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The final straight



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At the end of April, Almaty in Kazakhstan will play host to the tenth UEFA Futsal Cup finals, where local team Kairat Almaty will be competing for the title with Portuguese clubs SL Benfica and Sporting Clube de Portugal and ASD Città di Montesilvano C/5 from Italy.



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The UEFA club competitions are into the final straight, where every match counts. In the UEFA Champions League, Shakhtar Donetsk have qualified for the quarter-finals for the first time, beating AS Roma home and away in their round of 16 tie.

Photo: Supinsky/AFP

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## UEFA

Route de Genève 46

CH-1260 Nyon

Switzerland

Tel. +41 848 00 27 27

Fax +41 848 01 27 27

www.UEFA.com

E-mail: uefadirect@uefa.ch



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# Full of the joys of spring

It is said that international football never sits still for a minute nowadays and this is hard to deny if you consider all it entails, from match organisation to the training of young players, not to mention financial matters and the modernisation of infrastructure.

But as the days get steadily longer and warmer and nature shows new signs of life, so does international football. The arrival of spring lifts the spirits of football fans even more than most, with the added excitement of European club football building to its climax. From February, when the competitions resume and the knockout stages begin, the tension steadily mounts, peaking at the finals in May, which, this year in London and Dublin, should once again more than live up to the fans' expectations.

Meanwhile, in March, the national teams resume their UEFA EURO 2012 qualifying campaigns as they seek to book their places in the final round in Poland and Ukraine. On a related note, good news emerged from the latest meeting of the International FA Board, who agreed to extend the experiment with two additional assistant referees to include EURO 2012, which will undoubtedly help assure quality refereeing at this flagship tournament.

Then, as spring turns to summer, we have another two exciting events to look forward to. First, the final round of the European Under-21 Championship in Denmark,

where will see some of Europe's most promising young footballers in action, and then, also in Europe but on an even wider scale, the Women's World Cup in Germany. Even if the women's game does not single-handedly shape the future of football, this summer will no doubt provide another reminder that it is going to be a major player.

With all this to look forward to, we certainly have every reason to be full of the joys of spring!



*Michel Platini*  
UEFA President



# Tenth final – historic first

The growth of the UEFA Futsal Cup can be measured by the number of clubs on the starting grid.

When the competition was officially launched in the 2001/02 season after a number of pilot tournaments, 27 teams took part. By the start of the current campaign, the number of contestants had risen to 48 clubs from 47 national associations, and a total of 184 clubs have taken part during the decade since the birth of the competition.

One of the big questions to be asked when the final four gather to compete for the trophy at the end of April is whether SL Benfica can successfully defend the title won on home territory in Lisbon last year – a feat nobody has achieved since Spanish side Playas de Castellón won the competition in its first two years of existence. Five other clubs have disputed two successive finals but none of them has struck gold twice.

## First final round in Kazakhstan

The UEFA Futsal Cup is now set to celebrate its tenth birthday by breaking new ground. For the first time, the final tournament of a UEFA competition is to be staged in Kazakhstan and as the country's largest city, Almaty, is only a few hours' drive from China and used to be a staging post on the Silk Road, it goes without saying that it is the most oriental of all the venues ever used for the finals of a UEFA competition.

The final tournament is being hosted, for the fifth time in its current four-team format, by one of the competing clubs. On this occasion, Kairat Almaty and the Kazakh national association will act as hosts to the three visiting teams. Semi-finalists three times in the last five years, Kairat cannot be labelled 'outsiders' at an event which, venue apart, also makes history for a different reason. Spain and Russia have accounted for seven of the competition's nine champions and, for the first time, the 2011 finals will not involve a team from either of European futsal's most prominent nations.

Instead, Portuguese futsal has underlined its growing status on the European scene by sending two teams to Almaty. Defending champions SL Benfica will be joined by arch-rivals Sporting Clube de Portugal, affording prospects of a 'local derby' between 'Eagles' and 'Lions' played just about as far from Lisbon as the world atlas permits. Sporting are currently led by Orlando Duarte who, after ten years as Portugal's national team coach, returned to the club after the departure of Paulo Fernandes... to Benfica. Duarte had first joined Sporting as head coach in 1991 and had led them into a period of domestic success.

History is also being made by ASD Città di Montesilvano, the team from Italy's Adriatic coast who, on their debut in the competition, earned the trip to Almaty by eliminating the 2008 champions, MFK Viz-Sinara Ekaterinburg (on the Russian club's home pitch), and last year's bronze medallists, Araz Naxçivan of Azerbaijan, in the elite round. Ten of the Italians' goals in qualifying rounds were scored by Cleyton Baptistella, one of Italy's outstanding performers at the Futsal EURO 2010 and a Futsal Cup semi-finalist last season wearing the shirt of another Italian club, Luparense C/5. The incentive for Fulvio Colini's side is to take the trophy to Italy for the first time.

## The value of the home advantage

Two of the four-team final tournaments have been won by the team playing on home territory and the question is whether the 2011 hosts can become the third. SL Benfica star Joël Queirós, scorer of the equaliser as his team came from a goal down to beat Interviú Madrid 3-2 after extra time in last year's final in Lisbon, places value on the home advantage. "It was our greatest weapon last year. It was a plus having 10,000 fans supporting us."



UEFA



Sportsfile

João Carlos Barbosa, coach of Kairat Almaty, hopes to have further opportunities to celebrate with his team



Benfica celebrate their success of last year with their fans, whose support spurred them on to victory

As is the case at many of Europe's leading futsal clubs, the Kairat Almaty dressing room is rich in Brazilian accents, one of them corresponding to João Carlos Barbosa, who directs operations from the Kazakh team's bench. Spectators might be confused by on-pitch communications among the players, which tend to be conducted in a mixture of Kazakh, Russian and Portuguese. One of Kairat's key performers, the team captain, Kelson Bezerra da Silva, also relishes the opportunity to write his name into the annals of the UEFA Futsal Cup. Kelson was among the scorers as Belgian club Action 21: Charleroi lifted the trophy in 2005, and then scored the opening goal of the 2007 final, in which MFK Dinamo Moskva defeated Interviú Madrid 2-1 to clinch a first-ever victory for Russia. He now hopes to become futsal's equivalent of Clarence Seedorf by being champion of Europe with three different clubs.

Curiously, one of his team-mates in the 2005 final, Alex Almeida Martins – who just wears his first name on his shirt – scored twice in the crucial 5-3 victory over Spain's ElPozo Murcia which earned Sporting their journey to Kazakhstan and left the Spaniards without a representative among this season's final four. Although Alex is one of five Brazilians, Sporting's current squad also contains six of the Portuguese national team players who returned from the Futsal EURO 2010 with silver medals.

### An opportunity for developing futsal

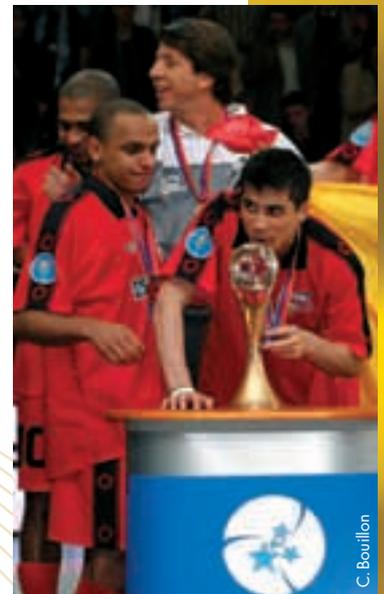
But the event itself is as important as the players who will provide the entertainment and the drama. Dinmukhambet Suleimenov, scorer of the crucial opening goal in the nail-biting 2-2 draw with Georgia's Iberia Star Tbilisi which gave Kairat their place in the final four, comments: "It's really important for Kazakh futsal, which

has been developing quite slowly. Thousands of spectators will come to the UEFA finals and I hope that, among them, there might be sponsors and sport administrators who will want to invest in futsal. Sport is improving all the time in Kazakhstan. We have just organised the Asian Winter Games, so this is another opportunity to show that we can stage big sporting events."

He agrees with Joël Queirós that home advantage counts: "It's a big plus. We played the elite round in Almaty, and it was a totally different feeling. We were playing for the whole country and we felt huge support. I am sure there'll be even more fans at the final round and we will see if my dreams of winning this trophy can come true."

History will be made when the ball starts rolling in the semi-finals, to be played on Friday 29 April at the recently renovated 5,000-seat Baluan Sholak sports palace in Almaty. The draw conducted on 9 March determined the semi-final pairings, which are: Sporting Clube v MFK Kairat Almaty and SL Benfica v ASD Città di Montesilvano C/5.

And, unless SL Benfica can become the second club to successfully defend the title two days later, a new name will be engraved on the UEFA Futsal Cup and either Kairat, Montesilvano or Sporting will become the seventh club to don the European crown during its ten years of existence. ●



Kelson has already won the trophy twice and is hoping for a third victory with his current club, Kairat Almaty

# Turkey joins the futsal elite

The qualifying rounds for the second 12-team finals of the European Futsal Championship have now been completed, with nine of the 2010 finalists on the starting grid for the Futsal EURO 2012 to be staged in Croatia early next year.



The hosts are among the three newcomers to the final tournament, though the Croatians have a rich history in the five-a-side game and were among the pioneers when European competitions got under way in the mid-1990s. Romania, one of the eight finalists in 2007, returned to the final tournament thanks to an unusually low 1-0 scoreline in a nail-biting final match on home terrain which gave them second place behind the Czech Republic in Group 4.

## Hat-trick in ten seconds from time

The most dramatic story, however, was written by Turkey in the Group 5 qualifiers played in Ukraine. Coming from 1-0 and 2-1 down, they defeated the 2010 hosts, Hungary, 3-2. But victory seemed to have taken a heavy toll when they were beaten 12-2 by the hosts in their second game – a result which left them needing to beat another 2010 finalist, Belgium, to have any hope of qualifying. The Belgians appeared to have thwarted them by coming back to 2-2 with only 34 seconds to play, only for Cihan Özcan to make history by completing a hat-trick with only 10 seconds remaining and taking his goal tally to 24 in 14 European Championship



Ukraine had the upper hand over Turkey, who nevertheless qualified for the final round

games. After qualifying for the first time, Turkey's coach, Omer Kaner, commented, "nobody included us among the contenders for a place in the finals but now we have shown that Turkey can achieve something in futsal and I can promise that we will do our best in Croatia".

The top four from the 2010 finals safely negotiated tough qualifying groups to earn their passage to Croatia. The Czechs, bronze medallists, edged out neighbours Slovakia in a group which ended in a three-way tie on six points and featured Norway – one of the teams which confirmed its development in the indoor game. The other five groups were dominated by teams who strung together three victories, among them Ukraine (top scorers with 20), Russia and Italy (who conceded only one goal apiece), Portugal (who consolidated their silver medal status with three strong performances under the new leadership of Jorge Bras) and the defending champions, Spain, who were drawn into a group that included the 2010 semi-finalists Azerbaijan. José Venancio's side, in a phase of rebuilding following retirements – 5 players made their debuts in the competition – scored 17 times in their 3 games and will now travel to Croatia in search of their fourth successive victory.

## Draw in September

The Spaniards will, of course, be one of the top seeds when the draw for the final tournament is made in Zagreb on 9 September. Portugal and Italy (silver medallists in the last two editions) will also be in the 'top pot' alongside the hosts. The Czechs, Russians, Serbs and Ukrainians will be in the second, with Slovenia and the 2010 surprise package, Azerbaijan, joining the two newcomers, Romania and Turkey, in the third. The final tournament starts with four groups of three, with the top two in each group going into the quarter-finals which mark the start of the knockout phase. An exciting tournament is in prospect, with futsal standards rising and an increasing number of teams determined to challenge the more established powers. ●



Azerbaijan beat France, among others, to qualify for the final round

# A workshop to share knowledge in women's football

UEFA's Executive Committee has pointed the way forward for European women's football by giving crucial support to its future development. A recent gathering in Nyon laid impressive foundations for Europe-wide progress under the UEFA HatTrick assistance programme.



A total of 51 UEFA member associations – virtually the European body's entire membership – sent their senior women's football delegates to the House of European Football for a women's football development workshop, held under the auspices of the Knowledge & Information Sharing Scenario (KISS) in which national associations share invaluable experience for the overall benefit of European football. The KISS project forms part of the HatTrick assistance scheme for UEFA's associations and is administered by the UEFA national associations division.

## Executive Committee's impulse

The workshop followed a key decision taken by the UEFA Executive Committee at its meeting in Prague in December. Taking note of the massive growth in European women's football, in terms of both registered players and participation, the committee agreed to back the UEFA women's football development programme through a yearly payment of €100,000 to each association between 2012 and 2016. The payments will be made via the HatTrick III scheme.

Women's football development is now a key element in the national associations division's list of activities, and a new position of UEFA women's football development coordinator has been created. In addition, women's football is included in the UEFA Study Group Scheme, whereby national associations share technical expertise and know-how by visiting each other for discussions and seminars.

## Comprehensive agenda

The presence of 51 associations in Nyon greatly encouraged UEFA and showed a heartening readiness to contribute to maintaining the momentum within the women's game. The inaugural workshop provided a comprehensive agenda – women's football development at UEFA, women and governance in football, the brand positioning of women's football at UEFA and the recruitment of women coaches.

During the workshop, a number of associations shared their experiences through informative presentations on a variety of issues. These included women and governance (Austria and Denmark); volunteer recruitment (Sweden and former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia); grass-

roots programmes (Moldova and Republic of Ireland); promotional campaigns (England); building a girls' academy (Switzerland); and recruitment of female footballers (Germany).



Working in groups during the workshop in Nyon

The positive atmosphere was underlined by every delegate at the workshop. UEFA's move to give even more impetus to the women's game was the subject of unanimous praise. "I think the work UEFA is starting to do in terms of supporting the girls' and women's game in Europe is absolutely massive for the future of women's football," said Sheila Begbie, head of girls'/women's football at the Scottish Football Association (SFA) and a member of the UEFA Women's Football Committee.

"I think that a conference like this, through the KISS programme, is really important to support the national associations. It provides people with the opportunity of having input from well-developed countries – models of good practice," she added.

## Creating networks

"It's the best idea we've had for a long time," added Elisabeth Bougeard-Tournon, women's football manager at the French Football Federation (FFF). "It enables us to have very instructive presentations on what is happening in other countries, whatever their level, and to exchange views with people and create networks to all progress together." →



→ "It's been a fantastic couple of days," said the Republic of Ireland's senior national women's team coach, Sue Ronan. "Meeting people that you might only normally meet at competition draws but now being able to sit down in discussions with them and find out what is going on within their associations – I think we can all learn going forward."

UEFA now plans to organise a series of smaller workshops which will correspond to the development levels of the associations. In addition, pilot projects will be held in four countries, in which the early impact of UEFA's support will be assessed. The future of women's football is in good care – with UEFA and the national associations working hand in hand to ensure continued progress. ●

## HatTrick programme

# The Maltese example

If evidence was ever needed of the effect of the UEFA HatTrick programme on the infrastructural development of football facilities in a country, then surely Malta would fit the bill.

Since being elected president of the Malta Football Association (MFA) in August of last year, Norman Darmanin Demajo has inaugurated six new facilities for member clubs, with no fewer than a further nine projects in the final stages of completion, and more projects in the pipeline.

The MFA president sees HatTrick as "UEFA's direct hit to ensure that the national associations focus on grass-roots issues.

"The MFA has realised that football in our small nation can only progress if direct assistance is afforded at club level in two major areas – continued professional education and assistance for improvement of club facilities. The MFA will continue to work in this direction, encouraged and assisted by the UEFA HatTrick programme, which is an important part of the equation that will assist in realising our goals over the coming months.

"The HatTrick programme is a typical example of UEFA putting its money where its mouth is," he added. "HatTrick is also about educating clubs and associations. It is very important that UEFA has taken this role, and I'm very happy to feel UEFA's backing."

### Development of infrastructure

HatTrick funds have been bolstering football's infrastructure in Malta for years – in areas such as facilities, artificial surfaces, adequate floodlighting and player development. Recent projects which have benefited from such UEFA assistance are scattered all over Malta, including in Attard, Birkirkara, Gudja, Hamrun, in Korradino (Hibernians' ground), Kalkara, Marsaxlokk,

Mgarr, Mqabba, Msida, Pembroke, Rabat/Mtarfa, Santa Lucia, Siggiewi, Pieta and Zabbar (St Patrick FC).

Aspiring footballers, including the very young working their way up in the game, will be able to use these facilities to hone their skills while also being assisted in their social and academic development. The Malta Football Association is also looking to invest in the latest technologies designed to assist coaches to achieve optimum physical and mental conditions.

### Help in raising funds

"The strength of present and future HatTrick programmes takes on a new dimension when using the



Mellieha SC's artificial turf was made possible thanks to a HatTrick contribution



Hibernians' ground in Korradino was equipped with floodlights through the HatTrick programme

programme's financial assistance benefits as collateral for raising the additional funds that are needed today, for benefits that will be enjoyed by our clubs in the future and hopefully for many years to come."

The UEFA HatTrick programme also promotes and supports the use of funds for proper administration and good governance.

Bjorn Vassallo, the Malta Football Association's newly appointed CEO, outlines the benefits of such policies: "It is very easy to succumb to pressures and deviate from the real priorities of managing the association's share of UEFA funds. The HatTrick programme spells out the important issues and ensures that allocated funds are used in accordance with the agreed terms. These include good governance projects, which could range from social initiatives to staff-related matters and continued professional education."

### A football-crazy island

Malta is a football-loving island – the game of football has always been and still is the most popular sport – and, last year, the MFA and everyone involved in the game on the Mediterranean island celebrated the 100th anniversary of national football competitions first being played in the country, the national league having kicked off in 1909/10, and the 50th anniversary of the MFA membership of both UEFA and FIFA.

No wonder this small country in the middle of the Mediterranean is known as a football-crazy island!

The Malta Football Association, in conjunction with UEFA's HatTrick assistance programme, continues to look



Michel Platini at the inauguration of Pembroke Athleta FC's artificial pitch

to improve facilities, all of which comes down to the new administration's main policy of putting the island's clubs at the forefront.

These projects on the islands of Malta and Gozo are some of many that are being achieved as part of the second phase of UEFA's ambitious HatTrick programme for its 53 member associations, which covers the period from 2008 to 2012.

● Domenic Aquilina

# An autonomous set-up

The separation of powers, the cornerstone of any democratic system, is enshrined in the UEFA Statutes, which also stipulate that *"Members of the Organs for the Administration of Justice may not belong to the Executive Committee or to any other Committee of UEFA"*.

This has not always been the case. Initially, the various committees and commissions were responsible for taking their own disciplinary decisions, which was not ideal as far as consistent decision-making was concerned. The first step towards a centralised disciplinary system was taken when the statutes were revised at the Extraordinary UEFA Congress in Rome in June 1968, when the national association delegates laid down the legal foundations necessary for the creation of a disciplinary committee. The new body held its first meeting on 3 October 1968.

The separation of powers was still not in place at that stage: the disciplinary committee chairman was, in fact, one of the UEFA vice-presidents, Artemio Franchi, while the Executive Committee was responsible for dealing with any appeals.

Following a further revision of the UEFA Statutes, at the congress in Vienna in 1972, the separation of powers and UEFA's new disciplinary structure were officially adopted at the initiative of the West German football association at an extraordinary congress held in Rome a year later. Since then, the executive's role in disciplinary matters has been limited to appointing the members

of the Organs for the Administration of Justice and adopting the UEFA Disciplinary Regulations, which set out the disciplinary measures to be imposed by the disciplinary bodies, originally the Control and Disciplinary Committee and Board of Appeal, since renamed the Control and Disciplinary Body and Appeals Body.

A new element was added to the system at the Extraordinary UEFA Congress held in Helsinki in October 1997, when the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) was recognised in the UEFA Statutes. A further addition was the introduction of disciplinary inspectors, a function that was instituted in 1998 and confirmed in the UEFA Statutes at the October 2001 congress in Prague. Disciplinary inspectors represent UEFA in disciplinary proceedings. They can open disciplinary investigations or lodge appeals, and may also be asked to conduct investigations by the president, Executive Committee, general secretary or disciplinary bodies.

## Real separation

The autonomy of the disciplinary bodies is still not well understood by the general public, nor even by representatives of the media, who see UEFA as a

The Executive Committee, chaired by Gustav Wiederkehr, during the Extraordinary UEFA Congress in 1968 when the UEFA Statutes were amended to provide for the creation of a disciplinary body



single, unique organisation. Although the disciplinary bodies meet at UEFA headquarters, this is essentially for practical and economic reasons; although the president and Executive Committee can lay down general guidelines, such as zero tolerance of cheats, the disciplinary bodies always impose disciplinary measures on the basis of the Disciplinary Regulations; although UEFA administration staff work for the disciplinary bodies, they have absolutely no influence on the decision-making process; and although the members of the disciplinary bodies are appointed by the Executive Committee, suggesting that they might let themselves be influenced by UEFA's executive would be a slur on the integrity of these experienced respected lawyers.

To sum up, the separation of powers at UEFA is a reality and the disciplinary bodies' decisions are taken in all good conscience by the members of these bodies and these members alone.

#### A variety of cases

One of UEFA's statutory objectives is to "prevent all methods or practices which might jeopardise the regularity of matches or give rise to the abuse of football".

To achieve this, UEFA can impose any measures it deems appropriate, including sanctions, as provided by the UEFA Disciplinary Regulations, against those who threaten the smooth, orderly running of matches and competitions.

The cases dealt with by the disciplinary bodies are extremely varied. Many involve infringements of the Laws of the Game or misconduct by players, coaches, officials or spectators. More than 800 decisions are issued each year by the disciplinary bodies. Although violence was, for a long time, the biggest problem, rapid advances in information and communication technologies have created another serious threat for football and sport in general, in the form of illegal and irregular betting. So much so that UEFA has made the fight against corruption and match-fixing a priority: in December 2008, the Executive Committee decided to adopt practical measures to combat match-fixing, a policy that was supported by the Ordinary UEFA Congress in Copenhagen in 2009.

From the start of the 2009/10 season, the betting fraud detection system introduced by UEFA in 2005 was therefore extended not only to UEFA competition matches, but also to those in the top two divisions and national cup competition of each UEFA member asso-

ciation. Each season, therefore, some 29,000 matches are scrutinised for signs of suspicious betting, such as a sudden sharp increase in stakes being placed. Dialogue and collaboration between the national associations, other sports federations, public authorities and police is another indispensable means of trying to prevent such betting, which is often the work of criminal organisations operating at international level.

The desire to combat this phenomenon was reaffirmed in August 2010 in a Professional Football Strategy Council resolution against match-fixing. As a result of all these efforts, a number of offences

Red cards and other match-related incidents account for a good number of disciplinary cases



The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Lausanne

have been uncovered and the disciplinary bodies have had to deal ruthlessly with referees, players and clubs involved in UEFA competitions. However, there is still a long way to go. ●

### More staff recruited

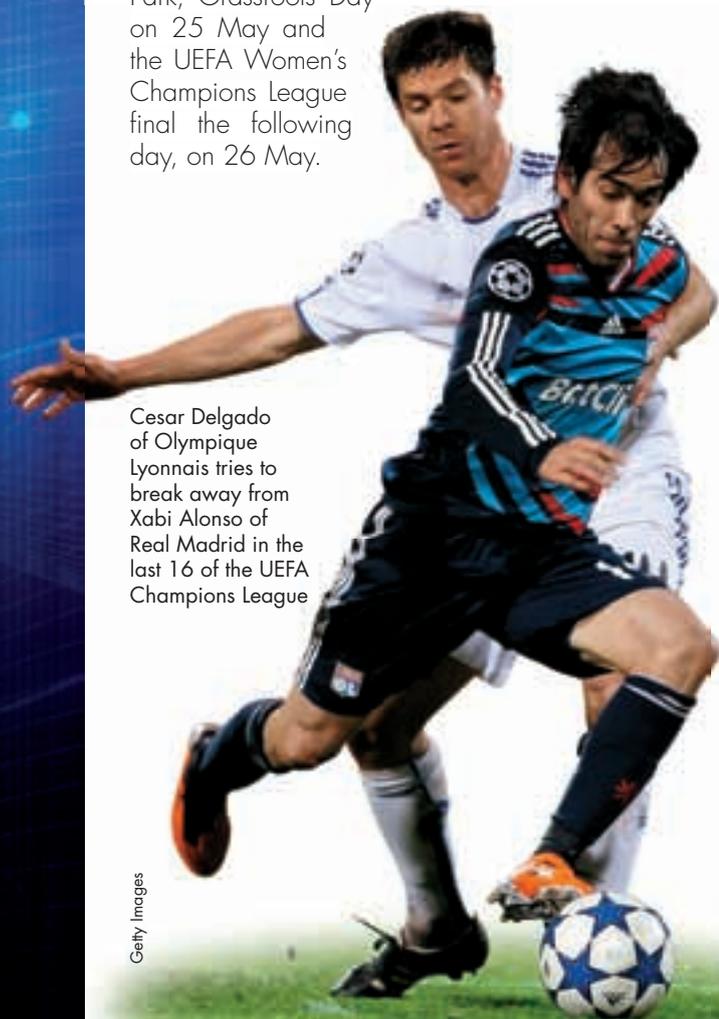
**The fight against corruption and match-fixing has also led to the recruitment of additional disciplinary staff. In September 2008, the Executive Committee gave the green light for the recruitment of two extra employees and four new disciplinary inspectors with experience in this field.**

**From June this year, these services will be headed by a new chief legal counsel for integrity and regulatory affairs, Pierre Cornu, currently prosecutor general of the canton of Neuchâtel, who, in addition to his legal experience, has gained valuable sports knowledge through his role as president of the sports court of the Swiss Football Association.**

# Preparing for the finals and the following season

The UEFA club competitions resumed in February, with the round of 16 for the clubs still competing in the UEFA Champions League and the round of 32 for those involved in the UEFA Europa League.

A few days earlier, on 10 February, the Club Competitions Committee met at UEFA headquarters in Nyon under the leadership of its chairman, Michael van Praag. The meeting agenda included an update on preparations for the 2011 finals. For the UEFA Champions League final, to be held at London's Wembley Stadium on 28 May, former England international Gary Lineker has been appointed as ambassador. Also, the visual identity of the final has been finalised, ticket prices (85,000 places, including around 25,000 for each finalist club) have been fixed in four categories, ranging from €90 to €350, hotel reservations have been made for the finalists and a vast programme of events is being organised, with highlights to include the Champions Festival in Hyde Park, Grassroots Day on 25 May and the UEFA Women's Champions League final the following day, on 26 May.



Cesar Delgado of Olympique Lyonnais tries to break away from Xabi Alonso of Real Madrid in the last 16 of the UEFA Champions League

Getty Images

The ambassador for the Europa League final, which will be staged at the Dublin Arena on 18 May, is former Irish international Ronnie Whelan. The visual identity of the final was unveiled at the end of November and the 47,500 or so places have been split into four price categories, ranging from €50 to €135.

The Club Competitions Committee also discussed next season's competitions, in particular the 2011/12 regulations and draw procedures. The proposed amendments, none of which have any fundamental impact on the competitions concerned, were submitted to the Executive Committee for approval at its meeting in Paris in March.

The committee also noted that there would be no official bidding procedure for the 2013 and 2014 finals, but that the UEFA president would present proposals to the Executive Committee at its meeting in June.

The committee members also continued to discuss the future of the UEFA Super Cup, in particular the idea of separating it from the awards ceremony and draws used to launch the new season and holding it at a different venue each year (starting in 2013), just like the club competition finals, in order to give more member associations the opportunity to host a major UEFA match. ●

## UEFA EURO 2012

### Ticket sales open

Ceremonies were held in Kyiv and Warsaw on 1 March to mark the start of ticket sales for UEFA EURO 2012.



The UEFA president, Michel Platini, attended the ceremony at the Copernicus Science Centre in Warsaw, along with EURO 2012 ambassadors Zbigniew Boniek and Andrzej Szarmach and the president of the Polish Football Association, Grzegorz Lato.

Another EURO 2012 ambassador, former Ukrainian international player and coach Oleg Blokhin, attended the ceremony in Kyiv.

Direct sales of tickets to the public are being conducted exclusively via the official UEFA.com website



Michel Platini at the ticket sales launch in Warsaw with Grzegorz Lato, president of the Polish Football Association

from 1 to 31 March. There is no first come, first served policy: all requests submitted between these dates will be entered into a lottery to determine the successful applicants.

A total of 1.4 million tickets are available for the European Football Championship final round in 2012 and around 85% are reserved for fans (41% sold via direct sales to the public, 32% allocated to the 16 participating associations, 2% for the host cities and 10% distributed by sponsors through competitions and promotional activities). The remaining tickets will be assigned to the non-participating associations, other members of the football family (confederations, clubs, referees, officials, etc.), the governments of the host countries, VIPs and hospitality guests. ●

## Anti-doping controls

Chaired by Dr Jacques Liénard, the Anti-Doping Panel also met to discuss preparations for EURO 2012 at UEFA headquarters in February.

Looking ahead to next year's tournament in Poland and Ukraine, the panel members considered the logistical problems the anti-doping programme will face, the need to ensure the conformity of the doping control rooms at all eight stadiums and the training of chaperones, who will accompany players drawn for testing to the doping control rooms after each match. The panel noted that 124 players had been tested at the 31 matches in UEFA EURO 2008, while 160 out-of-competition tests had also been conducted. All the results were negative.

More generally, the panel discussed the new player whereabouts procedures. It also noted the results of the tests carried out so far in the 2010/11 UEFA competitions. More than 1,200 tests have been conducted, producing only one positive result. During the entire 2009/10 season, 1,710 tests were conducted, four of which came back positive. ●

■ On 21 and 22 February, a workshop was held at UEFA headquarters for EURO 2012 match managers. The agenda of this working meeting included media, communication, security, protocol, ticket sales and numerous other issues associated with match organisation. ●



EURO 2012 match managers during the meeting at UEFA

## Additional assistant referees at EURO 2012

At its 125th meeting in Newport, Wales, on 5 March, the International FA Board responded positively to UEFA's request for the additional assistant referees experiment to be extended to the 31 matches at EURO 2012.

In the UEFA competitions, initial trials with two additional assistants stationed behind the goal line were conducted at European Under-19 Championship qualifying matches in autumn 2008. During the 2009/10 season, the experiment was extended to Europa League matches from the group stage onwards. The International FA Board then agreed to include Champions League matches from the play-offs as well as Europa League matches from the group stage (in both cases for the 2010/11 and 2011/12 seasons), and the UEFA Super Cup. ●

■ *Only A Game*, the UEFA exhibition which has already proved a great success in Brussels, Liverpool and Istanbul, opened its doors on 16 January in the Finnish city of Turku, European Capital of Culture for 2011. The exhibition aims to demonstrate the impact that football and European society have on each other and includes fun, interactive elements. It is open until 18 December at the Logomo centre in Turku and entry is free. ●



### A programme for detecting young talent

The Albanian Football Association (AFA) has successfully started reorganising the way talented young players are detected and identified, not only all over the country but also abroad.

In Albania itself, the programme is run from the six regional offices which have just been inaugurated, each with its own organisational structure as well as three coaches. The talent detection and selection programme and the selection process organised and managed by these regional offices covers three age categories: U12, U15 and U17.



Systematic talent spotting to maintain the quality of Albanian football

At the same time, the AFA has decided to structure and expand its efforts to spot talented young Albanian footballers living abroad. This work is based on a study on the specificity of Albanian emigration, which concerns about one third of the population. Albanian communities are known to be settled in Greece, Italy, Germany and

Switzerland, but special attention will also be paid to countries such as Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Austria and France.

Within the AFA, Redi Jupi, a former well-known player and coach in Albania, is responsible for coordinating, selecting and managing the information received from our representatives in European countries.

Together with the technical department and coaches of the U17, U19, U21 and A national teams, Redi Jupi organises and leads tours in Albania and to numerous different countries in Europe to closely evaluate the level of young footballers. By opening up opportunities for these children to show their talent and dedication, the AFA will ensure the quality of Albanian football in the future. ● Press office



### National licences granted to all top division clubs



Meeting of the FFA licensing committee

On 15 February, the licensing committee of the Football Federation of Armenia (FFA) met at the FFA's headquarters to decide which clubs could be granted licences to play in Armenia's top division championship in 2011.

The meeting was led by the chairman of the committee, Ara Lopoyan, who also heads the FFA's competitions unit, and involved Satenik Amiranyan, deputy chairman, as well as members Hakob Hambartsumyan and Hrachya Ghambaryan. The FFA's licensing department was represented by Arno Sargsyan, licensing manager, Artur Azaryan, deputy licensing manager, and other experts.

During January 2011, the clubs provided the FFA licensing department with all the documentation corresponding to the non-financial criteria laid down in the FFA's club licensing regulations (sporting, personnel-administrative, legal and infrastructure-related criteria), based on which necessary inspections were carried out by experts from the licensing department and reports prepared for the licensing committee. All the results were presented in detail by Arno Sargsyan at the meeting.

Based on this information, the licensing committee decided to grant national licenses to all top division clubs: FC Pyunik, FC Banants, FC Ulisses, FC Mika, FC Gandzasar, FC Shirak, Ararat FC and SC Erebuni-Dilijan.

However, the licensing season is not over yet. The next deadline is 8 April, by when licence applicants (clubs) in the running to play in UEFA club competitions in the 2011/12 season have to submit their financial documentation, on the basis of which their eligibility to participate in those competitions will be decided. ● Tigran Israelyan



### National centre for women's football soon to open

A milestone has been reached in women's football in Austria. In the next school year, the Austrian Football Association (ÖFB) will be opening a national centre for women's football in St Pölten, capital of the state of Lower Austria and, at the same time, opening the doors to elite women's training for the first time. For girls born between 1993 and 1997, specialist schools will be provided, as will on-site accommodation.

At the beginning of February, the ÖFB, represented by Johann Gartner, president of the Lower Austria football association, and Willi Ruttensteiner, sports director, hosted an open day at the Lower Austria sports campus, where the academy will be located. The response was overwhelming. More than 80 girls and numerous parents were keen to find out more. Equally pleasing was the number of enrolments for the entrance exams, which take place soon.

The running of the national centre for women's football is also in highly capable hands. Its sports director is Dominik Thalhammer,



The site of the national centre for women's football

who has previously been in charge of the FC Admira academy and active as a coach in the Austrian Bundesliga, and the managing director is sports scientist Norbert Braunstorfer. Former player Isabel Hochstätger, who has been responsible for the administrative side of women's football for the ÖFB for a long time, is also heavily involved in the project.

The national centre for women's football is being launched officially in March at a media conference to be given by Austria's sports minister, Norbert Darabos, and the president of the ÖFB, Leo Windtner.

● Peter Klingmüller



### Fourth Baku international futsal tournament

The fourth Baku international futsal tournament took place from 4 to 8 February at the Baku sports palace. The national futsal teams of Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Latvia and Uzbekistan took part. The traditional tournament was organised by the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA), in cooperation with the Azerbaijan Futsal Federation, for the first time in 2008. All the matches are broadcast on Azerbaijan TV.

On the last day of the tournament, Uzbekistan defeated Latvia (6-3) for third place, leaving Ukraine and Azerbaijan to contest the final. A lot of fans were in the sports hall to see the surprising 3-0 victory of the home team. With three wins out of three in the tournament, Azerbaijan claimed the trophy. Special gifts were offered to all participants by the AFFA.

In 2010, Azerbaijan finished the European Futsal Championship in fourth place and, in the same year, FC Arax came third in the UEFA Futsal Cup.

The AFFA is delighted that futsal is attracting much attention and gaining in popularity in Azerbaijan. ● Mikayil Narimanoglu



Azerbaijan beat all their opponents in the tournament in Baku



Belarus

www.bff.by

## Indoor youth tournament in Minsk

From 23 to 30 January, the covered football arena in Minsk hosted the seventh edition of an international indoor youth tournament well known beyond Belarus.

The opening ceremony was a great show with dynamic music, team presentations and greetings from VIP guests such as Liutauras Varanavicius (president of the Lithuanian Football Federation and UEFA Executive Committee member) and several top officials representing Minsk city and the government, which stressed high support for the tournament at the top level. The UEFA general secretary, Gianni Infantino, sent his traditional video message to all the participants and fans.

Eight teams came to Minsk in the hope of winning the trophy, from Belarus, Belgium, Finland, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine.

Belarus, Belgium, Finland and Lithuania were drawn into Group A, while Moldova, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine formed Group B.

The group matches were spread across three matchdays. The teams that finished bottom of their groups (Lithuania and Moldova) played for seventh place, with Lithuania winning 2-1. Fifth place was decided in a match between

Belarus and Ukraine, which Ukraine won 6-1. Russia beat Finland 4-2 in the match for third place. In the final, Belgium played Serbia. Eric Abram's team, who also reached the final last year, when they lost to Russia, came out winners this time, beating Serbia 3-1.

Personal awards went to: Daniel Kollar (Finland) – best goalkeeper, Mikhail Shishka (Ukraine) – best defender, Marko Pavlovski (Serbia) – best midfielder, and Serder Serderov (Russia) – best forward. Nicola Storm from Belgium was voted player of the tournament.

On 27 February, the new football season in Belarus kicked off with the super cup match between the domestic champions, BATE Borisov, and the cup runners-up, Torpedo Zhodino. It was the second super cup match in the history of Belarusian football. Like last year, the title went to BATE Borisov. But unlike last year, when the winners were decided in a penalty shoot-out, this year BATE won the match 3-0 in normal time.

On the same day, the Belarus Football Federation (BFF) organised an open day and football festival for more than 100 children from various schools in Minsk. In the first half of the day, the youngsters were divided into groups headed by BFF staff and visited the association's headquarters, where they had a chance to see how various departments of the federa-



The football festival that concluded the BFF open day

tion work and what they do to develop and promote football.

In the second part of the day, the children took part in a football festival held in the covered football arena. They also worked in groups and polished their football skills under the watchful eyes of experienced instructors, including the coach of the national A team, Bernd Stange, and some famous ex-players. Every single participant was brimming with excitement and went away with the same feeling: "The day was marvellous and the event was unforgettable!"

● Yulia Zenkovich



Bosnia and Herzegovina

www.nfsbih.ba

## International youth futsal tournament attracts huge interest

The Junior Champions football school in Sarajevo hosted the fourth Junior Cup international futsal tournament for young players in four age groups (children born in 2001, 2000, 1999 and 1998). In total, 94 teams from 6 countries took part, 5 from the region (Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina), plus Lebanon.

More than 1,000 young people played in the tournament, showing, through their enviable skills, that Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region boast many talented players. The tournament took place in an atmosphere of fair play and friendliness, as the organisers had intended. This is the biggest tournament in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and probably in the region as well.

"I am thrilled that Sarajevo hosted around one and a half thousand young players, their coaches, parents and supporters for three days. I am assured that everybody felt comfortable in the Olympic city. The aim of the tournament was to bring together young players, for them to socialise and make friends, and all through sporting competition. The tournament has an even bigger significance in that the players taking part came from countries that were once united as one country.

"I expect that next year we will have more teams and also that clubs from a wider area will take part", said Almir Prguda, leader and coach at the football school.

The winners of the tournament were SF Piksi Pale, Bosnia and Herzegovina (2001 category), NK Maribor, Slovenia (2000), NK Champion Ilidza Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina (1999) and FK Buducnost Banovici, Bosnia and Herzegovina (1998).



Making friends during the tournament

In other news, the national team of Bosnia and Herzegovina have played their first match of this year. Safet Susic's team played a friendly match against a Mexican selection on 9 February in Atlanta, Georgia (USA). The Mexicans won 2-0 at the Georgia Dome stadium. There were 25,000 fans of our national team who live over there in the stadium to cheer them on. This is a record for an away match of our national team.

Meanwhile, our national futsal team were in action in Group 6 in the qualifying competition for next year's European Futsal Championship final round in Croatia. The tournament took place in Lasko in Slovenia, and alongside the host team and our team, also involved the national futsal teams of Italy and Latvia. Our team, coached by Murat Jaha, lost two of their matches (6-1 against Slovenia and 4-0 against Italy) and won one (3-2 against Latvia).

● Fuad Kravac



England

www.thefa.com

## The FA Women's Super League launching in April

The FA's ambition is to create a competitive, sustainable and commercially attractive league at the top of women's football in England. We want to ensure talented players no longer have to move overseas to play competitive football.



The stated vision is to revolutionise and develop women's football so that the game is more commercially sustainable, the players are seen as icons, the clubs build bigger and more loyal fan bases, and these fans enjoy a greater experience.

The FA is investing over £3m into the new league. There is also considerable indirect investment from The FA that is difficult to quantify, in staff resources and support provided by other FA departments. The major focus in the first two years will be to raise the profile of the league. The new broadcast partnership with ESPN is key to establishing women's football as a watchable and exciting sport in its own right – an attractive alternative to follow in the summer. ESPN will screen five live games in the first season and also show weekly highlights ensuring The FA WSL has a consistent broadcast platform.

The following eight teams will be competing in The FA WSL: Arsenal Ladies FC, Birmingham City Ladies FC, Bristol Academy Women's FC, Chelsea Ladies FC, Doncaster Rovers Belles, Everton, Lincoln Ladies FC and Liverpool Ladies FC.

The league will kick off in April with the opening fixture of Chelsea v Arsenal on Wednesday 13 April at 17.30 (GMT). The new league website, www.fawsl.com, will be launched in March.

● Johann Alexander

**France**  
www.fff.fr

**Women's World Cup: the countdown begins**

The cream of women's football in France gathered in Paris at the end of February for a ceremony at which the 2011 FIFA Women's World Cup trophy was presented. The French stage of the welcome tour was the opportunity to begin the official countdown to the tournament, which Germany is hosting from 26 June to 17 July.

"The objective is in front of our eyes," said striker Laura Georges, gazing longingly at the trophy. "We have to do everything we can to bring it back to France." Ophélie Meilleroux, her team-mate, agreed: "Looking at the stadiums where we'll be playing our first three matches and the expected number of spectators, the excitement is starting to mount. This ceremony makes us realise that the tournament is approaching fast. We're eager to go to Germany to give our all and get as far as possible."

As far as possible? Bruno Bini and his team would like to reach the semi-finals at least and qualify for the 2012 Olympic Games in London. Realistic though this ambition seems, the French women's team will first have to get the better

of their Group A opponents, Nigeria, Canada and Germany.

Across the Rhine, in Germany itself, the event is also eagerly awaited. The figures speak for themselves. Steffi Jones, chairman of the German organising committee, has said that 45,000 tickets have already been sold for France's match against Germany on 5 July in Mönchengladbach. In all, more than 700,000 tickets have been sold. The tournament also promises to be a media success. "This World Cup promises to be very special," says Tatjana Haenni, FIFA's head of women's football. "It will enjoy increased visibility, which is especially valuable in countries where women's football is still not very well developed."

There are 120 days to go until the French women's team, currently eighth in the FIFA rankings, make their first appearance in the final round. Preparations are in full swing. From 1 to 10 March, the French team were in Cyprus for a friendly tournament also involving the Netherlands, New Zealand and Switzerland. After that, from 16 to 19 May, they will be in Brest, where they will play Scotland and then spend some time resting up before heading to Germany.

● *Matthieu Brelle-Andrade*



France's coach, Bruno Bini, with Tatjana Haenni from FIFA

**Hungary**  
www.mlsz.hu

**Hungarian football forum**

As a part of its anniversary year – the Hungarian Football Federation (MLSZ) is celebrating its 110th anniversary – the MLSZ organised a Hungarian football forum on 28 February at the László Papp sports arena in Budapest.

During the morning, four session zones were created and 69 presenters gave speeches on their respective football-related topics, from technical issues to journalism and infrastructure, and from youth education to medical issues, professional football and the national team. The MLSZ received more than 1,400 applications from participants before the event, showing that Hungarian society is still ambitious and curious about football.

After the lunch break, the forum continued with a plenary session from the stage. The day culminated with Sándor Csányi, president of the MLSZ, outlining the strategic development plan for Hungarian football for the period from 2011 to 2020. Before that, however, Viktor Orbán, the prime minister of Hungary, spoke about the duties of the state. The special guest of the day was the Spanish Royal Football Federation. Fernando Hierro, sports director, and Ginez Melendez, U17 coach and FIFA instructor, explained the Spanish method, based on quality and personal ability, including skills off the field.

Sándor Csányi, the top man of the MLSZ – a well respected banker in Hungary who took over at the MLSZ last summer – described the reasons for Hungarian football's lack of success in recent decades and gave the audience an idea about how it could improve in the next ten years. The MLSZ's complex plan includes all the major topics addressed during the morning sessions. As he mentioned, this strategy is now up for discussion, and the MLSZ awaits the reactions and comments of the members of professional and grassroots football, as well as the fans. ● *Márton Dinnyés*



Fernando Hierro presents a Spanish team shirt to Viktor Orbán as Sándor Csányi, president of the Hungarian FA, looks on

**Georgia**  
www.gff.ge

**GFF rescues championship**

Following his election as president of the Georgian Football Federation (GFF), Zviad Sichinava faced an immediate crisis, with the professional football league on the brink of collapse at the end of last year because of financial problems and poor management. Sponsors had jumped ship and the league was besieged with debts, no longer able to pay referees and delegates.

At this disastrous point, the GFF decided to take the domestic league under its own umbrella and support it until the end of the current championship in May 2011. Faced with the problem of finding unforeseen financial resources to cover all the league's debts, the GFF turned to the Georgian government for assistance and



The championship has been able to continue normally, despite the problems.

received the funds necessary to see the championship through to its conclusion.

● *Tatia Burduli/Mamuka Kvaratskhelia*

**Germany**  
www.dfb.de

**Women's football in the spotlight in World Cup year**

Women's football will be very much the focus of attention of the German Football Association (DFB) during 2011, as underlined twice at the start of the year. At the New Year's reception hosted by the organising committee of the FIFA Women's World Cup on 14 January in Frankfurt, the DFB was already looking forward to the tournament, which will take place from 26 June to 17 July.

"After 2010, the men's year, with the highly successful World Cup in South Africa, it will be the women's turn in 2011," said the president of the DFB, Theo Zwanziger, to some 300 guests from the worlds of politics, business, show business and sport, as well as representatives of the nine venues and the sponsors. Adding to those

words, the general secretary of the DFB, Wolfgang Niersbach, said: "The World Cup must be another joint effort. We all have to do our bit."

This call has already been taken up by the women's national team, who began the year by taking part in a marketing event on 10 and 11 January in Dusseldorf. "We gave our sponsors and partners the opportunity over these two days to shoot TV spots and photos with the women's national team for their World Cup campaigns. Almost all of them want to do some kind of promotional activities with the women's team in the World Cup year," reported Doris Fitschen, manager of the German women's national team. Seven advertising spots alone were shot, leaving Doris Fitschen in no doubt that "we'll have great advertising presence ahead of the World Cup."

● *Niels Barnhofer*



Iceland

www.ksi.is

## Celebrating our 100th national league competition

Although every year is a special year in Icelandic football, this year will be extra special. This summer we will celebrate our 100th national league competition and this occasion will be celebrated throughout the season with various events.

To mark this anniversary, one of Iceland's finest sportswriters, Sigmundur Ó Steinarrson, has written the 100th year story of our competition. At the end of April, just before the season kicks off, the first volume of the story will be delivered to Geir Thorsteinsson, president of the FA

of Iceland. The second volume of the story will be published in November, just after the new champions have been crowned.

The first competition took place in 1912, with three clubs participating: Fram, KR and IBV. With Fram and KR on the same goal difference, even after three games, an extra game was needed, which KR won 3-2 to be crowned the first Icelandic champions.

Our 100th season begins on 1 May, when the titleholders, Breidablik, who won the title for the first time last year, will welcome the club that won the title back in 1912, KR.

● Thorvaldur Ingimundarson



KR (in front) and Fram, who played off for the first league title



Kazakhstan

www.kff.kz

## New national team coaches



Miroslav Beránek, the new national coach

The new head coach of the senior Kazakhstan national team was introduced at a media conference in Almaty on 31 January. Sayan Khamitizhanov, general secretary of the Football Federation of Kazakhstan (FFK), and Viktor Katkov, vice-president, introduced a 53-year-old Czech specialist, Miroslav Beránek, to the public. Beránek is known for the fact that he coached the Czech Under-21 national team

which won the European Championship in 2002, as well as for his experience of coaching the senior Czech national team. In his time, he has also worked for various Czech, Hungarian and UAE football clubs, leading Slavia to victory in the Czech Cup and Debrecen to the Hungarian league title.

On 9 February, the Kazakhstan national team played their first match under his leadership – a friendly match against Belarus in Antalya, Turkey, which ended as a 1-1 draw.

Since Beránek's appointment, other Kazakhstan national teams have also got new coaches. Kazakhstan specialist Andrey Vaganov has been appointed head coach of the women's national team, while two German coaches have come on board as youth team coaches – Oliver Pelzer as head coach of the Under-17s and former senior national team head coach Bernd Storck as head coach of the Under-19s.

In other news, the FFK launched its new official website (www.kff.kz) on 24 February. The website is now multilingual, with Kazakh, Russian and English versions. It also has a modern interface providing video and other features to make it more colourful and attractive.

● Alexandr Keplin



Liechtenstein

www.lfv.li

## Fun and fair play



All different but all sharing the same love of the game

As part of the 'all different – all equal' campaign, the fourth 'alli anderscht – alli gliich' tournament was organised in Vaduz by the Liechtenstein Football Federation (LFV). It involved 69 boys and 3 girls from Liechtenstein, the Austrian state of Vorarlberg and the Swiss canton of St Gallen. The peculiarity of the tournament lies in the composition of the teams, for which the boys and girls, originating from 17 different countries, were picked at random. The youngsters therefore found themselves with team-mates they had never met before. Even the coach was new to them.

The youngsters took quite well to this arrangement. After some initial scepticism and hesitant handshakes, camaraderie and fun soon prevailed, and within minutes the youngsters were cheerfully playing and joking together. Even their Croatian, Belgian or Brazilian names were no obstacle; they played as one, with each team taking the name of a footballing nation.

The tournament was a striking example of how football brings people together, transcends national boundaries and promotes cooperation. It was a fine advertisement for football's values and the LFV's 'fun and fair play' motto.

● Anton Banzer



Latvia

www.lff.lv

## LFF teams up with basketball and floorball to promote sport in schools

The Latvian Football Federation (LFF), Latvian Basketball Association and Latvian Floorball Union have initiated a joint project, Run Sports, within the framework of which Riga and Riga district first-year secondary school students will be able to take part in a basketball, football and floorball relay competition combining fun, creativity and sport, with prizes at stake for the winners.

A popular personality or athlete will advise each class and participate with the students in the relay, which will be broadcast on Latvian TV every Saturday morning for seven weeks.

The competition will take place in three phases: quarter-finals involving 16 teams, semi-finals with 8 teams and finals where the 4 best teams will compete to win a trip to the aquapark (first prize), tickets to the puppet theatre (second prize), and tickets to football, basketball and floorball matches (third prize).

The project aims to encourage youngsters to take up sport, to promote basketball, football and floorball, and to develop the coaching skills of sports teachers.

● Martins Hartmanis/Viktor Sopirin



Encouraging football in schools

**Lithuania**  
www.lff.lt

**Historic Baltic Cup trophy recreated**

Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia will compete for a new trophy in the Baltic national teams' tournament following the recreation of the historic trophy.

The Baltic Cup competition has been held since 1928 and had a special trophy made in the tournament's early years. However, when all three Baltic neighbours were annexed by the Soviet Union during World War II, the competition ceased. The trophy was taken to Moscow, where it went missing a few decades later.

"With our Latvian colleagues, we were looking at old pictures a few years ago and decided we should bring back this trophy. We were unable to find the original, therefore all three federations agreed on a project to recreate the

trophy," says Julius Kvedaras, general secretary of the Lithuanian Football Federation.

Lithuanian sculptor Dziugas Jurkunas, who also made a football statue for the country's national football academy, was given the task, and after six months of work, recreated the trophy with a few minor changes.

"The previous cup we had was ordinary. Now we will have a unique trophy. We also hope to make one for the Under-21 tournament," says Robertas Tautkus, the LFF's national teams director.

Since Lithuania won the last edition of the competition, the trophy will now reside at the national football academy in Kaunas. The Baltic Cup is held every two years and the next one is set to be played in Estonia in 2012.



The new Baltic Cup trophy, inspired by the pre-war version

● Vaidotas Januska

**Malta**  
www.mfa.com.mt

**Futsal – the way ahead**

The Malta FA (MFA) is aware of the importance of five-a-side football for the development of football skills at an early age. It is therefore no coincidence that futsal on the island has gained in popularity and is organised by the association with the same importance as mainstream football.

Youngsters in schools are being attracted to the game as futsal festivals are organised on a regular basis.

Following the success of last year's annual national schools' festival, this highly awaited event was again on the calendar early this year.

The festival, held under the auspices of the MFA and organised with the collaboration of the government's council for sport, drew the participation of several schools. The first two phases were held in a brand-new sports complex in the south of the island, the Cottonera sports complex.

The participation of a large number of boys and girls in these initial phases was an indication of the great interest this indoor sport is generating. The next phase is a grand finale



The schools' futsal festival was a huge success

Domenic Aquilina

with the participation of the elite teams in what should be another unqualified success in this venture.

Besides providing a means of enjoyment for aspiring young footballers, the aim of this activ-

ity is to tap resources and nurture them from the earliest possible age.

Given the popularity of the event, the aims of the organisers are being achieved.

● Alex Vella

**Moldova**  
www.fmf.md

**Gala for laureates of Moldovan football**

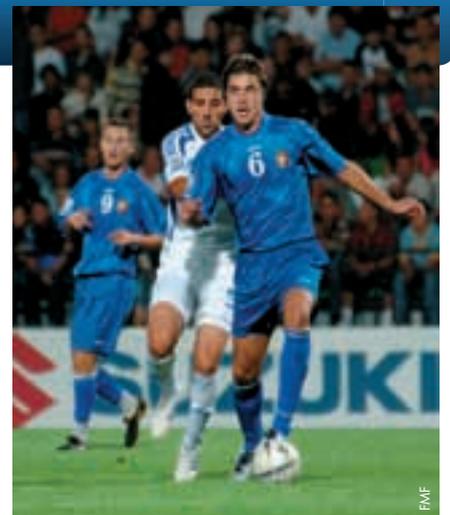
Alexandru Epureanu, defender with FC Dinamo Moscow, received the player of 2010 award in front of 1,500 people at the FA of Moldova's annual awards ceremony.

In the other award categories, the winners were: best coach (Vlad Goian, FC Iskra-Stali Ribnita), best referee (Valeriu Sorochin), best futsal player (Oleg Hilotii, Lexmax Chisinau), best woman player (Ludmila Ninicu, Goleador SS 11 Chisinau), best beach football player (Andrei Negara, Lexmax Chisinau) and best football tennis player (Cristina Samson, CFT Chisinau), best goalkeeper in the national championship (Vladislav Stoyanov, FC Sheriff), best defender (Nicolae Orlovski, FC Olimpia), best midfielder (Alexander Erokhin, FC Sheriff), best forward (Ghenadie Orbu, FC Dacia) and

top goalscorers (Jymmy Franca, FC Sheriff, and Alexandru Maximov, FC Viitorul).

The team of the year award went to the national Under-19 team, while FC Tiraspol received the 2010 fair play award.

The Magdacesti sports school was honoured by UEFA and the FA of Moldova for the most valuable grassroots football event of 2010, the women's national Special Olympics team received the prize for best disabled football event, FC Noroc Nimoreni topped the best women's football event category and, last but not least, the development of grassroots football award was presented to the American and British embassies in Moldova, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency in Moldova and the Open Fun Football Schools in Moldova.



Alexandru Epureanu, player of the year, in a match against Israel

● Press office

FMF

## New names in Dutch women's football

Following the departure of national coaches Vera Pauw (national A team, currently working in Russia) and Hesterine de Reus (Under-19s, now working as head coach of the Jordanian national women's team), the Dutch FA (KNVB) recently appointed two successors in order to continue the development of the Dutch national women's teams and women's football in general. Roger Reijners has been appointed as head coach of the Dutch national women's team until the 2016 Olympics, while Johan van Heertum will be in charge of the women's Under-19 squad. Reijners is a former professional player with Fortuna Sittard and MVV. After his playing career he worked for both clubs as head of youth development and head coach. Reijners started his new job with third place in the international women's tournament in Sao Paulo. Van Heertum successfully began with a 1-0 away win in a friendly versus Belgium.

Towards the end of February, the clubs in the women's premier league agreed on new rulings with regards to the set-up of the league. From next season, matches will be scheduled on Fridays rather than Thursdays, and clubs will have the opportunity to sign players as well. Furthermore, clubs can either decide to develop players



Roger Reijners, the new coach of the women's national A team

themselves or work with a satellite club as they have done since the launch of the league four years ago. For financial reasons, AZ Alkmaar and Willem II have been forced to withdraw from the women's premier league. The six remaining clubs (ADO Den Haag, SC Heerenveen, FC Twente, FC Utrecht, VVV Venlo and FC Zwolle) are confident that two other clubs will join them to start the new season with eight clubs once again.

In line with the recent growth of girls' and women's football in the Netherlands – football is bound to overtake field hockey as the largest team sport for women in the country – the KNVB hosted a UEFA Study Group Scheme meeting on women's football at its headquarters in Zeist from 7 to 10 March. Coaches from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic and Spain working in girls' and women's football attended the event and listened to several lectures on the development of women's football in the Netherlands and recent trends. To finish off their three-day stay, they watched the national U15 girls' team play a regional U17 girls' team.

Despite narrowly missing out on the 2011 FIFA Women's World Cup in Germany, Dutch women's football is still on the move.

● Rob de Leede

## A drama based on football

Over 120 people packed the Senate Chamber at Stormont in Belfast recently to hear the drama *Lish and Gerry At The Shrine*, which is based around two Northern Irish football legends who crossed the sectarian divide in the 1940s. Elisha Scott was the Protestant manager of Belfast Celtic, while Gerry Morgan was Linfield's Catholic trainer.

With support from the EU and the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, the Irish FA, in association with the Belfast Celtic Society and Healing Through Remembering, held the drama and also facilitated a workshop which looked at the issue of sectarianism in our society.

The Irish FA's head of community relations, Michael Boyd, said: "It was a pleasure working with the Belfast Celtic Society and Healing Through Remembering on this historic event. The facilitated discussion after the superb drama allowed us all to consider the impact and implications of past events on our current attitudes and understandings. It was also great to hear, during the discussion, about the meaningful work that goes on in the community today which uses the



The organisers of the drama

universal power of football to challenge bigotry. Sectarianism is still a major problem in Northern Ireland and sport has a leadership role to play in building a shared and better future for all."

Padraig Coyle, chairman of the Belfast Celtic Society and writer of the drama *Lish and Gerry At The Shrine*, added: "I think the drama really helped people to engage with the difficult subject of sectarianism and how damaging it has been to football. But more importantly there was a recognition that the hard work continues in the battle to stamp it out." ● Geoff Wilson

## Community grassroots competition in connection with UEFA Europa League final

The Football Association of Ireland (FAI) and Dublin City Council have unveiled plans for a community-based grassroots project to welcome the UEFA Europa League final to Dublin on 18 May.

The FAI and Dublin City Council were the successful joint bidders to host the 2011 UEFA Europa League final in Dublin on 18 May, and both organisations also work very closely through a network of 20 co-funded football development officers in communities throughout the city.

The community grassroots competition is being implemented to leave a lasting legacy after the UEFA Europa League final on 18 May and has the objective of increasing female participation levels by identifying girls with an interest in playing football and giving them a pathway to become involved with local clubs.



A community grassroots competition is being organised during the week of the UEFA Europa League final

The competition will be played at venues across Dublin starting the week of the mid-term break (21 February) and will be based on four-a-side small-sided games. Winners from each area will progress into area heats to be held in the second week of the Easter holidays (week starting 28 April) and the winners of the heats will advance into the Road to the Europa League Finals, to be held in Dublin on 17 May, the day before the Europa League final.

● Fran Whearty

## A new chief executive

The Football Union of Russia (RFU) has appointed Andrey Balashov as its new chief executive. Previously, he advised the union's president on commercial affairs.

"Undoubtedly, this appointment is a great honour for me. I realise that the work will be very hard and extensive. The country is often judged solely on the achievements of the national football team, forgetting that we have clubs, children, veterans, mass and amateur football. Moreover, while the elite level is still able to pay for itself, the rest needs constant financial support. I have to deal with the organisation of the RFU and the development of all areas of football," said Andrey Balashov. ● Irina Baranova



Andrey Balashov, the new CEO of the Russian FA



**Scotland**

www.scottishfa.co.uk



The winners of grassroots awards

**Scottish grassroots heroes honoured**

The unsung heroes of grassroots football were honoured at the 8th Scottish FA Grassroots Awards, presented by McDonald's and the Sunday Mail.

The annual ceremony took place at Scotland's national stadium, Hampden Park, and celebrated the efforts of the tireless volunteers who give their valuable time and effort to provide footballing opportunities in communities across the country.

Scotland national coach, Craig Levein, and McDonald's head of Scottish football, Kenny Dalglish, presented the awards.

Addressing the hall packed with grassroots

football volunteers, Craig Levein said: "I spoke to Scotland captain Darren Fletcher as part of our review of the game and asked him who his biggest influence was. He told me all about a teacher who inspired him."

"So please, never forget or underestimate how much of a difference you can make in the life of every kid you give a chance to. The potential is there in all of them."

Kenny Dalglish said: "I love this night, it always

makes you appreciate just how much people do for this great game of ours."

"People like Craig and myself wouldn't be here if it wasn't for volunteers like John Beaton (Merit Award winner) giving up hours of his time, every day of his life. Yet they never take credit for it. The support McDonald's have shown to grassroots football in Scotland should not go amiss either and long may it continue for the benefit of the Scottish game."

The award winners were:

Best Coach in Youth Football – Robert Bartlett (Cuminestown Youth Active Football Club)

Best Volunteer in Youth Football – Raymond Kelly (President, Scottish Youth FA and Secretary, Aberdeen Juvenile FA)

Best Volunteer in Schools Football – Robert Wilson (Forrester High School, Edinburgh)  
Best Youth Football Club of the Year – Cowie United

Best Volunteer in Disability Football – Ian Husband (Edinburgh Deaf Football Club)

McDonald's Community Champion Award – Stuart Wild (Renfrew Vics)

Best Volunteer in Adult Football – David Buchanan (Oban Saints)

Best Volunteer in Women's/Girls' Football – Laura Montgomery (Glasgow City FC)

Best Grassroots Community Club – Glenrothes Strollers

Merit Award for Services to Football – John Beaton (John has been instrumental in setting up and running football in the Inverness area for the past 40 years)

● Clare Bodel



**Sweden**

www.svenskfotboll.se

**New national arena takes shape**

The construction of Sweden's new national arena, the Swedbank Arena, is proceeding according to plan. The inauguration is planned



The women's national team visit the site of the new national stadium

for 2012, well ahead of the Women's EURO 2013, when it is to host the final. The Swedish women's national team paid a visit to the construction site in February, before departing for the Algarve Cup tournament in Portugal.

"It looks like it will be amazing. The spectators will be close to the action, with great views from wherever they are seated. It's quite special that Sweden will finally have a stadium of this standard," said Therese Sjögran, the team's most senior player, with 163 caps.

With Swedbank Arena's 50,000 capacity, the goal of the local organisers will be to set a new attendance record for the Women's EURO at the 2013 final.

Another brand-new arena (with an 8,000 spectator capacity) to be used for the Women's EURO 2013 will be built in Linköping. The remaining host cities (Gothenburg, Halmstad, Växjö, Kalmar and Norrköping) will use existing arenas.

● Andreas Nilsson



**Slovakia**

www.futbalsfz.sk

**Congratulations to Jozef Venglos**

The most important Slovak football personality, Jozef Venglos, celebrated his 75th birthday on 18 February. For the occasion, the Slovak Football Association prepared a special gathering of Slovak footballing legends. Team-mates and opponents of Venglos (Jan Popluhár, Ladislav Kacani, Anton Urban and Titus Bubernik) came to congratulate him, as did players who won the 1976 European Championship with him and bronze medals at the 1980 Championship (Jan Svehlik, Jozef Capkovic, Alexander Vencel, Jan Pivarnik and many others). The leaders of the Slovak Football Association were also among the well-wishers (Jan Kovacic, president; Jozef Antosik, vice-president; Jozef Kliment,

general secretary) as well as former Slovak president Rudolf Schuster and other important Slovak football personalities.

Vladimir Weiss, coach of the Slovak national team, said: "It will be always etched in my memory that Jozef Venglos is the coach who took us to the 1990 World Cup in Italy. Through his experience, he taught us to understand football both in our hearts and minds. He taught us how to take some things easy but, on the other hand, he expected discipline, order and precision both on and off the pitch. I still use his experience in my role as coach of the national team. I still focus on the stuff he taught me as a coach."

Jozef Venglos has been president of the Alliance of European Football Coaches' Associations for 15 years, he led the national teams of Czechoslovakia and Slovakia in 77 matches and was the first foreign coach in the English Premier League (Aston Villa, 1990/91). He is still one of the most sought-after authorities in football and has spoken in more than 120 countries all over the world.

The Slovak Football Association plans to continue to organise such gatherings to thank deserving players, coaches, referees and officials for their contribution to Slovak football, as well as to bring their merits to the attention of new football generations.

● Juraj Curny

Jozef Venglos (centre) is congratulated by Ján Kováčik, president of the SFZ, in the presence of legendary defender Jan Popluhár (who passed away at the beginning of March).





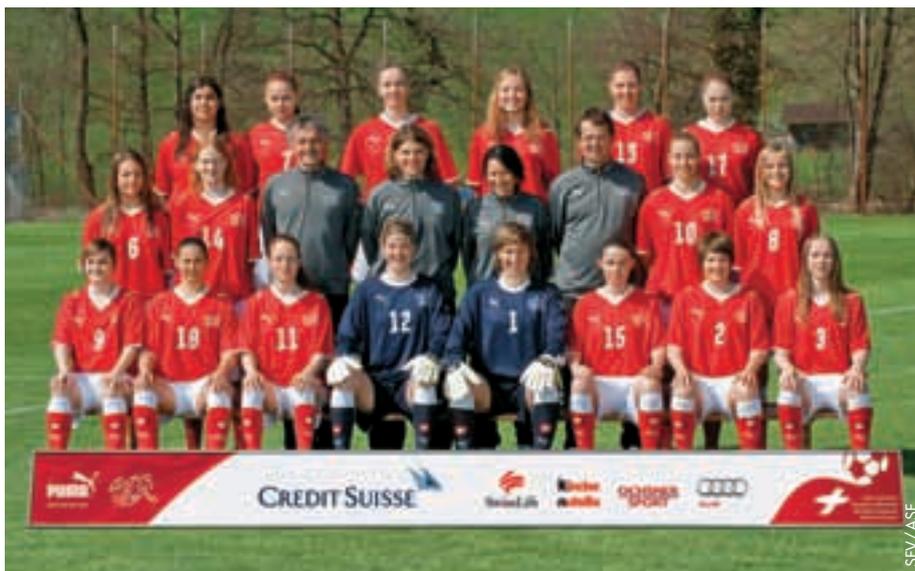
### U17 women and U19 men on the heels of the U21s

Spurred on by the success of the national Under-21 team, who, under coach Pierluigi Tami, have qualified for the forthcoming final round of the European Under-21 Championship in Denmark, two more products of the Swiss FA's successful youth sector – the girls' Under-17 and boys' Under-19 teams – are hoping to follow hot on the heels of their Under-21 counterparts.

In April, the girls' Under-17s and boys' Under-19s will both be playing on home soil.

The girls, coached by Walter Späni, play in eastern Switzerland from 9 to 14 April with the ambition of qualifying for the European Women's Under-17 Championship final round in Nyon for the first time. In Küsnacht, Freienbach and Rapperswil, the Swiss side, which boasts a number of talented players, will come up against France, Scotland and Wales in the second qualifying round. It will not be an easy ride for the Swiss girls, although they did make a strong impression in the first qualifying round with wins against Poland, Estonia and Latvia.

The boys' Under-19 team were equally impressive in their European Under-19 Championship first qualifying round. A hands-down win over Andorra and draws against Germany and Northern Ireland put the team, coached by Claude Ryf, through to the elite round, which the Swiss – with some of the 2009 U-17 World



The Swiss women's Under-17 team

Cup winning team in their ranks – will contest in western Switzerland (Lausanne, Nyon and Yverdon) in May/June. Their opponents will be England, Montenegro and Spain. The Swiss Under-19s will be endeavouring to qualify for this year's final round in Romania,

having missed out in 2010. Both Swiss youth teams will be counting on the vocal support of their growing number of supporters during their forthcoming qualifying tournaments on home soil.

● Pierre Benoit



### New disability football coaching project

The Turkish Football Federation (TFF) has started a new project for disability football with the aim of training certified disability football coaches. Organised by the TFF's disability football department, educator training has already begun, involving 20 professional TFF coaches, regional grassroots football coordinators and disability sport specialists.

This first module, held in Istanbul on 21 January, focused on disability football for learning disabled players. The leader was Special Olympics Europe-Eurasia football adviser

André Peeters, who ran an interactive six-hour programme with a mix of theoretical and practical sessions, giving everyone the chance to share their experiences.

For the practical sessions, the trainee educators were joined by 18 Special Olympics (SO) unified football players. After a training session with the SO players, the course participants played a game of unified football together.

The other training modules will be led by other professionals with experience of disability football. The TFF's disability football coach education programme will start after completion of the educator training.

● Communications Department



Training the trainers of disability football coaches



### First C licences for youth coaches

At the end of February, at the headquarters of the Ukrainian Football Federation (FFU), a practical conference was held on organising and running a training course for amateur coaches in regional football federations (FFU C licence).

According to UEFA recommendations, from 2011 coaches working with amateur youth teams which participate in national or regional competitions should be trained to C level. The FFU introduced the required programme last year to help promote the education of amateur coaches.

At the conference, a number of respected football experts gave presentations, including



C licences for youth coaches

the FFU's technical director, Kostiantyn Vikhrov, professors Viacheslav Popov and Valentyna Voronova, assistant professor Oleksandr Gryn, and representatives of the FFU's scientific department and licensing committee.

The topics covered included the organisation of FFU C-licence training across the regional federations, the organisation of theoretical football classes, scheduling studying and training systematically in player education, and providing teaching practice and hands-on experience to FFU C-licence course participants.

Later, the FFU president, Grigoriy Surkis; the first vice-president, Oleksandr Bandurko; and the technical director, Kostiantyn Vikhrov, were the high-profile officials who attended the open meeting of the executive committee of the Kyiv football federation where the first 24 coaches working in children's and youth football received their C licences – making them eligible to work throughout Ukraine.

● Ivan Dyvak

# A new president for a new era



17 February 2011 marks a new milestone in the history of Slovenian football. It is the date when the delegates to the congress elected Aleksander Čeperin as the third president of the FA of Slovenia, succeeding Rudi Zavrl, whose mandate lasted for 20 years, and Ivan Simic, who departed from the prestigious position before completing his second year at the helm.



Photos: Sportfot.com



The president Aleksander Čeperin (left) and the general secretary Aleš Zavrl

Čeperin, a 43-year-old lawyer from Grosuplje, was initially approached by the majority of regional football associations, as it was the football base's idea for him to become Simic's successor. The joint effort of the football

family was an indication of unity not seen since the days of the leadership of Rudi Zavrl. Following the news of overwhelming support for Čeperin, his only opponent for the top seat in the association, Tugomir Frajman, decided to withdraw from the race literally five minutes before the withdrawal deadline. His move rendered the presidential race void and the congress delegates only had to confirm Čeperin as their new president.

As expected, Čeperin maintained high support throughout the voting procedure, receiving 24 of the 29 delegate votes. In his first speech after becoming president, Čeperin said that he would try to "convince those who voted against me to join us and work together in the name of Slovenian football."

## Independent elections

This year for the first time, the delegates had another elective duty at the congress. Up until the latest changes to the association's statutes, the vice-presidents were elected together with the president. However, this time, independent elections for four vice-president positions were held. Out of nine candidates, the four that received the most support were three vice-presidents from Simic's term – Stane Orazem, Rade Mijatovic and Franc Kopatin

– and one who served under Rudi Zavrl during one of his mandates, Stanko Glazar.

"I will do my absolute best to be successful in the role of president of the FA of Slovenia and I hope that the people who work in Slovenian football will help me with their sincerest and best intentions," Čeperin said at a press conference moments after his election.

## High expectations

The expectations of the football family are high and Čeperin has already singled out a few important fields in which he will try to make an impact. "We will need to work hard to help Slovenian football clubs. Football in Slovenia doesn't enjoy the perks it is supposed to and we need to change that. I find it unacceptable that the Football Association of Slovenia is not among the top five associations when it comes to splitting the funds from the foundation that supports sports organisations in Slovenia. Football has more than 42,000 registered players in our country and I believe it deserves a better position than it currently has," Čeperin said, reaffirming the conviction previously stated in his pre-election programme.

"I will seek valuable help from the general secretary, Aleš Zavrl, as I tackle these issues," Čeperin added.

Whatever Čeperin's first move may be, one thing is certain. With his appearance, intellect, stature and ability to listen, he is the perfect candidate to reunite the football family and take Slovenian football a step further at all levels – national, club and youth.

● Matjaz Krajnik

## Many happy returns

**Kaj Østergaard** (Denmark), referee observer, celebrates his 60th birthday on 3 April. Match delegate **Nebojsa Ivkovic** (Serbia) joins him at the same milestone on 24 April, while **Eduard Dervishaj** (Spain), member of the Club Licensing Committee, and **Vladimir Petrov** (Ukraine), referee observer, will both be turning 50, on 11 and 22 April respectively.

UEFA also extends birthday wishes for April to:

**Carlo De Gaudio** (Italy, 1.4)  
**Jan Peeters** (Belgium, 2.4)  
**Dennis Cruise** (Republic of Ireland, 3.4)  
**Thomas Grimm** (Switzerland, 3.4)  
**Yoav Strauss** (Israel, 3.4)  
**Christian Kofoed** (Denmark, 4.4)  
**Jan Ekstrand** (Sweden, 5.4)  
**Lennart Wangel** (Finland, 5.4)  
**Momir Djurdjevac** (Montenegro, 5.4)  
**Alexey Sorokin** (Russia, 5.4)  
**Aleksandra Nikolovska** (FYR Macedonia, 5.4)  
**Athanasios Briakos** (Greece, 6.4)  
**Pavol Peracek** (Slovakia, 7.4)  
**Jacques Devismes** (France, 8.4)  
**Grzegorz Lato** (Poland, 8.4)  
**Jim Fleeting** (Scotland, 8.4)  
**Yevgeniy Stolitlenko** (Ukraine, 8.4)  
**Márton Esterházy** (Hungary, 9.4)  
**Jean-Claude Blanc** (Italy, 9.4)  
**Ladislav Svoboda** (Czech Republic, 9.4)  
**Zoran Petrovic** (Serbia, 10.4)  
**Panagiotis Tsarouchas** (Greece, 10.4)  
**Vlastibor Minarovech Jr** (Slovakia, 10.4)  
**Umberto Gandini** (Italy, 11.4)  
**Rodger Gifford** (Wales, 12.4)  
**Valeriu Ionita** (Romania, 12.4)  
**François De Keersmaecker** (Belgium, 12.4)  
**Paolo Piani** (Italy, 13.4)  
**Georgios Bikas** (Greece, 15.4)  
**Erol Ersoy** (Turkey, 15.4)  
**Antonius van Eekelen** (Netherlands, 15.4)  
**Manuel Enrique Mejuto Gonzalez** (Spain, 16.4)  
**Charles Schaack** (Luxembourg, 17.4)  
**Ernst Ravnaas** (Norway, 18.4)  
**Oguz Sarvan** (Turkey, 18.4)  
**Michael Kuchenbecker** (Germany, 19.4)  
**Jean-Louis Valentin** (France, 19.4)  
**Jean Appietto** (France, 20.4)  
**Jean-Luc Veuthey** (Switzerland, 20.4)  
**Vitor Manuel Melo Pereira** (Portugal, 21.4)  
**Martinus van den Bekerom** (Netherlands, 21.4)  
**Patrick Fenech** (Malta, 22.4)  
**Jan Damgaard** (Denmark, 22.4)  
**Morgan Norman** (Sweden, 22.4)  
**Roland Tis** (Belgium, 23.4)  
**Mehmet S. Binnet** (Turkey, 23.4)  
**Jacques Lambert** (France, 24.4)  
**Ayraham Luzon** (Israel, 24.4)  
**Sándor Piller** (Hungary, 24.4)  
**Frederick Roy Millar** (Northern Ireland, 25.4)  
**Philippe Verbiest** (Belgium, 25.4)  
**Daniel Ryser** (Switzerland, 25.4)  
**Salustia Chato Cipres** (Andorra, 25.4)  
**Philip Gartside** (England, 27.4)  
**Jan Carlsen** (Denmark, 27.4)

**Zdzislaw Krecina** (Poland, 28.4)  
**Knud Stadsgaard** (Denmark, 28.4)  
**George Frank** (Israel, 29.4)  
**Gudmundur Ingi Jónsson** (Iceland, 29.4)  
**Robin Howe** (Scotland, 29.4)  
**Emanuel Macedo de Medeiros** (Portugal, 30.4)

## Forthcoming events

### Meetings

#### 5.4.2011, Belgrade

European Under-17 Championship: draw for the final round

#### 8.4.2011, Nyon

Stadium and Security Committee

#### 11.4.2011, Nordwijk

Grassroots Panel

#### 11-15.4.2011, Nordwijk

UEFA Grassroots Workshop

#### 15.4.2011, Nyon

National Team Competitions Committee

#### 18.4.2011, Nyon

Medical Committee

### Competitions

#### 5/6.4.2011

UEFA Champions League: quarter-finals (first legs)

#### 7.4.2011

UEFA Europa League: quarter-finals (first legs)

#### 9/10.4.2011

UEFA Women's Champions League: semi-finals (first legs)

#### 12/13.4.2011

UEFA Champions League: quarter-finals (return legs)

#### 14.4.2011

UEFA Europa League: quarter-finals (return legs)

#### 16/17.4.2011

UEFA Women's Champions League: semi-finals (return legs)

#### 26/27.4.2011

UEFA Champions League: semi-finals (first legs)

#### 28.4.2011

UEFA Europa League: semi-finals (first legs)

#### 29.4-1.5.2011, Kazakhstan

UEFA Futsal Cup: finals

### Notice

On 17 February, Aleksander Čuferin was elected president of the Football Association of Slovenia.

### Match agents

Four new UEFA match agent licences have been issued, to:

#### Marcin Hakman

Orkzei 22  
 68-200 Zary  
 Poland  
 Mob: +48 601 773 454  
 hakman@post.pl

#### Jérôme Dumois

Group Sport Development.  
 15 rue du Colonel Moll  
 75017 Paris  
 France  
 Mob: +33 6 60 91 27 29  
 jeromedumois@yahoo.fr

#### Marian-Ioan Mihail

Bodesti 2, Bl. 29B, Ap. 184  
 022435 Bucarest  
 Romania  
 Mob: +4 0724 342 412  
 marian@mihail-ma.com

#### Mark Warburton

Cycad Enterprises LLP  
 Unit 530 Highgate Studios,  
 Highgate Road  
 London NW5 1TL  
 UK  
 Mob: +44 780 1579 631  
 mark.warburton@cycadsports.com

### Publication

The third issue of *Alive*, the UEFA EURO 2012 newsletter, has just been published. It is available in the UEFA EURO 2012 section of UEFA.com.





**RESPECT**

The Opponent



**RESPECT**

Diversity



**RESPECT**

The Game