



UEFA
Grassroots
Programme

Editorial:
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**Big-Time + Small-Time
= Great Time**

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Summer Fun

GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL NEWSLETTER



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**PAT BONNER, FAI TECHNICAL DIRECTOR,
AND ANDY ROXBURGH, UEFA TECHNICAL DIRECTOR, AT THE
OPENING OF THE FIRST MINI-PITCH IN DUBLIN.**

IMPRESSUM

EDITORIAL GROUP

Andy Roxburgh
Graham Turner

ADMINISTRATION

Frank Ludolph
Isla Kälin

PRODUCTION

André Vieli
Atema Communication SA
Printed by Cavin SA

COVER

Photo: Polish FA – from the
UEFA photo contest



UEFA

YESTERDAY'S CHILD

EDITORIAL

**BY ANDY ROXBURGH,
UEFA TECHNICAL DIRECTOR**

Yesterday's child played football in the anonymity of the streets. Today, children are part of organised grassroots programmes and are scouted. Only recently, one English coach told me that his club had just spotted a 'natural' – the player was four years old! Of course, the children's football environment has changed, and there are many brilliant grassroots projects. The principles, however, which led to the development of great players in those misty, less commercially-orientated days of yesteryear haven't altered. Street motivation was intrinsic, with a love of the game and a fascination for the ball the dominant reasons for children to participate. If football was in the blood before the age of 12 years, it was there for life. The community encouraged it, the schools promoted it, and children loved it.

Yesterday's child learned to be self-reliant, but according to former Swiss football internationalist, Lucio Bizzini, the situation has changed in recent years. "Caught in the trap of having their free time organised by institutionalised sport and specialist training camps, the children of today learn to be passive," stated the Geneva University lecturer. Spontaneity, independence and free expression can disappear if grassroots coaches organise everything and use direct teaching methods to drill home their image of the game. Free play must be part of the development process and it was for this reason that UEFA, as part of its HatTrick project, invested CHF 52 million in mini-pitches (free-play areas measuring 21 x 13 m)

for its member associations – a tangible message from UEFA about the importance of play areas for children and the need to stimulate grassroots football. The promotion of maxi-pitches (40 x 20 m), which are designed for small-sided games, will be the next phase of grassroots facility development.

Yesterday's child learned by trial and error, by experimenting, by constant practice. Pelé, the legendary Brazilian, was exceptionally talented, but like other players of his era, he practised his basic skills with fierce determination. "I began to kick against the wall, to practise with both legs, kicking and rebounding hour after hour," he once explained. For those who coach children today, this daily practice with the ball is often missing, and the grassroots coaches need to compensate, to find ways of speeding up skill acquisition, while still maintaining the emotion of the game in their children's programmes.

Yesterday's child loved tricks and clever moves, and during the vital foundation phase of development (9-12 years) they were hungry for imaginative skills and adventurous play. Today's grassroots coach needs to replicate the learning conditions of old. They need to create match situations through small-sided games and practices which encourage children to find their solutions to the game's problems. This requires creative teaching methods and is one of the reasons why children's football is in urgent need of more football teachers; talented coaches who know the game, who can demonstrate, and who understand the learning process.

Yesterday's child lived in a different world – an imperfect world of modest means and poor infrastructure where football was, for many, the main form of entertainment, social interaction

and creative expression. Today's child, on the other hand, is bombarded by electronic and sporting options. But football still has much to offer the current grassroots player. As Jürgen Klinsmann, the head coach of the German national team, said recently, "Football means a lot more than the professional game. It helps to develop the children who will form tomorrow's society." Producing top players is a by-product of grassroots football because it is more important what football does for young people than what young people do for football. Current grassroots schemes are booming, and there are many terrific examples, but maybe some of today's coaches and grassroots players, boys and girls, could learn a little more about self-reliance, commitment, and free expression from the passionate young dreamers who played under the streetlights in the dim and distant past.



Jürgen Klinsmann, Germany's national coach.



PER RAVN OMDAL,
A UEFA VICE-PRESIDENT
AND A FERVENT
PROMOTER OF GRASSROOTS
FOOTBALL.

THE GRASSROOTS CRUSADE

**ON THE FACE OF IT, DESCRIBING UEFA AS A 'CRUSADER' MIGHT SOUND
PRETENTIOUS. YET THE WORD DOES REFLECT THE ORGANISATION'S DEDICATION AND COMMITMENT
TO THE CAUSE OF GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL.**

Lennart Johansson has always maintained that "grassroots football is the foundation. If the grass roots are not cultivated, football at all levels will suffer, and it is UEFA's desire to help the associations develop thriving grassroots programmes." UEFA's 'Vision Europe' document, published in April of this year, stresses that national associations are best placed to manage their own grassroots strategies but that UEFA has an important supportive, proactive role to play – notably in "gathering and disseminating best-practice and project ideas between member associations, for example by elaborating charters and conventions in different areas."

UEFA's Grassroots Charter is now a reality. On 20 September, UEFA's Executive Committee, at its meeting in Rome, formally ratified the programmes of five member associations which had taken part in a pilot scheme aimed at establishing a viable blueprint for the charter outlined in UEFA's Grassroots Football Declaration made at the Conference for Presidents and General Secretaries in 2001.

By the way, some of the important 'crusaders' in this area have been the members of UEFA's Grassroots Working Group created in November 2002. They helped to elaborate the UEFA Grassroots Programme, which

was approved by the UEFA Executive Committee in Athens in February 2003 and, once the UEFA Technical Committee had endorsed the project, the UEFA Executive Committee asked for work to go ahead on the Grassroots Charter on 17 November 2004. Within a year, five 'pioneers' had already put their signatures to the brand-new charter.

The five national associations were those of England, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Scotland. Their experience has allowed guidelines to be drafted and one might say that, having designed and assembled the rocket, we are now ready for lift-off.

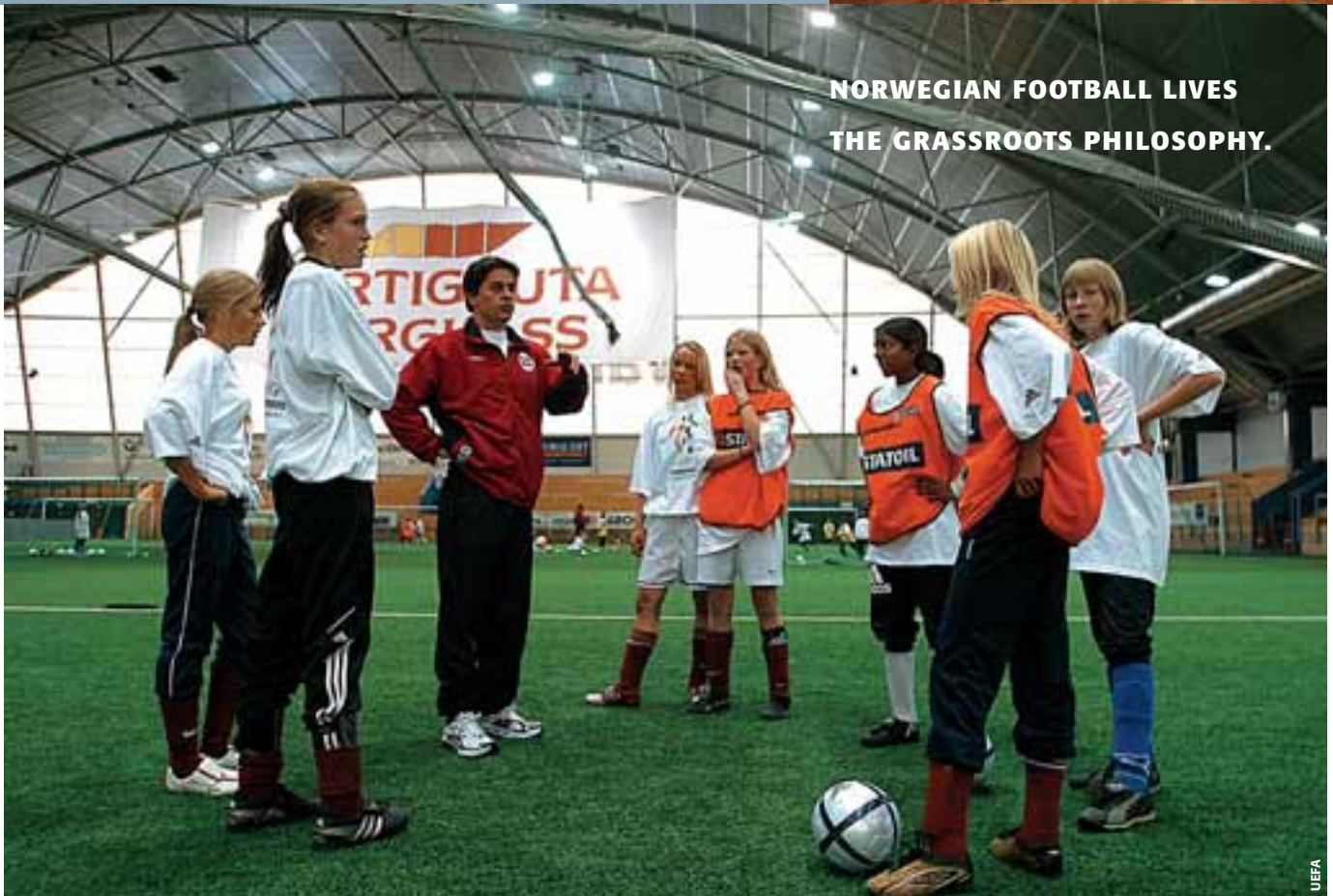
In practical terms, that means opening the door to other national associations with a view to endorsing their grassroots programmes under the terms of the charter. The main criteria are based on ensuring that the coaches, leaders or monitors at junior grassroots levels are adequately equipped to coach children and youths; establishing a coherent players' programme, offering training and playing opportunities for different age groups (children 5-12 and youths 12-19); a solid infrastructure in terms of facilities; and an equally solid underlying philosophy, built on the principles of promoting 'football for all', fair play, anti-racism and other social values.



**THE FIRST FIVE
ASSOCIATIONS SIGNED
THE GRASSROOTS
CHARTER IN ROME
IN SEPTEMBER.**



**NORWEGIAN FOOTBALL LIVES
THE GRASSROOTS PHILOSOPHY.**



The obvious questions are: 'What's the next step?' and 'How do I become a member of the Grassroots Charter?' The answers will be provided in detail at a series of grassroots workshops which will be staged on a geographical basis during 2006. All national associations will be invited and the first batch of invitations will refer to the inaugural workshop scheduled to be staged in Norway next May. The idea behind the workshops is to set out the basic requisites outlined in the charter and to offer maximum encouragement and support to associations who would like to meet charter standards or to evaluate the grassroots programmes in countries where those standards might already have been met. The more of you we can welcome on board the UEFA Grassroots Charter, the better... for the future of the game of football.





UEFA

**KAREN ESPELUND,
CHAIRWOMAN OF UEFA'S WOMEN'S
FOOTBALL COMMITTEE.**

WHAT ABOUT THE GIRLS?

THAT'S THE QUESTION BEING HEARD MORE AND FREQUENTLY AS NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS ALL OVER EUROPE PLOT THEIR GRASSROOTS STRATEGY. THE MESSAGE DELIVERED VERY CLEARLY BY THE 5TH UEFA WOMEN'S FOOTBALL CONFERENCE STAGED IN OSLO DURING OCTOBER IS THAT WOMEN'S FOOTBALL CONTINUES TO BE THE CONTINENT'S FASTEST-GROWING SPORT.

As Giorgio Marchetti, UEFA's Director of Professional Football, pointed out during his review of the highly successful WOMEN'S EURO 2005 tournament in England, UEFA had cognisance of 251,218 registered female players in 1985 and 1,520,289 during the current campaign. As UEFA's vice-president Per Omdal stressed on receiving his 'guests' in Norway, "We mustn't have 400 people

discussing the present or the future of the women's national team. We need 400 people organising football games for girls. We mustn't start at the summit. The accent must be on the grass roots." His country leads by example. Even in Norway, regarded as one of the front-runners in the women's game, the number of girls playing football has increased by 30% since 2001.

As world and European champions, the Germans continue to set benchmarks for the rest of the continent. Tina Theune-Meyer, who has just stepped down from her pedestal as head coach after nine years of sustained success, reported that some 20,000 German girls are currently competing in the area where the grass roots are effectively nurtured.

This was also one of the points emphasised by Sheila Begbie, head of girls' and women's football in Scotland – one of the associations currently working on upgrading structures and skills. She underlined the importance of welcoming schools into the grassroots fold, not least because allowing young boys and girls to practise the same sport paves the way for maximal efficiency in terms of the use of facilities and staff. But it's not just a question of getting the girls to run on to the pitch and kick a ball. Someone needs to take an overview; there needs to be uniformity and continuity; football activity also needs to be encouraged during the before-school and after-school periods; and the football played at grassroots levels has to be dovetailed into development programmes capable of channelling players into league and



UEFA/ERIKSEN



PER KJÆRBYE

national-team football. Hence the need to combine quality with quantity: to develop skills while the girls are enjoying a game of football.

Sheila mentioned the interaction between the top of the tree and the grass roots, commenting that a successful national team encourages girls to take up the game. This was one of the points forcibly emphasised by Elisabeth Loisel, head coach of the French national team that has surged into the upper echelons of the women's game in a very short space of time. "In 1998, we had 27,600 registered players," she commented, "and the results of our 'A' team were relatively poor. The national team is now fifth in the FIFA ranking and, by the end of June this year, our balance showed 48,502 registered players." In other words, there has been a 78% growth in a period of seven years.

If we're playing the percentage game, it's not entirely irrelevant that the French national association has, in the meantime, increased its budget for women's football by 250%. More importantly, a four-year action plan has been devised, aiming at accelerating grassroots growth. The 'football for everyone' concept is, as in Scotland,

applied at school level and among clubs. At the moment 1,213 have girls' or women's teams and the aim is to increase this figure considerably.

Obviously France has special parameters in that it is, geographically, among the continent's largest territories. This has prompted the national association to establish the 'Centre d'Accueil Féminin', a sort of central bureau that will help to supervise and work alongside schools, clubs, local authorities and so on. The plan is to set up, within French football's 22 regions, no fewer than 102 of these centres.

Not all national associations, evidently, are equipped to copy the sort of recipes drafted by, say, the French, Scottish or German associations. But the different recipes can be adapted to suit the ingredients in other fields. At the moment, only 33 of UEFA's member associations have development plans for girls' football. Use of the word 'only' may be a little harsh, bearing in mind the rapid progress made in recent years. But the figures indicate clearly that there is still a great deal of work to be done in terms of integrating girls into the pan-European grassroots campaign.



BILDBYRÅN



**A SURPRISING
SCORE FOR FOOTBALL!**

BIG-TIME + SMALL-TIME = GREAT TIME

ONE OF THE PERMANENT CHALLENGES IN FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT IS TO AVOID GRASSROOTS PROGRAMMES FROM BECOMING ISLANDS WHICH THE MAINSTREAM OF FOOTBALL FLOWS PAST.

THE AIM IS TO CREATE ONE CONTINUOUS FLOW, WITH YOUNGSTERS STAYING IN THE GAME AS PLAYERS, REFEREES, VOLUNTEERS, ADMINISTRATORS, SUPPORTERS OR TELEVISION VIEWERS.

One way of creating this sense of integration is to allow the 'small-time' players to see and feel part of the 'big-time'. UEFA has acknowledged the potential value of allowing footballers at the base of the pyramid to get a glimpse of life at the top. But what is the best way to do it?

UEFA has been pegging grassroots projects to major events since the starball match was introduced in 2002

as a prelude to the annual cup hand-over ceremony in which the UEFA Champions League trophy is returned by the champions of Europe and handed to the host city to be placed on public display until the final. The starball match is a 24-hour five-a-side match contested in shifts by around 1,000 players representing two 'teams', played on a mini-pitch dressed up to look like a UEFA Champions League venue. The match is open to boys and

girls of all age groups with, obviously, the seniors playing through the deepest of the night. Goals are plentiful and winning margins are usually slim.

For instance, the event in Istanbul prior to last season's cup handover was the highest-scoring starball match, with no fewer than 850 goals scored at an average of 35.4 per hour or one every 1.74 minutes. Despite the deluge of goals, the margin of victory was slim. The final scoreboard recorded a win for the black shirts of Asia Athletic over the white shirts of Europe United by 427 to 423. But the important thing was not the result but the fact that over 800 people had enjoyed a taste of 'UEFA Champions League' football.

The three starball matches played in Glasgow, Manchester and Gelsenkirchen were so successful that the concept was applied to the finals of UEFA's two major club competition finals last May.

The UEFA Cup final in Lisbon coincided with the opening of the Quinta das Conchas complex – a huge park and garden area that includes facilities for sport. So a five-a-side tournament was organised as a joint venture



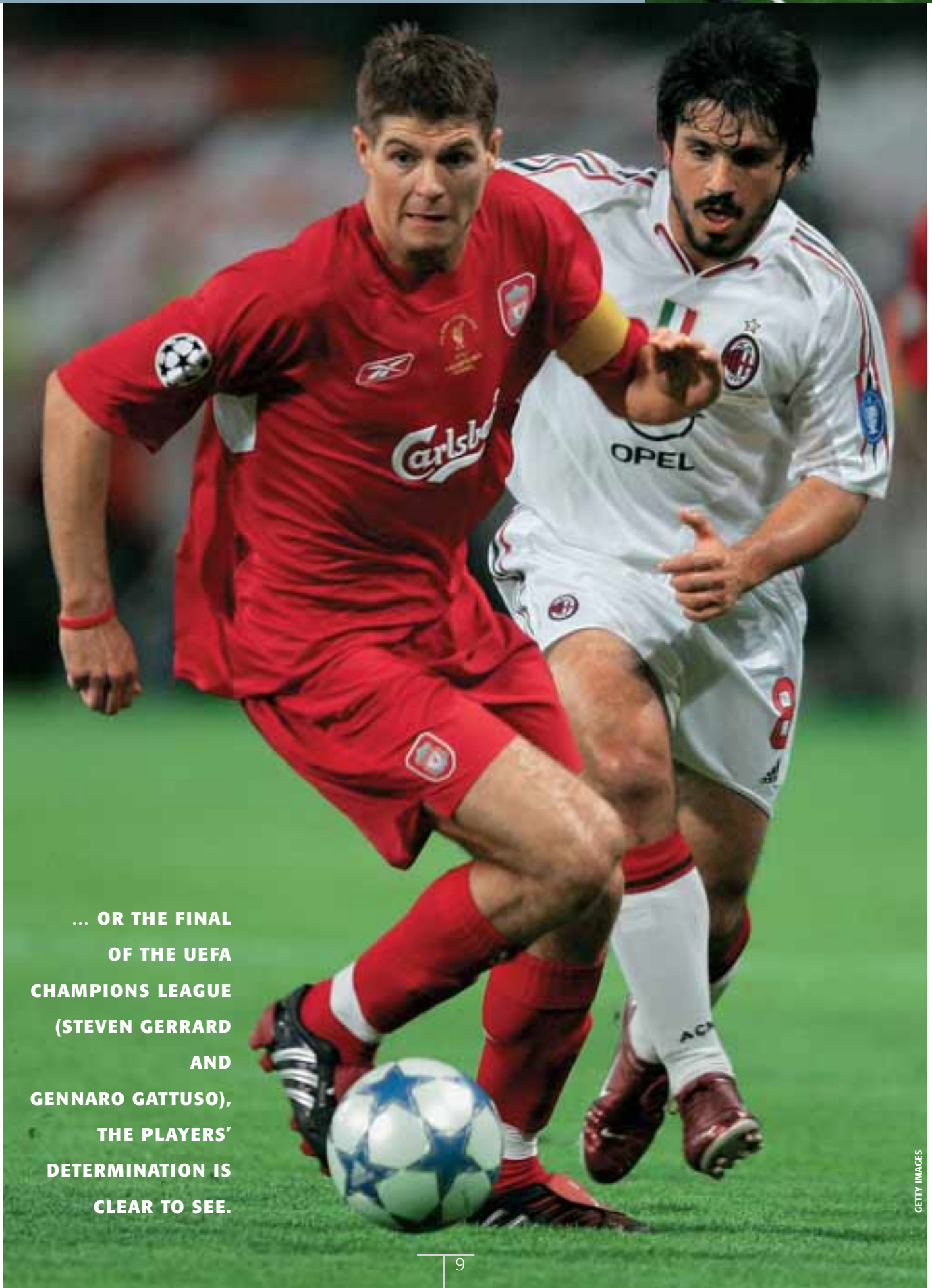
Paulo Sousa with some grassroots players before the final in Lisbon.

WHETHER THE
STARBALL MATCH...



VEDAT DENACI

... OR THE FINAL
OF THE UEFA
CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
(STEVEN GERRARD
AND
GENNARO GATTUSO),
THE PLAYERS'
DETERMINATION IS
CLEAR TO SEE.



GETTY IMAGES



VEDAT DENACI

involving Lisbon city hall, the Lisbon football association and UEFA, with additional support from sponsors, who were also offered the opportunity to set up displays in key areas of Lisbon. The result was a four-day event which reached its grand finale on the day of the final between Sporting Clube de Portugal and CSKA Moskva, with star players and other prominent personalities invited to play important walk-on roles during the tournament.

Games were played – with referees – on four 40 x 20 m grass pitches with 3 x 2 m goals within two age categories (11-12 and 13-14). A total of 400 boys and 200 girls took part, with the participating teams coming from the annual Lisbon Games, local schools and special invitations by parishes in the city based on fair play, sporting spirit and commitment to grassroots causes. Each player received a medal, a bib and other equipment such as caps and T-shirts. During the first two days, the 16 teams in four groups played each other on a league basis. On the follow-

ing two days, the format switched to knock-out with, for example, the winner of Group A taking on the fourth-placed team in Group B. On the last day, the finals were played; and the winners received a special trophy during the awards ceremony that closed the event.

Within a day, a similar event had kicked-off at the Fenerbahçe SK youth academy in Istanbul. The UEFA Young Champions event was a UEFA-led grassroots tournament pegged to the UEFA Champions League final with a view to giving youngsters a taste of the continent's top club competition event. Just under 1,000 of them took part (all boys this time), split into 10-12, 12-14 and 14-16 age groups, with 64 teams of five in each category. Games were 4 v 4 (with rolling substitutions) on 30 x 20m pitches, with no goalkeepers and no referees. Each match lasted 15 minutes. As at the starball match, pitches were UEFA Champions League look-alikes and adidas, apart from providing the matchballs, as they had done in Lisbon, also offered a skills

clinic and other features such as dribbling, juggling and shooting competitions, plus the opportunity for the winners to be ball-boys at the final.

There were some interesting features. One adult was present at every game but players refereed their own games and decided their own substitutions. Parents were kept away from the touchlines and applauded good football from 'a respectful distance'. As in Lisbon, the initial games were played on a league basis and, during this phase, the Young Champions provided a tremendous festival of football, with an outstanding attitude to the game, a lot of fun and an environment that fostered fair play. Teams played high-risk football and individuals were prepared to run at opponents and display their full repertoire of ball skills. So far, so good. Extremely good, in fact.

However, the point of recording all this in the newsletter is not just to celebrate past events. We travelled home after the finals with some observations and reflections that, we hope, will interest national associations which organise or intend to organise similar grassroots events, maybe pegged to domestic cup finals or other senior events.

For example, a lot of the goals scored in Istanbul were not the product of solo skills or passing movements. Instead, they were scored by a single kick into an unguarded goal. So would it be better to include goalkeepers and enlarge the goals?

In terms of fostering control and skill, would it be better for the Under-12s to play with a size 4 ball?

And, maybe more importantly, it didn't pass unnoticed that, as the knock-out rounds of the competitions pro-



EMPICS/UEFA

THE STARBALL MATCH IN ISTANBUL.



FOTOS: VEDAT DENACI



Posing with the champions' trophy is a dream come true for these youngsters: UEFA vice-president Senes Erzik looks on (far right).

gressed, a degree of tension crept in – with all the symptoms which that entails. The high-risk football of the group matches was diluted into lower-risk strategies; players were sometimes inhibited by the fear of losing, in that they were less willing to attempt tricks or to exercise their dribbling skills.

Instead, they opted for safety-first passing. And, of course, nobody likes to see a youngster end a marvellous tournament in tears just because his team has been beaten by a narrow margin in the quarter-finals or semi-finals. We were drawn into the perennial debate among grassroots leaders about where

the line should be drawn in terms of the competitive element. We have to find the right formula for encouraging grassroots players to express themselves and enjoy themselves to the maximum without inhibitions induced by the 'fear of losing' yet, at the same time, without impairing or diluting the innate will to win.

But those are questions for us to address – not the players who went home with wonderful memories of the events in Lisbon and Istanbul and of their chance to feel part of some of the biggest events on the world's sporting stage. As organisers, we learned enough to be able to make some fine-tuning to the logistics of the event but, when we head for the 50th anniversary final at the Stade de France next May, the Young Champions will, once again, be part of the grand finale to the UEFA Champions League season.



ALL EYES ON THE BALL IN AUSTRIA.

SUMMER FUN

IN THE LAST NEWSLETTER, WE REPORTED THAT THE 'SUMMER OF GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL' PROGRAMME LAUNCHED IN UEFA'S JUBILEE YEAR HAD BEEN SUCH A RESOUNDING SUCCESS THAT FOOTBALLERS ALL OVER THE CONTINENT WOULD BE ENJOYING A SECOND HELPING IN THE SUMMER OF 2005.

The logistics remained unchanged. UEFA supported grassroots events by supplying certificates of participation and by offering each national association 100 adidas grassroots programme footballs and 150 T-shirts, plus an additional 50 footballs for each association's most valuable grassroots event and another 50 for the best disabled football event.

The 2004 menu had been fairly tasty and the heartwarming result of the repeat performance in 2005 was that the second helping was served to almost three times as many. In 2004, the news that half a million grassroots players had enjoyed some summer football was greeted as a resounding success. So we're short of superlatives as we see from

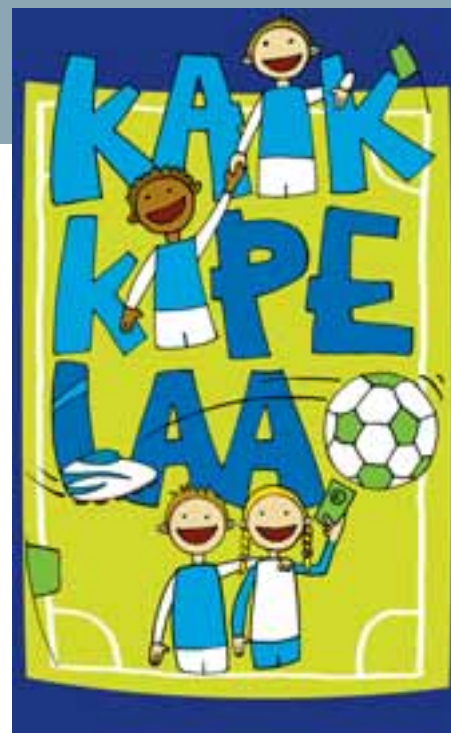
figures supplied by our national associations that the 2005 edition comfortably topped the 1.3 million mark even though, at the time of going to press, definitive statistics had not been received from all 52 member associations.

From UEFA's standpoint, it was also heartening to see how some of



Intense action in Armenia.

ALL-OUT ATTACK IN THE NETHERLANDS.



A Finnish grassroots poster.

where practically the whole spectrum was covered via specialised projects targeting, for example, the deaf (Estonia, Latvia, Slovakia) or amputees (Russia, Ukraine). Other associations singled out broader-band events catering for a wide range of players under Paralympics or Special Olympics banners. At the time of writing, no fewer than 34 national associations had signalled their best event or festival for disabled players.

our commercial partners for top competitions are also throwing themselves enthusiastically into grassroots projects. Indeed, the Coca-Cola Cup in Belgium and the Danone Cup regional tournament in the Czech Republic were among the front-runners in terms of sheer numbers of participants. But the lion's share of the effort is being invested by national or regional associations in schemes ranging from Slovakia's 'Mini Champions League' to a tournament for girls in Latvia and a summer school in the south-west of France for kids who would otherwise have had no opportunity for a holiday.

The same applies to the events organised in the disability football sector,



Fabien Barthez makes time for a disabled fan.

THE WINNING GALLERY

PHOTOS



SLOVENIA

1

■ ■ The winning photograph arrived with a Slovenian postmark and was a great example of family involvement in grassroots football.



NORWAY

2

■ ■ The silver-medal photo captured a split second from Norway's massive Landsturneringen national tournament, with a youngster about to make a great eyes-wide-shut save.

DENMARK

3



■ ■ Third prize went to an image of the summer's biggest grassroots event – which offered opportunities to 130,000 players in Denmark. It's a nice image of how grassroots football embraces all cultures.

As in 2004, UEFA organised photography and art competitions, inviting participants to submit photographs and drawings related to the summer's events and expressing the joy and the value of grassroots football. Standards were high and many memorable images were received at UEFA's headquarters. Member associations which struggled to select their best grassroots event might be consoled to learn that we struggled just as mightily to select the medallists.

ART

CYPRUS

1



■ ■ The winning drawing arrived from Cyprus – a colourful, dynamic painting of goalmouth action as seen through the eyes of a young child.

BELARUS

2

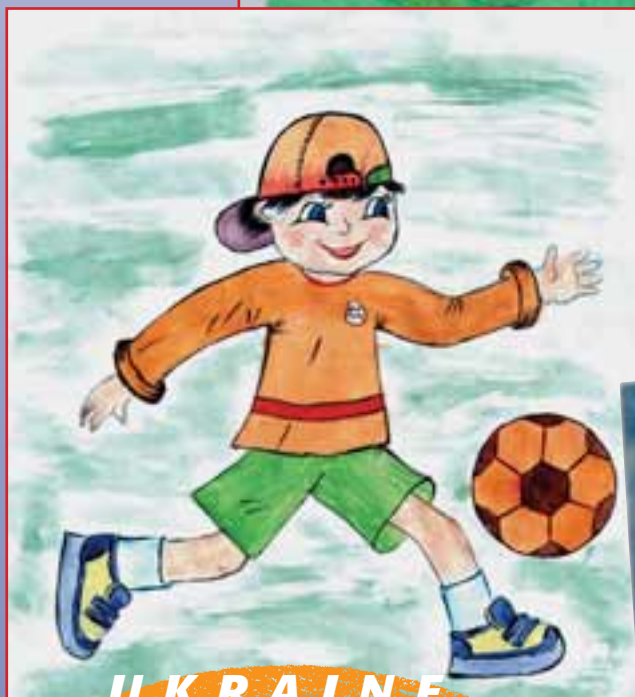


■ ■ Second prize went to Belarus and a three-dimensional football scene.

UKRAINE

3

■ ■ The third prize was awarded to a work submitted from Ukraine, with the colours and, more especially, the face expressing the joy of playing football.





UEFA
Route de Genève 46
CH-1260 Nyon
Switzerland
Phone +41 848 00 27 27
Fax +41 22 707 27 34
uefa.com

Union des associations
européennes de football

