

# Coaching's Golden Age

The Chinese have a proverb which illustrates the value of experience: "If you want to know the road ahead, ask someone who has travelled it." This statement supports Marcello Lippi's view on coaching at the top level: "The players must feel that they have a secure and strong guide." Certainly, success in international competitions seems to be the preserve of those who have travelled a long way in the game. Consider the last three winners of the EURO – Luis Aragonés of Spain was three weeks short of his 70th birthday when he won the title in 2008, Otto Rehhagel was about to turn 66 when he led Greece to gold in 2004, and four years earlier, Roger Lemerre, a comparative youngster, was just short of his 60th birthday when he secured the European crown for France.

Europe has won three out of the last four World Cups and the technicians responsible were reaching the stage in life when the candles were costing more than their birthday cakes. Vicente Del Bosque (Spain), Marcello Lippi (Italy) and Aimé Jacquet (France) were all in the 57 to 60 age bracket and were very experienced campaigners. During the FIFA final tournaments, all three were subjected to intense pressure and moments of crisis, but their ability to see the bigger picture, to remain calm in the media storm and to use their years of leadership know-how proved decisive. Vicente Del Bosque explained his leadership philosophy at a recent UEFA conference and offered words of wisdom to his coaching colleagues about the need to be more than just a coach when he said: "If you only know about football, you are lost." Thus, coaching at the summit, as illustrated by our World Cup winners, requires a well-rounded personality, someone who has an extensive knowledge of life as well as the game.

The coaches who have reached the knockout stage of this season's UEFA Champions League represent an interesting mix of mature statesmen, those in coaching's golden age, and a younger generation of high fliers. Half of the 16 coaches are over 50 years old, while the others – with the exception of the 'youthful' 39-year-old Unai Emery of Valencia CF – are in their forties. Football teams benefit from having a good blend of youth and experience. The same applies to the UEFA Champions League coaching fraternity, which offers a gifted group of blossoming technicians, such as José Mourinho of Real Madrid CF and Pep Guardiola of FC Barcelona, in tandem with long-standing maestros such as Sir Alex Ferguson of Manchester United FC, Arsène Wenger of Arsenal FC and Louis van Gaal of FC Bayern München.

Of course, coaching at the top level needs new blood, new ideas and new energy, because the game must continue to evolve. But some coaches are like fine wine – they improve with age. The senior stars of the technical area are living proof that wisdom and experience are valuable assets when operating at the highest level. As long as they retain their health and their enthusiasm, there is no reason why they cannot continue to compete with the best and be role models for those who are still making their way up the coaching ladder. When we talk about success in football, longevity should be recognised and celebrated. Double UEFA Champions League winner Sir Alex Ferguson provides today's technicians with an impressive benchmark – he is a wonderful example of someone who is both a winner and a survivor.

**Andy Roxburgh,  
UEFA Technical Director**

Empics Sport

UEFA.technician

## In this issue

The Technician Interview: Takeshi Okada	2
Added Value	6
The Barça Boys	8
Great Expectations	10
Tribute to Enzo Bearzot	12

# The Technician Interview

By Andy Roxburgh, UEFA Technical Director

**B**orn in Osaka, Japan, Takeshi Okada was a useful defender in his time, but his fame in football has come from his exploits as a coach at club and national level. He started out at JEF United (the club that Jozef Vengloš once coached) as an assistant in the early 1990s. Then he was promoted to assistant with the national team and took over as head coach during the qualifying campaign for the 1998 World Cup. He steered the team past Iran and into the finals in France. Between 1999 and 2006 he had Japanese League club jobs at Sapporo and Yokohama Marinos and was voted manager of the year in 2003 and 2004. Following title winning seasons, he returned to the national team in 2007 and took the Samurai Blues to the World Cup in South Africa. His excellent work there, taking Japan to the second round and only losing on penalties to Paraguay, earned him the title of Asian Coach of the Year 2010. Alberto Zaccheroni took over the Japanese squad in October 2010 and proceeded to win the Asian Cup in Qatar at the beginning of this year – a

*In training before the World Cup finals in South Africa*

great achievement for the new Italian coach. However, the man who built the foundations and raised the World Cup profile of the Japanese team is the articulate, thoughtful and successful...

## Takeshi Okada

**Before the World Cup in South Africa you were subjected to intense pressure. How did you cope with that and how did you protect your team?**

Yes, there was a great deal of criticism, particularly from the media before the World Cup in South Africa. Most of it was directed at me and not at the team and I was happy to take the pressure away from the players. I wanted to protect them as much as I could. Also, I said to the players that we had to believe together in what we were doing. The media, in a way, was like an opponent and we had to shield ourselves against all external forces.

During the qualifying competition for the 1998 World Cup, my boss was fired and I took over. Everyone said we had no chance, but we managed to beat Iran, our last chance to get to the World Cup, and to qualify. I was under enormous pressure, but I understood that I could only do my best. The ultimate responsibility was with the president, because he chose me. My attitude was to focus on the task at hand and let others worry about the future. After the final qualifying game against Iran, which we won, my character changed – it was a defining moment for me and Japanese football.

On a personal level, the support of my family was crucial. Even when things were difficult, the family always gave me their full backing and this helped me enormously to cope with the various pressures. Also, like Marcello Lippi, I went scuba diving in order to have another interest. It is important to have



Getty Images



other things in your life apart from football. Without the family, I could not have handled the job of national coach.

### **How has Japanese football developed since your involvement in the 1998 World Cup in France?**

During the last decade Japanese football has developed a lot. One thing that has helped is the number of Japanese players who have been playing abroad. We have always had skill, heart and fitness, but the exposure to the top level has definitely helped. This also applies at international youth level. The J-League has continued to provide a good competitive environment but it is the experience of international football that has raised the standard. We still get foreign players in the J-League, but not of the level we had in the past, when players such as Zico and Stojkovic came here. Those former superstars made a big impression on our young players. We have rules in the J-League about the number of non-Japanese players from Asia and from the rest of the world that guarantee that there are club places for some of our own talents. Certain key positions are taken by the foreign players and this can create problems. It will be similar to the situation that Fabio Capello encounters in England. Overall, though, I think the confidence of the Japanese player has improved in recent years and this has made us more competitive at the top level.

### **As AFC Coach of the Year 2010, what is your view about coach education in the Far East?**

We are very well organised in coach education in Japan, but we have a problem of culture. Japanese students expect to be taught and wait to be taught. They follow the instructions but it is not easy to get them to take the initiative. We are very good at copying things. Yes, we have won an award from the AFC for the best education programme, but student coaches need to be encouraged to develop their own personalities, to find their own identities. The organisation is very good, but we need to work on mentality and methods. Regarding my award, I think it belongs to all the coaches in Japan. They are the ones who work hard to develop the next generation of professional players.

### **You produce some very talented youngsters in Japan. What is the philosophy behind your youth football?**

Yes, we have some technically gifted players and we run a lot. Also, there is no doubt that there is a passion for the game. The main challenges relate to mentality, having a professional approach, and building confidence. We need to raise the standard of the J-League to make it more challenging for the young talents and this will accelerate their development towards the top level. But I think our detailed, tightly structured approach has us heading in a good direction. Johan Cruyff once said in an interview that it would be great if youth football led the way when developing the game at national team level. It is what Fernando Hierro, the technical director of Spain, said about the world champions: *"Our style of play comes from the youth, not the other way around"*.

### **Nakamura, Honda and Endo have thrilled everyone with their brilliant free kicks. What is the secret of their success?**

There is no doubt that the role models provided by Zico, Stojkovic and other foreign stars had a major influence on our current players when they were growing up. The use of artificial walls and constant practice has paid dividends, as was proved in South Africa when we scored with two direct free-kicks in the same match, against Denmark. First, it was Honda with this magnificent left-foot shot and then, just over ten minutes later, Endo with a Zico-style right-footer. Of course, in Europe you were



*Takeshi Okada in conversation with UEFA's technical director, Andy Roxburgh, at a conference in Japan*

already aware of Honda because he produced the same for CSKA Moscow in the UEFA Champions League. Lots of practice, no doubt, but seeing those images of Zico and Stojkovic made a big impression on many young Japanese players.

### **The J-League, which you said provided a good competitive environment, supplied all but four of your squad for the World Cup 2010. What are the prospects for your domestic competitions?**

As I said earlier, the J-League provides a basis for player development, but you must remember that the league only started in 1993, so in comparison to the top leagues in Europe there is a long way to go. The public support remains good and a lot has been achieved over the years. But it will be difficult to reach the level of the benchmark leagues in England, Spain or Germany. Finance and the level of competition in those countries will be difficult to match and therefore our ability to attract the top stars will be limited. We have an environment where coaches and clubs do not take risks these days and that could create a problem long term, I think.

### **Apart from your own football, which country do you admire the most?**

I wouldn't identify a country, but rather certain clubs. I really admire teams such as Barcelona and Arsenal because of the way they play the game. I was in the stadium doing the commentary for Japanese TV at the recent *el clásico* match between Barça and Real Madrid. Along with 98,000 others, I witnessed a standard of football from the home team that was from another world. Xavi, Iniesta and Messi were irresistible and showed us how the game

can be played if you have players of the highest quality. So, I am a fan of certain clubs, those with a creative philosophy, rather than any particular country. Because of the transfer market, the clubs can acquire the best players in the world, but the national team has to nurture its own.

### In order to compete at the highest level, have you had to overcome certain cultural traits?

What I said about the coaches also applies to our players. Yes, it is a good thing that they do what they are told to do, but they are not that good at doing more, in other words, taking risks by using their own initiative. So, I kept trying to have them work on that aspect of their

moment when you realise that the team is growing and you are able to share the joy with them. On the other hand, it feels awful when things go wrong and you are held responsible for any failings. But the good moments definitely offset the bad ones.

### Following your efforts in South Africa, how optimistic are you about the future of Japanese football?

If we continue to work hard, then the future will be bright. The success in the Asian Cup in Qatar provides further evidence of our country's progress. Also, I think that after playing in the World Cup, many players realised that they have the potential. What would help would be more exposure to top European football as we have seen with Honda and Hasebe.

### What is your view about the UEFA Champions League?

Absolutely the top standard for a club tournament. You see top players from all over the world giving top performances. Compared with the World Cup, tactically it is a higher standard, I think. The most amazing thing is how quickly they play forward, yet under control. The UEFA Champions League is really popular in Japan. We get up at 4am to watch it live, or sometimes we see it delayed, at breakfast time, but we are avid fans.

### What could Europe learn from football development in Japan?

Maybe they could be a bit like the Japanese players, who are loyal to their teams. In addition, our players can have a passion for victory, yet respect their opponents and others at the same time. Japan actually won the AFC fair play award for 2010 and we are proud of this. However, we have a lot to learn from the European game – even when we are tired at 4 o'clock in the morning. ●

*Japan before extra time in their round of 16 match against Paraguay in the 2010 World Cup*



game, over and over again. Our attitude is to be humble, but on the pitch we need to express ourselves. The stars of Barça are humble but they are artists on the field of play.

### Having lived through two World Cup final tournaments, what have you learned about the job of the national coach?

First, you have to say that it is a crazy job. I think Arsène Wenger said something similar once before. You won't become rich as a national coach in most countries, although you are subjected to enormous pressure, which comes with all the nationalistic feelings. However, as I discovered, it is a life experience which makes you stronger as a person. You need to be mentally tough and keep your faith, even when things are not going well.

### What, for you, is the best and the worst aspect of coaching?

Once in a while, you get to enjoy a blissful moment in the midst of a long struggle. It is a wonderful

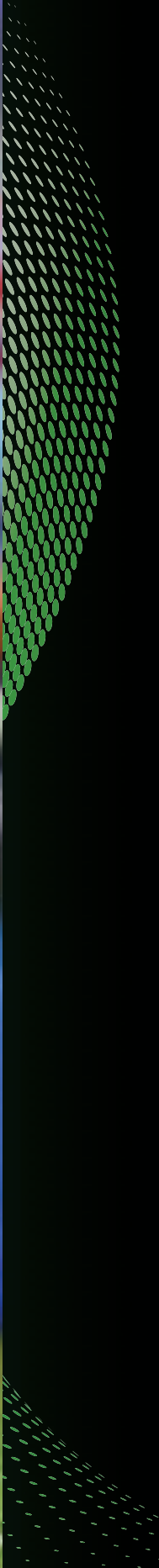
*Japan made it into the last 16 in the World Cup in South Africa, where it took penalty kicks for Paraguay to eliminate them*







*Takeshi Okada giving instructions to his team during the World Cup in South Africa*



# Added value

**In coaching, students take their education seriously. This statement might seem strange, but, unlike the average university student, many of them step into the footballing 'classroom' with extensive inside knowledge of their chosen profession, albeit as players rather than coaches.**

The teachers therefore need to be thoroughly prepared to offer top-quality education to a demanding audience, to assess them accurately and to issue coaching diplomas which, even though they offer no guarantee of success in terms of results, provide reliable confirmation of professional competence.

Just 13 years after 6 member associations became founder signatories of the UEFA Coaching Convention at a ceremony in Ghent, the national association of Montenegro was accepted in January at A level to complete

courses run by the Belgian and Israeli associations the most recent to be re-approved.

Secondly, a number of specialised branches are being added to the central core of the convention. Specific competence-based courses for elite youth coaches have been designed and one of the immediate objectives is to introduce and build up A-youth membership at a time when providing the best possible coaching at youth development levels has a special relevance within many clubs' and associations' strategic plans for the future. Guidelines for specialised courses aimed at fitness coaches and goalkeeping coaches are also being finalised and will be distributed to national associations during the course of the current year.

At the same time, UEFA is very actively encouraging member associations to help each other by organising and promoting groundbreaking knowledge-sharing scenarios.

The Study Group Scheme is now in its third season, during which 56 events have been scheduled, with 28 different national associations acting as hosts. Of the total, coach education is the core element of 15 visits, 16 are dedicated to elite youth football, 13 to grass-

roots football and 12 to women's and girls' football. All in all, no fewer than 1,850 technicians are involved in Study Group Scheme events this season, along with all the members of UEFA's Development and Technical Assistance Committee. At its meeting in Prague in December 2010, the Executive Committee reviewed the scheme and decided to extend it beyond the initial term, which was due to come to an end in the 2011/12 season. This means that the Study Group Scheme has now become an ongoing, long-term project.

The other groundbreaking innovation on the coach education front is the introduction of a student exchange programme during 2011. This is a project aimed at providing Pro licence students with opportunities for international knowledge exchange and to have direct access to



*Study Group Scheme participants at the new Dublin Arena, the venue for the 2011 UEFA Europa League final*

the family. All 53 UEFA associations are now signatories to the convention, with 43 of them entitled to issue UEFA-endorsed Pro licences and the others at A and B levels. There are currently some 162,000 technicians in Europe with UEFA-endorsed licences.

Reaching this milestone is no pretext for UEFA to rest on laurels or to lose momentum. There are clear objectives in terms of continuing to encourage (and to add value to) the coach education work done by member associations.

Firstly, there is a fundamental requirement to guarantee credibility by undertaking regular (three-yearly) re-evaluations in order to make absolutely sure that standards are not allowed to drop. This is an ongoing process, with the



UEFA tutors and UEFA content as part of their educational processes. The plan has been devised with a view to offering direct UEFA involvement which can provide added-value support to the Pro licence courses run by national associations.

Three scenarios have been envisaged: student exchange events staged either at UEFA's headquarters in Nyon, at a host association or in conjunction with a UEFA event, such as the final tournament of an age-limit competition. Two of these scenarios will be tested when pilot projects are conducted in mid-2011, with a view to officially launching the student exchange programme with, in all probability, five events to be organised during the 2011/12 campaign.

The participants in each course will be Pro licence students from three national associations, led by their coach education director. UEFA will appoint an overall course director to coordinate the event, with members of UEFA's Jira Panel also becoming actively involved, along with guest presenters.

Pro licence students from the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia will take part in the inaugural four-day pilot course in Nyon during the first week in May. The second is being organised by UEFA during the first week of the European Under-21 Championship final round in Denmark, where students from the local association will be added to visitors from Finland, Norway and Sweden on the list of participants. In this case, the duration of the event will be increased to five days (opening at 15.00 on day 1 and closing by lunchtime on day 5), with the students able to work and observe at as many as five Under-21 fixtures.

The programmes have been designed with a view to covering as much of the coaching spectrum as possible.

Some sessions will focus on technical topics – specific areas such as counterattacking, combination play or pressing. Practical facets will be dealt with during visits to clubs or, in the case of the pilot event at the Under-21s in Denmark, in-depth analysis of matches. Teaching practice will also



*In the classroom during a study group session in Ukraine*

feature on the agenda – and this needs to be carefully choreographed and tested at the pilot events in order to make it genuinely fruitful for all the participants. Knowledge sharing will obviously permeate the extracurricular phases of each event, but more formal exchanges will be channelled through group discussions, forum sessions and meetings with frontline professional coaches.

Equally importantly, the typical programme will also feature management topics, focusing on the profile of a top coach and the leadership qualities he or she requires, in addition to specific areas of the job, such as managing groups of top professional players, recruitment policies and procedures, dealing with the media, and crisis management.

*"The aim is to encourage student coaches to move across Europe and to broaden their horizons,"* comments UEFA's technical director, Andy Roxburgh, who has designed the pilot courses. *"This is an exciting project and one which, UEFA is convinced, will genuinely add value to the coach education work being done by our member associations."* ●

UEFA's technical director, Andy Roxburgh, who has designed the pilot courses. "This is an exciting project and one which, UEFA is convinced, will genuinely add value to the coach education work being done by our member associations." ●



*On the field during a study group session in Turkey*

# The Barça Boys

**Among the coaching fraternity, there is an understandable degree of scepticism about award ceremonies. Doubts tend to be based on perceptions of the levels of compatibility between the cult of the individual and the core values of a team sport.**

However, the recent FIFA Ballon d'Or ceremony represented an exception to the rule. The fact that all three nominees hailed from FC Barcelona was unusual. The fact that they had never worn the shirt of any other club was even more unusual. And the fact that they had all emerged from the club's academy at La Masía provided exceptional incentives to reflect on the values and profiles of youth development schemes. Another striking

fact is that five of the FIFA/FIFPro World XI had received their education at La Masía. For once, the individual awards added up to a collective tribute – and it was fitting that the name of the individual winner was drawn from the envelope by Pep Guardiola, another product of La Masía who, as player and now as coach, has been steeped in the club's culture and footballing traditions.

The ceremony in Zurich highlighted the Catalan club's role model status in terms of player development. But how easy is it for 'wannabe Barças' to build on the Masía blueprint? Pep Guardiola's succinct summary of the Masía philosophy makes it clear that there is no quick-fix route to Barça's standards of excellence. *"The whole culture,"* he says, *"is based on work ethic and family ethic. The aim is to develop aptitudes and attitudes suited to a fast, technical game. We obviously focus on general footballing athleticism – but also on speed of movement and thought."*

Barça's concept of athleticism, it has to be said, is not to be confused with physique – as illustrated by the stature of the three nominees in Zurich. During the current season, the FC Barcelona squad is, in terms of height, the shortest among the 32 clubs in the group stage of the UEFA Champions League.

*"We obviously have a tactical philosophy, a way of playing,"* Pep adds. *"We work on ways of winning the ball back as quickly and efficiently as possible, on circulating it rapidly and on approaching the game with a high degree of humility."* If you go into the dressing room and greet Xavi with a *"How're you doing?"*, his reply will invariably be along the lines of *"We're getting things done..."* The club is incontestably Big Time, but diva attitudes cut very little ice in the dressing room or on the pitch. The system produces stars – but with non-star attitudes. *"I think most of us are football romantics,"* Xavi comments. *"We like to win by taking the initiative and being positive. We like football that's attractive to play, attacking and pleasing to the eye."*

Judgements on whether this credo has been fulfilled could probably be passed by the worldwide audience who witnessed the recent clásico against Real Madrid at the Camp Nou. The 5-0 scoreline made the headlines. But maybe the most significant figures were provided by a pass count of 636 for the home team against 279 by the visitors. One critic referred to *"consummate choreography"*, commenting that *"Barça's game seemed to have been plotted in a trigonometry class"* and that *"Real were suffering death by a thousand triangles"*.

As a role-model performance, this represents a serious challenge for other clubs who are ready, willing and able to invest in youth development. And, even though Pep Guardiola said afterwards that *"games like this happen very rarely"*, further evidence can be supplied by other Barça performances – in the UEFA Champions League, for instance.

Eight days after *el clásico*, and with top spot in Group D already in their pocket, Barça entertained Russian champions FC Rubin Kazan, who needed victory at all costs to maintain hopes of progress. The home team's 2-0 win was based on 74% of the ball and a pass count of 991 to 297. Of the 14 players fielded, 10 were graduates of La Masía. Three of them were debutants in the competition.



Josep Guardiola



Against this backdrop, it was hardly surprising that the ceremony in Zurich should be enthusiastically celebrated by the Catalan media as a tribute to La Masía and its three decades of successful operation. The more surprising fact that it also inspired comment in the *Financial Times* indicates that youth development is by no means impervious to economic factors.

AFC Ajax, a long-standing role model in the youth development field, have probably lost count of the number of visiting technicians who have been interested observers on the touchlines at their De Toekomst training complex. However, the Dutch club's financial fortifications struggled to withstand the impact of the Bosman ruling and stem an outward flow of young talent. At La Masía, the increasing number of technicians who are warmly welcomed are visiting a club whose monetary robustness affords greater potential in terms of retaining talent during a lengthy educational period. The trek through La Masía to the first-team dressing room can take the equivalent of a secondary education and a university course. Personal development during these formative years therefore takes on greater relevance – and it means that the club needs to invest in teachers and psychologists in addition to the talent recruiters and the coaching staff.

*Lionel Messi, winner of the Ballon d'Or, with his challengers and team-mates Andrés Iniesta and Xavi Hernández.*

The reputation of La Masía in terms of instilling strong personal values along with the club's insistence on playing attractive, enjoyable football mean that parents are prepared to let youngsters leave home to join the club (Lionel Messi from Argentina or Andrés Iniesta from a small village in Albacete, for example) – which, in turn, means that the club is obliged to create another (football-oriented) family where they can feel at home and where their talent, personality and self-esteem can flourish. At the same time, the club tries to ensure that a minimum number of gates are placed along the pathway from the academy to the first team. The eight graduates from La Masía who started *el clásico* provided priceless incentives to current students who, even though monetary offers may be substantial, think twice before opting to leave the club.

In the current economic climate, and with financial fair play becoming increasingly relevant, clubs are rightly paying greater attention to youth development. As the *Financial Times* pointed out when, in the aftermath of Zurich, assessing FC Barcelona's successes in nurturing and retaining top talent, "for companies looking to develop and retain top talent, the lessons are that success requires a clear strategy for talent development and the patience to think beyond short-term gains". In Zurich, Lionel Messi, Andrés Iniesta and Xavi Hernández were humble illustrations of that philosophy. ●



# Great Expectations

Replacing the 2010 calendar with the 2011 edition symbolically closed the curtains on the World Cup and threw them wide open on perspectives of the next European Championship.

The countdown to the finals in Poland and Ukraine is now being measured in days rather than years and the next few months will be crucial in deciding which 14 national teams will join the hosts on Europe's biggest stage.

From a technical point of view, there are many fascinating angles. Anecdotally, it will be interesting to see whether Spain can make history by becoming the first nation to successfully defend the title and achieve a unique hat-trick which, after a similar European Championship and World Cup double in 1972 and 1974, the Germans narrowly missed during the 1976 penalty shoot-out against Czechoslovakia. More pertinently from a technical standpoint, games will provide an opportunity to assess the impact of Spain's EURO and World Cup double in terms of a trend towards a possession-oriented game based on fast and fluent combination moves. After their victory in 2008, it was noted that their average pass count was in excess of 450 per game – and there is evidence to support theories about a generalised trend in this direction.

In club football, FC Bayern München averaged just under 600 successful passes per game during the group

stage of the current UEFA Champions League. Among the eliminated teams, it is maybe no surprise that Louis van Gaal's former club AFC Ajax should average over 550 attempted passes per match, but statistics related to other clubs (FC Basel 544, FC Twente 479, Bursaspor 477, Werder Bremen 464, or SL Benfica 462) suggest a widespread drift – even in geographic terms – towards a game based on short or medium-distance passing combinations. The long pass (30 metres or more) currently accounts for something between one-fifth and one-sixth of the total and a significant percentage of these passes are diagonal switches of play from flank to flank rather than direct supply to a target striker.

Will the trend towards a single striker be accentuated at the 2012 finals? Spain's double success was achieved with a blend of 4-2-3-1 and 4-1-4-1 structures, depending largely on match situations or the injury list. And the wider picture reveals a trend towards 4-5-1 defending and 4-3-3 or 4-2-3-1 attacking, with the offensive complexion of the team variable according to the type of players fielded in the wide positions. At the 2008 finals, Austria and Greece

*David Villa scores in Spain's EURO 2012 qualifier against Scotland in Glasgow*





were the only teams to adopt (sporadically) the format of a three-man defence and wing backs. How likely are we to see this structure in 2012?



Montenegro (Milorad Pekovic, right, in action against England's Gareth Barry) have been one of the surprises of the first stage of the EURO 2012 qualifying competition

In 2008, some 40% of the 77 goals were scored by players who could reasonably be labelled strikers, whereas many of the critical goals stemmed from middle-to-front attackers, who are becoming increasingly frequent components in starting lineups. Is this another tendency which will be carried into next year's final tournament?

The value of effective counterattacking in the top club and national team competitions has become unquestionable with, in 2008, the Russians and the Dutch, in particular, producing stunning, copybook fast breaks. The consequent concerns about countering the counter have injected some structural and tactical adjustments into the modus operandi of the top teams – notably in terms of the deployment of screening midfielders. At EURO 2008, 8 of the 16 teams operated at some stage with two screening midfielders. The question is whether, in 2012, this percentage becomes even greater.

In terms of goalscoring, the 145 scored in South Africa represented the lowest total since the FIFA World Cup adopted the 64-match format, with the average of 2.26 per match contrasting quite steeply with the figure of 2.5 registered at the last two EUROS. In this area, one of the attractive debating points is the correlation between increasing levels of collective efficiency and the potentially decisive influence of the outstanding individual.

As the qualifying groups emerge from hibernation and gather momentum, many questions are still to be answered. However, no matter who travels to Poland and Ukraine for the 2012 finals, the romance and the sheer intensity of the competition can be taken for granted. The presence of nations such as Norway and Montenegro among the group stage pacesetters provides testimony to the variety of playing styles and national identities which contribute to the spectacle and sheer drama of a competition which, since the Soviet Union first lifted the trophy in 1960, has held a mirror to Europe's political and footballing evolution.

Today's teenagers might remember the fairy story of Denmark scrapping their close-season holidays to step in as last-minute replacements at EURO'92 – and going on to win it. But they will probably refuse to believe the story about the semi-final that was decided by the toss of a coin in the privacy of the dressing room tunnel or the final which, because it ended as a 1-1 draw, had to be replayed 48 hours later. In football, 1968 seems centuries away...

In coaching terms, the European Championship has provided a gallery of greatness and a tribute to legendary figures such as Helmut Schön and Rinus Michels. After leading Greece to their historic win at EURO 2004, Otto Rehhagel offered his trademark, picturesque slant on what victory can mean. "I'm the only man in Athens who's allowed to drive in the bus lane," he said, later adding, "and if I win it again, they're going to give me the bus to go with it."

EURO 2004 also represented a turning point in the tournament's social significance by combining finals with fan zones and fiestas – to the extent that sponsor workshops and host city preparations for the 2012 event have long since been under way. As it happens, the public's love affair with the European Championship can be personified by Michel Platini who, as player and captain, received the trophy at the Parc des Princes in Paris in 1984, having scored an all-time record of nine goals and becoming the only man to score two hat-tricks in a final tournament.



A pass by Anatolij Tymoshchuk, whose club, FC Bayern München, achieved a pass count of almost 600 per match in the group stage of this season's UEFA Champions League

He travelled to Sweden in 1992 as head coach of his national team. And, in 2008, as president of UEFA, he handed the trophy to Spanish captain Iker Casillas. "National teams have always been the supreme expression of a country's football," he maintains, "and the defence of national teams is at the top of our priority list at UEFA." As the qualifying campaign gathers momentum, the question for the man who received the trophy in 1984 is the identity of the man he will hand it to in Kyiv on Sunday 10 July 2012. ●

## Enzo Bearzot

Although he passed away just before last Christmas at the age of 83, it would be remiss of *The Technician* to overlook the sad news of the death of Enzo Bearzot. He is forever associated with Italy's devastating acceleration in the 1982 FIFA World Cup finals in Spain where, after three undistinguished draws during the group stage in Vigo, his team lifted the trophy in Madrid after successive wins against Argentina, Brazil, Poland and (West) Germany. But his legacy was exhibited on a much broader canvas. His coaching career was marked by spells as assistant to Nereo Rocco and, when he moved from club football to the Italian national association, to Ferruccio Valcareggi and to Fulvio Bernardini – a man also hailed by Marcello Lippi as a predominant influence on his career. "I was very impressed with his intelligence, his wisdom, and the educational background of a man who had a degree in business and economics," the 2006 World Cup winner comments. Many of Bernardini's qualities found continuity when Enzo Bearzot, taking over as head coach in 1977, led Italy into the 1978, 1982 and 1986 World Cups, accumulating 104 games at the helm of the national team.

At a time when Italian club football was renowned for its defensive acumen, he persuaded his players to exploit their attacking skills and to 'play like champions'. Paolo Rossi, the cutting edge of the 1982 champions, said, "he was like a father to me. I owed him everything". Enzo went about his task in a quiet, elegant manner which earned him the respect of players and even the most vociferous of Italian critics. Nearer to his own heart, he also earned the respect of the coaching colleagues to whom, when he later became president of the Italian association's technical centre at Coverciano, he passed on his wisdom. It is only fitting that *The Technician* should pay a small tribute to a real coaches' coach, a gentle man and a true gentleman.

*The crowning moment of Enzo Bearzot's career – Italy's victory in the 1982 World Cup*

---

Editorial Group

Andy Roxburgh, Graham Turner

---

Production

André Vieli, Dominique Maurer

---

Layout, Printing

CO Créations, Artgraphic Cavin SA

