

# UEFA



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## UEFA CONGRESS

Governance reforms  
adopted in Helsinki

Aleksander Čeferin, UEFA President

Congress - Helsinki 2017



41<sup>st</sup> Ordinary UEFA Congress  
Helsinki 2017



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WE CARE ABOUT FOOTBALL

WE CARE ABOUT FOOTBALL

### HAVING A FIELD DAY

UEFA Direct talks to PSG's head groundsman, Jonathan Calderwood

### THE TECHNICIAN

Fabio Capello shares his secrets to success

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

UEFA bids farewell to five members in Helsinki



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# 'SECURITY IS OUR NUMBER ONE PRIORITY'

**T**he recent attack on a bus carrying Borussia Dortmund players to their UEFA Champions League quarter-final against AS Monaco FC unfortunately highlighted the challenges that we face in organising some of the world's biggest sporting events.

Furthermore, this incident served as a reminder that no matter how great the action on the pitch, it is the safety and security of the players, fans, officials and partners that has to be our number one priority for all our matches and competitions.

UEFA has more than 60 years' experience of organising football matches and we have faced many trials and tribulations along the way. As recently as last year, UEFA EURO 2016 was staged against a backdrop of hideous terrorist attacks that targeted France and neighbouring Belgium.

I remember vividly how we spent countless months in consultation with the local organising committee, the French government and local authorities to ensure the safety of the hundreds of thousands of people who attended the tournament – an event that thankfully passed without major incident.

To show UEFA's commitment to ensuring a safe environment for players, officials and fans, we are setting up a new security unit, which will work alongside our existing Stadium and Security Committee.

As you know, in the coming months we have several major events to deliver, including youth tournaments, Women's EURO 2017 and the club competition finals. In each case, we are working very closely with the local authorities in order to guarantee the safety of the participants, the fans and everyone else visiting the host countries and cities.

I sincerely hope that everyone will be able to enjoy these magnificent occasions to the fullest. After all, football has the unique quality of being able to unite people of all nationalities, races and faiths – no matter how challenging the times may be.



**Theodore Theodoridis**  
UEFA General Secretary





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## 41<sup>st</sup> Ordinary UEFA Congress Helsinki 2017

UEFA

# 'LET US NOT BE AFRAID'

UEFA president **Aleksander Čeferin**'s message to the 41st Ordinary UEFA Congress in Helsinki on 5 April was loud and clear: UEFA is ready to face the future, and it will show no fear whatsoever in meeting the demands posed by football's ever-changing world.

In his keynote speech at the latest gathering of Europe's football parliament – his first address to a UEFA Congress since his election last September – the UEFA president called for bravery and

forward thinking in the nurturing of the game. "Football is beautiful. Let us dare to protect it together. Let us dare to fight for what we believe to be just. That is our responsibility as

leaders," he told representatives of UEFA's 55 member associations and prominent guests.

"Let us have the courage of our convictions, our values and our passions."

The UEFA president emphasised that while respect should always be shown to UEFA's past decisions and traditions, change and reform should not be cause for trepidation. "Like on the pitch, our formula for success will be efficiency, simplicity and a touch of creativity," he told the audience. "No empty promises; no empty words; no scandals. Let's act. With humility, respect and professionalism."

A series of good governance reforms approved during the Congress (see page 9) were described by Mr Čeferin as a necessary rebuilding of UEFA's foundations. "We realise that these measures are far removed from the concerns of pure football fans," he said. "But these changes are essential if we are to rebuild our image, restore our credibility and strengthen our legitimacy."

### Vision for tomorrow

Mr Čeferin stressed that now was the time to start moulding the European football of tomorrow, and that the national associations would play a key role in that process. "Together, we will develop a strategic vision for European football," he explained. "We will initiate discussions

very soon. It is your ideas, projects, hopes and aspirations, and those of your clubs, players and supporters, that will be at the heart of this vision."

Moving on to the relationship between UEFA and football stakeholders, the UEFA president emphasised that Europe's leagues, clubs and players should not be seen as enemies. "They are key stakeholders in our game," he said.

"Partners that we must respect. So why be afraid of dialogue? Why be afraid of telling them face to face how we could shape the future together, hand in hand, in the best interests of football?"

**"It's not a question of looking at football as it is today and asking 'Why?', but of dreaming about how it could be and asking 'Why not?'"**

**Aleksander Čeferin**  
UEFA President

Mr Čeferin ruled out a closed European league. "Quite simply, that is not in line with our values and ideals," he said. "But we will work together for the good of club football and correct what needs to be put right." Turning to the leagues, he said that UEFA would "never give in to the blackmail of those who think they can manipulate small leagues or impose their will on the associations because they think they are all-powerful on account of the astronomical revenues they generate". He insisted that money did not rule and that the football pyramid had to be – and would be – respected, while explaining that UEFA would work with the leagues for the good of domestic football, in order to find practical solutions to their problems.

Mr Čeferin pledged to continue the development of UEFA's financial fair play measures, which have helped to stabilise European clubs' finances. "Financial fair play has been remarkably efficient in reducing club debt," he explained, stressing that these rules should not simply be seen as austerity measures. "It must be a support mechanism, encouraging greater justice and stability, but also greater investment." →

## NEW FACES

A number of new faces will be present at the next meeting of the UEFA Executive Committee in Cardiff on 1 June, following elections at the UEFA Congress in Helsinki.

Eight seats on the committee were up for election, and out of the 11 candidates in the running, the following were elected/re-elected for four-year terms:

• Karl-Erik Nilsson	(Sweden)	50 votes (new)
• John Delaney	(Republic of Ireland)	48 votes (new)
• Michele Uva	(Italy)	46 votes (new)
• Zbigniew Boniek	(Poland)	45 votes (new)
• Reinhard Grindel	(Germany)	44 votes (new)
• David Gill	(England)	40 votes
• Michael van Praag	(Netherlands)	36 votes
• Servet Yardımcı	(Turkey)	34 votes (new)

Armand Duka (Albania) received 25 votes, Elkhan Mammadov (Azerbaijan) received 24, and Kieran O'Connor (Wales) received 11. Kairat Boranbayev (Kazakhstan) withdrew his candidature before the election.

Karl-Erik Nilsson was appointed first vice-president, with Fernando Gomes (Portugal), Reinhard Grindel, Grigoriy Surkis (Ukraine) and Ángel María Villar Llona (Spain) being named as the other vice-presidents. David Gill (England) was appointed treasurer.



In addition, four European members of the FIFA Council were elected by acclamation: Sándor Csányi (Hungary), Costakis Koutsokoumnis (Cyprus) and Dejan Savićević (Montenegro) for four-year terms, and Reinhard Grindel (Germany) for a two-year term.



Perti Alaja, president of the Finnish FA, welcomed the Congress participants to Helsinki.

**Fighting negative elements**

Mr Čeferin made a firm commitment to maintaining UEFA’s determined stance on violence, doping, corruption, match-fixing, and ethical and disciplinary problems – “all the evils that threaten our sport,” as he put it. This, he said, was why UEFA had established a new division tasked solely

with combating these negative elements.

He explained that “social fair play” would also be a priority for UEFA in the future, with a focus on making football fairer and more ethical. This would include protecting children and incorporating respect for human rights and workers’ rights in bidding requirements for

UEFA competitions. “Being a social fair play organisation also means being an organisation that does not tolerate racism,” the UEFA president emphasised. “Or sexism. Or homophobia. Or discrimination against disabled people. Here too, I ask you to set an example,” he said. “Within UEFA and within your



**A NEW HONORARY MEMBER**

**Marios N Lefkaritis was awarded honorary UEFA membership at the Congress in Helsinki, as he retired from UEFA duties after more than two decades of outstanding service to European football.**

In recent years, he was a UEFA vice-president and treasurer, while also chairing the Finance Committee and the National Associations Committee, as well as acting as special advisor to the HatTrick Committee.

Marios N Lefkaritis served UEFA in various different roles over the years, with the first coming way back in 1992. He was first elected to the Executive Committee in 1996 and was, among other things, chairman of the European Under-21 Championship Committee and vice-chairman of the European Championship Committee. He was also vice-chairman of the board of EURO 2008 SA.

At national level, he was president of the Cyprus Football Association for ten years from 1991, before becoming the association’s honorary president. Marios N Lefkaritis joins a highly select group of individuals:

**UEFA honorary president**

Lennart Johansson (Sweden)

**UEFA honorary members**

- Gerhard Aigner (Germany)
- Hans Bangarter (Switzerland)
- Egidius Braun (Germany)
- Des Casey (Republic of Ireland)
- Şenes Erzik (Turkey)
- Jean Fournet-Fayard (France)
- Vyacheslav Koloskov (Russia)
- Marios N Lefkaritis (Cyprus)
- Antonio Matarrese (Italy)
- Joseph Mifsud (Malta)
- Per Ravn Omdal (Norway)
- Giangiorgio Spiess (Switzerland)
- Geoffrey Thompson (England)

respective bodies. We cannot stand up for diversity, gender equality and social inclusion by means of TV spots and good intentions if we ourselves tolerate words and behaviour from another age." He reflected that social fair play would "make football more open to those who love it and to those who play it, wherever they are, wherever they come from and whoever they may be".

The UEFA president announced that UEFA would be making an additional €1m solidarity payment to each member association for the current cycle, owing to the excellent financial results achieved by national team tournaments such as EURO 2016. "In an ever more individualistic society, 'sharing' must not be considered a dirty word," he told the associations' presidents and general secretaries. "Solidarity is a value that has to be engrained in UEFA's DNA." He stressed that he was aware of the financial difficulties that the associations sometimes faced. "UEFA is not here to accumulate wealth while you struggle

to develop football in the furthest reaches of your territories," he said. "When the financial results exceed our expectations, as they have done in this cycle, I will propose to redistribute the funds as soon as possible."

#### **Defending football's values**

Mr Čeferin stressed that football had to remain a game of the people, asserting that UEFA would "defend football's values against all the cynics, killjoys and moralists, and against all those who are embittered, disappointed, disillusioned or disgusted".

### **The UEFA president announced that UEFA would be making an additional €1m solidarity payment to each member association for the current cycle.**

Football, he said, had to act as a unifying – rather than a divisive – force. "Let football give people reason to dream," he urged. "Footballers are artists. They light up dark rooms in so many homes around the world. They inspire. They delight. They transcend. Quite simply, they bring out pure and intense emotions in us, in a troubled world, a complex and paradoxical world – a world that is more regulated and sanitised than ever, and at the same time ever more inclined towards populism and fear."

"With tens of millions of registered players and hundreds of millions of fans, we represent the biggest social movement in Europe. In an uncertain world, in societies beset with doubt, we have responsibilities," Mr Čeferin concluded. "I will say it again: let us not be afraid. Together, let us always respect and defend those who bring football alive every day, everywhere: the supporters, the volunteers and the younger generation. Let us never forget that it is for them that we must pursue our projects for the future." 🌐



## **GOVERNANCE REFORMS APPROVED**

**UEFA's good governance programme took a crucial step forward at the Congress in Helsinki, with Europe's national associations approving reform proposals that are designed to strengthen the organisation.**

The reforms in question were a key element of the manifesto presented by the UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, in the run-up to his election last September. Mr Čeferin explained to the Congress that these changes were "a necessary step towards greater calm and stability in UEFA," he said.

"Why should we be afraid," he said, "to modernise and to keep up with the times? After all, transparency and good governance are not only fashionable; they are praiseworthy and respectable values."

These reforms include new term limits for the UEFA president and members of the Executive Committee, with officials allowed to serve a maximum of three four-year terms. From now on, candidates for election/re-election to the Executive Committee must also hold an active office (president, vice-president, general secretary or chief executive) at their respective national associations.

In addition, two full member positions on the Executive Committee are to be granted to representatives of the European

Club Association. Meanwhile, UEFA's Governance and Compliance Committee is to be strengthened, with two additional independent members being appointed, bringing the total number of members to five.

Moreover, a specific article is to be included in the UEFA Statutes, to ensure that venues for all UEFA competitions are selected in a fully objective manner by means of a transparent bidding process, while another article will make ethics and good governance a statutory objective. Finally, national association experts will now be allowed to chair UEFA committees.

Aleksander Čeferin described the reforms as "an overhaul of our foundations, on which we can build a better future".

"'Leading by example' has to be more than just a catch-line," he said. "It has to be a clear reality."

Addressing the Congress, the European commissioner for education, culture, youth and sport, Tibor Navracsics, gave a warm welcome to the reforms. "I am glad to see that UEFA is taking these commitments seriously," he said. "Transparency, accountability and stakeholder involvement are the backbone of good governance principles."

# NEW FUTSAL STRATEGY IN PLACE

A new strategy for futsal and the staging of the UEFA Europa League final in the same week as the UEFA Champions League final in the 2018–21 cycle were the main focal points of the latest UEFA Executive Committee meeting, which took place in Helsinki on 4 April.



The recent Executive Committee meeting in the Finnish capital was not just important because of the decisions that were taken; it was also an opportunity to thank members who were taking their leave of the committee ahead of the following day's 41st Ordinary UEFA Congress.

Farewells and gratitude for years of outstanding service went to vice-presidents Giancarlo Abete (Italy) and Marios N Lefkaritis (Cyprus), as well as fellow committee members Allan Hansen (Denmark), Avraham Luzon (Israel) and František Laurinec (Slovakia). All five can reflect with pride on their crucial work on behalf of UEFA and European football at a time when the game has been evolving more rapidly than ever before.

One of the Executive Committee's eternal characteristics is its desire to ensure that European football keeps pace with modern times, and a number of key strategic decisions were made in Helsinki in relation to futsal, seeking to take the game forward as it continues to grow in popularity.

Giancarlo Abete, Avraham Luzon, Marios N Lefkaritis, František Laurinec and Allen Hansen after their final Executive Committee meeting in Helsinki.

Thus, as of 2022, the UEFA Futsal EURO will take place every four years (rather than every two years) and will be contested by 16 teams (rather than 12). The structure of this competition will be improved, with the qualifying stage spanning two seasons, and the clash with the Futsal World Cup every four years will be avoided. The 2020–22 European Futsal Championship will kick off in the 2020/21 season, with no Futsal EURO final round taking place in 2020.

In addition, a UEFA Women's Futsal EURO is to take place every two years, starting in 2019. This will be contested by four teams, reflecting the fact that the number of national women's futsal teams remains limited at present. Meanwhile, on the youth front, a European Under-19 Futsal Championship is to take place every two years, also starting in 2019, and will be contested by eight teams.

The Executive Committee also endorsed changes to the format of the UEFA Futsal Cup. From 2017/18, the top three member associations in UEFA's futsal rankings will be entitled to enter a second representative, in addition to their domestic champions. Then, as of the 2018/19 season, the competition will be renamed the UEFA Futsal Champions League, further increasing the prestige associated with UEFA's premier futsal club competition.

Turning to the 11-a-side game, the Executive Committee gave the green light to playing the Europa League final in the same week as the Champions League final for the entire 2018–21 cycle. This move has been made so that the Europa League final is played – like the Champions League final – after the end of the domestic season. Consequently, the final of the 2018/19 Europa League will take place on Wednesday 29 May 2019. The two finals will be staged at different venues, as is the case at present.

Finally, the Executive Committee confirmed that the final round of the 2017–19 European Under-21 Championship would take place in Italy from 16 to 30 June 2019.

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will take place in Cardiff on 1 June, the day of the Women's Champions League final, and two days before the Welsh city also plays host to the Champions League final. 🌐

# STOCKHOLM SET TO PUT ON A SHOW

The stage is set in Sweden's capital for the final of the 2016/17 UEFA Europa League on 24 May.

**S**tockholm's Friends Arena is providing the stage for the much-anticipated climax of this season's Europa League, adding another layer of football history to both the Swedish capital and its state-of-the-art stadium.

Friends Arena is proving a worthy heir to the historic Råsunda Stadium, which it replaced as the seat of Swedish football five years ago. Located roughly 1km from the site of the old ground in Solna, just north of Stockholm, the arena was inaugurated on 14 November 2012, a night celebrated for Zlatan Ibrahimović's extraordinary bicycle kick from outside the box in Sweden's 4-2 victory over England.

More high drama followed at the Women's EURO 2013 final, where a crowd of 41,301 watched Nadine Angerer save two penalties and Anja Mittag score for Germany against Norway to take the European crown.

Home to both the Swedish national team and local club AIK, Friends Arena is Scandinavia's biggest football arena. The footballing history it has helped to create

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The Friends Arena in Stockholm has a retractable roof and can seat 50,000.

builds on that written at the Råsunda, which hosted finals of the men's and women's World Cup. It was there that Pelé fired Brazil to glory against the hosts in 1958, and Norway's women triumphed against Germany in 1995.

## Record numbers

Another memorable occasion now awaits with the culmination of the 2016/17 UEFA Europa League. A total of 188 teams – from continental heavyweights to European debutants – entered the competition and the action has been followed in record numbers. Manchester United FC's home match against Fenerbahçe SK on matchday 3 drew a group-stage record of 73,063 to Old Trafford, and a new knockout stage and overall competition high was recorded at Wembley as 80,465 watched Tottenham Hotspur FC take on KAA Gent in the round of 32.

The competition's large audiences have been rewarded with compelling action. Jan Sýkora's opening goal of the group stage – for FC Slovan Liberec against Qarabağ FK – came after just 10.69 seconds and was the quickest successful strike in Europa League history. Aritz Aduriz then

became the first player to find the net five times in a single Europa League match when he scored all of Athletic Club's goals (including three penalties) in their 5-3 victory over KRC Genk on 3 November.

Whoever ultimately prevails in Stockholm on 24 May, there will be a new name on the trophy for the first time in four years, with Sevilla FC not back to defend their hat-trick of titles. Whoever takes their crown will be the cream of a remarkably diverse crop.

Of the 188 contenders, 139 entered in the qualifying rounds, 16 were given direct access to the group stage and 33 joined at various intervals from the UEFA Champions League.

Since the old UEFA Cup was rebranded ahead of the 2009/10 campaign, 190 clubs representing more than 30 countries have taken part in the group stage of the Europa League, with 13 making their debuts this season alone. At Friends Arena on 24 May, though, it will be all about the last two standing in 2016/17, and to paraphrase a certain Swedish super group, the winner will take it all. 🏆



THE GAME



# PITCH PERFECT

Modern football pitches are as smooth as billiard tables and perfect for a fast-flowing spectacle. But what is the science behind them? Award-winning grounds manager **Jonathan Calderwood** explains how times have changed and what exactly goes into making the perfect pitch.



It has earned praise from Lionel Messi and Neymar in the UEFA Champions League. UEFA declared it the best pitch at EURO 2016. And it has been Ligue 1's best pitch for the last three seasons. Even in an age of beautifully telegenic playing surfaces, it manages to stand out from the rest. The pristine rectangle of grass at Paris

Saint-Germain FC's Parc des Princes is a perfect example of the modern football pitch.

It is not the only one, of course. Think of all the lights shining on emerald carpets across the continent on a Champions League night, and suddenly that not-so-distant age of wintry mudbaths and dusty goalmouths seems light years away.

The man responsible for the pitch at Parc des Princes is the club's grounds manager, Jonathan Calderwood. The Northern Irishman, who was lured to the French capital from Aston Villa FC, where he had won eight separate awards for his work, chuckles as he reflects on how expectations have changed. →



PSG's grounds manager, Jonathan Calderwood, tends to the Parc des Princes pitch.

## THE GAME

"I've been doing this job for 22 years now, and back then all you did was prepare the pitch as best you could, and that was it," he says. "You'd just cut it, mark it out and make it look the best you could – no questions asked. Now, it's all about trying to keep the players on the pitch and give the coach the type of pitch he wants for whatever type of football he plays. It's all about how quick the pitch is, how much water is on there, the height of the grass, how hard or soft the pitch is, the traction on the pitch – whether players slip over – and so on. Even a bad bobble can cost a club tens of millions."

This search for pitch perfection is a relatively new phenomenon. When Bill Shankly became manager at Liverpool FC, he asked the Anfield groundsman where

the watering facilities were and was told they had none. In that era, clubs would use braziers and flame throwers to try to melt the ice on frozen grounds. Another English club, Halifax Town AFC, even responded to the 'Big Freeze' of 1963 by opening their pitch up to the public as an ice rink. Even when Calderwood began working in the game in the

**'The pressure now to produce this perfect pitch 12 months a year is unbelievable. Any injury at all is scrutinised, and any bad bounce is scrutinised.'**

**Jonathan Calderwood**

mid-90s, the forensic approach found today had yet to arrive.

He even cites the example – albeit unusual in any era – of a grounds manager in one European country who would stay at home on the day of a game, considering his work done. Needless to say, that would never happen today.

"The grounds manager is now such a massive part of the club and the team, it's unbelievable," says the Northern Irishman, who has a 15-strong team working under him in Paris. "We've got better tools to do the job, but the pressure now to produce this perfect pitch 12 months a year is unbelievable. With the amount of money that is involved in the game, these big teams are buying massive players, and they want to keep them

A muddy Anfield pitch during a match between Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur in 1971.



Getty Images



Getty Images

Grassmaster pitch containing 3% synthetic fibre, which gives added stability to the pitch. "There's 180mm of it sitting below the surface and 20mm sitting above the surface. So, the whole synthetic fibre is 200mm long, and that is stitched every 2cm apart. That makes it a reinforced pitch, with the natural grass roots growing around these synthetic fibres."

There are three distinct layers below the grass surface of the pitch, starting with the 'root zone', which is 120mm deep and made up of 95% sand and 5% organic matter to help the grass grow. Beneath this, Calderwood explains, is 180mm of sand to aid drainage. Then comes the undersoil heating system and 100mm of gravel. Then, at the very bottom, elite clubs will all have a sophisticated drainage system.

"Some guys might have a SubAir system which can blow warm air or cold air through the pitch," explains Calderwood of one example of the hi-tech systems available. "You can also reverse it and pull water through the pitch. So, if you have a big downpour an hour before kick-off, you just push a button and it sucks the water out of the pitch. Sometimes, if you have a lot of water, the smell becomes a bit stagnant, and you can hit the button and it sucks the bad gasses out of the soil. →



Getty Images

The Switzerland v Turkey match at EURO 2008 was played in difficult conditions following a downpour.

### Getting the perfect pitch

So, what exactly goes into making the perfect pitch? Let us start with the playing surface itself. In the case of Calderwood's pitch at Parc des Princes, the surface is stripped every summer and new grass seed is sown, using perennial rye grass – a cool-season grass well suited to the northern European climate.

Not every club has this luxury. Those in urgent need will buy readymade turf grown at a nursery or farm and roll it out. However, seeded grass pitches tend to be stronger. At Parc des Princes, as Calderwood explains, they have a Desso

on the pitch. Any injury at all is scrutinised, and any bad bounce is scrutinised. "We're continually talking to the coach and the fitness coach and the performance guy and the doctor and the physio. You're really in the middle of that team now, whereas before you were just seen as the guy who looked after the pitch and cut the grass and put some white lines on it."

## 'IT'S A PASSION'

**Jonathan Calderwood talks about the dedication required to be an award-winning grounds manager.**

"The working life of a groundsman at the elite level is so demanding – the days can be long and you need absolute commitment. We work all day Saturday and all day Sunday, because most of our matches are at nine o'clock on a Sunday night. But when you do this job, 95% of the time you are doing it because it's a passion – you love pitches and you love grass. You don't really do it for money. I love football, and for some reason I love grass. It comes from my father. He was a keen gardener back in Northern Ireland, and growing up I was out in the garden all the time working for him, cutting the grass and doing the flowers. I loved football as well, so the two came hand in hand."



Getty Images

### JONATHAN CALDERWOOD

#### 1997–2001

Deputy Head Groundsman, Wembley Stadium

#### 2001–06

Head Groundsman, Aston Villa FC and Wolverhampton Wanderers FC

#### 2006–13

Head Groundsman, Aston Villa FC

#### 2013-present

Head Groundsman, Paris Saint-Germain FC

Leading a team of **15** groundsmen at Parc des Princes and the Saint-Germain-en-Laye training ground, and working on preparations for a new 18-pitch training centre



You can also blow air up and crack all the sand to allow air to come into the sand.”

Not all the technology is below the ground, either. “There are ultra violet lights we wheel on to replicate the sun,” he adds. “Think about all these stadiums which block out the sunlight. It’s good in one way because budgets are growing, respect for the job is increasing, and technology is improving too, but stadiums are getting bigger, which is making things more complicated.”

And yet, grounds managers are finding solutions in the natural world too. Manchester City FC’s use of garlic on their pitch to counter the menace of nematodes – minute worms which feed on grass roots – is an example of a trend towards using natural products in the daily upkeep of pitches. “You have your main basic feeding programme made up of liquid and fertiliser, and that will be supplemented with other bio-stimulants like sugars, compost teas and seaweeds to try to enhance the grass and the strength of the grass. It is all about trying to make the grass as strong as possible for when players are twisting and turning and sliding on it,” Calderwood explains.

In Calderwood’s case, he takes compost collected from the forest and ‘brews’ it in a teapot before spraying it on his pitch.

“This dirty water is full of bacteria, and it goes into the soil and helps the fight against bad bacteria and breaks down the fertiliser to make it readily available for the grass to grow better.” Memo to visitors to his office: think twice if he offers you a cup of tea.

Changing technology: from the laying of Highbury’s under soil heating in 1964 to today’s special lighting to help grass growth.

## SHIFTING DIMENSIONS

“The maximum length of ground shall be 200 yards, the maximum breadth shall be 100 yards.” Thus, the dimensions of the football pitch – decided in 1863 at the founding meeting of The Football Association – were set out in the first printed version of the complete Laws of the Game. In metric measurements, this means 183m by 91m. By any measure, this was an astonishingly loose regulation, allowing pitches to vary considerably in size.

A subsequent amendment in 1897<sup>(1)</sup> stipulated that pitches should be 91–119m long and 46–91m wide, albeit with greater precision required for international matches (101–110m long and 64–73m wide). Today, the regulations governing UEFA’s competitions allow for fewer surprises, with pitches required to be 100–105m long and 64–68m wide.

This ensures – no pun intended – a more level playing field, although the lack of uniformity of old certainly allowed for some wonderfully quirky pitches. For instance, English club Yeovil Town FC’s former ground, Huish, had a 2.4m slope from sideline to sideline. It also allowed coaches to use pitches to their advantage, with teams who were strong at set pieces (such as long throws) favouring narrow pitches, for example.

<sup>(1)</sup> Rous, S., & Ford, D. (1974). A History of the Laws of Association Football. FIFA.

### Cut and watered

Modern footballers are now finely tuned, scientifically honed athletes, and the pitches they play on are also prepared to the nth degree – up to and beyond the first whistle. The way the grass is cut is of no little significance in this regard, as Calderwood explains.

“Some clubs use the height of the grass to their advantage. If you’re a quick-passing, free-flowing football team, you are going to want your grass as short as possible so the ball moves quickly across the surface. But if you’re not such a passing team and want to upset the other team a little bit and slow the pitch down, you might decide to leave the grass 30mm long.”

According to UEFA’s regulations, the height of the grass “may not, in principle, exceed 30mm” in any game in its competitions. There are also detailed specifications regarding the watering of pitches, with regulations stating: “The pitch must be watered evenly

and not only in certain areas. As a general rule, pitch watering must finish 60 minutes before kick-off. However, upon decision of the home club, pitch watering may also take place after that time, provided it takes place: (a) between 10 and 5 minutes before kick-off, and/or (b) during half-time (for a maximum of 5 minutes).”

One club where pitch watering is as integral to the team’s culture as their pre-match anthem is FC Barcelona. Prior to their 1994 Champions League final against AC Milan in Athens, opposition coach Fabio Capello refused a request from the Catalan club for the pitch to be watered, and the Italian’s logic was clear: why allow the Dream Team a slicker surface on which to play their scarily swift football?

After all, watering the grass close to kick-off is all about increasing the speed at which the ball skims over the surface. Indeed, during Pep Guardiola’s time at the club, the groundsman would even enter the dressing room at half-time, armed with an up-to-the-minute local

weather forecast, to consult the captain and a member of the coaching staff on how much watering was required during the interval.

This leads us to another intriguing point about today’s pitches. Their impact on the way the game is played is clear for all to see. Their speed and smoothness are integral to the basketball-style spectacle that is often witnessed in matches marked by lightning-quick counterattacks. Yet their impact on players’ bodies is still being assessed.

### ‘A different injury pattern’

“It increases the speed of the game, which means you get a different injury pattern,” says Professor Jan Ekstrand from the UEFA Injury Study Group. “If you look at the injury studies we have done over the last 15 years, we can see that the general injury risk has not changed, but some types of injury have increased, such as muscle injuries, and some have decreased, like ankle sprains.” →

Fabio Capello wanted the pitch as dry as possible before his Milan side’s 1994 UEFA Champions League final win over Barcelona.



Professor Jan Eskstrand has observed changing injury patterns on today's pitches with more hamstring and fewer groin injuries.



A quicker sport has resulted in more hamstring injuries, but Professor Eskstrand is also working on fresh research – due to be sent to the British Journal of Sports Medicine – which identifies, he says, “a clear decrease in groin injuries over the last 15 years”. On the heavier pitches of old, where players’ feet would get stuck in the mud, groin injuries were far more prevalent.

It is also worth noting another piece of research – from a nine-season study spanning nine different European countries – which points to a higher incidence of anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injuries among players who play on harder, drier pitches in southern Europe.<sup>(9)</sup> There may be more injuries overall in the colder northern European countries, but, as Professor Eskstrand observes, a hot sun

“dries the pitch, and a dry pitch has greater friction, which means you can get your foot caught in the pitch and get a twisting rotation of the knee, which increases the risk of ACL injuries”.

While that is more of a climatic factor, a long-serving doctor at one Champions League club has identified another potential injury risk directly connected to the make-up of the modern pitch –



## PLASTIC FANTASTIC

It was a decade ago, during the 2006/07 season, that the first Champions League group stage fixture took place on artificial turf, with FC Spartak Moskva hosting Sporting Clube de Portugal at Stadion Luzhniki. That came four years after the launch of UEFA’s Artificial Turf Project, featuring pilot project partners in Austria, the Netherlands, Russia and Sweden.

Today, Andorra play all of their European Championship and World Cup qualifying games on a 3G surface at Estadi Nacional. Further afield, the entire 2015 Women’s World Cup in Canada was held on artificial pitches.

Suffice to say, these synthetic carpets are a world away from the early experiments witnessed in the English game in the 1980s, when Queens Park Rangers FC and Luton Town FC became the first clubs to host top-flight football on plastic



FC Spartak Moskva v Sporting Clube de Portugal on 27 September 2006 was the first UEFA Champions League match to be played on artificial turf.

pitches in a major European league. Two other lower-league clubs, Oldham Athletic FC and Preston North End FC, followed suit, although by the time Oldham won promotion to the top flight on a 2G plastic pitch in 1991, the rules had changed and they had to revert to natural grass.

Joe Royle, Oldham’s manager at the time, remembers the benefits of that pitch

– which provided a place to train and was a year-round, revenue-raising community resource – as well as the widespread scepticism surrounding such surfaces.

“QPR’s pitch”, Royle says, “was basically a plastic mat of grass laid on concrete. I remember a game there when the ball bounced once and went over the bar.” In Oldham’s case, the pitch at Boundary Park was “on a rubber dynamic base with a long pile of plastic grass, two-thirds filled by sand. So you could actually pass the ball on it and pass it forward without it running out of play.”

Opponents remained suspicious, however. “I remember a last-minute equaliser at Southampton in the League Cup,” he chuckles. “I found myself jumping out of the dugout shouting ‘Back to plastic!’ and it was totally for their benefit.”

**'A dry pitch has greater friction, which means you can get your foot caught in the pitch and get a twisting rotation of the knee, which increases the risk of ACL injuries.'**

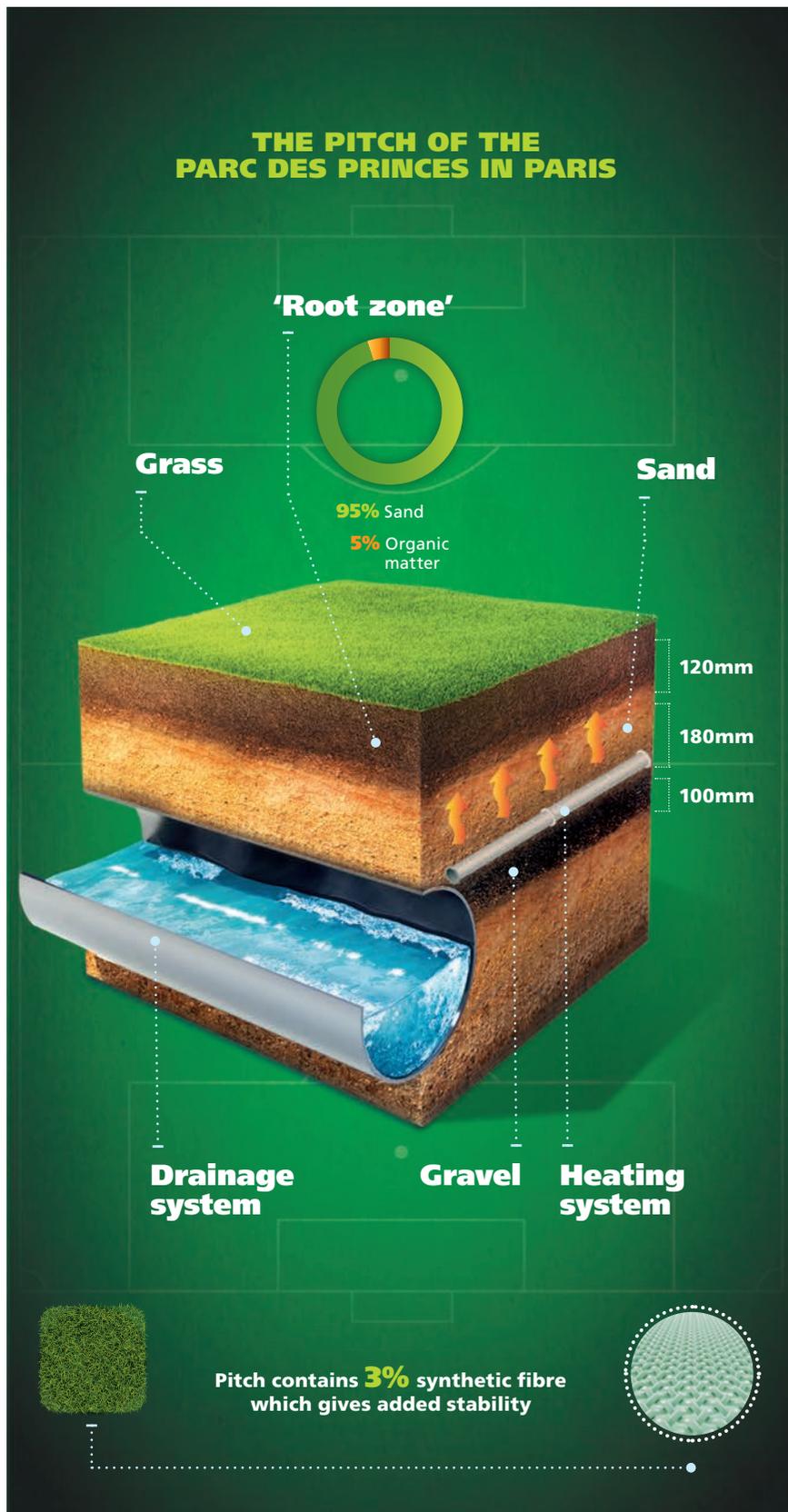
**Professor Jan Ekstrand**  
**UEFA Injury Study Group**

namely, the strip of artificial turf that runs the other side of the touchline at many of today's grounds. "That, to me, makes no sense," he says. "If you are a full-back, you might have to be half off the pitch and still running. You've got one foot on there and one foot on the grass, and that is potentially dangerous."

The football pitch will continue to evolve, but one thing that is not in doubt is the fact that today's surfaces are now more conducive to good football than ever before. When Manchester United FC visited FC Rostov recently in the UEFA Europa League, their round of 16 match was played on an uncharacteristically bumpy pitch, giving their players a glimpse of how things used to be for their predecessors – not easy at all.

As Jonathan Calderwood – a creator of many fine pitches himself – observes, the overall quality has never been so high. "I saw a game on TV the other night, and the commentator was saying the pitch was not very good," he says. "In front of the goals was a bit brown, but the rest of it was looking pretty good. But according to the TV, it was a 'disaster'. Even in front of the goals, you've got grass covering the goalmouths all year round now. When you look back at the pitches in the 70s and 80s, they were mudbaths. It's incredible how expectations have changed." 🌱

<sup>(1)</sup> Waldén, M., Hägglund, M., Orchard, J., Kristenson, K., & Ekstrand, J. (2013). Regional differences in injury incidence in European professional football. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*, 23(4), 424-430.



# GROWING THE GAME IN EASTERN EUROPE

Achieving higher participation figures in eastern Europe is an increasingly important challenge. This subject was analysed in detail at a regional UEFA GROW summit hosted by the Georgian Football Federation in Tbilisi on 2 and 3 March.

**G**rowing Participation in Eastern Europe was the title of a conference which brought together representatives of the national associations of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine. They were joined by 11 ministers from those countries, a number of senior government representatives as well as delegates from the Council of Europe.

This regional summit was organised under the auspices of UEFA GROW, a programme which helps national associations to develop football at all levels across Europe. Discussions focused on the reasons why participation levels in sport – especially football – are lower in eastern Europe than in the rest of the continent.

The key objective was to seek common solutions to challenges that are shared by national associations across eastern Europe in terms of getting more people playing football, fostering greater understanding of the importance of the grassroots, and generating greater support for efforts to boost participation. “Through UEFA GROW, supporting the UEFA Grassroots Charter, we realised that participation rates were low across eastern Europe, and that this was a challenge that was particular to the region,”



UEFA Grassroots Ambassador Per Ravn Omdal in discussion with some of the delegates in Georgia.

**0.68%**  
**of the people in the 14 eastern European countries are registered players, compared with an average of 3.37% in other UEFA countries.**

explained UEFA’s national associations director, Zoran Laković.

## Facts and figures

The figures presented in Tbilisi make for interesting reading. For instance, although around 50% of the total population of UEFA’s member associations live in the 14 eastern European countries in question, those countries are home to just 14% of Europe’s registered players. Indeed, just 0.68% of the people in those countries are registered players, compared with an average of 3.37% in other UEFA countries.

For every football club in those 14 countries, there are 8 in the rest of Europe. There are also 18 times as many female coaches and 10 times as many female referees in the other UEFA countries as there are in those eastern European countries. The lack of physical activity in those countries is another concern, with 47% of adults, 52% of women and 43% of children considered to have been physically inactive for the last 12 months.

The meeting in Georgia noted that low participation levels were having a negative impact not only on eastern Europe’s performances on the international stage, but also on commercial revenues. Only one eastern European country – Russia





Kakha Kaladze, Georgia's vice-prime minister and energy minister, addressed the summit.

– will take part in this summer's UEFA Women's EURO 2017, compared with 15 from elsewhere in Europe. Meanwhile, in men's football, none of the 14 eastern European associations feature in the top 15 of UEFA's aggregated U17 and U19 boys' and girls' coefficient rankings. Various major issues were identified, including a lack of accurate participation data, the absence of a grassroots philosophy, a lack of insight into players' wants and needs, and a failure to establish grassroots club infrastructures to deliver a clear participation growth strategy.

"The objective of the summit was to fully understand the participation challenges faced by our national associations in eastern Europe and find solutions together, so that more people would have opportunities to play the game, right across the region," Laković explained.

### Next steps

Various measures are now being implemented as a result of the gathering in Tbilisi. UEFA has pledged to provide the national associations with even better data demonstrating the business case for investing in the grassroots, while also seeking to have a positive influence on policy at the highest levels within the European Union and the Council of Europe. National associations will continue to work with their governments to assess the gaps in grassroots sports, in order to invest in a strategic manner to grow participation.

In addition, greater emphasis will be placed on strategically driving participation growth through the UEFA GROW programme. The associations stressed the need for closer alignment with government objectives and policies, in order to ensure that they and their governments could work in tandem to grow participation in football, and sport in general.

The 14 national associations also underlined their firm commitment to nurturing grassroots football, and ensuring the presence of the structures necessary to deliver participation growth. 🌱

## LOCAL SOLUTIONS TO LOCAL ISSUES

Participants at the summit in Tbilisi welcomed the opportunity to examine the issue of participation levels in eastern Europe, and returned home with new ideas and fresh perspectives on this subject. Here are some of the many positive reactions to this event:



"We in Poland are just embarking on a large participation growth project in cooperation with UEFA, so this summit came at exactly the right time. It gave us the opportunity to develop our thinking in this area, and we are now focused on delivering great results for Polish football in the coming years."  
**Zbigniew Boniek, president of the Polish Football Federation**



"Having just developed our new Towards 2020 strategy, this summit gave us the opportunity to bring our government officials here to see how serious we – the national associations and UEFA – are about growing grassroots participation. This will certainly help us to deliver on our objectives in Lithuania."  
**Edvinas Eimontas, president of the Lithuanian Football Federation**



"We are currently moving forward with our grassroots plan, so it was important for us to see the clear link between the number of people who play football at grassroots level and the impact on international performances and revenues. We look forward to strong cooperation with UEFA in terms of growing the grassroots in Ukraine."  
**Andriy Pavelko, president of the Football Federation of Ukraine**



"Organising a UEFA GROW summit on such a key issue was an excellent idea, as it shows that UEFA really understands the issues that the various regions face, and is ready to tackle them. Having the Council of Europe and sports and education ministers present was really important, as we need to build strong partnerships with them in order to achieve the mass participation that we desire."  
**Răzvan Burleanu, president of the Romanian Football Federation**



"The Georgian Football Federation was delighted to host such an important UEFA GROW summit, as we really believe that we must all get more people to play the game. This summit offered us the chance to showcase the grassroots programmes that we have introduced over the last year, and show how well they are progressing."  
**Levan Kobiasvili, president of the Georgian Football Federation**



"We are delighted that UEFA is seeking to find local solutions to local issues facing football. We had great discussions with other national associations facing similar challenges, and received insights and research that will be most useful in developing our grassroots programmes."  
**Armen Minasyan, general secretary of the Football Federation of Armenia**



Norman Timari's Hungary (left) and Halldor Stenevik's Norway are both through to the final tournament in Croatia.

Peter Hilbert

# DESTINATION CROATIA

After a total of 126 qualifying matches, we now know which 15 teams will line up alongside hosts Croatia in the final round of the 2016/17 European Under-17 Championship.

**T**he final round of the 2016/17 European Under-17 Championship begins on 3 May and already the competition has thrown up its fair share of surprises. Portugal beat Spain on penalties in Baku to lift the trophy in 2016, but they will not be in Croatia to defend their title, missing out after losing their final elite round game 2-0 to their Iberian rivals. One team's pain is another team's gain, however, and the Faroe Islands have been celebrating after qualifying for the finals of a UEFA competition for the very first time. They finished as one of the seven best runners-up, ahead of Portugal. The Faroe Islands will be joined in Croatia by another side competing in their first final tournament at Under-17 level – Norway.

The other contenders are largely familiar. England are back for a record 12th final tournament at this level, as are France, the Netherlands and Spain, who will each be contesting their 11th. All four have won the competition twice and will be bidding to become the first side to win a hat-trick of titles.

The final tournament was expanded to 16 teams in 2014/15 to give more

## CALENDAR

**Group stage:** 3/4, 6/7, 9/10 May

**Quarter-finals:** 12/13 May

**U-17 World Cup play-off:** 16 May

**Semi-finals:** 16 May

**Final:** 19 May

## Venues

Stadium Zaprešić, Stadium Lučko, Stadium Velika Gorica, Stadium Sesvete, Stadium Varaždin, Stadium Rujevica, Stadium Kostrena

youngsters the chance to experience the intensity of high-level competition, and the record crowd of 33,000 that watched hosts Azerbaijan's opening match against Portugal certainly provided all the atmosphere of a senior fixture.

## 'A big experience'

With Croatia hosting their first-ever UEFA youth tournament, their coach, Dario Bašić, believes that this will be an important learning experience for his players and an opportunity for them to show what they are capable of on the international stage: "I can't think of a better development opportunity than playing here among the best teams in Europe. It is very important for all players to play at a high level, and at this age it is extremely important to have as many big matches as possible. This will give the players valuable experience and show them where they stand in elite European football. It is crucial for them to learn how to accept advice and how to develop their talent. This will be a big experience for them. They have an opportunity to prove their quality and point their careers in the right direction."

**Group A**

- 1 Croatia
- 2 Spain
- 3 Turkey
- 4 Italy

**Group B**

- 1 Scotland
- 2 France
- 3 Hungary
- 4 Faroe Islands

**Group C**

- 1 Germany
- 2 Rep. of Ireland
- 3 Serbia
- 4 Bosnia-Herz.

**Group D**

- 1 Netherlands
- 2 England
- 3 Norway
- 4 Ukraine

The final tournament will also act as the qualifying competition for Europe's five berths at the U-17 World Cup in India, from 6 to 28 October 2017.

UEFA.com



## A FIRST FOR CROATIA

This year's European Under-17 Championship final round will be the first finals of a UEFA youth competition to be held in Croatia, and the Croatian Football Federation (HNS) has taken several steps to make it a memorable occasion for all involved and to leave a lasting legacy for football in Croatia.

The HNS plans to visit dozens of elementary and football schools in the Rijeka and Zagreb regions to introduce the tournament and present its Fan Culture programme. Promoting positive values and behaviour to future footballers and fans is one of the HNS's main goals. As part of the Fan Culture project, the HNS will distribute materials to youngsters, including leaflets with ten fan commandments and fan paraphernalia.

The HNS has engaged two ambassadors for the tournament. Famous national team player Niko Kranjčar has taken on the role of football ambassador, while young singer Eni Jurišić is the music ambassador, with her song Kao jedno (As one) being used as the official tournament anthem. At the same time, #AsOne will be used as a slogan for the tournament, sending a positive, energising and inclusive message to everyone – including all the different teams, players and fans. The HNS has also launched a dedicated website for the tournament (Croatia2017.hr) and social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, all of which are labelled @u17EuroCroatia.

The local organising committee is working hard to ensure that everyone – players, fans, coaches and officials – enjoys their time in Croatia. While making sure that the teams enjoy good sporting conditions and can perform to their full potential on the pitch, the HNS is also looking to showcase the cultural, natural and gastronomic treasures that its country has to offer.

The players do not have to look far for an example of how the experience of competing at this level can soon lead to greater things. The likes of Andrés Iniesta, Wayne Rooney, Mario Götze and Cristiano Ronaldo all took their first international steps on this stage, as did another Portuguese midfielder – Renato Sanches – more recently. Sanches was part of the Portugal side that reached the semi-finals of this tournament in Malta in 2014 – two years before going on to help Portugal win their first senior title at EURO 2016, picking up the young player of the tournament award in the process. He has fond memories of his time in the Under-17s. "Those tournaments help you to develop and grow," he explains. "You have a lot of responsibility. Those tournaments push you to give your best and represent your country well. They're a way for you to learn. The advice I would give to younger players is to give your best in those tournaments and always represent your country well. The best goal to have is to always be humble and a winner. Play well or badly, but always give your best and try to win, because victories are what will bring you happiness."

### Welcoming hosts

Croatia has hosted two previous UEFA tournaments: the final round of the UEFA Regions' Cup in 2009 and Futsal EURO 2012. With 16 teams competing this time around, the president of the Croatian Football Federation, Davor Šuker, admits that this tournament represents an "organisational challenge", but says:

"Our talented and hard-working team is totally dedicated to delivering a top-class tournament. Croatia is one of the world's most beautiful countries, and we are looking forward to introducing its many wonders, as well as our hospitality, culture and cuisine, to participating players, coaches, staff, officials, fans and media representatives. Though only one team can lift the trophy, all of our guests can enjoy the tournament experience, both on and off the pitch – and that is our goal as hosts."

The tournament will be staged around Rijeka on the Adriatic coast and Zagreb, the capital, with the final in the northern city of Varazdin. Croatian pop star Eni Jurišić and former international Niko Kranjčar are the tournament's ambassadors and both are looking forward to welcoming fans to their country in May. "I have wonderful memories of playing for our national youth teams, and I won a bronze medal with the Under-16s in 2001," Kranjčar explains. "I am delighted to be an ambassador for such a major tournament and feel really honoured."

Jurišić's duties, meanwhile, include writing the tournament's anthem (see right), which she hopes will be a big hit, just like the football. "The song is cheerful and has a strong motivational message," she says. "I'm delighted to be involved, because these are young people trying to fulfil their dreams and I'm happy to be able to help them on their way. The name of the song is 'As One', which is also the slogan for the tournament. It says that together we are stronger and our hearts beat as one."



# FAROE ISLANDS MAKE HISTORY

The Faroese Under-17 team have caused a sensation by qualifying for the European Under-17 Championship finals in Croatia in May.

**T**he team already made Faroese footballing history in Luxembourg last October when they qualified for the elite round. They were drawn into a group with Cyprus, the Republic of Ireland and Slovakia, which was considered relatively lucky, but no one ever imagined they would make it as far as the final tournament.

## Holding on to vital victory

The Faroe Islands' elite round mini-tournament was played in Cyprus, and the Faroese team got off to a poor start, losing 4-0 to the Irish favourites. But in the following match, against the hosts, they held on for a 0-0 draw. This meant that a win against Slovakia in the final group game could result in a place in the finals if the Republic of Ireland beat Cyprus at the same time.

The boys got off to a very good start against Slovakia, with Tórus Jacobsen giving the Faroe Islands the lead after a rebound off the crossbar. At half-time the Faroe Islands were still leading Slovakia 1-0, and when Hanus Sørensen, who had just recently signed an academy contract with Danish Super League side FC Midtjylland, scored with a header to make it 2-0, the Faroese players and staff could barely believe their own eyes – they had the finals in their sights.

Slovakia did manage to pull one back, and they put some pressure on the Faroese side, but the underdogs stood firm and held on to a vital victory, as did the Republic of Ireland.

When Albanian referee Andi Koçi blew the final whistle the whole Faroese squad stormed onto the pitch to celebrate their sensational qualification.

"It was a fantastic feeling and it really took some time to sink in," coach Áki Johansen told Faroese radio after the match.

## Massive credit to players and staff

The result is a massive credit to the players and staff. For the Faroe Islands Football Association the result is of immense importance. It shows that even if you are a country of only 50,000 inhabitants, on the pitch it is 11 against 11 and anything can happen.

Johansen and his assistant, Pól F. Joensen, an IT sales manager and a carpenter by trade,

have done a tremendous job to achieve this result. But now the focus of the Faroese FA is on giving the team the best possible circumstances in which to prepare for the final tournament in Croatia.

Only the top 16 Under-17 teams in Europe take part in the finals, and it is worth mentioning that the Faroe Islands and Norway are the only Nordic countries to have qualified.

## Motivating other teams

The Under-17s' achievements are tremendous not only for the team and the staff, but also for other Faroese youth teams who dream of qualifying for the finals of a UEFA competition. The team have now shown not only that it is possible to qualify for an elite round, but to go all the way to the finals. With the island's other teams all watching closely, the question now is: who will be next?

This should motivate not only the Faroe Islands' youth teams, but teams from other small nations too. Size is not all that counts and sometimes the underdogs really do pull off a sensation, as the Faroese Under-17s have shown. 🇫🇷

**The Under-17s' achievements are tremendous not only for the team, but also for other Faroese youth teams who dream of qualifying for the finals of a UEFA competition.**



H. E. Danielsen/FSF

# U17 CHAMPIONSHIP GOAL STATISTICS

## NUMBER OF MATCHES/GOALS/GOALS PER GAME



## ALL-TIME TOP SCORERS

8

**Odsonne Édouard** 🇫🇷 France

7

**Bojan Krkić** 🇪🇸 Spain  
**David** 🇪🇸 Spain  
**José Gomes** 🇵🇹 Portugal  
**Jonatan Soriano** 🇪🇸 Spain

6

**Paco Alcácer** 🇪🇸 Spain  
**Morten Rasmussen** 🇩🇰 Denmark  
**Tevfik Köse** 🇹🇷 Turkey

5

**Denis Calincov** 🇲🇩 Moldova  
**Manuel Fischer** 🇩🇪 Germany  
**Collins John** 🇳🇱 Netherlands  
**Tomáš Necid** 🇨🇪 Czech Republic  
**Wayne Rooney** 🇬🇧 England

4

**Bruno Gama** 🇵🇹 Portugal  
**Jaime Gavilán** 🇪🇸 Spain  
**Sandro Iashvili** 🇬🇪 Georgia  
**Nikola Kalinić** 🇦🇷 Croatia  
**Toni Kroos** 🇩🇪 Germany  
**Milan Purović** 🇲🇩 Montenegro  
**Abel Ruiz** 🇪🇸 Spain  
**Jari Schuurman** 🇳🇱 Netherlands  
**Dominic Solanke** 🇬🇧 England  
**Yannis Tafer** 🇫🇷 France  
**Simon Vukčević** 🇲🇩 Montenegro  
**Deniz Vilmaz** 🇦🇷 Azerbaijan



## NUMBER OF APPEARANCES SINCE 2001/02

# STRONG LINE-UP FOR FINALS

The final round of the tenth European Women's Under-17 Championship is taking place in the Czech Republic from 2 to 14 May, with a suitably strong cast contesting the trophy.



## The contenders

### Group A

Czech Republic, Germany, Spain, France

### Group B

Republic of Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, England

## Match schedule

### Group stage

2, 5 & 8 May  
(Plzen, Pribram, Domazlice, Prestice)

**Semi-finals:** 11 May  
(Domazlice, Pribram)

**Final:** 14 May in Plzen

The holders and five-time champions Germany are back to defend their crown, but they did not have things all their own way in qualifying. Indeed, they had to wait to find out whether they had qualified as the best runners-up after finishing second to England in their elite round group. England's 2-1 victory over the defending champions in Telford was sweet revenge for the Lionesses, who had been knocked out by Germany in the semi-finals in Belarus last season.

Spain are the second most successful side at this level with three titles, and they will be hoping to make it four in the Czech Republic after comfortably advancing through qualifying with victories against Iceland and Portugal and a draw with Sweden. Spain have reached the last three finals, winning one in 2015 and losing the other two to Germany. Norway (semi-finalists last season),

In the elite round, England beat Germany 2-1 at home on 27 March. Both teams have qualified for the final round in the Czech Republic.

the Republic of Ireland (runners-up in 2010), France (three-time runners-up), the Netherlands and the Czech Republic complete the line-up.

Tournament ambassador and former Czech international Pavlína Nováková-Ščasná believes the event could have a lasting impact on women's football in her country. "This is a real milestone for Czech women's football," she says. "We've never hosted a tournament like this. I hope a lot of youngsters start playing after this. I will take my children to the games so they can see how beautiful women's football is." Football certainly runs in Nováková-Ščasná's family. Her father, Zdeněk Ščasný,

was a Czechoslovak international and AC Sparta Praha great, while her brother Michal also played professionally. She was named Czech female footballer of the year five times, and her impressive CV features clubs such as AC Sparta Praha, FC Bayern München, Philadelphia Charge and LdB Malmö. She hopes that this tournament will help to inspire the next generation of players.

"This will be an invaluable experience for them," she says. "They will gain confidence and great memories. But it's also important to enjoy the occasion. This is a unique experience that cannot be had anywhere else."

Matches will be played at four venues in Bohemia, west of the capital Prague, in Plzen, Pribram, Domazlice and Prestice, with the final being contested at Stadion města Plzně on 14 May. The final will also be screened live on Eurosport. ⚽

## 'ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL'

**Karel Rada won 43 caps for the Czech Republic as a defender and played in the final of EURO '96. Now coach of the Czech women's Under-17s, the 46-year-old will be hoping to make that experience tell when his country hosts the finals of the 2016/17 European Women's Under-17 Championship.**



**The Czech Republic qualified for the final tournament for the first time last summer. How important was that experience for your players?**

It was a tremendously valuable experience. They faced the very best European teams. I realised the value of that recently when we played Spain for a second time. The players' performance in that game was significantly different. The first game against such a strong side is all about not showing too much respect and dealing with your nerves. As you get used to playing them, your self-confidence really grows.

**What are the key things to teach players of this age?**

We are still working on individual skills and players' technical abilities. We also work on team tactics, developing the ability to play in different formations. The players should be equipped with those skills by Under-19 level.

**What sort of impact has the new Czech women's academy had on your work?**

It represents a truly giant leap forward. I see improvements in the players every day. We work with them for a week every

month. There is time for us to show them how to organise their training regimes, not only regarding football, but also as regards healthy lifestyles. Things like that are also important if they want to reach the top. They understand what elite sport means and what they must do to reach that level.

**What are your side's strengths?**

If we want to succeed – and for me, getting out of our group would be a great achievement – we have to work as a team as much as possible, be ready to help each other and support each other. It's a case of 'all for one and one for all'.

**Is there extra pressure on the home team?**

Whether you admit it or not, there is. Friends, family in the stands, media interest, spectators ... Players put pressure on themselves. Suddenly, they start trying too hard and that eagerness destroys the quality of their performance. We talk about it a lot with the girls. We will need to include some activities in our tournament programme that are unconnected with football to allow them to relax mentally.

**But how important is home support?**

It would be great to have full stadiums.

I know from my own career what a great bonus that is for the players. We are looking forward to having the fans on our side and inspiring their support. I hope they will be proud of us.

**You were one of the pioneering coaches of Czech women's football at youth level ...**

We started many years ago. At that point, we only had weekend training camps for representative teams from Bohemia and Moravia. We established an Under-15 team and saw them progress with every game they played. The UEFA development tournaments at Under-16 level are also a great thing for the players. They arrive ready for the Under-17s with at least a handful of international caps. The difference is visible from the first minute of the game.

**Your surname means 'advice' in Czech. What advice will you be giving your players?**

I will remind them that they already have some experience from last year and that there is nothing to be afraid of. We have done our homework and are well prepared. We just need just to put our hearts into each game and keep chasing our goal – to qualify from the group.

## Czech Republic set to organise its biggest-ever women's football event

Hosting the final round of the European Under-17 Women's Championship will hopefully result in a great boost for women's football in the Czech Republic. The country's hosting of the European Under-21 Championship finals in 2015 was a resounding success, and the Football Association of the Czech Republic (FAČR) is hoping for a repeat performance in May.

This final tournament will be the largest women's football event ever staged in the Czech Republic. The FAČR has left no stone unturned when it comes to making the tournament a success, not only in terms of organisational matters, but also as regards raising awareness



among fans in the four host cities – Plzen, Píbram, Domazlice and Písek.

The FAČR has been working with local clubs to promote the tournament, and

cooperating closely with regional and city authorities. Communication with local schools is also very important in this regard, with 12,000 schoolchildren set to attend the first games. Those children can also look forward to receiving motivational packages containing sports equipment.

Fun sports festivals will be organised as an important social element of the event. These will be aimed primarily at families with children, placing them at the very heart of the tournament. The organising committee is also planning a music competition for bands and several accompanying football tournaments for children and young people.



# A SHARED LEGACY

The UEFA EURO 2016 legacy project, through which each of the tournament's ten host cities were given €2m to invest in football-related infrastructure, has had a tangible and lasting impact in France, and nowhere more so than in and around Saint-Étienne, where 18 new facilities have been built for the benefit of 24 different communes.

**E**URO 2016 may have ended nine months ago, but it is having a lasting impact in and around the ten host cities thanks to a €20m legacy project aimed at developing football-related infrastructure. In Saint-Étienne, for example, the authorities decided to divide their share of the funds among different communities in the greater urban area to create a network of infrastructure and encourage people to play at their local clubs. They limited the level of funding for each community project to €170,000 for

the construction of new facilities and €68,000 for renovation work, with the proviso that all grounds should meet the standards required to host competition matches.

Jean-Jacques Fradin, director of sport at the local authority of Saint-Étienne Métropole, describes how the projects were selected: "Rather than investing the whole €2m in a single project, we wanted the money to benefit as many people as possible across the 45 communes that make up our metropolitan area. We

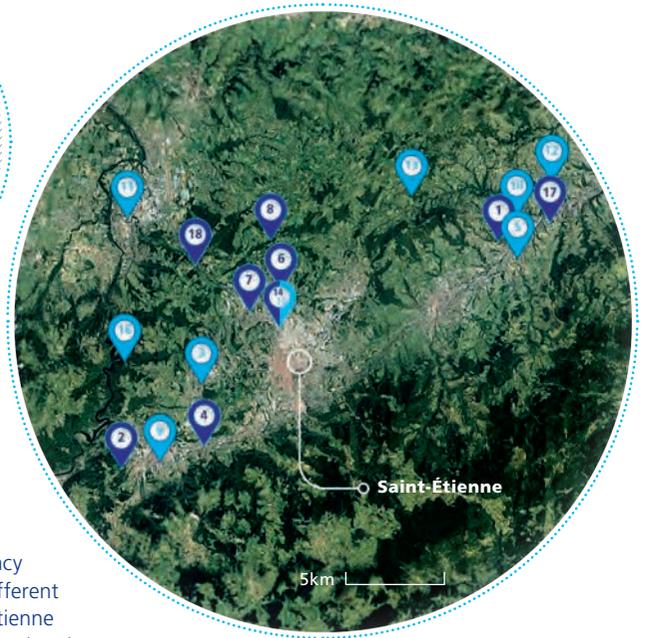
wanted EURO 2016 to leave a lasting legacy throughout our urban community of 400,000 people. The initial €2m attracted additional funding that brought the overall investment to €12m, which is an enormous sum for an area of our size."

Managed by the communes themselves, the new and renovated grounds provide amateur players with much nicer, better-equipped facilities, which offer a real boost in terms of attracting and retaining players and increasing the game's overall appeal. "In the city of Saint-Étienne,

which has a population of 170,000, we decided to invest in a pitch that anyone can use, whereas in the surrounding communes, most of which have fewer than 10,000 inhabitants, we focused our efforts on facilities for clubs and their players. That is why all renovated pitches had to be capable of staging competition matches," says Roland Goujon, the Saint-Étienne Métropole local authority's vice-chairman responsible for sport. "We didn't want to pour all our resources into one location, but to share the funds among 18 stadiums in 24 municipalities. That way, the local impact was obviously much greater. In an area like ours, which has a great football tradition, all our clubs have lots of registered players, and they were all able to benefit. Some still played on dirt pitches or on very old grass. These projects improved training and playing conditions, which in turn led to an increase in the number of registered players."

**'A real godsend'**

One club that benefited is Roche-Saint-Genest, which straddles the municipalities of Roche-la-Molière (population: 10,000) and Saint-Genest-d'Erlept (6,000). Despite being barely 10km from the centre of Saint-Étienne, these two large villages are in a very rural area. At an altitude of about 500m and with winter temperatures plummeting to around -10°C, playing football in winter used to be something of a challenge. However, thanks to the legacy project, the old dirt pitch, which had certainly seen better days, was replaced with a state-of-the-art artificial pitch with floodlights that could be used for regional and district competitions. The club's president, Stéphane Kunz, explains: "Our grass pitches used to cause problems because the local authorities wanted us to go easy on them. Depending on the time of year, up to three official matches can be played on a pitch every week: one on Saturday, one on Sunday morning and one on Sunday afternoon. But in winter, you can't play more than one match a week, and sometimes none at all! So we converted our old 100m by 60m dirt pitch, which we hardly ever used because it was usually unplayable and even dangerous in winter, into a 105m by 68m artificial pitch. It's a real godsend for training and matches in winter. Unless it's covered in frozen snow, we will be able to use this pitch all the time."



**€2M DIVIDED BY 18 EQUALS €12M**

The 18 projects that received legacy funding were spread across 24 different communes in and around Saint-Étienne and the initial €2m from UEFA stimulated matched funding that brought the total investment to €12m.

<b>1 Cellieu Chagnon</b>	Renovated	<b>10 Génilac</b>	Newly built
<b>2 Fraisses</b>	Renovated	<b>11 Andrézieux-Bouthéon</b>	Newly built
<b>3 Roche-la-Molière</b>	Newly built	<b>12 Saint-Joseph/Saint-Martin-la-Plaine</b>	Newly built
<b>4 Le Chambon-Feugerolles</b>	Renovated	<b>13 Saint-Christo-en-Jarez</b>	Newly built
<b>5 Lorette</b>	Newly built	<b>14 Saint-Étienne – Etivallière</b>	Renovated
<b>6 L'Étrat/La Tour-en-Jarez</b>	Renovated	<b>15 Saint-Étienne – Etivallière</b>	Newly built
<b>7 Saint-Priest-en-Jarez</b>	Renovated	<b>16 Saint-Victor-sur-Loire</b>	Newly built
<b>8 Saint-Héand</b>	Renovated	<b>17 Rive-de-Gier</b>	Renovated
<b>9 Firminy</b>	Newly built	<b>18 La Fouillouse</b>	Renovated

In terms of tangible benefits, half of the 18 clubs that benefited from the EURO 2016 legacy project have seen a significant increase in their numbers of registered players, while the others now enjoy greatly improved training facilities for all age groups: "For the small municipalities that used to have dirt pitches, the improvement in playing conditions is phenomenal, not only for the adults but also for all the youth teams, both boys and girls," Roland Goujon explains.

"To sum up," Stéphane Kunz adds, "this sustainable investment has enabled us to increase both the quality and quantity of our training sessions. Not only that, but our club's brand image has also been enhanced in the minds of our 500 registered players and their families. Finally, and this is perhaps the most important thing, people who might want to join us – players and coaches alike – find the club more appealing now. It's given us a boost in every sense of the term." 🌍



Saint-Joseph received €145,000 from the legacy fund to build a brand-new pitch (left), which promises to be just as popular as the new artificial turf installed here in Chambon-Feugerolles.

# THE FUTURE OF FOOTBALL

The coaches of all the clubs involved in this season's UEFA Youth League were invited to the House of European Football in Nyon on 20 and 21 March for the inaugural UEFA Youth League Coaches Forum.

A total of 75 coaches and heads of academies participated in the first-ever UEFA Youth League Coaches Forum, which featured discussions and debate on coaching trends, the Laws of the Game and the role and importance of the Youth League, as well as a question and answer session with UEFA Champions League-winning coach Fabio Capello.

All attendees received a certificate recognising their participation in the event as further education within the meaning of Articles 24 and 29 of the UEFA Coaching Convention.

The event began with a look at the technical report on the 2015/16 Youth League and a presentation on coaching trends by UEFA's managing director of technical development, Ioan Lupescu. That presentation highlighted the variety of playing styles being used by successful teams at EURO 2016 and in the Champions League.

It is noticeable that the approaches adopted by the top teams of today tend to be reflected in the youth teams

of tomorrow. As a result, academy and youth team coaches are spending more time readying their players for the step up to first-team duty, thereby playing an increasingly important role in young players' careers.

## 'A better chance of succeeding'

"In the past, players often had to go into the world of professional football and adapt very quickly on the hoof," said Manuel Jesús Cano Martín, coach of Club Atlético de Madrid's youth team. "But now, a footballer from the youth academy can go in with their Youth League experience, having played one or two seasons in a competition like this, and they'll know a lot more about that environment and that atmosphere. They will be much more used to playing at that level, which will give them a better chance of succeeding."

The presentation also looked at the need for coaches to strike a balance between the players they have at their disposal and their favoured philosophy.

One of the ensuing discussions focused on the role of academies, and there was unanimous support for even greater emphasis being placed on the development of young players.

"Academies play a fundamental role, and all of us here have the huge responsibility of coaching those players and helping them to become the future of football," said Valencia CF coach Mista.

"Everything is much more professional now. There is no doubt about that. These days, a player at an academy is already semi-professional. That's the trend within football nowadays. Maybe youngsters will now start to have a lifestyle that's exclusively dedicated to football at a younger age."

However, what these players may lack in comparison with previous generations is raw talent shaped by the largely disappearing phenomenon of street football. While players of the past were brought up playing – sometimes barefoot – on cobbled streets and in alleyways, improvements in facilities and across



75 coaches and heads of academies attended the inaugural UEFA Youth League Coaches Forum in Nyon.

UEFA

society as a whole mean that this tends not to be the case nowadays. Participants were asked whether this was leading to a decline in the number of naturally creative footballers, with fewer players now capable of running at opponents with the ball.

### Innate talent and development

“It’s true that, with today’s academies and systems of play, players improve, but they also lose the value of that innate talent,” Mista said. “Academies churn out mechanical players in many cases, and you lose some of that talent. I think 50% of each would be the ideal ratio, so that a player can be part of the team dynamic, but once he takes to the pitch within a structure, he can play his own football. We sign players because they have innate talent, so we have to foster that, rather than take it away from them.”

Sevilla FC coach Agustín López Páez had a contrasting view on the subject, with the forum encouraging coaches to air their opinions and discuss them with their colleagues. He said: “I don’t feel like street football has been ‘lost’. In reality, we’re evolving at an incredible rate, and in practical terms, coaches and coaching staff are much better prepared and the players are much better prepared. There are still a lot of talented players, and they’re getting even better. But if we’re going to focus on the essence of what we’ve talked about, playing in the village square, we can’t go into that kind of teaching, because hardly anyone plays in village squares nowadays! We have to adapt to how life has changed. I also think it’s positive that, at all the various youth academies, there is also work being done at an individual level, with technical development departments helping players to refine their technical skills. Players nowadays are much better prepared in every way, and we have to try to avoid getting confused by this kind of terminology.”

Participants also had the opportunity to exchange views on the Youth League and make proposals to UEFA that could potentially benefit the competition and its development.

“This competition is the pinnacle of a youth player’s development and education process, since – as we all know – they are playing against the best in Europe, the best players of their generation, and sometimes older generations,” said SL Benfica coach João Tralhão, who will



### A presentation on the Laws of the Game by UEFA refereeing officer Hugh Dallas ensured the coaches were up to date on recent refereeing issues.



return to Nyon on 21 April with his side in the final four of this season’s Youth League. “That forces them to compete at a level exceeding their own ability – which, of course, helps their development. I think the future of European football looks bright, as many young players are increasing in value and standing out in this major competition.”

As part of the two-day forum, Tralhão and the coaches of the other three semi-finalists, Real Madrid CF, FC Barcelona and FC Salzburg, all took part in an entertaining friendly match at Colovray Stadium – the venue for the semi-finals and the final. Those four footballing pedagogues were exemplary in their respect for one another on the pitch, and that will continue when they return to Nyon later this month.

A presentation on the Laws of the Game by UEFA refereeing officer Hugh Dallas ensured the coaches were up to date on recent refereeing issues, before Fabio Capello, who guided AC Milan to the 1993/94 UEFA Champions League title and has won domestic league titles in both Italy and Spain, talked to participants about coaching and youth development as part of a round-table discussion (see interview on next page).

Capello brought with him an array of anecdotes and a wealth of advice, and the coaches, many of whom are right at the beginning of their careers, certainly appreciated his input. They will now be seeking to emulate the 70-year-old Italian, armed with all the insight they gained from the inaugural UEFA Youth League Coaches Forum. 🌱

FABIO CAPELLO

# 'MY PHILOSOPHY? COPY AND MOULD THINGS TO MY OWN IDEAS'

A fine art enthusiast, Fabio Capello can look proudly at the wealth of football silverware that sits alongside the artworks he has acquired over the years. Successful as a midfielder with AS Roma, Juventus and AC Milan, winning four Serie A titles and earning 32 caps for Italy, he has gone on to become an outstanding coach, amassing a total of five Italian domestic championships with AS Roma and AC Milan, and two La Liga titles at Real Madrid CF.

**W**hen you consider that his CV also features 1994 UEFA Champions League and UEFA Super Cup titles with Milan, as well as stints coaching the national teams of both England and Russia, it is obvious that Fabio Capello draws from a vast reservoir of experience and knowledge when he talks about football and coaching – as he did as guest of honour at the recent UEFA Youth League Coaches Forum in Nyon.

## How did you transition from player to coach?

I stopped playing in 1980, and I started coaching the 15-year-olds at Milan. I moved on to the 17–18 age group, and then the 20-year-olds. I coached youth teams for five years. In my opinion, it's very important for coaches with ambition to understand how to manage youngsters.

## When did you have your first taste of coaching a first team?

I became assistant to Milan's first-team coach, Nils Liedholm, in 1987. The president asked me to take charge of the last five matches, and we qualified for the UEFA Cup. Nils Liedholm stayed on with us, and I wanted that. He was

a coach who had made history in Italian football. He had vast experience, and he had given a lot to the game.

## You studied at the Italian federation's technical center in Coverciano and gained experience in other sports. That must have given you considerable insight into all aspects of management.

I worked at Mediolanum Sport [Milan's multisport club], where I was in charge of basketball, ice hockey, rugby and volleyball. That was actually very important for me, as it helped me to understand the psychology of different sports, of different players, of different ways to approach a match. Milan's president, Silvio Berlusconi, sent me on management courses. It was all hugely valuable.

## Is there anyone who has had a particular influence on your coaching career?

I was lucky enough to play at Roma under Helenio Herrera, who also coached the great 1960s Inter Milan team. He used to say something very simple: "You play the way you train." He said that you can't train at 60km/h and then think that you can play at 100km/h on a matchday. Then, at the end of my playing

career, I worked under Liedholm, who made me realise that you can always improve technically. To improve tactically is important, but technique is equally important.

## In a discussion with UEFA last year, Carlo Ancelotti also mentioned Nils Liedholm as one of his main mentors, saying he didn't copy him, but still learned a lot from him.

Liedholm was a very calm person, but with great personality. I learned from him the importance of understanding the moments that your team goes through. He always exuded extreme calm.

## Is it fair to say that a coach might take inspiration from a variety of important sources – but, in the end, you still have to be your own man?

Our job – like the job of any artist – is to go around 'stealing' and copying. But after you've 'stolen' and copied, you must mould things according to your own ideas. Think of the great artists ... Picasso copied the African artists, and he became a genius. So, my philosophy is 'steal, copy and develop' ... →





**'I was lucky enough to play at Roma under Helenio Herrera [below], who also coached the great 1960s Inter Milan team.'**



Top left: Fabio Capello's first senior coaching experience came at AC Milan as assistant to Nils Liedholm.  
Above: European Cup-winning coach Helenio Herrera (right, holding glass) who Capello played under at AS Roma. Below: Capello during his playing days in 1976.

**You've managed big clubs and national teams. What is the major difference for a coach between coaching a national team and coaching a club?**

It's a different job. Managing a national team has nothing to do with managing a club. A national team manager is lucky if he has a consolidated block of players who come from one or two clubs, have a winning mentality, have desire, can carry other colleagues along with them and, above all, can quickly apply your style of play on the pitch. You also have to find leaders in the squad. If you don't, it's very difficult.

**You only have a short period to work with players for national team matches ...**

If you're playing on a Thursday, the players arrive on the Monday after playing a league match, so you do nothing that day. On the Tuesday, you have a 'half' training session; on the Wednesday, you prepare for the match; and on the Thursday,



you're on the pitch. It's essential to have a group of players who feel part of the national team and want to win trophies. On the other hand, a club manager works on a daily basis and understands how he needs to work, what he needs to improve and where the relevant strengths lie. He can work on the team psychologically when they win and when they lose, so it's a daily job. With a national team, the job is completely different.

**Your teams are usually quite intense and physically well prepared. Do you regard specific fitness training as something important within general training?**

You need to find the right balance. In my opinion, the most important thing is the work that you do in pre-season. I have always stressed the importance of good pre-season preparation. But this depends on the league that you're coaching in. In England, they are always playing. They don't train as much because they have to recover. In Spain and Italy, you can do more. It also depends on what competitions you're in – if you're taking part in European competitions and playing a lot of matches. I keep saying that you can plan, but the most important thing is the manager's eye – his ability to understand the team's level of fitness and understand whether it's a physical issue or a mental one. And nowadays, you obviously have to work on things like technique and speed as well.

**How do managers adapt when they coach teams in different countries?**

I can say from experience that in Italy, you have to adapt to the city where you work. There are significant differences between coaching Roma, Juventus and Milan. If you change countries and go to work in Spain, you have to understand where you are going. The players are used to doing things in a certain way, the football is different, the culture is different, the media are different ... There's a big difference in Italy between Rome and Milan, and there's a bigger difference between Italy and Spain. If you go and work in England, you need to understand where you are, what their customs are, and so on.

Capello imparted his wisdom during a question-and-answer session at the UEFA Youth League Coaches Forum in Nyon. Below: The Italian won La Liga in 2007 during his second coaching spell at Real Madrid, pipping FC Barcelona to the title.



### So, you have to be mentally flexible ...

You can have your own ideas about football and your own way of managing, but you must also understand the place that you're working in – because if you don't, then you're going to have huge difficulties.

### If you're coaching abroad, communication must be extremely important ...

It can create certain problems, I must say. When I was with Russia, two players spoke Spanish and two spoke English. My communication with the players was always through an interpreter, so you can't always really express what you're feeling inside and wanting to get across – whether in difficult times or when things are going well.

### Which of your achievements have given you the most satisfaction?

Well, one team that gave me many trophies and great feelings of satisfaction was Milan ... but that was a team that had already been put together. I changed a few things, but the team had already been built. The biggest struggle for me was at Roma, because I had to bring a winning mentality to the team.

**'That second spell at Real Madrid gave me the greatest satisfaction, as we won the title in 2007 despite having been some way behind FC Barcelona with only a few matches remaining.'**

I had two spells at Real Madrid, the second of which was after they had gone a few years without a trophy. That second spell gave me the greatest satisfaction, as we won the title in 2007 despite having been some way behind FC Barcelona with only a few matches remaining.

### Quite an achievement ... Tell us more about that.

I told the team that they were as good as Barcelona, both in terms of strength and in the way they played. I told them that we had to play each match as if it were a final – and if Barcelona still ended up ahead of us, so be it, we would applaud them.

### You must have created a fantastic team spirit on that late run ...

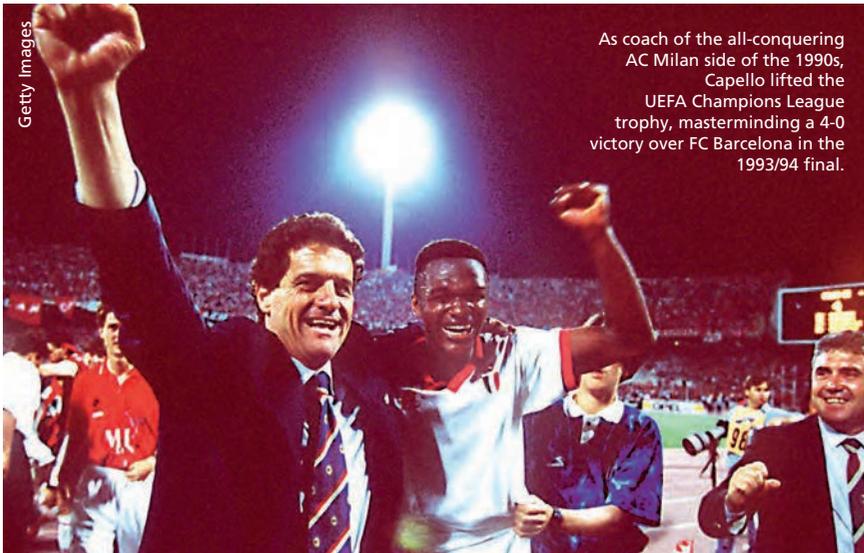
There was a unique team spirit – a level of commitment that was almost crazy. It's very important to tell you about

the key role that psychology plays in the minds of experienced players ... or how it can block them. Our last match was against RCD Mallorca. We were level on points with Barcelona, but having drawn in Barcelona and won at home, we were top of the table. We just needed to win the match. However, in the first half, international players – experienced players – were playing with fear. They weren't doing anything right. And we were one goal down at half-time.

### So, what did you do at half-time?

I usually asked the players not to say a word for the first four or five minutes. They could change their kit, wash themselves and do whatever they needed to do. Because if you start talking as soon as you enter the dressing room, you risk saying stupid things because you are nervous. It's important that a coach stays calm. I used those four or →





As coach of the all-conquering AC Milan side of the 1990s, Capello lifted the UEFA Champions League trophy, masterminding a 4-0 victory over FC Barcelona in the 1993/94 final.

**'I have never accepted compromises. The team is my responsibility. You need to have a strong personality. You have to be fair, but you need to have the strength of character to stand your ground when you're in the right.'**

five minutes to think about how to change things around, because a tactical switch is simple, but there are also times when you have to work on the psychology of the team.



**And on this particular occasion?**

You can't always act the same way to change things around. There are times when you have to shout to wake the players up ... but in a moment of fear, what do you do? What do you say? I used that time to think. Should I get upset? Should I laugh? Should I talk quietly? Usually, I would stand up and tell the players to do this or that. This time, since the players were showing fear, I asked one of them to make space for me and I sat down. I was sat at the same level as they were. I simply told them that we'd done something unbelievable and asked why we should gift Barcelona the title now. I said: "Go out on the pitch and play like you do in training." That's all. I didn't say anything else. And we came back to win, meaning that we were crowned champions.

**Are there any players you have coached that stand out?**

The greatest player I've ever coached is the Brazilian Ronaldo, although I ended

Left: Capello coached Brazilian great Ronaldo at Real Madrid during the 2006/07 season. Bottom right: His most recent coaching role was as Russian national team manager between 2012 and 2015.

up selling him at Real Madrid! He was so technically skilful at speed – like no other player that I've seen. Over 30 metres, he did things at full speed, starting and stopping, changing direction ...

**You've come to UEFA for the UEFA Youth League Coaches Forum. At the clubs where you've worked, have you been able to dictate the philosophy and decide how to develop young players?**

At every club where I've coached, when I arrived, I always asked for four or five youngsters from the academy to train with the first team. Sometimes, we would speak with the person responsible for the youth system to assess who deserved to be training with the first team. In this way, you would find out about young players' characters and how they would adapt.

**What if they had difficulty adapting?**

If, after training with us, they behaved arrogantly, we would react by not calling them up for first-team training. They then understood that if we did call them back, they would have to give more – that they had to change. What happens, therefore, is you find out that one player is ready for the first team, while another might perhaps need to be sent out on loan [to another club] to gain experience. There are young players who have character and go out on the pitch with no fear, and there are others that don't have such self-confidence.

**How different is managing players now in comparison with the past?**

The difference is huge. Many things need to be taken into consideration. In some respects, managing the group was easier then. There were no agents, so clubs could manage all of the whims that today's players have under the influence of their agents. They were also more relaxed times: there was a president who took decisions, and the manager was in charge of the team. Nowadays, you have agents, and club owners come from countries with different cultures. The rules have changed, and that makes life difficult for a coach.

**At some stage, a coach may have to make some compromises.**



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### Where is the limit for a coach in making such compromises with owners and players?

I have never accepted compromises. The team is my responsibility. You need to have a strong personality. I think you have to be fair, but you need to have the strength of character to stand your ground when you're in the right. Because if you give in – with the players, as well – you show your weak points. We're judged on how we treat the star players, how we treat the young players, how we behave after a loss or a win, what our reactions are, and so on. You're constantly under scrutiny, so you need to be extremely careful and prepared. I treat stars and youngsters the same way. No one has ever asked me: "Why aren't you saying the same thing to that guy?" or "Why can that guy do that?" In a team, we're all equal – all of us – if we want to win. If you don't want to win ... then accept compromises.

### How do you see the game evolving in tactical and technical terms in the future?

I believe that football will be more tactical in the future, so we need to be more tactically aware, better prepared and technically faster. There will be a need for much more focus on the pitch. We're very

advanced in the area of statistics, and through things like heart rate monitors, and especially with the use of video technology, which allows you to watch and prepare your team, and then helps you to sell your ideas to them.

### What about playing systems?

I don't believe that you can play just one system. It depends what players you have. I always say that you have to make your wine using the grapes that you have. You can't produce champagne or a Bordeaux with every kind of grape. So, you have to look at the grape that you have, and you have to be smart enough to understand it. You have to find the formation that makes your players perform

the best. A manager has to be able to understand the potential of his team.

### Finally, what would you say is the hardest thing for a manager?

Choosing the starting 11, deciding who will sit on the bench and who will be in the stands – that's the hardest thing. It's a matter of courage and having a winning mentality. The coach has to have the courage to choose. He must be brave and understand why a player who is perhaps only at 85% might – or might not – perform better than another player. And you have to understand players' worth. If you don't understand the real value of your players, you can't help them to improve. 🍷



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# UEFA BACKS PROJECT ON FAN OWNERSHIP AND BETTER GOVERNANCE

A fan-led project focuses on good governance, sustainable finance and volunteer engagement.

**U**EFAs is currently co-funding a project that promotes good financial practice in football. The initiative is coordinated by UEFA partner SD Europe, an organisation that assists supporters in becoming formally involved in their clubs as well as developing member ownership of football clubs generally.

The Clubs and Supporters for Better Governance in Football project brings together six member-run football clubs and various European national supporters' organisations and focuses on three key areas to enable growth: governance, sustainable finance and member/volunteer engagement.

The project, also funded by the European Union under its Erasmus+ programme for education, training, youth and sport, will help promote

EU principles on good governance in sport through a two-year training, education and exchange programme involving project partners from seven EU states.

## Malmo workshop

As part of this initiative UEFA attended a workshop in Malmo, Sweden, joined by UEFA social responsibility partners including Football Supporters' Europe (FSE), CAFE (Centre for Access to Football in Europe) and Fare.

The workshop participants discussed, among other things, ways of achieving financial sustainability and how clubs can operate without neglecting their founding principles. UEFA explained the importance of evaluating football finances today and the various challenges which can arise.

UEFA has been working with SD Europe for many years. This meeting was a great opportunity to see and hear directly how national supporters' organisations and member-run clubs at all levels of the game have developed and perceive football.

The various project partners are taking part in a series of exchange visits over the lifetime of the two-year project, with key learnings and best practices being compiled to shape a comprehensive online training tool by the end of 2017.

Antonia Hagemann, CEO of SD Europe, said: "It is great to see how member-run clubs and national supporters' groups benefit from this project. The feedback has been very positive and we look forward to further improving the way we all operate based on shared values and principles." 🌍

# MAKING FOOTBALL THE NUMBER ONE PARTICIPATION SPORT FOR WOMEN

As part of its preparations to launch a five-year campaign to make women's football the number one participation sport in Europe, UEFA is on the road, working with national associations across the continent in a series of special workshops.

UEFA's women's football workshop series kicked off in Northern Ireland, followed by events in England, Germany, the Netherlands, France, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Wales.

The Together #WePlayStrong campaign will be officially launched on 1 June before the UEFA Women's Champions League final in Cardiff. The campaign is underpinned by research that will help all those involved at all levels of women's football to increase participation, raise the game's profile and improve access for coaches, teams and players.

## Starting in Northern Ireland

As hosts of this year's European Women's Under-19 Championship final round, the Irish Football Association in Northern Ireland, which is also launching a drive to recruit women football leaders, is taking significant steps to boost participation and address inequalities in women's football.

At the first of the special workshops, UEFA delivered advice to delegates from the Irish Football Association on how to take advantage of marketing opportunities and encourage engagement on the ground and through social media, as well as how to maximise



Northern Ireland hosted the first Together #WePlayStrong workshop.

sponsorship. Stakeholders from women's football at all levels, from the grassroots to the elite, shared experiences, discussed barriers to access and worked together to find solutions.

Gail Redmond, women's domestic manager at the Irish FA, said: "We were delighted to be the first country to pilot the Together #WePlayStrong workshop and we believe this initiative will be key in helping us to reach our goal of making football the number one sport for women and girls in our country.

"We are proud of our close relationship with UEFA and are excited about the growth prospects for women's and girls' football over the next five years. We want to increase participation at all levels and we plan to energise clubs to build capacity by prioritising club development.

"We found the presentations to our staff informative and it was helpful to offer stakeholders in Northern Ireland an opportunity to voice their views on how to improve and develop the game here."

Guy-Laurent Epstein, UEFA's director of marketing, applauded Northern Ireland for the enthusiasm and commitment shown by those working in women's football, particularly the many volunteers. "There is a great appetite to develop women's football in Northern Ireland, and it comes at a time when football has enjoyed good levels of investment," he said.

"The newly opened National Football Stadium at Windsor Park is a beautiful stadium, and the success enjoyed at EURO 2016 has inspired many within football to help children and young people, including girls, to take up the game.

"We recognise that putting football at the forefront for women across Europe is a big challenge, but we feel very confident we are on the right track. We have developed a toolkit for all national associations to tailor to their needs, and with UEFA's support it will help to make football the number one sport played by women in Europe." 🌱



## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

FIRUZ ABDULLA

 The Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA) held its annual general meeting at Boulevard Hotel in Baku on 15 March.

AFFA president Rovnag Abdullayev opened the meeting by welcoming the delegates, guests and media representatives in attendance and telling them about what AFFA had done to further the development of football in Azerbaijan during the reporting period, highlighting some of the positive results.

AFFA general secretary Elkhan Mammadov announced that TV channel CBC Sport had made a video about AFFA activities during the reporting period and gave a detailed overview after the video was shown.

Tural Piriyeu, head of AFFA's marketing and sponsorship department, and volunteer programme director Vugar Rustamli also addressed the meeting.



Min Yuan, deputy representative of UNICEF Azerbaijan, one of AFFA's partners, was then invited to take the floor. She talked about UNICEF Azerbaijan's work in cooperation with AFFA and presented their latest video.

AFFA's chief accountant, Khalid Javadov, presented the 2016 financial report, and the delegates then heard from Ulvi Hasanov, representing AFFA's independent auditors.

After all the speeches and reports, elections were held for a vacancy on the AFFA executive committee. There was only one candidate, namely Zaur Akhundov, president of Azerbaijan's futsal federation, so an open vote was held and Mr Akhundov was elected.

The AGM was followed by an executive committee meeting and a press conference with Mr Abdullayev.

## HELP THROUGH FOOTBALL

VALENTIN BOTTE

 On 7 March, Belgium's national training centre in Tubize played host to the Belgian Homeless Cup, in which more than 250 players in 21 teams competed alongside each other in a spirit of fun and friendship.

This event is a socio-sporting football tournament for homeless people and other acutely vulnerable members of society. With teams coming together from all over Belgium, it gives people an opportunity to regain confidence in themselves through football and enjoy the experience with others.

"It's a great honour for us to come and play here at the Red Devils' training centre," explained Dirk, the goalkeeper of the team from Leuven. "Lots of people need a day like this to put a smile back on their face and connect with other people who have experienced the same kinds of difficulty in their lives."



The event was attended by the secretary of state for the fight against poverty and equal opportunities, Zuhail Demir, who said: "Sport is the best way of restoring social cohesion. People can meet here and talk about their various experiences in life. Football is giving these homeless people an opportunity to regain confidence in themselves and meet other people. Football has a role to play in society, and the fact that the Royal Belgian Football Association has agreed to take

part in this project is very important."

The Belgian Homeless Devils and the Belgian Homeless Flames will soon be pulling on the national shirt on the international stage, with the men's and women's teams both taking part in the 15th Homeless World Cup later this year. That tournament, which will take place in Oslo from 29 August to 5 September, will be a great opportunity for the players to make headlines and show off their skills.

CROATIA

www.hns-cff.hr

## READY FOR U17 FINALS

TOMISLAV PACAK



Two months before the opening match of the European Under-17 Championship finals, the Croatian Football Federation (HNS) gave a presentation on the tournament to the Croatian media and public. During the well-attended media conference, the HNS presented Niko Kranjčar as football ambassador for the tournament and young singer Eni Jurišić as the music ambassador and performer of the tournament anthem, *Kao jedno (As one)*. Jurišić was accompanied by Kranjčar for the filming of the official music video, and the pair were joined by the Croatian U17 team and children from local football schools.

To further promote the tournament and its legacy, the HNS is introducing a project entitled Fun Culture to elementary and football schools in the

Rijeka and Zagreb regions. The HNS has also launched a dedicated tournament website, Croatia2017.hr, and social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, all of which are labelled @u17EuroCroatia.



Niko Kranjčar (left), Eni Jurišić and Dario Bašić (Croatian U17 coach).

During the HNS assembly in March, coaches Željko Huber and Stanislav Vugrinec were presented with the HNS's highest individual accolade for contributions to the development of youth football in Croatia. Vedran Ćorluka was presented with the Fiery Wings award by the Croatian national team's fan club, in honour of his brave EURO 2016 appearance against Turkey when he suffered a severe cut to his head. Youngster Ante Ćorić was recognised as young player of the year, while respected coach Stanko Poklepović received an award for his lifetime contribution to Croatian football.

Marijan Kustić was unanimously elected as HNS vice-president after Damir Mišković resigned due to his many business obligations.

Meanwhile, the Croatian national team players once again showed their support for the ongoing fight against racism, discrimination and violence at football stadiums by promoting national minority football camps ahead of their important win against Ukraine in the European Qualifiers for the 2018 World Cup.

DENMARK

www.dbu.dk

## WORLD-CLASS WOMEN ENTER DANISH FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME

MARTIN MOGENSEN



For the first time in history, two big names from the women's game have been inducted into Danish football's hall of fame.

At this year's Danish football awards ceremony, Lone Smidt Nielsen and Susanne Augustesen were named as the latest new editions to Danish football's hall of fame, making them the first women in the prestigious company of players such as Michael Laudrup, Allan Simonsen and Peter Schmeichel.

During her career, Smidt Nielsen was often described as the best female player in the world and, among numerous achievements, won the Italian championship twice with her club Sanitas Trani. In 2015 she was named female football player of the century by the Danish FA.

Like Smidt Nielsen, Augustesen played for Sanitas Trani and was part of the championship winning team in the 1980s. In total, she won six Italian championships and was Serie A's top scorer eight times, scoring more than 600 goals during her career overall. Her list of achievements also includes victory in the then unofficial Women's World Cup in Mexico in 1971, when she scored all three goals in Denmark's 3-0 win against the hosts in the final, in front of 110,000 spectators at Estadio Azteca.

In their acceptance speeches both women underlined how proud they were to be part of the increased focus on women's football in Denmark over recent years and said that they wanted to serve as role models for girls playing football all over the country.



Lone Smidt Nielsen and Susanne Augustesen.

The Danish football hall of fame was established in 2008, providing a unique opportunity to remember great accomplishments and to honour those responsible for the finest results in Danish football. Candidates for the hall of fame are nominated by a special committee and are named at the annual Danish football awards ceremony.

ESTONIA

www.jalgpall.ee

## AIVAR POHLAK RE-ELECTED AS PRESIDENT

MIHKEL UIBOLEHT



The members of the Estonian Football Association (EJL) have re-elected 54-year-old Aivar Pohlak as president of the organisation for another four-year term. Mr Pohlak was first elected as president in 2007.

The EJL congress also elected two vice-presidents and ten board members. Three new members have replaced veteran football leaders Peeter Küttis, Josep Katsev and Arvu Sild. The new members are Estonia's top female player Anastassia Morkovkina, former professional goalkeeper Daniil Savitski, who now works as an attorney-at-law, and infrastructure expert Teet Ilves.

The EJL congress was attended by a record 95 delegates. UEFA Executive

Committee member František Laurinec addressed the congress, while UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin sent a video message.

The number of people playing football in Estonia has increased exponentially. In 1995 the country had just 2,651 registered players, in 2013 the number was 17,359 and by 2016 it had reached 20,765.



GERMANY

www.dfb.de

## FOOTBALL MUSEUM HOSTS TALKS ON PLAYING CULTURE

THOMAS HACKBARTH



In February, Borussia Dortmund's head coach, Thomas Tuchel, and Stanford University chair and literary theorist Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht gave the first in a series of talks on playing culture organised by the cultural foundation of the German Football Association (DFB).

The talks go beyond the everyday to address universal topics such as the relationship between beauty and efficiency and the ratio between predictability and chance in the world's most popular game.

Leading sports journalist Christoph Biermann moderated the first two intensive 45-minute discussions.

Thomas Tuchel is one of the greatest advocates of a modern, technically advanced, fast and attacking style of football, and one of the game's more perceptive and critical thinkers. In 2009, when he was in his mid-30s, he became head coach of 1. FSV Mainz 05 and even

before joining Borussia Dortmund in 2015 he was regarded throughout Europe as one of the most exciting coaches of his generation.

In his book 'Lob des Sports' (In Praise of Sport), Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht reveals that outside his work, it is the world of sport and stadiums that fascinates him the most because of the 'moments of intensity and aesthetic pleasure', as he describes it.

Together, the panellists discussed football from a totally new angle, bringing practice and theory together in a unique format that produced a lively, fresh and often surprising debate. Fast, energetic, artful and at times heated, it was quite a match, but after 90 minutes, the final result was unequivocal – there is definitely a place for intellectual discussions about playing culture and healthy debate about the state of football. The next talks are planned for the second half of this year.

GEORGIA

www.gff.ge

## NEW BEGINNING FOR NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

OTAR GIORGADZE



Georgia's top domestic championship kicked off on 4 March with a new name – Erovnuli Liga – and a new format. The league pyramid is now divided into the following four tiers: Erovnuli Liga, Erovnuli Liga 2, Liga 3 and the Regional League. The top two tiers have both been given the name Erovnuli (Georgian for 'national') as a reminder of the history and character of the early domestic football competitions.

The Erovnuli Liga features the country's top ten clubs, competing for the domestic championship title over four rounds, played from spring until autumn.

The Erovnuli Liga branding was produced by the Georgian Football Federation. It includes a new logo, a new anthem and a new online platform, as well as numerous other innovative features that aim to increase fan engagement and mass participation in Georgian football. This is the first time that the domestic championship has had its own visual and audio identity, digital platforms and brand regulations on kit and stadiums.

Fans are now able to watch every Erovnuli Liga match live online and, as the league's main partner, Georgia's public broadcaster will also televise one live match a week and special weekly and monthly roundups.



GIBRALTAR

www.gibraltarfa.com

## UNDER-21 COACHING TEAM APPOINTED

STEVEN GONZALEZ



The Gibraltar Football Association (GFA) is delighted to announce the appointment of Aaron Asquez as head coach of Gibraltar's national Under-21 team, with Michael Felice as his assistant. Asquez holds a UEFA B licence and both men bring significant knowledge and expertise to the GFA's coaching staff, having been involved in Gibraltarian football for several years at various levels.

Their first match in charge will be the team's opening European Under-21 Championship qualifier, away to Austria on 8 June. This will be Gibraltar's first-ever appearance in an international competition at this level.

"These are exciting times for Gibraltarian football," said the GFA's technical director, Desi Curry. "Today's appointment gives two young, extremely

promising Gibraltarian coaches the opportunity to develop their careers in line with our philosophy for nurturing, developing and allowing home-grown talent to flourish on the world stage."

Mr Curry also announced a change to the GFA's policy on coaches who are involved with clubs also being allowed to have a role with national teams: "The policy is being amended slightly. Gibraltar is a small place with a very limited pool of coaches, most of whom develop within our clubs and gain their invaluable knowledge and experience at club level. As technical director, what I want to see is good coaches working consistently at good levels, and that can only be achieved by having regular contact with club football. The policy I am putting in place now will therefore look to allow coaches who may be involved at club

level to be involved with some of our national youth selections, provided there are no conflicts of interest and they do not coach the same age groups at club and national level. In order to make this project a success, I know we can count on the cooperation of the clubs going forward – it needs all of us pulling in the same direction."



Desi Curry (left), Aaron Asquez and Michael Felice.

ITALY

www.figc.it

## RETE! PROJECT RETURNS

DIEGO ANTENOZIO



As the national team prepared for its evening match against Albania at Stadio Renzo Barbera in Palermo on 24 March, the CEO of the Italian Football Federation (FIGC), Michele Uva, was at the nearby Villa Niscemi for the official launch of the third annual Rete! project.

Organised by the FIGC's youth and schools division (SGS) in partnership with the Catholic University of Milan, the project supports unaccompanied foreign minors living in centres run by the System for the Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR) throughout Italy. After an opening address by the president of the SGS, Vito Tisci, who stressed the FIGC's commitment to social responsibility, SGS secretary Vito Di Gioia went on to outline the scheme and its objectives. "Since 2015, this project has provided a programme of coaching and educational activities, which are delivered at the participating centres themselves in partnership with the regional

coordination offices of the SGS," he said. Since its inception, the Rete! project has grown significantly, with more and more young people participating from one year to the next.

Another integral part of the project is research by academics from the Catholic University of Milan, who are looking at challenging contexts in which football is seen to have a positive effect. Speaking at the launch event for the third edition of Rete!, research coordinator Professor



Emanuele Caroppo presented their findings so far. Michele Uva then emphasised the importance of the synergy between the project partners – namely the FIGC itself, the SPRAR's national coordination service, Italy's interior ministry and the project's key sponsor, the Eni energy company – in terms of the great social benefits of the project, in which the FIGC continues to invest and is committed to developing over the years ahead.

During the day, about a hundred young people from refugee and asylum-seeker centres in Agrigento, Barcellona Pozzo di Gotto, Bonagia, Caltanissetta, Mazzarino and Milazzo, all in Sicily, took part in a skills-development session and mini-tournament led by the FIGC's local coaching team at the University of Palermo. Prof. Caroppo took the opportunity to meet with SPRAR staff and learn about their day-to-day work with the young people and the issues they face. To cap off a special day, following the tournament the young players were accompanied to Stadio Renzo Barbera to watch Italy's 2018 World Cup qualifier against Albania.

LATVIA

www.lff.lv

## FOURTH FEDERATION CUP FOR YOUTH TEAMS

TOMS ĀRMANIS



For the fourth year in a row, Riga, the capital of Latvia, has hosted the Federation Cup, an elite youth competition for national teams organised by the Latvian Football Federation. The 2017 edition gathered together teams of players born in or since 1999 from FYR Macedonia, Latvia, Norway and Ukraine.

The annual mini-tournament brings together representatives of some of Europe's leading youth football systems, inviting them to test their skills against each other and their Latvian hosts. This tournament, staged in early spring, serves as one of the best opportunities for the teams to roll up their sleeves before the upcoming UEFA qualifying tournaments.

Ukraine won the first two editions of the competition, while last year the

trophy was lifted by the Norwegians. This year Ukraine once again proved themselves to be the best team of the tournament, winning against Latvia and Norway and drawing against FYR Macedonia. The Norwegians followed one point adrift, while tournament debutants FYR Macedonia came third. The hosts lost all three of their games to finish fourth.

As well as enabling youth players to gain international experience, this year's tournament also supported the learning curve of Latvian coaches working towards their UEFA Elite Youth A licences. They analysed every game and put together training and game plans as if they were coaching the teams themselves. Latvia is currently running its first UEFA Elite Youth A licence course, on which a total of 21 local youth coaches are enrolled.

LITHUANIA

www.lff.lt

## PRIMARY SCHOOL LEAGUE LAUNCH

VAIDOTAS JANUŠKA



As part of its efforts to encourage children of all ages to play football, the Lithuanian Football Federation (LFF) has launched its first primary school league competition. The pilot season encompasses five regions and will involve 72 teams and more than 1,300 participants, ranging from first to fourth grade, playing small-sided indoor football.



The league aims to be fun for all, and rewarding too, with everyone receiving sports equipment and other prizes courtesy of sponsors. For promotional purposes, a well-known local composer has created a league song, while football fans have been invited to vote on the names of the league mascots on Facebook.

For LFF president Edvinas Eimontas, who attended one of the first matches, the project had already met expectations after the first week. "We've had great success with fun-based football in kindergartens and wanted to do something for children taking their next steps in the game," he explained. "For the pilot season we couldn't accommodate everyone who wanted to play, but hopefully in the next few years the number of participants in the league will reach at least 5,000." The competition is set to expand all over the country as of autumn this year.

LIECHTENSTEIN

www.lfv.li

## HUGO QUADERER RE-ELECTED

ANTON BANZER



The agenda for the Liechtenstein Football Association's 2017 general assembly, which took place on 30 March in Ruggell, included elections for a number of positions on the association's board. Three board members' terms of office had come to an end, including that of the president, Hugo Quaderer. The 52-year-old former sports minister, who has led the association since 2015, was unanimously re-elected for a further four-year term by delegates from member clubs.

Looking ahead to the challenges that the association is set to face in the coming years, Hugo Quaderer reiterated that he would continue to do everything in his power to support football in Liechtenstein over the next four years and that all existing projects, including the establishment of a new technical centre, would be continued. He also stressed the importance of the association's board remaining a reliable partner for FIFA and UEFA.



MALTA

www.mfa.com.mt

## CELEBRATING MALTA'S FIRST INTERNATIONAL

ALEX VELLA



It is 60 years since Malta played their first official international match, a friendly against Austria on 24 February 1957. That game ended 3-2 to the Austrians, who were considered one of the best teams in the world at the time, having finished third in the 1954 World Cup in Switzerland.

To celebrate this anniversary, the Malta Football Association (MFA) organised a series of activities, which were coordinated by MFA vice-president Matthew Paris. The first activity was a reception in honour of the players who lined up for Malta on that historic day. It was an emotional gathering for the players, many of whom

are now in their late 80s. Exclusive mementoes and gifts commemorating the match were presented to the veteran players by the MFA president, Norman Darmanin Demajo.

An anniversary logo was also unveiled, a video feature commemorating the match was shown and a message sent by FIFA president Gianni Infantino was read out. Other activities included the release of a commemorative publication compiled by the MFA's communications office, and visits by the Maltese national squads to hospitals and children's homes under the MFA's Football for Life programme, which is supported by FIFA and UEFA.

Six decades of international football have also been earmarked as the main theme of the MFA's annual awards, which will be presented shortly, and the anniversary celebrations will feature prominently in the build-up to Malta's much-awaited 2018 World Cup qualifier against England on 1 September 2017.

MOLDOVA

www.fmf.md

## CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

SVETLANA PATRAȘ



For the fifth year in a row, the Football Association of Moldova (FMF) and CCPA/OFFS Moldova (Cross Cultures Project Association/Open Fun Football Schools) organised a match between former Moldovan women's and men's internationals to celebrate International Women's Day on 8 March. The men presented flowers to each of the women before the match, which was hosted by FC Zimbru Chișinău.

The head of women's football at the FMF, Natalia Ceban, and national women's Under-17 team coach Elena Subbotina played an important part in the match. Representatives of CCPA/OFFS Moldova were also involved, including assistant coordinators Iurie Conusevici (head coach of the men's

team) and Svetlana Patraș (captain of the women's team), and Diana Bobuțac and Iana Pogarevici, both of whom work as instructors for CCPA/OFFS Moldova.

The match was well attended and received good media coverage, with match reports on the FMF's official website and on TV.



NORTHERN IRELAND

www.irishfa.com

## KICK-OFF TIME FOR EDUCATION AND HERITAGE CENTRE

NIGEL TILSON

 The Irish Football Association's new Education and Heritage Centre has officially opened. Northern Ireland manager Michael O'Neill and goalkeeping legend Pat Jennings cut the ribbon at the centre, which is housed within the National Football Stadium at Windsor Park in Belfast.

The facility tells the unique story of Northern Ireland football using a variety of media, interactive displays and key artefacts. Visitors are able to relive the atmosphere of famous nights, gain

insights into the drama on and off the pitch and feel the rush of emotions shared by everyone at the stadium – win, lose or draw.

Irish FA president David Martin said: "The creation of our Education and Heritage Centre at the National Football Stadium presents a fantastic opportunity for the Irish Football Association to showcase much of the 136-year history of the game here.

"From the Irish Challenge Cup and its first winners, Moyola Park FC, through to the present day and the exploits of our



Michael O'Neill (left) and Pat Jennings.

national team at EURO 2016, there is all sorts of nostalgic coverage. The British Championship Trophy has remained in Northern Ireland's possession as we were the last winners in 1984 and it is also on display."

ROMANIA

www.frf.ro

## PARTNERSHIP SIGNED WITH UNICEF

PAUL ZAHARIA

 Alongside looking after the sport itself, which is, of course, the primary concern of all national associations, social responsibility is a key pillar of the Romanian Football Federation (FRF). With this in mind, on 10 March the FRF signed a three-year partnership agreement with the United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF.

The goal of the partnership is to develop and undertake joint action and activities to promote quality, inclusive education and to combat violence against children.

The FRF will support projects launched by UNICEF and the two organisations will work together on awareness-raising campaigns and fundraising activities. The first campaign relates to violence against children and is entitled 'It is not normal to be normal'. Next, funds will be raised for a project promoting social inclusion through integrated community services. Numerous other projects will follow over the course of the next three years.

'The power of football for the future', 'YES to education, NO to violence' and 'Normality for children' are just three

of the messages used by the FRF to communicate the fact that it is neither normal nor acceptable to use violence against children or to in any way abuse them. It is hoped that the FRF's support of UNICEF's development programmes in the football community will further reinforce these messages, as well as providing an opportunity to raise awareness of children's issues, especially those involving vulnerable and excluded children.



Sandie Blanchet (left) and Răzvan Burleanu.

"Football is a social phenomenon that brings together millions of fans, regardless of sex, profession, faith or social status. We believe that if this force is put to use on behalf of education and to fight against all forms of violence, many children will be able to enjoy quality education in a safe environment and will be inspired to stay in school. In parallel, we can help collect more resources for UNICEF programmes, in order to raise the standard of education available," said Răzvan Burleanu, FRF president, at the official FRF-UNICEF press conference.

On the same occasion, Sandie Blanchet, UNICEF's representative in Romania, said: "The partnership with the FRF will help us raise awareness and spread information about educational rights and children's needs. We want to use the FRF's channels to communicate campaign messages to as many football fans as possible. They can help vulnerable children access quality, inclusive education and help stop violence against children."

SAN MARINO

www.fsgc.sm

## A NEW ERA FOR FOOTBALL IN SAN MARINO

MATTEO ROSSI



Fresh from the election of Marco Tura as president, the San Marino Football Federation (FSGC) has taken some important initiatives and made some key appointments to consolidate its progress on a number of fronts. The recently elected FSGC council has named Alberto Pacchioni as general director and Massimo Bonini as technical director. Both appointments, which were the result of careful selection processes, reflect the recent developments in Sammarinese football and the progress the FSGC has made from an organisational and a technical perspective. Former Juventus and Bologna star Bonini set straight to work alongside coaches from the FSGC's national and youth set-ups, his first



priority being to identify methods and practices that will make San Marino's teams more competitive and prepare them for the many challenges they face in the months ahead. With making strides at international level a central objective of the FSGC, San Marino played friendlies against Andorra and Moldova in the first three months of the year in preparation for their World Cup qualifier against Czech Republic. The team will gain more invaluable experience with a friendly against Italy in Empoli on 31 May.

With these and many more initiatives under way, the FSGC has its sights firmly set on a new era of growth for football in San Marino, founded on hard work on the pitch and defined by success at international level.

SERBIA

www.fss.rs

## AN IMPORTANT DAY FOR SERBIAN FOOTBALL

MIRKO VRBICA



The Football Association of Serbia (FSS) was honoured to receive a visit from UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin recently. Accompanied by Zoran Laković, UEFA's national associations director, Mr Čeferin visited the FSS's national sports centre with FSS president Slaviša Kokeza and honorary FSS president Tomislav Karadžić.

"This is an important day for Serbian football. Many thanks to Mr Čeferin for taking the time to visit our association. We have talked about the development of football in Serbia and I think we have managed to agree on many great things. The FSS and UEFA have an excellent relationship of cooperation," said Mr Kokeza during the visit.

Mr Čeferin also voiced his satisfaction, saying in excellent Serbian: "I'm pleased to be here. The FSS has always supported me, even when I was a long way from being elected UEFA president."

Mr Čeferin then addressed specific problems facing Serbian football.

"The biggest problem that Serbia has in regard to football is infrastructure.

"We have also talked with the Serbian prime minister, who promised to contribute to the financing of various

projects, such as the construction of artificial pitches and a national stadium. UEFA has already given considerable help to Serbia, and will continue to do so," he said.



SLOVAKIA

www.futbalsfz.sk

## HAPAL EXTENDS CONTRACT AS U21 COACH

PETER SURIN

 The Slovak Football Association (SFZ) is pleased to announce that Under-21 coach Pavel Hapal will continue to lead the team through their next European qualifying campaign.

"Pavel Hapal had signed a contract for the 2015–17 qualifying competition, with a clause extending the contract until the end of the European Under-21 Championship in Poland [if the team qualified]," the general secretary of the SFZ, Jozef Kliment, explained. "We presented our interest in further extending our cooperation in autumn last year. Both sides agreed they wanted to achieve further goals together, so we signed a new contract as from 1 January 2017 for the 2017–19 qualifiers,

including potential play-offs and the final tournament in Italy in 2019."

"Pavel Hapal was the only candidate for us," said SFZ president Ján Kováčik. "He did an outstanding job in his first two years in charge. His team qualified for the European Under-21 Championship finals as qualifying group winners, played spectacular football and gained recognition from the experts. But what we appreciate most is the way the players under coach Hapal approached the Slovakian football family. They showed character, heart, passion and pride. And there lies the answer as to why we have not considered any other candidates for this role for the upcoming qualifying campaign."

Word about Hapal's great work with the Under-21 team spread quickly. Rumours suggested potential interest from Czech clubs AC Sparta Praha, SK Slavia Praha and FK Viktoria Plzeň, as well as Polish top-flight clubs. But Hapal set the record straight: "The Slovakia Under-21 team remains my priority. There was no time or reason to think about changing jobs." However, he also said in an interview for a Czech newspaper: "I do not want to forget the daily work of a coach at club level. One day I would like to take a coaching role at a club and I believe I will be able to make the decision on the right place in due time."



Pavel Hapal (left) and Ján Kováčik.

SLOVENIA

www.nzs.si

## PARENTS SURPRISE PLAYERS AHEAD OF KEY GAME

MATJAZ KRAJNIK

 The Slovenia national team had just finished a training session in Glasgow on the eve of their recent European Qualifiers match against Scotland, when their coach, Srečko Katanec, asked the players to wait on the pitch, as a few fans wanted to come and say hello. The players were delighted to discover that those 'fans' were none other than their parents and other close family members.

This initiative, which was organised jointly by national team sponsor Petrol and the Football Association of Slovenia (NZS), brought 30 parents from Slovenia to Scotland in complete secrecy with one sole aim – to surprise their children and give them an extra boost of energy and motivation ahead of that important match. Months of coordination and organisation went into that one moment of surprise, with many of those parents

never having seen their children play away from home for the national team.

Petrol, which began its association with the NZS last year, had been looking for an answer to the question 'Who gives you energy?', searching for the driving force behind the players, from the first time they stepped onto a football pitch and until now, as members of the Slovenia national team. This surprise visit was, in a sense, the answer to that question, for those parents and family members have been right behind those players every step of the way, cheering their every success over the years and all their commitment, hard work and persistence.

The players were entirely unaware that their nearest and dearest would be coming to see them until the moment they appeared on the pitch. The energy that flowed from that surprise visit was

the kind that gives fresh impetus, stokes passions and strengthens the desire for victory.

That clandestine operation, which was revealed to only a handful of people (including the head coach), is set to be depicted in a short film, which will follow those parents all the way from Slovenia to Scotland, showing their arrival at the training session and their emotions during the game.

The NZS has also released this video of the surprise visit: <http://bit.ly/NZS-Petrol-live>



SWEDEN

[www.svenskfotboll.se](http://www.svenskfotboll.se)

## NEW NATIONAL TEAM BADGES

ANDREAS NILSSON



Since the early 1970s, the Swedish national teams have played in shirts bearing the hallmark of the Swedish Football Association (SvFF) – the SvFF badge. But not any more. As part of a major rebranding project, the badges on all national team shirts will now read ‘SVERIGE’ (Sweden) instead. “When you play for Sweden you represent your whole country, simple as that. It’s not just about the FA. Football is the national sport of Sweden, and we want to be inclusive to everyone. We want our brand to be about community, joy, diversity and friendship and, above all, to say

that everyone is welcome,” says SvFF general secretary Håkan Sjöstrand.

Swedish football will now promote seven different brands: the SvFF, the Swedish Cup, futsal, development and education, the supporters’ club, the women’s national teams and the men’s national teams. The SvFF badge will continue to be used as part of the national association brand.

“We needed to make our brands and propositions to the market a lot clearer. This rebranding will make it easier for us to engage fans and to highlight our community work,” says Sjöstrand.



SWITZERLAND

[www.football.ch](http://www.football.ch)

## REDUCING THE RISK OF INJURY

PIERRE BENOIT



Football is constantly evolving. The game is becoming faster, more dynamic, more popular and more competitive – all positive factors which are helping to make football even more attractive at all levels. Unfortunately, however, that increased dynamism has brought with it an increase in the risk of injury, which explains why the Swiss national accident insurance fund (SUVA) has spent years working with the Swiss Football Association to prevent accidents.

Every year, around 45,000 people injure themselves on Switzerland’s football pitches, running up costs totalling 170 million Swiss francs. In response, SUVA has established an accident prevention programme aimed specifically at reducing the number of football-related accidents and promoting safe play. Its Safety at Community Tournaments initiative has led to a marked reduction in the risk of injury, with SUVA and tournament organisers working together to improve

safety. Indeed, the number of injuries at SUVA-supported tournaments has fallen significantly in the last few years. SUVA provides organisers of community and corporate tournaments with equipment, access to qualified referees and financial support. A SUVA-commissioned study on accidents in Swiss football shows that 70% of all football injuries occur in the context of formal club football (50% during matches; 20% during training), with large numbers of accidents being caused by foul play. Knee injuries tend to be the main issue in this regard, resulting in long lay-offs and considerable costs.

A number of years ago, SUVA and the Swiss Football Association established the Fair Play Trophy. Every year, the country’s fairest football clubs are honoured and acknowledged, and since 2016 the winners of the trophy have had an automatic place in Switzerland’s national cup competition. Thus, amateur footballers now have a chance of playing against professional sides from the Swiss Super League, which is an incentive for all clubs to make a real commitment to fair play.



## UEFA REGIONS' CUP FINAL DRAW

AYDIN GÜVENİR

 On 2 March, the Turkish Football Federation (TFF) hosted the final draw for the 2016/17 UEFA Regions' Cup, which will be played in Istanbul from 1 to 9 July.

Together with representatives of the eight associations whose teams have qualified for the finals, the draw was attended by Ali Düşmez, TFF executive board member and amateur board chairman, Turkey Amateur Sports Clubs Confederation president and tournament ambassador; Şükrü Genç, the mayor of Sarıyer; Gürsoy Osman Bilgin, the district governor of Sarıyer; Maliki Ejder Batur, the deputy mayor of Umraniye; and other selected guests and TFF officials.

The 2016/17 UEFA Regions' Cup finals, sponsored by Turkcell, will be played at the Hasan Doğan national teams' camp and training facilities, Umraniye stadium and Yusuf Ziya Öniş stadium. The groups are as follows:

- Group A: Istanbul (Turkey), Ingulec (Ukraine), Zagreb (Croatia) and Lisboa (Portugal)
- Group B: Castilla y León (Spain), Olomouc (Czech Republic), Region 2 (Republic of Ireland) and South Region (Russia)

In other news, Arçelik is to be one of the main sponsors of the Turkish national teams. The signing ceremony for this important new partnership took place at the Antalya Regnum Carya Golf &

Spa Resort on 22 March. The ceremony was attended by TFF president Yıldırım Demirören, TFF vice-president Ali Dürüst, TFF executive board members Cengiz Zülfikaroğlu, Mustafa Çağlar and Alaattin Aykaç, Turkish football director Fatih Terim, TFF general secretary Kadir Kardeş, Koç Holding vice-chairman Ali Koç, Koç Holding durable consumption group chairman Fatih Kemal Ebiçioğlu, Arçelik Turkey general manager Can Dinçer and players from the national A team.



## NEW LOOK FOR NATIONAL TEAMS

YURI MAZNYCHENKO

 The Ukrainian national teams in all age categories will soon have a new look after the Football Federation of Ukraine (FFU) signed a four-year deal with sports clothing manufacturer Joma. The Spanish company will also give the FFU 72,000 balls to help develop youth football in Ukraine over the four-year period.

"Having a unique design for our national team kits before the start of the FIFA and UEFA qualifying campaigns, the social component of the contract and future joint projects – these are the main reasons why we have chosen Joma as our new technical sponsor," FFU president Andriy Pavelko said.

Jose Manuel Lopez, managing director of Joma, a brand that has been successfully rolled out in 105 countries around the world, hopes that its



technologies and innovations will help the Ukrainian national teams to achieve good results.

On signing the deal, Mr Lopez presented Mr Pavelko with a new-look

No12 shirt, and the senior men's team, coached by Andriy Shevchenko, showcased the new kit in their European Qualifiers match against Croatia in Zagreb.

## BIRTHDAYS

**Bent Clausen** (Denmark, 1 May)  
**Peter Mikkelsen** (Denmark, 1 May)  
**Vasko Dojčinovski** (FYR Macedonia, 1 May)  
**Alexey Smertin** (Russia, 5 May)  
**Anton Fagan** (Scotland, 2 May)  
**Vladimir Medved** (Slovakia, 3 May)  
**Olivier Chovaux** (France, 3 May)  
**Haim Jakov** (Israel, 3 May)  
**Ronen Hershco** (Israel, 3 May)  
**Anghel Iordanescu** (Romania, 4 May)  
**Borislav Aleksandrov** (Bulgaria, 4 May) **30th**  
**Peter Gilliéron** (Switzerland, 5 May)  
**Christian Welander** (Sweden, 5 May)  
**Costakis Koutsokoumnis** (Cyprus, 5 May)  
**Goran Mihajević** (Montenegro, 5 May)  
**Ken Ridden** (England, 6 May)  
**Gudmundur Petursson** (Iceland, 6 May)  
**Karl-Erik Nilsson** (Sweden, 6 May) **60th**  
**Charles Flint** (England, 7 May)  
**Pekka Luhtanen** (Finland, 8 May)  
**Michel Pralong** (Switzerland, 8 May)  
**Marc Dobbelaer** (Belgium, 8 May)  
**Miroslav Tulinger** (Czech Republic, 8 May)  
**Dan Vo Quang** (France, 8 May)  
**Magnus Forssblad** (Sweden, 10 May)  
**Yuri Baskakov** (Russia, 10 May)  
**Jean-Marie Gantenbein**  
 (Luxembourg, 11 May)  
**Timo Huttunen** (Finland, 11 May)  
**Volodymyr Geninson** (Ukraine, 12 May)  
**Gaston Schreurs** (Belgium, 13 May)  
**Henrik Ravnild** (Denmark, 13 May)  
**Carlos Manuel Ferreira Matos**  
 (Portugal, 14 May)  
**Maria Luisa Villa Gutiérrez** (Spain, 14 May)  
**Hans-Jörg Eissmann** (Germany, 15 May)  
**Nikolay Levnikov** (Russia, 15 May)  
**Evzen Amler** (Czech Republic, 15 May)  
**Sotirios Sinnis** (Greece, 15 May)  
**Luis Cuervas Del Real** (Spain, 15 May)  
**Egon Franck** (Germany, 16 May)  
**Svein Johannessen** (Norway, 17 May)  
**Kadri Jägel** (Estonia, 17 May)  
**Lars Appelqvist** (Sweden, 18 May) **90th**  
**Tamara Chichinadze** (Georgia, 18 May)  
**Andreas Morisbak** (Norway, 19 May)  
**Jozef Marko** (Slovakia, 19 May)  
**Gaetano De Gabriele** (Malta, 19 May)  
**Milovan Djukanović** (Montenegro, 19 May)  
**Rune Pedersen** (Norway, 19 May)  
**Raimondas Statkevicius**  
 (Lithuania, 19 May) **50th**  
**Michał Listkiewicz** (Poland, 20 May)  
**Sandra Renon** (France, 20 May) **40th**  
**Neli Lozeva** (Bulgaria, 20 May)  
**Ewa Gajewska** (Poland, 21 May)  
**Nicolai Cebotari** (Moldova, 21 May)  
**Costas Kapitanis** (Cyprus, 21 May)  
**Theo van Seggelen** (Netherlands, 22 May)  
**Karl Dhont** (Belgium, 22 May)  
**Christian Hockenjos** (Germany, 23 May)  
**Packie Bonner** (Republic of Ireland, 24 May)  
**Ainar Leppänen** (Estonia, 24 May)  
**Teresa Romao** (Portugal, 24 May)  
**Andrzej Zareba** (Poland, 24 May)  
**Semen Andreev** (Russia, 25 May)  
**Hans Cooman** (Belgium, 25 May)  
**Ivančica Sudac** (Croatia, 25 May)  
**Marco Tura** (San Marino, 26 May)  
**Evgeni Giner** (Russia, 26 May)  
**Nikoloz Jgarkava** (Georgia, 26 May)  
**Peter Lawwell** (Scotland, 27 May)  
**Jim Stjerne Hansen** (Denmark, 28 May)  
**Jean-Pierre Escalettes** (France, 29 May)  
**Jacques Antenen** (Switzerland, 29 May)  
**Jozef Kliment** (Slovakia, 29 May)  
**Donel Conway** (Republic of Ireland, 31 May)  
**István Huszár** (Hungary, 31 May)  
**Arnaldo Cunha** (Portugal, 31 May)  
**Mads Øland** (Denmark, 31 May)

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### Meetings

**11 May, Bahrain**  
 FIFA Congress

**18 May, Nyon**  
 Stadium and Security Committee

**30 May, Nyon**  
 Medical Committee

## NOTICES

- Noël Le Graët was re-elected as president of the French Football Federation on 18 March.
- Karl-Erik Nilsson was re-elected as president of the Swedish Football Association on 25 March.
- Aivar Pohlak was re-elected as president of the Estonian Football Association on 28 March.
- Hugo Quaderer was re-elected as president of the Liechtenstein Football Association on 30 March.

## OBITUARY

- **Fuad Krvavac** (Bosnia and Herzegovina) passed away on 30 March. For many years he was the faithful correspondent of his national association for UEFA Direct, keeping readers up to date with the association's activities and its teams' performances.

## Competitions

### 2/3 May

UEFA Champions League: semi-finals (first legs)

### 2–14 May, Czech Republic

European Women's Under-17 Championship: final tournament

### 3–19 May, Croatia

European Under-17 Championship: final tournament

### 4 May

UEFA Europa League: semi-finals (first legs)

### 9/10 May

UEFA Champions League: semi-finals (return legs)

### 11 May

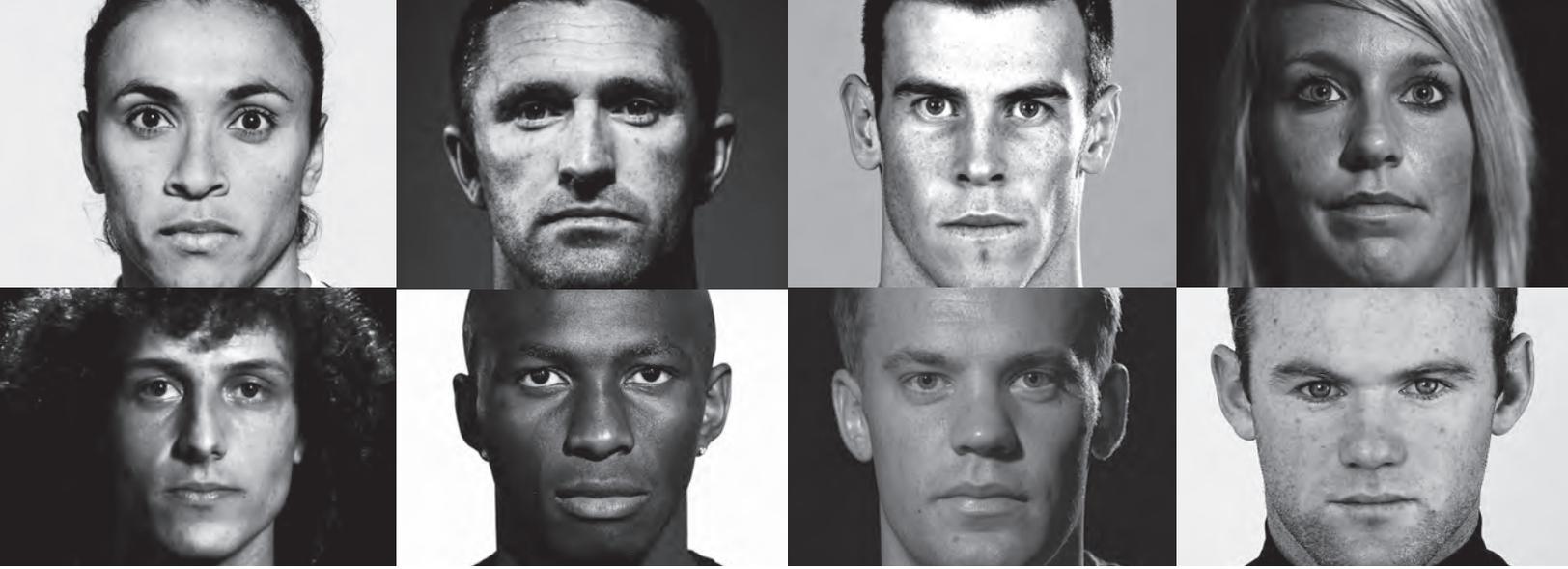
UEFA Europa League: semi-finals (return legs)

### 20 May–11 June, South Korea

U-20 World Cup

### 24 May, Stockholm

UEFA Europa League: final



# NO TO RACISM



 **RESPECT**

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