

EDITORIAL

THE SHARING OF KNOWLEDGE

After an exhilarating and entertaining FIFA World Cup in Brazil, the challenge for many top-level club coaches was to refuel and remotivate their international players, who had been progressively reintegrated into pre-season schedules after a brief summer respite. Ditto some of the national team coaches, who had to overhaul their squads and coax them into top gear for an immediate round of fixtures in the UEFA EURO 2016 qualifiers. But, despite the packed calendar, the month of September offered club and national team coaches opportunities to get together in a non-competitive environment and, quite simply, talk football.

The first event was the annual Elite Club Coaches Forum at UEFA's headquarters in Nyon. The 2014/15 squad contained quite a few newcomers, with coaches from UEFA Europa League teams mingling with colleagues who had led their clubs into the knockout rounds of the UEFA Champions League. Sir Alex Ferguson, who earlier this year agreed to take on the role of UEFA Coaching Ambassador, encouraged his colleagues not to hesitate in speaking up and helping UEFA to improve its club competitions – including the newcomers, whom he urged “*not to be overawed by us older guys*”. He underlined the value of listening to young coaches with young ideas. The young coaches were also happy to tap into the knowledge of Sir Alex and the other experienced campaigners. And a third dimension was added to the interaction thanks to the presence of the UEFA President, Michel Platini, and the General Secretary, Gianni Infantino. It was not lost on the coaches that they were not ‘there for the photo’ but were prepared to listen and to contribute throughout the forum.

When the national team coaches and technical directors gathered in St Petersburg for the joint FIFA-UEFA conference on the World Cup, we were privileged to hear Joachim Löw talking

about coaching topics relating to Germany's victorious campaign. But one of the other interesting features was a round-table discussion during which some of the coaches reflected with honesty on their teams' failure to progress beyond the group stage. They admitted that the experience had hurt them. They admitted that they had spent a lot of time trying to pinpoint the reasons for setbacks on the field of play, despite meticulous, well-designed preparation programmes prior to the trip to Brazil and during the final tournament itself. For the coaches who had not been at the World Cup, it offered a fascinating insight.

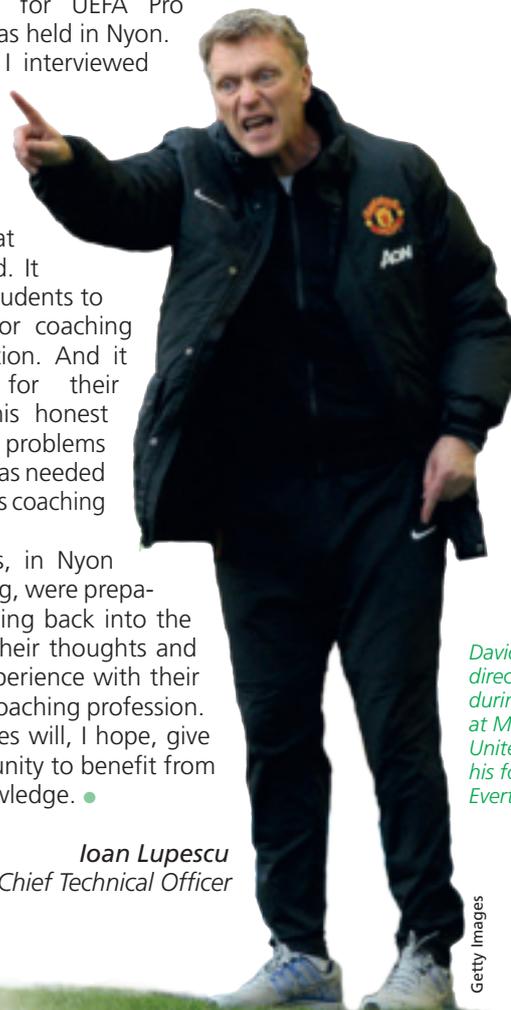
A couple of weeks after the event in Russia, the first of the 2014/15 season's student exchange courses for UEFA Pro licence students was held in Nyon.

On the final day, I interviewed David Moyes, the technician who had faced the difficult challenge of stepping into Sir Alex's shoes at Manchester United. It

was easy for the students to feel his passion for coaching and coach education. And it was important for their futures to hear his honest appraisal of the problems and situations he has needed to address during his coaching career.

All the coaches, in Nyon and in St Petersburg, were prepared to put something back into the game by sharing their thoughts and their first-hand experience with their colleagues in the coaching profession. The following pages will, I hope, give readers an opportunity to benefit from some of their knowledge. ●

Ioan Lupescu
UEFA Chief Technical Officer



David Moyes directs operations during his time at Manchester United FC – against his former club, Everton

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IN THIS ISSUE

INTERVIEW – JOACHIM LÖW	2-5
ECHOES OF BRAZIL	6-9
FROM AWAY GOALS TO YOUTH LEAGUE	10-11
A BALANCING ACT	12

THE INTERVIEW

Success can bathe a coaching career in so much dazzling golden light that it can obscure long, arduous and mentally demanding routes to the peak of the profession. This applies to a professional player – an Under-21 international – whose interest in the technical aspects of the game ushered him into youth coaching while his playing boots were still getting muddy. He made the transition into full-time coaching as assistant at VfB Stuttgart and, stepping up to the role of head coach, won the German cup in 1997 and led the club into the final of the European Cup Winners' Cup a year later. Sandwiched between two spells in Turkey, he then led Karlsruher SC before moving to Austria to take charge of FC Tirol and FK Austria Wien. In the meantime, he had found affinities with Jürgen Klinsmann at a coaching course and when the latter took the helm of the German national team in 2004, he was invited to jump on board as assistant. When Klinsmann departed after the FIFA World Cup on home soil in 2006, he stepped up to No. 1 spot with firm views on pathways towards a modern, attack-minded playing philosophy. The rest, as they say, is history. At the age of 54, he took centre stage at the FIFA-UEFA conference for national coaches and technical directors to receive acclaim from his coaching colleagues and, in an interview with UEFA's chief technical officer, Ioan Lupescu, to discuss Germany's ultimate success at the FIFA World Cup in Brazil. He is, of course...

JOACHIM LÖW



The obvious opening question is what qualities a coach needs to become world champion?

Well, from my point of view it is not the coach who becomes world champion, but it is a team. Not just the players who actually played, but the whole squad, and also the team behind the team. Because if you want to achieve success, the whole team has to work perfectly, like a machine, and all the pieces of the puzzle need to fit together into one picture. I think the core job of a coach is to select the right players for a tournament. You need players who are mentally and physically fit, who are able to deal with difficult moments. I think the characters of the players plays an important role. A coach needs to be a psychologist, because during a tournament

you're looking after a team of players which is being watched closely and put under a lot of pressure. A coach needs, as well as specific abilities, a philosophy and a pathway that he tries to implement and communicate to the players. That is something I have learned: today's players want explanations and to understand criticism by the coach. So you need to be able to make yourself understood. So I think the psychological aspect and good communication are, as well as football-specific abilities, fundamental for a coach.

Do the same principles apply for your 'team behind the team'?

It's important nowadays that a coach works with people who are specialists in their domains. You shouldn't be scared of putting a team together made up of experts who are better than the coach in some aspects. It's an important requirement. The coach is an educator, a leader, a psychologist, a communicator. He is representing the federation, so the coach must continuously communicate with the media. Coaches cannot do all of that perfectly. So, for me personally, it was important to have people in my environment who discuss things with me, who give me their opinions, but who are loyal to me and who are reliable. They are experts in their domains, and I trust their opinion. Secondly, I am convinced that the different characters must add up. Especially in a tournament like this. It's not just about football skills but also about interpersonal relationships. How tolerant are the players? What is their tolerance to frustration? How disciplined is a player if he doesn't play? How does he blend into the team? How much respect does he show the others? These are important aspects. Characters and values are important to achieve such a success.



Argentina goalkeeper Sergio Romero watches anxiously as Germany defender Benedikt Höwedes connects with a header during the FIFA World Cup final in Rio de Janeiro

Ten years with the national team, including the two as assistant to Jürgen Klinsmann. Has your coaching style changed during this time?

You certainly learn and gain experience through all those years. That is obvious and important for a coach, as it makes you develop further. But I don't think I have changed my style much over the last few years. I've remained faithful to myself, representing and teaching certain values to the players. Today all players are very mature and know how to take on responsibilities. That's why it is important for a coach to set certain rules and to implement them continuously, as you need discipline in the group. But I don't think I have changed my style of coaching.

Was there a moment in Brazil when you thought Germany could go all the way to the title?

Honestly, there wasn't a moment to think 'now we will win the World Cup'. You shouldn't forget that at that level, every opponent is unpredictable. And the smallest mistakes are immediately punished by your opponent. So you don't really have that feeling that you will win the title. You have to focus match by match. But what gave us the last kick was the 7-1 against Brazil. Beating the hosts, of course, gave us more confidence for the final. And I watched the reactions in the dressing room from the coach's perspective. And I realised that the players were still very humble and modest.

You mean there was no euphoria?

There was no euphoria. Everybody was able to evaluate that match the right way. The Brazilian team was in shock after we scored the second and third goals; you could really feel that on the pitch. But my players were all very focused the next day and very calm. A good sign for me, especially after losing the final in 2008 and the semi-final in 2010, that maybe this time we had the right mentality and the boundless ambition to win the tournament and to reach the end of the path we had taken. The example was Bastian Schweinsteiger, who wasn't really 100% but what he showed in the final, especially the mental strength, and what he gave to the team... he and the others showed that they didn't want to miss that chance again.

You mention those previous results – and there was also the 2012 semi-final against Italy. Did they add up to a lot of pressure on the coach?

Well, it is normal that the pressure is high for the big nations. If Germany go to play a tournament then everybody, the country and all football fans, just expect the team to win it. But I have learned to deal with the media and to ignore criticism. Most coaches know this anyway, but it's important to focus on your job as coach

and not on what is happening around you. You need to go your way. We do the same among the coaching staff. We reflect on things and discuss among ourselves. You manage to accept whatever comes from outside, but you have to be convinced about your path and follow it despite any criticism.

Were there moments when you didn't think you were good enough to win the title?

Of course there are difficult moments. The whole tournament is difficult – and not just adapting to the climate or early kick-off times. You had to be aware of the flexibility of your opponents. You could see that there were many different systems and playing styles. I don't think there are any small nations any more. Just look at Costa Rica, who managed to play at a high level.



Joachim Löw leads from the touchline

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We certainly had to overcome difficult moments, especially against Algeria, where we had problems in defence at times. We were just set up wrongly at the back when we were attacking. We weren't well positioned. Algeria had nothing to lose and were hoping to be successful with their quick counterattacks. So that was certainly a difficult match, also because it went into extra time. But it was maybe also thanks to us for wearing our opponent down with our performance in the second half and in extra time. We managed to put pressure on our opponent until the end. But I have to say that Algeria played very well in defence too.

Did you see the victory in Brazil as a reward for work done over many years – building up high-performance centres, for example?

That is also a success, that's for sure. Being eliminated in the group stages at the EUROS in 2000 and 2004 put the German national team a bit on the floor. But new structures were introduced, along with academies, specific school cooperation projects and, importantly, training content. Before, there was a huge focus on physical fitness and a physical style of play. But the focus moved on to technical aspects, on to coordination, and now, after 10 or 15 years, you can reap the benefits. In 2006, we still had a lot of difficulty finding centre-backs with strong footballing skills. And in midfield or on the wings, much the same. But now we have players of 19, 20, 21 or 22 who have great technical skills. That is also the result of the work being done at the clubs and of the structures which were changed and of course, thanks to great

coaching education, because the coaches are educated and work very well. So all that helps you become a world champion.

How did you translate all this into success for the national team?

Firstly, it was definitely about better youth development. That was an important aspect. Jürgen Klinsmann arrived in 2004 and managed to implant a new structure within the federation. We added a sports psychologist; we added a fitness coach; we had Oliver Bierhoff who dealt with everything on the sporting side and who gave us some breathing space. In 2006, we lived on our emotions during the World Cup, because the team was not as strong as today in terms of technical aspects. After 2008, I had the impression that we needed to change certain things, even though we had reached the final. We couldn't compete with Spain in terms of football. Spain were and are models for us in terms of player development as well. The integrated philosophy from the bottom up within their federation, the fact that all teams follow the same philosophy... that wasn't the case in Germany, where the youth teams sometimes played differently than at A level. So it was important to integrate the same philosophy in all categories. I think that at the World Cup in 2010, we developed further in our football and it was an important step. Of course you need physical requirements and you need other things. But nowadays, if you are not playing good football, you will not be able to become world champions or win a major title.

How important is experience? You had 10 or 11 players who had played World Cups or EUROS or Champions League finals and even the younger ones had been successful in Germany's youth teams...

Experience is certainly very important, especially at tournaments like these, having players on board who can handle and find solutions to difficult situations and know what to expect. Neuer, Hummels, Boateng, Höwedes, Özil... six or seven players had been European Under-21 champions in Sweden in 2009 and it was very important for players at that age for their development, to experience a success and to gain confidence in their ability to win a tournament like that. But I think the quality of the players is the decisive factor. We had a lot of young players, like Schürrle, Kroos and Götze. They all have great quality. I think that was important. Then I guess another factor in Brazil was physical fitness. There were many matches played at high tempo. I didn't really expect that beforehand – to see the players perform so well especially at such a high temperature. We played three matches in the group stage at over 30 degrees and with high humidity and we played right in the heat of midday. Many teams really tried to invest a lot, especially in attack, so physical fitness played an important role.

In his role of assistant coach, Joachim Löw between head coach Jürgen Klinsmann and Germany team manager Oliver Bierhoff during a match in Rotterdam in August 2005



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What trends did you see among the other teams in Brazil? What can you see coming up in the future?

Well, at this World Cup there was definitely one noticeable trend and that was the variety you saw. In the past, most teams played a 4-2-3-1 system, but that has changed a bit. Some nations played with three at the back or even with five. That is nothing new. It is something we already saw in the past. But today you face opponents who are a lot more flexible with their tactical possibilities. Teams are able to change the basic structure in the team like, for example, Chile who do it very well. They can play with lots of varieties. They can play with two attackers or only one, and then they play with a numerical advantage in midfield and can use the players in attack or in defence. Then, secondly, the physical fitness has maybe improved a bit compared with 2010. When I saw that pace in such conditions... it was just enormous. And in terms of development in general, I think there can be changes and modifications so that you can improve and further develop the individual quality of the players, especially in the youth teams. I think that team tactics are well trained and well taught, but there can be work to do regarding individual job descriptions, looking at, for example, how a centre-back plays, what a wing-back needs to be able to do, what to expect from an attacker today, or from a midfielder. We need to promote that individual development because we have problems in

certain positions in Germany, also in the youth sector. We only have a few wing-backs and, of course, Philipp Lahm has now retired from the national team. We also don't have such a large number of strikers now that Miroslav Klose has left, so we need to look for forwards who can perform well in the penalty box. We have room to improve in individual positions.

How difficult was it to re-motivate your team when it came to getting back into qualifying games for UEFA EURO 2016?

Well, despite all the happiness that a tournament like that brings, it also brings a lot of issues and problems in the aftermath. You can and should enjoy the success for a couple of weeks, but then when it all starts again you can see that there are issues. It is not very easy for the players, after having been together for eight extra weeks after the league had finished, continuing to play at such a high level at such a big tournament. It is not easy to focus on new tasks. And we had to cope with the departures of three major players like Lahm, Klose and Mertesacker, plus four or five players who were injured. The other players had only a short time to recover before the domestic league started again and over years this is a problem for the players. So, when we started, the players who had been at the World Cup weren't really fully there physically and mentally. So we didn't have the pace, the dynamics or the security that we had had a few weeks earlier. ●

Philipp Lahm is the first European captain to savour victory in America as he receives the Jules Rimet trophy from Brazil's president Dilma Rousseff, FIFA president Joseph S. Blatter, German chancellor Angela Merkel and German president Joachim Gauk

ECHOES OF BRAZIL

National team coaches meet in St Petersburg to review the FIFA World Cup.



An image from the forum session involving (left to right) Ioan Lupescu (UEFA), Didier Deschamps, Fabio Capello, Vicente Del Bosque, Roy Hodgson, Nico Kovač and Jean-Paul Brigger (FIFA)

How important is job-specific experience for coaches who lead national teams to major tournaments? Was it a coincidence that the world champion coach, Joachim Löw, travelled to Brazil with a decade of experience with the German national team tucked away in his baggage? As usual, there were a number of 'absent friends' when coaches and technical directors from Europe's national associations met in St Petersburg in mid-September for a FIFA-UEFA conference based on analysis of the 2014 FIFA World Cup. Five of the coaches who led European teams to Brazil had already left for pastures new, leaving Löw and Vicente Del Bosque (at the Spanish helm since 2008) as the 'veterans' in a job which has become increasingly short-term and in which 'cycles' often come to an end at the end of a major competition.

As FIFA had staged a similar event for CONMEBOL and CONCACAF nations a week earlier, the conference in St Petersburg had unequivocally European perspectives. In an overview of a final tournament which had achieved high entertainment levels, the impression expressed by the European technical observers was that most games had been played with attacking vocation and that the mindset among the coaches was to focus on winning games rather than to avoid losing them. Oddly, however, there

was a substantial downturn in the number of goal attempts in comparison with the 2010 final tournament in South Africa. Statistics make it possible to argue that the scoring opportunities carved out in Brazil were of higher quality – or clarity. More goals were scored (171, up from 145 in 2010). The average of 2.67 per game is a halfway house between the 2.32 in the 2013/14 UEFA Europa League and the 2.90 in the UEFA Champions League. Although mindsets were generally attack-oriented, they were not always transferred to the scoreboard, with silver-medallists Argentina scoring two goals in 450 minutes of football during the knockout rounds.

Goalscoring patterns revealed a decrease in the success rate of long-range shooting: in 2010, 82% of goals were scored inside the penalty area. In Brazil, that percentage increased to

just a few decimal points short of 90%. Another eye-catching statistic was the dramatic rise in the number of assists from the corner areas – the rectangle drawn by touchline, byline and the edges of the penalty area. No fewer than 26% of assists were delivered from these areas, compared with 19% in 2010 and only 12% in 2006. The inference is to highlight the importance of the supply routes opened up by full-backs and wingers in the advanced wide areas. The mention of full-backs is justified by one of the other salient pieces of data to emerge from the final tournament: 28% of the assists were delivered by defenders, compared with 19% in 2010 and 12% in 2006. In other words, the effectiveness of supply from members of the back four has increased by 133% since the final tournament in Germany eight years ago.

Attacking possession

In contrast to the prevailing trend in the UEFA Champions League, 21 of the 64 games were won by the team enjoying a minor share of the ball. A notable feature was, however, that the European teams generally had more possession in the attacking third with, curiously, the Netherlands emerging as the exception to prove the rule. Louis van Gaal's side had only 19% (along with Costa Rica and the USA), with only

Algeria (18%) registering less possession in the attacking area. Belgium topped this particular table with 30%, while France and Germany had 27% and 26% respectively. Non-European sides tended to have more possession in their defensive third, with only Greece (33%) in among the USA (39%), Algeria (37%), Chile (36%), Costa Rica (36%) and Brazil (31%). Those figures contrasted sharply with the 2013/14 UEFA Champions League, where the team with the least possession in the attacking third was Galatasaray AŞ with 29%, with Arsenal FC registering 42% – substantially more than any of the sides at the World Cup.

When asked to what extent he worked with statistics, Joachim Löw replied: *“We used statistics from our own matches to see, for example, how often we lost the ball and how many successful passes were made in the attacking third. We didn’t look too closely at the number of kilometres our players ran – we were more concerned about the intensity of the running rather than the distance.”* Intensity and acceleration were two aspects underlined by many of the other coaches in St Petersburg. France’s coach, Didier Deschamps, reflected: *“The tournament emphasised the importance of being able to sustain high-intensity runs over the full 90 minutes.”* His Croatian counterpart, Niko Kovač, the tournament’s second-youngest coach at 42, added: *“Being good on the ball and being able to produce peak performance over 60 or 70 minutes isn’t enough – the differences in intensity became very obvious.”*

The concept of intensity can be readily linked with levels of fitness and athleticism. *“I think that technique is always the difference-maker,”* commented Deschamps, *“but the World Cup showed us that the modern player must be a high-level athlete, physically equipped to maintain high levels of intensity throughout the match.”* The general consensus was clearly that the top players of today and tomorrow require technique, power, speed and emotional control.

From the bench to the World Cup

Imbuing players with these qualities was a matter of some concern for many of the coaches. Russia’s Fabio Capello pointed out that Europe’s domestic leagues are diverse in intensity levels. Löw signalled Mesut Özil as an example: *“He had to adapt to the Premier League, and he said that it was different from Spain, where if Real Madrid went two goals ahead, they could practically play out the game with their technique and expertise. He found that in England that was not the case. Every game pushes you to your limits.”* Like Capello, Roy Hodgson has to find solutions to problems derived from the migration of players. *“Not that long ago,”* the England manager commented, *“it would have been unthinkable to have a player in the national team who wasn’t a starter at his club. But this is a relatively common occurrence these days. Being on the bench at a top club means that you get good training. But you have to question if that is enough to succeed at a tournament like the World Cup.”*

Wesley Sneijder slams in an 88th-minute equaliser against Mexico, with an added-time winner then sending the Dutch en route to the bronze medal



Getty Images

Russia's squad was the only one comprising exclusively home-based players who travelled to Brazil having, in most cases, been exposed exclusively to the parameters of the Russian domestic league. England selected 22 'native' players and one playing his league football in Scotland. Other coaches had to cope with radically different problems: Belgium had two home-based outfielders, Croatia one, and Bosnia and Herzegovina none. Safet Sušić's squad contained players from nine different leagues, while five other European squads were gathered from seven or eight domestic championships.

Hence the emphasis among the coaches in St Petersburg on team spirit. *"Mental aptitudes and team spirit are crucial,"* said Deschamps, *"because six weeks or so together represents a human adventure. And for my nine players who were under 25, it was a great experience in terms of building for EURO 2016. All successful teams focused clearly on collective virtues."*

Among the collective virtues, rapid, well-choreographed transitions in both directions were described as the 'magic moments' of match play in Brazil. *"They were fascinating phases of play,"* the audience in St Petersburg heard. *"One in four of the goals scored in open play was derived from a quick counterattack – most of them from explosive forward movements by two or three players. And, defensively, the challenge was to get back into shape quickly enough to stop or pre-empt the opposition's counters."* In statistical terms, 34 of the 133 open-play goals stemmed from fast counters. Finland's Mixu Paatelainen, a member of the

team of technical observers, reported that in Brazil the trend was towards aggressive 'semi-high pressing', based on maintaining a high defensive line but pulling players rapidly back to the halfway line (in many cases, into the centre circle), inviting the opposition to open play to the advanced full-backs and then pressing hard to disturb the build-up and, frequently, to launch the fast counter from the platform of intercepting a forward pass.

Risk management was also deemed to have been a major factor at the final tournament, with teams often *"willing to lose shape in positional terms, but without losing their collective balance"*. Paatelainen highlighted a tendency to keep the back door secure, with three or four balancing players while the ball was in opposition territory. Argentina, he pointed out, generally maintained at least four at the back when attacking, whereas Germany generally relied on the two centre-backs and one holding midfielder to drop the defensive anchors. Plus Manuel Neuer. As Claudio Ranieri commented: *"Neuer participated a great deal in starting attacking moves, and it emphasised the need for coaches to develop goalkeepers who are good with the ball at their feet and who have quality and calmness in their passing."*

The standard of goalkeeping was seen as one of the high notes of the tournament, with few goals directly attributable to errors by keepers. *"Neuer was outstanding,"* Löw conceded, despite his determination to focus on collective rather than individual qualities. *"He doesn't take himself too seriously and, in training, his attitude is totally professional. He constantly approaches*

He looks worried. But Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer has done enough to deny Algeria's Faouzi Ghoulam during a problematic match for the eventual world champions



Getty Images

the coaching staff to analyse things and observe details in order to improve himself. He does a lot to initiate play; he is not nervous at all; he has good technique; and he is courageous in taking risks. When we're training attacking moves, he is part of our strategy. And when we lose the ball, he takes high positions and controls the free space behind our defence. He acts like an extra outfielder in the build-up and in our defensive set-up. You can see in the Bundesliga that other keepers are adopting his style of play. I think it's a good development for goalkeepers to be positioned further up the field, rather than on their line. In football today, it's positive to have a keeper who can start quick attacks and who can defend outside the penalty area." One of the notable statistics to emerge from the final in Brazil was that Neuer made 28 passes – and that all of them were successfully received by a team-mate.

Developing the stars of the future

Spain's technical director and youth development guru, Ginés Meléndez, stepped on stage in St Petersburg to review the implications of what he had noted at the final tournament in terms of its potential significance in youth development. As almost half the open-play goals in Brazil stemmed from wing play or combination moves, he underlined the importance of one-touch management of the ball, the need to combine technique with speed, and the importance of helping young players to perfect the timing and weighting of their passing. As the club coaches had done at their forum a few days earlier, he reflected on the set plays which accounted for 22% of the goals in Brazil. However, almost one-third of the dead-ball goals were penalties, and only three were scored directly from free-kicks, whereas 18 stemmed from corners. Of 32 headed goals, 18 were scored as a result of set-play scenarios. Good deliveries of set plays and aerial ability, he concluded, should not be ignored in youth development work.

He also highlighted the importance of behavioural patterns which the coaches also felt were crucial elements in the long-term cohabitation that a major tournament demands. "At youth development levels," Meléndez insisted, "it is important to instil a winning mentality. But it is also important that winning or losing should not provoke notable changes in performance levels. It should be made clear that emotional extremes are counterproductive."

He also stressed that the major senior tournaments also set benchmarks in terms of the fair play principles which, he insisted, should be firmly implanted at youth development levels. For the record, the number of fouls awarded in Brazil dropped by only 4% in relation to South Africa, but the number of yellow cards registered a dramatic downturn of 31% (from 261 to 181). "It is noticeable at UEFA's age-limit tournaments,"



Against Nigeria, the cultured left foot of Lionel Messi strikes one of only three successful direct free-kicks in 64 games to put Argentina 2-1 ahead

Meléndez pointed out, "that the top teams tend to be the ones that you see at the top of the fair play table as well. It is important that this trend should be visible at the top end of the senior game as well." Germany, it has to be said, won the title receiving only six cautions in the seven matches they played.

Meléndez's presentation in St Petersburg ended with comparisons between the Spain team which had won the world title in 2010 and the Germany side which emerged victorious in Brazil. He flagged up their formations with, under the image of each player, the number of international matches played in youth competitions. "Apart from Miroslav Klose," he indicated, "all the world champions in 2010 and 2014 had won medals in age-limit tournaments – a fact which demonstrates the importance of giving young players as much international experience as possible in preparation for the day when they play a senior World Cup." As it happens, Spain's reliance on the defending champions meant that only one player under the age of 23 took the field in Brazil, whereas Joachim Löw included six in his squad and fielded five of them during the tournament. By and large, the coaches of the European teams were more adventurous in using Under-23s, with Switzerland fielding eight and Belgium six. By contrast, Argentina and Chile fielded no Under-23 players, Japan and Uruguay only one. As Roy Hodgson remarked: "It is not realistic to expect a team of 19 or 20-year-olds to win a World Cup, because experience is a virtue. But, as national team coaches, we have to find the right formula for introducing young players into the senior team." Is it a coincidence that the last five FIFA World Cup finals have been won by the younger of the two teams? That was one of many debating points to emerge from a fascinating conference in St Petersburg. ●

FROM AWAY GOALS TO YOUTH LEAGUE

Top coaches in Nyon discuss the A to Y of UEFA club competitions.

Away goals, home advantage, playmakers, possession, set plays, sin bins, strikers, pitch watering, technical fouls, yellow cards, the UEFA Youth League... the top club coaches played to the width when they met in Nyon in September for the 16th edition of the UEFA Elite Coaches Forum, chaired by UEFA's coaching ambassador, Sir Alex Ferguson, aided and abetted by the UEFA President, Michel Platini, who underlined the organisation's commitment to listen to the voices of football people.

A review of the 2013/14 season highlighted the competitive nature of the two main club competitions. "The final standings might suggest otherwise," commented Jürgen Klopp, "but every team has qualities that make it difficult to play against them." Arsène Wenger concurred: "The differences have become very narrow and I think improvements on the scouting front have contributed to that, with clubs better equipped to find the best players for their style of play." Unai Emery, UEFA Europa League champion with Sevilla FC, maintained that: "The standard of the competition might be slightly lower but for coaches and players, it adds a lot to the season." Jorge Jesus, who led SL Benfica through the UEFA Champions League group stage and then to the UEFA Europa League final, grimaced at the comparison. "I would argue," he said, "that as from the quarter-finals, the Europa League has the same quality and intensity as the Champions League."

But it was a perennial talking point which kicked off discussion on more specific matters: whether the away goal has an excessive impact on home-and-away ties and whether coaches are tempted to adopt, as Arsène Wenger put it, a "defend well at home and attack well away" approach. There were differences of opinion,

with Jürgen Klopp, for example, finding it "strange to hear that teams might not play aggressively at home", or Filippo Inzaghi commenting, "0-0 at home can't be considered an ideal result. In front of your own fans, you have to try to capitalise on home advantage."

The group also reflected on possession play and counterattacking. "In the German league," commented Pep Guardiola, "if you lose the ball you immediately create an opportunity for opponents to score, with four, five or six players prepared to make 40-metre runs in a matter of seconds." Carlo Ancelotti remarked: "You don't see teams in the Champions League focusing exclusively on defence. Defensive work is a prelude to a counter – especially as rule changes in recent years have benefited attacking teams." Discussing counterattacks led to the use of deliberate 'technical fouls' to break them up and the need for referees to react accordingly.

Possession play and playmakers

Statistical suggestions that possession-based teams tend to be more successful (Club Atlético de Madrid providing the exception) provoked reflections, notably by Michel González when he reported that Olympiacos FC have 16% more possession in the Greek league than in the Champions League. "This is a challenge for a coach," he stated. "We are expected to dominate and to entertain the public as a 'big club' on Sunday – and then take the field as a 'small club' with different priorities on the Wednesday. You need to work in a different way to prepare your team to compete in the Champions League."

However, there was a degree of mistrust in statistical evidence. "You might have a lot of possession in the attacking third without really posing a threat," Guardiola commented, with

The team photo at the 2014 event features, in the back row from left to right, Pierluigi Collina, Laurent Blanc, Manuel Pellegrini, Nuno Espírito Santo, Jens Keller, Mircea Lucescu, Jorge Jesus, Unai Emery, Jürgen Klopp, Roger Schmidt and André Villas-Boas, along with UEFA's Gianni Infantino, Ioan Lupescu and Giorgio Marchetti and, in the front row, Michel González, Rafael Benítez, Carlo Ancelotti, Filippo Inzaghi, Michel Platini, Sir Alex Ferguson, Josep Guardiola, Luis Enrique and Arsène Wenger. Massimiliano Allegri and Jose Mourinho arrived after the photo had been taken





Photos UEFA via Getty Images



Laurent Blanc raises a laugh and a smile from Jürgen Klopp and Arsène Wenger; Carlo Ancelotti in conversation with Sir Alex Ferguson and Michel Platini; and Ancelotti listening attentively to Rafa Benitez

Jürgen Klopp adding, *“I believe that, in the final third, the accuracy of your passing is more important.”*

Still in the attacking third, Jens Keller opined: *“We are short of classic strikers. They’re not good enough. We need to work on the next generation.”* As Laurent Blanc said: *“In the past you generally relied on attackers to score your goals. But these days there is a clear trend towards teams where many players are equipped to score.”* The feeling was that the emphasis had drifted towards the development of creative talents, in detriment of the ‘blunter instrument’ type of predator. The mention of creative talent led to debate on definitions of the ‘playmaker’, with Valencia CF coach Nuno Espírito Santo among those who felt that, in today’s game, it is too risky to depend on a single playmaker. Arsène Wenger reflected that: *“The traditional playmaker can be a problem if he becomes too important. He can slow the game down and become too absorbent.”* Klopp maintained that elaborate possession-based attacks demand creative talent, whereas counterattacks require a different kind of ‘launcher’. Michel Platini, commenting on a trend towards all-rounders as opposed to specialists, felt that levels of technique have risen so considerably that *“the player who has the ball is the playmaker”*.

Experimentation with the temporary exclusion of players on a ‘sin bin’ basis in UEFA’s youth development tournaments was the cue for discussions on coaches’ tactical response to playing in numerical inferiority for a limited period of time – including logistical doubts about where the sanctioned player has to spend five or ten minutes on a cold winter evening. Addressing disciplinary matters also prompted the coaches to request clarification of the rules applied to a coach who has been suspended or sent off. There was also a call for clearer regulation of pitch watering procedures – which UEFA has already been working on – and the height of grass. *“The speed of the ball is essential to the spectacle,”* Guardiola insisted.

The importance of set plays was debated at length, with many coaches encountering dilemmas in terms of how much training-ground time should be dedicated to them. Ancelotti summed them up by remarking: *“You must practise set plays and study video footage of the opposition’s approach to attacking and defending at dead-ball situations. On the other hand, we don’t actually train set plays that much because it’s difficult to reproduce the situations you can find in a real match. The referee is also an important element because you can easily have 16 players in a small area and what happens in front of goal has become very complex.”* Sir Alex Ferguson agreed: *“Another reason not to work too much on set plays,”* he recalled, *“was fear of injuries.”*

Learning European fundamentals

Questions related to player development were also on the agenda. At senior level, Roger Schmidt, now at Leverkusen after leading Salzburg in last season’s UEFA Europa League, emphasised the importance of playing in UEFA competitions. *“The young players learned a lot,”* he said, *“and they will capitalise on that in the future. It was positive in terms of team spirit and player development.”* Most of the discussion, however, focused on the benefits noted during the inaugural season of the UEFA Youth League. Inzaghi, in last season’s competition as coach of the AC Milan youth team, reflected: *“It was a very gratifying experience in terms of player growth and facing up to quality opposition from other countries.”* Ferguson also stressed the importance of giving youth players *“the opportunity to learn the fundamentals of European football”*. At the same time, the coaches felt that there was a need to find the best ways of combining the new competition with the educational requirements of the young players.

As Sir Alex Ferguson said when he closed the forum: *“These meetings are important because they allow coaches to get together out of competition and to express ourselves.”* ●

A BALANCING ACT

UEFA launches pilot female coach education project.

The adage about being able to prove anything with statistics cannot be applied to the sphere of female coaches. The figures are strikingly unequivocal. For every woman with a UEFA B licence, there are 53 men; for every woman with a UEFA Elite Youth licence, there are 35 men; for every woman with a UEFA A licence, there are 82 men; and for every woman with a UEFA Pro licence, there are 126 men. It means that the overall women to men ratio in European football is 1:58. Is this desirable? Or acceptable?

To some extent, it is understandable. Younger women often lack the time to go for coaching qualifications because a playing career has to be combined with work or study. When they hang up their boots, priorities can easily become family and/or securing an income – which, again, leaves little time (or, on occasions, money) for coaching studies. Against this background, it is no surprise that the percentage of male coaches in women's club and national team football has become a perennial talking point. The challenge which UEFA has taken up is to promote the qualification – or further qualification – of female coaches and to find more viable pathways from playing to coaching.

"The first step," explains UEFA's head of football education services, Frank Ludolph, *"has been to set up pilot projects encouraging current and former elite players to earn coaching qualifications via a pathway that maintains the level of the regular educational content but has been organisationally designed to fit more neatly into the female students' daily lives."*

The Danish national association (where there is one woman among the 111 Pro licence holders and very few female coaches to work with 71,000 players) has been quick out of the blocks. Former and current national team players have been targeted for a B licence course which kicked off in September and an A licence course which starts in December. The students meet around national team activities and their

education is being underpinned by internet teaching. The aim is to offer the same education with less time away from family, training, work and/or study.

The Danish programme differs from other pilot projects in that it is not associated with a UEFA tournament. In Croatia, an Under-18 women's development tournament served as a peg on which to hang the first module of a scheme aimed at helping female coaches towards B licences. Forty hours of the educational programme were attached to the tournament, with the remaining 80 hours organised in user-friendly segments at other times.

The formula has been enthusiastically received by other national associations who will be staging Under-16 or Under-18 women's development tournaments in the near future with, at the time of writing, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Turkey having confirmed their readiness to attach 40-hour segments to the events they are hosting. UEFA is supporting the projects by sending instructors to assist with educational content – and is also offering a financial contribution with a view to reducing the burden on women whose playing careers have been less lucrative than their male counterparts. Republic of Ireland national team coach Sue Ronan, one of three female coaches at UEFA's first Pro licence student exchange course of the season, commented: *"There is definitely a shortage of female coaches based on a lack of opportunities and finance. So this project is exactly what is needed."*

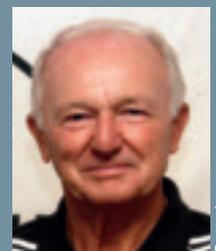
UEFA aims to float 11 pilot projects to lay foundations for a programme which has been nicely described by the Danish FA. *"The girls and women on the pitch have a knowledge and a passion for the game which we would like to transfer into the coaching area,"* says technical director Peter Rudbæk. *"So far, it has not been a natural transition, so we have to help it on its way."* The words could easily be 'stolen' as a mission statement for an exciting pan-European project. ●

GERO BISANZ: THE GURU HAS LEFT THE FIELD OF PLAY

It is a shock and hard to take that, out of the blue, Gero Bisanz, the former coach education director of the German FA and first head coach of the German women's national team, succumbed to a heart attack while enjoying a round of golf two weeks prior to his 79th birthday.

"Gero Bisanz has the answers..." That is how an article in this publication began roughly ten years ago. By that time, UEFA had already paid diverse tributes to Gero's immense contribution to the game. During recent days, many articles have highlighted his merits in relation to the development of women's football. He was a pioneer in Germany and won three European championship title in his coaching career, while caring for the structural foundations of tomorrow. But Gero was also a true monument to coach education. At the helm of the German coach education programme for 30 years, he prepared generations of coaches for

the professional game. Many of his graduates stayed in touch with him, discretely seeking – and obtaining – advice, even when already coaching on the front line. I had the immense pleasure of working with him in coach education, at both national and European levels. As a member of the Jira Commission and the Technical Development Committee, Gero contributed significantly to the original design of the UEFA Coaching Convention, with Germany becoming one of the first six signatories. Many associations then benefited from his guidance and expert advice during the implementation of the convention. A revered expert who provided profound and relevant answers, a guide and – for some – a guru, a personality with huge human qualities, a friend... has left the field of play and we will miss him. ● *Frank K. Ludolph*



Getty Images

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