

THE TECHNICIAN

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The Trials and
Tribulations
of the Technical
Area

Interview:
Sir Alex Ferguson

Referee
Education

A Night
at the Nou Camp

From Eight
to Twelve

The Year
in Words



NEWSLETTER
FOR COACHES

No 42
MAY 2009



IMPRESSIONUM

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PRODUCTION

André Vieli
Dominique Maurer
Atema Communication SA
Printed by Artgraphic Cavin SA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Hélène Fors

COVER

The Netherlands' coach, Bert van Marwijk, gives instructions from the technical zone during a World Cup qualifier. The Netherlands have won their first five matches and are ideally placed to qualify for the final tournament in South Africa.

(Photo: Getty Images)



Germany's coach, Joachim Löw, congratulates Marcell Jansen as he crosses the technical zone on leaving the pitch.

THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF THE TECHNICAL AREA

EDITORIAL

BY ANDY ROXBURGH,
UEFA TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

It has taken a long time but, finally, coaches have the use of a technical area and the authority to work freely within that defined zone. In the United Kingdom, during the black-and-white days of the 1920s, Aberdeen FC created a pitch side dugout (i.e. a trainers' bench) – an early attempt to let the coach communicate directly with his players during the game. But for decades, in the big stadiums, it was a case of the boss being seated and out of earshot.

Fast forward to the late 1980s and, in some tournaments, a gentleman's agreement came into play which allowed the coach to stand beside the bench, *à la* Beckenbauer. But sometimes this was a recipe for conflict between the coach and letter-of-the-law officials, because the arrangement was open to individual interpretation. The International FA Board (IFAB) finally brought order to the situation by introducing the technical area in 1994, but the trials and tribulations were not over.

An issue of contention remained. According to the Laws of the Game, the coach had to return to the bench after giving touchline instructions. A moment of pause while the coach tried to analyse the flow of the game often resulted in the fourth official breaking into policeman mode, resulting in antagonism. The disturbing, image-damaging incident at EURO 2008, when Austria's Josef Hicklberger and Germany's Joachim Löw were both dismissed from the bench following an altercation with the fourth official magnified the problem. Without debating the rights and wrongs of that particular case, it was clear that something had to be done to minimise the agitation.

The IFAB, at its 123rd annual general meeting in February of this year, decided it was time to remove the contentious part of the text. The board's press release spelled it out: "In order to avoid unnecessary conflicts between fourth officials and

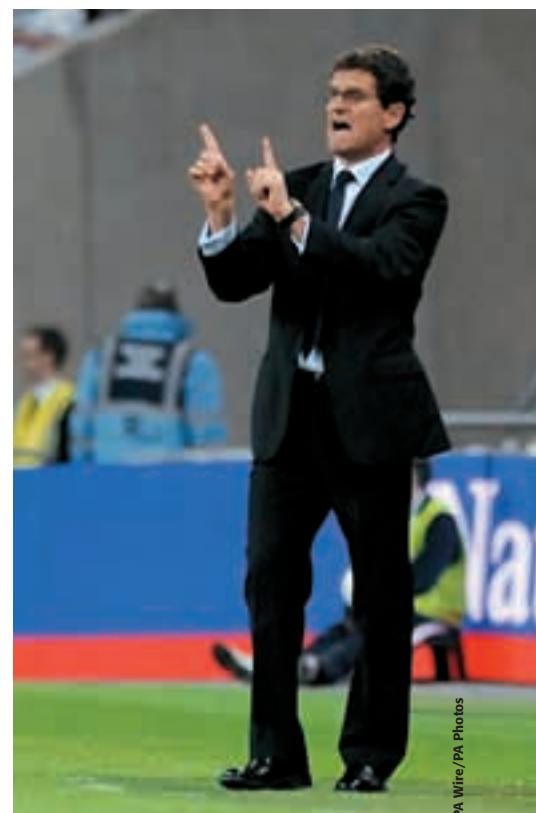
coaches, or other occupants of the technical area, the board agreed that, provided they behave in a responsible manner, one person will be permitted to remain in the technical area and no longer be required to return to their position on the bench after conveying tactical instructions."

The coach's desire to work freely in the technical area was finally recognised and accepted. But with freedom comes responsibility. The new directive is not a mandate for technical-area mayhem, and coaches who lose control will still face the consequences. However, those who impersonate a jack-in-the-box or park themselves at the front of the area will have no problem as long as they do not become abusive and provocative. When Martin O'Neill of Aston Villa FC jumps up and down, it is a manifestation of his boundless energy and enthusiasm. When FC Internazionale Milano's José Mourinho stands in splendid isolation, like the conductor of an orchestra, as he did in dramatic fashion during the recent UEFA Champions League match at Old Trafford, he offends no one. And when Italy's Marcello Lippi strikes a Hollywood pose (the late Paul Newman comes to mind), he simply adds a touch of class to the proceedings. The coach's style and the effect of his instructions are part of the game, but if technicians undermine the authority of the referee and his assistants they damage football's image and run the risk of expulsion.

The technical area is the domain of the coach, a place where he can plan his next move, relate to his staff, and communicate with the substitutes who can influence the match outcome. What a coach does from this place of influence can make a difference. Think of Sir Alex Ferguson's intervention during the second half of last season's UEFA Champions League final in Moscow, when he changed Manchester United FC's shape to mirror Chelsea FC's 4-3-3 and, in doing so, altered the momentum of the match. It was a move which ultimately led to victory for United (albeit following a penalty shootout). Or recall the 1997 UEFA Champions League final when BV Borussia Dortmund's Ottmar Hitzfeld made the decision, after only 15 minutes, to switch midfielder Paul Lambert into a man-for-man marking role against

Zinédine Zidane, thus nullifying the Juventus playmaker and creating the conditions for his team's ultimate success. Two good examples of decisive decisions communicated from the technical area.

By altering the text relating to the technical area, the IFAB has taken a common sense approach and shown respect for technicians and the role that they play in today's football. It has been a lengthy, sometimes painful, process for the coach's job and working conditions on the touchline to be acknowledged and recognised in a tangible way. The technical area, when used properly, adds an important, positive dimension to the game. We have come a long way since the introduction of the trainers' bench at Aberdeen FC – let's hope that the coach's new-found freedom will reduce conflict and increase professional composure on the touchline. Fundamentally, football is a game for players. But coaches can make a significant contribution to individual and team success – at the training ground, in the dressing room, and from the technical area.



Fabio Capello in expressive mode in the technical zone.

INTERVIEW

BY ANDY ROXBURGH,
UEFA TECHNICAL DIRECTOR



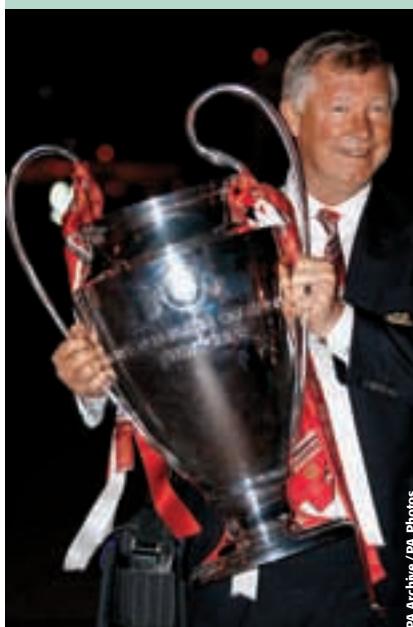
A triumphant procession through Aberdeen after the Scottish side's victory over Real Madrid in the final of the 1983 European Cup Winners' Cup.

JUST OVER 30 YEARS AGO, ALEX FERGUSON BECAME HEAD COACH OF ABERDEEN FC IN SCOTLAND AND, SOON AFTER HIS APPOINTMENT, APPEARED ON TV DECLARING HIS INTENTION TO WIN A EUROPEAN TROPHY WITH ABERDEEN FC AND ANY SUBSEQUENT CLUB HE MIGHT JOIN. HE SET A TARGET AND HAS HIT THE BULL'S EYE FOUR TIMES (SO FAR) – ONCE WITH ABERDEEN FC AND THREE TIMES WITH MANCHESTER UNITED FC. THE UEFA CUP WINNERS' CUP WAS WON IN 1983 WHEN THE DONS BEAT REAL MADRID CF IN THE FINAL. EIGHT YEARS LATER, ALEX'S RED DEVILS' OVERCAME FC BARCELONA IN THE SAME COMPETITION. HE WENT ON TO WIN THE UEFA SUPER CUP ON BOTH OCCASIONS, JUST FOR GOOD MEASURE. THEN THE ULTIMATE PRIZE: THE UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE WAS WON IN 1999 (V FC BAYERN MÜNCHEN) AND AGAIN IN 2008 (V CHELSEA FC). THE EUROPEAN/SOUTH AMERICAN CUP – THE INTERCONTINENTAL CUP TO MANY FANS – AND THE FIFA WORLD CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP WERE ADDED TO THE COLLECTION IN 1999 AND 2008. ALEX FERGUSON'S RECORD IN DOMESTIC FOOTBALL IS REMARKABLE (10 PREMIER LEAGUE TITLES, 3 SCOTTISH LEAGUE TITLES, AND 21 CUP TRIUMPHS ON EITHER SIDE OF THE BORDER), BUT IT IS HIS SUCCESS IN EUROPE THAT PROVIDES THE ICING ON THE CAKE. UEFA COACH OF THE YEAR IN 1999 AND THE CURRENT HONORARY LEADER OF UEFA'S COACHES CIRCLE, HE IS AN ICON OF EUROPEAN CLUB FOOTBALL, A SUPERSTAR OF THE TECHNICAL AREA. HE IS...

SIR ALEX FERGUSON

1 • It is over 25 years since you first won a European trophy, how have the ingredients for success changed in that time?

Well, they have certainly changed in terms of the back-up required, particularly in the area of sports science. Medical information, nutrition and preparation of players for top-level games have reached another level. What has not altered, in our case, is the insistence that players train to a high standard – we have always aimed for 100% quality. I have never changed that approach because, in my opinion, what we do on the training pitch transfers to the matchday. We never allow lazy training sessions. For me, the training is an opportunity for players to express themselves as professionals. Players who don't commit themselves at training can have a negative impact on the others and things then deteriorate into a shambles – then you are not a real



Sir Alex Ferguson with the UEFA Champions League trophy won by Manchester United in 2008.

football club. Also, at Manchester United FC and Aberdeen FC we have always had a great team spirit. You don't get perfection, and today with an increase in the number of egotistical players making it more demanding, it can be difficult for many managers. The intrusion of agents and player representatives means that some players don't have the same personal responsibility as their counterparts of 20 or 30 years ago. For example, back then they all booked their own holidays, today this is not always the case. One big change, of course, is the increase in the number of major stars required to compete at the top level. We now have 18 nationalities in our club and this is a development that I could not have predicted when I started out in management. We have reached a situation where I have two full-time scouts in Brazil, one in Argentina, others in Germany, France, etc.

**SIR ALEX FERGUSON'S FIRST
UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE TROPHY, AFTER MANCHESTER UNITED
BEAT BAYERN MÜNCHEN IN BARCELONA IN 1999.**



Sir Alex Ferguson and the legendary Sir Matt Busby after United's victory in the 1991 European Cup Winners' Cup final.



Empics Sport/PA Photos

vates them above everyone else – this is apart from their outstanding ability. But as we were saying earlier, one of the biggest changes in the game in recent years is the increase in the speed of transition. A lot of counter-attacking is different today, unlike the old classic Italian style of the 1960s when the ball was played long to an individual attacker that might get a 1 v 1 in a big space. Now players flood forward from midfield and from full-back positions, making it four or five supporting the fast break. This group counter-attacking has definitely been a big change in the game.

3 • What does it take to be a top player in European football today?

There are some players, such as Kaká, Messi and Ronaldo who are innately gifted. But this is not enough, and there is a practice element which becomes very important. If you watch Cristiano Ronaldo, he practises after every squad training session, and quite a few others do the same. As a coach, we dedicate parts of the training to improving touch, movement, passing and speed of play, but the special quality, the detail, depends on the player being willing to sacrifice himself after training – this is a hallmark of the great players. If the big talents only rely on their natural ability, they won't have that extra edge. They must do something extra on their own.

I have people all over the place, and this is an indication of how powerful the Premier League has become and how we have developed as a football club. For us it is a global business. This has been good for me, because I'm dealing with different cultures and I find that very interesting from a management point of view. It is simply not possible to be parochial any more.

2 • From a tactical point of view, what are the main developments you have seen in the UEFA Champions League during the last ten years?

The speed of the transitional play is definitely quicker now. In addition, the coaching qualities have improved, and through sports science and technology

you are able to examine your opponents more thoroughly. We can get the running times and stats on every player we play against. This is phenomenal information for any coach – we explore every detail and can analyse everything we need to know. This has had an impact on tactical operations. But the one thing that never changes is your hope that you can find a Cristiano Ronaldo or a Lionel Messi – players who can change the game with their solo actions and counter the tactical impact of all the coaches. Trying to stop players like Messi is quite a challenge, because there are always moments in the game when he drives at you with the ball and you say: "Oh no, here we go again." All the great players, like Lionel Messi, have an element of courage that ele-

4 • How would you compare the UEFA Champions League with the European Championship or World Cup?

Some of the World Cup final tournaments, and even one or two of the EUROS, have been a little disappointing. The last great World Cup was in 1986 in Mexico when Argentina beat Germany 3-2 in the final. There has not been anything to compare since then. Yes, some will say that today it is much harder to play against most national teams – and that general standards have improved. But then when you look at the UEFA Champions League and see the quality – many of the games have been absolutely fantastic. We are talking about real top games. Our match with



SIR ALEX FERGUSON GIVES INSTRUCTIONS TO WAYNE ROONEY.

Chelsea FC was one of the most competitive UEFA Champions League finals in recent years. Of course, we happily forget one or two of the finals 20 years ago when the games were negative and finished with a penalty shootout after a cautious 0-0. But think of the Liverpool FC v AC Milan 3-3 game – what kind of drama was that? Or Manchester United FC v FC Bayern München with two goals in injury time to win the trophy. There are many good games at the World Cup, but in general the quality in the big UEFA Champions League games is, in my view, higher. But then I have only been to two World Cup final matches. Firstly, in 1998 when France demolished Brazil when all the talk was about the problems surrounding Ronaldo and the impact they had on Zagallo's team. However, I must say that I found the last final, France v Italy, engrossing from a tactical point of view. It was a match of high intensity, and the decision by Marcello Lippi in the second half to go to three midfield players was decisive because it stabilised Italy at a time when France was beginning to overrun them. In answer to the initial question, I think that, overall, the UEFA Champions League is hard

to beat when it comes to consistency, quality and drama. The World Cup, of course, is every four years, and big changes always take place with the departure of many players and coaches and continuity then suffers.

5 • What are the main difficulties that a club faces by being involved in European competition?

The main difficulty is the preparation. Because we are involved in such an intense domestic league, with constant demands and fixture congestion, we have limited amounts of time to prepare for the UEFA Champions League matches. However, there are no real handicaps. For example, I think the refereeing standards have improved – there is a better respect between the referees and the players. The organisation is very good and there is rarely an issue in this aspect. The only thing that sometimes concerns me is in the stadium when we train the night before the match, because there are too many people around and you can't do much serious work. The TV cameras go after 15 minutes but you still can't guarantee privacy. When you play on Saturday, rest Sunday and are scheduled to play

away on Tuesday in the UEFA Champions League, you only have the Monday session at the opponent's ground and you don't know who is watching you. It is hard to overcome that problem.

6 • Do you change your match preparations for European nights?

We don't do any serious tactical work, as I said, due to time and venue constraints. It is more about recovery and talking them into the game. We always stick to UK time, no matter where we go. The day of the game is a bit elongated and the time difference doesn't help. So we get the players up at around 10am and do a mobility session, often using fun and music. Then there is the video analysis before lunch. Only then do I pick the team for that night's match.

7 • Are you happy with the away-goals rule?

I don't think we worry about this as much as we did 20 years ago. Because of the speed and effectiveness of counterattacking, it is not such a disadvantage to play away from home as it once was. I don't worry too much about this, but the away goal is, of course, nice to have. Make no mistake, it is an advantage to have it when you are away from home, but it is not a weight round my neck because the rule is there. I don't think it needs to be changed, because that little incentive does stop teams parking around their own penalty box throughout an away match.

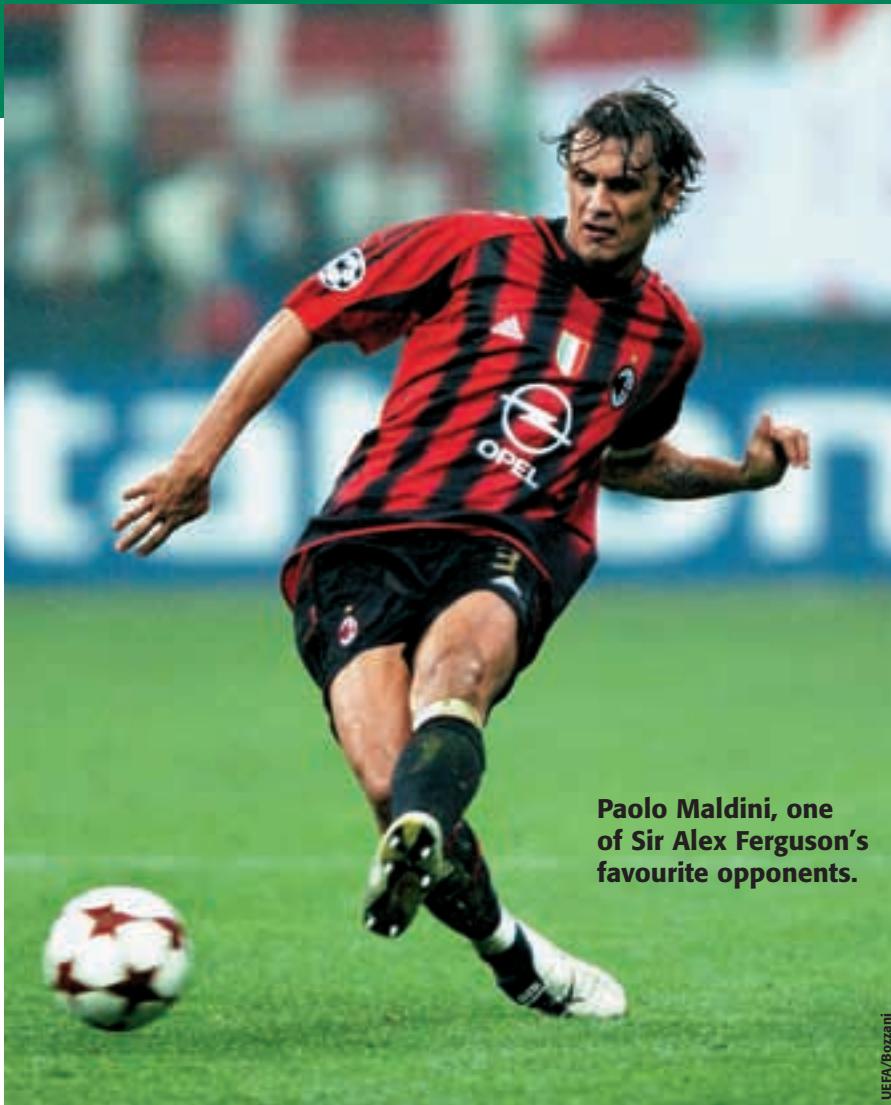
8 • In recent years in the UEFA Champions League, there has been a drop in number of goals from free kicks – is that chance or are there reasons?

The only reason I can think of is lack of practice. As I have already indicated, Cristiano Ronaldo practises free kicks constantly and the evidence is there because he nearly always hits the target. People talk about the ball moving a lot but it has done that for the past two decades, so I don't think the ball is a major factor. The distance between the wall and the ball is not to blame because the referees are generally



Alan Smith scores Manchester United's second goal in their high-scoring win against AS Roma in the 2006/07 UEFA Champions League.

**SIR ALEX FERGUSON
AND MARCELLO LIPPI.**



Paolo Maldini, one of Sir Alex Ferguson's favourite opponents.

doing their job. No, for me, it has more to do with practice and chance.

9 • What are the biggest differences between the domestic game and the UEFA Champions League?

The difference in the preparation and the atmosphere in the stadiums are the two main factors. Just think of the crowds at Old Trafford, the Nou Camp, San Siro or the Bernabeu on a UEFA Champions League night and you will know what I am talking about. We had 84,000 in Milan on our last visit and the atmosphere was electric – you get a tingle on such nights. It is also to do with the floodlights, the occasion, and the special competition between football cultures. The Premier League is fantastic and very competitive, but some of the games can be less than thrilling. In the UEFA Champions League most matches are exciting, dramatic and top-level. It is a Champions League, not just a cup competition, and the

current format is the best arrangement for this contest among elite club sides.

10 • Which match would you describe as your "best ever" in Europe?

Without a doubt, the 7-1 victory over AS Roma at Old Trafford in the quarter-final of the 2006/07 UEFA Champions League was the best – it was a record score for the UEFA Champions League quarter-finals. We went into that game against a top Italian side that had beaten us 2-1 in the first leg. Our first-half performance in front of our own supporters was out of this world, and Luciano Spalletti's team were shell-shocked because our quick, one-touch play was exceptionally good. Some of our goals were brilliant, in particular the fluid, one-touch play leading to the strike by Alan Smith. That game certainly stands out. As does the 3-3 draw away to FC Barcelona which could have ended up 20-20 the way both teams attacked. Some games reflect



Ellis/AFP/Getty Images

the history of the clubs, and that was a good example. You don't forget those wonderful, special nights.

11 • What are the best and the worst aspects of coaching in European competitions?

The best, without question, is being on the big stage with all the great coaches in Europe, such as Marcello Lippi, Ottmar Hitzfeld, Carlo Ancelotti – strangely I never came up against Fabio Capello. I remember being in Turin and Signor Lippi was on the bench – wearing a black leather coat and smoking a small cigar, smooth and calm, while I was a worker in a tracksuit being drowned in the pouring rain – not much difference! To match yourself against the top coaches and to compete in all the great European stadiums is really marvellous. That is the magic of European football – the UEFA Champions League has provided me with the opportunity to realise my boyhood dreams. Surprisingly AFC Ajax is the only big gun that I have never faced in Europe. The worst part is the exhausting media work after the game – as many as six TV interviews plus a big press conference. We are still working long after the players have washed and dressed.

12 • Since the start of the UEFA Champions League, which two or three opposition players have impressed you most?

When I think of the current generation, Lionel Messi is top-level and, although he has never really taken my breath away, Kaká has impressed. Zinédine Zidane was brilliant but, without a doubt, Paolo Maldini has been my favourite opposition player during my time as a Champions League coach – he has a wonderful presence, competitive spirit, athleticism, and although not the world's greatest technically, he has influenced all the AC Milan teams during his wonderfully successful era – a truly marvellous player.



**HUGH DALLAS AT
THE UEFA REFEREE COURSE IN
MALAGA IN FEBRUARY.**

REFEREE EDUCATION

HOW MUCH DO MATCH OFFICIALS KNOW ABOUT COACH EDUCATION? AND HOW MUCH DO THE TECHNICIANS KNOW ABOUT THE EDUCATION OF MATCH OFFICIALS?

Relationships between the two form one of the game's perennial talking points. And it's an issue that UEFA has been – and is – addressing. There has been a proactive approach to encouraging contacts and interaction. For example, former international referee Hugh Dallas, now a member of UEFA's Referees Committee, was invited to attend the post-EURO 2008

National Team Coaches Conference. And he took that experience to two refereeing events recently staged in Málaga and Cannes.

The former was the annual event at which an educational course for new international referees is dovetailed with the re-education of top officials at the Advanced Course for Elite and Premier Referees. "They are different educational events," Hugh Dallas comments, "because we know the top referees inside out while the newcomers are the ones who really need our assistance in making the big leap from domestic to international football."

The parallels with coach education start with the belief that the aim is not to myopically focus on tests and examinations but to develop good technicians and referees. For example, fitness assessments are now based on a series of six 40-metre runs in a maximum time of 6.2 seconds plus a minimum of 20 high-tempo 150-metre runs in 30 seconds, with a 50-metre, 35-second recovery time between runs. In other words, tests are geared much more closely to match conditions than the long-distance runs of yesteryear and complaints that "he couldn't keep up with play" have been consigned to the history books. The same applies to knowledge of English. The new international referees didn't sit down in Málaga to do a written exam. Assessments were based on much more helpful dialogue focusing on areas such as family life, business interests, training schedules

or sporting preferences. "This is of much greater value to both parties," Hugh Dallas remarks, "because UEFA needs to get to know them and they want to get to know UEFA."

"We also paid attention to psychological factors," he adds. "It's essential to be prepared to cope with pressure, disappointment, criticism and analysis by other people – and self-analysis as well." The comments might equally be applied to a coach education course...

Further similarities were highlighted when UEFA's technical director, Andy Roxburgh, conducted a session where the core issue was the importance of leadership qualities. "This was fascinating and of great value," Hugh Dallas commented afterwards. "He made us realise how much referees can learn from experienced coaches. We acknowledge that it's difficult for active coaches to dedicate time to us, but we can benefit a huge amount from greater contact with those who, at some point in time, are not working at the coal face, as we say. It doesn't take a genius to point out that coaching and refereeing are different. For example, we can't sign referees – we have to develop them! But there are certainly points in common."

Coaches and referees play roles in an intensely competitive sport which is subject to exhaustive public scrutiny. They have to be equipped to deal with crises, stress and big egos. They have

Hugh Dallas in action when he refereed in the Scottish Premier League.



**HUGH DALLAS AT UEFA'S
NATIONAL COACHES CONFERENCE
IN VIENNA LAST SEPTEMBER.**



Giving explanations to the French Under-17s at the final round of their 2007/08 European championship.

to be prepared to take risks and big decisions. In other words, knowledge and talent may be important, but they are not necessarily enough. Personality counts – especially in an era where the leader's position and decisions are readily challenged.

The referee, like the technician, captains a team. The latter leads his back-room staff, the former his assistants and a fourth official. Performances are assessed – by a referee observer or by a president or board of directors sat in the main stand. Responsibility has to be assumed. Every member of the team needs to have clearly defined obligations and areas of accountability have to be established. Communication is a key element. Clear messages must be transmitted. The referee, like the coach, needs to sense the right moments for praise, criticism or silence. But he needs to create a mood of confidence and optimism, and he has to motivate by setting attainable targets. Team spirit has to be built.

Like the coach, the referee requires 'emotional intelligence' based on self-awareness, self-confidence, self-motivation and self-control. "Refereeing a match is like riding a horse," says Hugh Dallas. "You need flexibility allied to control."

On the agenda in Málaga was 'top-quality player management' – an item which is by no means alien to coach education courses. It could even be argued that it is a more powerful weapon in the refereeing armoury. The coach will frequently refrain from debriefing his players immediately after a match when adrenalin is still pumping. The referee, on the other hand, is *obliged* to deal with the players while their pulse rates are hitting the ceiling. Authority, character, credibility, energy and the various types of control therefore take on paramount importance. Anybody who thinks that knowledge of the Laws of the Game is the be-all and end-all for a top referee is as naïve as the person who thinks that the ability to kick a ball is enough for a player who takes a penalty in a UEFA Champions League final shootout.

In Málaga, in consequence, special attention was paid to the big decisions. "If you're aiming at the top," said Hugh Dallas, "you have to be strong and courageous. This is why, in Málaga, we had sessions devoted to vital judgments in the penalty area and the correct evaluation of physical challenges. We have to prepare referees to handle incidents correctly and to act positively when it comes to holding and blocking in the box. Sometimes it's a question of

adjusting positioning and making sure the players are aware of your presence in the box. Sometimes it's a question of being courageous. And we have evidence of referees becoming more courageous in this sort of situation."

It was also stressed that courage and leadership qualities needed to be applied to protecting the image of the game – an area where respect is the key word and where cooperation with coaches is more than relevant. "We looked at cases of dissent, confrontation and ongoing feuds between players which can often be more easily spotted by the assistants than by the referee, as they tend to go on behind his back," Hugh Dallas explains. "Again, man-management skills are important. The coach has to manage the dressing room; we have to manage the game."

Hugh is currently relishing his educational role as a member of the UEFA Referees Committee. But the 'educator' on site at matches is the referee observer – and there has been activity on this front in recent months. "We don't want the observer to be a passive presence, just marking the referee. We want the observer to be proactive with regard to the uniform interpretation of the laws – and we want the observers themselves to have uniform criteria in the messages they transmit to the referees on site and to take uniform criteria into their national associations and make sure they go right down to the grassroots game. That's why we got the observers together for a special course in Cannes and, just prior to that, I was at a course in Manchester for ten new observers."

While the meeting in Cannes was in progress, UEFA's Executive Committee approved seven more applications to join the UEFA Referee Convention, with the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Malta, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Slovakia and Sweden bringing the total number of signatories – in just three years – to 20, with a further 30 applications currently being reviewed. Referee education is on the move.



CLAUDE PUEL, THE OLYMPIQUE LYONNAIS COACH, WITH HIS PLAYERS ON THE PITCH AT THE NOU CAMP.

A NIGHT AT THE NOU CAMP

WHEN LIONEL MESSI BROKE INTO THE OLYMPIQUE LYONNAIS BOX, PLAYED A WALL PASS WITH SAMUEL ETO’O AND SIDE-FOOTED INTO THE NET TO MAKE IT 3-0 FOR FC BARCELONA IN THE 40TH MINUTE, CLAUDE PUEL, DIRECTING OPERATIONS FROM THE OL BENCH, BRIEFLY LOWERED HEAD TO HANDS. WHEN ETO’O PUT THE HOME TEAM FOUR AHEAD THREE MINUTES LATER, THE HEAD STAYED THERE A BIT LONGER. WITHIN SECONDS, HOWEVER, JEAN MAKOUN THREW A LIFELINE BY HEADING HOME A CORNER.

As the teams headed for the dressing rooms at the Nou Camp, it's a debatable point whether Claude or his Barça counterpart Josep 'Pep' Guardiola had the easier of the two team talks. It's also a rhetorical point. Let's face it, when offered a choice between leading or trailing 4-1 at half-time – least of all in the first knockout round of the UEFA Champions League – anyone expressing a preference for the latter would probably be referred for psychiatric treatment.

The Pep talk was about sustaining the high tempo and maintaining concentra-

tion. Claude's message was quite clear. In tactical terms, he reshaped his formation, fielding anchor midfielder, Jérémie Toulalan, at right-back in place of François Clerc and sending on Mathieu Bodmer as the cutting edge of a midfield diamond. In psychological terms, his message was about the importance of scoring a goal that might sow the seeds of doubt among the home players and provoke the fear-of-losing syndrome. He wanted his players to believe in their chances – and he led by example. Claude and his assistants Patrick Collot, Robert Duverne and Joël Bats, 'played' the second half with passion and commitment. He leapt up to punch the air when Juninho made it 4-2 just three minutes into the second half and urged his team forward in search of a 4-3 which would have stretched Catalan nerves to the limit.

Both coaches had made a calm start to the game, coaching from

the edge of the technical area with hands on hips or in pockets. During the second half, the temperature rose. Pep repeatedly gestured to his players to use the width and revert to the combination play which had put them four goals ahead. Claude energetically conveyed the belief that the mission impossible was possible. In the event, an added-time counter allowed Barça sub Seydou Keita to round the keeper and seal a 5-2 win.

The players had offered a worldwide audience 90 minutes of high-tempo, thrilling football. But, for the two coaches, the match had lasted days.

After an uncharacteristically lean spell of two draws and two defeats, Barça had recorded a reassuringly spectacular 2-0 home win on the previous Saturday. For the Wednesday date with OL, Pep Guardiola was keen to keep the players on their toes by shaking up the pre-match routine. The Tuesday training session was moved from afternoon to morning and, after the lunchtime pre-match press conference and the announcement of a 22-man squad, the players went home. At seven, they were back at the stadium to board the team bus and, for the first time, headed for a magnificent hotel offering stunning views across the city from



Claude Puel watches his captain, Juninho, leave the pitch after being shown the red card.



**Josep Guardiola,
coach of
FC Barcelona.**

Getty Images

the Tibidabo mountain. During the afternoon, Pep attempted to relax – but found it difficult. He enjoys reading but “by the time I get to the second page, I’m already seeing wingers and full-backs instead of words”. Having already spent time with his backroom staff in preparing the pre-match DVDs, he used the afternoon to mentally prepare for team selection, for the tactical approach to the game and the messages he felt he needed to transmit to the players.

For Claude Puel, the Wednesday match had started in the early hours of Sunday. After a 2-0 league defeat by LOSC Lille at the Stade de France, the squad left Paris to fly back to Lyon at 00.30. On arrival at the stadium, the players headed home. Not Claude. He stayed up with

BARCELONA PLAYERS SALUTE THE CROWD AFTER QUALIFYING FOR THE CHAMPIONS LEAGUE QUARTER-FINALS.



his backroom staff to prepare the 20-minute summary which highlighted the good and the bad from the previous match. He put his key in the door at home sometime between three and four in the morning.

The squad was in for training at 11.00; Claude was there to greet them. The session was accompanied by debriefings for players and staff. Then, at lunchtime, the media. And, finally, a chance to draw breath.

By 09.00 on Monday, Claude was back at the training ground for a meeting with his backroom team and to go through the DVD on Barça which would kick-start the players’ preparations. At lunchtime, more media activities were followed by discussions on the logistics of the trip to Barcelona and preparation for the afternoon training session. The squad reviewed their performance against Lille at 15.00, trained at 15.45 and headed for the airport at 17.30. Three hours later, they were having dinner at the hotel in Barcelona and Claude was preparing the match in his mind.

By 10.00 on the Tuesday morning, he was gleaning information from the local press and casting a watchful eye at the DVD of Barcelona’s Saturday match. Lunch and dinner were pretexts to run through the details with his staff and, between the two meals, the team had visited the stadium for the pre-match press conference and an intensive, hi-tempo training session on the pitch.

For Pep, one of the priorities on match-day was to prevent the players from being infected by boredom. For him, however, there was no risk. Immediately after breakfast, he was preparing the words to match the DVD he would show the players at 11.00. Then back to the stadium for a light session of fun training followed by another video dedicated to set plays. After lunch back at the hotel, he sat down his technical staff to select images for the final pre-match DVD. The team talk was the prelude to departure from the hotel

and, at the stadium, there was a final video review before the players went out to salute the crowd and warm-up at 20.10.

There was a moment when Claude wondered whether his players would have time for a proper warm-up. The route from the hotel to the Nou Camp ran the team bus into a traffic jam which even the police escort couldn’t get them out of. Mobiles started to smoke and adrenalin started pumping. In the event, OL reached the stadium just over an hour before kick-off.

During the day, Claude had announced which 18 of the 21-man expedition would appear on the team sheet. The opposition had been analysed in words and images during an hour-long meeting before lunch – and the key images from the 1-1 draw in Lyon in the first leg were reviewed. Immediately before departure to the stadium, Claude got the players together again to go through set plays and to underline the vital elements of the game plan. In the dressing room, there was individual guidance and group motivation for the big game.

The rest, as they say, is history. After the match, Pep and Claude were required to deliver the (important) messages in front of the TV interview backdrops and at the press conference. Pep, totally drained, was able to head home. The OL expedition left Barcelona airport at 01.15 with Claude, mindful of Arsène Wenger’s comments about the difficulties in remotivating players after the trauma of UEFA Champions League elimination, was already preparing for the next league match at home to AJ Auxerre which, incidentally, was lost.

For the fans, it had been another memorable night at the Nou Camp. For the two technicians who had previously been opponents as players when Barça met AS Monaco in the 1993/94 UEFA Champions League, the 90 minutes of football had been four days of hard work.



Cello/Bougaerts/Getty Images

GERMANY V DENMARK
AT THE ALGARVE CUP IN MARCH.

FROM EIGHT TO TWELVE

IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, TWO EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS WILL BE PLAYED – AND, RESULTS APART, BOTH REPRESENT A FASCINATING STEP FORWARD. WHEN THE WOMEN'S EURO 2009 KICKS OFF IN FINLAND IN AUGUST AND THE BALL STARTS ROLLING AT THE 2010 EUROPEAN FUTSAL CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL ROUND IN HUNGARY NEXT JANUARY, THERE'LL BE A DOZEN TEAMS ON EACH STARTING GRID, AS OPPOSED TO THE EIGHT OF THE PAST.

The transition is important. In the men's senior game, the EURO 2008 field featured four teams who had not been at EURO 2004. In futsal and in the women's game, a much clearer pecking order has been established. Serious development programmes

have been set in motion in other countries and the 'emerging nations' are offering ever more serious opposition to the powers that be.

In the women's game, the eight teams who played EURO 2005 in England have qualified once again. So the expansion to twelve finalists has offered opportunities for Iceland, the Netherlands, Russia and Ukraine to measure themselves against the best. It has to be said that the women's fixture list offers similar opportunities to the emerging nations via high-profile international tournaments like the Algarve Cup and the Cyprus Cup. In futsal, these options are fewer and farther between.

The expansion of the final tournament therefore gains in relevance. The starting list for Hungary features seven of the eight teams which disputed the European title in Porto in 2007. The Hungarian hosts will be among the newcomers, but chances to compete with the best at a high-profile, televised final tournament will also be offered to Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium and Slovenia.

'Competing with the best' is no exaggeration. Europe provided three semi-finalists at the World Cup played in Brazil at the end of last year – though the hosts took the title by beating

Spain 4-3 in a penalty shootout after a 2-2 draw. Interestingly, the Brazilian squad, with an average age of 30.7, was the most experienced in the competition and contained three players plying their trade in the Spanish professional league. The Italian team which defeated Russia to take the bronze medal had no fewer than seven. This means that, in Hungary, Spain will be defending their European crown amid concerns about the opportunities currently being given to home grown players.

The expansion of the final tournament to twelve teams offers educational experience to a wider range of technicians – especially as some of the major powers have different hands at the helm. José Venancio, who took control of the Spanish futsal team just before EURO 2007, remains in charge. But Alessandro Nuccorini has stepped away from the Italian team after 12 years, handing over to Roberto Menichelli, his assistant since 1999. Oleg Ivanov has parted company with the Russian team, handing over to Sergey Skorovich who, just as José Venancio had done in 2007, combines national team duties with the post of head coach to Viz-Sinara Ekaterinburg, who defended their UEFA Futsal Cup title on home soil at the end of April. It means that Portugal's Orlando Duarte and Ukraine's Gennadiy Lysenchuk are



D. Aquilina

Albania and Georgia meet in a European Futsal Championship qualifier.

VIC HERMANS, NATIONAL FUTSAL COACH FOR THE NETHERLANDS.



Keystone/ANP/Ermindo Armino

the most experienced campaigners, along with Tomas Neumann, who led the Czech Republic into the 2007 finals. In Hungary, eight of the dozen coaches will be gaining their first experience at the finals of a European championship.

They are relishing the opportunity. Belarus coach Valeri Dosko sums up years of frustration by commenting: "This is a reward for 15 years of hard work. It was tough to finish so many times as runners-up in our qualifying groups and not go to the finals." Belgium's Benny Meurs rates qualification for the European Championship final round an outstanding success – and not just in playing terms. "Qualifying is hugely important for futsal development in Belgium and for outdoor football as well, because our sport can be an excellent development programme," he comments. "We hosted a qualifying mini-tournament and it was fantastic for our team to play in front of a crowd of around 2,500, many of whom had never seen the sport before. A lot of people said they found it exciting and would come again."

This was one of the debating points to arise from a World Cup where the goalscoring average registered a seemingly healthy increase from 5.93 at the 2004 finals to 6.91 in 2008. But the figures are misleadingly distorted by the fact that the debutants from the Solomon Islands conceded 69 goals in their three games – including a record 31-2 defeat by Russia. The 20-team finals featured a second group stage where the average fell to 5.75 and, in the knockout games which decided the tournament, it dropped even further to 4.5. Hence a degree of concern about ways of maintaining futsal's reputation as a fast, spectacular, free-scoring sport.

In Brazil, there was no questioning the tempo of the game. The general feeling was that, in recent years, fitness training has been upgraded to such an extent that it begins to affect the technicians'

strategy. Higher fitness levels allow teams to adopt a pressure-play approach instead of passive defence when the situation demands it. On the other hand, the counterattacking philosophy which has, traditionally, been one of the salient features of various national teams has been affected by faster transitions from attack to defence. In other words, futsal teams, like their outdoor counterparts, are realising the importance of 'countering the counter'. Counterattacks with numerical advantage are increasingly rare and coaches are now having to pay increased attention to ways of achieving positional rather than numerical advantage and coaching players to operate in various roles rather than a single one.

The role of the goalkeeper is also under scrutiny. Now that the Laws of the Game allow the keeper to play the ball directly into the opponent's half, there is a tendency for opposing teams to drop back when the keeper is in possession rather than distort their defensive shape by pressuring. The keeper therefore feels free to advance towards the halfway line and act as a fulcrum for spells of potentially boring and frustrating possession play. This trend tends to be more visible as a stalling tactic

when teams are taking on theoretically superior opposition.

The Netherlands' national coach, Vic Hermans, who was in Brazil and at the final round 2007 as a member of the Technical Team, also expresses personal misgivings. "I find it difficult to accept that the futsal laws differ from the outdoor game in one special respect," he observes. "In futsal, a player who brings down from behind an opponent who is through one-on-one against the goalkeeper is only yellow-carded. Can that be right? And, in my personal opinion, the sliding tackle should be outlawed. Not only is it potentially dangerous but it also disrupts the game. If you look at incidents involving the sliding tackle, you'll see that they all too often end up with play coming to halt because they have to come on with the mop to clean the floor. We want futsal to carry on being a really fast game, so we have to continually look at the things which slow it down and try to find solutions."

In other words, it seems that there'll be no shortage of talking points when the first 12-team European Futsal Championship finals kick off in Hungary next January.



Almeida/AFP/Getty Images

Brazil v Spain in the 2008 Futsal World Cup final.



UEFA-Pjwoods.ch

UEFA'S TECHNICAL REPORTS FOR 2008.

THE YEAR IN WORDS

**WHO WON THE EUROPEAN UNDER-19 CHAMPIONSHIP
IN 2008? WHO WON THE UNDER-17S? WHICH TEAMS TOOK THE
GOLD MEDALS IN THE EQUIVALENT TOURNAMENTS FOR GIRLS?
IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT,
YOU'LL MAYBE KNOW THE ANSWERS. IF NOT, THEY CAN ALWAYS
BE FOUND AFTER A FEW CLICKS ON UEFA.COM.**

But UEFA's approach to its own competitions is to offer much more than a list of winners. For the technician, it's much more helpful to have views on how the tournaments were played, how games were won, drawn and lost, and to have a permanent statistical record, along with team analysis and points for discussion. It's a service that UEFA is happy to provide – and it's nice to hear that it's appreciated by the technicians. Lars Lagerbäck, for example, is probably unaware of the quiet satisfaction he generated during an interview at EURO 2008. "The Swedish FA used to send people to these events to compile our own technical reports," he said. "But these days, the ones produced

by UEFA are so good that we don't spend money on that any more." Thanks Lars!

UEFA's range of technical reports not only covers major events such as EURO 2008 but also provides permanent records of youth development competitions which, otherwise, might pass unrecorded into history. So there is statistical coverage of facets such as the roles and minutes played by each squad member. The data are blended with observations made by qualified eyes, in the form of a résumé of each team's key features and a number of debating points which arise during the tournament. During 2008, for example, there were some thought-provoking

comments on aspects such as team formations, the modus operandi of the lone striker, the exploitation of crosses (were enough players being thrown into the box to meet them?), the effectiveness of long-range shooting, trends in real playing time, the need to play football from the back (qualities to coach in defenders?), and, in the lower age groups, the need for career management or the tendency to select youngsters born in January or February rather than end-of-year players.

The technical reports vary in substance according to their target groups but the prime objective is to detect trends – especially those which might influence football development programmes.

The first job for the annual report on the UEFA Champions League is to provoke debate when the leading technicians get together at the UEFA Elite Club Coaches Forum at the beginning of each season – and many of the discussions have given rise to changes. The report on EURO 2008 became a working tool at the post-event National Team Coaches Conference in Vienna last September.

In 2009, a full range of technical reports will be produced by Andy Roxburgh and his teams of technical observers. In addition to the annual report on the UEFA Champions League, there will be publications dedicated to the European Under-21 Championship finals to be played in Sweden in June and to the UEFA Women's EURO 2009 to be staged in Finland during August and early September.

However, there will be modifications to the reports on the youth development competitions which will be completed in forthcoming months. Technical reports on the European Under-17 and Under-19 finals, to be played in Germany and Ukraine respectively, will be edited into a single report and the same will apply to the girls' competitions staged in Switzerland and Belarus. In other words, there will now be technical coverage, for the first time, of the Women's Under-17 finals to go with the reports on the Under-19s which have been published in recent years.

Although the technical reports can, in the course of time, be found by the general public on uefa.com, the prime target group is you – the technician. Feedback is therefore more than welcome – and it doesn't have to be of the Lars Lagerbäck variety...



D.Aquilina

France v Republic of Ireland in a European Under-19 Championship qualifier.



TRAINING ROUTINE

BY DAVID MOYES
Head Coach of Everton FC

Encourage Short / Quick Switch of Play

Practice 1

General Setup

- Pitch dimensions depend on the number of players.
- It works best using six, seven, eight or nine-a-side.
- Both teams can score a goal in any of the three goals.



Key Points

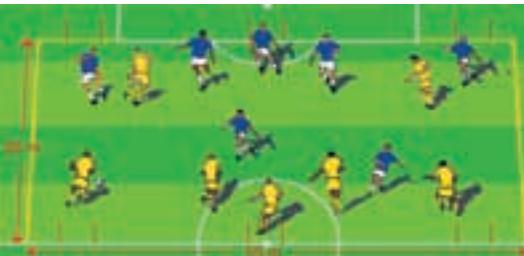
- Look to switch the play or look for forward, angled passes.
- Team in possession should try to receive the ball in between the opposing players.
- If you cannot score – keep possession!

Practice 2 – Progression 1

General Setup

As above, but...

- Neither team can score in a goal that the 'sweeper' is protecting.



Key Points

As above, but...

- Team in possession need to get their heads up to identify where the 'sweeper' is in order to eliminate him.
- This should encourage quicker movement off the ball.

Practice 3 – Progression 2

Focus on Offence or Defence depending on the Coach's Requirements

General Setup

- Yellow team can score a goal in any of the three goals.
- Yellow team cannot score in a goal that the 'sweeper' is protecting.
- Blue team attack the one full-size goal.



Key Points

- As above.
- Encourage positive attacking play (with an outcome).
- Switches, shots, crosses, one-twos.
- Defenders can shoot if goals are unguarded.

AGENDA

2009

May 6 – 18

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

May 16 / 23

- UEFA Women's Cup Final (2 legs)

May 20

- UEFA Cup Final (Istanbul)

May 27

- UEFA Champions League Final (Rome)

June 15 – 22

- UEFA Regions Cup Final Tournament (Croatia)

June 15 – 29

- European Under-21 Championship – Final Tournament (Sweden)

June 22 – 25

- 2nd European Women's Under-17 Championship Final Tournament (Nyon)

July 13 – 25

- 8th European Women's Under-19 Championship Final Tournament (Belarus)

July 21 – August 2

- 8th European Under-19 Championship Final Tournament (Ukraine)

August 23 – September 10

- Women's EURO 2009 (Finland)

Yellow Team

- Build from back.
- Eliminate the sweeper through quick ball movement.

Blue Team

- Shape and position without the ball.
- Pressing from the front, if applicable.

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