

Tournament review



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CZECH REPUBLIC 2015





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The future is bright

"Congratulations go to Sweden, whose disciplined performances earned them a first trophy at Under-21 level"

The 2015 UEFA European Under-21 Championship final tournament was an exciting event that we can reflect on with great satisfaction. The competing teams played in thrilling and very diverse styles, leaving us in no doubt that the future of European football is very bright indeed.

That can also be said for the hosts' sporting infrastructure, on which the cooperation between UEFA and the Football Association of the Czech Republic (FAČR) was superb, the latter opening their stylish new headquarters before the final. The tournament reflected the recent development of football in the country and ran efficiently with the assistance of the volunteers who lent their support.

Congratulations go to Sweden, whose disciplined performances earned them a first trophy at Under-21 level, and to Portugal for their stylish progress to the final. We hope for more of the same to come in an atmosphere of fair play and respect in Poland in 2017. Meanwhile, we hope that you enjoy reflecting with us on this year's enjoyable tournament.

Michel Platini
UEFA President



Sweden and Portugal reached the final playing different styles of football

The final brought down the curtain on one of the biggest events in Czech sporting history



Raising the bar

"We enjoyed a fortnight of thrilling and entertaining action"



Miroslav Pelta (right) with UEFA President Michel Platini at the final

We would like to thank UEFA for the faith shown in us when setting us the challenge of staging this UEFA European Under-21 Championship final tournament – the biggest in our country's football history. We enjoyed a fortnight of thrilling and entertaining action – but there was a lot of hard work behind it.

We have been able to develop our footballing infrastructure in the Czech Republic while simultaneously proving that it is possible for us to stage a tournament that met UEFA's high standards and allowed the stars of the future to take centre stage on the pitch.

We worked together as an organisation, with the support of hundreds of volunteers, to ensure that visitors, players and teams all enjoyed their experience in our country at these finals. In doing so, we raised the bar for ourselves and, from our brand new headquarters, can look forward to a bright future as a result.

Miroslav Pelta
Football Association of
the Czech Republic President

Inspiring a generation

The summer of football in the Czech Republic brought benefits across the board for the host nation and beyond

The UEFA President is shown around the Hall of Fame at the new FAČR headquarters

Traditionally, the UEFA European Under-21 Championship has given fans a glimpse of the continent's footballing stars of tomorrow. The same could be said of the 2015 final tournament in the Czech Republic, and an equally significant boost to the health of the game came in the foundations that were laid there for the future.

The event in June left a legacy for footballing infrastructure, with the new Football Association of the Czech Republic (FAČR) headquarters inaugurated on the day of the final, having been built with assistance from the UEFA HatTrick programme.

Significant renovations, meanwhile, took place at the venues in Olomouc, Uherske Hradiste and at Prague's Letna Stadium ahead of the U21 EURO. The Letna Stadium gained a new away dressing room, and referee and delegate's rooms as well as a new hospitality area in the main stand with executive boxes, all of which could prove crucial to a sustainable future.

In Olomouc, the refurbished away dressing room at the Ander Stadium saw its first lick of paint since Real Madrid CF visited for a UEFA Cup quarter-final against home of SK Sigma Olomouc in 1992, and the renovation work also yielded a modern anti-doping room and spacious media centre. Sigma's Repecin training ground was also upgraded, with improvements owing much to €2.38m of funding from both the Czech ministry of education and sport and the local government.

The infrastructure at the home of 1. FC Slovácko in Uherske Hradiste – the other venue in Moravia – was also significantly improved thanks to the U21 EURO. A new pitch was laid for the first time in 12 years, while new turnstiles were constructed at the stadium entrance, a big screen installed and new press and hospitality areas built inside.



The final teams line up for a minute's silence for Josef Masopust



A Respect flag on display during the anthems

"We had about 15–20 aims when applying for this tournament," said the tournament director, Petr Fousek. "We've had a positive response from the media and the public, and UEFA, the teams and the referees have all expressed their satisfaction. It has given us better infrastructure; we struck a good economic balance, had good attendances and of course the boost to youth football in inspiring a young generation."

The sense of legacy extended to the learning curve that the tournament offered its participants – and not just the players on show. Polish match official Szymon Marciniak took charge of the final having come through UEFA's Centre of Refereeing Excellence (CORE) in Nyon, showing the benefits of investment in the sustainable development of the game. "One referee from Poland was invited [to Nyon], and fortunately it was me," he said. "That was the most important thing for me, working

with David Elleray – he has been the most important person for my career so far and we are still in contact now. When I started with CORE I thought I could referee, but when you go to a UEFA competition it is a totally different world."

Off the field, fledgling journalists gained major tournament experience of their own in the Czech Republic. The UEFA-sponsored International Sports Press Association (AIPS) Young Reporters programme was repeated after its successful venture in Israel in 2013, and representatives from the eight participating nations and elsewhere were selected to take part. They were able to cover press conferences, attend matches and experience many areas of the media, before receiving certificates from the UEFA President, Michel Platini. All in all, events in the Czech Republic suggest the foundations for football are solid enough to give them plenty to report on in the future.



Technical report



Eden project

Tension reigned and expectations were regularly thwarted as the tournament delivered engrossing drama and surprises

The long, winding road to the Eden Stadium in Prague proved to be anything but a garden of roses. The thorny ramifications of the Under-21 tournament were made obvious by the fact that only three of the 2013 finalists were in the Czech Republic, that Spain were not there to defend their title, and that on the final matchday of the group stage, nobody was mathematically assured of a semi-final place, nor had anybody been able to book tickets for the trip home. The two groups produced vastly different scoring patterns – 16 in Group A in Prague, 11 in Group B at the other end of the country – but were similar in offering oscillations of fortunes. Prospects varied like sunshine and clouds; games were rarely won by the pre-match favourites.

Germany's Joshua Kimmich gets to the ball ahead of Czech midfielder Michal Trávník

Group A

The hosts provided a striking example in their opening game against Denmark. Jamming the accelerator to the floor, the Czech team attacked and counterattacked furiously, reaping a reward when right-back Pavel Kadeřábek, an irritating thorn in the Danish left flank, cut inside and beat Jakob Busk Jensen at his far post with a left-footed drive. Nobody would have argued with the hosts' 1-0 half-time advantage (indeed, it could have been more) and nobody could have predicted a radical change of tide that would convert the match into the proverbial game of two halves. Although Jakub Dovalil had warned his side not to, the Czechs dropped back and allowed the Danes to get into their passing rhythm. Two corners – one from the left headed in by Jannik Vestergaard, one from the right partially cleared and scooped in by substitute Pione Sisto – turned the game on its head.

Serbia started as impressively as the Czechs, mirroring the Germans' 1-4-2-3-1 formation. They defended stoutly and countered with speed, skill and purpose – and went ahead via a superb solo penetration by Filip Djuričić. Back came Germany through controlling midfielder Emre Can and, curiously,

an evenly disputed game petered out when Germany left-back Christian Günter received a second caution after 69 minutes. Germany settled for a point; Serbia could not find enough adrenalin to take all three.

Mladen Dodić's team, having showcased themselves as title contenders, were further buoyed by Serbia's victory in the FIFA U-20 World Cup. However, hours after watching the drama in New Zealand, they performed sleepily, conceding two goals via cutbacks from the Czech left in the opening 21 minutes. With only 43% possession, a pallid version of the team that had started so impressively received a crushing 4-0 defeat.

Ahead of the final round of group matches, nobody was assured of a semi-final place, nor had anybody booked their tickets for the trip home

The Czechs, going through the reverse process, pressed and defended sensibly, exerted a more measured, controlled tempo and enthused the massive home crowd. Meanwhile, Denmark – despite creditable loyalty to ball-playing principles – were overrun by a German side that deprived them of the ball and scored three times, first via a fast break, then a free-kick well-struck by forward Kevin Volland, and finally a cutback from the left turned in by defender Matthias Ginter. The group had been turned on its head.

The Czechs, needing to win, evolved towards a 1-4-4-2 rather than their previous 1-4-2-3-1 and, again, showed their better profile. So did Germany. It was not until the 55th minute of an even contest that a defensive mishap broke the stalemate, a defective clearance allowing Volland's pass from the left to fall nicely to midfielder Nico Schulz. But, 11 minutes later, an exceptional move culminated in a cross from the right and a first-time shot high into the German net by substitute Ladislav Krejčí. The draw was sufficient for Horst Hrubesch's team, but not for Dovalil's – the problem being that Denmark, with Rasmus Falk indefatigably running the right flank and Jens Jønsson outstanding as controlling midfielder, produced a goal in each half to defeat the dispirited Serbs, who joined the hosts at the exit.



Pierre Højbjerg surges forward for Denmark



Filip Djuričić (right) and Germany's Emre Can



Portugal's narrow victory against England helped them top a tight Group B

Group B

Margins were even slimmer in Group B. In their opening match, England dominated 22-18 in goal attempts but were beaten when João Mário picked up a rebound to score the only goal of a game in which the eye-catching features were the pace and skill of the Portugal middle-to-front players. Elsewhere, a red card for Sweden defender Alexander Milošević in the 28th minute and a goal for Italy from the consequent penalty seemed likely to settle the issue in Olomouc. Italy, normally favourites to capitalise on a one-goal and one-man advantage, failed to do so on this occasion. Having weathered the first half storm, Sweden bravely switched to 1-4-3-2 after the break, equalised from a corner and won with an 86th-minute penalty.

But Group B was to be equally topsy-turvy. Sweden, with only 38% of the ball, held out against England until five minutes



Oscar Lewicki (right) and Italy's Federico Viviani vie for possession



England talisman Harry Kane

João Mário scored the only goal in a game where the pace and skill of the Portuguese caught the eye

from time, when substitute Jesse Lingard volleyed into the net from long range after Patrik Carlgren's punched clearance had fallen nicely for him. In the other match, Italy produced exceptional physical endeavour and some fast transitions – notably on the right – which gave Luigi Di Biagio's team counterattacking chances. Portugal's flowing combination play was frustrated and, despite holding the upper hand in the final half-hour, they failed to break the deadlock.

Still in with a mathematical chance, Italy exploited two glaring defensive errors in as many minutes to take a 2-0 lead against England and, shortly after adding a third, heard that Portugal had gone 1-0 ahead against Sweden – a scoreline that earned them a semi-final place. But celebrations went awry as England scored an (irrelevant) late goal and, more importantly, Sweden secured an 89th-minute equaliser against Portugal when a shot by substitute Simon Tibbling struck two opponents on its way into the net. Contrary to pre-tournament form, England and Italy, two former champions, were out.



Delight for Ricardo (front right) after he makes it two for Portugal

Goal rush

Portugal 5-0 Germany

Few would have predicted that the two semi-finals would produce almost as many goals as the whole of the six-fixtures schedule in Group B. Even fewer would have foreseen that the encounter

between Portugal, who had scored two goals, and Germany, who had conceded two, would end in a 5-0 win for the former. Horst Hrubesch adjusted his team structure, opting to field Johannes

Geis as a single screening midfielder with Joshua Kimmich and Emre Can in more advanced positions. The bid for numerical supremacy in midfield was unsuccessful, with João Mário and Bernardo Silva arrowing through the corridors on either side of Geis to create positional havoc among the Germany back four. After Silva's opener, cutbacks to the edge of the box supplied two more goals, the second a psychological blow during added time at the end of the first half.

During the interval, Hrubesch removed Geis, reverted to twin screening midfielders and sent on Max Meyer in a bid to disturb the Portugal No6, William Carvalho, who had run the first-half show. But, within seconds, João Mário's goal dynamited any strategic plans for recovery. When Portugal substitute Ricardo Horta added a fifth and German sub Leonardo Bittencourt was red-carded, the final 15 minutes gave the German fans time to file dejectedly out of the stadium.



Portugal goalkeeper José Sá (in black) consoles German counterpart Marc-André ter Stegen

Denmark 1-4 Sweden

Soon after the German exodus in Olomouc, the other semi-final in Prague was to yield another tale of the unexpected, with Sweden plagiarising Portugal's script of scoring more goals than they had done in the entire group stage. For just over 20 minutes, the script was a tale of the expected, with Denmark's 1-4-1-4-1 structure laying the foundations for domination of the ball against the Sweden 1-4-4-2. But Denmark's territorial advantage did not oblige Sweden keeper Patrik Carlgren to hit the panic button and the game was changed by an incident at the other end. Defender Alexander Scholz and striker Isaac Kiese Thelin tumbled to the ground, paving the way for John Guidetti to prise open the game from the penalty spot. While the Danes were tending their wounds, Tibbling found space to receive on the right and dispatch a cross-shot past Busk Jensen. The two-goal margin encouraged Sweden to interpret their defend-and-counter libretto with even greater gusto.

Jess Thorup, however, retained his faith in the comeback ability the Danes had shown in their first match. In the 57th minute, he sent on Lasse Vigen Christensen to replace Jens Jønsson,



John Guidetti and Isaac Kiese Thelin celebrate the opening goal in Olomouc

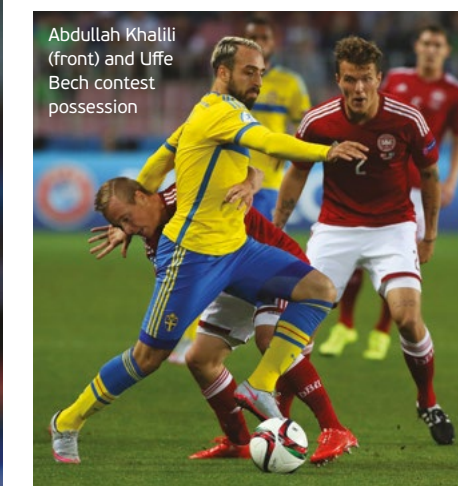
who had been forced to drop in amid the centre-backs to find space for his play-building activities. Within minutes, a rare miscue in the Sweden defence allowed Uffe Bech to plant the seeds of recovery. But, as the clock ticked down, it was a blip at the other end that decided the contest. The Denmark skipper, Vestergaard,

leader and core element of his team's defensive line, had just moved upfield to don the mantle of target striker when a seemingly innocuous ball was played into the heart of the Denmark box. A moment's hesitation, as if the defenders were expecting Vestergaard to address the issue, allowed substitute Robin Quaison to exploit an area of no-man's-land and make it 3-1. With the referee's stopwatch heading for 90+5, another fast counter ended with midfielder Oscar Hiljemark, who had found space on the right of the Denmark box, crossing the ball into the net and sparking unbridled jubilation in the Sweden camp. The teams that had upset the favourites in Group B were to meet again in the final.

The two semi-finals produced almost as many goals as the six fixtures in Group B



Jannik Vestergaard (right) and Filip Helander keep their eyes on the ball



Abdullah Khalili (front) and Uffe Bech contest possession

Sweden hit the spot

It took penalties to settle a fascinating final in which Sweden emerged as deserved winners of their first title



Sweden goalkeeper Patrik Carlgrén races away in celebration after his decisive penalty save



Sweden fans in full voice



Victor Lindelöf turns away from Ivan Cavaleiro

The decibels from the Sweden end remained at deafening levels from warm-up until the end

When the players ran out to warm up at the Eden Stadium, they were greeted by a solid wall of yellow-shirted Sweden fans packed into the seating behind the goal on the left. The Portugal fans were equally keen to make their voices heard but were more widely dispersed. It metaphorically summarised a final in which the Swedes were collective and compact – and the Portuguese, although equally passionate and hungry for success, were more diffuse and intermittent in their efforts. The decibels from the Sweden end remained at deafening levels from warm-up till the end, abating only for the respectful pre-

match silence to honour Czech legend Josef Masopust, who had passed away the previous day. Portuguese chanting was to be muted as frustration set in.

Yet the final denouement was far from visible when the Polish referee signalled the start of play. The all-red Portuguese pushed the yellow-and-blue shirts insistently back towards their goalkeeper, play being repeatedly condensed into a 30m band.

Rui Jorge's team, faithful to their 1-4-3-3 structure, started to test their opponents' defences through their full-backs Ricardo Esgaio on the right

and the left-sided Raphael Guerreiro, both making high-speed incursions and prepared to go all the way to the byline. William Carvalho, the inspirational controlling midfielder, sailed with seemingly effortless ease into spaces where he could receive and distribute. Bernardo Silva, skipping across the front line as the attacking free spirit, twisted and turned past determined tackles. Ricardo, on the right, and Ivan Cavaleiro, on the left, trod the white lines in a bid to stretch the Sweden back four to the limit. The opening quarter-hour was a Portuguese monologue, with the Swedish players, despite the vocal support from behind their goal, struggling to get a word in edgeways.

Yet Patrik Carlgrén in the Sweden goal was not required to produce heroics. He had watched anxiously as a short corner allowed Ricardo to shake the side netting. And a high ball won by Silva offered William a goalward route that was illicitly barred, Sérgio Oliveira's free-kick then rattling from the crossbar.

But, having achieved their objective of initial containment, Sweden started to do what they do best. The defensive lines of their classic 1-4-4-2 formation remained close and compact. The wide midfielders selflessly assisted in the suffocation of the marauding full-backs. Isaac Kiese Thelin, half of the two-pronged attacking force, burned calories to drop back and disturb William in his centre of operations. Carlgrén relieved the pressure on his penalty area by kicking long and, even though only half of his clearances reached a friendly recipient, they gave his defensive block time to recover the positional rationality that, bearing in mind the levels of Portuguese technique, offered greater dividends than diving into tackles. While the centre-backs used long diagonals to open play to the wings, Carlgrén systematically targeted Kiese Thelin, reaching him 14 times yet connecting with his strike accomplice John Guidetti only twice.

There were 19 minutes on the clock when Sweden first bared their counterattacking teeth, Simon Tibbling making the first of many runs at breakneck speed on the right and delivering a cross that allowed José Sá to demonstrate his positional excellence. Events at the other end obliged the tracksuited Rui Jorge to direct ▶



Oscar Lewicki gets to grips with Bernardo Silva

calming gestures towards Cavaleiro, increasingly frustrated by being flagged offside. Contrastingly attired in suit and silk scarf, Håkan Ericson was equally composed as he patrolled the Sweden technical area. As the sides went in at half-time, both coaches had reason to feel satisfied. However, taking into account a 62%-38% share of possession in Portugal's favour, Rui Jorge might have been forgiven for greater concern that the stalemate had not been broken.

Ericson used part of the interval to check the physical condition of centre-back Filip Helander and replace him with Joseph Baffo who, during the rest of the proceedings, was equally competent in defence and arguably more willing to accelerate into midfield with the ball. In terms of control, however, screening midfielder Oscar Lewicki was emerging as a key figure at the expense of William, his tiring Portuguese counterpart. As the second half unfolded, it symbolised

a centre of gravity that, slowly but surely, was sliding into Swedish possession. Although Carlgrén twice needed medical attention after contact with onrushing opponents, it was Sá who was becoming increasingly required to unfurl his goalkeeping talents.

Rui Jorge tried to breathe new life into his increasingly frustrated team by making all three substitutions in fractionally over a quarter of an hour. Tozé, replacing captain Oliveira, repeatedly tried his luck from long range, while the withdrawal of the two wide forwards allowed Gonçalo Paciência to take centre-stage in the Portugal attack. On the right, left-footed Iuri Medeiros narrowly failed to make an immediate impact, his curling shot creating a breeze at the far post.

But the tide was changing. The Sweden full-backs, especially Victor Lindelöf on the right, were catching the eye as often as their Portugal counterparts had done during the first half. From the long deliveries by Carlgrén, Sweden were snapping up the second ball and even harrying William into losses of possession. At the other end, Portugal were struggling to find solutions, their



Victor Lindelöf holds off Ricardo



João Mário shows his emotions



Sweden players pile on shoot-out hero Patrik Carlgrén

ball-to-feet approach play becoming less troublesome to opponents who gained pleasure from efficient defending. The lines of Portuguese attacks were being successfully diverted towards the wide areas and shots were being attempted when they could easily be blocked.

And so to extra time – and a first period when Sweden emphatically refuted any allegations of fatigue and, converting the roaring of their supporters into energy, created a string of chances against flagging opponents. Ericson, in the meantime, had underlined confidence in his players' physical condition by using only one more of his substitution options, bringing on Robin Quaison for the exhausted Tibbling shortly after the hour mark. Both coaches had rallied their players before the start of extra time and led them into team huddles prior

Carlgrén went to his right to make the stop and earn a first Under-21 title for Sweden

to the shoot-out that would decide the title. Ominously for Portugal, the toss of a coin decided that the penalties would be taken at the goal in front of the massed yellow shirts.

With Sweden striker Guidetti opening the proceedings in emphatic style, the first five spot kicks hit the net – Tozé's via the crossbar. Carlgrén then flew to his left to save from Esgaio, and Sá kept

the scores level by reading Abdullah Khalili's 'paradinha'. With João Mário and Lindelöf then converting, William had to hit the net, but Carlgrén went to his right to make the stop and earn a first Under-21 title for Sweden. As one of the UEFA technical observers put it, the Sweden team had proved to be too much for Portugal's individuals.



The Swedes savour their moment of triumph

Håkan's plans pay off

Demanding dedication, Håkan Ericson prepared diligently for the finals

"We followed our game plan very well. England had more possession and we knew they could be dangerous on the counterattack, so it was part of our game plan to use the long ball. Against Portugal, we will have a different game plan because they are quite a different team to England." Håkan Ericson's comment after the defeat by England illustrated his ability to design strategies depending on the opposition. In the Czech Republic, he stressed that he and his staff prepared for each fixture using a repertoire of "seven or eight game plans". Hence his preference for "players able to follow game plans and team tactics rather than those who might have greater individual qualities".

The gold medal hanging from his neck as he left the Eden Stadium represented the major success in a coaching career deeply rooted in a family tradition started by his father Georg, a Sweden national team coach in the 1970s. Håkan, while still engaged in a lower-league playing career, took his first steps in coaching at 23 and reached the podium in Prague on the back of 32 years of learning his trade. That process began with roles as assistant and head coach at youth development and senior levels, before he joined the national association and assumed responsibilities for coach education and the age-limit national teams, taking the U21 baton in 2011 and forging a relationship with the senior coach Erik Hamrén that he labels "excellent".

In the Czech Republic, he demanded – in almost paternal fashion – dedication, endeavour and commitment to the cause. In theory, the day after the match against England was 'free'. But, following defeat, freedom was compressed into the time span between a morning training session and a team tactical meeting at 21.00. He stressed the importance of leading a compact and motivated team-behind-the-team, which he was reluctant to make too numerous. Only two members were added to the squad for the trip to the Czech Republic: a chef and an additional physio – the latter an important element in a group of sufficient diversity in terms of match practice to warrant individual preparation schedules. "If your staff

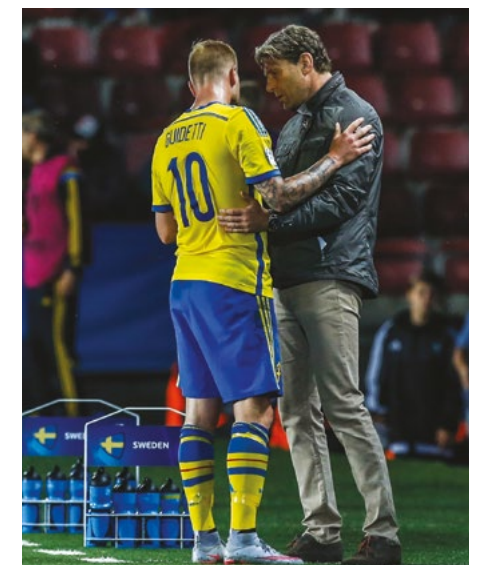
"We had game plans, had luck, had players who worked very hard together with great team spirit and, don't forget, some very good individual qualities"

is too big," Ericson commented, "you run the risk of people trying to appear important by adding work or personal ideas. As a coach, it's easier with fewer rather than more because you have more influence and control."

Ericson's style during the final tournament was to adhere to widely held principles among coaches to design rest-and-recovery schedules in which

non-starters worked harder on the training ground than those who had been engaged in the front line of match play. Time was dedicated to reviewing the attacking and defensive mechanisms of set pieces. "They were very important in qualifying," he commented, "and without set plays we would not have been in the Czech Republic. So it was

Clockwise from left: Håkan Ericson gives his team some last-minute instructions during extra time of the final; Ericson has a word with John Guidetti and urges his side on from the touchline



important to keep refreshing our knowledge." After the shoot-out victory in the final, he stressed how "we practised a lot of penalties and prepared the order in which we would take them. We hardly slept for two days before the final, but the secret is to be prepared for everything."

Beating Portugal provided the crowning moment of a campaign in which Sweden "had game plans, had luck, had players who worked very hard together with great team spirit and, don't forget, some very good individual qualities". Victory in Prague was the reward for a counterattacking team led by an accomplished counterpunching coach.



Balancing act

Defensive qualities had a slight upper hand as player job descriptions continued to evolve

“A good defence is still a good idea,” commented Peter Rudbæk, one of the UEFA technical observers in the Czech Republic. “Portugal and Sweden were successful because, in general, their defensive play was good. On the other hand, from a development perspective, the most difficult thing to learn and to execute is to break through a well-organised defensive block. To do that, you need players who are tactically and technically prepared, individually and as a team. And that takes time.”

As fellow technical observer Dany Ryser remarked before the final: “A lot of people have rated Portugal the best team because they have found a good balance between attack and defence.

And, it has to be said, they have some excellent individual qualities.” In a few words, the two observers outlined the challenge – by no means a new one in the world of football – facing the coaches who led teams into the final tournament: finding the right balance between defending and attacking qualities.

“We were strong defensively and dangerous going forward,” said Serbia coach Mladen Dodić after their opening game against Germany. “That is the model I want to see repeated. Our team is an attacking one. But, in order to be effective, we have to first perform in defence.” “We haven’t conceded yet in the tournament,” said Portugal coach Rui Jorge after the goalless draw with Italy,

“and I’m happy that we’re showing a lot of defensive consistency. But that doesn’t mean we’re not showing the attacking nature of our game.”

The tournament in the Czech Republic hinted at a balance that had tilted marginally in favour of defensive qualities. But there were exceptions. “I identified with the Denmark team,” said UEFA technical observer Ginés Meléndez, “because they gave priority to playing good football, they had an attacking philosophy and they were prepared to take risks. But the tournament showed up their defensive weak points and loss of possession in midfield often left them vulnerable to the counterattack – they paid a high price for that.”

Comfortable without the ball

In the Czech Republic, talk of possession play was muted – with the absence of teams such as France or defending champions Spain perhaps an influential factor. Of the ten games that produced a result, half were won by the team with less of the ball. England, top of the ball possession chart with 56%, went home after the group stage; Sweden, firmly at the foot of the table with only 43%, went home with gold medals. As Sweden coach Håkan Ericson commented, “one of our game plans is based on giving greater possession to the opposition”. In the Czech Republic, they were not alone in feeling comfortable without the ball, with the Czech Republic, Italy and Serbia aligning with the Swedes in terms of counterattacking preferences – even

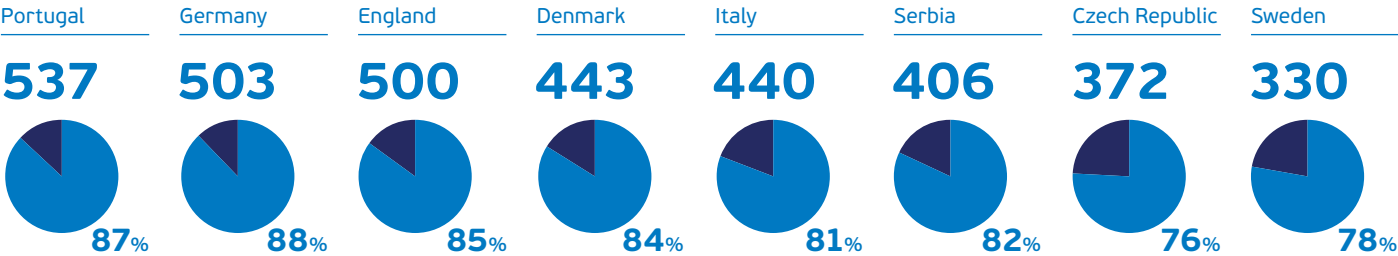
though only four of the tournament’s 37 goals could be directly attributed to fast counters. In general, high possession percentages by opponents did not provoke headless-chicken pursuit of the ball. The tendency was clearly to assemble defensive blocks as rapidly as possible and to wait for ball-winning and counterattacking opportunities. As the technical observers noted, “not many teams set out to dominate”.

In terms of ball-circulation, teams in the tournament averaged 441 attempted passes per game, slightly below the mean figure of 458 passes per match registered by the 32 clubs participating in the UEFA Champions League. However, parameters varied

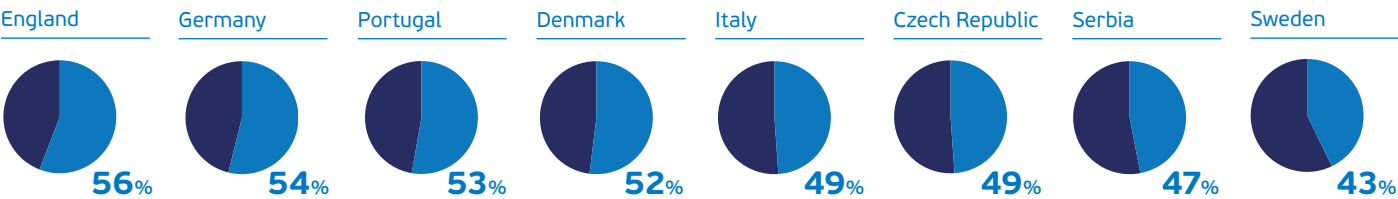
significantly, with Portugal playing 63% more passes per game than Sweden, their opponents in the final. For the sake of comparison, the data related to the 30 minutes of extra time at the final have been omitted.

Web statistics related to individual passing reveal Portuguese domination, with six of Rui Jorge’s squad in the top seven. However, data are coloured by the fact that Portugal and Sweden played at least two hours more than the other contestants. On the basis of passes attempted per minute (which enables a more legitimate comparison), the leaderboard on the following page emerges. ▶

Attempted passes per match and accuracy



Average possession per match



England’s Jesse Lingard assesses his options as Luke Garbutt overlaps

Of the ten games that produced a result, half were won by the team with less of the ball

Passes per minute

William Carvalho Portugal	0.82
Matthias Ginter Germany	0.78
Lasse Vigen Christensen Denmark	0.74
Sérgio Oliveira Portugal	0.72
Tom Carroll England	0.70
Ricardo Esgaio Portugal	0.69
Raphael Guerreiro Portugal	0.67
João Mário Portugal	0.67
Nathaniel Chalobah England	0.66
Danilo Cataldi Italy	0.64
Andreas Christensen Denmark	0.64
Joshua Kimmich Germany	0.64
Jens Jønsson Denmark	0.62
Bernardo Silva Portugal	0.62
Jesse Lingard England	0.61
Dominique Heintz Germany	0.60
Pierre Højbjerg Denmark	0.59
Marc-André ter Stegen Germany	0.59
Goran Čaušić Serbia	0.56
Ben Gibson England	0.56

Portugal’s passing patterns reveal that William Carvalho, Sérgio Oliveira, João Mário and Raphael Guerreiro passed to every outfield player (but only one back pass to the goalkeeper). During the final, Ricardo Esgaio interchanged 53 passes with João Mário on the right flank. England midfielder Tom Carroll, also proactive with two passes per three minutes of play, associated similarly with all his outfield colleagues. On the other hand, 62% of Germany centre-back Matthias Ginter’s passing during the group stage was directed to his goalkeeper or fellow defenders. This pattern varied when the playing structure was changed for the semi-final against Portugal, during which 19 of his 55 passes were for the keeper or fellow defenders and 23 for Emre Can and Joshua Kimmich, the two more advanced midfielders ahead of the single screening midfielder in the starting formation.

In terms of passing accuracy, readiness to take risks is evidently a determining factor. One player, Germany centre-back Robin Knoche, achieved 100% accuracy with the 98 passes he made during his solitary appearance against Serbia. But 62 were to goalkeeper or fellow defenders (but none to the right-back) and 23 to the two screening midfielders. He made seven forward passes to Amin Younes on the left wing – but none to Kevin Volland who, in that game, was fielded wide on the right.



Germany's Robin Knoche on the ball



Italy's Francesco Bardi makes a clean catch

The ultimate goal

A relative paucity of goals, partially masked by the ten scored in the two semi-finals, provoked renewed discussion on the lack of predators currently visible on European youth development horizons. The scoring chart in the Czech Republic was not happy reading for the tournament’s strikers and the UEFA technical observers frequently raised questions about lack of penetration or readiness to push players into the box – the latter an element easily interlocked with the decline in the number of successful crosses. “The match between Italy and Portugal could easily have ended 5-5,” Dany Ryser reflected, “but it finished without goals. When you see so many chances and no goals, you inevitably come away wondering what can be done to improve the quality of finishing.” “It makes you wonder,” concurred Rudbæk, “whether more resources should be dedicated to coaching goalscoring as a speciality.”

On the other hand, as had been the case at other age-limit tournaments, there was no criticism of the strikers. As technical observer Dušan Fitzel commented: “The strikers are not so often the tall target men that they were in the past. They are now more mobile and there’s a greater emphasis on making runs behind the defence. At this tournament you could see very clearly that the attackers had to be good at pressing and efficient as a first line of defence.” “We saw good attackers,” Ginés Meléndez agreed, “but they were forwards who contributed to the collective cause rather than specialist finishers.” Events in the Czech Republic confirmed that the striker’s job description has undergone a radical change.



Jack Butland kicks upfield



Marc-André ter Stegen displays his footwork

Feet first

The same concept could be applied at the other end of the pitch. In the Czech Republic, the general trend was for the goalkeeper to operate as an outfielder in building from the back and to assume the role of sweeper, patrolling the environs of the box and remaining on maximum alert to any possibility that a through pass might appear on the radar. This gave added relevance to the keeper's positioning while his team was attacking and, as a vital feature of a transformed job description, he needed to be equipped to play with his feet. The tournament provided a striking example of how the goalkeeper’s role is evolving.

In the list of passes attempted, tenth position belonged to Marc-André ter Stegen. The only German player to make more passes than his goalkeeper was centre-back Ginter. During Germany’s second game against Denmark, Ter Stegen made more passes (80) than any other player in the match and 96% of those were successfully received by a team-mate. Apart from the demands imposed by the opposition's shooting or crossing, Ter Stegen was brought into play by his own team-mates 120 times during the group stage. Jakob Busk Jensen (Denmark), José Sá (Portugal) and Jack Butland (England) also featured among the leading 70 passers of the ball during the final tournament.

The data for the distances covered by goalkeepers offers more evidence of evolution. Sá was alone in regularly

Goalkeepers' outfield play made them potential targets for pressing

covering less than 5km per game. Italy keeper Francesco Bardi posted the tournament low of 3,882m in the opening game against Sweden – though this rose to 5,654m in the following game. All the other keepers on show in the Czech Republic provided data-based confirmation of their levels of alertness by covering 5–6km per game.

Whereas Ter Stegen’s passing accuracy over the tournament was 91%, the champion keeper, Patrik Carlgren, averaged only 50%. But he provided a further – dissimilar – example of how the keeper is integrating into collective game plans. In the final, all but six of the Sweden keeper’s passes



Patrik Carlgren throws out

were long – mostly to the left – and only 21 of 43 reached a team-mate. In the opening game against Italy, only 7 of 21 clearances were successfully received by colleagues, and it was 12 of 25 against England, 15 of 29 v Portugal, and 8 of 30 in the semi-final win against Denmark. The formula, however, was an integral part of Sweden’s second-ball philosophy. Sweden operated with a two-pronged attack but game plans were choreographed for Carlgren to find one striker rather than the other. During the tournament, he connected 36 times with a long pass to Isaac Kiese Thelin and only five times with John Guidetti.

In football, trends are rapidly greeted with counter-trends. The goalkeepers’ increasing participation in outfield play inevitably made them a potential target for pressing. When receiving in open play or taking goal kicks, a keeper would frequently find that opponents were cutting off his short or medium passing options with the evident aim of forcing him to play long and assume a greater risk of loss of possession.

The tournament illustrated that the evolution of the goalkeeper’s job description requires training ground work on equipping him with a different skillset with hands and feet.



Denmark's Jannik Vestergaard rises above the hosts' Pavel Kadeřábek

Closing the back door, opening the front

All eight teams in the Czech Republic operated with a zonal back four. The trend towards a 1-4-2-3-1 structure continued, with five of the participants operating in this formation as a default setting. Italy and Portugal opted mostly for a 1-4-3-3 system, with Sweden deploying a 1-4-4-2 team shape. The Czechs and Italians switched to 1-4-4-2 at some stages, Portugal could change their attacking shape by varying the position of Bernardo Silva, and Horst Hrubesch switched Germany to 1-4-3-3 with a single screening midfielder for the first half of the semi-final against Portugal (reverting to 1-4-2-3-1 after the interval when already 3-0 down). The general trend was for quick transitions to 1-4-4-2 or 1-4-1-4-1 defensive structures after loss of possession.

By and large, centre-backs were reluctant to push forward in search of numerical superiority in midfield – though Denmark captain Jannik Vestergaard was prepared to make an exception, with screening midfielder

Full-backs were crucial additions to attacking play

Jens Jønsson dropping deep to provide cover. Joseph Baffo was also prepared to make sorties into midfield when coming on as substitute in the final. Defensive aerial power was illustrated by the relative lack of success from crosses or set plays – and a tournament total of three headed goals. With full-backs pushing forward, the centre-backs were often responsible for opening play to the wide areas with diagonal passing. However, much of the ball play by centre-backs involved safety-first passing from one to the other – a prime example provided by the German pair of Ginter and Knoche, who interchanged 56 passes during their opening game against Serbia. “There obviously has to be a safety-first element in delicate areas of the defence,” Rudbæk commented, “but my strong impression

is that the quality of defenders’ first-touch passing has improved.”

The final graphically illustrated that, as Ginés Meléndez put it, “the full-backs were crucial additions to attacking play, giving it width and depth”. Sweden’s Victor Lindelöf and Ludwig Augustinsson, along with their Portugal counterparts Ricardo Esgaio and Raphael Guerreiro, jointly covered 58.27km at the Eden Stadium, constantly combining with the wingers or wide midfielders and supplying crosses. The upfield runs by the Portugal full-backs allowed the two advanced players to exploit the pockets between opposing full-backs and centre-backs – and the use of these pockets promoted cutbacks as a source of goals. There were many outstanding examples of the attacking full-back, among them Czech right-back Pavel Kadeřábek, a firm candidate to earn a place in UEFA’s team of the tournament and scorer of the event’s first goal when he made a long run inside to find the net with a left-footed finish.



Portugal's William Carvalho keeps his eyes on the ball as Sweden's Isaac Kiese Thelin challenges

The screening midfielder has become a more creative type of player

Balancing midfielders

Continuing with the evolution of job descriptions, one of the oft-debated themes in the modern game relates to the role of the playmaker. The tournament in the Czech Republic confirmed that the traditional No10 is a seriously endangered species, and that the most influential performers are now more commonly found in the ‘controlling’ or ‘balancing’ midfield positions. “The screening midfielder has become a more creative type of player,” Rudbæk commented. “It’s not just about defending. He needs to read the game and be equipped to launch counters. That’s important. This is where we are seeing the influential players with quick feet and head – the decision makers at the heart of the team.”

Portugal’s William Carvalho was elected player of the tournament by the UEFA technical team as he epitomised the qualities of the ‘balancing midfielder’ – not only in terms of galvanising team play from the core position, but also the defensive qualities that contributed so much to the balance of the team. After losing to Portugal, England coach Gareth Southgate commented: “They went very long for the first phase. It meant there were lots of second balls floating around midfield. They had four players in a midfield diamond for that match and we only had three, so the physicality of Carvalho enabled them to pick up more of those loose balls.”

The tournament provided further evidence of the tendency, within

the framework of the 1-4-2-3-1, to drop ‘playmakers’ into the screening positions. With regard to the other midfield roles, Dany Ryser noted how “all the teams tried to use fast players in the wide areas with good technique and the ability to take on opponents one against one. We also saw the use of ‘reverse wingers’, with mostly left-footers operating on the right.” Ginés Meléndez remarked: “We saw less elaborate construction through midfield than we did in 2013 with, generally speaking, much faster transitions. The use of the wide areas in middle-to-front play was crucial, but it seemed that few of the midfielders deployed in the line of three really stood out individually.”



Germany coach Horst Hrubesch has a pat on the head for striker Kevin Volland

“Unfortunately, we didn’t have an answer to their intensity,” Serbia coach Dodić remarked after the 4-0 defeat by the hosts. Sweden coach Ericson said: “I try to give energy to my players. That’s my way of coaching. And we had a group of players who believed that anything was possible.”

UEFA’s technical observers debated whether, in games between otherwise equally matched opponents, attitudes and intensity were decisive factors. Portugal coach Rui Jorge repeatedly expressed his belief that this was the case. “Talent itself is not enough,” he categorically stated after his team’s victory against England. “My players showed character and will to win. When you display commitment, that sort of passion, it becomes easier to

achieve a positive result.” After the 5-0 victory against Germany, he said: “I don’t think there was a tactical secret. It was about the quality of our players and the intensity they put into the game.” Lamenting the defeat by ten-man Sweden, Italy coach Luigi Di Biagio argued that his side “shouldn’t have lowered the tempo and the intensity. That was something we could have avoided. We need to improve our game management.”

One of the areas where coaches exerted an influence was the tempo of ball circulation. “After the interval, the Danish sped up their passing and we stopped being proactive,” Czech coach Jakub Dovalil said after a disappointing second half. “Germany actually entered this tournament in the second half,”



Italy's Luigi Di Biagio issues instructions

rue Hrubesch after Germany’s opening draw with Serbia. “That was when we started to play at proper pace.”

Whereas tempo and intensity of match play are variables, passion and commitment may not be – and the coaches in the Czech Republic all admitted that character plays a big part in player selection processes. “There are four important elements,” insisted Hrubesch. “The team, the team, the team and then the individual.” The emphasis in the German camp was that they were in the Czech Republic “to make dreams come true”, and the environment in the team hotel constantly reminded the players of their childhood, their first clubs. “We help them to remember why they’re here,” Hrubesch insisted.

“Character is important,” Dovalil conceded. “The first thing we look for is a will to play and will to win.” “A player might have greater talent,” added Ericson, “but if he doesn’t integrate into the group, he’s out.”

While personality, attitude and emotional intelligence are common requirements for all playing positions, the tournament in the Czech Republic demonstrated that, with attackers expected to defend and defenders and goalkeepers expected to participate in construction, job descriptions are becoming more extensive. As champion coach Ericson maintained: “It’s important to count on players who can follow game plans. Before, football was about specialists. Now we’re talking about all-rounders.”

The goal standard

Two eventful semi-finals raised the tournament goal average



Top scorer Jan Kliment got the tournament's only hat-trick against Serbia

The comparative lack of goals emerged as one of the talking points of the tournament, although the debate took on an extra dimension when the two semi-finals produced ten. The other 13 fixtures yielded 27 goals at an average of 2.08 per match, which would have been the lowest of the century. In fact, the total was 37 at 2.47 per game – a downturn of 17.8% in comparison with the 2013 final tournament in Israel. The goals were scored by 30 players, seven of them substitutes, thus extending the

trend away from teams relying on target strikers to be the main suppliers of goals. Two sides came back to win despite conceding the first goal: Denmark (against the Czech Republic) and Sweden (with ten men against Italy). Two matches, including the final, were goalless draws and, of the other 13, eight were won by the team scoring first. In eight matches, one or both of the teams failed to score.

Set plays accounted for 27% of the total number of goals compared with 31% in Israel in 2013 and 19.4% in Denmark in 2011. This confirms the downward trend from the 45% registered in Sweden in 2009 and the peak of 50% at the final tournament in Portugal in 2006. In the Czech Republic, only three of the set-play goals were from the penalty spot (two of them favourable to Sweden) whereas in Israel in 2013 half of the set-play goals were penalties. ▶

Goalscoring analysis

The parameters of goals resulting from corners remained unchanged. As in 2013, corners led to four goals. The 2015 tournament produced 147 corners, giving a success rate of 1 in 37. By way of a benchmark, in the 2014/15 UEFA Champions League the success rate from corners was similar: one goal per 38.42. The success stories related to corner kicks were told with Scandinavian accents – Denmark scoring both of their goals against the Czech

Republic from corners and Sweden following suit with an equaliser in their 2-1 comeback victory against Italy. All three goals were scored in the opening group fixtures and, hinting at thorough analysis of future opponents, there was not another corner kick success until the semi-final in Olomouc, when a delivery from the right by Bernardo Silva was nodded on by defender Paulo Oliveira and turned in at the far post by Ricardo to put Portugal 2-0 up against Germany.



The only success from a direct free-kick was down to Germany striker Kevin Volland, who put his side 2-0 ahead against Denmark. The Danes supplied the only success from an indirect free-kick when Pierre Højbjerg's centre allowed Viktor Fischer to seal his team's 2-0 win against Serbia. Italy's third goal against England could be traced back to a throw-in, which led to the header by Marco Benassi.

Leading scorers

	GOALS	ASSISTS	M/P
Jan Kliment (Czech Republic)	3	0	262
Kevin Volland (Germany)	2	1	352
John Guidetti (Sweden)	2	1	426
João Mário (Portugal)	2	1	466
Marco Benassi (Italy)	2	0	180
Simon Tibbling (Sweden)	2	0	254

M/P = Minutes played
Assists and then minutes played (with the player boasting the better goals to minutes on the pitch ratio taking precedence) are used to separate players with the same goal tallies.

How the goals were scored



The 2015 final tournament again highlighted the decrease in the effectiveness of the forward pass, through or over the defence. In 2011, these had accounted for 43% of the open-play goals. In Israel, this figure decreased to 13% and, in the Czech Republic, fell even further to just 7.4% (5.4% of all goals). This can be arguably related to the compactness of defensive blocks, making penetration through the centre more problematic, or to the increasing readiness of goalkeepers to assume the duty of diligently sweeping behind the back four. The only goals directly attributable to through passes were from the Germany counterattack that allowed Volland to put his team 1-0 ahead against Denmark, and the ball that permitted Czech striker Jan Kliment to complete his hat-trick versus Serbia.

Instead, 30% of the open-play goals were derived from cutbacks, with teams exploiting the wide areas or the pockets between central defenders and full-backs to pull the ball back ▶

CATEGORY	ACTION	GUIDELINES	GOALS	
SET PLAY	Corner	Direct from or following a corner	4	<div></div>
	Free-kick (direct)	Direct from a free-kick	1	<div></div>
	Free-kick (indirect)	Following a free-kick	1	<div></div>
	Penalty	Spot kick (or follow-up)	3	<div></div>
	Throw-in	Following a throw-in	1	<div></div>
Total set-play goals			10	
OPEN PLAY	Combination	Wall pass or combination move	5	<div></div>
	Cross	Cross from the wing	3	<div></div>
	Cutback	Pass back from the byline	8	<div></div>
	Diagonal	Diagonal pass into the penalty box	2	<div></div>
	Run with the ball	Dribble and close-range shot or dribble and pass	3	<div></div>
	Long-range shot	Direct shot or shot and rebound	2	<div></div>
	Forward pass	Through pass or pass over the defence	2	<div></div>
	Defensive error	Bad back pass or mistake by the goalkeeper	2	<div></div>
	Own goal	Goal by the opponent	0	
Total open-play goals			27	
Total			37	

Goalscoring analysis

to a finisher. Germany, the Czech Republic and Portugal were the teams who most effectively exploited this route to goal. Combination play was the second most fertile source, accounting for 18.5% of the open-play goals.

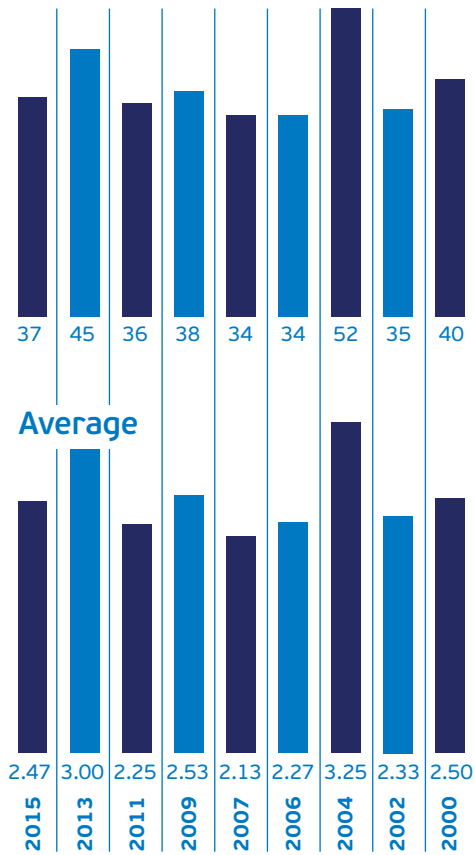
As had been the case in Israel, crosses were not efficiently converted and supplied only 11% of the open-play goals. Curiously, none of the goals attributable to deliveries from the wide areas adhered to the time-honoured formula of cross + header. All the successful crosses were met with the boot, the most spectacular of them being the Czech Republic's equaliser against Germany, driven into the roof of the net by Ladislav Krejčí following a low centre from the right.

Crosses supplied only 11% of open-play goals – and all met with the boot, rather than the head

Goalkeepers were generally not surprised by shots from long range – although one or two successful efforts from distance were filed under different categories. Portugal's fourth against Germany, for example, was a deflected long-range attempt resulting from a cut-back. England's winner against Sweden was a long-distance volley by Jesse Lingard after the goalkeeper had punched out a corner. Their solitary reply during the 3-1 defeat against Italy was also struck from distance.

Overall, the goal tally in the Czech Republic was a middle-of-the-road figure in terms of the history of the tournament, with the average hauled up to a respectable level by the high-scoring semi-finals.

Goals per tournament



Germany's Kevin Volland scores from an Emre Can slide-rule pass against Denmark

Statistics

The end product

Sweden triumphed despite having the third-lowest number of goal attempts

The tournament in the Czech Republic produced significantly fewer goals than the 2013 event in Israel despite a substantial 31% increase in the number of goal attempts. In 2013, Spain took the title with an average of 14 goal attempts per match, whereas the average among five of the eight finalists was down in single figures. In 2015, only two of the eight teams registered averages below ten per game – one of them, curiously, being champions Sweden.

In terms of offering excitement to spectators, the competition yielded

26.6 goal attempts per fixture, in contrast to the average of 20.3 in Israel. Of the 307 attempts which were not blocked, only 41% were on target and, of the grand total, only 32% obliged the goalkeeper to intervene. In 2015, it required 10.78 attempts to produce a goal compared with 6.76 in 2013 – a statistic that inevitably raises questions about the quality of finishing.

The graphic reveals that the hosts and the champions were alone in registering more on-target attempts than attempts wide of the mark.

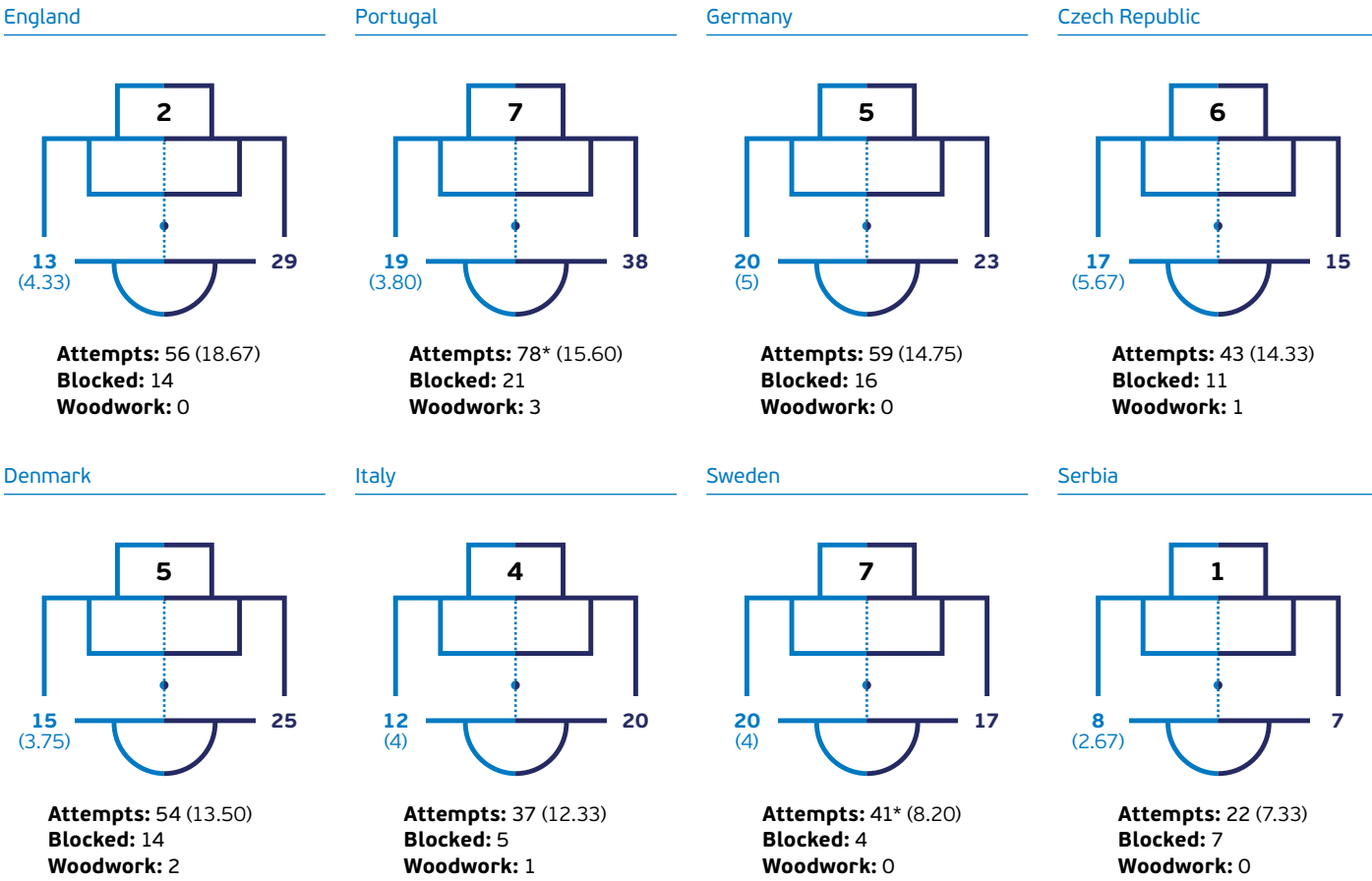
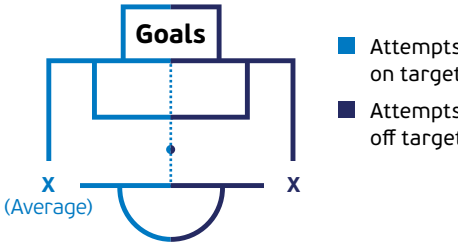
Sweden won the title thanks to a high level of efficiency – seven goals from 20 on-target attempts. It is also noteworthy that, although Sweden's opponents totalled 80 goal attempts, only 18 were on target (3.6 per game) and Håkan Ericson's side conceded only four goals. The asterisks in the graphic below indicate that, for the sake of fair comparisons, the four attempts by Portugal and five by Sweden during extra time in the final have been omitted. In other words, all the figures are uniformly related to 90 minutes.

Attempts on goal

These diagrams illustrate the goals and attempts on goal for each team during the 2015 final tournament and are ordered by average attempts per game.

Attempts = tournament total (average per game)
Blocked = blocked shots

Woodwork = hit the post or crossbar
Attempts striking the woodwork are included in the on-target total if deflected by goalkeeper or defender and in the off-target total if the attempt strikes the woodwork directly.
*Excluding extra time in the final



Talking points

Some surprising data on player ages and the demands placed on coaches provided food for thought

Enough time to coach?

Coaches had plenty to keep them busy – on top of trying to improve their teams

"A small part of the job is coaching," one of the coaches at the final tournament ruefully remarked. The comment provokes reflection on a number of inter-related factors. Firstly, about the job description. The U21 coach evidently needs to dedicate substantial amounts of time to people and issues within the national association – including the potentially crucial relationship with the head coach of the senior team. During the run-up to the final tournament, the typical U21 coach is also required to deal with the coaches of the clubs where his players and potential players are based. In addition, he also needs to deal with the clubs – and the coaches in the Czech Republic were quick to point out that relationships with clubs and club coaches are not normally the same thing.

Then, moving closer to the dressing room, he is required to lead and organise a backroom team that he may

or may not have selected himself. The 'teams behind the teams' seem to be in a process of continuous expansion: in the Czech Republic, one of them totalled 26 people. In other words, the backroom staff was bigger than the playing staff.

And, finally, the coach needs to prepare the players. This, in many cases, was easier said than done. England coach Gareth Southgate had, at least, taken a clear policy decision not to select five players who although eligible had, as he put it, "moved past Under-21 football". He was by no means alone in putting question marks against the motivation of players who had already embarked on senior national team careers – a perennial talking point at a level at which players often alternate between the two sides.

For other coaches, the issue had different effects. For several, the

problem was that players had been included in senior squads for the previous week's UEFA EURO 2016 qualifiers and had reported for U21 duty three days before the opening fixture. Some had played, some had not. Denmark coach Jess Thorup, for example, left one player out of his team for the first game because of fatigue.

There were other discrepancies with coaching repercussions. Some players had finished their domestic football six weeks before proceedings started in the Czech Republic and needed to be reactivated from vacation mode. Others had been on post-season tours with their clubs. For the two Scandinavian coaches, the problem was that domestic championships had finished at the weekend prior to the tournament (though, in light of the results, it could be argued that such continuity was an asset). For Serbia coach Mladen Dodić,

the challenge was to prepare a squad containing 11 home-based players and 12 who were playing abroad. In other words, he had to deal with a cocktail of the parameters outlined above.

Although the individual coaches had to deal with dissimilar scenarios, the net result was surprisingly uniform. By and large, they were obliged to split their squad into various groups, each of which went through tailored preparations aimed at getting them up to more or less the same speed in time for the tournament. In some cases, the discrepancies were so acute that training sessions had to be programmed on an individual basis – many of them conducted by fitness coaches rather than head coaches. Can anything be done to give U21 coaches more time for coaching?

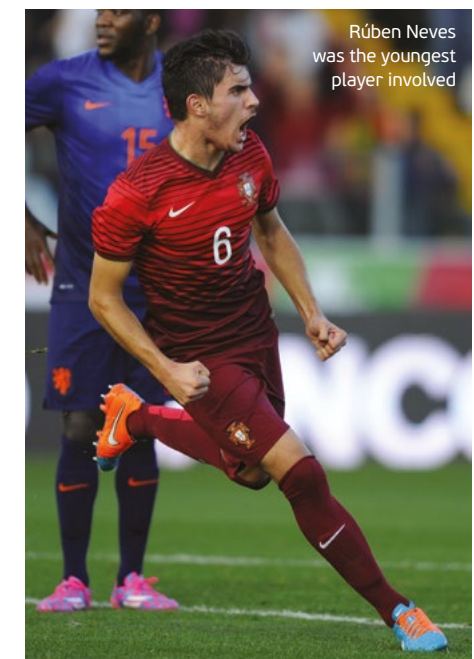
Age concern

Disproportionately low numbers of players were born between October and December

For the record, the players who travelled to the Czech Republic had dates of birth spanning six years. Of the 184 players on the eight squad lists, 73 were born in 1992 and were therefore either 22 or 23 – some of them too 'senior' to be part of the Denmark, Germany, Portugal and Sweden squads at the 2016 Olympic Games despite having worked hard to help their teams to qualify. A further 61 were born in 1993, 34 in 1994 and 12 in 1995, four of whom had yet to reach their 20th birthday, with one more (Sweden midfielder Kristoffer Olsson) reaching that milestone on the day his team played the final. The Czech Republic, Denmark and England provided the three players born in 1996, while Rúben Neves (on for the last five minutes for Portugal against England) was the 'baby' of the tournament with a birthdate in 1997. To leave no stone unturned, it might be pointed out that Serbia could have fielded three of the squad that was winning the FIFA U-20 World Cup in New Zealand while the Under-21s were in the Czech Republic.

So much for the overview. The talking point lies more deeply embedded in the tournament archives – and, curiously, is one that is regularly broached at the final tournaments of the UEFA European Under-17 Championship, where debate usually focuses on the high percentage of participants born in the first three months of the calendar year. The tendency to select the oldest available players is comprehensible given that, within that age bracket, time-lapses of six or nine months can represent significant margins in terms of physical and mental maturity. The surprise is therefore to transfer the same talking point to U21 level, where one would suspect that these discrepancies would have been ironed out. But, in the Czech Republic, it became apparent that they had not been.

Why are the end-of-year players not showing up at U21 level?



Rúben Neves was the youngest player involved

The factual basis for discussion is that the final tournament featured only 18 players with dates of birth between October and December, in other words, only 9.78% of the 'workforce'. This is hugely at odds with mathematical logic, which says that the figure should obviously be somewhere around 25%. Of the 18 players born during the autumn, half could be described as regular performers at the final tournament. Four were on the field of play for less than 60 minutes during the entire event. Five did not play at all.

The talking point is simple and evident: why? Many associations are aware of the scenario, with some running projects and/or teams for the 'late developers' aimed at integrating them into national squads in later age groups. It is comprehensible that head coaches of U17 teams prefer to select the older players with a view to being as competitive as possible. But why are the end-of-year players not showing up at U21 level? Can astrologists argue that there is less talent among those born under the signs of Libra, Scorpio and Sagittarius? Is this talent being allowed to slip through our fingers? Does it pose questions about scouting procedures and player-monitoring? Does it raise issues about scout education?

Making their mark

Rui Jorge's side may have narrowly missed out on the trophy, but his Portuguese players were prominent among those who left a lasting impression

Man of the match

UEFA named a man of the match after each of the 15 fixtures in the Czech Republic. The player was selected by the UEFA technical observers at the game and announced to the public over the PA system. The outstanding player was not automatically a member of the winning team but, as the list reveals, he invariably was. Three target strikers were among those selected (Jan Kliment, Harry Kane and Kevin Volland), two were centre-backs (Jannik Vestergaard and Filip Helander) and the others played in a variety of roles – Oscar Lewicki, Jens Jønsson and William Carvalho operated in the controlling midfield positions, Filip Djuričić, Amin Younes, Marco Benassi and Bernardo Silva filled the wide areas and Patrik Carlgren – man of the match in the final – was in goal. Until then, Portugal had been alone in providing the man of the match at every game they had played, and in supplying the only players to take the award more than once.

One of these was singled out as the player of the tournament. William had been a dominant force in the Portugal set-up, controlling play, finding space to receive, distributing the ball and dictating the tempo from his central position in front of the back four. He combined positional sense and vision with outstanding individual technique and athletic qualities that allowed him to fulfil the balancing role in a very gifted team.

The technical observers also selected a team of the tournament, which on this occasion represented an even greater challenge given that, unlike the squads of yesteryear, a genuine team of 11 players had to be named. This inevitably meant that a large number of good players had to be omitted. Time will tell how many of the top performers in the Czech Republic will go on to shine at major tournaments in the senior game.

MATCH	PLAYER
Czech Republic v Denmark	Jannik Vestergaard
Germany v Serbia	Filip Djuričić
Italy v Sweden	Oscar Lewicki
England v Portugal	Bernardo Silva
Germany v Denmark	Amin Younes
Serbia v Czech Republic	Jan Kliment
Sweden v England	Harry Kane
Italy v Portugal	Bernardo Silva
Czech Republic v Germany	Kevin Volland
Denmark v Serbia	Jens Jønsson
England v Italy	Marco Benassi
Portugal v Sweden	William Carvalho
Portugal v Germany	William Carvalho
Denmark v Sweden	Filip Helander
Sweden v Portugal	Patrik Carlgren

Player's team in bold

Player of the tournament William Carvalho (Portugal)

Although 480 minutes and 65.3km in 13 days ultimately took a toll, William underscored coaching-manual definitions of the 'controlling midfielder'. Starting from the zone in front of his back four, the Sporting CP midfielder made himself available to team-mates with seemingly effortless ease, distributed the ball with intelligence and vision and pushed forward to support Portugal's attacking play, without forgetting his obligation to provide defensive balance in a side that conceded only once. His positional sense and physical presence contributed to his ball-winning acumen, while his authoritative personality allowed him to lead and dictate the tempo of play.



William keeps a step ahead of Germany's Emre Can

Team of the tournament

For the first time, the UEFA technical observers were briefed to select a team rather than a 23-man squad. This made the task even more challenging and, inevitably, excellent performers had to be omitted. The observers opted for a 1-4-2-3-1 formation, as this was the most frequently seen structure. The finalists provided the majority of the 11, the 'intruders' being the leader of the Denmark defence, Jannik Vestergaard, Nathan Redmond, a standout performer in a talented England midfield, and Kevin Volland, who led the Germany attack with panache. Portugal supplied five players to Sweden's three – a circumstance down to the feeling among the technical observers that the champions' success had owed more to collective virtues than to individual qualities. The Sweden trio worked in the engine room of the side, where Filip Helander symbolised his team's delight in defending, right-back Victor Lindelöf the readiness to defend and counter with purpose, and screening midfielder Oscar Lewicki the team's work ethic and ability to execute game plans. Portugal goalkeeper José Sá was outstanding in conceding only one goal, while the filigree attacking skills of Bernardo Silva allowed him to rival William in the race to be named player of the tournament.



José Sá



Victor Lindelöf



Filip Helander



Jannik Vestergaard



Raphael Guerreiro



William Carvalho



Oscar Lewicki



Nathan Redmond



Bernardo Silva



Ivan Cavaleiro



Kevin Volland

Results and standings

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
DENMARK	3	2	0	1	4	4	6
GERMANY	3	1	2	0	5	2	5
CZECH REPUBLIC	3	1	1	1	6	3	4
SERBIA	3	0	1	2	1	7	1

Czech Republic 1-2 Denmark

Attendance: 15,987, Eden Stadium, Prague
Goals: 1-0 Kadeřábek 35, 1-1 Vestergaard 56, 1-2 Sisto 84
Yellow cards: Knudsen 3, Vestergaard 31 (DEN)
Referee: Marciniak **ARs:** Sokolnicki, Listkiewicz
AARs: Raczkowski, Musiał **FO:** Cano

Germany 1-1 Serbia

Attendance: 5,490, Letna Stadium, Prague
Goals: 0-1 Djuričić 8, 1-1 Can 17
Yellow cards: Leitner 43, Günter 48, 69 (GER); Čaušić 52, Brašanac 54, Pantić 75 (SRB)
Red card: Günter 69 (GER)
Referee: Estrada **ARs:** Martínez, Sobrino
AARs: Hernández, Gil Manzano **FO:** Averyanov

Serbia 0-4 Czech Republic

Attendance: 16,253, Letna Stadium, Prague
Goals: 0-1 Kliment 7, 0-2 Kliment 21, 0-3 Kliment 56, 0-4 Frýdek 59
Yellow cards: Brašanac 11, Djuričić 68 (SRB); Masopust 84 (CZE)
Referee: Turpin **ARs:** Cano, Danos
AARs: Fautrel, Bastien **FO:** Efthymiadis

Germany 3-0 Denmark

Attendance: 13,268, Eden Stadium, Prague
Goals: 1-0 Volland 32, 2-0 Volland 48, 3-0 Ginter 53
Yellow cards: Knudsen 17, Poulsen 51 (DEN)
Referee: Karasev **ARs:** Averyanov, Kalugin
AARs: Lapochkin, Ivanov **FO:** Diks

Czech Republic 1-1 Germany

Attendance: 18,068, Eden Stadium, Prague
Goals: 0-1 Schulz 55, 1-1 Krejčí 66
Yellow cards: Frýdek 32 (CZE); Younes 28, Korb 65, Kimmich 88, Can 90+4 (GER)
Referee: Makkellie **ARs:** Diks, Steegstra
AARs: Blom, Kamphuis **FO:** Martínez

Denmark 2-0 Serbia

Attendance: 4,297, Letna Stadium, Prague
Goals: 1-0 Falk 21, 2-0 Fischer 47
Yellow cards: Christensen 54 (DEN); Ćirković 41, Petrović 62, Petković 63 (SRB)
Referee: Sidiropoulos **ARs:** Efthymiadis, Kostaras
AARs: Koukoulakis, Tritsonis **FO:** Sokolnicki

ARs = assistant referees; AARs = additional assistant referees; FO = fourth official

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PORTUGAL	3	1	2	0	2	1	5
SWEDEN	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
ITALY	3	1	1	1	4	3	4
ENGLAND	3	1	0	2	2	4	3

Italy 1-2 Sweden

Attendance: 6,719, Ander Stadium, Olomouc
Goals: 1-0 Berardi 29 (p), 1-1 Guidetti 56, 1-2 Kiese Thelin 86 (p)
Yellow cards: Viviani 43, Bianchetti 48, Bardi 85 (ITA); Helander 24, Guidetti 64, Hiljemark 71 (SWE)
Red cards: Sturaro 80 (ITA); Milošević 28 (SWE)
Referee: Sidiropoulos **ARs:** Efthymiadis, Kostaras
AARs: Koukoulakis, Tritsonis **FO:** Paták

England 0-1 Portugal

Attendance: 7,167, City Stadium, Uherske Hradiste
Goal: 0-1 João Mário 57
Yellow cards: Gibson 48, Jenkinson 62 (ENG); Bernardo Silva 49, João Mário 83 (POR)
Referee: Makkellie **ARs:** Diks, Steegstra
AARs: Blom, Kamphuis **FO:** Pelikán

Sweden 0-1 England

Attendance: 11,257, Ander Stadium, Olomouc
Goal: 0-1 Lingard 85
Yellow cards: Khalili 70, Baffo 79 (SWE)
Referee: Estrada **ARs:** Martínez, Sobrino
AARs: Hernández, Gil Manzano **FO:** Pelikán

Italy 0-0 Portugal

Attendance: 7,085, City Stadium, Uherske Hradiste
Yellow cards: Bernardeschi 65, Biraghi 69, Romagnoli 87 (ITA); Gonçalo Paciência 90+1 (POR)
Referee: Marciniak **ARs:** Sokolnicki, Listkiewicz
AARs: Raczkowski, Musiał **FO:** Paták

England 1-3 Italy

Attendance: 11,563, Ander Stadium, Olomouc
Goals: 0-1 Belotti 25, 0-2 Benassi 27, 0-3 Benassi 72, 1-3 Redmond 90+3
Yellow cards: Loftus-Cheek 67 (ENG); Zappacosta 57 (ITA)
Referee: Karasev **ARs:** Averyanov, Kalugin
AARs: Lapochkin, Ivanov **FO:** Pelikán

Portugal 1-1 Sweden

Attendance: 7,263, City Stadium, Uherske Hradiste
Goals: 1-0 Gonçalo Paciência 82, 1-1 Tibbling 89
Yellow cards: Sérgio Oliveira 65 (POR); Lewicki 18 (SWE)
Referee: Turpin **ARs:** Cano, Danos
AARs: Fautrel, Bastien **FO:** Paták

Semi-finals

Portugal 5-0 Germany

Attendance: 9,876, Ander Stadium, Olomouc
Goals: 1-0 Bernardo Silva 25, 2-0 Ricardo 33, 3-0 Ivan Cavaleiro 45+1, 4-0 João Mário 46, 5-0 Ricardo Horta 71
Yellow cards: Ricardo Esgaio 18 (POR); Kimmich 23, Bittencourt 63, 75 (GER)
Red card: Bittencourt 75 (GER)
Referee: Sidiropoulos **ARs:** Efthymiadis, Kostaras
AARs: Koukoulakis, Tritsonis **FO:** Paták

Denmark 1-4 Sweden

Attendance: 9,834, Letna Stadium, Prague
Goals: 0-1 Guidetti 23 (p), 0-2 Tibbling 26, 1-2 Bech 63, 1-3 Quaison 83, 1-4 Hiljemark 90+5
Yellow card: Vestergaard 59 (DEN)
Referee: Karasev **ARs:** Averyanov, Kalugin
AARs: Lapochkin, Ivanov **FO:** Pelikán

Final

Sweden 0-0 Portugal

(Sweden win 4-3 on penalties)
Attendance: 18,867, Eden Stadium, Prague
Penalty shoot-out: 1-0 Guidetti, 1-1 Gonçalo Paciência, 2-1 Kiese Thelin, 2-2 Tozé, 3-2 Augustinsson, 3-2 Ricardo Esgaio (saved), 3-2 Khalili (saved), 3-3 João Mário, 4-3 Lindelöf, 4-3 William (saved)
Yellow cards: Baffo 110, Lindelöf 112 (SWE)
Referee: Marciniak **ARs:** Sokolnicki, Listkiewicz
AARs: Raczkowski, Musiał **FO:** Turpin

THE TECHNICAL OBSERVERS



The UEFA technical team in the Czech Republic (clockwise): Ioan Lupescu, Stéphanie Tétaz, Dany Rysen, Frank Ludolph, Peter Rudbæk, Graham Turner, Ginés Meléndez and Dušan Fitzel

Match officials

REFEREES	COUNTRY	BORN	FIFA
Xavier Estrada Fernández	Spain	27/01/76	2013
Sergey Karasev	Russia	12/06/79	2010
Danny Makkellie	Netherlands	28/01/83	2011
Szymon Marciniak	Poland	07/01/81	2011
Anastasios Sidiropoulos	Greece	09/08/79	2011
Clément Turpin	France	16/05/82	2010

ASSISTANT REFEREES

Anton Averyanov	Russia	31/01/73	2000
Frédéric Cano	France	23/07/73	2008
Nicolas Danos	France	27/09/80	2013
Mario Diks	Netherlands	26/07/77	2014
Damianos Efthymiadis	Greece	21/07/73	2010
Tikhon Kalugin	Russia	03/12/74	2003
Polychronis Kostaras	Greece	21/05/83	2014
Tomasz Listkiewicz	Poland	06/10/78	2011
Miguel Martínez Munuera	Spain	08/04/86	2015
Teodoro Sobrino Magán	Spain	07/09/78	2013
Paweł Sokolnicki	Poland	01/04/80	2010
Hessel Steegstra	Netherlands	27/03/78	2013

ADDITIONAL ASSISTANT REFEREES

Benoît Bastien	France	17/04/83	2014
Kevin Blom	Netherlands	21/02/74	2005
Fredy Fautrel	France	31/10/71	2007
Jesús Gil Manzano	Spain	04/02/84	2014
Alejandro Hernández Hernández	Spain	10/11/82	2014
Sergey Ivanov	Russia	05/06/84	2014
Jochem Kamphuis	Netherlands	11/04/86	–
Michael Koukoulakis	Greece	25/06/75	2008
Sergey Lapochkin	Russia	28/04/81	2013
Tomasz Musiał	Poland	19/02/81	2014
Paweł Raczkowski	Poland	10/05/83	2013
Stavros Tritsonis	Greece	30/11/77	2010

FOURTH OFFICIALS

Jan Paták	Czech Republic	27/07/82	2014
Ondrej Pelikán	Czech Republic	03/06/80	2010

Czech Republic



Group A Czech Republic / Denmark / Germany / Serbia



		BORN	G	A	DEN	SRB	GER	CLUB
					1-2	4-0	1-1	
GOALKEEPERS								
1	Tomáš Koubek	26/08/92			90	90	90	FC Hradec Králové
16	Jiří Pavlenka	14/04/92			0	0	0	FC Baník Ostrava
23	Michal Reichl	14/09/92			0	0	0	SK Sigma Olomouc
DEFENDERS								
2	Pavel Kadeřábek	25/04/92	1		90	90	90	AC Sparta Praha
5	Jakub Brabec	06/08/92		1	90	90	90	AC Sparta Praha
14	Laco Takács	15/07/96			0	0	0	FK Teplice
15	Jan Baránek	26/06/93			82↓	0	0	FC Viktoria Plzeň
19	Matěj Hybš	03/01/93		1	90	90	90	FC Vysočina Jihlava
20	Jakub Jugas	05/05/92			0	0	0	FC Zbrojovka Brno
21	Matěj Hanousek	02/06/93			0	0	0	FK Dukla Praha
22	Tomáš Kalas	15/05/93			S	90	90	Chelsea FC
MIDFIELDERS								
4	Adam Jánoš	20/07/92			8↑	0	0	FC Vysočina Jihlava
6	Ondřej Petrák	11/03/92		1	90	90	90	1. FC Nürnberg
7	David Houska	29/06/93			0	0	0	SK Sigma Olomouc
8	Jaromír Zmrhal	02/08/93			90	90	90	SK Slavia Praha
11	Martin Frýdek	24/03/92		1	90	90	79↓	FC Slovan Liberec
12	Michal Trávník	17/05/94			28↑	61↑	59↓	1. FC Slovácko
13	Ladislav Krejčí	05/07/92		1	76↓	0	31↑	AC Sparta Praha
18	Lukáš Masopust	12/02/93			0	15↑	29↑	FK Jablonec
FORWARDS								
3	Václav Kadlec	20/05/92			S	29↓	0	AC Sparta Praha
9	Jan Kliment	01/09/93		3	90	82↓	90	FC Vysočina Jihlava
10	Jiří Skalák	12/03/92		2	14↑	75↓	61↓	FK Mladá Boleslav
17	Tomáš Přikryl	04/07/92			62↓	8↑	11↑	FK Dukla Praha

Numbers in the squad list represent minutes played; G = goals; A = assists; 0 = unused substitute; ↑ = brought on; ↓ = taken off; S = suspended; so = sent off

STATISTICS

PLAYERS USED 17 GOALS 6

AVERAGES

POSSESSION 49%
Max: 57% v Serbia
Min: 43% v Denmark

PASSES ATTEMPTED 372
Max: 426 v Serbia
Min: 328 v Denmark

PASSING ACCURACY 76%
Max: 81% v Serbia
Min: 66% v Denmark

KEY FEATURES

- 1-4-2-3-1 with two screening midfielders; switches to 1-4-4-2
- Compact defensive block with fast counterattacking transitions
- Preference for direct attacking, winning second ball
- Good use of width with overlapping full-backs, notably Kadeřábek on right
- Spells of high fore-checking but emphasis on players behind the ball
- Dangerous, well-rehearsed set plays with good deliveries
- Strong team ethic, high work rate, discipline and mental resilience

TEAM SHAPE

COACH JAKUB DOVALIL

"We have regrets about our second half against Denmark – but we can have none about the way we played against Serbia and Germany. The first game was like day and night. The first half was excellent and we told the players before the restart to play the same positive football. But Denmark sped up their passing; we stopped being proactive and they equalised. Then we made an individual mistake and conceded a second. We learned that if you make a mistake at this level you are punished and the tournament can be over."

Denmark



Group A Czech Republic / Denmark / Germany / Serbia



	BORN	G	A	CZE	GER	SRB	SWE	CLUB
				2-1	0-3	2-0	1-4	
GOALKEEPERS								
1	Jakob Busk Jensen	12/09/93		90	90	90	90	Sandefjord Fotball
16	Frederik Rønnow	04/08/92		0	0	0	0	AC Horsens
22	David Jensen	25/03/92		0	0	0	0	FC Nordsjælland
DEFENDERS								
2	Alexander Scholz	24/10/92		90	90	90	90	R. Standard de Liège
3	Frederik Sørensen	14/04/92		25↓	0	0	0	Hellas Verona FC
4	Jannik Vestergaard	03/08/92	1	90	90	90	90	SV Werder Bremen
5	Jonas Knudsen	16/09/92	1	90	90	S	90	Esbjerg fB
6	Andreas Christensen	10/04/96	1	90	90	90	90	Chelsea FC
12	Patrick Banggaard	04/04/94		0	0	0	0	FC Midtjylland
13	Riza Durmisi	08/01/94	1	0	0	90	0	Brøndby IF
14	Christoffer Remmer	16/01/93		0	0	0	0	FC København
19	Jens Jønsson	10/01/93		0	77↓	90	57↓	AGF Aarhus
MIDFIELDERS								
8	Lasse Christensen	15/08/94		65↑	90	24↑	33↑	Fulham FC
10	Pierre Højbjerg	05/08/95	1	90	0	89↓	90	FC Augsburg
15	Nicolaj Thomsen	08/05/93		90	90	90	90	Aalborg BK
17	Christian Nørgaard	10/03/94		0	13↑	1↑	0	Brøndby IF
FORWARDS								
7	Viktor Fischer	09/06/94	1	57↓	18↑	66↓	1↑	AFC Ajax
9	Yussuf Poulsen	15/06/94		90	61↓	90	90	RB Leipzig
11	Uffe Bech	13/01/93	1	0	29↑	5↑	90↓	FC Nordsjælland
18	Rasmus Falk	15/01/92	1	89↓	0	85↓	65↓	Odense BK
20	Nicolai Brock-Madsen	09/01/93		0	90	0	0	Randers FC
21	Emil Berggreen	10/05/93		1↑	0	0	0	TSV Eintracht Braunschweig
23	Pione Sisto	04/02/95	1	33↑	72↓	0	25↑	FC Midtjylland

Numbers in the squad list represent minutes played; G = goals; A = assists; 0 = unused substitute; ↑ = brought on; ↓ = taken off; S = suspended; so = sent off

England

Group B England / Italy / Portugal / Sweden



	BORN	G	A	POR	SWE	ITA	CLUB
				0-1	1-0	1-3	
GOALKEEPERS							
1	Jack Butland	10/03/93		90	90	90	Stoke City FC
12	Jonathan Bond	19/05/93		0	0	0	Watford FC
13	Marcus Bettinelli	24/05/92		0	0	0	Fulham FC
DEFENDERS							
2	Carl Jenkinson	08/02/92		90	90	90	Arsenal FC
3	Luke Garbutt	21/05/93		90	90	90	Everton FC
5	John Stones	28/05/94			0	90	Everton FC
6	Ben Gibson	15/01/93		90	90	90	Middlesbrough FC
15	Michael Keane	11/01/93		0	0	0	Burnley FC
20	Liam Moore	31/01/93		90	90	0	Leicester City FC
21	Calum Chambers	20/01/95		0	0	0	Arsenal FC
22	Matt Targett	18/09/95		0	0	0	Southampton FC
MIDFIELDERS							
4	Jake Forster-Caskey	25/04/94		0	0	63↓	Brighton & Hove Albion FC
7	Alex Pritchard	03/05/93		11↑	55↓	0	Tottenham Hotspur FC
8	James Ward-Prowse	01/11/94		54↓	0	0	Southampton FC
10	Tom Carroll	28/05/92		79↓	73↓	0	Tottenham Hotspur FC
11	Nathan Redmond	06/03/94	1	90	90	90	Norwich City FC
14	Nathaniel Chalobah	12/12/94		90	90	90	Chelsea FC
16	Jesse Lingard	15/12/92	1	74↓	35↑	90	Manchester United FC
19	Will Hughes	17/04/95		36↑	45↓	0	Derby County FC
23	Ruben Loftus-Cheek	23/01/96	1	0	27↑	37↑	Chelsea FC
FORWARDS							
9	Harry Kane	28/07/93		90	90	90	Tottenham Hotspur FC
17	Danny Ings	23/07/92		16↑	45↑	90	Burnley FC
18	Benik Afobe	12/02/93			0	0	Wolverhampton Wanderers FC

Numbers in the squad list represent minutes played; G = goals; A = assists; 0 = unused substitute; ↑ = brought on; ↓ = taken off; S = suspended; so = sent off



STATISTICS

PLAYERS USED 17 GOALS 2

AVERAGES

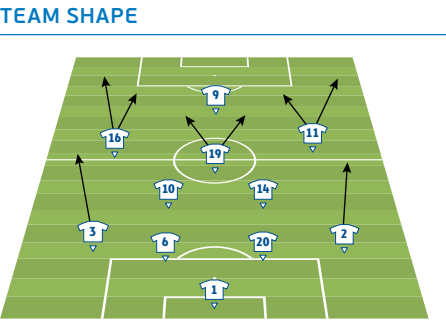
POSSESSION 56%
Max: 62% v Sweden
Min: 48% v Portugal

PASSES ATTEMPTED 500
Max: 554 v Sweden
Min: 414 v Portugal

PASSING ACCURACY 85%
Max: Sweden 88%
Min: Portugal, Italy 83%

KEY FEATURES

- Positional interchanging within 1-4-2-3-1 structure; 1-4-4-1-1 defending
- Controlled possession play with elaborate build-ups, solo skills
- Good diagonal passing to open play on the flanks
- Wingers ready to take on opponents; support by overlapping full-backs
- Kane the attacking focal point; off-ball movement, readiness to shoot
- Spells of high pressure, but emphasis on pressing from midfield
- High defensive line with keeper ready to sweep behind back four



COACH GARETH SOUTHGATE

"The experience was brilliant for our young players. There's so little between teams and it comes down to small details and concentration. Against Italy, two moments of madness in our defending cost us the game. That's the harsh reality of tournament football. There can't be any questions about the way we played between the two boxes. We created a lot of chances and had good attempts saved by the keepers. And we were punished for the errors we made at the other end."

Germany

Group A Czech Republic / Denmark / Germany / Serbia



	BORN	G	A	SRB	DEN	CZE	POR	CLUB
				1-1	3-0	1-1	0-5	
GOALKEEPERS								
1	Bernd Leno	04/03/92		0	0	0	0	Bayer 04 Leverkusen
12	Marc-André ter Stegen	30/04/92		90	90	90	90	FC Barcelona
23	Timo Horn	12/05/93		0	0	0	0	1. FC Köln
DEFENDERS								
2	Julian Korb	21/03/92		90	90	90	87↓	VfL Borussia Mönchengladbach
3	Christian Günter	28/02/93		69so	S	90	90	SC Freiburg
4	Matthias Ginter	19/01/94	1	90	90	90	90	Borussia Dortmund
5	Nico Schulz	01/04/93	1	19↑	90	90↓	50↓	Hertha BSC Berlin
16	Robin Knoche	22/05/92		90	0	0	0	VfL Wolfsburg
22	Dominique Heintz	15/08/93		0	90	90	90	1. FC Kaiserslautern
MIDFIELDERS								
6	Johannes Geis	17/08/93		0	13↑	0	45↓	1. FSV Mainz 05
7	Leonardo Bittencourt	19/12/93		13↑	79↓	26↑	15↑so	Hannover 96
8	Yunus Malli	24/02/92		0	0	8↑	0	1. FSV Mainz 05
10	Moritz Leitner	08/12/92		45↓	0	0	0	VfB Stuttgart
11	Emre Can	12/01/94	1	1	90	77↓	90	Liverpool FC
14	Kerem Demirbay	03/07/93		0	0	0	0	1. FC Kaiserslautern
17	Joshua Kimmich	08/02/95		45↑	90	90	90	RB Leipzig
18	Maximilian Arnold	27/05/94		0	0	0	0	VfL Wolfsburg
19	Amin Younes	06/08/93	1	90	90	64↓	90	1. FC Kaiserslautern
20	Max Meyer	18/09/95		77↓	90	82↓	45↑	FC Schalke 04
21	Felix Klaus	13/09/92		0	8↑	0	3↑	SC Freiburg
FORWARDS								
9	Kevin Volland	30/07/92	2	1	90	82↓	90	TSG 1899 Hoffenheim
13	Philipp Hofmann	30/03/93		71↓	0	1↑	0	1. FC Kaiserslautern
15	Serge Gnabry	14/07/95		0	11↑	0	0	Arsenal FC

Numbers in the squad list represent minutes played; G = goals; A = assists; 0 = unused substitute; ↑ = brought on; ↓ = taken off; S = suspended; so = sent off



STATISTICS

PLAYERS USED 19 GOALS 5

AVERAGES

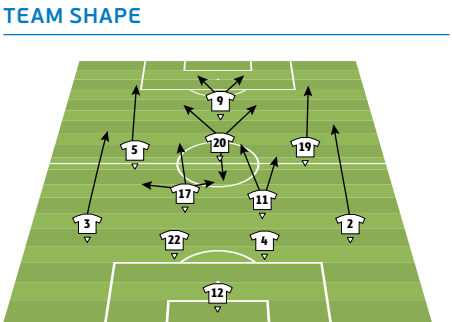
POSSESSION 54%
Max: 55% v Serbia
Min: 51% v Portugal

PASSES ATTEMPTED 503
Max: 544 v Serbia
Min: 418 v Czech Republic

PASSING ACCURACY 88%
Max: 92% v Serbia
Min: 83% v Czech Republic

KEY FEATURES

- 1-4-2-3-1; first half v Portugal 1-4-3-3 with single screening midfielder
- 1-4-4-2 defending with high defensive line and intense pressing
- Influential goalkeeper covering big area, building play from back
- Good balance of defensive and attacking qualities in controlling midfielders
- Volland an excellent attacking reference – finding space, supplying team-mates
- Quick transitions in both directions; fast wingers taking on opponents
- Strong, athletic players; high-tempo passing aiming to dictate pace of game



COACH HORST HRUBESCH

"When you lose a semi-final 5-0, there are not many excuses. We wanted to be aggressive, but Portugal were as aggressive as we had wanted to be. We lost the one-on-ones; our passing was not good; we didn't do the easy things well. It was the entire team, not any individuals. But the team has the character to accept it – we win together and we lose together. One result should not obscure that we achieved our minimum objective: to reach the semi-finals and to qualify for the Olympics."

Italy

Group B England / Italy / Portugal / Sweden



		BORN	G	A	SWE	POR	ENG	CLUB
					1-2	0-0	3-1	
GOALKEEPERS								
1	Francesco Bardi	18/01/92			90	90	90	AC Chievo Verona
14	Marco Sportiello	10/05/92			0	0	0	Atalanta BC
20	Nicola Leali	17/02/93			0	0	0	AC Cesena
DEFENDERS								
2	Stefano Sabelli	13/01/93			90	0	27↑	AS Bari
3	Cristiano Biraghi	01/09/92			0	90	90	AC Chievo Verona
5	Daniele Rugani	29/07/94			90	90	90	Empoli FC
6	Alessio Romagnoli	12/01/95			0	90	90	UC Sampdoria
12	Federico Barba	01/09/93			0	0	0	Empoli FC
13	Matteo Bianchetti	17/03/93			90	0	0	Spezia Calcio
17	Armando Izzo	02/03/92			0	0	0	Genoa CFC
22	Davide Zappacosta	11/06/92			90	90	83↓	Atalanta BC
MIDFIELDERS								
4	Lorenzo Crisetig	20/01/93	1	0	76↓		90	Cagliari Calcio
7	Federico Viviani	24/03/92			90	5↑	7↑	US Latina Calcio
8	Stefano Sturaro	09/03/93			80so	S	S	Juventus
15	Marco Benassi	08/09/94	2	0	90	90		Torino FC
16	Daniele Baselli	12/03/92			69↓	0	0	Atalanta BC
18	Cristian Battocchio	10/02/92			61↓	62↓	0	Virtus Entella
21	Danilo Cataldi	06/08/94			21↑	90	90	SS Lazio
FORWARDS								
9	Andrea Belotti	20/12/93	1		78↓	85↓	90	US Città di Palermo
10	Domenico Berardi	01/08/94	1	1	90	90	63↓	US Sassuolo Calcio
11	Federico Bernardeschi	16/02/94			0	28↑	0	ACF Fiorentina
19	Marcello Trotta	29/09/92	1		12↑	14↑	75↓	AS Avellino 1912
23	Simone Verdi	12/07/92			29↑	0	15↑	Empoli FC

Numbers in the squad list represent minutes played; G = goals; A = assists; 0 = unused substitute; ↑ = brought on; ↓ = taken off; S = suspended; so = sent off



STATISTICS

PLAYERS USED19

GOALS4

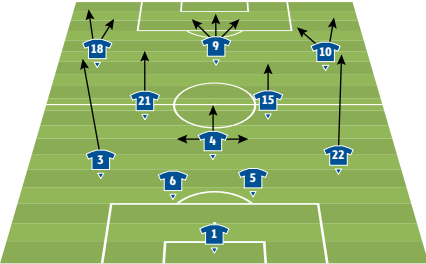
AVERAGES

- POSSESSION 49%
Max: 59% v Sweden
Min: 41% v England
- PASSES ATTEMPTED 440
Max: 517 v Sweden
Min: 366 v England
- PASSING ACCURACY 81%
Max: 84% v Sweden
Min: 76% v England

KEY FEATURES

- 1-4-3-3; switch to 1-4-4-2 with twin midfield screen against England
- Compact deep defending with minimal space between lines
- Emphasis on fast counterattacks and direct supply to front player(s)
- Use of reverse wingers – left-footed Berardi cutting in from right
- Diagonal switches of play; full-backs supporting wingers
- Strong centre-backs with aerial power; variety of dangerous set plays
- Tactically disciplined, hard-working unit with strong team ethic

TEAM SHAPE



COACH LUIGI DI BIAGIO



"I was proud of the boys – of what they achieved and the tremendous progress they made during the time we were together. Our regrets are about missing chances and failing to kill off the game against Sweden when we had the chance. In the second half, we shouldn't have lowered the tempo and the intensity. That was something we could have avoided. It showed that we need to improve our game management and to focus on finding the net when we have a chance to close off a game. It was a bitter pill not to go to Rio because a dream like that doesn't come along every day."

Portugal

Group B England / Italy / Portugal / Sweden



		BORN	G	A	ENG	ITA	SWE	GER	SWE*	CLUB
					1-0	0-0	1-1	5-0	0-0	
GOALKEEPERS										
1	José Sá	17/01/93			90	90	90	90	90	CS Marítimo
12	Daniel Fernandes	13/11/92			0	0	0	0	0	VfL Osnabrück
22	Bruno Varela	04/11/94			0	0	0	0	0	SL Benfica
DEFENDERS										
2	Ricardo Esgaio	16/05/93			90	90	90	90	90	A. Académica de Coimbra
3	Tiago Ilori	26/02/93			90	90	29↓		90	FC Girondins de Bordeaux
4	Paulo Oliveira	08/01/92	1		90	90	90	90	90	Sporting Clube de Portugal
5	Raphael Guerreiro	22/12/93			90	90	90	64↓	90	FC Lorient
13	João Cancelo	27/05/94	1	0	0	0	26↑	0		Valencia CF
14	Tobias Figueiredo	02/02/94			0	0	61↑	90	0	Sporting Clube de Portugal
15	Frederico Venâncio	04/02/93			0	0	0	0	0	Vitória FC
MIDFIELDERS										
6	William Carvalho	07/04/92			90	90	90	90	90	Sporting Clube de Portugal
7	Rafa Silva	17/05/93			0	54↓	0	40↑	0	SC Braga
8	Sérgio Oliveira	02/06/92			90	90	90	90	54↓	FC Paços de Ferreira
10	Bernardo Silva	10/08/94	1	1	90	78↓	90	50↓	90	AS Monaco FC
16	Rúben Neves	13/03/97			5↑	0	0	0	0	FC Porto
18	Ivan Cavaleiro	18/10/93	1	1	73↓	0	58↓	45↓	61↓	RC Deportivo de la Coruña
20	Tozé	14/01/93			0	9↑	0	0	36↑	Estoril Praia
23	João Mário	19/01/93	2	1	85↓	81↓	90	90	90	Sporting Clube de Portugal
FORWARDS										
9	Gonçalo Paciência	01/08/94	1	0	36↑	32↑	0	20↑		FC Porto
11	Iuri Medeiros	10/07/94	1		17↑	12↑	16↑	0	29↑	FC Arouca
17	Carlos Mané	11/03/94			11↑	90	0	0	0	Sporting Clube de Portugal
19	Ricardo Horta	15/09/94	1	0	0	0	45↑	0		Málaga CF
21	Ricardo	06/10/93	1	1	79↓	0	74↓	90	70↓	FC Porto

*aet; lost 4-3 on penalties

Numbers in the squad list represent minutes played; G = goals; A = assists; 0 = unused substitute; ↑ = brought on; ↓ = taken off; S = suspended; so = sent off



STATISTICS

PLAYERS USED20

GOALS7

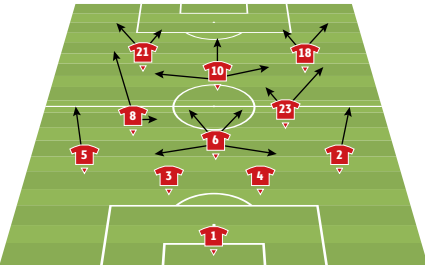
AVERAGES

- POSSESSION 53%
Max: 57% v Sweden (final)
Min: 49% v Germany
- PASSES ATTEMPTED 537
Max: 600 v Sweden (MD3)
Min: 474 v England
- PASSING ACCURACY 87%
Max: 88% v Sweden (MD3 and final)
Min: 83% v Italy
- To facilitate comparisons, extra time in the final has been excluded


KEY FEATURES

- Attack-minded 1-4-3-3 based on fluent combination moves
- High levels of technique; able to play out of tight situations
- Vertical attacks, many launched by controlling midfielder William Carvalho
- 1-4-3-3 defending with attackers pressing high
- Strong, fast back four, backed by excellent goalkeeping from Sá
- Bernardo Silva the free spirit, attacking catalyst; outstanding technique
- Fluid movements; use of flanks; penetrations to byline and cutbacks

TEAM SHAPE



COACH RUI JORGE



"If someone told us before the tournament that we'd be second, it might have felt like a positive. But it wasn't, because we deserved more. You're never a winner when you finish second. The positive was that we were amazing with this group of players, going 15 games without losing and failing to score in only two matches. At the end of the final it felt unfair because we had done everything in our power to win."

Serbia

Group A Czech Republic / Denmark / Germany / Serbia



		BORN	G	A	GER	CZE	DEN	CLUB
					1-1	0-4	0-2	
GOALKEEPERS								
1	Marko Dmitrović	24/01/92			90	90	90	Charlton Athletic FC
12	Nikola Perić	04/02/92			0	0	0	FK Jagodina
23	Nemanja Stevanović	08/05/92			0	0	0	FK Čukarički
DEFENDERS								
3	Marko Petković	03/09/92			0	45↑	90	FK Crvena zvezda
5	Uroš Ćosić	24/10/92			0	0	0	Pescara Calcio
6	Aleksandar Pantić	11/04/92			90	90	9↑	Córdoba CF
13	Nemanja Petrović	17/04/92			90	90	90	FK Partizan
15	Uroš Spajić	13/02/93			90	90	90	Toulouse FC
17	Aleksandar Filipović	20/12/94			0	0	0	FK Jagodina
20	Lazar Ćirković	22/08/92			0	0	81↓	FK Partizan
22	Filip Stojković	22/01/93			90	45↓		FK Čukarički
MIDFIELDERS								
2	Aleksandar Kovačević	09/01/92			0	27↑	90	FK Crvena zvezda
4	Srdjan Mijailović	10/11/93			0	0	0	Kayserispor
7	Goran Čaušić	05/05/92			90	63↓	90	Eskişehirspor
8	Mirko Ivanić	13/09/93			0	0	0	FK Vojvodina
14	Darko Brašanac	12/02/92			90	90		FK Partizan
18	Miloš Jojić	19/03/92			90↓	85↓	66↓	Borussia Dortmund
19	Nikola Trujić	14/04/92			1↑	0	24↑	FK Partizan
FORWARDS								
9	Aleksandar Pešić	21/05/92			90↓	90	90	Toulouse FC
10	Filip Djuričić	30/01/92	1		90	90	90	Southampton FC
11	Aleksandar Čavrić	18/05/94			13↑	0	59↓	KRC Genk
16	Luka Milunović	21/12/92			1↑	5↑	31↑	Platanias FC
21	Slavoljub Srnić	12/01/92	1		77↓	90	0	FK Čukarički

Numbers in the squad list represent minutes played; G = goals; A = assists; 0 = unused substitute; ↑ = brought on; ↓ = taken off; S = suspended; so = sent off



STATISTICS

PLAYERS USED 17 GOALS 1

AVERAGES

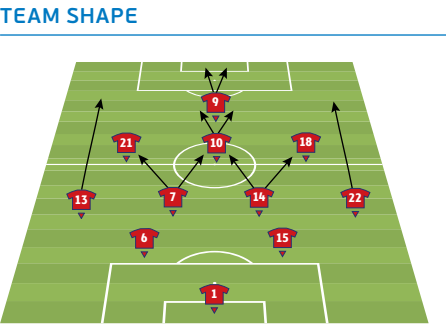
POSSESSION 47%
Max: 52% v Denmark
Min: 43% v Czech Republic

PASSES ATTEMPTED 406
Max: 468 v Denmark
Min: 335 v Czech Republic

PASSING ACCURACY 82%
Max: 87% v Germany
Min: 73% v Czech Republic

KEY FEATURES

- 1-4-2-3-1 with quick transitions to 1-4-4-1-1 defending
- Counterattacking style using pace of middle-to-front players
- Extensive use of long pass by keeper; reaction to second ball
- Keeper ready to sweep outside box, cut out opposition counters
- High levels of technique in all departments; good under pressure
- Djuričić the main attacking threat – movement and one-on-one skills
- Pressure from midfield; emphasis on drawing opposition forward



COACH MLADEN DODIĆ

“We had some good moments in Prague, especially in the first match when we were strong defensively and dangerous going forward. But we couldn’t replicate that performance and the heavy defeat by the Czechs undermined our confidence. We have a lot of attacking players, but we scored just one – albeit beautiful – goal. Beside our problems in defence, that was the main reason for our elimination. In order to be effective, we first have to perform in defence. Qualifying for the finals was a success and the boys gave their maximum – there is nothing more to say.”

Sweden

Group B England / Italy / Portugal / Sweden



		BORN	G	A	ITA	ENG	POR	DEN	POR	CLUB
					2-1	0-1	1-1	4-1	0-0*	
GOALKEEPERS										
1	Patrik Carlgren	08/01/92			90	90	90	90	120	AIK
12	Jacob Rinne	20/06/93			0	0	0	0	0	Örebro SK
23	Andreas Linde	24/07/93			0	0	0	0	0	Molde FK
DEFENDERS										
2	Victor Lindelöf	17/07/94			45↑	90	90	90	120	SL Benfica
3	Alexander Milošević	30/01/92			28so	S	90	90	120	Beşiktaş JK
4	Filip Helander	22/04/93			90	90	10↑	90	45↓	Malmö FF
5	Ludwig Augustinsson	21/04/94			90	90	90	90	120	FC København
17	Joseph Baffo	07/11/92			90	90	80↓	0	75↑	Halmstads BK
18	Sebastian Holmén	29/04/92			0	0	0	0	0	IF Elfsborg
21	Pa Konate	25/04/94			0	0	0	0	0	Malmö FF
MIDFIELDERS										
6	Oscar Lewicki	14/07/92	1		90	90	90	90	120	Malmö FF
7	Oscar Hiljemark	28/06/92	1		90	90	90	90	120	PSV Eindhoven
8	Abdullah Khalili	07/06/92			90	87↓	83↓	90	120	Mersin İdman Yurdu
13	Arber Zeneli	25/02/95			0	0	0	0	0	IF Elfsborg
15	Kristoffer Olsson	30/06/95			0	0	0	0	0	FC Midtjylland
16	Simon Tibbling	07/09/94	2		0	78↓	38↑	72↓	66↓	FC Groningen
19	Sam Larsson	10/04/93	1		45↓	12↑	0	1↑	0	sc Heerenveen
20	Robin Quaison	09/10/93	1		0	3↑	7↑	18↑	54↑	US Città di Palermo
22	Simon Gustafsson	20/01/95			0	0	0	0	0	BK Häcken
FORWARDS										
9	Branimir Hrgota	12/01/93			0	0	52↓	0	0	VfL Borussia Mönchengladbach
10	John Guidetti	15/04/92	2	1	76↓	81↓	90	59↓	120	Manchester City FC
11	Isaac Kiese Thelin	24/06/92	1		90	90	90	90↓	120	FC Girondins de Bordeaux
14	Mikael Ishak	31/03/93			14↑	9↑	0	31↑	0	Randers FC

*aet; won 4-3 on penalties

Numbers in the squad list represent minutes played; G = goals; A = assists; 0 = unused substitute; ↑ = brought on; ↓ = taken off; S = suspended; so = sent off



STATISTICS

PLAYERS USED 16 GOALS 7

AVERAGES

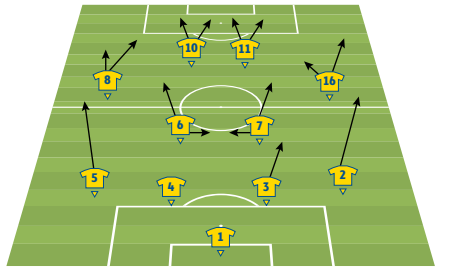
POSSESSION 43%
Max: 47% v Portugal (MD3)
Min: 38% v England

PASSES ATTEMPTED 330
Max: 430 v Portugal (MD3)
Min: 259 v Italy

PASSING ACCURACY 78%
Max: 84% v Portugal (MD3)
Min: 72% v Italy

KEY FEATURES

- Classic 1-4-4-2 operated with endeavour and discipline
- Strong, well-organised defensive block; two very compact lines of four
- Non-possession play; quick counters based on direct supply to strikers
- Fast attack-to-defence transitions with fierce pressure on ball carrier
- Long passes by keeper, mostly to left; second ball support from midfield
- Advances on flanks supported by strong runs from midfield
- Disciplined implementation of clear game plans with strong collective spirit



COACH HÅKAN ERICSON

“The tournament demonstrated that some teams are quicker and more technical than us, but we are very well-organised tactically. We found a good balance between technical play and all playing together. We had to do what we were good at. We have a team that thinks anything is possible and possesses a fantastic team spirit. It’s possible to win football matches with those qualities.”

Event report



Pride and joy

As Sweden celebrated, the Czech Republic could take pride in its "biggest ever project"

In the words of the tournament director, Petr Fousek, it was the "biggest project that Czech football has organised in its history," and when it ended, with Sweden triumphant against Portugal

in the final at a packed Eden Stadium, the hosts had good cause to look back on the 2015 UEFA European Under-21 Championship final tournament with pride and satisfaction.



Uherke Hradiste's main square was a picturesque backdrop for the city's fan zone

Czech spectators of all ages show their colours (top and bottom left); Jan Kliment celebrates a goal for the hosts (bottom right)



Fifteen matches were played out at four venues – Prague's Eden Stadium and Letná Stadium, and the Ander Stadium and City Stadium in Olomouc and Uherske Hradiste respectively. For Mr Fousek, the choice of venues allowed visiting players and spectators to see not just the Czech capital but also the welcoming eastern region of Moravia, a pleasant three-hour journey away by train. "We tried to produce a concept incorporating Bohemia and Moravia, which are the two main regions within the Czech Republic," he said. "It meant every football fan across the country had a chance to get easy access and go to the matches."

Overall, more than 160,000 spectators filled stadiums during the 14-day event and it was a memorable experience for the visiting players too – not least the Sweden team, who won their first U21 title. Sweden brought the largest contingent of travelling supporters,

By incorporating Bohemia and Moravia, every fan across the country could go to matches

and one end of the Eden Stadium was a sea of blue and yellow on final night.

For Sweden captain Oscar Hiljemark, though, it was not just the Eden Stadium on 30 June that he would remember fondly. "All the stadiums and pitches have been fantastic and absolutely top-quality," he said. There were even more fans waiting to greet them when they arrived back in Stockholm – an estimated 20,000, to be precise – underlining just what this competition means to players and fans alike.



Venues

Having a ball

Sweden's colourful fans get behind their team

Refurbished stadiums drew sizeable crowds enjoying the relaxed atmosphere – notably Sweden's vibrant yellow hordes

"Czech Republic – Land of Stories" read the slogan on one of the touchline advertising boards at the UEFA European Under-21 Championship final tournament. This was designed to highlight the undeniable charms of the host country, though for football fans it was the stories unfolding in Prague, Olomouc and Uherske Hradiste that took precedence during June 2015.

The action got under way in Prague with the opening pair of Group A fixtures on 17 June – the first of eight matches in the capital. Nobody visiting the Czech Republic's biggest city could have disputed the words of Pavel Nedvěd, the tournament ambassador, in the official programme when he declared: "Prague is unique, Prague is beautiful." A fortnight later it must have felt all that and more for Sweden's players as they lifted the trophy at SK Slavia Praha's Eden Stadium, roared on by over 2,500 of their fans among the 18,867-strong crowd.

The Eden Stadium, which opened in 2008 and hosted the 2013 UEFA Super Cup, was certainly a fitting venue for the final as the most modern of the four stadiums, and there was another 18,000-plus crowd when the Czech Republic played their last group fixture there against Germany.

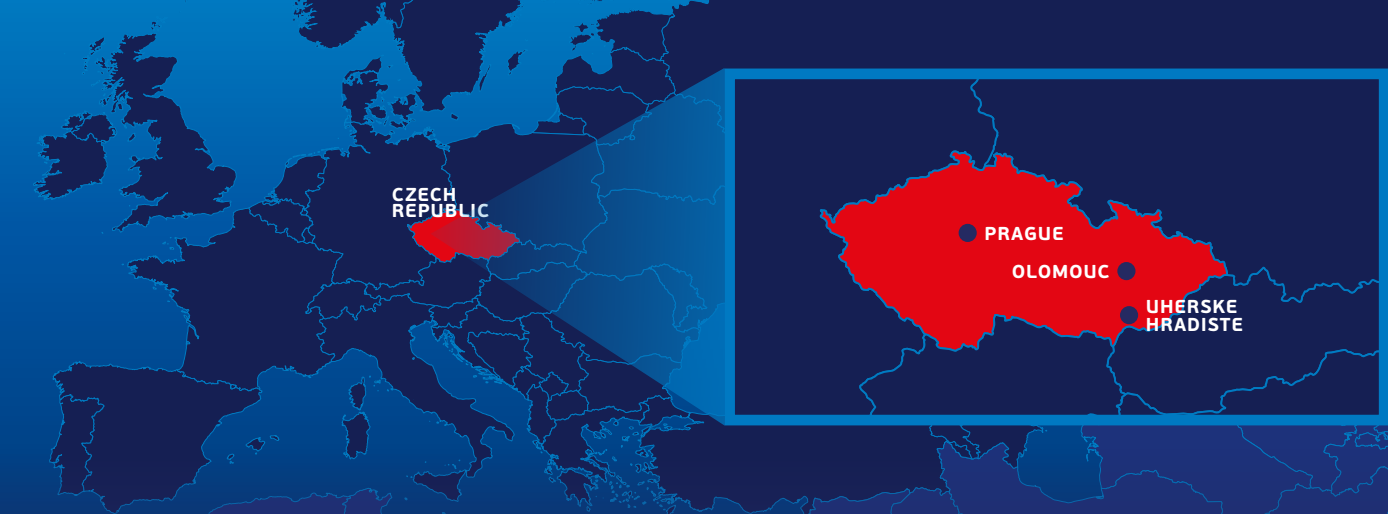
It was over to the east of the country in Moravia that the Group B chapter was written. The university city of Olomouc hosted four matches in all, including the semi-final between Portugal and Germany, and the flags of the competing nations were proudly displayed in the tourist information centre in the heart of the old town.

Sweden's supporters added further colour with their matchday processions to the stadium – an estimated 1,000 or so forming a river of blue and yellow that flowed past the fan zone en route to the Ander Stadium, which had been given an

impressive makeover for these finals. There were over 11,000 in the ground when Sweden took on England – and a similar number when England and Italy met in their group decider.

AC Sparta Praha's Letná Stadium and the City Stadium in Uherske Hradiste were other grounds to benefit from refurbishments made for the tournament, and the former venue welcomed 16,253 spectators on the evening the Czech Republic defeated Serbia.

Uherske Hradiste was the smallest of the venues, but visitors had the benefit of a fan zone right in the heart of town in the main square. Moreover, inside the ground, the local spectators made an impressive effort to add to the atmosphere with their rhythmic hand-clapping during games – it had a positive impact, even if nobody sang quite like the ebullient Swedes.



Eden Stadium

Matches

Group A Czech Republic 1-2 Denmark

Group A Germany 3-0 Denmark

Group A Czech Republic 1-1 Germany

Final Sweden 0-0 Portugal (Sweden win 4-3 on pens)

Aggregate attendance 66,190



Letná Stadium

Matches

Group A Germany 1-1 Serbia

Group A Serbia 0-4 Czech Republic

Group A Denmark 2-0 Serbia

Semi-final Denmark 1-4 Sweden

Aggregate attendance 35,874



Ander Stadium

Matches

Group B Italy 1-2 Sweden

Group B Sweden 0-1 England

Group B England 1-3 Italy

Semi-final Portugal 5-0 Germany

Aggregate attendance 39,415



City Stadium

Matches

Group B England 0-1 Portugal

Group B Italy 0-0 Portugal

Group B Portugal 1-1 Sweden

Aggregate attendance 21,515

Key players

UEFA had the backing of 12 sponsors during the tournament

The commercial programme for the 2015 UEFA European Under-21 Championship final tournament consisted of eight global sponsors, who benefited from extensive worldwide marketing rights. In addition there were four national sponsors with marketing rights within the host country only.

This two-tiered approach allowed for the tournament to be promoted globally and locally in unison. At a global level, the sponsors activated across a number of key markets for UEFA national team football, while domestically, the insight of the local companies lending their support helped to drive interest – and fans – to the stadiums.

As well as promotional activities, the sponsors provided further support by supplying key products and services, thereby playing a key role in the day-to-day organisation of the tournament itself.

Global sponsors



National sponsors



adidas supplied the official match ball for the 2015 edition of the U21 EURO and the visibility of the adidas brand was further enhanced through the provision of tournament-themed clothing for the event's youth

programme participants, volunteers and staff. In addition, adidas designed and produced the official licensed products that were sold at the Intersport official fan shops at all four stadiums. The sports brand was also

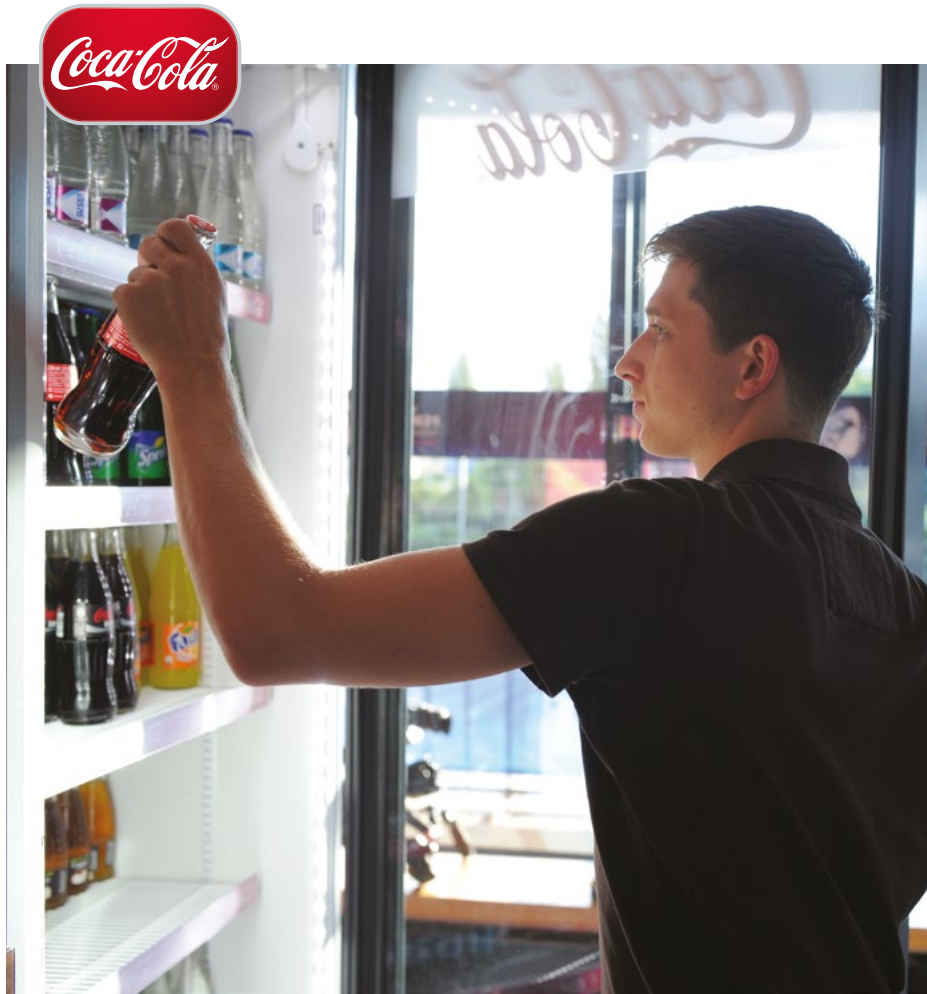
presenting partner of the adidas Golden Boot award, creating a bespoke trophy that was presented to the competition's three-goal top scorer, Jan Kliment of the Czech Republic.



Carlsberg continued its long-standing association with the U21 tournament, which it activated via its exclusive partner in the Czech Republic, Budějovický Budvar, np. The Carlsberg brand was heavily visible with the company promoting its core brand – and 'Celebrate Responsibly' – messaging on perimeter boards, as well as providing Carlsberg products for key areas on site

and within the Olomouc and Uherske Hradiste fan zones. Carlsberg amplified its activity around the semi-final and final matches with branded commercial display areas where fans could pick up Carlsberg wigs. Meanwhile, the company also made use of its full allocation of tickets through various on and off-trade promotions ahead of the tournament.

Commercial programme



Coca-Cola gave children from all over the Czech Republic the chance to be a part of the pre-match ceremony through its national team flag-bearer programme. These children were recruited through the nationwide Coca-Cola Cup, an inter-school football tournament, and while the winners became flag bearers, other children received tickets to games. Coca-Cola also took the opportunity to entertain some of its major customers, offering them the Ultimate Access tour as well as hosting them in the UEFA VIP hospitality areas. The sponsor further contributed to the tournament by providing drinks for players, staff and spectators at the many concessions points.



What stood out with Continental were the efforts of its team in the Czech Republic to promote the event, as they distributed

promotional tickets to more than 100 young football fans across the country. These tickets were advertised on the Continental website and Facebook page, and also through a football tournament organised by local clubs in collaboration with Continental Football Tournament

Otrokvice. The pinnacle of the promotion was the semi-final between Portugal and Germany in Olomouc, which was attended by 50 lucky winners, and the final in Prague to which ten were able to go to courtesy of Continental's tickets.



As a global sponsor, the national tourism board used its 'Land of Stories' slogan across its own and the tournament branding platforms – and this message, underlining the history and rich culture of the host country, appeared on stadium perimeter boards and in brochures distributed at the stadiums. In addition, Czech Tourism welcomed visitors to the grounds by handing out flyers promoting its services and informing tourists how to make the most of their visit. The event received further exposure through Czech Tourism's online channels, with visitors able to learn more about the tournament and also encouraged to include an U21 game as part of their itinerary.



Hyundai played an active role, not least by providing 61 vehicles to transport players, staff and officials around the host cities. On the pitch, meanwhile, the company provided the official match ball carrier for every match – a once-in-a-lifetime experience for children recruited via promotional activities in Hyundai's local dealerships. Hyundai had an additional presence at the Eden Stadium in Prague, where the company offered fans the chance to win prizes by taking part in remote control car races. Finally, in the digital sphere, Hyundai ran a predictor game on UEFA.com through which users could win prizes by forecasting correctly the outcome of each tournament fixture.



Commercial programme



McDonald's runs an annual football competition in the Czech Republic in which over 80,000 children take part and its association with the U21 EURO provided extra incentive for youngsters to do well. The big draw was the chance to take part in the McDonald's Player Escorts programme which, as in previous years, allowed local children to become part of the pre-match ceremony, walking out on to the pitch hand in hand with players. It was not just the McDonald's Cup winners who were rewarded, though, as regional finalists received tickets to games and McDonald's further publicised the tournament through its social media and in-store promotional channels, offering additional opportunities for people to get involved.



The State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) used the U21 EURO to keep driving and developing awareness of the company's brand across Europe. The association with the tournament was seen as another step toward strengthening SOCAR's credibility in the world of sport and football in particular. Its visibility on the stadium perimeter boards also helped to enhance the company's association with its home country, Azerbaijan – with the slogan 'Energy of Azerbaijan' appearing at the side of the pitch during matches.



NATIONAL SPONSORS



As one of the largest sports retailers in the Czech Republic, Intersport engaged with local schools and youth football clubs ahead of the tournament through a series of ticket promotions. It was the official sports shop for licensed products for the event itself, and to make sure fans had the best access to the tournament merchandise, the company set up specially branded U21 corners in its retail stores in the host cities as well as having dedicated shops at all four stadiums.



ČEPS, the Czech transmission system operator, is responsible for ensuring the transfer of electricity from generators to areas of consumption. For the U21 EURO, it also played a part in sparking interest in the event, running promotions among its client base, driving ticket sales and raising awareness by rewarding employees and valued customers with tickets to games – while benefiting in return from brand presence at the tournament.



Alexandria, the Czech travel company, played an active role in promoting the event to its broad customer base. It used its perimeter board branding to raise awareness of the company and hosted important clients in the UEFA hospitality areas at each game. Overall, the tournament provided a strong platform for Alexandria to raise its profile within the Czech Republic and to benefit from, as well as contribute to, the positive feeling around the tournament.



MAFRA, the respected Czech media group, provided an ideal platform to drive ticket sales and raise awareness within the host country through its daily newspaper, MF DNES (the most popular daily in the Czech Republic), and its website, www.iDNES.cz, which has over 3 million unique users per month. Together, they worked to promote the tournament and provide in-depth coverage for football lovers throughout the country.



Global audience tunes in

The U21 EURO was seen by football fans across the world thanks to UEFA's TV and internet coverage

The UEFA European Under-21 Championship has established itself as a major footballing event, and this was reflected in the widespread television coverage of the final tournament that ensured the action was transmitted into homes in more than 120 nations around the world.

UEFA had broadcast partners in each of the eight competing countries and on every continent, ensuring its coverage went far beyond Europe to Africa, Asia, Australia and the Americas. There were also radio partners from six of the nations in action, including major public radio networks such as the BBC for England and RAI for Italy.

To broaden the reach of the competition, UEFA has established an extensive broadcast network by partnering with major media outlets in territories worldwide. Rights were granted on a platform-neutral basis, allowing partners to show the matches across all of their outlets, and covering all types of transmission techniques.

In addition to the broadcast network, which included 25 European nations, UEFA provided a free live streaming service of every match in all unsold territories, along with highlights of each fixture worldwide, via UEFA.tv (UEFA's official YouTube channel) and UEFA.com. This ensured a total of 88,000 views throughout the tournament – including 20,000 views for the final, which was available in 26 non-European territories as diverse as New Zealand, Nepal and North Korea.

UEFA also provided its broadcast partners with branding elements, allowing for the creation of branded studio backdrops and promotional trailers as well as online and print promotion.

1.7m Swedish high

Sweden's final success against Portugal was watched by 1,702,000 people on TV4 – a 58.5% share of the audience and better than any of its audiences for the recent FIFA Women's World Cup or IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship. It was significantly higher than any Swedish audience for the past three U21 tournaments. TV12 (part of the TV4 Group) had its best audience ever when 781,000 viewers watched Sweden's semi-final against Denmark (a 33.7% audience share).

4.59m Italians switch on for decider

RAI's highest viewing figures were for Italy's last group fixture against England – 4.59 million and a 19.4% audience share – and these bettered any group stage audience for the 2013 tournament.

2.17m Portuguese passions stirred

There were 2.17 million viewers of the final on RTP1, the main channel of Portugal's public broadcaster RTP, which showed all of Portugal's games. This represented an audience share of 47.3%, which was more than triple the channel's average prime-time share (15.2%).

545,000 Danes' group stage best

In Denmark, DR shared the coverage of the finals with fellow free-to-air broadcaster TV3, DR1 achieving the nation's greatest audience for the Danes' final group stage match against Serbia. The audience of almost 545,000 was a 40.8% share – the highest for any match in all countries broadcasting the tournament before the semi-finals.

6.64m Germans draw biggest audience

The best audience of the tournament in any country was 6.64 million, a 22.5% share, for Germany's final group stage match against the Czech Republic on ZDF, the German public service broadcaster that shared the national team's games with ARD.

550,000 Czechs surpass 2011 figures

CT Sport's biggest audience – 550,000 for the Czech Republic's last group game against Germany – was bigger than for any of their matches in 2011, including the Czech side's semi-final against Switzerland.

Czech Republic 2015 broadcast network

TV PARTNERS

EUROPE

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro	Arena
Bulgaria	Viasat
Czech Republic	Česká televize
Denmark	DR, Viasat
Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia	Viasat
Finland	Elisa
France, Belgium, Switzerland	Ma Chaîne Sport
Germany	ARD, ZDF, Sport1
Israel	Charlton
Italy	RAI
Norway	Viasat
Portugal	RTP, Sport TV
Romania	Romania Telekom
Slovakia	TV Joj
Sweden	TV4
UK and Republic of Ireland	BT Sport

OUTSIDE EUROPE

Angola, Mozambique	Sport TV Africa
Australia	BeIN Sports
Brazil	Globosat
Canada	TSN / RDS
China	CCTV
Indonesia	RCTI / MNC Sports
Japan	WOWOW
Latin America	ESPN
Malaysia	Astro Measat
Middle East and North Africa	BeIN Sports
Sub-Saharan Africa	Ma Chaîne Sport
Thailand	PPTV
USA and Caribbean	ESPN

RADIO PARTNERS

Czech Republic	Český rozhlas
Denmark	DR Radio
Italy	RAI Radio
Germany	ARD Radios
Portugal	Antena 1
Sweden	SR Radio
UK	BBC Radio, talkSPORT

Broadcasting the action

Records were set as UEFA and Česká televize combined to produce first-class coverage of the finals

A camera captures the emotion of the U21 EURO

Clockwise from top left: Denmark's Jannik Vestergaard speaks to a reporter; Patrik Carlgren makes his decisive save; a cameraman tracks the action



UEFA TV Production appointed Česká televize as the host broadcaster for the 2015 UEFA European Under-21 Championship final tournament. The Czech public service provider had two dedicated production teams, who each covered two of the four venues and implemented a 13-camera production plan – including two super slow-motion cameras at every game. This increased to 15 cameras for the semi-final while at the final, as Sweden goalkeeper Patrik Carlgren made his decisive penalty save from William Carvalho's penalty, a total of 17 multilateral cameras were on hand to capture the action.

Unilateral coverage by visiting broadcasters also reached a tournament record high. Five visiting broadcasters were on site with their own productions, including ARD and ZDF (Germany), RAI (Italy), Viasat and DR (Denmark) and TV4 (Sweden). Seventy flash interview bookings were made during the tournament, as well as bookings for 16 super flash, 16 pitch reporter and nine pitch view platforms, and three indoor studios, all coordinated by UEFA's unilateral services team. The responsibility of enriching the tournament coverage with TV graphics was assigned to Chyron Hego (with additional tracking data provided by deltatree), who also provided the

giant screen service for spectators in the stadiums.

UEFA TV Production provided staff to coordinate activities on site at all venues, to ensure both host and visiting broadcaster operations ran smoothly. At the match command centre at UEFA's headquarters in Nyon, Switzerland, all elements of the multilateral production were reviewed and feedback was delivered as necessary.

TV Production also created additional programming material for broadcasters to enhance their main finals coverage, including a 2013 recap promo, a U21 creative promo for the tournament as a whole, a host city promo for each venue, and a two-hour U21 compilation (including interviews, play-off highlights,



As Sweden goalkeeper Patrik Carlgren made his decisive penalty save, a total of 17 multilateral cameras were on hand to capture the action

creative team idents and host city raw footage packages). Česká televize's coverage was also used for both the UEFA.tv YouTube channel live streaming service (in countries where TV rights were unsold) and highlights clips with accompanying English commentary.

Ahead of UEFA EURO 2016, the U21 finals also provided an invaluable opportunity to conduct several broadcast technology tests. A 4K stitch technology test (where two side-by-side 4K camera images are 'stitched together' live to generate a continuous shot of the entire pitch) and a next generation player tracking system test were successfully conducted, with footage from each sent back to Nyon for evaluation.

All angles covered

UEFA.com's team of reporters provided in-depth web coverage and media services for the final tournament

Football lovers had no problem staying up to date with events in the Czech Republic thanks to UEFA's comprehensive media output. Whether it was by clicking on to UEFA.com, accessing social media and mobile platforms, or leafing through the official tournament programme, fans seeking information about the U21 EURO had no shortage of options.

With its team of on-site reporters, UEFA.com provided extensive coverage in seven languages, drawing 1.25 million unique visitors – with 1.8m visits and over 6.9m page views – over the course of the event. After full coverage of the qualifying phase – including a report of every match on the UEFA website – the editorial team had the task of producing the final tournament programme, which featured interviews with players past and present along with analysis of the competing sides. In addition, UEFA.com prepared the in-depth press kits available to journalists before every fixture in the Czech Republic, full of facts and figures and details about the squads and match officials.

The matches themselves provided the main focus of UEFA.com's coverage of the finals, with minute-by-minute commentaries, match galleries, match reports, and player and coach reaction. UEFA.com's reporters – including speakers of Czech, German, Italian, Portuguese and Serbian/Croatian – were also responsible for conducting post-match flash interviews for the live world television feed, while website users could access highlights of every game – as well as on UEFA.tv on YouTube.

As well as the matches themselves, UEFA.com attended every pre-match press conference and carried out a series of exclusive sit-down interviews. Further insight and colour came from a series of video features – including a day in the life of a referee and team crossbar challenges – as well as exclusive behind-the-scenes photographs on matchdays.

Content on the tournament Facebook page reached 50 million people

The tournament also had a strong presence on social media, with official pages on Twitter and Facebook engaging millions of fans. Pavel Nedvěd answered questions from @UEFAUnder21 users in #AskNedved, while tweets were viewed more than 23m times, with 172,000 mentions of the official hashtag, #U21EURO.

The official tournament Facebook page now caters for 1.37 million followers after attracting over 35,000 new likes, while content reached over 50 million people worldwide. Coverage on Facebook, which included live press conference and match updates, also induced 3m engagements (likes, comments and shares).

Website users could also join in the official Under-21 fantasy football and predictor games, while those living in territories where rights for the tournament had not been sold had the additional bonus of free live streaming for every game.

Portugal's Ricardo in a post-match flash interview



172k



mentions of the official hashtag #U21EURO

3m

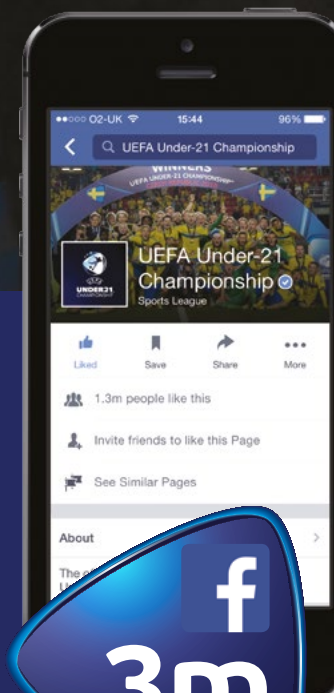
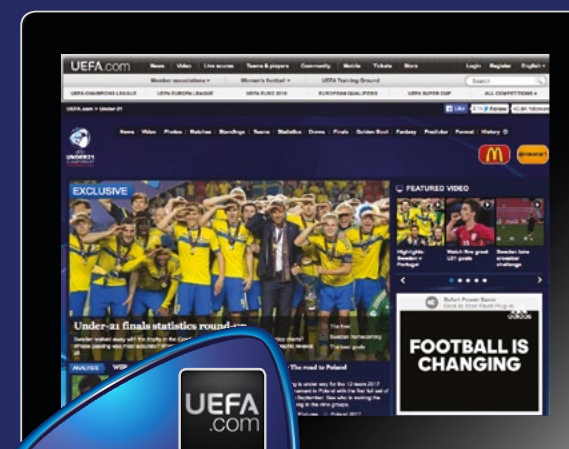


likes, comments and shares

1.25m



unique visitors during the tournament



Main event

Tournament ambassador Pavel Nedvěd played a key role in creating a buzz in his home country.



The trophy on display before the final



Pavel Nedvěd on duty at the draw

The 2015 UEFA European Under-21 Championship final tournament had the backing of the biggest name to come out of Czech football in recent decades: Pavel Nedvěd, the 2003 European Footballer of the Year. Nedvěd, the former Juventus and Czech Republic midfielder, was at the forefront of the promotional effort.

The event ambassador ran a section of the Prague half-marathon wearing a U21 EURO T-shirt and his appearance in an award-winning TV ad for the competition provided great publicity.

He attended almost the whole tournament, but Pavel Nedvěd was not the only high-profile Czech football personality to play his part

In fact, it was the most successful social media clip ever created by the Football Association of the Czech Republic (FAČR). The light-hearted commercial showed Nedvěd undergoing plastic surgery in order to look young enough to play in the tournament and it appeared not just on Czech television but also on the big screens in the stadiums before games.

Nedvěd was alongside the UEFA President, Michel Platini, at the finals draw on 6 November 2014 and Petr Fousek, the tournament director, praised the way he embraced his role thereafter. "He attended almost the whole tournament," said Mr Fousek of Nedvěd's involvement, though he was not the only high-profile Czech football personality to play his part.

Petr Čech, the national team goalkeeper, was another prominent supporter and offered his memories of winning the 2002 event in an interview in the official tournament programme. Elsewhere, Vratislav Lokvenc joined Nedvěd in running the Prague half-marathon while the trophy tour

Clockwise from top left: fan zone information in Uherske Hradiste; a tram in Olomouc; two happy spectators show off their tickets



organised by the FAČR had the support of other famous names. Antonín Panenka – hero of Czechoslovakia's 1976 UEFA European Championship triumph – was involved, along with Pavel Horváth, Zdeněk Grygera, Lukáš Zelenka and Michal Pospíšil, as the U21 EURO trophy was exhibited at club stadiums before Czech First League fixtures, including the big Prague derby between AC Sparta Praha and SK Slavia Praha.

The Czech U21 coach, Jakub Dovalil, appeared with international referee Pavel Královec at an event at Wenceslas Square, meanwhile, and if that took place in the heart of the capital, the rest of the country was not forgotten as the FAČR arranged a publicity drive at its youth tournaments, with promotional materials and tickets widely distributed.

National television played its part, too, by broadcasting profiles of the Czech U21 players and then giving the squad's pre-finals training camp in Austria a level of coverage normally reserved for the senior team.

The prominent signage in the host cities served to reinforce the message – at Prague's Václav Havel Airport, for instance, there were tournament banners greeting new arrivals as they left the building and such notices were visible on the streets of Olomouc and Uherske Hradiste also. Given the publicity drive, it was no surprise when hundreds of fans turned up for the Czech squad's autograph-signing session at the Ďolíček Stadium in Prague on the eve of the finals – an indication of the high expectations created.



High media interest

The 2015 UEFA European Under-21 Championship final tournament attracted plenty of media interest – a fact underlined by the presence of around 300 accredited press and media representatives at the event in the Czech Republic. This number included 121 members of the written press and 89 photographers. Additionally, there were 57 website reporters at the tournament and 19 TV reporters. Overall, UEFA received media accreditation requests from 21 different countries in the lead-up to the finals; the highest number came from the Czech Republic, followed by Germany and England.



Stand out

The distinctive competition identity caught the eye

The UEFA European Under-21 Championship's status as a competition of quality and prestige is reflected by its strong brand identity. The distinctive blue and white logo was used in the build-up to the tournament – on posters and flyers – with the name of the host country and year (Czech Republic 2015) appearing at the bottom in red. This was the primary visual element of the brand identity and it featured on all branding – from city signage (such as lamp post flags) to backdrops in the stadiums to the tournament homepage on UEFA.com.

UEFA provided its broadcast partners with a variety of branding elements to ensure a consistent look, from the brand source file – to create studio backdrops, or promotional campaigns – to sponsor backdrops allowing for a seamless visual transition between the presenters at the stadium and the studio back home. Additionally in the Czech Republic there were also specific host city logos, which combined the official tournament logo with the host city name.

Clockwise from top: England's Jack Butland; the finalists take the field; the stage is set; the competition identity



Perfect souvenir

adidas produced tournament-themed merchandise sold by Intersport at grounds



Thanks to the combined efforts of adidas and Intersport, fans at the 2015 UEFA European Under-21 Championship final tournament were able to buy official merchandise unique to the event.

adidas, known for its innovative and high-quality products, created a bespoke apparel collection for the tournament. In line with the trend towards more functional sportswear items, adidas included products from its popular Climalite range, the new fabric that sweeps away moisture.

The event-themed clothing included T-shirts and polo shirts, as well as caps and scarves along with a range of U21 balls, from the top-of-the-range match ball to the replica ball and mini-ball.

Intersport, a global expert in sports retail, ensured that spectators at the stadiums had easy access to these

products by setting up strategically located merchandising outlets at all four venues. These outlets were open before, during and after matches.

Football fans unable to attend the games were also able to pick up souvenirs of the event elsewhere, as adidas and Intersport installed specific U21 corners in their shops in Prague and Olomouc from which they sold the licensed products.



Destination Poland



A new expanded final tournament gives the 2017 hosts even more to look forward to



Poland fans turned out in their thousands to support their team at UEFA EURO 2012 (top); the opening ceremony for the 2015 UEFA Europa League final (above)

The next UEFA European Under-21 Championship finals in Poland are already guaranteed to create history. After a run of eight final tournaments featuring eight teams, the 2017 edition will comprise 12 sides – split into three groups of four – following UEFA’s decision to expand the competition.

It will also be another opportunity for Poland to showcase its ability to organise major football events, the Poles having already proved fine hosts. After staging the U19 final round in 2006, they co-hosted UEFA EURO 2012 with Ukraine, while Warsaw was the venue for this year’s UEFA Europa League final between Sevilla FC and FC Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk. For the Polish Football Federation (PZPN), which sent a fact-finding delegation to the Czech Republic, the challenge now is to build on these experiences at the 2017 U21 EURO.

Certainly there will be no shortage of exciting local talent on display, with 18-year-old Jagiellonia Białystok goalkeeper Bartłomiej Drągowski already making waves after being voted best goalkeeper and discovery of the year by his fellow Ekstraklasa players.

The PZPN will involve a greater number of venues than it did at UEFA EURO 2012 – when Gdansk, Poznan, Warsaw and Wroclaw staged matches. At the time of writing, the Polish governing body had proposed Warsaw, Gdynia, Bydgoszcz, Kielce, Lublin, Tychy and Krakow as venues; whatever the final selection, the aim is to ensure a broad geographical spread, with games to be played up on the north coast and in cities in the south and east of Poland. It will be the biggest U21 tournament yet with 21 matches and plenty of action for football lovers across Poland.



UEFA
UNDER21
CHAMPIONSHIP
CZECH REPUBLIC 2015

Roll of honour

2015	Sweden
2013	Spain
2011	Spain
2009	Germany
2007	Netherlands
2006	Netherlands
2004	Italy
2002	Czech Republic
2000	Italy
1998	Spain
1996	Italy
1994	Italy
1992	Italy
1990	USSR
1988	France
1986	Spain
1984	England
1982	England
1980	USSR
1978	Yugoslavia

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