

## Celtic cousins join forces in hope of hosting Euro 2020

By **ROBIN SCOTT-ELLIOT**

Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland are set to mount a joint bid to host Euro 2020. Turkey and Georgia are the other predicted bidders and as both countries have potentially serious flaws as prospective hosts, the Celtic nations will stand a good chance should they decide to translate a declaration of interest into a concrete bid.

Last night was the deadline for countries to register an interest in hosting the finals, which would be the first in the United Kingdom for 24 years. Interested countries now

**“Many in Uefa are losing patience with Turkey... the Olympic clash does not help”**

have 18 months to table an actual bid, which would need 10 stadiums to host the 24-team finals. The expanded finals require all three to bid together to meet the stadium criteria.

It would be the first time a major finals has been hosted by three nations but the bid is likely to garner strong support if Turkey and Georgia remain the only other entrants.

Turkey, which had previously received public backing from Michel Platini, the president of Uefa, is believed to have lost a degree of support recently over a match-fixing scandal that continues to bedevil the Turkish FA. Istanbul is also bidding for the 2020 Olympic Games and neither Uefa nor the International Olympic Committee believe a country can host both.

A senior Uefa official told the Press Association: “Many in Uefa are los-

ing patience with Turkey due to the chaos in the football there. The Olympic clash does not help either so this could be good news for Scotland, Wales and Ireland if they were to proceed with a bid.”

Uefa are keen to encourage a Celtic bid, especially as Georgia are expected to struggle to match the stadium criteria, as the governing body want to oversee a contest for their flagship international event. France will host the 2016 finals, but none of the other major European nations have expressed an interest. England, Germany and Spain have ruled themselves out and Russia is holding the 2018 World Cup. Hosting a 24-team tournament is beyond most nations on their own.

Scotland and Ireland mounted a joint bid for Euro 2008 but disagreements over the potential use of Croke Park fatally undermined it and it was one of the first to be crossed off the list. Scotland and Wales thought about bidding together for 2016 but the project never got off the ground.

Jonathan Ford, the chief executive of the Football Association of Wales, said: “It is not a bid, it’s a declaration of interest and that will allow us to obtain the information from Uefa so that we can fully assess and determine, independently and together, whether we should submit a bid.”

The three associations will now begin exploring the detail with possible venues in Dublin, Cardiff, Swansea, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen.

Ireland are competing at Euro 2012 this summer, but Scotland have not qualified for a major finals since the 1998 World Cup in France. Wales have to go back to the World Cup of 1958.

## Spurs’ Kaboul ruled out of France squad

By **JAMES MARINER**

The Tottenham Hotspur defender Younès Kaboul will miss next month’s European Championship after being left out of the provisional France squad because of a knee injury.

The centre-back was sidelined for three weeks last month but returned to start Spurs’ final four matches of the season, before being substituted late on in Sunday’s victory over Fulham.

The France coach, Laurent Blanc, revealed the 26-year-old would miss the tournament in Poland and Ukraine before announcing a 26-man squad. Blanc decided to include midfielders Yoann Gourcuff and Alou Diarra despite their poor form for Marseilles and Lyons respectively. France take on England in the opening match of Group D in Donetsk on 11 June.

Elsewhere, in Group D, Sweden have also named their 23-man squad for the tournament, including Blackburn’s Martin Olsson, West Bromwich Albion’s Jonas Olsson and Sebastian

Larsson, of Sunderland. Manchester City striker John Guidetti was omitted because of a thigh injury. “I’m terribly disappointed,” the 20-year-old said. “The Euros were the big goal and it’s sad not to get that chance.”

Vicente del Bosque has named an experimental squad for Spain’s upcoming friendlies with Serbia, South Korea and China, with a number of top names absent. Players from Barcelona, Chelsea and Athletic Bilbao have been omitted from the holders’ squad owing to involvement in this weekend’s Champions League final and next week’s Copa del Rey final, giving a number of fringe players the chance to stake claims for places. The three clubs provided 15 players for Spain’s most recent friendly.

The Real Betis midfielder Benat Etxebarria is included, along with Real Madrid’s Raul Albiol. “I have incorporated players that have had a good season,” Del Bosque, the Spain manager said. “We have to think about those that can be helpful to us in the future.”



### RACE WARS ABUSE FOR ENGLISH PLAYERS

**12 Oct 2002, Slovakia v England**  
Ashley Cole and Emile Heskey were targeted by Slovakian fans during the Euro 2004 qualifier in Bratislava, leading to the Slovakian ambassador formally apologising to the Football Association. “To have the whole stadium shouting at you and making those gestures was frightening,” Heskey said.

**17 Nov 2004, Spain v England**  
Shaun Wright-Phillips and Cole were subjected to monkey chants in a friendly held at the Bernabeu. Fifa later fined the Spanish Football Federation a paltry £44,750.

**17 June 2007, Eng U21 v Serbia U21**  
The FA made a formal complaint over the racist abuse from Serbian fans and players. Uefa

investigated racist chants aimed at England’s Nedum Onuoha, while Justin Hoyte was also targeted by an opposition player in the tunnel after the match.

**10 Sept 2008, Croatia v England**  
Fifa fined the Croatian Federation £15,000 after monkey chants were aimed at Heskey in a World Cup qualifier in Zagreb.

**10 Oct 2009, Ukraine v England**  
Visiting players complained of racist chanting during the World Cup qualifier in Dnipropetrovsk.

**2 Sept 2011, Bulgaria v England**  
The Bulgarian FA was fined £32,000 following abuse directed towards Ashley Young during a Euro 2012 qualifier in Sofia.



Ashley Young suffered abuse during the match against Bulgaria GETTY

## FA fears that England players will be racially abused at the Euros

**Bernstein promised by Platini that referees will have ‘more powers to deal with incidents’**

By **ROBIN SCOTT-ELLIOT**  
*Sports News Correspondent*

The Football Association has raised concerns with Uefa over the prospect of England players being racially abused during this summer’s European Championship. David Bernstein, the FA chairman, has discussed the issue with Uefa president Michel Platini and been promised that referees have “increased powers to deal with situations in matches”.

Bernstein said yesterday that the FA had been “working on all sorts of contingency plans and preparing for all eventualities” should any England players be the subject of racial abuse at Euro

2012. Last week the UK’s senior policeman in charge of footballing matters, Assistant Chief Constable Andy Holt, warned of the possibility of England players and supporters being racially abused in Ukraine, where England will play their three group games.

In the course of a meeting with Platini two weeks ago, Bernstein raised the subject; yesterday Bernstein told a Parliamentary inquiry into racism in football that Platini had assured him Uefa was taking the issue “very, very seriously”.

“They have given referees increased powers to deal with situations in matches,” Bernstein told the Culture, Media and Sport committee at Westminster.

When asked about Euro 2012, Gordon Taylor, chief executive of the Professional Footballers’ Association, told the same inquiry: “We’ve got a big worry with the European Championship.”

Uefa insists it is taking steps to address the issue ahead of the tournament, which begins on 8 June. More than 80,000 police officers and stewards in Poland and Ukraine will be given “anti-discrimination training to help them identify discriminatory chants, symbols and behaviour,” say Uefa.

Europe’s governing body says sanctions have been provided to deal with any incidents. Under measures which were actually introduced in 2009, referees have the “power to abandon a match should racist behaviour occur in the stadium”. In the extreme, that could result in the “awarding of a match by default, deduction of points or dis-

**“A young generation of black players are saying ‘We can’t stand for this any more’”**

qualification from the competition”. Any player found guilty of abusing an opponent faces a minimum of a five-match ban.

England players have been on the receiving end of racist abuse during previous visits to eastern Europe. Last year the Bulgarian FA was fined €40,000 after Ashley Young, Ashley Cole and Theo Walcott were abused by the home support.

Uefa has been criticised for its response to previous racist incidents. Earlier this season Manchester City were fined €30,000 because their players came out late for the second half against Sporting Lisbon in the Europa League. That was €10,000 more than Porto were fined for their fans racially abusing City players in the previous round.

The on-going problem with racism at football grounds in Poland and Ukraine was highlighted this year when the respected campaign group Never Again, which is linked to the Uefa-backed group Football Against Racism in Europe, produced a report detailing 195 incidents of “racist and discriminatory behaviour” between September 2009 and March 2011.

Questioned about matters closer to home, Bernstein insisted yesterday that the FA had made the right decision at the right moment in choosing to strip John Terry of the England captaincy

over his forthcoming trial for allegedly racially abusing Anton Ferdinand.

“We got it spot on,” said Bernstein, who made the decision with the unanimous support of the FA’s board. “There was no point in making a premature decision because we believed the trials would be before the European Championship.”

Yesterday’s inquiry also focused on the problem of racism within the domestic game. After the ban for Liverpool’s Luis Suarez and the on-going Terry/Anton Ferdinand case, Taylor believes young black players are wary of reporting incidents of racist abuse. There is a fear of receiving a “torrent of abuse” via Twitter and other social media if a player makes a complaint.

Taylor said: “I feel there is an element of belief among my younger black players that it’s still, ‘Hmm, I can make a complaint but...’ There’s been a worry that the Terry-Ferdinand incident has not been dealt with yet; there’s been a worry about what happened with the Liverpool reaction. I’ve got a young generation of black players that are saying, ‘We can’t stand for this any more’, and I’m feeling frustrated that we can’t be a bit more effective in that process.”

In the wake of the Suarez case the FA is to look at introducing “induction programmes” for players coming into this country to outline what is considered unacceptable in English football.

## With Neville in the camp, England’s players should not fall prey to indifference

**COMMENT**  
**JAMES LAWTON**  
*Chief Sports Writer*



We can be cynical as easily as we like over the fast-tracking of Gary Neville into the hierarchy of the England team. We can ask if, for example, you were the new manager Roy Hodgson, would you rather have Red Nev at your side in the potential maelstrom of the European Championship – or lurking in a TV studio dreaming up the kind of line that hit David Luiz like an assassin’s bullet?

Comparing the Chelsea defender’s work with the meanderings of a schoolboy let loose on a PlayStation was a barb Neville may never surpass in the rest of his broadcasting career but Hodgson, who is already on record with his belief that having the media on-side is a key part of the job, may well be happy not to run the risk.

However, even in an age when the massaging of popular opinion has reached industrial levels, there are enough reasons to believe that Neville’s long-term appointment is rooted in something other than a craven reaction to the former Manchester United captain’s remarkable rise as one of the game’s most influential voices.

The most arresting of them is the possibility that after a club career that brought him eight Premier League titles and a Champions League medal, and one with England that he has already described as the last word in futility, he will be ideally placed to draw from the strength of one side of his experience and transfer at least some of it to the other.

Encouragement to believe this is certainly not diluted by even the most casual review of his performance since putting aside his boots and taking up the microphone. Whether you agree with everything he says or not, there is certainly no strain in acknowledging an authentic attempt to get to the heart of the game in which he accumulated 85 caps.

He was never England’s most accomplished player, nor United’s – though Sir Bobby Charlton had no hesitation in inserting him at right-back in the all-time team running back to the Busby Babes – but there was never any shortage of evidence that he cared.

He also, palpably, applied himself to the science of defence, to those false dawns of the Golden Generation. He was playing in Munich when Michael Owen scored his hat-trick and did his cartwheel and some of us were persuaded that Sven Goran



Gary Neville was part of the false dawn of the Golden Generation GETTY

he often feels obliged to level at a new generation of defenders.

An early job description for him is that he will be Hodgson’s most acute reader of the mood of the England dressing room – a role that might have been weighed in gold two years ago on the high

**He will be Hodgson’s most acute reader of the mood of the England dressing room**

veldt when Fabio Capello and his players engaged in a cultural collision so catastrophic that the manager later confessed that when he looked out on to the field he didn’t recognise his own team.

The breakdown could hardly have been more profound. Wayne Rooney spoke of the ineffable boredom of life in an isolated five-star prison, John Terry made not the least miscalculation of his life when he elected himself as the spokesman for a dressing room he could hardly have split more profoundly had he driven a stake into the middle of the floor.

For Neville there is also the much wider perspective of all those false dawns of the Golden Generation. He was playing in Munich when Michael Owen scored his hat-trick and did his cartwheel and some of us were persuaded that Sven Goran

Erikkson might just have found the lost chord of the English game.

A few years later he witnessed the full wretched circle in the celebrity circus of Baden-Baden, when old club-mate David Beckham handed back, tearfully and unbidden, the England captaincy.

Neville may then have reflected on the time he made his own run for player power while organising a strike threat on behalf of Rio Ferdinand after he was dropped from the national team while awaiting a disciplinary hearing for failing to take a drugs test.

It will be some time before we know the value of Neville’s appointment and any serious clue about where it might lead, but the instinct is strong that it should be welcomed.

If there is a single perception, right or wrong, about the relentless failure of the England team it is that it has not been accompanied by any sense of overwhelming regret by the players involved.

Rooney was aghast that fans should complain so loudly that night in Cape Town when England played so feebly against Algeria and Capello made his terrible confession that he had looked helplessly at the skeleton of a team he had tried to build.

At the very least, indifference will not come so easily in the shadow of Red Nev.