

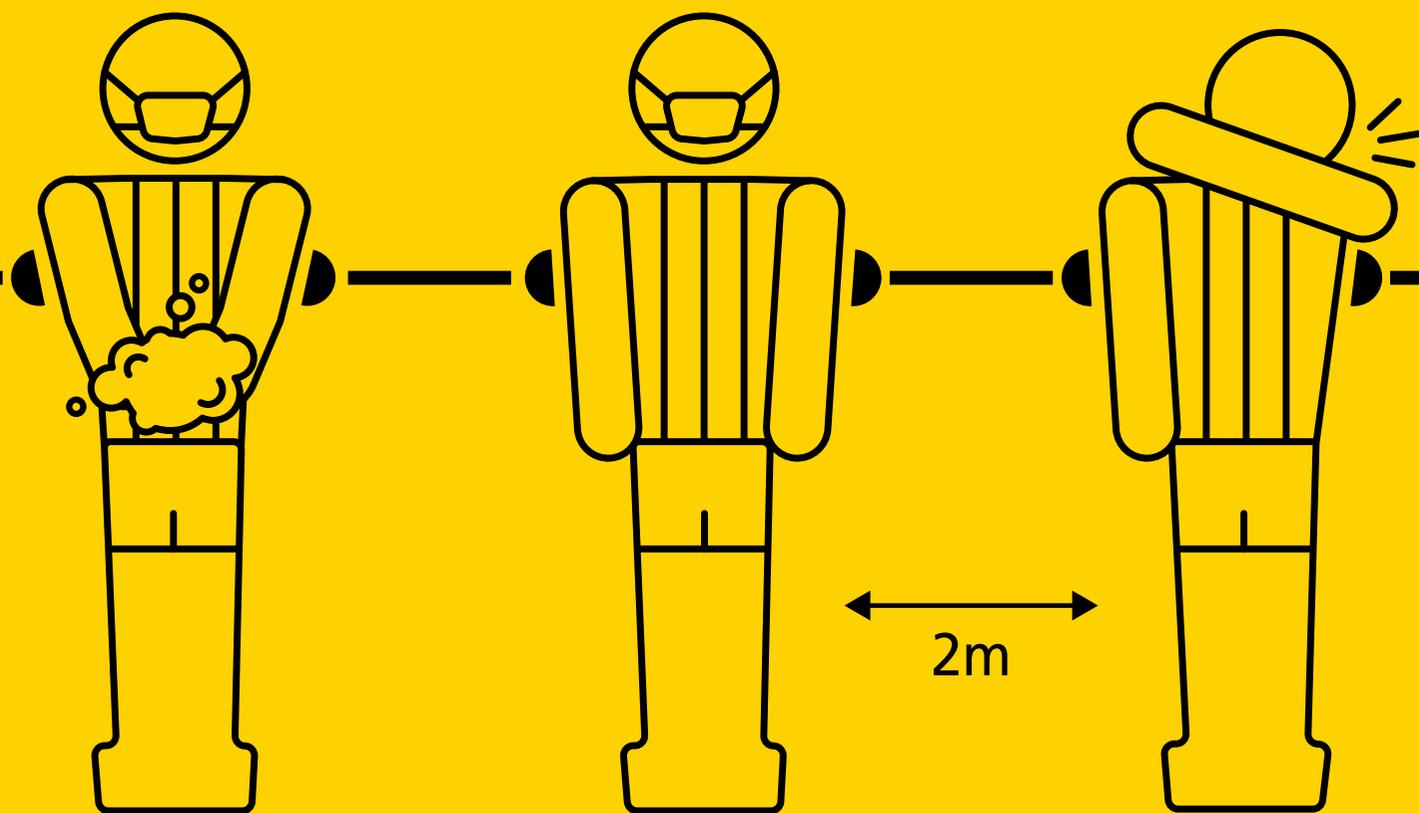
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Aleksander Čeferin
UEFA President

FOOTBALL WAITS... AND SHOWS ITS BEATING HEART

It is only a matter of weeks since European football was looking forward with great anticipation to an exciting climax to the UEFA and domestic competition seasons, as well as UEFA EURO 2020, a unique tournament bridging 12 countries and celebrating the 60th anniversary of the continent's premium men's national team competition.

Since then, life in Europe and beyond has been turned on its head by the rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus. Football has been brought to a halt at both European and national levels. UEFA has been forced to postpone all its club and national team competitions until further notice, while moving EURO 2020 to the summer of 2021 and UEFA Women's EURO 2021 to the following year.

UEFA reacted swiftly in making these decisions, within a full and frank consultation process not only with its 55 member associations, but also with fellow football stakeholders – clubs, leagues and players' unions. It was the correct decision at the right time, based on common sense, in compliance with national measures and World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations. The unprecedented circumstances indeed made it impossible for any sport to take place.

I have been extremely proud of how UEFA and its stakeholders have acted together in a spirit of full and honest cooperation at this time. This spirit remains truly alive within a situation that is in a state of constant evolution. Specific working groups are meeting regularly, and further decisions are being taken with the consensus of our partners and based on sound expert advice. Most importantly, every step is being taken in the knowledge that the safety and health of everyone in football is of paramount importance. I would also like to thank our colleagues at FIFA for their collaboration and understanding as we negotiate our way through this difficult and demanding period.

It is a matter of pride as well to observe the response of the wider European football community to the crisis and its effects. There are countless examples of sacrifices being made, of help, assistance and comfort being offered... of football caring. The wealth of positive stories across the continent has warmed the heart, and does our sport great honour and credit.

This is a time of reflection for us all. Everyone who holds football close to their hearts will cherish the moment when the beautiful game returns with its excitement, drama and passion – from the grassroots to the highest levels – and we can all celebrate its eternal magic. And when football finally kicks off again, it will be essential to remember the qualities that have come to the fore in this crisis: cooperation, unity, solidarity. Just as these qualities are guiding our actions at present, they will also provide the foundations for our recovery in the future.

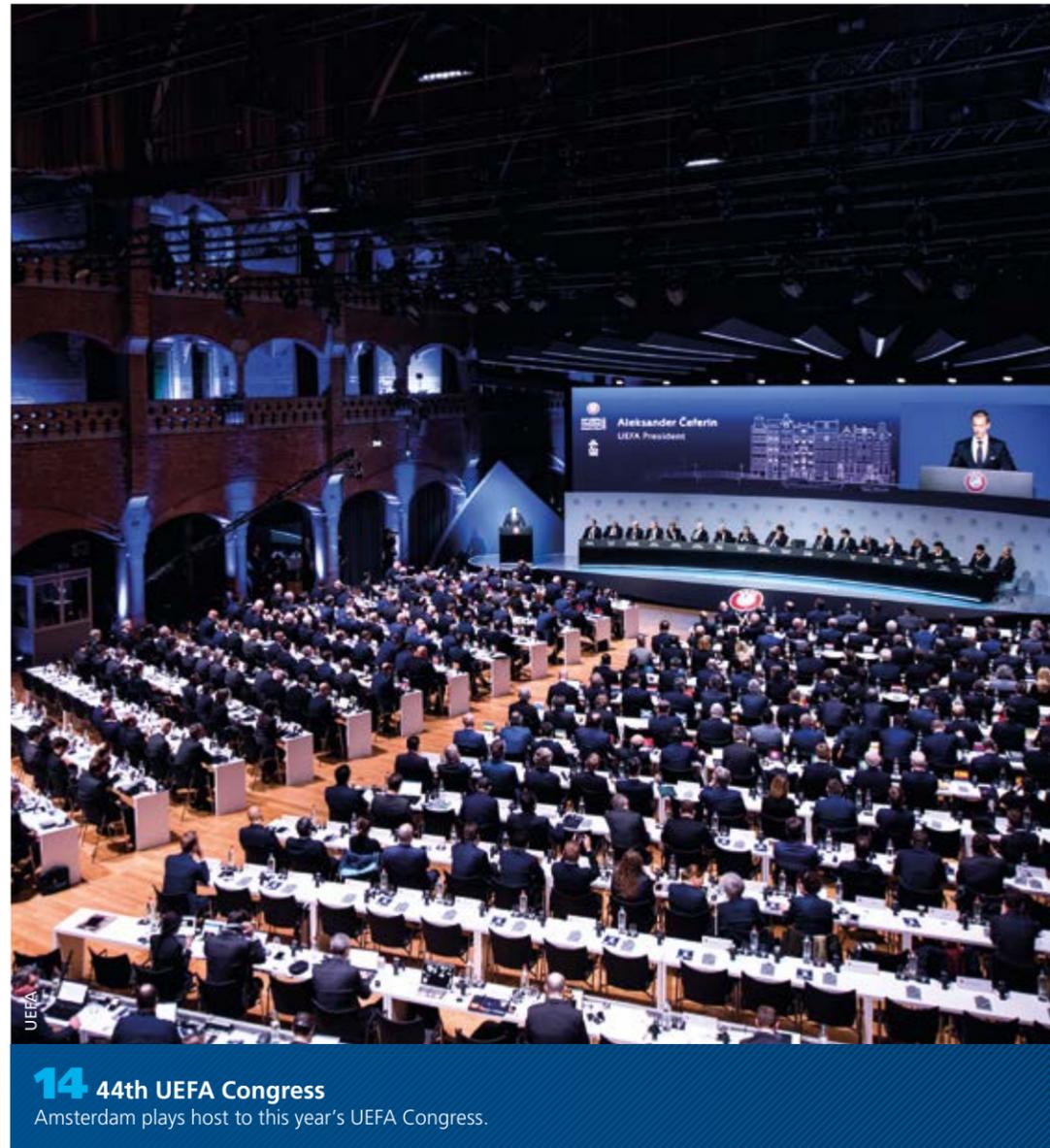
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FOOTBALL SHOWS SOLIDARITY TO DEAL WITH UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGE

UEFA and the continent's football stakeholders have been working together in the face of the coronavirus pandemic which has halted ordinary life across Europe.

**THURSDAY
12 MARCH**



UEFA issues videoconference invitation

In light of the ongoing developments in the spread of COVID-19 around Europe and the changing analysis of the World Health Organization, UEFA invited representatives of its 55 member associations, together with the boards of the European Club Association (ECA) and the European Leagues (EL) and a representative of FIFPRO Europe, the players' union, to attend meetings by videoconference on Tuesday 17 March to discuss a united response to the outbreak.

**SUNDAY
15 MARCH**



Club competition fixtures for coming week postponed

UEFA announced the postponement of all UEFA club competition matches scheduled for the week starting 16 March. This included the remaining UEFA Champions League round of 16 second-leg matches on 17/18 March (including two fixtures scheduled to take place behind closed doors, Bayern München v Chelsea and Barcelona v Napoli); all UEFA Europa League round of 16 second-leg matches on 19 March; and all UEFA Youth League quarter-final matches on 17/18 March.

As a consequence of the postponements, the UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League quarter-final draws scheduled for 20 March were also postponed.



**TUESDAY
17 MARCH**

UEFA EURO 2020 postponed

UEFA announced the postponement of EURO 2020 following a series of videoconference meetings with European football's stakeholders in which there was a unanimous agreement on the importance of completing the 2019/20 club season. The Europe-wide tournament, set to take place from 12 June to 12 July 2020, was postponed until 2021, when it will run from 11 June to 11 July.

In its media release, the European governing body said: "The health of all those involved in the game is the priority, as well as to avoid placing any unnecessary pressure on national public services involved in staging matches. The move will help all domestic competitions, currently on hold due to the COVID-19 emergency, to be completed."

The decision, taken by UEFA's Executive Committee, came after UEFA had consulted the presidents and general secretaries of the 55 national associations, as well as representatives of the ECA, EL and FIFPRO Europe. UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin had convened the videoconference to find a coherent plan to break the logjam of fixtures building up owing to the spread of the virus across the continent.

The UEFA president said: "The health of fans, staff and players has to be our number one priority and, in that spirit, UEFA tabled a range of options so that competitions can finish this season safely and I am proud of the response of my colleagues across European football. There was a real spirit of cooperation, with everyone recognising that they had to sacrifice something in order to achieve the best result."

"It was important that, as the governing body of European football, UEFA led the process and made the biggest sacrifice. Moving EURO 2020 comes at a huge cost for UEFA but we will do our best to ensure that the vital funding for grassroots, women's football and the development of the game in our 55 countries is not affected. Purpose over profit has been our guiding principle in taking this decision for the good of European football as a whole."

Contingency plan agreed, competitions frozen

As an outcome of their discussions, UEFA, the ECA, EL and FIFPRO Europe signed a resolution on European football's broader response to the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The principles of the contingency plan that was unanimously agreed regarding the 2019/20 season included the postponement until further notice of all UEFA competitions and matches (including friendlies) for clubs and national teams for both men and women. There was agreement too on a shared commitment to complete all

domestic and UEFA club competitions by 30 June, if the circumstances allowed for this.

The precise details included:

National team competitions

- The play-off qualifying matches for EURO 2020 scheduled to be played in March 2020 were postponed until the international windows of June 2020, subject to a review of the situation.
- The rescheduling of Matchdays 3 and 4 of the European Qualifiers scheduled to take place in June 2021.
- The UEFA Nations League finals, the European Under-21 Championship final tournament and the UEFA Women's EURO all scheduled between June and July 2021 would be rescheduled accordingly.
- Clubs to release players to national teams for all rescheduled tournaments.

Club competitions

- A commitment to complete all domestic and UEFA club competitions by the end of the current sporting season, i.e. 30 June 2020 at the latest, should the situation improve and a resumption be appropriate and prudent enough.
- Possible limitations or cuts in current exclusive calendar slots, potentially resulting in the scheduling of domestic league matches in midweek and scheduling of UEFA club competition matches on weekends.
- Possible adaptations of the 2020/21 UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League qualifying rounds in case of late completion of the 2019/20 sporting season, i.e. after 30 June 2020.

Working groups put in place

UEFA also announced the setting up of working groups with representatives of the leagues and clubs to examine calendar solutions to allow for the completion of the current season and any other consequence of the decisions made.

A first working group composed of representatives of UEFA, leagues and clubs was immediately established to examine relevant calendar matters and devise solutions allowing for the resumption and/or conclusion of the current season in a coherent manner. A second working group composed of representatives of UEFA, leagues, clubs and players would be set up at a later stage to assess the economic, financial and regulatory impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and propose measures to help mitigate the consequences of the pandemic.

**FRIDAY
20 MARCH**



Postponement of UEFA futsal competitions

UEFA announced the postponement until further notice of a number of futsal tournaments and events. All seven UEFA Futsal EURO 2022 qualifying round play-off ties were postponed to later dates, tentatively between June and mid-December. The qualifying group stage draw scheduled for 14 May was postponed to 7 July.

Showpiece finals officially postponed

UEFA gave official confirmation of its decision to postpone this May's UEFA Women's Champions League final, UEFA Europa League final and UEFA Champions League final. No decision had yet been made on rearranged dates.



**MONDAY
23 MARCH**

**WEDNESDAY
1 APRIL**



UEFA postpones all June national-team matches

Following a videoconference meeting with the general secretaries of all 55 UEFA member associations and recommendations made by the working groups created on 17 March, the UEFA Executive Committee decided to postpone all national team matches scheduled for June as well as to cancel the 2020 European Under-17 Championship and European Women's Under-19 Championship final tournaments. The UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League campaigns remained on hold "until further notice".

The full list of decisions comprised the following:

- All national team matches for men and women due to be played in June 2020 were postponed until further notice. This included the play-off matches for UEFA EURO 2020 and qualifying matches for UEFA Women's EURO 2021.
- All other UEFA competition matches, including the centralised international friendly matches, remained postponed until further notice.
- Youth national team competitions:
 - (i) the European Under-17 Championship final tournament scheduled for May 2020 was cancelled;
 - (ii) the European Women's Under-19 Championship final tournament scheduled for July 2020 was cancelled;
 - (iii) the European Women's Under-17 Championship final tournament scheduled for May 2020 was postponed until further notice (as it is a qualifying competition for the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup);

(iv) the European Under-19 Championship final tournament scheduled for July 2020 was postponed until further notice (as it is a qualifying competition for the FIFA U-20 World Cup).

- The UEFA Futsal Champions League finals scheduled for April 2020 were postponed until further notice.
- The deadlines related to all 2020/21 UEFA club competitions were postponed until further notice, in particular as regards the admission process and the registration of players. New deadlines would be set in due course.

Temporary amendments to club licensing process

The Executive Committee also reiterated its full commitment to club licensing and financial fair play and agreed that the current exceptional circumstances necessitated some specific interventions to facilitate the work of member associations and clubs. It supported the proposal to give member associations more time to complete the club licensing process, until the admission process for next season's UEFA club competitions had been redefined.

As a result of the increasing uncertainty generated by the ongoing extraordinary events, the Executive Committee also decided to suspend the club licensing provisions relating to the preparation and assessment of clubs' future financial information. This decision applies exclusively to participation in the 2020/21 UEFA club competitions.



**THURSDAY
23 APRIL**

UEFA encourages completion of top-tier domestic competitions

After meeting via videoconference, the UEFA Executive Committee underlined its wish for national associations and leagues to complete their 2019/20 domestic competitions, where possible. It also stressed the importance of admission to UEFA's club competitions "on sporting merit".

In its statement UEFA said: "The ideal scenario, should the pandemic situation permit it, is to have the currently suspended domestic competitions completed enabling football clubs to qualify for UEFA club competitions on sporting merit in their original format. Should this outcome not be possible, in particular due to calendar issues, it would be preferable that suspended domestic competitions would restart with a different format in a manner which would still facilitate clubs to qualify on sporting merit."

UEFA acknowledged there might be "legitimate reasons" for domestic campaigns to be ended prematurely but stressed that it reserved the right to refuse or evaluate the admission to any club proposed by a national association should it have acted outside of UEFA's stated criteria.

The Executive Committee also decided to release immediately the club benefit payments relating to clubs' contribution to UEFA's national team competitions, in light of the financial difficulties many clubs are facing. Such payments include €50m to clubs with players in the 39 national teams not involved in the play-offs and €17.7m to clubs with players from the 16 national teams involved.

Women's EURO 2020 moved to 2022

The Executive Committee confirmed the postponement of UEFA Women's EURO 2021, with the tournament rescheduled for 6 July to 31 July 2022 in England. As for UEFA EURO 2020, the decision was taken to retain its original name, even though the event will now take place in 2021 owing to the coronavirus pandemic.

[See report on p12 for more details](#)



**THURSDAY
9 APRIL**

UEFA supports Common Goal initiative

The UEFA Foundation for Children announced plans to contribute to the Common Goal COVID-19 Response Fund, a newly launched initiative to fund charities focused on helping children in the world's poorest communities to cope with the coronavirus pandemic's devastating impact.

The foundation became the first sports institution to support the Response Fund set up two days earlier by Common Goal – a group of 150 players, managers and leaders who have pledged 1% of their annual earnings from football to charities working with some of the world's most vulnerable children.

"In these difficult times, which affect many countries and especially the most fragile populations, it is important to coordinate and organise responses adapted to each situation," said UEFA president and UEFA Foundation for Children chairman Aleksander Čeferin, himself a supporter of Common Goal since November 2017. "It is for this reason

that the board of trustees of the UEFA Foundation for Children decided to join this initiative, to allow football to play a role of social responsibility."

"This is a really positive step for the Common Goal COVID-19 Response Fund and I would like to thank the UEFA Foundation for Children," added Manchester United midfielder Juan Mata, the first member to join Common Goal back in August 2017. "To overcome the coronavirus and the other challenges facing humanity, we need to coordinate individual efforts and work together as a team."

The UEFA Foundation for Children's contribution to the Common Goal COVID-19 Response Fund will help to support youngsters affected by the pandemic. Aside from the short-term aims, the foundation will also look to ensure that assistance will continue, with a focus being placed on communities in conflict zones.

EUROPEAN FOOTBALL STANDS UNITED AGAINST COVID-19 CRISIS

European football's competitions may be on hold, but the world's most popular sport still has a frontline role to play in society's response to COVID-19.

COVID-19 has temporarily postponed UEFA plans to celebrate 60 years of the European Championship with a tournament bridging the entire continent, but the European football community remains more united than ever in its off-the-field response to the pandemic.

From Belfast to Baku, national associations, clubs and players have launched countless initiatives to ensure more people comply with Government regulations on social distancing and staying at home. With the aim of inspiring others, we highlight a few of the ways that football

is making a difference across Europe: whether raising funds to purchase medical equipment, producing training videos about staying fit at home, delivering food to the elderly and vulnerable or using the sport's enormous reach to deliver vital health messages.



1 Azerbaijan: Putting a smile back on the faces of football fans

In a national campaign to boost the morale of football supporters staying at home, Azerbaijan's professional football league is sharing fun photos from domestic league matches on its Instagram channels. Among the clubs, FC Sabah players, coaching staff and employees have collected more than €25,000 for a national coronavirus fund. The club has also produced a video in support of the nation's doctors and nurses, who are risking their lives on the front line of Azerbaijan's COVID-19 response effort.

2 France: Les Bleus support frontline healthcare staff

The French Football Federation (FFF), together with national team players and staff, are making a significant donation to France's Assistance Publique – Hôpitaux de Paris (Paris university hospital trust) to support healthcare staff. The contribution will go towards improving the daily lives of caregivers as well as funding hospital research. The FFF has also reserved 5,000 Stade de France seats for health professionals for the national team's first home match once football resumes, with another 1,000 tickets for the women's national team's return to action.

7 Portugal: Football funds lifesaving equipment for local hospitals

The Portuguese Football Federation (FPF) has launched a joint fundraising campaign with a leading broadcaster to help pay for new equipment for the country's hospitals and charitable institutions. By mid-April, the initiative had raised over €500,000, thanks in part to national team players sharing their experiences of living in isolation. Among other initiatives, Cristiano Ronaldo announced a €1 million project that will pay for three intensive care units at hospitals in Lisbon and Porto.

8 Romania: Footballers ask expats not to travel

Former internationals Miodrag Belodedici and Adrian Mutu feature in a Romanian Football Federation video advising all Romanians living abroad to help slow the spread of COVID-19 by postponing plans to visit their homeland. Elsewhere, a chain of Italian restaurants owned by Cosmin Olăroiu, currently head coach of Chinese side Jiangsu Suning, is delivering hot meals to staff at Bucharest's main hospital for infectious diseases, while Răzvan Raț, capped 113 times, has offered rooms in his hotel for anyone placed in quarantine.

3 Germany: Bundesliga's UEFA Champions League participants show solidarity

Germany's UEFA Champions League participants – Borussia Dortmund, FC Bayern München, RB Leipzig and Bayer 04 Leverkusen – have set up a solidarity fund worth €20 million to help clubs in both the Bundesliga and 2. Bundesliga who are struggling to cope with the economic consequences of football's shutdown.

To establish the fund, the four clubs will forego their share of the undistributed national media revenue from the German Football League (DFL) for the 2020/21 season (approximately €12.5 million) and also allocate €7.5 million of their own resources.

4 KSI Iceland: 'Keeping moving' is the message

The Football Association of Iceland (KSI) has launched a social media campaign called Áfram Ísland or 'Keeping moving'. This encourages young footballers and their families to stay fit for the day football can safely kick off again. Every day, video clips of training exercises for ten-year-olds are posted on Instagram and Facebook, some including a personal message from members of the men's or women's national teams, with goalkeeper Hannes Halldórsson's training tips proving a big hit.

9 Spain: La Liga clubs rally to help local communities

Real Madrid and the national sports council have teamed up to create a medical supplies centre at the Santiago Bernabéu stadium, with the Real Madrid Foundation running a fundraising campaign asking fans to contribute to the cost of critical medical equipment. FC Barcelona has also offered its facilities to the Catalan government if additional hospital space is needed, while Atlético de Madrid women's player Silvia Meseguer has volunteered to work in a Madrid hospital after recently graduating in medicine.

10 Sweden: Clubs support on several fronts

Several Allsvenskan clubs have placed players and staff at the disposal of organisations and businesses, including IF Elfsborg and Malmö FF, whose CEO Niclas Carlén packed bags of groceries for the Stadsmissionen charity, while AIK are delivering 5,000 meals to medical staff at Solna's Karolinska Hospital. BK Häcken players have made videos emphasising the importance of sticking to social distancing regulations, with messages recorded in Arabic, Finnish and Spanish as well as Swedish to ensure they are fully understood in multiethnic Gothenburg.

5 Italy: Azzurri set #TheRulesOfTheGame for defeating COVID-19

The Italian Football Association (FIGC) has written #TheRulesOfTheGame for a national information campaign using the power of calcio to enforce public compliance, particularly among the young, with 11 critical 'rules' to contain the spread of COVID-19. Leading men's and women's national team players are delivering the rules through video messages posted under the hashtag #TheRulesoftheGame. The campaign also gives Italians the chance to donate money to support national health facilities.

6 Poland: PZPN's financial package to help clubs

The Polish Football Association (PZPN) will allocate €25 million to help men's and women's football at all levels survive the economic impact of the shutdown. Almost half will go to clubs taking part in next season's Ekstraklasa as well as the first and second divisions – on the condition that the funds benefit youth players and coaches, and are not used to pay players' salaries. National team pair Robert Lewandowski and Jakub Błaszczykowski, meanwhile, have both made substantial donations to Polish hospitals.

11 Switzerland: National players add voice to #CoroNo

After contracting COVID-19 himself, Swiss Football Association (SFV) president Dominique Blanc launched #CoroNo from quarantine – a digital campaign promoting public health messages and encouraging more people to stay at home to avoid catching or transmitting the virus. The SFV has published a daily video message from different national team players, each explaining how they are spending their time at home and repeating the Swiss health ministry's key recommendations.

12 Ukraine: Association and clubs fund medical equipment for hospitals

The Ukrainian Association of Football (UAF) has taken a lead role in helping veteran footballers who are self-isolating to safeguard against COVID-19 infection. In addition, both the UAF and leading Ukrainian clubs Dynamo Kiev, Kolos Kovalivka, Vorskla Poltava and PFC Oleksandriya have purchased critical ventilators to help local hospitals give life-saving treatment to patients with severe coronavirus infections.

WOMEN'S EURO NOW SET FOR 2022

UEFA Women's EURO 2021 postponed to 2022; immediate release of club benefit payments for clubs' contributions to UEFA's national team competitions; green light for guidelines on eligibility principles for the 2020/21 UEFA club competitions – a series of key decisions taken by the UEFA Executive Committee at its videoconference meeting on 23 April.



With the next Women's EURO having been postponed by a year, fans will have to wait until summer 2022 to find out who will claim the title won by the Netherlands in 2017.

The Executive Committee has confirmed that owing to the COVID-19 crisis, the next Women's EURO will now be held in England from 6 to 31 July 2022, with matches played at the same venues as originally proposed to host the event.

The decision to move UEFA Women's EURO came after UEFA announced on 17 March that UEFA EURO 2020 would be postponed to 2021 following the global outbreak of COVID-19, and given UEFA's duty to protect the health of all those involved in football.

"We have carefully considered all options, with our commitment to the growth of women's football at the

forefront of our thinking," said UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin. "By moving UEFA Women's EURO to the following year, we are ensuring that our flagship women's competition will be the only major football tournament of the summer, providing it with the spotlight it deserves."

Club benefit payments

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the committee agreed to immediately release club benefit payments relating to clubs' contributions to UEFA's national team competitions. The payments were to be released following the European Qualifiers play-offs, but have been brought forward in view of financial challenges faced by

clubs amid the current crisis. The payments will be as follows:

- €50m will go to clubs that have released players for the 39 national teams not involved in the European Qualifiers play-offs.
- €17.7m will go to clubs that have released players for the 16 national teams taking part in the European Qualifiers play-offs (not including payments for the play-off matches, which will be paid on completion of the play-offs).
- The balance of €2.7m – related to players released for the play-offs – will be distributed upon completion of these play-off matches in the autumn.

Based on the payment distribution mechanism approved by the Executive Committee, €70m will be distributed among those clubs which released players for the European Qualifiers and the UEFA Nations League, and the remaining €130m will be distributed among those clubs releasing players for UEFA EURO 2020. A total of 676 clubs from the 55 UEFA member associations will receive amounts ranging from €3,200 up to €630,000 for their contribution to the European Qualifiers and the UEFA Nations League for the 2018–20 period.

For UEFA EURO 2020, a minimum of €200 million is available for distribution to clubs, as agreed in the memorandum of understanding (MoU) between UEFA and the ECA, which was renewed in 2019. "European clubs are an integral part of the success of our national team competitions," said the UEFA president.

"As a result, a share of our national team competition revenues is distributed to the clubs which release players for those matches. In these difficult times when many clubs are facing financial issues, especially with their cash flow, it was our duty to make sure that clubs

receive these payments as quickly as possible."

Working groups

The committee received reports from the working groups established in partnership with the European Club Association (ECA), European Leagues (EL) and the players' union FIFPRO Europe, which have been involved in discussions on future scenarios regarding domestic football and UEFA club competitions. The committee also heard a report on the work of the newly established medical subgroup tasked with examining the health issues surrounding a return to football.

Eligibility principles

The committee approved guidelines on eligibility principles for 2020/21 UEFA club competitions. The guidelines approved at the 23 April meeting reflected the principle that admission to UEFA club competitions should always be based on sporting merit.

UEFA urged national associations and leagues to explore all possible options to play all top domestic competitions giving access to UEFA club competitions to their

natural conclusion – while emphasising that the health of players, spectators and all those involved in football, as well as the public at large, should remain the primary concern.

UEFA EURO 2020

Following the postponement of UEFA EURO 2020 to the summer of 2021, the Executive Committee decided that the tournament will still be known as UEFA EURO 2020.

This enables UEFA to keep the original vision of the tournament to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the European Football Championship, as well as make EURO 2020 sustainable by not generating additional amounts of waste, given that considerable branded material had already been produced by the time of the tournament's postponement.

Finally, turning to the European Under-21 Championship finals, the committee heard that options for the rearrangement or postponement of the tournament would, following examination by the National Team Competitions Committee, lead to a final decision being taken by the Executive Committee at its next meeting on 27 May 2020. 🌐

Future hosts appointed in Amsterdam

Chaired by UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin, the Executive Committee met on the eve of the 44th Ordinary UEFA Congress in the Dutch capital on 2 March.

While the following day's Congress was obviously uppermost in everyone's mind, the committee decided that the 45th Ordinary UEFA Congress would be held in the Belarusian capital of Minsk on 2 March 2021.

Turning to forthcoming UEFA club competition finals, the committee appointed the Puskás Aréna in Budapest as the venue for the 2022 UEFA Europa League final. The 2022 and 2023 finals of the UEFA Women's Champions League will take place in Turin (Italy) and Eindhoven (Netherlands) respectively.

The 2022 and 2023 UEFA club competition seasons will kick off in traditional fashion with the UEFA Super Cup matches – bringing together the previous season's UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League winners – taking place at the Helsinki

Olympic Stadium (Finland) and Kazan Arena (Russia) respectively.

Other decisions in Amsterdam saw the Executive Committee approve the 2020 version of the UEFA Coaching Convention. The convention has a variety of objectives, including establishing football coaching as a recognised, regulated profession;

ensuring availability of well-educated professional and amateur coaches on and off the field; and assuring the ongoing quality of football.

Finally, the committee approved the 2020 UEFA Medical Regulations, as well as various regulations for forthcoming UEFA club and national team competitions.



The Puskás Aréna in Budapest will host the UEFA Europa League final in 2022.

Getty Images



'PURPOSE OVER PROFIT' – UEFA PRESIDENT'S CONGRESS MESSAGE

Amsterdam played host to the 44th Ordinary UEFA Congress on 3 March – with UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin issuing a warning that the European football community must act to prevent the over-commercialisation of the game.

In his address to representatives of UEFA's 55 member associations and distinguished guests at the Beurs van Berlage conference centre in the Dutch capital, the UEFA president hailed European football as "the greatest success story of modern-day sport". He promised that UEFA would continue to nurture the constant progress of European football through proper and efficient use of all its resources – but emphasised that the European football family had to put "purpose before profit".

"Should our success be measured only in terms of our commercial achievements, or should it be able to take bold decisions that are not always guided by financial interests?" he asked. "Purpose over profit. That is the key."

Key achievements

The UEFA president underlined the achievements of European football's governing body and the wider European game:

- The doubling of the UEFA Foundation for Children's budget benefiting almost one million disadvantaged children around the world;
- Redistribution of funds: 87% of UEFA income redistributed throughout European football;
- Europe's growing football family: around 20 million registered players,

- more than 160,000 qualified referees, 144,000 amateur clubs and 1,900 professional clubs;
- UEFA Champions League final: world's most watched annual club football event;
- Beyond Europe: 13 billion cumulative global audience for all UEFA-organised matches over a three-year cycle;
- Digital engagement for UEFA competitions: more than 18 billion social media interactions last season.

"Our primary objective is to protect, promote and develop football across Europe. I would go as far as to say power is worthless unless it incorporates the notion of purpose over profit."

The UEFA president insisted that the European sports model, based on promotion, relegation and solidarity, should be defended with "strength, conviction and legitimacy".

"If our success enables us to ward off threats that appear on the horizon, we can be proud," he said. "These threats are alarming. And we need to anticipate the worst if we are to prevent it."

Respecting principles, history and structure

The UEFA president reflected that football was not simply a business like any other. "It has a history, tradition and structure that must be respected. →

Just Spee: 'We need to be innovative'

The Netherlands has an exuberant passion for football – the Royal Netherlands Football Association (KNVB) has 1.2 million members belonging to over 3,000 football clubs and playing 33,000 matches every week. In addition, around 400,000 volunteers are kept busy making this all possible. In welcoming Congress delegates to Amsterdam, the Dutch minister for medical care and sport, Bruno Bruins, spoke of the game's enduring power as a social force. "Football connects people... all members of our society," he said. "Regardless of your skin colour, regardless of your limitations, regardless of your religion and



regardless of your sexual orientation. Football brings people together. There are no exceptions."

Just Spee, the KNVB president, said that the Netherlands was committed to playing a key role in the game's development. "We look beyond the present and the past, far into the future," he said. "Our sport no longer develops along ancient pathways alone. There are all kinds of new horizons in all directions of the globe. We need to be innovative, both in the sport itself and in terms of stewardship. The KNVB wants to be co-responsible, an incubator for the football of 2050 and beyond."

Foundation's first five years

The Amsterdam Congress provided the ideal opportunity to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the UEFA Foundation for Children, the body set up by UEFA in 2015 to find ways of using football to support children across the world and defend their rights. The foundation's general secretary, Urs Kluser, focused on the projects and achievements that have marked a memorable first five years for the foundation.

245 projects since 2015

"Over the course of these great five years," Urs Kluser said, "the foundation has contributed to the protection of children and their rights through football by providing grants for 245 projects. The foundation has been able to support projects in 100 countries on all five continents."

"While many of the projects have emphasised children's health, education and integration, the foundation has also devoted its attention to victims of conflict, especially refugees, and the promotion of youth employment through football."

Using football's power for children

"We are very proud to be one of the ways that European football can give back to society, and use the power of the game to defend children's rights," he added. "It gives them the opportunity to play and forget about their problems for a while, and it helps them succeed in the future."



Our principles, history, tradition and structure are the reason for our current success. There are certain principles that are sacrosanct. The right for confederations to organise continental competitions is an inalienable right. The principles of solidarity, of promotion, relegation and open leagues are also non-negotiable.

"If our success enables us to prevent the over-commercialisation of our sport..., enables us to develop football across the continent [and] promote social cohesion and show future generations that football must be synonymous with openness, tolerance and diversity, we can be proud. We are the guardians of a legacy..., here to protect the game, its players and its history."

Football for everyone

The UEFA president said it was imperative to foster football across Europe – "as we do with the 87% of our income redistributed throughout European football" – and "give girls and boys from all walks of life, from all ethnic, social and religious backgrounds, the chance to play football in the best possible conditions". Successes, he added, were also providing the opportunity to invest in women's football "to inspire the millions of girls who dream of becoming tomorrow's top players, referees or coaches."

In addressing the challenges being caused by racist conduct in football stadiums, the UEFA president said that he, and many others, had been "sickened" by what they had witnessed in a number of European stadiums this season. "That is not football," he said. "Football is, above all, a celebration of life, community and unity. It's an exchange. It's about sharing. The problem is not on the pitch, where diversity is greater than in any other sport and probably any other part of society. The problem is in our societies, in the stands. Things need to change."

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Elections

Two elections took place in Amsterdam. Rainer Koch (Germany) was elected to the UEFA Executive Committee as a member for a one-year term, while Noël Le Graët (France) was elected to the FIFA Council as a member for a three-year term. The 2018/19 UEFA annual report was approved, along with the 2018/19 financial statements and the budget for the 2020/21 financial year. Various amendments to the UEFA Statutes were also approved, and delegates ratified the composition of both the UEFA Organs for the Administration of Justice and the UEFA Governance and Compliance Committee.

Following approval by the UEFA Executive Committee at its meeting in Amsterdam the previous day, next year's UEFA Congress will take place in Minsk, Belarus, on 2 March 2021. 🌐



UEFA

EXCITING MATCHES AHEAD

The 2020/21 UEFA Nations League draw was held in Amsterdam on 3 March, with a number of changes to the competition's format compared with its inaugural edition.

Last September, the UEFA Executive Committee decided to restructure the UEFA Nations League, with 16 teams in Leagues A, B and C, and seven teams in League D. The teams were allocated to leagues based on their overall ranking following the first edition.

This change to the format follows a consultation process involving all 55 UEFA member associations and reflects their desire to further reduce the number of friendly matches. It also enhances sporting fairness as all teams in the same group will play their last match on the same day and at the same time.

The draw in Amsterdam on 3 March produced the following groups:

LEAGUE A

- Group 1** Netherlands, Italy, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Poland
- Group 2** England, Belgium, Denmark, Iceland
- Group 3** Portugal, France, Sweden, Croatia
- Group 4** Switzerland, Spain, Ukraine, Germany

LEAGUE B

- Group 1** Austria, Norway, Northern Ireland, Romania
- Group 2** Czech Republic, Scotland, Slovakia, Israel
- Group 3** Russia, Serbia, Turkey, Hungary
- Group 4** Wales, Finland, Republic of Ireland, Bulgaria

LEAGUE C

- Group 1** Montenegro, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Azerbaijan
- Group 2** Georgia, North Macedonia, Estonia, Armenia
- Group 3** Greece, Kosovo, Slovenia, Moldova
- Group 4** Albania, Belarus, Lithuania, Kazakhstan

LEAGUE D

- Group 1** Faroe Islands, Latvia, Malta, Andorra
- Group 2** Gibraltar, Liechtenstein, San Marino



The teams will play each other home and away, with the four League A group winners qualifying for the finals, which



will feature semi-finals, a third-place match and the final. The group winners in Leagues B, C and D will be promoted and those finishing bottom of the groups in Leagues A and B will be relegated.

As League C has four groups while League D has only two, the two League C teams to be relegated will be determined by two-leg play-offs. Following the decision to postpone EURO 2020 to 11 June – 11 July 2021 and the need to reschedule the European Qualifiers play-offs, originally scheduled for March 2020, the UEFA Nations League calendar is currently being reviewed and the new match dates will be confirmed in due course. 🌐

Following the resounding success of the inaugural UEFA Nations League, won by Portugal, the second edition is set to start once the calendar has been finalised.

DAVOR ŠUKER

LIVING, EATING AND BREATHING FOOTBALL

Goals were Davor Šuker's business as a footballer. The Croatian scored them in abundance in a splendid 19-year career, and they made him an icon as one of Europe's most prolific front runners. He was a feared handful for even the best opposition defenders – scoring 203 times in 448 appearances for NK Osijek, Dinamo Zagreb, Sevilla, Real Madrid, Arsenal, West Ham and TSV 1860 Munich, and his 69 games for Croatia between 1992 and 2002 yielded another 45 strikes.

Osijek-born Šuker won a Spanish title and the 1997/98 UEFA Champions League with Real Madrid, and his six goals at the 1998 World Cup earned him the tournament's Golden Shoe and brought Croatia a coveted bronze medal. He was crowned as the country's Golden Player to mark UEFA's golden jubilee in 2004.

There are goals of another kind now for Davor Šuker in his role as president of the Croatian Football Federation (HNS), and as a member of the UEFA Executive Committee. UEFA Direct talks to him about his life in football.

First of all, how is Croatia coping in the aftermath of the earthquake on 22 March, and how is the country facing the COVID-19 pandemic?

These are difficult times for every country, and a devastating earthquake made things even worse in Croatia. It was a terrifying moment for everybody in Zagreb. We are mourning the loss of one young girl, and many people were left without their homes. I am proud of how the football community reacted to this crisis. The Croatian Football Federation and our national team players both made major donations to the coronavirus and earthquake relief funds. We wanted to help our medical staff, doctors and nurses, who are doing a great job in Croatia. We are thankful to them, as well as to all the scientists and everybody who is contributing to this fight. The football family is truly showing its solidarity and unifying power during this difficult period. I believe Croatia and the world will come

out of this even stronger. I also think we'll have a new-found respect and love for football and every other sport, because we'll know how much we miss it when we can't go to the stadium or watch live games on television. I'm sure that the return of football will be one of the most important steps in society getting back to 'normality' – and I can't wait for that moment!

Were you a football fan from a very early age?

You know, I started my life in football, I have played football and now work in football, and I certainly think that I will end my days in football...

Do you come from a sporting family?

Yes, the entire family has been involved in sport. My father was an athlete; he was a shot-putter. My sister was a volleyball player, and so was my uncle. Everyone reached national team level. I'm happy and relieved that I had those same genes!



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It was clear from an early age that you had a special talent as a footballer...

The most important thing was I had a great coaching system in my hometown of Osijek. Many players from there have been successful and played in the top leagues.

And you soon made your mark as a goalscorer – you made your debut with hometown club NK Osijek at 16, you finished leading scorer in Yugoslavia's league a couple of years later, and your goals helped Yugoslavia win the world youth title in 1987.

From the very start, I lived for goals, and that never changed. I never took goalscoring lightly! My attitude was that if I didn't take scoring goals seriously, the luck that you sometimes need wouldn't stay with me. And as a goalscorer, you're always looking to score in the next game. So I always concentrated 100% on my job, both in training and on the pitch. That stayed with me throughout my playing career... I went step by step, I set myself goals, I scored goals, and fortunately, I was successful.

Did you have a favourite footballer as a youngster?

Yes, I admired the great German forward [and current Bayern Munich chairman] Karl-Heinz Rummenigge. I used to enjoy →

Davor Šuker's 'dream player' was Germany's Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, in action here against Belgium in the final of EURO 1980, which Germany went on to win 2-1.



UEFA

INTERVIEW

watching him on the two TV channels that we had at the time. He was very strong athletically, and he was my dream player. I got to know him later on in life, and whenever I see him I enjoy his company. There's a mutual respect between us. He's very much a man of football.

You went on to enjoy a fine career with several major clubs, and gained international renown as a member of the outstanding Croatian team that finished third in the 1998 World Cup in France – a tournament in which you also won the Golden Shoe as leading scorer. When you look back, is there any moment in your career that gives you particular pride?

Yes, at that World Cup in 1998 – the third-place play-off against the Netherlands. We'd lost the semi-final against the hosts France, and now we had to lift ourselves to play against the Dutch – an excellent team with big players. We'd had a great tournament and had done so well; we'd worked extremely hard. And now, we had one final challenge – to overcome disappointment, win and finish third. We won the game 2-1, and I scored. It was my sixth goal in the tournament, and I was fortunate enough to win the Golden Shoe. That victory in

“People think it was just a matter of going in with my World Cup Golden Shoe and saying: ‘Hey, I’m here. I won the Golden Shoe, I want to be president.’ It wasn’t like that at all. There was a lot of preparatory work and learning to be done, and that process has never stopped since I became president.”

that particular game was a really proud moment for all of us.

And out of all the goals that you scored, do you have a particular favourite?

My best goal is probably the one against Denmark at EURO '96. It was a great piece of action from our team – I have to mention the great pass I received from Aljoša Asanović prior to the goal. That goal combined everything I'd learned as a young footballer, starting with a good first touch, which is really important. You've got to have good feeling for time and space, excellent ball control and – most importantly for that goal – I had to strike the ball at the ideal moment and with the appropriate part of my foot, knowing that I'd got the great goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel in front of me, who looked like a giant at that

moment. Luckily, everything went as I imagined, and we got an important win against the reigning European champions. It was a great day for our team!

How much of being a top footballer depends on talent, and how much depends on hard work?

It's clear that without hard work, nothing comes true. To be successful, football has to be your life. You have to be dedicated to the job, to the ball. You need to love the ball; it's your friend, you spend 24 hours with it, you might even take it to bed with you! And I worked hard, because I wanted this success.

Players at the highest level also work with distinguished coaches. Which ones impressed you in your career?



Davor Šuker opens the scoring for Croatia against France in the semi-finals of the 1998 World Cup semi-final, where he finished as the leading scorer.

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I learned something from every coach – Luis Aragonés, Carlos Bilardo, Ćiro Blažević... and Arsène Wenger, my coach at Arsenal, was very important. I liked the consistency of his work. He stayed the same whether we had won well or lost badly. He realised the importance of looking ahead as soon as possible after a setback. He said: “When you lose a Premier League game, the only thing you can do to change things is to move on to the next game. You must look to make sure that you win the three points the next time around – in doing so, you make up for the bad game before.”

What inspired you to take the administrative route after such a distinguished playing career?

After a football career, a lot of football players think: “I want to be a sporting director,” or “I want to be a manager or a coach.” I decided that I definitely didn't want to be a manager or a coach. In addition, I decided not to be a sporting director, and after my football career finished at TSV 1860 Munich, I set up my football academy just to find my space. Eventually, I also became involved in the Croatian Football Federation's activities and, in 2012, I was fortunate enough to be elected as the federation's president.

How did you learn the skills for that role?

I learned a considerable amount about leadership from two very experienced

men at the Croatian federation – my predecessor Vlatko Marković, who spent 14 years as president, and the long-serving general secretary Zorislav Srebrić. They were important guides for me.

Did your playing career also help you in this respect?

Well, people think it was just a matter of going in with my World Cup Golden Shoe and saying: “Hey, I'm here. I won the Golden Shoe, I want to be president.” It wasn't like that at all. There was a lot of preparatory work and learning to be done, and that process has never stopped since I became president. You must visit the various regions in the country, talk, consult, organise, prepare programmes and strategies. It's not an easy job, I want to say that. And being a president is similar

to being a player... if you work hard and get results, you will be chosen again. I open my heart. I'm not a person who will close off his ideas. I tell people what I would like to do: “I will follow these rules, I will do this.” And then, people either follow you or they don't. That's part of life.

Under your presidency, Croatia's football has enjoyed high-level success – the national team's magnificent run to the 2018 World Cup final is a highlight, and there have been regular appearances in major international tournaments...

Since 1998, in fact, Croatia has only failed to qualify for EURO 2000 in Belgium and the Netherlands and the World Cup in South Africa in 2010. Otherwise, we have →



Getty Images

Zagreb, 16 July 2018. The Vatreni receive a heroes' welcome after finishing as runners-up in the World Cup, an immensely proud moment for the president of the Croatian Football Federation.



Getty Images

Ćiro Blažević is one of the coaches to have made a big impression on Davor Šuker during his playing career.



Davor Šuker at the UEFA Executive Committee meeting in Amsterdam on 2 March.

“Croatia has been running a successful programme for around a decade now in which youngsters with potential are being discovered in rural areas away from the cities. Our research says that some 95% of such players come from rural settings rather than places like Split, Osijek, Zagreb or Rijeka.”

been present at the big final tournaments. We have tried to invest the revenue wisely. Croatia is a small country – we work hard, and we try to work intelligently. I am lucky – we have this family atmosphere with a lot of hard-working people, and we strive constantly to build the image of the Croatian Football Federation, the league and the players. Croatian players are respected all around the world. I’m extremely glad to be part of this federation, and to serve as the leader of a great team there.

What does it mean for you to be a member of the UEFA Executive Committee, and to contribute to the success of European football?

I really enjoy being part of the Executive Committee. The UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, is doing a fine job. He is a hard worker, he has great experience and, of course, he’s the right man in the right place. My colleagues on the committee all work diligently for the good of football, so the balance is right – a good leader, a good committee and, I must add, a good administration around us. For my own part, I try to bring in what I can do best, and that gets respect within the Executive Committee.

Did you view UEFA differently when you were a player?

Yes, when I was playing, I saw it differently. I didn’t really fully understand the work that UEFA was doing, or really concentrate on that work. To be honest, when I was playing football, I just concentrated on my job of being professional on the pitch, and working well for my club.

Are you encouraged to see UEFA’s achievements?

UEFA is a world-class football leader, not only because of competitions such as the Champions League and Europa League, but also because of what it does for football across Europe. UEFA is respected, and the results are there for all to see... UEFA’s mission is to be transparent and

take care of football – helping its 55 member associations, the 55 members of UEFA’s family. Investing in the family is crucial.

How important are the grassroots to football’s overall well-being?

Of course, everyone likes to come first, and a lot of money is invested everywhere in trying to make this happen – but it’s equally important to take care of the foundations, the youngsters, everyone who wants to play. This aspect is crucial for an association such as ours.

What do you do in Croatia to find and nurture the potential stars of the future?

Croatia has been running a successful programme for around a decade now in which youngsters with potential are being discovered in rural areas away from the cities. Our research says that some 95% of such players come from rural settings rather than places like Split, Osijek, Zagreb or Rijeka. They come from the small towns and villages. So you need to go there, you need to watch the game outside the cities, you need to monitor school football in such places. You need to work hard and take time to foster a country’s talented young players, to prepare them for the future. We have seen a situation where the vast majority of the players who have played in EURO or World Cup tournaments started their pathways in the Croatian youth teams. This means that we’re doing good work in this direction – setting an example in a small country. My advice to other national associations would be to think far ahead – look ahead to the 2026 World Cup and EURO 2028, not just to 2024. Youth development work is all [about] the long term, and our thinking has helped us prosper. You really need to give yourself the time.

There are also those footballers with Croatian family backgrounds who have been raised in other countries...

This situation represents a big opportunity for the Croatian Football Federation. There are four million Croats in Croatia, and four million outside [the country], around the world. We have already had some Croatian players in our national team that have grown up in other countries, such as Ivan Rakitić or the brothers Robert and Niko Kovač. It’s important for us to look at other countries in our search for footballers of quality. That’s why we’re launching a very important project – we will organise football camps in countries with large Croatian populations, such as the United States, Canada and Australia, as well as in South America (Argentina, Chile), in order to find new talents. We have quite a small population, and in order to stay competitive with countries with a much bigger population we need to find every talented player we can, irrespective of where the player lives. Luckily, Croats in other countries are quite patriotic, and it’s a dream for many of those youngsters to play for the Croatian national team.

If you hadn’t been a footballer, and gone on to be an association president, what would you have been? What would you have done?

I would still have done something in sport... and to be honest, I can’t really imagine that I would have stayed outside football.

Finally, what does the word ‘respect’ mean to you?

My home education taught me to do everything with a sense of respect. You want to be successful, of course, but in my position, it’s important to set an example for other people every day, every month of every year. That’s the most important thing. Football really can help you develop as a person. You learn things such as teamwork, respect for the coach, respect for referees and other players. I think that’s what makes football and sport so great... 🤝

POSITIONING FOOTBALL AS A STRATEGIC PARTNER

The UEFA Grow public affairs pillar supports UEFA member associations in building sustainable partnerships with government institutions and positioning football as a strategic partner.

Support is recognised more and more for the major role it plays in society. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Council of Europe, through the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS), highlight in their frameworks/charters the impact of sport on individuals, communities and nations on many levels. Football has the privilege of being the team sport of choice for most people in most countries; thus football has a bigger impact, but also a bigger responsibility.

At this year's UEFA Congress in Amsterdam, the UEFA president called for European football to prioritise purpose over profit. It would be easy to think purely of professional football in this regard, but purpose is at the core of all sport. Why do football associations exist? What is their purpose? And how true do they remain to that purpose?

Most football associations are clear on their purpose; from the smallest clubs, leagues and affiliates, incredible work

is being done through football to build better people and better communities.

A challenge for football and for most other sports is that the good work is taken for granted, the outcomes are not articulated and the recognition is lost. The UEFA Grow public affairs pillar aims to support national associations in addressing this challenge.

A recent survey conducted by the UEFA Grow programme revealed that 80% of UEFA member associations interact with their government on a regular basis, with facility development the most regular topic. Almost 80% of national associations are in receipt of national funding, while 50% also receive local/regional government funding and 45% also receive EU funding.

On the face of it these are encouraging numbers, but drilling a little deeper uncovers major opportunities and threats. Most national associations rely completely on personal relations between senior ministers for public finance and migration

administrators/politicians and the government; only 10% of associations receive funding from non-sports budgets; only 16% have a public affairs plan. Despite the power of football and its impact in society, very few national associations have a strategic approach to public affairs, lobbying, funding and policy development. This is a risk, and it is an opportunity to grow.

Strategic and sustainable partnerships

The UEFA Grow strategic framework, Football Federations of the Future, has positioned public affairs as a critical business function, and a range of support is already being provided to the national football associations of Albania, Latvia, Moldova, Northern Ireland, Poland, Scotland, Slovenia and Wales. Public affairs specialists conduct stakeholder mapping, alignment with key government policies, action plans, toolkits and key messages for each association. Utilising the results of



Scottish FA

The Spartans Community Football Academy in Edinburgh delivers €6 million to the local economy annually.



Scottish FA

The Scottish FA president Rod Petrie (right) and CEO Ian Maxwell (left) with public finance and migration minister Ben Macpherson at the UEFA SROI club calculator launch.

“Football is Scotland’s national game and can be a powerful force for good in our communities. The SROI report is an important piece of work, and the culmination of a unique partnership between the Scottish government, sportscotland, the Scottish FA and UEFA over many months to produce robust evidence of football’s contribution to our communities and society.”

Ben Macpherson
Minister for public finance and migration

the Grow social return on investment (SROI) model has been an important dimension of public affairs work. Countries that can demonstrate with scientific evidence the impact of amateur football in society begin their public affairs work from a strong and convincing position.

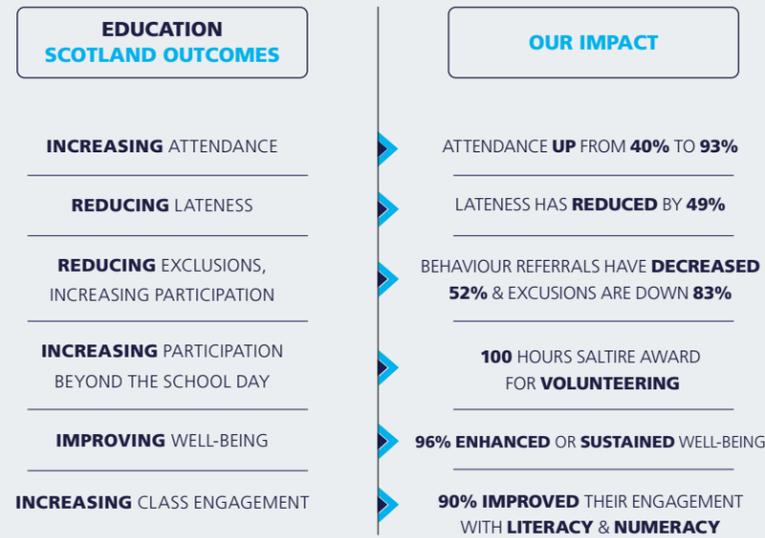
The Scottish FA (SFA) has enjoyed strong relations with the government for many years. This has led to dedicated government personnel liaising with

football at the grassroots and professional level. Assessing the associations strong relations with the government, CEO Ian Maxwell says: “Our recent application of the Grow SROI model has led to meetings with senior government officials regarding a variety of portfolios, not just at national association level, but our regions and clubs have also strengthened their positions at their own regional and local authority levels.”

Ben Macpherson, minister for public finance and migration, explains that: “Football is Scotland’s national game and can be a powerful force for good in our communities. The SROI report is an important piece of work, and the culmination of a unique partnership between the Scottish government, sportscotland, the Scottish FA and UEFA over many months to produce robust evidence of football’s contribution to our communities and society.”

A way forward

In these very uncertain times, where football, like all other sports and entertainment, has had to adapt to the needs for social distancing at a global level, there is an opportunity to reflect on the impact that football has in society. In its absence, its multilayered contribution to social and economic activity is perhaps clearer to see. There are opportunities to reflect more deeply on how football can build stronger, healthier and more inclusive communities. There is time to develop partnerships, effect policy and solidify the role of football. Grow has conducted a UEFA-wide audit of each national association’s public affairs activity; a public affairs template has been produced to develop a plan with the government; and a toolkit and training are available to conduct stakeholder mapping, develop key messages, and link the association’s activity to government policies. Through a recent agreement with the ministry of education, the president of the Football Association of Moldova, Leonid Oleinicenco, has been able to introduce football into the curriculum for primary school children. “We found that the government wants to work with football. It is confident in our ability to deliver and in football’s care for our children, our future.”



EAT FOR VICTORY

What's the best way to feed a footballer? We spoke to experts inside four national team camps to hear how sports science and cultural habits both have a role to play.



France players at mealtime during EURO 1984. Clockwise from left: Luis Fernández, Michel Platini, Patrick Battiston, Dominique Rocheteau and Bruno Bellone.



These days, Republic of Ireland players (Robbie Brady pictured here at EURO 2016) have personalised dietary plans – quite a contrast to the time when players were told to drink Guinness to settle their nerves...

“Il faut manger pour vivre et non pas vivre pour manger.” This well-known French saying, coined by the 17th-century playwright Molière and which translates as “We should eat to live and not live to eat”, has endured for more than three centuries, but whether it works for health-conscious professional footballers is a moot point.

Certainly no elite footballer can freely indulge their appetite seven days a week; at the same time, though, Molière’s Miser – for whom the maxim was written – never had to cover 13km or attempt 40-odd sprints in the space of 90 minutes. Indeed the current scientific thinking that a player should be eating seven grams of carbohydrate for every kilo of their body weight on the day before a game is the very opposite of miserly.

For an illustration of the science behind such measurements, consider this insight from Dan Horan, head of football science and research at the Football Association of Ireland, who highlights the care and attention given to the feeding of the Republic of Ireland national team. Horan begins: “We’ve used a performance nutritionist, Dr Mark Evans, to evaluate the composition of each meal in order to ensure that players are meeting their energy requirements during camps. We follow a food-first approach to nutrition in camps but there are some supplements made available to players who require them, such as whey and casein protein.”

He adds: “We encourage players to adjust their carbohydrate intake in the lead-in to matches so that they’re able to perform effectively for as long as required during matches. Non-playing substitutes and goalkeepers have lower energy requirements than starting outfield players

and they’re aware that their food intake needs to reflect this during camps.”

Never mind Molière, we have come a long way even since 1990, when an Ireland squad captained by Mick McCarthy were told to drink Guinness by manager Jack Charlton on the eve of their World Cup quarter-final against Italy in Rome in order to settle any nerves. Different times, as underlined by UEFA Direct’s discussions with representatives of several men’s national teams, not only the Republic of Ireland.

The strong impressions drawn from these discussions are that the challenge of feeding elite-level footballers is two-fold and involves a balancing act of providing fuel to power athletes yet also food to please them – and thereby ensure they eat enough.

Hence the significance of a chef who travels with the team, according to Zoran Bahtijarević, doctor of Croatia’s national side. He says: “You have to be aware that sports nutrition is boring and so the chef will make sure to give a special touch to the meals and make them more interesting for the players.”

Vegetarians welcome in Sweden

An obvious first step for any such chef is to ascertain which foods players wish to eat. In the case of Sweden, each player receives a questionnaire ahead of every get-together, allowing them to explain their preferences. Dale Reese, the squad’s medical and performance coordinator, elaborates: “With every player we look at what foods they can eat, what foods they can’t eat – if they are lactose-intolerant, glucose-intolerant, any allergies or things like that. We’ve got a list for whenever we’re discussing [orders] with the different hotels and airlines. This is our base.”

This year, he adds, the Swedes have added a vegetarian main course to every mealtime “because there are three or →

“Non-playing substitutes and goalkeepers have lower energy requirements than starting outfield players and they’re aware that their food intake needs to reflect this during camps.”

Dan Horan
FAI head of football science and research

four that have gone vegetarian so we want to accommodate that as well but, on the other hand, to monitor them so we know they're getting enough of their vitamins."

With the Republic of Ireland players, team chef David Steele will prepare individual dishes for players with specific requirements, such as those following a vegan diet. Whenever a player comes

into the squad for the first time, he will sit down for a chat with Steele, along with team doctor Alan Byrne and the strength and conditioning coach. Dan Horan from the FAI explains: "Some players are very precise with regard to the balance of carbohydrates, proteins and fats that they consume on different days and require their food to be weighed and prepared specifically for them."

Winning ingredients

Former England full-back Lee Dixon remembers the impact of Arsène Wenger's changes to his diet as an Arsenal player.

"It would be wrong to say we had a bad diet before Arsène came, but he looked at what we were eating pre-match and it was old-school food – Ian Wright, for example, always had a steak with an egg on it for his meal three or four hours before a game. The way our food was cooked was changed and we had a lot of boiled food instead – it wouldn't be grilled chicken with fat on or olive oil; it was a boiled chicken. This was done pretty much overnight.

Before Arsène's arrival, our doctor, John Crane, who was the England doctor as well, would come into the dressing room at half-time with a full bag of jelly babies and would hand out two or three just before you went out for the second half to give you energy and that sugar rush. The first time he came in when Wenger was there, I'll never forget the boss's face as he looked at Doc Crane walking around with these jelly babies – he looked at him and goes, 'Doctor, what are you doing?'. That stopped instantly.

Arsène had a nutritionist, Dr Yann Rougier, who came in and spoke to us about what sort of nutrition would be good for you and which vitamins. There was a whole table full of tablets and nutrition and vitamin supplements available to us, and every morning before training you were encouraged to walk along and take a tablet out of each pot – one would be vitamin C, one would be vitamin D, etc. Dr Rougier also educated us on the importance of how to chew your food, which we all found amusing but

it made a lot of sense when you broke it down as to how the body goes through processing food – chewing each mouthful 10 to 15 times to make sure the food was processed in your mouth before it went down into your stomach, which helped you process that food and get the nutrients into your body a little bit quicker.

As a group, we were quite famous for liking a drink in the early years, and Arsène was very much against alcohol – the odd glass of wine here and there, after a game, was fine but the thought of drinking something during the week, why would you do that? So that was discouraged too. We had a lot of players who were 31, 32, and he told us we could get another three or four years out of our bodies if we looked after them. I thought, 'Right, I'm in' as I wanted to pay till I was 38 and I felt brilliant playing with him. I was 32 when he came and from then I was probably the fittest I'd ever been. Gary Neville, an old rival at Manchester United, still talks about our 1998 double-winning team and how good we were and how fit we were. It opened up a lot of people's eyes to the potential of nutrition."



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Creatures of habit

Judging by the teams surveyed, variety is vital yet so too a degree of routine. In the case of Croatia's 2018 World Cup finalists, their usual daily offering takes the following form according to Dr Bahtijarević: "We always set up a buffet so the players can choose themselves what to eat. We'll discreetly monitor what they're putting on their plates and we always try to have different possible combinations – usually one seafood dish, one chicken dish and one veal, but sometimes we switch one of these with some risotto or something similar. They also have a various choice of side dishes so they can combine, make their own meal from what is offered.

"The players need to maintain their routine," he adds. "Our national team is mostly filled with very experienced players coming from top European clubs. Nobody could tell me that Luka Modrić needs to be told what to eat. That's why we're following the system of minimum intervention."

The FAI's Dan Horan concurs. "It is very important for players to keep their eating habits on international duty," he says. "Players usually like certain foods in the days leading up to games and feel more

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 "Our players all come from outside Sweden and when we have our gatherings they want as much as Swedish food as possible. It makes the players crazy happy."

Dale Reese

Sweden national team medical and performance coordinator



UEFA



Hungary's players like food that reminds them of home when they are away for any length of time.

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relaxed and confident when they have access to this food. The risk when players move from one environment to another – from club to national team – is that there can be a change in both training and nutrition. It is easier to keep the nutrition side of things constant and players settle into camps quicker when their nutrition needs are well met. The use of stir-fry stations and build-your-own salad bars allows players to make their own meals. This sense of autonomy helps players to relax in camps."

It seems the importance of routine cannot be overstated. In his book *I Think Therefore I Play*, former Italy playmaker Andrea Pirlo likens the monotonous efficiency of his ex-AC Milan colleague Filippo Inzaghi's goalscoring with his equally monotonous eating habits: packet upon packet of plasmon biscuits and, for lunch and dinner, the same dish of "plain pasta with a little bit of tomato sauce and cured beef".

Dale Reese offers an example from within the Sweden camp of the impact of even a minor disruption to a popular routine. He explains: "We usually want a pasta station [where] one of chefs stands and makes pasta while we're waiting. It's usually carbonara and the guys love it.

[Once] in Portugal they couldn't provide us with a pasta station as it was so far from the kitchen and it made players a little bit disappointed that they had to scoop up the carbonara instead of getting it personally done. It's amazing how they react to just small things. It's a little bit extra work but those small things really make a big difference."

Home cooking

A taste of home matters too. In the 1970s, supporters of Hamburger SV sent Kevin Keegan, their star forward, boxes of Shredded Wheat after he admitted in an interview how much he was missing his favourite breakfast cereal. During Argentina's World Cup campaigns of 1986 and 1990, meanwhile, Diego Maradona's father, Don Diego, would provide the squad with regular asados – or Argentinian barbecues. The same need exists today. When the Republic of Ireland travelled to France for EURO 2016, for example, they took with them a selection of food from home, including porridge (4kg), baked beans (5kg), sugar-free peanut and almond butter (5kg) and Barry's tea bags.

"We try to provide meals that players are used to," says Dan Horan. "We used Bord Bia [the Irish Food Board] for EURO →

A family guide to eating like a champion

Want to eat like a champion? Eat for Goals!, a cookery app endorsed by UEFA, the World Heart Foundation and the European Commission, is one way to found out how – and with healthy ingredients too. Launched in 2014, it shows youngsters, and their parents, how to prepare recipes chosen by some of European football's highest-profile players ... from Cristiano Ronaldo's preferred choice of haddock with lemon and vegetables to Sergio Ramos's gratin chicken with peppers, via Lotta Schelin's fresh fruit salad.

Eat for Goals! began life as a book of footballers' recipes which promoted the message that a healthy and active lifestyle requires healthy food too. Its objectives were to raise awareness of obesity, inspire children to exercise and cook, and raise funds for the World Heart Federation's children's programmes.

The app, in English and Spanish, encourages youngsters aged from seven upwards to 'score a goal' to see the recipes from 11 featured players. It provides facts about food and step-by-step instructions which should allow even novice cooks to make healthy meals. Older football fans might enjoy it too – after all, it is interesting to see just what the game's biggest names like on their plates. For the curious, here are a few of their choices: spaghetti all'Arrabbiata with tuna and vegetables (Paul Pogba); crunchy cod with herbs (Steven Gerrard); seafood risotto (Mikel Arteta); Brazilian black bean stew (Kaká); and Cuban rice (Samuel Eto'o).



2012 to import fresh Irish meat to Poland via Germany. Players respond well to these 'home comforts' and it encourages players to eat the volumes of foods that are required to prepare for the intensities of international football."

This is not just the case at tournaments, but at any international get-together, particularly involving players who play their club football elsewhere. "Many of our players play abroad so they have a wish for some Hungarian flavours," says national team chef István Bodnár, albeit acknowledging this presents him with a test of his skills given the base of several popular dishes in Hungary is rántás, a sauce made by browning flour in oil. "For such food we apply cornstarch instead and balance the different flavour with seasoning. We get the same taste but the food is prepared in a healthy way."

The wish for the familiar taste of some home favourites is tempered by the task at hand too, Bodnár adds. "On day one, the meal is less strict and as we get closer to the match, it gets more and more healthy. We have more and more grilled food, prepared with plant-based ingredients."

Dale Reese observes similar cravings among the Sweden squad: "Our players all come from outside Sweden and when we have our gatherings they want as much as Swedish food as possible. It makes the players crazy happy." One favourite is beef Rydberg, a meat dish eaten with Swedish lingonberries. During the World Cup in Russia, though, a problem arose with sourcing these berries. "We weren't allowed to import them," Reese says, which meant no lingonberries at their base in Gelendzhik on the Black Sea. "You should have seen how glad the players were when we got to St Petersburg [for the round of 16] and there we could get lingonberries. They had their lingonberries and that made their day."

This is not to say that footballers are never allowed to sample new dishes. Reese adds: "As long as our chef agrees it's well done and it's good, then yes, with some of the dinners that aren't the day before or the day after a match, one of the main dishes will be a local dish that our chef approves, so yes we want them to try. The Russians, for example, made us a marvellous pressed apple juice that they combined with sparkling water and the guys just loved it. I don't know how many litres went down!"

Planning ahead

No team wants to suffer the loss of a player to food poisoning, as happened, for instance, to England goalkeeper Gordon Banks at the 1970 World Cup in Mexico. A bottle of beer drunk at dinner the night before the quarter-final against West Germany left him doubled up with stomach cramps. England, with Peter Bonetti in goal, lost the match 3-2, having led 2-0 – an outcome that led Banks to later claim his drink had been spiked.

When it comes to a major tournament, therefore, good cooperation with staff at the team hotel is essential. Zoran Bahtijarević explains how Croatia have ensured a smooth process in the past. "As we're dealing directly with the hotels where we're based, we give them the menus we set and they cooperate with their local suppliers to get all they need to prepare everything that's on the menus. We always expect high-quality groceries and our chef on site is always checking that everything goes as planned."

Each country has its own way of working. István Bodnár stresses the importance of only using fresh ingredients – never anything frozen – when feeding his Hungary players. Sweden dispatch one of their two chefs a day in advance when leaving for their tournament base. Meanwhile, a three-strong Republic of Ireland delegation, including Dan Horan, chef Steele and team doctor Byrne visited the team's EURO 2016 hotel twice ahead of that tournament "to build relationships with the management and kitchen staff", as Horan explains. He adds: "Our policy is to have meals ready for the players ten minutes before the official meal time and that means that hotel staff need to understand the importance of timing and room preparation. The dining and snack rooms for players and staff are very important areas during a tournament because they spend so much time there." Albeit with less Guinness these days. 😊

"Our national team is mostly filled with very experienced players coming from top European clubs. Nobody could tell me that Luka Modrić needs to be told what to eat. That's why we're following the system of minimum intervention."

Dr Zoran Bahtijarević
Croatia's national team doctor



Getty Images



ALEX CABARRÓS

The science of sports nutrition

Asker Jeukendrup is a professor of exercise metabolism at Loughborough University in England and acts as a performance consultant to Barcelona, RB Salzburg and PSV Eindhoven.

What is today's scientific thinking regarding nutrition for footballers?

The studies show it is not just putting fuel in the body that's important, but also that with the right fuels you can improve coordination skills, timing, decision-making – all those factors that are really important in football. Good coordination starts in the brain, so what do we need for optimal brain function and is there anything we can do with nutrition to optimise that brain function? Carbohydrates, which you also need as fuel for the muscles, and caffeine are two things which will affect the brain. Caffeine can also have negative effects, depending on the dosing – if you have the right dose, you get really improved alertness and cognitive functioning; if you have too much, you become anxious and your heart rate goes up too much.

Looking at the lead-up to a match, what should a footballer be eating the day before?

It really is about making sure the energy stores in the muscles are full, so 24 hours before you have to make sure you eat enough carbohydrates. It doesn't matter what the source is – pasta, rice, potato or bread are all good. Once digested, it is just glucose and the glucose will be stored. One thing about footballers is they almost always underestimate how much they have to eat. The day before, typically you'd be looking at eating around seven grams per kilogram of your body weight,

so for an 80kg player that is 500 or 600 grams of carbohydrate, and that's quite a lot.

And the day of the game?

When you wake up in the morning, your brain has been using glucose overnight. This is stored in your liver, which is the only place that can deliver carbohydrate to the brain



when sleeping. When you wake up, therefore, the liver doesn't have much glycogen any more, so you'll need a breakfast that delivers enough carbohydrate to replenish what was there – a decent breakfast with a focus on carbohydrates. I'd be looking for around 100 grams. Whether it's an afternoon or evening match, I'd then suggest eating the main meal three hours before kick-off, giving plenty

of time to digest it. You want something easily digestible, as if it's a steak then that steak would definitely still be sitting in your stomach during the match. You want a pasta or rice dish that is fully absorbed, so by the time of the match all of that energy is now stored in the muscle.

How important is food intake after a match for recovery?

If a player has another match three days later, then they would want to start eating again immediately after the match. We are looking at between 70 and 90 grams of carbohydrates, which is a fair amount, especially as it's not that easy to eat immediately after a match for most players. There are other solutions, like shakes with carbohydrate and protein.

And finally, how about treats – like something sweet or a glass of wine or beer?

In the recovery period especially, sugar is a perfect way to replenish your glycogen quickly, so it would fit in fairly well with aggressive refuelling. The problem with cakes is they contain a lot of fat and energy that maybe you don't necessarily need. Footballers still sometimes have a little bit of a struggle to maintain their body weight, so in that respect I would be careful. Alcohol is okay if it is occasional, but beer and wine have quite a lot of calories – almost twice as many as carbohydrates or sugar. One or two glasses now and then is not going to be a problem, but binge drinking is because that really affects recovery as well.

EXTRA TIME

The growth of veterans' football across Europe is bringing more opportunities for older players to keep playing the game they love, according to a new survey.

There comes a time for every football player, whatever their level of ability, to hang up their boots. Fortunately there are now more possibilities than ever to carry on playing the game thanks to the growth of veterans' football across Europe.

Whether it be ex-pros, amateurs or park players, the vets' game is becoming an increasingly popular option for men – and, to a lesser extent, women – between the ages of 30 and 70 in a number of UEFA-affiliated nations.

Denmark leads the way for the highest participation ratio, with 4% of the population actively playing veterans' football according to a continent-wide survey undertaken by Vivian Graf, a medical student at Imperial College London and supervised by Dr Tim Meyer, the new chairman of the UEFA Medical Committee. In Germany too, the numbers are impressive, with 1.8 million of the 82 million population (or 2.2%) actively registered as players. Reflecting the opportunities for female as well as male players in Germany, there are women's veterans' tournaments in the over-32, over-35 (for example, the Berlin Cup) and over-40 age brackets.

The survey's findings point to a rising number of participants in older age categories, which should mean an accompanying climb in national and international veterans' competitions. Although there are currently few established league structures in place, at least four countries do run national league competitions: Belgium, Denmark, Finland and Germany. Graf and Meyer's report foresees a virtuous circle whereby more competitions will mean more registered players and clubs – and, in turn, an increased focus on fitness, with football providing a platform to promote better cardiovascular health and physical well-being among older population groups.

"For veteran football players, the game is about the social aspect," said Jorrit Smit, advisor on adult football at the Royal Dutch Football Federation (KNVB), who is quoted in the report. "However, the demand for competition will increase, so we will see what the future holds."

There is particular praise for two Nordic countries – Denmark and Finland – for the provision of decade-by-decade age-bracket football right up to 70, noting that the



The health benefits of low-intensity football (as being played here in the Czech Republic) are immeasurable.

intensity levels achievable by a 50-year-old and a 70-year-old can differ considerably. To minimise the risk of injury, and provide more equal competition, the authors recommend that having more narrow age categories is "the more logical approach", though this is more difficult in countries with lower participation rates such as Slovenia, where competitive over-age football is limited to just over-30s and over-40s.

Areas of concern

Veterans' football across Europe involves varying regulations to minimise the risk of injury, including smaller pitch sizes. The match duration is reduced in all countries – ranging from 20 to 30 minutes per half – while countries such as Denmark and Slovenia offer a game with fewer players on each side (between five and nine). Tackling is restricted in some countries. Given these variations across the continent, the authors call for a set of rules to be introduced Europe-wide to encourage more international competitions.

They also call for "significant alterations" to training routines among older players. In all the countries that participated in the survey, training is never more than twice a week at veterans' level – and rarely split by age bracket, with players from 35 to 70 all potentially training together. In some countries, there is no regular training at all.

The survey found that sessions run on average for between 60 and 120 minutes and mainly involve match play and practising game-related situations such as corners. Crucially, there tends to be little fitness work and the absence of warm-ups and cool-downs was a particular concern for the researchers.

They write: "[Warm-ups] do not only increase blood flow to working muscles around the body for preparation, but also decrease the risk of many different types of sports injuries, which older athletes are more prone to anyway. A cool-down should also definitely be included as it helps to gradually decrease heart rate and also prevent sudden pooling of blood in lower limbs, causing dizziness and possibly fainting, which can cause further injuries."

What happens next

The view of Andy Dyke, the English Football Association's national development manager, is that "veterans' football is an area of growth where we are likely to see more diversification as people become more comfortable with the game format". Indeed, the English FA already has successful veterans' football programmes, which it has begun expanding into Spain, Belgium and other European countries as an 'expat programme' to encourage the participation of English speakers abroad,

and to engage local football clubs to start offering it, too.

It is perhaps no surprise that veterans' football is thriving most in countries with well-organised amateur and professional set-ups – such as Denmark, England, Germany and Sweden, which have high participation rates across the board.

The researchers found a "positive attitude" also in countries such as the Netherlands, Russia and Slovenia, where efforts are being made, first and foremost, to develop the over-age game through leagues and local clubs. In Russia, for instance, there are tournaments split into age groups – the Eternal Stars Cup and the Legends Cup – with varying rules for players of different ages. Hungary, another country cited, has introduced a veterans' football season.

There is also a wish to develop international competitions, with the authors noting "an ongoing goal of more internationalism by augmenting competition and travelling abroad". One such example, involving Slovenia, is the 'third-age' tournaments already organised in the Balkans – in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, as well as Slovenia – which provide opportunities for international encounters. 🌐

Walking football gains ground

Walking football is a different game altogether, designed for participants aged 50–70+ with a specific set of rules: games are played on a smaller pitch with a maximum of seven players on each side, and physical contact of any kind is prohibited, as are running or jogging.

The health benefits for the older generation have been clearly noticed by many associations, with the opportunity to meet people and socialise helping create a positive mindset among participants. Walking football has developed considerably in the past decade and is now played competitively across Europe; the fact that it is played at a lower intensity than veterans' football means fewer concerns about potential health risks, with a reduced threat of cardiovascular incidents, and this is another factor in its rapid growth. However, older athletes wanting to boost their endurance and football-specific fitness might have to add other drills.



As in the case of Lithuania, veterans' football is not just for men.

TEN YEARS OF SUCCESS FOR DISABILITY PARTNERSHIP

At the end of last year, UEFA and the Centre for Access to Football in Europe (CAFE) celebrated the tenth anniversary of their partnership and measured the progress made during those ten years to improve access to football for disabled fans.

CAFE was set up in 2009, funded by UEFA, to offer advice on increasing access to football for disabled people, improving stadium infrastructures and raising awareness around inclusion within the game.

Live football is now enjoyed by more disabled supporters than ever. Clubs, leagues and national associations are increasingly aware of the importance of access and inclusion, and governing bodies have outlined their commitment to a game that is accessible, inclusive and welcoming for all.

Accessible seating

The creation and development of accessible seating, not just in greater numbers but also in better locations with improved sightlines inside stadiums, has been a key focus for the partnership. CAFE has carried out more than 90 access appraisals of venues across Europe and beyond to help improve access, using the UEFA and CAFE Good Practice Guide to Creating an Accessible Stadium and Matchday Experience (Access for All) as a benchmark. The guide sets out the minimum accessibility requirements for new and existing stadiums, based on

European standards, and is a valuable tool for any national association or club.

Audio-descriptive commentary (ADC) training

ADC is a dedicated service that can help partially sighted and blind fans to enjoy an inclusive matchday. In the context of a live football match, ADC ensures partially sighted or blind fans have a complete understanding of the match they are attending. UEFA has worked alongside CAFE for a number of years to provide ADC at UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League finals, as well as at all EURO 2012 and EURO 2016 matches. It will be provided again at EURO 2020. Since 2009, more than 150 people have been trained in producing high-quality ADC coverage at matches.

Developing the disability access officer role

Since 2015, the disability access officer role has been incorporated into the UEFA Club Licensing and Financial Fair Play Regulations, ensuring that clubs across the continent support the provision of inclusive, accessible facilities and services. CAFE was commissioned by UEFA to

oversee the implementation of this role and together the two organisations have so far provided training to more than 850 people across 25 member associations. In January 2019, the first meeting of the disability access officer network group was held in Barcelona, attended by 30 specialists from national associations, clubs, disability NGOs and disabled fan groups.

Establishing disabled supporter associations

Nearly 200 dedicated club and national team disabled supporter associations have been established across Europe, providing a ready-made community for disabled fans, as well as a forum to liaise with organisations to improve services and facilities and discuss ongoing issues. This dialogue helps clubs and national associations better understand the needs and challenges facing their disabled supporters as they work towards providing total access for all.

CAFE's activities in 2020

During the CAFE week of action, held from 7 to 15 March, the work taking place across Europe to improve access and inclusion in stadiums was celebrated. UEFA and CAFE combined forces to create a new video highlighting the crucial work undertaken to help more disabled fans attend live football matches. The video spread on social media, and different clubs all over Europe showed it before or after their matches. In April, CAFE launched a survey to gain a better understanding of the typical matchday experiences of people with non-visible disabilities and address some of the issues they encounter in attending live football matches. The survey is open until 18:00 CET on 15 May and can be found on the CAFE website: <https://www.cafefootball.eu/news/cafe-launches-survey-for-non-visibly-disabled-people>.



TAJIKISTAN AND UZBEKISTAN YOUNGSTERS SAVOUR EUROPEAN TOURNAMENT EXPERIENCE

The UEFA Assist programme, aimed at nurturing football development outside of Europe, helped two Central Asian nations compete in a youth tournament in Belarus in February.

The international youth tournament, the Development Cup, has become something of a tradition in Belarus, with the 16th edition of the tournament held in Minsk in February.

Organised by the Football Federation of Belarus (ABFF), the event for Under-17 national sides attracted six teams from across Europe – from Iceland to Israel – as well as Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The ABFF was able to invite the two Central Asian countries to participate thanks to the support of the UEFA Assist programme. Although the initiative mainly assists associations outside of Europe through the sharing of knowledge and best practices, it also allows UEFA's member associations to develop their own projects with football associations in different confederations.

"UEFA aims to work as much as possible in the development of football, and I feel it is our duty to assist other confederations and their member associations by sharing our experience, expertise and knowledge so they can reach their goals," said UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin.

"We are looking forward to helping them grow football in their continents and also to participating in the development of the game outside Europe."

Players experiencing different cultures

The invitations to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan gave their respective Under-17 teams the perfect opportunity to play against countries from a different continent. However, this was also the case for a number of the European sides – a chance they greatly appreciated.

"It's a different culture and a good experience for the players; we can always play Finland, Sweden or Norway, whose culture is similar to ours," explained David Snorri Jonasson, the head coach of Iceland's Under-17 team.

"This tournament is very useful for the players as they can test their skills against teams from different cultures. It is very important for us, as most of the players from Iceland will aim to play abroad in the future."

ABFF president Uladzimir Bazanau was just delighted that the countries competing were all able to take home several positives from the tournament, which is important for the further development of the players.

"It is great that such teams as Finland and Belgium participated in this tournament for the tenth time," he said. "I would like to thank Belarus and Tajikistan for a great final, and I would like to say thank you to our partners, the Development Bank of the Republic of Belarus and the UEFA Assist programme."



Above: The young Belarusians celebrate their hard-earned tournament victory. Top: Belarus came back from a 2-0 deficit to beat Tajikistan in the final.



NEW MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR UEFA AND CONMEBOL

The UEFA Executive Committee and the CONMEBOL Council met at the House of European Football in Nyon in February and signed a renewed memorandum of understanding (MoU) to replace the agreement signed in 2012.



This new MoU forms the basis for enhanced collaboration in a variety of domains to foster the development and growth of football on both continents.

The MoU aims to provide assistance and support between UEFA and CONMEBOL and their respective member associations in establishing and implementing projects and activities relating to:

- Education, training, technical development and refereeing
- Promotion and development of grassroots, youth and women's football
- Organisation of men's, women's and youth football competitions, as well as futsal
- Marketing, legal and social responsibility matters
- Safety and security
- Promotion of ethical and good governance principles in football

In order to advance cooperation on such projects, both governing bodies decided to create four joint committees to focus specifically

on the following matters: competitions, development, women's football and refereeing. Ad hoc commissions could also be formed to discuss other areas of cooperation when necessary.

Speaking after the meeting, UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin said: "UEFA and CONMEBOL have a long history and tradition together, notably through epic and thrilling competitions such as the Artemio Franchi Trophy and the European/South American Cup. Today's agreement marks a first step in allowing UEFA and CONMEBOL to closely cooperate so that we can share expertise and knowledge for the development of the game on both continents."

CONMEBOL president Alejandro Domínguez, added: "We had been working for months on this in order to have a very constructive and fruitful meeting today, and I am delighted that CONMEBOL and UEFA agreed to cooperate further on a variety of topics. Together we can do a lot for the development of football and I am very much looking forward to this enhanced collaboration. This is just the beginning." 🌐

The presidents of CONMEBOL and UEFA, Alejandro Domínguez and Aleksander Čeferin, in Nyon on 12 February 2020.

DIVERSITY IN NUMBERS

For the first time ever, a Danish sport can offer a specific quantitative estimate with regard to diversity. More than 8,000 active participants in Danish football responded to a questionnaire about everything from everyday life in a club to gender, ethnicity and sexuality.

BY SIGNE ULLSTAD

Players, coaches and referees were just some of the 8,000 respondents from all levels of Danish football who answered an extensive questionnaire about diversity. The questionnaire was sent to all participants in Danish football, including the 1,611 clubs, regardless of age, level and geography.

The impartial questionnaire was compiled by the analysis company Kantar Gallup for the Danish Football Association (DBU) at the request of the association's president, Jesper Møller Christensen, who was proud to present the results.

"Football is for everybody and, therefore, we wanted to get an overview of the reality in Danish football. The results are now ready, and there is no doubt that

we have more work to do. But I am pleased to see that 91% of those involved in Danish football very much have the feeling that there is room for everyone, so we are very satisfied with the results," the DBU president said.

Room for improvement

Many results can be drawn from the diversity questionnaire, including the experiences of referees, players and club members on how it feels to be part of Danish football. The results indicate that 74% of girls and women believe it is easier to be a boy or man in football, 44% of gay people experience discriminating language in the football environment, and 48% of immigrants believe it is easier to be an

ethnic Dane on the pitch. However, there are also some positive numbers to come out of the questionnaire. Alongside the fact that a high percentage of club members believe there is room for everyone in the club, as many as 93% say they are treated well in their club.

The DBU president believes there has been improvement in Danish football but that there is still work to do.

"It is essential that we work together to strengthen diversity in Danish football for everyone's benefit," Jesper Møller Christensen concluded.

The results will now be discussed in Danish football, and the DBU will then present initiatives for a more diverse Danish football community. 🌐





The partners in the child safeguarding project (left to right): LOC president Isabel Fehr, LFV general secretary Peter Jehle, patron HSH Princess Maria-Anunciata of Liechtenstein, and LFV president Hugo Quaderer.

CHILD SAFEGUARDING PROJECT

The Liechtenstein Football Association (LFV) and the Liechtenstein Olympic Committee (LOC) are joining forces to promote child safeguarding in Liechtenstein sport.

BY ANTON BANZER

With a project entitled ‘Empowering children and young people in sport’, the LFV and the LOC plan to give all sports associations and clubs a chance to address various topics, such as bullying, violence, grooming, sexual abuse, neglect, and alcohol and drug abuse, to raise awareness and be equipped to respond.

“I know from personal experience how much pleasure, self-discipline and team spirit sport can bring to a child,” explains the project’s patron and LOC board member, HSH Princess Maria-Anunciata of Liechtenstein. “In the world of sport, we can enable children and young people to recognise and deal with difficult situations appropriately, with awareness and self-confidence.”

As well as empowering children, the project will help protect coaches

and officials in particular, by clarifying what is permissible and what is important in their dealings with children and young people. It will therefore safeguard the many volunteers who work for clubs and associations by encouraging preventive measures and raising awareness. LOC president Isabel Fehr and LFV president Hugo Quaderer have both emphasised the importance of their two organisations’ future cooperation. Existing national and international networks will be used to develop child protection measures in sport that are adapted to the situation in Liechtenstein.

To this end, between now and 2024, the various topics will be studied closely in a bid to produce a positive long-term impact in and beyond the world of sport.

The project kicked off on 25 January with a highly acclaimed launch event devoted to addressing bullying in sport. 

UEFA president’s visit

Visiting Liechtenstein for the first time as UEFA president on 27 January, Aleksander Čeferin welcomed the growth of football there.

During talks with the LFV president, Hugo Quaderer, and general secretary Peter Jehle, he was briefed about the challenges faced by one of UEFA’s smallest member countries (the principality has around 38,000 inhabitants and lies between Austria and Switzerland), as well as its work and achievements.

The UEFA president also met Daniel Risch, Liechtenstein’s sports minister, and Manfred Bischof, the mayor of Vaduz, and attended a reception at Vaduz castle hosted by HSH Prince Alois of Liechtenstein.

“It’s very important for me to visit the smaller countries,” said the UEFA president. “And I must say I’m very impressed by the infrastructure and organisation of football in Liechtenstein. It’s great that the municipalities and government are giving their support, and I think the country has a bright future ahead.”

The UEFA president visited the LFV’s offices in Schaan and the national training centre in Ruggell, which is still under construction with partial funding from UEFA’s HatTrick programme, which reinvests revenue from the European Football Championship in UEFA’s 55 member associations, enabling them to improve all aspects of the game, including infrastructure.

“Funding from the UEFA HatTrick programme is vital for the development of football in Liechtenstein,” said the LFV president.



REPLAY YOUR MEMORIES IN THE NEW LIBRARY OF POLISH FOOTBALL

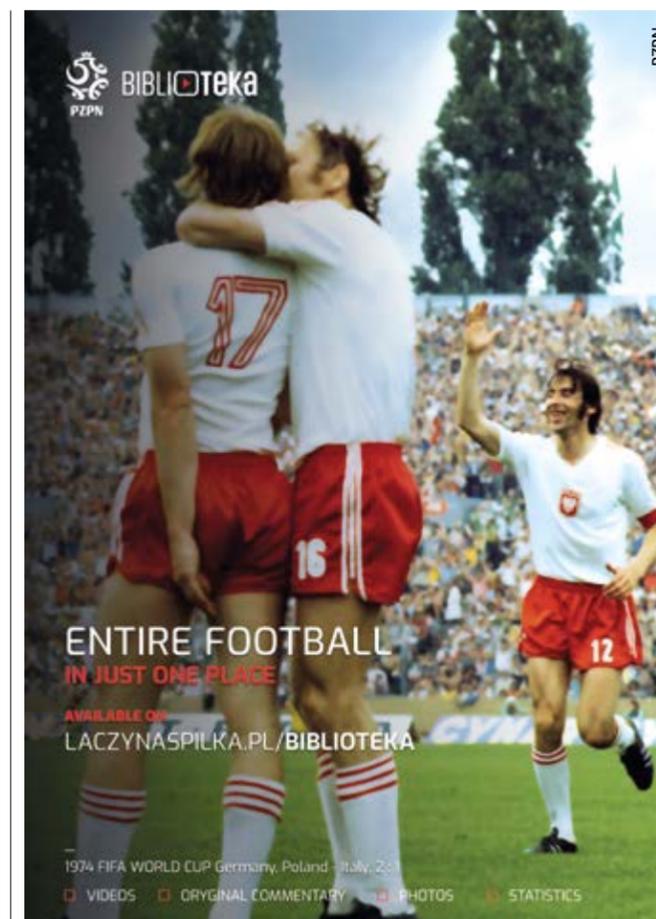
After years of arduous collecting and archiving work, the online library of Polish football opened its virtual doors on 16 October. Fans of the national team can use the library free of charge and relive all the team’s matches, highlights and much, much more.

BY RAFAŁ BYRSKI

The library of Polish football is one of the best football-related projects carried out by the PZPN [Polish Football Association]. We worked long and quietly in order to create something wonderful – an encyclopaedia of Polish football. We have the most important Polish national team matches, highlights, fun facts and newspaper clippings,” said Zbigniew Boniek, the PZPN president.

Like any good film library, the library of Polish football starts with the classics, the Polish national team matches that everyone should watch, games that bring the generations together. The older generations can relive the feelings and emotions that accompanied the ‘winning’ draw at Wembley in 1973 that started the march of the Kazimierz Górski Eagles to third place in the world, and the five goals that Antoni Piechniczek’s team scored in the second half of Poland’s match against Peru in the 1982 World Cup. An unforgettable taste of the past. For the younger generations, there is Poland’s first-ever win against Germany, achieved by Adam Nawałka and his team. On that October evening at the national stadium, the Lewandowski, Krychowiak and Glik generation believed they could rekindle the triumphs of the past. That adventure lasted for them up to the EURO 2016 quarter-finals.

No European football association can boast such a broad and complete library. “Our project is unique in Europe. Nobody has such a comprehensive multimedia resource telling the history of football in their country. That is why there was nobody to follow, so the entire project had to be developed from scratch – starting from the idea and ending up



The online library of Polish football is accessible free of charge and gives fans the opportunity to relive all the national team’s matches.

with the final product. Many thanks go to TVP and Polsat, in particular to directors Marek Szkolnikowski and Marian Kmita. They helped us with the hard and arduous work of obtaining archive material. We are united by football,” said Maciej Sawicki, the PZPN general secretary.

The library of Polish football has been

divided into several tabs so that all national team fans can find something to suit them. They can choose from matches, chronicles, recommended multimedia and video collection. All is available free of charge at www.laczynaspilka.pl/biblioteka. Users just need to have an account on the PZPN website. 

UEFA MATCH OFFICERS' WORKSHOP

On 11 and 12 February, the first of 13 regional workshops for UEFA match delegates, security officers, venue directors and match managers was held in Moscow.

BY EKATERINA GRISHENKOVA

Organised by UEFA in cooperation with the Football Union of Russia, the workshop was attended by representatives of the national associations of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia.

On the first day, the participants discussed the preparation and running of an imaginary match from the perspective of the different roles and responsibilities of a UEFA delegate, security officer and venue director/match manager. Separate attention was paid to crisis management (e.g. deterioration of weather conditions on the day of the match), in particular the various sources of information and communication between everyone concerned.

The second day of the seminar began with a discussion of the different problems that match officers could be confronted with during the course of the season, such as the pitch being in poor condition or a referee being injured during the game, as well as the sequence of actions



to be taken in such situations. In addition, examples of incidents that should and should not be included in the delegate's post-match report were analysed.



Stanislav Cherchesov's contract extended

The Football Union of Russia has extended its contract with the head coach of Russia's national team, Stanislav Cherchesov, until 30 December 2022.

Cherchesov's team reached the quarter-finals of the 2018 World Cup and also qualified for EURO 2020, which has been postponed until 2021. Together with Cherchesov, Russia will fight for the right to play at the 2022 World Cup, and his contract may be extended until 31 July 2024 if they qualify and overcome the group stage.

"The contracts of our coaching staff with the Football Union of Russia provided for an automatic two-year extension after the Russian team qualified for the EUROs. But because the 2022 World Cup will not take place in summer 2022 as previously planned, but in November and December, the change of contract end dates was a technicality. The relevant adjustments have been made, and we are very pleased to continue our work in the team," Cherchesov said.

ALBANIA

www.fshf.org

UEFA GIRLS' UNDER-16 DEVELOPMENT TOURNAMENT

ALBAN TARTARI

The girls' Under-16 national teams of Albania, Georgia, Lithuania and Montenegro participated in the UEFA girls' Under-16 development tournament hosted by the Albanian Football Association (FSHF) in February. The visiting teams stayed and trained in the city of Durrës, while the matches were played at the brand-new Air Albania Stadium in Tirana and Elbasan Arena in the city of the same name. With the popularity of women's football rising in the country, thousands of supporters filled the stadiums, and the matches were shown live on the national sports channel RTSH Sport.

The president of the Albanian Football Association, Armand Duka, thanked UEFA for entrusting the FSHF with this kind of event, which serves one of the national priorities of the association – the



development of children's and women's football. "We are very happy to collaborate with UEFA, and this is not the first tournament, nor will it be the last. As UEFA believes in our organisational capacities, we offered our best stadiums and services for this tournament. At the end of this month [February 2020], we will host a UEFA boys' Under-16 development tournament with Albania,

Algeria, Georgia and Lithuania. This kind of event is a great example of what can be done in these categories," he said.

The FSHF is placing special importance on women's football, as it is one of the main priorities of its activities in 2020. A series of events are scheduled throughout the year, with campaigns promoting women's football having just started.

AUSTRIA

www.oefb.at

PROMOTING FUN AND GAMES

SIMON-PETER CHARAMZA

Exceptional situations call for exceptional measures! This is a sentiment we are becoming increasingly familiar with in these unprecedented times. It is up to us all to do whatever we can to deal with our current circumstances as best we can.

Ballschule Österreich, a free app developed by Geomix, is a good place to start.

With schools closed, many parents and carers are faced with the challenge of looking after children at home and keeping them occupied all day long in the house and, if they are lucky, garden. With this in mind, the Ballschule Österreich app (which literally translates as Austrian ball school) was updated in March to include a host of special games and exercises that are easy to play in the living room or garden.

Videos by experts provide detailed instructions on how to organise the games and exercises, giving all parents and carers the tips they need to take on the role of coach.

The content is not specific to football; it promotes physical exercise and ball sports in general, in a fun and playful way.

After several years of development, the app was launched in autumn 2018 by Austria's three general sports governing bodies (ASKÖ, ASVÖ and Sportunion) and six national ball sport associations (handball, basketball, futsal, volleyball, American football and football), under the coordination of the Austrian Football Association.

With a view to promoting ball sport education in Austria, the app was originally designed as part of a project

with Ballschule Heidelberg aimed at helping teachers and coaches plan and deliver inventive classes and training sessions with the aid of professional video-based guides.

The idea was to provide children with an inspiring and effective basic education in different ball sports and help them discover the lasting joy of physical exercise and team sports.

In the current circumstances, it is hoped the app can be used to share the joy of sport even further and wider and help families spend their time at home in a meaningful, active and playful way, with a wide variety of physical exercises and games, all based around the motto 'Stay home, stay fit'.

Geomix's Ballschule Österreich app is available to download free of charge from Google Play and the App Store.

CROATIA

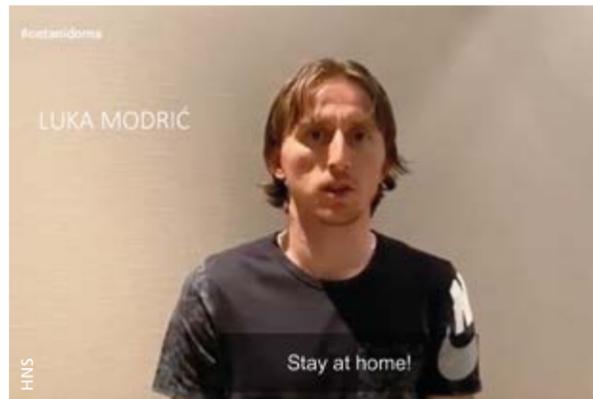
www.hns-cff.hr

VATRENI SUPPORT CROATIA IN OVERCOMING EARTHQUAKES AND AN EPIDEMIC

NIKA BAHTIJAREVIĆ

The Croatian national team's March matches may have been cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic, but the Vatreni were nevertheless brought together by a joint cause: helping their fellow citizens in an unprecedented time of need.

With all of Europe in the midst of battling the COVID-19 pandemic, Croatia's capital city suffered an additional blow. In the early hours of 22 March, Zagreb was hit by three consecutive earthquakes, the first of which caused major damage to buildings in the city centre and devastated many of the city's hospitals, leaving the health system additionally vulnerable at a time when its limits were already being tested by an influx of patients infected with the novel coronavirus.



Croatia's football clubs and the Vatreni were among the first to voice their support for the citizens of Zagreb, and the national team players did not stop at words alone – in the following days, they raised four million Croatian

kunas (€526,000) for earthquake and coronavirus relief. To urge Croatians to comply with health experts' recommendations during the pandemic, the Croatian Football Federation also produced a video featuring head coach Zlatko Dalić and all of the players that had

been set to travel with the team for the March friendlies. Their message? Together we can beat this virus – but only if every single one of us takes responsibility and plays our part by staying at home.

CZECH REPUBLIC

www.fotbal.cz

GUIDELINES FOR HELPING CHILDREN IN DISTRESS

RADEK ŠAMŠA



Last year, the Czech Football Association, in cooperation with the Czech children's helpline Safety

Line, produced a handbook entitled How To Help Children Who Suffer. The handbook was initially sent to Czech

football clubs as a helpful resource for the coaches of youth teams. In 2019, it received a UEFA Foundation for Children Award with a grant of €45,500.

However, other sports associations in the Czech Republic also found the handbook useful and approached the Czech Football Association and Safety Line about extending it to other sports, such as basketball and ice hockey.

"Sometimes a coach, not a parent, is the first person who can help kids suffering with their difficulties. This is a very helpful guide for all coaches. I'm very proud that we came out with the handbook and that it's been recognised by the UEFA Foundation for Children. I'm convinced that similar steps are an important part of our job," said Martin Malik, president of the Czech FA.

"You can find 11 of the most critical and frequent topics registered by Safety Line in this handbook. I'm very happy that other sports associations are interested in adapting it so that it can be extended to other sports," added Michaela Vesela, the Czech FA's social projects manager.

ENGLAND

www.thefa.com

ENGLAND CAPTAINS LAUNCH PLEDGE OF POSITIVITY

NICK SMITH

The Football Association (The FA) has launched the Pledge of Positivity, which asks parents and spectators involved in Under-18s grassroots football to commit to creating a more positive environment at matches across the country.

A recent survey conducted by The FA and Nielsen found that 88% of more than 1,000 grassroots participants cite parents as a driver of disrespect in grassroots football.

To have an impact on this off-pitch behaviour, The FA has launched the Pledge of Positivity, encouraging those on the sidelines to support all players involved and respect referees, coaches and other spectators. The pledge is based on The FA's Respect behavioural code of conduct, which seeks to improve behavioural standards in football.

England captains Steph Houghton and Harry Kane are the first two people to have made the Pledge of Positivity, encouraging others to follow suit at www.TheFA.com/Pledge.

England men's captain Harry Kane, a father of two, said: "As parents and spectators, it is our job to make sure that children enjoy playing football. The pitch should be a place of support and encouragement. Youngsters should never feel pressure or intimidation from the sidelines, so I'm delighted to add my name to the Pledge of Positivity, and I'd like to encourage as many people as possible to do the same."

The Lionesses' captain, Steph Houghton, added: "Positivity is essential in football. It's important to create an environment where everyone enjoys playing. There are small things you can do on the touchline – like applauding good play from both teams – that has a big impact on young players."

The FA's chief executive, Mark Bullingham, said, "Having coached grassroots football for the last five years, I've seen first-hand the huge impact that parents on the sidelines can have on players from both a positive and negative point of view. It's no surprise



Steph Houghton and Harry Kane

that kids play better in a positive environment and our research has confirmed this impacts 90% of players. It's crucial that we create an atmosphere where players are encouraged rather than abused, for their enjoyment of football as well as their mental health. I urge others to join me in making this pledge and showing their support for kids' football."

The FA's Respect campaign was relaunched ahead of the 2018/19 season (having been originally launched in the 2008/09 season) with a new mantra of We Only Do Positive. As a result, The FA has seen positivity in grassroots football rise, with 88% of tracked U12-U18 matches being played in a positive environment, a 2% increase from the previous season. The FA hopes that the Pledge of Positivity will ensure that number continues to rise. Make your pledge at www.TheFA.com/Pledge.

ESTONIA

www.jalgpall.ee

100 YEARS SINCE FIRST INTERNATIONAL MATCH

MAARJA SAULEP

2020 marks an important milestone in the history of Estonian football as the men's national team celebrate 100 years since their first international match.

In October 1920, Estonia made an overseas visit to face their neighbours Finland in a friendly match, which marked the team's first appearance on the international stage. The match took place in the Finnish capital, Helsinki, in front of a reported crowd of 2,500 spectators.

The historic match was held in unusual circumstances and with no proper



Indrek Schwede archives

Estonian footballers had played on a grass pitch, as back then football fields at home consisted only of dirt and sand.

In difficult conditions, Estonia had to concede defeat. Finland scored four goals before half-time and

managed to add two more in the second half, clocking up a convincing 6-0 victory at the full-time whistle. Since 1920, the Estonian men's national team have played more than 450 matches, and Estonia and Finland have met 35 times.

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HUNGARY

www.en.mlsz.hu

GREAT GÖRÖCS LAID TO REST

MÁRTON DINNYÉS



Újpest's legendary Olympic bronze-medal-winning, 62-time Hungarian international midfielder János Göröcs was laid to rest in the Megyeri út cemetery in March.

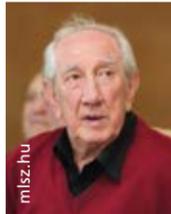
"I played with 'Titi' for years. It was a big thing, an honour to play in such a great side as his. If he'd been allowed to move abroad, he'd have had a huge career. We looked up to him on and off the pitch and it was my pleasure to be in his company," said former team-mate Antal Dunai. Göröcs was born in 1939 and by the age of ten was already a registered youth footballer in Újpest. Two years later, Göröcs joined Budapest Dózsa – soon to become known as Újpest Dózsa – and, aged 18, made his full debut with a goal against Salgótarjáni BTC on 25 August 1957. He made his Hungary

international debut after the 1958 World Cup in Sweden in a 3-1 victory over Poland in Chorzow, before being part of the Hungary team that played in the first-ever European Championship fixture, a qualifier against the Soviet Union, which, just like his first league match, ended with Göröcs scoring a goal but his team losing the match 3-1.

Göröcs' club won the 1960 Hungarian league title and reached the 1962 European Cup Winners' Cup semi-final, with the 22-year-old topping the competition's scoring charts along the way with eight goals. The mid-sixties were a transitional period for Újpest, but Göröcs had already gained a reputation for superb vision, movement and a reading of the game. In an era when Hungary were rolling in world-class

forwards, Göröcs stood out as one who could play across the five-man forward line but also as a creative midfielder, and it was in this latter role that he excelled as part of a thrilling Újpest Dózsa that came to be regarded as possibly the best in Europe in 1969, the Budapest club winning the domestic league and cup double and knocking out English champions Leeds on their way to the 1969 Fairs Cup final.

Göröcs retired in 1974, later becoming an accomplished coach and winning the 1987 Hungarian Cup with his beloved Újpest Dózsa. The Hungarian Football Association's lifetime merit award was given to him by president Sándor Csányi in 2016.



ISRAEL

www.football.org.il

FANS MATTER! PROJECT LAUNCHED

EITAN DOTAN



The Israel FA (IFA) and the Stands Organisation have launched the Fans Matter! project. The launch took place on 13 February in Brussels.

The project's main goal is to improve the ability and professional management capabilities of fan-run football clubs, to assist football clubs in liaising with clubs and authorities, and promote vast community and social responsibility.

Fans Matter! is supported by the European Union and UEFA, and managed by SD Europe.

During the two-year project, fan organisations, football associations and fan-run football clubs from eight different countries will participate in workshops, training sessions and information exchanges in order to improve the resources available to fan-run football clubs and support organisations that are involved in club management. The main

aim of the project is to support and upgrade clubs that are managed by fans in order for these clubs to operate in an efficient, organised and communal way.

The series of workshops will help to create experts in every country who will be able to support fan organisations and fan groups in dealing with local authorities. In addition, knowledge and information will be provided to club management, staff and volunteers to equip them to make the best decisions for the club or organisation.

During the project, in which the Italian and Spanish football associations are also taking part, there will be exchange visits between the associations in order to understand the processes in each country, and enhance cooperation and information sharing between them. The event was also attended by representatives from



UEFA, Cyprus, Germany, Italy, Spain, North Africa and hosts Belgium.

In Israel, cooperation will take place between the Israeli FA and Stand, the Israeli sports club fan organisation that represents all sports club fans in Israel, with an emphasis on football club fans. The organisation works to promote the rights of Israeli sports fans and topics such as transparency, fan involvement, price regulation, game broadcast times, and the elimination of violence and racism in Israeli sports.

The representatives from Israel that took part in the launch in Brussels were Stand founder Shai Golov, IFA content manager and press officer Eitan Dotan, Kiryat Ata youth department manager and Ha'poel Haifa Basketball CEO Ron Feldhaim, and Ha'poel Katamon Jerusalem chairwoman Daphna Goldshmdit Cohen.

MALTA

www.mfa.com.mt

ACCOMMODATION SUPPORT FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS

KEVIN AZZOPARDI



The difficult and unprecedented situation we are facing calls for solidarity, mutual respect and unity. The Malta Football Association is committed to supporting not only the football family but the entire Maltese community in these challenging times.

At a time when the dedicated and selfless work of medical professionals is essential in the ongoing efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19, the Malta FA

launched an initiative on 24 March to support healthcare workers who may require alternative accommodation in the interest of public health.

A number of rooms have been made available to the ministry of health after the Malta FA reached an agreement with three accommodation service providers, all members of the Maltese football family, who have significantly reduced their daily room rates in support of this initiative.

The related costs are being covered by the Malta FA through the football social responsibility fund as part of the association's Football For Life programme.

This accommodation support programme is being coordinated by the central procurement and supplies unit within the country's ministry of health.

While reiterating its immense gratitude to the medical staff and all those contributing to the ongoing efforts to tackle the coronavirus, the Malta FA thanked the accommodation service providers for their cooperation and support.

The association furthermore renewed its appeal to the general public to follow the advice and instructions given by the health authorities.



MOLDOVA

www.fmf.md

FC SFÎNTUL GHEORGHE WIN THE FEDERATION CUP

COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT



FC Sfîntul Gheorghe Suruceni have become the first winners of the national Federation Cup. In the final of the competition, the Saints beat Petrocub-Hînceşti 2-0 courtesy of goals from Raman Valkau and Alexandru Suvorov.

The trophy presentation ceremony was attended by Corneliu Popovici, minister of education, culture and research of the Republic of Moldova, and Leonid Oleinicenco, president of the FA of Moldova (FMF).

It is the first trophy for the Suruceni club in its 17-year history. Last year, for the first time, the team coached by Serghei Cebotari reached the Moldovan Cup final and finished second in the championship. This performance allows

FC Sfîntul Gheorghe to play for the first time in the UEFA Europa League first preliminary round next season.

The Saints' opponents in the Federation Cup final, Petrocub-Hînceşti, suffered their first defeat at the ultimate stage, after having won five consecutive group matches. Petrocub forward Vadim Gulceac was the competition's top

scorer, with seven goals.

The Federation Cup was created specifically for the top-division clubs in order to structure friendly matches as a championship warm-up competition. The FMF plans to organise this competition every year, and possibly turn it into an international one in the future.



NORTHERN IRELAND

www.irishfa.com

FOOTBALL COMMUNITY HUBS ROLLED OUT

NIGEL TILSON

The Irish Football Association's foundation has started the official roll-out of 12 new football community hubs across Northern Ireland.

The hubs – two in Belfast and ten in the council areas outside Belfast – have been created to provide a greater focus on club and volunteer development and on boosting participation levels in line with the Irish FA's Let Them Play youth football strategy.

Each hub is designed to deliver a football for all service to the community using football as a hook for health, education, crime prevention, good relations and employability. A regional grassroots football developer, a Let Them Play officer, Football For All support staff and a UEFA grassroots volunteer will be based in each of the 12 centres.

Michael Boyd, director of football development at the Irish FA Foundation, said: "Our strength lies in the ability of our staff and volunteers to serve the needs of the community through the universal language of football. Our



approach is to work with the councils and our community partners to help create healthier citizens and communities. It's all about providing a better service, supporting stronger

inclusive clubs and creating more partnerships on the ground in the various council areas." The roll-out began with the launch of the Lisburn/Castlereagh hub at Carryduff's Lough Moss Centre.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

www.fai.ie

FITNESS TOPS THE BILL

GARETH MAHER

There were 75 coaches in attendance at the first-ever football fitness conference hosted by the Football Association of Ireland (FAI), and it was a huge success.

The many speakers on the day included the FAI's head of football science and research, Dan Horan, Queens Park Rangers' sports scientist Dylan Mernagh, the FAI's Ger McDermott, and premier league strength and conditioning coaches Darren Dillon (Shamrock Rovers) and Remy Tang (Bohemians). Sessions took place both on and off the pitch, as the participants learned from those at the top of their respective professions. Speaking at the conference, FAI coach education

coordinator and conference organiser Craig Sexton said the day was a huge



success. "We are delighted with our first-ever football fitness conference. The fantastic guest speakers really showcased the direction in which we are looking to take the content as we move forward," he said.

"To have the event sold out weeks in advance shows there is a real appetite to develop within the coaching community in Ireland, and we look forward to continuing to progress all areas of coach education."

Plans are already in place to host a second seminar to ensure that best practice techniques are shared with and explained to coaches all around the country.

ROMANIA

www.frf.ro

A VISUAL BRAND IDENTITY FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

PAUL ZAHARIA

The first three Romanian women's leagues, as well as the girls' Under-15 championship, are about to get their first own visual brand identity, which will become part of the existing Romanian Football Federation (FRF) brand and visual identity 'universe'.

During the past five years, the FRF's top priority has been, and still is, to reform



and develop football in Romania, a priority that goes hand in hand with promotion, which is a crucial part of the development process and includes promotion of the brands and visual identities. The men's senior and Under-21 teams, the 42 county football associations, the men's second and third leagues, as well as the FRF itself, all have their own new visual identities.

As far as women's football development is concerned, this can only be achieved through a proper and fast promotion process, and in order to increase the visibility and commercial value, it became a must to create a brand visual identity for each of the first three senior leagues, as well as for the junior ones. As a result of this commercial identity, the FRF hopes to

attract sponsors and commercial partners for the women's domestic leagues and for the women's national teams, and also create the best premises to negotiate TV rights for women's first league matches.

The FRF aims to turn women's football into the number one team sport played by girls and women in Romania, an aim that can only be achieved by creating the right environment and infrastructure and giving every girl and woman the right and possibility to play and enjoy football in dedicated competitions. To achieve this aim, women's football has to become a sport with visibility and with increased commercial value.

Regarding the new visual identity itself, it combines football's central element (the ball) and the silhouette of a female player.

SLOVAKIA

www.futbalsfz.sk

TOMÁŠ MEDVEĎ ELECTED TO SLOVAK FA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PETER SURIN

Tomáš Medved' joined the executive committee of the Slovak Football Association on 28 February as the players' representative. Slovakia's sports law requires such a seat on the executive body of every sports association.

The law in question came into effect on 1 January 2016; however, it was only possible to find a new member of the Slovak FA executive committee recently. In February 2018, the first candidate, Blažej Vaščák, still an active player, was not endorsed by the Slovak FA conference. There were then no candidates at any of the next three conferences.

This time, there were two former players in contention for the seat. Former goalkeeper Ján Mucha is president of

the players' union and actively promotes a healthy environment for professional players and makes useful connections abroad through FIFPRO. Tomáš Medved' played for 12 clubs in four countries, scoring 103 goals along the way. Today, he leads the Slovak elite group of top scorers and is vice-president of the league that protects the rights of Slovakian athletes.

He provides training mostly to football players in the areas of law and economics, including their post-playing life. "It is important for us to show them the possibilities they have during their career to study and think about their future, when they will not earn money from football," he told the conference. He won the vote in a convincing manner with 69 votes, against 9 votes for Ján



Mucha. "I will tackle my new role very responsibly and with great respect. The services we have been providing to athletes for years really work. And I believe that with a role within the

executive committee of the Slovak Football Association, I will represent the players and their needs well. As one of my priorities, I want to build consensus for solving conflicts that have been problematic in the past. We want to create and develop, and not destroy what works. Cooperation is the key. It is the only way we can work effectively," Medved' said after his election.

SWEDEN

www.svenskfotboll.se

DIGITAL PAYMENTS FOR REFEREES

ANDREAS NILSSON

 Paying the referee in cash at the match is an aspect of football that has changed little in the last 100 years. But now the Swedish FA is implementing a new digital system for referee remuneration and expenses.

Payment will now be made online instead of cash in hand, as an integrated part of the FA's competition management system FOGIS.

The advantages are many: the referee will be paid automatically, without having to handle cash on matchday or write a receipt by hand. Clubs will also be rid of handling cash for the ref, and have an easier time handling receipts and bookkeeping throughout the season. The quality of the digital match reports will also improve, since they are now directly connected to

the payment and travel expenses.

The digital payment system has been developed in-house by the IT department of the Swedish FA, and will be used for most FA-administered competitions from the start of the 2020 season. Regional football associations will also implement the system at their earliest convenience.

SWITZERLAND

www.football.ch

CONTINUED GROWTH FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

PIERRE BENOIT

 Fourteen years ago, Ralph Zloczower, the Swiss FA president at the time, set himself the target of increasing domestic support for women's football. With this aim in mind, he set up a women's football committee, which included various female members of the Swiss national council and Monika Kaelin, the wife of the former Swiss international Fritz Künzli, who recently passed away.

The committee quickly got down to business, working in close cooperation with the girls' and women's football department and overseeing qualification for the final rounds of various UEFA youth competitions and the 2006 and 2010 U-20 Women's World Cup, along with Switzerland's first-ever appearances at a Women's World Cup (2015) and Women's EURO (2017). Today, many Swiss internationals play for top European clubs.

The Swiss FA's new president, Dominique Blanc, has taken things a step further: the girls' and women's football department is now a division in its own right and no longer falls under the technical director. At its helm, Tatjana Haenni, a well-known former player, coach and head of women's football at both FIFA and UEFA, is the first woman to sit on the Swiss FA's executive board.

"It's time to send out a clear, strong signal," said Dominique Blanc, referring



to the board's strategic decision. "By creating a separate women's football division, the Swiss FA is highlighting its intention to give even greater recognition to women's football and unlock as much of its development potential as possible."

"I am delighted that the Swiss FA has decided to take this historic step," said Tatjana Haenni. "If women's football is to be promoted in a credible and targeted way, it needs to be represented in the decision-making bodies."

UKRAINE

www.ffu.org.ua

PROFESSIONAL CLUBS TO EMBRACE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

YURI MAZNYCHENKO

 The executive committee of the Ukrainian Association of Football has approved a women's football development strategy for 2020–24.

The unanimous decision is a fundamental milestone in the development of women's football in Ukraine.

As part of the strategy, all men's professional football clubs are required to register at least 20 girls under 16 years of age and to support their girls' teams in order to assist the expansion of women's and girls' domestic leagues and tournaments.

This requirement will come into force from the 2020/21 season, and the number of home-grown female footballers at each professional club should increase to 30 under the age of 17 by the end of the 2021/22 season.

In addition, clubs must sign a cooperation agreement with women's higher/first league teams or run teams within their own club structures that



would participate in the higher/first league competitions.

Until recently, the first and only professional Ukrainian football club with both men's and women's teams

was PFC Lviv. Nowadays, the women's team of Mariupol plays in the higher league, while the Karpaty Lviv team are competing for promotion from the first league to the higher league.

WALES

www.faw.cymru

TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER

MELISSA PALMER

 The COVID-19 outbreak has had a huge impact on our daily lives and the Football Association of Wales understands that this can create worry

for anyone, and even greater anxiety for those with an existing mental health problem.

To make people aware of some simple steps to maintain their well-being during this difficult period, senior Cymru players joined Welsh mental health charity Hafal to create an advisory campaign, launched across FA Wales social media platforms this March.

Entitled 'FA Wales & Hafal – Together We Are Stronger', the advisory video is available to watch on the FA Wales YouTube channel.

Cymru players, including Jess Fishlock, Dan James, Sophie Ingle, Rabbi Matondo, Helen Ward, Chris Gunter and Ethan

Ampadu, give tips, in English and Welsh, such as "Look out for each other", "Try to stay active", "Keep yourself occupied with things you enjoy doing at home", "Eat well and stay hydrated" and "Keep talking to your team-mates".

Hafal also gives five more helpful tips for looking after your physical and mental health, which can be found on the FAW.Cymru website.

The FAW and Hafal advisory campaign is also featured in online adverts. The FAW decided to use the adverts, which were initially dedicated to promoting the now cancelled senior men's matches, to ensure a wider reach of the well-being advice across the country.



MAY BIRTHDAYS

1 FRIDAY Bent Clausen (Denmark) Vasko Dojčinovski (North Macedonia)	2 SATURDAY Anton Fagan (Scotland) 50 Ian Maxwell (Scotland)	3 SUNDAY Olivier Chovaux (France) Ladislav Gadosi (Slovakia) Haim Jakov (Israel) Vladimir Medved (Slovakia)	4 MONDAY Francisca Araujo (Portugal) 40 Polly Handford (England) Anghel Iordanescu (Romania) 70 Daniil Savitski (Estonia)	5 TUESDAY Peter Gilliéron (Switzerland) Goran Mihaljević (Montenegro) Christian Welander (Sweden)	6 WEDNESDAY Karl-Erik Nilsson (Sweden) Gudmundur Petursson (Iceland) Ken Ridden (England) Marcin Stefanski (Poland)	7 THURSDAY Charles Flint (England) Louisa Fyans (England) Claus Thomsen (Denmark)
10 SUNDAY Yuri Baskakov (Russia) Magnus Forsblad (Sweden) Armen Melikbekyan (Armenia) 40 Mihai Stoichiță (Romania)	11 MONDAY Maksym Betsko (Ukraine) Peter Bossaert (Belgium) Jean-Marie Gantenbein (Luxembourg) Timo Huttunen (Finland) Emils Latkovskis (Latvia) Kirsten van de Veen (Netherlands)	12 TUESDAY Volodymyr Geninson (Ukraine)	13 WEDNESDAY Henrik Ravnild (Denmark) Gaston Schreurs (Belgium) 70 Elke Van Den Steen (Belgium)	14 THURSDAY Neil Doncaster (Scotland) 50 María Luisa Villa (Spain)	15 FRIDAY Azamat Aitkhozhin (Kazakhstan) Evžen Amier (Czech Republic) Espen Auberger (Norway) Luis Cuervas Del Real (Spain) Hans-Jörg Eissmann (Germany) Knarik Grigoryan (Armenia) Nikolay Levnikov (Russia) Piotr Maranda (Poland) Sotirios Siniis (Greece)	16 SATURDAY Egon Franck (Germany) Kenny Jean-Marie (France)
19 TUESDAY Jonas Baer-Hoffmann (Netherlands) Gaetano De Gabriele (Malta) Milovan Djukanović (Montenegro) Evangelos Grammenos (Greece) 60 Jozef Marko (Slovakia) Rune Pedersen (Norway)	20 WEDNESDAY Tomás González Cueto (Spain) Michał Listkiewicz (Poland) Neli Lozeva (Bulgaria) Sandra Renon (France)	21 THURSDAY Mette Bach Kjær (Denmark) Nicolae Cebotari (Moldova) Ewa Gajewska (Poland) Costas Kapitanis (Cyprus) Paulo Lourenço (Portugal) Natalia Orive (Spain)	22 FRIDAY Niclas Carlén (Sweden) Karl Dhont (Belgium) 50 Rod Petrie (Scotland)	23 SATURDAY Vidar Halldórsson (Iceland) Christian Hockenjos (Germany)	24 SUNDAY Packie Bonner (Republic of Ireland) 60 Ainar Leppänen (Estonia) Teresa Romão (Portugal) Andrzej Zareba (Poland)	25 MONDAY Semen Andreev (Russia) 80 Hans Cooman (Belgium) Ivantića Sudac (Croatia)
28 THURSDAY Jim Stjerne Hansen (Denmark)	29 FRIDAY Jacques Antenen (Switzerland) Jean-Pierre Escalettes (France)	30 SATURDAY David Fernández Borbalán (Spain)	31 SUNDAY Donel Conway (Republic of Ireland) Araldo Cunha (Portugal) István Huszár (Hungary) Arne Larsen Økland (Norway) Mads Øland (Denmark)			

NOTICE

Terje Svendsen has been re-elected president of the Norwegian Football Association.

8 FRIDAY Marc Dobbelaer (Belgium) Aleksandr Keplin (Kazakhstan) Pekka Luhtanen (Finland) David Malcolm (Northern Ireland) Michel Pralong (Switzerland) Miroslav Tulinger (Czech Republic) 60 Dan Vo Quang (France)	9 SATURDAY
17 SUNDAY Kadri Jägel (Estonia) Svein Johannessen (Norway) Anna Malmén (Sweden) 30 Damiano Tommasi (Italy)	18 MONDAY Lars Appelqvist (Sweden) Tamara Chichinadze (Georgia) Didier Quillot (France) Elchin Samadli (Azerbaijan) Luka Steiner (Slovenia)
26 TUESDAY Nikoloz Jgarkava (Georgia)	27 WEDNESDAY Peter Lawwell (Scotland)

JUNE BIRTHDAYS

1 MONDAY David Avanesyan (Armenia) Ekaterina Fedyshina (Russia) Giovanni Pifarotti (Italy)	2 TUESDAY Lazar Rakidziev (North Macedonia) Ferenc Székely (Hungary)	3 WEDNESDAY Klara Bjartmarz (Iceland) Ivaylo Ivkov (Bulgaria) Radek Lobo (Czech Republic) Gilles Pettimangin (France) 60 Liana Stoicescu (Romania)	4 THURSDAY Mete Düren (Turkey) Anu Jokela (Finland) Jean-Samuel Leuba (Switzerland) Vito Roberto Tisci (Italy) 60 Yauheni Tratsiuk (Belarus) John Ward (Republic of Ireland)	5 FRIDAY Maksimas Bechterevas (Lithuania) John MacLean (Scotland) Ludovico Micallef (Malta) 70 Jaap Uilenberg (Netherlands) 70	6 SATURDAY Stefano Braschi (Italy) Michael Hyland (Republic of Ireland)	7 SUNDAY Sándor Berzi (Hungary) Lars-Åke Björck (Sweden) Michel Sablon (Belgium)
10 WEDNESDAY Hans Bangerter (Switzerland) Laura Dougan (Scotland) Eleni Kiriou (Greece) 50 Andrew Shaw (England)	11 THURSDAY Zoran Dimić (Serbia) Thorir Hákonarson (Iceland) Kristinn Jakobsson (Iceland)	12 FRIDAY Alain Courtois (Belgium) Haris Gvozden (Bosnia and Herzegovina) Jørn West Larsen (Denmark)	13 SATURDAY Roland Coquard (France) Matej Damjanović (Bosnia and Herzegovina) Targo Kaldjoja (Estonia)	14 SUNDAY Nuno Castro (Portugal) Galina Doneva (Bulgaria)	15 MONDAY Miguel Galán Torres (Spain) Georgios Godalias (Greece) 70 Viacheslav Koloskov (Russia) Vilma Zurze (Lithuania)	16 TUESDAY Sabri Çelik (Turkey) Alkan Ergün (Turkey) Kepa Larumbe (Spain) Ferrán Soriano (Spain)
19 FRIDAY Tobias Wolf (Germany)	20 SATURDAY Maria Mifsud (Malta) Maxim Mitrofanov (Russia) Pascal Parent (France)	21 SUNDAY Vakhtang Bzikadze (Georgia) Zoran Cvrk (Croatia) Ilja Kaenzig (Switzerland) Martin Malik (Czech Republic) 50 Paulius Malžinskas (Lithuania) 50 Tomasz Mikulski (Poland) Peter Peters (Germany)	22 MONDAY David Martin (Northern Ireland) Viktor Shvetsov (Ukraine)	23 TUESDAY Vladimir Antonov (Moldova) Leslie Irvine (Northern Ireland) Philippe Lafrique (France) Georg Pangl (Austria) Zvi Rosen (Israel)	24 WEDNESDAY Tom Borgions (Belgium) Benjamin Egli (Switzerland) Arturs Gaidelis (Latvia) Jeanette Good (Finland) 50 Hilmi Sinan Güreli (Turkey) 40 Jouni Hyttiä (Finland) Karlo Kankkunen (Finland) João Rocha (Portugal) Jean-Jacques Schonckert (Luxembourg) Renatus Temmink (Netherlands) 60	25 THURSDAY Mario Gjucinovski (North Macedonia) Michalis Koukoulakis (Greece)
28 SUNDAY Alessandro Giaquinto (San Marino) Wim Koevermans (Belgium) 60	29 MONDAY Ivan Borissov Lekov (Bulgaria) Orhan Erdemir (Turkey) Gyöngyi Gaál (Hungary) Ginta Pēce (Latvia) Michael Tschritzis (Greece) Paul-Daniel Zaharia (Romania)	30 TUESDAY Peter van Zunderd (Netherlands)				

8 MONDAY Johannes Scholtz (Netherlands) 70	9 TUESDAY Jonathan Ford (Wales) Petri Jakonen (Finland) Monica Jorge (Portugal) Jesper Møller Christensen (Denmark) Antoine Portelli (Malta) Andrey Vladov (Russia)
17 WEDNESDAY Michael Maessen (Netherlands) Markus Nobs (Switzerland) Anne Rei (Estonia) Paolo Rondelli (San Marino) Gregor Weimbs-Ackermann (Germany)	18 THURSDAY Elkhan Mammadov (Azerbaijan) Ivan Novak (Croatia) Hannelore Ratzburg (Germany)
26 FRIDAY Foppe de Haan (Netherlands) Nerijus Dunauskas (Lithuania) Kuno Tehva (Estonia)	27 SATURDAY Barry Bright (England) Ruud Dokter (Republic of Ireland) Aitor Elizegi Alberdi (Spain) Sigurdur Hannesson (Iceland) Eyjólfur Ólafsson (Iceland)



EQUAL GAME

