



UNDER21™
CHAMPIONSHIP



UEFA European Under-21 Championship
Final round - DENMARK 2011

THE ROUTE TO THE FINAL

The fixture list for the final tournament in Denmark had an unfamiliar look to it. The Germans, champions in 2009, were not there to defend the title. Nor were the Dutch and Italians, winners of the three previous tournaments. Iceland, who had finished their qualifying group ahead of Germany, were making their debut. And the Swiss were back for the first time since 2004. Only three of the 2009 finalists were in Denmark – and the surprises continued when the ball started rolling at the four venues in Jutland.

In Group A, the hosts – an unknown quantity as they had not needed to play their way through qualifying rounds – opened with a 1-0 loss against the Swiss, despite fervent support from a huge crowd in Aalborg. They then fought back from a goal down against Belarus to stay alive with a 2-1 win, having had morale boosted by an equaliser within 90 seconds of conceding the opening goal. Iceland had held the upper hand during their final-tournament debut against Belarus but, having failed to convert three 1 v 1 situations on the keeper, were torpedoed by a red-card-and-penalty scenario which turned out to be the pivotal moment in the group. The spot kick and a late second goal against ten-man opposition allowed Belarus to make a winning start. Iceland then went down 2-0 to an impressive Swiss side to set the scene for an astonishing final matchday on which, to guarantee progress, the Swiss needed to draw and the other three needed to win.

Belarus seemed to be out of the equation when 2-0 down to the Swiss at half-time in Aarhus. But, just before the hour mark, news filtered through from Aalborg of two Icelandic goals in as many minutes. The 2-0 scoreline was the cue for a frantic finish to a match which produced 43 goal attempts. The Danes, throwing caution to the wind, came back to 2-1 after 81 minutes – one goal short of qualification – only to be killed off by a third Icelandic goal in the second minute of added time. The final score of 3-1 not only eliminated the hosts but also dampened the Icelanders' joy after their first ever victory at the Under-21 finals, leaving them a goal short of a semi-final place.



Anxious faces in a packed Danish box during the 2-1 win over Belarus which proved to be the hosts' only victory of the tournament PHOTO: ANDREW BOYERS / ACTION IMAGES

While both teams trooped dejectedly off the pitch in Aalborg, the crowd down in Aarhus was witnessing the incongruous sight of the Belarus delegation celebrating a 3-0 defeat by the Swiss, with players ultimately leaving the pitch smiling but shaking their heads in disbelief. After magnifying glasses had been applied to the regulations, the three-way tie on three points was found to be favourable to the Belarusians – much to the chagrin of the dejected Danes and Icelanders.

Group B, playing in Herning and Viborg, fell only marginally short in terms of drama. Spain set out their stall for the entire tournament by dominating possession in their opener against England but, after taking an early lead, failed to find a knockout punch and dropped two points when striker Danny Welbeck equalised two minutes from time. It turned out to be the only match that Luis Milla's team failed to win. Czechs and Ukrainians struggled against Spain's possession-based combination play, failed to score a goal and jointly managed only three on-target goal attempts in three hours of football. The two teams had themselves met on the opening day, when two goals by Borek Dockal earned the Czechs a 2-1 win, extended their Under-21 team's two-year unbeaten run and confirmed their status among the tournament favourites.

On the final day of the group stage, Spain clinched top spot by impressively beating Ukraine 3-0 (David De Gea saving a penalty, it has to be said), leaving the greater drama to unfold in Viborg, where England, after following their draw against Spain with another goalless stalemate with the Ukrainians, needed to beat the Czechs to claim second place, whereas the latter only needed a draw. When Welbeck struck again to put England 1-0 up with 12 minutes to play, Stuart Pearce's side were pencilled in as semi-finalists. But in the 83rd minute Jakub Dvořák sent on Jan Čížek and Tomáš Pekhart to reinforce the attack. He could hardly have dreamed that his substitutions would yield such spectacular dividends, with the former scoring in the 89th minute and the latter in 90+4 to earn second place and send the 2009 silver medallists home. It left the Czechs one point behind the Spaniards, whose central triangle, formed by Ander Herrera, Thiago Alcántara and screening midfielder Javi Martínez, had generated some of the tournament's most eye-catching football.

The same Czech changes, however, failed to produce the same effect in the semi-final against the Swiss, where defensive qualities prevailed. Two hours of football produced six on-target goal attempts and six minutes before the end of extra time, Swiss striker Admir Mehmedi resolved a seemingly innocuous situation with a crisp low shot into the corner of the Czech net to earn them a 1-0 victory which put Switzerland into the Under-21 final for the first time. Pierluigi Tami's well-structured team had played crisp combination football throughout the tournament and with Xherdan Shaqiri and Innocent Emeghara providing pace and creativity on the wings, the attack ably led by Mehmedi had always looked dangerous. FC Basel goalkeeper Yann Sommer started the final on the back of 390 minutes without conceding a goal.

The other semi-final also required an additional half-hour. Andrei Voronkov somehow managed to hook his team's only on-target effort into the Spanish net seven minutes before the break, after which their extenuating rearguard action kept the Spaniards at bay until a minute from time,

when substitute Jeffren Suárez sped to the byline and crossed for Adrián López to knock in the equaliser at the near post and spark off massive celebrations. Spain had been within seconds of elimination. But, with Belarusian resistance finally breached, another sub, Diego Capel, reached the byline at the other end, supplying a top-quality cross from the left for Adrián to head, his second goal and make it 2-1 in the last minute of the first period of extra time. A 3-1 victory was sealed when, eight minutes later, Jeffren sped into Belarusian territory and hit the net with a fierce left-footed long-range drive.

England's exit had, in the meantime, signified an addition to the fixture list, with Belarus and the Czech Republic meeting in Aalborg to decide which of the two would join the Spaniards and Swiss as European qualifiers for the 2012 Olympic Games. Although the Czechs dominated possession, their scoring touch deserted

them for the third time in five games. Only one of their goal attempts was on target and their lack of firepower was punished when, with only two minutes remaining, Belarus defender Egor Filipenko surged forward for a left-footed volley into the Czech net. Their second victory of the tournament made Belarusian football history by earning them an Olympic place, while Spain and Switzerland travelled to Aarhus to dispute the European Under-21 crown.



Spain's screening midfielder Javi Martínez beats the Czech No11, Tomáš Pekhart, to a high ball during the Group B game in Viborg

PHOTO: ANDREW BOYERS / ACTION IMAGES



BARÇA BOYS BLOSSOM

In May 2008, in the Turkish city of Antalya, Spain won the European U17 Championship with an inspired display in the final against France. Two players who were part of that 4-0 winning team were back in the national jersey for the U21 final tournament in Denmark in June. They were the youngest members of Luis Milla's squad, both 20-year-old starlets from FC Barcelona, but their contribution to the team's success was significant. Right full-back Martín Montoya and midfield creative force Thiago Alcántara (a scorer in 2008 and a substitute for Barça in the UEFA Champions League final at Wembley) lined up in the U21 final against Switzerland, with a built-in winning attitude and surrounded by a talented group of emerging internationals.

Switzerland had reached the final in Denmark by winning four matches in a row without conceding a goal. Spain, on the other hand, had drawn (1-1) with England in the group stage and had come perilously close to elimination before scoring a last-minute equaliser against Belarus in the semi-finals. The final score after extra time may have been 3-1, but the victory was hard earned. However, by common consensus, the two best sides in the 2011 U21 tournament had prevailed when Switzerland, wearing all red, faced the white knights of Spain on a sunny evening in Aarhus.

For the first 15 minutes it was a "war of attrition", with an intense midfield battle for domination of the ball and the territory. While the Swiss operated a 4-2-3-1 formation, the Spanish favoured the simplicity of 4-3-3 – both formations,

however, were highly condensed. Only after Switzerland's Fabian Lustenberger was yellow carded for a clumsy challenge on Spain's Ander Herrera did things settle down. It was never ugly, but the fluidity that both teams had shown earlier in the campaign was missing during that opening phase. Two players, however, began to exert their influence on the proceedings: Switzerland's talented winger Xherdan Shaqiri and Spain's Juan Mata. Interestingly, both provided good examples of the "Messi syndrome", in reference to the Argentinian superstar's role, before he recently became a central attacker, of operating from the right wing, although left-footed.

Shaqiri, the Swiss No10, watched by national coach Ottmar Hitzfeld, was the first to threaten, but his free-kick went sailing harmlessly over the Spanish crossbar. He then swivelled around Spain's Dídac

Swiss No10 Xherdan Shaqiri puts some weight into a challenge on Spain's inspirational midfielder Thiago Alcántara during the final in Aarhus

PHOTO: MICHAEL STEELE / GETTY IMAGES





Spanish midfielder Ander Herrera meets an excellent cross by left-back Dídac Vilà to head his team 1-0 up in the final PHOTO: ANDREW BOYERS / ACTION IMAGES

Vilà and volleyed the ball, surprisingly with his right foot, straight at David De Gea. The Spanish goalkeeper double-fisted the ball over the top to safety. And we all know what happens when you wave a red flag at a bull – those in Swiss red created the provocation and the young Spanish charged forward.

A brilliant combination move in the 35th minute involving Spain's Ander Herrera, Juan Mata and Thiago Alcántara saw the latter drive a shot just wide of the Swiss goal. Six minutes later the boys in white had a breakthrough: Mata switched the play right to left, full-back Dídac Vilà delivered the perfect cross into the box, and Ander Herrera, the midfielder on his way from Real Zaragoza CF to Athletic Club de Bilbao, headed the ball powerfully into the net from close range. Switzerland's coach, Pierluigi Tami, made an entry in his black book – a reference point for a half-time team talk that had suddenly taken on a different, difficult slant.

Second-half substitutes and a tactical change saw the Swiss mirror the shape of the Spanish, but this had little impact on the flow of the game. With the Spanish midfielders Mata and Javi Martínez

omnipresent, the game was controlled by Luis Milla's men. Set plays became the major weapon of both teams. The Spanish came close from an indirect free-kick and a corner, the later resulting in an unopposed header by Alberto Botía which flew wide of the target. The Swiss, meanwhile, had two great efforts at goal following outstanding dead-ball deliveries from wide on the right by Xherdan Shaqiri. On the second one, which came after 77 minutes of play, Swiss centre-back Timm Klose could not believe his glancing header went outside, rather than inside, the Spanish post. Spurred on by their near misses, Switzerland increased the tempo and intensified their pressing play. But what appeared to be a light at the end of the tunnel turned out to be a Spanish train coming in the other direction.

Referee Paolo Tagliavento of Italy gave a free-kick to Spain just inside the Swiss half, but the official delayed the restart to allow a Spanish substitution: Jeffren Suárez replacing Adrián López in attack. With everything static, Thiago Alcántara brought the game to life with an audacious direct free-kick which sailed over the keeper into the Swiss net. It was a brilliant right-foot

drive, so unexpected that anyone who blinked at that moment missed it. Nine minutes remained, but few in the 16,000 crowd would have given Switzerland any hope of recovery. Yes, the boys in red continued to compete bravely, and they did have a couple of half-chances before the final whistle sounded, but the day belonged to Spain and its next generation of top talents.

As usual on these occasions, the winners danced in a circle while the losers avoided contact, lost in their dark mood of disappointment. Young Thiago and Montoya had again triumphed on a European stage, evoking memories of their U17 exploits in Turkey three years earlier. Between these youthful successes the senior Spanish national team had, of course, won both UEFA EURO 2008 and the 2010 FIFA World Cup. It was little wonder, therefore, that Ángel María Villar Llona, president of the Spanish FA, had a contented smile on his face on that pleasant summer evening in Aarhus when his U21s added to the trophy cabinet.

Andy Roxburgh
UEFA Technical Director

TECHNICAL TOPICS

JOTTINGS FROM JUTLAND

Spain's victory was understandably interpreted as an extension to the national team's successes at UEFA EURO 2008 and the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa. However, as UEFA's technical observers pointed out – along with several of their coaching colleagues who led the eight final round teams into the tournament – many of their rivals perceived the main challenge as coping with Spain's possession-based combination game rather than imitating it. Spanish national teams have often adopted the 4-2-3-1 structure with twin screening midfielders and in Denmark three teams favoured this formation: the hosts, the Ukrainians and the Swiss, the latter providing opposition to the Spaniards in the final. However, Luis Milla made an adjustment to the title winners' structure with a move towards FC Barcelona's 4-3-3 arrangement, deploying Javi Martínez in the single screening midfield role usually performed for Barça by Sergio Busquets (who, in terms of age, would have been eligible for the tournament in Denmark, incidentally).

Spain's Under-21 title, like their senior victories, could be linked to sustained success in youth development competitions. Goalkeeper David De Gea was European and world champion at Under-17 level, Juan Mata, Diego Capel and Jeffren Suárez were European Under-19 champions in Poland in 2006, five of their team-mates were in the squad which successfully defended that title in Austria a year later, and the FC Barcelona duo of Thiago Alcántara and Martín Montoya were gold and silver medallists with the Under-17s and the Under-19s respectively.

Less than a year before the Aarhus final, Thiago Alcántara had played the UEFA Under-19 final in Caen as a screening midfielder alongside his Barça colleague Oriol Romeu. In Denmark, however, Milla deployed him in a more advanced midfield role, using Ander Herrera alongside him to produce a nice balance between defensive and creative qualities higher up the park, with Javi Martínez operating (outstandingly) behind them. There was sufficient attacking fluidity and flexibility for György Mezey, one of UEFA's technical observers, to comment, "Spain's formation was 4-1 plus the others."

SHAPING UP FOR SUCCESS

In Denmark, Spain were the only team to operate a clear-cut 4-3-3 formation with two genuine wingers. The 4-2-3-1 formation, which had taken firm hold in other UEFA age-limit competitions, was used by three of the eight participants – among them the Swiss, who occasionally varied their shape (as they did in the final) to operate with a single screening midfielder (Fabian Lustenberger). The Danes experimented with Mads Albæk alongside Kasper Povlsen in the screening roles but in two games fielded Mike Jensen in a slightly more advanced position, where he could offer closer support to the inspirational Christian Eriksen. The Ukrainians consistently fielded Volodymyr Chesnakov in one of the holding roles but rang the changes in terms of selecting his partner.

The other teams played variations on the 4-4-2 theme, with Iceland using Aron Gunnarsson as a single screen in a 4-1-4-1 structure. The Czechs fielded Marcel Gecov in the screening role. England initially deployed Michael Mancienne – usually a defender – in their pivotal midfield position, while Belarus usually fielded a flat four in midfield, with the impressive Mihail Sivakov occasionally playing the midfield sweeping role in a 4-1-4-1 structure.

Spain's right-winger Juan Mata takes on Oleg Veretilo and Belarus captain Mikhail Sivakov during the dramatic semi-final in Viborg

PHOTO: ANDREW BOYERS / ACTION IMAGES





Two of the tournament's most impressive full-backs in action as England's No14 Kyle Walker, and Spain's left-back, Dídac Vilà, compete for possession during the 1-1 draw in Herning PHOTO: MICHAEL STEELE / GETTY IMAGES

FEET AND WINGS

One of the salient features in Denmark was that the two finalists operated with genuine wingers. The Spanish squad contained a plethora of them, with Diego Capel and Jeffren Suárez ready, willing and able to stand in for the most regular starters, Juan Mata and Iker Muniain. Much of Switzerland's attacking potential stemmed from the pace of Innocent Emeghara on the left and the busy, low-wheel-based Xherdan Shaqiri on the right. The resurgence of the winger – as opposed to attacking midfielders deployed in wide areas – was accompanied, as UEFA's technical director, Andy Roxburgh, commented in his appraisal of the final, by examples of the "Messi syndrome". The appearance of the diminutive left-footed Argentine on the right

flank of Barça's attack before he moved to his current, more central role was the cue for other left-footers (Arjen Robben, for example) to make the switch. In the Aarhus final, all the wingers were "wrong-footed", with Spain's Mata and Switzerland's Shaqiri emerging as influential figures. England's gifted Daniel Sturridge was fielded either in a central role or – more usually – wide on the right, where his pace and left-footed ball skills posed constant threats. The "exception" was Spain's left-footed left-winger Diego Capel, who delivered the classic lofted cross from the left byline for Adrián to head Spain 2-1 up during extra time in the semi-final against Belarus.

Describing Capel as an "exception" hints at a change in the nature of advances through the wide areas, where "wrong-footed"

wingers like Shaqiri and Sturridge are less likely to respect traditions of heading for the corner flag and delivering a cross. Disciples of Messi are more likely to cut inside in search of shooting positions, look for combinations or create spaces for overlapping full-backs to take over as the main suppliers of traditional crosses – as demonstrated by Spain's left-back Dídac Vilà, whose centre allowed Ander Herrera to open the scoring in the final. Spain's left-footed Jeffren provided a spectacular example of the change in *modus operandi* when, receiving the ball on the right wing, he made an infield run, unleashing a fierce drive with his favourite foot and clinching the 3-1 victory over Belarus in the semi-final.

TECHNICAL TOPICS



Czech midfielder Lukas Vácha fights a lone battle against Belarusian opponents and is tackled by Egor Filipenko during the Olympic play-off match in Aalborg, during which he was red-carded

PHOTO: IAN WALTON / GETTY IMAGES

BULLFIGHTERS AND BULLS

The Argentinian World Cup winning coach César Luis Menotti recently said that the Spanish national team's change of fortunes dated back to a pre-EURO 2008 decision by Luis Aragonés "to be a bullfighter instead of a bull". His viewpoint could be equally well applied to the 2011 Under-21 final tournament, where UEFA's technical observers detected a fairly even split between bullfighters and bulls – the teams who set out to take the initiative and those who focused on reacting to whatever red rags the opposition waved at them.

The tournament in Denmark thus fuelled discussions. As it happened, the teams who reached the final were ones who patently set out to take the initiative, dictate the tempo and dominate possession. On their way to the Aarhus final, Switzerland averaged 57% of the ball and Spain 66%. Yet the Spaniards were seconds away from being eliminated in the semi-final by a Belarus side which had only 27%

of possession but hit the net with its one and only on-target scoring attempt, derived from a long throw-in. Bronze medals and an Olympic place undoubtedly represented "success" for the Belarusians' defend-and-counter style and provoked further debate on "artistry v effectiveness" and the difficulties facing coaches in their quest for the right balance.

The observers in Denmark detected a group of teams who trod the middle ground between Belarus and the two finalists. For them, predisposition to take the initiative was pegged to specific match situations rather than playing philosophies. The hosts, inevitably pushed forward by home support, were ahead on the scoreboard for only 19 minutes during the entire group stage, allowing impatience, frustration and necessity to enter the equation. Iceland were impressive in terms of defensive organisation but only came to life as an attacking force in the final nothing-to-lose situations in the second half against the

Swiss and their final fixture against the Danes, when technical observers detected greater confidence, aggression and off-the-ball movement. The Czechs, Ukrainians and English occupied various areas of a middle ground between combination play and defend-and-counter philosophies with the emphasis on being difficult to break down in defence. The three teams jointly scored seven goals in 750 minutes of football.

The counter-argument is to question the viability of implanting a playing "philosophy" at Under-21 level where, for example, 13 members of the Icelandic squad were already playing their football in eight different foreign countries. The Czech and Swiss squads contained nine émigrés apiece, although only three of the Swiss were starters in the final. Spain's starters against them were all home-based (Dídac Vilà having been loaned back by AC Milan to RCD Espanyol). Is this a significant factor when it comes to implanting a philosophy and building a team equipped to take the initiative – to be a bullfighter rather than a bull?

WINNING THE BALL

The Spanish team were alone among the eight teams in Denmark systematically exerting high pressure on opponents with the clear objective of regaining possession as quickly as possible and as near to the opposing goal as possible. Switzerland, Denmark and England were among the teams who sporadically pressed high according to match situations. The general tendency, however, was to drop back in rapid attack-to-defence transitions, lure the opposition forward and then hit them on the break. Belarus were textbook exponents of rapid transition into a compact, disciplined defensive block. In their second match (against Spain), the Czech side opened with intense high pressure. But failure to win the ball and defensive problems derived from pushing players forward soon persuaded them to withdraw to defensive positions within the final third.

However, teams were also generally well aware of the need to counter the counter, with the screening midfielders playing important roles in cutting off fast breaks by the opposition. The declining success rate in terms of goals resulting from fast counters raises further questions about the need to encourage teams to take the initiative rather than rely exclusively on counter-punching.

BUILDING FROM THE BACK

High standards of goalkeeping contributed to the tournament's low scoring rate, with Yann Sommer's record of 430 minutes without allowing the ball to hit the Swiss net an outstanding feature. He and Spain's David De Gea conceded only two goals in five matches. However, the need to play quickly out from the back while opposing defensive blocks were not in place meant that shot-stopping was not the only task for the keepers in Denmark. The ability to distribute the ball quickly and accurately was a fundamental quality in terms of launching attacks.

Much the same applied to central defenders. Ukraine's Yaroslav Rakits'kyi provided a prime example of the central defender equipped to launch moves with long diagonal switches of play, as opposed to safety-first passing at the back. When trailing to the Czechs in the opening game,



Icelandic midfielder Gylfi Sigurdsson, surrounded by Swiss opponents, holds off Jonathan Rossini during the Group A match in Aalborg PHOTO: MICHAEL STEELE / GETTY IMAGES

it was he who was pushed forward into midfield when Pavlo Iakovenko's team switched to three at the back. The Swiss pair of Jonathan Rossini and Timm Klose played an important role in building from the back, as did Spain's central defenders Alberto Botía and Álvaro Domínguez. In both cases, the centrally placed screening midfielder (Fabian Lustenberger and Javi Martínez respectively) was a quintessential component in laying the foundations for attacking moves. Initiating moves from the central areas was the cue for rapid advances by full-backs, notably England's Kyle Walker and the adventurous Spanish pair, Martín Montoya and Dídac Vilà.

The tempo of attacking build-ups was also one of the discussion points to emerge from the tournament. Although the Spaniards were technically equipped to be "patient" in their approach work, the tempo of their passing posed permanent questions for their opponents. On the other hand, some teams also approached the attacking part of the game with degrees of patience, but the tempo of their build-ups was not high enough to present problems to well-organised defensive blocks.

SOLO SKILLS

Although the emphasis was on well-organised defensive structures, soloists often emerged as the decisive elements when it came to unlocking doors.

The Spanish and Swiss teams featured several players who were ready to run at opponents in 1 v 1 situations and inject an element of chaos into disciplined and well-structured defensive blocks. Where the champions excelled, however, was in possessing players in all departments whose technical qualities allowed them to receive the ball in congested areas and make good use of it. Spain's play provided a myriad of examples of passes played to seemingly marked team-mates who, nevertheless, were unfazed by the proximity of opponents ready to exert immediate and vigorous pressure on the ball carrier. Both finalists were teams who were technically equipped to play their way round defensive blocks by supplying fast, skilful wingers or adventurous full-backs. But they were also technically equipped to retain possession and elaborate slick short-passing moves aimed at penetrating the heart of the compact, densely populated defensive blocks. The challenge for youth development coaches is to encourage and produce players with the ability to manage the ball in the tightest of situations and when under intense physical pressure. The Spanish national team demonstrated in Denmark that, in tune with FC Barcelona's performance in the UEFA Champions League final, the ability to play in congested areas wears down the opposition not only in terms of calories spent but also in terms of the psychological damage inflicted by long sequences of unsuccessful challenges for the ball.

GOALSCORING ANALYSIS

SET-PLAY DROUGHT IN DENMARK

With 36 goals scored in 16 matches, the 2011 UEFA Under-21 final tournament produced two goals fewer than the previous event in Sweden in 2009, but two more than both the 2006 and 2007 editions. However, the set-play return in Denmark was dramatically less than that of recent competitions. Two years ago, 45% of the goals emanated from standard situations (it was 50% in 2006), but in 2011 the total was less than 20%. In fact, only one goal was scored as the result of a corner (Spain's Ander Herrera heading in at the back post against England) and one from a free-kick (Thiago Alcántara's ingenious strike from long range which sealed victory for Spain in the final). A long throw by Belarus against Spain and four penalties, one after a rebound, completed the set-play return. Traditionally, UEFA's U21 final tournaments have been fertile ground for producing goals following restarts, but Denmark turned out to be surprisingly atypical in this respect.

Another aspect of goalscoring which had less impact in 2011 was in the category of counterattacks/fast breaks. In Sweden in 2009, 11 of the 21 goals from open play were the result of counters (around 50%), while in Denmark only three goals (10%) came from this source – advanced counters by both Switzerland and Ukraine and a collective break by the Czech Republic against England. This suggests that countering the counter, in particular the use of screening players and cautious defensive blocks, was an important aspect of each side's strategy.

In open play, the biggest success came from through passes (45%), with Spain, Switzerland and the Czech Republic the leading exponents of the art. Spain beat the Czech Republic 2-0 with both goals coming from penetrating passes (the first a superb assist from World Cup winner Juan Mata), while the Czechs did the same double in their 2-1 victory over England. Also, Switzerland's opening goal against Iceland, scored by Fabian Frei, was set up by a clever through ball from FC Basel's young star Xherdan Shaqiri. On the subject of incisive moves, Shaqiri was the only player



One of the watershed moments of the tournament, as the ball hits the Belarus net in the 89th minute of the semi-final. Adrián López's late equaliser paved the way for Spain's 3-1 extra-time win

PHOTO: MICHAEL STEELE / GETTY IMAGES

to score a solo goal with a dribbling run and finish. The Swiss No10 manoeuvred his way through the Danish defensive block, with nine players on the edge of the penalty box, before finishing with his trusted left foot.

Another important source of open-play goals came from crosses (31%), with Spain the leading lights. Their opening goal in the final against Switzerland, scored by Ander Herrera, came from a brilliant delivery by full-back Dídac Vilà – an inviting cross with pace and spin. A further example of top-level crossing and finishing was Iceland's second goal against the hosts, Denmark. Great play on the left wing by Gylfi Sigurdsson preceded the cross for Birkir Bjarnason's powerful header, putting the visitors two up and on their way to a 3-1 victory. Incidentally, Iceland's three goals in the tournament all came in this one match.

As usual, goals from long-range shots added to the spectacle and in some cases they were also decisive. Of the five goals scored in this manner, two were match winners: Nicolai Jørgensen for Denmark against Belarus (2-1) and Admir Mehmedi for Switzerland against the Czech Republic (1-0), the latter in the semi-final.

Overall, the final tournament in Denmark produced some outstanding moments of skilful finishing. Spain, the champions, scored 11 times – 4 more than their nearest rivals and fellow finalists Switzerland. Only one match ended 0-0 (England v Ukraine), although the semi-final between Switzerland and the Czech Republic needed extra time to produce the game's solitary goal. Adrián of Spain won the adidas Golden Boot with five goals, while his team-mate Juan Mata topped the list for assists. But it was another Spanish player who left an indelible mark on the tournament in Denmark. Thiago Alcántara's amazing 81st-minute goal in the final not only sealed victory for Spain over Switzerland, but provided the scoring charts with the only entry in the free-kick section. The 2011 edition of the U21 championship will be remembered for many excellent things – set plays, however, will not be one of them, with the exception, of course, of this Spanish gem.

GOALSCORING

Action	Guidelines	No. of goals
Corners	Direct from/following] a corner	1
Free-kicks (direct)	Direct from a free-kick	1
Free-kicks (indirect)	Following a free-kick	–
Penalties	Spot kick (or a follow-up from a penalty)	4
Throw-ins	Following a throw-in	1
Combinations	Wall pass/three-man combination play	1
Crosses	Cross from the wing	9
Cutbacks	Pass back from the byline	1
Diagonals	Diagonal pass into the penalty box	–
Running with the ball	Dribble and close-range shot/dribble and pass	1
Long-range shots	Direct shot/shot and rebound	5
Forward passes	Through pass/pass over the defence	12
Defensive errors	Bad pass back/mistake by the goalkeeper	–
Own goals	Goal by the opponent	–
		Total 36



Daniel Welbeck's header puts England 1-0 ahead after 77 minutes and seemingly on course for the semi-finals – only for the Czechs to hit two late goals

PHOTO: MICHAEL STEELE / GETTY IMAGES



TALKING POINTS

OLYMPIC IDEAL?

To describe it as a sub-plot in Denmark is maybe to understate the influence of the Olympic Games on the final round of the Under-21 competition. To decide the three European representatives to join the British hosts in 2012, the fixture list was modified to include a bronze-medal play-off (won by Belarus thanks to an 88th-minute goal) to decide which country would accompany Spain and Switzerland in the search for Olympic gold. At first glance, there appears to be no prime material for debate, until scrutiny of the squads reveals that one-third of the participants in Denmark were over the Olympic age limit. To be precise, this applied to 63 of the 183 squad members.

Squad by squad analysis adds some nuances. Two Spanish players (Juan Mata and skipper Javi Martínez) made history

by lifting the Under-21 trophy a year after they had become world champions with the senior team in South Africa. Their willingness to “step down” to Under-21 level illustrates the players’ enthusiasm for the Olympic experience, while Spain’s squad, Luis Milla explained, had been designed for possible prolongation into 2012, with Mata and Martínez figuring among the three over-age players permitted. On the other hand, in Olympic terms, the Swiss squad contained nine over-age players (four of whom started the final against Spain), and six of the ten outfielders who started the bronze-medal play-off for Belarus against the Czechs were also above the Olympic limit. With 11 of the squad born in 1988, Belarus had more “senior citizens” than any of the other finalists, with Ukraine taking second place in these particular rankings on ten.

The questions for debate are therefore glaringly obvious. Is it acceptable, correct or fair that Olympic places can be won by players who will not be able to compete in the Olympic tournament? Is it appropriate to use the Under-21 finals as a qualifying competition for the Olympic Games? If so, should the age-limit dates be rearranged to coincide with the Olympic cut-off dates? Or should Europe rearrange the Olympic cut-off dates to marry them with the age limits in the Under-21 championship?

There are further questions, including the familiar issue of player release for an Olympic tournament scheduled for the July-August period when clubs are competing for UEFA Champions League or UEFA Europa League places. But that’s another talking point...

Czech screening midfielder Marcel Gecov steers the ball away from the outstretched leg of Ukrainian midfielder Ievgenii Konoplianka during the Group B match in Viborg.

PHOTO: IAN WALTON / GETTY IMAGES





Denmark's inspirational midfielder Christian Eriksen is pursued by Iceland's Johann Gudmundsson during the crucial Group A match in Aalborg which produced 43 goals attempts

PHOTO: MICHAEL STEELE / GETTY IMAGES

A SENIOR MOMENT?

How many of the players at the Under-21 final tournament were familiar faces to European television audiences? This seemingly academic question is posed with an ulterior motive. When the ball started rolling in Denmark, the competitors had jointly notched up 229 international appearances at senior level. No fewer than 48 players – more than a quarter of the total workforce – had already represented their respective national A teams. OK, 17 of them had won only a single senior cap but, apart from the Spanish World Cup duo mentioned above, others had a significant amount of top-level international experience. For example, Egor Filipenko, scorer of the goal that earned Belarus their Olympic berth, had played 15 times in the senior team; Denmark's Christian Eriksen was only one game behind him; Xherdan Shaqiri and Andriy Yarmolenko had played 11 times for Switzerland and Ukraine respectively; and the Icelandic squad featured 14 players who had played 85 senior games in total, led by midfielder Aron Gunnarsson, capped 23 times at A level.

Parameters vary, with Iceland providing an example of a national association with a restricted workforce in comparison with the numbers of registered players in, say, England, France or Germany. Also in the

equation is the debate among coaches on the motivation level of players who have played in the senior team and are then required to "step down". Some national associations have an unwritten policy of not bringing players back to lower levels once they have moved a step higher up the international ladder. Is this a valid policy? Should there be a set figure of senior appearances after which a player is no longer eligible for the Under-21 team? If so, what should that figure be?

DEVELOPMENT OR RESULTS?

An extension of the previous talking point relates to the evolution of the game. Many moons ago, the Under-21s were regarded as young hopefuls with the potential of reaching the senior team. These days, as the previous point indicates, the two levels are closer than ever. A year after the 2009 finals in Sweden, for example, six members of Germany's winning Under-21s were returning from the senior World Cup with bronze medals. They were among the 123 squad members under the age of 23.

In UEFA's youth development competitions, the tendency is for coaches to offer a taste of international football to as many squad members as possible. In Denmark, the tendency was for coaches to field a fairly stable starting lineup with minimal

changes from game to game. As a result, 46 outfielders played 45 minutes or less, with 28 of them sitting on the bench during the entire tournament, along with the 16 reserve goalkeepers. The coaches in Denmark evidently focused on putting out their best team in search of results. Is this the correct approach? Can the Under-21 competition be regarded as "youth development"? Or has it become just as results-oriented as the senior game?

PLAYING BY THE RULES?

On the final matchday of the group stage, the permutations for deciding the placings in Group A ran to over half a page. And when the final whistles were blown in Viborg and Herning, there were incongruous scenes as the Belarus delegation celebrated a place in the semi-finals after losing 3-0 to the Swiss, who had emphatically underlined their status as group winners. Iceland's simultaneous 3-1 victory over the hosts had produced a three-way tie on three points – and Belarus emerged as best of the three on the basis of the two goals they had scored against ten-man Iceland. It gave them a +1 goal difference in the head-to-heads with Iceland and Denmark, compared with 0 and -1 respectively.

In UEFA competitions, the use of the head-to-head system generally makes sense – especially in situations where a group might contain a team susceptible, according to the form book, of being beaten by heavy scorelines. This was evidently not the case in Denmark, where application of the head-to-head regulations meant that, exaggerating to the extreme, Belarus could have been beaten 12-0 by Switzerland and still have qualified. As it happened, the situation in Group A was highly unusual in that the three teams level on three points had an identical goal tally of three scored and five conceded. Should it therefore be considered a statistical freak and be consigned to the history books without any more ado? Or is there room for further fine-tuning of the regulations when it comes to separating teams who finish groups level on points? For example, when rule books and calculators have to come out to decide second place, is it appropriate that results against the group winners should be ruled out?

RESULTS

Group A

11 JUNE 2011

Belarus – Iceland 2-0 (0-0)
1-0 Andrei Voronkov (77-pen), 2-0 Maksim Skavysh (87)
Attendance: 2,817 at Aarhus Stadium: KO 18.00
Yellow cards: BLR: Mikita Bukatkin (26), Sergei Politevich (65) / ISL: Rurik Gislason (79)
Red card: ISL: Aron Gunnarsson (76)
Referee: Aleksandar Stavrev (FYR Macedonia) /
Assistants: Borsch; Soteriou / **Fourth official:** Liany

Denmark – Switzerland 0-1 (0-0)
0-1 Xherdan Shaqiri (48)
Attendance: 9,678 at Aalborg Stadium: KO 20.45
Yellow cards: DEN: Nicki Bille Nielsen (90+4) / SUI: Gaetano Berardi (62)
Referees: Robert Schörgenhofer (Austria) / Tomé; Simkus / Strahonja

14 JUNE 2011

Switzerland – Iceland 2-0 (2-0)
1-0 Fabian Frei (1), 2-0 Innocent Emeghara (40)
Attendance: 1,903 at Aalborg Stadium: KO 18.00
Yellow cards: SUI: Granit Khaka (38), Nassim Ben Khalifa (89) / ISL: Bjarni Vidarsson (12), Gylfi Sigurdsson (44), Hólmar Eyjolfsson (90+3)
Referees: Marijo Strahonja (Croatia) / Borkowski; MacGraith / Strömbergsson

Denmark – Belarus 2-1 (1-1)
0-1 Dzmitry Baha (20), 1-1 Christian Eriksen (22-pen), 2-1 Nicolai Jørgensen (71)
Attendance: 18,152 at Aarhus Stadium: KO 20.45
Yellow cards: BLR: Mikita Bukatkin (32), Sergei Politevich (88) / DEN: Mads Albæk (64)
Referees: Paolo Tagliavento (Italy) / Akrivos; Koskela / Mažić

18 JUNE 2011

Iceland – Denmark 3-1 (0-0)
1-0 Kolbeinn Sigthorsson (58), 2-0 Birkir Bjarnason (60), 2-1 Bashkim Kadrii (81), 3-1 Hjörtur Valgurdsson (90+2)
Attendance: 9,308 at Aalborg Stadium: KO 20.45
Yellow cards: ISL: Gylfi Sigurdsson (23), Aron Gunnarsson (45+1), Runik Gislason (57) / DEN: Mike Jensen (83), Nicolai Jørgensen (90+3)
Red card: ISL: Eyjólfur Sverrisson (coach)
Referees: Milorad Mažić (Serbia) / MacGraith; Tomé / Stavrev

Switzerland – Belarus 3-0 (2-0)
1-0 Admir Mehmedi (6-pen), 2-0 Admir Mehmedi (43), 3-0 Frank Feltscher (90+3)
Attendance: 1,604 at Aarhus Stadium: KO 20.45
Yellow cards: SUI: Granit Khaka (27), Admir Mehmedi (83) / BLR: Oleg Veretilo (5), Pavel Niakhaichyk (29), Siarhei Matveichyk (41, 68), Uladzimir Khvashchynski (65)
Yellow / red card: ISL: Siarhei Matveichyk (68)
Referees: Markus Strömbergsson (Sweden) / Simkus; Akrivos / Liany

GROUP STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Switzerland	3	3	0	0	6	0	9
Belarus	3	1	0	2	3	5	3
Iceland	3	1	0	2	3	5	3
Denmark	3	1	0	2	3	5	3

Group B

12 JUNE 2011

Czech Republic – Ukraine 2-1 (0-0)
1-0 Borek Dockal (49), 2-0 Borek Dockal (56), 2-1 Maxym Bilyy (87)
Attendance: 4,251 at Viborg Stadium: KO 18:00
Yellow cards: CZE: Tomáš Pekhart (28), Marcel Gecov (46), Jan Moravek (54), Lukas Vácha (90) / UKR: Roman Zozulya (44)
Referees: Milorad Mažić (Serbia) / MacGraith; Koskela / Hansen

Spain – England 1-1 (1-0)
1-0 Ander Herrera (14), 1-1 Daniel Welbeck (88)
Attendance: 8,046 at Herning Stadium: KO 20.45
Yellow cards: ESP: Thiago Alcántara (24), Ander Herrera (70) / ENG: Daniel Welbeck (35)
Referees: Markus Strömbergsson (Sweden) / Akrivos; Borkowski / Tagliavento

15 JUNE 2011

Czech Republic – Spain 0-2 (0-1)
0-1 Adrián López (27), 0-2 Adrián López (47)
Attendance: 4,662 at Viborg Stadium: KO 18.00
Yellow cards: CZE: Lukas Vácha (33), Libor Kozák (62), Ondrej Mazuch (80) / ESP: Juan Mata (25), Javi Martínez (25), Adrián López (47), Alberto Botia (53)
Referees: Robert Schörgenhofer (Austria) / Soteriou; Borsch / Liany

Ukraine – England 0-0
Attendance: 3,495 at Herning Stadium: KO 20.45
Yellow cards: UKR: Ievgenii Konoplianka (24), Oleg Golodyuk (31), Maxym Bilyy (35), Yaroslav Rakits'kyi (62) / ENG: Jack Rodwell (38), Scott Sinclair (61), Fabrice Muamba (90+1), Phil Jones (90+3)
Referees: Aleksandar Stavrev (FYR Macedonia) / Simkus; Tomé / Hansen

19 JUNE 2011

Ukraine – Spain 0-3 (0-2)
0-1 Juan Mata (10), 0-2 Adrián López (27), 0-3 Juan Mata (72-pen)
Attendance: 3,302 at Herning Stadium: KO 20.45
Yellow cards: UKR: Anton Kanibolotskyi (27), Andrii Iarmolenko (45), Denys Garmash (66), Ievgenii Konoplianka (73) / ESP: Martín Montoya (70), David De Gea (74)
Red card: UKR: Denys Garmash (71)
Referees: Marijo Strahonja (Croatia) / Koskela; Soteriou / Schörgenhofer

England – Czech Republic 1-2 (0-0)
1-0 Daniel Welbeck (76), 1-1 Jan Chramosta (89), 1-2 Tomáš Pekhart (90+4)
Attendance: 5,262 at Viborg Stadium: KO 20.45
Yellow cards: ENG: Kyle Walker (69) / CZE: Marek Suchy (80), Jan Chramosta (90)
Referees: Paolo Tagliavento (Italy) / Borsch; Borkowski / Hansen

GROUP STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spain	3	2	1	0	6	1	7
Czech Republic	3	2	0	1	4	4	6
England	3	0	2	1	2	3	2
Ukraine	3	0	1	2	1	5	1

Semi-Finals

22 JUNE 2011

Spain – Belarus 3-1 after extra-time (0-1, 1-1)

0-1 Andrei Voronkov (38), 1-1 Adrián López (89),

2-1 Adrián López (105), 3-1 Jeffren Suárez (113)

Attendance: 7,529 at Viborg Stadium: KO 18.00

Yellow cards: ESP: Adrián López (36), Alberto Botia (80), Javi Martínez (115) / BLR: Pavel Niakhaichyk (17), Maksim Skavysh (37), Mihail Sivakov (67), Oleg Veretilo (90+4)

Referees: Markus Strömbergsson (Sweden) / Simkus; Torné / Tagliavento

Switzerland – Czech Republic 1-0 after extra-time (0-0; 0-0)

1-0 Admir Mehmedi (114)

Attendance: 5,038 at Herning Stadium: KO 21.00

Yellow cards: SUI: Fabian Frei (45), Admir Mehmedi (115) /

CZE: Ondrej Mazuch (23), Milan Cerný (65), Lukas Vácha (117)

Referees: Robert Schörgenhofer (Austria) / MacGraith; Borsch / Mažić

Final

25 JUNE 2011

Switzerland – Spain 0-2 (0-1)

0-1 Ander Herrera (41), 0-2 Thiago Alcántara (81)

Switzerland: Yann Sommer (capt.); Philippe Koch, Timm Klose, Jonathan Rossini, Gaetano Berardi; Fabian Lustenberger; Xherdan Shaqiri, Granit Xhaka (Pajtim Kasami 67), Fabian Frei (Amir Abrashi 54), Innocent Emeghara (Mario Gavranovic 53); Admir Mehmedi.

Spain: David De Gea; Martín Montoya, Albert Botia, Alvaro Domínguez, Dídac Vilà; Javi Martínez (capt.); Juan Mata, Thiago Alcántara, Ander Herrera (Diego Capel 90), Iker Muniain (Daniel Parejo 85); Adrián López (Jeffren Suárez 80).

Attendance: 16,110 at Aarhus Stadium: KO 20.45

Yellow cards: SUI: Fabian Lustenberger (16), Gaetano Berardi (61) /

ESP: Javi Martínez (77), David De Gea (90+4)

Referees: Paolo Tagliavento (Italy) / MacGraith; Simkus / Schörgenhofer

Olympic Play-Off

25 JUNE 2011

Czech Republic – Belarus 0-1 (0-0)

0-1 Egor Filipenko (88)

Attendance: 870 at Aalborg Stadium: KO 15.00

Yellow cards: CZE: Lukas Vácha (31, 75), Libor Kozák (78), Marcel Gecov (82) / BLR:

Oleg Veretilo (26), Andrei Voronkov (44), Maksim Skavysh (60), Aliaksandr Hutar (90+1)

Yellow / red card: CZE: Lukas Vácha (75)

Referees: Milorad Mažić (Serbia) / Borsch; Borkowski / Strömbergsson

The Spanish squad in full celebratory chorus after taking the European Under-21 title for the first time since 1998

PHOTO: ANDREW BOYERS / ACTION IMAGES



BELARUS

HEAD COACH **Heorhi KANDRATSYEU**

Date of Birth: 07/01/1960



"In the semi-final against Spain, my players stuck to our game plan perfectly. You can't just go out to play attacking football, so the priority was defence. The plan worked for 89 minutes, then we were short of concentration at the end. First we let their winger reach the byline and then the striker get the first touch. We were almost there. But we had a very successful tournament and I'm happy that Belarus have won a place at the Olympics. My team left every last drop of energy out on the pitch and played good football. They deserve praise."



Belarus v Denmark

- 4-4-1-1 (4-1-4-1 v Danes) with single or twin screen and withdrawn 'second striker'
- Deep, compact defending with minimal space between lines and nine behind ball
- Extensive use of direct passes by defenders or keeper to lone striker
- Comfortable without the ball; well-coordinated defensive movements
- Always looking for quick counters with aggressive collective running
- No7 the captain and pivotal figure when building through midfield
- Well-organised, highly motivated team with strength and athletic qualities

No	Player	Date of Birth	Pos	ISL	DEN	SUI	ESP	CZE	G	Club
1	Aliaksandr HUTAR	18.04.89	GK	90	90	90	120	90		FC BATE Borisov
2	Stanislau DRAHUN	04.06.88	MF	90	90	90	120	90		FC Dinamo Minsk
3	Siarhei MATVEICHYK	05.06.88	DF			68	S	76		FC Gomel
4	Sergei POLITEVICH	09.04.90	DF	90	90	S	120	90		FC Dinamo Minsk
5	Dzmitryy BAHА	04.01.90	MF	75	90	90	59+	56+	1	FC BATE Borisov
6	Yury ASTRAUKH	21.01.88	DF							FC Vedrich-97 Rechyt'sa
7	Mihail SIVAKOV	16.01.88	MF	90	90	90	120	90		Wisla Krakow (POL)
8	Mikita BUKATKIN	07.03.88	MF	90	45*	S	51+			FC Naftan Novopolotsk
9	Maksim SKAVYSH	13.11.89	FW	12	32	54	84	83	1	FC BATE Borisov
10	Aliaksandr PERAPECHKA	07.04.89	MF	89	76	45*	61*	34*		FC Dinamo Minsk
11	Andrei VORONKOV	08.02.89	FW	78	58	36	69*	90	2	FC Kryvbas Kryvyi Rih (UKR)
12	Artem GOMELKO	08.12.89	GK				X	X		FC Lokomotiv Moskva (RUS)
13	Pavel NIAKHAICHYK	15.07.88	MF		14	90	120	90		FC BATE Borisov
14	Yury RYZHKO	10.10.89	DF							FC Torpedo Zhodino
15	Dmitry REKISH	14.09.88	MF	15	45+		26	7		Polonia Warszawa (POL)
16	Mikhail HARDZEICHUK	23.10.89	MF							FC BATE Borisov
17	Vitali HAIDUCHYK	12.07.89	DF			20				FC Dinamo Brest
18	Dzianis PALIAKOU	17.04.91	DF	90	90	90	120	14		FC Shakhtyor Soligorsk
19	Yauheni SAVASTSYANAU	30.01.88	DF							FC Neman Grodno
20	Oleg VERETILO	10.07.88	DF	90	90	90	120	90		FC Dinamo Minsk
21	Egor FILIPENKO	10.04.88	DF	90	90	90	120	90	1	FC BATE Borisov
22	Dzmitry HUSHCHANKA	12.05.88	GK							FC Vitebsk
23	Uladzimir KVASHCHYNSKI	10.05.90	FW	1		24+				FC Dinamo Brest

Pos = Position; G = Goals; S = Suspended; * = Started; + = Substitute; I = Injured/ill; X = Returned to club after group stage

CZECH REPUBLIC



Czech Republic v England

- Variations on 4-4-2 with single screen and midfield diamond
- High level of technique; able to build patiently with short combinations
- Resorted to more direct attacking in response to high pressure (e.g. v Spain)
- Rapid transition to compact defensive block; all three midfielders back
- Dangerous crosses (notably by overlapping No5) for rapid near-post runs
- Strong in 1 v 1 defending; fast collective counters when ball was won
- Outstanding team spirit; high levels of motivation; never-say-die attitude

HEAD COACH **Jakub DOVALIL**

Date of Birth: 08/02/1974



"We qualified from a tough group, so that was an encouraging aspect for the future. But in the semi-final against Switzerland, we didn't do what we set out to do before the game. We didn't hit top form in the tournament and there were moments when, sincerely, we performed badly. We knew that we could play better and I couldn't understand why we fell short of our standards. In the play-off against Belarus, it was all about psychology and, unfortunately, we failed on that front and missed out on qualification for the Olympics."

No	Player	Date of Birth	Pos	UKR	ESP	ENG	SUI	BLR	G	Club
1	Tomás VACLIK	29.03.89	GK	90	90	90	120	90		FK Viktoria Zizkov
2	Jan LECJAKS	09.08.90	DF	90	90	90		13*		RSC Anderlecht (BEL)
3	Radim REZNIK	20.01.89	DF							FC Banik Ostrava
4	Ondrej MAZUCH	15.03.89	DF	90	90	90	120	90		RSC Anderlecht (BEL)
5	Ondrej CELUSTKA	18.06.89	DF	90	90	90	120	90		SK Slavia Praha
6	Lukas VÁCHA	13.05.89	MF	89	90	S	120	75		FC Slovan Liberec
7	Tomas HORAVA	29.05.88	MF	45*				90		SK Sigma Olomouc
8	Borek DOCKAL	30.09.88	MF	90	90	90	120	90	2	FC Slovan Liberec
9	Libor KOZÁK	30.05.89	FW		45+	83	63*	45+		S.S. Lazio (ITA)
10	Jan MORAVEK	01.11.89	MF	45+	63	83	83			1. FC Kaiserslautern (GER)
11	Tomáš PEKHART	26.05.89	FW	90	45*	7	57+		1	1. FC Nürnberg (GER)
12	Jan KOVARIK	19.06.88	MF	75		68		77+		FK Jablonec
13	Marcel GECOV	01.01.88	MF	90	90	90	120	90		FC Slovan Liberec
14	Vaclav KADLEC	20.05.92	FW		27		8	7		AC Sparta Praha
15	Milan CERNÝ	16.03.88	MF		13	22	112			SK Slavia Praha
16	Marek STECH	28.01.90	GK							West Ham Utd. FC (ENG)
17	Marek SUCHÝ	29.03.88	DF	90	90	90	120	90		FC Spartak Moskva (RUS)
18	Lukas MARECEK	17.04.90	MF	1		90	120			RSC Anderlecht (BEL)
19	Jan CHRAMOSTA	12.10.90	FW			7	37	83	1	MK Mladá Boleslav
20	Michael RABUŠIC	17.09.89	FW							FC Zbrojovka Brno
21	Jan HOSEK	01.04.89	DF							FK Teplice
22	Adam HLOUSEK	20.12.88	FW	15	77			45*		1. FC Kaiserslautern (GER)
23	Jan HANUS	28.04.88	GK							SK Slavia Praha

Pos = Position; G = Goals; S = Suspended; * = Started; + = Substitute; I = Injured/ill

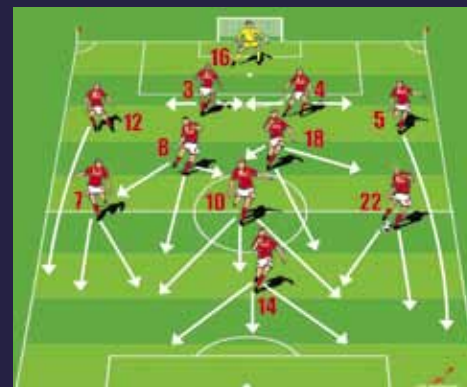
DENMARK

HEAD COACH **Keld BORDINGGAARD**

Date of Birth: 23/11/1962



"The major disappointment was to create so many scoring chances and not convert them. For the players, the defeat against Iceland was probably the heaviest day they had experienced in their careers – and I felt the same way. They gave everything and created enough to go through to the semi-finals. But it was a fantastic journey and I hope the guys will look back and acknowledge that they learned something while they were going through this process. There were enough positive things to think that the future is looking brighter."



Denmark v Switzerland

- 4-2-3-1 with occasional switches to 4-1-3-2 when chasing result
- Emphasis on building from the back with off-ball movement and overlapping
- Well-balanced screening midfielders; No8 more adventurous than No18
- No10 the creative catalyst of combination attacks and through passes
- Emphasis on quick transition to defensive positions rather than high pressing
- Effective wing play by left-footed No22 on right and right-footed No9 on left
- Strong team ethic; high levels of fighting spirit and rebound mentality

No	Player	Date of Birth	Pos	SUI	BLR	ISL	G	Club
1	Jonas LÖSSL	01.02.89	GK					FC Midtjylland
2	Anders RANDRUP	16.07.88	DF					Brøndby IF
3	Mathias ZANKA	23.04.90	DF	90	90	90		FC København
4	Andreas BJELLAND	11.07.88	MF	90	90	90		FC Nordsjælland
5	Nicolai BOILESEN	16.02.92	DF	82	90	90		AFC Ajax (NED)
6	Mads ALBÆK	14.01.90	MF		90			FC Midtjylland
7	Daniel WASS	31.05.89	MF	82	90	78		Brøndby IF
8	Mike JENSEN	19.02.88	MF	90	77	88		Brøndby IF
9	Nicolai JØRGENSEN	15.01.91	FW	33	81	90	1	Bayer 04 Leverkusen (GER)
10	Christian ERIKSEN	14.02.92	MF	90	90	90	1	AFC Ajax (NED)
11	Nicolaj AGGER	23.10.88	FW			2		Brøndby IF
12	Mads FENGER	10.09.90	DF	90	9	12		Randers FC
13	Lasse NIELSEN	08.01.88	DF					Aalborg BK
14	Nicki BILLE Nielsen	07.02.88	FW	90	90	62		Villarreal CF (ESP)
15	Jesper JUELGAARD	26.01.89	DF	8				FC Midtjylland
16	Mikkel ANDERSEN	17.12.88	GK	90	90	90		Reading FC (ENG)
17	Thomas DELANEY	03.09.91	MF					FC København
18	Kasper POVLSEN	26.09.89	MF	90	13	90		AGF Århus
19	Frederik SØRENSEN	14.04.92	DF					Juventus (ITA)
20	Matti LUND NIELSEN	08.05.88	MF					FC Nordsjælland
21	Henrik DALSGAARD	27.07.89	FW	8	62	28		Aalborg BK
22	Bashkim KADRIL	09.07.91	MF	57	28	90	1	Odense BK
23	Nicklas HØJLUND	06.03.90	GK					Lyngby BK

Pos = Position; G = Goals; S = Suspended; * = Started; + = Substitute; I = Injured/ill

ENGLAND

ENGLAND



England v Spain

- Variations on 4-4-2 or 4-1-4-1 with single screening midfielder
- Left-footed key attacker No10 deployed on right or as second striker
- Extensive use of direct supply to attackers No9 or No10 by full-backs or keeper
- Effective 1 v 1 defending; adventurous full-backs, especially fast No14 on right
- Good diagonal switches of play and supply of crosses
- Intense pressure in midfield; possession generally quickly regained
- Strength and pace throughout team; opponents given few scoring chances

HEAD COACH **Stuart PEARCE**

Date of Birth: 24/04/1962



"We showed flashes of decent play when we cut the opposition open. But our performance in the first two games was maybe where it cost us, especially against Ukraine. The Czechs banked up against the ball and made it difficult for us. We just didn't have the doggedness to see out the victory. We ended up hurting quite badly after that defeat, and I thought that if we'd won, our momentum could have taken us on to the final. But you have to take it on the chin, be humble and congratulate the people who put you out of the tournament."

No	Player	Date of Birth	Pos	ESP	UKR	CZE	G	Club
1	Frank FIELDING	04.04.88	GK	90	90	90		Derby County FC
2	Michael MANCIENNE	08.01.88	DF	67	89			Hamburger SV (GER)
3	Ryan BERTRAND	05.08.89	DF	90	90	90		Chelsea FC
4	Fabrice MUAMBA	06.04.88	MF		1	90		Bolton Wanderers FC
5	Chris SMALLING	22.11.89	DF	90	90	90		Manchester United FC
6	Phil JONES	21.02.92	DF	90	90	90		Manchester United FC
7	Marc ALBRIGHTON	18.11.89	MF			14		Aston Villa FC
8	Jordan HENDERSON	17.06.90	MF	90	90	64		Sunderland AFC
9	Daniel WELBECK	26.11.90	FW	90	90	90	2	Manchester United FC
10	Daniel STURRIDGE	01.09.89	FW	90	90	90		Chelsea FC
11	Scott SINCLAIR	25.03.89	FW	9	33	87		Swansea City FC
13	Alex McCARTHY	03.12.89	GK					Reading FC
14	Kyle WALKER	28.05.90	DF	90	90	90		Tottenham Hotspur FC
15	James TOMKINS	29.03.89	MF					West Ham United FC
16	Jack CORK	25.06.89	DF					Chelsea FC
17	Tom CLEVERLEY	12.08.89	MF	81		76		Manchester United FC
18	Henri LANSBURY	12.10.90	MF	23	33	26		Arsenal FC
19	Jack RODWELL	11.03.91	DF	23	57			Everton FC
20	Daniel ROSE	02.07.90	MF	67	57	3		Tottenham Hotspur FC
21	Nathan DELFOUNESO	02.02.91	FW					Aston Villa FC
22	Connor WICKHAM	31.03.93	FW					Ipswich Town FC
23	Jason STEELE	18.08.90	GK					Middlesbrough FC

Pos = Position; G = Goals; S = Suspended; * = Started; + = Substitute half; I = injured/ill

ICELAND



HEAD COACH Eyjölfur SVERRISSON

Date of Birth: 03/08/1968



"For a small country, it was unbelievable to be in the tournament and the whole nation was proud of the team. We have a lot of young, talented players, hungry for success and with perfect attitudes to be great players. They worked very hard and showed great character. We had only three days to prepare – which was too little – and there was tension because the pressure was high. But the players learned how to cope with big games, to deal with the media... and it could have been more successful if we'd had a bit of luck on our side."



Iceland v Denmark

- 4-1-4-1 with midfield diamond and single screen; spell of 4-1-3-2 v Swiss
- Well organised in defence and attack; players well aware of specific roles
- Screening midfielder and target striker the reference points
- Preference for direct supply in the depth; winning "second balls"
- Comfortable without the ball; higher, more confident pressing when trailing
- More open approach v Denmark with moves built from central defence
- Good use of wide areas by No9 and No7; able to build fluent attacking moves

No	Player	Date of Birth	Pos	BLR	SUI	DEN	G	Club
1	HARALDUR Björnsson	11.01.89	GK	90	90	90		Valur Reykjavík
2	Jón Skúli FRIDGEIRSSON	30.07.88	DF					KR Reykjavík
3	Hólmur Örn EYJOLFSSON	06.08.90	MF	90	90	90		West Ham Utd. FC (ENG)
4	Eggert JONSSON	18.08.88	DF	90	90	90		Heart of Midlothian FC (SCO)
5	Hjörtur VALGARDSSON	27.09.88	DF	90	90	90	1	IFK Göteborg (SWE)
6	Birkir BJARNASON	27.05.88	MF	7	30	79	1	Viking FK (NOR)
7	Jóhann GUDMUNDSSON	27.10.90	FW	32*	I	90		AZ Alkmaar (NED)
8	Bjarni VIDARSSON	05.03.88	MF	83	60			KV Mechelen (BEL)
9	Rúrik GISLASON	25.02.88	FW	29	90	68		Odense BK (DEN)
10	Gylfi SIGURDSSON	08.09.89	MF	90	90	90		TSG Hoffenheim 1899 (GER)
11	Arnór SMARASON	07.09.88	MF	61		11		Esbjerg fB (DEN)
12	Oskar PETURSSON	26.01.89	GK					Grindavík
13	Elfar Freyr HELGASON	27.07.89	DF					Breidablik
14	Thórarinn VALDIMARSSON	23.04.90	DF					IBV Vestmannaeyjar
15	Almar ORMARSSON	25.02.88	FW					Fram Reykjavík
16	Gudmundur KRISTJANSSON	01.03.89	MF		90			Breidablik
17	Aron GUNNARSSON	22.04.89	MF	76	S	90		Coventry City FC (ENG)
18	Andrés JOHANNESON	21.12.88	DF					Fylkir
19	Kolbeinn SIGTHORSSON	14.03.90	FW	90	90	90	1	AZ Alkmaar (NED)
20	Arnar PETURSSON	16.03.91	GK					Sønderjyske (DEN)
21	Alfred FINNBOGASON	01.02.89	FW	58+	45*			SC Lokeren (BEL)
22	Björn SIGURDARSON	26.02.91	FW		45+	22		Lillestrøm SK (NOR)
23	Jón Guðni FJOLUSON	10.04.89	DF	90	90	90		Fram Reykjavík

Pos = Position; G = Goals; S = Suspended; * = Started; + = Substitute; I = Injured/ill

SPAIN



Spain v Switzerland

- 4-3-3 with influential screening midfielder (No4); two mobile wide attackers
- Possession game based on short-passing combinations and off-ball movement
- Outstanding balance and skills in midfield trio (No4, No18, No19)
- Excellent keeper; strong central defenders; adventurous advanced full-backs
- Good interceptions; high pressing in numbers to win ball in attacking third
- Attack well led by No7 with support from interchanging midfielders
- Frequent switches of play; attacking variations on flanks and central areas

HEAD COACH **Luis MILLA**

Date of Birth: 12/03/1966



"Personally, I was delighted – but I was even more delighted for the players who built this success on hard work, spirit and belief. You could see that in the semi-final against Belarus. They knew that, if you keep fighting, faith is sometimes rewarded. Switzerland also deserved praise for their performance, not only in the final but throughout the tournament. The lads were thrilled, they understood what they had achieved. The whole team put together a great campaign, not just the starters but also the players who came off the bench and made key contributions. Everybody played their part."

No	Player	Date of Birth	Pos	ENG	CZE	UKR	BLR	SUI	G	Club
1	RUBÉN MIÑO	18.01.89	GK							FC Barcelona
2	CÉSAR Azpilicueta	28.08.89	DF			8				Olympique de Marseille (FRA)
3	Alvaro DOMÍNGUEZ	16.05.89	DF	90	90	90	77	90		Club Atlético de Madrid
4	JAVI MARTÍNEZ	02.09.88	MF	90	90	76	120	90		Athletic Club de Bilbao
5	Mikel SAN JOSÉ	30.05.89	DF							Athletic Club de Bilbao
6	JEFFREN Suárez	20.01.88	FW	80			50	10	1	FC Barcelona
7	ADRIÁN López	08.01.88	FW	72	74	80	120	80	5	RC Deportivo La Coruña
8	Daniel PAREJO	16.04.89	MF	18	16	14		5		Getafe CF
9	BOJAN Krkic	28.08.90	FW	10		10	43			FC Barcelona
10	Juan Manuel MATA	28.04.88	FW	90	89	90	120	90	2	Valencia CF
11	Diego CAPEL	16.02.88	MF	4	7		62+	1		Sevilla FC
12	Martín MONTROYA	14.04.91	DF	90	90	82	120	90		FC Barcelona
13	David DE GEA	07.11.90	GK	90	90	90	120	90		Club Atlético de Madrid
14	Emilio NSUE	30.09.89	FW		1					RCD Mallorca
15	JOSÉ ANGEL Valdés	05.09.89	DF							R. Sporting de Gijón
16	VÍCTOR RUÍZ Torre	25.01.89	DF							SSC Napoli (ITA)
17	DIDAC Vilà Roselló	09.06.89	DF	90	90	90	120	90		AC Milan (ITA)
18	ANDER HERRERA	14.08.89	MF	86	90	90	58*	89	2	Real Zaragoza CF
19	THIAGO Alcántara	11.04.91	MF	90	90	90	120	90	1	FC Barcelona
20	Alberto BOTÍA	27.01.89	DF	90	90	90	120	90		R. Sporting de Gijón
21	RUBÉN PÉREZ	26.04.89	MF							RC Deportivo La Coruña
22	Iker MUNIAIN	19.12.92	FW		83	90	70	85		Athletic Club de Bilbao
23	Diego MARIÑO	09.05.90	GK							Villarreal CF

Pos = Position; G = Goals; S = Suspended; * = Started; + = Substitute; I = Injured/ill

SWITZERLAND

HEAD COACH **Pierluigi TAMI**

Date of Birth: 12/09/1961



"It was something special to reach the Olympics for the first time in 83 years. The team had personality and positive energy on the pitch. They went out with courage and conviction to play their football. It was a disappointment to lose the final and it was tough to play our fifth game against a Spanish team that played at a high level. We had chances from set plays at 1-0 down but Spain scored a super goal that finished the game. I was proud of our performance in the tournament – and that was the first thing I said to the players after the final."



Switzerland v Spain

- 4-2-3-1 with No6 and No14 forming well-balanced midfield screen
- Attacking philosophy; high-tempo combination moves built from back
- Fast, creative wingers; left-footed No10 on right; right-footed No7 on left
- Attack well led by fast, skilful No11; good support by hardworking No9
- Rapid counterattacking; occasional high pressure in wide areas
- Strong central defenders; overlapping full-backs; excellent goalkeeper
- Excellent tactical awareness; disciplined and well organised

No	Player	Date of Birth	Pos	DEN	ISL	BLR	CZE	ESP	G	Club
1	Yann SOMMER	17.12.88	GK	90	90	90	120	90		FC Basel 1893
2	Philippe KOCH	08.02.91	DF	90	90	90	120	90		FC Zürich
3	Fabio DAPRELÀ	19.02.91	DF			15				Brescia Calcio (ITA)
4	Pajtim KASAMI	02.06.92	MF	5				23		US Città di Palermo (ITA)
5	Jonathan ROSSINI	05.04.89	DF	90	90	90	120	90		US Sassuolo Calcio (ITA)
6	Fabian LUSTENBERGER	02.05.88	MF	90	90	90	120	90		Hertha BSC Berlin (GER)
7	Innocent EMEGHARA	27.05.89	FW	90	90	65	111	53	1	Grasshopper-Club
8	Moreno COSTANZO	20.02.88	MF		24		9			BSC Young Boys
9	Fabian FREI	08.01.89	MF	70	66	90	78	54	1	FC St. Gallen
10	Xherdan SHAQIRI	10.10.91	MF	89	90	90	120	90	1	FC Basel 1893
11	Admir MEHMEDI	16.03.91	FW	85		90	120	90	3	FC Zürich
12	Kevin FICKENTSCHER	06.07.88	GK							FC Sion
13	Nassim BEN KHALIFA	13.01.92	FW		6					1. FC Nürnberg (GER)
14	Granit XHAKA	27.09.92	MF	90	68	52	S	67		FC Basel 1893
15	Timm KLOSE	09.05.88	DF	1	90	90	120	90		FC Thun
16	François AFFOLTER	13.03.91	DF	90						BSC Young Boys
17	Frank FELTSCHER	17.05.88	MF			25			1	AC Bellinzona
18	Amir ABRASHI	27.03.90	MF		22	38	49	36		Grasshopper-Club
19	Mario GAVRANOVIC	24.11.89	FW		84		42	37		FC Schalke 04 (GER)
20	Daniel PAVLOVIC	22.04.88	DF							Grasshopper-Club
21	Benjamin SIEGRIST	31.01.92	GK							Aston Villa FC (ENG)
22	Xavier HOCHSTRASSER	01.07.88	MF	20			71			Calcio Padova (ITA)
23	Gaetano BERARDI	21.08.88	DF	90	90	75	120	90		Brescia Calcio (ITA)

Pos = Position; G = Goals; S = Suspended; * = Started; + = Substitute; I = Injured/ill

UKRAINE



Ukraine v Spain

- 4-2-3-1 with No17 as more conservative of two midfield screens
- Blend of combination moves and direct supply to solitary striker
- Strong defensive block of six (No4 the pivotal figure); attacking unit of four
- Preference for counterattacking style; fast forward as soon as ball was won
- Diagonal switches of play; movement by wingers to make space for full-backs
- Good positional interchanging by front three; fluent movement in midfield
- Highly motivated, hardworking unit with strong team ethic; positional discipline

HEAD COACH **Pavlo IAKOVENKO**

Date of Birth: 19/04/1964



"We had ambitions going into the tournament but we were up against strong teams in an equally matched group, where every team tried to work out how best to play against Spain. We had a game plan, but the individual quality of the Spanish players was difficult to deal with. The team played some effective football but, unfortunately, we didn't translate this into goals. I have no complaints about the commitment shown by my players. They gave their all and I was not ashamed of them. If mistakes were made, then they were made by me."

No	Player	Date of Birth	Pos	CZE	ENG	ESP	G	Club
1	Anton KANIBOLOTSKYI	16.05.88	GK	90	90	90		FC Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk
2	Bogdan BUTKO	13.01.91	DF	90	90	90		FC Volyn Lutsk
3	Yevgen SELIN	09.05.88	DF		90	90		FC Vorskla Poltava
4	Yaroslav RAKITS'KYY	03.08.89	DF	90	90	90		FC Shakhtar Donetsk
5	Artem PUTIVTSEV	29.08.88	DF	90				FC Metalist Kharkiv
6	Vitalii VITSENETS	03.08.90	MF			9		FC Shakhtar Donetsk
7	Ievgenii KONOPLIANKA	29.09.89	MF	90	65	90		FC Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk
8	Taras STEPANENKO	08.08.89	MF	54				FC Shakhtar Donetsk
9	Mykola MOROZYUK	17.01.88	MF	64				FC Metalurh Donetsk
10	Roman ZOZULYA	17.11.89	FW	90	20	90		FC Dynamo Kyiv
11	Andriy IARMOLENKO	23.10.89	FW	87	25	81		FC Dynamo Kyiv
12	Denys BOYKO	29.01.88	GK					FC Dynamo Kyiv
13	Temur PARTSVANIYA	06.07.91	DF	36				FC Dynamo Kyiv
14	Oleg GOLODYUK	02.01.88	MF		90	51+		FC Karpaty Lviv
15	Serhiy KRYVTSOV	15.03.91	DF	90	90	90		FC Shakhtar Donetsk
16	Maxym BILYY	27.04.89	MF	26	90	39*	1	FC Zorya Luhansk
17	Volodymyr CHESNAKOV	12.02.88	MF	90	90	90		FC Vorskla Poltava
18	Oleksiy KURILOV	24.04.88	DF					FC Vorskla Poltava
19	Denys GARMASH	19.04.90	MF		90	71		FC Dynamo Kyiv
20	Oleksandr MATVYEV	11.02.89	DF					FC Vorskla Poltava
21	Valeriy FEDORCHUK	05.10.88	MF					FC Kryvbas Kryvyi Rih
22	Artem KRAVETS	03.06.89	FW	3	70			FC Dynamo Kyiv
23	Dmytro NEPOGODOV	17.02.88	GK					FC Metalurh Donetsk

Pos = Position; G = Goals; S = Suspended; * = Started; + = Substitute; I = Injured/ill

TOURNAMENT STATISTICS

BALL POSSESSION

Victory for Spain’s possession-oriented U21s, coming on the heels of the senior team’s World Cup win and FC Barcelona’s UEFA Champions League title, provided a cue for discussion on the importance of ball possession and how often this is equated with efficiency in front of goal. In other words, discussion focuses on whether possession is purposeful and whether it should be allowed to become an end unto itself. This is the statistical platform on which debate can be built.

Team	Average				
Belarus	v ISL	v DEN	v SUI	v ESP	v CZE
	47%	43%	42%	27%	46%
41%					
Czech Republic	v UKR	v ESP	v ENG	v SUI	v BLR
	44%	34%	37%	42%	54%
42%					
Denmark	v SUI	v BLR	v ISL		
	46%	57%	54%		
52%					
England	v ESP	v UKR	v CZE		
	41%	48%	63%		
51%					
Iceland	v BLR	v SUI	v DEN		
	53%	42%	46%		
47%					
Spain	v ENG	v CZE	v UKR	v BLR	v SUI
	59%	66%	64%	73%	54%
63%					
Switzerland	v DEN	v ISL	v BLR	v CZE	v ESP
	54%	58%	58%	58%	46%
55%					
Ukraine	v CZE	v ENG	v ESP		
	56%	52%	36%		
48%					

The figures indicate clearly that Belarus and the Czech Republic were able to play comfortably without the ball – although they were among the teams whose average was pulled down by their low share of possession against the Spaniards. The Swiss team achieved a consistent level of ball possession except in the final against Spain, and the Ukrainians were equipped to dominate – only for their average to be pulled down by their reduced share of the ball in the game against Spain (when they also played the final 20 minutes a player down).

Statistics demonstrate that the teams who had the lion’s share of the ball scored the most goals, with Spain averaging 2.2 per game and the Swiss 1.4. None of the other six participants exceeded the one goal per game average.

WHEN THE GOALS WERE SCORED

The tournament in Denmark provided a sharp contrast with the 2009 finals in Sweden, where 53% of the goals were scored in the first half and 16% in the final quarter hour. The table illustrates the radical changes seen at the 2011 event.

Minutes	Goals	%
1-15	4	11
16-30	4	11
31-45	4	11
46-60	6	17
61-75	2	5.5
76-90	10	28
90+	3	8
91-105	1	3
106-120	2	5.5

In Denmark, only one-third of the goals were scored during the first half, whereas 36% hit the net during the final quarter hour or additional time at the end of the game. If the three goals scored during extra time in the two semi-finals are excluded, 27% of the tournament’s goals were scored between the 80th minute and the final whistle.

Fatigue (and the lapses of concentration it can produce) is often invoked as an explanation for this phenomenon. However, the technical observers felt that fitness levels at the tournament were more than adequate to cope with 90 minutes of football and therefore asked whether the statistics could be related to attitudes and, in particular, the willingness to “go for goal”. The glut of late goals could be put down to match or group situations where teams were obliged to throw caution to the winds and head for the opposing penalty area with fewer tactical inhibitions.



Iceland’s No5, Hjörtur Valgardsson, seals a shock 3-1 win over Denmark with a goal in the second minute of added time in the crucial Group A fixture

PHOTO: ANDREW BOYERS / ACTION IMAGES

KEEPING SCORE

Although the final tournament produced only one goalless draw, the 36 goals scored in Denmark at an average of 2.25 per match represent a low return. This figure is the second lowest at the Under-21 finals since the turn of the century and compares unfavourably with the last two senior EURO tournaments, where the average was 2.48 goals per game. At club level, the historic average in the UEFA Champions League (over 19 seasons) is 2.61, with the 2010/11 campaign registering 2.84 per match.

Year	Goals	Average
2011	36	2.25
2009	38	2.53
2007	34	2.13
2006	34	2.27
2004	52	3.25
2002	35	2.33
2000	40	2.50

SUCCESS RATIOS

Goal tallies are inextricably linked to scoring attempts – and the 2011 final tournament offered spectators a particularly exciting match in which the Danish hosts and Iceland shared 43 attempts at goal as both traded attacking punches in the fight for a semi-final place. However the tournament average was roughly half that figure, with the 16 games yielding 360 goal attempts, of which 125 were on target (approximately 22 and 8 per match respectively). Denmark had by far the highest averages, overall and on target (50% of their strikes at goal were accurately directed between the posts), yet scored only three goals in their three group games.

Team	Attempts	Average	On Target	Average
Belarus	36	7.2	12	2.4
Czech Republic	52	10.4	13	2.6
Denmark	51	17.0	26	8.7
England	34	11.3	13	4.3
Iceland	43	14.3	9	3.0
Spain	63	12.6	22	5.4
Switzerland	60	12.0	20	4.0
Ukraine	31	10.3	10	3.3

CONCEDING THE FIRST GOAL

One of the notable pieces of information to emerge from the final tournament was that both teams scored in only 6 of the 16 matches played. In three of those six (Denmark v Belarus, Czech Republic v England and Spain v Belarus) the team conceding the first goal fought back to win. As the tournament produced only two draws (both involving England), this means that 11 of the 16 matches were won by the team scoring first.



Spain's left-footed right-winger Juan Mata bends in a corner during the semi-final against Belarus in Viborg PHOTO: ANDREW BOYERS / ACTION IMAGES

CORNERS

The goalscoring analysis highlights the dearth of set-play goals during the tournament in Denmark. Only seven were scored and four of those were from the penalty mark. The other notable feature is that only one goal originated from a corner – and that was on the opening day in Group B, when midfielder Ander Herrera gave Spain a 1-0 advantage over England with a back-post header. During the remainder of the tournament, corner kicks failed to produce a dividend.

Team	Corners	Average
Belarus	19	3.8
Czech Republic	21	4.2
Denmark	14	4.7
England	12	4.0
Iceland	11	3.7
Spain	24	4.8
Switzerland	29	5.8
Ukraine	10	3.3

The success rate of 1 in 140 represents a significant reduction in comparison with other international competitions. At UEFA EURO 2008, the conversion rate of corners into goals was 1 in 64, while the 2010 FIFA World Cup yielded 10 goals from corners in 64 fixtures. In the 2010/11 UEFA Champions League, the number of successful corners rose from 23 to 28, while the conversion rate actually fell to 1 in 46. The debating point arising from the lack of goals in Denmark is whether teams were well drilled in the defence of corners, whether scouting of future opponents had minimised the surprise factor or whether the coaches, given a generalised lack of preparation time, preferred not to dedicate significant training ground efforts to the rehearsal of corner kicks.

STATISTICS

THE OFFSIDE FLAG

The 16 matches played in Denmark produced a total of 72 offside decisions at an average of 4.5 per match. This compares with an average of 5.57 in the 2009/10 UEFA Champions League.

Spanish striker Adrián López was flagged more frequently – nine times – than any other individual player, though his match average was lower than Iceland’s Kolbeinn Sigthórsson, who had six offsides in the three group games. Swiss striker Mario Gavranovic was flagged five times in 122 minutes – though the “record” goes to his fellow Swiss sub Nassim Ben Khalifa, who was whistled for offside twice during the six minutes he spent on the field of play.

In collective terms, the salient data were that Ukraine – or, to be more precise, Roman Zozulya – was flagged offside only once in three matches. Seen from the other angle, statistics indicate that the defensive line which provoked the most offside decisions was that of Belarus, who accounted for 26% of the tournament total. By contrast, the Swiss back line saw the flag raised only six times in five matches and 480 minutes of play.

Team	Attack	Average	Defence	Average
Belarus	7	1.4	16	3.2
Czech Republic	11	2.2	15	3.0
Denmark	7	2.3	6	2.0
England	8	2.7	2	0.7
Iceland	10	3.3	11	3.7
Spain	16	3.2	10	2.0
Switzerland	15	3.0	6	1.2
Ukraine	1	0.3	7	2.3

SUBSTITUTIONS

Iceland and Ukraine were the only two teams not to use their full quota of substitutions during the final tournament in Denmark, with the result that 92 of the 96 opportunities to make changes were taken. However, the technical team remarked that very few of the substitutions signified modifications to team structures. The emphasis was on changes of personnel – and/or personality – rather than changes of formation, and on late substitutions. Excluding the two substitutions made during extra time, 32% were made in the 80th minute or later.

Minutes	Substitutions
1-15 mins	1
31-45 mins	3
Half-time	5
46-60 mins	12
61-75 mins	28
76-90 mins	38
90+ mins	3
Extra time	2

Finding space among the Belarus defenders, Adrián López meets a cross by Diego Capel to head Spain 2-1 ahead during extra time in the semi-final

PHOTO: ANDREW BOYERS / ACTION IMAGES



THE WINNING COACH

Luis Milla insists that glory should reflect off everybody. During the group stage, he dedicated victory over Ukraine to Julián Del Amo, a familiar face as head of delegation at a multitude of UEFA and FIFA events, who died on 19 June after 50 years at the Spanish federation. After the final against Switzerland he also insisted: “I must mention a colleague of mine who has been a key figure. Unfortunately, Fernando Hierro is leaving his post as sporting director at the federation. He has been a great professional and a great colleague. All our coaches have enjoyed working with him and this victory is for him too.”

The tributes made by Luis Milla highlight the continuity and the teamwork which has underpinned Spain’s sustained successes at every level from the Under-17s to the seniors. But the couple of years leading up to the victory in Denmark had produced a series of changes within the Spanish federation’s coaching staff – and the departure of Juan Ramón López Caro (who had led the Under-21s during the 2009 finals and the initial part of qualifying for 2011) meant that Luis Milla had been fast-tracked into the Under-21s with a very short track record. His first contact with front-line coaching had not come until he joined Getafe CF as assistant to Michael Laudrup in 2007. A year later he joined the national association’s coaching staff as Under-17 coach to replace the legendary Juan Santisteban. He was then promoted to the Under-19 bench, taking them to the 2009 final tournament in Donetsk and the 2010

final in Caen, where they were beaten 2-1 by the French hosts. He therefore travelled to Denmark with barely three years’ experience – and none as head coach of a top club.

However, Luis’s 16-year playing career had stood him in more than good stead. Unusually, his CV features FC Barcelona, Real Madrid CF and Valencia CF, and opportunities to work with coaches such as Johan Cruyff, Alfredo di Stéfano, Radomir Antic, Leo Beenhakker, Vicente Del Bosque, Fabio Capello, Claudio Ranieri and Héctor Cúper. On joining the Spanish federation, his priority was to apply his knowledge to Spain’s well-established youth development philosophies and to absorb the culture. This is where colleagues such as Fernando Hierro and Ginés Meléndez played fundamental roles in ensuring continuity of ideas, criteria and playing philosophy.



Luis Milla receives his gold medal from the UEFA president, Michel Platini, and general secretary, Gianni Infantino

PHOTO: ANDREW BOYERS / ACTION IMAGES

“In Denmark,” he said, “our style was based on having the ball as much as possible and on moving it around to create chances and hurt the opposition. We made sure that the emphasis was on being ambitious, delivering performances based on a certain style – and winning. We were delighted with what we achieved but Spain is fortunate to have clubs who are working in similar ways and who are producing particular types of footballer. We have a clear style of play and we give our footballers the confidence to remain faithful to it and to enjoy playing it. In Denmark, the players deserved their success because of their hard work, their team spirit and their belief in our playing philosophy.”



Dressed in blue but with no sign of the blues, Luis Milla joins his players in celebrating the 2-0 victory over Switzerland in the Aarhus final

PHOTO: IAN WALTON / GETTY IMAGES

MAN OF THE MATCH

A Sport Man of the Match award was presented after each of the 16 matches played in Denmark. The player was selected by the UEFA technical observer(s) at the game and announced to the public over the PA system.

Selecting the man of the match often proved difficult. The objective was not so much to highlight the “best footballer on the pitch” as to select a player who had made a decisive contribution to the outcome of that particular game. In a tournament which was notable for its well-organised defensive blocks, that honour frequently went to the player who had exerted a major influence by “unlocking the defensive door”. In contrast to 2009, when two goalkeepers received the award, no keepers were selected, and Egor Filipenko, scorer of the late goal which earned Belarus an Olympic place, was the only defender to be named. As the list reveals, three players went home with two man of the match awards – and all three were on display in the Aarhus final between Spain and Switzerland.

Match	No	Player
Belarus v Iceland	7	Mihail Sivakov
Denmark v Switzerland	10	Xherdan Shaqiri
Czech Republic v Ukraine	8	Borek Dockal
Spain v England	19	Thiago Alcántara
Switzerland v Iceland	7	Innocent Emeghara
Denmark v Belarus	10	Christian Eriksen
Czech Republic v Spain	7	Adrián López
Ukraine v England	19	Denys Garmash
Iceland v Denmark	19	Kolbeinn Sigthórsson
Switzerland v Belarus	11	Admir Mehmedi
England v Czech Republic	13	Marcel Gecov
Ukraine v Spain	10	Juan Mata
Spain v Belarus	7	Adrián López
Switzerland v Czech Republic	10	Xherdan Shaqiri
Czech Republic v Belarus	21	Egor Filipenko
Switzerland v Spain	19	Thiago Alcántara

(Player's team marked in **bold**)



Spanish striker Adrián López is a picture of concentration as he breaks away from Ukrainian midfielder Volodymyr Chernakov during the Group B game in Herning

PHOTO: ANDREW BOYERS / ACTION IMAGES

LEADING SCORERS

Player	Team	Goals
Adrián López	Spain	5
Admir Mehmedi	Switzerland	3
Borek Dockal	Czech Republic	2
Ander Herrera	Spain	2
Juan Mata	Spain	2
Andrei Voronkov	Belarus	2
Daniel Welbeck	England	2



After the final, Spain made a clean sweep of precious metals with striker Adrián López taking the Golden Boot, Thiago Alcántara lifting the Man of the Match award, and Juan Mata earning the tournament's Bronze Boot trophy

PHOTO: IAN WALTON / GETTY IMAGES

THE TECHNICAL TEAM

UEFA's technical director, Andy Roxburgh, captained a team of four technical observers at the final tournament in Denmark. In alphabetical order, they were:

Jerzy Engel (Poland) – Former national coach of Poland (2002 World Cup); sports director of the Polish FA; former coach of Legia Warszawa, Wisła Kraków, KSP Polonia Warszawa, Apollon Limassol FC, Nea Salamis FC and Apoel FC; champion of Poland in 2000 and of Cyprus in 2006; Polish football coach of the year in 2000 and 2001; Best Sports Coach 2001; Gentleman of Year 2001.

Dušan Fitzel (Czech Republic) – Played for 11 seasons in the Czech league and 2 in Cyprus; in charge of SK Slavia Praha's Under-18 and Under-19 teams, 1995–98; head coach of all Czech youth teams, 1998–2005, winning the UEFA U21 title as assistant in 2002; national coach and technical director of Malta, 2006–09; technical director at the Czech FA since then.

György Mezey (Hungary) – Technical director of Hungary; former national coach of Hungary (1978, 1982 and 1986 World Cups); former national coach of Kuwait; former coach of Újpest FC, MTK Budapest, Vasas SC, Budapest Honvéd FC and, finally, Videoton FC, where he led the club to its first league title in 2011; Olympic coach and European national coach of the year in 1985; Hungary's coach of the year in 2010.

Peter Rudbæk (Denmark) – Coach of Aalborg BK (at 27) from 1983 to 1990 and 2000 to 2002, of Viborg FF from 1990 to 1993 and of AGF Århus from 1993 to 2000; Denmark's coach of the year in 1987 and 1996; technical director of the Danish national association since 2005.

Among their tasks in Denmark was the challenge of selecting an all-star squad of players who, in their opinions, had made an impact on the tournament as a whole – as opposed to those who took home man of the match awards on the basis of performance in a single fixture. The table shows their selection.

ALL STAR SQUAD

Position	No	Name	Country
Goalkeepers	13	David DE GEA	Spain
	1	Yann SOMMER	Switzerland
	1	Tomás VACLÍK	Czech Republic
Defenders	5	Nicolai BOILESEN	Denmark
	5	Ondrej CELUSTKA	Czech Republic
	17	DIDAC Vilà	Spain
	15	Timm KLOSE	Switzerland
	4	Yaroslav RAKITS'KYY	Ukraine
	5	Jonathan ROSSINI	Switzerland
	5	Chris SMALLING	England
	14	Kyle WALKER	England
Midfielders	10	Christian ERIKSEN	Denmark
	13	Marcel GECOV	Czech Republic
	18	ANDER HERRERA	Spain
	4	JAVI MARTÍNEZ	Spain
	7	Mihail SIVAKOV	Belarus
	19	THIAGO Alcántara	Spain
Forwards	7	ADRIÁN López	Spain
	10	Juan MATA	Spain
	11	Admir MEHMEDI	Switzerland
	10	Xherdan SHAQIRI	Switzerland
	19	Kolbeinn SIGTHORSSON	Iceland
	10	Daniel STURRIDGE	England

Lining up in the stadium at Aarhus are, from left to right, György Mezey, Jerzy Engel, Peter Rudbæk, Dusan Fitzel and UEFA's technical director, Andy Roxburgh





The 16 match officials from 16 different countries line up for the squad photo in Denmark

MATCH OFFICIALS

THE REFEREES

Name	Country	Date of Birth	FIFA
Milorad Mažić	Serbia	23.03.1973	2009
Robert Schörgenhofer	Austria	21.02.1973	2007
Aleksandar Stavrev	FYR Macedonia	30.03.1977	2006
Marijo Strahonja	Croatia	21.08.1975	2004
Markus Strömbergsson	Sweden	26.04.1975	2006
Paolo Tagliavento	Italy	19.09.1972	2007

THE ASSISTANT REFEREES

Name	Country	Date of Birth	FIFA
Christos Akrivos	Greece	14.02.1976	2008
Marcin Borkowski	Poland	14.04.1979	2007
Mark Borsch	Germany	16.03.1977	2008
Jukka-Pekka Koskela	Finland	28.04.1978	2003
Damien MacGraith	Rep. Ireland	12.10.1980	2007
Vytautas Simkus	Lithuania	13.01.1975	2003
Michael Soteriou	Cyprus	11.01.1979	2009
Venâncio Tomé	Portugal	01.10.1974	2009

THE FOURTH OFFICIALS

Name	Country	Date of Birth	FIFA
Kenn Hansen	Denmark	29.05.1980	2011
Liran Liany	Israel	24.05.1977	2010

FAIR PLAY

The Danish hosts topped the final tournament's fair play rankings, thanks to only four cautions in their three matches and impressively sporting support from their fans. However, the 16 games played in 2011 underlined the status of the Under-21 finals as a heavyweight contest in terms of cautions. The six referees from non-competing countries reached for the yellow card on 80 occasions at an average of exactly five per game. This represented a significant increase on the 2009 figure of 63 (4.2 average) but remained within the parameters of the previous decade. The 2007 finals in the Netherlands yielded 86 cautions at 5.38 per match, while the 2006 event in Portugal weighed in at 77 and 5.13. The 2004 final tournament registered an all-time high of 98 yellow cards.

In Denmark, the group stage yielded 57 yellow cards, with the four knockout fixtures supplying the remaining 24. Four players were dismissed: two for twin yellows and two for direct reds. The debating point, however, is why the Under-21 disciplinary record is so different from other top events. The 2010/11 UEFA Champions League, for example, produced an average of 3.62 yellow cards per match. How can this 38% difference be explained?

FAIR PLAY RANKINGS

Pos	Team	Score	Matches Played
1	Denmark	8.250	3
2	England	8.119	3
3	Switzerland	8.050	5
4	Spain	8.007	5
5	Iceland	7.452	3
6	Ukraine	7.417	3
7	Czech Republic	7.393	5
8	Belarus	7.278	5

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Editorial Team:

Andy Roxburgh (UEFA Technical Director)
Graham Turner

Production Team:

André Vieli
Dominique Maurer

Administration:

Frank Ludolph
Stéphanie Tétaz
David Gough
UEFA Language Services

Technical Observers:

Jerzy Engel
Dušan Fitzel
György Mezey
Peter Rudbæk

Graphics:

Olé Andersen

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Designwerk, GB-London

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UEFA
Route de Genève 46
CH-1260 Nyon 2
Switzerland
Telephone +41 848 00 27 27
Telefax +41 848 01 27 27
UEFA.com

Union des associations
européennes de football

