



Union des associations européennes de football



**Media Release**

Date: 28/02/2007

**Communiqué aux médias**

No. 030

**Medien-Mitteilung**

## ***Ronaldinho, Carles Puyol, Lilian Thuram and Gianluca Zambrotta in Europe XI squad***

During the Meridian Cup & Conference which has been taking place in Barcelona this week, FC Barcelona have confirmed that four players have been given the green light to accept the invitation to take part in the Celebration Match between Manchester United FC and an all-star Europe XI to be played on Tuesday 13 March at Old Trafford, Manchester, kicking-off at 20.00 local time.

It was appropriate that Frank Rijkaard, head coach of the current European champions, should confirm the players' availability to UEFA's Technical Director, Andy Roxburgh, during the Meridian event. The Dutchman represented Europe during the 2001 Meridian Cup All-Star Match in Bari, where Marcello Lippi was the head coach of the European side and Andy Roxburgh was his assistant. The same two coaches will be on the Europe XI bench at Old Trafford and Frank Rijkaard, who plans to accompany his players on the trip to Manchester, has laid the foundations for a 'reunion'.

Ronaldinho is the first attacker to feature in Marcello Lippi's squad, while Carles Puyol will be the first central defender to be included in the European squad. Lilian Thuram and Gianluca Zambrotta, rivals at last summer's FIFA World Cup final, will further reinforce a defence which already features Eric Abidal (Olympique Lyonnais) and Jamie Carragher (Liverpool FC). Gregory Coupet, the Olympique Lyonnais goalkeeper, as well as the midfielders David Beckham (Real Madrid CF), Steven Gerrard (Liverpool FC) and Juninho (Olympique Lyonnais) have also been made available for Europe XI.

The presence of Lilian Thuram at Old Trafford has special significance, as he has already accepted another invitation to be an 'ambassador' for the united Europe. He was asked by UEFA and the Brussels regional government to be the central figure in an exhibition set in the heartland of the European Union institutions from May to August this year.

"I enjoy playing in this type of match," Lilian Thuram comments, "and especially one that emphasises the role football can play within European society."

"It's good to feel that the players are so keen to take part," adds UEFA's Technical Director, Andy Roxburgh. "We're grateful to them, to Frank Rijkaard and to the club president for being so supportive and for wanting to be part of such a significant match."

**For further information:  
UEFA Media Services: ++41 848 04 27 27**

Route de Genève 46  
CH-1260 Nyon 2  
Tel. +41 848 04 27 27  
Fax +41 22 707 28 38  
media@uefa.ch  
**uefa.com**