

UEFA



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REAL MADRID CF REIGN SUPREME IN CARDIFF



WOMEN'S EURO 2017

Reporting on women's
football in the Netherlands

THE TECHNICIAN

How do coaches make sense
of all the statistics?

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

New members get
down to business



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SUMMER STABILITY

Summer is in full swing in Nyon and I am delighted to report that we are enjoying a period of much-needed stability. We all know UEFA has been confronted with some very tough times in the recent past but, fortunately, we were able to steer through those choppy waters and as the start of the 2017/18 season beckons, we find ourselves in a very strong position, moving forward at a great pace.

The arrival of our new president saw a series of key decisions made across the organisation. Comprehensive reforms were implemented for term limits, overall good governance matters and bidding processes. We have also seen changes made to the internal structure with the introduction of new cells and units. It is my belief that UEFA will continue to go from strength to strength. We will do so by working together with our internal and external stakeholders. Our member associations are the lifeblood of UEFA and we need their support for this organisation to thrive. We are very committed to investing in grassroots, education and development programmes and I am proud that we have committed an additional €1m in solidarity payments to each association.

Good relationships with clubs and leagues are also crucial for the future of European

football and I am happy to say that we are enjoying a period of stability and tranquillity on that front as well. Relations between ourselves, the European Club Association (ECA) and the European Professional Football Leagues (EPFL) are solid and we need them to stay that way as, together, we work to make the right decisions for the greater good of our beautiful game.

On the competitions front, there is a busy summer in store with the UEFA U21s in Poland, UEFA Women's EURO in the Netherlands and men's and women's U19 final tournaments taking place in Georgia and Northern Ireland respectively.

As we work on our summer tournaments, we are already looking ahead to the next club season, with qualifying matches starting very soon. The excitement on the pitch never stops, while off it we continue to make important strides into a bright future.



Theodore Theodoridis
UEFA General Secretary





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FOOTBALL DOCTORS LEARN IMPORTANT EMERGENCY SKILLS

Emergency on-field medical treatment was the main topic on the agenda at the latest Football Doctor Education Programme workshop, held in Barcelona from 24 to 28 April with 51 UEFA member association doctors in attendance.

The workshop focused in particular on the essential know-how that doctors must have to treat a player who has collapsed or is unconscious.

The 51 doctors were given invaluable training in fitting a collar, performing a log roll – a manoeuvre used to move a person without flexing the spinal column – using an automated defibrillator, performing cardiac massage and dealing with wounds, and head and face injuries. Group work included hands-on practical cases using real-life scenarios.

The sessions in Barcelona were mainly led by Dr Jonny Gordon, author of the first volume of the UEFA Encyclopedia

of Football Medicine. The three-volume encyclopedia was published by the Thieme publishing house at the end of April and can be purchased from Amazon and Thieme.

Professor Anna Nordström – co-author of the first volume – was also in Barcelona to provide specialist knowledge on concussion issues, while the UEFA Medical Committee chairman, Dr Michel D'Hooghe, contributed his vast experience to the discussions.

The doctors underwent a rigorous testing process at the end of the workshop to evaluate the skills and knowledge they had acquired. This evaluation is essential because the doctors not only learn

important skills at the workshop but are also taught how to 'cascade' their own version of the course for doctors in their own country – a unique aspect of the course that increases overall knowledge and expertise. The assessment guarantees that only workshop participants who demonstrate competence in the topic areas addressed are authorised to pass on those skills and knowledge.

UEFA is planning to stage Football Doctor Education Programme workshops on a more regular basis. In addition, every football doctor who attended the course can link up in a WhatsApp group to share and discuss their daily work. 🌐

EMPOWERING WOMEN TO LEAD

Female members of the football family gathered in Nyon from 8 to 12 May for a week of talks and workshops on personal development and leadership skills.

Now in its fifth edition, the UEFA Women in Football Leadership Programme is designed to achieve more gender equality in football, for the benefit of the game as a whole.

After each week-long session the participants enter a one-year mentoring scheme, with the aim of helping more women reach decision-making positions in football. Participants come from all over Europe and various areas of the game. During the latest session at UEFA's headquarters they heard from Nadine Hack, CEO of beCause Global Consulting, and Ginka Toegel, professor

in organisational behaviour and leadership at IMD business school. The week also featured a friendly football match and fruitful simulations and group discussions.

The Women in Football Leadership Programme is already having an impact on the lives of previous participants. Elif Canbay, marketing and sponsorship manager at the Turkish Football Federation, says: "This was the best learning experience I have had during my career. I learned so much from the inspiring role models, I discovered more about my strengths and opportunities and, finally, I met great colleagues from

other associations. I'm now more aware of the opportunities that lie ahead of me, and how I can work towards being an inspiring female leader in football."

Malina Cintic, a legal expert at the Romanian Football Federation, adds: "For me, the experience exceeded my expectations. A complete programme with top professionals and a well-thought-out schedule. It has helped me grow a great deal, both personally and professionally. I highly recommend it!"

Gender equality

Having an inclusive work environment and diverse teams has been proven to result in more efficient and effective leadership and better-run organisations overall. However, statistics still show that very few women occupy leadership positions within the national associations and European football as a whole. UEFA's role as the governing body of European football is to promote gender equality throughout the game and help women to make their voices heard in decision-making processes. 🌐

FIRST MEETING WITH NEW LINE-UP

The UEFA Executive Committee's meeting in Cardiff on 1 June heralded the start of a new era, with several new members present in the Welsh capital. The committee's decisions included the approval of a series of trials at final tournaments this summer – in particular, a fourth substitution in extra time, and a new order of kicks for penalty shoot-outs.



Six Executive Committee 'debutants' attended the meeting – Zbigniew Boniek (Poland), John Delaney (Republic of Ireland), Reinhard Grindel (Germany), Karl-Erik Nilsson (Sweden), Michele Uva (Italy) and Servet Yardımcı (Turkey). All six were elected at the Ordinary UEFA Congress in Helsinki in April.

The committee agreed to continue the trial of a fourth substitution in extra time at UEFA Women's EURO 2017, as well as at the Under-21, Under-19 and Women's Under-19 final tournaments this summer. The aim of football's lawmakers, the International Football Association Board (IFAB), who approved the trials last year, is to see whether there are benefits in terms of player welfare, whether fourth substitutes are used tactically or genuinely for the good of the players, and whether the potential use of all four substitutions during extra time would have an unfair impact on the game.

A trial involving yellow and red cards for team officials in the technical area will be undertaken at the same final tournaments. The use of yellow and red cards for those on the bench is aimed at making it clearer when a player or official is officially warned or dismissed from the technical area.

Another IFAB trial relates to the order of penalty kicks taken by teams in shoot-outs, and the experiment will continue at this year's men's and women's Under-19 final tournaments to see whether it is possible to lessen the advantage for the team taking the first penalty in a pair of spot kicks. In the trial, the teams take it in turns to take the first penalty in each pair of spot kicks (ABBA system), instead of automatically following each other in an ABAB format.

The Executive Committee also decided to introduce comprehensive bidding regulations covering all UEFA competitions, both club and national team, in all age categories – thereby ensuring fully open and transparent bidding processes.

UEFA vice-president Reinhard Grindel was appointed chairman of the five-man UEFA Governance and Compliance Committee, and two independent members were appointed: José Juan Pintó Sala, a Spanish lawyer and Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) arbitrator, and Charles Deguara, auditor general of the national audit office in Malta.

The next meeting of the UEFA Executive Committee will take place in Nyon on 21 September, following the previous day's 13th Extraordinary UEFA Congress in Geneva. 🌐

TOTTI TO RECEIVE UEFA PRESIDENT'S AWARD

The Cardiff meeting also brought the announcement that former Italian international Francesco Totti will receive the 2017 UEFA President's Award, which recognises outstanding achievements, professional excellence and exemplary personal qualities. The 40-year-old played for AS Roma throughout his distinguished career, and made his 786th and final appearance for the club in May. He was capped 58 times for Italy, winning the World Cup in 2006, and helped Roma to the Italian league title in 2001 and victory in the Italian cup in 2007 and 2008. He scored a record 307 goals for Roma, and became the oldest goalscorer in UEFA Champions League history in 2014, at the age of 38. UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin described Totti as a "fantastic player". "He's simply phenomenal," he added. "Congratulations, Francesco, for a fantastic career and for your extraordinary loyalty and dedication, to Roma and to football."

BRILLIANT MADRID MAKE IT 12

Cristiano Ronaldo strikes twice as Real Madrid CF become the first side to retain the UEFA Champions League title.

In the end, not even Europe's meanest defence could hold back the tide as Real Madrid CF's second-half onslaught proved too much for Juventus in the UEFA Champions League final. Cristiano Ronaldo rode the crest of the wave in Cardiff with a pair of goals to propel his side to a 4-1 victory and their 12th European title, as well as a place in history as the first team to retain the trophy in the Champions League era.

Juve goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon was in tears at the end as he waited to collect his runners-up medal, the 39-year-old bemused at how the game had turned so quickly. Juventus had gone into half-time level at 1-1 thanks to Mario Mandžukić's

stunning bicycle kick soon after Ronaldo's opening goal on 20 minutes. That, however, was as good as it got for the Italian champions, who were brushed aside in the second half by further strikes from Casemiro, Ronaldo again and substitute Marco Asensio.

Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane may have inherited a formidable team, but the 2016 and 2017 Champions League triumphs were of his own making. By using Ronaldo sparingly in the Liga run-in, Zidane ensured his crown jewel was shining brightest when it mattered most, and the forward duly responded by hitting ten of his competition-leading 12 goals in the final five games of the campaign. Zidane had





also adjusted the team's shape to allow Isco to play at the apex of a midfield diamond, which meant that he started in place of home-town hero Gareth Bale in the Welsh capital. Nevertheless, any local disappointment was soon forgotten as an enthralling match got under way.

Beaten in the 2015 final by Barcelona, Juve seemed determined not to be overawed by the occasion and took the game to Madrid, coming close to opening the scoring when Miralem Pjanić's low drive was tipped away by Keylor Navas. The breakthrough, however, came at the other end after a swift one-two between Dani Carvajal and Ronaldo down the right resulted in the Portuguese player sweeping the ball low past Buffon for his 104th Champions League goal and Real's 500th overall in the competition.

It was testament to the resolve of Juventus that they forced their way back into the game just seven minutes later, and with a goal comparable in brilliance to the volley that Zidane struck so sweetly for Madrid in the 2002 final. Mandžukić controlled Gonzalo Higuaín's pass on

his chest with his back to goal, then leapt acrobatically to fire the ball over his head and Navas's outstretched hand into the top corner. It was a moment worthy of winning any final, but Madrid regrouped and soon put it behind them.

Their pressure on Juve's goal had been growing from the start of the second half, and it was no surprise when Casemiro broke the deadlock on 61 minutes, albeit with a big slice of good fortune, his long-range shot leaving Buffon stranded after deflecting off Sami Khedira. Juve had only conceded three goals in 12 games en route to the final, but they let in a third on the night three minutes later when the outstanding Luka Modrić dashed to the byline and cut the ball back for Ronaldo to knock in from close range. The result was already beyond doubt when substitute Juan Cuadrado was dismissed for a second yellow card, and the celebrations started in earnest when Asensio knocked home the fourth – teed up by the effervescent Marcelo down the left – in the final minute.

Though comparisons with the great

Madrid sides of the 1950s may be premature, as captain Sergio Ramos lifted the trophy for the third time in four years, it felt as if the club's grip on it was every bit as tight. "No one had retained the Champions League and we've managed to do it," said Zidane, the first coach to mastermind back-to-back European Cup triumphs since Arrigo Sacchi with AC Milan in 1990. "Today is a historic day for the whole Madrid family – players, staff, all our fans. I'm really happy – I almost feel like dancing, and I owe that feeling to this club. I consider myself a 'man of the house' here; it's the club of my heart. Now it's important to enjoy what we've done." No one could begrudge him that. 🏆

Juventus 1-4 Real Madrid CF

3 June 2017, National Stadium of Wales, Cardiff

Goals: 0-1 Ronaldo 20, 1-1 Mandžukić 27, 1-2 Casemiro 61, 1-3 Ronaldo 64, 1-4 Asensio 90

Attendance: 65,842

Player of the match: Cristiano Ronaldo

Referee: Felix Brych (Germany)



CARDIFF SHINES IN FINAL SPOTLIGHT

The Welsh capital rose to the occasion as host of the 2017 UEFA Champions League final.

The Champions Festival in Cardiff Bay offered an array of activities for the throngs of visitors.



A giant billboard of local hero Gareth Bale welcomed visiting fans to Cardiff, and from the waterfront to the castle, and the National Stadium of Wales to Cardiff City Stadium, the Welsh capital put on a show that will live long in the memory. With a population of just 350,000, Cardiff is one of the smallest cities to have hosted a UEFA Champions League final, and it took the occasion to heart, opening its arms to fans keen to be a part of this unique occasion, whether they had a ticket or not.

The festival hosted inclusive 'football-for-all' games, including matches for amputees.



Decked out in the Champions League livery and with a giant dragon and trophy sitting high on the ramparts, Cardiff Castle was first to fall under the final's spell, soon followed by the Cardiff Bay waterfront, home to the UEFA Champions Festival between 1 and 4 June.

With the trophy itself as centrepiece, the festival attracted 100,000 visitors over the four days. The Ultimate Champions match on Friday 2 June drew the biggest crowd, with thousands of fans lining the waterfront to catch a glimpse of competition legends performing on a floating pitch. Local heroes Ryan Giggs and Ian Rush received a roar of support as the players arrived by boat.

Skills clinics were also held on the pitch as well as 'football-for-all games', involving – among others – amputee players and players with cerebral palsy, which highlighted the inclusive nature of the festival. Live music and DJ sets, a giant TV screen and a wide range of sponsor activities, including a look to the future with Sony's virtual-reality experience, the Virtual Champions Arena, also kept fans entertained. The Millennium Centre, meanwhile, was home to the UEFA Champions Gallery, a superb exhibition of the best photography from finals down the years. Also on display were the 12 winning pictures from the grassroots photography competition 'This is Welsh Football', organised by the Football Association of Wales (featured in the following pages). Most photographed of all, though, was the famous trophy itself, with 20,000 supporters having a snap of themselves taken beside it.

With French teams Olympique Lyonnais and Paris Saint-Germain also in town to



A picture with the famous trophy was just one of the many activities for children to enjoy at the festival.

contest the UEFA Women's Champions League final at Cardiff City Stadium, fans from a wide range of nationalities mingled in the city. Brilliant sunshine in the days leading up to the final added to the carnival atmosphere, and by Saturday the party was in full swing as Juventus and Real Madrid CF supporters descended on the city. Castle Street, Queen Street, High Street and St Mary Street were occupied by legions of Spaniards and Italians mixing in a spirit of friendship and excitement.

With an estimated television audience of 180 million in 100 countries for the final, Cardiff was in the spotlight and the National Stadium of Wales was soon centre stage. Supporters of both teams packed their ends not long after the gates had opened, and there were fireworks before the game had even kicked off courtesy of a spectacular opening ceremony with live act the Black Eyed Peas.

Final ambassador Ian Rush brought the trophy onto the pitch, while in the stands a Juventus supporter draped a John Charles flag over the first tier – the Welsh legend and former Juve and Cardiff City FC player still fondly remembered in Turin. One group of Welsh fans started up a rendition of Don't Take Me Home, the anthem that had accompanied the Wales team on their exhilarating run to the semi-finals of EURO 2016, bringing the spirit of that magical month in France back to Cardiff for the night. Indeed, for the locals, one of the biggest cheers of all was saved for Welshman Bale when he came on as a substitute. At the end of an incredible week, he and his Real Madrid team-mates would take home the trophy, but not before contributing to an experience Cardiff will never forget. 🇬🇧



MAXI-PITCH LEGACY

A new maxi-pitch donated by UEFA will keep kids on the ball in Cardiff.

Away from the crowds, UEFA and the Football Association of Wales (FAW) were ensuring the Champions League final would leave a lasting impression on the city by opening a new maxi-pitch in Grange Gardens in the Grangetown area of Cardiff, with the aim of inspiring local kids to play the game and bring the community together. Jonathan Ford, chief executive of the FAW, UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin, UEFA general secretary Theodore Theodoridis, UEFA Champions League final ambassador Ian Rush and former Italian international striker Patrizia Panico were among those attending the ceremony.

WELSH FOOTBALL THROUGH A LENS

Following the national team's heroics in reaching the semi-finals of UEFA EURO 2016, Wales was once again at the forefront of European football as it hosted the 2017 UEFA Champions League and Women's Champions League finals in Cardiff.

To celebrate the Welsh game, and its grassroots in particular – the heart and soul of any footballing nation – UEFA and the Football Association of Wales (FAW) organised a photo competition in the run-up to the finals.

The competition was adjudicated by Ian Rush and Jayne Ludlow, ambassadors of the men's and women's finals respectively, and the photos were given pride of place in a special This is Welsh Football exhibition at the UEFA Champions Gallery in Cardiff's Wales Millennium Centre. The winners in each category – Off the pitch (Over-16s and Under-16s) and On the pitch (Over-16s and Under-16s) – received tickets to the Champions League final and a range of photographic equipment.

A popular attraction at the annual Champions Festival, the Champions

Gallery looks back on the now 61-year history of Europe's premier club competition. With this year's special exhibition, visitors were also taken on an intimate journey through grassroots football in Wales.

"Every picture tells a different story, and some of the winners there were incredible," said Rush. "It definitely brings back memories of when I was a kid – even putting the nets up, taking them down and things like that. I think you often don't appreciate the people who do that: they're the unsung heroes." ⚽





1. Geraint Duckfield.
2. Wil Cheshire (winner: category On the pitch/Over-16).
3. Dean Bowden.

PICTURE CONTEST



1. Tomos Lewis. 2. Garry Taylor (winner: category – On the pitch/Under-16). 3. Chris Couchman. 4. Morfudd Elin Wynne. 5. Geraint Duckfield. 6. Andrew Woodhead. 7. Gwyn Jenkins. 8. Keivan Edwards (winner: category Off the pitch/Over-16). 9. Nick Jones.





1



3



1. Nik Mesney.
2. Mike Sheridan.
3. Craig Rattenbury (winner: category Off the pitch/Under-16).
4. Ruth Crump.



DEFIANT UNITED WIN IT FOR MANCHESTER

On 24 May, Manchester United FC claimed their first UEFA Europa League title in Stockholm after a coaching masterclass by José Mourinho.

The emotion at the final whistle was palpable. Paul Pogba threw his hands in the air and became the focal point for his team-mates as they converged from all corners of the pitch. Injured quartet Zlatan Ibrahimović, Marcos Rojo, Ashley Young and Luke Shaw raced on crutches to join them. José Mourinho pointed to his family in the stands – an apology, he said, for not having been the easiest person to be around in the build-up to the final. This meant something.

It meant a Europa League trophy – a first for the English giants. It meant a place in next season's UEFA Champions League group stage. And it meant the opportunity to dedicate a prize to their city – a city wounded by a bomb attack two nights earlier that had claimed 22 lives. "The manager told us that the only thing we could do was win this," said Ander Herrera. "It's only a football game; it's only a trophy; but it's something."

Herrera was right at the heart of it – the rudder at the back steering Manchester United and ensuring that any incursions by AFC Ajax encountered choppy waters. The Spaniard, a beaten finalist with Athletic Club in 2012, was man of the match here, recognition of his understated influence on the ball and acute awareness of the situation. More than once he implored team-mates to work back and defend,

to restore defensive shape – a Mourinho man if ever there was one.

Indeed, this was vintage Mourinho. Manchester United started quicker than some had anticipated – to be clear: this was no containment job – but always kept their shape and never yielded to Ajax. Of course, an early goal helps. There were 18 minutes on the clock when Paul Pogba, on the edge of the box, struck a firm left-footed shot that took a wicked deflection off Davinson Sánchez and looped past the wrong-footed André Onana.

A hymn to youth

That was a huge blow to an Ajax side with an average age of less than 23. The impressive Matthijs de Ligt actually became the youngest ever finalist at the age of just 17 years and 285 days. Led by Bertrand Traoré, the Dutch outfit gamely sought to replicate the swashbuckling style that had brought them to Sweden. The trouble was, they needed space to work in, and Manchester United resolutely refused to grant any. Mourinho's men bossed the midfield and harried relentlessly when not in possession.

Moreover, the English side always had an outlet going forward, a willing recipient for every goal kick, free-kick and long ball: Marouane Fellaini. Manchester United knew it;



Henrikh Mkhitaryan (above) and Paul Pogba (right) gave Manchester United FC their first-ever UEFA Europa League trophy.



This victory means a place in next season's UEFA Champions League group stage.



RESULT

AFC Ajax 0-2 **Manchester United FC**

Attendance: 50,267

Referee: Damir Skomina (Slovenia)

Goals: 0-1 Pogba 18,
0-2 Mkhitarian 48

the fans knew it; the 370 members of the written press knew it. Ajax knew it, too – they were just unable to do anything about it. Fellaini won a total of 15 aerial duels, a record for a Europa League game, and his mere presence clearly unsettled the Dutch side. In fact, it led directly to Manchester United's second goal.

Two minutes into the second half, Fellaini drew two defenders, freeing up space for Chris Smalling to nod Juan Mata's corner towards Henrikh Mkhitaryan, who hooked in a clever, improvised finish – his sixth of the competition. "I shouldn't have been there," admitted the Armenian. "I should have been on the [edge of the] box, but as I had a yellow card Ander Herrera said it would be better if I got involved in the corner."

Surely now, with the game almost up, lapses would creep into Manchester United's play? Not on Mourinho's watch; nor Herrera's. Pogba dropped back to support Herrera in the closing stages, and when the Frenchman, sensing a crowd-pleasing third goal, galloped forward on a counterattack late on, the usually quietly spoken Spaniard immediately castigated him. There was no let-up – not until the final whistle had been blown.

Fitting final

This was, in many ways, a win becoming of its surroundings. It is said that there are two concepts central to the Swedish mindset: 'lagom', which translates as 'not too much; not too little', and 'ordning och reda', which means 'tidiness and order' – everything in its proper place. These are almost mantras for Mourinho, with four victories in major UEFA club competitions.

As the engraver set about etching the 18 letters that make up 'Manchester United FC' onto the trophy – he could have been forgiven for rooting for AFC Ajax – a stage was hastily erected on the pitch. With 120 photographers' lenses trained on him, UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin handed over the trophy and Manchester United finally had the missing piece of the puzzle. They are only the fifth club in history to have lifted all three major UEFA club trophies.

Their fans' appreciation was obvious – the 70 planes parked at Arlanda Airport ready to take them home would just have to wait. The chants of 'United, United' again gave way to a defiant refrain of 'Manchester, Manchester, Manchester', as they had during the pre-match tribute. Somehow, 'United' seemed appropriate too though – for this was a victory rooted in unity. ⚽

A LASTING LEGACY

Ajax were nominally the home team for the final, allowing them to wear their famous red-and-white home colours and forcing the Red Devils to play in blue. But what if they had both worn red? Confusion, we assume, would have reigned. Well, that is almost exactly what happened during a game staged elsewhere in Stockholm earlier in the day to illustrate how colour-blind people see a match.

One side started the game in red jerseys, with the other team wearing bright green. At half-time, though, both teams removed their shirts to reveal identical olive green kit underneath, showing how red-green colour-blind people often perceive these two colours. As the teams played on, the bewilderment on players and fans' faces was clear for all to see. A point well made, thought the watching Lars Lagerbäck, the current Norway coach, who is colour-blind himself.

That initiative highlighting an issue affecting 1 in 12 men (but only 1 in 200 women) was one of several that took place during the day at the neutral fan zone at Kungsträdgården in central Stockholm. There were also matches for amputees and power chair players under the banner 'football for all' – a theme echoed in the northern suburb of Husby, one of the poorest parts of Stockholm, where a 3G maxi-pitch fully funded by UEFA was officially inaugurated, underlining UEFA's commitment to ensuring a lasting legacy.

For the final itself, FedEx teamed up with local organisation Djurgården Fotboll to offer disadvantaged children the opportunity to accompany the players out onto the pitch. Accessibility was also high on the agenda at the Friends Arena, with volunteers helping fans to get from car parks and accessible drop-off zones to their seats. Inside the ground, there was a wheelchair loan service and priority lanes at food and beverage concessions, as well as an audio-descriptive commentary service.





PARIS BLINK FIRST AS LYON RETAIN THEIR TITLE

Goalkeeper Sarah Bouhaddi swept home the winning spot kick as holders Olympique Lyonnais beat Paris Saint-Germain to win their fourth UEFA Women's Champions League crown in Cardiff on 1 June.

Sarah Bouhaddi has the Women's Champions League in her blood. Before the 2017 final against Paris Saint-Germain at Cardiff City Stadium, the goalkeeper had already won the competition three times, her saves crucial to each one of Olympique Lyonnais' successes. Now she has done what no other goalkeeper has achieved before – scored to make her team European champions.

Following 120 goalless minutes, Bouhaddi's strike brought a marathon shoot-out to an end after her opposite number, Katarzyna Kiedrzynek, had fired wide of Bouhaddi's right-hand post with the 15th kick. "The players asked me if I wanted to take one, so I stepped up to the plate and I scored," Bouhaddi said. "I'm happy to have scored tonight,

but it doesn't really matter; the most important thing was the team won. Throughout the whole match nobody gave up. That made the difference."

It was a crushing blow for Paris, who had also lost the French Cup final to Lyon by the same scoreline on penalties two weeks previously, and had again matched their compatriots toe to toe during an absorbing encounter. Indeed, if it had not been for a pair of Bouhaddi saves in the first half, it might have been a very different story, the first stop particularly impressive as she pushed away Shirley Cruz Traña's close-range effort. Lyon enjoyed the bulk of possession but threatened only sporadically, with Kiedrzynek equal to anything they created. Dzsener Marozsán, the player of the match, twice tested the keeper with

long-range drives and Ada Hegerberg's shot was deflected narrowly wide at the start of the second period. Paris, however, always looked threatening on the break and spurned the best chance of the half when Marie-Laure Delie dragged her shot wide on 62 minutes when clean through.

The noise generated by Paris' passionate and vocal support was contagious, and the majority of the 22,433 crowd joined in as the game reached its climax. But, without a goal to break the deadlock, penalties were needed for the second successive season. Paris had the advantage when Kiedrzynek tipped Eugénie Le Sommer's kick onto the woodwork, only for Bouhaddi to match the Polish keeper's heroics soon after by keeping out Grace Geyoro. She then went one better by delivering the decisive blow past Kiedrzynek herself.



As the Paris players wept on the pitch – losing finalists for the second time in three seasons – Lyon celebrated joyously. They had equalled 1. FFC Frankfurt's record of four European titles, and it felt like the balance of power in Europe was shifting. For the first time in a decade – and just the third overall – no German side had reached the final, the two French clubs having both knocked out Frauen-Bundesliga opposition in the last eight. Lyon's victims had been VfL Wolfsburg, whom they had also beaten on penalties in the 2016 final. Twelve months on, they had again held their nerve when it mattered most, giving coach Gérard Prêcheur a memorable victory in his last match in charge. What a way to sign off – with the club's fourth European title. 🏆

RESULT

Olympique Lyonnais 0-0* Paris Saint-Germain
*Lyon win 7-6 on penalties

Attendance: 22,433

Player of the match: Dzsener Marozsán

Referee: Bibiana Steinhaus (Germany)

DRAGON ROARS

Welsh women's football the winner following Cardiff thriller

It may have been an all-French affair, but the 2017 UEFA Women's Champions League final is one Welsh football will remember with pride. "French flair on show, but Wales will be the winners in the long run" ran the headline in local paper the Western Mail the next day, and it was not hard to see why.

This was about more than a single match; this was a powerful message of support for Welsh women's football and the grassroots game in the country. The action had started long before the final had even kicked off. Many of the 22,433 crowd had come straight from the National Female Tournament still in their football kits and sporting freshly earned medals around their necks. In all, 1,597 women and children took part in the event organised by the Football Association of Wales (FAW), and they were soon contributing to a brilliant atmosphere at Cardiff City Stadium. As a Mexican wave went around the ground midway through the second half and the decibel levels rose still further, there was no mistaking the feeling that these young fans would be back for more in the future.

UEFA's determination to increase female participation was also felt with the launch of the Together #WePlayStrong campaign. The initiative aims to make football the most-played women's sport in Europe by 2020, and an inspirational video explaining its goals was aired before the match. The opening ceremony also boasted a first for UEFA as adults joined children in waving the centre-circle banner before kick-off. Fifteen girls, each with a parent, took part

in the display to help the UEFA Foundation for Children mark the UN Global Day of Parents. The foundation also invited 900 children connected to the charitable streetfootballworld network to take part in the ceremony by holding a Together #WePlayStrong banner.

Music was provided by the famous Cor Glanaethwy (North Wales Choir), which has become something of a symbol of the competition this season, having also performed at the UEFA Champions Festival in Cardiff Bay as well as three months earlier to mark 100 days to kick-off. Another major milestone on the road to the final was the trophy handover on 21 April, when current Wales manager and final ambassador Jayne Ludlow paraded the trophy through the streets of Cardiff alongside former men's winner Ian Rush. And she had the trophy in her hands again at the final, when presenting it to triumphant Olympique Lyonnais captain Wendie Renard.

Ludlow, who won this competition with Arsenal LFC in 2007, is convinced that staging the final in Cardiff will help inspire the next generation of Welsh women's players, and many of her young charges were at the game. "It's more important to my youngsters than Christmas this year," she said. "First and foremost, we want the girls to enjoy the sport. That was my ethos as a player and that's what I want for our youngsters coming through now." With a little help from two great French sides, that ambition is being fulfilled.



6 of the past eight finals have featured Lyon, who have won four of them – a record they share with Frankfurt

SPOT-ON GERMANY CLINCH RECORD SIXTH VICTORY

The final round of the tenth European Women's Under-17 Championship, which took place in the Czech Republic from 2 to 14 May, confirmed Germany's dominance of this competition, with Spain the runners-up.

The final round of the 2016/17 European Women's Under-17 Championship – the fourth to be contested by eight teams and the tenth in total – was the first time that a major women's youth tournament had been held in the Czech Republic. While the setting was new, with games being played in Plzeň, Domazlice, Písek and Příbram, the final outcome was somewhat more familiar, with Germany notching up a record sixth title.

Once again, the eight finalists were divided into two groups of four, with the top two in each group qualifying for the semi-finals. Holders Germany were drawn in Group A alongside Spain (the team they beat in last season's final), France and hosts the Czech Republic, while Group B was contested by England, the Republic of Ireland, Norway and the Netherlands.

With a combined total of 17 goals, the first round of matches was a real festival of football, with a massive 10,219 spectators watching the hosts' opening match against France. That was more than just a record for this tournament;

it was the largest crowd ever for a women's game at any level in the Czech Republic. Unfortunately, though, the majority of those spectators left disappointed, as Karel Rada's team were narrowly beaten 2-1. "Maybe we were a little nervous, although it is great to see so many fans coming to see our women play," the EURO '96 finalist said.

Familiar foes

In the group's other opening fixture, familiar foes Germany and Spain met once again, just over six months after locking horns in the quarter-finals of the U-17 Women's World Cup in Amman. On this occasion, Germany were emphatic winners, with hardworking midfielder Lena Oberdorf – who only turned 15 in December – helping them to a 4-1 win.

Over in Group B, England secured the biggest win of the tournament, with the Republic of Ireland conceding five without reply. The Netherlands beat Norway 3-1 in the group's other fixture, with a spectacular Olaug Tvedten free-kick from 40 metres scant consolation for Børje Sørensen's team.

A further 13 goals followed in the second round of matches, when the path to the final began to take shape. The Netherlands' 2-1 win over England ensured not only that they had qualified for the semi-finals with a game to spare, but also that they were assured top spot in the group. England, on the other hand, would have to play Norway – who beat the Republic of Ireland 1-0 in Plzeň in their second game – for the right to join the Dutch in the final four. That defeat eliminated the Irish, and there was similar disappointment for the hosts over in Group A. Their fate was sealed by a 5-1 defeat to a resurgent Spain led by an inspirational Lorena Navarro on her comeback from injury. In the other game in Group A, Germany also sealed their place in the semi-finals with a 2-1 win over France.

In the final set of group games, Spain got the point they needed against France, drawing 1-1 and setting up a semi-final against the Netherlands, while the Czech Republic suffered their second 5-1 defeat in as many games, this time to Germany. Over in Group B, Norway found top gear

It took penalties to separate Germany and Spain in the final at Plzeň City Stadium.



when it mattered, ending England's hopes with a 2-0 win in a game that was delayed by four hours owing to heavy rain in Plzen.

Dramatic penalty shoot-out

Norway took their game to another level in their semi-final clash with Germany in Píbram, pushing the holders all the way. Anouschka Bernhard's team dug in, though, dominating the second half. With the scores tied at 1-1 at the end of normal time, the scene was set for a new type of penalty shoot-out, with the International Football Association Board including this tournament in its trials of an experimental system aimed at making spot kicks fairer in terms of the distribution of pressure. Rather than alternating in an ABAB format, the teams took it in turns to take two consecutive penalties in an ABBA format – just like tie-breaks in tennis.

Norway actually had four opportunities to win – two with their own spot kicks and a further two on Germany's penalties – after their opponents missed their first three. Ultimately, though, it was Norway who ended up losing their nerve, missing three in a row themselves, and Andrea Brunner netted the winner for Germany.

There was no such drama in the other semi-final, with Spain securing a comfortable 2-0 victory against a Dutch side that had no answer to the Iberians' quick, attacking football, setting up a repeat of last season's final.

In that final in Plzen, Spain did most of the attacking, but Germany held firm as the rain came down and the pitch became heavy. With the scores level at 0-0 at the end of normal time, a penalty



shoot-out was required – just like last season. The outcome was also the same, with Germany emerging victorious from their second straight ABBA-style shoot-out and Spain finding the net only once from the spot as their nerves got the better of them after a tiring and frustrating 80 minutes.

"Going to penalties was good for us, but bad for Spain," said Bernhard, celebrating her fourth title at this level. And to think that Germany had only qualified for the finals as the best runners-up, finishing second to England in an elite round group which also included Italy and Poland. "It was just a moment when I thought 'Wow!'," Bernhard added as the confetti covered the pitch to bring an end to another European Women's Under-17 Championship.

Germany will be back bidding for a seventh title in the 2017/18 season, with next year's final tournament being held in Lithuania. Qualifying will start in September, with 11 groups of four contesting the first qualifying round, although Germany will not enter the fray until the elite round in spring 2018, when the next defence of their title will begin. 🏆

RESULTS

Group A

Czech Rep.	1-2	France
Spain	1-4	Germany
Czech Rep.	1-5	Spain
Germany	2-1	France
Germany	5-1	Czech Rep.
France	1-1	Spain

Group B

Rep. of Ireland	0-5	England
Norway	1-3	Netherlands
Rep. of Ireland	0-1	Norway
Netherlands	2-1	England
Netherlands	0-0	Rep. of Ireland
England	0-2	Norway

Semi-finals

Netherlands	0-2	Spain
Germany	1-1	Norway
<i>Germany win 3-2 on penalties</i>		

Final

Germany	0-0	Spain
<i>Germany win 3-1 on penalties</i>		



Sportsfile

Spain's Abel Ruiz outmanoeuvres England's Jonathan Panzo in the final.

SPAIN HOLD THEIR NERVE TO SECURE RECORD THIRD TITLE

In the final round of the 2016/17 European Under-17 Championship, which took place in Croatia from 3 to 19 May, Spain secured a record third title, defeating England 4-1 on penalties in Varazdin.

For the fifth time in six years, the final was decided on penalties. It was a thrilling climax to the tournament, with the scores level at 2-2 at the end of the match thanks to Spanish substitute Nacho Díaz's headed equaliser in the sixth minute of added time.

Twelve months after being on the losing side against Portugal in Azerbaijan, Spain captain Abel Ruiz – who in the course of the finals became the competition's all-time leading appearance maker (24 matches) and its joint top scorer (16 goals) – hoisted the trophy aloft, with Víctor Chust scoring the winner in a shoot-out conducted as part of an International Football Association Board trial aimed at making the order of spot kicks fairer.

The Iberian nation completed their hat-trick of titles ten years after a team featuring Bojan Krkić and David de Gea had secured their first – also at England's expense. Spain, who had also won the tournament in 2008, thereby moved

ahead of the five other countries with two victories to their names (opponents England, plus France, the Netherlands, Portugal and Russia) on the competition's roll of honour.

First for the Faroe Islands

At the other end of the experience scale, the Faroe Islands were appearing in the final round of a UEFA competition for the first time, with coach Áki Johansen describing their qualification as "sensational". "We have a population of just 50,000, yet we're competing in a European championship," he said. "It's almost unheard of, so everyone's excited."

The Faroe Islands finished bottom of Group B with three defeats, while Norway and hosts Croatia – who were both also making their debut in the tournament – fared only slightly better, managing a solitary point apiece in Groups D and A respectively.

The Faroe Islands' tally included a 7-0 defeat to France, the biggest in the

tournament's history. That scoreline was then matched by Germany against the Republic of Ireland, with Jann-Fiete Arp registering his second hat-trick of the tournament, having already struck three times in 13 minutes during a 5-0 victory over Bosnia and Herzegovina in Germany's Group C opener.

Despite that emphatic defeat, the Republic of Ireland still qualified for the knockout stage. Germany, meanwhile – like England in Group D – collected maximum points.

France's Amine Gouiri outscored everyone in Croatia. Seven of the Olympique Lyonnais forward's eight goals – a record-equalling total for this tournament, matching the tally posted by compatriot Odsonne Édouard in 2015 and the combined total scored by Ruiz in 2016 and 2017 – came in the group stage against Hungary, the Faroe Islands and Scotland.

In doing so, Gouiri equalled the all-time record for the most goals scored by

one player in the group stage of a UEFA final tournament – a record he now shares with Spain's Jonathan Soriano (2001/02 European Under-17 Championship), Portugal's Gil Gomes (1988/89 European Under-16 Championship) and France's Michel Platini (EURO '84).

Gouiri went head to head with fellow No9 Ruiz in the quarter-finals, putting France in front early on. Right-back Mateu Morey then equalised for Group A winners Spain after a solo run, before FC Barcelona forward Ruiz joined Gouiri on eight goals by converting a penalty. Sergio Gómez then rounded things off with a third Spanish goal in the second half.

"Abel is a complete player who really understands the game," said Spain coach Santi Denia. "He has speed, a good shot and stamina. He knows how to read the game, when to drop out wide, when to look for the ball in the box and when to shoot. He has everything it takes to be a great forward for a major European team."

A passage to India

The margin of victory in the other three quarter-finals was slender, with England (1-0 versus the Republic of Ireland), Germany (2-1 v the Netherlands) and Turkey (1-0 v Hungary) all edging through, guaranteeing their places at the 2017 U-17 World Cup in the process. A few days later, Gouiri fired France to victory in a World Cup play-off against Hungary to claim Europe's fifth and final berth at that tournament, which will take place in India in October.

"You need someone like Amine when you have to score, and today he showed why he's the best forward in the championship," said France coach Lionel Rouxel. "This is a great thing for him. He spent a month preparing for the tournament, and I told him this [the World Cup place] was for him."

The semi-finals were also tight. Jadon Sancho's fifth goal of the tournament helped England to edge past Turkey 2-1, while Spain got the better of Germany on penalties after a 0-0 draw in which Ruiz rattled the crossbar from the spot in normal time.

The 32 matches were played at seven venues scattered across the country – in Rijeka on the Adriatic coast, around the capital Zagreb and in the northern city of Varazdin. This was the first time that Croatia had staged the finals of a UEFA youth competition, with the Balkan nation

RESULTS

Quarter-finals

Spain	3-1	France
Hungary	0-1	Turkey
Germany	2-1	Netherlands
England	1-0	Rep. of Ireland

World Cup play-off

Hungary	0-1	France
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Semi-finals

Turkey	1-2	England
Spain	0-0	Germany
<i>Spain win 4-2 on penalties</i>		

Final

Spain	2-2	England
<i>Spain win 4-1 on penalties</i>		

having previously hosted the final round of the UEFA Regions' Cup in 2009 and Futsal EURO 2012.

Those two competitions both resulted in Spanish victories, but for long periods of the final of this tournament at Stadion Andjelko Herjavec – the third time that Spain and England had met at this stage of the competition – a repeat outcome seemed unlikely.

When Phil Foden put England 2-1 up just before the hour mark with a shot from outside the box, restoring their lead after Morey had cancelled out Callum Hudson-Odoi's deflected effort, Steve Cooper's side were on course for a 12th successive victory in this season's competition and a third title of their own.

However, Díaz changed all of that at the last, and just as they had done at the same ground three nights earlier, Spain held their nerve from the spot.

"It's wonderful to have won, given all the hard work the group put in," Denia said. "England pushed us to the limit, but we managed to turn it around and win. This is important for us and the federation because Spain haven't won this title for many years. We had the luck today."

Cooper added: "Nobody would have written that script at the end. The only emotion I have at the moment is pride. I know it doesn't feel that way now, but this experience will be a good one when we get over it." 🌍





#WEPLAYSTRONG

TOGETHER #WEPLAYSTRONG

UEFA launches an ambitious new marketing plan aimed at making football the most played women's sport across Europe within five years.

Together #WePlayStrong was presented by Germany international turned UEFA women's football advisor Nadine Kessler in Cardiff on 1 June, the day of the UEFA Women's Champions League final. While the Women's Champions League represents the pinnacle of women's club football in Europe, Together #WePlayStrong hopes to inspire girls and women of all ages and abilities to get involved in the game.

"More girls and women than ever are playing the game we love, and we believe that Together #WePlayStrong will push up the numbers even more," said Kessler, 2014 world and European women's player of the year. "It is vital that we get the message out there, to show young girls in particular what an amazing sport football is. This campaign is going to help us do exactly that."

The main focus of Together #WePlayStrong is on driving participation and ensuring that those who do take up the sport stay involved over the long term. UEFA aims to support its

"Women's football is very important for UEFA. And for us it's a big day to have started a big campaign to promote it. And I'm looking forward to improving it in the future."

Aleksander Čeferin
UEFA President

55 member associations to develop their own localised plans to get more girls playing football. Their efforts will be assisted by the new, image-led marketing campaign, which has been designed to change perceptions of women's football. Famous ambassadors and celebrities are helping to spread the word, such as model Cara Delevigne, pop singer Astrid S, as well as male and female football players such as Alex Morgan, Cesc Fàbregas and Eden Hazard. And new media channels will be used to share content with girls on the platforms they use.

"This is an exciting time for women's football," Kessler said. "When you see first-hand just what these projects mean to young girls, you realise the game's real potential."

To support the positive media debate about women's football, UEFA has partnered with the University of Birmingham to conduct the largest study of its type into the role and impact of playing football for girls. That study

UEFA



surveyed more than 4,000 girls and young women in six different countries: Denmark, England, Germany, Poland, Spain and Turkey. It spanned four different categories of respondent – 13 to 18-year-olds playing football; over-18s playing football; girls/women playing other sports; and girls/women playing no sport at all – featuring both quantitative analysis and a qualitative survey in the form of interviews. The study shows the significant impact that playing team sports has on self-confidence, as well as indicating that girls regard football as the most rewarding of the various team sports on offer. The launch of Together #WePlayStrong continues across the summer with players at Women's EURO 2017 supporting the campaign as well as further marketing materials aimed to inspire girls to 'Come play'! More information at WePlayStrong.org



STRONGER THANKS TO FOOTBALL

The study conducted by the University of Birmingham across six countries shows how playing football has a more positive impact on young girls compared with other sports.



1. CONFIDENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM

"I feel more confident as a result of playing with my team."

80% of young female footballers agree
(74% in other sports)

"I have become better at dealing with fear and anxiety as a result of playing sport."

56% of young female footballers agree
(50% in other sports)



2. FRIENDSHIP AND TEAMWORK

"I feel stronger as part of a team."

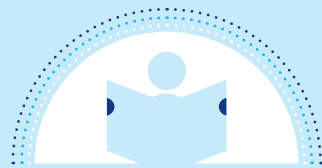
83% of young female footballers agree
(79% in other sports)

"My team-mates understand me."

77% of young female footballers agree
(70% in other sports)

"I have learned I have a lot in common with people from different backgrounds."

68% of young female footballers agree
(61% who play other sports)



3. LIFE SKILLS

"Playing sport has helped me learn to organise my time and not put things off."

74% of young female footballers agree
(67% in other sports)

"Playing my sport has helped me prepare for school or college."

53% of young female footballers agree



Getty Images

WOMEN'S EURO ALREADY BREAKING RECORDS

Record ticket sales for the opening game of UEFA Women's EURO 2017 are positive proof that this expanded final tournament, which will take place in the Netherlands from 16 July to 6 August, will be the most spectacular to date.

Women's EURO 2017 will be the first final tournament since the expansion from 12 to 16 teams, and it looks like being the best ever, both on and off the pitch.

The action will kick off on Sunday 16 July, with the hosts taking on two-time winners Norway in Utrecht. With ticket sales topping 16,000 more than two months before the game, guaranteeing a record crowd for a women's football match in the Netherlands, we can be sure of a spectacular start.

Norway, who won the tournament back in 1993 – the last time that somebody other than Germany lifted the trophy – and were runners-up four years ago, will surely be one of the main challengers this year, alongside Sweden, England and Spain. Holders Germany and France are probably the two favourites, but it will be tough to get out of any of the four groups, with only the top two going through to the quarter-finals.

Group A

The other match in Group A on the first day of the tournament will see Denmark take on Belgium in Doetinchem. Fans can look forward to a pair of local derbies when the group ends eight days later, with Belgium facing the Netherlands in Tilburg and Norway facing Denmark in Deventer – a replay of their 2013 semi-final, which ended up going to penalties.

The final will be played at the 30,000-seater FC Twente Stadion in Enschede.



100,000

tickets had already
been sold by mid-May.

All eyes will be on the Netherlands, who came of age in 2009, reaching the semi-finals on their first appearance in the tournament, and went on to qualify for the 2015 Women's World Cup. Their line will be led by Arsenal Ladies FC's prolific new signing, Vivianne Miedema. However, Norway have a star forward of their own in Ada Hegerberg, who won the UEFA Best Women's Player in Europe Award for 2015/16. Denmark, whose recent friendly results include 6-0, 6-1 and 5-0 victories against Portugal, Russia and Finland respectively, can call on exciting attacking talents Pernille Harder and Nadia Nadim, while Belgium – who are making their tournament debut – boast the likes of VfL Wolfsburg's Tessa Wullaert.

Group B

Every tournament needs a group of death, and 'B' is for 'brutal' in this instance. Germany, aiming for a seventh straight title and fresh from winning Olympic gold last year, will be joined in Group B by Pia Sundhage's Sweden, who took silver in Rio. Unsurprisingly, many of the potential stars of the tournament come from these two teams, with new German coach Steffi Jones able to call on the likes of Dzsenifer Marozsán, Anja Mittag and Alex Popp (not that anyone in that team can be assured of a starting place, with so much talented competition) and Sweden boasting players such as Lotta Schelin, Kosovare Asllani and Caroline Seger.

That will make life tough for the other two teams – Italy, who have never failed to reach the last eight, and Russia, who were denied a quarter-final place in 2013 by the drawing of lots (with Denmark going through instead). Italy's squad will be something of an oddity on this occasion: for the first time since 1997, it will not feature Patrizia Panico, who is now coaching the Italian men's Under-16 team.

Group C

France's team is packed with players from UEFA Women's Champions League finalists Olympique Lyonnais and Paris Saint-Germain, and many believe that this will be the tournament where Les Bleues finally put a succession of disappointments and near-misses behind them. Indeed, in both 2009 and 2013 they lost on penalties in the quarter-finals, having been favourites to go through, and they suffered similar heartbreak against Germany at the same stage of the 2015 Women's World Cup.

However, none of France's three opponents can be taken lightly. Iceland are appearing at their third consecutive Women's EURO – they were qualifying for tournaments long before their male counterparts – while Austria and Switzerland are making their tournament debuts. The Swiss, though, are definitely dark horses, having already played in the 2015 Women's World Cup and boasting world-class players such as Ramona Bachmann and Lara Dickmann in a hugely experienced squad under former German international Martina Voss-Tecklenburg.

Group D

If 'B' is for 'brutal', 'D' is for 'derbies'. This group kicks off on 19 July, with two pairs of neighbours going head to head – Spain against Portugal in Doetinchem, followed by England against Scotland in Utrecht. England were the best European side at the 2015 Women's World Cup, beating Germany in the third-place play-off, and coach Mark Sampson was so sure of his squad that he announced his final list of 23 players on 3 April.

However, Spain knocked England out in the group stage in 2013, and Jorge Vilda has blended the likes of Verónica Boquete, Jennifer Hermoso and Vicky Losada into a formidable unit, recently winning the Algarve Cup. Meanwhile, Portugal – the biggest surprise of the qualifying competition – and Scotland are both making their tournament debuts. For the Scots, this represents a well-deserved swan song for Finland-bound coach Anna Signeul after 12 years in charge, following heartbreaking play-off losses ahead of the 2009 and 2013 tournaments. Despite the absence of Kim Little through injury, the squad still has plenty of class, not to mention plenty of familiarity with their opening-day opponents England. They will perhaps be hoping to avenge the defeat that Scotland suffered the last time the two nations played each other at senior level in a UEFA tournament, when the Scots lost 2-0 at Wembley in EURO '96.

SCHEDULE

Group matches

Matchday 1: 16, 17, 18 and 19 July

Matchday 2: 20, 21, 22 and 23 July

Matchday 3: 24, 25, 26 and 27 July

Quarter-finals

29 and 30 July

Semi-finals

3 August

Final

6 August

Venues

Breda

(Rat Verlegh Stadion – 19,000)

Deventer

(Stadion De Adelaarshorst – 10,500)

Doetinchem

(Stadion De Vijverberg – 12,500)

Enschede

(FC Twente Stadion – 30,000)

Rotterdam

(Sparta Stadion – 10,599)

Tilburg

(Willem II Stadion – 14,500)

Utrecht

(Stadion Galgenwaard – 23,750)

The hosts

The tournament, for which TV rights have already been sold all over the world, will then continue with quarter-finals in Doetinchem, Rotterdam, Tilburg and Deventer. Breda will stage one semi-final, with Enschede's 30,000-capacity FC Twente Stadion hosting the other, and Enschede will also be the venue for the final on Sunday 6 August.

The Royal Netherlands Football Association (KNVB) has pulled out all the stops in promoting the tournament in the various host cities – as can be seen from the Instagram feed of tournament mascot Kicky (@Kickydemascotte). She has travelled all around the Netherlands, from grassroots events to the country's biggest stadiums, meeting everyone from children to King Willem-Alexander. Her promotional efforts are clearly paying dividends, with more than 100,000 tickets being purchased by mid-May and the king himself planning to attend.

Even more is planned during the tournament itself, which will be covered extensively on UEFA's social media channels and those of the KNVB. That coverage will be supplemented by promotion of the new Together #WePlayStrong campaign encouraging girls to play football, which was launched by UEFA on 1 June.

That hashtag will hopefully become as familiar to people watching matches as the official tournament hashtag (#WEURO2017), which should also be buzzing with conversation once the games get under way. 📺



Up against Izabela Lojna of Croatia, Germany's Bianca Schmidt helps defend the eight-time European champions' clean sheet in qualifying.

Getty Images

REFEREES IN TUNE FOR THE EURO

The referees for Women's EURO 2017 in the Netherlands are ready for the challenge. Nearly 40 match officials, who will act as referees, assistant referees, fourth officials or reserves, spent three days at the impressive Royal Netherlands Football Association (KNVB) campus at Zeist in mid-May for a preparatory workshop.

Briefings, practical sessions and a fitness test featured on the agenda, and the match officials made excellent use of the state-of-the-art facilities at the campus to fine-tune their preparations for the first Women's EURO to feature 16 teams, to be played at seven Dutch venues between 16 July and 6 August.

With the 100-days-to-go milestone passed at the start of April and spring in the air in Zeist, the EURO atmosphere was palpable. "I think the excitement is everywhere, I can feel it, and I hope the referees can feel it too," said UEFA Referees Committee member and experienced former referee Dagmar Damková, who led the workshop together with fellow committee member Bo Karlsson.

The referees themselves are aware that something special is just around the

corner. "It's one of the most important steps in my life," said Ukraine's Kateryna Monzul, looking ahead to her third EURO. "It's really a responsibility, because I'm not only responsible for myself, but also for my team, my country, and UEFA in general."

EURO debuts

For some of the match officials, the EURO will offer a first taste of Europe's flagship women's national team finals. "It was really a pleasant surprise," was the reaction of Sweden's Pernilla Larsson to her selection. "Not many referees get to go to a EURO, and it's like a fairy tale to know that I'm one of them." Another debutant is Germany's Riem Hussein: "I was very surprised and a little bit shocked," she said, "because I never thought it would be possible."

This summer's EURO will undoubtedly set new benchmarks in European

women's football, which has flourished remarkably, not only in terms of the players' technique and fitness, but also on a tactical level. Bibiana Steinhaus, the German referee who took charge of the 2011 Women's World Cup final and 2012 Olympic women's tournament gold-medal match, is ideally placed to comment on the rapid rise of the women's game. "The speed and dynamics of women's football have developed, for sure," said Steinhaus, who next season will become the first woman to referee in the men's Bundesliga. "The players are now athletes – and women referees have had to develop at the same pace. At the coming Women's EURO, we will have a chance to see just how much progress has been made. UEFA is giving huge support to women's football and women referees, and this has been a big factor."



Sportsfile

"It's one of the best life lessons, to learn how to handle people. It also helps you to be a strong person, because a weak person cannot be a referee."

Dagmar Damková
UEFA Referees Committee member



Sportsfile



The referees were given crucial advice in Zeist.

UEFA has indeed kept pace with this progress, inviting Europe's top female referees to its winter courses every year since 2013. Dagmar Damková feels that there is a huge difference in preparations now compared with when she was refereeing. "I was talking with one of my colleagues," she said, "and we said to each other: 'How lucky referees are nowadays!'. We talked about how much material they have at their disposal. They are provided with a lot of things that we didn't have. Nowadays, they have so many opportunities to learn, to gain experience, to practise. Practical training can even include sessions with players, where the referees train for situations - we didn't have this in the past. And now they are also able to study and practice by watching video clips."

Safeguarding football's image

The EURO referees are fully conscious of their role as guardians of football's

image. Bibiana Steinhaus fully believes in the importance of respect between all those involved in the game. "We all wear Respect badges on our shirts," she said, "but we really have to all treat respect as a real living value. We are all working on the same 'product' – football – and we have to come together, and 'sell' this product as it should be sold to the world."

The officials are awaiting some of the biggest assignments in their careers in the Netherlands – and they will be watched by women and girls who may be inspired to follow them into the refereeing profession. What words of advice would Dagmar Damková give to such young hopefuls? "It's one of the best life lessons, to learn how to handle people," she reflected. "And it also helps you to be a strong person, because a weak person cannot be a referee."

If you are strong on the field, you are also strong in life – and, nowadays in life, you need that. ⚽

THE UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2017 MATCH OFFICIALS

Referees: Jana Adamkova (Czech Republic), Stéphanie Frappart (France), Riem Hussein (Germany), Bibiana Steinhaus (Germany), Katalin Kulcsár (Hungary), Carina Vitulano (Italy), Monika Mularczyk (Poland), Anastasia Pustovoitova (Russia), Esther Staubli (Switzerland), Pernilla Larsson (Sweden), Kateryna Monzul (Ukraine)

Assistant referees: Sanja Rodak Karšić (Croatia), Angela Kyriakou (Cyprus), Lucie Ratajova (Czech Republic), Sian Massey (England), Manuela Nicolosi (France), Christina Biehl (Germany), Katrin Rafalski (Germany), Chrysoula Kouroumpylia (Greece), Judit Kulcsár (Hungary), Michelle O'Neill (Republic of Ireland), Lucia Abruzzese (Italy), Nicolet Bakker (Netherlands), Anna Dabrowska (Poland), Petruta Iugulescu (Romania), Mihaela Tepusa (Romania), Ekaterina Kurochkina (Russia), Svetlana Bilić (Serbia), Belinda Brem (Switzerland), Maria Sukenikova (Slovakia), Oleksandra Ardesheva (Ukraine), Maryna Striletska (Ukraine)

Fourth officials: Lina Lehtovaara (Finland), Lorraine Clark (Scotland)

'THEIR PROGRESS HAS BEEN AMAZING'

A referee fitness team led by Belgian expert Jean-Baptiste Bultynck put the referees through their paces in Zeist and remains in contact with the officials to provide invaluable advice and instructions in the weeks leading up to the tournament.



that could be further improved in the run-up to the tournament."

The fitness work in Zeist was three-fold, with tests of agility, turning and speed of movement, sprints, and endurance running. Specific training

"Our basic objective was to check if the referees were fit enough to participate in the European Championship," said Bultynck, himself a former top-level referee. "And we also wanted to see if there were points

for the assistant referees concentrated in particular on the sideways agility that they must nurture to be able to run the line.

The referees will have an 'active' rest period ahead of the EURO following the end of their domestic and European seasons. "This means that they don't have to do normal training sessions in that period," Bultynck explained, "but they should do something of a lower intensity, such as cycling, for a maximum period of ten days before the normal training begins again for the tournament. The most important thing from a physical point of view is that they

are in good physical shape when they arrive in the Netherlands for the EURO."

Bultynck admires the referees' commitment and professional attitude. "I'm not only impressed by their dedication to fitness, but also their dedication to football and to refereeing," he said. "They are highly motivated, and want to referee to the best of their abilities. It's about nothing else but refereeing. They want to show how good they are, and how they want to make progress ... and their progress in the last ten years has been amazing."

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL AIMING HIGH

The Netherlands – hosts of this summer's Women's EURO – has made women's football development one of its priorities.



OJC Rosmalen has more than 2,000 registered players, making it the biggest amateur club in the Netherlands.

At the entrance to the headquarters of the Royal Netherlands Football Association (KNVB), in the forest of Zeist near Utrecht, two things catch the eye. The first is a giant football on the grass; the second and most prominent is a huge sign covering the front of the main building, the 'centre circle of Dutch football' as the people here call it.

On the canvas, there is no Sneijder, Robben or Klaassen, instead there is a group of women celebrating, accompanied by the words *Geniet komende zomer van het EK in Nederland* (Enjoy this summer with the Women's EURO in the Netherlands). Starting on 16 July, the Oranje Leeuwinen (Lionesses), as the women's team is nicknamed, will take part in their third EURO, this time on home soil. It brings back memories for some, especially Pierre van Hooijdonk, the former Netherlands international (46 caps) and an ambassador for this summer's event.

"The atmosphere is likely to be different from what we experienced at the men's EURO in 2000, but one thing is certain: the Netherlands women deserve to be there," underlines the former Celtic player. "I accepted this role as an ambassador because we have the unfortunate tendency to criticise women's football and compare it with men's football. But they're two totally different things. What's more, the women's national team is currently having success that the men haven't had for some time."

This sentiment is shared by Sarina Wiegman, who has been Netherlands coach since January 2017. While she admits that it will be difficult to progress from a Group A that includes Norway and Denmark, she is confident that the Netherlands "can achieve something in the EURO. We want to show the Dutch people that we have a talented, resourceful team."

Top team sport in the Netherlands

Talent is not something that Dutch women's football is lacking. Sadly it does suffer from a lack of visibility. With little media coverage, the game is trying to divest itself of this inaccurate amateur image that it has been labelled with. Nonetheless, 153,000 women and girls are currently registered as players with the KNVB football department. "That makes us the top team sport in the country in terms of numbers, and also the fastest-growing sport, because we have twice as many participants as we did just over a decade ago," says Bert van Oostveen, the former KNVB director of professional football who is now tournament director for Women's EURO 2017 and KNVB general secretary.

Moreover, lots of Dutch players are now playing in the top leagues around Europe: Daniëlle van de Donk and Vivianne Miedema are at Arsenal, Mandy van den Berg is at Reading FC, Stefanie van der Gragt at FC Bayern München, Lieke Martens at FC Rosengård, Loes Geurts at Paris Saint-Germain FC and Anouk Dekker at Montpellier. Furthermore, FC Twente smashed the Dutch attendance record for a women's football match last season with a crowd of no fewer than 15,637 spectators against FC Barcelona in the UEFA Women's Champions League.

"Supporters won't only see that women's football is competitive, they'll also see that this group of players is cool, that they have fun," adds Minke Booij, an Olympic field hockey gold medallist in Beijing in 2008 and head of women's football at the KNVB since 2015.

Better still, EURO 2017 will make it possible "to reconnect the sport with its fans" according to Van Oostveen. "Why's Dirk Kuyt so popular here? It's because he's a simple guy. We have to acknowledge that going to watch men's football is less accessible, in terms of connecting with the players and getting tickets. That won't be the case with the Women's EURO. The players are accessible, as are tickets to matches. All tickets for the Netherlands games are already sold out. Girls will be able to identify with new role models like Vivianne Miedema and Anouk Dekker." →

"Every generation is preparing the ground for the next one. When Vera Pauw was coach, she created a platform at the KNVB that has made it possible to improve the conditions for women's football"

Sarina Wiegman
Netherlands women's
national team coach



Amateur football in the Netherlands is not always plain sailing...



Women's football has undergone a far-reaching transformation and been on the up for several years. The first results are already visible and the full impact will be seen in 10 to 15 years.

"The average age of female footballers in the Netherlands is 13," recalls Van Oostveen. That is more or less the same age as the initiative to overhaul women's football in the Netherlands. In 2001, the KNVB laid the foundations of its Jeugdplan Nederland (national youth plan), or JPN as it is commonly known, to provide a favourable environment for the up-and-coming youngsters of Dutch women's football. "We have 3,000 football clubs in the Netherlands, 2,500 of

6,000 the regular attendance at the Dutch women's national team home games

13 the average age of female footballers in the Netherlands

153,000 women and girls registered with KNVB

them have a link with women's football, ranging from clubs with one girl playing in a boys' team up to those with full women's teams. 100 of the 2,500 clubs are doing well, 20 extremely well. We're approaching the 100 clubs to ask them if they would like to play a part in creating an optimum environment for developing women's football, at club level, in collaboration with the clubs around them. In a way, we're asking if they'd like to be the model clubs for others," explains Booi.

The first Centrum voor Topsporten Onderwijs (CTO) was established in



Amsterdam in 2007, followed by the one in Eindhoven in 2013. These two institutes, financed by the Dutch Olympic Committee and the ministry for health, well-being and sport, serve the country's top sports talent, including the best footballers - providing a centre of excellence for the best female players between 13 and 17. "The girls selected at the CTO play in the official U15 and U17 championship against boys. It's a very good approach because they have excellent facilities, they train almost every day during the week, and they play at weekends," underlines former Willem II and PSV player Marlou Peeters, who is now in charge of the U13 training set up.



Romée Leuchter up against Anna Torroda in the semi-finals of the recent European Women's Under-17 Championship finals in the Czech Republic.

Sportsfile

"For the moment, professional clubs aren't engaged in the JPN, but we hope that they will be within the next five years and all the big football clubs in the Netherlands will have a high-performance women's section. The goal is to ensure that every professional club has its own CTO."

From grassroots to the professional game

While waiting for AFC Ajax or Feyenoord to set up their own training centres that embed amateur female footballers in a professional environment, women's football must rely on the grassroots game to develop. "I think we're responsible for the education of the players who come into the national team. However, it's not for the national association to educate the players on a day-to-day basis. That's the job of their clubs. And that doesn't necessarily mean the professional clubs, but directly by means of amateur women's football. That's where everything starts," asserts Booij.

To do this, the KNVB has selected seven development centres. Utrecht has been the most successful so far, with ten women's clubs that Marlou Peeters is responsible for coordinating →



The Netherlands won their first women's title at the European Women's Under-19 Championship finals in 2014.

by “injecting [her] professionalism. The project is supported by multiple stakeholders. It brings together the KNVB, FC Utrecht, the Utrecht municipal authorities and local multi-sport authorities”.

At just 26, she is one of 38 women with a UEFA B licence, which recently allowed her to take charge of the first team at Sporting70. “It’s the best women’s team in Utrecht” she says proudly. Sporting 70 play in the Hoofde Klasse, the third division of the Dutch national league. “And we have Hercules, another women’s team, on the pitch next to us, so that creates a bit of rivalry at all levels.”

Peeters’ predecessor was asked to step down because he did not have the qualifications that are now mandatory. It is a little revolution on a day-to-day basis according to 20-year-old Fenna Hiemstra, who has played at the club for three seasons: “We’ve only had four training sessions with Marlou, but we’re seeing the difference already: the warm-ups, the tactical exercises are much more elaborate, for example. It’s more complicated, but in a good way.” As for the training pitches and the dressing rooms, “thanks to men’s football, we already have the facilities to develop players



“Thanks to men’s football, we already have the facilities to develop players from the youngest age groups, so it would be a pity not to make use of them.”

Minke Booij

Head of women’s football at the KNVB

from the youngest age groups, so it would be a pity not to make use of them,” summarises Booij, adding that the internationals use the same facilities as their male counterparts at the KNVB campus which was redeveloped in August 2016.

In this environment of professionalisation and structuring of women’s football, the method is working: this year, the U17 national team reached the semi-final of their European Championship, while the U19s successfully defended the title they won in 2014. In addition, the decision to appoint Sarina



Wiegman as the new national team coach is very symbolic. A former international with 104 caps, she is one of only three Dutch women to hold a UEFA Pro licence. The others are former Netherlands coach Vera Pauw, and Hesterine de Reus, who was Australia's coach until 2014. What is more, she is the only woman to have coached a men's team, Sparta Rotterdam B, as assistant to Ole Tobiasen.

Sarina Wiegman embodies the bridge between amateur and professional that Dutch women's football is currently crossing, and the bridges that it will cross in future. It is also

significant that the Netherlands coach retired from playing a few weeks before the KNVB introduced the JPN. "When I was playing at Ter Leede, everyone was amateur – players, coaches... Now a young girl can become a professional footballer and I've had the chance to become a professional coach. The difference to when I was a player is like chalk and cheese. We're moving closer to what I experienced in the American college system when I played over there for a year when I was younger," she explains. "It makes you think about the future." →



Vivianne Miedema's acrobatics against Iceland in a friendly in April this year.



Girls also starred at the women's cup final on 2 June.

"Stop comparing women's football with the men's game"

If Dutch women's football is thinking about the future, it is because its story still remains to be written. Two years ago, the Oranje Leeuwinnen qualified for the World Cup for the first time, while the first time they took part in a EURO was in 2009. "Qualifying for the EURO was the breakthrough for us. That was the moment when we launched a bid to host the EURO," appraises Van Oostveen.

It was the key achievement of Vera Pauw, Netherlands coach from 2004 to 2010, who took her team to the semi-final of the tournament. "Every generation is preparing the ground for the next one. When Vera was coach, she created a platform at the KNVB that has made it possible to improve the conditions for women's football. That's the reason why she ultimately led the national team to the EURO for the first time in its history," says Sarina Wiegman.

Pauw also planted the seeds for others to follow her path. "She's a real inspiration for me. In any event, women's football is a sport of passionate people. You can do a lot with very little," confesses Marlou Peeters.

Another reason for thinking about the future is not to repeat the errors of the past. Bert van Oostveen launches into a mea culpa: "It was important to stop comparing women's football

with the men's game. We don't have the same sponsors. In women's football, we have to find sponsors who can make a long-term commitment, who are looking to achieve something with us rather than make a profit at all costs. We don't have the same fan base either. There's more of a family atmosphere in women's football. It's more 'Olympic', you could say. We also made the mistake of creating a closed league, a completely artificial concept, then the BeneLeague, made up of clubs from Belgium and the Netherlands. That's when we realised that it's better to build for the future, to plan for the long term. That's also where our slogan comes from: 'Celebrating the new generation of football'."

Women's football has long been casting envious eyes at the men's game because, as well as the success it has achieved, football is one of the rare enclaves that men dominate in a country that is often a standard-bearer for equality. "Concentrating exclusively on men's football is overlooking 50% of the population of our country," points out Van Oostveen. "In our country, the board of every major company includes women. In Europe, we've seen several women become prime minister or president. It's not like that in Dutch football, yet diversity is necessary."

While men's football may not serve as an example, the situation is perhaps better elsewhere. There is neighbouring Germany, of course, where the work coach Silvia Neid did between 2005 and 2016 has won praise from all sides. There are good examples at home as well. "In the Netherlands, history has shown that women fare better than men in sport. That's something we can see in the Olympics. I'm convinced there's more to learn from other team sports in the Netherlands than from men's football," says Booij with a smile.

She was hired by the KNVB not for her expertise in football, but for her philosophy on athletes and her culture of success. The victories



"Concentrating exclusively on men's football is overlooking 50% of the population of our country. (...) In our country, the board of every major company includes women. (...) It's not like that in Dutch football, yet diversity is necessary."

Bert van Oostveen
UEFA Women's EURO 2017 director

Women's EURO 2017 ambassador Pierre van Hooijdonk presents the trophy to a group of children.



of field hockey, handball and volleyball teams, even Dafne Schippers' win in Rio last summer, can only vindicate the former Olympic champion, who goes on to expand on her theory: "Initially, no one was interested in field hockey. Then we started to win medals at the Olympics, and the number of registered players grew exponentially. That was when the public authorities came in. They invested millions in facilities to develop the sport. Today, we have stadiums with capacities of almost 8,000 for women's hockey. That might not seem much, but it is huge in the context of the sport. It is that kind of snowball effect that we want to replicate in women's football, with the help of the clubs, the authorities and the KNVB."

And that snowball effect is what it has already had, as nearly 6,000 spectators come to watch every international match played by the women's

national team. Between now and next year, the KNVB expect to see the number of registered female players increase by 10%. In the meantime, the Netherlands have a EURO to host and take part in. Ambassador Pierre van Hooijdonk is hoping for only one thing: "That the girls do better than we did in 2000; in other words, they win!" And let us hope that a good summer will leave a legacy for the future of Dutch women's football too. ⚽

"I hope that the girls do better than we did in 2000; in other words, they win!"

Pierre van Hooijdonk
UEFA Women's EURO 2017
ambassador



The Oranje Leeuwinnen will have their work cut out to qualify from their Women's EURO 2017 group, which pits them against Belgium, Denmark and Norway.

FOOTBALL'S NEW FRONTIER

The flood of data and statistics into football has been one of the big changes the sport has witnessed since the turn of the century. But how do coaches and clubs make sense of it all?

In football there's an overflow of useless data, like pass completion rates and possession stats. Part of the problem is that people start with the data, not with the questions, and as a consequence they end up answering questions no one has asked."

These are the words of FC Midtjylland chairman Rasmus Ankersen. Midtjylland are a club whose analytics-based approach not only won them a first Danish Super League title in 2015 – it has also placed them at the forefront of what some would call football's quiet revolution. Some of it may be "useless", as Ankersen puts it, but amid the reams and reams of data now out there, there is much that is useful – and fewer clubs across the continent work harder than Midtjylland to apply it to their benefit.

If analytics is football's brave new world, then Midtjylland are out there in the advance party, exploring uncharted territory. "Being able to collect and interpret data is a key skill in recruitment, sports science, coaching and medical departments," says Ankersen as he begins to underline the Midtjylland ethos. The club's majority shareholder is Matthew Benham, owner of the English second-tier team Brentford FC, and a man who earned his wealth as creator of Smartodds, a company which used mathematical models to predict football results.

This approach is quite at odds with traditional thinking, explains Ankersen, and it involves far more than, for instance, the employment of a specialist kicking coach to work with players.

"Fundamentally we believe that 'the league table lies'," he elaborates. "When we're evaluating progress, we're looking

more at our internal model rating, which is a better indicator of how the team is developing than a snapshot of the table. We know there's so much randomness in football that you rarely get what you deserve, and the head coach knows this. He understands that being number one in the table while performing as number five in our model rating is not acceptable.

"We look at what all football teams seek to do – to create as many high-probability scoring opportunities as possible and reduce the number of scoring opportunities conceded," he adds. "We know there's a lot of randomness in conversion rates and, as a consequence, a team's ability to consistently get into positions where the probability of scoring is high and prevent the opponent from doing it against you is, over time, more predictive of how a team is doing and is likely to do in the future than its league position at that particular moment. Results can easily swing between 10 and 15 points over a season solely down to randomness."

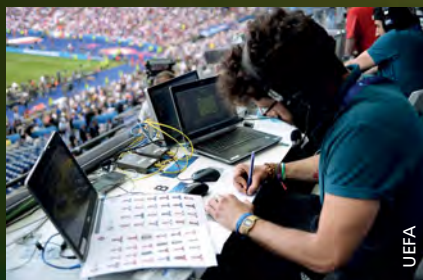
The Midtjylland approach is undeniably different, but all around Europe clubs are increasingly influenced by analytics. Just take this example from Ernesto Valverde, the new FC Barcelona coach. During his time in charge of Athletic Club, Valverde consulted an econometrics professor at the London School of Economics, Ignacio

Palacios-Huerta, for advice on playing games at Athletic's new-but-not-quite-finished San Mamés stadium in 2013/14. Behind one goal, a new stand was not ready and, contrary to the expectations of Valverde and his players, they learned from Palacios-Huerta that statistics – some taken from Rayo Vallecano's experience of an identical situation – suggested they would have more success attacking the wall of the unfinished stand, than the spectator-filled end of the ground opposite.

"Getting that answer was crucial to us because the stand was going to take most of the season to complete and the information would help us plan which goal we chose to attack in the first half," Valverde later recounted. "We talked it over with the players and they said that if we were more likely to score in the goal against the wall then that's the direction they'd like to be going in the first half. And it must have worked because by the end of the season we had qualified for the Champions League."

The first steps

The Numbers Game, a thought-provoking book by Chris Anderson and David Sally, describes analytics as "football's newest frontier". Mapping the early milestones, it notes the arrival of Opta Sports in English football in the mid-90s, followed by such early market leaders as Prozone, also in England, and Amisco in France. Paul Boanas remembers those early days at Prozone when the company worked with "four or five teams" in the Premier League and he and his colleague would sit in front of TV monitors "tracking the movement of the players on the field and inputting whether it was a shot, cross or pass." Today, Boanas is director of sales of Catapult Sports, a provider of scientifically validated metrics for clubs around the world, via its GPS tracking devices. →



At each UEFA match, a venue data coordinator collects all the match statistics.

 **88%**
pass completion

 **29**
explosive
sprints

 **7,225m**
covered

 **2.6**
goals
per game

 ?  ?  ?  ? **8** goal attempts
4 Off target

COACH

He reflects on the boom his industry has witnessed: "There are so many data analytics companies, tracking companies, etc., looking at football and thinking, 'We'll develop something now that will revolutionise the world. Frankly, it will not'."

For Boanas, revolution may not be the right word – yet he believes the technology available today does make a telling impact and quotes Arsène Wenger, who once said, "There are 22 players on the field and I have two eyes". This naked-eye view has been enhanced, he says, following FIFA's 2015 decision to permit the wearing of GPS devices in matches albeit with the proviso that the resulting data could not be viewed during the action. "Managers can now get data at half-time and full time about how a player has 'performed'," adds Boanas, those inverted commas his own. "It does help bring some accountability. Just because you've run better doesn't mean you've performed better but you can look at a heat map and say, 'Are you in the right position? Is your high intensity work in the right areas of the field?'"

Today Catapult Sports provides GPS systems for some of the world's biggest football clubs – Real Madrid CF, FC Bayern München, Paris Saint-Germain and Celtic FC. At this elite level, a club's GPS equipment is tailored according to their needs and can include such metrics as PlayerLoad, which measures explosiveness

"As well as the GPS and heart-rate data ... we try to link the objective performance output with a player's feeling so that we have the whole picture."

Xabier Ruiz de Ocenda
Analyst at Real Sociedad

and helps assess an individual player's workload to reduce the risk of overdoing it.

It is not just the biggest clubs who benefit. AFC Flyde, a club in the northwest of England, newly promoted to the fifth rung of the English ladder, recently signed up for a GPS system. "Clubs in lower divisions can wear a device and get accurate monitoring of their players in a game, whereas before they couldn't afford a ProZone or Amisco tracking system that was based on a camera and video system," Boanas explains. Indeed one of the company's systems, Playertek, even caters for "sub-elite players" as Boanas puts it, sending ten metrics – such as distance covered, sprint distance, players' power output, etc. – to their mobile phone.

Daily gains

Xabier Ruiz de Ocenda works as an analyst at Real Sociedad de Fútbol in the Spanish top flight, and he offers an insight into the day-to-day application of technology within the club's first-team squad.

Match data is far more complex than mere ball possession – "it's also, for example, whether the play is more direct or possession-based or involving counterattacks," he explains, and there are also metrics to help with the players' conditioning.

"As well as the GPS and heart-rate data, we also want to know, with RPE [Rating of Perceived Exertion], how a player feels before, during and after training and competitive matches. We try to link the objective performance output with a player's feeling so that we have the whole picture.

"Before each training session we ask the player about their psychological and physical condition," he continues. "Whenever we detect an anomaly, we talk to the player and medical department, to understand it better and to adapt the workload of the session for that particular player. In short, we talk with them regularly and show them the data that's put up on the dressing-room wall. And if it's a more individual matter, we'll call them to discuss it."

Oleg Yarovsky concurs that the capacity to measure a player's workload is one of the big pluses of this new technology. Yarovsky is the sporting director of Russian Premier League side PFC CSKA



Statistics showed that Athletic Club would have more success attacking the wall of the unfinished stand at their new-but-not-quite-finished San Mamés stadium.

Getty Images

"At every training session they wear the vest and every player has an electronic card, where all their training session data is kept."

Oleg Yarovsky
Sporting director of CSKA Moscow



Getty Images

Moskva and he explains: "We have to keep the training intensity at least at 85% of the playing intensity and to understand that you have to use the data. During a training session where there's a high intensity, your eyes cannot see how intense each player's work is so we use the data for that."

"At every training session they wear the vest and every player has an electronic card, where all their training session data is kept. When a player is coming back from

injury, for example, we can show him whether the intensity he's training at is enough. If there's a problem we speak to the player; if there's no problem we don't need to put something extra into their heads."

In CSKA's case, they receive their data from InStat, a popular provider for Russian top-flight sides. "InStat provides us with information about opponents," he adds, explaining that this goes to all core members of the coaching staff. And yet

at CSKA they still believe in the human eye also, particularly when it comes to recruitment. "I strongly believe live observation cannot be replaced by any TV observation," says Yarovsky. "It's like with dating – a live conversation cannot be replaced by anything, but social networks somehow help young people to get more information. In any case you want to meet the person and see them in real life."

Back at Midtjylland, Rasmus Ankersen takes a different view. Data is vital, he →



A COACH'S VIEW

Lars Lagerbäck
Norway national team coach

"It was around 1998 or '99 that we started working with PowerPoint presentations with the Swedish national team and a year or two later, our then analyst, Paul Balsom, introduced computers to our work."

"Today, working with the Norway national team, my analyst takes all the defensive and offensive set-pieces of our opponent's last seven matches, along with all the scoring chances, and from that we pick out the examples we want."

"Sometimes we pick out other things. When I was coaching Iceland and we played the Netherlands in EURO 2016 qualifying, we did something special on how to play against Arjen Robben. With the Dutch style of playing, it's so important that you don't sell yourself one v one so after the first game we took out a lot of clips of one v one situations and we emphasised this."

"As for my own players, we film each match ourselves with a wide picture where we can see all the outfield players all the

time and how they're doing their job without the ball, and that's also really important for me."

"Our team meeting is normally not more than 40 minutes long. As well as looking at the opposition, when it comes to our defending, I use some PowerPoint clips from the last game or two – this could be 10 or 25 minutes depending on the opponent or how well we've been doing things."

"Regarding data, I find all statistics are useful to me as a coach. I do look into it but there's very little I use for the players – it's more helpful to give me as clear a picture as possible of our performance. I don't go into it with the players unless it's something really special – like the one v one situations, as this is a decisive part of the game."

"Perhaps the most important thing for me with data is I can give players feedback and they don't just think it's my opinion. With statistics and video analysis you can easily pick out different situations and show them to the players and say, 'You did this right and that wrong'. Overall, my experience is if you give players too much information it can have the opposite effect and be too much so they don't take it on board."



2016/17 CHAMPIONS LEAGUE IN NUMBERS



833

The number of passes made by Real Madrid's **TONI KROOS**, the most of any player during the campaign



601'

The number of minutes played by Salzburg's **CHRISTIAN SCHWEGLER** during the qualifying stages, the most of any player



142,345m

The distance covered by **KOKE** for Atletico, the most of any player during the campaign



27

The highest number of successful crosses made by one player, Juventus' **DANI ALVES**



98%

The highest pass completion rate of any player who made more than 100 pass attempts, achieved by Real Madrid's **MATEO KOVACIĆ**



22

The highest average number of attempts on goal per game during the qualifying stages, achieved by **PORTO FC**

says, when assessing potential new signings. For a start it helps to measure the merits of teams from different countries and so allows for a better understanding of the level that would-be signings are performing at. "Primarily we use it to compare the strength of teams in different leagues," he explains. "That's very hard to do with the human eye, and good models are often a lot more accurate. It's important to know if we're recruiting a player from a team at a higher level or a lower level than us, and we believe that we're very good at measuring that."

Midtjylland also carry out detailed checks on the character of prospective signings. "Personality is a huge thing for us," he adds. "We don't want any cultural misfits. The best way to find out the real character of someone is to speak to people who've played with him and experienced him when he's at his best and his worst. We don't really believe too much in interviewing the player himself because he's likely to give us the answer he thinks we want to hear. In my opinion, the best way to do a job interview is when the person doesn't know he's being interviewed, and that's why we do a lot of work collecting confidential references from people who know him very well."

Midtjylland's approach may appear extraordinary but there is no doubting the increasing belief in the importance of analytics across the football world. In England, Arsenal FC went so far as to buy the Chicago-based sports analytics company StatDNA and bring it in-house. Last November, Liverpool FC appointed as their sporting director Michael Edwards, who had arrived at the club originally as head of analytics.

And yet according to Rob Esteva, director of The Stats Zone, we are still just at the beginning of the process of mining this rich seam of information. Esteva, who once worked with Matthew Benham at Brentford, says even the biggest clubs are still finding their way. "Elite clubs are beginning to recognise the fact that the mainstream data available to them does not necessarily fully cater to their needs. I fully expect that more will follow the trend of building their own data collection systems and working to their own sets of definitions that suit their style of play, and players."



The players of Danish club FC Midtjylland wear GPS devices during matches.

'We're behind the US'

"Historically you don't have people with a mathematical background at football clubs; certainly on the technical side that is very rare," he adds. "There are weaknesses within the data and a lack of expertise on the technical side helping us to interpret the data and make meaning out of it. It still feels like we're five or ten years behind North American sports in terms of how we are using data for decision-making."

According to Esteva, the long-term approach required for data – big samples take several years to accumulate – means this can be overlooked by some coaches, whose job insecurity leaves them thinking in the short term only. Yet his own work includes helping more curious clubs find specific answers. He explains: "We will go to a team and say, 'What theories do you have that you want to support or blow out of the water?' If we look at the high press, for instance, we'll ask, 'Are your players chasing the ball down efficiently from the time the opposition defender gets the ball? How many seconds does it take the nearest man to close him down? Is he positioning himself correctly so he can stop the defender from playing an easy pass?'"

Another example he proffers concerns the use of data in player recruitment: "I worked on a project with Chelsea several years ago as they knew they had to replace Frank Lampard at some point and wanted to use data to look at how

they could identify players who have similar attributes. You go through the process, look at which attacking midfielders score 15 goals a season, make five to ten assists per season, can run 11–12km per game and can average 70–80 passes per game. You can come up with a list of players that fit within that sphere but you're looking at different leagues and different teams. That is difficult and there's also the context of what happened around Lampard at Chelsea so you need to look at the data around two defensive midfielders sitting behind him that enabled Lampard to do what he did.

"So you have to look at what those around him did to allow him the freedom to do the attacking side of things. That was one aspect. Then you look at other countries and other players and, for instance Diego, the Brazilian attacking

midfield at Wolfsburg, had similar stats but in Germany, where he was in a very attacking team and where the average goals per game at that time was something like 2.9 per game. In the Premier League the average was about 2.6 and Chelsea were not creating to the same degree. So there's nothing to say that Diego can do those things as well if you put him into a team that doesn't have as many chances and doesn't play as open. There are just so many variables but context is key and using techniques like cluster analysis to look at units within a team can be vital to project player performance when recruiting.

"Everything with data and small gains is about minimising your risk," he continues. "It is giving you a slightly better chance of succeeding. It might be 1% or 2% but you're not changing the whole system. There's no magic formula." 🧠

UEFA SUPPLYING THE STATS

"We're up to around 2,300 games each season," says Andy Lockwood, UEFA's data services manager, as he reflects on the European governing body's work in gathering data for each match played in its competitions. "UEFA has a venue data coordinator (VDC) at every match and the minimum data gathered is the line-ups, yellow and red cards, substitutions and goalscorers – the key events that the referee validates after the game," he adds, – "together with shots, corners, offsides and fouls. Information such as the timings of events and the reasons for bookings is used by the administration and the disciplinary unit."

This is the bare minimum, and UEFA collects rather more extensive data from Champions League and EURO matches,

Europa League finals and the Super Cup.

Lockwood explains: "We work with a company which deploys an optical tracking system at these matches.

There's an operator at the game and when the teams come out on to

the pitch they tag each player and the cameras follow the players. Every player is followed in terms of distance covered, speed, sprints, and passing. There's a heat map and a plan showing where their passes went on the pitch. The clubs

receive PDFs of this tracking data for all their players, and we also send the feeds to the clubs so they can integrate them directly into their systems. This is private. It is beyond what the broadcasters and other media are allowed to use and is reserved for the clubs' performance analysts to look at."



STARS OF THE FUTURE IN GEORGIA

Georgia is back in the European football spotlight. Having hosted the 2015 UEFA Super Cup between FC Barcelona and Sevilla FC, Georgia will soon be welcoming the stars of the future for the European Under-19 Championship finals.

As part of their role as hosts, Georgia also organised a prestigious four-team U19 tournament in November 2016, when it welcomed France, Spain and the Netherlands to Tbilisi. Of those sides, only the Netherlands will be joining Georgia for the final tournament this summer, along with Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, England, Germany, Portugal and Sweden.

The draw for the finals took place in April with the tournament ambassador, former Georgia captain Zurab Khizanishvili, assisting with the proceedings. In an emotional speech, the 35-year-old, who hung up his boots this year after a playing career that took him to clubs in Scotland, England, Turkey and Azerbaijan, as well as his home country, said: "It is a matter of great honour and pride for me to be the ambassador of the European Under-19 Championship, which will be hosted by Georgia. I would like to highlight the great importance of this for our country. It is the first time that Georgia will host a tournament of this magnitude, and I am sure that it will be a memorable event

for everyone. The games will be played in the capital – Tbilisi – as well as the city of Gori, and I am sure that fans will get to see some exciting matches. I am delighted to meet so many young people and fans and tell them about the tournament. To the players, I want to say the following: be proud that you are representing your country, and always remember that this is a unique opportunity for each and every one of you. The best moments in life are created precisely by making the most of your opportunities. I wish you the best of luck, and call upon the fans to become a part of this football celebration, because football belongs to the fans."

A truly special competition awaits the eight finalists. Georgia, a country of less than 4 million people, has a special relationship with football. The locals love the game more than any other sport, and they are truly passionate supporters. Five years ago, a crucial elite round qualifying game between the U17 national teams of Georgia and Ukraine was attended by 12,000 fans, a record for a qualifying match in that age group.

A huge motivation

Supporters of all ages are eagerly awaiting the start of the tournament. Banners across the country are not only advertising the tournament; they are also showcasing the Georgian U19 players eager to become national heroes in July.

"Playing at a tournament of such magnitude in your own country gives you a special motivation to perform in front of your home supporters. We have to get off to a good start against Portugal to realise our dream of advancing out of the group stage – the fans will really help us in this regard. Hosting an event such as this is not only great for Georgian football; it's also a matter of prestige for the whole country," said FC Dinamo Tbilisi and Georgia U19 player Giorgi Chakvetadze.

Hosts Georgia will play in Group A, together with the Czech Republic, Sweden and Portugal. The opening ceremony, as well as the opening tie between Georgia and Portugal, will take place in the city of Gori, which will host a total of four games. As part of its tour around the whole country, the trophy has already taken centre stage at a special event organised in historic Gori. Young fans had the opportunity to have their photo taken with the trophy, and the walls of the city's castle were illuminated in the tournament colours.

"It's great to see the young fans so happy. The closer the tournament gets, the more I can feel the excitement building among the local people. To host a competition like this is a great motivation for any country. I am delighted that Georgia will be in the football spotlight this year," added a very proud Georgian Football Federation president, Levan Kobiashvili. 🇧🇪



SCHEDULE

Group matches:

2/3, 5/6 and 8/9 July

Semi-finals: 12 July

Final: 15 July



INSPIRING WOMEN IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Eight teams, including hosts Northern Ireland, will participate in the final tournament of the European Women's Under-19 Championship from 8 to 20 August.



Sweet Caroline, the official mascot for the UEFA Women's Under-19 Championship in Northern Ireland, was designed by schoolgirl Eadie Fallis.

This year's European Women's Under-19 Championship finals will provide a great opportunity to drive women's football forward in Northern Ireland, according to the tournament director, Sara Booth.

The National Football Stadium at Windsor Park in Belfast, the Ballymena Showgrounds, Mourneview Park in Lurgan and Portadown FC's Shamrock Park will all be hosting matches.

"At the Irish Football Association we believe in football for all – for men and women, young and old, across the community," says Booth. "This is the single biggest opportunity for the Irish FA to grow women's football. By putting our country on the world stage and hosting this event we hope to inspire a new generation of girls – and boys – to dream of wearing the Northern Ireland jersey. Not only do we want more young people to take up the sport; we also want to encourage more administrators, coaches, referees, officials and volunteers to get involved at their local girls' and boys' clubs as a consequence of this tournament."

Great involvement

A local organising committee has been set up to deliver the event – and over 30 members of the Irish FA have already got involved in some capacity or another. "This is the first time in the history of the association that we have mobilised so much support for a women's football event," Booth continues. "We believe that by hosting this tournament we will showcase Northern Ireland at its best, including our football, our facilities, our culture, our history, our fans, our tradition of hosting major tournaments and our unconditional love of the game."

For the first time in women's football, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland will compete together in a major tournament. England and Scotland won their respective elite round qualifying groups – as did Belgium, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, while France claimed the last remaining place as best runners-up.

The draw for the finals was held at Belfast City Hall on 22 June (draw results and match schedule on UEFA.com).

The eight teams will compete in two groups of four to decide who makes it through to the semi-finals and, ultimately, the final.

Northern Ireland will kick off the tournament at the National Football Stadium in Belfast on 8 August, and then play at Mourneview Park on 11 August and at Ballymena Showgrounds on 14 August. The National Football Stadium will then host the semi-finals on 17 August and the final on 20 August.

Comprehensive marketing and digital media plans are in place to promote the tournament, while a legacy and participation plan has also been developed to draw maximum benefits for the country as a whole.

Sweet Caroline

The official mascot for this summer's event, Sweet Caroline, has just completed a tour of schools around Northern Ireland to encourage families to support the tournament. She also used the tour to launch a bid to break the world record for the most penalties scored by a mascot in one minute.

The world record attempt will take place during the opening ceremony on 8 August at the National Football Stadium. The record currently stands at 16 goals in one minute by a team of mascots.

Sweet Caroline was designed by Fermanagh schoolgirl Eadie Fallis, who won the social media mascot design contest entered by 3,500 children from primary schools across Northern Ireland.

For further information on the European Women's Under-19 Championship finals, log on to www.irishfa.com/uefawu19.

A FIRST FOR SKOPJE

Two of the biggest names in European football will contest the 2017 UEFA Super Cup when Real Madrid CF and Manchester United FC meet at Skopje's National Stadium on 8 August, in what will be FYR Macedonia's first European club final.

Skopje is the latest venue for the UEFA Super Cup, which was played in Monaco every year between 1998 and 2012, before UEFA's Executive Committee decided the game should be staged in a different city every year. Prague was the venue in 2013, with Cardiff (2014), Tbilisi (2015) and Trondheim (2016) all hosting matches since then. After Skopje, Tallinn – the capital of Estonia – will be the destination in 2018.

Real Madrid are in the Super Cup for the third time in four seasons and are bidding to lift the trophy for the fourth time following their triumphs in 2002, 2014 and 2016. Only AC Milan and FC Barcelona, with five wins apiece, have enjoyed more success in the competition.

Zinédine Zidane's side earned their place in a sixth Super Cup – they lost in 1998 and 2000 in addition to their three triumphs – by becoming the first side to win the Champions League in successive seasons, beating Juventus 4-1 at the National Stadium of Wales in Cardiff on 3 June to claim their 12th European Cup overall. Cristiano Ronaldo's two goals in that match made him the first player to score in three Champions League finals.

Real Madrid therefore became the first European champions to retain the trophy since AC Milan's successive triumphs in 1989 and 1990. The Rossoneri were also the last club to win consecutive UEFA Super Cups, also in 1989 and 1990 – a feat Madrid now also have in their sights.

Manchester United booked their place in Skopje by beating AFC Ajax 2-0 in the Europa League final in Stockholm on 24 May. Goals from Paul Pogba and Henrikh Mkhitaryan gave United their first triumph in the competition, making them the fifth club to win all UEFA's major club competitions – adding to the European Cup wins in 1968, 1999 and 2008 and the 1991 European Cup Winners' Cup.

United have made three previous appearances in the Super Cup, winning their first in 1991 before defeats in

Monaco in 1999 and 2008. Should they get the better of Madrid in Skopje, they would become the tenth team to win the competition on more than one occasion.

Skopje, meanwhile, might be hosting its first major European club final, but the National Stadium is no stranger to UEFA games. During extensive renovations it hosted five matches at the 2010 European Women's Under-19 Championship final tournament – the 8,000 that turned out to watch the hosts take on Spain remains a competition record.

The stadium, situated in a band of the Vardar River, has a UEFA capacity of 33,460 and is the home ground of local teams FK Vardar and FK Rabotnicki, while the FYR Macedonia national side play most of their games there.

The ground re-opened on 12 August 2009, when FYR Macedonia lost 3-2 to European champions Spain in a friendly. A multi-purpose venue, it is also used for concerts, with big names such as Pink and Carlos Santana having played there. An illuminated outer façade was completed in 2013. Real Madrid and Manchester United will both be bidding to light up the ground themselves on 8 August. 🌟

33,460

is the UEFA capacity of the National Stadium, home of local teams FK Vardar and FK Rabotnicki.



DISABLED CHILDREN GET THE CHANCE TO PLAY FOOTBALL

For the first time in Kazakhstan, a unique project is giving children and teenagers with cerebral palsy the chance to play football.



The project, which is aimed at youngsters aged between 7 and 18, is being implemented with the support of the Football Federation of Kazakhstan (FFK) and the International Federation for Cerebral Palsy Football (IFCPF).

Thanks to a grant offered by the IFCPF to train coaches to work with children with cerebral palsy, coaches from all over Kazakhstan have been trained by international experts and received certificates to allow them to work with disabled children. For its part, the FFK provides the necessary football equipment, pays the coaches' salaries and makes every effort to develop cerebral palsy football throughout the country.

A great initiative

"The first four teams have already been set up at the Almaty special boarding school No. 2 for children with musculoskeletal disorders, and teams will soon follow in Ust-Kamenogorsk, Kokshetau, Astana and Karagandy. This is a great initiative, a project of huge social importance," said Chingis Temerkhanov, head of the FFK's grassroots football department. He stresses that it is a chance for children with cerebral palsy to break out of social isolation and make friends. "It is an opportunity to acquire not only a hobby but also a profession in sport. Cerebral palsy doesn't stop you from becoming a good referee,

About 15,000 children in Kazakhstan have cerebral palsy.

"Cerebral palsy doesn't stop you from becoming a good referee, excellent coach, sports team manager, doctor or masseur."

Chingis Temerkhanov
Head of the FFK's grassroots football department

excellent coach, sports team manager, doctor or masseur," he added.

Cerebral palsy football has some special features. Each team has only seven players and the rules are simplified: for example, the pitch is much smaller, there is no offside rule and a ball that goes out of play can be rolled instead of thrown in. Each half lasts 30 minutes, with a 15-minute interval in between.

"Kazakhstan is one of the first countries in Central Asia to develop CP football," said IFCPF secretary general Sam Turner after the coach training course, which he had run with fellow tutor Marcel Geestman from the Netherlands.

A new U19 competition

The IFCPF now has 53 members and regularly organises international competitions. By the end of the year, the FFK plans to create a national Under-19 team, which will also take part in IFCPF competitions.

"After our course, coaches will have developed their knowledge about how to properly classify players and deliver football coaching sessions," said Turner. "Although we hope Kazakhstan will create a national team, an important goal is to involve as many children in CP football as possible. Football enhances self-esteem and attitude to ourselves and to life. So it is fantastic that the Football Federation of Kazakhstan is supporting this important programme." ⚽

10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NEW WEMBLEY STADIUM

On 19 May The Football Association celebrated the tenth anniversary of the official opening of the new Wembley Stadium.

The stadium was officially opened by the Duke of Cambridge at the 2007 FA Cup final and has so far welcomed over 20 million visitors to see more than 300 live sport and entertainment events.


Over the last ten years the national stadium has hosted some of the biggest and best live events, breaking a number of attendance records along the way and giving fans unforgettable experiences.

FA chief executive Martin Glenn said: "Wembley Stadium had a difficult birth but a decade on we can only be proud of what the stadium has become. It's now Europe's leading stadium and without doubt the venue of choice for global sporting and entertainment events.

"Having already hosted so many memorable moments we are looking forward to what the next decade will bring, including Adele,

the semi-finals and final of EURO 2020 and hosting Tottenham Hotspur next season. It can only get bigger and better."

To mark the celebration of the anniversary, Wembley lit up its iconic arch in the colours of every football team that has played at the famous arena since its reopening. Over 160 European and international men's and women's teams have played at the stadium in the last decade across a variety of competitions and friendlies. In a show of gratitude to all the clubs, each of the club or national team colours were displayed on the famous arch alongside their name and crest.

In 2017 Wembley will continue to be a leader in live sport, music and entertainment, with 16 events already scheduled this year. A full list of upcoming live events at the connected stadium can be found at: www.wembleystadium.com. 

Over 160 European and international men's and women's teams have played at the stadium in the last decade"



The FA

AZERBAIJAN

www.affa.az

U23s WIN ISLAMIC SOLIDARITY GAMES FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

MIKAYIL NARIMANOGLU



The Azerbaijan Under-23 team took gold at the fourth Islamic Solidarity Games held in Baku in May.

For the eight-team football tournament, Azerbaijan were in Group A alongside Cameroon, Morocco and Saudi Arabia, while Group B comprised Algeria, Oman, Palestine and Turkey. The Azeri boys held Cameroon to a goalless draw before going on to beat Saudi Arabia 2-0 and then finishing the group stage with another goalless draw, against Morocco this time. It was enough to see Azerbaijan through to the semi-finals, where they beat Algeria 2-0.

In the final played at the Tofiq Bahramov Republican Stadium on 21 May in front of a crowd of 25,000, Azerbaijan beat Oman 2-1 to win the tournament.



AFFA

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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HŠK ZRINJSKI CROWNED 2017 CHAMPIONS

FEDJA KRIVAVAC



May saw Bosnia and Herzegovina take on Germany, the Republic of Ireland and Serbia in Group C of the European Under-17 Championship in Croatia. After losing to Germany 5-0 and Ireland 2-1, they beat Serbia 1-0 in their final group game. But it was not enough to book them a place in the quarter-finals.

At the Football Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina's annual general assembly, president Elvedin Begić praised the recent progress made by the association, which includes important administrative reforms, improvements to club competitions and increased football promotion across the country. Honorary president Ivica Osim, national team head coach Mehmed Baždarević and executive board advisor Zvezdan Misimović were among the delegates there to adopt last year's financial and audit reports.

Elsewhere, SFK 2000 Sarajevo continued their domination of Bosnian women's football, becoming league champions for the 15th time and taking home the women's cup by beating NK Emina Mostar 3-1 in the final.

In the men's cup final, NK Široki Brijeg proved too strong for FK Sarajevo. The final score after the two legs remained even, but Široki Brijeg held their nerve to beat the Sarajevans 4-3 on penalties.

In the last round of the premier league, HŠK Zrinjski were crowned champions after defeating FK Sloboda Tuzla 3-0. In a thrilling end to the season, their 64 points proved enough to hold off challengers FK Željezničar, who finished second by just one point. Zrinjski's victory marked the end of the first league season with the new 12-team format, and guarantees them a place in the 2017/18

Champions League qualifiers, while Sarajevo, Široki Brijeg and Željezničar will compete in the 2017/18 Europa League qualifiers. NK Metalleghe BSI and FK Olimpik Sarajevo were relegated from the top flight of Bosnian football.



F. Krivavac

NEW BASE FOR REFEREES

NIKOLAY DYULGEROV



At the end of 2016, the Bulgarian Football Union (BFU) opened its new national football centre at Boyana, on the outskirts of the capital, Sofia. The new centre was funded thanks to the efforts of the BFU president, Borislav Mihaylov, combined with financial assistance from UEFA's HatTrick programme.

Since February, the centre has also become a base for Bulgaria's elite referees, where they can enjoy all the comforts of the centre and hold their seminars, workshops and training under the guidance of members of the BFU's



referees committee and UEFA refereeing officer Marc Batta, who is also the referees' supervisor.

Every month, the BFU referees committee meets with the match officials to go over the latest top league matches.

Modern video analysis technology is used to conduct debriefs, discussions and analyses, and to instruct the referees on how to improve their performance and ensure uniform, consistent decision-making.

A MONTH OF CELEBRATION

TOMISLAV PACAK



After a great season, HNK Rijeka have deservedly won their first-ever domestic title, ending 11 years of domination by GNK Dinamo Zagreb. After their decisive win against HNK Cibalia, Rijeka's players were joined on the pitch by thousands of fans in a wild celebration of the club's historic achievement. "Miracles sometimes happen in football, and this is our miracle. This title is for all the generations of players, coaches, employees and fans of Rijeka, who have waited so long for this moment and have never stopped believing," said Rijeka's coach, Matjaž Kek.

Not content with winning the league, Rijeka then went on to beat Dinamo Zagreb in the final of the Croatian Cup in Varazdin, securing a historic double.

Varazdin also hosted the final of the European Under-17 Championship, with Spain lifting the trophy for a third time after beating England on penalties at the end of an exciting and dramatic game. The tournament was a big success for Croatia, which was hosting the final round of a UEFA youth competition for the very first time. Tournament ambassador and Croatian international Niko Kranjčar was



on hand to present the players with their medals: "It was a great final with some fantastic football. I am proud of Croatia for successfully organising this tournament. It was a great experience for everybody."

The men's national team also joined in the fun in May, beating Mexico in a historic friendly in Los Angeles – Croatia's first-ever match on North American soil. "We have wanted this match for years, and it means so much to us that our national team have come to the USA," said Stanko Bilaver, who has lived in the United States for 50 years – one of over 5,000 Croatians who turned out to support their team.

For the fifth year in a row, a Croatian player got his hands on the UEFA Champions League trophy. Indeed, with Luka Modrić and Mateo Kovačić representing Real Madrid CF and Mario Mandžukić playing for Juventus, Croatia's winning streak was guaranteed to continue, regardless of which team prevailed in Cardiff. Meanwhile, Danijel Subašić celebrated his first title with AS Monaco FC (as well as being voted Ligue 1's goalkeeper of the year), Modrić and Kovačić secured their first Spanish titles with Real Madrid. Mandžukić and Pjaca did the double in Italy, Jozo Šimunović won the Scottish championship with Celtic FC, Josip Radošević and Duje Čaleta-Car won the Austrian league with FC Salzburg, and Branimir Kalaica won the Portuguese title with SL Benfica. Meanwhile, Matej Mitrović won the Turkish championship with Beşiktaş JK (with Croatian goal-keeping coach Marjan Mrmić joining him in celebration) and former Croatian captain Darijo Srna did the double again with FC Shakhtar Donetsk in Ukraine. As if that was not enough, Ivan Rakitić (FC Barcelona) and Marin Leovac (PAOK FC) also won their respective domestic cup competitions.

CYPRUS

www.cfa.com.cy

GOAL IN LIFE FOUNDATION

MEDIA DEPARTMENT



Representatives of the UEFA Foundation for Children travelled to Cyprus in April to learn about Goal in Life, a new foundation aiming to use the power of football and its players to assist socially vulnerable groups.

Goal in Life is the first charity of its kind – a voluntary body comprised exclusively of footballers, established on the initiative of Cyprus and AEK Larnaca FC captain Constantinos Charalambides. He succeeded in rounding up 22 founding members – active footballers and veterans – representing teams from towns and cities across the Mediterranean island. The legal basis for the foundation has been laid, a board has been set up, and the statutes are already in force. Support has been forthcoming from the Cyprus Football Association, the Cypriot government and businesses on the island.

The official launch ceremony was held at the Presidential Palace in Nicosia on 15 May, in the presence of Nicos Anastasiades, president of Cyprus, and Costas Kadis, minister of education

and culture. “Football is the biggest social phenomenon, not only in Cyprus but worldwide,” said Charalambides.

“Goal in Life uses the power of footballers to shape society via two important pillars: as a charity, collecting funds and resources and giving them to those who need them most, and through volunteering, in order to empower others to promote humanity, mutual assistance and unity, and move away from fanaticism and crime.”

Goal in Life has identified various ways of achieving its objectives. These include providing financial support to vulnerable groups, fundraising for specific causes and initiatives, and visiting schools and hospitals as a form of civic engagement. Goal in Life membership is open to footballers aged 18 and over, from Cyprus or abroad, who are registered with the Cyprus Football Association. Individuals, companies and organisations that are interested in the foundation can also provide financial support through annual subscriptions or donations.

Members are encouraged to lead by example, to show that all players – whether Cypriot or not – are united by a common goal, namely to help society. They are also asked to speak out against violence, drugs, crime and other social ills, and convey other equally important social messages. “Since players are idols, through their actions they are able to penetrate the different layers of society and actually help people in need,” the foundation explained.

Goal in Life and the Cypriot ministry of education and culture have agreed to set up a two-year schools programme, which will be launched in September. The foundation will cover the cost of teachers staying on after their usual working hours to provide additional courses in sport and physical education. Another of the programme’s aims is to promote the essential values of sport among youngsters. The Cyprus Football Association is proud of the players and veterans behind this unique initiative, and hopes that it will be echoed by other players throughout Europe.

ESTONIA

www.jalgpall.ee

CELEBRATING CLUB FOOTBALL

MAARJA SAULEP



Late May saw the Estonian national stadium play host to the men’s and women’s cup finals, with many fun activities organised as part of this annual one-day celebration of Estonian club football.

The action got off to an early start with the first stage of the Estonian Cup of Nations, a tournament for ethnic minorities living in Estonia. The first leg of the Seniors Cup took place at the same time, with teams made up of players born in 1972 or earlier.

A festival area was set up within the stadium, where guest of honour East Tallinn Central Hospital offered health checks and consultations. A dedicated area for children proved to be a great

hit, and the Estonian Football Association also organised a penalty shoot-out competition.

After some hard-fought games, Pärnu JK lifted the women’s cup for the sixth time, while last year’s league champions FCI Tallinn celebrated their first cup triumph in the men’s final, beating JK Tammeka Tartu 2-0.

The Estonian men’s cup competition carries the name of Evald Tipner, a goalkeeper who won 66 caps for the national team before the Second World War. Tipner also won the Estonian league eight times, and lifted the cup once with his team VS Tallinna Sport. He was considered one of the best European goalkeepers of his time.



Former national team coach and local footballing legend Tarmo Rütli was ambassador of the event and handed out the medals at the award ceremonies.


FAROE ISLANDS

www.football.fo

UNFAMILIAR FACES IN THE CUP FINAL

TERJI NIELSEN



 We now know the line-up for the final of the Faroese Cup, with B36 Tórshavn set to take on NSÍ Runavík at the national stadium, Tórsvøllur, on 26 August.

NSÍ won their semi-final fairly comfortably, beating holders KÍ Klaksvík 3-0 at home in the second leg, following a 2-2 draw in the first leg.

The other semi-final was a derby, with B36 facing local rivals HB Tórshavn, and

it was about as dramatic as they come. With the first leg having finished 1-1, B36 went 1-0 up in the second leg, before having two players sent off. HB eventually made their numerical advantage pay, equalising late on, before taking the lead early in extra time. However, in an astonishing turnaround, Faroese international Róaldur Jakobsen then scored two sublime goals – a direct free-kick, followed by a long-range effort from all of 70 metres – to take the nine men of B36 to the cup final.

B36 and NSÍ have not been regulars in the cup final in recent years. B36 have not appeared in the final for nine years and last won the competition in 2006. And while NSÍ were runners-up just two years ago, that was their first final in 11 years, and they last lifted the trophy back in 2002.

GIBRALTAR

www.gibraltarfca.com

A HISTORIC DOMESTIC TREBLE

STEVEN GONZALEZ



Europa FC secured their first league title in over 65 years on the final day of the league season. Victory was sealed by a solitary point, thus ending Lincoln Red Imps FC's 14-year hold on Gibraltar's first division. Two of Europa's key summer signings, midfielder Liam Walker and forward Kike Gomez, were on target in their final-day victory over Glacis United FC, thereby adding the league shield to the Pepe Reyes Cup they won at the beginning of the season.

But Europa did not stop there. The final of Gibraltar's cup competition saw them take on a Lincoln Red Imps outfit that was still hurting after surrendering their league title. And with Walker and Kike starring once again, they did not



disappoint. Helped slightly by a deserved red card shown to Imps defender Bernardo Lopes, Europa ran out 3-0 winners, securing a historic domestic treble for the green and blacks.

For the first time ever, Europa FC will represent Gibraltar in the Champions League qualifying stages, after having played in the Europa League qualifiers for the last three seasons. Lincoln Red Imps and St Joseph's FC have qualified for the Europa League.

GEORGIA

www.gff.ge

COCA-COLA CUP 2017 – TBILISI FINALS AT BASA

TATA BURDULI



The largest project organised by the Georgian Football Federation (GFF) – the Coca-Cola Cup – began in May. The tournament brings together schoolchildren from across the whole country.

Participants in the Tbilisi leg of the cup included teams from every part of the Georgian capital. Boys' teams were composed of players born between 2003 and 2004, while girls' teams were made up of players born between 2002 and 2004. The final games took place at Basa, the GFF's technical centre, and were followed by an award ceremony. Five boys' teams and one girls' team advanced to the final tournament in Kvartali, where they will compete against the strongest sides from the other Georgian regions. Some 10,000 children from over 1,000 schools across Georgia took part in the cup last year, while this year the number of players grew to 16,000.

Prior to the Tbilisi finals, players and fans were addressed by the GFF president, Levan Kobiasvili, and the minister of sport and youth affairs, Tariel Khechikashvili, as well as the president of Coca-Cola Georgia, Temur Chkonia. They emphasised the importance of the competition for promoting healthy lifestyles and developing grassroots football in Georgia. Mr Chkonia also spoke about future plans for the tournament and said that cooperation with the GFF had ensured that the tournament would become international from next year, with Georgian youngsters getting the chance to compete against counterparts from abroad.



ISRAEL

www.football.org.il

RAISING AWARENESS AMONG PARENTS

EITAN DOTAN



The Israel Football Association (IFA) decided to dedicate the 2016/17 national cup to the parents who cheer their children on from the sidelines at football matches, calling on them to join the association in its efforts to make football free of violence and discrimination, and to bring about a better society in general.

Parents who go to watch their children play football do not always behave properly, so the goal of the initiative was to make them aware that such inappropriate behaviour is out of place and to encourage them to show self-restraint and to set an example.

The association produced special shirts for parents who accompanied

their children onto the pitch before the finals in each age category. The shirts bore the slogan 'model parent, model fan'. Before the opening whistle, the parents read out the wording of the 'equal rights and tolerance treaty' drawn up by the IFA: "I who raise, educate, support, encourage and accompany my child on their way to becoming a footballer and a moral person, undertake to work together with the Israel Football Association to promote fair, egalitarian, friendly football at every opportunity. I call on all parents, the biggest and most loyal fans of their children, to remember that we should serve as examples for those who look at us and see us as role models.

Victory on the pitch is not everything, and it cannot atone for improper behaviour off the pitch. Only together, on the pitch and off it, can we all be winners".

The IFA president, Ofer Eini, said about the initiative: "I believe that the initiative of the association, which has received the full support of groups and parents and excited everyone, will strengthen the values and educational impact that the association wishes to promote through football. Every season we set a moral goal for the national cup, and we look forward to an equally successful campaign next season."

ITALY

www.figc.it

KICKOFF 2017: TEAMWORK AND THE FUTURE OF FOOTBALL

DIEGO ANTENZIO



Italy's sports minister, Luca Lotti, brought the curtain down on Kickoff 2017, the third annual football symposium organised by the Italian Football Federation (FIGC). "In sport, as in life, it is vital that we come together to achieve our shared goals," he said, reflecting on the theme of the two-day event – 'Teamwork: the way forward'. "I am delighted with this initiative because it is a reflection of the work the federation puts in, day in and day out."

All of the weekend's activities were aimed at turning ideas into programmes for the future development of the sport. In all, some 220 guests were invited to take part, representing a broad spectrum of Italian society that spanned higher education and academia, public administration, business, journalism, sport, entertainment and other areas of the country's cultural life. Participants included an array of notable figures, including the mayor of Florence, Dario Nardella, the president of the Emilia Romagna region,

Stefano Bonaccini, former head coach of the national volleyball team Mauro Berruto, film director Volfango De Biasi, the head of the FIGC's performance and research department, Valter Di Salvo, academic and writer Moris Gasparri, actor Dino Giarrusso, and the CEO of Vision Distribution, Nicola Maccanico.

After an opening presentation at La Pergola theatre, the participants were divided into 12 'teams', each tasked with developing proposals in areas the federation had identified as being of strategic importance. These included development programmes for the FIGC regional centres, the federation's online presence (the new FIGC website and other digital platforms), inclusivity projects, a development plan for women's football, plans for a new football museum in Florence, and a programme for improving stadiums and sports facilities. Other topics included the first Italian football hackathon, research on the economic footprint of Italian football, football and the Italian

school system, major tournaments (the European Under-21 Championship and EURO 2020), materiality assessments in the context of sustainability, and stakeholder engagement, plus various cultural projects and celebrations.

One of the topics that generated the most interest was football as a tool for integration at all levels of society. There were a number of innovative proposals such as the introduction of walking football, a variant of the game developed in the UK with the aim of keeping older people active. Other ideas that emerged over the two days included prioritising brand protection, the creation of a new venue director role at professional clubs, and general ways to improve sports infrastructure in the country. These and other suggestions could well form the basis for initiatives launched in 2018, when the FIGC celebrates its 120th anniversary and 60 years of the national football centre at Coverciano.



KOSOVO

www.ffk-kosova.com

A NEW LEAGUE FOR GIRLS

BAJRAM SHALA



Football is not just a sport in Kosovo, it is a way of life.

The love for the game is apparent wherever you go, and it is clear that football's popularity is set to increase among both men and women. The Football Federation of Kosovo (FFK) is working hard to develop women's and girls' football in the country, a move which has been strengthened by FIFA and UEFA's recognition of the FFK back in 2016. Kosovo already has a women's football league made up of ten teams, and this year the FFK is also launching an Under-16 girls' league. There will be eight teams to begin with, and hopefully more next year.

The future also looks bright for men's football in Kosovo, with the national Under-16 boys' team winning two of their three games at a recent UEFA



development tournament hosted by the Republic of Ireland. In their first-ever international tournament, the youngsters beat Denmark 5-4 on penalties after the game finished 1-1 at the end of regular time. In the second game they suffered a narrow defeat at the hands of the home

team, losing 2-1 after a valiant effort. The young Kosovans were superb in their final game against Northern Ireland, running out 4-1 winners. These impressive results point to a strong future ahead for Kosovan football in Europe, with the youth teams leading the way.

LATVIA

www.lff.lv

INSPIRING FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT

TOMS ĀRMANIS



At its annual congress in April, the Latvian Football Federation (LFF) proudly presented Football at the Heart of Latvia – a strategic document for football development from 2017 to 2024.

The strategy, which is available online, is the result of extensive research and analysis carried out across Latvia. It sets out clear goals for the further development of Latvian football and aims

to inspire everyone involved to achieve them.

The research reveals that we all strive to identify our goals and what inspires us to achieve them. Sometimes the goal itself is motivation enough, while at other times we need an extra incentive to get things rolling. People involved in football are no different - they look to fulfil both personal goals and those that really give something back to society.

"Today more than 30,000 people are actively involved in Latvian football," said Edgars Pukinskis, CEO of the LFF. "This really highlights the appeal of the game here. The Latvian Football Federation's main task is to protect and develop the beautiful game, but also to spread the word about football's power to positively influence everyone involved. It's important to create an environment that motivates people to become a part of football and strive for success."




LITHUANIA

www.lff.lt

LEARNING THROUGH FOOTBALL

VAIDOTAS JANUŠKA



 For the 12th year running the Lithuanian Football Federation (LFF) recently invited youngsters from children's homes and other social institutions to participate in its Learn

through Football project, which aims to promote healthy lifestyles among children and increase their social inclusion.

The project has been organised at the start of every summer since 2006.

This year 223 boys and girls – including from 20 children's homes – took part in the event, the highlight being a mini-EURO in which the children represented different countries of their choice.

The main focus of the three days was on sport, but there was also a talent show, trivia and music competitions, a trip to the cinema and some local sightseeing. At the final game of the tournament the children got to meet international referee Gediminas Mažeika, who made his debut in the UEFA Champions League group stage this season.

"We're glad to get kids involved in sports and other activities to make them smile. We want to show them they can be an important part of society", said the LFF's grassroots manager, Ignas Marcinkevičius. "There are lots of examples of children who take up football seriously, but it's more important that they all chose a healthy lifestyle."

MALTA

www.mfa.com.mt

ELITE ACADEMY PILOT PROJECT

ALEX VELLA

 As part of an initiative launched by the Malta Football Association (MFA) at the beginning of the season, seven clubs are currently piloting an elite youth academy project run by the MFA's technical centre.

A series of preparatory meetings were held to explain the structure and prerequisites of the project, and the clubs' response and enthusiasm were very encouraging. The seven clubs that met the criteria and were selected to pilot the project with their Under-13, Under-15 and Under-17 squads are now receiving support from the MFA to upgrade their existing youth structures and turn them into academies.

The basic requirements for participation included having an MFA-qualified

administrator, a head coach who holds a UEFA Elite Youth A licence and an assistant who holds a UEFA B licence for each youth team, a goalkeeper coach, a fitness coach and a physiotherapist. The future academies also need to have a full-size pitch with all the necessary facilities.

According to the MFA's technical director, Robert Gatt, the main objective of the first stage in this pilot project is not to build winning teams but to restructure and upgrade the existing youth set-ups and transform them into fully fledged academies.

Staff from the MFA's technical centre are making periodic, unannounced visits to assess training sessions and check that they are being conducted in line with the agreed programme. Gatt confirms



that the project is very much going according to plan and at the end of the season the technical centre will submit a report with recommendations to the MFA's executive committee.

MOLDOVA

www.fmf.md

FC SHERIFF WINS MOLDOVAN DOUBLE

PRESS OFFICE



The 26th Moldovan Cup final on 25 May in Chisinau pitted FC Sheriff against FC Zaria Balti.

After an exciting match with a crowd of 7,000 spectators, FC Sheriff lifted the trophy for the ninth time in their history, seeing off the former cup holders 5-0. All five goals were scored in the second half – with Vitalie Damașcan (twice), Cyrille Bayala (twice) and Jo Santos hitting the back of the net. At the official ceremony after the match, Sheriff captain Mateo Sušić was handed the trophy by the general secretary of the Football Association of Moldova (FMF), Nicolai Cebotari. For the fifth year in a row, this key fixture was overseen by a foreign referee, this time Alper Ulusoy from Turkey, who put in a great performance.

Five days later, FC Sheriff played against FC Dacia Chisinau in a so-called golden match to determine the Moldovan



champions. Both teams finished the league on 69 points, which according to FMF regulations calls for a tie-breaker.

Eighteen-year-old Sheriff striker Vitalie Damașcan opened the scoring after 37 minutes, but Dacia defender Veaceslav Posmac hit back with an amazing shot from 40 metres. The score remained level after extra time, meaning that the Moldovan championship would be decided by penalties. The hero of the day was Sheriff goalkeeper Serghei Juric, who

saved two penalties to help the Tiraspol team come out 4-1 winners.

"We are very happy today and it's time to celebrate!", said the delighted Sheriff head coach Roberto Bordin. "We deserve to win the championship because our team was united and we played very well during the whole season." FC Dacia president Adlan Shishkhanov was very gracious in defeat: "We lost against a strong team and I want to wish FC Sheriff good luck in the Champions League preliminary rounds."

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

www.fai.ie

OVER 28,500 CHILDREN PLAYING FOOTBALL

STEPHEN FINN



Boys and girls from across Ireland enjoyed the experience of a lifetime at the SPAR FAI Primary School 5s national finals at the Aviva Stadium in May.

After a nationwide series of qualifying rounds across all 26 counties, children from



12 different counties progressed through the provincial stages to battle it out for national honours on a sun-kissed day in the national stadium.

The 2017 five-a-side event was the biggest yet, with more than 28,500 children from 1,495 schools taking part in county, regional and provincial competitions across Ireland – a new record for the programme, which has been coordinated by FAI Schools, an FAI-affiliated organisation responsible for school football since the mid-1990s.

Programme ambassador and former Republic of Ireland international Keith Andrews, along with minister of state for tourism and sport Patrick O'Donovan were among those present to support the teams and witness some thrilling games across all six sections. "The atmosphere for the finals was remarkable," Andrews said. "This whole competition is about providing

children with an outlet to play their sport and enjoy that rather than the competitive side of things, but they'll all remember this day for the rest of their lives."

The schools were divided into provincial representatives from small, medium and large school populations. While girls could compete with the boys in the A Cup, B Cup and C Cup sections, there was also a separate competition for girls only: the A Girls Cup for small schools, B Girls Cup for medium schools and the C Girls Cup for large schools.

The winning schools were: A Cup: Granagh NS, Kilmallock, Limerick; A Girls Cup: Drimina NS, Tubbercurry, Sligo; B Cup: Scoil Mhuire gan Smál, Ballymote, Sligo; B Girls Cup: Carnmore NS, Oranmore, Galway; C Cup: St Ciaran's NS, Hartstown, Dublin; and C Girls Cup: Our Lady of Good Counsel GNS, Johnstown, Dublin.

ROMANIA

www.frf.ro

CHILDREN IN BUCHAREST TAKE CENTRE STAGE

PAUL ZAHARIA



For Bucharest and its National Arena, hosting UEFA EURO 2020 matches represents more than just the largest-ever sports event organised in Romania. It means promoting football among youngsters – the future of Romanian football – and celebrating the cultures and heritage of all the countries involved.



As part of its long-lasting partnership with the local authorities of Bucharest's 5th District, the Romanian Football Federation recently organised a 'mini-EURO' for schoolchildren in the local area.

The 24 schools taking part in the competition were split into six groups of four teams, with each school representing a different UEFA member association. Before the tournament began, the children were invited to a celebration attended by several of the foreign ambassadors based in Bucharest. The teams took centre stage at the event, giving top-class performances which showcased the culture and traditions of the countries they would be representing in the upcoming competition.

Two days later, the children gave a different kind of performance – this time showcasing their football skills during the group matches. The semi-finals were

played the next day, and the final and third-place play-off were organised at the Bucharest National Arena to coincide with the Europe Day celebrations on 9 May. The lucky teams involved fulfilled their dream of playing on the biggest footballing stage in Romania.

Former internationals Miodrag Belodedici, Ion Vlădoiu and Marius Lăcătuș were on hand to offer their support to the players. Together with Rudi Verkempinck, assistant coach of the Romanian national side, and Daniel Florea, mayor of the 5th District, the stars presented the awards at the end of the tournament.

The mini-EURO was won by School No. 280, competing as Armenia, who beat Ion I.C. Brătianu, representing Belarus, in the final. Joy and happiness, tears and disappointment; the players experienced the same emotions felt at all major football competitions.

SLOVAKIA

www.futbalsfz.sk

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP VICTORY BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE

PETER SURIN



It is forty-one years since Czechoslovakia, which existed as a country until the end of 1992, were crowned European champions – a triumph that is now buried under the dust of time and remembered only in football books, overlooked by the current generation.

With the help of the Slovak Football Association, film-makers decided to relive that glorious moment and to bring it and its heroes alive for the young generation. The film, entitled simply *Finále*, runs for 82 minutes, almost the duration of a football match, and it has something for everyone – for those who love history, for those who revel in the polemics between generations, and for the fans of modern football as well. The movie is directed by Pavol Korec and Dušan Miko,

who have included the story of the current national team players who made it to EURO 2016.

The documentary shows the real people who experienced those historic moments and what became of the 'Belgrade champions', including the touching story of legendary right-winger Marián Masný. The film captures the humanity of Ján Švehlík, the inimitable humour of Jozef Čapkovič, Ivo Ján Pivarník's levity and the friendly banter between Karol Dobias and Antonín Panenka. There are quotes from members of the German team they played in the final – Rainer Bonhof, Bernd Hölzenbein and Dieter Müller speaking about the final with a sad smile on their faces. "No one in Germany would be making a film about Belgrade '76. Losing the final was a big disappointment.



SFZ

Everyone expected us to win," Bonhof says.

It may not be a documentary worthy of an Oscar nomination, but it is a film for true football fans. And there are millions of those!

SLOVENIA

www.nzs.si

MARKO VAVPETIČ APPOINTED GENERAL SECRETARY

MATJAŽ KRAJNIK

Following Aleš Zavrl's move to take up his new role as head of club licensing at UEFA after eight years as general secretary at the Football Association of Slovenia (NZS), the association's executive committee has appointed 45-year-old Marko Vavpetič – an economics expert with 20 years' experience in the financial industry – as his successor.

The new general secretary is keen to apply his extensive business management experience to develop Slovenian football. With football having outgrown the traditional boundaries of sport and

become a truly global phenomenon, national associations need to adopt a different approach to their financial and strategic management.

Vavpetič, who played youth football at Svoboda Vič before going on to play in the Slovenian first and second divisions, convinced the executive committee with his well-thought-out programme, which aims to build on the major steps taken by the NZS to grow football in Slovenia and increase its popularity, as well as seek new development opportunities in different areas. He plans to start by improving football infrastructure in



general, guaranteeing the safety of everybody involved in football and at football matches, and developing women's and national team football. During his first term, the NZS will also concentrate on ensuring the successful delivery of Futsal EURO 2018, which Slovenia is getting ready to host in Ljubljana from 30 January to 10 February 2018.

SWITZERLAND

www.football.ch

PETER GILLIÉRON RE-ELECTED

PIERRE BENOIT



Peter Gilliéron has been re-elected president of the Swiss Football Association.

The 64-year-old lawyer from Berne, who was born in Italy, was elected by acclamation at the association's annual congress in May. This new term of office – his fifth in total – means that he will remain president until at least 2019.

Gilliéron's time at the head of the Swiss Football Association has been a period of extraordinary success. Shortly after being appointed general secretary in 1993, Switzerland qualified for the 1994 World Cup, and they went on to qualify for EURO '96, EURO 2004 and the 2006 World Cup as well. That was followed by the

co-hosting of EURO 2008 in cooperation with the Austrian Football Association, with Gilliéron and his Austrian counterpart, Alfred Ludwig, playing a key role in the organisation of the tournament. What is more, no sooner had Gilliéron been elected president for the first time in 2009 than the Swiss Football Association achieved what was probably the greatest success in its 122-year history, winning the U-17 World Cup under coach Dany Ryser. Switzerland also went on to qualify for the 2010 and 2014 World Cups, as well as EURO 2016, and it currently has an excellent chance of qualifying for the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

However, it is not just the senior men's side that has enjoyed repeated success under Gilliéron; the country's youth teams have also been regular participants at major tournaments, with Switzerland reaching the final of the European Under-21 Championship in 2011.

Similarly, constant progress has been observed in women's football – which was also strongly supported by Gilliéron's two predecessors as president, Ralph

Zloczower and Marcel Mathier. In 2015 the national women's team made their debut at the Women's World Cup, and this summer they will also take part in their first-ever Women's EURO.

For all the success that has been achieved at elite level, it should be noted that Gilliéron has also been careful to nurture the grassroots, overseeing a period of consistent development in both qualitative and quantitative terms. And last but not least, the association's finances are rock solid, thanks to a combination of sporting success and attractive sponsorship agreements.

Bernhard Heusler (Swiss Football League), Philippe Hertig (First League) and Peter Hofstetter (Amateur League) were also re-elected to the Swiss Football Association's seven-member executive committee, alongside the presidents of the association's three leagues, Heinrich Schifferle (Swiss Football League), Romano Clavadetscher (First League) and Dominique Blanc (Amateur League), who are members by virtue of their respective positions.



TURKEY

www.tff.org

NEW SPONSORSHIP DEAL WITH P&G TURKEY

AYDIN GÜVENİR



The Turkish Football Federation (TFF) recently signed a sponsorship deal with P&G, one of the biggest supporters of sports in Turkey and around the world.

Under the new agreement, which includes national youth teams at all levels, Gillette will be the official men's care brand of the national men's teams, Ariel will be the official sponsor of the national women's teams, and P&G will be the official supplier of the Hasan Doğan national teams camp and education facilities in Riva, Istanbul.

TFF president Yıldırım Demirören, P&G Turkey and Caucasus general manager Tankut Turnaoğlu and TFF vice-president Ali Dürüst were joined at the sponsorship announcement at the Hasan Doğan facilities by TFF executive board members Cengiz Zülfikaroğlu and Mustafa Çağlar, executive board reserve member Fuat Guguloğlu, national team coach Fatih Terim, TFF general secretary Kadir Kardaş and various Turkish internationals.

"We are here today to experience the pleasure and pride of signing a sponsorship deal that increases the



Yıldırım Demirören (left) and Tankut Turnaoğlu

value of our football with a world brand," the TFF president said. "Today, the Turkish Football Federation, which has the sixth largest budget of all of UEFA's member associations, is fulfilling its mission of acquiring new and bigger sponsors. I want this to be the start of a new chapter for women's football, in particular, with Ariel as the sponsor. The results of research conducted among 4,000 girls in Denmark, England, Germany, Poland, Spain and Turkey were announced last month. According to the research, girls who play football have much higher self-confidence than those involved in other popular sports," Demirören added.

"UEFA has said it aims to make football the number one sport among girls and women by 2022. I believe that our

sponsorship deal with Ariel will be a great contribution to achieving that in Turkey. I would like to thank P&G for their strong support of men's and women's football in Turkey. We will continue our efforts to increase the value of Turkish football with major brands from home and abroad."

The general manager of P&G Turkey and Caucasus was equally pleased with the sponsorship deal, which he saw as a reflection of how P&G touches and improves lives through sport. "I'm very happy to share the TFF sponsorship news, which shows our commitment to sports and healthy generations," he said.

"With our brands Gillette and Ariel, we are proud to support the national men's and women's teams and celebrate their successes together."

WALES

www.faw.cymru

FISHLOCK BECOMES FIRST PLAYER TO REACH 100 CAPS

ROB DOWLING



Jessica Fishlock became the first Welsh footballer to make 100 appearances when she was picked to play for her national team in their 3-1 win against Northern Ireland in April.

There was resounding appreciation for Fishlock from the home crowd in Ystrad Mynach as she became the first Wales player ever to play a century of games for her country. To mark the occasion, Sophie Ingle handed the captain's armband back to her predecessor as Fishlock led the team once again. Fishlock fittingly got herself on the

scoresheet in the match to round off a memorable day.

She has started balancing her playing career with a coaching role at Melbourne City in Australia, and earlier this year found herself propelled into the position of player-manager for the remainder of the W-League season.

She took the position of responsibility in her stride, and in February her side won the Grand Final with a 2-0 win over Perth Glory. The winning player-manager also scored and was named player of the match.



JULY BIRTHDAYS

Antonie Marinus Verhagen

(Netherlands, 1 July)

Frank De Bleeckere (Belgium, 1 July)

Hannu Tihinen (Finland, 1 July)

Razvan Burleanu (Romania, 1 July)

Marinus Koopman (Netherlands, 2 July)

Pjetur Sigurdsson (Iceland, 2 July)

Philippe Hertig (Switzerland, 2 July)

Rusmir Mrković (Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2 July)

Mustafa Erögüt (Turkey, 2 July)

Peadar Ryan (Republic of Ireland, 3 July)

Bertrand Layec (France, 3 July)

Carolina De Boeck (Belgium, 3 July)

Antonio Matarrese (Italy, 4 July)

Neale Barry (England, 4 July)

Roland Ospelt (Liechtenstein, 4 July)

Massimo Cumbo (Italy, 4 July)

Patrick Nelson (Northern Ireland, 5 July)

Natalia Avdonchenko

(Russia, 5 July) **50th**

Tiago Craveiro (Portugal, 5 July)

Hans Schelling (Netherlands, 7 July)

Slaviša Kokeza (Serbia, 7 July) **40th**

Martin Glenn (England, 8 July)

Jacobo Betrán Pedreira (Spain, 8 July)

Martin Maleck (Switzerland, 8 July)

Holger Blask (Germany, 8 July)

Ekaterina Todorova

(Bulgaria, 8 July) **30th**

Heinrich Schifferle (Switzerland, 9 July)

Paul Allaerts (Belgium, 9 July)

Yordan Letchkov

(Bulgaria, 9 July) **50th**

Sergiu Lisnic (Moldova, 9 July)

Murad Mammadov (Azerbaijan, 10 July)

Thomas Christensen (Norway, 10 July)

Markus Kopecky (Austria, 10 July)

Levan Kobiashvili

(Georgia, 10 July) **40th**

Nina Hedlund (Norway, 11 July)

Edo Trivković (Croatia, 11 July)

Darko Čeferin (Slovenia, 11 July)

Günter Benkö (Austria, 12 July)

Filip Popovski (FYR Macedonia, 12 July)

Maria Teresa Costa (Portugal, 13 July)

Sjoukje de Jong (Netherlands, 13 July)

Elke Günthner (Germany, 14 July)

Robert Sedlacek (Austria, 15 July)

Ben Veenbrink (Netherlands, 15 July)

Ernst Nigg (Liechtenstein, 16 July)

Lars Lagerbäck (Sweden, 16 July)

Jiří Ulrich (Czech Republic, 16 July)

Michail Anagnostou (Greece, 16 July)

Giuseppe Mifsud-Bonnici

(Malta, 17 July)

Alexander Safonov (Russia, 17 July)

Antonia Kokotou (Greece, 17 July)

Kari Iuell (Norway, 19 July) **60th**

Alfredo Trentalange

(Italy, 19 July) **60th**

Tormod Larsen (Norway, 20 July)

Anton Bychkov (Ukraine, 20 July)

Vladimir Radionov (Russia, 21 July)

Michel Wuilleret (Switzerland, 22 July)

Iain Robertson Brines

(Scotland, 22 July) **50th**

Balázs Makray (Hungary, 22 July)

Bontcho Todorov (Bulgaria, 23 July)

Pavel Malović (Slovakia, 23 July)

Marcelino Santiago Maté

(Spain, 23 July)

David Gil (Israel, 24 July)

Gijs de Jong (Netherlands, 24 July)

Mario Gallavotti (Italy, 25 July)

Claus Christensen (Denmark, 25 July)

Ferenc Ragadics (Hungary, 25 July)

Nenad Radivojević (Serbia, 25 July)

Jacob Erel (Israel, 26 July)

Alfred Ludwig (Austria, 26 July)

David Bowen (Northern Ireland, 26 July)

Depi Koxenoglou (Greece, 26 July)

Jeff Davis (England, 27 July)

Björn Ahlberg (Sweden, 28 July)

Štefan Tivold (Slovenia, 28 July)

Nataša Joksimović (Serbia, 28 July)

Karl Espen Eriksen (Norway, 28 July)

Robert Kispal (Hungary, 28 July)

Peter Stadelmann (Switzerland, 29 July)

Kieran O'Connor (Wales, 30 July)

João Leal (Portugal, 30 July)

Des Casey (Republic of Ireland, 31 July)

Tugomir Frajman (Slovenia, 31 July)

Jozef De Ryck (Belgium, 31 July)

Joël Wolff (Luxembourg, 31 July)

Javier Tebas (Spain, 31 July)

Duncan Fraser (Scotland, 31 July)

Cenk Cem (Turkey, 31 July)

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

Sheila Begbie (Scotland, 1 August) **60th**

Kimmo Lipponen (Finland, 1 August)

Vibeke Karlsen (Norway, 1 August) **50th**

Igor Janković (Serbia, 1 August)

Erich Rutemöller (Germany, 2 August)

Luciano Luci (Italy, 2 August)

Mehmet Süheyl Önen (Turkey, 2 August)

Gerard Behan (Republic of Ireland, 2 August)

Andreas Schluchter

(Switzerland, 3 August) **60th**

Thura Win (England, 3 August)

Dariusz Pasięka (Poland, 3 August)

Franck Thivilier (France, 3 August)

Zdravko Jokić (Serbia, 4 August)

David Gill (England, 5 August) **60th**

Yves Wehrli (France, 5 August)

Aleh Chykun (Belarus, 5 August)

Piet Hubers (Netherlands, 6 August)

Pierino Lardi (Switzerland, 7 August) **70th**

Andrea Gotzmann

(Germany, 7 August) **60th**

Anna Bordiugova (Ukraine, 7 August)

Marcel Vanelshocht (Belgium, 8 August)

Plarent Kotherja (Albania, 8 August)

Olivier Henry (Belgium, 8 August)

Nico de Pauw (Belgium, 8 August)

Odd Flattum (Norway, 9 August)

Roy Hodgson (England, 9 August) **70th**

Nick Nicolaou (Cyprus, 9 August)

Peter Fossen (Netherlands, 10 August)

Urs Vogel (Switzerland, 11 August) **80th**

Laura Riposati (Italy, 11 August)

Domenico Messina (Italy, 12 August)

Eva Ödlund (Sweden, 12 August)

Emil Kostadinov (Bulgaria, 12 August) **50th**

Roger Vanden Stock (Belgium, 13 August)

Joseph Mifsud (Malta, 13 August)

Cornel Cristian Bivolaru

(Romania, 13 August)

Patrick Willemarck (Belgium, 13 August)

Metin Tunçer (Turkey, 13 August)

Albano Janku (Albania, 13 August) **50th**

George Pandealea-Dobrovicescu

(Romania, 14 August)

Jevgenijs Miļevskis (Latvia, 15 August)

Kjell Alseth (Norway, 15 August)

Thibault De Gendt (Belgium, 15 August)

Jacques Lagnier (France, 16 August) **70th**

Victor Beceiro (Spain, 16 August)

Stanislav Sukhina (Russia, 16 August)
Sergey Pryadkin (Russia, 17 August)
Bente Skogvang (Norway, 17 August)
Dane Jošt (Slovenia, 18 August)
Romano Clavadetscher
 (Switzerland, 18 August)
Borja Santana (Spain, 18 August)
Luca Miranda (Italy, 18 August)
Vitālijs Liholajs (Latvia, 19 August)
Patricia Gregory (England, 19 August) **70th**
Hans Reijgwart (Netherlands, 19 August)
Graham Hover (England, 19 August) **60th**
Fabrizio Tencone (Italy, 19 August)
Per Ravn Omdal (Norway, 20 August) **70th**
Eren Eroğlu (Turkey, 20 August)
Carmel Bartolo (Malta, 21 August) **70th**
Marta Atzori (Italy, 21 August)
Eamon Breen
 (Republic of Ireland, 21 August)
Kazimierz Oleszek (Poland, 22 August)
Antonios Karpetsopoulos
 (Greece, 22 August)
Geoffrey Thompson (England, 23 August)
Ioannis Economides (Greece, 23 August)
Demetrio Albertini (Italy, 23 August)
Igor Pristovnik (Croatia, 23 August)
Luis Manuel Rubiales Béjar
 (Spain, 23 August) **40th**
Enrique González Ruano
 (Spain, 24 August)
David Delferiere (Belgium, 24 August)
Johnny Vanspauwen (Belgium, 24 August)
Nicolae Grigorescu (Romania, 24 August)
Pavel Kolev (Bulgaria, 24 August)
Bert Andersson (Sweden, 25 August)
Regina Konink-Belksma
 (Netherlands, 26 August) **60th**
Scott Struthers (Scotland, 26 August)
Ronit Glasman (Israel, 26 August)
Karen Nalbandyan (Armenia, 27 August)
Tammo Beishuizen
 (Netherlands, 27 August) **60th**
Denni Strich (Germany, 29 August)
Scilla Gennaro (Italy, 29 August)
Leo Windtner (Austria, 30 August)
Charles John Grundie
 (Northern Ireland, 30 August)
Marian Ruzbarsky (Slovakia, 30 August)
Boško Jovanetić (Serbia, 30 August)
Christer Fällström (Sweden, 31 August)
Cristel Brorsson (Sweden, 31 August) **60th**

Stefano Podeschi
 (San Marino, 31 August) **50th**
Pedro Dias (Portugal, 31 August)
Christoph Kollmeier
 (Germany, 31 August)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Meetings

6 July, Nyon

Futsal EURO 2018: play-off draw
 UEFA Futsal Cup: preliminary and main round draws

14 July, Nyon

UEFA Champions League/UEFA Europa League: third qualifying round draws

4 August, Nyon

UEFA Champions League/UEFA Europa League: play-off draws

24 August, Monaco

UEFA Champions League: group stage draw

25 August, Monaco

UEFA Europa League: group stage draw

29 August, Nyon

UEFA Youth League: domestic champions path first and second round draws

30 August, Nyon

Elite Club Coaches Forum

Competitions

1–9 July, Turkey

UEFA Regions' Cup: final tournament

2–15 July, Georgia

European Under-19 Championship: final tournament

4/5 July

UEFA Champions League: first qualifying round (return legs)

6 July

UEFA Europa League: first qualifying round (return legs)

11/12 July

UEFA Champions League: second qualifying round (first legs)

13 July

UEFA Europa League: second qualifying round (first legs)

16 July – 6 August, Netherlands

Women's EURO 2017

18/19 July

UEFA Champions League: second qualifying round (return legs)

20 July

UEFA Europa League: second qualifying round (return legs)

NOTICES

- Peter Gilliéron was re-elected as president of the Swiss Football Association on 20 May.
- Ángel María Villar Llona was re-elected as president of the Spanish Football Federation on 22 May.
- Marko Vavpeti has replaced Aleš Zavrl as general secretary of the Football Association of Slovenia.

25/26 July

UEFA Champions League: third qualifying round (first legs)

27 July

UEFA Europa League: third qualifying round (first legs)

1/2 August

UEFA Champions League: third qualifying round (return legs)

3 August

UEFA Europa League: third qualifying round (return legs)

8 August, Skopje

UEFA Super Cup

8–20 August, Northern Ireland

European Women's Under-19 Championship: final tournament

15/16 August

UEFA Champions League: play-offs (first legs)

17 August

UEFA Europa League: play-offs (first legs)

22/23 August

UEFA Champions League: play-offs (return legs)

22–27 August

UEFA Futsal Cup: preliminary round
 UEFA Women's Champions League: qualifying round

24 August

UEFA Europa League: play-offs (return legs)

28 August – 5 September

European Under-21 Championship: qualifying round

31 August – 2 September

European Qualifiers for the 2018 World Cup: matchday 7



NO TO RACISM



RESPECT

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