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No 66 – October 2007



Photos: UEFA-pjwoods.ch

Message of the president

A carefully thought out proposal

The current elite of European football is not the same as it was in the early years of the Champion Clubs' Cup, nor does it necessarily have to remain unchanged. The European model of sport, with its system of promotion and relegation, aims specifically to prevent the elite from becoming a clique and denying new contenders the possibility of access. Nothing is set in stone: worth has to be constantly proven on the pitch.

This is one of the concerns which underlie the proposal that I put forward in Monaco to the Professional Football Strategy Council with regard to the future of the UEFA club competitions from 2009 onwards. The other key elements forming the basis of my proposal are those I argued for in my presidential campaign – namely, to allow the largest possible number of national associations to be represented in European football's flagship club competition and to increase the number of domestic champions among the participants. This is because, as its name indicates, the competition is primarily intended for teams which have won titles, and with this in mind I also wish to give domestic cup winners the possibility of taking part. This has the added merit of giving a fresh boost to national cup competitions, which, in many countries, have a long tradition and enjoy enormous popularity.

My proposal does not call into question the whole format of the UEFA Champions League which, it is generally agreed, is an undeniable success. Nor does it seek to take anything away from the big associations, the strongest of which retain the possibility of having four teams involved and the (new) assurance of having at least three. What it does aim to do is improve certain aspects – for example, to avoid a situation where the runners-up in a domestic championship may be competing in the Champions League even though the winners of the same championship are not involved. My proposal is also concerned with strengthening the UEFA Cup with a more clearly defined group phase and a bigger number of clubs moving from one competition to the other. Overall, the national associations will not lose any representatives, and some will even have more. The quality of the competitions will not suffer either, and all the constraints of the match calendar have been taken into account.

Therefore, having closely examined all the elements in this proposal, I am convinced that it is in the general interests of European football and, unless someone presents a more beneficial plan based on the same philosophy, this is the proposal which I will make a strong case for at the Executive Committee meeting in November.



Michel Platini
UEFA President

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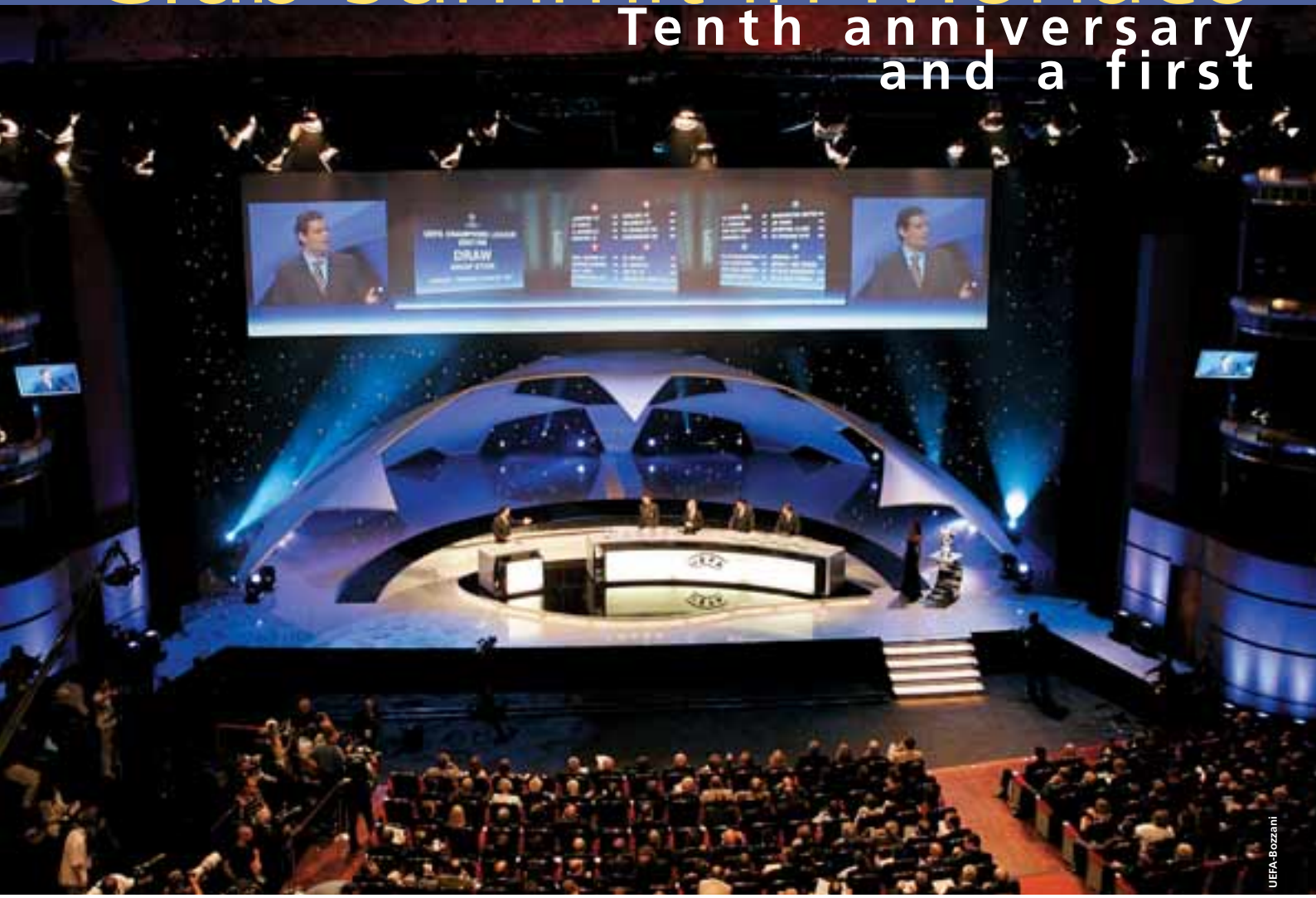
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Massimo Ambrosini holds aloft the Super Cup trophy that AC Milan won at the expense of Sevilla FC.
Photo: UEFA-Bozzani

Club summit in Monaco

Tenth anniversary and a first



UEFA-Bozzani

AT THE END OF AUGUST, AND FOR THE TENTH YEAR IN A ROW, EUROPEAN FOOTBALL EMBARKED ON ITS NEW SEASON IN THE PRINCIPALITY OF MONACO.

The tenth anniversary of UEFA's summer reunion in Monaco turned out to be a poignant occasion following the death of FC Sevilla defender Antonio Puerta, sadly cut down on the brink of a promising international career. The bereavement had consequences for the draw for the group stage of the UEFA Champions League, as the third qualifying round return match between AEK Athens and FC Sevilla had been postponed for a few days. Measures had to be introduced to ensure that the main draw criteria were respected (clubs from the same country drawn in different groups, selection of group seeds) despite the uncertain identity of the 32nd qualifier.

The packed programme in Monaco included the draws for the Champions League and UEFA Cup, the Super Cup, a gala evening, a meeting of the Club Competitions Committee, the UEFA president's lunch with the media and also several meetings with the clubs, sponsors and broadcasters in preparation for the season.

First meeting of the Strategy Council

A significant new feature of the programme in Monaco this year was the first meeting of the Professional Football Strategy Council. Proposed by UEFA president Michel Platini as a continuation of the European Professional Football Strategy Forum that met earlier in the year, the extraordinary Congress in Zurich in May had anchored the Professional Football Strategy Council within UEFA's Statutes. The Strategy Council brings together representatives of the national associations, leagues, clubs and players (see separate column on p. 4).

Speaking of the meeting, held on Thursday 30 August, Michel Platini told the assembled media at a lunch: *"It was a historic meeting. The bases for collaboration between the stakeholders had to be established. The objective is to introduce a charter for European football and a collective agreement."* One of the keenly awaited points of the meeting was the UEFA president's presentation of his vision for the European club competitions for 2009-12.

Members of the Strategy Council

The Professional Football Strategy Council (PFSC) comprises the following members:

- four UEFA vice-presidents, representing the interests of UEFA and its member associations: Senes Erzik (Turkey), chairman of the Strategy Council, Geoffrey Thompson (England), Angel Maria Villar Llona (Spain), Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder (Germany);
- four European league representatives: José Luis Astiazaran (Spain), Lex Gold (Scotland), Sir David Richards (England), Frédéric Thiriez (France);
- four club representatives: Maarten Fontein (Netherlands), Umberto Gandini (Italy), Peter Kenyon (England), Joan Laporta (Spain);
- four professional players' representatives: Gerardo Gonzalez Movilla (Spain), Leonardo Grosso (Italy), Philippe Piat (France), Theo van Seggelen (Netherlands).



The meeting of 30 August in Monaco.

UEFA-Bozzani

The representatives of the leagues, clubs and players are elected for two years by the groups recognised by UEFA as representing their interests, namely the European Professional Football Leagues (EPFL), the European Club Forum (ECF) and the International Federation of Professional Footballers' Associations, European Division (FIFPro).



The death of Sevilla defender Antonio Puerta cast a shadow over the gathering in Monaco. Tributes were also paid to him at the draw for the Champions League.

Changes to the access List

"It is not a matter of changing the format of the Champions League," emphasised the president in his introduction, paying homage to the creators of a competition that has had global success. The participation of 32 teams in the group stage is not in question, nor is the formula by which the group stage is followed by knockout rounds for the last 16 teams. The president's proposal concerns the competition's access list; his preference has always been to favour champions and competition winners while increasing the number of associations represented. The UEFA president's plan is to allocate the 32 places available as follows:

- one place reserved for the holders;
- three places guaranteed for clubs from the top three associations in the UEFA rankings, that is to say nine places;
- two places guaranteed for clubs from the associations ranked 4-6, in other words six places;
- one place guaranteed for clubs from the associations ranked 7-12, i.e. six clubs.

This would allocate 22 places to clubs representing 12 associations, or 13 if the holder qualifies through its national championship, thus giving a place to the champions of the association ranked 13th. For the remaining ten places, the plan is to form two different qualifying groups: the first would comprise the champions of the associations ranked from 13 to 52 (Liechtenstein does not organise a national championship and does not participate in the competition). Three knockout rounds would provide six teams for the Champions League group stage, bringing the number of associations represented to 18 (or 19) (there were 15 in the 2007/08 competition). The second qualifying group would bring together the winners of the national cup competitions of the top 16 associations in the UEFA rankings. Two qualifying rounds would supply the final four participants in the Champions League. If a winner of a national cup competition has already qualified through its finishing position in the national championship, the place would not go to the defeated finalist but would instead be allocated to the next-best team in the national championship.

The proposed formula not only increases the number of associations represented but also the number of champions. For example, the system would have led to 18 champions taking part in this year's group stage compared with the 13 champion clubs under the present method. Furthermore, opening the Champions League to cup winners would revitalise national cup competitions and


UEFA-Bozzani


UEFA-Bozzani

The meeting of the Club Competitions Committee.

increase the number of participating teams that had won a title in the previous season.

The UEFA Champions League would remain linked to the UEFA Cup by the passage of a certain number of teams from the Champions League to the UEFA Cup – more than at present in fact (in particular the 12 winners of cup competitions not qualifying for the Champions League). The UEFA Cup would have a more "comprehensible" group stage than at present, with 12 groups of four teams each. The first two teams in each group, plus the eight teams finishing third in the Champions League groups, would progress to the knock-out stages in the round of 32.

Only the holders from the previous year, if they did not qualify for the Champions League, would enter the group stage directly. All other clubs would have to come through one or both qualifying rounds and/or the first round except for the clubs from the Champions League. The UEFA Intertoto Cup would cease to exist and the season would start slightly later than at present (first game in July instead of the end of June).

The president acknowledges that his proposal has led to a lively discussion within the Strategy Council. Those involved have requested additional time to reflect on the proposals and a final decision will not be taken at the Executive Committee meeting in Istanbul at the end of September, but has been put back to November instead.

First committee meeting of a new era

First presented to the Executive Committee at its meeting in Heerenveen in June, the president's proposals also featured on the agenda of the Club Competitions Committee which held a three-and-a-half hour meeting on 31 August after the UEFA Cup draw.

"This is the first committee meeting of a new era," emphasised Michel Platini at the start of the meeting, referring to the amendment of the Statutes that now means committees report directly to the Executive Committee. Giangiorgio Spiess came to Monaco to indicate that he is stepping down from this committee, on which he was the Executive Committee's representative for many years. The committee chairman is unchanged – Friedrich Stickler of Austria still presides, now assisted by another Executive Committee member, Mathieu Sprengers (Netherlands).

Before considering the president's plan for the competitions, the committee noted that the UEFA Champions League continued to ride on a wave of success, as shown by attendance figures, while the trend for the UEFA Cup was also positive.

The meeting decided to retain a single draw for the quarter- and semi-finals of the Champions League and UEFA Cup in order to allow semi-finalists sufficient time to prepare their travel arrangements. The meeting also discussed the procedure for selecting stadiums for final matches, ticketing for finals, the distribution of surplus income from the Champions League and the kick-off time of the 2008 Champions League final in Moscow (22.45 local time).


Dennis/AFP/Getty Images

If the winner of a national cup competition has already qualified then the league table will determine the next club to qualify for the Champions League. This system would have come into play in England last season, where both FA Cup winners Chelsea and losing finalists Manchester United had already qualified for the Champions League.

Income from the club competition finals

The Club Competitions Committee was informed in Monaco of the income received from final matches. The Champions League final in Athens generated EUR 2,001,865 for each of the finalists from ticket sales, in addition to the fixed prize money (EUR 7 million for Milan and 4 million for Liverpool).

In the UEFA Cup, FC Sevilla and RCD Espanyol received EUR 957,448 each from ticket sales from the final in Glasgow in addition to their prize money of 2.5 million and 1.5 million respectively.



Prince Albert of Monaco presents the award for the UEFA Club Footballer of the Year to Kaka, watched by UEFA president Michel Platini.

Hatem Baalouch/AFP/Getty Images



The winners of the awards lent a hand with the draw: Clarence Seedorf alongside UEFA general secretary David Taylor.

UEFA - B. Bozzani



Draws for the club competitions

AFTER THREE QUALIFYING ROUNDS, 16 TEAMS HAVE MADE IT THROUGH TO JOIN THE 16 AUTOMATIC ENTRANTS FOR THE GROUP PHASE OF THE 2007/08 UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE.

On 30 August the draw was made at the Grimaldi Forum in Monte Carlo to separate the 32 participants into eight groups of four, albeit with a question mark remaining over the last team to qualify, resolved the following Monday when Sevilla FC beat AEK Athens, a match that had been postponed after the tragic death of the Sevilla defender Antonio Puerta, to whom those gathered paid homage by respecting a minute's silence.

The draw for this, the 16th year of the UEFA Champions League was also the time to honour the best players from last season. This year, UEFA's Technical Study Group drew up a list of players for the attention of the managers of the 16 teams in the knockout phase, and it was they who awarded the prizes, each obviously refraining from choosing a player from his own team.

As winners of the competition, AC Milan's strong presence on the podium was no surprise. They received four of the five awards, an achievement which illustrates further – as if it were necessary – that in team sports, it is the value of the whole that strengthens the individual.

The awards ceremony

The award for the best goalkeeper, presented by former USSR keeper Rinat Dissayev, went to **Petr Cech** of Chelsea. All four other awards went to the current European champions, AC Milan:

- **Paolo Maldini,** captain with five European champion club titles to his name, received the award for best defender, and the trophy was presented to him by Dutchman Ronald Koeman;
- **Clarence Seedorf** received the award for best midfielder from Frenchman Didier Deschamps;
- **Ricardo Kaka** was nominated the season's best forward and it was a former AC Milan player, Dejan Savicevic, the current president of the Football Association of Montenegro, who presented him his trophy;
- Kaka also received the highest award – the UEFA Club Footballer of the Year – from Prince Albert II of Monaco.



Three Milan players on the podium: (from left to right) Kaka, Paolo Maldini and Clarence Seedorf, alongside Chelsea's Petr Cech.

Getty Images

Twenty-three former winners

Fifteen national associations are to be represented this season in the Champions League: Spain (4 clubs), Italy (4), England (4), Germany (3), Portugal (3), Scotland (2), Turkey (2), Ukraine (2), France (2), Greece (1), Netherlands (1), Russia (1), Norway (1), Romania (1) and the Czech Republic (1). There are no newcomers among the associations, meaning that the total number represented since 1992/93 remains at 29. However, newcomers Slavia Prague and Sevilla FC, the latter winners of the UEFA Cup this spring, are respectively the 100th and 101st clubs to have taken part in theChampions League – a significant milestone.





Dejan Savicevic and Paolo Maldini, two former team-mates reunited in Monte Carlo for the awards ceremony.



As usual, several previous winners of UEFA trophies are taking part in the competition – 23 in total, of which 12 have previously won the Champions League, with 35 victories in total between them. Among these clubs, the three teams to have won the competition the most often are Real Madrid (9 times), AC Milan (7) and Liverpool (5). The other former champions are Barcelona (2), Benfica (2), Internazionale (2), Manchester United (2), Porto (2), Olympique de Marseille (1), Celtic (1), PSV Eindhoven (1) and Steaua Bucharest (1).

Manchester United and FC Porto, both present in the competition once again, continue to share the record for the highest number of appearances in the Champions League, with 13 each: the English club also holds the record for the number of consecutive appearances with 12. Barcelona, AC Milan, PSV Eindhoven and Real Madrid remain hot on the heels of the leaders with 12 appearances each. The most conspicuous absentees this season are Bayern Munich, who have taken part in the competition 11 times previously, whereas Norwegian side Rosenborg celebrate their return to the competition after a year's absence and join Bayern Munich on 11 appearances.

■ The fixed sums in the Champions League are to remain the same as last year, with a participation premium of EUR 3 million, then 400,000 per game played, 600,000 per victory and 300,000 for a draw in the group phase. The bonus for qualification for the knockout phase is 2.2 million, for the quarter finals 2.5 million, for the semi-finals 3 million, and 4 million for the losing finalist. The prize for the winners is a cheque for EUR 7 million.

UEFA Champions League calendar 2007/08

	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
18.09	Ol. Marseille – Besiktas	Chelsea FC – Rosenborg BK	Real Madrid – Werder Bremen	AC Milan – SL Benfica
	FC Porto – Liverpool FC	FC Schalke 04 – Valencia CF	Olympiacos – S.S. Lazio	Shakhtar Donetsk – Celtic FC
03.10	Liverpool – Ol. Marseille	Valencia CF – Chelsea FC	S.S. Lazio – Real Madrid CF	Celtic FC – AC Milan
	Besiktas JK – FC Porto	Rosenborg BK – FC Schalke 04	Werder Bremen – Olympiacos	SL Benfica – Shakhtar Donetsk
24.10	Besiktas – Liverpool	Rosenborg BK – Valencia CF	Werder Bremen – S.S. Lazio	SL Benfica – Celtic FC
	Ol. Marseille – FC Porto	Chelsea FC – FC Schalke 04	Real Madrid CF – Olympiacos	AC Milan – Shakhtar Donetsk
06.11	Liverpool – Besiktas	Valencia CF – Rosenborg BK	S.S. Lazio – Werder Bremen	Celtic FC – SL Benfica
	FC Porto – Ol. Marseille	FC Schalke 04 – Chelsea FC	Olympiacos – Real Madrid CF	Shakhtar Donetsk – AC Milan
28.11	Besiktas – Ol. Marseille	Rosenborg BK – Chelsea FC	Werder Bremen – Real Madrid	SL Benfica – AC Milan
	Liverpool FC – FC Porto	Valencia CF – FC Schalke 04	S.S. Lazio – Olympiacos	Celtic FC – Shakhtar Donetsk
11.12.	Ol. Marseille – Liverpool	Chelsea FC – Valencia CF	Real Madrid CF – S.S. Lazio	AC Milan – Celtic FC*
	FC Porto – Besiktas JK	FC Schalke 04 – Rosenborg BK	Olympiacos – Werder Bremen	Shakhtar Donetsk – SL Benfica* (*4.12)

	Group E	Group F	Group G	Group H
19.09	Rangers – VfB Stuttgart	AS Roma – Dynamo Kyiv	PSV Eindhoven – CSKA Moskva	Arsenal FC – Sevilla FC
	Barcelona – Ol. Lyonnais	SC Portugal – Manchester Utd	Fenerbahçe – Internazionale	Slavia Praha – Steaua Bucuresti
02.10	Ol. Lyonnais – Rangers	Manchester Utd – AS Roma	Internazionale – PSV Eindhoven	Steaua Bucuresti – Arsenal FC
	VfB Stuttgart – Barcelona	Dynamo Kyiv – SC Portugal	CSKA Moskva – Fenerbahçe	Sevilla FC – SK Slavia Praha
23.10	VfB Stuttgart – Ol. Lyonnais	Dynamo Kyiv – Manchester Utd	CSKA Moskva – Internazionale	Sevilla FC – Steaua Bucuresti
	Rangers FC – Barcelona	AS Roma – SC Portugal	PSV Eindhoven – Fenerbahçe	Arsenal FC – SK Slavia Praha
07.11	Ol. Lyonnais – Stuttgart	SC Portugal – AS Roma	Internazionale – CSKA Moskva	Steaua Bucuresti – Sevilla FC
	Barcelona – Rangers	Manchester Utd – Dynamo Kyiv	Fenerbahçe – PSV Eindhoven	SK Slavia Praha – Arsenal FC
27.11	VfB Stuttgart – Rangers	Dynamo Kyiv – AS Roma	CSKA Moskva – PSV Eindhoven	Sevilla FC – Arsenal FC
	Ol. Lyonnais – Barcelona	Manchester Utd – SC Portugal	Internazionale – Fenerbahçe	Steaua Bucuresti – Slavia Praha
12.12	Rangers – Ol. Lyonnais	AS Roma – Manchester Utd	PSV Eindhoven – Internazionale	Arsenal FC – Steaua Bucuresti
	Barcelona – VfB Stuttgart	SC Portugal – Dynamo Kyiv	Fenerbahçe – CSKA Moskva	SK Slavia Praha – Sevilla FC



An imposing setting for the UEFA Cup draw, made by Gérard Houllier and David Taylor.

UEFA Cup
The road to Manchester

FOLLOWING ITS TWO QUALIFYING ROUNDS, THE 37TH UEFA CUP WILL BRING TOGETHER REPRESENTATIVES OF 31 MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS. GÉRARD HOULLIER, THE FORMER HEAD COACH OF LIVERPOOL AND OF OLYMPIQUE LYONNAIS, MADE THE TRIP DOWN TO MONACO TO ASSIST UEFA'S GENERAL SECRETARY, DAVID TAYLOR, IN MAKING THE DRAW FOR THE FIRST ROUND.

Eighty teams will attempt to qualify for the group phase of the competition, among them, the 16 teams who were knocked out in the third qualifying round of the UEFA Champions League, nine of the 11 teams who made it into the UEFA Cup via the UEFA Intertoto Cup and one survivor of the three teams that qualified via UEFA's fair play competition, the Swedes BK Häcken.

Fourteen of the participants have won at least one UEFA trophy, the most decorated being AFC Ajax, who have won ten European titles, including one UEFA Cup. Bayern Munich, who have won four European champion club cups and one UEFA Cup, are also prestigious participants in this year's competition. Tottenham Hotspur have won the competition twice already, and Bayer Leverkusen, Anderlecht and Galatasaray all appear once on the roll of previous winners.

The top three sides in each of the eight groups will go through to the knockout phase of the competition, to be joined by the eight teams who finish third in the group phase of the Champions League. The final of the UEFA Cup will be played on 14 May 2008 at the City of Manchester Stadium.



Michel Platini presents the cheque to the president of the CPISRA, Alan Dickson, under the watchful eyes of Kaka and Seedorf.

Photos: UEFA-Bozzani

A sign of solidarity

The club competitions meeting in Monaco is also the time for European football to show solidarity with the less fortunate members of our society.

Since 1998 and the first European club meeting in Monaco, this solidarity has been expressed in the form of a cheque for CHF 1 million paid to a sports-related charity or to an organisation that contributes to promoting sport among disabled people.

This year, UEFA president Michel Platini presented the cheque to the Cerebral Palsy International Sports and Recreation Association (CPISRA) at the draw for the group stage of the Champions League.

The CPISRA was founded in 1978 to encourage those suffering from physical disabilities, from severe brain injuries or cerebrovascular damage or from other related conditions, to play sport. Members have been playing seven-a-side football with specially adapted rules for a number of years, with competitions at regional, national and international levels, culminating in the Paralympic Games, organised every four years. The cheque from UEFA will allow the CPISRA to develop and extend its seven-a-side football activities and to publicise them better.

■ The new Fair Play and Social Responsibility Committee had its first meeting on 4 September in Nyon, presided over by Senes Erzik, vice-president of UEFA. The committee has prepared a social responsibility strategy that it will submit to the Executive Committee at the same time as other more concrete and specific measures.

■ The 8th FARE Action Week against racism and discrimination in European football will take place from 17 to 30 October.



The name Puerta was on every shirt in tribute to the Sevilla defender who had died three days earlier.



Renato opens the scoring for Sevilla FC.



Inzaghi is clearly overjoyed to have scored the equaliser.

UEFA Super Cup

A fifth success for AC Milan

FOR THE FOURTH TIME IN FIVE YEARS, THE STADE LOUIS II IN MONACO HOSTED AN ALL-LATIN SUPER CUP MATCH, THIS TIME PITTING UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE WINNERS AC MILAN AGAINST SEVILLA FC, THIS YEAR'S HOLDERS OF THE UEFA CUP AND LAST YEAR'S WINNERS IN MONACO.

Although there was a warm atmosphere, it was not exactly party time inside the packed arena in Monaco because thoughts of the young Sevilla defender Antonio Puerta, who had died tragically three days earlier, were still at the forefront of everyone's minds, including those of the Milan supporters who, in a generous gesture at half-time, presented the Sevilla fans with a banner in homage to the young player.

For the players, the best way to honour the Spanish defender was surely to give their all in respecting the rules of fair play. This proved the case, with the exception of a few incidents of diving, which, although rare, were also unwelcome and tended to irritate the spectators.

As is often the case at the beginning of the season, there was no shortage of sloppy or imprecise play from either side, and it was Renato who took advantage of slack marking by AC Milan to open the scoring, just as he had done the previous year in the Super Cup match against Barcelona.

Athens all over again

What followed proved to be a far less joyful occasion than last year for the men from Seville who, having taken a gilt-edged chance well, began to succumb to the domination of a Milan side that seemed never to doubt their own strength. Perhaps this was because, with the exception of their captain Paolo Maldini, who had not recovered sufficiently from his operation to play at this level, Milan put out exactly the same team that beat Liverpool FC in Athens. What was certainly clear at the beginning of the new season was that they were still just as comfortable moving the ball around using the entire width of the pitch and were still able to time lightning runs to make best use of the direct approach.

It was also clear that Gennaro Gattuso was as opinionated as ever, and that "Pippo" Inzaghi as opportunistic, the latter providing the equaliser. Andrea Pirlo's ability to create magical openings was once again there for all to see – he created the second Milan goal, which Marek Jankulovski volleyed home well first time. Finally, AC Milan still have the unstoppable Kaka, and it was his speed that produced a penalty, which he converted for the third goal, albeit at the second attempt.

As it should be

This was a deserved victory, and AC Milan were even elegant enough to make sure their three goal-scorers found the net in alphabetical order: I for indomitable, despite going a goal down; J for jealous – who would not be jealous of the insatiable appetite that helped Milan to their 17th UEFA trophy and their fifth Super Cup in seven attempts; and K for the knockout blow dealt to the opponents.

Carlo Ancelotti's men will look to apply this theory again when they represent Europe at the FIFA Club World Cup, to be played from 9 to 16 December in Japan.

31 August 2007
Monaco – Stade Louis II – 17,822 spectators
AC Milan – Sevilla FC 3-1 (0-1)
Goals: 14' Renato (0-1), 55' Inzaghi (1-1), 62' Jankulovski (2-1), 87' Kaka (3-1).
Referee: Konrad Plautz (Austria)



Photos: UEFA-Bozzani



FC Marsaxlokk salute their fans after winning the national title.





Victor Scriha, then president of the club, and coach Brian Talbot present the trophy to the champions.

Marsaxlokk FC

A dream story

WHEN ON 18 JULY, MALTESE BOV PREMIER LEAGUE CHAMPIONS MARSAXLOKK FC TOOK TO THE FIELD AT THE TA' QALI NATIONAL STADIUM IN MALTA FOR THE FIRST LEG IN THE FIRST QUALIFYING ROUND OF THE UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE, HISTORY WAS IN THE MAKING FOR THIS MODEST YET AMBITIOUS MALTESE CLUB HAILING FROM A PICTURESQUE FISHING VILLAGE IN THE SOUTH OF THE TINY MEDITERRANEAN ISLAND.

Marsaxlokk FC had scaled the rungs of Maltese football in a very impressive manner. The football club, initially known on the island as Beland City and Marsaxlokk White Stars FC, was formed on 11 November 1949. In 1954, the club adopted its current name of Marsaxlokk FC. The club managed to win a place in the third division in 1955. The nineties were spent lingering in the second division, usually in a struggle to avoid relegation.

Progress was clearly seen on the horizon as the club won promotion to the first division in the 1999/2000 season. Clearly struggling in a tougher division, after just one season, in 2001/02, the club managed to gain promotion to Malta's top football league – the Premier League.

Solid managerial structure

Ably managed by its president, Victor Scriha, the club continued to flourish both on and off the field of play. During the 2003/04 season, the club managed to finish in fourth place in the Premier League and achieve a memorable runners-up spot in the FA Trophy (national cup), earning the right to a place in the first qualifying round of the 2004/05 UEFA Cup. In their first European club venture, the side went out of the competition to Slovenian side NK Primorje, losing at home 1-0 and 2-0 in Slovenia.

The 2006/07 season was to be the year of the Marsaxlokk club. Honorary club director Victor Scriha brought in none other than former Ipswich Town FC and England international Brian Talbot to guide the side from the bench and put his final touches to his already consolidated side. Marsaxlokk finally wrote history and lifted their first ever Maltese Premier League trophy amid the euphoria of their ever loyal supporters chanting "Tal-Lampuki" – a typical fish caught in the Mediterranean Sea by the village trawlers. Marsaxlokk rounded up their commitments with a total of 47 points, a record since the introduction of the Championship Pool.

"This day is the fruit of five years of hard work which has seen Marsaxlokk scale the rungs from the lower divisions to the Premier and to the title," said honorary club director Victor Scriha just after Marsaxlokk were declared champions. It was also a special day for a special man – Joseph Grech, now 84 years old, who, despite his age and special needs, was also present on the pitch. Visibly moved, Grech was the official founder of the Marsaxlokk club way back in 1949.

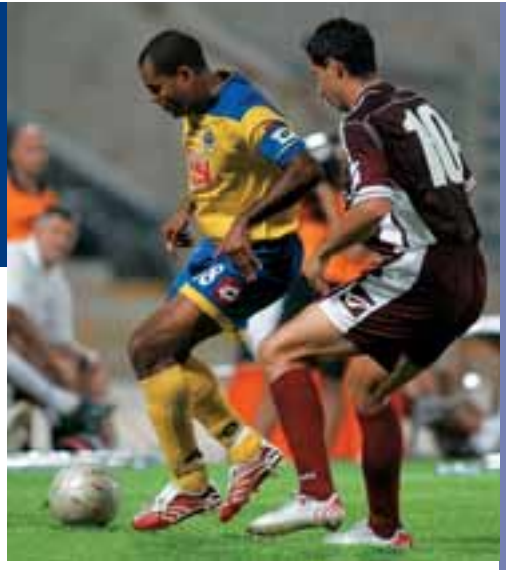


The best catch ever in this fishing village: the Marsaxlokk players and officials hop on board a trawler to take the trophy back to the island.

Photos: D.Aquilina



An emotional Joseph Grech holds up the trophy.



But no luck for the Marsaxlokk captain Jamie Pace (18) against Sarajevo in the Champions League qualifying match.

Big changes

This season the club has experienced important changes both in the administration of the club and on the field of play. Club supremo Victor Scriha has stepped down and has now been elected as the new president of another Premier League club, Valletta FC. Robert Micallef has taken over as president of Marsaxlokk.

Brian Talbot, confirmed by the champions for the coming season, has seen four of his key players – all Malta internationals – ending their commitment with the club: Andre Schembri, last season's Premier League's top goalscorer Daniel Bogdanovic, Luke Dimech, voted as the club's best player for last season, and goalkeeper Justin Haber. Replacements arrived in time for the new season: Brazilian Andre Rocha Da Silva, back on loan from Hibernians, fellow Brazilian Wendell Gomes, who returns to the south seasiders from Floriana together with another Brazilian, Renato Garcia Conceicao, from St George's, and the latest signing, Birkirkara FC strongman William Camenzuli.

Disappointing UEFA Champions League debut

The south seasiders are still feeling the disastrous aggregate 9-1 loss to Bosnia-Herzegovina champions FK Sarajevo in the first qualifying round of the UEFA Champions league this season – losing 6-0 on home soil and 3-1 in Sarajevo.

"We knew it would be difficult against FK Sarajevo. But the biggest problem we faced came from the fact that we did not have a really well-prepared squad, not physically but because of the players we lost at the end of the season, who we did not replace in time," said Marsaxlokk vice-president Peter Hartshorne.

Local club management structure

Just like all other Premier Division clubs – ten in all – Marsaxlokk operates a very basic yet very difficult to run management structure.

Finances are the main concern for each and every Premier League club on the island. Revenues from gate receipts are very much at a low, even though the Malta Football Association strives hard to assist the clubs in the best possible manner.

Marsaxlokk coach Brian Talbot was quite straightforward about the situation in Malta: *"If Malta as a football nation wants to improve, it should have a much better structure. There is not the appropriate number of pitches on which to train. In my view, even some of the artificial pitches are not good. There is not enough grass on the island. It is difficult here because of the climate.*

"I think that clubs should put their own structure in place before they spend so much money on players. Clubs have got to get their facilities correct in terms of grass or artificial pitch, get full-time coaches and try to get their players together every day. Without these concepts in mind it is very difficult to improve."

Club vice-president Peter Hartshorne also spoke about the club structure system on the island: *"At Marsaxlokk, the facilities are very poor – we have one of the best areas on the island – but yet we do not have the training and football facilities. We are lacking from the roots – we do not have enough staff in the youth sector, but as everyone knows, in Malta we have a very difficult situation, where most clubs depend on volunteers some of the time. Hopefully, with the new generation coming through, maybe in a couple of years' time, we will find the right people to take over on the administration side and find the right solution for succeeding at grassroots football."*

Domenic Aquilina

The model of the Maltese FA

The former Maltese national team captain, David Carabott, a Marsaxlokk FC youth product who also played for Hibernians FC, Valletta FC, Ghajnsielem FC in Gozo, Msida St. Joseph FC and Sliema Wanderers FC, depicted Malta's current football structure in his own words: *"I think Maltese clubs are lagging far behind as regards proper football structures – training facilities in particular. Seeing most of the Premier League clubs train on artificial and mostly undersized pitches does not go down well with me.*



David Carabott, the Malta national team's most-capped player ever.

"When I was with Sliema Wanderers, we used to train on a five-a-side artificial pitch. How can a coach plan his tactics with his players training on undersized pitches? It is time that Maltese Premier League clubs and even lower division clubs invested more of their financial resources in training facilities from which the club can benefit more.

"On the other hand I would like to give a very big hand of applause to Joseph Mifsud, the Malta Football Association president, for his stern leadership and work for the Malta national football team and Maltese football facilities in general. I played a record number of 123 international appearances for Malta – a record which I still hold to date – and can honestly say that the facilities as far as the national team is concerned are the best on the island."

D. A.





Forum chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, UEFA general secretary David Taylor and the other members concentrate on the documents in hand.



European Club Forum

Competitions at the core of the debates

THE SECOND MEETING THIS YEAR OF THE EUROPEAN CLUB FORUM TOOK PLACE ON 10 AND 11 SEPTEMBER IN NYON AND WAS CHAIRED BY KARL-HEINZ RUMMENIGGE.

The structure of the UEFA club competitions for the period 2009-12 was the most eagerly anticipated point on the agenda for this meeting, which brought together representatives from 24 clubs. After due consultation of all those concerned, it seems clear that the format for the UEFA Champions League – a 32-club group phase followed by the knockout stages – is unanimously supported and will therefore be retained. And so the discussion moved on to the objectives of the proposal tabled by UEFA president Michel Platini, which include an increased proportion of actual champions in the competition which bears their name and, furthermore, the representation of a greater number of national associations.

A majority in favour

The forum's clubs were divided into four groups, based on UEFA's national association coefficients, where they discussed the details of the "Platini format". The plenary session produced a majority in favour of the proposal – even total support for it from the two groups with the lowest coefficients – although the proposal to limit the domestic cup winners to the 16 top UEFA associations (see pages 4-5) raised certain questions. The reservations about the proposed format came mostly from the first group, which contained representatives of the "big" associations, and were on precisely the subject of the access of domestic cup winners to the Champions League. The national cup competition was judged tantamount to a lottery in comparison to the league by opponents of the scheme, who were in favour of preserving the current system, even with the option of letting each association choose between the cup winner and the third or fourth placed team in the national league. Another proposal was to increase the number of participants in the group stage to 36. The most important thing, as chairman Rummenigge noted in his closing address, *"is to avoid conflict and to find the fairest and best solution."*

The club delegates were asked for their opinions on the new format for the UEFA Cup, which would have 12 groups of four followed by the knockout rounds: this proved very popular. Aspects of marketing were also discussed, and as regards the Champions League, the idea of centralising media rights for the third qualifying round was welcomed. The delegates' agreement depends on the distribution of the supplementary income accrued, estimated at EUR 55 million. There was also widespread support for centralising the media marketing only from the group phase of the UEFA Cup onwards, and then completely centralised marketing for the knockout rounds.

Strategy Council welcomed

Furthermore, the representatives welcomed the creation of the Professional Football Strategy Council as a new instrument for dialogue and for taking part in the decision-making process. They also believed that a European Football Charter would be a useful tool in reaching agreements between all parties involved in football. They underlined that this was a long-term project and some reminded those present of their priorities, including the question of compensation for making their players available for international matches. They were united in their warm welcome for the proposal by the president to provide an office for the forum at UEFA's headquarters.

Finally, the forum was able to gauge the advantages of the first four working years of the club licensing system in a review of this period, as much in matters to do with the training of technical staff as with the improvements to club facilities or the increase in the number of youth teams.



Photos: pjwoods.ch



Leading referees prepare for the European season ahead

AT THE BEGINNING OF SEPTEMBER, THE 5TH SUMMER GATHERING FOR UEFA ELITE REFEREES AND THE 7TH SEMINAR FOR ASSISTANT REFEREES TOOK PLACE AT THE HOUSE OF EUROPEAN FOOTBALL IN NYON.

The three-day gathering – held traditionally every year on the eve of a new European club football season – included a varied agenda and aimed to prepare leading referees and assistant referees in the best possible way for the 2007/08 campaign both theoretically and in practice.

With over 75 officials present in Nyon, UEFA reiterated its objective to continue to improve the work with Europe's top referees and assistant referees, with particular emphasis on certain aspects which are harming the image of the modern game. In his opening address, the chairman of UEFA's Referees Committee, Angel María Villar Llona, outlined the main objectives of this gathering: *"First, to prepare the referees and their assistants for the UEFA competitions in the 2007/08 season. And second, to prepare the referees for EURO 2008 next summer in Austria and Switzerland."*

Zero tolerance

Addressing all the participants, UEFA president Michel Platini conveyed a message of solidarity and firmness regarding the decisions of referees and assistant referees, stressing UEFA's policy of zero tolerance towards any form of violence and racism inside or outside stadiums. *"Football is a school of life. Regardless of the sporting result, the spirit of the game should be respected. The role of the referees is to impose this respect and the respect of the Laws of the Game"*, he said.

The course comprised both theoretical and practical elements, such as expert presentations, discussion groups and specific training exercises. UEFA Referees Committee members Volker Roth, Vladimir Sajn and Hugh Dallas raised various topics and offered advice to the referees on various refereeing tasks, such as concentration, anticipation, protection of the players and management issues. In an effort to underline the necessary action and various subtleties that should be taken into account before any decision is taken, their presentations were illustrated with a variety of video examples.

Injured players

The increasing tendency to use the arms illegally to hold, push and jostle for position in the penalty area represented an area of particular concern. Referees were called on to carefully control such situations and take the appropriate action in case of infringements.

Another important item on the agenda was the management of injured players. Having observed different practices in different member associations, and in order to prevent any potential confusion in UEFA competitions, UEFA has recommended through a media release that in case of an injury, the other players should leave it to the referee to decide whether a player's injury is serious enough to stop the play in order to allow him/her to receive treatment.



... follows theory.



News from Brussels

UEFA and the European Commission have teamed up to produce a new 30-second film that encourages people of all ages to play more sport. The film will appear on our television screens during the half-time interval throughout the new UEFA Champions League season.

An increasingly sedentary lifestyle is one of the most serious challenges facing Europe's health, and is an important factor in the rising levels of obesity. People are less active: two thirds of all adults and half of all children get less exercise than they should. The new film encourages people of all ages and abilities to go out and play sport.

This new initiative is one part of UEFA's contribution to the debate on public health. As a sports governing body, UEFA believes it has a responsibility to address such issues. Together with the European Commission, UEFA believed the film would offer an efficient way to communicate a simple message to the widest possible audience.

Some 13 million European adults are obese, and 400 million are overweight. These levels are three times higher than two decades ago. Some three million European children are obese, and one in five children is overweight. These figures are increasing at a rate of 400,000 every year.

The immediate damage to our health is clear. Obesity causes about one third of all cases of heart attack and stroke, and two thirds of the incidences of high blood pressure. Abdominal obesity doubles the risk of heart attack. Obesity-related conditions, until recently seen only in adults, are now appearing in younger people (type 2 diabetes, atherosclerotic changes).

As a sports governing body, UEFA is well placed to take part in ➜

the public debate on Europe's health. We promote football at all levels, including the amateur and grassroots sport. And we also recognise that the problems created by a sedentary lifestyle demand urgent attention. The new film adds to our broader efforts to encourage physical activity:

• since 2004, UEFA has helped to fund more than 2,000 new mini-pitches across the whole of Europe, as part of the HatTrick programme;

• we continue to support the World Heart Federation, to promote healthy lifestyles and in particular to encourage physical activity among young people;

• we will soon publish a book of healthy recipes, to which some of Europe's top football clubs and players have contributed.

Last but not least, the film represents another example of our cooperation with the European Union. The European Commission paid the production costs of the film, while UEFA offered its 30-second half-time slot for free. Together, we worked with one of the world's leading advertising agencies, Abbot Mead Vickers BBDO, who offered their work at below normal costs.

You can watch the film on uefa.com.


Jae-Hwan/AFP

Alberto Mordago of Spain (3) and Nigerian Macauley Chrisantus in the final of the U17 World Cup.

Discussions also included mental preparation, with expert advice given by Swiss sports psychologist Mattia Piffaretti, and a situation report on the progress of the referee communication system presented by the referees' working group.

Silver for Spain in Korea

For the third time, after 1991 and 2003, Spain reached the final of the Under-17 World Cup but, once again, they had to make do with the silver medal after losing 3-0 on penalties to Nigeria, who won their third Under-17 title, following victories in 1985 and 1993.

In the final round played in Korea from 18 August to 9 September, Spain began by winning their group with two wins and a draw, before eliminating the hosts in the last 16, France (on penalties) in the quarter-finals and Ghana (after extra time) in the semi-finals. Germany also performed well, winning the bronze medal with a 2-1 defeat of Ghana.

Like France against Spain, England fell to another European nation, Germany, in the quarter-finals. The fifth European representative, Belgium, were knocked out in the group phase.

International congress in Spain

The Spanish Football Association, with FIFA's support, will host an international congress on the FIFA Regulations for the Status and Transfer of Players in Madrid on 26 and 27 October.

The aim of the congress will be to study the fundamental provisions of the regulations and to enable national associations, clubs and agents to hear expert analysis of these issues. The themes to be discussed include the solidarity mechanism, administrative procedures for the transfer of players between national associations, disputes and ways of resolving them and training compensation.

LOOKING AHEAD TO **EURO**2008

Volunteer recruitment phase under way

●○● Would-be volunteers for EURO 2008 can now file their applications online at www.euro2008.com. Altogether, 5,000 volunteers have to be recruited. Describing their role, the UEFA president, Michel Platini, said, *"The volunteers are extremely important ambassadors for EURO 2008. Their competence, enthusiasm, helpfulness and friendliness will contribute enormously to the impression that visitors from home and abroad take away with them."*

In each of the two main host cities of Vienna and Basle, 1,000 volunteers are needed, while 500 will be recruited for each of the other six host cities. During the event, the volunteers will support the 320 or so full-time staff of Euro 2008 SA in 14 areas. *"The volunteers are the first people our visitors come into contact with. They are the face of EURO 2008. And I'm sure it will be a friendly and happy one,"* said Friedrich Stickler, chairman of the board of Euro 2008 SA and president of the Austrian Football Association.



Euro 2008 SA

Trix and Flix are looking for 5,000 volunteers to give them a hand.

The application phases run from 27 July to mid-November and from 5 December until the end of February. The second phase is designed, among other things, to recruit volunteers with specific language skills, according to the countries that ultimately qualify for the tournament. Potential volunteers must be 18 by 1 June 2008 and speak English and German (as well as French in the case of Geneva). Their personality is also important, with motivation, reliability, team-mindedness and a strong sense of identity with the event counting as much as professional qualifications.

All applications will be evaluated by the volunteer team and the candidates that are shortlisted will be invited for an interview sometime between September and March.

By April at the latest, candidates will know whether their application has been successful. Those selected to help with the final draw in Lucerne will already hear in November.



For the coaches, the forum is above all a chance to make themselves heard.



Roberto Mancini, Zico, Michel Platini and Gheorge Hagi: honouring creative football at the Elite Club Coaches Forum.



Andy Roxburgh welcomes two of the new arrivals, Albert Emon (left) and Alain Perrin.

Ninth forum of the elite club coaches

SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 1999, UEFA'S ELITE CLUB COACHES FORUM HAS DEVELOPED INTO AN ANNUAL ROUTINE WHICH HAS BEEN GREATLY APPRECIATED BY THE CONTINENT'S TOP TECHNICIANS.

But 'routine' is maybe not the most appropriate word to use, as the event seems to take on new dimensions as the years go by. And the ninth encounter was exceptional in terms of the unprecedented geographical coverage provided by an all-star squad which included, for example, Zico of Turkish champions Fenerbahçe SK, Jesualdo Ferreira of FC Porto, Walter Smith of Rangers FC and 'Takis' Lemonis of Olympiacos CFP. In a way, they represented the four cardinal points of European football.

Diversity and fresh slant

There was not only geographical diversity. A fresh slant was provided by a trio of French forum debutants – Albert Emon, Alain Perrin and Claude Puel – along with 'Gica' Hagi, who was set to lead his former club, FC Steaua Bucuresti, back into UEFA Champions League action. And they were more than happy to exchange views with some of the forum's 'older hands' such as Valery Gazzaev, Arsène Wenger, Roberto Mancini, Gérard Houllier, Ottmar Hitzfeld, Thomas Schaaf, José Mourinho and two-time UEFA Cup winner Juande Ramos. At the same time, there were notable absentees, such as Sir Alex Ferguson (who, sadly, was attending a funeral) and European champion Carlo Ancelotti, who was on the AC Milan bench at a match in Kiev to commemorate the 50th anniversary of FC Dynamo.

The coaches heard, directly from UEFA president Michel Platini, his proposals to re-shape the structures of the two main club competitions as from 2009.

Unequivocal guidelines

They also listened to Hugh Dallas, who entered the forum fresh from the referees' seminar whose final whistle had just sounded. When he outlined the Referees Committee's unequivocal guidelines about getting to grips with holding and obstructing in the penalty box at set pieces, the coaches reacted supportively – and with calls for consistency and perseverance in the application of measures which, as past experience has indicated, run the risk of becoming diluted as the season wears on. The technicians also reiterated their growing mistrust of the practice of expecting opponents to kick the ball into touch when a player is on the ground. Their misgivings were supported by video replays of an incident where the so-called fair play gesture actually became a source of conflict and disciplinary sanctions. The coaches voted for the decision to stop play to be left in the hands of the referee. And before Hugh Dallas was allowed to leave the 'field of play', he also received polite requests for structured, standardised guidelines for fourth officials – which he readily took on board.

The forum, led by UEFA Technical Director Andy Roxburgh, also focused on technical aspects related to goalscoring patterns, the importance of counter-attacking and, as derived products, the index of risk-taking and training-ground work aimed at minimising lapses in concentration which, the coaches agreed, tend to prove exceedingly costly in the high-intensity world of the UEFA Champions League. They also acknowledged the substantial differences between the group and knockout phases, with success depending on the ability to adapt from one to the other. However, as had been the case at the eight previous editions, the most important results of the forum were the proposals which, in coming months, will turn up on other debating tables within UEFA, FIFA and the International Board – which is why the Elite Club Coaches Forum has taken its place among the most fruitful dates on the UEFA calendar.



Photos: pjwoods.ch



Annual review of the work on club licensing.

ARMENIA

Review of the club licensing system

The Armenian FA's (FFA) club licensing system annual review meeting took place on 10 August in the FFA conference hall. The meeting was chaired by the FFA chief executive and club licensing project leader, Armen Minasyan. During the meeting, licensing manager Arno Sargsyan presented the annual report dedicated to the results of the 2007/08 licensing season. Numerous topics, achievements, problems and their solutions were highlighted in the report, in particular feedback from the clubs and chairmen of the decision-making bodies; results of internal audits and risk assessment; previous and current versions of the FFA club licensing system manual; matters relating to the code of conduct, independence and confidentiality; objectives set at the beginning of the season and their current status; staff certification and training; infrastructure site visits; benchmarking in relation to previous seasons (2004-2007), etc.

FFA chief accountant Gagik Rechelyan presented the financial report for the first half of 2007 and referred to benchmarking in relation to previous years. One important aspect is that the financial results for the FFA club licensing system in general and the licensing department in particular are improving year by year, with results for the first six months of 2007 better than for 2004 and 2005.

Benchmarking in relation to previous seasons and preliminary objectives for next season were described by the licensing manager. As previously stated, the most important goal is the successful passing of the new licensing procedures by the clubs, which will allow them to take part in Armenia's premier league championship in 2008 and the UEFA club competitions in the 2008/09 season.

A question and answer session plus a discussion of the report took place after the presentation, giving the participants the opportunity to find answers to their specific questions. At the end, the annual report was approved unanimously. FFA chief executive A. Minasyan will represent the results of the annual review meeting to the FFA executive committee at its next meeting.

In other news, the month of August had a fabulous climax for local supporters. On 22 August, the Armenian senior national team, brilliantly coached by Ian Porterfield, produced a breathtaking performance to secure a draw against a star-studded Portuguese team in its EURO 2008 qualifying match, thus remaining undefeated in three successive games.

Tigran Israelyan

AUSTRIA

Infrastructure and technology drive

By 2008, all 2,300 Austrian football clubs will be equipped with laptops by the Austrian Football Association (ÖFB) to allow the clubs to process all their match-related administrative tasks and data. Referees can enter their password and confirm results and decisions. In this way, all match-related administrative tasks will be processed electronically nationwide, as already tested in pilot projects, and the ÖFB will be one of the frontrunners among Europe's football associations as far as the electronic processing of data and administrative tasks is concerned.

The project has been made possible thanks to support from the federal sports development fund and UEFA. The ÖFB, the Bundesliga and the regional associations are also making substantial contributions of their own. As was the case for the Challenge Project database and the European Under-19 Championship final round, Siemens has come on board as our technological partner.

Other focal points are the women's leagues, for which the ÖFB is making EUR 100,000 available to support the recruitment of qualified coaching staff. The women's clubs are, of course, also benefiting from the infrastructure drive and are each receiving a laptop.

In addition, in partnership with Hyundai, the ÖFB has been able to supply each of its nine regional training centres with a Hyundai Starex minibus. The vehicles have been in use since June and were officially handed over symbolically to Austria's most-capped player and current national-team coaching assistant, Andreas Herzog.

With the support of UEFA's HatTrick programme, the ÖFB and its nine regional associations have also been able to install 42 "fun courts" throughout the country. Six are already open, in Vienna, Marz, Schachendorf, Tobaj, Gurk and Michelhausen, and are in active use. Another 36 courts are in the pipeline or already under construction.

Peter Klinglmüller



Andreas Herzog takes possession of the vehicles in a symbolic gesture.

AZERBAIJAN

Coaches offered "A" level courses

In Azerbaijan, events are being organised to raise the level of knowledge and professionalism of coaches and to train specialists who meet the requirements of modern football. In this respect, courses have been organised in Baku since 2006 for the purpose of training coaches to internationally recognised standards.

From 7 to 20 January 2006, 25 participants attended a "B" level coach education course. Then from 10 to 12 April, the coaches' theoretical and practical knowledge was put to the test in exams held at the Shafa stadium under the direction of UEFA representative Zdenek Sivek. After passing the exams, the coaches received their "B" licences.

This year, the first part of an "A" level coach education course took place in Azerbaijan from 21 to 29 May. The second part of the course was organised at the Shafa stadium from 20 to 29 August. The AFFA general secretary, Elkhan Mammadov, attended the course opening ceremony.

The course were run by Zdenek Sivek and the members of the methodological group. The third part of the course, as well as the exams, were scheduled from 3 to 5 September.

Elkhan Mammadov

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The fight against nationalism

Zeljeznicar's Grbavica stadium in Sarajevo was the venue for an U15 tournament bearing the slogan 'The fight against nationalism', a venture supported both by the Balkan Alpe Adria Project (BAAP) and Football Against Racism in Europe (FARE) in conjunction with UEFA. Six clubs from Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina took part in the competition in two groups. Group A contained FK Zeljeznicar, Croatian side HNK Rijeka and FK Smederevo from Serbia, while in Group B, FK Borac Banjaluka from Bosnia and Herzegovina met FK Rad from Belgrade, Serbia and a side from the Novi Grad football school. The winners of the tournament were the youngsters of FK Rad, who beat HNK Rijeka in the final. *"This was an extraordinary tournament, and we are happy that we won the first place, without any goals against us. The organisation was of the highest quality, and were welcomed as true friends,"* said Goran Kovacevic, head coach of the team of FK Rad.

The players of SFK 2000 Sarajevo, women's champions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, finished third in their group in the first qualifying round of the UEFA Women's Cup, which took place in Skopje, FYR Macedonia. French champions Olympique Lyonnais, who beat Sarajevo



F. Krvavac

A tournament to fight against nationalism.

7-0 in the match that decided top spot, reached the second round.

Bosnian futsal champions MNK Kaskada Gracanica missed out on the main round of the UEFA Futsal Cup, finishing in second place in the preliminary round Group E, played in the Swedish city of Skövde, and losing the last match against the hosts Skövde AIK 2-1. In the first match, Kaskada beat Jeepers from Malta 18-3.

The friendly against western neighbours Croatia in Sarajevo attracted much attention: the match at the Olympic stadium was an interesting one and produced plenty of goals. The guests eventually won 5-3, but Bosnian international Zlatan Muslimovic scored a hat trick for the home side. This was the first time that the Croatian national team had played in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, close to Sarajevo in Kresevo, the U21 teams from the two countries played out a 3-3 draw.

Before the start of the match in Sarajevo six players – Bakir Besirevic, Edin Mujcin, Mirsad Dedic, Sejad Halilovic, Senad Begic and Mirza Varesanovic – were presented with gifts by Bosnian head coach Fuad Muzurovic and Zorislav Srebric, general secretary of Croatian Football Federation, to mark their retirement from the Bosnian national team.

Fuad Krvavac

BULGARIA

Third head coach for national team

During its regularly scheduled meeting at the end of July, the executive committee of the Bulgarian Football Union (BFU) accepted the choice of BFU president Borislav Michaylov to appoint Dimitar Penev, a 62-year-old football specialist who has the nickname "Stratega" (strategist), as the new head coach of the Bulgarian national team. His contract is due to run until the end of the current EURO 2008 qualification stage, covering the five remaining matches.

This is the second change of coach for Bulgaria during the qualification stage, Hristo Stoichkov having led the team for the first five EURO 2008 matches and Stanimir Stoilov having been in charge for the two matches against Belarus only.

The newly appointed Dimitar Penev has already played a part, however, as a head coach in Bulgarian football history. The 51st head coach since the creation of the Bulgarian team (in May 1924), he was in charge of the national side from 1990 to 1996, when the Bulgarian "Dream Team" was one of the leaders in world football, finishing fourth at the 1994 World Cup in the USA.

At the same meeting, the executive committee decided that referees from the football associations of other countries may only officiate at top-flight matches in Bulgaria when both participating teams have made and agreed to such requests.

Borislav Konstantinov

CROATIA

Meeting our objectives

After the achievement of our national team in reaching the top of EURO 2008 qualifying group E, we look forward to further success and the qualification of our team for EURO 2008. We also expect similar results from our U21 national team.

Players of all youth national teams gathered again for the summer football camp which the Croatian FA traditionally organises for the most talented players and coaches.

After a period of rather poor performances, the beginning of this season saw a larger measure of success for our clubs participating in the qualifying rounds of the European club competitions. This is a result of the improved quality of the first division, which is also borne out by greater numbers of spectators at first division matches. Also, the first year of the second division being organised as one group has been evaluated as a great success. The youth competitions (U19 and U17) are also going to be played on the basis of single groups, but the number of participating clubs has been increased from 12 to 16.

The executive committee discussed reports from the FA's club licensing department and licensing body, and verified the new national club licensing regulations for first, second and third division clubs approved by UEFA. The executive committee praised the work of the licensing body and the licensing division and congratulated licensing manager Ivancica Sudac on being appointed as a member of UEFA's Club Licensing Committee.

The inaugural world football competition involving clubs founded by Croats outside Croatia was staged in Zagreb and surrounding towns, with excellent organisation. All the objectives were fulfilled and it was decided that the competition will be organised every four years. The winning club was FC Croatia Toronto (Canada), the runners-up were Canberra FC (Australia) and third place went to the team from the Croatian minority in Gradisca (Austria).

Finally, the implementation of the grassroots programme during the summer months has been the source of great satisfaction.

Ante Pavlovic


HNS

FC Croatia Toronto, the first winners of the competition involving clubs founded by Croatian migrants.

ENGLAND

Tackling skills in England

The summer has been a busy period for The Football Association with around 3,000 children across England benefiting from skills coaching as part of The FA Tesco Skills Programme. Launched in June by England and Chelsea midfielder Frank Lampard, the scheme has seen 66 specialist coaches provide sessions for schools and local clubs up and down the country.


The FA

Whether for boys or girls, the important thing is to develop techniques.

Focused on developing individual technique among 5-11 year-olds, the emphasis is on the children having fun, spending time with the ball at their feet and expressing themselves without the pressure of game situations. The ultimate aim is to bring one million children through the programme by summer 2010.

FA Director of Football Development Sir Trevor Brooking explained the philosophy behind the scheme: *"The 5-11 age group is the key developmental stage for ingraining individual skill. The immediate objective is to providing specialist, quality coaching to give young players an enjoyable, positive and stimulating environment to maximise their ability.*

"Further down the line, we hope that the programme will help address the skill gap between English youngsters and their European →



FFF

A new and important step forward for beach football in France.

counterparts, which has an obvious impact on our future success as a football nation."

Frank Lampard added: *"I remember practising my skills over and over as a youngster and that has helped me reach the top. Whatever your ability, the skills programme will help make you a better player."*

The coaching programme is backed up by an interactive website (www.thefa.com/skills) which provides skills drills, tips and videos.

Andrin Cooper

FINLAND

Centennial match against Spain in October

The Football Association of Finland (FAF) has been celebrating its centennial throughout the year. Although various festivities have taken place since January, the centennial match has still to be played. Finland's jubilee matches have previously been played against opponents such as Brazil (1987), England (1975) and the Soviet Union (1967).

This time it is Spain's turn to celebrate with the Finnish football family, as Luis Aragones brings his side to the Helsinki Olympic Stadium on 17 October, only four days after their EURO 2008 qualifying match in Denmark. Both Finland and Spain have an exciting autumn in their respective EURO 2008 qualifying groups, as both countries seek to secure places in the final tournament in Austria and Switzerland next summer.

"We are glad that we can offer our fans a centennial match against a football powerhouse such as Spain. Our goal is to have a true football fiesta, as we are inviting different members of the football family to celebrate our hundred years of history," said FAF president Pekka Hämäläinen.

The two countries have previously met five times, with Spain emerging as the stronger side on four occasions. The first encounter between the two countries in 1969 ended in a 2-0 victory for Finland, with Tommi Lindholm and Arto Tolsa finding the net.

Sami Terävä

FRANCE

World beach soccer comes to France

In July 2008, Marseille will become the international beach soccer capital. The southern French city will be hosting the fourth edition of the Beach Soccer World Cup, FIFA having entrusted the French Football Federation (FFF) with the organisation of the competition. For the first time in its history, therefore, the world beach soccer competition will be leaving Brazil, which has been its traditional setting since 1995 (it has only borne the name of FIFA since 2005), to make a stopover in Europe before going on to Dubai in 2009. This decision has been greeted with enthusiasm by FFF president Jean-Pierre Escalettes: *"It's an honour for the whole of the French Football Federation and for everyone who has had faith in this discipline and its continued growth. We will do our utmost to give the world a tremendous tournament."*

Having won the world title in 2005 and third place in 2006, France is one of the leading beach soccer nations and the city of Marseille has become a mandatory venue on the continental circuit. Every summer for the last six years, its beaches have hosted the European league's Superfinal. In this year's event, which took place from 21 to 26 August, the "Blues", with Eric Cantona in charge, finished runners-up to Portugal after a week which confirmed the huge popular success of beach soccer.

For the 2008 World Cup, the capacity of the venue in Marseille's famous Prado district will be increased from 4,500 to 8,500 seats, and the event is already mobilising a large number of partners to provide back-up for the FFF. *"This is a great step forward for French beach soccer,* said Eric Cantona. *It signifies great recognition for this extraordinary sport which really gets people going."*

Philippe Mayen

GERMANY

Jubilee ceremony for German women's team

It is 25 years since the German women's team played its first international match – on 10 November 1982 in Koblenz, to be precise, resulting in a 5-1 victory over Switzerland. On 22 August, to mark the silver jubilee, the current women's national team returned to the scene of that inaugural game. With tradition and symbolism in mind, it was at the Oberwerth stadium in Koblenz that the anniversary international match was staged. Once again the opponents were Switzerland, this time in the context of qualifying for the European championship and preparing for the World Cup. The 7-0 victory against the Swiss women showed that the German women, well drilled by DFB coach Silvia Neid, are in the best possible shape for defending their title at the World Cup in China from 10 to 30 September.

"Twenty-five years of internationals for the women is an absolute success story. Wonderful games such as the one we saw today have brought them status and acclaim," said DFB president Theo Zwanziger, a self-proclaimed fan of women's football, in his welcome speech at the ensuing ceremony, which brought together numerous guests of honour from politics, sport and society.

Past and future names from women's football rubbed shoulders at the event in Koblenz. The DFB had invited numerous former players from victorious national teams spanning three decades, and a large number of them had accepted the invitation. Marion Isbert, Sissy Raith, Martina Voss, Heidi Mohr, Doris Fitschen, Steffi Jones and incumbent DFB coaches Maren Meinert and Bettina Wiegmann were all present, mingling with members of the current team such as captain Birgit Prinz and playmaker Renate Lingor.

Michael Herz

HUNGARY

Anti-racist events before the match of the year

Almost every year, Hungary hosts a football gala involving one of the leading teams in the world on the 20 August national holiday. This year, World Champions Italy played a friendly match at the Ferenc Puskás stadium on 22 August. Summer visitors to the Hungarian capital in previous years have included Germany, Argentina and Spain.

In the lead-up to the big game, the Hungarian FA organised two special events. A competition was held in which bids were made by the participants and the prize for the winner was to officially kick off the match, with all the income going to a charity which supports sports camps for sick children. The winning bid was on behalf of a five-year-old child who is a passionate football fan and is currently being treated for leukaemia.

The second event was an anti-racist initiative. The players of both teams were led onto the pitch by a varied group of children representing minority groups in Hungary. The almost 50,000 spectators in the stadium cheered the home side and the world champions, as well as applauding the children who are growing up in Hungary as members of various minorities.

The night turned out even better than the Hungarian FA expected, as Hungary played some great football and beat Italy 3-1.

Márton Dinnyés


MLSZ Mathias Imre

Hungarian internationals and young people from ethnic minorities just before the kick-off of the match against Italy.

KAZAKHSTAN

A new president

On 28 August, an elective conference of the Football Federation of Kazakhstan took place. The decision to convene this conference was made on 3 August at an FFK extraordinary conference, the delegates to which decided to replace the association's president, Rakhat Aliyev, with effect from 28 August, on the grounds that he was no longer able to fulfil his duties.


Adilbek Dzhaksybekov
FFK

A new FFK president and executive committee were elected in Almaty on 28 August. Adilbek Dzhaksybekov, 53, was unanimously voted in as the new FFK president. Since 2000, he has been in charge of the football association of Astana city, and since December 2004, he has also held the government office of head of the presidential administration.

"I would like to express gratitude to the former leadership and executive committee of the FFK for their work," the new FFK president said after his election. *"Now the most important thing for us is to unite for the good of our football. It should be open to anyone who wishes to be involved, and also we need to invite children, youth and women to take part. Our country possesses a great economic potential and is able to take a well-deserved place in the global football family. We have to do our best to this end concerning the construction of pitches and the development of youth football and football clubs."*

Immediately after the conference, the first meeting of the new FFK executive committee was held, at which a new first vice-president, Sayan Khamitzhanov, and second vice-president, Seilda Baishakov, were elected. The resignation of the general secretary, Askar Akhmetov, was accepted. Maxim Lebedev has been appointed as the new general secretary.

Alexandr Keplin

LATVIA

Beach football championship established

For the first time in Latvia, a national beach football championship was established and at the beginning of September the final tournament was played. Latvia's Baltic coastline consists of more than 450 kilometres of flat white sand, which is highly suitable for football. The eight winners of the regional championships met in a final tournament in Jurmala,

In Group A , the Latgale region was represented by the Dinamo LAT team, Riga by Jaunais Dinamietis, the Kurzeme region by Latvijas krievu kopiena and Jurmala by VBFK. Group B was composed of FREE from Jurmala, TUC/FTA from Riga, Tosmares kugu buvetava from Kurzeme and the Latvian national border guard team from Latgale. The official organisers of the tournament were the Latvian Football Federation (LFF) and the Latvian Beach Football Association, created by the LFF.

A week later the Baltic Beach Football cup was played between the two strongest teams from each of the Baltic countries of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

September has brought not only the start of a new school year but also the 2007 Latvian School Cup final tournament, involving 36 teams from different schools and more than 450 participants born after 1992. Girls' teams were also widely represented here and over a three-day period they competed for the title of the best school in Latvian football. A dedicated website has been constructed for the tournament and for youth football in general: www.bernufutbols.lv.

Martins Hartmanis


LFF

A tournament to find the best women's school team.

LIECHTENSTEIN

Child-friendly football

Children want to play football – this is the motto with which the Liechtenstein Football Association (LFV) presented its new project at a recent press conference. Every year, more and more boys and girls are joining football clubs, who then face the challenging task of making more and more coaches available. The goal is to strengthen and support the clubs and to enable children to play football in a way that suits them.

The LFV and the Football Association of St. Gallen have become joint patrons of the children's football project (aimed at the 6-10 age group). The project leader is Beni Bruggmann, who has played a considerable role in the development of children's football with the Swiss Football Association. Five coaching tutors from the region are assisting him with great energy, creating a well-organised team with both experience in dealing with children and a methodical approach. The team has one major goal: to support and advise coaches in their involvement on the football field, and in so doing, to provide a training programme suitable for children as well as a light-hearted game.


LFV

Experts are going to provide young people with football to suit their needs.

The offer, free of charge to both clubs and coaches, includes half a day's theoretical and practical tuition twice a year. In addition, coaches will receive visits to their club training sessions, where they will work together with coaching tutors to analyse the training: perhaps one or two things might need to be improved, but the coaches will also be reassured that they are on the right track. Coaches from football schools and the 6-8 age group are currently involved in the programme, and they will be followed by the 9-10 age group.

The philosophy to be embedded in the clubs through the project is based on the enjoyment that children get from playing: the game is at the heart of the training. Lots of games in small teams are important, bringing so-called 'street football' into the clubs. The games are supplemented by simple exercises with the ball, so that the children learn techniques correctly.

The first education session took place on Saturday, 1 September. The theory part dealt with the children's game and was followed by a training demonstration with the 6-8 age group, with a discussion of details of the project rounding off the session.

Judith Frommelt

LITHUANIA

Insurance for amateur players

This year saw the start of a collaboration between the Lithuanian Football Federation (LFF) and one of biggest insurance companies in Lithuania, ERGO Lietuva: a contract between the two was signed in August which includes an agreement that all amateur footballers who participate in football tournaments supported by the grassroots programme are insured against injury for up to 77 million Litai (c. CHF 37 million).

The LFF is very pleased to see both the involvement of ERGO Lietuva in Lithuanian football, and especially the association with participants of the grassroots programme. This insurance company is the first in Lithuania to contribute to football at an amateur level. →

"Our collaboration with the Lithuanian Football Federation started with the insurance of amateur football players. We hope to support any other projects in the future, not only for young people, but for adults also," said Kestutis Bagdonavicius, president of ERGO Lietuva in the Baltic states.

According to LFF president Liutauras Varanavicius, most companies come to support the national teams and the higher or even lower leagues, but very often the amateurs who participate in social projects or youth football are overlooked: *"Through the grassroots programme we can help children and young people who play football as amateurs to socialise in their free time."*

According to the statistics, young people frequently get injuries in their free time. The main goal of the Lithuanian Football Federation, together with ERGO Lietuva, is to remind parents that they must aim to ensure the safety of young people every day and everywhere.

Vaiva Zizaite



Liutauras Varanavicius (left), president of the LFF, and Kestutis Bagdonavicius, president of the insurance group ERGO Lietuva, with the contract for amateur footballers.

MALTA

Annual referees' seminar

The annual Malta FA's pre-season referees seminar was recently held at the conference hall of the Ta' Qali Centenary Stadium. The seminar, organised by the MFA's referees board, was held under the auspices of UEFA and conducted by David Elleray, a member of UEFA's Referees Committee who had a distinguished career as a referee in England and internationally. An opening address by MFA president Joseph Mifsud and an introduction by Tom A. Restall, who is in charge of the MFA's referees department, were followed by three days of lectures, workshops and group reports in plenary sessions, with a discussion for all participants bringing the three-day activity to an end.

The themes ranged from the referee's personality to consistency in sanctioning unsporting behaviour, as well as communication between officials. Judging offside decisions, the management of free kicks and positioning in different situations were also tackled during the seminar.



Referees from Malta are anxious to be involved with refereeing at the highest level.

The massive participation of referees, assistant referees and match inspectors was an encouraging sign of the interest Maltese match officials are showing to keep abreast with developing situations and maintain worldwide uniformity in the way matches are controlled.

Alex Vella

MOLDOVA

Focus on youth football

On 1 September, more than 5,000 children in 200 teams started the new season of Moldova's national youth championship, organised by the Football Association of Moldova (FMF) in six age categories: U12, U14, U15, U16, U17 and U18. The youngest player in the championship is Oleg Sarioglo from Dinamo Bender, aged eight.

The competing teams receive plenty of attention from the FMF, which has provided sports equipment, including footballs, to all teams in recent years.

The FMF executive committee took the important decision before the start of the new championship that from now on, the tournaments should be played with the participation of U12, U14, U15 and U16 teams without counting points as well as with no team rankings. *"This decision was taken in order to promote younger players in professional football. We have taken into account the experience of Denmark, Norway and Scotland,"* said Oleg Molceanov, the head of the FMF youth department.

Paying more attention to Moldovan youth football has begun to produce some good results. In 2002 the Moldovan U17 team trained by Petru Efros played in the final round of the European U17 Championship, which is a significant achievement, while both the U17 and U19 national teams recently qualified for the elite rounds of their respective UEFA competitions.

Victor Daghi



No points and no league table to reduce pressure in youth football.

NETHERLANDS

More and more members

Membership of the Dutch FA (KNVB) increased by 35,000 last season. With 1,125,093 members the KNVB is by far the largest sports association in the Netherlands. The federations representing other popular sports such as hockey, tennis and golf have a total number of members that is not even half the membership of the KNVB. Thus, football has not only retained its position as the most popular sport in the country but its own popularity is at the highest point ever in the national association's 117-year history.

The increase can be attributed to two sectors where growth has been most conspicuous. The youngest category (boys and girls aged 5 to 8) saw a total gain of nearly 15,000 members. The rise in the number of women and girls playing football is remarkable as well. In the space of a few years, the total number of women and girls playing football has climbed to nearly 100,000. Last year over 8,000 girls and women joined football clubs all over the country.

In all areas of youth football the membership grew by a small margin, improving the position of football among teenagers between 12 and 18. In this age group there had been a small decrease in numbers in recent years.

Ruud Bruijnis, the CEO for non-professional football at the KNVB, claimed that the wide range of football activities that the association has on offer is partly due to the positive balance over last season. *"The KNVB makes sure that players of both sexes and all social and religious backgrounds and ages have the possibility to play football at their own level not far from where they live,"* he told the media when the figures were released. *"The ever increasing number of artificial pitches plays an important role as well. Members can practise on these pitches in larger numbers and more frequently. The major international football events that the Dutch FA organised in recent years drew large audiences and have contributed to the rise in the popularity of football in the Netherlands."*

Rob de Leede

NORTHERN IRELAND

Developments in refereeing

In December 2005 the Irish Football Association (IFA) appointed its first Referee Development Officer with the country's most experienced referee, Alan Snoddy, taking up the post.


IFA
Alan Snoddy

Work began immediately to increase the number of referees with more recruitment campaigns launched throughout the country. This proved successful with over 200 people trained as referees during 2006/07. Steps are also being taken to ensure these new recruits are retained in refereeing and also more work is ongoing to try and increase the number of newly trained referees becoming active; currently approximately one third take up active refereeing.

Promoting refereeing is also on the increase with regular positive news stories circulated to the media and displayed on the association's website.

One major initiative is the completion of a "Referee Skills Programme" aimed at 16-18 year olds in education. This is a 20-hour fully accredited course supported by the Open College Network, allowing successful students to obtain a qualification that is recognised and meaningful in third level education.

The catalyst for much of the ongoing activity is the UEFA Convention on Referee Education and Organisation, and the association has three projects in place which are being cooordinated by Alan Snoddy.

A new regional referee development structure has been implemented with four groups of young talent formed and a mentor system in place. By the end of 2007 work will have been completed to ensure each new active recruit to refereeing has a mentor when he leaves the beginners' class and starts officiating. Finally, work has started to ensure referee observers in Northern Ireland have a meaningful education and development programme in place.

A new referee database has also been introduced recently to assist the ongoing administration of refereeing, and soon a DVD will be launched promoting all areas of refereeing in Northern Ireland.

"Refereeing in Northern Ireland has progressed in many ways in the last year and I must pay tribute to the many volunteers who continue to give up valuable time instructing and assessing. Without this work we would not be able to grow and this dedication is so valuable," says Alan Snoddy. *"I also know when we are accepted into the referee convention, we can increase our progress with the resources that will be available and reward the volunteers for their work."*

Caroline Menary

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Football Association of Ireland unveils "high performance strategy"

Having laid the basic foundations for the future development of Irish football with the publication of the technical development plan in 2004, the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) has developed a number of specific strategic plans over the past two years following extensive consultation with all stakeholders. These plans cover the areas of emerging talent, the eircom League of Ireland, the women's game, referees and interculturalism. The FAI has also overseen a major revamp of coach education to cater for 17,000 qualified coaches.

In addition, the FAI is currently developing strategies for the amateur game, for schools and for the colleges and universities sector. The FAI commissioned strategic management consultants Genesis to review the area of high performance in July 2006. The Genesis review presented a clear strategy for the way forward which has been adopted by the board of the association.

The five strategic themes which drive the "high performance strategy" are talent development, performance structure and systems, the domestic football structure, the senior international team and the FA's organisational structures.

Among the key recommendations set out by Genesis are:

- Change the focus for 6-12 year olds from competitive to developmental
- Create a national academy and up to 12 regional academies
- Appoint an international performance director
- Establish an international performance system and an international performance group
- Encourage more locally based players to become integrated into international structures
- Provide additional logistical support for senior and U21 international teams
- Bring the organisational structure into line with new resource requirements.


FAI
From left to right: David Blood, president of the FAI; John Delaney, chief executive of the FAI and Alistair Gray, managing director of Genesis, unveil the high performance strategy to the media.

The international performance director will be responsible for the development of elite players at under-age level and the role will also oversee the national academy at Abbotstown. He will work closely with FAI technical director Packie Bonner and his team, who will be responsible for the development of players until they graduate from the emerging talent programme.

The national academy at Abbotstown, Dublin, is designed to take the best players who wish to remain in Ireland to pursue their football education after they graduate from the emerging talent programme. The first phase, the construction of new headquarters for the association, will be completed by the end of October.

Fran Whearty

SERBIA

Saying no to racism

The Football Association of Serbia has launched a vigorous initiative against racism and related phenomena such as nationalism, hooliganism, chauvinism and xenophobia, which tarnish the image of sport. After more than 40 disciplinary sanctions in the last 15 years, including for the misconduct of a small group of Serbian supporters at the U21 European Championship match against England this year, the Serbian FA decided to adopt a strong stance to say "no" and "enough is enough" to "supporters" of this kind.


FAS
Zoran Mirkovic gives out leaflets to supporters that encourage sporting behaviour.

First at all, on the basis of a EUR 100,000 budget, the anti-racism initiative opened with a public letter to the whole Serbian nation from FA president Zvezdan Terzic entitled "Appeal for football", in which he urged everyone to focus exclusively on the positive quality of sporting values.

Since then, the Serbian FA has continued its action with various events, including at the EURO 2008 qualifying match against Belgium played in Brussels on 22 August. →

A public announcement was made 15 minutes before the match, national team players warmed up in T-shirts carrying the slogan "Stop racism", and journalists and officials delivered flyers highlighting 11 key principles for football fans to the Serbian supporters. Through their involvement, the journalists wished to show their solidarity with this course of action.

In the forefront of the FA's action, senior national team sports director Zoran Mirkovic said: *"I deeply believe that football and sport in general should show no tolerance for racism and related phenomena. We need a positive spirit, fair play, competitiveness and also respect for all involved in football. We are strong enough and we will come out on top."*

The Serbian FA initiative, which will be continued at the match against Finland in Belgrade on 8 September, has the full backing and cooperation of the Ministry of Sport.

Aleksandar Boskovic

SWITZERLAND

Pierre-André Schürmann becomes new U21 coach

The new coach of the Swiss U21 team, Pierre-André Schürmann, got off to a winning start in his new post with a 2-1 victory in Belgium. The executive committee of the Swiss Football Association elected Schürmann to succeed Bernard Challandes.


Pierre-André Schürmann
ASF/SFV

Schürmann has been contracted as a youth coach with the Swiss FA since July 2001. During this time he formed part of the training staff of the European U17 Championship-winning team in 2002 and helped the U19s to reach the semi-finals of the equivalent competition on home soil in 2004, meaning that this team qualified for the final round of the U20 World Cup in the Netherlands in 2005.

Between 1978 and 1997, Schürmann's playing career took him to Sion, Monthey, Chiasso, Vevey, Lausanne, Basle and Wil; he made a total of 425 appearances in the Swiss national league and scored 105 goals. He began his coaching career as player-coach with Wil in 1994 and then became coach between 1995 and 1997, reaching the quarter finals of the Swiss Cup once and the last 16 twice with the second division side. After a one-year spell as technical director of Lausanne, he was coach between October 1998 and late 2000. Schürmann won the Swiss Cup with Vaudois club in 1999, reached the final again the following year and helped the club to finish the championship once in third place and once as runners-up. Under Schürmann's leadership, Lausanne reached the fourth round of the UEFA Cup in 2000/01, beating Cork City, Torpedo Moscow und Ajax Amsterdam before finally losing out to Nantes.

Pierre Benoit

TURKEY

Hot grassroots summer

The 2007 summer grassroots activities began in Turkey in May, even before the summer. The Mevlana Konya grassroots festival was the first event, followed by the Trabzon grassroots festival, each attracting about young participants. The Ankara football festival was held at the end of June, involving 164 teams and more than 1,500 eight and nine-year-olds. Also in June, a girls' football tournament was held in Istanbul for 16 school teams.

The TFA has a new and strong sponsor for its grassroots activities. Ülker, one of the biggest firms in the food industry, has been very supportive,especially for the 2007 Van football village event, which was this summer's pioneer grassroots project of the TFA.

The first Istanbul Riva international under-12 grassroots festival took place in July. Participants came from Northern Cyprus, Germany, FYR Macedonia, Russia and Ukraine, and there was also a TFA team, a football village team and a team comprising Turkish boys and girls living in Germany. It was a great week for everybody; the children played football, chess, had rhythm classes altogether, and spent some time on the beach.The grassroots spirit was everywhere and the main purpose of friendship and fair play was definitely fulfilled.


TFF
Grassroots football brings joy to children.

The biggest disability football event of the summer took place in Istanbul in September, with the participation of approximately 20 disabled players. At the end of the festival, the participants went to see the Turkey v Hungary international.

With the final games of the Turkish beach soccer league in Antalya and the futsal tournament in Northern Cyprus in September, the 2007 grassroots summer activities that were run in 15 different regions throughout Turkey will come to an end, and more than 200,000 people of all ages will remember this summer as full of football, fun and fair play.

Zeynepgül Ene

UKRAINE

Lobanovskiy Forever!

The Football Federation of Ukraine (FFU) has successfully held the fifth international memorial tournament to the greatest ever Ukrainian coach, Valeriy Lobanovskiy. The tournament in Kiev was won by Israel's U21 team for the second year in a row after they defeated Serbia 2-0 in the final. The hosts had to be content with third place, beating Moldova 3-1. Before this, in the semi-finals, Israel had beaten Ukraine on penalties, and Serbia overcame Moldova in the same way.

"Five years have passed since we suffered the loss of Valeriy Lobanovskiy, a coaching genius and great man, but our hearts still hurt," said the president of the FFU, Grygoriy Surkis. *"I doubt there is anyone who didn't respect this maestro, and our main task is to hold him in remembrance. Moreover, as he wholeheartedly worked for the best in Ukrainian football, we have to carry on his course. The Lobanovskiy memorial tournament is one more step in the progress of football in our country."*

The first Valeriy Lobanovskiy memorial tournament in 2003 welcomed four famous clubs, and it was Dynamo Kyiv, where Lobanovskiy spent 22 years as a player and a coach, that emerged winners of the competition, repeating the success the following year. In 2005 the Polish national team took the first prize. Two years ago it was decided to involve U21s, since when we have witnessed the double triumph of Israel.

This year's tournament, as before bearing the motto "Lobanovskiy Forever", received special attention from the FFU, as many of today's Ukrainian U21 players are expected to shine at EURO 2012, which will be staged in Poland and Ukraine. So we can figuratively say that Valeriy Lobanovskiy still cares about the future of Ukrainian football.

Lobanovskiy is considered the pioneer of the scientific approach to football in Ukraine, which enabled him to gain eight USSR and five Ukraine titles, six Soviet and three Ukraine Cups, two UEFA Cup Winners' Cups and a UEFA Super Cup with Dynamo Kyiv. Each of Lobanovskiy's Dynamo generations had great international success, the last being in the Champions League 1998/99 when Kyiv got to the semi-finals. Three of his pupils were named European players of the year, namely Oleg Blokhin, Igor Belanov and Andriy Shevchenko. The great coach also successfully worked with the national teams of the USSR and Ukraine. He died on 13 May 2002 as a result of an acute stroke suffered during the match against Metalurh in Zaporizhya five days before.


Olexandr Zadiraka
Ukraine vs Moldova in the Lobanovskiy Memorial tournament.

Bogdan Buga



Communications
Birthdays – Calendar

Birthdays

Doping Control Officer Frits Kessel (Netherlands), celebrates his 70th birthday on 12 October. He will be followed the day after by Willy Goovaerts (Belgium), a referee observer, and on 15 October by Tom van der Hulst (Netherlands), a member of the group of former UEFA committee members. Match delegate Arie Wolf (Israel) celebrates his 60th birthday on 22 October.
Hugh Dallas (Scotland), a member of the Referees Committee, turns 50 on 26 October.
UEFA also wishes many happy returns to:

- Trevor Brooking (England, 2.10)
- Levent Bicakci (Turkey, 2.10)
- Andrzej Wach (Poland, 2.10)
- David Richards (England, 3.10)
- Julius Kvedaras (Lithuania, 3.10)
- Léon Schelings (Belgium, 3.10)
- Wilfried Heitmann (Germany, 4.10)
- Khennet Tallinger (Sweden, 4.10)
- Silvo Borosak (Slovenia, 4.10)
- Frank Coulston (Scotland, 5.10)
- Albertus Hendrikus Korthals (Netherlands, 5.10)
- Kaare Inge Lindboe (Norway, 6.10)
- Angelo Carlos Brou (Portugal, 7.10)
- Armand Duka (Albania, 7.10)
- Jari Maisonlahti (Finland, 7.10)
- Pierre Delaunay (France, 9.10)
- Sergey Zuev (Russia, 9.10)
- Ellert B. Schram (Iceland, 10.10)
- Milovan Nikolic (Slovenia, 10.10)
- Leonard Nokes (Wales, 10.10)
- David Petriashvili (Georgia, 10.10)
- Joan Gaspart (Spain, 11.10)
- Bo Karlsson (Sweden, 12.10)
- Jean-Pierre Morlans (France, 13.10)
- George Brian Smith (Scotland, 14.10)
- Michel Piraux (Belgium, 15.10)
- David Blood (Rep. Ireland, 16.10)
- John Delaney (Rep. Ireland, 16.10)
- Jean-Marie Philips (Belgium, 17.10)
- Frans Hoek (Netherlands, 17.10)
- Aivar Pohlak (Estonia, 19.10)
- Imre Bozóky (Hungary, 20.10)
- Joseph Bertram Worrall (England, 21.10)
- Paul Philipp (Luxemburg, 21.10)
- Philip Pritchard (Wales, 22.10)
- Mircea Sandu (Romania, 22.10)
- Jan C. Huijbregts (Netherlands, 23.10)
- Michel Vautrot (France, 23.10)
- Dragutin Karlo Poljak (Croatia, 23.10)
- Christian Teinturier (France, 24.10)
- Antonin Herzog (Czech Republic, 24.10)
- Pekka Hämäläinen (Finland, 25.10)
- Perry Gautier (Belgium, 26.10)
- Ramiz Mirzayev (Azerbaijan, 27.10)
- Javier Lozano Cid (Spain, 28.10)
- Rui Cacador (Portugal, 29.10)
- Gijsbert van Oostveen (Netherlands, 30.10)
- José Luis Astiazaran Iriondo (Spain, 31.10)

Upcoming events

Meetings

9.10.2007, Nyon
Draw for the UEFA Cup group matches

23-25.10.2007, Nyon
Course for international women referees

Competitions

2-3.10.2007
UEFA Champions League: group matches (matchday 2)

4.10.2007
UEFA Cup: first round (second legs)

23-24.10.2007
UEFA Champions League: group matches (matchday 3)

25.10.2007
UEFA Cup: group matches (matchday 1)

Notices

- Jean-Marie Philips has been chief executive of the Belgian Football Association since 1 September.
- The Kazakhstan Football Association elected Adilbek Dzhaksybekov as its new president on 28 August. Maxim Lebedev is the new general secretary.
- The Georgian Football Association has a new fax number: + 995 32 915 995.
- The Football Association of Montenegro has moved into its new headquarters at the following address: Ulica 19. decembra bb 81000 Podgorica – Montenegro
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Guy Dejaeghere (Belgium) has had his licence renewed for eight years, until 16 July 2015. However, **Kenneth Rowley** (England) has had his UEFA licence revoked.

New book

Football Fans Guide

Football clubs take plenty of supporters with them when they travel to away matches.



This guide is designed to make life easier for English supporters by supplying them with a wealth of practical information, including how to get to the game and food and drink both at the stadium and in the surrounding area. It covers all the clubs in the Premiership and the Football League, as well as the new Wembley (by Mark Bisson of Pitch Publishing, *markbisson@hotmail.com*).

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