

THE TECHNICIAN

WOMEN'S

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Ziza and Zizou**

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and Answers:
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COVER

The final of the UEFA Women's Cup will be an all-German affair after the victory of 1. FFC Turbine Potsdam (Conny Pohlers, No. 9) over Djurgarden/Alvsjo (Therese Brogarde), pictured on the front cover, and 1. FFC Frankfurt's win over Montpellier HSC.

(PHOTO: OLAF WAGNER/GETTY IMAGES)



Zinedine Zidane

Louisa Necib

Ziza and Zizou

EDITORIAL

BY ANDY ROXBURGH,
UEFA TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

They both wear No. 10 and play for France; both can see a pass and have the technical ability to deliver; and both move on the pitch with style and grace. But Ziza (Louisa Necib) and Zizou (Zinedine Zidane) play in different worlds. The former was a star in the French team that won the silver medal at last season's European Under-19 Women's Championship; while the latter, an icon at Real Madrid CF, helped "Les Bleus" reach the finals of the 2006 World Cup in Germany.

Zizou has lived the dream which men's football has to offer: riches, fame, a full-time career, huge crowds, big stadiums, the best of everything that the game can provide. Of course, he has earned the rewards and the recognition with his artistry. But what about Ziza? Could she ever emulate the 'master of Madrid'?

As a player in women's football, at the moment, it simply is not possible. The women's game cannot provide the opportunities which are available to men in top-level professional football, but there is some light on the horizon.

During recent years, UEFA has raised the profile of women's football through the development of competitions, conferences and technical activities, and the events of 2005 confirmed that progress is being made. The European Women's Championship in England broke all records in terms of

crowds, TV coverage and sponsorship. The 2004/05 European Women's Under-19 Championship produced a new champion (Russia), offering further evidence that more associations are capable of making a challenge for honours. The 4th UEFA Women's Cup for clubs was a big success and the 5th UEFA Women's Football Conference, which was held recently in Oslo, confirmed UEFA's and the member associations' commitment to raising women's football to a higher level. There has been an enormous increase in interest in the women's game, and in some countries it is the fastest growing sport. But, of course, more needs to be done.

When the top women's national coaches take part in their second Forum at the House of European Football in early 2006, proposals will be made about UEFA's competitions and development activities and this will be useful. But the real challenge rests with the associations. They need to establish grassroots programmes for

girls, create girls' youth academies, and encourage professional football clubs to have a women's team (many Premiership clubs in England have already taken this idea on board). Only a global strategy will raise standards, increase participation, and improve the image of women's football.

Those who say that 'football is a man's game' have got it wrong. Football is for all, and the importance, for the game in general, of developing women's football cannot be underestimated. Back in the 1920s, women's matches were watched by big crowds in England, and with intense development those halcyon days could return. But only if the women's game can be raised to a professional level – on and off the pitch. The vast gap between the football world of Louisa Necib and that of Zinedine Zidane remains, but UEFA and many member associations are committed to the development of the women's game and the dreams of young players like the French No. 10 – Ziza.



The Russian Under-19s celebrate their 2005 European title.

**WOMEN'S TECHNICIAN Q&A:
WOMEN'S WORLD CHAMPION
TINA THEUNE-MEYER.**



1 • It's pointless asking if we have any young 'Tina Theune-Meyers' coming through because your record will be tough to beat. But have we got enough women coaches in general?

No! What we have to do is address many of the players who are active today. We should encourage them to take coaching courses – from as early as the age of 18 – so that we can prepare more coaches to operate at the top level. In addition to getting their coaching diplomas, the girls will find out that it's a lot of fun being a coach. Having played the game at high level, they will find it much easier to tune into the mind-set of the player and to understand the game. You might find it strange to start them at ages like 18 but if you get them interested early enough they develop a nice sense of self-assurance. It helps them to develop their personality which, in turn,

TINA THEUNE-MEYER

is a benefit for them as footballers during their playing career.

2 • Do you ask every player in your squad or only the players you think have the necessary qualities?

Well, we talk to each and every individual about her career and her future. This is important because, unlike the top male players, their career doesn't guarantee a certain lifestyle or a level of earnings. This means that it's crucial to discuss things like education and a career outside football. So you might have a young player who you would try to push towards a male club – to train with the professionals once or twice a week – or you can have a player who is better suited to carrying on as a student, so you help her to combine football with her education. If, as a coach, she wants to go all the way to the A licence, it means she joins the men for a four-week course and, all in all, she does the same work as the male coaches for a period of six to seven months. There's a positive side to the girls being alongside the men because it helps to convince the men that women's football not only exists but can actually be quite good. Anyway, what we end up with is a series of programmes – very different ones – tailored to each individual.

3 • In your opinion, what qualities are needed to be a successful coach in the women's game?

The same as male coaches, but there is a difference in that a female coach, once she has opted for football, is 100 per cent for football. She is totally focused on football per se. And that is the pre requisite for constant improvement. Because you always want to learn from others – and you can learn from others. Otherwise, the qualities are the same. You have to be able to analyse games in terms of your own team's performance and opposing teams' styles of play. Then you have to communicate your ideas in an effective way. The other key issue is to promote your players, in the sense of helping them to develop and improve so that you can 'squeeze the last drop' out of them. This is an especially important asset for coaches who don't have as many players to choose from as we do in Germany.

4 • A lot has happened in women's football since you started coaching in 1985. But has the job itself changed?

I have certainly changed! At the beginning, I tried to make everything perfect. I tried too hard to have absolutely everything covered to the maximum degree. I spent a lot of time trying to reach that

level of perfection and it took a while for me to realise that much of this time was actually wasted. Nowadays, I'm much more aware of where the most important areas are and I'm much better at focusing on those critical points. I'm also conscious that our successes have also led to changes. That was brought home to me when we came home after winning the World Cup. When we arrived in Frankfurt, they had prepared a massive reception for us at the Rathausplatz and the square was absolutely packed with people – something we had never experienced in women's football. What has also changed is that people know me. Not a single day goes by without me receiving one, two, three or more requests to make a presentation, to help a project for children who are ill or diseased or even to preach in a church! So that is also a big change because

it wasn't always the case that a coach in women's football had a high profile or was so much in demand as a 'public figure'.

5 • That pursuit of perfection – was it because you felt that, as the first woman to obtain the A licence, you had a point to prove?

It was because my idol and my mentor was also a perfectionist. Gero Bisanz was not only a coach but also a lecturer at the sports university. So I felt that I had to emulate him by taking an interest in everything and being as 'complete' as possible.

6 • People associate you with success. But it would be a rare thing for a technician not to have experienced some difficult moments...

That's right. I would go right back to my first training camp. At that stage we had to qualify for the final phase of the European Championship. We actually went on to win it – but that, for me, was unexpected and, to be honest, unbelievable. We were very, very, very lucky! But it was good for me! I remember that, in the qualifying round, everything went our way. There was even one shot by our opponents that hit the crossbar, came down, hit one of our players on the

**GERMAN CELEBRATE
WINNING THE EUROPEAN
TITLE IN 2005.**



shoulder and, instead of going into the net like it does 99 times out of 100, came out again. We went on to score at the other end but, if that ball had gone in, we would almost certainly have been eliminated in the preliminary round. There's nothing a coach can do about those situations, of course. But at the beginning of your career, they can make a big difference!

Then there was a difficult time because, although this might sound strange, I wasn't ready, as a coach, for such success. It took me a while to come to terms with it. The next turning point came when we went to the World Cup and were eliminated in the quarter-finals. It was a disappointment but I felt that we had played good football. Then there was a spell around 2000 when I had to take some decisions based on what I thought was necessary if we were to be successful in the future. Those decisions were difficult for me as a human being but I was sure they had to be taken in order to move forward. I discussed things with my team but, in the end, the one thing I did right was to stay on my own track and not let anybody or anything distract me from my objectives. I had a strong feeling that I was doing the right thing for our football. There was a lot of criticism – some of it pretty heavy. But I withstood that and we

went on to win a bronze medal at first and then a World Cup and a couple of European Championships. So I felt I had been proved right. But it hadn't been an easy time because the decisions were tough ones to take, because of all the criticism, and because of all the tension they generated both inside and outside the dressing-room. But, in a way, that period of unrest made us even stronger in the medium-term.

7 • Is mental preparation important in a game where everybody wants to beat Germany?

Yes, that's very true. Even if you're not successful, it can be a great stimulus if you have good players, help them to develop and produce a team that plays good football. So that's a big satisfaction and something very positive. You have to forget that everybody wants to beat you and just focus on performing to the best of your capabilities.

8 • Was the 2005 team the best of your champion sides?

I wouldn't like to say that because the side that won the European Championship in 1989, for example, was also a very good team. So was our silver-medal team in 1995 and the world champion side with Maren Meinert, Pia Wunderlich, Bettina Wiegmann and the other wonderful players. They weren't just exceptional players; they were also great personalities who had a great influence on the overall performance of the team. At WOMEN'S EURO 2005, the interesting thing is that I had a very strong feeling that all the players, like myself, had a very strong desire to achieve something. There was still a desire to win, a desire to improve and go even further.

9 • What did you feel after the victory in the final at Blackburn when all the players put on those shirts with 'Thank You, Tina' on them?

I didn't realise! I remember thinking that the players looked smart in those black t-shirts and I didn't notice the text until after we had been on to the podium for our medals. I was so happy I didn't pay any attention. When I finally saw the message, it really brought me to a halt. It was quite emotional.

10 • When you stepped off the podium it was suddenly 'game over' literally and figuratively. Was it tough to adapt and what are your plans?

Well, it wasn't so sudden because I'd thought about it for a long time and the handover had been well prepared.

When I look back on everything that has happened...well, I just have to smile. I thought that I would now need some time with my family, my friends and all the things that I haven't had time to do. I even have a piano teacher! There are other things related to football and I've had entirely new ideas, like a football-related project I'm working on with a photographer – who is also doing a book on Germany's world champions – all of them together, the men and the women.



Tina Theune-Meyer and her successor Silvia Neid hold aloft the European trophy.

11 • How has football changed since you started in football?

When I played, we played 30 minutes each way with a smaller ball! There are so many things that have changed. I remember times when the idea of a woman becoming a professional footballer was inconceivable. I don't think anybody even raises an eyebrow now. In the old days, a girl would be told off if she played football. Now, a teacher will give a girl a pat on the back and say how good it is that she's playing football. These days, playing and training are carried to their limits and much greater attention is paid to women's football at national-team and club levels. One of the positive things from my spell in charge of the national team is that the players are now celebrities who can communicate with the people and who have helped make women's football a marketable commodity. I'm proud to feel that we've created something classy, something really good – with a great future."



Birgit Prinz, a key player in the German team.



EMPICS



GETTY IMAGES

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

WHEN TINA THEUNE-MEYER LED HER TEAM ON TO THE PODIUM AT EWOOD PARK, HOPE POWELL SALUTED THE GERMAN CHAMPIONS WITH A MIXTURE OF ENVY AND ADMIRATION. THE ENGLISH HOSTS – ONE OF THE NATIONS WORKING HARD TO ESTABLISH THEMSELVES AS A MAJOR FORCE IN THE WOMEN'S GAME – HAD FALLEN BY THE WAYSIDE IN THE GROUP STAGE. "IT WAS A BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT AND WE ALL FELT THAT WE HAD LEFT WHILE THERE WAS STILL UNFINISHED BUSINESS TO BE DONE," SAYS THE WOMAN WHO, AFTER BEING CAPPED 66 TIMES BY HER COUNTRY, BECAME ENGLAND'S FIRST FULL-TIME NATIONAL TEAM COACH IN 1998. BUT ONE OF HOPE'S VIRTUES IS THAT SHE SEEKS AND FINDS POSITIVE ASPECTS IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY. "THE TOURNAMENT WAS INCREDIBLE. A LOT OF WORK WENT INTO IT AND IT WAS VERY WELL DONE. IT WAS WELL PROMOTED, AND THE VIEWING FIGURES WERE THE BEST EVER. I THINK THAT, FOR ALL OF US, IT WAS A TREMENDOUS LEARNING EXPERIENCE AND WE HAVE TO GO ON FROM THERE." SO IT WAS ONLY NATURAL TO SIT DOWN WITH THE WOMEN'S EURO 2005 HOSTESS AND ASK HER FOR VIEWS ON SOME OF THE CRUCIAL ISSUES FACING THE WOMEN'S GAME.

What lessons did you learn from WOMEN'S EURO 2005?

"As a coach, I learned a great deal – personally and professionally – especially about the group of players who spent an inordinate amount of time together. I thought preparation was going to be important, so we prepared thoroughly. We studied the other teams and their playing systems. Since the day I got this job, my question has always been 'How can this be better?' and the WOMEN'S EURO gave me the opportunity to ask that question a lot of times and see what other people do. It was a learning experience in every way. It made me move up a notch and, at the end of it there was a realisation that, even if we were bitterly disappointed to be knocked out, the players went away knowing and believing that they can compete with the rest of the world."

Should more coaches be given the opportunity you had?

"Yes! That's why I'm happy about the decision to make the final tournament bigger. It will give more coaches the opportunity to learn and great incentives to the coun-

tries who are on the fringe of the top league. It will help them develop. Qualifying is tough these days because standards in Europe have risen dramatically. So a final tournament with 12 will be better and, eventually with 16 – like the men – would be a very positive step forward."

How do you see the state of the European game, based on what you saw at the WOMEN'S EURO?

"On the pitch, I think that the WOMEN'S EURO demonstrated that the field is leveling out quite fast. Germany didn't cruise through all their games, even though they still showed that there's a little bit of a gap between them and everybody else. I think the gap will continue to close and that European football will continue to be a major force. When England first qualified for a European Championship in 2001, we had to treat it as an experience and use the tournament to discover exactly what we had to do to compete with the best. Since then, we've made massive strides forward – irrespective of the results at the 2005 finals, because all our games were very close indeed. I think

experience is an important part of the German equation. They've been in certain situations so many times that nothing seems to be alien to them. They always find an answer – and that's a massive item to have in your locker. Other countries are now beginning to accumulate experience quite quickly and that can only help to make the scenario even more competitive."

What is the way forward?

"One of the really big issues for me is coach education. It's important to build a future generation of really good female coaches. If you look at people like Tina Theune-Meyer, who has just handed over to Silvia Neid, that's the way we should be going, in my opinion. On the other hand, Marika Domanski Lyfors has also stepped down and her successor is male. So is Carolina Morace's. This suggests that there's a lack of high-quality female coaches in the women's game and we're in danger of projecting an image that women coaches are not good enough. I suspect that the decision-makers – the people who appoint the national-team coaches – feel that there isn't enough female expertise to cope at the highest level. Even in the England team, my assistant coach is male. That's because, at the time he was appointed, there wasn't a female coach who seemed to be equipped to take the role on. This isn't peculiar to England, because top countries like the USA and so on have had male coaches. If you had asked me ten years ago who should be appointed, I wouldn't have hesitated to say 'the best person for the job' because, at that stage,

HOPE POWELL DURING THE EURO MATCH BETWEEN ENGLAND AND SWEDEN.



there was still a tremendous amount of work to be done in terms of improving overall standards within female football. But, at the same time, I really feel that it is our responsibility to develop female coaches who are equipped to work with the top teams. That's the way to raise the profile of women's football even further and to offer incentives to the female coaches – to give them something that's really worth going for."

How do you set about achieving that aim in the short term?

"The German system is good. It's positive to target the top players who've lived the experience and been part of that world. Of course, having been a top player doesn't offer you any guarantee of being one of the best coaches. But it does mean that you have the experience and – what's also really important – you have a genuine passion for the women's game. I say that because one of the relevant questions here is that many male coaches, if they're offered a job in men's football, will probably walk away from the women's game, whereas a female coach would probably want to stay. That's why I feel it's so important to start helping people to come through and have sufficient calibre to make the grade in women's football."

Is it that easy to encourage players to become coaches in what is essentially an amateur game?

"I think you emphasise the enjoyment rather than the financial rewards. A lot of players don't give a thought to coaching until the end of their career or near the end of their career. So the immediate aim would be to encourage the players to start a coaching course and, even if it is at the lowest level, to find out that it's something they can really enjoy. Then it can be a great start to a coaching career if they can pick up diplomas while they're still playing the game. You wouldn't expect every member of your squad to turn to coaching because it does require a certain way of seeing and understanding the game. You also need a certain manner. You have to know how to present yourself and communicate effectively. Then you need to be good at managing a group, which is also a definite skill – and not everybody has that skill."

Do you think coach education schemes are equipped to offer these players enough opportunities to acquire their coaching diplomas?

"In England, we're fairly well advanced in that direction but, obviously, if you want

to attract players into coaching, you have to give them easy access and have your coach education structures in place. The English FA has done a lot of work in this area and we've managed to solve some of the basic problems – such as courses which take place at weekends while players, of course, prefer to be playing then! But we can now give opportunities all over the country, which is also important. Our current structure came about after we got our heads together in 2001 and came up with a mentoring strategy for women who want to go into coaching, aimed at giving them support in all our regions. That means someone goes around watching them coach, giving them some feedback, some practical themes, advice and even come up with mock assessments. That works from Level 3 right the way through to the A licence. So far, it has been highly successful and we're getting some really good, fully qualified female coaches."

But are clubs and national associations reluctant to recognise them?

"That's why Tina's successes with Germany have been important for all of us. Everybody has been able to see that the German coaching staff is essentially female. The fact that so many teams have male coaches is not a problem in itself. It's not a criticism of the men concerned. Not at all. No way. There are a lot of good men working in the female sector. But I'm convinced that the future lies with the female coaches who have a deep-rooted passion for women's football and who will

be prepared to work for the good of the game. Not for themselves. Not for financial rewards. For the good of the game."

Playing the devil's advocate, you could say that Tina was able to stay in the job for so long because results went her way...

"I'm sure she's had tough times during the 19 years she's been working as assistant coach and then head coach. But, credit to Germany. They decided to show confidence in her and, if you like, they gave her the opportunity to make mistakes! She wasn't always successful but she went from strength to strength as a coach and has become a role model for the rest of us. On the world and European stages, her credentials are second to none – in both the men's and women's games. No one can equal her achievements. And the German model, in terms of structures, promotion, development and so on, has to be the benchmark for all of us, even though the German style might not suit countries which haven't got anything like the same parameters in terms of numbers or money. I feel that in England, at least 90 per cent of what we've done has been right – and most of that has been based on the German way of doing things. They are simply further down the road than the rest of us and it will take time to catch up with them. I sometimes have to remind myself that I've been in this job for seven years and that Tina was in her job for 19. I'm playing catch-up but I have to be patient!"



Hope Powell makes the most of a stoppage to give instructions to her players.



SVEN SIMON

THE GERMAN AND NORWEGIAN PLAYERS SHAKE HANDS BEFORE THE WOMEN'S EURO 2005 FINAL.

THE OSLO EXPERIENCE

THERE WERE NO FEWER THAN 39 SENIOR OR UNDER-19 NATIONAL-TEAM COACHES IN THE TEAM PHOTO TAKEN AT THE 5TH UEFA WOMEN'S FOOTBALL CONFERENCE STAGED IN OSLO. THE 'HOME TEAM' WAS SUPERBLY LED BY UEFA'S VICE-PRESIDENT PER OMDAL – AS USUAL, A PASSIONATE CHAMPION OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL – AND KAREN ESPELUND, WHO CHAIRS UEFA'S WOMEN'S FOOTBALL COMMITTEE. THERE WAS A NICE MIX OF TECHNICIANS AND ADMINISTRATORS AMONG THE 150 PARTICIPANTS, WITH FIFA AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE AFRICAN, ASIAN, AMERICAN AND OCEANIC CONFEDERATIONS COMPLETING A STRONG, ALL-ROUND SQUAD.

The women's football umbrella covers so many topics that it was by no means easy to design a three-day programme to embrace subjects such as the development of women's football, grassroots programmes, practical sessions, competition structures, discussion groups, technical aspects such as reading the game, and, of course, a review of the

2005 European Women's Championship. The event, organised by UEFA Technical Director Andy Roxburgh and his staff, was so intensive and productive that it ended with a call to stage the Women's Football Conference every two years instead of the current four-year span – a proposal which did not fall on deaf ears.

The fact that the conference in Norway was not exclusively coach-orientated served to underline how deeply most national-team coaches – more than their male counter-parts – are involved in administrative areas. This was forcibly brought home by France's Elisabeth Loisel when she gave a detailed run-down of her national association's development plan currently being implemented via 22 regional women's football committees. Grants are available to encourage female coaches to attend regional courses and to allow the best to join male coaches on national courses.

As the interviews with Tina Theune-Meyer and Hope Powell illustrate, the development of women coaches emerged from the conference as one of the top priorities within the women's game. But the technicians also expressed other concerns, such as the structures of national-team football (qualifying phases, formats for mini-tournaments and support for developing nations in terms of organising 'friendly' tournaments). FIFA's Technical Director, Mary Harvey, outlined



UEFA

A practical session at the Women's Conference in Oslo.



plans for the FIFA Under-17 World Cup, which will evidently make a big impact in Europe and in other confederations where there is no established Under-17 competition at continental level.

Other interesting messages were delivered by UEFA's Director of Professional Football, Giorgio Marchetti. WOMEN'S EURO 2005 was the first to be played since the European Women's Championship was transferred from 'Football Development' into the professional category – which opened the door for the English FA and UEFA to put together a successful promotional package. The rewards were an average match attendance of 7,825, an all-time competition record of 29,092 for England's opening game, 121 hours of TV coverage, an average audience of close to a million per game, and an audience of 5.6 million for the final.

On the face of it, the figures may not seem to have a direct bearing on the technician. But the implications are significant. The tournament can no longer be automatically classed as a loss-making event, and the profile of the women's game is being dramatically elevated – two factors that make a nice, heavy noise when placed on decision-makers' and sponsors' tables, with evident knock-on benefits for coaches, who will obviously not complain about their personal profiles being elevated in unison with those of their teams and women's football.

Ask Elisabeth Loisel. In Oslo she highlighted the symbiosis between national-team performance and grassroots growth. In 1998, she pointed out, France had 27,600 registered players and the national team was well behind the leaders of the pack. A two-pronged development plan aimed at broadening the base of the footballing pyramid and, at the same time, promoting elite players at the national coaching centre in Clairefontaine. With France rising to fifth place in the FIFA ranking, the national team is now established

among the leaders and, inspired by national-team successes, more and more girls are encouraged to play football. This had translated into figures of 48,502 registered players by the end of June and 1,838 teams engaged in official competitions. At the same time, the budget for women's football has been increased by 250 per cent. Sheila Begbie explained how the Scottish FA is embarking on a similar programme, with an increased profile for the national team high on the agenda. The efforts have already been rewarded, when the Scottish Under-19s made their debut in a final tournament during the summer.

But the Germans are still setting the benchmarks in the European game – which is why the audience was all ears during an opening-day session featuring Willi Hink, Director of Women's Football,

Heike Ullrich, the German FA's Women's Football Manager, and Tina Theune-Meyer. Among a wealth of interesting data and ideas was the fact that 76 per cent of German parents now heartily approve of their daughters playing football – a crucial change in social attitudes. "In comparing men's and women's football," Tina Theune-Meyer remarked, "the concepts are obviously the same. But social factors are important. Men earn money from football and can therefore concentrate on a professional career. Girls have to keep other options open and have less time to dedicate to football. That's why I enjoy going to my local butcher's. The talk always comes round to football and the women end up asking the butcher 'OK, who are the world champions? The German men? No, the German women!' It means that women's football is much more highly respected – and I like that."



Carolina Morace (Italy) and Elisabeth Loisel (France) during the WOMEN'S EURO 2005.



**TURBINE POTSDAM WILL DEFEND
THEIR UEFA WOMEN'S CUP TITLE IN MAY 2006.**

THE WAY FORWARD

**SO MANY ISSUES WERE ADDRESSED AT THE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL CONFERENCE IN OSLO
AND SO MANY POINTS RAISED THAT IT BECOMES DIFFICULT TO CONDENSE THEM INTO A FEW LINES.
IN ALMOST TELEGRAPHIC FORM, HERE ARE SOME OF THE THEMES MOST DIRECTLY
RELATED TO THE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL TECHNICIAN.**

Eleven best or best eleven?

An interesting debating point was raised by one of the national-team coaches, who revealed that, at WOMEN'S EURO 2005, several of the team had played out of position. The dilemma might be familiar to national-team coaches in national associations who are not exactly blessed with riches in terms of the number of players to choose from. Do you select the best players and slot them into a team? Or do you take the best players in each position? The problem is that the clubs with international-class players often prefer to field them in the most 'influential' positions within the team. The best defenders and midfielders might therefore play their club football in central positions, leaving the national-team

coach to scrape around for full-backs, wide midfielders or wingers. Sometimes the problem is self-regulating. England's Hope Powell, for instance, says that if a player is slotted into a different role in the national team, the club coach usually takes note and fields her in the same position in league matches. But that's not always the case. When it comes to international matches or tournaments where preparation time is limited, should the best players be selected and played out of position? If so, how many...?

Top refs for top teams?

At WOMEN'S EURO 2005, the six referees and eight assistants were from national associations that had failed to qualify for the final tournament. This is

normal practice at UEFA events and is a logical response to a situation where, especially bearing in mind the crossovers between Group A and Group B when the knock-out format kicks in at the semi-final stage, an official from a participating country might only be 'available' for one match. However, many of the coaches in Oslo questioned the system, arguing that referees from the top countries such as Germany, Sweden and Norway *never* get a chance to officiate at a European Championship and that, in the men's EURO, the same policy is not applied. The major difference, of course, is that having 16 teams at the male event affords greater flexibility in the deployment of match officials. The expansion of the European



The participants at the Oslo Conference.

WOMEN REFEREES FOR WOMEN'S MATCHES.



SVEN SIMON

Women's Championship finals to 12 teams is an obvious cue for a review of the situation.

Whistling up reinforcements

During his review of the status quo in Germany, Willi Hink mentioned that, whereas women's football has been moving forward at sprint speed, the number of referees has remained static. At a time when women's football is registering explosive growth, national associations need to address the issue of encouraging more women to take an interest in refereeing. In Oslo, the idea of special courses for female referees was mooted.

The UEFA Women's Cup

Now in its fifth season, the continental club competition is firmly established on the footballing calendar. In Oslo, several ideas were thrown onto the debating table – such as a proposal to stage the mini-tournaments on a Wednesday-to-Wednesday basis so that they cover only one weekend. There was also a call for fixed dates on weekdays, a thorough review of the fixture list, more support with regard to travel costs for teams from 'outlying areas' such as Iceland, and maybe more representatives from the stronger nations along the lines of the access formulas adopted for the UEFA Champions League. There were also polite enquiries about a cup winners' cup and the possibility of organising the final as a single event in place of the current home-and-away format.

More interaction

The call for the UEFA's Women's Football Conference to be staged more frequently resulted from the coaches' realisation that they meet too seldom. The interchange of experiences and ideas was one of the positive features of the event and there was a proposal for 'regional' seminars for technicians (club coaches in addition to representatives from the national associations) to be organised under UEFA's auspices according to geographical areas. There was a strong feeling that top coaches such as Tina Theune-Meyer and Marika Domanski Lyfors, who stepped down after WOMEN'S EURO 2005, should not be allowed to drift out of the game but be deployed as 'ambassadors' to pass on their knowledge to other, less-experienced female coaches.

THE LAST WORD

Major changes for WOMEN'S EURO 2009

The decision to expand the final tournament from eight to 12 teams was one of the most salient features of the UEFA Executive Committee meeting held in Malta at the beginning of November. But other significant changes will also be implemented when the 2007–2009 European Women's Championship kicks off.

The qualifying competition will no longer be split into two divisions with only teams from the top division in with a chance of qualifying for the finals. Next time round, the draw will be open and all participating associations will have a sporting chance of reaching the finals.

A preliminary round will be played (in four-team mini-tournament format) to narrow the field down to 30. The participants will be the lowest-ranked associations in a coefficient list drawn up by UEFA and the teams eliminated at this stage will receive assistance from UEFA in the form of a development package including organisational support and educational programmes for players and coaches.

Under-17s set to kick off

FIFA's decision to stage an Under-17 World Cup on a biennial basis as from 2008 has been well received by UEFA and a qualifying competition will be organised as soon as details such as exact dates and the number of participants per confederation have been finalised. Once the parameters are in place and national associations have responded to the invitation to take part, UEFA can get to work on deciding whether a qualifying competition or a final tournament is the optimal way of determining Europe's candidates to take the first-ever world crown at Under-17 level.

The injury list

The WOMEN'S EURO 2005 was included in UEFA's analysis of injury patterns and, in consonance with the men's finals in Portugal a year earlier, the tournament in England demonstrated that the risk of injury was higher during the group phase than in the knock-out stages, with the eliminated teams accounting for more mishaps than the four sides who reached the semi-finals.

However, that isolated fact is difficult to interpret. On the one hand, it could be argued that the injuries had a negative effect on results. On the other hand, it could be pointed out that, human nature being what it is, players in losing teams are more likely to report injuries than the winners. Overall, the tournament in England produced only three injuries serious enough to keep the player out for a month or more and the general risk of injury was similar to the one registered in the men's finals. However, there were far fewer injuries caused by foul play and the women sustained more contusions but no fractures. Fractures were much more common in the men's game, possibly attributable to the intensity of play or simple equations of body mass in collisions. Further details of UEFA's injury study will be published in 'Medicine Matters'.



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