

PHOTO: DOMENIC AQUILLINA



**DECEMBER 2023**  
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# RAISE THE GAME

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THE OFFICIAL ONLINE MAGAZINE  
OF THE MALTA FA TECHNICAL CENTRE

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## FROM THE EDITOR

**D**ear coaches, welcome to the third issue of Raise The Game, the official digital magazine of the Malta FA Technical Centre. Each page reflects the dedication and sheer passion that guide our efforts to make a positive impact in the Beautiful Game.

In our exclusive interview, we meet Iuan Woods who coordinates the technical project and is at the helm of Malta's U21 team.

We shine a light on our Women's National Team, fresh from their success in the UEFA Women's Nations League. Join us in celebrating their remarkable journey as coach Manuela Tesse relives the emotions of an amazing campaign while discussing her coaching philosophy and approach.

The UEFA Under-19 Euro Championship also takes centre-stage in this edition with an in-depth analysis of the technical preparations for the biggest football event of the year.

You can learn more about the latest initiatives and courses that are shaping the next generation of football coaches. As we invest in the growth of our coaches, we pave the way for a brighter future for the sport we hold dear. Doping education also remains a priority, underlining our commitment to fair play and integrity.

Two local studies, supported by the Malta FA Technical Centre, are reviewed in this edition. One of the studies has even influenced the redesign of our Regional Football Hubs training sessions in a bid to increase the time on task. Our grassroots section features a typical Under-14 training session from our Regional Football Hubs.

I hope that you find this edition interesting and applicable to your context.

I take this opportunity to wish you and all the football community the best for this festive season.

**Karl Attard**



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## INTERVIEW

‘My football career was not a shooting star... resilience and determination were very important factors’

At the height of his career, Iuan Woods was an industrious striker and a prolific scorer who achieved success at club level, especially with Sliema Wanderers and Floriana, and also earned 49 caps for the national team. Now approaching his 47th birthday, Woods has made steady progress in his coaching career, becoming a key figure in the Malta FA's technical sector. **Kevin Azzopardi** caught up with Woods, who was recently appointed Technical Co-ordinator and Under-21 National Coach...



## **W**hat made you fall in love with the game of football as a child?

I was born in Canada where football was not the most popular sport. I may have been attracted to football because my father has always been an avid follower and probably because at school, I didn't feel at ease practising the sports most of my school-mates were into those days. Automatically, and I can't really pinpoint the reason I started to play football in Canada when I was seven years old... I began to enjoy it and then one thing led to another.

I mean when you enjoy doing something and you also feel that you have the ability to play, you keep doing it but the fun element is fundamental. When we moved to Malta – I was 10 at the time – I continued to play football with local clubs.

## **Looking back, what were the most important milestones in your career progression, from your early days in Canada to your teenage years and eventually the step-up to senior football?**

One of the most significant milestones is the very start, the passion for the game. Then, football becomes such a big part of your life that you can't do without it. When I was young, not a single day passed without playing football, either at school, near our family home or with the club... this is one of those things that has stayed with me during my entire career because it constantly reminds me of my great passion for football.

Then, as you get older, you face different challenges. When I came to Malta, playing at nursery level and getting selected for the national youth teams... your confidence grows.

When my family relocated to Malta, my first club was Sirens as we lived in Qawra at the time and Fr Hilary (Tagliaferro) advised me to join the nursery of Sirens.

There was a particular year when Sirens didn't field a team in the Under-16 competitions and I was part of a group of players who moved to Attard. I stayed with Attard until the age of 17... there was a



short period when I went to play with Peterborough United in England. I spent around two-and-a-half months with the youth team of Peterborough United and when I returned to Malta, I signed for Valletta.

During that time, Valletta had a very strong team, one of the best in the club's history. I learned a lot during that period... I must admit that it was also a difficult time for me as I was very young and accustomed to playing regularly to the point that you find it hard to accept that you're not playing, but that was a different reality. At Valletta, I came across players who were better and more experienced than me, and I found it difficult to secure first-team football. The competition for places was very strong but I believe that difficult times, when you are struggling, strengthen your resilience to succeed. And that period (with Valletta) was very important for me because I faced difficulties. I personally believe that when





things are easy, you don't really appreciate them. In fact, I was part of the national youth teams up to Under-21 level but the step-up to the senior national team took a while... I had to wait five years to make my debut for the senior team. In fact, I was 25 or 26 when I played my first match for the senior national team.

Another important milestone was when I moved to Pietà Hotspurs as I was given the chance to play regularly at this club. It was a turning point in my career as I was 22 at the time and playing first-team football. I felt more confident and my self-belief grew... from that moment my career progressed as then I joined Sliema Wanderers, started to challenge for honours and began playing more regularly for the national team.

**Your career pathway was gradual, you showed patience and perseverance to improve and climb up the ladder but your efforts were eventually rewarded...**

Exactly. My career was not a shooting star in the sense that I wasn't an instant success. I had to wait... resilience and determination were very important factors. When I was passing through challenging times, I didn't blame the coaches, or this or that, I focused on myself and what I had to do. In fact, there was a period when I was with Pietà Hotspurs when we trained early in the morning, then I went to work and I trained again in the evening to keep improving. Eventually, these efforts paid off.

**Who have been the most influential persons in your football career?**

Undoubtedly, my parents who have always been totally supportive, driving me to training and games, showing great patience when I played football at home and occasionally breaking the furniture as well. My wife Giselle has also played a pivotal role in all of this. She has always supported me and understood how important football was for me from day one. She always put my career before her own and tried to support me in whatever needed to be done for me to succeed. I don't like to single out coaches because I feel that all of them contributed

**“I REJOINED SLIEMA WANDERERS, AGED 35, AND THAT WAS ANOTHER MILESTONE IN MY CAREER AS I HAD LEFT MY COMFORT ZONE WHEN I SIGNED FOR FLORIANA AND TWO YEARS LATER, I RE-SIGNED FOR SLIEMA, SO I HAD SOMETHING TO PROVE AGAIN. I MEAN I WAS 35, PEOPLE MAY HAVE BEEN SCEPTICAL ABOUT MY MOVE BACK TO THE CLUB BUT THAT YEAR, SLIEMA QUALIFIED FOR EUROPE AND I WAS THE CLUB'S TOP SCORER, SO IT WAS A REWARDING EXPERIENCE”**

to my development, from my childhood up to the last day of my football career.

When I stopped playing at the age of 37, I had great respect for all the coaches and I always felt that I could learn from every one of them. Naturally, there were particular stages during my career that gave me a push, it's like suddenly you are looking at the results during that period and attributing them to the current coach but in actual fact it's the result of the work of the coaches you've had before, people who had shown faith in you, members of the committee who may have taken the risk in signing you, also when I moved to clubs that were challenging for honours.

Even at 33 years old, when I signed for Floriana... it was another important period in my career. When I reached the age of 33, I was tempted to quit... when Sliema Wanderers told me that my services were no

**“I ALSO LIKE TO MENTION MY SPELL WITH PIETÀ HOTSPURS. ALTHOUGH WE DIDN'T WIN AN HONOUR DURING THAT PERIOD, WHEN I LOOK BACK AT MY CAREER, MOST OF MY FONDEST MEMORIES ARE FROM MY TIME WITH PIETÀ HOTSPURS. THE TEAM SPIRIT, THE ATMOSPHERE AMONG THE PLAYERS AND TECHNICAL STAFF... FOR ME PERSONALLY, MY SPELL WITH PIETÀ HOTSPURS REALLY HELPED ME TO MOVE FORWARD AS A PLAYER. THE DRESSING ROOM WAS VERY UNITED”**



longer required, I honestly considered calling it a day as I couldn't imagine myself starting all over again at a new club. Then an important club like Floriana showed an interest in me and things progressed from there. Those were also two important years for me as I managed to win a prestigious honour (FA Trophy) with Floriana. After that, I rejoined Sliema Wanderers, aged 35, and that was another milestone in my career as I had left my comfort zone when I signed for Floriana and two years later, I resigned for Sliema, so I had something to prove again. I mean I was 35, people may have been sceptical about my move back to the club but that year, Sliema qualified for Europe and I was the club's top scorer, so it was a rewarding experience.

**What are the best moments and high points of your career, both at club level and with the national team?**

At national team level, all the debut matches in the younger age-groups were nice occasions but my debut for the senior national team was extra special as I had almost given up hope. I mean I was 26 years old and thinking that the chance to make my debut for the national team might never materialise. So, when I played my first match, against Poland in 2003, it was a very special occasion, marking the start of a 10-year career as a national team player. I treasured every national team game as I knew I had to really work hard and persevere to be in that position.

At club level, everyone remembers the honours won and you do enjoy every trophy and every success, they are all memorable moments... with Valletta, Sliema Wanderers and also Floriana. But I also like to mention my spell with Pietà Hotspurs. Although we didn't win an honour during that period, when I look back at my career, most of my fondest memories are from my time with Pietà Hotspurs. The team spirit, the atmosphere among the players and technical staff... for me personally, my spell with Pietà Hotspurs really helped me to move forward as a player. The dressing room was very united. My





biggest satisfaction in football are the relationships you build with your team-mates and fellow players. Time passes but these relationships remain strong and the mutual respect between the former team-mates is one of the biggest achievements for me.

**Your decision to move into coaching after retiring from football – was it a natural step or you needed time to consider what you wanted to do after the end of your playing career?**

It happened naturally. While I was playing, I was always intrigued by the finer details of the game, not just my role as a player but many other aspects such as how the coach spoke, their training methods and approach.

I used to ask a lot of questions to understand why he was doing this and that and, without knowing, that was a sign of my fledgling interest in coaching. Practically, when I stopped playing, I wanted to take a short break before moving into coaching. However,

we ended the season with the FA Trophy final, which we lost to Valletta at the time, and the following week the club president, Keith Perry, asked me if I was interested to join the technical staff of Sliema Wanderers and I accepted. That's how my coaching career took off.

**You have come a long way in your coaching career, gradually climbing up the ladder to become Malta U-21 national coach and Technical Co-ordinator of the Malta FA. Looking back, how do you view the educational opportunities and courses offered by the Technical Centre?**

Education is extremely important from every aspect. When I finished my sixth form, I only wanted to play football but I had the basic academic requisites to continue my studies at a later stage if I wanted to. And that's exactly what I did... I started university when I was 26, so during the period I started to play for the senior national team I began my studies to become a PE teacher. I always felt that my career was as a football player but I was also comforted by the knowledge that I had back-up. I chose the PE degree because I felt that it was closely linked with what I planned to do in the future with regard to coaching. Apart from this, I also started my coaching courses – I did the licence C, B and A, and eventually the UEFA Pro.

There are so many things to learn and you never know enough... we hear this very often and it's true. In football, you are always learning something new. I also pursued a Masters Degree in Coaching precisely because I recognised the need to further my knowledge on the subject.

**From Head of Grassroots to Technical Co-ordinator and national Under-21 coach. How do you look at your new roles and the challenges they present?**

It's a big challenge. The grassroots role was very interesting for me... even when I was coaching at club level I was always in favour of the development of young homegrown players. I used to closely follow what was going on in this sector... there is a lot of negative criticism but there were many good things in place at clubs. That said, I always approached this

**“THE GRASSROOTS ROLE WAS VERY APPEALING FOR ME... I SPENT TWO YEARS IN THAT POSITION. ALTHOUGH WE STILL HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO, I FEEL THAT WE HAVE DONE SOME IMPORTANT WORK IN THAT SECTOR... IT WAS NOT A CASE OF REINVENTING THE WHEEL, WE TRIED TO CONSOLIDATE THE EXISTING WORK AND PROJECTS. THE TRANSITIONS TO U-21 NATIONAL TEAM COACH AND TECHNICAL CO-ORDINATOR – I WOULDN’T DESCRIBE IT AS A STEP FORWARD BUT ANOTHER STEP... I MEAN IF I HAD TO REVERT TO MY ROLE IN GRASSROOTS, I WOULDN’T CONSIDER THAT AS A STEP BACKWARDS”**

subject with a critical lens... I was aware of the things that, in my opinion, were being done the right way but also had my ideas as to where we could make small improvements. Therefore, the grassroots role was very appealing for me... I spent two years in that position. Although we still have a long way to go, I feel that we have done some important work in that sector... it was not a case of reinventing the wheel, we tried to consolidate the existing work and projects. The transitions to U-21 national team coach and Technical Co-ordinator – I wouldn’t describe it as a step forward but another step... I mean if I had to revert to my role in grassroots, I wouldn’t consider that as a step backwards.

It’s a different step, one that I really like because, after a career as a football player, coaching for me is the closest thing that offers that kind of satisfaction to remain in football.

My role as Technical Co-ordinator gives me a perspective of the enormous work and various projects at the Technical Centre, helping me to understand more the things that are being done and perhaps what we need to do more in pursuit of further improvement. All my personal experiences have enhanced my sense of perspective. Even when we discuss internal matters at the Technical Centre, I always try to analyse the situation from the perspective of the club, the perspective of the coach and the perspective of the player because I have experienced all these realities.

Regarding the U21s, the challenge is huge, as always. It’s a challenge not because I’m now the coach... the previous U-21 edition also played against Spain, during my time as a Malta U-21 player we also faced Spain, so I’m not the first coach who is leading a national team against these teams. It’s certainly a big challenge but we will do our best.





**Ivan Woods the person and Ivan Woods the coach. Does your approach to coaching also reflect your values as a person?**

My values as a human being and as a coach are intrinsically linked. When I talk about respect, loyalty and commitment, these are the principles I tried to live by throughout my playing career. I expect the same from the players. Respect is earned and it can only be achieved through your actions. It's easy to talk in a certain way in front of the players but what I do as a coach, during training and the level of attention I devote to the players, epitomises my character especially the effort I put into trying to understand the person. In fact, I tell my players – the person and the player are different. I judge the player according to what he does on the pitch, in training and during the games, but I don't judge the person by the same measure. I will not speak less or more to a player based on their performances on the pitch, and for me this value must be reciprocal but I also fully understand that this is very difficult when you are coaching. Most of the time, the player judges a coach based on whether he is playing or not but looking back on my experiences as a player, there were coaches with whom I was not a regular first-team player but I still have the utmost respect for them because they treated me for who I am... their behaviour towards me was not influenced by how well I played.

**How do you look at the progress of the ongoing technical projects, especially when it comes to youth development and the pathway from grassroots to elite?**

The answer to this question is vast because I believe it affects all the relevant stakeholders. The answer is not straightforward. If you asked me... what is needed to improve the level of Maltese football? Some might come up with one solution, kind of if we do this or that, we will solve the problems hindering Maltese football but experience has taught us that this is not the case. In the past, new football schools came into existence and there were also a number of



projects but... I feel that the issue is that everyone is mostly interested in their part. We talk about the importance of collaboration, and there is collaboration, but it's not enough. If you look at the key stakeholders... you must start with the players. The player must realise that recognition and success are earned. You must show dedication, commitment and train hard. There are responsibilities the players must live up to, the same goes for the parents who all want their children to become great players but we all know that not every young footballer will make it. There are also the schools, we have ongoing projects that give us insights into what the schools are doing. Are our children doing enough physical activity?

We have conducted a study at primary school level called Fun Fit 5. We will soon have the findings of this research in hand and these will allow us to assess the benefits of having more physical education hours at our schools. These are basic things our children are not experiencing unfortunately. Then there are the clubs who will look at the development of the player, also in the context of their own goals and ambitions to challenge for the U-15 league for example. What is the overall objective?

There is the national teams. Perhaps, we also look at our own part here, we want the players to spend more time with us so we can develop them according to our philosophy. Objectively, what I'm trying to say is that we all tend to prioritise our individual needs

and goals but if all the stakeholders come together, I believe that we can achieve more in terms of improvement.

Also, we have a problem in that our stretched resources are too spread out on a small island like ours and this causes other difficulties.

A lot of work is being done... by the clubs, the schools and the parents who are very dedicated, everyone is trying to contribute but I believe we all need to take a step back and look at the broader picture.

## FOOTBALL IDOLS, FAVOURITE COACH AND MORE...

### All-time favourite player

Romario as he was small and a striker like me.

### Coach

Roberto De Zerbi – of Brighton. I have been following him since he was at the helm of Sassuolo. His profile has grown but he's a coach I like a lot.

### Foreign club

None as I don't have an association with a particular club.

### Epic match

Two games – 2009 FA Trophy final, Sliema Wanderers vs Valletta when we won on penalties after being pegged back from 3-1 up in the dying stages of the game. The 2011 FA Trophy final, Floriana vs Valletta, when I was with Floriana and we won the cup with a late goal from a free-kick

### National team room-mates

Gilbert Agius... we have remained friends and I am still in contact with him.

### Favourite music

Rock music... Metallica, U2.

### Food

Everything but I love pasta

### Movies or series?

I like to watch movies, especially series as it helps me to momentarily switch off from football. I mean football dominates my thoughts, my work here, the upcoming games, so when I get back home, I look forward to spending time with my family and watch some movies when I can.

### Favourite movie

Forrest Gump... It's one of the few movies I've watched more than once.

### Series

Sports documentaries like The Last Dance. ■



## IVAN WOODS PROFILE

**Date of birth:** 31 December 1976 (age 46)

**Place of birth:** Toronto, Ontario, Canada

**Position:** Striker

### SENIOR CAREER\*

YEARS	TEAM	APPS	(GLS)
1994–1999	Valletta	65	(11)
1998–1999	» Sliema W. (loan)	20	(10)
1999–2005	Pietà H.	114	(48)
2005–2010	Sliema W.	141	(71)
2010–2012	Floriana	54	(15)
2012–2014	Sliema W.	50	(15)

### INTERNATIONAL CAREER

	Malta U21	8	(4)
2003–2011	Malta	49	(1)



# ‘we approached every game with a winning mentality’

MALTA WOMEN'S COACH SAYS PLAYERS ENCOURAGED TO FOCUS MORE ON THEIR OWN STRENGTHS RATHER THAN THE OPPOSITION



Malta Women's Coach Manuela Tesse provides an intriguing insight into her work and the principles that defined the national team's UEFA Women's Nations League success. Words: **Kevin Azzopardi**

**T**op of the group, unbeaten in six matches with five wins and one draw, and promoted to League B of the UEFA Women's Nations League! This sums up the excellent campaign enjoyed by the Malta Women's National Team in this inaugural competition as the girls, led by coach Manuela Tesse, rubberstamped their promotion with a 2-1 comeback victory over Latvia at the Centenary Stadium earlier this month.

Goals by Kailey Willis and Maria Farrugia sparked great celebrations on the pitch and in the stands with the team's never-say-die attitude and positive approach coming to the fore on a memorable night for Maltese football.

Interviewed for the second edition of Raise The Game only weeks after her appointment as Malta Women's Coach, Tesse had said: "I am here to try and strengthen the evolution of women's football in Malta as I strongly believe that there is a lot of potential.

"I have noticed that there are many interesting, strong players here, in my opinion. There is now a new format for the UEFA Women's Nations League – targets must always be realistic and within reach but I believe that we can challenge for promotion to Group B.

"My objective here, and I will do my utmost, is to move up to League B in the UEFA Women's Nations League."

Eleven months on, Tesse had good reason to be happy as her team accomplished their mission in emphatic style, their progress reflected in the dynamic showings throughout their commitments in Group C1 which also contained Moldova and Andorra.

"This UEFA Women's Nations League has been an incredible journey, an amazing experience for the players and also for the technical staff," Tesse said.

"You can learn a lot when you have to play and prepare for six games, and in the end we got what we deserved." →

## 'WE PLAY TO WIN'

The UEFA Women's Nations League Group C1 campaign highlighted Malta's fearless attitude and attacking philosophy, two key factors underlined by the stats – 13 goals scored and only one conceded in six outings.

"The change in our mentality was crucial," Tesse said. "I felt that there was a tendency to think more about the other team, assuming that they are always stronger than us but day by day, we tried to change our mindset, strengthening our belief that 'We are strong' and 'We can win every game if we work hard and believe'."

## "WE APPROACHED EVERY GAME WITH A WINNING MENTALITY AND OUR PHILOSOPHY IS TO PLAY TO WIN NOT JUST TO PARTICIPATE"



"We approached every game with a winning mentality and our philosophy is to play to win not just to participate."

From a coaching point of view, Tesse said the principles she sought to instill in her players are based on aggressive pressing and attacking play.

"We follow simple principles, both in and out of possession: without the ball, we press high, with intensity, to try and win the ball back in the opponents' half – we attack our opponents and not wait for them, reflecting the change of mentality I mentioned earlier."

"When in possession, we try to play the ball on the ground, starting with our goalkeeper. It is imperative that all players are involved in our attacking build-up."

"Another change is how we attack the box and we have made significant improvement – our approach is that we should always try to attack the penalty box with a minimum of four players." →







**“WE FOLLOW SIMPLE PRINCIPLES, BOTH IN AND OUT OF POSSESSION: WITHOUT THE BALL, WE PRESS HIGH, WITH INTENSITY, TO TRY AND WIN THE BALL BACK IN THE OPPONENTS’ HALF – WE ATTACK OUR OPPONENTS AND NOT WAIT FOR THEM, REFLECTING THE CHANGE OF MENTALITY”**

## STERNER CHALLENGE

A sterner challenge clearly awaits the Maltese girls as they move up to League B of the UEFA Women’s Nations League.

“The players need to understand that they are strong, everything is possible and we have shown that a small country like Malta has now moved to League B and we are going to play against some very strong teams in Europe,” Tesse said.

“We must believe and the girls must continue to work hard, together, to achieve what they want.”

## TEAM BEHIND THE TEAM

The support staff also have a key role to play with Tesse singling out the key contribution of her technical team, emphasising that the time when the coach was expected to do everything is long gone.

“Football is a big commitment, you must work daily and the time when the coach had to work on every aspect of the preparation belongs to the past,” the experienced Italian coach said.

“The staff members around the coach are very important, more eyes can see better than just a pair of eyes, spotting different things. At the same time, I believe it’s beneficial for the players to have more than one person giving them instructions... they need to listen to other voices and see other faces not only the coach.”

## DEFINING MOMENT

Malta’s UEFA Women’s Nations League feat has attracted a lot of media attention with the promotion-clinching 2-1 victory over Latvia dominating the headlines. It certainly helped to raise the profile of women’s football in Malta with over 1,000 fans turning up to cheer the team in last week’s match at the Centenary Stadium. →

**“DURING THIS UEFA WOMEN’S NATIONS LEAGUE COMPETITION, THE PEOPLE WHO CAME TO THE STADIUM FELT THE EMOTIONS DURING OUR GAMES AND AT THE SAME TIME THE FOOTBALL WE EXPRESSED ON THE PITCH WAS VERY GOOD. FOR SURE, THE CULTURE AROUND WOMEN’S FOOTBALL IN MALTA IS CHANGING FOLLOWING THIS HISTORIC ACHIEVEMENT”**

Tesse is hopeful that this success could represent a defining moment in the development of women’s football in Malta.

“I think this result will help us to work more in the future to further boost the development of women’s football in Malta,” she said.

“During this UEFA Women’s Nations League competition, the people who came to the stadium felt the emotions during our games and at the same time the football we expressed on the pitch was very good. For sure, the culture around women’s football in Malta is changing following this historic achievement.” ■



## FACTS AND FIGURES

**13 goals** scored by Malta in Group C1 of the UEFA Women’s Nations League

**8 goals** scored by Haley Bugeja, placing her second in the overall scorers’ list

**6 assists** by Rachel Cuschieri, the best tally across the three divisions of the UEFA Women’s Nations League

**5 wins / 1 draw**

## RESULTS AND STANDINGS

### LEAGUE C • GROUP C1

	P	W	D	L	Pts
Malta	6	5	1	0	<b>16</b>
Latvia	6	3	1	2	<b>10</b>
Andorra	6	1	1	4	<b>4</b>
Moldova	6	0	3	3	<b>3</b>

**22 September 2023**

Latvia 0-1 Malta

**26 September 2023**

Malta 2-0 Moldova

**27 October 2023**

Malta 5-0 Andorra

**31 October 2023**

Andorra 0-3 Malta

**1 December 2023**


Moldova 0-0 Malta

**5 December 2023**

Malta 2-1 Latvia







# The velocity at lactate threshold between different levels of play in Maltese football

## DAVID FENECH

National Teams Fitness Coach  
Staffordshire University

**F**ootball is considered a high-intensity team sport where the relative contribution of the aerobic and anaerobic energy systems during a football match largely depends on the level of play, training status and genetic factors of the footballer. Approximately 90% of the total energy provision during a football match is derived from the aerobic energy

system with an average intensity close to the anaerobic threshold. The anaerobic threshold or velocity at lactate threshold (vLT) is the point during exercise where the body of the athlete must switch from aerobic to anaerobic metabolism. Thus, determining the vLT is of utmost importance as it monitors the efficacy of the endurance component of the athlete which is associated with successful football performance. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate whether a difference in the vLT subsists between footballers playing in different levels of Maltese football. →



## METHODS

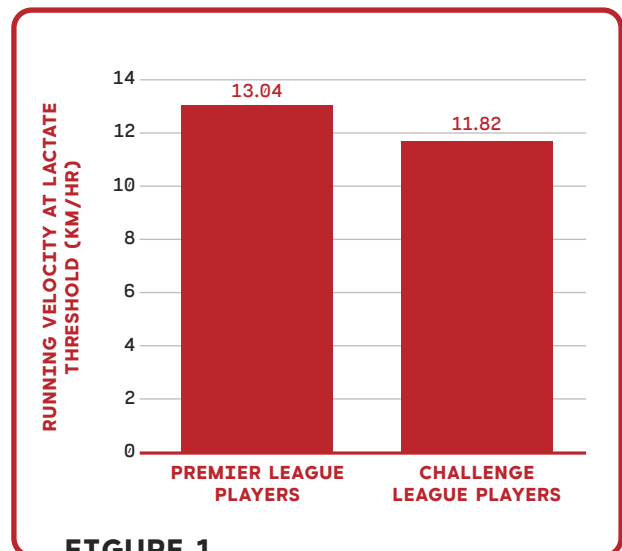
A total of 51 male footballers (age: *Mean* = 25.2 years, *Standard Deviation* = 4.2; body mass: *Mean* = 73 kg, *Standard Deviation* = 5.8; body height: *Mean* = 174.7 cm, *Standard Deviation* = 6.8) participated in the study. Twenty-three players were from nine teams participating in the top tier of the Maltese football pyramid (Premier League), whilst the other 28 players were from eight teams participating in the second tier of Maltese football (Challenge League). Testing was done at the end of the season since footballers cover the greatest distance at a high intensity (> 18 km/hr) towards the end of the season (Mohr et al., 2003). Player statistical information of the 2021/2022 Maltese football season was obtained from the Malta Football Association (Malta FA) through an online database (mycomet.mfa.com.mt) which contained all the playing records of the footballers. Players who played at least 1,000 minutes of competitive football during the 2021/2022 football season were eligible to take part in the study. This threshold was selected since a greater decrease in  $\dot{V}O_{2\max}$  was reported in footballers who played fewer than 1,000 minutes throughout a whole competitive season (Sporis et al., 2011). Players completed a multi-stage, three-minute incremental

treadmill test during which capillary blood sampling was taken from the fingertip with the corresponding heart rate recorded at the end of each stage. The vLT was determined using the  $D_{\max}$  method together with calculations of heart rate at lactate threshold and maximum heart rate. An independent t-test was used to determine differences in outcome measures between players from different divisions.

## MAIN FINDINGS

### 1. Difference in vLT between Premier and Challenge League Footballers

The main finding of this study was that Premier League footballers had a significantly higher vLT (13.04 km/hr) than Challenge league footballers (11.82 km/hr). Therefore, the mean velocity during which Premier League footballers switched from aerobic to anaerobic metabolism was at 13.04 km/hr. Such velocity was higher when compared with Challenge League footballers since their change from aerobic to anaerobic metabolism occurred at 11.82 km/hr. →



**FIGURE 1**

Group means comparing the Velocity at Lactate Threshold (vLT) of Premier League and Challenge League footballers.

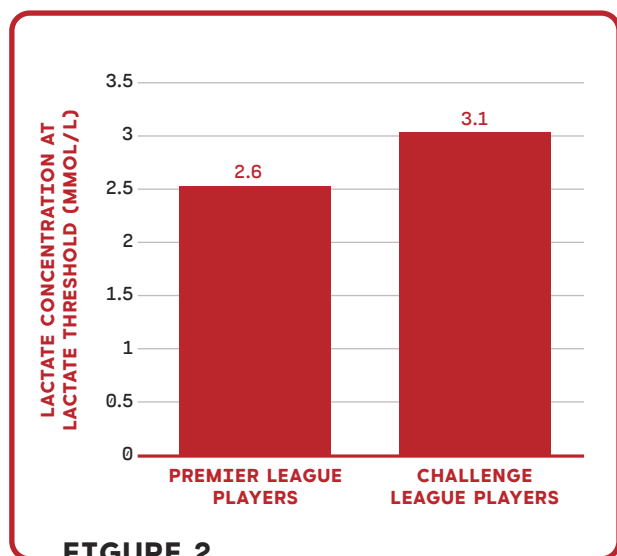


These results indicate that Premier League footballers will take a longer time to experience fatigue during a match, since blood lactate accumulation occurred at a higher velocity. Blood lactate accumulation is the result of the release of lactate from the working muscles and is influenced by the metabolism in various tissues such as the heart, liver and brain. During a football match, a footballer experiences an accumulated response of lactate production in the muscles due to the repeated intense exercise performed during the different periods of the game. This leads to a decrease in speed and running distance, where metabolic changes due to oxygen insufficiency in the working muscles instigate the exhaustion of muscle glycogen resources and the inhibition of the activity of glycolytic enzymes. A rapid fall of glycogen in the working muscles and the inhibitory effects of glycolytic enzymes contribute to the



Players completed a multi-stage, three-minute incremental treadmill test during which capillary blood sampling was taken from the fingertip with the corresponding heart rate recorded at the end of each stage.

decrease in efficiency of adenosine triphosphate (ATP) re-synthesis resulting in muscular fatigue. Furthermore, the mobility of players during a football match is also partly dependant on anaerobic glycolysis where an intense exercise sustained for longer than 20 seconds is associated with an exponential rise in blood lactate accumulation. Consequently, endurance training sessions focus on the removal of lactate production and utilise it as a potential source of energy where the faster removal of blood lactate is key in determining how quickly a player will fatigue. Results from this study indicate that Premier League footballers have a lower lactate production-to-removal ratio when compared with Challenge League footballers leading to an enhanced recovery from high-intensity intermittent exercise. Therefore, at a given speed, Premier League footballers consume more oxygen than Challenge League footballers but with a lower blood lactate production. In fact Premier League footballers had lower lactate concentration levels (2.6mmol/L) at lactate threshold when compared with Challenge League footballers (3.1 mmol/L). →



**FIGURE 2**

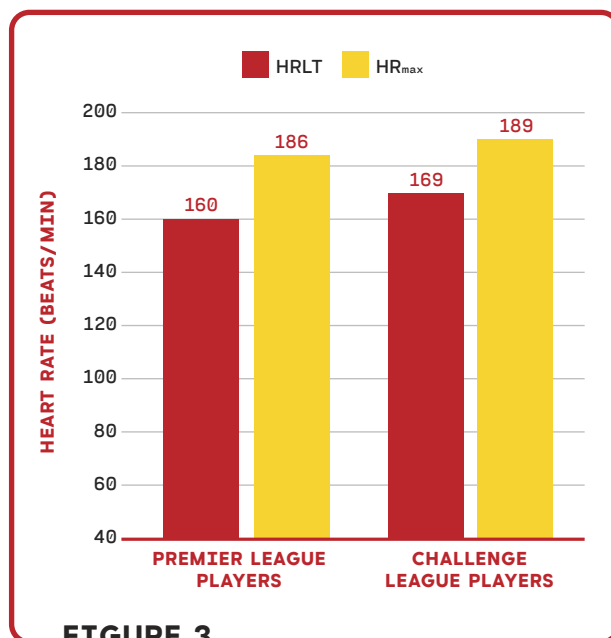
Mean lactate concentration levels at Lactate Threshold of Premier League and Challenge League footballers.

## 2. Differences in the heart rate at lactate threshold

Similar significant differences were found in the heart rate at lactate threshold (HRLT) with Premier League footballers having a lower heart rate at lactate threshold (160 bpm) than the heart rate of Challenge League footballers (169 bpm). No significant differences were observed in the maximum heart rate (HR<sub>max</sub>) of footballers between different divisions.

## 3. Comparison with other European Leagues

The findings of this study corroborate studies carried out in other European football leagues which ascertain a positive relationship between a footballer's physical capacity such as uLT determination and high-level football performance. In fact, similar conclusions were found in the top two Greek leagues through an almost identical study (Ziogas et al., 2011) with footballers playing in the top Greek league having a mean uLT of 13.2km/hr. Such finding is very similar to the mean velocity of the Maltese Premier League players found in this study. Similarly, a significant difference was also found between the uLT of footballers playing in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Greek football divisions. However, the mean velocity of Greek players playing in the second tier had a higher mean velocity (12.6km/hr) when compared with the mean velocity of Challenge league footballers (11.8km/hr).



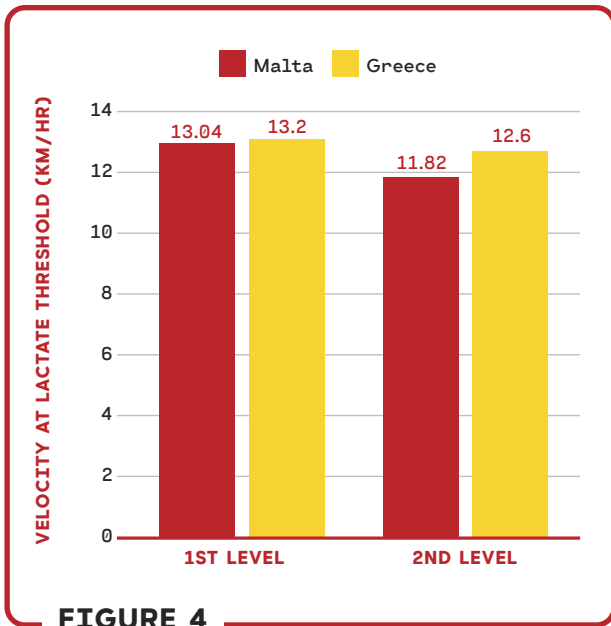
**FIGURE 3**

Mean results of heart rate at lactate threshold (HRLT) and maximum heart (HR<sub>max</sub>)

The finding that there was a difference in uLT among different levels of play is congruent with a study carried out over two seasons of the Spanish first and second division leagues. Although the total distance covered by footballers during a match between the first and second divisions in Spain was similar, players in the Spanish first division performed more runs at a high intensity (> 18km/hr) than those playing in the second division (Gomez→







**FIGURE 4**

Group Mean Velocity at Lactate Threshold of 1st and 2nd level footballers in the Maltese and Greek Leagues.

Piqueras et al., 2019). Footballers with a higher uLT have an efficient oxidative system due to improved lactate removal and enhanced phosphocreatine regeneration, which contributes to an enhanced recovery from high-intensity intermittent exercise. Hence, due to the efficacy of their aerobic system because of a higher uLT, Premier League players are capable of performing more actions of repeated maximal and submaximal intensities due to a faster metabolic recovery. This improved aerobic capability gives Premier League footballers an advantage as the most decisive goal-scoring situations during a match occur at a high intensity (Martínez et al., 2022).

## CONCLUSIONS & PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Although a difference in uLT between different levels of play was confirmed by the findings of the current study, whether this physical capacity is related to performance success in football is debatable. Although high-intensity running is considered to be the main physical attribute preceding a goal (Martínez et al., 2022), a single physical capacity should not be considered in isolation. Therefore the uLT is not the only variable that differentiates footballers of different levels as technical, tactical and situational variables all have an influence on results and hence the classification of teams in different levels. However, the uLT together with the corresponding HR are critical variables that allow performance coaches to individualise and monitor the external and internal training load parameters. Even though the endurance capacity of footballers improves during the season conclusions from this study confirm a significant difference in uLT between divisions at the end of the season.

Thus, lactate testing of footballers in different parts of the season is suggested to help coaches better periodise the training load and ultimately improve endurance performance. Such testing could also help coaches to meticulously plan and implement compensation endurance sessions for substitute footballers as a decrease in the endurance capacities of substitute players has been reported throughout a football season. GPS data can also indicate if the average running velocity during endurance sessions is slightly above the uLT in order to maximise improvements in the endurance capacity of their athletes. Consequently, the findings of the current study expand on the knowledge about the physical capacities of footballers between differing levels of play. Being one of the most sensitive indicators of endurance performance, monitoring the uLT is crucial in proposing an effective training programme as this will ultimately improve the physical capabilities of football players. ■





# IS THIS THE BEST USE OF TIME? ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT USE OF PRACTICES IN MALTESE FOOTBALL

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<sup>3</sup>School of Sport and Exercise Sciences, Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, UK

**S**ession design is a crucial aspect of sports coaching. Yet this can be a challenging area for coaches. Which exercises should the session include, for how long, in what sequence and when should the coach provide instructions? Some coaches will rely on their former playing experience or (online) inspiration from peer coaches to make these decisions.

Other coaches will react to the challenges faced in the latest game, while some coaches may plan long-term by proactively curating their sessions with an intentional mix of specific drills, games, and instructions. Such a structure can support development over time and prompt learning that transfers to competition. This is not an easy task however, because there is a never-ending supply of activities and advice available to coaches via online media, coaching courses, and via private companies. Faced with this myriad of recommendations, it can be helpful for coaches to categorise practice types into two main sub-activities; drill-based activities (i.e., training form) and game-based activities (i.e., playing form), and consider what mix of the two is best for the players. →



Drill-based activities typically have no opposition and involve players or groups repeating actions (e.g., passing routines, or running drills). Such activities are often coach-led, with instruction and demonstration as key behaviours. These drill-based activities are the preferred approach for coaches who desire controlled, safe, and predetermined activities, where the decisions about what to do are made in advance by the coach. They often target a single domain in developing either physical, technical or tactical skills. Advocates of these activities argue that direct, specific instruction and external feedback within sessions can help players' knowledge, maintain high standards, and provide repetition of correct techniques. Others argue that drill-based practices limit creativity and decision-making. It is suggested that while practices might look good and structured, the practice does not always transfer into games, which are chaotic and varied. It is also argued that any improvements are not likely to be retained by players over time. Finally, if poorly planned, drill-based activities can result in players standing around and this may not be the best use of pitch time.

In contrast, game-based activities focus on 'game like' contexts with opponents challenging players' game intelligence and decision-making capabilities. These can involve small-sided games, conditioning games or other game formats that include an opponent feature (e.g., 1v1, 2v1, 4v4+GKs, 6v6+6). Typically, game-based activities include questions from coaches that might explore the positioning and movement of opponents, team-mates, and the ball. Within games, coaches might adjust the task (e.g., score by dribbling into a zone), numbers of players (e.g., overloads) and the space (e.g., long/wide/wedged pitches) to provide players with varied challenges that encourage problem solving. A positive aspect from game-based learning is that it promotes creativity, players utilise their physical, technical and tactical skills simultaneously, and players experience games as a fun training format. However, critics argue that game-based approaches do not provide the pre-determined technical and physical stimulus that players desire, parents can become frustrated with the coach that asks questions and does not provide answers, and that learning through games can take a long time to occur. →



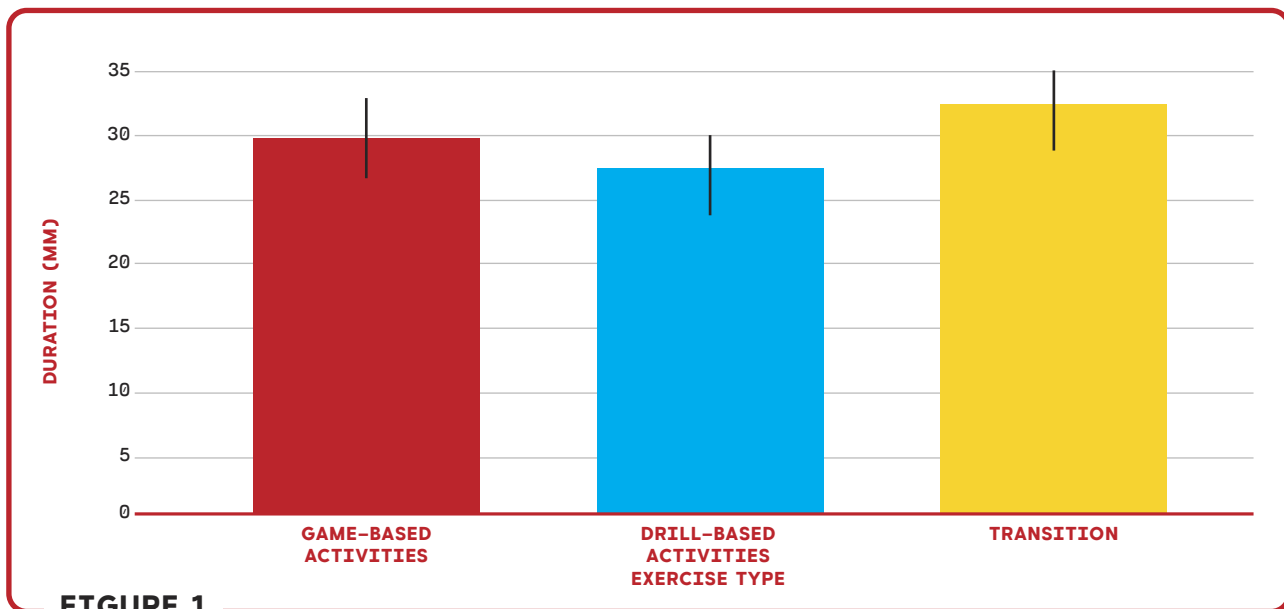


**“ENGLAND, GERMANY, PORTUGAL AND SPAIN SHOW A SHIFT TOWARDS GAME-BASED ACTIVITIES, AMOUNTING TO 60% OF THE TIME ALLOCATED FOR PRACTICES AND AROUND 40% IN DRILL-BASED ACTIVITIES. THIS IS A USEFUL PROMPT FOR MALTESE COACHES TO CONSIDER THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THEIR SESSIONS AND HOW THEY PLAN THE RATIO OF GAME-BASED AND DRILL-BASED ACTIVITIES”**

Because both approaches have strengths and weakness, coaches often use a mixture of approaches. That said, contemporary research across Europe suggests that top performing countries spend more time in game-based activities. For instance, England, Germany, Portugal and Spain show a shift towards game-based activities, amounting to 60% of the time allocated for practices and around 40% in drill-based activities. This is a useful prompt for Maltese coaches to consider the effectiveness of their sessions and how they plan the ratio of game-based and drill-based activities.

An important critique here is that these studies did not examine how much of the session was spent moving between activities, instructions of coaches, or having water breaks. This is necessary because coaches may unintentionally spend more time in situations where players stand still and listen, instead of being engaged in football activities. And, as a result, 60% game-based and 40% drill-based may be an overestimation. For coaches who may have limited access to pitches and players, both effective *and* efficient use of time is key to maximise player development.

With the above in mind, a recent study with support from Liverpool John Moores University, →



**FIGURE 1**

Duration (mean ± standard deviation) per exercise type



Learning Works Malta and the Malta FA, examined practice type and time in 20 sessions with young (12-14yrs) Maltese footballers. The study analysed the amount of drill-based, game-based and transition periods (i.e., moving between exercises, water breaks, interaction with coaches) within the sessions.

Findings revealed an average of 31 minutes (34.3%  $\pm$ 3.26) per 90-minute session is spent on game-based activities, 27 minutes (29.8% $\pm$ 3.38) per 90-minute session is spent on drill-based activities, and 32 minutes (35.6% $\pm$ 2.35) per 90-minute session is spent on transition.

The key observations from this are:

- 1) The Maltese sessions observed have a lot less game-based activities compared to other studies in youth football in countries such as England, Germany, Portugal, and Spain.
- 2) The Maltese sessions had a lot of transition time (water breaks, coach interaction, moving between exercises).

The aim of this study was not to criticise the coaches but to provide insight, prompt reflective analysis, and guide session design for coaches in Malta. To this end, based on these insights, coaches could consider designing practices that result in more playing time for the players and more efficient use of

coach instructions, water breaks and moving between drills. For example:

- Session plans, videos of activities and correct techniques can be shared with players prior to training to inform players on the expectations and coaching points.
- Session organisation, such as allocating players teams should be done before the on-pitch session starts.
- Coaches should prepare the training area/equipment needed beforehand.
- Water bottles should be strategically placed close to the training area to reduce transition.
- Coaches can combine water breaks with instructions for efficiency.
- Specific instructions can be given to individual players without stopping the whole practice.
- Fewer activities could be done for longer time. For instance, four exercises (with slight moderations) instead of six drills will reduce transition.
- Feedback on activities can be provided post-session with video review, to reduce coach interaction.

Through careful planning, strategies such as the above could reduce transition time. Using the time saved, coaches can then ensure they provide more game-based activities that develop creativity, decision-making and long-term learning. In this way, a strategic approach to practice design could support efficient *and* effective practice.

Of course, any such change in practice design will result in increased demands for players and should be carefully planned, built up over time, and monitored. For those interested in more detail on how these sessions were monitored, the study is due to be published in the MCAST Journal of Applied Research and Practice, and you can contact the lead author, Melvin Farrugia. ■



# The road to the 2023 UEFA EURO U19 Finals held in Malta

STEFANO GRIMA,  
ANGELO PETRELLI



Looking back on the football experience derived from the Malta U-19 team's participation in the 2023 UEFA Euro Under-19 Final Tournament in Malta, one must take into account the entire process which kicked off back in November 2021. The preparation for the biggest football event to ever take place in our country was a thorough holistic plan, without cutting corners.

A large pool of players was involved together with the technical staff who were fully dedicated and focused on the squad, playing no fewer than 30 friendly matches, including the Slovenia Cup in September 2022 and the UEFA Preparatory Tournament, held in Malta in November last year.

The technical staff was composed of Head Coach Antonio Mendes, Assistant Coach Stefano Grima, Goalkeepers Coach and Mental Performance Coach, Andrew Hogg, Fitness Coach Angelo Petrelli, and Match Analyst Filippo Gori, all working hand-in-hand with the Technical Coordinator at the time, Coach Alessandro Zin-nari. Supporting these staff members were the medical team personnel, and the kit managers, in coordination with Daniel Theuma, the Team Manager, and Kurt Formosa, former Chief Football Officer at the Malta FA. →

**“A LARGE POOL OF PLAYERS WAS INVOLVED TOGETHER WITH THE TECHNICAL STAFF WHO WERE FULLY DEDICATED AND FOCUSED ON THE SQUAD, PLAYING NO FEWER THAN 30 FRIENDLY MATCHES, INCLUDING THE SLOVENIA CUP IN SEPTEMBER 2022 AND THE UEFA PREPARATORY TOURNAMENT, HELD IN MALTA IN NOVEMBER LAST YEAR”**





Focusing on the technical point of view, the staff mainly had two targets. The main target was the actual tournament in July 2023, but the development of the player and the importance of adhering to the football philosophy followed by the Technical Centre, were also priorities.

Once the games were approaching, the staff planned the sessions to prepare the boys in the best way possible from all aspects: technical, tactical, physical, and mental, but in the other weekly sessions, training was based on principles of play, individually and group-related.

## PHYSICAL PREPARATION

Significant attention was given to the physical aspect of our players, considering that the final preparation for the tournament coincided with the end of the club championships. Testing, evaluating, monitoring, managing training – game situations, was part of the detail the fitness coach together with the performance department were following to reach the best shape and ensure the best quality of work, taking into consideration the delicate moment of the season.

External and internal response to the training were all the time being assessed with continuous communication between staff members and medical

**“72 PLAYERS WERE CALLED UP IN DIFFERENT CAMPS OR STAGES, COMING FROM MALTESE AND GOZITAN CLUBS, OUT OF WHICH 49 PLAYERS FEATURED IN DIFFERENT MATCHES, INVOLVING 21 PLAYERS BORN IN 2005 AS WELL, WITH 13 OF THEM MAKING APPEARANCES IN DIFFERENT GAMES”**

staff, so that every minute, on and off the pitch, or at the gym, could be planned for the benefit of the players. Needless to say, this kind of work is carried out on a daily basis with all the national team squads.

Another priority was the number of friendlies played against top-level nations like Germany, Portugal, USA, and Croatia, as well as Turkey, giving the boys and the staff an experience that was to stand them in good stead for the big occasion as well as for their sporting careers.

One must say that, although the final selection included 20 players, as per UEFA regulations, the experiences enjoyed by different players during these months involved significantly more players than those who made the final squad. In fact, 72 players were called up in different camps or stages, coming from Maltese and Gozitan clubs, out of which 49 players took part in different matches, involving →



21 players born in 2005 as well, with 13 of them making appearances in different games. This statistic continues to emphasise the idea of working on the long-term and short-term, simultaneously. It is also good to mention that 14 players were based abroad – either players who left Malta to continue their career abroad, or players who have Maltese lineage and are therefore eligible to play for our national teams.



## MENTAL PREPARATION

A very important aspect that must be highlighted is the work done on the mental aspect of the squad. The difference how the boys approached games at the beginning of the process and how they were facing games at the end, was totally different. Although everyone was aware that we were facing huge challenges, everyone believed that the group is stronger than the individual and that being strong was our only choice. This was achieved through several sessions the players had with the Mental Performance Coach, and through pre-training talks by the coach or staff members that addressed different scenarios during different phases of the two-year preparation period.

## TACTICAL ASPECTS

Throughout the entire process, one can also note a change in the tactical approach, giving the boys another experience and enhancing their knowhow of the game. While in the first season, the 1-3-4-2-1 and the 1-3-4-1-2 formations were used, closer to the tournament the coaching staff opted for a 1-3-5-2 formation. This was purely a tactical decision but it never changed anything from the principles of play when →



**“WHEN ONE ANALYSES THIS CHANGE IN THE SYSTEM, ONE CAN CONCLUDE THAT THE BOYS WENT THROUGH DIFFERENT TACTICAL EXPERIENCES, IMPROVED THEIR KNOWLEDGE, AND BENEFITED FOR FUTURE ENCOUNTERS THEY MIGHT BE FACING, MAKING THEM BETTER AND MORE COMPLETE PLAYERS”**

the team was in possession. The main ideas did not change. What changed was the system of play, something related to the characteristics of the players who were selected, and the quality and high-level opponents the team was facing.

When one analyses this change in the system, one can conclude that the boys went through different tactical experiences, improved their knowledge, and benefited for future encounters they might be facing, making them better and more complete players.



## **MATCH ANALYSIS**

A crucial role that helped a lot in the daily work of our coaches was that of the Match Analyst. Analysing training sessions, analysing our matches and analysing opponents are crucial tools in today's game as far as the technical staff is concerned. The videos shown to the coaches led to hours of discussions, challenges, and more hard work to improve the ability of the boys and the team in general.

Finally, one must underline the precious work put in by all the players who formed part of the Malta U-19 squad over the last two seasons. The amount of work and sacrifices asked from them were not easy to handle. A big thank you must go to the players and the clubs who collaborated with the Malta FA Technical Centre for the benefit of the Maltese game. We are confident that the Maltese National Team will reap the fruit of this work in the coming years. ■



# Regional Football hubs

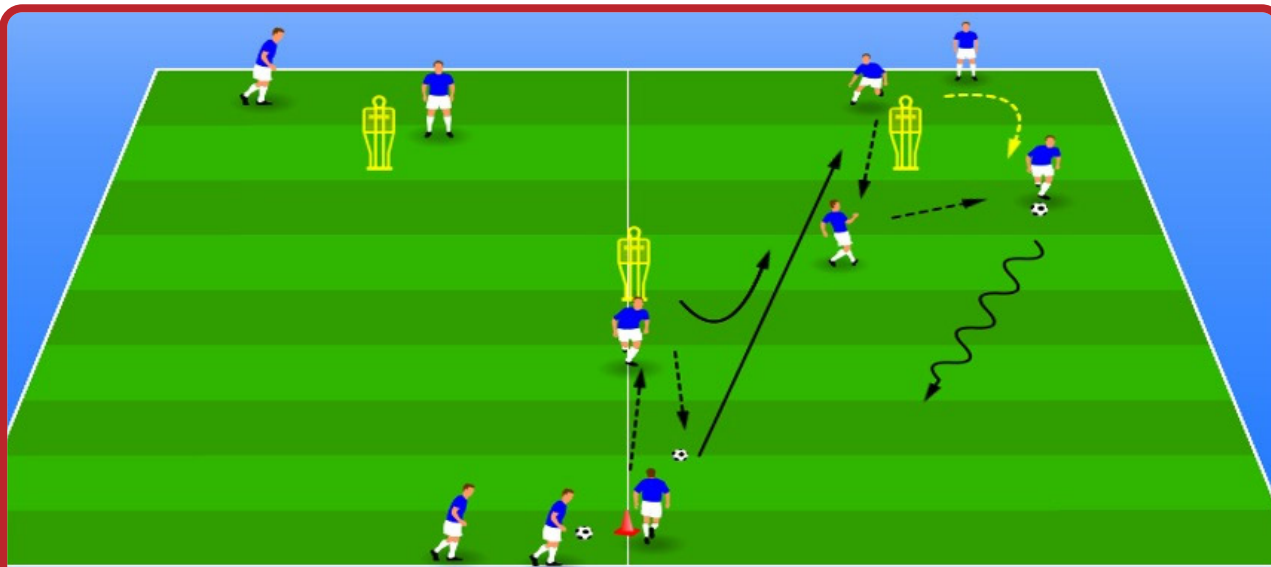
## TRAINING SESSION FOR U14 AGE-GROUP



### WARM-UP EXERCISE

#### WARM-UP 1

- Warm-up 15 minutes passing drill
- 20 minutes small-sided game
- 20 minutes positional game
- 30 minutes game 11 vs 11 with 3 touch in the first 10 minutes
- Players move from small-sided game to the positional game after 20 minutes, so each group of 10-12 players change exercise



### TECHNICAL ACTIVATION (WARM-UP)

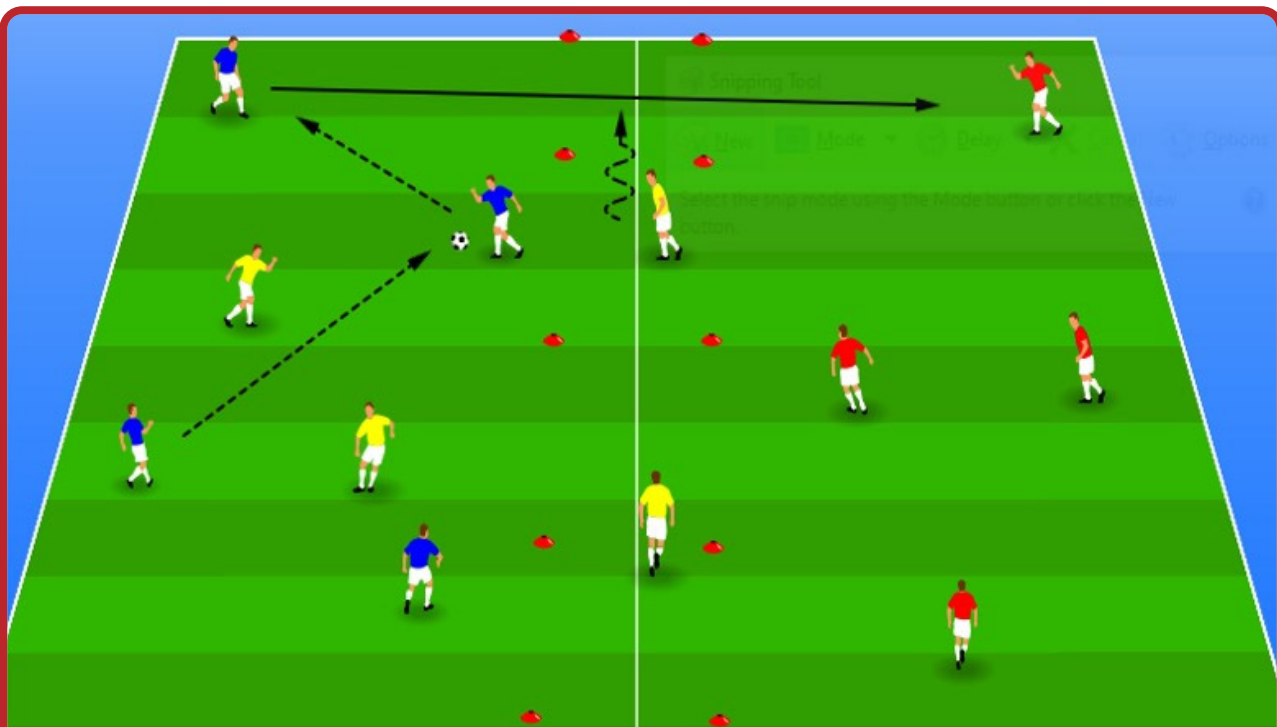
#### PASSING DRILL

Player 1 passes to Player 2 who passes back to Player 1. Player 1 passes to Player 3 who plays a one/two with Player 2, and dribbles to position 1. Next player passes to the other side.

#### COACHING POINTS

- Using inside of the foot
- Player receiving makes a counter movement
- Communication when receiving and passing the ball
- Strength of pass and timing of runs →





## POSITIONAL GAME

### 4 VS 2 DOUBLE RONDO 3 TEAMS

**Objective:** Teams play 4vs2 in one half and complete 5 passes and then try to give a pass across the middle channel to the other team that is waiting in the other box.

The other 2 players try to block the pass. If the ball goes in the other box, the 2 players defending in the channel go to press and try to win the ball.

Defending team try to win as many balls as possible for a point.



## SMALL-SIDED GAME

### 3vs3 / 2vs2

The blue team starts with possession. They have to try and deliver a pass to the strikers. If the blue striker receives the ball, he plays a 2 us 2 situation in the box. If the red team win the ball they try to score in the small posts.

**Progression:** 1 of the blues can join the attack to play a 3 us 2 situation in the box. →

## GOALKEEPERS TRAINING DIVE TECHNIQUE AND RELATED FOOTWORK

- Technical Aim: Positioning, Shot Stopping
- Physical Aim: Functional
- System: 1-3-5-2
- Equipment: As required per plan
- Goalkeepers No: 3



### OUTCOMES 1-4

- Receive chest shot at '1' and return;
- Quick feet across red markers (1-2-1);
- Sideways movement to '3' and to '4' and '5';
- Receive chest shot and return;
- Dynamic movements – Lower Body – to '6';
- Walk back.
- Static stretching – upper body.

Change direction and repeat for lower body dynamics and static stretching.

## COACHING OUTCOMES

- Assume a starting position so that GK is always ready to attack the ball
- Move in relation to the ball to close the angle at all times
- Be 'set' as the shot is struck
- React to and attack the ball
- Decide whether to catch or parry
- Decide offensive action and launch attack (if applicable)



### OUTCOMES 1-5

- GK starts in the starting position and moves out to '1' to receive a back-pass from server 'A';
- Dribble with the ball across goal to pass through the gate to serve 'B';
- Quickly recover position '4' and move out to '5' to receive chest shot and react right side half-high ball.

Repeat the exercise for 5 times and change direction. Important observation must be given to the first touch at '1'.



### OUTCOMES ALL

- GK starts in starting position and reacts to high ball from server 'A';
- Distribute to server '2' and take up a position at '3' to receive and shift play '4' to 'C';
- Recover position '5' and move out to '6';
- Receive a ground ball shot – right.

Repeat the exercise for 5 times and change direction. Particular attention should be given to how GK goes up for the ball. ■



# all access















# COACH EDUCATION

Over the past months, the Coach Education Department has offered various learning opportunities to the coaches through CPDs and different courses. Candidates following different courses had the opportunity to learn and practise the art of coaching under the supervision of Malta FA coaching staff and other special guests who render our coaching courses and CPDs more 'international'.

The candidates of the UEFA Elite Youth A course had the opportunity to visit the Brighton and Hove Albion training facilities in March on a three-day study visit, also managing a short discussion with first team manager Roberto De Zerbi. Portugal's Joaquim Milheiro, now the coach of Qatar U23 squad for the next Olympic games, was the guest for a CPD session and also lectured during the Elite Youth A course. The UEFA B course module three was held purposely during the UEFA U19 finals in Malta, thus taking the opportunity to experience top-level football first hand. This group of coaches benefited from a two-hour session on positional play with renowned Italian coach Maurizio Viscidi who was part of Italy's U19 coaching staff here in Malta. →





It is the policy and commitment of the Malta FA Technical Centre to offer the best possible opportunities to our coaches to increase their football and coaching knowledge under the guidance of experienced local and international practitioners.

## WHAT'S ON?

The Malta FA Technical Centre is proposing a vast array and selection of courses over a four-year span in order to cater for the ever-growing demands of the local coaching community. Over the next four seasons, the Coach Education Department is planning to cover all the coaching courses that are offered with special emphasis on Grassroots Leaders and UEFA C Diploma due to their popularity and high demand.

Over the next seasons there should be an addition of three different courses (\*\*) which are currently in different stages of development.



COURSE	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
<b>UEFA PRO</b>	1	cont...	-	-
<b>UEFA A</b>	1	-	1	-
<b>UEFA ELITE YOUTH A</b>	-	-	1	-
<b>UEFA B</b>	-	1	-	1
<b>UEFA C&amp;B COMBINED</b>	-	-	1	-
<b>UEFA C</b>	1	2	2	3
<b>UEFA GOALKEEPING B</b>	-	1	-	1
<b>UEFA FITNESS B*</b>	1	-	-	1
<b>UEFA FUTSAL B**</b>	-	1	-	-
<b>UEFA YOUTH B**</b>	-	-	-	1
<b>MATCH ANALYSIS COURSE</b>	1	-	1	-
<b>FUTSAL NATIONAL C</b>	1	-	1	-
<b>GOALKEEPERS' LEVEL 1</b>	-	1	-	1
<b>YOUTH FITNESS AWARD</b>	-	1	-	1
<b>GRASSROOTS LEADERS COURSE</b>	3-4	3-4	3-4	3-4
<b>MALTA FA SCOUTING COURSE***</b>	-	-	1	-

**CPDS**  
CPD sessions are held regularly throughout the season.

\* UEFA Fitness B is part of a UEFA pilot programme and is replacing the Football Fitness Coach Certificate as from this season

\*\* The UEFA Futsal B and the UEFA Youth B are still to be confirmed by UEFA

\*\*\* The Scouting Course is being planned for 2025/26 as the Malta FA is still training its staff to be able to deliver such course.

Please note that this is a projected course schedule from 2023 until 2027. This schedule is subject to changes according to the needs of the local coaching community and the Malta FA Coach Education Department. ■



coaches' fundamental

role in the

# prevention of doping in football

## DR DANIEL MCKEAN

Senior National Team Head Doctor  
Malta FA Medical Coordinator

**Y**ou might ask yourselves, what does doping have to do with a circular for coaches? Why should you, a coach, bother with the ins and outs of doping? But if you consider part of your role as moulding players into the best footballers they can be, then surely that includes respect for themselves,

others and for the game itself. This is something which is fundamental to anti-doping. We have a responsibility to ensure that all players have an equal chance, that they are mentally and physically healthy and that the ethics of the sport we love are upheld.

We already know that coaches have a profound influence on the lives of players, and that they are often held in the same regard as parents and teachers. What a coach says, and how they act carries weight. Football can be a powerful tool for good, socially, →



from a lifestyle perspective, and educationally. Most of you reading this will be able to look back at your experience in football and feel that it shaped who you are today.

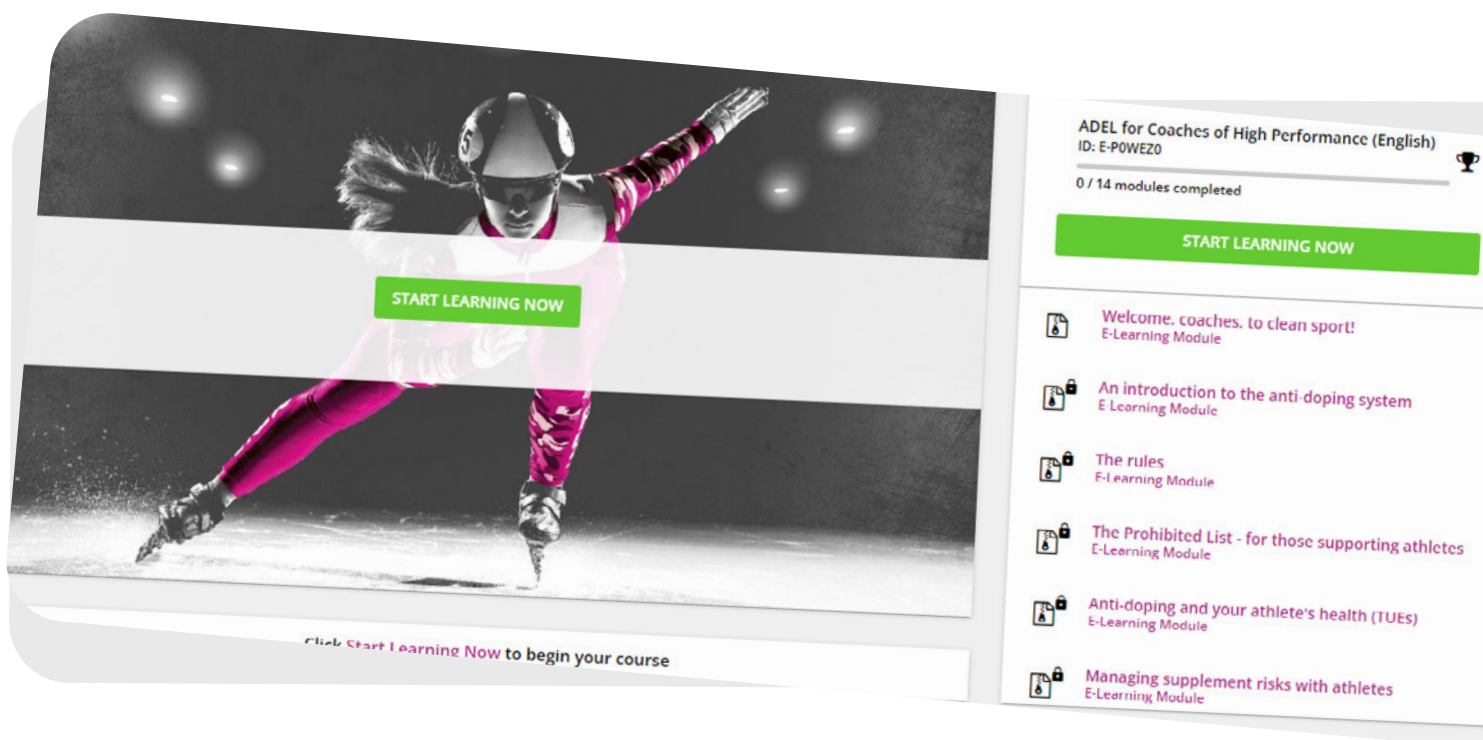
So how can you, as a coach, tackle the issues associated with doping? The first step is to get yourselves educated on the dangers and current issues associated with doping. There are plenty of resources out there. The Anti-Doping Education and Learning (ADEL) website published by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) is a great place to start.

Furthermore, you can help to create an environment where players can feel safe and where they can improve as footballers whilst having fun. We should move away from a “win at all costs” mentality and instead foster realistic team and individual goals. This is not to say that you should not aim to win, but that cheating is unacceptable.

A coach is central to the safeguarding of their players, and just as you should speak out against any behaviours that you feel are harmful to the players under your care, you should speak out against behaviours associated with doping. You can find support from parents, administrators and even the National Anti-Doping Organisation (NADO) should you

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ever have issues that are too big to deal with alone. Often, just knowing who to speak to is already the first step in the prevention of doping, but you as a coach will be the point of reference for your players and it is important to remember that when we ask ourselves that question... what does doping have to do with coaching? ■





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