of course, designed the rules together, can be proud of this achievement. ●

COUNCIL OF EUROPE SPORTS MINISTERS CONFERENCE



Antoine Tardy/UNOSDP

Meeting of the sports ministers in Belgrade

The UEFA president gave a pivotal speech at the Council of Europe sports ministers conference in Belgrade on 15 March, taking the opportunity to draw attention to the policy areas UEFA considers a priority: the fight against match fixing and violence, financial fair play, sporting justice and the safeguarding of national teams.

He began his speech by pointing out that behind all fixed matches “*lurk organised criminal networks [that] exploit loopholes in the law to ransack entire competitions*”, before reiterating that “*match fixing must be made a criminal offence*.” The UEFA president also called for an international convention on match fixing, which the Council of Europe will consider in the coming months.

He went on to assert that “*the future of sport does not lie in violence*”, before announcing that the Council of Europe and UEFA would “*work together*” to update the 1985 Convention on Spectator Violence, more than 25 years after it entered into force.

The UEFA president then summarised the key principles of the financial fair play initiative. “*I ask one thing of you*,” he told the sports ministers, “*and that is to protect financial fair play*.” The same request was made in respect of national teams, for which “*one country [Spain, ed.] has taken the necessary step [of establishing] the compulsory release of national team players as a principle in its national legislation*.”

Finally, he reaffirmed his strong belief in sporting justice. “*I am committed to giving our arbitration procedures the guarantees they desperately need*,” he said, before concluding on a collective note: “*Let us work together to give sport the common-sense rules it requires. This is our common fight: for the sustainability of sport and the future of Europe*.” ●

Development programmes

CLUB LICENSING AND FINANCIAL FAIR PLAY

Three important club licensing and financial fair play workshops have been held across Europe in recent months, with all 53 UEFA national associations participating.

The annual meetings took place this year in London, Tbilisi and Vienna and play an essential role in bringing together the club licensing network and facilitating the sharing of experiences. With the majority of national licensors and their decision-making bodies assessing club documents between March and May, before eventually submitting their list of licensing decisions to UEFA on 31 May, the meetings have found a home in the calendar in February and early March.

There were a number of topics common to all three workshops, together with some more tailored presentations.

Cutting-edge governance at Wembley

A selection of the largest national associations took part in the first two-day workshop at Wembley Stadium – a suitably grand venue – on 8/9 February.

David Bernstein, chairman of the FA and first vice-chairman of the UEFA Club Licensing Committee, strongly underlined the importance of both club licensing and financial fair play as key governance projects for European football.

Participants then received a series of presentations from The FA and the Premier League highlighting the cutting-edge governance and regulations in place in England, and emphasising some of the distinguishing features of the implementation of UEFA club licensing in the country. Regulations on third party ownership, fit and proper person tests and the use of a central FA bank account through which all transfer payments flow were just some of the governance measures presented and discussed by the national association participants from France, Italy, Portugal, Russia, Scotland, Spain, the Netherlands, Turkey and Ukraine. This

workshop was the latest in a series where the hosts present the nuances of their system, helping to spread best practice and trust across Europe in terms of how licensing is applied.

Following a stadium tour and an organised trip on the England players' bus to see the Cirque du Soleil at the Royal Albert Hall, the participants re-assembled on the second day for presentations on financial fair play and, specifically, the IT systems that have been developed to support the project. A detailed explanation was given on the software solution that has been developed to help monitor overdue transfer payables. Participants then took part in various simulations to help them understand the system. Finally, to bring two excellent days to a close, some of the key findings from the recently published European Club Footballing Landscape report were presented, showing trends in club football and providing the broadest and most complete analysis of club football finances, which is extremely relevant in the context of financial fair play.

Warm welcome in Georgia

The Georgian Football Federation (GFF) welcomed participants from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belarus, Bulgaria, Estonia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Montenegro and Poland to the second workshop in Tbilisi from 21 to 23 February. The GFF president, Domenti Sichinava, warmly welcomed the guests and UEFA to the workshop, where everyone gained hands-on experience in using the new financial fair play IT system. The participants rounded off a day of case studies with an evening in Tbilisi's old town.

Wrap-up in Vienna

The third and largest club licensing workshop was held in Vienna on 1 and 2 March. Georg Pangl, CEO of the Austrian Bundesliga, greeted licensing managers and financial experts from 27 national associations: Austria, Albania, Andorra, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Republic of Ireland,



The workshop in Tbilisi

Iceland, Israel, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Northern Ireland, Norway, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and Wales. Here, as in Tbilisi, the participants performed test exercises in the new overdue payables module of the financial fair play IT solution. During the second day, a presentation was given about the very latest club licensing activities and financial fair play results, as well as the upcoming discussions and challenges. The workshop concluded with a summary of the latest club benchmarking figures. ●



Group work to encourage active participation

SPOTLIGHT ON BUCHAREST AND MUNICH

As the top teams battle it out in the crucial stages of UEFA's two major club competitions, the lights are starting to come on in the venues for the two big finals.



Romania playing France on 6 September last year in the inaugural match at the National Arena in Bucharest

This season, two magnificent stadiums are making their debuts as settings for the grand finales: the National Arena in Bucharest will stage the UEFA Europa League final on 9 May and, ten days later, the Fussball Arena München will be the venue for the 20th UEFA Champions League final.

The Europa League final is being played at a stadium which, apart from those built for UEFA EURO 2012 in Poland and Ukraine, is one of the newest in Europe. The National Arena in Bucharest was inaugurated barely eight months ago with an international match between Romania and France on 6 September. The impressive new stadium, with its fully retractable roof, has been built on the site of the old National Stadium, where the last ball was kicked in November 2007.

First major club event in Romania

Although Romania hosted the final rounds of the 1996–98 European Under-21 Championship and last season's European Under-19 Championship (both won by Spain, incidentally), the

climax to the 2011/12 Europa League is the first major club event to be staged in the country. Even when FC Steaua Bucuresti won the European Champion Clubs' Cup in 1986, the UEFA Super Cup was played as a single match in Monaco – a genuine forerunner to the format which was later adopted in 1998.

The Romanian Football Federation (FRF) is teaming up with UEFA to peg grassroots activities to the big final. The Grassroots Bucharest Trophy kicked off in March, when schools ran internal competitions to find the best teams to represent them in tournaments staged in the six districts of the Romanian capital. Around 100 schools fielded boys', girls' and mixed teams in a competition which allowed some 4,000 youngsters to enjoy the beautiful game. In the run-up to the UEFA Europa League final, the finals of this competition, involving just under 200 boys and girls, will be staged on a mini-pitch in the city's Tineretului park. As has become the custom in recent years, UEFA is donating a mini-pitch to both the cities hosting this season's two major club competition finals.

Back to where it all began

Miodrag Belodedici, who is acting as UEFA's ambassador for the Bucharest Europa League final, provides an interesting link to the Champions League: he was the first player to win Europe's top title with two different clubs – FC Steaua Bucuresti in 1986 and FK Crvena zvezda in 1991. He is joined in his ambassadorial role by two players who have both been world champions with Germany: Steffi Jones is ambassador for the UEFA Women's Champions League final and Paul Breitner for the men's equivalent.

The UEFA Champions League final represents, in a way, a return to its origins, as Munich was the venue for the first final in the newly formed competition. On 26 May 1993, Olympique de Marseille defeated AC Milan 1-0 to become the first and only French club to don the European crown. Four years later, BV Borussia Dortmund defeated defending champions Juventus 3-1 at the same venue to perpetuate a strange phenomenon – in two decades, no team has been able to mount a successful defence of the Champions League title.

Munich was also the venue for one final in the pre-Champions League era, with Nottingham Forest FC, currently in the second tier of English league football, beating Swedish dark horses Malmö FF on 30 May 1979 to take the title. But after the three previous Munich finals at the Olympiastadion, the spotlight now falls on the state-of-the-art Fussball Arena München, which was completed in April 2005 after one of the most strikingly democratic processes in the annals of German football. In 2001, a public referendum decided that the construction of a totally new arena was preferable to an upgrading of the Olympiastadion which, as the name suggests, had been built for the 1972 Olympic Games.

Whereas Wembley Stadium in London, the venue for the 2011 and 2013 Champions League finals, is not home to a club side, the Fussball Arena is home to two – FC Bayern München and TSV 1860 München – with stadium technology allowing the structure to glow red for the former or blue for the latter.

Women's final at the Olympiastadion

Despite the move across the Bavarian capital, UEFA has not turned its back on the Olympiastadion. Following the example set in Getafe and Fulham in the last two seasons, the final of the UEFA Women's Champions League is being staged in the same city as the men's final. On Thursday 17 May, the Olympiastadion will thus burst into footballing life again after a seven-year hibernation since the last official match was played there on 15 May 2005.

The sheer grandeur of the men's final is almost taken for granted. But this season's women's final also seems likely to go into the record books. The Munich showpiece could break the record attendance figure of 28,112 set by the return leg between FCR 2001 Duisburg and WFC Zvezda 2005 Perm in 2009, when the UEFA Women's Cup final was still being played on a home-and-away basis.

Hopes of a record-breaking crowd are based on UEFA's commitment to making the match a family-friendly event that will help promote women's foot-

ball. The final kicks off at 18.00 on a public holiday and ticket prices have been set at highly affordable levels, including packages for groups and families. Fifty thousand tickets are being made available online and at 200 sales points throughout southern Germany, as well as at the stadium itself.

What is more, the men's and women's finals have been brought even closer together by the Champions Festival, which is being set up in the Olympiapark surrounding the Olympiastadion. The festival will open its doors on the eve of the women's final, and fans of all four finalist teams will be able to share with the general public the pleasures of playing football, testing their skills and breathing in the history of the UEFA Champions League via displays of memorabilia and films shown in the Theatre of Champions.

UEFA Grassroots Day

Although essentially a Munich event, acting as a direct link between the foundations and the peak of the game, the Champions Festival also has a wider role to play. When it opens on Wednesday 16 May, the festival will be the epicentre of the pan-European Grassroots Day, on which UEFA's 53 member associations organise grassroots events of all kinds, but with the common denominator of clearly transmitting "football for all" messages and stressing the importance of grassroots football within the game and within society. Special events will be staged at the Olympiapark, where the Champions Festival will build to a crescendo on the day of the men's final with an Ultimate Champions match at which, if all goes well, fans will be able to enjoy the skills of all-time greats such as Michael Laudrup, Paolo Maldini, Zinedine Zidane and the de Boer twins.

All in all, Bucharest and Munich add up to an impressive climax to the European season – right from the grassroots to the peak of the professional game. ●



Borussia Dortmund won the last UEFA Champions League final in Munich, played at the Olympiastadion

DRAW FOR THE UEFA FUTSAL CUP SEMI-FINALS



On 3 April, at half-time in the UEFA Champions League match between FC Barcelona and AC Milan, David Villa, Borislav Mihaylov, chairman of the UEFA Futsal and Beach Soccer Committee, and Àngel Ros, mayor of Lleida, performed the draw for the UEFA Futsal Cup semi-finals.

The matches will be played at the Pavelló Barris Nord in Lleida on the following dates:

27 April: Semi-finals

18.30: Marca Futsal (ITA) v MFK Dinamo Moskva (RUS)
21.00: FC Barcelona (ESP) v Sporting Clube de Portugal (POR)

29 April: Finals

17.00: Third-place play-off
19.30: Final



Draw for the UEFA Futsal Cup semi-finals at half-time in the UEFA Champions League quarter-final between FC Barcelona and AC Milan: Borislav Mihaylov, David Villa and Àngel Ros (left to right)

NEW EDITION OF THE UEFA REGIONS' CUP



The qualifying draw, held on 5 March at UEFA headquarters in Nyon, was the first official event of the 2012/13 UEFA Regions' Cup.

Eight teams are involved in the preliminary round, which will be played between 1 August and 30 September this year. The two group winners and the best runner-up will join the 29 other teams in the intermediate round, which will determine which eight teams (group winners) enter the 2013 final round.

Preliminary round

Group A: Kazakhstan, Turkey, Israel, Romania
 Group B: FYR Macedonia, Wales, Sweden, Northern Ireland

Intermediate round

Group 1: **Belarus**, France, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovakia
 Group 2: **Bulgaria**, winner of preliminary round Group A, Switzerland, Croatia
 Group 3: **Czech Republic**, Hungary, Germany, Scotland
 Group 4: **Lithuania**, Azerbaijan, Serbia, winner of preliminary round Group B
 Group 5: **Malta**, Latvia, Russia, Moldova
 Group 6: **San Marino**, best preliminary round runner-up, Republic of Ireland, England
 Group 7: **Ukraine**, Slovenia, Belgium, Spain
 Group 8: **Estonia**, Poland, Italy, Finland
Mini-tournament hosts in bold.

UNDER-17 FINAL ROUND IN SLOVENIA



In May, three of the teams that participated in the 2011 final round – the Netherlands (winners), Germany (runners-up) and France – will be joined by Poland, Belgium (subject to the outcome of the protest filed by Hungary), Iceland, Georgia and hosts Slovenia in the final round of this season's European Under-17 Championship.

Slovenia, participating in this stage of the competition for the first time, will host the final round in four cities from 4 to 16 May.

The participants include three former competition winners, with the Netherlands having won it in 2011, Germany in 2009 and France in 2004. Poland could even be added to this list, since they won the European Under-16 Tournament in 1993.

The group matches will be played on 4, 7 and 10 May in Ljubljana, Domzale, Maribor and Lendava. The semi-finals on 13 May and the final on 16 May will take place at the ŠRC Stožice stadium in Ljubljana.

The draw, conducted in Ljubljana on 4 April by the chairman of the UEFA Youth and Amateur Football Committee, Jim Boyce, and the two tournament ambassadors, Sašo Udovic and Marko Simeunovic, produced the following groups:

Group A: France, Iceland, Georgia, Germany
 Group B: Slovenia, Netherlands, Poland, Belgium



Aleksander Čeferin, president of the Slovenian FA, at the draw for the U17 final round

UEFA WOMEN'S CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SEMI-FINALS



The quarter-finals of the UEFA Women's Champions League were played in March.

1. FFC Frankfurt eliminated FC Malmö (0-1, 3-0), Olympique Lyonnais conquered Brøndby IF (4-0, 4-0), 1. FFC Turbine Potsdam beat FC Rosiyanka (2-0, 3-0), and Arsenal LFC knocked out Göteborg FC (3-1, 0-1). The lineup for the semi-finals, which were played on 15 April (first leg) and 21/22 April (second leg), was therefore as follows:

Olympique Lyonnais v 1. FFC Turbine Potsdam
 Arsenal LFC v 1. FFC Frankfurt
 Match results and reports are available on UEFA.com.

UEFA PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR GIANNI RIVERA

Following in the footsteps of Alfredo Di Stéfano, Sir Bobby Charlton, Eusébio and Raymond Kopa, who have each in turn won the UEFA President's Award since 2007, another legend of European football, former Italian international and 1969 Ballon d'Or winner Gianni Rivera received this distinction at a ceremony held at the Stadio Giuseppe Meazza in Milan on 12 March.

The UEFA president, Michel Platini, wanted to pay tribute to a man who had shown class both on and off the pitch and a player who had symbolised football intelligence, elegance and technique, as well as loyalty to a single club.

Gianni Rivera made 501 Serie A appearances for AC Milan, a club to which he remained faithful from the moment he signed from the Piedmontese club US Alessandria Calcio 1912 in 1960 until he hung up his boots in 1979. Among other trophies, he helped the Milanese club to win three domestic league titles, the European Champion Clubs' Cup in 1963 and 1969 and the European Cup Winners' Cup in 1968 and 1973.



Michel Platini presents Gianni Rivera with the UEFA President's Award

In the colours of the Italian national team, Rivera won the European Championship in 1968 and reached the 1970 World Cup final after scoring the winning goal in a memorable 4-3 semi-final victory over Germany. "Rivera was among the first to understand that the ball is faster than the player and that he had to make full use of it", explained Michel Platini, an expert in such things himself.

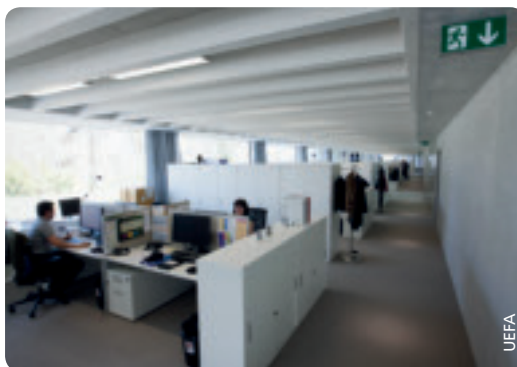
NEW BUILDING AT UEFA HEADQUARTERS

Since the UEFA Executive Committee decided, at its meeting in Malta in January 2010, to construct a new administrative building in Nyon, the project has progressed with great efficiency, so much so that it became operational on 12 March, when the first UEFA staff (information and communication technology unit) moved in.

The Bois-Bougy building joins the Clairière building on an 18,000m² plot of land, of which it occupies a little less than a quarter (4,000m²). It contains around 190 desks, adding to the 230 in the Clairière and the 200 in the main building. As a result, all of UEFA's administrative staff can now be accommodated on a single "campus", which also includes the Colovray stadium and its facilities and the recently renovated Villa Falaise.

Designed by the Bassicarella architects' firm in Geneva, the new building comprises 32,000m³ of floor space spread over four levels, fitting the

curves of the land so that only the top two floors are visible. It also complies with the strictest environmental standards.



UEFA's new office building provides an additional 190 desks

TRAINING FOR EUROPEAN POLICE OFFICERS

European police and security officers will benefit from a training programme supported by UEFA and the EU.

Launched in March in Ossendrecht in the Netherlands, the programme began with a five-day gathering of 50 police-force representatives from 20 European countries involved in major football events.

The programme will continue until the autumn and will be attended by some 250 police officers in total. It aims to raise participants' awareness of the security issues connected with football matches. Multimedia presentations, practical observation work at important matches and interactive learning exercises based on various scenarios form the basis of the programme, which has been designed with the help of security experts.





TECHNICAL CENTRE INAUGURATION

On 1 April, 15 minutes' drive from Tel Aviv, the Israel Football Association (IFA) inaugurated Beit Hanivharot, the Israel national teams' training and technical centre. Among the guests at the ceremony was the UEFA president, Michel Platini.



The UEFA president and Avraham Luzon, president of the Israel FA, with Limor Livnat, minister of culture and sport

Several former IFA presidents have spoken of the need for a complex to house the activities of all Israeli national teams, from the Under-16s upwards. But it was not until the current president, Avi Luzon, was elected in 2007 and nominated a new CEO (Ori Shilo) and a new deputy CEO (Rotem Kamer) that progress was finally made. Although the grand opening on 1 April could be seen as the culmination of this progress, it is, in itself, just a beginning.

The majority of the funding for building the centre came from FIFA and UEFA. In his congratulatory speech, Michel Platini was full of praise for the endeavour and underlined the importance of a national football academy for the advancement of the game throughout Israel.

Avi Luzon spoke of the efforts put into completing the project: "We have proved that Israeli football can achieve its goals if the right attitude and efforts are shown."

The new centre is located on a ten-acre plot near a kibbutz outside Tel Aviv. The main building is currently on one level of 1,000m², but plans for a second floor are already in place and its construction should be completed within a couple of years. The centre also comprises two pitches, one natural and one artificial.

The main building houses four dressing rooms and all the other supporting infrastructure footballers need, including a lecture hall and cafeteria. Accommodation for the Israeli players and visiting teams is located in the nearby Shefayim Kibbutz hotel, with which the IFA has reached an agreement.

Search for a technical director

The IFA already has a plan in place regarding the activities it wishes to organise at the centre. An intensive search is now under way to find a technical director to head up all the professional aspects of developing the national youth system and national youth teams. This person will also be in charge of planning upgrades to the existing youth infrastructure in connection with the scouting and development of both players and coaches. The search for a technical director is concentrated on leading nations in the field of youth development, such as Germany, the Netherlands, France and Spain.

The IFA also launched its regional teams programme at the start of the year. The country was divided into five regions and after an intensive scouting process, the best players aged 13–14 in every region were invited to join their regional teams.

The launch of the regional teams programme is connected to the opening of the technical centre. When the head coach of the youngest national team (U16) started trying to put together his team, it was apparent that he had very little data or information on the best footballers in the country at that age.

The thinking behind the regional teams programme was to find talented players at an earlier age and gather as much data on them as possible. In the near future, regional teams for players aged 11–12 will also be established, all under the professional control of the new centre's technical director.

At present, every regional team gathers once a week at a designated training facility in its region. The different teams will play each other and during the holidays the best players from each will come together for extra training and international games against teams in similar age groups. These extra training sessions and games will take place at the Beit Hanivharot training and technical centre. ●

Amir Ephrat / Michal Grundland

MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS



Successful training launch

The first in a series of first aid and defibrillator courses took place last month at the headquarters of the Andorran Football Federation (FAF), in collaboration with the Andorran Red Cross.

This first course, aimed at members of the FAF and affiliated clubs, included ten hours of theory and practical classes over two days.

One of the Andorran federation's main goals is to provide training to its staff, not only in

technical and sports fields but also in first aid and occupational hazards.

Also in the development domain, the first edition of a refresher course for experts in sports leadership finishes at the end of May.

This training course was made possible by an agreement between the FAF, the University of Andorra and the National Institute of Physical Education of Catalonia.

With the clear aim of improving the training of experts in sport throughout the country (coaches, managers, members



First aid training

of federations and others), this course is also designed to help improve relations between athletes and coaches.

● Silvia Casals



New media and communications division

The Austrian Football Association (ÖFB) has updated its organisational structure. As of 1 April, a fourth division covering media and communications has been added to the existing domains of sport, law and administration, and organisation and finance. Wolfgang Gramann has been put in charge of the new division. The 48-year-old PR consultant and coach previously worked for the ÖFB between 1997 and 2004, and more recently oversaw the association's bid



Wolfgang Gramann

to host the final round of the European Under-21 Championship in 2015.

The new division is tasked with the strategic planning and management of all internal and external communications through all relevant channels. In addition, it

will provide a professional service to the media at all times, particularly in connection with national team matches.

● Press office



Rovnag Abdullayev re-elected as AFFA president

The president of the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA), Rovnag Abdullayev, was re-elected for a second term at the AFFA general meeting held on 9 March at the AFFA's headquarters in Baku. All 34 delegates voted in favour of the incumbent president, meaning Abdullayev will remain at the head of the Azerbaijani football organisation for the next four years.

The president thanked the delegates for putting their faith in him: "I am happy that the delegates trust me. This is a great opportunity for me to continue my work and I will do my best to further develop football in the country. Grassroots football development, football infrastructure and educational improvements are our main priorities. We have organized U11, U13, U14, U15, U16 and U17 boys' leagues, as well as U15 and U17 girls' leagues, as part of our grassroots development programme. The AFFA also organises the



The AFFA president, Rovnag Abdullayev, at the media conference following his re-election

schoolchildren's cup in the regions. We had 1,500 registered players in 2009 but now we have 24,000. Our association conducts UEFA C, B, A and Pro category coaching courses. As you know, the development of football is closely linked to modern football infrastructure, too. The construction of the AFFA football academy and the AFFA football centre are steps already taken in this direction. The Dalga Arena has been constructed in Mardakan, a suburb of Baku, with capacity for 6,000 spectators. The AFFA has also built a new stadium in the Agsu region and the designs for the Bayil stadium in Baku are under way. Moreover, the process of installing artificial mini-pitches in Baku and the different regions of Azerbaijan is continuing. As part of the AFFA promotion project, we have placed various videos of the country's football on the AFFA website, affavideo.az, as well broadcasting our national teams' home and away matches on affatv.az.

"The AFFA also has the great task ahead of hosting the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup in Azerbaijan from 22 September to 13 October this year. I hope that the Azerbaijani football family will help us achieve success in our hosting of this tournament and make everyone very happy."

Also at the general meeting, the AFFA general secretary, Elkhan Mammadov, shared with the delegates a letter sent by UEFA for the occasion and a video was shown of the AFFA's activities over the last year.

Finally, the AFFA president answered questions from journalists at a media conference in the conference hall.

● Mikayil Narimanoghlu



Super Cup and football festival

The Football Federation of Belarus (BFF) held its second open day on 6 March to coincide with the Belarus Super Cup match between FC BATE Borisov and FC Gomel, which kicked off the 2012 football season in Belarus. The open day initiative was launched last year and proved to be a great success.

This year over 120 children aged between 5 and 12 from state schools and specialist sports schools participated in this celebration of football. Around 30% were girls and the youngest were accompanied by their parents.

The open day consisted of two parts. First, the kids were split into several groups and given tours of the BFF headquarters, where they had a chance to get acquainted with the federation's work processes at all levels. The tours were conducted by BFF staff and volunteers.

This was followed by a football festival in a covered football arena. The participants were once again divided into groups, this time for various practical exercises under the guidance of experienced instructors.

Activities included an introduction to goal-keeping, ball control, polishing some basic and more difficult skills, and short refereed matches. The exercises ranged from simple to more complicated. They were the same for all the groups and were adapted to the skills of each.

The idea was to give a feel for football to the children, some of whom had never touched a ball before. Their eyes lit up, showing how much they enjoyed the activities.

A football tournament was also organised for very young players representing various football schools in Minsk, with an awards ceremony conducted by the BFF vice-president, Sergey Safaryan.

The festival was followed by a friendly match between veterans of FC BATE Borisov and FC Gomel, representing the two cities competing for the Super Cup.

After that, it was time for the Super Cup itself. BATE had won the two previous editions, but this time it was FC Gomel who came out on top, winning 2-0 with both goals from newcomer Vyacheslav Gleb.

● Yulia Zenkovich



The football festival was a huge success

Bosnia and Herzegovina
www.nfsbih.ba

National team preparations in full swing

Last month was dominated by women's and youth football. Our women's senior national team were in neighbouring Montenegro in preparation for their next EURO 2013 qualifying matches. Head coach Samira Hurem's players had two games against the newly formed national team of Montenegro. In the first match, held in Bar, Montenegro beat Bosnia and Herzegovina 3-2. In the second, in Podgorica, Bosnia and Herzegovina held their hosts to a 2-2 draw.

The U21s, meanwhile, were in action in neighbouring Serbia. After preparations at the Football Association of Serbia's sports centre in Stara Pazova, the two sides played in Belgrade, where the Serbians won 2-0.

At the beginning of March, the head coach of the Bosnia and Herzegovina U17s, Sakib Malkocec, held a training camp and then took his squad to Ajdovscina in Slovenia, where they too lost 2-0 to the locals. Bosnia and Herzegovina's youngest national team is preparing to compete in the qualifying round of the 2012/13 European Under-17 Championship

from 24 to 29 September, when they will be hosting Greece, France and Slovenia.

Tony Karacic, head coach of the U19 national team, has been preparing two squads. The first is getting ready to travel to Croatia for the elite round of the 2011/12 UEFA European Under-19 Championship from 25 to 30 May, having been drawn into Group 6 alongside Georgia, Austria and hosts Croatia. Karacic's other team is preparing for the 2012/13 European Under-19 Championship, with Bosnia and Herzegovina hosting the Group 8 qualifying mini-tournament from 11 to 16 October. The other teams in the group are Slovakia, Norway and Kazakhstan.

Also in March, Bosnia and Herzegovina's women's U17 team played two games in Sarajevo against their Montenegrin peers, giving their young guests their first ever victory in the first match (2-1 to Montenegro) and ending the second with a 1-1 draw. Ilija Lucic's young players are preparing to compete



Bosnia and Herzegovina's Under-19s

in the first qualifying round of the 2012/13 European Women's Under-17 Championship in Lithuania from 1 to 6 October.

Off the pitch, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Football Federation has provided computer equipment to all the referee departments thanks to the UEFA Referee Convention programme. The funding for the equipment is the result of efforts on all sides to meet the requirements and standards of the convention. UEFA's recognition and financial endorsement of these efforts provides additional motivation for further reforms. The federation hopes to become a signatory to the UEFA Referee Convention by the end of the year.

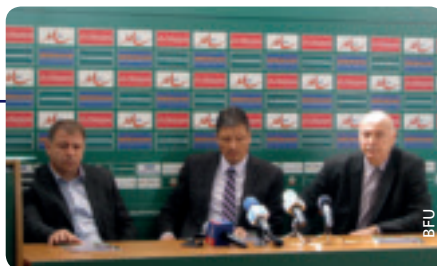
The computer equipment was delivered by Elmir Pilav, director of the competitions department, at a special event held in Sarajevo.

● Fuad Kravac

Bulgaria
www.bfunion.bg

Ljuboslav Penev supports youth football development concept

The coach of the Bulgarian men's national team has expressed his support of the youth football development concept recently unveiled at the headquarters of the Bulgarian Football Union (BFU). Two of the men behind the concept – Yuri Nikolov, deputy chairman of the football coaching academy, and Plamen Mihov, director of the youth football depart-



Unveiling the youth football development concept

ment at the BFU – also took part in the event.

"We are starting to work with the youngest players: our 'Football 7' tournaments have already started, involving children born in 2001 and 2002. We have also started to use a new

method for selecting youth national teams – we have regional camps where managers select the best candidates from 88 youngsters aged 14 to 15," said Mihov. Explaining the new concept, he said: "I only need mention the example of Germany, where they have already begun preparing young players for the World Cup in 2026."

"We have drawn from the experience mostly of Germany and the Netherlands, but also other leading football nations. The idea was born back in 2008 but we needed time to make it happen," Nikolov added.

● Pavel Kolev

England
www.thefa.com

The FA Women's Super League set for second season

The FA Women's Super League (WSL) is gearing up for its second season as eight of England's top teams prepare to battle it out for this year's trophy. Kicking off in April, this season builds on a successful launch last year when the WSL became the first semi-professional league for women's football in England.

Its aims are not only to bring fans quality, competitive matches, but also to create a robust pathway into the game for aspiring young talent and, ultimately, to transform the player-fan relationship by making it the most interactive league in the world.

With women's football now ranked the third biggest team sport in the United Kingdom – behind only men's football and cricket – the WSL is continuing to lead the way for both players and fans.

Since its launch, the WSL has increased support inside and outside the stadium – attendances have risen by more than 600%, viewing figures of live matches have been on a par with other domestic leagues in Europe and social media channels now attract more than 80,000 followers.

From 8 April until 7 October – with a mid-season break for the London 2012 Olympics – The FA WSL summertime tournament is once again putting women's football in the spotlight of the sporting calendar, while offering affordable and family-friendly matchday experiences.

Following a series of bold transfer moves and with international recruitment under way, the clubs are vying to prove themselves during what promises to be an exciting year for women's football, with many players also hoping to be selected by Team GB for the forthcoming Olympics. As well as bringing inspiration to the pitch, WSL players remain accessible to



Arsenal goalkeeper Emma Byrne with the WSL trophy she and her team-mates won in the competition's first season

young people, acting as positive role models through dedicated community programmes and by appearing at numerous events.

This year, WSL title sponsor Continental is leading The FA Girls' Football Festival, visiting 19 cities to engage girls in the hope that the fun and enjoyment they experience will motivate them to play more often and join their local clubs.

● Nada Hook

Emotional farewell game for Birgit Prinz

The record-breaking German international Birgit Prinz – capped 214 times for her country – brought her remarkable career to a close with two goals and a great deal of emotion. Her farewell game at Frankfurt's Stadion am Bornheimer Hang was attended by 6,543 people keen to honour one of the foremost sportswomen of our time. In the crowd were Wolfgang Niersbach, president of the German Football Association (DFB), DFB vice-presidents Hannelore Ratzeburg and Rainer Koch, the DFB general secretary, Helmut Sandrock, FIFA's head of women's competitions, Tatjana Haenni, the minister-president of Hesse,

Volker Bouffier, and Frankfurt's lord mayor, Petra Roth.

The crowd witnessed an entertaining and emotional game between 1. FFC Frankfurt and the German national team, with Birgit Prinz playing half a game for each. Both teams featured long-time colleagues of the 214-time international, who scored 128 goals in her 17 years in the national team and won more than 30 national and international titles in the course of her career. Birgit Prinz left the field to a standing ovation after 85 minutes, before signing off with an emotional lap of honour in front of the fans. Her verdict: *"That was a wonderful farewell. I had a great career: it was a fantastic time with many great moments."*

● Annette Seitz



The DFB president, Wolfgang Niersbach, pays tribute to Birgit Prinz

Bongarts/Getty Images

Latvian referees in Spain

Latvian referee Andris Treimanis and his assistants Haralds Gudermanis and Aleksejs Spasjonnikovs were invited to officiate at a friendly match between the world's top-ranked team, Spain, and the national team of Venezuela on 29 February. The match took place at the Estadio La Rosaleda in the Spanish city of Malaga. It was the first time that a Latvian referee had ever officiated at a match involving

the current world and European champions.

A FIFA referee, and named Latvia's best referee at the age of 26, Andris Treimanis was grateful for this opportunity: *"For us it was a unique experience. To referee in a high-class stadium, in front of more than 25,000 spectators, was really amazing. The tempo of the Spanish team's game was very intense, with a huge number of short passes and lots of running. I think we gave the best possible account of ourselves and proved our confidence, skill, physical fitness and competitiveness in this top-level match."*

In other news, the Latvian Virsliga season started in late March, with ten clubs competing for the national title in a four-round championship. In addition, the Latvian Cup semi-finals take place on 11 April, with the final on 12 May. Elsewhere, elections were held at the Latvian Football Federation's annual congress on 30 March to determine the president and board that will work for next four years under the federation's new statutes.

● Viktors Sopirins



The Latvian referee team

Julius Kvedaras is the new LFF president

At its annual general meeting, the Lithuanian Football Federation (LFF) elected Julius Kvedaras as its new president until 2016, following the decision by the federation's outgoing president, Liutauras Varanavičius, not to seek a fourth successive term.

Kvedaras, well known in Lithuania as a player in the 70s and 80s and coach in the 90s, won two championship titles and six cups in his playing career. He also had a brief spell on the coaching staff of the national team before being appointed general secretary of the LFF in 2000.

Since 2007, Kvedaras has also served as a member of the UEFA Football Committee.

After his election, the 62-year-old outlined youth football and continued infrastructure development as the priorities for his four-year tenure as president of the LFF. *"Lithuania is a small footballing country and we will have to continue working hard to stay competitive. We will only succeed by doing that together,"* he said. *"We must continue developing our infrastructure and focusing on youth football, expanding our network of football academies."*

Kvedaras takes over from Liutauras Varanavičius, who had been president since 2000. Despite leaving the post, Varanavičius has agreed to continue assisting the LFF on international matters and commercial activities as first vice-president. *"I can confidently say that I achieved the goals set during my tenure and that the federation is in good shape to target new objectives,"* Varanavičius said. *"I want to support the development of football in Lithuania to the best of my abilities in my fields of expertise."*

● Vaidotas Januska



The new president, Julius Kvedaras

LFF

Matthias Voigt elected new president

At the general meeting of the Liechtenstein Football Association (LFV) on 26 March, the delegates of the seven LFV member clubs elected a new executive board.

With 12 votes and 2 abstentions, the outgoing vice-president, Matthias Voigt, was elected as president. He succeeds Reinhard Walser, who had led the largest association in Liechtenstein for nine years (since 2003) and played a significant role in its positive development.

Alongside Reinhard Walser, board members Heinz Biedermann (grassroots football) and Urs Gerner (finance) also stepped down. The new board comprises Edy Kindle (vice-presi-

dent), Rudolf Marxer (professional football), Klaus Schmidle (treasurer), and Thomas Risch (marketing). All were elected unanimously.

● Anton Banzer



The new LFV board

LFV



DarkoFirst football academy to open in September

At six venues around the country, the Football Federation of Macedonia (FFM) began selecting young footballers in March for the country's first sports academy. In addition to football, the sports academy will teach basketball, handball and tennis.

The Football Federation of Macedonia was among the first involved in the initiative, which was launched by the agency for youth and sports and the ministry of education and science. According to Nebojsa Markovski, director of the FFM's education centre, interest in studying football at the academy is already very high.

As explained by the director of the agency for youth and sports, Lazar Popovski, one of the aims of the project is to develop a new generation of Macedonian footballers that takes after great players such as Pancev, Najdoski, Pandev and Boskovski.

The main emphasis will, of course, be on sport, but a certain number of academic



Candidates for the academy under expert observation

subjects will also be taught so that the students can obtain other qualifications and certificates.

In order to select football students for the academy, the FFM has set up a special jury composed of eminent coaches, scouts and officials from the ministry of education and

science and the agency for youth and sports. The jury members are Vujadin Stanojkovikj, Gorgi Jovanovski, Mite Mitev, Goran Petreski, Mensur Jakupi, Bob Stojkovski, Mario Vujovic, Argent Beqiri, Ljupco Kmetovski, Davor Tasevski (ministry of education and science) and Angel Kurtelov (agency for youth and sports).

Initial selections have already been made in Skopje, Tetovo, Stip, Kavadarci, Strumica and Ohrid, with regional scouts selecting about 200 potential students. After the final selection has been held in September at the MM-Brico high school, 26 successful footballers will be enrolled at the academy.

Rules on how the academy will function are currently being prepared by the FFM in cooperation with the ministry of education and science and the agency for youth and sports.

● Zoran Nikolovski



Commitment to infrastructure development

An infrastructure development project embarked on some years ago by the Malta Football Association (MFA), with the financial assistance of the Maltese government and the UEFA HatTrick programme, received another boost recently when it was announced that the MFA would be given more funds from the central government for the further implementation of this ongoing project.



From left to right, MFA chief executive Bjorn Vassallo, Maltese minister Tonio Fenech, MFA president Norman Darmanin Demajo, and parliamentary secretary Clyde Puli are pulling together for the good of Maltese football

More member clubs will benefit from this allocation of funds, which will be used over the next two years to build and improve football facilities in Malta and Gozo. Such extensions to infrastructure from the very base will provide Maltese footballers, as well as administrators and supporters, with modern artificial pitches, training areas, stands and club premises. It is envisaged that all clubs will have their own facilities.

In a significant event held at the main hall of the Centenary Stadium, adjacent to the National Stadium at Ta' Qali, the finance,

economy and investments minister, Tonio Fenech, announced that funds would be made available by the central government for the implementation of this long-term infrastructure development programme. The announcement was made in the presence of the parliamentary secretary for youth and sport, Clyde Puli, and a number of MFA officials, including

the president, Norman Darmanin Demajo.

The MFA's construction of modern football facilities is in line with UEFA policy and will go a long way towards laying the much-needed foundations on which the game in this small but ambitious Mediterranean island will be built in years to come.

● Alex Vella



Women's tournament in Vadul lui Voda

The Moldovan national teams' technical centre in Vadul lui Voda played host to the recent Martisor women's Under-19 tournament. Eight women's teams from different regions of Moldova took part in the event, which was held in an atmosphere of fair play and friendliness, just as its organiser, the Football Association of Moldova (FMF), had intended. The winners were Noroc Nimoreni, who beat Goliador sports school No. 11 from Chisinau 8-7 on penalties in the final. In the third-place play-off, Tiraspol sports school won 1-0 against Victoria Macaresti.

The awards ceremony was attended by the FMF general secretary, Nicolae Cebotari, who presented the par-

ticipants with well-deserved medals, trophies and gifts. "The aim of this tournament was to promote women's football and to bring together young players for them to socialise and make friends – all through sporting competition," the general secretary said.

● Press office



Noroc Nimoreni, winners of the tournament

KNVB focuses on referees and fair play

The Royal Netherlands Football Association (KNVB) recently launched a campaign to introduce a more professional refereeing policy at amateur club level. Together with its commercial partner ARAG, a legal services provider, the association is challenging amateur clubs to introduce policies that improve the quality and visibility of their referees. In addition, the clubs are encouraged to try to improve knowledge of the rules among players at all levels.

Clubs that meet these requirements will receive a fair play certificate – a stamp of quality indicating a professional refereeing policy – and a complete fair play amateur football package, including official referee match kits, consultancy sessions with a KNVB referee, and a sign indicating that the club's premises are a fair play zone.



FIFA referee Kevin Blom visiting an amateur club

Well-known international referees have been travelling all over the country to present fair play certificates to amateur clubs. They have also spent time talking to club referees, players and parents to stress the importance of knowing the rules and respecting the referee.

The key lesson is that fair play is the responsibility of all, not only the referee. Talking about

the new initiative, KNVB international referee Kevin Blom said: "I love to visit amateur clubs and talk about the importance of a good refereeing policy. Without referees, there is no football. For that reason it is important that we have referees that are well equipped for their task and clearly visible."

● Rob de Leeuw

New kit partnership

Kit manufacturer adidas has recently announced the signing of a long-term partnership with the Irish Football Association, which will come into effect from August this year. News of the partnership will spark fond memories of the previous collaboration and on-pitch successes of the late 70s and 80s.

The partnership will give the manufacturer the right to supply kit to all of the national teams, referees in the top three leagues in Northern Ireland and the association's coaching department, as well as balls for all Irish League matches.

Irish FA chief executive Patrick Nelson said: "adidas was synonymous with the association

during our most successful period ever, and I'm sure our supporters will be absolutely delighted with the news that we are to be reunited with them. This is the 30th anniversary of our game against Spain in the 1982 World Cup, when we played in that iconic adidas shirt."

The Irish FA's head of marketing and communications, Geoff Wilson, added: "This is an exciting partnership for the association as it covers all aspects of our business – from international to domestic to the grassroots strands of our game. The adidas brand will bring many great benefits and is a great example



The IFA's Geoff Wilson and Steve Holland from adidas seal the deal

of the calibre of partner that we are now attracting and working with."

Steve Holland, adidas national sales manager for commercial football partnerships, said:

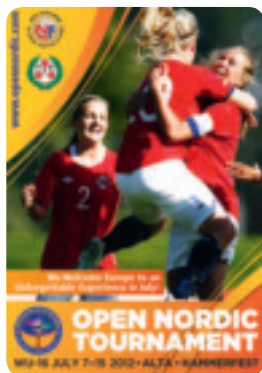
"It's great to partner with the Irish FA once again after nearly 30 years. The Irish FA has some bold and ambitious plans, including the redevelopment of Windsor Park, and it is an exciting time to be associated with all levels of football in Northern Ireland."

● Sueann Harrison

Women's U16 Open Nordic Tournament in July

The regional football association of Finnmark, in the extreme northeast of Norway, is organising this year's Women's Under-16 Open Nordic Tournament in Alta and Hammerfest from 7 to 15 July. The association is very proud to be hosting the event and is already working hard to ensure the tournament is a success, since getting more girls and women to play and enjoy football is of great value, both nationally and internationally.

Through the host cities of Alta and Hammerfest, the organisers are looking forward to being able to promote Norway's northernmost county of Finnmark. This is a spec-



NFF

ular region with midnight sun, stunning scenery and some of the most northerly football clubs in the world. It takes some getting used to, but the sun does not set there for a whole three months in the summer. The local football association has created a profile for the tournament that reflects Finnmark's magic location and its warm and friendly people.

The organisers' goals are to deliver an event that meets UEFA's high standards, to ensure the participating teams, staff and supporters have a unique and unforgettable time, and to promote the region of Finnmark as an attractive destination.

A tournament to promote women's football and the extreme north of Europe

● Press department

Teams from Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands are all taking part in what will be the first international football matches to have taken place so far north in Norway.

Inspired by the FIFA Women's World Cup in Germany last summer, which managed to secure strong local involvement and generate nationwide enthusiasm for the competition, the local organising committee in Finnmark is working hard to promote its tournament – both in Norway and abroad. It hopes to get as many people as possible to experience this unique sports event by creating what Norwegians call a *folkfest*, a popular celebration for all, for the duration of the 16-match tournament.

You can get the latest news on preparations at <http://opennordic.com/eng> and if you would like any further information or have any questions, please contact Roger Finjord at roger.finjord@fotball.no.

● Press department



Sad news

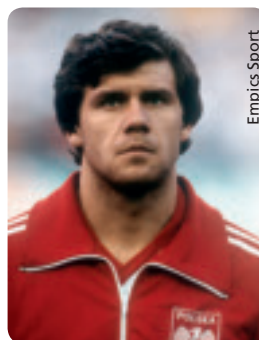
Since the beginning of 2012, several prominent members of the Polish football family have sadly passed away.

Henryk Batuszynski, a former footballer for Górnik Zabrze and German clubs VfL Bochum 1848, DSC Arminia Bielefeld and LR Ahlen, died of a heart attack on 1 March. He was 39 years old and had made 15 appearances for the Polish national team, scoring 4 goals.

A few days later we said goodbye to Jan Maj, a former president and honorary member of the Polish Football Association. The national

team enjoyed great success during Jan Maj's presidency (1973–76), finishing third in the 1974 World Cup in Germany and winning silver medals at the 1976 Summer Olympics.

The former striker Włodzimierz Smolarek died at the age of 54 on 7 March. His funeral, attended by thousands of fans, took place in Aleksandrów Łódzki on 10 March. During his playing career, Smolarek played 60 times for the Polish national team and was a vital part of the 1982 side that came third in the FIFA



Włodzimierz Smolarek at the 1982 World Cup

World Cup in Spain. He was posthumously awarded the Knight's Cross of the Order of Polish Rebirth, one of Poland's highest honours.

● Agnieszka Olejkowska



College football makes history

College football made history at Tallaght Stadium on 29 February, when the Colleges Football Association of Ireland (CFAI) marked its 40th anniversary by setting a new world record for the most consecutive penalty kicks to be taken in one day.

Irish football icon Ray Houghton had the honour of taking the 743rd penalty to break the record, which was set by Major League Soccer in New York last year, when David Beckham took the record-breaking kick. The CFAI, working with Dublin's Institute of Technology in Tallaght (ITT Dublin) and Senior College Dun Laoghaire, helped smash that record with a new total of 1,401 kicks. The record is now being verified by Guinness World Records, with an announcement expected in the coming weeks.

"Given that there could not be a gap of any longer than 30 seconds between each kick, it took an enormous amount of planning and coordinating to ensure that everything was executed to perfection," the CFAI chairman, Padraig Carney, said.

"It was a tremendous day and I have to pay tribute to all of the volunteers who made it such a success. All the organisations involved put in a huge effort, including Tallaght hospital, Sport Against Racism in Ireland (SARI), ITT Dublin, the ITT students' union and Senior College Dun Laoghaire."

"I am sure it will be a day everybody involved will never forget." John Delaney, chief executive of the Football Association of Ireland (FAI), Brian Hayes, minister of state at the department of finance, Pat McLaughlin, ITT Dublin president, and Brian

Kerr, former Republic of Ireland manager, also turned up to take a spot kick.

The two charities chosen to benefit from the money raised were SARI and the National Children's Hospital in Tallaght. The local schools which took part were Old Bawn Community School, St Mark's Community School, St Aidan's Community School, St Anne's Primary School and St Dominic's National School.

A total of 25 goalkeepers made themselves available to face an average of 56 penalty kicks each. Among them were a number of League of Ireland goalkeepers, including Barry Murphy (St Patrick's Athletic), Paul Hunt (Longford Town), Chris Bennion (Monaghan United) and Matt Gregg.

● Derek Kinnevey



New contract for national coach

The San Marino Football Federation has awarded Giampaolo Mazza another contract – his eighth in total – as coach of its national team. The first game of his new contract will be against Montenegro in a qualifying match for the 2014 FIFA World Cup. *"I am delighted to have the president and the federal council show their faith in me every two years,"* Mazza explained.

At the media conference introducing the new technical staff for San Marino's national teams, Giampaolo Mazza looked ahead to the next two years: *"We will set out again with just as much enthusiasm as we had right at the very beginning, with determination and humility, and we will endeavour to improve on what we have achieved thus far."* The one major change to the technical team is the arrival of former AC Cesena, Modena FC and Torino FC defender Roberto Cevoli as technical consultant for all of the national teams. *"It is an exciting project,"* stressed Cevoli, who hopes that he can bring all of his experience to bear. A new contract has also been awarded to Under-21 coach Pierangelo Manzaroli, who still has three internationals left to play under his current contract.

There is a change at Under-19 level, with Joseph Berardi taking charge after a few years of coaching the Under-17s. They will now be overseen by Mirko Papini, who will be looking after a national team for the first time. Although he is no stranger to San Marinese football, Ermanno Zonzini will also be making his debut. The former international defender and current coach of S.S. Cosmos will take charge of the



The technical staff of the national teams

team competing in the UEFA Regions' Cup.

There will also be a change at the head of the country's futsal team. Umberto De Gregorio, who is from Romagna and has coached Cesena in Serie A, will take charge of San Marino's newest national team in the qualifying rounds for the next European Futsal Championship and FIFA Futsal World Cup.

● Elia Gorini



The FAI chief executive, John Delaney, takes his penalty kick

New national performance centre for sport

The Scottish FA's chief executive, Stewart Regan, is chairing a steering group taking forward plans for Scotland's first national performance centre (NPC) for sport.

Scotland's Commonwealth Games and sports minister, Shona Robison, has announced that up to £25 million from the Scottish government's Young Scots Fund will be ploughed into the initiative.

The new facility will feature a multi-sports performance centre including a national football academy, a key recommendation in the recent review of Scottish football conducted by former first minister Henry McLeish.

Stewart Regan is joined on the steering group by Sheila Begbie, head of girls' and women's football at the Scottish FA and vice-chairwoman of the UEFA Women's Football Committee, alongside representatives from



The steering group in charge of setting up a national performance centre for sport

sportscotland, EventScotland, British Swimming, and the High Performance Group (Hockey).

The steering group has been tasked with setting out the criteria for bids from local authorities wishing to bring the centre to their area and with agreeing a timetable for completion.

Stewart said: "The commitment to the NPC is a hugely significant step forward, not just for Scottish football but for Scottish sport and culture. It reinforces our relationship with the Scottish government and this joint commitment is integral to the Scottish FA's performance strategy. It is our intention to work in partnership with other sports to maximise the use and accessibility of existing facilities, but also to ensure new ones, like the NPC, will provide our most talented young sportsmen and women with the platform to fulfil their potential."

"The Scottish FA has shown its commitment to elite talent development by appointing our first performance director, Mark Wotte, and by investing £15 million over the next four years in the performance area. We are delighted the Scottish government shares our vision."

Shona Robison said: "Football is Scotland's national game and, building on our record investment in the sport, we want to build the foundations of future success for our national sides. Despite the challenges which Scottish football is facing, the government's commitment to developing and improving our national game remains undiminished."

"Backed by funding of £25 million from our Young Scots Fund – a youth talent initiative to give Scots a fair chance to realise their potential – the national performance centre will give sportsmen and women, the chance to develop their skills, delivering a tangible legacy from the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow as well as building on our investment into elite athletes for 2014 and beyond."

● Clare Bodel

A pitch in honour of the UEFA president

On 16 March, the UEFA president, Michel Platini, was the guest of the FA of Serbia, and in a special ceremony, he was honoured for his valuable assistance in the cooperation between UEFA and the FA of Serbia, and for his contribution to the development of Serbian football, especially in the area of infrastructure, by naming the main pitch at the Stara Pazova sports centre after him.

The sports centre of the FA of Serbia was opened on 14 May 2011, having received significant funding from the UEFA HatTrick programme. As a permanent sign of gratitude for UEFA's support, the leadership of the FA of Serbia decided to name the main, No10 pitch after the UEFA president.

"Michel Platini, with other UEFA officials, helped us to build this centre, and we made the logical and appropriate decision to inaugurate a pitch in his name. Also, everybody in Serbia has respect for his playing days, and we thought it would be symbolic to name the No10 pitch after him, since it was his trademark. We firmly believe that many youth players will make progress on this pitch and become great players," said Tomislav Karadžić, president of the FA of Serbia, at the ceremony at Stara Pazova.

Michel Platini said: "This is a great honour for me. This is the second pitch to bear my name, the first of its kind being at the FFF [French Football Federation] sports centre in Clairefontaine. I am delighted to accept this



Michel Platini and Tomislav Karadžić inaugurate the No10 pitch

honour because I really want to see lots of youngsters going on to become great footballers. Thanks to Mr Karadžić and to the FA of Serbia for their decision. I would also like to say how satisfied I am with our good relations."

Mr Karadžić presented the UEFA president with a model of the pitch and with the FA of Serbia's golden lapel badge, the association's top award, making Michel Platini the first foreigner to receive this award.

Then the two presidents and other guests watched the final of the UEFA Under-16 development tournament that had been taking place at the sports centre during the previous few days. In the final, Serbia's Under-16s beat their counterparts from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 10–0.

● Aleksandar Boskovic

Change of president

After 21 successful years as president of the Swedish Football Association (SvFF), Lars-Åke Lagrell stepped down at the 2012 annual meeting.

"I want to thank everyone who has contributed to the development of Swedish football over the years. We have come a long way together: our national teams are doing very well, we have a brand new national stadium and a healthy economy. I will still be around football when my help is wanted, but now, at last, I will have more time to watch the matches myself," said Lagrell.

The new president is 55-year-old Karl-Erik Nilsson, a former FIFA referee and tournament director of the 2009 European Under-21 Championship final round in Sweden.

"There are challenges ahead but we are well prepared to meet them. Grassroots football and the elite depend on each other. Working together is the only way forward for us. Development of new modern stadiums, our relationship with the fans, and our new national stadium will be important issues to deal with," said Nilsson in his inaugural speech.

Sweden's new national stadium, the Friends Arena, is due to open in November. Swedbank originally acquired the naming rights but passed them on to Friends, a non-profit



Lars-Åke Lagrell congratulates his successor, Karl-Erik Nilsson

organisation working to combat bullying in schools and sports clubs. The new name reflects football's commitment to social responsibility.

"This is an amazing opportunity for us! Through the Friends Arena we hope to reach more children and parents, and to find new ways to get people involved in the fight against bullying," Friends chairman and founder Sara Damber said.

● Andreas Nilsson



Looking forward to the Olympics

In London this summer, Switzerland will participate in an Olympic football tournament for the first time in 84 years. They last took part in Amsterdam in 1928, when they were knocked out in the very first round. Swiss football fans have happier memories of the 1924 Olympics, where the valiant Swiss team won silver after having lost to Uruguay in the final and effectively become European champions. This time round, Switzerland qualified for the Olympics on account of their performance at last year's European Under-21 Championship in Sweden, where they were beaten finalists.

In March, the Swiss Football Association (SFV-ASF) published a "long-list" containing the names of the 50 players being considered for Switzerland's Olympic football squad. The list, which was duly submitted to the Swiss

Olympic Association, includes 12 players over the age of 23, of whom a maximum of three can be selected. By 6 July, the 50 names will need to have been whittled down to the 18 (plus 4 on standby) who will be going to London to represent Switzerland at the Olympics from 26 July to 11 August.

Pierluigi Tami, coach of the Olympic football team, and Peter Knäbel, technical director of the SFV-ASF, will, with the help of their staff, carefully monitor all the players on the list over the next few months, before making their final decision. "We will certainly be selecting a strong team for the Olympics," says Peter Knäbel, who is looking for players to "show that they are excited by the Olympics, as that is certainly a basic requirement for selection". Before the list was published, the SFV-ASF arranged to meet



The Olympic team coach, Pierluigi Tami

representatives of the clubs concerned to ensure that the players selected will be released. "It is important to us that we have a good relationship with the clubs, as the world of football will not come to a halt after the Olympics, with qualifying for the European Under-21 Championship and, for the senior team, the FIFA

World Cup beginning immediately afterwards. For the SFV-ASF, these are even more important than the Olympics," Peter Knäbel explains.

The SFV-ASF's provisional Olympic list includes experienced members of the senior national team, such as Diego Benaglio, Philippe Senderos, Valon Behrami and Pirmin Schwegler, showing that the Swiss will certainly be aiming high this summer.

● Pierre Benoit



Super Final to spice up championship race

As announced at the beginning of the season, the Turkish Football Federation (TFF) is introducing a Super Final series at the end of the regular 2011/12 Super League season. In this new stage of the competition, the teams that finish the regular season in the top four

will go head to head in a home-and-away Super Final championship group. The winners will be crowned champions of the 2011/12 Super League and qualify directly for the 2012/13



UEFA Champions League group stage.

The teams that finish the regular season in fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth place will also meet in a play-off group stage known as the Super Final Europa League, which will follow the same format as the championship group. The winners of the Europa League group will then play the fourth-placed team from the championship group in a single match on 20 May. This match will be played at a neutral venue and the winners will qualify automatically for next season's UEFA Europa League.

At the end of the regular season and before the start of the new stage of the competition, the points totals of the teams participating in the two Super Final groups will be divided by two. For example, a club on 70 points at the end of regular season will begin the Super Final on 35, while a club on 67 points will be reduced to 34 (rounding up automatically).

The Super Final group matches will be played on six matchdays between 14 April and 13 May.

● Aydın Güvenir



EURO 2012 schools football cup

More than 300,000 children from 12,000 schools are to participate in a special tournament dedicated to UEFA EURO 2012.

The competition, which has spread to all corners of Ukraine, began at the end of March and culminates in mid-May with the final at Kyiv's Olympic Stadium, the venue for the EURO 2012 final. The EURO 2012 schools football cup is being organised jointly by the Ukrainian government and the Football Federation of Ukraine (FFU).

The competition is open only to children who do not train at professional clubs' academies or other organised football structures. The winners of regional tournaments will enter a round of 32 and subsequent knock-out rounds to determine which team will lift the trophy – a copy of the Henri Delaunay Cup. The winners will also receive 25 tickets to the UEFA EURO 2012 final. The runners-



The Olympic Stadium in Kyiv

up, semi-finalists and quarter-finalists will receive tickets to other EURO 2012 matches.

"The development of professional football would be impossible without its grassroots base," the FFU president, Grigoriy Surkis, said. "Ukraine has great traditions of competitions among children. I need only cite the Leather Ball, the Thousand Teams Cup, and many regional tournaments, not to mention football classes in secondary schools. And I have no doubt this new tournament will also be a success and will uncover the future stars of our beloved game."

● Bogdan Buga



New national development centre

Work has begun in Wales on the building of a national development centre, to be situated at the International Sports Village in Newport.

The ceremony to cut the first piece of turf was attended by the president of the Football Association of Wales, Philip Pritchard, the national team manager, Chris Coleman, the Welsh FA's technical director, Osian Roberts, and the chairman of the Welsh Football Trust, Peter Lee OBE.

The venue will become home to coach and player education activities, as well as being a base for age-group matches.

● Ceri Stennett



A model of the national development centre

Birthdays

Pekka Luhtanen (Finland), member of the circle of former committee members, is celebrating his 70th birthday on 8 May. On 19 May, **Milovan Djukanovic** (Montenegro), match delegate, is celebrating his 50th. UEFA also wishes many happy returns to:

Campbell Ogilvie (Scotland, 1 May)
Peter Mikkelsen (Denmark, 1 May)
Ladislav Gadosi (Slovakia, 3 May)
Volydymyr Chorno-Ivanov (Ukraine, 3 May)
David Gill (England, 3 May)
Anghel Iordanescu (Romania, 4 May)
Peter Gilliéron (Switzerland, 5 May)
Costakis Koutsokoumnis (Cyprus, 5 May)
Kenneth Ridden (England, 6 May)
Gudmundur Petursson (Iceland, 6 May)
Karl-Erik Nilsson (Sweden, 6 May)
Liam McGroarty (Republic of Ireland, 6 May)
Michel Pralong (Switzerland, 8 May)
Marc Dobbeleir (Belgium, 8 May)
Miroslav Tulinger (Czech Republic, 8 May)
Stuart Turner (England, 9 May)
Iouri Baskakov (Russia, 10 May)
Armen Melikbekyan (Armenia, 10 May)
Jean-Marie Gantenbein
 (Luxembourg, 11 May)
Ernst-Peter Radziwill (Germany, 11 May)
Timo Huttunen (Finland, 11 May)
Maxim Betsko (Ukraine, 11 May)
Henrik Ravnild (Denmark, 13 May)
Mattia Piffaretti (Switzerland, 13 May)
Odile Lanceau (France, 14 May)
Carlos Manuel Ferreira Matos
 (Portugal, 14 May)
Hans-Jörg Eissmann (Germany, 15 May)
Piotr Maranda (Poland, 15 May)
Hakan Nyberg (Sweden, 15 May)
Nikolay Levnikov (Russia, 15 May)
Evzen Amler (Czech Republic, 15 May)
Andrey Balashov (Russia, 15 May)
Luis Cuervas Del Real (Spain, 15 May)
Egon Franck (Switzerland, 16 May)
Angel Bungurov (FYR Macedonia, 16 May)
Denys Lutiuk (Ukraine, 16 May)
Svein Johannessen (Norway, 17 May)
Lars Appelqvist (Sweden, 18 May)
Andreas Morisbak (Norway, 19 May)
Jozef Marko (Slovakia, 19 May)
Gaetano De Gabriele (Malta, 19 May)
Rune Pedersen (Norway, 19 May)
Michal Listkiewicz (Poland, 20 May)
Serge Muhmenthaler (Switzerland, 20 May)
Platon Bozatzidis (Greece, 20 May)
Miodrag Belodedici (Romania, 20 May)
Ewa Gajewska (Poland, 21 May)

Nicolai Cebotari (Moldova, 21 May)
Costas Kapitanis (Cyprus, 21 May)
David Bernstein (England, 22 May)
Theo van Seggelen (Netherlands, 22 May)
Karl Dhont (Belgium, 22 May)
Christian Hockenjös (Germany, 23 May)
Packie Bonner (Republic of Ireland, 24 May)
Ainar Leppänen (Estonia, 24 May)
Suheil Daood (Israel, 25 May)
Hans Cooman (Belgium, 25 May)
Steven Martens (Belgium, 25 May)
Ivančica Sudac (Croatia, 25 May)
Evgeni Giner (Russia, 26 May)
Robert Jeurissen (Belgium, 27 May)
Zdenek Sivek (Czech Republic, 28 May)
Jim Stjerne Hansen (Denmark, 28 May)
Jean-Pierre Escalettes (France, 29 May)
Jacques Antenen (Switzerland, 29 May)
Jozef Kliment (Slovakia, 29 May)
István Huszár (Hungary, 31 May)
Arnaldo Cunha (Portugal, 31 May)

Forthcoming events

Meetings

8 May, in Bucharest
 Football Committee

9–11 May, in Nyon
 Talents and mentors course
 Women referees course

16 May
 Grassroots Day

24/25 May, in Budapest
 FIFA Congress

Competitions

4–16 May, in Slovenia
 European Under-17 Championship:
 final round

9 May, in Bucharest
 UEFA Europa League: final

17 May, in Munich
 UEFA Women's Champions League: final

19 May, in Munich
 UEFA Champions League: final

Notices

- On 16 February, Ángel María Villar Llona was re-elected as president of the Spanish Football Federation.
- On 3 March, Yngve Hallén was re-elected as president of the Football Association of Norway at its general meeting.
- On 9 March, Rovnag Abdullayev was given another four-year term as president of the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan.
- On 23 March, Karl-Erik Nilsson was elected as president of the Swedish Football Association.
- On 26 March, Matthias Voigt was elected as president of the Liechtenstein Football Association.
- Finally, Julius Kvedaras has been chosen as the new president of the Lithuanian Football Federation, having previously served as general secretary. Edvinas Eimontas is now acting general secretary.

Match agents

Three new UEFA licences have been awarded to the following match agents:

William Jennings
 510 Galleywood Road
 Chelmsford, CM2 8B4, UK
 +44 7774 250 224
 bill.jennings@premier-mm.co.uk

Hans Martin Møller
 Skolebej 17, Horne, 5600 Faarborg
 Denmark
 +45 232 620 75
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Stéphane Saliu
 13, bis lotissement Allée les Termes
 13380 Plan de Cuques, France
 +33 6 355 963 06
 stephane.saliu@orange.fr

In addition, **David Oertli** (Sitges, Spain) and **Andreas Lampert** (Werneck, Germany) have had their licences renewed, and the following agents have changed address:

Gaël Mahé
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 Case Postale 171, 1211 Geneva 28
 Switzerland
 +41 78 735 75 007
 gael.mahé@sportgm.com
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