

THE TECHNICIAN

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**NEWSLETTER
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Luis Aragonés led Spain
to victory at EURO 2008.

(Photo: Foto-Net)

Spain's
Fernando Torres
shields the
ball from Germany's
Philipp Lahm in
the final in Vienna
in June.

FOOTBALL PROSE AND POETRY

EDITORIAL

BY ANDY ROXBURGH,
UEFA TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Chelsea FC's Luiz Felipe Scolari, the 2002 World Champion with Brazil, and Portugal's EURO finalist in 2004, once said that 'beautiful football is fantastic, if it can be married to results'. The performances of a number of teams at EURO 2008 supported the argument that victory can be attained by playing positive, attractive football. Spain, under the direction of Luís Aragonés, won the 2008 European Championship with a fine blend of efficiency and style. All the statistics confirmed their dominance and skilful approach: the champions registered the top average in quantity of passes (570 against Sweden), the amount of successful passes (forward and medium length), and the number of shots on target. The Spanish based their game on progressive possession play, fluid combinations, and individual flair and imagination. "I like teams who focus on attacking and who enjoy playing. This Spanish team is experienced and love to play this type of football," said Guus Hiddink, the head coach of the Russian national team, after his side had lost twice during the 2008 final tournament to the eventual winners. But for the undemonstrative Luís Aragonés, it wasn't all about flamboyance – pragmatism laid the foundation for romance. Even the Brazilians have been known to take care of basic business.

The legendary Brazilian coach Mario Zagallo said: "I would rather play ugly and win – if you can play beautifully and win, that's great." Coaches who work at the top level, and who are in the results business, will confirm that winning is the priority, but in a world of TV-dominated sports coverage, entertainment and quality of performance are also an important part of the equation. If the public and media label a team as boring, albeit that they are winning on a fairly regular basis, then the coach's position can become precarious – there are high-profile examples in recent years of coaches winning titles and then being dismissed. In today's football envi-

ronment, the players and owners have become more demanding, while the media and the fans have increased their expectations, often to unrealistic levels. The old maxim 'enough is never enough' comes to mind. A team can lose and play badly, lose and play well, win and play badly, or win and play well. Unquestionably, the latter is the desirable outcome, and Spain in the EURO and Manchester United FC in the UEFA Champions League championed the cause of attacking football while confirming the need for structure, efficiency and, when necessary, caution.

The trends in UEFA's competitions show an increase in fast combinations, spectacular counter-attacks, tactical flexibility, match intensity and technical quality, particularly at high speed. There is less use of rigid systems such as 4-4-2, and the tendency towards the lone striker has often been accompanied by supporting wingers and middle-to-front attacking midfield players. But as José Mourinho said at UEFA's recent Elite Club Coaches' Forum: "Philosophy is one thing, adaptability another." The creative aspects of the game have been flourishing, but counter measures have inevitably been evolving. There is, at the top level, a decrease in midfield orchestrators, surprise tactics (especially on set plays), advanced pressing and risk-taking in general. Countering the counter, with the extensive use of midfield screen players, has become a key development. While most top coaches try to produce results through positive play, they recognise the need for balance – a disciplined defensive structure in tandem with a framework for attacking fluidity and flair.

The 2008 European Championship, which was outstanding from a technical perspective, also promoted the concept of respect. Everyone was trying to win but not with a 'win at all costs mentality. Overall, the attitude of the players towards each other was commendable – some club-mates were, of course, direct opponents in the finals and that probably contributed to the situation. In addition, a member of the UEFA Referees Committee visited each squad at their training camp, prior to the opening match, in order to explain the approach of the match officials and to clarify certain interpretations of the laws. The outcome was very few mass con-

frontations, isolated cases of dissent, and fewer yellow and red cards than at EURO 2004. With figures to prove it, the finalists, Spain and Germany, showed that success and an adherence to positive sporting behaviour can be compatible.

The aim in professional football is to win matches, but more and more the demands of the owners, the public and the media are to do it with style and panache. Just as in writing, where good prose provides the basic structure but poetry raises the text to a higher level of creativity, the game at the top level needs both effective, sensible organisation and, whenever possible, a commitment to skilful attacking play. The former coach of Real Madrid CF, Vanderlei Luxemburgo, stressed the attitude required when he declared to Brazilian coaching colleagues at a conference in Rio: "To be afraid of losing removes the willingness to win." EURO 2008 was a wonderful advert for the European game, with the successful sides blending passion for the cause, proficient team play and open attractive football. The aim is to win, but how the result is achieved has gained increasing significance in elite football's demanding environment. "I think all football lovers want people to make good combinations, to get into the penalty area and to score goals," said Spain's Luís Aragonés whose team captivated everyone with wonderful passing movements. The Spanish not only played fantastic football but they married it to results, and in doing so, set a performance standard for others in Europe to emulate.



Sir Alex Ferguson's Manchester United promote an attacking style of football.



Getty Images

GERMANY'S TORSTEN FRINGS AND MICHAEL BALLACK SURROUNDING AUSTRIA'S ANDREAS IVANSCHITZ DURING EURO 2008.

THE REAR-VIEW MIRROR

Looking back at EURO 2008

WHEN THE FIFA WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS KICKED OFF IN SEPTEMBER, SEVEN OF THE SIXTEEN EURO 2008 FINALISTS OPENED THEIR CAMPAIGN WITH A NEW HEAD COACH ON THE BENCH. ONLY FIVE TEAMS HAD TRAVELLED TO AUSTRIA AND SWITZERLAND WITH THE TECHNICIAN WHO HAD LED THEM TO THE 2004 FINALS IN PORTUGAL AND, OF THOSE, ONLY LARS LAGERBÄCK AND OTTO REHHAGEL STILL OCCUPY THE SAME SEAT. CURIOUSLY, TWO 'VETERANS' FROM THE 1996 FINALS – FATIH TERIM AND GUUS HIDDINK – WERE BACK IN THE FRONT LINE FOR THE 2008 FINALS BUT, IN GENERAL, CYCLES OF NATIONAL TEAM MANAGEMENT TEND TO BE BRIEF, WITH THE RESULT THAT LITTLE 'ACCUMULATED EXPERIENCE' IS CARRIED FROM ONE EVENT TO ANOTHER.

Broadcasting information as widely as possible within the coaching family therefore makes sense. UEFA's Technical Report was launched at the 8th UEFA Conference for National Team Coaches staged in Vienna in late September and has since been dispatched to national associations. An abridged version is posted on uefa.com. Based on observations by UEFA's Technical Team, the publication sets out to highlight some of the trends which came into sight at the peak of the national team pyramid.

There was no shortage of material in Austria and Switzerland. One of the salient features was that few teams built their campaign on a rigid structure. Only Austria and Greece occasionally operated with three central defenders and two wing-backs. Both switched to a zonal back four in their second fixtures, reverting to three at the back for their final group games. Structures were adapted from game to game or during a particular match, with the technician opting to change the shape of his team



Getty Images

Russia's Roman Pavlyuchenko (right) and Spain's Marcos Senna challenge for the ball in the semi-finals.

in response to specific situations. The silver-medallists were a case in point. Germany opened the tournament with Mario Gomez and Miroslav Klose as an attacking partnership – the latter lying slightly deeper – with Michael Ballack and Torsten Frings operating in front of the back four. During the second half of the crucial game against Austria, Joachim Löw inserted Thomas Hitzlsperger into the midfield screening positions instead of one of his strikers and pushed Michael Ballack further forward – a structure retained until the

second half of the final, when they were chasing the result against Spain.

Although heaven-sent late goals provided milestones on Turkey's route to the semi-finals, the foundations for fortune were laid by Fatih Terim's astute substitutions – many of them at half-time. Like many of his colleagues, he focused his structural changes on the midfield screening positions, changing the midfield shape and attacking potential of his team by switching from two to one. Spain's Luís Aragonés trod the same path in the opposite direction in response to sustained German pressure early in the second half, sending on Xabi Alonso to accompany the excellent Marcos Senna in the screening role.

Spanish formations highlighted another feature of a final tournament where twin strikers were a relatively rare sight. Attacking partnerships were mainly based on a deeper-lying forward playing off a lone striker – illustrated by the relationship between David Villa

**THE EURO TECHNICAL REPORT IS ALSO
AVAILABLE ON UEFA.COM.**



and Fernando Torres. The injury to the former prompted Luís Aragonés to perm midfielder Cesc Fábregas into the equation – indeed, in terms of numbers, EURO 2008 offered more job opportunities to middle-to-front midfielders than to out-and-out strikers. For this reason, when it came to selecting the tournament’s all-star squad, UEFA’s Technical Team opted to split the midfielders into two categories: one for midfielders in the classical mould and a second for those who patrolled the middle-to-front areas.

Inevitably, many post-tournament reflections are inspired by the winners – yet the Spanish style differed radically from the formula successfully employed by Greece in 2004. Statistics tell part of the story. The 2004 title had been won with a 44% share of the ball; Spain had 54% of possession and peaked at 63% against Sweden. In Portugal, Greece took the title with 42 goal attempts; in Austria, Spain had 98. The 2008 champions recorded an average of more than 540 passes per game and avoided the pitfall of converting possession into an obsession. They posted the highest average of forward passes and, in the final, 35% of their constructed attacks led to a goal attempt. Their combination play provided an object lesson in the fine art of purposeful possession.

Whereas set plays had been a highly effective weapon in the Greek armoury, the referee’s whistle was, more often than not, the cue for a Spanish player to put the ball down and touch it to the nearest companion, simply to get the ball back into circulation and to offer the opposition no respite in their pursuit of it. As in the UEFA Champions League, the percentage of goals stemming from set plays registered a sharp fall. If we extrapolate the four successfully converted penalties from the equation, only 12 of the other 73 goals came from dead-ball situations and one of them (Daniele De Rossi’s strike which deflected off Thierry Henry into

the French net) was a directly struck free kick. Michael Ballack’s winner against Austria was touched to one side and then set up by a team-mate for his spectacular strike into the top corner. Only five goals stemmed from corners, half the number registered in 2004.

If the decline in set-play goals emerged as one of the talking points, it was no surprise that EURO 2008 underlined the importance of the ability to counter-attack. Almost half of the goals scored during open play resulted from counters or fast breaks which exploited the (rare) moments when efficient defensive blocks could be caught disorganised, outnumbered or spread out. As Andy Roxburgh remarks in the Technical Report, “there is no doubt that counters reached a new level of significance during EURO 2008 and were a key element in the success of the leading teams.”

The Technical Report, as well as offering technical analysis and debating points, represents a permanent statistical record of the event – and this also applies to the sister publications which have been appearing in recent months. The 2007/08 UEFA Champions League

report was launched at the Elite Club Coaches Forum in early September and a trio of reports on the European Under-17, Under-19 and Women’s Under-19 final tournaments have also been distributed to national associations.

Talking about the publications produced by UEFA with the coaches’ circle in mind, this issue of *The Technician* happens to be the 40th. Like this one, the first was printed in the aftermath of a European Championship and revealed that 68.8% of the goals at EURO ’96 had been scored by strikers. At EURO 2008, this was down to 53%. And, in stark contrast to the style which won this year’s title for the Spaniards, 62% of the goals resulted from moves of three passes or less. Only one reached double figures.

In that inaugural issue of *The Technician*, Andy Roxburgh concluded his editorial by commenting “there is no doubt that international football can stir, in a positive way, the passions of a nation, excite the imagination of the young, and bond people together in spite of their local differences.” Trends may come and go but that, at least, has remained unchanged.



David Silva scores Spain’s third goal in their semi-final against Russia in Vienna.



Getty Images

**ILLEGAL USE
OF THE HANDS IN THE
FINAL BETWEEN
SPAIN AND GERMANY.**

RESPECT AND PROTECT

REFEREEING WAS ONE OF THE ITEMS ON THE MENU FOR THE FIRST FULL DAY OF THE 8TH UEFA CONFERENCE FOR EUROPEAN NATIONAL COACHES IN VIENNA. HUGH DALLAS OF SCOTLAND, THE FORMER INTERNATIONAL WHO IS NOW A MEMBER OF THE UEFA REFEREES COMMITTEE, PRESENTED SOME REFLECTIONS ON EURO 2008, ALONG WITH UEFA'S HEAD OF REFEREEING, YVAN CORNU.

The final tournament raised one or two interesting issues, such as the Netherlands' opening goal against Italy – which features as a talking point in the technical report on the event. But, apart from isolated incidents, there were facets which could become regular features at UEFA events of the future.

For the match officials, EURO 2008 began well before the opening match. The 12 referees, each with two assistant referees from the same country, and the eight promising referees who

acted as fourth officials, were briefed prior to the tournament on various areas which had already been outlined to the participating teams – and the pre-event meetings with the teams represent an important feature which has already been written into the script for the final tournaments of UEFA's age-limit competitions. This sharing of knowledge hopefully contributed to the positive behaviour of the players, which, in purely statistical terms, resulted in a 20% decrease in yellow cards compared with EURO 2004 and a total of only three red cards (two

of them in the last minute) during the entire tournament in Switzerland and Austria, as opposed to eight in Portugal.

The aims of the referees and the Referees Committee were principally to protect the players, to protect the image of the game, and to promote mutual respect between players, referees and coaches.

Apart from highlighting the broader brush strokes of the philosophical approach, Hugh Dallas illustrated some details with DVD clips related to specific themes. Acts of serious foul play, the illegal use of arms and elbows, stopping promising attacks and denying obvious goal-scoring opportunities were issues that were addressed, with the emphasis on protecting the players and the game. Referees had been advised to be aware of the use of the arm as a weapon rather than a tool and Hugh Dallas pointed out a trend of fewer unfair challenges being directed towards players' legs yet more to the head, due to the illegal use of arms and elbows.

Hugh Dallas reminded the national coaches that following the denial of an obvious goal-scoring opportunity in the penalty area, the referee has a duty to apply the Laws of the Game: a penalty kick and a red card for the offender. In response to questions from the floor, he added that national asso-



Empics Sport / PA Photos

The goal scored by Van Nistelrooy for the Netherlands against Italy when Italy's Panucci was on the ground behind the goal line gave rise to a lot of discussions.

**HUGH DALLAS (SCOTLAND),
MEMBER OF THE UEFA REFEREES
COMMITTEE, MAKES HIS
PRESENTATION IN VIENNA.**



ciations do have the right to address the International Football Association Board (IFAB) regarding changes to the laws. This was because, in Vienna, a majority of coaches agreed that the triple punishment of penalty kick, red card and player suspension seemed excessive.

The notion of protecting the image of the game was covered by clips concerning holding and pushing in the penalty area and, in particular, the prevention of this prior to set pieces. In addition, the coaches were reminded that under Law 5 only the referee has the power stop "the match if, in his opinion, a player is seriously injured." This means that if a team puts the ball out of play when a player is injured, they should not expect the subsequent throw-in to be returned to them. The opening matchdays of the UEFA Champions League underlined that this has still not been fully assimilated by some players and coaches.

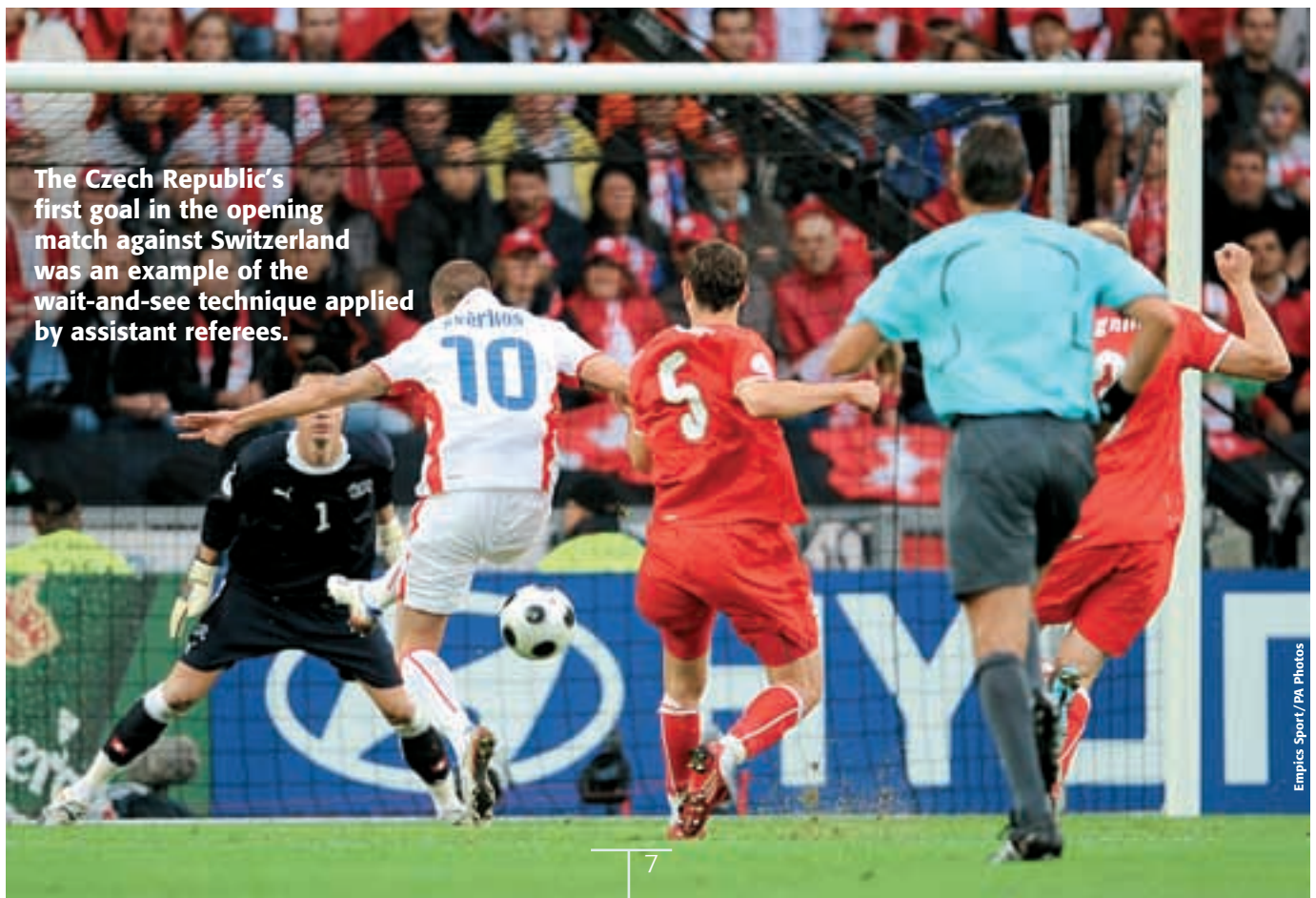
The offside law is always a topical issue and Dallas reminded participants once more of Law 11, which was graphically illustrated by the controversial Ruud van Nistelrooy goal for the Netherlands against Italy. The participants were also informed that assistant referees were instructed to adopt a so-called "wait and see" technique and the coaches all agreed that the assistant referee should wait before judging if a player in an offside position actually takes an active part in play. The first goal of the EURO 2008 tournament, scored by the Czech Republic in the opening match, provided a perfect example of an assistant adopting this wait-and-see technique.

The audience in Vienna also learnt of the methods referees are instructed to use to cut out dissent by word or action, with a minimum of a yellow card being shown to the offending player and any other players who get involved, particularly players who come from a distance to do so –

even if they happen to be the team captain.

The dismissal of both coaches during the match between Austria and Germany obviously fuelled debate among the coaching fraternity. Hugh Dallas was quick to reassure the technicians that UEFA's policy is for the officials to allow them to get on with their job of coaching from the bench, as long as this is done in a responsible manner and they remain low key and within their own technical area. If the referee decides that this is not the case, then he has the right to have the coach removed from the bench.

However, the moral behind the pre-tournament briefings and the presence of Hugh Dallas and Yvan Cornu in the midst of the national team coaches in Vienna is that exchanges between coaches and the refereeing fraternity are proving to be beneficial for both parties and should, hopefully, lead to better understanding and greater mutual respect.





**UEFA Champions League
in Moscow**
Manchester United FC v
Chelsea FC 1-1 after extra time
(6-5 in penalty shootout)
Gold: Sir Alex Ferguson
Silver: Avram Grant

GOLDEN OLDIES

THE SUMMER MONTHS ARE TRADITIONALLY LABELLED THE 'CLOSE SEASON' BUT, IN 2008, NO FEWER THAN EIGHT EUROPEAN TITLES WERE DECIDED IN JUST OVER TEN WEEKS BETWEEN MAY AND JULY. THE ANNUAL TRIBUTE TO THE TECHNICIANS WHO HAVE STEPPED ON TO THE PODIUM READS, THIS TIME ROUND, LIKE AN ODE TO EXPERIENCE.

Luís Aragonés led Spain to their historic EURO 2008 victory a few days short of his 70th birthday and his compatriot Juan Santisteban had, a few weeks earlier, ended his extensive and highly successful career in Spanish youth football with another Under-17 triumph at the age of 71. On the club scene, Sir Alex Ferguson had become the second most senior technician to win the UEFA Champions League by lifting the trophy in Moscow at the age of 66, while Dick Advocaat had, at 60, made history for Russian football by leading FC Zenit to UEFA Cup glory a week earlier and struck gold again when his side defeated

Sir Alex's protégés to win the UEFA Super Cup in Monaco. Horst Hrubesch emerged as the baby amongst the winners in the men's competitions at the age of 57 and, on the women's podium, Corrado Corradini struck another blow for the experienced campaigners by leading Italy to their first-ever Under-19 crown a few days before his 64th birthday.

Is it coincidence? A total of 757 matches on the benches of the Spanish league certainly add up to an enormous fund of experience for Luís Aragonés, the man nicknamed The Wise Man from Hortaleza in reference

to his origins in the suburbs of Madrid. Is it coincidence that he received the European Championship baton from Otto Rehhagel, champion of Europe in Portugal at the age of 65? During EURO 2008, Arsène Wenger was invited to comment on the younger coaches who were performing in Austria and Switzerland. "It's the same as with players," he responded. "If you're good, you're good – no matter how young or inexperienced you might be. But at this level, it's an advantage to have experience. When you're young, after all, you're more likely to make mistakes. And at top level, mistakes can be costly."



**European Football
Championship
in Austria / Switzerland**
Spain v Germany 1-0
Gold: Luís Aragonés
Silver: Joachim Löw

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Cetty Images

**UEFA Cup
in Manchester**
FC Zenit St. Petersburg v
Rangers FC 2-0
Gold: Dick Advocaat
Silver: Walter Smith



Cetty Images

**UEFA Super Cup
in Monaco**
FC Zenit St. Petersburg v
Manchester United FC 2-1
Gold: Dick Advocaat
Silver: Sir Alex Ferguson



Langer/Bongarts/Cetty Images

**European
Under-19
Championship
in Czech Republic**
Germany v Italy 3-1
Gold: Horst Hrubesch
Silver: Francesco Rocca



Sportsfile

**European
Women's Under-19
Championship
in France**
Italy v Norway 1-0
Gold: Corrado Corradini
Silver: Jarl Torske



Sportsfile

**European
Under-17
Championship
in Turkey**
Spain v France 4-0
Gold: Juan Santisteban
Silver: Francis Smerecki



UEFA-piwwoods.ch

**European
Women's Under-17
Championship
in Switzerland**
Germany v France 3-0
Gold: Ralf Peter
Silver: Gérard Sergent



Sportsfile

UEFA Women's Cup
1. FFC Frankfurt v
Umeå IK 1-1 / 3-2
Gold: Hans-Jürgen Tritschoks
Silver: Andrée Jeglertz



Sportsfile

**UEFA Futsal Cup
in Moscow**
MFK Viz-Sinara Ekaterinburg
v ElPozo Murcia FS 4-4
(3-2 in penalty shootout)
Gold: Sergey Skorovich
Silver: Eduardo São-Tiago 'Duda'



**LUIS ARAGONÉS
IS THROWN INTO THE AIR
BY HIS PLAYERS.**

THE SEEDS OF SPAIN'S CHAMPION HARVEST

THE TRIBUTE TO THE WINNING COACH IN THE EURO 2008 TECHNICAL REPORT OPENS WITH A PARALLEL DRAWN BETWEEN THE SIGHT OF LUÍS ARAGONÉS BEING THROWN INTO THE AIR IN VIENNA AND AN IDENTICAL IMAGE OF JUAN SANTISTEBAN AFTER HIS TEAM HAD SUCCESSFULLY DEFENDED THE EUROPEAN UNDER-17 TITLE IN TURKEY A FEW WEEKS EARLIER. ALTHOUGH HIS OWN COLLECTION OF SILVERWARE IS UNPARALLELED IN YOUTH FOOTBALL, THE GREATEST SATISFACTION OF THE COACH WHO HAS NOW RETIRED WAS UNDOUBTEDLY THE SIGHT OF SO MANY OF HIS FORMER PUPILS LIFTING THE HENRI DELAUNAY TROPHY IN VIENNA.

Juan, how would you describe the philosophy that you have helped to implant in Spanish football over the years?

Well, my philosophy is based on a love of technique and respect for the ball. I like a style in which every player on the park is generous in his love for the ball and is generous with his team-mates.

What about the playing style. How has that developed?

Well, the basis is to mirror in the youth teams what is being done in the senior team. If the senior team plays 4-4-2, we have to produce players equipped to operate that system. If the senior team plays 4-3-2-1, the same. The objective is always to develop players

who can be used in the senior team and who will feel comfortable playing there. That's a valid approach because you're working for yourself in terms of going to final tournaments and so on. And, at the same time, you're working for the future because you're supplying players to the senior team who can slot in without any problems. Almost 90% of the players who went to EURO had come through our age-limit teams.

Can you think of a player who, when you saw him as a youth player, you knew would become famous?

It doesn't happen that often. The example that springs to mind is Bojan Krkic, who immediately struck you as an extraordinary player. He had enormous qualities and it was obvious that he was capable of doing things that kids of his age don't usually do. The thing in this job is that you look to the future only to a certain extent – you focus on what the player is and it's up to you to imagine what he could be. But always taking his development step by step. So you tend to be cautious



Cesc Fábregas is one of the many Spanish players to have blossomed in European youth competitions.

**ANOTHER SPANISH COACH
WAS ALSO TRIUMPHANT THIS YEAR,
JUAN SANTISTEBAN, WHOSE
UNDER-17S SUCCESSFULLY DEFENDED
THEIR EUROPEAN TITLE.**



Sportsfile



Ceety Images

Iker Casillas, Spain's goalkeeper and captain, also starred in the youth national teams.

on the conclusions you draw when you first see a promising young player. You need to be patient. Other cases come to mind, like Iker Casillas, who played his first final for us when he was 15. People asked me how I dared to field him at that age, but I could see the makings of an exceptional talent and had to give him a chance. We've had other players who we've also put in when they were very young – like Cesc Fàbregas, for example. We played him in Finland in 2003 at 16 and didn't have any doubts about him because he was a player whose talent was immediately visible. You know that they can become top players at an early age, so you give them every possible opportunity to demonstrate their qualities, to develop and to gain international experience.

Are you proud of the work you've done in building the Spanish national team?

It depends on the definition of 'you'. If you're talking about Juan Santisteban,

the answer is 'no' because, over a period of 17 years, this has been a team effort. We talk about team spirit among the players and it's just as important – if not more important – among the coaching staff as well. We've all spoken our minds, we've all helped each other, we've never envied each other. Iñaki Sáez, Ginés Meléndez ...everybody has given his best and, I give thanks to God, things have worked out well.

What about the players who haven't made it to the top? What would you say are the reasons?

I think a number of factors can be decisive and most of them stem from the personal life and environment of the player. In the first place, his friends. Secondly, his agent or agents. Thirdly, his parents. I have been on the bench at youth matches and heard some barbarous shouting by parents at their own children. I cannot see any reason to shout insults at your son. It's unbelievable. Maybe the stress levels corre-

spond to a desire to see the boy earning money from football as soon as possible and to help dad to buy an apartment or give up work. If so, it's the wrong direction to take. The same principle applies to many agents who seem to be in too much of a hurry to cash in. If a player has quality, he's going to get there. So there's no reason to risk everything by trying to get him there a bit more quickly by putting him under unbearable pressure when he's 16 or 17. Very often, the player responds to that pressure by focusing on his individual play rather than the collective efforts by the whole team. And that can put the youngster on a downhill slope. It's sad to see it, but that's the way it is.

Does that mean you're pessimistic about the future?

No! I hope I haven't given that impression. We have been producing quite a few talented young footballers in Spain, not least we've because we've upgraded our facilities in recent years and the youngsters now have opportunities to train on artificial surfaces in the regions where it's difficult to maintain grass pitches. The kids can play more football and, in consequence, I think our football is, little by little, going up – not overnight, but we've been scaling the rungs one by one and I think we're getting closer to the top of the ladder. Unless we – and that includes the parents and the agents – do something stupid, I don't see any reason why Spain can't consolidate a position among the elite national teams.

Looking back over the years, was there anything that you would have done differently?

No. I only have positive memories of everything. Because since I've been working for the Spanish national association, I've been treated with such warmth and affection that I have felt totally fulfilled. I'm struggling to find the right words because, as soon as I start thinking about it, I get emotional.



**FORUM PARTICIPANTS
LISTEN INTENTLY TO THE
DISCUSSIONS.**

TEN YEARS AFTER HAPPY ANNIVERSARY FOR THE CLUB COACHES' FORUM

PUT NAMES TO THE FACES ON THE TEAM PICTURE, ADD THEM UP AND YOU'LL HAVE HARD EVIDENCE THAT THE 10TH UEFA ELITE CLUB COACHES FORUM SET A NEW ATTENDANCE RECORD.

THE PROFILE OF THE EVENT WAS HIGH ENOUGH TO WARRANT COVERAGE IN UEFADIRECT AND ON UEFA.COM, SO THE TECHNICIAN MAKES NO APOLOGIES FOR GETTING STRAIGHT TO THE POINT – OR RATHER, STRAIGHT TO SEVERAL POINTS.

Dead Ball Goals – A Dying Species?

The 2007/08 UEFA Champions League combined with EURO 2008 to highlight a decrease in the number of goals stemming from set plays. The previous year's forum had already identified modern levels of espionage as a relevant influence on the decline and, as José Mourinho commented, "the loss of the surprise factor means that it only makes sense to prepare novel set

plays before the really special games." The technicians also felt that walls are far too often set up at below-regulation distances and that defences are, these days, much more effectively organised and focus on zonal rather than man-to-man marking – which make block-off manoeuvres more difficult to complete.

Arsène Wenger threw another theory into the melting pot. "I think goalkeep-

ers, these days, receive more protection and the improvement in training facilities also has a relevance," he remarked. "Players are now doing their daily work on much better surfaces where it is easier to keep the ball on the deck. This means that there are not so many good headers of the ball." Is that true in your neck of the woods?

Make or Break?

Many of the teams who prosper in UEFA club competitions approach their domestic fixtures with the obligation of breaking down theoretically inferior opponents. However, the European season highlighted the importance of counter-attacks and, as Mirko Slomka said, "we spend a lot of time analysing how opponents react when we win the ball." Claudio Ranieri acted as 'spokesman' for Italy's counter-attacking traditions by reviewing the philosophy of "protecting the goal, breaking fast, and making optimal use of possession." He recalled that, during the Arrigo Sacchi era, AC Milan's success was based on "rational use of space and quick strikes." Manuel Pellegrini broached the issue of whether to counter with a controlled combination move or a direct through ball and many of his colleagues agreed that the nature of the counter depends on who wins the ball and his capacity



Photo-montage: UEFA-plwoods.ch

The forum membership in 2008.

**CHELSEA'S LUIZ FELIPE SCOLARI TALKS
TO INTER'S JOSE MOURINHO, PORTO'S JESUALDO
FERREIRA AND SPORTING'S PAULO BENTO.**



to think and act at high pace – coupled with enough technical ability to execute the move. As Gérard Houllier said, “the counter-attack is prospering because modern footballers are better equipped to combine skill and speed”.

The importance of rapid counters was underlined by coaches who agreed that defensive blocks are being set up more quickly than ever before. “You very rarely see a rigid 4-4-2 any more,” Arsène Wenger commented. “You can’t afford to be second best in midfield and most teams defend 4-5-1. This was also visible at EURO, where many of the teams who started with 4-4-2 ended up operating 4-5-1.”

Home Truths about Away Goals

The away goals rule, introduced 41 years ago, was the subject of lively debate at the forum – and you can join the debate by reading one of the talking points in the 2007/08 UEFA Champions League technical report. The question is whether the importance of away goals in knockout ties has become excessive in terms of influencing the tactical approach to home games. The ruling was written into the European script with a view to encouraging away teams to adopt a more adventurous philosophy. But there are recent examples to support arguments that the rule is now tending to produce the inverse effect, with home teams tending towards conservatism in the knowledge that goals conceded on home soil can inflict serious damage. So has the time come to think again?

Vive La Différence!

The question posed to the coaches at the forum was deceptively simple: in top competitions, what makes the difference? Nobody came up with an instantaneous, definitive answer – but the contributions were thought-provoking. Sir Alex Ferguson, for example, pinpointed freshness, squad rotation, longer-term reviews of a player’s form and the importance of resting minor injuries. Arsène Wenger followed this



Gérard Houllier between Claudio Ranieri and Manuel Pellegrini.

up by highlighting the ability to identify problems: “the good coach anticipates and is brave enough to act – maybe to sacrifice a key player in order to repair the team structure”. Some of the others rubbed their chins and grinned “I wish we had that luxury!” But the more serious responses focused on willingness to take risks and, as Luiz Felipe Scolari commented, “what makes the difference is a united, technically equipped group with great team spirit and the ability to focus on results” – a view which moved the debate nicely on to the next point...

How Important is Leadership?

This is becoming a major issue in coach education – and one which deserves more in-depth coverage in a future issue of *The Technician*. And this was a part of the event in Nyon where Paulo Sousa played, as he had done during his distinguished playing career, an influential midfield role. The forum discussions rapidly led to questions about how many of their leadership qualities are being given free rein by a new generation of club owners and presidents – which, in turn, led to debate about the greatest challenges facing today’s top-level coach. Crisis

management and levels of control within the dressing room emerged as key issues in an environment where players, agents, owners, media and supporters are increasingly demanding. “The job itself has become very demanding,” said Arsène Wenger, “and you can underline the word ‘demanding’ three times. The coach’s qualities are these days questioned more than ever, which means that you need to be stronger than ever.”

“The job is basically about observations, decisions and, above all, control,” said Sir Alex Ferguson. “Players are being affected by external factors which can undermine their mental strength, so you need to be clear and firm in your own mind if you are going to be an effective leader.”

“The forum was a short but very intense gathering,” Andy Roxburgh commented. “Over ten years it has developed and the fact that some of the coaches made enormous efforts to attend underlines how much they enjoy meeting each other in the knowledge that UEFA has, over the years, taken on board many of the proposals that have been made at the forum.”



FATIH TERIM GIVES INSTRUCTIONS DURING TURKEY'S TRAINING AT THE ERNST HAPPEL STADIUM IN VIENNA.

TRAINING

THE 16 TEAMS WHICH TOOK PART IN EURO 2008 HAD TWO AND A HALF WEEKS TO PREPARE BEFORE THE OPENING MATCH. DURING THAT PERIOD A VARIETY OF METHODS WERE USED TO IMPROVE FITNESS (RECOVERY AND REGENERATION WAS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT), TACTICAL KNOW-HOW, INDIVIDUAL TOUCH AND TEAM COORDINATION. SOME TEAMS ACTUALLY PERSONALISED PRE-TOURNAMENT TRAINING SCHEDULES BASED ON THE INDIVIDUAL PLAYERS' WORKLOAD DURING THE SEASON.



Portugal's public training sessions at the Maladière stadium in Neuchâtel were attended by more than 12,000 supporters.

The Portuguese played full-scale (11 v 11) practice matches – 12,000 fans watched them in Neuchâtel, with Luiz Felipe Scolari, the boss, acting as referee and coach. The emphasis for Portugal was on possession play, counter-attacking and set plays (many repeated before the practice game restarted). Guus Hiddink, the head coach of Russia used an 11 v 11 game, on a shortened pitch (goals on the 16 metre line at each end), to prepare for the semi-final match against Spain. The Dutch maestro worked on fast transitions, incisive play and good delivery from the flanks. Fatih Terim was one of the coaches who employed specialised fitness trainers – he engaged the same

US company that Jürgen Klinsmann worked with during 2006 World Cup in Germany. The fitness team used

heart monitors to control the intensity of the training, with information displayed on the computer screen in real time. In the build-up to the tournament, Fatih focused on patterns of play through midfield – first with shadow play and then in a controlled 11 v 11.

The Dutch trained the way they played, and high intensity pressure and fast switching of play were emphasised in conditioned games during the preparation phase. They showed their readiness when they produced their sensational counterattacking moves against Italy in their first game in Berne. The Oranje players' willingness to support the fast breaks was already evident in training.

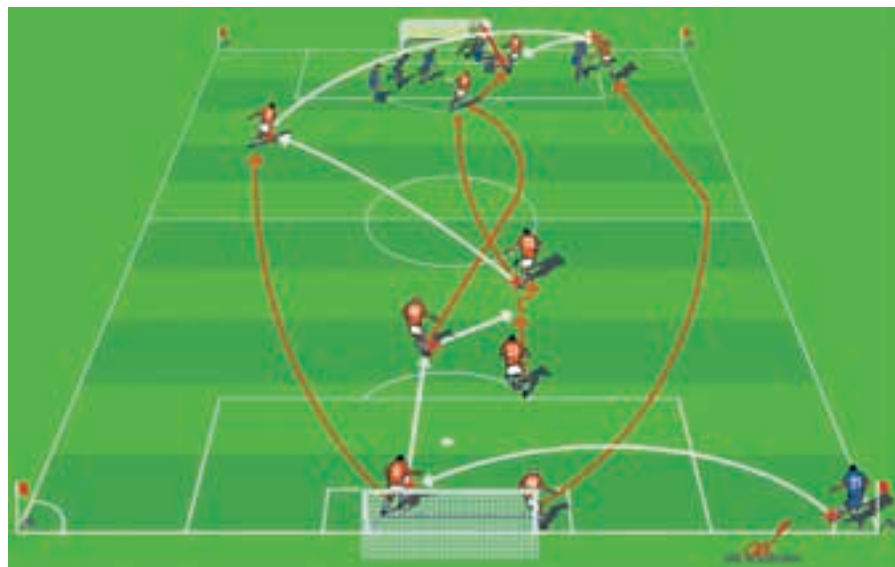


Xavi's incisive pass for Spain's winning goal in the EURO final.

**THE STADIO OLIMPICO IN ROME
IS THE VENUE FOR THE
2009 UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL.**



D. Aquilina



A counter-attack leads to the Netherlands' second goal against Italy.

The Spanish were less dynamic in the preparation drills and practice routines, but the quality of their combination play at training, through central areas and on the flanks, was impressive. An important request from the Spanish was to have the stadium pitches watered in order to facilitate their slick passing movements and penetration play.

Austria have had a football/fitness trainer (Roger Spry) on their coaching staff for some time. With some support from UEFA, the Austrians

(under the control of their technical director, Willi Rutensteiner) produced a DVD of their conditioning training at EURO 2008, and this will be used as a teaching aid in the ÖFB's development programme.

The training process is largely hidden from the public gaze, but the results are there for all to see when the matches are played. The quality of football at EURO 2008 was ample proof that the technical teams did a great job in preparing their national squads for competitive action.



Spain's Luis Aragonés prepares his squad during EURO 2008.

AGENDA

2008

November 11

- UEFA Grassroots Panel (Nyon)

November 24 – 28

- Medical Committee
- Development and Technical Assistance Committee (Nyon)

December 8

- 1st Elite Club Doctors Forum (Nyon)

2009

January 26 – 28

- UEFA Technical Directors Conference (Paris)

February 1 – 6

- Winter Referees Course (Malaga)
- Referees Committee

February 16 – 20

- Youth & Amateur Committee
- Football Committee

March 16 – 20

- UEFA Grassroots Workshop (Hamburg)

May 6 – 18

- 8th European Under-17 Final Tournament (Germany)

May 20

- UEFA Cup Final (Istanbul)

May 27

- UEFA Champions League Final (Rome)

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