

# UEFA

DIRECT



No. 161



## A NEW PRESIDENT FOR UEFA

### THE TECHNICIAN

Technical reports shed light on the latest tactical trends

### REFEREES' SUMMER GATHERING

Europe's elite referees reconvene in Nyon

### UEFA SUPER CUP

Real Madrid CF triumph in Trondheim



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# FOOTBALL FIRST

It is with great honour, but also a great sense of responsibility, that I start my mission as UEFA president, a mission which you, UEFA's member associations, have entrusted me with, and one which I will dedicate to further protecting, promoting and developing football in Europe.

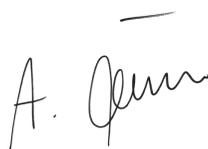
I know the last year was not an easy one for our organisation. It faced many challenges and threats, but thanks to the excellent work of the administration and the unity of the European football family, UEFA's standing and reputation remained unscathed.

It is now time for us to turn the page and start a new chapter together. My vision is clear and it focuses on putting football first. As we search to find the perfect balance between big and small, north and south, east and west, we must always protect the interests of the game we love and cherish.

During my time as president of the Slovenian Football Association, I had the opportunity to witness the significant impact that UEFA's education, grassroots and

development programmes have on small national associations. As I travelled around Europe, I also saw with my own eyes how this organisation has helped to build new pitches, training centres and football infrastructure across the continent. I believe there are further opportunities for UEFA to make a difference, and we can do so by empowering our member associations to take on a bigger role in creating and delivering projects and programmes.

I am really looking forward to working with all of you in a spirit of cooperation and dialogue. Together, I hope we can lead UEFA into an era of stability, hope, balance and friendship.



**Aleksander Čeferin**  
UEFA President





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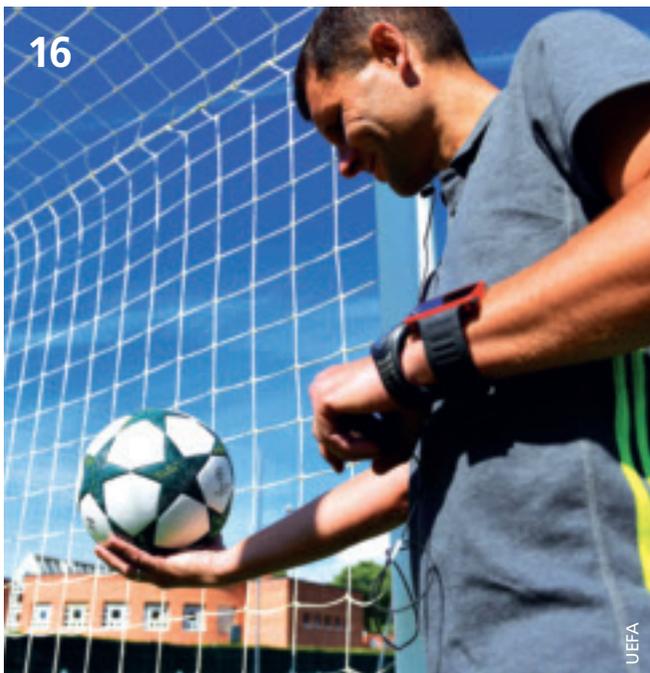
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# A NEW PRESIDENT AT THE HELM

Aleksander Čeferin is the seventh UEFA president. The 48-year-old Slovenian lawyer was voted into office by Europe's national associations at the 12th Extraordinary UEFA Congress, held in Athens on 14 September. He pledges to spearhead a new chapter for UEFA and European football.

**T**he Grand Resort Lagonissi close to the Greek capital was the setting for UEFA to move into tomorrow with a new man at the helm. The two candidates for the presidency possessed the necessary calibre for the job, with Čeferin having been president of the Football Association of Slovenia since 2011, and Michael van Praag having headed the Royal Netherlands Football Association since 2008. A third candidate, Royal Spanish Football Federation president Ángel María Villar Llona, had withdrawn in the days before the election.

Čeferin emerged victorious by 42 votes to 13. He succeeds a distinguished sextet who have taken charge of the European umbrella body and guided its course since its birth in 1954 – Ebbe Schwartz (Denmark), Gustav Wiederkehr (Switzerland), Artemio Franchi (Italy), Jacques Georges (France), Lennart Johansson (Sweden) and Michel Platini (France). The outgoing UEFA president was present at the Athens Congress to thank the associations and close his period of office, which began in 2007.

Following the warm ovation that greeted the result, a clearly moved Čeferin let his feelings show: "Thank you for your fantastic support. It is a great honour, but it is at the same time a great responsibility," he told the associations. "It means a lot to me, and to my family, who are very proud about it. My small but beautiful Slovenia is also very proud, and I hope that one day, you will also be proud of me."

## Wind of change

Speaking to the Congress ahead of the vote, Čeferin looked firmly into the future. "Today, the wind of change is blowing through European football," he reflected. "It is the end of an era and the start of a new one – an era of stability, hope, balance and football."

"We are administrators of the most popular sport in the world. We are the guardians of the beautiful game," he continued. "I am a team player, a man of conviction, a passionate man, a man of his word. I am not a man of unrealistic promises. We cannot move this organisation further with unrealistic promises."

"Therefore, with a clear conscience and mind, I am ready to deliver the projects that will take UEFA to a new level. I want you, the associations, to take centre stage. Let's develop the game together and, when necessary, let's protect it together."

Čeferin refused to dwell on negative issues. "I don't want to live in an empire of fear," he said. "I want to bring out all the good things that UEFA and the associations have been doing. I'm here to find ways to tackle all the problems that surround our game, as someone with a new, clear vision, someone who is bold and brave enough to open a new chapter in the 62-year history of this amazing organisation."

"UEFA has been an exemplary organisation for all other sports bodies for many years. It still is. I want to congratulate UEFA for making us dream, and giving us happiness and emotions for more than 60 years."

## FIFA Council female member

As women begin to enjoy greater participation in football's decision-making process, another vote was held at the Congress in Athens in which Italy's Evelina Christillin was elected to represent UEFA on the FIFA Council. According to the FIFA Statutes, each confederation must elect at least one woman to this strategic body that sets the vision for world football. A former international Alpine skier, 60-year-old Christillin has considerable managerial experience to put at the service of the game, having already played a key role in the organisation of the 2006 Winter Olympic Games in her native Turin. 🌍

**"Thank you for your fantastic support. It is a great honour, but it is at the same time a great responsibility."**

**Aleksander Čeferin**  
UEFA President

# THEODORE THEODORIDIS APPOINTED AS GENERAL SECRETARY

A new era began in earnest for UEFA in Athens on 15 September, when Aleksander Čeferin chaired his first UEFA Executive Committee meeting.

**T**heodore Theodoridis was confirmed as UEFA General Secretary, having been appointed ad interim in March following the election of Gianni Infantino as FIFA president. Together with the new UEFA president, the 51-year-old Greek will now press ahead with leading the UEFA administration into a new chapter in its history.

Getting down to daily business, two venues were selected for the 2018 club competition showpieces. European club football's flagship end-of-season showdown, the UEFA Champions League final, will take place at NSK Olimpiyskiy stadium in Kyiv, Ukraine, in just under two years' time. A venue that is accustomed to hosting big matches, FC Dynamo Kyiv took on FC Bayern München there in the second leg of the 1975 UEFA Super Cup, it was used in the 1980 Olympic Games and it hosted five EURO 2012 games, including the final.

The Executive Committee also selected Lilleküla stadium in Tallinn, Estonia, to host the UEFA Super Cup on 14 August 2018, continuing UEFA's policy of taking the season opener between the reigning Champions League and Europa League title holders around Europe. A decision on who will host the Europa League final in 2018 will be taken at a later stage.

## Appointments and awards

The committee appointed two new members of the UEFA Club Financial Control Body's investigatory chamber for mandates running until 2020: Damien Neven (Belgium), formerly a chief economist in the European Commission's Directorate-General for Competition, and Rick Parry (England), former chief executive of Liverpool FC and the English Premier League. The Club Financial Control Body has the important role of overseeing the application of the UEFA Club Licensing and Financial Fair Play Regulations, with the investigatory chamber responsible for the monitoring and investigation stage of proceedings.

The Executive Committee also decided in Athens to present a special award to the football associations of Iceland, the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and Wales for the outstanding contribution their supporters made to the success of EURO 2016. The conduct of fans during the month-long tournament helped create a festival atmosphere over the summer in France.

"UEFA EURO 2016 was a celebration of football and this is thanks, in large part, to the passion and dedication of fans at all stadiums in France," said UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin. "UEFA wanted to reward some of the groups of supporters that were particularly enthusiastic and passionate during the tournament, so congratulations to the national associations who are receiving this award." 🏆



Theodore Theodoridis

Aleksander Čeferin assumes his place at the heart of the UEFA Executive Committee



# HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO RECOVER AFTER A MATCH?

UEFA has been supporting football-related academic research projects through its Research Grant Programme since 2010. This month, Kevin Thomas presents details of his research on how the neuromuscular system responds and adapts to exercise, which looks at cycling, resistance training and intermittent forms of exercise, such as football.

In a typical football match, an elite player will cover about 12km, with an activity profile that includes high-intensity sprints, turns, jumps, kicks and changes of direction. An inevitable consequence of those considerable physical demands is fatigue, which reduces physical capacity during the match and persists for days afterwards. The consequences of fatigue are compounded by the competitive schedules of today's elite footballers, which include frequent demanding periods where multiple games are played in a week, often separated by as little as 48 hours. These congested fixture periods have been linked to an increased incidence of injuries, and a range of high-profile managers (including José Mourinho, Jürgen Klopp, Guus Hiddink and Manuel Pellegrini) have called for more flexible scheduling to protect footballers and ensure the best possible spectacle for fans of the game.

## What we did ...

With support from the UEFA Research Grant Programme, we conducted a project that aimed to provide new information on the fatigue experienced by players and the time that it takes to recover from a match. We defined 'fatigue' as

a reduction in the ability to produce force, and using stimulation of the brain and the nerves that activate muscle, we determined whether this fatigue could be explained by 'central' processes (i.e. fatigue of the central nervous system) or 'peripheral' processes (i.e. fatigue of the muscle). We used these techniques to study the fatigue experienced by footballers immediately after a simulated match, and we monitored the recovery of the central nervous system and muscle function for three days after a game, to see how long it took for players to recover.

## What we found ...

We found that football matchplay resulted in a high degree of fatigue, with players' ability to produce force being impaired for up to three days after a game. Immediately after the game, this fatigue could be explained by effects on both the central nervous system and muscle function. However, just 24 hours after the game, the central nervous system had recovered markedly, albeit there was still evidence of small impairments, which took two days on average to fully resolve. In contrast, the deterioration in muscle function persisted for around three days, and it took until two days after the game before there were any signs of recovery. These negative effects on the central nervous system and muscle function were also associated with a reduction in physical performance: players could not sprint as fast after games, and they could not jump as high for up to three days afterwards. Feelings of fatigue and muscle soreness also took three days to recover from.

All in all, our project demonstrates that it can take up to three days to fully recover from matchplay and that the negative impact on muscle function is the primary cause of this. These findings have important implications for the people responsible for managing the training process and scheduling fixtures, who should look at how best to manage the recovery of players between competitive games. 🔄



Kevin Thomas, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, Department of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation, Northumbria University, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

**“Research that helps us to understand the management of fatigue and recovery after matches is of critical importance for fans, players, managers and both national and international associations.”**

**Kevin Thomas**  
Project Coordinator



Sportsfile

# #FOOTBALLFORGOOD IN LYON

Supported by the UEFA Foundation for Children and hosted by Sport dans la Ville, streetfootballworld Festival 16 involved 400 youngsters in Lyon from 28 June to 7 July.

In parallel to EURO 2016 in France, Festival 16 brought together disadvantaged boys and girls from across the world. The UEFA Foundation for Children considers football to be not just a game, but a way of life, a way to dream and to see the world.

Seventy organisations sent delegations of two girls and two boys aged between 15 and 18 to represent their country, as well as a young leader and a delegation leader to guide them through the journey of the festival. Selected on the basis of their good behaviour in addition to their love of football, Festival 16 participants played in teams of mixed nationalities and genders. The tournament was played according to 'football3' methodology, which relies on the concepts of fair play and respect, as participants have to agree on their own rules before the match and play without referees. The winning team is not necessarily the one that scores more goals, as additional points can be awarded by the opposite team based on observance of the rules and fair play.

The tournament promoted values such as fair play, respect, diversity, gender equality, solidarity and dialogue.

"streetfootballworld Festival 16 shows that it is possible to cross boundaries through football," said streetfootballworld's network director, Vladimir Borković.

## Cultural exchanges

The festival's opening ceremony was attended, among others, by the French minister for sports, Thierry Braillard, the mayor of Lyon, Gérard Collomb, and Jacques Lambert, president of EURO 2016 SAS.

The ceremony kicked off the tournament in style, including performances from the Opéra de Lyon, the French air force, the national parachute team and the Freestyle Football Federation. The ceremony closed with a firework display, adding colour to the occasion.

After days filled with football, the youngsters were also kept busy in the evenings with lively and captivating cultural exchanges that allowed each of the delegations to present their country through a costumed dance prepared in advance with care and enthusiasm.

Last but not least, the UEFA foundation team, in collaboration with TV Media Sport (TVMS), worked on a series of short videos involving



teenagers as interviewees, interviewers and actors alongside football legends including Claude Makelele and Christian Karembeu.

Festival 16 was not only a sporting event; it was also a social, cultural and entertaining event filled with experiences and laughter, one that will shape the participants' identity, their perception of others, and their outlook on life – once more providing proof of the essential power of football.

Philippe Oddou, director and co-founder of Sport dans la Ville, summed up the festival in apt fashion: "At Sport dans la Ville, we believe in the power of happy memories. And this streetfootballworld Festival 16 will provide unforgettable and happy memories for the young people who came from all over the world to take part in it."

**"By bringing together girls and boys from 50 countries from all over the world, we are helping the next generation to learn about living together, and are creating bridges towards a better society."**

**Vladimir Borković**  
streetfootballworld  
Network Director

# ANOTHER VICTORY FOR REAL MADRID

After meeting in Cardiff in 2014, Spanish clubs Real Madrid CF and Sevilla FC met again in a UEFA Super Cup, this time in Trondheim, Norway, on 9 August.

It was the sort of moment that you knew instantly would go viral. Led by Sergio Ramos, Marcelo, Álvaro Morata, Lucas Vázquez and Casemiro, a group of Real Madrid players – freshly minted UEFA Super Cup winners – burst into the post-match press conference and doused coach Zinedine Zidane in water, all the while singing “campeones, campeones”.

The jubilant celebrations indicated what the trophy meant to Real Madrid: the significance of another European title for a club synonymous with continental triumph.

## No gain without pain

How Zidane’s side had to suffer to get their hands on the UEFA Super Cup, though. Under new coach Jorge Sampaoli, domestic rivals Sevilla pushed Real all the way. Despite going behind early to Marco Asensio’s stunning long-range effort, the UEFA Europa League winners responded in powerful fashion, drawing level as half-time beckoned, thanks to a fine goal from Franco Vázquez.

Los Hispalenses then dominated the second half, deservedly taking the lead for the first time in the match through substitute Yevhen Konoplyanka’s 72nd-minute penalty.

## Ramos to the rescue

There was, however, a twist in the tale of an enthralling encounter. It was Ramos – as it always seems to be – who rescued the game for his side, popping up in the 93rd minute to head past Sergio Rico and level proceedings. The 30-year-old was immense all evening, and the equaliser was his third goal in Madrid’s last four UEFA finals.

Timothée Kolodziejczak’s dismissal three minutes into extra time reduced Sevilla to ten men, and although Sampaoli’s side held firm and attempted to hold on for penalties, there was little they could do when Dani Carvajal danced through their defence in the 119th minute, the right-back sending Real Madrid into dreamland with his low shot past Rico.

Carvajal’s goal must rank as one of the finest individual efforts to settle any final and provided an unforgettable conclusion to a memorable event in Trondheim, the third-largest city in Norway and the northernmost city to stage a UEFA final.

While Lerkendal Stadion is a familiar UEFA Champions League arena because of home club Rosenborg BK’s regular participation in the competition – the Norwegian side in fact beat Real Madrid on Los Blancos’ first visit to the stadium in 1997 – this was the first UEFA club final to be held in the city, or indeed the country.

## The perfect hosts

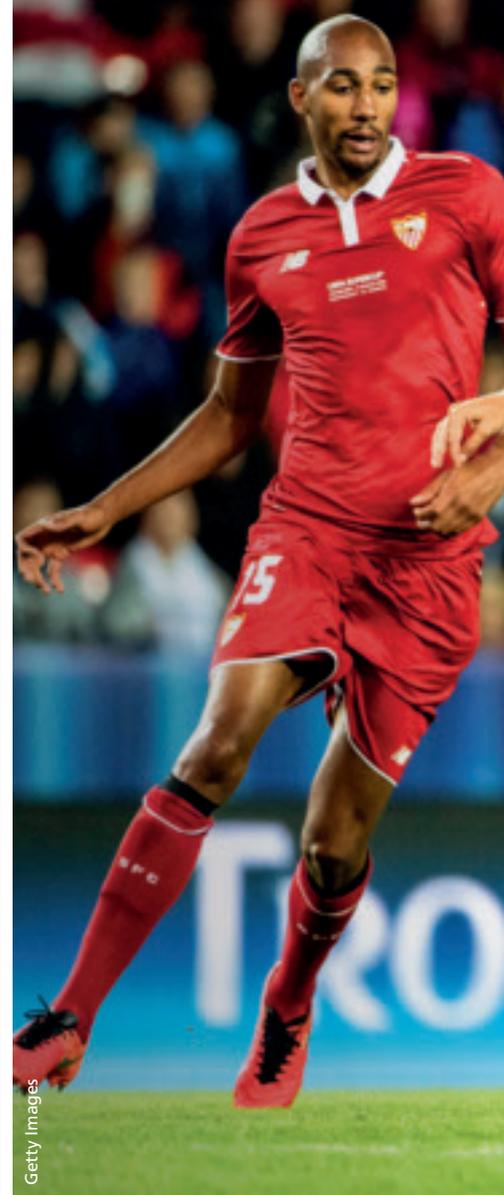
A beautiful city surrounded by pine trees and on the Norwegian Sea, Trondheim played the perfect host. Excitement was evident across the city in the days leading up to the showpiece, with flags and banners fluttering in the chilly northern wind and visiting Spaniards arriving wrapped up warmer than they would have been at home in Madrid or Seville.

The locals, meanwhile, were delighted to welcome the visiting Spaniards, emphasising the importance of hosting major sporting events for a small city and enjoying getting to know the good-natured Spanish fans.

An enterprising flamenco school set up a stall in the centre of town on the morning of the match, while employees of local sport shops ran penalty shoot-outs in the streets for children, whether local or visiting.

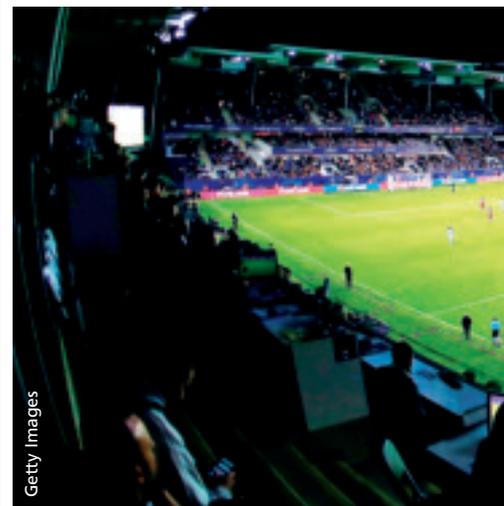
Tapas bars in the centre of town were packed with fans, with the visitors from Seville in particular creating quite a noise. Sevilla president José Castro mingled with those visiting fans prior to kick-off in Solsiden Square, where red and white club banners sat proudly alongside the Norway flag.

That goodwill only extended as far as the pitch, however, with most locals firmly in the Real Madrid camp when it came to support. Los Blancos were welcomed rapturously beforehand, with fans queuing at the gates



Getty Images

Real Madrid’s Luka Modrić tries his luck, watched by Steven N’Zonzi.



Getty Images



UEFA via Getty Images

## A FIRST FOR WHEELCHAIR USERS

Two disabled child refugees living in Norway, Sayed Ali, an 11-year-old from Afghanistan, and Ismail Jamal, a 10-year-old from Syria, accompanied Real Madrid captain Sergio Ramos and Sevilla captain Vicente Iborra onto the field before the UEFA Super Cup in Trondheim, becoming the first children who use wheelchairs ever to be player escorts at a football match.

This was made possible by the UEFA Foundation for Children, which defends children and their rights, together with Handicap International, a body that defends the rights of disabled people worldwide, improves their living conditions and helps them integrate into society.

## RESULT

**Real Madrid CF** 3-2 Sevilla FC (aet)

**Attendance:** 17,939 **Referee:** Milorad Mažić (Serbia)

**Goals:** 1-0 Asensio 21, 1-1 Vázquez 41, 1-2 Konoplyanka 72 pen, 2-2 Ramos 90+3, 3-2 Carvajal 119



of the stadium just to get a glimpse of their heroes, shouting players' names and cheering every goal in training the day before the game.

The atmosphere was even better on matchnight, when every Real Madrid player's name was greeted with a cheer. Ramos and Vicente Iborra – the Real Madrid and Sevilla captains respectively – led their teams onto the pitch accompanied by two children who use wheelchairs.

Real's three goals were received warmly on an otherwise freezing evening, but the Sevilla fans certainly gave the passionate locals a run for their money, time and again producing stirring renditions of the club anthem.

Ultimately, though, it was those supporting Real Madrid who departed Lerkendal Stadion happier. Carvajal's stunning goal to cap off an evening of stunning strikes spelled heartbreak in the UEFA Super Cup for the third successive season for Sevilla, while Real lifted the trophy for the third time.

And it was a fitting ending that the first UEFA trophy awarded in a city founded in around 997 by Vikings went to a club known as Los Vikings. 🇳🇴



## FRANCE CLAIM THIRD UNDER-19 TITLE

France beat Italy 4-0 in the final of the 2015/16 European Under-19 Championship, at the end of a tournament played in Germany from 11 to 24 July.

**T**he likes of Hugo Lloris, Yohan Cabaye, Antoine Griezmann and Alexandre Lacazette have all won the European Under-19 Championship with France – and the class of 2016 proved worthy successors to their illustrious predecessors.

France produced their best performances in Germany when it mattered most, scoring 12 goals in their final three games to win the title for the third time, beating Italy by a record 4-0 margin in the final.

Ludovic Batelli's French side lost their first game of the tournament but hit top form at the competition's business end, brushing aside the Netherlands to reach the semi-finals, where they disposed of Portugal. France saved the best till last: early goals from Jean-Kévin Augustin – a stunning solo strike – and Ludovic Blas were added to late on by captain Lucas Tousart and Issa Diop as Italy's previously imperious defence was utterly dismantled.

Such has been Spain's dominance of the U19s, with seven titles in the competition's first

14 years, including 2015, that their elite-round elimination by England came as a jolt, although it was the second time in three years that La Rojita had missed the finals.

England carried that impressive form into the final tournament, scoring twice in the first nine minutes of their matchday one fixture with France. That was the first of three successive 2-1 Group B wins for Aidy Boothroyd's team, while France responded strongly to that opening setback. Defeats of Croatia (2-0) and the Netherlands (5-1) gave them the runners-up spot, Augustin striking five of their goals – three against the Dutch and scoring a record-equalling six in the finals overall – and Kylian Mbappé the other three.

### **54,689 spectators for the opening match**

Group A opened with hosts Germany playing Italy in front of 54,689 at the VfB Arena in Stuttgart, a new U19 final tournament record. The majority went home disappointed after



**“We wanted to give as many people as possible the chance to see matches. We spread the tournament as wide as we could.”**

**Juppi Lee**  
Tournament director



Sportstyle

France's Kylian Mbappé, under pressure from Italy's Filippo Romagna, tries his luck in the final.

Federico Dimarco's late penalty earned Italy a 1-0 win, setting an Azzurrini theme. Germany's hopes were ended by a 4-3 defeat against Portugal despite Phillipp Ochs' hat-trick, Portugal making sure of first place with a 1-1 draw against Italy that left their opponents second.

**Five teams qualify for the 2017 World Cup**

That opening fixture set the tone in terms of attendances across the ten venues, with the 15 games drawing more than 150,000 spectators in total – another new U19 record. "Our target with UEFA was to have more than 100,000 spectators, and we'd achieved that six weeks before the tournament, so we were excited to see how many people would come in the end," said tournament director Juppi Lee.

"Our strategy paid off; we defined our target groups, not only the football crowd but new young people who we wanted to get involved. That meant looking at kick-off times and the schedule for the tournament.

"We have used ten venues in total because we wanted the best conditions for the teams – to protect the pitches," Lee added. "We've not had more than two matches in one stadium, and we also wanted to give as many people as possible the chance to see matches. We spread the tournament as wide as we could."

Germany secured third position in the section with a 3-0 win against Austria, setting up a play-off against the Netherlands for a place

in the 2017 U-20 World Cup. Three late goals made it 2-2 after 90 minutes, with both sides allowed to use a fourth substitute during extra time under a new UEFA experiment. Germany prevailed 5-4 on penalties after a 3-3 draw.

In the semi-finals Italy – whose group-stage goals had been two penalties and a free-kick – again showed their set-piece prowess. Dimarco converted another spot kick and a wonderful curling free-kick to earn a 2-1 win against England, for whom Alberto Picchi's own goal came too late.

Portugal struck first in the second knockout tie, taking a third-minute lead with Pedro Pacheco's header, before Mbappé took over. The Monaco forward set up France's tenth-minute equaliser for Blas, then scored twice from close range in the second half. For France, however, the best was still to come.

"It's an extraordinary moment," said Batelli after leading France to the title. "We've had a great squad. In our first game against England we weren't awake at the start, but maybe those first ten minutes made us win this tournament; everyone knew that if we continued like that, it would be a catastrophe. These are players who've worked for each other, with great quality, and we've shown that in our last three matches, against the Netherlands, Portugal and especially Italy."

Augustin finished as top scorer with six goals, equalling the U19 final tournament record set by Spain's Álvaro Morata (2010/11) and Davie Selke of Germany (2013/14). 🌐

**RESULTS**

**Group A**

Germany	0-1	Italy
Portugal	1-1	Austria
Italy	1-1	Austria
Germany	3-4	Portugal
Austria	0-3	Germany
Italy	1-1	Portugal

**Group B**

Croatia	1-3	Netherlands
France	1-2	England
Netherlands	1-2	England
Croatia	0-2	France
England	2-1	Croatia
Netherlands	1-5	France

**World Cup play-off**

**Germany** 3-3\* Netherlands  
\*Germany win 5-4 on penalties

**Semi-finals**

England	1-2	<b>Italy</b>
Portugal	1-3	<b>France</b>

**Final**

**France** 4-0 Italy



Sportstyle

# FRANCE COMPLETE UNDER-19 DOUBLE IN RAINY SENEC

On 31 July, France won their fourth European Women's Under-19 Championship – condemning Spain to a third successive final defeat – in a match where half-time lasted two hours owing to a huge thunderstorm.

The final round of the 2015/16 European Women's Under-19 Championship, which took place in Slovakia from 19 to 31 July, may have appeared to be business as usual, with France winning their fourth title and Spain reaching their third final in a row, but the decider in Senec was more than a little out of the ordinary.

The game began in bright sunshine, but by the time Grace Geyoro had given France the lead, the predicted heavy rain had started. By half-time, it had become a thunderous downpour, and play was suspended. For two hours, efforts were made to clear the pitch, and tentative arrangements were made to resume the following day. Eventually, though, the pitch was declared playable, albeit rain was still falling, and the game was able to continue.

Not long afterwards, France goalkeeper Mylène Chavas saved Nahikari García's penalty and, with more than a little assistance from

the wet pitch, the tournament's top goalscorer, Marie-Antoinette Katoto, made it 2-0 with her sixth goal in Slovakia. Lucía García pulled one back with six minutes to go, and Nahikari García very nearly equalised at the death, kicking the water as she went for the ball and slicing over from point-blank range. France, though, who celebrated victory by diving in the puddles by the side of the pitch, were worthy winners, having handled the conditions better than their opponents. "When I scored, I really couldn't believe it. I screamed," Geyoro said. Katoto added: "We were very motivated [during the rain delay]. We kept our focus. We could have waited longer or played extra time. We would have won anyway."

## Rain stops play in Group A

The final was actually the second weather-disrupted match of a tournament played largely in warm sunshine, with the Group A game



Left: France's Estelle Cascarino takes on Spain captain Nahikari Garcia in the final. Below: Beatriz Beltrán challenges Pleun Raaijmakers in the semi-final between Spain and the Netherlands.





## RESULTS

### Group A

Slovakia	0-6	Netherlands
France	0-1	Norway
Netherlands	1-0	Norway
Slovakia	0-6	France
Norway	0-0	Slovakia
Netherlands	1-2	France

### Group B

Spain	1-0	Germany
Austria	0-4	Switzerland
Spain	4-0	Austria
Germany	2-4	Switzerland
Switzerland	0-5	Spain
Germany	3-1	Austria

### Semi-finals

<b>France</b>	3-1	Switzerland
<b>Spain</b>	4-3	Netherlands

### Final

<b>France</b>	2-1	Spain
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between Norway and Slovakia having been abandoned early in the second half at 0-0 on account of a waterlogged pitch. With the result of the other group game taking place at the same time (in which France beat the Netherlands 2-1) meaning that neither Norway nor Slovakia would qualify from Group A regardless, the result was confirmed as a 0-0 draw without the game resuming, giving hosts Slovakia their first point in the final round of a UEFA women's competition.

Slovakia, who were taking part in their first women's final tournament, began with 6-0 defeats to both the Netherlands and France. France actually kicked off with a 1-0 defeat to Norway, but the Norwegians' subsequent 1-0 loss to the Netherlands proved to be their undoing.

Spain dominated Group B, beating Germany 1-0, Austria (who were appearing at this stage of the competition for the first time) 4-0 and Switzerland 5-0. In fact, both Switzerland and Spain were already through to the semi-finals by the time they came to play each other in their final group game, with the Swiss having defeated Austria 4-0 and Germany 4-2 in their first two matches. Germany did then beat Austria 3-1 to secure third place in the group, but they have now gone five tournaments without a title.

### Goals galore

With 11 goals, the semi-finals of this year's tournament were the highest-scoring ever. In the first semi-final, France trailed Switzerland 1-0 at half-time, but a double substitution changed the game, with Perle Morroni and Clara Mateo coming on. Within 30 seconds, Morroni had set up Mateo for the equaliser. Four minutes later, Mateo turned provider, setting up Katoto for France's second. Then, in the 54th minute, Mateo scored her second of the match as France ran out 3-1 winners.

"I rested some players in the first half, and it proved to be a good decision, as they made a big impact in the second half," France coach Gilles Eyquem said.

In the other semi-final, Spain overcame the Netherlands 4-3 in a high-quality encounter with several long-range goals. The Dutch led twice as they looked to repeat their victory over Spain in the 2014 final. (Indeed, both teams featured veterans of that match.) But it was not to be, with Spain prevailing thanks to a hat-trick by Sandra Hernández – the fourth player to score three goals in the semi-finals of this tournament, after Vivianne Miedema (2014), Sofia Jakobsson (2009) and Elena Danilova (2005), all of whom have gone on to achieve success at senior level.

### France make it four

However, for the third year running, Spain lost in the final. (In fact, Spain have also reached the finals of the last three European Women's Under-17 Championships, winning only one – in 2015.) Nuria Garrote, Nahikari García and Andrea Sánchez played in all three of those competitions and have now played in the finals of four UEFA youth competitions – a record in both men's and women's football. This golden generation of Spanish players have also set a number of other records, including García's record 22 appearances in the finals of UEFA youth competitions and Sánchez's 40 competition appearances overall (i.e. including qualifying matches).

Ultimately, though, it was France who handled the conditions better and emerged victorious, adding to previous titles in 2003, 2010 and 2013. That victory came just a week after their male counterparts had beaten Italy in the final of the European Under-19 Championship – repeating the Under-19 double achieved by their compatriots in 2010 and Spain in 2004.

Geyoro – whose team had been on the verge of group-stage elimination at the time of the men's final in Sinsheim – explained that they had been inspired by the men: "We were thrilled last week when the boys won their Under-19 title. They showed us how to do it," the Paris Saint-Germain forward said. "We are delighted to be the champions of the '1997 generation'." 🏆



# THE SECRETS TO REFEREEING SUCCESS

A behind-the-scenes visit to UEFA's summer gathering for match officials, held in Switzerland in August, shows that preparation, hard work and greater knowledge are helping officials set higher standards.

**A**mong the business travellers, pilots and flight attendants at Geneva's Starling Hotel, the group of athletes in matching bottle-green tracksuits checking phones and chatting as they waited in the lobby could easily have been taken for a football squad gathering for a pre-season camp.

They were ... and they weren't. They were not a squad of football players, but they were a team of elite athletes at the top of their sport getting ready for the start of their season.

They were UEFA's top referees, meeting for their annual pre-season gathering.

A total of 76 top male referees – including the 18 EURO 2016 officials – and 16 leading female officials spent three days in Geneva and nearby Nyon from 10 August to prepare for the new campaign and review the recent past, including the month-long EURO in France.

From the outset, the EURO group were rightly praised for their performances. Ángel María Villar Llona, UEFA's first vice-president and chairman of the Referees Committee, opened the gathering with warm words for the EURO officials: "I have a special word of thanks for the EURO referees. You did a fantastic job, especially in the final. The new amendments to

the Laws of the Game were implemented for the first time, but you did very well." Mr Villar Llona captured the spirit of the gathering as he added: "Today is soon yesterday, and now we have to start thinking ahead."

## Looking ahead

A distinguished former referee, Pierluigi Collina, spoke next in his capacity as UEFA's chief refereeing officer. The renowned Italian presided over the course as impressively as he took charge of Champions League, World Cup and UEFA Cup finals in the 1990s and 2000s. Even more so as he led subsequent sessions in UEFA's university-style auditorium, where he came across as a born educator – someone who had reached the pinnacle of his profession and was eager to help the next generation of referees become the best that they could be.

And, just as he revolutionised refereeing in the 1990s with his preparation, professionalism, athleticism and eye for detail, now he and UEFA's refereeing unit are raising refereeing standards across Europe. Five minutes into Collina's first presentation, the EURO success was consigned to the past: "Now we need to look forward to the new season; we, you, need to be ready." →



## REFEREEING

Readiness and preparation are watchwords for Collina. In his mind, the secret to maintaining high performance is match preparation, which is composed of three elements: knowledge of the Laws of the Game and how to interpret them, fitness, and football knowledge.

As such, the gathering was no handshakes and cocktails-style conference, but rather an intensive preparation programme. Indeed, the referees were put through a demanding test on the new Laws of the Game on the opening evening. The officials hunched over their workbooks for the allotted 45 minutes as they pondered such multiple-choice questions as: "After extra time and just before kicks from the penalty mark, the goalkeeper is injured and cannot continue. Can he be replaced?"\*

### Not table football

Knowledge and interpretation of the Laws of the Game extends to viewing and reviewing video clips of incidents from recent matches. On the opening day, Collina took the referees through incidents from EURO 2016 itself and delivered a reasoned critique. Further insightful video sessions also took place on the final afternoon, focusing on "denial of a goalscoring opportunity" and handball. Incidents were examined and old canards challenged in often humorous fashion, as, for example, when Collina talked about handball: "We don't expect it to be like table football, with arms down by the side." He also told the referees: "We accept that there can be different interpretations."

In terms of fitness, referees are now as much athletes as the players themselves. In fact, in



the UEFA Super Cup on the eve of this summer gathering, referee Milorad Mažić covered 16km – more than any of the players. The referees follow bespoke training programmes, and are put through their paces through demanding fitness tests at UEFA's summer and winter gatherings.

So, under the baking late-morning sun at Nyon's Colovray stadium, all the officials undertook tests which seemed gruelling to this outsider. Rather than standard Cooper or beep fitness tests, the officials are subjected to the rigorous Yo-Yo intermittent recovery test, which better correlates to the amount of high-intensity activity and maximal-speed distance covered during a match.

### Ever-increasing pace

The test involves a lot of sprinting at an ever-increasing pace. The referees have to reach level 18.4, which equates to 45 successive sprints. Among the elite referees, the target

Europe's elite referees descended on the UEFA campus in Nyon from 10 to 12 August to be put through their paces in the classroom and on the pitch



was achieved with ease. Indeed, onlookers seemed to be sweating more just watching. And in fact the objective is not just to pass the test, but to do so without struggling, ensuring that the officials remain lucid and focused on decision-making in match situations, even as they produce an elite athletic performance.

Collina was a pioneer of the final element of match preparation, football knowledge, during his own refereeing career. English referee Graham Poll recalled being the fourth official for the 2002 World Cup match between Japan and Turkey, which Collina refereed. "He drew their line-ups on a board," Poll said. "He told us how they would play, who the fiery characters were, where the likely flashpoints would be, what each assistant might expect to happen on his part of the pitch. He covered everything. It was incredible. It was preparation to the nth degree. And, furthermore, he wasn't wrong."

### Tactical briefings

Collina is now imparting that approach to Europe's next batch of referees. The session on tactical preparation revealed that, for the first time ever, at EURO 2016 officials received tactical briefings from UEFA-qualified coaches, detailing how teams played. This was not just aesthetic appreciation of formations or tiki-taka or Gegenpressing, but specifically tailored preparation, so that officials could position themselves better and know what to expect in terms of how moves would progress and when transitions would take place. Or as Collina succinctly puts it: "to know what happens before it happens". These briefings will continue for club competitions in the 2016/17 season, with referees also to be trained in using an online scouting platform to perform their own research.

Referees are also embracing technology in other ways. The summer course included a hands-on demonstration of goal-line technology for those referees who had not officiated at EURO 2016. The officials were also shown the pre-match checks that they will perform two hours before matches this season. Chiefly, as Collina states, the technology will allow the additional assistant referees to better perform their main task.

The course concluded with words of praise and encouragement from UEFA's director of competitions, Giorgio Marchetti, before a final rallying call from Collina: "We have prepared – and now we strike!" 🚩

*\* Yes. He can be replaced by a named substitute or by an excluded player to make up the number of players, as long as all the permitted substitutes have not been used. The goalkeeper cannot take a kick.*



## Goal-line technology

EURO 2016 was the first UEFA tournament to use goal-line technology (GLT), after its UEFA premiere at the finals of the 2015/16 Champions League and Europa League. The system will also be used in the 2016/17 Champions League, from the play-offs onwards. Pierluigi Collina stresses that GLT and the additional assistant referee system will operate in perfect harmony: "With GLT focused on the goal line, the additional assistants can focus exclusively on incidents in the penalty area – the most crucial area of the pitch."



REFEREEING



PIERLUIGI COLLINA

# 'THE REFEREE'S SHAPE NOW IS A PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALLER'S SHAPE'

UEFA's chief refereeing officer has been putting Europe's elite match officials through their paces again at their annual summer gathering in Nyon. We caught up with him while he was there.

**F**irstly, can you reflect a little on EURO 2016? You must have been very happy with the high refereeing standards.

The standard of refereeing at EURO 2016 was very high. I have to say that four years ago in Poland and Ukraine, the standard was already very high, and it was not easy to improve from that level. But we were confident, because we knew how much work the referees had done, and how committed they were in preparing for the tournament. So it is not a surprise, because I am convinced that if you work hard, the results come. Nevertheless, I am very happy, and I have to thank the referees for their commitment, because we demanded a lot from them in terms of preparation for this tournament ... and they were very, very committed.

**There were only three red cards in the tournament, and only one straight red card. Does the higher standard of refereeing go hand in hand with better player behaviour?**

Certainly the number of cards depends on the behaviour of the players. I think something that made a difference, and this was something we had already experienced in 2008 and 2012, was the programme that we ran before the

competition, when we visited the national team camps and showed the coaches, staff and players the same instructions that we gave to the referees. The objective was to have everyone on the field of play speaking the same language, so they all knew what to expect.

**High standards do not happen by accident. Can you tell us a little about the preparation that goes into achieving and maintaining these standards?**

There are three pillars of match preparation. Certainly, referees need to know the Laws of the Game and how to interpret them, and we had several seminars before the tournament – in February, then in April, and again before the tournament kick-off. EURO 2016 was particular for this matter, because the IFAB [International Football Association Board] introduced several changes that were really important, such as the new rules on denying a goalscoring opportunity and the new sanction for handball.

Then there's fitness preparation. For some time, we have been running very accurate monitoring of all our referees through our head of fitness, Werner Helsen, and his staff. They monitor the referees throughout the season, so they know exactly how they are, what the →

**"What made the difference was the programme we ran before the competition, when we visited the national team camps and showed the coaches, staff and players the same instructions that we gave to the referees. The objective was to give everyone on the field of play the same information, so they all knew what to expect."**

**“For the EURO, we had a team of match analysts: UEFA-licensed coaches who compiled reports on the 24 teams, analysing how they played in different moments of a match and highlighting the technical characteristics of the players.”**

standards are like and what they have to do. So the level of physical preparation [for EURO 2016] was high. Once more, it was really hard or almost impossible to distinguish players from referees, because their shape now is really a professional footballer’s shape. They look like the players that they are refereeing.

The third pillar is knowledge of football – the tactical preparation. We have been working on this for some years, trying to give the referees support. For the EURO, we introduced a new role, so we had a team of match analysts: UEFA-licensed coaches who compiled reports on the 24 teams, analysing how they played in different moments of a match and highlighting the technical characteristics of the players. They analysed the teams for six months before the EURO, and before every EURO match one of the analysts briefed the referees at our headquarters, and the team reports were updated during the competition. This gave added value to the referees’ team – not only to the referees, but also the assistant referees,

because information concerning offsidings was also given.

**You spoke about the EURO for only five minutes in your initial presentation. What are the objectives of this pre-season gathering?**

Yes, because as much as we would like to speak about something that was successful, the EURO is over. It’s in the past. We have a very important season ahead of us, starting with the play-offs, one of the key moments of the season. We want to have our referees ready for the beginning of the competition, and also for the group stage of the Champions League and the Europa League. For the women at this gathering, it is also an important season, even more so because of the Women’s EURO in the Netherlands next year. The aim is to check how they are, and prepare them for the forthcoming season.

**How are the referees educated, how are they tested, and how important is interpretation of the laws?**

The knowledge is crucial. This gathering started with a test on the Laws of the Game, particularly concerning the changes. There were two types of test: a written test, and a video test where we want the referees to give us their interpretations of the incidents shown.

**During your presentations, you reviewed video clips and offered constructive criticism, even when the referees involved were present ... Is that something that happens throughout the season?**

The best way to learn is to see something, and you can learn from the experience you had, and this opportunity should also be given to those who did not have this experience. So if we show a clip, and there is something that did not work, this is not to blame the referee, but to offer the experience that this referee had to all the other referees, because the same thing could happen to them next time round. Normally, we do it during our seminars, but, as we cannot have seminars too often, we have implemented a web platform, so that whenever there is something important to be learned, explained or shown to the referees, we create a clip with a comment, and send it to a referee or group of referees. We do the same for assistants and observers. It is not just a matter of saying “this was wrong”, and then giving the reason; for us it is actually more important to give the reason, and we might also say “this was right, and this is the reason”. Positive things can also come from a mistake if you understand the reason ... 🗣️

**COLLINA'S 3 PILLARS OF MATCH PREPARATION**



- ⦿ Know the Laws of the Games and how to interpret them
- ⦿ Fitness – physical preparation
- ⦿ Football knowledge – tactical preparation



# MIND AND BODY

Referees have to know the Laws of the Game inside out and be fit enough to remain fresh under pressure.

The 2016/17 season will be notable for the application of the new Laws of the Game, which came into force on 1 June. The laws have been redrafted primarily to improve structure and phraseology, but there are also changes to the laws themselves, based on common sense.

This season will also see the continuation of a two-year trial of the amended so-called 'triple punishment' rule, which previously involved dismissal, a penalty and a suspension for the denial of an obvious goalscoring opportunity within the penalty area. Under the revision, referees will give a yellow card, not a red card, if a goalkeeper or defender in the penalty area genuinely and honestly tries to

challenge for the ball and commits a foul.

Referees must be as fit as elite athletes to remain lucid in their decision-making in the heat of a top-level match. As many as 76.7% of UEFA referees are now ranked excellent or very good in terms of fitness, compared with 27% five years ago – they are considered today as elite athletes in their own right.

On average, referees ran 9.9km per match during EURO 2016, with a maximum of 12.4km. Average top speed was 24.6km/h.

Belgian sports scientist Werner Helsen and his referee training and fitness team make sure that officials follow a tailored fitness programme. Continuous monitoring of the top referees started four years ago.

"We have seen a reduction in body fat among the referees from an average of 16.7% to only 13.5% four years later," Helsen states. "We have given them valuable advice with respect to nutrition and fluid intake, and it is clear that they have progressed significantly."

The officials also undergo regular fitness tests such as the ones performed in Nyon. Those assessing the tests are more focused on the process than the result. As UEFA chief refereeing officer Pierluigi Collina explains: "Referees should not spend too much time in the maximum heart rate zone, as they lose lucidity. Proper fitness means that the referee is fresher under pressure."

## FAST FACTS

At EURO 2016, referees ran an average of

**9.9km**

per match

The referees' average top speed at EURO 2016 was

**24.6km/h**



# EXCITEMENT IN MONACO

Even without the UEFA Super Cup providing the icing on the cake, UEFA's annual gathering in Monaco at the end of August continues to whet the appetites of all fans of European football.



While the Super Cup is now held in a different European city each year, giving more of the continent a chance to see the previous season's most successful clubs in the flesh, UEFA's traditional week-long summer gathering in Monaco remains a magnet not only for the clubs involved in the draws, but also for media and supporters even. For although the principality no longer stages the match that used to bring the week's events to a close, it still plays host to a raft of big names: legendary players come to lend a hand at the draws, while the cream of the current crop turn out to see who will pick up the prestigious player of the year awards. And so, Monte Carlo's Grimaldi Forum was abuzz with anticipation once again on 25 and 26 August. While crowds of supporters gathered outside to see their heroes arrive, club

The visual identity of the 2017 Europa League final is unveiled at the prestigious Grimaldi Forum in Monaco ahead of the group stage draw.

representatives were on tenterhooks inside as they waited to discover their fate in the Champions League and Europa League group stage draws. With live coverage on television and across social networks, including on the official UEFA.com platform, where fans were invited behind the scenes of the event for the very first time, the huge sense of anticipation ahead of the draws spread far beyond Monaco itself.

## Two newcomers from England and Russia

The Champions League draw kicked things off on Thursday 25 August, with many of Europe's big names in the hat. The current title holders, Real Madrid CF, along with FC Barcelona and FC Porto, had qualified for the group stage for the 20th time, while FC Bayern München were making their 19th appearance. At the other end of the spectrum, Leicester City FC (England) and FC Rostov (Russia) were both making their debuts. In his role as ambassador for the 2017 final in Cardiff, former Liverpool FC striker Ian Rush, who won the 1984 European Champion Clubs' Cup with the Anfield side, as well as earning 73 caps for Wales, helped conduct the draw along with Ruud van Nistelrooy, Clarence Seedorf, Thierry Henry and Roberto Carlos.

"It's perfect timing!" he said. "It's amazing that Wales qualified for the EURO and that next year we've got the Champions League in Cardiff! It can only be great for Wales. We're a small country but we do pride ourselves in what we do."

The Welsh dragon, which appears on the national flag, has been paired with the Champions League trophy to create the visual identity for Cardiff's first Champions League final. The design was officially unveiled in Monaco and is the result of collaboration between UEFA's commercial partner TEAM Marketing, based in Lucerne (Switzerland), and London agency Designwerk. It will be on display throughout the city of Cardiff on 3 June next year.

## Youth League growing up fast

Introduced in 2015/16, the format of the Under-19 club competition is based on two

paths: a Champions League path, which takes the form of a 32-team group stage, with the same line-up and fixture list as the Champions League group stage, and a domestic champions path, which consists of two rounds (on 28 September and 19 October, then 2 and 23 November), the draws for which took place in Nyon on 30 August (results available on UEFA.com). The eight second-round winners will meet the eight Champions League path runners-up in play-offs on 7 and 8 February in order to determine the eight teams that will join the eight group winners in the round of 16 on 21 and 22 February. The quarter-finals will be held on 7 and 8 March, with the semi-finals and final in Nyon on 21 and 24 April respectively.

### Europa League final in Sweden

Rivalling the glitz and glamour of the Champions League is no easy task, but the Europa League has a number of other selling points that help it to stand out from its big sister. With more participating clubs, it reaches more supporters, and the relationship between the clubs and their fans is often more intimate and passionate because local ties are that much stronger. The joy of discovering new opponents and unknown destinations also adds to the competition's charm.

This season, 13 clubs (FC Astana, RC Celta de Vigo, Dundalk FC, Hapoel Beer-Sheva FC, Konyaspor, Olympiacos FC, Osmanlıspor, US Sassuolo Calcio, Southampton FC, 1. FSV Mainz 05, Manchester United FC, OGC Nice and FC Zorya Luhansk) have qualified for the group stage for the first time, although Manchester United and Olympiacos can hardly be described as newcomers to international competition. Celta Vigo also participated in group matches in the old UEFA Cup.

The official ambassador for the final, Patrik Andersson, helped conduct the draw. The former Sweden international won the Champions League with Bayern München in 2001 and made 96 senior appearances for his country between 1992 and 2002. He was joined on stage at the Grimaldi Forum by Andrés Palop, two-time UEFA Cup winner with Sevilla FC.

The visual identity of the final, which will be played in Stockholm on 24 May, was designed by the same partnership of TEAM Marketing and Designwerk that created the identity for the Champions League final. With players and supporters holding the trophy aloft before the iconic backdrop of Stockholm's city hall and waterfronts, it combines the unique character of the Swedish capital with the thrill of the competition. 🌐

**"It's amazing that Wales qualified for the EURO and that next year we've got the Champions League in Cardiff. It can only be great for Wales. We're a small country but we do pride ourselves in what we do."**

**Ian Rush**  
Former Wales striker and 2017 final ambassador

## Ada Hegerberg and Cristiano Ronaldo named best players in Europe

**The UEFA Best Player in Europe awards were swept up by a regular winner and a debutante.**

Having scored the decisive penalty in the UEFA Champions League final and captained Portugal to their inaugural European Championship victory, Cristiano Ronaldo continued the best year of his already extraordinary career by taking the men's prize.

The Real Madrid CF striker, who set the record for the most goals in a Champions League group stage and finished as the leading scorer in the competition for the fourth straight year, said: "My team-mates are the key – they are the key every year. I

work hard myself but without their help this would not be possible. Thanks to my team-mates from Real Madrid and Portugal. [Winning the EURO] was different because I've won the Champions League three times now. To win something with Portugal was the highlight of my career."

Of the 55 journalists from the European Sports Media (ESM) group chosen to select the UEFA Best Player in Europe, 40 voted for Ronaldo. Club Atlético de Madrid and France forward Antoine Griezmann (8 votes) and Real Madrid and Wales forward



Gareth Bale (7 votes) took second and third place.

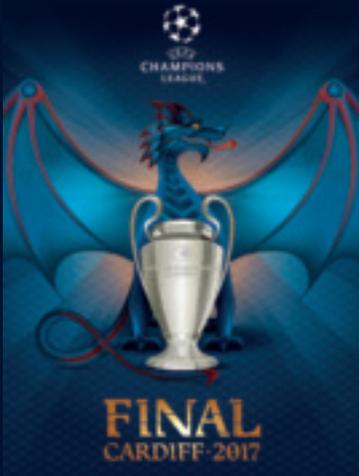
Meanwhile, 21-year-old Ada Hegerberg celebrated not only her trophy treble with Olympique Lyonnais but her first time on stage at the Monaco gala, where she collected the women's trophy.

Norwegian international Hegerberg said: "The most important moment of my career so far has been the Champions League victory

last season. But standing here today with this trophy is a true honour."

Hegerberg won 13 votes from a jury of 20 ESM journalists. Olympique Lyonnais/Portland Thorns FC and France midfielder Amandine Henry came second, with 4 votes, and 1. FFC Frankfurt/Olympique Lyonnais and Germany international Dzsennifer Marozsán was third, with 3 votes.

## COMPETITIONS



### Champions League groups

<b>Group A:</b> PFC Ludogorets Razgrad Paris Saint-Germain Arsenal FC FC Basel 1893	<b>Group B:</b> Beşiktaş JK FC Dynamo Kyiv SSC Napoli SL Benfica	<b>Group C:</b> VfL Borussia Mönchengladbach FC Barcelona Celtic FC Manchester City FC	<b>Group D:</b> Club Atlético de Madrid FC Bayern München FC Rostov PSV Eindhoven
<b>Group E:</b> AS Monaco FC Bayer 04 Leverkusen PFC CSKA Moskva Tottenham Hotspur FC	<b>Group F:</b> Borussia Dortmund Real Madrid CF Sporting Clube de Portugal Legia Warszawa	<b>Group G:</b> FC København Club Brugge KV Leicester City FC FC Porto	<b>Group H:</b> Sevilla FC Olympique Lyonnais GNK Dinamo Zagreb Juventus

### Calendar

**Group matches:** 13/14 and 27/28 September, 18/19 October, 1/2 and 22/23 November, 6/7 December  
**Round of 16 draw:** 12 December in Nyon  
**Round of 16 (first legs):** 14/15 and 21/22 February  
**Round of 16 (second legs):** 7/8 and 14/15 March  
**Quarter-final draw:** 17 March in Nyon

**Quarter-finals (first legs):** 11/12 April  
**Quarter-finals (second legs):** 18/19 April  
**Semi-final draw:** 21 April in Nyon  
**Semi-finals (first legs):** 2/3 May  
**Semi-finals (second legs):** 9/10 May  
**Final:** 3 June at the National Stadium of Wales, Cardiff



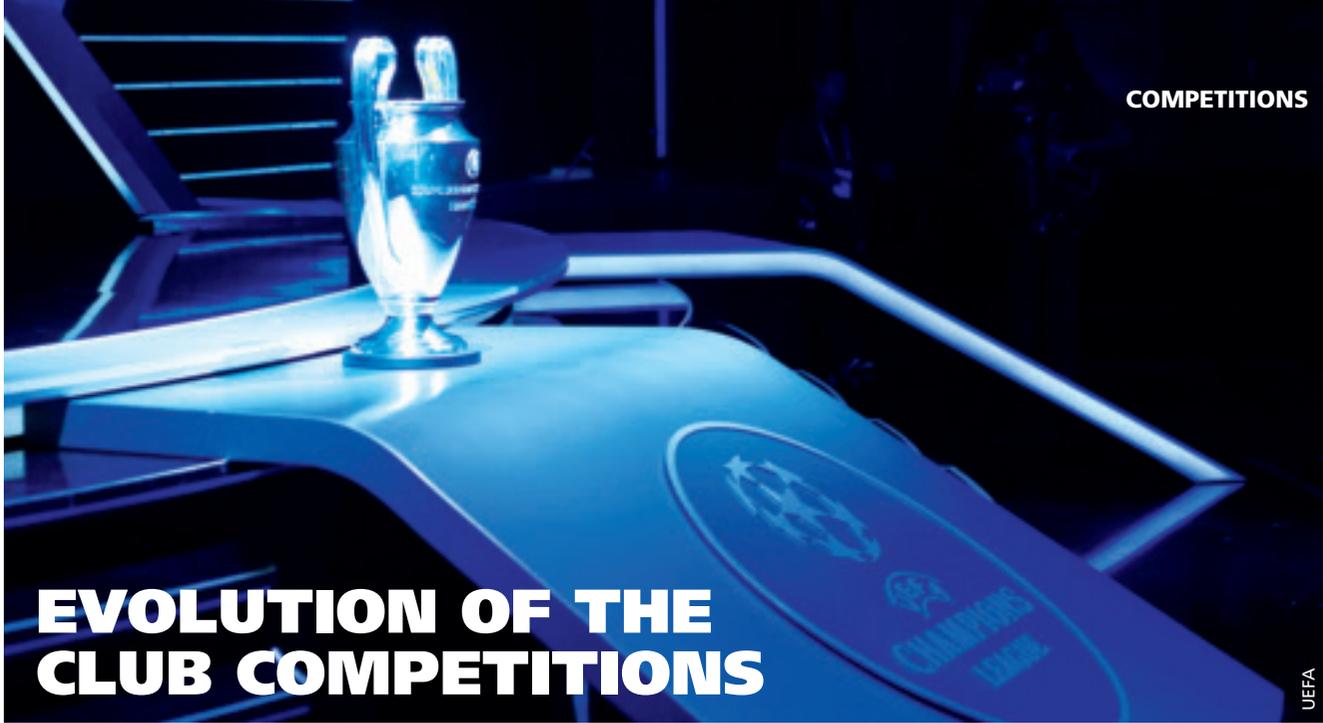
### Europa League groups

<b>Group A:</b> Fenerbahçe SK Feyenoord Manchester United FC FC Zorya Luhansk	<b>Group B:</b> FC Astana BSC Young Boys Olympiacos FC APOEL FC	<b>Group C:</b> Gabala SC 1. FSV Mainz 05 AS Saint-Étienne RSC Anderlecht	<b>Group D:</b> FC Zenit AZ Alkmaar Dundalk FC Maccabi Tel-Aviv FC
<b>Group E:</b> FK Austria Wien FC Viktoria Plzeň AS Roma FC Astra Giurgiu	<b>Group F:</b> Athletic Club SK Rapid Wien KRC Genk US Sassuolo Calcio	<b>Group G:</b> AFC Ajax R. Standard de Liège RC Celta de Vigo Panathinaikos FC	<b>Group H:</b> KAA Gent Konyaspor FC Shakhtar Donetsk SC Braga
<b>Group I:</b> FC Schalke 04 FC Salzburg FC Krasnodar OGC Nice	<b>Group J:</b> ACF Fiorentina Qarabağ FK FC Slovan Liberec PAOK FC	<b>Group K:</b> AC Sparta Praha FC Internazionale Milano Hapoel Beer-Sheva FC Southampton FC	<b>Group L:</b> FC Zürich Osmanlıspor A.Ş. FC Steaua București Villarreal CF

### Calendar

**Group matches:** 15 and 29 September, 20 October, 3 and 24 November, 8 December  
**Round of 32 draw:** 12 December in Nyon  
**Round of 32:** 16 February (first legs) and 23 February (second legs)  
**Round of 16 draw:** 24 February in Nyon

**Round of 16:** 9 March (first legs) and 16 March (second legs)  
**Quarter-final draw:** 17 March in Nyon  
**Quarter-finals:** 13 April (first legs) and 20 April (second legs)  
**Semi-final draw:** 21 April in Nyon  
**Semi-finals:** 4 May (first legs) and 11 May (second legs)  
**Final:** 24 May at the Friends Arena, Stockholm



# EVOLUTION OF THE CLUB COMPETITIONS

UEFA

**Adjustments to the UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League for the 2018–21 cycle were announced in Monaco during the kick-off events for the new club competition season. There are no format changes to either competition, but clubs will benefit from an increase in financial distributions.**

The changes, which centre on access procedures, follow a lengthy consultation process with major European football stakeholders. The UEFA Executive Committee approved the changes at its meeting in Monaco on 24 August, on the recommendation of the UEFA Club Competitions Committee and the European Club Association (ECA), which represents 220 clubs across Europe.

The champions and league paths to the Champions League group stage will be retained, thereby ensuring that clubs from all associations have a shot at qualifying through their domestic leagues.

The Europa League winners will automatically qualify for the Champions League group stage – at present, they are guaranteed a place in the play-offs as a minimum.

The top four clubs from each of the four top-ranked national associations will also qualify automatically for the Champions League group stage. The full details of the access list for both competitions will be finalised by the end of the year.

UEFA General Secretary ad interim Theodore Theodoridis welcomed the evolution. “We are happy that European football remains united behind the concepts of solidarity, fair competition, fair distribution and good governance,” he said.

UEFA also revealed in Monaco that financial distributions to clubs will increase significantly for both competitions. A revamped distribution system, comprising four pillars – starting fee, competition performance, individual club coefficient and market pool – will lead to greater rewards for sporting performances, with the market pool share decreasing at the same time.

A new system will apply for the club coefficients, with clubs judged on their own records (the country share for an individual club coefficient will no longer be used, unless that coefficient is lower than 20% of the association’s coefficient). Clubs which have won trophies in the competitions in the past will be acknowledged in coefficient calculations – points will be given for previous European titles, with a weighted system for Champions League and Europa League titles.

In addition, a subsidiary company, UEFA Club Competitions SA, is to be set up, with the aim of making an important strategic contribution in determining the future of UEFA’s club competitions. UEFA and the ECA will each appoint half of the new subsidiary’s managing directors.

“I think that the relationship between UEFA and the clubs will now be even stronger,” Mr Theodoridis said. “The cooperation between the clubs and UEFA has worked very well, and I think with this agreement and the changes made, it will even strengthen the bond between the two in the future.”

“We always have to strike the best balance between two different poles,” was the view of UEFA competitions director Giorgio Marchetti. “We want the competitions to remain the best of the best. On the other hand, of course, UEFA has an important mission to organise a European competition, which means maintaining access and giving chances to all to potentially participate in the competition.”

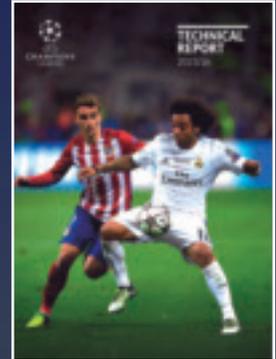
“I welcome UEFA’s decision,” said ECA chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge. “It reflects a serious and fair solution for European club football. I am particularly pleased with the fact that the European football community remains united moving forward.”

**“We are happy that European football remains united behind the concepts of solidarity, fair competition, fair distribution and good governance.”**

**Theodore Theodoridis**

# 2015/16 CHAMPIONS LEAGUE IN NUMBERS

Following the release of the 2015/16 technical report, UEFA Direct highlights some of the most revealing stats and figures from the latest edition of Europe's premier club competition, and those that came before.



The Champions League technical report is available on [UEFA.org](http://UEFA.org)

## Average number of goals per match and season



## Total number of goals per season



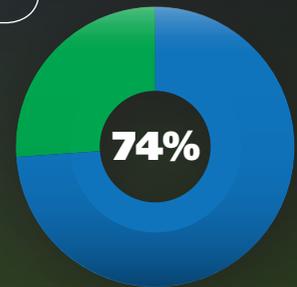
FC Bayern München	67%
FC Barcelona	65%
Paris Saint-Germain	60%
Real Madrid CF	54%
KAA Gent	53%
FC Dynamo Kyiv	52%
SL Benfica	51%
Chelsea FC	49%
PSV Eindhoven	49%
Manchester City FC	48%
VfL Wolfsburg	48%
Club Atlético de Madrid	46%
Arsenal FC	45%
AS Roma	44%
FC Zenit	44%
Juventus	43%

**Average\* possession per team involved in the knockout stage**

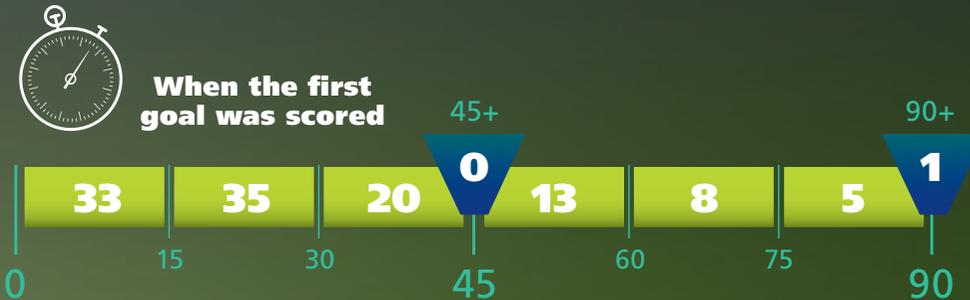
\* average across whole competition



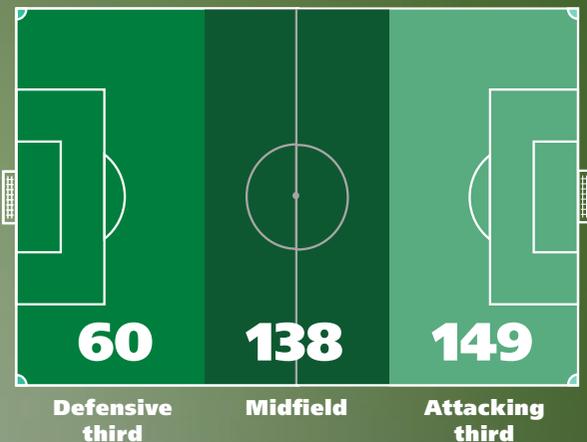
Proving that possession isn't everything, Atlético reached the final with one of the lowest ball retention rates of the teams in the knockout stage



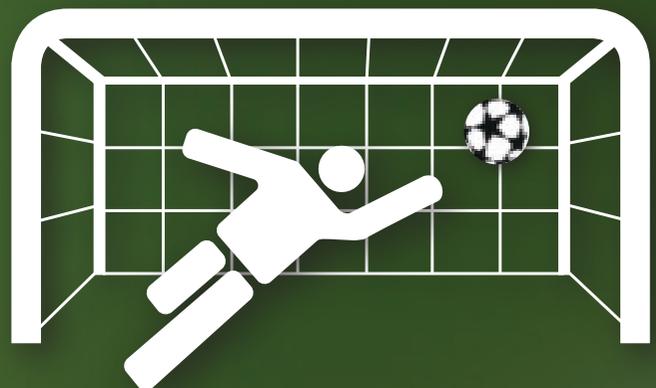
of games with goals were won by the team who scored first



**Ball-winning positions resulting in goals**



**1** in every **10** attempts resulted in a goal





Getty Images

# REWIND REVEALS TREND TOWARDS FAST FORWARD

The recently published technical reports on EURO 2016 and last season's Champions League and Europa League point to some clear tendencies that were confirmed by the elite coaching forums held in Nyon and Paris: possession is not a prerequisite for success, effective wing play is, and direct attacks are the order of the day.

**A** glance at the rear-view mirror reveals that, among the top 16 clubs in each of last season's two major club competitions, almost half the coaches (14, to be precise) were no longer on the same bench when the ball started rolling at the start of the new season. In addition, nine of the EURO 2016 coaches had parted company with their national teams. As Lars Lagerbäck said after Iceland's victory over England prompted Roy Hodgson to step down, "coaching is not the easiest".

One of the hang-ups endemic to those engaged at the top end of the coaching profession is that the vertiginous roller coaster of day-to-day work affords few opportunities to take time out, rewind the recent past and use a wide-angle lens to search for any patterns that may or may not have emerged from the previous season. UEFA offers encouragement to hit the pause button by staging the annual Elite Club Coaches Forum in

Nyon and, after EURO 2016, inviting the continent's national team coaches and technical directors to a conference in Paris for a review of the first 24-team final tournament in the history of the European Football Championship. And, with a view to sharing information and reflections among as broad an audience as possible, technical reports on each competition have been published. In theory, the two major club competitions should not be overly dissimilar. Yet Unai Emery, after steering Sevilla FC in the group stage of the UEFA Champions League and then leading the Spanish club to a third successive UEFA Europa League victory, stressed during the forum in Nyon that teams diverted from the Champions League to the Europa League frequently struggle to adjust to the biorhythms of two surprisingly different competitions. Zinedine Zidane, who led Real Madrid CF to victory in the Champions League in his first season as coach, admitted "the Champions League is a complex entity to

deal with", while technicians such as SL Benfica's Rui Vitória and FC Dynamo Kyiv's Serhiy Rebrov underscored the coaching challenges pegged to the need to combine high-profile, high-intensity European fixtures with much lower-key domestic games. Flipping the same coin to a EURO perspective, Northern Ireland's Michael O'Neill was not alone in feeling proud of the performance by players who had never experienced Champions League football and could therefore have been excused for falling short of the intensity levels required at the top end of the international game.

Despite the diverse personalities of the three competitions, it was not mission impossible to weave threads of different hues into an interesting texture. Hein Vanhaezebrouck, who led KAA Gent into the Champions League knockout phase last season, remarked in Nyon: "One of the things we saw at EURO was – it's becoming more and more visible, in fact – that you have two ways of playing: the dominant way of playing, and the defensive way →

of playing where you don't worry about giving the ball to the opponent. As a small team, the normal thing is to give the ball to the opponent. But I dared to do it the other way. In almost every game, even away to Valencia and Zenit, we had dominance."

The issue of 'dominance' via possession has been a perennial debating point during a period when Champions League titles have see-sawed between teams with possession-based philosophies and teams who have been comfortable without the ball. The technical report mentions that the group stage of the 2015/16 competition suggested that the gap between philosophies was narrowing. Teams enjoying greater possession won 40 games, while 35 were won by teams who had less of the ball. In other words, a greater share of possession was translated into victory 53% of the time, a marginal majority. Possession then became more productive in the knockout rounds (13 wins and eight defeats) to produce a final balance of 53:43 in favour of the teams with a greater share of the ball.

**To dominate or not to dominate**

At the same time, the technical report questions definitions by signalling that only four participants (FC Barcelona, FC Bayern München, Paris Saint-Germain and Manchester United FC) could comfortably be described as 'possession teams' in the sense that they had more than 50% of the ball in each and every one of their matches. By contrast, half the participants registered variations of 20 percentage points or more between their maximum and minimum possession figures – among them the two Madrid sides who disputed the final in Milan where, contrary to preconceived notions about 'possession play' and 'direct attacking', Club Atlético de Madrid had more of the ball than Real during all three periods of the match.

The Europa League painted a similarly chiaroscuro picture. Ten of the top 16 teams posted averages of 50% or more, yet none had a greater share of the ball in every match they played. As in the Champions League, the season's averages conceal considerable peaks and troughs – a glaring example being provided by semi-finalists Villarreal CF. The Spanish side had 67% of the ball at home to FC Dinamo Minsk and 35% away to SSC Napoli. The champions, Sevilla, had a greater share of possession in only one of their last five games.

However, the most compelling evidence was delivered in France, where only 15 of the 51 matches were won by the team dominating possession. The tendency gathered momentum during the knockout phase, when 15 games produced only four victories (27%) for the



teams who had more of the ball. Iceland's run to the quarter-finals was achieved via 21 minutes of possession per match. And Portugal's victorious campaign was based on a clear change of strategy. During the group stage, shares of the ball ranging from 58% to 66% failed to produce a win. The switch to a more counterattacking style in the knockout rounds entailed possession percentages which dropped into the low 40s.

"In the last decade," José Mourinho commented during the forum in Nyon, "possession has become a very important word in our world. But now, what is the importance of possession? At the moment, the numbers tell us very, very clearly that you can win football matches without possession."

The debate over the value of ball possession remains very much alive. But the 2015/16 season suggested that players are now less likely to display symptoms of frustration or panic when opponents dominate possession and demonstrated that top teams are comfortable with the ball and without it.

**Significantly, the eight teams in the Champions League who delivered the fewest crosses were all eliminated in the group stage.**



Getty Images

Fernando inadvertently helps Gareth Bale's cross home to send Real Madrid into the Champions League final

### Spreading the wings

"What EURO showed us," said Sir Alex Ferguson, who chaired the forum in Nyon, "is that if you can defend right – like Portugal did in the final – you can win matches." "During this EURO," Mourinho added, "I saw a lot of strikers or front men not pressing the defensive lines, but compacting with the midfielders. In terms of roles, you could confuse them with midfield players because the objective of the team was to compact low, occupy spaces and get players back. I think teams were about a defensive idea, low levels of risk, and use of individual qualities to try to get a win."

"At EURO," Arsène Wenger commented, "I think everybody focused on strongly protecting the centre of the pitch. Everybody was physically better prepared. And almost everybody was very effective in breaking up counterattacks. That's why it's now difficult to see players running through midfield and that's why most teams focus on opening play to the flanks – and that's why we see more goals coming from crosses."

Data presented in the technical reports support the Arsenal manager's observations. In the knockout rounds of the Europa League, 28% of the goals could be traced to crosses or cut-backs from the wide areas. In the Champions League, goals from crosses increased by 24% in comparison with the previous season and, with goals from cut-backs also registering a 21% upturn, no less than 35% of the competition's open-play goals had their origins in supply from the wide areas. Significantly, the eight teams who delivered the fewest crosses were all eliminated in the group stage. Statistics also hinted at greater attention to quality. In 2014/15, five of the 32 Champions League contestants had bettered a 1 in 4 'success rate' in terms of deliveries reaching a teammate. In 2015/16, no fewer than 14 teams surpassed this benchmark.

This trend was transported to France. Mixu Paatelainen, one of UEFA's technical observers at the final tournament, said: "We saw a lot of teams operating well-organised narrow defending and this underlined the need to find a way around the block, bearing in mind the difficulties of playing through it. I think that's why we saw a greater number of crosses". The final balance after the 51 matches was that about 40% of the open-play goals could be attributed to crosses or cut-backs and – as in the Champions League – quality, in addition to quantity, remained an issue. Iceland, although averaging only eight crosses per match, registered a success rate a few decimal points short of 1 in 3, while a third of the contestants bettered 1 in 4. Germany, despite delivering more crosses (29.8 per match) than any other team, were in the lower reaches of the table with a success rate of 1 in 5. Joshua Kimmich, pressed into action as right-back, posted a 23% success rate while Jonas Hector, on the left, registered 6%. Joachim Löw's team was among a majority in France who relied heavily on full-backs or wing-backs, rather than genuine wingers, for the supply of crosses – an eye-catching example being Italy's Antonio Candreva, who delivered 22 crosses from the right in the two games before injury ruled the wing-back out of the tournament.

However, one of the most striking statistics recorded in the technical report on EURO 2016 was the average of 40.76 crosses per match, compared with 26.16 at EURO 2012. The increase of 56% provided a clear indicator of the growing relevance of effective wing play as a response to rapid transitions into compact defensive blocks designed primarily to block central routes to goal. →



The coaches forum in Nyon brought together some of the top technicians in European club football

### Counter-espionage

Information in the technical reports also endorsed Wenger's views on the increasing difficulties in finding central routes to goal via solo runs or the traditional through ball. According to the report on the Champions League, as with the solo runs, a high percentage of the 'forward pass' successes can be associated with counterattacking, with Kevin De Bruyne's opener for Manchester City in Paris, the opener by Fernando Torres for Atlético in Barcelona, and Atlético's tie-winning away goal by Antoine Griezmann in Munich providing key examples.

### A similar tale told in France

Counterattacking, the report notes, provided 46% of the open-play goals at EURO 2008 but, with awareness increasing, the percentage at the subsequent two tournaments has been halved. At EURO 2016, although Portugal's victory could be attributed to the switch to a counterattacking approach, most of the successful counterattacks could be traced to late-game scenarios when opponents were pushing forward in search of a result. Very few broke the deadlock. Many of the coaches openly disclosed that they had designed game plans in accordance with scouting information on the opposition's counterattacking potential.

"As expected," said Croatia coach Ante Čačić, "Portugal played on the counterattack. But we controlled it and didn't allow them a chance until almost the end of the 120 minutes." "We were ready for them," stated his opponent, Fernando Santos, "and we set up to resist their strengths. We didn't allow them to counterattack." After the Group C game, Poland coach Adam Nawalka remarked: "There were times when Germany took the initiative but we gave it to them consciously to allow ourselves space to hit them on the counterattack." "We didn't allow Poland

to play to their strengths, to hurt us on the counterattack," Löw responded. In those two games, 210 minutes of football produced one goal.

### The price of goals

In France, the emphasis on spiking opponents' guns certainly pushed up the price of goals. The average of 2.12 goals per game (and only 1.92 in the group stage) was well over 20% lower than the 2.61 in the Europa League or the 2.78 in the Champions League. What's more, with deadball situations accounting for 30% of the goals at EURO 2016 (compared with 21% in the Europa League and 23% in the Champions League), the average number of open-play goals was 1.5 per game. In France, 68% of games were won by the team who scored first and no fewer than 19 of the goals that broke the deadlock were set plays.

The ratio of goals to attempts provided further proof that goals were more expensive in France. Sevilla won the Europa League by scoring once per 6.65 attempts and only two of the competition's top 16 teams required an average of 10 or more attempts to hit the net. The Champions League registered one goal per 9.86 attempts. At EURO 2016, the average was 12.65. Whereas 9 of the 16 finalists in 2012 had required 10 attempts or fewer to score, only 5 of the 24 in France could boast that level of efficiency. Germany, for example, needed 15.43 to score (7.5 in 2012) and England 20.75.

However, the most palpable effect of rapid transitions into compact defensive blocks is a clear trend towards more direct attacking and away from over-elaborate construction. "In the modern game, you see more long balls than before," Wenger said, "and one of the reasons for the increase is that the middle of the pitch has become so congested." After Spain's possession-based victories in 2008 and 2012, the extensive use of the long pass and more

**The most palpable effect of rapid transitions into compact defensive blocks is a clear trend towards more direct attacking and away from over-elaborate construction.**

direct attacking at EURO 2016 became an even more eye-catching feature.

Even before the ball started rolling in France, the Champions League had pointed in that direction. In 2014/15, long passes (30m or more) had accounted for only 9% of the repertoire of six teams. In 2015/16, by contrast, Paris Saint-Germain were the only team to fall below double figures. The average use of long passes over the 125-match campaign increased by 23% to 13.5. In France, only four teams (England, Germany, Spain and Switzerland) overtly played an elaborate possession-based passing game, and the percentage of long passes increased by almost one-quarter in relation to EURO 2012, to average out at 15.88 across the tournament. At EURO 2012, five of the 16 teams could claim that long passes accounted for less than 10% of their total. In France: none. In 2012, the Republic of Ireland had set the benchmark by going long in 19% of their passing. In 2016, four teams exceeded that figure, with Northern Ireland (28%) and Iceland (22%) at the head of the field.

### Fast forward

Further evidence to support theories of a trend towards more direct attacking stems from analysis of goalscoring moves. As the technical report mentions, the time span of a scoring move at EURO 2016 dropped by 10.6% to 10.77 seconds, while the average number of passes in the build-up also fell, to 3.73. This echoed the downward trend registered in the Champions League, where the average



Daniel Sturridge's spectacular curled finish put Liverpool ahead in the first half of the Europa League final

goalscoring move had a duration of 11.51 seconds and involved an almost identical figure of 3.74 passes.

Interestingly, the champions, Real Madrid, changed radically from season to season, with the duration of their successful attacks dropping from 13.83 to 7.75 seconds and the number of passes from 5.13 to 2.43, whereas silver medallists Atlético Madrid – with a greater reputation for direct attacking – required 15.06 seconds and 5.81 passes.

Among the wide variety of topics addressed by the technical reports, one of the most striking features revealed by the rewind of 2015/16 is a notable trend towards the use of the fast-forward button. 🏃

Atlético beat Barcelona 3-1 at home in the Champions League quarter-finals despite being in possession of the ball for only 28% of the match





## PARIS AND BEYOND

Europe's national team coaches met in the French capital on 12 September to discuss what they had learnt from UEFA EURO 2016.

**W**ith the rapid transition to World Cup qualifying, it is understandable that for many EURO 2016 is a thing of the past. But it would be foolish to consign it to memory without taking stock and seeing what takeaway messages it has to offer the coaching fraternity in particular. That was the mission statement when UEFA invited national team coaches, technical directors and coach education specialists to a conference in Paris – where else? – on 12 September.

The starting point was a selection of information culled from the technical report, copies of which were distributed hot off the press to the conference attendees. The full report is also available in various languages on UEFA.org. Some of the topics – such as the pros and cons of fielding a settled team or rotating the full squad – were then carried into a round-table session. “As everybody says, with a national team you can’t sign players,” Wales manager Chris Coleman said. “So it’s about



Getty Images

Cristiano Ronaldo rises high to head Portugal in front against Wales in the EURO 2016 semi-finals

getting the best out of the players you have. In my case, I had outstanding talents like Gareth Bale and Aaron Ramsey, so I tried to set up a team that would get them into possession as much as possible and encourage them to do as much damage as possible."

Iceland co-coach Lars Lagerbäck stressed: "We tend to look only at the final tournament. But our preparations were over a period of two years or so, since we started the qualifying rounds. Before the EURO, we had the full squad together for a very limited number of days, so our campaign was down to the good basic organisation that we had already put in place."

Lagerbäck also outlined the ins and outs of the co-coaching formula that he had employed with Sweden and, alongside Heimir Hallgrímsson, with Iceland. "It's a formality, really," he said. "Heimir and I get on very well together – that's the important thing. Whether you talk about 'head coach', 'co-coach' or 'assistant coach' is not so relevant. Maybe it makes it easier to share the media work but, otherwise, it makes no difference."

### Flexibility and stability

The coaches in Paris also weighed up the value of tactical flexibility. Didier Deschamps, who varied structures and personnel during the final tournament, said: "I think a coach always wants to be able to surprise the opposition or to react in accordance with a specific match situation. You always want to play to your strengths – but a squad can give you different strengths and more options when it comes to adapting to create more problems for opponents."

Coleman, on the other hand, expressed a preference for stability. "The best Plan B," he said, "is to get Plan A right. But if you see that your plan doesn't work, then you make changes to look for a result." Lagerbäck also preferred a settled structure – in Iceland's case a classic 4-4-2. "Football is about getting into the box as often as possible – and there are

various ways of doing that. Personally, I prefer to use two strikers as I think the cooperation between them poses greater problems for defenders." He and Coleman both underlined the importance of training-ground work on set plays which, in France, accounted for around 30% of the goals. "You can score with fantastic creative play like Barcelona," commented Coleman, "but that's not the only way. A while ago, we were conceding too many goals from set plays and crosses and we've been successful in cutting that down. We work on organisation and delivery – which can be tedious for the players. But we make sure they know individual roles and that's a good investment."

During the final session in Paris, UEFA's chief technical officer, Ioan Lupescu, invited European champion Fernando Santos to review the reasons for Portugal's success. Man-management strategies emerged as key features, with Santos outlining his search for the right balance between youth and experience and his successful efforts in "persuading them to calm down". He revealed that emotional responses had been difficult to control and that he had strived to stifle deep-rooted ambitions to attack with panache. "Football is very simple," he maintained. "The aim is to score and not concede. The players wanted to throw everything forward but I helped them to become more focused and pragmatic. We didn't change the set-up that much but we sat back a little more and didn't allow ourselves to get caught too high up the pitch."

Asked by Lupescu to trace his own development as a coach, he responded: "As a coach in today's game, it is essential to be trusted by the players. Over the years, you develop your capacity to read and understand the game. You need to embrace technology and you need to be able to transmit all the knowledge that you have acquired." Those qualities were evidently crucial in his run to Portugal's first major trophy. 🏆



Sportsfile

## Homage to Vicente del Bosque

"Success changes a lot of people," Sir Alex Ferguson said on stage in Paris. "But it has not changed Vicente del Bosque. Even after all his successes, he has retained the same humility. He not only won titles but he also did it in style." After three domestic titles and victory in two UEFA Champions Leagues, one UEFA Super Cup and one Club World Cup with Real Madrid CF, followed by eight years, a World Cup crown and a European Championship trophy at the helm of Spain, Del Bosque's retirement was honoured by his coaching colleagues, who gave him a standing ovation as UEFA presented him with a specially commissioned photobook. With trademark humility, he said: "A coach is only worth what his players are worth. The only advice I would pass on is that behaviour is important. No matter what, a coach has to remain calm and collected in order to take optimal decisions." Gracias, Vicente!



UEFA

# DISABLED FANS JOIN IN THE FOOTBALL FUN AT EURO 2016

A sound plan was developed as part of the EURO 2016 football social responsibility and sustainability programme for disabled fans at the tournament in France. Provisions put in place, especially for blind fans and wheelchair users, set a new benchmark for accessibility and inclusiveness at football events.

**F**ootball belongs to everyone, and the game's institutions have a duty to make the sport accessible to the largest number of people. UEFA pledged to include and welcome disabled fans as part of the celebrations in France.

Disabled people constitute the largest minority group (more than 15%), according to the World Health Organisation, and this figure is rising. It is important to remember that disabled people do not attend live sporting events in isolation – they come with family and friends.

## Seeing through words

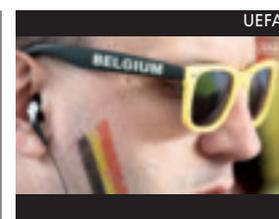
"The UEFA EURO 2016 Respect – Access for All project helped us to build on the great work started in Poland and Ukraine in 2012," said Joyce Cook, managing director of UEFA's social responsibility partner the Centre for Access to Football in Europe (CAFE). "We look forward to

the next four years, as we all strive for 'Total Football Total Access' across Europe."

UEFA offered an audio description commentary (ADC) service to blind and partially sighted fans at EURO 2016 – a first in France.

Implemented across all 51 EURO 2016 matches in conjunction with CAFE and stadium authorities in the ten host cities, the ADC, available on FM frequencies, provided specialist commentary to people with limited or no vision – with additional visual narration: players' facial expressions, kit colours, haircuts, fans' celebrations, their flags and outfits, and the overall atmosphere.

Kevin Vanderborght, a blind football fan, left his home in Belgium at two o'clock in the morning to support his team against the Republic of Ireland in Bordeaux. "What I love most about football," he said, "is the amazing atmosphere, and to be surrounded



UEFA



Watch Kevin's day



UEFA



Watch Jean-Pierre's EURO match journey

by my friends! We live big football games together. Audio description allows us to receive each detail of the atmosphere, and to feel intense emotions. We then leave with lots of memories."

The broadcasting equipment donated to each EURO 2016 host stadium constitutes a lasting UEFA legacy to France. Already available in countries such as Austria, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Ukraine, the UK, and now France, UEFA hopes that the latest football ADC venture will inspire other national associations and sports bodies to provide such services.

**Attending games as a wheelchair user**

UEFA developed additional facilities and services to make EURO 2016 an inclusive experience – from parking permits to disabled fan entrances, as well as buggies from entrances to lifts. Volunteers were specifically trained to guide, support and respond to inquiries from disabled fans.

Jean-Pierre Inacio was one of the many wheelchair users who attended EURO 2016.

"What I like is to be surrounded by European fans, to meet people, and to share the excitement," he explained. "That's what life is all about!"

Jean-Pierre also urged other disabled fans to go to matches. "My advice for someone with reduced mobility is to go to the stadium if they want to go."

CAFE sent disabled match monitors to EURO 2016 to gather feedback aimed at improving future services and infrastructure.

UEFA and CAFE plan to broaden access to football in Europe, and to use the sport's power to foster social inclusion. This is crucial, as some 50% of disabled people have never participated in leisure or sports activities owing to inaccessible venues and services. Accessible sporting venues report an increased and more inclusive fan base, an enhanced reputation, greater ticket and merchandise sales, and an increased sense of community and belonging for all. ♿

**ACCESSIBILITY OUTCOMES**

**Facts and figures on EURO 2016 achievements:**



Disabled fans' accessibility guide to getting around during the finals

5 dedicated and trained accessibility volunteers at each host venue

Pedestrian and wheelchair user buggies and wheelchair loan services

Dedicated parking and drop-off points

Audio descriptive commentary (ADC) for partially sighted and blind fans, and ADC broadcasting equipment donated to each host venue as a legacy

30 local volunteers: media students trained to deliver ADC at each host venue

200 additional personal headsets donated

**HOW TO IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY AT MAJOR FOOTBALL EVENTS**

National associations and other bodies looking to make football matches more open to disabled people are encouraged to:

1. Establish a national pan-disability advisory group of access and inclusion representatives from disabled fan groups.
2. Inform disabled fans about getting to the stadium on matchdays: how to obtain disabled fan tickets, accessible transport links, dedicated parking, drop-off points, entrances, facilities and amenities.
3. Promote the UEFA and CAFE Good Practice Guide to Creating an Accessible Stadium and Matchday Experience (available in 14 languages at [www.cafefootball.eu/en/access-all](http://www.cafefootball.eu/en/access-all)).
4. Introduce an audio descriptive commentary service at stadiums for blind and partially sighted fans.

For more information, you can contact CAFE: [info@cafefootball.eu](mailto:info@cafefootball.eu) +44 20 8621 2405



ALBANIA

www.fshf.org

## LORO BORIÇI STADIUM READY FOR ACTION

TRITAN KOKONA

 The national team of Albania will have a new home for its forthcoming 2018 World Cup qualifiers, the Loro Boriçi Stadium in Shkoder. Having been totally renovated, the stadium now has an all-seater capacity of 16,000. The renovation was a mutual investment by the Football Association of Albania and the government. Shkoder is the main city in northern Albania and is known as the cradle of Albanian culture and history. It is also where Albanian football began at the beginning of the 20th century. The local team is KF Vllaznia, which is also the oldest football club in Albania, having been founded in 1919.

Reconstruction work on the stadium began one year ago. It included the construction of the main stand and one side stand, while the two other stands

were totally reconstructed. The stadium meets the parameters required for international fixtures. It was inaugurated on 24 August on the occasion of the 2016 Albanian Super Cup match between KF Skënderbeu and FK Kukësi, before playing host to Albania's first 2018 World Cup qualifying match on 5 September against FYR Macedonia. For EURO 2016, Albania played its home qualifying matches at the new Elbasan Arena. However, now that the Loro Boriçi Stadium is ready, the national team will play there. Meanwhile, Qemal Stafa Stadium in Tirana, where the national team has played most of its matches since 1946, has been completely demolished and work has begun to build a new, modern 23,000-seater stadium on the same spot. In two years' time, it will be the new home of the Albanian national team.

AZERBAIJAN

www.affa.az

## CHILDREN'S PORTABLE PITCH HAPPINESS

TORA AKHMEDOVA

 The Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA) often holds events and runs projects to increase the popularity of football in all regions and to enhance children's and young people's interest in football. The installation of artificial football pitches is something that attracts the most attention. To date, the AFFA has installed more than 150 artificial pitches in Baku and other towns and cities that children can use.

Another AFFA initiative is to set up portable pitches in areas of Baku that are awaiting artificial pitches. One of these portable pitches has been set up in the Khatai area of Baku, in response to an appeal sent to the AFFA's official Facebook page. The children of Khatai



are thrilled to be able to play football on such a good pitch, and they were even happier when Azerbaijan national team goalkeeper Kamran Aghayev visited the pitch. He played football with the children, had photos taken with them and signed autographs.

Given the success and popularity of these portable pitches, the initiative will certainly be extended further and wider.

AUSTRIA

www.oefb.at

## FAREWELL PARTY FOR ALFRED LUDWIG

CARMEN REDL

 At a special ceremony held in Vienna on 29 August, the Austrian Football Association (ÖFB) officially said goodbye to its long-serving chief executive, Alfred Ludwig, who has taken well-deserved retirement after decades of service to the game. The Austrian national team and many big names from the worlds of sport, business



and politics looked back at Ludwig's life and achievements over the past 35 years.

Highlights of his ÖFB career include the reopening of Vienna's Praterstadion (now known as the

Ernst-Happel-Stadion) in 1986 and the hosting of the 1987 and 1990 European Champion Clubs' Cup finals, the 1995 UEFA Champions League final and the 1994 UEFA Cup final, all of which were held in Vienna, and the European Under-16 Tournament in 1996, the first UEFA tournament to be staged on Austrian soil since 1979. Although the two UEFA Congresses held in Vienna in 1994 and 2015 were also memorable occasions for Alfred Ludwig, his crowning glory was undoubtedly the staging of EURO 2008 in Austria and Switzerland, in which he played a leading role as ÖFB general secretary.

As a mark of gratitude for and recognition of his outstanding services to the association, Ludwig was presented with the Grand Decoration of Honour for services to the Republic of Austria by the Austrian sports minister, Hans Peter Doskozil. On 1 August, Thomas Hollerer took over as general secretary, while Bernhard Neuhold assumed the role of managing director of Austrian Football Marketing GmbH (which will become ÖFB Wirtschaftsbetriebe GmbH on 1 January 2017).

BELGIUM

www.belgianfootball.be

## ROBERTO MARTÍNEZ HEADS THE RED DEVILS

PIERRE CORNEZ



On 3 August the Royal Belgian Football Association announced the appointment of Spanish coach Roberto Martínez as the new national team coach. 43-year-old Martínez replaces Marc Wilmots, who had led the Red Devils since 2012.

After shortlisting the best candidates for the job, the Belgian FA very quickly selected Martínez, who has said that he is honoured to be able to work with such a talented group of players. Since turning his hand to coaching, the former midfielder has successfully managed



Swansea City AFC, Wigan Athletic FC and Everton FC.

At his first media conference, he was very enthusiastic about the trust that had been placed in him: "I've felt really welcome ever since I arrived in Belgium, and it didn't take long for the Belgian FA's professionalism to show. That and the Belgian players' many good qualities, along with the enthusiasm of the supporters, has convinced me that I've made the right choice. Success requires talent. We have talent, so we can succeed."

Bart Verhaeghe, first vice-president of the Belgian FA, was also very positive: "It's important to point out that even though there were a huge number of candidates, Roberto Martínez was chosen unanimously. But appointing a new coach for the national team is just one of many steps that must be taken to achieve success. In this respect, the players also have a big responsibility."

The Belgian FA's sport director, Chris Van Puyvelde, praised Martínez's experience: "There aren't many coaches who can boast seven years working in the Premier League. The three words that people have used most when talking to me about Roberto Martínez have been passion, work and clarity. In my opinion, these three concepts are very important. What's more, being Spanish, Roberto Martínez knows a lot about Spanish football, and he also has experience of English passion. That's a fantastic mix, and I'm sure it will benefit our talented team."

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

www.nfsbih.ba

## FIRST FOOTBALL FOR ALL CAMP

FUAD KRVAVAC



The Respect football school in Sarajevo recently organised its first Football for All camp, held at the stadium in Praca, and as a socially responsible organisation, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Football Federation (NFSBiH) was pleased to be part of the event. Over three days, the children from all across the country had the chance to socialise, have fun and compete against each other, and they returned home with lots of good memories, unanimous in the opinion that such events should become tradition.

"Since its establishment the school has opened the door to all children, without any form of discrimination. The school treats everyone equally, and through the spirit of sport any differences between the children are erased," said Emir Hujdur, the founder and director of the school, who also thanked the NFSBiH for its support in organising the first camp.

At the other end of the football pyramid, HŠK Zrinjski were knocked out of the Champions League by Polish champions Legia Warszawa (1-1, 0-2) in the second qualifying round. In the first round of the Europa League, NK Široki Brijeg were knocked out by Malta's Birkirkara FC (1-1, 0-2), FK Sloboda Tuzla by Israel's Beitar Jerusalem FC (0-0, 0-1) and FK Radnik Bijeljina by Bulgaria's PFC Beroe Stara Zagora (0-0, 0-2).

It was a different story for futsal champions MNK Centar Sarajevo, who advanced to the main round of the UEFA Futsal Cup after three wins in preliminary group D in Lithuania. They beat Lynx FC (Gibraltar) 9-3, Istanbul Üniversitesi SK (Turkey) 9-3 and hosts FC Baltija (4-1).

The women's national team played a friendly at the NFSBiH training centre in Zenica against Ukraine and lost 1-0. The training centre also hosted a women's U18 UEFA development tournament. The winners were Croatia, ahead of FYR

Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro.

Last but by no means least, women's football champions WFC SFK 2000 Sarajevo won first place in qualifying group 6 of the UEFA Women's Champions League, with victories at home over Israel's WFC Ramat Hasharon (1-0) and Latvia's Rigas Futbola skola (3-0), and a draw against Ukraine's WFC Kharkiv (2-2). Thanks to this success, Sarajevo have qualified for the round of 32.



F. Kravac

BULGARIA

www.bfunion.bg

## NEW WEBSITE FOR THE NEW TOP PROFESSIONAL LEAGUE

YORDAN GROZDANOV

 Bulgaria's new First Professional Football League has just been launched and comes with its own website – [www.fpleague.bg](http://www.fpleague.bg). The site includes official team line-ups and live updates on the most important events during each match (goals, yellow and red cards, substitutions, corner kicks, shots on goal, offsides, etc.). All the information is available free of charge, whether visitors want to follow the main

action of the game live or get information from the official source.

The creation of the website is another step in the development of the successful Electronic Championship project, which was launched for elite clubs in 2014 and extended a year later to teams in the second division. The project allows clubs to organise their documents (player registrations, records regarding players on loan, etc.) electronically. Moreover, the



BFU

project provides a digital service for every match in the first and second professional leagues, so printed referee and delegate reports have been replaced.

There will soon be an English version of the platform, which will be accessible to everyone who wants to track anything connected to the matches in the First Professional Football League.

CROATIA

www.hns-cff.hr

## CAPTAIN'S FAREWELL

TOMISLAV PACAK

 Darijo Srna, long-term Croatia captain and record holder in terms of number of caps for Croatia, has announced his international retirement in an emotion-packed open letter. The 34-year-old said farewell to the national team after 134 caps, 68 as captain, and 22 goals.

"This is the greatest and saddest day in my life. To part forever with something you love so much breaks your heart, fills your eyes with tears. The words don't come. There are none, there can be none... How could there be? I was the captain of Croatia national football team. The captain of the Vatreni. It was worth every second," Srna wrote in the letter.

Srna represented Croatia at six major competitions: EURO 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2016, and the 2006 and 2014 World Cups.

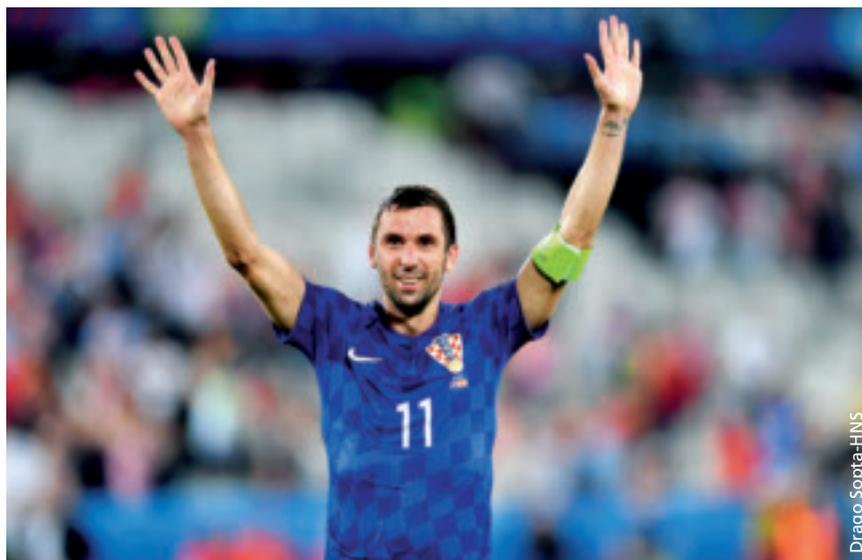
"He led his team-mates by example, with commitment and charisma. On behalf of the Croatian Football Federation, I congratulate Darijo Srna on his exquisite international career, and thank him for everything he gave to Croatian football. There will always

be a place for him," said Davor Šuker, president of the Croatian Football Federation.

Croatia head coach Ante Čačić added: "He was a real leader on and off the field, and simultaneously brought charm, joy and a serious approach to every training session. A true captain, he ensured a good atmosphere in the team, and showed the necessary responsibility and professionalism. He was a true example to his team-mates, and the younger players will confirm how much Darijo's support has meant to them."

Following the announcement of his international retirement, Srna's team-mates also paid tribute to their captain. Many of them highlighted what an honour it was to share the locker room and the field with Srna, how supportive he was and what a true example he set, both on and off the field. They pointed out that Srna was truly a great player, but above all a great person.

On his debut as captain Srna said: "It is a great honour to become Croatia captain, but it will be difficult to follow Niko Kovač's footsteps." Seven and a half years later, it will be difficult to follow Srna's footsteps.



Drago Sopta-HNS

ENGLAND

www.thefa.com

## GREG CLARKE ANNOUNCED AS NEW FA CHAIRMAN

DANNY LYNCH



Greg Clarke has been appointed as the new chairman of The Football Association (The FA).

Having been approved by The FA's board on 22 July, Clarke's appointment was formally ratified by a full meeting of The FA's council at Wembley Stadium on 25 August. This means that David Gill's spell as acting chairman has ended, and he will revert to his duties as vice-chairman.

Clarke said: "I'm delighted to be confirmed as the next chairman of The FA and I'm relishing the challenge. My experience as a council member for The FA has given me an insight into the excellent work this organisation undertakes at every level of the game. It's an honour for me to be joining at such a

pivotal point in its recent history and I'd like to thank the board and the council for their continued support."

The new chairman's first day with English football's governing body was Friday 2 September. It was a busy introduction to life at The FA, as he started the day at Wembley Stadium and then took in the FA Cup first-round qualifying match between South Park FC and Dorking Wanderers FC later that evening. The following day he accompanied The FA's general secretary, Martin Glenn, and the senior men's team to Trnava in Slovakia for their opening 2018 World Cup qualifier.

The busy first month continued as Clarke travelled to Athens on 14



September for the UEFA Congress, then watched the England women's team play the day after at Meadow Lane, the home of Notts County, as Mark Sampson's side took on Estonia in a Women's EURO 2017 qualifier.

"The FA has the ability to have the most positive effect on football in this country – from the grassroots game all the way through to the men's and women's senior England teams," Clarke said. "I'm looking forward to continuing that good work and playing my part in representing an FA that we can all be proud of."

FAROE ISLANDS

www.football.fo

## KÍ KLAKSVÍK END VÍKINGUR'S CUP DOMINANCE

TERJI NIELSEN



The Faroese Cup final was played on 27 August, between Víkingur, who had won the cup for the last four years, and KÍ Klaksvík, the current leaders of the Faroese Premier Division.

Everything was in place for a memorable final between the two best teams in the Faroe Islands and for the first time ever for a Faroese Cup final the national stadium, Tórsvøllur, was sold out. The 5,000 spectators certainly did their best to make it a memorable night in Torshavn, as did the teams.

The match got off to a lively start and after about a quarter of an hour KÍ took the lead. After a period of sustained pressure in the Víkingur goal area, KÍ went for goal. The ball bounced off Víkingur and Faroe Islands captain Atli Gregersen and into the back of the net, behind Hungarian keeper Géza Turi.



But Víkingur soon settled back into the game, and it was nothing more than they deserved when Andreas Lava Olsen equalised half an hour in.

The rest of the game was very intense and there were not many chances to score. Víkingur's Hans Pauli Samuelsen had an excellent chance in extra time, but his effort went over the bar.

So after 120 minutes of an intense cup final fight it all came down to penalties. KÍ scored from their first four penalties,

and when Erling Jacobsen missed Víkingur's fourth it was up to former Víkingur player Súni Olsen to clinch the cup title for KÍ against his childhood club. Set-piece specialist Olsen was clinical and so KÍ won the Faroese Cup, for the first time in 17 years.

Now all that remains is to see if they will clinch the double when the Faroese Premier Division finishes in October. Currently they are in pole position, with Víkingur in second place.

## A BIG STEP FORWARD FOR GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL

GIORGI PIRTSKHELANI

 Our new amateur league is up and running, and soon we will have a national amateur football team, too. Some months ago, the Georgian Football Federation (GFF) presented a programme of activities that includes a new league championship format, a new club financing scheme, a new national team system and other priorities, including grassroots football, which the GFF realises is a very important area for any developed football country.

Steps have already been taken to develop this particular sector of Georgian football. On 7 May an amateur football competition, the Tbilisi League 2016, kicked off. The GFF president, Levan Kobiashvili, and the Georgian minister of sport and youth affairs, Tariel Khechikashvili, attended the opening ceremony. In the inaugural match, Gaguri Temka beat Kvartali 7-4.

The competition was organised by the Georgian amateur football association with support from the football development fund and the GFF. The 16 participating teams were drawn into two groups of eight, with all eight quarter-finalists earning a place in the ten-team Tbilisi amateur premier league, which

will begin in September.

The final of the Tbilisi League 2016 took place on 9 July at Bendela Stadium. The decisive match was contested by the teams of Feola Saburtalo and Vazisubani. With the score level at 1-1 after 90 minutes, Vazisubani managed to score the winning goal in extra time to take the title.

"Grassroots football is an area of priority for us. The Tbilisi League constitutes a great opportunity and stimulus for all participants. I am glad that there has been a lot of interest in this undertaking, as evidenced by the number of participating teams. I am certain that this number will increase further in the future. Our aim is to see amateur football expanding across the country," said Levan Kobiashvili.

The amateur league will facilitate the establishment of a Georgian national amateur team in the near future, which will represent the country in the international arena.



## NEW HEAD OF YOUTH FOOTBALL APPOINTED

STEVEN GONZALEZ

 The Gibraltar Football Association (GFA) is delighted to announce that Daniel Berllaque has been appointed as the new head of youth football. Berllaque brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the role, having sat on many GFA sub-committees over the years.

Ivan Robba, the GFA's deputy general secretary, welcomed Daniel to his new role, stating: "We are extremely pleased to be able to appoint Daniel Berllaque as



our new head of youth football. Daniel is an extremely committed individual who is passionate about football and especially the development of youth football on the rock."

Berllaque took on the role with immediate effect, and couldn't wait to get started. "I am grateful for having been given this opportunity to continue working in youth football in Gibraltar," he said. "My main goal is to provide a framework in which Gibraltar's youngsters will have a platform to play the sport safely, whilst having fun. I am sure that with the help of all other stakeholders we can work to ensure that our youth are provided with all the opportunities necessary to develop in and enjoy the sport we all love."

LATVIA

www.lff.lv

## BOYS' FOOTBALL FESTIVAL

TOMS ĀRMANIS

 The boys' football festival is an annual event in Latvia that delivers the beautiful game in a manner suited to the youngest generation of football players. It brings together the best Under-10, Under-11 and Under-12 teams from all over the country to experience football in an atmosphere of summer, music and seaside.

This festival is one of the biggest youth football competitions in the Baltics and gives teams the chance to compete in an unusual format. Clubs taking part in the competition are represented by one team from each age group. Each team competes against their peers from other clubs, earning points for their club as a whole. This serves as a tool to develop the young players' sense of belonging, because in this tournament they are fighting for the pride and ambitions of not only their team, but also their club.

These summer tournaments take place in the seaside city of Salacgrīva. Music is played throughout the whole tournament, including during matches, and in between the games players and their parents can

take part in various other activities. This allows the parents not only to support their children during the games, but also to bond with them in the atmosphere of a true football festival.

The six best clubs compete in Group A, while 12 other clubs compete in Groups B and C for the chance to earn a spot in Group A. For the past four years Group A has been won by FK Liepāja.



LUXEMBOURG

www.football.lu

## SUPPORTING CLUB YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

JOËL WOLFF

 The Luxembourg Federation (FLF) has been actively supporting its clubs' efforts to develop young players through a number of targeted initiatives in recent years, offering financial assistance as well as donating training equipment with

an eye to providing the best possible training and playing conditions for children and young people.

At the beginning of August, all 90 clubs involved in youth football were supplied with a set of footballs for their respective youth teams. A total of 613

youth teams each received ten balls, making an impressive total of 6,130 balls. Depending on the age category of their various teams, the clubs were able to choose between size 4 and size 5 balls. This is the seventh consecutive year in which the FLF has donated balls or other training equipment to its clubs for their youth development work.

The association is also aware of the important role of fair play in youth football, which is why a separate fair play competition for youth teams involving players aged between 12 and 19 is being organised for the fourth time this season. Prizes will be awarded to the youth teams that top the fair play table at the end of the season.

All these measures help to promote youth football in Luxembourg, enabling children and young people to continue having fun as they participate in organised football at grassroots level.



## FIRST FOOTBALL ACADEMY GRADUATES

ZLATKO ANDONOVSKI

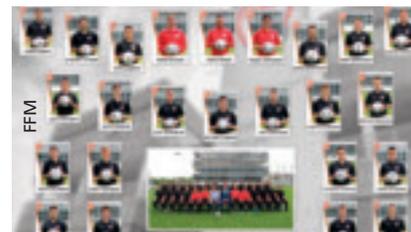
 The first cohort of students at the Football Federation of FYR Macedonia's football academy in Skopje have successfully finished their four years of studies and have just graduated. The academy runs a special, UEFA-backed development programme that aims to produce better football players through the right mix of sport, school and life education.

"Our vision was to present the academy as the leading institution of its type in [FYR] Macedonia, based on the examples of the best European schools, with a unique mission to prepare the students for modern times, as a school of the future. The football academy is very progressive from the perspective of youth development, and when we talk of development, we're not only referring to football. For us it is of the utmost importance to stress the development of the young players as individuals with real values, who undergo a good educational process," says Zoran Stratev, the federation's national youth teams coordinator.

Across the country there are nine other football academies, in Bitola, Gostivar, Ohrid, Prilep, Shtip, Skopje, Strumica, Tetovo and Veles. They are a testament to the importance placed by the Football Federation of FYR Macedonia (FFM) on the development of youth talents and their career progress.

The football academies operate as part of the existing educational system in FYR Macedonia, in cooperation and coordination with the FFM. The academies have a special programme that fits into the state educational programme, in order to provide the right type of education for the young players. The programme is centralised within the state education system, while the sports academy is run as a separate institution that is governed by the ministry of education, the agency of youth and sport and the FFM.

Thanks to the dedication and systematic work that has gone into it, the results of the development programme are already valuable. However, it is our responsibility to ensure ongoing improvement, as well as to follow the latest trends when preparing the content of the programme.



"It is our main goal to extend the programme suggested by UEFA for the football academy in Skopje to the other academies throughout the country in order to ensure that all the students receive the same level of academic and sports training. As I already mentioned, these are our national youth team players and potential senior national team players. It is very important that they know each other personally and as football players, in both a psychological and a technical context," Stratev adds.

Everyone involved in the project agrees that we need young people with open minds, and this can only be achieved through a high-quality, value-based development programme based on the UEFA model. This is so important at a time when young people are facing challenges both on and off the pitch.

## A HYBRID PITCH FOR MALTA'S NATIONAL STADIUM

ALEX VELLA

 Major works on the pitch at Ta' Qali National Stadium have just been completed. This latest venture by the Malta Football Association (MFA) is part of several infrastructure projects aimed at upgrading Malta's football facilities to meet the latest global standards. The reinforced natural turf, which is estimated to have cost more than €1m, is the latest type of hybrid grass surface and has been laid at several major stadiums around the world.

The turf's strength is derived from millions of artificial turf fibres that are

interwoven with the natural turf. Artificial turf can take much more wear and recover faster. As a result, the surface can withstand much more playing time than a normal natural grass surface.

Emanuel Cassar, the MFA's head of infrastructure projects, said that a UEFA turf consultant, Alan Ferguson, had conducted a pitch inspection earlier this year, and produced an executive report on the stadium and the adjacent training grounds.

After consultations with world leaders in the design and construction of hybrid

turf pitches, the MFA awarded the contract to SIS Pitches, a company that is well known for this type of technology. The work started with the removal of the pitch surface, taking it down to drainage level. Next, a new drainage system with a gravel layer, an irrigation system and sand and root-zone layers were supplied and installed. The work finished with fertilisation and final levelling. The contract also envisages planting Bermuda grass, grow-in maintenance, the completion of the peripheral area and the supply of pitch equipment.

Through this investment Malta will be able to boast a state-of-the-art pitch to rival the best football playing surfaces in the world. The first match to be played on this new surface was the 2018 World Cup qualifier between Malta and Scotland on 4 September.

MOLDOVA

www.fmf.md

## FC SHERIFF WIN MOLDOVAN SUPER CUP

PRESS OFFICE



The final of the 10th Moldovan Super Cup pitted local team FC Sheriff against FC Zaria Balti in Tiraspol on 10 August. After a dramatic match, holders Sheriff lifted the cup for the seventh time in their history after seeing off Moldovan Cup holders Zaria Balti 3-1.

The showpiece meeting between the two powerhouses attracted plenty of attention, and after 16 minutes Switzerland striker Danijel Subotic opened the scoring for Sheriff after a great cross by Bosnian Mateo Sušić. But Zaria Balti hit back four minutes later with a header from Igor Bugaiov.

In the 71st minute Bugaiov was sent off for an elbow. Sheriff began to attack more, and eight minutes before the end of the match Subotic scored a second goal, this time from a penalty. Zaria Balti tried to equalise again, but after a mistake in defence, Sheriff forward Eugeniu Rebenja scored the team's third goal in the last minute of the game, to seal Sheriff's triumph.

At the official ceremony after the match, Sheriff captain Sušić was

presented with the trophy by the general secretary of the Football Association of Moldova, Nicolai Cebotari.

"It was a tough game. We had a lot of opportunities to score and to win the trophy but now I want to congratulate our opponents. We have to focus now on our next matches in the national

championship," said Zaria Balti's coach, Vlad Goian.

"It was not the ideal match to be played from our side but we are very happy to have won the Moldovan Super Cup! We will try to improve our game. Today we celebrate," said Sheriff's coach, Frenchman Bruno Irlès.



Vadim CAFTANAT

Deținătoarea Supercupeii Moldovei Orange 2016

NORTHERN IRELAND

www.irishfa.com

## VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE AT SUMMER CAMP

NIGEL TILSON



An Irish Football Association summer camp offering a mix of football and athletics proved to be a runaway success. The Irish FA and athletics body Athletics NI joined forces to offer the camp, which focused on six athletics disciplines as well as football. A total of 39 children registered for the activities, including ten girls.

The camp at the Mary Peters Track in Belfast formed part of the Irish FA's extensive Nutty Krust summer football camps programme, which was staged at more than 70 venues across



IFA

the country and attracted more than 4,000 participants. Malcolm Roberts,

the association's regional grassroots development officer for Belfast Central, explained: "We are always trying to enhance our camps and dual sport camps are a way for us to reach out to user groups who would not normally consider playing football. The feedback from this particular camp was excellent, and especially from the girls, some of whom had never really played football before. All the participants at the camp loved the variety on offer. They got to try out long jump, high jump, shot put, javelin, hurdles and orienteering as well as football."

The pilot camp was so successful that the Irish FA and Athletics NI are hoping to run similar camps at other venues which host Athletics NI's grassroots programme. These are located in Antrim, Bangor, Cookstown and Newry.

## AN UNFORGETTABLE SUMMER

STEPHEN FINN



The Republic of Ireland's summer to remember at EURO 2016 left supporters of the national team with some fabulous memories that will never be forgotten. And it appears that the same is true of the French hosts and their opinion of Ireland's fans, whose sporting behaviour following Martin O'Neill's team in France in June was rewarded – alongside their Northern Ireland counterparts – with the prestigious Médaille de la Ville de Paris, which was presented to both sets of fans by the mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo.

It is estimated that over 100,000 Ireland supporters travelled to France for the tournament and received glowing plaudits from the world's media for their support and behaviour inside and outside



the tournament stadiums. Republic of Ireland supporter Jamie Monaghan and the chairman of the Confederation of Republic of Ireland Supporters Clubs, Joe McKenna, represented the Republic of Ireland supporters at a special ceremony in the fan zone in Paris, ahead of the EURO 2016 semi-final match between France and Germany, where the award was presented to the both sets of supporters for their exemplary behaviour. Also present was the Irish ambassador to France, Geraldine Byrne Nason.

John Delaney, CEO of the Football Association of Ireland, said: "I was delighted to see our fantastic supporters receive this great honour from mayor Anne Hidalgo. Our supporters are the greatest ambassadors our country could have, and just like our new generation of footballing heroes, we're extremely proud of them. It was also great to see Jamie Monaghan collect this award on behalf of all of our supporters, and I include the late James Nolan, who sadly passed away during EURO 2012. It is fitting, too, that we remember the two Northern Ireland supporters – Darren Rodgers and Robert Rainey – who died during EURO 2016."

Meanwhile, Republic of Ireland goalkeeping legend Shay Given announced his retirement from international football during the summer. Given, 40, will continue his club career with Stoke City, but is stepping away from the international stage, with 134 caps to his name.

## MODERN METHODS FOR YOUNG ROMANIAN FOOTBALLERS

PAUL ZAHARIA



In line with its five-year strategy (2015–20), the Romanian Football Federation (FRF) recently launched the first-ever public debate on its official website to gather opinions from specialists and football fans with regard to a document setting out the federation's vision of how to train and educate children and young football players.

The main purpose of this framework document is to establish guidelines and, subsequently, to set the direction to be followed at national level for activity at youth level. The document is part of a huge, complex project targeting, among other aims, the reorganisation of the current coach education school and the education of coaches who work at youth level, as well as the introduction of a uniform way of training and playing at the centres of excellence managed by the FRF.

Taking into account the specificity of Romanian football, the members of the task force charged with drafting the framework document, led by Sandu Tabirca (coordinating coach of the Romanian youth national teams), analysed the national football philosophies and approaches of Australia, Belgium, England, Germany and the USA, the strategies of the FAs of Austria, Canada, Denmark, Serbia and Spain and the strategies put in place by AFC Ajax, GNK Dinamo Zagreb, FC Barcelona and Chelsea FC.

The members of the task force also studied international literature, and the document they produced was highly compelling because of the lack of success of the Romanian youth national teams in the last ten years (only one qualification for a European Championship final round, and few qualifications even for elite rounds) and because of the decreasing

number of Romanian players playing in the top five European leagues. By comparison, other eastern European and Balkan countries have an increasing number of such players.

Ensuring a proper environment for educating players, practising modern football, putting the emphasis on training by playing, and training adapted for each age are the four main pillars of the document, the overarching message of which is that "until a certain age, results should not matter – enjoying football is what is most important".

Once people have shared their ideas, comments and suggestions via the federation's website, the document will be published in its final form and immediately applied at national level. It will also become a study manual for future coaches and a guide for coaches already working in children's and youth football.

SCOTLAND

www.scottishfa.co.uk

## SCOTT BROWN RETIRES FROM INTERNATIONAL DUTY

MICHAEL LAMONT



Former Scotland captain Scott Brown has retired from national team football ahead of the World Cup qualifiers. The Celtic skipper and midfielder made the decision to prolong his club career after recovering from injury.

Brown, 31, made his international debut against the USA in 2005 and, following more than a decade's service to his country, entered the Scottish Football Association's international roll of honour when he earned his 50th cap, against Denmark, in March. Brown broke the news about stepping down to Scotland manager Gordon Strachan and later admitted that it was the toughest decision of his career but, after a summer of reflection, he had realised that the demands of national team football could

not be sustained along with a hectic club schedule both domestically and in Europe.

Brown said: "Firstly, I would like to thank Gordon for giving me the honour of not only playing for my country but captaining Scotland in the last campaign. I also owe a debt to every Scotland manager before him who selected me – right back to Walter Smith handing me my senior debut, and the national youth coaches along the way."

Strachan gave a glowing endorsement of Brown's contribution to his country, saying: "Scott is one of the most wholehearted players I've encountered and somebody who puts the team ahead of himself. He is not the type to play within himself, either, and I understand and respect the decision he has taken."



Scottish FA

SLOVAKIA

www.futbalsfz.sk

## RECORD 202 CLUBS IN SLOVAK CUP

PETER ŠURIN



The Slovak Cup started its 48th season with a record 202 clubs competing. The Slovak Cup is managed by the Slovak Football Association and is open to teams from the top five divisions.

FC Pata, representing a town of just 3,000 people, were promoted to the fifth division for the first time last season and immediately took the opportunity to enrol for this season's Slovak Cup. The players put their best foot forward for their first-ever cup match and beat TJ Družstevník Zvončín 5-0 in front of a crowd consisting of 1 in 15 of Pata's residents. They maintained their pace in the second round and beat FK Slovan Most pri Bratislave 3-0, with Miroslav Pilo scoring before the end of the first minute, setting the record for the fastest goal of the year so far.

A remarkable feature of this season's competition is that, unlike in previous years, when it was almost a regularity, none of the teams from the first division (who enter



SFZ

the competition in the second round) lost their first match. However, ŠK Slovan Bratislava had to go to penalties to beat FC Vranov nad Topľou, in a thrilling encounter witnessed by more than 2,400 spectators in the stands.

FK AS Trenčín have won the cup for the last two seasons, and also finished first in the league last season, earning them the double. They got off on the right foot this season too, with a solid 9-0 win over Plevník-Drienové – coming from four divisions down, they were no match for the defending champions. Another interesting match was between FK 05 Levoča and Strážske, who had to play their second half a week after the first as a result of bad weather.

Since 1993, when Slovakia became an independent state, 13 clubs have won the Slovak Cup. Slovan Bratislava has the most wins (six), followed by Inter Bratislava (three).

SWEDEN

www.svenskfotboll.se

## FOOTBALL FOR LOVE AND EQUALITY

THOMAS SALETEG

 Representatives from the Swedish Football Association (SvFF), the national teams and the leagues took part in this year's Pride parade in Stockholm. Stockholm Pride, which has been the largest Pride festival in Scandinavia since it began in 1998, strives to raise awareness of LGBT+ issues and create a safe space for LGBT+ people and their gender expressions.

"It goes without saying that we would take part in this parade. Of course we don't have all the answers to different



Bildbyran

social matters, but it is important that we state our position and show what we stand for, showing that football welcomes everyone," said the SvFF general secretary, Håkan Sjöstrand.

Swedish football is continuing its Everyone is Different – Different is Good programme, covering areas such as diversity, integration, equality and LGBT+ issues, i.e. many of football's welfare concerns. Sweden's 3,184 football clubs can apply for funds from the programme for local projects this autumn.

UKRAINE

www.ffu.org.ua

## SHEVCHENKO TAKES OVER AS HEAD COACH

YURI MAZNYCHENKO

 Former Ukraine striker Andriy Shevchenko was appointed as the new national team head coach in mid-July with the unanimous support of the executive committee of the Football Federation of Ukraine.



Pavlo Kubanov

The 39-year-old, who remains the national team's top scorer with 48 goals, has signed an initial two-year deal, with an option to renew for a further two years. Italians Mauro Tassotti and Andrea Maldera, known for their work with Shevchenko at AC Milan, as well as Spaniard Raul Riancho, former Dynamo Kyiv assistant manager, are also joining the coaching staff.

"It was my dream to become the head coach of Ukraine. I had a long and successful national team career and can say that this team has always stayed very close to my heart. I know better than anyone the team's chemistry and the atmosphere in the locker room, so there's no need for me to organise communication with the players. Now my task is to change the team's style of play and bring it to a new level," Shevchenko said when he was presented to the media as the new head coach.

SWITZERLAND

www.football.ch

## AWARDS FOR SOMMER AND DICKENMANN

PIERRE BENOIT



The Swiss Football Awards 2016 were recently held in Lachen, in the canton of Schwyz. There were 11 award winners in total, 7 of them selected by the public and the others by a panel of experts.

Not surprisingly, the player of the year award went to goalkeeper Yann Sommer, for his exploits with Bundesliga side VfL Borussia Mönchengladbach and the Swiss national team. Sommer follows in the footsteps of his national team predecessor, Diego Benaglio, who has twice been named best player. The current Swiss number one, who qualified for this season's UEFA Champions League with his club, also won the save of the year award for his superb stop in the closing stages of Switzerland's opening EURO 2016 match against Albania.

Meanwhile, Lara Dickenmann (VfL Wolfsburg) was named best female player for the sixth time. A clever technical player, Lara has been pulling the strings in midfield for her national and club sides for many years.

The coach of the year award went to Swiss national team coach Vladimir Petković, whose side remained undefeated in four matches at EURO 2016 in France but were edged out on penalties against Poland in the round of 16.

VfL Borussia Mönchengladbach central defender Nico Elvedi picked up the award for best young player.



SFV

## BIRTHDAYS

**Håkan Sjöstrand** (Sweden, 1 Oct.) **50th**  
**Sergejus Slyva** (Lithuania, 1 Oct.)  
**Levent Bıçakçı** (Turkey, 2 Oct.)  
**Andrzej Wach** (Poland, 2 Oct.)  
**Lutz Michael Fröhlich** (Germany, 2 Oct.)  
**Léon Schelings** (Belgium, 3 Oct.)  
**Victor van Helvoirt** (Netherlands, 3 Oct.)  
**Wilfried Heitmann** (Germany, 4 Oct.)  
**Khennet Tallinger** (Sweden, 4 Oct.)  
**Silvo Borosak** (Slovenia, 4 Oct.)  
**Márton Vági** (Hungary, 4 Oct.)  
**Frank Coulston** (Scotland, 5 Oct.)  
**Terje Hauge** (Norway, 5 Oct.)  
**Jerzy Engel** (Poland, 6 Oct.)  
**Yves Leterme** (Belgium, 6 Oct.)  
**Francesca Sanzone** (Italy, 6 Oct.)  
**Iveta Bankova** (Bulgaria, 6 Oct.)  
**Samantha Lovse** (Slovenia, 6 Oct.)  
**Faruk Hadžibegić** (Bosnia-Herzegovina, 7 Oct.)  
**Armand Duka** (Albania, 7 Oct.)  
**Jari Maisonlahti** (Finland, 7 Oct.)  
**Andrii Pavelko** (Ukraine, 7 Oct.)  
**Draženko Kovačić** (Croatia, 8 Oct.) **50th**  
**Pierre Delaunay** (France, 9 Oct.)  
**Sergey Zuev** (Russia, 9 Oct.)  
**James Buckle** (England, 9 Oct.)  
**Ellert B. Schram** (Iceland, 10 Oct.)  
**Milovan Nikolic** (Slovenia, 10 Oct.)  
**Laurent Duhamel** (France, 10 Oct.)  
**Alin Cioban** (Romania, 10 Oct.)  
**Naira Abramyan** (Armenia, 10 Oct.)  
**Joan Gaspart Solves** (Spain, 11 Oct.)  
**Dimitar Zisovski** (FYR Macedonia, 11 Oct.) **60th**  
**Romeo Jozak** (Croatia, 11 Oct.)  
**Bo Karlsson** (Sweden, 12 Oct.)  
**Adrian D. Casha** (Malta, 12 Oct.)  
**Anna De Toni** (Italy, 12 Oct.) **40th**  
**Siegfried Kirschen** (Germany, 13 Oct.)  
**Pedro Tomas** (Spain, 13 Oct.)  
**Aleksander Čeferin** (Slovenia, 13 Oct.)  
**Dušan Krchňák** (Slovakia, 14 Oct.)  
**Tony Paëffgen** (Lithuania, 14 Oct.)  
**Tom van der Hulst** (Netherlands, 15 Oct.)  
**Michel Piraux** (Belgium, 15 Oct.)  
**Wendy Toms** (England, 16 Oct.)  
**Konrad Plautz** (Austria, 16 Oct.)  
**John Delaney** (Republic of Ireland, 16 Oct.)  
**Jean-Marie Philips** (Belgium, 17 Oct.)  
**Frans Hoek** (Netherlands, 17 Oct.) **60th**  
**Adonis Procopiou** (Cyprus, 17 Oct.)  
**Pedro Lopez Jimenez** (Spain, 18 Oct.)  
**Petros Mavroidis** (Greece, 19 Oct.)  
**Aivar Pohlak** (Estonia, 19 Oct.)  
**Miljenko Sakoman** (Croatia, 19 Oct.)  
**Paul Philipp** (Luxembourg, 21 Oct.)  
**Mircea Sandu** (Romania, 22 Oct.)  
**John Taylor** (Scotland, 22 Oct.)

**Arie Kenneth Scheiman** (Israel, 22 Oct.)  
**Fridin Ziskason** (Faroe Islands, 22 Oct.)  
**Jan C. Huijbregts** (Netherlands, 23 Oct.)  
**Michel Vautrot** (France, 23 Oct.)  
**Dragutin Karlo Poljak** (Croatia, 23 Oct.)  
**Elmir Pilav** (Bosnia-Herzegovina, 23 Oct.)  
**Antonin Herzog** (Czech Republic, 24 Oct.) **60th**  
**Elvedin Begić** (Bosnia-Herzegovina, 24 Oct.)  
**Roy Cathcart** (Northern Ireland, 26 Oct.)  
**Markku Lehtola** (Finland, 26 Oct.)  
**Hugh Dallas** (Scotland, 26 Oct.)  
**Perry Gautier** (Belgium, 26 Oct.)  
**Gerard Perry** (Republic of Ireland, 27 Oct.)  
**Jürgen Paepke** (Germany, 28 Oct.)  
**Rui Cacador** (Portugal, 29 Oct.)  
**George Fantaros** (Cyprus, 29 Oct.)  
**Maria Persson** (Sweden, 29 Oct.)  
**José Cunha Rodrigues** (Portugal, 30 Oct.)  
**Tim Meyer** (Germany, 30 Oct.)  
**Bert van Oostveen** (Netherlands, 30 Oct.)  
**Alexander Alaev** (Russia, 30 Oct.)  
**Alan McRae** (Scotland, 31 Oct.)  
**Kurt Zuppinger** (Switzerland, 31 Oct.)  
**José Luis Astiazaran Iriondo** (Spain, 31 Oct.)

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### Meetings

**17 October, Nyon**  
 UEFA Women's Champions League:  
 round of 16 draw

**18 October, Nyon**  
 European Under-21 Championship:  
 play-off draw

**21 October, Nyon**  
 UEFA Futsal Cup: elite round draw  
 2017–18 European Futsal Championship:  
 preliminary and main round draws

**Competitions**  
**30 September–21 October, Jordan**  
 U-17 Women's World Cup

**5/6 and 12/13 October**  
 UEFA Women's Champions League:  
 round of 32

**5–11 October**  
 European Under-21 Championship:  
 qualifying round matches

**6–11 October**  
 2018 World Cup European Qualifiers

## NOTICES

Following the retirement of Alfred Ludwig, **Thomas Hollerer** took over as general secretary of the Austrian Football Association on 1 August.

The English Football Association has appointed **Greg Clarke** as its chairman, replacing Greg Dyke.

## OBITUARIES

**Jan Peeters**, a member of the circle of former UEFA committee members and a former president of the Royal Belgian Football Association, died on 21 July at the age of 82. He served on several UEFA bodies, from 1992 until 2006, including the Juridical Committee and the Committee for Non-Amateur Football.

**Michael 'Milo' Corcoran**, former president of the Football Association of Ireland, died on 22 August at the age of 65. He was a member of the UEFA Youth and Amateur Football Committee from 2002 to 2006.

**11–16 October**  
 UEFA Futsal Cup: main round

**17–25 October**  
 Women's EURO 2017: play-offs

**18/19 October**  
 UEFA Champions League: group matches (matchday 3)  
 UEFA Youth League: UEFA Champions League path group matches (matchday 3)

**19 October**  
 UEFA Youth League: domestic champions path first round (return legs)

**20 October**  
 UEFA Europa League: group matches (matchday 3)



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