

# UEFA



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## KEEPING PACE WITH CHANGE

The latest Champions League  
technical report highlights  
football's tactical and  
technical trends





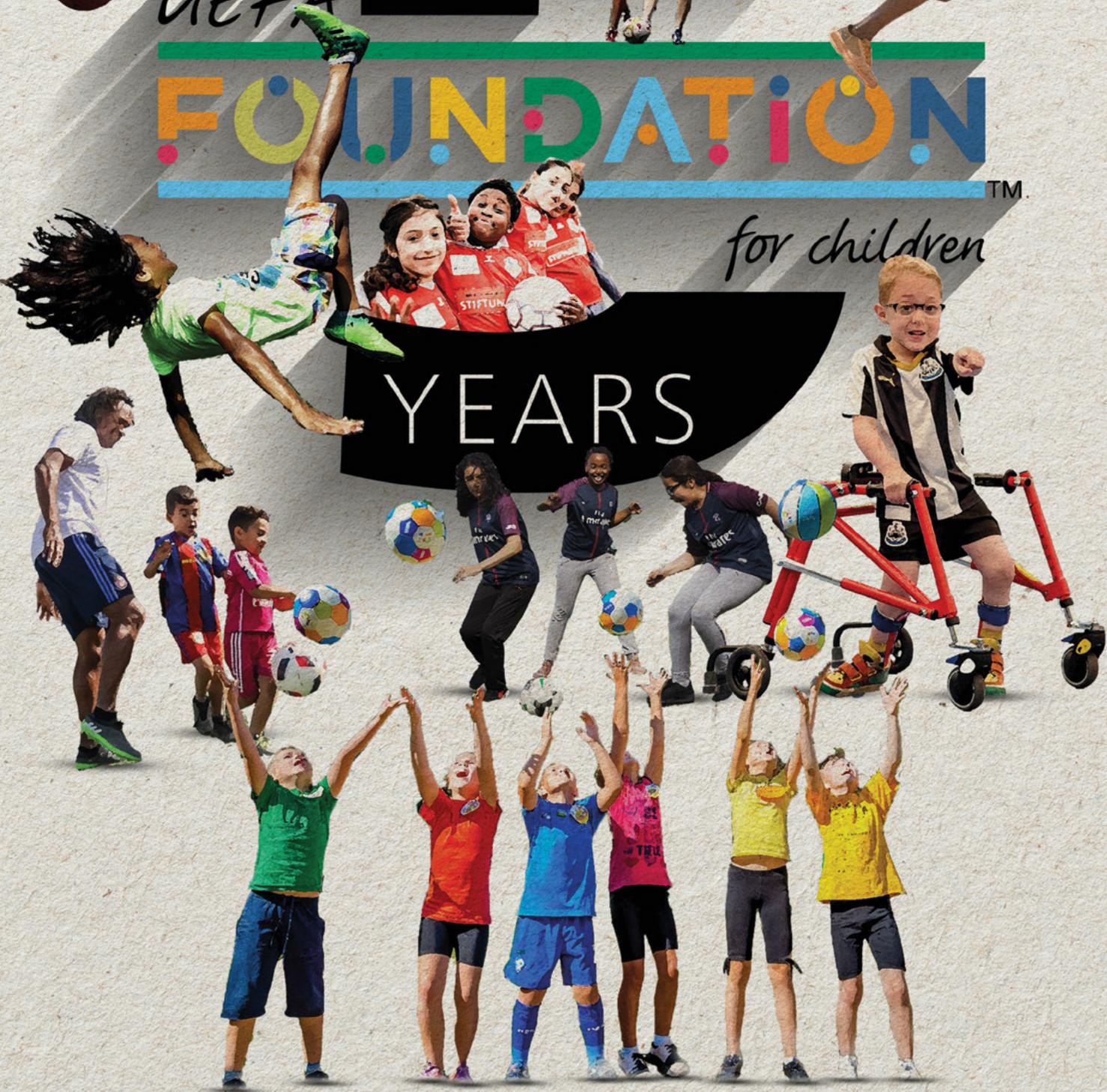
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## YEARS





**Aleksander Čeferin**  
UEFA President

# LEARNING LESSONS FROM A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

**F**ew events underline the rich diversity in culture across our continent than the way that nations welcome in the new year – from waltzing in Austria, or throwing out old clothes in Italy, to switching on taps in Turkey so that good luck can flow in. However, there is one tradition at the end of every year that unites almost every country in Europe and beyond: taking stock of the previous 12 months with a view to embarking on the future.

Football is no exception, not least after this tumultuous and extraordinary year. There are many lessons to draw from the way that governing bodies, national associations, leagues, clubs, players and fans have pulled together amid the coronavirus pandemic to adapt to unprecedented change. Three lessons stand out:

UEFA has a tried and tested formula in place for safely staging its competitions, with more than 1,000 club and national team matches completed since our return to play in August.

The Return to Play protocol, published in July, has established robust medical and operational standards for all UEFA competitions. No stone has been left unturned in our efforts to protect everyone involved in our matches, both on and off the field.

Football's popularity and reach bring an added social responsibility. In times of need, it has the power to support and strengthen communities.

National associations, leagues, clubs and players launched countless initiatives to help their local communities cope with national lockdowns. These included raising funds to purchase medical equipment, delivering food to elderly and vulnerable people, producing training videos about staying fit at home, and using football's enormous reach to deliver vital health messages.

In the past nine months, we have overcome a series of significant obstacles, any one of which would have seemed insurmountable in more normal times – rewriting the entire UEFA 2020/21 match calendar, reformatting and finishing four competitions in four weeks in August, piloting the safe return of a limited number of fans for the UEFA Super Cup match in Budapest, and postponing EURO 2020 by 12 months – a move which, among other things, also enabled 2019/20 domestic competition seasons across Europe to be brought to a conclusion when football returned in the summer.

In 2020, we have learned that by working together in a spirit of compromise and understanding, acting as a team and striving for the same objectives, the European football community can surmount any obstacle. It is a lesson that will serve us well in the future.

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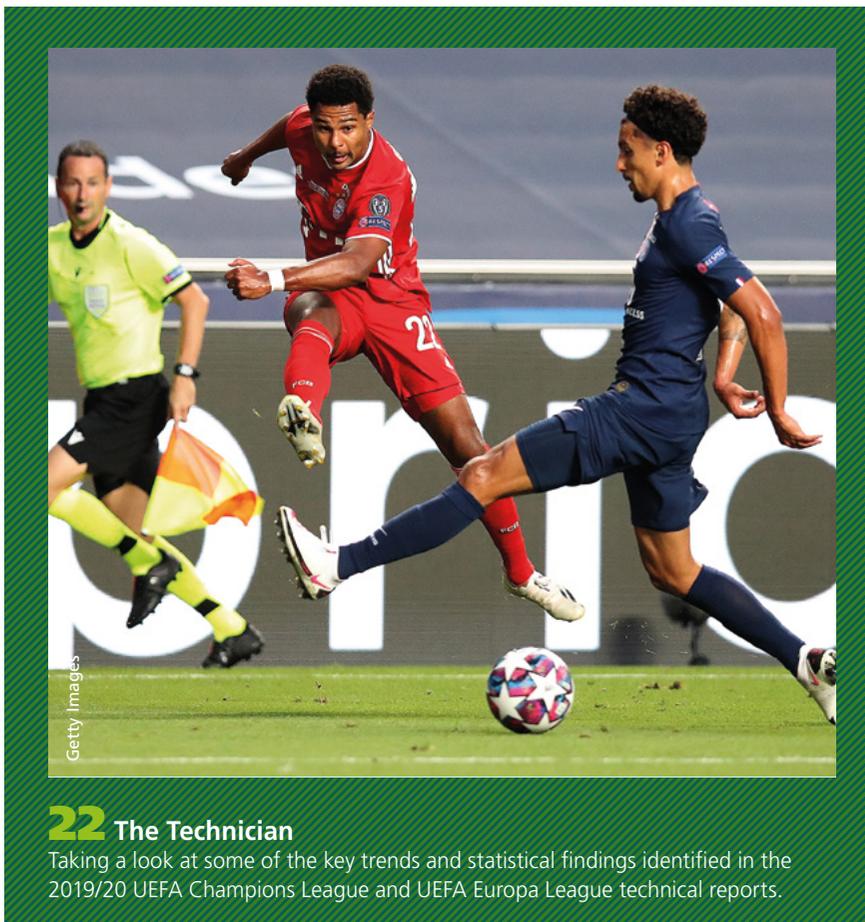
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UEFA

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Barça win an all-Spanish final.



Getty Images

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Italy will welcome France, Spain and Belgium for the UEFA Nations League finals in October 2021.

# EURO 2020 LINE-UP FINALISED

On a thrilling evening of football, Hungary, Slovakia, Scotland and North Macedonia claimed the final four of the 24 spaces at EURO 2020. Here we look back at the play-offs, for which qualification was based on results from the 2018/19 UEFA Nations League.



## Path A: Hungary leave it late to see off Iceland

Two of the surprise packages at EURO 2016 battled it out for one of the remaining EURO 2020 places. And, for a long time, Iceland, quarter-finalists in France, looked set to qualify for a third consecutive major tournament, having also competed at the 2018 World Cup.

Everton FC's Gylfi Sigurdsson, who had scored twice in the semi-finals against Romania (2-1), appeared on course to become a national hero after netting again with a stunning 11th-minute free-kick that deceived the Hungarian goalkeeper. But just as Hungary's dream of repeating their wonderful EURO 2016 campaign (when they reached the round of 16) seemed to be ebbing away came what might be dubbed the 'miracle of Budapest'.

In the space of four minutes, Iceland fell apart and the Hungarians found two new heroes of their own: first, Loïc Négo scored an 88th-minute equaliser, before even he was outdone by Dominik Szoboszlai, who



netted a superb winner in added time. Courted by some of Europe's giants, the 20-year-old ran from his own half, carrying the ball 30 metres before unleashing a shot that went in off the post to secure a 2-1 win.

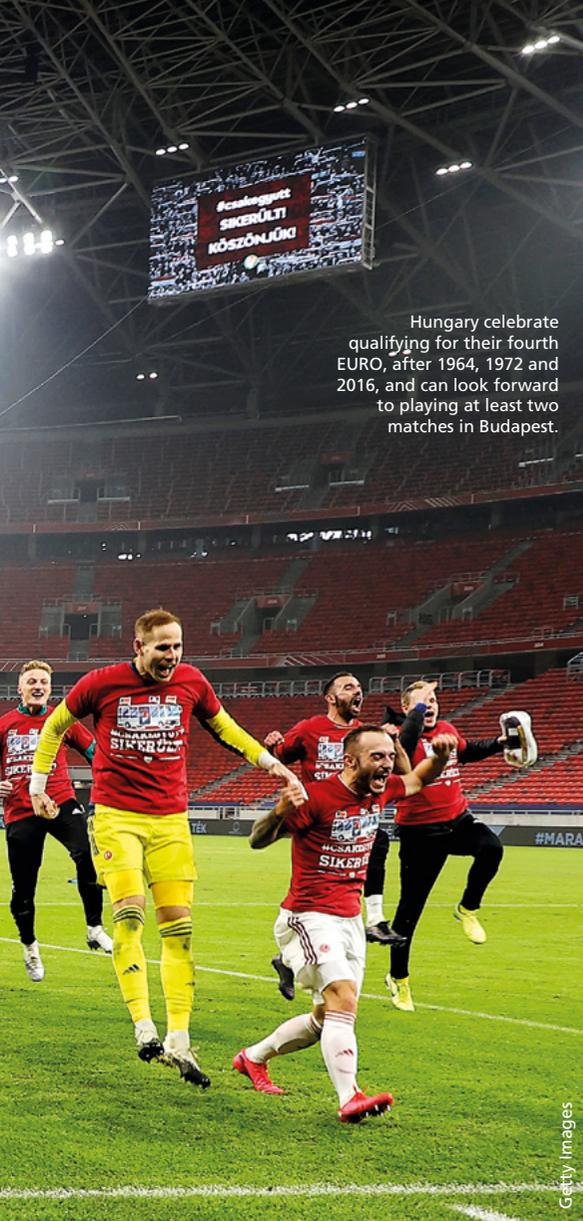
After a more comfortable semi-final win over Bulgaria (3-1), Hungary initially struggled against the Icelanders before securing a place in the European

After destroying the hopes of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in the play-offs, Slovakia will be returning to Dublin to meet Poland and Sweden in the group stage.

Championship finals for the fourth time in their history, where they will face France, Germany and Portugal in a tough-looking Group A.

## Path B: Slovakia rewarded at last

Having narrowly missed out on booking a place at EURO 2020 through the qualifying competition, when they finished just behind Croatia and Wales (but ahead of Hungary)



Hungary celebrate qualifying for their fourth EURO, after 1964, 1972 and 2016, and can look forward to playing at least two matches in Budapest.



After a 25-year wait, Scotland have qualified again for a major European men's tournament, with two matches at Hampden Park awaiting them, not to mention a meeting with England at Wembley.

### Path C: Scotland end a 25-year wait

Like Slovakia, Scotland experienced ups and downs aplenty and a true roller coaster of emotions that culminated in great national delight as the country reached the EURO for the first time since making consecutive appearances in 1992 and 1996. This was certainly no stroll in the park, with the Scots' place in the finals earned largely thanks to their composure from the penalty spot, where they overcame Israel in the semi-finals (0-0, 5-3 on penalties) and Serbia in the final (1-1, 5-4 on penalties). All ten Scottish penalties were converted, while their opponents missed one spot kick each to give Scotland victory on both occasions.

It could have been so much easier in Serbia, where home striker Luka Jović scored a last-gasp 90th-minute equaliser after Ryan Christie had opened the scoring after 52 minutes. During extra time, Serbia had chances to make amends for past failures (they have never reached a EURO since gaining independence), but Scotland held firm. When goalkeeper David Marshall saved Aleksandar Mitrović's penalty, he sent his entire country into raptures.

With young players who are used to playing at the top level, including Kieran Tierney (Arsenal FC), Andrew Robertson (Liverpool FC) and Scott McTominay (Manchester United FC), in their ranks, Scotland will be looking to cause a shock or two in Group D, where they will come up against England, Croatia and the Czech Republic.

### Path D: North Macedonia hit the jackpot

Prior to the path D play-offs, one thing was certain: the winning team would participate in their first-ever EURO, since Georgia, Belarus, Kosovo and North Macedonia had never previously qualified for European

football's biggest competition. After defeating Belarus 1-0 in the semi-finals, Georgia were within a whisker of their first final tournament, but it was North Macedonia who prevailed in the end, qualifying somewhat more comfortably than the other play-off winners.

A well-deserved 2-1 semi-final win at home to Kosovo, who had been favourites to win path D, was followed by a 1-0 victory on Georgian soil. To add further gloss to the North Macedonians' historic feat, the winning goal – an opportunistic, deft finish in the 56th minute – was scored by 37-year-old Goran Pandev. As captain, record cap holder (114) and top goalscorer (36), the Genoa AFC player is a true icon of his country's national team and his devotion to the cause was rewarded with a goal that sent fans wild in the streets of Skopje, capital city of the country which gained independence in 1991.

North Macedonia will not be the only debutants at EURO 2020, since Finland will also be appearing for the first time following a successful European Qualifiers campaign. However, getting past their Group C opponents – the Netherlands, Ukraine and Austria – will be no easy task. 🏆

in their group, Slovakia finally booked their ticket for the finals after two eventful play-off encounters. After being taken to the wire by the Republic of Ireland (0-0, 4-2 on penalties), the evergreen Marek Hamšík and his teammates faced Northern Ireland with a new coach at the helm.

Appointed just before the match, Štefan Tarkovič saw his side take the lead with a 17th-minute strike by Juraj Kucka, but they were pegged back in the 88th minute when defender Milan Škriniar put through his own net. With extra time secured, Northern Ireland could once again dream of repeating their memorable EURO 2016 exploits, when they reached the round of 16. However, their dreams were short-lived, thanks to a winning goal by striker Michal Ďuriš at the conclusion of a swift counterattack in the 110th minute.

Drawn in Group E with Spain, Sweden and Poland, Slovakia will be desperate to at least match their performance of 2016, when they too were eliminated in the round of 16.



North Macedonia knocked out Kosovo and Georgia to qualify for their first-ever EURO.

# A PRESTIGIOUS QUARTET

Belgium, France, Italy and Spain will contest the 2020/21 UEFA Nations League finals, which will be played in Italy in October 2021. Who will succeed Portugal, winners of the inaugural edition in 2019, is anyone's guess.

**T**he 2006, 2010 and 2018 world champions, together with Europe's most fashionable team of the moment: the line-up for the 2020/21 Nations League finals resembles the cast list for a blockbuster movie, with a completely new set of protagonists compared with the 2019 edition. What could be more natural for a competition in which European countries go toe to toe to see which of them make up the continent's current elite? In its second edition, UEFA's newest national team

competition confirmed that it truly merits its place in the European football calendar.

A new league structure had been introduced, with 16 teams in Leagues A, B and C, and seven in League D. The group winners in Leagues B, C and D would be promoted, while teams finishing bottom of the groups in Leagues A and B would be relegated. Two League C teams would be demoted to League D for the competition's third edition in 2022/23. These two teams would be determined through two-legged

play-offs involving the four teams finishing fourth in each League C group.

While League A, which provides the four finalists, is always bound to attract the most attention, the Nations League gives all 55 UEFA member associations plenty to play for. With promotion, relegation and possible 2022 World Cup play-off places at stake, there is excitement and drama at every level. Here we review the group phase, which was played between September and November 2020.



Raphaël Varane in action in France's 1-0 defeat of titleholders Portugal.

Italy will host the Nations League finals in 2021. Nicolò Barella during Italy's group match against Poland.



Getty Images

## LEAGUE **A**

### Group 1 Italy to host the finals

The final phase of the 2020/21 edition will be held in Milan and Turin from 6 to 10 October 2021, thanks in no small part to the recent exploits of the Squadra Azzurra. A candidate to host the finals alongside fellow group members Poland and the Netherlands, Italy was chosen after its national team finished top of Group 1 with 12 points from three wins and three draws. Italy secured first place with a convincing 2-0 final-matchday win over Bosnia and Herzegovina, who were relegated (4th, 2 points). Roberto Mancini's men owe their success to a number of factors: a solid defence (two goals conceded, the fewest in League A), a multifaceted strike force (seven goals by six different scorers) and a dogged refusal to be beaten. In fact, the Italians are now undefeated in 22 matches dating back to September 2018 and were too strong for Poland (3rd, 7 points) and even for a Dutch side (2nd, 11 points) that frequently

dazzled but were ultimately denied top spot after a 1-0 home defeat to Italy that swung the group in their visitors' favour.

### Group 2 Belgium, of course

Belgium's place among the European elite is clear from the simple fact that their qualification for the finals came as no surprise to anyone. Although their position as group winners was not confirmed until the final matchday, when they strolled to a 4-2 win over Denmark, the ever-impressive Romelu Lukaku (five goals) and his team-mates dominated the group. Amassing 15 points from five wins and a solitary defeat, their 16 goals put the Belgians at the top of the scoring charts across all 14 Nations League groups. The 2018 World Cup semi-finalists, who took no prisoners on their way to EURO 2020 qualification (ten wins in ten matches, 40 goals scored), will see their golden generation travel to Italy with high hopes of lifting their first international title, which would be a fitting reward for their flamboyant style of play. Behind the Belgians, Denmark (2nd, 10 points) and England (3rd, 10 points) were both in the

running for a long time before seeing their ambitions dashed when they lost, one after the other, in Belgium, where Roberto Martínez's players appear invincible (unbeaten in competitive matches since 2010). Iceland, who performed well below their recent standards, were relegated (4th, 0 points) and were the only one of the 55 teams to finish without a single point on the board.

### Group 3 France eliminate the holders

After winning EURO 2016 and the 2019 Nations League, could Portugal pull off a remarkable European treble? Their prospects looked good as the team led by Cristiano Ronaldo beat both Sweden and Croatia home and away thanks to some breathtaking performances. But the Portuguese (2nd, 13 points) ultimately fell to another European giant, France. After a goalless draw against the French had seemed to give Portugal a narrow advantage over the 2018 World Cup winners, they were dealt a killer blow in the group 'final' in Lisbon. With stars such as Varane, Kanté, Pogba and Griezmann in their ranks and a game plan reminiscent →



Getty Images

Romelu Lukaku scores Belgium's second goal against Denmark.

#### Group 4

##### Spain demolish the Germans

In one of the most headline-grabbing results of the competition, Spain, who had been flying somewhat under the radar since winning EURO 2008, the 2010 World Cup and EURO 2012, reminded everyone that they remain a great footballing nation by inflicting Germany's heaviest competitive match defeat (0-6) on the final matchday. A draw would have been enough to see Germany (2nd, 9 points) through to the finals, but Joachim Löw's men were torn apart by a rampant Spanish outfit, with Ferrán Torres bagging a hat-trick. Boasting a young team that is now beginning to show its true potential, Spain (1st, 11 points) will approach the final phase as much-fancied outsiders. As for the Germans, following their capitulation in Seville, Nations League success continues to elude the Mannschaft (two wins in ten matches in the two editions so far). However, they still did enough to finish ahead of Ukraine and Switzerland, who were prevented from facing each other a second time by positive COVID-19 test results in the Ukrainian squad. UEFA's disciplinary bodies awarded the match to Switzerland by forfeit, resulting in Ukraine's demotion to League B.

of their successful 2018 campaign in Russia, Les Bleus showed they are always ready for the big occasion by winning 1-0 in the Portuguese capital. In fact, their 16-point haul was not surpassed by another team in the entire competition. Behind France and Portugal, Croatia (3rd, 3 points), whose performances fell a long way short of the level that saw them reach the 2018 World Cup final, and Sweden (4th, 3 points), who were relegated to League B, were left to pick up the scraps.



#### Finals draw and schedule

##### Semi-finals

6 October: Italy v Spain  
(Stadio San Siro, Milan)

7 October: Belgium v France  
(Juventus Stadium, Turin)

##### Match for third place

10 October: Juventus Stadium, Turin

##### Final

10 October: Stadio San Siro, Milan



Getty Images

LEAGUE **B****Promotion for Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary and Wales**

For the 16 teams in League B, the number one aim was to win their group in order to secure a place under the League A spotlight. It was a challenge met with flying colours by Wales (Group 4 winners), who not only amassed the joint highest points total across all the Leagues (16, equal with France in League A), but also had the best defence, conceding just one goal. Finland provided the only real obstacle to the Welsh team's promotion to League A, but a convincing 3-1 win in their final match saw Gareth Bale and his compatriots see off their Nordic rivals once and for all.

Like Wales, Austria (Group 1 winners, 13 points) sealed top spot in their final home match against their closest challengers – Norway in this case. A draw (1-1) was enough for the Austrians, who won all three of their away fixtures. They were pushed all the way by a

Norwegian side led by the phenomenal Erling Haaland, who finished as the group phase's top scorer with six goals.

Meanwhile, leadership of the other two League B groups changed hands on the final matchday. In Group 2, the Czech Republic (1st, 12 points) beat Slovakia 2-0 to leapfrog Scotland (2nd, 10 points), who lost 1-0 in Israel. Although the Scots had beaten the Czechs twice, the latter came through by winning their other four matches, against Israel and Slovakia.

It was the same scenario in Group 3, where Hungary (1st, 11 points) edged out Russia (2nd, 8 points), who collapsed to a 5-0 defeat in Serbia in their final match while the Hungarians were securing a timely first home victory (2-0 against Turkey). After reaching the round of 16 at EURO 2016 and qualifying for EURO 2020 through the play-offs, Hungary showed that they once again merit a place at the top table of European football. After finishing fourth in their respective groups, Northern Ireland, Slovakia, Turkey and Bulgaria will play in League C in the next edition of the Nations League.

LEAGUE **C****Teams on the up**

A number of teams in League C climbed a step nearer the continent's elite by gaining promotion to League B at the end of this edition. Montenegro, whose watertight defence (2 goals conceded) was only breached by surprise package Luxembourg, were the first to move up (1st in Group 1, 13 points). Meanwhile, Armenia (1st in Group 2, 11 points) had the magnificent Tigran Barseghyan (four assists, more than any other player in any group) to thank after sealing promotion late on with a crucial 1-0 win over North Macedonia. Another team on the up, Slovenia (1st, 14 points), topped a low-scoring Group 3 (19 goals in 12 matches was the smallest total in any of the 14 groups) thanks, not surprisingly, to an impressive defensive record (1 goal conceded). It was fitting that Josip Iličić and his team-mates confirmed promotion with a 0-0 draw against their main rivals, Greece. Albania (1st in Group 4, 11 points) also left it late to secure top spot with a thrilling 3-2 win over Belarus in Tirana, in which the formidable Sokol Çikalleshi, scorer of four goals in total, netted a brace.

LEAGUE **D****Faroe Islands and Gibraltar seize their chance**

The seven teams in League D had been split into two groups, with a League C place on offer for each group winner. Group 1 was won by the unbeaten Faroe Islands (1st, 12 points), with four-goal Klæmint Olsen leading the way. In Group 2 – the only three-team group – Gibraltar (1st, 8 points) achieved the greatest feat in their (short) history, just seven years after contesting their first official match. Two wins in their first two matches set Los Llanis on course for League C. As a bonus, Gibraltar – like all 14 group winners – will be given the chance of a place in the 2022 World Cup play-offs, since two of the 14 Nations League group winners will be selected from those that do not qualify for Qatar directly or reach the play-offs through the qualifying competition. 🌐

In Seville, Spain handed Germany their worst defeat in a competitive match.



# NEW APRIL DATE FOR UEFA'S CONGRESS

The postponement of the 45th Ordinary UEFA Congress until April 2021 and host venue appointments were among the decisions taken by UEFA's Executive Committee at its latest meeting, held by videoconference on 3 December.

**W**ith UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin in the chair, the committee decided to postpone the date of the next Ordinary UEFA Congress from 2 March to 20 April 2021. The Congress will be held in Montreux, Switzerland. The postponement has no effect on deadlines for candidatures for the UEFA Executive Committee (2 January 2021) or FIFA Council elections (2 December 2020).

## Albania to host first UEFA Europa Conference League final

The Albanian capital, Tirana, and the city's National Arena were chosen by the committee to host the inaugural final of the UEFA Europa Conference League in 2022. This new UEFA club competition begins next season, and will feature 184 teams in total over the 2021/22 campaign, including at least one from each of UEFA's 55 member associations and 46 clubs transferring from either the UEFA Champions League or UEFA Europa League (more details on page 13).

## UEFA Nations League finals in Italy

Turning to national team football, Italy will host the finals of the 2021 UEFA Nations League in October 2021, with the two semi-finals, the third-place match and the final taking place at two iconic venues in northern Italy – the Juventus Stadium in Turin and the Stadio San Siro in Milan.

Following the draw, which took place on the same day as the Executive Committee's videoconference, Italy will take on Spain in the first semi-final in Milan on Wednesday 6 October, and Belgium will face France in Turin the following day. The third-place match will be staged in Turin on Sunday 10 October, with the final following in Milan on the same day.

## 2023 Under-21 finals co-hosted by Georgia and Romania

Georgia and Romania were appointed as co-hosts of the 16-team European Under-21 Championship final tournament in 2023, with four stadiums in Romania

(two in Cluj-Napoca and two in Bucharest) and four in Georgia (Batumi, Poti and two in Tbilisi). The opening match will take place in Romania and the final will be held in Georgia.

## Armenia/Azerbaijan match ban lifted

Following the ceasefire that was agreed between Armenia and Azerbaijan on 9 November 2020, and taking all circumstances into account, the Executive Committee was told that, following an assessment of the situation, the conditions to stage UEFA matches in both countries could now be met.

Consequently, the committee decided to remove the ban imposed on 20 October 2020 on UEFA competition matches being played in Armenia and Azerbaijan. 🌐

The Executive Committee held its meeting on 3 December by videoconference.





Getty Images

The National Arena in Tirana will host the very first Europa Conference League final on 25 May 2022.

# WELCOME TO THE UEFA EUROPA CONFERENCE LEAGUE

Next season heralds the start of a new UEFA men's club competition – the UEFA Europa Conference League – which will make UEFA's club competitions more inclusive than ever.

**T**he competition's creation was approved by the UEFA Executive Committee at its meeting in Dublin in December 2018, and will provide more matches for more clubs.

The UEFA Europa Conference League – which will run throughout the 2021–24 cycle at least – was borne out of dialogue between UEFA and the European Club Association (ECA), and responds to a widespread demand from clubs to increase their chances of participating more regularly in European competitions.

## How the competition will work

A total of 184 teams will be involved over the course of the inaugural 2021/22 season, including at least one from each of UEFA's 55 member associations and 46 clubs transferring from either the UEFA Champions League or UEFA Europa League.

A qualifying phase in July/August 2021 [three qualifying rounds and a play-off

round (split into a main path and a champions path for those transferring from the UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League champions path)] will be followed by a 32-team group phase (September–December 2021) featuring eight groups of four teams, followed in spring 2022 by knockout round play-offs, the round of 16, quarter-finals, semi-finals and the final.

## Final in Tirana

The 32 group-stage teams will comprise:

- 17 teams from the UEFA Europa Conference League main path
- 5 teams from the UEFA Europa Conference League champions path
- 10 teams eliminated in the UEFA Europa League play-offs

The eight group winners automatically go through to the last 16. Additional knockout round play-offs will then be played before the round of 16 between the eight group runners-up and the third-ranked teams of

the UEFA Europa League groups.

The 21,690-capacity National Arena in Tirana, Albania, will stage the first final on 25 May 2022, as announced by the UEFA Executive Committee on 3 December 2020. The stadium was built, with the help of UEFA's HatTrick assistance programme, on the site of the former Qemal Stafa Stadium in the centre of the Albanian capital.

The UEFA Europa Conference League fixtures will take place on Thursdays alongside UEFA Europa League games (though the final in Tirana will be a week after the 2022 UEFA Europa League final in Sevilla). Matches in the two competitions will in principle be equally split between the two time slots: 18:45 CET (no longer 18:55) and 21:00 CET.

The winners will earn a place in the following season's UEFA Europa League group stage if they have not qualified for the UEFA Champions League via their domestic competition. 🍀



# HOSTS BARÇA TRIUMPH IN FIRST ALL-SPANISH FINAL

The concluding act of the 2019/20 season ends in glory for Barça.





Asadov (KPRF) levels the score against Barça in the semi-finals, but it was the Catalan side that made it through to the final.

UEFA FUTSAL CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

**Semi-finals – 9 October**

ElPozo Murcia FS - MFK Tyumen 2-1 (1-0)  
 Barça - Sport Club KPRF 3-3 (2-1)\*\*  
 \*\*Barça qualify 5-4 on penalties

**Third place – 11 October**

Sport Club KPRF - MFK Tyumen 2-2 (0-1)\*\*  
 \*\*KPRF win 3-1 on penalties

**Final – 11 October**

Barça – ElPozo Murcia FS 2-1 (2-0)



It took more than 13 months from the start of qualifying to the final act of the 2019/20 UEFA Futsal Champions League season, but it was worth the wait for Barça, who clinched the title for the third time in their Palau Blaugrana.

There was an inevitable air of uncertainty as the ball eventually started rolling in Catalonia. Not only had the date for the final four been put back from April to October; the venue had also relocated from Minsk as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Furthermore, the consequent restrictions and limitations on regular match and training regimes meant, as Tyumen coach Nikolai Ivanov predicted on the eve of the final four, that the true level of the participants could only be gauged when the action commenced.

Ivanov was talking from experience. Injuries and COVID-19 deprived him of the likes of Artem Antoshkin, Aleksandr Upalev, Andrey Batyrev, Sergey Krykun and Denis Nevedrov – all key members of the team that had booked their place in the finals way back in November 2019 with a 3-1 victory over the defending champions, Sporting Clube de Portugal.

**Tactical tweaks in the semis**

Ivanov deployed a tactic familiar in his team's Russian league games, but unexpected in the final four. Goalkeeper Leonardo Gugiel spent almost as much time in the Murcia half as he did inside his own area and what came as a surprise to the Spaniards was also not entirely out of Ivanov's initial playbook. "We would not have played him as flying keeper as much as we did if we had had our full squad of players available," he admitted. As a result, both teams and the coaches on the touchline found themselves exploring new tactical ways to make a breakthrough, and it was Murcia coach Diego Giustozzi's repeated tweaks and modifications that ultimately bore fruit. Goals from Rafa and Alberto García sandwiched a strike from the polyvalent Sergei Abramovich to set up the first half of a maiden all-Spanish final.

Barça did not have their fans to fall back on, despite holding home advantage for their clash with KPRF – a game Andreu Plaza's men almost let slip. Sergio Lozano and Ferrao gave the hosts what appeared to be a comfortable lead against the Russian champions, but former Barça

player Romulo put a completely different complexion on the game with a half-time buzzer-beating strike. Yanar Asadov levelled in the second half and the two teams exchanged blows again before a penalty shoot-out determined the winner, with Lozano netting the decisive penalty for Barça.

KPRF came from behind also in the all-Russian third-place play-off between the sides who had become the 19th and 20th participants in this final four competition, earning another penalty shoot-out. This time it was Lin, whose miss had proved crucial in the semi-final, who converted the winner to earn KPRF the bronze medal.

**Tactical innovations in the final**

In spite of the lack of game and training time ahead of the finals, the quality of the teams' preparation was lauded by UEFA technical observer Miguel Rodrigo, who identified plenty of tactical variety and, in particular, innovation being used in order to obtain an edge. As two familiar foes lined up for the final, it was therefore intriguing to see who would be able to outwit whom.

Murcia made their intentions known immediately, employing a consistent high press that smothered their opponents, all the while blocking the supply line to Ferrao. That is easier said than done, however, and when Barça did manage to find Ferrao in space they drew first blood with a deflected effort. Murcia remained calm and continued to dominate proceedings, but they suffered another sucker punch as Aicardo increased Barça's lead, again with the aid of a deflection. Although Leo Santana gave Murcia hope, Didac Plana came into his own to help Barça see it out for their third title, after 2012 and 2014, and the first for their coach, Andreu Plaza. "It's probably the most important title in my life," said the Barça coach, who thanked his club's directors and management for believing in him and their project.

It was certainly worth the wait for Plaza and Barça, as it was for futsal aficionados who finally got to see the conclusion of a competition that had commenced on 27 August 2019 in Nicosia, Cyprus, and ended on 11 October 2020 at the Palau Blaugrana. 🏆

# SHINING A LIGHT ON OUR UNSUNG HEROES

UEFA announced the winners of its annual Grassroots Awards in November, recognising the outstanding work done by individuals and organisations across the continent – from Germany to Georgia, via Denmark, Italy and Poland.

**L** launched in 2010, the Grassroots Awards reward excellence and shine a light on some of European football's unsung heroes. Each of our 55 national associations are invited to nominate candidates each year, with award winners

then selected by UEFA's Executive Committee, following recommendations made by the organisation's Grassroots Panel bureau and Development and Technical Assistance Committee.

Frederiksberg Boldklub,  
in the Danish capital of  
Copenhagen, the 2020 UEFA  
Grassroots Award winners for  
Best Grassroots Club.





#### BEST GRASSROOTS PROJECT

## Etnoliga (Poland)



Etnoliga, an initiative promoting diversity and inclusion in Poland's capital city, is the 2020 UEFA Grassroots Award winner for Best Grassroots Project.

Etnoliga is a social programme in the Polish capital, Warsaw, that promotes diversity through its annual football league for immigrant communities and looks to support refugees as well as empower women, LGBT+ and other underprivileged groups. Set up by the non-profit organisation Foundation for Freedom, or Fundacji dla Wolności, it began in 2005 as a one-off tournament involving asylum seekers and local youngsters and has developed into a significant cross-cultural sporting initiative. Since 2010 it has organised an annual league competition for around 20 teams. Players decide on the rules at the start of each season and every team is required to include three men and three women, and players of three different nationalities.

A member of the UEFA partner Fare network, Etnoliga promotes diversity, inclusivity and understanding, with a particular focus on helping refugee communities. This year, it began a programme of regular activities in the Debak refugee camp south of Warsaw, with the support of Fare and the Chelsea Foundation.

Offering non-formal education and counselling, Etnoliga helps to pass on language skills and cultural information. Its outstanding work has gained previous recognition, with a place on the shortlists for the Beyond Sport Global Awards in 2017 and the #BeInclusive EU Sport Awards in 2019.

#### **In their own words: 'Involving refugees in society'**

"The idea behind Etnoliga was born 15 years ago when I took an interest in the fate of refugees in Warsaw and thought that football could be a way of somehow involving them in society," says Etnoliga founder Krzysztof Jarymowicz. "I proposed we all play a game, they jumped at the idea, and that's how we organised the first tournament.

"Etnoliga is a place where you can meet people from different countries, get to know their cultural background. We emphasise the fact that it is for both men and women, for everyone, regardless of where they were born, what they believe in, who they are, what they do on a daily basis.

"We have also tried from the beginning to mediate between refugees and various organisations that provide specialised services to refugees – to connect them, to help them, to show them who can help them."



#### **Rinus, the online assistant coach (Netherlands, silver)**

Rinus is a free online tool developed by the Royal Netherlands Football Association (KNVB) for all grassroots coaches in the Netherlands. The app contains exercises, training sessions, multi-week training plans, and a video and information library – accessed by around 25,000 coaches per month. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it has provided 80,000 coaches with special exercises and training sessions designed to comply with social distancing rules.



#### **Football in Prison (Spain, bronze)**

In 2007, the Royal Spanish Football Federation (RFEF), in partnership with the Spanish prison service, launched a programme to achieve social integration through football. The RFEF delivers equipment to regional federations, who distribute it in turn to prisons, organising sports schools and competitions which are self-managed, with inmates encouraged to act, for example, as referees or committee members. Each prison then selects a team of players who, depending on their situation, can compete against other prisons.

## BEST DISABILITY INITIATIVE

## Quarta Categoria (Italy)



Quarta Categoria (4th Category) is the 2020 UEFA Grassroots Award winner for Best Disability Initiative after opening the door to organised football for thousands of disabled players.

Founded in 2016, Quarta Categoria – now called the Divisione Calcio Paralimpico e Sperimentale (Paralympic and experimental football division) – is responsible for arranging Italy's first major football tournament for players with a cognitive impairment, learning disability or other mental health issue. The project, created at regional level in collaboration with various grassroots clubs, agencies and local non-profit organisations, has grown into a national initiative with a consequent increase in participation. More than 80 professional clubs are now involved in supporting teams, along with national disability organisations.

Quarta Categoria's goal is to encourage participation in disability football and its first milestone event was in January 2017 – a seven-a-side national football tournament involving nine teams, each of them 'adopted' by a professional club. By 2018/19 there were 116 clubs involved from across 11 regions of Italy, ensuring an opportunity to play football for some 3,000 players.

With only one month of training possible since February owing to the lockdown, Quarta Categoria's clubs have provided alternative activities, including a FIFA esports tournament, an online

athletic preparation course for team coaches and an online platform to enable 'team' training from home.

### In their own words: 'Emotions, friendships and satisfaction'

"These were boys and girls with cognitive communication difficulties," says Marco Brunelli, general secretary of the Italian Football Association. "They had a social life in which they weren't able to play football like everyone else. The questions seemed stupid and the answer seemed obvious: 'Yes, of course you can play football.' But in reality, at that moment there were no organised activities within the association for those boys and girls."

Coach Marco Di Pirro has seen the benefits to players first-hand. "I've been the coach of [ACPD] Blue Star [Roma] for over ten years," he says. "The fundamental characteristic of my team – and it's something I'm really proud of – is that on the pitch they embody the values of a proper team, i.e. they show respect for the kick-off times, for the rules and the kits."

It is a sentiment echoed by Lazio for Special coach Ranieri Romani, who adds: "We've been participating in this tournament for four years, in the Quarta Categoria. For me, playing football helps these great guys to feel the great emotions of being part of a group, to build lifelong friendships and, who knows, maybe even to have a certain amount of personal satisfaction."



Giampiero Sposito



### Special Power League – football league for disabled children run by Health Life Academy Star League (Croatia, silver)

The Croatian Football Federation has taken big strides in the past two years with the launch of the Special Power League for disabled children. Working together with an NGO, the Health Life Academy, it arranges four tournaments annually, involving more than 200 disabled children. This is a national, long-term project, rather than a one-off activity, with all top-flight clubs joining forces to use football as a platform for the social integration of disabled youngsters.



### Special activities for special kids (Ypatingos treniruotės) (Lithuania, bronze)

'Special activities for special kids' is a grassroots football initiative for kindergartens aimed at children with physical and learning disabilities. The Lithuanian Football Federation's grassroots department, in cooperation with kindergartens, schools and Special Olympics Lithuania, created a festival involving a variety of simple physical activities, many football-based. The initiative was launched in Vilnius five years ago in partnership with FK Žalgiris and is now supported by several professional football clubs, with players assisting the children by demonstrating skills and presenting them with prizes.

**BEST GRASSROOTS LEADER**

## Jessy Surmava (Georgia)



Jessy Surmava's work in establishing a football school for youngsters in western Georgia earned him recognition with the 2020 UEFA Grassroots Award for Best Grassroots Leader.

UEFA chose to honour Jessy Surmava with its Best Grassroots Leader award for his vision and determination in establishing a football school in Martvili, a small town in Samegrelo province in western Georgia. Surmava began planning his town's first-ever football school in 2011 with the goal of increasing participation in football for children at a local level. To realise this vision, Surmava sought and obtained various government grants and, with the support of the local municipality, was able to secure a venue close to Martvili, which opened in January 2018.

The Children's Football Academy of Martvili holds training sessions at different venues across the region, where it is difficult for children to travel long distances. It runs a total of 12 teams that cater for up to 300 children in a region which has been lacking a strong grassroots infrastructure. The school makes a significant contribution to the development of football in the region and it is a measure of its importance that Georgia's ministries of sport and infrastructure, as well as the Georgian Football Federation, all sent representatives to its opening two years ago.

On opening, Surmava's academy signed



Lasha Kuprashvili

Jessy Surmava

a memorandum of cooperation with the reigning national champions Dinamo Tbilisi in the capital city, nearly 300km away.

**In his own words: 'A big motivation and fuel for future projects'**

"I would like to thank UEFA and all the people involved in the process for these Grassroots Awards," Jessy said. "It's not only an award for me; it's a big motivation and fuel to drive me for future projects. I will use this award to do more things, more activities, more projects. My persona will be stronger after this and I will try hard to be a role model for other guys like me in grassroots football.

"It plays an important role in [children's] personal development. Above all, they can live healthy lives. We can give hundreds and thousands of people a chance to adopt a healthy lifestyle. That's crucial."

Levan Kobiashvili, president of the Georgian Football Federation and a former international star, is extremely proud of the coach. "I wish we had people like Jessy in every region," he said. "Jessy is and has become an example to so many other people. This project has played a huge role in the sense that we have a lot more people, more children, involved today and more children play football than before."



**Brian Sloan**  
(Northern Ireland, silver)

Now in his 70s, Brian has devoted his life to grassroots football and, specifically, to Brookvale FC. Formed in the Bessbrook area of County Armagh during the troubles in Northern Ireland, Brookvale was and remains a huge part of the community. Brian has filled numerous roles there: chairman, coach, manager, grass cutter, money collector, bus driver and many more. Moreover, he has provided opportunities for young players seriously affected by the situation in Northern Ireland, using the power of sport to help bring together both sides of the community during fractious times.



**Klyuev Pavel Aleksandrovich**  
(Russia, bronze)

Klyuev Pavel Aleksandrovich is a sports coach and organiser of a street football league in the mountainous Russian republic of Buryatia in eastern Siberia. He began by organising a competition for teams in several districts close to his home in Ulan-Ude, capital of Buryatia, before expanding it into a large-scale event for teams from all over the republic. He has also created a student futsal league and his aim is to increase the participation of children and teenagers in sporting activities, steering them towards a healthy lifestyle.

**BEST PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL CLUB**

## SV Werder Bremen (Germany)



SV Werder Bremen's outstanding community work, notably a groundbreaking programme with schools and nurseries, earned the Bundesliga club the 2020 UEFA Grassroots Award for Best Professional Football Club.

SV Werder Bremen have always been more than just a football club – rather, a multisports organisation with separate athletics, chess, handball, table tennis, fitness and gymnastics divisions.

Yet their social impact has grown impressively this century after they became the first football club in Germany to establish a community programme and create a partnership initiative with schools, the '100 Schools, 100 Clubs' project set up in 2002.

Today, Werder's social engagement work includes projects for people with disabilities and for refugees, and a walking football initiative for the over-60s. On top of that, the club has not lost sight of the importance of its long-established grassroots football programme, with 22 grassroots teams run under the supervision of around 50 coaches (female and male).

Werder's recognition by UEFA follows, above all, the success of its Ball Schools scheme – or Ballschule – which provides supplementary PE lessons at 14 nursery schools and 16 primary schools in Bremen. These are schools where there are no PE teachers or no provision for sports activities, yet Werder's presence offers their pupils the opportunity to participate in sport and exercise as well as to learn important social values.

So many other children benefit too from Werder's efforts, which, since 2015,

have also included an annual inclusion day (sponsored by the DFL Foundation and Aktion Mensch), offering sports activities for visually impaired children and teenagers.

**In their own words:**  
**'Sport can open doors'**

"At Werder Bremen, we are convinced that sport can open doors and create new opportunities for young people with disabilities or from minority groups in ways that would not otherwise be possible," explains Henrik Oesau, Werder Bremen CSR project manager. "Sport can be the means [for doing that]. That is why we work on this project with such passion.

"We dedicate our work to specific target groups – children with disabilities or from minority groups and child refugees.

"The pandemic has forced us to be creative, to stay in touch with our groups to show that they are still part of a team, so they can feel the trust and support of that team. We will continue our work and try to use the power of football and Werder Bremen's logo to make a positive difference to our society."

Former Werder player and coach Thomas Schaaf, who is now the club's technical director, believes it has a responsibility to the local community. "As a big football club, we need to understand that we receive so much, that the fans put their trust in us, everyone involved makes a huge effort to be part of it," he explains. "We benefit from this commitment. I believe it's important that we give commitment back."



**Shakhtar Social**  
(Ukraine, silver)

Shakhtar Social is a non-profit foundation established by FC Shakhtar Donetsk in 2018 to implement the club's social and charitable projects, as well as to develop children's grassroots football in Ukraine. Shakhtar Social runs the 'Come On, Let's Play!' project aimed at promoting children's football and allows disabled children – boys and girls, aged from 7 to 16 – to participate in free football sessions in six Ukrainian cities. Participants include youngsters with autism, cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome and hearing impairments, and the project helped Shakhtar Social win the UN Partnership for Sustainability Award in December 2019.



**Dundee United Community Trust**  
(Scotland, bronze)

The Dundee United Community Trust (DUCT) has developed an education programme in partnership with local primary schools that benefits over 300 children. Titled Shoot Back in Time, the project uses the environment of a football club to engage pupils in numeracy, literacy and communication skills. The DUCT currently runs a mental health football team and plans to launch an amputee football activity across the city as well as weekly sessions for physically disabled children. It set up Dundee United Women's FC in 2017 to involve more local women in football and the team have already won a league cup, two league titles and promotion to the second tier of the Scottish Women's Premier League (SWPL 2).



Per Kjærbye

**BEST GRASSROOTS CLUB**

## Frederiksberg Boldklub (Denmark)



Frederiksberg Boldklub, from the Danish capital of Copenhagen, are the 2020 UEFA Grassroots Award winners for Best Grassroots Club thanks to their outstanding work with players of all ages.

Founded in 1912, the club demonstrate an inclusive approach to the game, running teams for people of all abilities – boys and girls, juniors and seniors. Frederiksberg promote fair play among all their teams, and, having been recognised at national level for their work, are now being honoured by UEFA.

Frederiksberg Boldklub's commitment to social responsibility reaches far beyond football and their members. Over their 108-year history, the club have committed to being a positive influence within their community and, in recent years, have joined forces with the Danish Refugee Council to provide playing opportunities for refugee children and youngsters from marginalised families, helping them integrate into society and enjoy the physical and mental health benefits of playing football.

In collaboration with diabetes and heart

charities, FB also offer football-based fitness training for older people and men and women with dementia, as well as a team for children aged between one and three.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, the club arranged a variety of activities including online bingo events on Facebook and self-training videos whereby two youth players each day had to perform a challenge. There was also efootball (for youth members), and referee training (for players and coaches) via the Danish Football Association's virtual clubhouse.

**In their own words: 'Football is for everyone'**

"We are a football club for everyone, from the youngsters to the 'old boys' at 50, 60, 70 years old. And there is room for everyone, women, men, girls, boys," says Martin Busk, the club's head of administration.

"We can offer children and youngsters from the entire county, as well as the capital city, a lot of content in their everyday lives that keeps them away from



**Chadderton Park Sports Club (England, silver)**

At Chadderton Park, inclusivity defines the club's entire ethos. The club welcomes players of all abilities and believes fun is more important than winning. It now has over 90 different teams for children, seniors, disabled players and people with cerebral palsy, demonstrating that a football club is more than the name suggests and can truly be the heart of a community.



**Greenisland Football Club (Northern Ireland, bronze)**

Greenisland is a community-orientated club for juniors and seniors with around 400 players and 100 volunteers who ensure playing opportunities for male, female and disability groups. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the club have continued to serve their members and the local area, delivering food packages to community groups and medication from pharmacies to people in need. They have also offered online skills competitions and football fun packs for their junior members.

challenges in life. It's important because football is for everyone regardless of level or the colour of your skin. Football should be fun primarily. To me, it's important that the club can embrace all kinds of people. It's also a part of our DNA to show fair play towards the opponent, teammates, the coach and the referees. Therefore, we are very inclusive and have a lot of focus on that among our young members."



Getty Images

With 15 goals, Bayern's Robert Lewandowski – in action here in the final against PSG – was the 2019/20 competition's top scorer.



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# INVESTIGATING THE TRENDS

The UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League technical reports offer an analysis of the key trends and statistical findings identified in 2019/20, starting with a rare flood of goals...

**G**oals, goals, goals. The 2019/20 UEFA Champions League saw an unprecedented flow of them. There were some stunning scorelines – not least 8-2 and 7-2 wins for eventual champions FC Bayern München – and a total of 386 goals struck across 119 matches. There had been more scored in the 2017/18 season but that total of 401 goals came from 125 matches; the COVID-affected 2019/20 campaign had six fewer fixtures and thus concluded with a goals-per-game ratio of 3.24 – the UEFA Champions League’s highest since its current format was established.

The rush of goals meant a fall in scoreless draws to four – the lowest since 1998/99 – and with the UEFA Europa League mirroring the pattern with just seven stalemates in its 197 games (only one in the knockout rounds), UEFA’s end-of-term technical reports had one very pressing question to reflect on: why all the goals?

According to Roberto Martínez, the Belgium coach and one of UEFA’s team of technical observers who helped produce the reports, this surfeit of goals was the result of a “trend of global football” involving coaches favouring a high-pressing, high-risk attacking strategy.

It was not hard to find examples in 2019/20: consider the UEFA Champions League newcomers from Italy, Atalanta BC, who played one v one across the pitch and conceded 18 goals on an exciting run to the last eight. Among the 16 clubs in the UEFA Champions League knockout rounds, Martínez noted that only Club Atlético de Madrid and Olympique Lyonnais employed a counterattacking approach, while Cosmin Contra, another of UEFA’s team of observers, put it more bluntly: “Now teams play in the other half and this leaves space at the back.”

If football in 2020 is part of the entertainment business, as another technical observer reflected, the desire showed by coaches to meet expectations of attractive football, playing out from the back and through the thirds, brings a clear element of risk. Gareth Southgate, the England coach and UEFA observer, reflects in the UEFA Champions League technical report that: “If you don’t get it absolutely spot on, then they’ll play through you and you’re in trouble.” Indeed that risk was exacerbated in 2019/20 with it being the first season when goalkeepers could play a goal kick short to a teammate in the penalty box, and their success or otherwise with this new ploy was another topic analysed in the reports.

## Unfamiliar final formats

“While there were two familiar names etched into the respective trophies at the end of 2019/20 – with Bayern’s sixth European Cup/UEFA Champions League title and Sevilla FC’s sixth UEFA Cup/UEFA Europa League success – UEFA’s technical reports dwell too on the highly unfamiliar backdrop against which both competitions concluded following the spring lockdown.

“Try to imagine in the theatre, actors trying to perform to empty chairs,” says the technical observer from Poland, Jerzy Engel, in the UEFA Europa League technical report. Yet more than one observer felt that the Paris Saint-Germain players, for example, profited from the altered format by finding a focus and intensity which helped them reach their first UEFA Champions League final. They also considered the impact of one-off matches rather than the customary two-legged ties – something, says Southgate, that allowed for “more possibility for unusual results”. That said, according to another of the observers quoted, Israel coach Willi Ruttensteiner, the format with which the old season ended, while enjoyable, should be a one-off: “With these knockout matches, there’s a decision on the day, so it’s exciting, but I think of the full stadiums and home and away games and what it means to the clubs.” →



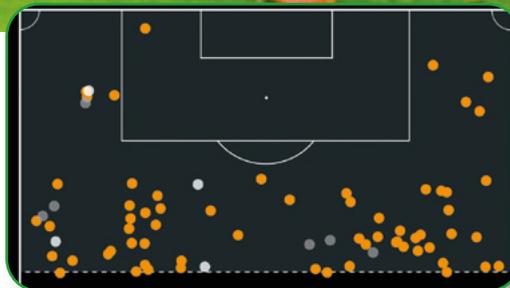
Sevilla players swarm Paul Pogba in the semi-final against Manchester United.

Getty Images

**PRESSING**

**The pressing question**

A successful pressing game entails striking the right balance between risk and reward – something that Bayern and Sevilla achieved to spectacular effect.



**Sevilla pressing**

- High turnovers 73
- Ending in a shot 10
- Ending in a goal 4

The 2020 UEFA Champions League technical report details how high pressing carries a degree of risk, but that it can also bring with it ample reward. With UEFA Europa League winners Sevilla also striking it rich with a competition-leading high press, it is fair to claim that the winning formula was made by striking the right balance; blending boldness with bravura.

The dynamic attacking play which contributed to the record average number of goals per game in the UEFA Champions League in 2019/20 was one of the standout trends observed in the competition. Clubs are not merely looking to appeal to their global audience by employing a more entertaining brand of football, however. They are doing so

to be successful. Bayern were a prime example of how a high press can, when used effectively, be lethal. Forty-four times Hansi Flick’s men got a shot in on goal within 15 seconds of a turnover, yet they rarely looked in any danger defensively, with an outstanding team organisation and collective trust catching the eye of Gareth Southgate. “You can see the angles of approach, the coordination of the pressing,” he said, echoing the words of his fellow UEFA observer Roberto Martínez, who was even more explicit in apportioning much of the merit for this disciplined approach to Flick.

Bayern were not by any means alone in attempting to win possession back in the final third, though their efficiency was

unrivalled. The 2019 semi-finalists AFC Ajax, for example, allowed fewer passes to their opponents than any other club before intervening in a bid to win the ball back, their average of 7.5 marginally better than Bayern’s 7.9. However, as can be seen, their 31 high turnovers only led to four shots on goal, none of which found the target. Meanwhile, Liverpool FC had led the way in 2019, yet they struggled to sustain the same sort of success in trying to defend their title, with just eight shots coming from their 41 high turnovers. The Reds followed Bayern and preceded Manchester City FC for PPDA (Passes Allowed per Defensive Action), confirming their willingness and preference to press in all areas of the

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 "If you don't get it absolutely spot on, then they'll play through you and you're in trouble."

**Gareth Southgate**  
 UEFA technical observer

field, as part of their coach Jürgen Klopp's pursuit of Gegenpressing perfection.

Interestingly, Ajax exhibited an even more impressive PPDA following their shift across to the UEFA Europa League in the round of 32, allowing opponents Getafe CF an average of just 6.78 passes before attempting a tackle. This was more than one pass fewer than the next hungriest side to win back the ball, Eintracht Frankfurt, and almost two fewer than champions Sevilla. Once again, the difference lay in the effectiveness, with Ajax scoring just twice and falling at that first Europa League hurdle, while Sevilla – with four goals and ten more shots coming from their 73 high turnovers – picked up the ultimate prize. "Sevilla's high press was excellent; they really had the best team performance," said Thomas Schaaf, underlining how the Andalusians had excelled in efficiency.

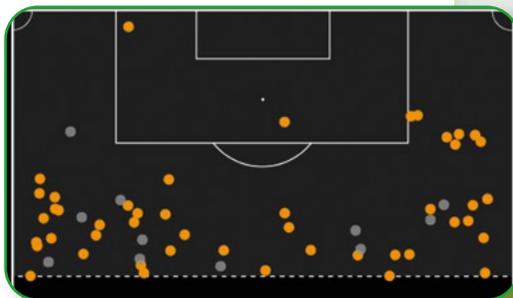
Efficiency is considered a stereotypically German trait, and Bayern showed there is a degree of truth to that presumption with their peerless press. The Bavarians transformed three high turnovers into goals, turning over 27% of all these turnovers into a shot. Even when they led FC Barcelona 6-2 in their historic quarter-final rout, Flick's men continued to sustain a significant level of pressure, so much so it was their No9 – the 2019/20 competition's top scorer, Robert Lewandowski – who stole the ball back

from his Barça counterpart Lionel Messi on the way to Philippe Coutinho slotting in Bayern's seventh. "When the ball is lost, all the players press aggressively to win it back," noted Cosmin Contra. That is hardly surprising, considering the demands Flick laid out upon being appointed as Bayern coach in November. "Unity is immensely important," he said. "You defend together as a team, collectively, against the ball, not just individually."

Bayern's collective improvement could also be seen in their possession statistics, with a rise from their average of 57% in 2018/19 to 64% on their way to the title – second only to Klopp's Liverpool. Yet here again, the way Bayern used their possession gives perhaps a better indication of how and why they lifted the trophy in Lisbon. Indeed, the two games in which they had the least possession resulted in their biggest wins, with a 7-2 victory over Tottenham Hotspur FC from 58.6% possession and that 8-2 win over Barcelona from their lowest share of just

49.3% – the only time they had less of the ball than their opponents. They were nevertheless actively pursuing the ball with their persistent press and this could well have contributed to Tottenham's worst pass accuracy for the season (70%), coming from their lowest number of passes (297) in a single UEFA Champions League game last season. The fact they covered more ground in their 3-1 defeat in Munich (115.1km) than in any other game they played in Europe last season showed how much José Mourinho's men were effectively chasing shadows against a disciplined and organised Bayern who, despite frequently regaining possession in advanced positions, nevertheless followed the global trend of taking longer and needing more passes to score – 13.84 seconds and 4.21 passes compared with 9.81 seconds and 2.94 passes in the previous season. Stifling Barça, who ranked in the top five in each of the categories of 358 short passes (ranked third across the competition), from a combined average of 639 passes attempted (third) and an 87% accuracy (fifth), was also the result of another trend observed in the UEFA Champions League last season, that of the growing threat provided by wing-backs. Alphonso Davies and Joshua Kimmich excelled in this added dimension of Bayern's high press, combining for one of Bayern's eight goals against Barcelona. →

Frankfurt's pressing tactics illustrated by Timothy Chandler and Djibril Sow against Arsenal's Bukayo Saka in the Europa League.



**Frankfurt pressing**

- High turnovers 58
- Ending in a shot 11
- Ending in a goal 0

Getty Images

**SET PLAYS**

**Set-piece menace subsides**

The number of set-piece goals in the UEFA Champions League fell in 2019/20 though clubs including Bayern and Atlético still carried a threat.

No side in the 2019/20 UEFA Champions League scored more set-play goals than Bayern. Similarly, no team in the UEFA Europa League surpassed Sevilla's total of six – two of them in the final following Éver Banega free-kicks into the box. Yet it would be over-simplistic to say the two competition winners were the best-performing dead-ball sides in a campaign which offered some intriguing – and sometimes contrasting evidence – regarding the significance of set pieces.

In the UEFA Champions League, penalties aside, the combined number of goals from all other dead-ball opportunities fell from 65 to 48 – just 12.4% of the overall tally (compared with 17.8% a year earlier). This included a drop from 42 to 27 in the number of goals from corners. By contrast, in the UEFA Europa League, there were 63 goals scored following corners (or 11.5% of the total) while the overall portion of set-piece goals was 19.7%

The fact that in the senior competition corners were the source of just 7% of goals begged the question of where set-play work now ranks on the list of coaches' priorities – not least after a season which, remarkably, featured just once the sight of a direct free-kick flying into the net in a UEFA Champions League match. Roberto Martínez wondered whether the wish to focus on aspects of open play, notably working the ball out from the back, might be a factor in less training-ground time being spent on set pieces.

That said, for some clubs, the work done certainly paid off. The UEFA Champions League's most productive teams were Bayern, with five set-piece goals, followed by Atlético with four. Both claimed three from corners, as did Chelsea FC, and the data suggests it was Diego Simeone's Atleti who were the most consistently dangerous. Of all the clubs to reach the knockout stage, the Madrid side had the highest percentage of goals from set pieces (30.8%) as well as the highest ratio of corners per shot (1.8:1).

While UEFA's analysis shows that

inswinging deliveries led to over half of the 27 UEFA Champions League goals from corners, in the case of Atlético, the majority of their deliveries were directed towards the penalty spot, including the one that led to Saúl Ñíguez's scrambled winner at home against Liverpool in the last 16. The same went for Crvena zvezda, who matched Atleti's rate of a goal attempt for every 1.8 corners and departed the competition following the group stage having scored from every nine corners taken.

Conversely, Borussia Dortmund, the club from the last 16 with the lowest corner-to-shot ratio (6:1), looked more commonly to the near post, aiming for a flick-on. So too Ajax, who across the competition ended with the second-lowest ratio (5.8:1), having seen too many deliveries fail to beat the first defender.

In the UEFA Europa League, Sevilla, along with FC Astana, recorded the same ratio of 1.8 corners per shot as Atlético. As it was, Julen Lopetegui's men scored from

only one of their 39 corners, yet managed 43 shots. One possible factor was their ploy of stationing three players on the edge of the opposition box, leaving them well placed to stop counterattacks and also to profit from any short clearances by getting in a shot from distance.

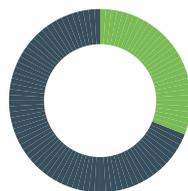
The actual threat of conceding from a long-range shot was in Maurizio Sarri's calculations, meanwhile, in packing Juventus's box with defenders but leaving the edge of the area free: it meant the Serie A side allowed a shot from every 1.7 corners (the UEFA Champions League's worst ratio) but the gamble of allowing low-quality chances from distance seems to have paid off by the fact Juve conceded only once from 40 corners faced.

On the defensive side, Bayern ended the season with the best ratio of corners to shots conceded, allowing an opposition attempt from every 5.4 corners faced (in total, seven shots from 38 corners). They had a scare when, from a Barcelona short

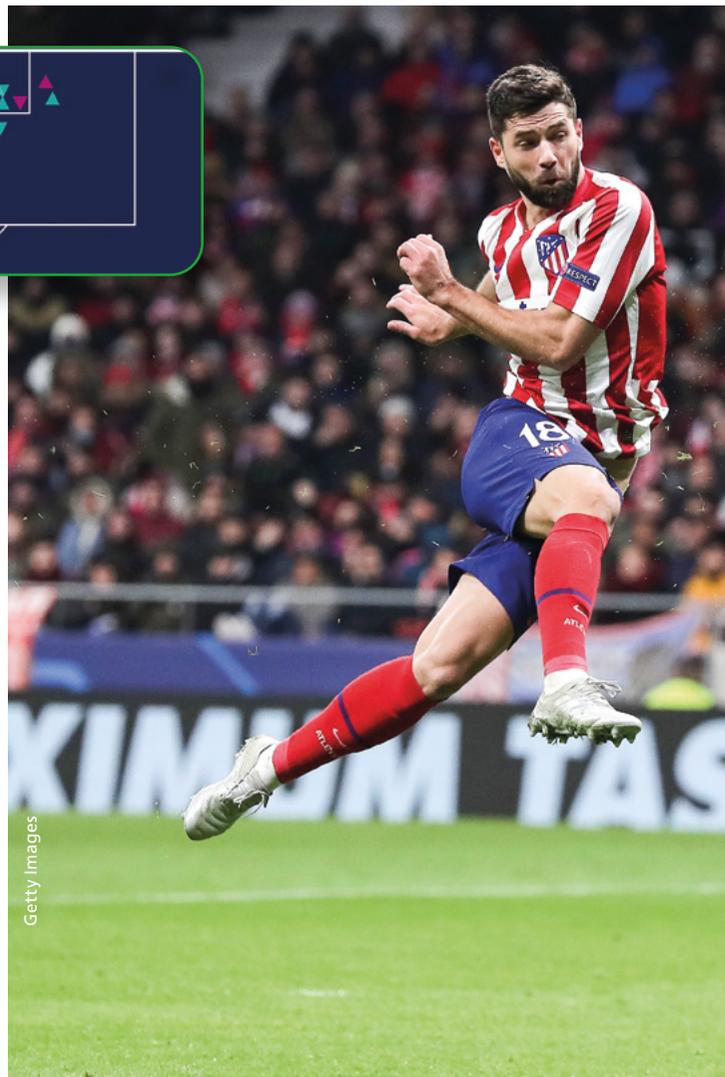


**Atlético corners**

- ▲ Successful inswingers
- ▲ Unsuccessful inswingers
- ▼ Successful outswingers
- ▼ Unsuccessful outswingers



**30.8%**  
Percentage of Atlético de Madrid goals from set plays, the highest among the last 16 clubs



Getty Images

corner, a Lionel Messi ball beat everyone before striking the far post with the score at 1-1 in their quarter-final, yet ended the campaign unbreached from corners.

While Bayern used a zonal set-up, compatriots RB Leipzig – who avoided conceding from any of their 51 corners faced – chose a mixed zonal and man-marking strategy. In the UEFA Europa League, meanwhile, technical observer Dušan Fitzel suggested the introduction of VAR in the knockout stage prompted a move towards more zonal marking, yet another German side, Bayer 04 Leverkusen, bucked that trend by mainly man-marking with a single player defending zonally in the six yard box – and their reward was a competition-best ratio of one shot conceded for every ten corners faced. At the opposite end of the scale, Beşiktaş JK conceded a goal from every six corners, after allowing 18 opposition attempts from the 23 they had to defend.

Finally, FC Copenhagen were the least efficient attacking team from corners,

with one shot per 8.2 taken. Indeed from 41 corners (61% of them inswinging), they managed only five shots. That said, they at least scored once, which is more than semi-finalists Manchester United FC managed, despite their 22 shots from 66 corners.

### GOALKEEPING Neuer sets the standard

In a season when the changed goal-kick rule brought a fresh challenge for goalkeepers, Manuel Neuer stood out for his assured footwork.

With the sweeper-keeper phenomenon now firmly established, a significant change in the rules added yet another aptitude to the job description of a modern-day goalkeeper during the 2019/20 campaign. Perhaps fittingly, it was Bayern's Manuel Neuer – arguably a

pioneering figure in what has become a stable norm of goalkeepers featuring more and more frequently as auxiliary defenders – who lifted the UEFA Champions League trophy aloft in August.

The prize was not his personally, but being the first to raise it into the Lisbon sky was of causal significance. With six clean sheets, Neuer was unbeatable in more than half the matches he played, resulting in a joint-best average of 0.7 goals conceded per game. This only partially explains why the German custodian's contribution to Bayern's sixth elite continental crown was so substantial, however. His assured footwork meant he did even more of his talking with the ball at his feet, and his words were duly delivered poetically.

"Not every keeper is like Neuer, who's fabulous with his feet," commented technical observer Ginés Meléndez. That comes in particularly handy when goalkeepers are now allowed to pass the ball short to a teammate inside their own penalty area – or, as FC Internazionale Milano often did, receive the ball short from a defender taking the goal kick. In the UEFA Champions League, only Dinamo Zagreb's Dominik Livaković – who consequently had the highest average pass distance from goal kicks – did not dabble in a new rule which enabled six goals to be scored after a short goal kick had been taken.

He was an outlier, though, with beaten finalists Paris Saint-Germain leading in taking 45% of their goal kicks short, with Bayern just behind SSC Napoli (43%) in third place with 42%. In the UEFA Europa League, Inter relied on this outlet an even greater number of times, with two thirds of Samir Handanović's goal kicks going no further than the perimeter of his own penalty area. "It's a good rule and can be very effective, but you've got to work on it," said technical observer and former Republic of Ireland goalkeeper Packie Bonner. Indeed, for all its benefits of being able to construct attacks from deep, potentially pulling opponents in and creating space higher up the field, comes the caveat of losing the ball in very dangerous territory if things do go wrong. "With pressing so high, a lot of the time there are more mistakes by goalkeepers," cautioned Meléndez.

The expanded range of a goalkeeper's options from goal kicks added a new dimension to their game, with those →

Felipe scores Atlético's second goal against Lokomotiv Moskva in the Champions League group stage.





Getty Images

Kylian Mbappé shoots against Manuel Neuer in the Champions League final.



**24%**

Portion of goal kicks taken short to a player in the box



**76%**

the save percentage of Manuel Neuer

more capable with their feet, such as Neuer – who completed 98% of his passes from goal kicks – able to combine their qualities with the intelligence to decide when to go short and when, such as under a particularly high press, it is safer to go long. In Neuer’s case, only once did he send the ball into the opposition half, twice seeking a winger or an advanced full-back, but more frequently playing short-to-mid-range passes: the Bayern No1 had the lowest average pass distance from goal kicks. Compare this with Paris custodian Keylor Navas, who alternated short with long kicks and rarely attempted to find a teammate just outside his own area, and the contrasting ways the new rule can be interpreted were evidenced by both finalists.

At the other end of the spectrum, Manchester City goalkeeper Ederson preferred to go long for several reasons, his excellent distribution being one of them. With two false No9s in Kevin De Bruyne and Bernardo Silva in their fixture with Real Madrid CF, for example, he had two more valid reasons for trying to get the ball to their feet directly. “An interesting feature was the opportunity to leave a two v two situation from a simple long pass from Ederson,” commented

Roberto Martínez. Ederson only played a goal kick within his own penalty area six times.

Handanovič had already played that many short passes in just 24 minutes of Inter’s final four fixtures in the UEFA Europa League, with an average of one every four minutes as he led the way in embracing the rule change. Inter head coach Antonio Conte, who has previous in defensive build-up from his days as Italy manager, turned this tactic into one of his side’s preferred attacking approaches. Like with Neuer and Ederson, this is possible thanks to the Slovenian’s confidence on the ball. “You never have the feeling that he’s nervous,” said technical observer Thomas Schaaf. Instead, Handanovič always appeared to be in control, understanding when it was too risky to play a short pass, or sensing when the time was right to seek the likes of Romelu Lukaku or Ashley Young with a long ball, once the required space in midfield had been successfully created. Thinking and reading the game more like an outfield player is the latest step in a progression which is seeing goalkeepers become increasingly integral members of their teams, not just in preventing goals, but in paving the way for them to be scored at the other end.

## GOALSCORING

### How the goals were scored

Crosses and cutbacks were an important source of goals in the 2019/20 UEFA Champions League.

After the dust had settled on the rat-a-tat of goals in the 2019/20 UEFA Champions League, the specifics of how the goals were scored was a matter for analysis for UEFA’s technical observers. The analysis in the ensuing technical report identified crosses and cutbacks as the most productive route to goal for teams in the 2019/20 competition, yielding 113 goals, or 29.3% of the total, while the proportion was even higher – 34.67% – in the Europa League, with 190 goals scored from such an outlet.

The top scorers Bayern scored 11 of their 43 goals from crosses, including Kingsley Coman’s final winner from a pinpoint ball by Joshua Kimmich, while Paris Saint-Germain, Real Madrid and Dinamo Zagreb each struck six times. In the case of Madrid, crosses (six) and cutbacks (four) brought ten of their 16 goals – including Rodrygo’s centre for Karim Benzema’s fine header at Manchester City.

For Dinamo, crosses were the source of 60% of their ten goals – including Dani Olmo’s brilliant over-the-shoulder volley against Manchester City.

The next most popular routes to goal were combinations (51 goals) followed by shots from outside the box (38), through balls (33) and goals from defensive errors (26). The fact that Bayern scored five goals from opposition mistakes could well be read as a result of the pressure they put on rival players by pushing high up the pitch.

On combinations, Barcelona and Manchester City respectively scored four and five goals in this fashion – or 27% and 23.8% of their totals. Given Barcelona’s playing style, it is no surprise they should be producing long passing sequences: they averaged 18.07 seconds on the ball before scoring, and even Lionel Messi’s fabulous individual strike against Napoli – the UEFA observers’ choice as Goal of the Tournament – was preceded by 21 passes.

Overall, the average number of passes in the lead-up to goals reached a nine-year high of 4.24, while the average time in possession before scoring exceeded 13 seconds for the first time in this period. Even Liverpool have modified their approach: Jürgen Klopp’s men averaged 12.8 passes before scoring – quite a difference from the 7.6 passes recorded on their path to the 2018 final – and this reflected the more patient approach which left the Reds with the highest average possession rate per match (67.1%).

Of course, there are always exceptions.

As already noted above, Lyon played a counterattacking game which reaped impressive reward in the quarter-final against Man City. Overall the Ligue 1 side averaged just 1.9 passes – and 6.6 seconds – before scoring, and according to Roberto Martinez, who observed their victory over City, it was striking “how well they can counterattack, quickly and with a lot of threat with the two strikers and arrivals from deep of [Maxwel] Cornet and [Houssem] Auar”.

In the UEFA Europa League too, it was common to see a patient build-up from sides, reflected by the fact there were only nine goals scored following counterattacks involving no more than three passes. Winners Sevilla sought out openings with plenty of switches and player movement: one goal against F91 Dudelange involved 20 passes, while Óliver Torres’s spectacular overhead kick against Qarabağ FK followed a 37-pass sequence lasting 95 seconds.

There were other examples noted in the competition’s technical report. Quarter-finalists Wolverhampton Wanderers scored three times at the end of 16-pass sequences; Arsenal FC held onto the ball for 58 seconds, meanwhile, before Joe Willock struck against R. Standard de Liège. Anything Arsenal do, incidentally, their local rivals Tottenham try to do better, and in the UEFA Champions League, Spurs scored a goal at Crvena zvezda through Christian Eriksen after keeping possession for 74 seconds.

Finally, a word on the timing of goals in the 2019/20 club competitions. It was striking to note the sheer number of late goals, struck during the closing stages when tired limbs were resulting in spaces opening up. Counting all the goals struck from the 76-minute mark to the end of added time in the UEFA Champions League, there were 95 in total, which represented almost a quarter of the overall number (24.61%).

Scoring the first goal was another talking point in the technical reports, given the percentage of games in which the team breaking the deadlock managed to avoid defeat – 86.1% in the case of the UEFA Champions League. Across the UEFA Europa League campaign, the side who struck first won on 63.5% of occasions, while in the knockout stage, that figure rose to 70.4%. Hence it was to Sevilla’s credit that they came from behind to win both their semi-final against Manchester United and final against Inter. By contrast, in the UEFA Champions League final tournament in Lisbon, there was just one match in which the team that conceded first recovered to win – namely, Paris Saint-Germain’s late, late comeback against Atalanta. An interesting point raised by Gareth Southgate here was that stopping the momentum of a game in an empty stadium seemed all the harder. “When games were going away from teams, the mentality was a bit different with no supporters in the stadium,” he said. 🌱



Kingsley Coman heads in the goal that gave Bayern their sixth elite European title.



# THE STATS BEHIND A HIGH-SCORING SEASON

UEFA Direct looks at some of the statistics and figures found in the latest UEFA Champions League technical report to see how the goals were scored in a record-breaking campaign.

## GOALS PER SEASON

■ Goals per season ● Average goals per game



## GOALS TIME



### GROUP STAGE

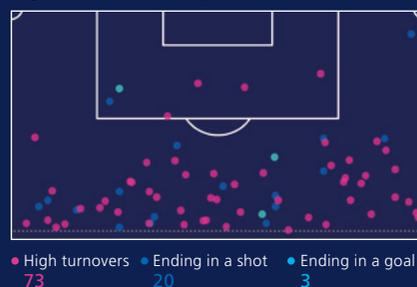


### KNOCKOUT STAGE



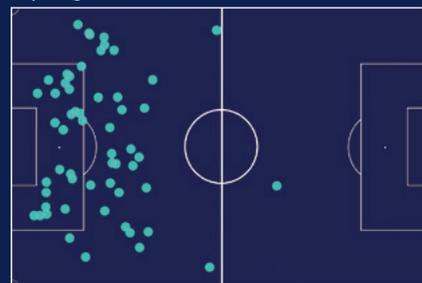
## PRESSING

Bayern outcome of the press



## GOALKEEPER DISTRIBUTION

Bayern goal-kick locations



GOAL TYPE

	SET PLAYS	PENALTIES	OPEN PLAY
2019/20	48	37	301
2018/19	66	34	266
2017/18	70	28	303
2016/17	73	33	274
2015/16	65	25	257
2014/15	69	31	261

HOW THE GOALS WERE SCORED

CATEGORY	ACTION	TOTAL
OPEN PLAY	Combinations	51
	Crosses	81
	Cutbacks	32
	Through balls	33
	Long passes	16
	Individual action	20
	Shots from outside box	38
	Defensive errors	26
SET PLAY	Corners	24
	Throw-ins	1
	Penalties	37
	Direct free-kicks	5
	Indirect free-kicks	12
OWN GOALS		10
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>386</b>

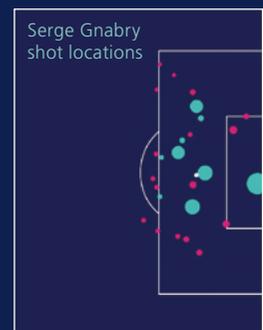
SET-PLAY GOALS

■ Total goals    ● Set-play goals



TOP SCORERS

<b>Robert Lewandowski</b>	<b>15</b>
Erling Braut Haaland	10
Serge Gnabry	9
Raheem Sterling	6
Harry Kane	6
Memphis Depay	6
Dries Mertens	6
Gabriel Jesus	6



● Shots ● Goals; circles scaled by quality of chance

Robert Lewandowski (in action against PSG in the Champions League final) scored 15 goals in last season's flagship club competition.



# SILENT APPLAUSE

UEFA salutes top performers with 14 awards to players and coaches.

Getty Images

It was in 2007, after completing a hat-trick of UEFA Club Footballer of the Year, Ballon d'Or and FIFA World Player awards, that AC Milan's Brazilian midfielder Kaká said: "It's incredible to win an individual award in a team sport where everybody wants to be able to say I am the best."

It is often said that an award is like a round of applause – something that footballers have been starved of during this period of silent stadiums. But the UEFA awards ceremony, even though the pandemic pushed the season kick-off event from Athens to Geneva, made as much media noise as usual. More, in fact. The spectrum had been broadened. For the first time, UEFA presented awards in positional categories for players in the UEFA Women's

Champions League. For the first time, there was a Player of the Season award for the UEFA Europa League. And, for the first time, there were UEFA Coach of the Year awards in the men's and women's games.

In both categories, the champions swept up three of the four positional awards and, as it happened, the men's and women's Player of the Year awards ran in parallel. In both cases, they were won by the player selected as Forward of the Season. Robert Lewandowski of FC Bayern München was voted UEFA Men's Player of the Year, while Pernille Harder – on the basis of performances while she was still at VfL Wolfsburg – took the women's award. Although both are prolific goalscorers, their modus operandi as attacking players is interestingly different.

## Striking figures

In numbers, Lewandowski's season was outstanding: 15 goals and six assists in the UEFA Champions League, with at least one goal in every match en route to the final. However, the tributes focus on other aspects. "He works so hard for the team," said his coach at FC Bayern, Hansi Flick. "He is important for our defence, as he provides support – and nothing needs to be said about the danger he poses in front of goal. He is very professional and works extremely hard. He is the best central striker in the world." The German club's CEO, Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, added: "He is arguably the best professional I have ever come across here. His diet, his lifestyle... everything is dedicated to success."

Not so long ago, a trend towards strikerless formations prompted debate in UEFA's technical reports on age-limit competitions about whether enough strikers are emerging at development levels. Lewandowski's award, allied with the fact that FC Internazionale's target man Romelu Lukaku was voted UEFA Europa League Player of the Season, argues strongly that the central striker is still very much alive and kicking as a decisive ingredient in successful team play.

### Harder and Harder

Pernille Harder, after taking the award in 2018, became the first woman to win it twice. Unlike the two award-winning men, the Denmark international is a middle-to-front attacker rather than a spearhead. A fast, skilful catalyst making intelligent into-the-depth runs, she contributed 38 goals to Wolfsburg's double in Germany and nine in the run to the Women's Champions League final.

There are further contrasts and similarities to be found in other categories. Manuel Neuer and Sarah Bouhaddi, for example, have established themselves as role models for a similar goalkeeping credo. Both are 34; both push out quickly to sweep behind their teams' high defensive lines; both are competent and accurate with their feet; both are proactive in building from the back.

The similarities between the two winning coaches are that Hansi Flick and Jean-Luc Vasseur are both relatively new to the job and, in the case of the Lyon boss, new to women's football. Both had to deal with the responsibility of motivating teams

already steeped in success. Both won their Champions Leagues at the first attempt.

### Leader and pioneer

And then there is Didier Drogba. Aleksander Čeferin named him for the UEFA President's Award as "a leader – a pioneer. I remember him as a player for his skill, strength and intelligence but, above all, for his insatiable appetite to succeed – a trait that is equally present in his desire to help others off the field of play".

At Chelsea, the powerful striker's partnership with the club's current manager, Frank Lampard, still holds the record as the most prolific in Premier League history. But, when boots were hung up, he decided that the way forward relied on brainpower rather than physical power – a conviction which prompted Drogba to enrol on UEFA's Executive Master for International Players programme with a view to adding administrative skills to his repertoire. In the meantime, the foundation he set up in 2007 has been – condensing a broad spectrum into a few words – tackling hunger, poverty and inequalities in Africa while promoting welfare, education and employment. "There are so many children in the developing world who have the potential to become not only footballers, but also doctors, teachers and engineers," he maintains. "This is why it is so important to help and support our youngsters to let them fulfil their dreams and aspirations."

Drogba, and the other 11 award-winners, deserve their round of applause – no matter how muted by the extraordinary events of 2020. 🌍

## 2019/20 AWARDS

**UEFA Men's Player of the Year:**  
Robert Lewandowski

**UEFA Champions League Goalkeeper of the Season:**  
Manuel Neuer

**UEFA Champions League Defender of the Season:**  
Joshua Kimmich

**UEFA Champions League Midfielder of the Season:**  
Kevin De Bruyne

**UEFA Champions League Forward of the Season:**  
Robert Lewandowski

**UEFA Women's Player of the Year:**  
Pernille Harder

**UEFA Women's Champions League Goalkeeper of the Season:**  
Sarah Bouhaddi

**UEFA Women's Champions League Defender of the Season:**  
Wendie Renard

**UEFA Women's Champions League Midfielder of the Season:**  
Dzsenifer Marozsán

**UEFA Women's Champions League Forward of the Season:**  
Pernille Harder

**UEFA Europa League Player of the Season:**  
Romelu Lukaku

**UEFA Men's Coach of the Year:**  
FC Bayern München head coach Hans-Dieter Flick

**UEFA Women's Coach of the Year:**  
Olympique Lyonnais head coach Jean-Luc Vasseur

**UEFA President's Award:**  
Didier Drogba



Pernille Harder is the only player to have won the UEFA Women's Player of the Year award twice.





Romania saw its number of registered young players grow exponentially over two years.

## FIVE YEARS OF GROWING THE GAME

Since it was set up in 2015, the UEFA Grow programme has had a far-reaching impact on the health of UEFA's member associations.

It began in the summer of 2015 with pilot projects in Azerbaijan, Finland, Malta, Northern Ireland, Portugal and Slovenia. In the five years since, it has had an impact on every single UEFA member association across Europe. It is the UEFA Grow programme and its impact has been as considerable as its expansion.

Officially launched in September 2015 with the aim of helping national associations to maximise their potential on and off the pitch, the Grow programme provides tailor-made support, offering fact-based research and market intelligence

to guide UEFA's member associations in developing a strategic vision. Its effects are far-reaching, yet focused on the five areas that constitute Grow's key pillars: strategic planning, participation, image, engagement and revenues. And its evolution goes on, as Karl-Erik Nilsson, president of the Swedish Football Association and UEFA first vice-president, noted when reflecting on this fifth anniversary.

Nilsson, a Grow programme ambassador, said: "What used to be a marketing support initiative is now our central strategic development platform for national

### SHARING AND SUPPORTING

UEFA lends expertise to national associations through a variety of services. In addition to regional meetings, workshops and a monthly newsletter, there are UEFA Grow mentors (experts assigned to individual national associations) and a mentorship programme which pairs up national associations. In 2021, a UEFA grow strategic development partner will be assigned to each national association to improve communication and development support. Recently introduced services include the IT maturity matrix, offering an audit of an association's technology systems, and the SROI model measuring the social, health and financial impact of amateur football.

associations to grow the game and it has become a key contributor to raising national association standards in line with the UEFA strategy Together for the Future of Football. Many important areas have been added to the programme, including strategic planning, insights, IT and strategic communications support. The evolution culminated in last year's launch of Football Federations of the Future, laying out a clear road map for national associations on how they can grow the game in their market over the next years."

The Football Federations of the Future framework covers 14 core business development pillars and helps the national associations establish a vision for the next five-year period. The Grow team have already engaged with 15 national associations through the project's self-evaluation process. One of those associations is the Romanian Football Federation, whose president, Răzvan Burleanu, explains: "The framework inspired us to be even more strategic and forward-thinking in the construction of our new strategic plan, having successfully delivered our last one. It offered us the chance to raise ourselves and Romanian football up another level and we are absolutely determined to make the very most of this opportunity."

### **Growing European football with the national associations**

Raising football to another level could be an unofficial motto of the Grow programme given its impact across so many areas – not least participation in the game. Since 2015, the Grow programme has helped 44 national associations to develop bespoke participation plans, and among those with set targets there was an average rise of 11% in registered players (as opposed to a 4% decrease among the others). Similarly, those associations that completed Grow participation workshops witnessed a 42% growth in women's and girls' football (as opposed to 4%). By way of example, in Romania between 2015 and 2017,

the number of boys registered at Under-10 level rose from 8,411 to 63,530, and for Under-10 girls, the rise was from 0 to 31,580.

Through the participation framework developed by Grow, national associations are able to conduct a self-assessment on their current status in participation and receive guidelines for development. This has led, for instance, to the Polish Football Association hiring 48 people in the field of participation development (three for every region), with a target of increasing the number of registered players from 400,000 to over one million by 2022.

Engagement with the public is another aspect of the programme's remit and since 2015 national associations have increased their social media following across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram by 277% (or from 26 million to 98 million followers). YouTube views have increased by 1,119% (from 146 million to 1.78 billion interactions) and there has been a 58% increase in website traffic.

National associations have also improved their brand awareness with the support of the Grow programme, which allows them access to independent consumer research. The UEFA team have run 70 research projects across the five years and have helped create 24 brand strategies, as well as rebranding projects for 18 national associations. Of the 44 national associations to benefit from this service, the Georgian Football Federation (GFF) offers a case worth highlighting, its success in improving its image among the population going in tandem with strategic communications work.

"The GFF image research is very important for us, helping us to review our priorities and development areas and formulating strategies to grow football in Georgia," says Levan Kobiashvili, the GFF president. "The awareness of what the GFF does day to day in leading, promoting and developing football in Georgia increased considerably thanks

to proactive communications activities. As a result, the GFF image has improved significantly and is now well above the European benchmark."

### **Financial impact**

The Grow team's support with commercial planning has reaped rewards too over these first five years. After a UEFA review of its commercial strategy, the Football Association of Iceland's improvement plan brought about a 300% increase in sponsor revenue. After a similar review in 2019, the Royal Belgian Football Association oversaw a 50% increase in its commercial revenue up to 2021, compared with its 2018 figures. There are other examples: from the Gibraltar Football Association achieving a five-year kit deal worth 40 times the value of its previous one to the Portuguese Football Federation earning a threefold rise in sponsorship income for the 2018–22 cycle.

UEFA's wish to provide further financial guidance to associations – more important than ever given the fresh challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic – led to the Grow team offering an Executive Financial Essentials course, beginning in autumn 2020, as part of its business development programme.

Nilsson adds: "We continue to identify areas where support is needed and requested by our national associations. Two key pillars we are building at the moment are financial management and human resource management. These two areas will further diversify the support portfolio that the UEFA Grow programme has to offer, making it even more versatile and offering the most practical of support to our 55 member associations, no matter where they are on their strategic football development journey." 🌐

“What used to be a marketing support initiative is now our central strategic development platform for national associations to grow the game and it has become a key contributor to raising national association standards.”

**Karl-Erik Nilsson**, UEFA first vice-president



# SHINING A LIGHT ON THE PATH TO GENDER EQUITY

Supporting women in football is not the same as promoting women's football, warn the authors of a UEFA-backed study.

**F**or Dr Donna de Haan, an associate professor from The Hague University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands, there was one clear, and significant, misconception that recurred over the course of a series of interviews conducted for her UEFA-backed research into gender equity in football governance.

Reflecting on the interviews with employees of seven UEFA member associations under the auspices of the UEFA Research Grant Programme, Dr de Haan explains: "Even though we didn't ask specific questions about women's football, as soon as we started to talk about women in decision-making roles, respondents would start talking about the popularity of women's football in their country." To her surprise, "people couldn't differentiate between the game played by women and women doing a job in football. Whether you employ a woman in your finance team shouldn't be linked to the success of your women's national team."

This is a point reiterated by Professor Leanne Norman from Leeds Beckett University in England, who collaborated with Dr de Haan on the project, also supported by the English Football Association. "People were pulling us back to talking about women's football and then if we talked about women on boards and decision-making, it was very much 'Yes, we now have the women's game so we're going to have a women's representative on the board'," she adds.

"We need to see beyond men's and women's football and stop separating it and be more ambitious in our vision to have a more inclusive game. Football is football. It's up to our national associations and UEFA to be more ambitious and broader in our vision to have an inclusive game."

## Culture shift needed

It was in October 2019 that the UEFA Research Grant Programme jury chose this joint study, titled 'Understanding the role of

men in facilitating gender equity in football governance', as one of six research projects for 2020. Dr de Haan and Professor Norman subsequently conducted interviews with 34 employees – 24 men and 10 women – from seven national associations in the period up to February this year. The aim, Dr de Haan explains, was to "speak to as many board members or people in decision-making leadership roles as we could in that time, male and female." Although the identities of the participating countries were not disclosed, the researchers "spread it out so it could be as a representative of UEFA's 55 associations as possible" and were grateful for the European governing body's support. "Having the support and sponsorship of UEFA, and being able to go to people with that, was crucial," says Professor Norman. "It opened so many more doors."

One of the main conclusions drawn from the research is that a culture shift is needed to provide proper equality in football. "It has to be a cultural thing – it's no good saying 'We value women in football' if you don't see them in decision-making places," says Dr de Haan, who suggests equality is still seen as "a nice-to-have" rather than a "need-to-have" in the game. "I think in society, equality is a need-to-have, not a nice-to have. Sport has a role to play in that and the momentum is building but it's going to take those in leadership and policy and governance [to act]."

Professor Norman elaborates on this view that organic change is not enough, saying: "We have loads of research over years to show we cannot rely on goodwill – there's too much interest, there's too much power and there's too much finance at stake, particularly in football, for us to rely on that just being an evolution."

She continues: "These are very deeply embedded practices, so for me the big message was we're not doing enough and whatever we've done is not at the right level, and is not maybe even intervening in the right way. We're doing



Dr Donna de Haan, associate professor at The Hague University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands.



Prof Leanne Norman, Leeds Beckett University, England.



Stéphanie Frappart referees the Europa League match between Granada and Omonia Nicosia on 26 November 2019. The French referee was also in charge of the UEFA Super Cup in September, and has also been appointed for a men's Champions League match.

Getty Images

a lot for women's football and that was one of our key messages, that there's a lot of time and attention and increasing commercialisation of women's football, and people are very happy to get behind that. What they're less aware of, and where the work needs to be done, is addressing those people that work in football and, in this case, women that work in football."

#### **Understanding the local context**

A key suggestion from the pair is that a better understanding of the local context in which UEFA member associations operate is required. "We spoke to some

countries that were on very different points on the pathway of women in football and women's football and their understanding of gender equity, and this was a reflection of what was going on more broadly within their society and their culture," says Professor Norman. "A big message for UEFA is to address this at a national level rather than throwing a blanket over it."

Both researchers consider that there has been progress made, with Professor Norman pointing to the English FA as a positive model. Dr de Haan agrees that "it's not all a negative story" but notes that the research points to the fact that

there remains "a lot more to be done. What is the ultimate goal? We can be bigger and more ambitious."

Their findings were presented in July to the UEFA Research Grant Jury, which comprises a chair, representatives of European football, and academics known internationally for their work in European football or sport in general. "It's a really positive sign they supported this research and invested in it as we do need funding to do this kind of project," says Dr de Haan. "To feed this information back is of huge value, as is the fact an organisation like UEFA can see the importance of this research." 🌐

# EVERY CHILD IS A CHAMPION!

In 2020, the UEFA Foundation for Children celebrated five years of global project activities. The projects have all contributed to help European football fulfil its social responsibility through supporting children and defending their fundamental human rights.

**D**espite the COVID-19 pandemic and the new challenges it has brought, the UEFA Foundation for Children was able to rely on the commitment of its partners, who continued and adapted their programmes to tackle the immediate effects of the pandemic on children and young people beyond the initial emergency response. Significantly, it is important that football and educational programming for young people in underserved communities continue after the health crisis. "Our foundation plays an instrumental role in helping children who are living in challenging and difficult conditions around the world. With the help of the foundation trustees and our partner not-for-profit organisations, we will continue to strengthen the foundation's activities and increase our positive impact for children and their families," said Aleksander Čeferin, UEFA president and chairman of the foundation's board of trustees.

At its latest meeting, the board of

trustees allocated the foundation's 2020/21 project budget of €4,812,021 to 55 projects (representing a mixture of new projects and an extension of some existing projects) in line with its mission to protect children in the areas of health, education, personal development, access to sport, integration of minorities and protection for victims of conflicts. The projects were announced on 20 November 2020 to coincide with World Children's Day.

Approximately half of the foundation's project budget is earmarked for projects in Europe while the rest supports projects in other continents. Fifty-five not-for-profit projects were selected for financial support from the UEFA Foundation for Children: 24 in Europe, 16 in Africa, 8 in America, 6 in Asia and 1 in Oceania.

### Making dreams come true

Despite the many pandemic-related sanitary conditions affecting the UEFA competitions, the foundation was able to find creative, innovative solutions to give

children the opportunity to be virtual player mascots and welcome some of the world's greatest footballers during the UEFA Champions League final eight tournament. The initiative was in partnership with the UEFA Champions League official sponsor Mastercard. The children appeared virtually at the Estádio do Sport Lisboa for the semi-final between RB Leipzig and Paris St-Germain.

"Wow! I will remember this day for the rest of my life! Thank you!" said Ruby Wilson on learning she had been chosen to take part in the activation. "After the doctor only recently told me that I might not play football ever again, this lifted my spirits so much! I will never forget this day."

A special edition of the UEFA Foundation for Children activity report for 2019/20 is available online at [uefafoundation.org](http://uefafoundation.org), including videos of the projects.

For more information: [contact@uefafoundation.org](mailto:contact@uefafoundation.org) 📧



The Fabretto Children's Foundation in Nicaragua is one of the many projects supported by the UEFA Foundation for Children.



# SCOTTISH FA HELPS BAHAMAS REBUILD AFTER HURRICANE DORIAN

Returning to play  
after the hurricane.

In September 2019, Hurricane Dorian caused mass destruction across the Bahamas. The Scottish FA donated \$40,000 through the UEFA Assist programme to help the Bahamas FA rebuild its footballing infrastructure.

**W**hen the hurricane hit, the Scottish FA donated funds to ensure the Bahamas FA was able to purchase vital equipment to enable it to continue to play and develop the game.

The Scottish FA recognised that the UEFA Assist programme was a valuable vehicle to support the Bahamas in this time of crisis. The UEFA initiative offers the sharing of knowledge and best practices to help other football confederations develop and strengthen football within their respective territories.

Assist allows UEFA's member associations to develop their own projects with football associations outside Europe. The programme also aims to increase solidarity and enhance football development to tackle the needs of national associations and confederations in other parts of the world.

"The Scottish FA is delighted to provide assistance to the Bahamas FA in any way it can to ensure football is able to flourish

across the country," said the Scottish FA's head of football development, Andy Gould.

"We hope our support will not only help provide vital resources to the game but also forge a long-lasting partnership that will promote, foster and develop the game at all levels.

"We recognise that our coaches in Scotland are central to providing high-quality activity and establishing a positive culture for our players, and we look forward to sharing how we have achieved this with the Bahamas FA and assisting them in developing their own coach education framework."

In addition, the Scottish FA will look to support the development of coach education work in the Bahamas in the coming years, providing mentors to share theoretical, observational and practical learning.

"We are very grateful and appreciative for the help and support we have received

from the Scottish FA to help develop the game in our country," said the president of the Bahamas Football Association, Anton Sealey.

"Hurricane Dorian was obviously a setback for football in our country, but with the help of the Scottish FA, who are providing us with high-quality coaches and allowing us to obtain much-needed equipment, this can help us to move forward. I hope that our newly formed partnership will continue to develop over the coming years."

The Scottish FA will also provide advice to the Bahamas FA on strategic and operational management and how to retain coaches and players. Work will also be done on the development of grassroots and youth football in the Bahamas.

The overall aim is not only to improve the quality of the Bahamas FA coaching workforce but also to increase the level of coach education attainment. 🌱

# EXPERT GROUP SETS OUT NUTRITION ADVICE FOR ELITE FOOTBALL

UEFA, in cooperation with its Medical Committee and nutrition specialists, has published a set of best-practice nutrition advice and recommendations for elite football.



Getty Images

**T**he aim is to protect players' health and ensure high-quality match and training performance.

The project concept initiated by Arsenal's former head of nutrition James Collins and the club's head of research and development, Dr Alan McCall, saw nutrition experts join forces with the UEFA Medical Committee to draw up the project blueprint. The main scientific article has been published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine.

Giorgio Chiellini of Juventus. The right nutrition makes a difference to players' health and performance, at every level.

## Major recommendations

The key recommendations take into account the diversity of the global footballing community, including both male and female players, outfield players and goalkeepers, as well as match officials.

Significant findings delivered in the report include:

- **Matchday nutrition** – how to best prepare players for optimal matchday performance, including carbohydrate (the main fuel for football performance) recommendations for pre-match, during and in recovery from matches
- **Training day nutrition** – recommendations on the key components of players' training nutrition: macronutrients (carbohydrate, protein, fat), hydration, and micronutrients (vitamin D, iron calcium)
- **Staying healthy** – the key elements to maintaining all body functions, and how inadequate intakes of several vitamins and minerals can impair players' health
- **Body composition** – defining the most accurate methods to monitor elite players as there is no single body mass or body fat percentage value that fits all players
- **Dietary supplements** – extreme caution must be taken due to the risk of a doping violation from the use of dietary supplements; as such nutrition strategies should be 'food first'
- **Globalisation** – cultural diversity and dietary considerations – during Ramadan, players should be individually monitored with training loads adjusted accordingly to reduce injury risk, and scheduled at the most appropriate time of day for nutritional support
- **Injury rehabilitation** – during the acute post-injury phase, care should be taken to maintain energy balance and protein intake and avoid micronutrient deficiencies to facilitate wound healing and tissue repair
- **Junior players** – elite junior players should be periodically evaluated in relation to their individual energy, macronutrient, micronutrient and fluid demands according to their training/competition patterns and maturational status. 🌐



## REFEREES STAR IN UEFA'S MAN IN THE MIDDLE DOCUMENTARY

UEFA gives a fascinating close-up view of some of Europe's top referees in a four-part documentary series which was unveiled on the UEFA.tv channel last November.

**M**an in the Middle – the first original documentary series produced for UEFA's own digital platform – brings viewers closer than ever before to the life of a referee and puts the spotlight on one of football's toughest jobs. The documentary shows in particular what it takes to be a referee in the high-pace, high-stakes world of the UEFA Champions League.

The documentary, premiered on UEFA.tv on 16 November, looks at the professional and private lives of 16 referees over an 18-month period between February 2019 and August 2020. The referees are part of an elite group selected by UEFA to officiate at matches in Europe's premier club competition.

Thanks to its unprecedented access, Man in the Middle reveals the hidden sides of refereeing – from candid footage of on-field exchanges with

players to personal interviews about the pressures of balancing a high-profile job with family commitments.

UEFA Champions League match officials appearing in the documentary include Daniele Orsato, who took charge of the 2019/20 final in August, as well as Danny Makkelie, the UEFA Europa League final referee, and Anthony Taylor, who handled September's UEFA Super Cup fixture.

### Setting the standard

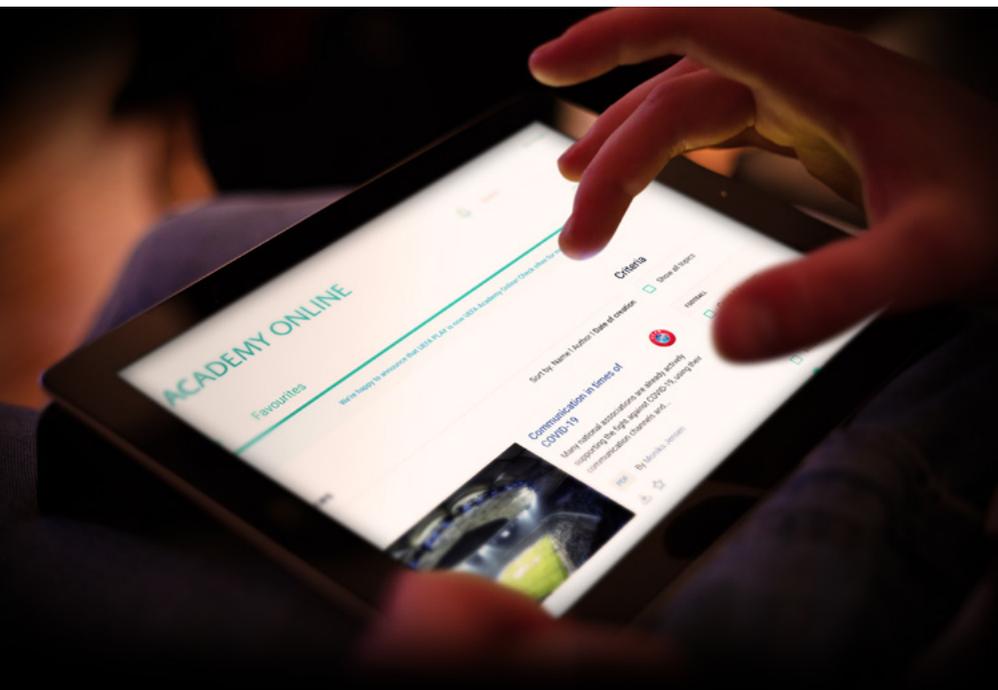
"This is a very important documentary for UEFA and our family of referees," said the chairman of UEFA's Referees Committee, Roberto Rosetti – a former international referee himself. "It highlights the professionalism, motivation and dedication of some of Europe's best officials, as well as showing the human beings behind the figures seen by players and supporters on the pitch."

Man in the Middle reveals how the

referees adapted to the introduction of the video assistant referee (VAR) system. Other key focal points over the four episodes include the psychological preparation that is a major part of modern-day elite referees' training, the online training sessions that became the norm when the COVID-19 pandemic halted football earlier this year, and how referees and their families lived with the lockdown measures put in place as a result of the pandemic.

"The introduction of VAR and the pandemic have brought new challenges for our community of officials," said Rosetti, "but we are extremely proud of how they have adapted and continue to set the standard for football officials around the world."

"I hope everyone can enjoy the series and that people can learn more about what it takes to become and be an elite UEFA referee," he added. 🌐



## UEFA Play becomes UEFA Academy Online

**THE UEFA ACADEMY** provides management training for sports administrators, specialists and players to ensure the world's favourite sport works with the best qualified professionals. We believe that sharing expert knowledge and best practices is one way to achieve this goal.

In this spirit, the UEFA Academy has decided to upgrade its online knowledge-sharing platform by bringing more features to it and making it available to a broader audience. For more consistency, the platform has also been renamed as UEFA Academy Online (previously known as UEFA Play).

UEFA Academy Online now has a section open to the general public, allowing anyone interested in football to access material on a broad range of activities, both on and off the pitch, on topics such as strategic and operational management, football development, grassroots, women's football, and much more.

UEFA's 55 member associations can access over 1,000 additional resources on the platform. Students or graduates of a UEFA Academy programme also have direct access to the UEFA Academy alumni network directory and the digital versions of the UEFA Handbook of Football Association Management and the UEFA Toolbox in Football Management.

Whether based in Europe or further afield, working in professional football or for a local organisation, UEFA Academy Online gives participants access to a constantly expanding set of resources and information that will help them both in their daily activities and strategic thinking.

Visit <https://academyonline.uefa.com/> or send an email to [academy@uefa.ch](mailto:academy@uefa.ch) for more information.

## UEFA president meets EU leaders

**ON 1 DECEMBER**, the UEFA president, Aleksander Čeferin, and the president of the European Parliament, David Sassoli, met by videoconference to highlight the important role played by European football in Europe's recovery and the achievement of social and societal objectives.

"From promoting values in education of young people to promoting equality and diversity and fighting all forms

of discrimination, UEFA and the European Parliament have a longstanding shared vision of European football as a force for good," said the UEFA president. The discussion also focused on the need for a sea change in the fight against racism. UEFA and the EU will work together under the EU's Anti-racism Action Plan 2020–2025.

Two days later, the UEFA president met the European

Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, also by videoconference. He committed UEFA's full support to the European Green Deal and underlined that European football stands alongside the European Commission on climate action. UEFA will also help raise awareness to ensure that Europe meets its goal of being the first climate-neutral continent by 2050.

The meeting also

emphasised the urgent need for Europe to be prepared and build public trust to ensure effective coronavirus vaccine deployment.

The meeting was an opportunity for UEFA to raise the importance of protecting the fundamental aspects of the European model of sport, as well as to discuss the power of European football and sport to promote positive change, as well as European solidarity and values.



# ALBANIAN FA CELEBRATES ITS 90th ANNIVERSARY



Football started in Albania in the early 1900s and spread rapidly throughout the country. However, it took three decades for it to be organised institutionally.

BY TRITAN KOKONA

At their first EURO, in 2016, Albania defeated Romania in the group stage but did not make it into the knockout stages.



On 6 June 1930, with a royal decree signed by King Zogu I, the sports federation was created, where the Albanian Football Association was ranked first among other sports federations. The association was run by the Albanian Youth entity. Two years later, on 13 and 14 May 1932, at the FIFA Congress held in Stockholm, Albania was accepted as a full member of FIFA. Before the start of the Second World War, seven national championships were played. Despite the best efforts of the sports authorities, the national team never played until after the war.

Immediately after the war, the Albanian Football Association was reorganised. The national football team was created and the national championships in all categories resumed. In 1954, Albania was accepted as a full member of UEFA. The national team played for the first time in the qualifiers for the second European Championship (1964) and the eighth World Cup (1966). Until the fall of communism, the Albanian FA exercised its activity under the direction of the Committee of the Albanian Union of Physicalists and Athletes (an organisation

that played the role of national Olympic committee).

In 1992, the Albanian Football Association was set up as an organisation, with statutes and an organisational structure, a general assembly and an executive committee. In 2002, it started to organise itself as a structured body, increasing its professional performance. Since then, the ever-better functioning of its mechanisms has been felt throughout Albanian sports life,

becoming an example to follow.

The national team achieved historic success by qualifying for EURO 2016 in France.

COVID-19 somewhat prevented the association from staging a series of programmed activities but, despite this, the Albanian FA created a celebratory atmosphere through its messages reliving the proud achievements of the first 90 years and looking ahead to the next chapter in its history. 🇦🇱



A training match in Shkodra in 1928.



# RAISING FUNDS FOR THE RED CROSS AND FOOD BANKS

The Italian Football Association (FIGC) and the LAPS Foundation, a non-profit organisation founded in 2016 by Italian entrepreneur Lapo Elkann, have launched a new solidarity initiative.

BY DIEGO ANTENOZIO

#ÈIlNostroDovere – #OurDuty is a fundraising campaign to support the most vulnerable families, those particularly affected by the worsening social and economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic. The funds raised will go to the Italian Red Cross and the food bank network and be used to donate basic necessities. #ÈIlNostroDovere – #OurDuty follows on from the Beyond The Mask campaign, also promoted by the LAPS Foundation, which raised over €1 million and collected more than 150 tonnes of food and basic necessities in Italy, Portugal and Spain.

The FIGC has enlisted the support of the men’s and women’s senior national teams for the new campaign, with the Azzurri and the Azzurre cheering on those who have always cheered for them by lining up for a promotional photo with their hands on their hearts, their hands painted in the colours of the Italian flag, and the hashtag #ÈIlNostroDovere – #OurDuty at the bottom of the photo.

“We are happy to be able to contribute to this LAPS fundraising campaign,” said Gabriele Gravina, president of the FIGC.

“We are very aware of the responsibility that football’s role in society places on us and, in everything we do, we try to convey the same passion, the same emotions that a goal by the Italian national team arouse, because it is in this spirit that we want to help those in real need. We want to play and win as a team, on and off the pitch.”

### Cohesion and solidarity

“The economic and social impact caused by the pandemic,” said Giorgio Chiellini, captain of the Azzurri, “has taken on dramatic proportions for many families, destroying many of the small and great certainties on which thousands of people lived their present and built their future. Situations like this require each of us to do something. To overcome this challenge, cohesion and solidarity are needed, qualities that we Italians know how best to display in difficult times.” Azzurre captain

Sara Gama added: “This campaign sees the Azzurre and Azzurri on the pitch together, in a game of the utmost importance, to get as many Italians as possible to donate to help families who are facing serious economic difficulties due to the pandemic. The Azzurre and the Azzurri are standing side by side to help. It is our duty to be on the front line right now. We would love you [the Italian people] to join us.”

Hosted on the Tinaba platform, #ÈIlNostroDovere – #OurDuty will run until 6 January 2021. In parallel with the action in Italy, fundraising campaigns have also been launched in Portugal and in Israel together with the national football associations. Furthermore, the LAPS Foundation and the Independent Ideas/Publicis creative consultancy group have agreed to make the creative format, expertise and human resources available free of charge to football associations all over the world. For more information, go to <https://laponlus.org>.



AZERBAIJAN

www.affa.az

## PROJECT AIMS TO DEVELOP SPORT IN RURAL AREAS

TORA AKHMEDOVA

 The Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA) is implementing another project to develop football and increase its popularity. One of the main goals of this new project is to get children and teenagers involved in football in the regions, especially in rural areas.

Taken as a step to put into action the recommendations of the president of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, on the development of sport in rural areas, the project is being put into operation in the regions of Shamakhi, Siyazan, Ismayilli, Tovuz, Gadabay and Balakan.



BELARUS

www.abff.by

## FORMER HEAD OF GRASSROOTS VITALY KRUPITSA PASSES AWAY

ALEKSANDR ALEINIK

 Belarusian football is mourning the loss of Vitaly Krupitsa, a former head of grassroots football at the Belarus Football Federation.

Vitaly's path was inextricably linked with football. In his early football career, he was called up to play for his country at youth level and played his club football with Mosty. Then he devoted himself to beach soccer and, for many years, was in charge of the beach soccer department at BATE Borisov, as well as playing for the club's beach soccer team and winning a number of trophies along the way. He also defended the colours of the Belarus national beach soccer team.

Later, Vitaly Krupitsa devoted himself to the development of grassroots football in Belarus. As head of the grassroots football department at the Belarus Football Federation, he launched a number of projects that are still ongoing and participated in many international workshops, which contributed substantially to increasing the popularity

of the number one game among the most diverse segments of the population. His most famous project is the 'Dad, Mom,



Me – football family' festival, which has been held in Belarus since 2016 and was recognised at the end of 2018 with the UEFA Grow award as the best grassroots football project in Europe in the Grow Participation category. Largely due to the efforts of Vitaly, the UEFA Grassroots Football Conference was held in Minsk in 2019, attended by representatives of all UEFA member associations as well as guests from other confederations. Following his remarkable success at international level, he moved to work at the UNICEF office in Belarus.

Vitaly Krupitsa's contribution to the development of football cannot be overestimated. He preached and practised a healthy lifestyle, moving out of town with his wife and three children, but this did not spare him from being diagnosed with terminal cancer. Vitaly would have turned 40 in February 2021.

The Belarus Football Federation expresses its deepest sympathy to the family and friends of Vitaly Krupitsa.

## A POPULAR GAME FOR FANS

MATTEO BALLIAUW

 During the summer of 2020, the Royal Belgian Football Association (RBFA) created a unique experience to engage with the fans in the absence of the EURO 2020 tournament. Together with market research agency iVOX, a game was created to allow fans to discover which of the Belgian Red Devils is most similar to them. In this game, Which Devil Are You?, questions were asked to the fans about their hobbies, interests, etc. These answers were compared with the replies of the national team players. Based on the matching algorithm, a ranking of the

most similar players was provided to the fans and the individual answers of each player could be compared with their own replies.

The initiative has been very popular among fans of the Belgian Red Devils. About 35,000 participants have already taken part. Using a live dashboard on the association's database, including the number of participants and some of their demographics, the RBFA team has been able to actively manage the campaign. Moreover, the RBFA now knows the fans



who gave their GDPR opt-ins better, and can use this data (e.g. on interest to travel to away games) to communicate with them in a more personal way.

If you want to check out the game yourself, it is available at <https://www.rbfa.be/en/news/which-devil-are-you>.

## LOOKING AHEAD TO TWO EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS IN 2021

NIKA BAHTIJAREVIĆ

 The extended break in international football and the postponement of EURO 2020 were low points for football worldwide. Croatian football fans can rejoice, however, because 2021 is looking to be a good year. While Croatia's 2018 World Cup silver medallists secured their place at the EUROs in late 2019, supporters of the national team will also get the chance to follow the Vatreni's younger counterparts at the European Under-21 Championship finals in spring 2021.

The team had an unsteady start in the qualifiers, but the introduction of a new head coach livened up the Croatian youngsters and helped them get back in the running for a place in the finals. An unfortunate tie in Edinburgh, however, put a damper on their plans, and by the team's last qualifying match, a seemingly impossible list of conditions had to line up for the Young Vatreni to find their way to the finals – Scotland had to lose against or tie with Greece for Croatia to take second spot in their group, teams in other groups had to

flounder in their final matches, and the Croatian Under-21s had to win with a high goal difference against Lithuania (possibly as high as 4-0) to qualify. But when the odds get unbeatable, so do the Croats, who scored seven goals against Lithuania to fix up their overall goal difference, and were rewarded for it with a place at the final tournament.

"We had a tough run in the qualifiers, but the players were always motivated. The boys made it clear that they love

playing for their country," said head coach and former Liverpool star Igor Bišćan after the match against Lithuania. "The way they played tonight really represented Croatian football at its very best – effective, attractive, serious."

Fans of the Croatian national teams certainly hope to see exactly that kind of Croatian football at the Under-21 finals in March and May – and at EURO 2020 in June.



ENGLAND

www.thefa.com

## LAUNCH OF FOOTBALL LEADERSHIP DIVERSITY CODE

JANE BATEMAN

 In October, the English Football Association launched the Football Leadership Diversity Code, with over 40 clubs across the Premier League, English Football League, Women's Super League and FA Women's Championship committing to tackle inequality across senior leadership positions, team operations and coaching roles.

The code has been developed in collaboration with club executives, players, coaches, HR directors, media and leaders across the game to ensure that English football better represents its diverse society. Recognising that support structures off the pitch do not reflect the increasing gender and ethnic diversity seen on the pitch, it will increase accountability and transparency.



The code focuses on increasing equality of opportunity, with hiring targets to find the best people for jobs from diverse talent pipelines, and will expand more broadly over time.

Paul Elliott, chair of The FA's Inclusion Advisory Board, helped drive the development of the code alongside chief executive Mark Bullingham and Edleen John, The FA's director of international relations, corporate affairs and co-partner for equality, diversity and inclusion. Paul Elliott said: "We believe the introduction of the Football Leadership Diversity Code will signal a long-term change for the English game. The number and stature of clubs that have already agreed to join us on this journey proves that with clear goals, transparency and a desire for action, we can shape a better future together."

More information on the Football Leadership Diversity Code can be found at [www.TheFA.com/FLDC](http://www.TheFA.com/FLDC)

FAROE ISLANDS

www.football.fo

## KÍ KLAKSVÍK CLINCH THE DOUBLE

TERJI NIELSEN

 Kí Klaksvík are still dominating women's football in the Faroe Islands, as they have been doing for the last 20 years, and this season they clinched the double again, as they have done so often before.

The women from Klaksvík secured the league title with several rounds to go, owing to their massive lead on the chasing pack. By the end of the competition, Kí Klaksvík had 56 out of a possible maximum of 60 points, and were 26 points ahead of runners-up NSÍ Runavík.

The season ended with the cup final between Kí Klaksvík and NSÍ Runavík, with the champions running out comfortable winners, beating their opponents 3-0.

It is the 15th time in 20 years that Kí Klaksvík have won the women's cup, and what is remarkable is that three of the players on the pitch for the final this



season have been part of the team on all 15 occasions. Twin sisters Rannvá Andreassen and Ragna Patawary, who turned 40 a couple of weeks ago, both started the match, while Malena

Josephsen entered the pitch with a few minutes to go. Rannvá Andreassen even scored the goal that gave Kí Klaksvík the lead late in the first half.

## GIBRALTAR WIN PROMOTION IN THE NATIONS LEAGUE

STEVEN GONZALEZ



Gibraltar's national team sealed a historic achievement in the UEFA Nations League with two draws in the November international window.

A 0-0 draw on a heavy wet pitch in San Marino on matchday 5 set up a winner takes all 'final of finals' against Liechtenstein at the Victoria Stadium.

The only sad part was that the match had to be played behind closed doors owing to COVID-19 restrictions.

Gibraltar scored first thanks to an own goal and, despite a Liechtenstein equaliser before the break, Gibraltar never looked troubled in the second half, and when the match came to an end, Julio Ribas and his team of Gibraltarian Warriors had made history – only one goal conceded in the group, unbeaten throughout the campaign and promoted to League C! Speaking after the game, Ribas was full of praise for everyone

involved in this historic achievement.

"What the players have achieved is very important, especially as for over four years they suffered a lot and were being constantly described as the worst international team in the world. But here we are! We have taken a step forward but we have to continue, we have to work hard, because you can only achieve moments like this through sheer hard work.

"Being the Gibraltar head coach is the proudest moment of my career and it is a great honour for me to give everything I have got for Gibraltar and for my players. I have to thank all my players, my backroom staff, my medical team and everyone at the Gibraltar FA who have stood together, side by side, always supporting us. As a family, we have managed to win the group and get promoted into League C of the UEFA Nations League. This is for all of them and, importantly, for the whole of Gibraltar, who were always behind us with their unconditional support. Thank you to everyone. This has been a historic occasion, an unforgettable one!"



## FERENCVÁROS SEND CLEAR MESSAGE

MÁRTON DINNYÉS



In 2012, Ferencvárosi Torna Club was one of the first Hungarian clubs to initiate a campaign against exclusion, and since then the Budapest club has been raising awareness about the importance of this issue with short films. The slogan of the 2020 campaign video is 'We are a family in Fradi' (Fradi is the club's nickname).

In the most popular Hungarian sport club's new 30-second video, Norwegian international striker Tokmac Nguen urges fans to unite in their fight against discrimination. This message is perfectly

in line with the Hungarian Football Federation's 'Hate is not an option' campaign launched in 2013 and played



out in every single professional football game in the country.

Since winning their respective league titles under the special COVID-19 measures this year, Ferencváros' men's and women's teams have both performed well in their respective UEFA competitions. Serhiy Rebrov's men's team reached the UEFA Champions League group stage (after an absence of 25 years), while the women's team achieved a memorable 6-1 win in the first qualifying round, before losing against the Slovenian champions in the second round.

LATVIA

www.lff.lv

## ONLINE PLATFORM TO CHOOSE A PATH IN FOOTBALL

TOMS ĀRMANIS



With the aim of encouraging more people to get involved in football and inform them about the various paths available, the Latvian Football Federation (LFF) has created a simple online platform connecting all interested people to the respective specialists.

The platform [www.futbols.lv](http://www.futbols.lv) offers visitors direct access to the five primary sectors in Latvian football – player, coach, referee, volunteer and supporter. Users can fill a simple registration form and leave their contact information. The respective LFF specialists will then get in touch and propose a range of possibilities for getting started.

Parents can use the platform to find a club where their children can train, and it is also designed to be the first port of call for anyone interested in obtaining a lower level coaching qualification or wanting to test their skills in refereeing football matches, as well as for young people looking for valuable experience in staging football-related events and supporters



of the Latvian national team eager to join a fan club.

All these sectors are central pillars in

the strategy for developing Latvian football between 2017 and 2024, titled Football in the Heart of Latvia.

LITHUANIA

www.lff.lt

## FOOTBALL SUPPORTS ENVIRONMENTAL CAMPAIGNS

ROBERTAS KAŽDANAS



The Lithuanian Football Federation (LFF) and Lithuanian clubs joined several international campaigns in the past year to raise awareness among the football community about environmental and sustainability issues.

In July, the LFF joined the #PlayGreen project, which aims to engage volunteers across Europe and promote the values of eco-friendly sport by creating grassroots sports activities.

In another initiative, a team of 20 campaigners have joined forces under the

guidance of the LFF's grassroots projects manager, Greta Guižauskaitė. Acting as green ambassadors, their mission is to raise awareness of sustainability issues among the football community and to develop specific actions to reduce the environmental impact of the game.

Meanwhile, five football clubs are taking part in the #GreenCoach programme in order to improve their good governance by incorporating sustainability into their daily management. Experts from the Sant'Anna School of

Advanced Studies in Pisa, Italy, will create an online tool for the clubs to measure their environmental footprint on and off the field.

"Environmental policy is becoming more visible in Lithuania. We are more aware of social responsibility matters and have started to implement sustainable actions in our daily work and projects. Together with UEFA, we are working to make football more attractive in different social, economic and public areas," said Greta Guižauskaitė.

## MICHAEL MIFSUD GIVEN PERFECT SEND-OFF AS NATIONAL TEAM MAINTAINS UPWARD TREND

KEVIN AZZOPARDI



The Malta Football Association honoured one of its greatest football ambassadors as Michael Mifsud made his final appearance for the national team in the friendly match against Liechtenstein on 11 November.

Fittingly, Mifsud, the country's most-capped player with 143 appearances, crowned his international career with a clinical finish to hand Malta an early lead in a 3-0 victory at the national stadium, taking his record tally of goals to 42 and extending the team's positive run, which now stands at seven unbeaten matches.

Before the game, Malta FA president Bjorn Vassallo presented Mifsud with a framed Malta shirt with the number 143 on the back and a gift in recognition of his extraordinary contribution to the national team and Maltese football.

Now playing for Sirens FC in Malta's

premier league, Mifsud, 39, led the team out for one last time and left the pitch on the hour mark after a typically sprightly performance that encapsulated his international career spanning two decades.

"On a personal level, I'm happy to have scored in my final match for the national team, but the nicest thing was to leave the stadium with a resounding 3-0 victory and seeing the team perform very well," said Mifsud, who had made his international bow at the age of 18 in a friendly against Albania in 2000.

"The emotions were high throughout, especially when we took the group photo and during the presentation of the framed shirt," he added. "I would like to thank Malta FA president Bjorn Vassallo and national coach Devis Mangia for making this possible, as it meant a lot to me. This day had to come.



"I have played alongside many players from different generations in the last 20 years, but I leave with a very positive feeling. What I've liked most about the current squad is the team management; the coach and his technical staff are very meticulous and professional. There is a good group of players, a great set-up and a good philosophy behind the team's approach, and when you have these things in place, results will follow."

## WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAM RAISE BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

GARETH MAHER



The Republic of Ireland women's national team has linked up with Breast Cancer Ireland to help raise breast cancer awareness.

With one in nine women diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime and 30% of them between the ages of 20

and 50, the Ireland players were keen to use their profile to shine a spotlight on these worrying statistics.

As they prepared for their Women's EURO 2022 qualifier away to Ukraine, the squad took time to raise awareness by wearing Breast Cancer Ireland face masks, which can be bought online to help fund further research.

Katie McCabe, national team captain, said: "It's really important to raise as much awareness as possible about breast cancer because it is something that affects so many women around the world and has a huge impact on families.

"Research, education and awareness are all key to tackling breast cancer, so on

behalf of the Ireland women's national team, I'd like to encourage women from the age of 20 upwards to download the Breast Aware app and learn about the eight signs and symptoms."

Aisling Hurley, CEO of Breast Cancer Ireland, said: "We are thrilled to partner with the Republic of Ireland women's national team during this Breast Cancer Awareness month.

"Women supporting and empowering others to be more breast aware is critical if we are going to change the landscape of this disease into the future. Knowing what is normal today, should an abnormality arise, is important in ensuring a more positive treatment outcome."



ROMANIA

www.frf.ro

## AN ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT NEW ARTIFICIAL PITCH

PAUL ZAHARIA



Despite the coronavirus pandemic, work is progressing at full speed on Bucharest's three new stadiums (Ghencea, Arcul de Triumf and Giulești), which should all be ready by spring 2021 and will all be used by the Romanian national teams.

Apart from this high-level infrastructure project, the Romanian Football Federation (FRF) is also busy working on smaller, but no less important, infrastructure projects targeting the development of football in Romania. One such project will see the construction of at least one regular-size artificial pitch in each of the 41 counties and in Bucharest.

In normal circumstances, i.e. before the pandemic broke out, six such artificial pitches were inaugurated in six counties. The seventh was handed over on 29 October in Târgoviște, the capital of Dâmbovița county. Each of these pitches

has its own story and significance, but the one in Târgoviște (complete with a 300-seat stand and floodlights) especially so. In 2019, after an absence of 21 years, the local team, FC Chindia Târgoviște, won promotion back into the Romanian premier league, but as the only local stadium is an old, dated one that is supposed to be replaced by a brand-new one in a few years' time, the club has been obliged to play its home matches at suitable venues in other cities. On top of that, all the other football infrastructure in Dâmbovița county is in a poor state, which means that the newly opened artificial pitch offers important support to all FRF members in the county.

The FRF president, Răzvan Burleanu, inaugurated the pitch together with Târgoviște's mayor, Daniel Cristian Stan, and said that: "Our aim was to give children back the joy and happiness of playing football. Now the little ones from Târgoviște



have a field where they can display and improve their skills and be happy that they have the opportunity to play their beloved sport. Our whole football needs investments in terms of infrastructure. Because of the specific Romanian weather conditions, natural pitches can hardly be used for five months of the year, making artificial turf an ideal alternative. We are speaking about the biggest FRF investment project, which will not end here. Our target, while struggling with the pandemic, is to inaugurate two more such pitches in two other counties before the end of the current year and to continue the project in the following years all over our country – everything, of course, with the support of the local authorities."

According to the partnership (the same applies in all counties), the Târgoviște local council manages the pitch, while all FRF members have the right to use it free of charge.

RUSSIA

www.rfs.ru

## CENTENARY OF THE BIRTH OF KONSTANTIN BESKOV

EKATERINA GRISHENKOVA



18 November 2020 marked the 100th anniversary of the birth of the outstanding Soviet player and legendary coach Konstantin Beskov.

Beskov spent almost 15 years of his playing career at FC Dynamo Moscow, with whom he twice won the national championship (1945 and 1949) as well as one USSR Cup (1953).

In 1954, he switched to coaching, where he achieved great success with FC Dynamo Moscow, FC Spartak Moscow and the USSR national team. From 1967 to 1972, and again in 1994/95, he coached Dynamo Moscow, achieving second place in the USSR Championship in 1967 and 1970, and winning the USSR Cup in 1966/67 and 1970, then the

Russian Cup in 1994/95. In 1972 Dynamo Moscow got through to the European Cup Winners' Cup final and became the first Soviet team to reach the final of a European club competition.

From 1977 to 1988, Beskov was in charge of Spartak. Under him, the team were invariably among the prize winners of the USSR championship for nine years in a row. Under Beskov's leadership, the USSR national team took silver at the 1964 European Nations' Cup and bronze at the 1980 Moscow Olympics.

Football veterans honoured the memory of Konstantin Beskov by laying flowers at the Beskov monument in the Vagankovskoye cemetery in Moscow on his birthday. The ceremony was attended by veterans of



Spartak and Dynamo, and the chairman of the football veterans committee of the Football Union of Russia, Aleksander Mirzoyan, who played under Beskov and considered him as his mentor.

Later, the Fedor Cherenkov youth football academy hosted a friendly tournament involving veterans' teams of Spartak, Dynamo and the Russian national team. The commemorations concluded on 21 November, when the Spartak and Dynamo players wore T-shirts in honour of the great coach ahead of their teams' premier league encounter.

## A TOUGH BUT HOPEFUL YEAR

### PRESS OFFICE



2020 will remain etched in people's memories because of a pandemic that no one could have imagined a year ago and which has left its mark on the social fabric of all our countries. However, it is also a year that will be written into the history of the San Marino Football Federation.

Despite the uncertainties and changes concerning the national and international calendars, San Marino teams have been in action in three European competitions. In the UEFA Nations League, our men's senior national team achieved consecutive draws in their Nations League matches against Liechtenstein and Gibraltar – the first positive results for the team since 2014.



The Under-21s also showed signs of improvement, even though this was not reflected in the results. In futsal,

meanwhile, our men's national team have pulled off a first by qualifying for the play-offs for Futsal EURO 2022 having finished their qualifying round group in second place.

"We will remember the recent performances and results of our national teams for a long time to come," stated the council of the football federation, "and we will also be able to associate some nicer memories with a year that has sorely tested all of us and disrupted our daily lives. We hope that these positive trends will continue within our different national teams during 2021, and provide some calm and tranquillity to all members of the football family of San Marino."

## PAVEL MALOVIČ STEPS BACK IN AS NEW NATIONAL TEAM DOCTOR

### PETER SURIN



After national team doctor Zsolt Fegyveres tested positive for COVID-19 at the beginning of the international window in October, the Slovak Football Association (SFZ) needed to find a quick, reliable substitute and decided to ask the best of the best – the experienced Pavel Malovič – to return to work.

Pavel Malovič chaired the association's medical committee from 1983 to 2014, since when he has been managing its medical department.

His medical career in football started in 1974 in the youth system of Slovan Bratislava, but most importantly he has been involved in many big matches of the Czechoslovakia and Slovakia national teams.

Václav Čermák, the legendary Sparta Praha and national team doctor, was the one who suggested him for that role. "I started in the national team under head coaches Masopust and Ježek at

the Strahov stadium in September 1986 for the match against Netherlands, which we won 1-0 thanks to a goal from Knoflíček," Malovič recalls.

Slovakia v Israel in October 2020 was his 140th international match and the first one for 19 years.

Between 1986 and 1993, he was the main doctor of the Czechoslovakian national team, then between 1994 and 2001 he was the doctor of the Slovakian national team, followed by 117 official matches with the Under-21 team, as well as 207 official matches with the Czechoslovakian and Slovakian youth teams, making a grand total of 464 international matches at various levels.

History records Pavol Šoral as the first Slovakian player in the Czechoslovakian national team, Martin Macek as the first Slovakian referee in the World Cup, Ferdinand Daučík as the first Slovakian coach of the joint federal team – and Pavel



Malovič as the first Slovakian doctor of the Czechoslovakian national team, when he was part of the squad for the 1990 World Cup in Italy.

Born in Bratislava, Malovič celebrated his 68th birthday in July. In addition to his involvement in football, he has also worked with the ice hockey team of Dukla Hodonin, the wrestling team of Dunajplavba Bratislava, the Czechoslovakian karate team and as the personal doctor of former Slovakian tennis player Dominik Hrbatý.

He is also the author of two books of poetry and a collection of popular publications on health-related topics, as well as the co-author of a collection of song lyrics and three books of essays.

Together with director Dušan Hanák, he was part of the team that worked on the 1986 psychological film *Quiet Happiness*.

But football always remains closest to his heart.

SLOVENIA

www.nzs.si

## RADENKO MIJATOVIČ RE-ELECTED FOR A NEW TERM

MATJAŽ KRAJNIK



Radenko Mijatović has been re-elected as president of the Football Association of Slovenia (Nzs) through virtual elections for a new four-year term with a total of 27 votes.

New times call for new technology and the Football Association of Slovenia held its general assembly with elections for the positions of president and vice-president in a virtual environment for the first time, in the year the association celebrates its centenary.

The 56-year old Mijatović, who took over at the helm of the Nzs in 2016 from the current UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin, was the only candidate for the position and received 27 votes from the 27 delegates who submitted their votes. Two delegates failed to submit their votes in the virtual election.

Mijatović had vast support among the

regional associations, being nominated for the presidential seat by MNZ Celje, MNZ Lendava, MNZ Ljubljana, MNZ Maribor, MNZ Murska Sobota, MNZ Ptuj and the association of football referees of Slovenia.

“Considering that I didn’t have any opponents going into this election, the outcome was expected. I am happy with the result,” said Mijatović in a post-election statement, also noting that he was surprised that nobody ran against him as there are many people in Slovenia who would make a great president.

Mijatović added that at a time when the world and, with it, football are facing their biggest challenge, he feels the honour and responsibility that come with such a position. “My decision to go for another mandate wasn’t self-evident and it wasn’t easy. But it’s easier with all the people I work with who create this supportive



environment. I would like to thank everybody for their support in the last four years. We managed to achieve a lot, but that’s now behind us and I’d like to focus on the future now. Currently, it’s unpredictable and uncertain. My main goal right now is to justify the trust I received and fulfil the commitment we gave to football.”

The delegates also elected, or re-elected, new vice-presidents during the general assembly. Stanko Glažar and Danilo Kacijan were re-elected for new mandates, receiving 29 and 27 votes respectively, while the delegates put their trust in Gvido Mravljak (27 votes) and Dejan Germič (22 votes) for their first mandates. The only female vice-presidential candidate, Tamara Šnofl, received five votes and finished fifth.

SWEDEN

www.svenskfotboll.se

## 2015 – WHEN FOOTBALL STOOD UP TO WELCOME REFUGEES

ANDREAS NILSSON



It has been five years since the 2015 refugee crisis, and the Swedish FA commemorated this anniversary by taking a look back at how the Swedish football community stepped up to help.

An unprecedented 163,000 refugees came to Sweden in 2015, a wave that peaked in the autumn. When the official institutions buckled under the pressure, Swedish sports in general, and football in particular, took on part of the responsibility. Swedish FA general secretary Håkan Sjöstrand used the televised annual 2015 football gala to speak directly to Swedish football clubs, asking them to open up and help the new arrivals.

Kista SC was one of more than 1,100 Swedish football clubs that heeded the call and took part in the effort to receive and



begin to integrate the refugees.

“At the time, we had mattresses all over our club house, accommodating families who would have slept in the street otherwise. In the years since, we have run projects teaching Swedish, supporting women, helping out with homework, and so much more,” said Kista SC team manager Sonja Dousa.

“When the authorities close their offices and go home, we are still open. We are

flexible and fast to react. I feel we have made a big difference to a lot of people,” she added.

More than 3,000 projects to assist new arrivals have been conducted by Swedish sports, with football clubs being the largest contributor (39% of projects).

“When I asked our clubs to help out in 2015, it wasn’t a desperate plea. I knew that we would help by opening up our locker rooms, and we did. Football is so much more than what happens on the pitch – helping people to meet and strengthening civil society is in our DNA. I want to thank everyone in Swedish football for what’s been done over the years. Thank you for helping people during a difficult period,” said Håkan Sjöstrand.

SWITZERLAND

www.football.ch

## LOWER LEAGUES ALSO FACE PROBLEMS

PIERRE BENOIT



Just like everywhere else, the coronavirus pandemic is creating major problems for the Swiss FA and Swiss football clubs. With the Federal Office of Public Health requiring all matches to be played behind closed doors, the fight for financial survival for professional clubs in the Swiss Football League is already well known. However, the situation in the lower leagues and regional associations is also deeply concerning.

While clubs in the top men's divisions and the Women's Super League are still able to train, everything is at a standstill in the lower leagues, with the players forced to take another extended break.

The difficulties faced by clubs such as Yverdon-Sport FC, battling away at the top of the Promotion League (the third tier of Swiss football), are clear for all to see. When last season was brought to a premature end, the Vaud-based club had a four-point lead at the top of the table, and they find themselves in exactly the same situation now, four points clear after ten matches. Previously coached by Lucien Favre and Bernard Challandes, and with another top technician, Jean-Michel Auby, now at the helm, the club has won promotion to the top tier three times in the past (1993, 1999 and 2005), and reached the Swiss Cup final in 2001. With promotion again on the cards, the latest interruption has come at a highly inopportune time for the club from the shores of Lake Neuchâtel. It is to be hoped that the club's officials will not lose patience and that Yverdon-Sport FC can continue its upward climb in spite of coronavirus and all the adversity it brings. There is always hope.

UKRAINE

www.ffu.org.ua

## A HISTORIC MILESTONE FOR REFEREE MONZUL

YURI MAZNYCHENKO



A team of Ukrainian referees received a historic appointment from UEFA for a recent UEFA Nations League match.

The League D goalless draw between San Marino and Gibraltar on 14 November was officiated by Kateryna Monzul, assisted by Oleksandra Ardasheva and Maryna Striletska, with Anastasiya Romanyuk acting as the fourth official, making them the first all-women refereeing team to take charge of a senior men's international.



The 39-year-old Monzul is no stranger to big occasions, having refereed the UEFA Women's EURO 2013 semi-final between Norway and Denmark, the 2015 Women's World Cup final between the USA and Japan, the 2014 UEFA Women's Champions League final between Tyresö and Wolfsburg, as well as at Women's EURO 2017 and the 2019 Women's World Cup. She was recognised as the IFFHS World's Best Woman Referee in 2015.

WALES

www.faw.cymru

## SUPPORT TO THE SHOW RACISM THE RED CARD DAY OF ACTION

MELISSA PALMER



In partnership with Show Racism the Red Card (SRtRC), the anti-racism educational charity of the Football Association of Wales (FAW), the FAW recently released a poignant video emphasising the importance of challenging racial prejudice.

Released on SRtRC's day of action, the campaign video features FAW Trust ambassador and girls' football coach Ayah Abduldaim along with several senior Cymru [Wales] players. The video highlights the many forms of racism, its effects and the need for further education on this important topic, as well as signposting the FAW's Report It platform.

As part of the Fare Network Football People action weeks, SRtRC's annual fundraiser, Wear

Red Day, takes place on 16 October and is vital in helping the anti-racism charity raise funds to support SRtRC schools programmes, in addition to raising awareness and educating young people and teachers.

The FAW realises that, while some progress has been made in football, more must be done, which is why it is developing a new equality, diversity and inclusion plan for Welsh football. Education is vital, and alongside SRtRC a range of educational seminars and resources are being developed for the wider football family.

Challenging racism in football and society is, of course, a collective

responsibility and there is a need for support across the whole football family in Wales, and beyond.



We are supporting Show Racism the Red Card.

**COMPETITIONS****January****12–17 January**

UEFA Futsal Champions League:  
round of 32

**25 January – 3 February**

Futsal EURO 2022: qualifiers

**February****16–21 February**

UEFA Futsal Champions League:  
round of 16

**16/17 and 23/24 February**

UEFA Champions League: round of 16  
(first legs)

**18 February**

UEFA Europa League: round of 32  
(first legs)

**25 February**

UEFA Europa League: round of 32  
(return legs)

**March****1–10 March**

Futsal EURO 2022: qualifiers

**2/3 March**

UEFA Youth League: round of 64

**3/4 March**

UEFA Women's Champions League:  
round of 16 (first legs)

**9/10 and 16/17 March**

UEFA Champions League: round of 16  
(return legs)

**10/11 March**

UEFA Women's Champions League:  
round of 16 (return legs)

**11 March**

UEFA Europa League: round of 16  
(first legs)

**18 March**

UEFA Europa League: round of 16  
(return legs)

**23/24 March**

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

**24/25 March**

2022 World Cup: European Qualifiers  
matchday 1

**24–31 March, Hungary and Slovenia**

European Under-21 Championship  
2019–21: final round, group matches

**27/28 March**

2022 World Cup: European Qualifiers  
matchday 2

**30/31 March**

2022 World Cup: European Qualifiers  
matchday 3

**31 March – 1 April**

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

**MEETINGS****February****27 January, Nyon**

UEFA Youth League: round of 64 draw

**16 February, Nyon**

UEFA Women's Champions League: round  
of 16 draw

**26 February, Nyon**

UEFA Europa League: round of 16 draw

**March****5 March, Nyon**

Women's EURO 2022: play-off draw

**12 March, Nyon**

UEFA Women's Champions League:  
quarter-final and semi-final draws

UEFA Youth League: round of 32, round of  
16, quarter-finals and semi-finals draw

**19 March, Nyon**

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

**OBITUARIES**

**Henri Roemer**, a former member of the UEFA Executive Committee (2000–04) and former president of the Luxembourg Football Federation, passed away at the age of 68 on 24 October. At UEFA, he was also chairman of the Development and Assistance Committee (2000–02) and a member of the Media Committee (1998–2000), and represented the Executive Committee on the Youth and Amateur Football Committee (2002–04).

**Josep Lluís Vilaseca Guasch**, a member of the Amicale des Anciens, the circle of former UEFA committee members, passed away at the age of 90 on 14 November. He sat on the UEFA Control and Disciplinary Committee for almost 30 years, first as a member (1978–86), then vice-chairman (1986–96) and finally as chairman (1996–2006).

**Dimitar Largov**, a former president of the Bulgarian Football Union, passed away at the age of 84 on 26 November. He was a member of the UEFA Committee for the European Championship from 1992 to 1994.

**NOTICE**

**Radenko Mijatović** has been re-elected president of the Football Association of Slovenia for another four-year term.



# # EQUAL GAME

