

UEFA

DIRECT

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FOOTBALL ASSOCIATIONS

DUTCH DELIGHT

The Netherlands take the
EURO by storm to win their
first major women's trophy

WINNERS

#EQUALGAME

UEFA's new
Respect campaign

UNDER-21 CHAMPIONSHIP

Germany's day

KARL-ERIK NILSSON

Interview with UEFA's
first vice-president



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WOMEN'S EURO HITS THE MARK

During the 22 days of Women's EURO 2017 in the Netherlands, we all witnessed something historic – the biggest women's national team competition ever.

Yes, for the first time ever we had 16 competing teams, but this tournament made history in many other ways as well. It was the biggest UEFA Women's EURO in terms of the number of fans who attended matches, the number of people who watched the action on TV and the number of online users who engaged with its digital content.

What does all this mean? It means that if there were ever any doubts that women's football is a premier product, then they have certainly been dispelled.

There was another indicator that women's football is growing at a record pace: none of the four semi-finalists had ever won this tournament before. In the end it was the home side who lifted the trophy, and this maiden triumph prompted wild celebrations from Oranje fans all over the country.

Another champion was crowned in the European Under-21 Championship, with Germany reigning victorious in Krakow after an intense final against Spain. The level of

football on display in Poland once again showed that our youth tournaments are not far behind the senior level.

The summer also saw Real Madrid lift yet another trophy. In what was a night to remember in Skopje, Real beat Manchester United and took the UEFA Super Cup back to Spain.

Some cycles may have finished, but another is already beginning, with the new UEFA club competition season officially kicking off in Monaco. It is the perfect opportunity to launch a new social responsibility awareness campaign and I am proud that we will be further promoting inclusion, diversity and accessibility in this new communications initiative. Football is for all and I hope we will be able to spread this message far and wide with the new #EqualGame campaign.



A. Čeferin

Aleksander Čeferin
UEFA President



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CONTENTS

6 Women's EURO 2017

The first 16-team Women's EURO and a new name on the trophy.

12 European Under-21 Championship

At the final round in Poland, Germany win their second European Under-21 title since 2009.

16 #EqualGame

UEFA's new Respect campaign, #EqualGame, puts the spotlight on diversity.

26 European Under-19 Championship

England win their first Under-19 title at the final round in Georgia.

28 UEFA Regions' Cup

Istanbul host the tenth Regions' Cup final tournament, won by Zagreb.

30 The Technician

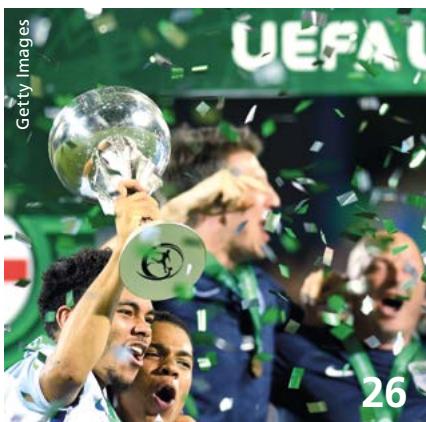
In both the UEFA Champions League and the UEFA Europa League, the trend is towards quick, counterattacking football.

34 European Qualifiers

With just four matchdays still to go in the European Qualifiers for the 2018 World Cup, the suspense is starting to mount.

38 Karl-Erik Nilsson

UEFA's first vice-president tells UEFA Direct why football inspires him.



44 Through the lens

A snapshot of the 2016/17 UEFA competition season.

62 Doping control officers

The faces of UEFA's anti-doping programme.

64 Research Grant Programme

Six new research projects have been awarded grants for 2017/18.

68 News from member associations



DUTCH DELIGHT AS HOME NATION WINS WOMEN'S EURO

Germany's 22-year reign as European women's champions came to an end as the Netherlands delighted sell-out crowds by claiming the title for the first time.



Women's international football, often with some justification, has been accused of being predictable at the top level. UEFA Women's EURO 2017 could not have been further from that stereotype.

The long-awaited expansion of the European Women's Championship finals to 16 teams took effect for Women's EURO 2017. Beforehand there had been concerns as to whether the lower-ranked teams would be able to compete with the traditional powers, but with the nations ranked 12th and 13th meeting in the semi-finals, the former having ended Germany's 22-year reign in the quarter-finals, the extra berths proved fully justified.

The team that were the first to inflict an elimination on Germany since 1993 were Denmark, who were to meet all-conquering hosts the Netherlands in a sold-out Enschede final. It was the home side who emerged triumphant to become only the fourth nation to win the title, after a thrilling final watched by more than 28,000 fans. All six of the hosts' games sold out for an aggregate attendance of 110,897 out of a record tournament total of above 240,000.

Five debutants

That this would become a tournament marked by surprises was not so clear in qualifying, as Germany and France made it through without dropping a point or conceding a goal, and 11 of the 12 finalists from 2013 booked their spots, and comfortably in most cases. The ones to miss out were Finland, who were the victims of the shock of the qualifying competition when they saw a 2-0 lead disappear in a 3-2 defeat by Portugal, who were in the fourth tie of seeds but then defeated Romania with an extra-time away goal in the play-offs.

Like Portugal, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria and Scotland made their Women's EURO debuts in the Netherlands, and all

were to gain at least one victory. In fact only two teams were to fail to get a point, injury-hit Iceland and, amazingly, 2013 runners-up Norway.

Boasting Ada Hegerberg up front, many expected Norway to go all the way, but a sign of what was to come came in the opening game. Norway were up against the Netherlands, and considering the hosts had changed coaches less than a year before the finals, there were some doubts as to whether the Dutch would be able to live up to the hopes of their fans after an impressive months-long marketing campaign that had even included the royal family turning up at a promotional event to buy tickets.

Inspired hosts

King Willem-Alexander was in his birth city of Utrecht to watch the opening game, one of a crowd of 21,732 – a record for Dutch women's football, and a mark that was not to last long. Some hosts freeze with the expectation; from the start the Netherlands were inspired.

They tore into Norway and in the opening seconds Danielle van de Donk forced Ingrid Hjelmseth into a brilliant save. The pre-tournament focus was on prolific Dutch striker Vivianne Miedema but it was wingers Lieke Martens and Shanice van de Sanden who were inspired against Norway. And they combined for the only goal, Martens's cross turned in by Van de Sanden, born like the monarch in Utrecht. Coach Sarina Wiegman said: "This performance against a top nation is really a breakthrough for us. We've proven to ourselves what we're capable of and that's a huge step."

Women's international football, often with some justification, has been accused of being predictable at the top level. UEFA Women's EURO 2017 could not have been further from that stereotype.

Also on the opening day, Denmark – who reached the 2013 semi-finals but had seldom impressed since – made the most of an early goal to beat slow-starting Belgium 1-0. But the debutants recovered to stun Norway 2-0, a fully deserved victory that ranked among the tournaments' biggest upsets. "We had a group talk to get rid of some frustration after the Denmark game," Belgium forward Tessa Wullaert said. "We were very dangerous in possession and that's what made the difference."

That evening the Netherlands faced Denmark in a game few saw as a dress rehearsal for the final. It was not the high-scoring encounter that would unfold 17 days later as a Sherida Spitse goal was enough for a Dutch win despite Denmark dominating the second half. However, Denmark were to book progress with a 1-0 defeat of Norway while the Netherlands topped the group as they were made to work for a 2-1 win against Belgium, who had plenty of support not far from the border in Tilburg.

How the groups shaped up

Group A was to produce the two finalists. Before the tournament, if anyone had thought any section would send forth both the winners and runners-up, it would have been Group B with Germany and Sweden. Both were to

make the last eight, but in ominously unconvincing fashion.

In fact, after the opening day, it was Russia who were on top in Group B. They had only missed out on the 2013 quarter-finals on the drawing of lots behind Denmark, but on the other hand had never won a game in their four previous group-stage appearances. That run ended in game 13 as they defeated Italy 2-1 with goals from long-serving Elena Danilova and Elena Morozova, but the real star was teenage keeper Tatyana Shcherbak, who made some superb saves.



RESULTS

Quarter-finals

Netherlands	2-0	Sweden
Germany	1-2	Denmark
Austria	0-0	Spain
Austria win 5-3 on penalties		
England	1-0	France

Semi-finals

Denmark	0-0	Austria
Denmark win 3-0 on penalties		
Netherlands	3-0	England

Final

Netherlands	4-2	Denmark
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Getty Images

Above: Caroline Weir (Scotland) celebrates scoring her team's first goal against Spain.
 Right: Anna Blasse (Germany) and Katrine Veje (Denmark) battle for possession during their teams' quarter-final.



Getty Images

WOMEN'S EURO

Germany and Sweden drew 0-0 in their opener, a game high on quality despite the lack of goals. Four days later, though, both got off the mark. Sweden beat Russia 2-0, with Lotta Schelin scoring her seventh EURO goal, taking her ahead of a certain Zlatan Ibrahimović, something the Rosengård forward said was "pretty cool". Germany edged a 2-1 win against Italy with a second-half Babett Peter penalty, a result that left the Azzurre eliminated despite a much-improved showing.

Italy had never previously failed to reach the last eight under any Women's EURO format; now only Sweden could maintain such a record. And they did so despite a 3-2 loss to Italy in a game of high excitement and top-quality goals, substitute Cristiana Girelli scoring the winner in the last game for the retiring

Melania Gabbiadini, who, to rub salt in Azzurre wounds, lost her status as the all-time UEFA Women's EURO career group-stage scorer to Lotta Schelin.

That Sweden survived was thanks to Germany's 2-0 win against Russia, earned by two more penalties. Germany topped the group and Steffi Jones, who had succeeded Silvia Neid as coach following the 2016 Olympic gold, was content: "The machinery is starting to roll now. And I am convinced that we will make goals against Denmark as well, and if they are from the spot or not, I do not really care about that, as long as we score."

Austria – a turn-up for the books

Pre-finals discussions about Group C were mainly about who would finish second behind France, tipped as the most likely

successors to Germany as champions. Would it be Iceland, in their third consecutive finals, though hit by injuries to key players? Or perhaps Switzerland, in their debut Women's EURO but fresh from making the 2015 Women's World Cup last 16 and boasting some of the continent's highest-rated attacking talent? There were fewer takers for Switzerland's fellow finals newcomers Austria. So there were plenty of raised eyebrows when Austria opened the group by beating Switzerland 1-0 with a goal from their all-time top scorer Nina Burger. There was less surprise at France defeating Iceland by the same scoreline, but they required a Eugénie Le Sommer penalty with four minutes to go in order to earn the three points.

France had produced both UEFA Women's Champions League finalists in Lyon and Paris Saint-Germain, both teams with a healthy core of home players, but they were not clicking – even in their run of quarter-final exits, Les Bleues have usually impressed in major tournament groups. And so France had to come from behind to draw 1-1 with Austria, whose coach Dominik Thalhammer pointedly said afterwards: "Yes, we were defensive as the French coach pointed out, but we don't have quite as many world-class players at our disposal so we play to our strengths."

Iceland, meanwhile, were knocked out with a game to spare as Switzerland came from behind to win 2-1 through stars Lara Dickenmann and Ramona Bachmann. Switzerland, though, now knew they had to beat France to go through to the quarter-finals at Les Bleues' expense.

With Austria cruising to a convincing 3-0 win against Iceland, France looked in real trouble when Ana-Maria Crnogorčević gave Switzerland a 19th-minute lead not long after French defender Eve Périsset was sent off. But Camille Abily's 76th-minute free-kick snuck in and France held on for a draw and second place behind those little-fancied outsiders, Austria.

England convince

One section did finish as seeded, with England topping Group D ahead of Spain, Scotland third and Portugal bottom, but that is a long way from the full story.



Getty Images

Anouk Dekker (Netherlands) and Ada Hegerberg (Norway) challenge for a header.



The Swedish team forms a circle before their match against Germany.

Getty Images



All six of the hosts' games sold out for an aggregate attendance of 110,897 out of a record tournament total of above 240,000.

What was not in doubt was that England were the most convincing performers of the group stage, starting with their opening game against Scotland, finally in a major tournament after play-off near misses for 2009 against Russia and 2013 versus Spain.

Scotland were missing several key players through injury but even at full strength might have had no answer to England's clinical display as they won 6-0, the largest winning margin in any Women's EURO. Jodie Taylor's hat-trick was the first in a final tournament since 1997.

Earlier on in the competition's own derby day, Spain overcame Portugal 2-0, dominating the encounter though without turning possession into goals the way England did. And they were made to pay

for that when the group's two favourites met. Vicky Losada nearly struck in the opening seconds for Spain but England scored soon after through Fran Kirby. Spain had around 80% of possession, but seldom created clear chances. And as time ran out Taylor, who had seen little of the ball, again showed her eye for goal after Jordan Nobbs's flick to clinch a 2-0 win.

Portugal edged a 2-1 win against Scotland to keep the group open until the final day. Player of the match Dolores Silva summed up what it meant to Portugal when she said: "It's historic to be in this Women's EURO final tournament, and now we've got our first victory! It's amazing! We are really delighted." England, virtually through already, made ten changes for the game with

Portugal, and the Lionesses only just edged a 2-1 win through Nikita Parris. Portugal's defeat meant Scotland could have reached the quarter-finals by beating Spain by a two-goal margin. But in an outcome familiar to fans of Scotland's male team in their final tournaments over the decades, they fell heroically short – winning 1-0 but just failing to get a second goal.

There was just one rest day to catch breath before the quarter-finals, and in keeping with the group stage the knockout phase opened with a surprise. The Netherlands had performed far better than Sweden in the group stage but many expected the Olympic silver-medallists to make their greater tournament pedigree count. Instead, a Martens free-kick and a goal – at last – for Miedema ensured a →

UEFA-BACKED YOUNG REPORTERS PROGRAMME PUSHES BOUNDARIES FROM KICK-OFF TO FINAL WHISTLE



Thanks to the UEFA-sponsored young reporters programme of the International Sports Press Association (AIPS), a group of fledgling journalists covered the final round of the Women's EURO in the Netherlands. One of those reporters, Jeroen Adriaanse, himself from the Netherlands, looks back at a memorable experience.

"Could there be a better stepping stone to my future career in sports journalism than the UEFA-sponsored AIPS youth reporters programme? After three weeks of joy and hard work, the three-week programme offered me everything I could have hoped for – and more.

I was given the opportunity to cover the UEFA Women's EURO from start to finish, together with an enthusiastic international group of fellow young reporters and four professional mentors. The press box became my second home as on-the-whistle match reports and player profiles had to be produced on an almost daily basis.

Next to this, I felt privileged to attend the inspirational classes given by some top-notch guest speakers, including FIFA Women's Player of the Year and UEFA Best Women's Player winner Nadine Kessler and UEFA Referees Committee member Dagmar Damková.

Sometimes I find it difficult to step out of my comfort zone but I was challenged constantly to question myself and adapt to new situations to cover each story in the best possible way. This allowed me to improve my interview techniques while becoming familiar with how a major tournament is organised.

The programme opened my eyes and enabled me to become a better reporter in a competitive sports journalism world. It has been a journey that can only be described as a once in a lifetime experience."

RECORDS BROKEN

The total tournament attendance of **240,045** surpassed the record set in 2013 of **216,888**. Three of the top six single-match Women's EURO record attendances were achieved during these finals.



The estimated total TV audience of around **160 million** was more than 50 million higher than in 2013.



There were more than **4 million** visits to the Women's EURO section of UEFA.com and the new women's football app, more than doubling the numbers for 2013.

2-0 win for the hosts, and excitement was palpably growing wherever they played in the country.

Germany's 22-year reign ends

The day's second quarter-final never happened as torrential rain in Rotterdam forced the postponement of Germany's tie with Denmark to the following afternoon, despite Jones joining in with the effort to clear the pitch and dugouts of water. Once the game started it seemed like business as usual when Isabel Kerschowski put Germany into a third-minute lead. But their failure to add another before half-time proved fatal for their chances.

Early in the second half, a Stine Larsen cross was headed in by Nadia Nadim and from there on Denmark looked the more

likely team to score. And score they did with seven minutes left as Nadim and Frederikke Thøgersen combined to set up Theresa Nielsen for the winner. Germany's 22-year reign as champions was over, the first time they had lost a knockout game in this competition since Denmark themselves beat them to third place in 1993. Nielsen said: "I'm so happy that we beat Germany. It's amazing. Everybody dreams about scoring, but doing it is another thing!"

Busting myths

Austria were the only one of the debutants to survive the group stage, but the quarter-finals were not enough for them. Spain's problems in front of goal continued as they were held to 0-0 for 120 minutes by Austria, who then won 5-3 on penalties with five perfect spot kicks. Thalhammer reflected: "This EURO is a great sign of what you can achieve as an underdog with spirit and dedication. Our mentality hasn't changed. Maybe the theory about the favourites only being able to win in women's football is a myth after all."

Another myth busted was that England would always lose to France. The last time England had beaten France was in 1974 but they went into the last quarter-final as the form team and Les Bleues were without two suspended defenders – Périsset and the talismanic Wendie Renard. The match was tight and of the highest quality but not for the first time in the tournament England proved that they would take a chance when presented – Taylor getting the only goal, her fifth of the finals.

The final four

In 2013 Denmark won their quarter-final on penalties but then fell in the semis by the same method. This time they inflicted that fate on Austria, whose spot-kick luck deserted them not only in normal time through Sarah Puntigam – the game again ended 0-0 – but then in the shoot-out as they lost 3-0 to the disappointment of thousands watching on big screens in Vienna, though the team were given a heroes' reception on their return home.

Talking of thousands, the Dutch record from the opening game was eclipsed by the 27,093 that saw the hosts take on England at FC Twente's Enschede home that would also stage the final. England were missing goalkeeper Karen Bardsley through injury and suspended midfielder



Above: Steph Houghton (England) waits to lead her team-mates out onto the pitch before their quarter-final against France.

Below: Viktoria Schnaderbeck (Austria) controls the ball during her team's semi-final against Denmark.





Jill Scott, replaced by their most-capped player, Fara Williams.

For once the Netherlands were not able to dominate down the wings but instead controlled the game in the centre through Danielle van de Donk, Jackie Groenen and Spitse. Miedema, now having found her range, put the Netherlands ahead and although England – by now tournament favourites – pushed hard, they fell two down after a slip by Williams was ruthlessly punished by her Arsenal colleague Van de Donk. With the final touch Millie Bright made it 3-0 with an own goal but by then England were beaten and Enschede was celebrating.

Party time for the Dutch

The party began early on the day of the final as thousands of orange-clad fans joined the fan walk from Enschede city centre to the stadium as yet again the Dutch women's football attendance record was broken. But for the first time in the tournament, the hosts fell behind as Denmark won an early penalty converted by Nadim.

Could the Netherlands respond as Denmark were unable to do in the group game after Spitse's spot kick? The answer came very quickly as Miedema turned in Van de Sanden's tenth-minute cross. The game did not settle down – just before the half-hour Martens curled a shot beyond the reach of Stina Petersen and Pernille Harder, Denmark's brilliant young captain, ended her wait for a finals goal in the 33rd minute.

It was already the highest-scoring first half in any EURO final – men's or women's

– and the teams went in at 2-2. However, only six minutes into the second half was another goal, Spitse again haunting Denmark as she converted a free-kick on her club home ground. This time Denmark were unable to respond, as already with three players out through injury before kick-off more players picked up knocks. And the Dutch celebrations really began in the 89th minute when Miedema managed her fourth goal of the knockout phase, leaving her just one behind adidas Golden Boot winner Taylor.

The big prize was the Netherlands' though, only the fourth team to win this trophy after Sweden, Norway and Germany, all of whom had won their first title by 1989. Indeed, only Germany had previously won both men's and women's EURO titles. Appropriately Marco van Basten was on hand to celebrate with the team, while fellow 1988 final goalscorer Ruud Gullit posted footage of himself enjoying the 4-2 goal.

Martens was named player of the tournament, but it fell to Spitse, who lifted the trophy with Mandy van den Berg, to sum up the Netherlands' joy at being the first home Women's EURO winners since Germany in 2001: "We played in front of a crowd of 30,000 and if we'd have played in an even bigger stadium, it probably still would have sold out. It is a huge thing at the moment but I think you guys have a better grasp of it than we do at the moment. But I think that in a couple of months, when we look back at the tournament, we will think 'wow'. I think it's really fantastic." ☑

WHAT THEY SAID: THE CHAMPIONS



Sarina Wiegman, coach

"It was a great final, with two teams that really wanted to play football, and really wanted to win. Both teams played attacking football and six goals in an exciting match is a great advert for the women's game. I thought we deserved it, but Denmark showed they deserved to be here too."



Sari van Veenendaal, goalkeeper

"When you looked around, everyone was orange and everyone was screaming and supporting us. This is my second home here in Enschede; I played here for five years and it's unbelievable. I'm so happy!"



Vivianne Miedema, forward

"I knew my moment would come and I'm so happy I could help the team today. And having scored the 4-2 was good because it was just done after that goal. I don't know. I'm so happy, I can't even describe it I think."

GERMANY AND POLAND WIN AT U21 FINALS

In the 21st match of the 21st European Under-21 Championship finals, Germany beat Spain 1-0 to take the title for the first time since 2009. Off the pitch, however, Poland won acclaim for a novel approach to the organisation of a major tournament.

The Polish national association (PZPN) was, of course, no novice. They had, after all, teamed up with colleagues from Ukraine to help UEFA get the EURO 2012 show on the road. But, courageously, they decided not to copy and paste Warsaw, Gdansk, Poznan and Wroclaw onto the list of venues for the U21 event. Instead, they preferred to take the football into other parts of the country. In the north, the choices were Gdynia and Bydgoszcz, the latter entailing an element of bravery in that the city is not home to a top-level club side. The glass-half-full interpretation was, however, that this would, hopefully, create a healthy appetite for the U21 action.

The other four venues – Krakow, Tychy, Kielce and Lublin – required a great deal of scrolling down the map of Poland. Distances and travel times between them could exceed 600km and six hours. From a

promotional point of view, the cultural diversity was an asset. Each city possessed qualities to be maximised and, for the organisers, a prime objective was to engage the citizens at the six venues in a dynamic project. As they commented afterwards, people were surprised by the importance and dimensions of the major international event and were more than prepared to invest effort and enthusiasm into the process of converting project into reality.

The main challenge was to merge such diverse geography into a concerted team effort and to prevent each venue from becoming a remote island. And it was in this area that the PZPN organisers were to encounter one of the main reasons to feel proud of their efforts. Political commitment to the common cause was, for example, illustrated by the meetings held every few weeks between the mayors

of the six host cities, at which the sharing of information and knowledge was maybe of greater importance than the agenda of work and improvements to be implemented at stadiums, training facilities, city centres and fan zones.

Spectacular in every sense

The reward was a spectacular, impeccably organised event. And the Polish media were quick to highlight the festive atmospheres in cities and stadiums and to recall the levels of energy and colour that EURO 2012 had generated in the country. Attendances also paid tribute to the promotional efforts during the run-up to the tournament, including the extra push provided by Krakow-born former Polish international full-back Marek Kozminski, on board as official ambassador for the event.



There had been whispered fears that the matches not involving the host country might struggle to attract the public. But misgivings were rapidly allayed when tickets were put on sale to the public on Monday 20 February. By the Tuesday morning, 11 of the 21 games were sold out. When the final balance was compiled at the end of June, it revealed a total audience of just under a quarter of a million. The exact figure was 243,995 spectators at an average of 11,619 per match.

And they were not short-changed on entertainment value. The first 12-team final tournament set a new record by averaging in excess of three goals per game. Oddly, the first game was the only one to end goalless – though England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford saved a late penalty which could have broken the deadlock and earned Sweden a victory that would have kick-started the defence of the title they had won in 2015. In the event, the defending champions went home after a group phase in which they failed to win a game.

New 12-team format

As it happened, the eight teams who had contested the 2015 title were hitting the replay button in Poland, where Slovakia, Spain, the hosts and FYR Macedonia filled the other places on the starting grid of the expanded final tournament. The latter

were making their debut at the finals of a UEFA competition for men and, even though they were among the group-stage fallers, they earned a round of applause from the team of UEFA technical observers at the event on account of the positive approach by a team that might have been forgiven for adopting a more conservative strategy. Blagoja Milevski encouraged his players to express themselves and took them home convinced that the lessons and experience would stand them in good stead for future tournaments.

The draw, it has to be said, had placed them in the tough northerly Group B, in Gdynia and Bydgoszcz, where they had to contend with Serbia, Spain and the 2015 silver-medallists, Portugal. The group featured some nice touches on and off the pitch. The volunteers in Bydgoszcz, for example, organised activities to show their solidarity with the Spanish players in support of Yeray Alvarez, the central defender who, after being selected for the tournament, had been obliged to withdraw due to a recurrence of testicular cancer. And beach games on the coast at Gdynia were staged to mirror the Group B fixture list but which featured supporters – with no U21 age limit.

On the pitch, the group scripted a hard-luck story for the Portuguese. Rui Jorge's team posted two victories but sandwiched between them was a thorny →



A CHAMPION COACH

Stefan Kuntz was a European champion as a player with Germany in 1996. Exactly 21 years to the day, he repeated the feat as coach of Germany's winning team at the U21 EURO on 30 June.

Kuntz on...

The need to start well – and maintain a rhythm

"The way this tournament format works, there is no time to start slowly. Our plan was: we will not rest any players. If you want to become a European champion, you have to be able to cope with five matches in the space of a few days."

Speaking individually to his players

"Every player is different and they need to be addressed differently. Some players don't need any conversations with their coach, others need one daily. It's a mixture of handing out tips, telling stories and giving advice."

His instructions before the final against Spain

"I talked about three or four points before the game. The first was the body – we trusted all the players to give 100 per cent. The second was the head – that we kept calm and followed our game plan. After that I told them they had nothing to lose, as they had already won people's hearts back at home. The final point was team spirit – I knew every player wanted to win the cup for their team-mates."

The winning feeling as a coach

"I looked at my trousers after the semi-final and there was some dirt on my knees – I'd been lying on the grass because I had so much joy in me. It's totally different becoming a champion as a coach rather than a player. As a player, you are happy for yourself. As a coach, you are happy for 40 or 50 different people."



fixture against their Iberian neighbours. Trailing 2-0, they edged back into the game thanks to one of the outstanding goals of the tournament – an unstoppable left-footed volley from the corner of the box by Bruma. But they were punished on the counterattack while pushing forward for an equaliser. Substitute Iñaki Williams latched onto the ball in his own half and capped a solo gallop with a cool finish that put 3-1 on the scoreboard.

That goal had repercussions. The new 12-team format arrived with inherent talking points. The need to conjure four semi-finalists from three groups entailed the selection of a 'best runner-up'. The criteria were clear: number of points; goal difference; number of goals scored. If equality persisted, a delve into disciplinary records and coefficients would have been required.

And then there were four

In Group A, a dream start by the hosts against Slovakia (a thumping near-post header after 53 seconds) had the nightmare sequel of a 2-1 defeat plus a last-gasp penalty that earned a 2-2 draw with Sweden and mathematical survival. Victory over England was required, but a 3-0 win clinched first place for Aidy Boothroyd's team, while the same (surprising) scoreline against Sweden gave the runner-up spot to Slovakia with six points and a goal difference of +3. Back to Portugal. A day later, they kicked off against FYR Macedonia with the clear target of winning by at least three goals. Two goals in 22 minutes put them on track but, to their credit, the debutants fought back to 1-2 and then, in the 80th

minute, to 2-3. Bruma's third goal of the tournament added spice to added-time but a 4-2 win left them one goal short of the semi-finals.

It was all down to a Group C which had a rollercoaster ride to a dramatic denouement. Opening victories for Germany and Italy against the Czech Republic and Denmark paid due respect to the form book. But a cat was thrown among the pigeons when some powerful long-range shooting earned the Czechs a 3-1 win over Italy while Germany were solidly overpowering Denmark 3-0 – a result that eliminated the latter. This set the scene for a showdown in Krakow, where Italy's hopes swung on the hinges of victory over Germany.

Luigi Di Biagio, one of only three coaches who had also been on the benches in the Czech Republic two years previously, produced a tactical masterstroke by withdrawing his target striker, Andrea Petagna, and using the mobility of Federico Bernardeschi as his attacking stiletto in a formation based on high collective pressing by five players. A ball win high on the left presented Bernardeschi with a solo run at goal and, as it turned out, the only goal of the game. As Czech hopes were being conclusively dashed by a rampant Denmark, Germany's goal difference of +4 earned them the 'best runner-up' label, sending them through with Italy at the expense of Slovakia, impotently waiting in the wings while the other two groups were being played out.

Goals galore

In the meantime, the tournament was well on its way to setting a new goalscoring

RESULTS

Group A

16 June		
Sweden	0-0	England
Poland	1-2	Slovakia

19 June		
Slovakia	1-2	England
Poland	2-2	Sweden

22 June		
England	3-0	Poland
Slovakia	3-0	Sweden

Group B

17 June		
Portugal	2-0	Serbia
Spain	5-0	FYR Macedonia

20 June		
Serbia	2-2	FYR Macedonia
Portugal	1-3	Spain

23 June		
FYR Macedonia	2-4	Portugal
Serbia	0-1	Spain

Group C

18 June		
Germany	2-0	Czech Republic
Denmark	0-2	Italy

21 June		
Czech Republic	3-1	Italy
Germany	3-0	Denmark

24 June		
Italy	1-0	Germany
Czech Republic	2-4	Denmark

Semi-finals 27 June

England	2-2*	Germany
*Germany win 4-3 on penalties		
Spain	3-1	Italy

Final 30 June

Germany	1-0	Spain
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In the 40th minute, Mitchell Weiser heads in Germany's winning goal.





Germany add to the European Under-21 title they won in 2009.

record of over three per game. And, in the view of UEFA's technical observers, the format had played a positive role. Unlike EURO 2016, where third place in the group was compatible with progress, the coaches in Poland knew that winning games – and the group – afforded the only guarantee of a place in the last four. The 21 games yielded 65 goals and, significantly, Spain's Saúl Ñíguez, with his surging runs from midfield and fierce long-range strikes, emerged as the top scorer with five, ahead of the tournament's array of strikers.

Saúl, a familiar face to followers of the UEFA Champions League, was among the star performers who drew crowds to the stadium – and, although the coaches did not generally regard the U21 event as a 'development tournament', many stressed its value on the players' learning curves. FYR Macedonia coach Milevski commented: "My players lacked experience at high level and our opponents had that experience from the Champions League and the Europa League. It was tough to play three games in a few days but the experience will make our players better." Even Di Biagio remarked: "We have players in Serie A but when you look at Saúl, who has 20 or 30 games in the Champions League, or Deulofeu, who has played in Spain, England and Italy, it shows that international football demands other qualities compared with our national league." There was no lack of quality in two

semi-finals of exceptional intensity. Two corners, one low cross, one lofted cut-back and two headers added up to a 2-2 draw in a see-saw confrontation between England and Germany, followed by a sterile half-hour of extra time (during which both coaches availed themselves of the experimental opportunity to make a fourth substitution) and a penalty shoot-out in which Julian Pollersbeck made two saves to ensure a victory for Stefan Kuntz's team. In the other, Saúl had put Spain 1-0 up before the 58th-minute dismissal of the Italy screening midfielder Roberto Gagliardini. But Bernardeschi conjured an equaliser for the ten men, only for Saúl to strike twice more to settle a match that allowed midfielder Dani Ceballos to exhibit the creative

qualities that earned him the UEFA Player of the Tournament award.

A fitting finale

The final, however, was another matter. The German game plan was based on a high back line, high pressing and high intensity, allied with astute positional play that produced overloads in the areas surrounding Spain's full-backs. Albert Celades' team allowed itself to be pushed deeper and deeper, unable to find space for their trademark combination play. It was German right-back Jeremy Toljan who delivered the cross five minutes before the break that allowed Mitchell Weiser to duck into a backward header that looped over the keeper and into the far corner of the net. It was just reward for a period of relentless pressure. Although Spain were more recognisable as their normal selves after the interval and gave Germany some 20 minutes of rough weather, they were unable to find goalward routes against an opposing team which had astutely plotted to spike their attacking guns.

As the rain poured down on the medals ceremony, it was gold for German order and collective qualities and silver for the more mercurial Spaniards. It was a spectacularly fitting finale to a tournament rich in goals and talent which had also given PZPN president Zbigniew Boniek many reasons to feel proud of his organisational team and the legacy that the memorable event had left in six Polish cities. ☈



243,995

spectators attended the tournament, at an average of **11,619** per match

DIVERSITY INSPIRES NEW UEFA RESPECT CAMPAIGN

UEFA is heralding the start of a new season with a new Respect campaign: **#EqualGame**. It seeks to demonstrate and champion the inspiring diversity of football in Europe, and players from grassroots right up to the elite level are already lining up in support.

The #EqualGame campaign brings a fresh dimension to UEFA's promotion of diversity, inclusion and accessibility. It has evolved out of and builds upon the successful No to Racism campaign run by the European body for several years, and aims to spread the positive spirit of inclusion, amplify an uplifting message about the benefits that football brings to the community and show how the game should be open and accessible for all. Needless to say that UEFA still considers its anti-racism stance as vitally important and will continue to work tirelessly with its partners and stakeholders to eradicate this problem from football.

The implementation of a new awareness campaign to promote diversity, inclusion and accessibility is central to UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin's vision of creating the perfect balance within all levels of European football. Speaking at the UEFA Congress in Helsinki in April, Mr Čeferin underlined the importance of UEFA being a 'social fair play' organisation, meaning that UEFA will not tolerate racism, sexism, homophobia or any form of discrimination. The new Respect campaign aims to help to bring the football community closer together and ensure that the fight against all types of discrimination remains at the forefront of UEFA's vision and actions.

This is further enhanced by the outcomes of a recent fan survey. When asked which areas they

expected UEFA to invest in, alongside examples such as battling match-fixing and anti-doping came matters such as diversity, inclusion and accessibility – the need to make the sport available for everyone across Europe.

UEFA listened carefully and took note. As a result, #EqualGame will constantly strive to emphasise football's ability to be a powerful unifying social force. UEFA fully understands the crucial importance of diversity, and recognises football's capacity to connect people from different cultures, because it speaks a universal language.

#EqualGame is about people and their football stories – it will give football lovers across Europe the opportunity to express just what the game means to them.

"We are looking across Europe for wonderful stories that we can portray," says UEFA's head of corporate communications, Peter Klomp. "They will all paint a wonderful picture of different people, from different backgrounds, leading different lives, and sharing what football means in their lives."

UEFA will also work together with the national associations to find stories, which can be shared with the wider European audience.

Diversity also means that people take their information in different ways through different channels, and UEFA will make full use of the wide range of outlets at its disposal.

The campaign will be supported by a bespoke television spot featuring the likes of Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi, Paul Pogba and Ada Hegerberg, alongside grassroots players from different European countries. This TV ad will premiere on matchday 1 of the 2017/18 UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League season. A 60-second version will be available on all UEFA digital platforms.

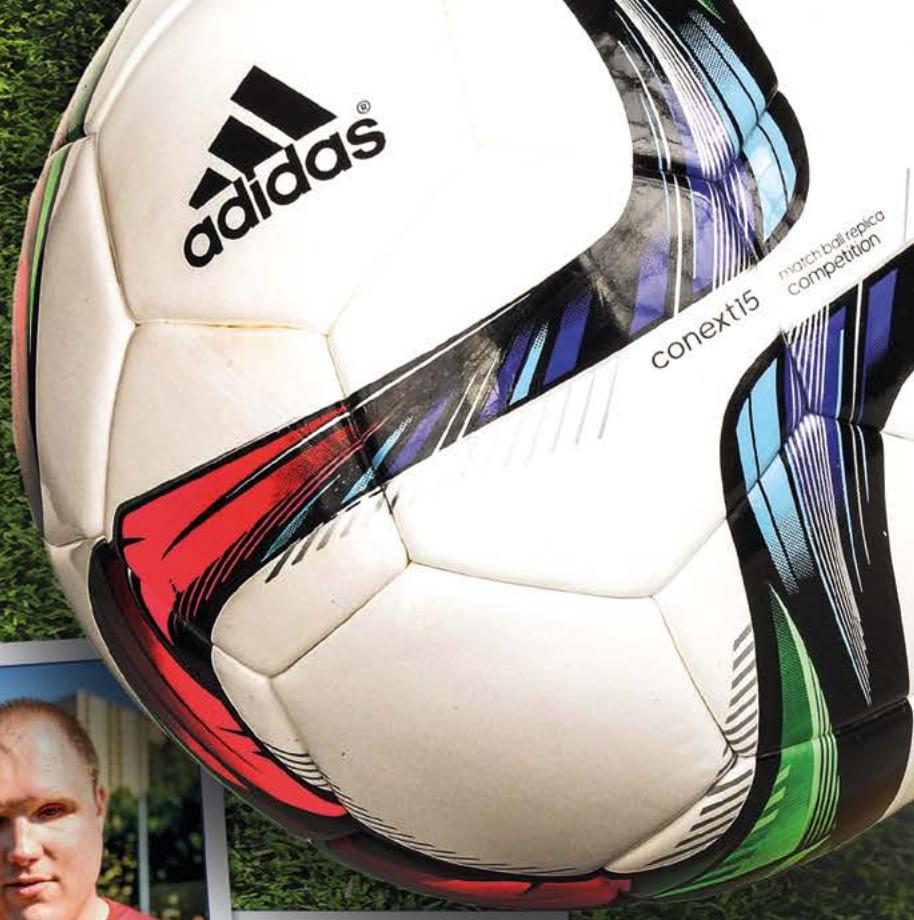
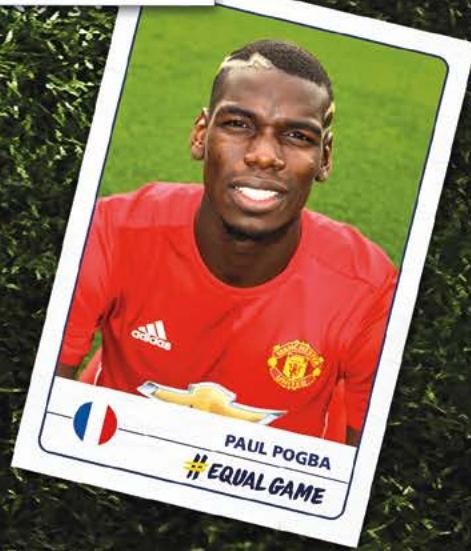
An interesting feature of this campaign are the short web documentaries, where people will give the viewers a 'sneak peek' into their footballing lives. UEFA Direct will feature these stories monthly in photo reports.

Paul Pogba succinctly captures the campaign's ethos in one of the TV spots: "Out there on that pitch we're all equal ... That's what I love." It is a comment that speaks volumes – how when you are wearing a football kit, and on the pitch, it simply does not matter who you are, where you are from, what you believe in or how well you play.

Pedro Pinto, UEFA's managing director of communications, adds: "#EqualGame plans to show the force for good in football, the positive energy the sport generates, how it can reconcile, create friendships, and give meaning and purpose to people."

UEFA hopes that this unique new venture will have a positive impact in showing football's social benefits – and importantly, how the game of football unites, rather than divides. ☺

#EQUALGAME



EDDIE THOMAS – WALKING FOOTBALL – WALES

“FOOTBALL HAS BEEN A WONDERFUL PART OF MY LIFE”

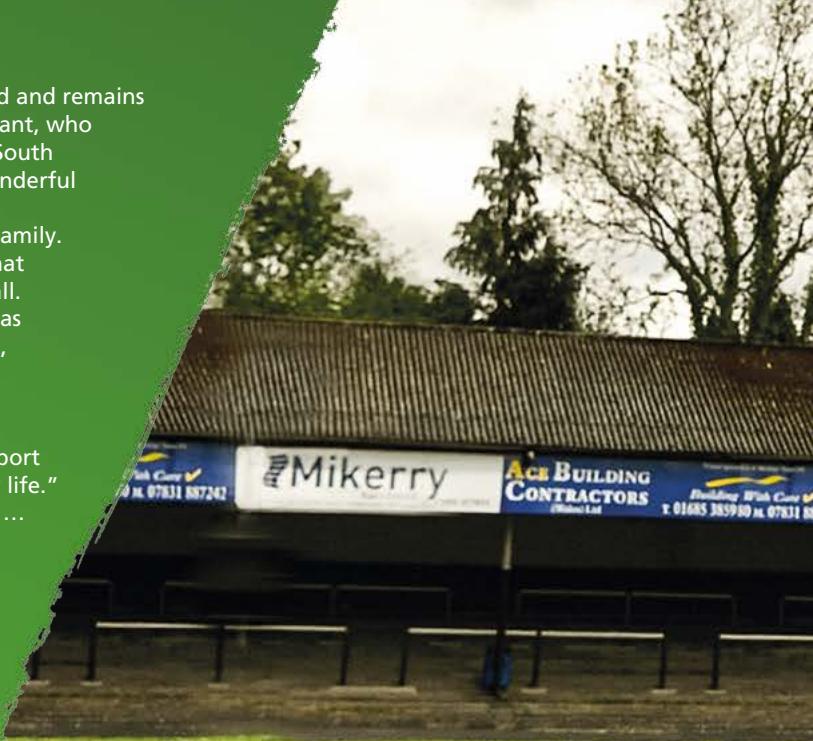
The new UEFA Respect campaign, #EqualGame, seeks to demonstrate football's incredible ability to cast aside differences and bring people together. Each month, UEFA Direct is travelling across Europe to meet some of the people who make the game what it is. Our first port of call is Wales ...

Eddie Thomas's love affair with football began in childhood and remains undimmed to this day. The retired 66-year-old coal merchant, who was born and raised in the town of Merthyr Tydfil in the South Wales valleys, epitomises so much of what makes football a wonderful way of life.

Eddie, like many others from Merthyr, comes from a mining family. He likens the team spirit forged in football to the close bond that unites miners. Time has not withered Eddie's passion for football. He played for his country in the Welsh veterans' team, but he has now discovered a new way to stay involved – 'walking football', which keeps him fit, active and in touch with friends.

Eddie, also a keen guitar player and singer, has passed on the football bug to his 27-year-old son Aled. Father and son go together to watch local team Merthyr Town FC. "Football is a sport for everyone," Eddie reflects. "It's been a wonderful part of my life." We have no doubt that football will stay in his blood forever ...

#EQUAL GAME





**"MY FATHER, HIS FATHER
BEFORE HIM AND MY
FATHER'S BROTHERS
WERE ALL MINERS.
THAT'S HOW I GOT
INTO IT"**





**"MERTHYR HAS BEEN A SPECIAL PLACE
FOR ME AND MY FAMILY: I WAS BORN,
RAISED AND BROUGHT UP HERE.
I THINK IT'S A BEAUTIFUL PLACE"**





**"FOOTBALL IS ABOUT CAMARADERIE:
LIKE MINERS WORKING UNDERGROUND,
YOU'RE ALL IN THERE TOGETHER"**





"MY SON IS AUTISTIC, AND IT CAN BE VERY CHALLENGING SOME DAYS. FOR ME PERSONALLY, FOOTBALL IS A NICE RELEASE"







Sportsfile

GLORY IN GEORGIA FOR ENGLAND'S UNDER-19s

England finally claimed their first European Under-19 Championship at the end of a successful tournament played in Georgia from 2 to 15 July.

There was a new name on the European Under-19 Championship trophy after the 16th edition closed in Georgia – a final tournament that was universally praised by the eight teams involved.

England – beaten finalists in 2005 (by France) and 2009 (by Ukraine) – made it third time lucky in Georgia as they defeated Portugal in the final in Gori. "It's been a very well organised tournament," said coach Keith Downing. "Thank you to all the officials, UEFA and the Georgian public for their support."

That backing was perfectly illustrated on matchday 3, when almost 25,000 spectators watched the Czech Republic end the hosts' hopes with a 2-0 victory at the Mikheil Meshki Stadium. That ground was one of four venues used for the tournament, and one of three in the Georgian capital, Tbilisi, where, in addition to the main stadium, known as the Mikheil Meshki-1, there was the smaller Mikheil Meshki-2 next door and the David Petriashvili Stadium, named after UEFA's senior project manager within the national associations division who died in a road accident in Tbilisi in December 2015.

On the pitch, aside from the opportunity to become European champions, the focus was on development of the players, and there was a united view that their experiences in Georgia will stand them in good stead.

The fourth ground was the Gori Stadium in Gori, around 100km from the capital and the venue for the final on 15 July. A full house of over 4,000 were richly entertained as England and Portugal combined to fulfil Downing's pre-match wish: "Hopefully it'll be a very good game to finish off a very successful tournament. We're hoping to put on a real show for the people of Gori."

'Great tournament'

Even allowing for the disappointment of his team falling at the last and becoming the first side to lose three U19 finals, Portugal's coach, Hélio Sousa, was able to reflect on a profitable two weeks. "It's been a great tournament," he said. "The Georgian organisation gave us everything we needed in every game. I have to say thanks to all – Georgia, UEFA, the media, fans, staff, everyone. The conditions have been incredible everywhere and that's what players need to give their best."

On the pitch, the tournament featured a number of firsts. Hosts Georgia, whose only previous qualification in 2013 yielded one point from their three group appearances, got their maiden finals' victory on matchday 2, defeating debutants Sweden 2-1 in front of 8,300 at the Mikheil Meshki-1.

Sweden finished fourth in Group A but collected their first point in their final game via a 2-2 draw against Portugal. "It's been a nice tournament," said coach Claes Eriksson. "It's good to have qualified for the first time, although of course we wanted to get to the semi-finals."

Bulgaria, meanwhile, had lost every game in their two previous appearances in 2008 and 2014, and it was more of the same in Georgia as they lost to both England and Germany.

'Unbelievable experience'

However, on matchday 3 a 1-1 draw with the Netherlands – in which Georgi Rusev had the honour of scoring Bulgaria's first goal – ensured Angel Stoykov's side finished on a positive note. "The draw put us against three of the best teams in Europe, but for us it was an unbelievable experience to be here," the coach reflected. "It was a very good step for the personal development of our players and for the whole Bulgaria team."

That result also sent the Netherlands into the semi-finals for the first time, having been eliminated in the group stage in their four previous final tournament appearances. Despite losing 1-0 to Portugal in the last four, Maarten Stekelenburg was full of praise. "It was a good tournament in terms of organisation, pitches, everything," the coach explained. "It's been very important for the players as they played England, Germany, Portugal – all the top teams. That is a very useful experience; you only progress if you play the strongest opponents."

The most consistent praise for the tournament came from Jan Suchopárek, whose Czech Republic side finished second to Portugal in Group A and then suffered semi-final heartbreak against England, substitute Lukas Nmecha scoring the only goal of the game with virtually its final kick. Despite that, Suchopárek was generous in his post-tournament assessment, saying: "This tournament has ended for us, but it doesn't end in our minds, and our heads. We'll remember it for ever: everything has been so well done."

Stars of tomorrow

On the pitch, as ever, aside from the opportunity to become European champions, the focus was on the development of the players, and there was a united view that their experiences in Georgia will stand them in good stead. "This will be so good for these players in the long term," said Suchopárek. "They need to work hard but I have no doubt these players can represent our country at a higher level – I believe in them."

The top scorer award was shared between four players on three goals: Sweden's Viktor Gyökeres, who scored in every group game, Joël Piroe, who struck a hat-trick in the Netherlands' opening 4-1 win against Germany but was injured early

England's Dujon Sterling up against Portugal's João Queirós in the final.

RESULTS

Group A – 2, 5 and 8 July

Sweden	1-2	Czech Republic
Georgia	0-1	Portugal
Georgia	2-1	Sweden
Czech Republic	1-2	Portugal
Czech Republic	2-0	Georgia
Portugal	2-2	Sweden

Group B – 3, 6 and 9 July

Bulgaria	0-2	England
Germany	1-4	Netherlands
England	1-0	Netherlands
Germany	3-0	Bulgaria
England	4-1	Germany
Netherlands	1-1	Bulgaria

Semi-finals – 12 July

England	1-0	Czech Republic
Portugal	1-0	Netherlands

Final – 15 July

Portugal	1-2	England
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on matchday 2, and England pair Ryan Sessegnon and Ben Brereton, who both scored twice as Germany were beaten 4-1 on matchday 3.

Having scored the last-gasp semi-final winner against the Czechs, Nmecha repeated the trick to decide the final against Portugal, slotting in in the 68th minute to secure a 2-1 victory after Easah Suliman's opener had been cancelled out by a Dujon Sterling own goal. That gave England a first Under-19 title, making them the first side to win every game in the finals since Germany in 2008.

It was the latest success in a glittering summer for England's age-group teams, beaten only on penalties in the European Under-17 Championship final and Under-21 semi-finals in addition to success in the U-20 World Cup in South Korea.

"It's created a huge momentum this year," said Downing. "We have heavily invested in St George's Park in the last five years. What we need to do now is sustain this success and continue working through all the age groups. It's been a big year for us and we'll enjoy it, but we'll continue to work." 



Sportfile



The Croatian winners congratulate their Irish opponents and friends.

"I have been to many countries but I have never seen anything like this. It's beautiful and really impressive," Gričar said, while Davis added: "The whole set-up is unbelievable, especially the recovery facilities."

TFF executive committee member and tournament ambassador Ali Düşmez was proud of his national association's successful delivery of the tournament. "We amateurs are a big family. I think we showed all members of that family Turkish hospitality at its best and proved that we are capable of hosting even higher-profile events," he said. "Only one team won the trophy but there's more to a competition than winning, such as friendship and fair play. I believe they are the real winners."

The Irish Football Association president, David Martin, who was a UEFA delegate for the tournament, thanked Turkey for being fantastic hosts. "The national training facilities offered by the TFF were well above expectations and we were very impressed," he said.

Sport and recreation

As the tournament kicked off, the teams quickly proved that their quality was nothing short of first class and they were eager to deliver. Olomouc's Marek Samek, who said he had never seen such a standard before, added: "The UEFA Regions' Cup was amazing because it gave us a great opportunity to compare ourselves with other European teams." Having taken part in three Regions' Cup tournaments, Zagreb's Brujić expressed his feelings by saying: "I have enjoyed every single match in the competition in which I have taken part so far. In those moments, I really felt like a professional player."

Although their collective aim was the same, the players had different personal goals. For some, the tournament was a means to fulfil their dreams of turning professional; for others it was merely about sport and recreation.

"Football has always been a very big passion for me and I want to earn a living out of it and base my whole life on it," Istanbul's 19-year-old winger Raşit Yöndem said. "My goal is definitely to become a professional player and

ZAGREB CLAIM MAIDEN REGIONS' CUP CROWN

Losing finalists in 2015, Croatian outfit Zagreb lifted the UEFA Regions' Cup trophy for the first time after cruising to a 1-0 win against Irish side Region 2 in the final of the biennial competition on 9 July in Istanbul.

While effectively conveying the importance of amateur football as a cornerstone of the European game, the UEFA Regions' Cup offers additional competition experience and exposure to young players who have not made the leap to the professional game, and is a special experience for seasoned players who would otherwise not have the chance to compete at international level.

The 2017 edition of the final tournament was hosted by the Turkish Football Federation (TFF) from 1 to 9 July in Istanbul and brought together the continent's eight best amateur selections. Group A comprised hosts Istanbul (Turkey), Zagreb (Croatia), Lisboa (Portugal) and Ingulec (Ukraine), while South Region (Russia), Region 2 (Republic of Ireland), Castilla y León (Spain) and Olomouc (Czech Republic) formed Group B. The level of organisation of the

tournament was highly praised by all the participating teams, who had the chance to use the TFF's national training centre, which was inaugurated in 2014 and funded partly through UEFA's HatTrick programme. "The pitches, accommodation and food provided by the TFF at our camp were excellent. We felt as if we were the senior national team of Croatia," Zagreb forward Nikica Brujić said in an interview. Zagreb coach Tomislav Gričar and Region 2 coach Gerard Davis both rated the TFF's training centre as a world-class facility.

The level of organisation of the tournament was highly praised by all the teams, who had the chance to use the TFF's national training centre.

I hope that the Regions' Cup will put me on the radar of professional clubs." His team-mate Ramazan Kallioğlu was very straightforward in calling the tournament the biggest experience of his life. "Instead of facing familiar opponents, we moved to uncharted lands by playing against other cultures. It helped us to see the points we need to improve," he added.

The UEFA Regions' Cup not only allows players to compare themselves against opponents from other countries but also to develop their own footballing networks. "Playing amateur football gives you an opportunity to get away from your everyday job for a while, to go out to meet your friends and play football. It's enjoyable and very good for your health," explained Region 2's experienced goalkeeper Brendan O'Connell, who is a lawyer by profession.

"I made new friends from other countries," said Ingulec left-back Vladislav Horshchynskyi. "We exchanged contact details with several players from Croatia and Portugal. We will certainly keep in touch with them."

High standard of play

Both Region 2's O'Connell and Lisboa captain Tiago Alves agreed that the standard of play was high. O'Connell, 34, who was playing in his fifth Regions' Cup competition and made some heroic saves in his team's match against Castilla y León, even went so far as to say: "I think the Spanish team we played here were probably the best I have ever faced."

With their play based on possession and passing, the Spanish were tipped by many as favourites. Ahead of the last group games, they were on equal points with Region 2 at the top of Group B. However, coming from 2-0 down, Russia's South Region beat Castilla y León in a 3-2 thriller and a breathtaking turn of fate in the tournament. The Russians not only finished in second place but also ended the Spanish side's hopes, with the Irish representatives finishing at the summit after defeating Olomouc 4-1 the same day. In Group A, Zagreb caught the eye with their solid defence and showed how they had kept a clean sheet during the intermediary round. With six players with previous Regions' Cup experience in their squad, they looked composed in attack and reached the final unbeaten. Group A also contained a story of courage and

pride. Istanbul right-winger Mert Arslanç had been on the sidelines for two and a half months after sustaining a serious head injury during the intermediary round mini-tournament in Moldova. He was fit to return to action in the final tournament and helped his side to bronze medal position following his assist in their last game against Lisboa.

The final between Zagreb and Region 2 was a challenge between equal forces. The Irish relied on their captain Kenneth Hoey's creativity but the Croatians stood strong with their centre-backs Matej Vrbat and Matej Ivković, the only goal of the game coming from Toni Adžić with Brujić providing the assist.

During the rest days, the teams visited the historical sights of Istanbul and soaked up the Turkish culture, which is a mix of east and west. After the final match, both teams enjoyed the pearl of the city, the Bosphorus, on a boat trip together. The Croatians celebrated their success, while the Irish kept their heads high for being

in the final for a second consecutive time. They all savoured the moment together, at the same time, in the same place. It was a perfect gesture of friendliness, in harmony with the ultimate goal of this amateur football competition.

UEFA Executive Committee member and TFF first vice-president Servet Yardımcı, who followed every game played at the TFF Riva facilities, clearly explained the tournament's philosophy. "With amateur players making up 95% of those playing football in Europe, the UEFA Regions' Cup's aim is to reward excellence among players who do not play professional football at any level. Besides, it is not only about football but also about exchanging views and ideas on society and how football can play a part in making our societies more inclusive," he said. Yardımcı was joined by UEFA Youth and Amateur Football Committee chairman John Delaney and UEFA general secretary Theodore Theodoridis to present medals to the finalist teams. 

RESULTS

Group A

1 July

Zagreb Region 2-2 Lisboa
Istanbul 3-0 Ingulec

3 July

Ingulec 3-3 Lisboa
Istanbul 0-2 Zagreb Region

6 July

Lisboa 1-1 Istanbul
Ingulec 1-4 Zagreb Region

Group B

1 July

Castilla y León 4-1 Olomouc Region
Region 2 IRL 1-0 South Region Russia

3 July

Castilla y León 0-0 Region 2 IRL
Olomouc Region 1-2 South Region Russia

6 July

South Region Russia 3-2 Castilla y León
Olomouc Region 1-4 Region 2 IRL

Final

9 July

Zagreb Region 1-0 Region 2 IRL





TAKING THE FAST TRACK TO GOAL

UEFA's technical reports on its 2016/17 elite club competitions highlight a trend for quick, counterattacking football – and a record number of Champions League goals.

Positive attacking football is firmly in fashion. This is the uplifting message to draw from UEFA's technical reports on last season's men's club competitions, which found ample evidence that the quick and direct counterattacking football currently in vogue goes hand in hand with a fast flow of goals.

To underline the point, for the first time in the 25 years of the Champions League, the 2016/17 campaign ended with a goal average of above three per game – a record total of 380 scored at a rate of 3.04 per match. The Europa League witnessed its own scoring spike last term, with 565 scored at a rate of 2.76 per game, the highest in five years.

The technical reports for both competitions provide considerable food

for thought, with the prevalence of swift transitions just one significant trend noted by UEFA's technical observers, who also highlighted the importance of wing play as a route to goal – albeit a route more commonly taken these days by full-backs than old-fashioned wingers. They identified an increase in the use of longer balls too, and a changing relationship between forwards in the same team.

UEFA's technical reports are the product of the work of a team of observers who attend every knockout match in the Champions League and Europa League. For those present at the Champions League technical observers' meeting chaired by UEFA's chief technical officer, Ioan Lupescu, the morning after the Juventus v Real Madrid final in Cardiff, there was also much to savour – a point

summed up by experienced German coach Thomas Schaaf.

"It was refreshing to see so many teams playing high-tempo football with great changes of play," Schaaf says in the technical report. "All of us who are fascinated by football could see lots of duels, one-on-one situations, deep running, fast vertical attacking and an emphasis on creating chances. We saw lots of goals, and I hope that this is a trend that will continue."

It was a trend writ large in the identity of the winners in Cardiff, Zinédine Zidane's Madrid, who were – as the Champions League report says, "the ones that had scored the most goals in a season when goalscoring records were shattered." In the wake of the more cautious approach witnessed by some

of the participants at EURO 2016, the report adds: "The flow of goals in the 2016/17 season contradicted the theory that today's exhaustive levels of scouting and match analysis might encourage coaches to focus on pre-empting the opposition's attacking play."

The direct route

As regards the specific brand of attacking football on display in 2016/17, Fabio Capello, speaking in Cardiff, described a move away from the Barcelona-inspired possession game. "We are certainly seeing an evolution in that the teams who opt for the Barcelona possession-based style that set the trends a few years ago now seem to be running into difficulties," said the Italian, a Champions League-winning coach with Milan in 1994. "This is normal. Any successful model – the elements implemented by Arrigo Sacchi, Johan Cruyff or Pep Guardiola, for example – is analysed in depth. I would say that, now, the trend is that if you win the ball, you immediately run at the opponents while they are out of balance and can be surprised. The key is to win the ball quickly and then mount direct collective attacks, entering the penalty area quickly." A case in point were Juventus, one of Capello's former clubs, who based their run to the final on proficient defending and quick



"It was refreshing to see so many teams playing high-tempo football with great changes of play. We saw lots of goals, and I hope that this is a trend that will continue."

Thomas Schaaf
UEFA technical observer

transitions into attacking mode. There were other examples and overall, just below 20% of the goals scored in open play in the Champions League could be directly attributed to counterattacking. As for the Europa League, the fact that only four of the ten teams who had most possession in matches reached the last 16 of the competition highlights this same tendency. In the final itself, winners Manchester United had only 33% of the ball against Ajax.

Another of UEFA's technical observers, the former Finland striker and coach Mixu Paatelainen, says in the Europa League report: "Teams have that fast transition when they win the ball and pass it forward, instead of taking their time, and I think the onus now in football, for success, is: 'What happens when you win the ball? Can you win territory, can you beat men early and quickly?' Possibly there will be an increase of long balls in the future, because if you just pass it short or sideways, teams will throw themselves into their compact unit, and it's very difficult to break that."

As well as quick, long passes forward, one trend detected in the Champions League was the sight of attackers staying high up the pitch to disturb their opponents' build-up and try to force the rival goalkeeper to play long,



GOALS, GOALS, GOALS

The unprecedented number of goals in the Champions League – 380 at a rate of 3.04 per game – meant that the competition's global audience was offered one goal per 31 minutes of play. According to UEFA's technical report: "[This] balance represented an increase of 9.5% in comparison with the previous season but the goalscoring pattern registered an unusual variation. The group stage produced two goals fewer than in 2015/16. And the season ended with record-breaking figures because nets were ruffled on 102 occasions during the knockout rounds, compared with 67 in the previous season – a massive increase of 52%."

Period of the game in which most goals are scored

76 – 90+ mins



As for the most productive time for scoring goals, in the Champions League it was the period from 46 to 60 minutes, while in the Europa League it was from 61 to 75 minutes. Yet when goals scored in added time are included in the 76–90 minutes period, this becomes the most fruitful period – yielding 21% of goals in the Champions League and 22% in the Europa League.

If that stat suggests an emergence of similar patterns in the two competitions, so too does the dead-ball goals tally: 24% was the total for both the Champions League and the knockout stage of the Europa League.

Full-backs like Real Madrid's Carvajal and Marcelo are equally capable of helping to create goals in the way that wingers used to.

thereby increasing their own team's chances of immediately regaining possession. Juventus used this ploy effectively in the first leg of their quarter-final against Barcelona, when Marc-André ter Stegen was obliged to play long on 12 occasions, with only three of those long passes reaching a team-mate. Massimiliano Allegri's team repeated the dose in the home leg of the semi-final against AS Monaco, when 60% of the passes made by Danijel Subašić were long. Only four found a friendly target.

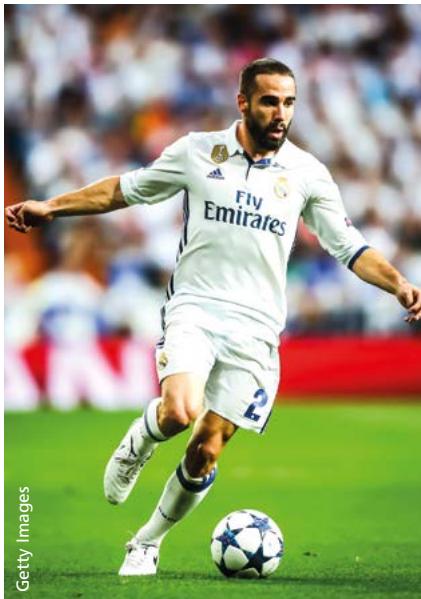
Wide boys

Another theme commented on by UEFA's technical observers is a recurring one from recent campaigns: the onus on full-backs to provide attacking width. The Champions League technical report includes the thoughts of ex-Man United winger Ryan Giggs, a new addition to the ranks of technical observers last season and a man perfectly placed to talk about wing play.

"Wingers are definitely going out of the game," he says in the report. "Full-backs are now the wingers. No matter what system you play, there are simply not the wingers that we saw 10 or 15 years ago, unfortunately. Of course, there are still players like Gareth Bale or Eden Hazard who can play the role of wingers but, more or less, they play inside now and tend to look for space in the pockets.

"When I played on the wing, there was a big reliance on the other players to give you the ball. Now, the star players don't wait for that to happen. They go to look for the ball and they tend to look for the ball in those little pockets where they feel the ball is going to come. This is obviously a shame but, on the other hand, teams like Real Madrid show us full-backs who are equally capable of helping to create goals in the way that wingers used to do it."

It was not just at Madrid. Giggs' former team-mate at Old Trafford, Antonio Valencia, was praised for his efforts in the Europa League report as one of two full-backs – along with Lyon's



Jérémie Morel – named in the official team of the tournament the morning after the Ajax v United final in Stockholm. What

such players have to do, unlike genuine wingers of old, is make dynamic runs into the spaces where they can deliver or test



their 1 v 1 skills. And one popular ploy to give them the opportunity to break forward, UEFA's observers also suggested, is the diagonal pass.

As Sir Alex Ferguson said: "If you've got two wide players, then penetration from midfield on a diagonal ball is very useful." The other useful diagonal ball, he added, was to the centre forward. "If you're building from one side and you've got a Diego Costa or Sergio Agüero, then you'll use it."

The statistics for the 2016/17 campaign lend further weight to the importance of a good supply from the wide areas, given the increase in goals from this source. The Champions League report notes that: "crosses, cutbacks and diagonal passes into the box accounted for 43% of the open-play goals. This marks a significant increase on the 36% registered in 2015/16." The same applied with the Europa League where, in the knockout rounds, 34% of the open-play goals were from crosses – a figure that rose to 43% with the addition of cutbacks.

Relationships between forwards

Another intriguing discussion point that emerged during the Champions League technical observers' meeting concerned the way that relationships between front players have evolved.

The report offers the example of Real Madrid's front two of Cristiano Ronaldo and Karim Benzema in the final. "Few teams operated with a genuine attacking partnership of twin strikers operating in parallel," it says. "The final provided an illustration of how even the 1-4-4-2 structure did not entail a 'partnership' as such, with Benzema and Ronaldo splitting wide and rarely striking sparks off each other. Among the 491 passes completed by Zidane's side during the final, there were three by Benzema to Ronaldo and none in the reverse direction.

Much the same could be applied to the two-pronged attack of AS Monaco, where [Radamel] Falcao and [Kylian] Mbappé formed an effective partnership in terms of their movement but without indulging in combination play as a duo.

During the three hours of the semi-final against Juventus, they exchanged four passes." Instead, adds the report, while there were exceptions, such as semi-finalists Atlético de Madrid, a "more general pattern was for a lone striker to receive support from in-cutting wide players (the relationships between Messi and Neymar with Suárez at Barcelona providing a high-profile example) or for danger to emerge from a cluster of middle-to-front players (Marco Reus, Ousmane Dembélé and Shinji Kagawa at Dortmund) grouped behind the advanced attacker".

Meanwhile, if Monaco's front two did not fit the convention of old, they still helped to make the surprise semi-finalists from France a joy to watch, according to Giggs. "I enjoyed watching Monaco," he said. "They had pace and power throughout the team. Falcao supplied the goalscoring instinct with younger legs all around him." There was much else to enjoy too, of course, as the goals flew in across the continent. 



UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GOALS

39%
Away
teams
(147)



61%
Home
teams
(228)



*Percentages exclude finals which are played on neutral territory



Goals scored
with headers



A drop from

18% to 14%



Goals generated
after solo runs

Group stage



Knockout stage



RUSSIA AWAITS HER GUESTS

Which 13 European teams will join Russia at the 2018 World Cup? Will any of the major nations miss out on a place? Will there be any surprise qualifiers?

With four matchdays of the qualifying competition remaining, the suspense is starting to mount. By 10 October, the identity of the nine direct qualifiers will be known, with the remaining four European berths decided in November, when the eight best runners-up contest the play-offs.

Group A

Harder than expected for France

After wins over the Netherlands (1-0) and Sweden (2-1) early in the campaign, France appeared on course to qualify more easily than in 2010 and 2014, when they needed the play-offs to secure their place in the finals. However, a huge defensive blunder during stoppage time in the return match

against the Swedes enabled Ola Toivonen to snatch the winner in a 2-1 victory that took the Scandinavians to the top of the group, where they lead Les Bleus on goal difference (13 points each). Having failed to qualify for EURO 2016, the Netherlands (currently in third place on 10 points), World Cup finalists in 2010 and semi-finalists four years later, are in danger

Switzerland's Josip Drmić scored the only goal of his country's qualifier against Latvia. With six wins out of six, Switzerland are well on the way to a place in the World Cup in Russia next summer.





Getty Images

of missing their second major tournament in a row. Behind the three favourites, Bulgaria (fourth, 9 points) remain in the running despite defeats to France and Sweden. Trailing further behind are the inconsistent Belarus (fifth, 5 points), who managed to beat Bulgaria (2-1) and hold France (0-0), but were unable to see off Luxembourg (1-1). Although they are bottom of the group, the team from the Grand Duchy are performing well, with goalscorer Aurélien Joachim (4 goals) leading the way.

Group B **Will Switzerland hold off Portugal?**

After six matchdays, a huge eight-point gap separates Portugal (currently second in the group on 15 points) from Hungary (third, 7 points). As a result, the erratic Hungarians (who drew with the Faroe Islands and lost in Andorra) can virtually forget about qualifying for Russia.

The Faroe Islands (fourth, 5 points) and Andorra (fifth, 4 points) may also be out of the running, but both have made tremendous progress and currently sit above a struggling Latvia (sixth, 3 points). Despite five wins and 22 goals scored – including 11 by Cristiano Ronaldo, the joint top goalscorer of the competition so far – Portugal find themselves in danger of missing out on top spot in the group. The reigning European champions were beaten by Switzerland in their opening match (2-0), since when the Swiss have kept their foot firmly on the pedal. Along with Germany, they are one of only two

teams to have won all six of their matches. Participants in the last three World Cups, they have found their way out of tricky situations in Hungary (3-2) and Andorra (2-1), as well as at home to Latvia (1-0). If Switzerland maintain their form, everything could come down to the last match, a top-of-the-table clash with Portugal, who will be doing their utmost to avoid the play-offs, the route through which they qualified for both the 2010 and 2014 editions.

Group C **Germany sweep all before them**

With the best attack (27 goals scored) and the tightest defence (1 goal conceded) in the entire qualifying competition, Germany are, as usual, sailing through to the finals and already have six victories under their belts. The Germans score goals from every part of the pitch, with no fewer than 13 different players contributing in their six matches to date, and they appear firmly on course to reach their 17th consecutive World Cup final tournament in 2018 and defend the title that they won in Brazil. Behind them, Northern Ireland (second on 13 points) are continuing to display the form they showed at EURO 2016 and look set to claim a play-off spot, mainly thanks to a watertight defence that only Germany have managed to breach. Not only do Northern Ireland already occupy second place, they are also yet to host the only team that seems capable of catching them, the Czech Republic (third, 9 points). After an outstanding start (7 points in 3 matches), Azerbaijan have slipped down

the table with three defeats in a row. A disappointing Norway (fifth, 4 points) have only managed to beat San Marino, who have lost all six of their matches so far.

Group D
Opportunity knocks for Serbia and the Republic of Ireland

Joint top with 12 points apiece, Serbia and the Republic of Ireland are dominating a very close group in which Georgia (currently in fifth place on 3 points) and Moldova (sixth, 2 points) are the only teams to have lost a match by more than one goal and 9 of the 18 matches have been drawn. The clash between the joint leaders in Dublin on 5 September could well determine who books their ticket for Russia: either the Irish, who are as solid as ever, or the Serbs, who are benefiting from the scintillating form of striking duo Aleksandar Mitrović (5 goals) and Dušan Tadić (4 goals, 5 assists). EURO 2016 semi-finalists Wales (third, 8 points) are among the ten European teams still undefeated in the qualifiers, but they have drawn their last five matches. They sit four points behind the top two, alongside Austria (fourth, 8 points), who could benefit from a favourable run-in if David Alaba and his team-mates manage to fend off their Welsh hosts on matchday 7. Although they have made life difficult for the teams further up the table, Georgia have only managed to draw both their matches against Moldova, who have lost all their other fixtures.





Getty Images

A clash of the titans between Italy's Alessio Romagnoli and Spain's Andres Iniesta in the 1-1 draw in Turin.

Group E

Poland on the brink

With two hat-tricks, a brace and at least one goal in each of the six matches played, Robert Lewandowski, whose 11 strikes make him the competition's joint top goalscorer so far, boasts an incredible record that is largely responsible for Poland's stranglehold on their group (currently topping the table on 16 points). Six points clear at the top, the Poles can already start thinking about their first World Cup appearance since 2006. The fight for the play-off spot is essentially between Montenegro and Denmark, who each have ten points on the board. Montenegro, who won 1-0 in Denmark and have never reached the World Cup finals before, are led by the classy Stevan Jovetić (6 goals). Even so, they remain level on points with the Danes, who have impressed against the smaller teams in the group. For Romania (fourth, 6 points) and Armenia (fifth, 6 points), the chances of qualifying look slim, although the latter managed a 3-2 home win over Montenegro. The only team to have gained a point against Poland (1-1), Kazakhstan (sixth, 2 points) are fairly solid on home territory, but struggle on their travels (11 goals conceded in three matches).

Group F

Central Europeans on England's tail

England, justifying their billing as hot favourites to win the group, are currently in pole position with 14 points. Uncompromising at home with three wins and three clean sheets, the promising young English side have found it harder

to make their superiority count away, drawing in Slovenia (0-0) and Scotland (2-2). After three goals in a crazy last five minutes, the all-British encounter put the group back in the balance, leaving the Three Lions under threat from two central European opponents, Slovakia (second, 12 points) and Slovenia (third, 11 points). Since losing their first two matches, key player Marek Hamšík and his team-mates have secured four successive victories. On matchday 7 they will face their main rivals, Slovenia, who have only scored six goals but have shown a high level of consistency. After experiencing tremendous highs (including a win over Slovenia) and desperate lows (including a 3-0 defeat in Slovakia), Scotland (fourth, 8 points) are still in with a chance of snatching a play-off place and securing a first appearance in the finals since 1998. Lithuania (fifth, 5 points) and Malta in particular (sixth, 0 points) are finding life rather more difficult.

Group G

Spain v Italy

It was the most hotly anticipated duel of the qualifying competition. When Spain and Italy, two of the most successful European nations of the past decade, were placed in the same group, the stage was set for a clash of the titans. After six matchdays, the suspense could not be greater, with each team boasting 16 points and an impressive goal difference (+18 for Spain, +14 for Italy), having drawn their first encounter 1-1. The return match – at the Estadio Santiago Bernabéu on 2 September – will, in all probability, determine who qualifies directly for the World Cup finals. Will the Spaniards take

revenge for their defeat in the EURO 2016 round of 16? For the other four group members, keeping up with the two giants is proving a thankless task. Having made a good start with nine points from four matches, Israel (fourth, 9 points) fell behind after defeats in Spain (1-4) and to Albania (0-3). Although the Albanians (third, 9 points) are set to miss out on their second major tournament after EURO 2016, they have confirmed their status as formidable opponents. At the foot of the table, the gulf in quality between FYR Macedonia (fifth, 3 points), who always catch the eye, and Liechtenstein (sixth, 0 points), who have suffered several heavy defeats, is clear for all to see.

Group H

Belgium dominate

Heralded as a country capable of dominating European football in the next few years, Belgium (currently top of the group on 16 points) have certainly lived up to their billing since the qualifying campaign began. The four spearheads of Belgium's golden generation (Romelu Lukaku, Dries Mertens, Eden Hazard and Christian Benteke) have already netted 16 goals between them, demonstrating the explosive attacking potential of Roberto Martínez's men. Greece (second, 12 points), the only team to have avoided defeat against the Belgians so far (1-1), also remain unbeaten. Drawing strength from an unfailing sense of solidarity, the Greeks will host Belgium on 3 September as they attempt to take another step closer to qualifying for the World Cup, as they did in 2014. Bosnia and Herzegovina (third, 11 points) have the same objective in mind and, with Vedad Ibišević and Edin Džeko

in attack (3 goals each), they will play three of their last four matches on foreign soil, having won 10 of their 11 points at home. Cyprus (fourth, 7 points) have been far from outclassed by their more illustrious opponents and took full advantage of their two matches against Gibraltar (sixth, 0 points). Although their first World Cup qualifying campaign is proving a difficult baptism (24 goals conceded), Gibraltar have managed to find the net in three of their six matches. Estonia (fifth, 4 points) are also struggling, as illustrated by their 8-1 defeat to Belgium.

Group I **Four-way battle**

Group I includes four teams that participated in EURO 2016 and who, after six matches each, are separated by a mere two points. From Croatia (currently in front on 13 points) down to Ukraine (fourth, 11 points), with Iceland (second,

13 points) and Turkey (third, 11 points) in between, all four are relying on impressive home records. In fact, none of them has lost a single match on their own territory. The matches between them will inevitably determine the final group standings, since Finland and Kosovo have so far only mustered a single point each. Their draw with Finland was a historic result for the Kosovars in their first qualifying campaign since gaining independence. After their incredible run at EURO 2016, when they reached the quarter-finals in their first-ever final tournament, can Iceland maintain the momentum and book a ticket to Russia? To do so, they will have to successfully negotiate a difficult trip to Turkey, the only one of their rivals whom they have yet to visit, whereas Croatia, for example, still have trips to Turkey and Ukraine ahead of them. The way things are looking, nothing will be decided until the final set of matches on 9 October. ☈

SCHEDULE

Qualifiers

Matchday 7

31 August–2 September

Matchday 8

3–5 September

Matchday 9

5–7 October

Matchday 10

8–10 October

Play-off draw

13 October

Play-offs

9–14 November



Getty Images

KARL-ERIK NILSSON

'THIS IS A VERY GOOD TIME FOR EUROPEAN FOOTBALL'

Managing people comes naturally to **Karl-Erik Nilsson**, as his diverse and fulfilling passage through life goes to show. His CV makes for impressive reading: a schoolteacher encouraging and motivating children to learn; a long-time mayor of his home town of Emmaboda in southeast Sweden; a referee at the highest level, both domestically and on the international stage; a much-respected president of the Swedish Football Association; and, since spring of this year, membership of the UEFA Executive Committee and a key role as UEFA's first vice-president.

In this interview, 60-year-old Nilsson tells us why football inspires him, how his various career changes have come about, and why strong interpersonal skills are one of life's key assets.

What's your very first memory of football?

The first thing I have clear memories of is the 1966 World Cup in England. I also remember seeing footage of the fantastic World Cup in Sweden in 1958, but I was too young to remember the tournament actually taking place. I was only one year old at the time!

Both my parents were involved in our local club, Lindås BK, and my older brothers played for the club. My father was very active within the club, and I recall going to watch matches in my parents' old Volvo.

Did you play football outdoors with your friends?

Yes, we played almost every evening. We played everywhere – in the garden or on the patch of grass next to the school. In the winter, as well as playing football, we would often go skiing or play ice hockey on the frozen lakes.

Did you idolise any particular footballers?

There was one fantastic player, Roger Magnusson, who played for Olympique de Marseille for several years. He had relatives

who lived in our village, so there was a connection with him. I remember seeing him play, and it was magnificent to see what he could do with a football. He was my first real hero.

In addition to your local club, did you also follow the fortunes of a bigger team?

Yes – Kalmar FF. They play in the top division now and were Swedish champions in 2008. I also have a soft spot from my younger days for the English club Wolverhampton Wanderers. Once a week, on Saturdays, we would watch an English first division match live on TV, and Wolves made a big impression on me. Their Molineux ground was my favourite stadium at that time.

Did you play for your local club?

Yes, I played for all the youth teams and at senior level as well.

But at some stage, you changed from being a player to a referee. How did that come about?

To be honest, I was not a particularly talented player. Most of the time I played for the second team. I suffered an injury, and someone said that the club needed referees for its youth teams. So I went on a course. I thought to myself that I could do some refereeing while I was recovering from my injury.

→

"Both my parents were involved in our local club, Lindås BK, and my older brothers played for the club."



UEFA

INTERVIEW

"There was one fantastic player, Roger Magnusson, who played for Olympique de Marseille for several years.

I remember seeing him play, and it was magnificent to see what he could do with a football. He was my first real hero."

Well, I refereed my first match, and I said I would never do it again. I didn't like it! It's a lonely feeling when you referee your first match. It felt like my only company was a bottle of lemonade in the dressing room! But there was a guy there from the local referees' association, and after the match he gave me some advice and encouraged me to do another match, and then another match. It was thanks to him that I continued.

At a certain stage, you must have begun thinking about aiming for greater things as a referee?

When you're playing for your local team or you're a referee at the start of your career, I don't think anyone thinks 'I will go right to the top'. I didn't have particularly great ambitions. But you get encouragement from other people, and you start thinking that you could take the next step. Then, once you've reached the third tier, you want to join the elite ... and once you've refereed in the Swedish top flight, you want to be an international referee. I began setting myself goals, and I was determined to do well. I eventually became an international referee in 1993/94.

Did you have any role models as a referee?

Not really. Of course, you watch referees and see their personalities. But I think refereeing is really something where you have to develop your own style.

You refereed at the highest level. What were your most memorable moments?

I was fortunate enough to take charge of matches in the UEFA Champions League. I refereed at Arsenal, Panathinaikos, Manchester United, Bayer 04 Leverkusen,

Presse Sports



Real Madrid ... They were memorable occasions. Another special moment came in 2000 – I was selected to referee the final of the European Under-21 Championship, when Italy beat the Czech Republic at the end of a fantastic tournament in Slovakia.

And there is one other match that you will surely never forget ...

Yes – a World Cup qualifier between England and Moldova at Wembley Stadium in September 1997. Going to Wembley is always an emotional experience, but on this particular occasion, it was just after Princess Diana had died. I remember the flowers everywhere, and the minute's silence observed by 75,000 spectators. That's something I will never forget.

Before becoming a football administrator, Karl-Erik Nilsson refereed 150 Swedish top-division ties and 12 matches in the UEFA Champions League.



SvFF-Bildbyran

Something like that gives you a very important perspective on life.

Refereeing gave me a good perspective on many things. During my career as a referee, I was also the mayor of my home town. So it was invaluable to see all of those different places all over Europe, to observe how they functioned in terms of their societies, and to see if certain elements could be put into practice back home.

What characteristics must a referee have?

Well, first of all, you have to have a good knowledge of football and a good feeling for the game. You obviously have to know the Laws of the Game, but you also need to be strong when you have to take decisions. You have to earn respect – because if players respect you as a person, there is more chance that you will also be respected when you take difficult decisions.

I have to say, before I started refereeing, my father used to blame all of our local team's defeats on the referee. But he changed his mind somewhat and was more respectful of referees when I became one!

You have since gone from being a football referee to becoming president of the Swedish FA and UEFA's first vice-president. How did that chapter of your life come about?

In some ways, it started at my local club, because I saw my parents and my brothers working actively for the club – and I also saw how important that club was for the local community.

Many of us players had duties to perform to help run the club. I took a keen interest in that side of things, and I eventually joined various committees and the club board, ultimately becoming club president. The next step on the ladder was becoming involved in the regional football association, and from there, one thing led to another. I became regional president and was asked to join the board of the Swedish Football Association, and things went from there. When I became president of the association, I was honoured to succeed a fantastic leader, Lars-Åke Lagrell, who had been president for 21 years.

The result has been a successful career as a football administrator.

I'm happy and proud to have had the opportunity to work for Swedish football, and now also to be part of the development of football at European level. It's a fantastic challenge.

And you've also made your mark in local politics ...

Professionally, I was a teacher in the Swedish school system for several years. I mostly taught Swedish language, but also mathematics and social science. On account of my position as president of the local club, the local authorities felt that I should be part of the local town council. I was elected in 1985 at the age of 28. This led to me becoming mayor of my home town. I was one of the youngest mayors in the country. I served for 12 years and was re-elected twice.

As a result of that, you must have a great understanding of what it



"Going to Wembley is always an emotional experience, but on this particular occasion, it was just after Princess Diana had died. I remember the flowers everywhere, and the minute's silence observed by 75,000 spectators. That's something I will never forget."



Getty Images

means to be responsible for affairs at local level. How does it now feel to be responsible for an entire country's football?

An important aspect of the work of a national association's president and its board is giving clubs opportunities to develop and nurture young boys and girls, ensuring that they have fun and become both good players and good citizens in their respective local environments. So, it's a responsibility, but it's also a fantastic opportunity. I don't really feel that this responsibility weighs heavily on my shoulders.

As president of the Swedish FA and a former referee, when you go into a stadium, do you still get that buzz when you walk up the steps and see the pitch and the crowd – when you feel the atmosphere?

You never lose it. It's truly thrilling. You feel the enthusiasm of the crowd – how much the colour of the shirt means to the fans. Football is outstanding from that perspective, in terms of creating that atmosphere. The game also helps to build bridges between people. It's great to be a part of that family.

"We played England and won 4-2, with our captain, Zlatan Ibrahimović, scoring all four goals. The last goal, a fantastic overhead kick, won FIFA's Puskás Award for the goal of the year."



Karl-Erik Nilsson meets the UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, in Nyon in October 2016.



Bildbyran

When you watch the Swedish national team, you're the association's president, but you're also a supporter. How do you react when Sweden score?

You have to show respect to your opponents. Your fellow president is sitting next to you. You show your emotions, but in a balanced way.

You've mentioned the word 'respect'. How important is respect to you?

It means everything – both in football and in life – at all possible levels. We have to respect each other in our various football environments – be it as clubs, associations, stakeholders, referees, coaches, players or spectators. At the same time, we can have different opinions; that's part of democracy. Respect is hugely important and should always be at the forefront of everybody's minds, across the football community.

Tell us about one great match and one great goal that you've seen.

Does anything stand out in particular?

One match – and a goal from that match. I had just become president of the Swedish FA, and we were inaugurating our new national stadium in Stockholm. We played England and won 4-2, with our captain, Zlatan Ibrahimović, scoring all four goals. The last goal, a fantastic overhead kick, won FIFA's Puskás Award for the goal of the year. That was a moment I will never forget.

What do you like to do to get away from football?

Of course, I like sport, but when I have time, I also like to read a good book – a biography or something a little lighter. I also like to spend time at our summer house. We have a small boat, and it's nice in the summer to go out and do some fishing. I also like to travel. In this business, you travel a lot!

Your family must be a great source of encouragement?

Yes, they're all very interested in sport, and football in particular. They go to matches as well, and that makes things easier, of course. If I were the only one in the family who was so interested in football, perhaps it would be more complicated. My wife, Lena, is extremely good at seeing when something is wrong. She's a very good mentor and discussion partner – a very important person.

You've been a teacher, a mayor and a referee, and now you're a football

administrator. That must have given you tremendous insight into how to handle people?

I'm very interested in human beings and how relationships work. The strongest thing that any organisation has is its human resources. I'm absolutely certain that good management, leadership and interpersonal skills can help to get more out of an organisation and its people. But if management or leadership fail to bring out the best in someone, they can end up smothering their creativity. I'm convinced that the way you behave as a leader determines the results that your organisation achieves.

You were elected to the UEFA Executive Committee in April of this year and hold the position of first vice-president. How does it feel to be in such a privileged position?

It's a great honour – a fantastic privilege. I have a very good relationship with the UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin. We have known each other for a long time, and I'm really looking forward to working with him and the rest of my colleagues in the Executive Committee, as well as with the UEFA staff. I have known a lot of them for many years as a result of my various careers. The Executive Committee has a good balance of experienced people and newcomers, and it's really inspiring to see the cooperation between them. In my opinion, this is a very good time for European football.

Finally, if you had any hopes for football in Sweden and elsewhere in the future, what would they be?

I hope that football will continue to play an important role in society – not only as a tool to create a better world, but also as a fantastic source of inspiration and entertainment. We must retain this balance between the two. To achieve this, we need to have enough football pitches, enough economic strength and enough dedicated coaches who want to inspire and educate.

We also have to provide other parts of the world with the means to develop football, so that every young boy or girl has the opportunity to play.

We have to protect the game as well. Football is under threat from criminals who are trying to use our sport as a vehicle for corrupt activities. We must safeguard the game against match-fixing and do our utmost to uphold all of the strong values that make football so great. ⚽

**KARL-ERIK NILSSON
CAREER FACTS**

- **1992**
Becomes Swedish top-flight referee
- **1994-2002**
FIFA referee
- **2002**
Appointed as UEFA referee observer and match delegate
- **2012**
Elected as president of the Swedish Football Association
- **2013-15**
Vice-chairman of the UEFA National Associations Committee
- **2015-17**
Vice-chairman of the UEFA HatTrick Committee
- **2017**
Elected to the UEFA Executive Committee; named UEFA first vice-president and appointed chairman of the HatTrick Committee





Barcelona v Juventus,
19 April 2017 (0-0),
Champions League

A SNAPSHOT OF 2016/17

Another sensational season of UEFA
competitions across Europe





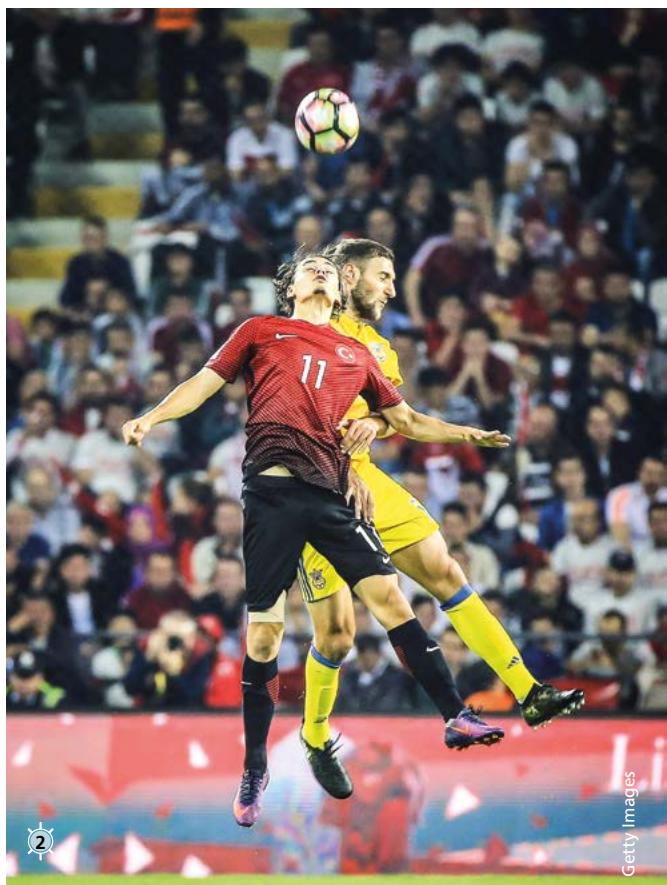


1. Real Madrid v Sevilla (3-2), 8 August 2016, Super Cup, Trondheim 2. Atlético v Bayern (1-0), 28 September 2016, Champions League 3. Zenit v Dundalk (2-1), 3 November 2016, Europa League 4. England v Norway (6-1), 6 September 2016, Under-21s. 5. Sweden v Netherlands (1-1), 6 September 2016, European Qualifiers





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5 Getty Images



1. Celtic v Manchester City (3-3), 28 September 2016, Champions League.
2. Turkey v Ukraine (2-2), 6 October 2016, European Qualifiers.
3. Denmark v Kazakhstan (4-1), 11 November 2016, European Qualifiers.
4. Mönchengladbach v Celtic (1-1), 1 November 2016, Champions League.
5. Wolfsburg v Chelsea (1-1), 12 October 2016, Women's Champions League.



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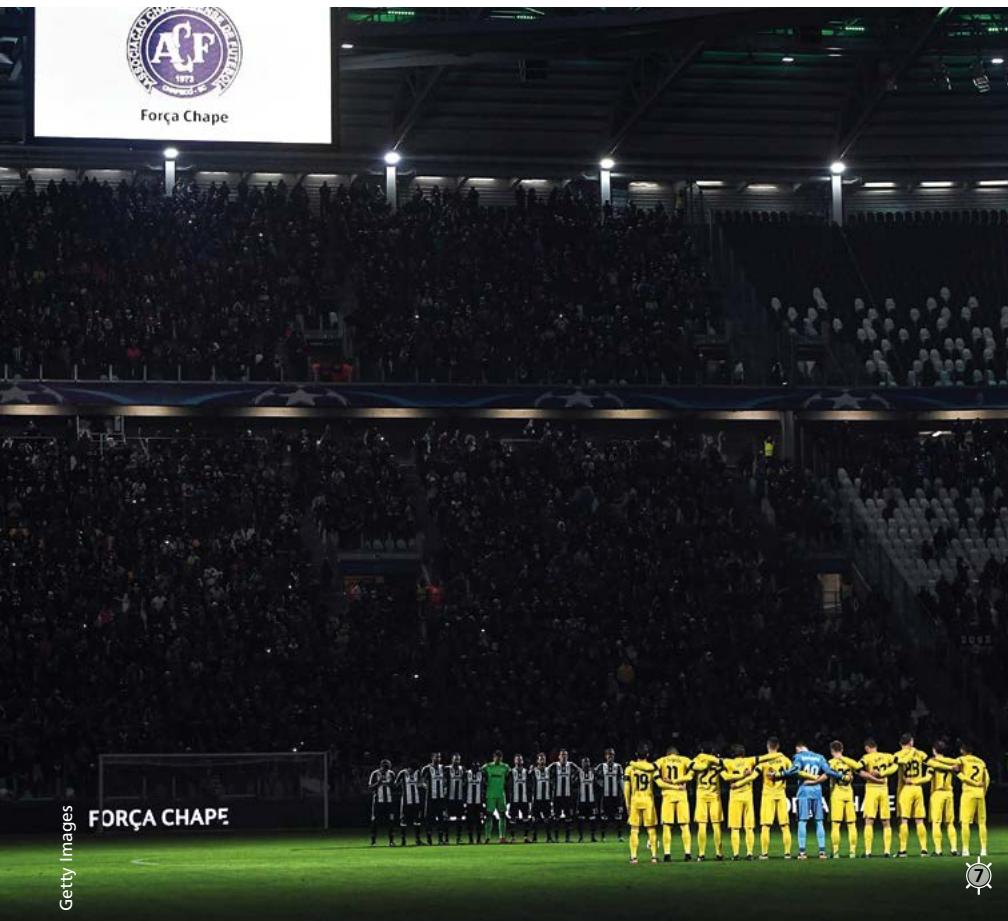
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6. Fenerbahçe v Zorya (2-0), 24 November 2016, Europa League 7. Paris v BJK Kazygurt (4-1), 17 November 2016, Women's Champions League 8. Benfica v Napoli (1-2), 6 December 2016, Champions League 9. Zorya v Manchester United (0-2), 8 December 2016, Europa League



1. Mainz v Anderlecht (1-1), 20 October 2016, Europa League 2. Norway v Serbia (1-0), 15 November 2016, Under-21s 3. Germany v Latvia (6-0), 2 October 2016, Women's Under-17s 4. Monaco v Tottenham (2-1), 22 November 2016, Youth League



5. Greece v Bosnia-Herzegovina (1-1), 13 November 2016, European Qualifiers 6. Mönchengladbach v Barcelona (1-2), 28 September 2016, Champions League 7. Juventus v Dinamo Zagreb (2-0), 7 December 2016, Champions League 8. Ludogorets v Arsenal (2-3), 1 November 2016, Champions League







CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Real Madrid v Borussia
Dortmund (2-2),
7 December 2016

Madrid's Toni Kroos breaks
away from Łukasz Piszczek





1



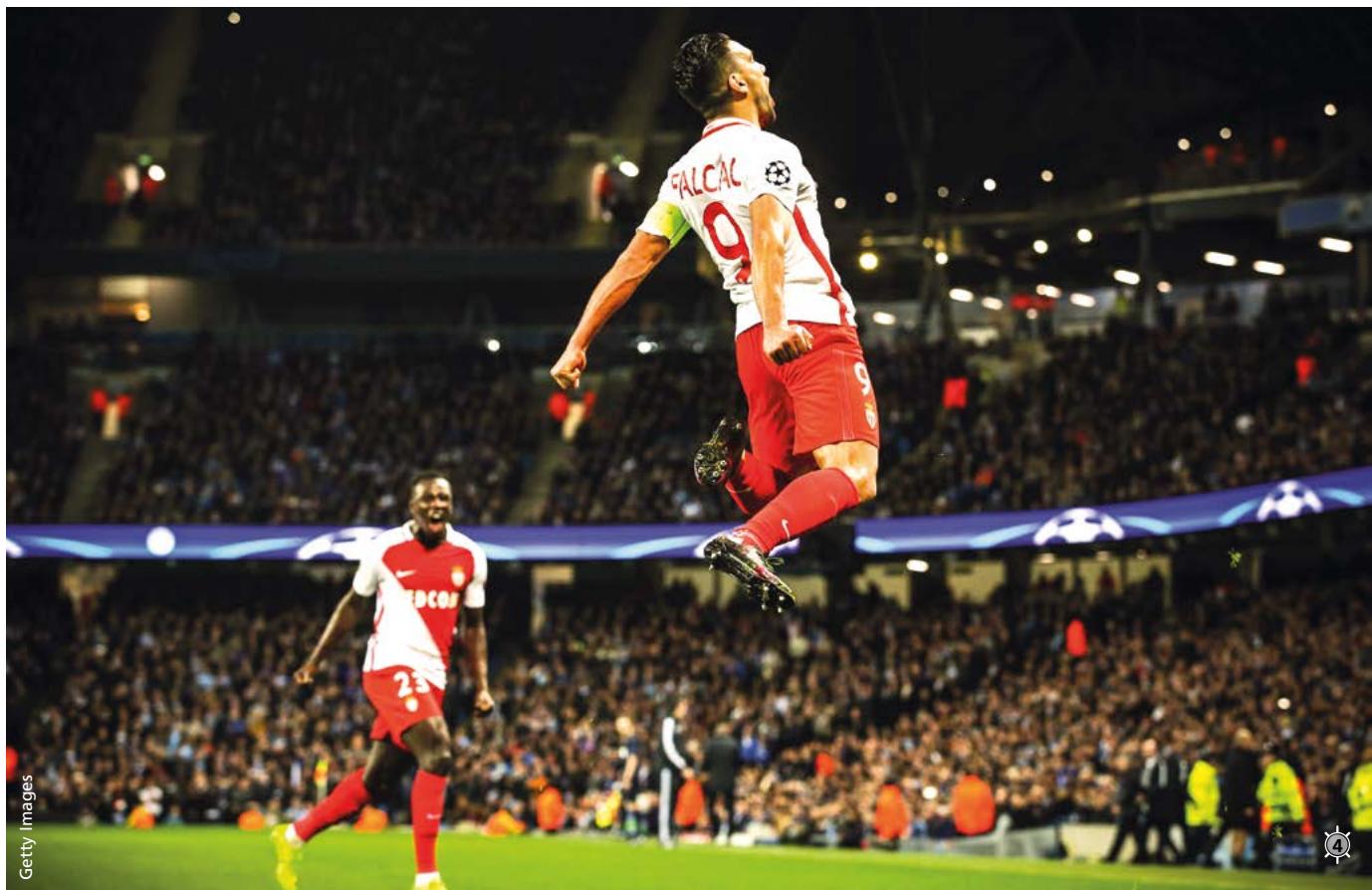
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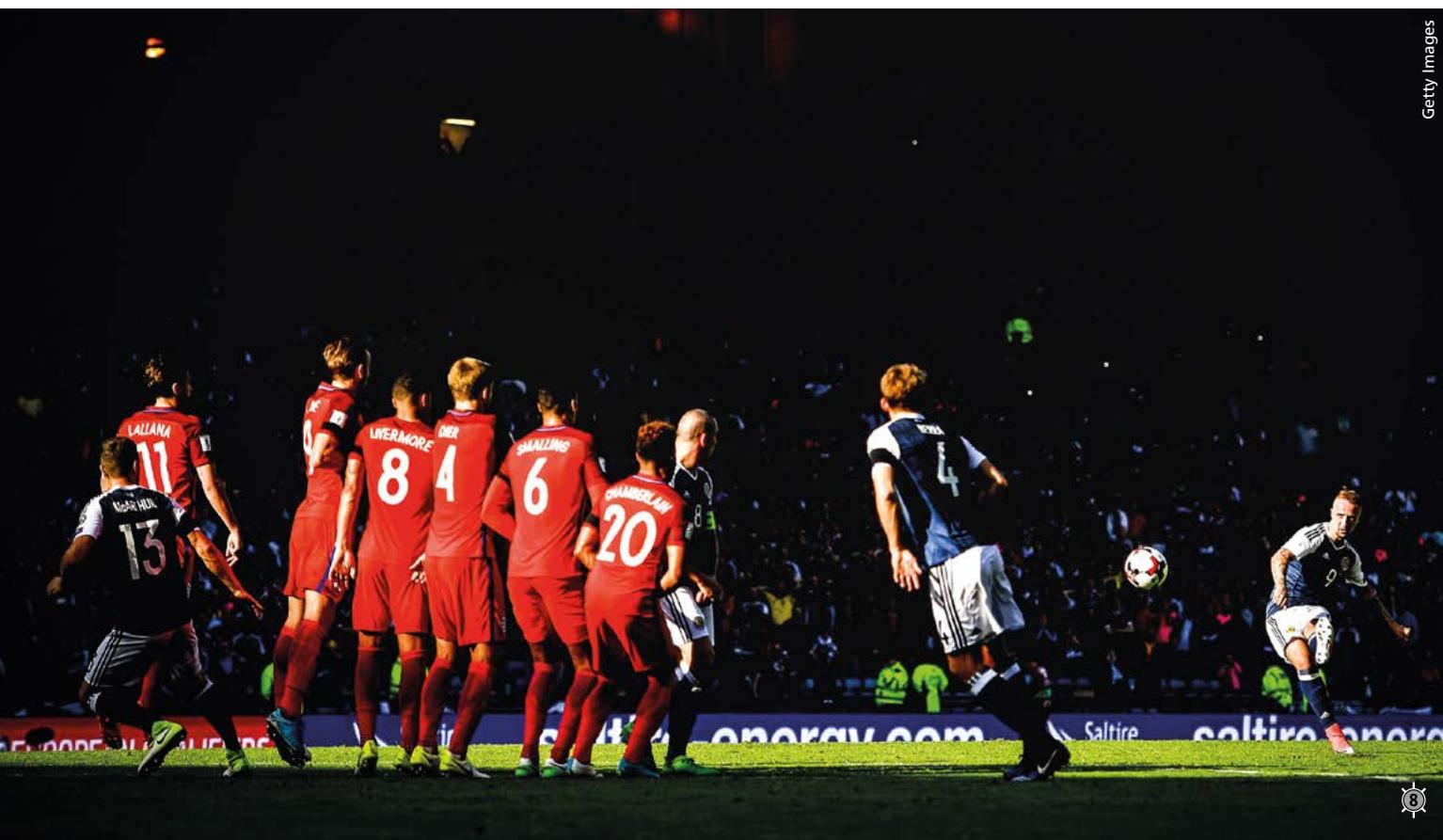
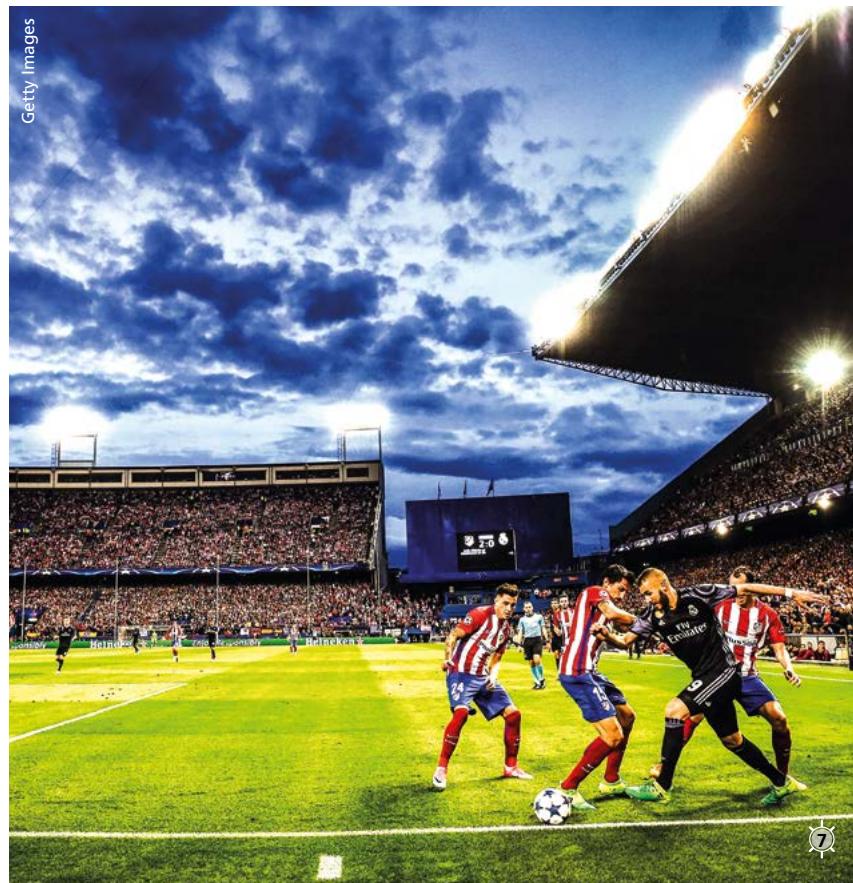
3



Getty Images

4

1. Manchester City v Celtic (3-2), 6 December 2016, Youth League 2. Sporting CP v Inter (0-7), 30 April 2017, Futsal Cup 3. Manchester United v Celta (1-1), 11 May 2017, Europa League
4. Manchester City v Monaco (5-3), 21 February 2017, Champions League



5. Borussia Dortmund v Benfica (4-0), 8 March 2017, Champions League 6. Juventus v Monaco (2-1), 9 May 2017, Champions League 7. Atlético v Real Madrid (2-1), 10 May 2017, Champions League
8. Scotland v England (2-2), 10 June 2017, European Qualifiers







EUROPEAN WOMEN'S U17 CHAMPIONSHIP

Germany v Norway (1-1; 3-2
on penalties), 11 May 2017

Andrea Brunner celebrates
after putting Germany
through to the final.



1. Benfica v Salzburg (1-2), 24 April 2017, Youth League
 2. Lyon v Paris (0-0; 7-6 on penalties), 1 June 2017, Women's Champions League
 3. Spain v England (2-2; 4-1 on penalties), 16 May 2017, Under-17s





4. Ajax v Manchester United (0-2), 24 May 2017, Europa League
5. Istanbul v Lisbon (1-1), 7 July 2017, Regions' Cup **6.** Austria v Spain (0-0; 5-3 on penalties),
30 July 2017, Women's EURO **7.** Portugal v England (1-2), 15 July 2017, Under-19s



FIRST UEFA-ECA LEGAL WORKSHOP TAKES PLACE IN MARSEILLE



ECA

With matters of law becoming ever more important in the world of football, UEFA and the European Club Association (ECA) recently organised their first joint workshop with a view to strengthening their relationship in this key area.

Stade Vélodrome in Marseille was the venue on 8 and 9 June for the first UEFA-ECA legal workshop, which looked at current and future legal developments and trends in European football and their impact on European clubs at international level.

The workshop was designed exclusively for ECA members, with executives and legal representatives of 54 European clubs coming to Marseille to share knowledge and exchange views with UEFA's legal experts.

The event had a packed agenda, covering matters such as UEFA's disciplinary regulations, FIFA's regulations on the status and transfer of players, and the case law of the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne.

It also looked at the pitfalls faced by clubs when it comes to commercial contracts, the financing of transfers,

and the fight against match-fixing, which UEFA regards as a serious threat to the integrity of football.

Four key pillars

UEFA emphasised its zero-tolerance approach to match-fixing and presented the four key pillars of its strategy in this area: education, legal framework, monitoring and investigations, and sanctions.

UEFA also stressed that cooperation with ECA members was crucial in order to achieve its goal of regulating competitions in an effective manner.

UEFA explained its financial fair play measures, which are aimed at ensuring clubs' financial well-being and have helped to establish a more stable financial environment in club football. It also underlined its opposition to third-party ownership of players, which it regards

as harmful to the interests of players, clubs and fans, as well as detrimental to the game's integrity and general standing.

José María Cruz, chairman of the ECA's legal advisory panel and chief executive of Sevilla FC, described the workshop as a "unique event". "Cooperation between our two organisations on events like this helps to strengthen the relationship between clubs and European football's governing body," he said.

Cruz added that it was "essential for the well-being of football for clubs to be up to date with all developments involving legal and regulatory stakeholders in the game".

UEFA's managing director of integrity, Emilio García, agreed that the joint workshop was "a very good opportunity to address and clarify legal issues, exchange views and answer European clubs' questions." ⚽

CHANGES AFOOT IN THE FUTSAL CUP

The 2017/18 UEFA Futsal Cup officially got under way on 6 July, when the draws for the preliminary and main rounds were made at UEFA headquarters in Nyon.



Under the new competition regulations, the top three associations in the UEFA futsal national team coefficient rankings can now enter two teams in the Futsal Cup. This season, that privilege in principle goes to Russia, Spain and Portugal. However, as Spain's Inter FS qualify as the titleholders and no more than two clubs per association are allowed to take part, Italy – who are ranked fourth – get to enter a second team instead.

The preliminary, main and elite rounds will, as before, be played in the form of mini-tournaments hosted in the country of one of the four teams in the group. The lowest-ranked teams in the UEFA Futsal Cup coefficient rankings start out in the preliminary round, their exact number depending on the overall number of entries. This season, the preliminary round will comprise 32 teams competing in eight groups, from which the winners will go through to the main round.

Two paths for the main round

In another major change to the competition format, the main round is now split into two separate paths. Path A will consist of the teams ranked 1st to 11th and 16th to 19th in the UEFA Futsal Cup coefficient rankings, plus the

titleholders. These 16 teams will be drawn into four groups of four, with the top three from each group advancing to the elite round. Path B, meanwhile, will consist of the teams ranked 12th to 15th and 20th to 23rd plus the eight preliminary round winners. These 16 teams will also be drawn into four groups of four, but only the group winners will proceed to the elite round.

No teams will receive byes to the elite round – unlike before, when four teams started their Futsal Cup campaigns there.

The 16 teams in the elite round will again be drawn into four groups of four; however, the draw will be slightly different because of the two-path main round. There will be three seeding pots and no country protection. The four Path A group winners will be drawn into position one in each group and the Path A group runners-up into position two, without allowing the winners and runners-up from the same Path A group to end up in the same elite round group. The other eight teams will then be drawn freely to fill the remaining two positions in each group (third-placed teams can be drawn into the same elite round groups as the winners or runners-up of their main round mini-tournaments).

As before, the final round (comprising semi-finals, a third-place play-off and the final) will involve the four winners of the elite round groups, hosted by one of that final four.

The results of the draws for the preliminary and main rounds can be found on UEFA.com.

CALENDAR

Preliminary round: 22–27 August 2017

Main round: 10–15 October 2017

Elite round draw: 19 October 2017

Elite round: 21–26 November 2017

Final round draw: date still to be set

Final round: 19–22 April 2018

DOPING CONTROL OFFICERS – THE FACE OF UEFA'S ANTI-DOPING PROGRAMME

UEFA is recognised as one of the world's leading sports organisations in the fight against doping, thanks in no small part to the efforts of an expert front-line team – the UEFA doping control officers. So what role do doping control officers play in the drive to keep European football free from doping? We take a step-by-step look at the doping control procedure at UEFA matches.



UEFA

Doping control officers – or DCOs – are the face of UEFA's anti-doping programme for the players, the clubs and the officials. Fifty-nine of them, from 30 different countries, are currently deployed by the European body. All are medical doctors, and many of them do the same work for their national anti-doping organisation (NADO).

Professional, confident — and calm under pressure

UEFA expects its doping control officers to carry out at least six assignments a year — and in fact, some actually conduct over 35 assignments each season. They are expected to know the rules and procedures, pay strong attention to detail, be good communicators and, above all, be professional, confident and



59

DCOs, from 30 different countries, are currently deployed by the European body.

calm under pressure. Another key requirement is that DCOs must protect the confidentiality of UEFA's testing programme. Quality control is crucial for UEFA, which has a full training and assessment process for new DCOs and carries out regular audits of its existing DCOs in the quest for consistently high standards.

UEFA appoints doping control officers for assignments based on criteria such as experience, languages spoken and nationality – DCOs do not test teams from their own country. They can be assigned for 'in-competition' tests, where they test players after a match, or 'out-of-competition' tests, where they test players at the training ground, at the team hotel or at the player's home.

Once they have been given their assignments, the DCOs are responsible for managing all stages of the doping control process – from conducting the draw to delivering the samples to the laboratory.

Random selection or target testing

Players are selected either by random draw or for targeted testing. If DCOs are appointed to conduct target tests, they receive the names of the players from the UEFA anti-doping unit. If the DCO has to conduct a draw, all of the players listed on the match sheet are eligible for selection. The DCO asks the team representatives and the UEFA match delegate to witness the draw.

On arrival at the venue, the DCO informs the team doctors that there will be a doping control and lets them know what is expected of them and their players. The control takes place in a doping control station located inside the venue; the DCO prepares the premises, making sure that they are secure, that there is a private toilet, that there is enough seating for all the selected players, and that sealed water is available for the players to rehydrate after the match or training session.

In-competition testing

Where in-competition testing is concerned, the DCO tells the team representatives which players have been selected 15 minutes before the end of the match. At the final whistle, the DCO takes up a position at the tunnel exit, so that he or she can clearly see the players coming off the pitch. It is the team's responsibility to ensure that the players are aware of their selection, and the players are responsible for reporting directly to the doping control station. This procedure is always overseen by the DCO, to ensure that everything goes smoothly. At certain matches, the DCO has chaperones to assist with notification – but it is always the players' responsibility to report to the doping control station. Once they have been notified, players must go straight to the doping control station; they cannot return to their dressing room first.

Once in the doping control station, the DCO explains the procedure to the players and lets them know whether they will have to only do a urine test or whether blood will be collected as well. The DCO tells the players that they have to provide 90ml of urine and that they should rehydrate until they are ready to provide a sample.

Sample collection

When the player is ready to give a urine sample, the DCO asks them to select a sealed collection beaker, and goes with them to the toilet to



For blood tests,
less than a tablespoon
of blood is collected from
a vein in the player's arm.



witness the sample being provided. The DCO then asks the player to choose a sample collection kit, containing A and B bottles, to check that their selected equipment is intact, that it has not been tampered with and that the sample codes on the bottles all match. The DCO then observes the player splitting the sample into the bottles and closing the lids. The density of the sample is checked to ensure that it can be analysed, and if the sample is suitable, the DCO releases the player.

If blood samples are taken, UEFA appoints DCOs that regularly collect blood in their daily work. In a blood test, less than a tablespoon of blood is collected from a vein in the player's arm.

The DCO must carefully complete all sections of the doping control form, which represents the legal record of the test. Consequently, the DCO must ensure that the player checks that all the recorded information is correct, and give the player the opportunity to add any remarks. Both the DCO and the player sign the form at the end of the test to confirm that everything is correct. The DCO gives one copy of the doping control form to the player, one copy goes to UEFA, and an anonymous copy is sent with the samples to the laboratory.

Transporting the samples

Once samples have been collected from all players, the DCO personally transports the samples to a World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)-accredited laboratory for analysis. If blood samples have been collected, these are transported in a special temperature-controlled box. When the DCO arrives at the laboratory, the samples are checked to ensure that they are all intact and there is no evidence of tampering. The laboratory then formally signs a UEFA 'chain of custody document' to confirm that it has received the samples.

The final steps follow within 48 hours of the assignment, during which the DCO has to inform UEFA of the players tested and give their sample numbers. The DCO also has to give a separate detailed report on any incident that may have occurred outside of the procedure. Clarity and accuracy are fundamental here, as the report is UEFA's record of a doping control and it could lead to a disciplinary hearing for the player or club.

Essential job

From start to finish, a comprehensive process for an essential job – the DCOs are proud in the knowledge that their dedication and expertise is a vital component in helping UEFA ensure that doping has no place in football. ☑



JURY SELECTS RESEARCH PROJECTS FOR 2017/18

The jury for the UEFA Research Grant Programme – an initiative that supports the academic work of doctoral and post-doctoral researchers studying European football in a multitude of disciplines – has chosen the research projects that will receive grants for the 2017/18 season, the eighth year of the programme.

UEFA-funded research projects are intended to produce findings that the European football family can use to reach more informed decisions and which UEFA and its member associations can use to further develop their activities and projects.

This year, UEFA received 55 applications for projects developed for and in conjunction with 23 different member associations, underlining the associations' strong interest in academic research that is of high relevance and interest to them. All 55 proposals made it through to the second evaluation stage and after a comprehensive review six were chosen by the jury:

Supporting the football global coach through cross-cultural training by Mario Borges, London South Bank University, England. *Project supported by the Portuguese Football Federation.*

Scheduling of concurrent training preceding acute non-contact injuries in elite European football players by Kevin Enright, Liverpool John Moores University, England. *Project supported by the English Football Association.*

Repetitive subconcussive head impacts: brain alterations and clinical consequences by Jolien Gooijers, KU Leuven, Belgium. *Project supported by the Royal Belgian Football Association.*

Building psychological resilience into elite women's football throughout the talent pathway by Oliver Mason, University of Surrey, England. *Project supported by the English Football Association.*

A tale of clubs, leagues and countries: the impact of the Africa Cup of Nations on European professional football by Levi Pérez, University of Oviedo, Spain. *Project supported by the Royal Spanish Football Federation.*

The working practices and operational environments of referees from a transnational comparative perspective by Tom Webb, University of Portsmouth, England. *Project supported by the Royal Netherlands Football Association.*

The six researchers will spend the next nine months carrying out their research in cooperation with their supporting national associations and will present the results to UEFA next year.

"The jury had the hard task of choosing between a large number of many very high-quality and diverse proposals. The selected projects aim to tackle strategic topics with innovative approaches and will produce useful insights for European football stakeholders," said the chairman of the jury, Michel D'Hooghe.

The researchers who received grants for the 2016/17 season have also made their final presentations before the jury on the following research topics:

An innovative MRI technique for acute hamstring injuries – a feasibility study of micro-structural recovery at return to play

by Hans Tol, Academic Medical Centre of the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands. *Project supported by the Royal Netherlands Football Association.*

The road to victory in the UEFA Women's Champions League: profile of successful coaches and teams by Edson Filho, University of Central Lancashire, England. *Project supported by the English Football Association.*

Football for human rights: embedding human rights promotion and protection through and within European football by Jacopo Tognon, University of Padova, Italy. *Project supported by the Malta Football Association.*

The preventive effect of an adductor strengthening programme on groin problems in Norwegian male football players by Thor Einar Andersen, Norwegian School of Sports Sciences, Norway. *Project supported by the Football Association of Norway.*

#Social Responsibility in #Football: mapping perceptions and expectations through social media conversations across Europe by Tim Breitbarth, Bournemouth University, England. *Project supported by the German Football Association.*

Effectiveness of European countries' laws and regulations in dealing with match-fixing by Thomas Gabris, Comenius University Bratislava, Slovakia. *Project supported by the Slovak Football Association.*

An investigation into the engagement of disabled people in European football by Paul Kitchin, Ulster University, Northern Ireland. *Project supported by the Irish Football Association.*

One research project from the previous cycle (2015/16), which was allowed more time for data collection, was also presented before the jury:

Balancing football and non-football activities in Danish football clubs

by Esben Rahbek Gjerdrum Pedersen, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark. *Project supported by the Danish Football Association.*

The jury of the UEFA Research Grant Programme comprises five representatives of the European football family and five academics known internationally for their work related to sport and European football.

This year, the jury welcomed three new members and thanked the retired members for their professionalism and commitment to the work of the jury. Nodar Akhalkatsi, Per Ravn Omdal and Prof. Gérald Simon stepped down and have been replaced by Edvinas Eimontas, former president of the Lithuanian Football Federation, Nathalie Iannetta Sabattier, governance and social affairs chief advisor at UEFA, and Prof. Fabien Ohl from the University of Lausanne. Giangiorgio Spiess also announced his intention to retire from the jury before the next edition of the Research Grant Programme and the jury thanked him for his valuable and professional contribution to every edition of the programme to date. ☺

UEFA RESEARCH GRANT PROGRAMME JURY

European football family representatives:

- Dr Michel D'Hooghe (chairman of the UEFA Medical Committee and of the UEFA Research Grant Programme jury)
- Edvinas Eimontas (former president of the Lithuanian Football Federation) – new
- Nathalie Iannetta Sabattier (governance and social affairs chief advisor, UEFA) – new
- Giangiorgio Spiess (former member of the UEFA Executive Committee and UEFA honorary member)
- Ivančica Sudac (head of international affairs and licensing, Croatian Football Federation)

University representatives:

- Prof. Susan Bridgewater (University of Liverpool, England)
- Prof. Paul Downward (Loughborough University, England)
- Prof. Jan Ekstrand (former vice-chairman of the UEFA Medical Committee and professor at Linköping University, Sweden)
- Prof. Jürgen Mittag (German Sport University, Cologne, Germany)
- Prof. Fabien Ohl (University of Lausanne, Switzerland) – new



STRIKING A BALANCE

To give readers of UEFA Direct a taste of the interesting work supported by the UEFA Research Grant Programme, we are showcasing a selection of the funded projects. This month, Professor Esben Rahbek Gjerdrum Pedersen from the Department of Management, Society and Communication of the Copenhagen Business School examines how clubs balance football and non-football activities in everyday organisational life.

Many football clubs struggle with a number of day-to-day challenges, including lack of volunteers, poor physical infrastructure, difficulties in collecting membership fees and competing player demands (junior v senior and elite v grassroots). These challenges can take up substantial resources and have a negative impact on club operations and development.

Football and non-football activities

A research project among more than 200 Danish football clubs provided a detailed account of the various activities occupying volunteers and staff in everyday club life. While football-related activities arguably remain the dominant activity, the results also indicate that administration, planning, and meetings also take up substantial

resources. Evidence also indicates that clubs often find it difficult to balance football and non-football activities – a problem which is rooted in limited volunteer resources. Moreover, many football clubs have elite versus non-elite discussions, which also have a financial dimension, as the extra costs of having an elite focus are sometimes covered by the majority of non-elite members.

Special emphasis was paid in the research to the clubs' engagement in partnerships and social/environmental activities. The findings show that the large majority of clubs collaborate with football-related partners (football clubs, sports associations and municipalities), whereas there is less interaction with non-sports partners (private companies, healthcare providers, foundations, etc.). Around half of the football clubs engage in social/



UEFA

Esben Rahbek Gjerdrum Pedersen is a professor in the Department of Management, Society and Communication of the Copenhagen Business School. He is also a member of the board of directors of the Academy of Business in Society (ABIS).

environmental activities, mainly related to fair play, refugees, transparency and equal opportunities.

A new partnership agenda?

Overall, there seems to be a compelling case for new partnerships with partners from the public, private and non-profit sectors (private companies, healthcare providers, trade unions, foundations, etc.).

The results indicate a need for more partnerships which address the fundamental needs of the communities as well as the clubs. Strategic collaboration can strengthen societal engagement while at the same time addressing core tensions within the clubs. Engaging in social activities and partnerships should ideally contribute to the development of core club activities, e.g. by attracting new volunteers and members and financing new investments.

National associations and local unions can also play a more active role in addressing football v non-football tensions with financial resources and specialised knowledge and competences. Moreover, they can contribute to networking and fundraising efforts, which will reduce the time and resource investments of individual clubs. 



WOMEN'S FOOTBALL CREATES A BUZZ IN SANDEFJORD

A bumper crowd of just under 4,000 turned out to cheer Norway on as they faced the USA on 11 June in their final home game before UEFA Women's EURO 2017 in the Netherlands.

With the match being played at Sandefjord Arena, the Football Association of Norway (NFF) organised a pre-match event for young players in the nearby Bugården Park, arranging football activities, food, music and much more besides. In addition to building excitement ahead of the Norway v USA match that evening – the 50th meeting of the two sides – the NFF also sought to showcase women's football in general and highlight the importance of sport for both physical and mental health.

Emails were sent out to all clubs in the Sandefjord area, with a focus on girls between the ages of 6 and 16. The NFF encouraged all coaches, parents and youth leaders to bring their young players along, giving them an opportunity to play football with their team-mates and show their support for the national side. The organisers set up mini-pitches for three-a-side games, and they were all used to their maximum potential, with players keen to show off their impressive skills.

A new campaign for young players

The NFF also used this event to unveil its new campaign, entitled MeWe #sterkalene #sterkeresammen (#strongalone #strongertogether). This campaign, which is aimed at young players – especially girls – and seeks to foster greater interest and participation in football, was then fully rolled out in July as Women's EURO 2017 got under way.

A kahoot quiz displayed on the big screen was a fun way to find out how much the crowd of young players really knew about the Women's EURO and their national team. In addition, NFF Vestfold set up a fair-play tent and organised a nature walk, and players tried their hand at football darts and a shooting wall.

With so many activities to try, the players had to fuel up. Food coupons were handed



The NFF sought to showcase women's football in general and highlight the importance of sport for both physical and mental health.

out, allowing children to help themselves to hotdogs, drinks, fruit and ice cream (which were generously donated by the NFF's partners and local vendors).

A stage was set up in the park, and the young players were taught simple dance moves to accompany the song 'Breathe' by Astrid Smeplass, which they would later perform at half-time in the big match. This fun activity proved to be a great success. The face painting was also very popular, and it was great to see so many youngsters running around with the Norwegian flag on their cheeks.

In addition, Stabæk Fotball star and former international Trine Rønning gave a lecture about her journey to success. The venue was packed, and the young players left truly inspired.

As kick-off approached, everyone started to make their way over to Sandefjord Arena. As hoped, around half of the stadium was taken up by people who had participated in the event at Bugården Park. With all the painted faces, team shirts, dancing and cheering, the atmosphere was fantastic, and the Norwegian team greatly appreciated the amazing support they received from the crowd. Although the USA ultimately prevailed, winning 1-0, the day was still a huge success. ⚽



A host of pre-match activities were organised for the girls who came to cheer on their national team in their pre-Women's EURO warm-up match against the USA.

AUSTRIAN CUP GETS A REVAMP

CARMEN REDL



Fans and clubs have a new-look Austrian Cup to look forward to this season. The biggest change is to the name of the competition, which is now known as the UNIQA ÖFB Cup thanks to a five-year deal signed with the Austrian insurance group as the new presenting sponsor.

The spirit, values and character of the competition are summed up by the motto Glaube.Wille.Mut (Belief. Determination.

Courage), which inspires the competing teams 'to believe in making the impossible possible.'

In addition to the UNIQA ÖFB Cup web page, a social media concept has also been developed, with Facebook, Instagram and YouTube pages featuring present-day and legendary cup heroes, quizzes, competitions, and lots more. Coverage of the competition has also been upped, with the first-round matches in mid-July

broadcast live on TV or the internet.

Each club that plays in the first round will receive €1,000 and the participation fee has been abolished.

On the field itself, in any match that is undecided after 90 minutes, teams will now be able to make a fourth substitution in extra time.

The 2018 UNIQA ÖFB Cup final will take place on 1 May at the Wörthersee Stadion in Klagenfurt.

FOOTBALL FESTIVAL TO MARK NATIONAL MEDIA DAY

ULVIYYA NAJAFOVA



National media day was celebrated in Azerbaijan on 22 July, marking the 142nd anniversary of the publication of the country's first national newspaper back in 1875.

The Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA), which has a close relationship with the media, marked the

occasion with a media football festival. Held at Dalga Arena, the event took the form of a mini-tournament consisting of four matches between media representatives and AFFA staff members.

At a post-tournament dinner, the AFFA general secretary, Elkhan Mammadov, stressed the role of the media in



AFFA

promoting football in the country. The AFFA media committee announced the various prize winners, each of whom received a gift for their efforts in the festival mini-tournament.

BEST PLAYERS OF THE SEASON ANNOUNCED

FEDJA KRVAVAC



The Bosnia and Herzegovina national team continued their 2018 World Cup qualifying campaign against Greece at a full Bilino polje stadium in Zenica. Despite both teams giving a lot of effort, the match ended goalless, which was especially disappointing for the Bosnians, whose chances of reaching the World Cup have diminished significantly as a result.

At the traditional awards ceremony held at the end of each season, the best players of 2016/17 were announced. The award of best premier league player went to

Željezničar striker Miroslav Stevanović. Žrinjski's Kenan Pirić was named best premier league goalkeeper, with the top scorer honour going to Željezničar's Ivan Lendric, who notched up 19 goals during the season. Mehmed Janjoš from Sarajevo was named best coach, while FK Radnik from Bijeljina received the fair play award. In the women's league, the best player award went to Nikolina Milović from Radnik Bumerang, with the best goalkeeper award going to Almina Hodžić from SFK 2000 Sarajevo. In the futsal category, Marijo Aladžić from Mostar SG Staklorad was

named best player and Bahrudin Omerbegović from MNC Center best goalkeeper.

Back to action on the pitch, in their latest qualifying match for the 2019 European Under-21 Championship finals, Bosnia and Herzegovina lost against Switzerland in Biel, with a goal from Nicolas Haas in the 12th minute enough to secure a win for the home side.

Finally, 300 players from all over Bosnia and Herzegovina took part in this year's women's football festival in the cities of Banja Luka, Mostar and Zenica.

'LITTLE BULGARIAN PEOPLE' TO PLAY THE ALL-STARS

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MEDIA DEPARTMENT



The Bulgarian Football Union (BFU) is hosting an exhibition match between representatives of the national dwarfism organisation, Little Bulgarian People, and popular athletes, including former football players. The game will take place on 21 September at the national football base in Boyana, Sofia, as part of the European Week of Sports, exactly a year before Sofia becomes a European Capital of Sport in 2018.

The BFU president, Borislav Mihaylov, regards the match as a consolidation of the partnership between the two organisations, which dates back a few years and is devoted to removing social barriers for people with disabilities, adapting football stadiums and sports facilities, and fighting discrimination. In 2014 the president of Little Bulgarian People, Svetoslav Chernev, received a plaque from the BFU president in



Svetoslav Chernev and Borislav Mihaylov

recognition of the dwarfism organisation's contribution to the development of disability football in Bulgaria. The BFU has also donated footballs and kits to the organisation.

CELEBRATING WINS, PERFORMANCES AND DIVERSITY

TOMISLAV PACAK



In the UEFA Regions' Cup final in Istanbul, Zagreb defeated Region 2 of the Republic of Ireland to win the title. Not only was it sweet revenge for losing in the final two years ago in Dublin against Irish representatives, but it was the first time that a Croatian team had won a UEFA final tournament. The only goal of the final came from Toni Adžić in the 26th minute. "I can only say the best about our players and the whole tournament, which was brilliantly organised. Our amateur football is at a high level and this great result proves it," said coach Tomislav Gričar.

Croatia can also boast of having had a UEFA Champions League winner for the fifth time in a row – Luka Modrić having helped Real Madrid win the final against Juventus with another brilliant display to become the first Croatian player with three Champions League trophies to his name. Mateo Kovačić joined him in the celebrations, winning his second trophy, while Mario Mandžukić had to take consolation from the fact that he scored a stunning goal, one of the best in the history of the competition. He also became the first Croatian to score in

two different finals, and is only the third player to score in European Cup finals for two different clubs. Modrić was selected for the UEFA Team of the Year 2016 and has also won the Croatian footballer of the year award for the fifth year in a row.

In other news, the Croatian Football Federation (HNS) has turned to the famous 1998 World Cup bronze-medal winning team to find new coaches for its youth teams. Robert Jarni has taken over the Under-19 team, while Petar Krpan will be in charge of the Under-17s. "I am happy to have this opportunity to manage the Croatia Under-19 national team, especially as it's got quite a few talented players.



It's an honour and I will be seeking notable success," said Jarni, who played for Juventus and Real Madrid, among other clubs.

The HNS president, Davor Šuker, joined Janica Kostelić, winner of four Olympic gold skiing medals and current state secretary for sport, at the seventh football camp for national minorities in Karlovac. More than 80 youngsters took part in different activities aimed at fighting racism and discrimination in football.

The HNS executive committee has chosen the city of Vinkovci as the venue for the Croatian cup final, the first time that the oldest city in Europe will have hosted the event. Meanwhile, the top-division referees and their observers gathered in St Martin on the river Mura to prepare for the new season.

Finally, the HNS mourned the death in June of Neven Kolić, an exceptional football official who served in different capacities for more than 50 years. The Croatian football community was also saddened by the death of 27-year-old goalkeeper Antonio Jurjević, who died on 10 June after playing in a futsal tournament.

GRASSROOTS CHAMPIONSHIP ATTRACTS MORE THAN 500 TEAMS

CONSTANTINOS SHIAMBOULLIS

 Youth football is booming in Cyprus, with a total of 6,000 children between the ages of 5 and 13 taking part in the Cyprus Football Association's 2016/17 grassroots championship.

This annual competition, which was first organised in 2007, began back in October and concluded in mid-June. It was contested by more than 500 teams from all over Cyprus, with 1,000 or so matches being played every month, making it the biggest football



competition in the country in terms of the number of children participating.

The finals took place at Stadio GSP in Nicosia on 16 June, with hundreds of spectators coming along to marvel at the

children's passion, talent, commitment and enthusiasm. The Cyprus Football Association also organised a number of ancillary activities, making the event a veritable festival of children's football.

ENGLAND

www.thefa.com

AN ENCOURAGING SUMMER

ANDY WALKER

 By any standards, The Football Association has had an encouraging summer on the pitch in UEFA competitions.

While naturally much of the focus has been on the England team competing at the sharp end of the prestigious UEFA Women's EURO in the Netherlands, England teams at age-group level have also performed very well in their respective European competitions. For technical director Dan Ashworth, the relative success of the various development teams under the guidance of his colleague Matt Crocker is testament to improved collaboration with clubs and leagues, as well as the impact of the country's national football centre, St George's Park.

The state-of-the-art complex in the Staffordshire countryside about an hour from Birmingham marks its fifth anniversary in October and it has had a transformative impact on how the national teams work. It will also play host next year when England stages the 2018 European Under-17 Championship final tournament in May.

"It is encouraging that our young players have proved they have got some

talent to compete on the world stage and I am most pleased for the coaches that work across young player development. It is a real team effort," Ashworth said.

The FA is reflecting on a period during which England ran out as runners-up at the men's European Under-17 Championship in Croatia before taking the men's European Under-19 title in Georgia and reaching the semi-finals in the European Under-21 final tournament in Poland. On the women's side, the Under-17s reached the last eight in the Czech Republic, while the Under-19s were preparing for their finals in Northern Ireland at the time of writing. On top of all of that, the men's Under-20s were crowned world champions in their category in South Korea.

Ashworth added: "The coaches at professional clubs have also done a really good job. We borrow the players, they come to international duty because of the work the clubs have done and that goes down to the grassroots game as well. We have been told for a number of years in England that we don't have talented coaches and we don't have talented players in our development system,



and hopefully the performances over the summer have proved that's a myth.

"We do have some talent in our system and I am really pleased for all those people involved. It is encouraging. Ultimately we will get judged, and St George's Park will get judged, on how that transfers into the senior teams. We are striving for success in the senior teams in years to come but it does give some encouraging signs that we have got some players in our system that are good enough to compete on the world and European stages.

"The players have shown that age on age, we are up there with some of the better countries. We are not going to win the European championships every year, we are not going to win the World Cup every year, but we are very encouraged by the direction we are heading in."

ESTONIA

www.jalgpall.ee

YOUTH PROGRAMME RECEIVES IMPORTANT RECOGNITION

MAARJA SAULEP



The football-based prevention programme SPIN has earned a big acknowledgement by being one of the recipients of the UEFA Foundation for Children award.

The programme, which was started in 2015, is aimed at less fortunate children who do not have a lot of opportunities

for extracurricular activities. It is based on the successful Premier League Kicks project from England. At the moment over 500 children from the capital, Tallinn, the third-largest city, Narva, and the fifth-largest city, Kohtla-Järve, are participating in the programme.

The SPIN programme consists of

weekly football training and workshops, where the children learn life skills ranging from self-control to setting goals and teamwork through sports-related activities and games.

Keit Fomotškin, executive director of SPIN, explained what makes the programme different: "Compared with other similar projects and programmes, our aim is also to analyse the scientific effects," he said. "SPIN has a thoroughly thought-out model, a strong network and, based on the results, also a positive effect on the participants' social skills. The children's performance in school increases, they are socially more active, and impulsiveness and risk-taking decrease. It shows that SPIN is an effective programme and that it helps to build safer, stronger, more respectful communities, strengthens social skills and brings a positive change in the educational system."

The programme is also praised by Aivar Pohlak, president of the Estonian Football Association: "Football is a tool for us to change communities for the better and we are delighted that a programme such as SPIN has produced real results and changed young people's lives."



FRANCE

www.fff.fr

FOOTBALL TAKES TO THE BEACHES

JEAN-BAPTISTE SCHMIDT



Throughout the summer, the French Football Federation's beach soccer tour crossed the country to introduce as many people as possible to the game. Organised by the amateur football league in conjunction with the Joël Cantona Organisation, the tour took in 13 towns and cities from 8 July to 26 August.

Numerous fun activities were put on for free for anyone and everyone who wanted to find out what beach soccer

was all about – from football juggling demonstrations to youth tournaments and a football quiz, with plenty more in between.

Altogether, 26 days were given over to the tour, with a crew of 20 (presenters, DJs, jugglers, technicians, etc.) travelling 21,000km in two months.

The tour has been running since 2001 as part of long-term development plans for beach soccer, boosting the popularity of the game year on year.



FIRST 'PLAY WITHOUT PRESSURE' SESSIONS PROVE AN OVERWHELMING SUCCESS

STEVEN GONZALEZ



Fun-filled football sessions with the emphasis on youngsters enjoying playing and learning about football were launched for the first time this summer as the first stage of the Gibraltar FA's (GFA) new initiative to get youngsters to play football without worrying about scorelines, results, pressure to perform and who the best player may or may not be.

Under the slogan 'Play Without Pressure', the association's grassroots department organised fun-filled sessions by qualified GFA coaches aimed at providing fun and enjoyable football for children between the ages of 5 and 12.

The youngsters even got to meet and quiz national team players, including captain Roy Chipolina and senior players Liam Walker and Ryan Casciaro, who gave them lots of advice as well as demonstrating the 'art' and indeed fun of taking a penalty!

The GFA's technical director, Desi Curry, and grassroots manager Leslie Asquez are delighted at the success of the first part of the initiative and are keen to emphasise that these sessions are just the start, with various new projects and activities to be rolled out during the course of the coming year.



Stephen Ignacio

FIRST FAIR PLAY FESTIVAL

MEDIA DEPARTMENT



Under the slogan 'All for the game', the Hellenic Football Federation (HFF) recently organised its first-ever fair play festival, bringing together 100 girls aged between 12 and 16 for a two-day celebration of women's football.

The event was held in Athens and sought to teach the girls about the values of fair play in the world's most popular sport, but also in sport and life generally,

to boost the development and progress of women's football in Greece.

Antonis Nikopolidis, Dimosthenis Kavouras and Antonis Pronas, head coaches of the men's U21 national team, the senior women's national team and the women's U19 and U17 national teams respectively, were joined by leading scientists associated with the HFF to speak on the importance of fair play in football.

The young players, representing women's clubs AO Vrilissia, Olympiada Imitou, Agios Dimitrios Athinaiki, Zografoi, Akratitos, Foinikas Agias Sofias and Asteras Chaidariou, were given the chance to showcase their talent during a series of exhibition matches and skills-based games. They received rapturous applause from the spectators and the organising committee for their passion, commitment and technical skills despite having only just started out in the sport.

The event sent a very clear message to everybody watching, and parents in particular, about the value of playing football and the need to encourage children to play. It highlighted how girls especially can benefit from football, in sport and in life.

It was also an ideal opportunity for the HFF to launch several new social media accounts, all of which are dedicated to grassroots, infrastructure and football development. The event was a resounding success and clearly showed that the future is bright for women's football in Greece.



EPO

HUNGARY

www.mlsz.hu / en.mlsz.hu

MAKING FURTHER STRIDES IN THE WOMEN'S GAME

MÁRTON DINNYÉS



"Development in women's football needs to focus on two areas: increasing the number of those playing and high-quality coaching," says Anita Juhász, who is the new person in charge of the development of women's football at the Hungarian Football Federation (MLSZ). "On the one hand, it's important that we involve as many girls as possible who are interested in playing because they provide the foundation. On the other hand, we must build a system which also guarantees quality coaching. It is important we pay attention to the details, and to the human factor too."

This will also help the women's national team to develop. There is already

considerable help for clubs nationwide and a list of further improvements has been prepared. "The MLSZ enables girls' clubs to use funds from a corporate tax benefit scheme. Indeed, plenty of additional funding for 20 training centres can be achieved and support for top-flight clubs can also be increased. This can help to improve club infrastructure, which attracts larger crowds who can watch games in comfort," Juhász said.

The 41-year-old sports law graduate points out that women's football now attracts greater attention in the national media, with Hungary's M4 Sport channel showing nearly every national team game live as well as crucial



Anita Juhász

championship matches. Additional funds, she says, must be used in order for the clubs to enhance their own image and popularise the game. "This money of course means responsibility for the clubs, and in future we'd like to reward the most efficiently run women's centres and clubs. Working together with their counterparts from the men's game, sports organisations can establish a high-quality system in the future. This is, of course, a big step which will take years. In addition, the launch of a girls' section in the OTP Bank Bozsik grassroots programme will help to put a spotlight on girls' football."

ITALY

www.figc.it

'FOOTBALL DURING LESSON TIME' ENJOYS SUCCESSFUL SECOND YEAR

DIEGO ANTENOZIO



The second year of the Il Calcio e Le Ore di Lezione (Football during Lesson Time) initiative, which uses the sport as an educational tool to teach children about respect, fair play and how to support their team positively without resorting to violence, has now come to an end. A report on the second year, as well as all the Italian Football Federation's other schools initiatives, was presented during a press conference held at the Italian ministry of education in Rome.

The initiative, which is being implemented in primary and secondary schools, is fully endorsed by UEFA as part of its Captains of Change programme and is being delivered in partnership with the Italian football leagues and the national coaches' and footballers' associations. It aims to record and monitor all of Italian football's schools initiatives nationwide, to help ensure that a sufficient number of projects are



in place for the future and that they are of the best possible quality.

Among the changes introduced in 2016/17, professional clubs' supporter liaison officers were given increased responsibility for running the initiative in their respective areas and pupils' families were directly involved in all of the programme's activities. There was a particular focus on integration, with a view to combatting discrimination and promoting diversity, and on measures

to counteract bullying and cyberbullying, which are areas of real concern for young people.

In 2016/17, the programme saw 72,976 pupils aged between 6 and 18 enjoy 8,160 hours of lessons (compared with 6,143 hours in 2015/16, an increase of 33%). The initiative covered 2,385 classes (compared with 1,797 in 2015/16 – again an increase of 33%) in 776 schools (compared with 501 in 2015/16).

There was also an increase of 5% in the number of projects delivered during 2016/17 (199 compared with 190 the previous season).

Planning and implementation of the next year of the programme will be fine-tuned ahead of the new school year, based on curriculum proposals from across the country, as well as feedback from this year's campaign. There are also plans to design a special logo for the initiative.

LATVIA

www.lff.lv

NINE NEW PRO LICENCE HOLDERS

TOMS ĀRMANIS



June marked the end of the latest UEFA Pro licence coach education programme in Latvia. This year nine coaches from Latvia and one from Estonia successfully completed the two-year course.

Since June 2015 the Pro licence students had attended 17 sessions and completed 535 hours of tuition. Two of the students have been given an extra year to complete the training.

Introduced in 2012, the UEFA Pro licence is the highest coaching qualification available in Latvia. To date, 28 coaches have successfully completed UEFA Pro licence courses organised by the Latvian Football Federation.

In addition to its general coach education programme, the federation also offers specific futsal, goalkeeper and women's football coach education.

LITHUANIA

www.lff.lt

COACHING GOES ONLINE

VAIDOTAS JANUŠKA

As part of its strategy to improve coaching, the Lithuanian Football Federation (LFF) has made a public launch of its e-platform for coaches, AcademyOnline. Based on Dutch methodology, the system has already been used for UEFA A and B licence courses.

"A few years ago we decided we needed a centralised platform for coaches and this led to the new system. We want to be able to help the club coaches in their work and also use common methods in order to achieve the main goal – producing quality players for Lithuania," says the LFF technical director, Raimondas

Statkevičius. All clubs have been invited to test the platform and the online coaching system will be fully implemented in the coming months.

Meanwhile, the LFF has also begun its C licence courses for coaches, teachers and parents working with children up to 10 and 11 years old. Participants have to complete an e-seminar before joining a two-day live course. The first two groups have provided great feedback. "It has left the best of feelings because we managed to learn many new things and also met people who see children's coaching from a new, different perspective," said Marius Komovas, a youth coach in Klaipėda.

LIECHTENSTEIN

www.lfv.li

PETER JEHLE BECOMES MOST CAPPED PLAYER

ANTON BANZER

 On 11 June Peter Jehle overtook Mario Frick as Liechtenstein's most capped player when he pulled on the national team goalkeeper's shirt for the 126th time ahead of Liechtenstein's World Cup qualifier away against Italy.

Jehle made his national team debut back on 14 October 1998, when he was just 16 years old. Liechtenstein's opponents on that day were Azerbaijan and the young Jehle played an active part in his country's first win in a FIFA or UEFA qualifying competition, with Liechtenstein running out 2-1 winners. Since that historic day, Jehle, now 35, has become the national team's first-choice goalkeeper and captain.

Jehle, who plays his club football with FC Vaduz, is a real unifying force for Liechtenstein football. On 14 August 2013, for Liechtenstein's friendly against Croatia, he became the third Liechtenstein player after Mario Frick and Martin Stocklasa to notch up 100 caps. Less than four years later he holds the most-capped player record outright, an honour he looks set to hold onto for some years to come as he continues as Liechtenstein's first-choice goalkeeper.



SIX-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN UNVEILED

ALEX VELLA



The Malta FA (MFA) has announced a six-year strategic plan designed to further improve football on the island.

The plan includes a second national school of sport set up in partnership with the country's ministry of education. It is one of the key projects on the MFA's agenda, as is a review of the amateur and grassroots sectors, including futsal and women's football and the creation of a support unit to assist young footballers to overcome the inherent initial difficulties of joining a foreign club. There will also be specialised training for club administrators, five new projects at the Ta' Qali national complex, the relocation of the association's technical centre and

the construction of a compact stadium at the MFA training grounds.

These details were unveiled by the MFA president, Norman Darmanin Demajo, during the association's annual general meeting in July. "For an organisation like the MFA it is important that we always have a purpose – a point in the future, an agreed objective towards which we can all work," he stressed. "In business this is referred to as a strategic plan, which is merely an exercise which asks the question where we would like to be in five or six years' time," he explained.

The association's success in implementing its strategy depends predominantly on the strength of its administrative and human resources.



Norman Darmanin Demajo

"We need to have the best people in our ranks, not only those who are talented in their field but also people who are passionate about football and internally motivated. All this will help the association to be of service to Maltese football," the Malta FA president concluded.

FUN FOOTBALL SCHOOL SEMINAR FOR LEADERS AND COACHES

PRESS OFFICE

 A joint Cross Cultures Project Association (CCPA), Open Fun Football Schools (OFFS) and Sport + Schools + Police (SSP) seminar for leaders and coaches was held at the Moldovan national teams' training centre in Vadu lui Vodă from 24 to 28 July. The seminar was attended by 156 coaches and comprised theoretical and practical sessions, including presentations about the role and importance of the coach and the organisation of the fun football schools. Instructors from the Moldovan FA (FMF) demonstrated a number of exercises, and small-sided games were held in which all coaches participated.

While the seminar was going on, the CCPA/OFFS office in Moldova also organised a football festival on 26 July in which 120 boys and girls in the Under-7 and Under-11 categories took part. Special guests Nicolai Cebotari, FMF general secretary, Veaceslav Balan, representative of the ministry of internal

affairs, and Oleg Molceanov, the FMF's sports criteria expert, were on hand to give gifts to the children.

The festival was run by CCPA/OFFS project assistant coordinator Svetlana Patraş, FMF grassroots manager Valentin

Chicu, CCPA/OFFS instructors Vladislav Pocotilo, Iana Pogarevici, Diana Bobuţac, Victor Mardari, Ion Telic and Vasile Tolocnincov, and Moldovan police representatives Natalia Gaidibadi and Virginia Balanici.



Vadim Căftanat

NEW FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY

NIGEL TILSON



The Irish Football Association has launched a new five-year strategy aimed at promoting, fostering and developing football for all in Northern Ireland.

With the Northern Ireland senior men's side having competed at EURO 2016, the new National Football Stadium at Windsor Park complete, more people watching the Northern Ireland Football League (NIFL) Premiership and more people playing the game, football in the country is on a high.

Not wishing to leave it there, the board of the Irish FA commissioned a new five-year strategy in January, designed to ensure the game continues to grow at all levels and that the association continues to deliver for the entire football family in Northern Ireland.

The strategy sets six long-term objectives:

- to help Northern Ireland international teams challenge every time and qualify every other time for major tournaments;
- to help rebuild the football estate in Northern Ireland;
- to provide assistance to senior clubs in European competitions and to help NIFL Premiership clubs break into the top 40 in the UEFA coefficient rankings;
- to reinvigorate the 'everyday' game;
- to build a thriving stadium business at the National Football Stadium in Belfast;
- to serve the community better.

The Irish FA Chief Executive, Patrick Nelson, said: "We want to build on the foundations laid in recent years and to set new targets that will benefit the whole game in Northern Ireland."



Patrick Nelson (left) and David Martin



IFA

The document is available to view and download at irishfa.com/strategy

FIRST ROMANIAN CFM NEARS COMPLETION

PAUL ZAHARIA

 Continuous learning represents one of the main pillars of activity of the Romanian Football Federation (FRF). It is valuable not only for the federation's own employees but also for its affiliated members, for whom seminars, conferences and other learning events are organised by the FRF and partner organisations.

The UEFA Certificate in Football Management (CFM) is one of the educational programmes being run by the FRF in order to train and educate

football managers in accordance with European standards. Funded through the UEFA HatTrick programme, the CFM is for anyone involved in football who wishes to develop or expand their theoretical and practical knowledge of football management. The main topics covered are the organisation of football, strategic and performance management, operational management, football marketing and sponsorship, communication and public relations, and event and volunteer management.

The CFM also fits into the objectives of the FRF's strategic plan 2015–2020 for the development of football in Romania.

The first session, organised in cooperation with UEFA and the Swiss Graduate School of Public Administration (IDHEAP) of the University of Lausanne, took place in Bucharest on 6 and 7 July, with two more sessions to follow in October 2017 and March 2018. In addition, all the participants have to complete eight online modules.

The participants come from all walks of football, from clubs and regional football associations, from the Romanian Football Federation (ticketing, brand management, team management, grassroots and communication managers), as well as from the football associations of Croatia, Moldova and Slovakia. They include some former players, such as Romania's Lucian Sânmaranean.

If they complete the course successfully, the participants will receive a certificate of higher education.



FIRST COHORT OF REFEREES GRADUATE FROM SCORE

MICHAEL LAMONT

 The first cohort of aspiring referees have graduated from the Scottish Centre of Refereeing Excellence (SCORE). SCORE was launched in 2015 and is based at the National Performance Centre for Sport in Edinburgh, providing a pathway for up-and-coming referees to reach the upper echelons of the game.

The Scottish FA and Heriot-Watt University have worked in partnership to provide education through modules and intensive training over the last two years.

Coached by current category one referee Craig Thomson, all nine graduates

have been mentored during SCORE and undertaken an academic programme. They had to complete nine modules during the part-time course, focusing on key aspects of the job such as motivation, dealing with aggressive coaches and players, building positive relations and working across cultures.

On the pitch, the referees took charge of Under-20 development matches where they were filmed and the recordings were then used for more detailed analysis of their performances.

John Fleming, head of referee operations at the Scottish FA, said:



"I am delighted to congratulate the nine graduates of SCORE 15, each of whom has proven to be an exceptionally promising referee and has undoubtedly benefited from the education the programme has provided."

The nine SCORE graduates are: Connor Ashwood, Graham Grainger, Scott Lambie, Stewart Luke, Matthew McDermid, Ross Menzies, Peter Stuart, Lloyd Wilson and Ross Hardie.

DEFIBRILLATOR FOR LIFE

PETER SURIN

 What is the cost of a human life? The answer can be found in the Slovak Football Association's integrated approach to protection, security and services in the organisation of football matches. The procedure was developed by Peter France, security manager at the Slovak FA, in cooperation with Pavel Malovič, the association's head doctor, and the Falck company. Falck entered the Slovakian market in 2005 and the company has its main offices for central and eastern Europe in Bratislava.

As part of the integrated approach, a number of top and second division clubs received defibrillators and cabinets. Club representatives were trained on how to handle this valuable equipment, where to place it and how to use the defibrillator when human life is in danger. The stadiums also have new medical facilities, which the public must be able to access at all times.

The following clubs participated in the training and now own a brand-new defibrillator: AS Trenčín, MŠK Fomat Martin, Partizánu Bardejov, MFK

Ružomberok, DAC 1904 Dunajská Streda, MFK Tatran Liptovský Mikuláš and FC ViOn Zlaté Moravce.

"We are building new stadiums and modernising the old ones. We are applying UEFA's well-established approach to the organisation of medical care and overall security and services for fans at venues. Football stewards are one of the key elements in event organisation. They need to react to situations quickly and help the fans until the emergency services arrive. It is our responsibility to guarantee the safety and security of supporters at football matches. Stewards need to be able to help in emergency situations when someone's health or life is at stake. We need to have the proper technology and trained personnel to help supporters efficiently in an emergency. We are planning to request a grant from UEFA in order to get other Slovakian clubs involved," said Peter France, security manager.

"The reality at matches shows that it is absolutely necessary to have the organisation and technical facilities of



the highest level when it comes to medical care and security. In the past, I have come across opinions saying that it is not a necessity to have a defibrillator at stadiums. However, this is not true. It is a matter of life and death. We are already educating sports doctors. The next step is to link the theory with the practice. The security department at the Slovak FA are doing an amazing job in cooperation with Falck, who are providing invaluable services to the football family," said Pavel Malovič, head doctor.

DAVID MEETS GOLIATH

PIERRE BENOIT



The coveted Sandoz trophy weighs 6.86kg, has a value of around 100,000 Swiss francs and was donated to the Swiss FA by Lausanne banker Aurèle-Gilbert Sandoz in 1925. It is presented by the association's president to the captain of the Swiss cup winners after each season's final.

If the trophy could talk, the stories it could tell would easily run to several volumes. It could recount the number of times that it had found itself being mended at the goldsmith's in Berne after lively celebrations. Or it could tell the story of the Zurich public transport employee who found the trophy on the tram one morning, left behind by record cup winners Grasshoppers after their victory parade through the city.

And a glorious new chapter in the trophy's history is in the making, with the winners of the amateur fair play trophy now qualifying automatically for the first main round of the cup – a real achievement for any amateur club. The first club to enjoy this privilege is ninth-tier club Union Sportive Montfaucon

from the Bern-Jura region, who, to add to the excitement, were drawn to play their first cup tie at home against none other than Neuchâtel-Xamax from the Swiss Challenge League (the second tier of the Swiss football league system). In their heyday under legendary coach Gilbert Gress, Xamax were a force to be reckoned with in European competitions and a match even for the likes of Real Madrid, Bayern Munich, Roma and Celtic.

The capacity of the Stade du Péché in Montfaucon was increased for the occasion and was jam-packed for the cup tie, which netted the home club the highest earnings in its history.

On the day, the elaborate 4-5-1 system prepared by Montfaucon coach Jean-Marc Bueche was not enough to cause an upset. The match will, however, remain firmly etched in the memories of the players, including goalkeeper Lucien Ourny and star player Davy Vonlanthen, who will no doubt give the shirts they wore pride of place above their mantelpieces.

The team's defeat did not dampen the euphoria, and celebrations in the town of 610 residents continued late into



the night. Stories about this momentous day will certainly be handed down for many years to come.

HARNESSING THE UNIQUE POWER OF FOOTBALL

ROB DOWLING



Chris Coleman, the Wales national team manager, has been spending the international break inspiring schoolchildren around the country.

Coleman and coach Kit Symons recently went to the Rhondda Valleys, where they spent the day visiting primary schools in the area to talk about their experiences within football and answering the children's questions.

While on their visit to Williamstown, Ton Pentre and Cwmparc primary schools, Coleman and Symons explained the similarities between the commitment that



is needed to be a professional footballer and achievement in the classroom.

"Perseverance is important," Coleman explained to the children. "You don't have to be the most skilful player or the cleverest in the class to make it. If you persevere and work hard at everything you do, you can be proud of yourself."

The school visits are being used to deliver a segment of the Football Association of Wales' strategic plan, harnessing the unique power that football has to connect with people in a positive way.

BIRTHDAYS

Gerhard Aigner (Germany, 1 September)
José Guilherme Aguiar (Portugal, 1 September)
Manuel Díaz Vega (Spain, 1 September)
João Moraes (Portugal, 1 September)
Alain Giresse (France, 2 September)
Savo Milošević (Serbia, 2 September)
Gérard Houllier (France, 3 September) **70th**
Rudolphe Mannaerts (Belgium, 3 September)
David Elleray (England, 3 September)
Bartłomiej Zalewski (Poland, 3 September)
Victor Mintoff (Malta, 4 September)
Grigoriy Surkis (Ukraine, 4 September)
Barry Taylor (England, 5 September)
Ludovic Debru (France, 5 September)
Eija Vähälä (Finland, 6 September)
Bernd Stöber (Germany, 6 September)
Shmuel Shtefi (Israel, 6 September)
Andrew McKinlay (Scotland, 6 September)
György Mezey (Hungary, 7 September)
António Laranjo (Portugal, 7 September)
Werner Helsen (Belgium, 7 September)
Vignir Már Thormóðsson
 (Iceland, 7 September) **50th**
Adrian Titcombe (England, 8 September)
Kostadin Gerginov (Bulgaria, 9 September)
Geir Thorsteinsson (Iceland, 9 September)
Ilonka Milanova Djaleva (Bulgaria, 9 September)
Aki Riihilahti (Finland, 9 September)
Charles Robba (Gibraltar, 10 September)
Ioannis Tsachilidis (Greece, 11 September)
Katarzyna Wierzbowska (Poland, 11 September)
Tomas Karpavicius (Lithuania, 11 September)
Talal Darawshi (Israel, 12 September)
Tanya Gravina (Malta, 12 September)
Stanisław Speczik (Poland, 13 September) **70th**
Lennart Schafroth (Sweden, 13 September) **60th**
Jon Skjervold (Norway, 13 September) **60th**
Lennart Vestervall (Sweden, 13 September) **60th**
Ingrid Jonsson (Sweden, 13 September)
Philippe Prudhon (France, 13 September)
Ivan Gazidis (England, 13 September)
Miguel Líttard Fernández-Palacios
 (Spain, 13 September)
Javid Garayev (Azerbaijan, 14 September) **40th**
Kim Robin Haugen
 (Norway, 14 September) **40th**
Adam Giersz (Poland, 15 September) **70th**
Eugeniusz Nowak (Poland, 15 September)
Dejan Savićević (Montenegro, 15 September)
Sokol Jareci (Albania, 15 September) **50th**
Antonis Petrou (Cyprus, 16 September)
Fran Gavin (Republic of Ireland, 16 September)
Kelly Simmons (England, 16 September)
Antero Silva Resende (Portugal, 18 September)
Şenay Erzik (Turkey, 18 September)
Roberto Rosetti (Italy, 18 September) **50th**
Miroslava Migalova (Slovakia, 18 September)
Marija Andjelković (Serbia, 18 September)
Reinhard Grindel (Germany, 19 September)
Stefano Farina (Italy, 19 September)
John Fleming (Scotland, 20 September) **60th**
Paul Lyon (Gibraltar, 20 September)
Miloš Marković (Serbia, 20 September)
Helena Herrero González (Spain, 21 September)
Viktor Paradnikov (Ukraine, 21 September)
Nenad Dikić (Serbia, 21 September)
Stefan Weber (Germany, 21 September)
Vladislav Khodeev (Russia, 21 September)

Luc Wilmes (Luxembourg, 21 September)
Nail Izmaylov (Russia, 21 September)
Cornelis de Bruin (Netherlands, 22 September)
Goetz Eilers (Germany, 23 September)
Umberto Lago (Italy, 23 September)
Vlado Svilokos (Croatia, 23 September)
Andreu Subies i Forcada
 (Spain, 23 September)
Giangiorgio Spiess (Switzerland, 24 September)
Eugen Strigel (Germany, 24 September)
Ionel Piscanu (Romania, 24 September)
Matteo Frameglia (Italy, 24 September)
Magdalena Urbanska (Poland, 24 September)
Mogens Kreutzfeldt
 (Denmark, 25 September) **70th**
Paul Krähenbühl (Switzerland, 25 September)
Karl-Heinz Rummenigge
 (Germany, 25 September)
Christine Frai (Germany, 25 September)
Rotem Kamer (Israel, 25 September)
Ayse Idil Cem (Turkey, 25 September)
Stephen Lodge (England, 26 September)
Camelia Nicolae (Romania, 26 September)
Dzmitry Kryshchanovich
 (Belarus, 26 September) **50th**
Jens Kleinefeld (Germany, 27 September)
Mariano Delogu (Italy, 28 September)
Michael van Praag
 (Netherlands, 28 September) **70th**
Karel Bohunek (Czech Republic, 28 September)
Zoltan Drucska (Hungary, 28 September)
Cristian Vornicu (Romania, 29 September)
Dariusz Paweł Dziekanowski
 (Poland, 30 September)
Cristina-Daniela Uluc (Romania, 30 September)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Meetings

1 September, Nyon
 UEFA Women's Champions League:
 draw for the round of 32

6 September, Nyon
 National Team Competitions Committee

7 September, Nyon
 National Associations Committee

20 September, Geneva
 13th Extraordinary UEFA Congress

20 September, Nyon
 Executive Committee

21 September, Nyon
 Governance and Compliance Committee

29 September, Ljubljana
 2017–18 European Futsal Championship:
 final round draw

Competitions

3–5 September
 European Qualifiers for the 2018 World Cup:
 matchday 8

10–13 and 24–27 September
 2017–18 European Futsal Championship: play-offs

NOTICES

- On 26 July, Ángel María Villar Llona (Spain) resigned from his position as UEFA vice-president and member of the Executive Committee with immediate effect.
- On 18 June, Leo Windtner was re-elected as president of the Austrian Football Association.
- On 24 June, Gérard Linard was elected as president of the Royal Belgian Football Association, replacing François De Keersmaecker.
- On 5 July, Dejan Savićević was re-elected as president of the Football Association of Montenegro.
- On 10 July, Victor Santos was re-elected as president of the Andorran Football Federation.

OBITUARIES

- Fuad Musayev, former president of the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan, died in mid-June aged 79. At UEFA level, he served on the Committee for the European Championship from 1994 to 2000, on the Development and Assistance Committee from 2000 to 2002, and on the Assistance Programmes Committee from 2002 to 2004.
- Alex Vella (Malta) died on 26 July aged 75. For many years, he was a faithful contributor to UEFA Direct, reporting on the activities of the Malta Football Association.

12/13 September

UEFA Champions League: group matches (matchday 1)
 UEFA Youth League – UEFA Champions League path: group matches (matchday 1)

14 September

UEFA Europa League: group matches (matchday 1)

14–19 September

European qualifying matches for the 2019 Women's World Cup

26/27 September

UEFA Champions League: group matches (matchday 2)
 UEFA Youth League – UEFA Champions League path: group matches (matchday 2)

27 September

UEFA Youth League – domestic champions path: first round (first legs)

28 September

UEFA Europa League: group matches (matchday 2)



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