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Photos: UEFA-P. Piwozdsch

Message of the president

Zero tolerance of violence

Violence may not be inherent in football, but it does, unfortunately, tend to stick to it like a parasite that it cannot get rid of.

At both European and national level, numerous steps have been taken to eradicate this scourge from the stadiums, especially since the Heysel tragedy. However, when the measures taken leave the troublemakers with nowhere to vent their aggression inside the stadium confines, the violence spills out into the neighbouring streets. The lower divisions, and even youth football, are not immune either.

To counter these acts of violence, in whatever form they take, football's leaders absolutely need the help of the public authorities, which is why we are doing everything we can to ensure effective cooperation with and between police forces throughout Europe.

Even if it cannot overcome violence single-handed, football does have full responsibility for its own area of activity. In this respect, as far as the behaviour of players, coaches and club officials goes, there is no excuse whatsoever for seeing players fighting on the field, club officials tolerating racism in their stadiums, or coaches creating a climate of hatred by making inflammatory statements. Football is not war, nor is it a battle. It is not a matter of life or death. There are no "groups of death" in the competitions, and stadiums should not be "hellholes". Any act of violence, cheating and contempt must be punished with the utmost severity. There is no room for tolerance of such behaviour.

Respecting the principles of the opponent, accepting that losing is part of the game, and creating a festive atmosphere in the stadiums will certainly not be enough to dissuade the hardcore troublemakers who use football as a pretext for their antisocial behaviour.

But for everyone involved in our game, impeccable behaviour is more than a need: it is a duty.



Michel Platini
UEFA President

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COVER

Germany (Christoph Metzelder, in white) took an important step towards a place at EURO 2008 by beating one of their toughest opponents, the Czech Republic (Milan Baros) in March.

Photo: Klamar/AFP/Getty Images

European Club Forum

The club competitions under the spotlight



UEFA-piwoods.ch

THE FIRST MEETING THIS YEAR OF THE EUROPEAN CLUB FORUM, WHICH HAD BEEN POSTPONED FROM THE BEGINNING OF FEBRUARY, TOOK PLACE ON 19 AND 20 MARCH AT UEFA HEADQUARTERS IN NYON. THE MEETING, CHAIRED BY KARL-HEINZ RUMMENIGGE, BROUGHT TOGETHER REPRESENTATIVES FROM FOUR-FIFTHS OF THE 102 MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY BODY, WHICH IS MADE UP OF THE CLUBS INVOLVED IN THE UEFA COMPETITIONS.

"The football family has for too long been torn apart by internal squabbles, and these rifts have allowed outsiders to 'move the goalposts'. This has simply got to stop," stressed the president of UEFA, Michel Platini, in his welcome address. He therefore called for unity, which builds strength and is achieved by respect: "If we respect each other, then football will be respected," he assured the delegates, before going on to present the Professional Football Strategy Council, which the representa-

tives of the national associations will be invited to incorporate into the UEFA statutes at the confederation's tenth extraordinary congress in Zurich in May. This body is intended to be an expanded version of the European Professional Football Strategy Forum, which met in January, bolstered by the addition of players' representatives and representatives of the players' union, FIFPro; the original forum comprised the UEFA vice-presidents and club and league representatives. Each delegation would be

entitled to four representatives, making up a body of 16 members, chaired by the first vice-president of UEFA. Social dialogue, problems surrounding the football calendar and any other subject linked to professional football in Europe would pass before this body in an attempt to reach a consensus before the matter was submitted to the Executive Committee, which would obviously consider the recommendations and proposals of the council closely during its decision-making process.

Club competitions 2009-2012

The structure of the UEFA club competitions for the period 2009-2012 was one of the major topics on the agenda of the meeting. The participants heard the thoughts of a working group composed of representatives of national



Karl-Heinz Rummenigge (centre), chairman of the European Club Forum, in conversation with club representatives.



The participants showed their interest by their active involvement.

associations, leagues and clubs, and assisted by specialist agencies commissioned to research and study the three areas of the working group: the competition formats, marketing and revenue distribution. The group considered several variants and options before formulating a set of recommendations which were discussed by the European Club Forum in four groups set up according to UEFA's national association coefficients.

The proposal to keep the UEFA Champions' League in its current format met with unanimous approval, but there were some differences of opinion on the issue of whether the current qualifying system should be kept or replaced by a different format. There was also widespread support from the club delegates for a UEFA Cup that included a group phase consisting of 48 teams divided into 12 groups of four. But once again, there

was some disagreement on the proposed format of the qualifying system for this competition.

The proposal to include the third qualifying round of the Champions League in the central marketing system met with general disapproval. However, the idea of reserving four dates instead of two for the first knockout round was better received, even though this plan could be bad news for the UEFA Cup.

The proposal to centralise the television rights from the group stage of the latter competition was generally well received. Full centralisation would not occur until the direct knockout rounds.

Access reserved for cup winners alone

On the subject of access to the competitions, the participants largely supported the principle that just the winner of the national cup should be entitled to take part in the UEFA Cup, and under no circumstances the losing finalist. The number of clubs per association in the Champions League

and an increase in the number of national champions taking part in this competition were issues that divided the forum, depending on whether they were in a high coefficient group or not. The same was true of issues linked to the distribution of revenue, where some participants were firmly in support of the current regulations while others wanted to see solidarity payments scaled up in proportion to the rate at which the overall revenue is increasing.

The timeline for the procedure which will lead to the adoption of the format for 2009-2012 having been extended, the consultation period will now last until August, with the Executive Committee not taking a decision until September, by which time the European Club Forum will have met again.

New format for draws

Turning to the immediate future, some proposed amendments to the regulations for the 2007/08 competitions – which still have to be approved by the Executive Committee



The views of the working groups did not always concur.



Animated roundtable discussion

Before chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge could begin to draw conclusions from the forum's two half-day sessions, the results of a round-table really set the meeting alight, provoking numerous contributions from club delegates.



Prof. Egon Franck

"Cost control and salary caps" was the topic, presented first by Egon Franck, a professor from the University of Zurich, who then took on the role of chair of the roundtable and, when necessary, 'devil's advocate'. A general overview was presented of the situation in other sports, most notably in the United States, and some clarifications were necessary, such as to explain that it was not the capping of individual players' salaries which was involved, but of the total salary budget of the clubs, before the debate opened with a somewhat provocative

question: Why, when so many clubs are in financial difficulty, does football continue as the exception and not introduce such measures?

Those who debated the issue concluded that the most obvious reason was the diversity of Europe itself – the large number of member states and the differences between them that mean that a euro is not quite worth the same in every country because taxes and charges vary from one place to the next. Between the more liberal supporters of a system in which the clubs regulate themselves and those who could happily countenance a ceiling proportional to sporting revenue, it is also necessary to remember those clubs with annual budgets of less than a quarter of a million euros a year, who would be forced to cease operations if they had to limit their salary budget to a fixed percentage of their revenue.

Seen in this light, many see the club licensing system as an appropriate and adequate instrument for achieving the financial stability necessary for competitions to work properly, even if it does not go as far as to constitute perfect equality in means and therefore chances. The discussion also brought to light the problems caused by tycoon owners with whole books of blank cheques, who can be at the same time a source of discouragement for good managers and an incitement to massive investment, leading to debt. Such agonies are not just reserved for the most ambitious clubs, but can also affect those seeking to avoid relegation at all costs.

Should the revenue distribution system be reviewed? How can the downward investment-debt spiral be avoided? Should the regulations be tightened? Or should separate competitions even be organised for clubs that are less well off? So many questions to which the roundtable did not try to offer answers, but which will be debated again in the future.



Photos: UEFA/philwoods.ch

were presented to the club representatives. Among them, a new format for the quarter-final draw of the Champions League, under which teams would be seeded according to the results of matches in the same campaign – from the group phase and the first knockout round. A victory in any of these matches would be worth two points and a draw one point, with the four highest-scoring teams according to this principle becoming the four seeds. The format for the semi-finals would also be arranged to make it impossible for the best two teams of the season to meet each other before the final. In this way, each game would assume added importance.

The forum also supported the recommendations of a working group that has been looking into the sale of new media rights. Technological developments and digital convergence have rendered obsolete the division of sales by types of transmission (TV, internet, mobile telephony, and so on), and the working group therefore favoured a time-based approach.

Various other topics rounded off the meeting. There was an update on the installation of the Football Administration and Management Environment (FAME) IT platform, which will soon replace the extranet network of the club forum. The meeting was also informed of the range of possibilities offered by a computer tracking system that records such statistical data as the speed of the ball, distance, and even tactical information, and constitutes both an addition to the packages offered by television service providers and a useful aid to a better understanding of the game. Finally, information was provided about initiatives launched by the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of Europe in parallel with the Independent European Sport Review.

Peter Lawwell (Celtic FC), David Dein (Arsenal FC), Karl-Heinz Rummenigge (FC Bayern Munich), Ferran Soriano (FC Barcelona), Ernesto Paolillo (FC Internazionale) and Prof. Egon Franck participated in the roundtable.



Leonardo/AFP/Getty Images
Portugal struck hard against Belgium but can still improve their consistency.



Supinsky/AFP
After reaching the 2006 World Cup quarter-finals, Ukraine (Oleg Gusiev, No. 9) now have their sights set on a place at EURO 2008.

EURO 2008

qualifying groups

Big boys in trouble

THE QUALIFYING CAMPAIGN FOR EURO 2008 IS VIRTUALLY AT THE HALFWAY STAGE. ALMOST ALL THE GROUPS ARE VERY TIGHT AND THERE IS EVERY CHANCE THAT WE WILL WITNESS SOME MAJOR SURPRISES. SO FAR, NONE OF THE FOUR SEMI-FINALISTS FROM LAST YEAR'S WORLD CUP HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY CONVINCING, WHILE OTHER "BIG NATIONS" SUCH AS SPAIN AND ENGLAND HAVE ALSO MADE DISAPPOINTING STARTS. THERE COULD BE AN INTERESTING LINE-UP IN SWITZERLAND AND AUSTRIA IN 15 MONTHS' TIME...

In Group A, the only group with eight teams, four or maybe even five teams are still in with a shout. Portugal, who finished fourth in the 2006 World Cup and reached the EURO 2004 final, are the group favourites. Figo and Pauleta, now retired from the international scene, have been replaced by Cristiano Ronaldo

as the main talisman. His partnership with Quaresma, supported by Tiago, can produce wonders, as they showed against Belgium (4-0). But the Portuguese are inconsistent: they have drawn twice and lost in Poland. The Poles, now coached by globetrotter Leo Beenhakker, are on an upward curve. Five consecutive wins have made up for early disappointments against Finland and Serbia, although both these teams are still in contention. Finland coach Roy Hodgson would love to return to Switzerland, where he has fond memories (having qualified for the 1994 World Cup and EURO '96 with the Swiss national team). However, like the Finns (who were beaten in Azerbaijan), the Serbs, who are coached by Spaniard Javier Clemente and slipped up against Kazakhstan, have no more room for error.

Group B: worried finalists

The two finalists of the last World Cup in the same group! Yet neither France nor Italy have set the world alight. With new coach Roberto Donadoni at the helm, the world champions only picked up one point from their first two matches (a home draw against Lithuania and defeat in France). The Italians failed to qualify for the European Championship that followed their previous World Cup victory (1982). However, their recent progress might mean that lightning does not strike twice. France, now without Zidane but with



Oseledko/AFP
Kazakhstan (Maxim Zhalmagambetov, No. 4, in an aerial challenge with Serbia's Nikola Zigic) scored their first goals at home and won their first European Championship qualifying match.

several experienced players still available (Vieira, Thuram, Henry, etc.), made their task more complicated by losing in Scotland. Team coach Raymond Domenech is under no illusions. *"It is going to be a fight between four teams right to the end, just like in the World Cup qualifiers,"* he said. Two years ago, France, Switzerland, the Republic of Ireland and Israel could not be split until the very last round of matches. This time, Ukraine, World Cup quarter-finalists who have so far only lost to Italy in the EURO 2008 qualifiers, complete the quartet of hopefults.

Group C: exile at an end

This is the only group that already appears done and dusted. Turkey, who finished third in the 2002 World Cup, and Greece, reigning European champions, have opened



Messini/AFP/Getty Images
Turkey (Mehmet Aurelio, No. 7) bagged a clear win in Greece, but the reigning European champions are still in with a good chance to defend their title in 2008.

up a considerable gap at the top. Fatih Terim's men are calling the shots thanks to their convincing 4-1 victory in Greece, but nearly put their foot in it a few days later. Trailing 2-0 to Norway, they only avoided defeat because of two incredible errors by their opponents. Another reason for the Turks to be optimistic is the fact that they will be able to play in front of their home crowd again against Hungary on 12 September. Their match against Norway, played in Frankfurt, was the third and final time they will have to play behind closed doors following the suspension imposed by FIFA because of the serious incidents that occurred after the match against Switzerland in November 2005. As for Greece, in spite of their lapse against Turkey, they have shown that



Croatia's Luka Modric breaks free from his opponents against FYR Macedonia.



Adrian Mutu, a key force in a solid Romanian side.



Hasenstein/Bongarts/Getty Images

they have not lost the realism and defensive strength that enabled them to lift the trophy in Portugal. Rehhagel's men have won three of their four victories by the smallest of margins (1-0).

Group D: Germany maintain form

Germany are continuing where they left off in "their" World Cup, in which they finished third. Continuity is the watchword where the German coaching set-up is concerned, with Jürgen Klinsmann having been replaced by his assistant, Joachim Löw. Apart from a slip-up in Cyprus (1-1), the "Mannschaft" has performed convincingly and boasts the best attack and fourth best defence (behind Russia, England and the Netherlands) of the 50 teams involved in the qualifying competition! Rarely used by Bayern until Hitzfeld arrived, Podolski continues to shine for the national team (7 goals, making him the group's top scorer). Moreover, Kevin Kuranyi, who was not selected for the World Cup, made an astonishing return, scoring both German goals in the summit meeting in the Czech Republic (2-1). Despite this defeat and even though Nedved and Poborsky have retired from international football, the Czechs, EURO 2004 semi-finalists, remain favourites to take second place. However, their Slovak neighbours and the Republic of Ireland are not out of the running yet.

Group E: England in difficulty

Croatia have come to terms with their World Cup disappointment. New coach Slaven Bilic (who was still a player not so long ago) has brought in some youngsters and attacking duo Eduardo and Petric are performing wonders. After beating Israel and England and drawing in Russia, the Balkan team are the new group favourites. England are having real problems and will find it especially difficult to qualify now that Russia appear to have found a certain degree of stability with the arrival of Guus Hiddink. As his past World Cup record shows (with the Netherlands in 1998, South Korea in 2002 and Australia in 2006), the Dutchman rarely fails. Highly promising

goalkeeper Igor Akinfeev (21) has only conceded a solitary goal in the whole qualifying campaign. Nobody has a better record.

Group F: flying Healy

Spain and Sweden were the favourites in this group, with Denmark a serious outsider. Then Northern Ireland came along. Thanks to David Healy (27), the British side has defeated the Spaniards as well as Lagerbäck's men. With nine goals, the Leeds striker, whose



club is battling to avoid relegation to the third division in England, is the top scorer in the qualifying competition! After a horrendous start, Spain recorded two wins in March, although they were hardly convincing. Despite losing in Spain, Denmark – who had to play with ten men for 70 minutes after a player was sent off – are also still in with a chance. A 1-0 friendly win in Germany on 27 March proved that Morten Olsen's outfit are full of confidence. Another noteworthy result was Liechtenstein's second ever win in European Championship qualifiers, achieved with former Swiss national coach Hans-Peter Zaugg at the helm. After losing in Vaduz, Latvia – who reached the final round of EURO 2004 – will have a new coach in June after Jurijs Andrejevs' resignation.

Group G: three teams unbeaten

The absence of Van Nistelrooy, frozen out by coach Marco van Basten since the World Cup, has not prevented the Netherlands from starting their campaign well. With a few older players around them (Van der Sar, Van Bronckhorst, etc.), the youngsters (Babel, Emanuelson, Sneijder) are making progress. Nevertheless, they do not always put on a good show and qualification is not yet a formality. Indeed, a solid Romanian side, inspired by an in-form Adrian Mutu, avoided

defeat in Holland and is still unbeaten. Bulgaria, coached by former Golden Ball winner Hristo Stoichkov, have also yet to lose. However, the draw at home against Otto Baric's Albania may well count against the 1994 World Cup semi-finalists when it comes to the final reckoning.

Emanuele Saraceno



PA Wires/PA Photos



Table tennis and volleyball have their own champions leagues.



UEFA Champions League

A source of inspiration

**THE SUCCESS OF THE UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE HAS INSPIRED
MANY OTHER SPORTS AND FOOTBALL CONFEDERATIONS TO GO DOWN
THE SAME ROAD, WITH SIMILAR RESULTS.**

"Like many UEFA initiatives, the Champions League is symbolic for us," says Olivier Mottier, executive director of the European Volleyball Confederation (CEV), *"although we are not quite at the same level"*. Volleyball launched its own Champions League in 2000 and created a similar event for women the following year. The Champions League is reserved for league champions and cup winners, with other competitions organised for lower-placed clubs. The number of

participants in the different cups is determined, as in the UEFA competitions, by rankings based on the results of the clubs from each federation. Olivier Mottier explains: *"We have also been inspired by the UEFA club licensing system. Any team wishing to participate in our competitions is sent a 180-page document setting out its rights and obligations. Like UEFA, we have created a standard format for the Champions League, including where broadcasting*

is concerned: each sponsor is therefore guaranteed a presence at 150 matches. Every participating team has to sign a contract with a television channel which will broadcast its matches. This was difficult at the beginning but it is beginning to bear fruit." In fact, the number of men's teams has grown from 16 to 24, while the women's league, which had eight teams at the outset, currently comprises 16 teams and will have 20 next season.

The CEV Champions League starts with a phase involving four groups of six, in which each team faces its opponents twice. The top three in each group progress to a knockout round. The four best teams then dispute the title via the famous *final four*.

The CEV has acquired greater stability thanks to the Champions League. It is also hoping that the media coverage of volleyball will attract more young players and enable it to broaden its membership base over the next five years. Volleyball has a long tradition of European cup competitions. The first such event was held in the 1959/60 season. However, the sport has not developed



The UEFA Champions League: an innovative concept uniting football, the broadcasters and the sponsors.



The handball Champions League continues to evolve.

In Asia and Africa

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has been organising club competitions since 1967, setting up the Champions Clubs' Cup, Cup Winners' Cup and Asian Super Cup. It brought all these competitions together under the umbrella of a new Champions League in 2002/03. Unlike the UEFA Champions League, it is not open to all its member associations, but only the top 15: Iraq, Iran, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Australia, China, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam. Twenty-eight teams are split into seven groups of four. The group winners and the reigning champions contest subsequent rounds by direct elimination.



AFP/AVILES

A spectacular scene in the CAF Champions League match between Mangaspot (Gabon) and JSK Dabo (Algeria).

The AFC organises the President's Cup for emerging football federations. It is also developing a plan, Vision Asia, to support the growth of football in Asia and prevent it splitting into different spheres of interest.

The African Football Confederation (CAF) has also drawn inspiration from the UEFA Champions League. After several preliminary rounds, the remaining eight teams are split into two groups of four. The top two in each group contest the semi-finals. The final is played on a home and away basis, since a match at a neutral venue would not attract enough spectators.

The Arab Champions League was introduced in 2003/04, stemming from the competitions organised for domestic league champions and cup winners of the Arab countries.

P.P.

at an equal rate across Europe. Russian clubs have enjoyed the lion's share of success over the years. Russia, Poland and Italy are the main hotbeds where volleyball is concerned. *"These nations have therefore attracted most attention, leaving other ambitious countries in the shadows. Now, if a club does well and qualifies for the Champions League, it becomes a more attractive proposition. The top players are no longer obliged to move to Italy either."*

Turning to handball...

Handball's Champions League was born in 1993/94, not long after UEFA's version. It has since undergone several reforms. Originally played in two groups of four, then in four groups of four, it has now doubled in size again and comprises eight groups of four clubs. The best teams qualify for the last 16, when they begin two-legged knockout rounds. *"Next season, we are introducing a second group stage. We will be centralising the marketing from the second phase, whereas at the moment we only do that from the first knockout round, apart from the television rights, which we manage from the start of the competition,"* explains Sian Rowland, communications manager of the European Handball Federation (EHF). The EHF Champions League is currently in a pivotal season. Its development, overseen by the company EHF Marketing GmbH, a subsidiary of the EHF, is accelerating. *"It is making a tremendous effort to improve the character of the event. We have also recently introduced certain obligations, such as the need for identical surfaces at all venues. Our competition is clearly benefiting from its name and from the identity that we have created by adhering to a strict regime, applicable*

to all participants. The Champions League is generating significant interest amongst the main European TV stations. These matches must be held at large venues."

...and table tennis

In table tennis, La Villette Charleroi are preparing to contest their seventh successive Champions League final. The sport used to have a Champion Clubs' Cup, which was based on a direct knockout system. However, it drew inspiration from UEFA in 1998/99, launching a Champions League with two groups of four clubs. In 2005/06, the competition doubled in size, with four groups of four. The rest of the tournament is played in a two-legged knockout format. Didier Leroy, technical director of the Belgian Table Tennis Federation, assesses the impact of this Champions League: *"The clubs have structured themselves and become professional. They have to meet various requirements and pay fines if they fail to do so. Eurosport broadcasts the matches from the semi-final stage onwards. Before that, the clubs can count on the local TV stations. We are seeing genuine progress in our sport. There is more media coverage and standards are becoming more even across Europe. At the start, it was just German clubs and La Villette. The number of clubs that qualify from each country depends on their position in the table of national rankings, as in UEFA competitions. Germany and France, for example, can enter several clubs, not just their champions. However, other countries, such as Spain, are emerging. Granada reached the semi-finals and La Villette will be playing an Austrian club in the final."*

Pascale Pierard



Michel Platini and
José Manuel Barroso
exchange views.

Thys/AFP/Getty Images



Report from Brussels Meeting of the presidents

**ON 12 MARCH, BRUSSELS WAS THE SETTING FOR AN EXCEPTIONAL MEETING
BETWEEN UEFA PRESIDENT MICHEL PLATINI AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
PRESIDENT, JOSÉ MANUEL BARROSO. IT WAS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THEM
TO DISCUSS THE GOVERNANCE OF SPORT IN EUROPE AND RAISE A NUMBER OF
ISSUES WHICH UEFA AND ITS MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS ARE CURRENTLY FACING.**

The two presidents expressed their respective viewpoints during a formal meeting and a working lunch before holding a joint press conference.

Both described relations between UEFA and the EU as "excellent" nowadays, and agreed on the need to promote the European model of sport.

White paper

With regard to the Commission white paper on sport, which is

due to be published this summer, the EU president gave assurances that this did not presage the adoption of any Community legislation on sport – which in any case would be impossible. The white paper would simply be a means for the Commission to indicate its position on the subject and, in particular, the way in which Community law should be applied to it – namely, by taking its specificity into account.

According to Mr Barroso, this meant in practice that a balance had

to be found between, on the one hand, the social and educational values of sport and, on the other, the application of the major principles of EU law to its economic aspects. In his view, the growing commercialisation of football and the transformation of some clubs into business entities meant that professional football could not escape EU rules.

As regards the Charleroi case, the European Commission president said that FIFA and UEFA had very strong legal and political arguments and he felt that the balance was more in their favour.

Training of young players

Michel Platini, for his part, expressed his concern regarding the urgent need to place greater emphasis on the training of young players in Europe, saying: "Young players should be trained to play, not to be bought and sold."



A commemorative shirt
for the president of the
European Commission,
pictured with Michel Platini
and two famous names
in European football,
Sir Bobby Charlton and
Marcello Lippi.

Thys/AFP/Getty Images





Youth player training is crucial to the development and future of football.

Rangers FC/PA Photos



The mini-pitch in Saint-Josse.

UEFA

Mini-pitch supported by the European Commission

Since 2004, the year of its golden jubilee, UEFA has been funding the construction of mini-pitches in the territory each of its member associations through the HatTrick programme.

By building mini-pitches in the heart of urban areas, UEFA hopes to help revive the tradition of street football, which used to be so popular, and is providing local communities with excellent facilities in which to play football.

In this context, the Belgian Football Association (URBSFA) and UEFA inaugurated a new mini-pitch on 16 March in the Saint-Josse district of Brussels. This initiative was unusual insofar as it was actively supported by the European Commission, which has recently moved part of its headquarters into this locality.

In Belgium, most of the 40 or so mini-pitches that have been built to date are located in regions and districts where young people form a large proportion of the population. The municipality of Saint-Josse is a good example, since almost half of its 24,000 inhabitants are under 25. Thanks to this newly built mini-pitch, they will all be able to enjoy a sports facility near where they live and play football to their heart's content, since the pitch will not be part of the sporting infrastructure of any particular club.



UEFA

Left to right: Jean Demannez, mayor of the Saint-Josse district of Brussels; Odile Quentin, European Commission director-general for Education and Culture; Michel Sablon, technical director of the Belgian FA; and François de Keersmaecker, president of the Belgian FA.

The official opening of the mini-pitch in Saint-Josse was attended by representatives of the four institutions which funded the project: the municipality of Saint-Josse, the URBSFA, the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission and UEFA. They were all delighted to have been able to contribute to such an initiative and noted that the mini-pitch in Saint-Josse would have a particularly exotic dimension: the population of the municipality is composed of nationals of more than 180 different countries, who all live together peacefully.

More than anyone else, these people have a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate football's potential to promote intercultural dialogue...

José Manuel Barroso agreed that the Bosman ruling had had some "unforeseen" consequences.

Finally, the UEFA president voiced the idea of possible collaboration with the EU in order to step up the fight against scourges such as hooliganism and money laundering – which considerably tarnish the image and values of football.

Opening with a short film tracing the major stages in the building of Europe and the history of European football, the press conference was the occasion for the two presidents to introduce the match scheduled for the following day at Old Trafford between Manchester United and a Europe XI. The gala match was staged to celebrate a double golden jubilee: the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, which laid the foundations of the European Union, and the 50th anniversary of Manchester United's first European campaign.

Marcello Lippi, who won the 2006 World Cup with Italy, then unveiled the list of players selected for the Europe XI, including England team skipper Steven Gerrard, French international goalkeeper Grégory Coupet, and Internazionale Milan's prolific Swedish striker, Zlatan Ibrahimovic.

Following this announcement, Michel Platini presented a commemorative European team shirt with the number 27 to José Manuel Barroso, drawing a round of applause from the gathered media representatives.

Attending as a representative of Manchester United, Sir Bobby Charlton, who in 1966 was part of the England team that won the World Cup as well as being European Footballer of the Year, closed the event with an inspiring message: "Let's be proud of Europe!"



The players and mascots come onto the pitch.
PA Wire/PA Photos



Marcello Lippi and Sir Alex Ferguson: relaxed for this special match.
Ellis/AFP/Getty Images



Henrik Larsson (right): a farewell ovation.
Ellis/AFP/Getty Images

50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome

A Great Night at the Theatre

TUESDAY, 13 MARCH 2007 WAS A DATE TO REMEMBER AT OLD TRAFFORD, A NIGHT WHEN MANCHESTER UNITED FC ENTERTAINED A EUROPE XI COACHED BY WORLD CHAMPION MARCELLO LIPPI AND UEFA'S TECHNICAL DIRECTOR ANDY ROXBURGH IN A CHARITY MATCH AT THE THEATRE OF DREAMS.

The success of the event can be gauged from two figures. The match was watched by a crowd of 74,343 – a record attendance at Old Trafford for a non-competition match – and the game generated £1.2m (some EUR 1.8 million), ensuring that the celebration match would be able to leave a significant legacy in a variety of charity projects coordinated by the Manchester United Foundation. In recognition of the support received from Munich and Belgrade after the 1958 tragedy, revenue from the match was also earmarked for special projects in both cities. Another

heartening figure is that the audience contained some 20,000 children. Each of the adults received, free of charge, a 116-page souvenir match programme produced by UEFA.

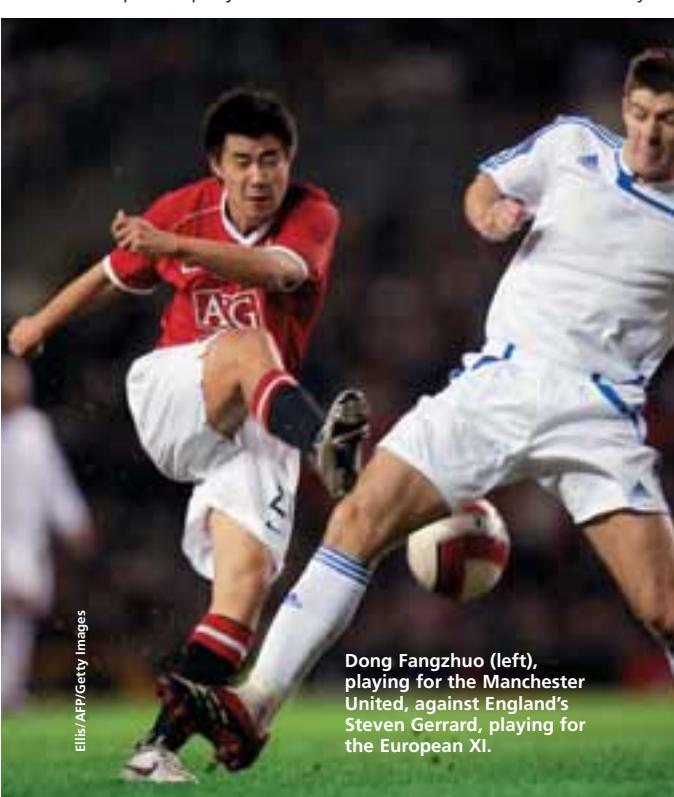
For once, United did not have to worry about whether they won or lost. Their role was to host a very special occasion and they performed the role to perfection. The European Commission travelled to Old Trafford to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome – and went home very happy about the way they had done it. UEFA supported the event by helping to organise it and by selecting the Europe XI, greatly appreciating the level of support by the clubs and players who helped to make the event a great success watched by millions of viewers all over Europe.

It is legitimate to talk about an 'event' rather than a match. Prior to kick-off, United told their European story in pictures, projecting on giant screens installed in the stands specially for the occasion, images which progressed from black-and-white into colour as history unfolded. To bring the images to life, names from United's past walked

on to the Old Trafford turf, starting with Sir Matt Busby's son Sandy and continuing with Bill Foulkes and Brian Kidd to relive the magical moments of the 1968 win against SL Benfica; Denis Irwin from the team that won the 1991 European Cup Winners' Cup; Brian McClair, scorer of the goal that won the UEFA Super Cup a few months later; and Ole Gunnar Solskjær, whose last-gasp winner clinched the dramatic UEFA Champions League victory in 1999. During the half-time interval, the story was continued by "Busby Babes" Wilf McGuinness and Sir Bobby Charlton, while David Beckham, distraught by the knee injury which ruled him out of the game, went onto the pitch to say goodbye to the fans who had made his years at Old Trafford "the best of my career".

Before the game, Michel Platini and José Manuel Barroso, the presidents of UEFA and the European Commission respectively, received commemorative figurines from Sir Bobby Charlton and from United's chief executive, David Gill, along with editions of the club's Opus books which measure a square metre and weigh something approaching 40 kilos. The players also received a commemorative gift box and UEFA was presented with a cheque for £25,000 for Terre des Hommes, an organisation dedicated to the welfare of children.

The celebration match itself was all about exuberant football: moments of stunning individual brilliance, great camaraderie during a game played with such fairness that German referee Markus Merk was able to keep his cards in his pocket, and seven goals. Henrik Larsson earned himself a standing ovation as he said goodbye to the United fans wearing the Europe XI captain's armband – just one of many emotional moments on a special night at the Theatre of Dreams.



Dong Fangzhuo (left), playing for the Manchester United, against England's Steven Gerrard, playing for the European XI.
Ellis/AFP/Getty Images

Manchester United – Europe XI 4-3 (4-1)
Wayne Rooney (2), Wes Brown, Cristiano Ronaldo for Manchester Utd; Florent Malouda, El-Hadji Diouf (2) for Europe.



An extraordinary meeting of the UEFA Executive Committee.



Meetings and other activities

Preparation of the tenth extraordinary congress

WHY REVISE THE UEFA STATUTES THIS SPRING, WHEN A FULLY REVISED VERSION IS DUE TO BE PRESENTED TO THE CONGRESS IN KIEV AT THE BEGINNING OF NEXT YEAR?

The answer to this question lies in the change of UEFA president. In his electoral campaign, Michel Platini clearly stated that he wished to be an "executive president" while, at the same time, strengthening the authority of the elected representatives of the national associations. Since the majority of those same representatives placed their confidence in him in Düsseldorf, the UEFA statutes now have to take account of the wishes of the new UEFA president.

This was the main business on the agenda of the extraordinary Executive Committee meeting convened on 26 March at UEFA's headquarters in Nyon. Although the amendments are being kept to a strict minimum, no fewer than 30 articles are still affected. During its meeting, the Executive Committee therefore examined the amendments proposed by a working group chaired by vice-president Geoffrey Thompson, in order to decide on the text that would be presented to the national associations' delegates at an extraordinary UEFA Congress in Zurich on 28 May.

The articles in question concern, in particular, the UEFA organs (the president replaces the chief executive as an organ), the composition of the Executive Committee (with the abolition of co-opted members but an increase in the number of members from 13 to 15, an amendment which would, however, not come into effect until 2009), the duties of the Executive Committee, the powers of the president, the duties of

the general secretary (who replaces the chief executive) and the committees.

More committees

On the subject of the committees, two of the proposed amendments signal a return to the situation that existed before the FORCE project and the subsequent amendment of the statutes at the congress in 2000, in that the committees would again be directly associated with the Executive Committee and, in principle, chaired by its members. The number of committees would also increase (from 11 to 19), to allow a better balance and synergy with the FIFA committees. The number of members in each committee would, moreover, not be defined in the statutes.

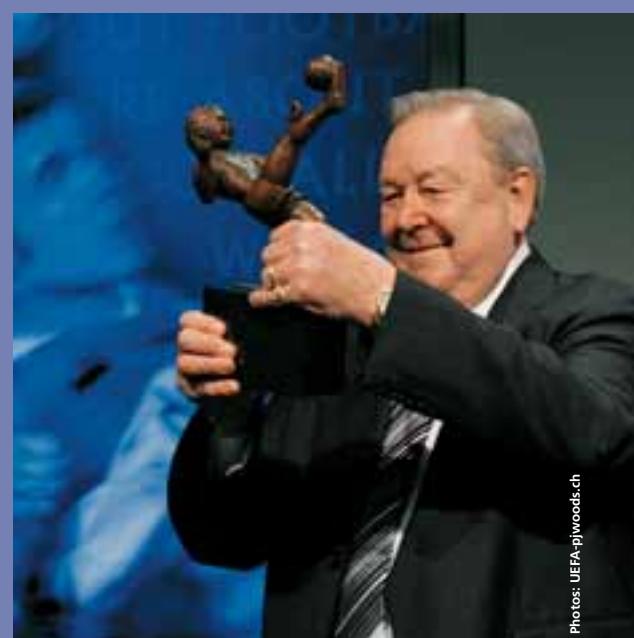
■ **The UEFA honorary president, Lennart Johansson, attended this meeting of the Executive Committee, and took advantage of the opportunity to address the UEFA staff in the auditorium of the House of European Football. He was also presented with a gift by his successor to recognise the great contribution he made during his 17 years as UEFA president.**

A new article is also being proposed which testifies to UEFA's desire to intensify dialogue within the whole European football family by incorporating the Professional Football Strategy Forum into the statutes. This body met for the first time in January and, under the revised statutes, would be known as the Professional Football Strategy Council and expanded to include the "representatives elected by any such players' union recognised by UEFA as representing the interests of the professional players in Europe" (see page 3).

The committee also approved the agenda for the tenth extraordinary UEFA Congress, which will be devoted essentially to this partial revision of the statutes.

The meeting was also informed that David Taylor, outgoing chief executive of the Scottish FA, would officially take up his appointment in charge of the UEFA administration on 1 June.

Last but not least, the committee approved the procedure for designating the hosts of EURO 2012 at its meeting on 17 and 18 April. It also noted that its summer meeting will now take place in Groningen (Netherlands) on 22 and 23 June, to coincide with the final of the European Under-21 Championship.



Photos: UEFA-pjwoods.ch



Jim Boyce was assisted by Marc Wilmots in the draw for the European Under-17 Championship final round.



Like in Paris last year, a large part of the Champions Festival in Athens will be reserved for young people.



United against violence

In his efforts to respond to the latest unfortunate incidents in and outside European stadiums, the UEFA president, Michel Platini, invited police experts and government representatives from different European countries to tackle this problem together on 21 March.

He had already discussed the issue at a meeting with the president of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, whom he had asked for the support of the EU member states in the fight against football violence.

The meeting participants agreed that common goals could only be achieved through improved cooperation between all the parties involved. UEFA will therefore work more closely in future with the EU's Police Cooperation Working Party,

which aims to promote sharing of information and international partnerships between ministries responsible for security and police authorities. In this way, efforts will be made to harmonise existing preventative measures and to develop a common legal framework for the prevention and punishment of violence in European football.

Festival of football in Athens

The club competitions are approaching their climax, which, in the case of the UEFA Cup, will take place at Hampden Park in Glasgow, on 16 May, with the UEFA Champions League final taking place at the Olympic stadium in Athens a week later, on 23 May.

The UEFA Champions League final in Athens will be preceded by a UEFA Champions Festival, which will start the weekend before the match and offer a whole host of activities to promote football, the UEFA Champions League and its sponsors. The planned activities include a grassroots tournament for girls and boys aged 10 to 16, skill drills, training sessions with well-known experts, a non-stop 24-hour football match and other types of games organised by the

UEFA Champions League sponsors, while a Champions Gallery will trace the history of the competition.

Under-17 draw in Brussels

Only three of the teams that took part in last year's European Under-17 Championship final round are among this year's finalists: Belgium, who qualify automatically as final round hosts, Germany and Spain.



The elite team was therefore the stumbling block for several leading lights at Under-17 level, notably the reigning European champions, Russia, who were knocked out in their group's mini-tournament in Portugal. On the last day of the mini-tournament, Russia ended up ceding their claim on a place in the final round to Iceland after an unbelievable match in which Russia started the second half 6-0 down but managed to pull back five goals before the final whistle, with a final score of 6-5 to Iceland! Last year's other finalists, the Czech Republic, were also eliminated, beaten to a place in the final round by Ukraine.

The draw for the final round was conducted in Brussels on 4 April by former Belgian international Marc Wilmots and the chairman of the Youth & Amateur Football Committee, Jim Boyce, and produced the following two groups.

A: France, Spain, Germany, Ukraine;

B: Netherlands, Belgium, Iceland, England.

The final round takes place from 2 to 13 May and the best five teams qualify for the FIFA U-17 World Cup in South Korea in August and September.

■ The draw for the final round of the European Women's Under-19 Championship will be made in Reykjavik on 23 May. The tournament is scheduled from 18 to 29 July.



Participants united for the same cause: safety and security.



The Basque Country won the UEFA Regions Cup in 2005.

UEFA



■ In the fifth UEFA Regions Cup, six teams have already secured their place in the final round: Aveiro (Portugal), Tuzla Canton (Bosnia & Herzegovina), Ivan Odessa (Ukraine), South-East Region (Bulgaria), Dolnoslazki (Poland) and Basse-Normandie (France). The remaining two finalists will be known by the end of April. The final round takes place in Bulgaria in June.

U-20 World Cup in Canada

On 9 March, Toronto was the venue for the draw to form the groups for the FIFA U-20 World Cup, which will be hosted by Canada from 30 June to 22 July.

Europe's reigning Under-19 champions, Spain, will be representing their continent, along with Scotland,



Award for UEFA

At a ceremony in London, "Ultimate Stage", the UEFA Champions League brand concept for the 2006-09 cycle, won the prestigious Sport Industry Award 2007 in the category of Best Promotion of a Sport by a Governing Body.

Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland and Portugal, as the best teams from last year's European Under-19 Championship final round in Poland.

The groups for the world cup in Canada are:

Group A: Canada, Chile, Congo, Austria;

Group B: Spain, Uruguay, Jordan, Zambia;

Group C: Portugal, New Zealand, Gambia, Mexico;

Group D: Poland, Brazil, South Korea, USA;

Group E: Argentina, Czech Republic, North Korea, Panama;

Group F: Japan, Scotland, Nigeria, Costa Rica.

The title is currently held by Argentina.



LOOKING AHEAD TO EURO2008

Huge run on tickets for EURO 2008 – 10.3 million ordered already

●●● Interest in tickets for EURO 2008 could hardly have been greater: 600,000 football fans from 142 countries have ordered a total of 10.3 million match tickets.

Thus the total number of tickets requested for the final round is 18 times greater than for the previous tournament in Portugal in 2004 and almost matches the figure for the 2006 World Cup, which stood at 10.8 million. All 31 games are over-booked across all price categories. "Simply unbelievable," said a very happy Martin Kallen, chief operating officer of Euro 2008 SA. "We did not suspect such a rush. We were estimating orders for four to five million tickets."

The list of the most sought-after games is predictably topped by the



Coffrini/AFP/Getty Images

final (651,141 tickets ordered), followed by the two semi-finals (561,565 for Basle and 502,081 for Vienna). The most orders came from Switzerland (29%), followed by Germany (27%) and Austria (21%).

All those who have ordered tickets will be informed by the end of April whether they have been successful or not. A total of 1,050,000 tickets are available for EURO 2008, of which 33% could be applied for between 1 and 31 March during the internet sales period on www.euro2008.com.

The national associations taking part in the final round will provide a further opportunity to get tickets. They will receive 20% of the total number of tickets for each group game in which their team is involved.

Trix and Flix cannot hide their delight at how successful the ticket sales have been.

AUSTRIA



Top award for ÖFB honorary president Hans Reitinger

By reaching the semi-finals of the European Under-19 Championship in Poland in July last year, Austria qualified for their first FIFA U-20 World Cup in 24 years. The draw for this tournament – one of the biggest events in Canadian sporting history – took place in Toronto at the beginning of March. Austrian Under-20 manager Paul Gludovatz's players will be in the group with teams from host nation Canada, Congo and Chile when the tournament begins on 30 June. "In spite of the tough opponents we are going to face, the objective remains qualification for the last 16," confirmed Gludovatz.

As far back as the end of January, Hans Reitinger, formerly both the president of the Austrian Bundesliga and vice-president of the Austrian Football Association (ÖFB), was presented the UEFA Order of Merit in ruby at the 31st UEFA Congress in Düsseldorf by the outgoing UEFA president, Lennart Johansson, in recognition of his services to European football. Also present on this special day were FIFA president Joseph S. Blatter and several stars of the 1954 World Cup. Moved by the award, Reitinger described it as "a complete surprise and an honour that I no longer expected at this point in my life. I see this as confirmation that the

work I have done has been recognised at European level and am delighted to receive this order of merit."

This top award was also acknowledged slightly less formally in Düsseldorf by a mixed delegation from Germany and Austria which included, among others, the likes of Franz Beckenbauer, Wolfgang Niersbach, Matthias Sammer, Friedrich Stickler and Alfred Ludwig, who congratulated the ÖFB honorary president by raising their glasses of champagne in honour of this rare achievement.

Peter Klingmüller



BELARUS



Election Conference

The regular election conference of the Belarus football association (BLS) took place on 4 March and the results saw current president Gennady Nevyglas re-elected for a new four-year term. Victor Novikov was elected vice-president, with Michael Vergeenko, Sergey Kunica and Peter Juzhik becoming his assistants. The new staff of the BLS executive committee was also confirmed and at its first working session appointed Leonid Dmitranica to the post of general director.

UEFA treasurer Marios Lefkaritis was present at the election conference and in his speech noted the high rates of Belarusian football development, wishing good luck to the leadership.

The re-elected president of the BLS confirmed that "the main association priorities – the development of children's and youth football and the stabilisation of the material and technical infrastructure – are well-known to everyone. I think that

in these areas we have made considerable improvements."

"By working together, we have built three full-size football grounds and 40 mini-pitches with artificial turf. There are now seven standard synthetic pitches in the country."

The new headquarters of the Belarus FA have been completed and include a modern training facility that will contribute to the most effective development possible. Furthermore, we have taken essential measures to continue the process of club licensing: since this began in 2005, all teams in the first division have been licensed.

The last major changes to the machinery of the association have been completed and its schedule modified. The last few years have shown that the association is a deserved member of UEFA and FIFA; our opinions have considerable weight and we are respected in the international football family. The discussion of the problems associated with football in our mass media shows that we have succeeded in making football attractive to the community.

Siarhei Novysh

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



A new look to the national team

The national team of Bosnia and Herzegovina made a good start to this spring's round of qualifying matches for EURO 2008, under the leadership of new head coach Fuad Muzurovic. The Bosnians managed to surprise Norway, winning the match at the Ullevaal Stadium in Oslo by two goals to one.

After a weak start, with two home defeats at the Bilino Polje stadium in Zenica against Hungary and Greece, there is now renewed hope that Bosnia and Herzegovina will be in the fight for one of the top two places in Group C.

What makes this win even sweeter is that the crowd in Oslo welcomed a totally new Bosnian team. Out of the 23 players in the squad for the game, nine of them were debutants (Vedad Ibisevic, Mario Pandza, Ivan Radeljic, Ivan Bozic, Darko Maletic, Edin Dzeko, Ajdin Maksumic, Adnan Custovic and Edin Pehlic) and four of these even started the game. Five of the squad (Ibisevic, Pandza, Dzeko, Maksumic and Pehlic) played last autumn for the Bosnia and Herzegovina Under-21 team that reached the play-offs for the Under-21 European Championship in the Netherlands this year, but failed to get past the Czech Republic. And only five of the squad who faced Norway played in Bosnia and Herzegovina's last match against Greece (Zvjezdan Misimovic, Branimir Bajic, Mladen Bartolovic, Mirko Hrgovic and Dario Damjanovic). Head coach Muzurovic also recalled some players after absence from the national team (Adnan Guso, Safet Nadarevic, Zajko Zeba, Admir Vladavic, Branislav Krunic and Romeo Mitrovic).

The match against Norway was the 101st to be played by the Bosnian national team, and reunited head coach Muzurovic and Vedin Music, both of whom also took part in Bosnia and Herzegovina's first official match in Tirana, Albania on 30 November 1995.



England v Bosnia & Herzegovina in the elite round of the European Under-17 Championship.

The national team has a new captain in Zvjezdan Misimovic, the 25-year-old who plays for German side VfL Bochum and is currently Bosnia's top scorer of the campaign.

Our Under-21 national team played their first friendly match against Switzerland in their warm-up for the qualifiers in the 2007-09 European Under-21 Championship, winning 1-0. This was the first match the team had played under new coach Nikola Nikic.

Bosnia and Herzegovina are in the same qualifying group as France, Malta, Romania and Wales for the European championship.

The football association of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FF BHZ) hosted Group 3 in the elite round of the European Under-17 championship in March, in partnership with the city of Sarajevo. As well as the hosts, this group consisted of Azerbaijan, England and Serbia. The matches were held in the biggest stadiums in the country – the Asim Ferhatovic Hase Olympic stadium and the Grbavica stadium. After some interesting contests, the team that will travel to Belgium was decided in the last round. The winners of the competition were England, who finished just ahead of Serbia. The home team led by coach Velimir Stojnic did not disappoint, despite finishing in last place in the group.

Fuad Krvavac

BULGARIA



Four former stars at the head of the Bulgarian Football Union

Four members of the Bulgarian squad that finished fourth in the 1994 World Cup in the USA were appointed to leading positions in the Bulgarian Football Union (BFU) in elections which took place at the association's congress in Sofia last autumn. Borislav Michaylov, the former goalkeeper who made a national record 102 appearances for Bulgaria, 60 of them as captain, was elected president; Jordan Lechkov, the former midfielder who scored five goals in 45 caps for his country, was made first vice-president; Emil Kostadinov (former right winger, 60 matches and 26 goals) and Nasko Sirakov (former forward, 82 caps and 23 goals), who were also in the squad that played in the USA, were elected as members of the association's executive committee.

Jordan Lechkov is also currently the mayor of Sliven – a city in south-eastern Bulgaria with a population of more than 100,000. He is the first former international footballer in Bulgarian history who has been elected to such a post.

The top management of the BFU are working hard to achieve the main objectives for Bulgarian football as they were

outlined during the last congress. These are:

- The financial independence of the association from the government
- The implementation of FIFA and UEFA rules and requirements in all areas of football in Bulgaria
- Providing support for the Bulgarian national team as it seeks to qualify for the EURO 2008 final round and ensuring the continued good performance of national teams from all age groups.

A delegation from UEFA led by first vice-president Senes Erzik visited Bulgaria at the end of last month and had a very productive discussion with its hosts. Mr Erzik said that BFU projects under the UEFA HatTrick programme were making good progress and he was sure that great results would be evident very soon.

Borislav Konstantinov

CZECH REPUBLIC



Education programme for referees

The referees' and delegates' committee of the football association of the Czech Republic (CMFS) has prepared a new education programme for its professional referees, designed to make it easier for them to referee matches.



The referees are ready for the closing part of the season.

The project aims to improve not only physical condition, but also the technical skills of the referees of the first and second divisions. The existing programme of half-yearly seminars is now to be supplemented by monthly physical training sessions in Prague and Brno under the leadership of Zdenek Sivek, a member of the UEFA Technical Instructors Panel. These are to be prepared on the basis of the training results of the individual referees, which will be sent weekly from heart rate monitors.

The CMFS referees' committee asked the German Football Association (DFB) for its cooperation as it looks to improve referees' technical skills and positioning during matches. Talks subsequently took place between the chairman of the referees' committee of the CMFS, Ludek

Macela, and Volker Roth, who is chairman of the referees' committees of both the DFB and UEFA, with positive results. A programme of regular consultations has been established between the referees' committee of the CMFS and a former international referee and participant in the UEFA Talents and Mentors Programme, Aron Schmidhuber. His monthly sessions, in which he draws on his wealth of knowledge and years of experience, and gives updates on the latest UEFA trends, are proving very helpful to Czech referees. It is already possible to see an improvement in their current physical condition and technical skills from the results achieved and the tests carried out.

Vit Pavlusek

ENGLAND



Coaching course on the Solomon Islands

The Football Association's Alan Gillett received a hero's welcome when he delivered a coaching course to football instructors on the Solomon Islands in March.

Gillett coached the Solomon Islands in 2004 and secured a 2-2 draw with Australia, a result that is still regarded by many as the national team's greatest achievement. He was awarded a silver medal for his contribution to sport on the islands and was delighted to have the opportunity to return to the small nation after The FA signed a new cooperation agreement with the Oceania Football Confederation (OFC).

"I have always been looking for an opportunity to return and after I learnt that The FA had committed to assisting the development of football in the OFC



The coaches pay close attention to what Alan Gillett is saying.

region, and specifically in Fiji and the Solomon Islands, I knew I would be back," said Gillett.

Gillett worked alongside another FA coach, Jamie Houchen, to deliver a week-long course focusing on various elements of coach education and The FA Learning programme.

By the end of the workshop, hundreds of children turned up to take part in the

→ coaching sessions conducted by local instructors, who will be left to continue the good work started by The FA's Gillett and Houchen.

"We want Solomon Islands coaches to go to FIFA," added Gillett. "We want Solomon Islands referees to become instructors in Oceania."

"They have got the raw materials, players and coaches. And they have got people who work at the grassroots level in the country but they have got to keep it going."

Nada Grkinic

FINLAND



Enthusiasm for women's football

The women's national team reaching the semi-finals of the European Championship in England in 2005 created a lot of enthusiasm for women's football in Finland, and the team received tremendous media attention. The key players of the national team became household names, many of them playing abroad and having achieved international success with their club teams as well. The Finnish Women's Under-19 team was the first women's team in the history of Finnish football to qualify for a FIFA tournament, the FIFA Women's Under-20 World Championships in Russia in 2006.

A club licensing system for the ten women's league clubs, aimed at continuously improving the quality of club activities, was implemented for the first time for the 2007 season. Financial, sporting, infrastructure, legal as well as personnel and administration criteria have been created together with the clubs, and everyone is very committed to the development



The women's cup got under way in January.

process. During the past few years, the number of girls playing football has grown by 10% a year, thus giving the clubs a lot of challenges and opportunities.

However, the biggest challenge for domestic football, men's and women's, is to increase the number of spectators attending football matches. There are more than 112,000 licensed players in Finland, more than 20,000 of whom are female – and some 500,000 Finns claim to have football as their hobby, practising it at least once a week. Getting these people into the football stands is one of the main goals of the Finnish clubs, along with encouraging and nourishing fan culture. Stronger club identities, fans clearly supporting and wearing their club colours, is what the Finnish football family is aiming for.

According to a survey conducted in January 2007, all the women's league clubs have sporting goals, but only a couple have clear goals when it comes to communication, marketing and spectator recruitment. The FA is playing a stronger and stronger role in leading and coordinating the efforts of the clubs, creating event manuals, drawing up marketing and communication plans as well as producing branded material in order to create a positive image and a strengthening brand identity for the Finnish women's football league. The vision for the development work is a strong domestic league, a popular women's national team and a successful EURO 2009 tournament, making women's football the number one female sports topic in Finland.

Outi Saarinen



The UEFA president in a familiar role.

GEORGIA



Visit of UEFA president

After his election, the new UEFA president, Michel Platini, made his first official trip by visiting Georgia on 7 and 8 March. He spent two days familiarising himself with the football infrastructure in Georgia.

With a delegation from the Georgian Football Federation (GFF) and its president, Nodar Akhalkatsi, Michel Platini visited the training base in Saguramo which is under construction and the Basa technical centre. He also visited the Boris Paichadze national stadium.

The GFF arranged for him to meet some Georgian politicians, namely the prime minister, Zurab Nogaiedeli, as well as Giorgi Gabashvili, Minister of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport, and David Namgalauri, head of the Department of Sport and Youth Affairs.

During his visit, Michel Platini opened a women's tournament organised by the GFF and the Georgian national team fun club at the Irao stadium in Tbilisi.

On the second day of his visit, the UEFA president gave a press conference for Georgian and foreign journalists accredited in Georgia.

Michel Platini assessed the achievements of the GFF positively and expressed his hope that the federation would continue its good work.

Alexander Tsoboladze

KAZAKHSTAN



A first victory under the aegis of UEFA

During the period from 7 to 11 March, Shymkent city hosted the first ever national team Alma TV International Cup tournament. The participants in the tournament were the national teams of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. The Kazakhstani team won the tournament, beating Kyrgyzstan 2-0 and Azerbaijan 1-0 along the way, and drawing 1-1 against the national team of Uzbekistan. All the proceeds from the tournament went to the AIDS foundation of the South Kazakhstan region.

The next match of the Kazakhstan national team was on 24 March within the framework of the EURO 2008 qualifying matches. In Almaty, Kazakhstanis

played against the Serbian national team and claimed their first victory under the aegis of UEFA. Goals from Kairat Ashirbekov and Nurbol Zhumaskaliyev helped Kazakhstan to a 2-1 win.

"I would like to express my gratitude to the football players. Today's victory is first of all their accomplishment," said the Dutch head coach of the Kazakhstan

national team, Arno Pijpers. "I am also grateful to the Football Federation of Kazakhstan and its president, Rakhat Aliev. In order to build a team, time is essential and time has been given to us. Last year, we carried out hard work, we the players, the coaches and the administration, and now we are reaping its fruits."

Alexander Keplin



A tournament to contribute to the fight against AIDS.

LATVIA



UEFA helps with new stadium project in Riga

In mid-March, a UEFA delegation saw early spring time in Riga. After touring the two largest Latvian stadiums, Daugava and Skonto, a sketch of a proposed new stadium was examined and revised.



A model of the new Daugava stadium.

LIECHTENSTEIN

A good year all round

The general assembly of the Liechtenstein football association (LFV) took place on 20 March. Numerous guests both from home and abroad were present, alongside two representatives from each of the seven member clubs. The meeting was chaired competently by the president of the association, Reinhard Walser.

He presented the annual report, mentioning in particular the new offices in Schaan, the enlargement of the stadiums at Vaduz and Eschen, the potential for improvement in youth football and the stable financial situation of the association. The representatives passed the budget unanimously.

It was only a year ago that the club presidents decided on new regulations for the cup competition. One clause of the document is now being changed again, so that in future the LFV board will be able to seed teams up to the quarter-finals, instead of until the last 16 of the competition, which is the case this year.

The vice-president of the LFV, Fredi Hilti, and the head of grassroots football, Heinz Biedermann, were both re-elected by a majority of the delegates for further

The UEFA representatives were the guests of the Latvian Football Federation (LFF), stadium architect Aigars Blazevics and new project manager Guntars Indriksons. All of them were meeting to consider the best possible solutions for a new national base for football, athletics, hockey, and other sports on the Daugava site, plans which will eventually be presented to the Latvian government.

For more than a year, the LFF has been trying to convince the government and the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science that the country needs a new, modern, reliable national sports base which meets all the requirements of all the sports federations that currently use the stadium. What is more, the LFF, together with investors, is ready to build the new stadium and maintain it without any investment from the Latvian government. However, current stadium managers have a different view. They think that the government should maintain the current stadium by making enormous investments on its own and deny the LFF the opportunity of renovating it, claiming that the LFF's interests are purely commercial. Currently, the Daugava stadium is in a critical condition and national team football matches are played at the Skonto club stadium.

Martins Hartmanis

two-year terms. Georges Lüchinger, head of marketing, received the backing of all the delegates and was unanimously re-elected.

The meeting also heard that the LFV is planning to build a technical centre with training pitches. At present, discussions with the public authorities are still in the early stages. Beni Bruggmann, a relatively new face at the LFV, will be responsible for youth football, and plans to work closely with the clubs in this area.

The former coach of the Liechtenstein national team, Martin Andermatt, was honoured for his work. Likewise, the former president of FC Balzers, Stefan Wolfinger, was thanked for his many years of service in the post.

Judith Frommelt



Reinhard Walser, president of the Liechtenstein FA, chaired the general meeting.

FYR MACEDONIA



Full support for Haralampie Hadzi-Risteski

Out of the 56 delegates who attended the ordinary general meeting of the Football Federation of FYR of Macedonia held in Struga on 17 March, 55 voted in support of the current president, Haralampie Hadzi-Risteski.

The delegates accepted the financial report for the year 2006, as well as the budget for 2007.

"We have information about the huge pressure put on delegates not to attend the meeting," said Mr Hadzi-Risteski, who also sent a written protest to the prime minister of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Nikola Gruevski, requesting an end to the great pressure being put on the delegates, which was also described by the country's media as polit-



Full support for the president of the football association.

ical influence on the game. At the same time, Mr Hadzi-Risteski said that the answer given by the government agency for youth and sport, which tried to question the legitimacy of the meeting held in Struga, amounted to direct influence by politics on football.

As a result of all these actions, the attempts of the so-called "initiative board" for changes in the Football Federation of FYR of Macedonia failed, due to the support given by the delegates to the current management of the federation. In the meantime, football's world and European governing bodies, FIFA and UEFA, have issued a joint letter stating that they recognise all the decisions taken at the general meeting and giving their full support to the federation's president, Hadzi-Risteski, and his management team, expressing their great satisfaction at the way the federation is running all its activities, making it a rare example in Europe. Among the activities mentioned were the very good organisation of qualifying tournaments in the UEFA competitions, the licensing system and the operations of the coach education centre, as well as the first UEFA media rights workshop to be held in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which was attended by representatives from six associations.

Zoran Nikolovski



AC Milan training in Malta.

MALTA



Training facilities in Malta a popular destination

In recent years, facilities at the Malta Football Association (MFA) national complex in Ta' Qali have proved the ideal venue for both foreign clubs and national squads to go on training camps.

The facilities are enhanced by well-equipped accommodation, situated conveniently adjacent to the training grounds. A specially-appointed MFA board takes great care to ensure that the complex meets the required standards.

Both the top Italian team AC Milan and the Austrian national squad have recently had productive one-week training sessions at the complex, culminating in friendly matches against the Maltese

champions Birkirkara and the national team respectively.

During the last months, club sides from Switzerland, Germany, Denmark and Norway, as well as Finland's Under-21 and the Swiss national women's squads, have been on the list of visitors to Malta, where mild weather makes for a welcome winter or pre-season break away from the severe climatic conditions in some European countries.

These trips to Malta are mutually beneficial: foreign teams take the opportunity to combine their training camps with matches against local sides and the island's national teams in different categories, giving Maltese sides valuable contact with top-class professionals.

More bookings from overseas squads are on the itinerary, making the surroundings at the national complex a veritable hive of activity throughout the year.

Alex Vella

NETHERLANDS



Women's premiership – a historical step

ADO Den Haag, AZ, SC Heerenveen, FC Twente, FC Utrecht and Willem II will make up the new women's premiership as of August. The six professional clubs signed an agreement last month, com-

mitting themselves to this ambitious project for at least three years.

This new step marks a historic moment for women's football: the long-desired elite platform for top sports has finally been created, and top players can now make further steps in their development. "Internationally, we have never managed to qualify for the final round of the European Championship, let alone the World Cup," says Vera Pauw, the national team manager. "Thanks to this initiative, I am sure that we will now qualify for the final round of the European Championship in 2009."

The agreement signed by the clubs states clearly what is required. A foundation has been set up to exploit the commercial interests of the women's premiership. Neither promotion nor relegation applies, so the competition will effectively be a closed one, although it may well be opened up in the future. The new league is not a professional league – the players will all be amateurs, but will have their expenses paid.

"The main issue is the facilities," as Vera Pauw stresses. "We can benefit from the knowledge and expertise that the professional clubs have assembled over the years. The current first division will remain as it is. Each professional club



Six clubs for a new women's league.

will be linked to a top amateur club in order to guarantee the flow of talent. A maximum of six players of the professional club can play for the partner amateur club in any league game. The professional clubs are free to cooperate with an amateur club of their choice in their region."

Rob de Leede

NORTHERN IRELAND



Sponsor for the County Centres of Excellence programme

The future of talented young footballers in Northern Ireland was given a significant boost when the Football Association of Northern Ireland (FAI) announced airline Flybe as sponsors of the County Centres of Excellence programme.

The FAI's youth strategy identified the importance of developing the best young talent in Northern Ireland in order to increase the supply of elite players through to the youth and senior international teams. It is vital for the success of our international teams that more Northern Ireland players play at the highest level in England, and in order to improve the likelihood of this happening, the youth strategy proposed the establishment of an excellence programme.

The FAI Flybe/George Best Centres of Excellence successfully began their sessions at the beginning of February, managed by the six highly qualified FAI county coaches. Each centre aims to



Andrea Hayes and Nigel Best deliver kit to one of the centres of excellence.

have 25 boys in each of the four age groups and up to 30 girls across the four age groups in the first year.

Flybe has recently launched a new kit for all young footballers who take part in the six county centres of excellence. Each centre will have a different colour of kit (light blue, yellow, sky blue, red, navy and white) which players will wear when county v. county competitions are played.

The kits were launched by Andrea Hayes of Flybe and the IFA's high performance manager, Nigel Best, at the George Best Belfast City Airport.

IFA chief executive Howard Wells recently visited an assessment session at County Down's centre of excellence at Queens' PE centre. The session consisted of 20 minutes covering coaching skills and tactics, followed by a number of small-sided matches.

Former Northern Ireland international and QPR defender Alan McDonald is due to visit some of the centres in the next few weeks.

Caroline Menary

NORWAY



Locally trained player rule to be implemented in Norway

The executive committee of the Norwegian football association (NFF) has decided to introduce a locally trained player rule in Norwegian football. From 2008 onwards, clubs in the Norwegian top division, the Tippeligaen, will have to have eight locally trained players out of a squad of 25. At the same time, the NFF has distributed a paper to all member clubs, which discusses how regulations governing locally trained players can be further developed in Norway.

A locally trained player is defined by UEFA as either a club-trained player or an association-trained player; in Norway, at least four of the eight must be club-trained.

"By introducing the locally trained player rule to Norwegian football we are preparing the ground for a better competitive balance between the clubs, as well as giving young, talented players a real opportunity to step up into professional football," said the president of the NFF, Sondre Kåfjord.

"One of our most important tasks is to ensure that young players with talent and ambition get an opportunity to develop their potential within our sport. Football clubs have an important social and educational role both in their local communities and beyond. In this context, the nurturing of local talent is not only beneficial for football as a sport, but also for society as a whole," said Mr Kåfjord.

Of the 220 Norwegian players in Tippeligaen 2006, 150 originated from Norwegian grassroots clubs. *"These figures show that local clubs are the most important arenas for recruiting young players. If we increase the chances for young players to succeed, it will stimulate the clubs in local communities to work even harder,"* added Mr Kåfjord.

Roger Solheim



Croke Park in Dublin.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND



Lansdowne Road stadium

The FAI recently welcomed the decision of An Bord Pleanála, the Irish planning appeals body, to uphold the decision of Dublin City Council to grant permission to build Dublin's new 50,000-capacity stadium on the site of the Lansdowne Road facility. The ambitious building programme at Lansdowne Road envisages having the stadium completed by the end of 2009. Work on the site is planned to commence within the coming weeks.

March was a historic month in Ireland as the Republic of Ireland hosted Wales and Slovakia in the EURO 2008 Group D qualifiers at Croke Park, the home of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) in Ireland. The two games were played before a capacity crowd of over 70,000, with

Steve Staunton's side winning both games 1-0 to leave the Republic of Ireland in a promising position ahead of the qualifying fixtures in the autumn.

The FAI is deeply appreciative of the GAA's decision to allow football to be played at Croke Park in 2008 during the development of the Lansdowne Road stadium.

The announcement of an additional EUR 1 million in funding to be allocated by the Irish government to the association towards the technical development plan provides the association with the resources to further drive forward the plan, which is the foundation for the development of the game from grassroots to elite level.

The extra funding will be utilised across the range of 19 programmes within the FAI's technical plan, which focuses on including everyone who wants to get involved in football. As the biggest sport in the country, the extra resources will be of great benefit to many of the 450,000 who currently take part in football.

Fran Whearty

SCOTLAND



Double departure in view



David Taylor

The Scottish Football Association (SFA) has advertised for a new chief executive, after it was confirmed that David Taylor was to leave the association to become general secretary of UEFA.

Mr Taylor, who joined the SFA in August 1999, left at the end of March to take up his new role in Switzerland with European football's governing body.

He said: "The Scottish FA is a very different organisation now from that which I joined in 1999. It has been a great pleasure to work with the board of directors and the staff in the change process. There is much still to do but I am pleased I can leave the SFA in a strong financial position and with long-term plans in place to strengthen the base of our national game in the years ahead."

The president of the SFA, John McBeth, will assume the duties of the chief executive on an interim basis until a successor is in place. Mr McBeth will also be leaving the SFA in June, after four years as president, to become a vice-president of FIFA.

Andy Mitchell

SWITZERLAND



Swiss football association always looking to improve

To deal with the ever-growing list of demands in top-flight football today, the Swiss football association (SFV) and the Swiss Football League (SFL) have created two new positions: in future, two new employees will take full responsibility for important areas of work at the heart of the association.

The SFV and SFL have already named Ulrich Pfister as safety and security officer. The 39-year-old has previously occupied various senior positions in such areas. He takes up his new post on 1 July 2007 and will be responsible for all matters relating to safety and security in all departments of the SFV. In appointing

Pfister to this position, the SFV is taking into account the recent rapid increase of violence in Swiss football. This measure is also in accordance with the guidelines of the Swiss Olympic association, which insists on a full-time safety and security officer.

The SFV has also decided to create a full-time position to oversee the educa-

tion of referees. In doing so, senior association figures are following a directive of the referees committee, with the aim of promoting a higher level of refereeing and consistency in the application of the rules. This measure also means that the SFV is now fully eligible to sign the UEFA referee convention.

Pierre Benoit

UKRAINE



Joy at Under-17 victory

"Let me be the first to get your autographs and when you're stars I'll be proud of them," said the president of the football federation of Ukraine (FFU) at a ceremony to congratulate and honour the Ukrainian Under-17 team that qualified for the final round of the European Under-17 Championship. Less than one day after the triumphant win over Italy in the elite round of this competition, the Ukraine team was congratulated by the management of the FFU. Yuriy Kalitvincev's players went to the federation's headquarters straight from Boryspil airport.

Highlights of the three matches that the team won in Udine (Italy) were played on a large TV screen. "We are delighted

with your success. For me, the most important thing to come out of the deciding game against the Italian team is not your qualification for the final round of the 2006/07 championship, but your faith in yourselves and the mentors you have had since childhood," said Grigoriy Surkis.

Yuriy Kalitvincev told all those present the story of what, to his mind, has been the deciding factor in this achievement. "More than one and a half years ago, when we formed the team, we set our guys the task of winning the U-17 World Cup. As you know, it is possible to qualify for this through the European Under-17 Championship. Gradually, we are reaching this goal, and that's why we'll try to continue to improve."

Every player and all the coaching staff of the Under-17 national team, some of whom are already well known, received gifts from the FFU.

Valery Nykonenko



Grigoriy Surkis, president of the Ukrainian FA, welcomes back the Under-17s from their successful tournament in Italy.



Communications Birthdays – Calendars

Birthdays

Lars Appelqvist (Sweden), a member of the group of former UEFA committee members, celebrates his 80th birthday on 18 May, while two referee observers have their 50th birthdays this month: Ladislav Gadosi (Slovakia) on 3 May and Karl-Erik Nilsson (Sweden) on 6 May. Match delegate Gaetano Degabriele (Malta) joins them at the same milestone on 19 May.

UEFA also wishes many happy returns to:

- Mircea-Lucian Salomir (Romania, 1.5)
- R. Campbell Ogilvie (Scotland, 1.5)
- Peter Mikkelsen (Denmark, 1.5)
- Johann Hantschk (Austria, 3.5)
- Anghel Iordanescu (Romania, 4.5)
- Selami Özdemir (Turkey, 4.5)
- Eleonora Gambillara (Switzerland, 4.5)
- Peter Gilliéron (Switzerland, 5.5)
- Costakis Koutsokoumnis (Cyprus, 5.5)
- Kenneth Ridden (England, 6.5)
- Gudmundur Petursson (Iceland, 6.5)
- Murat Jaha (Bosnia & Herzegovina, 7.5)
- Pekka Luhtanen (Finland, 8.5)
- Michel Pralong (Switzerland, 8.5)
- Marc Dobbeleir (Belgium, 8.5)
- Patrick Comninios (Greece, 8.5)
- Haim Zimmer (Israel, 9.5)
- Robert B. Valentine (Scotland, 10.5)
- Armen Melikbekyan (Armenia, 10.5)
- Arie Frost (Israel, 11.5)
- Ernst-Peter Radziwill (Germany, 11.5)
- Timo Huttunen (Finland, 11.5)
- Jean-Marie Gantenbein (Luxembourg, 12.5)
- Henrik Ravnild (Denmark, 13.5)
- Carlos Manuel Ferreira Matos (Portugal, 14.5)
- Hans-Jörg Eissmann (Germany, 15.5)
- Piotr Maranda (Poland, 15.5)
- Hakan Nyberg (Sweden, 15.5)
- Nikolay Levnikov (Russia, 15.5)
- Evzen Amler (Czech Republic, 15.5)
- Angel Bungurov (FYR Macedonia, 16.5)
- Svein Johannessen (Norway, 17.5)
- Andreas Morisbak (Norway, 19.5)
- Jozef Marko (Slovakia, 19.5)
- Helmut Krug (Germany, 19.5)
- Rune Pedersen (Norway, 19.5)
- Michal Listkiewicz (Poland, 20.5)
- Serge Muhmenthaler (Switzerland, 20.5)
- Zvezdan Terzic (Serbia, 21.5)
- Theo van Seggelen (Netherlands, 22.5)

- Mathieu Sprengers (Netherlands, 24.5)
- Packie Bonner (Republic of Ireland, 24.5)
- Ainar Leppänen (Estonia, 24.5)
- Semen Andreev (Russia, 25.5)
- Suheil Daood (Israel, 25.5)
- Hans Cooman (Belgium, 25.5)
- Robert Jeurissen (Belgium, 27.5)
- Zdenek Sivek (Czech Republic, 28.5)
- Patrick A. Daly (Republic of Ireland, 28.5)
- Jim Stjerne Hansen (Denmark, 28.5)
- Jean-Pierre Escallettes (France, 29.5)
- Jacques Antenen (Switzerland, 29.5)
- István Huszár (Hungary, 31.5)

Upcoming events

Meetings

8-10.5.2007, Nyon

7th seminar for referee mentors and talents

12.5.2007, Porto

Draw for the European Futsal Championship final round

13.5.2007, Nivelles (Belgium)

Youth & Amateur Football Committee

15.5.2007, Glasgow

Jira Panel

16.5.2007, Glasgow

Technical Development Committee

23.5.2007, Athens

Club Competitions Committee

23.5.2007, Reykjavík

Draw for the European Women's Under-19 Championship final round

28.5.2007, Zurich

Extraordinary UEFA Congress

30-31.5.2007, Zurich

FIFA Congress

Competitions

1/2.5.2007

UEFA Champions League: semi-finals (return legs)

2-13.5.2007, Belgium

European Under-17 Championship final round

3.5.2007

UEFA Cup: semi-finals (return legs)

16.5.2007, Glasgow

UEFA Cup: final

23.5.2007, Athens

UEFA Champions League: final

Notices

■ On 17 March, Avi Luzon was elected president of the Israel FA for a three-year term.

■ On 30 March, Aivar Pohlak was elected president of the Estonian FA.

■ Lars-Åke Lagrell has been re-elected president of the Swedish FA for a further year.

■ Guntis Indriksons has been elected president of the Latvian FA for a four-year term.

■ On 2 April, the Italian FA elected Giancarlo Abete as its new president.

■ Following the departure of Petr Fousek, Rudolf Bata has become acting general secretary of the Czech FA.

New publication

Ballkaniada 1946

This book by Albanian author Besnik Dizdari is dedicated to the Balkan Games of 1946 held in Tirana, when the Albanian national team won the Balkan Football Championship for the first time. Apart from football, the games – the first to be played in Europe after the war – also consisted of athletics. Besnik Dizdari's book provides a historical and statistical account of these games. "Rozafat", Tirana 2007.

Email: dizdarib@san.com.al

Obituary

René Hüssy (Switzerland), a member of the circle of former UEFA committee members, passed away on 11 March aged 78. A former coach of the Swiss national team and a founder member of the Swiss football coaches' association (USFT), René Hüssy also made his knowledge available to UEFA as a member of the Committee for Technical Development from 1982 to 1996, a body which he served as vice-chairman from 1992 until his retirement in 1996. From 1992 to 1995, he also chaired the study group for the introduction of a European coaching licence.

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