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Cover:

The quarter-finals of the UEFA club competitions were contested at the beginning of April. In the UEFA Champions League, Borussia Dortmund qualified at the expense of Málaga CF in a thrilling encounter. Here, Robert Lewandowski attempts to beat the Spanish goalkeeper, Wilfredo Caballero. The other semi-finalists are FC Bayern München, FC Barcelona and Real Madrid CF.

Photo: Getty Images



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First the Professional Football Strategy Council and then the Executive Committee adopted a tough stance on tackling racism and protecting the integrity of football.



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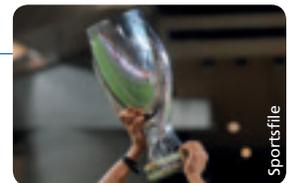
There are nine candidates vying for the eight four-year terms that will be awarded by the member associations' delegates at the UEFA Congress in May. They tell us about their priorities.



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Thanks to UEFA's HatTrick programme, the Mikheil Meskhi Stadium in Tbilisi will be ready to host the UEFA Super Cup in 2015.



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The 21st issue of UEFA•medicine matters presents the UEFA Football Doctor Education Programme, in addition to special features on jet lag and groin and other muscular pain in footballers.





A TIME TO CELEBRATE

This year, winter seems to have lasted much longer than it should. Muddy, sometimes snow-covered pitches have once again raised questions about the wisdom of playing at the coldest time of the year. Indeed, unpredictable bounces and untimely slips are hardly conducive to a technical, dazzling style of play characterised by high-precision passing. And it is not only the technical quality of the game that suffers as a result, but the entertainment value too.

But football is more than just a form of entertainment. It is first and foremost a game, and a team game at that. A special event this year serves to remind us of what football is really all about, as The Football Association (The FA), the oldest in the world, celebrates its 150th anniversary. English football has always embodied the specific values of the game – tenaciousness, commitment and team spirit – whatever the conditions, since there is no winter break in the English championship. Anyone who has experienced the extraordinary atmosphere of an English stadium, with supporters close to the players and quick to get carried away by their teams' exploits,

anyone who has been stirred by the sound of the fans' singing and gripped by the incredible fervour of the crowd can testify to the fact that a match in England is not just a football match, but a real community event.

For The Football Association, 2013 is therefore a year of celebration, and UEFA is delighted to be able to make its own contribution by staging the climax of the European club season, the UEFA Champions League final, in London, along with the UEFA Women's Champions League final and this year's general meeting of the UEFA member associations, the 37th Ordinary UEFA Congress.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'M. Platini'. The signature is stylized and fluid.

Michel Platini
UEFA President

REGULATIONS GALORE

The agenda of the UEFA Executive Committee's second meeting of the year, held in Sofia and chaired by the UEFA President, Michel Platini, included, in particular, the approval of numerous sets of regulations.

The end of the 2012/13 season is approaching and it is therefore already time to start thinking about the next campaign. With this in mind, the Executive Committee examined the proposals of the UEFA committees and administration concerning the regulations of the 2013/14 competitions. Since last year, the club competition regulations have been designed to cover a three-year cycle, so only a few minor amendments were made to the regulations for the 2013/14 UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League and the 2013 UEFA Super Cup. Most of these changes concern dates or other UEFA provisions that have entered into force in the meantime (particularly concerning financial fair play) or, in the case of the Champions League, the launch of the UEFA Youth League, in which clubs that qualify for the Champions League group stage are invited to enter a team.

next two years, were also adopted. The 2013/14 edition will be reserved for players born after 1 January 1995 and will be played in parallel with the Champions League, with the same group compositions and calendar. The knockout rounds will be played as one-off matches, with drawn matches settled by a penalty shoot-out at the end of normal time. The round of 16 matches will be hosted by the group winners, after which a draw will determine the home teams in the quarter-finals, while the semi-finals and final will be held at neutral venues.

In order to promote the training of local players, the regulations state that 10 of the 20 players, on the list submitted by each club must have played for the club concerned for an uninterrupted period of two years before the start of the UEFA competition.

Award for best woman player

Still on the subject of regulations, those of next season's UEFA Women's Champions League were also approved. Here also, the changes were

Youth club competition

The regulations of this new youth competition, introduced on an experimental basis for the

The UEFA President, Michel Platini, with the General Secretary, Gianni Infantino seated next to him, chaired the discussions in Sofia



Desislava Komarova

minor, although the new regulations make provision for the creation of a Best Woman Player in Europe Award, which will be presented by UEFA before the start of the following season.

The Regulations of the UEFA Futsal Cup 2013/14 were also given the green light by the Executive Committee.

However, the competitions are not all that requires regulation: the 2013 editions of the UEFA Medical Regulations and UEFA Anti-Doping Regulations were approved and will enter into force on 1 July.

EURO 2020 bid regulations

Another set of regulations was on the agenda, and these were more unusual in so far as they concerned bids for UEFA EURO 2020. This anniversary edition of the competition will be staged in 13 cities across Europe.

The Executive Committee, in accordance with the relevant regulations, fixed the bid process timeline, which will begin on 26 April this year with the official invitation for bids and end with the appointment of the host associations in September 2014. The voting procedure for these appointments is governed by an annex to the regulations, which defines geographical zones in order to ensure that EURO 2020 really is a "EURO for Europe". Each zone will need to have at least two bids and the hosts will be chosen in four phases: the first to determine the host association for the final and semi-finals; the second for four associations that will each host one quarter-final and three group matches; and the third and fourth phases to select host associations for one round of 16 and three group matches.

The committee also approved the financial model and the top-line bid requirements, a complex document dealing with the costs and allowances linked to operational activities in the host cities and stadiums, transport and accommodation structures, information and communication technologies, promotion of the event, security, guarantees, the organisational model and financial matters.

Full house for the Referee Convention

In Sofia, the Executive Committee ratified Bosnia and Herzegovina, Portugal and Russia as new signatories to the UEFA Convention on Referee Education and Organisation. This brings the total number of national associations that have signed the convention to 53, which means that all UEFA member associations now belong to it,



The Executive Committee held its first meeting in the Bulgarian capital since September 2004

including Liechtenstein, the only partial member. The three new signatory associations will each receive a €200,000 bonus for the current season and, from 2013/14 onwards, an annual payment of €100,000 for as long as they continue to meet the convention's requirements.

Still in the field of refereeing, the Executive Committee followed the Finance Committee's favourable opinion and decided to award financial support to national associations that implement the additional assistant referees' programme in their competitions. This support will be granted over three consecutive seasons from 2013/14 and is worth €10m overall.

The Executive Committee also:

- approved the 2013/14 budget for submission to the Ordinary UEFA Congress in London in May;
- noted the state of preparations for UEFA EURO 2016, including the launch of the official logo for the competition on 26 June;
- endorsed the Professional Football Strategy Council's condemnation of racism and call for the protection of football's integrity (see page 6);
- finalised the programme and agenda for the 37th Ordinary UEFA Congress in London on 24 May;
- followed the Grassroots Panel's recommendations concerning the awards to be presented to mark UEFA Grassroots Day;
- noted that the 2012/13 UEFA Regions' Cup final round draw would be held in Abano Terme in the Venice region of Italy on 9 May. •

SAFEGUARDING INTEGRITY AND FIGHTING RACISM

The Professional Football Strategy Council (PFSC) met on 27 March in Sofia on the eve of the UEFA Executive Committee meeting.

were also debated, giving the opportunity to each stakeholder group to express its views on the format of these competitions for the 2015-18 period. Finally, an update was given on the latest progress in the implementation of the agreement regarding the minimum requirements for standard player contracts in European football.

■ At its meeting in Sofia, the Executive Committee expressed unanimous support for the position paper and resolution adopted by the strategy council.

With regard to **the integrity of football**, the document approved by the PFSC and ratified by the Executive Committee stresses that the problem of match-fixing that has been identified in recent years “*jeopardises the integrity of competition and damages the very soul of our sport.*” It adds that sports bodies do not have the structural and legal capacities to eradicate this problem by themselves, and therefore need the help of national governments and the European Union. It also calls for recognition of sports bodies’ rights to the competitions they organise in relation to betting services, which would both reduce the risk of match-fixing and generate funds that could be used to finance initiatives aimed at fighting it.

The document then proposes an action plan based on the following practical initiatives:

- codes of conduct for all participants in football, including players, coaches, referees, officials and administrators;
- education and prevention programmes;
- agreements with the betting industry;
- permanent betting fraud detection systems;
- a coordinated network of national association integrity officers;
- disciplinary regulations based on a zero-tolerance policy towards match-fixing. ●

■ The full versions of these documents can be found on UEFA.com.

Representatives of Europe’s national associations (UEFA), clubs (European Club Association), leagues (European Professional Football Leagues) and players (FIFPro Division Europe) unanimously adopted a joint position paper including an action plan to protect the integrity of football and reinforce efforts to tackle match-fixing. Additionally, the strategy council also adopted a resolution aimed at combating racism and discrimination in the game.

Transfer matters have been identified as a priority for the PFSC in 2013 and further discussions will take place on this subject in subsequent meetings. The UEFA club competitions

RESOLUTION AGAINST RACISM

The Professional Football Strategy Council and the Executive Committee also took an unequivocal stand against racism, which remains widespread in football stadiums despite the measures already adopted in the areas of education, prevention and punishment.

The resolution published in Sofia, which will also be submitted to the national associations at the UEFA Congress in London, calls for strict observation of the guidelines issued by UEFA on how to deal with racist incidents during matches. It fully supports referees stopping matches in cases of racism and calls on national associations, leagues and state authorities to use every available means to fight racism. The resolution also firmly opposes all other forms of discrimination. ●

THE NINE CANDIDATES FOR THE UEFA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

There are 15 items on the agenda for the 37th Ordinary UEFA Congress on 24 May in London.

As well as the statutory items relating to various reports and financial issues, other items for discussion on this year's agenda include the Gibraltar Football Association's application for full membership of UEFA, the fight against racism and – certainly the most eagerly awaited item – elections.

Eight seats are at stake on the UEFA Executive Committee. Two outgoing members – the second vice-president, Geoffrey Thompson (England), and Theo Zwanziger of Germany – decided not to stand for re-election. The six other outgoing members have decided to try and win another term in office. They are vice-presidents Giancarlo Abete (Italy) and Marios N. Lefkaritis (Cyprus), as well as Allan Hansen (Denmark), František Laurinec (Slovakia), Avraham Luzon (Israel) and Michael van Praag (Netherlands).

Three new candidates have been announced – David Gill (England), Fernando Gomes (Portugal) and Wolfgang Niersbach (Germany) – bringing to nine the total number of candidates in contention for four-year terms of office.

Ahead of the elections, all nine candidates agreed to answer the following two questions:

A What do you see as UEFA's top priority in the immediate future?

B If you are elected (or re-elected), what personal contribution do you think you can make to achieving that objective?



Getty Images

David Gill

Born 5 August 1957, vice-chairman of The Football Association; former member of the Professional Football Strategy Council and vice-chairman of the Club Competitions Committee; CEO of Manchester United FC:

A For me, the priority for UEFA has to be to constantly seek improvement in the development of the game in Europe by firmly endorsing the principles of fair play and solidarity in matters of finance, competition and integrity. I know from my experience at club, national association and European levels that finding the right balance is a perennial challenge, and the diversity within Europe makes it even more so. However, I firmly believe European football has a vibrant future ahead of it, and that good governance is the key.

B My decision to stand for election was based on a desire to "give something back" – to share the knowledge and expertise I have gained from working in the game for over 16 years. Football has been my passion since boyhood, and I am privileged to have made it into my career. I care deeply about the future development of the European game. Election to UEFA's Executive Committee would allow me to play a real part in its future, ensuring it is sustainable and financially secure for national associations and clubs alike, and based on sound governance principles. This summer, I will step down as CEO of Manchester United after ten fantastic years to devote more time to other areas of the game. To my mind, European football has never been as exciting, but at the same time as challenging. It would be an honour for me to have the opportunity to be a part of it and to make a positive difference. ●

FIFA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The four outgoing members of the FIFA Executive Committee will all stand for re-election. They are Michel D'Hooghe (Belgium), Şenes Erzik (Turkey), Marios Lefkaritis (Cyprus) and Vitaly Mutko (Russia). There are no other candidates.



UEFA

Giancarlo Abete

Born 26 August 1950, president of the Italian Football

Federation; fifth vice-president of UEFA, UEFA Executive Committee member since 2009; chairman of the Development and Technical Assistance Committee:

A The fight against match-fixing, racism and doping, which alter the nature and image of this game, diminishing its credibility in the eyes of supporters and sponsors. It is also important to support the interests of the major national associations (which are the technical and financial driving forces of the whole movement, through the relationships with leagues and clubs), and to increase solidarity towards minor and medium associations by means of financial contributions for development projects and improvements to their infrastructure

and management through direct cooperation with UEFA and major national associations. It is a question of enhancing the activity of the national teams, including youth teams.

B My contribution, as in my first term of office on the Executive Committee (2009-13), will provide the experiences and skills acquired in 23 years of activity within the Italian Football Federation (FIGC), of which the last six have been as president and another nine as vice-president. In addition to the various problems faced and solved in Italy, I have got to know of similar ones existing in the other European football associations, having participated actively on various different FIFA and UEFA committees, always operating for the coexistence of the interests of all parties. Having just been re-elected president of the FIGC, I will intensify our policy of cooperation with other national associations on technical, refereeing, medical and administrative aspects, for the mutual benefit and the unity of the whole European football family. ●



UEFA

Fernando Gomes

Born 21 February 1952, president of the Portuguese Football Federation; vice-chairman of the National Associations Committee:

A I defend the development and reinforcement of measures such as the grassroots football and the HatTrick programmes, through which associations, especially the ones with lower investment capacity, can improve their infrastructure. I believe that we should preserve and if possible increase these solidarity mechanisms. Programmes like these will ensure a brighter future for football.

On the other hand, we should also guarantee that items like the European Championship finals, the reinforcement of policies for football integrity, eradicating match-fixing, financial fair play and the promotion of the European sports model continue to have wide consensus.

It is also vital to be very strict and rigorous on banning racist, xenophobic or violent behaviour from our game.

B My different capabilities in football, based on more than 20 years of experience of sports administration in Portugal and the international perspective acquired over the last ten years through my presence on several committees and international bodies, lead me to think that I am qualified to understand and help solve the challenges football faces as a whole.

I will try my very best to put these qualities and experience into the service of UEFA and its member associations. ●



UEFA

Allan Hansen

Born 21 April 1956, president of the Danish Football Association; UEFA Executive Committee member since 2009; chairman of the HatTrick Committee:

A I see UEFA, European football and any other organisation as a wagon wheel. If just one of the spokes of the wheel is defective, the wheel will not function properly and the same applies to UEFA/European football.

In that context, I see three main challenges on which we have to target our efforts in the coming years:

- to maintain the integrity of football.
- to reinforce the identity of national team football in order to safeguard the future of the international game and that way provide more money and consistency across the football family.
- to reduce the risk that the gap between large and small countries, and between the top European clubs and the other clubs in UEFA's club competitions gets bigger and bigger.

The fact remains that the greatest threat to the sport of football is not what is happening on the pitch, but the negative spin-off that takes place off the field: racism, xenophobia, match-fixing, illegal betting, corruption, crowd disturbances, questionable financial arrangements, political interference, and so on.

If football loses its credibility, we will not be able to maintain the public's interest in and awareness of our sport. From this perspective, it is my opinion that UEFA's top priority in the immediate future must be to take the necessary measures in order to ensure the integrity of football. If we fail to do so, football will perish.

B During my first term in office I have gained knowledge of some specific areas within the scope of international football – match-fixing, third-party ownership and the centralisation of media rights as part of the European Qualifiers project are but a few examples – and as chairman of the UEFA HatTrick Committee, I have gained insight into the developments that member associations have undergone throughout the past few years – not least the need for development and support they may have for the future.

In parallel with my work for UEFA I have represented European football in the FIFA Transparency and Compliance Task Force and since then in the new FIFA Audit and Compliance Committee, and through this acquired valuable knowledge in the field of the FIFA governance reform process and the future of FIFA.

Finally, over the past four years I have been in charge of a root-and-branch reform process of the Danish Football Association, a process that has resulted in the implementation of a modern organisation system in which grassroots football and elite football are walking hand in hand towards the continued positive development of Danish football, based on the philosophy that the parties in football cannot achieve nearly as much on their own as they can through reciprocal, binding solidarity.

In overall terms, I feel that the experience and knowledge I have gained during my first term in office and through my 11 years as president of the Danish Football Association could be particularly valuable to help us push forward harmoniously.

I believe I have much to offer European football, as we are looking forward to confronting the challenges that stand side-by-side with progress and development, and therefore I am seeking re-election to be given the opportunity to play a part in this future, ensuring that it is exciting, progressive and secure for our national associations, our players, and all those involved in the management of our game. ●



UEFA

František Laurinec

Born 19 August 1951, honorary president of the Slovak Football Association; UEFA Executive Committee member since 2009; chairman of the Stadium and Security Committee:

A The key priority will be to successfully conduct the new, extended European Championship, which not only gives a sporting chance to medium-sized and small national associations, but also provides them with the necessary financial security and stability by implementing the model of central marketing.

Of course, I am an adherent of the organisation of the European Championship in 2020 in the whole of Europe. Nothing will live up to the slogan "UEFA truly all European" better.

Another great task is the development of social dialogue with all members of the football family – with clubs, leagues and player associations.

B If I gain the trust to be re-elected, first and foremost, I want to contribute with my experience:

- of organising the European Championship in Poland and Ukraine;
- of practice in the field of social dialogue and knowledge of the specifics of diverse national associations;
- within the Stadium and Security Committee, to the improvement of the infrastructure and security of stadiums. ●



UEFA

Marios N. Lefkaritis

Born 28 November 1946, honorary president of the Cyprus Football

Association; fourth vice-president of UEFA, UEFA Executive Committee member since 1996; chairman of the Finance Committee:

A

I see the following priorities:

1. to fight against match manipulation (match-fixing);
2. to fight corruption;
3. to fight against violence in stadiums, always in cooperation with the competent authorities;
4. to fight against racism of all kinds and at all levels;
5. to bring our house in order by fully respecting financial fair play;
6. to stabilise and safeguard UEFA's financial and other wealth.

B

I will work hard in order to achieve all the above and, as chairman of the Finance Committee, to protect all national associations and clubs and make sure our competitions run smoothly.



UEFA

Avraham Luzon

Born 24 April 1955, president of the Israel Football Association;

UEFA Executive Committee member since 2009; chairman of the Club Licensing Committee:

A

Firstly, to spread amateur football to all levels of the population of Europe.

Secondly, to narrow the financial gap between the clubs and to lower the big investments of club owners, so that the clubs can benefit from their own incomes via financial fair play, and so that when a club owner leaves, it will not devastate the club. Also, to make sure that there are no gaps that are so big that they can hurt competitiveness.

B

Firstly, through grassroots football – I would like us to do all over Europe as we do every year in Israel and have a huge event for all the fans.

Secondly, as chairman of the Club Licensing Committee and as a senior banker, I will set out the right financial criteria so that we achieve our goals.



DFB

Wolfgang Niersbach

Born 30 November 1950, president of the German Football Association,

for whom he started work in 1987 as chief press officer for EURO '88, before becoming general secretary in 2007 and being elected president in March 2012; member of the National Team Competitions Committee:

A

To maintain the high level of European football and to demonstrate the importance of this to FIFA even more.

B

I will act with complete conviction and determination in favour of solidarity in football and unity between the grassroots and the elite, between professionals and amateurs, between women and men, and girls and boys. Only together are we strong!



UEFA

Michael van Praag

Born 28 September 1947, president of the Royal Nether-

lands Football Association; UEFA Executive Committee member since 2009; chairman of the Club Competitions Committee:

A

Under its current President, Michel Platini, UEFA is closer to its member associations than ever. Continuing this close relationship should remain UEFA's top priority. In that respect, it is required to keep the open dialogue with these key stakeholders about the further development of football in Europe and of the individual associations ongoing, using the many efficient platforms available. It is also required to continue acting on behalf of both the greater collective need of associations and the individual needs of associations based on the outcomes of these discussions.

Following the most recent discussions with member associations, UEFA is acting on the further development of national team competitions. As the mentality of UEFA is to continuously be open for innovations that are – from both a sporting and a financial perspective – for the benefit of these competitions, in my opinion this is rightfully a top priority of UEFA.

The aforementioned openness to innovation goes as well for UEFA's club competitions. Optimising these competitions in order to preserve their high quality is a third top priority in my eyes. Creating financial solidarity between Champions League and Europa League clubs is an important part of that: a fair share for everyone.

Last, but certainly not least, another top priority is safeguarding the current position of football as the most important sport in the world. It means that UEFA is to maintain its good existing

relations with all stakeholders in order to unite against everything which is threatening football nowadays: match-fixing and corruption, violence and racism, financial excesses, third-party ownership of players, and so on.

B

In my first term as a UEFA Executive Committee member, I have had the opportunity to get to know almost all of my fellow associations' presidents and, equally importantly, have had the opportunity to bring their voices and opinions to the UEFA Executive Committee. It is my wish to intensify this active position even more.

If I have the honour of being re-elected for a second term on the UEFA Executive Committee, I will use that position to represent the voices of associations with regards to national team competitions, in order to ensure that decisions are being implemented accordingly.

As chairman of the UEFA Club Competitions Committee and, as a consequence of that, being a board member of TEAM Marketing, I can actively contribute to safeguarding the best balance of interests of my fellow associations, as well as those of clubs, by maintaining the good understanding between them. This includes optimising the financial interests of UEFA, associations and clubs in the best possible way where marketing and thus financial income are concerned.

Finally, in my career as an executive in football I have represented a national association, a league and a club. Hence, I understand the interests of different stakeholders. This has been very helpful in the support of UEFA President in his mission to reunite European football. I would certainly continue working on outstanding issues in which mutual understanding plays a key role. This unity is important to achieve the goals of financial fair play as well as for the joint fight against all that is threatening football in general.

For me, football is above all a "people's business" and I am committed to making sure it stays this way.

GEORGIA'S MIKHEIL MESKHI STADIUM TICKS ALL THE BOXES FOR 2015

Mikheil Meskhi (1937–91) was a star of Georgian football. Nicknamed the “Georgian Garrincha” for his sensational wing play, he was a creative and dynamic force on the pitch. During his prestigious career, Meskhi played for FC Dinamo Tbilisi and FC Lokomotivi Tbilisi and earned 35 caps for the Soviet Union’s national team.



The stadium will be ready for the 2015 UEFA Super Cup

Today, the Meskhi name and his passion for football live on in the most modern stadium in Tbilisi, which has recently been selected to host the 2015 UEFA Super Cup, opening its doors to the European football family as a whole.

A long story

The stadium has a remarkable history. It was built in 1956 by German settlers (after the second world war) and has since had a wide variety of names and owners. However, by the turn of the century, although the stadium was still hosting top-quality football matches, its tired infrastructure, limited facilities and wooden bench seating meant that it often played second fiddle to the more prominent Boris Paichadze Stadium.

In 2010, Tbilisi city council took a key decision and officially transferred the stadium’s ownership rights to the Georgian Football Federation (GFF) for a period of 33 years, before then extend-

ing this to 49 years. The GFF then worked with the city council and UEFA to outline the best possible future for the new Mikheil Meskhi Stadium. UEFA wholeheartedly approved the development project and approximately 80% of the necessary funding was provided through the UEFA HatTrick programme, the remainder being supplied by the GFF and its principal sponsor, SOCAR.

Top-class stadium

“Stadiums are at the heart of football and are where the action is played out,” says Domenti Sichinava, president of the GFF. *“The stadium had tremendous potential, but we needed to define the quality criteria and priorities for the renovation. There is still work to be done, but we now have a top-class stadium where football is played and watched in a safe and modern environment.”*



Photos: GFF

Some of the stadium's facilities

The renovation project, consisting of three main phases, began in June 2011, and the ultimate aim is for the stadium to fully comply with all relevant UEFA regulations. The major construction work has already been completed and the stadium is now in full use again for national teams and local clubs, as well as sometimes playing host to other sports (such as rugby) and social events.

"Stadiums should aim to serve the community as a whole and should be designed as family-friendly locations both for football matches and other events. This is the concept for the Mikheil Meskhi," confirms Revaz Arveladze, general secretary of the GFF. *"The stadium now accommodates up to 26,000 spectators on new individual seats, and with 32 entrances/exits we can fill or clear the stadium in five minutes. We are delighted with the results so far."*

As well as the increased capacity, the Mikheil Meskhi stadium boasts VVIP and VIP areas with 80 and 488 seats respectively. These areas are linked to an underground car park with space for 60 cars, as well as open-air parking for 40 cars. Large numbers of people will arrive at the stadium in a short space of time on matchdays, so adequate parking and access to the public transport system were considered essential factors in the overall planning process.

High-quality media facilities

The role of the media in football has grown very significantly over the last decade. The Mikheil Meskhi Stadium has a brand new press conference room and media centre, equipped with all the necessary amenities and technical facilities. The stadium's media area, which contains seating for up to 65 journalists and television reporters, is located in the east stand with an excellent view of the pitch.

In terms of the players and the game itself, the dressing rooms have been revamped to provide more comfort and space for match preparations and medical assistance. The grass on the main pitch – as well as the training pitches – has been completely replaced and is subject to a regular maintenance programme.

"Stadium management consists of a multitude of operational roles, and a step-by-step development plan is essential to maintain control and manage costs," said Domenti Sichinava. *"We also ensured that we had correctly understood the expectations of the community, as well as the football family. It is certainly this clarity of vision, coupled with a dedicated team, that has produced such excellent results for the Mikheil Meskhi. We are really looking forward to 2015."* ●

UEFA GUIDE TO QUALITY STADIUMS

In addition to the funding provided through the HatTrick programme, UEFA has supported the GFF throughout this renovation project by providing expert consultancy services as regards the construction and management of the stadium.

The UEFA Guide to Quality Stadiums is a step-by-step manual for stadium planning. It looks in detail at the wide range of factors that must be taken into consideration in this regard and features real-life case studies. It is an essential tool for anyone considering a similar project in the future.

Further information on this topic can be obtained from UEFA's national associations development unit. ●

SLOVAKIA IS LOOKING FORWARD TO WELCOMING THE STARS OF THE FUTURE

Slovakia will host the final tournament of the 2012/13 European Under-17 Championship from 5 to 17 May.

Slovakia last hosted a final tournament in 2000, when stars of European football such as Andrea Pirlo, Christian Abbiati, Frank Lampard, Jamie Carragher, Mark van Bommel, Dirk Kuyt, Xavi Hernández, Carles Puyol, Milan Baroš and Marek Mintál played the world's most popular game in Slovak stadiums. At that time, all these players were part of their national Under-21 teams, and Slovak fans had a rare opportunity to see them show off their football skills.

Future stars

We are looking forward to seeing history repeat itself in May. The headline of the tournament's promotional campaign is *"The stars rise up before us"*. Ján Kováčik, president of the Slovak Football Association (SFZ), explained: *"We hope that we will see future stars that will fascinate millions of fans all around Europe and the world with their play. As organisers, we will do everything to ensure that the teams and fans remember the tournament as one in which great players played in great matches in front of great crowds."*

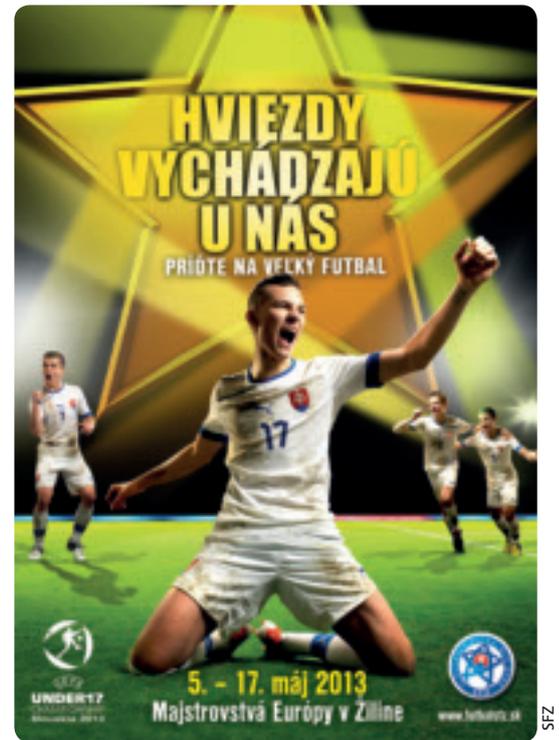
History suggests that this will indeed be the case. Players such as Wayne Rooney, Cesc Fàbregas, Toni Kroos, Bojan Krkić, Lukas Podolski, Gerard Piqué and Mario Gómez have all played in the final rounds of European Under-17 Championships.

Two centres and two ambassadors

The matches will be played in the stadiums of Slovak First League clubs (in Zilina, Dubnica nad Vahom, Nitra and Zlate Moravce), and the teams will be accommodated in two centres – Zilina and Senec. After the group stage everything will move to Zilina, with all matches being played in the best

and most modern stadium in Slovakia (where MŠK Žilina have played UEFA Champions League matches, and where the Slovak national team played two matches in March).

As the tournament has two centres, there will also be two ambassadors. The first, Lubomír Moravčík, is a star of Slovak football and comes from Nitra. He was the head coach of the national Under-17 team for two years and twice took them to the



A poster for the tournament

elite round. The second is Viktor Pečovský, a Slovak international who plays for MŠK Žilina and was voted the best player in the Slovak First League in 2012.

The group matches will be played on 5, 8 and 11 May, with the semi-finals taking place on 14 May and the new European champions in this, the youngest UEFA age category, being crowned on 17 May. It is interesting to note that none of the teams in the final tournament were present in Slovenia last year, with Slovakia and Sweden appearing in the final round for the first time. Sweden left it late to qualify, scoring in additional time at the end of their last match in the elite round. And there was a major surprise in another elite round group, with Germany failing to qualify despite scoring 34 goals (and conceding just four) in their first five qualifying matches. They lost 1-0 to Ukraine in the decisive game, with the winning goal being scored by Ukrainian forward Andriy Boryachuk three minutes before the final whistle.

On 4 April, in Senec, the finalists were drawn into the following two groups:

- Group A:** Slovakia, Austria, Switzerland, Sweden
- Group B:** Russia, Ukraine, Croatia, Italy.

Qualifying for the FIFA U-17 World Cup

All the finalists will have not only their natural passion for winning to inspire them, but also an additional motivating factor. The first three teams in each group will qualify for the FIFA U-17 World Cup, which will be held in the United Arab Emirates in October and November this year. ●

Juraj Čurný

The stadium in Zilina



A MOUTH-WATERING PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

The 2013 UEFA Europa League final is coming to Amsterdam, to be held at the Amsterdam ArenA on Wednesday 15 May. The City of Amsterdam and the Royal Netherlands Football Association (KNVB) have organised a whole range of promotional activities to raise awareness of the match among the residents of Amsterdam. The main projects are the trophy tour, a variety of grassroots tournaments and spectacular decorations across the city.



The Amsterdam ArenA first opened its doors in 1996, but has recently undergone a major renovation. It will now celebrate the completion of that refurbishment by hosting one of the most prestigious football matches in the world. The stadium, which has a capacity of 53,000, is one of the few venues in Europe with category 4 status. It was also the first stadium in Europe to have a sliding roof (which takes 20 minutes to open or close).

The stadium's designers wanted to ensure that everyone could see the whole of the touch lines and goal lines. That is why the rows of seating are banked as steeply as they are. There are 115 cameras in the stadium, and the Amsterdam ArenA has its own closed-circuit TV system with 300 TVs. The stadium also has two giant video screens, each measuring 65m².

In addition to the two floors of parking located right under the pitch, the Amsterdam ArenA is the only stadium to have a road running underneath it too. The Amsterdam ArenA has 17,500 parking spaces and also boasts a wide range of conference rooms, restaurants and vending areas.

Trophy tour

The UEFA Europa League trophy was brought to Amsterdam by a delegation from Club Atlético de Madrid and presented to Eberhard van der Laan, the mayor of Amsterdam, by Michel Platini, the UEFA President. The trophy tour then immediately got under way, with Europa League final ambassador Patrick Kluivert taking the trophy on board a canal boat accompanied by a dozen schoolchildren. Kluivert – still the Dutch national team's all-time top goalscorer with 40 goals – answered questions from the children on the way to the Olympic Stadium, where the trophy will stay at night during its four weeks in Amsterdam. From 18 April to 13 May, the trophy will spend its days being paraded through the city. People will be able to take pictures of the trophy at various locations across Amsterdam, and it will be

shown at many of the city's most popular and iconic sites.

It will be on show, for example, at the final of a grassroots competition for schools, which will be held at the home of amateur club SVV Swift at Olympiaplein. It will also be displayed at the Only Friends Centre, a local sports centre for disabled children. This all goes to show that the UEFA Europa League final in Amsterdam is for everybody, irrespective of their age, gender, race or religion.

City dressing

The whole of the city of Amsterdam will be decorated in honour of the UEFA Europa League final. There is a special tram travelling through Amsterdam since the day the trophy arrived in the city. The tram is completely decked out in the colours and



The Amsterdam ArenA will be a fitting stage for the final of the UEFA Europa League

design of the Europa League in celebration of the very special event taking place in the city on 15 May. There is Europa League branding throughout the city, with Amsterdam eating, sleeping and breathing the Europa League in the month prior to the final – a match that will doubtless be worthy of the great city of football that Amsterdam has always been. After all, the city is also home to former European champions Ajax and is the birthplace of many great players and coaches, including Johan Cruyff and the late Rinus Michels. ●

Rob de Leede

FITNESS SEMINAR IN OSLO

UEFA has held a pilot seminar, entitled “Fitness for Football”, on linking fitness training to specific football development training for the benefit of players. UEFA’s 53 member associations were the catalyst for this event, which was organised as part of its coach education programme.

The seminar, in Oslo, was organised by UEFA football education services, following a request by associations for more specialist support on the issue, and gathered the heads of coach education from the national associations, as well as fitness and medical experts. They discussed how football training and fitness training can be aligned to help players perform to their maximum, as well as to prevent injuries.

The Oslo event also helped nurture dialogue between coach educators and fitness and medical experts, and was aimed at encouraging national associations to think about integrating relevant fitness elements at various levels of coach education in a more appropriate and up-to-date way.

The seminar asked how fitness training could be bonded with skills and teamwork training, and to what extent football activities could address physical needs.

The key discussion point was to demonstrate that football-specific fitness training, as opposed to general fitness training, should be part of the players’ overall training process. In addition to the development of essential skills, players must have the necessary physical fitness for matches. The seminar argued that a training situation should therefore be as close to the competitive situation as possible. The demands in training must be as similar as possible to the demands of the situation being trained for.

A UEFA survey showed considerable differences between national associations as regards what fitness means, as there are a lot of fitness experts without knowledge specific to football. Now the associations have to be stimulated on how they can better integrate fitness topics within their coach education programme. ●



Discussions to ensure better practical preparation

MEETING WITH SUPPORTERS

At the beginning of March, representatives of supporters’ groups were welcomed to the UEFA headquarters in Nyon for an annual meeting.



At the beginning of March, representatives of supporters’ groups were welcomed to the UEFA headquarters in Nyon for an annual meeting.

The purpose of these gatherings is to improve mutual understanding between UEFA and supporters by sharing ideas and opinions, and raising awareness of their respective activities and needs.

Three supporters’ groups were represented at this meeting, which was attended by the UEFA President, Michel Platini: Football Supporters Europe, Supporters Direct and CAFE, which represents disabled supporters. ●

COMPETITIONS

- Sweden, France, Denmark, England, Norway, Finland and Germany have qualified for the final round of the European Women’s Under-19 Championship, in which they will join Wales, the competition hosts, at the middle of August. The draw will take place on 7 May.

- Italy, Azerbaijan, Russia, Spain, Portugal, the Czech Republic and Slovenia have qualified for the final round of the UEFA Futsal EURO 2014 in Belgium. Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovakia, Romania, Croatia, Serbia, the Netherlands and Ukraine will contest play-off matches for the four remaining places.

- The draw for the FIFA U-20 World Cup was made in Istanbul on 25 March and produced the following groups:

- Group A:** France, Ghana, USA, Spain
- Group B:** Cuba, South Korea, Nigeria, Portugal
- Group C:** Turkey, El Salvador, Colombia, Australia
- Group D:** Mexico, Greece, Paraguay, Mali
- Group E:** Chile, Egypt, England, Iraq
- Group F:** New Zealand, Uzbekistan, Uruguay, Croatia ●

MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS



UEFA Pro licence course starts

Albania's first UEFA Pro licence coaching course has begun. The participants selected to take part in the course – which will take a year to complete – are all coaches of Albanian national teams or Albanian Super League sides. As the detailed programme put together by the Football Association of Albania's technical department shows, those coaches have quite some work to do before they can be awarded the UEFA Pro licence.

The coaches on the course are very enthusiastic about it, describing it as a high-level



The UEFA Pro licence students

professional course. In March, they visited Florence and attended one of ACF Fiorentina's training sessions. They had the opportunity to meet Fiorentina's coach, Vincenzo Montella –

one of the most successful young coaches in the Italian Serie A – and to ask him various questions.

Their next stop was Durres, where the Albanian national team had gathered. There, they attended a training session overseen by Gianni De Biasi, the coach of Albania's senior national team, in preparation for Albania's qualifying match against Norway and the friendly against Lithuania.

The UEFA Pro licence course runs until the end of 2013.

● Tritan Kokona



Women's youth league to be launched in April

The fifth Easter grassroots tournament organised by the Andorran Football Federation (FAF) was a great success, with 20 seven-a-side teams from Andorra and neighbouring provinces coming to play on the latest generation of artificial surfaces at the sports centre in Alàs.

There were three age categories (Under-7s, Under-9s and Under-11s), with a group stage, semi-finals and a final for each, resulting in a total of 40 games (7v7, 12 minutes each way). The winners were FC Encamp (Under-7s), EF Artesa de Segre (Under-9s) and the Andorran national team (Under-11s). Year after year, the success of this regional tournament encourages

the FAF to invest even more time, energy and effort in grassroots football.

In 2012, the FAF launched a campaign entitled "Les princesses també juguen a futbol" ("Princesses also play football"), aimed at developing grassroots girls' and women's football nationwide. The project began with a nationwide TV advertisement (which can be seen on www.faf.ad in the "Futbol femení" section) and involved inter-class games and football activities at local schools. The scheme aimed to encourage girls of primary school age to take up football, with a view to creating youth teams and a youth league.

The success of this campaign can be seen in the establishment of Andorra's first ever girls' youth league, which will kick off at the end of



Schoolchildren are encouraged to play football

April. The league will comprise seven teams of girls born between 1999 and 2004.

One of the FAF's goals is to allow talented girls to progress and participate at higher levels in the future, at which point an Andorran women's team will become a reality.

● Silvia Casals



New digital media officer

In March, a new digital media officer joined the media and communication department of the Austrian Football Association (ÖFB). Susanne Polansky has been entrusted with the task of developing and implementing a global social media strategy, relaunching its portals and looking after the ÖFB's digital communication channels.

Since the ÖFB launched its social media portals on Facebook (www.facebook.com/



Susanne Polansky

DasNationalteam and www.facebook.com/immerwiedereroes-terreich), its number of "friends" has already more than doubled in the space of a month. As well as photographs, short videos filmed during national team get-togethers are

included, while personal messages from players and other special features provide behind-the-

scenes insight. Meanwhile, news items such as national team match lineups will be published first on the Facebook page.

The objective is to grow ÖFB's Facebook community into one of the largest in the world of sport.

All in all, with this new appointment, the association has increased its level of knowledge and resources in the digital field in order to take greater account of the growing demands of the online world.

● Wolfgang Gramann



Sixth Baku International futsal tournament

The sixth annual Baku International futsal tournament took place from 12 to 16 February at the Baku Sports Palace. The tournament was organised by the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA), in cooperation with the Azerbaijan futsal federation.

Participants in Baku included the national futsal teams of Azerbaijan, Belarus, Latvia, Moldova and Uzbekistan. The highlight of the tournament was the final between Azerbaijan

and Belarus, which the hosts won 2-1. Fans packed the arena to watch the home team's hard-fought victory – their third in as many matches. Special gifts were presented to all participants of the tournament by the AFFA.

Azerbaijan have now won five of the six Baku international futsal tournaments. One benefit of these annual events is that Azerbaijan's futsal team is now among the strongest in Europe and has qualified for the forthcoming UEFA Futsal EURO 2014, which will be held in Belgium.

● Ayan Aghayeva



The participants pose for a photo after the trophy and certificates presentation ceremony



A big step towards Brazil

Bosnia and Herzegovina's national team are well on their way to a place in the final round of the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil after beating Greece – their main rivals in Group G – 3-1 in Zenica. It was their first ever win over Greece, having failed to beat them in their previous six games (qualifying matches for the 1998 FIFA World Cup, EURO 2004 and EURO 2008).

The "Dragons" have five qualifying matches left, and their fate is in their own hands. If Safet Sušić's team continue to play this well, they have a chance of taking part in a major competition for the first time.

Elsewhere, Bosnia and Herzegovina's futsal team, playing in the main round of the European Futsal Championship in Bratislava, finished second in Group 2 with four points (behind Azerbaijan, who managed nine points). Boro Matan's players will now have a chance to qualify for the Futsal EURO 2014 in Belgium through the play-offs.

In preparation for the start of their qualifying matches for the European Under-21 Championship, Bosnia and Herzegovina's Under-21 team recently recorded a convincing 5-0 win against Macedonia in Sarajevo. Their next match will be a friendly at home to Serbia on 4 June, ahead of their first qualifying match, which will be at home to Albania on 11 June.

Other teams have also been in action: the women's national team recently came fourth in the Croatian Cup, an international tournament in Rovinj. Samira Hurem's team lost their first match 1-0 to Russia, before beating Slovakia 4-1. In the third-place play-off, they lost 6-5 to Slovenia on penalties.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's youngest men's and women's teams were also in Croatia, taking part in UEFA development tournaments in Umag. The women's Under-16 team won their tournament, and the men's Under-17 team won theirs, too.

In other news, the club licensing team operating within the Bosnia and Herzegovina



The Bosnian national team took a significant step closer to Brazil by beating Greece

Football Federation (NFSBiH) has, in cooperation with UEFA representatives, held a seminar for representatives of Premier League clubs. The event was also attended by newly elected members of the first instance and appeals bodies responsible for the licensing of clubs. At that seminar, club representatives were familiarised with the new IT tools that will be used for the submission of financial benchmarking data for UEFA.

The NFSBiH recently opened a fan shop in Bascarsija, in the old part of Sarajevo, and organised a charity football match to raise money for children with special needs. The event also marked the 27th birthday of Bosnian international and Manchester City FC forward Edin Džeko, who played in the match alongside other international players. A total of 27 boys and girls with special needs from across the country also played, as did children from various primary schools in Sarajevo.

Another piece of news that has caught people's attention is the fact that Džeko, who is also a UNICEF ambassador, has been awarded the prestigious "City of Sarajevo Award in Honour of April 6th". This is given to deserving citizens and collectives to mark 6 April, the date on which the city was liberated from fascism at the end of the second world war. The prize, which was first awarded in 1956, was presented to the players Josip Katalinski in 1975 and Safet Sušić in 1981, as well as being awarded to Ivica Osim, the then coach of the Yugoslav national team, in 1990.

● *Fuad Kravac*



Marketing initiatives to promote the Danish women's national team

The Danish Football Association (DBU) has undertaken different initiatives to promote the Danish women's national team before it competes in the Women's EURO 2013 in Sweden this summer. Among the initiatives are the team's participation in a nationwide DBU promotional tour and the creation and presentation of a team mascot.

The DBU tour is a brand-new promotional opportunity for the football association that is planned as an annual event with a different focus each year. For 2013, the focus is split between the hosting of a nationwide street football tournament and the promotion of the women's national team.

The DBU Tour 2013 is visiting 16 cities across Denmark. In each city, one or two players from the women's national team will be present. The players will be available to chat to fans and local people in the different cities, sign autographs and compete with the public in different football-related contests.

Along with the players, the newly launched team mascot will also be present on the tour. The mascot is the first for a Danish national football team. It takes the form of a female tiger named Emma Hu and has been developed in close cooperation with the women's national team. From a marketing perspective, Emma Hu has been developed to brand the women's national team from a broad perspective and, more specifically, to help children (especially girls) identify with the national team and the players.

Emma Hu has already proven successful in aiding the branding of the women's team as the mascot was unveiled exclusively on nationwide public service television on a very popular news and entertainment talk show. Emma Hu made her first public appearance in the company of three national players, which led to the players talking about women's football, the national team and the Women's EURO 2013.

The way in which the mascot was introduced to the public showed how Emma Hu, the DBU tour and several other marketing initiatives can help the Danish women's national team gain more attention in the national media and among the public prior to the championship in Sweden this summer.



Emma Hu, the mascot of the Danish women's national team

● *Søren Gjelstrup Jessen*



Workshop for referees in Sliven

The Bulgarian Football Union has reduced the number of people on its referees committee from seven to five. The news was announced by the chairman of the referees committee, Nikola Dzhuganski, during the refereeing workshop held in Sliven at the beginning of March. Georgi

Kordev will no longer be involved in the committee, while Kostadin Kostadinov retains his position as manager of the referees committee, a role he was given when Bulgaria signed the UEFA Convention on Referee Education and Organisation.

During the March workshop, all Bulgaria's professional referees took their annual fitness tests, with three of them – Georgi Kabakov, Georgi Todorov and Martin Margaritov – joining FIFA's list of international referees. Kyros Vassaras, a member of the UEFA Referees Committee, attended the workshop and introduced participants to new trends in refereeing.

Also in Sliven were the executive directors of all of Bulgaria's professional football clubs. They were given a lecture on the fight against racism – an issue that is still a problem for clubs and the national team, with many fans unaware of the consequences of inappropriate behaviour during games.

● *Dimitar Trenev*



The refereeing workshop participants

Defibrillators for clubs

The Football Association (FA) and the British Heart Foundation (BHF) have teamed up to help save lives in England's football clubs and their communities.

More than 900 defibrillators will be made available to clubs in the National League System below the Premier League and the Football League, and also to clubs in the Women's Super League, to help save the lives of cardiac arrest casualties.

This unique partnership between The FA, which is marking its 150th anniversary in 2013, and the BHF was announced on the first anniversary of former England Under-21 and Bolton Wanderers FC midfielder Fabrice Muamba suffering a cardiac arrest on the pitch.

The initiative will create thousands of lifesavers by giving players, staff and fans access to the equipment and information needed to save a life, including hands-only cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) which was made famous for the BHF by former star player Vinnie Jones.

The charity will match an initial donation of £400,000 from The FA towards the cost of the defibrillators, with an additional £400,000 made up of contributions from clubs. With two-thirds of the cost of a brand new lifesaving defibrillator being provided by The FA and the BHF, eligible clubs are now able to apply to the fund to secure the equipment and learn more about how it can save lives.

Awareness of sudden cardiac arrests was heightened when Muamba suffered a cardiac arrest in Bolton's FA Cup match against Tottenham Hotspur FC on 17 March last year. Muamba's story is even more remarkable as only around one in ten people normally survive a witnessed, out-of-hospital cardiac arrest in the UK.

Mike Healy, The FA's head of medical education, added: "For more than 20 years, The FA has recognised the importance of timely and appropriate first aid for casualties in football environments. Individuals of all ages can die from cardiac arrest, even athletes who appear to be in the prime of their physical fitness."

"The chance of survival from a cardiac arrest is promoted by the timely use of a defibrillator, by early cardiopulmonary resuscitation and by quick access to an appropriate clinical environment. However, it is vitally important that someone responds to preserve the life and promote recovery of the casualty until more advanced medical care can be provided."

Professor Peter Weissberg, medical director at the BHF, added: "The rules of cardiac arrest are really very simple: there is no chance of survival without prompt CPR and a defibrillator."

"The importance of these machines in the chain of survival cannot be underestimated, and a new partnership between the nation's heart charity and The FA promises to make a difference between life and death in many of our clubs and their communities. This is a chance to equip many of our football clubs with the lifesaving skills and equipment which will improve this country's very poor cardiac arrest survival rates."

● Greg Demetriou

School futsal competition kicks off

The Football Association of Finland, in cooperation with Finland's school athletics association, has launched a new futsal competition for schools, which has been very well received by students and teachers alike. The competition is aimed at sixth-graders in schools across Finland, and the objective is to establish a model whereby any student from any class can take part.

The rules are a little "lighter" than in regular futsal, and the ball used is softer. A minimum of five girls and five boys from each class take part. Each match comprises four periods, with boys and girls playing in two each. The boys play against boys from another class, and the girls play against girls. Each participating school organises its own internal championship, and the winning class from each school goes through to a regional tournament.

In the first year of the competition, 140 classes participated in the event and feedback was extremely positive. A lot of attention is paid to fair play, and after each match green cards are handed to children who have shown respect to other players and the referee.

Given the successful launch and the very positive feedback from both students and teachers, the competition will be extended to other age groups and the number of participants is expected to increase significantly.

● Jukka Salasuo

The schools futsal competition has got off to a good start



FFF launches its new website

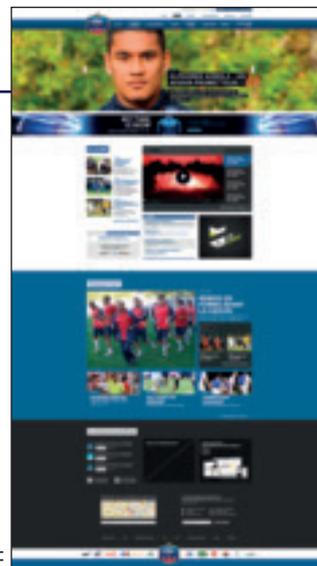
An important step was taken to improve the digital communication of the French Football Federation (FFF) in March, with the total overhaul of its website. Boasting almost 2 million unique visitors (1,953,000 in November, a new record), fff.fr is the number one football website in France. The main innovations are described below.

The home page is divided into three parts. At the top, there is a scrollable banner with four images illustrating two current news stories, a feature article and an FFF campaign or activity. The middle section contains three illustrated articles ("A la une") ("The front page"), the FFFtv video player and a news thread. Finally, the bottom section, entitled "Passion Foot" ("Passion for football"), highlights several articles and videos.

Undoubtedly one of the most significant innovations is "My FFF". This is a dedicated, personalised space in which users can choose the content they want. Information and services are featured in accordance with the areas of interest that are indicated when registering (free of charge). Fans of the French women's team, for example, will receive all the relevant news on this team first.

"Au cœur du jeu" ("At the heart of the game") is a brand new section aimed at current and aspiring FFF members. Players, coaches, club officials, volunteers and referees can all find information relevant to their particular role. Divided into five subsections (for players, referees, coaches, medical staff and club officials), this area contains valuable practical advice, details of training opportunities and official information on topics such as setting up a club, for example.

The "La vie des clubs" ("Club life") section is devoted to amateur football. It provides official information about the 18,000 or so French clubs, describes good practices developed by associations, profiles volunteers and details the



A brand-new website for the FFF

FFF's activities. There is also a link to the current discussions on the FFF Facebook page.

Another innovation is the grouping of all the men's and women's national teams in the "Equipes de France" ("French national teams") section, including player and match profiles, fixture lists, coach information, a detailed statistical record of all matches, and written and video news articles for each team.

Cup competitions and championships each have their own dedicated section. The championships section (from Ligue 1 to district leagues) contains all the results and league tables, while the cups section adopts the same model, adding the UEFA competitions.

"Rétro" ("Looking back") is another new section that focuses on the history of French football. Videos, photos and articles pay tribute to legendary matches and players. The 100 key dates for the FFF are included in this section, together with details of all internationals and national team match sheets since 1904, and not forgetting the full list of French Cup winners and results since 1918.

● Matthieu Brelle-Andrade



“A very good idea”

The Coca-Cola-sponsored national team fan club has celebrated its tenth anniversary. The occasion was marked on 26 March, at the FIFA World Cup qualifier against Kazakhstan in Nuremberg, the city where the fan club's success story began a decade ago. Almost 50,000 supporters of the German national team are now members of the club.

Not even the fan club's patron and national team manager, Oliver Bierhoff, expected the club to grow so rapidly: *“It's all part of the overall success of the fan club. It can surprise people at all levels. The fact that it's so big is simply brilliant. It shows not only how much support the national team has, but also how much the fans identify with it.”*

As well as providing a structure for the supporters of the German national team, the fan club is a focus for numerous special offers, such as trips to the team's home and away matches. It also gives members the chance to play an active role in creating a good atmosphere at international matches. *“When I think of the fan club, I am invariably reminded of those moments produced by the fans that give*



Celebrating the anniversary of the national team fan club in Nuremberg

us goose bumps. And there have been several of them in recent years. The choreographed displays, the songs, the support at exactly the right time, the expense that the fans go to in

order to support us – there are so many stories behind it. Forming the fan club was simply a very good idea”, says Bierhoff.

● Niels Barnhofer



Fourth open day

For the fourth consecutive year, the Israel Football Association (IFA) has organised an open day for the general public and fans.

The IFA opened its gates free of charge and invited children, parents and visitors to come inside and see its pitches and dressing rooms, experiencing life behind the scenes in the world of Israeli football. Children's cup finals were played, and trophies and medals were awarded.

Israel is hosting the final tournament of the European Under-21 Championship this summer, so there was a huge separate area dedicated to this event, allowing fans to meet the Israeli players and coach, to get autographs and take pictures, and to find out more about the tournament and the four host cities (Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Petach-Tikva and Netanya).

There were also various competitions, such as free-kick contests and a “sporting family” contest. One of the highlights of the day was an all-star match between former Israeli interna-



An open day with a fun atmosphere

tionals and a team comprising some of Israel's top actors and singers. More than 17,000 football fans came and enjoyed the event, which took place at the national stadium in

Ramat Gan. This open day is the IFA's biggest grassroots event, and last year it resulted in the IFA winning a UEFA KISS marketing award.

● Michal Grundland



Annual general meeting

On 25 March, the Liechtenstein Football Association (LFV) held its annual general meeting in Schaan. In the presence of František Laurinec, a member of the UEFA Executive Committee, the main items on the agenda were the adoption of new statutes (in line with FIFA standards) and elections to the executive board.

One position on the board had been vacant for the last two years, and that was ably filled by lawyer and former Liechtenstein international Marco Ender, who will be responsible

for grassroots football for the next two years. All other board members were re-elected, ensuring continuity in the work of the association.

At the end of the meeting, František Laurinec, representing UEFA, and Leo Kranz, president of the Liechtenstein Olympic sports association, took the opportunity to address the LFV's executive board and the other delegates.

● Anton Banzer

The LFV's new executive committee



Exams during UEFA tournament

An unusual experience for a group of about 20 young Maltese players has confirmed the spirit of camaraderie and cooperation that



The Maltese student players with their Greek supervisors

unites the Malta Football Association (MFA) and the Hellenic Football Federation (EPO), as well as the education authorities of the two countries.

Several weeks before Malta's Under-16 men's and women's teams were due to travel to

Chalkida in Greece to take part in a UEFA development tournament, it became apparent that the event clashed with important university-related examinations in Malta.

Undaunted, the Maltese authorities held discussions involving all those concerned in order to find a way for the players to sit these important exams while they were abroad. Communication with the EPO and Greece's education authorities led to all the necessary logistical arrangements being finalised in the minutest detail. As a result, the players were able to sit their exams at the appropriate time.

Everything went as planned, and so the Maltese players were then able to honour their sporting commitments on the pitch on behalf of their country.

This episode confirmed that innovative ways of resolving exam-related problems involving sport can always be found, as long as there is goodwill.

The players and their parents expressed their gratitude to all parties for ensuring that this impasse was successfully resolved.

The top officials at the MFA were equally grateful. They explained that, thanks to careful planning, a template had been established for overcoming such difficulties in the future.

● Alex Vella

Soccer Sight goes digital

Carl Frampton, the new European super-bantamweight champion and an ardent Northern Ireland supporter, has officially launched Soccer Sight Digital, a joint initiative by the Irish Football Association (IFA) and the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB). The Soccer Sight initiative put in place at Windsor Park has allowed many blind and partially sighted people to follow matches through audio descriptions. This has enabled spectators with sight loss to enjoy internationals and domestic matches in a whole new way.

Soccer Sight Digital is a football access project designed to improve access to football at all levels for blind and partially sighted people. The new digital equipment is funded by the Northern Ireland Executive's Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL). Soccer Sight offers a form of audio commentary. It helps to give blind and partially sighted people a fuller experience when attending international football matches. It differs from regular radio commentaries as it offers a full description of the stadium, the game, fans' reactions, the location of play and the fan's location in relation to the pitch and goals.



From left to right: Jim Shaw, president of the IFA, Alderman Leatham, mayor of Lisburn, David Bowen, coordinator of the project, and European boxing champion Carl Frampton at the official launch of Soccer Sight

David Bowen, the RNIB's Soccer Sight coordinator, said: "Soccer Sight is an excellent scheme, which will enhance the enjoyment of blind and partially sighted people going to Northern Ireland internationals. It gives an all-round better, fuller and more complete match-going experience. Also, it opens up the other aspects of going to the football that fellow, sighted fans appreciate as a matter of course."

The IFA president, Jim Shaw, added: "The IFA is delighted to have been able to access funding from DCAL to provide new digital equipment to enhance the quality of broadcasts to all our visually impaired and blind supporters at Northern Ireland home games." Carl Frampton said: "The IFA should be congratulated, along with its dedicated coaches and staff, for its huge efforts in breaking down some of the barriers faced by blind and partially sighted people in accessing sports."

Barry Macaulay, senior manager for Northern Ireland at the RNIB, commented: "It is great to see the IFA continuing to lead the way on accessibility for sports fans who are blind or partially sighted. This updated equipment will be ideal for the revamped national football stadium, and we are very hopeful that the GAA and Ulster Rugby will follow suit and provide audio description facilities at Casement Park and Ravenhill."

This project has been made possible by the generous support provided by the Northern Ireland Executive through DCAL's "Promoting Equality, Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion through Sport" programme.

● Sueann Harrison

FMF marks International Women's Day

On 8 March, International Women's Day, the first ever match involving former members of the Moldovan women's team took place at CSCT Buiucani's stadium, with the women taking on former members of the men's national team.

Before kick-off, the men presented a bunch of flowers to each of the women. The game was fast-paced, with the women leading almost throughout and the men not equalising until the dying seconds. The final result was 11-11. The match was organised by the Football

Association of Moldova (FMF), in cooperation with the Cross Cultures Project Association (CCPA) and its Open Fun Football Schools (OFFS) programme in Moldova. A number of CCPA/OFFS representatives took part in the match: the two team captains, Lurie Conusevici and Svetlana Ceban, are both assistant CCPA/OFFS coordinators for Moldova, while Natalia Ceban and Iana Pogarevici are both CCPA/OFFS instructors.

A good number of people attended the match, including a number of journalists. The event was reported on the official website of the FMF and several TV channels.

● Svetlana Ceban



Complete equality between teams of both genders



An important agreement

The Portuguese Football Federation (FPF) has signed an agreement with 35 clubs in the second division (Divisão II), supporting projects aimed at improving clubs' facilities. The FPF has invested more than €1m in this programme, money that the clubs can spend on dressing rooms, pitches, medical offices, stadium security, stands, press areas and laundry rooms, for example, between now and the end of September.

The programme was launched last August, and the clubs had to submit their projects by the end of October. The majority of those projects were approved by the FPF and the Portuguese institute of sports and youth. The FPF will finance 80% of the projects submitted by the clubs, up to a maximum of €50,000 per project.

This agreement is an important achievement for the Portuguese FA, as this was a significant objective for its board of directors and is essential to improving the clubs' facilities prior to the launch of the new second division in a few months' time. A new format is to be



An important agreement for Portuguese football

introduced, which should increase interest in the division among both the general public and the media.

The FPF believes that, given the present financial and social situation in Portugal, with major challenges across the sports industry, it is important to support clubs and help them to strengthen their structures and facilities in order to ensure the development of Portuguese football.

● FPF communications department



Focus on social responsibility

Romania faces very specific challenges on account of the global economic crisis: more than two million Romanians now work abroad, with most leaving their children behind in Romania to be raised by relatives – and some abandoning their children entirely. Some of those abandoned children live in special social or residential centres and face serious problems when it comes to adapting and integrating into Romanian society.

Football is being used to combat truancy and delinquency, as well as to support integration into society. Poor children are being encouraged to play football, with the most talented among them going on to play at a higher level.

The Romanian Football Federation (FRF) has launched a special project in partnership with local councils in various districts of Bucharest (mainly the fifth), as well as the national schools authority and the Policy Center for Roma and Minorities, with which the FRF has worked successfully for many years.

Between 20 April and 20 October 2013, around 500 children between the ages of 7 and 14 living in Bucharest (mainly in the fifth district) will take part in a special competition due to be held in more than 25 local schools. This competition is aimed at children living in social and residential centres, children living far below the poverty line and children with only one living parent.

Sports teachers will assemble squads of 12 children corresponding to those criteria (including, if possible, children of the requisite age who do not attend school), and those children will have daily training sessions. At the end of each week, they will play six or seven-a-side games in this special championship on mini-pitches measuring 20m by 40m.

Teams will be formed on the basis of age (with teams for boys aged 7 to 9, 10 to 11 and 12 to 14 and girls aged 11 to 14) – and there will be around 35 to 40 teams altogether.

Each child will receive playing kit and training kit from the FRF, and each team will receive 10 balls and 12 bibs. In addition, the sports teachers will receive a supplementary payment on top of their regular salary, which will be paid by the fifth district's local council.

The sports teachers will be assisted and advised by Romania's youth team coaches, by coaches appointed by the FRF's coaching school and by a number of former international stars currently working for the FRF, such as Miodrag Belodedici, Daniel Prodan and Ion Vlădoiu.

The project is to be rolled out in four more regions of Romania (Alba, Valcea, Bacau and Satu Mare), where another 500 children in the same situation will be invited to participate. And there are plans to extend the project to even more regions in the near future.

● Paul Zaharia



New partnership for grassroots football

Robbie Keane, captain of the Republic of Ireland's national team, has been unveiled as the ambassador for the McDonald's Football Association of Ireland (FAI) Future Football programme, a brand-new partnership to support grassroots football clubs and enhance the work they do at a local level.

Over 4,000 boys and girls from 83 clubs across Ireland are expected to participate in the new initiative this year, which includes free coach education workshops, fun days and football competitions.

This new club initiative has been developed to combine various elements of coach education, player development and club management that will give young footballers a platform for the application of their skills in an inclusive, fun and friendly environment. The elements making up the programme are:

- **Coach education** – new small-sided game workshops (4v4 and 7v7) have been developed in line with the Future Football programme. Ten free places will be available on each course to all clubs involved.



Robbie Keane, ambassador of the new grassroots programme

- **Future Football fun days** – a community football event hosted by a number of the participating clubs. Fun days will include football activities, skills competitions and entertainment. The event will be free of charge and open to everyone.
- **Future Football cup competition** – run in conjunction with the fun days but open only to participating clubs. There will be three age categories (U8, U9 and U10), and teams will include boys and girls.
- **Future Football cup finals day** – teams can progress from the local cup competitions to a finals day, to be held on 15 October in Dublin. Activities will be held in and around the Dublin Arena, with all participants attending an international game later that evening.
- **Club support programme** – clubs will complete a survey which will assist in the design and implementation of a support programme that sets standards and benchmarks for club administration and management. It will also provide clubs with information and resources to assist their ongoing development. Participating clubs will work towards implementing the agreed criteria.

In selecting clubs for participation, the FAI invited expressions of interest from all clubs before looking at many aspects of their management and organisation, such as administrative structure and procedures, development planning, fundraising and associated activities, as well as their role in their community, how long they have been established, their links with the FAI and participation in FAI initiatives, and whether they have a girls'/ladies' section, to determine if they were suitable.

● Stephen Finn

Women's football in Russia marks its 25th anniversary

An international conference celebrating 25 years of women's football in Russia was held in Moscow in March. The event was attended by Nikolai Tolstykh, president of the Russian Football Union (RFS), Karen Espelund, member of the UEFA Executive Committee and chairwoman of the UEFA Women's Football Committee, and Eva Pasquier, FIFA's European development manager, as well as famous coaches and players from Russian women's football. The event was also attended by special guests from the football associations of Germany, England and Azerbaijan, who reported on women's football in their respective countries.

Women's football has only been around for a quarter of a century in Russia, with the USSR's first nationwide tournament being held in

Chisinau in August 1987. Back then, young female players competed for special prizes awarded by the weekly publication Sobesednik. While men's football was marking its 90th anniversary, women's football was just starting to develop and promote itself. The USSR then established a women's football association, organising a women's football championship and forming a women's national team. Thanks to the efforts of Nadejda Gorban, Neil Tishenko and Oleg Lapshin, this new kind of football was made available to the Russian people and enjoyed bright prospects.

"First of all, I would like to congratulate all the people who were involved in launching women's football in Russia on this special and



Celebrating 25 years of women's football in Russia

important day for us. Your sincere love and absolute devotion have resulted in its successful establishment and development in difficult times. This has been a historic period," said Nikolai Tolstykh.

● Irina Baranova

Agreement on a new national stadium

As part of the programme adopted by its executive committee for the period 2012-16, the Football Association of Serbia (FSS) is continuing with its stated objective: the strengthening of Serbia's football infrastructure.

Following the opening of its sports centre in May 2011, the FSS now has a new task: the construction of a national stadium. In March, the FSS's management began the process of turning its plans into reality, the first concrete step being the signing of a cooperation agreement between the FSS and the British company Mace (under the auspices of the British embassy in Belgrade) regarding the construction of the stadium.

The signing of the agreement was followed by an initial presentation looking at the basic procedure for building such facilities – something Serbia has never had. At the moment, the main tasks are to find investors and decide on the location. Mace's experience with the construction of various sports facilities, combined with the FSS's determination to push ahead with this plan, suggests that progress will be swift.

The presentation was also attended by the British ambassador to Serbia, Michael Davenport, who said: "The people of our countries have the same passion for football. I am very happy to see that concrete cooperation has been established between the FSS and Mace. Modern multifunction football facilities are a reality today, and I deeply believe that the project 'National Stadium Serbia' is not a utopian one and will soon be within reach for all Serbian citizens."

The FSS's president, Tomislav Karadžić, said: "This kind of stadium has been a dream for many generations of people in our country. However, I emphasise that we are not just constructing this grand stadium; we also want to see seven new modern stadiums all over Serbia, all as a result of this cooperation. Football infrastructure is the basis of modern work. With this project, we are aiming to enter the group of candidates to co-host UEFA EURO 2020, because we wish to welcome the best teams in this amazing competition in seven years' time."

All three parties will now intensify their efforts, and the results will be announced in due course.

● Aleksandar Bošković

A new mandate for Karl-Erik Nilsson

Karl-Erik Nilsson was elected president of the Swedish Football Association (SvFF) for a second term at the association's annual meeting in March, with all other members of the SvFF's board also re-elected unanimously. The SvFF posted a profit of €4.5m in 2012, more than half of which was due to Sweden's participation in EURO 2012. As usual, the proceeds will be spent on developing football in Sweden, with fixed amounts earmarked for the UEFA Women's EURO 2013, the development of talent and support for the construction and renovation of stadiums.

The annual meeting also approved a new strategy document that will lay the foundations for the SvFF's operations until 2017. Karl-Erik Nilsson hosted a number of open sessions across the country in autumn 2012, giving everyone involved in Swedish football the opportunity to have their say on the association's future strategy. Regional associations and various interest groups were also consulted before the final document was adopted.

Reigning champions IF Elfsborg are likely to retain their title when the Swedish National League's new season kicks off in April – at least according to a poll of 300 representatives of media organisations and league clubs who attended the country's annual pre-season event. Malmö FF, AIK Solna and BK Häcken are seen as the most likely challengers. The league has been won by seven different clubs in the last eight seasons, and if Elfsborg win it in 2013 they will be the first club in ten years to defend their title.

● Andreas Nilsson



A new term of office for SvFF president Karl-Erik Nilsson



The launch of the national stadium construction project



Football is (almost) all that Laupen's girls talk about

The Swiss schools football championship – the Credit Suisse Cup – was launched more than 30 years ago in 1981, and the competition remains extremely popular to this day. The grand final tournament will once again take place in Basle this year, on 12 June. The final tournament will be contested by those school teams that make it through the qualifying rounds, who will then compete for the title of Swiss champions in the various categories.

Every year, the Swiss schools football championship is contested by about 6,000 teams, comprising approximately 150,000 players between the ages of 10 and 16 from all 26 Swiss cantons (as well as the Principality of Liechtenstein), making it the largest youth sports competition in Switzerland.

In Laupen, near Zurich, this year's final tournament is already the talk of the community. The local girls' team are looking to extend

their unique four-year winning streak and leave Basle as champions for the fifth year in succession.

Laupen's girls have already written themselves into cup history. Last year they won the grade 7 title, having won the grade 6, 5 and 4 titles in the previous three years – an unprecedented achievement.

As Laupen has no upper school, the girls now attend a secondary school in neighbouring Wald, where their winning streak has continued. Even the girls' sports teacher, Claudia Longhi, goes into raptures when asked about her talented young players: "These girls can play football. That's quite clear. But they are enthusiastic about – and good at – sports in general; they excel at volleyball and unihockey, too." Their success has come without the aid



Jubilant for the winners of the schools championship trophy

of any additional sports programmes at school. Instead, the girls have honed their skills at local clubs. All play football outside of school, with most playing for FC Wald, and one – a member of the regional Under-15 team – playing for DFC Rapperswil.

● Pierre Benoît



Draw for the FIFA Under-20 World Cup 2013

The draw for the 19th FIFA Under-20 World Cup, which will be hosted by Turkey this summer, was made on 25 March at the Grand Tarabya Hotel in Istanbul.

The 24 competing teams learned the names of their opponents and the host cities for their group stage matches – which will begin with the opening match on 21 June between Cuba and South Korea in Kayseri.

The draw for the group stage, which was made in the presence of the brand-new FIFA Under-20 World Cup trophy, threw up a number of interesting and intriguing clashes. Hosts Turkey face El Salvador, Colombia and Australia in Group C.

The one-hour show hosted by Turkish TV star Defne Samyeli was the perfect curtain-raiser and whetted appetites ahead of the 52-match tournament, which will take place from 21 June to 13 July in the seven host cities of Antalya,



FIFA secretary general Jérôme Valcke conducts the draw

Bursa, Gaziantep, Istanbul, Kayseri, Rize and Trabzon.

"We will show the beauty of our country and our love for football," said Servet Yardımcı, president of the local organising committee. Jim Boyce, vice-president of FIFA and chairman of the FIFA organising committee for the Under-20 World Cup, was equally enthusiastic: "Football

is a wonderful sport for bringing people together. It will be wonderful to see all 24 teams come together here in Turkey."

Popular Turkish band Gece performed a rousing rendition of "Yıldızlar Buradan Yükseliyor" ("The stars rise from here"), the official song of the FIFA Under-20 World Cup 2013, and then FIFA secretary general Jérôme Valcke took to the stage for the draw ceremony itself.

He was assisted by four famous people from Turkey's footballing history: renowned former national team coaches Fatih Terim and Mustafa Denizli, as well as former international Hakan Şükür, Turkey's all-time top scorer, and former goalkeeper Rüştü Reçber, the country's most-capped international.

● Aydın Güvenir



A successful month for Ukraine

Ukraine's senior and Under-17 teams enjoyed a very successful March. The senior team defeated Poland and Moldova in qualifying matches for the 2014 FIFA World Cup and improved their chances of reaching the final tournament in Brazil.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's Under-17s caused a sensation by winning Group 4 in the elite round of the European Under-17 Championship, qualifying for the final tournament this summer. They secured first place by beating Bulgaria, Estonia and hosts Germany.

"Teams that qualify for final tournaments have made a great step forward. The final tournament of a youth championship can be

compared to the quarter-final of a senior EURO. The teams that qualify for the final round are in better technical, tactical and psychological condition than their opponents. This tournament demonstrated once more that achieving the desired result is not always an easy task," said Olexandr Holovko, head coach of Ukraine's Under-17 team.

● Serhiy Dryha

The young Ukrainian team celebrate a goal against Germany in the qualifying competition



BIRTHDAYS

Campbell Ogilvie (Scotland, 1 May)
 Peter Mikkelsen (Denmark, 1 May)
 Ladislav Gádoši (Slovakia, 3 May)
 Volodymyr Chorno-Ivanov (Ukraine, 3 May)
 David Gill (England, 3 May)

Peter Gilliéron (Switzerland, 5 May)

☆☆☆ 60th

Costakis Koutsokoumnis (Cyprus, 5 May)
 Kenneth Ridden (England, 6 May)
 Gudmundur Petursson (Iceland, 6 May)
 Karl-Erik Nilsson (Sweden, 6 May)
 Liam McGroarty (Republic of Ireland, 6 May)
 Pekka Luhtanen (Finland, 8 May)
 Michel Pralong (Switzerland, 8 May)
 Marc Dobbelaire (Belgium, 8 May)
 Miroslav Tulinger (Czech Republic, 8 May)
 Stuart Turner (England, 9 May)
 Iouri Baskakov (Russia, 10 May)
 Armen Melikbekyan (Armenia, 10 May)
 Jean-Marie Gantenbein (Luxembourg, 11 May)

Ernst-Peter Radziwill (Germany, 11 May)

Timo Huttunen (Finland, 11 May)

Maxim Betsko (Ukraine, 11 May)

Henrik Ravnild (Denmark, 13 May)

☆☆☆ 60th

Odile Lancelotti (France, 14 May)

Carlos Manuel Ferreira Matos
 (Portugal, 14 May)

Hans-Jörg Eißmann (Germany, 15 May)

Piotr Maranda (Poland, 15 May)

Håkan Nyberg (Sweden, 15 May)

☆☆☆ 60th

Nikolay Levnikov (Russia, 15 May)

Evžen Amler (Czech Republic, 15 May)

Luis Cuervas del Real (Spain, 15 May)

Egon Franck (Germany, 16 May)

Angel Bungurov (FYR Macedonia, 16 May)

Denys Lutiuk (Ukraine, 16 May)

Svein Johannessen (Norway, 17 May)

Lars Appelqvist (Sweden, 18 May)

Andreas Morisbak (Norway, 19 May)

Jozef Marko (Slovakia, 19 May)

Milovan Djukanović (Montenegro, 19 May)

Gaetano De Gabriele (Malta, 19 May)

Rune Pedersen (Norway, 19 May)

☆☆☆ 50th

Michał Listkiewicz (Poland, 20 May)

☆☆☆ 60th

Serge Muhmenthaler (Switzerland, 20 May) ☆☆☆ 60th

Platon Bozatzidis (Greece, 20 May)

Miodrag Belodedici (Romania, 20 May)

Ewa Gajewska (Poland, 21 May)

Nicolai Cebotari (Moldova, 21 May)

Paulo Lourenço (Portugal, 21 May)

Costas Kapitanis (Cyprus, 21 May)

David Bernstein (England, 22 May)

☆☆☆ 70th

Theo van Seggelen (Netherlands, 22 May)

Karl Dhont (Belgium, 22 May)

Christian Hockenjos (Germany, 23 May)

☆☆☆ 50th

Patrick Bonner (Republic of Ireland, 24 May)

Ainar Leppänen (Estonia, 24 May)

Semen Andreev (Russia, 25 May)

Suheil Daood (Israel, 25 May)

Hans Cooman (Belgium, 25 May)

Steven Martens (Belgium, 24 May)

Ivančica Sudac (Croatia, 25 May)

Evgeni Giner (Russia, 26 May)

Robert Jeurissen (Belgium, 27 May)

Zdeněk Sivek (Czech Republic, 28 May)

Jim Stjerne Hansen (Denmark, 28 May)

☆☆☆ 60th

Jean-Pierre Escalettes (France, 29 May)

Jacques Antenen (Switzerland, 29 May)

Jozef Kliment (Slovakia, 29 May)

István Huszár (Hungary, 31 May)

Arnaldo Cunha (Portugal, 31 May)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Meetings

2 May, in Nyon

UEFA Marketing Advisory Committee

7 May, in Nyon

UEFA Medical Committee

UEFA Club Licensing Committee

9 May, in Abano Terme (Italy)

Draw for the final round of the UEFA Regions' Cup

22 May

UEFA Grassroots Day

22 May, in London

UEFA Professional Football Strategy Council

22/23 May, in London

UEFA Executive Committee

23 May, in London

UEFA Club Competitions Committee

24 May, in London

Ordinary UEFA Congress

30/31 May, in Mauritius

FIFA Congress

Competitions

30 April/1 May

UEFA Champions League: semi-finals (return legs)

2 May

UEFA Europa League: semi-finals (return legs)

5-17 May, in Slovakia

European Under-17 Championship: final round

15 May, in Amsterdam

UEFA Europa League: final

23 May, in London

UEFA Women's Champions League: final

25 May, in London

UEFA Champions League: final

NOTICES

- On 9 February, Geir Thorsteinnsson was re-elected president of the Football Association of Iceland.

- On 23 February, Christian Andreasen was re-elected president of the Faroe Islands Football Association.

- Florence Hardouin is the new chief executive of the French Football Federation.

MATCH AGENTS

Six new match agents have been granted a UEFA licence:

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Meanwhile, **Georgi Gradev** (Bulgaria) no longer holds a UEFA licence.

NEW BOOK

LOCKES MATCHPLAN – FUSSBALLPROFI

In a rectangular format reminiscent of a personal diary, this book by sports commentator and presenter Ulli Potofski is aimed at young football fans who – like Locke, the book's hero – dream of becoming professional footballers. Locke's story, interspersed with photos and cartoons, introduces readers to the path to success, with the obstacles that they are liable to face and all the problems of adolescence. Along the way, readers receive advice on diet, training and playing techniques and also get the chance to have their say through questionnaires. (www.buchverlagkempen.de; €12.90)



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