

UEFA



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CHAMPIONS INSIDE AND OUT

Portugal win Futsal EURO 2018

**NATIONS
LEAGUE**

Everything to play for

THE TECHNICIAN

The language quandary
in the dressing room

INTERVIEW

David Gill, UEFA treasurer
and vice-president



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REAPING THE REWARDS OF OUR SHARED SUCCESS

The global attention generated by the UEFA Nations League draw in Lausanne in January was a welcome reminder that national team football is stronger than ever. The moves we have made together in recent years to centralise national team football and to rejuvenate it with a new competition have started to pay off as it becomes increasingly popular with fans and broadcasters across the globe.

Popularity of our competitions is important for their livelihood, and generating further revenues is as well, but it is what UEFA does with those additional funds that can truly make a difference to the protection, promotion and development of football in Europe.

In keeping with UEFA's tradition, the net revenues stemming from the success of our national team competitions will flow back to our member associations via the HatTrick programme, the distribution of EURO prize money and the agreed centralised media rights distribution for European Qualifiers and the UEFA Nations League.

When it comes down to it, it is all about teamwork, and it is thanks to the dedicated work and successful cooperation between the member associations and UEFA that we can celebrate the gains made.

It was with great pleasure and pride, therefore, that we announced at the recent UEFA Congress in Bratislava that HatTrick funds would increase by 25% for the next cycle. These new funds will give national associations even more opportunities to improve their infrastructure, solidarity and education projects

and to bring to fruition all those initiatives they have always longed for and needed.

EURO prize money has also been increased substantially. We have decided to make more funds available to more teams per round and to apply significantly higher financial rewards for the performances on the pitch. Again, these additional funds will go to our member associations, enabling them to invest in grassroots, education and development projects in their territories.

Following on from the increase in the amount available for distribution in the UEFA Women's Champions League, I am also pleased to announce that the funds allocated to the development of women's football are being doubled. This is another strong sign of UEFA's commitment to developing the women's game.

When you put the significant increase in the amount for distribution in men's club football into the equation as well, it all adds up to record amounts being shared across all areas of European football.

This would not have been possible without the continuous collaboration and support of all our stakeholders. Thank you to all of you!



Theodore Theodoridis
UEFA General Secretary





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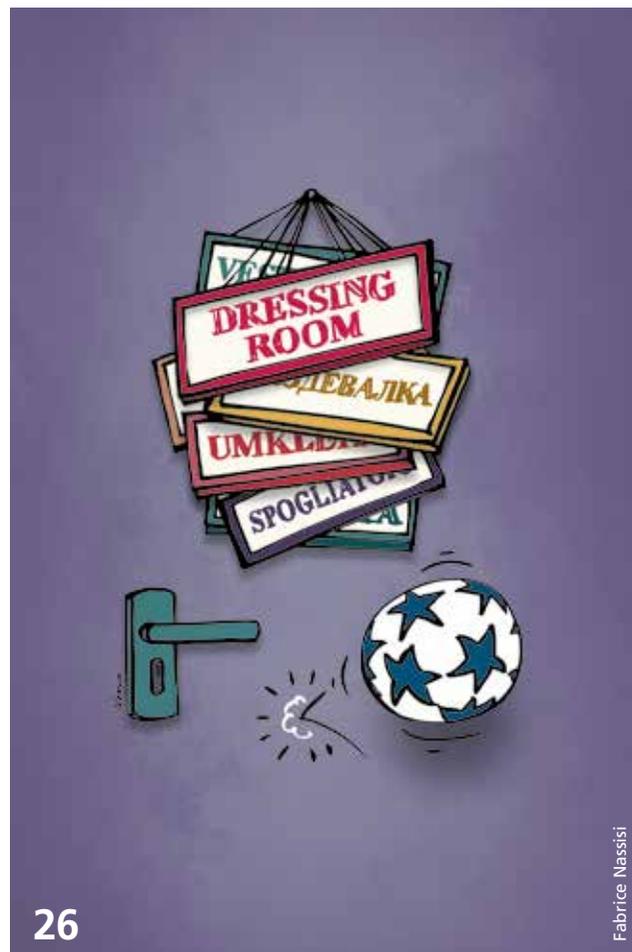
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PORTUGAL WIN HISTORIC FUTSAL TITLE

Portugal – pretenders to the throne for the best part of two decades – finally donned the European crown after a thrilling 3-2 extra-time victory over seven-time champions Spain in the UEFA Futsal EURO 2018 final, played on 10 February at the magnificent Stožice Arena in the Slovenian capital, Ljubljana.



Portugal's long-awaited triumph allowed them to become the fourth winners of the trophy and to emulate Spain's extraordinary feat of being champions of Europe in the outdoor and indoor disciplines at the same time.

Although Jorge Braz's team had to wait until 55 seconds from the event's final whistle to seal the ultimate victory, few could dispute the argument that Portugal had competed at the highest level throughout the 12-day final tournament. With 23 goals in their five games, they were by far and away the most prolific scorers in an event where goals came at a premium. Statistically, this was illustrated by a downturn of nine on 30% in comparison with the goal tally registered at the previous tournament in Serbia in 2016. A drop from 129 to 91 raised all manner of debating points about risk

management attitudes and fear of defeat. But credit where credit was due: the standard of goalkeeping was outstanding.

Goalkeepers stand out

The bronze medal match provided a graphic illustration. Russia and Kazakhstan offered the fans a spectacular game punctuated by 96 goals attempts. It ended with a 1-0 victory for the Russian team that had taken Portugal to the wire in a dramatic semi-final. As it happened, the match which acted as curtain-raiser for the Portugal v Spain final involved the two goalkeepers who were ultimately selected by UEFA's technical observers for their team of the tournament. As it happened, the observers were Javier Lozano of Spain and Orlando Duarte of Portugal. And, as it happened, the keepers they selected were two very different personalities with two

very different goalkeeping styles. Georgi Zamtaradze guarded the Russian net with efficiency and sobriety; Higueta contributed to Kazakhstan's game plans with panache, self-confidence, acrobatic shot-stopping, flamboyant upfield sorties and, in the semi-final against Spain, a spectacular goal from long range.

Alongside the duo in the nominees for UEFA's team of the tournament was the Slovenia keeper, Damir Puškar, who, apart from conceding only five times in three games, was a key protagonist in one of the major surprises of the group phase. The hosts had opened the tournament with disappointment in an opening fixture which, curiously, replicated the opening game of Futsal EURO 2016, when they had taken on Serbia, who were hosting the event. This time, Slovenia avoided a repetition of that 5-1 defeat and were →



hopeful of taking three points when they surged into a 2-0 first-half lead. Serbia, however, refused to raise the white flag and the second of their two replies came when they were operating with a flying goalkeeper 28 seconds before the end.

Turn-ups for the books in the groups

The 2-2 scoreline was a sign of things to come at an event which produced more drawn games (six) than any previous tournament. Serbia went on to snatch another draw against Italy in an encounter that yielded 76 goal attempts (two-thirds of them by Italy) but only two goals from set plays. The result left Group A dependent on the final showdown between Slovenia and Italy. Roberto Menichelli's team produced an overwhelming first half yet, thanks in great part to Puškar's shot-stopping, could score only once. And so it stayed until past the half-hour mark. Then, suddenly, a cross from the left by Matej Fideršek was met at the far post by the unmarked Slovenia captain Igor Osredkar. Apart from spreading jubilation among the sell-out crowd, the significance was that, in a three-way tie on two points, Italy would be out. Hence the introduction of the flying keeper – only for Osredkar to steal the ball from Murilo, run unopposed at the Italy goal and clinch the 2-1 result that sent the 2014 champions home.

The group stage threw up further surprises, albeit none so drastic in terms of unexpectedly revising homeward travel plans. In Group B, Poland – in the final tournament for the first time in 17 years – were expected to be second-best against former champions Russia. But, with stalwart, well-organised defending, determined counterattacking and some nice tactical innovations, Blažej Korczynski's team restricted Russia to a single goal and grabbed a point while operating with a flying keeper nine seconds from time. Running out of steam against Kazakhstan, however, sent them home, along with Italy, Romania (who relinquished a two-goal advantage to lose 2-3 to Ukraine) and, unfortunately, France.

A breath of fresh air

Supporters of France's Group D rivals Azerbaijan and Spain might frown at the use of 'unfortunately'. But the part-time debutants breathed fresh air into the tournament with an uninhibited approach,



"Georgi Zamtaradze guarded the Russian net with efficiency ..."

exhilarating solo skills and athletic qualities seemingly at odds with players who had been obliged to negotiate time away from their jobs to travel to Slovenia. All this was understandably tempered by a lack of big-match experience which, firstly, allowed Spain to come back from 2-4 down to register a 4-4 draw which was, nonetheless, a creditable result for the debutants and then, in the second match, prompted them to concede crucial set-play

goals in the 3-5 defeat by Azerbaijan which sent Pierre Jacky's team home.

It proved to be the only victory of the tournament for Azerbaijan. A 1-0 defeat against an edgy Spain fazed by the performance against France consigned them to a quarter-final against Portugal, the only team to have won both of their group games. The 8-1 victory for Jorge Braz's team included four goals for Ricardinho, who thus became the all-time top scorer at Futsal EUROs with a total which reached 22, and set him on track to top the 2018 charts with seven goals and four assists. By contrast, Spain, although gathering momentum in their approach work, were still struggling to find the net. It was a solitary long-range shot by Pola which earned them a second consecutive 1-0 win and eliminated a Ukrainian team which had played with defensive discipline and a strong work ethic.

Class act

In the meantime, Kazakhstan were demonstrating that third place in 2016 had been no accident, with Douglas Junior emerging as one of the class acts of the tournament. Playing minute after minute

RESULTS

Semi-finals

Russia	2-3	Portugal
Kazakhstan	5-5	Spain
(Spain win 3-1 on penalties)		

Third place play-off

Russia	1-0	Kazakhstan
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Final

Portugal	3-2	Spain
(after extra time)		





... while Higuita contributed to Kazakhstan's game plans with panache and, in the semi-final against Spain, a spectacular goal from long range."

goalkeeper but conceded the clinching goal by losing the ball while in the same mode with 23 seconds remaining. The defeat meant that a talented team returned home without winning a game.

Russia had also come through the group stage without winning, but exploited sound goalkeeping and defending to dash Slovenian dreams with a 2-0 win – the second goal a counterattack with only 25 seconds remaining. But nothing could subtract from the host nation's contributions on and off the field of play. The last of five 12-team final tournaments (there will be 16 participants as from the next finals in 2022) was impeccably organised and attendances moved regularly into five figures despite the heavy snowfalls which decorated the streets of Ljubljana with two-metre dunes.

Dramatic semis

The hosts' efforts were rewarded by four final matches rich in quality, intensity and drama. Russia, keeping the lid on Ricardinho's box of tricks and, once again, showcasing their defensive expertise, led Portugal 1-0 until the three-quarter mark. But two fierce strikes by the excellent →

after minute of every match, his positional acumen, passing vision, tight skills and power-shooting made him an influential presence alongside surprise package Taynan, drafted into the squad at the 11th hour in response to a training-session injury to Leo. Cacau's team reached the semi-finals with a relatively comfortable 3-1 victory over Serbia. Trailing 2-0, Goran Ivančić's team reduced arrears while deploying Mladen Kocić as flying



Slovenia's emblematic captain Igor Osredkar steered the host team as far as the quarter-finals.

BIG CHANGES AFOOT IN EUROPEAN FUTSAL



Aleksandr Alaev, chairman of UEFA'S Futsal and Beach Soccer Committee and acting president of the Football Union of Russia, shares his impressions of Futsal EURO 2018 in Slovenia and tells UEFA Direct how futsal is developing in Europe.

"On behalf of UEFA, I would like to thank the Football Association of Slovenia for the excellent organisation of Futsal EURO 2018. The association has undertaken a huge amount of work since 2015 when, with the current UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, still at the helm, it was chosen to host the tournament.

Futsal in Europe is growing fast, as is the popularity of the game. Of course, this is thanks to a large extent to UEFA's commitment and attention to one of the most accessible kinds of football. Futsal EURO 2018 in Slovenia was the last to be organised as a biennial competition. From now on, it will be played every four years instead of every two – and with 16 teams instead of 12 as of Futsal EURO 2022.

Moreover, UEFA is introducing two new competitions: a European Women's Futsal Championship and a youth Under-19 competition.

The first editions will take place in 2018/19, with the final rounds scheduled for February and September 2019 respectively. As far as futsal club competitions are concerned, the UEFA Futsal Cup becomes the UEFA Futsal Champions League. These changes were all approved by the UEFA Executive Committee at its meeting in Helsinki last April.

So it is an exciting time in the European futsal arena and one which will certainly raise the popularity and profile of futsal even higher."

“Portuguese celebrations gave overwhelming credence to the adage that pictures are worth a thousand words.”



André Coelho – one from long range, one following a corner – overturned the score. Then, with Russia waiting for a whistle which never sounded, Bruno Coelho made it 3-1, with Eder Lima slamming home a reply for Russia within seven seconds of the restart to keep nerves jangling during the frantic closing seconds of a dramatic encounter.

The other semi-final provided even greater drama. Kazakhstan led twice. Spain, rediscovering their scoring touch, led twice. Douglas Junior, who had yet again conducted the orchestra with great skill and aplomb, made it 4-4 with 79 seconds remaining to send the contest into extra time, during which each team scored once. Goalkeeper Paco Sedano then saved from Taynan to give Spain

a 3-1 penalty shoot-out victory which meant that Kazakhstan, by the narrowest of margins, had to contest the bronze medal with Russia.

A feast of Iberian ball skills

When the grand finale kicked off 48 hours later, the 10,352 spectators barely had time to settle into their seats before an early goal set pulses racing. With 59 seconds on the clock, Miguelín lost possession, leaving Ricardinho, of all people, 1 v 1 against Sedano, whom he beat with composure. Venancio López’s team initially struggled to cope with Portugal’s aggressive high pressing and fluent off-the-ball movements in a 1-4-0 structure that, in the outdoor game, could be described as a ‘striker-less formation’. Spain’s response was to operate more regularly with Alex or Solano as an attacking pivot to give their approach play greater depth and more passing options against their opponents’ high pressure. A neat combination, culminated by Marc Tolrà’s finish, produced an equaliser shortly before the interval and, midway through the second half, Spain’s dominance was transferred to the scoreboard when Lin met a Miguelín free-kick at the back post. But, throwing on Pedro Cary as flying keeper, Portugal conjured up an equaliser in the penultimate minute. The finishing touch to a slick combination was provided by Bruno Coelho, back in action after limping to the dressing room in the first half. His crucial finish sent the final into extra time.

Again, Spain appeared to have the upper hand – and the pendulum seemed to swing further in their favour when Ricardinho went to ground and eventually limped off with an ice pack strapped to his ankle. But, with 55 seconds of the additional ten minutes remaining and with both teams having reached the five foul mark, the referee’s whistle sounded after a tackle on Pedro Cary as Portugal were

playing their way out of their own half. It was the second 10-metre penalty of the match – Miguelín’s spot-kick for Spain having been repelled by the woodwork. For Portugal, the taker was Bruno Coelho. He stepped up and coolly dispatched a fierce low drive past Sedano into the Spanish net. Heart rates were relentlessly punished as the seconds ticked away – especially when Spain hit the post with just 14 remaining. But the klaxon sounded with 3-2 to Portugal on the scoreboard at the end of a memorable contest that had offered the fans a feast of Iberian ball skills, intensity and drama and no fewer than 104 goal attempts.

Pictures worth a thousand words

Portuguese celebrations gave overwhelming credence to the adage that pictures are worth a thousand words. Coach Jorge Braz may not have jumped as high as his players nor slid into huddles on the floor. But, as he embraced his players and backroom staff, he exuded the joy and inner satisfaction of a man who, since taking over from his friend and mentor Orlando Duarte after the loss of the final against Spain in 2010, had felt Portuguese frustrations as deeply as anybody. Ditto Ricardinho, one of futsal’s outstanding artists who, finally, had a major international title to add to his serial successes at club level.

Indeed, it was Ricardinho who was first to receive an award from the UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin. To a standing ovation, the Portugal captain hobbled on to the podium to become the first player to earn the newly introduced trophy for the player of the tournament. The UEFA technical observers had selected him not only on the basis of his exceptional solo skills but also in recognition of the way he had taken responsibilities as team leader and had offered his individual abilities to the collective effort. 🏆



Ricardinho finished the competition as European champion, top scorer and player of the tournament.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: THE LIMITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Since 2010, UEFA has been supporting football-related academic research projects through its Research Grant Programme. This month, Dr Tim Breitbarth presents details of his recent study, which looked at online conversations about social responsibility in European football.



Dr Tim Breitbarth is a principal academic at Bournemouth University's faculty of management. His research, which builds on international corporate marketing experience, spans a wide range of areas – from sports marketing and strategy to sustainability and organisational performance.

Some people consider social media and social responsibility (SR) to be a perfect fit, as both target interaction, accountability and transparency. And yet, expectations remain limited when it comes to constructive dialogue on SR and football in the online sphere: even if associations and clubs do seek to engage in dialogue, communication via social media is still likely to be perceived as a marketing tool aimed at conveying messages about the organisations in question. It is certainly the case that the complexity of communicational dynamics needs better alignment in football organisations. Balancing seriousness with 'sharability', 'provocability' and 'emotionability' is the key to success in the world of social media. Embracing non-technical SR language and outcome-oriented SR messages can be an effective starting point when seeking to inspire and steer constructive and positive conversations.

Differences between social media and online news media

The perception that 'Facebook = social media' is as common as it is erroneous, for the world of social media extends far beyond household names such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Indeed, this study located and extracted relevant themes and communication dynamics from more than 400 million social media sources drawing on the VICO social media monitoring system as an insightful 'social listening tool'. The study was conducted over four months in early 2017 and spanned a variety of languages, with about 125,000 relevant items in Croatian, English, French, German, Italian, Polish, Romanian, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish being identified in that period.

Importantly, major differences were observed between typical social media (micro-blogging, social networking, etc.)

and online news media (which tend to be editor and organisation-led) in terms of both the volume and dynamics of communication (referred to as 'buzz') and tonality. Subjects attracting buzz on social media included corruption, charitable activities, doping, community issues and health, compared with corruption, social issues, respect, social development and governance in news media. Moreover, commentary on the likes of Twitter and Facebook was more sceptical and negative. Unexpected and spontaneous events (such as the Dortmund bus bombing) tended to quickly lead to high levels of social media buzz around SR and football. In contrast, SR-related messages and commentaries related to planned events (e.g. matches and associations' annual congresses) tended to attract large amounts of online news coverage in the first instance.

Using SR to enhance reputations, relationships and communication

Insight derived from SR-related social media content can directly inform organisations' policies, strategies and tactics, as it supports managerial decision-making when it comes to things like social programmes and effective communication. Social media is now a vital communication tool, democratising information and shifting structures of influence. With views on SR focusing less on the direct financial benefits derived from such activities and more on reputational impact, stakeholder relationships and communication, football organisations should develop an enlightened and effective style of play when it comes to the – still bumpy – social media pitch and SR-related communication in general. 🗣️

A DRAW THAT GIVES EVERYONE A CHANCE

The anticipation and excitement were palpable in Lausanne on 24 January, when the great and good of European football convened in the Swiss city on the shores of Lake Geneva for the christening of the continent's latest flagship competition.

The Nations League regulations and draw procedure had been digested, and were finally to become a reality. Ahead of the draw itself, the UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, kicked things off by unveiling the competition trophy, which put a sparkle in the eyes of Europe's biggest football nations ... the 12 biggest, in fact, since that is the number of teams that make up League A, from whose ranks the first Nations League winners will arise. To recap, the senior men's teams of all 55 UEFA member associations have been split into four leagues, with 12 each in Leagues A and B, 15 in League C and 16 in League D, in accordance with their positions in the UEFA national association coefficient rankings the day after the end of the European Qualifiers for the 2018 World

Cup. Each of the four leagues contains four groups, with three teams per group in Leagues A and B, one group of three and three groups of four in League C, and four teams per group in League D.

League A teams to challenge for the title

The calibre of the League A groups, in which the continent's best 12 teams will compete from 6 September to 20 November 2018, was always going to be extremely high. Trying to rank the groups in order of difficulty now that the draw has been made is therefore easier said than done. However, Group A2, containing three teams that have only recently joined Europe's top table – Belgium, Switzerland and Iceland – appears perhaps the most winnable,

with the Belgians slight favourites thanks to their steady recent improvement and an impressive batch of talented youngsters. The winners of the group, in which each team will play four matches (two against each of the other two group members), will join the three other League A group winners in the Nations League finals, which will be hosted by one of the finalists from 5 to 9 June 2019. The format of this final phase will be very simple, with semi-finals, a third-place match and the final, the winners of which will be crowned the inaugural Nations League champions. Picking a favourite is tricky business too: the groups are so well balanced that it is difficult even to predict who will make it into the final phase. The reigning world champions, Germany, who qualified for the 2018 World Cup at a canter, will be



most people's favourites in Group A1. Solid though they are, the Mannschaft will, however, face a tricky opponent in France, who boast a huge array of talent, especially going forward, and who beat them in the EURO 2016 semi-finals. France will also renew acquaintances with another of their recent victims, the Netherlands, whom they beat in World Cup qualifying and who are bound to be out for revenge after missing out on the last two major international tournaments.

Group A3 contains three teams with contrasting recent histories. Having hit the heights at EURO 2016, Portugal lived up to their status as European champions by seeing off Switzerland in a hard-fought battle to secure a place at the World Cup. To everyone's surprise, Italy will not be joining the Portuguese in Russia, having failed to qualify for the World Cup finals for the first time since 1958. Currently in a rebuilding phase, the Azzurri will be determined to make life difficult for Portugal. Poland complete the group, having developed into one of Europe's strongest nations in recent years with talented striker Robert Lewandowski at the helm. If Group A3 looks spicy, so too does Group A4, where Spain, England and Croatia have been pitted together. It is hard to find a more talent-filled trio of national teams in Europe at the moment, with the ever-vibrant interplay of the Spanish, the youth and attacking verve of the English, and Croatia's outstanding midfield. Although none have shone in recent final tournaments – they all fell before the quarter-final stage at the 2014 World Cup and EURO 2016 – all three must be considered potential Nations League champions.

Everyone eyeing a place at EURO 2020

With Europe's 12 best teams all in the same league, the Nations League is bound to provide top-quality matches for spectators and TV viewers alike. However, although League A will

attract the most international attention, the other 43 nations of Europe have not been forgotten. Quite the opposite, in fact, since the new competition will pit them against teams of a similar standard, with the promise of some closely fought matches. The promotion and relegation system provides an added competitive edge, with the 12 group winners in Leagues B, C and D moving up a league and the bottom-placed sides in the top three leagues moving down for the second edition of the competition, which is scheduled to start in September 2020. Wales, for example, who reached the semi-finals at EURO 2016, are in Group B4 and will need to see off the Republic of Ireland and Denmark to secure promotion to League A. Meanwhile, over in Group C3 Slovenia, Norway, Bulgaria and Cyprus will be fighting for promotion to League B... while at the same time trying to avoid relegation to League D.

There is sure to be something at stake right up to the last in every group, which all the teams will be keen to win, of course. But a place on the next rung of the continental ladder is not their only incentive, since the Nations League offers the added carrot of four tickets to EURO 2020. While 20 teams will book their place at the EURO through the European

Qualifiers, the four remaining slots will be filled by the winners of the play-offs in March 2020 – and who qualifies for the play-offs will be determined by the Nations League. Leagues A, B, C and D will each have a separate play-off path, with two semi-finals and a single-leg final, the winners of which will be awarded a place at EURO 2020. In other words, the winners of Group D2, composed of Belarus, Luxembourg, Moldova and San Marino, will only be two matches away from competing at the next EURO! With Latvia the only of the 16 League D teams to have done so before, there is every chance of a newcomer joining the top table of European men's national team football, courtesy of the Nations League. 🌐



The silver UEFA Nations League trophy weighs in at 7.5kg and is 70.5cm tall.

UEFA

GROUPS

League A

Group A1	Group A2
Germany	Belgium
France	Switzerland
Netherlands	Iceland
Group A3	Group A4
Portugal	Spain
Italy	England
Poland	Croatia

League B

Group B1	Group B2
Slovakia	Russia
Ukraine	Sweden
Czech Republic	Turkey
Group B3	Group B4
Austria	Wales
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Republic of Ireland
Northern Ireland	Denmark

League C

Group C1	Group C2
Scotland	Hungary
Albania	Greece
Israel	Finland
	Estonia
Group C3	Group C4
Slovenia	Romania
Norway	Serbia
Bulgaria	Montenegro
Cyprus	Lithuania

League D

Group D1	Group D2
Georgia	Belarus
Latvia	Luxembourg
Kazakhstan	Moldova
Andorra	San Marino
Group D3	Group D4
Azerbaijan	FYR Macedonia
Faroe Islands	Armenia
Malta	Liechtenstein
Kosovo	Gibraltar

CALENDAR

- Matchday 1:** 6-8 September 2018
- Matchday 2:** 9-11 September 2018
- Matchday 3:** 11-13 October 2018
- Matchday 4:** 14-16 October 2018
- Matchday 5:** 15-17 November 2018
- Matchday 6:** 18-20 November 2018

Teams with no fixture on a given matchday play friendlies.

The League A group winners will contest the finals from 5 to 9 June 2019, the draw for which is due to take place in early December 2018.

The draw for the play-offs that will decide the final four places at EURO 2020 will be held on 22 November 2019, with the matches then played between 26 and 31 March 2020.

LJUBOMIR MORAVAC – SLOVENIA

"I'M STILL PART OF THE GAME"

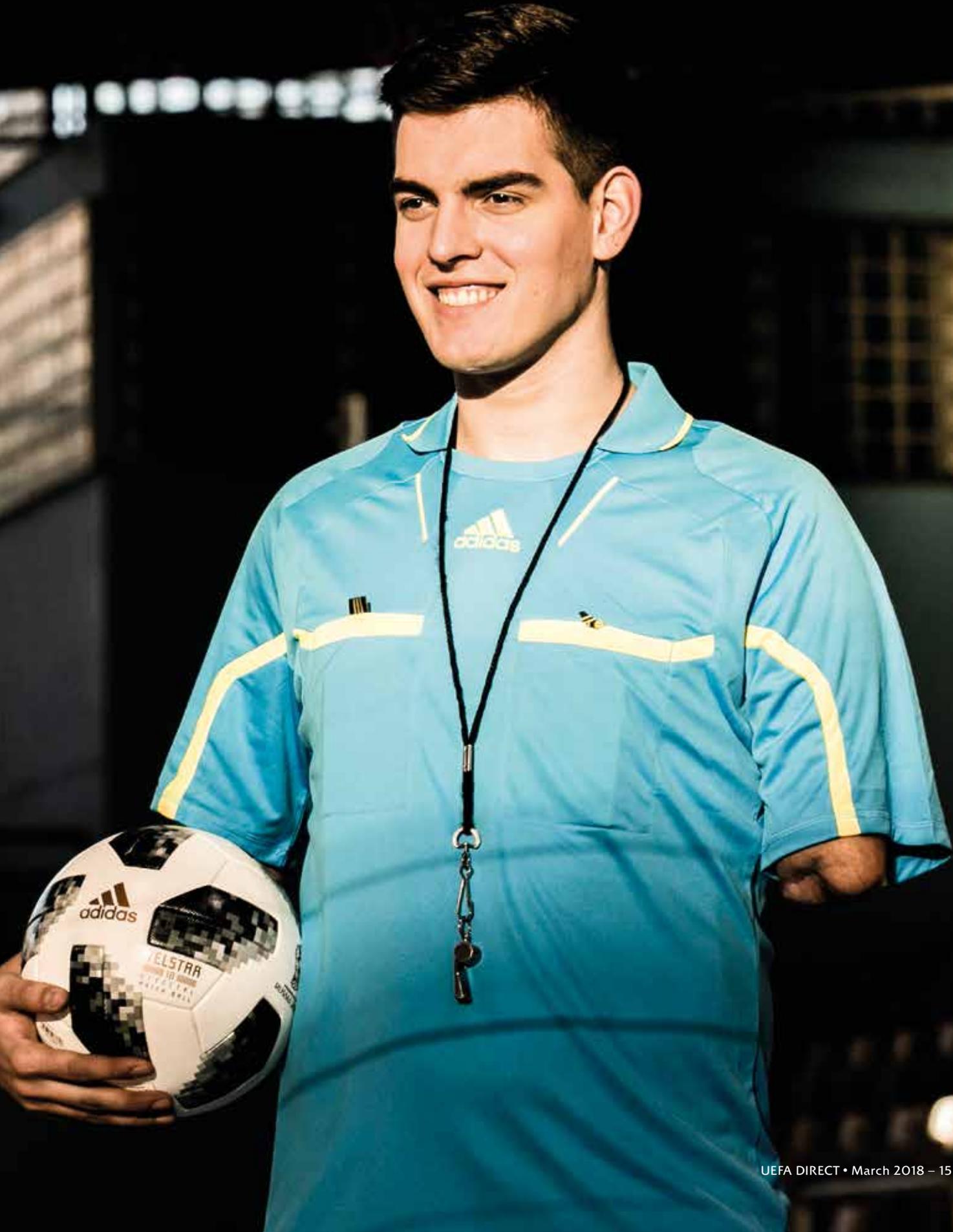
Football has played an immense healing role for 21-year-old Ljubomir Moravac, whose story embodies the values of UEFA's #EqualGame campaign and shows how football can help to rebuild someone's life.

Football has been etched on Ljubo's heart since he first played with a ball as a five-year-old in a village in his native Serbia. He comes from a football family, and his elder brother Ranko was capped at Serbian youth level.

Ljubo showed promise as a goalkeeper. At 16, he moved with his father to the Slovenian city of Maribor, joined local club NK Maribor where his brother Ranko, a midfielder, had already signed a professional contract, and began to feature in the club's youth teams. In 2014/15, Ljubo was a member of the NK Maribor squad that played in the UEFA Youth League group stage.

However, his young life was to change dramatically on 2 August 2016. In a road accident after a training session, two of his team-mates lost their lives and Ljubo was seriously injured. As a result, part of his left arm had to be amputated. On his path to recovery, Ljubo has found relief in football. He has taken up refereeing, and is relishing the new challenge. Ljubo's love affair with the game has given him solace, comfort and hope – and a new start that is helping him to move forward. "Without my arm, I thought I would never be part of football again, since I only saw myself as a goalkeeper," he reflects. "But I found a way to return ... and I still love football as much as I did when I was five years old."

#EQUALGAME



EQUAL GAME



"IF I HADN'T TRAINED AS MUCH AS I DID, IF THERE HADN'T BEEN FOOTBALL, I WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN PHYSICALLY PREPARED TO SURVIVE."







"NK MARIBOR IS LIKE MY SECOND FAMILY. THEY HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ON MY SIDE, TRYING TO FIND A WAY TO HELP ME AND MAKE THINGS EASIER FOR ME. THEY EVEN MOTIVATED ME TO BECOME A REFEREE."





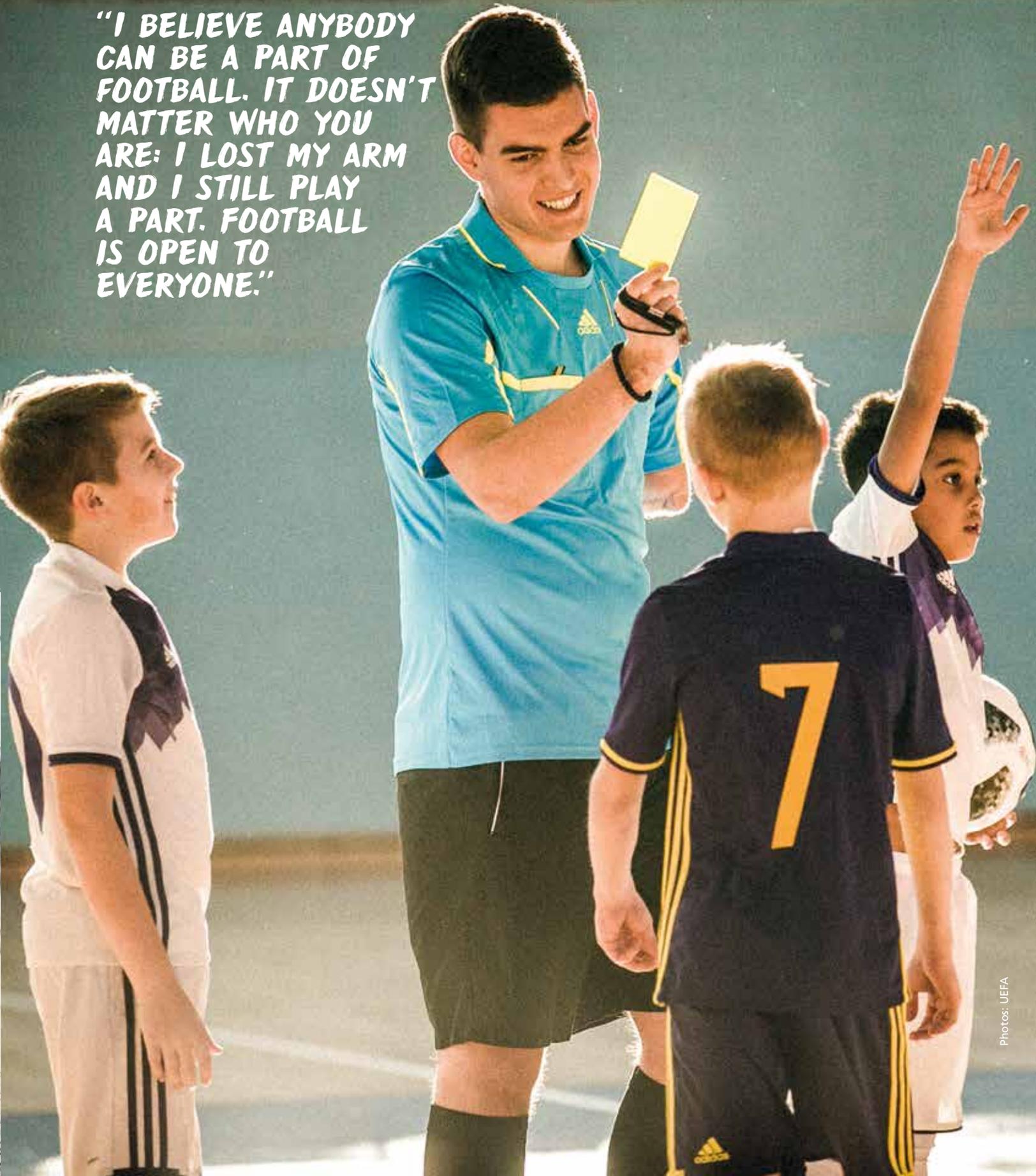
**"FOOTBALL HELPED
ME TO TACKLE THE
AFTERMATH OF THE
ACCIDENT LIKE A MATCH
- ONE WHICH I HAD TO
WIN."**



"AFTER THE ACCIDENT, I THOUGHT MY FOOTBALL CAREER WAS FINISHED. BUT REFEREEING WAS A WAY FOR ME TO GET BACK INTO THE GAME."



**"I BELIEVE ANYBODY
CAN BE A PART OF
FOOTBALL. IT DOESN'T
MATTER WHO YOU
ARE: I LOST MY ARM
AND I STILL PLAY
A PART. FOOTBALL
IS OPEN TO
EVERYONE."**



PROMOTING INCLUSION, DIVERSITY AND ACCEPTANCE THROUGH FOOTBALL IN ITALY

With its Rete! project, the Italian Football Association (FIGC) is showing how football can facilitate the integration of migrants and promote tolerance and inclusion.

In 2015, the FIGC launched a project for unaccompanied foreign children who live in SPRAR centres (protection system for asylum seekers and refugees) across the whole of Italy. The Rete! project, developed by the FIGC youth and school sector, aims to promote social inclusion, peer interaction and intercultural dialogue through educational and football-oriented activities. The scheme has proved a success so far.

The first edition in 2015 involved 237 youngsters and 24 different SPRAR projects; 280 young migrants and 25 SPRAR projects took part in the second edition in 2016, and the 2017 edition welcomed 397 participants from 30 SPRAR projects based in 11 different regions of Italy. The fourth edition is now under way, FIGC chief executive and UEFA vice-president Michele Uva having recently

signed a memorandum of understanding with the Italian government. "The project was at an experimental stage before," he explains. "The results were very positive, so we are now ready to reach out further. The FIGC is glad and proud to cover all the costs of this project because this is an investment for a better future for everyone."

From October 2017 to April 2018, the young migrants (16–19 years old) will attend football-oriented training activities at the various SPRAR centres and have the opportunity to train with FIGC coaches. Compared with previous editions, there will be a much greater synergy with local amateur clubs, with mixed-team activities planned. The local clubs participating in the project will be recognised as elite football schools if they have the necessary requisites, otherwise they will be allowed



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to start the process to be recognised as football schools. Clubs and participating footballers over the age of 18 will also have the chance to attend an entry level grassroots coaching course in their area.

Welcome to Coverciano

In April and May there will be inter-regional phases with four mini-tournaments between SPRAR projects organised according to geographical criteria: north, central, south and Sicily. The semi-finals and final, meanwhile, will be held in Coverciano, at the FIGC technical centre. Last season's final between SPRAR projects from Vizzini (Sicily) and Lodi (Lombardy) was played in Coverciano in front of an Italian national team delegation including players Marco Verratti, Davide Astori, Leonardo Spinazzola and Mattia Caldara, with team manager Gabriele Oriali presenting medals to the players after the final whistle.



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The FIGC's Rete! project fits into the Italian ministry of the interior's protection system for asylum seekers and refugees (SPRAR).



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Last season's SPRAR final between Vizzini (Sicily) and Lodi (Lombardy) at the FIGC's technical centre in Coverciano was watched by some famous faces, including Marco Verratti.

Michele Uva and Fiona May – head of the FIGC's anti-discrimination committee – also attended the event alongside Vito Tisci, president of the FIGC youth and school sector, Luigi Maria Vignali, general manager for Italians abroad within the ministry of foreign affairs, and Alessandra Morelli, senior advisor for sport and culture of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Among the success stories of this project is the one of young midfielder Abdoulie Dampha, a migrant from Gambia who won the first edition of the tournament with the Caltagirone SPRAR team in 2015 before signing a contract with Serie B club Trapani the following year. Helping youngsters to become professional footballers is certainly a bonus but not the main objective of the project.

As explained by the FIGC's Cristina Blasetti, Rete! aims to promote inclusion by using football as a tool for education,

training and integration, promoting good behaviour by teaching ethical values, improving the understanding of the importance of physical activity and its impact on health and on the social and professional development of child refugees, and promoting healthy lifestyles in general.

Rete! is only one of the projects to fight racism launched by the FIGC since the appointment of Fiona May in 2014. "When I was asked to become the FIGC's advisor for integration and the fight against racism, I said no at first," she remembers, recalling her first reaction when the FIGC president at the time, Carlo Tavecchio, approached her. "I didn't want my name to be used for ineffectual and superficial campaigns on the subject. But then, after evaluating the project better and being given 24 hours to think it over, I changed my mind and accepted the role."

The former long jump champion did not waste time proving that she was right to accept the role, and after her appointment the FIGC started organising a series of successful projects aimed at eradicating racism from football and promoting integration. "I discovered a very masculine world of football which is different to athletics, but I have seen a great desire for change," she says.

Combating racism as a priority

It all started in 2015, when the FIGC launched the project 'Razzisti? Una brutta razza' (Racists? An ugly race), which aimed to educate young footballers on topics such as tolerance and integration through a series of meetings organised all across Italy. The success of the project convinced the FIGC to extend it to Italian schools in 2016 through the creation of a dedicated platform. The project 'Tutti i Colori del Calcio' (All the colours of football) featured the launch of a website where students could post videos about their fight against racism. By 2016, 41 videos had been published on the platform, with 17 Italian regions, 43 schools and over 1,000 students involved. The Facebook page of the project received 3,839 likes.

"We decided that we had to work with youngsters. It is difficult to change the mentality of adults, but sport can do a lot to educate the next generations," Fiona May explains. "Youngsters, kids most of all, are crucial to defeat racism. None of us are born racist; kids don't care about differences. We have to learn how to return to that natural instinct that only →



“None of us are born racist; kids don’t care about differences. We have to learn how to return to that natural instinct that only kids have. Education also plays a central role.”

Fiona May
Head of the FIGC’s anti-discrimination committee

kids have. Education also plays a central role. This is the only way to promote values like tolerance and living together without giving any relevance to the colour of a person’s skin. When the players meet on the pitch, when they play side by side, there are no divisions and prejudices anymore but a unique wave of friendship moving as a whole on the pitch in the name of sport.”

Fiona May – born in Slough, England, to Jamaican parents – knows a thing or two about sport: during her scintillating career in track and field, she won three world championship titles (two outdoor and one indoor), two Olympic silver medals and various other honours. But she also knows what it takes to move to a different country and adapt to a new culture. After becoming European and world champion



Luigi Maria Vignali, general manager for Italians abroad within the ministry of foreign affairs, presents the trophy to the tournament winners.

at youth level for Great Britain – and after studying economics and business management administration in Leeds – she moved to Italy, married an Italian athlete and ended up competing for her new country. She retired in 2005 but continued to be very active behind a desk. She has been a member of the board of trustees of the UEFA Foundation for Children since May 2017 and she is also studying for an Executive Master in Sport Governance (MESGO).

Families, school and sport

The fight to eradicate any kind of discrimination from the world of sport is her main occupation now. “We want to keep growing with our projects but it’s not easy,” she says. “We want to help integration. We must think positive, be brave. People coming from another world, athletics like me for example, have a completely different mentality, more open. I have never thought about skin colour during my career, I didn’t know what racist boos were. Football is the national sport in Italy, we have to help the game reduce racism until we manage to eradicate it completely. We have to work together in sport to help open people’s minds. The basis of racism is ignorance, the ignorance of people who can’t recognise equality as a key value for society.”

Meanwhile, the FIGC is also very active in backing UEFA’s #EqualGame campaign. “Especially through the Rete! project,” Michele Uva said during an event at the Liceo Agnesi school in Milan organised by SSC Napoli to talk about diversity. “After families and school, sport is the third step in the fight against discrimination. It is up to you, the students, to promote this message and make your voices heard. Through a collaboration between the FIGC and the police, incidents of discrimination have decreased by 75% since 2011 in Italian football. Now, for example, there are new rules allowing clubs to permanently ban fans responsible for discriminatory behaviour, like in England. But there is still plenty of work to do.”

Confirming Uva’s words, Napoli defender Kalidou Koulibaly told students about his personal experience when he asked the referee to stop a game at Lazio following repeated monkey chanting from a group of fans. The centre-back is sure that projects like Rete! can help with integration. “My parents were immigrants once upon a time and I know first-hand the challenges they



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had to face," he said. "Without their decision to seek a better way of life, there is no way I could have aspired to be what I have become. I have enormous respect for migrants who are risking everything, often in order to escape conflict, in order to find somewhere where they can live in peace and harmony."

Rete! can certainly help in this sense. A study into the role of football as a tool for integration conducted in collaboration with the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Rome confirms the good results achieved by the project. The study, with targeted questionnaires distributed to young participants, confirms that it

is possible to observe positive changes towards greater emotional stability and social inclusion thanks to this project, as well as benefits derived from increased social exchanges with other young people through football-related activity, such as improved wellbeing, increased happiness, a greater sense of freedom and a reduction in loneliness.

"Italy must become the most important centre for reception and integration," Uva explains. "We must never give up with our efforts because none of the 60,000 young footballers coming from abroad must ever feel excluded." 🌍

UEFA GRANT SCHEME FOR THE INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES

The UEFA Fair Play and Social Responsibility Committee has approved a new grant scheme for UEFA member associations as part of UEFA's football and social responsibility strategy for 2017–21.

The grants are intended to help refugees integrate in their host societies by means of football-related activities.

Six grants of €50,000 will be available each year. All associations already offering a comprehensive programme that meets the grant scheme guidelines, or wishing to set up such a project, have been invited to apply.

A jury consisting of representatives of UEFA and external expert organisations will evaluate the applications and draw up a shortlist of recommended projects, from which the six recipients will be selected by the UEFA Fair Play and Social Responsibility Committee. All participating associations will be informed of the outcome by the end of April 2018.

ABUBACARR'S LONG AND HARD JOURNEY

As part of its #EqualGame campaign, UEFA met Abubacarr Konta, a 16-year-old who, having lost his parents, left his African home in Gambia to seek a fresh start in Europe. 'Abu' arrived in Sicily in February 2016, but to do so he had to face a tragic journey – from Gambia to Libya, through Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. Libya was the departure point for crossing the Mediterranean by boat to Italy. "[Me and my friends] were on the same boat, sailing," Abu remembers. "But the boat developed a fault. One of my friends fell into the water with others who were sitting with him. He called out my name, but I couldn't help because I was trying to save my own life, and they drowned." Abu finally reached Sicily owning only a shirt and shorts. "I wasn't even wearing shoes," he says. From Messina, he was relocated to the SPRAR centre in the town of Giammoro, on the northern Sicilian coast. The centre is home to a small group of youngsters aged 15–18 who are attending Italian language classes and learning additional life skills like tree-planting, watering and cooking. However, there is also time to play football, an overriding passion since Abu's childhood. "I feel



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happy when playing football. I love football," says Abu, whose football idol and inspiration is former Spain midfielder Xabi Alonso. Football has helped the group of youngsters become close friends. Abu also feels great respect for the Sicilians and loves Italian food, but football remains his greatest passion. "Football is my life," he says. "Football unites people – that's what I love about the game."



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FOOTBALL, A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE?

Since 1995 and the Bosman ruling, European football has become such a cosmopolitan affair that even language barriers are shifting.

“I speak seven languages. Once you can speak two languages, it’s easy to learn a third, a fourth, or even more. I now speak Romanian, French, English, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Russian. It’s essential for my job.” One can imagine a diplomat or the CEO of a multinational company uttering these words – people whose linguistic skills and ability to communicate in different languages enable them to look after the interests of their country or company. But those are the words of a football coach – and not just any coach at that. Mircea Lucescu, 72, is the head coach of the Turkish national team, having previously worked for 12 clubs in five countries. A life spent moving from pitch to pitch ... and from language to language. Is he unusual in the football world? Not at all, according to Lucescu. “These days, high-level coaches are more

or less obliged to speak several languages. Carlo Ancelotti must speak four or five languages, Pep Guardiola the same, José Mourinho maybe more ... Coaches are in charge of players who come from all over the world and they need to be able to tell them what they want. Getting our ideas across to our players, that’s our job!”

Coaches have always had to adapt to changes in football: tactical, physical, technological, sociological changes, and so on. Adaptability is part of a good coach’s DNA. Since 1995 and the Bosman ruling, European coaches and technical staff have also had to add linguistic adaptability to their CV. Pre-1995, the situation was relatively simple: each club was allowed up to three foreign players, who were looked after with varying degrees of success in order to help them integrate and understand what they were being instructed to do.

Since 1995, there has been a huge shift in European football. “Since that moment, clubs have recruited more and more foreign players. Of course, having 15 different nationalities in the dressing room is different to having just three,” says Portugal’s Luís Figo, winner of the Ballon d’Or in 2000. According to the Neuchâtel-based International Centre for Sports Studies (CIES), 39.7% of top-division players in this season’s European domestic championships are foreigners. The figure can be as high as 65%, as is the case in Turkey. In the English Premier League, foreign players make up 59% of first-team squads and it is not unusual for clubs to field teams composed almost exclusively of foreigners. On 26 February 2015, for example, the UEFA Europa League match between Tottenham Hotspur and Fiorentina was the first UEFA competition match in which neither side included →



“In Donetsk, since we had up to 14 Brazilians on our books, I spoke to the whole squad in Portuguese once I felt my Portuguese was good enough. And an interpreter would pass on my instructions to the Ukrainian players in Russian.”

Mircea Lucescu
Turkish national team coach and former Shakhtar Donetsk coach

TERMINOLOGY AT YOUR FINGERTIPS



In 2008, UEFA and Langenscheidt published a trilingual football dictionary in UEFA's three official languages (English, French and German).

A useful reference for any football translator, interpreter or administrator, it contains some 2,000 entries covering everything from the game itself to stadium, equipment, medical and media terms.

The printed version quickly sold out but the dictionary is now available for free online on UEFA.com:

www.uefa.com/insideuefa/dictionary/index.html

a player from its own country in its starting XI. The 22 players who started the match represented 15 nationalities, but there were no Englishmen in the Tottenham team and no Italians in Fiorentina colours, although the Italian side did include Englishman Micah Richards in their line-up.

Arsenal with a French accent

How can a coach get through to all his players when they come from different countries, speak different languages and have different cultural backgrounds? Robert Pirès, who won the 1998 World Cup with France, has first-hand experience of the internationalisation of football.

“At Arsenal, there were never any problems between the English and French players. We didn’t all speak the same language, but we spoke the same football.”

Robert Pirès

Former Arsenal player

At Arsenal, he was a member of the Premier League's first-ever totally foreign starting XI, which beat Crystal Palace 5-1 in 2005. “It didn't matter who was playing, Arsène Wenger always conducted his team talks in English. Afterwards, anyone could ask a team-mate for help if they hadn't understood something. At the start, I always asked Thierry Henry or Patrick Vieira to tell me what the coach or the players were saying in English.” While coaches often use the local language for their team talks – unless, as we shall see later, they do not speak it themselves – language barriers are much easier to break down when it comes to one-to-one conversations between player and coach. “When it was just the two of us, Arsène Wenger always spoke to me in French. It was the same when he was talking to several French players at the same time,” explains Robert Pirès. In fact, the ability to speak to each other in their native language can be good for the relationship between players and coaches from the same country when they are abroad. Luís Figo found himself in such a situation twice in his career, firstly with Carlos Queiroz at Real Madrid and later with José Mourinho at Inter Milan. “In both cases, if we were on our own or if they wanted to explain a tactical detail, we spoke to each other in Portuguese.



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Both of them could speak several languages and had no trouble using the local language, so I never had to help them with any translations," smiles Figo, who can now speak Spanish and Italian fluently, even though he did not know a word in either language before playing in the two countries.

While the similarities between Portuguese and Spanish or Italian made it easier for Luís Figo to learn the local languages quickly, Bixente Lizarazu was not so lucky. When he arrived at Bayern Munich in 1997, the Frenchman came up against a more difficult obstacle than opposing Bundesliga strikers. "Although I had learned English and Spanish at school, I didn't understand German at all. I tried to avoid German when I arrived. However, I spoke a lot of English when I got to Munich because the Germans are very good at English." French-speaking former Swiss international Patrick Müller was able to compare the experience of moving to a country where he spoke the language with moving to one where he did not. He left Switzerland for Olympique Lyonnais, where he went on to win three French league titles in four seasons. In 2004, he joined Spanish club RCD Mallorca, but only stayed for six months. "Adapting to life in Lyon was easy. When



Bixente Lizarazu admits that he did not know a word of German when he joined Bayern Munich.

you speak the language, you soon feel at home. However, when I arrived in Mallorca, I could not speak a word of Spanish and none of the players in the dressing room could speak French, German or English. I discovered how hard it is to become part of a group

when you don't speak the same language as everyone else," he recalls. After only six matches in Spain, he returned to Lyon, where he won three more league titles.

At Olympique Lyonnais, Müller found himself playing alongside a large contingent of Brazilians. The club had specialised in recruiting players from Brazil and making them feel at home, especially off the pitch. "The Brazilians were very well looked after and they settled in quickly because people made their lives easier by dealing with everything for them. There was no interpreter for them in the dressing room, but if a Brazilian player didn't understand an instruction, another Brazilian would explain it in Portuguese," Müller says.

Portuguese the lingua franca in Donetsk

Brazilian footballers play all over the world, the ultimate symbol of the game's globalisation. It is estimated that over 1,200 of them play in professional leagues →

NATIONAL TEAMS ARE (ALMOST) SPARED

Whereas language issues are a daily challenge for clubs, they are much less of a problem where national teams are concerned. In most countries, all the players and technical staff speak the same language, which makes communication much easier.

However, there are exceptions. Firstly, if the coach does not speak the language of the country in which he is working, as in the case of Mircea Lucescu, the current Turkey coach, for example. In such situations, an interpreter often translates all the coach's instructions into the local language. The situation can be more complex, and more akin to that found in clubs, in countries with more than one official language or a number of different regional languages.

In Europe, Belgium and Switzerland spring to mind. While German, French and Italian are all official languages in Switzerland, along with Romansh, things are different within the national team.

"German has always been the language of the Swiss team. Throughout my time with the national team, all the coaches spoke German and there were more German-speakers than French," says Patrick Müller, who won 81 caps between 1998 and 2008, a period when Michel Pont assisted Köbi Kuhn, and then Ottmar Hitzfeld, and was responsible, among other

things, for interpreting their instructions for the players who only spoke French. "To be honest, even in Switzerland, where several languages are spoken, there are far fewer problems than in clubs. As head coach of FC Lugano, I had to manage a squad with 11 different nationalities, and that certainly requires a lot more work!" says Michel Pont.



French-speaking Patrick Müller (No20) played 81 times for the Swiss national team, where, despite the country having four official languages, German is predominant.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD FOOTBALL INTERPRETER?

Nowadays, it is impossible to imagine the football world without interpreters. In an era when players and coaches are constantly moving all over the world, interpreters have become essential cogs in ensuring mutual understanding between the different components of numerous clubs.

But what is it that distinguishes a good football interpreter? Strangely, the quality that is often mentioned first has nothing to do with language. "They need to know a lot about football, otherwise they won't last long!" says Graham Turner, an English journalist who worked as an interpreter for coach Terry Venables during his three seasons at FC Barcelona from 1984 to 1987.

Many coaches have had the unfortunate experience of not choosing their own interpreter when arriving in a new country, and have quickly decided to replace them after a few mistranslated instructions. However, tactical nous on its own may not be enough, according to Graham: "The other indispensable quality

for an interpreter is the ability to adapt their translation. It's not a case of interpreting things literally, but of getting the message across by adapting it to the language and the local culture. It's important to have

someone who is truly immersed in both cultures so they can find the best translation." So what it really boils down to is that an interpreter working for a football club needs to be more than a language specialist, and a member of staff like everyone else. Someone who can get on well with the players as well as the coach. "Since English is a much more concise language than Spanish, Terry Venables would sometimes ask me to say two words to a player and I would need 30 words

to explain it in Spanish. He would burst out laughing and ask if he was doing the coaching, or whether I was in fact giving out whatever instructions I wanted," says Graham, who returned to his career as a journalist after his Barcelona experience.



across the world. All clubs try to help them integrate and cope with being away from their families, who often stay behind in Brazil. One club, however, leads the way when it comes to the recruitment of Brazilian players: FC Shakhtar Donetsk, who were coached between 2004 and 2016 by ... Mircea Lucescu, the ideal coach to manage the Brazilian diaspora both on and off the pitch.

"When I arrived, there were not many Brazilians, but we gradually started to recruit more and more of them. Most of them were young when they came, which meant that the coach also played an important role in their education. To help them adapt to life in Ukraine, I needed to be able to speak to them directly so we could form a close relationship," says Lucescu, whose initial idea was to work on his Portuguese. He then took an incredible decision. As a Romanian coach working in a part of Ukraine in which Russian is the everyday language, he began to deliver all his team talks in Portuguese! To him, it seemed the natural thing to do. "In my coaching career, my knowledge of several languages has been an enormous asset. One of my strengths is my ability to get my point across to my players, to understand what they say, and to make their lives easier

as players and as people. In Donetsk, since we had up to 14 Brazilians on our books, I spoke to the whole squad in Portuguese once I felt my Portuguese was good enough. And an interpreter would pass on my instructions to the Ukrainian players in Russian."

Are interpreters really necessary?

While not all coaches are prepared to learn another language in order to talk to their foreign players, everyone we spoke to was unequivocal: even though communication is less fluent than between people speaking the same language, it is never really a problem in a cosmopolitan dressing room. "With my Italian coach Giovanni Trapattoni, we spoke in a mixture of Spanish and Italian, and we understood each other. In the dressing room at Bayern, players spoke to each other in German, English, Spanish and Portuguese, and everyone got on perfectly well. You can't have long discussions on the pitch anyway. Twenty words is enough to get your point across!" explains Bixente Lizarazu. Luís Figo wholeheartedly agrees: "Even though I didn't speak Spanish when I arrived at Barça, I managed to communicate with the other players and we understood each other." A view shared even more

enthusiastically, almost poetically, by Robert Pirès: "At Arsenal, as soon as a player arrives, his level of English is assessed and a teacher is assigned to him, with the possibility of attending lessons every day. I quickly learned the important words that I needed to use on the pitch, so I could pick up the basic vocabulary. There were never any problems between the English and French players. We didn't all speak the same language, but we spoke the same football."

Opinions on interpreters in the dressing room are more varied, especially when the coach does not speak the local language. "I can't understand it when clubs or national teams recruit coaches who do not speak the local language. People management is so important in football that it's hard to see how a coach can manage a dressing room without speaking the same language as most of the players. There are bound to be things that do not come across properly," says Michel Pont, assistant coach of the Swiss national team from 2001 to 2014. "When I arrived at Barça, Johan Cruyff spoke to the players in Spanish. Then Bobby Robson and, after him, Louis van Gaal spoke in their own languages, and it was all interpreted into Spanish. It was José Mourinho who translated everything that Bobby Robson

“People management is so important in football that it’s hard to see how a coach can manage a dressing room without speaking the same language as most of the players. There are bound to be things that do not come across properly.”

Michel Pont

Former assistant coach of the Swiss national team

said to us, for example. For the players, having an interpreter does not change much in terms of what is actually said, but it is more difficult to form a close relationship with a coach if you don’t speak the same language,” says Luís Figo. In his last season as a player, Robert Pirès came across a rather unusual linguistic conundrum in India. At FC Goa, Brazilian legend Zico would issue instructions in Portuguese before an assistant translated them into English for most of the squad. Then another member of staff translated into Hindi for the Indian players who did not speak English. “It was easier for me because I speak Portuguese, so I understood immediately. But I could tell it wasn’t always straightforward for the Indians,” remembers the Frenchman, who also spent time at Villarreal, where he was

able to speak Spanish, the language of his maternal grandparents. “In some clubs, almost every player seems to have an interpreter. It’s quite bizarre. I can’t understand how a coach can develop a strong relationship with his players like that,” says Lucescu. Nevertheless, even though he has been coaching the Turkish national team since August 2017, he has decided not to learn the national language, preferring to issue instructions to his players in French before an assistant translates them into Turkish. “But as far as one-to-one conversations are concerned, many Turkish internationals play abroad, so in order to form a closer relationship with them, I can speak to them in whichever language suits them best, as long as it is one that I can speak,” he says. A diplomatic answer if ever there was one. 🌍



Juninho and Edmilson are two of the large contingent of Brazilians who have adapted to life in Lyon.

ENGLISH, THE ‘GO-TO’ LANGUAGE

“These days, if you don’t speak English, you’re dead!” Even though he never played in the Premier League, Luís Figo speaks English very well and has no doubt that, for a footballer, a basic knowledge of Shakespeare’s language is very useful, if not indispensable.

Patrick Müller, who now uses English every day in his job at UEFA, agrees: “In football, the thing that’s different about English is that it is spoken all over the world. Even among people whose mother tongue is not English. Let’s imagine a Belgian and a Spaniard playing together in the Czech Republic. How do they communicate with each other? In all likelihood, it will be in English, or at least ‘broken English’”.

“If there was one message I could pass on to young players, I would tell them to take their English lessons seriously, because you never know what life is going to throw at you. I wasn’t a very good student, and I suffered later because of that,” admits Robert Pirès, who communicated with his Indian team-mates at Goa FC in English, for example.

For Bixente Lizarazu, English was a lifeline when he moved to Bayern Munich, especially outside the dressing room. “Nowadays, as a club ambassador, I am much more comfortable speaking German in public. I love speaking it, even to the media. But when I was a player, I preferred to speak English so I could be sure that my words wouldn’t be misinterpreted.”

Mircea Lucescu also mainly uses English to speak to the members of the Turkish FA, although he occasionally uses French with the players. And he can always resort to Romanian, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese or Russian if someone has difficulty understanding him ...

A GROWTH PLAN FOR EUROPEAN FOOTBALL

Promoting and developing football across Europe is a key role of UEFA and its 55 member associations. That mission is at the very core of UEFA GROW, a programme launched by UEFA in 2015 with the aim of systematically and strategically growing European football by inspiring and collaborating with the national associations in order to ensure they are able to maximise their full potential both on and off the pitch.

“UEFA GROW is our central business development support programme to nurture football across Europe. UEFA GROW offers tailor-made consultation services to our national associations in the areas that are most relevant for football organisations, from building a better image of football, to increasing revenue opportunities and getting more people to play our beautiful game,” says Zoran Laković, UEFA national associations director.

UEFA GROW was introduced following a thorough review of the European football landscape as well as analysing statistics and industry trends. While football is the most followed sport across most of Europe, the review showed there were areas which had room for improvement – for example, that more needed to be done to increase participation rates and revenues in certain markets. This is something that UEFA GROW is actively looking to build on.

- It is important that both the image of football and that of its governing bodies is viewed positively as negative perceptions can affect other business outcomes and the development of the sport.
- Football cannot develop unless people continue to play the game. How people play is also evolving and changing. UEFA GROW is looking to help national associations increase the number of registered football players at grassroots level after there had been a decrease between 2010 and 2015 within some associations.
- The digital revolution is happening and UEFA GROW is helping the national associations to adapt accordingly in order to develop football engagement through new technology and platforms in their respective markets.
- Changes in the sponsorship and media rights landscapes have created new

opportunities for national associations to generate additional revenues which could be used for new development programmes.

UEFA GROW offers additional support to the national associations beyond the existing assistance offered under UEFA's HatTrick programme, which is built on three core pillars: investment funding, knowledge sharing and education.

In summer 2015, UEFA GROW launched six pilots with the football associations of Azerbaijan, Finland, Malta, Northern Ireland, Portugal and Slovenia. Following a successful test phase, the project was given the go-ahead for further expansion across Europe following the top executive programme (TEP) meeting of UEFA member association presidents and general secretaries in Malta in September 2015.

How does UEFA GROW work and what support do the national associations get?

The purpose of UEFA GROW is to lead and support the growth of football across Europe. This is achieved by using fact-based research, market intelligence and industry experts to build strategic plans for growing the game.

UEFA GROW focuses on providing individual assistance to each UEFA member association through a series of workshops and additional follow-up support. The workshops are always tailored to meet the specific association's needs and take into account local market challenges. However, the framework is the same across Europe and linked to why UEFA GROW was launched in the first place – to ensure the national associations are able to maximise their potential both on and off the pitch.



The main four growth areas and the benefits for the national associations are as follows:

- Image:** UEFA gives national associations access to independent research looking into the current state of football in their respective markets. This data covers a number of different topics, including the general popularity of the sport, the perception of the various national teams, and the image of the governing body itself. This independent review forms the basis for setting up an action plan to address the issues identified.
- Participation:** Following a thorough review of existing data, UEFA GROW helps the national associations to draft growth plans for participation and retention, which include the definition of clear yearly targets for different age categories in both men's and women's football. The plans also detail the corresponding responsibilities and required programmes and budgets.
- Engagement:** All national associations nowadays use digital channels and social media to communicate with their football families. Under the engagement pillar, UEFA GROW is helping national associations to develop a universal digital marketing and FRM (football relationship management) strategy with clearly defined targets for reach, engagement and other metrics.
- Revenues:** National associations need to have sufficient funds in order to invest in football development and thus be able to grow the game. UEFA GROW helps them each to set up a clear commercial strategy and five-year business plan with key performance indicators and timings to develop all areas of the commercial revenue wheel.

All of UEFA GROW's pillars are intrinsically linked. If an association has a good reputation in its respective country, more people are likely to play, attend or watch the sport. This could ultimately lead to increased revenue possibilities and digital engagement opportunities.

Following discussions with the national associations, it became clear that UEFA GROW could offer assistance and expertise in other areas of football development. Therefore a decision was

PARTICIPATING ASSOCIATIONS SO FAR



taken in 2016 to add some extra pillars in order to address areas such as brand management and how the association communicates with its audiences at all levels.

Additional follow-up support is available across the following areas:

Strategic planning: UEFA GROW supports national associations in developing a strategic plan for the whole organisation, painting a clear picture of where the organisation is going and defining clear strategic objectives for the upcoming years.

Communication: This pillar is about helping to create a clear strategic communications plan that looks to improve the image of the associations and helps them deliver the right messages to the right stakeholders.

Insights: The field of data and insights is becoming increasingly relevant for the national associations. UEFA GROW provides a number of different services, including giving access to data, sharing best practices and providing benchmarking information. The overall objective is to help national associations become more insight and data-driven organisations.

Brand: A brand is much more than just a logo and, as such, an increasing number of associations are requesting support from UEFA GROW to help them optimise their potential or to help them with other (re)branding projects. Creating a clear brand position for each product will increase the value and revenues that can be derived from the brands.

Public affairs: This pillar focuses on assisting national associations in developing clear strategies for how to form partnerships with government and other public authorities. This is becoming increasingly important as football widens its societal role and scope.

Meanwhile, the programme's successes have led to the creation of additional supporting tools for national associations. In addition to the aforementioned pillars, the UEFA GROW team is now working on numerous projects in order to provide a greater overview of football development across Europe, including the following:

UEFA GROW dashboard: a platform to keep track of the progress that all national associations are making in GROWing football

UEFA GROW IT maturity matrix: a tool which assesses the capabilities of national associations and provides strategic IT support across business functions

UEFA GROW index: a tool measuring the strength of football across all national associations

UEFA GROW SROI model: a tool for measuring the social return on investment from mass participation in football

UEFA GROW has become the central business development platform for national associations to grow the game. Almost 40 UEFA member associations have joined UEFA GROW and benefitted from this programme to date. The coming years promise to be an exciting and positive experience for the associations that have adopted and are looking to join UEFA GROW with the ultimate aim of trying to make the game even stronger across Europe. 🌐

DAVID GILL

'I'M VERY PROUD AND HONOURED'

A UEFA Executive Committee member since 2013, treasurer and vice-president since 2017 and previously the chief executive of Manchester United for many years, David Gill is a veteran of football administration. He tells UEFA Direct what football means to him.

To love football and be involved in the game professionally is a cherished dream for many people. David Gill has achieved that dream, having enjoyed a successful career as finance director and chief executive of Manchester United, the club he has followed since boyhood.

Recognition for his professional experience and knowledge has also come at national, European and world football levels. He served on the English Football Association board, and was elected to the UEFA Executive Committee in 2013. Two years later, he became a FIFA vice-president. He is the UEFA treasurer and chairman of the Finance Committee – a vital role, given the organisation’s key mission to reinvest funds and revenue in the development and progress of the game on this continent.

Were you a football fan from an early age?

Yes, from when I was very young – in those days I played outside with my older brother in my home town of Reading. We chose teams to support. My brother chose Tottenham, who had won the English league and cup ‘double’ in 1961, and I chose Manchester United. I’ve supported United ever since.

Did you have an idol?

I was a great fan of George Best. United had some wonderful players at that time – Bobby Charlton, Denis Law – but I just loved George Best. I was privileged to meet him when I worked at Manchester United. Unfortunately I never saw him play live. I saw him on television, and read about him in football magazines.

So you began playing football as a very young boy?

I’ve played football all my life really.

Did you have any aspirations to try to make a career out of it?

No, I wasn’t good enough. I played at university level and I played a lot of amateur football. I was a centre-forward, but to be honest I was lazy.

We obviously know you as a football administrator, but what’s your profession?

I trained as an accountant. I did a commerce degree at Birmingham University, and then I joined Price Waterhouse in Leeds and worked in various offices, including in the United States for a couple of years. Then I came back and moved into industry. I trained as a chartered accountant, and moved up the finance ladder.

And then the opportunity arose to work for the club that you

support, Manchester United. How did that come about?

Fate took a hand. Before Manchester United floated on the stock market in 1991, there was a newspaper article which basically said that they needed to appoint a finance director. My wife said: “Well, that’s a job for you.”

But, actually, when you looked at the criteria, you had to have experience of being a quoted-company’s finance director. I didn’t have that experience, so I went out and got it. In 1996, the then finance director of Manchester United left, and a vacancy was created at the club.

A friend of mine rang Manchester United and found out who the firm were that were looking for the replacement. They got in touch with me, I went for interviews and happily →

“I was a great fan of George Best. United had some wonderful players at that time – Bobby Charlton, Denis Law – but I just loved George Best. I was privileged to meet him when I worked at Manchester United. Unfortunately I never saw him play live.”



Bobby Charlton



George Best



Denis Law

Getty Images



got the job. I made the move up north from the south of England in 1997, to become United's finance director.

Manchester United — you don't get many bigger clubs in the world, certainly in terms of finance. It must have been quite a challenge?



David Gill breaks a sake barrel as Manchester United launch a new sponsorship deal in 2010.

I thought it was a good career move. I hadn't been good enough to become a professional footballer, but I'd always loved football. I just thought it was a great opportunity – and you have to grasp these things when they come along.

A successful career followed at United, as finance director and chief executive. Then, you also took on a role at the English Football Association ...

The English FA board was comprised of members of the professional game and members of the national or amateur game, and an opportunity came up for me to first become an FA councillor, and then to go onto the board, in 2006. I stayed there for a number of years, and I'm still actively involved in international relations.

From The FA, you took another step up in football administration when you were elected to the UEFA Executive Committee. What did that entail?

Geoff Thompson served diligently on the UEFA Executive Committee for a number of years. It was decided by The FA that when his term finished in 2013, we would put another candidate forward, and I was interested in doing it. I thought it was appropriate to stand down from running Manchester United in the summer of 2013 – and I was elected to the Executive Committee of UEFA in May of that year. I think that coming onto the UEFA Executive Committee was a natural extension of my work with The FA. I have a club perspective and a club view from my time with Manchester United that

“Before Manchester United floated on the stock market in 1991, there was a newspaper article which basically said that they needed to appoint a finance director. My wife said: ‘Well, that’s a job for you.’”



It was in 2013 that Manchester United won their last league title, just before the departure of two stalwarts of the club: coach Sir Alex Ferguson and chief executive David Gill.

can be of real value within the Executive Committee's work.

Are you proud of being able to contribute to European football as an Executive Committee member?

I'm very proud and honoured to be on the Executive Committee. I really enjoy it, and I think UEFA has incomparable assets – it has top-class, expertly run and organised competitions. I think UEFA quite rightly continues to progress. It's a highly respected organisation in the world of football for what it does to develop the game.

How do you see UEFA's progress under its current president, Aleksander Čeferin?

Aleksander took over at a difficult time, and has brought in new ideas and is making excellent progress. He has set up and changed the governance regulations, with term limits, active roles, etc. Then, he has also brought the clubs and leagues into our organisation to play a role. There is an important focus on areas such as women's football and futsal. I think we're looking at all the right things, while not ignoring the priority of making sure that we maximise the returns from the main competitions that we run, because that money is then reinvested into football.

A lot of people wouldn't know what the UEFA treasurer does. What exactly is the treasurer's role?

Basically, the job entails overseeing the finances and the resources of UEFA from an Executive Committee level. We have a very experienced financial team within the UEFA administration, and I'm there for them, to discuss and oversee matters. Along with my fellow finance committee members, Michele Uva and Sándor Csányi, we effectively look at issues, budgets, auditors' reports, expenditure over a certain level, these sort of things, before they go to the Executive Committee for a decision. I see my role as being supportive to the UEFA management.

How important is it that UEFA is perceived as being careful with money?

I think it is crucial. UEFA is a prudent organisation, a non-profit organisation. The money it receives is then redistributed, for example, to national associations or

“UEFA is a prudent organisation, a non-profit organisation. The money it receives is then redistributed, for example, to national associations or clubs.”

clubs, according to the various agreements in place. The funds are used to develop football. So, to my mind, UEFA's money is not its own money. We have 55 member associations, and they are the ones developing football at the grassroots level, at national level. We help them with resources, both financial and other, to actually develop the game in their country. That is UEFA's objective. So UEFA, in my view, has to be seen to be very careful, while also having the capacity to make relevant decisions. Should we invest in that area or that area? What are the financial implications? What are the other implications? UEFA has to make these decisions, to ensure that its overall strategy in developing football is enhanced.

You've also been involved in club licensing and financial fair play at UEFA, as chairman of the Club Licensing Committee. When you look at financial fair play now, what impact has it had since it was introduced in 2009?

Without a doubt, it has made a difference. I have seen that from a club perspective and also from a decision-making perspective. Losses have come down significantly as far as financial management within European club football is concerned. The amount of overdue payables has also dropped significantly. Financial fair play has worked, in particular in stemming the massive losses that were being made by some clubs. There were many examples of clubs that were being mismanaged, the owners then disappeared and the team plummeted through the divisions and it all ended up in tears. And the people who suffer in those situations are the fans who have that lifetime affiliation with the



clubs. So it's been very satisfying to see how this negative situation has been turned around considerably.

Let's go back to your love of the game again. When you walk into any stadium that you visit, and the stadium is full, do you still get a buzz?

Yes, definitely. I like going to full stadiums, especially for night games, for example in the UEFA Champions League. The atmosphere just builds up under the floodlights. Nothing beats the live experience in my opinion.

What's the best goal you've ever seen?

Two goals from 1999, both for Manchester United, one dramatic and one fantastic. Firstly, Ole Gunnar Solksjær's winner to complete United's amazing comeback against Bayern Munich in the UEFA Champions League final; secondly, →



David Gill has fond memories of Ole Gunnar Solskjær's goal in the 1999 Champions League final.

Are you an England fan as well?

Obviously I want England to do well, it's important for the game in England if they are successful.

But I actually think that national team football is very important overall, and the work that we do at UEFA to encourage and develop the national team game is vital. National teams are crucial to identity, and to developing football in each individual country.

As a football fan, what do you think are the biggest challenges facing European football?

The danger is always to assume that things will continue as they are, but I think that if you look at football generally, the sport is only going to get bigger, in terms of coverage, involvement and following. It is, without doubt, the world sport and it needs to continue to be that, so you can't become complacent.

I think we also have to ensure that the players are protected as far as workload is concerned, given the intensity and speed of the modern-day game. The players are the product, and you've got to protect the product to ensure that it remains attractive.

How important do you feel are the words 'respect' and 'fair play' in football?

For me, it's crucial, whether it's respect for the referee, or respect for the opposition, the traditions, etc. Football is a very emotive game, and you can have decisions that go against you at crucial times, and I've seen people overreact and not show respect. I think that UEFA is working very hard in this area, and we certainly need to continue to push the Respect campaign.

Finally, if you had one football dream in the future, what would it be?

For England to win the World Cup again. I was nine when they won it in 1966. I remember that day. I watched the match with my father. It was amazing. Nowadays, you see how the players of 1966 are still revered. As an Englishman, I'd love England to win it once more. 🇬🇧

a marvellous goal by Ryan Giggs, weaving his way past several Arsenal players from the halfway line before finishing emphatically in the FA Cup semi-final replay. Both goals were key moments in helping United to win the league, cup and Champions League 'treble' that year.

And the best match?

I was privileged to be the chief executive of Manchester United – and, therefore, I saw many great, great matches.

When you watch football today, which teams and players excite you?

I think there are skills in different areas. Football changes, it goes in cycles. Barcelona at their height were really impressive. I'm impressed by the sheer skill of some of the top-class players, and the way they've looked after themselves and continued to develop. For example, I admire [Cristiano] Ronaldo. Manchester United had him as a youngster, and he went to [Real] Madrid, and I feel admiration at the way that he's developed since then, and how focused he's been, how he continues to evolve his game to make sure he's still one of the very top players in world football.



"Financial fair play has worked, in particular in stemming the massive losses that were being made by some clubs."

ANDORRA

www.faf.ad

UEFA PRESIDENT VISITS ANDORRA

XAVI BONET

 On 19 January, Aleksander Čeferin became the first UEFA president to visit the Andorran Football Federation (FAF). He was accompanied by the UEFA general secretary, Theodore Theodoridis, and UEFA's national associations director, Zoran Laković.

The UEFA delegation began by visiting the FAF headquarters, where they held talks with the FAF president, Víctor Santos, and general secretary, Tomàs Gea. They met all the FAF staff before being greeted by the Andorran prime minister, Antoni Martí, and sports minister, Olga Gelabert.

The UEFA officials concluded their visit with a very special event for Andorran football, the start of the construction of the FAF's new La Massana football



village, in the presence of the mayor of La Massana, David Baró. The UEFA president signed a football that was buried during the ceremony held to commemorate the laying of the foundation stone of the new facility. The centre will include a football pitch, a futsal arena, a seven-a-side football pitch and a 100-space car park. The construction work is expected to take one year.

AZERBAIJAN

www.affa.az

BAYIL TRAINING CENTRE OPENS ITS DOORS

ULVIYYA NAJAFOVA



 The Bayil training centre officially opened its doors on 20 December in an opening ceremony attended by the president of the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA), Rovnag Abdullayev, and members of the AFFA executive committee. The centre is located at Bayil Stadium in Baku. After the ribbon-cutting ceremony, the guests were given a guided tour.

The centre is a three-story building consisting of fitness room, office space, accommodation, laundry and café, toilets

and wash rooms, etc. and is equipped with all the necessary equipment, including the latest training equipment, fitness and office equipment and furniture. The centre's 16 rooms can accommodate up to 36 players and coaches at a time.

The construction of the centre was funded by UEFA, and it will be used by the Azerbaijan national teams and FC Sabail on the basis of a mutual agreement between the AFFA and the club. "I'd like to thank everyone who has supported this ambitious project. It is going to have a huge impact on football in Azerbaijan," said the AFFA president. "I am certain that the sports staff at the centre will be working hard to fully realise the centre's potential and to turn young athletes' dreams into reality."

AUSTRIA

www.oefb.at

FOCUS ON FANS AT UEFA WORKSHOP IN VIENNA

CARMEN REDL

 The Austrian capital hosted the second UEFA workshop for supporter liaison officers (SLOs) on 21 and 22 December. Organised by UEFA in cooperation with SD Europe, the two-day event brought together 51 representatives from 45 national associations to discuss current fan-related topics.

Looking ahead to EURO 2020, UEFA hopes to appoint an SLO for each association to mediate between its national team and fans. Already well established at club level, SLOs have so far been the exception rather than the rule where national associations are concerned. The Austrian Football Association, which already employs an SLO, and the Austrian Bundesliga told the delegates about the measures that have been taken in this area in Austrian football. SLOs from Djurgårdens IF, Brøndby IF und KAA Gent also suggested some ways in which national associations could engage with their supporters.

In summary, all those present agreed that it is vital for football that fans are given more of a voice. Even though there are differences between countries and their individual approaches, all the stakeholders share the same objective of wanting to create a safe and accessible environment for football fans. This can only be achieved through open communication and dialogue with supporter groups.



AWARDS TO ENCOURAGE THE NEXT GENERATION

GLEB STAKHOVSKY

 The second annual Star Ball grassroots football award ceremony was held at the headquarters of the Football Federation of Belarus (ABFF) on 16 December. Awards were presented for the best players in the Under-15, Under-16, Under-17 and Under-18 categories, plus Best Youth Coach, Person

of the Year, and Best Grassroots Leader. As many as 120 nominees came from all over the country in the hope of taking an award away with them.

The Person of the Year award went to Nikolay Murashko, who built an artificial pitch for his private football academy, a project of considerable significance



in Belarus, where a lack of facilities is common. The Best Grassroots Leader was awarded to a physical education teacher, Elena Otchik, who has organised a large number of festivals and tournaments in her small town of Kalinkavichy.

This year's event attracted a great deal of interest from sponsors, who gave many valuable presents to the three best nominees in each award category.

Siarhei Safaryan, the ABFF general secretary, and Igor Krushenko, the senior men's national team head coach, played an active role handing out the awards during the ceremony.

Grassroots football for children and teenagers is one of the ABFF's priorities. We strongly believe that this is the way to lay the foundations for future football success in Belarus. This ceremony gives us an opportunity to show our very special stakeholders, such as children, children's coaches and grassroots leaders who work with children, that the ABFF is at hand and ready to encourage them in every way possible.

OFFICIAL VISIT AND NEW HEAD COACH

FEDJA KRVAVAC

 At the end of the year, the UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, and UEFA's director of national associations, Zoran Laković, paid their first official visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina, meeting the staff of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Football Federation along with the country's presidency and council of ministers.

One of the major topics under discussion was assistance in improving facilities. The UEFA president emphasised that UEFA was prepared to help the country to improve the quality of its football infrastructure. "UEFA has received guarantees from state institutions that they are ready to improve the quality of the infrastructure," he said. "That's the cornerstone to improving the football and the results."

The new year began with Robert Prosinečki being appointed as the new head coach of the senior men's national



team, replacing Mehmed Bazdarević. Prosinečki is already well known in the region as one of the best players in both Croatia and the former Yugoslavia. In his previous position as head coach, he led

the Azerbaijan national team to three victories in the qualifiers for the 2018 World Cup in Russia (two against San Marino and one against Norway) and a draw (against the Czech Republic). Although the team eventually did not qualify for the World Cup, nor did it finish bottom of its qualifying group.

Before that, Prosinečki coached Crvena zvezda (Red Star Belgrade), winning the Serbian Cup in 2012. He then went on to Turkish club Kayserispor, leading the team to a historic result – fifth place in the Turkish league. And for four years, he was assistant to Slaven Bilić on the bench of the Croatian national team. "I am honoured to have been chosen, especially before the next European Championship qualifiers," said Prosinečki. "I will do all I can to ensure we compete with the best players, both from our own premier league and from other European leagues," he added.

BULGARIA

www.bfunion.bg

ALEKSANDER ČEFERIN IN SOFIA

NIKOLAY DYULGEROV



The UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, visited Bulgaria on 11 December for meetings with the country's prime minister, Boyko Borisov, sports minister Krasen Kralev, the president of the Bulgarian Football Union (BFU), Borislav Mihaylov, and various local mayors. Praising the work of the BFU and the valuable cooperation of the local authorities, the UEFA president noted that the football association, state and local authorities all clearly wanted to support the game and work together for the good of football. "The infrastructure here is very good," he added, "and the national training centre is one of the best in Europe."

The UEFA president also praised the work of Borislav Mihaylov, a veteran of the UEFA Executive Committee. In particular, he highlighted the BFU president's commitment to the welfare of the game and to protecting the interests of Bulgarian football. He then reflected

on UEFA's role, projects and financial support, in particular through its HatTrick programme, which makes significant funding available to all UEFA member associations year on year and without which Bulgaria's national training centre would not have been possible.

Aleksander Čeferin talked about preparations for EURO 2020, which he said appeared to be on track. "Of course, the challenges of a project like this are significant, with multiple different countries, currencies and legislations."

The BFU president, meanwhile, outlined his organisation's future plans, stating that although it could not build stadiums, as that comes under the government's remit, the BFU can work on smaller-scale infrastructure projects, such as pitches. After a successful year for Bulgarian football, with the senior men's national team beating the Netherlands and Sweden and the Under-19s qualifying for the final round of their European



Championship, the BFU is continuing to invest. "Our finances are healthier than ever before," said Mihaylov. "and we have around €3m over four years to invest through the current HatTrick programme. We intend to invest this money where it is most needed – in academies, pitches, mini-pitches, and stadium infrastructure," he explained.

Bulgaria's sports minister, Krasen Kralev, concluded: "We are extremely happy with our cooperation with the BFU. We have already built nine pitches, and we're upgrading facilities year on year. I'm delighted to see that our school and children's football project is also going very well. The BFU has our total support. Our priority is youth development and the sports ministry will do all it can to help."

CROATIA

www.hns-cff.hr

DAVOR ŠUKER REMAINS IN THE PRESIDENT'S SEAT

TOMISLAV PACAK



In December the assembly of the Croatian Football Federation (CFF) re-elected incumbent president Davor Šuker for another four years. He has stood at the helm of the Croatian FA since 2012, when he replaced long-serving president Vlatko Marković.

With his second term due to last until 2021, Davor Šuker expressed excitement at having the chance to continue his contribution to football in Croatia, and stressed the importance of teamwork and continuity, both on and off the pitch. He also encouraged fans to "visit Russia next summer in great numbers to support Croatia in the World Cup."

Head coach Zlatko Dalić expressed his respect for all three of Croatia's opponents, while also affirming his belief that Croatia's place in the World Cup is well-deserved.

This coming autumn, just months after the World Cup, Croatia will compete in the top tier (League A) of the inaugural UEFA Nations League, in which the Croatian national team will play Spain and England.

Zlatko Dalić praised the Nations League as "a great idea and an excellent competition to replace the majority of friendlies". He predicted that the competition would be a hit among Croatian fans and that they would



be especially excited at the prospect of seeing more of team captain Luka Modrić.

In other news, the Croatian fair play committee celebrated its tenth anniversary in December, and both the Croatian FA and its president were honoured to receive the committee's thanks for their unwavering commitment to supporting fair play initiatives.

On a sad note, Croatian football has also suffered a tragic loss with the passing of futsal player Mate Čuljak. The late Croatia international will be greatly missed.

CYPRUS

www.cfa.com.cy

MID-SEASON SEMINAR FOR TOP MATCH OFFICIALS

CONSTANTINOS SHIAMBOULLIS



Top Cypriot match officials recently attended their three-day mid-season winter seminar in Ayia Napa. The event got off to a flying start with Yo-Yo tests and Ariet assistant referee intermittent endurance tests.

Joachim Spitz, a UEFA fitness expert, oversaw the exercises and was extremely impressed with the overall fitness levels. With the exception of one referee who was unwell, all those taking part successfully completed the tests – an all-time first.



UEFA coach Maciej Wierzbowski took the assistant referees through practical offside exercises and provided them with instant video feedback.

The programme also included various technical topics presented by UEFA refereeing officer Hugh Dallas, and Costas Kapitanis from the Cyprus Football Association (CFA).

Hugh Dallas has been very pleased with the increased level of performance of the match officials since he became involved in their training two years ago. However, he acknowledged that there was always room for improvement and there would be no let-up in the efforts to reduce the number of errors on the field.

Saavas Konstantinou, the technical director of the CFA, delivered an interesting presentation on time management and the importance for referees to restart play as soon as possible to keep time lost to a minimum.

DENMARK

www.dbu.dk

'FOOTBALL IS MEDICINE'

JAKOB HØYER



The evidence is strong: playing football is broad spectrum medicine and can be used in the prevention and treatment of lifestyle diseases.

A strong evidence-based programme, Football Fitness, was launched in Denmark in 2011 combining the health and fitness effects of playing football with the social aspects of the game. The long-term aim was to improve the health of the adult population and recruit more adult football players.

In January this year more than 200 scientists, practitioners and healthcare workers assembled at the Cidade do Futebol headquarters of the Portuguese Football Federation (FPF) in Lisbon for the first international Football is Medicine conference, organised by the FPF in partnership with the Danish FA, the University of Southern Denmark (SDU) and UEFA.

After a welcome by Fernando Gomes, the FPF president, SDU professor Peter Krstrup presented

results from 130 scientific papers. He concluded that football training "combines strength training, endurance training and interval training, and that Football Fitness is medicine, football is for all and football is for life." The vice-president of the Danish FA, Bent Clausen, described the Football Fitness concept and how it was run in Denmark. Well-structured and straightforward, sessions started with a proper warm-up, included balance and strength exercises, and combined a variety of well-established drills and ball exercises, along with small-sided football games.

Football Fitness does not focus on performance and picking the starting 11 for the weekend matches. It is all about recreational football with like-minded people, when it suits you, concentrating on exercise, fun and togetherness. The programme has proved so popular it is now running in more than 300 Danish football clubs, or about 20% of the national total.



Football Fitness can be adjusted for participants across their lifespan, independently of gender, fitness and football skills. Moreover, as small-sided games are central to the concept, training can be organised irrespective of the number of participants, making the programme very flexible. Nor is a dedicated football coach necessary, with groups run by a team leader trained in the Football Fitness coaching course that is now available all over Denmark.

Football Fitness has great potential in health promotion and for recruiting new football players. Because Football Fitness is for everyone and can be played everywhere, but also because it's healthy, fun and social. After the success of this first international Football is Medicine conference, a second is to be held at the University of Southern Denmark on 25 and 26 January 2019.

ENGLAND

www.thefa.com

THE FA PEOPLE'S CUP IS BACK

NICK SMITH



The FA People's Cup is back following a very special launch event at St George's Park on 12 January, turning dreams of lifting a trophy at Wembley Stadium into a reality for people all over the country. And with registration to the free-to-enter five-a-side tournament now open to amateur players of all ages and abilities, people can dust off their boots in preparation for the nation's largest and most inclusive small-sided football competition.

To celebrate the launch, a diverse group of amateur players came together at the national football centre to take part in The FA's first-ever specialist five-a-side training camp, taking the opportunity to hone their five-a-side football skills ahead of this year's tournament. Attendees, including Under-14 girls and boys, university students, disability players and walking footballers, took part in expert sessions with elite FA coaches, with advice on perfecting the often match-deciding 'one-step penalty' and mastering the 'showboating skills' needed to beat your opponents in style.

The participants were also able to follow in the footsteps of England's 28 national teams by playing on the pitches



at St George's Park, which will host the finals of this season's FA People's Cup for the first time in the competition's history.

One of the teams at the training camp were the Crawley Old Girls, who reached the finals of last year's FA People's Cup in the Women's Vets category (Over-35s). The team, who describe themselves as "a group of 'old' girls learning to play football while having fun and making new friends", are a great example of the inclusive and positive nature of the competition.

Les Howie, head of grassroots football at The FA, said: "The FA People's Cup is extremely important to grassroots football in this country, providing a fantastic opportunity for people to play the game we all love. With 18 categories welcoming a truly diverse set of entrants, this competition really is for all. And with the added appeal of a final at St George's Park, 2018's tournament is set to be the best yet."

FAROE ISLANDS

www.football.fo

LOOKING FORWARD TO THE NATIONS LEAGUE

TERJI NIELSEN



On the whole, Atli Gregersen, the captain of the Faroese national team, is pleased with the outcome of the draw for the group stage in the UEFA Nations League, which put the Faroe Islands alongside Kosovo, Malta and Azerbaijan.

"This group suits us fairly well," he said. "Drawing Kosovo from the lowest pot was a bit unlucky, but the other two nations are reasonable opponents for us. We have done well against Malta at international

level, and our Under-21 team has previously done well against Azerbaijan," he added.

Gregersen hopes Faroese football fans will come out in force to cheer the team on at their home matches.

"We have a fair chance against all three nations in our group," he said, "and our matches at home could be decisive. With good results at home and some reasonable results away, there might be a chance for us to go quite a long way."

ESTONIA

www.jalgpall.ee

NEW START FOR THE WOMEN'S GAME

MAARJA SAULEP



The Estonian Football Association (EJL) has appointed Jarmo Matikainen as head coach of the women's national team to replace Indrek Zelinski. Matikainen previously



Jarmo Matikainen

coached the Wales national women's team and Finland Under-17s and Under-19s, in addition to serving as the assistant coach of the Canadian and

Finnish senior women's national teams. "His experience coaching in Wales and helping women's football there will benefit us," explained Anne Rei, EJL general secretary, "because their situation was similar to ours now. We need to continue building a sustainable structure."

"If you love football like I do and you want to be involved in coaching at international level, then this opportunity is too good to turn down," said Matikainen. "I am really looking forward to working in Estonia. I believe we can achieve many great things with the women's game here." Besides his duties as head coach, the 57-year old Finn will oversee the overall development of women's and girls' football.

"Jarmo will also work very closely with the youth team coaches, giving them advice, helping coordinate their work and acting as mentor to the national youth teams," Rei commented.

Matikainen sees a bright future ahead. "We can be successful in many ways, even if we don't have the resources all the bigger nations have. If we work hard, I'm absolutely confident we will do well here," said Matikainen. "It doesn't matter if we don't win every game or bring home trophies, but we do need to make sure that all the girls have the opportunity to play and practise and feel part of the football family in Estonia."

FRANCE

www.fff.fr

NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH URBANSOCCER

JEAN-BAPTISTE SCHMIDT



On 11 January, the French Football Federation (FFF) signed a partnership agreement with the UrbanSoccer five-a-side football network. Under the agreement, which runs until 30 June 2020, UrbanSoccer centres and local authorities are able to offer special privileges to clubs and registered players who wish to play five-a-side football in a suitable, high-quality environment. The partnership involves 29 UrbanSoccer centres and 19 districts.

The key features of the partnership are:

- Discounted pitch hire for clubs and registered players (25% discount during off-peak hours for clubs and 20% discount for registered players)
- Free hosting of annual events organised by districts and leagues
- French national team birthday offer for UrbanSoccer customers
- Organisation of UrbanSoccer events at Clairefontaine
- Installation of fan zones in UrbanSoccer centres during the 2018 World Cup



Marc Debarbat, president of the amateur football league, said: "This partnership will enable us to serve our members even better by offering them new opportunities to use high-quality facilities at preferential rates."

Julien Falgoux, director of UrbanSoccer, added: "We are delighted with this partnership. We will benefit from the image and appeal of the FFF and the French national team. We are their number one supporters. Together, we will continue to develop five-a-side football and offer our players new forms of entertainment and service."

GERMANY

www.dfb.de

LAHM NAMED SIXTH HONORARY CAPTAIN

ARNE LEYENBERG



In 2017, when Philipp Lahm retired as an FC Bayern München player with yet another German championship medal in his pocket, an extraordinary career was brought to a fitting end. He had won eight Bundesliga titles, six German Cups and the UEFA Champions League to boot. His crowning moment as a footballer, however, came in Rio de Janeiro on 13 July 2014, when he captained the German national team

Getty Images



to World Cup victory in the legendary Maracana stadium. At the German Football Association's extraordinary assembly in December, Lahm followed in the footsteps of Fritz Walter, Uwe Seeler, Franz Beckenbauer, Lothar Matthäus and Jürgen Klinsmann by becoming the DFB's sixth honorary captain.

HUNGARY

www.mlsz.hu/en.mlsz.hu

BEST OF THE BEST IN BUDAPEST

MÁRTON DINNYÉS



Hungarian footballers past and present were honoured at the 60th Sportspeople of the Year awards gala at Budapest's national theatre on 11 January.

The star-studded event saw Hungary and VfL Wolfsburg striker Zsanett Jakabfi named Woman Footballer of the Year, having won the 2017 German league and cup titles and been the UEFA Women's Champions League's joint top scorer in 2016/17. In the men's category, the top scorer in last season's MLS in the USA, Hungarian international striker Nemanja Nikolic of Chicago Fire, garnered the most votes from members of the

Hungarian Sports Journalists Association.

The 2017 Goal of the Year came from Ferencváros player Joseph Paintsil for his spectacular finish against Videoton FC in Hungary's premier league.

And finally, the Lifetime Achievement award this year went to Kálmán Mészöly of Vasas SC. The former international defender was capped 61 times, won a bronze medal at the 1964 European Championship and played in both the 1962 and 1966 World Cups before also coaching Hungary at the 1982 World Cup. The 'Blond Rock', as the 76-year-old is known, was presented with his award by Hungarian Football Federation

(MLSZ) vice-president Sándor Berzi.

On the initiative of the MLSZ, blind footballer István Szabó was invited to present the Disabled Sportsman of the Year award to fencer Richárd Osváth. Alongside some of world football's biggest names such as Lionel Messi and Paul Pogba, Szabó is one of the amateur stars of UEFA's #EqualGame social responsibility campaign to promote inclusion, diversity and accessibility in football throughout Europe. The short film produced to publicise the campaign, which has the full support of Hungarian football, was shown at the gala.

ITALY

www.figc.it

WORLD'S FIRST PERMANENT VAR TRAINING CENTRE UNVEILED AT COVERCIANO

DIEGO ANTENZIO

 The Italian Football Association (FIGC) has unveiled the world's first permanent training centre dedicated to instructing match officials in the use of video assistant refereeing (VAR). The new unit at the FIGC technical centre in Coverciano opened its doors in January this year, a few months after the federation reached an agreement with British company Hawk-Eye – which already supplies sports technologies to FIFA, Serie A and numerous other leagues including the Bundesliga, the English Premier League and MLS in the USA – for the provision of equipment and specialised technical support.

The role of technical director at the new unit has been entrusted to Roberto Rosetti. Not only has Rosetti overseen the use of VAR in Italy since it was introduced at the start of the season; his experience in this emerging field and the successful launch of the system in Italy have been acknowledged by FIFA, which has asked him to head the VAR project for its international competitions and selected

Coverciano to host a refereeing seminar ahead of the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

Other national associations and international bodies will also be able to send match officials to Coverciano, allowing referees from all over the world to learn how VAR is to be applied in their respective competitions and benefit from an unrivalled combination of cutting-edge technology and FIFA- and IFAB-approved training programmes, as well as the other facilities at the FIGC's technical HQ, where it has invested over €3m in renovations and upgrades over the last two years.

The work carried out by the FIGC, Lega Serie A and the Italian referees association (AIA) in trialling the VAR system in recent months means that the Italian game now boasts a unique wealth of experience and expertise, which will no doubt benefit the global development of the sport in years to come, and help cement Coverciano's place as one of the leading coaching and development centres in world football.

"All we want is to make football fairer, forge ahead with our ideas and



improve our technical, technological and training skill set as part of a project that represents a landmark in the development of world football," explained Rosetti. "I would like to congratulate the FIGC, Lega Serie A and the AIA for the way they have joined forces so quickly and effectively, and Italy's referees for all their hard work and enthusiasm in getting behind the project."

The FIGC CEO, Michele Uva, added: "Thanks to our far-sightedness, our organisational capabilities and, above all, the excellent work of Italy's referees and the AIA, the FIGC is increasingly regarded as a pioneer in specialised training and the application of new technologies."

KOSOVO

www.ffk-kosova.com

FOSTERING REFEREEING TALENT

DITURIE HOXHA

 As part of its preparations for admission to the UEFA Referee Convention, the Football Federation of Kosovo (FFK) has launched a talent and mentor programme aimed at developing promising match officials. The programme was launched at a two-day seminar led by UEFA Referee Convention Panel specialist Alan Snoddy and attended by four referees, seven assistant referees and five mentors. The programme will be coordinated by the FFK referee manager, Visar Kastrati, who will ensure that the talent-mentor relationship is productive and there is regular feedback to monitor progress and identify any issues.

The referees' fitness levels were assessed in a Yo-Yo test, while their technical knowledge was examined with a video test and a 'severity of the challenge' exercise. "The next generation of talented officials are now being supported and educated and they must make the most of this great opportunity to maximise their potential," said Alan Snoddy.

Meanwhile, the FFK integrity officer, Ejup Osmani, conducted workshops throughout Kosovo in December and January to increase awareness and prevent match-fixing among 13 to 19-year-olds.



Valon Berisha

In other news, the achievements of the FFK and Kosovan football were celebrated at a gala event in Pristina in January, where several stakeholders were honoured for their contributions to developing Kosovan football, and Valon Berisha received the player of the year award.

ANDRIS VAŅINS NAMED PLAYER OF THE YEAR

TOMS ĀRMANIS

 For the third year in a row and the fifth time in all, FC Zürich goalkeeper Andris Vaņins has been named Latvia's best player, making him the award record holder. It is also the fifth year in a row that the player of the year has been a goalkeeper, Andris Vaņins having received the honour in 2015 and 2016, following his previous awards in 2008 and 2013.

Last year Andris Vaņins was handed the captain's armband for the Latvian national team, following the retirement of Kaspars Gorkšs from national team football. Vaņins has played for his country 87 times to date.

In other awards, Olga Ševcova was named best female player for the third time in her career, while Roberts Uldriķis and Anastasija Fjodorova were voted best youth players of 2017. Three awards went to Russian Evgeny Kozlov – formerly with Latvian champions Spartaks Jūrmala – who was named joint top scorer, as well as best midfielder and best premier league



player of the year. Last but not least, Nigerian striker Adeleke Akinola Akinyemi took two awards (joint top

scorer and best premier league striker), as did Alvis Dubovs (top scorer and best player in the Latvian first league).

NEW YEAR, NEW LOOK

ANTON BANZER

 By combining the national colours of blue, red and gold with the principality's crown, mountains and love of football, the Liechtenstein Football Association (LFV) has come up with a strong new logo, which it unveiled to the public at a brand launch event on 29 January.

The new logo is the visible part of a comprehensive two-year rebranding process undertaken by the LFV with the support of UEFA. A key part of the process was to define the association's vision, mission and values, which are summed up in the new slogan: 'One Game. One Team. For the Country'.



LITHUANIA

www.lff.lt

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL IN THE SPOTLIGHT

JUSTAS KONTRIMAS



Lithuania's women's Under-17 national team have begun their preparations ahead of this year's European Women's Under-17 Championship final tournament from 9 to 21 May, for which Lithuania is the host nation and therefore qualifies automatically. Matches will take place in three cities: Alytus, Šiauliai and Marijampolė, all of which have deep-rooted football traditions.

Former Lithuanian women's international Ieva Kibirskūtis, who now coaches the women's Under-17s, offered some thoughts about the squad building: "They are getting together more as a group. We have players coming in and out but the girls welcome them and take it all in their stride. In April we have 20 players coming to the camp. Now everything is really about trying to see



who makes it and who doesn't, who we see being there and who needs to step up their game. I think we are going to

surprise a lot of people in May when they see how strong girls can be."

Loreta Rogačiova, a member of the current women's Under-17 squad, is delighted with the experience: "We feel the progress and at every training session the coaches are preparing us in new ways. That said, we have to improve. We can't wait for the tournament and we want to show that Lithuania can really play football."

Meanwhile, LadyGolas (Lady Goal), the biggest schoolgirl futsal tournament in the Baltic states, is set for a second season, with 371 teams registered to take part. The competition serves as a platform for girls to step into women's football. Having received backing from UEFA and FIFA, the tournament encourages more girls to try football and aspire to higher goals.

MALTA

www.mfa.com.mt

MALTESE FANS AMONG THE BEST-BEHAVED IN UEFA COMPETITIONS

KEVIN AZZOPARDI



The UEFA fair play rankings for the 2016/17 season make good reading for the Maltese clubs and national teams. Published annually, the latest table reflects the results obtained from all UEFA competition matches played at both club and national team level between 1 July 2016 and 30 June 2017.

The Maltese fans were among the best-behaved in Europe last season. This is laid out in the classification for spectators' behaviour, with Malta coming in joint third in this category, alongside Iceland and the Faroe Islands, with 8.923 points. Finland topped the chart for fan behaviour with a score of 9.187, closely followed by Latvia with 9.117.

Malta ranks 36th in the overall UEFA fair play rankings with a total 8.079 for 42 matches but achieved the sixth best progression among the 55 associations.



This significant improvement is reflected in Malta's overall fair play score in 2016/17 – 8.079, up from 7.791 in 2015/16. Only Georgia, Moldova, Croatia, Latvia and Montenegro made greater strides in the rankings.

In the overall fair play rankings, Iceland stole top place with 8.51 for 42 matches played. The Netherlands followed in second place and Poland came in third. Only associations whose teams collectively played at least 35 matches were taken into account for the 2016/17 UEFA fair play competition. In other news, Malta's Centenary Stadium buzzed with excitement

in December as around 150 girls from local primary schools took part in an open day. Only 8% of the girls are registered with local clubs, yet they eagerly participated in activities overseen by qualified MFA coaches, club coaches and members of the Malta national women's Under-19 team.

This event was organised by the grassroots and women's department in the Malta FA's technical centre, in collaboration with SportMalta and the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE), as part of their shared mission to develop grassroots football for women.

ALEXANDRU SPIRIDON APPOINTED NATIONAL COACH

PRESS OFFICE

 The Football Association of Moldova (FMF) recently announced the appointment of 57-year-old Alexandru Spiridon as the



new national team coach, taking over from Russian coach Igor Dobrovolski. Spiridon already managed the Moldovan national team in 2001 and will now guide his country through its qualifying campaign for the UEFA Nations League. Moldova have been drawn in Group D2 alongside Belarus, Luxembourg and San Marino.

Pavel Cebanu, the FMF president, welcomed Spiridon at a media conference in Chişinău, while Spiridon himself was pleased to be back coaching the national team. "Our goal now is to win the group for our supporters," he said.

Born in Edineţ in 1960, Alexandru Spiridon played for the Moldovan national team and various clubs (Nistru Chişinău, SKA Kyiv, Zaria Luhansk, Zaria Bălţi, Zimbru Chişinău and Tiligul Tiraspol). He was five-time champion

of Moldova and won the Moldovan footballer of the year award in 1992. He scored the first-ever goal in the history of the national team of Moldova. He then went on to coach Zimbru Chişinău, Tiligul Tiraspol, the national Under-21 team, the senior national team, Unisport Chişinău and Nistru Otaci. Between 2004 and 2017 Spiridon was the assistant coach under famous Romanian Mircea Lucescu at Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukraine), contributing to the team's winning the UEFA Cup in 2009, Ukrainian championship (8 times), Ukrainian Cup (6 times) and Ukrainian Super Cup (7 times), before following Lucescu to Zenit Saint Petersburg (Russia).

Spiridon made his second debut at the helm of the national team in a friendly match against South Korea in January this year.

RESIDENTIAL COURSE KICK-STARTS BUSY YEAR FOR ELITE PLAYERS

NIGEL TILSON

 The Irish Football Association's development programme for young elite players, JD Club NI, has hit the ground running in 2018. A busy schedule for the year ahead, across age groups ranging from the Under-10s to the Under-17s, got under way with a residential course for the Under-16s.

An extensive training schedule for the Under-13s to the Under-17s is up and running at the Mid-Ulster Sports Arena in Cookstown, while the JD Club NI Performance School at Integrated College Dungannon and three regional centres across Northern Ireland are hosting sessions for the Under-10s to Under-13s. JD Club NI players will be participating in various tournaments across Europe in 2018, from the Rotterdam Cup in the



Netherlands to the Madrid Cup in Spain. However, the emphasis this year across most of the age groups is to participate in games in Britain, where Northern Ireland players' talents can be spotted by full-time professional clubs in England, Scotland and Wales.

The Under-16s, in particular, have a busy competitive schedule as they build towards representing Northern Ireland in this year's Victory Shield. The schoolboys' tournament, in which they will compete against the Under-16 teams of Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland, is due to be staged in the Republic of Ireland in October. Matches against Slovakia, Austria, Finland and Estonia and in various other tournaments will give them plenty of game time in the run-up to the Victory Shield.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

www.fai.ie

SHINING A LIGHT ON GLOW FOOTBALL

GARETH MAHER



Bringing fun into football is a key goal of the Football Association of Ireland, which is how the concept of 'glow football' came about. Led by the women's football department and supported by development officers around the country, the initiative was trialled in Newcastle West, County Limerick, late last year.

Girls from three age groups – Under-14s, Under-16s and Under-19s – were invited to take part in the trial, and sessions were devised that catered to the different ages and ensured that everyone could enjoy the experience.

Played indoors in the dark wearing high-visibility vests, with colourful pitch markings and a luminous football, glow



football gives players the opportunity to experience futsal in a fun and interactive way.

There are plans to roll out glow football for different age groups around the country over the coming months.

ROMANIA

www.frf.ro

RESPECT CUP PROMOTES AN EQUAL GAME

PAUL ZAHARIA



#EqualGame has a special resonance within Romanian society and the Romanian Football Federation (FRF) has decided to develop partnerships with various national and international organisations. One of these is FDP-Protagonists in education, which joined forces with the FRF towards the end of 2017 to organise the first Respect Cup, a competition aimed at 42 children aged between 8 and 11 who also attend a socio-sports school.

The school was launched by FDP in 2013 in cooperation with the Real Madrid Foundation and is intended to prevent children dropping out of school. Each year, 65 children from very poor families or families with special issues are encouraged to stay at school by getting them involved in weekly training sessions run according to methodology devised by Real Madrid. Additionally, the children visit football clubs, meet well-known athletes and artists, and receive private tutoring from ten volunteer high-school pupils. In 2017,

none of the children involved dropped out of school.

Now, thanks to its partnership with the FRF, FDP has reached one more milestone in its noble efforts, the Respect Cup. Six indoor matches were played by mixed teams and the points system was also mixed: one-third of the final number of points came from each team's match score (3 points for a win, 2 points for a draw, 1 point for a defeat); the second third (marks from 1 to 3) were awarded by an FRF representative for adhering to the main values (team spirit, equality, respect, motivation, self-esteem, autonomy, health); and finally, the last third comprised marks awarded by the children to each other depending on team behaviour on the pitch.

Ultimately there was a winning team, but the main achievement was of a higher order. Everybody was awarded an FRF medal and all the children were happy to have taken part, because they all realised the value of an #EqualGame.



FEDOR CHALOV THE WONDERKID

EKATERINA GRISHENKOVA

 In December, 19-year-old Fedor Chalov, who plays for PFC CSKA Moskva and has played for his country in every youth category, won the 2017 First Five award, which is presented to the best young footballer playing in the Russian Football Premier League.

First Five was set up by the Children's Football League in 2002. Nominees must meet several criteria: be a Russian citizen, be under 21 years of age and have played in at least one-third of their club's matches during the year in question. The prize winner for 2017 was selected by representatives of the Russian Football Union, Russian Football Premier League, National Football League, Professional



Football League and Children's Football League, coaches of the national teams of Russia, and journalists.

The award ceremony was held under the auspices of the Russian Football Union in Moscow. Fedor Chalov attended the

event with his parents, Nikolay and Natalia, brother Daniil and sister Daria. In accordance with the First Five tradition, all laureates must do something unusual at the ceremony so Chalov, who studied music as a child, played the piano.

Chalov was born in Moscow in April 1998. He attended the PFC CSKA football academy and made his debut as a forward for the club's first team in the Russian football championship, the Russian Cup and the UEFA Champions League in 2016. He won a silver medal with his club in the 2016/17 domestic championship, played in the 2015 Under-17 World Cup in Chile, and now plays for the Russian Under-21 team.

NEW CHALLENGES, NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND A NEW COACH

PRESS OFFICE

 After changes at the top of the San Marino Football Federation (FSGC) following elections just under a year ago, the national team has now undergone a renovation of its own. Pierangelo Manzaroli's four-year tenure as head coach of the national team is over and he has been replaced by Franco Varrella.

A former assistant to Arrigo Sacchi between 1995 and 1996, when Sacchi was head coach of the Italian national team, Varrella returns to San Marino ten years after his last managerial position – in charge of club side San Marino Calcio. "Destiny" was the word used by Varrella when he was unveiled to the press. The first-ever foreigner to take charge of the San Marino national side, he intends to continue working at Coverciano (the technical centre of the Italian Football Federation), where he teaches football tactics and technique, as much as he can.

His first official duty was to attend the draw for the first edition of the UEFA



Nations League in Lausanne, Switzerland. The new competition has received the firm backing of the San Marino federation. Varrella's team have been drawn in Group 2 of League D, alongside (in descending order based on the UEFA seeding system) Belarus, Luxembourg and Moldova.

This new chapter for San Marino football comes at the start of a year

that promises to be full of challenges and opportunities on and off the pitch, with the focus on growing and improving on every level, addressing technical shortcomings on the field and improving levels of professionalism and expertise off it. The FSGC hierarchy believe that the appointment of Varrella will help San Marino move forward on both these fronts.

SCOTLAND

www.scottishfa.co.uk

WOMEN INTERNATIONALS BEGIN THEIR COACHING JOURNEYS

MICHAEL LAMONT

 Six Scotland women's national team players have just reached the end of their 12-month UEFA B coaching diploma courses. They are current internationals Leanne Crichton, Joelle Murray, Christie Murray and Rachel Corsie, plus recently retired Gemma Fay and Leanne Ross.

During the past year, the players have focused on the design and delivery of coaching sessions, how to coach teams during matches, as well as video analysis, physical preparation and many other factors relating to individual and team performance.

The bespoke course for national team players is a continuation of the impressive coach education work being carried out in the women's game, with Scotland one of seven European nations



to have three full-time female coaches in charge of national teams.

A further 17 women recently obtained their Scottish FA C coaching licences, with more than 1,000 women in all having gained coaching qualifications in the course of 2017, a rise of more than 400 compared with 2016. The Scottish FA's coach education manager,

Greig Paterson, said: "The six players approached the Scottish FA to do their B licences, showing a desire to begin their coaching journeys. We are always striving to increase the number of qualified female coaches working in the game and recently delivered a women-only Scottish FA C licence course, which was well attended."

The captain of Scotland's women's national team, Rachel Corsie, said on completing the B course: "I've really enjoyed the course as coaching is something I am passionate about. There are more and more female coaches coming through now and I think that is only helped by having three full-time female coaches in Pauline MacDonald [women's U17s], Pauline Hamill [women's U19s] and Shelley Kerr [women's senior team]."

SERBIA

www.fss.rs

GOLDEN BALL AWARDS GO TO VLADAN MILOJEVIĆ AND VLADIMIR STOJKOVIĆ

UGLJESA VRBICA

 At the end of last year, the Football Association of Serbia announced the winners of its Golden Ball awards, which went deservedly to the FK Crvena Zvezda coach, Vladan Milojević, and to FK Partizan and national team goalkeeper Vladimir Stojković.

Vladan Milojević took over as coach of the red-and-whites last summer, and in the autumn, for the first time in ten years, he led them to the group stage of a European competition and from there, to their first European knockout stage in 25 years. "For me personally, this was a remarkable year. I was a step away from the Champions League, and then came an invitation from my beloved team. I had my family and my players by my side all the time, as well as the management who



gave me this opportunity. So the dream I had as a kid from Arandelovac to make it to Zvezda came true," he said.

For Vladimir Stojković, it is the first time he has won this award, doing so in the year the national team qualified for the World Cup, their first major competition in eight years, and Partizan made it to their first European knockout stage in 12 years. "I thank the Football Association of Serbia and all the national coaches who have supported me all these years. This award is the most important to me in my career. I thank Partizan, who gave

me the chance to defend again on the 'big stage,'" he said.

The president of the Football Association of Serbia, Slaviša Kokeza, welcomed the audience to the award ceremony, congratulated Vladan Milojević and Vladimir Stojković on their well-deserved awards, and said that this would be a historic year for Serbian football. "It is a great privilege to express my satisfaction with everything we achieved together this year, which undoubtedly has been the most successful of the past two decades. The results we have achieved make us proud, in particular the results of the A team, which has qualified for the World Cup, and I congratulate everyone who took part in the accomplishment of this goal," he said.

200 CAPS FOR RÓBERT TOMASCHEK

PETER SURIN



Former international and current national team administrator Róbert Tomaschek is the proud owner of no fewer than 200 caps – 50 earned as a player and the other 150 in his current managerial role.

Tomaschek was a player coveted by all the coaches. Honest, consistent and disciplined, he became an irreplaceable part of the new national team under Jozef Vengloš after Slovakia gained independence on 1 January 1993. In February 1994, the Slovak national team played their first official international tournament in the United Arab Emirates. Tomaschek was in the squad and made his debut for Slovakia in Sharjah on 2 February 1994. He was a permanent fixture in the national team until 6 June 2001, when he played his farewell national team match in Baku against Azerbaijan. During his international playing career, which came to an early and unexpected end, he earned 50 caps and scored four goals. He was not even 30 when injury forced him to hang up his boots. Then, in



August 2003, Ladislav Hudec, Slovakia's Under-16 coach at the time, asked him to join his coaching staff. He stayed with the Under-16 team for a while, then joined the Under-20 team for just one tournament, before being invited to join the staff of the senior national team.

Coach Dušan Galis, who took over the senior national team on 1 January 2004, was looking for someone who knew the world of football well, had experience, spoke fluent English and, most importantly, was trustworthy. Tomaschek fitted the bill perfectly. Moreover, Galis had been his coach at Slovan Bratislava, so the pair knew each other well. On 31 March 2004, Tomaschek kicked off the second chapter in his national team career – this time as team administrator.

He has worked with five coaches since then: Ján Kocian, Vladimír Weiss, the duo of Stanislav Griga and Michal Hipp and, finally, the current coach, Ján Kozák. He has been involved in 154 national team matches, but was banished to the stands for four of them after an emotional outburst.

His personal achievements include four Slovakian championship titles, three Slovakian Cups and four appearances in the player of the year top ten. As national team administrator, he took part in the 2010 World Cup and EURO 2016.

SAME COACH FOR WOMEN'S U23 AND MEN'S U17 TEAMS

ANDREAS NILSSON



The Swedish FA places great emphasis on its men's and women's national teams working together and has taken a new step in that direction by putting coach Ulf Kristiansson in charge of both the women's Under-23 and the men's Under-17 teams.

"It will be an exciting role. I think the Swedish FA is making a lot of progress with developing both the women's and men's teams right now, so for me personally it will be double the usual input. I will make the most of being part of both environments and ensure that my teams benefit in their development as well," Kristiansson says.



Ulf Kristiansson

Ulf Kristiansson has plenty of previous experience in both men's and women's football. His CV includes work with the men's national teams of Sweden and Nigeria, AIK in the Swedish top flight, and several of Sweden's winning women's Under-19 squads.

"Ulf is a modern coach who sees football before gender. He is innovative, and a leader who is a perfect fit for developing young players. We are excited about the idea of sharing a coach between the men's and women's departments, and think that's the way forward," says Lilie Persson, player development manager at the Swedish FA.

SWITZERLAND

www.football.ch

TOP REFEREES AND ASSISTANTS BECOME SEMI-PROFESSIONAL

PIERRE BENOIT



Since the start of this year, the Swiss Super League's elite referees and assistant referees have been able to reduce the number of hours they work in their day-to-day jobs thanks to a significant increase in the financial support they receive from the Swiss Football Association and the Swiss Football League.

In return for this pay rise, Switzerland's seven FIFA referees and six of the country's ten FIFA assistant referees have cut their working hours to a maximum of either 50% (referees) or 60% (assistant referees).



SFV

"Enabling our most talented and promising elite referees and assistant referees to turn semi-professional may seem a small step compared with the situation in other countries, but it is a milestone for Swiss football," says Cyril Zimmermann, former chief of Switzerland's top referees, who was appointed as the Swiss FA's first full-time elite referee manager on 1 December. He was replaced as head of elite refereeing by his former deputy, Dani Wermelinger, who was also a top referee for many years.

In order to fund semi-professional referees, the Swiss Football League is increasing its annual refereeing budget by CHF 500,000 to CHF 2.5 million, while the Swiss FA will contribute an extra CHF 190,000 to the total sum of CHF 3.25 million. These additional funds will cover the new payments to elite referees and assistants, as well as the cost of employing the elite referee manager. They will also be used to pay for additional basic and further training, together with investments in coaching and sports medicine.

"By enabling them to become semi-professional, the hope is that our top referees will enhance their reputation nationally and internationally and, through consistently good performances, push themselves forward for Champions League and top-level national team matches," says Heinrich Schifferle, president of the Swiss Football League, vice-president of the Swiss FA and a firm advocate of the new system.

"We are trying to lay foundations that will enable our elite referees to manage their increasing workload better. We want to give them more recovery time and reduce the number of injuries," says the Swiss FA's sporting director, Laurent Prince, adding that: "Modern football is developing at lightning speed and becoming increasingly fast and dynamic. In order to meet the challenges that this creates for our referees, we need to do all we can to make them and their assistants even fitter, both physically and metaphorically: they need to be fit for the future. Our aim is to see Swiss referees officiating at major final tournaments again in the not-too-distant future."

TURKEY

www.tff.org

FOOTBALL VALLEY EXPANSION

BAHRI ÇİFTÇİ



A new centre and administrative building are currently under construction in Riva near Istanbul as part of the Turkish Football Federation's vision to bring all its operations onto a single site it refers to as Football Valley.

Located just opposite the Hasan Doğan national team education and training facilities, the new complex will occupy a 38,000m² site and feature 26,000m² of indoor facilities hosting a conference hall, meeting rooms, an office building, an accommodation

block, press centre, prayer room, two restaurants and a spacious foyer. It will also be equipped with a fitness area, sauna, therapy pools, two natural turf football pitches, locker rooms, game hall and recreational areas for the athletes staying at the facility.

The whole facility is designed to provide ease of access to disabled people, and of the 82 bedrooms, 20 have been specially designed for people with disabilities.

An atrium and an indoor garden will complete the new complex.



TFF

LINING UP VOLUNTEERS FOR THE CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL

YURI MAZNYCHENKO

 The Football Federation of Ukraine (FFU) president, Andriy Pavelko, recently paid a visit to the team busy recruiting volunteers for the UEFA Champions League final in Kyiv in May and, while he was there, met some of the applicants.

"The volunteers have important roles to play, ranging from greeting guests to providing IT support," said the president. "It is important for all the participants and fans to have a positive impression of Ukraine, and I am pleased that so many people are prepared to give their time to

help ensure that it all goes smoothly."

The recruiters and candidates include many of the volunteers who helped out during EURO 2012. "The volunteers come from all walks of life," explained Oksana Lesyk, who is in charge of the recruitment process. "Some are still students, some are young professionals, and others are top managers or have already retired. In addition, 30% of applications have come from abroad."

To thank him for his support, Andriy Pavelko was presented with a volunteer's T-shirt.



Andriy Pavelko

RYAN GIGGS APPOINTED NATIONAL TEAM MANAGER

ROB DOWLING

 The Football Association of Wales (FAW) has announced the appointment of Ryan Giggs as the Wales national team manager on a four-year contract. Giggs played for Wales 64 times between 1991 and 2007 and was a member of the squad that

narrowly missed out on qualifying for EURO 2004, after losing a play-off match to Russia at the Millennium Stadium.

Following an illustrious playing career spanning over 23 years at Manchester United, Giggs's coaching career also began at Old Trafford in 2014, where

he was made interim manager towards the end of the 2013/14 season. Giggs was subsequently named assistant manager at Manchester United under Louis van Gaal, serving alongside him until July 2016.

"We are delighted to see Ryan appointed as the national team manager," said Jonathan Ford, the FAW chief executive. "With his vast experience playing, coaching and managing at the biggest club in the world, we are confident of a successful future for our national team." Following his appointment, Ryan Giggs expressed his pride at having been given the honour of managing the national team. "The challenges we have ahead of us with the Nations League and qualification for EURO 2020 excite me a great deal," he said. "I can't wait to start working with the players as we prepare for these crucial matches later in the year."

Giggs's first game as national team manager will be against the hosts in the 2018 China Cup in Nanning on 22 March.



FAW

BIRTHDAYS

Benny Jacobsen (Denmark, 1 March)
Peter Frymuth (Germany, 1 March)
Luis Medina Cantalejo (Spain, 1 March)
Damir Vrbanović (Croatia, 2 March)
Aleksandr Gvardis (Russia, 2 March)
Jenni Kennedy (England, 2 March)
Hans Lorenz (Germany, 3 March)
Zbigniew Boniek (Poland, 3 March)
Andy Gould (Scotland, 3 March)
Alexandru Deaconu (Romania, 3 March)
Carolin Greiner Mai (Germany, 3 March)
Patrick McGrath
 (Republic of Ireland, 4 March)
Crawford Wilson
 (Northern Ireland, 5 March)
Zoran Bahtijarević (Croatia, 5 March)
Boris Durlen (Croatia, 6 March)
Ichko Lozev (Bulgaria, 6 March)
Hervé Piccirillo (France, 6 March)
Dan Ashworth (England, 6 March)
Dušan Maravić (Serbia, 7 March)
Tomás Gea (Andorra, 7 March)
Josep Lluís Vilaseca Guasch
 (Spain, 8 March)
Kris Bellon (Belgium, 8 March)
Alexis Ponnet (Belgium, 9 March)
Vladimir Aleshin (Russia, 9 March)
Henk Kesler (Netherlands, 9 March)
Herbert Fandel (Germany, 9 March)
Lennard van Ruiven
 (Netherlands, 9 March) **40th**
Otar Giorgadze (Georgia, 9 March)
Mateo Beusan (Croatia, 10 March)
Ilkka Koho (Finland, 10 March) **60th**
Jasmin Baković
 (Bosnia and Herzegovina, 10 March)
Diana Andersen (Denmark, 10 March)
Lucien Kayser (Luxembourg, 11 March)
Olga Zhukovska (Ukraine, 11 March)
Vito Di Gioia (Italy, 11 March)
Jean-François Crucke
 (Belgium, 12 March)
Miroslav Vitković (Croatia, 12 March)
Thomas Partl (Austria, 13 March)
Neil Jardine (Northern Ireland, 14 March)
Lucia Knappkova (Slovakia, 14 March)
Nikola Prentić (Montenegro, 14 March)
Götz Dimanski (Germany, 15 March)
Michael Thomas Ross
 (Northern Ireland, 15 March)
Robert Malek (Poland, 15 March)
Simeon Tsolakidis (Greece, 17 March)
Christos Skapoullis (Cyprus, 18 March)

Marcello Nicchi (Italy, 18 March)
Paul Elliott (England, 18 March)
Marina Tashchyan (Armenia, 18 March)
Ronald Zimmermann (Germany, 19 March)
Mark Bos (Netherlands, 19 March)
Claude Kremer (Luxembourg, 19 March)
Sándor Csányi (Hungary, 20 March)
Eddie Foley
 (Republic of Ireland, 20 March)
Jim Boyce (Northern Ireland, 21 March)
Ginés Meléndez (Spain, 22 March)
Chris Georghiades (Cyprus, 22 March)
Michail Kassabov (Bulgaria, 22 March)
Pascal Garibian (France, 22 March)
Luca Zorzi (Switzerland, 22 March)
Helmut Fleischer (Germany, 22 March)
Hugo Quaderer (Liechtenstein, 22 March)
Andrew Niven (Scotland, 22 March)
Gabriele Tomassi (Italy, 22 March)
Franz Krösslhuber (Austria, 23 March)
Andrea Lastrucci (Italy, 23 March)
Mirosław Malinowski (Poland, 23 March)
Mahmut Özgener (Turkey, 23 March)
Hilda McDermott
 (Republic of Ireland, 23 March)
Outi Saarinen (Finland, 23 March)
Fernando Ruiz Hierro
 (Spain, 23 March) **50th**
Dejan Dimovski
 (FYR Macedonia, 23 March)
Gianni Infantino
 (Italy/Switzerland, 23 March)
Michael Kirchner (Germany, 25 March)
Gitte Holm (Denmark, 26 March)
Jelle Goes (Netherlands, 26 March)
John Peacock (England, 27 March)
José Antonio Casajus
 (Spain, 27 March) **60th**
Armen Minasyan (Armenia, 27 March)
Pavel Cebanu (Moldova, 28 March)
Pal Bjerketvedt (Norway, 28 March)
Lamprini Dimitriou (Greece, 28 March)
Edgar Obertüfer
 (Switzerland, 29 March) **90th**
Ignacio Sitges Serra (Spain, 29 March)
Bernadette Constantin (France, 29 March)
Bernadino González Vázquez
 (Spain, 29 March)
Sanna Pirhonen (Finland, 29 March)
William Hugh Wilson (Scotland, 30 March)
Richard Havrilla (Slovakia, 31 March)
Marina Mamaeva (Russia, 31 March) **50th**
Matteo Simone Trefoloni (Italy, 31 March)

NOTICES

- On 22 December, Davor Šuker was re-elected as president of the Croatian Football Federation.
- On 20 January, Ari Lahti was elected as president of the Football Association of Finland.
- The Football Association of Finland has a new email address: palloliitto@palloliitto.fi
- The Kazakhstan Football Federation has a new postal address: **8 Saryarka Ave., 4th floor 010000 Astana Kazakhstan**
- Alexandr Alaev has been named as acting president of the Russian Football Union, replacing Vitaly Mutko.

OBITUARIES

- **Otto Demuth**, former general secretary of the Austrian Football Association (ÖFB), passed away on 16 November at the age of 92. He served on UEFA's Appeals Body from 1976 to 1980 and on its Control and Disciplinary Body from 1980 to 1992. In 2004, he was awarded the UEFA Order of Merit in Ruby.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Meetings

16 March, Nyon

UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League: quarter-final draws

Competitions

6/7 and 13/14 March

UEFA Champions League: round of 16 (return legs)

8 March

UEFA Europa League: round of 16 (first legs)

13/14 March

UEFA Youth League: quarter-finals

15 March

UEFA Europa League: round of 16 (return legs)

21/22 March

UEFA Women's Champions League: quarter-finals (first legs)

21–27 March

2017–19 European Under-21 Championship: qualifying round

28/29 March

UEFA Women's Champions League: quarter-finals (return legs)

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