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## EVENT REPORT

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As we stood under the rain in Krakow presenting medals to Germany and Spain after a final of enormous quality and intensity, it was a moment to reflect on a tournament that had provided so many positives. Congratulations were due, not only to the gold and silver medallists, but also to all the other teams who had travelled to Poland for the first 12-nation Under-21 final tournament with a will to win and an attacking vocation. The result was an event rich in goals and entertainment for the many thousands of fans who made the journey to Poland to support their teams. These fans mingled happily with their hosts at stadiums, in cities and even on the beaches of the country’s north coast.

Special and heartfelt thanks are due to the Polish Football Association – the PZPN – and to its president Zbigniew Boniek for offering the teams and the fans such a magnificent scenario. The cooperation between UEFA and the PZPN was superb. The result was an impeccably organised event that took football into a wide area of the country, backed by social and grassroots activities that will doubtless leave a lasting legacy from a highly successful and memorable tournament.

Aleksander Čeferin
UEFA President

It was great to have such a well-organised Under-21 final tournament here in Poland – we showed both UEFA and a watching worldwide audience that we can successfully host these events. We were able to repeat the organisational success of UEFA EURO 2012, which Poland co-hosted with Ukraine. Once more we proved we are more than capable – that whatever UEFA asks of us, we can deliver. It was also really pleasing to see both the local Polish fans and supporters from other nations create such a special atmosphere, amid plenty of capacity crowds in the stadiums.

Not only did we have the pleasure of viewing the stars of tomorrow, we actually saw them shine in the present – the likes of Marco Asensio and Dani Ceballos really caught the eye. In the final reckoning it was teamwork that prevailed, and Germany lifted the trophy. In a sense, the tournament also represented a link with UEFA EURO 2012 and its legacy. The fantastic atmosphere and spirit of that tournament was felt here again in June.

Even though the Polish team were unable to get beyond the group stage, it was by no means a lost cause – some of these Poland players already have senior international experience and I am confident about their long-term career prospects.

Overall, then, I will look back on this championship as a very enjoyable and well-organised event, which ran smoothly in every possible way.

Zbigniew Boniek
Polish Football Association President
FYR Macedonia looked at home on their first final tournament appearance.
THE ROAD TO KRAKOW

There are different ways to reach a final, and while Spain left nothing to chance, Germany were delighted to ride their luck at times.

More teams, more thrills and spills, more disappointments. Whereas the top two teams in each group of the previous eight-nation format progressed to the semi-finals, whittling the dozen contestants in Poland down to four semi-finalists was a process conducive to hard-luck stories. Luck, the dictionary definition tells us, is “success or failure apparently brought by chance rather than through one’s own actions”. And, as they made their way home after the group stage, many of the coaches must have been scratching their heads and wondering if alternative courses of action could have changed their fortunes.
Hosts Poland and holders Sweden fall at the first hurdle

Fortune certainly seemed to smile on the hosts when, after 53 seconds of the opening game, right-winger Przemysław Frankowski fed overlapping full-back Tomasz Kędziora, whose cross was met by a thumping near-post header by Patryk Lipski, ending a powerful run after linking the build-up in the centre-circle. The start seemed too good to be true – and it was. Poland coach Marcin Dorna might have wished otherwise, but his team instinctively took a step back and handed the initiative to Slovakia, whose controlling midfielder Stanislav Lobotka lived up to his job description as the leader in a 1-4-1-4-1 attacking shape. Slovakia hit back with goals from Martin Valjent and substitute Pavol Šafranko and their 2-1 win signified an initial setback for the hosts.

The second chapter followed a similar script. Dorna switched from 1-4-2-3-1 to a more overt 1-4-4-2 to mirror the Sweden formation and, within six minutes, an end-to-end combination initiated by the keeper allowed Łukasz Moneta to drill in a cut-back from the right. Sweden, however, capitalised on a neat combination through the middle and a corner on the left to hit back twice before half-time. They defended the advantage right through until added-time before conceding a penalty that Dawid Kownacki converted to earn the hosts 2-2 a draw. It was a goal of crucial importance, as it kept Poland mathematically alive. This was because, on the opening day, Sweden and England had battled out a goalless draw. The latter made a dominant start, set up in 1-4-4-1-1 formation but the defending champions, relentlessly pressing ball-carriers and defending in depth, gradually wore them down. With both teams defending narrowly, space was at a premium. And, when the stalemate seemed destined to be broken, England keeper Jordan Pickford, diving to his right, raised a providential arm to beat out a spot-kick that Linus Wahlqvist had driven towards the centre of the net. England coach Aidy Boothroyd switched to a midfield diamond for the next game against Slovakia only to see his team concede from a corner. However, a short corner and a counterattack down the left earned three points and converted England v Poland into a must-win match for both sides. Sticking to the diamond, England converted domination into a 3-0 win against the hosts, while in the other match, Slovakia surprisingly eliminated Sweden by the same score. Coach Håkan Ericson, in his last game on the Under-21 bench, was “shocked when I realised after ten minutes that we didn’t have any style, especially in midfield”. The defending champions were out.
In-form Spain prove too hot to handle

The 2015 silver-medallists Portugal suffered a similar fate to Sweden in Group B. Rui Jorge’s side switched from their traditional 1-4-3-3 to 1-4-4-2 and then 1-4-6-1 structures after taking the lead against Serbia. Bruno Fernandes’s late goal gave them a 2-0 win and seemingly put them on track ahead of the group’s watershed fixture against Spain. Portugal matched the Spaniards in many aspects of play, but fell behind to a brilliant solo goal by Saša Rinić and a fast counter finished by Sandro Ramírez at the near post. The margin narrowed after a stunning long-range volley by Bruma pulled Portugal to within one with 13 minutes to play, but as they pressed for an equaliser, substitute Ifakil Williams ran from his own half to complete a solo counterattack and a 3-1 win. After Spain’s 5-0 victory over FYR Macedonia on the opening day—which included a hat-trick from Marco Asensio—it also confirmed their place in the semi-finals. FYR Macedonia bounced back from that heavy defeat by drawing 2-2 with Serbia—a result that spelt elimination for both teams.

The scenario invited Spain coach Albert Celades to change his entire starting XI for the final game, in which a single goal from Denis Suárez was enough to beat a Serbia team reduced to ten just before the break. In the meantime, Rui Jorge could afford no such luxuries. Portugal took on FYR Macedonia with the crystal-clear objectives of scoring a hatful of goals and hoping for the best in the race for the best-runner-up status that would earn a semi-final place. Portugal coach Rui Jorge

THE CZECHS’ LOSS TO DENMARK OFFERED GERMANY THE CONSOLATION PRIZE AS BEST RUNNER-UP

Germany squeezed through in second place

Italy take top spot, but Germany survive

Portugal’s near miss also set clear targets for the contenders who brought the curtain down on the group phase 24 hours later. Italy had to beat Germany. Not necessarily by a hatful, but anything less would leave them at the mercy of the Czech Republic’s result against Denmark. It was an unexpected denouement to a Group C that had kicked off in seemingly orderly fashion. Germany, basing their game on a potent midfield triangle and two highly adventurous full-backs, were good value for a 2-0 win over the Czech Republic, whose net result was a single on-target attempt in the 90 minutes. Denmark harvested the same total (and lost by the same score) against Italy, pitting a compact 1-4-4-2 against Luigi Di Biagio’s 1-4-3-3. The Czechs, however, threw a cat among the pigeons on the second matchday against Italy. Vítězslav Lavíčka shrewdly manipulated his team structure three times in response to situations during a game in which powerful long-range finishing proved decisive. Their 3-1 victory, coupled with another comfortable 3-0 win for Stefan Kuntz’s Germany against Denmark, signified elimination for the Danes. It also fuelled speculation about a potential three-way tie on six points that prompted onlookers to apply a magnifying glass to the tournament regulations.

But the outcome proved to be as unexpected as the scenario. Denmark coach Niels Frederiksen inserted Kenneth Zohore as the main striker in his 1-4-4-2 formation, and the Danes struck on two successful counterattacks to go 1-0 and 2-1 ahead. Although the Czechs twice equalised, they failed to get within reach of their target of a four-goal win. While making their last throws of the dice, they were caught twice more, allowing Zohore to complete a creditable tally of two goals and one assist and for Denmark to achieve the consolation of third place. While Frederiksen was drafting in a striker, Di Biagio drafted one out. Target man Andrea Petagna was left on the bench in a 1-4-1-4-1 structure featuring the pace and skills of Federico Bernardeschi as the attacking spearhead. Disturbing German build-ups with collective high pressing gave them control of the game—and the only goal, when a high ball on the left wing allowed Bernardeschi to slide ball past Julian Pellerinke in a one-on-one situation. Germany failed to find a response—or even a shot on target. The Czechs’ loss to Denmark, however, offered the consolation prize as best-runner-up thanks to a goal difference of +4.

GROUP C

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GROUP B

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TOURNAMENT OVERVIEW

SEMI-FINALS

ENGLAND 2-2 GERMANY

(aet; Germany win 4-3 on penalties)

Germany’s prize for finishing as the best runner-up was a semi-final against England in which Boothroyd’s team enjoyed 60% of the ball and a series of scoring opportunities during the opening 20 minutes. But, with a potent midfield and full-backs ready to run round the edges of the England diamond, Germany turned the tide with a sequence of assaults on the right-hand angle of the England penalty area. One of them allowed an unmarked Davie Selke to head in a lofted cut-back by right-back Jeremy Toljan. England equalised through Demarai Gray after a partially-cleared corner and Tammy Abraham gave them the lead just after the break, only for substitute Felix Platte to restore parity with an unstoppable near-post header from another corner. Both coaches availed themselves of the experimental fourth substitution during extra-time, but failed to modify the 2-2 scoreline, allowing Germany, after overturning the ball-possession tally to 65-35 in their favour, to clinch a penalty shoot-out win.

SPAIN 3-1 ITALY

Di Biagio reinstated Petagna as the percussive element in the Italy attack but maintained his high-pressing approach in a bid to disrupt Spain’s elaborate combination play, leaving Roberto Gagliardini to protect an ample area in front of his side’s back four. Spain’s exceptional technique allowed them to emerge from the Italian minefield unscathed and, gradually, Marcos Liorente, Saúl Ñíguez and Dani Ceballos began to weave a spider’s web. The latter delivered a neat pass for Saúl to score after allowed an unmarked Davie Selke to head in a lofted cut-back by right-back Jeremy Toljan. England equalised through Demarai Gray after a partially-cleared corner and Tammy Abraham gave them the lead just after the break, only for substitute Felix Platte to restore parity with an unstoppable near-post header from another corner. Both coaches availed themselves of the experimental fourth substitution during extra-time, but failed to modify the 2-2 scoreline, allowing Germany, after overturning the ball-possession tally to 65-35 in their favour, to clinch a penalty shoot-out win.

53 minutes and, when Gagliardini’s efforts earned him a second yellow card five minutes later, ‘game over’ seemed likely to appear on the giant screen. However, a deflected shot by Federico Bernadeschi allowed the ten men to equalise. With coach Albert Celades urging his team to react to the damaging psychological blow, Saúl produced a long-range shot to tranquillise twitching nerves and, when a breathtaking counter along the left allowed Saúl to apply a firm, one-touch finish to the cut-back, the contest was over with a quarter of an hour to spare. Spain were to meet Germany in the final.
Physical application, discipline and courage – and Mitchell Weiser’s goal – ensured it was Germany singing in the rain in Krakow.

It was the 21st game in the 21st competition for Under-21s. Citing the association of the magic number with creative spirits, experts in numerology might easily have predicted a victory for Spanish improvisation over German order. But the final played on a warm, humid evening in Krakow confirmed that football and numbers do not always travel comfortably together.

The form book certainly attached the label of favourite to Albert Celades’ team. They had won all their games en route to the final; Germany had won only two of their four fixtures. But both received vociferous encouragement from the travelling supporters among the 14,059 spectators who filled the stadium with noise and colour. When the French referee signalled for the ball to start rolling, it started rolling in the way the pundits might have predicted, with the red-shirted Spaniards easing it fluently across the surface and using the dribbling skills of Gerard Deulofeu and Marco Asensio to test the German full-backs.

This lasted five minutes. Then, little by little, Germany rolled up their sleeves and set to work on erasing the script. Or rather, imposing their own. The first warning shot was, to be pedantic, a header, left-back Yannick Gerhardt crossing for Max Meyer’s head to send the ball smacking against Kepa Arrizabalaga’s right-hand post. Spain attempted to reply in kind, with right-back Héctor Bellerín ending an underlapping run by heading wide. But it was along that flank that one of the key strategic battles was to be disputed, with Meyer constantly drifting left from his central midfield role to create overloads in the area around Bellerín and oblige Deulofeu to drop deep to search for numerical equality.

Elsewhere, similar scenarios were being created by Stefan Kuntz’s astute game plan. It required physical application, discipline and courage of convictions – qualities rarely lacking in German teams and certainly not here in Krakow as the first half unfolded. Kuntz watched approvingly, not needing to fine-tune a smoothly running machine, only unfolding his arms to applaud individual actions. The solid platform on which his structure was built was a high defensive line, wavering around 40 metres from the German goal. Goalkeeper Julian Pollersbeck unhesitatingly advanced to sweep the area behind his back four and was rewarded by being constantly brought into play as a passer of the ball. One of his preferential targets was ‘Maxi’ Arnold, always prepared to drop deep to receive and perform a valuable linking role with the front five, who relentlessly applied aggressive high pressure on Spain’s construction workers. Their screening midfielder, Marcos Llorente, struggled to cope with the shower of arrows fired into his territory, with the result that Saúl Ñíguez felt compelled to man the defences alongside him, while Dani Ceballos, on the Spanish left, felt equally obliged...
to double back as a counterfoil to the running of Mitchell Weiser and full-back Jeremy Toljan. In the central zone, striker Maximal Philipp, drafted in for the injured Dave Selke, toiled manfully as the first line of the high defence. Pushed deeper and deeper, the Spanish formation struggled to offer any semblance to the team that had stamped their possession-play hallmark on their previous games. Italy had also based their game plan on obiliing Spain to play long, yet Celades’ team had found second-ball solutions. Against Germany, they defended so deep that there was no support for striker Sandro Ramirez, who found himself ploughing a lonely furrow. Forward passes were efficiently intercepted – and back came Germany again. As if not recognising his own team, Celades watched aghast, shuffling ideas to identify the key messages for his half-time team talk. But, before he could reload his weapons in the dressing-room, one of the German arrows had found its mark. During the period of sustained pressure, Toljan found space high on the right to deliver a lofted cross. Way before the near post, Weiser got across centre-back Jesús Vallejo to duck under the ball and then raise his head to connect. Arrizabalaga watched aghast as the ball looped high across the goal and into the far corner of the net. It was just reward for the German endeavour; concentration and positional intelligence that had effectively prevented Spain from playing their game. As they trooped off the field at half-time, the Spanish players were well aware that they had failed to find any semblance to the team that, after Spain’s purple patch at the beginning of the half, had regained its composure, compactness and speed of transition after losses of possession. When the final whistle sounded, the heavens opened. But when Kuntz walked on to the pitch with a hand on his head, it was not to protect against the rain. The gesture signalled disbelief that his debut tournament had ended in victory. A victory that, in the opinion of UEFA technical observer Mou Paateilainen, had been “due to their success in preventing Spain from playing. In terms of football, it probably wasn’t their best performance but they were efficient and the defensive structure won them the game.” Thomas Schaaf agreed: “The coach designed a perfect structure. The win was not about exceptional individuals but about a really good collective team performance.”

GERMANY’S WIN WAS NOT ABOUT EXCEPTIONAL INDIVIDUALS, BUT A REALLY GOOD COLLECTIVE TEAM PERFORMANCE

Héctor Bellerin gets macedaunted with former Arsenal team-mate Serge Gnabry

GERMANY 1-0 SPAIN
30 June 2017
Krakow Stadium, Krakow

GOAL
1-0 Weiser 40

GERMANY
Pollersbeck; Toljan, Stark, Kempf, Gerhardt; Haberer (Kohr 82); Weiser; Meyer, Arnold, Gnabry (Armilli 81); Philipp (Öztunali 87)

SPAIN
Arrizabalaga; Bellerín, Meré, Vallejo, Jonny (Gayà 51); Núñez, Llorente (Mayoral 83); Ceballo; Asensio, Ramírez (Williams 71), Deulofeu

REFEREE
Benoît Bastien (FRA)

ATTEINDANCE
14,059

MATCH STATISTICS

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Spain goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga looks on as Mitchell Weiser’s goal flies in as the first line of the high defence.
LEADING FROM THE FRONT

Man-management and team-building skills more than made up for Stefan Kuntz’s lack of coaching experience

In the dressing-room, after the tactically thorny group game against Italy, Stefan Kuntz told his players they had just gained experience that money couldn’t buy. Despite the defeat that had consigned Germany to second place, he congratulated his team and reassured them that they deserved to be in the semi-finals. After the penalty shoot-out win that earned a place in the final, he reflected that, if England had sent them home, it would not have made him better or worse as a coach.

Well, not quite. As one of the relatively few strikers to move into coaching, he was backed by first-hand experience as a player, notably at EURO ’96 – a tournament where he learned that man-management of a squad has a prime importance and that players who might not have been regular starters may be called upon to play a final. This was in the baggage he took to Poland at the head of a squad hurriedly reshaped after the inclusion of nine eligible players in Germany’s FIFA Confederations Cup squad. His selection had also been influenced by club form, alignment with the German Football Association’s player profiles and personalities amenable to team-building – ahead of pure technical and tactical qualities. As remarked by Thomas Schaaf, a UEFA technical observer in Poland: “He has a good relationship with the senior team. He likes working with young players and he realises the importance of bringing them together to attain high levels of team performance.”

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The balance and maturity seemed at odds with a track record of just three qualifying games in charge of the team after several years in administrative, rather than coaching roles within the game. New at the job, he had evidently travelled to Poland to embark on his first major tournament.

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There was still much to learn – even at this level.

“The technical and tactical levels of this tournament are coming, in all aspects, closer and closer to the level of the A tournaments. Most of the players compete in the best leagues in Europe and the overall standard is very high.” The comment by Serbia coach Nenad Lalatović highlighted the status of a final tournament that featured a significant percentage of players capped at senior level and served to prepare the U21s for the demands endemic to a major, high-profile international tournament.

Much the same applied to the coaches. Portugal’s Rui Jorge, Sweden’s Håkan Ericson and Italy’s Luigi Di Biagio were the only three who had patrolled technical areas in the Czech Republic two years earlier. Apart from preparing for contests against top-level opponents, the coaches also had to address the man-management issues associated with long spells in a major-tournament context. There were also non-footballing aspects to consider, such as media activities that, although they may be of a sporadic nature in the daily domestic life of an U21 squad, gain intensity when reporters are permanently adjacent to the team in an international tournament.

Although the event in Poland represented an approximation to the summit levels of the senior game, the coaches stressed educational values. Denmark coach Niels Frederiksen was left to reflect on a four-year unbeaten run in qualifying but shortfalls in performances against elite opposition. After the semi-final against Spain, Di Biagio mused: “We have players who have appeared in Serie A. But take Saúl, for example, who has played 20 or 30 games in the UEFA Champions League, or Gerard Deulofeu, who has played in Spain, England and Italy. This is not being critical, but one of the realities we have to face is that the international game is another level compared to the national league.” After ruminating on Portugal’s elimination, Rui Jorge said: “I was disappointed by the outcome but not by our performances. My players deserved more for the passion they put into their game. I was asked whether, if I could go back, I would have been more conservative against Spain. But, well, we are not like that.” In other words, even though the U21 tournament cannot be regarded as a development event, its educational value is undeniable.

UEFA’s technical observer Mixu Paatelainen said: “I felt that the 12-team format encouraged attacking play, whereas at UEFA EURO 2016 we saw what happened when even third place in the group was enough to see you through.” The result was a free-scoring tournament where the only goalless draw was the opening game between England and the defending champions, Sweden. “We set ourselves a target of four points from our first two games,” England manager Aidy Boothroyd said. “We didn’t adopt a defensive approach. On the other hand, it was important not to lose.” For the second game against Slovakia, England switched from a 1-4-2-3-1 structure to 1-4-4-2 with a midfield diamond – and this illustrated the tactical flexibility that provided one of the salient features of the tournament.

Teams were quick to adapt as the situation demanded.

After UEFA EURO 2016, Wales manager Chris Coleman said “the best Plan B is to execute Plan A efficiently”. But, in Poland, most teams were equipped to execute a Plan A and a Plan B with equal degrees of efficiency. “For me,” said UEFA technical observer Peter Rudbæk, “the tournament was all about flexibility rather than what you might call ‘one-concept’ football. There was flexibility match to match; and there was flexibility during matches. I saw the game between Italy and Czech Republic where both teams changed their structure three times. I would say that maybe Spain and Sweden were the only teams to stick to the same playing system throughout.”
Boothroyd’s switch to the midfield questions of the German centre-backs. and movement constantly asked Federico Bernardeschi, whose pace replacing him with the more mercurial his starting line-up against Germany, Di Biagio, for instance, withdrew unchanged, coaches used different to players varying playing patterns. Di Biagio, for instance, withdrew target striker Andrea Petagna from his starting line-up against Germany, replacing him with the more mercurial Federico Bernardeschi, whose pace and movement constantly asked questions of the German centre-backs. Boothroyd’s switch to the midfield

norm rather than the exception, Serbia, for example, switched from 1-4-1-4-1, to 1-4-4-2 against Spain and for the last 20-odd minutes against Portugal. And then changed to 1-4-2-3-1 early in the second half against FYR Macedonia. The Czech Republic were equipped to play 1-4-2-3-1 or 1-4-5-1 or 1-4-1-3-2 ...

Attacking full-backs were a tournament trademark. The full-backs were especially attack-minded,” said UEFA technical observer Stefan Majewski, “and this was an attractive feature because they often left open spaces that offered opponents good chances to counterattack.” The final between Germany and Spain underlined the importance of the full-back role in team mechanisms, with Albert Celades’ team also demonstrating the value of the ‘underlapping’ run through the inside channel in addition to the more traditional overlapping runs along the touchline. As Dany Ryser remarked: “We did not just see the full-backs running up the line and hitting high crosses. More and more moves take them right into what we might call the ‘cut-back areas’ between the two vertical lines of the penalty area.” A prime example was provided during the Germany v England semi-final, when Jeremy Toljan reached the byline and delivered the lofted cut-back that allowed Davie Selke to head his team into a 1-0 lead. Slovakia left-back Róbert Mazáň, for example, emerged as his side’s main passer of the ball with an average of 67 passes per game. Portugal right-back João Cancelo averaged 54; Toljan and Héctor Bellerín, opponents in the final, were among the right-backs whose participation in team play could be measured by 40 or so passes per game. In terms of positional play, they also played key roles by occupying advanced areas and allowing the wide players to move inside and offer support to the strikers.

BUILDING FROM THE BACK

Centre-backs often cut out the middle man

The full-backs’ role in building from the back was, in most cases, a question of taking advanced positions on the flanks. The most standard procedure was for centre-backs to split, opening a central area for a screening midfielder to drop deep to receive. In some cases, the centre-back provided a simple pass to the deep midfielder – who then either played through the middle or opened play with a view to exploiting the relationships between full-backs and wingers or wide midfielders. In other cases, the centre-backs distributed directly, without the middle man, to the wide areas. In four sides, a centre-back was the team’s main passer of the ball; Italy’s Daniele Rugani, England’s Calum Chambers, Serbia’s Milos Veljkovic and Poland’s Jan Bednarek all delivered more passes than any of their team-mates. Germany’s Marc-Oliver Kempf was only marginally behind the deep midfielder Max Arnold in his team’s distribution pattern. In teams operating with two screening midfielders, coaches sought to achieve balance with one of them generally assuming greater responsibility in terms of pushing forward to link middle-to-front play and offer support to the main attackers. Denmark sent Lasse Christensen forward while Christian Nørgaard held the zone; for England, Nathaniel Chalobah sat behind the two box-to-box midfielders; Italy relied heavily on Roberto Gagliardini to patrol a wide area behind the front five; Poland were prepared to launch Karol Linetty into an attacking role; Ruben Neves was the covering element for Portugal; Lobotka performed that function for Slovakia. And so on. As Thomas Schaaf remarked: “There were some very impressive examples of efficient rotation among the midfielders during the build-up phase.”
KEEPER’S BALL

Goalkeepers were pressed into playing the long ball

“When we discuss ‘high pressing’, we need to draw a distinction between the instant reactions to loss of possession and the sort of high pressing we saw when the ball was with the opposing team’s goalkeeper,” said Mixu Paatelainen. “Many teams were prepared to take up high positions, to encourage the keeper to play long – or, if he made a pass to a wide area, to immediately go in and press hard.”

In Poland, the marked tendency was for opponents to cut off short or medium passing options with the evident aim of forcing the keeper to play long and assume a greater risk of loss of possession. The ploy emphasised the requirement for the goalkeeper to be equipped to play with his feet – and to refine decision making in terms of ball distribution. In Poland, the top teams were unafraid to use the goalkeeper as a passing option when building from the back. Spain’s Kepa Arrizabalaga averaged around 40 passes per game; Julian Pollersbeck, his opposite number during the final, averaged 38. Among the other semi-finalists, England’s Jordan Pickford made 34 passes on average, Italy’s Gianluigi Donnarumma, 28. Attempts to oblige them to play long bore fruit in the sense that, in three of the four cases, one in four passes was intercepted by an opponent. Pollersbeck, following the trail blazed in Germany by Manuel Neuer, played significant periods of each match in sweeping positions outside his penalty area – and the success rate in his passing was significantly higher at 82%.

TECHNICAL TOPICS

PASSING TIME

Teams based their games on short combination play

As the preceding paragraphs suggest, teams generally focused on playing through the thirds. “Almost all the teams set out to play a passing game,” said Rudbæk. “As it happened,” Paatelainen added, “quite a few teams fielded a tail striker. But, in general, I would say that there was very limited use of direct supply to the target man.” Tournament statistics indicate that just over one-quarter of the goals were scored by main strikers. This provided a contrast to UEFA EURO 2016 where one of the salient features had been a tendency towards more direct attacking via long back-to-front supply to the strikers, followed by second-ball follow-up. Serbia provided an exception to the general rule by frequently playing long to the striker during their opening game against Portugal, but reverted to combination play in their remaining two fixtures.

“In the games that I saw,” Paatelainen remarked, “the fact that there was so little direct supply to the striker meant that the screening players were generally not under pressure to stay so far back. The emphasis on short combination play through the thirds clarified the situation for many of the teams in terms of their pressing strategies. We saw a lot of teams prepared to press hard from midfield rather than withdraw into the defensive block.”

Rudbæk concurred, saying: “We saw a majority of teams prepared to go high with their first line of defence – and I would pick out the high pressing by Italy as a prime example.” Di Biagio’s side posed serious problems to Germany and Spain by pressing with five players in advanced areas and, even if ball-winning was not successful, effectively disrupted the opposition’s build-up pattern. Indeed, it was regaining the ball in Germany’s right-back area that immediately put Bernardeschi into a one-on-one situation against the goalkeeper and allowed him to score the goal that sent Italy to the top of the group. “At the same time,” Ryser added, “the Italian team was also very competent at what I call ‘rest defence’. They had three or four balancing players who were ready to anticipate the next step in those ‘what if we lose the ball now?’ situations.”

Most teams were prepared to go high with their first line of defence

Spain goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga

Poland 2017 Tournament review
A high number of passes is no guarantee of success

The finalists were the teams who made the highest number of passes per game during the tournament in Poland and, at the same time, registered the highest averages of ball possession. Coincidence? Curiously, the Spain and Germany senior teams had also topped the chart at UEFA EURO 2016 with averages of 641 and 639 passes per game. On the other hand, the average among the top eight teams in the 2016/17 UEFA Champions League was 548 passes per match – and all but one of the national teams at the tournament in Poland fell below that mean – even though the totals of Germany and England were somewhat inflated by the half-hour of extra-time they disputed in the semi-final. At the U21 final tournament in 2015, Sweden had provoked debate on the pros and cons of direct play by taking the title with an average of only 330 passes per game. In Poland, Ericson’s team upgraded that figure by a massive 35% – only to bow out in the group stage. “I think that Sweden’s statistics are a bit misleading,” Rudbæk commented, “because they tended to go for possession play in the midfield areas, to let their game breathe a bit.” Sweden’s upturn sent the Czech Republic to the foot of the table – their passing accuracy also leaving them well short of the opposition.

The comment underlined the fact that sheer quantity is not everything. Pastelainen acted as spokesman for the entire team of UEFA technical observers by stating: “We didn’t see much possession play for possession’s sake. The tournament was excellent in terms of dynamic possession and positive passing. That was a very good factor.” At UEFA EURO 2016, one of the features to raise eyebrows was the fact that only 15 of the 51 fixtures were won by the team that enjoyed a greater share of ball possession. In Poland, that trend petered out. Four of the 21 matches were drawn and, of the other 17, 12 were won by the team who had dominated possession. The wins for the team with a lesser share of the ball were for Slovakia (v Poland), Czech Republic (v Italy), Portugal (v Serbia), Italy (v Germany) and Germany (v Spain in the final). The Czech Republic and FYR Macedonia were alone in having less of the ball in each of their games. Spain and Germany were the only two to consistently enjoy the lion’s share of possession until they met in the final.

Using the Head

Germany scored five of the tournament’s 12 headed goals

One of the topics to emerge from recent seasons in UEFA’s age-limit tournaments had been a lack of headed goals, prompting questions about the coaching of aerial abilities at development levels. In Poland, 12 of the 65 goals (18%) were headers, though one of them (Italy’s equaliser against the Czechs) was a reflex action to a rebound. It was one of only five open-play goals to be scored against the head, with Germany supplying two of them. Germany underlined the value of aerial ability by scoring all three of their semi-final and final goals with the head. Of the seven headed goals from set plays, one was the far-post header by Serbia’s Uroš Djordjević from a free-kick on the right. The other six, curiously, were from corners on the left.

The high success rate from corners, as mentioned in the goalscoring section of this report, focused attention on the diverse methods of defending them. Portugal were among the minority who preferred zonal marking, along with Germany, who split their players in 4-3-2 lines with one player protecting the near post. Denmark also deployed two players at the posts, with the rest setting up three lines of defence at approximately five, ten and 15 metres from the line. Most set themselves up in a mix of zonal and individual marking, such as the Italian preference for four marking individually and six covering zones. As those numbers indicate, they were among the many teams who defended corners with all players back and, in consequence, limited chances of mounting a counterattack while the opponents’ centre-backs, in all probability, were out of position.

England, with two on the posts and the others marking, were alone in leaving two players up, while Poland also left a potential target upfield while they were defending. It was one of the few conservative aspects in a tournament dominated by attacking vocations.

Counter-Punching

Creating danger from high-ball re-igniations

Although possession-based combination moves were the most fertile source of goals, 22% of the open-play goals could be attributed to counterattacking. The percentage, however, was a conservative estimate. As the technical observers pointed out, there was room for debate about definitions of the counterattack, fuelled by a need to differentiate between the traditional counter from deep and the high ball-regains derived from the high pressing that was one of the main trademarks of the tournament. In the latter category, examples would include Italy’s winner against Germany (pressing in the Germany right-back area), Spain’s fourth against FYR Macedonia, Portugal’s second against Serbia or the Czech Republic’s opener against Italy.

On the other hand, the majority of the more traditional counters adopted the form of a regain and a pass to release a player on a high-speed solo run. Spain, despite their reputation for patient possession play, underlined the value of counterattacking in their armory with two goals against FYR Macedonia (regains and solo runs by Marco Asensio) and the third against Portugal, when substitute Iñaki Williams set off on a solo run from within his own half. England’s second against Poland was slightly more elaborate: Jacob Murphy and Lewis Baker starting the solo run by Demarai Gray that ended with a tap-in by Murphy. Denmark’s opening two goals against the Czech Republic stemmed from individual breaks by Rasmus Nissen and Mads Pedersen that were similarly rounded off from close range. The number of successful counters based on long solo runs highlighted the importance of working on off-the-ball movement triggered by ball regains.
The expansion to a dozen teams evidently gave rise to a significant increase in the number of goals scored at the final tournament. The event in Poland nevertheless posted the second highest average since the group stage became part of the final tournament in 2000. As mentioned elsewhere in this report, UEFA’s technical observers felt that the change of format – with only the group winners assured of a place in the semi-finals, offered an incentive to a more attacking approach. Poland certainly provided a contrast to the previous final tournament in the Czech Republic, where the paucity of goals during the group stage emerged as a major talking point. The 65 goals were shared among 51 players, nine of whom found the net more than once. As a general indicator, just under 30% of the goals were scored by strikers, 14 by wingers, 9 by wide midfielders, 17 by midfielders operating more centrally, 5 by centre-backs and 2 by full-backs. The caveat about the ‘general indicator’ is because there are nuances between wingers and wide midfielders and because, to quote an example, Italy’s Federico Bernardeschi scored one of his two goals when operating as central striker against Germany and the other from a wide-right role against Spain. Seven goals were scored by substitutes.

<table>
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<th>YEAR</th>
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<th>AVERAGE</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>10</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HOW THE GOALS WERE SCORED

Corners were the most productive set play, while from open play, combination moves and solo runs were the most successful route to goal

Set-play goals
In Poland, set plays accounted for 21.5% of the goals. This confirmed a downward progression in comparison with 27% in 2015 and 31% in Israel in 2013. Conspicuous by their absence were goals derived from free-kicks. The only success was the free-kick on the right and the back-post header that earned Serbia a 2-2 draw against FYR Macedonia. Efforts by direct free-kick specialists went unrewarded. In 2013, half of the set-play goals had been penalties, but only three were converted in 2015 and, despite the increase in the number of matches, only four of five spot-kicks hit the net in Poland – the save by England’s Jordan Pickford thwarting Sweden in the opening game of the tournament. This meant that corners emerged as the main source of set-play goals. The 2015 tournament had produced a total of 147 corners and the success rate worked out at 1 in 37 – very similar to that season’s UEFA Champions League success rate of one goal per 38.42 corners. By 2017, the two competitions trod divergent paths. A success rate of one goal per 51.8 corners in the 2016/17 UEFA Champions League (and 145 at EURO 2016) was followed by contrasting figures in Poland where nine successes in 217 attempts produced a 4.1 ratio. England were involved in four of them – scoring from two and conceding copy-and-paste near-post headers against Slovakia and Germany. Apart from this trio – each of them successful twice – the Czech Republic, Portugal and Sweden proved the least fruitful to corners. This could be regarded as a poor return on training-ground time dedicated to set plays – as much as 40% of sessions in the case of Italy, 25% for Poland, in addition to theoretical work in the meeting room. Other teams, such as Serbia or FYR Macedonia, preferred to work on four or five options while, on the other hand, Sweden shunned set-play work in Poland, having done their spadework on the training pitch at home.

Open-play goals
Although the four goals scored during extra time made it legitimate to argue that 23% of the goals were scored after the 90th minute, the final quarter-hour of normal time was not the most productive segment of the 21 matches played. Indeed, the final 15 minutes of the first half yielded one more goal, with the period between 61 and 75 minutes proving to be the most fertile, providing 20% of the tournament total. Cagey starts were reflected by a low total of half a dozen goals during the opening 15 minutes but, later in games, the relatively even distribution of goals could be used to argue that fitness levels were uniformly high.

<table>
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<th>MINS</th>
<th>GOALS</th>
<th>%</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>31-45</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>90+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Decimal points account for the missing 1%
Spanish pair Saúl Ñiguez and Marco Asensio accounted for four of the tournament’s top ten strikes.

The 65 goals scored in Poland included some net-bursting strikes from long range, five of which found their way into the top ten selected by UEFA’s technical observers. Some of them had a massive impact on the outcome of matches, such as the strike by Michael Lüftner that clinched the Czech Republic’s shock 3-1 win over Italy or the left-footed drive by Saúl Ñíguez that put Spain 2-1 ahead in the semi-final against the same opponents just after Italy had delivered a psychologically-damaging blow by equalising while down to ten men.

Saúl’s overhead kick to open the scoring against FYR Macedonia was an example of consummate skill, as was the long-range left-footed volley by Bruma that pulled Portugal back to within a goal at 2-1 during the group game against Spain. The selection also includes the two German headers that put Stefan Kuntz’s team 1-0 up in the semi-final against England and provided the winning goal in the final against Spain.

Saúl Ñíguez
Spain
5-0 FYR Macedonia

Brilliant overhead kick from Gayà’s cross from the left put Spain in front in their opening game.

Marco Asensio
Spain
5-0 FYR Macedonia

The first of Asensio’s three goals, this 25-metre strike left goalkeeper Igor Aleksovski rooted to the spot.

Bruma
Portugal
1-3 Spain

This time the forward breaks in from the left, twists past a defender then curls a shot into the far corner.

Michael Lüftner
Czech Republic
3-1 Italy

Pin-point and powerful low drive from distance with five minutes to play that sealed the Czechs’ triumph.

Nathan Redmond
Slovakia
1-2 England

Redmond collects James Ward-Prowse’s deep pass on the left, cuts into the area and fires in at the far post.

Southall
England
2-2 Germany (AET; Germany win 4-3 on pens)

Germany pass their way through England’s defence before Jeremy Toljan cuts the ball back for Selke to head in.

Saúl Ñíguez
Spain
3-1 Italy

Saw takes one touch and drills past Donnarumma from 25 metres for the second goal of his hat-trick.

Top Ten Goals

1. Saúl Ñíguez
   Spain vs FYR Macedonia
   Brilliant overhead kick from Gayà’s cross from the left put Spain in front in their opening game.

2. Marco Asensio
   Spain vs FYR Macedonia
   The first of Asensio’s three goals, this 25-metre strike left goalkeeper Igor Aleksovski rooted to the spot.

3. Marco Asensio
   Spain vs FYR Macedonia
   Asensio runs from his own half, cuts inside and coolly finishes from the edge of the area.

4. Nathan Redmond
   Slovakia vs England
   Redmond collects James Ward-Prowse’s deep pass on the left, cuts into the area and fires in at the far post.

5. Bruma
   Portugal vs Spain
   Perfect timing from the substitute who volleys in from the edge of the area after Spain fail to clear a corner.

6. Michael Lüftner
   Czech Republic vs Italy
   Pin-point and powerful low drive from distance with five minutes to play that sealed the Czechs’ triumph.

7. Bruma
   FYR Macedonia vs Portugal
   This time the forward breaks in from the left, twists past a defender then curls a shot into the far corner.

8. Davie Selke
   Germany vs England
   Germany pass their way through England’s defence before Jeremy Toljan cuts the ball back for Selke to head in.

9. Saúl Ñíguez
   Spain vs Italy
   Saúl Ñíguez accounts for four of the tournament’s top ten strikes.

10. Mitchell Weiser
    Germany vs Spain
    A delicate and perfectly placed looping header off another Toljan cross wins Germany the title.

Team Attemps Average On Target Average Off Target Blocked Woodwork Goals

- Germany: 113
  - Average: 22.6
  - On Target: 30
  - Average: 6
  - Off Target: 48
  - Blocked: 35
  - Woodwork: 1
  - Goals: 8

- Portugal: 57
  - Average: 19
  - On Target: 18
  - Average: 6
  - Off Target: 24
  - Blocked: 15
  - Woodwork: 2
  - Goals: 7

- Czech Republic: 48
  - Average: 16
  - On Target: 15
  - Average: 6
  - Off Target: 18
  - Blocked: 16
  - Woodwork: 1
  - Goals: 5

- FYR Macedonia: 46
  - Average: 18.33
  - On Target: 13
  - Average: 3.33
  - Off Target: 7
  - Blocked: 7
  - Woodwork: 4
  - Goals: 4

- Spain: 72
  - Average: 14.4
  - On Target: 23
  - Average: 6.66
  - Off Target: 24
  - Blocked: 25
  - Woodwork: 0
  - Goals: 12

- England: 54
  - Average: 13.5
  - On Target: 21
  - Average: 5.25
  - Off Target: 23
  - Blocked: 10
  - Woodwork: 0
  - Goals: 7

- Slovakia: 40
  - Average: 13.33
  - On Target: 13
  - Average: 4.33
  - Off Target: 11
  - Blocked: 16
  - Woodwork: 0
  - Goals: 6

- Italy: 52
  - Average: 13
  - On Target: 24
  - Average: 6
  - Off Target: 18
  - Blocked: 10
  - Woodwork: 1
  - Goals: 5

- Denmark: 38
  - Average: 12.67
  - On Target: 14
  - Average: 4.67
  - Off Target: 17
  - Blocked: 7
  - Woodwork: 0
  - Goals: 4

- Poland: 38
  - Average: 12.67
  - On Target: 11
  - Average: 3.67
  - Off Target: 17
  - Blocked: 10
  - Woodwork: 1
  - Goals: 3

- Serbia: 32
  - Average: 10.67
  - On Target: 12
  - Average: 4
  - Off Target: 13
  - Blocked: 7
  - Woodwork: 1
  - Goals: 2

- Sweden: 31
  - Average: 10.33
  - On Target: 10
  - Average: 3.33
  - Off Target: 14
  - Blocked: 7
  - Woodwork: 1
  - Goals: 2

Note: attempts striking the woodwork are included in the on-target total if deflected by goalkeeper or defender and in the off-target total if the attempt strikes the woodwork directly.

Italy and Slovakia were alone in getting more of their finishing on target than wide of the mark during a tournament that produced 641 goal attempts at an average of 30.5 per game – a significant increase on the 26.6 registered in 2015 and the 20.3 in 2013. Whereas in 2015, two of the eight contestants had averaged fewer than 10 attempts per game (including the champions, Sweden), none of the dozen in Poland registered single figures. However, in the 2017 tournament, 173 were blocked by opponents and, of the remainder, 44% were on target.
Opinion was split on the pros and cons of a 12-team tournament. As talking points go, they don’t come much better. Against some undeniable pros, debate can be fuelled by some legitimate cons. Expanding the final tournament to 12 teams could only be a positive advance on the previous eight-nation format. As Blagoja Milevski, the head coach of FYR Macedonia, said after the three matches in Poland: “I believe that, in the future, we can be regular participants in major championships.”

Curiously, the eight finalists from 2015 all managed to qualify in 2017. But the expansion opened the door to Poland, Slovakia and Spain as well as to FYR Macedonia. Again, overwhelmingly positive. So how could anybody dare to whisper a preference for the old eight-team tournament? The answer, of course, can be traced to hang-ups endemic to the 12-team format. What is the best way of getting four semi-finalists from three groups? In Poland, the answer was to include ‘the best runner-up’ alongside the three group-winners. The criteria were clearly set out in the tournament regulations: number of points, goal difference, number of goals scored and so on, right down to the teams’ disciplinary records.

So far, so good. The tournament diary, however, reveals that by approximately 22:40 on Thursday 22 June, England had beaten Poland to top Group A. And Slovakia had posted a 3-0 win against Sweden to claim the runner-up position with a goal difference of +3. Poland and Sweden travelled home, but Slovakia couldn’t. They would have to tread water for 48 hours and head coach Pavel Hapal would need to train and prepare for a semi-final that might or might not materialise. On the Friday, Portugal kicked off against already-eliminated FYR Macedonia with a clear game plan. Rui Jorge and his players had the target of winning by at least three goals. As it happened, they fell a goal short. They went home. Slovakia stayed in the waiting room.
This left Group C subject to all sorts of permutations among Germany, Italy and Czech Republic with the top two places at stake. On the Saturday, Italy had to beat Germany. But the required margin of victory depended on the Czechs. And so on. With Italy 1-0 ahead, news of how the Czech balloon was being punctured by Denmark was relayed to the bench. Reassured by a status quo that signified semi-final places for both Italy and Germany, the closing minutes were dedicated, amid whistling from the spectators, to some anodyne possession play. Slovakia gloomily packed their bags.

Being drawn in Group A had obliged Slovakia to start their final game without a target whereas the teams in the other two groups, playing on later dates, knew exactly what they had to do. Is that fair? Was it coincidence that the last group to kick off provided the ‘best runner-up’?

Another angle was that the structure, as one of the coaches put it, “held a knife to our throats”. ‘The groups were so tough that you wanted to field your best players all the time,” said another. “And the high level of intensity meant that they were running risks of fatigue, whereas you had players unused on the bench.” On the other hand, UEFA’s technical observers argued that the format may have influenced the sharp increase in the number of goals. “When two teams qualify from four,” said Mixu Paatelainen, “there’s a temptation to be more cautious. But if you know you’ve got to win the group to guarantee a place in the semi-finals, you have strong motives for playing to win.”

Bearing all this in mind, it may be easier to understand the degree of discomfort among the coaches. Germany’s Stefan Kuntz, eventually to graduate from ‘best runner-up’ to champion, expressed a widely-held view among his colleagues. “The 12-team format is not the optimal solution,” he said. “Eight or 16 teams would be much better.” Do you agree? Would it be desirable – or feasible – to manipulate the fixture list so that the final group games could be played at the same time?

**STICK OR TWIST?**

How much should a coach adapt his team and tactics to the opposition?

Tactical flexibility is a useful weapon in the coaches’ armoury. In Poland, scouting was thorough and meticulous, with the coaches stressing the importance of watching future opponents’ styles during the final tournament rather than basing judgements on performances during the qualifying rounds – a perspective endorsed by the number of enforced squad changes mentioned opposite. But how far do you bend to the qualities of the opposition? As one of the UEFA technical observers at the tournament remarked: “The coach needs to decide how much to change in order to counter the opposition without running the risk of destroying the team’s own style.”

One of the coaches succinctly commented: “We looked at our opponents, but only to see how best we could play our own football.” How easy is it to achieve that balance?

**THE LATE DECISION ON THE SQUAD LIST AFFECTED GERMANY’S TRAINING SCHEDULES AND TEAM STRATEGY FOR THE TOURNAMENT**

With player availability different from team to team, how level was the playing field?

Stefan Kuntz also voiced another source of concern among the coaches in Poland. No fewer than nine players whose dates of birth made them eligible for his squad were away on senior team duty at the FIFA Confederations Cup. England coach Aidy Boothroyd found himself in a similar situation in that, in agreement with the senior team coach and the FA technical director, some eligible players had been selected for FIFA World Cup qualifying duties, while other players who might have been selected had only just returned home after winning the FIFA U-20 World Cup in the Korea Republic. Similarly, Rui Jorge travelled in Russia. Kuntz acknowledged that the late decision on the squad list had affected his training schedules and the team strategy for the tournament. He might, for example, have preferred to operate with two strikers rather than one striker plus two wingers.

Other coaches also remarked that, in terms of squad selection, the playing field was not exactly level – but for different reasons. Nenad Lalatović and Marco Dorna, head coaches of Serbia and Poland respectively, pointed to one country where all players had been released for the U21s, but where clubs had blocked the release of Serbian and Polish players. This is a relatively widespread issue bearing in mind that, even without the release problems, the squads in Poland averaged half-a-dozen players enrolled at clubs outside their native countries. What’s more, the reason behind refusals to release players was that the days in June were not FIFA dates. As the U21 tournament in Poland was being staged concurrently with the official FIFA Confederations Cup in Russia, is this logical?
For only the second time at the final tournament of the UEFA U21 competition, UEFA’s technical observers were given the challenging brief of selecting a ‘starting list’ of 11 players rather than a full 23-man squad. Meeting after the final, their daunting task was to eliminate outstanding performers from the ‘short’ lists of 33 and then 22 that they had drawn up while the competition was unfolding. The result was an all-star select XI that could be fielded in a 1-4-4-2 formation.

**TEAM OF THE TOURNAMENT**

- Marco Asensio (forward)
- Julian Pollersbeck (goalkeeper)
- Federico Bernardeschi (forward)
- Saúl Ñíguez (right midfielder)
- Max Meyer (offensive midfielder)
- Dani Ceballos (left midfielder)
- Maximilian Arnold (defensive midfielder)
- Yannick Gerhardt (left-back)
- Milan Škriniar (centre-back)
- Niklas Stark (centre-back)
- Jeremy Toljan (right-back)

**PLAYER OF THE TOURNAMENT**

Dan Ceballos
Spain

At the UEFA European Under-19 Championship finals in 2015, Dani Ceballos was selected for the UEFA Team of the Tournament, alongside fellow midfielder Marco Asensio and central defender Jesús Vallejo. All three played important roles in Poland and, coincidentally, all three have joined Real Madrid since lifting the U19 trophy in Greece. Ceballos, born with Andalusian love of the ball in his blood and educated at the Real Betis Balompié academy in Seville, travelled to Poland on the back of 30 Liga appearances in the 2016/17 season. He took the top award at the U21 tournament as a prime example of a footballer with outstanding individual qualities dedicated to the collective needs of his team. Operating mostly through the inside-left channel of the Spanish team, he used his technical skills to twist and turn away from aggressive pressure and to link attacking play through midfield and into the final third with outstanding control, vision, creativity and ability to see and deliver the telling through pass.

**MAKING THEIR MARK**

Dani Ceballos was named player of the tournament, but his ten teammates in the all-star XI also showed plenty of promise for the future.
**Scores and Tables**

The games, goals and line-ups from Poland.

**Group A**

| England | 3 0 1 5 6 7 5 3 | Slovakia | 3 0 1 5 6 7 5 3 | Sweden | 5 2 0 3 6 7 5 3 | Switzerland | 3 0 1 5 6 7 5 3 |
|--------|----------------|----------|---------------|---------|----------------|-----------|
| 3 2 1 0 5 6 7 3 | 3 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 | 5 2 0 3 6 7 5 3 | 3 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 | 5 2 0 3 6 7 5 3 |

**Poland 3-0 Slovakia**

**Lukas, 15 June**

Goals: 1-0 Chienchen, 2-0 Michel, 3-0 Weiberger

**Germany 2-0 Portugal**

**Bydgoszcz, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Lissek, 2-0 Bardi (85th+5)

**Spain 3-2 Poland**

**Tychy, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Gačinović, 2-0 Bardi, 3-0 Suárez

**Portugal 4-0 Germany**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Fernandes, 2-0 Sarri, 3-0 Bardi, 4-0 Piqué

**Germany 2-0 Czech Republic**

**Tychy, 27 June**

Goals: 1-0 Weiser, 2-0 Bardi (81st+3)

**Czech Republic 3-1 Slovakia**

**Tychy, 27 June**

Goals: 1-0 Zuber, 2-0 Havel, 3-0 Kral (89th+6)

**Portugal 1-3 Spain**

**Bydgoszcz, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Fernandes, 2-0 Suárez, 3-0 Oyarzabal

**Germany 2-0 Czech Republic**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Weiser, 2-0 Bardi

**Slovakia 3-0 Germany**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Hořejš, 2-0 Havel, 3-0 Kral (89th+6)

**Slovakia 3-2 Poland**

**Tychy, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Chienchen, 2-0 Michel, 3-0 Weiberger

**Sweden 2-0 Portugal**

**Bydgoszcz, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Lissek, 2-0 Bardi

**Czech Republic 2-4 Portugal**

**Bydgoszcz, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Fernandes, 2-0 Sarri, 3-0 Bardi, 4-0 Piqué

**Slovakia 2-0 Germany**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Hořejš, 2-0 Havel

**Germany 2-0 Czech Republic**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Weiser, 2-0 Bardi

**England 2-0 Germany**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Lissek, 2-0 Bardi

**Czech Republic 2-1 Slovakia**

**Tychy, 27 June**

Goals: 1-0 Chienchen, 2-0 Michel

**Portugal 1-0 Slovakia**

**Bydgoszcz, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Fernandes

**Slovakia 1-0 Germany**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Hořejš

**Germany 2-3 Czech Republic**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Weiser, 2-0 Bardi, 3-0 Suárez

**Czech Republic 1-0 Germany**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Hořejš

**Czech Republic 1-0 Slovakia**

**Tychy, 27 June**

Goals: 1-0 Chienchen

**Germany 1-0 Czech Republic**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Weiser

**Slovakia 1-0 Germany**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Hořejš

**Portugal 1-0 Germany**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Fernandes

**Slovakia 1-0 Germany**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Hořejš

**Germany 2-0 Czech Republic**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Weiser, 2-0 Bardi

**Slovakia 1-0 Germany**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Hořejš

**Greece 1-0 Germany**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Weiser

**Czech Republic 1-0 Slovakia**

**Tychy, 27 June**

Goals: 1-0 Chienchen

**Czech Republic 1-0 Germany**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Hořejš

**Portugal 1-0 Germany**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Fernandes

**Slovakia 1-0 Germany**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Hořejš

**Germany 2-0 Czech Republic**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Weiser, 2-0 Bardi

**Slovakia 1-0 Germany**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Hořejš

**Czech Republic 1-0 Germany**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Hořejš

**Germany 1-0 Czech Republic**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Weiser

**Slovakia 1-0 Germany**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Hořejš

**Czech Republic 1-0 Germany**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Hořejš

**Portugal 1-0 Germany**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Fernandes

**Slovakia 1-0 Germany**

**Krakow, 24 June**

Goals: 1-0 Hořejš
CZECH REPUBLIC

GOALKEEPERS
1 Lukáš Važula 03/11/94 FK Mladá Boleslav
16 Lukáš Žíma 06/01/94 90 90 90 Genoa CFC
23 Patrice Maçaj 11/06/94 MFK Zemplín Michalovce

DEFENDERS
2 Stefan Sliva 20/03/96 90 90 90 FK Evid Moravské Budějovice
5 Michael Luther 14/04/94 1 90 90 SA Slavia Praha
15 Patrik Strnata 17/11/94 FK Mladá Boleslav
19 Milan Havel 07/06/94 90 90 90 Bohemians Praha 1905
27 Daniel Holzer 16/05/94 90 78 AC Sparta Praha
28 Filip Kala 15/01/94 MŠK Žilina

MIDFIELDERS
3 Marek Hasík 08/07/95 1 247 121 1 FC Slovácko
4 Michal Šalon 19/04/94 81 77 AC Sparta Praha
5 Tomáš Soukola 27/06/96 90 90 90 SA Slavia Praha
6 Antonín Beráč 01/03/94 347 SA Slavia Praha
10 Michal Trávník 17/04/94 1 90 90 90 FK Jablonec
11 Jakub Jeník 14/02/98 1 90 90 544 Ústí nad Labem
17 Michal Hladík 10/11/98 791 Bohemians Praha 1905
18 Jakub Nečas 28/03/97 90 90 90 FK Jablonec
19 Václav Černý 17/10/97 1 721 90 AFC Acoy
20 Petr Souček 04/03/94 564 FC Slovan Liberec
21 Martin Hasá 01/01/96 187 584 491 Bohemians Praha 1905

FORWARDS
7 Lukáš Julík 02/01/94 265 AC Sparta Praha
8 Tomáš Chory 28/02/95 1 97 139 465 SK Sigma Olomouc
14 Patrik Schick 04/03/96 1 90 81 90 UC Sampdoria

Numbers in match columns represent minutes played; G = goals; A = assists; b = brought on; t = taken off; S = suspended; so = sent off

DENMARK

GOALKEEPERS
1 Jeppe Hadberg 30/04/96 90 90 90 Esbjerg fB
16 Thomas Hegeskjær 04/02/95 AIF Aarhus
22 Daniel Jørgensen 19/07/97 FC Nordsjælland

DEFENDERS
2 Frederik Holst 24/09/94 90 90 Brondby IF
1 Andreas Christensen 16/02/98 90 90 90 FC Nordsjælland
4 Patrick Barmpoudis 04/04/94 90 90 90 SV Darmstadt 98
5 Jakob Ridding 11/01/96 621 167 Aalborg BK
6 Rasmus Hjulsager 13/11/97 90 FC Midtjylland
13 Joachim Andersen 31/05/96 FC Twente
14 Math. Pedersen 01/06/96 1 287 746 FC Nordsjælland
20 Jakob Rasmussen 26/05/97 90 FC Schalke 04

MIDFIELDERS
1 Christian Norgaard 10/02/94 90 90 90 Brondby IF
7 Andrew Hjulsager 15/01/98 90 801 661 FC Celta de Vigo
8 Lasse Vogn Christensen 15/08/94 90 90 90 FC Midtjylland
24 Casper Holberg 23/04/94 566 537 FC Kobenhavn
17 Mathias Jensen 03/07/96 109 90 FC Nordsjælland
18 Emiliano Marses Hansen 06/05/95 90 FC Nordsjælland
19 Frederik Bernting 13/02/96 794 Aalborg BK
27 MadsDamgaard Poulsen 23/06/97 117 90 FC Nordsjælland

FORWARDS
9 Marcus Ingvartsen 04/01/96 1 721 90 297 FC Nordsjælland
10 Lucas Andersen 13/02/94 1 801 90 Grasshopper Club Zürich
31 Kenneth Zohore 31/01/94 2 187 444 90 Copenhagen fB
27 Kaspar Schik 02/03/96 AIF Aarhus

Numbers in match columns represent minutes played; G = goals; A = assists; b = brought on; t = taken off; S = suspended; so = sent off

TEAM SHAPES

DENMARK

KEY FEATURES
■ Second striker Andersen dropping off to receive – and the other pushing forward to open play to wings, midfield
■ Second line in midfield dropping; quick pass to Andersen or attacker
■ Emphasis on building from back with one central midfielder, four players balancing
■ Variations on 1-4-4-2 with quick transitions to compact shape
■ Strong midfield pressing; quick pass to Andersen or attacker
■ Second striker Andersen dropping off to receive – and the other pushing forward to open play to wings, midfield
■ Emphasis on building from back with one central midfielder, four players balancing
■ Variations on 1-4-4-2 with quick transitions to compact shape

CZECH REPUBLIC

KEY FEATURES
■ Variations on 1-4-2-3-1, see switch to 1-4-3-4-2 (v Germany)
■ Tactical flexibility; three changes of structure during match
■ Frequent use of direct supply to striker; increasing midfield support
■ Full-backs up; 8 supporting attacks
■ Emphasis on attacking wide players cutting in
■ Under pressure, build by central midfield and 6 in holding role; 10 dropping short to receive; 9 playing in depth
■ Strong midfield pressing; quick pass to Andersen or attacker
■ Second striker Andersen dropping off to receive – and the other pushing forward to open play to wings, midfield
■ Emphasis on building from back with one central midfielder, four players balancing
■ Variations on 1-4-4-2 with quick transitions to compact shape
ENGLAND

GROUP A: ENGLAND, SPAIN, PORTUGAL, SERBIA

COACH

AIDY BOOTHROYD

BORN: 08/02/71

NATIONALITY: English

STATISTICS

- **PLAYERS USED**
  - 23
- **463 ATTEMPTS**
- **46**% **PASSING ACCURACY**
- **40%** **POSSESSION**

TEAM SHAPES

**ATTACK:** Full-backs up at every opportunity, midfield diamond, 7, 11 making runs behind defence

**DEFENCE:** Transitions with strikers dropping level with 15 to form first line of defence

KEY FEATURES

- 1-4-4-1-1 defending
- Efficient attacking options with one striker or two, overlapping full-backs
- Stepper playing short, medium, under pressure, or escaping to high full-backs
- Intermediate midfield-driving play, patience behind defence
- Efficient press after ball-loss, high press deep at opposition goalkeeper

TEAM SQUAD

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FORWARDS

- 7
- 11

FYG Makedonia

GROUP B: SPAIN, PORTUGAL, SERBIA, FYR Macedonia

COACH

BLAGOJA MILEVSKI

BORN: 25/03/71

NATIONALITY: Macedonian

STATISTICS

- **PLAYERS USED**
  - 18
- **636 ATTEMPTS**
- **43%** **PASSING ACCURACY**
- **43%** **POSSESSION**

TEAM SQUAD

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FORWARDS

- 12
- 19

TEAM SHAPES

**ATTACK:** Full-backs up, 11 drifting wide, 9 cutting in. Systematic counters, 7 more offensive; solo runs, long-range shots

**DEFENCE:** Compact lines, either deep or from midfield, 10 players behind ball

KEY FEATURES

- 1-4-4-1-1 defending
- Efficient attacking options with one striker or two, overlapping full-backs
- Stepper playing short, medium, under pressure, or escaping to high full-backs
- Intermediate midfield-driving play, patience behind defence
- Efficient press after ball-loss, high press deep at opposition goalkeeper

Poland 2017

Treatment review
TEAM SHAPES

COACH
STEFAN KUNTZ

STATISTICS

SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
1 Marc-André ter Stegen
20/07/92 1
101 101 101 101 101 FC Barcelona
3 Alphonse Areola
23/03/93 1
98 98 98 98 98 1. FC Kaiserslautern
191/10/98 1
101 101 101 101 101 1. FC Kaiserslautern

DEFENDERS
2 Jérôme Boateng
08/02/91 1
101 101 101 101 101 1. FC Kaiserslautern
3 Jan Vertonghen
13/03/93 1
98 98 98 98 98 1. FC Kaiserslautern
17 Laurent Koscielny
02/09/91 1
3 3 3 3 3 3. FC Kaiserslautern
4 William Saliba
20/12/99 1
1 1 1 1 1. FC Kaiserslautern
12 Benjamin Pavard
02/08/19 1
101 101 101 101 101 101 1. FC Kaiserslautern
16 Benjamin Henrichs
02/07/99 1
101 101 101 101 101 101 1. FC Kaiserslautern
17 Konrad Laimer
05/02/99 1
101 101 101 101 101 1. FC Kaiserslautern
18 Remi Normandal
05/01/00 1
101 101 101 101 101 1. FC Kaiserslautern
21 Dominik Kohr
11/10/00 1
101 101 101 101 101 1. FC Kaiserslautern

MIDFIELDERS
7 Marco Verratti
07/03/94 1
101 101 101 101 101 1. FC Kaiserslautern
16 Blaise Matuidi
20/02/91 1
101 101 101 101 101 1. FC Kaiserslautern
18 Marco Verratti
20/02/91 1
101 101 101 101 101 1. FC Kaiserslautern
19 Davide Calabria
03/02/96 1
101 101 101 101 101 1. FC Kaiserslautern
20 Federico Bernardeschi
04/02/94 1
101 101 101 101 101 1. FC Kaiserslautern
21 Manuel Locatelli
08/01/98 1
101 101 101 101 101 1. FC Kaiserslautern

FORWARDS
19 Krzysztof Piatek
11/02/96 1
101 101 101 101 101 1. FC Kaiserslautern
22 Federico Chiesa
05/02/99 1
101 101 101 101 101 1. FC Kaiserslautern

* After extra time; Germany won 4-3 on penalties
** Numbers in match columns represent minutes played; G = goals; A = assists; 
F = brought on, I = taken off; S = suspended; so = sent off

TEAM SHAPES

ATTACK: High midfield line with full-backs ready to support front four

DEFENCE: Transitions by disciplined midfielders; strong pressing by front four players

KEY FEATURES
• 1-4-3-1-1 formation; single striker
• Attacking outputs: classic striker Petagna or free-running Bernardeschi
• Well-positioned team with fast transitions in both directions
• Football runs by central midfielders and full-backs against opponents
• Team press by disciplined, hardworking unit with strong ball-winning ability

Numbers in match columns represent minutes played; G = goals; A = assists; 
F = brought on, I = taken off; S = suspended; so = sent off
**Poland 2017 Tournament review**

**TEAM SHAPES**

TEAM SHAPES

- **COACH**
  - MARCIN DORNIA
  - Born: 17/09/79
  - Nationality: Polish

**STATISTICS**

- **PLAYERS USED**
  - 23
  - 384 PASS ATTEMPTS
  - 29% PASS ACCURACY
  - 40% POSSESSION

- **GOALKEEPERS**
  - Max: 6 (vs Slovakia)
  - Mid: 36 (vs England)
  - Min: 6 (vs Sweden)

- **FORWARDS**
  - Max: 4 (vs England, Sweden)

- **DEFENDERS**
  - Max: 3 (vs Slovakia)
  - Min: 1 (vs Sweden)

**GROUP A**

- **POLAND**
  - 15/03/95 8
  - 22/04/95 90 90 90 90 90 (7pts)
  - L1-2 D2-2 L0-3

**GROUP B**

- **PORTUGAL**
  - 01/08/94 249 90 90 90
  - 04/04/94 90 90 90 90

**FOUR.matches**

- **POLAND**
  - 07/08/95 Zagłębie Lubin
  - 20/05/95 90 88
  - 12/06/94 1 82
  - 24/06/95 Wisła Płock

- **PORTUGAL**
  - 20/05/95 90 90 90
  - 26/06/95 SSC Napoli

**KITS**

- **POLAND**
  - Home: White
  - Away: Red

**PORTUGAL**

- **GROUP A**
  - 2017 Tournament review

**PARTICIPANTS**

- **POLAND**
  - 10/08/94 Włodzimierz Grudzien
  - 22/04/94 GKS Piast Gliwice
  - 22/04/94 82

**PORTUGAL**

- **GROUP B**
  - 15/08/94 8
  - 12/08/94 90 90 90 90 90

**CONTRIBUTIONS**

- **POLAND**
  - 60% v Serbia
  - 50% v Slovakia

- **PORTUGAL**
  - 65% v FYR Macedonia
  - 47% v Serbia

**KEY FEATURES**

- **TEAM SHAPES**
  - **POLAND**
    - 1-4-2-3-1
  - **PORTUGAL**
    - 1-4-4-2

**COACH**

- **POLAND**
  - RUI JORGE
  - Born: 27/03/73
  - Nationality: Portuguese

**STATISTICS**

- **PLAYERs USED**
  - Max: GES v FYR Macedonia
  - Min: 4 (vs Serbia)

**TEAM SHAPES**

- **POLAND**
  - 1-4-2-3-1
  - 1-4-4-2

**GROUP B**

- **PORTUGAL**
  - 01/08/94 249 90 90 90
  - 04/04/94 90 90 90
  - 04/04/94 90 90 90

**FOUR.matches**

- **POLAND**
  - 07/08/94 Zagłębie Lubin
  - 25/05/95 90

**PORTUGAL**

- **GROUP B**
  - 01/08/94 249 90 90 90
  - 04/04/94 90 90 90

**KITS**

- **POLAND**
  - Home: Black
  - Away: White

**PORTUGAL**

- **GROUP B**
  - 01/08/94 249 90 90 90
  - 04/04/94 90 90 90

**CONTRIBUTIONS**

- **POLAND**
  - 60% v FYR Macedonia
  - 50% v Serbia

**KEY FEATURES**

- **POLAND**
  - High-tempo combinations with positional interchanging in midfield

- **PORTUGAL**
  - Two lines of four with wingers dropping back to cover full-backs

**COACH**

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  - 1-4-4-2

**GROUP B**

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  - 04/04/94 90 90 90

**FOUR.matches**

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  - 25/05/95 90

**PORTUGAL**

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  - 04/04/94 90 90 90

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  - Away: White

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  - 25/05/95 90

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  - 04/04/94 90 90 90

**KITS**

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  - Home: Black
  - Away: White

**PORTUGAL**

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- **PORTUGAL**
  - Two lines of four with wingers dropping back to cover full-backs
### TEAM SHAPES

#### Serbia

**ATTACK:** Preference for right-side relationship between 2 and 17. Smiker ready to receive direct pass after ball win

**DEFENCE:** Compact lines with strong pressing as from midfield, ten behind the ball

#### Slovakia

**ATTACK:** Full-backs up; 6 the playmaker; combinations in midfield

**DEFENCE:** 3 the leader of strong back four; ready to break forward; 6 controlling in front

### KEY FEATURES

#### Serbia

- 1-4-1-4-1 with Lobotka as controlling midfielder
- Combining play when on possession, good passing between lines
- When pressing, direct supply to striker and second-ball support from midfield
- Possession play with home fans backing in midfield
- Compact disciplined defending; wide midfielders ready to break forward; 6 controlling in front
- Patient build up or, when pressed, direct supply to target striker Zreľák
- Quick transitions in both directions; compact movement by middle four

#### Slovakia

- 1-4-4-1-1 with Lobotka as controlling midfielder and playmaker
- Quick transitions in both directions; compact movements by midfield four
- Compact backline when pressing; direct supply to target striker Žižka
- Excellent passing game with good options for player in possession
- High press as opponent's goal kicks; intense pressure after ball loss
- Strong marker and work ethic, disciplined defence backed by influential keeper

### TEAM SHAPES

#### Serbia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Player</th>
<th>BORN</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>POS.</th>
<th>MINS</th>
<th>SHOTS</th>
<th>KEY ROLE</th>
<th>TEAM SHAPE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Goalkeeper | Lalatović | 22/12/77 | 35 | 0 | FTR | 90 | | Classical | Birthday

#### Slovakia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Player</th>
<th>BORN</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>POS.</th>
<th>MINS</th>
<th>SHOTS</th>
<th>KEY ROLE</th>
<th>TEAM SHAPE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Goalkeeper | Hapal | 27/07/69 | 1 | 0 | GK | 90 | | Classical | Birthday

### TEAM PROFILES

#### Serbia

- **COACH**: Nenad Lalatović
- **SQUAD**

#### Slovakia

- **COACH**: Pavel Hapal
- **SQUAD**

### STATISTICS

#### Serbia

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Opponent</th>
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<th>2-1 Away</th>
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#### Slovakia

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Opponent</th>
<th>2-1 Home</th>
<th>2-1 Away</th>
<th>3-0 Home</th>
<th>3-0 Away</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRE</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>455</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Team Profiles

#### Spain

**Coach**
- **Albert Celades**  
  Born: 28/09/75  
  Nationality: Spanish

**Statistics**
- **Players used**: 12  
  - Goals: 7 (3 v Portugal)  
  - Passes attempted: 613  
  - Accuracy: 89%  
  - Possession: 59%

**Team Shapes**
- Goalkeepers: 4
- Defenders: 3
- Midfielders: 8
- Forwards: 5

**Goals**
- Total: 7
- Against: 0

**Defence**
- High-tempo combinations with positional interchange in midfield

**Key Features**
- 4-4-2 with single screening midfielder and two wingers
- Defensive-orientated, short-passing combinations, control in tight situations
- High-tempo full-backs, one- or two-touch passing moves
- Fast attacks to prevent transitions, high pressing in midfield
- Excellent use of wide areas, full-backs high-speed overlapping, underlapping
- Borja Mayoral: 113 passes attempted (115 touches, 5.45)
- Attacks on set-pieces, clear playing in the press, talented in all departments

**Players in Match Columns**
- Minutes played: 90
- Goals: 3 (v Portugal)
- Assists: 2

#### Sweden

**Coach**
- **Håkan Ericson**  
  Born: 29/05/60  
  Nationality: Swedish

**Statistics**
- **Players used**: 21  
  - Goals: 12 (6 v Slovakia)  
  - Passes attempted: 1,164  
  - Accuracy: 84%  
  - Possession: 52%

**Team Shapes**
- Goalkeepers: 2
- Defenders: 6
- Midfielders: 8
- Forwards: 5

**Goals**
- Total: 12
- Against: 3

**Defence**
- 15 dribbling to build alongside centre-backs; balanced attacking with great discipline

**Key Features**
- Highly structured 4-4-2 with narrow dense defensive block
- Fast counterattacks based on direct supply from central midfield
- When opening to break, fluent passing moves, good positional awareness
- Proximity to ball carrier; towards the backtracking full-back line of defence
- Attacking movement off play, good decision making when defending
- Highly experienced in discipline and anticipation

**Players in Match Columns**
- Minutes played: 90
- Goals: 6 (v Slovakia)
- Assists: 4

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**Poland 2017 Tournament Review**
LASTING IMPRESSIONS

The red carpet was rolled out for fans from across Europe for a tournament that will leave a positive legacy for the host nation.

The red-and-white flag of Poland waved happily in a breeze of success as the national association, the PZPN, encouraged the host cities to lay out a red carpet for the competition’s first 12-team tournament. After the final whistle in Krakow, there were many reasons to feel proud.

Statistics spelled out a success story. Within hours of tickets going on sale in February, all three of Poland’s group games and the final were sold out. The final balance revealed a cumulative audience of almost a quarter of a million – to be precise, 244,085 spectators at an average of 11,623 per match.

But reasons for pride stretched beyond statistics. The PZPN adopted an expansive, dynamic approach aimed at engaging the public in a huge event organised by the citizens of Poland. Hence the decision to give the tournament a geographical spread involving six cities of great diversity in terms of character, qualities and cultures.

If pressed to select a single preference among the motives to feel proud, the PZPN would highlight the way the organisation of the tournament brought the cities together – to the extent that the six mayors met regularly to interchange information and knowledge.

The results were outstanding, in practical terms, some examples include new pitches in Kielce and Tychy; a refurbished main stand in Bydgoszcz; a roof in Lublin; upgraded media facilities at all venues, along with investment in giant screen technology – the event left a clear infrastructural legacy.

Equally important is the social legacy the tournament will leave behind. Bringing the U21 EURO to smaller cities allowed UEFA and the PZPN to have a greater impact on the communities in which the games were played. The six cities will all have benefited in numerous ways from hosting the event, such as key lessons in stadium management on an organisational level, for example, or help promoting football – and sport in general – within the community. Having helped set a high benchmark in terms of organising the tournament, the PZPN will have played a part in enabling the cities to push for similar events in the future.

Of course, the PZPN already have a successful track record when it comes to organising the biggest sporting events. UEFA EURO 2012 provided Polish football a springboard on and off the pitch and its impact is still being felt in a number of ways. For example, fans attending Poland’s national-team matches can travel for free on public transport simply by displaying a match ticket – an
Welcome Hosts

Initiative from EURO 2012. Benefits are also evident on the pitch, where Poland moved from 70th place in the FIFA rankings in 2012 to fifth in August 2017. “In qualifying for UEFA EURO 2016, we had the second-best crowd figures in Europe with an average of 50,000. That has continued into our European Qualifiers for the FIFA World Cup,” said PZPN general secretary Maciej Sawicki.

The PZPN has also embraced UEFA’s GROW initiative, which, among other things, aims to help member associations expand both grassroots participation and financial revenues. The PZPN has doubled its budget over the past four years, and 350,000 Poles are actively playing the game. And while Poland is now blessed with state-of-the-art stadiums, the PZPN is striving to ensure that top-notch facilities exist for grassroots players too. There are more than 2,600 artificial mini-pitches, with the association also intending to construct covered pitches, enabling football to be played in all conditions.

The tournament branding was highly visible in the stadiums and host cities.

SPREADING THE WORD

A large media presence and a successful promotional campaign kept fans in the know.

The tournament generated huge media interest, with 475 press and non-rights holding TV and radio staff accredited for the tournament and 147 media present at the final. The efforts of the PZPN to promote the Under-21 EURO, meanwhile, took various successful forms, from an online presence to a publicity tour, with much other engagement besides. Certainly, the work of building a buzz about the tournament benefited from a formidable online presence, with an official u21poland website and Twitter account launched in late summer 2016 and reinforced by promotional activities on the PZPN’s multimedia platform – Łączy Nas Piłka (United by Football) – which reaches 3 million football fans nationwide per month. Particularly impressive was the creation of a 12-part TV series ‘Nasze EURO’ (Our EURO). Broadcast on Łączy Nas Piłka’s YouTube channel and Facebook page, plus the u21poland channels, this magazine show heightened public interest in the finals and raised anticipation levels as the tournament approached.

Catching the eye on a grander scale was the promotional EURO truck that delivered both a trophy tour and an exciting range of activities including an exhibition, interactive football challenges, competitions and sponsor activities. The truck travelled over 15,000km, spanning 47 stops from March onwards. The ‘One year to go’ countdown event – featuring tournament ambassador Marek Koźmiński – and April’s official trophy handover in Gdynia were other major milestones, two of numerous events publicised by the PZPN, primarily through media releases, for a network of more than 500 media representatives. Between 1 September 2016 and the final whistle there were more than 40,000 mentions of the tournament in the Polish press and on television, radio, websites, forums and social media channels.
VENUES AND ATTENDANCES

From Gdynia in the north to Krakow in the south, the final tournament was played in six cities spanning the length of Poland. And with big crowds at each of the venues – and a total attendance of 244,085 – the nation got behind the event as much as its team.

### KIELCE STADIUM, KIELCE
- Tournament capacity: 14,733
- Matches:
  - Group A
    - Sweden 0-0 England, 11,672
    - Slovakia 1-2 England, 12,087
    - England 3-0 Poland, 13,176
- Aggregate attendance: 36,935

### LUBLIN STADIUM, LUBLIN
- Tournament capacity: 15,247
- Matches:
  - Group A
    - Poland 1-2 Slovakia, 12,087
    - England 2-2 Sweden, 14,651
    - Slovakia 3-0 Sweden, 11,203
- Aggregate attendance: 40,765

### BYDGOSZCZ STADIUM, BYDGOSZCZ
- Tournament capacity (increased to 12,897 for Serbia v Spain): 11,585
- Matches:
  - Group B
    - Portugal 2-0 Serbia, 10,724
    - Serbia 2-2 FYR Macedonia, 5,121
    - Serbia 2-1 Spain, 12,058
- Aggregate attendance: 27,903

### GDYNIA STADIUM, GDYNIA
- Tournament capacity: 14,769
- Matches:
  - Group A
    - Portugal 2-0 Serbia, 10,724
    - Spain 1-3 England, 13,862
    - FYR Macedonia 2-4 Portugal, 7,533
- Aggregate attendance: 29,664

### TYCHY STADIUM, TYCHY
- Tournament capacity: 14,805
- Matches:
  - Group A
    - Germany 2-0 Czech Republic, 14,051
    - Czech Republic 3-1 Italy, 13,251
    - Czech Republic 2-4 Denmark, 9,047
- Semi-final: England 2-2 Germany, 13,214 (Germany win 4-3 on pens)
- Aggregate attendance: 49,563

### KRAKÓW STADIUM, KRAKOW
- Tournament capacity: 14,715
- Matches:
  - Group A
    - Denmark 0-2 Italy, 8,754
    - Germany 3-0 Denmark, 9,298
    - Italy 1-0 Germany, 14,039
- Semi-final: Spain 3-1 Italy, 13,105
- Final: Germany 1-0 Spain, 14,059
- Aggregate attendance: 59,255

RESPECT

Respect was a key byword at the final tournament in Poland. Respect advertising boards were located around the pitches at each stadium, and the Respect logo was visible on players’ bibs as they came out onto the pitch to warm up, as well as on their shirt sleeves for the match itself. Team captains wore No to Racism-Respect branded armbands, while the pre-match line-up of the teams and match officials for the national anthems also involved youngsters carrying the Respect flag and wearing Respect T-shirts.

Accessibility for disabled people was also a priority. Dedicated ticketing measures were in place, with disabled people able to request a complimentary ticket for a companion to support them in attending matches. A total of 138 disabled people and 57 companions purchased their tickets online or at stadium ticket booths. A no-smoking policy was in operation at each of the tournament venues, with spectators reminded of the tobacco ban via messages on the stadium giant screens and speaker announcements over the stadium public address system. No-smoking signs were prevalent throughout the stadiums, and stewards were instructed to ask spectators not to smoke in stadium public areas.
The commercial programme for the 2017 UEFA European Under-21 Championship final tournament consisted of ten global sponsors and one national sponsor. It was an approach that allowed the global sponsors extensive worldwide marketing rights to associate with and promote the tournament, while the national sponsor offered crucial access and insight into the host market. This combination helped generate awareness of the finals – key to attracting fans to the stadiums – and the various sponsors also contributed vital products and services to facilitate the smooth running of the showpiece event.

As is custom, adidas supplied the official match ball – a product that offered both superior in-flight visibility through its striking design and colour scheme, and improved grip for players courtesy of a premium surface structure. The adidas brand was also highly visible in the quality apparel it provided for tournament staff, volunteers and youth-programme participants. Moreover, adidas produced the official licensed products sold at official Intersport fan shops at all six stadiums during the finals. Meanwhile, its ballboys/girls initiative gave a once-in-a-lifetime experience to local youngsters at the semi-finals and final. Closer still to the action, as presenting partner of the U21 EURO adidas Golden Boot award, the brand created a bespoke award presented to five-goal final-tournament top scorer Saúl Ñíguez of Spain.
Carlsberg’s sponsorship of the UEFA European U21 Championship in Poland was a fitting sequel to its involvement at UEFA EURO 2012 in the same country – with the Carlsberg name markedly visible throughout the two-week tournament. Carlsberg’s core brand messaging was promoted on perimeter boards, and its products made available at key areas within all stadiums. Certainly, thanks to the various refreshment stalls on site as well as the VIP programmes that the organisation helped to run, Carlsberg ensured nobody went thirsty at these finals.

Continental played its part in driving the success of the Polish finals. The company’s logo could be seen vividly on perimeter boards at the various venues – in fact the bright ‘Continental yellow’ boards assisted in lighting up the stadiums, just as the numerous goals, skills and tackles illuminated the on-field action.

Continental also showed its support by purchasing several VIP booths, with top management figures coming to take in the performances of these top European teams.

Cinkciarz came on board as a global sponsor for the first time, with the online currency exchange brand delivering an extensive programme of fan engagement – including activation of commercial display, stadium tours and an innovative digital marketing campaign encouraging fans to create content linking the brand to the tournament. In the local market Cinkciarz leveraged its sponsorship of Poland’s national team to further widen the scope of its efforts; internationally, the company used parent brand Conotoxia to engage additional markets.

Already a presence in Polish football by virtue of its activities at UEFA EURO 2012 and the Copa Coca-Cola tournaments, Coca-Cola utilised the U21 EURO to reinforce its involvement in the international game. It offered hundreds of people the chance to win match tickets and gave key customers a unique experience with the “Ultimate Access tour” – a behind-the-scenes tour that included watching the teams warm up (left). Its contribution to a successful event also entailed providing Coca-Cola products, making sure participating teams and on-site staff were kept hydrated throughout – with fans also able to buy drinks at the assorted refreshment stands.

Poland 2017 Tournament review
COMMERCIAL PROGRAMME

After a hugely successful debut at UEFA EURO 2016, Hisense continued its fruitful partnership with UEFA national team football by activating all its basic rights as sponsor. With the consumer electronics brand seeking to expand its footprint across Europe, the championship proved an ideal opportunity to further develop its recognition and awareness, while Hisense also fully exploited its assets such as tickets for the purpose of B2B and B2C engagement.

A longstanding partner of UEFA national team football, McDonald’s was once again a valued presence at, and supporter of, the showpiece finals. As with so many previous tournaments, the company enabled more than a hundred children to have a once-in-a-lifetime experience by being part of the pre-match ceremony – walking on to the pitch hand in hand with their heroes via the exclusive ‘McDonald’s Player Escorts’ programme. For this edition, McDonald’s also recruited several children from abroad, highlighting the championship’s international appeal.

The tournament was an ideal occasion for Hyundai to intensively activate its brand, with UEFA national team football – and the U21 competition in particular – long established as a major part of the automotive company’s global sponsorship strategy, and Poland considered an important market. In this context, Hyundai not only supplied over 100 vehicles to support final-tournament operations but also ran nationwide test drive/ticket promotions to help attract fans to matches. Upon arriving at the venues, the public could visit the brand’s commercial display stands, which featured activities such as driving simulators, photo booths and table football in addition to Hyundai ‘noise sticks’, which were distributed for fans to show their support.

UEFA national team football is a core component of SOCAR’s sponsorship strategy. Having promoted its innovative ‘Make Your Debut’ campaign around UEFA EURO 2016, the Azerbaijani energy company had the perfect opportunity, with the U21 Euro, to continue building brand awareness. There was significant visibility on site, on TV and across digital media – indeed, UEFA’s digital platforms posted ‘SOCAR Top Stats’ videos throughout the tournament and thus invited further engagement with fans. By these efforts, SOCAR took another step forward in developing its brand and deepening its footprint across European football.
As national sponsor of the U21 EURO, INTERSPORT seized the chance to engage with local supporters in the lead-up to the finals through a selection of ticket promotions that served to heighten anticipation levels. INTERSPORT was the official sports shop of licensed products for the championship, and to make sure fans had the best access to merchandise, it sold products through specially branded U21 areas within its classic retail stores in the host cities as well as dedicated shops at every finals venue. The official licensed product range, developed specifically for the event, included various eye-catching adidas items, replica shirts of the participating teams and, of course, match balls, replica balls and mini-balls.

Turkish Airlines combined its role as official airline partner of UEFA national team football with its proud status of global partner of the U21 finals. Consequently it was strongly visible around the tournament with pitchside brand exposure and on-site visibility on backdrops, giant screens, stadium dressing and other promotional material. Turkish Airlines also profited from considerable exposure on social media via its digital sole and exclusive ‘Moment of the Day presented by Turkish Airlines’ – comprising a match-action video clip with graphic overlays of the best moment of each matchday.

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The final tournament for the 2017 UEFA European Under-21 Championship was broadcast in over 150 territories by 26 broadcast partners, with impressive numbers following the action throughout the two-week competition. That included a 15% increase in the group stage alone across seven of the nations that competed in both the 2015 and 2017 tournaments – the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Slovakia, Sweden and the UK. The UEFA.tv channel on YouTube and the UEFA.com website and social media outlets complemented broadcast coverage by providing historical clips, interviews and many in-tournament features, as well as live streams of all matches to viewers in markets where no broadcast partner had been appointed.

HIGHLIGHTS

The key viewing figures from Poland

GROUP STAGE

Poland’s matches averaged between 25 and 30% market share, with matches against Slovakia and Sweden attracting 3.7m viewers. 2.9m watched Spain’s game with Portugal on Cuatro, a 21.3% share.

Poland v Denmark on ZDF attracted 5.7m viewers (22.9% share), compared to Germany’s opening match in the FIFA Confederations Cup that week (6m viewers, 39% share).

RAI’s broadcast of Italy v Germany was the most-watched programme in Italy that day (5.4m viewers, 32% share). Both domestic and neutral matches performed well in Slovakia, where 0.5m viewers (28.7% share) tuned in to Markíza for the decisive last group stage match against Sweden – four times more than the 2015 final. In Sweden, Poland v Sweden attracted 0.8m viewers (29.2% share) across Kanal5 and Eurosport 1, 68% up on the average domestic interest group stage match in 2015.

SEMI-FINALS

England v Germany

Twice as many people watched England’s semi-final against Germany on Sky Sports 1 (0.6m viewers, 4% share) than the British and Irish Lions tour match that day (0.3m viewers, 5.9% share). In Germany, the 5.3m audience was 50% higher than those semi-final against Portugal in 2015 on ARD (3.5m viewers, 20.8% share). Both matches were early kick-offs.

Spain v Italy

In Italy, 7.9m people watched the Azzurri take on Spain on Rai 1, almost double the number that watched the 2013 final between the two sides on the same channel (4m viewers, 29.8% share). The figure is comparable to the average neutral-match audience in Italy during UEFA EURO 2016 on free-to-air channels. In Spain, the 4m audience on Cuatro was double the size compared to the 2013 semi-final against Norway (2m viewers, 18% share) and 27% higher than the 2013 final between Italy and Spain (3.2m viewers, 26.1% share). The match attracted 57% more viewers than the Clásico between Barcelona and Real Madrid in April 2017, which was the most watched Liga match of the 2016/17 season (2.6m viewers, 16.7% share on Movistar).

FINAL

In Germany, 8.7m viewers watched the final on ZDF – a 30.7% share – which equalled the average domestic match audience for the senior team’s European Qualifiers for the 2018 FIFA World Cup up to that point. In Spain, Cuatro attracted 4.2m viewers (33.7% share), the highest audience in three tournaments and up 30.9% on Spain’s 2013 final win against Italy (3.2m viewers, 28.1% share), which was also on Cuatro. Audience figures also exceeded expectations in neutral markets with, for example, 2.1m tuning in to Rai 3 in Italy, 2.1m watching in Poland and over 600,000 in France on L’Equipe.

UEFA.tv

UEFA’s official YouTube channel is key to its media rights strategy

Live streaming and video-on-demand (VOD) coverage on UEFA.tv increased massively compared to 2015, in part because of the number of matches covered increasing by six to 21, but also because of the growing popularity of UEFA.tv as a channel for football content. UEFA.tv had close to 700,000 subscribers by the end of the tournament, six times more than in 2015. Live streaming minutes watched (23,124,360) and total views (1,655,928) were up by 1,424% and 1,831% respectively compared to 2015 with an average viewing time of 13:57 minutes. Highlight clips, meanwhile, generated 1,155,866 views and 2,449,289 minutes watched on VOD by 10 July 2017. UEFA.tv was most-watched in Vietnam (11% of total views), followed by the Netherlands (10%), Russia (8.4%), Thailand (7.4%) and India (6.5%).

Benefits of VOD included multiple views of key moments from matches, overcoming the limitations of traditional linear television, and allowing fans to watch matches again for key goals and significant moments. UEFA.tv’s growing popularity also saw an increase in the number of matches broadcast in over 150 territories by 26 broadcast partners, with impressive numbers following the action throughout the two-week competition. That included a 15% increase in the group stage alone across seven of the nations that competed in both the 2015 and 2017 tournaments – the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Slovakia, Sweden and the UK. The UEFA.tv channel on YouTube and the UEFA.com website and social media outlets complemented broadcast coverage by providing historical clips, interviews and many in-tournament features, as well as live streams of all matches to viewers in markets where no broadcast partner had been appointed.

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The images from the 2017 UEFA European Under-21 Championship in Poland were produced in partnership between the final tournament’s host broadcaster Polsat and UEFA. There was a production team at every one of the six venues, with a minimum of 13 cameras covering each game, including two super-slow-motion cameras, a steadicam and an in-goal mini-camera. In addition, a flycam (similar to an aerial camera system but mounted on a single cable) was used for the opening match, while the final was a 17-camera affair, including an additional Steadicam, a high reverse camera and two extra super-slow-mo cameras. UEFA TV Production also provided a full suite of graphics for Polsat to complement the coverage.

What’s more, UEFA TV Production staff were on site throughout the tournament to support both Polsat and all visiting broadcasters. This service was complemented by full quality control completed off-site on all matches, with feedback promptly shared with the host broadcaster as the tournament progressed. Leading up to the finals, UEFA had also delivered to broadcasters comprehensive additional programming material, including tournament and host city promos, plus an update package comprising interviews, rushes, raw host city material, play-off highlights and more. In-tournament behind-the-scenes filming was also carried out for UEFA and its sponsors.

Broadcasters were able to customise their own coverage thanks to a series of unilateral facilities made available by UEFA and coordinated by the governing body’s unilateral services team. In all, 155 commentary positions were booked, supplemented by 68 post-match flash interview positions and 58 pitch-presentation positions, as well as 189 unilateral cameras (including electronic news gathering, bonded mobile broadband, team filming and UEFA filming).

By directing the U21 final from London, as well as on the ground in Krakow, UEFA was able to prove the technical viability and effectiveness of a UHD 4K remote production – representing a major milestone ahead of UEFA EURO 2020, a tournament that will be spread across 13 different European host cities.

IN THE PICTURE

Host broadcaster Polsat and UEFA TV Production teamed up to deliver the images from Poland.
The UEFA European Under-21 Championship attracted a sizeable digital audience once again for the 2017 edition in Poland, with increasing numbers of fans eager to see the next generation of stars, many of whom are already playing at Europe’s top clubs.

A shift to the responsive, mobile-friendly design so successful at UEFA EURO 2016 was implemented for the Under-21 section of UEFA.com, with users directed to the hugely popular live MatchCentres, which generated over a million page views during the course of the tournament.

The decline in consumption of longer-form editorial such as reviews, match reports and features meant the content was instead pushed to key traffic areas – with the MatchCentres taking centre stage alongside the official information, data and statistics for which UEFA.com is the only official source.

In addition, reporters delivered text, photo and video updates live from every match, making the most of their behind-the-scenes access with a constant stream of first-hand colour and insight. In all, the 2017 edition resulted in almost 2.2 million visits to the Under-21 section of UEFA.com, an increase of around 15% on the previous tournament in 2015. There were also major gains on social media, with the conversation driven by the likes of Spanish duo Marco Asensio and Saúl Níguez – each of whom had featured prominently in their clubs’ respective UEFA Champions League campaigns. Player of the Tournament Dani Ceballos was also at the centre of the discussion, particularly after he was snapped up by Real Madrid on the back of his impressive displays in Poland.

Much of the competition’s charm lies in its history, with several established stars having made their first international impression on the Under-21 stage. This reflected in users’ interactions on social media, with archive content featuring Under-21 graduates such as Luís Figo, Mesut Özil and Cristiano Ronaldo contributing to increased fan engagement.

On Facebook, the Under-21s generated upwards of 244,000 interactions and 12 million video views, increasing the channel’s overall follower count by some 77,000 in the process. Meanwhile on Twitter, constant updates from the team in Poland drove 188,000 interactions and attracted 14,000 new fans all centered around the official competition hashtag #U21EURO.
COUNTDOWN TO 2019

A record 54 teams are involved in qualifying, but only co-hosts Italy are guaranteed a place in the 2019 final tournament.

Italy and San Marino will co-host the 2019 UEFA European Under-21 Championship final tournament, with a record 54 teams competing in qualifying.

It will be the first time that Italy stage the U21 EURO, despite boasting a glorious history in the competition:

- The Azzurrini have won the title a record five times, though they have not lifted the trophy since 2004, when a team including the likes of Andrea Barzagli, Daniele De Rossi and Alberto Gilardino beat Serbia and Montenegro 3-0 in the final in Bochum.

- This time round, the qualifying competition kicked off even before the 2017 finals had begun, with Kosovo’s first match at this level ending in a 1-0 defeat by the Republic of Ireland in Dublin on 25 March. Gibraltar are the other debutants for this 2017–19 edition which will involve all 55 UEFA member associations for the first time.

- Italy have a bye to the finals but co-hosts San Marino must qualify – the nine group winners advance to the 12-team final tournament automatically, with the remaining two places decided by a pair of two-legged play-off ties featuring the four best runners-up. The 2019 U21 EURO will also serve as the qualifying competition for the football event at the 2020 summer Olympics in Tokyo.

ROLL OF HONOUR

2017 Germany
2015 Sweden
2013 Spain
2011 Spain
2009 Germany
2007 Netherlands
2006 Netherlands
2004 Italy
2002 Czech Republic
2000 Italy
1998 Spain
1996 Italy
1994 Italy
1992 Italy
1990 USSR
1988 France
1986 Spain
1984 England
1982 England
1980 USSR
1978 Yugoslavia