

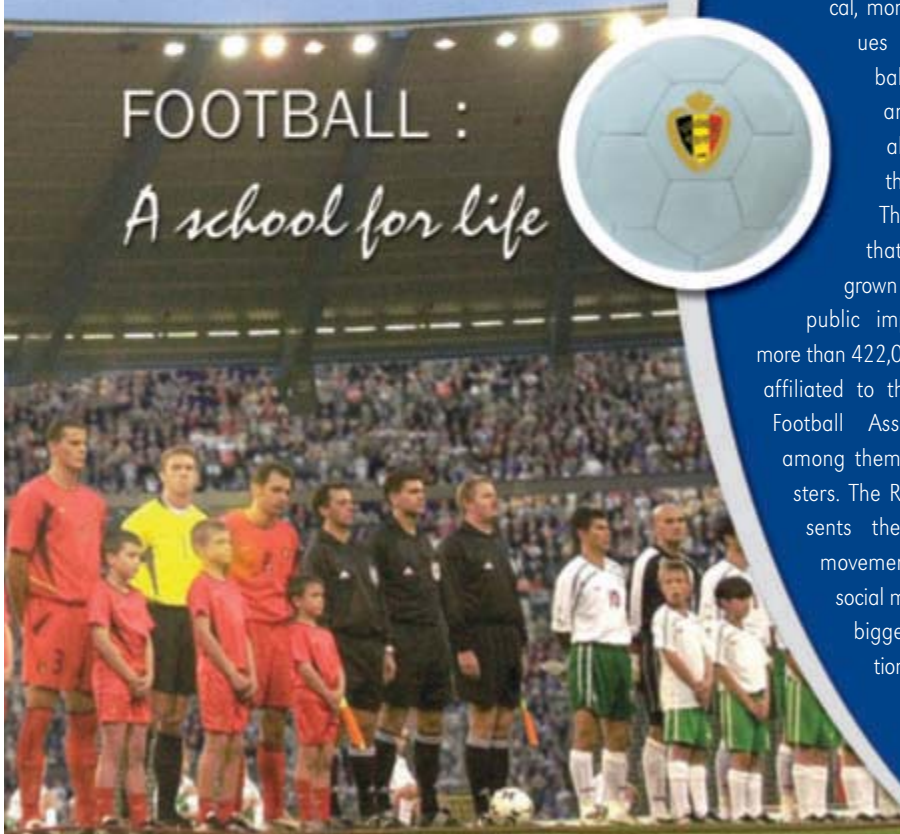


# FOOTBALL :

*A school for life*



Football, along with other sports and cultural activities, encompasses fundamental values in our young people, and helps bring children to their full development. They learn to enjoy themselves in a safe and friendly environment whilst at the same time absorbing the basic rules of life: fighting spirit, discipline, respect for others, loyalty, solidarity, humility... These physical, moral, and social values help build a balanced character and serve as valuable assets all through their lives. There is no doubt that football has grown into an activity of public importance. Today, more than 422,000 individuals are affiliated to the Royal Belgian Football Association (RBFA), among them 250,000 youngsters. The RBFA surely represents the biggest youth movement, the biggest social movement, and the biggest sports federation in the country!



## RBFA: football ... Fun

The RBFA represents every club in the Kingdom. Founded in 1895, it has the status of a non-profit-organisation. It has no fewer than 2000 active clubs on its register and organises over 300,000 games a year.

Football is by far the most popular sport in Belgium. That Belgians love the game is demonstrated by the way they pack the terraces in the many stadiums across the country, week in, week out. The highest TV audiences are recorded during broadcasts of games involving the national team, known to everyone in Belgium as the 'Red Devils'. There is a well-established football tradition in Belgium and it is natural that the country should have an important role in the modern game. After all, the RBFA was a co-founder of both FIFA (1904) and UEFA (1954).

Belgian football and the Red Devils have become genuine ambassadors for our country. They symbolise our nation's know-how and achievements. When it comes to major international competitions, it is not just the hundreds of thousands of RBFA members who support the Devils but millions of men women and children across the entire population.

## A well structured Association

The RBFA is registered as a non-profit organisation, managed by an Executive Committee led by a Federal President.

The Association exercises powers under three headings: Executive, Policy and Discipline & Regulatory Affairs which are administered by various committees and commissions.

Responsibility for day-to-day management rests with a Management Committee headed by the Federal President and including the General Secretary charge of Central Management- the Chief Treasurer acting for the Finance department, and finally the National Technical Director responsible for Technical / Sports matters.

## The Federal Administration

The Federal Administration is headed by the General Secretary. The Association employs 150 people distributed between the federal head office and 9 provincial offices. In providing whatever service, in whatever department, the Association can count on the contribution of a specialized staff focused on the common aim of carrying out work which is at once wide-ranging, absorbing and highly specific, and always with a view to serving the interests of our clubs and affiliates.



## Communication: *The RBFA, clubs, affiliated members and supporters...all united!*

Our first and foremost concerns are, and will remain, the clubs and our affiliated members (managers, players, referees, coaches...). Together they provide our central mandate as a sports organisation: to promote the game and those who play it.

The Association is obviously anxious to continually improve communication with its clubs. At the present time we have a number of communication tools at our disposal: an official journal *La Vie Sportive* - 'The Sporting Life'; a federal chronicle and more modern means of communication such as the RBFA website [www.footbel.com](http://www.footbel.com). This site contains a wealth of information including fixtures, match-results and team-rankings in the various competitions as well as event programmes, news from the clubs and updates on upcoming competitions.

Day-to-day communication is facilitated by an extranet system, by using a password, through which clubs and affiliated members can access information on the Association's database. In the near future, interactive communication between clubs and the Association will be accomplished.

Of no less importance is the need to keep the general public well informed; towards this end the Association utilizes both its website and also mounts numerous media campaigns on themes such as fair-play, refereeing and indeed Belgian football itself...

The communication department is also responsible for keeping such interested parties as coaches, referees and sponsors informed and up-to-date.

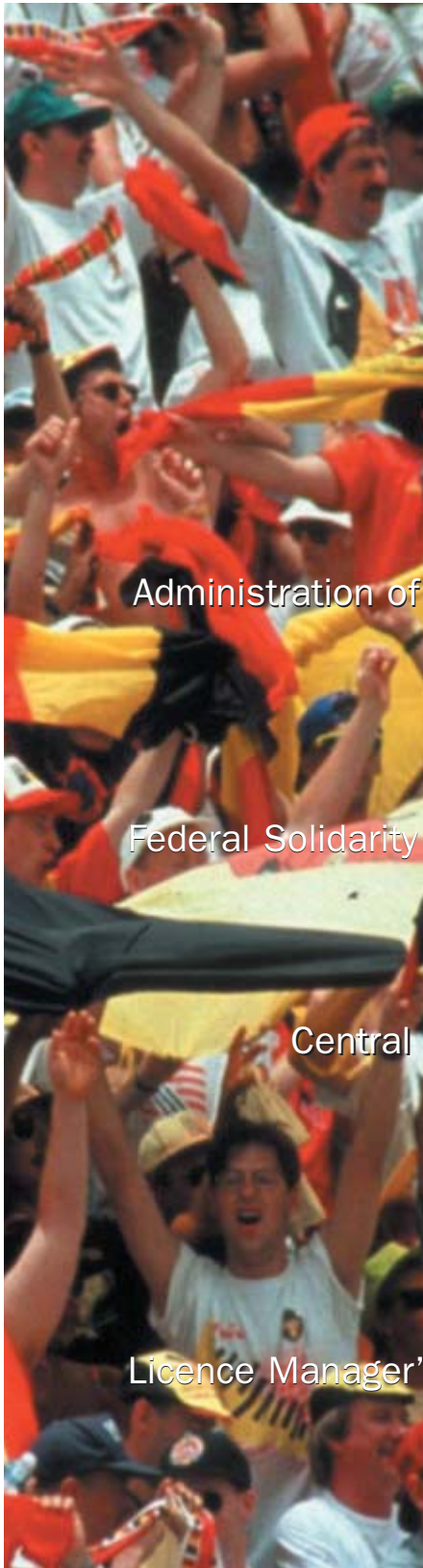
Communication with coaches is channelled specifically through the Federal Coaching School and the RBFA's regular information magazine, *Dug-Out*. A website dedicated to refereeing can be accessed via the Association's main site. Finally, a quarterly publication, *Team@Work* provides concise updates and other briefings both on RBFA activities and those of our sponsors.

## Discipline & Regulation: *Fairness all round!*

Responsibility in the areas of discipline and the supervision of the Association's rules and regulations, rests with a Federal Disciplinary Authority comprised of a President and 8 members.

With regard to the Association's core sporting activities, the Authority is charged (among other duties) with investigating allegations of match rigging, doping, and the deliberate disruption of league and other fixtures.





Alongside these duties it also has an investigative role in cases where club property is transferred in circumstances of financial difficulty and is also in charge of licensing professional clubs.

In regards to discipline, the Authority acts directly to seek the resolution of minor issues involving professional clubs and players. As far as all other disciplinary matters are concerned, it has powers to recommend sanctions to the competent authorities within the Association.

The Federal Disciplinary Authority has the right to lodge appeals against decisions and to call for a general review of specific cases, where such action is considered appropriate. It may act on its own initiative, or under the instructions of the Executive or the Secretary General.

All legal matters concerning the Association are handled by its Legal Department, which is also responsible for international affairs.

## Administration of Clubs & Affiliated Members

This service administers all details regarding membership of the Association and also supervises:

- player transfers both within Belgium and internationally
- releases from contract, loaning of players etc
- signing of contracts
- drafting of licences for professional players from outside the EU

## Federal Solidarity Fund (FSF)

Created in 1967 the FSF is unique in Belgian sport. It manages a common fund paid into by clubs and affiliated members whose purpose is to help meet the costs faced by those injured in sports accidents. Some 33,000 cases are dealt with each season.

## Central Treasury

Headed by the General Treasurer, this department is responsible for managing the Association's finances and providing its accountancy needs, including:

- collecting and keeping account of all the Association's revenues
- paying and keeping account of funds owed by the Association
- issuing bills and keeping account of payments
- handling all other accountancy matters.

The department is also in charge of all aspects of ticketing for games involving the Red Devils.

## Licence Manager's Department

Since the 2001-02 season, all clubs in divisions 1 and 2 of the national league must hold a licence which entitles them to take part in official competitions. Hence the creation of this department, consisting of

the manager - whose duties involve accountancy, auditing and regulatory issues – and 2 assistants. The department supervises licensed clubs to ensure they comply with the conditions attached to the granting of the licence and fulfil whatever obligations they may have regarding recovery - or debt - repayment packages entered into with creditors in compliance with licence requirements.

## Sponsors and Marketing

Over many years, our sponsors have organised major publicity campaigns around the national team. Today the RBFA has 14 *Main Sponsors* committed to supporting Belgian football. The Association also enjoys the support of numerous other partners, whether as service providers or financial backers.

## The “Albert Roosens”

Technical Centre: *There is no place for luck*

The centre was created in 1995, on the occasion of the Association’s centenary.

It has 4 main objectives:

- Organising and supervising training, coaching courses and matches for all our national selections
- Promoting the game
- Scouting new talent at regional and national level
- Running a new Federal Coach Training School offering training and retraining courses, symposia etc.

A medical team is responsible for looking after referees and assistant referees as well as players in the national squad. It is based in the Catholic University of Leuven.

## The Federal Coach Training School: *Train today ... to be better tomorrow*

The RBFA trains experts capable of promoting and developing players, both as individuals and as team members, from across the entire spectrum of Belgian football.

Over 1,000 keen students qualify for a diploma every year. Our school’s goal is to provide clubs with technical experts equipped with the latest coaching and training methods.

Always anxious to improve the quality of our play, and our players, and also to make ourselves as competitive as possible compared to other nations, our Association has taken all the steps necessary to ensure we meet UEFA requirements, which set the standard for training courses organised in all fifty-two member countries. In accordance to this, we organise three specific, complementary courses, which build upon each other and lead to the following qualifications: UEFA-A: Youth Coach, UEFA-B: Coach and UEFA-PRO: Professional Coach.



Since September 1999, the Federal Coach Training School has had the honour of being able to award diplomas recognised by UEFA, the highest authority in European football, which means that those holding these diplomas may offer their services in fifty-two countries.

## Refereeing

### *Fair-Play First!*



Referees play a crucial role in football. They embody the sporting spirit and carry out a function that deserves to be admired. Without them, football would cease to exist!

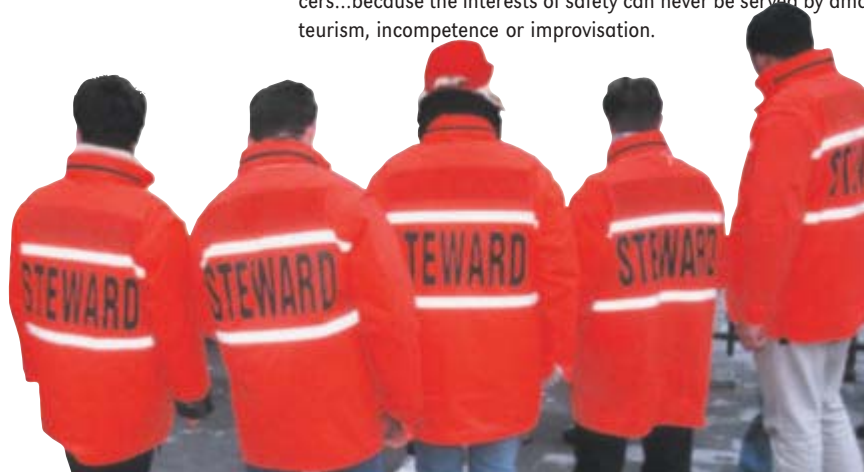
The Central Referees Commission and the different Provincial Referees Committees have under their authority some 7000 referees under their authority, who are in charge of over 300,000 fixtures per season! The development of refereeing ranks among the Association's priorities, and it has taken new measures to improve both the training and professional standing of referees in our country.

These initiatives have shown positive results; a large number of new referees have been appointed and the skilled performance of our international referees is becoming more and more recognized.

## Safety

### *Football is a family outing for those who love the game!*

Promoting football is not the RBFA's only statutory purpose. As one aspect of its broader - and highly significant - social role, it shares the task of ensuring public safety, in collaboration with other interested parties. The Association coordinates the clubs in meeting their safety obligations under the law. It acts as a consultant, a key contact, and as a intermediary for information for both the clubs and the authorities. Finally, it provides training for safety personnel - stewards, chief stewards, club safety officers...because the interests of safety can never be served by amateurism, incompetence or improvisation.



## Economic & Cultural Events

The Association organises numerous economic and cultural events, throughout the year.

## National Competitions

*For all ages and levels*

At present there are 4 divisions at national level:

- First Division, the “Jupiler League” with 18 clubs
- Second Division, also comprising 18 clubs
- Third Division, consisting of 2 sub-divisions with each 16 clubs
- The “Promotion” division comprising 4 groups with each 16 clubs

At provincial level, competitions are similarly split into 4 divisions. They are supervised by the provincial authorities.

Women’s and under-age teams also exist at both national and provincial level.

The under-age categories are:

- “Little Devils” (>6)
- Junior 1 (8-10)
- Junior 2 (10-12)
- Junior 3 (12-14)
- Junior 4 (14-16)
- UEFA Juniors (16-18)

The annual Belgian Cup competition is open to every club in the Kingdom.

*Restructuring Under Way...*

In order to take account of changing circumstances, a restructuring of the league is currently envisaged. The continuing development of professional football is assured.

## Women’s Football

*There is something for everyone...*

In the USA, the most popular sport among women is not tennis or swimming or athletics, but football! In The Netherlands too, football ranks as women’s favourite team sport and it seems that Belgium is showing the same trend. The Association became aware of a growing interest in football, on the part of women, back in the late 1960’s. Since then, interest has continued to grow and women’s teams from Belgium have competed regularly in international tournaments as well as competitions at both European and World level. Over the past ten years, there has been a continual increase in the number of affiliations.



## Indoor Football / Futsal

*A discipline in its own right*



Today, some 830 clubs, competing within their own league as well as in tournaments and international competitions, are registered with the Association.

The 'Action 21' club from Charleroi put in some first-rate performances in coming in runner-up in the UEFA Futsal Cup in 2002 and 2003.

The national futsal team competes regularly in European and World championships.

## UEFA

*Belgium's European trophies*



In the forty years' existence of the various European competitions, Belgian teams have reached a final, on eleven occasions. Three titles have been won by R.S.C Anderlecht (1976: RSCA- West Ham: 4-2, 1978: RSCA-Austria Viennes: 4-0, 1983: RSCA-Benfica: 1-0, 1-1) and one by KV Mechelen (1988: KVM-Ajax:1-0).

## EURO 2000

*A complete success...and good news for young players!*

Belgium had the honour of organising this tournament in collaboration with the Dutch FA, the first time that the organisation of such an event has been entrusted to two countries. It proved to be an exemplary experience for the whole sporting world. Not only did we witness outstanding quality, but for the first time in history the tournament made a profit.

Following Euro 2000, the Association decided that the profits it generated would be invested in improving the standard of youth coaching in Belgium. A new youth plan, known as '**Futurofoot**' was drawn up. This project aims to achieve significant advances, both in terms of facilities and in the quality of the coaching offered.

In effect, the success of Euro 2000 means that we are now in a position to pursue an ambitious plan creating a significant number of **Technical and Coaching Centres** at provincial, regional and national levels.

At the same time, a complete restructuring of our competitions is planned, to ensure that they correspond more closely with the needs of young players. Greater professionalism in preparing our national youth teams, alongside the development of Football Academies for our young elite players, will complete the process of training the most talented players.

The Association has drafted a **Youth Action Plan** with a number of specific objectives:

- Effective talent-scouting
- Guiding talented youngsters to the top levels in professional football, through high quality coaching at club level
- Improving the overall quality of youth coaching at club level
- Improving coach training programmes
- Objectifying youth training standards at club level by means of a labelling system

And finally, the **Youth Action Plan** has its part to play in enhancing the role of football as a force for good in society at large.



## Promoting youth and other social action

### *Getting active through sport*



#### **Promoting youth:**

Our youth are the future! The Association takes every **possible initiative to encourage** young people towards sport in general, and towards football in particular.

As well as promoting physical development, football also plays a role at the social and educational levels. In line with this, the Association has launched a number of campaigns and projects, each of which makes a solid contribution to our youth policy as a whole.

**Beach Football** gives youngsters on summer vacation the chance to enjoy this informal version of the game. Matches are organised on most of the major beaches along the Belgian coast. Other sports, seeing the success of this initiative, have followed suit.

Based on work done in collaboration with a number of universities, our **QIKFoot** programme aims at achieving Total Quality in youth coaching. Its objective is to help clubs in the top two divisions to better identify their strengths and their weaknesses in order to improve the quality of their youth coaching to its highest potential.

#### **Social Action:**

Numerous initiatives have been undertaken such as those opposing violence and drug and alcohol abuse. Similar actions to promote fair play are organised on a regular basis around the country.

The RBFA's **Social Charter** has been drawn up with the help of:

- United Colours of Sport Foundation (*Stichting Samen Kleurrijk Sporten*),
- Centre for Equality of Opportunity
- Fight Against Racism.

All Belgium's national teams are committed to

respecting the charter which unequivocally forbids all forms of discrimination on grounds of gender, race, nationality, religion or disability.

#### **Neighbourhood Football**

This project, designed with large urban areas in mind, emphasises the social aspect of the game. It has been re-launched with the aim of engaging local coordinating groups to take it forward.

**Project Meridian** gathers together Europe's national football associations around the goal of providing advice and support to their partnering associations in Africa. Within this framework, the RBFA has established partnerships with the national associations of Burundi, Rwanda and the Republic of Congo.

Since 2003, the European Year of People with Disabilities, the Association has taken part in the **90 Minutes of Happiness** project, whose objective is to provide the best possible conditions in our football stadiums for persons with a disability who wish to attend games.

Finally, the Association, in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, helps run the **Football in Penal Institutions Programme** which aims at improving prisoners' quality of life.



## The Red Devils

### *Our country's ambassadors*

Through the Red Devils, Belgium has earned for itself a public image which is recognised and admired all over the world. They are indeed our best ambassadors abroad!

Our national side regularly distinguishes itself on the international stage. In fact, the Red Devils have reached the World Cup finals on eleven occasions, six of them – the last in South Korea and Japan in 2002 - in succession, a unique achievement in world football. Their performance against Brazil in the quarter finals in 2002 was genuinely memorable.

But there is no doubt that their best ever performance was in the 1986 finals in Mexico, where, after a history-making passage through the various rounds, they went down 2-0 to Argentina in the semi-final.

Closer to home, Belgium achieved its best ever finish in the European Nations Cup when it was narrowly beaten by Germany (2-1) in the 1980 final.

### The Red Devils and

### humanitarian aid

### *"Accion Diablos Rojos – Casa Hogar"*

Moved by the levels of poverty they witnessed in Mexico during the 1986 World Cup, the Red Devils decided to donate part of their match fees in aid to underprivileged children.

Since then, a number of other charitable undertakings have built significantly on this initiative. With a view to increasing the amount of aid given, the RBFA won the backing of 26 companies, and as many private individuals, who came in as sponsors for the "Casa Hogar", which aims to provide local libraries in disadvantaged areas. In 1993 FIFA honoured the Association for this humanitarian action awarding it the "Fair-Play" prize for 1992. On October 15<sup>th</sup> 1997, Michel D'Hooghe, Honorary President of the RBFA, received the Order of the Aztec Eagle - the highest honour bestowed by Mexico on a foreign citizen - from Mexico's ambassador to Belgium, in recognition of the work done in Toluca in the previous 10 years.

Today a number of libraries have been opened and are utilized by the public as centres for a variety of different activities and events. The ultimate goal is to build some ten libraries in the poor neighbourhoods around the industrial city of Toluca - neighbourhoods which lack basic amenities such as electricity, running water and sewage disposal. This transatlantic campaign owes its existence to football and perfectly illustrates how the game can play an important social role.



*Facts you should know...*

- The first club founded in Belgium was Royal Antwerp, in 1880
- The RBFA was founded in 1895 at the instigation of Louis Mühlinghaus
- Belgium and Sweden were the first countries to create a national league. FC Liège was Belgium's first Champion in 1896; seven teams competed
- Standard Liège became the first professional club in 1958
- RSC Anderlecht holds the most league titles
- It has also competed more than any other club at European level, and has won three European titles (1976, '78, '83)
- Jan Ceulemans is Belgium's most capped international player (99 games, 96 caps)
- Top scorers for the Red Devils: Voorhof and Van Himst (30 goals)



- The name Red Devils was first used in 1906 by journalist Pierre Wildiers in *La Vie Sportive* ('The Sporting Life'), following a memorable victory over The Netherlands
- Highest ever score: Red Devils 10, San Marino 1 (2001)
- Country most often played against: The Netherlands
- Belgium's first official international match was against France in 1904
- Belgium's 600th match was also against France, in Paris May 18th, 2002. It was a victory for the Red Devils, 2-1.



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