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Three more referees join UEFA/Red Cross campaign

Anders Frisk, Markus Merk, Lubos Michel join Pierluigi Collina as ambassadors

During the 12th UEFA Advanced Course for Elite and Premier Referees being held at Las Rozas on the outskirts of Madrid, three top referees announced that they are joining forces with Pierluigi Collina to form a group of four ambassadors for the 'Protect Children in War' campaign being pegged by UEFA and the International Committee of the Red Cross to UEFA EURO 2004™.

Pierluigi Collina announced his commitment to the cause at a ceremony staged in Geneva on 27 November 2003, when UEFA handed the ICRC, for the seventh successive year, a cheque for one million Swiss francs. "The Children in War campaign aims to protect children in times of war, offer them material aid, re-unite them with their families and prevent them from being used as armed soldiers. So I am honoured to be associated with the campaign," Pierluigi Collina said at the time. He is now being joined by Swedish referee Anders Frisk, who handled the UEFA EURO 2000™ final; Markus Merk of Germany, referee of last season's UEFA Champions League final; and Slovakia's Lubos Michel, who handled the UEFA Cup final.

"I am very proud to be part of this campaign," says Lubos Michel. "As parents, we all think of children as innocent human beings and any kind of violence involving children is very sad. When we travel around Europe as referees, we see how much football can do to create friendly and peaceful atmospheres. I have children of my own and it makes me feel good to wake up in the morning and see them full of cheer. We are fortunate to live in a country where there is no conflict, so I'll be very happy if I can help this campaign to make life more peaceful for all the children who are suffering in war zones."

"I am honoured to be part of this campaign," comments Anders Frisk. "At first, I asked myself what I could do, but then I realised the meaning of the appointment, discovered the aims of the campaign and now I feel really, really proud. I have three children of my own and a fourth is expected any day now. As parents in a Nordic environment, it is difficult to understand and accept what children are going through in other countries in Europe and different parts of the world. This is a challenge which I will meet with a very open heart and a good feeling."

Markus Merk is an experienced campaigner in this sort of field, having set up schools, orphanages and other projects in India during the last decade. "It's a big pleasure to be on board for this campaign because it's all about children," he explains. "We are duty-bound to do everything we can for children because they really need our help. I have learned that performing at football matches in big stadiums before thousands of people is a wonderful life but that there are also other things that can be more important. Helping children is one of those things."

More details of the campaign will be made available when the UEFA EURO 2004™ referees meet for a pre-tournament seminar in Portugal from 26-29 April 2004.