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REAL HISTORY IN THE MAKING





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THE ACTION NEVER STOPS

One thing is certain in modern-day football – time never stands still. No sooner had we brought the curtain down on the 2017/18 European club competition season in May than we were all eagerly awaiting the World Cup in Russia. Europe's representatives are attempting to continue the continent's proud recent record, with Italy (2006), Spain (2010) and Germany (2014) crowned world champions at the last three tournaments.

The European club competition campaign finished on a high note with three excellent finals. Kyiv was the setting for the UEFA Champions League showpiece, which culminated in Real Madrid's third successive triumph in this competition. Lyon won a record fifth UEFA Women's Champions League crown in the same city. Earlier in May, in Lyon, Atlético Madrid had captured their third UEFA Europa League title in style. This meant a superb 'double' for the city of Madrid – the first time this feat had been achieved since 1994, when Milan provided the UEFA Champions League and UEFA Cup winners. Consequently, the two Madrid clubs will come together in August to contest the UEFA Super Cup in Estonia's capital, Tallinn.

The summer also brings talented young footballers onto the major European stage. England and Lithuania were excellent hosts of the men's and women's Under-17 finals respectively – won by the Netherlands and Spain – and the next opportunity to view the potential top players of tomorrow comes in July, with the men's Under-19 finals in Finland and the women's Under-19 finals in Switzerland.

By September, the new club competition season will be in full swing, and national team football – such a crucial source of national pride and identity – will return to the spotlight with the kick-off of the inaugural UEFA Nations League. Indeed, time really does wait for no one in the beautiful game ... and we join fans everywhere in looking forward to a wealth of excitement and entertainment in the months ahead.



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping loops and strokes.

Theodore Theodoridis
UEFA General Secretary



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Chief editor:
Emmanuel Deconche

Deputy chief editor:
Dominique Maurer

Chief writer:
Mark Chaplin

External contributors:
Graham Turner (pages 6-9 and 28-29)
Simon Hart (pages 12 and 30-35)
Paul Saffer (pages 26-27)
Giorgio Iacovazzo, ASF (page 38)
Mikael Erävuori, SPL (page 39)
Maarja Saulep, EJI (page 40)

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UEFA

SCHOOL TIME

“Time spent in sport activities at school and at university produces health and education benefits which need to be enhanced.” The challenge of converting the words from a European Commission white paper on sport into a tangible reality has been accepted by UEFA with a large dose of enthusiasm.



The result is a football in schools project that forms a perfect marriage with the principles of UEFA's Grassroots Charter and the ongoing programmes associated with it. The immediate impact of a pilot scheme has offered great incentives to accelerate along the right track.

Before going any further, the priority is to point out that this is not UEFA patting itself on the back. As a governing body, the role is to support and encourage member associations to jump on board and breathe life into a concept that UEFA firmly believes in.

The primary aim is to promote football activities as an integral part of children's physical education and link into the European Commission's Be Active campaign, which emphasises the health benefits pegged to higher levels of physical fitness and well-being. The dividends are worth having. Recent research in Austria, for example, concluded that the state was being saved some €50m a year by the equation 'more active youngsters = less illness'. One of the fundamentals of the UEFA Grassroots Charter is to make football accessible to everybody. And schools, basically egalitarian institutions, are ideal companions when it comes to allowing children to enjoy football in a safe environment, irrespective of ability, gender, ethnicity, religion or physical constitution.

Injecting football into the physical education curriculum is one of those things that are easily said but not so easily done. Hence a pilot scheme aimed at seeing exactly how the project could be made to work. Six member associations kicked off the football in schools project – and one of the significant features was the sheer diversity of their approaches to the initiative. This was highly positive, as it demonstrated that the scheme was not about UEFA simply demanding compliance with a rigid set of rules. Instead, the project is all about tailor-made programmes to suit the needs and circumstances of each individual country.



GEORGIA

Free tuition for 954 teachers

Female participation up to 25% by 2020

Project linked to 20 professional clubs



The pilot scheme immediately highlighted the importance of this degree of flexibility, thanks to Russia. Working on the educational curriculum is not just a matter of sending a courier van to schools with a bagful of footballs. Far from it. Nor is it reasonable to expect PE teachers to be well versed in the arts of football. To illustrate the point, the reality for many member associations is that a considerable percentage of teachers are women who, during their own educational years prior to the explosive growth of the women's game, probably had no opportunities to become acquainted with the niceties of football. Andrey Vlasov, who coordinates activities in Russia, said: “One of our main priorities before we could launch the project was to train the teachers.”



GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL



RUSSIA

3-YEAR PLAN

YEAR ONE

24,000

children at **600**
schools in **6** regions

YEAR THREE

120,000

children at **3,000**
schools in **20** regions

Russia is, by far, the largest of the six pilot countries in terms of sheer geographical spread. With each association having been encouraged to set steadily increasing targets over a three-year period, Andrey Vlasov's scheme provides the most grandiose figures, beginning with 24,000 children at 600 schools in six regions in the first year and targeting 120,000 at 3,000 schools in 20 regions in the third. The number of tutors involved will triple from 100 to 300 over the three-year period. Work in the schools is accompanied by online contests, 83 grassroots football festivals and football competitions at the country's summer camps that entertain some 10 million youngsters.

At the other end of the scale: Northern Ireland. "We agreed to step on board as the programme exactly matched the targets we had set in our youth strategy," said Keith Gibson, the Irish FA's football development manager. "This programme gives the youngsters a more varied education. It also improves the association's reputation in society at large and helps us reach young people, which is directly in line with our objectives."

From a starting point of 800 boys and 800 girls in 15 primary and five secondary schools, the target is to triple the figures within three years – and, at the time of writing, that target is by and large within sight. The Northern Irish recipe for success also includes classes by →

And this immediately raised an interesting issue that might easily be applicable to other member associations inside and outside the former Soviet bloc. Prevalent legislation – even at grassroots and volunteer levels – required teachers and leaders to possess a university qualification that might take as long as three years to obtain. Legal parameters have now been adapted with a view to making it easier for teachers to acquire enough grassroots educational skills (such as D or C licences) to be able to implement the football in schools philosophy.

In other words, even though this is essentially a football-driven scheme, it needs to be implemented in cooperation with the ministry of education and other relevant educational authorities.



NORTHERN IRELAND

3-YEAR PLAN

YEAR ONE

1,600

boys and girls in
15 primary and
5 secondary schools

YEAR THREE

3x

the figures





AZERBAIJAN

Launch of **Under-10 & Under-11** leagues, **25** school tournaments and regional mini-competitions

qualified coaches aimed at offering pupils in the 11–14 age bracket the chance to gain certified education in football development and opportunities to take part as volunteers at events organised by the national association.

Azerbaijan's football in schools project targets the same age group, though underpinned with plans to launch Under-10 and Under-11 leagues, 25 school tournaments and regional mini-competitions. Additional momentum has been provided by four members of the national team who are endorsing the scheme as ambassadors. At the schools, football training is being conducted by 109 teachers who have acquired D licences and 26 C licence holders. "It is essential to train the people who will be working with the children because only those with the right skills can have a positive influence," says Jahangir Hasanzada, grassroots football director for the Association of Football Associations of Azerbaijan. "These children are the future and that future depends on the people who educate them."

The national association of Albania has placed similar emphasis on the quality of football education by offering D licence courses to teachers completely free of charge. Their football in schools programme has been launched by a national manager and six

20,000

children in the 7–9 age group at **150** schools

YEAR ONE

45,000

children in the 7–9 age group at **400** schools

YEAR THREE

3-YEAR PLAN

ALBANIA



In view of the initial success of the football in schools project, UEFA intends to open it up to all other member associations and to offer funding to support this type of grassroots scheme

regional coordinators initially targeting 20,000 children in the 7–9 age group at 150 schools, rising to 45,000 at 400 in the third year. Andi Zere, who heads up the programme, says: "To help football grow, we believe we have to make closer links with children. Schools are where the children are and, through the education system, we can teach them to play football and pass on the benefits, such as social skills, equality and good health."

In Georgia, the target figures bear great similarity, as does the free tuition offered to 954 teachers in courses conducted regionally. Focusing on encouraging girls to play football, the association aims to bring female participation up to 25% by 2020. Similarly, the project launched in FYR Macedonia (aiming to involve 16,000 children and 150 teachers at 120



FRM

schools by the end of the three-year period) sets out to bring 3,000 girls into the fold, with the 5v5 games for younger children featuring a minimum of two girls per team and the 8v8 matches for the older pupils at least three. The association has decided to focus on the 7–10 age category. Bojan Markovski, who runs the programme, explains: “We realised that at that age children have few opportunities to play football if they don’t belong to a club but that not all families can afford to pay the membership fees. We pass on true values to the children, and that enables us to have an impact on society.

“Children love to compete. That’s why competitions are an integral part of our project. They also help the children understand what’s expected of them if they go on to join a club.”

The transition to club football is one of the knock-on benefits of the football in schools project – which in turn promotes an increase in the number of registered players. This is where the new scheme intermeshes neatly with the principles of UEFA’s Grassroots Charter and, if schools are increasingly the place where youngsters get their first taste of football, it becomes essential that the first experience is positive enough to encourage them to continue playing in a club environment.

As Bojan Markovski puts it: “It is vital for coaches and teachers to be well trained to work with children taking their first steps in football.” Georgia, meanwhile, is linking the football in schools project to 20 professional clubs.

But the most rewarding aspect of the project as a whole is to see that it has made an immediate impact and is helping to set best-practice standards. This is going to be highlighted and reviewed at a conference in Minsk in Belarus, where there are plans to launch a specific club development project that will, again, illustrate the benefits of close cooperation between the national association, the ministry of education and schools.

In view of the initial success of the football in schools project, UEFA intends to open it up to all other member associations and offer funding to support this type of grassroots scheme. From 2020, when the next cycle of HatTrick payments kicks in, €50,000 will be added to the €150,000 paid for membership of the Grassroots Charter – and this will be earmarked funding for specific football in schools programmes, benefitting the schools, the teachers, the clubs and, by promoting a healthy lifestyle and egalitarian values, society as a whole. ⚽



FYR MACEDONIA

3,000 girls introduced to football, 5v5 games featuring minimum of 2 girls per team, 8v8 featuring minimum of 3

PARTY TIME IN KYIV

The Ukrainian capital proved the perfect host as the Champions League finals came to town.

The Champions Festival was a big hit with the fans and local population, with 200,000 visiting between 24 and 27 May.

“We’re singing in Ukraine, just singing in Ukraine, what a glorious feeling, we’re happy again,” roared a group of Liverpool fans, adding their own twist to the Gene Kelly classic.

Their enthusiasm was catching. Locals gathered round – some for an impromptu game of keepy-uppy, others to take photos of the new arrivals. Two days before the Champions League final between Liverpool and Real Madrid, the centre of the Ukrainian capital was being transformed into the centre of the footballing world.

Kyiv’s main thoroughfare, Khreshchatyk, was given a Champions League makeover as the Champions Festival opened its doors to visiting fans and proud Kyivians, who were delighted to see their city shine in the spotlight.

With the Champions Pitch at one end of the festival and the main stage at the other – and a dizzying array of games and skills challenges laid on by competition sponsors in between – fans were encouraged to get involved at every opportunity. And they did.

Between 24 and 27 May, an astonishing 200,000 visitors attended the festival, with the #EqualGame message that football is for everyone clearly being taken to heart.

The UEFA Champions League and UEFA Women’s Champions League trophies, prominently displayed on the starball stage in the middle of the festival, were the main attractions. As many as 8,000 people had their photo taken with that silverware in the run-up to the two finals – the first of which, between Olympique Lyonnais and VfL Wolfsburg, was held on the Thursday night.

Crowds streamed out of the festival and across Independence Square for the short walk to the Valeriy Lobanovskyi Stadium, which sits nestled in the woods on the right bank of the Dnieper river. Home to FC Dynamo Kyiv, the ground



Real Madrid CF



Liverpool FC

3-1

Attendance: 61,651 **Referee:** Milorad Mažić

Goals: 1-0 Benzema 51, 1-1 Mané 55,
2-1 Bale 64, 3-1 Bale 83

is named after their late great coach, who took the club to the semi-finals of the European Cup three times, as well as winning the European Cup Winners' Cup in 1974/75 and 1985/86, and had a huge impact on the Ukrainian game.

Children climbed up on his statue and sat on the bench next to him. Out on the pitch, Lyon eventually triumphed 4–1 after extra time, with a crowd of 14,237 watching as the French side won a record fifth European crown.

Back at the festival, the UEFA Women's Champions League also featured prominently in the Champions Gallery, which highlighted the illustrious history of both the men's and women's games. While people lingered over iconic images, others took photos of their own alongside signed shirts and balls featuring each of this season's competing teams.

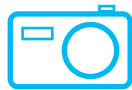
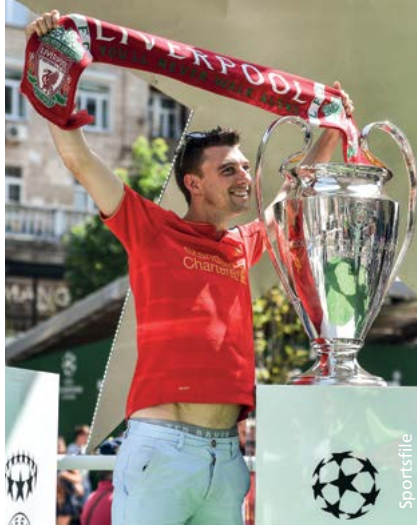
Out on the Champions Pitch, past and present collided as former stars of the game showed they still had what it takes in a four-team tournament featuring Real Madrid and Liverpool greats, a team captained by final ambassador Andriy Shevchenko and a side composed of UEFA Champions League stars. Roberto Carlos, Luís Figo, Steve McManaman, Robbie Fowler, Shevchenko, Serhiy Rebrov, Marcel Desailly and Deco were just some of the talents on display as a crowd of 10,000 watched the games on the Friday afternoon.

As a baking hot day turned to night, fans gravitated to the other end of the festival to listen to a set by DJ Hardwell – one of a series of high-profile acts that provided the soundtrack to four days of celebrations.

Kyiv had also hosted the final of EURO 2012, and this year fans were again made to feel at home across the city.

A giant replica trophy on the square outside St Sophia's Cathedral was a beautiful and hugely popular spot for a selfie, with the UEFA Champions League anthem blaring out of nearby speakers. Further entertainment was laid on for Liverpool fans in Shevchenko Park – named after the Ukrainian poet, rather than his footballing namesake.

The day of the final brought another cloudless sky with more glorious sunshine, and the giant beanbags and umbrellas of the Together #WePlayStrong stand at the festival provided welcome respite from the heat and sun.



As many as

8,000

people had their photo taken with the trophies

Further down Khreshchatyk, Liverpool and Real Madrid fans mingled, with chants of 'Hala Madrid' and 'Y Viva España' being countered by 'Allez, Allez, Allez' – a song that became synonymous with Liverpool's journey to Kyiv – and endless homages to Mohamed Salah.

The incongruous sight of hundreds of dancing Hare Krishnas in the midst of the revelry only added to the festive atmosphere as fans of both teams joined their parade. One Real Madrid fan was accompanying his 85-year-old father to his 12th final, and the pair swayed happily as the burgeoning group slowly danced and sung its way towards the stunning Olimpiyskiy complex.

Thousands of Liverpool fans had spent the afternoon basking in the sun in Shevchenko Park, before the short walk to the ground. The sense of anticipation was growing, and a set by Dua Lipa during the opening ceremony raised the noise

level still further. Croatian duo 2CELLOS's live rendition of the UEFA Champions League anthem then brought the crowd to their feet as the two teams lined up.

Finally, the moment had arrived. An estimated global television audience of 160 million tuned in as all the drama, heartache and glory was beamed around the world – Salah's tears, Karius's despair, Bale's genius.

In the end, it was Sergio Ramos who hoisted the trophy aloft, with Real Madrid securing a historic third successive title and a record 13th overall. For Ramos, this completed a unique double, with the defender having helped Spain to claim the Henri Delaunay Cup as UEFA EURO 2012 winners in that same stadium six years earlier.

As Real Madrid fans partied long into the night, locals were waking up to a celebration of their own. By chance, Kyiv Day – an annual city-wide holiday that falls on the last weekend in May – coincided with the final day of the Champions Festival, and local orchestras and bands provided the soundtrack to the day's festivities from the main stage.

"Yesterday we hosted the most prestigious event in European football," Kyiv's mayor – and former world heavyweight boxing champion – Vitali Klitschko told the assembled crowd. "And the atmosphere in our wonderful capital was enjoyed not only by locals and people from other corners of Ukraine, but also by tens of thousands of foreign visitors from all over the world.

"Our hosting of this major event was a huge success – as highlighted by the UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, as well as various visitors to our city, foreign fans and many others. This party will live long in our memories." 🇺🇦



Andriy Shevchenko, ambassador for the final, up against Alvaro Arbeloa in the Ultimate Champions tournament.

THREE CHEERS FOR ATLÉTICO

Spain's stranglehold on the UEFA Europa League continued as Club Atlético de Madrid secured a third triumph in the competition with their final victory over Olympique de Marseille.

The final on 16 May took place on French soil at a Stade de Lyon filled predominantly with OM's noisy supporters. But it was Atlético's night as they joined compatriots Sevilla FC in securing a trio of UEFA Europa League successes in this past decade.

Atlético's shining light was Antoine Griezmann, who scored two goals to earn the man of the match award. Overlooked by Lyon as a boy in nearby Macon, the France forward gave Atlético a first-half lead with an ice-cold finish following a mistake by André Zambo Anguissa. Griezmann slotted his second goal after 49 minutes and, after Marseille substitute Kostas Mitroglou had headed against a post, Gabi crowned Atlético's victory with a late third goal.

It was a night of contrasting emotions for Griezmann's international colleague Dimitri Payet. The Marseille playmaker left the action after 32 minutes with a thigh injury and tears in his eyes. He had begun the match by teeing up Valère Germain with a clear opening on goal but the striker's shot flew over and OM's night went downhill from there as they suffered a




Olympique de Marseille 0-3 **Club Atlético de Madrid**

Attendance: 55,768

Referee: Björn Kuipers (Netherlands)

Goals: 0-1 Griezmann 21
0-2 Griezmann 49
0-3 Gabi 89

Atlético will be lining up against their Madrid rivals in Tallinn on 15 August to play for the 2018 UEFA Super Cup trophy.

third defeat in the final of the UEFA Cup/ UEFA Europa League.

Rudi Garcia's men had entered the competition ten months earlier in the third qualifying round and their road to the final was illuminated by eight wins in nine matches at an increasingly feverish Stade Vélodrome. Their victims included RB Leipzig, the German newcomers to Europe who reached the quarter-finals via the UEFA Champions League group stage, but fell 5-2 in southern France.

Atlético also entered in the round of 32 following an early UEFA Champions League exit. Beaten UEFA Champions League finalists in 2014 and 2016, they drew from their deep well of experience to negotiate a tough semi-final against Arsenal FC, eventually prevailing 2-1 on aggregate to end Arsène Wenger's dream of a valedictory final before he stepped down as manager of the Gunners after 22 years.

Overall, the 2017/18 campaign featured 48 teams representing 29 countries. There was a first taste of group-stage football in a major UEFA competition for nine clubs: Atalanta BC, TSG 1899 Hoffenheim, İstanbul Başakşehir, 1. FC Köln, FC Lugano, Östersunds FK, FK Vardar, SC Vitesse and FC Zlin. In Atalanta's case they finished the group stage undefeated in their first European campaign since 1991. Köln's supporters showed what their European participation meant to them when 20,000 made the trip to London for their match at Arsenal. Sweden's Östersund provided the most romantic plot line: a fourth-division club only seven years earlier, they overcame Galatasaray SK and PAOK FC in the qualifying rounds and travelled all the way to the round of 32, where they won at Arsenal, albeit in a 4-2 aggregate defeat.

No team put more into the campaign than FC Salzburg who, in becoming Austria's first European semi-finalists since 1996, equalled the record for the longest endurance run in UEFA club competitions, playing 20 matches overall, from the second qualifying round of the UEFA Champions League on 11 July through to semi-final elimination by Marseille on 3 May. That was a night for Marseille to dream, but it would be Diego Simeone's Atlético who stamped their class and authority on the final. 🏆



#EQUALGAME SPOTLIGHT AT THE CLUB COMPETITION FINALS

UEFA's #EqualGame campaign promoting diversity, inclusion and accessibility in football came into sharp focus at the European club competition finals in Kyiv and Lyon in May.

With the attention of the world centring on the finals of the UEFA Champions League, UEFA Women's Champions League and UEFA Europa League, a series of activities in both host cities helped to convey #EqualGame's key message – that football is open to all, irrespective of ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, social background or religious beliefs.

In Kyiv, the setting for the men's and women's Champions League finals, Football for Social Inclusion matches were held on the Champions Festival mini-pitch under the #EqualGame/Respect banner. The matches featured amputee football, cerebral palsy football, Special Olympics football for players with learning disabilities, and football for children from conflict areas, which aimed to show that although people are different, everyone can find common ground in their love of the game.

Each of the organisations involved is an official football social responsibility partner of UEFA – Homeless World Cup, Special Olympics, the International Federation of Cerebral Palsy Football and the European Amputee Football Federation. Another partner, the Centre for Access to Football in Europe (CAFE), arranged audio-descriptive commentary for some of the matches.

The mayor of Kyiv, former professional boxer Vitali Klitschko, expressed his total support for #EqualGame. "It's very important to spread the message of social inclusion and diversity," he said, "and we want to do this through sport. As Nelson Mandela said: 'Sport has the power to change the world.'"

The UEFA Champions Gallery at the Champions Festival presented the history of the UEFA Champions League/European Champion Clubs' Cup and the UEFA Women's Champions League, while an #EqualGame exhibition highlighted grassroots football stories from across Europe.

A third event at the Champions Festival, staged in the #EqualGame dome, involved UEFA's social responsibility partners, together with the host association for the finals, the Football Federation of Ukraine, and emphasised the importance of social inclusion in football. The partners engaged with fans and visitors to the festival by showing and explaining their different areas of activity.

Special match in Lyon

#EqualGame brings some of the game's leading lights together with grassroots players, and a few of them met up at the UEFA Europa League Village ahead of the final in Lyon. Grassroots players from throughout Europe who have featured in the campaign to date were joined on the pitch by Portuguese legend Luís Figo, former Olympique Lyonnais and Barcelona favourite Éric Abidal and current Olympique Lyonnais women's stars Ada Hegerberg and Shanice van de Sanden.

Since #EqualGame's launch last August, a number of grassroots players have shared their fascinating stories with UEFA on its various communication channels, generating vast interest in the campaign as a result.

"It was an absolute pleasure to take part in this unique occasion ...," said former Barcelona, Real Madrid and Inter Milan midfielder Figo, "...sharing the joy of football and promoting diversity and inclusion – values that are a crucial element of this great sport."

"Our match has showcased equality on the pitch," added Ada Hegerberg, "and highlighted just how football should be accessible to all, no matter who they are, what they do or where they come from."

Ramutė Kartavičienė, who has set up a team of grandmothers in Lithuania, scored three times during the game. "But this match was not about scoring goals," she said afterwards. "It was about playing together with all kinds of people from different backgrounds and with a variety of abilities. We didn't know each other before we came here, but I made new friends. We have one thing in common – we love the game. ⚽"

At the Champions Festival in Kyiv, Brazilian star Cafu helped show that football truly is accessible to everyone.



THREE IN A ROW FOR LYON

The French side claimed a hat-trick of UEFA Women's Champions League titles and a record fifth overall with victory against Wolfsburg in Kyiv on 24 May.



Amandine Henry scores the equaliser which set Lyon on the road to victory.

Sportsfile

Olympique Lyonnais struck three times in five minutes in extra time to beat VfL Wolfsburg 4-1 at the Valeriy Lobanovskiy Stadium in Kyiv and become the first team to win three successive UEFA Women's Champions League crowns.

Lyon have contested seven of the past nine finals, including a defeat by Wolfsburg in 2013 before beating them on penalties two years ago. This was another tight affair, as defences held the upper hand in normal time. Lyon came closest when Noelle Maritz cleared off the line from Amandine Henry, who then saw her close-range shot brilliantly saved by Almuth Schult with eight minutes left. Three minutes into extra time, though, Wolfsburg struck first when Pernille Harder's low shot from outside the box beat goalkeeper Sarah Bouhaddi as she dived to her right.

That brought the 14,327 crowd to their feet, and the noise increased further as Reynald Pedros's side hit back. Lyon had never previously come from behind to win a UEFA Women's Champions League final, but following Alexandra Popp's 96th-minute dismissal for a second yellow card, that was about to change. Within two minutes Henry had smashed in the equalising goal following a fine pass from Ada Hegerberg, and just a minute later substitute Shanice van de Sanden crossed low for Eugénie Le Sommer to put Lyon 2-1 ahead. Wolfsburg had no answer to van de Sanden's pace and

	
VfL Wolfsburg	1-4* (0-0) <small>*after extra time</small>
Olympique Lyonnais	
Attendance: 14,237 Referee: Jana Adamkova (Czech Republic)	
Goals: 1-0 Harder 93, 1-1 Henry 98, 1-2 Le Sommer 99, 1-3 Hegerberg 103, 1-4 Abily 116	

power down the right, and in the 103rd minute she teed up Hegerberg, who knocked in Lyon's third goal in five minutes. It was the Norwegian star's 15th strike this season, a new competition record.

With four minutes to play, van de Sanden – a UEFA Women's EURO winner with the Netherlands in 2017 – cut the ball back to Camille Abily, who angled her low shot into the far corner. The veteran midfielder's smile said it all; this was her record 81st and final match in the competition before retiring, and to round it off with her 43rd goal and fifth title was a fairy-tale ending. For Lyon, however, there is no end in sight to this golden era.

"It's simply incredible that we've won three in a row," said Le Sommer, one of four players alongside Abily, Bouhaddi and Wendie Renard to have featured in all five Lyon triumphs. "It shows how much quality we have in the squad and we've been rewarded for our hard work and the

resources that the club has put at our disposal."

The Kyiv final was the last to be played in conjunction with the men's showpiece, with the change highlighting the growing stature of women's football. Next season's women's final will take place in Budapest on 18 May, with the men's in Madrid two weeks later.

'Limitless potential'

Speaking in Kyiv, the UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, explained the decision: "The potential for women's football is limitless, and it is with this in mind that we decided to separate the two UEFA Champions League events. That will give the women's game a platform of its own to continue to grow and become an unmissable event and television spectacle in its own right."

The 2018 final ambassador, Iya Andrushchak, meanwhile, hopes this match will prove a catalyst for growth. "I was glad to see more than 14,000 people in the stands, which is beyond doubt a record attendance for women's football in Ukraine," she said. "It's so nice to hear young people discussing the goals, the teams and their new favourite female players. We'll have to wait and see the results, but for now I'm just happy that my country saw this showpiece and that I was part of it. And even more so, that so many people came and really enjoyed this celebration of women's football." 🌟

2020 CLUB FINAL HOSTS SELECTED

The selection of hosts for the 2020 UEFA club competition finals, the UEFA EURO 2020 final tournament match schedule and the 2018 UEFA Club Licensing and Financial Fair Play Regulations were key items on the agenda at the Executive Committee's meeting in Kyiv on 24 May.

The committee selected Istanbul's Atatürk Olympic Stadium to host the UEFA Champions League final in two years' time, and the Arena Gdansk in Poland was appointed to stage the UEFA Europa League final. The 2020 UEFA Women's Champions League final will take place at the Austria Arena in Vienna, and the Estádio do Dragão in Porto will stage the UEFA Super Cup match.

The year 2020 will also bring another EURO – a special one this time around, with the final tournament being staged in 12 cities across Europe to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the inaugural finals. An important step forward was taken in Kyiv with the approval of the EURO 2020 final tournament match schedule (see pages 16/17). Rome's Stadio Olimpico will stage the opening match on 12 June.

Club licensing and financial fair play measures introduced by UEFA in 2009 have had a crucial impact in introducing more discipline and rationality within club football finances, for the overall benefit of

the club game in Europe. The Executive Committee approved revised Club Licensing and Financial Fair Play Regulations aimed at further strengthening the existing rules and adapted to the ever-changing European football environment. This follows a comprehensive review undertaken in consultation with UEFA member associations, as well as the European Club Association (ECA), European Leagues and players' body FIFPro Division Europe.

The new regulations seek to increase transparency, with clubs obliged to publish their financial information, including payments to agents. Furthermore, there will be improved harmonisation of financial and accounting reporting principles on football-specific transactions, such as specific accounting requirements for the transfer of players.

A more proactive approach will also be pursued in order to anticipate financial issues, through the introduction of a series of new financial indicators enabling stricter monitoring of clubs' budgets by the UEFA Club Financial Control Body.

These indicators are the sustainable debt ratio that will enhance the monitoring of club debt, and a player transfer deficit indicator which will improve the monitoring of clubs' transfer spending beyond a certain amount.

Finally, the 2018 regulations contain various provisions designed to upgrade the protection and education of youth players – these include the introduction of a child protection policy, new medical requirements and reinforced youth development programmes – as well as to raise the standards and foster the development of women's football in Europe.

The Executive Committee also appointed the president of the Cyprus Football Association (CFA), George Koumas, as a member of the FIFA Council until the 2019 UEFA Congress. He replaces his predecessor as CFA president, Costakis Koutsokounmis, who passed away in March.

The next meeting of the UEFA Executive Committee will take place in Nyon on 27 September. 🌐

The Atatürk Olympic Stadium in Istanbul will be hosting its second UEFA Champions League final in 2020, 15 years after the unforgettable final between AC Milan and Liverpool (3-3).



EURO 2020 MATCH SCHEDULE

At its meeting in Kyiv at the end of May, the Executive Committee approved the EURO 2020 match schedule, with the opening match to be held at the Olimpico Stadium in Rome before the tournament extends to 12 cities right across Europe.

		GROUP STAGE							
		Matchday 1				Matchday 2			
		FRI 12/06	SAT 13/06	SUN 14/06	MON 15/06	TUE 16/06	WED 17/06	THU 18/06	FRI 19/06
		SAT 20/06							
	ROME Stadio Olimpico 68,000	1 GROUP A 21:00 CET					14 GROUP A		
	BAKU Baku Olympic Stadium 69,000		2 GROUP A				15 GROUP A		
	ST PETERSBURG Saint Petersburg Stadium 61,000		4 GROUP B				15 GROUP B		
	COPENHAGEN Parken Stadium 38,000		3 GROUP B					16 GROUP B	
	AMSTERDAM Johan Crujff ArenA 54,000			5 GROUP C				17 GROUP C	
	BUCHAREST National Arena Bucharest 54,000			6 GROUP C				18 GROUP C	
	LONDON Wembley Stadium 90,000			7 GROUP D					20 GROUP D
	GLASGOW Hampden Park 51,000				8 GROUP D				19 GROUP D
	BILBAO San Mamés Stadium 53,000				9 GROUP E				22 GROUP E
	DUBLIN Dublin Arena 51,000				10 GROUP E				21 GROUP E
	MUNICH Football Arena Munich 70,000					12 GROUP F			24 GROUP F
	BUDAPEST Puskás Ferenc Stadium 68,000					11 GROUP F			23 GROUP F



Matchday 3					KNOCKOUT STAGE														
SUN 21/06	MON 22/06	TUE 23/06	WED 24/06	25/06 26/06	Round of 16					Quarter-finals			Semi-finals			Final			
					SAT 27/06	SUN 28/06	MON 29/06	TUE 30/06	01/07 02/07	FRI 03/07	SAT 04/07	05/07 06/07	TUE 07/07	WED 08/07	09/07 10/07 11/07	SUN 12/07			
26 GROUP A				REST DAYS					REST DAYS		46 W43 v W44 21:00 CET	REST DAYS			REST DAYS				
26 GROUP A													47 W40 v W38 18:00 CET						
	28 GROUP B							42 2D v 2E					45 W41 v W42 18:00 CET						
	27 GROUP B																		
						38 2A v 2B													
								41 1F v 3A/B/C											
						37 1A v 2C											49 W45 v W46 21:00 CET	50 W48 v W47 21:00 CET	

MICHELE UVA

'YOU FEEL RESPONSIBILITY FOR MILLIONS OF PEOPLE'

When Michele Uva reflects on the repercussions of his work as CEO of the Italian Football Association (FIGC), the word he repeats is responsibility. It is easy to understand why – after all, as he does not hesitate to acknowledge, “Your work has an impact on millions of people.” The 53-year-old feels the same way as a UEFA vice-president, a new responsibility that he assumed last September. He is proud to be part of a team marking a new path at the service of European football.

From volleyball to basketball and football, Michele Uva has had the opportunity to work on sports development at all levels, and he has written extensively on the subject, as well as being an associated university professor. In a broad-ranging interview, the sports administrator discusses his hopes and fears for football, and his attempts to revive calcio. While the Azzurri men’s team failed to qualify for the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia, the women’s side made history in qualifying for the 2019 FIFA Women’s World Cup in France, which echoes a series of impressive results at youth national-team level. Indeed, Uva believes the future is bright for Italy: “What I’m doing now will have a big impact in the medium to long term, not tomorrow. Investing in the future is crucial to achieve sporting and social results.”

Michele, how do you embody your role of CEO at the Italian Football Association?

The way I interpret being a CEO is to be the coach of a team formed by 500 professionals, helping them to work well together, and giving them a clear vision and a deep insight into football and the objectives of the Italian Football Association. My motto is: “The best of today is not enough to excel tomorrow”.

What was your background, and how did you get into the world of sport?

I graduated in scientific subjects, but during my studies I pursued my passion for sport. At 21, I started out as a sports administrator back in 1985, becoming the head of the youth sector for a volleyball team in Serie A in Italy. I did ten years in volleyball, then club football, and then

consultancy abroad for New York MetroStars. After that, I was with a company called Sport-Markt in Germany, followed by two years in basketball and four years at the Italian Football Association as Chief Development Officer. Then I was CEO of the Italian Olympic Committee and, since September 2014, I have been CEO of the Italian FA. Every experience has been wonderful, each one taught me a lot – but you never stop learning. If I had to pick my favourite, it would be the first job with young athletes, because they gave me so much in terms of emotions and understanding.

What were the reasons for you becoming a football administrator, specifically?

My transition from volleyball to football was straightforward, as the same company which owned my volleyball club also →

“If you don’t respect your opponent, the referee, the fans, you are basically not respecting yourself. And that is not what football is about.”





Michele Uva was a huge fan of 1969 Ballon d'Or winner Gianni Rivera (pictured, right).

owned a football club (Parma). They said to me, 'You're a good manager for volleyball, and you could be a great one in football, as long as you keep your common sense.' This was my route in, and also my key lesson, which I relied on both in good and bad times.

Did you ever have any ambition to have a career actually playing sport?

Like many Italians, I played football with friends, but my real sport was volleyball. I went to university in Bologna and when I was there, I played in the youth team for a Serie A club [Zinella Volley]. My ambition was to play in Serie A, but I soon realised I'd never be able to. I understood that there was a limit, so I started my career as an administrator for that club. In life, you must always be aware of your own limits. You must have the ambition to play in Serie A, but you can't always achieve that. In the managerial game, you can get where you want to be if you study, have talent, take it seriously and always maintain openness.

22 April 2016: Michele Uva presents the men's and women's UEFA Champions League trophies in Milan, where both finals would be played.



Were you, like virtually every Italian, a football fan from an early age?

I grew up a fan of AC Milan, but when I went to work as the CEO of Parma [1996–2001], I got to know lots of players and lots of coaches. So, nowadays, I'm lucky to just enjoy football, and I like watching it.

Where are you from originally?

From southern Italy – a place called Matera. It's a small city, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, in the Basilicata region.

What's your first memory of football when you were a boy?

A live Milan game away to Bari. The city where I was born, Matera, is 50km from Bari. My father knew how much I liked Milan, so he took me to Bari, and I still remember how full the stadium was. I must have been five years old. I remember it perfectly. I have such a vivid image of it. It's perhaps one of the few memories I have from those years. I don't remember where I lived, but I remember that stadium.

Did you have a favourite player?

Gianni Rivera first, then Franco Baresi.

Why Rivera?

Because I supported Milan, and because he had style. He played with his head up, and when you play like that, it means that you see everything around you.

Speaking generally about football in Italy, is it possible not to grow up as a football fan, given the passion for the game?

It's impossible for a boy not to be a fan. The passion is infectious. My son is nearly six years old, and the first thing he did at school, before finding friends, was to choose a team to support. So, in Italy, it's infectious among all children. Maybe it's in the Italian DNA. That's how it is.

For you growing up watching football and then working in football, what's the best match you've ever seen?

In my life I've seen hundreds, thousands of games. However, when you see them live,

they're the ones that usually stay with you. As I said, there's the first one that I ever watched, then there's Milan's 5-0 victory against Real Madrid in the semi-final of the European Cup in 1989. I was studying in Bologna and I went to see the game. Arrigo Sacchi's Milan played extraordinary football: Rijkaard, Van Basten, Gullit, Baresi, Maldini, Ancelotti ...

And the best goal?

Diego Maradona's goal in the 1986 World Cup against England – his run and dribbling from halfway. It was something extra special. He displayed great ability, passion, talent – what else can I say? Panache, daring, and then, in the end, success ... It's a little bit like the professional lives of each of us. You start from far out, you've got the ball, you need to overcome lots of obstacles, but you need to keep your eye on the goal. That's your objective.

When you walk into a stadium now for a big match like the UEFA Champions League final, how do you feel?

"In life, you must always be aware of your own limits. You must have the ambition to play in Serie A, but you can't always achieve that."

Fantastic, because I like to see the people who come ... I like to see all the youngsters, to see their excitement, their passion, to see all the families. It's a brilliant feeling. You understand what football is about, but you also understand that your work has an impact on millions of people. If your work has an impact in Italy, for example, it has an impact on 36 million fans. And it's a big responsibility.

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

When you no longer support a team, it's a wonderful thing, because you can enjoy the games. Something is missing – the passion and suffering you get from supporting a team – but you can watch football and enjoy it. Now, the Italian national team's games are the most difficult ones to watch, especially the youth ones.

Youth team matches are my favourites to watch. There is innocence, enthusiasm. They don't think about personal success but, instead, of the team. The other day, I was in Rotherham for the Under-17 [EURO] final. We lost the penalty shoot-out in the final against the Netherlands. Watching these 17-year-olds, who play with enthusiasm and passion and are proud to wear the Italian shirt, cry in the dressing room afterwards was very emotional.

We have no Italy in the World Cup currently taking place in Russia. It doesn't seem right ...

The whole of Italy is upset, but many abroad are too. In sport, however, you have to get used to the fact that these things can happen, especially in football: things don't always go the way you think, and this is perhaps what makes it such a beautiful game. While we are sad for →

In 1999 Parma, with Michele Uva as CEO, won the UEFA Cup against Marseille (3-0).





Getty Images

Michele Uva has fond memories of the great Milan team – here Christian Panucci and Dejan Savicević – that were winners of the 1994 UEFA Champions League final against Barcelona (4-0).

not making it, on the other hand, you have joy and surprise for a country that is not expected to qualify, and instead does.

When you're representing the Italian Football Association, are you still able to celebrate a goal when Italy score? I'm thinking of when you have a colleague from another association next to you at an international match. What do you do?

You can celebrate, but with respect. It's impossible to do nothing, but it's also not right to celebrate too much. Always, always respect the opponent and always respect the referee. This is the philosophy. And it's the philosophy we also teach the youngsters in the national youth teams.

How do you feel personally about the responsibility of being at the head of the football association in a country that is crazy about football?

You can approach this role in two different ways in Italy – with a sense of power, because it's an important position in society, or with a sense of responsibility. You feel responsibility for millions of people. The association has 1.25 million people registered: 1.1 million registered players and 834,000 who are under 18. I feel responsibility, and that my actions have an impact on millions of people.

In addition, this is a special year, as we celebrate the 120th anniversary of the founding of our association – one more reason not only to be proud, but also to work hard and live up to our important history.

What do you do to relax away from football?

I love to write. I take notes during the year, and then put them together in the summer. I write things that I think will be important for the future. Just recently, I published my sixth book – this one is on women's football.

Do you find when you write that ideas and thoughts come at any time of the day?

No, at night. I go to bed at ten o'clock. At two in the morning, I wake up. Always. This has been the case for 20 years.

I'm awake from two until five or six, and then I go back to sleep for an hour. In those two or three hours, my brain is productive.

Do you have a favourite writer? Do you read books as well?

I like reading books about history: Roman times, contemporary history, major world conflicts. I like to understand what was going through people's minds. I prefer historical figures, people who made history, because they all had differing visions: Churchill, De Gaulle.

Going back to football, you were elected onto the UEFA Executive Committee in April last year. How proud are you of your involvement with UEFA, and what do you think of the work that it is doing for European football?

I'm extremely proud. It's an honour to be involved with UEFA, and there's a great

"Football is for all, men's and women's. This is one of the biggest cultural leaps that football still needs to make."

'give-and-take' atmosphere. We have a president who is a leader with a vision, and an Executive Committee that really works like a team. This is very stimulating from a human and professional perspective. I think that, while in Italy you have a responsibility to over 30 million fans, when you do something for UEFA, the number of people increases to hundreds of millions.

What do you think are the main dangers that football has to face today?

Violence and bribery. In Italy and in Europe, violence in stadiums is reducing, but there are still issues outside of the event, which for me represents an even bigger risk. The other concern is that criminals, who are not only violent, but who also use money to fix matches, could abuse football. I see football as strong and clean on the inside but, due to its relevance, it represents a target for

negative forces almost everywhere.

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

First of all, if you don't respect your opponent, the referee, the fans, you are basically not respecting yourself. And that is not what football is about.

If you had one wish for football in the future, one wish for the whole of football, what would that wish be?

That as many children as possible in the world can play football. Many children are fortunate and can do so, but many cannot do it for thousands of reasons. A wish for the whole world is that every child can have a ball to play with.

As an Italian, what would be your dream for Italian football in the future?

The simplest answer would be to win

another World Cup, but that would be boring. [My dream would be for Italy] to be successful in youth competitions and help the development of women's football. Football is for all, and women's football has been the topic of my latest book. This is one of the biggest cultural leaps that our sport still needs to make.

One final question: a young boy comes to you and says, 'I want to play football' and asks you what he should do. What would be your words of advice?

Enjoy, follow your instinct and play for the team. This works well in football, but also in life. Football is a "life academy"; it has a cultural impact, and it can teach something to children which also then helps them off the pitch. Being a team player, helping your teammates, playing together as one – that is the real victory. 🌟



FIGC

On 10 April, Michele Uva congratulated Sara Gama on winning her 100th cap for her country.

UEFA'S EURO – 60 YEARS YOUNG

The European Football Championship is now a major worldwide sporting attraction. And it was 60 years ago, in June 1958, that the illustrious and prestigious competition was born. Here, we look at how the EURO, as it has become known, took shape and took flight in the 1950s.

The idea of a European competition for national teams had already been mooted years previously by Frenchman Henri Delaunay, who became UEFA's first general secretary when the organisation was founded in June 1954. In 1927, Delaunay was involved, along with eminent Austrian football administrator Hugo Meisl, in submitting a proposal to the world football body, FIFA, for the creation of a European national team cup.

Delaunay's dream would take 30 years to reach fruition, but it was clear that a key early UEFA objective was to create such a national team competition – it was even written into the first UEFA Statutes,

Until 1968, the competition went under the name of the European Nations' Cup. France hosted the first, four-team final round in 1960, losing 5-4 to Yugoslavia in the semi-finals.

the overriding feeling being that a continental confederation of FIFA should have its own national team competition. In the autumn of 1954, UEFA set up a subcommittee to consider draft regulations. Its work eventually led to the presentation of a proposal at UEFA's inaugural Congress in Vienna in March 1955. That proposal involved splitting the competition into two phases, with a knockout phase in the season before the FIFA World Cup and a final tournament in a single country the following season. To prevent fixture congestion, the proposed new competition would also serve as the European qualifying competition for the World Cup.

Initial signals from FIFA, which had to authorise such a competition, were, however, reticent. Its general secretary at that time, Kurt Gassmann, wrote to UEFA saying that he did "not entirely agree with the ideas that were presented concerning a UEFA competition and the qualifying competition for the 1958 World Cup". Gassmann felt that the proposal went against FIFA's interests and that staging the final phase of a European competition in the same year as the World Cup finals would present unwelcome competition for the FIFA tournament and threaten crucial FIFA revenue. His suggestion was that the European competition's knockout phase should take place two years before the World Cup finals and that the final tournament should be staged one year ahead of the FIFA finals. It would also be advisable, Gassmann reflected, "to separate the knockout stage of the European competition from the preliminary stage of the FIFA competition."

'Premature' idea

Consequently, the Vienna Congress sent the idea – deemed "premature" – back to the UEFA subcommittee's drawing board. A revamped proposal avoided clashes with the World Cup finals, and the group-stage idea was jettisoned for a direct knockout format to prevent overloading the calendar.

Opposition to the idea remained. Clubs were consulted, and they were reluctant to release players for an increased number of national



Pressesports



Sources

UEFA – 60 Years at the Heart of Football, Andre Vieli (2014)
25 Years of UEFA, UEFA (1979)
Official UEFA archives

team matches. The project was postponed again at the Lisbon and Copenhagen Congresses in 1956 and 1957, and was put on the agenda for the next Congress in Stockholm in June 1958. However, in 1957, supporters of the project had won a vote by 15 to 7, with four abstentions and one blank ballot paper. The debate at the Congress in the Swedish capital on 4 June 1958 was intense. The Congress minutes record that the Italian FA president, Ottorino Barassi, “did not consider the creation of this competition as desirable, as it would restrict the international calendar and risked exciting national passions.” West Germany said it was inappropriate to create a competition without regulations having been submitted to the Congress. Nevertheless, a majority of the delegates present at the Stockholm Congress came out in favour of launching the competition.

Lunchbreak talks

UEFA's first president, Denmark's Ebbe Schwartz, asked the subcommittee to rediscuss the project during the Congress lunch break, suggesting that the start of the competition be put back to 1959 – an idea that the subcommittee did not wholly endorse. There were calls from delegates for the 31 UEFA member associations at the time to be given the opportunity to reexamine the project. At the start of the afternoon session, however, the UEFA president ended the toing-and-froing conclusively, declaring, according to the Congress minutes, that “the draw would take place on Friday 6 June,”

Delaunay's dream would take 30 years to reach fruition, but it was clear that a key early UEFA objective was to create such a national team competition – it was even written into the first UEFA Statutes.

The USSR won the inaugural European Nations' Cup, thanks to a winning goal from their striker Viktor Ponedelnik in extra time of the final against Yugoslavia.

before moving on with the agenda.

It had been a long and difficult birth, but it was now ‘full steam ahead’, and the draw duly took place at the Foresta Hotel in Stockholm two days after the Congress. There were 17 entrants for the inaugural competition – Austria, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, East Germany, France, Greece, Hungary, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Ireland, Romania, Spain, Turkey, the USSR and Yugoslavia. And there were three notable absentees – England, Italy and West Germany.

The first official match in the European Nations' Cup, as it was called, took place on 28 September 1958, when the USSR met Hungary at Moscow's Luzhniki Stadium. The hosts won a round of 16 match 3-1 in front of 100,572 fans (a subsequent preliminary match – drawn by lots to decide the two teams to play it – saw Czechoslovakia emerge victorious against the Republic of Ireland over two legs to create the 16-team knockout field). Anatoli Ilyin scored the first-ever EURO goal for the USSR after just four minutes.

Delaunay's dream comes true

Sadly, Henri Delaunay would never see his dream become reality. He had passed away on 9 November 1955, and was succeeded as UEFA general secretary by his son Pierre, who continued to staunchly champion his father's idea until it was given the green light. In recognition of Henri Delaunay's role in the creation of the new competition, the trophy – provided by the French Football Federation – was named after him.

Pierre Delaunay was optimistic for the future of the competition. “It can be expected,” he wrote in the Official UEFA Bulletin in September 1958, “that, allowing for the experience gained from this first edition ... the number of nations will be greater in 1962.” His optimism was not misguided – 29 associations entered the second EURO, staged from 1962 to 1964.

The inaugural competition concluded with a final tournament in France in July 1960, featuring four teams – the hosts, Czechoslovakia, the USSR and Yugoslavia. The USSR triumphed by the odd goal in three after extra time in the final against Yugoslavia at the Parc des Princes. From small acorns do large oaks grow – and the stage was set for the development of a competition that has graduated, over six memorable decades, into one of the biggest and most popular sporting events in the world. 🏆

SPAIN END GERMAN JINX TO CLAIM FOURTH WOMEN'S U17 CROWN

After losing the last two Women's Under-17 finals to Germany on penalties, Spain turned the tables on their main rivals in Lithuania thanks to a pair of goals from captain Eva Navarro.

Spain claimed their fourth European Women's Under-17 title and in doing so ended their German hoodoo. The two teams – who between them have won all but one of the titles since the competition began in 2007/08 – also contested the 2013/14, 2015/16 and 2016/17 finals, and on each occasion Spain lost on penalties.

Spain's captain fantastic

However, in Lithuania two second-half Eva Navarro goals ensured it was Spain who lifted the trophy. Navarro, who also scored the only goal of Spain's semi-final against Finland, was the only player left from the 2017 final. The only other 'veteran' of 2017, Barcelona's Claudia Pina, who scored 15 goals in qualifying, was ruled out of the finals because of injury. And it looked as if her firepower might be sorely missed when Spain's Group B opener against Italy ended goalless.

Poland and England, the other two teams in Group B, also shared the points on the opening day, producing a 2-2 draw. It was Poland's first appearance at the

finals since winning the last four-team version of the tournament in 2012/13, which was the only other time they had qualified for this stage. The Poles opened the scoring before England took a 2-1 lead going into the dying stages, only for Paulina Tomasia to grab a dramatic last-gasp equaliser.

Salmon leaps to victory

Three days later Italy registered another 0-0 draw, this time against Poland, while Spain stole a march on the rest of the group by beating England 2-1, with Navarro scoring the winner ten minutes from the end. She added two more as a 5-0 victory over Poland put Spain top of the group, while England leapt from fourth to second thanks to a win over Italy. At half-time, it was the Italians who seemed to be heading to the semi-finals with a third consecutive 0-0 draw; however, a second-half hat-trick from England captain Ebony Salmon in the space of 19 minutes set the Lionesses on their way to a 4-0 victory.

Meanwhile, Group A featured two teams making their debut in the finals:

hosts Lithuania, and Finland. The latter had qualified in dramatic fashion with a five-goal spree in the second half against Scotland in their last elite-round game. Their 5-0 victory saw them leapfrog France and qualify on goal difference by a single goal.

Daunting debuts

In Lithuania, the Finns faced a baptism of fire against six-time winners Germany, who were looking to complete a hat-trick of back-to-back titles. The holders were given a mighty shock when they fell behind to a 53rd-minute Aino Vuorinen goal. However, in the last nine minutes, Shekiera Martinez scored twice to give Germany victory.

In their opening match, the hosts – the first women's side from Lithuania to play in a major final tournament – suffered a chastening 9-0 defeat at the hands of the Netherlands, for whom Kirsten van de Westeringh bagged a hat-trick. Three days later they performed far more creditably in a 4-0 reverse against Finland, who also had a hat-trick hero in Annika Huhta.

Comeback queens

The Netherlands seemed to be heading out of the group as they led Germany 2-0 with just seven minutes to go; but again the holders showed their ability to fight back. First Martinez pulled a goal back, and then Laura Donhauser equalised deep in added time.

Germany endured another frustrating start against Lithuania, needing 35 minutes to break the deadlock and secure a one-goal lead going into the break. However, the holders hit form in the second half and eventually ran out 8-0 winners, with Martinez bagging a ten-minute hat-trick to become the only player to score in all three group games at a Women's Under-17 final tournament.

High-flying Finns

The Netherlands and Finland faced off to decide who would join Germany in the semi-finals. The Dutch had looked set to win the group before conceding that late equaliser to the reigning champions, but they now found themselves dumped out of the competition by the Finnish newcomers.



Sportsfile

Dana Leskinen and her Finland team-mates produced a turn-up for the books by beating England 2-1 in the match for third place, qualifying for the U-17 Women's World Cup as a result.



Sportsfile



RESULTS

Group A (9, 12 and 15 May)

Finland	1-2	Germany
Lithuania	0-9	Netherlands
Germany	2-2	Netherlands
Lithuania	0-4	Finland
Germany	8-0	Lithuania
Netherlands	1-2	Finland

Group B (9, 12 and 15 May)

Italy	0-0	Spain
Poland	2-2	England
Spain	2-1	England
Poland	0-0	Italy
Spain	5-0	Poland
England	4-0	Italy

Semi-finals (18 May)

Germany	8-0	England
Spain	1-0	Finland

Third-place match (21 May)

England	1-2	Finland
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Final (21 May)

Germany	0-2	Spain
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Kaisa Juvonen and Aino Vuorinen scored for the Finns before Romée Leuchter set up an exciting finish with a penalty for the Dutch three minutes before the end.

Martinez on a roll

Their victory sent the Finns through to a semi-final against Spain, leaving England to face Germany. England had fallen to Spain in the 2013/14 semi-finals and Germany two years later at the same stage when they were edged out 4-3 by the eventual champions. This time against the Germans it was not nearly as close. Things went wrong for England from the moment Kyla Rendell deflected the ball into her own net; less than a minute later Martinez doubled Germany's lead, and she would go on to claim a second consecutive hat-trick as the champions ran out 8-0 winners. Her three goals took her total to nine, which was not just a Women's Under-17 record; it also equalled the most goals scored in any UEFA football final tournament, putting her alongside Michel Platini's tally for France at the 1984 European Championship and Russia's Elena Danilova in the 2005 Women's Under-19 finals.

In the other semi-final, Finland managed to withstand constant Spanish pressure in the first half, and goalkeeper Anna Koivunen made up for bringing down Paula Arana in the box by saving the

resulting penalty to ensure the teams went into the break goalless. Paola Hernández, who had also rattled the crossbar in the first half, eventually helped Spain break the deadlock in the 52nd minute, as her pass put Navarro through on goal, and the latter duly slotted home past Koivunen.

Spain continued to enjoy the better of the play and closed the match out with a 1-0 win to reach their fifth consecutive final – a run that has included every tournament since the format was expanded from four to eight teams in 2013/14, and one that has only been bettered in a UEFA national team competition by Germany's senior women's team, who won six consecutive EURO titles between 1995 and 2013.

Familiar foes

When Spain and Germany faced off for the latest in time in the Lithuanian city of Marijampole, it was always going to be a tightly contested affair, with a goal fest unlikely. The two teams had contested the previous two finals and also the 2013/14 edition, and on each occasion they had been deadlocked after 80 minutes, with Germany going on to win on penalties.

And halfway through their latest encounter, a similar outcome looked probable, with Germany looking slightly

the likelier to score as they finished strongly going into the break. However, just as they had in their semi-final, Spain showed their teeth early in the second half, as Arana's through ball found Navarro and the skipper finished with aplomb.

The holders had already shown their ability to come from behind and they pressed for an equaliser. But Martinez was frustrated in her bid to set a new finals record of ten goals. Instead, with seven minutes left, Navarro's brilliant solo effort sealed Spain's fourth Women's Under-17 title.

With Spain also having won last year's Women's Under-19 EURO, they became only the second country to hold both titles simultaneously, after Germany, who won the first Under-17 Championship in 2008 after having claimed the Under-19 crown the previous year.

Cause for pride

As for Lithuania, they may not have caused any upsets on the pitch, but they can look back with pride on a tournament that was a resounding success. Over 11,000 people turned up to watch the first women's final tournament staged in the country – an impressive return – and they were amply rewarded with plenty of entertaining football, a few surprises and a first glimpse of some future stars. 🌟

A TOAST TO ABSENT FRIENDS

The Netherlands defeated Italy to claim their third European U17 title. Although absent from this summer's World Cup, both nations laid the foundations for future success.



The final was played at Rotherham stadium in Yorkshire on 20 May.

It was the first men's age-limit tournament to be staged in England since The FA hosted the last finals to be disputed beneath the Under-16 banner in 2001. On that occasion, a certain Fernando Torres scored the solitary goal that gave Spain victory over France. And, 17 years later, while the Italians and Dutch were warming up on the turf of the New York Stadium in Rotherham, Torres was being given a standing ovation at the end of his farewell performance for Club Atlético de Madrid. It was inevitable to wonder how many of the 320 players on show at the tournament in England would go on to merit a standing ovation.

On the other hand, when the ball started rolling on 4 May, onlookers were frowning into crystal balls, trying to conjure up an image of who might be worthy of an ovation in 16 days' time. A school of thought maintained that the eventual winner might well emerge from the

tournament's group of death.

The quartet of Germany, the Netherlands, Serbia and Spain, drawn into Group D certainly whetted appetites – and left aftertastes of sweetness or bitterness depending on the flag spectators were waving. Few, including, by his own admission, their coach Kees van Wonderen, expected the Dutch to be 3-0 up against Germany by the 41st minute of the opening match. Or that Germany would fail to find a reply.

Also by his own admission, Van Wonderen "took a bit of a risk" by changing six outfielders for the second match against Spain. But luck teamed up with good football to produce a 2-0 win – the first goal after a Spanish defender had slipped, the second cannoning into the net via the woodwork and the keeper's back.

Spain had no such luck, failing to earn dividends from three gilt-edged opportunities during the second half. With everybody defeating the powerful Serbs, Spain found themselves obliged to defeat Germany in a do-or-die encounter between two former champions. Another tale of the unexpected opened with a set-play goal for Spain with about 100 seconds on the clock and closed with an eyebrow-raising 5-1 scoreline, with Santi Denia's team accounting for all six goals – the consolation for Germany being a long-range shot deflected into the net by a defender.

No less drama in Group A

Elsewhere, groupings may have had lower profiles. But not lower levels of drama. Notably Group A, where world champions England had to shake off first-game nerves fuelled by a large crowd. After a narrow 2-1 win against Israel, alarm bells sounded when the hosts trailed Italy 1-0 at the break – the collective high pressing implemented by Carmine Nunziata's side producing a high interception while England were trying to play their way out, followed by a conclusive long-range shot. England's power play, however, made relentless demands on the Italians, who surrendered to two second-half goals. Even so, there was a twist in the tail. Switzerland, beaten by Italy on the opening day, produced an outstanding collective effort to defeat England 1-0 to create a three-way tie on six points. Had the England keeper not thwarted a point-blank, added-time shot, England would have been eliminated on goal difference. As it was, they were through to the quarter-finals by the skin of their teeth.

Surprises all round

Not to be outdone, the other two groups also produced surprises. Portugal, champions in 2016, could find no goalward pathways against Norway – the only team to operate with three at the back. Having ostensibly rediscovered the winning trail with a handsome win over Slovenia, they lost their way once more against Nordic opponents. A 1-0 defeat by Sweden's industriously implemented 1-4-4-2 system sent them home. In their opening Group C game, Denmark had a comfortable 2-0 half-time lead which could easily have been doubled, but for Bosnia and Herzegovina, playing

with much greater conviction and passion, to emerge as 3-2 winners. The shell-shocked Danes were stunned again by an early long-range goal from the Republic of Ireland, who then claimed second spot with two late goals against Bosnia and Herzegovina. A 1-0 win for Belgium against Denmark gave them three wins without conceding and condemned the latter to an early trip home.

Positive vibes

By this time, the tournament was transmitting positive vibrations. The pitches at the six venues in the English Midlands were in impeccable condition; the 16 teams were singing the praises of facilities in the three centres where they were accommodated; coaches were, in general, offering development opportunities to the members of squads, newly expanded to 20 players; and some singularly un-British weather made pitch watering a basic requirement. The scene was set for a fascinating series of knockout games.

Spain continued the fluent combination play against Belgium that had dismantled the German defence. But, at half-time, Thierry Siquet reminded his players that, miraculously, they were only 1-0 down. Sure enough, a dynamic reboot yielded two replies in ten minutes and the Spaniards, having burned the candle down so far against Germany, could find no further physical or mental resources to come back. There was a more predictable outcome to England's quarter-final against Norway. Although Norway manfully played their way back into the game, their main threats stemmed from dead-ball situations and a 2-0 defeat put an end to a very creditable campaign. Italy began to don the 'dark horse' mantle by scoring early against Sweden, whose collective industry continually threatened to wear down their opponents. But the threats failed to

materialise – notably when a penalty was saved by Italy keeper Alessandro Russo just before half-time.

An unusual penalty ending

The greatest drama, however, was acted out in Chesterfield. The Dutch struggled to find solutions against Irish deep, compact, resolute 1-4-5-1 defending, with one-way traffic running into a solid jam on the outskirts of the penalty area. But the match was uncorked in the simplest of fashions: a corner on the right and an unimpeded header from centre-back Liam van Gelderen. While the Dutch were wiping their brows and breathing a collective 'phew' of relief, Colin O'Brien's team proceeded to elaborate a crossfield move; a cross from the left; a neat one-two in the box; and a coolly taken equaliser by Troy Parrott. And so to penalties – with an unusual ending. After the Irish had missed their first, eight spot kicks hit the net. The match ball was then saved by James Corcoran – who was flagged for encroachment. Having been booked for time-wasting with 20 minutes to play, the second yellow spelled red. Defender Oisín McEntee, donning the keeper's shirt, failed to save the retaken kick and the Dutch were home.

Their reward was a semi-final against the hosts – a match that lived up to expectations in terms of tempo, intensity, technical expertise, alternating spells of domination and scoring chances ... but not goals. The tournament's second shoot-out produced 11 consecutive successes, followed by the save from Joey Koorevaar that opened the door to the final. In the other semi-final, Italy, although deprived of their main attacking threat Alessio Riccardi through suspension, were too fluent and skilful in their play for Belgium who, nonetheless, again restricted the half-time deficit to a single goal.

Back they came, as they had done

RESULTS



Quarter-finals

Italy	1-0	Sweden
Norway	0-2	England
Belgium	2-1	Spain
Netherlands	1-1	Rep. of Ireland

Netherlands win 5-4 on penalties

Semi-finals

Italy	2-1	Belgium
England	1-2	Netherlands

Netherlands win 6-5 on penalties

Final

Italy	2-2	Netherlands
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Netherlands win 4-1 on penalties

against Spain, only for Italy to strike a long-range second nine minutes from time. The champions of the two strongest groups were to meet in the final.

Rock and roll in Rotherham

The roller-coaster which had propelled the tournament to its finale continued to rock and roll in Rotherham. The Dutch, with Kees van Wonderen again ringing the changes, looked the more potent force in the opening stages. But Italy, obliging them to play long balls more frequently than they might have liked, played their way back into the game – yet fell behind six minutes after the break. Carmine Nunziata made a shrewd tactical change, injecting attacking midfielder Nicolò Fagioli and, within eight minutes, the No17 had set up goals for Samuele Ricci and Alessio Riccardi which, in a matter of seconds, turned the final on its head. Another substitution, however, provided the final sting in the tail – target striker Brian Brobbey turning in a cross to make it 2-2.

Joey Koorevaar saved the first two of Italy's spot kicks, while the orange gloves (another small irony) of Alessandro Russo failed to prevent any of the Dutch penalties from hitting the net. When Ramon Hendriks struck home the conclusive 4-1, the orange shirts swarmed around their keeper beside the posts he had successfully defended, while the Italians were swept to the ground, as if hit by a hurricane. The small irony here was that the Dutch had won the title without winning any of their knockout games. But, although both nations would be missed in Russia, they had raised national spirits with stirring performances in England. 🍷

Italian Alberto Barazzetta challenges Dutch player Elayis Tavsan.



Sportfile



BOYS TO MEN

Skill and maturity grow hand in hand as players go up through the ranks of youth football. But the key is in the competition.

To gauge the value of youth tournament football, it is worth opening the pages of Andrés Iniesta's book *The Artist: Being Iniesta*. Inside is a fascinating insight from Iniesta's former Spain team-mate Fernando Torres into the precious learning curve that a youth competition can provide. In this case, the U-17 World Cup in Trinidad and Tobago in 2001. Iniesta and Torres were then 17 years old and key players in a Spain team eliminated in the first round after defeat by Burkina Faso. On the plane home, Torres and Iniesta sat writing a letter about the difficulties encountered. "The awful training facilities, the completely unacceptable standard of hotels, the debatable

quality of the food, the travelling ..." Torres remembered.

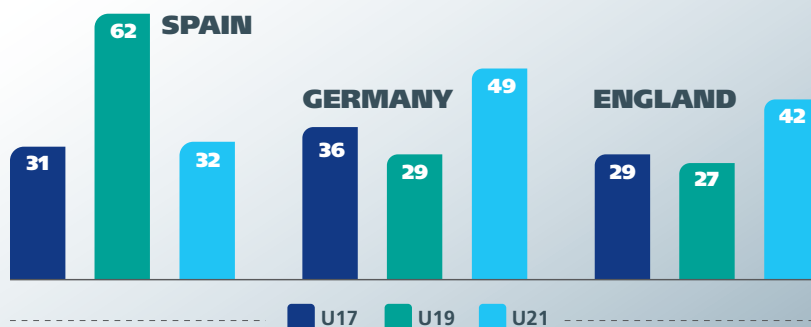
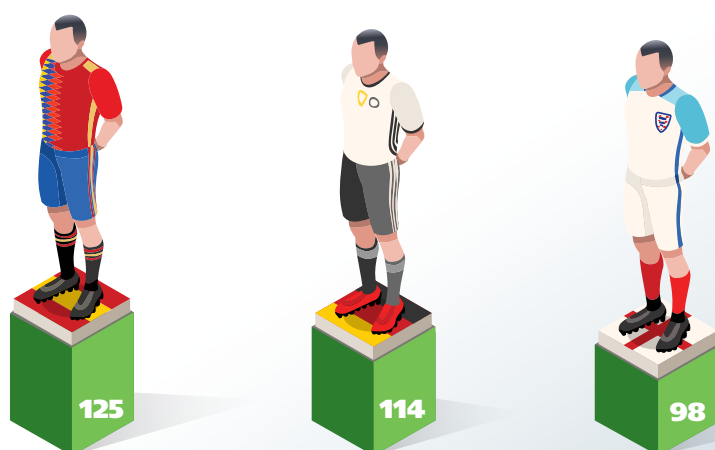
"That tournament helped both Andrés and me grow up fast, because it showed us the flipside of this game, the pain of defeat," added the Atlético icon. "We were the main players in that squad and so we were singled out for blame when it all went wrong." The lesson served both men well.

As Torres explained, he wrote a message on a shirt that he gave to Iniesta on their homeward journey from the Caribbean. It read: "One day, you and I will win the World Cup together." The striker's prescience was impressive. Iniesta, as we now know, would score Spain's winning goal in the 2010 World

The Under-21 competition certainly provided crucial experience for the Iceland players who went on to stun England, and the watching continent, at EURO 2016.



National teams with the most youth experience at EURO 2016 (by caps won)



Cup final against the Netherlands, two years after Torres himself had decided the destiny of the EURO 2008 final against Germany.

This just shows that there can be something significant to learn in defeat as well as victory. And the intensity of the occasion can give the lesson extra force.

Spain's regular participation in the final stage of youth competitions meant their footballers had plenty of learning opportunities before that unique winning sequence, at senior level, of two European titles and one world crown between 2008 and 2012.

The Spanish team continue to arrive at the major tournaments having garnered the most know-how as youth footballers – by EURO →

2016, for instance, they had accumulated 125 games combined in Under-17, Under-19 and Under-21 finals. Second on the list, meanwhile, were Germany with 114 matches between them. Back in 2009, they served early notice of the World Cup-winning potential that was realised in 2014 when Manuel Neuer, Jérôme Boateng, Mats Hummels, Benedikt Höwedes and Mesut Özil helped capture the European Under-21 title in Sweden. In that same summer of 2009, Mario Götze, scorer of their 2014 World Cup final-winning goal, became a European Under-17 champion.

Ginés Meléndez Sotos, technical director of the Royal Spanish Football Federation, speaks of the 'positive baggage' that a player collects through such participations at youth level. He was coach of the Spain team, including Juan Mata and Gerard Piqué, that won the European Under-19 Championship in 2006.

"The players who pass through these competitions act differently when they're older and have greater potential than those who've not had the same experience," he says.

Piqué, he notes, was "always a leader, with a winning mentality" but he still gained from

his experiences with Spain's junior sides. And so did his team-mates.

"Players who learn to compete as Under-17s and Under-19s have an advantage when they go on to the senior national team. A player develops when he's competing, and if he doesn't compete at the highest level he doesn't develop properly. If you do things that are too easy, you hardly get better at all. Competition is everything. It's what makes the biggest mark. It's fundamental. Without competition they can't improve."

There are "completely different" challenges at each age level, adds Meléndez, who notes how Under-17 players, for instance, face the test of handling a spell of time in a foreign country. "Three weeks is a long time not to have some drop in morale with the younger age groups, especially when results aren't good."

A good tradition

These opportunities are nothing new for the best teenagers in European football. The first UEFA Youth Tournament was played in 1957, taking over from the FIFA Youth Tournament that had been introduced nine years earlier.

"The players who pass through these competitions act differently when they're older and have greater potential than those who've not had the same experience."

Ginés Meléndez Sotos
Technical director
of the Royal Spanish
Football Federation



Gerard Piqué, with Mario Suárez, basks in the glory of winning the European Under-19 title in 2006, little knowing that four years later he would be clutching the World Cup, along with Cesc Fàbregas.



In 1981, this became the European Under-18 Championship, then a year later UEFA created its sister competition for the Under-16s. In 2001 the two competitions were relaunched as Under-19 and Under-17 tournaments respectively. While they had a long-established tradition of a final round involving 16 teams, it was not until 2000 that a group-stage format was introduced to the Under-21 final round, then featuring eight teams.

The Under-21 competition certainly provided crucial experience for the Iceland players who went on to stun England, and the watching continent, at EURO 2016. The team that overcame England en route to the quarter-finals in France included five players – Birkir Bjarnason, Johann Gudmundsson, Aron Gunnarsson, Kolbeinn Sigthórsson and Gylfi Sigurdsson – who had earlier caused a ripple or two by beating Germany 4-1 on their way to their first Under-21 finals in 2011. Once there, they eliminated the hosts, Denmark. Indeed it was Sigthórsson, scorer of the opening goal in the 3-1 defeat of the Danes, who would hit the winner against England in Nice five years later.

John Peacock watched the recent European Under-17 Championship in England in his role as a UEFA technical observer. Formerly coach of the England side that won the event in 2014, he believes every opponent now offers different hurdles to overcome.

“Whatever country you play nowadays, in Europe or the world, they’re very difficult to beat,” he argues. “If you’re England playing one of the smaller nations, invariably they will defend deep and defend in numbers around the box, and that’s a different aspect from what they are used to back in England, where they play pretty much toe to toe, week in week out.”

Facing different tactical questions is just one of the challenges, as Peacock adds. “When you’re playing for your country and you’re abroad, with different facilities and a different culture, it’s a massive learning curve. When they get into senior football these are things they’re going to have to contend with.

“You want a little bit of pressure to try and do well, but the skill of the head coach now is to make sure the environment isn’t so pressurised that players don’t perform. →



In the space of five years, Manuel Neuer went from being a European Under-21 Championship winner in Sweden in 2009 to a World Cup winner in Brazil in 2014.

‘THE BOY DONE GOOD’

UEFA Youth League graduates

Number of mins/
appearances in
UEFA Champions League



HÉCTOR BELLERÍN
(Arsenal)

1,391 mins, 15 apps



KYLIAN MBAPPÉ
(Monaco, PSG)

1,321 mins, 18 apps



ANDREAS CHRISTENSEN
(Mönchengladbach, Chelsea)

1,321 mins, 15 apps



Getty Images

It's about getting the right balance really," Peacock continues.

"The ones that reach the very top are the ones that have this drive and can handle pressure. Sometimes, for the ones that can't handle it, it's going to be difficult to sustain the level of career at the top level that they'd want. You do find out a lot more about the player, and a lot more about the team, trying to compete in this environment.

"The acid test is you are trying to get to a World Cup and these experiences that the players have gained can hopefully stand



Getty Images

In 2003, Wayne Rooney went straight from the England Under-19 team to the senior team. He made his final England appearance on 11 November 2016 in their 3-0 win over Scotland in the World Cup qualifiers.

them in good stead at a senior level." Wayne Rooney, England's record goalscorer, was also involved in this year's European Under-17 Championship as tournament ambassador. In what now feels like a different age, the then 16-year-old Rooney earned the golden ball for his five-goal feat at the 2002 finals in Denmark. Speaking ahead of the latest tournament, Rooney dwelled on the potential these competitions hold as a launch pad for a young footballer's career.

Glimpse of the future

"I got used to scoring goals for my country, which at any level is a great moment," said Rooney, who made his first-team debut at Everton FC within three months of his Under-17 feats. "I think it's brilliant to see what level you are, but also to try and get into the rhythm of playing tournament football.

"There are things you can show in these games that can make your club manager stand up and think, 'Well he's got a chance, I'm going to take a chance on him, give him

a go'. These tournaments can catapult players to the next level, into the first teams in whatever clubs they're at," he added.

One up-and-coming England midfielder, Lewis Cook, highlighted his own promise as part of John Peacock's triumphant side at the 2014 finals in Malta. He went on to captain England to victory at last year's U-20 World Cup and became a Premier League regular with Bournemouth in 2017/18, to earn a place in Gareth Southgate's standby squad for the World Cup finals.

Peacock remembers the small but significant steps the then Leeds United player took with England's Under-17s. "I saw a definite improvement in that 2013/14 season. I saw a very committed player with lots of ability but who just needed to fine-tune parts of his game. He was very competitive, but on the international stage you need to be a little bit more careful about when you can produce that tackle. He matured as the season went on and he did outstandingly well in the finals in Malta."

Club competition

This decade has brought further opportunities for young players at the continent's leading clubs and then in the UEFA Youth League, which was launched in 2013/14.

The Youth League enables youngsters to get accustomed to the routine of midweek international club football – travelling and testing themselves against their counterparts from other countries – and, in theory, lessens the impact when they step into the senior European game.

In all, 135 players have stepped up from the UEFA Youth League to the UEFA Champions League. The equivalent figure for the UEFA Europa League is 170. One particularly noteworthy graduate from the Europa League is teenage defender Matthijs de Ligt, who played for Ajax in the Youth League in February 2017 and three months later produced a display of extraordinary composure for the Amsterdammers in the Europa League final against Manchester United.

Jason Wilcox, academy manager at Manchester City, is appreciative of possibilities that the UEFA Youth League provides for his young prospects to sample different styles as well as environments.

Speaking in Nyon ahead of City's semi-final defeat against eventual Youth League champions FC Barcelona in April, he said: "One thing we always say is that our development programme is not all about 'win at all costs' at academy level, but there are going to be times when we have to put the boys under a little bit more pressure to go and win.



"There are certain tournaments abroad where we make a real effort to win, and I think that's important. But we try and build the boys' character so that this game is not a development game, this is about learning how to win big football matches, and the pressure that involves. If the boys can't handle the pressure of playing in a [UEFA Youth League] semi-final, they've got no chance of handling the pressure in a senior Champions League final, which is what the ultimate aim is."

And, as Andrés Iniesta and Fernando Torres can vouch, reaching that ultimate goal can mean some harsh lessons along the way. 🌱

"These tournaments can catapult players to the next level, into the first teams in whatever clubs they're at."

Wayne Rooney



POLISH FA REAPS THE BENEFITS OF REVENUE GROWTH

Revenues are essential if a national association is to protect, promote and develop football at all levels. If an association successfully manages to grow its revenue, this can have a positive knock-on effect on participation, engagement and image.

UEF A GROW is a central business development support programme launched in 2015 with the aim of systematically and strategically growing European football through the national associations.

The programme's revenue pillar offers national football associations tailor-made commercial consultancy to support their revenue programmes and grow football in their countries.

Unique market position

All national associations have the same core purpose: to protect, promote and develop football for everyone within their borders. They were all established with a broad mandate to serve the public and most of them receive public funding.

For national associations, generating revenue is a means rather than an end. By increasing revenues they can better achieve their core

purpose of protecting, promoting and developing football, whether this involves investing in facilities, grassroots participation, brand development, or digital infrastructure, as well as improving coaching or funding other initiatives.

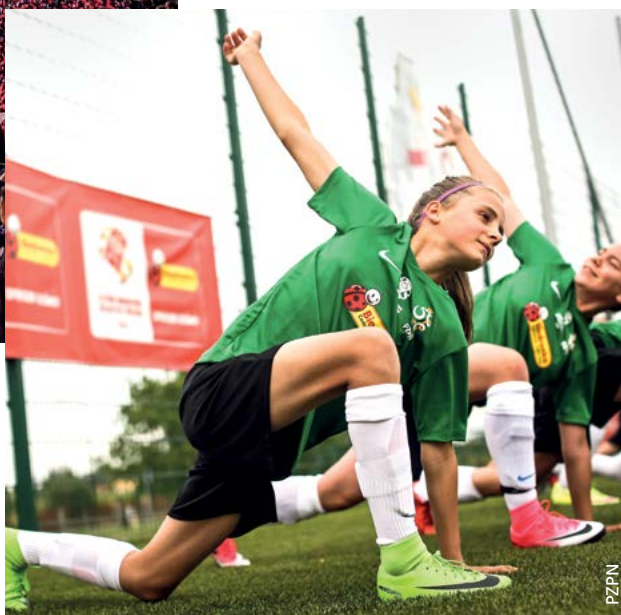
At the same time, national team football – and especially men's senior national teams – exists in a highly commercialised media and marketing landscape and it must offer partners value for money in order to generate optimal revenue within this environment.

Since national associations' revenue programmes must operate in both these worlds – developmental and commercial – they have different strategic priorities, and so represent a unique proposition to the market. They can therefore work with partners in a different way. For instance, national associations can seek deeper partnerships that enable partners to support football authentically, by funding





Since 2012, the Polish Football Federation has seen its ticketing revenue grow from €5m to €12.5m.



By bringing in more revenue, the Polish Football Federation can invest in and increase participation in football, thereby creating a virtuous circle.

specific initiatives, directly promoting football, gaining coverage and distribution for matches or giving retail support for ticket and merchandise sales. This unique position makes a much broader strategic approach essential.

Strategic approach is key

While a clear purpose and a clear overall strategy are vital, the revenue programme must be tightly integrated into this strategy. The UEFA GROW revenue pillar is designed to help national associations take a broad, strategic view of their revenue programmes, identify the key commercial priorities, and then seek bespoke support in key areas where it is warranted. It is closely linked to strategy, brand, communications, planning, digital engagement and participation because all these areas strongly affect commercial value. Several of the national associations taking part in the UEFA GROW scheme have embraced this strategic approach and have

seen extremely positive results, with the efforts of the Polish Football Federation (PZPN) representing a notable success.

Polish success story

The PZPN has made significant changes to its revenue programme since joining the UEFA GROW programme in early 2016 and has already seen very positive results from its endeavours.

The key for the PZPN has been to invest in building its national team brand, accompanied by a positive match experience for fans and corporate customers, which has helped drive ticket sales and hospitality revenue.

Interest in the national team is now booming. An average of 7.43 million people saw Poland's European Qualifiers on TV, with around 9.5 million watching their final match against Montenegro – not bad for a country with a population of 38 million. The Polish national side is now an appealing brand for sponsors, with the

PZPN able to attract a wide range of both international and domestic partners. "In 2012, the PZPN was harvesting an annual revenue of €5m from ticketing and hospitality," says the PZPN's general secretary, Maciej Sawicki. "However, last year the association managed to earn €12.5m, with all Poland games now played at the National Stadium in Warsaw. During our five home European Qualifiers for the 2018 FIFA World Cup, an average of 54,646 fans came to watch Poland play."

The federation has also made significant efforts to integrate grassroots football more directly with its revenue programme, with very positive results. For instance, the PZPN created the 'Łaczy Nas Piłka' (Football unites us) brand for all its customer-facing activity and uses LaczyNasPilka.pl as a single portal for all such activity, including grassroots organisation, national team information and ticket sales. This allows the federation to promote its revenue offerings to grassroots participants, publicise its grassroots programmes among national team fans, and use its digital infrastructure to target everyone with its marketing efforts.

The PZPN has certainly benefited from the success of its national team, but a successful national side does not always mean the national association will maximise its true revenue potential. Since embracing all the pillars of UEFA GROW in 2016, the federation has taken football development in Poland to the next level.

"UEFA GROW has been a fantastic tool for the Polish Football Federation," says Sawicki. "The revenue strategy created as part of the programme has contributed considerably to an increase in PZPN income. Without funding, it wouldn't have been possible to implement the many excellent projects that are helping to develop football in Poland."

The future

The national associations that will succeed commercially in the future are those that have a clear overall strategy, integrate their revenue strategy properly within it, prioritise their efforts, invest the necessary time and resources, and capitalise on their unique position in the overall media and marketing environment. The UEFA GROW revenue pillar provides bespoke consultancy designed to help national associations do precisely that. ⚽



WOMEN'S UNDER-19 CHAMPIONSHIP SHAPING UP TO BE A THRILLER

GROUPS

- Group A** Switzerland, Norway, Spain, France
Group B Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Italy

CALENDAR

- Group stage** 18, 21 and 24 July
Semi-finals 27 July
Final 30 July

Switzerland's Under-19s in their warm-up match against the USA in Biel/Bienne on 10 April (1-1).

Preparations are in full swing for the European Women's Under-19 Championship final round, which is heading to Switzerland from 18 to 30 July, making it the first nation to have hosted the eight-team tournament twice, having done so for the first time in 2006.

Eight of Europe's top women's Under-19 teams will compete in two groups of four for the right to contest the knockout phase. In the opening match, France will take on the host nation in Wohlen on 18 July. Among the other contenders are the Netherlands, whose senior women's side won Women's EURO 2017, reigning champions Spain, who triumphed in this year's European Women's Under-17 Championship final in Lithuania, Germany, who were Spain's opponents in the final of the Women's Under 17 Championship, Denmark, Italy and Norway.

"It's a huge honour for Switzerland to host this event," said tournament director Damien

Mollard. "Everyone is doing their best to make sure we deliver a truly memorable tournament. All the ingredients are there to turn the finals into a giant party for football fans. Spectators can look forward to matches of the highest quality, featuring players who will grace the elite women's game in years to come."

Naturally, the host nation team are keen to have a successful tournament. "We have outstanding players and there's a good feeling in the camp," said coach Nora Häuptle. "We've clearly got a tough group on our hands with France and the defending champions Spain, but we've shown in the past that we can hold our own against the very best. As with any group stage, the opening match will be crucial and maybe even decisive for our progress at the tournament. We'll be focusing on two key aspects: making sure we perform to the best of our ability and transmitting enthusiasm and passion to our fans."

Aside from the competition itself, the tournament also has a key role to play in promoting women's football more generally. "Events such as the European Under-19 Championship are a real fillip for women's football as a whole because there is plenty of good media coverage," said Franziska Schild, head of women's football at the Swiss Football Association. "We intend to promote women's football not only on the pitch but also off it, by staging various exciting non-football activities aimed at raising awareness among as many people as possible."

As well as Wohlen, matches will be played in three other host cities – Biel/Bienne, Yverdon and Zug – all of which boast top-class facilities and will provide fans and visitors with the chance to enjoy a rich cultural experience in a beautiful setting. ⚽



EXCITEMENT GROWS IN OSTROBOTHNIA

The Under-19 Championship finals will kick off on 16 July in Ostrobothnia in western Finland. Europe's brightest young talent will come together on Finnish soil to compete for the trophy.

The tournament, which will be played in the cities of Vaasa and Seinäjoki, is different in many respects from its predecessors. The venues will certainly be the furthest north since the introduction of the under-19 tournament in 2001, but there is much more that sets it apart.

For the first time, the eight-team tournament will be played not just in two cities, but also in only two stadiums, which will keep the organisation of the tournament very compact. Another first is the fact that it will be played on artificial turf, at new stadiums in Vaasa and Seinäjoki.

The stadiums each have a capacity of just over 5,500 and have already proved themselves to be fully functional in Finnish league games.

"We are convinced that these stadiums will provide the perfect home for the tournament. Even before the draw, ticket sales showed that there is huge support for the tournament in the region, and we hope to be able to make every single game a joyous and memorable experience for both the teams and the spectators," explained tournament director Jeannette Good.

Although preparations had been under way for a long time already, the draw on 30 May officially kicked off the tournament. The Vaasa city hall played host to the draw, welcoming

representatives of all the participant countries and the media, while the tournament host broadcaster, Yle, screened the draw live.

The weather was surprisingly warm for late May, which provided the perfect opportunity to show off the tournament-branded bikes in the city's streets alongside the tournament vehicles. The draw was certainly an event few people could have missed – and more was to follow.

Trophy on tour

Just two days later, the local clubs from both host cities – VPS from Vaasa and SJK from Seinäjoki – played the Finnish league's Ostrobothnia derby at the Vaasa stadium. This occasion also marked the start of the trophy tour. The UEFA Under-19 Championship trophy arrived in Vaasa before the match and spectators had the chance to take selfies with it. Since then it has been on display at several events, including Finnish men's and women's internationals.

While the trophy itself will take a rest during the tournament, there will be plenty of action on the pitch, as well as outside the stadiums. Most notably, there will be fan zones in both cities where people can breathe in the atmosphere of the tournament, even between games.

Just like any other football competition, this tournament is ultimately about

GROUPS

Group A Finland, Portugal, Norway, Italy

Group B Turkey, Ukraine, France, England



CALENDAR

Group A 16, 19 and 22 July

Group B 17, 20 and 23 July

Semi-finals + U-20 World Cup play-off 26 July

Final 29 July



FA of Finland / Nanne Lindberg

winning, and celebrating the best team. This will obviously be the main focus in Finland too, but it does not rule out other values. The organisers are keen to help fans realise that they can enjoy the atmosphere even if their team is not winning or if they do not support a particular team.

Another characteristic of this tournament is an extensive sustainability programme. Wherever possible, the environment will be prioritised. Recycling will be widely encouraged and the use of plastic containers minimised, while the message that Finnish tap water is excellent and safe to drink will also be keenly promoted.

On 29 July the champions will be crowned in Seinäjoki – the moment that the tournament's organisers have been working towards. Along the way there will be magic moments for everyone – and hopefully fond memories will be created.

"Everyone is important to us. Every player, team member, spectator; quite simply, everyone. We will do our utmost to offer an unforgettable experience for everyone. Our dedicated team of staff, club representatives and volunteers mean I can be quite confident that we will showcase Finland as a great place to host events now and in the future as well," proclaimed Good. 🌱



The 6,000-seater Vaasa Stadium.

TALLINN PRIMED FOR THE SUPER CUP DERBY

On 15 August the Estonian capital will host one of the biggest events in the European football calendar, the 2018 UEFA Super Cup. City rivals Real Madrid and Atlético Madrid – as 2017/18 UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League winners respectively – will face off in a derby at Lilleküla Stadium.

Besides being the first UEFA club competition final to be held in Estonia, the match is of particular significance, as 2018 is the 100th anniversary of the country's independence.

Throughout the year, Estonian football will be celebrating the jubilee by featuring Estonia 100 visuals on posters and social media promoting national team and league matches.

All the celebrations will culminate with Estonian football's main gift to the country – the UEFA Super Cup. The match will draw a lot of attention from around the world, while offering local fans the chance to see two top European teams battling it out for the Super Cup trophy.

Lilleküla Stadium is being spruced up for the big day and changes have already been made both inside and out.

While its total capacity has increased from 10,000 to 15,000, ingress has been made smoother for incoming crowds, and people with disabilities will now have proper access to the venue. Media and TV facilities have been revamped to

include a new conference centre. And two new giant screens have been added to enhance the fans' experience.

A trophy tour will also be part of the Super Cup experience. During the weeks leading up to the big match, the UEFA Champions League, UEFA Europa League and UEFA Super Cup trophies will be paraded in seven different cities: Tallinn, Tartu, Narva, Paide, Kuressaare, Pärnu and Viljandi.

The tour will follow Estonian men's top league matches to draw the attention of young footballers, so all league teams will have the rare opportunity to put the trophies on show for their fans.

A small festival will be held alongside each team's home match, where the public can take part in various activities and have their photo taken with the cups.

"We want the Super Cup to reach as many people as possible. That's why the trophy tour has been planned this way," says the general secretary of the Estonian

Football Association, Anne Rei. The trophies will then move on to Freedom Square in the centre of Tallinn, where they will be on display in the neutral fan zone on 14 and 15 August.

Tallinn is doing its best to ensure fans enjoy the experience. The city will be decorated in the Super Cup colours to create the right atmosphere, and festival areas will be arranged at various locations with a variety of activities and performances. In addition to the neutral fan zone, dedicated meeting points for Real Madrid and Atlético Madrid fans will be set up. The city will mark routes from the airport and meeting points to the stadium, so fans will find it easier to move around in the city.

Anne Rei adds that: "Hosting the Super Cup is a really big thing for our country, our capital and our association. Cooperation is going very well and I am grateful to all parties involved. This is an unprecedented experience for Estonia and Estonian football, and is sure to leave a lasting legacy." ⚽



The 15,000-seater Lilleküla Stadium in Tallinn has recently undergone extensive renovation.

ANDORRA

www.faf.ad

SERIOUS FOOTBALL FUN

XAVI BONET



The 19th Francesc Vila memorial youth tournament in late May attracted teams from the Czech Republic, France and Spain. Espanyol, Villarreal and Slavia Prague won the three finals.

Besides the 88 matches in three categories (Under-9s, Under-11s and girls), this tournament is well known for attracting large crowds, and the stands fill with supporters of all teams, ensuring a lively atmosphere throughout the weekend.

On the field, there were players who will undoubtedly go on to play for their or other clubs' first teams or even turn pro one day. But before that, besides honing their skills, they will need to consolidate their mastery of solid football values such as respect for their opponents, teamwork and fair play.



AZERBAIJAN

www.affa.az

SYMBOLIC TICKET PRESENTED TO THE AFFA PRESIDENT

ULVIYYA NAJAFOVA



Before the start of the 2018 UEFA Europa League final between Olympique de Marseille and Club Atlético de Madrid at the Stade de Lyon, the UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, presented the president of the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA), Rovnag Abdullayev, with a symbolic first ticket for the 2019 UEFA Europa League final, to be played at the Baku Olympic Stadium on 29 May next year.

The UEFA general secretary, Theodore Theodoridis, and his AFFA counterpart, Elkhon Mammadov, also took part in the presentation of the symbolic ticket.

The decision to hold the 2019 UEFA Europa League final at the Baku Olympic Stadium was taken by the UEFA Executive Committee at its meeting on 20 September 2017.

After the ceremony, the UEFA president said: "I have seen the stadium in Baku."

We have talked with the president of the AFFA. I have no doubt the next UEFA Europa League final will be organised magnificently." The AFFA president, Rovnag Abdullayev, said: "Azerbaijan is capable of staging significant events. Thanks to the firm support of the republic's president, Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan has hosted major sports competitions such as the European Games and the Islamic Solidarity Games with great success, and all of this provides good reason to trust in Azerbaijan. We are glad UEFA decided to hold the 2019 UEFA Europa League final in our country. It will be a great celebration of football in Baku."

The AFFA general secretary, Elkhon Mammadov, said: "The president of Azerbaijan has signed an appropriate order and given special instructions in connection with the staging of the UEFA Europa League final in Baku next year. The local organising committee has been set up. We are working closely with all the relevant state structures. We already have experience hosting major sports events and hope to be given the opportunity to host other UEFA events in the future."



ZRINJSKI WIN LEAGUE AND ŽELJEZNIČAR LIFT CUP

FEDJA KRVAVAC



In May, Bosnia and Herzegovina's national Under-17 team contested the final round of the 2017/18 European Under-17 Championship in England. Unfortunately, despite a great start to the tournament, with a 3-2 victory over Denmark in their opening game in Group C, Zoran Erbez's players did not make it through to the knockout stage, as that win was followed a 4-0 defeat to Belgium and a 2-0 loss to the Republic of Ireland. This was the third time in a row that the Under-17s had qualified for a major tournament, making them the most successful of Bosnia and Herzegovina's various national sides.

Meanwhile, HŠK Zrinjski have been crowned champions of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the third consecutive season – the first time that has been achieved since the Bosnian and Herzegovinian Premier League was launched back in 2000/01. FK Željezničar were runners-up, while NK Čelik and NK Vitez were relegated.

Željezničar were not left completely empty-handed, though, as they won the Bosnian and Herzegovinian Cup – the first time they had lifted the trophy since 2011/12 – beating FK Krupa 6-0 on aggregate in the final. The Blues won the first leg 2-0, and they went on to win the

second leg 4-0. For Krupa, making it to the final was a huge success in itself, as they had never even played in the top flight before 2016/17.

So, Zrinjski will represent Bosnia and Herzegovina in next season's UEFA Champions League, while Željezničar, FK Sarajevo and NK Široki Brijeg will all compete in the UEFA Europa League. Elsewhere, Mostar SG Staklorad won the Premier Futsal League by a huge margin, finishing 18 points ahead of runners-up MNK Brotnjo. As a result, they will represent Bosnia and Herzegovina in the inaugural UEFA Futsal Champions League next season.

The 2017/18 season ended with a series of awards honouring the best players and coaches in domestic competitions run by the Football Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

DINAMO ZAGREB GET BACK TO WINNING WAYS

NIKA BAHTIJAREVIĆ



May marked the end of Croatia's club competition season, meaning that it was time for the country's clubs and players to reap the rewards of the year's hard work. Following last season's dominant showing by HNK Rijeka, GNK Dinamo Zagreb got back to winning ways, securing another domestic double. To add to the club's successes, Dinamo Zagreb can also take pride in having three home-grown former players appearing in the UEFA Champions League final in Kyiv, with Croatian internationals Luka Modrić and Mateo Kovačić representing winners Real Madrid CF and international team-mate Dejan Lovren playing for runners-up Liverpool FC.

Croatian talent was also in evidence at the UEFA Europa League final in Lyon, where the national team's right-back, Šime Vrsaljko, helped Club Atlético de Madrid to victory. That final was also of particular significance for the Croatian

Football Federation (HNS), as its head of international affairs and licensing, Ivančica Sudac, became the first woman ever to act as UEFA delegate at the final of a senior UEFA men's competition.

Modrić et al. had little time for rest after their clubs' successes, with head coach Zlatko Dalić taking Croatia's preliminary 24-man squad to Rovinj in late May to start preparing for the World Cup. One of the team's first activities in Rovinj was a CPR course. "We wanted to educate the public on the importance of proper first aid and show our players that we care about their well-being. CPR can save a lot of young lives," said team doctor Zoran Bahtijarević.

With many of the senior national team's players being products of Croatia's youth system, the HNS is keenly aware of the key role that youth teams have to play in ensuring that the future of Croatian football is just as bright as its present. In late April, an Under-14

memorial tournament was organised in Vukovar, with a team from Rijeka emerging triumphant. That was followed by two HNS tournaments for Under-14 boys and girls in Medulin. On the grassroots front, the HNS has again been highlighting the role that football can play in promoting tolerance, with the federation helping Croatia's World Roma Organization to organise the Tenth National Minorities Football Camp in Dubrovnik.

Meanwhile, with the competitive season drawing to a close, the HNS recently kick-started its largest infrastructure project of the year – the renovation of Croatian First League pitches – with construction work starting at NK Inter Zaprešić's stadium in mid-May.

Finally, to add to the excitement surrounding the build-up to the World Cup, the HNS recently launched a new annual event: the Days of Croatian Football. This year's inaugural event, which took place in Slavonia and was timed to coincide with Croatia's last friendly before the World Cup, featured the HNS's first ever football award ceremony.

DENMARK

www.dbu.dk

TEN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

MIA KJÆRGAARD



On 9 May, a special committee tasked with increasing the number of women and girls playing football in Denmark presented a series of recommendations aimed at strengthening and promoting the women's game.

After almost two years of deliberations, the committee, which was established by the Danish Football Association (DBU) in 2016, unveiled its final report – which includes three overarching goals and ten specific recommendations aimed at fostering the development of women's football – at a major press conference.

Within ten years, the committee wants to see more women and girls playing the game, more women in positions of authority at local clubs (e.g. on clubs' boards), and more women refereeing high-level matches – in both women's and men's leagues.

The committee, which was tasked with identifying ways of achieving sustainable growth and development in women's football, with the aim of improving women's health and well-being and empowering women working in the world of football, was chaired by former Danish prime minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt, who is now chief executive of Save The Children International.

"Since the women's national team reached the final of the Women's EURO in the summer of 2017, interest in girls' football has increased significantly in Denmark. We need to take action now, unless we want the countries around us to overtake us with their ambitious plans for the development of women's football," she explained.

The committee has set three major goals for the women's game:

1) At grassroots level, football should



aim to become Denmark's most popular sport among women and girls. By 2025, the DBU should have at least 135,000 girls playing football in Denmark (compared with about 65,000 in 2018).

2) At professional level, the national women's team should aim to win a Women's EURO, a Women's World Cup or an Olympic football tournament within the next ten years.

3) Within ten years, one third of all registered footballers in Denmark should be women. Also, women should make up one-third of the DBU's board. Accordingly, one-third of all resources should be allocated to women.

The committee's full report (in Danish and in English) can be found here:

www.dbu.dk/~media/files/dbu_broendby/kvindefodbold/kvindekommissionens%20rapport%2009042018.pdf

ENGLAND

www.thefa.com

FIRST MIDNIGHT RAMADAN LEAGUE LAUNCHED IN BIRMINGHAM

JOHN REEVES



In 2017 Birmingham County Football Association, one of the 50 regional associations in England's network, established the nation's first Midnight Ramadan League. Every Friday throughout Ramadan, players from the Birmingham community come together to participate in a round-robin football tournament with games played between midnight and 2.30am.

The Ramadan League consists of 30-minute, seven-a-side matches officiated by FA-qualified referees. The competition is also affiliated to the Birmingham County FA, meaning the winners receive trophies and medals

at the end of Ramadan.

The tournament, which is supported by The Football Association and hosted by the Aston Villa Foundation, is open to anyone who wants to play football between the hours of midnight and 2.30am, not just Muslims. It was set up after consultation with players from Birmingham's inner city football teams, many of which said they found it difficult to keep fit during Ramadan as they were fasting for 19 hours a day.

Obyed Hussain, founder of the league, explained: "For Muslims, Ramadan is a month of self-discipline and kindness, but also a time to live your normal life. It is not



an excuse to stop exercising or playing football as this is something we do on a daily basis. This league is about providing a space for people of all backgrounds to come together, have fun and keep active during a time of great importance to the Muslim community."


Over 150 people are participating in the league, which has already been a resounding success. Moreover, many community groups attend the games to watch and provide an atmosphere for the high-quality football taking place. The popularity of the Midnight Ramadan League has also encouraged other County FAs to follow suit.

FAROE ISLANDS

www.football.fo

HONOURED FOR 1,000 MATCHES

TERJI NIELSEN

 Former referee Niklas á Liðarenda was recently honoured for officiating in 1,000 matches in a variety of refereeing roles.

Niklas á Liðarenda started out as a referee in the top Faroese division back in the 1980s and since then has been refereeing regularly for the Faroe Islands FA.

He refereed 400 matches before retiring and has so far acted as referee observer for more than 400 matches,



as well as officiating numerous times as assistant referee or fourth official. As referee observer for a top division match between KÍ Klaksvík and EB/Streymur, he brought his grand total to 1,000 matches. He was honoured for his devotion to the game before start of play.

Niklas á Liðarenda has also been heavily involved in a number of referee courses in the Faroe Islands as well as performing international duties for UEFA.

GEORGIA

www.gff.ge

FIRST MATCH OFFICIALS GRADUATE FROM REFEREE ACADEMY

GEORGE PIRTSKHELANI

 The first match officials recently completed the first course run by the Georgian Football Federation's referee academy. That course, which began in December 2017, was financed by the Georgian football development fund, making it free for all participants. Hundreds of applicants applied to take part, with 30 initially being chosen to participate and more being added to that list later on. Those successful applicants included seven female referees.

The opening of the academy was attended by UEFA's Jaap Uilenberg

and Jørn West Larsen. The latter had acted as an adviser to Georgian referees at UEFA, and it was under his guidance that Georgia joined the UEFA Convention on Referee Education and Organisation.

The graduation ceremony for the first batch of successful young referees took place on 28 May. The president of the Georgian Football Federation, Levan Kobiashvili, congratulated the graduates and thanked them for their participation, telling them that graduating from the referee academy would be a major milestone in their quest to forge a successful career in refereeing.

"Congratulations on successfully completing the course. You are set to become very important figures in Georgian football. I am delighted to see that you did not shy away from the challenges presented by the extensive application process, the busy schedule and the gruelling physical activities. You thoroughly deserve the diplomas that I am about to give you. I am especially happy for our female graduates. You are part of a new generation that will help combat existing social stereotypes about refereeing. I am sure that, in the future, more people in this country will want to get involved in football through refereeing," he said.

The director of the Georgian football development fund, Zaza Dolidze, talked about the importance of education, emphasising the government's eagerness to prioritise projects such as the referee academy. He also indicated that the fund would continue to finance refereeing courses in the future.

At the end of the graduation ceremony, the young referees received their diplomas and symbolic badges from Levan Kobiashvili and the federation's general secretary, David Mujiri.



GERMANY

www.dfb.de

UEFA AWARDS €50,000 TO DFB FOUNDATION PROJECT

THOMAS HACKBARTH



Since March 2015, more than 3,400 applications from football organisations all over Germany have been approved as part of a refugee initiative run jointly by the Egidius Braun Foundation of the German Football Association (DFB) and the federal commissioner for migration, refugees and integration. UEFA recently donated €50,000 to the initiative under its football and refugees grant scheme.

In 2015, the DFB foundation, named after the association's former president Egidius Braun, launched the '1:0 für ein

Willkommen' (1-0 for a welcome) project, through which football clubs were awarded €500 grants to promote refugees' social integration by encouraging them to play football. Now, under the '2:0 für ein Willkommen' (2-0 for a welcome) programme, which was launched at the start of 2017, support is being offered for further integration measures such as vocational orientation programmes, cultural diversity events and specialised training programmes for refugees who want to participate in organised football.

GREECE

www.epo.gr

IT'S A WOMAN'S GAME!

MICHALIS TSAPIDIS



From 11 to 14 April, Thessaloniki proudly hosted the #itsawomansgame festival – a series of innovative initiatives aimed at promoting girls' football, teaching people about fair play and raising awareness of key social issues. The event was jointly organised by the Hellenic Football Federation (EPO), Thessaloniki city council and the regional amateur football association of Macedonia.

As part of the event, 72 Under-15 girls from 39 women's teams were invited to participate in an informal mini-tournament. The girls, who were selected by national youth team coach Antonis Prionas following a series of preliminary training sessions, were divided into four teams and competed

against one another at a stadium in Mikra. Those matches – a first for Greek football – were an invaluable opportunity for national team coaches to watch the girls in person and see what they could do. The girls also attended a series of seminars led by distinguished scientific specialists on the subjects of nutrition, psychology and pre-match medical checks, as well as having the opportunity to chat to players and coaches with years of experience at international level. In addition, the EPO also organised, with invaluable assistance from various voluntary associations and organisations, specialist information sessions on violence against women and the prevention and treatment of breast cancer.

On 13 April, a huge football party took place in Aristotelous Square in central Thessaloniki, with girls from local academies and other young players taking part in a range of activities. More than 300 girls between the ages of 5 and 15 took part in fun psychomotor games, played free-form football and danced Zumba, enjoying the kind of elation that only the world's most popular sport can provide.



GIBRALTAR

www.gibraltarfa.com

A GREAT WEEKEND FOR WALKING FOOTBALLERS

STEVEN GONZALEZ



Gibraltar's walking footballers played in their first-ever tournament abroad in May, in Bristol in the UK, where they competed in the over-65s International Super Masters Tournament, taking on teams from Scotland, the Netherlands, Canada, England and Wales.

They kicked off the tournament with a 2-0 defeat to Ayr United FC from Scotland. Next up were the Netherlands, who had some former Dutch internationals on show. Gibraltar lost 3-0 to their Orange opposition. A 1-0 win over Wales followed, with a goal from Eliot Federico. In their fourth game, they drew 1-1 with Inter UBC Veterans from Canada, with Gibraltar's goal scored by Clive Beltran. Finally, they drew 0-0 with Birmingham Walking Football Club from England.

Overall, Gibraltar finished the tournament in fourth place – a very creditable finish given the calibre of the opposition they were up against and the fact that this was the first tournament of its kind they had taken part in. The overall impression they gave was amazing, so much so that Gibraltar were awarded the fair play award at the end of the tournament – a great way to round off a hugely successful weekend for Gibraltar's walking footballers.



ISRAEL

www.football.org.il

CURTAIN CALL FOR CFM

EITAN DOTAN



The Israel UEFA Certificate in Football Management (CFM) course drew to a close in Jerusalem in May. Held in various European countries each year, the course is run in cooperation with UEFA and the University of Lausanne in Switzerland, and is intended to provide tools and knowledge for national football association and club management.

This course was attended by Israelis and staff from various European football associations and clubs. The CFM

curriculum aims to address best practices in association management, developing theoretical and practical knowledge, sharing up-to-date knowledge of management techniques and best practices throughout Europe, consolidating participants' empirical knowledge, and strengthening the football community throughout Europe.

The course topics are: football organisation, management of operational strategy, operational management, football marketing and sponsorship,

media relations, media and public relations, event management and volunteer operation.

Comprising e-learning modules and six days of face-to-face seminars, the course lasted a total of nine months. The first two-day seminars in Israel, in September and January, were held at the national teams' training centre in Shefayim and the last in Jerusalem in May.

The certificate is awarded to participants passing a 20-minute oral examination in English, covering all aspects of the course.

ITALY

www.figc.it

ITALIAN FOOTBALL IN BETTER SHAPE

DIEGO ANTENZIO



Over 570,000 official matches, 32 million supporters through the turnstiles, 4 million participants and 1.4 million registered members of the Italian Football Association (FIGC) ... These are just some of the numbers from the latest annual report on the state of Italian football.

The eighth edition of ReportCalcio, covering the 2016/17 season, was unveiled in Milan during the FIGC's 120th anniversary celebrations. Speakers at the event included FIGC chief executive and UEFA vice-president Michele Uva, Carlo Dell'Aringa from the Italian research and legislation agency (AREL) and Emanuele Grasso of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC).

The report, which was produced by the FIGC in collaboration with AREL and PwC, shows how professional football in Italy has become more economically sustainable, with the value of production up by 28% compared with 2014/15, thanks partly to the new economic and financial audit measures the FIGC has introduced based on financial fair play. The proportion of clubs running at a net loss dropped from 87% in 2014/15 to 74% in 2016/17, while aggregate net equity over the same period increased from €37 million to €358 million.

That said, the total debt of Italian professional football remains a real concern and has surpassed the €4 billion mark for the first time. The number of matches played by the various Italian national teams increased to 206 in 2016/17, the most in the last six seasons.

As a result, the total domestic TV audience figures for the national teams reached 117.6 million and their number of followers on social media hit 7.7 million, an increase of 45.3% compared with 2015. Also worthy of note are the key contributions made by football to tax and social security funds (€10.2 billion over the last ten years) and the increase in stadium revenues (+2.9%), although other European countries remain ahead of Italy in terms of sporting infrastructure.

Among the new features of the latest report is Football Spread®, an index for measuring the difference in the economic, financial and sporting indicators of the Bundesliga (which is seen as the benchmark) and the other four major European leagues (La Liga, Ligue 1, Serie A and the Premier League).

The key indicators used are: average club revenue, wages as a share of turnover, the ratio of turnover to total liabilities, average attendances and



UEFA rankings. Benchmarked against the Bundesliga, the other leagues scored as follows: Ligue 1 +227.3 points; Serie A +208.3 points; La Liga +57.9 points; the Premier League -25.7 points.

"ReportCalcio provides an overview of the entire Italian football industry," said Michele Uva. "The overriding principle that drives the report is transparency. It highlights the strengths of Italian football but also flags the problem areas we have improved and continue to improve. The FIGC uses the data from the report to drive our agenda. Because the figures are certified, the report has become an important frame of reference for both industry professionals and the media."

An English version of the report can be downloaded here: http://www.figc.it/other/Report_Calcio_2018/2018_0335_RepCalcio_eng_3005_1050_LowRes.pdf

KAZAKHSTAN

www.kff.kz

NEW PITCH FOR CHILDREN WITH CP

MEDIA DEPARTMENT



A football pitch for children with cerebral palsy (CP) musculoskeletal disorders was inaugurated at a school in Almaty in May.

The Kazakhstan Football Federation (KFF) arranged for the new facility with funds from the UEFA HatTrick programme. The artificial turf pitch will enable children at the specialised boarding school to play their favourite game. They have already enjoyed training sessions with Maria Yalova, the ex-captain of the Kazakhstan women's national team, and former CSHVSM Barys player Syuzanna Kornetsova.

The inauguration ceremony was followed by a festival and a friendly match for children with CP. The day turned into a real celebration for all the children present, with the participation of TV presenters



Evgeniy Ozhogin and Eldar Serikpaev, together with children's entertainers and football freestylers.

The event was attended by the KFF general secretary, Azamat Aitkhozhin, champion wrestler Islam Bayramukov, and Kairat striker Chuma Anene.

Cerebral palsy is the most common motor disability in childhood and

Kazakhstan has 15,000 youngsters living with the condition. Last year the KFF joined the International Federation of Cerebral Palsy Football, leading to Almaty hosting the country's first football championship for children and teenagers with CP and neurological conditions. Six teams took part with players in the 10–15 age range.

LATVIA

www.lff.lv

MIXU PAATELAINEN TAKES CHARGE OF THE NATIONAL TEAM

TOMS ĀRMANIS



Finnish specialist Mixu Paatelainen has been named as the new head coach of the Latvian national team, officially taking up the position on 24 May. He replaces Aleksandrs Starkovs, who was let go in early April.

After the first matches in his new position, in the Baltic Cup and a friendly against Azerbaijan, Paatelainen will have the task of aiming for the top spot in Latvia's group in the UEFA Nations League. If he achieves that objective, his contract will automatically be extended for the UEFA EURO 2020 qualifying campaign.

"This is a moment of great pride and honour for me. I am very much looking forward to this tremendous challenge. Of course, my primary work is with the national team, but I also intend to work closely with the youth national coaches



and assist them in order to do everything for the improvement of Latvian football in general. We have a big task to improve our performances and results. It is important to make the team believe in success. I believe we can have an effective team that plays together, because this togetherness is the key to success. I believe that if we work hard and systematically, if we have a positive approach in everything we do, we can achieve this," Paatelainen said in his first public address.

As a player, Paatelainen scored 18 goals in 70 appearances for the Finnish national team and played for nine different clubs in four countries. Most of his career was spent in Scotland, where he also had four spells as a manager. From 2011 to 2015, he was the head coach of the Finnish national team.

LIECHTENSTEIN

www.lfv.li

NEW TRAINING CENTRE FOR NATIONAL TEAMS

ANTON BANZER



The Liechtenstein Football Association (LFV) has passed the first milestone on the road to completing a new technical centre for its national teams at the FC Ruggell training ground.

For several years now, the LFV has been searching for a new home for its seven national teams and the six Liechtenstein

clubs that play in the Swiss league. When it became clear that all six clubs would not be able to share facilities at a single location, an agreement was reached with the Ruggell municipal authority and football club to build a suitable base for the country's national teams. The new facilities are being built at the Widau sports centre,

along with an extra football pitch, and will provide the LFV with the ideal location for training courses and national team get-togethers.

The LFV's technical centre will eventually also include a training and match venue for the country's top club sides as well as offices for the whole LFV administration.

MALTA

www.mfa.com.mt

FARRUGIA 'PROUD AND HONoured' TO BE NEW HEAD COACH

KEVIN AZZOPARDI



Ray Farrugia has spoken of his joy and pride after being named Malta's new national team head coach. His appointment was announced on 2 May by Norman Darmanin Demajo, president of the Malta FA, after the

association's executive committee had unanimously endorsed the 62-year-old's appointment.

Farrugia, who steps up from his role as assistant coach, having also had two positive spells in charge of the Malta Under-21s, has appointed Branko Nisevic as his right-hand man. The other members of Farrugia's coaching team are Ronald Vella (technical assistant), Luca Pagani (physical trainer) and Charles Sciberras (goalkeepers' coach).

Farrugia's immediate priority is to prepare the Maltese team for its UEFA Nations League commitments, starting

in September. Malta have been drawn in Group D3 along with Azerbaijan, the Faroe Islands and Kosovo.

On the domestic front, Valletta FC completed a league and cup double after winning the FA Cup.

Two weeks after capturing their 24th league title, Valletta applied further gloss to their season by beating Birkirkara 2-1 in the cup final, played at the national stadium on 5 May.

Valletta will be flying Malta's flag in the 2018/19 UEFA Champions League, while Balzan, Gzira United and Birkirkara have qualified for the UEFA Europa League.



MOLDOVA

www.fmf.md

MILSAMI WIN MOLDOVAN CUP

FMF PRESS OFFICE



The final of the 27th Moldovan Cup, which took place in Chisinau on 23 May, pitted FC Milsami Orhei against FC Zimbru Chişinău. Following a dramatic match watched by 8,942 spectators, Milsami lifted the trophy for only the second time in their history, having beaten Zimbru 2-0 after extra time. In a cruel twist of fate, Milsami's two goals (which came in the

99th and 102nd minutes) were both scored by former Zimbru player Maxim Antoniu.

At the official ceremony after the match, Milsami captain Andrei Cojocari was handed the trophy by Nicolai Cebotari, general secretary of the Football Association of Moldova.

For the sixth final in a row, a foreign referee took charge of the game.



This time, Bartosz Frankowski from Poland was the man in the middle, and he did a great job.

NORTHERN IRELAND

www.irishfa.com

MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMME LAUNCHED

NIGEL TILSON



The Irish Football Association has launched a new programme to raise awareness of the issues surrounding mental health. The association is working in partnership with Train 2B Smart Soccer and the TAMHI, MindSight, Inspire and Change Your Mind charities to deliver the Ahead Of The Game initiative.

It marked the launch of the programme with the release of a mental health and well-being guide which will be distributed to football clubs across Northern Ireland. The guide aims to support clubs and volunteers when dealing with mental health issues, with a focus on challenging the stigma and preventative measures.



Supported by UEFA HatTrick funding for football-related social responsibility projects, Ahead Of The Game will reward 100 clubs that demonstrate best practice

and have signed up to a mental health charter, which comes with an equipment pack and further training in using the club guide. The initiative will also become part of the Irish FA's wider club accreditation programme.

The Irish FA president, David Martin, said: "It is important to raise awareness of the issues surrounding mental health as they can affect anyone, including those in the football family. Football plays a big part in the mental health of players, volunteers and even supporters as it can have a major impact on our emotions, relationships, identity and self-esteem. Staying mentally well is comparable to staying physically fit."

NORWAY

www.fotball.no

EAT MOVE SLEEP

MARI HAUGLI AND PEARSE CONNOLLY



The Eat Move Sleep programme was launched in 2015 and aims to encourage and enable children in Norwegian football clubs to make healthier choices about food, physical activity and sleep.

It is a collaboration between BAMA, Norway's largest private-sector distributor of fruit and vegetables, the Norwegian Football Association and the EAT Foundation, with research data provided by the Norwegian institute of public health.

"BAMA has been a partner of the Norwegian Football Association for 25 years. Its commitment to using football to get its 'eat healthy' message across has always been strong. Now the slogan is more comprehensive: Eat Move Sleep. It is a fine example of how our partners are ready to adapt to changing environments in order to keep their market position," explained Erik Loe, commercial director of the Norwegian Football Association. Rune Flaen, CEO of BAMA GROUP,



added: "By using the wide reach of football, we can spread knowledge about diet, nutrition and physical activity."

The programme provides clubs with a toolbox to help them use their venue, activities and business models to promote healthy and sustainable lifestyles.

The toolbox activities include creating visibility at sports events, providing healthier food options at sports venues, getting high-profile football personalities involved and promoting a fruit scheme that offers sports clubs and organisers of

football tournaments all over the country a 60% discount on fruit.

Another key toolbox activity is coaching the coaches. They are taught how they can use their influence as role models to guide children and young people to make healthier and more sustainable lifestyle choices.

The programme is an example of how football clubs and the public sector can collaborate closely with food companies, civil society and academia to bring about positive changes.

FESTIVAL OF FOOTBALL IN CORK

GARETH MAHER



The Football Association of Ireland (FAI) will take its 2018 festival of football and annual general meeting to County Cork from 10 to 18 August.

This will be the first time that the festival of football and AGM will have visited Cork, following previous years in Kerry, Mayo, Monaghan, Wexford, Clare, Donegal, Wicklow, Westmeath, Sligo/Leitrim, Tipperary and Kilkenny.

"I'm delighted that the FAI will be bringing the festival of football and AGM to Cork this year. Grassroots football is the foundation that we build everything else on, and Cork is one of the most impressive counties when it comes to development, administration and volunteer work at grassroots level," said the FAI's CEO, John Delaney.

"A huge part of the festival of football is about celebrating what has been done and recognising achievements, but also

looking ahead with developments such as the centre of excellence in Glanmire. It is an exciting time for football in Cork.

"Since 2007 we have been able to visit different counties as part of the festival of football roadshow, and it is a great way to connect with those making a difference in the development of our game. We look forward to visiting Cork in August for the festival and also our AGM."

Among the events planned for the week-long festival of football are visits to more than 30 clubs by former Republic of Ireland internationals, well-known footballing personalities, FAI personnel and high-profile coaches, with FAI summer soccer school camps also taking place across the county.

The FAI coach education department will run its own festival in tandem during the same week to offer a unique opportunity for parents and aspiring



coaches to complete introductory level coaching courses and workshops, while football fun days will also take place throughout the county.

The FAI will make equipment, funds, match tickets and services available to clubs in Cork to mark the county's hosting of the 2018 FAI AGM.

Around 250 delegates representing every league and divisional association in Ireland are expected to attend the AGM, while a delegates dinner will be held on 17 August where a number of national awards will be presented.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS, GREAT REWARDS

PAUL ZAHARIA



Innovation on various levels remains high on the agenda of the Romanian Football Federation (FRF), aiming not only to promote football's values, but also recognise and reward all teams for major achievements.

This new project, comprising innovation and the special branding of the league, are being carried out with UEFA's assistance and support.

'The big performance starts here!' is the motto the FRF chose for the second division, while 'Your team, your football!' was picked for the third division, as these are the two that prepare players, and sometimes even stars, for the first division and sometimes for international level.

With this new configuration, in which the lower divisions have their own brand and sponsors, the FRF decided to

introduce a new trophy for the winners of the second division. It was unveiled at a ceremony at the FRF's headquarters in Bucharest on 23 May. The 60cm trophy weighs 13kg and is made of silver-plated bronze. Each second division champion will keep the trophy for one year and will receive a replica on handing it back to the FRF.

"It is a milestone in the second division's evolution, which would not have been possible without all the successful projects we have worked on since 2014 in cooperation with all FRF members," said the FRF president, Răzvan Burleanu, at the launch ceremony. "Our target has been to stabilise, strengthen, improve and promote this competition. Every step we took was a success because we all worked together with the same goals.

"The new trophy is a symbol and



represents greater responsibility. It symbolises performance managed on the pitch, and that cannot be achieved without performance in terms of club management.

"And it is also a responsibility, because the winners have a higher mission: to continue their performance at a higher level. I feel confident that, from the 2018/19 season, when a lot of strong teams and well-established brands in Romanian football will be competing in our second division, this competition will become stronger and tougher and will reflect its motto: 'The big performance starts here!'"

RUSSIA

www.rfs.ru

RUSSIAN-GERMAN FOOTBALL WEEK

EKATERINA GRISHENKOVA



From 6 to 10 May, Moscow and Volgograd – both of which are due to host matches during this summer's World Cup – staged a Russian-German football week, featuring a series of events as part of a cooperation agreement between the national football associations of the two countries.

The week began with a seminar in Moscow focusing on fan engagement in the run-up to Russia 2018, with participants from Germany – which hosted the World Cup in 2006 – sharing their experience of organising the competition.

Among those attending the event were the acting president of the Russian Football Union (RFU), Aleksandr Alaev, and the president of the German Football Association (DFB), Reinhard Grindel. Also present was former Russian

international Alexei Smertin, who is now the RFU's anti-racism inspector, as well as representatives from the Russian football premier league.

Meanwhile, at FC Rotor Volgograd's Zenit Stadium on 8 May, the Russian and German Under-18 national teams played a friendly as part of their preparations for the 2018/19 European Under-19 Championship. Coached by Guido Streichsbier, Germany emerged victorious with a 3-1 win thanks to goals from Nicolas Kühn (2) and Eric Hottmann. Gamid Agalarov scored for Russia.

A day earlier the two squads took time out from their pre-match preparations to visit one of Volgograd's most famous landmarks, Mamayev Kurgan war memorial, where they laid flowers at the Eternal Flame in memory of the victims of the Second World War. The two national

association presidents also visited the memorial the following morning.

Meanwhile on 9 May, when Russia celebrates Victory Day to mark the end of the Second World War, Alaev and Grindel visited the Rossoshki military memorial cemetery outside Volgograd. They were joined by embassy staff from both countries, players from the German Under-18 squad and academy players from Rotor Volgograd.

The climax to the Russian-German football week coincided with the 2017/18 Russian Cup final, which was contested by FC Tosno (from Leningrad Region) and FC Avangard (Kursk) at the new Volgograd Arena, which has been built for the 2018 World Cup. The match, which ended in a 2-1 victory for Tosno, was attended by the German delegation.

"Our collaboration with one of the world's top football countries has been very fruitful," said the RFU acting president of the partnership with the DFB. "Since extending the agreement a year ago we have launched a joint training programme for players and staged an international friendly. It has been a great success."

SAN MARINO

www.fsgc.sm

GOING BACK TO THE FUTURE

PRESS OFFICE



On 31 May, the San Marino Football Federation (FSGC) unveiled the new strip that the senior and Under-21 teams will wear in forthcoming international matches. The first of these will be the opening round of games in the new UEFA Nations League, which San Marino approaches with renewed hope and a brand-new coaching set-up.

The strip, which was designed and manufactured by Macron, working closely with the FSGC as part of UEFA's kit assistance scheme, pays homage to the national team's traditions and heritage,

notably by returning to San Marino's internationally recognised colours of sky blue and white. So the country could be said to be heading back to the future as it looks ahead to its forthcoming UEFA Nations League and EURO 2020 qualifying matches: there is plenty of enthusiasm about new beginnings, but also a nod to the past and to the identity it hopes to export across Europe.

The same can be said of La Fiorita, Folgore and Tre Fiori, the three clubs that will represent San Marino in the UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League preliminary rounds next season.



La Fiorita earned the right to play in Europe's premier club competition after they defeated Folgore 1-0 in the final of the San Marinese championship, taking them to a historic double following their 3-2 (aet) victory over Tre Penne in the Coppa Titano.

SLOVAKIA

www.futbalsfz.sk

NEW UNDER-21 COACH

PETER SURIN



On 6 March it was announced that Pavel Hapal, the Slovakia Under-21 team's highly respected coach, would be moving to AC Sparta Praha, accompanied by his long-serving assistant Oto Brunegraf.

His replacement has now been found: 42-year-old Adrián Guľa was the strongest candidate, chosen for his great work helping younger players to progress and his reputation for inspiring good morale, maintaining ethics and his consistent approach.

Previously, Guľa played in Slovakia and the Czech Republic for Prievidza, Opava, Jablonec, Púchov, Viktória Žižkov, Inter Bratislava and then again in Prievidza.

His transition to coaching in 2009 was smooth and he quickly proved he had what it takes. With his strong character, he is able to instil his philosophy and positive thinking in his teams. He convinces players to believe in their own abilities and strengths and these teams often achieve positive results, while playing spectacular football.

He won the Slovakian second league and promotion while coaching AS Trenčín, and took MSK Žilina to the Slovakian championship title. He was an excellent mentor for young prospects such as Milan Škriniar, who currently plays centre-back for Inter Milan.

Despite interest from Czech and Polish



clubs, Guľa decided that his next career move lay in his home country with its Under-21 team. We wish him all the best!

SWITZERLAND

www.football.ch

WHERE IT ALL BEGINS

PIERRE BENOIT



Swiss football has been riding high for many years now. Currently sixth in the FIFA

world rankings, the men's senior team are playing in their fourth consecutive World Cup this summer. Success at youth level is

not thin on the ground either, with world and European titles at Under-17 level among the accolades. Over in the women's game meanwhile, the senior team qualified in style for the 2015 Women's World Cup and look set to qualify for next year's final tournament in France.

Despite those excellent results at elite level, the Swiss Football Association president, Peter Gilliéron, who has been at the helm since 2009, insists that none of that success would have been possible without the excellent work being done at grassroots level throughout the country.

Around 300,000 people hailing from almost 200 countries play football in Switzerland. For many of them, their football club is like a second home, where everybody is expected to get involved because everyone counts and belongs. It is also somewhere where they can share their ups and downs, and discover what they and their skills can bring to the team. A shared love of football has so much to offer – both on and off the pitch, and from the bottom to the top.



UKRAINE

www.ffu.org.ua

FOOTBALL LOVERS FLOCK TO CHAMPIONS FESTIVAL IN KYIV

YURI MAZNYCHENKO

Over four days, from 24 to 27 May, Kyiv's main street, Khreshchatyk, played host to the Champions Festival, which was held to celebrate the staging of the women's and men's 2018 Champions League finals in the Ukrainian capital. The festival was a resounding success, with more than 200,000 people visiting on the evening of the final alone.

The free programme of festivities included the Ultimate Champions Tournament featuring four 5-a-side teams of former stars (Real Madrid Legends, Liverpool Legends, UEFA Champions League Legends and Andriy Shevchenko & Friends), who entertained the fans on a specially constructed artificial pitch on the eve of the Champions League final. In the tournament final, Real Madrid Legends and Andriy Shevchenko & Friends shared six goals in a draw that was high on class and entertainment. But the real winners were the fans, who enjoyed plentiful



opportunities to get autographs and even grab selfies with many of the game's true greats.

Fans at the Champions Festival were also treated to a display of some incredible tricks from a group of football freestylers. Meanwhile, UEFA's sponsors laid on a varied programme of entertainment and activities, while there was nonstop music courtesy of some of

Ukraine's top DJs and musicians.

The final day of the Champions Festival featured a grassroots football programme for children organised in conjunction with the Open Fun Football Schools programme, which uses the game to promote social cohesion and post-conflict reconciliation. Some 30 young players took part in a training session and were put through their paces in a series of drills focusing on technique, coordination, movement and communication on the pitch.

Anders Levinsen, the managing director of Danish Cross Cultures Project Association, which runs the Open Fun Football Schools, presented balls and football kits to all of the youngsters taking part. "The girls and boys had a wonderful chance to play on the same pitch on which just yesterday some of Europe's best footballers showed off their skills," he said. "I'm sure we've made a lot of children very happy."

WALES

www.faw.cymru

PARTNERSHIP WITH WELSH HEARTS

MELISSA PALMER



At the Wales national team open training session in Wrexham on 21 May, the Football Association of Wales (FAW) announced its partnership with Welsh Hearts, The Heart Charity for Wales. The partnership's long-term aim is to deliver life-saving defibrillators, equipment and training to all football clubs in Wales. To kick off the partnership, the national team donated their match fees to fund the first six defibrillators, one for every area association in Wales.

Football clubs and training facilities across Wales often form community hubs and are used by many different sports teams and community groups. However, many of these integral community spaces

do not yet have defibrillators installed. The unique partnership between the FAW and Welsh Hearts aims to change this by ensuring that every player and spectator at every football club in Wales, no matter how big or small, will have access to a life-saving defibrillator in future.

"At the Football Association of Wales, we recognise the importance of investing in the health and well-being of our footballers and the wider community using football facilities across the country," explained the medical services manager and lead physiotherapist for the Football Association of Wales, Sean Connolly. "With this partnership we will work together to fundraise so that we can help Welsh Hearts with the amazing work

they do for heart health in Wales. We hope that this equipment will minimise the terrible impact of sudden cardiac arrests that have occurred at football grounds throughout Wales."



JULY BIRTHDAYS

Antonie Marinus Verhagen

(Netherlands, 1 July)

Frank De Bleeckere (Belgium, 1 July)

Hannu Tihinen (Finland, 1 July)

Razvan Burleanu (Romania, 1 July)

Marinus Koopman (Netherlands, 2 July)

Pjetur Sigurdsson (Iceland, 2 July)

Philippe Hertig (Switzerland, 2 July)

Rusmir Mrković

(Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2 July) **50th**

Mustafa Erögüt (Turkey, 2 July)

Peadar Ryan (Republic of Ireland, 3 July)

Bertrand Layec (France, 3 July)

Carolina De Boeck (Belgium, 3 July)

Antonio Matarrese (Italy, 4 July)

Neale Barry (England, 4 July) **60th**

Roland Ospelt (Liechtenstein, 4 July)

Massimo Cumbo (Italy, 4 July)

Lukas Pitek (Slovakia, 4 July)

Patrick Nelson (Northern Ireland, 5 July)

Natalia Avdonchenko (Russia, 5 July)

Tiago Craveiro (Portugal, 5 July)

Hans Schelling (Netherlands, 7 July)

Alaatin Aykac (Turkey, 7 July)

Slaviša Kokeza (Serbia, 7 July)

Martin Glenn (England, 8 July)

Jacobo Betrán Pedreira (Spain, 8 July)

Martin Maleck (Switzerland, 8 July)

Ekaterina Todorova (Bulgaria, 8 July)

Heinrich Schifferle (Switzerland, 9 July)

Yordan Letchkov (Bulgaria, 9 July)

Sergiu Lisnic (Moldova, 9 July)

Murad Mammadov

(Azerbaijan, 10 July) **60th**

Thomas Christensen (Norway, 10 July)

Markus Kopecky (Austria, 10 July)

Levan Kobiashvili (Georgia, 10 July)

Nina Hedlund (Norway, 11 July)

Darko Čeferin (Slovenia, 11 July) **50th**

Filip Popovski (FYR Macedonia, 12 July)

Maria Teresa Costa (Portugal, 13 July)

Sjoukje de Jong (Netherlands, 13 July)

Sharon Zeevi (Israel, 13 July) **40th**

Elke Günthner (Germany, 14 July)

Ben Veenbrink (Netherlands, 15 July)

Ernst Nigg (Liechtenstein, 16 July)

Lars Lagerbäck (Sweden, 16 July) **70th**

Jiří Ulrich (Czech Republic, 16 July)

Michail Anagnostou (Greece, 16 July)

Giuseppe Mifsud-Bonnici

(Malta, 17 July)

Alexander Safonov (Russia, 17 July)

Antonia Kokotou (Greece, 17 July)

Kari Iuell (Norway, 19 July)

Alfredo Trentalange (Italy, 19 July)

Tormod Larsen (Norway, 20 July)

Vladimir Radionov (Russia, 21 July) **80th**

Gudni Bergsson (Iceland, 21 July)

Michel Wuilleret (Switzerland, 22 July)

Iain Robertson Brines (Scotland, 22 July)

Balázs Makray (Hungary, 22 July)

Bontcho Todorov (Bulgaria, 23 July)

Pavel Malović (Slovakia, 23 July)

Marcelino Santiago Maté (Spain, 23 July)

David Gil (Israel, 24 July)

Gijs de Jong (Netherlands, 24 July)

Mario Gallavotti (Italy, 25 July) **70th**

Claus Christensen (Denmark, 25 July)

Ferenc Ragadics (Hungary, 25 July)

Nenad Radivojević (Serbia, 25 July) **40th**

Jacob Erel (Israel, 26 July)

Alfred Ludwig (Austria, 26 July)

David Bowen (Northern Ireland, 26 July)

Jeff Davis (England, 27 July)

Björn Ahlberg (Sweden, 28 July)

Stefan Tivold (Slovenia, 28 July)

Nataša Joksimović (Serbia, 28 July)

Karl Espen Eriksen (Norway, 28 July)

Robert Kispal (Hungary, 28 July)

Peter Stadelmann (Switzerland, 29 July)

Kieran O'Connor (Wales, 30 July)

João Leal (Portugal, 30 July)

Des Casey (Republic of Ireland, 31 July)

Tugomir Frajman (Slovenia, 31 July)

Jozef De Ryck (Belgium, 31 July)

Joël Wolff (Luxembourg, 31 July)

Javier Tebas (Spain, 31 July)

Duncan Fraser (Scotland, 31 July)

Cenk Cem (Turkey, 31 July)

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

Sheila Begbie (Scotland, 1 August)

Kimmo Lipponen (Finland, 1 August)

Igor Janković (Serbia, 1 August)

Erich Rutemöller (Germany, 2 August)

Luciano Luci (Italy, 2 August)

Mehmet Süheyl Önen (Turkey, 2 August)

Gerard Behan

(Republic of Ireland, 2 August)

Bisser Bochev (Bulgaria, 2 August)

Andreas Schluchter (Switzerland, 3 August)

Kim Milton Eggers (Denmark, 3 August)

Thura Win (England, 3 August)

Dariusz Pasięka (Poland, 3 August)

Franck Thivillier (France, 3 August)

Mustafa Caglar (Turkey, 4 August)

David Gill (England, 5 August)

Yves Wehrli (France, 5 August) **60th**

Aleh Chykun (Belarus, 5 August)

Piet Hubers (Netherlands, 6 August)

Pierino Lardi (Switzerland, 7 August)

Andrea Gotzmann (Germany, 7 August)

Anna Bordiugova (Ukraine, 7 August)

Marcel Vanelshocht

(Belgium, 8 August) **70th**

Plarent Kotherja (Albania, 8 August)

Olivier Henry (Belgium, 8 August)

Nico de Pauw (Belgium, 8 August)

Odd Flattum (Norway, 9 August)

Roy Hodgson (England, 9 August)

Nick Nicolaou (Cyprus, 9 August)

Peter Fossen (Netherlands, 10 August)

Urs Vogel (Switzerland, 11 August)

Laura Riposati (Italy, 11 August)

Domenico Messina (Italy, 12 August)

Emil Kostadinov (Bulgaria, 12 August)

Roger Vanden Stock (Belgium, 13 August)

Joseph Mifsud (Malta, 13 August)

Cornel Cristian Bivolaru

(Romania, 13 August) **60th**

Patrick Willemarck (Belgium, 13 August)

Metin Tunçer (Turkey, 13 August)

Albano Janku (Albania, 13 August)

Michael Verschuere (Belgium, 13 August)

George Pandelea-Dobrovicescu

(Romania, 14 August) **40th**

Jevgeņijs Miļevskis (Latvia, 15 August)

Kjell Alseth (Norway, 15 August)

Thibault De Gendt

(Belgium, 15 August) **40th**

Jacques Lagnier (France, 16 August)

Victor Beceiro (Spain, 16 August)

Sergey Pryadkin (Russia, 17 August)

Bente Skogvang (Norway, 17 August)

Dane Jošt (Slovenia, 18 August)

Romano Clavadetscher

(Switzerland, 18 August)

Borja Santana (Spain, 18 August)

Luca Miranda (Italy, 18 August)

Patricia Gregory (England, 19 August)

Hans Reijgwart (Netherlands, 19 August)
Graham Hover (England, 19 August)
Fabrizio Tencone (Italy, 19 August)
Per Ravn Omdal (Norway, 20 August)
Daniel Spreutels (Belgium, 20 August)
Eren Eroğlu (Turkey, 20 August)
Carmel Bartolo (Malta, 21 August)
Marta Atzori (Italy, 21 August)
Eamon Breen
 (Republic of Ireland, 21 August)
Kazimierz Oleszek (Poland, 22 August)
Geoffrey Thompson (England, 23 August)
Demetrio Albertini (Italy, 23 August)
Igor Pristovnik (Croatia, 23 August)
Luis Manuel Rubiales Béjar
 (Spain, 23 August)
Enrique González Ruano
 (Spain, 24 August)
David Delferiere (Belgium, 24 August)
Johny Vanspauwen (Belgium, 24 August)
Nicolae Grigorescu (Romania, 24 August)
Rinat Akhmetov (Kazakhstan, 24 August)
Pavel Kolev (Bulgaria, 24 August)
Bert Andersson (Sweden, 25 August)
Alexander Zorkov (Russia, 25 August)
Regina Konink-Belksma
 (Netherlands, 26 August)
Scott Struthers (Scotland, 26 August)
Ronit Glasman (Israel, 26 August)
Aisultan Nazarbayev
 (Kazakhstan, 26 August)
Karen Nalbandyan (Armenia, 27 August)
Tammo Beishuizen
 (Netherlands, 27 August)
Savvas Constantinou (Cyprus, 28 August)
Denni Strich (Germany, 29 August)
Vadym Kostiuchenko (Ukraine, 29 August)
Scilla Gennaro (Italy, 29 August)
Leo Windtner (Austria, 30 August)
Charles John Grundie
 (Northern Ireland, 30 August)
Marian Ruzbarsky
 (Slovakia, 30 August) **50th**
Boška Jovanetić (Serbia, 30 August)
Christer Fällström (Sweden, 31 August)
Cristel Brorsson (Sweden, 31 August)
Stefano Podeschi (San Marino, 31 August)
Pedro Dias (Portugal, 31 August) **50th**
Christoph Kollmeier (Germany, 31 August)

Forthcoming events

Meetings

5 July, Nyon

UEFA Futsal Champions League/European Women's Futsal Championship: preliminary and main round draws

23 July, Nyon

UEFA Champions League/UEFA Europa League: third qualifying round draws

6 August, Nyon

UEFA Champions League/UEFA Europa League: play-off draws

17 August, Nyon

UEFA Women's Champions League: round of 32 draw

30 August, Monaco

UEFA Champions League: group stage draw

31 August, Monaco

UEFA Europa League: group stage draw

Competitions

5 July

UEFA Europa League: preliminary round (return legs)

10/11 July

UEFA Champions League: first qualifying round (first legs)

12 July

UEFA Europa League: first qualifying round (first legs)

16–29 July, Finland

European Under-19 Championship: final tournament

17/18 July

UEFA Champions League: first qualifying round (return legs)

18–30 July, Switzerland

European Women's Under-19 Championship: final tournament

19 July

UEFA Europa League: first qualifying round (return legs)

24/25 July

UEFA Champions League: second qualifying round (first legs)

26 July

UEFA Europa League: second qualifying round (first legs)

31 July – 1 August

UEFA Champions League: second qualifying round (return legs)

2 August

UEFA Europa League: second qualifying round (return legs)

NOTICE

- On 17 May, **Luis Rubiales** was elected president of the Spanish Football Federation.

OBITUARY

- Fadil Vokrri**, president of the Football Federation of Kosovo, died on 8 June aged 57. He had been third vice-chairman of the UEFA Football Committee since July 2017. After retiring from playing football, he had devoted himself to developing football in Kosovo, culminating in 2016 in the Football Federation of Kosovo becoming the 55th UEFA member association.

7/8 August

UEFA Champions League: third qualifying round (first legs)

7–13 August

UEFA Women's Champions League: qualifying round

7–26 August, France

U-20 Women's World Cup

9 August

UEFA Europa League: third qualifying round (first legs)

14 August

UEFA Champions League: third qualifying round (return legs)

15 August, Tallinn

UEFA Super Cup

16 August

UEFA Europa League: third qualifying round (return legs)

21/22 August

UEFA Champions League: play-offs (first legs)

21–26 August

European Women's Futsal Championship: preliminary round

23 August

UEFA Europa League: play-offs (first legs)

28/29 August

UEFA Champions League: play-offs (return legs)

28 August – 2 September

UEFA Futsal Champions League: preliminary round

30 August

UEFA Europa League: play-offs (return legs)

EQUAL GAME



RESPECT

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