

# Next?

It's at times like this, during transition, when there is a temptation to look back, to indulge in the soothing comfort of nostalgia. After 18½ years as technical director, I am no longer a UEFA employee. But rather than reflect on the past, I prefer to take a lead from my old friend and colleague, the late, great Rinus Michels, who once declared at a UEFA coaches' meeting: "Futuristic football is on the menu".

For all of us in the coaching profession (whether working on the front line, developing players or educating coaches), a "next" mentality is a prerequisite for survival or, if you are fortunate, for a successful career.

Even after a defeat or a disappointment, agonising for too long on past errors is futile.

As Gérard Houllier recently said: "The TV sound bite after a match is the springboard to the next game, because the players, the fans and the staff need you to be upbeat".

So, from a technician's perspective, I will offer a few parting thoughts on the road ahead for European football.

We must never forget that the fans are the lifeblood of the game and that they will continue to want more comfort, more quality, more information, more excitement, more choice and more success. Results will, of course, always remain a priority, but the way that teams perform will take on greater significance. The top four sides at UEFA EURO 2012 proved that a positive style can also be successful. It takes a conscious effort and a degree of courage to take such a risk. As Joachim "Jögi" Löw, Germany's national coach, explained to us: "We decided to concentrate more on ball possession and on initiating the play. We set out to change our footballing culture and to move away from a reactive style of play".

It takes guts to do that. Rinus Michels summed it up when he said: "Those who focus on the best result rather than the best football are less vulnerable than the others". Also, in an age of sophisticated collective play, the value of individual talent (Iniesta, Ronaldo, Messi and so on) will continue to be prized. French philosopher Voltaire was ahead of the game when he said: "God is not on the side of the big battalions, but of the marksmen!"

In the future, coach education will be increasingly carried out using the model of competence-based learning, and tutoring will be conducted in realistic situations at the clubs. Grassroots programmes will continue to expand, and the concept of "no grassroots = no future" will gain greater acceptance. Women's football will continue to attract more attention while futsal, especially as a development game, will warrant greater support within national associations. Referees, with assistants on all four sides of the pitch, will make further progress on their fitness and their ability to read the game – which will help them in their quest to minimise mistakes. And, when Vicente del Bosque remarked: "Coaching is an art but, at the same time, a science," he underlined the importance of sports science and medicine within the team behind the team.

European football, as viewed in its benchmark competitions, the European Football Championship and the UEFA Champions League, has attained impressive standards and is well placed for further advancement. Nobody can buy football's rich history. It is priceless. But we can't dwell on the heritage for too long because the future is hurtling towards us. If we stand still, we will be overtaken.

Thank you for your continued contribution to the European game and good luck with your next challenge. As Rinus said: "Futuristic football is on the menu". So there is only one word left to say: next?

Andy Roxburgh

Vicente del Bosque  
encouraging his team  
to move forward



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UEFA technician

# Back to Warsaw

## National team coaches gather to review UEFA EURO 2012

When the ball started rolling at EURO 2012, only two of the coaches who were at the helm of teams competing in Poland and Ukraine had been in technical areas in Austria and Switzerland four years earlier: Joachim Löw and Slaven Bilić. By the time the FIFA World Cup qualifiers got under way in September, 7 out 16 of the EURO 2012 finalists had new coaches on the bench. The lack of continuity and, consequently, opportunities to gain event-specific experience, highlighted the value of the 10th UEFA Conference for European National Team Coaches, which, for the second time, was staged in Warsaw (this was also the venue for post-event analysis of the 2002 FIFA World Cup).

As the England manager, **Roy Hodgson**, commented: "I think these conferences are always important. It's a chance to meet your colleagues; it's a chance to listen to their take on not only the latest tournament, but also on



the future trends of football. I think that Andy Roxburgh deserves enormous credit for the work he has done, and these conferences have been regular aspects of the job he has done, making certain that we continue the learning process at whatever stage of our coaching career we happen to be. And I can only hope that, now Andy is leaving, UEFA will continue with the same sort of technical assistance they have given to national teams as Andy has done during his time as technical director."

The content of the conference itself was backed by UEFA's technical report on EURO 2012, which was officially launched in Warsaw. On the opening afternoon, Andy Roxburgh presented some of the salient features of the report, which then fuelled a series of interviews with the coaches and technical observers who had gained a first-hand insight into the event. As Andy Roxburgh pointed out, detecting trends at a 31-match final tournament is a risky business. Observations on EURO 2012 were therefore in-

terspersed with data from football's other two benchmark competitions – the FIFA World Cup and the UEFA Champions League. On the following pages, *UEFA-technician* blends some of the factual data with comments by some of the technicians who stepped on to the stage in Warsaw to share their views with coaching colleagues and the technical directors of all 53 of UEFA's member associations.

### Taking the initiative

Entertainment value does not always emerge as one of the outstanding features of a major tournament. But the coaches in Warsaw unanimously applauded the high quality of the organisation – in particular the great success of the fan zones which attracted over 4 million supporters – and felt that the effects permeated through to the field of play.

**Paulo Bento (Portugal):** "This EURO was a competition of great quality. There were important factors, such as the behaviour of the public and the behaviour of the players and coaches, even in moments of great adversity and amid the tensions that always exist in these big competitions. Another positive factor was that there was no doping. Then we saw teams who, during the tournament, wanted to take the initiative and to play forward-looking, attacking football. Their top priority was to score goals – not just to avoid conceding them. So we saw very intense games played at high pace with a good level of football and many top-class players. Spain master the basics perfectly – ball control under pressure, a passing game in tight spaces – and they master the art of passing and transition very well. We ended up with a deserved European champion."

**Jerzy Engel (UEFA technical team):** "Football took a step forward. Teams were taking the initiative – not only when they had the ball but also in terms of trying to dominate the game by winning it back as quickly as possible."

**Fabio Capello (UEFA technical team):** "The great joy and happiness I experienced in every city contributed to the spectacle. Different nations and different fans were brought together in the most beautiful area of football, where there is no violence – only sporting and social values. It was a great EURO in which all the teams were competitive. There wasn't a single easy game for any team and I didn't see anybody with the philosophy of taking a 1-0 lead then just defending it."

For the record, 22 of the 29 games which produced goals were won by the team which went 1-0 up. Only Portugal (against the Netherlands) and Ukraine (against Sweden) came from 1-0 down to win.

## Team shapes

Seven of the finalists operated in a default formation of 4-2-3-1, five opted for 4-3-3, and the other four preferred a 4-4-2 structure, with Italy providing a degree of variation by starting the tournament in 3-5-2 formation. This was in line with the UEFA Champions League, where six of the top 16 teams generally played 4-2-3-1, five 4-3-3, four 4-4-2 and one (SSC Napoli) 3-4-3.

**Lars Lagerbäck (UEFA technical team):** "I was very impressed that the top teams played with different styles and different systems. The trend is towards 4-2-3-1



but we saw Spain and Italy playing differently, and England sticking to 4-4-2 and doing rather well. It was also interesting to see the different skills required for different roles within the team."

**Gérard Houllier (UEFA technical team):** "If I'd had to choose five postcards to send home, my first choice would have been an image of Italy. I was impressed that they played with two strikers and by the way they approached the competition. Credit must be given to Cesare for that, because Italy set the tone for the tournament and made a wonderful contribution."

**Cesare Prandelli (Italy):** "I wouldn't say we set out to create a new culture, but we did break with certain traditions and, during the two years of the qualifying phase, we had worked on taking the game to the opposition. At the EURO, we showed courage and we had a clear philosophy to face our opponents with a different approach. We changed our tactical system twice. At the beginning, our intention was to surprise. We played with a back three – or a back five if you look at our defensive work – but our philosophy didn't change. We wanted flexibility in terms of changing the system but we didn't want to forget the clear ideas we had worked on during the two years of preparation. Our initial formation had the disadvantage that it sometimes seemed that we were short of a player in midfield. And we had it in the back of our minds that, if we played against opponents who focused their attention on Pirlo, it could create difficulties for us. So we returned to a formation which gave us an 'extra' midfielder and we were a lot more secure in terms of ball control."

In terms of team shapes, the decision by Vicente del Bosque to operate without a traditional striker emerged as one of the main talking points.

**Fabio Capello:** "I have always said that modern football is based on 9+1. But then Vicente surprised me with his 4-6-0 formation without a striker."

**Gérard Houllier:** "I have always admired Vicente for his composure and his experience. Now I also admire him for his bravery in playing Cesc Fàbregas at centre-forward. I think that will give younger coaches a lot to think about."

**Vicente del Bosque (Spain):** "I had my doubts. But we finally decided that playing with an attacker who comes from midfield offered us more potential than a fixed-position striker. It wasn't necessarily going to be Fàbregas. It could have been David Silva – or almost any other midfielder. We thought it gave us extra mobility and laid good foundations for combination moves between midfielders who occupied the width of the pitch quite rationally. We also created more space to attack on the wings. Having said that, we knew that Fernando Torres would be in the starting lineup at some point – and Alvaro Negredo started the semi-final against Portugal. But we had looked at the option during our preparation phase and we decided that Cesc would be the best solution. Having said that, I don't believe that the system is all-important. If you ask me about priorities, I would say it's more about selecting the right players, building good relationships, getting good input from the few training sessions we have together and then choosing the most appropriate system of play."

**Lars Lagerbäck:** "If you had told me before the tournament that the top team would be playing without a striker, I wouldn't have believed you. I think this interesting for the future."

## The screening midfielders

The variations in team shapes often boiled down to the basic issue of whether teams operated with one or two screening midfielders. The coaches in Warsaw underlined the influence exerted by these players on the personality of the team and, among the teams who opted for the twin screen, the importance of developing a well balanced relationship between defensive and attacking qualities. Comparisons could be drawn, for example, between the Spanish pairing of Sergio Busquets and Xabi Alonso or Germany's duo of Bastian Schweinsteiger and Sami Khedira. The characteristics of the single screening midfielders varied, for instance, from Ukraine's Anatoliy Tymoshchuk

Pierluigi Collina, UEFA's chief refereeing officer (with Walter Gagg, FIFA director), came to talk to the coaches about refereeing at EURO 2012.



to Italy's Andrea Pirlo – the latter far removed from traditional ideas about the conservative nature of the role.



The event in Warsaw brought together the Italian national team coach, Cesare Prandelli, and his compatriot, Giancarlo Abete, chairman of UEFA's Development and Technical Assistance Committee

**Cesare Prandelli:** "Pirlo had been playing in that position for many years. The trend is to bring players with certain technical qualities and playing ability into that role. You can obviously have doubts about attaining the right balance – and all coaches have to go through this. But the trend is towards putting creative players into that position. Pirlo is a player who, even under pressure, manages to find the right pass to initiate an attacking move."

**Fabio Capello:** "These midfielders are very important for the team and Pirlo is a real team player. He's two-footed and has the same possession skills as Xavi

Hernández. He can dribble and not lose the ball. He is a quiet leader but he makes the difference and moves the whole team."

**Lars Lagerbäck:** "Xabi Alonso is also a real midfield general. He's always playing for the team. He can defend, he has a high level of individual skill, and his distribution is excellent."

#### Round the block

**Gérard Houllier:** "Transitions were very fast. Teams regrouped or pressed very quickly. It meant that you needed players who could beat the defensive block – especially ones who could go round it on the sides."

**Joachim Löw (Germany):** "We want to take the initiative. It means we have to be prepared to find our way past two or three lines of players who are trying not to let us play our game. And at the same time, we have to protect ourselves against possible counterattacks."

**Paulo Bento:** "Our objective was to devise game plans that maximised our positive characteristics. We had quick players up front and our aim was to make use of space in the wide areas through Ronaldo and Nani."

The final tournament also highlighted the relevance of full-backs in terms of exploiting the wide areas, the prime examples being Darijo Srna (Croatia), Philipp Lahm (Germany), Ashley Cole (England), Yuri Zhirkov (Russia), Gaël Clichy (France) and Jordi Alba (Spain).

**Gérard Houllier:** "A lot of the full-backs were not just supporting players. They were effectively wingers and they were key elements in beating packed defences."

At EURO 2012, 40% of the goals scored in open play were derived from crosses or cut-backs from the byline, with the total of 22 headed goals setting a new tournament record – compared with 15 in 2008 and 17 in 2004.

**Lars Lagerbäck:** "These were striking statistics and it also struck me that a lot of the most effective and skilful





The challenges facing national team football fuelled debate among the discussion groups formed on the basis of language affinities

combination moves were made on the flanks rather than through the middle."

#### Positive possession

Of the 12 teams which had also been in Austria and Switzerland, seven had more of the ball than they had done on average in 2008. Spain topped the possession chart with 59% (54% in 2008), Germany increased their share from 51% to 56%, and the Czechs from 43% to 50%. The 2004 finalists, Greece and Portugal, provided the most striking examples of the reverse trend, with their

shares dropping from 50% to 43% and from 56% to 45% respectively.

**Vicente del Bosque:** "We focus on ball possession. But with possession and nothing else it's difficult to win matches. Our possession game allowed us to score 12 and concede 1. But, apart from possession, we need to exert pressure to win the ball as quickly as possible and as far upfield as possible. If we can play in their half, we don't have to do so much running."

**Joachim Löw:** "In the last ten years, we have become more specific in Germany about the education of



An impressive group of national team coaches line up for a photo in Warsaw

players. We now have players who are a lot better educated on the technical side. We have been looking for players who can fulfil duties in specific positions, control the game, and play good football. We have thought about what it means to have ball possession and we have studied passing patterns. In training, we have placed the emphasis on attacking play, playing 'vertical passes' from the right



positions, rational horizontal and vertical positioning on the pitch, and attacking runs and manoeuvres. It has been a long process but we have improved in the right direction."

**Lars Lagerbäck:** "It interested me a lot to watch Spain's possession football. It made me reflect on the reality in many of the other countries in Europe, where we don't have the level of individual skill to play that type of football."

**Fabio Capello:** "I saw well organised teams who all had their national characteristics. But you can't expect Sweden, for example, to play like Spain. I'm a little bit worried that everybody will try to copy Spain. You can't copy their style if you don't have players of such high quality in your team. What you can do is to look for things which might be positive for your own team, understand what they do and take these elements back to your own national team."

### A passing thought

It is undeniable that the run of success for Spanish national teams (at all levels) and for FC Barcelona have triggered a trend towards a game based on combinations and more elaborate passing movements. The technical report on EURO 2012 contains the following observation: "The pendulum has swung since EURO 2008. UEFA's technical report on the tournament in Austria and Switzerland remarked that 'when it came to passing quantity and quality, Spain led the way – Luis Aragonés' side averaged more than 450 passes per game (they recorded the tournament's highest figure with 510 against Sweden) and achieved the highest average of successful passes'. The words could be equally applicable to Spain's EURO 2012 campaign – but not the numbers. Only four years on, the idea of hailing 450 passes per game as exceptional or applauding a tournament high of 510 would be almost laughable. Everybody except the Irish topped the average of 450 passes, 11 of the finalists made more than 500 passes per match, and the tournament high (excluding matches which went to extra time) was Spain's 929 passes against the Irish. The art of retaining the ball has taken on paramount importance."

Spain once again provided clear examples of the value of individual technique, the ability to twist and turn away from pressure, and the capacity to make rapid changes of speed in restricted areas.

**Gérard Houllier:** "I think that EURO 2012 suggested very strongly that work in youth development areas needs to be based on combinations of skill and speed, plus, of course, intelligent passing. That means that you have to develop footballers who can play in tight spaces."

**Fabio Capello:** "This also applies to defenders. They now need to be technically strong. They can expect to be put under pressure and if their only response to the situation is just to kick the ball clear, then you are just giving the ball back to your opponent – and this is something you can't afford to do at the top levels of the modern game."

### The mind game

**Joachim Löw:** "In a tournament of six or seven games, you have to find a level of consistency and avoid moments of weakness. In the last few years we consciously created changes in the squad's hierarchy and age structure, because we realised that we had young players who could perform well under pressure – between games as well as during them. In the last two tournaments we have fielded young teams, and of course you run a risk in terms of lack of experience. When we went behind against Italy, I felt that we stopped fighting with our best weapons and the team became a bit insecure. We need to work on that so that we are strong enough mentally and psychologically to cope with such situations. I think our players gained a lot of experience for future tournaments."

**Gérard Houllier:** "I was based in Poland and I could feel the tremendous pressure on the home team. I think that the Polish were inhibited by the overwhelming pressure that was on them. At the other end of the scale, I was impressed by the Spanish hunger. We always talk about their skills but I think that we should also mention their will to win, which was equally great. Credit to Vicente for this."

**Lars Lagerbäck:** "After my personal experience with having one really big star in the team, it was interesting to see the performances by teams which had many big stars and to imagine, as a coach, the way you would need to handle them to make sure their solo skills are put to the service of the team. I was extremely impressed that all the skilful players in the Spanish side were playing for the team all the time."

### A playing philosophy

One of the game's debating points is whether national team identities are being eroded by the globalisation phenomenon which has permeated the game at club level.

**Roy Hodgson:** "I'm not so certain that you establish philosophies or visions in a short space of time – maybe a tenure of two to four years, maybe you need longer than that. And if you take the Spanish team, about whom we've spoken volumes in Warsaw – quite rightly so, because they're the best team, certainly in Europe and in the world – they play a football which we all agree we love to watch and we'd love to be able to replicate. Vicente has had a long time with the team, but the philosophy and style of play has been built up over an even longer period of time. Joachim Löw has also explained how they changed their

philosophy after 2004, and the way that Germany plays today is, if you like, a product of eight years of quite serious concentration on their philosophy and playing style."

**Joachim Löw:** "All coaches acknowledge that this is more difficult with a national team because you only meet your players for limited amounts of time. The only longer preparation periods are prior to major tournaments when you can be together for four or five weeks, but even then, you don't have the whole group. In our first week, we had only eight players. Then the others from Dortmund and Madrid started arriving. And, finally, the players from FC Bayern München who'd been in the Champions League final. Basically, we had a week together. But normally, the players go back to their clubs after one or two national team games and there can be totally different footballing philosophies or cultures there."

**Paulo Bento:** "Unlike some of the other finalists, we have players scattered all over Europe. That creates difficulties, not just in cultural aspects but also because the players have acquired different habits at their clubs. The short preparation time makes it difficult to overcome that problem."

**Vicente del Bosque:** "The work done at grassroots and youth levels is undoubtedly a factor behind the high level of Spanish football – in clubs and national teams. It's important for us to have our national training centre – which is our home where, basically on a day-to-day basis, the coaches from the Under-15s to senior level meet up. We have a steady exchange and input from each other, and this helps a lot. I have been coaching the national team for four years but a development process going back

England's sports director Sir Trevor Brooking (extreme right) led one of the discussion groups with Louis van Gaal (second from the left) acting as group spokesman during the following day's feedback session

### Great expectations?

One of the perennial talking points focuses on the weight of public expectation and the extent to which it can influence performances at a major tournament.

**Cesare Prandelli:** "Expectations were not very high, as we were coming from a very disappointing World Cup. So our aim was to avoid playing half a match so poorly that it could send us home and, at the same time, to steadily gain credibility. Fortunately, the Italian media really tried to understand the work we were doing and the changes to our mentality that we were trying to make."

**Joachim Löw:** "There were great expectations because of our World Cup performance and our ten victories in the qualifiers. It was difficult to say the contrary to the media! We were undoubtedly under pressure but we discussed with the players what our objectives were and what type of football we wanted to play. I think we were well prepared – and we won our first four games."

**Vicente del Bosque:** "To convince people that we weren't favourites was impossible. But we should 'defuse' football: we shouldn't be thinking that one team out of 16 succeeds and the other 15 are 'failures'. It is positive if expectations translate into self-confidence but we had to face the reality of teams who would want to put pressure on us and prevent us from playing our game."

**Fabio Capello:** "If you want to be successful, you need to have many factors working well – and Spain had them all."

Statistics, technical topics and talking points raised by UEFA EURO 2012 can be found in the technical report, which has now been published, and also on [UEFA.com](http://UEFA.com). ●



# Table football

**I**t was the UEFA Champions League in debate mode. Instead of meeting for a brief pitchside handshake, some of the coaches who would come face to face during the group stage of the 2012/13 competition met around the debating table at UEFA's headquarters in Nyon, the traditional setting for the annual UEFA Elite Club Coaches Forum.

At this, the 14th event of its kind, the head coach of the defending champions, Roberto Di Matteo, was joined by Mircea Lucescu and Kasper Hjulmand, the coaches of his Group E rivals, FC Shakhtar Donetsk and FC Nordsjælland. SL Benfica's Jorge Jesus and FC Spartak Moskva's Unai Emery were able to meet Francesc "Tito" Vilanova, who was making his forum debut, having taken the FC Barcelona baton from Josep "Pep" Guardiola. Another debutant, Montpellier Hérault SC's René Girard, was five places away from Leonardo Jardim and two from Arsène Wenger, the coaches of his Group B rivals Olympiacos FC and Arsenal FC respectively. Werder Bremen's Thomas

Schaaf was the "middle man" between AFC Ajax's Frank de Boer and Borussia Dortmund's Jürgen Klopp, with a third Group D contender, José Mourinho, delivering diagonal passes from the other side of the room. AC Milan's Massimiliano Allegri was sitting next to a Group C rival, FC Zenit St Petersburg's Italian coach, Luciano Spalletti. Many of them were to meet barely two weeks later on the opening matchday of the UEFA Champions League season.

This quick review of the seating plan is relevant: it is easy to speak of the "coaching fraternity", but in a profession which is essentially a solitary exercise, fraternal synergies need to be built – and one of the prime missions of the annual forum is to do just that. Following UEFA EURO 2012, coaching attitudes had been widely praised and, as the club competition season got under way, the forum highlighted the fact that familiarity undoubtedly helps to breed respect among fellow members of the coaching profession.

*The coaches try not to look too hard at Europe's two major club competition trophies as they discuss trends in the game*



The other significant feature of the seating plan was that the presence of UEFA's president, Michel Platini, its general secretary, Gianni Infantino, competitions director, Giorgio Marchetti, and technical director, Andy Roxburgh, provided a clear indication that European football's governing body was prepared to listen to eminent coaching voices and to inject their input into decision-making systems. But, apart from specific proposals related to the structure of UEFA's club competitions and the regulations which apply to them, much of the forum was dedicated to simply discussing the football topics described below.

### Attractive football

"People want to see attractive football," commented Frank de Boer, "and recent seasons have demonstrated that attack-minded and defence-minded teams can both be successful. One striking feature is that defence-to-attack transitions in the Champions League have become incredibly fast, with Real Madrid CF providing a good example. They are always attentive to the chance of launching a fast attack."

Arsène Wenger felt that EURO 2012 had been attractive to watch because more teams had adopted a "want to win" rather than a "don't want to lose" attitude. "The Champions League," he added, "is essentially two competitions. The group stage is generally quite well controlled by the big clubs and then the cup games – the knockout stage – is very different, with new types of pressure. Teams tend to be well organised because they know each other so well, and we're seeing more teams who are equipped to get out of intense pressing situations and then be dangerous."

### Team shapes

UEFA's technical director, Andy Roxburgh, pointed out that, of the teams which reached the knockout rounds of last season's UEFA Champions League, six operated in a 4-2-3-1 structure as default setting, four in 4-3-3, one in 3-4-3, and five in 4-4-2. In other words, 10 of the top 16 opted for 4-3-3 or its younger brother (4-2-3-1), with the main difference centred on the deployment of one or two screening midfielders. Thomas Schaaf commented that the characteristics of the holding midfielders can have a profound influence on the personality of the team. "Dortmund won the Bundesliga with two screening midfielders who could launch attacks and take the initiative," he pointed out. "I don't think coaches can invent new shapes any more," Arsène Wenger remarked. "You look at the qualities of your players and try to find the most rational way of covering the pitch."

### Positive possession

"What is positive possession?" asked José Mourinho. "At the moment, there's a degree of confusion about attacking and defensive possession play. Maybe 'positive possession' can be measured by the number of shots at goal." Jorge Jesus added "I think the most effective teams are the ones who want possession with a specific objective."

FC Barcelona, synonymous with possession play, were held up as an example of a team which presses high and, as Carlo Ancelotti put it, "closes gaps and tries to intercept passes. This is an intensive, high-energy approach and many teams will prefer to drop deep and wait. Chelsea are a good example of a team which can combine compact



Luciano Spalletti (foreground), Jürgen Klopp and Thomas Schaaf tune into the simultaneous interpreting feed, with Frank de Boer and Fatih Terim in the background

defending with periods of high pressing." Barça's coach, Tito Vilanova, explained: "We operate a difficult playing style in that we sometimes leave about 60 metres at our backs. This means that we need to have extremely fast defenders." Gérard Houllier said, "very few Champions League teams go consistently for such intense pressure. The trend is to drop back quickly and press the ball-carrier from positions behind the ball."

### Goalscoring midfielders

Diego Simeone, Club Atlético de Madrid's title-winning coach in the UEFA Europa League and the UEFA Super Cup, commented: "Almost all teams currently operate with a single striker, which means that there is an increasing reliance on goals from midfield players". As Arsène Wenger pointed out: "This means that the midfield is often very highly populated and, if the ball is lost in certain areas, you are immediately in trouble". Gérard Houllier added: "The trend is creating a new job profile in midfield and the tendency is to look for players who are technically outstanding and able to play in tight spaces."

### Counterattacks

The coaches were interested to hear that the number of goals derived from fast breaks had stabilised at 27% during the 2011/12 season after reaching a peak of around 40% half a decade ago. This downward trend was illustrated by the decline from 46% at EURO 2008 to 25% at this year's final tournament. "With most Bundesliga teams defending high, this is an important facet," said



Jürgen Klopp. "It's a question of self-belief and of making fast forward moves while space is available. These are opportunities to be seized and, at Dortmund, we had more rewards from counters than we did from corners, for example."

As FC Porto's head coach, Vítor Pereira, commented: "When we talk about counterattacks, we talk about speed. But I think the speed of decision-making is the crucial element. I think that a good pass is more effective than a quick pass."

### Defeat

"People don't realise how much we suffer after a defeat," said one of the coaches at the forum. But Gérard Houllier insisted that the important thing was not to linger on a defeat. "Over-emphasising the factors which lead to a bad result can undermine confidence," he said, "and you should never lose sight of the fact that the important thing is the next game." As one of his colleagues stated: "The way you react to defeat can shape your career". As always, the UEFA Elite Club Coaches Forum produced plenty of priceless, thought-provoking comments. ●

### The lineup for the 14th UEFA Elite Club Coaches Forum

Back row (left to right): Jürgen Klopp (Borussia Dortmund), Leonardo Jardim (Olympiacos FC), Arsène Wenger (Arsenal FC), Vítor Pereira (FC Porto), Unai Emery (FC Spartak Moskva), Thomas Schaaf (Werder Bremen, UEFA technical team), Kasper Hjulmand (FC Nordsjælland), Andy Roxburgh (UEFA technical director). Middle row: Gianni Infantino (UEFA general secretary), Luciano Spalletti (FC Zenit St Petersburg), Massimiliano Allegri (AC Milan), René Girard (Montpellier HSC), Mircea Lucescu (FC Shakhtar Donetsk), Frank de Boer (AFC Ajax), Tito Vilanova (FC Barcelona), José Mourinho (Real Madrid CF), Pierluigi Collina (UEFA chief refereeing officer), Giorgio Marchetti (UEFA competitions director). Front row: Ivan Jovanović (APOEL FC), Carlo Ancelotti (Paris Saint-Germain FC), Fatih Terim (Galatasaray AS), Diego Simeone (Club Atlético de Madrid), Michel Platini (UEFA president), Roberto Di Matteo (Chelsea FC), Gérard Houllier (UEFA technical team), Jorge Jesus (SL Benfica)



# A Spanish summer

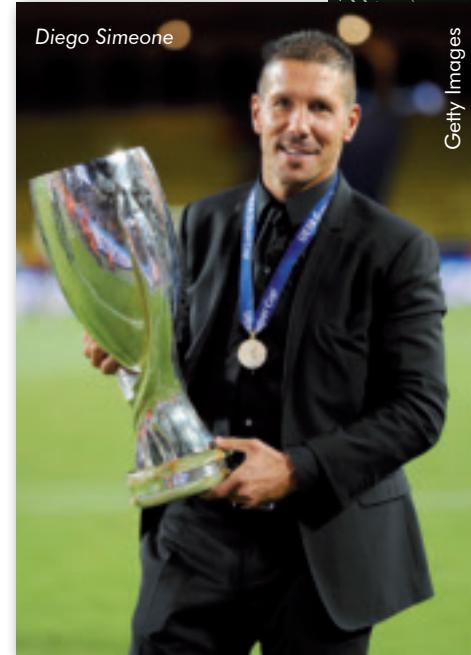


Calle Barrling

Sportsfile

## European Women's Under-19 Championship

In Turkey  
 Sweden 1-0 Spain  
 (after extra-time)  
 Gold: Calle Barrling  
 Silver: Ángel Vilda



Diego Simeone

Getty Images

## European Under-19 Championship

In Estonia  
 Spain 1-0 Greece  
 Gold: Julen Lopetegui  
 Silver: Kostas Tsanas

## UEFA Super Cup

In Monaco  
 Chelsea FC 1-4 Club Atlético de Madrid  
 Gold: Diego Simeone  
 Silver: Roberto Di Matteo

Captain Iker Casillas lifts the Henri Delaunay Cup in Kyiv



Getty Images

It could be argued that the surprise of the summer was Spain's unsuccessful defence of the Women's Under-17 title which Jorge Vilda's team had won in the previous two years. Otherwise, the presence of four teams in five European finals added up to a Spanish summer which demonstrated once again that the concept of "a close season" is obsolete. National teams were in training camps before the dust had settled at Fussball Arena München, where Chelsea FC and FC Bayern München had brought down the curtain on the club competition season. And, while Vicente del Bosque's Spanish squad was still celebrating victory at EURO 2012, the ball started rolling at the final tournaments of the women's and men's European Under-19 Championships. In the meantime, play was under way in the preliminary rounds of the 2012/13 club competitions and, within the blink of an eye, the UEFA Super Cup was raising the curtain on a new season. There was hardly time to applaud the technicians who had led their teams on to the podium during a summer which underlined the benchmarking status of Spanish football.

## UEFA EURO 2012

In Poland and Ukraine  
 Spain 4-0 Italy  
 Gold: Vicente del Bosque  
 Silver: Cesare Prandelli

## European Women's Under-17 Championship

In Switzerland  
 France 1-1 Germany (4-3 to Germany on penalties)  
 Gold: Anouschka Bernhard  
 Silver: Francisco "Paco" Rubio

## The last word

The UEFA Conference for European National Team Coaches brought down the curtain on Andy Roxburgh's term of over 18 years as UEFA's technical director. On the closing day of the event in Warsaw, the head coach of the current world and European champions, Vicente del Bosque, stepped on stage to present Andy a "memory book" in which friends and colleagues had dedicated messages to him. The words were written in privacy, but some of the sentiments, expressed anonymously for reasons of confidentiality, provide a fitting tribute to the founding father of The Technician.

*"A true lover of the game whose whole life has been devoted to football at all levels. Everyone who has come across his path will recognise his time at UEFA as a marvellous success story."*

*"You brought all of European football together and always looked to improve the quality of our game. Through the years you gained huge respect from everybody in our job and we will all miss that spark in your eyes, your warmth and your consistent desire to know more."*

*"A true sportsman and someone who has made friends and admirers in the whole world."*

*"Passion for football coloured your actions as a burning flame, igniting the motivation and drive to deal with the realities of the future of football."*

*"A Spanish song says that 'when a friend leaves, something dies in your soul'. You made European football better and you made the coaching profession better as well."*

*"You made everyone feel part of the wonderful journey you started when you became technical director. You will be greatly missed but your legacy will live on for many, many years."*

*"You have been a key player in raising the level of coach education and encouraging the personal growth of many people."*

*"Your work has defined the role of the technical director and, in the future, you will be regarded as a mentor and role model figure."*

*"A great technician, an extraordinary educator and a colleague loved by everyone."*

*"We will miss your professional expertise, mentoring and friendship."*

*"You have been a motivation for so many people and we thank you for bringing your spirit to us."*

*"Teaching is the most important profession in the world – and you have educated thousands. All these people and the game itself are better for your involvement in their lives."*

*"A great leader and a great man."*

And so say all of us.



A poignant moment as UEFA's general secretary presents a commemorative Scotland shirt to Andy Roxburgh at the conference in Warsaw – his farewell appearance as UEFA technical director