

UEFA

DIRECT



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FOOTBALL ASSOCIATIONS

MONACO AWARDS

Ronaldo and Martens
lead the honours

Cristiano Ronaldo and Ada Martens are standing together, both holding large, shiny, silver UEFA Player of the Year trophies. They are smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a red carpet with repeating UEFA and award logos.

#EQUALGAME
István, a champion
of blind football

**WOMEN'S U19
CHAMPIONSHIP**
Spain victorious in Northern Ireland

THE TECHNICIAN
Youth teams make
wide strides



UEFA
FOUNDATION

for children

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REJUVENATING NATIONAL TEAM FOOTBALL

A new season is already upon us. However, before focusing my attention on what is to come, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all the national associations and local organising committees which helped deliver some memorable tournaments over the summer. I had a chance to congratulate many of you personally, but I would also like to record here my appreciation for the work done in Croatia, the Czech Republic, Georgia, Poland, Turkey and Northern Ireland, which all staged fantastic youth and amateur events, and, of course, the Netherlands, which hosted UEFA Women's EURO 2017. Attendance and viewership records were broken across the board and none of this could have been achieved without all the work done over so many months by so many people on the ground.

As I write this editorial, the first matchweek of our 2017/18 club competition season is under way. I am sure we will have another campaign full of excitement with 32 Champions League and 48 Europa League teams dreaming of making it to Kyiv and Lyon respectively. I wish all the participating teams the best of luck and hope that all matches are played in a spirit of fair play.

On the national team front, we are looking forward to the dawn of a new era. Soon, we will hold the draw for the new UEFA Nations League, a competition aimed at rejuvenating

national team football. More national associations will have more meaningful matches than ever before, with some of the lower-ranked teams harbouring hopes of qualifying for a European Football Championship final tournament for the first time. Every match counts in the Nations League, as the final four will have a trophy at stake, while a restructured play-off system will see teams battling for EURO qualification until the last ball is kicked. I am really pleased that, together, we have been able to launch this new competition as we strive to achieve the perfect balance between national team and club football in Europe.

This is all part of an exciting future for European football. We will work with all our stakeholders to safeguard the future of football and make sure that our game is stronger and healthier than ever.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Theodore Theodoridis'.

Theodore Theodoridis
UEFA General Secretary



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IN THIS ISSUE

6 A brand-new season

At the traditional season kick-off events in Monaco, the draws for the UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League group stages were made, and the best male and female players of 2016/17 were announced.

10 UEFA Super Cup

Real Madrid get to keep the UEFA Super Cup silverware in their trophy cabinet for another year, as UEFA Direct looks back at the history of the competition.

13 UEFA Foundation for Children

The UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, visits the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan.

14 #EqualGame

István Szabó plays blind football in Budapest and loves his football as much as anyone else.

22 European Women's Under-19 Championship

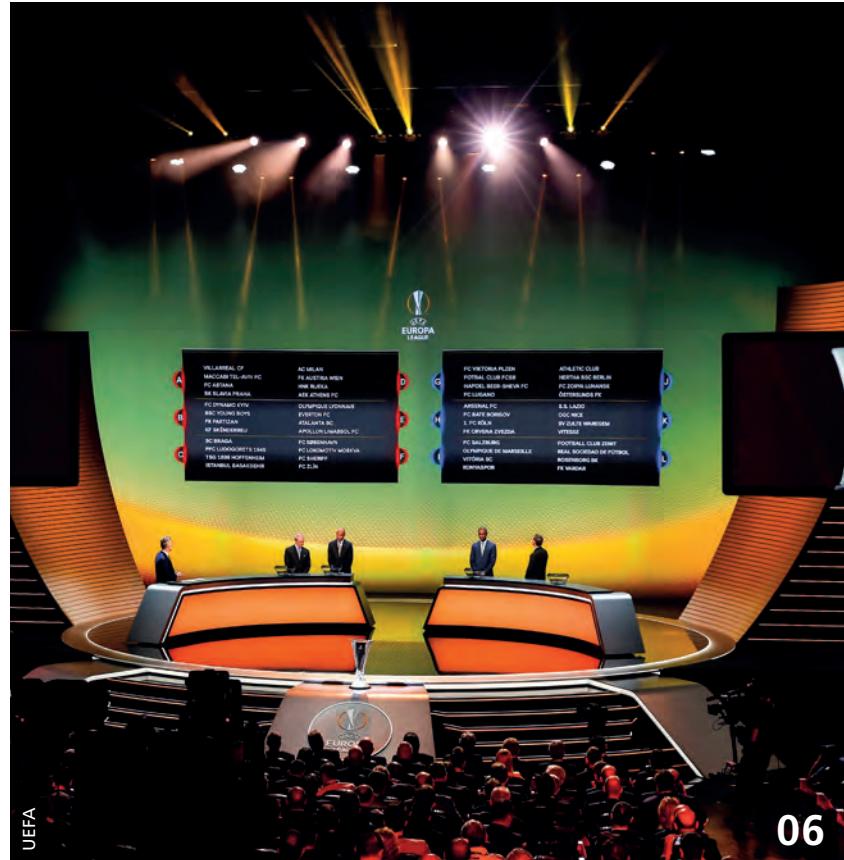
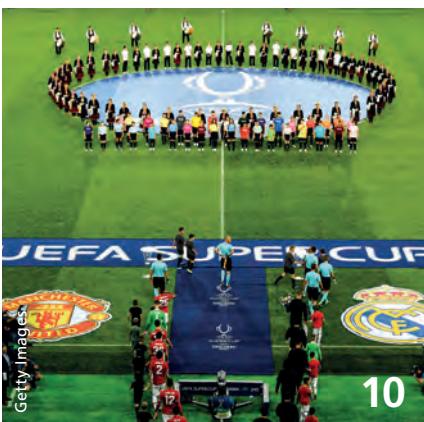
It was fourth time lucky for Spain in Northern Ireland after losing three straight finals.

24 The Technician

A technical and tactical review of this summer's men's and women's Under-17 and Under-19 final tournaments.

30 Elite Coaches Forum

The coaches of some of the most prestigious clubs in Europe came together in Nyon to discuss current issues and trends in the game.



31 Futsal

The keenly awaited UEFA Futsal Coaching Manual is now available.

Education

32 Great strides are being made in the drive to get more women into coaching.

34 Alumni of UEFA and FIFA's women in leadership programmes join forces in Amsterdam.

36 For the record

Yellow and red cards in numbers.

38 Research Grant Programme

What to do about match-fixing?

39 News from member associations





UEFA

MONACO DRAWS PROMISE AUTUMN EXCITEMENT

When the end of August arrives, the football world's attention turns to Monaco – the annual setting for the group-stage draw ceremonies in Europe's premier club competitions, the UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League. Thrills aplenty are naturally guaranteed after the 2017/18 draws on the shores of the Mediterranean.

Warm late-summer temperatures greeted those who travelled to the principality for the events heralding the start of another UEFA club competition season. The group-stage draws are a magnet for everyone whose heart beats for football, as they find out which renowned teams and stellar players will be testing their mettle against each other through the autumn.

The Grimaldi Forum was again the centre of attention over two exciting days. The atmosphere was highly charged as fans congregated outside the venue to see the stars and guests arrive for the draw ceremonies – some coming away with the cherished prize of a 'selfie' or

an autograph. Inside, club delegates were expectant as they learned their group-stage fate. Live coverage on UEFA.com, TV and social platforms gave fans worldwide the perfect opportunity to watch the draws unfold.

Champions League challenges

All UEFA Champions League roads in 2017/18 lead to the final at the NSK Olimpiyskiy Stadium in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv on 26 May next year. Before then, the draw on 24 August produced a group fixture list that certainly whets the appetite. The Kyiv final ambassador, former Ukrainian striker Andriy Shevchenko, and recently retired Italian

legend Francesco Totti drew out a series of classic encounters between top-notch rivals. For example, Bayern Munich will meet Paris Saint-Germain head-on in Group B, Chelsea and Atlético Madrid come together in Group C, Juventus and Barcelona face off in Group D, and holders Real Madrid go head to head with Borussia Dortmund in Group H.

While Madrid seek a third straight title and 13th success overall in the competition, two clubs – Germany's Leipzig and Azerbaijan's Qarabağ – are savouring their first-ever appearances. The number of clubs who have played in the group stage has climbed to 137, and Qarabağ's proud achievement as the first

Azerbaijani group-phase participants means that 33 of UEFA's 55 member associations have now been represented at this stage.

Youth League flourishes

The UEFA Youth League is now an established fixture on the European club competition landscape, especially as the potential stars of tomorrow are on view there. The competition's two paths comprise a Champions League route, featuring the 32 clubs in the UEFA Champions League group stage, and a domestic champions' route over two rounds. The eight teams prevailing in the second round will meet the eight Champions League path runners-up next spring to determine the eight teams to join the eight group-stage winners in the round of 16. The competition reaches its climax next April, with the semi-finals and finals at the Colovray stadium in UEFA's Swiss home town of Nyon.

Europa League anticipation

An attractive proposition in its own right, the UEFA Europa League enjoys a unique appeal through its diversity and truly European feel. The route to this season's final at the Stade de Lyon in France on 16 May 2018 quite definitely promises plenty of entertainment along the way.

Anticipation was high at the draw on 25 August, as 48 clubs found out their group opponents and began preparing for the challenges to come. The draw was carried out by the UEFA Europa League final ambassador, former Lyon and France star Eric Abidal, and the record all-time Europa League/UEFA Cup goalscorer with 40 strikes for Feyenoord, Celtic and Helsingborg, Sweden's Henrik Larsson.

The 2017/18 line-up features household names who have also graced the UEFA Champions League. AC Milan, Arsenal and Lyon are among this season's fancied outfits that fans will follow in the coming months.

Romanians FCSB and Austria's Salzburg are Europa League old-stagers making record seventh group-stage appearances, while 13 group debutants include Vardar – the first FYR Macedonia club to reach a UEFA men's club group phase.

Other clubs making their major group stage bow are Atalanta, Hoffenheim, Östersund, Cologne, Lugano, Vitesse and Zlín.

UEFA BEST PLAYER AWARDS

Each year, UEFA honours one man and one woman who made the headlines with their prowess on the pitch, paying tribute to their excellent performances over the course of the season just gone.

The 2016/17 UEFA Men's and Women's Player of the Year awards were presented in Monaco to two players who lit up the game at domestic and international level last season – Real Madrid and Portugal striker Cristiano Ronaldo and Barcelona and Netherlands forward Lieke Martens.

Ronaldo helped Madrid last season to their second successive UEFA Champions League title and 12th overall triumph in European club football's blue-riband competition. He finished as top scorer with 12 goals – topping the goalscoring charts for the fifth consecutive season and holding on to his position as the competition's record scorer with 105 goals as we entered 2017/18.

The 32-year-old was selected ahead of two other shortlisted nominees, Barcelona and Argentina forward Lionel Messi and Juventus and Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon, in a poll featuring the 80 coaches in the 2016/17 UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League group stages and 55 journalists selected by the European Sports Media (ESM) group, representing each of UEFA's member associations.

"I'm so glad to be here, and honoured to win this trophy again," Ronaldo said after receiving the award from the UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin. "Thank you to my team-mates and congratulations to them too. I'm so blessed. Thanks also to the supporters

of Real Madrid, and everyone who helped me to achieve this trophy."

Lieke Martens was the worthy winner of the women's award. She finished in front of Wolfsburg and Denmark striker Pernille Harder and Lyon and Germany midfielder Dzsenifer Marozsán in a poll of the 16 Women's EURO 2017 coaches and 8 UEFA Women's Champions League quarter-finalist coaches, plus 20 women's football journalists selected by the ESM group.

The 24-year-old was an inspirational figure in the Netherlands' march to the Women's EURO title on home soil this summer, where her three goals helped her to win the accolade of UEFA player of the tournament.

"This is so amazing," said Martens at the award presentation. "It's a big honour. I'm really proud, but I couldn't have achieved this without my team-mates. I'm speechless!"

Meanwhile, the inaugural 2016/17 UEFA Champions League positional awards were also presented in Monaco. Cristiano Ronaldo won the forwards' prize, joining Gianluigi Buffon (goalkeeper) and Real Madrid duo Sergio Ramos (defender) and Luka Modrić (midfielder) on the winners' rostrum.

Finally, Manchester United midfield dynamo Paul Pogba picked up the inaugural 2016/17 UEFA Europa League player of the season award. The Frenchman held off the challenge of two team-mates who were also key figures in United's journey to the Europa League title – Henrikh Mkhitaryan (Armenia) and Zlatan Ibrahimović (Sweden).

Gianluigi Buffon (Juventus) was named Goalkeeper of the 2016/17 UEFA Champions League.



#EQUALGAME CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

“Everyone has the right to enjoy football, no matter who you are, where you’re from or how you play” – this is the ethos of UEFA’s new diversity campaign, #EqualGame, which was launched at the season kick-off events in Monaco.

The #EqualGame campaign will unite the game’s top stars and its grassroots players as it seeks to promote greater inclusion, diversity and accessibility in football – demonstrating that the sport is open to all, irrespective of ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation and religious beliefs.

The UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, was joined by Manchester United and France midfielder Paul Pogba at the launch ceremony at Monaco’s Grimaldi Forum on 23 August. The pair were accompanied by Eddie Thomas, a grassroots player from South Wales, representing the millions of people across the continent who have football in their blood and play the game for love.

#EqualGame aims to increase public awareness of the various ways in which football can be played and enjoyed. The campaign will be highlighted across all of UEFA’s communications channels – including UEFA Direct – as well as in a TV spot featuring Pogba alongside Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi and Ada Hegerberg. A version of the TV spot will be published across UEFA’s online platforms.

“It’s a very important thing for UEFA, and for European and world football. We have to promote inclusion, diversity and accessibility,” the UEFA president said at the campaign launch. “If you want to be a ‘social fair play’ organisation,” he added, “you have to clearly say ‘no’ to racism, to sexism, to homophobia and to any discrimination – to discrimination of



The new campaign features star players such as Paul Pogba and amateur footballers such as Eddie Thomas, who plays walking football in Wales, both pictured with the UEFA president in Monaco.

disabled people or any others. The important thing is that you act. Football’s power has to be used.”

Pogba also expressed enthusiastic support for #EqualGame. “I am really honoured to be in this campaign,” he said. “I can show to the world that we’re all equal in what we do – we just do it because we love it – love when you’re on the pitch, love of playing football.” ⚽



TOTTI RECEIVES UEFA PRESIDENT'S AWARD

The loyalty of Francesco Totti as a one-club man in a superb 24-year career was honoured in Monaco, where the Italian legend received the 2017 UEFA President’s Award.

Totti retired in May after 786 games and 307 goals for his hometown club, Roma, for whom he made his debut in March 1993. He helped the Giallorossi to the Serie A title in 2001 and two Italian Cups, in 2007 and 2008. Totti also won the World Cup with Italy in 2006 and made a total of 58 appearances for his country.

“Francesco was not just a fantastic player, not just an idol of dozens of thousands of children,” said UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin when presenting him with the award. “His dedication to the one club he played for is fantastic. There is deep respect from UEFA’s side and deep respect from my side.”

“It’s the first time I’ve been given an award by UEFA,” said Totti. “It’s an important recognition and it’s rewarding. Now I’m even prouder of what I achieved on the pitch, and especially off it.”



CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUPS

Group A:

FC Basel, SL Benfica, PFC CSKA Moskva, Manchester United FC

Group E:

Sevilla FC, NK Maribor, FC Spartak Moskva, Liverpool FC

Group B:

Paris Saint-Germain, FC Bayern München, RSC Anderlecht, Celtic FC

Group F:

SSC Napoli, Feyenoord, Manchester City FC, FC Shakhtar Donetsk

Group C:

Club Atlético de Madrid, Chelsea FC, Qarabağ FK, AS Roma

Group G:

Beşiktaş JK, RB Leipzig, AS Monaco FC, FC Porto

Group D:

Sporting Clube de Portugal, FC Barcelona, Juventus Football Club, Olympiacos FC

Group H:

Borussia Dortmund, Real Madrid FC, APOEL FC, Tottenham Hotspur FC

CALENDAR

Group stage

12–13 Sept: MD1
26–27 Sept: MD2
17–18 Oct: MD3

31 Oct – 01 Nov: MD4
21–22 Nov: MD5
05–06 Dec: MD6

Round of 16

11 Dec: Draw
13–14 and 20–21 Feb: First leg
06–07 and 13–14 Mar: Second leg

Quarter-final

16 Mar: Draw
03–04 Apr: First leg
10–11 Apr: Second leg

Semi-final

13 Apr: Draw
24–25 Apr: First leg
01–02 May: Second leg

Final

26 May:
NSK Olimpiyski, Kyiv



Getty Images

EUROPA LEAGUE GROUPS

Group A:

Maccabi Tel-Aviv FC, Villarreal CF, FC Astana, SK Slavia Praha

Group B:

FK Partizan, FC Dynamo Kyiv, KF Skënderbeu, BSC Young Boys

Group C:

PFC Ludogorets 1945, TSG 1899 Hoffenheim, SC Braga, İstanbul Başakşehir

Group D:

AEK Athens FC, FK Austria Wien, AC Milan, HNK Rijeka

Group E:

Olympique Lyonnais, Atalanta BC, Everton FC, Apollon Limassol FC

Group F:

FC Lokomotiv Moskva, FC Zlín, FC Sheriff, FC København

Group G:

FC Viktoria Plzeň, Hapoel Beer-Sheva FC, FC Lugano, Fotbal Club FCSB

Group H:

1. Köln, FK Crvena Zvezda, FC BATE Borisov, Arsenal FC

Group I:

FC Salzburg, Olympique de Marseille, Konyaspor, Vitória SC

Group J:

Athletic Club, FC Zorya Luhansk, Östersund FK, Hertha BSC Berlin

Group K:

S.S. Lazio, SV Zulte Waregem, OGC Nice, Vitesse

Group L:

Rosenborg BK, FK Vardar, Football Club Zenit, Real Sociedad de Fútbol

CALENDAR

Group stage

14 Sept: MD1
28 Sept: MD2
19 Oct: MD3

Group stage

02 Nov: MD4
23 Nov: MD5
07 Dec: MD6

Round of 32

11 Dec: Draw (tbc)
15 Feb: First leg
22 Feb: Second leg

Round of 16

23 Feb: Draw (tbc)
08 Mar: First leg
15 Mar: Second leg

Quarter-final

16 Mar: Draw
05 Apr: First leg
12 Apr: Second leg

Semi-final

13 Apr: Draw
26 Apr: First leg
03 May: Second leg

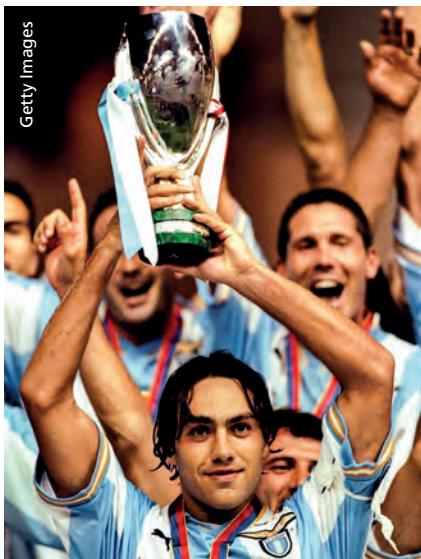
Final 16 May: Stade de Lyon, Lyon

Getty Images



FROM SLOW BEGINNINGS TO SEASON OPENER

The UEFA Super Cup took time to find its feet, but is now firmly established as the curtain-raiser for the European club football season.



Over the years, the Super Cup trophy has gone from being a simple plaque, as presented to Aston Villa in 1982, to a proper cup – a smaller one at first, as received by Lazio in 1999, and since 2006, a bigger and better one, as presented to Real Madrid in August this year.

The Super Cup has become the traditional way to round off one season and usher in the next, but it has gone through numerous changes en route and come a long way since its launch at the start of the 1970s.

It was the brainchild of Dutch newspaper *De Telegraaf* – in particular its sports reporter, and later editor, Anton Witkamp – at a time when the European Champion Clubs' Cup seemed to be the exclusive property of the Netherlands. With Feyenoord winning the trophy in 1970 before Ajax claimed three titles in a row, Witkamp came up with the idea of “something new” to decide definitively the top club side in Europe, and to further test Ajax’s ability.

“The idea was conceived in the era of total football. Our era – four consecutive European Cups between Feyenoord and Ajax,” he explained. “More than money and glory, they were pursuing the right to be called the best.”

“But who was the strongest team in Europe? The team that won the European

Cup? In principle, yes. Yet football is often a hymn to relativity and, for this reason, can be an imprecise art. So why not pit the holders of the European Champion Clubs' Cup against the winners of the Cup Winners' Cup? Why not throw down a challenge to Ajax?

“Rangers FC had won the Cup Winners' Cup in 1972. I put forward my plan to the Ajax boss [Jaap] van Praag, who found it an excellent idea. Consequently, the way was clear, with the patronage of my newspaper.”

With Rangers, who were having centennial celebrations that year, happily agreeing to take part, Witkamp and Van Praag met with UEFA to seek official endorsement of the new competition. However, in a sign of the struggles that were to mark the Super Cup's creation, such official endorsement was not forthcoming as Rangers were under a one-year suspension from UEFA due to their supporters' misconduct.

Nevertheless, the match went ahead in an unofficial capacity, funded by *De Telegraaf* and in a two-legged format to maximise revenue for both clubs. The games took place on 16 January 1973 in Glasgow and eight days later in Amsterdam. Johnny Rep, Johan Cruyff and Arie Haan gave Ajax a 3-1 victory in Glasgow, Alex McDonald having replied for Rangers. McDonald struck again in the second leg, as did Quentin Young, but Rangers were again outgunned with Haan, Gerd Mühren and Cruyff also scoring to produce a 3-2 win for Ajax and a 6-3 aggregate scoreline.

“More than money and glory, they were pursuing the right to be called the best.”

**Anton Witkamp
Founder of the Super Cup**

The first Super Cup proper

The first UEFA-sanctioned Super Cup matches took place in January 1974, although it was officially the 1973 showpiece. The first leg was played at San Siro, where Ajax lost 1-0 to AC Milan. Ajax made no mistake in the return leg in Amsterdam, which they won 6-0.

Though Witkamp's initial ambition of challenging and celebrating Ajax had been emphatically achieved, the competition still took time to take off – hindered by both the two-legged format and the fact that participation was not compulsory. Indeed, there was no 1974 contest, with Bayern Munich and 1. FC Magdeburg unable to find a mutually convenient date. Liverpool could not make space to meet Dinamo Tbilisi in 1981 either, and the 1985 competition was also not held, although that was because of the Heysel tragedy rather than calendar constraints.

A new trophy

Furthermore, there was no Super Cup trophy until 1987; prior to that the winners had been presented with a plaque bearing UEFA's logo. It was not until after the 1983 edition, when Aberdeen beat Hamburg, that the delegate from the second leg – future UEFA treasurer Jo van Marle of the Netherlands – suggested that a cup be presented to the winners, a proposal that was supported by the then UEFA president, Jacques Georges.

Produced by Italian firm Bertoni, the silverware was presented for the first time in 1987 to the Steaua Bucharest captain, Ștefan Iovan, after his team's 1-0 victory over Dynamo Kyiv in a one-off match played in Monaco.

The UEFA Executive Committee then moved to raise the profile of the Super Cup, deciding at its meeting in Moscow on 31 March 1995 that the competition should become a single match and take up permanent residence in Monaco. With participation now obligatory, the Super Cup became the sporting highlight of a much bigger football gathering held each August that included club competition draws and a gala evening with awards honouring the best players of the previous season.

The new format was played for the first time in 1998, when Cup Winners' Cup holders Chelsea beat Real Madrid 1-0 at the Stade Louis II. That venue would stage the Super Cup every year until 2012, with AC Milan, Barcelona – the two most



ROLL OF HONOUR

1973	AFC Ajax
1974	–
1975	Dynamo Kyiv
1976	RSC Anderlecht
1977	Liverpool FC
1978	RSC Anderlecht
1979	Nottingham Forest FC
1980	Valencia CF
1981	–
1982	Aston Villa FC
1983	Aberdeen FC
1984	Juventus
1985	–
1986	Steaua Bucharest
1987	FC Porto
1988	KV Mechelen
1989	AC Milan
1990	AC Milan
1991	Manchester United FC
1992	FC Barcelona
1993	Parma AC
1994	AC Milan
1995	AFC Ajax
1996	Juventus
1997	FC Barcelona
1998	Chelsea FC
1999	SS Lazio
2000	Galatasaray SK
2001	Liverpool FC
2002	Real Madrid CF
2003	AC Milan
2004	Valencia CF
2005	Liverpool FC
2006	Sevilla FC
2007	AC Milan
2008	Zenit St. Petersburg
2009	FC Barcelona
2010	Atlético de Madrid
2011	FC Barcelona
2012	Atlético de Madrid
2013	FC Bayern München
2014	Real Madrid CF
2015	FC Barcelona
2016	Real Madrid CF
2017	Real Madrid CF

successful sides in the competition's history overall with five wins apiece – and Club Atlético de Madrid each winning twice in Monaco.

Time for a change

After the last European Cup Winners' Cup in 1999, the UEFA Champions League winners took on the UEFA Cup victors (UEFA Europa League from 2010), and in June 2011 UEFA's Executive Committee voted for the match to be held in a different European city each year. Its first two stops were Prague (2013) and Cardiff (2014), with Tbilisi, Trondheim and, this year, Skopje subsequently awarded the match. In the 2017 edition, Real Madrid became the first team since AC Milan in 1989 and 1990 to retain the trophy, their third title in four years, moving them on to four wins overall.

The decision to hold the Super Cup in a different city each season was taken with all UEFA member associations in mind. The idea was to make it clear that each association is a fully fledged member of UEFA and able to play a full part in the life of European football's governing body by hosting one of its events. It is an idea that has been met with a positive reaction – much like the modern-day Super Cup itself. ⚽



In 2014, the Super Cup travelled to Cardiff, the second city to host the match since it left Monaco (above), where it was played from 1998 to 2012, to become a roving event.



MADRID DELIVER EARLY WARNING

The European champions were quickly back into their stride with victory in the UEFA Super Cup in Skopje on 8 August.



Real Madrid showed why they remain the team to beat in 2017/18 by overcoming Manchester United 2-1 in Skopje to become the first club since AC Milan in 1990 to retain the UEFA Super Cup. Goals in each half from Casemiro and man of the match Isco made the difference, as for the fourth successive season the UEFA Super Cup was won by a Spanish side.

The UEFA Super Cup has been touring Europe since 2013, with the match played in a different country each year. A sold-out stadium in Skopje and huge local interest further endorsed the wisdom of that

decision and there was a party atmosphere in the city centre as local and visiting supporters mixed in the sunshine at the fan zone on Macedonia Square, before making their way along the banks of the river Vardar to the stadium.

A good tempo

Madrid have certainly enjoyed the change of scene since the UEFA Super Cup left Monaco, winning the trophy in Cardiff, Trondheim and now Skopje in the past four years. On this showing it would be no surprise to see Zinédine Zidane's side

contesting it again in Tallinn in 2018 after they picked up from where they left off from their 4-1 UEFA Champions League final victory against Juventus in Cardiff. Zidane made just one change from that side, Gareth Bale coming in for Cristiano Ronaldo, and the Welshman almost broke the deadlock in only the second minute when he stabbed Marcelo's deflected cross over.

United manager José Mourinho fielded all three of his major summer signings – Victor Lindelöf, Nemanja Matić and Romelu Lukaku – and the Serbian midfielder in particular looked comfortable in his new surroundings as he slotted into central midfield alongside Ander Herrera – man of the match in United's 2-0 UEFA Europa League final victory against Ajax. Madrid, though, carried the greater threat and after Casemiro had delivered a warning by rattling the crossbar with a 16th-minute header, the Brazilian scored eight minutes later when he stole a march on the United defence to turn in Dani Carvajal's perfectly weighted pass.

Drinks break

Despite stifling heat, which necessitated drinks breaks in each half, there was a good tempo to a compelling match, with Madrid's slick passing in particular showing no signs of slowing. They sliced through the United defence again seven minutes after the restart, this time Bale and Isco exchanging passes on the edge of the area to open the way for the Spaniard to break clear and fire beyond David De Gea. United needed an instant reply and nearly got it in the 54th minute when Paul Pogba's header was parried by Keylor Navas, but Lukaku blazed the rebound over the bar. Within 11 minutes the Belgian had made amends, pouncing on the loose ball after Navas had been unable to hold Matić's powerful drive. United rallied, driven forward by substitutes Marouane Fellaini and Marcus Rashford, but the biggest cheer came with the introduction of former United favourite Cristiano Ronaldo as Madrid held on for their fourth UEFA Super Cup victory. 



Centre stage in the opening ceremony went to a group of local hearing-impaired youngsters from the DUCOR Partenija Zografski state school for education and rehabilitation. As part of a UEFA Foundation for Children initiative, they sang Coldplay's A Sky Full of Stars using sign language, accompanied by Skopje children's choir Falsetto.

Real Madrid CF 2-1 Manchester United FC

8 August 2017, Skopje

Attendance: 30,421

Goals: 1-0 Casemiro 24;

2-0 Isco 52; 2-1 Lukaku 62

Referee: Gianlucca Rocchi (Italy)

A GREEN OASIS IN THE HEART OF ZAATARI

On the initiative of the UEFA Foundation for Children, a new football pitch was recently installed at the Zataari refugee camp in Jordan. It was officially opened on 12 September at a ceremony attended by UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin.

A green football 'oasis' has sprung up in the Jordanian desert, in the form of a new synthetic pitch, jointly funded by official UEFA Champions League sponsor Lay's and the UEFA Foundation for Children. Open for use since 29 May, the new outdoor facility replaces the old pitch provided by the Norwegian Football Association.

Among the dignitaries attending the event along with the UEFA president were HRH Prince Ali Bin Al Hussein of Jordan, who is also the president of the Jordanian Football Association and the Asian Football Development Project (AFDP), and UEFA ambassadors Christian Karembeu of France and Lara Dickenmann of Switzerland.

The new pitch has made a major contribution to community life at Zaatari, not least for the camp's young children. "It's a wonderful feeling to see how something as simple as a football pitch can bring so much joy and happiness to these children," said the UEFA president. "Football has the ability to unite these children and also to teach them some important life skills, such as teamwork and respect."

Aside from cutting the ribbon at the opening ceremony, the UEFA president also met with some of the residents of what is one of the largest refugee camps in the world.

Living in Zaatari

The Syrian conflict, which has been raging for more than five years, has left the country's inhabitants with bleak prospects for the future. More than 80,000 refugees, who have been forced to leave their native country, have found a safe haven in the camp at Zaatari, where 57% of the inhabitants are children and young adults.

The aid programme launched by UEFA and the AFDP in 2013, and led by the UEFA Foundation for Children since April 2015, gives displaced children the chance to play football and take part in other sporting activities in a safe and suitable environment. Every week, a total of 4,480 youngsters participate in the programme's football activities, which have

been made possible thanks to the training of 250 coaches and 54 referees, both male and female. Together with the House of Sport, which opened in October 2016, the new football pitch provides an environment that enables children to play and forge new friendships in peace.

The leisure and educational activities on offer are also an ideal means of promoting social cohesion and core skills such as non-violent communication. Thanks to these activities, there has been a significant decrease in violent behaviour during the sports sessions. Efforts to promote the inclusion of young women have also borne fruit, with girls now accounting for over 25% of the participants.

"Powerful mediums such as sport and education have the ability to plant seeds of hope and potentiality even under the most difficult circumstances," reflected HRH Prince Ali, who has been involved in the project from the outset. ⚽

Every week, a total of 4,480 youngsters participate in the programme's football activities.



ISTVÁN SZABÓ – BLIND FOOTBALL – HUNGARY

“WHEN I PLAY FOOTBALL, NOTHING ELSE MATTERS”

István Szabó’s story is a testament to indomitable spirit. It’s a unique tale of how a young blind boy from a small Hungarian village refused to let his limitations affect his love of football – and how his life in football became a family affair. “If someone is born with a condition like mine,” he says, “it doesn’t mean that their whole life should be desperate.”

A sales representative in Budapest, István adored football from childhood but first made his mark in another sport. He was good enough in the pool to be an international swimmer – he could have even been a Paralympian, had he not put his studies first. It was thanks to those studies that he met a football-loving girl called Emilia at university. She became his wife, and the path they have travelled together has been marked by total devotion to the beautiful game. With a group of friends, István started a blind football team, Lass Budapest. He is the captain, while Emilia is the team’s ‘mother’ – a caring, committed volunteer and coordinator who brings along the equipment, washes the kit

and makes the players’ head protectors and eye masks by hand. The ‘founding friends’ form the team’s core, and all agree that they would sorely miss the bonds and spirit they have created if they stopped playing.

István and Emilia have a young son, Boldzsár. A proud father, István eagerly awaits the day that he can teach his little boy all about football and why it means so much to so many. With Emilia and Boldzsár, he feels peace and comfort, while playing football brings him a sense of purpose and confidence. “Blind football gives you a type of freedom where you don’t need to carry a white stick or ask for help,” István reflects. “It is happiness ... and joy.”

#EQUAL GAME





"IF SOMEONE IS BORN WITH A CONDITION LIKE MINE, IT DOESN'T MEAN THEIR WHOLE LIFE SHOULD BE DESPERATE."





EQUAL GAME





**"BLIND FOOTBALL GIVES YOU A TYPE OF
FREEDOM WHERE YOU DON'T NEED TO
CARRY A WHITE STICK OR ASK FOR HELP."**

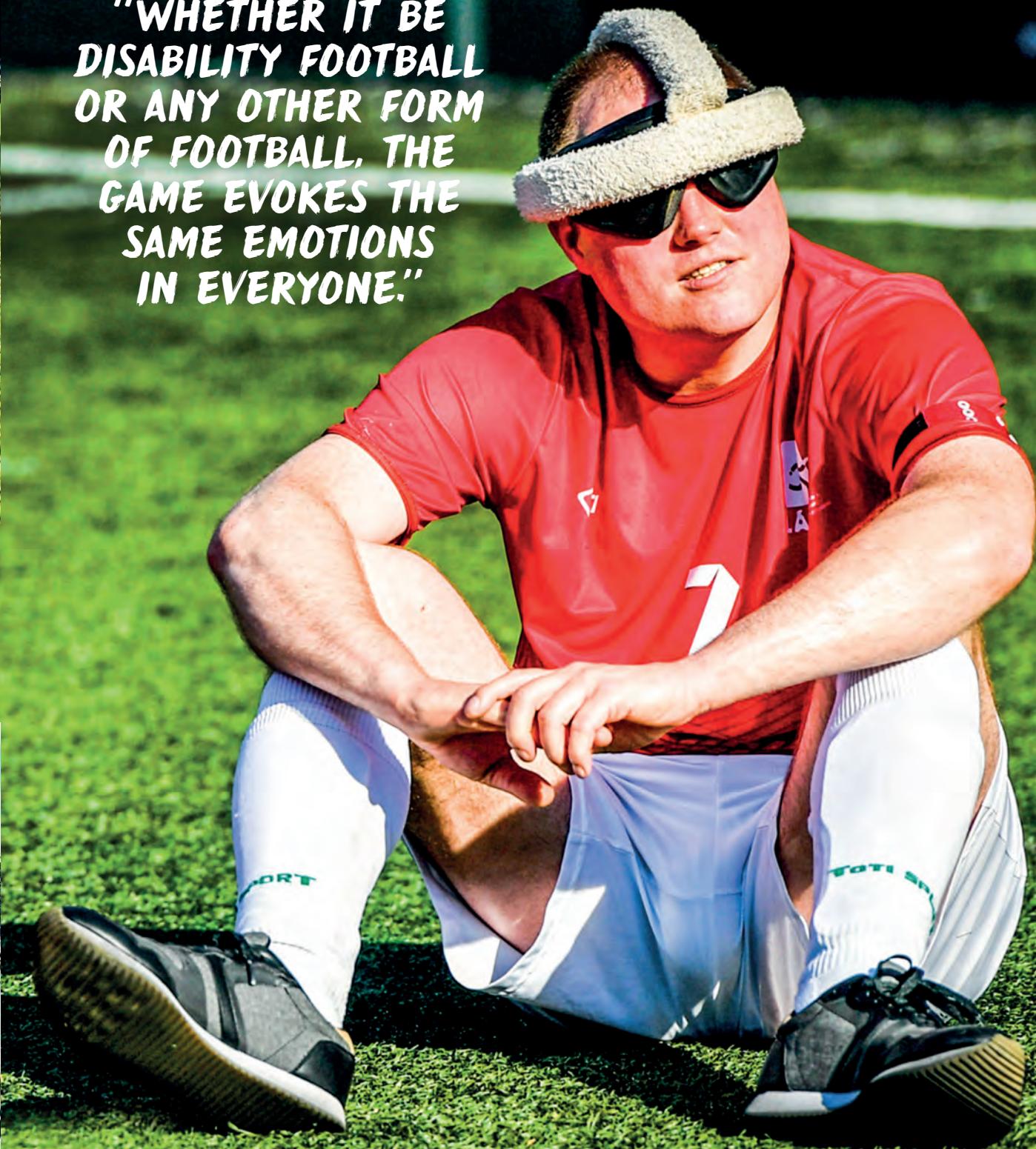




**"THERE'S A FEELING OF LIBERTY,
HAPPINESS AND JOY THAT I GET
WHEN DOING SOMETHING I LOVE."**



“WHETHER IT BE
DISABILITY FOOTBALL
OR ANY OTHER FORM
OF FOOTBALL, THE
GAME EVOKES THE
SAME EMOTIONS
IN EVERYONE.”





missed chances at the death left Spain feeling second-best and France reaping their 2-1 win on the podium.

This would be a fresh examination of the next generation, he insisted.

A classic final

"It will be a bit of a classic, I think, especially as both teams also met last year. We've got a new generation here, it's a new team for France and a new team for Spain.

"But it won't be a repeat of last year, we have new players in our team and we expect a good game.

"Spain always bring a great deal of quality to this tournament, their strengths are in possession and technical ability, but likewise, there are arguments for this French side, which, although young, have shown what they can do."

Prophetic words from the experienced coach, who has highlighted the importance of this development tournament and how annual records are virtually defunct by the time a new crop of players embark on a new campaign.

Rather, as with the example of Egurrola, this competition is about looking forward, and rarely behind. In football terms, Egurrola and her team-mates, captained by tournament top-scorer Patricia Guijarro, avenged Spain's defeat against France in Senec and paved the way for a boost in participation.

FOURTH TIME LUCKY FOR SPAIN

Pedro López's side evened the score with France after last season's decider to earn Spain their first win in four straight women's Under-19 finals, while hosts Northern Ireland made history with their first-ever goal in a women's final tournament.

Damaris Egurrola dedicated Spain's European women's Under-19 crown to her compatriots who had battled in three straight finals yet had to contend with runners-up medals each time. This year's champions ended what could have been four consecutive years of hurt, rallying to come back twice from behind against a vivacious and sharp French side, prompting goalscorer Egurrola, who starred for the Under-17s last year, to pay tribute to those Spanish teams who had been edged out so painfully before.

Spain's self-belief, determination and flair will not only have helped heal past wounds, but inspired a generation of girls to take up football in their own country, and beyond. Moreover, Pedro López's troops, along with Gilles Eyquem's France, were for many an unlikely finalist pairing. France's gutsy 2-1 comeback victory over Germany, and Spain's valiant 3-2 win against the Netherlands, a team buoyed by having watched their senior counterparts triumph on home soil at Women's EURO from their Belfast hotel, meant both teams booked their spot in the final.

Eyquem was quick to correct any suggestion this would be a repeat of Slovakia 2016, where



Spain's self-belief, determination and flair will not only have helped heal past wounds, but inspired a generation of girls to take up football.

Record crowds

As hosts, Northern Ireland and the Irish FA played their part in promoting women's football, attracting large crowds and creating widespread enthusiasm for the tournament. Total attendances of matches and fan zones ran well in excess of 12,000, including a national record of 4,289 at Northern Ireland's narrow 2-0 defeat against Spain in the opening match, with many spectators trying out football for the first time. It was also the fifth highest attendance in the tournament's history.

Alfie Wylie's girls made history by recording Northern Ireland's first-ever goal, a glancing header by 17-year-old Louise McDaniel, and the first point achieved by a Northern Ireland team at any level in a final tournament, in their 1-1 draw with Scotland.

The group stages were not short on entertainment for neutrals, with semi-final places going down to the wire for both eventual finalists. Spain progressed by edging a slender 1-0 win over Scotland at Mourneview Park, leaving the winners-in-waiting finishing second in Group A behind Germany, while France went through at England's expense in Group B's battle for second spot.



After an early loss to the Netherlands, eventual finalists France recovered to beat Italy and England in Group B

Popularity in France

The French Football Federation will host the U-20 Women's World Cup next year and can look forward to showcasing some outstanding home-grown talent.

Mathilde Bourdieu and Emelyne Laurent, whose blistering pace and stylish finishing gave Les Bleuettes a strong advantage, are the blueprint for future stars, while Mylène Chavas, the goalkeeper who saved a penalty in last year's final, offers wisdom in her interviews which mirrors her intelligence on the pitch. "Women's football has definitely earned more attention in France, which is important for us, as potential full internationals of the future; it's a great thrill for us to see so many people

RESULTS

Group A (8, 11 and 14 August)

Scotland	0-3	Germany
Northern Ireland	0-2	Spain
Germany	2-0	Spain
Northern Ireland	1-1	Scotland
Germany	6-0	Northern Ireland
Spain	1-0	Scotland

Group B (8, 11 and 14 August)

Italy	1-2	England
France	0-2	Netherlands
Italy	1-6	France
Netherlands	2-0	England
Netherlands	3-3	Italy
England	0-1	France

Fifth-place play-off – 17 August

(for a place in the 2018 U-20 Women's World Cup)

Scotland	0-2	England
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Semi-final – 17 August

Germany	1-2	France
Netherlands	2-3	Spain

Final – 20 August

France	2-3	Spain
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enjoying it," the Saint-Étienne stopper said.

"We have learned how to meet the expectations of the top teams in Europe by being at this tournament; it's a constant learning curve for all of us, even if we've been here once before."

Strength of Las Campeonas

López claims the daily progress he was able to see among his players gave him the confidence they would perform, yet also demonstrates how the intensity of final tournament football can pay fast dividends in developing young teams. "Our team really showed what they are capable of tonight, we are just so happy and proud of all the players, and staff," he said after the match. "This has been a wonderful tournament for us, not only for our development but now for us as champions.

"We had some excellent opportunities to counterattack and took them. The players tonight have been awesome and from my point of view, this feeling of unity and self-belief within the team is the reason we have emerged as champions." 

BRIGHT FUTURE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND GIRLS

Shaping a legacy for women's football was one of the core philosophies behind Northern Ireland's bid and delivery of the European Women's Under-19 final tournament.

The Irish FA, keen to boost participation among girls and women of all ages, and a pilot nation for UEFA's Together #WePlayStrong campaign (which aims to ensure that football is the number one sport for women across Europe by 2020), examined several successful ways to market the tournament, capture the imaginations of potential participants and encourage uptake. Tournament director Sara Booth and her team held a competition for primary school children to design the mascot, eventually born as Sweet Caroline, inspired by the Neil Diamond song popular in Northern Ireland stands and created by schoolgirl Eadie Fallis.

Roadshows in schools throughout the province, visual branding in public spaces and billboards, an official tournament song with music video, fan zones and family activities were

rolled out to raise awareness and stoke up a carnival atmosphere.

The final tournament fixtures ran parallel to the Women's Rugby World Cup hosted in Northern and the Republic of Ireland, which Booth identified as a key driver. The Northern Ireland department of communities hosted a reception for football, rugby and Gaelic Games representatives to celebrate development in women's sport.

"For me, importantly, it's about looking forward to the future," Booth said. "I played when I was younger and the things that they have now, I didn't have back then. The opportunities for women in sport now are incredible, particularly with the rugby and the football tournaments coming up."

On the pitch, head coach Alfie Wylie, who is also in charge of the senior team, developed player pathways for his Under-19 side, with places in senior squads available for those who prove themselves.

"That's the incentive we gave to the players, and it will always be the case,"

Wylie explained. "We have offered players the chance to show how much they're maturing and developing, and after the 1-1 draw against Scotland, I was convinced some senior players should be looking over their shoulders. This won't stop now the tournament is over. The experience of being at a final tournament was incredible for these girls but they need to show they can kick on, while we hope younger girls will be inspired to try out for our centres of excellence throughout Northern Ireland."



Sportsfile

U17 right-back Mateu Morey typified the trend for fast-moving defenders pushing forward as he helped Spain to victory in Croatia.



YOUTH COMPETITIONS SHOW WIDENING HORIZONS FOR FUTURE STARS

There was an emphasis on wise wing play, defensive organisation and more goalkeeper involvement in the 2017 youth tournaments, which were also used to test out a new penalty shoot-out system.

A football pitch is – by and large – 68 metres wide, but if there is one thing the 2017 final tournaments of UEFA's youth competitions highlighted, it is that coaches simply cannot get enough width.

They try to exploit every centimetre at their disposal. The ball may spend a greater amount of time in the more congested central areas of the field, which is understandable given the nature and flow of the game, but the efficiency of wing play – making the most of the time the ball does spend out on the flanks – was one of the key elements encompassing all competitions, men's and women's, this summer.

It was not purely about wingers either. Overlapping full-backs were one of the biggest trends observed across the board, starting – chronologically – at the Under-17s in Croatia in May.

There, the prevalence of wingers prepared to run into the interior channels and open up spaces for full-backs to exploit was notable. Instances of full-backs making high-speed runs right through to the byline and delivering crosses or cutbacks were also prevalent, with 10 of the 16 participating nations frequently implementing such tactics, including tournament winners Spain. The powerful runs and combination moves by their full-backs proved to be an important weapon in such teams' attacking armoury.

France right-back Vincent Collet offered prime examples of aggressive running along the touchline, allowing right-winger Yacine Adli to transfer his dribbling skills to the inside channels – sometimes on the other flank, which was also noted as a trend in Croatia – or to probe the opposition from a central playmaking position. Much the same could be said of England right-back Timothy Eyoma, whose marauding runs allowed Phil Foden to drift inside and operate across a broad section of the attacking front.

Using width at the Under-17 and Under-19 finals

This was a trend carried through to the Under-19s in Georgia. France were conspicuous by their absence, but England were one of the nations who made capital out of their flank play.

As in Croatia, the most common – and successful – approach to attacking in Georgia was down the wings, and half of

the eight nations regularly employed a strategy aimed at increasing productivity from the wingers and overlapping full-backs. A total of 15 goals – more than one in three – were scored from either crosses or cutbacks, with excellent movement and combinations down the flanks creating numerous opportunities, with a focused team effort to create spaces.

Wingers were doing this by moving into the middle, with full-backs exploiting the gaps this movement ripped open. The Czech Republic, Germany and Portugal all deployed similar tactics in this area, mixing the approach with full-backs taking a more central trajectory for their runs and wingers hugging the touchlines, before a quick turn outside by the full-back, going around his winger, exploited even more space.

This was well highlighted at the Under-17s, where Spain came back from 1-0 down against France in the quarter-final, with right-back Mateu Morey producing a high-speed 'underlapping' run to gain space for a left-footed shot. Minutes later, his Barcelona team-mate Juan Miranda embarked on an almost identical underlapping run on the left to earn the penalty that put his side 2-1 ahead. Morey burst through the inside channel again to equalise with another left-footed finish during the final against England.

"This is a tactical shift," says Savvas Constantinou, UEFA technical observer at the Under-19s in Georgia. "The wing play was coming increasingly from the full-backs and not just the wingers."

The technicians watching the Under-17s in Croatia also noted that wingers were not necessarily sticking to convention. Instead, there was a marked trend towards the use of change-footed wingers, with England →



"This is a tactical shift. The wing play was coming increasingly from the full-backs and not just the wingers."

Savvas Constantinou
UEFA technical observer at the Under-19s in Georgia

providing a striking example of the tendency with right-footed Jadon Sancho on the left and left-footed Foden on the right. Serbia and the Netherlands also regularly fielded 'wrong-footed' wingers, while Hungary and Ukraine were among those who switched wingers during games to mix the change-footed and orthodox approaches. Turkey did likewise, with the variation that both wingers were left-footed. Ambidexterity was a boon.

At the Women's Under-17s in the Czech Republic, 25% of goals were scored by wingers thanks to a greater emphasis being placed on swift counterattacking and direct wing play, with players notably showing a greater comprehension and grasp of tactics. "There were some very, very mature performances all round," said UEFA's technical observer in Plzeň, Anna Signeul, who reflected on the high-quality tournament and its entertaining, highly sophisticated matches. According to Signeul, defensive organisation was often equally strong, ensuring tactical battles in all transitions. Such a level of tactical awareness among players aged 14 to 17 is not to be taken for granted and illustrates how well prepared the teams were in the Czech Republic – and not only there.

In fact, detailed defensive preparation appeared to be another of the priorities at all of this summer's youth tournaments. The old adage that attack is the best form of defence appears to be mutating somewhat into defence being the best form of attack.



With Phil Foden on the right and Jadon Sancho on the left, England provided a masterclass in the use of 'wrong-footed' wingers in Croatia.



"The goalkeepers have been a nice surprise. England have got two really good goalkeepers, while the Netherlands' number one will be pushing for the senior team, and Scotland's and France's were also very good – it's encouraging for the future of goalkeeping."

Hope Powell

UEFA technical observer at the Women's Under-19s in Northern Ireland

In Croatia, where Spain defeated England in a penalty shoot-out – and there will be more on that later – the Iberians' captain Abel Ruiz and Turkey's three frontmen (striker Malik Karaahmet and the two wingers) were unstinting in their efforts to disturb the opponents' build-up while team-mates completed their transitions to the defensive block.

The aforementioned offensive vocation of full-backs offered counterattacking opportunities through the wide areas, and the top teams were adept at pre-empting penetration along the wings. In the construction phase, the norm was for a controlling midfielder to drop into the area between the spread centre-backs while the full-backs advanced. Centre-backs rarely made deep runs. Instead, the onus was on the midfielders and even forwards to drop back for possession to be regained, before launching themselves into surging counterattacks.

This shift towards a safety-first approach was accentuated at the Under-19s, where



all the head coaches acknowledged that set pieces were being worked on in training, but it appears the emphasis was more on defensive than attacking behaviour in dead-ball situations.

"Most of the teams were using all ten outfield players to defend set pieces," said UEFA technical observer Ghenadie Scurtu in Tbilisi. "There were different approaches, with man-to-man or zonal marking, but whereas before there would be one player remaining up the field to force their opponents to leave one player back, maybe as a reaction to seeing a lot of goals being scored after set pieces, the teams are now keeping these players in the penalty area." Just eight goals came from set pieces in Georgia, plus five penalties, perhaps as a result of the extra attention afforded to not conceding from such situations?

Scurtu also noted that defenders were not afraid to choose the long ball, bypassing the congested midfield areas if a build-up down the wings was not possible, "because you have a risk in midfield of losing the ball when you play combinations there, so they prefer to leave this part of the game".

Goalkeepers playing a greater part in the men's and women's game

Route one was not the predefined choice of the first line of the defence on the other hand. The goalkeepers – particularly at Under-19 level – demonstrated to what extent they have now also become the first line of attack.

To be an excellent goalkeeper, it is no longer enough to simply save shots. This was underlined, in particular, by the Netherlands' number one, Justin Bijlow, England custodian Aaron Ramsdale and the last line of the Portuguese defence – or perhaps, one might argue, the first line of their attack – Diogo Costa. Bijlow was picked out for particular



Netherlands keeper Daphne van Domselaar showed great promise in the Czech Republic.

praise, and all the more so for his active involvement in his team's games.

"He participates in the build-up and shows a very good feeling for the game," Scurtul said. "He is able to regulate the rhythm of the game and to take the right decisions." He and his fellow goalkeepers varied how the games were restarted, no longer restricting themselves to a long punt forward when playing out from the back was the preferred option. This is why their decision-making and discipline was so important and their performances demonstrated how much a part of the overall tactical shape of the teams goalkeepers have become, instead of just focusing on defending their goal or penalty area.

The same was evident at Under-17 level, despite the record number of goals scored – which, according to technical

observer Dušan Fitzel, was not down to poor goalkeeping. "What we saw in Croatia was confirmation that the job description has changed, with a much greater emphasis on the keeper's work with his feet," he said. "In the past, the Dutch excelled. But goalkeeper education has changed. In Croatia we saw teams who didn't hesitate to use the keeper to pass the ball. And keepers are increasingly integrated into training sessions rather than sent to one end to practise on their own." The quality of goalkeeping has been a bone of contention in women's football, but both this year's Under-17s and Under-19s suggested that standards are on the rise. While the Women's EURO may have been tinged by various goalkeeping errors, some of the highlights in the Netherlands were spectacular saves and there were predominantly positive things

to be said about the goalkeeping in the Czech Republic and Northern Ireland.

"The goalkeepers have been a nice surprise," said Hope Powell, one of UEFA's technical observers at the Women's Under-19s in Northern Ireland. "England have got two really good goalkeepers, while the Netherlands' number one will be pushing for the senior team, and Scotland's and France's were also very good – it's encouraging for the future of goalkeeping."

Jury out on 'ABBA' penalty shout-out trial

Goalkeepers still had to get the basics right, though, and this in a summer when trials were undertaken into a new penalty shoot-out system aimed at altering the way the players feel the pressure, the aim being to even out what is perceived as an →

advantage for the side that takes the first penalty. It has been estimated that around 60% of teams who take the first penalty in the habitual system go on to win the shoot-out. Under the trialled approach – labelled ABBA to reflect the order in which the teams take their kicks – it is envisaged that parity could be obtained, eradicating any perceived advantage from winning the toss of a coin – a method that was previously used, let us not forget, to determine the winner without even the need to trapse to the spot.

The first experiment took place in the Czech Republic, where Norway and Germany fought it out for a place in the Women's Under-17 final. Norway had four 'match points' in the semi-final shoot-out and lost them all, raising interesting questions as to how the pressure got to them.

Germany missed the opening spot-kick; Norway then missed the first and scored the second of their consecutive opening efforts. The pressure was therefore considerable on Germany's second and third penalty takers – arguably more so than if the second had stepped up immediately after Norway's first miss. Germany missed what were the fourth

and fifth penalties of the shoot-out overall and after Olaug Tvedten scored to put Norway two up, Vilde Birkeli wasted their first match point with their fourth kick of the shoot-out.

The ball was back in Germany's court for consecutive kicks and, had Melissa Kössler missed their fourth, Norway would have won without needing to go again. She scored, but the same pressure subsequently befell Sjoeke Nüsken, who had to convert hers to keep Germany's hopes alive. She did just that, bringing Germany back level at 2-2, although Norway were left with a fifth penalty and their fourth opportunity to reach the final. Silje Bjørneboe missed and the psychological turnaround was complete. My Sørsdahl Haugland squandered Norway's next attempt, providing Andrea Brunner with Germany's first opportunity to win, which she took.

"Penalties are always exciting, but I'm not sure this made it any fairer," said Monika Staab, one of UEFA's technical observers in the Czech Republic. "When Norway had four chances to win the game and they didn't, is that fair? It's not clear where the psychological advantage would be. It could actually be the opposite – that

more pressure is on the team that takes the first penalty because if they miss it and then their opponents score two in a row, suddenly you are two penalties down."

Germany went on to lift the title after another ABBA shoot-out which appeared to emphasise how being first up could, in truth, be a greater advantage – assuming you open the scoring. "You could see how it became a big advantage for Germany after scoring the first one," said Signeur. "After Spain then missed two, Germany had two penalties to lead by three. The pressure was therefore greater on the second Spain penalty-taker after their first had just missed. She knew that missing would effectively offer a 3-0 lead to Germany, who would then take the next two."

Either way, there was certainly consensus that more excitement had been provided for the fans, even if few were fully aware of how the situation was evolving. Clear indications of who has already taken a penalty, whether they scored or missed, and who is up next would be necessary to ensure all involved can follow and understand the stakes of each spot kick. Even Germany's Kössler did not initially realise that she





Germany beat Spain in an 'ABBA' penalty shoot-out to claim victory in the women's Under-17 final.

had scored their title-winning penalty until she saw her team-mates racing jubilantly towards her.

The experimental shoot-out system was also trialled at the men's Under-17s, where Spain showed more composure than their female contemporaries. They claimed a record third European Under-17 Championship title in dramatic circumstances thanks to a late goal in the final against England – in their record 12th final tournament – earning them a second chance, which they took, in the fifth final in the past six editions to be decided in a penalty shoot-out.

As in the Czech Republic, where Germany were all the wiser for their semi-final shoot-out experience, in Croatia Spain latched onto their own semi-final spot-kick success against Germany and held their nerve better in the showpiece, slotting away all five of their kicks while England missed the target with back-to-back efforts.

It was enough to earn Spain a record third Under-17 title in an impressive summer for the Iberians. Their women's Under-19s gained revenge for the disappointment of losing out to France a year ago by beating Les Bleuettes 3-2 in a dramatic final in Belfast, while at Under-17 level, María Antonia Is's team lost out in the final to a Germany side who secured

a record sixth title at that level, and the second in a row for Anouschka Bernhard, who has now lifted the trophy on four occasions.

England were too hot to handle in Georgia, securing their first-ever Under-19 title and condemning Portugal to a record third final defeat. The Three Lions' victory rounded off an impressive summer for them, which also included victories at the U-20 World Cup in South Korea and the Toulon Tournament in France.

2017 will be a year England hopes to build on as qualifying for 2018 gets under way, and they are not the only ones. After seeing the Faroe Islands reach their first youth finals – with their Under-17s taking on France, a country of 65 million compared to their 50,000 – Kosovo are among an even greater field of nations bidding to reach a UEFA youth final tournament, which is widely considered a crucial part of player development.

Having previously led Portugal's Under-17s to the European summit in 2016, Hélio Sousa, now the coach of his country's Under-19s, beaten for the third time in a final, confirms this philosophy: "They are at an important age to catch their dream. It is an important time in their life, between Under-15 and Under-20. At Under-17 you have three or four teams who develop from this and in a few years their players are stronger. Guys like Danilo Pereira, William Carvalho, Gelson Martins and André Silva were in the UEFA Under-19 finals in Hungary in 2014 and the U-20 World Cup in New Zealand in 2015 – I am more proud of that than I am of winning the European Under-17 Championship."

Their names indeed live on and there are likely to be many more like them to emerge from the UEFA youth tournaments in 2017 and beyond. ☑



"Whereas before there would be one player remaining up the field to force their opponents to leave one player back, the teams are now keeping these players in the penalty area."

Ghenadie Scurtu
UEFA technical observer at the Under-19s in Georgia

TOP CLUB COACHES SHARE IDEAS WITH UEFA

Europe's leading club coaches came to UEFA on 30 August to discuss ways of how football can be improved.

The UEFA Elite Club Coaches Forum gives both UEFA and the coaches a key platform on which to examine European football issues and the role of the modern-day elite coach, as well as identifying trends in the UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League.

A quality line-up with a long list of honours attended the gathering at UEFA's headquarters. A notable aspect of the forum, which first took place in 1999, is that it offers the coaches the chance to get together and talk about their profession in a relaxed and informal atmosphere, away from the everyday pressures of their high-profile jobs.

UEFA's coaching ambassador, former Manchester United coach Sir Alex Ferguson, chaired the meeting, to which UEFA had invited coaches with more than 100 UEFA Champions League appearances under their belt, coaches of clubs that participated in last season's Champions League round of 16 and beyond, and coaches of the clubs that took part in last season's Europa League semi-finals or final.

Distinguished guest list

It meant an impressive roll call: Massimiliano Allegri (Juventus), Rafael Benítez (Newcastle United), Eduardo Berizzo (Sevilla), Sergio Conceição (Porto), Unai Emery (Paris Saint-Germain), Leonardo Jardim (Monaco), José Mourinho (Manchester United), Ernesto Valverde (Barcelona), eminent Dutch coach Louis van Gaal, Rui Vitória (Benfica) and Zinédine Zidane (Real Madrid).

Topics on a packed agenda included trends and key success factors in the UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League – notable last season for the accent that was placed on positive, attacking football. A total of 380 goals were scored in the 2016/17 Champions League, a record average of 3.04 goals per game, while the goal tally in the Europa League reached a five-year high of 565.



Refereeing matters and the Laws of the Game were also debated, including the issue of actual playing time and the trialling of video assistant referees, as well as how coach and player behaviour can be improved, the length of the transfer window and the role of player agents.

The coaches make proposals that may benefit the European game – while UEFA listens, gives its own feedback and takes the coaches' ideas back to its various committees, panels and other bodies for further discussion.

"I think there's nowhere better to understand the mechanics of a game than from the position on the side of the pitch," said Sir Alex Ferguson. "Through these meetings, we look for advice from the rest of the coaches. We look for their

"We look for their experiences of things that are happening in their role as a coach, and where we can improve the game."

Sir Alex Ferguson
UEFA coaching ambassador

experiences of things that are happening in their role as a coach, and where we can improve the game."

Former players' forum

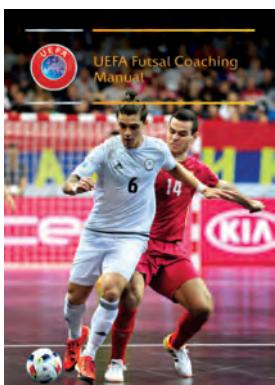
UEFA not only wants to learn from the top coaches – it also welcomes the views of those who have graced European football at its highest levels on the pitch. Consequently, on the same day as the coaches' forum, an experienced group of former players attended a round-table discussion in Nyon, chaired by the UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin.

Those present included Xabi Alonso, Leonardo, Peter Schmeichel, Clarence Seedorf, Dejan Stanković, David Trezeguet and Javier Zanetti. The meeting centred on competition rules, the Laws of the Game and football promotion.

"There was a lot of expertise in the room," said Stanković, the former Serbian captain and Inter Milan midfielder who has joined UEFA to work as a football development advisor. "UEFA wishes to hear what such players have to say. We shared opinions to be able to give UEFA the benefit of a great amount of experience." ☑

NEW FUTSAL COACHING MANUAL PUBLISHED

UEFA has published its keenly awaited Futsal Coaching Manual, its first reference book devoted entirely to futsal coaching.



The UEFA Futsal Coaching Manual will soon be available on UEFA.com.

European football's governing body expanded its coach education activities in 2012 with the introduction of the UEFA Futsal B licence. Following a series of workshops designed to familiarise the national associations with the licence criteria, tailor-made support was provided to help get courses off the ground. UEFA's futsal working group was then tasked with producing a new, indispensable handbook for all technicians of this rapidly growing form of the game.

The 204-page manual, available in English, German, Spanish, French, Italian and Russian, meets the two-fold objective of helping national associations to create their own Futsal B licence courses, while providing coaches with an invaluable resource devoted to the indoor game.

The UEFA Futsal Coaching Manual is divided into two parts. The first, which focuses on theory, contains an introduction to futsal, a chapter on team leadership and management, and an explanation of teaching methodology.

The second, which covers practical elements, describes the technical and tactical principles of futsal, the characteristics of physical preparation and the coach's responsibilities.

The manual was put together with the help of some of futsal's greatest technicians. It was produced under the guidance of Spanish four-time European champion coach José Venancio López Hierro, with contributions from Javier Lozano Cid, who coached Spain to two Futsal World Cup titles, and 2014 European champion coach Roberto Menichelli of Italy.

At a time when UEFA is stepping up its efforts to expand and develop futsal – a 16-team UEFA Futsal EURO every four years from 2022, a new biennial UEFA Women's EURO, a UEFA Under-19 Futsal EURO, and rebranding of the UEFA Futsal Cup as the UEFA Futsal Champions League – the UEFA Futsal Coaching Manual is already being heralded as the key point of reference when it comes to the technical aspects of the game. 

2v2 in each half of the court. Support for a 3v3 when bringing the ball out under pressure or in finishing on goal

The manual is
abundantly illustrated

15.3 Team tactics

Team tactics are complex tactical decisions that mean all the players in a team: **Individual tactics** – players apply their own personal approach; **Group tactics** – they apply individual and group set/strategic optimisations; **Team tactics** – to meet the needs of the team, the players' defensive rotations that have been set.

15.3.1 Attacking team tactics

Group tactical attacking systems come from the best tactics mentioned previously in the section on small-groups for tactical attacking systems in the previous chapter. As a result, they also fall within the category of team tactics, as they implement them. **Individual tactics** are what the coach has decided on with the team.

- Recycling of the ball** moving the ball quickly and accurately from one part of the court to another, continuously creating space for the ball and the opposition defence. This concept can also be used as a group tactic – it is important to move the ball quickly and difficult for the opposition to cover each other, or to move the ball quickly so that when it is held, it is held for as long as possible.
- Distribution of space** distribution one occupies space – means that positions are taken up in different areas of the court. In other words, the concepts of depth and width are fundamental.
- Creating/occupying/holding space**: this is a one-phase concept that can be the result of a group tactic. Players move off the ball to create space, taking them away from the ball and holding them, and changing them into a particular area of the court in order to create space for the ball and for themselves, enabling the ball. To make the ball move to and play in the space, players need to ensure **movement on the ball**.
- Attacking rotations** systematic rotation of three or four players, who 'use up' and 'factory space' in a specific order of rotation.
- Attacking rotations** systematic rotation of three or four players, who 'use up' and 'factory space' in a specific order of rotation.



Graduation time for the participants in the UEFA A diploma course in Iceland.

NUMBER OF FEMALE COACHES STARTS TO GROW

UEFA's coach development project for women has started to bear fruit. Since it was launched at the beginning of 2016, the number of female coaches has already started to grow, as UEFA's member associations have started to adopt the project.

The project was developed to counter the blatant lack of female coaches in Europe. With little support for female coach education anywhere in the continent and relatively high course fees in most countries, UEFA saw an opportunity to help – either by offering scholarships for UEFA A and Pro diploma courses, or by financing or sending a technical instructor to association-

run UEFA B diploma courses. The goal is to get more women into coaching, to give them access to further education, and as a result, to increase the number of female coaches throughout Europe.

UEFA has so far awarded scholarships and provided support for coaching courses and workshops to the following national associations:



WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A COACH?

⌚ Minimum hours of education in total:

UEFA B **120**

UEFA A **180**

UEFA Pro **360**

⌚ Minimum hours of practical units on the pitch, including work experience and study visits:

UEFA B **60**

UEFA A **90**

UEFA Pro **216**

⌚ Minimum hours of theory units off the pitch:

UEFA B **60**

UEFA A **90**

UEFA Pro **144**

⌚ Minimum hours of assessments (in addition to hours of education):

UEFA B **3**

UEFA A **6**

UEFA Pro **9**

Pro diploma scholarships

10 scholarships awarded:

Austria, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Moldova, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Sweden and Ukraine.

A diploma scholarships

23 scholarships awarded:

Estonia, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Moldova, Norway, Poland, Republic of Ireland and Sweden.

B diploma course funding

Armenia, Belarus, FYR Macedonia, Israel, Kazakhstan, Spain and Turkey (approximately 100 participants altogether).

B diploma course technical instructor support

Hungary (16 participants).

Female coach development workshops

Czech Republic, Malta, Northern Ireland, Portugal (approximately 100 participants altogether).

Several national associations have now applied for a second time, having seen how the project can help to develop women's football.

COACHING THEM UP IN ICELAND

The football sensation caused by Iceland's men's national team at EURO 2016 in France, where the performance of the team was matched by the fervour of the fans, did not stop there. Not wishing to be left behind, the women's team went on to qualify for Women's EURO 2017 in the Netherlands.

At the same time, more female coaches decided to study for their UEFA A coaching diplomas. Supported by UEFA through individual scholarships, the coaches completed their training between September 2016 and March 2017. The course included several blocks of tuition and culminated in a study trip to Norway, where the participants got the opportunity to coach Lillestrøm's men's Under-19 team and to work with Stabæk's women's team.

The course covered the use of video analysis software, game analysis and presentation and team periodisation, and included training sessions followed by peer and professional evaluations, as well as a written exam. The students worked hard during the six-month period and the Icelandic FA now has great expectations that they will become coaches at the highest level in the island's football community and role modules for players and other female coaches.

WHAT
THEY
SAID

Soffia Ámundadóttir

"This course has been very attractive and inspiring for women. It is excellent that this course is being funded, as this will prompt more women to go into coaching. Women-only courses such as this are encouraging in this male-dominated field."

Sigridur Þorlaksdóttir

"My objective was to become a better coach. We learned to analyse games, and to make annual plans for our teams, among other things. If I had not received a grant from UEFA, I could not have taken this course. I have definitely improved, and can now share some of my knowledge with other women coaches on the same path."

Bóel Kristjánsdóttir

"Going abroad to see how other coaches run their training lessons, to hear about their coaching ideology, discuss what you can do better, and what you're doing well, how to develop a training plan, and so on, was a good learning experience."

Margrét María Hólmarsdóttir

"The discussions after each game and the practice sessions were most useful to me. We would talk about what went well and what could be improved. Having a women-only course sends out the message that women can also become coaches, that this is not an exception. I hope that this will encourage more females to get their licence."

FOOTBALL PRACTICE IN MALTA

Held over four days in June, the Malta Football Association (MFA) organised a workshop dedicated to female coaches and women's football. The workshop, which was supported by a UEFA technical instructor through UEFA's coach development project for women, involved more than 50 girls and their parents, and over 30 coaches working in women's football. The goal of the workshop was to introduce the island's women's football coaches to best practices and methods for developing coaching programmes aimed at girls between the ages of 6 and 11. Insights from UEFA technical instructor Monika Staab:



"It was great to have so many female coaches participating in this workshop – we had 24 in total. They were very eager to learn and very committed. The seven

additional male coaches were strongly interested as well as they are very much involved in women's football.

"The emphasis in the practical training sessions was on variation in small-sided games – 'The game is the best teacher'. The practical training sessions were conceived for young girls (8 to 12 years-old) to have a lot of fun and enjoyment. We also emphasised the importance for this age group to get a lot of praise and understanding.

"There has been a tremendous improvement in women's football in the past five years. There are more

female coaches being trained and getting their qualifications. A new women's football office has been established at the MFA, and there is now an official administrator who works part-time for



Monika Staab

women's football. The MFA wants to establish a women's Under-35 competition to keep women in football as coaches, referees, administrators or managers. And there will be women's Under-17 and Under-19 competitions from the beginning of next season.

"Having said that, there are still a couple of issues. When they get to 13 to 15 years old, girls tend to drop out of football in Malta. During the workshop, we discussed how to keep these girls in football. An issue seems to be that some parents are reluctant to allow their girls to play, as Malta tends to remain a conservative country.

"Another issue for women's football in Malta is the limited number of facilities. Girls in this age group often have to train after eight o'clock in the evening. Of course, the parents are not happy about this. As there are not enough football fields available, men's and boys' teams tend to have priority when it comes to training. Women's football would benefit substantially from more support from the men's clubs." ⚽

More information on
the UEFA Coaching
Convention courses:



WOMEN AS FOOTBALL LEADERS

Women's football is advancing at a remarkable pace on and off the field. Its progress is such that the greater participation of women in European football's decision-making process has become a major priority. UEFA has understood this need, and is promoting the increased presence of women in senior roles through its Women in Football Leadership Programme.

The aim of the Women in Football Leadership Programme is to identify individuals across Europe who have the potential to become leaders, and the programme helps them to develop the appropriate skills. Moreover, women already in leadership positions are being offered additional support in their roles.

The idea of the programme was born during a workshop at UEFA Women's EURO 2013 in Sweden. Participants were asked what UEFA could do to promote not only women's football, but also women within football. Their response was unequivocal – there was a clear need for support and guidance to women working in football to take on leadership and decision-making roles in the European game.

UEFA took this request on board immediately, and set up its leadership programme, launching the first week-long seminar in April 2014, the House of European Football in Nyon welcoming 24 women from across the continent. Since then, the programme has thrived, reflecting UEFA's determination to ensure that women can envisage senior roles and take positions of responsibility in football.

Personal development priority

Personal development is a priority element within the programme. At the UEFA seminars, participants work with a professional coach – provided by the renowned IMD business school in Lausanne, Switzerland – on areas such

There was a clear need for support and guidance to women working in football to take on leadership roles.

as self-awareness and self-confidence. This is followed by a year-long mentoring scheme, involving mentors recruited by UEFA, which makes sure that the participants' progress continues after they have returned to their organisations. The mentoring scheme centres on career development and support to handle the challenges and possibilities that potential female leaders encounter within European football.

In addition to empowering participants and providing them with leadership skills, the Women in Football Leadership Programme creates an ideal opportunity for them to meet and share experiences with like-minded people who have encountered similar situations to themselves. It has been evident during the UEFA seminars and ensuing period that the connections made between the women have been strong, positive and beneficial for the participants' progress.

Mălina Cîntic, legal counsel at the Romanian Football Federation (FRF) is one of the many participants who has learned new skills for her career. "The programme has helped me grow a great deal, both

personally and professionally. It is empowering and extremely emotional. I think the most important message was how strong women in football are."

Isabel Hochstöger, head of the women's football department at the Austrian Football Association (ÖFB), agreed: "One of the best seminars I've done so far - for me especially in the area of personality, and observing oneself from a different perspective. Also, the association benefits from my acquired knowledge - for example, in how to achieve previously clearly defined goals."

Women in leadership development event

Feedback received from the UEFA leadership programme seminars prompted UEFA and FIFA to pool their combined forces and stage a special women in leadership development event in Amsterdam in July. Because UEFA's programme is designed to give women the tools and skills to progress within their organisation, many participants welcomed a follow-up meeting to look at their subsequent experiences. They felt that discussions were required in which they could also work to bring about change within their own organisation and generate long-term and enduring changes in European football's working culture.

The world and European governing bodies saw a great opportunity to bring together women from Europe and across the world, to enable them to meet, interact, exchange and connect. The result was an intensive session in Amsterdam, with participants taking part in simulations, group discussions and panel discussions.

There were plenty of positive echos from the Amsterdam event. "The idea of running the programme jointly with FIFA was an excellent one, as I was delighted to be able to talk to women working in football in Asia and Africa," said Jane Purdon, head of governance and leadership at UK Sport.



WAKING THE LEADER INSIDE OF YOU

Azra Numanović is devoting her career to women's football. At 27, she has already collected experience as a player for the Bosnia and Herzegovina women's national team, and has refereed at domestic level. In addition, she holds a UEFA C coaching licence.

Azra has worked within the administration of her club, SFK 2000 Sarajevo, for several years now, and has taken on the role of general secretary with responsibility for a variety of projects and initiatives. She has participated in the UEFA Women in Football Leadership programme, and attended a FIFA/UEFA development event in Amsterdam as part of her career learning curve. Over the coming years, Azra is keen to use the skills she is acquiring in leadership roles in football.

The UEFA Women in Football Leadership Programme seems to have brought terrific personal benefits for you ...

Women's football needs women as leaders, and this programme is showing you the right way to wake up the leader inside of you. The programme fulfilled its purpose – after the event, I returned home fully motivated.

What do you think were the key drivers to help you develop as an individual?

Passion, positive energy and persistence are part of my personality, and this helped me to keep going with my goal. I strongly believe in love, freedom and happiness. Of course, these words have a wide meaning, but when you apply them to football, it means that every girl has the right to enjoy this game.

It's clear that you have the confidence to make a success of your career.

Women have the talent and capability to make decisions. Nothing motivates me more than this. You need to be ready as an individual, you need to recognise your strengths and weaknesses. And when you do, use them for a good purpose. The leadership programme helped me to build up my self-confidence.

How has your mentorship gone? How has it influenced your decision-making?



Azra Numanović, 27, general secretary of SFK 2000 Sarajevo, took part in the Women in Football Leadership Programme this year.

The mentorship is a big part of the whole programme. I'm really happy to have a great mentor, a woman with great experience, great personality and a true leader. Having the opportunity to talk and exchange experiences and thoughts with her is a big opportunity. I can hear first-hand how it is to be a true role model, and that shows me how to build my own path.

Turning to the FIFA/UEFA women in leadership development event, how did you find mixing with the two groups of participants, and what were your key learnings?

Inviting participants from both courses to one event combined two groups into one great team of women. Diversity of thought, opinion and voice is the only way to find the right path for development and success.

You were able to talk with people from around the world ...

We had the chance to exchange experiences with participants from Australia to Canada, from Grenada to Sweden, and from Ghana to Bosnia and Herzegovina. I've learned that all of us have the same challenges and problems, but also the very same passion and love.

What did you enjoy most about the event?

Delving inside yourself, analysing the behaviour of people around you and sharing that cognition with others was the true strength of this event. Self-awareness and self-confidence are something that you need in the first place to be able to put your inner knowledge and ideas into action.

Could you have ever imagined, all those years ago, that women's football would have made such strides?

Fourteen years ago, all of this was just a dream. How would it be possible to push women's football forward, especially in a small country like Bosnia and Herzegovina? Now I see that it is possible. Women's football has a great future and great potential. ☺



"Self-awareness and self-confidence are something that you need in the first place to be able to put your inner knowledge and ideas into action."

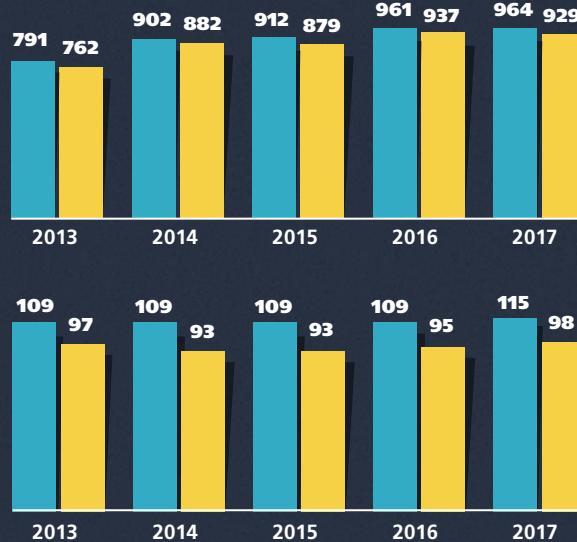
HOUSE OF CARDS

How the tally of yellow and red cards stacked up in all UEFA competitions during the past five seasons

YELLOW CARDS

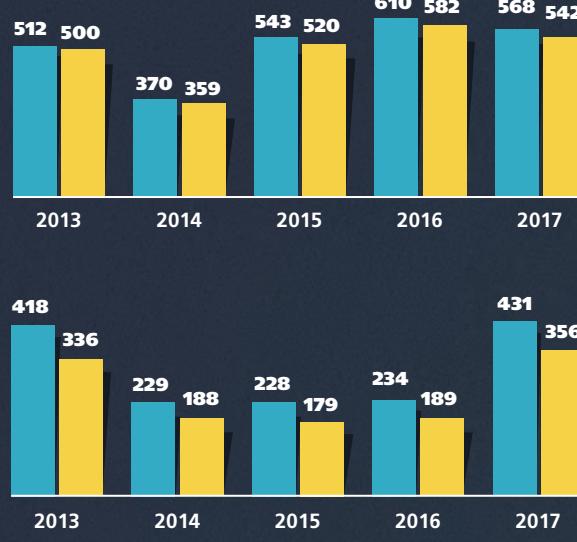


CLUBS



■ Matches played ■ Number of yellow cards

NATIONAL TEAMS





RED CARDS

CLUBS

MEN

2013	75	86	TOTAL: 161
2014	86	103	TOTAL: 189
2015	91	98	TOTAL: 189
2016	99	105	TOTAL: 204
2017	64	103	TOTAL: 167

791
902
912
961
964

WOMEN

2013	4	9	TOTAL: 13
2014	6	3	TOTAL: 9
2015	10	7	TOTAL: 17
2016	3	5	TOTAL: 8
2017	4	8	TOTAL: 12

109
109
109
109
115

MEN

2013	58	61	TOTAL: 119
2014	15	32	TOTAL: 47
2015	53	48	TOTAL: 101
2016	46	53	TOTAL: 99
2017	47	63	TOTAL: 110

512
270
543
610
568

WOMEN

2013	6	20	TOTAL: 26
2014	7	12	TOTAL: 19
2015	9	20	TOTAL: 29
2016	9	13	TOTAL: 22
2017	13	16	TOTAL: 29

418
229
228
234
431

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT MATCH-FIXING?

UEFA has been supporting football-related academic research projects through its Research Grant Programme since 2010. This month, Tomáš Gábriš describes his research on how to tackle the problem of match-fixing more successfully.

Match-fixing or manipulation of sports competitions is widely recognised as a serious problem, having to do mostly with corruption and betting fraud, but also with other, more personal motivations of players, managers, coaches and referees. This issue has spawned an unprecedented level of interest lately, both at national and international levels, in the quest for legislative ways to better respond to this growing problem. UEFA is also aware of the rapid developments in this area, as witnessed by the UEFA resolution on integrity adopted by the UEFA Congress in 2014, as well as by its support of our research project on match-fixing.

What we did ...

Aware that legislative changes are only a first step and that the key to successfully fighting match-fixing lies rather in the actual investigative practice, our research project sought to collect information from all UEFA member associations on their practical problems and solutions in this field. To start with, we sent a questionnaire to each association's integrity officer to collect a basic set of data, after which members of our team visited six associations, took part in three international conferences and performed extensive desk research in order to identify the actual practices with respect to fighting match-fixing.

What we found out ...

We found that the major problem faced by all UEFA member associations is a lack of cooperation, accompanied by low numbers of reported cases, slow investigative paces and a lack of professional expertise on the side of the police and the prosecution service. In addition, the cross-border flow of personal data on suspicious persons

as well as illegal (mostly online) betting activities represent other challenges that associations often face. In this respect, the best solution in most countries seems to be the establishment of a national platform for fighting match-fixing, involving the most important stakeholders – betting regulators, betting operators, sports associations, the police and the prosecution service. Countries with a national platform reported an increased level of mutual trust and cooperation among the stakeholders, which is a necessary precondition for successfully fighting the manipulation of sports competitions.

What can be done?

Although the establishment of national platforms is not really in the hands of football associations, the same as the blocking of betting websites or other restrictions on betting opportunities (e.g. betting on youth competitions), the associations can still insist on full-time integrity officers attending regular educational campaigns organised by UEFA, organise similar campaigns at national level, introduce a system for anonymous reporting and protecting whistle-blowers, as well as lay down broad competences for autonomous investigative and sanctioning bodies. Furthermore, as prevention tools, a prohibition on betting activities can be incorporated into standard player contracts, national associations can be encouraged to insist on the regular payment of salaries by the clubs, and new rules can be introduced with respect to the selection of referees or the sponsorship of clubs and competitions (often provided by betting operators).

There is, therefore, an ample list of possible solutions and recommendations to be drawn from our research project. Their actual effectiveness, however, still needs to be tested in practice. ☈



Tomáš Gábriš is an associate professor and the head of the department of theory of law and social sciences in the faculty of law at Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia.

"The best solution in most countries seems to be the establishment of a national platform for fighting match-fixing, involving the most important stakeholders."

ALBANIA

www.fshf.org

REFEREE ACADEMY OPENS ITS DOORS

GERT ÇARÇANI



On 2 September, the Albanian Football Association's referee academy opened its doors for the first time in the city of Korça. The initiative has the full backing of



the president of the Albanian Football Association (FSHF), Armand Duka, and the FSHF executive committee.

It has also found support among a large number of university students, who were introduced to it during a promotional tour of seven different universities, starting with the Tirana sports university.

The academy is open to anyone interested in taking up refereeing. Prospective students can apply online on the FSHF website. All applicants will first undergo a psychological test. If they

pass and are accepted into the academy, they will then spend two weeks studying the Laws of the Game and attending lectures on sports psychology, communication, health and physical preparation, as well as taking English lessons.

With this initial training under their belts, the applicants will put their new-found knowledge into practice in grassroots matches, up to Under-15 level. The course finishes with a ten-day consolidation phase. From Korça, the academy will move on to Tirana.

AUSTRIA

www.oefb.at

FIRST GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL CONGRESS A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

CARMEN REDL



Over two days in late August, the Austrian Football Association (ÖFB), in partnership with the Salzburg Football Association, organised the inaugural ÖFB grassroots football congress at the Saalfelden congress centre, giving over 100 club officials, football enthusiasts and coaches the opportunity to broaden their

knowledge of the beautiful game.

The congress programme covered a range of topical issues concerning sports coaching, training theory and management. With talks by national and international experts, as well as plenty of lively debate, the event was designed to foster the future direction and development of amateur football in

Austria among current players and potential new recruits.

The overriding objective of the congress was to stimulate greater recognition of grassroots football by politicians, the general public and sponsors, and to establish the grassroots game as a brand in its own right.

AZERBAIJAN

www.affa.az

MAKING CHAMPIONS LEAGUE HISTORY

NUBAR AGHAZADA



For the first time ever, an Azerbaijani team has qualified for the UEFA Champions League group stage. Having entered the competition in the second qualifying round, Qarabağ defeated Samtredia of Georgia 5-0 in the first leg at the Tofiq Bahramov Republican stadium, and 1-0 in the return leg in Tbilisi. Qarabağ then met Sheriff of Moldova

in the third qualifying round. The first-leg match in Azerbaijan ended in a 0-0 draw, but the Azeris won 2-1 in the second leg in Tiraspol on 1 August, thereby qualifying for the play-offs against Danish heavyweights Copenhagen.

After a hard-fought battle, Qarabağ won the first leg 1-0 in Azerbaijan on 15 August and although they lost the second leg 2-1 in Copenhagen on

23 August, Qarabağ qualified for the group stage thanks to the away goals rule.

Qarabağ are the first club in the history of Azerbaijani football to compete in the Champions League group stage. The president of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, met the team to congratulate them on their historic qualification and wish them continued success in their upcoming matches.

FOOTBALL FAMILIES COMPETITION GETS BIGGER AND BETTER

ALEKSANDR ALEINIK

 On 26 August, the Football Federation of Belarus (BFF) held the finals of this year's inter-family football competition, 'Dad, Mum and Me – the Football Family!', at its technical centre in Minsk. The competition was launched a year ago, during UEFA Grassroots Week, when 56 families from Minsk took part in what proved to be a very successful first event, prompting the organisers to turn it into an annual, nationwide competition.

This year's competition comprised six regional stages and a final festival, bringing together around 500 families from across the country and close to 2,500 participants. The 70 best families from the regional stages were selected for the final festival, where they were joined by last year's participants, whom the BFF had invited back as a thank you for making the first event such a big success. In the end, around 100 families turned out – a total of some 400 people.

The key factor in the success of the event was the regular contact between the organisers and participants, which helped to make everyone feel part of one big family. All the participants were sent team line-ups, a schedule and a programme before the festival. Families from different parts of the country made new friends through their shared love of football, and the BFF added more than 2,500 names to its database of contacts.

Under the rules of the competition, dads played against dads, mums against mums, and children in their respective age categories (5–7, 8–10, 11–13 and 14–17). Each family member earned a certain number of points depending on where their respective teams finished in their mini-tournaments. Those points were then aggregated to give the total number of points per family.

The close relationship between elite and grassroots football was highlighted by the participation of FIFA referee Olga



Tereshko, who was fresh back from taking charge of the final of the 2016/17 European Women's U19 Championship in Belfast. She refereed all the final matches at the festival and was delighted to have been invited to be part of it.

Another special guest was national team head coach Igor Kriushenko, who was on hand to award prizes and gifts to the winners and all the participants. The three best Belarusian football families received footballs signed by the national team, trophies and VIP tickets for Belarus' World Cup qualifier at the beginning of September. UNICEF and the Red Cross provided support to the BFF in organising the festival, which the BFF hopes will attract even more participants next year.

WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAM BREAKS NEW GROUND

PIERRE CORNEZ

 From 16 July to 6 August, the Belgian national women's team, nicknamed the Belgian Red Flames, took part in their first-ever European Women's Championship final round, hosted by their Dutch neighbours.

Qualifying for Women's EURO 2017 was a fine achievement in itself, but the players went into the tournament determined to impress, even though their three group stage opponents sat above them in the FIFA world rankings.

After losing their opening match 1–0 to Denmark, the Belgians knew they needed a good result against Norway and they certainly rose to the occasion with an excellent performance that resulted in a 2–0 victory. With three

points under their belts, the Belgian Red Flames went into their final group match against the Netherlands with a chance of qualifying for the quarter-finals. Unfortunately, however, despite playing well and displaying great team spirit throughout, they suffered a 2–1 defeat against the host nation.

Although the disappointment was palpable after Belgium's elimination, this should not overshadow the progress that has been made and the outstanding efforts of all the staff, led by coach Ives Serneels, and players. Congratulations must also go to the Belgian supporters, who were fantastic at all three matches, numbering 1,400 against Denmark in Doetinchem, 6,200

against Norway in Breda and 4,300 against the Netherlands in Tilburg. Of course, quantity and quality do not always go hand in hand, but they certainly did on this occasion, as the fans' unstinting support helped the players to produce some outstanding performances.

Back home, the television viewing figures were also impressive. The Belgian FA has been investing in the development of women's football for several years now, in particular by increasing the number of registered female players, and it is great to see the hard work beginning to pay off and our female footballers receiving the attention they deserve from the media and supporters alike.

A ROUND-UP OF THE ACTION

FEDA KRVAVAC

 Bosnian clubs FK Željezničar and NK Široki Brijeg have bowed out of the UEFA Europa League after making it through to the second qualifying round. Široki Brijeg drew 1-1 against Aberdeen in their first match, but the Scottish team progressed to the third round after winning the second leg 2-0. Željezničar's first leg against AIK ended in a goalless draw, but they lost the second match 2-0 at Friends Arena in Stockholm.

A lot of international friendlies took place this summer, with the Bosnian teams coming away with some great results. The women's senior team played two matches in Zenica against Jordan. The first ended 4-2 in favour of the Bosnians, and the second finished undecided at 2-2. The men's Under-17 team also played two friendlies in Zenica, against Azerbaijan. The first ended 0-0

and the second was won by Bosnia 2-1. In addition, the women's Under-17 team proved too strong for Croatia in their two friendlies, with the Bosnians winning the first match 2-1 and the second 1-0.

In other news, Bosnian first league side FK TOŠK Tešanj celebrated their 90th anniversary this summer. To mark the occasion, a friendly was organised with the men's Under-19 national team, which ended in a 1-1 draw.

SFK 2000 Sarajevo's run in the 2017/18 UEFA Women's Champions League ended in the qualifying round. After losing 1-0 to KS Vllaznia in the first match in their qualifying round mini-tournament, they ran out 3-0 winners in the second match, against SC Bettembourg, leaving them needing to beat FC PAOK Thessaloniki by at least two goals in their final qualifying-round game to go through to the round



of 32. Sadly, it was not to be, and coach Samira Hurem's players were beaten 3-0 at the Asim Ferhatović Hase stadium. The Greeks took the lead in the 16th minute through Efthimia Brame, and things went from bad to worse for the home team in the 35th minute, when Zerina Piskić was shown the red card. PAOK took advantage of their opponents being one player down, with Konstantina Strantzali and Eleni Markou adding a goal each to see them safely through to the knockout phase.

A NEW FAN DIALOGUE PROJECT

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MEDIA DEPARTMENT



Fan Dialogue: 2020 and Beyond is a new initiative jointly developed by the Bulgarian Football Union (BFU) and SD [Supporters Direct] Europe that aims to raise awareness about the importance of fan dialogue and examine the role supporter liaison officers (SLOs) can play in this regard.

The project has received funding under UEFA's HatTrick IV programme and seeks to implement best practices from abroad to develop innovative fan dialogue methods at national level among four key

stakeholders: the BFU, clubs, supporters and non-football stakeholders such as the police, local government and the media.

The coordinator of SD Europe, Loukas Anastasiadis, was special guest at the official launch event, which took place at the BFU's national technical base in Sofia. SLOs and club representatives from the top two Bulgarian divisions, as well as delegates from the national police and the National Football Information Point (NFIP), were also in attendance. Mihail Kasabov, BFU vice-president and member of UEFA's HatTrick Committee, led the proceedings.

"I am very pleased to welcome you here on behalf of the BFU and its president," said Kasabov. "Following the introduction of the SLO role in the top two divisions, the Fan Dialogue: 2020 and Beyond project demonstrates the ongoing commitment of the BFU to implementing a far-reaching fan dialogue strategy, as well as our willingness to improve

our relationship with supporters." Dimitar Christov (the BFU's SLO coordinator), Andrey Kyuchukov (SLO for FC Dunav Ruse and Bulgarian representative in the European SLO network), Nedelcho Mihaylov (head of the BFU's sports and technical committee) and police representatives took part in a workshop organised as part of the event.

Dimitar Christov outlined the activities SLOs are expected to perform as part of their role and explained the idea behind the project and the next steps. He also undertook to convey to the BFU president, Borislav Mihaylov, the challenges faced by the SLOs and to pass on to the BFU regulations committee all comments and suggestions made by fans via the SLOs.

All participants agreed that effective cooperation and communication were essential for improving collaboration between fans, the police, security firms and club representatives.



CROATIAwww.hns-cff.hr

A SECOND ANNIVERSARY TO BE PROUD OF

TOMISLAV PACAK

The Croatian FA's multimedia centre celebrated its second anniversary this summer, with almost 50,000 people having visited during the first two years. The aptly named Be Proud centre provides Croatian football with a place to celebrate its major successes and star players. Designed like a football stadium, visitors first arrive at the dressing rooms, which feature information screens, illustrations and memorabilia, and lockers that contain reminders of Croatia's appearances at major tournaments and together form a mural of

the country's bronze-medal celebrations at the 1998 World Cup.

Visitors can then make their way down the tunnel to reach the field and explore a wall of fame featuring the greatest names in Croatian football. Using interactive screens, they can gain deeper insights into specific players, goals and matches. Videos of important men's, women's and futsal matches and goals, plus trophy and award ceremonies, are also on offer.

All of the material is available in both Croatian and English, and admission is free.

ENGLANDwww.thefa.com

COMMUNITY SHIELD FOR GRENFELL

SIOBHAN BURKE

The Football Association dedicated the 2017 FA Community Shield to all those so tragically affected by the Grenfell Tower fire, which killed around 80 people in West London in June.

Contested this season between Premier League champions Chelsea and FA Cup winners Arsenal, the fixture is traditionally seen as the curtain-raiser for the English professional season, and it has a long history of raising money for a variety of charities and community organisations.

The FA, alongside the competing clubs, pledged to raise in the region of £1.25m for the Grenfell community from the game at Wembley Stadium on 6 August. Football came together in its support for those affected by the Grenfell disaster, with the Premier League, the English Football League and the National Game also making their own donations to those in need.

Over 1,000 members of the affected community and the three emergency services which responded to the blaze

were invited to attend the fixture, and representatives from the emergency services played a central role in the pre-match ceremony, including bringing the Premier League and Emirates FA Cup trophies, along with the FA Community Shield, onto the pitch before the game. The players wore black armbands and walked out with mascots including four children from Grenfell Tower.

The Choir for Grenfell – formed in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy by members of the affected community – performed Bridge Over Troubled Water on the pitch, the single recorded and released to raise money for the community.

Ahead of kick-off, four wreaths were laid on the pitch by FA chairman Greg Clarke, Patrick Golbourne, borough commander at the London Fire Brigade, and two former Grenfell Tower residents. This was followed by a moment of silence to remember the lives tragically lost.

Arsenal went on to lift the shield, but it was a day that represented much more than 90 minutes of football.

DENMARKwww.dbu.dk

DANISH FOOTBALL AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA

RASMUS SCHRIVER

The Danish Football Association recently launched the first of many campaigns to help raise awareness and tackle issues of homophobia in Danish football.

Tolerance has always been a core value of football, as shown by the various campaigns against racism throughout Europe. The Danish Super League, the Danish FA and the country's players have all agreed to invest resources into tackling homophobia, which is unfortunately still seen in football and elsewhere in society. Using a strong, cooperative and coordinated campaign, the goal is to create maximum publicity, impact and results in the fight against homophobia.

Over the next six months, the campaign will be implemented across the whole of Danish football – from the Super League to the national team via the streets of Copenhagen and Aarhus as part of the Pride festival this summer. It will feature both large and small events on the subject of homophobia in Danish football, and give both players and fans the opportunity to make up their own minds on the issue.



ESTONIA

www.jalgpall.ee

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FOOTBALL AND EURO WINNERS IN ESTONIA

MAARJA SAULEP



Estonia's summer capital, Pärnu, had the opportunity to host a UEFA Women's Champions League qualifying round mini-tournament for the first time and the Estonian crowd also got to watch Women's EURO champions in action into the bargain.

The reigning Estonian champions, Pärnu JK, had been drawn with debutants AFC Ajax from the Netherlands, Belgian champions R. Standard de Liège and Rīgas FS from Latvia. Ajax's squad included five members of the Netherlands' Women's EURO 2017 squad. Despite the tough opposition, Pärnu, who managed to

reach the round of 32 back in 2013, showed good fighting spirit throughout the mini-tournament. Over the course of seven days, more than 2,000 people visited the matches and cheered on the teams.

In the first match, the hosts faced Standard Liège. The Belgian champions ran out 2-0 winners, thanks to goals in the second half. On the same day, Ajax showed their potential when they beat Rīgas FS 6-0.

Next up, it was Ajax against Pärnu and Liège against the Latvian champions. The match between Liège and Riga was something of a one-sided affair, with Standard scoring eight goals. Pärnu showed



Gertur d Alatare

great resilience by managing to score against Ajax in front of 750 spectators. Unfortunately, it was not enough and Ajax went on to win the match 2-1.

Ultimately it was Ajax who progressed from the group after beating Liège 3-0 in the final match. Pärnu ended, however, on a good note by scoring two goals against Rīgas and winning the match.

FAROE ISLANDS

www.football.fo

LONG-AWAITED CUP GLORY FOR RUNAVÍK

TERJI NIELSEN



For the first time in 15 years, NSÍ Runavík lifted the Faroese Cup after winning the final against B36 Tórshavn 1-0.

Neither team had done that well in the cup tournament for many years and it was an even affair at the Tórsvøllur

stadium in Tórshavn, which attracted some 3,000 spectators.

The game was decided by a single goal, which was scored in the first half by veteran NSÍ left-back Einar Tróndagjógv, after a loose ball fell to him in the B36 box. He fired a quick shot through the

legs of B36's 17-year-old goalkeeper, Rói Mørk Hentze, and into the back of the net. There were few openings in the match, and even though B36 tried to pile on the pressure in the second half, they never really managed to create any clear chances to get the equaliser.

GERMANY

www.dfb.de

BIBIANA STEINHAUS BECOMES FIRST FEMALE REFEREE IN THE MEN'S BUNDESLIGA

JANNIK MÜLLER



Bibiana Steinhaus has reached the very top. Acknowledging her excellent, consistent performances in the men's second division, the German FA's referees committee has appointed the 38-year-old to officiate in the top-flight Bundesliga from this season, making her the first female referee at that level.

Steinhaus does not mind being the subject of close scrutiny: "I want female referees to become standard and par for the course in professional football." She also hopes to serve as a role model for other aspiring female referees.

The police officer from Hanover has been a German FA (DFB) referee since 1999, starting out in the women's

Bundesliga. Since 2005 she has also been a FIFA referee. In 2007 she became the first woman to referee matches in the second tier of the men's Bundesliga. Since then she has taken charge of 80 second-tier men's Bundesliga games and has been named DFB female referee of the year no fewer than six times to date.

FIRST OFFICIAL STORE OPENS

STEVEN GONZALEZ



The Gibraltar FA (GFA) recently

opened its first-ever official store. The store was inaugurated by the mayor of Gibraltar, Kaiane Aldorino Lopez, in the presence of the GFA president, Michael Llamas.

The official store, which is the first of its kind in Gibraltar, sees Gibraltar national

team replica jerseys on sale alongside merchandise, as well as a memorabilia display which supporters and football enthusiasts can enjoy at their leisure.

In the weeks and months to come, the official store will be developed to ensure it becomes and remains the focal point for football in Gibraltar.



VIDEO ASSISTANT REFEREE EXPERIMENT GETS OFF TO A POSITIVE START

DIEGO ANTENOZIO



The video assistant referee (VAR) experiment is under way in Serie A after the International Football Association Board (IFAB) gave the green light to the Italian scheme, which sees the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) working closely with the league's governing body, Lega Serie A, and the Italian referees' association (AIA).

The IFAB gave the final go-ahead following a meeting in Rome in early August attended by IFAB secretary Lukas Brud and technical director David Elleray, FIGC president Carlo Tavecchio and CEO Michele Uva, Roberto Rosetti and Nicola Rizzoli, respectively project leader and referee instructor for the VAR project, and Lega Serie A CEO Marco Brunelli. The results of the preliminary VAR trials conducted in Italy last season were presented at the meeting, allowing the current protocols to be fine-tuned and helping the IFAB to arrive at its final verdict on the use of video assistant referees. The organisers of the project in Italy received special praise for the way they have raised awareness of the VAR project and engaged with the various stakeholders, particularly the clubs and players, but also the media and supporters.

"We are definitely witnessing a new dawn," Roberto Rosetti said. "It's been a good start, but I'm a perfectionist and

we need to keep working hard. There's no turning back, but we have to make the process quicker and more efficient."

The basic principle of the VAR system is maximum benefit with minimum interference. "We've always known that people would need time to adapt to any change, the system would need to be fine-tuned and the process would need to be quicker and smoother," Rosetti added. "This experiment has a very clear objective: to make football fairer and eliminate serious errors. This is year zero, and we are well aware that certain things need refining. It's not easy watching the video. After officiating

a friendly match in front of 80,000 people, one VAR told me he had never been so tired in his whole life. It's a new concept, a different way of assessing in-game situations, so it will take time and patience to make things as good as they can be."

One reason for optimism is the reaction of the players, who for the most part have accepted the first video-assisted decisions without complaint. "It seems to me that the players are calmer," Rosetti continued. "They have shown remarkable composure, and I have also been pleasantly surprised by the positive attitude of the fans."



Roberto Rosetti

LATVIA

www.lff.lv

SEASON OF GOOD CHEER FOR OUR WOMEN'S TEAMS

TOMS ĀRMANIS



Latvia's women's teams enjoyed a very successful summer, taking home two gold and two silver medals from their respective women's Baltic Cup tournaments. The senior team, coached by Didzis Matiss, beat Estonia 3-0 and drew 1-1 against hosts Lithuania, putting Latvia in the gold-medal position for the first time in six years.

In the Under-19 tournament, hosted by Estonia, the Latvian team, coached by Viktors Vicehovskis, won both of their games to also run out as tournament winners. Meanwhile, in their tournament, also hosted by Estonia, the Under-17 team remained unbeaten, but had to settle for second place just behind the host nation, who had a better goal difference. Last but not least, the Under-15 team beat Estonia but lost



LFF

to hosts Lithuania in their Baltic Cup tournament, leaving them in second place.

The Latvian women's senior team was made up of players from four domestic clubs and two who play for teams in England and Germany, while the Under-19 team consisted of players from six Latvian clubs and one from an English club. The Under-17 and Under-15 teams comprised players from nine and seven Latvian clubs respectively.

MALTA

www.mfa.com.mt

NEW SERVICES FOR CLUBS AND FANS

KEVIN AZZOPARDI



Helping clubs to improve how they are run is a priority for the Malta Football Association (MFA), and with this in mind the association is launching a course in football administration.

Commencing in October, the 30-hour course will cover a number of key topics related to football administration, including management, MFA rules, regulations and other regulatory matters, information technology, finance, media and PR, and human resources. A number of lecturers and guest speakers will be brought in to present on the course, and the response to the initiative has been very encouraging: over 40 people, most of whom are already involved at club level, have expressed an interest in taking part.

Reaching out to football fans is another focal point for the MFA, which recently launched a new website, www.takeaseat.org.mt, as part of its ongoing efforts in this respect.

The concept behind the new website, which is supported by UEFA, is to engage fans in a different way. Registered Take A Seat members benefit from free access to news and exclusive articles on Maltese and foreign football, while also having the opportunity to connect with like-minded supporters in online discussion forums.

Members can choose where to sit in their virtual stadium, and who they want to sit with in order to share their experiences with friends and fellow fans who support the same team.

LIECHTENSTEIN

www.lfv.li

FAMILIAR FACES RECRUITED

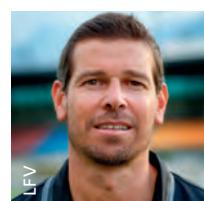
ANTON BANZER



Between them, former internationals Mario Frick and Martin Stocklasa amassed no fewer than 238 appearances for the Liechtenstein national team. Now, the Liechtenstein Football Association (LFV) has recruited the two familiar faces as members of its youth development team.

Liechtenstein's record goalscorer, Mario Frick, became head coach of the national Under-19 team this summer, as well as coach of the LFV's elite Under-18 squad. The 43-year-old former national team captain will share his wealth of experience not only with these two national youth teams, but also with LFV sports academy students. He will also be looking after the 'Fussball macht Schule' (football in schools) youth development project. Before joining the LFV, Mario Frick, who has 125 caps to his name, worked as a player-coach and coach for the Liechtenstein first division club FC Balzers.

Martin Stocklasa, 38, three-times footballer of the year, played professionally for 12 years, winning 113 caps, and has since gained experience as assistant coach and head of the junior section at FC St. Gallen. Like Mario Frick, Martin Stocklasa has taken on a number of different responsibilities at the LFV. The former defensive stalwart for the senior national team is now the head coach of the new Under-15 national team and assistant coach of the Under-21, Under-19 and Under-17 national teams. He is also jointly responsible for youth development and the Footeco junior football initiative, and coaches students at the national sports academy.



Mario Frick



Martin Stocklasa

MOLDOVAN FOOTBALL YEARBOOK 2016/17

PRESS OFFICE

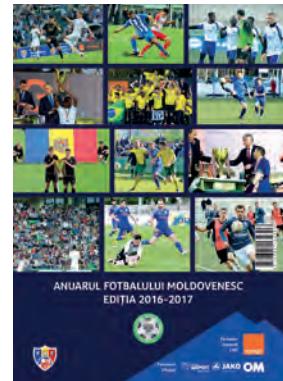
 The latest edition of the Moldovan football yearbook was recently published in Chisinau – the eighth time that the Football Association of Moldova (FMF) has produced this important resource.

The FMF's involvement gives this invaluable publication added credibility as a point of reference. As has been the case for the last seven years (the first issue having been published in 2010), the editor, Victor Daghie, has recorded for posterity the most important events of the last domestic football season. The 152-page yearbook opens with a message from Pavel Cebanu, president of the FMF, regarding the association's

organisational achievements.

The book contains masses of statistics on the 2016/17 season, including all appearances and goalscorers in Moldova's top three divisions, as well as lots of photos and selected historical records for each club. The yearbook is a must for statisticians, providing full individual analyses for each top-division club. The facts, photos and figures are complemented by a narrative season review for each top-flight club.

The yearbook also contains a list of all Moldovan champions since 1992, an all-time league table, details of the highest goalscorers of all time for the top two divisions, information about each



FMF

Moldovan Cup final and Super Cup, and player listings for clubs in the top flight.

SAVIĆEVIĆ RE-ELECTED PRESIDENT

BRANKO LATINOVIĆ

 Dejan Savićević was unanimously re-elected as president of the Football Association of Montenegro at the association's congress held in July.

The former Budućnost, Red Star, AC Milan and Rapid Vienna player, and the best-ever Montenegrin player, has embarked on his fifth term in office,

which runs until 2021. Under his tenure, football in Montenegro has faced different challenges and made vast improvements at various levels.

"Being president of the FA of Montenegro is a great honour and an even greater obligation. The support you have given me is an incentive for me to work

harder during the next four years in order to improve Montenegrin football even further. Many tasks lie ahead of us. There is a lot of work to be done, especially in improving infrastructure and creating adequate conditions for player development in our country. Those were the top priorities during my previous term and remain so today. I hope that at the end of my fifth term in office, I will be able to proudly say that we have accomplished our goals and that we have obtained beautiful new stadiums in Cetinje and Berane, as well as better pitches and facilities in all other towns," Savićević said after his re-election.

The congress also elected new members of the association's executive committee, the membership of which has been reduced to 13.

Zoran Laković, UEFA's national associations director, who was guest of honour at the congress, congratulated Dejan Savićević on his re-election and expressed great satisfaction at the work achieved by the Football Association of Montenegro.



NORTHERN IRELAND

www.irishfa.com

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL FESTIVAL ATTRACTS 60 TEAMS

NIGEL TILSON



Sixty teams took part in this year's Let Her Play festival organised by the Irish Football Association's foundation. The aim of the festival – the venue for which was Valley Leisure Centre in Newtownabbey – was to celebrate girls' and women's football across the country.

Although games in the youngest two age groups (U9 and U11) were non-competitive, all the girls who participated played with enthusiasm, and there was a lot of talent on show.

Crusaders Strikers and Mid-Ulster won their respective groups in the U13 competition and the final was a great advert for youth football; however

neither team managed to score, resulting in joint champions in the U13 section.

The U15 competition consisted of two sections playing in a league format, with the top teams in each being crowned winners. Carnmoney Ladies won every game in their section and ran out clear winners. The other section was very tight and came down to a penalty shoot-out between Lisburn Rangers and Cliftonville, with the latter taking the honours.

The Masters (over-30s) was a five-a-side competition initially played in a league format, with the top two teams competing in a final. Crusaders Strikers, who topped the league table, defeated



Comber Rec A 5-2 in the decider.

The tournament also helped to promote this year's European Women's Under-19 Championship final round, which was staged in Northern Ireland in August.

ROMANIA

www.frf.ro

SOWING THE SEEDS FOR A NEW U15 NATIONAL TEAM

PAUL ZAHARIA



The Romanian Football Federation (FRF) is introducing changes to the way it goes about talent scouting and selection with a view to making the process more efficient.

The biggest change is that talent scouting and selection will start with younger players than before, leading to the creation of a new Under-15 national team next year following a one-year Under-14 competition that began in August.

The eleven-a-side competition offers scouts the possibility to watch potential

talents over a longer period of time, which allows them to assess behaviour and performance in several matches and not just at one or two training camps.

Former Romanian international Ion Geolgau, who is in charge of the FRF's scouting department, says that the aim is to develop a competition in which the best players can progress and which builds on the football skills and potential of each player.

The competition, which has been embraced enthusiastically by the federation and its affiliated members, is being organised by the FRF together with the 42 county football associations, local scouts, the technical staff of the Romanian national youth teams and the members of the FRF technical committee.

The first round, in August, was contested in each of the 42 counties. The second, inter-county phase is now under way until October 2017. That will be followed by a regional phase between

March and May 2018, involving eight regions of five or six counties each. From each region 15 outfield players and two goalkeepers will be selected and those eight regional teams will play in a final tournament at the end of the 2017/18 school year in two groups of four teams. The two group winners will go through to the final, with the two group runners-up playing for third place.

At the same time, the 120 outfield players and 16 goalkeepers will be observed by the members of the FRF technical committee and the staff of the scouting department, as well as by the coaches of the Under-15 national team. Together they will select the 44 players (four for each position) who will form the extended Under-15 national team – the 'best of the best' of the 2,000 players born in 2004 who started out in the competition in August – and who will go on to test their skills at international level from autumn 2018.



FRF

FOOTBALL ACADEMY OPENS ITS DOORS

PRESS OFFICE



Football development, improved performances and better results: the aims of the San Marino Football Federation are crystal clear. And with the recent launch of the new San Marino academy, Sammarinese football looks set to achieve these targets.

Officially opened on 5 August, with several TV and press representatives as well as youth and women's team coaches in attendance, the academy has a brand-new technical framework – developed by the San Marino FA's technical department, headed by Massimo Bonini – that targets young players (aged 5–12, selected in collaboration with clubs), and the entire women's sector, including the team playing in Italian Serie B.

"It's a name change that we've needed for a long time now," said Alessandro Giaquinto, vice-president of the San Marino FA. "The values emanating from the term 'academy' are those we aspire to deliver: training and development

not only from a technical point of view, but also from an educational and instructional perspective. We aim to guarantee that all boys and girls who want to play football can do so, giving them all the tools they need to play to their fullest potential."

It goes without saying that the San Marino FA wants to become more competitive in the future. "We're working closely with local clubs, which play an invaluable role in recruiting new talent," underlined Carlo Chiarabini, technical director of the San Marino academy. "We want to offer elite players a series of projects that can be integrated into their normal activities to enhance their skills and qualities."

The academy marks the first step towards creating a national training centre as part of the San Marino FA's wider development project. Giampaolo Mazza, former coach of the San Marino national team and current technical and organisational coordinator of the

academy, underlined how important it is for young players to play regularly.

"The San Marino FA should take care of its most talented players who, by improving their performances, could help our national teams achieve the results we've been working towards for years, while at the same time passing on important values to all boys and girls playing football in San Marino."



SCOTLAND

www.scottishfa.co.uk

NEW PERFORMANCE SCHOOL INTAKE

MARK SNELL



The latest group of Scottish FA JD Performance School pupils have begun their footballing journey, which kicked off with the annual induction at Hampden Park in August.

The 48 pupils attended the national stadium with their parents, where they were treated to a question and answer session with the Scottish FA's performance director Malky Mackay, former Scotland international Stephen McManus and recent graduate Harry Cochrane, who scored for Hearts' first team in a pre-season match against Linfield.

The Scottish FA's Performance School programme is now in its sixth year, with JD recently signing a three-year deal to become the title sponsor of the initiative.

As part of the programme, seven

coaches work in conjunction with seven partner schools and the players' clubs to enhance the young prospects' technical skills by incorporating football education into their school curriculum.

Every year, each of the schools will take the most talented Under-12 players in their region – both boys and girls – and provide a minimum of five extra coaching sessions a week focusing on skills development. Over a four-year period, this will provide the most talented young footballers throughout the country with an extra 800 sessions.

The programme has already achieved success, with 15 of the 20 players named in the recent Scotland Under-17 squad being Performance School graduates, and six graduates appearing at the

European Under-17 Championship finals in Croatia back in May.

Earlier this year, 85 young players graduated from the programme, and 41 have signed professional contracts at clubs in Scotland and England.

"It is a very exciting time for these youngsters as this is the first step for them on their way to becoming Scotland internationals," said Mackay. "In three or four years' time these players have the chance to pull on a Scotland jersey at Under-16 level, and we want as many as possible to go on and do the same at senior level in the future."

"It's all about sacrifice and hard work for the next four years and we will support them as best we can through the programme and at their clubs."

SERBIA

www.fss.rs

DJOROVIĆ NAMED NEW UNDER-21 COACH

UGLJESA VRBICA

 The Football Association of Serbia has selected a new coach to lead the national side through qualifying for the 2019 European Under-21 Championship finals in Italy. The association has put its trust in Goran Djorović, a former international who played in the 1998 World Cup in France and EURO 2000 in Belgium and the Netherlands, and a close associate of the senior national team coach, Slavoljub Muslin.

“Recruiting Goran Djorović as the new coach of the Under-21 team is a phenomenal thing – it supports our desire and ambition to get more and

more former national-team players to take on responsibility for Serbian football,” said Goran Bunjević, sports director of the Serbian FA.

Serbia recently played in the 2017 European Under-21 Championship finals in Poland, and will take on Armenia, Austria, FYR Macedonia, Gibraltar and Russia in qualifying for the 2019 edition.

“We have a clear goal ahead of us: qualifying for the European Championship finals, which would certainly be a great success,” said Djorović. “But we also want to prepare these players for the challenges that hopefully await them on the senior team.”



SLOVAKIA

www.futbalfsz.sk

NEW HEAD COACH FOR YOUTH TEAMS

PETER SURIN

 Slovakia's Under-16 and Under-17 national teams have a new head coach, following the departure



of Ladislav Hudec, whose contract expired at the end of May. The Slovak FA's technical director, Ján Greguš, and vice-president with responsibility for the national teams, Karol Belaník, had the arduous task of finding the optimum replacement but they were very clear about what they were looking for: someone with experience, the right approach to coaching young players and a good track record. After carefully considering all applications, they signed a two-year contract with Samuel Slovák.

“One coach takes over the Under-16 and Under-17 teams, that's how our system works. The Under-16 team was created to introduce the players to the coach, while the Under-17 team enters European Championship qualifying. Slovák is the right candidate for this role, and in the meantime he will continue in his position as youth coordinator of the Slovak FA,” Greguš said on the selection of the new coach.

“I already work as youth coordinator and I think this is a role that suits me perfectly,” said Slovák. “My new appointment as Under-16 and Under-17

coach from 1 July is now the right step in terms of connecting theory with practice. I love challenges and this is a very good one from various perspectives.”

The job of youth national team coach is slightly different to that of a club coach. The players are 16 and 17 years old when they start playing serious football at national level. This is a time when they need to be approached in the right way to help them with their development.

“We have dreamed for years now of qualifying for a European Under-17 Championship final round, but we have our philosophy, which we believe will bring success. We need to set the standards for team and individual performance at this age level, but that does not mean we give up on results,” Slovák added after taking over the youth national teams. “One individual coach cannot make systematic changes by himself, but he can influence the processes. A lot depends on the working environment. In time we can then assess whether our cooperation makes sense and brings added value for both sides.”

DICKENMANN, PETKOVIĆ AND GRANIT XHAKA HONOURED

PIERRE BENOIT



Lara Dickenmann and Granit Xhaka were named male and female player of the year respectively at the recent Swiss football awards ceremony, while national team coach Vladimir Petković retained the coach of the year award.

Awards were presented in ten categories at the ceremony in Rapperswil-Jona. Four were based on public votes, while a panel of experts selected the winners of a further five awards (young player, coach, Swiss Cup team, referee and Credit Suisse Cup team of the year). The fair play team of the year was chosen in accordance with the criteria laid down for the Suva fair play trophy.

The highly prestigious player of the year awards were presented to Lara Dickenmann and Granit Xhaka. Xhaka, who left the German Bundesliga for

the English Premier League a year ago, has already become a lynchpin of the Arsenal FC midfield. Kriens-born Lara Dickenmann, meanwhile, retained the women's award after securing the German league and cup double with VfL Wolfsburg. With 122 caps now to her name, she was also the undisputed star of the women's national team in the European Women's Championship qualifiers and at the Women's EURO itself. The 31-year old has now been named Swiss female player of the year seven times so far.

Also in a repeat of the 2016 edition, the coach of the year award went to national team coach Vladimir Petković. His record with the Swiss national team is impressive, with six wins out of six in the qualifying campaign for next year's World Cup in Russia. Currently fourth in

the FIFA world rankings, Switzerland are now unbeaten for over a year.

All the winners at a glance:

- Players of the year: Granit Xhaka, Lara Dickenmann
- Swiss Cup team of the year: FC Basel
- Coach of the year: Vladimir Petković
- Young player of the year: Manuel Akanji
- Fair play team of the year: FC Däniken-Gretzenbach (women), US Montfaucon (men)
- Referee of the year: Belinda Brem
- Goal of the year: Xherdan Shaqiri (1-0 to Switzerland against Belarus on 1 June 2017)
- Swiss Cup goal of the year: Michael Lang (3-0 to FC Basel in the final against FC Sion)
- Credit Suisse Cup team of the year: fifth-grade girls, Zürich Hofacker

GEORGIA DEFEND BANNIKOV CROWN

YURI MAZNYCHENKO

 Late summer was a festive time in Kyiv as seven Under-17 teams from all over Europe descended on the Ukrainian capital to compete in the 14th annual Bannikov Tournament, which was played over five days – from 16 to 20 August – in four towns around the city. At stake was victory in a prestigious competition named after legendary Dynamo Kyiv goalkeeper and the first-ever president of the Football Federation of Ukraine, Viktor Bannikov.

Ukraine, coached by Oleh Kuznetsov, were joined by the Under-17 teams of Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Israel, Latvia, Slovakia and Slovenia. The teams played 16 matches at four stadiums in satellite towns around Kyiv – Yuvileiny Stadium in Bucha, V. Melnyk Stadium in Obukhiv, Kolos Stadium in Boryspil and Knyazha Arena in Shchaslyve.



The eight teams were divided into two groups, with the winners of each contesting the final and the runners-up entering a third-place play-off. Ukraine are traditionally the most successful nation, having won the tournament five times (in 2003, 2005, 2006, 2011 and 2012). Last year Georgia and Israel met

in the final – a 2-2 thriller that ended with the Georgians winning 4-2 on penalties.

This year Georgia and Israel topped their groups again and met for another final showdown. This time Georgia scored two fast openers, in the fourth and sixth minutes, added two more after the break and conceded only once to secure a solid 4-1 victory. Ukraine took third place with a 2-0 win over Slovakia.

The president of the Football Federation of Ukraine, Andriy Pavelko, congratulated the winners and other participants and presented the cup and awards. Individual prizes were given to the following players: Best goalkeeper: Luka Kharshiladze (Georgia) Best defender: Alan Aussi (Ukraine) Best midfielder: Matus Begala (Slovakia) Best goalscorer: Zuriko Davitashvili (Georgia; five goals)

BIRTHDAYS

Håkan Sjöstrand (Sweden, 1 October)
 Sergejus Slyva (Lithuania, 1 October)
 Agnieszka Prachniak (Poland, 1 October)
 Levent Bıçakçı (Turkey, 2 October)
 Andrzej Wach (Poland, 2 October)
 Lutz Michael Fröhlich (Germany, 2 October) **60th**
 Léon Schelings (Belgium, 3 October)
 Victor van Helvoirt (Netherlands, 3 October)
 Wilfried Heitmann (Germany, 4 October)
 Khennet Tallinger (Sweden, 4 October)
 Silvo Borošak (Slovenia, 4 October)
 Márton Vági (Hungary, 4 October)
 Frank Coulston (Scotland, 5 October)
 Terje Hauge (Norway, 5 October)
 Jerzy Engel (Poland, 6 October)
 Yves Leterme (Belgium, 6 October)
 Peter Sippel (Germany, 6 October)
 Francesca Sanzone (Italy, 6 October)
 Iveta Stoyanova Bankova (Bulgaria, 6 October)
 Samantha Lovse (Slovenia, 6 October)
 Armand Duka (Albania, 7 October)
 Jari Maisolahti (Finland, 7 October)
 Andrii Pavelko (Ukraine, 7 October)
 Draženka Kovačić (Croatia, 8 October)
 Pierre Delaunay (France, 9 October)
 Sergey Zuev (Russia, 9 October)
 James Buckle (England, 9 October) **60th**
 Ellert Schram (Iceland, 10 October)
 Laurent Duhamel (France, 10 October)
 Alin Cioban (Romania, 10 October)
 Christos Christou (Cyprus, 10 October) **40th**
 Naira Abramyan (Armenia, 10 October) **30th**
 Joan Gaspart Solves (Spain, 11 October)
 Dimitar Zisovski (FYR Macedonia, 11 October)
 Romeo Jozak (Croatia, 11 October)
 Yuryi Barbash (Ukraine, 11 October)
 Bo Karlsson (Sweden, 12 October)
 Anna De Toni (Italy, 12 October)
 Pedro Tomás (Spain, 13 October)
 Aleksander Čeferin (Slovenia, 13 October) **50th**
 Dušan Krchňák (Slovakia, 14 October) **70th**
 Tom van der Hulst (Netherlands, 15 October) **80th**
 Michel Piraux (Belgium, 15 October)
 Wendy Toms (England, 16 October)
 Konrad Plautz (Austria, 16 October)
 John Delaney (Republic of Ireland, 16 October) **50th**
 Gian Luca Angelini (San Marino, 16 October)
 Jean-Marie Philips (Belgium, 17 October)
 Frans Hoek (Netherlands, 17 October)
 Adonis Procopiou (Cyprus, 17 October)
 Pedro López Jiménez (Spain, 18 October)
 Petros Mavroidis (Greece, 19 October)
 Aivar Pohlak (Estonia, 19 October)
 Miljenko Sakoman (Croatia, 19 October)
 Paul Philipp (Luxembourg, 21 October)
 Robert Agnarsson (Iceland, 21 October) **60th**
 Mircea Sandu (Romania, 22 October)

John Taylor (Scotland, 22 October)
 Arie Kenneth Scheiman (Israel, 22 October)
 Fridin Ziskason (Faroe Islands, 22 October)
 Peter Dedič (Slovakia, 22 October)
 Jan Huijbregts (Netherlands, 23 October)
 Michel Vautrot (France, 23 October)
 Dragutin Karlo Poljak (Croatia, 23 October)
 Elmir Pilav (Bosnia and Herzegovina, 23 October)
 Antonin Herzog (Czech Republic, 24 October)
 Edvin Libohova (Albania, 24 October)
 Elvedin Begić (Bosnia and Herzegovina, 24 October)
 Roy Cathcart (Northern Ireland, 26 October)
 Markku Lehtola (Finland, 26 October)
 Hugh Dallas (Scotland, 26 October) **60th**
 Perry Gautier (Belgium, 26 October)
 Cristian Eugen Chivu (Romania, 26 October)
 Gerard Perry (Republic of Ireland, 27 October)
 Greg Clarke (England, 27 October) **60th**
 Levan Paniashvili (Georgia, 28 October)
 Jürgen Paepke (Germany, 28 October)
 Rui Cacador (Portugal, 29 October)
 George Fantaros (Cyprus, 29 October) **60th**
 Maria Persson (Sweden, 29 October)
 Silvia Tea Spinelli (Italy, 29 October)
 José Da Cunha Rodrigues (Portugal, 30 October)
 Tim Meyer (Germany, 30 October) **50th**
 Bert van Oostveen (Netherlands, 30 October)
 Alexander Alaev (Russia, 30 October)
 Alan McRae (Scotland, 31 October)
 Kurt Zuppinger (Switzerland, 31 October)
 José Luis Astiazarán Iriondo (Spain, 31 October)
 Fredy Fautrel (France, 31 October)

NOTICES

- On 18 August, Evangelos Grammenos was elected as president of the Hellenic Football Federation.

OBITUARIES

- Rudolf Bata, former general secretary of the Football Association of the Czech Republic (and of the Czechoslovak Football Association before that), passed away on 11 August, aged 89. He served in a number of roles for UEFA, as a member of the Finance Committee (1984–86), Control and Disciplinary Committee (1986–92), Stadia Committee (1992–2000) and Stadium and Security Committee (2000–02). Rudolf Bata was awarded the UEFA Order of Merit in Ruby in 2004.
- Pertti Alaja, president of the Football Association of Finland, died on 18 August at the age of 65. He made a major contribution to UEFA through his membership of numerous UEFA committees and panels since 1990. Vice-chairman of the UEFA HatTrick Committee since 2011, he went on to become its deputy chairman last July.
- Vaiva Zizaitė, press officer of the Lithuanian Football Federation, passed away a few weeks ago. She was a faithful UEFA Direct correspondent for many years, contributing numerous articles on her national association's activities.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Meetings

3 October, Nyon
 Women's Football Committee

16 October, Nyon

UEFA Women's Champions League: round of 16 draw

16-19 October, Belfast

Coach education workshop

17 October, Zurich

2018 World Cup: play-off draw

19 October, Nyon

UEFA Futsal Cup: elite round draw

Competitions

4-5 and 11-12 October

UEFA Women's Champions League: round of 32 (first and return legs)

4-10 October

European Under-21 Championship: qualifying matches

5-10 October

European Qualifiers for the 2018 World Cup

6-28 October, India

U-17 World Cup

10-15 October

UEFA Futsal Cup: main round

17-18 October

UEFA Champions League: group matches (matchday 3)
 UEFA Youth League: Champions League path group matches (matchday 3)

18 October

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

19-24 October

Qualifying matches for the 2019 Women's World Cup

19 October

UEFA Europa League: group matches (matchday 3)

31 October – 1 November

UEFA Champions League: group matches (matchday 4)
 UEFA Youth League: UEFA Champions League path group matches (matchday 4)

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