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EUROPEAN QUALIFIERS

The story so far on the
road to Russia

ME AND MY BOOTS

Players talk about the
prized tool of their trade

THE TECHNICIAN

Fernando Santos, Portugal's EURO-
winning coach, talks to UEFA Direct

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Lyon to host the 2018 UEFA
Europa League final



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"A NEW ERA"

The curtains are closing on another year, and as I look back on 2016 I am proud of what we all managed to accomplish.

It would be impossible to speak about some of the highlights of the last 12 months without mentioning UEFA EURO 2016 in France. I would like to thank the French Football Federation and EURO 2016 SAS for organising a fantastic event, and I want to praise all the national associations for making the European Qualifiers and the final tournament so exciting. There is no doubt in my mind that the move to expand the EURO to 24 teams was a great one!

We have also had some exciting moments in our other competitions. It is important not to forget that we organise a total of 15 competitions and they are all important in their own way for the promotion and development of European football.

Of course, we have just begun a new reign with Aleksander Čeferin at the helm of our organisation. It is a pleasure to work with a man I already knew well when he was president of the Slovenian Football Association. The new president has arrived with plenty of energy and ideas to take UEFA into a new era, and I am

looking forward to being by his side as we embark on this adventure together.

Together with the UEFA Executive Committee, we made some important decisions at the end of the year in Nyon, one of which was to increase the prize money for the UEFA Women's EURO from €2.2m in 2013 to €8m in 2017. We look forward to a successful tournament in the Netherlands.

That is just one of many success stories we hope we can tell in 2017, a year which will also feature the European Under-21 Championship final tournament in Poland. I look forward to working with all of you in the months to come and, in the meantime, take this opportunity to wish everyone happy holidays and a fantastic new year!



Theodore Theodoridis
UEFA General Secretary





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"Applying dubbin and cleaning the boots after training was like a ritual, and everybody did it with a lot of care - and superstition as well"

Paolo Rossi



HIS MASTER'S BOOTS

A player's boots say as much about them as the shirt on their back. Superstition, emotion, passion, precision – the football boot has always been more than just a piece of kit.

Boots are the footballer's tools," says Paolo Rossi as he looks back on his relationship with the football boots he wore.

The pair in which the former Italy and Juventus forward scored six goals for the Azzurri at the 1982 FIFA World Cup are currently on display in a touring exhibition¹, along with the coveted Golden Shoe award that he received as the tournament's top goalscorer. Yet, as Rossi tries to put into words what the football boot means to the footballer, he takes us back much further – to the first pair he ever wore, half a century ago.

"When I started playing for a football club at the age of ten, my mother bought me my first boots with rubber studs," he begins. "I can still remember it now – I could hardly breathe with the excitement. I felt like a Serie A footballer; I was so proud."

Later, as an apprentice at Juventus, his chest would swell with pride once more when first-team players shone in the boots he would 'break in' for them. "The senior players used to give us youth players their brand new boots for a week in order to make the leather softer. After a week you gave them back, and then when a player scored with those boots you felt as if you'd scored yourself!"

In those days, Rossi adds, there were few sponsorship deals for footballers in Italy, and players had to look after their boots. "We had to take care of our boots by applying dubbin and cleaning them after training," he recalls. "It was like a ritual, and everybody did it with a lot of care – and superstition as well."

Rossi is not alone in using the 'S' word – superstition – when remembering the old tools of his trade. Gary Lineker, who succeeded him as the winner of the Golden Shoe in 1986, has another tale which underlines what boots mean to a footballer.

It comes from the 1985/86 season, in which Lineker scored 40 goals for Everton FC. Unfortunately, his favourite boots went missing before a crucial evening game at Oxford United FC near the end of the season, and he had to borrow a pair. He missed several clear chances and Everton lost 1-0. Everton ended up surrendering their league title to Liverpool FC, finishing just two points behind their rivals. Lineker was subsequently reunited with his boots and duly went off and scored six World Cup goals for England in Mexico. "They were my lucky boots," he recalls. "I had them sent to adidas to fix on a couple of occasions. I was always a bit superstitious in those days."²

'A performance instrument'

Arguably, no footballer is better placed to reflect on this special relationship than Craig Johnston, the Australian who designed the prototype for the adidas Predator, which first appeared on football pitches in 1994. It was a revolutionary concept: a boot designed to aid performance.

"I looked at a boot like a golfer would look at his clubs and a tennis player would look at their racket," he says. "I don't think people had ever looked at a football boot as a performance instrument – it was just a boot." Johnston's love of the boot

was born during his days as a youth player at Middlesbrough FC, long before he won the European Champion Clubs' Cup with Liverpool in 1984. The teenager, a recent arrival from Australia, was initially rejected by Middlesbrough manager Jack Charlton. However, rather than go home, he hung around the club, earning pocket money by cleaning the first-team players' cars, kit and – crucially – footwear.

"A few times, rather than give me money, they would pay me in soccer boots," he recalls. "Puma Kings then were so paper-thin that they would wear out every two or three months, so I ended up with a collection of Puma Kings and adidas Copas. To me, that was worth much more than money. I was prince of the boot room. It was warm and it was safe, and I remember the smell of the liniment and the smell of the boots. That is where my love and understanding of good and bad football boots came from."

Johnston has no doubt in his mind as to which were the best boots of all. "My favourites were always the adidas Copa Mundial and the adidas World Cup," he says.

Changing fashions

'Have boots, will travel', the saying goes. But one of football's most interesting journeys is that made by the boot itself – a journey from the cumbersome designs of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when they were made of tough leather and reached high over the ankles, to today's super-lightweight models with their bright and garish colours.

In the original Laws of the Game, →

THE GAME

drafted in 1863, the only stipulation was that boots should have no protruding nails. For many decades, it was common for footballers to put new boots on and sink them into warm water to mould them to their feet. Dubbin was also put on boots to soften them up.

Change came in the years after the Second World War. In 1949, Adi Dassler's newly founded company – adidas – produced the first boots with moulded rubber studs. In 1954, West Germany's players won the World Cup wearing boots with screw-in studs. And two years after that, boots with nylon soles were on the market.

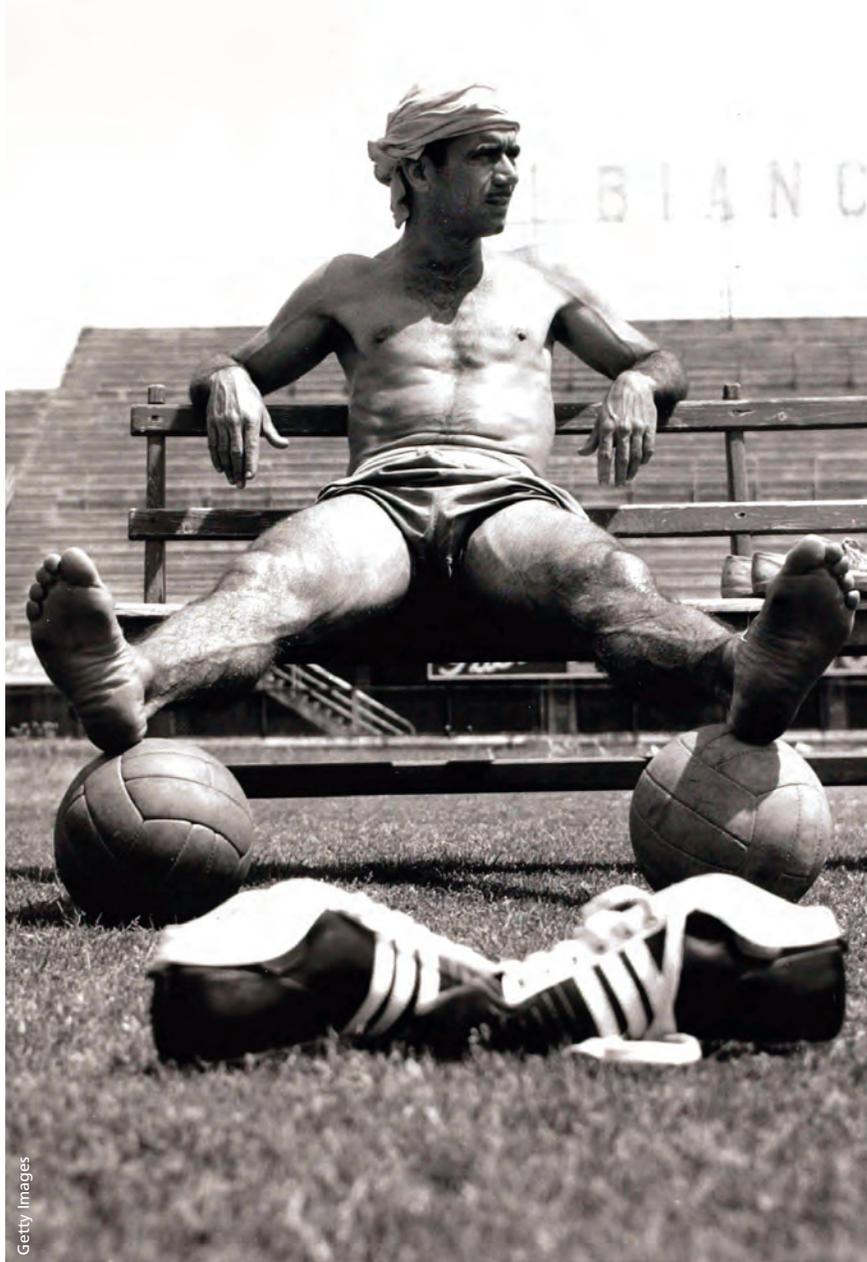
Over in England, it was the 1950 World Cup in Brazil that opened elite players' eyes to the future of the football boot. On Brazil's bone-dry pitches, the England players turned out in footwear – made of heavy leather with thick toe caps – that had changed little since the turn of the century. They were amazed at the sight of the Brazilian players' lightweight, streamlined boots.

The reaction of Stanley Matthews, England's iconic winger, was to go straight to a sports shop in Rio de Janeiro and buy himself a pair. "I realised that, with a pair of these, I could be even quicker," he said.³ On his return home, Matthews arranged for the Co-op to design him his own private pair – a replica of which sold 500,000 copies – which he would wear for the rest of his career.

Matthews' example is evidence that the practice of top footballers having boot endorsements is nothing new. England's National Football Museum in Manchester may display a pair of Frank Lampard's bespoke adidas boots from 2009 – with three textured synthetic pads stitched into kangaroo leather uppers for extra ball control – but it also features pairs endorsed by the likes of Tom Finney and George Best.

'Put yourself in my shoes' was the tagline for the Stylo Matchmaker boots promoted by Best, the Manchester United FC and Northern Ireland star, in the 1960s. A decade later, Johan Cruyff was refusing to wear the three stripes of adidas on his Netherlands shirt owing to his boot deal with Puma.

Believe it or not, the current fashion for coloured boots is not entirely new



either. While boots are now available in a kaleidoscope of gaudy colours, it is worth noting that Alan Ball, who won the World Cup with England, wore a white pair at the start of the 1970s. However, with supply chains not being quite as efficient as they are today, Ball actually ended up painting his old adidas boots white while waiting for Hummel to provide his new footwear.

In the case of Paolo Rossi, he actually had a stake in the company – Lancer –

On Brazil's bone-dry pitches, the England players turned out in footwear – made of heavy leather with thick toe caps – that had changed little since the turn of the century. They were amazed at the sight of the Brazilian players' lightweight, streamlined boots.



Below: 1951. England's Stanley Matthews inspects his studs.

Left: 1960. Brazil's Nilton Santos puts his feet up.

boots. You grip the ball and you give it an effect – side spin, top spin, and so on.' They said: 'Yes, but Mr Johnston, it's starting to rain, and our boots are made of leather and they're slippery; they're not made of rubber.' Driving home, I thought: 'The kids are right.' So I got a table tennis bat and took the rubber cover off it. I went back out in the rain and strapped it to my boot with some elastic bands. I kicked the ball, which was made of polyurethane, and it squeaked."

The aim, Johnston explains, was to design a boot with a bigger sweet spot and better grip at the same time. "It had a bit more grip and firmer, longer contact. The fins and jets – which were the backbone of the patent – gripped and deformed the ball like a ping pong bat. It allowed more of a contact, and because it was rubber, players could kick the ball harder."

"Unlike the good players I played with, like Graeme Souness, every time I kicked a ball, I had to think about it – what part of the foot and what part of the ball for what effect, be it back spin, top spin, a straight kick, etc. I was always analysing. Other people did it naturally, but I copied them. That is why I understand that the moment of contact between the boot and the ball is the moment of truth." In the end, Johnston – having been rejected by adidas, Nike, Puma, Umbro and Reebok – took his prototype to FC Bayern München and filmed some of the club's all-time greats trying out the shoe. "I got [Franz] Beckenbauer, [Karl-Heinz] Rummenigge, Paul Breitner and Gerd Müller. I filmed them in the snow at Bayern's training ground kicking the ball." That video convinced adidas to back the project, and the rest is history.

The present day

And so to the present and today's players and their boots. They look increasingly like high-street fashion items, but does that make them more disposable than they once were? Anecdotal evidence →

whose boots he wore while scoring six goals at the World Cup. "For a certain period, I owned that brand," he recalls. "It was a company which produced sportswear and other items, and before the tournament I'd invested in the brand."

Birth of a boot

This brings us back to Craig Johnston and the birth of the Predator. One key aspect of the changes made to football boots

is the fact that lighter footwear helped players to move at greater speed. Another is the fact that, as balls became lighter and more responsive, boots were designed to help players direct the ball better.

In Johnston's case, the idea came to him during a coaching session with youth players in his native Australia: "I was explaining to them how to swerve the ball, and I said: 'Look, you've got to think of it like having a table tennis bat on your

Below: In 1971, a 17-year-old Trevor Francis looks after the boots of his Birmingham City team-mates.
Right: In 1981, that same Trevor Francis was the first British player to be sold for a seven-figure transfer fee (to Nottingham Forest).



Getty Images

from one UEFA Champions League club, Tottenham Hotspur FC, suggests that players will get through ten pairs a season. However, Austrian international Christian Fuchs estimates that he uses half that number – “four or five” – in a campaign. “I play until they rip,” he says.

Anders Svensson, Sweden’s most capped male player, offers a fascinating insight as a recently retired player who began his career in the early 1990s, when his black Lotto boots would last him an entire season. Later, as a Premier League player, Umbro would provide him with made-to-measure boots. By the end of his career, he was wearing coloured boots adorned with the names of his children, his shirt number and a Swedish flag. “In the last few years, there were so many different boots – different materials and different colours – but I tried to get boots that were as similar as possible to the ones I’d had before, preferring leather and mostly discreet colours. I wanted as comfortable a boot as possible. I never liked standing out with all kinds of different colours. If I had boots that were a discreet colour and comfortable, I played in them till I couldn’t use them any more. It was difficult to get that colour again, as they always had new colours.”

He recalls that other team-mates saw things differently, citing the example of one Sweden player who wore a new pair for every international match he played. “One colleague in the Swedish national team liked to go into a game with completely unused boots,” he says. “I really didn’t like that. I needed to have a few training sessions in the boots before I used them in a game.”

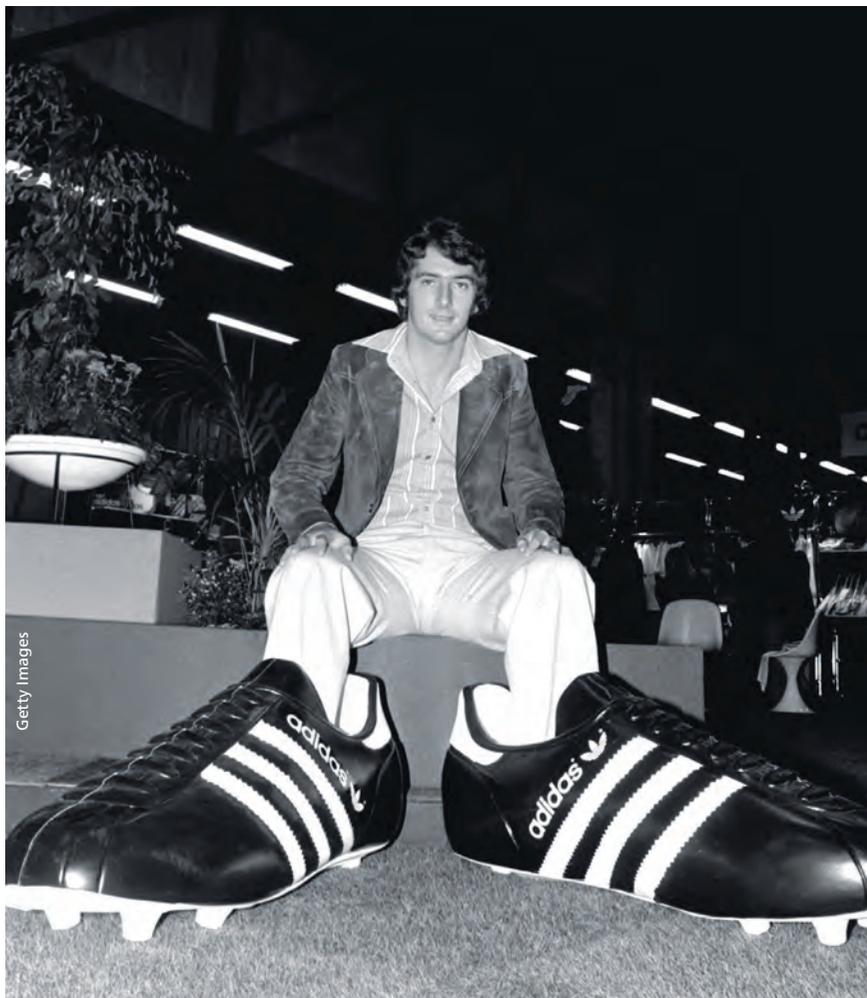
Craig Johnston would concur with that. Like Paolo Rossi, he evokes that special bond between a footballer and their footwear which is so vital to their job. “They become like a family dog that is always there for you and never lets you down – once you wear them in, of course!”¹

¹ Pablito: Great Italian Emotions’ will visit Brussels, Munich, New York and Monaco in 2017.

² Hart, S. (2016). Here We Go: Everton in the 1980s: The Players’ Stories.

³ Matthews, S. (2000). The Way It Was: My Autobiography.

⁴ Ferretti, A. (2015). Boots, Studs and Injuries in Football, UEFA Medicine Matters, No. 23, April.



Getty Images



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In 1962, Scotland’s Bobby Collins teaches his son the art of attaching studs.

THE STUD

Just as football boots have changed, so too have studs. In the 19th century, footballers’ boots had metal tacks or studs attached for better grip on muddy pitches. The first official studded football boots were produced in the early 1900s, but it was not until the 1950s that adidas introduced boots with interchangeable screw-in studs. Today, the most common studs are probably firm-ground studs, which can be either round studs or blades (although the latter have generated some concerns regarding players’ safety in recent years).⁴

FULL PROGRAMME CLOSES THE YEAR

The 2018–21 club competitions cycle, the 2018 Europa League final hosts and Women’s EURO 2017 prize money were all on the agenda at the Executive Committee’s last meeting of the year, held in Nyon on 9 December.



The committee approved the club competition access list, club coefficient calculation principles and financial distribution model for the 2018–21 cycle. Starting with the access list, all of UEFA’s 55 member associations will still be in with a chance of being represented in the Champions League and Europa League group stages. In addition, all domestic champions that are knocked out of the Champions League during qualifying will have a second opportunity to compete on the European stage, by way of a dedicated champions’ path in the Europa League.

As for the club coefficients, these will no longer include 20% of the respective national association coefficients. The club coefficients used for seeding purposes will be calculated from the clubs’ results over the last five seasons, to reflect their current strength, and will not contain bonus points for previous titles won. Meanwhile, club coefficients for financial distribution purposes will cover the last ten years and include bonus points for past silverware, reflecting the clubs’ contributions to the brand and success of UEFA’s flagship club competitions.

The bonus points allocated for trophies won will be as follows:

	UCL*	UEL**	CWC***
Last five years:	12	3	
From 1992/93:	8	2	2
Before 1992/93:	4	1	1

- * UEFA Champions League
- ** UEFA Europa League
- *** UEFA Cup Winners’ Cup

Furthermore, the contribution from the Champions League to the Europa League will be increased by €50m, and an additional €10m from the Champions League will be earmarked to increase the solidarity payments available to clubs involved in both competitions’ qualifying rounds.

New kick-off times

Two new kick-off times will be introduced for Champions League matchnights, meaning that during the group stage, two matches will be at 19.00 CET and the other six at 21.00 CET, to give fans a chance to watch even more of the action. From the round of 16 up to and including the final, all matches will kick off at 21.00 CET.

Looking to the Europa League, the committee appointed the 58,000-seater Stade de Lyon in France – one of the venues for EURO 2016 – to host the 2018 final.

Also on the topic of appointing hosts, approval was given to the bidding process for the inaugural UEFA Nations League final four in June 2019, with the hosts to be chosen from among the four finalists in December 2018.

The bidding concept for EURO 2024 was also approved, and will enable joint bids to be made, while direct qualification will be guaranteed to a maximum of two hosts. The bidding process will culminate in the selection of the EURO 2024 host or hosts in September 2018. In addition, approval was given to the overall bidding concept for the 2019 club competition finals, with the hosts to be chosen in September 2017.

As regards UEFA’s anti-doping strategy, and specifically the sample storage programme, the sample storage time was extended to ten years, to enable re-testing when new procedures become available, introducing another significant deterrent in the fight against doping.

Women’s EURO prize money

The growing importance of women’s football was underlined by the Executive Committee’s decision to increase the total prize money available at next summer’s Women’s EURO 2017 in the Netherlands to €8m (up from €2.2m in 2013). The team that takes the title will earn €1.2m.

Meanwhile, host associations were chosen for several competitions: Italy (Under-21 finals in 2019); Armenia and Northern Ireland (Under-19s in 2019 and 2020 respectively); Republic of Ireland and Estonia (Under-17s in 2019 and 2020); Scotland and Georgia (women’s Under-19s in 2019 and 2020); Bulgaria and Sweden (women’s Under-17s in 2019 and 2020); and Almaty, Kazakhstan (2017 UEFA Futsal Cup finals).

The committee confirmed the 2015/16 UEFA Fair Play rankings. Three national associations each receive €50,000 – Norway (overall fair play), Estonia (best spectators) and Belarus (best progression). Each association must donate these funds to an amateur or professional club for fair play or respect projects.

Finally, the Executive Committee appointed UEFA competitions director Giorgio Marchetti as the organisation’s new deputy general secretary. 🌐

STADIUM MANAGEMENT SUCCESS FACTORS

In order to give readers a taste of the work supported by the UEFA Research Grant Programme, UEFA Direct has been showcasing research projects funded by the 2015/16 cycle. This month, Daniel Gruber presents details of his study, which looked at factors governing the success of strategic stadium management.

Four of the stadiums hosting matches at UEFA EURO 2016 were brand new, and five of the others had undergone substantial renovations. France's high demand for football should ensure a decent future for those venues, particularly given their modest size (see issue 158 of UEFA Direct). In contrast, other new stadium projects have, in the past, sometimes been overly optimistic in terms of future capacity, resulting in empty seats and financial difficulties for the owners.

With that in mind, this study sought to carry out a scientific assessment of the industry's experience with stadiums, providing strategic insight into stadium management. This involved identifying the ideal business models for successful stadium management on the basis of expert knowledge and known market conditions.

German stadiums: a European benchmark

At the heart of this empirical study lay a strategic benchmarking exercise, which sought to identify successful models in the stadium industry. The German market was identified as an example to the rest of Europe, based, among other things, on case studies and data on both stadium usage and the maturity of the market. What is more, Germany's stadium

landscape is so vast and varied (with a total of 165 different venues) that it offers numerous examples of good practices.

The subsequent assessment of the German stadium market was based on two sources of information: qualitative interviews with industry experts looking at their chosen business model, and a standardised survey. The findings from Germany can be extrapolated from and applied to other stadium projects around Europe.

The recipe for success: a cautious approach to capacity and a focus on football

The study shows that a stadium's capacity should generally be determined by the home team's sporting success (or lack thereof) and the size of the local market. These findings are not just relevant to stadium operators and clubs; they should also be borne in mind when UEFA selects stadiums for a EURO and defines its capacity requirements, in order to foster stadium efficiency in the longer term. If, for example, non-market-related political motives take precedence when venues are selected, we can expect to see those stadiums suffer in terms of efficiency, and potentially even encounter serious financial difficulties. The risks associated with poor capacity planning



Daniel Gruber works in the department of sports governance and event management at the University of Bayreuth. His stadium research is highly practical in nature, whereby he is able to draw on his own experience working for the company that operates Frankfurt Arena. He has also carried out studies looking at the management of sports clubs and fan relations in football.

can, however, be mitigated by using modular seating that makes stadiums more flexible. The additional cost of such a solution is recouped over the lifetime of the stadium, as it prevents extra costs resulting from permanent excess capacity.

Another key finding is that construction and operating costs increase disproportionately as a stadium's functionality rises. At the same time, a high degree of functionality does not automatically guarantee a corresponding increase in usage. There is considerable economic uncertainty in the non-football events market, so the vast majority of stadiums should focus on football. ⚽



A TANTALISING LINE-UP

The draw for the first 12-team finals was held in Krakow on 1 December, dividing the participating teams into three challenging groups.

The assessment made by Portugal coach Rui Jorge immediately after the draw for the 2017 finals of the European Under-21 Championship will ring true for every coach preparing for this summer's final tournament in Poland. "It's tough, as it should be at major finals," said Jorge, who led Portugal to the runners-up spot two years ago. "Every team has worked very hard to be here and shown strength and quality to reach this stage."

Group A pits hosts Poland against holders Sweden, Slovakia and England, Group B comprises Portugal, Serbia, Spain and first-time finalists FYR Macedonia, and Group C features Germany, the Czech Republic, Denmark and Italy, i.e. three of the six teams that qualified unbeaten for Poland (the Czech Republic lost one game en route to the finals).

Six former winners in the field

The composition of the groups is not the only sign of the pedigree of the teams that will be competing in Poland from 16 to 30 June. There are six former winners in the field: Italy and Spain (champions five and four times respectively), plus the Czech Republic, England, Germany and Sweden, alongside first-time finalists FYR Macedonia. Blagoja Milevski's men will be the first football team to represent the small Balkan nation at a final tournament since the country hosted the European Women's Under-19 Championship finals in 2010.

Poland have competed at this level before but not since 1994, so it will feel almost as novel an experience for the hosts. The Polish Football Association president, Zbigniew Boniek, said after the draw: "It won't be easy, but if

you want to play in the European Championship and have any chance, you can't be afraid of anyone."

How they qualified

The qualifying competition finished on 15 November when Spain edged play-off rivals Austria aside on away goals and Serbia squeezed past Norway with a narrow 2-1 aggregate victory. This quartet had progressed to the play-offs as the four best runners-up following a 20-month, 250-match qualifying process at the end of which only one team – Germany – had a perfect record of ten straight wins.

Winners in 2002, the Czech Republic finished top of Group 1 with the help of UC Sampdoria's Patrik Schick. His goals placed him top of the scorers' table in qualifying – and without them the



FYR Macedonia are the surprise package, having topped their group in qualifying.

Czechs would have finished second to runners-up Belgium.

Group 2 was headed by an Italy side that finished a point clear of a strong Serbia by virtue of their formidable defence, which conceded only three goals in ten games. Luigi Di Biagio's men won six of their first seven matches on the way to what will be a record 19th final tournament appearance for the Azzurrini. Indeed until their final qualifier – in Lithuania, where they earned the single point needed to qualify – the only points they had dropped came from home-and-away draws with Serbia. As for Serbia, their campaign was spearheaded by captain, Uroš Đurđević, who hit the last of his nine goals in qualifying when Tomislav Sivić's team beat Norway 2-0 in the first leg of their November play-off. Kristoffer Haraldseid's own goal gave the Serbs a two-goal advantage that Norway were unable to overturn in the return in Drammen, despite Mohamed Elyounoussi finding the net for the home side.

The story in Group 3 was the unexpected qualification of FYR Macedonia, who surprised many observers by finishing a point clear of France at the top of the group. The Macedonians began their qualifying campaign with a 3-0 defeat in Iceland, but after a 1-1 draw in France on 28 March, Milevski's side won their last four fixtures without conceding a goal, and in the process sneaked ahead of Les Bleuets. Their reward was a piece of history as the first Macedonian men's side to qualify for a UEFA final tournament.

Portugal suffered heartbreak in the final two summers ago, when they lost to Sweden on penalties, but they have another chance to collect their first U21 crown in Poland after finishing comfortable winners of Group 4. Rui Jorge's unbeaten side started and finished their campaign with impressive away wins – 6-1 in Albania in September 2015 and 7-1 in Liechtenstein 13 months later – and scored three goals or more in seven of their ten qualifiers.

Denmark had the second most impressive qualifying record, dropping just two points at the top of Group 5. The only blemish on their record was a goalless home draw with Wales in their opening qualifier and they will travel to Poland with the joint-best defensive record of the finalists, having conceded only three goals in ten matches.

Sweden, victors over the Danes in the 2015 semi-finals and reigning U21 champions, also advanced unbeaten, from an awkward-looking Group 6. Their position at the summit owed something to their resilience as they twice came from behind to earn 1-1 draws with a Spain side whom they eventually pipped to automatic qualification by a point, following a final-day 4-2 victory over third-placed Croatia. Still coached by Håkan Ericson, architect of their surprise triumph last time out, Sweden had one of the qualifying round's leading assist providers in Kristoffer Olsson, who set up six goals as well as scoring three himself.

After finishing a point behind the Swedes, Spain had to survive the challenge of a tightly contested play-off against Austria. Captain Gerard Deulofeu's penalty in the 1-1 first-leg draw in St Polten not only made him his country's top scorer at U21 level (16 goals); it also provided the away goal that carried Spain through after a goalless draw in the second leg.

Germany will be one of the favourites as the teams line up in Poland having qualified from Group 7 with a 100% record, winning all ten games and scoring an unsurpassed 35 goals – an average of 3.5 per game. Davie Selke was the top scorer for Stefan Kuntz's team with seven goals, while Leroy Sané, Max Meyer and Maximilian Arnold each struck five apiece.

In Group 8, Slovakia secured only their second final-round participation – and their first since reaching the semi-finals in 2000. Pavel Hapal's side recovered impressively after defeat in their opening game in Belarus. They managed not to lose another game, driven on by the huge injection of confidence gained from back-to-back wins over the Netherlands, their closest challengers – a 3-1 away victory in October 2015 and a 4-2 home win a month later.

Last but not least, England qualified for their sixth successive finals by finishing unbeaten at the top of Group 9. The two-time winners underlined their supremacy in the section with a 6-1 rout of runners-up Norway in September 2016 that featured a hat-trick by Manchester United FC striker Marcus Rashford. That was their last qualifier under Gareth Southgate before he took over the senior team and Aidy Boothroyd took the U21 reins in his place. ⚽

AT A GLANCE

Group A:

Poland (hosts), Slovakia, Sweden (holders), England

Group B:

Portugal, Serbia, Spain, FYR Macedonia

Group C:

Germany, Czech Republic, Denmark, Italy

Match dates

Group A: 16, 19 and 22 June

Group B: 17, 20 and 23 June

Group C: 18, 21 and 24 June

Semi-final 1

Winner A v Runner-up B/C
or Winner C: 27 June

Semi-final 2

Winner B v Runner-up A/C
or Winner C: 27 June

Final: 30 June

Venues

Kielce	Group A
Lublin	Group A
Gdynia	Group B
Bydgoszcz	Group B
Tychy	Group C and semi-final
Krakow	Group C, semi-final and final



Karl-Erik Nilsson, president of the Swedish Football Association, with his Polish counterpart, Zbigniew Boniek, as the European Under-21 Championship trophy passes from the reigning champions to the hosts of the forthcoming finals.

RUSSIA 2018: ALL EYES LOOK EAST

The European Qualifiers for the 2018 World Cup kicked off in September and with the first four matchdays completed, trends are already emerging in the nine groups.

Only 13 of the 54 UEFA member associations taking part in the qualifying round will have the privilege of joining hosts Russia and competing at world-class venues such as Saint Petersburg Stadium (below).



As Russia prepares to stage the first World Cup to be held on European soil since 2006, the search is on to find the continent's 13 best national teams, who will compete alongside the host nation at the 2018 tournament. In the wake of EURO 2016, the first European Football Championship to feature 24 teams and a tournament that showcased the breadth of quality in European football, most of the continent's

major football nations are living up to expectations in the World Cup qualifying competition. However, the battle is fierce and there could be a few surprises in store. Four games in, here is the story so far.

Group A France maintain upward momentum

France have quickly put behind them the disappointment of losing the EURO 2016 final at home against Portugal and are on

course to qualify, thanks in particular to a 1-0 away win against the other group favourites, the Netherlands. Combining defensive solidity with attacking verve, Les Bleus also defeated Sweden, who lead the chasing pack alongside the Dutch (7 points each). The most surprising EURO 2016 absentees, the Netherlands, are embarking on a new era and find themselves vying with a Swedish team that remains tough to beat in spite of Zlatan Ibrahimović's retirement, as they showed in the 1-1 →





Paul Pogba steered France to victory against the Netherlands.

draw between the two nations. Meanwhile, Bulgaria (4th, 6 points) are hot on the heels of the top three thanks to two narrow home victories. Belarus, the only team to have held the French (0-0 on matchday 1), have failed to follow up their impressive start and have not won any of their opening four matches. A draw against Belarus saw Luxembourg pick up their only point of the campaign so far, although they are proving a tough nut to crack, having lost none of their matches by more than two goals and netted five goals of their own in the process.

Group B European champions in danger

In their first official match after winning EURO 2016, Portugal came back down to earth with a bump when they suffered a 2-0 defeat in Switzerland. That result has since become a millstone around the neck of Fernando Santos's men, despite three convincing victories against Andorra (6-0), the Faroe Islands (6-0) and Latvia (4-1) and Cristiano Ronaldo establishing himself as the joint top goalscorer of the competition so far (seven goals in four matches, equal with Poland's Robert Lewandowski). Portugal remain second in the group thanks to a perfect start by Switzerland, one of only three teams with a 100% record after four matches. Having reached the last 16 at both the 2014 World Cup and EURO 2016, the Swiss capitalised on their opening victory over Portugal and are proving that they are a force to be reckoned with on the European stage. The main surprise in this group is the fact that the Faroe Islands have already collected four points and are well on

the way to achieving their best ever tally in a qualifying competition. Hungary, on the other hand (3rd with 7 points), appear to be the only side capable of challenging Switzerland and Portugal at the top. For Latvia (5th, 3 points) and Andorra in particular (6th, 0 points), qualification looks a more unlikely prospect.

Group C Germans dominate while Azerbaijan surprise many

Germany have participated in 16 consecutive World Cup final tournaments since 1954 – a record for a European team – and their impressive run looks set to continue in 2018. With four wins out of four, each by a margin of at least two goals, 16 goals scored and none conceded, the Germans are already five points clear of their nearest rivals. Led by an inspired Thomas Müller (four goals and four assists), they have made an excellent start to the defence of their 2014 title. Behind them are two teams that have been making steady progress in recent years. Northern Ireland, still on the crest of a wave after reaching the last 16 at EURO 2016, are eyeing their first World Cup appearance since 1986, while Azerbaijan, who have never reached the final round of a major competition since gaining independence in 1991, are also in the hunt for a play-off berth after securing two wins with the only two goals they have scored so far. Meanwhile, the Czech Republic and Norway, both more frequent finalists, are not out of the frame yet, whereas San Marino, who have the leakiest defence in the competition, are yet to win a point.



AFP/Getty Images



Haris Seferović and Breel Embolo celebrate Switzerland's excellent start against European champions Portugal.



Group D Wales and Austria in a spot of bother

Semi-finalists at EURO 2016, their first ever European Football Championship final tournament, Wales are now aiming to qualify for the World Cup finals for the first time since 1958. Although still undefeated and despite Gareth Bale's typically valuable contribution (four goals), the Welsh have drawn their last three matches. Meanwhile, hailed as one of Europe's up-and-coming nations, Austria (4th, 4 points) already have their backs against the wall following defeats to the group's top two, the Republic of Ireland (1st, 10 points) and Serbia (2nd, 8 points). The Irish hit the front in this evenly matched group, in which the top three teams are yet to lose, with a 1-0 win in Austria. They also appear to have a favourable run-in, with home fixtures against all their main rivals still to come. Indeed, with four of their last six matches on home soil, the Republic's chances of qualifying for Russia as group winners look good, although they will need to be wary of Serbia, for whom Dušan Tadić is in outstanding form (three goals and five assists in four matches). Further down the table, Georgia are struggling to make the most of their tight defence (with two draws and two defeats by a one-goal margin), while Moldova are simply shipping too many goals.

Group E Lewandowski stars for Poland

In a group in which just five points separate the top four, Poland (10 points) lead the way after four matches, thanks in no small part to their star striker, Lewandowski. Joint top scorer in the qualifiers so far (seven goals, equal with Ronaldo), the FC Bayern München marksman has scored in every match, including a hat-trick in a 3-2 win over Denmark and an injury-time winner against Armenia (2-1). Poland are therefore on course to reach their first World Cup final tournament since 2006. For Montenegro, who currently lie second with 7 points, this is only their third World Cup qualifying campaign since gaining independence in 2006. However, with numerous quality players in their ranks, they are still dreaming of a place in Russia and will host the Poles in a crunch fixture in March. Denmark (3rd, 6 points) and Romania (4th, 5 points) are still very much in the mix for at least a play-off spot. The task looks more daunting for Armenia and Kazakhstan, who nevertheless remain in touching distance of supposedly superior outfits and will have an opportunity to improve their points tally when they face each other twice next year. →

Group F
England lead the way

Like most of the major European nations, England have made a successful start to the qualifying competition. With the best defence so far (no goals conceded), the Three Lions have not always been spectacular, but their defensive solidity has enabled them to grind down their opponents, with a 3-0 Wembley victory over Scotland confirming their position as group favourites. Defences have been on top in this group, with the 29 goals scored to date the lowest of any of the nine groups. This scenario has suited Slovenia in particular (2nd, 8 points), who are the only team to have kept a clean sheet against England (0-0) and beat Slovakia, one of their main rivals, 1-0. The Slovaks (3rd, 6 points) have recovered well from two opening defeats by winning their subsequent two matches. Despite losing heavily to their neighbours from south of the border, Scotland (5th, 4 points) remain in the hunt for a play-off place. The same can be said of Lithuania (4th, 5 points), but the prospects already look bleak for a Maltese side who have yet to claim a single point.

Group G
Spain and Italy neck and neck

Undoubtedly the most hotly anticipated duel of the qualifying competition has lived up to all expectations. Spain and Italy, two countries that are used to treading a relatively straightforward path through the qualifiers and reaching the final stages of major competitions, cannot both qualify for Russia automatically. Despite Spanish dominance, the first match between the sides since the EURO 2016 round of 16, when the Italians had been victorious, ended in a 1-1 draw. The return, to be played in Spain next September, is likely to determine the eventual group winners and will be one of Europe's most hotly anticipated matches of 2017. Behind these two footballing giants, Israel (3rd, 9 points) are enjoying a low-key but effective campaign. Beaten 3-1 by the Italians in their opening match, the Israelis are well placed to take advantage of any slip-ups by Spain or Italy and reach their first World Cup since 1970, when they qualified in the Asian zone. Although Albania are endeavouring to stay in touch (4th, 6 points), group G is the

Sergio Busquets chases down Éder as Spain and Italy battle it out for top spot in Group G.



AFP-Getty Images

group with the clearest gap between the teams at the top and those at the bottom, where FYR Macedonia and Liechtenstein, who were blown away by the Spanish (8-0), have yet to mark a point between them.

Group H Belgium appear unstoppable

With 21 goals scored, only one conceded and four players having scored three or more goals (Romelu Lukaku, Eden Hazard, Christian Benteke and Dries Mertens), Belgium's record after four matches is frighteningly impressive. After a disappointing end to EURO 2016, when they were eliminated by Wales in the quarter-finals, the Belgians recovered quickly and have won all their matches by at least three goals. The only team they have yet to play, Greece (2nd, 10 points), have been displaying their usual defensive qualities and will be endeavouring to keep the Belgian machine at bay when the two sides come face to face in March. Bosnia and Herzegovina (3rd, 7 points), who reached their first World Cup finals in 2014, appear the only real threat to the top two. Following a 4-0 defeat in Belgium, Miralem Pjanić (five assists) and his team-mates were on the verge of beating Greece before being pegged back in stoppage time (1-1). Despite beating Gibraltar, who are facing a steep learning curve in their first World Cup qualifying campaign, Cyprus and Estonia are still a long way behind the top three in this group, in which more goals have been scored than in any other (48 in 12 matches, an average of 4 per match).

Group I Iceland to cause another upset?

There appears every chance that the Icelandic tidal wave that hit France in June 2016 could reach Russia in summer 2018. The team that upset the odds at EURO 2016 by reaching the quarter-finals at their first-ever final tournament have made a solid start to the new qualifying campaign. Having lost only once, at the hands of the group leaders, Croatia (2-0), Iceland (3rd, 7 points) are still in the running to make their World Cup finals debut. After a disappointing EURO for both sides, Ukraine (2nd, 8 points) have made a better start than Turkey (4th, 5 points). However, in order to qualify for Russia as winners of this tough group, they will have to see off a Croatian team (1st, 10 points) that has been growing in confidence in recent years, boasting individual qualities as well as collective strength in all departments (10 goals scored,



one conceded). In their first qualifying campaign since gaining independence, Kosovo have not looked out of place, securing their first point and goal in their opening match against Finland (1-1), who are only ahead of them on goal difference. 🇹🇷

Top: Hakan Çalhanoğlu helped Turkey hold Ukraine to a draw in Group I. Above: With four wins, 21 goals scored and just one conceded, Belgium are off to a strong start in Group H.

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL ACROSS THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS 2016/17

The women's game continues to grow in popularity, with more and more women and girls playing football across the continent. Women's football across the national associations 2016/17 – available to download from UEFA.org – is made up of statistics provided by the national associations in September 2016 as part of an annual survey, together with data collected in June 2016 under the UEFA Grassroots Charter. The first half of the publication uses infographics to illustrate the development of women's football across Europe over the last three to five years, and the second half comprises factsheets on each of the 55 UEFA member associations.



Women's football across the national associations 2016/17 is available to download from UEFA.org

PLAYERS

1,270,481

Registered female players

Professional and semi-professional players



1,396 professional players

1,098 home-grown professional players

1,457 semi-professional players

298 foreign professional players

Countries with more than 100,000 female players



England



France



Germany



Netherlands



Norway

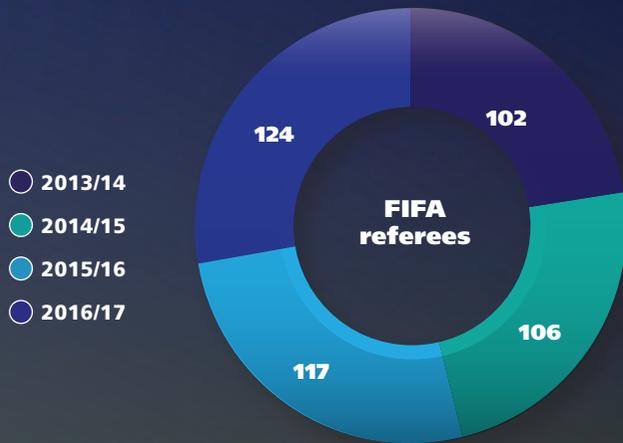


Sweden

UEFA MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS' CUMULATIVE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL BUDGET

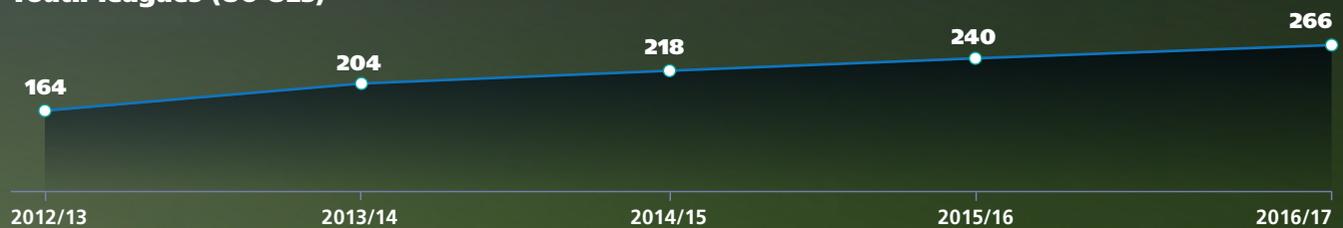


MATCH OFFICIALS



GIRLS' FOOTBALL

Youth leagues (U6-U23)



WOMEN, GOVERNANCE AND COMMITTEES



NATIONAL TEAMS

National teams (including youth)



National academies for girls



GROWING THE GAME IN ALL CORNERS OF THE CONTINENT

The innovative UEFA GROW marketing programme is helping national associations all over Europe to get more people involved in football.



It is less than a year since the new UEFA GROW marketing support programme was launched, and already its benefits are being widely felt. Initially piloted in six countries (Azerbaijan, Finland, Malta, Northern Ireland, Portugal and Slovenia), by the end of 2016 it was being implemented by 27 national associations and was having an impact in all areas of activity – including on the pitch.

“Here at the Romanian Football Federation, UEFA GROW has helped to transform and develop our entire grassroots structure,” says the president of the federation, Răzvan Burleanu. “We are now ready to welcome thousands of boys and girls into the Romanian football family as we develop the game at all levels.”

Increasing participation and retention across both genders and all age groups is critical for football’s future, and UEFA works closely with national associations to create clear plans for

growth and record accurate registration numbers. This is just one of a number of ways in which UEFA GROW is helping to develop the game, and Burleanu’s praise echoes positive feedback from other national associations for a scheme that provides support across four key pillars – image, engagement, participation and commercial revenues.

Working together

UEFA GROW uses fact-based, country-specific research, market intelligence and top industry experts to devise strategic plans for each national association. UEFA and the associations then work together to implement those plans. Each national association is given extensive consumer research on the image of the game in its country, and any issues that need to be addressed are highlighted. In the case of the Polish Football Association (PZPN), for example, efforts to improve the public’s perception of the

Above: Presentation of UEFA GROW to grassroots representatives in Slovenia earlier this year.

Below: Edvinas Eimontas, president of the Lithuanian FA, Noel Mooney, UEFA, Maciej Sawicki, general secretary of the Polish FA, and Virgar Hvidbro, general secretary of the Faroe Islands FA.



association have paid dividends across all aspects of its work.

“UEFA GROW came along at the perfect time for the PZPN, and it is interwoven into the very fabric of our strategic planning,” says the PZPN’s general secretary, Maciej Sawicki. “We have worked very closely together in a number of areas, and the public have responded very positively to the progress made by the PZPN. This helps us to attract more players, more digital followers and, of course, more commercial revenues.”

Direct engagement

UEFA GROW also promotes direct engagement between the national associations and the football family by helping associations to create comprehensive digital marketing strategies which incorporate internet, social media and mobile content, as well as football relationship management. Such strategic communication has helped national associations to move from a reactive to a more proactive approach to messaging.

For the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA), for example, the partnership with UEFA has quickly borne fruit. “Thanks to our involvement in the UEFA GROW programme, there is only one member association that is growing faster than us in terms of digital followers, and that is without us qualifying for UEFA EURO 2016,” says the AFFA’s general secretary, Elkhan Mammadov. “We are delighted with the results, and we have recently launched our overall strategic plan for Azerbaijani football, called GROW 2020, which will see the sport develop even further.”

Driving revenues

Thanks in part to UEFA support, national associations’ commercial revenues are continuing to rise. UEFA hopes that by helping the associations to further enhance their revenue streams, they can be encouraged to invest money back into the game. “We have really enjoyed working with the UEFA GROW team as we have looked to drive commercial revenues from existing and new sectors,” says Patrick Nelson, chief executive of the Irish Football Association. “We worked together to build a sales platform, then targeted sectors that we knew could deliver those revenues for football in Northern Ireland. Already, we are enjoying enormous benefits.”

Following requests from the national associations, UEFA has recently added a number of supporting pillars in order to create an even more holistic programme, and it is working with national associations to build on UEFA GROW’s comprehensive overall strategic plan. Expert brand advice, particularly as regards positioning and separating assets, has also led to income growth in many instances. In the course of UEFA’s work on the participation and commercial revenue pillars, it has also become clear that national associations want direct support when it comes to dealing with governments and other public bodies (such as the European Union). UEFA has vast experience in these areas, as well as valuable research on football’s benefits for society, which national associations can certainly benefit from. With 27 national associations already receiving extensive support through UEFA GROW, and 12 more preparing to join the programme in 2017, UEFA GROW looks set to continue to do just that. 🌐

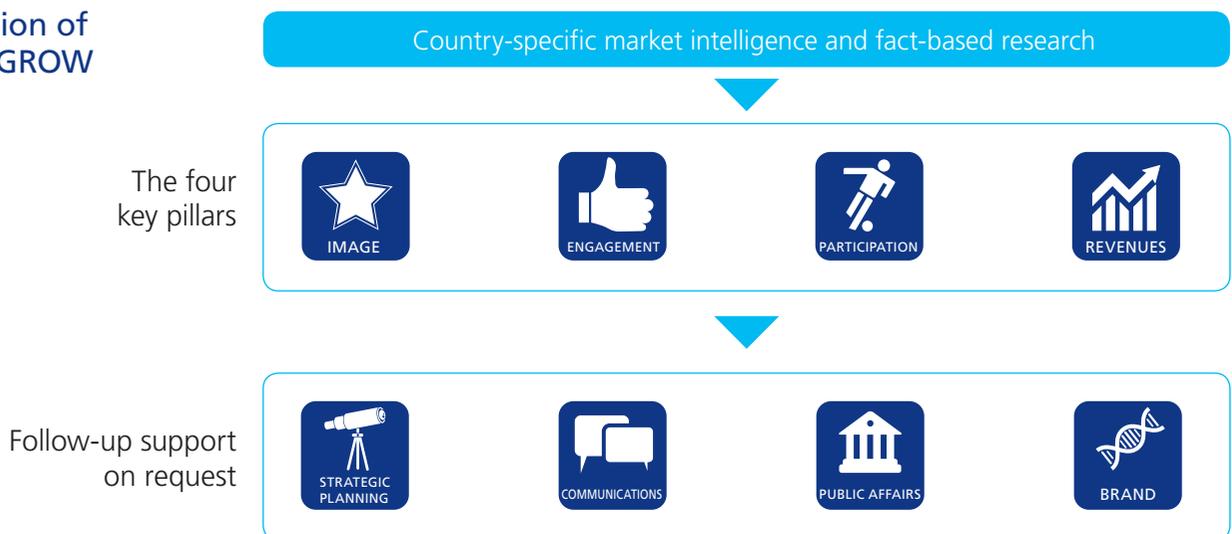
Pilot associations 2015

- Azerbaijan
- Finland
- Malta
- Northern Ireland
- Portugal
- Slovenia

New in 2016

- Albania
- Belarus
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Faroe Islands
- FYR Macedonia
- Georgia
- Kazakhstan
- Lithuania
- Moldova
- Poland
- Republic of Ireland
- Romania
- Slovakia
- Sweden
- Turkey
- Ukraine
- Wales

Evolution of UEFA GROW





Yorgos Matthalios

SIMPLY THE BEST

UEFA's KISS Marketing Awards in November showcased best practices across Europe.

The 2016 KISS Marketing Awards, which were presented during a marketing workshop in Athens in late November, paid tribute to best practices in national associations across the continent. A record 85 projects were put forward for awards this year, giving UEFA a rich supply of marketing ideas to share with other associations for the benefit of European football as a whole.

Projects were submitted by 35 different national associations and spanned a wide range of areas, including brand building, sponsorship, digital marketing, fan engagement, the promotion of football, marketing research, merchandising and licensing. "The KISS Marketing Awards enabled us to see how fast national

associations' marketing of football is improving, and we learned a huge amount from the event," said Maciej Sawicki, general secretary of the Polish Football Association (PZPN). "We were delighted to win the award for the best commercial partnership, which means the world to the PZPN."

These marketing awards, which were first presented in 2011, are awarded under the auspices of UEFA's Knowledge & Information Sharing Scenario (KISS) – a programme whereby Europe's national associations exchange expertise for the benefit of European football. Marketing is a vital element of the promotion of modern football and has a key role to play when it comes to strengthening the

identities of national teams and clubs.

This year's jury comprised Adrian Goldthorpe (managing partner at Lothar Böhm Associates Ltd), Sam Kelly (managing director of AKQA), James Annis (business development manager at AKQA), Mark Kirkham (head of marketing and innovation for western Europe at PepsiCo), Tony Meenaghan (professor of marketing at University College Dublin) and Bianca Rech (team manager at FC Bayern München).

Winning is not everything, however, and we now have a very rich bank of European football best practices that we will share over the next few months via our knowledge-sharing platform UEFA PLAY. 🌐

Best brand activation

Winner: Portuguese Football Federation – 'We Are Not 11, We Are 11 Million'

Creativity and innovation award:

Romanian Football Federation – 'Football Maths'

Special mention: Estonian Football Association – 'With Heart and Ball'

Best fan engagement campaign

Winner: Irish Football Association – 'Dare to Dream'

Creativity and innovation award:

Football Association of Moldova – 'Support National Team with Carla's Dreams'

Best commercial partnership

Winner: Polish Football Association – PZPN licensing programme

Creativity and innovation award:

Turkish Football Federation – Swarovski Turkish national team jewellery line

Best grassroots marketing campaign

Winner: Football Association of Finland – 'Using Football Relationship Management (FRM) to Grow Participation'

Creativity and innovation award:

Bulgarian Football Union – 'Grassroots – SIX-a-side'

Best women's football marketing campaign

Winner: The Football Association – 'A League Of Our Own'

Creativity and innovation award:

Israel Football Association – 'UEFA European Women's Under-19 Championship'

WOMEN TAKE CENTRE STAGE

The House of European Football in Nyon hosted the draws for the European Women's Under-17 and Under-19 Championships on 11 November.



Women's Under-17 Championship elite round 2016/17

The 2016/17 Women's Under-17 elite round draw split the 24 teams into the following six groups:

- Group 1:** Austria, **Netherlands**, Slovenia, Switzerland
- Group 2:** Norway, Denmark, **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, Wales
- Group 3:** Germany, Poland, **England**, Italy
- Group 4:** Republic of Ireland, Hungary, Scotland, **Serbia**
- Group 5:** **France**, Greece, Belgium, Russia
- Group 6:** Spain, Sweden, Iceland, **Portugal**

(Mini-tournament hosts in bold. Matches to be played in March/April 2017.)

The six group winners and the best runner-up will join hosts the Czech Republic, who qualify automatically, in the final round, to be played from 2 to 14 May 2017.

Women's Under-17 qualifying round 2017/18

The second draw was for the 2017/18 Women's Under-17 qualifying round. With Lithuania qualifying automatically as hosts of the final tournament in summer 2018 and Germany receiving a bye, the draw included 44 teams, who were divided into the following groups:

- Group 1:** Switzerland, **Poland**, Ukraine, Faroe Islands
- Group 2:** England, Scotland, Slovakia, **Latvia**
- Group 3:** Spain, Iceland, **Azerbaijan**, Montenegro
- Group 4:** Republic of Ireland, Greece, Romania, **Bosnia and Herzegovina**
- Group 5:** France, **Denmark**, Wales, Kazakhstan
- Group 6:** **Sweden**, Russia, Croatia, Israel
- Group 7:** Czech Republic, Netherlands, Turkey, **Estonia**
- Group 8:** Norway, **Hungary**, Bulgaria, Moldova
- Group 9:** Belgium, **Serbia**, Belarus, FYR Macedonia
- Group 10:** Austria, **Portugal**, Northern Ireland, Georgia
- Group 11:** Italy, Finland, **Slovenia**, Malta

(Mini-tournament hosts in bold. Matches to be played in autumn 2017.)

The top two in each group and the best third-placed side will join Germany in the elite round.



Women's Under-19 elite round 2016/17

The third draw of the day was for the current season's Women's Under-19 Championship elite round. The following groups were drawn:

- Group 1:** Spain, Belgium, **Hungary**, Russia
- Group 2:** England, Czech Republic, Denmark, **Turkey**
- Group 3:** France, **Netherlands**, Slovenia, Portugal
- Group 4:** Finland, **Republic of Ireland**, Scotland, Ukraine
- Group 5:** Serbia, Sweden, **Norway**, Italy
- Group 6:** **Germany**, Poland, Switzerland, Iceland

(Mini-tournament hosts in bold. Matches to be played in spring 2017.)

The six group winners and the best runner-up will join hosts Northern Ireland in the finals from 8 to 20 August 2017.

Women's Under-19 qualifying round 2017/18

The final draw of the day was for the 2017/18 Women's Under-19 qualifying round. A record 48 sides will compete for the 2018 title, including Kosovo, who are making their first appearance in this competition. The teams were divided into the following groups:

- Group 1:** Germany, **Iceland**, Montenegro, Kosovo
- Group 2:** England, Slovenia, Wales, **Kazakhstan**
- Group 3:** Denmark, Romania, Slovakia, **Lithuania**
- Group 4:** Spain, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, **Albania**
- Group 5:** Norway, **Portugal**, Northern Ireland, Cyprus
- Group 6:** **Netherlands**, Republic of Ireland, Estonia, Latvia
- Group 7:** France, Italy, **Moldova**, Faroe Islands
- Group 8:** Belgium, **Austria**, Croatia, FYR Macedonia
- Group 9:** Sweden, Czech Republic, Belarus, **Bulgaria**
- Group 10:** Scotland, Turkey, **Hungary**, Armenia
- Group 11:** **Finland**, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel
- Group 12:** Russia, Poland, Greece, **Georgia**

(Mini-tournament hosts in bold. Matches to be played in autumn 2017.)

The top two sides in each group will qualify for the elite round. Switzerland qualify for the finals automatically as hosts.



FERNANDO SANTOS

"THE KEY NOW IS TO CONTINUE BEING SUCCESSFUL"

Two months after guiding Portugal to victory at UEFA EURO 2016, Fernando Santos joined his peers at the UEFA Conference for European National Team Coaches in Paris on 12 September. Fielding questions from coaches from all over Europe, he talked about a range of topics, from pre-tournament preparations to changing tactics and getting the balance right in the squad.

"Portugal weren't one of the favourites to win the EURO. The favourites, as always, were Spain, because they were the holders, and Germany, who had just won the World Cup, followed by traditionally strong footballing countries such as Italy and hosts France. But I always said that Portugal were in with a chance. I think every coach at the tournament had that ambition."

Perfect blend

"This Portuguese team had some experienced players – 30, 31, 32-year-olds – who were very important, but more than 50% of the squad had never been to a EURO before, and some had only three or four caps to their name. I thought that if I could find the right way of combining the great experience and quality of players like Cristiano Ronaldo and Pepe with the youthful exuberance of the younger generation, we'd be in with a shout. I've always thought that the balance between experience and youth is very important. The young players have the quality – including the ability to learn tactics – otherwise they wouldn't be playing at international level. They were there on their own merits. Those young Portuguese players bring with them the ability to improvise and take risks, which is very important for a team."

Pre-tournament preparations

"Training was due to begin on 23 May, a week after the Portuguese Cup final, but I gave all the players an extra week off before reporting for

national team duty. Indeed, Ronaldo only arrived on 6 or 7 June – a week or so after we'd got together. Physical and mental recovery was much more important, given the players' heavy workloads, so we gave them a bit of freedom. We then replicated the experience of playing every three days. We had three friendly games with the same amount of recovery time between them so that the players could get used to it. We made the most of our training sessions, working on tactics and strategies – and, to a much lesser extent, aspects of fitness. Having only three days of rest [between games] really restricted the team's ability to recover, so we had to try to find a way of recovering while training and recovering well. Players have free time after games in Portugal, and in France we were always careful to replicate that. We thought it would be good to let the players mentally unwind, that giving them a mental rest would help them in some way overcome any physical problems they might have. Then there's the issue of team spirit, without which it's difficult for things to go well. And in this respect, things went really well. To be crowned champions of Europe ahead of France, Germany, Spain and all of those other teams, things needed to go really well."

Road to the final – the group stage

"We went to France to see if we could win the competition. I don't think it could have been any other way. We had to have a specific objective to focus on. We were theoretically the →



SANTOS CAREER FACTFILE

1987-1994	Estoril Praia
1994-1998	CF Estrela da Amadora
1998-2001	FC Porto
2001-2002	AEK Athens FC
2002-2003	Panathinaikos FC
2003-2004	Sporting Clube de Portugal
2004-2006	AEK Athens FC
2006-2007	SL Benfica
2007-2010	PAOK FC
2010-2014	Greece
2014-	Portugal

Getty Images

favourites in our group, but ours was the only group that had two teams from the top ten of the FIFA rankings [Austria and Portugal]. The two games in which we had the most possession were the first two – 66% in the first [1-1 against Iceland] and 59% in the second [0-0 against Austria]. Along with Spain, we were the team that attacked the most, had the most shots and made the most crosses, but we didn't win, and our opponents must be given credit for that. They stopped us from playing our game. After the first two draws, things were tricky, but the hardest game was against Hungary. We went behind on three occasions, and we came back all three times. We played in a typically Portuguese style, it was the game in which we ran the least, and it ended up being a bit chaotic. The result was pretty good – 3-3. A great game, and fortunately Ronaldo drew us level twice. He was crucial. This was very important for us, because in some ways it was difficult to control the players. They really wanted to win and forgot that our main objective when we arrived in France was to get past the group stage. We knew a draw would be enough for us to reach the next stage, and I wasn't able to control the players for the last 10 to 15 minutes. They kept going for goal, trying to score in any way possible, but I wanted them to calm down because we could have gone out. I think this game woke the players up and made the team stronger, because it made them more realistic – not stronger in terms of individual technical quality or the concepts of the game, but more realistic. The next round was completely different. With no points at stake, from then on every game was a final. It was important for me to make my players see this."

Road to the final – the knockout stage

"Croatia were really difficult opponents. They were one of the favourites, and it was because of them that Spain had finished second in their group. That game was one of the most tactical of the tournament. It wasn't very attractive to watch, and there weren't many goalscoring opportunities, but tactically speaking there were two really strong teams that cancelled each other out. From then on, we kept growing. The games and the opponents we faced were always tough. Poland were good at counterattacking, with two really good forwards, and Wales were a real surprise package. They were great from dead-ball situations, and it took a lot of analysis to see how we could stop them and cancel them out, because they'd won three games in a row. I spent two hours trying to figure out how to beat them. And the final – playing against

France in France – couldn't have been trickier, but we always believed. I had told my players after the Austria game that we would not be returning home until 11 July. I didn't just say that for the sake of it: it was what the players and I truly believed.

The final

"Ronaldo's injury was a really important moment. I tried to reorganise the team, putting Nani in the centre and [Ricardo] Quaresma on the right, but what I really wanted was to try to get through to half-time. It was a difficult moment for everyone – we'd had a clear strategy, and that had to be changed. It was difficult. You need to stop and think and then try to organise. I needed the half-time break to speak to my players – to explain what we would change and what we would try to do. I needed to instil in them something very important – that we had lost the best player in the world and were facing one of the best teams in Europe, if not the world, and only by playing as a team could we win. There was no point in thinking about what Cristiano might have done. We had to try to win the game as a team. I asked them to give an extra 10%. I said to them – I remember this perfectly – that 100% was not enough and they needed to give 110%. France are a fantastic team, and only by playing at 110% could we beat them."

Changing tactics

"We sat back a bit deeper [after the group stage], but no player was going to change from their fundamental role – their defensive and attacking duties. The way the team was set up on the pitch didn't change overnight, because it was the result of all the work we had put in up to that point. Twelve of our players had never taken part in a EURO before, so we had to carry on our work from the qualifying stage and our pre-tournament preparations. We were having problems, getting caught out by opponents because we were playing too high up the pitch. We understood that, given the characteristics of our players, it would be best to withdraw a bit and play further back. That would make our opponents play differently and we would have more space. We would take advantage of the natural talents of our players."

Philosophy and pragmatism

"All managers have a preferred formation or style of play, but we're all conditioned by the players available to us, without changing our philosophy. Many people in Portugal were talking about this and saying that Portugal traditionally played with a 4-3-3 formation. When I became coach, we changed to 4-4-2, and yet I had always been a coach who used a 4-3-3 formation more. When I was coaching the Greek national team I used that formation, because of the characteristics of the players →

"Life is about growing and evolving – not just as a manager, but as a human being – and we adapt as part of a natural evolution."

Fernando Santos was presented with an order of merit from the president of Portugal, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, at a ceremony held in Porto on 31 August.



Getty Images

available to me. However, Cristiano is no longer a left-winger in the traditional sense; he's more of a forward. I thought that, as I had the best player in the world, if I could get the most out of his qualities, I could get results. Looking back, my dream was for the team to play a certain way, but it was clear that with the players I had this wouldn't work, so I had to make changes."

Growing and evolving

"Life is about growing and evolving – not just as a manager, but as a human being – and we adapt as part of a natural evolution. We start off thinking that we know everything, and we need to understand that evolution is natural and we have to grow alongside it. Football has changed radically – not the players, their qualities or their idea of the game, but the rhythm of the game, the space on the pitch and [the question of] how to manage it. The increased role of science in football has raised training levels and led to games being tighter and more difficult. Coaches – myself included – have had to adapt to these new aspects. What I was required to do as a coach 30 years ago, I don't do today; I'm a completely different manager. Thirty years ago, pre-season took place on the beach. Twenty years ago, a typical warm-up was just running around the pitch for 20 or 30 minutes. Nowadays, nobody does this. We coaches



Getty Images

"We had lost the best player in the world and were facing one of the best teams in Europe, if not the world, and only by playing as a team could we win."

have to change and follow the developments in science. It's not enough to just understand football to be a coach; it's a lot more technical and scientific now."



Getty Images

Underdogs have their day

"I lived in Greece for a few years, so I know the culture there. It's part of me now. Greece achieved a great feat in 2004, and I think from now on unfancied teams will look at the sides that have won competitions without being favourites and use them as reference points. It happened to Denmark – they were a reference point. Then it happened to Greece, and now Portugal. But the teams and players cannot and should not be compared, or their style of play. Denmark were on holiday when they were called on to take part in EURO '92, so that was a completely different situation. Greece made the most of their situation, as did Portugal in France, in different circumstances."

Impact of the new format

"The new 24-team format is very different to the 16-team format. The possibility of three teams going through from a group changed things greatly in my opinion. A lot of what happened in France had a lot to do with the fact that three teams could qualify. Teams would make calculations."

Team ethic

"One of the keys to this Portuguese team is that the only word that exists in the team even now – and I hope it continues – is 'we'. 'I', 'he' and 'you' ceased to exist in our environment. The only word we used was 'we' – 'we win', 'we lose', 'we play'. It doesn't matter who plays. Fortunately for me, the players really got into this spirit. It was never difficult for me to manage the issue of which players would play and which wouldn't. All players want to play, and those who didn't got a bit down, which is normal, but they always put the team first. Things are always easier when that is the case. At 37, Ricardo Carvalho was one of the oldest players in the tournament. He played in the three group stage matches, but after that, because of fatigue and the demands of the games, I thought it would be a good idea to freshen up the defence. That's why he wasn't a starter in the latter stages. But he was still very important to the team because of his experience and the way he played. It's important to have a player like that, just like with João Moutinho. But at a protracted tournament like this, with only ten days of rest, it was very important to shake up the team and look for changes without losing the team's identity."

The future

"It's going to be different now, and it won't be easy. If you're playing the newly crowned champions of Europe, there's a greater



PORTUGAL AT EURO 2016

Group stage

Portugal 1-1 Iceland
Portugal 0-0 Austria
Hungary 3-3 Portugal

Round of 16

Croatia 0-1 Portugal
(aet)

Quarter-finals

Poland 1-1 Portugal
(Portugal win 5-3
on penalties)

Semi-finals

Portugal 2-0 Wales

Final

Portugal 1-0 France
(aet)

motivation, and you perhaps approach the game in a different way. That's what the game against Switzerland [a 2-0 defeat in Portugal's first 2018 World Cup qualifier on 6 September] was like. It was bad that we lost, obviously, but credit to Switzerland for beating us. But I'm going to reiterate to my players the lesson we learned from this. The key now is to continue being successful. Portugal have always had great players and great teams taking part in final tournaments – great players who have played or are playing for big European teams and have won big trophies with their clubs. But Portugal had never managed to win a [senior] competition at international level. Now about the road to success – the road is simple: we need to bring together talented Portuguese players and form a team that's pragmatic, knows its objectives and wants to win. We could just put together a team that plays nice football, but that isn't enough. I'm now 61 years old and I'm interested in winning. Winning breeds winning. There's a long way to go and space for the team to develop in many ways. At youth level, Portugal have done very well in recent years and have appeared in many finals at Under-17, Under-19 and Under-21 level. That is a result of the great efforts that Portuguese clubs have made at academy level. The Portuguese FA has put a lot into its youth teams, and now the City of Football training centre has opened. We will continue to work hard at youth level, while those who are now in the latter stages of their careers will carry on bringing all their experience and quality to the team. There's still a lot of work to be done, and a lot of room for our game to develop, as we're still far from where we want to be in some respects. But we'll continue to build on this base. We have our own strengths, and we'll always pursue our objective, which is to win." 🌱

A NEW HOME AT THE FOOT OF VITOSHA MOUNTAIN

With financial support from UEFA and FIFA, the Bulgarian Football Union (BFU) has recently built a new national technical centre in an area of outstanding natural beauty.



Football has a long history in Bulgaria, with its first governing body – the Bulgarian National Sports Federation – being established as long ago as 1 January 1923. Since then, Bulgaria, a country with a population of just over seven million, has successfully qualified for seven World Cups (including four in a row from 1962 to 1974) and the final rounds of two European Football Championships.

Bulgaria's finest and most memorable result came at the 1994 World Cup in the United States – a tournament that they nearly did not qualify for. On the evening of 17 November 1993, at a rainy Parc des Princes in Paris, Bulgaria played France in their final qualifying match, fighting for a place at the tournament. France needed only a draw to secure their place in the final round, but Bulgaria stole it from under their noses, winning 2-1 thanks to a 90th-minute goal from Emil Kostadinov.

The following summer, Bulgaria were one of the surprise packages of the tournament. They

had not won a single game at any of their five previous World Cups but, led by their captain Borislav Mihaylov, they went on an astonishing run. Bulgaria won two of their three group games and qualified for the round of 16, where they beat Mexico 3-1 on penalties. Dimitar Penev's team then faced the reigning world champions, Germany, in the quarter-finals, where goals from Hristo Stoichkov and Yordan Letchkov gave them a 2-1 victory.

The team went on to finish in fourth place after losing to Italy and Sweden in the semi-finals and the third-place play-off respectively. But this did nothing to dampen the joy of the Bulgarian people and the sense of solidarity and triumph that they felt during the tournament.

In what was the most divisive decade in the nation's modern history, Bulgaria's footballing heroes united the country in joy. Some 22 years later, some of those 'golden boys' of 1994 are now in leading positions at the BFU (with Borislav Mihaylov president of the association), and they are making history once again. →



Another dream comes true on 17 November

On 17 November 2016, the 23rd anniversary of Bulgaria’s qualification for the 1994 World Cup, the BFU opened its new technical centre in Boyana, on the outskirts of Sofia.

The new home of Bulgarian football, which was designed by the architectural firm Amphion, is located at the foot of Vitosha Mountain, surrounded by greenery. It boasts three football pitches (one with artificial turf, and one with a stand for 350 people), a multi-functional sports hall, a tennis court, and a hotel where teams will be accommodated. It also includes new ultra-modern headquarters for the BFU. Indeed, various innovative technological devices and cutting-edge environmental measures were used in the construction of the complex. The multi-functional sports hall will be able to cater for tennis, volleyball, basketball and handball, hosting both training and friendly matches.

From now on, this will be a place where footballers can hone their skills in peace. Here, all of the country’s national teams, which used to prepare for matches in various locations dotted around the country, will get exactly what they need: peace and quiet, good training conditions and clean air.

Before it could build the centre, though, the BFU first had to convince the Bulgarian government and its officials to approve the project. Thanks to the support of the prime minister, Boyko Borisov, the government eventually allowed the BFU to build on the site. An environmental sustainability plan was drawn up, and a landscape architect produced designs for the surrounding area. In May 2014, the authorities finally approved the plans. The construction of the centre went very smoothly, with everything proceeding according to plan.

UEFA and FIFA cover 95% of costs

This €10m project was largely financed by UEFA’s HatTrick programme and FIFA’s Goal programme, with the two governing bodies covering 95% of all costs between them. Petar Hubchev, head coach of the national team, was extremely impressed with the results: “With a new base like this, we now owe it to ourselves to play at a high level. Facilities like this can only be found in a few places.”

A role model for Europe and the world

The centre was officially opened on 17 November at an inauguration ceremony attended by the BFU president, Borislav Mihaylov, the UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, FIFA deputy secretary general Zvonimir



Boban, Bulgaria’s minister for youth and sport, Krasen Kralev, and members of the BFU executive committee, members of the UEFA Executive Committee, presidents of various football associations and about 500 other guests.

Aleksander Čeferin congratulated the BFU on its new centre: “I am sure that this new national technical centre will help to improve the quality of Bulgarian football on a long-term basis. I am also proud that this centre has been built with the support of UEFA’s HatTrick programme, which redistributes UEFA’s revenues across all member associations, helping them to develop football across Europe.”

“In many ways,” he continued, “this is what our job at UEFA is all about – helping to ensure the development of football across Europe, irrespective of the relative wealth or size of individual associations. Now, more than ever, we need solidarity – a value which is embedded in football’s DNA.”

Krasen Kralev, himself a passionate football fan, said: “When you have new high-quality infrastructure like this, success is never far behind. The sport has many leaders, but what we really need is people like Borislav Mihaylov and his team – people who are able to lay brick upon brick and build something useful for the entire nation and the sport as a whole.”

“What Borislav and his team have done is outstanding. This represents an enormous step forward for the future of Bulgarian football and the development of new generations of footballers. Congratulations to Borislav and the BFS,” said Zvonimir Boban. ⚽

The Bulgarian FA’s new, ultra-modern headquarters are in the heart of a complex that includes three football pitches, a multipurpose sports hall, a tennis court and a hotel.

The UEFA president (left) and the president of the Bulgarian FA, Borislav Myhailov, at the inauguration on 17 November.





A DREAM COME TRUE

**Borislav Mihaylov,
president of the BFU**

“There is no greater challenge for a man than to put his precise thoughts and emotions into words. A man expresses himself through actions. If I were to try to describe in just a few minutes how I am feeling at this precise moment, I admit that I would not be able to do it.

I have always had football in my life. My father played in goal for the Bulgarian national team and PFC Levski Sofia, so my very first memories are of my father’s training sessions, which my mother used to take me to. Not long after, I started playing football myself, without the slightest inkling that my goalkeeping career would span more than 18 years, that I would be playing in goal for the national team at the age of 18, or that I would win a World Cup medal as the captain of that team. And while I was playing, I never thought for a minute that I would go on to become

president of the BFU and hold that position for more than 11 years.

When I was chasing the ball around as a little boy, I had the same dreams as everybody else my age – dreams of winning matches and lifting trophies. I made those dreams come true. By the time I became president of the BFU, I already had a new dream: to ensure that our finest young players had the very best – the best equipment; the best training facilities; the best working conditions; everything they needed in order to develop their skills, have a great career and represent Bulgaria with pride and honour. This dream was shared by all of my former team-mates – a whole generation of players. Well, dear friends and colleagues, we have done it! Bulgaria’s national teams finally have a home of their own.

Let me first express my gratitude to my family, who have been by my side at all times over the last six years, even in the toughest of moments.

I would also like to thank my colleagues on the BFU executive committee, who, very much like me, were never in any doubt regarding the importance of this endeavour.

This initiative would never have come to fruition without the support of UEFA and FIFA. This project – the largest ever carried out by a sports association in Bulgaria – has been made possible by the financial support provided by the HatTrick programme and the personal commitment shown by Michel Platini, Gianni Infantino, Theodore Theodoridis and the new UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin.

I would like to thank everyone at the BFU for all of their hard work and patience, which has finally been rewarded.

Finally, I would like to make a promise – to take good care of this national technical centre here in Boyana and ensure that it continues to serve Bulgarian football for generations to come.”



TAKING FAROESE FOOTBALL TO THE NEXT LEVEL

The Faroe Islands Football Association (FSF) is pulling out all the stops with a view to taking Faroese football to the next level, hiring four new full-time coaches with UEFA A licences to develop the sport across the country.

At present, the FSF has just 12 full-time employees, but that will rise to 16 – an increase of 33% – on 1 January 2017, when Øssur Hansen, Eli Hentze, Jógvan Martin Olsen and Thomas Thinggaard start work. These four coaches, all of whom hold UEFA A licences, have been hired as ‘football developers’ and tasked with helping to improve the standard of football in the Faroe Islands.

The FSF must point the way

Pætur Smith Clementsen, the FSF’s technical director, is the man behind the hiring of the new football developers: “When I was appointed technical director of the FSF in autumn 2015, one of the first things we did was to sit down and discuss the state of Faroese football. We looked at how Faroese football was doing, with a particular focus on the country’s clubs, and thought about how we could help our clubs on a day-to-day basis. The FSF contacted clubs in order to find out what we could do to help them and what they would like the FSF to assist them with. We got almost as many different answers as there were clubs in the Faroe Islands, but almost every club mentioned the fact that the FSF needed to lead the way and point clubs in the right direction in terms of developing football in the Faroe Islands.”

The FSF’s first full-time youth coaches

In addition to working as football developers on a day-to-day basis, each of the four will also coach a national boys’ team.

“The coaches that we have had thus far at youth level have all worked as club coaches at the same time, in addition to having jobs outside football. We will now have national team coaches working for the FSF on a full-time basis, so they will be able to concentrate entirely on footballing matters,” Smith Clementsen explains.

The technical director is currently the only FSF employee working in the area of football development, but that is about to change.



The four football developers are introduced to the Faroese media and football leaders at a press conference.



Jógvan Martin Olsen, manager of the Faroese national team from 2005 to 2008, is one of the four football developers recruited by the Faroese FA.



Thomas Thinggaard from Denmark is the only non-Faroese in the team of football developers.

“Now there will be five of us focusing on footballing matters, so we are setting up a football forum where we can really explore issues relating to the development of football in the Faroe Islands,” he explains.

The four football developers and the technical director have divided the country’s clubs between them, with each having responsibility for four or five different clubs. “However, we have decided that developers will not be responsible for clubs where they have previously worked as coaches,” Smith Clementsen says.

The four football developers all have different backgrounds. Jógvan Martin Olsen is a former coach of the Faroese national team, while Eli Hentze is currently the coach of the Faroese Under-21 team. Øssur Hansen is a former Faroese international with almost 50 caps to his name, while Thomas Thinggaard is a young Dane who has been working in youth football in the Copenhagen area. 🌍

ANDORRA

www.faf.ad

20 YEARS TO THE DAY

XAVI BONET



November 2016 was a truly special month for the Andorran Football Federation. On 13 November, the day of its World Cup qualifier against Hungary in Budapest, it celebrated the 20th anniversary of its national team's very first match, played in 1996 against Estonia at Estadi Comunal. It was a cold evening outside, but full of warmth inside the stadium as a new national team was born.

The names on those first 11 yellow shirts are etched in the memories of Andorran supporters: Alfonso Sánchez, Félix Alvarez, Gerard Calvet, Jordi Lamelas, Francesc López, Josep Moragues, Francesc Obiols, Agustí Pol, Johnny Rodríguez, Lucendo and a very young Juli Sánchez, who, 20 years on, still plays for the national team. Substitutes Angel Martín,



Carlos Medina, Cristóbal Aranda, Jorge Bazan and Albert Carnicé also got a touch of the ball on that historic evening, in a squad led by Andorra's first national coach, Isidre Codina.

Although Andorra lost 6-1, it is the 61st minute that our fans remember, the moment when Agustí Pol scored Andorra's first-ever goal.

Moving forward 20 years, the national team is still among the minnows, but is striving to make its history with every match.

AUSTRIA

www.oefb.at

COACH EDUCATION TO THE FORE

CARMEN REDL



Each year, the Austrian Football Association (ÖFB) organises an advanced training course for the head coaches of all clubs in the top two divisions of the Austrian league. This year's one-day course, held in the Austrian capital, Vienna, in mid-November, featured a high-calibre guest speaker. Roy Hodgson, former England national team coach, whose 'Three Lions' qualified for EURO 2016 with a 100% record, offered some insights into his life as an international coach, explained his football philosophy to the coaches in attendance and described some of the demands on professional team coaches. With reference to EURO 2016, he also summarised current international trends in professional football.

The ÖFB's sporting director, Willi Rutensteiner, and goalkeeper coach and head of goalkeeper coach education,



Klaus Lindenberger, also assessed the final round in France, with a particular focus on technical and tactical analysis.

Meanwhile, at the end of September, Austria hosted its first UEFA Futsal B coach education course at the Lindabrunn sports academy. The course, organised by the ÖFB in cooperation with the Vienna federal sports academy, comprises a total of 120 theoretical and practical training units. It will conclude with examinations conducted by a panel of experts in early March.

ARMENIA

www.ffa.am

MKHITARYAN MADE UNICEF GOODWILL AMBASSADOR

HAYK KARAPETYAN



The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Armenia has appointed Manchester United FC midfielder and Armenian national team captain Henrikh Mkhitaryan as its latest



national goodwill ambassador.

In his new role, Mkhitaryan will support UNICEF in advocating for children's right to education, sport and play and will

use his voice to bring awareness to the plight of the most marginalised children in Armenia. His appointment coincided with UNICEF's global 70th anniversary in December.

Together with UNICEF, Mkhitaryan aims to encourage Armenian families to get active and ensure a fair chance is given to every child in the country, with an emphasis on children and young people's rights to quality learning from an early age and a good education in an inclusive environment.

"It's sad to know that not all children have the same opportunities to attend school and access quality early learning and education. All children should enjoy the opportunity to reach their full potential and become productive citizens," said Mkhitaryan. "I am honoured to become a goodwill ambassador for UNICEF and I want to use this platform to help UNICEF advocate for every child's right to education in Armenia, especially for those who are most vulnerable," he added.

Over the past two decades, Armenia has seen considerable progress in expanding access to pre-primary education, introducing inclusive education and committing to improve the quality of learning. However, many are still left behind, including children with disabilities and those living in remote rural areas.

SPECIAL COURSE FOR CLUB LICENSING OFFICERS

ELCHIN MAMMADOV

 Under the club licensing regulations of the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA), any club applying for a licence must have a club licensing officer. As of this season, those club licensing officers are obliged to attend special courses organised by AFFA and from next season they will have to sit exams on the core licensing process and criteria in order to obtain a certificate authorising them to continue working as club licensing officers. The AFFA's introduction of such courses and exams is supported by the UEFA club licensing and financial fair play unit.



One such course was held on 26 October. It comprised general information on UEFA, AFFA and the history of the club licensing system, specific information on the AFFA club licensing system, including the core process and stakeholders, the latest changes to the regulations, and the sporting, infrastructure, personnel and administrative, legal and financial licensing

criteria (including practical exercises).

Members of the AFFA club licensing group and other specialists gave presentations on a wide range of club licensing topics, including youth football development programmes and club academies, the player registration system, integrity in football, minimum medical requirements, refereeing matters and the Laws of the Game (on which meetings are organised with the individual clubs), the organisation of AFFA youth competitions, the role of supporter liaison officers at clubs, and the AFFA coach education system and structure.

At the end of the intensive course, the participants sat written exams and received attendance certificates. It is hoped that this and other club licensing initiatives will continue to raise standards throughout the professional game in Azerbaijan.

DRAGONS STILL IN THE HUNT FOR A WORLD CUP PLACE

FUAD KRVAVAC

 Bosnia and Herzegovina's final World Cup qualifier of the year was away against Greece at Stadio Georgios Karaiskakis in Piraeus. The match ended in a 1-1 draw, leaving the Dragons third in Group H with seven points, three behind Greece and five behind leaders Belgium. Their next qualifying match will be against Gibraltar in Zenica on 25 March.

The country's Under-21 team were more successful, beating Montenegro

2-0 in a friendly at Stadion Vrapčići in Mostar. Meanwhile, the national Under-21 futsal team recently made their debut, playing two matches against their French counterparts at the City Arena in Zenica and winning 7-1 and 4-2.

In the intermediary round of the tenth UEFA Regions' Cup, NZ Tuzlanskog Kantona lost all three of their matches in Group 2 (which took place in Simitli and Razlog in Bulgaria), losing 1-0 to San Marino, then 3-0 to Castilla y Leon

(Spain) and finally 2-0 to hosts South-West Region. All three other teams ended up with six points, with Castilla y Leon going through to the final round as group winners.

In the context of European social dialogue between stakeholders in football, a meeting was recently held in Sarajevo to analyse the current situation in terms of the content of standard professional contracts for players, decision-making systems for resolving disputes between clubs and players, and general cooperation between stakeholders in football in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Football Federation (NFSBiH), UEFA, the European Club Association (ECA), the Association of European Professional Football Leagues (EPFL), FIFPro, clubs in the Bosnian and Herzegovinian premier league that are members of the ECA (FK Željezničar, FK Sarajevo and NK Široki Brijeg), and the national trade union for professional footballers.

Last but not least, the NFSBiH recently took part in the UEFA-backed Football People action weeks against discrimination, in cooperation with clubs in the Bosnian and Herzegovinian premier league.



CROATIA

www.hns-cff.hr

CONSTRUCTIVE DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSIONS

TOMISLAV PACAK



The Croatian Football Federation (HNS) recently organised a second gathering of members of its executive committee, administrators from clubs in the top two divisions and the heads of regional football associations. The two-day meeting consisted of presentations, followed by an in-depth discussion on issues affecting Croatian football.

"The Croatian Football Federation is always there to support clubs, players, regional associations and the grassroots. These meetings are a great opportunity to share ideas, knowledge and experience with others, as we all have responsibility for developing football in this country," said the president of the HNS, Davor Šuker.

November was another successful month for the Croatian national team, which beat Iceland 2-0 at home thanks to



Davor Šuker

a brace from Marcelo Brozović.

They are now two points clear at the top of Group I in the race for a place at the 2018 World Cup. Meanwhile, the national Under-19 team qualified for the elite round of the European Under-19 Championship and Zagreb qualified for the final round of the UEFA Regions' Cup, with both teams winning their respective qualifying groups.

In women's football, Božidar Miletić recently replaced Zvonimir Kolak as head coach of the Croatian national team, with Tihana Nemčić taking over from Miletić as head coach of the Under-17 girls' team.

Finally, Croatia's football family recently said a sad goodbye to Željko Čajkovski, the GNK Dinamo Zagreb star who won a silver medal at the 1948 Olympics with Yugoslavia. Čajkovski died in Munich in November at the age of 91.

DENMARK

www.dbu.dk

AN INTERCONTINENTAL PARTNERSHIP

MARTIN MOGENSEN



On 25 October 2016, the Chinese Football Association (CFA) and the Danish Football Association (DBU) signed a historic memorandum of understanding, strengthening ties between the two organisations in areas such as grassroots football, women's and youth football, and good governance.

That agreement seeks to foster an exchange of knowledge and expertise between the two associations in the fields of football and institutional culture. In particular, the DBU, which has a strong record of ensuring that football plays a full part in society, will provide ideas and know-how to the CFA, helping football to act as a driver of health and well-being for people of all ages – male and female alike – across Chinese society.

The agreement – which forms part of the major football strategy launched by the Chinese president, Xi Jinping,



in 2015 – also provides for cooperation and the exchange of knowledge in areas such as grassroots development and women's football.

The two parties now have until the middle of 2017 to draw up and sign a full partnership agreement detailing the specific activities that they will cooperate on.

LGBT ABUSE IN FOOTBALL TACKLED WITH RAINBOW LACES CAMPAIGN

DANNY LYNCH

 The FA recently gave its support to the Rainbow Laces anti-homophobia in sport campaign. Local football associations in England joined the Premier League, Premiership Rugby, The FA, the English Football League and the Rugby Football Union in hosting a Rainbow Laces takeover to show their support for LGBT players and fans last month. The famous Wembley Arch went rainbow to demonstrate support, and Coventry City full-back Chris Stokes spoke exclusively to FATV about his education session with The FA this year after he was found guilty of sending a homophobic tweet. He admitted to breaching FA rules relating to the use of social media.



The Premier League showed its support for the campaign with messages on perimeter advertising at every match and games opening with a giant Premier League Rainbow Laces flag.

Other activities included teams wearing Rainbow Laces during training, laces being handed out at weekend fixtures and clubs organising meetings between LGBT fan groups.

WOMEN AND CLUBS BENEFIT FROM CERTIFICATE IN FOOTBALL MANAGEMENT

MIHKEL UIBOLEHT



 A recent UEFA Certificate in Football Management (CFM) course organised by the Estonian Football Association (EJL) involved staff from the national association and local clubs, together with visiting participants from Latvia, Lithuania and Turkey. A remarkable number of women took part

in the eight-month course, which ended with exams and a graduation ceremony in October.

"This CFM course put the participants in practical situations and gave them experience that they really need in their everyday work. We are very pleased and thankful to UEFA for bringing this

programme to Estonia," EJL general secretary Anne Rei said. "I am very happy that out of the 11 EJL staff who completed the course, 7 were women. This reflects the situation in Estonia: we have many female staff members in leading positions," she added. Many local clubs also benefited from the course, and the association is keen to capitalise on this. "We are looking to design and launch a course of our own in Estonia to develop even more staff," the general secretary said.

Indrek Petersoo, one of the graduates of the Estonian CFM and executive director of the football school at FC Levadia Tallinn, said: "This course was a very good opportunity to tie theory and practical experience together. I think it was really important that clubs could benefit from the course. It helped us to analyse our daily work and set new goals."

FRANCE

www.fff.fr

ESCAPE TO THE CHATEAU

JEAN-BAPTISTE SCHMIDT



After qualifying superbly for the eighth round of the French Cup, the amateur club ES Cheminots Longueau from the Picardy region of

France enjoyed the unique experience of a two-day visit to Clairefontaine, the national football centre. The club won the honour in a draw into which the

French Football Federation entered all the amateur clubs still in the French Cup as part of its celebrations to mark the centenary of the competition.

The players and staff of ES Cheminots Longueau were collected from Amiens on 2 December and taken to Clairefontaine on a bus decked out in the colours of the French Cup. A fabulous programme awaited them: use of the French national team's dressing rooms; training on one of the Clairefontaine pitches; and dinner, bed and breakfast at the residence used by the national team. After travelling home on the same French Cup bus, ES Cheminots Longueau faced their eighth round opponents, Croix Football IC.

Among the other French Cup centenary celebrations, special shirts were distributed to all 1,132 clubs in the fourth round; Stade Pontivyen won a training session with coach Lionel Charbonnier ahead of their fifth round tie; and US Saint-Philbert won the opportunity to play their six-round tie in the same conditions as the cup final itself.

GEORGIA

www.gff.ge

GEORGIAN CERTIFICATE IN FOOTBALL MANAGEMENT

KETEVA N GOLIADZE



The Georgian Football Federation (GFF) is organising a Georgian version of the UEFA Certificate in Football Management in cooperation with Ilia State University in Tbilisi. Under an agreement signed on 7 November, the Georgian equivalent of UEFA's renowned education programme aims to improve

the qualifications of managers working in Georgian football by enhancing their professional skills.

"Today is a very important day, as we embark on this much-needed, highly beneficial project," the GFF president, Levan Kobiashvili, said, on signing the agreement with the university. "For the

first time in our country, a football management course will be held in Georgian. It is analogous to the UEFA education programme and is being implemented in Georgia with UEFA's backing. I'm delighted to be signing a cooperation agreement with one of the leading universities in Georgia. Education is highly important and necessary for the development of Georgian football."

The rector of Ilia State University, Giga Zedania, added: "I am certain that this will be a very interesting programme and a crucial step forward in the development of Georgian football."

There are 30 places on the first course, which is entirely free and for which the application process opened in December. The course will run until July 2017, introducing people working in Georgian football management to global and European football standards and teaching them – in their own language – about strategic management, event organisation, marketing and public relations. Successful graduates will be awarded certificates by the university.



CACAU TAKES ON INTEGRATION AMBASSADOR ROLE

THOMAS HACKBARTH

 The German FA (DFB) has appointed former Germany international Cacau as its integration ambassador. When he arrived in Munich at the end of the 1990s, Cacau could not speak a word of German. 'Moment mal' was the title of his first German book, which he bought the following day. Having represented Germany at the World Cup in South Africa, he taught his former team-mates some basic Portuguese in preparation for the 2014 edition in Brazil, when he was no longer part of the playing squad. Now, he has been named DFB integration ambassador. "I think the DFB

and German football as a whole are very fortunate to have Cacau in this role", said the DFB president, Reinhard Grindel.

"I am looking forward to the challenge", said the 35-year-old former VfB Stuttgart striker, who hung up his boots in October. "No single great idea will solve everything. But once you realise that integration starts with the individual, you are already well on the way." As he took up his new position, Cacau also talked about the responsibility of the professional game: "You can't make a professional talk about social issues, but there is no doubt that we footballers share a responsibility and a duty to



Getty Images

act as role models." Cacau played for VfB Stuttgart for more than a decade, from 2003 until 2014, and helped them win the German championship in 2007. He represented the German national team 23 times between 2009 and 2012.

He scored only 110 seconds after coming on as a substitute in the 68th minute of the World Cup opening match against Australia in South Africa, a goal that remains the second quickest scored by a substitute at any World Cup.

REFEREE EXCHANGE WITH MALTA

STEVEN GONZALEZ

 On the last weekend in November, the Gibraltar Football Association (GFA) took part in its first-ever referee exchange. A team of match officials from Gibraltar – Jason Barcelo, Yaro Borg, Juan José Villada and Herbert Warwick – travelled to Malta to officiate in Maltese domestic fixtures, while a team from Malta took charge of league games in Gibraltar.

Such exchanges, which are strongly encouraged by UEFA, are a vital part of referees' long-term development, exposing them to different countries, cultures, players and playing styles.

Match officials see how people live in other countries and have the opportunity to share experiences with their peers and build friendships.

Our match officials refereed two games in the Maltese premier league and first division, while the Maltese officials took charge of two matches in the Gibraltarian premier division. All of those games went well, with both teams of match officials receiving compliments on their performances.

The GFA's senior referee manager, Adrian Bacarisa, was delighted with the results of this initiative. Indeed, he has

already lined up another exchange in the new year, this time involving the Andorran Football Federation.

Naturally, the referees who travelled to Malta were also delighted with the experience.

"The Malta Football Association were excellent hosts," Jason Barcelo said. "We were treated very professionally, and the accommodation and meals were excellent. It was also interesting to learn about Maltese culture. On the sporting side, we greatly enjoyed both matches."

Yaro Borg said: "The referee exchange was an invaluable experience, both improving the quality of our refereeing and exposing us to other footballing cultures. It also showed us that Gibraltar's football standards are no different from any other small European country."

Herbert Warwick added: "It was an extremely enjoyable weekend. The games went well, with players readily accepting decisions and behaving in a sporting manner. I am very grateful to have had this opportunity."

Juan José Villada said: "This has been an incredible experience. I am extremely grateful to the GFA's referee instructors for selecting me to take part in this referee exchange."



HUNGARY

www.mlsz.hu / en.mlsz.hu

YOUTH TEAMS READY FOR UEFA ELITE ROUNDS

MÁRTON DINNYÉS



Hungary's men's and women's Under-19s and Under-17s have all qualified in impressive fashion for the elite rounds of their respective European Championships.

The men's Under-17s, led by former Hungarian international Zoltán Szélesi, triumphed over Denmark and Liechtenstein in the qualifying mini-tournament they hosted, to progress to the elite round alongside one of the pre-tournament favourites, the Netherlands. Their female counterparts, managed by Doróttya Schumi, also played host to their qualifying group, in which they remained unbeaten to qualify alongside Poland.

Sándor Turtóczky's women's Under-19s

arguably produced the best performance of all by topping a tough group that comprised Montenegro, Slovakia and favourites Denmark – a team they beat 2-0 in their last match to ensure progression as unbeaten group winners. The men's Under-19s, managed by Michael Boris, completed the clean sweep by qualifying from their main round mini-tournament in second place behind a predictably strong Italy team.

These encouraging results provide a comprehensive boost to the youth national team set-up and evoke memories and fresh hopes of participating in major youth competition finals, following on from the European Under-19



Championship finals Hungary hosted in 2014 and the 2015 U-20 World Cup in New Zealand, where current senior national team coach Bernd Storck led the Hungarian squad to the round of 16.

ISRAEL

www.football.org.il

NEW EQUALIZER SEASON

EITAN DOTAN



A special event was held at the national stadium in Ramat Gan on 9 November to kick off the new season for The Equalizer, a not-for-profit organisation that provides year-round football-based activities for Jewish and Arab children in Israel and has been a partner of the Israel Football Association (IFA) since February 2016.

The Equalizer aspires to build a better society through education and football for Israel's next generation. The

organisation, which focuses on values such as tolerance and mutual respect, raises awareness of educational issues and the importance of maintaining an active lifestyle, preventing violence and racist incidents, and reducing the level of crime in the country.

Bringing together children from different backgrounds and with diverse religious beliefs is inherently challenging but football functions as a bridge between strangers and helps to develop

communication among players, whoever they are. The encounters organised by The Equalizer, which include handshakes, other sporting gestures, and activities associated with 'interpreting the unknown', encourage the children to communicate, play and make friends with strangers and children they even considered enemies before they entered the project.

One of the events organised at the national stadium was a short exhibition match with children from all over the country and Hapoel Tel Aviv players Weam Amasha and Hen Ezra.

"Our partnership with The Equalizer is part of the IFA's social vision. Our goal is to recruit more partners and get the government on board in order to make The Equalizer a nationwide success," IFA president Ofer Eini explains. "The combination of football and education will ensure not only the growth of players but, first and foremost, the growth of citizens the country deserves."

Israel international Yossi Benayoun said: "I don't know where I'd be today if I was not a footballer, but it's always been important for me to learn and to invest in school. I don't believe I'd deserve to be where I am today if I hadn't done that."

ITALIAN FOOTBALL FEDERATION INTRODUCES INTEGRATED REPORTING

DIEGO ANTENZIO



The Italian Football Federation (FIGC) is one of the first sporting bodies in the world to commit to the integrated reporting model. Its first integrated report, which was presented in Milan on 15 November, marks a step forward from the sustainability report that the federation has published in recent years. As such, it is a key component in the strategy the FIGC has followed resolutely since 2011 as it looks towards a more sustainable future marked by increased social responsibility, namely a commitment to transparency and the provision of all stakeholders with comprehensive and accurate information that highlights the added value generated in its various fields of activity.

The report focuses on key strategic areas and the progress made in each one, particularly in terms of internal efficiency, sustainability and transparency. It also highlights the FIGC's hard work and investment in the game itself, such as its work in infrastructure and youth development, its engagement with the professional set-up and, not least, its efforts to review and revise the country's

footballing regulations. The integrated report also analyses the processes that have seen the FIGC adopt a more global outlook and a greater level of social commitment, as well as its work in harnessing the great historical and cultural potential of Italian football. As the FIGC president, Carlo Tavecchio, explains: "This first integrated report is not the end; it is the start of a journey that will see the FIGC engaged daily in pursuit of the same universal values that form its very identity, and that have had an impact on the lives of millions of people."

The federation's commitment to transparent reporting is further demonstrated by another publication made available on its website, a recent report by Transparency International that places the federation as one of the 14 best national football associations among the 211 FIFA member associations, in terms of providing access to "the information necessary to let people know what they do, how they spend their money and what values they believe in."

During the presentation in Milan, the FIGC and the Italian ministry of



foreign affairs and international cooperation (MAECI) confirmed a programme of collaboration that will see the institutions combine their diverse skills and powers of

influence to promote Italy on the global stage. This programme is organised in four strategic areas: developing and leveraging the profile of Italy's national teams and their star players, both past and present; providing coach and referee training that will benefit young Italians living abroad; drawing on the support of the MAECI in bids to bring key football events to Italy; and coordinating efforts to provide sports training in other countries as an instrument of bilateral and multilateral cooperation. "Italian football and the royal blue shirt of the national team are symbols of excellence," Tavecchio said. "We want to put these symbols at the service of the country to promote the 'made in Italy' brand and enhance Italy's profile on the world stage."

YOUTH SEASON ENDS WITH EUROPEAN TOUR

TOMS ĀRMANIS



The 2016 season ended in November for Latvia's youth players, with the annual youth awards ceremony and a special European tour for the brightest talents aged 13 and 14.

During the course of the season, the best 13, 14 and 15-year-old players from all over the country are invited to the Latvian Football Federation's football academy. In between training and competing with their clubs, they meet at the academy several times a year for specialist training and interregional

tournaments, the aim being to better gauge their abilities and ease their transition from children's to youth football. At the end of the season, the best players from the U13 and U14 age groups are selected to form national teams and take part in a special European tour, giving them the opportunity to measure themselves up against players from elite youth academies elsewhere in Europe.

This year's European tour took the youngsters to Germany and the Czech Republic. The Latvian Football Federation

hopes that such experiences will further the development of the country's most talented young footballers and motivate them to strive for success at the highest level.

After the tour, the best teams, players and coaches from Latvia's youth championships met for the annual youth football awards ceremony. More than 120 teams representing almost 40 Latvian football clubs took part in this season's championships, which comprised five different age categories across two divisions.

LIECHTENSTEIN

www.lfv.li

PHILIPP PATSCH APPOINTED NEW GENERAL SECRETARY AND CEO

ANTON BANZER



The Liechtenstein Football Association (LFV) has appointed Philipp Patsch as its new general secretary and CEO. He will take office in January 2017, succeeding Roland Ospelt, who has played a key role in spearheading the continuing development of the LFV, the umbrella organisation of Liechtenstein's seven football clubs, for 13 years, including nine as general secretary. Roland Ospelt is owed a huge debt of thanks for his extraordinary contribution to football in Liechtenstein and for helping to enhance the LFV's reputation on the international stage.

His successor, Philipp Patsch, an industrial engineer who until now has held a senior position in Liechtenstein's state administration, has not only the professional expertise but also the leadership experience required for his demanding new role at the LFV.

The association also has a new sporting director for women's football. Daniela Künzler, who replaces Monika Burgmeier-Zuppiger, will also assume the role of women's national team coach. The former Swiss U19 and senior international knows Liechtenstein football well, having played for FC Ruggell when they were in the top Swiss women's league.



Philipp Patsch, new general secretary and CEO



Daniela Künzler, new women's national team coach

MALTA

www.mfa.com.mt

'ONE OF A KIND'

PRESS DEPARTMENT



Representing your country 350 times is a milestone of which any athlete would be immensely proud. The same goes for Tony Gambin, who is taking his well-earned retirement after more than 38 years of sterling service and 350 matches as masseur to the Malta national team.

The Malta Football Association (MFA) paid tribute to Gambin before the island's 2018 World Cup qualifier against Scotland. He was presented with a special jersey by MFA president Norman Darmanin Demajo, with his name and the number 350 on the back, in honour of a unique football adventure that has earned him huge respect from many of Malta's football legends.

"I call Tony one of a kind," said Carmel Busuttill, a close friend of Gambin's who was capped 111 times for Malta over the course of 19 years. "He started his career in 1982, the same year that I made my debut for Malta."

David Carabott, who until some weeks ago, held the record for the most

appearances for the national team, added: "He was such a character. Everyone used to flock to his hotel room to listen to his jokes!"

True to form, Gambin still had a surprise or two saved up for his retirement. "Let me share with you something you and many others probably don't know," he said. "Go on eBay and do a search for Tony Gambin ..." This produced a string of old bodybuilding magazines with Gambin himself on the cover! "I won numerous bodybuilding titles in New South Wales, Australia, before I emigrated to England in 1963," he recalled with pride.

Returning to his beloved football, Gambin has "many lovely, fond memories" about his career as masseur to the Malta national team. "I made 160 trips abroad with the senior national team and remember some amazing results, including the 2-2 draw against Portugal in Madeira in 1987, and the 1-1 draw against Hungary two years later."

Gambin worked with and earned the respect of no fewer than nine national



D. Aquilina

team coaches. "I used to work really hard," he reflects, "but I don't regret a single minute of it."

INTERNATIONAL VETERANS' TOURNAMENT

PRESS OFFICE



Joma Arena in Chisinau and the national technical centre in Vadul lui Voda hosted the 10th international FA of Moldova Cup for veterans, organised this year in memory of former Moldovan player Gheorghe Tegleațov. Four veterans' teams – from Constanta (Romania), Pinsk (Belarus), Reni (Ukraine) and Chisinau (Moldova) – took part in the tournament, which was held in a spirit of fair play and friendship, just as the Football Association of Moldova (FMF) had intended. In the first semi-final, Chisinau beat Pinsk 8-4, and Constanta beat Reni 4-0 in the other. Pinsk won the match for third place, beating Reni 5-3, and the final was won by Chisinau,



who achieved an incredible 7-0 against Constanta.

The awards ceremony was attended by Gheorghe's widow, Larisa Tegleațov, together with FMF first-vice president Mihai Anghel and Iurie Conusevici, president of the national football veterans' association. They presented the participants with well-deserved trophies and gifts. "This is a great way to develop veterans' football," Conusevici said. "I was pleased by the level of organisation and the atmosphere at the stadium."

Chisinau have won the last four editions of the FA of Moldova Cup, and nine overall. The Belarussian city of Pinsk took the title in 2010.

NEW GIRLS' AND WOMEN'S FOOTBALL ACADEMY

NIGEL TILSON



The Irish Football Association has set up a girls' and women's football academy in partnership with Ulster University, which has campuses across Northern Ireland.

As explained by the chief executive of the Irish FA, Patrick Nelson, the new academy is a "natural progression" from the Regional Girls' Excellence Programme, which has been hosted by the university for the past nine years. It will provide players with extra coaching and extra fitness training at the university's world-class facilities and will also tap into some of the best coaches and sports scientists in Northern Ireland and beyond.

"Through the academy at Ulster University we hope to encourage players to stay at home to develop their game, as well as receiving education here," Nelson says. "We envisage that this will ultimately help to strengthen both our international and domestic teams."

The Irish FA will join a number of other sports academies already based across



the university's four campuses, including the Andrew White Cricket Academy and Belfast Met Football Academy. "With access to Ulster University's world-class sporting facilities and expert

coaching, these academies will create a pathway for talented young athletes to develop and thrive," says the vice-chancellor of Ulster University, Professor Paddy Nixon.

PORTUGAL

www.fpf.pt

'FOOTBALL TALKS' RETURNS IN SPRING

MATILDE DIAS



The Estoril congress centre in the coastal town of Cascais will host the next edition of the Football Talks conference, an international event organised by the Portuguese Football Federation, bringing together key figures from the world of football to share ideas about the present and

future of professional football. The UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, the FIFA president, Gianni Infantino, and the chairman of the European Club Association (ECA), Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, have all been invited to speak at the conference, which will take place from 22 to 24 March.



FPF

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

www.fai.ie

DUBLIN EURO 2020 LOGO LAUNCH

STEPHEN FINN



The Irish sporting and political classes came together to help launch the official Dublin host city logo for UEFA EURO 2020 at a major event held at the capital's imposing CHQ Building in November.

The CEO of the Football Association of Ireland (FAI), John Delaney, and the FAI president, Tony Fitzgerald, extended a warm welcome to UEFA Executive Committee member František Laurinec, the country's prime minister, Enda Kenny, the minister for transport, tourism and sport, Shane Ross, the minister of state for tourism and sport, Patrick O'Donovan, and Dublin city council's Dermot Lacey. Republic of Ireland national team manager Martin O'Neill and assistant manager Roy Keane were also on the guest list, alongside former international Keith Andrews.

The UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, sent a video message to the assembled party, as did former Irish international striker Robbie Keane, speaking from Los Angeles as it was confirmed that he would spearhead a street and community football legacy programme in connection with his hometown's involvement in EURO 2020.

The Dublin host city logo features the city's Beckett Bridge as part of UEFA's

bridges theme for this 60th anniversary tournament, which is being hosted by 13 European cities.

Dublin will stage three group matches and one match in the round of 16 in what will be a unique multi-country twist for one of international football's premier competitions.

FAI CEO John Delaney said that the Dublin logo launch marked a "unique

partnership across football, government, city council and more than 20 other agencies and organisations."

"All partners collectively wore the green jersey in winning the bid for these games, which we expect will have a significant sporting, tourism and economic benefit for Dublin and Ireland," he added. "I would like to thank UEFA for awarding us host city status for this famous tournament. The hosting of these games gives us a great opportunity to grow football – particularly street and community football – and I am delighted that Robbie Keane has agreed to lend his support to leave a strong football legacy for the next generation."



Sportsfile

PERFORMANCE IS THE FUTURE

PAUL ZAHARIA



'Performance is the future' is more than just an abstract concept or catchy slogan. It is a far-reaching scouting initiative developed by the Romanian Football Federation (FRF) and one of its commercial partners, Gillette. The aim of the programme, which targets children aged 10 to 14, is to increase the chances of talented youngsters from poor rural areas being spotted and give them access to training of the highest standard.

Part of a much bigger FRF grassroots programme entitled 'Together, we are football', which was launched a year ago, 'Performance is the future' began in August 2016 and will run until May 2017. It involves members of the FRF technical committee and other technicians, led by former internationals Miodrag Belodedici, Ion Vlădoiu and Ion Geolgău, who is now the FRF's scouting manager. The panel of scouts are touring the length



and breadth country, stopping in towns and villages of all sizes, where they are organising local trials to identify a total of 11 talented players, who will be given a unique opportunity to pursue the football career every child dreams of. As part of the campaign the selected children will also enjoy a week-long trip to Barcelona and will be invited to a senior national

team training camp at the FRF's national training centre in Mogosoaia.

The scouts recently made their fourth stop, in Pădureni, a village in Vaslui, one of Romania's poorest counties. No fewer than 496 children took part in the trials, the highest number to date, and two potential star performers stood out: midfielder Răzvan Boiță and forward Cristian Turcu, both of whom were selected on the basis of "their talent and especially their attitude during the whole day," according to Geolgău.

'Performance is the future' builds on a previous grassroots scouting initiative 'Transform the narrow street into a stadium', which ran from September 2015 to April 2016 and involved more than 1,000 primary school children, also from rural areas. It culminated in a competition between the most talented players aged 7 to 11.

The FRF and its partners are committed to ensuring the future of Romanian football is bright and the values of the beautiful game are passed on to the next generation, wherever in the country they may be.

BUILDING ON AND FOR SUCCESS

MIRKO VRBICA



The Football Association of Serbia (FSS) is proud of the national team results, infrastructure developments and distribution of equipment that have marked the second half of 2016.

FSS president Slaviša Kokeza was elected in May, bringing in a new management structure and some very satisfying results, in particular for Serbia's Under-21s, who have qualified for the final round of the European Under-21 Championship in Poland in June.

The other national teams have seen success too, with the senior men's team getting off to a good start in the European Qualifiers for the 2018 World Cup in Russia, and the Under-17s and Under-19s both making it through to the elite round of their European Championships, putting Serbia very much



in the running for a place in the finals in Croatia and Georgia respectively. The women's Under-17s have also qualified for the elite round of their European Championship, having secured second place in a qualifying round mini-tournament played on home turf.

Alongside these strong results on the pitch – and in keeping with the election promises made by the new FSS president

– pitches have been laid and equipment donated in towns and villages across the country. Several cities and regions have received artificial pitches and more than 200 clubs have been given sports equipment, primarily for youth development purposes. As confirmed by the president himself, this kind of development support will remain a priority in 2017.

SLOVAKIA

www.futbalsfz.sk

RECORD CONTRACT FOR COACH GUĽA

PETER SURIN

 Adrián Guľa moved from Trenčín to Žilina in 2013 for his first five-year contract with top-division club MŠK Žilina. Having signed a new four-year contract on 13 October 2016, he is on course for an unprecedented seven years at the helm. Nothing of the sort has been seen in Slovakia since the days of Valer Švec, who coached Inter Bratislava from 1972 to 1978.

Guľa's arrival in Žilina was noteworthy in itself. He joined MŠK in July 2013 but signed his contract six months previously, as he was entering what would be his fourth and final year at AS Trenčín. Guľa agreed on a common vision and direction for his new club with its owner, Jozef Antošík, who was – and still is – excited about his coaching acquisition. He has reiterated his faith in Guľa many times and despite finishing in ninth, second and fifth place in the last three seasons, clearly not fulfilling the club's championship ambitions, Antošík never considered parting company with his coach. Not for a second. And Guľa stayed loyal to his post even when clubs such as Legia Warszawa, SK Slavia Praha and AC Sparta Praha

expressed an interest. Indeed, the reaction to such offers from abroad was to extend their contract until 2020!

MŠK have been waiting four years for

their seventh title – and Guľa for his first – but at the time of writing they were top of the table, with a clear lead over second-placed ŽP Šport Podbrezová...



SFZ

SWEDEN

www.svenskfotboll.se

STATUE FOR IBRAHIMOVIĆ

ANDREAS NILSSON

 A bouquet of flowers would hardly suffice to congratulate Zlatan Ibrahimović on his 11th Swedish player of the year award – known locally as the Guldbollen or 'golden ball' – and the national team career he called to an end in 2016. The Swedish FA opted for something bigger and better: a three-metre statue of Ibrahimović himself, to be erected outside the National Arena in Solna.

"Of course we should give him a statue. Sweden has not been good enough at giving our great athletes the recognition they deserve. I want to change that and what better way to start than with Zlatan

Ibrahimović, who in my opinion is the greatest we've ever had," says Håkan Sjöstrand, general secretary of the Swedish Football Association.

Swedish artist Peter Linde has been commissioned with the sculpture, which will be cast in bronze and unveiled in 2017.

The other major award presented at the annual Swedish football gala – the Diamantbollen or 'diamond ball' for Sweden's female player of the year – went to goalkeeper Hedvig Lindahl for the second year in a row. Special mention was given to her crucial penalty saves at the Rio Olympics that helped Sweden to take silver.



SFF

SWITZERLAND

www.football.ch

KIDS FESTIVALS AS POPULAR AS EVER

PIERRE BENOIT



The Swiss Football Association has placed great importance on youth football for many years, as demonstrated by its support for the Kids Festivals. In warm, autumnal weather, the festivals' partners – Credit Suisse, Concordia and Puma – joined Bernie the mascot and more than 300 children at the final festival of the 2016 season.

As had also been the case at the ten tournaments held earlier in the year, the young participants threw all their enthusiasm into the event hosted by FC Stäfa, one of the oldest football clubs in Switzerland (founded in 1895). Not even the stunning view of Lake Zurich from the Stäfner Frohberg could distract the children from the activities on the pitch.

The 2016 Kids Festivals took place at 11 different venues all over Switzerland, starting in Solothurn canton in May and finishing above Lake Zurich. Over 3,000 children aged between four and ten were able to enjoy playing their favourite sport at the various events, the last of which capped off an eventful season that was full of fun, football, excitement and unforgettable moments. Bernie the mascot enthusiastically attended

every one and took every opportunity to support the participating children.

For the Swiss FA, the Kids Festivals are, first and foremost, a chance to enable children to play football and have fun both on and off the pitch, with the focus on enjoyment rather than winning. The principles of fair play are extremely important and the children are encouraged to play freely, to stick to the

rules, to respect their opponents and to treat them fairly. Equally important, as far as the Swiss FA is concerned, is that the spectators on the touchline should also behave fairly and with restraint.

The children are already looking forward to next year's Kids Festivals, which kick off on 7 May, after the winter break, at the home of FC Bellinzona in Ticino.



PPR-Keystone

TURKEY

www.tff.org

BROADCASTING RIGHTS GO TO DIGITURK

AYDIN GÜVENİR



All broadcasting rights for the Turkish Super League and First League have been acquired by Digiturk for a record annual fee of \$590m in a five-season contract running from 2017/18 until the end of the 2021/22 season. Turkcell Superonline had also bid for the rights.

The tender was conducted by, among others, the Turkish Football Federation (TFF) president Yıldırım Demirören, vice-presidents Servet Yardımcı and Hüsnü Güreli, executive board member Cengiz Zülfiaroğlu, general secretary

Kadir Kardeş, the football clubs' union president and general secretary Göksel Gümüşdağ and Mesut Altan, the

president of Süper Lig club Çaykur Rizespor, Metin Kalkavan, and the TFF's director of football Fatih Terim.



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DIARY OF EVENTS

The UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, continues to meet with European football leaders, in Nyon and further afield.



The president of the Football Association of Finland, Pertti Alaja



The president of the Liechtenstein Football Association, Hugo Quaderer



The president of the Portuguese Football Federation, Fernando Gomes



The president of the Football Association of the Czech Republic, Miroslav Pelta



The president of the Luxembourg Football Federation, Paul Philipp



The president of the Football Association of Norway, Terje Svendsen



The president of the Polish Football Association, Zbigniew Boniek



The president of the Royal Spanish Football Federation, Ángel María Villar Llona (right), and the mayor of Bilbao, Juan María Aburto



The president of the Lithuanian Football Federation, Edvinas Eimontas

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Davor Šuker (Croatia, 1 January)
Joël Muller (France, 2 January)
Monica Ortigueira (Switzerland, 2 January)
David Mujiri (Georgia, 2 January)
Gerhard Sager (Sweden, 3 January) **70th**
George Pirtskhalava (Georgia, 3 January)
Andreas Demetriou (Cyprus, 3 January)
Victoriano Melero (France, 4 January)
David George Collins (Wales, 5 January)
Mette Christiansen (Norway, 5 January) **60th**
Mariano Moreno (Spain, 6 January)
Michael Zoratti (Austria, 6 January)
Siarhei Safaryan (Belarus, 6 January)
Rudolf Marxer (Liechtenstein, 6 January)
Sergii Lysenchuk (Ukraine, 6 January)
Andrejs Šipailo (Latvia, 7 January)
Emil Aliev (Russia, 7 January)
Nelly Viennot (France, 8 January)
Alf Hansen (Norway, 8 January)
Igor Janković (Serbia, 8 January)
Bernhard Neuhold (Austria, 8 January)
Franco Ferrari (Italy, 9 January)
Velid Imamović (Bosnia & Herzegovina, 9 January)
Duygu Yaşar (Turkey, 9 January)
Herbert Hübel (Austria, 10 January)
Emil Bozhinovski (FYR Macedonia, 10 January)
Hans-Dieter Drewitz (Germany, 11 January)
Olivier Brochart (France, 11 January)
Juan N. Garcia-Nieto Portabella (Spain, 12 January)
Drago Kos (Slovenia, 13 January)
Sofoklis Pilavios (Greece, 13 January)
Ausra Kance (Lithuania, 13 January)
Siarhei Ilyich (Belarus, 13 January) **40th**
Martin Iseli (Switzerland, 14 January)
Igor Satkii (Moldova, 14 January)
Nodar Akhalkatsi (Georgia, 14 January)
Radu Traian Visan (Romania, 14 January)

Alessandro Lulli (Italy, 15 January)
Phivos Vakis (Cyprus, 15 January)
Atanas Furnadzhiev (Bulgaria, 15 January)
Mitja Lainscak (Slovenia, 15 January)
Kleomenis Bontiotis (Greece, 16 January)
Kenneth Reeh (Denmark, 16 January)
Sune Hellströmer (Sweden, 17 January)
Steve Bennett (England, 17 January)
Jan W. Wegereef (Netherlands, 17 January)
Aristeidis Stavropoulos (Greece, 17 January) **50th**
Blaženka Logarušić (Croatia, 17 January)
Faruk Basturk (Turkey, 17 January)
Tibor Nyilasi (Hungary, 18 January)
Fabrizio Tonelli (Italy, 18 January)
Mark Boetkees (Netherlands, 18 January)
Bujar Kasmi (Albania, 19 January)
Artur Azaryan (Armenia, 19 January) **30th**
Lars-Åke Lagrell (Sweden, 20 January)
Pedro Ángel Galán Nieto (Spain, 20 January)
Ilir Shulku (Albania, 20 January)
Maciej Sawicki (Poland, 20 January)
Bjorn Vassallo (Malta, 20 January)
Ángel María Villar Llona (Spain, 21 January)
Maria Teresa Andreu Grau (Spain, 21 January)
Vladimir Iveta (Croatia, 21 January)
Are Habicht (Estonia, 22 January)
Alan Freeland (Scotland, 22 January)
Lassin Isaksen (Faroe Islands, 22 January)
Krzystof Malinowski (Poland, 22 January)
Harry M. Been (Netherlands, 23 January)
Pat Quigley (Republic of Ireland, 24 January)
Patrick Wattebled (France, 24 January)
Ofer Eini (Israel, 24 January)
Anneli Gustafsson (Sweden, 24 January)
Nikolai Ivanov (Russia, 24 January)
Edi Šunjić (Croatia, 24 January)
Philipp Patsch (Liechtenstein, 24 January)
Minke Booij (Netherlands, 24 January) **40th**
Gevorg Hovhannysyan (Armenia, 25 January)

Pascal Fritz (France, 25 January) **50th**
Metin Kazanhcioğlu (Turkey, 26 January)
Mirosław Ryszka (Poland, 26 January)
Florence Hardouin (France, 26 January) **50th**
Daniel Lorenz (Portugal, 26 January)
Cyril Zimmermann (Switzerland, 26 January)
Krister Malmsten (Sweden, 27 January)
Gilles Leclair (France, 30 January)
Nikolai Tolstykh (Russia, 30 January)
Cosimo Bolognino (Italy, 30 January)
Stefan Majewski (Poland, 31 January)
Brian Lawlor (Wales, 31 January)

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Volker Roth (Germany, 1 February)
Karen Espelund (Norway, 1 February)
Kyros Vassaras (Greece, 1 February)
Trygve Bornø (Norway, 2 February)
Barbara Moschini (Italy, 2 February)
Urs Reinhard (Switzerland, 2 February)
Steen Dahrup (Denmark, 3 February)
Mark Blackburne (England, 3 February)
Renata Tomasova (Slovakia, 3 February)
Sergii Vladyko (Ukraine, 3 February)
Jelena Oblakovic-Babic (Serbia, 3 February)
Vaclav Kroncl (Czech Republic, 5 February)
Peter Rudbaek (Denmark, 5 February)
Chris Bonett (Malta, 5 February)
Gabriel Weiss (Slovakia, 6 February)
Josep Maria Bartomeu (Spain, 6 February)
Leonid Kaloshin (Russia, 6 February)
Duško Grabovac (Croatia, 7 February)
Johan van Kouterik (Netherlands, 8 February)
Mike Appleby (England, 8 February)
Fino Fini (Italy, 9 February)
Donald McVicar (Scotland, 9 February)
Danilo Filacchione (Italy, 9 February)
Zoran Laković (Serbia, 9 February)
Luc Rabat (France, 10 February)
Götz Bender (Germany, 10 February)
Stewart Regan (Scotland, 10 February)
William McDougall (Scotland, 11 February)
Annelie Larsson (Sweden, 11 February)

Fritz Stuchlik (Austria, 11 February)
Madeline Ekvall (Sweden, 11 February) **50th**
Borislav Mihaylov (Bulgaria, 12 February)
David McDowell (Slovenia, 12 February)
Oleksandr Bandurko (Ukraine, 13 February) **70th**
Pierluigi Collina (Italy, 13 February)
Christian Mutschler (Switzerland, 13 February)
Roman Babaev (Russia, 13 February)
Marinus den Engelsman (Netherlands, 14 February)
Manuel Lopez Fernandez (Spain, 14 February)
Thomas Weyhing (Germany, 14 February)
Livio Bazzoli (Italy, 14 February)
Peter Bonde (Denmark, 14 February)
Juan Carlos Miralles (Andorra, 14 February)
Susanne Erlandsson (Sweden, 15 February) **60th**
Leif Sundell (Sweden, 15 February)
Katriina Elovirta (Finland, 15 February)
Sonia Testaguzza (Switzerland, 15 February)
Svitlana Shkil (Ukraine, 15 February)
Orkhan Huseynzade (Azerbaijan, 15 February)
Jan Pauly (Czech Republic, 16 February)
Roman Sowinski (Poland, 16 February)
Terje Svendsen (Norway, 17 February)
Robert Barczy (Hungary, 17 February)
Gudrun Inga Sivertsen (Iceland, 17 February)
Jozef Vengloš (Slovakia, 18 February)
Borislav Alexandrov (Bulgaria, 18 February)
Georgios Gkirtzikis (Greece, 18 February) **70th**
Patrick Kelly (Republic of Ireland, 18 February)
Pertti Alaja (Finland, 18 February)
Vasily Melnychuk (Ukraine, 18 February) **60th**
Jordi Pascual (Andorra, 18 February)
Petro Ivanov (Ukraine, 18 February)
Jānis Mežekis (Latvia, 19 February)
Louis Peila (Switzerland, 19 February)
Lars Arnesson (Sweden, 20 February)
Eggert Magnusson (Iceland, 20 February) **70th**
Edward Potok (Poland, 20 February)
João F. De Magalhães Marques (Portugal, 20 February)
Ion Geolgau (Romania, 20 February)
Patricia Moyersoén (France, 20 February)
Ralph Zloczower (Switzerland, 21 February)
Fernando Gomes (Portugal, 21 February)

Jarmo Matikainen (Finland, 21 February)
Eugène Westerink (Netherlands, 21 February)
Igor Ischenko (Ukraine, 21 February) **50th**
Asim Khudiyev (Azerbaijan, 22 February) **60th**
Vladimir Sajin (Slovenia, 22 February)
Ana Caetano (Portugal, 22 February)
Peter Jones (England, 24 February)
Hans-Dieter Flick (Germany, 24 February)
Oleg Harlamov (Estonia, 24 February)
Xavier Palacin (England, 24 February)
Miroslav Radoman (Serbia, 25 February)
Josep Garcia (Andorra, 26 February)
Ghenadie Scurtul (Moldova, 26 February)
Egidius Braun (Germany, 27 February)
Enrique Cerezo Torres (Spain, 27 February)
Allan Hansen (Denmark, 27 February)
Peter Lundström (Finland, 27 February)
John Beattie (England, 28 February)
Markus Stenger (Germany, 28 February)

NOTICES

- In November, Seilda Baishakov was elected as the new president of the Football Federation of Kazakhstan, succeeding Yerlan Kozhagapanov.
- Angelo Chetcuti is the new general secretary of the Malta FA, replacing Bjorn Vassallo.

OBITUARIES

- **Pierre Rochcongar** (France), third vice-chairman of the UEFA Medical Committee since 2015, died on 2 December, aged 69. He had been a member of the Medical Committee since 2011.
- **Leonardus van der Kroft** (Netherlands), a member of the Amicale des anciens, the circle of former UEFA committee members, died on 7 December, aged 87. He was a member of the UEFA Referees Committee from 1986 to 2000.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Meetings

19 January, Nyon

European qualifying competition for the Women's World Cup: preliminary round draw

20 January, Nyon

Women's Football Committee

26 January, Nyon

2017–19 European Under-21 Championship: group stage draw

9 February, Nyon

Executive Committee

13 February, Nyon

UEFA Youth League: draw for the round of 16, quarter-finals and semi-finals

16 February, Nyon

Media Committee

24 February, Nyon

UEFA Europa League: round of 16 draw

Competitions

23 January – 1 February

2017–18 European Futsal Championship: preliminary round

7/8 February

UEFA Youth League: play-offs

14/15 & 21/22 February

UEFA Champions League: round of 16 (first legs)

16 February

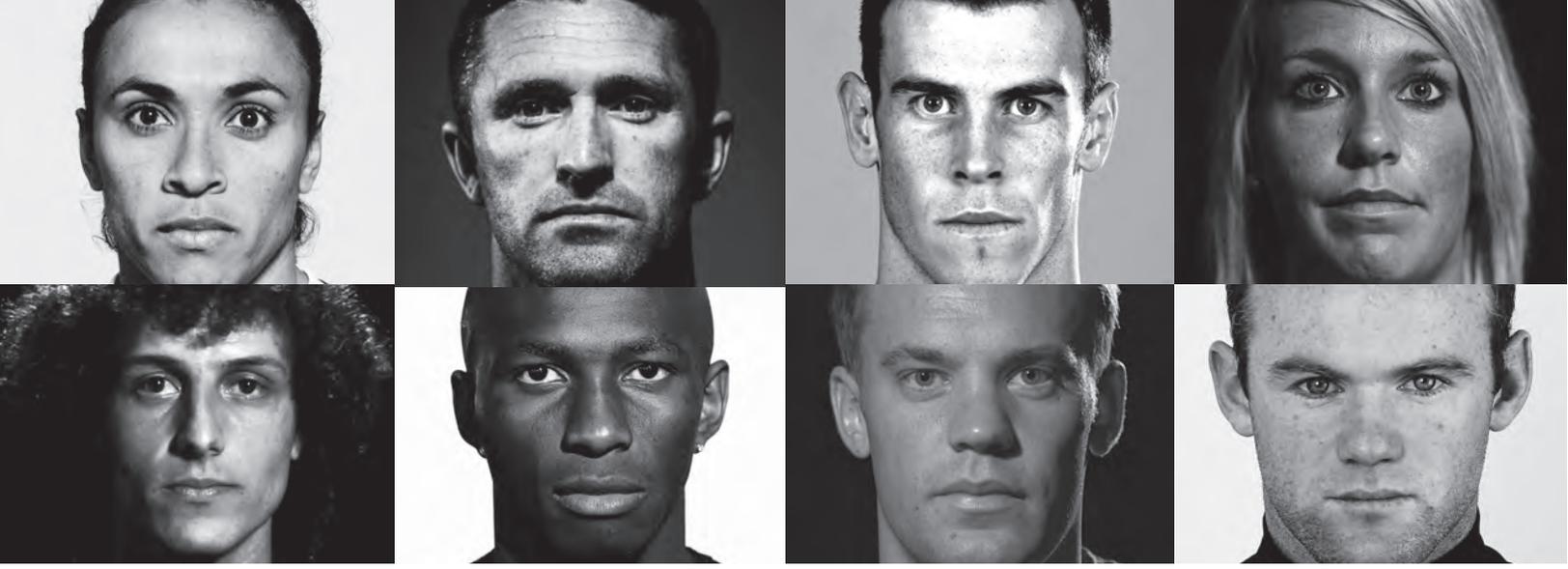
UEFA Europa League: round of 32 (first legs)

21/22 February

UEFA Youth League: round of 16

23 February

UEFA Europa League: round of 32 (return legs)



NO TO RACISM



RESPECT

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