

UEFA



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THREE OF THE BEST

Sevilla, Olympique Lyonnais and Real Madrid
win Europe's most coveted club prizes

THE TECHNICIAN

Holger Osieck, the
globetrotting coach

WOMEN IN FOOTBALL

Leadership programme
continues in Nyon

FOR THE RECORD

How many nationalities play
in the club competitions?



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THE JOYS OF SPRING

Once more, there was plenty of excitement and drama as the curtains closed on another UEFA club competition season. I would like to congratulate Real Madrid CF, Sevilla FC and Olympique Lyonnais on their winning campaigns in the UEFA Champions League, UEFA Europa League and UEFA Women's Champions League respectively.

A penalty shoot-out at the end of extra time is always a tough and tense ordeal. The UEFA Champions League final in Milan and the UEFA Women's Champions League final in Reggio Emilia both provided this gripping scenario. The shoot-outs had everyone holding their breath, before Real Madrid and Olympique Lyonnais finally emerged triumphant.

Ten days earlier, Basel's St. Jakob-Park had witnessed a stirring second-half comeback by Sevilla FC, who clinched the UEFA Europa League trophy for the third successive year.

There is one more congratulatory note to pass along: to Chelsea FC, who reigned victorious in the UEFA Youth League for the second year running.

Meanwhile, off the field, the latest edition of the UEFA Women in Football Leadership Programme – covered along with the club finals in this issue of UEFA Direct – laid further solid foundations aimed at offering women increased opportunities to move into key positions of authority within football across Europe.

The Nyon seminar focused especially on acquiring and nurturing the skills that will prepare women for leadership roles, and the implementation of a mentor scheme designed to hasten such development. This process will ensure that European football will soon be greatly enriched by the presence of more women at the heart of the game's decision-making processes.



Theodore Theodoridis
UEFA General Secretary ad interim





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EXTRAORDINARY UEFA CONGRESS IN ATHENS ON 14 SEPTEMBER

Following Michel Platini's decision to resign as UEFA president, the UEFA Executive Committee met in Basel on 18 May.

On the morning of the UEFA Europa League final between Liverpool FC and Sevilla FC, the Executive Committee set the date for the election of a new UEFA president. As permitted by the new UEFA Statutes, which came into force on 1 March this year, the Executive Committee decided to shorten the usual three-month period between the deadline for the submission of candidatures and the election date.

As a result, the election will take place on 14 September in Athens at an Extraordinary UEFA Congress, with the deadline for the submission of candidatures set at midnight (CET) on 20 July. The new UEFA president will be elected to fill the remainder of the term of Michel Platini, which would have ended at the Ordinary UEFA Congress in 2019.

The Athens Congress will also elect a woman to the FIFA Council, the body which replaces the FIFA Executive Committee and which will include at least one female member from each confederation. Europe's female member of the FIFA Council will be elected for an exceptional four-and-a-half year term, until the Ordinary UEFA Congress in 2021. The deadline for the submission of candidatures is the same as for the UEFA presidency, i.e. 20 July.

At its meeting in Basel – the first to be attended by Florence Hardouin, elected at the UEFA Congress in Budapest at the beginning of May – the Executive Committee also dealt with the matter of the participation of clubs from UEFA's new member association, the Football Federation of Kosovo, in the 2016/17 UEFA club competitions. The committee decided that the domestic league champions and cup winners could take part in the first qualifying rounds of the UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League respectively, but only if they could be granted special permission in accordance with Article 15 of the UEFA Club Licensing and Financial Fair Play Regulations. On 9 June, the UEFA Emergency Panel decided that Kosovan clubs did not qualify for such permission but that they could take part in the 2016/17 UEFA Futsal Cup and UEFA Women's Champions League, for which no club licensing requirements applied.

Following the admission of the football associations of Gibraltar and Kosovo as FIFA member associations, the UEFA Executive Committee decided to set up a task force to address the matter of their participation in the European Qualifiers for the 2018 World Cup. Finally, Gibraltar have been placed in Group H and Kosovo in Group I. 🇮🇵

Deadline for the submission of candidatures set at midnight (CET) on 20 July.

WHEN GRASSROOTS AND THE STARS COMBINE

Those who take part in football in their free time, for the love of the game, are the lifeblood of the sport. Grassroots players make up 99% of all players, and the importance of encouraging football at this level was recognised with foundations to play it developed in Basel and Milan around the club competition finals.

Excitement about the finals of the UEFA Europa League and the UEFA Champions League was palpable in Basel and Milan respectively. Locals and international visitors alike were buoyed by the passion and emotion of the biggest club football matches of the European year, and with donations made to both cities, pitches could be installed in order to turn that inspiration into participation.

New facility in Basel

On the eve of Sevilla FC's triumph in Basel, the city received a donation of a maxi-pitch close to a school in Liesbergermatte. The area has limited green space, so the new facility gives children the chance to play, and, importantly, is also part of the city's overall renovation plans.

Fittingly, FC Basel 1893 legend and Europa League final ambassador Alexander Frei attended the opening of the pitch. It measures 14m x 24m and is intended to be as accessible

as possible so that people of all ages and abilities can enjoy the beautiful game.

Upgraded facilities in Milan

The renovation of an existing pitch rather than the donation of a whole new facility went hand in hand with the UEFA Champions League final in Milan. At the pitch, on Via Comasina, the mayor of Milan, Giuliano Pisapia, was given a cheque to be put towards its development by UEFA ambassador Cafu, who was joined by UEFA's grassroots ambassador Per Ravn Omdal. The pitch's inauguration is planned for 2017.

While throngs of supporters enjoyed the UEFA Champions Festival and another footballing week in the sun in Milan, the donation is intended to provide a more lasting legacy for the city. It will make sure that a wider part of society can benefit from Milan hosting the final, long after Cristiano Ronaldo's penalty signified the conclusion of the big event at San Siro. ♻️

The city of Basel received a donation of a 14m x 24m maxi-pitch close to a school.





PORTUGAL WIN ON PENALTIES

Like they did in 2003, Portugal got the better of Spain in the final to win the European Under-17 Championship for the second time.

Thirteen years after a squad featuring João Moutinho, Miguel Veloso and Vieira had triumphed on home soil, Hélio Sousa's class of 2016 came out on top in Azerbaijan, defeating their Iberian counterparts on penalties after a 1-1 draw at Baku's 8km Stadium on 21 May. In doing so, Portugal became the joint most successful nation in European U17 competition history, along with England, France, the Netherlands, Russia and Spain.

The 31 matches took place at four venues in and around Baku – Baku Olympic Stadium, Dalga Arena, Qarabağ Stadium and 8km Stadium – between 5 and 21 May. The tournament was the first UEFA youth finals staged by Azerbaijan, though Baku was the setting for the 2014 Futsal Cup finals and has also been selected to hold four EURO 2020 fixtures. The country also hosted the 2012 U-17 Women's World Cup.

Moreover, the Azerbaijan U17 team was the first to represent the Transcaucasian country in any UEFA football final tournament. Their campaign got off to a mixed start. While 33,000 fans converged on Baku Olympic Stadium – the biggest crowd for any UEFA youth fixture since the inaugural U17 and U19 seasons in 2001/02 – the ensuing 5-0 reverse against Portugal left Tabriz Hasanov's side up against it from the off.

"What happened gave us strength," said Hasanov of the loss to Portugal, when his charges were 3-0 down after 24 minutes. "It gave us the will to focus. We were in our own backyard and we had to prove to all the fans that this team can play football." They certainly did that. Azerbaijan responded admirably, drawing 1-1 with Belgium and signing off with a 1-0 defeat of Scotland in their last Group A game.

Elkhan Mammadov, general secretary of the Association of Football Federations of

Azerbaijan (AFFA), said of the opening night: "It was a very important day for us. Though our team lost, the fans – the 33,000 who came to offer their support – were the winners because they made history."

Useful experience

Azerbaijan's fellow U17 finals debutants Bosnia and Herzegovina, the 38th UEFA association to be represented at this level, also found the going tough, losing 2-0 to Austria and 3-1 to Germany before heading home buoyed by a 2-1 triumph over Ukraine in which Benjamin Hadžić scored twice. "They have shown that they deserve to play at this level," answered Sakib Malkočević when asked how beneficial the experience could prove for his squad. "It will be useful for the rest of their careers."

Second victories for Austria and Portugal, 2-0 against Ukraine and Scotland respectively, meant they sealed early qualification for the quarter-finals. "We are stamping our identity on games," said Sousa. "We are being very strong defensively and creating many chances."

Belgium and Germany joined them on matchday three, when Sweden, England, Spain and the Netherlands completed the last-eight line-up. Holders France were eliminated without a goal to their name. After drawing with Denmark, they had keeper Gaëtan Poussin sent off a minute into the second half of their encounter with England, who went on to win 2-0. Sweden then ended their faint hopes, prevailing 1-0 at Qarabağ Stadium.

Portugal were imperious in easing to a 5-0 success against Austria in the quarter-finals, José Gomes registering the first three goals. In completing his hat-trick with a 47th-minute header, the Benfica forward surpassed Spain's Paco Alcácer to become the 16-goal top scorer in European U17 competition history. Austria coach Andreas Heraf said: "That is the

33,000
attendance for the opening match at Baku Olympic Stadium

16
goals scored by Portugal's José Gomez in European U17 competitions





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“What happened gave us strength. We were in our own backyard and we had to prove to all the fans that this team can play football.”

Tabriz Hasanov
Azerbaijan U17 coach



RESULTS

Quarter-finals

Portugal	5-0	Austria
Germany	1-0	Belgium
Spain	1-0	England
Sweden	0-1	Netherlands

Semi-finals

Portugal	2-0	Netherlands
Germany	1-2	Spain

Final

Portugal	1-1	Spain
Portugal win 5-4 on penalties		



Sportsfile

difference, the quality of these teams. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ukraine are sides we can defeat; Germany [who beat Austria 4-0 three days earlier] and Portugal are on a higher level than us. We had no chance.”

Goal of the tournament

The other quarter-finals were closer, with Germany (v Belgium), Spain (v England) and the Dutch (v Sweden) recording 1-0 victories. Spain’s Francisco García contributed a goal of the tournament contender. Having received possession just inside the England half close to the left touchline, the Real Madrid player embarked on a run that took him through the heart of the Young Lions’ defence. Faced with Jared Thompson, the 16-year-old calmly lifted the ball over the outrushing keeper.

“It was one of the best goals I’ve scored,” explained the winger. “When I got the ball the space opened up and I took the opportunity to move inside. The defenders were quite far apart, I saw the way, and so I took the chance to forge ahead. I was expecting some contact because England are a strong, physical team. The goalkeeper went down to his left so I shot down the middle and slightly to his right.”

Gomes’s seventh of the tournament, and his fifth header, put Portugal ahead against the Netherlands in the semi-finals. Right-back Diogo Dalot rounded things off late on – cue his Cristiano Ronaldo-style celebration. “We did well at the start, in the first ten minutes, but after that I must compliment Portugal,” said Netherlands coach Kees van Wonderen. “They have a very good squad and are well organised. We did everything we could, but Portugal deserved to win.”

For long periods of the second match of the day at Dalga Arena it appeared Germany would be Portugal’s opponents in the title decider, Renat Dadashov, a favourite among the locals because of his Azerbaijani roots, having fired the 2015 runners-up in front after ten minutes. However, goals inside the last quarter of an hour from Abel Ruiz and Brahim Díaz tipped the contest Spain’s way. A disappointing second half for Germany was capped when keeper Jan-Christoph Bartels was dismissed late on for bringing down Jordi Mboula, who rattled the woodwork from the spot with the score 1-0.

Dalot struck again in the final, only for Díaz to head La Roja level and end Portugal’s run of five successive clean sheets. It was the first goal Portugal No1 Diogo Costa had conceded in the competition in 656 minutes. Until then, the Porto shot-stopper had not picked the ball out of the net in a European U17 competition match since Trevoh Chalobah put England in front in a qualifying round fixture on 4 October.

“The credit should not only go to me – it’s also the job of the other 17 players,” said Costa. “We work hard in matches and training and stay very united. I was a bit upset because I wanted to go home with a clean sheet, but I was also confident in the rest of the team, that they would do what it takes to win.”

Not a lottery

Indeed they did. Nine consecutive spot kicks had been converted when Spain captain Manu Morlanes clipped the outside of Costa’s left-hand post, giving Portugal the trophy they last lifted 13 years previously. The cliché goes that penalties ‘are a lottery’. Not according to Sousa.

“Penalties aren’t a matter of luck; they’re a matter of competence,” he stressed. “We’d been practising penalties since gathering for our training camp on 25 April. It’s good that today we put that into action. We were very confident.”

Sousa added: “My players were incredible – they produced some almost perfect games here. Austria didn’t have a chance to score. We did it five times and kept playing. My players were positive – that’s the kind of Portugal footballer we want.”

Morlanes succumbed to the “immense pressure” as he stepped up to the spot. “I’m the captain of the team and I had to deliver at a crucial moment,” said the Villarreal player. “I tried my best to score, I failed, but that happens in football.”

Ultimately, Spain would reflect on a “very good two weeks” once their disappointment had subsided. “We beat the Netherlands, Italy, England and Germany – all among the favourites for the tournament – so I can only say once again that I’m very proud of the players,” explained coach Santi Denia. “This experience will serve them well.”

It is that experience and the chance for players to pit their wits against the best of their peers that are key tenets of this and other UEFA age-group tournaments. Writing in the official programme, AFFA president Rovnag Abdullayev championed the event as providing “a wonderful educational opportunity”.

Similarly, Theodore Theodoridis, UEFA General Secretary ad interim, praised the enlarged finals for offering “international experience to a wider range of youngsters aiming to become the stars of the future”.

Hasanov, meanwhile, predicts that the finals will provide a “big boost to the development of Azeri football”. “Football and infrastructure are being developed and new facilities are being built,” he said. “Azerbaijan are worthy European Championship hosts.”



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RECORDS FALL AS GERMANY STAND TALL

The ninth European Women's Under-17 Championship was the biggest yet, with 47 nations involved, so appropriately it ended with an eight-team final tournament that broke records on and off the pitch.

Qualification, comprising the autumn qualifying round and the spring elite round, whittled down the initial cast of 44 countries – joined mid-term by seeds Germany and France – to a final-round line-up of eight, including hosts Belarus. It was the second final tournament to be hosted by the Football Federation of Belarus, after the European Women's Under-19 Championship in 2009.

The group stage action featured three newcomers, in the form of Belarus, the Czech Republic and Serbia, underlining how yet more European national associations are talking seriously and acting decisively in developing women's football. The Czechs held Italy on matchday one, while the home nation lost 5-1 to Serbia. At the other end of the spectrum, Germany and title-holders Spain drew 2-2 as the championship's traditional heavyweights sparred. England and Norway, both aiming to improve on previous semi-final finishes, produced a five-goal thriller won by the English.

The Lionesses then bared their teeth to thrash Belarus 12-0 as the hosts – lacking competitive experience – wilted. The other Group A fixture finished 1-0 to Norway against

Serbia, while Italy, with a second clean sheet, frustrated Germany in Group B. Lorena Navarro, notching up the first of five goals that earned her a share of the golden shoe, nudged Spain past the Czechs and to the top of the table.

The group stage culminated with all eight teams, arithmetically at least, in contention. Ominously, Anouschka Bernhard's German side stepped up with a 4-0 dismissal of the Czech Republic, with Vanessa Ziegler and Marie Müller each netting two. However, Spain maintained pole position, as a double from Navarro helped account for Italy 3-1. The Group A honours went to an England team who trailed Serbia until a penalty equaliser and a Serbian red card changed everything. The eventual 4-1 English victory left Norway second in the group, despite their two unanswered goals against the Belarusians.

Three World Cup places at stake

The Norwegians' 'reward' was a semi-final against the defending champions. The Scandinavians did as well as anyone could in stopping the Spanish during the first half in Zhodino. Eight minutes after the restart, they succumbed to a long-range Silvia





Spain's Maria Blanco can only look on as Germany's Tanja Pawollek prepares to strike.



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Rubio effort. Then, as Norway tired, Spain conjured up three goals in a six-minute period late in the match to reach a record sixth final. That two of them were headers – by Natalia Ramos and Navarro – confirmed the trend for headed goals, amounting to 25% of all strikes at the tournament. Navarro's feet then sealed a 4-0 success.

The second semi-final, at the same stadium, was a classic. Either side of half-time England levelled within two minutes and then 60 seconds of falling behind, the tit for tat putting Ziegler, Ellie Brazil, Klara Bühl and Alessia Russo on the scoresheet. Nevertheless, Germany pulled clear as their midfield runners won the tactical battle and Tanja Pawollek and Ziegler scored. Even at 4-2 down, England mustered one last Russo goal, putting her on five alongside Navarro.

A classic final

England also had the consolation of U-17 Women's World Cup qualification, overcoming Norway 2-1 in the third-place play-off. They join the semi-final victors in travelling to Jordan in September.

The immediate business for Spain and Germany was the Borisov-Arena final. The contenders boasted two of the tournament's six female coaches, and both Bernhard and María Antonia 'Toña' Is are former internationals. Toña intended to mastermind a fourth Spanish title and her troops dominated the first 25

minutes. The clearer chances, though, went to Germany, for whom Janina Minge (twice), Pawollek and Bühl rattled the woodwork in a clash of the championship's most mature, intelligent teams. Arguably the Germans edged it over 80 goalless minutes with their speed, fitness and physicality, and they eventually prevailed in the shoot-out, 3-2, with conversions from Giulia Gwinn, Minge and Caroline Siems. It was Germany's fifth triumph from as many final appearances, and a second achieved on penalties against Spain.

While they and the Iberians set the bar increasingly high, in developmental terms the key statistic is that 20 countries have now gained experience and exposure from a European Women's Under-17 Championship, including 15 in three editions since the tournament's expansion.

The excitement of the finals extended well beyond the field of play. Warm weather and afternoon kick-off times encouraged young enthusiastic crowds to flock to the five stadiums, in Minsk (Traktor), Zhodino (Torpedo), Slutsk (City) and Borisov (Gorodskoi and Borisov-Arena), amounting to an unprecedented aggregate attendance of 44,653 – including a competition-record 10,200 for the final.

As the action unfolded from 4 to 16 May, fans feasted on a championship-record 58 goals in the finals, with the 12 scored in a single group game setting a record for any UEFA final tournament. ⚽

RESULTS

Group A

Belarus	1-5	Serbia
England	3-2	Norway
Belarus	0-12	England
Serbia	0-1	Norway
Norway	2-0	Belarus
Serbia	1-4	England

Group B

Italy	0-0	Czech Rep.
Germany	2-2	Spain
Italy	0-0	Germany
Czech Rep.	0-1	Spain
Spain	3-1	Italy
Czech Rep.	0-4	Germany

Semi-finals

Spain	4-0	Norway
England	3-4	Germany

Third-place play-off

Norway	1-2	England
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Final

Spain	0-0	Germany
Germany win 3-2 on penalties		

ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE OFF THE PITCH

There were also fan-zone activities for the 16 matches and the opportunity for orphans to act as player escorts for the final. Local youngsters also took part in four grassroots festivals, involving 400 children aged eight to ten, while four mini-tournaments took place, with 16 participating teams, including 160 girls. The tournament even reached into five local schools, with visits from Belarus, the

Czech Republic, Germany, Italy and Serbia players. The grassroots programme, helped by 100 volunteers, dovetailed with a social campaign promoting an anti-drug, alcohol and tobacco message.

By close of play, Belarusian children had been the recipients of some 2,000 souvenirs – balls, T-shirts, sports kit, cups, medals and match tickets – in addition to the many memories created.

MILESTONE FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL IN SLOVAKIA

After hosting the European Under-21 Championship in 2000 and the European Under-17 Championship in 2013, Slovakia will host its first women's final tournament, in the 2015/16 European Women's Under-19 Championship, from 19 to 31 July.

Preparations for what can definitely be described as a milestone for women's football in Slovakia are in full swing – not only will it be the first women's final tournament to be held in Slovakia; it will also be the first time that a Slovakian women's team has taken part in a major European tournament.

"Women's football in Slovakia has been in the shadow of men's football for a long time, with no interest from the public or the media. This is great promotion for the sport among girls and I believe Slovakia will benefit from it," says tournament ambassador Jana Hanzelova-Göghová. Having spent 25 years playing for the national team, Hanzelova-Göghová is recognised as one of the best Slovakian women footballers ever.

Four venues

In total, 15 matches will be played in Slovakia in 13 days. As well as Slovakia, Austria, who knocked out last year's winners, Sweden, will also make their debut. Favourites include 2015 finalists Spain and 2014 winners the Netherlands. And it will be the 13th appearance for Germany at this stage of the competition.

"Germany and France are favourites for me, along with Spain. However, I think Slovakia can surprise. With their mentality and fighting spirit they can work wonders," says Hanzelova-Göghová.

The four host cities are Myjava, Senec, Senica and Zlate Moravce. The Slovakian national football training centre in Senec is well known for hosting national team training camps. In summer, this small town close to Bratislava is also a very multicultural place, with many tourists visiting its famous lakes. It will be a great place to get the title party started when one of the teams lifts the trophy on 31 July.

Past experience

Zlate Moravce has hosted a number of the Under-21 national team's matches, but perhaps the most famous match was played there in August 2007, when FC ViOn Zlaté Moravce played in the UEFA Cup second qualifying round against FC Zenit. Zlate Moravce also hosted three group stage games in the 2012/13 European Under-17 Championship. Myjava and Senica have both invested in their infrastructure in recent years and have become temporary homes for the Slovakian Under-21 team on their way to qualifying for next year's European Under-21 Championship final round.

Slovakia will be the underdogs of the tournament, but the beauty of the game has proven the experts wrong many times in the past. "Let's be honest. There is no logic in football. I hope it will open up further opportunities for our girls to get into the big world of women's football. Every player has dreamed of playing in this competition," says Branislav Petrovič, coach of the Slovakian women's Under-19 team.

After the Slovakian national team has represented the country at EURO 2016, the Women's Under-19 tournament will be a great opportunity to showcase women's youth football. With the national broadcaster showing Slovakia's matches and the play-offs, women's football in Slovakia is finally reaching the heights it deserves.

"We feel responsible for preparing the event to the satisfaction of all participants, as well as UEFA. We feel honoured to be hosting such an important event," says Juraj Jánošík, the Slovak Football Association's executive committee member responsible for women's football.

With the new extra-time substitution rule also being tested at the finals, the tournament in Slovakia will write a new chapter in the history of the beautiful game in more ways than one. ⚽



Group A (Senec/Zlate Moravce)

Slovakia (hosts)
Netherlands
France
Norway

Group B (Myjava/Senica)

Spain
Germany
Austria
Switzerland

Calendar

Group stage:
19, 22 and 25 July

Semi-finals:
28 July (Senec)

Final:
31 July (Senec)



A FESTIVAL OF FOOTBALL FOR CHILDREN

From 11 to 24 July, Europe's finest young players will be in Baden-Württemberg for the final round of the European Under-19 Championship.

Before that, though, various tournament-related activities are being organised for local children. The German Football Association (DFB) and Baden-Württemberg's ministry of cultural affairs, youth and sport are cooperating closely on four different initiatives aimed at schools. "The European Under-19 Championship will make for a real festival of football in Baden-Württemberg," says the DFB's sporting director, Hansi Flick, who is also an ambassador for the tournament. "We want to get children interested and involved in the tournament. These initiatives will allow them to show off their skills in various different ways, as well as bringing a bit of football fever into the classroom."

Paule roadshow

Paule, the DFB's official mascot, is young, funny and football-mad. He is hitting the road in the build-up to the tournament, travelling from school to school – everywhere from Mannheim to Ulm – whipping children up into a football frenzy with a dedicated programme of activities. He spends about 45 minutes in each school playground, singing songs and showing off his best moves, as well as giving out signed pictures and posing for souvenir photos.

School tournaments

Whether you are setting your teacher up for a goal or celebrating victory with your classmates, football brings people together in fun and enjoyment, forging bonds of friendship. That is exactly what the DFB's school tournament initiative is all about. The idea is to encourage schoolchildren to organise competitions at their own schools. For the first 50 tournaments, the DFB will supply bibs, a match ball, a referee's whistle, a tournament fixture list, a trophy for the winners and Germany flags, bringing the buzz of the European Under-19 Championship

to individual schools. There are more than 1,000 DFB mini-pitches across the country, with 125 in Baden-Württemberg alone, and they are all available to the children for their tournaments.

Young reporters

Many schoolchildren dream of a career in the media, interviewing big names, introducing the public to budding stars of the future or reporting on all the hard work that goes on behind the scenes. This initiative seeks to bring that dream a step closer, giving schoolchildren the chance to gain their first experience of journalism by working as young reporters in the run-up to the European Under-19 Championship. The DFB has launched a writing competition in partnership with Baden-Württemberg's ministry of cultural affairs, youth and sport, asking children to write an essay about the values of respect, fair play or community. The best young writers will be given the opportunity to interview the German Under-19 team's players, coaches or technical staff in the build-up to the tournament.

Match dates

The tournament's group stage matches (which will be played on 11/12, 14/15 and 17/18 July) will take place in Stuttgart (at Arena Stuttgart and Stadion auf der Waldau), Großaspach, Reutlingen, Heidenheim, Ulm and Aalen. The knockout matches – an U-20 World Cup play-off (21 July), semi-finals (21 July) and the final (24 July) – will be played in Mannheim, Sandhausen and Sinsheim. The four semi-finalists and the winners of the play-off match between the teams finishing third in the two groups will all qualify for the 2017 U-20 World Cup in South Korea, which will take place between 20 May and 11 June 2017. 🌐



Group A

Germany (hosts)
Austria
Italy
Portugal

Group B

England
France
Croatia
Netherlands

Match schedule

Group stage

11/12, 14/15 and 17/18 July

Semi-finals

21 July

Play-off match and final

24 July

TACKLING STEREOTYPES

Challenging 'benevolent bias' in the workplace to drive gender diversity in football leadership positions and take all of the benefits from it. That was one of the themes of the fourth edition of UEFA's Women in Football Leadership Programme that took place from 9 to 13 May.

Tabi Haller-Jorden took to the stage and immediately clutched a whiteboard and set about giving some illustrations. The president and CEO of the Paradigm Forum, a think tank focused on innovating workplaces, had eschewed the electronic slide shows used in so many presentations and was ready to challenge an even more prevalent set of perceptions: those of gender characteristics and their impact on a working environment.

"It's interesting that when you flick through the newspapers from the past couple of weeks, you start to notice the extent that articles are raising the topic of gender," she said in her address to a group of participants predominantly representing a selection of UEFA member associations. "We have: 'Equal play for equal pay – no backing down', 'Why women quit science' and 'Wanted in China: more men to teach manly ways'.

"In the event that any of us would dare to suggest that this is not a timely topic, all you have to do is to open the newspaper. So what I want to do now is to discuss the slow progress that we see when it comes to advancing women in senior management positions."

Taketa and Mulumba

Haller-Jorden was presenting as one of the keynote speakers of the course, which gives female professionals from football across Europe the tools to develop in decision-making positions in football. As well as the speeches, group work and individual development throughout the week, the participants were assigned a 'mentor' for a year, who will work with them on putting their new-found expertise into practice.

On her whiteboard, two drawings were hurriedly scribbled along with the question of what they represented. Only when she

flung out the theoretical names of 'Taketa and Mulumba' was a mental association assigned to each image, showing the ease of unconscious bias when it comes to the working characteristics of men and women.

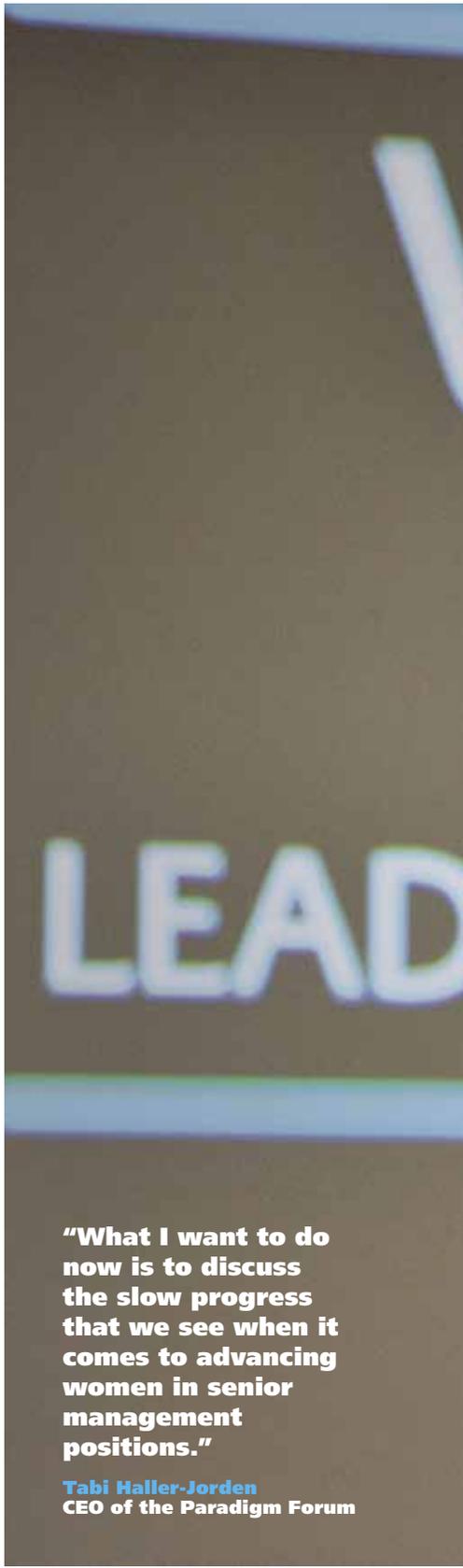
"I had the chance to partner with IMD on a research project we did and gave descriptions to see if people associated them with a man or a woman," Haller-Jorden continued. "In all the descriptions that were to do with taking charge, men were perceived to be innately more competent, and women were seen to be innately better at matters of taking care. That distinction was being made just by virtue of biological sex, which in this case dictates what competencies people think of."

Barriers to change

The assertion that mindsets, assumptions and stereotypes form a barrier to gender equality is not exclusive to football but one that UEFA would like to see changed over time in the sport's management. Since 1987, over 100 different studies have been produced that show that when women are proportionately represented in senior business positions, it derives positive results.

That was also the emphasis of one of the other main speeches, delivered by Kieran Finn, international vice-president of human resources at PAREXEL.

"Creating awareness of gender equality issues is something that we have been working on a lot in our company over the last year," he told programme participants. "As we go deeper into the data, then we are looking to make more structural changes to the way that we work, but we know we are accountable for that situation because we have all experienced the negative impact of someone else's unconscious bias. →



"What I want to do now is to discuss the slow progress that we see when it comes to advancing women in senior management positions."

Tabi Haller-Jorden
CEO of the Paradigm Forum





“We needed to make the next step to understand the challenges and difficulties that women are facing in the workplace. It’s all about creating the awareness.”

Kieran Finn
Vice-president for HR
at PAREXEL

“We actually hired a vice-president of diversity and inclusion with a lot of experience and she helped us to shape and articulate a vision for our organisation to get better. We had some very good metrics and demographics as a cultural organisation but needed to make the next step to understand the challenges and difficulties that women are facing in

the workplace. It’s all about creating the awareness.”

For the programme participants, having the means of dealing with those issues was the focal point of their agenda at the House of European Football in Nyon.

The opening night gave them the chance to network with mentors gathered from



a diverse cross-section of the football community. Julien Baehni (Head of Human Resources), Pedro Pinto (Chief of Communications & Media), Catalina Navarro (Head of Club Competitions Commercial Operations) and Daniel Marion (Head of ICT) represented UEFA as tutors. Meanwhile, Jozef Kliment (Slovakia), Anne Rei (Estonia), Heike Ullrich (Germany) and Karl-Erik Nilsson (Sweden) gave perspectives from the national associations, and expertise also came in from consultants Ebru Köksal (FIFA-UEFA), Jonathan Hall, Sarah O'Shea and Jayne Purdon.

IMD professor Ginka Toegel then led a session on leadership and self-awareness to discuss not only the impact that actions in the workplace have on the individual but also on the people around them. There were also sessions on team dynamics and influencing skills, before the participants formulated their development plans for implementing their newly acquired abilities.

Implementation

Key speakers and participants were in agreement that the research is undeniable but also that key stakeholders across the football family have to accept the need to change in order to make a realistic difference to the landscape of the sport's management.

"Studies suggest that men are oftentimes promoted based on their potential while women are more likely judged based on their performance", added Haller-Jorden. "An additional research finding indicates that women find it challenging to be both liked and respected which is very much in alignment with the 'taking charge' vs. 'taking care' dichotomy. The issue isn't that either approach is problematic, but that based on our biases, we may inadvertently discredit or discount different styles of leadership based on gender.

"So what can we do? Well, the first thing is to ensure that we – and those around us – aren't making presumptive evaluations based on gender alone. Over the course of my career, men and women alike have shared stories about a host of gender-based assumptions that have been made on their behalf without the benefit of a clarifying conversation to ensure a more accurate outcome. This kind of phenomenon is referred to as 'benevolent bias'; well-intentioned but assumptive assessments that are made based on gender alone without the benefit of a clarifying or confirming conversation." 🌱



Preparing to adapt to a diverse workplace

As CEO of UEFA Events SA and an experienced mentor on the Women in Football Leadership Programme, Martin Kallen spoke from a passionate and knowledgeable platform to the participants in Nyon.

His messages were clear: the need for preparation to get the most from the tutoring system in place, to show desire to take the steps needed to assume positions of leadership and responsibility in football management, and for the national associations to follow suit and support diversity as a professional reality in our sphere.

"It sounds easy: to invest time in your preparations; but of course, it isn't," Kallen said, touching the sensitivities of the attendees with his realistic tone. "You never have enough time to prepare and when we are busy, the first person to suffer is you. You also need an active coach in order to get the most out of the system as part of the programme."

Kallen shared his experiences at UEFA as evidence of how perception can change your working day. Having started with the organisation as an assistant, he admitted that many people still saw him in that regard,

and latterly having worked predominantly on the delivery of UEFA EURO 2016 meant that people had a view of him shaped by that as well. However, he told the participants that plenty could be done to mould the approach of others towards you.

"The main thing is to have your own vision of your career and where you want it go over the next year, two years, four years. As the chief of an organisation, I always do everything I can to try and keep the people for as long as possible and to keep them motivated because then, not only can they bring a lot to the organisation, but they can also develop their career too, and that's a win-win situation.

"It is also important for the associations who send you here to think about what their aims are? Do they have a plan for you afterwards? If you remain in the same position and with the same responsibilities, then we haven't been 100% successful because our aim is to have more women in leadership positions. For that, women have to be ready to take up the challenge because if you are not pushing, it is harder to achieve what you want to: nothing is for free."

MAKING A CHANGE, NOT A NOISE



Bojana Zec



Irena Bakrevska



Louise Doyle



Sharon Zeevi

Empowered by new skills and a fresh understanding of their strengths and weaknesses in the workplace, participants in the latest edition of UEFA's Women in Football Leadership programme have returned to work with a new professional perspective.

UEFA Direct caught up with four of them to gauge just how valuable their week in Nyon had been. Bojana Zec (Football Association of Serbia), Louise Doyle (Irish Football Association), Irena Bakrevska Miloshevska (Football Association of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and Sharon Zeevi (Israel Football Association) all had refreshing thoughts and different philosophies to share.

How did you first get involved in the programme?

Sharon: I heard about it first from a colleague who had done the programme and said it had given her a different dimension in her work with the association and that she had met great people and had great sessions. So I went to my general secretary, and here I am!

Irena: The same for me – a colleague suggested that I should do the programme after she had taken part. I read the documents and was really interested, and am happy that my association backed me.

What are the most important things that you have taken away from the programme so far?

Bojana: I have further confirmation of things I either thought I was or was not. That is very good and a bit strange for me because the programme isn't like any other; it's about me.

Louise: I agree; it's introspective.

Bojana: That's right. I'm here for me. Of course, my association sent me but it doesn't matter in which of its departments I work. I'm here for me and to improve.

Louise: The programme is like being in a bubble, in a good way. You have the chance to really focus on the sessions and it's just a case of being sure you can implement it when you get back.

It must be quite empowering to focus on yourselves as professionals during the week ...

Louise: And quite scary!

Irena: For me, the programme is special because it trains our psychological strengths and helps us to manage our interpersonal skills, which is important because it's something we have to deal with every single day.

In the keynote speeches, the subject of unconscious bias was addressed. Is that something you recognise from your working environment?

Irena: It shows that this topic is also important for men and that they should get involved to understand these issues too. OK, our position is as the minority in the football world and this programme is for us to strengthen our position and to find our place in that world.

Louise: That's a good point because if there is an unconscious gender bias in football, then it would be positive for men to be aware of it because some may not be aware that they show this bias but actually do, and this could affect how they react to people, how they recruit, etc.

Bojana: I feel I've been very lucky because it was only during those keynote speeches that I really heard the word 'bias' for the first time. I might work in a perceived 'men's world' but I



don't feel as if anyone has been biased against me in any way.

Does it mean that you're immune to it?

Louise: Maybe you don't feel it.

Sharon: I'm not ignoring it but I think it's more positive to find a way around it. I really believe that if I am good enough, then I will get promoted in my job. If I get the job done, I'll get the rewards – that was how I was brought up. If you do well, you get good things in return.

Louise: Women can offer different perspectives and different opinions from leadership positions and that can be a massive benefit to the sport as well as the issue of gender equality.

Bojana: I don't care if you're a 'her or a 'him – it's about delivering. For some people, the issue would be an excuse.

Irena: If you are judged fairly on that delivery ...

Louise: Here, we're also paving the way for those who will come after us. They might be just small drops right now, but small drops make a lake.

Sharon: I think we each have our own pathway and our own story, and here we get to learn how it can be a better story, which means I don't have to think about gender equality and focus on it because I can be the one shaping my own destiny. My daughter will see that I am working hard and fighting for my dreams and she will do the same – she won't sit at home and say it's not possible because she's a woman. I know we are paving the way for women in the future but that's not why I am doing it. Leadership is about making a change, not a noise. ♻️

LYON HOLD NERVE TO CLAIM THIRD TITLE

Olympique Lyonnais added to their 2011 and 2012 final triumphs for a third UEFA Women's Champions League crown, but needed penalties against VfL Wolfsburg on 26 May.

In the end favourites Lyon won the UEFA Women's Champions League final in Reggio Emilia, but what was looking like a straightforward win against VfL Wolfsburg turned into an epic.

Wolfsburg had ended Lyon's previous two-year reign as champions in 2013 with a 1-0 win against them in the final in London, and this time both teams were going for a third title, one behind record holders 1. FFC Frankfurt. Ada Hegerberg's early goal seemed to be enough for Lyon to reverse the scoreline from that previous final, but with two minutes left Alex Popp equalised and Wolfsburg even led the penalty shoot-out initially, before the trophy returned to France.

Both teams had certainly impressed on the way to the final. Lyon, who after a run of four consecutive finals had lost in the round of 16 two years running, sailed through, and in the semis avenged their elimination by Paris Saint-Germain in 2014/15 with a 7-0 first-leg win. That made it 16 goals in two European appearances at the new Stade de Lyon, having overcome first-time quarter-finalists Slavia Praha 9-1 in the quarter-finals there.

First time in Italy

Lyon had scored 35 goals in eight games on their way to the final; Wolfsburg – who had suffered their first-ever European defeat in the 2014/15 semis against Paris – were not quite as prolific. But having already seen off Chelsea LFC and Italian hopefuls Brescia CF, Wolfsburg beat holders Frankfurt 4-0 in the home leg of the last four, ensuring they could afford a 1-0 loss in the return.

With the final in Italy for the first time, great efforts were made by the Italian Football Federation and the municipal authorities to promote the match at Reggio Emilia's Stadio Città del Tricolore, home to US Sassuolo

Calcio, who will make their Europa League debut next season. The trophy was taken around the nearby Serie A grounds on matchdays, with final ambassador Patrizia Panico, scorer of more than 100 international goals, taking a prominent role, with help at the ticket launch in February from the likes of Azzurri coach Antonio Conte and 2014 World Cup final referee Nicola Rizzoli. Tournament ambassadors also toured local schools to speak about their experiences.

To further boost interest, the Italian air force's aerobatics display team, the Frecce Tricolori, announced plans for a spectacular flyover immediately before the final, which capped an opening ceremony with massed ranks of dancers. The sky was painted in the colours of the Italian national flag, which was particularly appropriate as it was in Reggio Emilia that Il Tricolore was first displayed in 1797.

Even before the final, Reggio Emilia played host to the Women's Grassroots Festival, including the finals of a tournament for local secondary schools and the interregional phase of the girls' Under-12 Nations Cup, with England captain and UEFA women's football development ambassador Steph Houghton also in town for a game with local children. The referees were not forgotten as Auditorium Malaguzzi played host to a meeting for more than 600 officials from across the country, with addresses by UEFA chief refereeing officer Pierluigi Collina, Nicola Rizzoli and the event coordinator for the final, Roberto Rosetti.

But it was all about the match itself, which was played in front of an impressive crowd of more than 15,000, plus countless more watching on television. Eurosport broadcast the event across Europe, while France 2 was also live from Reggio Emilia and beIN Sports showed the game across the Middle East and North Africa. And for the rest of the world, the



Sportslife

VfL Wolfsburg cannot contain Saki Kumagai, who later converted the winning penalty for Olympique Lyonnais.





RESULT

VfL Wolfsburg 1-1 **Lyon**
Lyon win 4-3 on penalties

Attendance: 15,117

Referee: Katalin Kulcsar
(Hungary)

Goals: Hegerberg 12 (0-1),
Popp 88 (1-1)

match was streamed for free on the UEFA.tv YouTube channel, with particular early morning interest in the United States, as Lyon midfielder Amandine Henry was to join Portland Thorns immediately after the final.

Emotional edge

The departures of stalwarts Henry, Lotta Schelin and Louisa Necib, who is to retire aged 29 after the Olympics, gave the match an added emotional edge for Lyon. Wolfsburg, who had already waved goodbye to the retired Martina Müller and Nadine Kessler since last winning the tournament, were also missing injured striker Caroline Graham Hansen, midfielder Julia Simic and defender Noelle Maritz.

But while Hansen was sidelined, Lyon's own young Norwegian forward Hegerberg soon made her mark. She got her competition-leading 13th goal of the campaign – one short of the record – in the 12th minute, finishing off after a brilliant run on the right by German international Pauline Bremer. Indeed, Bremer and fellow winger Amel Majri were giving Wolfsburg all sorts of problems, as Lyon's 4-3-3 formation pegged back a team fresh from winning the German Cup.

Lyon had won a tenth straight league title and fifth consecutive double, but although they were on top, a team that had scored more

than 150 goals this season could not increase their lead. And with two minutes left Isabel Kerschowski sent in a high cross that Popp bravely headed in to equalise – to the delight of the local fans, who had taken a shine to Wolfsburg, being pumped up by goalkeeper Almuth Schult.

Both teams had chances in extra time, but penalties were needed for only the second time in a final. Lyon had lost that first shootout to 1. FFC Turbine Potsdam in 2010 and fell behind again as Schult saved from Hegerberg. But Lyon's Sarah Bouhaddi denied both Nilla Fischer and Élise Bussaglia (who, like Lara Dickmann, had joined Wolfsburg from Lyon last summer). Saki Kumagai coolly converted the winning penalty, just as she did for Japan in the 2011 Women's World Cup. Kumagai was rewarded with the player of the match award by the UEFA technical team, who included ten Lyon players in their 18-strong Squad of the Season.

Referring to the departing Necib, Henry and Schelin, part of all nine of Lyon's European campaigns since their 2007 debut, Kumagai said: "Before the game we swore we had to win it, for us but especially for them." As for Hegerberg, who personally had a rollercoaster final, she said: "It is probably the biggest day of my life." 🏆



UEFA via Getty Images



HOLGER OSIECK

'THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR GAINING YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE'

Holger Osieck has had an extremely successful and multi-layered coaching career at national association and club level. As assistant to Franz Beckenbauer he won the World Cup in 1990 with West Germany. He then worked at Marseille with Beckenbauer (winning the French Championship) before becoming head coach at VfL Bochum, Fenerbahçe, Urawa Red Diamonds and Kocaelispor, winning the Turkish Cup and Asian Champions League along the way. He took over as Canada's head coach and upset the odds by winning the Gold Cup, and he also had a spell at FIFA as technical director before managing Australia and guiding them to the 2014 World Cup.

How did your coaching career start?

It all started while I was still a player. During this period, I was at the same time studying physical education and English at the university in Bochum. In the context of a cooperation between the sports institute of the university and the regional football association in Westphalia, I obtained my B licence. But I still considered this as a complementary part of my education and not as something leading into a future perspective of becoming a professional coach. Courses were on offer and that was the first step towards becoming a coach. At that time, my primary target was to become a teacher but as I went through the coaching licence process, more and more I developed the idea of getting into professional coaching. While I was in the North American Soccer League playing for the Vancouver Whitecaps, I also got into coaching because I signed a contract as assistant coach with the Canadian Soccer Federation. This got me involved in the qualifiers for the 1978 World Cup in Argentina. After I returned to Germany, I received an offer from the German FA to join them as a staff coach. I worked for the German FA for the following 11 years, working in different areas: I was involved in coach education (responsible for the A licence) and player development (coaching all youth teams (Under-15s to Under-21s)). In 1987, I became assistant coach of the senior team alongside Franz Beckenbauer. We coached together until the 1990 World Cup, which we won. After this great achievement, we both left the German FA.

Which other coach has had the biggest influence on you personally?

You take something from every coach. In particular as a young coach, it is important that you are ready to listen to the advice of

experienced coaches. In my case, my mentor was Herbert Widmayer, a very experienced Bundesliga and German FA staff coach. He took me under his wing and introduced me to the professional coaching business. Despite all the advice and support you receive, it is important to find your own way. There is no substitute for gaining your own experience.

How much influence did former head coach at the German FA Jupp Derwall have on you back then?

Jupp Derwall was a really successful German coach. He was assistant at the 1974 World Cup and took over the team after the World Cup in Argentina in 1978. In 1980 he won the European Championship and reached the World Cup final in 1982. He was like a father figure; he was always available and tried to help whenever he could. After the 1982 World Cup, he took me with him as assistant coach for one season with the national A team, when Karl-Heinz Rummenigge and Paul Breitner were still part of the German team. All the experience I gained during that period helped me a lot in my personal development as a coach.

What qualities does a coach need when entering professional football today?

Alongside the technical aspects like training and player development, a very important factor is man management. Psychological and leadership qualities are required; in particular the coach as a leader plays a very important role in the complex construction of a team. You need to have a vision, you need to have a plan and you need to give directions. It is crucial to communicate all these elements to the team to make your ideas work.

In 1982, Osieck became assistant to Jupp Derwall, coach of the West German team that won the 1980 European Championship and reached the 1982 World Cup final. He then served as assistant to Franz Beckenbauer, with whom he won the 1990 World Cup.



Getty Images



Getty Images



Getty Images

What concessions do you have to make to survive?

The most important thing is to be able to reach any of your players because they are all individuals with different personal attributes. You have to deal with sensitive characters, more robust characters and even indifferent characters. Now it is up to you as a coach to connect with all these different characters to challenge and to motivate them.

You have worked at different levels. How would you describe the treatment you have received from people in leading positions?

First, you have to adapt to various situations. There are officials at a club or association who try to impose their point of view on the coach, and others who are more supportive and have a lot of say in the work of the coach. In either case, you have to find a good basis for →

communication and understanding. It is always important that neither side loses face. The bottom line is that you stick to your principles and do not let these people interfere in your actual work.

What is the key when dealing with the media?

The importance of the media in today's game has grown tremendously. Whatever you do, whatever your decisions, they will be under the scrutiny of journalists. You have to learn that these people often have their own point of view that does not actually reflect your actions. There are different and often controversial positions on the media side. You have to accept that these controversial aspects exist. The media can never be your friends. They have to do their job and you as a coach have to do yours. And you cannot always ask for their full understanding of what you are doing. If you can come to a certain level of acceptance, it helps your position a lot. The worst mistake is that you start a war with the media. The outcome will be that they use their strong position and you will end up as the loser.

What were the toughest decisions you had to make?

Difficult situations occur when you have to tell a player that he won't be part of the team. When I was in the Turkish Cup final for instance, there was a player who had been a regular starter for the team but he was not 100% fit. So I had to tell him that he was not part of the squad for the final. Of course, he tried to persuade me to the contrary, which was understandable. But, for the good of the team, I had to leave him out. That was a tough decision and it was really difficult for me to get this message across. I had to think of the team and not the individual. Decisions like that were always problematic.

A recent study showed how much stress coaches are under. How did you keep fit during your career and how did you manage your stress?

Everybody develops their own method for dealing with stress. In particular, when the stress started to mount after a series of negative results. I used to protect myself by not reading any papers or other sports news, or I tried to work off the stress with some interval running. But I found that when the stress was really on, exerting myself physically made me even more frustrated. What I needed was a trustful environment with someone (my partner, for example) with whom I could discuss problems openly and discreetly. But in the end, the best way to get out of a miserable

situation is for you and your team to start winning again.

How do you see the relationship between coach and assistant, and how has the role of assistant coach evolved over the years?

The first requirement is loyalty. The assistant coach is the link between the head coach and the players. That means that, on the one hand, the assistant coach needs to fully support the head coach and, on the other hand, he needs to have a good working relationship with the players, in particular when the assistant has to convey messages from the head coach to the players. Given that the demands on the head coach in professional football have expanded, due to increased media attention, the work on the pitch is very often done by the assistant coach. The players are trained and instructed on how the head coach wants them to train. Therefore, acceptance of the assistant coach by the team is crucial.

Is there any decision you made as a head coach that you would like to change?

It is crucial that you surround yourself with people you trust, in particular when you work in foreign countries with different mentalities and a different approach to the game. I would bring at least one person of my choice with me, someone I could fully rely on. In some situations in my professional life, I went on my own without such a person and I experienced some disappointment.

You have more than 35 years of experience. How have you seen coaching change in the dressing room and on the touchline?

As society has changed over the years, so have the players. Whereas in the old days, a coach was more of an autocrat – what he said went for everybody – these days the players have become more critical and challenging towards the coach, which is a reflection on the development of the game itself. Years ago the players had clear tasks, whereas in today's game the tactical requirements of the players, the understanding of the game, and flexibility have become more and more important. That is why players have developed more into personalities who ask questions. There are game situations where they have to make their own decisions. Therefore, one of the main tasks of the coach is to enable and to encourage them to do so. The players should not just blindly follow any orders. Everyone has to be considered as an individual case. Everyone has to handle his own situation. 🌐

“The worst mistake is that you start a war with the media. The outcome will be that they use their strong position and you will end up as the loser.”



OSIECK'S TOP COACHING TIPS

○ LEADERSHIP

Have a vision, have a plan and give directions.

○ LEARN

Listen to the advice of experienced coaches.

○ SUPPORT

Surround yourself with people you trust.

○ TRUST

Encourage players to make their own decisions.



PREPARING FOR A TOUGH PROFESSION

An online search for ‘coach education’ is not overly rewarding. It throws up a couple of commercial offers and the odd link to national association websites. Searching for ‘UEFA coach education’ yields more heartening results, but even so, the on-screen evidence could easily be used to support theories that coach education is one of football’s best-kept secrets. So much so that UEFA has produced a promotional video to underline the importance of good coach education and map the parameters of the new edition of the UEFA Coaching Convention, which was published last year and is now being implemented by the national associations across Europe.

The video features a long line of leading coaches, who share their personal experience and professional insights. Thomas Schaaf, for instance, speaks for a great many of his colleagues when he says: “As a player you naturally think that you know it all, but you quickly realise that you are missing key knowledge – and this is what you obtain during your coach education.” Schaaf embarked on a long career coaching youth teams while still playing for SV Werder Bremen, and this path is now being trodden by members of a new generation, such as Swiss international Alexander Frei, who is currently coaching the

U15 side at FC Basel while studying for his UEFA A licence. “As a former top player, you think you know it all. But it is so different to become a good coach. I would say that without a proper coach education this is really not possible. So I’m enjoying the educational process that I’m going through with the Swiss FA,” he says.

Frei, who is taking his first steps on the coaching ladder, was quick to appreciate the value of ‘learning his trade’, but it is equally significant that those who have reached the top still stress the importance of climbing the educational ladder. “This is a profession,” says Didier Deschamps. “It’s something you have to learn, so the training process is vitally important.” Roy Hodgson concurs: “The coaching profession is very tough these days and anyone considering taking it up needs to understand that thorough preparation is essential.” European and world champion Vicente del Bosque maintains that Spain’s successes in club and national team competitions, senior and youth, can legitimately be linked to the quality of coaching at all levels. “Our youth football has become well-structured,” he says, “and the education of our coaches has been fundamental to our success.” Recent UEFA research supports this gradual progression, having found that 47 of the 80

“The coaching profession is very tough these days and anyone considering taking it up needs to understand that thorough preparation is essential.”

Roy Hodgson
Manager of the
England national team

head coaches who entered the 2015/16 UEFA Champions League or UEFA Europa League group stages had themselves started out in youth coaching or as assistant managers. It is also never too early to start, with the same UEFA research finding that 90% of those coaches were given their first coaching roles before they had reached the end of their thirties.

The value of the convention

Top technicians acknowledge that the coaching profession is constantly evolving and the new edition of the UEFA Coaching Convention has been designed with this in mind, reflecting – and encouraging – the trend towards reality-based learning. It is not always easy to agree on what this means in practice, and specifically in coaching courses, but Kris Van Der Haegen, Belgium's director of coach education, came up with a neat definition at the most recent meeting of the UEFA Jira Panel, representing the group of coach education experts responsible for the convention: "It's about using knowledge, skills and attitude to deal with realistic situations and problems in football, and the ability to transfer theory into practice."

World champion Joachim Löw is also quick to recognise the value of the convention: "Coach education has to be well-structured, multi-layered and constantly adapted to the evolutions of the game. UEFA realised this many years ago with the introduction of the Coaching Convention." Howard Wilkinson, chairman of England's League Managers Association, agrees: "There is no substitute for a thorough and ongoing coach education programme. We recognise that this would not be possible without the hard work and the foresight that

went into the creation and implementation of the UEFA Coaching Convention across Europe." Sir Alex Ferguson adds: "It is essential that anyone looking to become a coach gets enrolled onto a coach education programme. UEFA has worked really hard to ensure that this opportunity is available right across Europe."

More women in coaching careers

One of UEFA's current priorities is to ensure this opportunity is enhanced for female coaches. And it is starting to pay off. "I am happy to see that a larger number of women are taking the same opportunity as I did and are becoming coaches," says Sweden's Pia Sundhage, while European champion Silvia Neid adds: "Initiatives by UEFA and the German Football Association are helping to give women access to coaching careers through solid training. It's a positive development that more and more women are getting the UEFA Pro licence."

David Moyes, who has joined the tutors at a number of UEFA's Pro licence student exchanges in Nyon, stresses the need to prepare conscientiously for a challenging profession: "I would strongly advise anyone who is thinking of making football their profession to get themselves a very thorough coach education. UEFA's Coaching Convention has developed really well over the last decade or so and is there for everyone."

Iceland coach Lars Lagerbäck, also a Jira Panel member, is a firm believer that there are no shortcuts: "To become a good coach, you need education, experience, further education, a will to always learn more, a lot of hard work ... and a little bit of luck." ⚽

Coach education courses, both theory and practice, are essential for getting to grips with all aspects of the coaching profession.



SUPREME SEVILLA CONTINUE EUROPA DOMINANCE IN BASEL

Fans flocked to Basel from far and wide on 18 May to see Sevilla FC complete a Europa League hat-trick with a clinical comeback against Liverpool FC.

The first deployment of goal-line technology in a UEFA competition match testified to the forward-looking nature of the Europa League – but familiarity was the dominant theme from this year’s final in Basel, as Spain’s Sevilla FC overcame English adversaries Liverpool FC to win a third successive title, and a fifth title overall.

The manner of Sevilla’s success was also a carbon copy of last year’s triumph, in that they bounced back from conceding the opening goal, and they underlined their continuing Europa League dominance with a simply stunning second-half display.

The St. Jakob-Park venue was built in 2001, the same year that Liverpool last tasted success in this competition, and Reds fans were out in force as the club sought a fourth title. In fact, with 30,000 Liverpool supporters alone expected to make the pilgrimage to Basel –

on trains, planes and coaches via Denmark, Germany and other circuitous routes – UEFA and the Basel city authorities reacted quickly to install giant screens, so that ticketless fans could watch the match at the Barfüsserplatz (the Liverpool fans’ meeting area) and in the neutral fan zone at the Münsterplatz.

Huge party downtown

Already by Wednesday midday, the Barfüsserplatz was playing host to a huge party as Liverpool fans defied the rain, roaring out highlights from their songbook and ringing the picturesque square in banners and flags. Meanwhile, some intrepid Sevilla supporters had even scaled the Basel Münster to unfurl a flag. Both sets of fans mingled at the UEFA fan zone at the Münsterplatz, where the tournament ambassador, former FC Basel 1893 and Borussia Dortmund striker Alexander



Sergio Escudero closes in on Nathaniel Clyne in front of the 34,000 crowd at St. Jakob-Park.





BASEL FINAL 2016

UEFA

RESULT

Liverpool FC 1-3 Sevilla FC

Attendance: 34,429

Referee: Jonas Eriksson (Sweden)

Goals: 1-0 Sturridge 35, 1-1 Gameiro 46, 1-2 Coke 64, 1-3 Coke 70

Frei, was on hand to show off skills and sign autographs, while supporters also posed for photos with the trophy.

The pre-match entertainment continued at the stadium itself with a trademark rendition of You'll Never Walk Alone from Liverpool's travelling masses. This was followed by the official opening ceremony, in which DJ Schiller and singer Arlissa were joined by over 200 performers – including the Swiss national rhythmic gymnastics team, performers from nearby dance school Tanz Atelier Rheinfelden, and a professional dance group from Germany – for a spectacularly choreographed performance.

Prior to kick-off, local children were given the chance to be player escorts. FedEx, the main sponsor of the UEFA Europa League, donated 100 match tickets for the final to community football projects in Basel and the surrounding area. Among the 100 young fans, 22 children aged between seven and nine had the privilege of walking out onto the pitch alongside the two teams as player escorts. The UEFA Foundation for Children also donated 90 tickets to the Swiss Football Association, which provided them to Next Sport Generation, a foundation that promotes sport for children and adolescents.

When Sevilla wake up ...

In the main event, Liverpool soon assumed control after an even start, and took the lead after 35 minutes. Daniel Sturridge's sensational strike with the outside of his left foot did not require the verification of goal-line technology, which was being used officially for the first time in a UEFA competition game, as the ball flew into the corner. Buoyed by that strike and in the ascendant, coach Jürgen Klopp's side had chances to extend that advantage before the break.

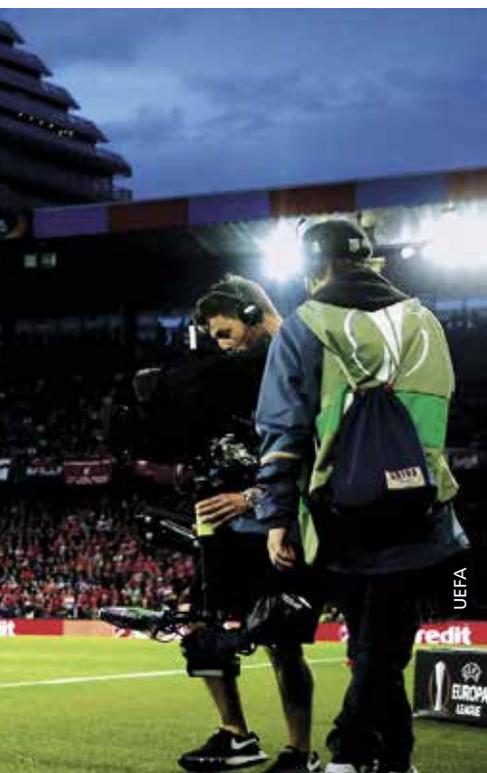
Their failure to do so was clinically punished within seconds of the restart. Mariano Ferreira got in behind the Liverpool defence, and his low cross was turned in by Kevin Gameiro for his eighth competition goal of the season.

The timing of the goal seemed to stun Liverpool into stasis, and Sevilla took control. It was not simply a momentum shift: subtle tactical tweaks such as giving more defensive responsibility to Vitolo and adopting a crisp short passing approach, rather than the more direct game that had faltered in the first half, saw Sevilla pin Liverpool back in defence. The Reds could not breach Sevilla's muscular midfield, and they were frequently undone by the swift movement and pinpoint passing of coach Unai Emery's charges.

Sevilla sealed their win with two wonderful Coke strikes in the space of five minutes. The converted right-back displayed a hitherto hidden eye for goal with a blistering shot after 65 minutes and an assured finish five minutes later, and there was no way back for a shell-shocked Liverpool. Fittingly, even in a much-changed side, it was two survivors from their 2014 and 2015 triumphs that fired Sevilla to victory.

The pain was absolute for Liverpool, with defeat confirming their absence from European football next season. But there is also hope at Anfield, with Klopp having led an inherited squad to two cup finals in his debut season. "We are disappointed, frustrated," he said, "but we will use this".

Sevilla's win earns them a spot in the 2016/17 UEFA Champions League, but in Basel, they only had eyes for one prize. Unai Emery was unequivocal about the club's feelings for the UEFA Europa League: "We love this competition. It's our competition ..."



UEFA



UEFA via Getty Images

MADRID'S LOVE AFFAIR

Real Madrid won the European Cup for the 11th time in Milan, in a repeat of the 2014 UEFA Champions League final, showing just how much the greatest European club competition means to the Spanish capital.

Cristiano Ronaldo may have otherworldly powers when it comes to kicking a football, but surely even the three-time Ballon d'Or winner could not have predicted the manner in which Real Madrid would clinch their 11th European Cup – La Undécima – in a dramatic penalty shoot-out against their great city rivals Atlético de Madrid.

Nothing, however, seems beyond the phenomenal No7. Shortly after burying the winning spot kick to conclude a marathon UEFA Champions League final in Milan, Ronaldo lifted the lid on his powers of precognition. "I had to score," he revealed. "I had the feeling I would score the winning goal."

He was far from alone in registering a sense of déjà vu. After all, not only were Madrid enjoying yet another night of European glory, it was Ronaldo who had netted their final goal, a penalty, in the Lisbon decider against the same opponents two years earlier.

There were other similarities, too. For starters, Madrid took an early lead – just as Atlético had done in 2014 – only to be pegged back late on. Sergio Ramos had struck the late equaliser in Lisbon, and it was he who got the ball rolling at the San Siro with barely a quarter of an hour gone, getting the faintest of touches on an awkward Gareth Bale free-kick to give Madrid a deserved first-half advantage.

Woodwork stories

But this time it was Atlético's turn to fight back. A different proposition altogether in the second period, Diego Simeone's side won a penalty within minutes of the restart as Pepe fouled Fernando Torres. Antoine Griezmann thudded against the bar from the spot, but far from letting his head drop, the in-form Frenchman continued to spearhead the Rojiblancos' riposte.

That effort bore fruit on 79 minutes as Yannick Carrasco emphatically converted a



RESULT

Real Madrid 1-1 Atlético Madrid
Real win 5-3 on penalties

Attendance: 71,942

Referee:
Mark Clattenburg (England)

Goals:
1-0 Ramos 15, 1-1 Carrasco 79

Juanfran cross, becoming the first-ever Belgian to score in a European Cup final. Extra time ensued, yet there was to be no Lisbon-style landslide and the game went to penalties.

Lucas Vázquez, Marcelo and Gareth Bale all found the net for Madrid. Griezmann, making up for his earlier miss, Gabi and Saúl Ñíguez responded in kind for Atlético. At 3-3, Ramos converted to give the Blancos the advantage before Juanfran, one of the competition's most reliable performers, scuffed against a post.

Ronaldo took the glory, converting assuredly to give Madrid an unassailable 5-3 advantage, but the plaudits were shared more widely. Man of the Match, as chosen by a team of UEFA technical observers including Sir Alex Ferguson, was winning skipper Ramos. Strength, leadership and composure rolled into one, the Spain stopper delivered a towering defensive display in the biggest club match of all.

The moment likewise belonged to victorious coach Zinedine Zidane. Forever remembered for his amazing volley in the 2002 final, the legendary playmaker was a surprise choice for some when he took the Madrid reins in January, but just five months into the role he became the seventh man to win the European Cup as a player and coach. Brought in to steady the ship, the Frenchman had achieved so much more.

Wave of applause for Juanfran

As the Madrid fans celebrated, a wave of applause emanated from the other end of the ground. Juanfran, whose missed penalty ultimately cost Atlético the title, had slid away unnoticed. Stood alone, teary-eyed and with one arm raised to the red and white wall in front of him, he apologised. But there was no blame here – and as if the reception he was given in return was not moving enough, his colleagues consoling him en masse proved that this was an Atlético team on and off the pitch.

It was difficult not to feel for the right-back, who had done everything right – including setting up his side's equaliser – until that vital spot kick. You felt for Juanfran. You felt for Atlético. You felt for their outstanding fans, who had roared them on from start to finish and continued to honour their heroes even in defeat.

Few realised it as the Madrid players basked under the floodlights, but dark clouds had begun to gather in advance of a torrential downpour the following day – quite the contrast to the scorching sunshine that had reigned in the build-up. In fact, weather-wise the occasion could hardly have been better, with fans soaking up the rays and enjoying Milan in all its style and splendour.



UEFA via Getty Images

There cannot be many more glamorous locations for a UEFA Champions League final. Not only is Milan a fashion capital, it is also a true football city with its own fierce local rivalry. However, for one week at the end of May, AC Milan and Inter had to watch from the sidelines as the two Madriids took centre stage.

Even the night before the annual UEFA Champions Festival opened on the Thursday, tourists and locals flooded the city centre for a glimpse of the various stands and activations laid on in front of the iconic Duomo and stretching all the way up to the imposing Castello Sforzesco.

Meanwhile, at the San Siro, the finishing touches were being applied in preparation of the main event. UEFA staff had already laid the groundwork well in advance – the historic arena covered from top to bottom in UEFA Champions League branding, security in place and more and more blue shirts buzzing around to ensure the stage was set for club football's greatest showpiece.

The murmurs of activity grew louder on Friday with the arrival of the teams for the pre-match press conferences and training. Atlético coach Simeone was first to address the media and did so in typically forthright fashion before taking his charges out for a sweltering afternoon session.

By the time Real Madrid took to the pitch, it was pleasantly balmy – a typical latter-stage UEFA Champions League evening as the light began to fade, floodlights flickered on and the anticipation levels began to rise.

The excitement spiked 24 hours later as American R&B star Alicia Keys ushered in the final with a spectacular set as part of the pre-match show. A Milano version of her worldwide hit New York went down a storm, with fans then treated to an Andrea Bocelli rendition of the UEFA Champions League anthem.

Then it was over to the teams, who served up a fascinating contest fuelled by the same derby passion seen in Lisbon two seasons before. Given Madrid's love affair with the UEFA Champions League and Atlético's exceptional progress under Simeone, you wouldn't put it past the Madrid rivals meeting again in Cardiff next term. 🌟

The match was close from start to finish.

16

Spanish teams have won the European Cup since the competition came into being in 1956 – more than any other country.

6

One-country finals:
**Real Madrid v Valencia (2000),
 Juventus v AC Milan (2003),
 Manchester United v Chelsea (2008),
 Borussia Dortmund v Bayern (2013),
 Real Madrid v Atlético (2014 and 2016).**

MILAN PLAYS THE PERFECT HOST

From its 14th-century Castello Sforzesco to the Piazza del Duomo, the Lombardy capital proved the ideal backdrop for the 2016 Champions Festival held from 26 to 29 May.



Milan smiled upon a wonderful 2016 Champions Festival and the festival smiled right back. For the handful of days when fans converged on the piazzas at the heart of the Lombardy capital, the sun beat down from a cloudless sky and the party atmosphere sizzled.

The beautiful celebration of football, friendship and fun was packed with supporters, not just of the two finalists from Madrid but of clubs from around the world. Often without any expectation of attending the final but with a love of the game and its personalities and history, they were inspired to travel to the host city to enjoy the spectacular Champions Festival.

One of the obvious bonuses of Milan, whose teams have won the European Champion Clubs' Cup ten times between them, is that it is a beautiful city. The Champions Festival stretched from inside the courtyard of the Castello Sforzesco all the way along Via Merchant and Via Dante to the stunning Piazza del Duomo, the site of Milan's famous cathedral.

The two sets of rival fans mingled peacefully while making the event colourful and noisy. It had all begun to take shape on the Thursday morning, two days before the match, as the Italian gospel choir, accompanied live by an orchestra, had welcomed AC Milan and Brazil legend Cafu into the Duomo square with the iconic Champions League trophy while its anthem soared up above the spires of the cathedral.

A blend of surprises

The festival was a blend of surprises, good food, music, big-screen entertainment, football stars, football games and new technologies just reaching the market, such as virtual reality. There were autograph sessions, ambassador football clinics, five-a-side competitions, free play sessions, a Young Champions tournament and a penalty shoot-out competition with former Dutch international Edgar Davids, a Champions League winner with AFC Ajax.

Superstar Italian DJ Benny Benassi topped the bill on the main stage on Friday evening before →



In the courtyard of the majestic Castello Sforzesco, children took centre stage for the whole of the Champions Festival.

CHAMPIONS FESTIVAL

fellow DJ Gaizka Mendieta, who played for Valencia CF the previous time the Champions League final was held in Milan, got the party started on the afternoon of the match with an hour-long set of music while fans danced and the sun lit up the square.

“Music and football are perfect partners,” said Mendieta. “The rhythm, the tempo, the creativity, the self expression – those ideas are just as important to music as football and vice versa. Then there’s the party element, the fact that fans want to sing and chant but they also like to dance and remember the beautiful moments of their Champions Festival experience every time in the future that they hear one of the records that I’ve played in my set here at Duomo.”

Other musical attractions included Prime Circle, South Africa’s most successful rock band; Lea Rue, the eclectic Belgian singer-songwriter who turned heads with her debut single ‘I Can’t Say No!;’ and singer Shelly Bonet who has performed several times as a special guest for US Grammy award winner Michael Bolton.

Mendieta also played in the Ultimate Champions, the tenth edition of this match between Champions League stars and legends and the first to feature women. Christian Karembu, Claude Makelele, Deco, David Trezeguet and Éric Abidal among others turned out for the World All-Stars. Their rivals, AC Milan & Inter Legends, coached by Ruud Gullit, included Roberto Carlos, Cafu, Sebastián Verón, Patrizia Panico, Pippo Inzaghi and Clarence Seedorf.

Social responsibility a priority

Blind football captivated fans at the festival as Bordeaux competed against Liguria in an exhibition game on the pitch next to the Castello Sforzesco. The game involves a ball fitted with a noise-making device, with players’ eyes covered to ensure a level playing field between blind and partially sighted footballers, while only the goalkeepers can see. The players move fearlessly on the pitch, with an impressive sense of space and sharp technical skills, always displaying a spirit of solidarity.

“To be part of the Champions Festival is an adventure,” said Toussaint Akpweh of the International Blind Sports Federation, one of UEFA’s social responsibility partners. “Most importantly it represents what all these athletes look for – to be recognised as sportsmen and footballers in their own right. The players do not belong to the world of disability; they belong to the world of football.”

After making their debut in Berlin in 2015, the European Amputee Football Federation (EAFF) returned to the Champions Festival



in Milan with two new sides – the national teams of Italy and France. The EAFF has 15 member countries: Belgium, England, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Republic of Ireland, Russia, Scotland, Spain, Turkey, and Ukraine. It gained UEFA support in April 2015 at its inaugural congress and has now become an active social responsibility partner.

Simon Baker, EAFF secretary general, shared his views on the event: “It is a great honour for the EAFF to play an international game on a platform such as the UEFA Champions League Festival 2016 in Milan. It is very important for us and for all our players to be a part of this great football family and to feel that football is really for all.

“Players at this level are very professional: they train very hard, like any player who gets the chance to represent his country – it is a very proud moment. What better way to inspire other amputees to get involved. Events like this are a great platform for our sport to be showcased, and to help with future sponsors, which are essential to the development of our game.”

Something Special

Another UEFA partner in action on the Castello Sforzesco mini-pitch was Special Olympics, who have been taking part in the Champions Festival since 2009. Four teams from the Lombardy region of Italy played unified football, which involves three players with learning disabilities and two without in a spirit of companionship and sportsmanship.

Active in more than 170 countries, Special Olympics is a global movement gathering children and adults with learning disabilities at sports activities alongside families and volunteers with the aim of creating a healthier,

more welcoming world for all. This year the Special Olympics athletes were also introduced to former internationals David Trezeguet and Gianluca Zambrotta.

David Evangelista, acting regional president and managing director of Special Olympics Europe Eurasia, said: “The experience that Special Olympics athletes enjoy is one they never forget as they get the opportunity to meet their football heroes and enjoy the support of family, fans and spectators pitchside. It’s a truly amazing experience for them on a huge international stage.”

Community groups were once more invited to be part of the Champions Festival, with 250 children from the Io Tifo Positivo (I Support Positively) schools project displaying their skills. Io Tifo Positivo promotes sport as a driver for social inclusion and education for young people and the project is supported by the Fondazione Candido Cannavò, the foundation named in honour of the former director of Italian sports paper La Gazzetta dello Sport.

Candido Cannavò’s son Alessandro masterminded the project and said: “Today’s parade was the highlight of many years of hard work. Being part of an important event like the Champions Festival is like a dream coming true. It’s a wonderful day for us – we could not have hoped for more.”

Io Tifo Positivo strives to foster a culture of sportsmanship among primary schoolchildren at an age when they are still open to positive messages and can transmit them back to their families. Its main aim is to discourage violence in sport, and in football in particular. “Our message is simple but very effective, and it is a timely message worldwide because violence in football is a problem everywhere,” Cannavò added. 🌍

The Champions Festival provided a showcase for football in all its forms, and gave fans the opportunity to admire the tightly guarded trophy at close range.

THE UEFA CHAMPIONS GALLERY

AC Milan and Internazionale legends came together for the opening of the UEFA Champions Gallery, a major attraction at the Champions Festival.

Massimo Ambrosini, Ivan Córdoba, Cafu and Dejan Stanković shared their memories with a crowd of stakeholders from the city of Milan and the media, hosted by journalist Gabriele Marcotti. There was also an opening message from UEFA’s director of competitions, Giorgio Marchetti.

The exhibition celebrated more than six decades of Europe’s top club competitions, with UEFA Women’s Champions League final ambassador Patrizia Panico also in attendance. The Champions Gallery welcomed more than 14,000 visitors in five days and made at least two of them very happy indeed: two Argentinians, as the 10,000th and 10,001st visitors to the gallery, left with a ticket each for the final.



WORLDWIDE APPEAL

No sooner had the curtain been drawn on the 2015/16 UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League than the number crunching began. As these statistics show, the popularity of UEFA's flagship club competitions extends the world over in more ways than one. Not only do they enjoy a worldwide following, but they

also attract the best players from all four corners of the world, with a grand total of 1,656 having played in this season's group stages. However, the statistics also show that the percentage of total playing time accounted for by players from UEFA member associations is on the rise, amounting to just under 80% in 2015/16.

Number of players by country who played in the group stages of the 2015/16 Champions League and Europa League



Number of players per confederation in the group stages over the last five seasons (2011/12–2015/16)

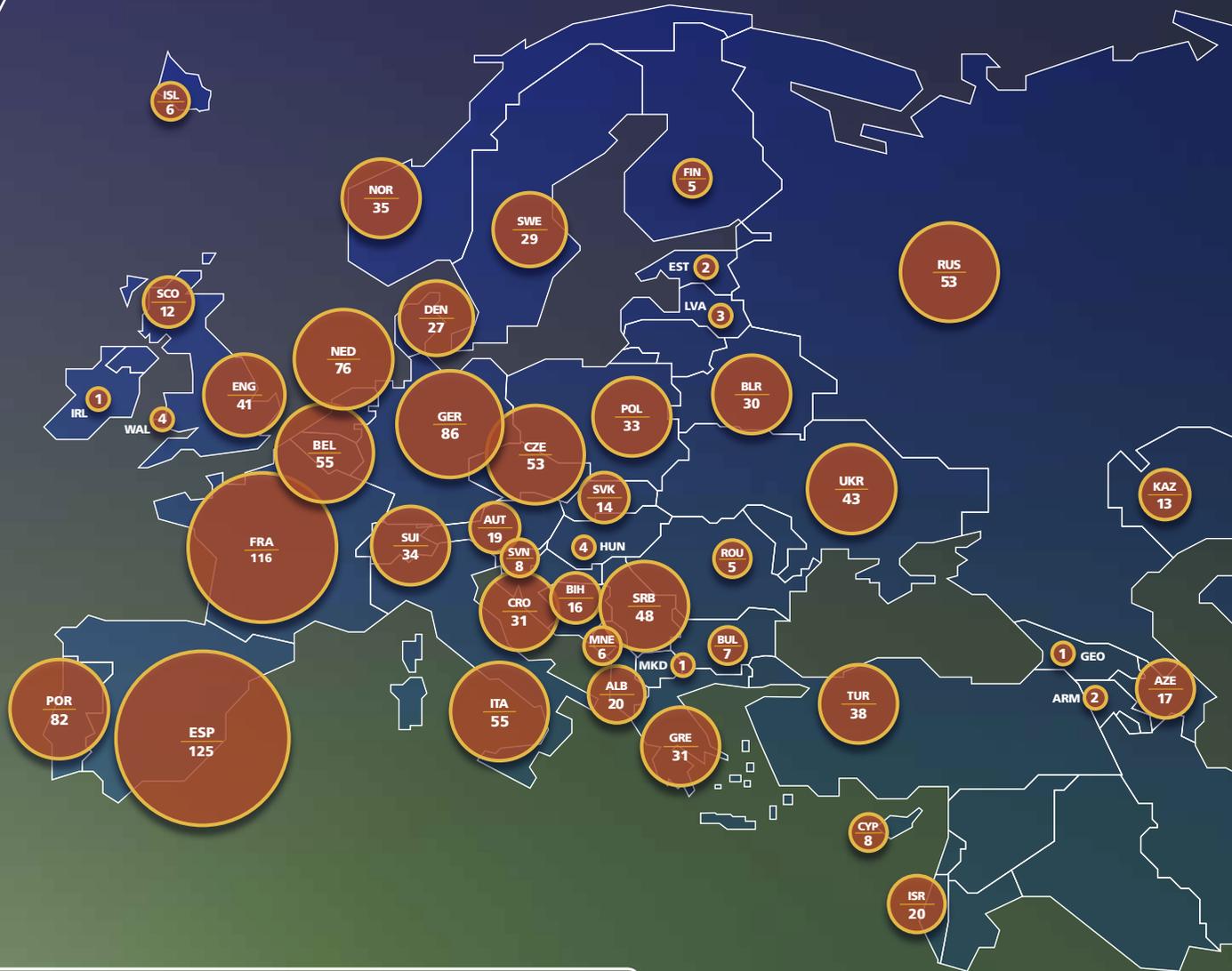


Players of **85** nationalities

58
UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

80
UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE

Including 41 non-European



Percentage of total playing time accounted for by players from UEFA member associations

FOOTBALL PARADISE AT THE FOOT OF THE ALPS

With the help of UEFA and FIFA, the Football Association of Slovenia (NZS) has built a new national football centre in an area of outstanding natural beauty where members of the royal family and Tito used to stay.



NZS

Historically, Slovenia's football infrastructure has generally failed to keep pace with the country's achievements in the game, with fans drawing jealous comparisons with the superior facilities available in other countries. In spite of that, the national football team has been phenomenally successful. In just 25 years of independence, Slovenia – a country with a population of a little over two million – has qualified for two World Cups and one EURO. Everyone remembers the country's historic qualification for EURO 2000 in Belgium and the Netherlands, the celebratory dances of Slovene football fans on the streets of Amsterdam, and the team's success in then reaching the World Cup in South Korea and Japan in 2002 and in South Africa in 2010. Slovenia almost made it to EURO 2016, as well, losing out to Ukraine in the play-offs. In recent years, the domestic club scene has been dominated by NK Maribor, who have qualified for the group stages of both the UEFA Champions League and the UEFA Europa League. Maribor's cult stadium, Stadion Ljudski vrt, is regularly full to bursting with enthusiastic sports fans – just as Ljubljana's Stadion Bežigrad used to be before it was closed in 2008.

In 2010, Stadion Stožice was built in the Slovene capital, becoming the country's largest stadium, with a capacity of 15,796. Stadion Ljudski vrt, which was renovated in 2008, can hold up to 12,861 spectators, while Športni park pod Golovcem in Celje has a capacity of 13,059.

Stadiums are one thing; the national football centre in Brdo is something else entirely and has a lot more to offer, as it combines a training centre with educational and other footballing activities at various levels. The NZS has decided to lead by example in this regard and has built a state-of-the-art technical centre with help from UEFA and FIFA.

From royal estate to football idyll

The old adage that if you want something done properly you should do it yourself was taken literally by the NZS, which drew up its own plans for a national football centre in one of Slovenia's most idyllic locations. Brdo Castle was built more than 500 years ago and was owned by the Yugoslav royal family between 1935 and 1941. The royals undertook a thorough renovation of the castle and its grounds, turning Brdo into one of the most beautiful estates in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. During the socialist period, the castle became the property of the state and was turned into a residence for the Yugoslav president, Josip Broz Tito. He visited Brdo regularly until his death in May 1980.

Today, Brdo Castle is used by the Slovene government for official meetings and other events. Guests can soak up the beauty of the unspoilt →

The 25,000m² state-of-the-art facilities on the Brdo estate, near Kranj, 30km north of the capital, Ljubljana.



Getty Images

Having made it as far as the play-offs for EURO 2016 and lost the first leg 2-0, Cesar scores in the 11th minute of the return leg to give Slovenia a glimmer of hope, only for Ukraine to dash those hopes by equalising in added time.

natural surroundings, try the local cuisine and enjoy a range of activities (such as a round of golf on the nearby golf course). From now on, it will also be a place where footballers can hone their skills in peace. Here, the country's national football teams, which used to prepare for matches in various locations around the country, will get exactly what they need: peace and quiet, good training conditions and clean air. Despite its idyllic surroundings, the technical centre has good access to transport links and infrastructure, being located close to a hotel, an airport and the motorway.

Before it could build the centre, though, the NZS first had to convince the Slovene government and its officials. After all, the Brdo estate is located in an area of outstanding natural beauty and is a site of great cultural significance. The government eventually allowed the NZS to build on the site of an abandoned hippodrome, knocking down stables and other unused buildings. A conservation plan was drawn up, and a landscape architect produced designs for the surrounding area. In May 2014,

the authorities finally approved the plans, and the construction of the centre went very smoothly, with everything proceeding according to plan.

Support from UEFA and FIFA

This €8.5m project was mainly financed by UEFA's HatTrick project and FIFA's Goal project, with the two governing bodies covering 90% of all costs. Head coach Srečko Katanec was extremely impressed with the results, saying: "These are facilities we can take pride in, also in comparison with other national teams." Another very important advantage is that players no longer have to spend hours on buses travelling to training and back. Team captain Boštjan Cesar explained that the players were very happy and that the centre represented a major step forward for Slovene football.

However, the centre – which consists of pitches, a multi-purpose sports facility and the NZS's headquarters – will not just be home to the country's national teams. The NZS will also use it to train coaches and referees and implement

SLOVENIAN FOOTBALL IN NUMBERS (2015)

38,075
REGISTERED PLAYERS
IN SLOVENIA

23,467
PLAYERS AGED 18
OR UNDER



NZS

The next challenge for Slovenia will be to host UEFA Futsal EURO 2018.

projects such as its Football for All ('Nogomet za vse') initiative. The centre will also host local clubs' matches and youth football. What is more, the facilities will be available for foreign clubs to hire for training camps.

The centre boasts three grass pitches, as well as other grass training areas, a training ground for goalkeepers and warm-up areas. The multi-purpose facility next to the pitch contains four changing rooms for players and referees, medical rooms, a massage room, a fitness centre, saunas and

jacuzzis. On the first floor is a glass pavilion with a roof terrace and a view of the pitches, which can be used by guests or journalists during open training sessions, or for press conferences, receptions, seminars, etc. The stand holds 400 people, and the NZS's headquarters are just 200m away. The new training centre will help the NZS to reduce its running costs, since the association organises dozens of events and training sessions for coaches and referees throughout the year, and these will now all take place at Brdo Castle.

ALEKSANDER ČEFERIN, NZS PRESIDENT



'One of the most beautiful training centres in Europe!'

Is the centre everything you expected it to be?

The players, the head coach and the rest of us are all thrilled. The centre is everything we expected it to be and much more besides. It is one of the most beautiful training centres in Europe and we are really proud of it.

Until now, the country's football infrastructure has not kept pace with the national team's achievements. You took matters into your own hands and laid the foundations for future success.

We have tried our best and lobbied umbrella organisations in Europe to help us. If the country's football infrastructure does not substantially

improve, it will be difficult to produce great players. However, much has been done in the last ten years, and more is planned for the future.

Facilities are one thing, but the centre's market potential is something else. It is in a truly idyllic location and is close to the airport. Have foreign clubs shown any interest in using the centre for training?

The centre has great potential. It is in a superb location and has top-quality pitches and excellent facilities. Everyone who has come to see it has been impressed. I don't want to name names, but I can tell you that some major European clubs have expressed an interest.

A role model for Europe and the world

A ceremony was held on 6 May to mark the official opening of the centre. That inauguration ceremony, which began with paratroopers landing on the pitch bearing the flags of UEFA, FIFA, the NZS and the Republic of Slovenia, was attended by the Slovene prime minister, Miro Cerar, the FIFA President, Gianni Infantino, the UEFA General Secretary ad interim, Theodore Theodoridis, and about 500 other guests.

Infantino, who had followed the project since the beginning, when he was still UEFA General Secretary, was delighted with the outcome: "Football is all about solidarity, respect and responsibility. And I would also like to add 'leadership' to that list. Aleksander Čeferin and his colleagues at the NZS have demonstrated great leadership, showing what can be done if you work in a professional manner, with passion and responsibility. Thank you for this. Slovenia has had many excellent results in the field of sport – including football. You can be proud of all your children playing football. This is the beginning of another beautiful football story."

The Slovene prime minister, a football lover himself, spoke of a historic milestone in the development of the Brdo estate, one of Slovenia's natural gems, and the fact that Slovene football had made impressive progress over the last 25 years. "In sport, Slovenia really is a superpower. I am convinced that these fantastic new facilities will contribute to the success of numerous Slovene football teams of all ages in the future."

Theodoridis also praised the centre: "This centre shows what can be achieved with the support of the development programmes run by FIFA and UEFA and represents a great example of good practice." Infantino concurred: "This outstanding centre is state of the art – top class. It will be used by UEFA as a role model within Europe and by FIFA as a role model at world level. This shows what can be done when national associations work in a responsible manner for the benefit of football. This is a great achievement, and we will see the results and benefits of this centre in the future." The opening ceremony was attended by some 20 other members of the European football family. 🌐

SECURITY CONFERENCE FOR GROUP STAGE OPPONENTS

WOLFGANG GRAMANN

 In mid-May, just weeks before the opening match of EURO 2016, Austria's federal interior ministry and the Austrian Football Association (ÖFB) invited politicians, representatives of police authorities and security chiefs from the national associations of the other countries in Austria's group (i.e. Hungary, Portugal and Iceland) to attend a security conference in Vienna.

The participants spent a full day discussing security measures for the tournament and agreeing on the strategies to be adopted. The fruits of their labours were then presented to the media at a press conference led by Austria's interior minister, Wolfgang Sobotka. As a memento of the occasion, the ÖFB's president, Leo Windtner, gave everyone who took part in the press conference a shirt signed by the Austrian national team.



Leo Windtner welcomed the fact that the ÖFB, the federal interior ministry and Sports Media Austria had established a joint task force back in December 2015 with a view to devising strategies to ensure that the various target groups – such as the Austrian team, the media, sponsors and, of course, fans – would be able to travel to and from France in complete safety. Between 60,000 and 70,000 Austrian fans are expected to travel to

France for the tournament, with about 45,000 fans having obtained tickets from UEFA for the team's group stage matches. All in all, a total of about 200,000 football fans are expected to cross Austria on their way to France. Another major challenge for security officials will be the large-scale public viewing of matches back home in Austria, with more than 300 such events having been registered with the Austrian state broadcaster.

EUROPEAN UNDER-17 CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS IN BAKU

NUBAR AGHAZADA

 Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, was a capital of football from 5 to 21 May, when it played host to this year's European Under-17 Championship final tournament.

A new tournament record was set at the opening match, when a whopping 33,000 spectators poured into Baku Olympic Stadium to watch the hosts take on Portugal. Before kick-off, the fans in the stadium and those watching on TV were treated to a magnificent opening ceremony involving dancers and traditional Azerbaijani music. The official 2016 tournament anthem We Must Win ('Biz qalib olmalıyıq') was also performed by Azerbaijani pop singer and tournament ambassador Roya Aykhan and Baku-

born singer-songwriter Miri Yusif. The 31 final tournament matches were held at four different stadiums around the capital – Baku Olympic Stadium, 8km Stadium, Dalga Arena and Qarabağ Stadium – attracting the attention of local and foreign media alike. More than 200 journalists were accredited to cover the matches, most of which were broadcast on Eurosport 1 and 2. CBC Sport TV also aired the matches in Azerbaijan.

Neighbours Portugal and Spain met in the final at 8 KM Stadium on 21 May, when Portugal were crowned champions after winning 5-4 on penalties, rounding off a successful tournament in Baku, and ushering in a spectacular summer of football in Azerbaijan!



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

www.nfsbih.ba

ZRINJSKI CROWNED CHAMPIONS FOR THE FOURTH TIME

FUAD KRVAVAC



HŠK Zrinjski have been crowned champions of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the fourth time in what was the final season under the current format. As of autumn 2016, the Bosnian and Herzegovinian premier league will be reduced from 16 to 12 clubs, with FK Borac, FK Slavija, NK Travnik, FK Rudar Prijedor, FK Drina Zvornik and FK Velež all being relegated at the end of 2015/16. In a poll conducted by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Football Federation (NFSBiH), Zajko Zeba (FK Sloboda Tuzla) was voted player of the year and Goran Karačić (HŠK Zrinjski) was voted the best goalkeeper. The season's top scorer was Leon Benko (FK Sarajevo) with 18 goals.

This season's cup winners were FK Radnik Bijeljina, who had never even reached the final before. In contrast, their opponents, FK Sloboda Tuzla,



were playing in their seventh cup final. Following a 1-1 draw in the first leg in Tuzla, FK Radnik Bijeljina won the second leg 3-0.

In the women's competitions, SFK 2000 Sarajevo did the double, winning the league for the 14th time in a row and beating ZFK Bumerang 6-0 in the cup final.

The national Under-17 side recently competed in the final round of the European Under-17 Championship in Azerbaijan, the first time they had ever reached that stage of the competition. They lost 2-0 to Austria and 3-1 to Germany, before carving out a 2-1 win against Ukraine, finishing in third place in Group B.

Meanwhile, the national Under-16 team won a UEFA development tournament held at the NFSBiH training centre in Zenica and a second venue in Dobož (near Kakanj). Toni Karačić's team beat Montenegro 8-7 on penalties (following

a 0-0 draw), before defeating Lithuania 1-0. Despite losing 2-0 to Slovenia in their final game, they won the tournament overall.

The Under-16 girls recently participated in a UEFA development tournament in Buku (Hungary). Ilija Lucić's team beat the hosts 1-0 in their opening match, before losing 3-0 to the Republic of Ireland. They then defeated Slovakia 4-0 to secure second place in the tournament, which was won by the Republic of Ireland.

At the end of May, a third friendly tournament was held at the Stanišići Ethno Village in Bijeljina, featuring the youth teams of 16 clubs from the former Yugoslavia. The winners were FK Vojvodina, who overcame HNK Rijeka 1-0 in the final. Mihajlo Nešković (FK Vojvodina) was voted player of the tournament, his team-mate Slobodan Tedić was the top scorer with 5 goals, and Ivo Pandur (HNK Rijeka) was voted the best goalkeeper. The 16 teams were: GNK Dinamo Zagreb, HNK Rijeka, NK Osijek and NK Zagreb from Croatia; FK Vardar from FYR Macedonia; NK Olimpija Ljubljana from Slovenia; FK Budućnost Podgorica and FK Sutjeska from Montenegro; FK Crvena zvezda, FK Partizan, OFK Beograd and FK Vojvodina from Serbia; and FK Željezničar, FK Sarajevo, FK Velež and FK Sloboda Tuzla from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

BULGARIA

www.bfunion.bg

NATIONAL TEAM KICK STARTS 'LET'S KICK' CAMPAIGN

YORDAN GROZDANOV



Bulgaria's national team recently kicked off the Bulgarian Football Union's Let's Kick campaign, designed to support and develop children's, women's and youth football in Bulgaria. Ivaylo Petev's team played an exhibition match against 'FC Concordia' at Vasil Levski national stadium. The FC Concordia team comprised children looked after by the Concordia Bulgaria Foundation, which has been offering social services and support for children at risk

since 2008. The Bulgaria team included captain Ivelin Popov, Ivaylo Chochev, Bozhidar Mitrev and Dimitar Rangelov, and the match was officiated by UEFA referee Hristiana Guteva. It was a very emotional occasion for the children, for whom playing with their footballing idols at the national stadium was a dream come true. After the match they received signed Bulgaria shirts and other souvenirs. The national team then started preparing for the Kirin Cup in Japan.



The next Let's Kick event was a 'mini-EURO 2016', also held at the national stadium, on 1 and 2 June. It involved 24 schools, representing the 24 teams competing at EURO 2016 in France.

'WE MUST RESPECT EACH OTHER'S DIFFERENCES'

TOMISLAV PACAK

 Several youth and women's football camps were held in Croatia this spring, but one in particular – the fifth national minorities football camp – stood out as being unique in world football. Held in the city of Cakovec, in the north of the country, it brought together around 160 boys and girls, aged 7 to 16, from various different ethnic groups.

Davor Šuker, the president of the Croatian Football Federation (HNS), officially opened the camp and played with the children, who were thrilled to be kicking a ball around with the 1998 Golden Shoe winner. "The easiest way to increase tolerance in society is through children and sport," the HNS president said. "We have to help each other, work together, provide footballs, and teach discipline. It is important that children learn the values of sport, which are vital to success in all areas of life and work. As a society, we have to be more tolerant. We have to act humanely towards everyone, and respect each other's differences."

The HNS also organised a stadium safety and security conference in Zagreb recently, which was attended by around 50 prominent guests, including Alpine ski racer and four time Olympic gold-medallist Janica Kostelić, who was recently appointed as deputy sports minister. Meanwhile, the HNS academy brought together over 100 goalkeeping coaches

for its second international goalkeeping conference.

Over on the pitch, May was a month of team and individual achievements: GNK Dinamo Zagreb won their 11th consecutive league title and later added this season's cup to their trophy collection, Real Madrid CF's Luka Modrić became the first Croatian to play in and win two UEFA Champions League finals (joined this time round by Mateo Kovačić), and Zorislav Srebrić, a long-standing HNS employee and a living legend among Croatian football executives, received the UEFA Order of Merit in diamond. Congratulations to them all!



UNDER-15 GIRLS HOPING TO SPRING ANOTHER SURPRISE

TERJI NIELSEN

 Last year, the Faroe Islands Football Association (FSF) established its first-ever national Under-15 girls' team. At their first tournament in Brøndby, Denmark, the girls sprang a major surprise, winning the event under the guidance of coach Svenn Olsen.

This year, the girls have a new coach in Bárá Skaale Klakstein, herself a very experienced player at both domestic and international level. Over the last few months, she has been working with a large squad in preparation for the challenges that lie ahead.

The squad has now been trimmed down, and at the beginning of August the team will travel to only their second tournament ever. This time it will not be in Denmark, where they did so well last year. Instead, the FSF has decided to enter the girls in the Baltic Cup in Riga, Latvia, where they will play Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Having a national Under-15 team has been a huge source of motivation for many girls in the Faroe Islands. The number of girls playing football is rising steadily, and this will hopefully have a positive impact on results.



GEORGIA

www.gff.ge

SEASON ENDS WITH ANOTHER DINAMO TRIUMPH

OTAR GIORGADZE



The Georgian football season ended with another double for FC Dinamo Tbilisi. Under the guidance of Slovak head coach Juraj Jarábek, who took over from Gia Geguchadze during the winter break, Dinamo won their 16th domestic league title and their 13th Georgian Cup.

At the initiative of the Georgian Football Federation (GFF), the final of the Georgian Cup (also known as the Davit Kipiani Cup) was held outside the capital for the first time. Consequently, Dinamo were crowned 2015/16 cup winners in Kutaisi, in the western region of Imereti, after beating FC Sioni Bolnisi 1-0.

One of the main architects of Dinamo's success this season was 38-year-old Aleksandre Iashvili. The veteran forward, who spent most of his career in Germany with SC Freiburg, Karlsruher SC and VfL Bochum 1848, played his last professional game wearing the shirt of the club where he first made a name for himself, having made his debut with Dinamo in 1993. Iashvili thus finished his career with a league-cup double and the 2015 Georgian player of the year award. After his final game, against FC Shukura Kobuleti, the GFF president, Levan Kobiashvili, presented him with a specially designed shirt with the number 9 on the back, which Iashvili wore



67 times for the Georgian national team. After a year's absence, Dinamo are keen to make their mark in UEFA Champions League qualifying. They will enter the 2016/17 European campaign with a new-look team and have promised their fans a successful season. Georgia will be represented in UEFA Europa League qualifying by FC Dila Gori, FC Samtredia, and Chikhura Sachkhere.

GERMANY

www.dfb.de

FIRST AMATEUR FINALS DAY IS A BIG SUCCESS

HENRIK LERCH



With 17 matches spanning almost eight hours of live television, boasting fantastic goals, tense periods of extra time, gripping penalty shoot-outs and a few shock results, Germany's first Amateur Finals Day on 28 May was a resounding success. This major footballing event, which was organised by the German Football Association (DFB) and its regional associations, in cooperation with public broadcaster ARD, had peak viewing figures of 2 million and an average audience of 1.37 million, with cameras present at the finals of all 17 regional cup competitions at the same time.

The DFB's president, Reinhard Grindel, described Amateur Finals Day as "an opportunity to celebrate amateur football and the volunteers who make it possible". Rainer Koch, the DFB's first vice-president with responsibility for amateur football and president of the Bavarian Football Association, said: "I am delighted that so many people tuned in to watch Amateur Finals Day. By organising this event, ARD, the DFB and the regional associations have



sent out a strong message regarding the importance of amateur football."

ARD started broadcasting at 12.05 and ended shortly before 20.00, almost eight hours later. The finals were divided into three blocks, with matches kicking off at 12.30, 14.30 and 17.00, and many were very tense affairs. For example, former top-flight side FC Hansa Rostock (now in the third tier of German football) needed penalties to overcome regional league side FC Schönberg 95 (i.e. a fourth-tier team), winning the shoot-out 4-3. Penalties were also required to determine the winners of the Middle Rhine Cup, with underdogs FC Viktoria Köln of the fourth tier overcoming SC Fortuna Köln of the third tier in a Cologne derby.

A crowd of 17,000 turned out to watch regional league side Rot-Weiss Essen host

Wuppertaler SV of the fifth tier in the final of the Lower Rhine Cup. The hosts ran out 3-0 winners, thereby qualifying, alongside Hansa Rostock and Viktoria Köln, for the first round of the 2016/17 DFB Cup, the draw for which was made on 18 June.

They were joined in the first round of the cup – which FC Bayern München recently won for a record 18th time – by a number of very small clubs, including BFC Preussen (Berlin) and FC 08 Villingen (South Baden) of the sixth tier, and Bremer SV (Bremen), 1. FC Germania Eggestorf/Langreder (Lower Saxony), SC Hauenstein (Rhineland-Palatinate/Saar) and FV Ravensburg (Baden-Württemberg) of the fifth tier.

"Amateur Finals Day was a great success, showcasing the full spectrum of German football," said Steffen Simon, ARD commentator and sports editor. "The positive response and the rising viewing figures in the course of the day show that this event has a bright future and will not be a one-off."

GREECE

www.epo.gr

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORT

PANOS KORKODILOS



The 24th International Congress on Physical Education and Sport was held in Komotini, in the northeast of Greece, from 20 to 22 May. The event is organised every year by the school of physical education and sport science at the Democritus University of Thrace, in close cooperation with the Hellenic Football Federation (EPO). The theme of this year's presentations was children and young people in physical activity and sport, and a lot of discussions centred on football. The EPO is working ever more closely with the school of physical education and sport science, which also hosted a recent Fitness in Football seminar. This, too, is set to become an annual event.

Giorgos Girtzikis, the president of the EPO, opened the congress. "We are living in times that require complete professionalism and specialist training. After all these years in football, my experience has taught me that when scientific knowledge and practical experience are combined, the results are excellent. Like all national associations around the world, we want to work closely with sports universities. I hope that we will strengthen our cooperation with the Democritus University of Thrace and other universities around the country, in order to provide football with the most qualified people in the field."

HUNGARY

www.mlsz.hu / en.mlsz.hu

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL ON THE UP

MÁRTON DINNYÉS



Zsanett Jakabfi

Sportsfile

Hungarian women's football has improved significantly in recent years, as the results of the senior national team go to show. Edina Markó's side are currently third in their European Championship qualifying group.

Many of Hungary's female internationals are also enjoying successful club careers. Zsanett Jakabfi, for example, is a regular in the starting line-up of this season's UEFA Champions League runners-up and DFB Cup winners, VfL Wolfsburg, and played a key role in their

recent success, scoring both goals in the cup final victory. Fanni Vágó and Lilla Sipos were also cup winners with Austrian side FSK St. Pölten-Spratzern this season, with Vágó scoring the winning goal in the final.

Hungary's women's clubs had a successful season that culminated in Ferencvárosi TC and MTK Hungária playing both legs of their thrilling championship decider live on national TV. Ferencváros, who have five foreign players in their squad, also won the Hungarian Cup, beating second-division Budapest Honvéd in the final.

The statistics are also reassuring at grassroots and youth level. The number of girls involved in the OTP Bank Bozsik youth development programme has broken the 20,000 barrier, a third of participants in this season's fair play cup for schools were girls, and as of next season it will be mandatory for even more men's clubs to enter a team in the women's championship too.

GIBRALTAR

www.gibraltarfifa.com

GIBRALTAR JOINS FIFA

STEVEN GONZALEZ



On 13 May the Gibraltar Football Association (GFA) became the 211th member of FIFA, the governing body of world football.

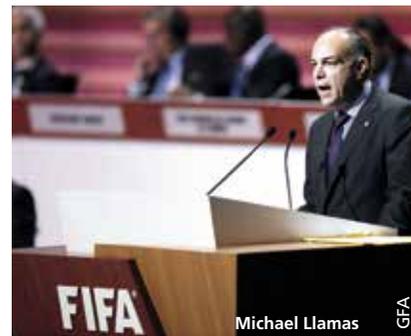
The GFA entered the international fold after its admission to UEFA in 2013 and the resurrection of its original 1997 application to join FIFA. This was followed by an award by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) on 27 April this year, instructing FIFA to take all necessary measures to admit the GFA without further delay.

A delegation from the GFA travelled to Mexico City – the venue for the 66th FIFA Congress, held on 12 and 13 May – to carry out intensive face-to-face lobbying with confederations and national associations outside Europe in order to secure enough votes for the application to pass.

The GFA is delighted that this lobbying, together with the CAS award, resulted in an overwhelming majority voting to admit the association as FIFA's 211th member.

Since 13 May a lot of work has got under way to implement much-needed changes to the domestic game in time for the new season, in conjunction with the GFA's member clubs and with the support of both UEFA and FIFA.

The GFA would like to express its gratitude and sincerest thanks to all its friends at UEFA and the other UEFA member associations who have been so supportive and helpful in its quest to join FIFA. This unconditional support is something that the GFA will never forget!



Michael Llamas

GFA

ITALY

www.figc.it

ROUND TABLES ON THE FUTURE OF FOOTBALL

DIEGO ANTENOZIO

 The sustainability and future development of football; maximising the value of the national team's identity; increasing the international reach of the Italian Football Federation (FIGC); promoting women's football; the increasing importance of the internet in football; the evolution of stadiums and facilities; training and

education ... these are just some of the topics that were discussed by 17 so-called 'play teams' during KickOff, a round-table workshop held in Cesena, which brought together participants from Italy and abroad with a wide range of expertise and experience to tackle various issues facing football.

Now in its second year, the event

was declared a huge success by FIGC CEO Michele Uva. "It has once again generated some fascinating ideas," he said. "It is now down to the federation to bring these ideas together, analyse them and get new projects off the ground."

The event kicked off, literally and figuratively, with the final of Rete! (meaning 'goal'), a tournament for young refugees living in reception centres across Italy, which was hosted by the San Patrignano community near Rimini. Giovanni Malagò, chair of Italy's Olympic Committee (CONI), and FIGC president Carlo Tavecchio were on hand to present the medals at the end.

The participants then assembled for their round tables. KickOff 2016 saw a number of new initiatives, including KickOff Talk, a live debate at the Bonci Theatre on the topic of courage, which included contributions from Olympic gold-medallists Manuela Di Centa (skiing) and Diana Bianchedi (fencing), as well as designer Fabrizio Giugiaro and architect Mark Fenwick.

The key benefits of this three-day event can be seen in the cross-fertilisation of ideas and the struggle to break football out of its own virtual echo chamber. With the end of the workshop, the discussion has now moved online, where the 'play teams' will continue to explore new ideas relating to the future of Italian football. To find out more, search the Apple Store or Google Play for "KickOff FIGC" and download the official KickOff 2016 app.



Getty Images

LATVIA

www.lff.lv

GUNTIS INDRIKSONS RE-ELECTED AS PRESIDENT

TOMS ĀRMANIS

 Guntis Indriksone was re-elected as president of the Latvian Football Federation (LFF) at this year's congress, which was held at the end of April and attended by representatives of 97 of the 105 LFF members. Indriksone – one of two candidates standing for election – received 86% of the votes, giving him a clear mandate to continue leading the federation for a sixth term in

office, having been first elected in 1996.

The LFF was founded in 1921 and had seven different presidents during Latvia's first period of independence (1921–40). There have been three different presidents at the helm since the country regained independence in 1990. The congress also admitted 14 new members and held elections for the board.



NO TO RACISM

VAIDOTAS JANUŠKA



 The Lithuanian Football Federation (LFF) has sent out an anti-racism message at two major football events this spring: the LFF Cup final and the national men's team's first home match of the year.

At the cup final, which took place in Telsiai on 15 May, the two teams – FK Žalgiris and FK Trakai – posed for a photo together before the match.

Two weeks later, the Lithuanian and Estonian national teams followed

suit prior to their Baltic Cup match in Klaipeda. The Baltic Cup, which also features Latvia, is one of the oldest national team competitions in Europe, having first been contested back in 1928.

END OF AN ERA

ALEX VELLA

 The FA Trophy – traditionally presented to the winners of Malta's main annual knockout competition, the Maltese Cup – was recently held aloft in victory for the final time.

On 14 May, after 82 years and 78 Maltese Cup competitions, the handsome solid silver trophy was presented for the last time. Fittingly, its final winners were also its first: Sliema Wanderers FC.

The trophy has its roots in the historic links between the Malta Football Association (MFA) and The Football Association (FA) in England, which pre-date the First World War.

In May 1933, a group of Maltese supporters travelled to Rome with English flags and banners to cheer on the England team in a friendly against Italy. The game ended in a 1-1 draw, with the Maltese providing vociferous and very



welcome support on the day.

That gesture prompted The FA to donate a silver trophy to their Maltese counterparts in recognition of the group's support during the match.

For many years, the Maltese Cup was contested only by Malta's top-flight clubs. However, a few years ago the competition was opened up to all MFA-affiliated clubs on the islands of Malta

and Gozo, along the lines of England's FA Cup. It was somehow appropriate that Sliema, one of Malta's top teams, should be the final recipients of the historic silver trophy, given that they won the inaugural competition back in 1935.

They have now won the Maltese Cup a record 21 times. A new trophy bearing most of the features of its predecessor will be presented as of next season.

MOLDOVA

www.fmf.md

ZARIA WIN MOLDOVAN CUP

PRESS OFFICE



The 25th Moldovan Cup final, which took place on 25 May in Chisinau, pitted FC Milsami Orhei against FC Zaria Bălți. Following a dramatic match in front of a crowd of 9,000 spectators, Zaria lifted the Moldovan Cup for the first time in their history, having seen off former winners Milsami Orhei 1-0 after extra time. Zaria captain Alexandru Onica was handed the trophy by Julien Ducarroz, chief executive of competition sponsors Orange Moldova.

The only goal of the game was scored in the 99th minute by Zaria forward Gheorghe Boghiu – who, in a cruel twist of fate, is also Milsami Orhei's all-time record goalscorer. "Yes, I have had some great times with Milsami Orhei, but that's all in the past. Zaria are my team now. They are from my home city of Balti, so I am delighted to have helped them win their first-ever trophy. Special thanks go to our army of 2,000 supporters, who roared us on to victory," Boghiu said.

"The atmosphere in the stadium was

unforgettable. Thanks to our fans, it was like a home match for us. We played very well, with great team spirit. Although our opponents were favourites, I think we deserved to win," said Zaria's Ukrainian head coach, Igor Rakhaiev, at the post-match press conference.

For the fourth final in a row, a foreign referee took charge of the game. This

time, Paweł Raczkowski from Poland was the man with the whistle, and he did a great job.

Just days after the match, Rakhaiev's contract with Zaria came to an end. The new coach will be appointed soon, and one of his first tasks will be to lead Zaria in the first qualifying round of the UEFA Europa League.



Dumitru Brînzan

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

www.fai.ie

COACHING CHANGES AT YOUTH LEVEL

STEPHEN FINN



The Football Association of Ireland (FAI) has recently announced changes to its coaching line-up at youth level. Colin O'Brien (pictured), who has been in charge of the Republic of Ireland's Under-15 boys' team since 2013, is to become the head coach of the national Under-17 team, while Jim Crawford, who until now has been Paul Doolin's assistant with the national Under-19 side, will take over as head coach of the Under-18s. Both men enjoyed successful playing careers before moving into coaching and have excelled in that new environment – initially as assistant coaches and more recently as head coaches.



FAI Sportsfile

The FAI's high performance director, Ruud Dokter, feels the appointments are a big step forward in the development of Ireland's international youth players. "Colin has been an international coach with the FAI for many years, and he has done great work with the Under-15s. He now steps up to the Under-17s, and we are very pleased to have him take on that role," Dokter said. "He is an expert in international youth football, and it is the right time for him to take on this new challenge. He knows the

players and the international environment, and he will now get to experience competitive UEFA games.

"This is also an exciting opportunity for Jim. He becomes the head coach of a team that we consider to be very important in our age-group training programme, and Jim has experience from his time with the Under-19s and the Under-18 home-based teams. Jim is also a long-serving coach with the FAI, and his knowledge of the international arena will be vital as he helps to prepare players for the Under-19 squad, where he worked closely with Paul Doolin.

"Both Colin and Jim have proved to be excellent coaches, so it is a natural fit for them to step up to these new roles. I look forward to working with them over the coming months and years."

SPECIALIST WOMEN'S FOOTBALL AND FUTSAL COACHING COURSES

PAUL ZAHARIA

 Under its strategic development plan for the period 2015–20, one of the objectives set by the Romanian Football Federation (FRF) is the development of women's football and futsal. This is clearly impossible without skilled coaches, so the FRF's coaching school has just concluded its first ever UEFA B diploma courses targeting these two areas of the game.

The women's football course began in April 2015 and comprised three modules. Two of them were held at the FRF's national training centre in Mogosoaia, with the other one taking place in Cluj-Napoca, the Transylvanian city which is home to both Romanian champions CFF Olimpia (who have dominated Romanian women's football for a number of years and have participated in the UEFA Women's Champions League) and the head coach of the women's national team.

Under the watchful eye of a well-known and highly experienced UEFA and FIFA instructor, Monika Staab from Germany, 24 women started the course and 17 finished it. Significantly, the list of participants included a number of current internationals (Ștefania Vătafu, Mara Bătea, Ioana Bortan, Andreea Corduneanu and Adina Giurgiu), who are already looking to the future and gaining experience with local youth teams. This first cohort of qualified women's football coaches will surely result in an increase in the number of registered female players and, in time, a continuation of the progress currently being observed at international level.

In contrast, Romania have already qualified for three Futsal EUROs, but those achievements are not reflected in the number of registered players, especially when it comes to younger players. This spring, 11 people successfully completed the FRF's UEFA B diploma course for futsal



coaches, which began in June 2015 and comprised three modules plus exams. Several foreign futsal specialists were invited to come and lecture on the course, including UEFA expert Mićo Martić and Sito Rivera from Spain (who used to be the head coach of Romania's national futsal team and is now in charge of the Hungarian national team).

These are obviously very early days in the coaching of futsal and women's football. However, the interest that has been shown in the FRF's courses and the results which have been achieved so far without specialist coaches mean that Romania can legitimately aspire to a bright future in these two areas, looking forward to improved performances and results at international level and the establishment of solid foundations across the country at grassroots level.

A BUSY SPRING SCHEDULE

MATTEO ROSSI

 The San Marino Football Federation (FSGC) had a busy schedule of international tournaments this spring. As well as the latter stages of its two major national competitions – the Coppa Titano and the league championship – San Marino organised and hosted a UEFA U16 development tournament and a UEFA Regions' Cup preliminary round mini-tournament, both of which required considerable organisational skills.

The first of these tournaments, which is dedicated to the stars of tomorrow, was held from 12 to 17 May and featured the U16 national teams of San Marino, Albania, Andorra and FYR Macedonia. The matches took place at the San Marino Stadium and the Stadio di Montecchio. FYR Macedonia

claimed top spot, finishing with nine points, while Albania were second with five points; San Marino finished third with three points and Andorra took last place with one point. The event was staged in the true spirit of fair play and sportsmanship. Only twice was a referee required to show a white card, which was introduced especially for this tournament, and was used to expel players from the field of play for eight minutes in the event that their protests overstepped the mark or they failed to show respect to the officials or their opponents.

The Regions' Cup tournament, which took place from 3 to 7 June, is a tournament for amateurs who have never played the professional game, making San Marino the perfect host. Joining the San Marino B Team for the event were

teams from the South Wales Football Association (Wales), Xanthi (Greece) and ZSMK (Kazakhstan). The FSGC worked for several weeks in the run-up to both events to ensure they lived up to previous editions and to prove to football fans that, despite its size, the San Marino Federation is capable of organising important international tournaments in a professional manner.



SCOTLAND

www.scottishfa.co.uk

STARS OF THE FUTURE TAKE CENTRE STAGE

DAVID CHILDS



Scotland's stars of the future recently took centre stage at the Scottish Cup final when the first batch of players graduated from the Scottish Football Association's performance schools ahead of the showpiece match between Rangers FC and Hibernian FC.

Eighty-three boys and girls each received a medal and a certificate of achievement, having completed four years of football education at one of seven schools across Scotland.

Of those graduates, 20 have represented Scotland at youth level, including Kieran Freeman of St John's High School in Dundee, who represented Scotland in the final round of the European Under-17 Championship in Azerbaijan in May.

Both of the Scottish Cup finalists

were represented at the ceremony, with Stephen Kelly and Lewis Mayo of Holyrood Secondary in Glasgow having signed for Rangers FC and Ciaran Brian of Broughton High School playing for Hibernian FC. All in all, 25 different clubs were represented. Brian McClair, the Scottish FA's performance director, said: "It was a momentous day for each of these young players. This is the culmination of four years of hard work as pioneers in the performance school programme. They have all been a credit to their schools, their families, their clubs and, of course, themselves. The important

thing is that each player sees this as the start of a journey, not the end of it. The work, commitment and principles that have been critical at both their clubs and their performance schools will be integral to the realisation of their ambitions. I hope everyone enjoyed their day, and I am sure we will meet again in the national youth teams."

Stewart Regan, chief executive of the Scottish FA, said: "The schools are a key pillar of our performance strategy. The opportunity they have had is unparalleled in Scottish football, and I am sure that every young player graduating today now has the perfect platform on which to fulfil their potential. The majority of these performance school pupils will now either sign professional contracts with their clubs or continue their education.



SLOVAKIA

www.futbalsfz.sk

RAISING AWARENESS OF MATCH-FIXING

PETER ŠURIN



Match-fixing by individuals and organised groups poses a serious threat to the sport of football. As a precaution, the Slovak Football Association recently organised an awareness-raising initiative for the country's top-flight clubs in cooperation with IndexxData Sport Security Consulting to inform them of the risks relating to match-fixing.

The clubs' players – both youth team and senior players alike – and members of their technical staff were made aware of what qualifies as match-fixing, given advice on how to behave and told which places to avoid in order to minimise the risk of being approached by people with dishonest intentions.

Participants were asked to answer a questionnaire in order to ascertain their opinions regarding match-fixing and

their experience of such practices. The anonymous survey consisted of 15 yes/no questions and was answered by 252 senior players and 241 Under-19 players.

The main questions were aimed at seeing whether people were behaving in a way that could be conducive to match-fixing.

The results were of great interest to the organisers:

- 14.1% of senior players and 30.5% of youth team players knew players or other stakeholders who bet on their own team.
- 13.2% of senior players and 13.5% of youth team players thought they had taken part in a fixed match.
- 7.3% of senior players and 30.5% of youth team players thought they had taken part in a match that had been

fixed by their own team.

- 6.2% of senior players and 10.8% of youth team players claimed to have witnessed match-fixing while playing abroad.
- 5.7% of senior players and 2.7% of youth team players claimed to have been contacted by someone trying to talk them into fixing matches, and one person claimed to have been physically attacked after refusing to do so.
- 78% of senior players and 78.4% of youth team players said they would report being asked to fix a match. It is disturbing that players know people who bet on their own team. However, it is good that only a few players have been asked to fix matches and that most players would report such a request.

SWEDEN

www.svenskfotboll.se

NEW APP BRINGS PLAYERS CLOSER TO THEIR FANS

THOMAS SALETÉG

 On the day that Sweden's EURO 2016 squad gathered in Stockholm to prepare for the tournament, the Swedish Football Association (SvFF) launched a brand new communications initiative.

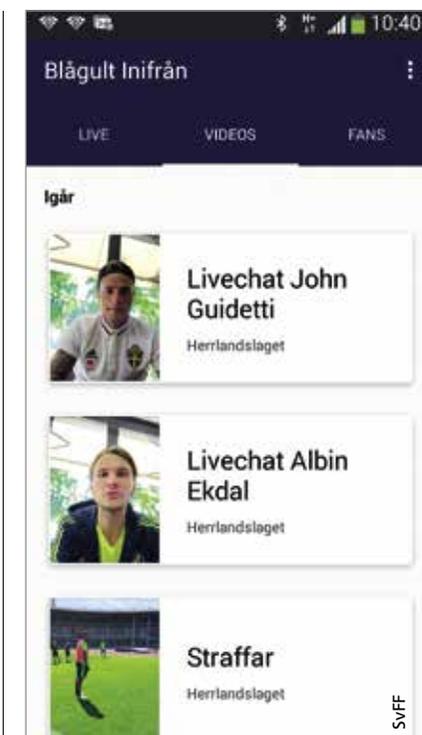
The SvFF's new mobile app, Blågult inifrån (which means 'blue and yellow from the inside'), gives supporters of the country's national teams the opportunity to interact with the likes of Zlatan Ibrahimović, Lotta Schelin and John Guidetti.

Blågult inifrån gives fans access to unique behind-the-scenes content in real time. The basic app is available free of charge, and for a small fee it can be upgraded to enable users to send and receive text and video messages. On the

day of the launch, players Albin Ekdal and John Guidetti took part in a live chat session with supporters.

The timing of the launch was just right, with EURO 2016 just around the corner and both the women's team and the men's Under-21 team preparing for European qualifiers. Blågult inifrån was an instant hit with fans and the media alike, as well as the teams themselves.

The SvFF's general secretary, Håkan Sjöstrand, stressed the importance of the fans' support for the association and Sweden's national teams: "Swedish supporters have been praised so many times for their outstanding devotion to their teams. This is one way for us to further strengthen the bond between us and our fans."



SWITZERLAND

www.football.ch

NEW ONLINE PLATFORM FOR CLUBS

PIERRE BENOIT

 One of Peter Gilliéron's many tasks as president of the Swiss Football Association is to provide the country's clubs with optimum support in all areas and ensure that they receive all the advice and assistance they require on a daily basis.

For that reason, the Swiss FA has established a special information and service platform (clubcorner.ch) to support club officials in their daily work and help them to save time. All the official announcements, forms and regulations that they require can now be found in one place, rather than being scattered across the main website football.ch. The association's support for clubs is three-fold: it comprises courses explaining how to encourage more people to volunteer in clubs, arguments detailing the importance of grassroots football, and the new Club Corner IT platform.

"The new Club Corner will hopefully be a meeting place for all club officials – a forum for knowledge-sharing that grows and grows," Peter Gilliéron said.

This initiative by the Swiss FA represents a further attempt to make clubs' lives easier, as well as providing valuable online support to coaches and referees.



BIRTHDAYS

Frédéric Thiriez (France, 1 July)
Antonie Marinus Verhagen (Netherlands, 1 July)
Frank De Bleeckere (Belgium, 1 July) **50th**
Hannu Tihinen (Finland, 1 July) **40th**
Razvan Burleanu (Romania, 1 July)
Marinus Koopman (Netherlands, 2 July) **60th**
Pjetur Sigurdsson (Iceland, 2 July)
Philippe Hertig (Switzerland, 2 July)
Rusmir Mrković (Bosnia-Herzegovina, 2 July)
Mustafa Erögüt (Turkey, 2 July)
Peadar Ryan (Republic of Ireland, 3 July)
Bertrand Layec (France, 3 July)
Carolina De Boeck (Belgium, 3 July) **50th**
Antonio Matarrese (Italy, 4 July)
Neale Barry (England, 4 July)
Roland Ospelt (Liechtenstein, 4 July)
Massimo Cumbo (Italy, 4 July) **50th**
Patrick Nelson (Northern Ireland, 5 July)
Natalia Avdonchenko (Russia, 5 July)
Tiago Craveiro (Portugal, 5 July)
Paulo Lourenço (Portugal, 5 July)
Hans Schelling (Netherlands, 7 July)
Martin Glenn (England, 8 July)
Jacobo Betrán Pedreira (Spain, 8 July)
Martin Maleck (Switzerland, 8 July)
Holger Blask (Germany, 8 July)
Ekaterina Todorova (Bulgaria, 8 July)
Heinrich Schifferle (Switzerland, 9 July)
Paul Allaerts (Belgium, 9 July)
Yordan Letchkov (Bulgaria, 9 July)
Sergiu Lisnic (Moldova, 9 July)
Murad Mammadov (Azerbaijan, 10 July)
Thomas Christensen (Norway, 10 July)
Markus Kopecky (Austria, 10 July)
Nina Hedlund (Norway, 11 July)
Edo Trivković (Croatia, 11 July)
Darko Čeferin (Slovenia, 11 July)
Günter Benkö (Austria, 12 July)
Filip Popovski (FYR Macedonia, 12 July)
Maria Teresa Costa (Portugal, 13 July) **60th**
Sjoukje de Jong (Netherlands, 13 July)
Elke Günthner (Germany, 14 July)
Robert Sedlacek (Austria, 15 July)
Ben Veenbrink (Netherlands, 15 July)
Johannes Malka (Germany, 16 July)
Ernst Nigg (Liechtenstein, 16 July)
Lars Lagerbäck (Sweden, 16 July)
Jiri Ulrich (Czech Republic, 16 July)
Michail Anagnostou (Greece, 16 July)
Giuseppe Mifsud-Bonnici (Malta, 17 July)
Antonia Kokotou (Greece, 17 July)
Vicente Muñoz Castillo (Spain, 19 July)
Kari Iuell (Norway, 19 July)
Alfredo Trentalange (Italy, 19 July)

Tormod Larsen (Norway, 20 July)
Vladimir Radionov (Russia, 21 July)
Michel Vuilleret (Switzerland, 22 July)
Iain Robertson Brines (Scotland, 22 July)
Balazs Makray (Hungary, 22 July)
Bontcho Todorov (Bulgaria, 23 July)
Pavel Malovič (Slovakia, 23 July)
Marcelino Santiago Maté (Spain, 23 July)
David Gil (Israel, 24 July)
Gijs de Jong (Netherlands, 24 July)
Mario Gallavotti (Italy, 25 July)
Claus Christensen (Denmark, 25 July)
Ferenc Ragadics (Hungary, 25 July)
Nenad Radivojevic (Serbia, 25 July)
Alfred Ludwig (Austria, 26 July)
David Bowen (Northern Ireland, 26 July)
Depi Koxenoglou (Greece, 26 July) **40th**
Jeff Davis (England, 27 July)
Björn Ahlberg (Sweden, 28 July)
Stefan Tivold (Slovenia, 28 July)
Nataša Joksimović (Serbia, 28 July)
Karl Espen Eriksen (Norway, 28 July)
Robert Kispal (Hungary, 28 July)
Peter Stadelmann (Switzerland, 29 July)
Kieran O'Connor (Wales, 30 July)
João Leal (Portugal, 30 July)
Des Casey (Republic of Ireland, 31 July)
Tugomir Frajman (Slovenia, 31 July)
Jozef De Ryck (Belgium, 31 July)
Joël Wolff (Luxembourg, 31 July)
Javier Tebas (Spain, 31 July)
Duncan Fraser (Scotland, 31 July)
Cenk Cem (Turkey, 31 July)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Meetings

7 July, Nyon

UEFA Futsal Cup: draw for the preliminary and main rounds

15 July, Nyon

UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League: draws for the third qualifying rounds

Competitions

10 June–10 July, France

EURO 2016

5/6 July

UEFA Champions League: first qualifying round (return legs)

NOTICES

- On 29 April, Guntis Indriksons was re-elected as president of the Latvian Football Federation for a new four-year term.
- On 20 May, Slaviša Kokeza became the new president of the Football Association of Serbia, taking over from Tomislav Karadžić.

7 July

UEFA Europa League: first qualifying round (return legs)

11–24 July, Germany

European Under-19 Championship: final tournament

12/13 July

UEFA Champions League: second qualifying round (first legs)

14 July

UEFA Europa League: second qualifying round (first legs)

19–31 July, Slovakia

European Women's Under-19 Championship: final round

19/20 July

UEFA Champions League: second qualifying round (return legs)

21 July

UEFA Europa League: second qualifying round (return legs)

26/27 July

UEFA Champions League: third qualifying round (first legs)

28 July

UEFA Europa League: third qualifying round (first legs)



#CelebrateFootball



UEFA
EURO2016
FRANCE



RESPECT