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# GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL NEWSLETTER







**MORE AND MORE GIRLS  
ARE TAKING UP FOOTBALL.**



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By getting involved  
in grassroots football,  
clubs like Rangers  
are doing their bit for  
the community.  
Photo: Rangers FC/PA Photos

# WHAT IS GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL?

## EDITORIAL

**BY ANDY ROXBURGH,  
UEFA TECHNICAL DIRECTOR**

It was on the first day of the 7th UEFA Grassroots Conference in Helsinki when a businessman, who had obviously seen our event signage, got into the hotel lift and asked me a simple question: "What exactly is grassroots football?"

For those of us who work in football development, this is a fundamental question which requires careful consideration and an answer with more depth than an elevator sound bite. In defining grassroots football, we need to state its purpose, identify its categories, recognise its values and understand its relationship with the top level. Before we can design our way forward, there must be a common understanding about the role of grassroots football and its importance to the game as a whole.

Basically, football has three layers: the professional game with its stars, the top-class youth level with its rising talents, and the non-elite grassroots competitions and activities. Football in the latter category, as we know, is not played for monetary gain, but for the pure pleasure of taking part. For some, grassroots football is a series of recreational fun activities which operate on a casual, friendly basis. For others, it is school or club-based football, and involves regular training and organised match schedules. For a limited number, it means being selected in their formative years to take part in a structured development programme which could eventually lead to a football career.

If the latter are children, then they are classed as grassroots players, even if they are associated with a professional club.

Grassroots football comes in a variety of packages and categories. Vast numbers play on a regular basis with their amateur clubs (adults, teenagers or children), while others take part in football for schools, companies or veterans. Indoor futsal, beach soccer and small-sided games for leisure also have big followings. But it is not just about the football, about the winning and losing. The grassroots game has been extremely valuable in encouraging social integration, creating a sense of community, supporting health education, and providing help for disadvantaged groups. Association-led/supported disability football, which offers playing opportunities to a variety of young people with either physical or learning difficulties, has developed and expanded enormously in recent years. When we talk about football for all, we mean it.

The game in general, and this includes professional football, undoubtedly benefits from investing in the

grassroots because it is the source of future fans, referees, administrators, 'football mothers', officials and sponsors – not to mention players. It is therefore incumbent on UEFA, the associations and the clubs to encourage mass participation and to keep people in the game for as long as possible. It may be fun football for many, but it is a serious business which can enrich the lives of people, contribute to a better society, and increase the game's popularity.

The businessman in Helsinki asked a simple question: "What exactly is grassroots football?" It is a question which those involved in the development of the game need to answer with clarity and passion. We need to have a common understanding about its purpose, categories, values, and importance. Marcello Lippi, Italy's World Cup winning coach, when asked about grassroots football, said: "Children's lives are far more complicated than ours were. Of course, they play a lot less football than we did." Our task in football development is to change that, and we can start by asking the question: What exactly is grassroots football?







**ROBERTO SAMADEN,  
FC INTERNAZIONALE MILAN'S  
GRASSROOTS MANAGER.**

# WHEN THE PEAK SUPPORTS THE BASE

**DURING THE EXTRAORDINARY CONGRESS IN ZURICH AT THE END OF MAY, UEFA'S PRESIDENT, MICHEL PLATINI, TRACED HIS OWN DEVELOPMENT THROUGH AMATEUR FOOTBALL TO TOP CLUBS AND THE NATIONAL TEAM. HE CALLED IT A "VIRTUOUS PYRAMID IN WHICH AMATEUR CLUBS WHICH DEVELOP PLAYERS PERFORM AN ESSENTIAL ROLE AT THE GRASSROOTS FOR THE WELL-BEING OF THE REST OF THE STRUCTURE", AND SAID THAT "IT IS HIGH TIME THE ENTIRE FOOTBALL FAMILY UNITED TO DEFEND A EUROPEAN SPORTS MODEL BASED ON SOLIDARITY BETWEEN THE FOUNDATIONS AND THE SUMMIT"**

There are heartening signs that people at the sharp end of the pyramid are, indeed, realising the importance of supporting the base. The public perception of elite professional clubs may be that they pull out the wallet to cream off the best young talents developed by clubs from the lower strata of the pyramid. Yet the fact is that more and more elite clubs are now taking a direct interest in grassroots football. The event in Helsinki highlighted the initiative currently being taken by two clubs which started the 2006/07 season in

the UEFA Champions League but are at the same time investing in the grassroots end of the game: Werder Bremen of Germany and the Italian champions, FC Internazionale Milano.

Their approaches are different but the philosophy is essentially the same. As Werder Bremen's Klaus-Dieter Fischer explained, "Almost half of our fans are playing or have played grassroots football and over half of them belong to one of the 26,000 clubs which are currently operating in Germany. It's a fact that, in 2005, only 12 of the German players in the Bundesliga had begun their careers with a professional club.

"The rest had started at one of those 26,000 amateur clubs. It means that professional football is unimaginable without thriving grassroots structures and we realise that, if professional football strays too far away from the grassroots, the number of spectators and the interest in professional football will both start to sink. So, by helping grassroots football, we are indirectly helping ourselves to establish and maintain our fan base."

But let's pause for a moment to focus on the man who took the stage in Helsinki. Because his role is fundamen-

tal to the structure built up by the German club four years ago, when 'Werder Bremen' formally split into two entities: a non-profit organisation called SV Werder Bremen von 1899 e.V. and a business company called Werder Bremen GmbH & Co KG aA. The non-profit organisation is the 100% owner of the shares in the business company, with Klaus-Dieter Fischer as president. He is also managing director of the business company's Young Talent Institution and can therefore act as a vital link between the professional and non-professional sectors of the club.

Normally, the Grassroots Newsletter would not delve into such administrative detail. But, in this area, it illustrates the importance of building the marriage between pro and grassroots football on solid legal and fiscal foundations.

In sporting terms, the structure translates into the senior team, an U23 team and 11 youth teams (U11 to U19) under the umbrella of the business company, with four senior teams and 23 junior teams (U7 to U19) affiliated to the non-profit organisation. But the club maintains that the SV in the non-profit organisation's name



FC Internazionale: active not only in the UEFA Champions League but also in grassroots football.

**KLAUS-DIETER FISCHER PLAYS A KEY  
LIAISON ROLE BETWEEN THE PROFESSIONAL AND  
AMATEUR SECTORS AT WERDER BREMEN.**



**Tickets  
for Werder  
Bremen's  
Bundesliga  
matches are  
regularly made  
available to  
grassroots  
football.**

Range/AP/Getty Images

doesn't only stand for Sport-Verein (sports club) but also for Soziale Verantwortung (social responsibility). Hence the focus on the principles of fair play and campaigns against racism and violence which are interwoven with the club's grassroots activities. It is also worth mentioning that Werder Bremen's credo also embraces a clear code of ethics related to the scouting and recruitment of young talent.

The vehicle for the club's commitment to social causes is solid partnerships with about a hundred schools and a hundred clubs within a 150km radius of from Bremen. No fewer than 1,200 tickets are made available for each first-team match at the Weser Stadion and these are often used as incentives – for example, participants in 'schools without racism' projects are prioritised when tickets are distributed. School projects are not limited to sport but also embrace sectors like economy and art, while the breadth of the grassroots base has encouraged food and healthy-living companies to sponsor sports activities.

In footballing terms, the club's commitment has included the construction of a street-soccer pitch near the stadium, and close relationships based on visits

by players and coaches to clubs and schools and 'return fixtures' with club and school coaches attending training sessions of Werder Bremen's youth and senior teams. The club also supports a junior tournament in the city and various fundraising charity events, in addition to eight one-day further-education courses for teachers, coaches and managers per year.

As Roberto Samaden explained in Hel- sinki, the approach of FC Internazionale Milano is somewhat different. Roberto is the club's grassroots manager and has coached Inter's U13 side since 1990. He is also manager of their 'Inter Campus Italia' project.

Like Werder Bremen's grassroots involvement, Inter's project was initially focused on the city and its surroundings. Four training centres were set up in Milan, with 20 specialist coaches leading teenagers through two weekly training sessions and competitive fun tournaments, such as 'mini-champions' based on 3v3, 4v4 and 5v5 games. As at Bremen, tickets are made available for home games at San Siro.

At the same time, 250 amateur clubs organise events on the 'Inter Soccer School' model, including fun days for

the 6-8 age group and, importantly, monthly update meetings for the trainers who run them. Developing and re-educating youth coaches has also been one of the lynch pins of the 'Inter Campus Italia' project which was launched in 1996 in cooperation with 22 affiliated clubs. Today, there are 61 in all regions of Italy and 3,584 players now take part in an annual seven-a-side competition, with qualifying rounds played all over Italy and the finals in Milan.

It is worth pointing out that the 'Inter Campus' concept has been introduced in 16 foreign countries with the aim of using football as an instrument to help needy children in the 8-12 age group. But that's another story...

Back home in Italy, Inter – apart from offering online courses – invite 40 trainers from amateur clubs to take part in 90-hour re-education courses featuring top coaches from Europe's top clubs. In the last two years, about 100 coaches from affiliated clubs have been taken to visit AFC Ajax and FC Barcelona. Over the last ten years, the track record of Inter Campus Italia makes impressive reading: over 200,000 children have visited the stadium, 10,000 have attended summer camps, over 5,000 coaches have attended re-education courses, Inter's youth coaches have made over 5,500 visits to affiliated clubs, and Inter's youth teams have played over 500 friendlies against teams from affiliated clubs. As a direct result, over 40% of the youth players currently on Inter's books have emanated from the affiliated clubs.

The message delivered loud and clear from Bremen and Milan is that the top professional clubs can, these days, find sound sporting and social reasons for injecting resources into grassroots football – not only in terms of developing players but also in terms of nurturing new generations of supporters who, literally and figuratively, will keep the ball rolling.





**PER RAVN OMDAL, A MEMBER  
OF THE UEFA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND A FERVENT  
SUPPORTER OF GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL.**

# THE GRASSROOTS CHALLENGE

**IN 2004, UEFA'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE APPROVED THE GRASSROOTS CHARTER CONCEPT, ITS DETAILS AND ITS GUIDELINES. IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH THIS PARTICULAR UEFA ENDORSEMENT SCHEME, SIX PILOT ASSOCIATIONS (DENMARK, ENGLAND, GERMANY, NETHERLANDS, NORWAY AND SCOTLAND) WERE INVITED TO SATISFY THE BASIC CRITERIA, AND THIS WAS COMPLETED EARLY IN FEBRUARY 2006.**

During the same year, regional courses were held for all member associations to increase everyone's understanding of the Grassroots Charter criteria, to improve awareness of the application process, to share best practice in relation to the charter, and to help each association develop an action plan for application submission. In addition, the aims of the charter were explained, and these are to set standards, raise

the quality, share ideas, increase the numbers participating, and receive recognition from UEFA for achievements in the area of grassroots football.

By the end of May 2007, the associations had surpassed our expectations, with 21 approved memberships and ten others actively involved in the evaluation process. The six pilot countries were joined by new members Belgium,

Croatia, Finland, FYR Macedonia, France, Greece, Malta, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and Wales. In satisfying the charter's basic criteria, these associations proved that they had the necessary grassroots structure, complied with UEFA's philosophy, and provided a number of services/training programmes for grassroots players and coaches. All 21 associations were



**The main aim  
of the UEFA  
Grassroots Charter  
is to encourage  
greater  
participation  
in football.**

**THE UEFA GRASSROOTS CHARTER  
SUPPORTS THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS WITH THEIR  
GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL ACTIVITIES.**



Sportsfile



**A practical session  
during the UEFA Grassroots  
Conference in Helsinki.**

UEFA

accorded a one-star status within the UEFA scheme.

But this was only the first step. In order to provide special recognition and to encourage grassroots action in certain areas, the UEFA Executive Committee sanctioned the introduction of a star system. Associations can gain additional stars if they satisfy UEFA's criteria regarding the number of social/disability activities on offer, achieve a certain level of registered players, have a minimum number of girls and women participating, and stage promotional activities which result in a defined level of growth in participation. The pilot associations (Denmark, England, Germany, Netherlands, Norway and Scotland) were evaluated for these additional stars. Five out of six were approved at the five-star level, while Denmark was recognised as a four-star member (in Denmark, disability

football is controlled by a government agency and therefore the social/disability award was not available to the association at this stage). Other associations who have been approved at a basic level are now applying for additional stars and the evaluation process is moving forward at a hectic pace.

In the near future, we will also introduce a sixth star (the applicants will need the previous five stars, plus special investment, advanced training programmes, an excellent infrastructure, and additional educational/promotional activities to qualify). A seventh star will follow for those who set the benchmark in grassroots development (the previous six stars will be necessary, plus an advanced, comprehensive grassroots programme in terms of quality and quantity). A re-evaluation system will be put in place soon to make sure that standards are maintained,

and if possible improved. This will operate on a three-year cycle for each association in membership.

As honorary president of the Norwegian FA, a member of UEFA's Executive Committee, and a guru of grassroots football, Per Ravn Omdal fully supports the programme. He says: "The UEFA Grassroots Charter is an excellent tool for encouraging the national associations to expand their grassroots activities."

When it comes to watering the grassroots, those with the watering cans in their hands (i.e. the associations' officials and grassroots managers) need all the help they can get, and UEFA is committed to providing support for their demanding work and recognition for their achievements in this vital area of football development.

**ANDY ROXBURGH**





**ASSOCIATIONS REPRESENTATIVES  
AT THE CONFERENCE IN HELSINKI.**

# THE HELSINKI EXPERIENCE

**IT WAS ENCOURAGING TO HEAR SO MANY VOICES CLAIMING THAT THE SEVENTH UEFA GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL CONFERENCE WAS THE BEST OF THEM ALL. THE AIM, OF COURSE, IS TO BUILD ON THE PAST AND TO MAKE EACH AND EVERY UEFA EVENT 'THE BEST EVER', SO IT WAS SATISFYING THAT A BASIC OBJECTIVE HAD BEEN ACHIEVED. YET THE TRULY IMPORTANT THING IS TO ANALYSE WHY THE EVENT WAS SUCCESSFUL AND WHAT CAN BE ADDED TO THE INGREDIENTS TO ENSURE THAT THE NEXT ONE IS ALSO A 'BEST EVER'.**

The conference in Helsinki was certainly a special occasion. It formed part of the Football Association of Finland's centenary celebrations and, apart from enjoying their impeccable hospitality, it was heartening that the hosts raised the curtain on their second century by focusing on the grassroots. One of the factors which also contributed to the success of the conference was the sheer diversity of a programme which covered practical sessions, discussion forums and presentations on themes ranging from disability football to grassroots football for girls, skill development and the potential contributions to be

made by sponsors, vividly illustrated by Eric Vlieg of UEFA's long-standing partner, adidas. England's Jeff Davis – focusing on disability football – and Germany's Willi Hink also underlined the fact that, apart from allowing as many people as possible to play football for fun, the grassroots game also has an important role to play within society as a whole. The range of topics during the event left a rich legacy in terms of ideas, debating points, methodology and, equally importantly, the interchange of experience and information during informal talks. After all, the success of the

conference must ultimately be measured by the energy it generated and the ideas that the participants took home from Helsinki as long-lasting souvenirs.

On the opening day, the hosts were first out of the blocks, led by Timo Huttunen and Jarmo Matikainen, grassroots director and technical director of the Finnish FA. They led the conference into one of the core issues: teamwork between clubs and national associations in grassroots development programmes. On previous pages, there is a brief review of how elite professional clubs – FC Internazionale Milano and Werder Bremen – are investing in grassroots projects. But, in Finland and in many other member countries, parameters are very different from the prevailing conditions in Germany and Italy.

With 112,572 registered players – one fifth of them female – Finland is not on a par with the European giants. But the way they have structured their grassroots programme could undoubtedly be an inspiration for associations of similar proportions.

Grassroots development is one of the two main target areas for an action plan covering the 2007-09 period with the declared aims of achieving a one-third increase in the number of registered players (and increasing the female com-



The conference included practical sessions like this one, run by Charlie Cook (ex Chelsea FC).



**JARMO MATIKAINEN, TECHNICAL  
DIRECTOR OF THE FINNISH FA.**



**A ball – the focus  
of attention.**



ponent to 30%), to involve another 10,000 volunteers to bring the total to 100,000, and to increase the number of full-size artificial turf pitches (with heating systems) from 30 to 100.

The foundations on which the Finns are building date back to 1999, when their 'All Stars' programme for children and young people was launched – followed by the 'Football for Everyone' campaign aimed at adult grassroots players. The national association has structured the programme in 12 districts within which the FA has appointed a management team and within which collaboration between those teams and local clubs is absolutely fundamental.

Hence the creation of the "All Stars Quality Club" concept, the aim being to strengthen development by awarding clubs "All Stars Quality" status if the criteria established by the national association have been fulfilled. By April, 43 clubs had acquired their quality endorsement, with another 30 in the application pipeline. The scheme entails regular monitoring, two plenary meetings per year, and the implementation of new activities and ideas. This evidently requires a commitment by

the national association in terms of resources and finance. It also dovetails with one of the most frequently expressed concerns to emerge from the discussion sessions in Helsinki: With more and more associations making highly positive reports about spiralling numbers of new grassroots players, how best to cope with the numbers? How best to guarantee maximum playing opportunities? And how best to provide sufficient quantity and quality in terms of coaches and leaders?

Participants at the conference recognised that many national associations require assistance in designing and servicing quality grassroots programmes. Many could also do with some advice on how to gain sponsors, how to establish partnerships with communities and with governmental authorities, how to devise programmes that will be attractive to whole families, how to upgrade playing installations to keep pace with demand, and how to marry grassroots programmes with social integration schemes. Significantly, one of the answers to questions about what more can be done by UEFA to stimulate and support grassroots programmes was a call for assistance

in establishing specific training for grassroots managers.

The participants in Helsinki agreed that one of the fundamental moves is to appoint managers dedicated exclusively to the grassroots sector – which is exactly what the Finns have done. As Timo Huttunen reported, the criteria for obtaining "All Stars Quality" status include a UEFA B Licence for the person responsible and a player/coach ratio which does not exceed 10:1. Grassroots programmes are interlocked with talent detection via a scheme which, as a mark of respect for the national team's colours, has been called the "Blue & White Way". In point of fact, the scheme sets out to upgrade levels of coaching as well as playing with the declared objective of "helping, educating and supporting players and coaches to reach their personal goals".

In more concrete terms, a practical session at the Finnair Stadium illustrated how Marko Viitainen, the Finnish FA's youth football manager, and Taneli Haara, district youth manager, set about the task of upgrading skills at the FA's School of Technique within a plan that also includes a project to nurture the most promising players in the 16-19 age bracket in 26 talent academies. At the same time, promising young coaches are given opportunities to become involved in Finland's national youth teams, alongside the more experienced campaigners.

This transition from grassroots to elite youth and professional levels was the central theme of an interview session involving the current head coach of Finland's senior team, Roy Hodgson, and UEFA's grassroots ambassador, Hansi Müller. Their exchange of views prompted participants to suggest that UEFA should increase the number of grassroots ambassadors so that it becomes easier for national associations to count on their services and to have a 'big name' to transmit, on home territory, some of the key features from the Helsinki experience.



Sportsfile

**GRIGORIY SURKIS HAS ALL THE QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED TO TAKE CARE OF GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL.**

# SPREADING UKRAINIAN GRASSROOTS

**THE PARTICIPANTS IN HELSINKI MAY REMEMBER THE MOMENT WHEN GRIGORIY SURKIS WALKED ON TO THE STAGE WITH HIS CURRICULUM VITAE PROJECTED ON TO THE GIANT SCREEN BEHIND HIM. IT READ LIKE THIS:**

- UEFA Executive Committee member
- President of the Football Federation of Ukraine
- Member of UEFA's Executive Committee Football Development Working Group
- Member of the Ukrainian parliament (as from 1998)
- Former club president of FC Dynamo Kyiv
- Ukraine's ambassador to the Council of Europe for Sport
- Graduate of the food industry's technological institute in Kiev
- Member of FIFA's Associations Committee

At that moment, the audience might have been forgiven for asking themselves how on earth Grigoriy Surkis finds time to care about grassroots football. But a more considered evaluation of his CV reveals that he has

exactly the right blend of qualifications and roles to draw all the grassroots strings together. And that is exactly what he and the Ukrainian Football Federation (FFU) have been doing in recent years.

Regular readers of the Grassroots Newsletter may recall that the Ukrainians have played a leading role in terms of organising events within the framework and the spirit of UEFA's 'Summers of Grassroots Football'. But there's more to the Ukrainians' development programmes than that. Much more. And the most striking aspect is the efforts currently being invested in establishing grassroots football in Ukrainian schools.

For the sake of comparison with other national associations (such as the Finnish FA mentioned on previous pages), it is worth pointing out that the FFU has three-quarters of a million registered players in all categories – the vast majority of them aged 18 or less. But the four-year comprehensive football development programme approved by the government in 2004 set about broadening the base of the footballing pyramid, adopting the simple philosophy of offering equal access to everybody – men and women – and embarking on serious training and licensing projects for coaches and leaders.

Given the country's geography, the organisational chart is, of necessity, a complex one, with the FFU's grassroots committee and committee for football development in the regions at the hub of the wheel to coordinate



FFU

A match during the Summer of Grassroots Football Programme in Ukraine.



## A GRASSROOTS MATCH IN UKRAINE.



Grassroots football also includes disability football.

the work done by 27 regional associations and 643 local or district associations. The Ukrainian system is competition-based, with 6,529 amateur teams taking part in regional competitions. The pyramid has been rationally constructed, with youth leagues sitting on top of the broad grassroots base, followed by elite youth development conducted at five regional centres. In Helsinki, Grigoriy Surkis was – rightly – proud to show images of the specialised youth training complex which bears the name of Viktor Bannikov and of the Gorenynchi training village in the Kiev region. The image on the screen behind him showed 14 full-size pitches...

The provision of training and playing facilities has been the cornerstone of another FFU special project: the Our Future programme. In 2004, UEFA's jubilee gift of one million Swiss francs for mini-pitch construction was combined with FFU funds to build 400 mini-pitches measuring 24 x 15 m. In 2005, the FFU funded the construction of a further 181, and, last year, funds

from footballing and governmental sources were invested in the construction of 213 larger pitches measuring 42 x 22 m.

At the same time, gargantuan efforts have been made to promote the values of grassroots football at school level. Class time devoted to football has now been implanted in 18,500 schools – 92 per cent of the total number of schools in the country. To make this possible without draining the schools' budgetary resources, one million footballs were distributed free of charge to schools between 2002 and 2006. And, of course, you can't 'teach football' to children without teaching the teachers. Training courses, clinics and re-education seminars have been attended by 26,000 physical education teachers (out of the country's total 'workforce' of 32,000).

This has been backed up by 50,000 Football at School manuals, distributed to teachers and pupils in addition to six million copybooks for students between grades 1 and 11. Computer

training programmes have also been distributed to teachers, coaches and leaders, while school football has also been promoted via articles and regular columns in the mass media, plus specialised 'spots' on national radio programmes. There is also a competitive element, with schools, their pupils and their teachers invited to enter the annual Football Class of the Year contest. And it is a staggering fact that 650,000 children have taken part in the annual Leather Ball club competitions for boys and girls in the 11-13 age group while, last summer, the annual Let's Give Joy to Children football festival for schoolchildren from small towns and villages was contested by 400,000 participants from 30,000 rural school teams.

The figures add up to compelling evidence of how the combined efforts of national associations and governmental bodies (with somebody like Grigoriy Surkis to bring the parties together) can lay solid foundations for the footballers and the football supporters of the future.



**UEFA'S TECHNICAL DIRECTOR,  
ANDY ROXBURGH, SPEAKING AT THE  
HELSINKI CONFERENCE.**

# UEFA's GRASSROOTS COMPASS

**A PHILOSOPHY IS LIKE A COMPASS – IT POINTS US IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.**

**FABIO CAPELLO, THE COACHING MAESTRO OF REAL MADRID, CERTAINLY KNOWS THE WAY WHEN IT COMES TO CHILDREN'S FOOTBALL. "CHILDREN SHOULD FOCUS ON FUN AND IMPROVING THEIR TECHNIQUE," HE SAYS WITH CONVICTION. LIKEWISE, UEFA HAS A CLEAR VISION ABOUT GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL. OUR BELIEFS, PRINCIPLES AND VALUES UNDERPIN ALL THAT WE DO IN THIS IMPORTANT AREA OF ACTIVITY.**

Grassroots football for us is about enjoyment. This translates into enthusiasm, serious fun (i.e. training and learning), satisfaction, appreciation, harmonious relationships, positive self-esteem. The joy, however, should not come from short-term gratification (i.e. extrinsic rewards in the form of

cups and medals), but rather through a long-term love of the game, a sense of belonging and a knowledge that you are improving. Simplicity and liveliness add to the enjoyment because these are the qualities which give the game its mass appeal. We must encourage dynamic movement and

provide appropriate conditions for learning the basics. It has been said that today's child is a creature that stands halfway between an adult and a TV set. We would prefer that they ran (with a ball) between two goalposts!

All UEFA's grassroots programmes advocate a game which is open to everyone and is available everywhere. We oppose all forms of racism and discrimination, and see our football clubs as places which provide opportunities for social integration, personality development and health management. For us, the game can flourish on rooftops, beaches, streets, halls as well as on grass pitches. Variety of playing forms and venues are all part of the kaleidoscope that is grassroots football.

Fair play is a core value in the grassroots game. Negative behaviour, such as cheating, violence, intimidation or verbal abuse, spoils the game for everyone. We need to encourage respect for opponents, team-mates, referees, coaches, the Laws and the game itself. Even in children's football



A competitive spirit, but without forgetting respect for fair play.



**GRASSROOTS  
FOOTBALL CAN BE PLAYED  
ANYWHERE.**



D. Aquilina

**Football does  
not discriminate, but  
gives everyone the same  
opportunities.**



UEFA

there can be negative influences in the form of obsessive coaches, aggressive parents and overpowering referees, and this is unacceptable. The game belongs to the participants – to the pitch people.

When we say that players come first in grassroots football, it means that they need playing time, encouragement and support in their personal development. Above all, the players must be safe, and great care must be taken with goal frames (especially of the portable type), equipment, and training methods. And, when youngsters are involved, child protection becomes important.

Of course, we mustn't lose sight of the game and its sporting values. Teamwork, skill development, game appreciation, self-expression, decision-making, concentration and a willingness to compete are fundamental for the grassroots player. It is also important to become self-reliant, to acquire good habits, and to have a positive attitude. We should remind ourselves that those who cannot express themselves through play (this is not limited to football) are often the ones with emotional difficulties in life itself.

At UEFA's 7th Grassroots Conference in Helsinki, I put three questions to the delegates in relation to football

philosophy: What do we believe in? What do we value? And what do we see ahead? I proceeded to offer a personal response as follows: "I believe in the power of football to make a difference in people's lives. I value the game for its simplicity, its passion, and its creativity. And I see football's popularity increasing and its social impact expanding."

Together UEFA and its member associations are developing a common grassroots football philosophy – it will be the compass that points us in the right direction.

**ANDY ROXBURGH**



**GRASSROOTS ACTIVITIES BEFORE THE  
UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL BETWEEN AC MILAN  
AND LIVERPOOL FC IN ATHENS.**

# THE YOUNG CHAMPIONS

**AMONG THE PROPOSALS MADE DURING THE CONFERENCE IN HELSINKI WAS  
THAT OF PEGGING MORE GRASSROOTS EVENTS TO MAJOR FIXTURES IN THE PROFESSIONAL GAME.  
THIS IS SOMETHING THAT UEFA HAS WHOLEHEARTEDLY SUPPORTED IN RECENT  
YEARS – AS THOSE WHO WERE IN ATHENS AND GLASGOW FOR THE UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE  
AND UEFA CUP FINALS WILL TESTIFY.**

In fact the City of Glasgow has been one of the innovative forces in combining the grassroots with the pinnacle of the pro game. When the UEFA Champions League went to Scotland for the 2002 final, the Glasgow Schools' Football Association (GSFA) had the great idea of mirroring the UEFA Champions League in a tournament for 13-year-old boys. "Glasgow's Champions" was the umbrella name given to a number of competitions played during the run-up to the big match at Hampden. All areas of the community were involved: girls, boys, youths, adults and disabled persons.

The "Thirteens" competition mirrored UEFA's format, with 27 schools starting group stages played throughout the autumn, winter and spring, followed by quarter-finals, semi-finals and a grand finale at Ibrox stadium, courtesy of Rangers FC, during the week leading up to the UEFA Champions League final.

The event in Glasgow also sparked off the Starball Match. It was the perfect way of expressing the city's passion for football. No fewer than 700 players took part in a 24-hour five-a-side match contested by two teams on a pitch set up in George Square using UEFA

Champions League advertising boards to give it the look and feel of 'the real thing'. They were the only 'barriers' to be seen, as the event was open to all age groups. The only concession to 'generation gaps' was that the youngest competitors put their boots on during daylight hours while the more senior players were in the limelight during the hours of darkness. Hampden Roar 210 – Clydeside United 212 was the result on the scoreboard when the curtain came down and when FC Bayern München appeared in George Square on their way to the cup handover ceremony at the City Hall. It had been so successful that the idea has been perpetuated at UEFA Champions League finals ever since. In Athens, it was played in Syntagma Square with three-a-side teams competing for the trophy.



**The Kallimarmaro Olympic stadium hosted the young champions before the UEFA Champions League final.**

In the meantime, the success of the event had prompted adidas to team up with UEFA in the creation of a UEFA Young Champions tournament aimed specifically at grassroots players between the ages of 9 and 14. The ancient Kallimarmaro Olympic stadium provided a magnificent setting for the event and it speaks volumes for adidas' commitment to the grassroots cause that, even though none of their branding was permitted in the ancient



**THE UEFA PRESIDENT,  
MICHEL PLATINI, PAID A VISIT TO THE  
GRASSROOTS FESTIVAL IN GLASGOW.**



monument, they enthusiastically put their shoulders to the wheel alongside UEFA and the local organisers in Athens. Girls and boys from 34 teams took part and the behaviour of parents, coaches and spectators contributed to a thoroughly enjoyable celebration of grassroots football.

The same could be said about the events in Glasgow a week earlier. On the eve of the all-Spanish UEFA Cup final at Hampden, UEFA's president, Michel Platini, kicked off the finals of the UEFA Grassroots Festival at the

Glasgow Green Football Centre. A series of qualifying tournaments staged over a period of five months had reduced a starting field of 13,000 to a few hundred. But they represented all sections of the community, given that, as Graham Diamond – the Scottish national association's link with Glasgow City Council – explained, "We have involved all sectors of the community in this grassroots tournament: boys, girls, veterans, people with disability and ethnic minorities. Sadly, they don't have opportunities to play football in the streets, like my generation had,

so things now have to be organised and structured."

But grassroots events are not being pegged exclusively to UEFA's big club finals. Johannes Axster, co-founder of Streetfootballworld, and Simon Groscurth were at the conference in Helsinki to present the EURO Schools 2008 project which, as the name strongly hints, is being linked to next year's EURO 2008. But that's another ongoing grassroots story which we'll track in future issues of this newsletter...



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