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World Cup goals for two national teams

Prosinecki and the Nineties

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Brilliant Blond

Robert Prosinecki was once the shining light of Yugoslavian football. The only player to have scored World Cup goals for two different national teams, his exceptional vision also enabled him to provide one crucial pass after another. The 46-year-old discusses unforgettable victories and bitter defeats in an interview with Massimo Franchi.

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"I can dispel any fears"

German coach Martina Voss-Tecklenburg is keen to cause a sensation with the Swiss women's national team by infusing the team with her winning mentality.

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All change in Swansea

A visit to Wales is not just about castles, beaches and pubs – there is plenty of football on offer too. At the Liberty Stadium, Swansea City have been delivering impressive Premier League performances since 2011.

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In his weekly column the FIFA President reflects upon the 60-year history of the Asian Football Confederation and is convinced "this is only the beginning."



Prosinecki and the Nineties

Our cover picture shows midfielder Robert Prosinecki in 1991, shortly before he left Red Star Belgrade for Real Madrid.

imago



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16 **Argentina**

The country is preparing for three 'Superclásicos' within eleven days. Pictured: Fernando Gago from Boca Juniors.



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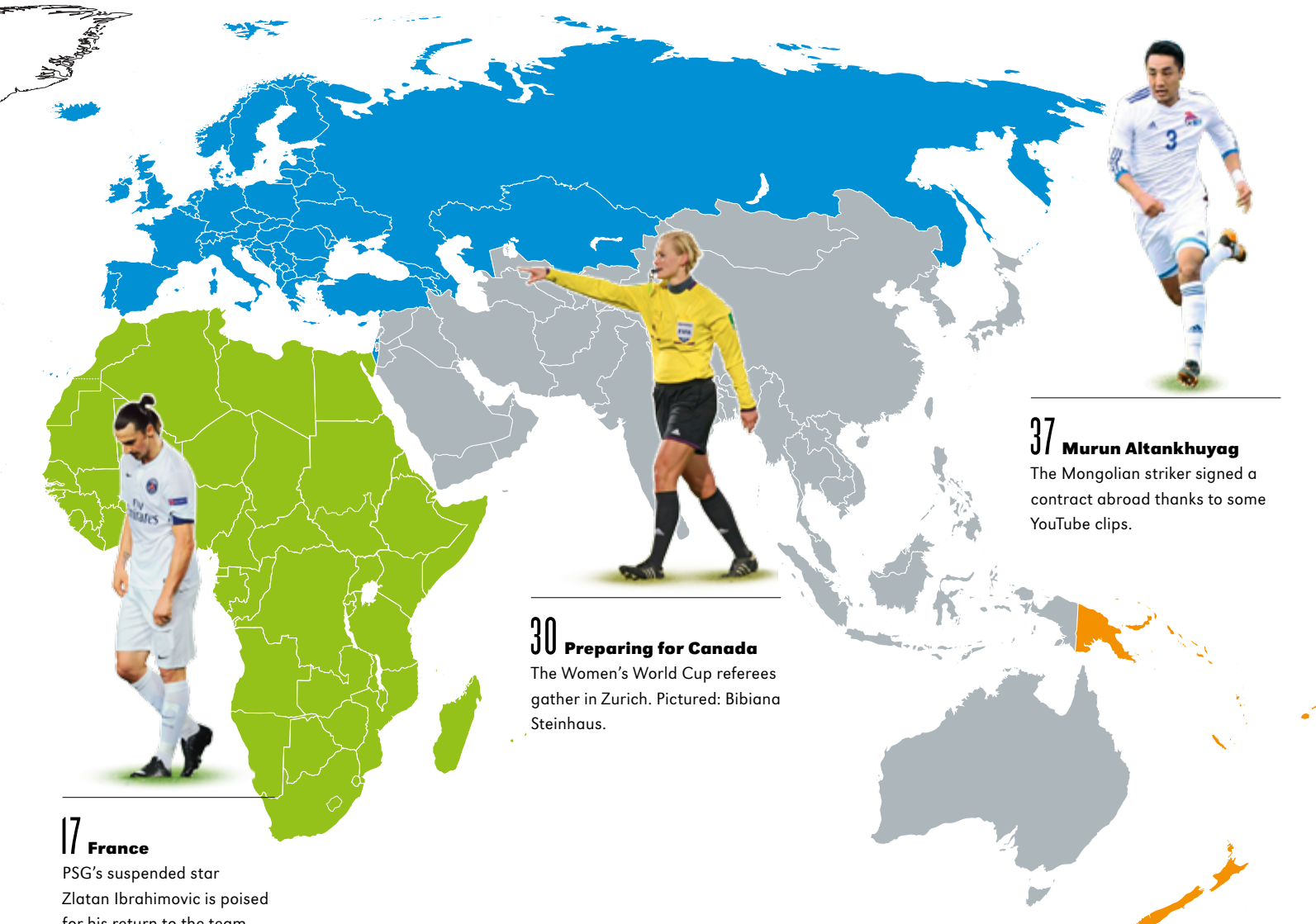
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PSG's suspended star Zlatan Ibrahimovic is poised for his return to the team.

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The Women's World Cup referees gather in Zurich. Pictured: Bibiana Steinhaus.

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The Mongolian striker signed a contract abroad thanks to some YouTube clips.



Blue Stars / FIFA Youth Cup
13 - 14 May 2015, Zurich, Switzerland



FIFA U-20 World Cup
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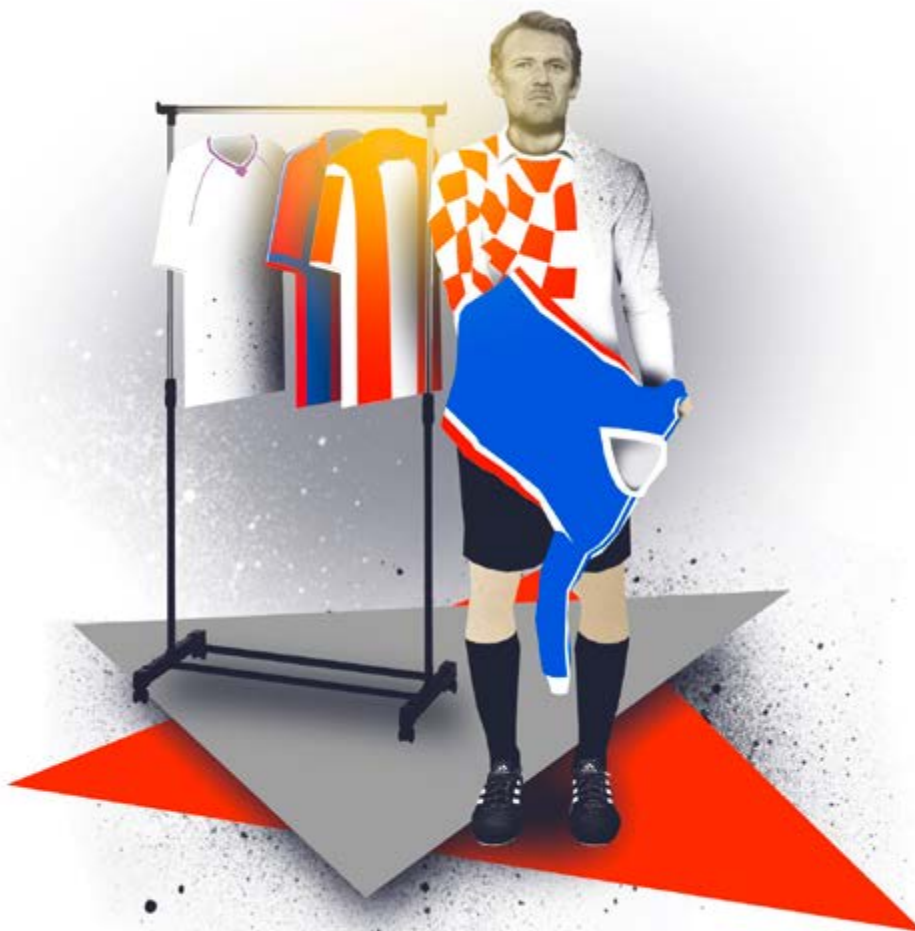
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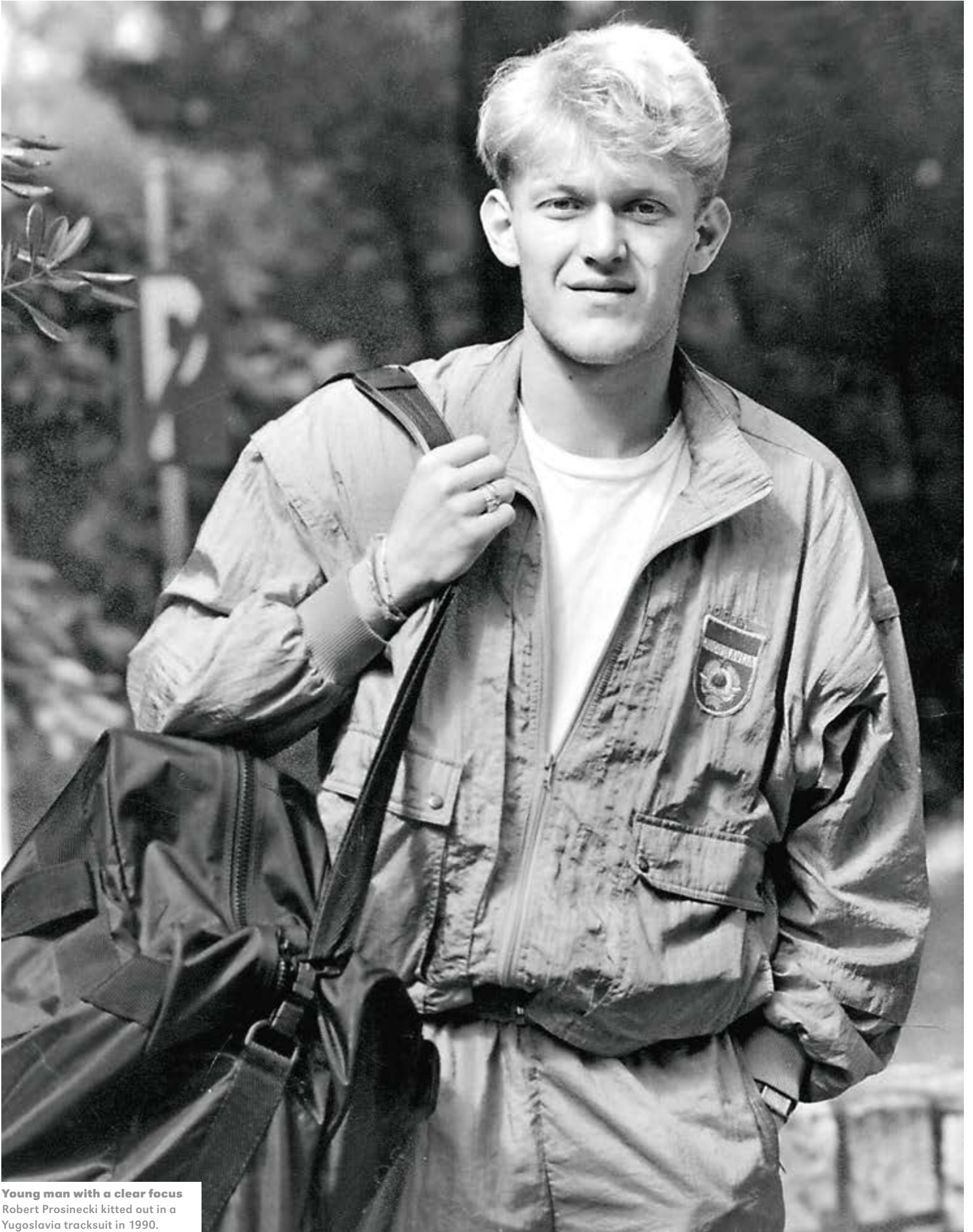
Moments of brilliance

There are some goals that linger long in the memory. This is true not only for the fans and the players who scored them – but sometimes their opponents too.

Arthur Numan is one man who would probably attest to this phenomenon. The Dutch defender presumably felt he had the measure of the Croatian strikeforce in the third place match at the 1998 World Cup in France. He had not reckoned with the talent of Robert Prosinecki. The “Brilliant Blond” ghosted into the penalty area, turned swiftly on the spot to leave Numan in a spin, took two steps and fired an unstoppable shot past Edwin van der Sar with his right foot to score a dream goal and give his country a 1-0 lead.

This was just one of the highlights of Prosinecki’s international career. Now 46, the only player ever to have scored World Cup finals goals for two national teams – Yugoslavia and Croatia – sat down with our reporter Massimo Franchi to discuss his glittering playing career in the 1990s and his latest challenge as Azerbaijan national coach. ⚽

Sarah Steiner



Young man with a clear focus
Robert Prosinecki kitted out in a Yugoslavia tracksuit in 1990.

GLOBAL CITIZEN

Robert Prosinecki is the only player in history to have scored World Cup finals goals for two different national teams, finding the net for Yugoslavia in 1990 before repeating the feat for Croatia in 1998. *Massimo Franchi* interviewed the former Real Madrid and Barcelona midfielder recently appointed as Azerbaijan's head coach.

Mr Prosinecki, you hold a unique record as the only player in World Cup history to have scored a goal at two tournaments for two different teams – first for Yugoslavia and later for Croatia.

Robert Prosinecki: I played at three World Cups: the first was with Yugoslavia in Italy in 1990 under Bosnian coach Ivica Osim, while the second two were for Croatia: at France 1998 for head coach Croatia Blazevic and again at Korea/Japan 2002 for Mirko Jozic. I scored against United Arab Emirates in a Yugoslavia shirt before finding the target for Croatia against Jamaica and the Netherlands. They were all important and unforgettable experiences, not only for my playing and coaching career but personally too.

If you had played for Germany too, your record would probably have been unbeatable.

Yes, I was born in Villingen-Schwenningen in the state of Baden-Württemberg, where my parents worked in the hotel industry, but I'd never have been able to play for Germany too because you cannot change association once you've been capped for a particular first team. The only reason I switched countries is because Yugoslavia ceased to exist and was split into the individual states of Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and ultimately Montenegro and Kosovo.



1998 World Cup in France
Prosinecki in action for Croatia.



Total concentration
Prosinecki in Yugoslavian colours in 1990.



1990 World Cup in Italy
The Yugoslavia midfielder grapples with Diego Armando Maradona.

image (3)



Fresh challenge
Prosinecki has been coaching Azerbaijan since December 2014.

Previously – in 1987, to be precise – you became U-18 world champion in Chile at the age of 18 and were named player of the tournament.

That was an indescribable feeling. We had an extremely strong team – a multicultural Yugoslavian side in which the Croatians played a dominant role under our coach Jozic. That squad included players like Davor Suker, Zvonimir Boban, Igor Stimac, Robert Jarni, Predrag Mijatovic, Branko Brnovic, Dragoje Lekovic and Gordan Petric. I still remember my free-kick that sealed our quarter-final win against Brazil. There was only a minute left to play and extra time already seemed like a certainty. The feeling of elation was incredible. We went on to win the final against West Germany on penalties but unfortunately I was suspended after picking up a yellow card in the semi-final against East Germany. Fortunately my team-mates held their nerve in the shootout.

Let's return to your World Cup appearances.

In Italy we once again proved we were a footballing power. When you think about that tournament, many people only remember players like Dejan Savicevic, Safet Susic, Zlatko Vujovic, Faruk Hadzibegic, Srecko Katanec, Predrag Spasic, Zoran Vulic or Dragoljub Brnovic, but Darko Pancev, Suker and young Alen Boksic were also part of that squad. Unfortunately we lost the shootout lottery that time around. Our opponents in the quarter-finals were the reigning world champions Argentina and Diego Maradona who, together with Michel Platini, was the idol of my youth. We

managed to stay on level terms with the eventual finalists despite going down to ten men after barely half an hour when Refik Sabadzovic was sent off. He'd been warned just minutes earlier after fouling Maradona, who was Napoli's star player at that time. Extra time still failed to produce any goals, and so the match went to penalties. Although I converted my spot-kick, it wasn't enough for us, but we could console ourselves with having been eliminated by an extremely strong Argentinian side.

You almost went all the way with Croatia in France eight years later.

Yes, that was a sad moment – the worst of my career. We faced the hosts at the Stade de France in the semi-final, and despite making the starting eleven in our three group games, I was on the bench for the Round of 16 and quarter-final. The game was still goalless at half-time in the semi before Suker gave us the lead straight after the break only for Lilian Thuram to score an equaliser almost immediately; the French defender then completed his brace midway through the second half. Unfortunately we couldn't fight back any more and ultimately had to be content with third place after beating the Netherlands in the "small final". Our fans greeted us like heroes on our return to Zagreb. A small nation with a population of little more than four million had ascended the Mount Olympus of world football.

Lilian Thuram, who played for Parma at that point, put you out of the tournament practically single-handedly.

“Veliki zhuti” - Brilliant Blond

From the end of the 1980s to the start of the new millennium, Robert Prosinecki's blond mane shone like a ray of sunlight, casting a golden glow over football pitches the world over. Born in 1969, Prosinecki is one of the most talented footballers the Balkan region has ever produced, and it was a joy and a privilege to watch him in action. He was capable of scoring magical goals and leaving opposition defenders for dead with his lightning-quick yet meticulous dribbling skills. The playmaker, who usually wore the number seven shirt, was not only renowned for his outstanding technical ability, but also for his elegance, work rate and ball control.

In 1987, Prosinecki helped Yugoslavia win the FIFA U-20 World Cup in Chile at the tender age of 18. With six victories from six games, their path to glory at the Estadio Nacional in Santiago could hardly have been more prolific. A 4-2 win against the hosts in their opening game was followed by victories against Australia (4-0), Togo (4-1), Brazil (2-1) and East Germany (2-1), before they overcame West Germany on penalties in the final.

Just like Diego Armando Maradona at the 1979 edition of the tournament in Japan, Prosi-

necki was unanimously voted the best player of the competition and awarded the Golden Ball, an accolade that has since been won by the likes of Argentine duo Lionel Messi (Netherlands 2005) and Sergio Agüero (Canada 2007), and Frenchman Paul Pogba (Turkey 2013).

Kings of Europe with Belgrade

In Croatia, Prosinecki is known as “Zhuti” (Blond) and “Veliki zhuti” (Brilliant Blond). It was then-Red Star Belgrade sporting director and future president Dragan Dzajic, himself a club legend, who first brought Prosinecki to the Serbian capital after “Robi” had been deemed surplus to requirements at Dinamo Zagreb by head coach Miroslav Blazevic. Former Ajax captain Velibor Vasov was in charge at Red Star at the time.

After excelling with Yugoslavia at the 1990 World Cup in Italy, Prosinecki helped Belgrade win the European Cup in 1991. Having reached the semi-finals without losing a single game, they overcame Bayern Munich in the last four (2-1 in Munich, 1-1 in Belgrade) before beating Olympique Marseille on penalties after a scoreless draw in the final in Bari.

Johan Cruyff comes calling

Prosinecki's eye-catching displays resulted in a move to Real Madrid, where during his three-year spell at the club he would experience memorable highs, but also crushing lows due to injury. His critics claimed his muscles were made of crystal, but when Prosinecki was 100 per cent fit it was his opponents who were left with aches and pains. It wasn't long before the Croatian joined Real's bitter rivals Barcelona, who were then coached by Dutch legend Johan Cruyff.

After returning to Croatia Zagreb (formerly Dinamo), Prosinecki went on to play in Belgium (Standard Liege), England (Portsmouth) and Slovenia (Olympia Ljubljana) before beginning his coaching career as Slaven Bilic's assistant with the Croatian national side.

A spell in charge of Red Star was followed by a brief stint at the helm of Turkish club Kayserispor. In December 2014, he replaced Berti Vogts as Azerbaijan head coach.

MF



European champions!
Prosinecki in action for Red Star Belgrade in the 1991 European Cup final against Olympique Marseille, whom they beat 5-3 on penalties.

Name

Robert Prosinečki

Date and place of birth

12 January 1969, Schweningen, (Germany)

Position

Midfielder

Clubs (selected)

**1987-1991 Red Star Belgrade
1991-1994 Real Madrid
1994-1995 Real Oviedo
1995-1996 Barcelona
1997-2000 Croatia Zagreb
2001-2002 Portsmouth
2002-2003 Olimpija Ljubljana
2003-2004 NK Zagreb**

Major honours

**1987 World youth champion (Yugoslavia)
1991 European champion (Red Star Belgrade)
1993 Spanish Cup winner (Real Madrid)
1996 Spanish Super Cup winner (Barcelona)
1998 World Cup bronze medalist (Croatia)**

Clubs coached

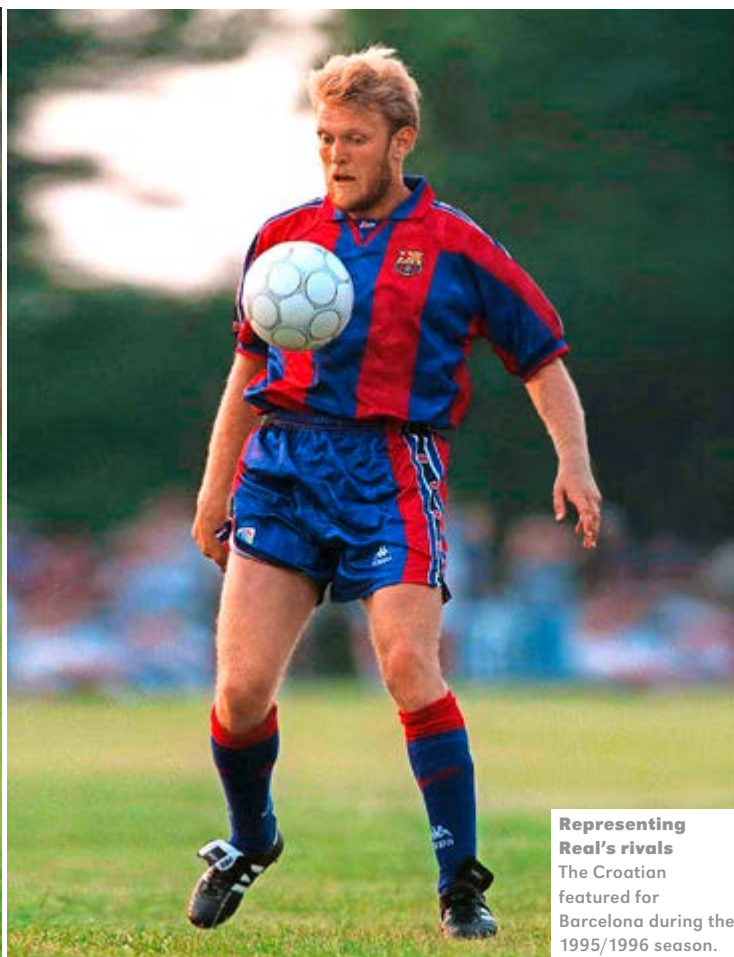
**2006-2010 Croatia (assistant coach)
2010-2012 Red Star Belgrade
2012-2013 Kayserispor
Since 2014 Azerbaijan**

International appearances

**1989-1991 Yugoslavia (15 caps, 5 goals)
1994-2002 Croatia (49 caps, 10 goals)**



By royal appointment
Prosinecki played for Real Madrid between 1991 and 1994.



Representing Real's rivals
The Croatian featured for Barcelona during the 1995/1996 season.

To this day one question still bothers me: how many times had he scored for his country before that match? Not a single one! But that's not all: how many more international goals has he netted since? None! Thuram played the game of his life that evening and came away from it having scored two decisive strikes – his only two goals in 142 caps for *Les Bleus*. Nonetheless, oddities like that are part of football; first the impossible becomes possible, then it becomes a reality. There are beautiful, wonderful moments, and then there are bitter pills that can be very tough to swallow. The most important thing is getting up again after a low point – that's vital in this sport.

Your national coach Miroslav Blazevic only brought you on in place of Mario Stanic a minute before the final whistle sounded in that legendary semi-final in Saint-Denis. Wasn't that humiliating for you? After all, it was he who announced that he would eat his coaching licence if you ever made it as a professional footballer when you were still a highly promising talent in Dinamo Zagreb's youth ranks.

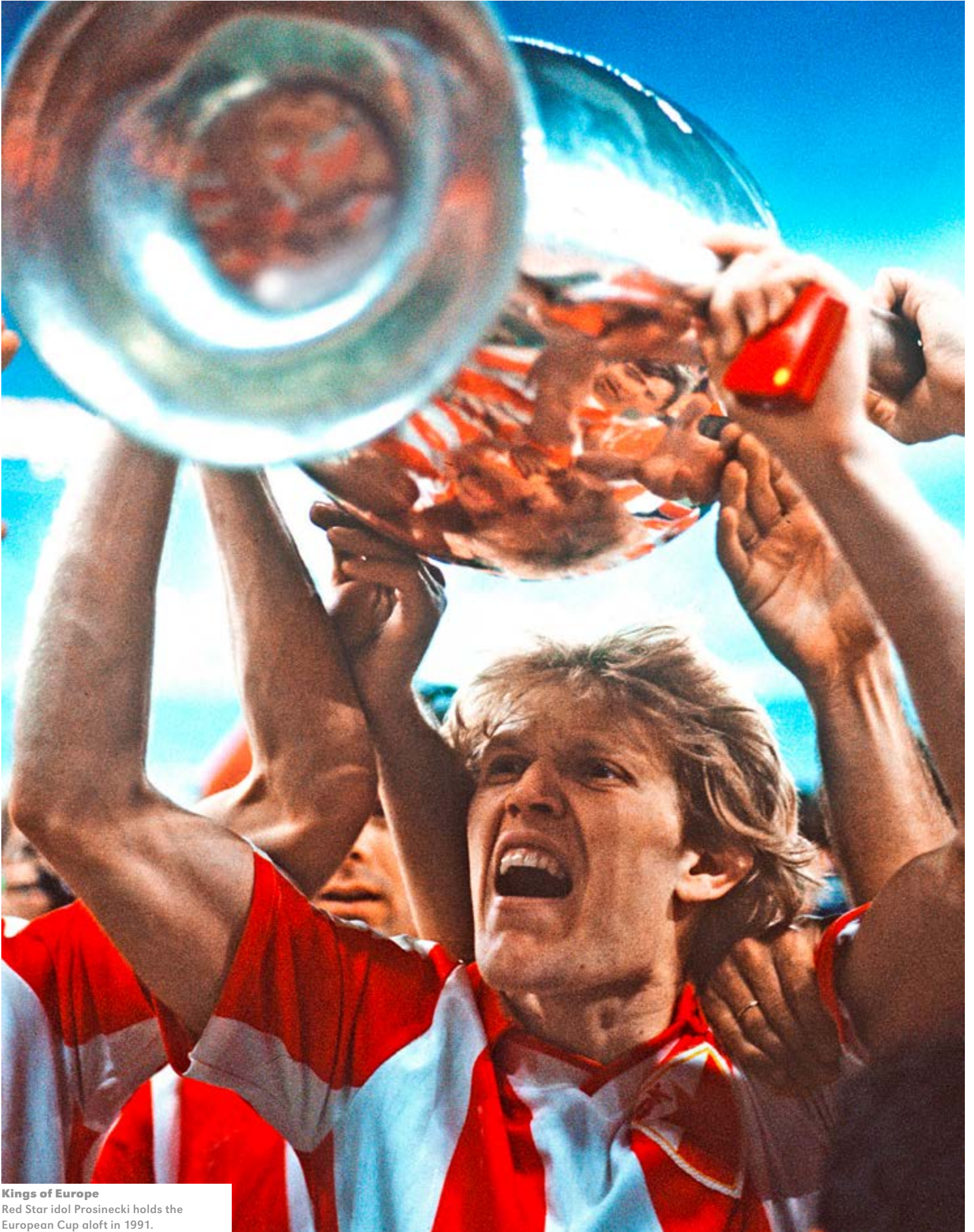
That was simply a reflection of his opinion at that time. His comments gave me tremendous motivation and spurred me on to keep improving as a player, and my career ran like clockwork after that. Today I count him among my friends and colleagues.

What was the best moment of your professional career?

Winning the Champions League back when it was still called the European Cup, without a doubt. We won the title in 1991 with

Crvena Zvezda, as we call it [editor's note: *Red Star Belgrade*]. That was the last major title won by a team from the former Yugoslavia. We beat Olympique Marseille in the final in Bari, and once again the title had to be decided by penalties after 120 goalless minutes. We had a fantastic side led by Serbian coach Ljubomir "Ljupko" Petrovic; my team-mates included our Montenegrin midfielder Savicevic, the Serbians Sinisa Mihajlovic and Vladimir Jugovic and a Bosnian in Sabanadzovic, but Dragan "Piksi" Stojkovic was no longer at the club – he left us the previous summer for Marseille, of all teams. The French side's coach, Belgian Raymond Goethals, only brought him on in the second half of extra time. We converted all five penalties – I scored the first one – to lift the trophy. It was the first and only major honour in the history of the former Yugoslavia.

The most important thing
is getting up
again after a low point



Kings of Europe
Red Star idol Prosinecki holds the European Cup aloft in 1991.

What did this triumph mean to you?

It utterly changed the careers and lives of our players. A few weeks after the game, Real Madrid's president Ramon Mendoza and Serbian coach Radomir Antic brought me to Real Madrid, while Sabanadzovic moved to Greece and our goalkeeper Stevan Stojanovic went to Belgium. The following year Savicevic, Mihajlovic, Jugovic and Pancev transferred to Italian clubs while Miodrag Belodedici, Ilija Najdoski and Vlada Stosic headed for Spain. Meanwhile our coach, Petrovic, was appointed by Espanyol in Barcelona immediately after our European Cup win.

We need to teach kids
the values of education,
respect and decency

You are one of the Balkan region's greatest players. Some Croatian experts believe that without cigarettes and whisky, you could have been one of the best players in the world – or even the very best.

I'm not so sure about that!

How difficult was it for you to return to Belgrade as Red Star coach in December 2010 after choosing to represent Croatia internationally?

It wasn't too hard as I'd given plenty to the club as a player, but I can understand that things would have panned out quite differently if I'd been appointed there ten years earlier.

What is your strategy for fighting against widespread racism inside stadiums?

You've got to build from the bottom up by educating young people at both state schools and football academies. We need to teach kids the importance of education, respect and decency.

You made your debut as Azerbaijan's head coach last month as Berti Vogts' replacement, with your new team securing three points in your first match against Malta in Group H of EURO 2016 qualifying. What made you decide to manage a side always placed around 135th in the FIFA world rankings?

I was attracted to the project ever since the association's General Secretary Elkhan Mammadov presented it to me on our first meeting in Paris. It's a new challenge for me, a long-term project that I'll need to tackle with passion and an iron will in light of the significant need for improvement there. My primary target is to contribute to the development of Azerbaijani football. There's no doubt that qualifying for a World Cup or European Championship finals tournament will be far from easy. We need time, but we're working on it. The fact that Azerbaijan are on the up means we have both players and resources. There's a fantastic infrastructure in place, supported by foreign coaches who are also helping to raise the standard among players, starting with the country's youth sides.

What's life like in Baku?

It's very good. Baku has a population of more than two million and feels like any other European capital. It's got everything from the Caspian Sea to the Caucasus mountains in the north west. It's a

vibrant, dynamic and modern city where new infrastructure and buildings are being constructed every day. Above all, the Land of Fire is incredibly impressive, having got its nickname from the numerous sites where natural gas erupts from the ground in a spectacular display of flames. These places are definitely worth a visit.

What is a typical working day like for you?

I get up early to take my daughters – 11-year-old Roberta and her 15-year-old sister Leonarda – to the international school, then I head to my office at the Association's headquarters, where I work until the evening. Then I go home, where my wife Vlatka is already waiting for me. I have another hobby besides my passion for football – my family.

Do you dream of one day coaching a top club like Real Madrid or Barcelona, having already caused a sensation there as a player?

Right now I'm only thinking about my immediate future in Azerbaijan. I've only just begun a three-year project, so I'm totally focused on the country's football development.

Would you rather compare yourself as a coach with Jose Mourinho or Pep Guardiola?

They are two of the world's best coaches already renowned for the numerous titles they've already won with their clubs. I'm only just starting out, so it'd be inappropriate to make that kind of comparison. Both of them are exceptional coaches, so I'm not sure who I'd choose anyway – but when it comes to philosophy, playing style and an emphasis on long-term projects, I've probably got more in common with Guardiola. 🇦🇿

Robert Prosinecki was speaking to Massimo Franchi

FIFA in Azerbaijan

AFFA, the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan, was founded in 1992 and became a member of FIFA two years later. Their history in the FIFA Ranking accurately reflects the national team's swift rise and equally rapid descent over the last decade: they were 125th in 2008 and 94th in 2013, but dropped to a nadir of 135th in 2014 by the time Robert Prosinecki took over as coach. Azerbaijan currently rank 115th in the world.

Over the last ten years, FIFA has invested almost US\$4 million to install an artificial turf pitch and construct a headquarters building in the capital Baku (2005), and in improvements to youth football throughout the country (2015).



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ON THE INSIDE

Poland: Ekstraklasa

Final shake-up underway in Poland



Sarah Steiner is a staff writer on The FIFA Weekly.

As the Polish Ekstraklasa season enters its home straight, clubs are fighting tooth and nail to finish in the top eight of the division and earn themselves a shot at the title. Champions Legia Warsaw are unlikely to be caught at the league's summit, having established a four-point lead over second-place Lech Poznan with two games remaining, but things are far less clear-cut in mid-table. Just three points separate the teams in seventh and tenth place as the battle for the championship play-offs heats up.

There is little margin for error at this stage of the domestic campaign, as KS Cracovia head coach Robert Podolinski learned the hard way recently. Cracovia's 1-0 loss to Pogon Szczecin ended their hopes of a top-eight finish and they will now fight for survival in the relegation

play-offs. However, they will have to do so without Podolinski, who was dismissed following the defeat.

The coaching merry-go-round is also in full swing in the Polish top flight. Podolinski is just one of four head coaches who parted company with their respective clubs in recent weeks. Piast Gliwice's Angel Perez Garcia, Wisla Krakow's Franciszek Smuda and Pogon's Jan Kocian have all been relieved of their duties.

Based on the banks of the River Oder, Pogon have enjoyed a turnaround in fortunes since

The fight for the championship play-offs is hotting up.

Kocian's departure. Czeslaw Michniewicz, who has overseen the last two matches, guided the port city club to a 2-0 victory over Jagiellonia Bialystok just two days after being appointed as Kocian's successor. However, the Polish Mourinho, as he is known in these parts, played down his side's recent upturn in form. "I've only just arrived and haven't been able to change many things," he said. "I just told the lads to play football. They went onto the pitch and they fought." Michniewicz's second game in charge also ended in victory. Indeed, the 1-0 win over Cracovia was their first away success since 19 September 2014.

The acid test is yet to come, though. Pogon currently occupy the eighth and final qualifying berth for the championship play-offs. Their closest challengers, Lechia Gdansk, are on the same number of points but have a slightly inferior goal difference. Michniewicz's charges face sixth-place Gornik Zabrze (40 points) in the penultimate round of fixtures, before taking on giants Legia Warsaw on the final day of the regular league season. "Our situation is good as well as bad," added Michniewicz. "It's good because we're in the top eight at the moment, but it's bad because we still have a long way to go." ❄️



The Polish Mourinho
Czeslaw Michniewicz has turned around Pogon Szczecin's fortunes since his appointment.



Argentina: Primera Division

Eleven exceptional days



Sven Goldmann is a leading football correspondent at Tages-spiegel newspaper in Berlin.

There were still some duties to attend to in the tenth round of Primera Division matches. Preliminary skirmishes began around Buenos Aires as Club Atletico Lanus played host to Boca Juniors at Estadio Nestor Diaz Perez. After conceding an early goal, the visitors recovered to win 3-1 thanks to strikes from Federico Carrizo, Cristian Pavon and Nicolas Lodeiro.

A few kilometres further north in the Argentinian capital's Belgrano district, Boca's arch-rivals River Plate hosted Banfield at Estadio Monumental, where a brace from Fernando Cavenaghi and a goal apiece from Sebastian Driussi and Ramiro Funes Mori handed the home side a 4-1 victory. These encounters provided a final warm-up before things get serious between Boca and River over the next few weeks – and how!

The country's two greatest clubs and fiercest rivals are dominating the league this year, as they have done throughout Argentinian footballing history. After some rather weaker showings in recent years, the two teams are striding ahead side by side this season. Boca and River remain unbeaten after ten rounds of games, topping the table with 24 points each and only the former's two additional goals to separate them. On 3 May, Boca will once again play host to the *Superclásico* at La Bombonera, the most atmospheric of South America's many captivating stadiums.

This league encounter will be the first of three meetings between the two old adver-



Rodolfo Arruabarrena Boca Juniors coach since August 2014.

saries within the space of 11 days, as Boca and River are battling for the title not just in the Primera Division but also in the continent's most prestigious club competition. The two sides have been drawn against each other in the last 16 of the Copa Libertadores – first at the Monumental on 7 May, then at the Bombonera seven days later. This all equates to eleven exceptional days for football in Argentina and even further afield.

According to England's *Observer* newspaper, Boca Juniors versus River Plate is the most eventful sporting occasion in the world – even if those events are not always of a peaceful

nature. Boca are the only team to have remained in the top flight ever since the Argentinian league turned professional in 1931. Although the *Azul y Oro* have lifted the trophy 30 times since then, their last triumph came a full four years ago. Meanwhile River have been champions on 35 occasions, having last emerged victorious under coach Marcelo Gallardo in 2014.

His opposite number Rodolfo Arruabarrena has already initiated the latest duel by throwing down a thinly veiled challenge to River. Although the teams' two Copa Libertadores matches were initially scheduled for 6 and 13 May, Arruabarrena was informed shortly after his side defeated Lanus that both legs of the tie had been postponed, supposedly after an intervention from television networks – and a brief rant ensued. "That's not right," the 39-year-old grumbled, sensing a conspiracy on River's part. "Boca will play on 6 and 13 May as agreed!" he declared, adding: "If Boca don't fight this, I will." One thing is for sure – the stage is set for 11 electrifying days in Buenos Aires. ⚡

Arruabarrena began the latest duel with River Plate by issuing a thinly veiled challenge.



France: Ligue 1

A telling absence



Roland Zorn is a Frankfurt-based football correspondent.

Any club that can afford to sign Zlatan Ibrahimovic will know that the eccentric

Swede commands a leading role both on and off the pitch. The gifted striker regularly turns in superb on-field performances for French champions Paris Saint-Germain, and provides further drama in unashamedly voicing his opinion away from the action, especially given his lifelong commitment to going on the attack. Such an approach can lead to the occasional slip-up, which is precisely what earned the all-round talent the three-match ban – reduced from four games – he is currently serving in Ligue 1. After the Parisian club’s 3-2 defeat away to Bordeaux in mid-March, Ibrahimovic not only insulted the referee, he labelled France a “crappy country”.

Such comments cannot go unpunished in a nation as proud as France, where Ibrahimovic receives a generous salary. However, his supporters have pointed out, with good reason, that the outburst recorded by Canal Plus, the Ligue 1 television rights holder, took place in the entrance to the changing room, an area normally restricted to players only. Yet Canal Plus considered Ibrahimovic’s remarks to be in the public interest, and scandal duly ensued. PSG have boycotted the broadcaster ever since, insisting that the images shown to the public constituted a breach of the contractual agreement in place between the two parties.

Ibrahimovic scoffed at his punishment, calling it a “farce and a disgrace for football”, regretting only “that they didn’t suspend me for the rest of the season because then I could have gone on holiday already.” The fact that a few days later Olympique Lyon striker Alexandre Lacazette, who overtook Ibrahimovic at the top of the league’s goalscoring chart, commented on the case has only

intensified the title race between the two clubs. Lacazette, who has scored 25 goals to Ibrahimovic’s 17 this season, said of the incident: “We know that cameras are pointed at us and we have to be aware of the impression we give away from the pitch.”

Lacazette was unable to add to his tally in the Rhone derby against AS St. Etienne on 19 April, with the league leaders dropping two valuable points in a 2-2 draw against their neighbours from the industrial city just 60 kilometres away. The previous day, PSG won 3-1 in Nice without Ibrahimovic and are now level on points at the summit with a game in hand. Victory over FC Metz on 28 April would take them back to the top of the standings.

The team’s talisman will make his comeback after that fixture – on 2 May away to Nantes – although it remains to be seen whether he will be a reformed character going into the final four games of the season. All of Paris will rejoice should he return in a blaze of glory, as PSG are still on course to win an unprecedented treble if they can add the league title and the French Cup to the League Cup trophy they have already secured. Should they succeed, France would surely become an increasingly attractive place for the country’s fiercest critic. ⚽



An Ibrahimovic-free win
Led by captain David Luiz, PSG beat Nice 3-1 away.

“I can reduce players’ fear”

German coach Martina Voss-Tecklenburg has managed to instil her winning mentality into the Switzerland women’s national team. Now the fearless Swiss are ready to cause a stir in their maiden appearance at a Women’s World Cup.

What can you pass on to your players of your experiences at major tournaments?

Martina Voss-Tecklenburg: I can reduce the fear that may arise as a result of the huge media interest, the matches being broadcast live on television and the number of spectators in the stadiums. A lot of my players haven’t been exposed to that before. At a World Cup they can’t be nervous and underperform out on the pitch. When I was I player, if I wanted something too much then I played badly. That said, I always had a strong will to win and was able to squeeze that little bit extra out of myself. That’s the experience I can convey. On top of that, we’ve hired a sports psychologist who has helped the players deepen their understanding of their roles and improve their self-confidence.

What are the key reasons behind Switzerland’s development and their first ever qualification for a Women’s World Cup?

The mindset has improved. When I started here the team’s focus was primarily on defending, but now we’ve become a lot stronger in attack and scored 53 goals in ten World Cup qualifying games. Self-confidence has grown and we’ve increased the intensity in training considerably. I demand six to seven training sessions per player per week. Some people stepped down from the national team because they couldn’t fit that in alongside their commitments to work or academic study. The others realised that despite training more they could still perform well in games.

The fact that over half of your team play in strong foreign leagues, such as in Germany and Sweden, must also have contributed?

That’s right, the players have outstanding fitness levels and a superb understanding of the game because they play at a high level week-in week-out. Their positioning and

strength in the tackle also develop quicker in those leagues.

What will you be focusing on in your preparations for the World Cup?

We’re working on some alternatives to the 4-4-2 formation we’ve mastered. We still need to improve our game in the final third, our drive towards goal, our final ball and our accuracy in general. I don’t like to see side-ways passing in zones 1 and 2 [of the three zones a football pitch is divided into in theory], nor do I like seeing build-up play going through the middle if it’s congested.

Who are your key players?

Obviously Ramona Bachmann, Lara Dickenmann and Ana Maria Crnogorcevic are very important to us as between them they scored half our goals in qualifying. If one of them is absent we can’t compensate for it, as we don’t have the same kind of depth in our squad as Germany or USA. But for me, a player who slides in to clear the ball off the line in the 89th minute is also a key member of the side.

What do you make of your group stage opponents?

Defending champions Japan are excellent, both technically and tactically, and the artificial pitches we’ll be playing on at the World Cup will suit them. Ecuador have a young team who we should be able to beat, while Cameroon are awkward opponents who are physically strong and forceful in tackles. That will probably be the decisive game in terms of reaching the Round of 16, which is our minimum target.

Who do you believe are favourites to win the title?

USA, Germany, France, Japan, Sweden, Norway, Brazil and hosts Canada. We’ve closed the gap on those teams and on a

very good day we could probably beat them. We lost 3-0 to USA and 4-1 to Brazil in our warm-up games, but also defeated Sweden 3-1.

What are your aims for Switzerland beyond this World Cup?

We want to qualify for major tournaments on a regular basis and establish ourselves among the top ten in Europe and the top 20 in the world. ⚽

Martina Voss-Tecklenburg was talking to Peter Eggenberger

Name

Martina Voss-Tecklenburg

Date and place of birth

22 December 1967, Duisburg, Germany

Position

Midfield, attack

Clubs played for

**1982–1989 KBC Duisburg
1989–1994 TSV Siegen
1994–2003 FCR Duisburg**

Coaching roles

**2008–2011 FCR Duisburg
2011–2012 FF USV Jena
Since 2012 Switzerland national team**

Germany national team

125 caps, 27 goals

Major honours

**German champion 1985, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1994, 2000
German Cup winner 1983, 1989, 1993, 1998
European champion 1989**



Christian Grund / 13 Photo



First Love

Place: Pacasse, Mozambique

Date: 25 April 2009

Time: 3.55 p.m.

Photographer: Jessica Hilltout





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Signs of life

Alan Schweingruber

There are some books whose stories are not easily forgotten, particularly when the author blends an entertaining plot with an important message for life. As a master of these literary lessons, Brazilian writer Paulo Coelho pens books that sell by the million.

Sooner or later, anyone who enjoys Coelho's work will stumble upon his sixth novel *The Alchemist*, published in 1988. In this book the protagonist, a young man on a journey, learns to let himself be guided by the signs scattered through life – a philosophy that ultimately leads him to his true love.

Accepting difficult circumstances in everyday life is simpler when you know they led to something positive, whether that means hitting your head before meeting someone special in the doctor's waiting room or getting frustrated when your car breaks down only to strike up an exciting new friendship on the train later that day. Sometimes finding the love of your life can be pure happenstance.

Although hardcore football fans often find love and learn tough lessons when visiting a stadium, the same can even happen when watching at home, as was the case recently when a lonely Bavarian settled down in front of his television set for the extraordinary Champions League quarter-final first leg in Porto. As kick-off approached, the commentator cordially delivered the usual nuggets of information such as "the turf here has been well watered," but soon admitted that he could not believe

what he was seeing as Bayern fell behind. Meanwhile, excitement of another kind was unfolding in the kitchen as the soup the solitary fan made before the game simmered away to a black mess in the pan. Thick smoke spread unnoticed, first throughout the apartment and then into the hallway outside. As the German champions levelled the scores, the groans of a heavily pregnant woman on the first floor drifted through the building. The telephone rang, a baby cried out. A short time later a vehicle with blue flashing lights pulled up outside and Munich lost the game 3-1.

That is the end of the story and the end of our Bayern supporter's nightmare.

On the other hand, if you want to know whether it was an ambulance or a police car that arrived at the apartment block, then do as Paulo Coelho does: close your eyes and let the tale unfold further.

The sound of the doorbell prompted the lone fan to drowsily stagger through the thick smoke towards the door of his apartment. As he opened it, his face brightened. It was the love of his life – a kind and beautiful firefighter. ☺

The weekly column by our staff writers



GENERAL INFORMATION

Country:

Ecuador

FIFA Trigramme:

ECU

Continent:

South America

Capital:

Quito

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Surface area:

283,561 km²

Highest point:

Chimborazo 6,267 m

Neighbouring seas and oceans:

Pacific Ocean

MEN'S FOOTBALL

FIFA Ranking:

34th

World Cup:

3 Appearances
2002, 2006, 2014

Best performance:

Round of 16, 2006

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

FIFA Ranking:

48rd

World Cup:

no appearances

LATEST RESULTS

Men's:

Argentina - Ecuador 2-1
31 March 2015

Women's:

Colombia - Ecuador 2-1
15 April 2015

FIFA INVESTMENT

Since 2000:

\$ 5,545,008



Weatherproof The Liberty Stadium in Swansea, the wettest place in Great Britain.

A place like no other

When Swansea City earned promotion to the Premier League four years ago, everything seemed to point towards a swift return to the second tier. However, such predictions were wide of the mark and, as *Alan Schweingruber* reports, the Welsh club are now widely respected in England.

Wales is not famed for its good weather and the country's three million inhabitants are used to regular downpours. The wettest place in the small nation – indeed the wettest in Great Britain – is Swansea, which has just 160 rain-free days per year.

There was therefore nothing unusual about the skies opening over Wales' second largest city on 3 May 2003, a gloomy Saturday with low-lying clouds creating an apocalyptic atmosphere. Yet it was on that day that the local football club, Swansea City, put in a superb display against Hull City to stave off relegation into amateur football.

In a fiery encounter watched by 9,585 spectators, Hull went 2-1 up, only for Swansea to fight back and win 4-2 thanks to a disputed penalty and a James Thomas hat-trick. It was somehow fitting that Thomas saved the club from slipping into the fifth tier of the English game, having returned to his homeland disappointed after a failed spell across the border with Blackburn Rovers, West Bromwich Albion, Blackpool, Shef-

field United and Bristol Rovers. Many people believe the club would not exist today if the match against Hull had ended differently, or if Thomas, who now works as an ambulance driver, had prolonged his stay in England.

Viking heritage

The name Swansea has nothing to do with swans or oceans, but was given to the city by the Vikings after a raiding party made a stop on the Welsh coast and called the place “Sweinn’s ey”, or “Sven’s island”. The Vikings had long since gone by the time Swansea City Football Club was founded, at which point a swan was included in the crest.

Nowadays, ‘The Swans’ are well known in England as they have been in the Premier League since 2011 - their second stint in the country’s top tier. They have done extremely well, with many of the division’s biggest clubs, including Liverpool, Chelsea and Arsenal, having lost to the Welsh outfit. Initially a source of widespread derision, the small club have earned the respect they are now afforded, and the British media have been very taken with their sophisticated playing style. Garry Monk’s side currently sit comfortably in mid-table in eighth place. The club’s greatest triumph came two years ago in February 2013 with victory in the League Cup final earning them a first piece of silverware in England.

On the brink

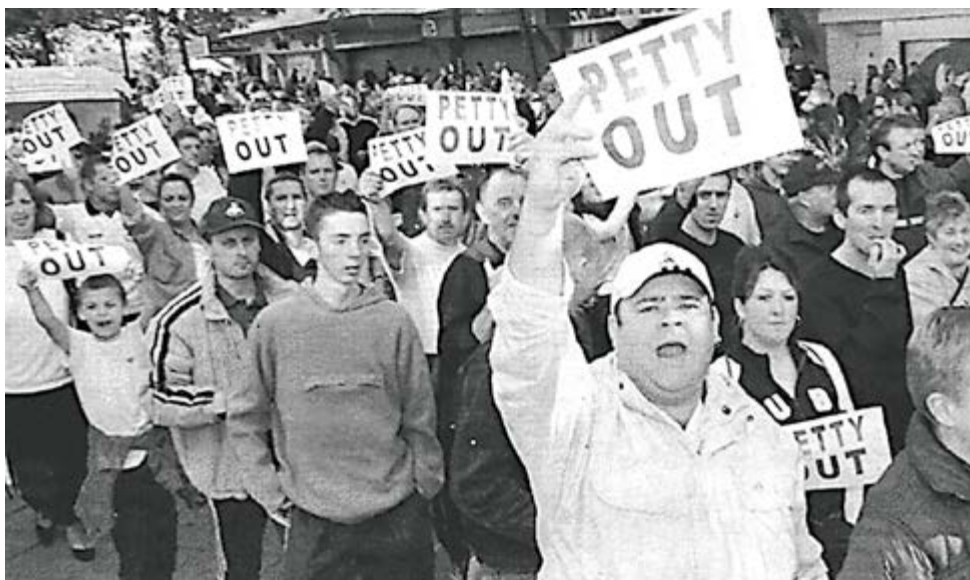
The club’s success story is a special one and last year a documentary titled ‘Jack to a King’ was released in cinemas. The 90-minute film is bookended by footage of the 5-0 League Cup final victory over Bradford City, although the main focus lies on the difficult period leading up to their moment of glory. In 2001, with Swansea on the verge of collapse due to heavy debts, Tony Petty bought the club for £1 and swiftly introduced drastic cost-cutting measures. He released seven players on one day and was soon on a collision course with the club’s followers. Once Petty realised half of Swansea’s supporters were against him he sold the club in a low-key deal for £20,000. Today, a group of local businessmen are in charge of operations and fans have a 20 per cent stake in the club.

‘Jack to a King’ feeds off supporters’ emotions and was primarily made with them in mind. To the neutral viewer, what stands out most is the intensity with which Swansea fans follow the club. There is no room for half-hearted support; it is all or nothing. Outsiders with pragmatic business concepts are not welcome, and in an era in which many European clubs are bought or financed by oligarchs and sheiks, the Swans have shown that success can be achieved by following a different path.

Once Petty realised half of Swansea’s supporters were against him, he sold the club.

Protests

New owner Tony Petty had a hard time with the club’s fans (right).



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For sale

With Swansea on the verge of collapse due to spiralling debts in 2001, the club inserted this advert (left) in newspapers.



Hat-trick hero
James Thomas' goals prevented Swansea dropping into amateur football in 2003 (left).



Wembley
In 2013 the Welsh outfit won the League Cup.



Gerhard Tremmel The German goalkeeper arranged his own transfer to Swansea City (right).

There is no room for half-hearted support at Swansea; it is all or nothing.

Back on their feet

Swansea's average attendance of 350,000 visitors a year is among the lowest in the Premier League. To put that into context, 1.2 million spectators pass through the turnstiles at Manchester United each year. Yet the small 20,000 capacity Liberty Stadium Swansea built ten years ago, in line with the resources available at the time, suits the unassuming Welsh side and they even share the arena with the local rugby team. There is a friendly atmosphere around the place and thoughts of expanding the stadium have only recently been considered. Swansea seem to have established themselves in the Premier League and have helped enhance the city's reputation across the UK. The university is full and applications for places have doubled over the last few years..

The Swans have also helped revive the once flagging career of German goalkeeper Gerhard Tremmel, an unremarkable Bundesliga custodian who moved to south Wales at

exactly the right time to make his dream of playing in the Premier League come true. His move to Swansea in 2011 was an unusual one. Tremmel was at Red Bull Salzburg when he discovered Swansea were holding a training camp in Austria, and he took it upon himself to go along. There, he spoke with the club's goalkeeping coach, who agreed to let him have a trial training session. When Swansea showed an interest in signing him, Tremmel promptly took care of the transfer himself. He was first-choice goalkeeper for a time and played in the cup triumph at Wembley. "I'd long be out of the picture in the Bundesliga," Tremmel once told German magazine 'Spiegel'. "German clubs are only interested in young players and the collective comes above everything else. Everyone is forced into a specific concept. In English football, clubs prefer to rely on players' individual abilities. I've got the necessary experience to shape a game and that counts for something here."

National sports

Rugby also enjoys a huge following in Wales and the country boasts one of the best teams in Europe. That stands in stark contrast with the state of domestic Welsh football, as even though the game is popular, the national championship is not. The League of Wales has existed since 1992 but the country's best teams – Swansea, Cardiff City and Wrexham – all play in England. Even amateur clubs such as Newport County and Colwyn Bay prefer to play in England and accept exclusion from the Welsh Cup as the price to pay. There are 12 sides in the Welsh top flight, but average attendance per game is just 300 spectators.

Nevertheless, the country is well worth a visit and offers more in terms of history and nature than many other nations. There are 641 castles dotted around Wales and it is the only country in the world where it is possible to walk along the entire length of its coastline. Furthermore, it is home to some magnificent beaches, which are ideal for winding down, and the rustic old pubs provide refuge when it inevitably starts raining again. ☔



**Standings England
Premier League 2014 / 2015**

Team	MP	W	D	L	Pts
1. Chelsea	32	23	7	2	76
2. Arsenal	32	20	6	6	66
3. Manchester United	33	19	8	6	65
4. Manchester City	33	19	7	7	64
5. Liverpool	32	17	6	9	57
6. Tottenham Hotspur	33	17	6	10	57
7. Southampton	33	17	5	11	56
8. Swansea City	33	13	8	12	47
9. Stoke City	33	13	7	13	46
10. West Ham United	33	11	10	12	43
11. Crystal Palace	33	11	9	13	42
12. Everton	33	10	11	12	41
13. West Bromwich Albion	33	9	9	15	36
14. Newcastle United	33	9	8	16	35
15. Aston Villa	33	8	8	17	32
16. Sunderland	32	5	14	13	29
17. Hull City	32	6	10	16	28
18. Leicester City	32	7	7	18	28
19. Queens Park Rangers	33	7	5	21	26
20. Burnley	33	5	11	17	26

20 April 2015 – 33 matchdays in total

- Champions League
- Champions League preliminary
- Europa League
- Europa League depending on domestic Cup
- Relegation

Oh, Vinnie!

Wales is widely reckoned to be rugby-obsessed, but the nation has consistently produced good footballers too. Names that immediately spring to mind include Ian Rush, Liverpool's prolific striker of the 1980s, and Ryan Giggs, whose Manchester United playing career stretched to an extraordinary 24 years. The nation's current star is Gareth Bale, who cost Real Madrid almost 100 million when he joined from Tottenham.

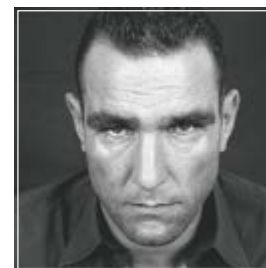
Then there was a certain Vinnie Jones, nothing like as good a player as the aforementioned trio, but famous nonetheless. Jones was an old school mid-field ball-winner with an energetic and at times rustic approach to tackling. He was once booked three seconds after kick-off, a feat still unmatched in English professional football. "If their top geezer gets sorted out early doors, you win," he declared after

he and Wimbledon triumphed in the 1988 FA Cup final. Jones had clattered Liverpool midfielder Steve McMahon within five minutes of the kick-off.

Heart massage video

If the Welshman was a journeyman player at best, he possessed real talent in another and unlikely area, namely acting – although very few people would have guessed it during his sporting career. After Jones hung up his boots, he was recruited by director Guy Ritchie for a supporting role in "Lock, Stock & Two Smoking Barrels" (1998). The release of "Snatch" two years later earned the former Wales international a clutch of awards, especially in the "Best Newcomer" category.

Jones remained in character as a callous hard man and enforcer, yet there was always a



delicious touch of irony to his acting. For example, in a short British Heart Association educational video released in 2011 he demonstrated the correct way to administer hands-only CPR. In the background, the accompanying goons dance along to the Bee Gees' "Stayin' Alive".

In 2013 Jones announced he was suffering from skin cancer. "Footballers never put on sunblock and they should all be wearing it," he declared.

sca



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Football is much more than just a game. Its universal appeal gives it a unique power and reach which must be managed carefully. FIFA believes it has a duty to society that goes beyond football.

Canada set for biggest ever TV production in women's football



FIFA TV Top-class coverage.

As the countdown to the 2015 Women's World Cup in Canada continues with just 43 days to go, FIFA has revealed plans for its biggest and most advanced broadcast production for a women's football tournament. FIFA's production will include top match directors, up to 22 state-of-the-art cameras and ultra-high definition visuals. A selection of the best European football directors will spearhead production teams at every game to ensure the very best coverage of all the action, emotion and drama during the competition.

As is usual for FIFA's flagship competitions, FIFA TV's broadcast production will be transmitted to territories all over the world. A standard minimum set-up of 20 cameras per match will provide fans with a viewing experience on a par with top European league coverage, with an enhanced camera plan of 22 cameras for the opening match, semi-finals and the final.

FIFA and Japanese broadcaster NHK will also work together to produce ten matches in ultra-high definition 8K visuals, including the final on 5 July. A separate team of producers will create dedicated content for mobile, tablets and laptops to meet increasing demand for match coverage on multimedia platforms.

FIFA Director of TV Niclas Ericson said: "FIFA expects hundreds of millions of fans around the world to tune in to the Women's World Cup in Canada and we are committed to ensuring that broadcasters and fans everywhere experience the tournament in the best way possible. This is the biggest broadcast production we have invested in so far for a women's football tournament. This supports FIFA's commitment to develop and promote women's football and it reflects the huge momentum and interest in women's football around the world today." 🌐

tfw



Asia on the march

Next week's Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Congress is another highlight in the sports administration calendar. Personally, I am extraordinarily pleased that the event is taking place in Bahrain because AFC President Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa of Bahrain is not only a wonderful host, but also an important figurehead for integration in this continent of such multi-faceted cultural diversity.

The AFC celebrated its 60th anniversary last year. The confederation looked back (and continues to look back) with pride on a glorious history. Twelve associations were present when the AFC was founded in 1954 at a meeting in Manila chaired by President Man Kam Loh of Hong Kong. The inaugural Asian Cup took place two years later in Hong Kong. The Asian confederation now has 46 members and is of central importance in the further development of our sport. The region which is home to two-thirds of humanity deserves increased attention if only for its immense reservoir of talent.

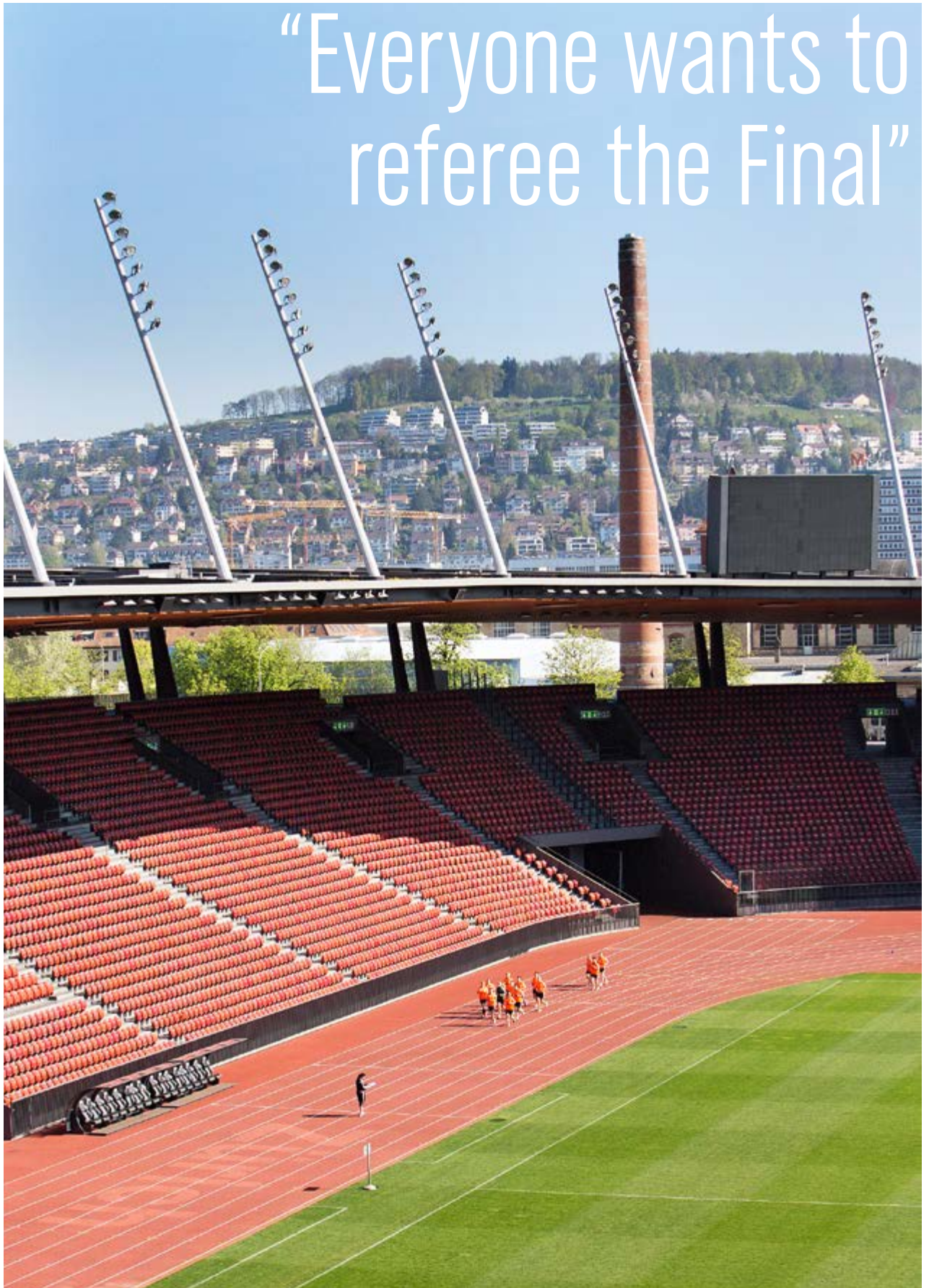
The women's game has also showcased the capabilities of Asian football. Japan won the Women's World Cup in 2011, claimed Olympic silver at the London Games in 2012, and won the U-17 World Cup last year. China has twice hosted the Women's World Cup finals and were silver medallists at the 1996 Olympics. North Korea triumphed at the U-20 level in 2006 and repeated the feat two years later at the U-17 level, where they were succeeded as world champions in 2010 by Korea Republic. And finally, the Chinese U-15 girls took the gold medal at the 2014 Youth Olympic Games. In the men's game, Asia can point to one major triumph, Saudi Arabia's U-16 World Championship success in 1989.

Last but not least, the AFC symbolises the importance of football as a school of life and an integrative force in promoting social equality. The fact that next year's U-17 Women's World Cup takes place in Jordan will help iron out common misunderstandings and prejudices.

Japan and Korea Republic set new benchmarks in 2002 with their organisation of the World Cup finals, and the South Korean team in particular captured the entire footballing world's imagination by qualifying for the semi-finals. At the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, the teams from Korea Republic, Japan, Australia and Iran contributed a great deal to the attractive tournament and the competitive, evenly-matched field. I am convinced that this was only the beginning.

Best wishes, Sepp Blatter

“Everyone wants to referee the Final”



Getting down to business

The referees tackle the fitness test in Zurich.

Six weeks before the Women's World Cup begins in Canada, the nominated referees met for a week of FIFA seminars in Zurich. The 73 women tasked with officiating the tournament have made it this far thanks to a combination of hard work and passion for their role.



It is 8 a.m. at Zurich's Letzigrundstadion. Although the sun is shining, it is still extremely chilly – a typical Swiss spring day. One by one the 22 referees, seven support referees and 44 assistant referees selected by FIFA for the 2015 tournament arrive at the venue in preparation for the morning's activity – the fitness test. Before long, words of encouragement such as "Yes! Yes! Yes! Go for it! You can do it," are ringing out across the pitch and a genuine sense of community builds as all the attendees cheer each other on. "We're like one big family," says Bibiana Steinhaus, who oversaw the 2011 Women's World Cup Final in Germany and is once again among the match officials selected for this tournament.



always something scheduled for us at that time so I set my alarm to talk to them at two in the morning."

"I'm so proud to be here"

By now it is midday, and the referees return to their hotel for lunch after successfully completing their fitness tests. The dining room echoes to the sound of laughter and mutual congratulations. "I'm so incredibly proud to be here," says Therese Raissa Neguel Damgoua. The 34-year-old Cameroonian has set herself an ambitious target for the World Cup: officiating the Final. "But everyone wants to do that," she concedes. When asked how she plans to reach her goal, she explains: "With reason, intelligence, purpose and belief in myself."

Germany's Bibiana Steinhaus has the same target in mind. "It came as such a surprise in the last World Cup," she says. "Everyone thought the German team would reach the Final, which meant I wouldn't have been able to referee the game," she laughs. Things turned out very differently: Germany exited the tournament at the quarter-final stage after a 1-0 extra-time defeat by Japan, and Steinhaus's strong performances were duly rewarded as she was handed the responsibility of officiating the tournament decider.

Germany's Bibiana Steinhaus has the same target in mind. "It came as such a surprise in the last World Cup," she says. "Everyone thought the German team would reach the Final, which meant I wouldn't have been able to referee the game," she laughs. Things turned out very differently: Germany exited the tournament at the quarter-final stage after a 1-0 extra-time defeat by Japan, and Steinhaus's strong performances were duly rewarded as she was handed the responsibility of officiating the tournament decider.

Putting goal-line technology to the test

In the afternoon the entire party arrive at the Home of FIFA's football pitches. Just like the men's World Cup last year, Canada 2015 marks the debut of goal-line technology (GLT) at the competition, so the next session is a practical trial with the new system. After an hour's training, FIFA's Head of Refereeing Massimo Busacca sums up the experience: "This initial contact with GLT was important for our refer-

ees. It's part of their preparations – and I'm convinced that goal-line technology will be a great help to our match officials during the Women's World Cup in Canada."

Although the tournament itself is now just around the corner, with just six weeks to go until the Opening Match at Edmonton's Commonwealth Stadium on 6 June, the referee for this game has yet to be confirmed. The officials will attend a further seminar in Vancouver ten days before the competition begins, and it is here that the referees and support referees for each match will be selected and announced.

Purpose and passion

The week in Zurich has shown that each and every referee will be ready come June. "It's about time we all show what we can do," says Therese Raissa Neguel Damgoua, to which her Canadian counterpart adds: "The better the football, the better the officials. We're growing together, and now it's time to demonstrate how hard we've been working." Their boss, Massimo Busacca, is extremely pleased with the performance levels on show: "I'm very happy with the work they've put in," he says. "Our referees have shown a great deal of purpose and passion. They're all keen to prove that their selection for the World Cup is justified." ❄

Sarah Steiner

Women from 49 countries

The referees gathering in Zurich between 18-24 April to ensure they are fully prepared for this summer's challenge hail from countries as diverse as the Cook Islands and Korea DPR, Ethiopia and France. Whether testing and improving their physique, acquainting themselves with the latest technology or discussing the rules, the excitement about their forthcoming Canadian challenge is palpable.

This is also true of the officials from the host nation – perhaps even more so. "It's an honour to be able to take charge of World Cup matches," says Canadian referee Carol Anne Chenard. "The fact that it's happening in our own country makes it even more special." The 38-year-old and her team are enjoying their time in Zurich, even if it means leaving their families for a week. Michelle Pye, the second Canadian referee selected, has three small children at home. "The time difference doesn't make things easy," she explains. "Although I can call them between 4 and 5 p.m., there's



T H E N

London, England



1922

Queen's Park Rangers playing leapfrog.

N O W

Miami Gardens, Florida



2011

A frog leaping during the USA - Honduras clash.



THERE WILL BE HATERS

Salamat

A place for eternity

Ronald Duker



Fairytales can be implausible, sad and sometimes even comforting. The real-life story of Austro-Hungarian writer Odon von Horvath, however, had very little of the latter. In 1938 Horvath was living in exile in Paris after fleeing Nazi Germany, and was killed by a falling branch after a tree he happened to be standing under was struck by lightning. He was not out in a forest, but was outside a theatre on the Avenue des Champs-Élysées. Even Horvath himself, who is best known for his work as a playwright, could surely not have come up with anything as absurdly dramatic. We will never know whether or not the writer went to heaven.

The seven-year-old boy in Horvath's novel 'Legends of the football pitch' also passes away. A terrible cough takes hold of him and, gripped by a fever, he sees his worried parents at his bedside as if through a haze. At around midnight there is a knock at the window and an angel appears in front of him.

It has one yellow wing and one blue one, the same colours worn by the boy's favourite football team. Moreover, on the angel's "narrow feet" are "purple football boots; a golden referee's whistle hung around his swan-like neck from a silver chain adorned with stars, and a matt white football lay in his transparent hands." The angel heads the ball straight up into the sky and it flies out beyond the Milky Way.

Before the boy can wonder where the ball went, the angel takes his hand and floats away with him into a footballing heaven. There is a pitch somewhere up on a cloud and the boy has the perfect view of the action. His "good, small child's heart" is filled with "immeasurable bliss" as the match "started, never to be ended, and the 22 players played as he had never seen the game played before. Occasionally one or two of them simply flew off after the ball (they were all angels after all), at which point the referee (an arch-angel) immediately blew his whistle for unfair conduct."

The boy was never seen again on earth, but mortals across the globe are thankful that the beautiful game is still played down here. ☺

"If he was from Iceland or the North Pole, I'd say, 'Ok, he's still wearing his ski boots'. But no, he simply has to stop the ball."

Franz Beckenbauer on Dante's defending in the run-up to Ricardo Quaresma's second goal for Porto

"When I was in my office after the game, Liam Gallagher from Oasis came in. He's a big fan of City and he planted a big kiss on my mouth – I didn't have time to react!"

Roberto Mancini on an incident after he led Manchester City to the Premier League title in 2012

"You can't expect Inzaghi to make fine wine out of turnips."

Giovanni Trapattoni on the AC Milan coach and his troops

"It was a boring game? If you want to have fun, you should go to the circus. I'm only interested in reaching the semi-finals."

Massimiliano Allegri on Juventus's 1-0 win over Monaco

"The best player in the world is Javier Pastore. He has something special, something that always surprises you. No special goals, no, but fantastic passes. He is the most creative player in the world. I love this kind of player."

Eric Cantona

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Panorama sunroof



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Seat ventilation system

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“Facebook and Youtube helped my career”

Murun Altankhuyag is the first player from Mongolia to sign a professional contract abroad, an achievement only made possible thanks to social media.

When I started playing football in my country at the age of 12, I always dreamt of becoming a professional player. But if that is the dream of many young boys all over the world, it is all the more difficult for a man from Mongolia. The infrastructure for football has long been bad, and there has not been adequate preparation of the players, even those in the national team.

That is why I am so proud to have succeeded in becoming the first professional footballer to play abroad in the history of Mongolia. The highlight in my career so far was this March when I signed a one-year contract with the Serbian club of Macva Sabac which competes in the second highest league of the country. Macva Sabac hired me without a single trial. I met with the club's president, Ivica Kralj, who was Yugoslavia goalkeeper at the World Cup in France 1998, one day before the contract was signed. He wanted me because he had heard good things about me from Dragan Anicic, the coach of BSK Borca where I had tried out in the weeks before. My Japanese agent had established contact with several teams in Serbia and Croatia by sending Youtube clips of me to an agent in Serbia. If it hadn't been for my Japanese agent, I would never have been able to become a professional. He got in touch with me in 2012 over Facebook after he had seen me play with the national team in Mongolia. At that time, I was studying sports management and playing football at a college in Missouri.

Apart from a Nigerian colleague, I am the only foreign player at Macva. I guess my new team-mates don't even know where Mongolia is. The adaptation to Serbia is a lot easier than it was in Thailand where I got my first contract

with a professional team in 2013 with Krabi FC, thanks to my agent's connections. The food and the weather in Serbia are similar to those in Mongolia whereas in Thailand they mainly serve spicy seafood which Mongolians don't eat. The weather was too hot for me there so I dehydrated and got cramps very often in the beginning.

Right after signing with Macva I flew back to Asia to participate in the qualifier for the 2018 World Cup in Russia against Timor-Leste. Unfortunately we lost 1-5 on aggregate. My teammates, national coach and the Mongolian fans expected wonders, at least three goals from me because of my new contract but I wasn't able to meet those high expectations. Timor-Leste fielded several players with a Brazilian background and were just too strong. People in Mongolia are not interested in the national league but are avid supporters of the national team. The refurbished stadium in Ulan Bator was sold out against Timor-Leste.

My aim is to secure a contract in one of the top leagues in Europe. Hopefully my skills

with the ball and my speed will help me. I know that I have to improve my tactical play and my understanding of the game in order to achieve that goal. ☺

Murun Altankhuyag was speaking to Peter Eggenberger

Name

Murun Altankhuyag

Date and Place of Birth

21 September 1989, Ulan Bator

Position

Forward/Winger

Clubs

2013-2014 Krabi FC (Thailand)

2014 Satun United (Thailand)

2015 Macva Sabac (Serbia)

Mongolia national team

12 caps, 2 goals

In Turning Point, personalities reflect on a decisive moment in their lives.



Leader
 Moves into top ten
 Moves out of top ten
 Matches played in total
 Most matches played
 Biggest move by points
 Biggest move by ranks
 Biggest drop by points
 Biggest drop by ranks

Germany (unchanged)
Switzerland (9th, up 3 ranks), **Spain** (10th, up 1 rank)
France (11th, down 3 ranks), **Italy** (13th, down 3 ranks)
135
British Virgin Islands, Dominica (3 matches each)
Wales (up 153 points)
Bhutan (up 46 ranks)
Israel (down 231 points)
New Caledonia (down 23 ranks)

Last updated:
 9 April 2015

Rank	Team	+/-	Points	Rank	Team	+/-	Points	Rank	Team	+/-	Points	Rank	Team	+/-	Points
1	Germany	0	1687	55	Gabon	-1	583	109	Cuba	1	298	163	Bhutan	46	128
2	Argentina	0	1490	56	Mali	-5	578	110	Sudan	0	288	164	Malaysia	-11	123
3	Belgium	1	1457	57	Albania	4	575	111	Libya	1	281	165	Grenada	-7	120
4	Colombia	-1	1412	57	Korea Republic	-1	575	111	St Kitts and Nevis	10	281	166	Puerto Rico	-6	119
5	Brazil	1	1354	59	Zambia	1	556	113	Namibia	0	279	167	Hong Kong	-10	116
6	Netherlands	-1	1301	60	South Africa	-5	553	114	Canada	2	277	167	Bangladesh	-5	116
7	Portugal	0	1221	61	Equatorial Guinea	-11	549	115	Azerbaijan	24	264	169	Suriname	-8	115
8	Uruguay	1	1176	62	Republic of Ireland	4	546	116	St Vincent and the Grenadines	3	262	170	Yemen	5	111
9	Switzerland	3	1135	63	Australia	2	531	117	Kenya	1	258	171	Montserrat	1	107
10	Spain	1	1132	64	Peru	-5	526	118	Dominican Republic	-11	257	172	Pakistan	-2	106
11	France	-3	1127	65	Trinidad and Tobago	-2	519	119	Niger	-5	252	173	US Virgin Islands	24	104
12	Romania	2	1086	66	Burkina Faso	2	517	120	Mauritania	-5	246	174	New Caledonia	-23	101
13	Italy	-3	1085	67	Bulgaria	4	505	121	Moldova	1	245	175	Guam	-8	97
14	England	3	1030	68	United Arab Emirates	1	501	122	Lesotho	-2	242	175	Swaziland	-12	97
15	Costa Rica	-2	1014	69	Venezuela	3	495	123	Burundi	3	237	177	Dominica	4	96
16	Chile	-1	991	70	Norway	0	491	123	Zimbabwe	1	237	178	Laos	-8	88
17	Croatia	2	977	70	Montenegro	-3	491	125	Vietnam	5	229	179	Cambodia	2	86
18	Mexico	3	937	72	Uganda	2	485	126	Syria	26	225	179	Chinese Taipei	9	86
19	Czech Republic	-3	923	73	Uzbekistan	-1	476	127	Kuwait	-2	224	181	Nepal	-1	71
20	Slovakia	2	920	74	Rwanda	-10	474	128	Liechtenstein	-5	219	181	Mauritius	9	71
21	Algeria	-3	917	75	Jamaica	1	466	129	Bermuda	40	217	183	Brunei Darussalam	15	69
22	Wales	15	916	76	Honduras	5	451	130	Barbados	1	215	184	Turks and Caicos Islands	-8	66
23	Côte d'Ivoire	-3	907	77	Armenia	2	449	131	Guinea-Bissau	3	212	184	Macau	3	66
24	Greece	3	900	78	Finland	0	446	131	Liberia	-14	212	186	Tahiti	-22	65
25	Austria	-2	891	79	Haiti	-2	442	133	Kazakhstan	5	210	186	Comoros	-9	65
26	Ghana	-2	833	80	Togo	-5	435	134	Aruba	-6	204	186	Sri Lanka	-12	65
27	USA	5	815	81	Paraguay	-1	418	135	Afghanistan	2	203	189	Seychelles	-11	60
28	Denmark	0	808	82	China PR	1	408	136	St Lucia	-4	202	190	São Tomé e Príncipe	-11	58
29	Scotland	10	796	83	Belarus	15	397	137	Luxembourg	-1	200	191	Cayman Islands	14	48
30	Tunisia	-5	793	84	El Salvador	5	388	138	Georgia	-12	197	192	Solomon Islands	-8	46
31	Bosnia and Herzegovina	-1	783	85	Latvia	10	387	139	Philippines	-11	193	193	South Sudan	-5	43
32	Russia	1	781	86	Mozambique	0	385	140	Palestine	0	192	194	San Marino	-13	40
33	Ukraine	-2	772	86	Iraq	11	385	141	Maldives	-8	191	195	Vanuatu	-4	34
34	Ecuador	-5	759	88	Sierra Leone	-1	382	142	Thailand	0	183	196	Fiji	-4	30
35	Poland	-1	753	89	Angola	-5	381	143	Tajikistan	-2	175	196	Samoa	-4	30
36	Senegal	0	752	90	Guatemala	-8	372	144	Central African Republic	-1	163	198	Bahamas	-4	26
37	Cape Verde Islands	1	737	91	Morocco	-2	371	144	Lebanon	2	163	198	British Virgin Islands	3	26
38	Iceland	-3	728	92	Bolivia	0	360	144	New Zealand	-10	163	200	Mongolia	-5	19
39	Sweden	6	704	93	Estonia	-6	358	147	India	26	161	201	Tonga	-5	17
40	Iran	2	689	94	Benin	-2	357	148	Curaçao	11	159	202	Papua New Guinea	-3	13
41	Guinea	3	678	95	Saudi Arabia	4	349	149	Malta	-4	158	203	American Samoa	-3	12
42	Northern Ireland	1	672	96	Cyprus	-11	342	150	Madagascar	-3	156	204	Andorra	-3	8
43	Hungary	3	665	97	Oman	-1	341	151	Chad	-3	155	204	Eritrea	-3	8
44	Serbia	-4	664	97	Malawi	-6	341	152	Timor-Leste	33	151	206	Somalia	-2	6
45	Nigeria	-4	652	99	Qatar	10	337	153	Kyrgyzstan	-3	146	207	Djibouti	-1	4
46	Israel	-20	649	100	Lithuania	-6	333	154	Nicaragua	31	142	207	Cook Islands	-1	4
47	Slovenia	1	648	101	Ethiopia	1	321	155	Guyana	11	139	209	Anguilla	-1	2
48	Cameroon	1	627	102	Faroe Islands	3	318	156	Gambia	12	138				
49	Congo	3	624	103	Jordan	-2	316	157	Korea DPR	-8	137				
50	Japan	3	614	104	Botswana	2	314	158	Myanmar	-5	133				
51	Egypt	7	612	105	FYR Macedonia	3	312	159	Turkmenistan	-15	131				
52	Turkey	4	603	106	Antigua and Barbuda	-4	311	159	Indonesia	-3	131				
53	Panama	8	587	107	Tanzania	-7	302	159	Belize	5	131				
54	Congo DR	-7	584	108	Bahrain	-4	299	162	Singapore	-9	130				



<http://www.fifa.com/worldranking/index.html>

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S U D O K U

The objective of Sudoku is to fill a 9x9 grid with digits so that each of the numbers from 1 to 9 appears exactly once in each column, row and 3x3 sub-grid.

1

EASY

					9	8	2	
		3	1			6		7
9				8				
7	9				4	2		
4			2	7	1			9
		2	5				3	4
				1				2
6		9			8	1		
	1	4	7					

2

MEDIUM

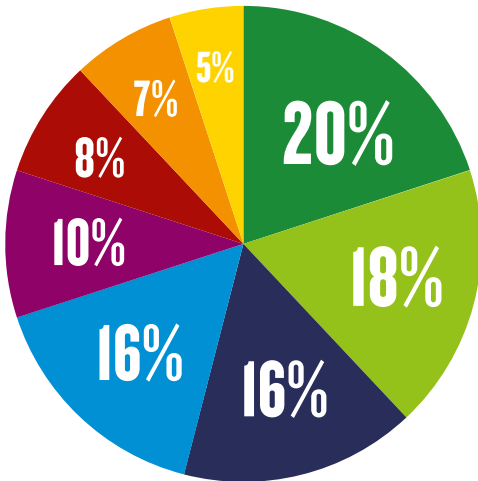
							3	
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6	3					8		4
9	2	3		7				6
1				6				2
7				2		4	9	8
2		5					4	7
4	9		6	1				
	8							

3

HARD

4	8		7	3				2
9	7		1			3		
		5		9				6
		3			9			
5				2				8
			3			2		
1				6		5		
		8			1		9	7
6				7	3		8	1

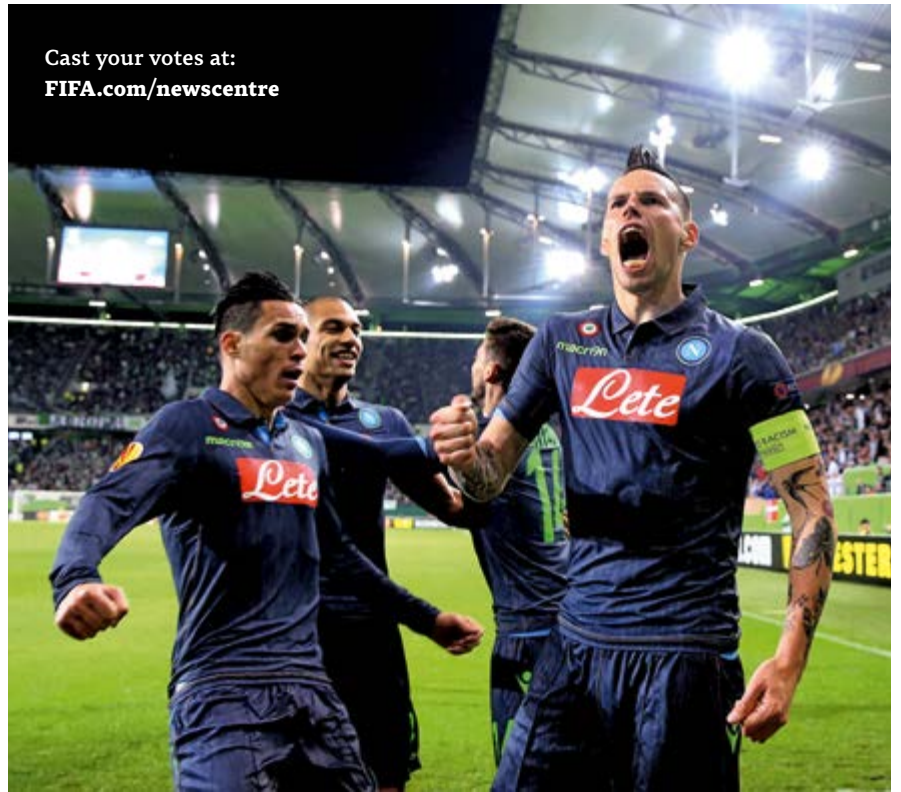
Which seeded team in Asia was drawn into the toughest group for Russia 2018 qualifying?



- Uzbekistan
- United Arab Emirates
- Australia
- Japan
- Iran
- Iraq
- China PR
- Korea Republic

Source: Fifa.com

Who are your favourites to win the 2014/15 Europa League?



WEEK IN NUMBERS



matches as coach now adorn Zdenek Zeman's record in Italy. However, the same game which saw him pass the milestone also heralded the end of a brief tenure at Cagliari. The Czechoslovakia-born supremo stepped down after watching his team slump 3-0 at home to Napoli.



Greek championship titles, including an impressive 17 in the last 19 seasons, is an achievement putting smiles on the faces of Olympiakos fans. The Piraeus club have already sealed the title for this term, increasing their lead over arch-rivals and 20-time champions Panathinaikos.



goals for Barcelona now grace Lionel Messi's footballing CV. The Argentina star, who has scored 46 goals in as many games this season and has also provided 24 assists, is only the seventh player to reach a quadruple century for a European club.