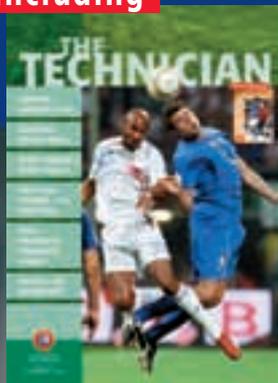


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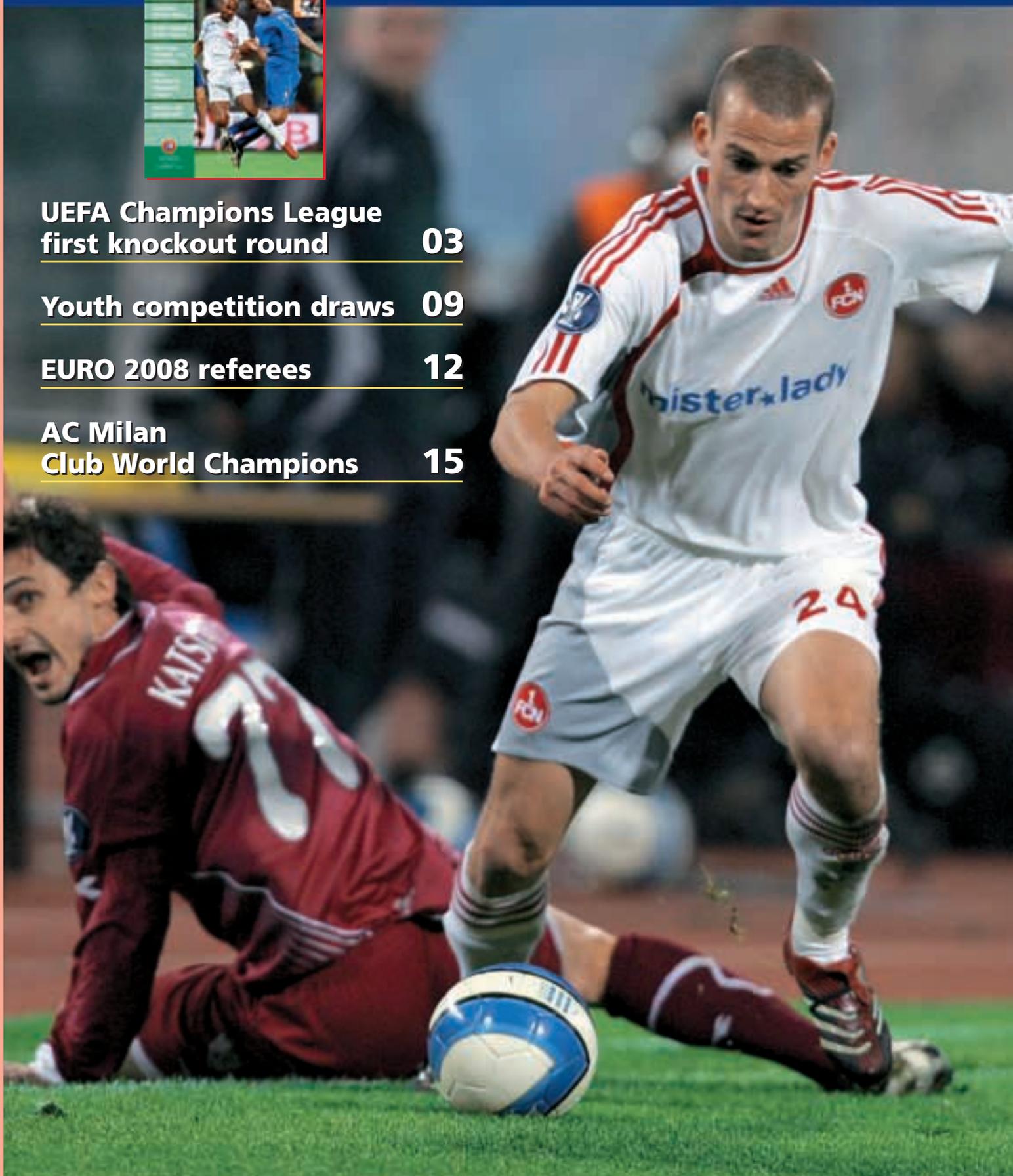


**UEFA Champions League
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Club World Champions** 15





Photos: UEFA/plywoods.ch

Message of the president Deeds rather than words

A good thousand kilometres separate Düsseldorf and Zagreb, as does the contrast between their national football associations, Germany being one of Europe's most powerful national football associations, and Croatia one of those that became autonomous or regained autonomy as a result of the major political changes at the end of the last century, when big countries were split up and Germany, meanwhile, was re-unified.

A year also separates Düsseldorf and Zagreb, my first year as UEFA president. I do not want to go over or even just summarise what has been achieved in that time – such reports tend to be exercises which aim to present achievements in the best light possible. Words are vital when it comes to presenting a manifesto, but then it is the deeds that matter, and I hope that everyone has been able to see for themselves that the manifesto I presented at the UEFA Congress in Düsseldorf was not simply a list of good intentions but a programme that we got down to right away, for the sake of the unity of European football and the defence of its interests.

Dialogue and the desire to find joint solutions with the national associations, leagues, clubs, professional footballers and everyone else involved in our game are the keystone of our efforts to build new and positive relations between all European football stakeholders. The same goes for our collaboration with FIFA, the other football confederations and the other sports governing bodies.

Rather than presenting my track record here, I prefer to express my satisfaction, my satisfaction at having found willing partners throughout who are willing to sit down around the same table and, as far as possible, find global solutions that safeguard the individual interests.

Thank you to everyone concerned. If we continue in this way, there is no doubt that when the time comes, the final analysis will be good.



Michel Platini
UEFA President

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COVER

The UEFA Cup resumes in mid-February. 1. FC Nürnberg (Peer Kluge) are one of the 32 teams still in the running.

Photo: Rys/Bongarts/Getty Images

UEFA Champions League

Milan clubs face English challenge



Jiri Jarosik scores against Shaktar Donetsk. Celtic are particularly formidable opponents on their home turf.

PA Wire/PA Photos



THE FIRST KNOCKOUT ROUND OF THE UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE ONCE AGAIN BRINGS TOGETHER THE CREAM OF EUROPEAN FOOTBALL.

The 16 participating teams have won Europe's most prestigious trophy 30 times between them. However, they include three clubs which have reached this stage for the first time. In this blend of tradition and renewal, one thing is certain: the draw has not been kind to the Italian clubs.

Clash of generations

By winning the recent FIFA Club World Cup, AC Milan picked up their 18th international trophy: a world record! The success enjoyed by the Champions League holders, currently struggling in Serie A, certainly owes a great deal to the talent of Kaká – Golden Ball winner and FIFA World Player of the Year – as well as a number of more

experienced players. As they prepare to face Maldini, Nesta and Seedorf, Arsenal are banking on youth. The "Gunners", Champions League finalists in 2006, have parted company with Thierry Henry and Freddie Ljungberg, but this has not made them less competitive – quite the opposite! Youngsters Van Persie, Fabregas – the linchpin of the team, Hleb, Adebayor and Senderos have assumed more responsibility for a team that is setting the pace in England. Eighteen-year old Brazilian Pato, a recent addition to the Milan squad, will be determined to prove that not all good young players are on the London club's books...

43 years later...

Internazionale and Liverpool (with seven European Cups/Champions

Leagues between them) have not faced each other in European competition since the 1964/65 season! Although they have not won the English league since 1990, the "Reds" have performed remarkably well in Europe: they have reached two of the last three Champions League finals (winning in 2005 and losing in 2007, each time against AC Milan). This season, the signing of Fernando Torres (the most expensive in the club's history) has made them more of an attacking force, as have the arrivals of the talented Benayoun and Babel. However, Steven Gerrard and his team-mates should not underestimate Inter, who are on an upward curve. Despite injuries to several key midfielders (Stankovic, Vieira, Figo, Dacourt) and the dramatic loss of form of Adriano (loaned to FC São Paulo until June), the "nerazzurri" are flying high in Serie A.



Sergio Ramos (in white) has grown in confidence in the Real Madrid defence.



Getty Images

Fernando Torres is congratulated by his Liverpool team-mates after scoring against Olympique de Marseille.



In memory of Capello

Fabio Capello led both Real Madrid and Roma to their most recent domestic league titles. However, neither club appears to be missing England's new national team coach. The club with the most Champions League wins to their name (9) is perhaps less "galáctico" than a few years ago, but their team is looking more solid and well-balanced. With Van Nistelrooy, Raul, Robinho and Sneijder, they still have a potent strike force. However, the hardworking Diarra, Julio Baptista and Gago offer good protection to the defence, where Sergio Ramos is improving all the time. After winning in Camp Nou, Bernd Schuster's men are on course for another Spanish title. Roma are also an exciting team to watch, favouring a fast, attacking style of play. While Totti unquestionably remains their leader, the support of De Rossi, Perrotta and Taddei in midfield and Doni, Panucci and Mexes in defence is essential.

Duel between prodigious forwards

The clash between Olympique Lyonnais and Manchester United is

also a duel between two of the continent's best young forwards. The English champions include 22-year old Cristiano Ronaldo, one of the top three players in the world according to the Golden Ball and FIFA World Player rankings. He is already leader, a



Karim Benzema, Olympique Lyonnais' new striking prodigy.

quality which Lyon's Karim Benzema (aged 20) is currently developing. His performances have forced internationals Baros (Czech Republic) and Fred (Brazil) onto the bench. Of course, this last-16 tie is not all about these two youngsters. Manchester United – with Tevez and Rooney (or Saha) as well as Ronaldo – have a fearsome strike force. Their team also boasts a number of high-quality senior players, such as Scholes, Giggs, Ferdinand and Van der Sar. Olympique Lyonnais are back on course after a worrying start to the season. However, the six-times French champions, who lost Malouda, Abidal and Diarra in the summer, seem less of a threat than last season, when they were eliminated from the Champions League in the first knockout round.

The stars and the home bankers

Winners of the 2006 Champions League, Barcelona added one new star – Thierry Henry – to their already impressive constellation at Camp Nou last summer. Even so, the first half of the season has failed to meet the Catalans' expectations. The injury to Eto'o is not the only reason. Ronaldinho has been disappointing and coach Frank Rijkaard's position is under fierce media scrutiny. On the plus side, alongside the outstanding Lionel Messi, two talented teenagers – Giovanni and Bojan – are beginning to emerge. The Scots, despite a number of good players (Vennegoor of Hesselink, Nakamura, Boruc), are not on the same technical level. However, they make up for it with grit, determination and excellent home form. In the group phase, Gordon Strachan's men won all three games at Celtic Park, including against AC Milan. However, they lost all three away matches....



Rose/Bongarts/Getty Images

Olympiacos celebrate qualifying for the first knockout round.



Korotayev/Epsilon/Getty Images

Edu, one of Fenerbahçe's Brazilian players.



Getty Images

Lisandro Lopez (9), FC Porto's goalscorer.

Happy memories

Playing Schalke will bring back fond memories for Porto: the Portuguese will be returning to the Arena AufSchalke in Gelsenkirchen, where they won the Champions League in 2004. Of the players who lifted the trophy on 26 May that year, defender Pedro Emanuel is the sole survivor, but Porto remain an excellent team. Playmaker Quaresma and goalscorer Lisandro Lopez will pose a particular threat to the German defence, which only conceded four goals in the group stage. This defensive solidity enabled Asamoia, Kuranyi and their team-mates to secure the club's first ever place in the last 16.

A match between debutants

Fenerbahçe v Seville is a match between debutants. Although they have won the last two editions of the UEFA Cup, this is the Andalusians' first taste of the Champions League. They will face a club from the Asian part of Istanbul, which has reached

the last 16 for the first time in its history. Their coach, the mythical Zico, has brought numerous fellow Brazilians into the team – Roberto Carlos, of course, as well as Edu, Alex and Deivid – while retaining a number of Turkish players. Seville, for their part, have had a tough few months. The tragic death of their left winger Antonio Puerta was followed by the mid-season departure to Tottenham of their influential coach Juande Ramos. Jesus Navas, Kanouté, Poulsen and their team-mates appear to have put these problems behind them and are regaining form.

Surprise and unrest

Frequent participants in the Champions League, Olympiacos have only once previously progressed beyond the group phase, in 1999. The team coached by Takis Lemonis has not therefore suffered from the summer departure of Rivaldo. With a closely-knit squad including the experienced Nikopolidis, Djordjevic and Kovacevic, Olympiacos are a tough proposition. Meanwhile, Chelsea's owner, Roman Abramovich, has limited his investments in the transfer market. A poor start to the season led to the resignation of José Mourinho. Despite a host of injuries (Lampard, Drogba, Cech, Cudicini, Terry, Makelele, Malouda, etc.), Avram Grant has kept the London club afloat. Youngsters Salomon Kalou and Jon Obi Mikel continue to progress, Ballack has returned to action after seven months out and Shevchenko has already scored as many times in 11 league matches this season as he did in 30 games in the last campaign (four goals). It is therefore not all doom and gloom for the "Blues", who have just added Nicolas Anelka to their squad.

Emanuele Saraceno

UEFA Cup Sixteen associations still in contention



The eight UEFA Cup groups put 24 teams through to the last 32, where they will be joined by the eight clubs that finished the UEFA Champions League groups in third place, namely, Olympique de Marseille, Rosenborg, Werder Bremen, Benfica, Rangers, Sporting, PSV Eindhoven and Slavia Prague. Sixteen national associations are still represented in the competition, with Germany alone accounting for five of the clubs.



UEFA-pjwoods.ch

UEFA General Secretary David Taylor conducts the draw.

The draw in Nyon on 21 December generated the following ties:

- Aberdeen FC – FC Bayern München
- AEK Athens FC – Getafe CF
- Bolton Wanderers FC – Club Atlético de Madrid
- FC Zenit St. Petersburg – Villarreal CF
- Galatasaray AS – Bayer 04 Leverkusen
- RSC Anderlecht – FC Girondins de Bordeaux
- SK Brann – Everton FC
- FC Zürich – SV Hamburg
- Rangers FC – Panathinaikos FC
- PSV Eindhoven – Helsingborgs IF
- SK Slavia Prague – Tottenham Hotspur FC
- Rosenborg BK – ACF Fiorentina
- Sporting Clube – FC Basel 1893
- Werder Bremen – SC Braga
- SL Benfica – 1. FC Nürnberg
- Olympique de Marseille – FC Spartak Moskva

The first legs will be played on 13/14 February and the return legs on 21 February.

The first knockout round

- FC Schalke 04 – FC Porto
- AS Roma – Real Madrid CF
- Olympiacos CFP – Chelsea FC
- Liverpool FC – FC Internazionale
- Arsenal FC – AC Milan
- Celtic FC – FC Barcelona
- Olympique Lyonnais – Manchester United FC
- Fenerbahçe SK – Seville FC

First leg: 19 February for the first four ties, 20 February for the other four.

Second leg: 4 March for the last four ties, 5 March for the first three and 11 March for FC Internazionale – Liverpool FC.



Ellis/AP/Getty Images

Reports on all of Shakhtar Donetsk's matches can be found on the club's website. Mariusz Lewandowski in action in the UEFA Champions League against Celtic.



Pedersen/AFP/Getty Images

Match extracts are shown on Dinamo Tbilisi's website.

The new media in the east

Full steam ahead

CLUBS FROM THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL ASSOCIATIONS IN EASTERN EUROPE DO NOT NECESSARILY HAVE THE SAME KIND OF MEANS AS THEIR ENGLISH, GERMAN AND ITALIAN COUNTERPARTS, BUT MANY OF THEM ARE JUST AS DYNAMIC AND UP TO DATE.

The representatives of some small nations are certainly still experiencing a few teething problems, especially those that have not been around for very long. This is not the case of Dinamo Tbilisi, winners of the European Cup Winners' Cup in 1981, whose conventional website features many superb videos of the goals

and key moments of its matches, at the same time as being very interactive; its visitors' views on different topics being very important to the club.

"One life, one love"

Cups scroll across the screen to music. A separate pop-up window fea-

tures the legendary faces associated with each trophy. FC Dynamo Kiev is celebrating its 80th anniversary and its numerous victories in style. Accessible in Ukrainian, Russian and English, the club's website offers to take visitors on a passionate journey through its past. Much like FC Shakhtar Donetsk, it gives the starring role on the site to the music – the club chants.

Dynamo has put its merchandise shop online and even uses a television channel, Megasport, while Dynamo TV offers exclusive news through the site on all events that impact the club. "One life, one love". The slogan that adorns the homepage hits the nail on the head: this Ukrainian club has gone to great lengths to communicate with its fans, who can subscribe for free to an electronic newsletter. The website offers various match extracts and immerses its visitors in the lives of the club and the team: training videos, pre-match ritu-

Steaua Bucharest sets sights high

In a recent survey completed by Romanian amateur footballers, Steaua Bucuresti was voted the most popular club by 48% of the respondents. Two years ago, the club with the most laurels in Romania reached the semi-final of the UEFA Cup once again, where it met English team Middlesbrough. Last year, a visit by Real Madrid attracted 30,000 spectators. Its less spectacular recent performances mean attendance is down, but Steaua is introducing initiative after initiative nonetheless, in its quest for excellence. In conjunction with Orange, its telephony partner, the club sends daily text messages of news to any fans who request them. The Steaua website contains match replays and numerous items for download. The club also organises a competition giving fans the chance to win fantastic prizes. The site gets 60,000 or so hits a week. Catalin Fainisi, the club's press officer, looks after the news for the site and the interface: "The official club sponsors' logos feature on the site, but it is managed by Steaua staff. The site has no sponsor as such. We see it as a service provided to our

supporters – a means of contact. The site was created in 2002, before I started here. We have no television because we lack the staff to manage the production, but we want to improve our site, in particular by



enhancing its interactivity, by incorporating more news and official information, and by improving the competition."

Steaua has a very professional system for ticket sales, even though, for the time being, its stadium is far from overrun. "We are struggling in this respect, but we can still move forward. We are going to sell tickets with the aid of two specialist sites. We have merchandise stores in various

big cities around the country but we also hope to incorporate an online shop into our website."

The club shop also sells a traditional magazine, with a circulation of 12,000. "Print media always go down well. Our magazine contains articles and news items; it too features our products and those of our sponsors."

P.P.



Monteforte/AFP/Getty Images

An electronic news-letter to keep up to date with Diogo Rincon (in action against AS Roma in the UEFA Champions League) and his Dynamo Kiev team-mates.



Kudrjavitseva/AP/Getty Images

FC Zenit St. Petersburg's celebrate winning the Russian championship in 2007.

als – the approach is varied and manages to be serious and entertaining in equal measure.

FC Shakhtar Donetsk, another UEFA Champions League club, also opts for action, with some superb match sequences by way of introduction. It may not have a TV channel yet, but the club has set up a camera to provide live footage of the work being carried out on its stadium and visitors can consult written reports on all of its matches. The online shop offers sports items and much more besides. Supporters can download numerous photos for free to liven up their computer screens and the members-only section lets fans share their impressions and put questions to the club.

Take the Zenit tour!

FC Zenit St. Petersburg goes a step further. Its site, sponsored by an impressive number of big firms, offers a shop, songs, photos and the standard website offering, as well as interviews with and daily reports from players, coaches and managers on current topics and ongoing themes. It is also possible to take a virtual tour of the whole stadium. The club even produces a weekly publication, Our Zenit, with archives in the online version. Zenit has a radio station, 89.7, with news about the club and the town, analyses and music, while TV XXI broadcasts commentaries and interviews.

Pascale Pierard

Red Star Belgrade: a brand-new site

FK Crvena zvezda can look back on 15 years of experience and its website is one of the most popular in Serbia. The club has just signed a contract with Pakom Group, a leading telecommunications company. Together they have developed a new site, which went online on 12 November. Alongside numerous news articles and standard features, the Red Star site has become even more interactive. Stefan Ivanovic, the club's press officer explains: *"There is a members-only area, a section reserved for journalists and an online shop. This is just the first phase in an ambitious project. We are the most popular club in the country, with a potential 3.8 million supporters in Serbia and 2 million in neighbouring countries. We want to forge ties with these supporters and provide them with a maximum of information. This is the only way in which we will remain attractive in the eyes of sponsors."*



Simon/Bongarts/Getty Images

FK Crvena zvezda offers its wide following an interactive website.

Supporters can now receive club news via SMS: *"We want to use all the technological resources available to us to improve communication. Text messages are one of our priorities."*

The site features the logos of numerous commercial partners, from Serbia and abroad. There are various big names. *"Over the last few years, sponsorship has been reduced to the bare minimum. Television adverts, the baseline for all advertisers, used to be good value. Recently, the situation has changed. We are therefore trying to attract new sponsors, by offering them a high profile in all our activities."*

P. P.



Sharing views and experiences at UEFA's headquarters.



Silvia Neid receives her special award from UEFA General Secretary David Taylor, pictured with Executive Committee members Per Ravn Omdal (left) and Mircea Sandu.



Elite Women's Coaches' Forum

A platform for discussion

ON 11 DECEMBER, THE THIRD UEFA ELITE WOMEN'S COACHES' FORUM TOOK PLACE IN NYON. THIS ANNUAL EVENT OFFERS COACHES A PLATFORM FOR SHARING EXPERIENCES AND OPINIONS, AND FOR DISCUSSING TRENDS IN ELITE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL, AS WELL AS GIVING THEM THE OPPORTUNITY TO FORM NEW CONTACTS AND RENEW EXISTING ONES.

Proposals put forward at the forum will be examined and possibly also implemented, as happened, for example, with the proposal to increase the number of rest days during youth final rounds.

German FA honoured

Silvia Neid, who led the German women's national team to their second world title in a row in China last autumn, received a special plaque in recognition of her outstanding achievements. Maren Meinert, coach of Germany's European Women's Under-19 Championship winning team, was also honoured. UEFA's Technical Director, Andy Roxburgh, said there was no doubt that Germany were setting the benchmark in women's football.

UEFA competitions

The forum participants heard that preparations for the final round of the Women's European Championship

in 2009 (Women's EURO 2009) in Finland were progressing well and were pleased with the latest developments, in particular the increase in the number of final round participants to 12. This would upgrade the tournament, which would help promote and develop women's football. For future tournaments, the coaches proposed that the final field should even be extended to 16, an idea which, however, requires careful analysis first.

Regarding the youth sector, the coaches were concerned about the landslide victories recorded in certain matches and the associated lack of media interest. For the European Women's Under-19 Championship final round, the size of the stadiums should be better suited to the event. In the view of Silvia Neid, a final with two good teams but in an empty stadium presented a sad picture. To overcome this problem, it was suggested, for example, that the matches

should be systematically advertised in the host cities, which was not the case for the last final round, which was otherwise very well organised.

Injury prevention

Vera Pauw presented the injury prevention programme that had been introduced gradually in the Netherlands since 2004. It had emerged from an analysis revealing that many cruciate ligament injuries among Dutch women players could be attributed to insufficient training. The injury prevention programme aimed to improve coordination and core stability, and had helped reduce the risk of injury noticeably in a short space of time.

Women's football coaches

The participants all agreed that women's football was fundamentally different from the men's game and that the requirements for women's football coaches were therefore quite different. It was therefore important to encourage as many women players as possible to pursue a coaching career and pass on their experience. They best knew the needs and what was important. In many countries, there were no special coach education programmes for women coaches. Associations were already integrating the education of women coaches into their normal programmes, but there was still a need for targeted courses. The fact that the education of women's football coaches was getting longer and more expensive could also cause problems in some cases.

Development programme for eliminated teams

The mini-tournaments organised by UEFA for the teams eliminated early from European Women's Championships were welcomed as invaluable. The instructors who attended the tournaments reported that the participating teams were very grateful to have such an opportunity, and the instructors had aimed to share experiences and advice with the team managers in an effort to bring them closer to the level of the other European teams.



Photos: UEFA-epjwoods.ch



Jim Boyce, vice-chairman of the Youth and Amateur Football Committee, assisted by Henning Sauerbier, captain of the German team that won the U17 fair play trophy.



Jim Boyce, Viacheslav Koloskov, chairman of the Youth and Amateur Football Committee and member of the Executive Committee, and UEFA Technical Director Andy Roxburgh.

Youth competition draws

Two seasons at once

ON 28 AND 29 NOVEMBER, DRAWS WERE HELD IN CANNES FOR THE EUROPEAN UNDER-19 AND UNDER-17 CHAMPIONSHIPS.



For the 2007/08 season, draws were held to establish the elite round groups. At Under-17 level, the fair play criterion was required to determine the top two third-placed teams and thus complete the list of qualifiers (with the top two teams from each qualifying round group). Destiny then dictated the following elite groups:

- Group 1:* **Republic of Ireland**, Portugal, Germany, Greece;
- Group 2:* Switzerland, **Croatia**, Belgium, Denmark;
- Group 3:* England, **Israel**, France, Russia;
- Group 4:* Slovakia, Czech Republic, **Serbia**, Sweden;
- Group 5:* **Northern Ireland**, Wales, Scotland, Slovenia;
- Group 6:* Italy, Spain, Austria,

Romania;

- Group 7:* **Netherlands**, Hungary, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Norway.

Host nations in bold.

The matches will be contested between 13 and 31 March 2008 and the group winners will join Turkey for the final round, from 4 to 16 May.



In the European Under-19 Championship, the draw saw the 28 qualifiers distributed as follows:

- Group 1:* England, **Belarus**, Poland, Serbia;
- Group 2:* **Hungary**, Portugal, Lithuania, Cyprus;
- Group 3:* **Norway**, Israel, Iceland, Bulgaria;
- Group 4:* **Slovakia**, Germany, Croatia, Albania;
- Group 5:* Russia, **Greece**, Netherlands, Moldova;
- Group 6:* Italy, France, Sweden, **Switzerland**;

Group 7: Ukraine, Turkey, Spain, **Armenia**.

The matches will take place from 27 April to 31 May 2008 and the winners of each group will qualify for the final round in the Czech Republic from 14 to 26 July.

2008/09 competitions

The following day, attention turned to the 2008/09 season, with the draw for the qualifying rounds that will take place in autumn 2008. To carry out the draws, the first vice-chairman of the Youth and Amateur Football Committee, Jim Boyce, was assisted by the captains of the winning teams in the 2007 fair play competition: Germany's Henning Sauerbier for the Under-17s, and Serbia's Miloš Bosancic for the Under-19s.

In the Under-17 competition, for which Germany will host the final

round in May 2009, the teams have been split into the following 13 groups:

- Group 1:* Northern Ireland, Belgium, **Liechtenstein**, Austria;
- Group 2:* Romania, **Israel**, Denmark, Lithuania;
- Group 3:* Czech Republic, **Hungary**, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia;
- Group 4:* Wales, **Portugal**, Faroe Islands, Kazakhstan;
- Group 5:* Greece, Republic of Ireland, Andorra, **Luxembourg**;
- Group 6:* **Croatia**, Serbia, Sweden, Moldova;
- Group 7:* Switzerland, Ukraine, **Iceland**, Norway;
- Group 8:* Azerbaijan, **Poland**, Bulgaria, Montenegro;
- Group 9:* Wales, **Italy**, Cyprus, Latvia;
- Group 10:* **Finland**, Belarus, Albania, FYR Macedonia;



Spain (Azpilicueta, on the right, in action against Greece in the U19 final in 2007) will again be among the favourites for the UEFA youth competitions in 2008 and 2009.

Kubani/AP/Getty Images



Jim Boyce, vice-chairman of the Youth and Amateur Football Committee, presents the 2006/07 U19 fair play trophy to Milos Bosancic, captain of Serbia's U19 team.



Match planning after the draw.

Group 11: **France**, Scotland, Slovakia, San Marino;

Group 12: Turkey, **Russia**, Slovenia, Malta;

Group 13: England, **Spain**, Armenia, Estonia.

The top two in each group and the top two third-placed teams will qualify for the elite round.

In the Under-19 competition, for which the final round will be held in Ukraine, 52 associations will contest the qualifiers in the following configurations:

Group 1: Scotland, **Hungary**, Azerbaijan, San Marino;

Group 2: Croatia, Belgium, **Estonia**, Kazakhstan;

Group 3: Italy, Russia, Latvia, **Moldova**;

Group 4: Republic of Ireland, France, **Malta**, Liechtenstein;

Group 5: Slovakia, Norway, Armenia, **Slovenia**;

Group 6: **Germany**, Netherlands, **Luxembourg**, Lithuania;

Group 7: Czech Republic, Georgia, **Cyprus**, Denmark;

Group 8: Sweden, Austria, Iceland, **FYR Macedonia**;

Group 9: Serbia, England, **Northern Ireland**, Albania;

Group 10: Greece, Poland, **Bosnia-Herzegovina**, Montenegro;

Group 11: **Turkey**, Romania, Andorra, Wales;

Group 12: Israel, **Portugal**, Finland, Bulgaria;

Group 13: Switzerland, Spain, **Belarus**, Faroe Islands.

The best two in each group and the top two number threes will qualify for the elite round.

Record number of participants

Forty-six national associations will be taking part in the 2008/09 European Women's Under-19 Championship, a new participation record for this competition, which is now into its 12th season.



Only two of these associations were not directly concerned by the draw made at UEFA's headquarters in Nyon on 11 December: Belarus, who qualify automatically as hosts of the final round in July 2009, and titleholders Germany, exempt from the first qualifying round.

It will also be the first time that the Belarus Football Federation has hosted the final round of a UEFA competition.

The teams were drawn into the following 11 groups:

Group 1: **Portugal**, Norway, Romania, Faroe Islands;

Group 2: **Poland**, Austria, Armenia, Turkey;

Group 3: **Sweden**, Wales, Croatia, Latvia;

Group 4: Netherlands, Spain, **Lithuania**, Cyprus;

Group 5: Scotland, England, **Slovenia**, Slovakia;

Group 6: Czech Republic, Finland, **Azerbaijan**, Northern Ireland;

Group 7: Iceland, Republic of Ireland, **Israel**, Greece;

Group 8: Hungary, Russia, **Bosnia-Herzegovina**, Moldova;

Group 9: France, Belgium, **FYR Macedonia**, Georgia;

Group 10: Switzerland, Denmark, **Serbia**, Kazakhstan;

Maurice Burlaz trophy settles in Spain

The Maurice Burlaz trophy was awarded for the first time in 1990, to honour the national association that achieved the best results in UEFA men's youth competitions over two consecutive years.

Its name is a tribute to the former vice-chairman of the Youth Football Committee and pioneer of youth football development, Maurice Burlaz. Last year, Spain took the trophy for the sixth time, and the third time in a row, entitling the Spanish FA to keep the award for good.

At this point it was decided to modify somewhat the rules of the competition, now called *UEFA Youth Football Award (Boys) – Maurice Burlaz Trophy*. The trophy is no longer awarded in even years, but in odd, meaning a transitional phase was required: the 2005/06 results, which had already been used to determine the previous recipients, have been combined this time with those from the 2006/07 season to decide on the new winners. Spain, the current titleholders in both UEFA men's youth competitions, have taken the trophy for the seventh time, leaving Germany and the Czech Republic in joint second position. The ranking takes into account the results of the Under-17 and Under-19 European Championships of the previous two seasons. Eight points are awarded to the champions of each competition, seven to the finalists, six to the semi-finalists, two to the third-placed teams in the final-round groups, and one to those in fourth. The best possible score is therefore 32 points. Spain took the trophy with a remarkable 30 points this year.



A brand-new Maurice Burlaz trophy for Spain, who know all about success at youth level.

seven to the finalists, six to the semi-finalists, two to the third-placed teams in the final-round groups, and one to those in fourth. The best possible score is therefore 32 points. Spain took the trophy with a remarkable 30 points this year.



The draws for the women's youth competitions.

UEFA-plivoods.ch



Jim Boyce presents the fair play trophies to Norway's women's U19 captain, Maren Mjelde, and France's women's U19 captain, Amandine Henry.

UEFA-plivoods.ch

Group 11: Ukraine, Italy, **Bulgaria**, Estonia.

The first qualifying round will be played between 25 and 30 September in the form of mini-tournaments in the countries highlighted in bold. The top two in each group will progress to the second qualifying round – in which Germany will also participate – along with the third-placed side with the best record. The teams will be drawn into six groups of four for the second qualifying round, which will take place in April 2009. The group winners and the best runner-up will join the hosts for the final round in Belarus.

2008 final round in France

In the current championship, the 24 teams that made it through the first qualifying round were drawn in December into the following groups for the second qualifying round:

Group 1: **Finland**, Sweden, Austria, Czech Republic;

Group 2: Iceland, England, **Belgium**, Poland;

Group 3: Germany, Hungary, Russia, **Romania**;

Group 4: Denmark, Scotland, **Switzerland**, Belarus;

Group 5: Norway, Italy, Ukraine, **Portugal**;

Group 6: Republic of Ireland, **Spain**, Netherlands, Serbia.

Mini-tournament hosts in bold.

The group winners and the best runner-up (the runner-up with the best record against the rest of the top three in the group) go through to this summer's final round in France, alongside the host nation. Germany have held the title for the last two seasons.

Sights set on New Zealand in the Women's Under-17 Championship

Two draws for the European Women's Under-17 Championship were also conducted in Nyon in December, one for the second qualifying round of the current competition, and the other for the first qualifying round of the 2008/09 championship.



The final round in May this year will be hosted by one of the countries still in contention and involve the four group winners from the second qualifying round in the championship's inaugural season.

Group 1: England, Netherlands, **Czech Republic**, Belgium;

Group 2: **France**, Scotland, Norway, Republic of Ireland;

Group 3: **Germany**, Sweden, Switzerland, Poland;

Group 4: Finland, Iceland, **Denmark**, Russia.

The second qualifying round matches will be played in March and April. For the teams that ultimately finish the championship in the top three places, the adventure will continue in the autumn in New Zealand, where the inaugural FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup will take place.

2008/09 groups

Forty teams have entered the second European Women's Under-17 Championship. They have been drawn into the following groups:

Group 1: **Belgium**, Denmark, Kazakhstan, Georgia;

Group 2: **Italy**, France, Azerbaijan, Iceland;

Group 3: Hungary, Ukraine, **Moldova**, Lithuania;

Group 4: Poland, Czech Republic, **FYR Macedonia**, Latvia;

Group 5: Republic of Ireland, Netherlands, **Turkey**, Faroe Islands;

Group 6: Finland, Germany, **Bulgaria**, Serbia;

Group 7: Russia, Sweden, **Slovenia**, Armenia;

Group 8: Switzerland, Scotland, **Belarus**, Israel;

Group 9: Wales, Spain, **Romania**, Croatia;

Group 10: Norway, England, **Estonia**, Greece.

Mini-tournament hosts in bold.

The group winners and the six best runners-up go through to the second round.



Germany (Dzsenifer Marozsan, 16) is a leading figure in women's football, both at youth and elite level.

Bongarts/Getty Images

LOOKING AHEAD TO EURO2008



Referees selected

NOT LONG AFTER THE EURO 2008 FINAL ROUND DRAW IN LUCERNE, UEFA'S REFEREES COMMITTEE APPOINTED 12 TEAMS OF REFEREES TO TAKE CHARGE OF THE 31 MATCHES TO BE PLAYED IN AUSTRIA AND SWITZERLAND FROM 7 TO 29 JUNE.

Applying the same principle as for EURO 2004, the committee has appointed teams comprising a referee and two assistant referees of the same nationality. The trios concerned have already proved that they can work well together and have had the

opportunity to fine-tune their team work this season by officiating together in top-level UEFA competition matches, chiefly in the UEFA Champions League.

The 12 following teams have been selected:

The Referees Committee also selected eight referees as fourth officials: Ivan Bebek (Croatia), Stéphane Lannoy (France), Viktor Kassai (Hungary), Kristinn Jakobsson (Iceland), Grzegorz Gilewski (Poland), Olegario Manuel Bartolo F. Benquerença (Portugal), Craig Thomson (Scotland) and Damir Skomina (Slovenia).

The 44 officials will meet in Switzerland from 14 to 17 April for a preparatory course during which they will undergo fitness tests and receive precise instructions for the final round. From 3 June, they will be staying in Regensdorf, close to Zurich, in a hotel which will serve as their base until 26 June. A doctor, physiotherapist and a fitness expert will be on hand there for them.

Referee	Assistant referee	Country
Konrad Plautz	Egon Bereuter Markus Mayr	Austria
Frank De Bleckere	Peter Hermans Alex Verstraeten	Belgium
Howard Webb	Darren Cann Mike Mullarkey	England
Herbert Fandel	Carsten Kadach Volker Wezel	Germany
Kyros Vassaras	Dimitris Bozatzidis Dimitris Saraidaris	Greece
Roberto Rosetti	Alessandro Griselli Paolo Calcagno	Italy
Pieter Vink	Adriaan Inia Hans Ten Hoove	Netherlands
Tom Henning Ovrebo	Geir Åge Holen Erik Raestad	Norway
Lubos Michel	Roman Slysko Martin Balko	Slovakia
Manuel Enrique Mejuto Gonzalez	Juan Carlos Yuste Jimenez Jesús Calvo Guadamuro	Spain
Peter Fröjdfeldt	Stefan Wittberg Henrik Andrén	Sweden
Massimo Busacca	Matthias Arnet Stéphane Cuhat	Switzerland



Konrad Plautz



Frank De Bleckere



Pieter Vink



Tom Henning Ovrebo

Jakob Kellenberger, President of the ICRC, and Michel Platini at the press conference announcing the partnership between UEFA and the ICRC for EURO 2008.



UEFA-plivoods.ch



News from Brussels

On 13 December, in Lisbon, the EU member states adopted the so-called EU Reform Treaty, which includes a historic article on sport and makes explicit reference to the specific nature of sport. The UEFA president, Michel Platini, described this acknowledgement as "a very important step forward".

According to the new Article 149, the European Union "shall contribute to the promotion of European sporting issues, while taking account of its specific nature, its structures based on voluntary activity and its social and educational function." "Union action shall be aimed at (...) developing the European dimension in sport, by promoting fairness and openness in sporting competitions and cooperation between bodies responsible for sports, and by protecting the physical and moral integrity of sportsmen and sportswomen, especially the youngest sportsmen and sportswomen."

The article retains the substance of the text proposed in the aborted project to establish a new constitution for Europe which was rejected in 2005. It is also in line with the 2000 Nice Declaration, which called upon the EU to "take account of the social, educational and cultural functions inherent in sport and making it special, in order that the code of ethics and the solidarity essential to the preservation of its social role may be respected and nurtured."

However, the main purpose of Article 149 of the Reform Treaty is to devolve power to the European Union to legislate on sport. By reading this article alongside the European Commission's White

The officials chosen to stay on for the closing stages of the tournament will then move to Vienna.

"Score for the Red Cross"

In November, the Executive Committee decided to repeat for EURO 2008 the partnership it entered into with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for EURO 2004.

The purpose of this cooperation is to allow a humanitarian cause to benefit from the popularity of a major sporting event. This time, a public fundraising campaign will be organised to raise money to support landmine victims in Afghanistan. Via a website, (www.scorefortheredcross.org) which will be launched in the spring, supporters of the 16 teams involved in the EURO 2008 final round will be able to buy virtual goals for their favourite team. As the tournament progresses, a table system will show which countries have the most generous fans.

UEFA will also make a direct contribution to the ICRC by paying out EUR 4,000 for every goal scored during the final round.

Various other activities are also planned, including the sale of a bracelet, which was presented at the draw in Lucerne.

■ UEFA is also contributing EUR 500,000 to the EUROSCHOOLS 2008 project. More than 300 schools in Austria, Switzerland and Liechtenstein are taking part by acting as ambassadors for UEFA's 53 member associations during the 2007/08 school year. By means of a draw, each school was assigned a country to learn about during the school year.

This activity is combined with local, regional and national football tournaments in which the schools play in the colours of their designated UEFA association. The teams, composed of 12-14 year-olds, play according to special rules which focus on fair play. A final round will take place in June at the same time as EURO 2008.



Howard Webb



Herbert Fandel



Kyros Vassaras



Roberto Rosetti



Lubos Michel



Manuel Enrique Mejuto Gonzalez



Peter Fröjdfeldt



Massimo Busacca

→ Paper on Sport published last summer (see uefadirect Nos 64 and 65), it can be assumed that legislative initiatives concerning the conditions for qualifying as and operating as a sports agent, the fight against doping, and discrimination will be examined in due course.

Creating this right to act also means that the EU Council of Ministers will have a "sport" formation when the treaty comes into force. In turn, the member states will have to be more enterprising when it comes to sports-related matters at European level.

Although questions remain regarding how Article 149 will be interpreted by the European Commission and the European Court of Justice, the UEFA president sees this written acknowledgement of the specific nature of sport as a source of hope for the Olympic and sports movements. *"A treaty-based reference to the specific nature of sport is a positive development. We look forward to these principles being applied in practice."* Before that, in order for it to come into force, the Reform Treaty has to be ratified by the 27 EU member states.



Meetings and other activities

UEFA Congress in Zagreb

Delegates from UEFA's 53 member associations will be gathering in Zagreb on 31 January for the 32nd UEFA Congress.

It may be the first time that a UEFA Congress has been hosted by the Croatian Football Association, but it is not the first to be held on Croatian territory, as UEFA held its tenth Congress in Dubrovnik on 8 May 1970. At that time UEFA Congresses were held biennially and UEFA had 33 member associations.

The 10th UEFA Congress re-elected Gustav Wiederkehr as UEFA president for a third term. This time round, there are no elections on the agenda, the UEFA Executive Committee having decided, in accordance with the Statutes, that until 2009 Mario Lefkaritis should take over the seat on the FIFA Executive Committee

vacated by Michel Platini when he became a FIFA vice-president on his election as UEFA president.

Apart from the usual congress business of annual reports and financial matters, various presentations will be made, including information on the feasibility study regarding the expansion of the European Championship final round.

Important step in relations with the clubs

On 15 January, at FIFA's headquarters in Zurich, FIFA, UEFA and representatives of some of Europe's major clubs signed a letter of intent described as starting a new chapter in relations between the governing bodies and the clubs. The European Club Forum, whose next meeting was brought forward to 21 and 22 January, then had to give its decision on the creation of a new, independent body recognised by UEFA to represent the interests of the clubs at European level (see next issue of uefadirect or uefa.com).

Change at the UEFA administration

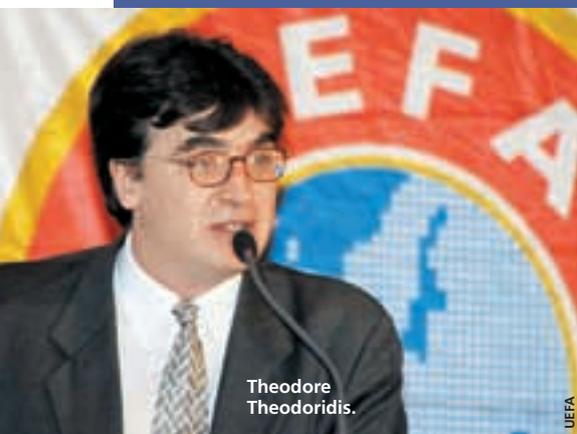
Jacob Erel, former General Secretary of the Israel Football Association, who joined the UEFA administration in 2000, first as Director of the Competition Organisation Division, then as Director

of the National Associations Division, left his position in mid-January.

The new director of the National Associations Division is *Theodore Theodoridis*, a member of the board of the Greek Football Association since 1997, who is already very familiar with UEFA, having been a member of the Stadium and Security Committee for six years

and subsequently vice-chairman of the current Club Competitions Committee.

He took up his new position with the UEFA administration on 22 January.



Draw for the first European Under-21 Futsal Tournament

In April 2007, in view of the continuing popularity of futsal in Europe, the UEFA Executive Committee approved the introduction of an Under-21 futsal competition.

At its meeting in Lucerne, the Executive Committee, at the recommendation of the Futsal and Beach Soccer Committee, decided that the final round of this inaugural competition would be hosted by the Russian Football Union in St Petersburg. The



Russian team therefore qualifies automatically for the final round.

Twenty-eight other national associations have entered the competition. They were divided into the following seven groups in a draw made in Nyon on 13 December:

*Group 1: **Slovenia**, Belgium, Georgia, Bulgaria;*

*Group 2: Ukraine, **Poland**, Lithuania, Romania;*

*Group 3: **Spain**, Slovakia, Greece, Switzerland;*

*Group 4: Netherlands, **Andorra**, Azerbaijan, Republic of Ireland;*

*Group 5: **Hungary**, Belarus, Latvia, Kazakhstan;*

*Group 6: **Italy**, Moldova, France, Turkey;*

*Group 7: Czech Republic, Croatia, **FYR Macedonia**, Armenia.*

Mini-tournament hosts shown in bold.

The group matches will take place between 7 and 13 April. The seven group winners will join Russia in the final round in December.

February draw for the UEFA Regions' Cup

The UEFA Regions' Cup, created in 1998 for amateur footballers, moves into its sixth season in 2008/09.

The competition is experiencing a surge in popularity, as 41 national associations have entered – a record, and a considerable increase over the 32 teams that took part in the first competition and even compared with the 37 involved in 2006/07.

The 2008/09 competition kicks off on 26 February, when the draw for the preliminary and intermediate rounds will be made at UEFA's headquarters in Nyon.

The final round will take place in June 2009 in the country of one of the teams that reaches that stage.



Club World Cup for AC Milan

AC Milan are certainly not short of international trophies, having, apart from anything else, won the European Cup/UEFA Champions League seven times so far.

The last trophy they lifted was, however, a bit special, first because they were the first European club to win the Club World Cup in the competition's short history, and secondly, because AC Milan have achieved the international treble: UEFA Champions League, UEFA Super Cup and Club World Cup, a feat that they also achieved in 1989 and 1990, when the precursor to the Club World Cup, the European/South American Cup, was still in place.

AC Milan have less fond memories of their last appearance in the European/South American Cup, in 2003, as they lost on penalty kicks to none other than Boca Juniors of Argentina, their opponents in the final of the 2007 Club World Cup.

The Italian club was therefore intent on evening out the record on 16 December at the Yokohama Inter-

national Stadium. They went into the lead almost halfway through the first half with a goal from Filippo Inzaghi, but it only took Boca two minutes to equalise, with Rodrigo Palacio putting the ball into the back of the net.

Led by Kaká, who was in superb form and who had a fantastic end to his year, receiving the Golden Ball and the FIFA World Player of the Year award, and being named best player of the tournament in the Club World Cup, there was no stopping AC Milan in the second half, with a further three goals – from Nesta, Kaká and Inzaghi – assuring them of victory, while Boca were only able to reduce the margin thanks to a late goal.

On their way to the final, Carlo Ancelotti's players faced tough opposition from Urawa Red Diamonds (Japan) in the semi-finals, beating them 1-0, while Boca eliminated Etoile Sportive du Sahel (Tunisia) by the same score. Urawa Red Diamonds finished the competition in third place, by beating Etoile Sportive du Sahel on penalty kicks after the match had ended 2-2.

As a result of their latest victory, AC Milan's tally of major international trophies goes up to 18.



AUSTRIA



Christmas bazaar makes net profit of EUR 7,288!

Now already 26 years old, the traditional Christmas bazaar of the Austrian Football Association (ÖFB) took place at the Ernst Happel stadium in Vienna on the third weekend in Advent. For numerous football fans, it was an opportunity not to be missed and they flocked to the bazaar in their hoards. The ÖFB is also grateful to the likes of UEFA, FIFA, national team players and the many sponsors and friends who generously donated items to the sale.

Thanks to the keen football fan shoppers and collectors, the bazaar made a net profit of EUR 7,288 which has gone towards the association's "Charity 08" campaign and raises the total amount in the ÖFB's benefit project account to an impressive EUR 57,388.45.



Alfred Ludwig, General Secretary of the Austrian FA, mans one of the stalls at the Christmas bazaar.

Hundreds of clubs, the Bundesliga, regional associations, as well as the ÖFB's sponsors, have already donated liberally to the "Charity 08" campaign. In addition, at the end-of-year celebration in November, collectors' items such as an original jersey from the U20 World Cup in Canada (worn by team captain Sebastian Prödl) and a Champions League ball autographed by Ronaldinho were auctioned. The net profit made from this event also went towards the "Charity 08" campaign. The aim is to collect a six-figure amount which will be used to assist needy members of the football family in the coming year. In the spring, the ÖFB will present the projects it is supporting.

Peter Klinglmüller

AZERBAIJAN



Ball festival in Baku

In accordance with the state programme for the development of football in Azerbaijan from 2005 to 2015 signed by the president of the republic, İlham



The juggling competition attracted a big crowd.

AFFA

Aliyev, and with the agreement signed by the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA) and McDonald's, a "ball festival" was held in Baku on 16 December in which 151 children participated. Asif Bagirov, a well-known correspondent in Baku, presided over the festival and kicked off the ceremony with an opening speech.

Then the floor was given to Elkhan Mammadov, General Secretary of the AFFA, who said: "The main aim of this festival, which will be a traditional event, is to spot talented young footballers, to develop football for children, and to highlight the role of football in a healthy lifestyle. I believe that the "ball festival" will play a large part in achieving these objectives. I wish good luck to everyone taking part in the festival."

Sayavush Ibrahimov explained the rules of the competition. Participants who could juggle the ball the most times in three minutes would go through to the next stage, which would be judged in a similar way. The winner, runner-up and third-placed participant would be those who juggled the most.

Parviz Mutallimov (born in 1994) finished in third place, Mammad Khalilov (1993) in second place and Rahman Shabanov (1996) in first place. They all received prizes, which were presented by the acting president of the AFFA, Elshad Nasirov, General Secretary Elkhan Mammadov, national team goalkeeper Farhad Valiyev, representatives of McDonald's and Hyundai Auto Azerbaijan.

T-shirts and balls were awarded to all the participants by the AFFA at the end.

Ulviya

BELGIUM



2018 World Cup bid launched

The Belgio-Dutch bid to host the 2018 World Cup was presented in Brussels on 20 December.

Alain Courtois, coordinator of the project in Belgium and the Netherlands, and former EURO 2000 director, presented the project to the Belgian political, economic and social authorities. Other Belgian figures also addressed the gathering, including the prime minister, Guy Verhofstadt, and the president of the Belgian Football Association, François De Keersmaecker.

All agreed that it was a dream, but an achievable one. Nothing is impossible, as François De Keersmaecker said: "When my predecessors wanted to host EURO 2000 in Belgium and the Netherlands, a lot of people were sceptical about the chances of such a project succeeding. However, the organisers of the time, who

are also supporting this bid, proved to everyone that our two countries were capable of organising a major international event, as EURO 2000 was a great success."

On 14 November, representatives of the Belgian and Dutch football associations met the FIFA president, Joseph S. Blatter, in what was described as a positive meeting. However, we must not get too enthusiastic, as several bids will be up for consideration and the other countries in the running to host the 2018 World Cup will also have aspects in their favour.



François De Keersmaecker, President of the Belgian FA (left) and Alain Courtois launch the Belgio-Dutch bid to host the 2018 World Cup finals.

We will therefore have to make a huge effort to increase our chances of organising the greatest football tournament in the world. Stadiums will also have to be built or renovated, as one of the prerequisites for hosting the World Cup is to have stadiums with a minimum capacity of 40,000 seats. In this respect, the assistance of the public and private sectors will be necessary.

A joint effort will therefore be required to ensure that our bid can be handed in to FIFA by 31 December 2010, a year ahead of the final decision, which FIFA will take in December 2011.

Pierre Cornez

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA



New president and national coach

The annual general meeting of the Football Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FF BHZ) was held in Sarajevo at the beginning of December. A new member of the presidium was elected, following the sudden death of the president, Milan Jelic. In addition to Iljo Dominkovic and Sulejman Colakovic, the new member of the presidency will be Bogdan Ceko, who was voted for by 42 of the 52 delegates present. The new president of the federation for the next 16 months is Iljo Dominkovic.

A meeting of the FF BHZ executive committee was also held in December, at which the head coaches of all the national teams, except for Velimir Stojnic, were dismissed, including Fuad Muzurovic, head coach of the national A team. The executive committee was not satisfied with the final reports on the results achieved by the national teams in their qualifying matches last year. However, after making it through the first round of qualifiers, Stojnic's Under-17s will try to do better in March this year when they take on the Netherlands, Hungary and Norway in the elite round.

The resignation of the director of all the national teams, Ahmet Pasalic, was accepted.

To replace Muzurovic, the executive committee unanimously elected Meho Kodro as the new head coach. From 20 candidates, the presidium drew up a shortlist of three candidates: Lothar Matthäus (Germany), Zlatko Kranjcar (Croatia) and Meho Kodro (Bosnia-Herzegovina). The executive committee gave its backing to Meho Kodro (40), who will lead the national team in their 2010 World Cup qualifying campaign, where the Bosnians will meet Spain, Turkey, Belgium, Armenia and Estonia in Group 5.

Meho Kodro actually captained the Bosnia-Herzegovina national team during Muzurovic's first mandate. Meho Kodro leads his players out for the first time for a friendly away to Japan on 30 January.



The AGM of the federation.

"It is a great honour to lead the national team of my home country, especially since I played for this team. I am expecting a difficult assignment and heavy responsibility, and I hope that all of us together, with the FF BHZ players and fans, can make a successful start to the next qualifying competition", said Meho Kodro.

Meho Kodro knows all about Bosnian football. He played with goalkeeper Adnan Guso, who still plays for the national team. Kodro also played two matches for the former Yugoslavian national team, led by Ivica Osim, against Sweden in Stockholm (4-3 win for the

home team) and the Netherlands in Amsterdam (2-0 win for the home team).

Kodro, who played for Velez (Mostar), Real Sociedad, Barcelona, Tenerife, Alaves and Maccabi Tel Aviv, made 13 appearances for the national team of Bosnia-Herzegovina and scored three times between his debut against Albania (0-0) in Zenica in April 1996 and his last match at Kosevo in April 2000 against a FIFA World Stars selection. He also played for the national team in the 1998 World Cup qualifying competition.

He was assistant coach at Real Sociedad (Spain).

Fuad Kravac

BULGARIA



Dimitar Berbatov footballer of the year

In the annual poll to select Bulgaria's footballer of the year, Dimitar Berbatov was voted the top choice by the 139 football reporters and pundits. The Bulgaria and Tottenham forward took 327 out of a possible 417 points. The runners-up were Bulgaria and Manchester City winger Martin Petrov with 276 points, and Georgi Petkov, goalkeeper of the Bulgarian champions Levski Sofia and of the Bulgarian



Borislav Mihaylov, President of the BFU (right) is to meet the president of Bulgaria.

national team, with 47 points. Altogether, 32 players were nominated for the poll.

Separate awards were handed out for the best goalkeeper (Georgi Petkov, Levski Sofia), best defender (Alexander Tunchev, CSKA Sofia), best midfielder (Marcho Dafchev, Lokomotiv Sofia) and best forward (Zdravko Lazarov, Slavia Sofia). The award for the most improved young footballer was won by Nikolai Dimitrov, who at the age of 19 broke into the first team of the Bulgarian champions, Levski Sofia.

In mid-December, the Bulgarian Football Union (BFU) organised a national conference dealing with the issues of youth football and youth development. The conference was in accordance with UEFA's requirements for youth football development. The forum ended up taking five major decisions, the most important of →

CYPRUS



Positive results

After evaluating its senior national team's overall performance, as well as its progress and encouraging results in the EURO 2008 qualifiers, the Cyprus FA has decided to extend its contract with head coach Angelos Anastasiades until 2010.

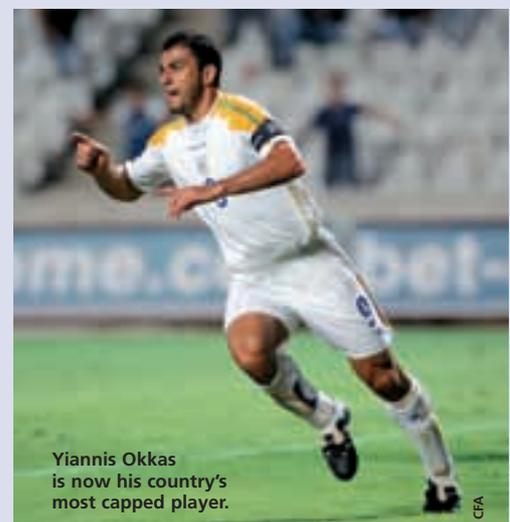
The national team played in Group D and was chasing third place right up until the last qualifying match. Unfortunately, the team ended up sixth, but with a total of 14 points this was Cyprus's most successful qualifying campaign ever. The effort required was massive, as five of the team's six opponents were ranked above them.

Setting another record, captain Yiannis Okkas took his number of national appearances to 84 during the EURO 2008 campaign, making him Cyprus's most-capped player, ahead of ex-captain, and previous record-holder, Charalambos Pittas, who was capped 82 times.

Cyprus is now preparing and planning for the 2010 World Cup qualifiers and, as a first step, the national team will host a friendly against Ukraine on 6 February.

In November, the national Under-19 team made it through to the elite round of the European Under-19 Championship. In the qualifying round, Cyprus finished second in Group 10. In the elite round, the side will come up against Hungary, Portugal and Lithuania. All the matches are to be played in Hungary, from 18 to 25 May.

Kyriacos Giorgallis



Yiannis Okkas is now his country's most capped player.

→ which is considered to be the decision to schedule a meeting of the BFU president, Borislav Mihaylov, with the president of Bulgaria. During this meeting, issues to be addressed will include the problem of facility and ground ownership and management. In Bulgaria, club stadiums, training grounds and other football-related facilities are not owned by the professional football clubs but by the local authorities. This means that the clubs have no incentive to develop and modernise the grounds, stadiums and practice facilities for youth football.

In mid-January, representatives from all the football associations in European Qualifying Group 8 for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa got together in Sofia to prepare their match schedule for 2008 and 2009. The meeting was attended by representatives from Italy, Ireland, Cyprus, Georgia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria.

Borislav Konstantinov

GERMANY



2007 integration prize awarded to Turkish club in Berlin

The German Football Association (DFB) and its general sponsor, Mercedes-Benz, have awarded their joint "integration prize" in three categories to the Berlin club Türkiyemspor, to St Norbert's school in Vreden and to the Frankfurt sports district. Some 200 clubs, schools and other groups submitted projects.

"It is impressive to see the huge commitment and imagination that has gone into the initiatives to promote peaceful and fair co-existence in our country," said the DFB's president, Theo Zwanziger. Oliver Bierhoff, manager of the national team, presented the prizes on 4 January during the Mercedes-Benz Youth Cup at the Glaspalast arena in Sindelfingen.

Türkiyemspor Berlin e.V. was founded in 1978 in the Berlin borough of Kreuzberg by immigrants. Today, Türkiyemspor, the best known Turkish-rooted club in Germany, consists of three men's teams, 14 youth teams and three girls' teams. Its membership is multi-ethnic. Türkiyemspor has always been a target for right-wing extremists. The club management endeavours to deal with this problem in a constructive way. Thus, an anti-racism project was developed in cooperation with schools, youth clubs and mosques. Likewise, the promotion of girls' football is sending a signal to the Turkish community. The Catholic St Norbert's school, an inner city voluntary all-day school, places an emphasis on integration, for the purpose of which afternoon football lessons are also used. In the "Special Prize" category, the Frankfurt sports district was recognised for its "NO to Racism" project in the Gallus district of the city. Young people were integrated into the job market and also encouraged to join local football clubs.

ENGLAND



Cooperation with Coaching For Hope

England women's head coach Hope Powell shared her football expertise with underprivileged children in Cape Town in December in her role as ambassador for FA international charity partner Coaching For Hope.

Coaching For Hope (CFH) uses football to empower vulnerable young people in the developing world and makes them aware of the dangers of HIV and AIDS.



Hope Powell shares her expertise.

It does this by training local coaches and educators to coach football and to use the game to spark debate about HIV and AIDS among children in their communities.

CFH already runs successful programmes in Burkina Faso and Mali, and with the 2010 World Cup in South Africa on the horizon, the charity chose to pilot its project in Cape Town to coincide with World AIDS Day on 1 December.

South Africa has the highest number of people living with HIV/AIDS in the world, with an average of 1,500 people infected daily. There are more than 42m HIV-infected people globally, with nearly 30 million of those in Africa.

Powell said: *"I feel proud to be involved in The FA's international work and with Coaching For Hope, and I was delighted to be part of the coaching programme."*

"It was a real eye-opener, not just for myself, but for the other coaches from England. It's great to be able to share our skills with local coaches in South Africa and to help their development."

"It was the first time some of the male and female coaches on the course had been coached by a woman, but that has hopefully helped to emphasise the need to empower girls and women so that they can tackle the issues surrounding HIV and AIDS."

"Girls and women in Africa need positive role models and I hope my presence proved that irrespective of gender, you can still take responsibility for your own destiny and aim high."

Powell was joined at the Marsh Memorial Children's Home in Rondenbosch by coaches from Tottenham Hotspur, Everton, Queens Park Rangers and a local trainer from an organisation called Kicking Aids Out.

Nada Grkinic



Oliver Bierhoff presents the awards.

The prize is an important element of the DFB's integration work. Its national teams and youth teams have long reflected this social reality. Since December 2006, Gül Keskinler, who takes care of this work for the DFB on a voluntary basis, has been involved in offering training as part of the association's coach and referee education. Each winning project receives a Mercedes-Benz Vito van. The second prize in each category was EUR 10,000 in cash, and the third prize EUR 5,000.

Thomas Hackbarth

ICELAND



Olafur Johannesson the new man in charge

Late in October, the FA of Iceland announced that it would not negotiate a new contract with the national team coach, Eyjolfur Sverrisson. By mutual decision, it was decided that Sverrisson would step down right away and not be in control for the last EURO 2008 qualifying match against Denmark.



Denmark-Iceland was the first match under the direction of Olafur Johannesson.

A few days later, a new national team coach was introduced, 50-year-old Olafur Johannesson. Johannesson had just stepped down as a coach of FH Hafnarfjordur. Under his helm, FH won three domestic league titles in a row, while in the 2007 season, FH won the Icelandic cup for the first time in its history but came second in the league.

Johannesson picked three new players for the squad to play Denmark, a game which Denmark won 3-0. The next task for Johannesson is at the beginning of February, when the national team will play in an international four nations tournament in Malta. The opponents there will be the hosts, Armenia and Belarus. The tournament takes place on 2, 4 and 6 February, with only the last date classified as an international date. It will therefore be a good opportunity for Johannesson to take a look at players who play in the domestic league in Iceland. A friendly game against the Faroe Islands will be played indoors at Kornum, a full-size football hall, on 16 March. This is the first time that the men's national team will play indoors. The national team will also play Slovakia away on 26 March. The last scheduled friendly game is on 28 May, when Wales will visit Iceland and play at the Laugardalsvollur stadium.

These friendly games will come in very useful for Johannesson as he prepares the Icelandic team for its 2010 World Cup qualifying campaign, in which Iceland will play in Group 9 with the Netherlands, Scotland, Norway and FYR Macedonia.

Thorvaldur Ingimundarson

ISRAEL



New website

The end of last month ushered in a new and exciting era in Israeli football as the Israel Football Association (IFA) launched its new website, www.football.org.il. The aim of the site is to bring modern-day football closer to clubs, players, coaches, and fans, as well as to communities worldwide. With a combination of advanced web technology, data management and user-friendly design, the IFA website provides a wealth of in-depth historical and up-to-date information about Israeli football.

The site comprises over 100,000 pages, with data on around 1,600 teams and over 35,000 players from all the domestic leagues in Israel – from the premier league's top flight all the way down to the youth divisions. Users are now able to conduct a simple search and discover all kinds of information.

Next month, the English version will be launched and a unique national team search engine will be unveiled, enabling users to receive information on various historic national team matches in all categories. As part of its unique services, the site has an FAQ section, a download centre and extensive details about clubs, players and match officials.

Each individual (player, coach or match official) has their own webpage that is automatically updated with a wealth of statistics following matches. A special section is also reserved for authorised users (club and team representatives and IFA members) providing access to more information than is available to the general public, including personal data, IFA budget approvals and disciplinary records.

Ofer Ronen

LATVIA



Astafjevs best player of 2007

A poll conducted among the media, coaches and Latvian FA (LFF) senior officials revealed that the best football player in Latvia in 2007 was the national team and Skonto FC captain Vitalijs Astafjevs. He and the other ten laureates were honoured at Latvian football's annual event in Riga on 26 December.

According to the results of the poll, Latvia's top three players of 2007 were Vitalijs Astafjevs (Skonto FC), Kaspars Gorkss (Blackpool FC) and Juris Laizans (Kuban). Best woman football player was

Guna Abolina (Saldus FK Lutrini), best coach was Romans Grigorcuks (FK Ventspils), and the best three LMT Virsliga players were Vits Rimkus (FK Ventspils), Andris Vanins (FK Ventspils) and Astafjevs.

For particular positions in the 2007 LMT Virsliga, best goalkeeper was Vanins, best defender Deniss Ivanovs (Liepajas Metalurģis), best midfielder Astafjevs, and forward Rimkus. The best Under-21 player was Aleksandrs Cauna (Skonto FC) and best player in the Traffic First League was Aleksandrs Cekulajevs (FK Auda).

The match organisers prize for the 2007 LMT Virsliga went to FK Ventspils. The Latvian Football Federation also made an award to the best football photographer – Zigismunds Zalmanis, to the best football journalists – Anatolijs Kreipans and Vladimirs Karpuskins, and to the best football media – the Latvian LTV7 channel.

In other news, the traditional Livonian cup was played between the Latvian and Estonian champions in mid-January. It was held in conjunction with the Baltic League meeting for 2008, where all clubs and federations of the Baltic countries met to discuss the forthcoming season.

■ **Gunars Akerbergs**, an active runner, statistician, football organiser and executive secretary of the LFF, passed away on 3 January after a long illness. His colleagues at the LFF express their condolences to his family and friends.

Martins Hartmanis

MALTA



Healthy relationship with the media

Unless national associations have a sound relationship with all stakeholders in the game, football cannot thrive along healthy lines. Foremost in reflecting this rapport is the media, whose close links with the public make it possible for the associations to build a good image.

Such a relationship is an integral part of this image-building commitment which is being advocated by UEFA in its educational programme for all its member associations. This was the principal theme of the European confederation's very fruitful KISS (Knowledge Information Sharing Scenario) seminar held in December under its HatTrick programme.

The Malta FA has long been supporting this principle of optimising its links with the football fraternity through proper media and communication management. Thus, it is helping to build a perception as an efficient and cooperative association.

For a small country like Malta, the service to football given by the sports media →



Vitalijs Astafjevs, Latvia's player of the year, is congratulated by Zigismunds Zalmanis, who himself received the prize of best football photographer.



D. Aquilina

The Malta FA is developing its relations with the media.

→ is remarkably extensive. Nine daily and weekly newspapers, a weekly magazine, a comprehensive annual publication, 11 radio and TV stations and four websites are testimony to this.

The Public Relations and Publications Committee of the Malta FA, set up specifically to further promote the association's image, is aware of this input by the Maltese sports media, and is constantly engaged in maintaining good relations with the journalists.

Press conferences, seminars and social events involving the media are regular activities on the Malta FA's calendar. Moreover, the association's weekly TV programme, meant to complement programmes on other stations of the same genre, has a formative element as its main raison d'être, and is hence meant as a tool to maintain good public relations.

Further proof of this healthy relationship is the Maltese association's practice of allowing journalists to be present as observers during the working sessions of its council.

Alex Vella

MOLDOVA



Gala for laureates of Moldovan football

Igor Dobrovolskiy, head coach of Moldova's national team, received the coach of the year award for 2007 at the laureates' gala held on 21 December – a traditional celebration when the FA of Moldova recognises the outstanding football personalities of the year.

Dobrovolskiy took up the function of head coach on 22 December 2006, at a time when the national team was bottom of Group C in the EURO 2008 qualifying competition. Under his leadership, our players managed to win 11 points from only the next eight qualifiers, thereby putting Moldova in fifth place out of seven teams. In their last four matches, Moldova achieved ten points, beating Bosnia-Herzegovina, Malta as well as Hungary, and drawing against Turkey.

On 21 October, Dobrovolskiy renewed his contract with the FA of Moldova for another two years. At 40 years of age, he has enjoyed an impressive football career. He played for FC Nistru Chisinau, then went on to play for FC Dinamo Moscow, Castellon and Atletico Madrid, Servette, Genoa, Olympique Marseille and Fortuna Düsseldorf. As part of the USSR national team, he won a gold medal at the Seoul Olympics in 1988 (6 matches, 6 goals). With the same team, he also took part in the 1990 World Cup, after which he represented the CIS at EURO '92 and Russia at EURO '96.

At the gala, other awards were presented for the best player (Alexandru Epureanu, FC Moscow), best futsal player (Alexei Muntean, FC Dinamo Chisinau), best woman player (Sanda Gutu, FC Roma Puhaceni), best team (FC Dacia Chisinau) and best referee (Veaceslav Banari).

The ceremony continued by designating the best goalkeeper of the national championship (Nicolae Calancea, FC Zimbru Chisinau), the best defender (Vazha Tarnishvili, FC Sheriff), best midfielder (Nicolae Josan, FC Iskra Stali), best forward (Igor Picusciac, FC Tiraspol), and best goal-getter (Alekssei Kuciuk, FC Sheriff). FC Sheriff Tiraspol took the 2007 fair play award. Sergiu Caraman received the youth coach award, while the Ukrainian Oleksandr Derik (FC Dinamo Chisinau) was presented with the futsal coach award and Vladimir Colbasiuc with the futsal referee of the year award.

Viorel Frunza (FC Ceahlautul Piatra Neamt, Romania) won the people's football personality of the year award from the Sport Courier newspaper, Serghei Stroenco (FC Tiligul-Tiras Tiraspol) the "Loyalty Award" awarded by the Meridian Sport publication and, for his crucial goal against Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Vremea newspaper honoured Igo Bugaiov (FC Chernomorets Odessa, Ukraine).

This year, the FA of Moldova also introduced some new awards: "Most Valuable Grassroots Football Event 2007", won by FC Gloria Edinet; "Best Disabled Football Event 2007", awarded to the national Special Olympics Team which won bronze at the Special Olympics World Games in Shanghai last year; "Best Veterans Football Event 2007", (FC Maiak Chirsova); "Best Futsal Event 2007" (FC Camelot Chisinau); and, finally, "Best Women's Football Event 2007" (Igor Spaniora, FC Gloria Edinet) in recognition and appreciation of the work undertaken for the development of women's football.

The general sponsor of the FA of Moldova, the Rusnac company, also presented special awards to Radu Rebeja, captain of the national team, to Igor Dobrovolskiy, and to Pavel Cebanu, president of the FA of Moldova.

Victor Daghi



Pavel Cebanu (left), President of the Moldovan FA, presents Igor Dobrovolskiy with his award.

NORTHERN IRELAND



IFA Flybe 'George Best' Excellence Programme

The IFA county excellence programme, sponsored by Flybe and supported by the George Best Foundation, has just commenced the second twelve-week period of its second year. The programme, which covers all six counties, delivers a comprehensive technical development programme for boys and girls aged between 11 and 16. The current strategy is to provide young boys and girls in the province with a player pathway to international football leading to a possible career in professional football.



One of the county teams.

Coaching sessions take place on a weekly basis in each of the six counties. Four 90-minute sessions take place for U12 (1996) U13 (1995) U14 (1994) and U15 (1993) boys. Two one-hour sessions take place for U14/U16 girls. In these sessions players follow a structured curriculum which includes technical, tactical, physical and mental topics. Over 600 boys and 200 girls currently participate.

Inter-county games were arranged for U14 (1994) and U15 boys (1993) prior to the Christmas break in order for the Northern Ireland U15 international manager, John McCormack, to assess players for selection for the Tri Nation's competition in March against Wales and the Republic of Ireland. A squad of 36 players will be selected to participate in the competition, which is due to take place in Belfast this year. Further county games took place between Londonderry and Antrim, Tyrone and Fermanagh, Down and Antrim, and Tyrone and Armagh during which players were assessed. From this year's Northern Ireland U16 Victory Shield campaign, in which the team drew 2-2 with England in Blackpool and beat Wales 1-0 in Aberystwyth, all the players in the squad had participated in the County Excellence Programme, an indication that the networking of players in each county is a success.

The county coaches are heavily involved in the youth international set-up. County Armagh and Down's Steven Millar and Raymond Alexander are currently involved in coaching the national U15 side which is participating in the Tri Nations compe-



Michel Platini cuts the ribbon alongside Dan Flinter (on his right).

tion. County Tyrone's Paul Kee has been involved with the U16 Victory Shield side, and County Fermanagh's Christophe Moulin is assistant to U17 manager Kenny Shiels. The U17s qualified for the elite stage of the European Championships in Belgium, beating Moldova, Montenegro and Belgium. In January, a development squad of 16 players will be selected at U13 level (1995 boys) to participate in a tournament in the south of France. Led by County Antrim's Pascal Vaudequin, the squad will consist of players from all six counties.

Caroline Menary

POLAND



Year of successes – year of challenges

We wish that the year 2007 was not yet over. The last 12 months were indeed very successful for Polish football. Fans of the "white-reds" national team had a lot of reasons to be excited and emotional, and a lot of victories to celebrate.

First of all, Poles became euphoric in April after Michel Platini, the UEFA president, announced that Poland and Ukraine would be hosting EURO 2012. We can hardly wait for this great event and the possibility to invite fans from all parts of our continent.

The next cause for celebration was provided by the Polish national team which, for the first time in the history of our football, qualified for the European Championship final round. The team, led by Leo Beenhakker, finished top of a very difficult qualifying group, beating, among others, Portugal, the current vice-champions of Europe.

Whereas last year was full of successes, the year 2008 will be the one of challenges. We hope that the Polish national team will fulfil the expectations of their fans and do well in EURO 2008. The months ahead will also see an acceleration of preparatory work for EURO 2012. Poles like challenges and now it is time to tackle some of them.

Michal Kocieba / Bartek Marks



With nine goals to his name, Ebi Smolarek played a key role in Poland's qualification for EURO 2008.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND



New FAI headquarters officially opened

Last month, the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) moved to its new headquarters at the national sports campus in Abbotstown after over half a century at 80 Merrion Square, Dublin. The association's 167 staff will be based at the new facility, which was officially opened on Wednesday, 5 December by Seamus Brennan, TD, Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism, with Michel Platini, President of UEFA.

The general secretary of UEFA, David Taylor, and the chairman of the national sports campus, Dan Flinter, were among those in attendance at the opening ceremony.

The FAI is the first national governing body to take up residence at the national sports campus, and will be joined in 2008 by the Irish Institute of Sport. It is envisaged that the national sports campus will eventually be home to as many national governing sports bodies as possible.

SAN MARINO



Youth football research

On 21 November 2006, with the approval of its executive committee, the San Marino Football Association created a research department specifically to conduct research connected with youth football. The importance of this initiative was twofold: first, to make a scientific-cultural contribution based on the experimental phase of the research and, secondly, to enhance the image of our association.

The research work was organised following a series of preliminary meetings held from November 2006 to define the type of research, the material, the means and the collaboration that would be useful in the implementation of the project. The meetings also identified the need to conduct a series of analyses to establish a functional model of youth football activity, since, at international level, scientific work in this field is virtually non-existent to date. In particular, the need was identified to pursue the following objectives:

- establish the influence of physical fitness on playing performance;
- analyse youth football activity;
- develop useful strategies for optimising match preparation procedures;
- develop useful strategies for optimising coaching.

Starting last February, a series of assessments were undertaken, using tests to evaluate resistance, to define the

The 3,000m² building on the 350 acre site at Abbotstown will house the FAI's 167 staff as well as organisations such as the Professional Footballers Association of Ireland, the Irish Soccer Referees' Society, the Leinster Football Association, the Schoolboys Football Association of Ireland and the Dublin & District Schoolboys League.

FIFA, the governing body of world football, contributed USD 400,000 to the fit-out costs of the building from its Goal funding assistance programme, while European football's governing body, UEFA, contributed CHF 400,000 under the Hat-Trick investment programme.

The opening of the new headquarters completes the first phase of the FAI's national sports campus project.

The second phase of the association's facility will be the construction of a national academy with seven training pitches. The FAI is currently recruiting for an International Performance Director to oversee the academy.

Fran Whearty

functional characteristics of young footballers (born in 1992 and 1993). In April, these tests were followed by a series of play assessments, conducted during experimental matches and championship matches, to determine the demands of playing football at youth level. During this phase, GPS movement detectors were attached to the players to determine speed, acceleration and movement time. In each match, each player's heart rate was also measured, as was the motion of bodily fluids and perceived effort. In addition, the environmental conditions, the temperature and the humidity level were closely monitored.

At the end of last year, the research department tackled another subject, that of the contribution that applied science could make to football. A "Soccer Engineering" project was launched by which software can be developed to optimise choices on the field of play and, therefore, player selection, by experimenting with repetitive activities, zone occupation and difficulty factors. Consequently, it is not just a question of compiling statistics, but of analysing them in order to assess and grade footballers.

In another initiative, using confirmed and published studies, the research department has examined the following areas in greater depth: tactical and technical, athletic and preventive. The principles applied concern the variation of the position of the centre of gravity and have already been tested on goalkeepers when diving.

Prof. Emilio Cecchini



Miroslav Djukic,
Serbia's coach of
the year.

SERBIA



Trust in young coaches

Something new happened in Serbian football at the end of 2007. In the last week of December, the FA of Serbia, FK Crvena zvezda and FK Partizan all named new coaches. Maybe it is a coincidence that the three most important domestic football structures decided to change leaders almost on the same day, but what is far more important is the fact that the new coaches are the youngest ever!

Miroslav Djukic, former national Under-21 head coach and coach of Partizan in 2007, swaps benches to become the head coach of the Serbian national team for the next two years. Only one person in history has been younger than Djukic in that position – Dejan Savicevic, who started at 36. Djukic is 41.

One week before his appointment, Djukic was named Serbian coach of the year. After only one year of coaching work, Djukic achieved second place in the European Under-21 Championship final round in the Netherlands.

Two of the biggest clubs, Crvena zvezda and Partizan, now have the youngest coaches in their history. Crvena zvezda coach Aleksandar Jankovic is 35 and Partizan's Slavisa Jokanovic is 39. Both are former players and this is the first coaching job for both.

This is something really new and unusual in Serbia. In the last decade, the same coaches moved around and took care of the top Serbian clubs. Now, having completed their UEFA-approved coach education with the Serbian FA, a new generation of qualified coaches have come onto the scene and are breathing fresh life into domestic football.

On this development, Zvezdan Terzic, president of the FA of Serbia, said: "I am very glad because young coaches are taking on roles at the top level in Serbian football. They have a new and modern approach to the game and I expect that our national team and our clubs will play much better. This is a brave decision, but it is only in this way that we can be better. Also, our coaching school produces new coaches and proves that education is the best way to success."

Aleksandar Boskovic

UKRAINE



FFU brings football to every school

While concentrating mainly on preparing to stage EURO 2012, the Football Federation of Ukraine (FFU) is not neglecting its other programmes, one of the most important of which is supporting football in secondary schools. A four-day seminar on "Perspectives on the development of school football", held at the FFU headquarters in Kiev, underpinned the importance attached to this programme.

"Nowadays, mass school football development is one of the priorities not only for the FFU, but UEFA as well, since it is regarded as a fundament of a pyramid: mass football – elite youth football – professional football,"

said Grigoriy Surkis, president of the FFU. "School football has a powerful influence on developing a healthy lifestyle among children. For example, this year [in 2007] 60,000 pupils took part in the national Leather Ball Cup (for boys and girls aged 10 to 13) and 400,000 children from the countryside participated in the "Let's bring joy to kids!" football festival. At the 'almost professional' level, five intra-regional child-youth football development centres and a child-youth football league (for 14 to 17 year-olds) have been going for many years."

However, very special attention is placed on the FFU's project of a school lesson with football elements. In 2001, the FFU concluded an agreement with the Ministry of Education and Science regarding the implementation of a third weekly PE lesson with football elements. Today, all schools in the country have built it into their curriculums. In return, the FFU is helping with financial, technical and methodical support. Since 2001, it has provided schools with one million leather balls. In addition, 800 mini-pitches have been built across the country. And this work continues.

The FFU is also supporting the most talented teachers. More than 32,000 have attended special courses. Every year, a national contest for the teacher of the best football lesson is held. Last year, first prize was awarded to a woman for the first time – Larysa Mokrynska, from the small town of Volodarka near Kiev.

Igor Linnyk



Larysa Mokrynska
won the prize for
the best football
lesson.

SLOVENIA



Introducing women's futsal

The growth of both futsal and women's football, and the need for women players to stay in shape during the winter break, all suggested to the women's and futsal committees of the Slovenian Football Association that they should join forces to find a solution.

In the past, women's football clubs used to organise futsal tournaments now and then and on their own, but now, for the first time in the history of Slovenian football, women's futsal is being played by official futsal rules and with futsal referees. The competition is being held during the winter break and takes the form of preliminaries and a final tournament in various categories. The 11 Under-13, 15 Under-17 and 17 senior women's teams are split into eastern and western groups, with the winners and runners-up contesting the finals.



Women's futsal might soon be played all year around.

If these winter competitions prove to be successful, both the women's and futsal committees plan to introduce a proper women's futsal competition played by dedicated players throughout the whole year.

Uros Stanic

SWITZERLAND



Child and youth protection work continues

Since 1999, the Swiss Football Association (SFV) has been sending out regular information about "Child and Youth Protection in Football". For their sports activities, children and young people are entrusted to adult leaders and, in this respect, the well-being of the youngsters in their care is the top priority.

In a new initiative in this area, the SFV is targeting football clubs with the third edition of the "Child and Youth Protection in Football" booklet, a poster, as well as a code of honour for coaches to sign. The SFV is not just tackling sexual exploitation but also emotional and physical abuse in sport.

In 2005, the SFV launched a nationwide campaign for clubs to sign up to the initiative. To date, 149 clubs throughout Switzerland have responded. With this fresh drive, the SFV hopes to reawaken the interest, support and positive response of the clubs and their coaches.

Pierre Benoit



UEFA

Communications Birthdays – Calendar

Birthdays

Fino Fini (Italy), a member of the circle of former UEFA committee members, will be 80 on 9 February. On 21 February, Ralph Zloczower (Switzerland), vice-chairman of the Media Committee, will be 75. Technical instructor Peter Bonde (Denmark) celebrates his 50th birthday on 14 February, as does referee observer Miroslav Radoman (Serbia) on 25 February.

Other leading members of the European football family celebrating their birthdays in February are:

- Volker Roth (Germany, 1.2)
- Karen Espelund (Norway, 1.2)
- Kyros Vassaras (Greece, 1.2)
- Leonardus van der Kroft (Netherlands, 2.2)
- Trygve Bornø (Norway, 2.2)
- Mark Blackburn (England, 3.2)
- Nikolaos Zamboglou (Cyprus, 5.2)
- Vaclav Krdndl (Czech Republic, 5.2)
- Gabriel Weiss (Slovakia, 6.2)
- Erich Rutenmüller (Germany, 8.2)
- Yusuf Namoglu (Turkey, 8.2)
- Alexander Slutski (Belarus, 9.2)
- Donald McVicar (Scotland, 9.2)
- Danilo Filacchione (Italy, 9.2)
- Zoran Lakovic (Serbia, 9.2)
- Luc Rabat (France, 10.2)
- Dani Koren (Israel, 10.2)
- William McDougall (Scotland, 11.2)
- Borislav Mihaylov (Bulgaria, 12.2)
- Oleksandr Bandurko (Ukraine, 13.2)
- Pierluigi Collina (Italy, 13.2)
- Heinz-Herbert Kreh (Germany, 14.2)
- Dieter Pauly (Germany, 14.2)
- Marinus den Engelsman (Netherlands, 14.2)
- Manuel Lopez Fernandez (Spain, 14.2)
- Georges Konrath (France, 15.2)
- John McBeth (Scotland, 15.2)
- Susanne Erlandsson (Sweden, 15.2)
- Athanassios Machairas (Greece, 15.2)
- Katriina Elovirta (Finland, 15.2)
- Svitlana Shkil (Ukraine, 15.2)
- Adalbert Kassai (Romania, 16.2)
- Gudrun Inga Sivertsen (Sweden, 17.2)
- Jozef Venglos (Slovakia, 18.2)
- Borislav Alexandrov (Bulgaria, 18.2)
- Flemming Serritslev (Denmark, 18.2)
- Patrick Kelly (Republic of Ireland, 18.2)
- Pertti Alaja (Finland, 18.2)
- Anders Frisk (Sweden, 18.2)
- Jaroslav Vacek (Czech Republic, 19.2)
- Janis Mezeckis (Latvia, 19.2)
- Lars Arnesson (Sweden, 20.2)

- Eggert Magnusson (Iceland, 20.2)
- João F. De Magalhães Marques (Portugal, 20.2)
- Carlos Godinho (Portugal, 21.2)
- Fernando Gomes (Portugal, 21.2)
- Asim Khudiyev (Azerbaijan, 22.2)
- Holger Hieronymus (Germany, 22.2)
- Vladimir Sajin (Slovenia, 22.2)
- Maarten Fontein (Netherlands, 23.2)
- Peter Jones (England, 24.2)
- Juan Padron Morales (Spain, 25.2)
- Manfred Amerell (Germany, 25.2)
- Jens Erik Magnussen (Faroe Islands, 25.2)
- Egidius Braun (Germany, 27.2)
- Allan Hansen (Denmark, 27.2)
- Xavier Lebray (France, 27.2)
- Zorislav Srebric (Croatia, 28.2)
- Dino Zoff (Italy, 28.2)
- Aron Schmidhuber (Germany, 28.2)
- John Beattie (England, 28.2)

Forthcoming events

Meetings

3-8.2.2008, Cyprus

Referees course

25.2.2008, Nyon

Fair Play and Social Responsibility Committee
Futsal and Beach Soccer Committee

26.2.2008 à Nyon

Youth and Amateur Football Committee
Players' Status, Transfer and Agents and Match Agents Committee
Draws for the preliminary and intermediate rounds of the 2008/09 UEFA Regions' Cup

27.2.2008, Nyon

Club Licensing Committee
Club Competitions Committee

28.2.2008, Nyon

Women's Football Committee
Football Committee

29.2.2008, Nyon

Media Committee
Marketing Advisory Committee

Competitions

13-14.2.2008

UEFA Cup: Round of 32 (first legs)

19-20.2.2008

UEFA Champions League: First knockout round (first legs)

21.2.2008

UEFA Cup: Round of 32 (return legs)

Notices

■ Mathieu Sprengers was re-elected president of the Dutch FA in December.

■ Iljo Dominkovic is the new president of the Football Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

■ Kimmo J. Lipponen became general secretary of the Finnish FA on 1 January.

New match agents

Match agent licences have been awarded to:

Hervé Cros

22, rue Louise Michel
69800 Saint-Pries, France
Mobile: +33 6 63 92 54 71
hervecros@yahoo.fr

Pierre Inquel

Sport Global Management
Elysée Bureau
66, avenue des Champs-Élysées
75008 Paris, France
Tel.: +33 6 75 20 42 70
Fax: +33 1 70 24 83 98
pierre.inquel@sportgm.com

Kostas Syriopoulos

Hectorstraat 5-H
1076 PM Amsterdam, Netherlands
Tel.: +31 6 10 40 28 45

Meanwhile, Mikael Linder (Sweden) has had his licence renewed.

New publication

Historia e Kampionateve te Shqiperise

This is the fifth volume of Besnik Dizdari's history of the Albanian championship. The latest volume in the series covers the 1955 to 1959 period and, although it is written in Albanian, the photos and detailed statistics (going back to 1930) are within the reach of anyone wishing to find out



more about Albanian football.
(Published by Rozafa.
dizdarib@san.com.al)

WE CARE ABOUT FOOTBALL



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UEFA
Route de Genève 46
CH-1260 Nyon
Switzerland
Phone +41 848 00 27 27
Fax +41 848 01 27 27
uefa.com

Union des associations
européennes de football

