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Emmanuel Deconche

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Cover:
*On 23 February, in Nice,
the qualifying draw
marked the first step
on the long road to
UEFA EURO 2016*

Photo: Sportsfile

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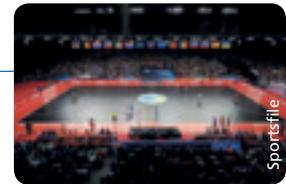
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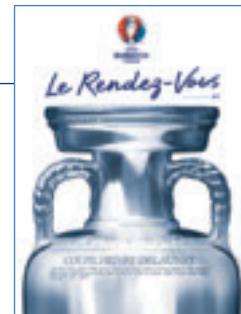
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The first issue of Le Rendez-Vous, the official UEFA EURO 2016 newsletter, features information about the host cities, stadiums, competition format and competitors, as well as the fixture list for the qualifying competition.





UEFA

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Thanks to UEFA's member associations, European national team football now has the platform on which to build for the long term, to reinforce its identity in the hearts and minds of fans across the continent.

The most recent step came with the UEFA EURO 2016 qualifying draw in Nice, which has provided a match schedule that, while presenting a logistical challenge, also opens the door to an extensive overhaul in the way that football fans will enjoy national team football for the next three seasons.

The Week of Football, across two series of European Qualifiers, for UEFA EURO 2016 and the 2018 FIFA World Cup, represents a fresh approach with six consecutive days of action. With seven such weeks dotted across the international match calendar for both competitions, fans can anticipate a true "appointment to view" – including multiple kick-off times at weekends.

It was essential that UEFA's member associations collectively supported such a radical change. It is an innovation which provides something for everyone. The priority was to address what was on offer for member associations, the teams and their fans. The Week of Football will do this by putting national team football in a prime position and giving it greater visibility, while at the same time giving the fans more matches to follow and more excitement. There have been other benefits, too.

A lot of work has gone into the centralisation of the European Qualifiers, and UEFA was convinced that it would make a compelling proposition across the board. Our broadcast partners and sponsors have eagerly supported

the new format, and we will also see more national team football viewed by fans beyond Europe's borders, creating a truly global appeal in the process.

With a daily ten-match schedule, and a new timetable which will allow plenty of matches to be played on Saturdays and Sundays, the Week of Football is sure to strengthen European national team football's allure.

Crucially, our member associations have been at the forefront in the decision-making process leading to the Week of Football and centralisation. It is heartening to see that the constructive dialogue with all our member associations remains ongoing, with further deliberations on the future of the national team game to come. National teams create a sense of identity, a feeling of unity and, in times of success, a glow of pride among a country's football fans. UEFA and its associations are striving to ensure that national team football remains a key focal point of the European football landscape.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gianni Infantino".

Gianni Infantino
UEFA General Secretary

FIRST EURO 2016 RENDEZ-VOUS

The qualifying draw for UEFA EURO 2016 unified the European football family in a celebration of French culture in Nice.



Sportsfile

The UEFA General Secretary, Gianni Infantino, with former winners Bixente Lizarazu and Ruud Gullit and former goalkeepers José Ángel Iribar and Rinat Dasaev

For the first time, the draw – held at the Nice Acropolis – involved 54 member associations, whose presidents and general secretaries had the opportunity to convene on the eve of the draw, among over 600 guests invited to an event

played out alongside the world-famous Nice carnival.

Speciality food and drink from the ten host cities was served at the venue after the draw while the football family waited for the confirmed qualifying round fixtures, entertained by piano music that had been a continuous thread of the weekend, also at the official dinner and during the draw ceremony itself.

Guardians of the French culture were joined on stage for the draw by famous “gardiens” of European football as 13 goalkeeping legends assisted UEFA’s General Secretary, Gianni Infantino, with the draw.

“I think it would be great to recreate the campaign of 1984 and, of course, we still remember 1998,” said Fabien Barthez, one of the past EURO winners involved. “Football and sport give you that little something, that extra sparkle; sport makes you feel alive. This will be a celebration of football. For a good celebration, you need full stadiums and for people to bring their kids. 2016 is still two years away but it will soon be here.”

Barthez lifted the trophy in 2000 in a team including Bixente Lizarazu, who also joined former Netherlands captain Ruud Gullit in presenting the hour-long show.

“It is a great honour to be asked to present it,” said Gullit, a winner in 1988. “It’s funny as well, if you look back on the fact that you were playing in a tournament like that and then all of a sudden you are doing this and you never

Group A

Netherlands
Czech Republic
Turkey
Latvia
Iceland
Kazakhstan

Group B

Bosnia and Herzegovina
Belgium
Israel
Wales
Cyprus
Andorra

Group C

Spain
Ukraine
Slovakia
Belarus
FYR Macedonia
Luxembourg

Group D

Germany
Republic of Ireland
Poland
Scotland
Georgia
Gibraltar

Group E

England
Switzerland
Slovenia
Estonia
Lithuania
San Marino

Group F

Greece
Hungary
Romania
Finland
Northern Ireland
Faroe Islands

Group G

Russia
Sweden
Austria
Montenegro
Moldova
Liechtenstein

Group H

Italy
Croatia
Norway
Bulgaria
Azerbaijan
Malta

Group I

Portugal
Denmark
Serbia
Armenia
Albania

thought it would happen. Back when we won it, you only needed four matches and then you were in the final. Nowadays with more teams, I think UEFA has made it much better and much more exciting."

Great expectations

"I expect a lot from EURO 2016 in France," concurred Lizarazu. "I have the impression that the Bundesliga used the 2006 World Cup to become the strongest, most exciting and most impressive league in the world along with the Premier League in England. I would like this EURO to allow France to revive both its national team and club football, with new stadiums and infrastructure, with people getting more enjoyment out of coming to watch games. French football needs some vitality and a boost."

For the first time, 24 teams will compete at the final tournament, giving broadcasters plenty to talk about in the post-draw flash positions at the Acropolis and other media in the mixed zone.

The qualifying round also sees the launch of the Week of Football concept, outlined by the UEFA President, Michel Platini, at a press conference on the eve of the draw. Under the new match schedule, which starts in September, national team matches will be played over six days at standardised kick-off times for the first time.

"This is an innovative project created for football fans, which has the unanimous support of UEFA's member associations," he said. "It was a strategic decision. We took it to try to promote national team football. Clubs play on almost every day of the week and, as a result, national team football has been pushed out of the limelight. We would like to see it back in the limelight again.

"We want fans to have more choice, to have more matches at regular kick-off times, not only to see matches of their own national team, but also to be able to watch all the best national teams in Europe."

Everything connected with the first "rendez-vous" for UEFA EURO 2016 was meticulously planned. Over 670 rooms across seven hotels in Nice were booked on the eve of the draw, with a fleet of 46 vehicles transporting guests, partners and staff to the different locations across the event, negotiating the logistical challenges presented by the carnival.

Camera positions were available on the red carpet to chronicle the arrival of guests and stakeholders at the draw proceedings, while 12 multilateral camera positions were stationed in the draw hall, including special cameras used under the guidance of director Francois Lanaud.

Guests and dignitaries were unanimous that the final tournament will leave a great legacy for football in France. The nation's future was represented at the ceremony by over 200 children, invited to see the first steps on the road to UEFA EURO 2016. ●

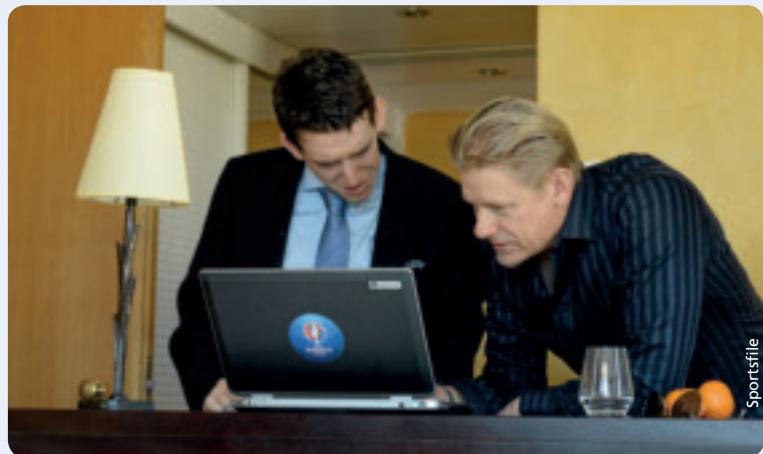
NICE PROVES SOCIAL DRAW

The official hashtag of the qualifying draw, #EURO2016, was a worldwide, top-trending topic on 23 February as fans from around the globe took to social media platforms to discuss events as they unfolded in Nice.

UEFA.com also proved popular, the official website of the competition recording 60 % more visits than for the qualifying draw of the 2012 competition – while in excess of 160,000 users watched the live stream of the draw, with commentary available in English and, for the first time, French.

There were other firsts, too, as UEFA launched its maiden Instagram account (Instagram.com/uefacom) ahead of the draw and also conducted Facebook Q&As – a novel way of allowing fans to engage with their heroes. One of the goalkeeping greats taking part in the ceremony, Peter Schmeichel, was the first in the hot seat, followed by Turkey coach Fatih Terim.

The Instagram account benefited from the first use in a football setting of Instatop – a mounted, mirrored tablet which takes photo-booth style pictures of willing volunteers.



Former Denmark goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel answers fans' questions on Facebook alongside Josh Hershman, UEFA's social media editor

In this case, it was goalkeepers of the likes of Dino Zoff, Andreas Köpke, Antonis Nikopolidis and Hans van Breukelen who posed in front of a EURO backdrop with a ball – and each other. Inside a month, more than 140,000 people were following the account. The official UEFA European Championship Facebook page (Facebook.com/uefaeuro) attracted 50,243 new fans on the day of the draw, taking the total beyond 3 million.

Those figures have been boosted by the launch of UEFA's first non-English Facebook page (Facebook.com/UEFAEUROFR), delivering mother-tongue content to the French audience as the countdown to June 2016 continues.

UEFA also has a French home on Twitter, where @UEFAEURO and @UEFAEURO_FR added 8,000 new followers on the day of the draw – it is the place to go if you want your 2016 news in 140 characters. UEFA has a large footprint on social media, with over 40 million cumulative followers across all channels, and the digital team are working closely with the social media giants to produce innovative and engaging content.

Examples of best practice were shared with the national associations at a KISS workshop in February, and while work is ongoing to verify and make all association accounts official, the goal is a cohesive strategy which takes us from the European Qualifiers through to France and beyond. ●

ITALY TAKE FUTSAL CROWN

Italy, champions for the first time in 2003, clinched a second European Futsal Championship title by defeating Russia in the final.



Sportsfile

The Italians celebrate winning their second European Futsal Championship title

Futsal was the real winner in Antwerp. “*Everything seemed to move up a step*,” commented Spain’s Javier Lozano who, with two FIFA World Cups and three EUROS to his credit as Spain’s national team coach, was in Belgium as one of UEFA’s technical observers. “*We could see improvements in coaching, in tactical maturity, in physical condition, in intensity, in goalkeeping, in the creation of shooting opportunities and in the presentation of the final tournament as a real spectacle.*”

The Royal Belgian Football Federation made a magnificent job of staging and promoting the event at two venues in Antwerp from 28 January to 8 February. The group matches were played at the smaller Lotto Arena, with the eight knockout games then staged a few metres along the pavement at the grandiose Sportpaleis, where the crowd of 11,558 at the final brought the total attendance for the tournament to 89,240. An abundance of in-stadium entertainment allowed the fans to

create and enjoy a wonderful atmosphere, while lighting levels allowed Eurosport to upgrade their TV production to include super slow motion cameras – and viewing figures in various European countries registered outstanding market shares. The tournament offered spectators a plethora of goals – none of them more spectacular than the bicycle kick by Eder Lima (the event’s top scorer with eight) which earned Russia their 4-4 draw with Portugal.

The big four

The Futsal EURO 2014 respected the form book in that the big four – Italy, Portugal, Russia and Spain – successfully monopolised the semi-final line-up. But they were made to work hard and none of them won all their matches on the way. As Russia’s coach, Sergei Skorovich, remarked: “*The ‘middle-class’ teams are getting stronger and stronger in terms of technique and tactics. I don’t think we can talk about ‘weak teams’ any longer.*”

His impression was borne out when, in the opening Group C fixture, Slovenia’s power and movement earned a 3-1 advantage which was only reduced to the final 3-2 scoreline 31 seconds from time while the Italians were operating with a flying goalkeeper. The surprise result prompted

Quarter-finals

| | | |
|------------|--------------------|-----|
| 3 February | Ukraine – Portugal | 1-2 |
| 3 February | Romania – Russia | 0-6 |
| 4 February | Italy – Croatia | 2-1 |
| 4 February | Slovenia – Spain | 0-4 |

Semi-finals

| | | |
|------------|------------------|------|
| 6 February | Portugal – Italy | 3-4 |
| 6 February | Russia – Spain | 4-3* |

* after extra time

Third-place play-off

| | | |
|------------|------------------|-----|
| 8 February | Portugal – Spain | 4-8 |
|------------|------------------|-----|

Final

| | | |
|------------|----------------|-----|
| 8 February | Italy – Russia | 3-1 |
|------------|----------------|-----|

four days of nail biting among the eventual champions, acutely aware that failure to win their second and last game (the 12 teams were divided into four groups of three) would signify an unprecedented group-stage exit. Their opponents were Azerbaijan who, fielding a flying goalkeeper for most of the second half, fought back from 5-2 down against Slovenia to edge a thrilling contest 7-6. In the event, Italy sailed into the last eight by taking a 3-0 lead and then adding four more goals while Azerbaijan were gambling on the flying keeper.

Group D also kicked off with a surprise, Croatia coming back with a late equaliser from the flying keeper to draw 3-3 with defending champions Spain – and then do likewise against the Czech Republic, who were eliminated by an 8-1 defeat against Spain. The other two groups respected the form book with greater clarity, with the hosts' first-night nerves contributing to a 6-1 defeat by Romania. Casting inhibitions aside, they deserved more than a 0-0 draw against Ukraine who (unusually in futsal) topped the group despite scoring only one goal in two games – against Romania. In Group B, the Netherlands lost heavily to Russia and Portugal, who then played out a thrilling 4-4 draw when pitted against each other.

A demanding tournament

The quarter-finals proved to be the watershed for the tournament's dark horses, who struggled to cope with the physical and mental demands of three high-intensity matches in five days. The Ukrainians were the first to go. Despite upping their game and matching the Portuguese for goal attempts, they were defeated 2-1.

Later that evening, Romania sent on the flying keeper just over a minute after the start of the second half, when Stancea Nelu's team was already trailing Russia 4-0. The ploy went unrewarded as they conceded twice more to lose 6-0. On the next day, Italy made a flying start, going 1-0 up after 46 seconds against Croatia. A stunning solo run by Franko Jelović pulled Mato Stankovic's team level, only for Fortino's goal to give Italy victory in a game where the second period was devoid of goals. In the last quarter-final, Slovenia started strongly against Spain but, with physical and mental fuel running low, were beaten 4-0. Still they went home with heads held high after making a memorable contribution to the tournament.

This left the big four to battle it out in the semi-finals. Italy's captain Gabriel Lima – who displayed outstanding leadership qualities throughout the tournament – put them ahead once again within the first minute but Portugal hit back twice in the first half, inspired by the extraordinary skills of Ricardinho. During the second half, however, the Italians hit three goals and only conceded one late reply.

There was an identical 4-3 scoreline in the other see-saw semi-final, in which Spain, 1-0 up

at the interval, struggled to cope with the mobility of the Russians after the break. A hectic spell of three goals in 40 seconds left Russia 3-2 up, only for Miguelín, as flying keeper, to force extra time with just over two minutes on the clock. A penalty shoot-out seemed inevitable until Robinho capitalised on a defensive error to chip the ball into the net and give Russia their first victory over Spain in 20 attempts. The Spaniards, disappointed to end a run of four consecutive gold medals at Futsal EUROS, salvaged pride by taking bronze thanks to a spectacular 8-4 victory over Portugal.

A long-awaited second European crown

The historic triumph, however, took its toll on the Russian squad. *"We didn't have any emotional energy left for the final, in which your heart should throb but you have an ice-cold mentality,"* coach Sergei Skorovich admitted. Italy, by contrast, found the mental and physical forces required in a showcase final. *"It was a night when we did everything well,"* their coach, Roberto Menichelli, commented. *"Defending, attacking, set plays...everything."* It was a set play which broke the ice, captain Gabriel Lima shooting home following a corner after just over six minutes. Eder Lima, however, produced a solo reply, stealing possession, turning and hammering the ball into the net. The Italians, focused and committed, successfully exploited deliveries to the far post to score twice more before the interval and, during a second period when the Russians threw everything at them, defended with discipline, strength and determination. *"When playing with the right heart and fighting spirit, we can achieve any objective,"* said Italy's captain, Gabriel Lima, just after he had lifted the trophy in Antwerp and led his team on a jubilant lap of honour. After a nightmare start, Italy had produced a dream finish to win their long-awaited second European crown. ●

*Russia's Eder Lima
against Italy's goalkeeper
Stefano Mammarella
in the final*



A FIRST FOR BAKU

The UEFA Futsal Cup has always explored new territory. Since introducing four-team finals in 2006/07, it has enabled Kazakhstan and Georgia to hold their first UEFA final tournaments. And in late April another country debuts as hosts of such a showpiece event when the competition heads to Azerbaijan's capital, Baku.

Araz Naxçıvan will act as host club, joined by the top three from the 2013 tournament in Tbilisi: holders Kairat Almaty, 2007 winners FC Dynamo of Russia and FC Barcelona, bronze medallists in Georgia, having taken gold in Lleida 12 months before. The four sides went into the semi-final draw in Baku on 12 March, with the fixtures at the Sarhadchi Olympic Sport Complex on 24 April and the final and third-place play-off two days later.

It has taken 99 games to get here, with 29 of the competition's 49 entrants from 48 nations kicking off in August's preliminary round. Baku United FC of London – who boasted Portugal captain Arnaldo Pereira and former Spanish international Marcelo – and Hamburg Panthers became their countries' first representatives to pass through a UEFA Futsal Cup round.



Filipe Amorim/DPI

Araz Naxçıvan triumphed over Sporting Clube de Portugal on the last matchday in the elite round

Neither would proceed any further, though, as 16 other clubs began their glory bids in October's main round. Also falling at this second hurdle were the only team to have featured in all 13 editions of the competition, Iberia Star Tbilisi, who had broken ground by reaching the semis and staging the finals in Georgia last April. This time they were pipped on goal difference by KMF Tango Sarajevo.

As ever, the top four seeds only started in November's elite round. Kairat, Dinamo and Barcelona cruised through their groups with three comfortable wins. Yet while the other side entering at this point, Sporting Clube de Portugal, approached their last match as Group D hosts leading Araz on goal difference, the 2011 runners-up were beaten 6-3 by their Azerbaijani guests.

Four teams for the title

So now the focus turns to Baku, and the 2,200-seater Sarhadchi arena, opened in August 2009 and used for taekwondo, basketball, gymnastics, volleyball and wrestling as well as futsal. There has never been a finals with so much experience in the field.

In this context Araz are relative newcomers: though this is their ninth straight season in Europe, they have got to the semi-finals just once before – in 2010 when they came third in Lisbon. Still, their roster forms the bulk of the Azerbaijan squad that played in the last three UEFA Futsal EUROS, supplying ten players this year, not to mention long-serving coach Alesio.

Kairat will contest their sixth semi-final since 2005/06, yet it was only last term that they actually won one. The Kazakh club stunned holders Barcelona 5-4 with a Fumasa hat-trick before an equally impressive 4-3 defeat of Dynamo with the decisive goal coming from keeper Higuita, a pivotal part of their attack as well as back line.

Dynamo duly lost a second straight final, just as in 2006. Twelve months on from that, they claimed their sole continental title; and the survivors of their dramatic 2007 success over Interviú in Murcia are Aleksandr Rakhimov, Cirilo, Tatù and Pula, scorer of the last-gasp winner.

Barcelona, meanwhile, have been in the last four in all three of their entries, triumphing as hosts in their 2012 debut before coming unstuck against Kairat last year. Barça's fate may be a warning to Kairat: no team has successfully defended the trophy since Playas de Castellón FS won the first two editions in 2002 and 2003. But then, until now, no Azeri side has had the chance to play a final on home ground either. ●

NYON ALL SET FOR SHOW OF TALENT

UEFA's newest competition reaches its climax this April and although a new trophy will be lifted for the first time, it will happen at a venue which is now an old hand at hosting title deciders.

The inaugural season of the UEFA Youth League has been a successful one. The aim of the venture – which is starting with a two-year trial period – is to provide young players with the chance to experience what top-level European club competition is all about. In the UEFA Champions League group stage, the participating clubs' youth teams (Under-19 level) took on the corresponding side from a different country, often travelled with the seniors to the away games and occasionally took part in other activities habitually performed by their elder colleagues – such as dealing with the media. All these things serve to give the next generation of European footballing talent a real feel for what the future may hold.

Colovray, a familiar destination

Development and gaining experience may be the paramount principles of the UEFA Youth League, but every competition has to have a winner and the first team to have their name engraved on the Lennart Johansson Trophy will do so following a final-four weekend at the Colovray stadium in Nyon, Switzerland. The stadium opposite UEFA's headquarters is a now familiar destination for a denouement, having held the four-team European Women's Under-17 Championship finals from the competition's launch in 2007/08 until 2012/13 (when it became an eight-team tournament). Colovray was also the location for the Youth Olympic qualifiers in October 2013, so the home of FC Stade Nyonnais certainly has pedigree in hosting age-group showpiece events.

Like those aforementioned tournaments, the climax to the UEFA Youth League season will comprise a pair of semi-finals – taking place on 11 April – followed by the final itself three days later. The last four will meet on the same day as the draw for the UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League semi-finals, giving increased exposure to the teams, with plenty of media expected to be in Nyon at the same time.

Cup-tie feel

While the competition started by mirroring the UEFA Champions League group stage, it has taken its own route – and further developed its own identity – since. The knockout draw on 16 December mapped the road to Nyon and with



all the ties being one-game affairs (the teams which finished top in the group stage gained home advantage in the round of 16), a real "cup-tie feel" was apparent at the fixtures after Christmas.

Despite its status as a youth tournament and its primary mission to aid development, the competition has not been without the odd touch of glamour. With big clubs come some heavyweight names: Filippo Inzaghi (AC Milan) and Patrick Vieira (Manchester City FC) are two of the veterans of European club football who are now coaching their respective youth teams. And look a little closer at the team sheets and some familiar names pop out. Devante Cole struck five times in five group stage games to help put Manchester City's name in the hat – a strike rate of which his father, Andrew Cole, would have been proud. City pipped FC Bayern München's U19s to second spot in Group D with Lucas-Julian Scholl, the son of Mehmet, turning out for the Bavarian side.

Now it is time for the final act, as a bit of history will be made in Nyon when we discover the first winners of this new competition. Judging by its first year, the UEFA Youth League may well produce new dynasties and names to join the Coles and Scholls of the football world. ●

Having hosted the European Women's Under-17 Championship final round for several years, the Colovray stadium in Nyon is now looking forward to welcoming the final four in the UEFA Youth League



The Lennart Johansson Trophy

A HEAD START FOR EUROPE'S YOUTH

UEFA has given girl and boy footballers a fantastic opportunity to make progress, through the introduction of UEFA international development tournaments across Europe. The European body has responded to feedback from its member associations by offering young footballing talents an additional chance to play competitive national-team matches in what is an exciting UEFA development project.

Having received the backing of the presidents and general secretaries of the UEFA member associations at their strategy meeting in Limassol, Cyprus, in September 2011, the idea was implemented under the auspices of the UEFA HatTrick assistance programme in spring 2012.



BFS

Development tournaments, for girls as well as boys, are very important for UEFA

An initial pilot phase proved a resounding success, the 2013 programme brought widespread praise from everyone involved – players, coaches and technical observers – and the 2014 schedule is packed with potential. Nine joint boys and girls' Under-16 tournaments are already confirmed until June, as are five separate Under-16 boys' and two separate girls' Under-16 tournaments.

The Under-16 age category was chosen for these specific development tournaments, as UEFA feels that this is a vitally important stage in a player's development pathway to the elite level. The friendly matches and their preparation help facilitate the player development process. The Under-16 development tournaments also prepare the way for players to move into the Under-17 age group, and the start of European youth competition action. ●

Only winners

Everyone wins through the tournaments – open to all 54 UEFA member associations. They represent a real step on the youngsters' learning curves in terms of skills and football knowledge. The players also relish an international environment in which to perform. Coaches are able to test more players and experiment with tactics – knowing that player development, rather than winning, is the ultimate objective.

Referees are given an ideal educational opportunity on their career path when taking charge of the tournament matches, and the associations organising the tournaments pick up experience in staging an event from an operational perspective. Finally, the friendship aspect is equally worthwhile – players meet counterparts from other countries and learn about different cultures and football philosophies.

The international development tournaments were launched to further support and reinforce the importance of youth football. The project provides a wide range of benefits for these young, talented male and female players, teaching them how to play under pressure and within a highly competitive environment. The players can also gauge their skill level alongside their opponents and gain valuable experience on the pitch. The UEFA member associations supporting this development project are providing the best possible platform for the future growth of national team football and elite performance.

At the same time, UEFA has launched another worthwhile venture, in giving young women's Under-17 and Under-18 players additional international experience through specific development tournaments at these age levels.

The tournaments are open to countries which participate in the European Women's Under-17 Championship qualifying round but do not qualify for the elite round. This year will see several such tournaments. Seven women's Under-18 events are already on the schedule between April and August, while the period between May and August will bring five women's Under-17 tournaments. ●

MATCH AGAINST POVERTY



Keystone

The 11th UEFA-backed Match Against Poverty took place on 4 March at the Stade de Suisse in Berne, watched by more than 21,000 fans.

A glittering line-up of world stars gave their time to travel to the Swiss capital to take part in the match to raise funds for victims of the typhoon that devastated the Philippines last November.

The UEFA President, Michel Platini, attended the match and even served as coach of the Zidane, Ronaldo & Friends team alongside Ruud Gullit. His team finished 8-6 winners against Young Boys & Friends, whose line-up included current and former BSC Young Boys' players such as Stéphane Chapuisat and Hakan Yakin. ●

"Coach" Platini with some of his star-studded team (left to right): F. Cannavaro, Ronaldo, Zidane, Hierro, Salgado and Nedvéd

FINLAND, NORWAY AND SWEDEN LEAD FAIR PLAY RACE

On 31 December, Finland were at the top of UEFA's fair play rankings.

Based on all UEFA competition matches played at club and national team level between 1 May 2013 and 30 April 2014, the three best-placed national associations are each rewarded with an additional place in the first qualifying round of the following season's UEFA Europa League.

At the halfway stage, Finland (8.244 points) are ahead of Norway (8.24), Sweden (8.171), France (8.157), England (8.144), the Netherlands (8.106), Denmark (8.069), Estonia (8.048), Scotland (8.047) and the Czech Republic (8.045). ●

A FIRST FOR KAZAKHSTAN

The 38th Ordinary UEFA Congress will be held in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, on 27 March. UEFA's invitation to the Football Federation of Kazakhstan to host its annual general meeting fits in with its commitment to involve all its member associations in its big events. Founded in 1992 following the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Kazakh federation became UEFA's 52nd member at the Congress in Stockholm in 2002.

Three years ago, the Football Federation of Kazakhstan hosted the UEFA Futsal Cup finals in Almaty, whose futsal team, Kairat Almaty, last year became the first Kazakh club to win a European football title when they beat MFK Dinamo of Russia in the 2012/13 UEFA Futsal Cup final.

Although there will be no elections at this year's UEFA Congress, the national association delegates will be voting on several amendments to the UEFA Statutes proposed by the UEFA Executive Committee. The agenda will also include the usual statutory items, such as annual reports and financial matters. Above all, however, the Congress remains an excellent opportunity for Europe's football leaders to strengthen their ties and to discuss current topics. ●

MEDICAL EXPERTS IN MADRID

The importance and evolution of medicine in football was highlighted at the sixth UEFA Medical Symposium, which took place in Madrid from 5 to 7 February.

The event, held in the Spanish capital, and organised in cooperation with the Royal Spanish Football Federation (RFEF), brought together medical experts from UEFA's 54 member associations and some of Europe's top clubs for three days of fascinating presentations and discussions on issues ranging from developments in tackling anti-doping to treating injuries, rehabilitation and nutrition.

"I think it is good to bring to the attention of the whole football family to the fact that football medicine has become more and more important," said the chairman of the UEFA Medical Committee, Dr Michel D'Hooghe. *"This symposium every four years is a highlight of the medical calendar for UEFA. It is an occasion for the doctors to meet, to exchange knowledge and experience."*

Huge changes

The theme of the symposium was evolution, and some of Europe's top national team and club doctors have noticed dramatic changes in football medicine over the years of their involvement in the game.

"It has changed a lot," said FC Barcelona doctor Ricard Pruna. *"I started with Louis van Gaal in 1997, and back then we only had two stretchers,*

The round-table participants (left to right): Sergio Ramos, David Villa, Vicente Del Bosque, Dr Helena Herrero, Graham Hunter, Victor Fernández, Dr Alan Byrne and Dr Juan Costa

one masseur and physiotherapist, and only one doctor. We only had a small first aid kit, with everything in it. Today at the club, we have two facilities where we have ultrasound, muscle specialists, cardiologists, densitometry to check bone composition and specialists in all those medical fields. As we have seen here at this forum, things have been evolving exponentially in the last 15 or 16 years. It's spectacular, and I think there is still a lot to come."

Underlining the relevance of medical matters, Spanish internationals David Villa and Sergio Ramos and coach Vicente Del Bosque were involved in a special round-table discussion. Villa, who himself suffered a serious injury that kept him out of the game for eight months in November 2011, said: *"It is a very important role at the club."*

"Doctors don't only deal with injuries, but also prevention, so the role is key. There's been a huge change, particularly in helping clubs get more medical resources, more attention for players. You used to see them one day a week, now there's constant contact. You might see them more than your coach!"

Del Bosque added: *"Doctors in football have a really specialist task now. The doctor who works with us (for Spain) is in constant contact and*



keeps us up to date with all players on a daily basis. It didn't used to be like that."

The importance of medicine in football was echoed by the RFEF president, Ángel María Villar Llona, as he paid tribute to former Spanish national team coach Luis Aragonés, who died in February: "Luis Aragonés was extremely interested in the medical aspects within football. He was a coach who knew how important it was to have the experience of doctors in football, and how important it was to results."

The success of the elite club injury study

The symposium also aimed to promote some of the programmes that UEFA has developed to enhance medical knowledge and care in recent years, such as the UEFA football doctor education programme, minimum medical requirements for UEFA competitions and the elite club injury study.

Now in its 13th year, the injury study has proved a huge success, with many UEFA Champions League clubs now benefiting from the large database of information that has been collated to find common trends in top-level football injuries.

Barcelona doctor Pruna has found the study particularly useful: "You can compare yourselves with other clubs in terms of muscle injuries, tendinitis injuries, heavy or light injuries, ligament injuries, player availability. So we use those statistics to educate the players, and talk to the coaches to draw conclusions and improve for the following season. We know today that if we go past a certain number of injuries, we won't win the Champions League; it's impossible. That's a fact."

Vice-chairman of the UEFA Medical Committee, Professor Jan Ekstrand, who has led the study since it began in 2001, added: "We have 18,000 injuries in the database and we are following 1.2 million training sessions and matches. We have a huge amount of material, the largest in the world."

"The biggest benefit for us is to have contacts with all these clubs and the possibility to discuss matters with colleagues working 24/7 on the field, sharing all their experience of how to protect the players."

Recovery time

The study has helped clubs to assess recovery times from injuries, and the question of when is the right time for an injured player to return to the pitch was another of the main subjects discussed in Madrid.

The English Football Association's Dr Ian Beasley offered a presentation on rehabilitation, while the issue was also debated in a round-table discussion chaired by Professor Ekstrand. The overall consensus was that the player's welfare should always come first.

"If there is a possibility of long-lasting injury or maybe even something that's left for the player after his career, then there's no way we would let him play, and usually the coaches follow our advice," said Dr Tim Meyer from the German Football Association.



The discussions and presentations during the symposium confirmed the growing importance of football medicine

On-pitch emergencies are a topic that has received heightened attention in recent years in the light of a number of high-profile cases of players collapsing during football matches. The tragic cases of the deaths of players such as Antonio Puerta and Piermario Morosini were remembered as part of an impactful session by UEFA Medical Committee vice-chairman Professor Stewart Hillis.

Minimum medical requirements

UEFA's minimum medical requirements aim to prevent such tragedies, with clubs and national associations having to ensure that certain pitch-side medical equipment and medical staff are present at UEFA matches. In addition, emergency treatment was also the focus of the first UEFA football doctor education workshop in February 2012.

This was another example of how medical care is evolving, and with giant strides also being made in other areas such as the fight against doping, as well as injury diagnosis and treatment, it would appear that the future of our footballers is in good hands.

"I don't know where we will stand in ten years," said Dr D'Hooghe, "but what I do know is that there has been an enormous progression over the years, thanks to the collaboration of many people in the field of football and in the field of football medicine." ●

BETTER ACCESS FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

Imagine being a disabled football fan and being unable – or at least, finding it extremely difficult – to go to watch the game you love. This important issue is being addressed by UEFA in tandem with its associated partner CAFE (Centre for Access to Football in Europe).

CAFE, a registered charity based in the United Kingdom and proactive across Europe, has clear objectives: promoting equal access to all European football stadiums and their clubs; acting as accessible stadium advisers and sharing good practice; increasing disability and access awareness using football's influence; establishing a European network of local and national disabled football supporter groups; and enabling more disabled people to follow and get involved in football at all levels.

Joyce Cook, CAFE's managing director, is a disabled football fan: *"I've watched matches where you could only see the players from the knees upwards, or only a third of the pitch, or you could actually see nothing,"* she says. Joyce asked UEFA for support, and UEFA responded – awarding CAFE its CHF 1m Monaco charity cheque in 2009, and appointing CAFE as the official UEFA EURO 2012 charity, donating €3,000 for every goal at the final round.

Greater awareness

The result is greater awareness of the needs of disabled fans. *"Because UEFA cares about this subject, people take note,"* says Joyce. *"Clubs give us respect. And UEFA and CAFE have created a joint good practice document. It is already being*

recognised around the world as a real best practice standard."

CAFE uses UEFA's help wisely, lobbying clubs to improve or develop access and facilities for disabled fans. *"Our job is to advise the clubs that with better access for disabled people, they will be a more inclusive club,"* Joyce reflects. *"Football has a magic that changes things where other platforms don't. The message is powerful. We also want to use this in terms of disability awareness to really help the impact on wider society."*

The legacy of UEFA EURO 2012 is strong, with disabled fans going weekly to matches in the co-host countries of Poland and Ukraine, and a growing number of disabled supporter associations attached to their clubs in these countries. CAFE worked with UEFA and EURO 2012 host cities, giving advice on how to improve facilities and services.

Alexandr Sidelnikov is a Ukrainian fan who set up a disabled supporters' group at his club, PFC Sevastopol, and assisted it in making access improvements with CAFE's help. *"The club does everything possible to help disabled people,"* he says, *"and that is not just disabled people who use wheelchairs."*

"There is a specially designated zone in the stands with sufficient space for everyone to make themselves comfortable with their friends and those who accompany us. In addition, for more than two years now, PFC Sevastopol has been helping us with transport... CAFE is doing very useful work helping everyone to understand the needs of disabled people." Alexandre and his group provide a superb example. *"We really want to see disabled people locally becoming active, speaking for themselves, empowered with a voice to really effect change at their own levels,"* adds Joyce Cook.

Progress takes time, but optimism is in good supply. *"I'd like to see, within the next five years, disability access officers at every club in Europe, and disabled fans going to matches at every club,"* Joyce Cook reflects. *"If we reach the point where each club has engaged with this subject, then we will have made real progress..."* ●

At the 2012 UEFA Women's Champions League final in Munich, disabled spectators enjoyed special facilities



Sportfile

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING SIGNED BETWEEN CAF AND UEFA

UEFA and its sister governing body in Africa, CAF, have signed a memorandum of understanding in Cairo which provides for strengthened relations and mutual cooperation.

The relationship between European and African football has taken a significant step forward with the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between UEFA and its sister governing body in Africa, the Confédération Africaine de Football (CAF).

The UEFA President, Michel Platini, and the President of CAF, Issa Hayatou, signed the memorandum at a ceremony at CAF's headquarters in Cairo, Egypt, on 20 February. The two presidents were accompanied by UEFA's General Secretary, Gianni Infantino, and Hicham El Amrani, Secretary General of CAF. Members of the CAF Executive Committee were also in attendance.

Valid until 31 July 2016 and open for renewal, the MoU provides for mutual cooperation between the two continental confederations with regard to the development of football in Africa and Europe. Objectives set out are the strengthening of collaboration between the two confederations and the establishment of a framework for exchange and dialogue.

This will be achieved through the sharing of information and experience, as well as joint technical development programmes in various fields such as coaching, refereeing, youth football, women's football, competition organisation, administration, marketing, media and social responsibilities.



CAF

"UEFA is very happy to partner CAF to exchange knowledge and share ideas to develop the game," said Michel Platini. "This initiative is the result of a collective decision by the 54 national associations of UEFA, since CAF is a major stakeholder in global football."

"This agreement will benefit the national associations affiliated to CAF and build their capacities in various sectors of football development," said Issa Hayatou. "CAF will be acting as an intermediary between UEFA and the national associations to ensure they get the expected benefits."

UEFA has signed memorandums with other confederations in recent times, as European football's governing body aims to strengthen its relationships within the football family. ●

The representatives of the CAF and UEFA in Cairo on 20 February to sign the MoU

JOHAN CRUYFF RECEIVES THE UEFA PRESIDENT'S AWARD

On 16 February, Michel Platini travelled to Amsterdam to present the 2013 UEFA President's Award to Johan Cruyff, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to European football. As a player, Johan Cruyff won an impressive collection of trophies and distinctions, including three successive European Champion Clubs' Cup successes with his first club, AFC Ajax, between 1971 and 1973. A symbol of the "total football" advocated by coach Rinus Michels in the 1970s, Johan Cruyff scored 392 goals in 704 club matches. He also netted 33 times in 48 appearances for the Dutch national team.

After hanging up his boots in 1984, he began a coaching career during which he added to his collection of European titles. He won the European Cup Winners' Cup with AFC Ajax in 1987 and with FC Barcelona in 1989, before lifting the European Champion Clubs' Cup with the Spanish team in 1992.

For several years, Johan Cruyff has been supporting disabled children and young people



On 16 February, in Amsterdam, Michel Platini presented the UEFA President's Award to Johan Cruyff. They are pictured with Edwin van der Sar (left), Michael van Praag and Michael Kinsbergen (far right).

through the foundation that he set up in 1997, which aims to help them improve their health, quality of life and social integration by playing football together.

Under Michel Platini, the UEFA President's Award has gone to Alfredo Di Stefano (2007), Bobby Charlton (2008), Eusébio (2009), Raymond Kopa (2010), Gianni Rivera (2011) and Franz Beckenbauer (2012). ●

MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS



Bakcell Under-14 Elite Cup

One of the priorities of the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA) is the development of youth football. Since 2008, the country has had organised leagues at youth level, providing an opportunity for children to play football on a regular basis.

Today, Azerbaijan has boys' leagues at Under-11, Under-12, Under-13, Under-14, Under-15, Under-16, Under-17 and Under-19 level, as well as girls' leagues at Under-13, Under-16 and Under-19 level. The boys' Under-12, Under-13 and Under-17 leagues are sponsored by Athena, Coca-Cola and Bakcell respectively, while the girls' Under-16 league is sponsored by UNICEF. As you can see, prestigious companies operating in the

country are interested in helping the AFFA to organise competitions.

Bakcell, a leading provider of mobile internet, is particularly active in this area. As part of the cooperation between Bakcell and the AFFA, a youth tournament – the Bakcell Under-14 Elite Cup – was staged in Baku from 27 January to 17 February.

This was organised to help teams to make good use of the break between the first and second rounds of the Under-14 league and to gain experience of tournament football.



AFFA

The young Neftchi players pose proudly with their trophy

More than 3,000 fans attended the final, which was contested by Neftchi and Inter on 17 February at Bayil Stadium. Neftchi came out on top, winning the final 2-0. After the match, both finalists and the third-placed team were presented with trophies by Bakcell and the AFFA.

• Narmina Zulfugarova



2014 development tournament

At the end of January, the Football Federation of Belarus (BFF), with the support of the Development Bank of the Republic of Belarus and the Minsk state executive



The 10th Development Cup was a great success

committee, organised its annual international Under-18 tournament in the Belarusian capital. The tournament was first staged in 2005, and teams from 18 different countries have come to Belarus to compete in it over the last ten years.

At the opening ceremony, the president of the BFF, Sergei Roumas, and his counterparts from the Russian Football Union, Nikolai Tolstykh, and the Georgian Football Federation, Domenti Sichinava, all stressed the importance of such tournaments for the development of young players and wished the participating teams luck. In addition, the UEFA President, Michel Platini, addressed those talented young players via a video link.

This tenth edition of the tournament was contested by a record 12 teams. The teams were divided into four groups of three,

where they battled for a place in the quarter-finals. The hosts were joined by teams from Russia, Ukraine, Finland, Iran, Latvia, Lithuania, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Moldova. Russia claimed the title for the third time, beating the hosts 6-1 in the final, with Hertha BSC Berlin forward Maximilian Pronichev scoring two goals. Pronichev was the tournament's top scorer, with seven goals in five games. Unfortunately, the Belarusian team did not have the physical or mental strength needed to overcome the Russians after an extremely tough semi-final against Ukraine (who went on to beat Lithuania in the third-place play-off).

After another well-organised event, the BFF is looking forward to welcoming new participants in 2015!

• Alexander Aleinik



Dragons satisfied with draw in Nice

Never before has the Bosnia and Herzegovina Football Federation (NFSBiH) had such a busy start to the year. In addition to preparations for this year's FIFA World Cup in Brazil, representatives of the NFSBiH also attended the draw for the qualifying stage of the forthcoming European Football Championship.

An NFSBiH delegation visited Florianopolis in Brazil from 18 to 20 February, attending a FIFA seminar and visiting the training centre at Casa Grande Guaruja. Head coach Safet Sušić was satisfied with the facilities at the hotel, where his team will arrive for a training camp on 6 June. The team will begin their preparations on 15 May in Sarajevo, and then on 28 May they will travel to the United States, where they will stay until 6 June, playing two friendly matches.

After Brazil, the NFSBiH delegation travelled to Nice to attend the UEFA EURO 2016 qualifying draw. Even before the draw, Safet Sušić, the players and the fans were all very happy, as Bosnia and Herzegovina were among the top seeds in pot one. This is great recognition for the Dragons, who will face Belgium, Israel, Wales, Cyprus and Andorra in Group B. Safet Sušić and the other representatives of the NFSBiH were all satisfied with the draw, and if the team play as well as they can, they can qualify directly for EURO 2016.

As in previous years, a winter camp was recently organised for the national women's youth and senior teams. The camp was held in the southern town of Ciluk on account of



NFSBiH

The Under-15 national team

the more favourable weather conditions in that part of the country. The women's Under-17s, Under-19s and seniors took part in training sessions, before playing a friendly match in Ciluk.

The men's Under-15s, Under-17s and Under-19s also came together, and they too played a friendly match. In addition, the young players were visited by Ivica Osim, the chairman of the NFSBiH's mediation committee.

• Fuad Kravac

Borislav Mihaylov re-elected

Borislav Mihaylov – Bulgaria's goalkeeper during their successful FIFA World Cup campaign in 1994 – has again been re-elected president of the Bulgarian Football Union (BFS). This will be the 51-year-old's third term in office.

With 461 of the 493 delegates voting for him, the BFS general assembly gave Mihaylov a massive vote of confidence and the green light to continue his work developing Bulgarian football.

"Wow, I am impressed! Your vote is a ringing endorsement of the work that has been done over the last eight years. Together, we have been through many trials and challenges, because football is a social phenomenon and, for better or for worse, it has been affected by the global economic turmoil. We have done a good job in this difficult situation, thanks to our fruitful cooperation with FIFA and UEFA. When I look at all of you, I strongly believe that Bulgarian football has a bright future ahead of it," said Mihaylov on being re-elected.



The BFS has re-elected Borislav Mihaylov as its president

Among the top priorities in the BFS's strategic plan for the period 2014-18, which was presented to the delegates, were the hosting of the final round of the European Under-17 Championship in 2015, the bid to host UEFA EURO 2020 matches, and the continued promotion and development of football within the country. Emphasis was placed on grassroots football, in line with the fifth of UEFA's key values. *"Through the UEFA Grassroots Charter, which the BFS signed in January 2013, we have established 'Football in School' programmes in all of Bulgaria's major cities. Our aim is now to go one step forward, turning this into a national project,"* Mihaylov said. Improving all communication with clubs in order to help them promote prospective sports infrastructure projects and obtain financing from local authorities and government was the other main focal point in the BFS's strategic plan.

Finally, the general assembly appealed to the Bulgarian government, calling for further strong support for football and asking that football be made compulsory in schools.

● Pavel Kolev



The doctors and medical staff who attended the symposium

HNS

Training for medical and marketing staff

The Croatian Football Federation (HNS) recently organised a medical symposium for team doctors at first and second division clubs and the medical staff of all national teams.

Emergency situations were the main topic addressed at the symposium, with lectures on topics ranging from the organisation of medical staff at clubs and coordination between clubs and the HNS to the management of cardiac arrests, injuries to the cervical spine, and head, thorax and abdomen injuries.

The symposium also involved written and practical examinations, after which all doctors were presented with medical equipment (emergency bags and defibrillators), provided in cooperation with UEFA, who supported this symposium.

"Football is developing really fast, with the intensity of matches and training increasing,

which makes the doctor's role even more important. Our task is to select a good team and organise it well. We need to learn and educate ourselves continuously in order to provide the best possible care for players," said Dr Boris Nemeć, the head of the HNS's medical committee.

The HNS also hosted two marketing workshops as part of UEFA's support for national associations ahead of the European Qualifiers. At the workshop on football relationship management (FRM), HNS staff learned more about FRM, looking at how it can transform the HNS's business and how to implement it, including the establishment of a roadmap for success with clear objectives.

Meanwhile, the workshop on digital marketing strategy focused on the HNS's digital opportunities. Digital marketing expert Richard Ayers analysed the current situation at the HNS and suggested various ways of creating a practical and progressive digital marketing strategy.

● Tomislav Pacak

Eight new mini-pitches

Since 2005, the grassroots department of the Football Association of the Czech Republic (FAČR) has been helping clubs in the Czech Republic to build mini-pitches for local children. Eight mini-pitches were built in 2013: five in villages and small towns (Plesná, Plzeňec, Malá Hrástice, Roudnice and Vetrov) and three in the capital, Prague (Ařitma, Dáblíček and SK Praha). The financing of these mini-pitches is shared: the clubs have to pay for all of the infrastructure around the mini-pitch, while the FAČR pays to have the artificial surface installed. All mini-pitches can be used

free of charge by the public (e.g. nursery, primary and secondary schools). Anyone can play football there. Mini-pitches are often also used on UEFA Grassroots Day in May, when youth tournaments and games are organised.

● Michal Blažej



Mini-pitches
in the Czech Republic

Member associations



England
www.thefa.com

Competitive as ever

The English FA is readying itself for the business end of the 2013/14 FA Cup season, with the semi-finals taking place in April and the final at Wembley on 17 May.

While The FA Cup is famous across the globe for the third round weekend in January, the competition actually begins in August with 737 entries from across the English non-league and professional game.

The FA Cup sees household names like Chelsea, Manchester United and Arsenal enter at the third round stage but it begins with clubs such as Chesham United, Maldon & Tiptree and Alton Town all dreaming of a lucrative tie against Premier League opposition and trying to progress in a competition that has a total prize fund of over £25m.



500,000 fans attending third round ties back in January – the most since 1980.

Next season The FA Cup will be shown on TV in the UK by both the BBC and BT Sport.

• Matt Phillips

Wigan Athletic caused an upset when they beat Manchester City in last year's FA Cup final



A kids' stand at the Stade de France

For France's last match against the Netherlands at the Stade de France on 5 March, the French Football Federation (FFF) introduced a "kids' stand", an exciting new scheme for its youngest supporters.

Sold at very reasonable prices, tickets for the kids' stand come with a special reception at the stadium and guarantee the youngsters



The French are focusing on the next generation of supporters

will be seated close to the pitch and the players, giving them an exceptional match-day experience in the best possible conditions. The following activities are also included to keep everyone entertained before and during the match:

- Shooting practice: under the supervision of dedicated staff, the children can test their shooting skills in the build-up to the match.
- Arts and crafts workshop: the children are also given an opportunity to draw, colour or write a message of encouragement on a giant banner for the team.
- The "history wall": the FFF has a duty to educate young people and believes that learning the history of the French national team will make them true supporters.
- "Allez les Bleus" activities in the stand: all the staff involved in the children's reception and pre-match activities accompany them in the stand during the match, encouraging them to support their team, for example by singing the French national anthem.

Already, over 400 people – parents and children – have benefited from the kids' stand project and enjoyed this exclusive, designated area.

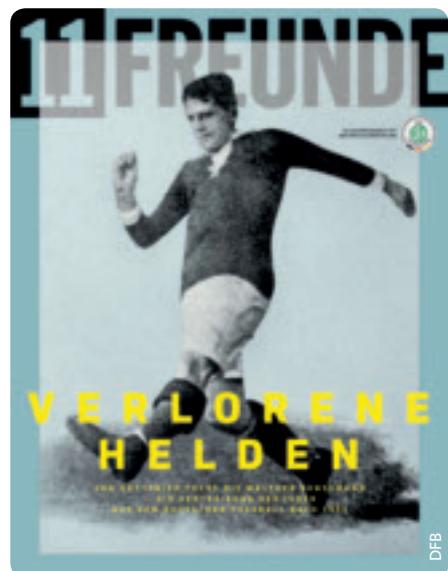
• Jean-Baptiste Schmidt



DFB Cultural Foundation and 11FREUNDE remember Jews in German football

The terrible loss suffered when Jews were driven out of sport in Germany was more or less overlooked for decades. Fortunately, over the past 15 years, some committed researchers and fan initiatives have been working to change this situation. The football magazine 11FREUNDE and the German Football Association's Cultural Foundation have been devoting attention to people whose names are little known, but whose contributions to the development of football in Germany deserve recognition.

The publication "Verlorene Helden" (Lost Heroes) comprises 192 biographies that exemplify not only the achievements of Jews in German football, but also the crimes that were committed against them after 1933 – deprivation of rights, expropriation, expulsion and murder. Professor Lorenz Peiffer and Henry Wahlig, sports historians from the University of Hanover, have collated these biographies from their own research, thanks to the groundwork and support of many others.



This publication will be sent to all German clubs

"The project had our full support from the very outset," said the DFB president, Wolfgang Niersbach. "I find it incredible how many Jewish players, coaches and officials helped to build and develop German football, before being expelled or murdered. It is important that we remember them. For this reason, we will be sending the brochure to all 25,000 clubs with the next DFB newsletter."

The "Verlorene Helden" special supplement was published on 20 February and can be downloaded at www.dfb.de.

• Thomas Hackbarth

Say "no" to match-fixing

Following the example set by UEFA and FIFA, the Malta Football Association (MFA) is playing a very active role in the global campaign against match-fixing. The MFA's integrity officer and his team work tirelessly to raise awareness of this issue, which is being tackled very effectively in Malta.

"Integrity tours" are being organised, whereby meetings are held with the MFA's member clubs with a view to stamping out such corrupt practices. Ways of communicating the details of such measures to Malta's football family have also been proposed.

An awareness-raising event was organised a few weeks ago at the Ta' Qali National

Stadium prior to two Maltese Premier League matches. All four teams' players and the various match officials came out onto the pitch together wearing T-shirts bearing the slogan "Say 'no' to match-fixing". Banners with the same message were carried by ballboys.

The series of integrity tours should reach a broad crosssection of Malta's football clubs and fans. The initiative will eventually be expanded to cover all the clubs in the country, starting with those in the top two divisions.

Besides the integrity officer and his team, other MFA officials are assisting with this awareness-raising initiative.

As a result of this intensive campaign, the Maltese people – particularly the younger



D. Aquilina

Players and referees wear "Say 'no' to match-fixing" T-shirts for the match between Valletta and Birkirkara

generation – will increasingly realise that the game should be guided by the principles of honesty and integrity, making it impossible for dishonest individuals or groups to indulge in match-fixing and other corrupt practices.

● Alex Vella

Charity work

As part of its ongoing charity work, the Football Association of Moldova (FMF) recently distributed presents at a Moldovan orphanage.

For the eighth year in a row, representatives of the FMF made a surprise visit to lift the spirits of children at the Concordia orphanage in Pirita in the Dubasari region. A total of 300 children between the ages of 1 and 16 gathered in the sports hall to receive gifts from the president of the FMF, Pavel Cebanu, who was accompanied by Moldovan internationals Alexandru Dedov (FC Zimbru Chişinău), Viorel Frunză



A wonderful surprise for the children at Pirita orphanage

FMF

(FC Veris Chişinău) and Alexandru Suvorov (FC Mordovia in Russia).

The children were given footballs, books and magazines. After the presents had been

handed out, the children were also given an opportunity to collect autographs, sing songs and dance with their famous guests.

● Press office

Club Mark scheme

Ballymena's Northend United Youth FC has become the first football club to gain accreditation under the new Irish Football Association (IFA) Club Mark scheme.

The IFA launched its Football for All (FFA) Club Excellence Mark in October, and since then over 80 clubs have registered their interest. This is a football-specific accreditation scheme which clubs can embark on to

try to improve the way they are run. The FFA Club Excellence Mark is a strand of the IFA's club and volunteer capacity building programme, which forms part of a Sport in the Community programme, a partnership with Ulster Rugby and Ulster GAA with support from the department for social development.

Northend United Youth FC is a community-oriented club that has demonstrated a commitment to best practice in the running of its football club. The Club Mark scheme is a tool that can help clubs like this to develop and ensure that they are run in the right way. The focus is on club

governance, the duty of care, coaches' development and community outreach. In achieving the one-star level, Northend United Youth FC has shown dedication to best practice in all of these areas.

The IFA's community relations manager, Claire Adams, said: "*This is a great achievement by the club, and the hope is that all football clubs can aspire to Club Mark accreditation, so that club football in Northern Ireland has a healthy and successful future.*"

The chairman of Northend United Youth FC, Johnny Sayers, said: "We are delighted and proud to be the first club in Northern Ireland to achieve the IFA Club Mark. This is recognition of the great work of all volunteers at the club since it was set up ten years ago. We hope this award will spur us on to bigger and better things."

This programme has been made possible by the generous support provided by the Northern Ireland executive through the department of culture, arts and leisure's Promoting Equality, Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion through Sport programme.

● Sueann Harrison



Players, volunteers and officials from Northend United Youth FC receive the IFA Club Mark together

Member associations



Senior team manager meets UEFA Pro course candidates

Republic of Ireland manager Martin O'Neill recently met the 17 candidates who will participate in the forthcoming UEFA Pro diploma course organised by the Football Association of Ireland (FAI). O'Neill was appointed national team manager in November and has vast experience in the game from his time at Sunderland, Aston Villa, Celtic, Leicester City, Norwich City and Wycombe Wanderers.

This will be the fourth group of coaches to go through the UEFA Pro system with the FAI's coach education department. Under UEFA regulations, the FAI can only run a Pro diploma course every two years. The confirmed candidates are: Stuart Ashton,

John Caulfield, Dave Connell, Jason Donohue, Eileen Gleeson, Tommy Griffin, Niall Harrison, Owen Heary, Ollie Horgan, Robbie Horgan, Peter Hutton, Tom Mohan, Mick Neville, Colin O'Brien, Don O'Riordan, Sue Ronan and Leo Tierney.

Greig Paterson, the FAI's coach education manager, said: "Having received an abundance of applications for the next edition of our Pro diploma course, we then entered a very robust selection process, and we are delighted with the final shortlist of candidates.

"The FAI have already produced 49 UEFA Pro diploma holders through their courses, and this next course will see a further 17 participants hone and develop their skills in several different disciplines, from the coaching field to the boardroom, and from psychology to sports science. This year we



A new UEFA Pro diploma course

will also welcome our first ever female participants: Sue Ronan, senior women's team manager, and Peamount United FC's head coach, Eileen Gleeson.

"The course will be led by our high-performance director, Ruud Dokter, and the Under-21 manager, Noel King."

Meanwhile, Irish football's domestic season commences in March. Now known as the SSE Airtricity League, the championship will run until the autumn. Saint Patrick's Athletic clinched the title last season, and made a major signing coup in pre-season with international midfielder Keith Fahey returning to the club after a five-year stint in England.

• Stephen Finn



Sochi to host Kuban Spring tournament

From 20 to 30 March, the host city of the 2014 Winter Olympics, Sochi, will be the venue for this year's international Kuban Spring tournament, in which 12 women's Under-19 teams are taking part.

The draw for the group stage was made at the House of Football in Moscow. Israel, Romania and Azerbaijan will be Russia's opponents in Group B, while Group A comprises Iran, Estonia, Slovakia and Ukraine, and Group C is made up of Turkey, the United States, Hungary and the Krasnodar region.



Representatives of the 12 teams taking part in this year's Kuban Spring tournament

The group matches will be played on 20, 22 and 24 March, the quarter-finals and the semi-finals will take place on 26 and 28 March respectively, and the third-place play-off and the final will be played on 30 March.

The group winners and runners-up and the two best third-placed teams will all

proceed to the quarter-finals. The teams that do not qualify for the knockout stage will take part in a complementary round, with matches taking place on 25, 27 and 29 March.

Matches will be played at the Sputnik sports development centre, which is used by Russia's national teams. The opening ceremony will take place on 20 March.

• Irina Baranova



Development, education and coaching project

The San Marino Football Federation (FSGC) launched its development, education and coaching project with a first event on the pitches of Dogana and Montecchio in September last year.

The project is the natural extension of a technical development programme launched two years previously, through which an FSGC coach worked with club coaches on Under-12 training sessions. Instead of just Under-12s, the new project incorporates all Under-8, Under-10 and Under-12 teams.

The initial proposals requested by the FIGC's head of youth development, Alessandro Giaquinto, were studied and approved by the members of the FSGC board, heads of coaching at the clubs, and the training and research department. Over the summer we then set about fleshing out a programme that would meet the real coaching needs of young players, as well as getting coaches on board who could apply the holistic approach needed.

The four-year project is based on 11 key principles. First among these is the education of young footballers, taking into account all topical, practical and balanced ideas applied in training sessions; sessions in which well-being, harmony, pleasure, fun and emotional fulfilment are all essential features. All of the initiatives put in place focus on quality, the overall aim being the pursuit of excellence.

The cornerstones of the project include dynamic, personalised syllabuses and timetables; periodic "hands on" sessions; benchmarking and evaluation to measure improvement; testing and fine-tuning along the way; constant consultation; and collaboration between the FSGC and club coaches.



A new development programme for children's football

Undoubtedly the most important principle is that every child should be given the same opportunities to progress. This means that every coaching session must be tailored to suit each individual's character, ability and capacity to learn. The aim is to provide young players with realistic goals, thereby enabling each to achieve positive growth.

The project team comprises youth development coordinator Emilio Cecchini; core skills coach Carlo Chiarabini; technical staff Lorenzo Magi and Firmino Pederiva; programme coordinators Omar Zanotti and Luigi Di Spirito; and goalkeeping coach Pietro Martini.

From the national association through its administrative and financial support, to the staff of the coaching and research department who are running and evaluating the project; from the clubs through their coaches, management and volunteers to the children's families who themselves play an active role – all involved must embrace the same shared objective: to work together with respect and passion and to nurture our children together.

• Elisa Felici

Ján Kováčik re-elected as president

Ján Kováčik has been unanimously re-elected as president of the Slovak Football Association (SFZ), with all 84 delegates voting for the 51-year-old to take on a second term in office. Delegates also elected members of the SFZ's executive committee and other officials.

Ján Kováčik described his previous term in office, stressing that the organisation was making great progress and implementing significant changes. One of the achievements that he referred to was the successful organisation of the final round of the European Under-17 Championship and the sporting

success of the national team at the FIFA U17 World Cup in the United Arab Emirates. The SFZ had also received a number of professional awards, such as the Štefan Mašlonka Award (for its media services) and the ITAPA Award (for its IT system), showing the extent

to which Slovakia's largest sports association had improved its performance and image.

Ján Kováčik explained that the main priority for his second term in office was the completion of an ambitious reconstruction, modernisation and building programme spanning 21 football stadiums across Slovakia. Another important goal was achieving sporting success with the senior national team, which should have the best facilities possible.

The congress in Poprad – held in the immediate vicinity of the new national training centre – was visited by Eva Pasquier from FIFA and Karen Espelund from UEFA. For the first time ever it was also broadcast on the internet.

● Juraj Čurný



Ján Kováčik after his re-election

Mikael Santoft to step down

The 63-year-old general secretary of the Swedish Football Association (SvFF), Mikael Santoft, has signalled his intention to take early retirement this autumn.

"I've been thinking about this for some time, and the time is now right. We have no major championships in 2014, and I have just finished a reorganisation at the SvFF. I've given the board early notice of my retirement to give them plenty of time to recruit my successor. There's nothing dramatic about this, but it is an intense job, which I've had since 2009, and I want to retire while I'm still healthy," Santoft said.

Karl-Erik Nilsson, the president of the SvFF, expressed regret at Santoft's decision: *"The SvFF will lose an important man, who has done a fantastic job for us. We're grateful for the early warning, but I do regret his decision."*



The general secretary of the Swedish FA, Mikael Santoft, is stepping down

In other news, Sweden will be represented by both a men's and a women's team at the Homeless World Cup in Chile this October. The club Gatans Lag, which will organise the Swedish teams, is a member of the SvFF and will be given support as part of the SvFF's commitment to corporate social

responsibility projects. Pia Sundhage and Henrik Larsson are both proud ambassadors of Gatans Lag.

"I can see the joy and the glow in the eyes of the homeless who play the world's greatest game: football. Of course I support Gatans Lag," Pia Sundhage said.

● Andreas Nilsson

Emmen football academy to close at the end of 2014/15

In 2005, the Swiss Football Association (SFV-ASF) moved the Credit Suisse Football Academy from Frauenfeld to Emmen. At the end of the 2014/15 season, the Emmen municipal authority and the SFV-ASF will be able to look back on a successful decade of cooperation.

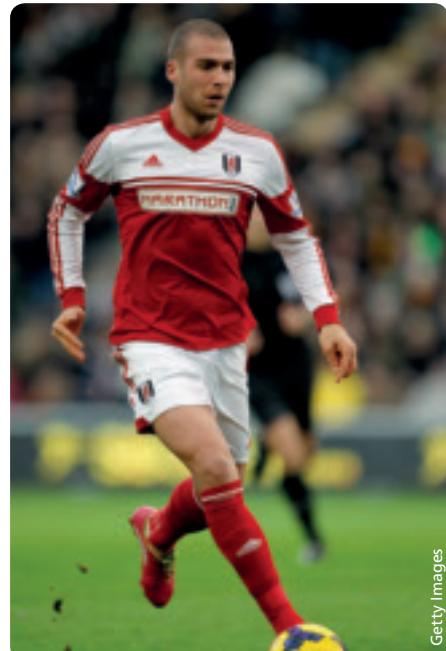
Since 2005, 18 talented young footballers from each academic year group have attended midweek training at the Emmen sports ground for two years, while continuing their studies at the local school. The players stay with host families in Emmen, have lunch and dinner together at the restaurant and do their homework under supervision. The SFV-ASF academy in Emmen has proved successful and made a huge contribution to the development of many talented young players.

In light of developments in the training of young footballers, however, the SFV-ASF academy in Emmen will close after ten years at the end of the 2014/15 academic year. The requirements of looking after and developing talented young footballers, and the set-up required, have changed significantly over the past ten years. The approach taken by the SFV-ASF has proved itself but the Super League clubs have now opened their own professional youth academies. Even the best young players now train with Super League clubs and the opportunities to combine football with school have been vastly improved. Thanks to the progress made by Switzerland's top clubs in terms of youth development, it is no longer necessary for the SFV-ASF to take the lead in this way.

Hence the decision to close the academy in Emmen at the end of the 2014/15 season.

Those in Emmen can look back with pride at players such as Pajtim Kasami (U17 world champion, Fulham FC), Haris Seferovic (U17 world champion, Real Sociedad de Fútbol) and Philipp Koch (FC Zürich), all of whom successfully made the jump from the Emmen academy into the professional game and the Swiss national team.

● Pierre Benoit



Pajtim Kasami trained in Emmen before becoming U17 world champion and joining Fulham FC

Getty Images

Member associations



Construction of new facilities for national teams

In a few months' time, the modern new facilities that the Turkish Football Federation (TFF) is building for its national teams will be completed.

The facilities are named after a former president of the TFF, Hasan Doğan, who died in July 2008 while he was still in office. The Hasan Doğan national team camp and education facilities, which are situated in Riva, Istanbul, are due to be completed this summer. The foundations were laid only last spring, on 9 April 2013.

All of Turkey's men's and women's national teams will use the facilities and have their training sessions there, and all educational seminars involving the TFF's partners will also be held there.

The president of the TFF, Yıldırım Demirören, and the head coach of the men's national team, Fatih Terim, believe that the Hasan

Doğan National Team Camp and Education Facilities will be unique in Turkish football and will be the envy of other countries.

Hasan Doğan national team camp and education facilities – facts and figures

Training facilities

Size of entire site: 190,000 m²
Five training pitches – four with natural turf (one with a stand) and one with artificial turf; training pitch for goalkeepers; beach soccer pitch; two basketball/volleyball courts; tennis court; futsal complex; mini golf course; running and cycling tracks

Building

Size of building: 18,000 m²
Size of accommodation block: 8,000 m²
85 standard double rooms (12 for disabled people); two suites; restaurant with capacity



A mock-up of the facilities planned for the Turkish national teams

of 150; lounge with bar (110 m²); seminar room; three meeting rooms; conference room with capacity of 350; health centre; swimming pool; three therapy pools; two training pools; fitness centre; two saunas; three massage rooms; six dressing rooms; physiotherapy room; two doctors' rooms; office for national team/football development directorate (2,300 m²); main lobby/reception; mini-amphitheatre; centre for technical staff.

● Aydin Güvenir



Under-21s win 2014 Commonwealth Cup

Ukraine's Under-21s overcame Russia to win the 2014 Commonwealth Cup. Serhiy Kovalets' team lifted their first trophy, having scored four goals without any reply from their opponents in the final.

In the opening match of the tournament, the Ukrainians beat Kyrgyzstan 2-0 to take the lead in Group A. The blue-yellows continued their winning streak with another 2-0 victory, this time against Estonia, and with four goals against their final opponents in the group stage, Tajikistan, against whom the Ukrainians were clearly the stronger side.

In the quarter-finals Ukraine left nothing to chance against their Lithuania opponents,



The Ukrainian Under-21s who lifted the 2014 Commonwealth Cup

whom they beat 4-1. Then came a very tough semi-final against Belarus, for whom the game ended dramatically when Shatsilouski scored the only (own) goal of the match.

After the Ukrainians' subsequent, confident display against Russia in the final, the head coach, Serhiy Kovalets, said: "It was good

match. A lot of fans turned out. We were luckier; we created our chances and scored our goals. I hope the spectators enjoyed the game. We made the most of the opportunity to test our young players at a big tournament."

● Yurii Maznychenko



2014 UEFA Super Cup in Cardiff

The Football Association of Wales (FAW), the Welsh government and Cardiff city council are delighted to announce that the UEFA Super Cup is coming to Cardiff.

This year's prestigious fixture between the winners of the UEFA Champions League and the UEFA Europa League will be played at Cardiff City Stadium on Tuesday 12 August.

The announcement was made at Cardiff City Stadium. Among those attending were the Welsh government's sports minister, John Griffiths, the chief executive of the FAW, Jonathan Ford, and the leader of Cardiff city council, councillor Heather Joyce. They were joined by two former winners of European club competitions, Ole Gunnar Solskjær and

Kevin Ratcliffe. The current Cardiff City FC manager, Solskjær, scored the winning goal for Manchester United FC in the 1999 UEFA Champions League final against FC Bayern München.

Jonathan Ford said: "The Football Association of Wales is delighted that Cardiff will be hosting this year's UEFA Super Cup. This prestigious match features the best teams in Europe: the winners of the Champions League and the Europa League. Cardiff has hosted several high-profile sporting events. This, however, is a first. This will be the first match staged on behalf of UEFA in the Welsh capital. We are sure it will not be the last."

● Ceri Stennett



Left to right: Ole Gunnar Solskjær, John Griffiths, Jonathan Ford, Heather Joyce and Kevin Ratcliffe

BIRTHDAYS

Carlo De Gaudio (Italy, 1 April)
Jan Peeters (Belgium, 2 April) 80th
 Michael Sjöö (Sweden, 2 April)
 Elisabeth Derks (Netherlands, 2 April)
 Kaj Østergaard (Denmark, 3 April)
 Martin Sturkenboom (Netherlands, 3 April)
 Dennis Cruise (Republic of Ireland, 3 April)
Yoav Strauss (Israel, 3 April) 50th
 Emil Ubias (Czech Republic, 3 April)
 Christian Kofoed (Denmark, 4 April)
 Alex Miescher (Switzerland, 4 April)
Jan Ekstrand (Sweden, 5 April) 70th
 Momir Đurđevac (Montenegro, 5 April)
 Aleksandra Pejkovska (FYROM, 5 April)
 Vencel Tóth (Hungary, 6 April)
 Snježana Focić (Croatia, 6 April)
 Athanassios Briakos (Greece, 6 April)
 Pavol Peracek (Slovakia, 7 April)
 Jacques Devismes (France, 8 April)
 Jim Fleetting (Scotland, 8 April)
 Peter Hegyi (Hungary, 8 April)
 Yevgeniy Stolitenko (Ukraine, 8 April)
 Márton Esterházy (Hungary, 9 April)
 Ladislav Svoboda (Czech Republic, 9 April)
 Zoran Petrović (Serbia, 10 April)
 Panagiotis Tsarouchas (Greece, 10 April)
 Vlastibor Minarovjech Jr (Slovakia, 10 April)
 Eduard Kindle (Liechtenstein, 10 April)
 Umberto Gandini (Italy, 11 April)
 Eduard Dervishaj (Spain, 11 April)
 Rodger Gifford (Wales, 12 April)
 Valeriu Ionita (Romania, 12 April)
 François De Keersmaecker (Belgium, 12 April)
Antonio Jose Fernandes Cardoso (Portugal, 12 April) 50th
 Paolo Piani (Italy, 13 April)
 Edvinas Eimontas (Lithuania, 13 April)
 Octavian Goga (Romania, 14 April)
 Georgios Bikas (Greece, 15 April)
 Erol Ersoy (Turkey, 15 April)
 Antonius van Eekelen (Netherlands, 15 April)
 Dušan Fitzel (Czech Republic, 15 April)
 Đuro Bukvić (Croatia, 16 April)
 Manuel Enrique Mejuto Gonzalez (Spain, 16 April)
 Charles Schaack (Luxembourg, 17 April)
 Oguz Sarvan (Turkey, 18 April)
 Alexandre Remin (Belarus, 18 April)
 Norman Darmanin Demajo (Malta, 19 April)
 Michael Kuchenbecker (Germany, 19 April)
 Virgar Hvibdro (Faroe Islands, 19 April)
 Elena Charina (Russia, 19 April)
 Jean-Luc Veuthey (Switzerland, 20 April)
 Michael Argyrou (Cyprus, 20 April)
 Marc Lesenfants (Belgium, 21 April)
 Vitor Manuel Melo Pereira (Portugal, 21 April)
 Martinus van den Bekerom (Netherlands, 21 April)

Alexandru Burlac (Moldova, 21 April)
 Tomislav Vlahović (Croatia, 21 April)
 Jan Damgaard (Denmark, 22 April)
 Morgan Norman (Sweden, 22 April)
 Roderick Petrie (Scotland, 22 April)
 Giorgios Sarris (Greece, 22 April)
 Volodymyr Petrov (Ukraine, 22 April)
 Claudine Brohet (Belgium, 22 April)
 Roland Tis (Belgium, 23 April)
 Mehmet S. Binnet (Turkey, 23 April)
 Prune Rocipon (France, 23 April)
 Nebojša Ivković (Serbia, 24 April)
 Avraham Luzon (Israel, 24 April)
 Sandor Piller (Hungary, 24 April)
 Mirsini Psaropoulou (Greece, 24 April)

Frederick Roy Millar (Northern Ireland, 25 April)
 Philippe Verbiest (Belgium, 25 April)
 Domènec Sichinava (Georgia, 25 April)
 Salustia Chato Cipres (Andorra, 25 April)
 Valentín Velikov (Bulgaria, 25 April)
 Marina Sbardella (Italy, 27 April)
 Philip Gartside (England, 27 April)
 Jan Carlsen (Denmark, 27 April)
 Edgar Steinborn (Germany, 27 April)
George Frank (Israel, 29 April) 70th
 Gudmundur Ingi Jónsson (Iceland, 29 April)
 Robin Howe (Scotland, 29 April)
 Emanuel Macedo de Medeiros (Portugal, 30 April)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Meetings

8 April, Nyon

Fair Play and Social Responsibility Committee

9 April, Valletta

European Under-17 Championship: final round draw

11 April, Nyon

UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League: semi-final draws

Competitions

1/2 April

UEFA Champions League: quarter-finals (first legs)

3 April

UEFA Europa League: quarter-finals (first legs)

8/9 April

UEFA Champions League: quarter-finals (return legs)

10 April

UEFA Europa League: quarter-finals (return legs)

11–14 April, Nyon

UEFA Youth League: final round

19/20 April

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

22/23 April

UEFA Champions League: semi-finals (first legs)

NOTICES

- On 14 February, Borislav Mihaylov was re-elected president of the Bulgarian Football Union.
- On 21 February, Ján Kováčik was re-elected president of the Slovak Football Association.

OBITUARY

Jean Appietto (France), a member of the UEFA Amicale des anciens (circle of former UEFA committee members) died on 15 February aged 80.

He was a member of the UEFA Board of Appeals from 1986 to 1992, then vice-chairman of the Juridical Committee from 1992 to 1998, before returning to the Appeals Body in 1998 and serving as its vice-chairman from 2002 until 2006. Jean Appietto received the UEFA Order of Merit in Diamond at the 2007 UEFA Congress in Dusseldorf.

24 April

UEFA Europa League: semi-finals (first legs)

24–27 April, Baku

UEFA Futsal Cup: final round

26/27 April

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

29/30 April

UEFA Champions League: semi-finals (return legs)



NO TO RACISM

