

# THE TECHNICIAN

FUTSAL

**A Different  
Ball Game**

**Interview:  
Javier Lozano**

**Coach  
Education**

**Learning  
by Competing**



**NEWSLETTER  
FOR COACHES**  
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Adriano Foglia in action during Italy's match against Portugal in the final round of the 2005 European Futsal Championship.

(PHOTO: UEFA)

**SERHIY KORIDZE  
(UKRAINE)  
OUTFLANKS A CZECH  
OPPONENT  
IN THE 2005 FINAL  
ROUND IN THE  
CZECH REPUBLIC.**

# A DIFFERENT BALL GAME

## EDITORIAL

BY ANDY ROXBURGH,  
UEFA TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Javi Rodríguez and Andreu are sporting heroes in Spain. Yet, many people in European football will never have heard of them because they are stars in the world of futsal. A specialised branch of the game, futsal is developing in Europe at a rapid pace. Why? Because futsal (five-a-side football played indoors with a small, heavy ball) is high-speed football, with spectacular match situations and remarkable creativity – a game for quick thinking and technical ingenuity. Apart from its appeal as a discipline in its own right, many national associations are recognising the value of futsal as a grassroots activity for developing players for the eleven-a-side game.

Apart from playing for Barcelona, what do Deco and Ronaldinho have in common? They both played futsal as youngsters in Brazil, and many of the skills they display in the UEFA Champions League were honed on small futsal pitches. Ronaldinho's amazing 'toe-ender' goal against Chelsea last season was a typical example of a futsal technique. Pelé, Zico, Socrates, Romario, Ronaldo and Real Madrid's new prodigy Robinho are all graduates of the Brazilian school of futsal wizardry. When Deco or Ronaldinho screen the ball while controlling it with the sole of the foot, the move comes from their futsal bag of tricks. The two codes, indoor (five-a-side) and outdoor (eleven-a-side), have much in common and the former can assist the latter by helping the development of quick, clever technique.

Futsal, the game itself, has much to offer as a top-level sporting discipline. When the hall is full, the floor fast, and the teams of a high quality, then 'fútbol-sala' is fantastic. It is football, but in many ways a different ball game to eleven-a-side. Futsal coaches, for instance, have a greater influence on the game than their outdoor colleagues because of the time-outs and the rolling substitutions. However, there are also common trends

in both types of football, such as the Europeans focusing on tactical development, while the South Americans continue to emphasise individual flair. Javier Lozano, the national futsal coach of Spain and the current futsal European and world champion, has no doubt about the need to train game appreciation: "The main aspect to develop (in futsal) is tactics. Teach the young players to think – speed and decision making are crucial."

A major problem for futsal's growth and further development stems from the fact that the game has been constructed from the top down. Adult competitions, both at national and European level, have been formed and promoted in glorious isolation from the game's roots and back-up services. There is an urgent need for grassroots programmes, player development schemes, youth competitions, futsal coach education, futsal referee training, etc. – all the elements which make up the football pyramid. A few associations, Spain being the role model, have started this process of comprehensive development, and UEFA has embarked on a number of technical, educational and promotional initiatives to raise futsal to the next level.

UEFA embraced futsal in 1996 when the first European Futsal Tournament was staged in Córdoba in Spain. Following the success of this event, an official European Futsal Championship was

introduced, and in 1999 in Granada (Spain), Russia beat the host to win the first title. To date, there have been four European Futsal Championships, four UEFA Futsal Cup competitions for clubs, two UEFA futsal conferences, and two UEFA futsal referee courses. The pioneering work of the last ten years is over and futsal will undoubtedly blossom during the next decade – Olympic recognition would be a major boost.

From a UEFA perspective, professional organisation and marketing will be implemented, development work will be expanded, and TV coverage will be increased. But the key to futsal's success will depend on attitude: the willingness of the national associations to invest in a branch of football which can live in juxtaposition with the eleven-a-side game, and make a valuable contribution to football at grassroots level. The extent to which the public will become fascinated by the exciting world of futsal will also be crucial.

If UEFA, the national associations and the futsal clubs commit themselves to the intense promotion of futsal, maybe tomorrow's international stars will become household names beyond the boundaries of their own countries, and will be instantly recognised as football personalities. For now, Javi Rodríguez and Andreu, two shining examples of futsal's potential, light the way to a bigger and brighter future for the indoor game. A new era beckons for European futsal.



Futsal can be really entertaining and exciting to watch!



## INTERVIEW

BY GRAHAM TURNER



**HE MODESTLY INSISTS THAT HIS CAREER HAS BEEN SHAPED BY “BOARDING THE RIGHT TRAIN AT THE RIGHT TIME”. AND HIS TRACK RECORD INDICATES THAT MOST OF THEM HAVE BEEN HIGH-SPEED TRAINS. HAVING REPRESENTED SPAIN’S NATIONAL FUTSAL TEAM 40 TIMES WHILE PURSUING HIS TEACHING CAREER, HE BECAME THEIR HEAD COACH AT THE TENDER AGE OF 31. IN THE LAST 14 YEARS, HE HAS BUILT A RECORD THAT IS UNPARALLELED ON THE FOOTBALLING PLANET. HE DEMONSTRATED THAT THE BRAZILIANS COULD BE BEATEN WHEN HE LED SPAIN TO THE FIFA WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE IN GUATEMALA IN 2000 AND EARNED ANOTHER GOLD MEDAL IN CHINESE TAIPEI FOUR YEARS LATER. HE PILOTED SPAIN TO VICTORY AT UEFA’S FIRST EUROPEAN TOURNAMENT IN CÓRDOBA IN 1996 AND COMPLETED A HAT-TRICK BY WINNING IN MOSCOW IN 2001 AND IN OSTRAVA LAST YEAR. OF THE FIVE FINALS PLAYED, HIS TEAM HAS BEEN IN FOUR OF THEM AND WON THREE. HOW MANY COACHES COULD POINT TO THE BRONZE MEDAL WON IN ITALY IN 2003 AS THE ‘LOW POINT’ IN THEIR CAREER? BUT HE IS NOT JUST ABOUT RESULTS. HE HAS WRITTEN BOOKS AND COACHING MANUALS. HE TRAVELS THE WORLD TO SHARE HIS KNOWLEDGE AT FUTSAL CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS. DURING THE LAST DECADE, HE HAS PLAYED THE ROLES OF PIONEER AND COACHING ‘GURU’. SO, WHO BETTER TO KICK-OFF THE FIRST ISSUE OF THE FUTSAL TECHNICIAN THAN**

# JAVIER LOZANO

“Before you ask any questions, I think that launching this publication represents an important move on UEFA’s behalf because, irrespective of the content, it demonstrates a new sensitivity towards futsal. It’s a symptom that times are changing and that UEFA is adapting to them. The futsal technician is generally someone who is deeply concerned about the game and its future; who tries to further his knowledge with every day that goes by; and who is fairly strong on self-esteem. By that, I mean that we are obliged to study and analyse techniques and to adopt what we might call a more scientific approach to the job of coaching a team. Yet, all too often, the futsal technician is treated as if he were a second-class citizen. But we have the courage of our convictions and feel that we are

first-class citizens in the coaching world. This publication is confirmation that UEFA sees us like that as well.”

**If you get this ‘second-class citizen’ feeling in Spain, the world champion nation, futsal technicians in other countries must feel this even more keenly?**

Much more. In Spain, we have been fighting since 1989 for justice in terms of acknowledgement and recognition, and we have already registered important successes in that regard. We have our own coaching badges; we’re included in coach education committees; we dedicate a lot of hours to re-education, we have the same sort of contracts as in the outdoor game, the same guarantees, the same legal back-up... step by step we have made important

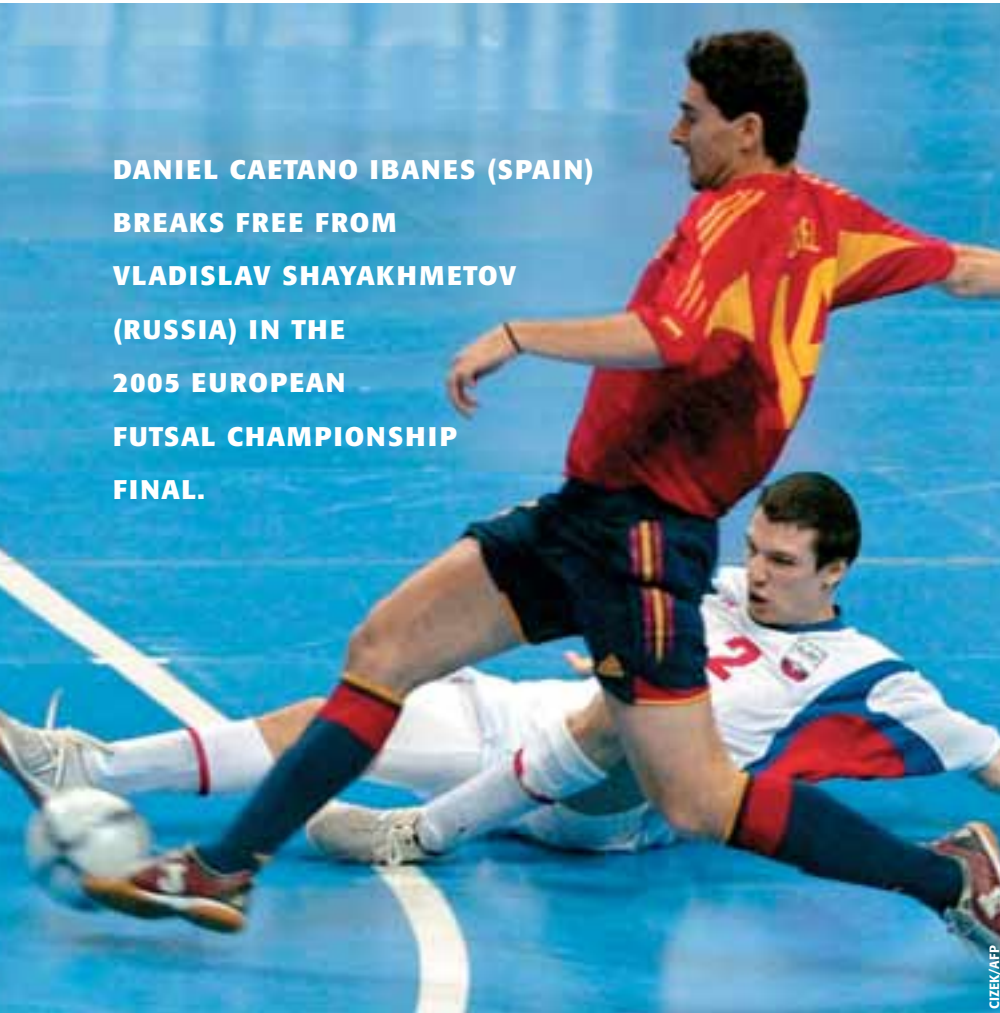
advances. In the last five years, especially, we have come a long way.”

**For practically the whole of Europe – even the more established powers as well as the relative newcomers – Spain is the role model. Everybody wants to analyse your way of working and your way of playing. Does the fact that everybody wants to beat you make your job even more difficult?**

Let’s say it generates a greater sense of responsibility and the need to assume leadership status. I find it very gratifying to help others. But I would also have liked to have had a role model! Someone to admire, to study and to ask for help. Unfortunately, I’ve never had that. In my generation, we had to be fighters, crusaders. We had to cut our own



**DANIEL CAETANO IBANES (SPAIN)  
BREAKS FREE FROM  
VLADISLAV SHAYAKHMETOV  
(RUSSIA) IN THE  
2005 EUROPEAN  
FUTSAL CHAMPIONSHIP  
FINAL.**



paths. We had to be pioneers. Having come through that stage, then it's a delight and a satisfaction to be able to help others to make progress.

**At the moment, what do you rate as the futsal technician's greatest challenges and greatest needs?**

Well, there's certainly no shortage of enthusiasm or appetite for the job. What's lacking is material. Where can the futsal technician find good reference manuals to read? Where is the best place for him to study? I might have all the good will and all the enthusiasm in the world, but I need someone to show me how to go about the job. I need documentation. I need seminars and workshops where I can gain and interchange experience with colleagues.

**Little by little, futsal is conquering the European map. How important is it that major 'outdoor' powers such as England, France or Germany are coming into the fold?**

Very important. In that respect, I have to take off my hat to Petr Fousek because, even before he became chairman of UEFA's Futsal Committee, he was already demonstrating that he is a great promoter of this sport. In his time, progression started being arithmetical and then became geometrical. At the beginning it was just 2+2 and 4+4. But now, it's not just about numbers. It's a question of unifying the game and gradually levelling out the standards within the whole continent. That's where UEFA's efforts and commitment have been greatly appreciated.

**What do you think is the best way of upgrading standards to a more uniformly high level?**

I would go back to the need to provide basic educational material and, in addition, motivating national associations to create courses where futsal coaches can receive a good education. On the broader scale, this means educating good coach educators who can lay proper foundations for the future. This is where UEFA has a role to play – in helping national associations with coach education, helping them to set up the right sort of courses. It's a question of assisting with organisation and know-how.

**Without wishing to polish your boots, do you think that other countries need a Javier Lozano? Someone who, apart from coaching, has the didactic ability to write books and manuals, conduct seminars and so on?**

I think other countries do have that sort of person. But not all of them have enjoyed the sort of support that I have received from the president of our national association, Angel María Villar. Thanks to him, I have been able to do a lot of work with the full backing of our federation. He has always been a great promoter and respecter of futsal and his contribution has been a decisive factor in Spain's successes. But, going back to the original question, I have travelled the world and I have realised that, in terms of human resources, futsal has great riches. There are people who can do as much as I have for the game and even more. They just need the sort of material and human support that I have had in Spain.

**Do you find it strange that the European futsal map has, up till now, been dominated by an East-West axis?**

It's true that Russia, Ukraine, Spain, Italy and Portugal seem to be the engines that are pulling the futsal train. But there's also a strong 'intermediate class'





**JAVIER LOZANO ADDS THE 2005 EUROPEAN FUTSAL CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY TO HIS COLLECTION.**

containing countries like Holland, Belgium, Croatia, Poland, Czech Republic and so on. Then we have the countries like Greece, France or England who are just starting and another group, including Scandinavia, who haven't yet joined the family. The 'engines' are now up to cruising speed and are capable of running under their own momentum. They have good organisation, solid coach education structures and so on. So our efforts should be focused on the 'intermediate class' countries and the ones who are just starting. We have to help them to start running faster than us so that, in a few years, they can catch up. I'm looking forward to the day when, instead of naming five candidates for the European title, we can name 18. So we have to make great efforts to bring other countries up to speed. This is not just talk. For example, last year we organised an international workshop at our headquarters in Madrid and it was attended by 250 coaches. And we're not just talking about tactics. For the futsal technician, areas like psychology, man management and group dynamics are absolutely crucial. I think it's significant for the futsal technician that, over the last couple of years, I've been invited by big companies to give

talks to executives on themes like leadership, motivation, stress management, risk assessment or group dynamics. It means there is an important social recognition of the work we do with our squads. I'm very proud of the fact that the business world looks to us for advice on these types of topics.

**The spectator who focuses on individual skills or creativity during a futsal match probably doesn't realise how much work the coach has done on collective qualities...**

Exactly. Spain has been world and European champion and we are what we are because of our collective virtues. Years ago we created a group culture that allows the squad to be greater than the total of its individual qualities. The team performance is always higher than the sum of its component parts. That's how we've managed to beat sides who are better than us. Man for man, it's obvious that the Brazilians are better than we are in terms of pure skill. But if the spectator's perception of futsal is that it's all about individual inspiration, then we haven't sold it correctly. I think there's a lack of real knowledge about futsal, even among administrators. That's why

some people look at us with a bit of misgiving and don't correctly judge the value that futsal has within sport and within society. In Spain that is changing – and that's why the big companies are interested in hearing how we go about the job. Futsal breeds positive characteristics such as solidarity, discipline, collective work ethics, respect for opponents, coaches, officials... At the same time, it's a safe, enjoyable sporting discipline and, at high level, it's a great school – or rather a university – in terms of the management skills I mentioned earlier on. Futsal is a wonderful educational tool. There's probably even a greater sense of involvement than in other disciplines because the ability to make flying substitutions means that every individual feels part of the team.

**But is the Spanish national team something exceptional, out of the ordinary? Do other club and national teams have the same characteristics?**

I have the feeling that the Spanish national team is something of a role model for others to imitate. We've created a style – and any style that is successful creates a mould for others. We've found a way of maximising collective efficiency without stifling individual flair and freedom. In other words, I try to implant concepts rather than rehearse moves that might make the team too mechanical. I encourage the players to think for themselves and to take decisions on the best way to handle situations. We've also made sure that the individual skills are used at the right time and in the right place so that they serve the team as a collective unit.

**In Spain, are there any conflicts between the eleven-a-side game and futsal?**

No. We're fortunate in our national association to have had a clear concept of how we want the game to be organised and, up to a certain age, we encourage youngsters to play both disciplines. Then they can choose to go into football or futsal. That way, no players are lost to the sport. They just go into different rooms within the same building.



Spain – the current futsal world champions.



of importance on human relationships and, of course, those represent two-way traffic. In other words, when I ask for support, people are usually prepared to give it. That's nice.

**What advice would you give to a young coach?**

A lot! But one practical tip would be to make sure you have a right-hand man who is sincere. Someone who is prepared to say things you don't want to hear. Someone who can contribute a different viewpoint.

**You've been a witness to some profound changes in the European map, with countries such as Portugal coming through very quickly. How long can Spain stay at the top?**

You've mentioned Portugal and I have great friends there. Every time they invite me, I go there and I tell them everything I know. I don't keep any secrets. In a way, we're feeding the people who, in the long run, are going to eat us! But I'm convinced that we're doing a good job for the future of futsal. I'd prefer to be in fifth place in a really strong scenario than No. 1 in a 'mickey mouse' competition. So my ideal is to keep raising the level of competition. Only that way can you place real value on what you achieve. That's my vision – and I think a lot of futsal coaches are visionaries!

**Talking of visions, if you had one wish, what would it be?**

The Olympic Games! And as every Olympics come and go, my conviction becomes even stronger. With maximum respect and without wishing to offend anybody, I see other disciplines that don't have the same social values as futsal or are less widely established. I wouldn't want anybody to be forced out, but I do believe that futsal warrants a place in the Olympics. That's my great dream. And I hope to see that dream come true, even if it's only as a spectator. I don't want to die without seeing futsal at the Olympics.

**How and why did you decide to move into futsal?**

I was lucky enough to have a sense of intuition. I played football and also joined the veterans to play futsal. I enjoyed it so much that, when they created the first league in Spain, back in 1983 or 1984, I faced a dilemma. On the face of it, futsal didn't offer that much and people told me it had no future. But I was attracted and fulfilled by it. It was a decision that changed my life. I jumped on the futsal train and it took me to somewhere completely new. It has made me tremendously happy. I had studied to be a teacher. So even when I was playing, I was thinking about the game and coaching. And another critical moment came when I was 30 and decided I would prefer to be a young coach rather than an old player. Less than a year later, I was head coach of the national team. I was one of several candidates and, during the interview I spoke about the spirit in the dressing-room, respect and all the other qualities that I felt were the important ones in a team-building process. Even though I was inexperienced, they obviously identified with my philosophy because they appointed me.

**At one point, your intention was to stand down after EURO 2005, wasn't it?**

That's right. Over the years I've been given more roles and greater responsi-

bilities within the national association and I thought it was a good time to move away from the bench. Not to move away from futsal because I can never see that happening. But to take a break from all the travelling to see players, from designing training sessions and so on. But Angel María Villar, my president, was very convincing. He gave me profound reasons to stay and, bearing in mind that he has given me his unstinting support through some difficult times, there was no way I was going to create a problem for him. The right moment will come but I'll stay within futsal, that's for sure.

**Someone who has achieved such sustained success might be tempted to keep the formula to himself. But you're always ready and willing to share your knowledge with colleagues. Why?**

That's right. I've always made use of World Cups and European Championships to compare notes with colleagues and the other day I started to count the number of conferences, workshops and courses I've attended. The total is around 200! I've never said no. I see it as a responsibility to go to any country that invites me. It means one week I might be in the Maldives and the next week in a small village in rural Spain. Where there's interest in futsal, you have to go. I've placed a lot





**PETR FOUSEK, CHAIRMAN  
OF UEFA'S FUTSAL COMMITTEE.**

**IN FEBRUARY, THE SPANISH NATIONAL ASSOCIATION'S TRAINING COMPLEX AT LAS ROZAS ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF MADRID WAS THE SCENARIO FOR THE 2ND UEFA FUTSAL CONFERENCE. PRESENTATIONS, INTERVIEWS, PRACTICAL SESSIONS AND MEETINGS WERE PACKED INTO A THREE-DAY EVENT ATTENDED BY TECHNICIANS AND ADMINISTRATORS FROM ALL 52 OF UEFA'S MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS. THE RESULT WAS A FIREWORK DISPLAY OF IDEAS, PROPOSALS AND VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF FUTSAL. SOME OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROMOTIONAL ANGLES ARE OBVIOUSLY OF LESSER INTEREST FOR THE FUTSAL TECHNICIAN. OR ARE THEY? ONE OF THE INTERESTING QUESTIONS TO EMERGE WAS:**

# IS A FUTSAL COACH JUST A COACH?

"When futsal started out," says Petr Fousek, chairman of UEFA's Futsal Committee, "federations didn't employ many people, so one person had to do several jobs. This has resulted in a group of technicians who are much more aware of organisational and administrative aspects than their counterparts in the outdoor game. They have an extremely wide knowledge, and that experience will be valuable when it comes to setting up slightly bigger administrative structures based on people with more specialised functions. I hope the participants went

home from Madrid better equipped to deal with their domestic needs."

The squad in Madrid was a blend of experienced campaigners with newcomers and representatives from the relatively few countries where futsal is still not played on a structured basis. Alongside Spain's Javier Lozano, other pioneers such as Russia's Semen Andreev and the current Dutch national team coach, Vic Hermans, pointed out very clearly that the coach's role often extends far beyond the confines of the dressing-room or pitch

and even the coach's permanent remit – the pursuit of results.

"It was my dream to be the head coach of Holland," Vic Hermans recalls, "and the dream came true in 1997. At that time, the national association didn't have a budget for a full-time coach, so I started on a 20% work basis. But I played other roles. Once a week I spent time passing on my experience to coaching colleagues and, at the same time, I was putting my vision for futsal onto paper. In 2001, that vision was accepted and I started to work full-time. One of the things I would encourage coaches in other countries to take on board is that, if you are the national team coach, there is more to the job than sitting down and working out how to train the senior team."

Semen Andreev tells a similar story about how he laid futsal foundations in the old USSR and, then, in Russia. "We started absolutely from zero," he remembers, "and with no back-up resources." Like many countries within the European futsal structure, the Russians started with the roof. "Without any other basis, we set up a national team. Fortunately, we had some immediate success and that gave great impetus for future development."



The UEFA Futsal Conference.



**VIC HERMANS  
OF THE NETHERLANDS.**



Technicians such as Vic, Semen and Javier have performed priceless pioneering work by stepping out of the dressing-room and investing time in campaigning, debating and convincing in the corridors of their own national associations – and then playing active roles in the implementation of their plans for the future.

Both helped to erect regional structures: six in the Netherlands and 22 in Russia. Both have become deeply involved in promotional and educational campaigns. "For example, we prepared a manual for schoolteachers," Semen Andreev explains. We started a campaign by placing giant posters in schools, encouraging the kids to play futsal. That's useless if the teachers know nothing about the game. So we made sure that they all received the Laws of the Game, advice on technique and basic recommendations on how to help the children enjoy their futsal. In recent years, futsal has been built into physical education at schools and this has led us into organising school competitions on a regional basis in the 12-13 and 14-15 age groups. This month (March) we are staging the first Russian futsal school championship and in 2007 we will be adding the 10-11 age group."

Despite evident geographical and cultural differences, Vic Hermans transmits a similar message from the Netherlands. "We now have 300 school teams playing regularly," he says, "with girls and boys taking part together. There has been such fast growth that I have had to work hard at finding coaches and referees. And, of course, it's not just a question of finding them – you have to educate them. So I have become deeply involved in clinics, workshops and so on. It's a lot of work, but recent times have shown that we're on the right track. In a way, all our work will be on display on 25 May. That's going to be our national futsal day, staged in a big hall in Amsterdam. We'll be staging youth tournaments, the cup final, workshops and a whole lot more. The futsal coach has to be prepared to do a lot of work on his own and, at the same time, we must all be prepared to help each other as much as we can."

The futsal technician often requires more than coaching ability. Commitment to the cause is a fundamental asset. Fortunately for the future of futsal, there seems to be no shortage of this priceless commodity.

## COACH EDUCATION

But how far can integration concepts be applied to coach education curricula for futsal and football? While it is perfectly feasible to play the indoor and outdoor games, coaching in both disciplines is undoubtedly more problematic.

"In my early years – and even now – coaches came into futsal from the eleven-a-side game and experienced huge difficulties in adapting," Semen Andreev recalls. "They came with a pre-conceived idea that 'mini-football' was a simple game – and that's not the case. In futsal, the apparent simplicity of the game is its complexity. So specialised coach education is a very important task and we need to put our energy into it. Most of us need to clarify and restructure within our own organisations in order to cope with the growth of futsal and the need for specialised coaches."

"When I did my coaching diploma in 1989," Vic Hermans remarks, "futsal was part of the curriculum. When I came back in 1997, it had disappeared. So we had to re-think and re-plan. Next year, coach education programmes at various levels will be in place."

This is why, during the discussion sessions in Madrid, coach education was high on

the agenda – and the lack of specialised programmes was seen as one of the major development difficulties. Hence a generalised call for UEFA's support in setting up a panel of educators and instructors, organising workshops and seminars designed specifically for futsal, and the distribution of didactic material which would help national associations to kick-start their own projects.

"Coach education is very important for the future of futsal," insists Petr Fousek. "In Madrid, we didn't want to draw up a list of 50 priorities because each one would run the risk of being lost like drops in the ocean. In the development sector – as opposed to competitions – one of the main priorities is to implant futsal in UEFA's grassroots programme. Coach education is the other priority. Our aim is to encourage the national associations to start licensing systems, given that by no means all associations have well-structured coach education schemes designed for futsal. Where we would appreciate UEFA's cooperation initially is in organising workshops where the target groups would be coaches from new or developing futsal countries. The ultimate aim would be to include a futsal coaching diploma in the UEFA coaching convention."



Futsal requires fast decisions and quick technique.



**SEMEN ANDREEV, A MEMBER  
OF UEFA'S FUTSAL COMMITTEE.**

## **FUTSAL v FOOTBALL – a match with no opponents**

"Our major setbacks have stemmed from negative attitudes and resistance within organisations involved in the outdoor game. I think that the key to the growth of futsal lies in convincing everybody – starting with the authorities – that there is no conflict between football and futsal and that it is better to join forces."

The comment by Semen Andreev summed up the universal sentiment at the conference in Madrid. And the general feeling is that the futsal origins of top outdoor players such as Ronaldinho, Robinho or Deco are transmitting unifying messages.

"The need to include futsal on the national association's curriculum was a tough message to get across," Vic Hermans admits. "I wanted to create a win-win situation for both disciplines, to make sure that football and futsal are in the same fold and getting the same promotion." Vic and his colleagues at the Dutch national association are currently discussing ways of dovetailing the two disciplines, and one of the proposals is to promote futsal competitions during the outdoor game's winter break. "It's a valid way of adding futsal skills to football players," says Vic Hermans. "They can learn

about technique, resolving tight situations, develop quick feet and quick thinking... my vision is to bring futsal and football together as two elements within an integrated sport."

But how far away is the sort of integration that Vic dreams about? One pertinent question might be to ask how many of the 21 clubs who have been champions of Europe in the outdoor game run futsal sections. Javier Lozano points out that, in Spain, "futsal has taken root very effectively in cities that don't have an elite football club. But the passion for football is easily transferred to futsal. FC Barcelona are now investing resources and I'm convinced that if their project is successful, five or six of the other clubs in our top division will follow suit. In that way, you're attracting a huge social mass – and the coaches are dreaming of this sort of situation."

## **LEARNING BY COMPETING**

One of the gauntlets thrown before the participants in Madrid was the challenge of assessing UEFA's futsal competitions. The response was a firm opinion that learning curves could be steepened by offering international experience to more players and

coaches. "I believe that, at present, there is a lack of incentives," said Semen Andreev. "And the best incentives are international matches and tournaments."

"I think there will be two very important recommendations to put on UEFA's desk," reported Petr Fousek, chairman of UEFA's Futsal Committee, at the end of the event in Madrid. "To expand the final tournament of the European Futsal Championship from eight teams to twelve, in line with the recent decision adopted for women's football. Another will be to launch a new Under-21 competition, with 39 associations interested in taking part." As many of the technicians in Madrid pointed out, the introduction of an Under-21 competition would have beneficial knock-on effects for youth development, as many national associations would then introduce a national team at Under-19 level in order to feed the Under-21 squad.

Petr was a front-line witness as host when the European Futsal Championship finals in Ostrava helped to upgrade the awareness and image of futsal in the Czech Republic. "It was a pity from a sporting point of view that our team didn't have quite enough resources to peak twice in such a short space of time, as the finals were so soon after the World Futsal Championship in Chinese Taipei," he commented.

This problem has now been solved by reshuffling the international fixture list, and it was a significant symptom of futsal's growing popularity that there were seven candidates to stage the 2007 European Futsal Championship finals. The bidding process ended with a victory for Portugal and the seven technicians who successfully lead their teams through the qualifiers will be glad to hear the schedule for the finals has been restructured in order to ensure that each team has at least one rest day between fixtures. Playing two games a day instead of four also opens the door for some kick-off times that will be much more user-friendly for teams, fans and TV.



The UEFA Fustal Cup tie between Action 21 Charleroi and Boomerang Interviu.



**ANGEL MARIA VILLAR,  
PRESIDENT OF THE SPANISH FA  
AND A UEFA VICE-PRESIDENT,  
IS A KEEN SUPPORTER OF FUTSAL.**



## THE LAST WORD

### WELCOMING THE HOSTS

One of the many symptoms of the rapid growth of futsal has been the response to UEFA's competitions. During the 1990s, it wasn't always easy to find hosts for qualifying mini-tournaments. Today, national associations are practically queuing up to act as hosts, with 15–20 keen to stage a tournament.

In conjunction with the draw for the preliminary and main qualifying rounds of the UEFA Futsal Cup in July, a workshop has been organised for the clubs who are hosting tournaments. The fact that the workshop involves UEFA's professional football division, the events team and the anti-doping unit may be seen as a small detail. But it represents a significant pointer that futsal is now being wholly embraced by the whole of UEFA's structure and sends a strong signal that UEFA is keen to put futsal in the top bracket and trigger commercial and organisational improvements.

### A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

Don't laugh at the headline. Mud, bumpy surfaces, lack of grass and the choice of studs may not be problems for futsal players but, in the metaphorical sense, there is a lack of a 'level playing field' for everybody in the sense that playing surfaces are by no means uniform.

To a certain extent, this is inevitable when futsal is played in multi-sport halls. But the technicians maintain that, if we wish to offer fans and viewers the most spectacular games possible, a fast surface is among the prime requirements. This explains why, for the 2005 European Futsal Championship finals in Ostrava, the playing surface travelled all the way from



A typical futsal technique.

Spain to the eastern end of the Czech Republic. Television viewers may remember that the surface was blue and it's an interesting concept to have a 'branded' surface – a playing field that is colour-coded to be instantly recognisable as a futsal pitch.

Total uniformity is, of course, a tall order. But the development of standard playing surfaces is one of the items on UEFA's futsal agenda. The subject is currently at the consultation stage with different flooring solutions under examination and the possibility of launching a UEFA certification scheme under discussion. The plan for the future is to play all UEFA matches on UEFA-approved surfaces.

### WHAT ABOUT US GIRLS?

"Futsal for women urgently needs support!" That was the rallying call issued by FIFA's futsal development manager, Jaime Yarza, during the conference in Madrid. Women's futsal is experiencing a rapid growth in consonance with the development of the men's game and, although there is currently no competition for the girls, this has definitely not passed unnoticed at UEFA. As Giorgio Marchetti, UEFA's Director of Profes-

sional Football, stated in Madrid, the potential for women's futsal is currently being analysed.

The Dutch federation reports that it now has well over 400 women's teams, girls have been fully integrated in Russia's school tournaments, and many countries in Europe and elsewhere are reporting fast growth in women's futsal.

The fundamental difference is that, in the men's game, there is a general acknowledgement that futsal has been built from the roof downwards. National teams and premier leagues – some of them professional – have presented the game to the public in such spectacular fashion that the walls and foundations have been built on success at the top.

With development programmes now reaching right down to the grassroots levels, the door was opened for boys and girls to compete together and for a solid player base to be created in the women's game. But an in-depth look at grassroots programmes in futsal will be one of the major topics to be addressed in the second edition of *The Futsal Technician*.

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