



**UEFA**  
**Grassroots**  
*Programme*

# GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL NEWSLETTER

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**The Summer**  
**of Grassroots Football**  
**2009**

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The fun of playing must always come first in grassroots football, whatever the age of the players.

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# GRASSROOTS DAY

## EDITORIAL

**BY ANDY ROXBURGH,  
UEFA TECHNICAL DIRECTOR**

The UEFA president, Michel Platini, and the UEFA Executive Committee have decided to declare Wednesday, 19 May 2010 as UEFA Grassroots Day. The aim is to celebrate and recognise grassroots football programmes and activities throughout Europe during the week leading up to the UEFA Champions League final in Madrid – the first time that the European club competition final will have been played on a Saturday.

Placing the Grassroots Day in juxtaposition with the professional showcase match is significant and deliberate because, without the grassroots game, top football would wither and die. It is also true that the superstars and the top clubs stimulate the next generation of players, coaches, referees, officials and fans, and a strong link between the elite and the grassroots has enormous benefits for both levels of football and, consequently, the game in general.

UEFA Grassroots Day will also give the national associations an opportunity to showcase their grassroots work and to promote their mass participation activities with the various non-elite groups: children, youths and veterans. Some have already indicated their intention to animate their mini-pitch programmes, while others will use international matches to demonstrate their grassroots projects. UEFA will support the associations' actions by supplying equipment, attendance certificates and T-shirts, and will publicise their achievements in promoting and developing the game. In addition, the national associations will offer proposals for special UEFA grassroots awards.

There will be three categories – best grassroots leader, best grassroots project and best grassroots club – and the UEFA Executive Committee will decide the 2010 winners, those whose exceptional work in grassroots football deserves recognition.

UEFA's website will have an important part to play in the Grassroots Day project. Firstly, uefa.com will start the countdown at the beginning of February with a declaration of '100 days to go'. This will trigger related news stories and the launch of grassroots promotional material. The second move will be to put educational material on the website which will address sporting, educational and social values. Specially designed lessons, aimed at youngsters between 10 and 14 years old, on the themes of winning and losing and teamwork will be created, and it is hoped that parents and teachers will find the material useful for engaging youngsters in discussions about issues which can have an impact on their personal development.

In Madrid, on UEFA Grassroots Day on Wednesday, 19 May 2010, the

UEFA president, Michel Platini, will present a new grassroots mini-pitch to the mayor of the city. A press conference will be held to explain the project and to give details of the various grassroots activities taking place in Madrid and in other participating cities throughout Europe. Special endorsements of grassroots football will be provided by UEFA grassroots ambassadors, mainly top players who have recently retired.

Just as football begins in its grassroots, so the build-up to the first Saturday night UEFA Champions League final will commence with grassroots action. Following the UEFA Grassroots Day on the Wednesday, the UEFA Women's Champions League final will take place on the Thursday evening. Two days later, Europe's showpiece for professional clubs will provide the icing on the cake, and it will be appropriate to remind ourselves during that week that grassroots football is the cake. Recognising and celebrating grassroots football on UEFA's Grassroots Day is therefore something worth doing – an initiative which will be fully endorsed by those who carry the ball close to their heart.



On UEFA Grassroots Day, grassroots football activities will be organised all over Europe.





THEO ZWANZIGER AT THE  
UEFA GRASSROOTS WORKSHOP  
IN HAMBURG IN MARCH

# ADDING VALUE TO SOCIETY

**GERMANY WAS ONE OF THE COUNTRIES WHERE 2009 WAS A BIG YEAR FOR GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL – AND WHERE YEARS TO COME LOOK LIKE BEING EVEN BIGGER. WHEN OPENING THE UEFA GRASSROOTS WORKSHOP IN HAMBURG IN MARCH, THEO ZWANZIGER, PRESIDENT OF THE GERMAN FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION (DFB) COMMENTED, “IF YOU TRY TO PLAY ELITE FOOTBALL AGAINST GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL, NOBODY BENEFITS. SO OUR PHILOSOPHY IS TO DERIVE MOMENTUM FOR GRASSROOTS PROJECTS FROM THE ELITE COMPETITIONS AND WE TRY TO EMPHASISE THAT FUN ISN’T INDIVIDUAL – IT INVOLVES FAMILIES, NEIGHBOURS AND COMMUNITIES. WE BELIEVE THAT GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL CAN BE AN INTEGRATING FORCE WHICH CAN ADD VALUE TO OUR SOCIETY.”**

Apart from the efforts being made by German clubs to reach deep into their communities, the DFB is running a number of projects within the global development plan launched in 2007. Schools are a key target area, where football can promote a healthy lifestyle, motivate youngsters for lifelong activity and provide a valuable tool for social

integration. But the majority of teachers are female – and many of them are reticent about their ability to ‘teach’ football. The DFB therefore launched a series of workshops aimed at helping them to cast their doubts aside.

Another initiative was a football badge project in partnership with a sponsor

(McDonald’s) which takes the form of thousands (the target for 2009 was 2,700) of skill-related events where over 80% of the participants who hoped to earn their badge fell into the 9-14 age bracket. At the same time, 30 ‘DFB Mobil’ vehicles are touring the country and staging promotional events at 10,800 clubs of all shapes and sizes.

The concept of using elite events as power generators for grassroots activities is being applied during the run-up to two major women’s tournaments to be hosted by Germany: the 2011 FIFA World Cup and the Under-20 finals which kick off in July 2010. Some 80 projects at local grassroots level have been targeted for DFB support, schools and clubs have been involved in the Team 2011 project, and a wide variety of events are being organised under the Children’s Dreams 2011 banner. The DFB is offering financial support to local non-profit organisations and groups, projects for teenagers and socially disadvantaged children in each venue are receiving



Former German international Renate Lingor at a DFB Mobil session

STEFFI JONES VISITS  
CHILDREN AS PART OF THE WORLD  
CUP TEAM 2011 PROJECT.



The German FA has made a huge effort to get mini-pitches built.

virtuous circle by promoting the elite competition.

But the original facet of the project is that there is much more to the out-reach events than football. The slogan 'Strong Kids; True Champions' has been attached to a programme aimed at promoting social skills and preventing violence. The community outreach days deliver strong messages about fair play, about respect, about helping yourself and others to enjoy the occasion, about learning how to be good and graceful losers, and about the importance of camaraderie and friendship.

Each event therefore lasts several hours and, apart from the football, features two other types of team games, known as net and teamball. The group activities are then carried into creative and artistic spheres via the creation of an 'Our Rules' poster, the building and decoration of a goal wall, the designing of an event wall and an activity based on a comic wall, where the participants are invited to show how they envisage the storyline evolving and supply the drawings which will complete the comic. The DFB is promoting the events by producing informative leaflets (in various languages) aimed at encouraging parents and other family members to come along as spectators. In terms of tangibles, the participants come away with wristbands, lapel badges and gym sacks. But the objective is for them also to take home from the community outreach days intangible benefits with regard to relationships, personal identity and social integration.

We can only wish the DFB every possible success for a project which not only makes a valuable contribution to the UEFA Grassroots Day but which is also so closely aligned with UEFA's own philosophy.

DFB backing and training programmes have been designed for social organisations which care for children. Steffi Jones, the former international who is now presiding the organising committee, says, "the aim is obviously to stage a peaceful, environmentally friendly event with a warm atmosphere. But we are attaching social objectives to the task of organising the tournament itself. We want to strengthen girls' football as a whole and to encourage more women to stay in the game as coaches. But it's also about living up to our responsibilities in society, so we are bringing schools, clubs and families close to the event and using it as an instrument for social integration."

This is where another project kicks in. The DFB is organising community outreach days as events pegged to UEFA's first Grassroots Day, to be staged in May 2010. "It's something we tested last year," explains the DFB's grassroots director, Willi Hink. "We found that it worked well, so we are now organising

a full-scale programme for 2010. Population studies show that modern German society is becoming increasingly cosmopolitan and our grassroots concepts and strategy are clearly aligned with that trend. So the emphasis is on social elements, in addition to encouraging the kids to enjoy some football."

In recent years, the DFB has been exceptionally active in support of the construction of mini-pitches – and the total has now reached four figures. Some 800 of them will provide the focal points for the community outreach days.

As the name suggests, the objective is to reach deep into communities, to generate interest and enthusiasm for the game of football among as many girls and boys as possible – and thereby boost registrations in club football. And, just as Steffi and her team are pegging social projects to the 2011 Women's World Cup, the community outreach days will complete a





## INTERVIEW BY ANDY ROXBURGH

**AFTER 15 SUCCESSFUL YEARS AS TECHNICAL DIRECTOR OF THE SWISS FA, HANSRUEDI HASLER'S TENURE HAS COME TO AN END. WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ASSOCIATION'S DEVELOPMENT WORK, HE HAS HAD A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE STRATEGY AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GRASSROOTS**

**WORK AND THE EDUCATION OF THE COUNTRY'S ELITE YOUTH PLAYERS. SWITZERLAND'S RECENT TRIUMPH IN WINNING THE FIFA UNDER-17 WORLD CUP WAS NOT ONLY A CREDIT TO THE TEAM COACH, DANY RYSER, AND HIS PLAYERS, BUT ALSO TO HANSRUEDI, WHO HAD MASTERMINDED THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES AND THE COACH EDUCATION STRUCTURES.**

**HE IS A CURRENT MEMBER OF UEFA'S GRASSROOTS PANEL; HE IS**

# HANSRUEDI HASLER

Switzerland won the top honours at the recent U-17 World Cup in Nigeria.



### **1 • What has been the highlight of your career as technical director of the Swiss FA?**

As I love grassroots football and elite youth football, my highlights are in those two areas. There has been a tremendous development in the promotion of grassroots football. In Zurich, for example, 70% of children between six and ten years attending a sports club first go to football. I have been responsible for coach education programmes, youth selections, grassroots football, women's football and elite youth development. Winning the European Under-17 Championship title in 2002 and the U-17 World Cup victory in 2009 are clearly the big

moments with our youth teams. On the grassroots front, there has been an increase in quality and quantity. For example, there has been a big improvement in the standard of children's football. We must remember that all aspects of development are important and contribute to the success of the association's programmes.

### **2 • How would you describe the structure which you have created, in particular the link between the grassroots scheme and the elite youth level?**

Grassroots football has always been supported and well organised in Switzerland, but the elite youth level

wasn't. The basis of everything has been our club structure. We have 1,400 clubs and we always say that they provide our foundation. Back in 1995 when we started, we decided not to separate the elite youth from the grassroots, but simply to make the clubs stronger. It was important to give the clubs criteria and guidelines on how to work with young players. The association also offered some funding to help the clubs and we worked with them on a common philosophy. The most important move for me was to employ professional coaches to assist the association – first 5, then 9 and now 20. All these coaches have three things to do – each one is the coach or the assistant with a national youth squad, but this is the dessert. Their main function is to visit clubs and to assist the coaches. This is about 50% of their work. The rest of their time is devoted to coach education activities. The association runs 4 centres of excellence and 40 of our clubs, the professional teams, are involved in elite player development. The clubs recruit the boys from the grassroots when they are 11 or 12 years old. Today we have created

**HANSRUEDI HASLER, PICTURED  
WITH UEFA'S TECHNICAL DIRECTOR,  
ANDY ROXBURGH, PREPARING FOR A MEETING  
OF THE UEFA GRASSROOTS PANEL**



partnerships for development, and two, three or four clubs combine to nurture the talents. Each partnership has only one technical director. At least one of the partnership teams must be a professional club. Young Boys of Berne, for example, is in partnership with Thun and Biel. The players are owned by the original club, but we have created a double licence, whereby boys can play for another club in the partnership. The grassroots clubs are linked to the various elite player partnerships in their region and this creates an important pathway.

**3 • What more does the association need to do in the field of grassroots football?**

We are still struggling with two problems. First we have a lot of children involved but they don't play enough football. The training is often too analytical, too static – they need to move more, to be more dynamic. The second problem is that we have five-a-side for the youngest and then seven-a-side for the older children, but the coaches arrive with too many players, for example 12 for a five-a-side game and this means that 7 hardly play. We need to make the children active and this will require a new culture of playing, a change of approach.

**4 • What effect has the UEFA Grassroots Charter had on your development work?**

Of course, it was not necessary to help us in terms of numbers but rather in specific areas, such as disability football. The charter has provided a stimulus. It has been an instrument for us to build up other areas of activity and to encourage our grassroots committee to do more. We need additional funds and more commitment to grassroots work in a variety of football categories, and the charter has helped us to do that.

**5 • There has been some mention in the media about the great integration process which has taken place in Swiss football. What is your view of that?**

In Switzerland, we have 20% of the population through immigration. In Swiss football, 42% of the players have their origins outside, so football in our country is a wonderful example of integration. At the elite level, that is the professional clubs, the figure is more like 50% and it is normal for most of these players to have two passports. This, of course, can be a problem for our national team as the players can choose to play elsewhere. At grassroots level, our clubs are great examples of community spirit and integration. We should initiate some scientific research to assess why integration works so well in football. The results of this work could be given to schools, for example, for their guidance. What we have learned in football is that what counts is your performance, not where you come from. If you play, you are in – even if you simply want to play, the club will find a place for you.

**6 • What impact will your success in the FIFA Under-17 World Cup have on your association's development work, in particular the grassroots area?**

We had a viewing audience on TV for the FIFA Under-17 final in Nigeria of 1.3 million, and overall it was stated that 40% of the population tuned in at some point. Many of the viewers were children and our Under-17s have become idols for them. As I said earlier, our clubs are at their intake limit, but the exploits of our youth squad will encourage many to increase their commitment and to improve their skill level. When we won the European title in 2002, it had an effect and now this World Cup success will stimulate others to emulate our young champions. The technical department of an association must focus on both the grassroots and the elite youth football – they are linked and equally important. If you are a technical director, you must love grassroots football and the elite youth game with the same passion.



Grassroots football is an excellent means of integration.





**UEFA'S GRASSROOTS  
PROGRAMME HAS DEVELOPED  
AT LIGHTNING SPEED.**

# KEEPING THE CHARTER MOVING

**JUST OVER A YEAR AGO, THESE PAGES WERE RECALLING THAT IT WAS  
"ONLY FOUR YEARS SINCE UEFA'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ASKED FOR THE PROPOSED GRASSROOTS  
CHARTER TO BE CONVERTED INTO REALITY AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE. AT THAT TIME,  
THEY WOULD HARDLY HAVE BELIEVED HOW RAPIDLY THE PROJECT HAS GAINED MOMENTUM  
AFTER A SLOW-BUT-SURE START". THE ARTICLE WENT ON TO REVIEW TARGETS.**

After the year 2006 had been dedicated to a series of regional workshops where the philosophy, requirements and application processes were set out, the ambitious target of 20 signatories by the end of 2007 was reached and surpassed. The figure pencilled on to the calendar for 2008 was 30 and, a year ago, we reported that the charter family had grown to 33 members, adding "an enormous amount has been achieved

in two years – and such rapid growth has created a healthy appetite for further progress in the grassroots structures at national association level."

The year 2009 has written another chapter in the same success story. At the end of November, UEFA's Executive Committee received recommendations to ratify Estonia, Hungary, Israel, Luxembourg, Poland and Serbia as one-star members of the Grass-

roots Charter. The six newcomers brought the total to 47 – which represents an impressive achievement within such a short space of time.

It has to be added that the six members of the UEFA family who are still not signatories are all active on the grassroots front – some of them extremely active, such as the Portuguese national association, which is set to implement extensive grassroots plans. It means that there are realistic hopes of completing the circle in a near future. At this point, the emphasis will be on continuing to build grassroots structures and adding further stars.

This has been an ongoing process during 2009 and the year ended with recommendations to award Iceland a fourth star (the social and disability star). The same star allowed Georgia to move from one to two-star status, while the Republic of Ireland combined the same star with the women's/girls' participation star to attain three-star status, while both Liechtenstein and Sweden received endorsement in the registered participants, women's/girls' and promotion and growth categories to attain four-star status. The fact that the



Perfect facilities at the UEFA Grassroots Workshop in Hamburg



## GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL: SERIOUS FUN



FA Sam Marino



UEFA-Woods

The Grassroots Panel met in November in Nyon.

47 members currently share 117 stars is a clear demonstration that the UEFA Grassroots Charter is a powerful instrument in terms of stimulating national associations to implant and enhance their grassroots structures.

But the charter is not a self-fuelling machine. It requires energy to keep it running smoothly. In conjunction with Andy Roxburgh and his team at UEFA, much of that energy is supplied by the members of the Grassroots Panel – one of the half-dozen expert panels within the UEFA infrastructure.

The basic *leitmotiv* of the Grassroots Panel is to support the Development and Technical Assistance Committee but it also has the specific mission of implementing the Grassroots Charter. The recommendations submitted for ratification by the UEFA Executive Committee stem from the

Grassroots Panel. And those recommendations have to be based on first-hand evaluations.

But this task is not, by any stretch of the imagination, a question of ‘marking exams’ and deciding whether the candidate has passed or not. Members of the Grassroots Panel offer support in designing grassroots programmes which fulfil UEFA criteria and the eventual evaluation is usually the culmination of a series of site visits and consultations. Panel members are therefore selected on the basis of expertise – and their specialised knowledge stems from their activities in the grassroots sphere in their own countries and the experience acquired during the implementation of grassroots projects within their own territory. Panel members are therefore equipped to help in cross-referencing UEFA’s grassroots programmes by, apart from their roles within the charter structure, being active in the grassroots

components of the Study Group Scheme, by participating in promotional campaigns or by offering advice and support to national associations in areas such as organising events under the Summer of Grassroots umbrella. These are the ‘mechanics’ who are currently helping to keep the charter – and UEFA’s other grassroots activities – running smoothly.

### The UEFA Grassroots Panel

Arnaldo Cunha (Portugal)  
Gaioz Darsadze (Georgia)  
Jeff Davis (England)  
Jim Fleeting (Scotland)  
Hansruedi Hasler (Switzerland)  
Willi Hink (Germany)  
Piet Hubers (Netherlands)  
Timo Huttunen (Finland)  
Miriam Malone (Republic of Ireland)  
Otakar Mestek (Czech Republic)  
Stig-Ove Sandnes (Norway)  
Kelly Simmons (England)  
Thomas Slosarich (Denmark)  
Yevgeniy Stolitenko (Ukraine)



**A PRACTICAL SESSION  
DURING A VISIT TO UKRAINE  
IN OCTOBER**

# VISITING THE FAMILY

**“THIS PROGRAMME GIVES COACHES AND ASSOCIATIONS  
AN EFFECTIVE WAY OF INTERCHANGING EXPERIENCE, KNOWLEDGE AND GOOD PRACTICE.”**

**“WE WANT TO EXPRESS SINCERE CONGRATULATIONS TO UEFA FOR PERMITTING  
SMALL ASSOCIATIONS LIKE OURS TO RUB SHOULDERS WITH THE VERY BEST IN EUROPE.  
IT’S A GREAT EXPERIENCE AND ONE WHICH SHOWS US THE WAY TO WORK WITH YOUNGSTERS,  
HOW TO IMPROVE THEIR TECHNIQUE AND THEIR ENJOYMENT OF THE GAME.”**

**“IT’S A VERY INTERESTING PROGRAMME – A PERFECT WAY  
OF DEVELOPING GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL.”**

These kind words were delivered by, respectively, Arnaldo Cunha of Portugal, David Rodrigo of Andorra and Peter Brusvik of Sweden and they were all referring to UEFA’s Study Group Scheme, which is currently in the second season of a four-year cycle.

Since this newsletter reported on its launch just over a year ago, the scheme has impressively gathered momentum. During the first season, 51 visits were organised and, by the time the

2009/10 campaign draws to a close, the total will have risen to 103. A total of 23 of those visits will have been dedicated exclusively to grassroots football and its development – although the other three categories (coach education, elite youth football and women’s football) also have grassroots connotations.

Just as a reminder, a Study Group Scheme ‘visit’ is a four-sided table with a host association at the head and

three visiting associations occupying the other sides. On second thoughts, the parallel with the table is probably not the most appropriate as, although visits certainly feature round-table elements, it might give the impression that they are academic classroom events. Far from it.

This is best demonstrated by taking a concrete example. In September, the Dutch football association – the KNVB – acted as host to visiting teams from Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Georgia. After being met at Amsterdam airport and checked into 34 single rooms in a hotel next to the KNVB’s headquarters at Zeist, they embarked on an intensive four-day ‘grassroots experience’.

The first stop was Leusden, where a local amateur club, Roda ‘46, presented its youth development scheme and staged a practical session with its youth players. Back at Zeist, the opening day finished with an after-dinner session on Dutch development structures by Corné Groenendijk. The second day featured a visit to another club, AWC Wijchen, where the menu blended a practical training session with



Delegations from Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Georgia visit the Netherlands.



presentations on youth football and the creation of a 'total football' environment at an amateur club.

The third day kicked off with a visit to the KNVB's regional office in Breda, where the theme was, obviously, the design and implementation of grass-roots projects at regional and district levels. The group then headed for Eindhoven, lunch at PSV's De Herdgang training centre, a visit to the PSV youth academy, a presentation based on the scouting of talented players, and practical sessions involving PSV's Under-12 and Under-14 teams.

But the day wasn't finished. After an early dinner, the search for best practice took them to the town of Best – where else? – and, more precisely, to the local Wilhelmina Boys club, where a youth football 'kick-off meeting' was being held to mark the start of the new season. The event was rounded off by a visit to AFC Ajax on the fourth morning, when the group attended the Under-21 team's training session in De Toekomst – the club's training centre – and watched a game played by the Under-12s.



But neither the Dutch visit nor any of the others came to an end with the return trip to the airport. A logbook of each event has to be created and vital feedback is transmitted to UEFA, which is more than aware that a four-year project offers opportunities to improve and streamline from season to season.

It has to be said – in muted tones which cannot be interpreted as boasting or complacency – that the feedback has, thus far, been extremely positive.

When asked to assess the management and coordination of the visits, 89% rated them as excellent and the other 11% as good. Among the visiting teams, levels of satisfaction related to logistical elements were similarly high: 87.5% rated course leaders as excellent; the other 12.5% as good. Practical sessions registered a 50:50 split between excellent and good, while

the theoretical elements were marked excellent by 63%, good by 25% and average by the remaining 12%.

The question of support material is potentially problematical – not least because of the diversity of languages. Although 77% (44+33) rated them as excellent or good, the remainder of the assessments were evenly split between 'average' and 'needs improvement'. Point taken. On the other hand, the Study Group Scheme in general has, so far, earned rounds of applause, with 78% valuing it as excellent and the other 22% as good.

"We will continue to refine and improve the scheme in coming seasons," comments UEFA's technical director, Andy Roxburgh, "but, based on reactions so far, we could say that if the project had been a film, it would have won an Oscar."

### Chart: the 13 specific grassroots visits during the 2009/10 season

DATE	HOST	VISITORS		
September 2009	Netherlands	Belarus	Bosnia-Herzegovina	Georgia
October 2009	Ukraine	Germany	Latvia	Wales
October 2009	Germany	Italy	Netherlands	San Marino
November 2009	Italy	Albania	Cyprus	Northern Ireland
November 2009	Spain	Portugal	Serbia	Slovakia
December 2009	England	Czech Republic	Poland	Ukraine
February 2010	Scotland	Finland	FYR Macedonia	Spain
March 2010	Finland	France	Israel	Slovenia
March 2010	Czech Republic	Denmark	Hungary	Lithuania
April 2010	Switzerland	Azerbaijan	Estonia	Republic of Ireland
April 2010	Republic of Ireland	Andorra	Faroe Islands	Malta
May 2010	Denmark	Greece	Liechtenstein	Montenegro
June 2010	Sweden	Belgium	Luxembourg	Switzerland



**THE UEFA PRESIDENT, MICHEL PLATINI,  
AND VICE-PRESIDENT SENES ERZIK PRESENTING  
PRIZES TO THE GRASSROOTS PLAYERS  
BEFORE THE UEFA CUP FINAL IN ISTANBUL**

# OAKS AND ACORNS

**THE SHEER VOLUME OF GRASSROOTS ACTIVITIES ATTACHED TO UEFA'S BIG EVENTS ILLUSTRATES THE SAYING ABOUT ACORNS GROWING INTO MIGHTY OAKS. BUT, WHEREAS THE AVERAGE GROWTH RATE OF A TREE IS ABOUT 50CM A YEAR, FOOTBALL'S GRASSROOTS HAVE BEEN SHOOTING UP AT A VERTIGINOUS RATE. THE 'ACORN' WAS PLANTED ONLY SEVEN YEARS AGO, WHEN THE CUP HANDOVER CEREMONY PRIOR TO THE UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL WAS PRECEDED BY A 24-HOUR FIVE-A-SIDE STARBALL MATCH INVOLVING GRASSROOTS PLAYERS OF ALL SHAPES, SIZES AND AGES. DURING THE WEEKS PRECEDING THE FINAL BETWEEN REAL MADRID CF AND BAYER 04 LEVERKUSEN AT HAMPDEN PARK, A GLASGOW'S CHAMPIONS TOURNAMENT WAS PLAYED INVOLVING TEAMS OF 13-YEAR-OLD BOYS FROM 27 LOCAL SCHOOLS.**

Since then, the starball philosophy has snowballed. The links between grassroots activities and the UEFA Champions League final have been perpetuated and strengthened – as illustrated by the events organised in Rome to coincide with the big showdown between FC Barcelona and Manchester United FC last May and those, as mentioned elsewhere in this issue, to be associated with the 2010 final in Madrid. But the

even more heartening news is that the principle has spread like wildfire into other UEFA competitions.

A few weeks before the final in Rome, the German national association had set the grassroots ball rolling by using the European Under-17 Championship finals to take the game into towns and regions where the public had rarely had the chance to watch national

team football. Kick-off times were arranged at school-friendly hours and the whole event was converted into a massive promotion of grassroots football.

Two days after the memorable Under-17 final between Germany and the Netherlands, watched by a crowd of 24,000 in Magdeburg, FC Shakhtar Donetsk beat Werder Bremen in the UEFA Cup final in Istanbul, where there was also an extensive underlay of grassroots activities. The Turkish football association decided to focus a grassroots programme on the bustling district of Kadiköy, where over half a million people populate the area around the Fenerbahçe SK stadium on the Anatolian side of Istanbul.

On 28 February, almost three months before the UEFA Cup final, the ball started rolling at a large-scale youth tournament staged over 12 weekends and culminating in finals played on the eve of the UEFA Cup showdown. The tournament involved 144 teams split into three age categories between 9 and 14. Each team comprised ten players, at least two of whom had to be girls.



Grassroots matches are typically linked to the major UEFA club competition finals as was the case at the UEFA Cup final in Istanbul.





**CHAMPIONS  
FESTIVAL BEFORE  
THE UCL FINAL  
IN ROME**

organised in Finland,” commented Pekka Hämäläinen, president of the national association at that time, “and our aim was to use it to stimulate interest in girls’ football in particular – and football in general.”

“The most heartening thing,” added the tournament director, Outi Sarinen, “was to see so many children and entire families at the stadium. A lot of them had never been to a football match of any description so, taking into account the joyful atmosphere they encountered, it was positive in terms of introducing new people to the game.”

It would take pages to list the 300 or so events that were pegged to the event. But the scale of the grassroots activities can be gauged by a summary of those where the national association was most deeply involved in the organisation.

The top age group (13-14) was the only one to be played on a truly competitive basis, with 48 sides split into eight groups of six for the first round, which was followed by knockout ties and two finals. In the other two age brackets (9-10 and 11-12) there were no league tables. But, as an incentive, fair play teams were selected to play a match on the final day of the event.

The logistics of the tournament meant that 36 five-a-side matches were played in each category every Saturday on mini-pitches at four sports centres, with all organisational costs covered by the Kadiköy municipality as a mark of support for the project. All the players received a shirt, shorts, a coloured bib and a diploma of participation.

There was a slightly different slant to the grassroots activity related to the European Under-21 Championship finals played in Sweden in June. School tournaments were organised in the host cities of Gothenburg, Halmstad, Helsingborg and Malmö, with knockout ties played in April and May and the finals (7 v 7 games of 2 x 10 minutes) staged as curtain-raisers to group matches in the main competition. Prior to the England v Sweden and Italy v Germany semi-finals, two showcase matches involving disabled players and former

top professionals were played on the pitches in Gothenburg and Helsingborg as part of UEFA’s support work for the International League Against Epilepsy.

UEFA Women’s EURO 2009 also represented an enormous stimulus for promotional and grassroots activities. “It was the biggest football tournament ever

EVENT	PLAYERS
Piirijoukkue Cup: four-day district tournament for 14/15-year-old boys and girls	1,100
Simo Syrjävaara Cup: three-day fun tournament for adult men and women	1,500
Kai Pahlman: four-day fun tournaments for 15-year-old boys’ and girls’ club teams	800
Funball two-day tournament for youth players	300
Unelma Cuppi: one or seven-day tournaments for women	2,000
Trophy Tour: 6 six-day pre-tournament events for children	1,000
Kaikki Pelissä: 125 one-day school events	70,000
Kaikki Pelissä: 100 one-day kindergarten events	5,000
National football schools: 45 one-week events for children aged 3–11	3,500
Zest: one-day recreational event for schools	3,000
National disability tournaments: 3 one-day events	500
Skill contest: one-day event in Tampere	500
Activity areas in each city throughout the tournament	Masses!

But, for the hosts, the Women’s EURO 2009 experience didn’t stop there. The final round was also a cue for club development and recruitment projects, veterans’ gatherings, campaigns aimed at encouraging former players to return to the game and contribute to club activities, a conference on leadership in female sports, and an education course for the coaches of all the top-division clubs in Finnish women’s football. It added up to a compelling demonstration of how big domestic and international events can be used as a launch pad for grassroots activities and development projects.



# THE **SUMMER** OF GRASS

The sixth edition of UEFA's Summer of Grassroots Football was another success story, with the whole spectrum of grassroots activities taking place throughout Europe. Since the launch of the promotional campaign in 2004, more than 14 million participants have been involved, and the member associations have to be congratulated on their efforts to promote and develop the grassroots of the game, not only in this seasonal scheme, but in their year-round commitment to grassroots programmes.

As the old saying goes, 'A little picture is worth a million words'.

With that in mind, the photographs on these two pages – some of the best submitted by the associations – will give a flavour of the grassroots action during the summer of 2009.

The joy, friendship and skill of the grassroots game is captured in just a few images.



**AZERBAIJAN**



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# ROOTS FOOTBALL 2009



**SAN MARINO**



**POLAND**

**FYR MACEDONIA**



**ARMENIA**



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