



UEFA
Grassroots
Programme

GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL NEWSLETTER

Editorial:
**The Real World
of Football**



Hamburg Highlights



Child's Play



**Abilities
and Disabilities**



Football for Life



**The Professional
Approach**



Stars in their Eyes

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The workshop in Hamburg was a mix of practical sessions, presentations and discussions.

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**GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL
IS A VEHICLE FOR HEALTH,
EDUCATION
AND INTEGRATION.**

THE REAL WORLD OF FOOTBALL

EDITORIAL

**BY ANDY ROXBURGH,
UEFA TECHNICAL DIRECTOR**

Every top footballer was once a grassroots player. Each one progressed through the development stages of free play, organised activity and, when their talent was identified, into serious, deliberate practice in a club environment.

FC Barcelona's homegrown talents Xavi Hernández, Andrés Iniesta and Carles Puyol went through this process, developing their technical skills and the qualities which would define them as people and sportsmen, such as hard work, cooperation and humility. Their youth coaches emphasised the difference between the life of a performer and that of an individual, and they matured into modest, dedicated professionals with their feet firmly on the ground.

In contrast to many of today's young people, the Barça trio did not live in the virtual reality world of computer games and internet sites. For them it was the real world of football, with all the life issues which go with it – learning about themselves and relating to others. All youngsters have faced the same challenges: developing self-control, confidence, courage, adaptability, and commitment, and improving their ability to engage with those around them – all human qualities which for the last decade psychologists have labelled as emotional intelligence.

For those engaged in grassroots football there is a message here: improving young players technically is one challenge, but contributing to the youngsters' personal development is also a fundamental goal. Through football, grassroots coaches can have a major impact on their players' emotional

behaviour, helping them to be optimistic, in control, able to handle conflict, focused, cooperative, competitive and socially integrated. Grassroots football's potential role as an educational, social vehicle cannot be underestimated, and needs to be promoted vigorously for the benefit of young people, society and the game itself. And a number of top professional players can help by providing a reference point for human qualities which make a difference in the game and in life itself.

Think of loyalty, and Manchester United FC's Ryan Giggs and AC Milan's Paolo Maldini immediately come to mind. The Welshman and the Italian have remained faithful to their first club, their first love, and are shining examples of devotion and dependability. For bravery, look at Petr Cech of Chelsea FC or Eduardo da Silva of Arsenal FC. Both have recovered from serious injury (the former from a fractured skull and the latter from a horrific broken ankle) and with praiseworthy courage continue to face frontline dangers. Two goalkeepers with a social conscience are Spain's Iker Casillas and England's David James. Real Madrid CF's No. 1 went to Peru to help disadvantaged children in the days following his triumph in EURO 2008, while the Portsmouth FC keeper, apart from being an ambassador for the Special Olympics, has created a foundation in Malawi to help local farmers and needy teenagers. And if it's work ethic, then look no further than Steven Gerrard of Liverpool FC or Wayne Rooney of Manchester United FC; or if it's quiet confidence then Alessandro Del Piero of Juventus and Andrei Arshavin of Arsenal FC will fit the bill. The ability to be both competitive and cooperative has immense value, and FC Internazionale Milano's Javier Zanetti is a role model in this respect. The quiet-spoken Argentinian is also well-known for his charity work, and his message to grassroots leaders is unequivocal: "There must always be values at the heart of sport, and this is what we have to teach our children."

A tiny number of the estimated one billion grassroots players worldwide will realise their dreams and play professionally. But vast numbers can gain immeasurably by being part of the football experience, whether as a player, a coach, a referee, an official or a fan. Learning about the game and expressing yourself on the pitch is great – learning about yourself and improving your human qualities as you participate is even more valuable. Spain's European champions Xavi Hernández, Andrés Iniesta and Carles Puyol are too humble to even consider themselves as role models, but there is no doubt that they have developed some positive personal qualities which young grassroots players would do well to emulate. Trying to equal or surpass their technical skills might prove a bit more difficult.



Manchester United's Ryan Giggs: a fantastic example of loyalty to one club.

PA Wire/PA Images



Pollex/Bongarts/Getty Images for DFB

**UWE SEELER AND HANSI MÜLLER ENJOY
BEING GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL AMBASSADORS.**

HAMBURG HIGHLIGHTS

**IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE 8TH UEFA GRASSROOTS WORKSHOP, A REPORT
IN *UEFADIRECT* MAGAZINE HIGHLIGHTED THE SHEER ENERGY OF THE EVENT – AND NONE OF THE
PARTICIPANTS IN HAMBURG WOULD ARGUE WITH THAT. IT WAS AN INTENSIVE PROGRAMME
WHICH OCCUPIED THREE FULL DAYS, INCLUDING VISITS TO THE CITY’S TWO MAJOR CLUBS
TO MIX PRACTICAL WORK WITH PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS. THE CORE ELEMENT WAS
THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN’S FOOTBALL. BUT MANY OTHER THEMES WERE WOUND AROUND
THAT CENTRAL PILLAR. THE WORKSHOP GENERATED ALL THE MATERIAL WHICH IS FEATURED
IN THIS NEWSLETTER AND COULD HAVE FILLED SEVERAL MORE.**

When he opened the proceedings, UEFA vice-president Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder commented that “these events are very good instruments for implementing concepts and spreading the grassroots spirit.” The next three days proved him right. During the same session, the DFB president, Theo Zwanziger, commented “these days grassroots football in all its guises gives an added value to society, so a united approach is crucial. It is essential for the grassroots of the game to derive momentum from the elite competitions.”

The first to pick up that particular baton was Steffi Jones. The former German international currently heads up the organising committee for the 2011 FIFA Women’s World Cup finals. “Apart from organising a peaceful event with a warm atmosphere,” she remarked, “the objective is to establish strong relationships with families and the grassroots, to clearly express the value of football as an integrating force, and to assume our responsibilities within society. Development and legacy programmes are being

pegged to the event, among them the Children’s Dreams 2011 campaign and 80 local grassroots projects which have been targeted for support.”

The validity of this philosophy was underlined when Johannes Axster of streetfootballworld reported on how his organisation had teamed up with UEFA for the EUROSCHOOLS project which was pegged to EURO 2008 and reaped huge benefits in terms of intercultural exchanges and social activities, in addition to the schools’ football tournaments themselves. UEFA had previously realised the value of forging links between elite and grassroots, having attached grassroots competitions and Champions Festivals to UEFA Champions League and UEFA Cup finals since 2002 – a tradition continued and enlarged this season with, in Rome, grassroots competitions organised in 8-10, 10-12 and 12-14 age groups and, in Istanbul, 144 teams and 1,500 players taking part in an event which ran through the 12 weekends prior to the final. In Madrid next year, plans



Sportsfile

A practical session at Hamburger SV’s stadium

A GROUP DISCUSSION AT THE WORKSHOP IN HAMBURG.



are afoot to stage an entire week of grassroots activities leading up to the first UEFA Champions League final to be played on a Saturday, with the first-ever UEFA Women's Champions League final to be staged in the same city during the same week. But that's another story...

Returning to Hamburg, the use of high-profile current or former players as ambassadors at these types of grassroots events was regarded as highly positive – and not least by Hansi Müller and local legend Uwe Seeler, who discussed the grassroots structures at VfB Stuttgart and Hamburger SV respectively. The two former German internationals now enjoy playing the ambassador role. "I like it," said Uwe, "because I was a team person from birth and I like to be part of the community. People tend to listen to what we say and we can deliver important messages about living and learning in a better way. We can also tell the parents to go home if they start driving their kids mad!"

"That's true," Hansi agreed. "We also have to make sure that, if parents become involved in grassroots football, they are properly equipped to teach. We also have to draw lines between leisure football and serious preparation. We have to make it clear to today's youngsters that dedication is essential and that, if you want to reach the top, getting your parents to take you to training twice a week isn't enough."

Adult influence – in the girls' game as well as the boys' – was cited during the discussion sessions in Hamburg as one of the main difficulties facing children's football today. Other social factors, such as diminishing leisure time, costs for children and families, and the negative impact of modern technologies contribute to concerns

about dropout rates at children's and youth levels. On the other hand, there were worries that the rapid growth of grassroots football would outstrip the availability of coaches and leaders, which could have a negative effect on quality. Asked to suggest measures to improve quality in children's football, the recruitment and education of coaches and volunteers was rated among the priorities to emerge from the Hamburg discussion groups, along with a need to guarantee the quality and availability of the facilities on which the children play their football. In some associations, the provision of footballs and equipment is still an issue to be addressed while other voices related this to shortfalls in political support or an excessively low-profile image of grassroots football. At the same time, cooperation with schools and local authorities was seen as an essential ingredient in recipes for sustained growth.

Questions about what more can be done by UEFA to stimulate progress produced responses which were mostly related to the sharing of knowledge and best practice. Events such as the grassroots workshop were

considered invaluable – and, as Andy Roxburgh explained, the Study Group Scheme is also proving to be highly positive. "I would say that around one quarter of the SGS is dedicated to aspects of the grassroots game. By the end of June, we will have staged 52 events under the auspices of the scheme with 23 different associations acting as hosts and 149 visiting groups (most with 11 participants) taking part. Only six visits have been exclusively grassroots-specific, but the grassroots game has formed part of the agenda at many of the others."

The six discussion groups also highlighted a desire for more permanent exchanges of information becoming available by, for instance, upgrading the grassroots content on the Training Ground sector of the UEFA website or via a specific intranet. Educational support, help with guidelines and grassroots philosophies were other issues raised, along with assistance in creating age-specific coach education courses and pan-European educational tools. In other words, a lot of energy and debating points were transferred from the workshop in Hamburg to UEFA's headquarters in Nyon – and vice versa.



Young players pay close attention to the example given by their instructor.



Pollex/Bongarts/Getty Images for DFB

**TAKING CARE OF
CHILDREN'S FOOTBALL IS ANYTHING
BUT CHILD'S PLAY.**

CHILD'S PLAY

THE TITLE OF ANDY ROXBURGH'S PRESENTATION ON THE OPENING MORNING IN HAMBURG WAS DELIBERATELY ENIGMATIC. CHILDREN PLAYING FOOTBALL WAS THE CORE THEME OF THE EVENT. BUT DICTIONARY DEFINITIONS OF THE EXPRESSION 'CHILD'S PLAY' INCLUDE 'AN EXTREMELY SIMPLE TASK' OR 'AN ACT OF SMALL IMPORTANCE' – BOTH OF WHICH ARE TOTALLY AT ODDS WITH THE PHILOSOPHY EXPRESSED IN SIX WORDS BY PER RAVN OMDAL, CHAIRMAN OF UEFA'S DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER: "OUR FUTURE BELONGS TO THE CHILDREN".

It could be strenuously argued that in this crucial area at the base of the grassroots pyramid, 'child's play' is an extremely difficult task and one of great importance. Balances need to be found. Children's football needs to be fun – but serious, well-organised fun rather than frivolity. It should be more about fixture lists than about league tables. It should be a platform for the development of skills but not a platform for overbearing coaches who see themselves as scaled-down replicas of Sir Alex Ferguson or Marcello Lippi.

It should encourage a will to win but not be prematurely impregnated with adult attitudes or rewards.

The importance of child's play was highlighted by Andy Roxburgh, by Willi Hink, director of development at the German association, and by Stig-Ove Sandnes, deputy general secretary in Norway, where the association has laid benchmarks in grassroots development. As Andy Roxburgh pointed out, UEFA's role is to stimulate interest, to set standards, to improve quality, to increase participation, to protect players and to offer support to the national associations which are working at the coalface in offering opportunities for the youngest members of the community to enjoy the game.

A generally accepted definition of 'children's football' is that it covers the primary school age groups up to 12 – at which point, according to feedback from the pan-European gathering in Hamburg, most national associations graduate youngsters from small-sided games into competitive 11 v 11 matches. The feedback also revealed that this sometimes happens at the age of 10 (with a certain tendency for elite clubs to favour an early transition) or as late as 13. In Norway, for example, it's 3 v 3 in the 4-5 age bracket, 5 v 5

from 6-10, 5 v 5 or 7 v 7 in the 11-12 group, and 11 v 11 from 13.

Norwegian statistics showcase the importance of children's football, which accounts for 64% of the country's structured football with 17,000 teams and 170,000 players active within the 6-12 age bracket. In the top two years of that bracket, seven of every ten boys and three out of ten girls play football – even excluding activities at football schools, tournaments and festivals.

This gives children's football an enormous social potential. In this respect, there are two basic elements to child's play: the child and the play. In footballing terms, it's about developing players, technical skills, performance and fitness. But, in this formative age group, it's also about developing an integrated citizen with social skills and a healthy lifestyle. In Germany, the motto applied to the youngest age group is 'keep 'em moving about' and, at the next stage, encourage them to adopt a sport-orientated lifestyle which will allow children to avoid physical and mental obesity – the latter equally important in a society where a high percentage of wrongdoing can be traced back to sheer boredom. The interesting two-page summary



Sportsfile

**THE GRASSROOTS COACH MUST
ALSO TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE SPECIFIC
ROLE OF THE GOALKEEPER.**



of the Laws of the Game produced in Norway for 6-12 year-olds also serves as a reminder that rule books mustn't be too heavy or repressive.

Hence the importance of developing the fun elements and the attractions of the game during the early years and building up enough romance and commitment during the foundation years to minimise the dropout rates which can easily occur during the teenage years if the saplings are not correctly nurtured and guided.

This, of course, requires investment in 'teacher training'. Ideally the sort of football teacher (as opposed to coach) required at this level is a friendly helper, a good organiser, a competent demonstrator, a reliable person and someone who has a contagious enthusiasm for the game. At the same time, as Uwe Seeler and Hansi Müller emphasised, guidelines for parents must be clearly communicated and respected if the right environments are to be created.

Up to the age of eight, children's football is all about having fun with friends, fulfilling the desire to learn and improve, promoting group cooperation, intensifying the fascination with the game and developing basic skills through activities which guarantee maximum ball-contact time. The 9-12 period is a foundation phase during the children's golden age of learning. This is when sessions can focus on mastery of the ball, reading the game, coordinating skills with speed and mobility and encouragement of team identities, imagination skills and self-awareness. In other words, playing football represents a vehicle for enthusiasm, personal relationships, satisfaction, self-expression and self-esteem and, at the same time, a learning curve in which challenges have to be set

and met. Children need to be gently pushed through their limits.

This is also the ideal time for values of respect and fair play to be implanted. In Norway, children are even invited to put their signatures to a fair play contract at the start of the season and every match is preceded by a UEFA Champions League-style handshake procedure. But, these days, respect for team-mates, match officials and opponents takes on an added dimension. In Germany, new strategies for grassroots football are being designed to cater for a society where 32.5% of the 6-year-olds or under are from migrant backgrounds, 29.3% in the 7-9 age bracket, and 26.7% of the 10-15s. This means that, more than ever, children's football has the potential to become a major integrating force based on the traditional precept that grassroots football is all-inclusive with no place for racism or any form of discrimination.

It also means that children's football has a role to play in communities and, as another feature in this issue reveals,

professional clubs are, these days, prepared to make major contributions. But the 'amateur spirit' remains as important as ever. The 260,000 boys and 110,000 girls who play 330,000 matches a year in Norway are backed by a team of 130,000 volunteers, whose leaders have attended 4-hour and 12-hour courses organised by the national association, while the formal grassroots football coaches have obtained their C licence after four 16-hour coach education modules. The Germans have been quick to realise that, if football forms part of the school curriculum, teachers need to be prepared and motivated to provide quality tuition to the crucial age-groups and, once the youngsters have reached the age of 11, they have a chance to attend one of the country's 366 training schools supervised by 29 full-time coordinators and 992 qualified coaches.

The time has come to throw the dictionary aside. Child's play is definitely not 'child's play'.





**JEFF DAVIES
IS IN CHARGE OF FOOTBALL
DEVELOPMENT AT THE
FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
IN ENGLAND.**

ABILITIES AND DISABILITIES

A RECENT STUDY IN SCOTLAND CONCLUDED THAT ONE IN SEVEN OF THE POPULATION HAS A DISABILITY OF SOME KIND, THAT THE RATIO BECOMES ONE IN FIVE IF CERTAIN TYPES OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS ARE INCLUDED, AND THAT 5% OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN HAVE A DISABILITY. THOSE DATA OFFERED IN HAMBURG BY SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL DISABILITY FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, STUART SHARP, PROVIDED COMPELLING EVIDENCE THAT, IF 'FOOTBALL FOR ALL' AND 'FOOTBALL WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION' TARGETS ARE TO BE ACHIEVED, OPPORTUNITIES TO PLAY DISABILITY FOOTBALL MUST BE OFFERED AS WIDELY AS POSSIBLE.

Yet, in Hamburg, it became clear that, even though pioneers such as the Dutch FA have been involved in disability football projects and partnerships since 1984, many other national associations continue to find the social and disability football star in the Grassroots Charter an elusive one.

That interesting point was the core element of a session led by Jeff Davies, national football development manager

at the English FA and member of UEFA's Grassroots Panel. The FA is, this year, celebrating the tenth anniversary of its Ability Counts programme for disabled players and Jeff is quick to acknowledge the difficulties which had to be surmounted in the early years and which are currently being addressed by many other national associations. The basic problem was that, in England, disability sport was run by various agencies and it wasn't until seven national

organisations were gathered under the English Federation of Disability Sport umbrella that The FA was able to establish an effective working relationship and a solid platform for development. Across the water in the Republic of Ireland, the Football Association of Ireland also took a major step forward when a Football For All committee was set up featuring one member from each of the disability groups involved in football. In many other associations, the key to development is also the ability to pull all the strings together and to walk the same road.

As Stuart Sharp explained, the Scottish FA has been treading a similar path. Important funding was provided by the Scottish Disability Sport agency but also by McDonald's who, as the audience in Hamburg had earlier heard, are currently underlining their commitment to grassroots football by partnering the German national association in a football badge scheme involving, this year alone, 200,000 participants at 2,700 separate events. In the UK, funding for disability football programmes also stemmed from the Sportsmatch project which, since 1992, has brought over

So-called unified matches involving players with or without learning disabilities are an enriching experience.



**STUART SHARP
IS RESPONSIBLE FOR
DISABILITY
FOOTBALL AT THE
SCOTTISH FA.**



EUR 60 million from the commercial sector into grassroots sport, with the government matching every commercial euro with one of its own.

This allowed the Scottish FA to draw up a master plan for the development of disability football, culminating in the Hitting the Target project – a four-year plan which will reach its conclusion in 2010. As in England, the priorities were to increase the number of participants in disability football, to develop training and competition opportunities, to build solid structures for future growth, to raise the public awareness and profile of disability football, to implant comprehensive education and mentoring programmes for new and existing coaches, and to enhance motivation by establishing clearly defined pathways to the top, starting with the pan-disability 'come and play' groups, school programmes and football centres and up through regional squads and mainstream clubs into the elite level. The English FA has set up player-tracking mechanisms for the 14-16 age group with a view to pinpointing those who may progress further along the trail towards the country's six (successful) national teams.

The Scots also approached the country's leading professional clubs, of which seven are already cooperating with disability teams in areas such as making training facilities available – which helps to raise the profile even further. At the same time, disability football is being played in football centres and at community clubs. The sport moved up another notch when Scotland's Centre for Disability Football was inaugurated in October 2005 and this has opened the door to residential training programmes for the elite squads, effective control of diet and nutrition, personalised fitness programmes based on medical screening

and profiling, and invaluable support in terms of lifestyle management.

Just below that level on the disability football pyramid are the two Regional Development Squad Centres where players with the potential to reach the national teams can be assessed and coached. However, the main objective is to broaden the base of the pyramid via partnerships with 32 local authorities and 16 branches of the Scottish Disability Sport organisation. In 2007, a decision was taken to create a National Development Day and, among the targets for the current year, is the aim for each of Scotland's regions to organise at least one disability football festival.

Any development plan needs to recruit and educate enough coaches to make it work. The Scottish FA introduced a specific coaching certificate in 2006, based on six-hour courses open to anyone over the age of 16, bearing in mind that youngsters are very often willing and able to act as leaders in disability football. The Hitting the Target project aims at recruiting at least 240 new coaches by the end of next year and this is being reinforced by a

national campaign aimed at bringing 150,000 volunteers into Scottish sport.

As Jeff Davies said in Hamburg, disability football is all about partnerships. "Within the Grassroots Charter," he said, "we have national associations which have obtained the disability football star even though they didn't originally mainstream their provision of disability football. What they did was to work with partners with a view to obtaining the star – and I have a strong suspicion that there are other associations which have not applied to UEFA for the star but which could stand to receive it. Admittedly, there are some associations which are simply not aware of the organisations within their country which deliver disability activity or are even not aware of any activity at all. So the first step must always be to pinpoint who is doing what, where and how. Then the associations can inject the football components into the equation and form partnerships which will allow disability football to take off – and allow the national association to add the disability star to its Grassroots Charter status. Go for it!"





**A GAME WITH
FORMER PROFESSIONALS
IN ENGLAND.**

FOOTBALL FOR LIFE

“I DON’T LIKE IT WHEN PEOPLE REFER TO ME AS AN ‘EX-FOOTBALLER’. THEY USE THE ‘EX’ BECAUSE THEY ONLY THINK ABOUT YOUR LIFE AS A PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL PLAYER. BUT WE WERE ALL FOOTBALLERS BEFORE WE BECAME PROFESSIONALS AND WE WILL ALWAYS BE FOOTBALLERS AFTERWARDS. A FOOTBALLER IS A FOOTBALLER FOR LIFE.”

The words were spoken during a recent interview by Christian Karembeu, champion of France, Spain, Europe and the world, currently channelling his passion for the game back from Europe towards his native Oceania. His sentiments provide a timely reminder that grassroots football is not exclusively about children and teenagers but also about the more senior citizens who wish to continue to express on the field of play their life-long commitment to the game.

It’s not easy. In some countries, former professionals are often able to remain

active in veterans leagues, where the performers have enough box-office appeal to make tournaments economically viable. But if your name and your skills don’t match up to the Zidanes, Butragueños or Laudrups of this world, getting a kick of the ball can be more problematical. The fun element is diluted if you have to compete with players who are 20 years younger or if, as the senior member of the side, you have the uncomfortable feeling of being a liability to the rest of the team. So, where do you play?

This question has been addressed by the Dutch national association. Piet Hubers, amateur football technical department manager at the KNVB, told the audience in Hamburg that a new project was born from the realisation that there were over half a million registered players who had passed the age of 35, among them 40,000 women. It represents a considerable slice of the country’s footballing population and a ‘community’ in which, by and large, registration fees could be affordable if demanded and in which, bearing in mind career considerations, enjoyment and the desire to avoid serious injury were paramount. The obvious answer was to experiment with competitions where the seniors could compete with their peers – and the KNVB’s 45+ project kicked off in April.

“We decided to focus on the 45+ age-group,” Piet comments, “because we do have significant numbers of players who continue their club football into their early 40s. But no further. So our basic question was ‘why quit at 45?’ Our answer was to create a competition for those who have reached an age where, as we jokingly say, you can be recognised by your black boots and tiny shorts!”



A UEFA-FIFA seniors’ match.

**PIET HUBERS, DIRECTOR
OF AMATEUR FOOTBALL AT THE
DUTCH FA, MAKES HIS
PRESENTATION AT THE WORKSHOP
IN HAMBURG.**



"Strangely enough, it originated from the KNVB's strategic marketing plan. I say 'strangely' because it wasn't conceived as a money-making exercise but rather as an initiative aimed at helping people to stay in the game and to offer some structured football to an important percentage of the population."

The 45+ project focused on retaining the players who had remained active into their 40s and on reopening the door to those who had been obliged by previous parameters to hang up their boots, whether they wanted to or not. So current barriers had to be eliminated and new concepts had to be introduced with the idea of adjusting competition structures to the physical capabilities of the players.

Experiments were conducted in conjunction with various clubs over a period of two years, while the KNVB also conducted research into the physical aspects most relevant to senior competitions. This included evidence from fitness testing, training programmes and expert advice from the medical profession.

Interestingly, the conclusion was that the most appropriate (and enjoyable) format was a 7 v 7 competition – a formula which is also being applied by some of the other national associations which operate structured competitions for the seniors. In the Netherlands, the launch of the 45+ tournament was, as Piet Hubers reports, "met by a very positive reaction from clubs, players, media, other sports and sponsors. Our regulations allow for squads of up to 12 players and the average works out at around 10. So we're happy that 215 teams entered the pilot competition. As it's the first year, we decided that playing should be free of charge. We obviously wanted as many teams to enter as possible, so it didn't make sense to put up financial barriers.

We also wanted a profile which would help to promote the project. When the competition unwinds, the KNVB will make another evaluation and take decisions on future costings and structures. At the moment, the tournaments are open to the KNVB's active members and former players." A player database will be set up to analyse the type of player who is keen to carry on playing competitive football at 45+.

During the first season, the competition is being played in mini-tournament format, with four teams meeting at a host club to play three 20-minute matches followed by regional finals. However, the plan is to switch, once the 45+ competition is firmly established, to regular weekly fixtures where the 7 v 7 games will be played as 2 x 30 minutes.

The welfare of the participants is obviously paramount as the competition

gets under way. Host clubs have been required to have first-aid staff on site and the KNVB is providing medical back-up at the finals – and at the Senior Games, which have provided an additional incentive during the inaugural season.

The Senior Games are being staged in the Zeeland area of the Netherlands in September, with around 3,500 participants competing in 22 sporting disciplines. 45+ football is among the sports on the agenda of an event which the KNVB will be supporting financially and logistically by, for example, covering entrance fees and providing medical backup. In the football finals, the 12 teams which emerge from the first season of the Netherlands' 45+ competition will take on four sides from visiting countries in a series of games which, it is hoped, will provide a high-profile demonstration that football is for life.



It's still great fun, even if the pace is slower.



Pooley/Bongarts/Getty Images for FB

THE PROFESSIONAL APPROACH

THE THEORY THAT OPPOSITES ATTRACT IS RARELY APPLIED TO FOOTBALL, WHERE PROFESSIONAL CLUBS AND THE GRASSROOTS ARE USUALLY REGARDED AS THE ANTIPODES OF THE GAME. BUT A FASCINATING SESSION ON THE THIRD MORNING IN HAMBURG UNDERLINED THE NUMBER OF CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS WHICH HAVE BEEN FORMED IN RECENT YEARS – TO THE EXTENT THAT THERE WERE STRONG SUGGESTIONS THAT THE TIME MIGHT HAVE COME TO REVIEW THE TRADITIONAL PYRAMID SHAPE WHERE GRASSROOTS PROVIDE THE BROAD BASE AND PROFESSIONAL CLUBS THE NARROW, DISTANT PEAK.

The modern game is being reshaped, with leading clubs acknowledging the roles they can play within communities and realising that, apart from talent detection and development, involvement at grassroots levels can broaden the fan base and foster long-lasting allegiances.

These messages were delivered by the two major pro clubs in the host city of Hamburg, by Robin Russell, a long-stand-

ing development and coach education specialist from England, and by AC Milan and their city rivals FC Internazionale.

The Hamburg clubs staged contrasting yet dovetailed practical sessions at their home grounds. Hamburger SV organised a training session involving technically gifted elite 11-year-olds. But, as the club's amateur sport leader, Jörn Spuida, pointed out, HSV reach out into the community by organising activities in 27 non-professional sporting disciplines, involving over 5,000 active sportsmen and women. In football, HSV run six men's and seven women's squads but the club is also active in social integration schemes, joint ventures with schools, and holiday camps where some 6,000 children a year enjoy some 'serious fun football' at 30 locations throughout the Hamburg, Lower Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania regions.

The relevance of offering school and holiday course football was underlined by Robin Russell. "In England, the most popular holiday courses are ones organised by professional clubs," he explained. "At the moment, over 900,000 Under-16s come into contact with around 100 clubs: half a million via school

programmes, 200,000 through holiday courses, and 200,000 thanks to organised matchday visits to first-team fixtures. It means that there are 500 full-time staff working exclusively on grassroots activities and that those 100 clubs employ around 2,000 part-time coaches."

In Hamburg, Robin tracked development over the two decades following a decision taken in 1986 to attach 'community officers' to 14 of England's leading pro clubs. "It was a far-sighted move," he commented. "And a brave one. Because the community officers who came to the clubs were not 'football people'. Their brief was to use government funding in partnerships with the clubs, aimed at providing training and job opportunities for the unemployed; to involve minority and ethnic groups in social and recreational activities; and to attempt to reduce the acts of hooliganism and vandalism which had been the scourge of English football during the 1980s. In doing all this, they also helped to maximise the use of facilities at the clubs." The result was an unprecedented joint venture involving The FA, the players' union, the leagues and regional associations, along with national and local governments which, by the early 1990s,



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Many professional clubs realise the importance of grassroots football.

**GOOD FACILITIES
MAKE PLAYING MORE
ENJOYABLE.**



Pollex/Bongarts/Getty Images for DFB

had attached social projects to all 92 clubs in England's professional leagues.

The benefits have been both tangible and intangible. Statistics confirm an increase in the number of children playing football and – vital news to the professional clubs – in attendance at matches. But other dividends are less easily quantified in statistical form. Improved behaviour and a better image of the game have allowed audiences to become more family-orientated and clubs have established closer links to the community. In other words, football has been primarily used as an effective medium to achieve social objectives which, in turn, generate knock-on benefits for the clubs.

This is very much home territory for Hamburg's other major pro club, FC St. Pauli. As Roger Hasenbein, leader of the club's Kiezkick social project launched in 2002, comments: "We are a city centre club, which means we have very little space but close ties to the community. Our current philosophy stems from input by the club and the fans on how FC St. Pauli can best meet demands in a deprived area. The Kiezkick project has been a big success because it has created an energetic mix of social institutions, fans and sheer enthusiasm. It has been an important experience because it has made us aware of football's tremendous potential for understanding and bridging social differences."

The philosophy is to create and fuel pride in the neighbourhood by offering chances to play fun football and generate feelings of togetherness. Training sessions, open to all and free of charge, are run through the club's fan shop at the stadium with seven members – mostly teachers – acting as youth trainers for two-hour sessions a couple of days a week. As the neighbourhood features high percentages of immigrant families, as many as 14 cultures and languages can be grouped together in a single session. At the same time, the club goes out of its way to offer an

appropriate welcome to girls whose parents might be reluctant to allow their daughters to play football. The club helps to organise tournaments involving boys' and girls' teams from schools, migrant communities and youth clubs, but the emphasis is on fun and integration rather than results. Social activities, such as barbecues, allow the 'family' to get together and special relationships with two local schools give the kids access to gym facilities during the winter. In other words, FC St. Pauli is a striking example of a professional club which has driven deep roots into the local communities.



Vogel/Bongarts/Getty Images

**Hamburger SV
players
are involved
in the club's
grassroots
programme.**

FC Internazionale Milano combine this sort of local approach with wide-ranging grassroots activities on the world stage. Roberto Samaden, head of grassroots development at the Inter academy, outlined how the Italian club contributes to local football by bringing youngsters into the game in the 5-7 age bracket, by letting them play at four training centres in Milan and organising, every Sunday, tournaments involving teams from other football schools based in Milan and the Lombardy region. In terms of player development, the priority has been to enhance the quality of training at the 53 affiliated clubs which form the Inter network throughout Italy. In the meantime, the

Not all clubs have the resources for such far-reaching global projects. But, in Hamburg, the clearly delivered message was that synergies between professional clubs and grassroots projects are mutually beneficial. As former German international Hansi Müller commented after reviewing VfB Stuttgart's involvement with grassroots development in a 200km radius catchment area, "apart from building ties with the clubs, this is also enormously positive for the players who usually take a different perspective on their 'star status' when they are brought close to the realities of life in the community which supports the club".



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SEVEN UEFA MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS SIGNED THE GRASSROOTS CHARTER AT THE UEFA CONGRESS IN COPENHAGEN IN MARCH.

STARS IN THEIR EYES

IN HAMBURG, THERE WAS TIME FOR A BIT OF STARGAZING. BUT NOT THE IDLE VARIETY. HUNDREDS OF EYES WERE TRAINED ON THE GRASSROOTS STAR SYSTEM AND THE MOVEMENTS WITHIN IT. THERE WAS ALSO A SPECIAL FOCUS ON OFFERING ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE TO THE 16 NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS WHICH WERE NOT SEEING STARS – THOSE WHICH, AT THAT POINT, HAD STILL NOT BECOME SIGNATORIES TO THE UEFA GRASSROOTS CHARTER.

But time has not stood still. Since Hamburg, there have been further movements in the grassroots galaxy. While the Grassroots Newsletter is being printed, UEFA's Executive Committee will be reviewing applications from Georgia, Romania and Slovakia for one-star status. If approved, they will bring the membership total to 40 and allow the target set for the 2009/10

season to be achieved with time to spare. Only 13 stars are not yet visible in the UEFA galaxy and, with further applications currently under review, there could be more 'a star is born' announcements in coming months.

At the same time, there have been movements deeper within the star system, with the Executive Committee examining applications for further stars from the Czech Republic, Faroe Islands, Moldova, Russia, Switzerland, Turkey and Wales. If ratified, they will increase to 21 the number of associations who have progressed beyond one-star status – a figure within touching distance of the target of 25 set for 2009/10.

Although the statistics are heartening, there was a sneaking suspicion that more associations could have moved on from one-star status but for their perception of the star system. One-star recognition was based on grassroots philosophy, structures and programmes for both players and leaders. The four additional stars were originally numbered and, although it was always stressed that they could be obtained in any order, there was a temptation to equate the system with the hotel sector where, for example, four-star status can only be reached after

acquiring stars 2 and 3. As it happens, star 2 in the Grassroots Charter was the one related to social and disability programmes which, for reasons discussed elsewhere in this issue, can be problematical for some associations. In point of fact, of the 21 which have progressed beyond one-star status, 11 have obtained the social and disability programmes star based on the criteria of establishing a minimum of four programmes – two in each category.

To avoid any danger of caution or misinterpretation, the four advanced level stars are no longer numbered. They are simply recognised by an initial: P for promotion and growth, R for registered participants, S for social and disability programmes, and W for women's and girls' participation. So, having acquired one-star status, an association can next aim at one or more of P, R, S or W. End of story.

Star P is based on a minimum of four promotional grassroots events and at least a 0.1% growth in the numbers participating. Norway set the benchmark with 128,993 at four events and a growth of 0.22.

Star R is pegged to the number of registered players: at least 2% of the pop-



Sportsfile



ulation or 400,000 in the larger associations. Again, Norway is the pacesetter with 10.8% followed by Germany (8.14%) and the Netherlands (7.2%).

Star S is mentioned above and, finally, Star W is based on a minimum of 3% of registered players being women or girls. Surprise, surprise! Norway leads with 27.9% followed by Denmark with 19% and Germany with 14.2%.

Talking about Denmark, DBU youth development coach Thomas Slosarich revealed that a similar star system is being implanted with a view to motivating clubs to offer better environments for grassroots players. "We've tried to adapt the UEFA system to our 1,600 grassroots clubs," he said. "It's a six-year project built with seven bricks: creating a good, safe environment, levels of participation, coach education (we're focusing on making activities appealing), loyalty to the principles of football, numbers of club members, good practice concepts, and the development of referees as 'game conductors' with clubs organising courses of at least nine

hours. Winning stars is a good promotion for the clubs, it gives them targets and incentives, and it promotes healthy competition with the neighbours!"

UEFA's Grassroots Charter is now advancing in other directions – one of them the provision of funding to help associations which attain one-star status. A re-evaluation procedure has been established whereby an association which does not add to its stars during a three-year period will have its grassroots status reassessed. And the star system has moved upwards to another level.

Shortly after the Grassroots Charter was kick-started with the ratification of five one-star members in 2005, Andy Roxburgh wrote in his editorial for the Grassroots Newsletter "Aim for the moon and, even if you miss, you'll land among the stars. That is an old maxim that challenges you to be the best you can be. Therefore, specifically for highfliers in grassroots development, sixth and seventh star classifications will be created. To get the sixth star an association will need to have the

previous five and provide proof of special investments in grassroots, high-level training programmes for players and coaches, a well-developed infrastructure, education through football schemes, and imaginative promotional activities." Just over three years later, that has become reality.

The charter has now escalated to the 'superior' level with applications for a sixth star from England, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Scotland and Ukraine submitted for ratification to UEFA's Executive Committee.

The sixth star is awarded for progressive, highly developed programmes over and above the requirements for five-star status in key areas such as special investments in grassroots, infrastructure, educational and training programmes, and promotional activities. England's application for six-star status, for example, also featured a new strategic plan, the recruitment and education of specialist grassroots staff, a programme of teachers' courses, various initiatives in the development of futsal, substantial investments in regional and school football, an innovative project aimed at establishing a nationwide network of 'sports villages', and much, much more. In fact the ten-page overview prepared by The FA to back their application for a sixth star would make several stories in their own right.

With six-star players already on the team sheet, one of the next steps in the evolution of the Grassroots Charter will be to launch the seventh star into the galaxy as a form of recognising exceptionally comprehensive grassroots programmes. At the same time, UEFA will be continually reviewing its own contribution and trying to offer even more incentives for national associations to keep stars in their eyes.





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