

THE TECHNICIAN

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FOR COACHES**
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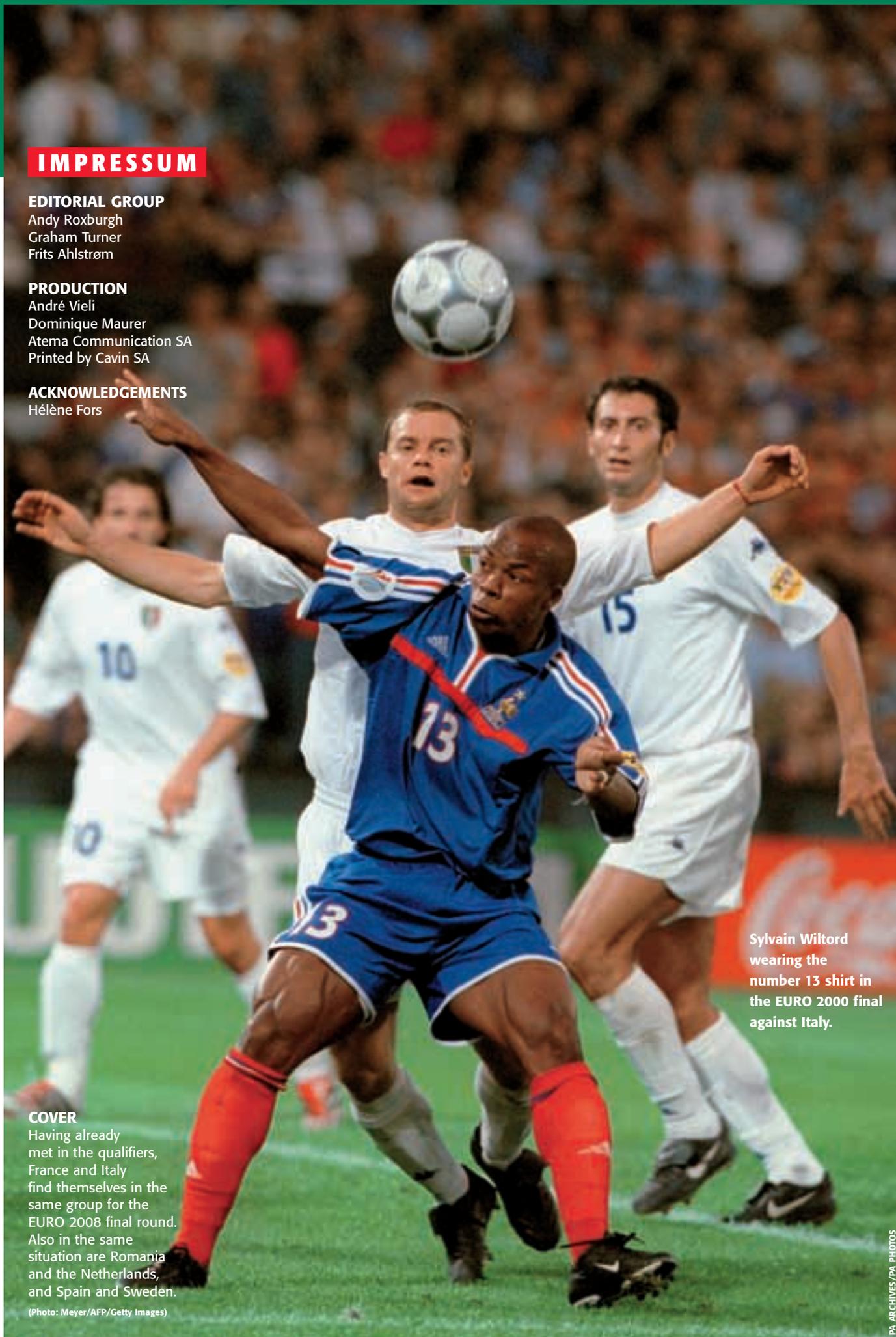
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Sylvain Wiltord wearing the number 13 shirt in the EURO 2000 final against Italy.

COVER

Having already met in the qualifiers, France and Italy find themselves in the same group for the EURO 2008 final round. Also in the same situation are Romania and the Netherlands, and Spain and Sweden.

(Photo: Meyer/AFP/Getty Images)

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LUCKY FOR SOME

EDITORIAL

BY ANDY ROXBURGH,
UEFA TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Sir Alex Ferguson, the head coach of Manchester United FC, once said: "Success in football management depends upon selection, decision-making, ability to handle players and luck." Of course, the harder coaches and players work and the more talent they have, the luckier they seem to get. Some, however, try to minimise the chance element by embracing superstition. I have seen players do crazy things to keep Lady Luck happy.

For example, one player who always had to be last out of the dressing room or another who didn't shave while he was on a scoring streak. Meanwhile, Mário Jorge Lobo Zagallo, the great Brazilian coach, was a great believer in the magical power of the number 13. Don't laugh. He would do everything to bring his favourite number into play because in his view it was a good omen. With the quality of his players and his managerial acumen, he didn't need much mystical help, but it made him feel a little more secure. Others of a superstitious disposition could support their views by referring to the final of EURO 2000 in Rotterdam.

In the match between Italy and France, with the former leading 1-0, Les Bleus' head coach Roger Lemerre sent on his No. 13, Sylvain Wiltord, and he duly scored the equaliser. Then, 13 minutes into extra time, France sealed victory – it was their 13th goal of the tournament and the goalscorer was none other than David Trezeguet. Treize in French is, of course, the number 13. Could there be something in this non-rational theory? Maybe the theory could give

us an indication of things to come as we contemplate the forthcoming European Championship finals. For instance, Germany set the benchmark for strikes at goal during the qualifiers, with 146 efforts resulting in 35 goals, and this included a record scoreline for Joachim Löw's side away to San Marino. You guessed it – it was 13-0. And, if talisman midfielder Michael Ballack returns from injury he will, as usual, be sporting the number 13 on his jersey. How can the Chelsea man possibly lose the toss of the coin? But before you put your money on Germany for the title, just remember that Poland have qualified for the finals for the first time – it was their 13th attempt. Could this be significant?

In case we get hypnotised by a positive light, spare a thought for David Healy of Northern Ireland who topped the qualifying charts with 13 goals but missed out on the finals, or Roy Hodgson's Finland scoring 13 goals but not making it to EURO 2008, or Luxembourg's stoppage-time winner by Fons Leweck against Belarus on 13 October – a goal which ended a run of 55 competitive matches without a victory but did not move them off the bottom of Group G. Some may believe in lucky numbers, but most put their faith in experience and ability.

Twelve of the teams that competed in EURO 2004 have qualified again and will participate in EURO 2008, although only five of the coaches who took part in Portugal will be back for more. Otto Rehhagel, who master-minded the Greek triumph in 2004, will be out to emulate himself by producing some repeat business. After he lifted the European trophy last time, he stated: "I am the only person in Athens who can drive in the bus lane." If he wins again, he will probably get a fleet of buses to go with his permit! Then there is Phil Scolari, a World Cup winner with Brazil in 2002 and a European

finalist with Portugal in 2004, who has the passion and know-how to create another stir. Köbi Kuhn of Switzerland, Lars Lagerbäck of Sweden, and Karel Brückner of the Czech Republic, veterans of EURO 2004, are all gurus of the technical area and know what it takes to succeed – without the use of lucky charms.

Not having the aid of a crystal ball, it is difficult to predict who will lift Europe's ultimate prize in international football on 29 June 2008. Goalscoring efficiency will certainly play a factor, and the exploits during the qualifying campaign of Croatia's Eduardo (10 goals in 12 strikes), Poland's Smolarek (9 goals in 15 strikes), Germany's Podolski (8 goals in 14 strikes) and Portugal's Ronaldo (8 goals in 31 strikes) augur well for their sides' prospects. But, without question, the managerial acumen and the tactical prowess of the 16 coaches, not forgetting the quality and condition of their players, will have a significant impact on the outcome of an event which will attract a massive global audience. No doubt, luck will play a part, and as events unfold, some will search the shadows of superstition for intangible support. But for most of us, reading the game will be far more important than reading something into a number – even if it is a 13.



Otto Rehhagel, winner of EURO 2004 and one of the five coaches to have taken part in the last two European Championship final rounds.

INTERVIEW

BY ANDY ROXBURGH,
UEFA TECHNICAL DIRECTOR



IN AN ILLUSTRIOUS PLAYING CAREER THAT SPANNED 20 YEARS, MORTEN OLSEN MADE 102 APPEARANCES FOR DENMARK, WHICH INCLUDED CAPTAINING A GIFTED NATIONAL SQUAD AT THE 1986 FIFA WORLD CUP IN MEXICO. HIS MAJOR CAREER SUCCESSES CAME IN THE 1980s, WHEN HE WON THE BELGIAN CHAMPIONSHIP (THREE TIMES) AND THE UEFA CUP WITH RSC ANDERLECHT, PRIOR TO MOVING TO 1. FC KÖLN IN GERMANY. HE WAS TWICE VOTED DENMARK'S PLAYER OF THE YEAR (1983 AND 1986). MORTEN WAS A THINKING-MAN'S PLAYER WHO MOVED EASILY INTO COACHING, AND IN SUCCESSFUL SPELLS WITH BRØNDBY IF, 1. FC KÖLN AND AFC AJAX, HE WON THE DANISH CHAMPIONSHIP TWICE AND A LEAGUE AND CUP DOUBLE IN THE NETHERLANDS. SINCE JULY 2000, HE HAS BEEN AT THE HELM OF THE DANISH NATIONAL TEAM AND LED HIS COUNTRY TO THE KNOCKOUT PHASES OF THE 2002 WORLD CUP AND THE QUARTER-FINALS OF EURO 2004. MORTEN HAS THE RARE DISTINCTION OF WINNING A GROUP PHASE AT A WORLD CUP BOTH AS A PLAYER AND AS A COACH. THE DANISH NATIONAL COACH IS ONE OF THE MOST RESPECTED TECHNICIANS IN EUROPE AND HIS THOUGHTS ON FOOTBALL ARE ALWAYS STIMULATING. HE IS TRULY A MAN OF THE PITCH. HE IS

MORTEN OLSEN

1 • What is your view of the forthcoming EURO and the World Cup qualifiers?

I think that the tournament in Switzerland and Austria will be fantastic, especially for the game itself because of the level of football. EURO '96 was not of particularly great quality, but since then, the European Championship and World Cup final rounds have been of a high standard. Of course, these tournaments are also big events, and the overall experience in Germany in 2006 was excellent. But it is also extremely important the way we play the game. Yes, it is about winning, but with all the attention from fans, sponsors, TV, etc. we must make the game itself better and better because that is the

only way that we can continue to make football interesting. So a tournament like EURO 2008 is vital for the image of the game – this is extremely important for the future. When you see qualifying games, it takes about a year and a half, and the key is stability and consistency. But the finals are held over a three-week period and then it is all about the form and fitness of the players at that specific time. Often the stars of such a tournament are players who were injured during the season, recover, and come into the event fresh. Marco van Basten was an example of that back in 1988. On the other side of the coin are some players who have played throughout the season, who are

physically and mentally tired, and who may not compete at their peak. For the moment, it is very difficult to say who will triumph in June 2008 because I think that 10 or 12 countries are capable of winning the European Championship. As we saw last time with Greece, anything is possible. The gap between the teams is very small. Looking further ahead to the World Cup qualifiers, from a coach's perspective, it is a pity that we play Sweden again, but there is always something special for the fans in these matches. Portugal are in our group and I appreciate very much the way they play football, and we mustn't forget Hungary, a traditional football country, that will be anxious to reach a final after a long absence.

**MORTEN OLSEN AND
HIS FORMER ASSISTANT,
MICHAEL LAUDRUP.**



Empics Sport/PA Photos

2 • What, for you, are the main challenges in managing a national team today?

The first thing is that there are a lot of foreign players playing in the top leagues, even in a small country like Denmark. It is good for the domestic competition to have new faces and quality players. But the consequence is that we don't have so many top players eligible for the national team. In addition, we don't have enough Danish players playing regularly in the big clubs in other parts of Europe, as was the case 20 years ago. A major problem for a national coach is the lack of time with the players, particularly for detailed preparation. And globalisation has had an impact on many things, including the attitude of the press. The media demands on all top coaches have increased, although we have to say that such intense interest is good for the promotion of the game.

3 • What is the impact of the home-grown players rule in Denmark?

In Denmark, I have not seen any benefit from this ruling. In fact, many clubs are bringing young players from abroad to their academies and they soon satisfy the home-grown regulation. This situation will have an effect on the national teams in the future.

4 • In what way does the UEFA Champions League have an influence on the work of the national team coach?

It is good for Danish football if we have a team in the UEFA Champions League but at the moment we don't have a club playing regularly at this elite level. Last season, we did have FC København and we saw one negative aspect, because some people were more interested in the UEFA Champions League than the fortunes of the national team. However, at the end of the day, having our clubs participating at this level is good for Danish football in general. In case there is any doubt, I must emphasise that our players are still proud to wear the national team jersey and there

Rentz/Bongarts/Getty Images

Morten Olsen during Denmark's match against Bulgaria at EURO 2004.



Empics Sport/PA Photos

MORTEN OLSEN (NO. 5) AT THE HEART OF THE DANISH DEFENCE, FACING ENGLAND'S KEVIN KEEGAN.

is no clash of loyalties for them. It is invaluable that our players gain playing experience in the UEFA Champions League because this know-how transfers into the national team. The biggest problem in Danish football is that we don't have as many top players as we had in the past, but we had a number of FC København players in our squad last season and this was a help to us. At the moment we have around 50% of the squad based in Denmark and exposure to European competition is extremely beneficial to those players.

5 • How would you describe your style of play?

We have to use the qualities within the squad and to build a solid team. Of course, there needs to be some flexibility, but a playing philosophy is also vital. Every time the national squad is together, you need to have a consistent approach. Whatever we want in terms of style, we must be realistic and remember it is about winning. But you must also think about the way you play

because I think it is important for the image and the future of football. Of course, the way we play doesn't just depend on us but on the opponent and the form we are in on a particular day. In general, however I take a very positive approach. We try to keep the ball, to dominate possession, but at the same time always look for possibilities to play in the depth. Without doubt, in modern football you must be very good in transition, both in exploiting space and in quickly forming the defence. I may have a personal philosophy, but I can only use players with a Danish passport – I can't buy players to create a perfect fit for my favourite style. However, I have been lucky that I have had in my time a number of players who fit the bill for me and for my approach. For example, we have always had wingers. I like to play with quick, wide players because they can cause the opponent particular problems, and we often defend better by blocking the attacking tendencies of the other team's full backs.

6 • Do you involve yourself in the preparation of the under-age national squads?

Yes. We have produced a new strategy in the Danish FA to develop individual players who can reach international level. It is not about systems of play, but about trying to develop the players' attitude in the game – trying to educate the players in the best way in terms of playing performances. Once a month, I meet the coaches of our national under-age teams and work on the development programme. We have a dialogue about football and the way to nurture young players. Today is the most important moment for the A team national coach, because we are in the results business, but for the sake of the association, we should have an influence on what happens tomorrow. The biggest challenge in football today is to find a way to play that can motivate the players to perform. If they are interested, committed and involved in the game that is what makes them ambitious. I don't like footballers who are looking at their watch – the game must be primarily a hobby and a passion. They must be motivated through the game, because they like to play. Of course, structure is necessary – without that there is no freedom to play.

7 • How can the relationship between the clubs and the national team be improved?

I can understand that in some countries this is difficult, but we are small and I have close cooperation with the club coaches. If you can't have such a relationship, it is a bad day. I have no problem about the release of players from our domestic clubs. Sometimes the difficulties arise when we have friendly games, but if a player is not playing regularly at a top club abroad, those clubs are often happy to let him play for us.

8 • How has the game evolved since you were a player?

The game has undoubtedly got quicker and more compact, and this means you need better technique and an ability to



Morten Olsen up against Karl-Heinz Rummenigge in the 1986 World Cup.

Witters/PA Photos



**Morten Olsen
in discussion with
Danish international
Thomas Gravesen
during a training
session.**

Larsen/APP/Getty Images

read the game faster. Players today don't have the space that we had in my era as a player. But, I'm sure that most talented players of former days would have adapted to today's conditions. Another factor that has influenced the quality of the modern game is the standard of the pitches. When you see most games in the UEFA Champions League the surfaces are fantastic. You cannot play a great passing game on a poor field. During my playing career, many of the pitches were poor and this was not helpful. Nowadays we even have artificial training pitches for year-round practice. If you see Arsenal FC's pitch in London, it is like a billiard table, and this is important for their type of football. When it is muddy, the solution is often to resort to a long-ball game.

9 • What are the key elements for success at the top level?

Assuming you have good players, you need to be talented in a variety of ways to be a successful coach. I think that experience is a prerequisite. The ability to be innovative is also important – never resting on your laurels and always looking for new solutions. And, of course, you need to be lucky. With today's players, I think you need to be better in coaching because they are more knowledgeable and inquisitive. It is good that players are happy to ask why. They want to know why, and this also means they know something about the way we want to play the game. This, of course, depends on which culture you are coming from. When players have the confidence



Empics Sport/PA Photos

to ask you why, you know that you have them fully involved in the process. Positional power is not enough for the coach today – top players react badly to verbal attacks. Communicating with the media and the marketing side has also become more demanding than in the past. You have to sell your team and your club – you could also say that you need to 'brand' yourself.

10 • Are you optimistic about the future of the game?

Yes, I am optimistic. As I said before, you need good organisation, discipline and structure. But I also see the freedom to play as a must. Often it is this freedom of expression by gifted players that decides top-level games. The two most important things in football for me are the public and the players. If these two groups are satisfied, then I'm satisfied. Yes we need to win, but everyone is happier if we win with some style. We in Denmark were one of the progressive countries in football education, but now everyone has developed and invested heavily in coaching and training. The collapse of the Berlin Wall and the Bosman Ruling were two major influences on football during the last 20 years. The fall of the wall created more countries, and therefore more competition, and the Bosman case gave more players from smaller countries the chance to play in the big European leagues. We will, I'm sure, continue to develop good coaches and footballers in Denmark, but the competitive environment has definitely changed.

11 • What next for Morten Olsen?

Following my 20 year career as a professional player, I have enjoyed being both a club manager and a national team coach, and after 17 years on the bench, I'm still happy to work in football and to be a technician – it is a great job. Some day, I may return to the club scene, but for now I am focused on Denmark's forthcoming World Cup campaign. In football, we must always be looking ahead to the next goal, to the next challenge.



Sportsfile

A PRACTICAL SESSION LED BY THE FA'S STEVE RUTTER DURING THE UEFA SYMPOSIUM IN LONDON.

BETTER COACHES = BETTER PLAYERS

THIS APPARENTLY SIMPLE EQUATION PROVIDED THE TITLE FOR ONE OF THE MANY THOUGHT-PROVOKING PRESENTATIONS AT THE LATEST UEFA COACH EDUCATION DIRECTORS SYMPOSIUM, WHICH WAS HELD IN LONDON. IT WAS DELIVERED BY THE HOSTS, WITH THE FA'S HEAD OF COACHING, JOHN PEACOCK, STEPPING ONTO THE STAGE AFTER A PREFACE BY SIR TREVOR BROOKING. THEY PAINTED A PICTURE WHICH, TAKEN AT FACE VALUE, MIGHT SEEM TO HAVE LIMITED RELEVANCE TO A MAJORITY OF NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS. HOWEVER, EVEN IF THE *PROBLEM* MIGHT NOT BE COMMON, THE FA'S REACTION MAY WELL LIGHT BEACONS ALONG A PATH FOR OTHERS TO FOLLOW.

First of all, the picture. It's no secret that England's Premier League is a magnet to the gilt-edged properties in the modern game. A review of the starting line-ups on the opening day of the current season revealed that

only 38% of the players were English – a drop of 9% compared with the previous season and a percentage perceptibly lower than in other major leagues, even the prime importers such as Spain's Primera División or

Italy's Serie A. The number of home-born Under-21s currently gaining top-division experience is a further cause for concern.

It doesn't take a Sherlock Holmes to detect a need for youth development. But the story doesn't end there. Elite youth development is mostly carried out at academies, many of which are run by the top pro clubs (though not all, as any facility which fulfils the required criteria can attain academy status). In England, the trend is for places at these academies to be increasingly taken by talents recruited at tender ages from other countries. As Peter Sturges, a key member of John Peacock's team, puts it, "our challenge is therefore to make sure that we give the younger players an education that is second to none in terms of matching anything, anywhere in the world so that, when it comes to selection and recruitment in the 16+ age group, the clubs and the academies begin to choose our kids and start to reverse the trend of bringing in foreign players on the assumption that their technique and game understanding are superior – a theory which I don't accept, by the way!"



Sportsfile

Peter Sturges from The FA addresses young players during the UEFA symposium in London.

**SIR TREVOR BROOKING,
TECHNICAL DIRECTOR OF THE FA.**



As this is clearly a coaching challenge, The FA's reaction has been to devise a grassroots-to-elite plan in which the development of coaches is pegged to the development of players and where one of the fundamental aims is to get the right coach into the right place at the right time. As John Peacock graphically put it, the idea is to jettison quick-fix mentalities and to create a coaching culture built on the concept of a lifelong learning process within a well-structured profession.

Commitment to qualifications and proper recognition of the coaching profession are keystones in The FA's structures for the future. Another of the prime requirements is a national centre – a 'home for learning' for both players and coaches. But, of course, most of the 'real work' is done on playing fields scattered all over the country. This is why, at the base of the pyramid, leaders and volunteer coaches are now able to find guidance and inspiration via DVDs and online educational material.

Along the road from grassroots to elite, the 'gateway' is considered to be the work done by coaches at UEFA B licence level. So the important features here are enhanced understanding of the game, coupled with consistent methodology right along the course pathway. The FA has invested in the appointment of 66 coaches whose brief is to enhance levels of skill by supporting clubs and schools and by working at FA skill centres. At this stage, meeting the needs of the players is crucial while, at the same time, offering them incentives and challenges. Coaches have to recognise which youngsters are struggling to cope, which are coping, and which are ready to forge further up the ladder. This implies the need to assess individual differences and detect, for instance, those who could be late developers.

The FA's structures also feature nine regional coach development managers

and a similar number of regional coaches for the 5-11 age group. In this respect, talent-spotting, they maintain, should not be restricted to players. The coaches with the greatest potential in certain areas need to be detected and deployed in the most effective way possible – which is why The FA proposes A youth licences for coaches working in the 5-11, 12-16 and 17-21 age brackets, alongside other specialised areas such as goal-keeping, psychology and the role of the 'academy manager'.

As in many other countries, former pro players are being encouraged to make the transition from pitch to dug-out as smoothly as possible. But The FA's viewpoint is that it's not just a question of recruitment. Having been welcomed at the front door, coaches need to be encouraged to climb the stairs. To this end, the plan is to eradicate the image of coaching as a solitary profession.

There are residential components in most coaching courses where senses of fraternity and team spirit can develop. But The FA's plan is to extend these into a sustained 'distance learning' environment. Coaches are encouraged to be interactive in groups where problems can be discussed and alternative solutions can be proposed. Apart from online exchanges via secure websites, conference calls are arranged so that coaches can blend their thinking on theoretical and practical issues and interchange their experiences in the handling of pro players. The audience in London heard how a guest student from New Zealand is currently earning admiration and Brownie points by getting up in the early hours of the morning to take part in the weekly phone-in.

Initial feelings at The FA are that significant progress has been made in the last year or so and that there are grounds for optimism with regard to the future – especially for the

so-called age-appropriate courses which, they believe, not only address the basic challenges but also dovetail nicely with initiatives around the skill centres and the deployment of the skills coaches in schools and junior clubs. The need and desire to work together with their partners in the professional domestic leagues, as well as the Professional Footballers Association and League Managers Association, is a vital aspect of The FA's strategy. Time and statistics will eventually tell whether home-born talent can reassert domination in the country's elite football. But, as John Peacock's right-hand man Steve Rutter – or Coach Education Manager, to give Steve his correct title – told the participants in London, "the aim is to create an environment in which every individual can reach his or her full potential".



John Peacock in the England v France semi-final during the 2006/07 European Under-17 Championship final round.



GÉRARD HOULLIER.

ELITE YOUTH FOOTBALL – THE NEXT STEPS

**AT A MOMENT WHEN THE VALUE AND IMPORTANCE
OF ELITE YOUTH FOOTBALL ARE RECEIVING GREATER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAN EVER BEFORE –
YET ARGUABLY FACING GREATER CHALLENGES THAN EVER BEFORE –
THE 9TH UEFA YOUTH CONFERENCE FOCUSED ON FINDING THE BEST WAY FORWARD.**

Over 200 guests and participants gathered in Mandelieu, on the outskirts of Cannes, for an event hosted by the French Football Federation, whose 'new' technical director, Gérard Houllier, was among the conference's play-makers, along with his compatriot, Dominique Bijotat, director of the youth academy just along the Côte d'Azur at AS Monaco.

The future, of course, is shaped by the past. But the conference highlighted the recent past rather than history. The UEFA youth tournaments played earlier in 2007 provided the basis for discussion – and the event was marked by the presentation of the Maurice Burlaz Trophy – for the seventh time – to the president of the Spanish association, Angel María Villar Llona, and to the triumvirate of Iñaki Sáez, Juan Santisteban and Ginés Meléndez who, once again, helped Spain to perform better than anybody else over the last two years – or, for that matter, the last two decades.

Indeed, when asked to explain the reasons behind Spain's sustained success, they emphasised the importance of a strong and stable 'coaching family' at youth levels, administratively separated from the senior team. This, they argue, allows youth development programmes to go ahead, no matter how many changes are rung in the coaching structure of the senior team. In other words, they would argue against a system



Inaki Saez, Juan Santisteban, Ginés Meléndez and UEFA Technical Director Andy Roxburgh.

whereby replacing the head coach of the national team entails changes right the way through the technical set-up. The same philosophy is applicable to club football but, in both cases, the structures need to be set up in a way which eliminates the sort of 'void' between youth and senior football which, as the following pages reveal, is of great concern to the elite youth coaches.

Spain emerged victorious from the Under-17 and Under-19 finals in 2007 but their voices were not the only ones to be heard in Cannes. The coaches of the eight semi-finalists were on stage

to offer their views. One of the strong messages to emerge was that thoroughly professional standards are now applied at these levels (which the players and their clubs probably expect). Michel Sablon, tournament director when Belgium hosted the Under-17 finals in May, explained how UEFA Champions League procedures had been implemented wherever possible and, more interestingly, outlined how the host association's scouts had prepared detailed dossiers on their opponents. His example was the semi-final against Spain. Juan Santisteban's side had beaten them 6-0 during the

**JIM BOYCE, VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE YOUTH
AND AMATEUR FOOTBALL COMMITTEE.**



run-up to the finals but detailed preparations meant that Belgium came within a penalty shoot-out of reaching the final. It was therefore not surprising that one of the technical observers commented "I had the impression that I was watching senior games" – a view which was fully endorsed by Willi Ruttensteiner, technical director of the Austrian FA, when he presented his review of the Under-19 finals.

One of the salient features of both final tournaments is that teams played more or less identical systems – raising questions about whether today's elite youth players are being properly equipped to operate within different tactical formations. In this context 'uniformity' is a dangerous word...

Gérard Houllier took a detailed look at structures within the French federation and commented that the emphasis is being increasingly shifted towards the 12-15 age group, during which youngsters need to be equipped with enough technical competence to be admitted to club academies or 'centres de formation'. As coach of the Under-19 and Under-20 sides, Frank Engel offered a German perspective on a youth development programme based on regional centres and this was followed up on the final afternoon when a national team coach (Finland's Jarmo Matikainen), a club coach (FC Bayern München's Werner Kern) and an administrator (long-time chairman of UEFA's Youth and Amateur Football Committee, Jim Boyce) collectively eyed the crystal ball.

Jim was back on stage to pull down the final curtain with a review of the many – points raised during the discussion sessions. The questions were simple: Are you satisfied with UEFA's youth competitions? And what are the main problems in your country in relation to youth development? The answers reflected the widely varying parameters affecting UEFA's member associations.

There was support for the format of UEFA's youth competitions but the importance of good communication between club and national team coaches was underlined. Concern was expressed about the way sub-teenage players (and/or their parents) are being 'recruited' by agents. There are worries in some countries about routes to the first team being blocked by imports. In some associations, there are doubts about how best to handle the impact of youth-level cross-border movements on club academies (the clubs maintain the imports help to raise standards but they *do* take places from local players). In some territories where a handful of clubs play dominant roles, there are concerns about the lack of truly com-

petitive games. And the same applies where youth leagues are organised on a regional rather than national basis.

There was enthusiastic support for UEFA's plan for an 'A Youth' licence, based on widespread conviction that the emphasis on *technical* development at earlier ages means that specialised coaches – with the right qualities for youth coaching – have become a prime requirement in development programmes. As UEFA's technical director, Andy Roxburgh, commented "the basic question facing us now is how we can best develop top-level youth coaches and ensure that they are given the status and importance they deserve".



Belgium's Kevin Kis (in white) in action against Spain's Lucas Porcar in the semi-finals of the last European Under-17 Championship.



Sportsfile

GIUSEPPE BARESI AT THE CONFERENCE IN CANNES.

FROM MERIDIAN TO CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

CAMP NOU, UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE MATCHDAY 6. FC BARCELONA V VFB STUTTGART.

BETWEEN THE TWO DRESSING ROOMS, TWO PLAYERS – ONE FROM EACH SQUAD – SHAKE HANDS, PAT EACH OTHER ON THE BACK AND EXCHANGE SHIRTS. NOTHING SPECIAL, YOU MIGHT THINK, IN THIS DAY AND AGE OF CROSS-BORDER MOVEMENTS AND PLAYERS WHOSE PATHS CROSS TIME AND TIME AGAIN. BUT THE IMAGE DID HAVE A SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE. THE PLAYERS WERE BOJAN KRKIC AND MANUEL FISCHER. STRIKERS, BOTH OF THEM. BOJAN (28.08.1990) WAS 17, ‘MANU’ (19.09.1989) JUST UNDER A YEAR OLDER. EARLIER IN 2007 THEY HAD ALSO MET IN BARCELONA, TEAMING UP IN ATTACK FOR EUROPE AGAINST AFRICA IN THE UNDER-18 DOUBLE-HEADER THAT FORMED PART OF THE MERIDIAN EVENT.

Their re-encounter as members of their clubs’ senior teams for a UEFA Champions League match was a memorable moment because of its rarity. And it was an image that would have made very pleasant viewing for the participants who had gathered in Cannes for the Elite Youth Coaches Forum a few weeks

earlier. The club line-up was formidable: AFC Ajax, AC Milan, FC Bayern München, Chelsea FC, FC Internazionale, Manchester United FC, Olympique Lyonnais, FC Porto, PSV Eindhoven, AS Roma and Valencia CF. The squad contained former stars such as Giuseppe Baresi, Filippo Galli and Brian McClair. As specialists in

youth development, their overriding concern was successfully converting elite youth footballers into established first-teamers – which is where Bojan and ‘Manu’ appear in the picture as a heartening vignette, albeit a rare one.

In Cannes, one of the concerns highlighted by the club representatives was the difficulty in convincing first-team coaches to include youth players. The firm belief was that the development of elite players is all too often hampered by lack of opportunities to train and play with the best. There was a fear that the gap between first-team and youth football is widening, with more players falling into a void created by lack of senior opportunities at an age when they are no longer eligible to compete in youth competitions.

At the other end of the scale, there were worries stemming from foreign clubs watching and attempting to recruit youngsters in their early teens or at even more tender ages. There are worrying case studies involving players whose development is truncated by being either removed from their family environment or, indeed, having the entire family



Getty Images

Bojan of FC Barcelona (right) playing in the UEFA Champions League as a 17 year old.

THE 4TH ELITE YOUTH COACHES FORUM.



Sportsfile

Manuel Fischer in action
in the Meridian Cup.



Sportsfile

uprooted, allied with a lack of guarantees of top-level football. In Cannes, there was widespread acknowledgement among the clubs of a need to stabilise relationships and to establish workable sporting and investment ratios. Various paths towards this goal were indicated, among them legal ways of binding youth players to their educating club for longer periods and/or imposing further, legally enforceable, restrictions on premature transfers – and tightening the regulations on agents who are involved in the transfer of youth players.

There was also a suggestion from the clubs that the 'club-trained' and 'association-trained' rules might err on the side of leniency. The proposal to increase the requirement from three seasons to five (between the ages of 15 to 21) is sure to provoke some interesting dialogue at UEFA debating tables in the next few months...

But these events also offer unique opportunities for UEFA and the elite

youth coaches to find out whether they can support each other more efficiently. In Cannes, the general feeling was that UEFA's club licensing system has had a positive impact in that it brought the importance of investment in youth to the attention of the decision-makers within the clubs. This, they feel, is making an important contribution to an increase in the quality of education and facilities.

There was also universal approval for the introduction of a UEFA-endorsed 'A Youth' licence, based on recognition of the fact that coaches require specific skills in each age bracket of development programmes – and it was also acknowledged that there are significant differences in the approach needed for each age group.

Inevitably, the relationships between clubs and national associations provided a major talking point. And there were some interesting ideas, such as associations grouping together the

most promising players in a region and going through specific elite training programmes with the best coaches from the youth academies.

But, above all, the club representatives underlined the importance of laying down efficient lines of communication between clubs and national associations. Or, to be more precise, between the academies or youth teams at the clubs and the national youth teams. In other words, the feeling was that lines of communication need to be established in the areas *below* the senior teams. All the clubs were in favour of collaborating with the national association in terms of sharing knowledge and information about individual players. In fact the clubs asked if UEFA could encourage this type of interchange by involving representatives of both camps to take part in future youth football workshops and seminars – an encounter which produced positive results in Cannes.



Empics Sport/PA Photos

**THE COACHES IN
GROUP C FOR EURO 2008:
ROBERTO DONADONI,
VICTOR PITURCA, MARCO VAN BASTEN
AND RAYMOND DOMENECH.**

BENCHES AND BENCHMARKS

THE MONTH OF DECEMBER ROUNDED OFF 2007 BY SETTING THE SCENE FOR 2008. IN LUCERNE, THE DRAW FOR EURO 2008 GAVE US PLENTY TO LOOK FORWARD TO. AND, JUST UNDER THREE WEEKS LATER, THE PROCEEDINGS IN NYON UNVEILED THE MENU FOR THE FIRST COURSES OF THE EUROPEAN CLUB COMPETITIONS WHICH WILL BE SERVED IN FEBRUARY. THE SHEER QUALITY OF THE CONTENDERS TURNS THE PREDICTION GAME INTO A MINEFIELD – AND THAT APPLIES TO THE TECHNICIANS AS WELL AS THEIR TEAMS.

In the European Championship and the UEFA Champions League, the last 16 feature only two non-European coaches – both of them Brazilian: Luiz Felipe Scolari of Portugal and Zico of Fenerbahçe SK. However, 11 (just over one third) of the technicians are working outside their native countries. 'Big Phil' Scolari, world champion in 2002, and Otto Rehhagel, the defending champion, will be the only technicians to travel to Austria and Switzerland with gold medals in national team football while, in the UEFA Champions League, the knockout rounds kick off with only four former winners in the technical area: Sir Alex Ferguson,

Frank Rijkaard, Rafael Benítez and the defending champion, Carlo Ancelotti. Questions about who will be laying the European benchmarks in 2008 are therefore wide open.

All four of the UEFA Champions League victors are still at the clubs they led to the title. Yet it has to be said that continuity, these days, is not the name of the game. The last two FIFA World Cup winners have immediately left their posts. And the fact that Marco van Basten, drawn into a daunting group with fellow ex-internationals Raymond Domenech, Roberto Donadoni and Victor Piturca, has already

announced his intention to step down after the finals recalls the opinion expressed by Roy Hodgson (who also left the post as Finland's manager at the end of the qualifying phase) that the role of national team coach has now become a short-term job – not least because "the media get tired of seeing the same face". When we convene for national team coaches' conferences after major events, it's always interesting to note how many changes have already been registered.

It has to be said that the continuity issue has been raised by events in the group stage of this season's UEFA Champions League. The participants were 32 clubs and 43 coaches – and, before anyone asks, the total doesn't include the No. 2s who've temporarily sat on the bench while the No. 1 was suspended. Nor does it include SL Benfica, who effected their change of head coach between the third qualifying round victory over FC København and the opening matchday of the competition proper.

The figures are unprecedented. And only time will tell if they represent an anecdotal record or a worrying trend. The group-phase summary reveals that Chelsea FC, FC Dynamo Kyiv, Olympique de Marseille, PSV Eindhoven, Rosenborg BK, Sevilla FC, FC Steaua Bucuresti and Valencia CF jointly fielded 19 coaches in six matchdays.

The fact that only two of the eight clubs will start the new year in the same competition can be interpreted in different ways. It could be argued that poor UEFA Champions League results were a contributing factor to the managerial change. Or, on the other hand, it could be taken as an indicator that switching horses in mid-race doesn't usually get you among the prize money.

Looking forward rather than back, technicians from 16 different European countries will be going for gold in the UEFA Champions League and EURO 2008. Who will be on the bench when the 2008 benchmarks are set? And how long will they stay there?



D. Aquilina

Following his team's victory in the Club World Championship in Japan in December, Carlo Ancelotti will now have his sights on a repeat of last year's performance in the UEFA Champions League.

**THE CITY OF
MANCHESTER STADIUM
IS THE VENUE
FOR THIS YEAR'S UEFA
CUP FINAL.**



Manchester City FC/PA Photos



Torben Hansen

TRAINING ROUTINE

BY PETER RUDBAEK
Technical Director
of the Danish Football Association



TRANSITION SPEED

Aim

- To encourage quick play in a small area.
- To train fast transitions, both in attack and defence.

Numbers

- 6 v 6 (plus goalkeepers). In addition, four side players – two 'jokers' recruited from each team.

Area

- Double penalty box.

Rules

- The four jokers always play with the team in possession and they are restricted to one touch.
- The field players when in possession can use the jokers and one

of the following conditions will apply:

- Free play
 - Two touch
 - One touch
- The four jokers are changed every 3 minutes (two from each team) – a one-minute break is permitted for the change-over.
 - Each player has 3 x 3 minutes on the pitch and 3 minutes as a joker.
 - Repeat the process, if required, depending on the training goals.

Coaching Points

- Fast interceptions and quick counter-attacks, when possible.
- Immediate pressing of the ball when possession is lost.
- Work on combination play and angles to receive the ball.

AGENDA

2008

February 3-8

- Winter Referees Course (Cyprus)

February 26-28

- Youth and Amateur Football Committee (Nyon)
- Football Committee (Nyon)
- Women's Football Committee (Nyon)

March 10-14

- 3rd UEFA Futsal Conference (Prague)

April 7-11

- 17th UEFA Course for Coach Educators (Lisbon)

April 21-25

- Medical Committee (Nyon)
- Referees Committee (Nyon)
- Development and Technical Assistance Committee (Nyon)

April 24-26

- UEFA Futsal Cup final round (Moscow)

May 4-16

- 7th European Under-17 Championship final round (Turkey)

May 14

- UEFA Cup final (Manchester)

May 17

- 7th UEFA Women's Cup final (1st leg)

May 21

- UEFA Champions League final (Moscow)

May 24

- 7th UEFA Women's Cup final (2nd leg)

June 7-29

- EURO 2008 (Austria/Switzerland)

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