



**ENGLAND**  
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**BELARUS**  
Alexander Gleb scored the fourth goal against Poland.



**BELARUS**  
Coach Puntus is lifted triumphantly by his players.

# member associations News

But just as Belarussian fans had almost given up hope of seeing our teams do themselves justice internationally, our youth teams started to give football fans something to smile about. In late September, in the first qualifying round of the European Under-19 Championship, teams from Greece, Portugal and Wales came to Belarus to play a mini-tournament in Minsk. Under the leadership of coach Pavel Rodnenok and his assistant Viktor Sokol, our team won the first match against Greece and drew against Portugal. For the last, crucial match against Wales, the Belarussians came through with a convincing 3-0 victory. Having finished level on points with Portugal, Belarus emerged as group-winners on goal difference, thereby securing a place in the next stage of the competition.

Then, in a European U-17 Championship mini-tournament in Switzerland in October, Yuri Pshnik's team took the group runners-up spot to go through to the next round of the competition.

Finally, the biggest and most pleasant surprise came from the European U-21 Championship. As group runners-up, the Belarus squad were drawn for the play-offs against a strong Polish side which had come through the qualifiers unbeaten. The first leg took place in Minsk on 15 November and, in spite of fantastic support from more than 10,000 fans, the Belarussian team was held to a 1-1 draw. Goalkeeper Yuri Zhevnov several times saved his team in apparently hopeless situations. The Polish side looked very confident in their away match and undoubtedly expected to win the second leg on home ground.

On 19 November in Wronki, the 5500-seater stadium was full to capacity and decked out in white and red. In spite of the pre-match atmosphere and the fact that several players on the squad list were out of action for reasons of injuries or suspension, the Belarussians were undaunted and it was clear that they intended to win. And win they did - an unequivocal 4-0 victory. The Polish side had no answer to the indefatigable Alexander Gleb, Yuri Zhevnov was rock solid in goal, and the whole team coached by Yuri Puntus just bore down on their opponents.

When the late plane with the team on board landed at Minsk airport, the arrivals hall was full of friends and supporters welcoming their players with greetings and champagne. Now, all Belarussian football fans expect their heroes to make a good showing in the final round of the championship and, of course, to book their berth for the Olympic games. So far, this is the best result ever in the history of Belarussian football.

*Sviatoslav Kiselev*



## BELGIUM

### National coach Aimé Anthuenis extends contract

The Belgian Football Association (URBSFA) has extended the contract of Aimé Anthuenis until 31 July 2006. The URBSFA is pleased with the results and style of play achieved by the Red Devils under Aimé Anthuenis and therefore had no hesitation in employing the former RSC Anderlecht and KRC Genk coach for a longer period. The national coach is now under contract until the end of the 2006 World Cup in Germany.

Aimé Anthuenis has been the Belgian national coach since 1 July 2002, having succeeded Robert Waseige after the 2002 World Cup in Korea and Japan. Inheriting a squad which had lost experienced men such as Marc Wilmots, Geert Verheyen, Johan Walem and Danny Boffin, he had only a few weeks in which to build a much younger nucleus of players. This difficult task could not be accomplished overnight and, despite totalling 16 points in a group including Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia and Andorra, Belgium failed to qualify for EURO 2004. However, the learning process now appears to be complete and new blood has been successfully injected. Youngsters have broken through, with players such as Sonck, Buffel, Van Damme, Deschacht, Soetaers and even the up-and-coming Kompany now playing alongside more experienced men like Bart Goor, Walter Baseggio, Daniel Van Buyten and the Mpenza brothers. The average age of the team is now around 26!

Such a young and talented Belgian team is bound to generate optimism. Aimé Anthuenis deserves all the credit for building a new team which can certainly look forward to a very bright future.

The next big challenge for Aimé Anthuenis and the Red Devils is to qualify for the 2006 World Cup in Germany. If they succeed, Belgium will play in their seventh consecutive World Cup finals.

*François Vantomme*



## BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA

### NK Siroki Brijeg - autumn champions

After their last match against NK Orasije at the Pecara Stadium, NK Siroki Brijeg emerged as champions of the autumn part of the season with 32 points. Currently in second place and just

one point behind the leaders are defending champions FK Leotar of Trebinje. Under head coach Ivo Istuk, Siroki Brijeg played really well at home - seven victories in seven matches - but they also showed great football at their away fixtures, and will be challenging FK Leotar for the title. In third place is FK Sarajevo, followed in the number four spot by NK Orasije, but the biggest disappointment was for the fans of FK Zeljeznicar, as the team from Grbavica is now in an all-time worst eighth place.

It is interesting to note that both teams from the capital, FK Sarajevo and FK Zeljeznicar, changed head coaches at the same time, when both teams were in a better position. The new coaches have not so far succeeded in making any headway.

The struggle to stay in the premier league is also a cliff-hanger, as just two teams will drop out. The FA decided in September that the league will not be trimmed down as was previously planned, as the quality of our football is improving and drawing bigger crowds. There was some unfair behaviour in several matches, but the league is pleased to note that since the advent of the united premier league, incidences of this type of behaviour are decreasing.

We shall be using the winter break to improve work in our refereeing section, as well other sections of the organisation. *"We want to help the clubs while implementing*



**BELGIUM**  
Wesley Sonck is one of the Red Devil's new generation.

PHOTO NEWS