UEFA donates maxi-pitch to Marseille

Former French star David Trezeguet was a guest as UEFA donated a maxi-pitch to Marseille - the European Capital of Sport 2017 - to mark UEFA Grassroots Week.

UEFA has donated a maxi-pitch to Marseille to mark UEFA Grassroots Week. Former French striker David Trezeguet was among the guests at the inauguration festivities in the French city.

As part of UEFA’s grassroots programme, more than 200 children aged between 7 and 11 from two different schools in Marseille’s XIIth district came to the inauguration of the synthetic maxi-pitch at the Sevan city stadium, home to the 17 teams of UGA Ardziv, a historical club in the city, founded in 1924.

The pitch was financed through a donation of €100,000 by UEFA - a donation which comes with Marseille’s selection as the European Capital of Sport 2017.

UEFA’s Grassroots Week is aligned with the European Week of Sport - an initiative set up by the European Commission, aimed at promoting sport and physical activity across Europe (#BeActive).

Watched by 1998 FIFA World Cup and UEFA EURO 2000 winner Trezeguet, the young players, boys and girls, played age-appropriate small-sided matches, as well as taking part in skills challenges and educational games featuring the laws of football. The event was organised in close collaboration between UEFA, the French Football Federation (FFF), the Mediterranean League, the Provence district and the French education ministry.

“I’m really moved by these kids, they enjoy being on this pitch,” said Trezeguet. “They play together and have fun. Football can be really strong, it unites people, from very different cultural backgrounds as well. Now is their time to play, and they are the future.”

“UEFA firmly believes that football and enjoyment of the game should be available for everyone, and that football plays a crucial role in helping to bring people together,” explained Frank Ludolph, UEFA’s head of football education services.

“Footballer drop-out levels across Europe are increasing at youth level, and this is why UEFA believes that it is crucial to continue to invest in grassroots football.”

“The game is a good way to learn life’s values. Investment in grassroots football is one of the eleven values reflected in UEFA’s remit,” Ludolph continued. “Without grassroots, there is no elite - without the roots, you never see a flower. We usually give three pitches a year - one to the European Capital of Sport and one to each city that hosts a club competition final.”

“UEFA’s contribution to this amazing day was more than appreciated,” said the two club co-presidents Roger Dermesropian and Philippe Cazarian. “Our club comprises 300 players, from children to veteran players. Our first team plays in the Régionale 1 [French football level 6] league, and it was really important to raise the standard of our main pitch for the benefit of all these players. The pitch also improves the way how our coaches can work with the kids.”

“We need facilities to keep grassroots football alive, especially in a city like Marseille, a football city with an increasing number of registered players,” was the view of the administrative director of the Mediterranean Regional League, Raphaël Boutin.

“It’s important to reward clubs for what they give to football. Without them, without volunteers, we could not develop star players, and the role of football for society should not be forgotten in this context. Football assumes its social responsibility.”

“It’s a great grassroots football celebration for all, boys and girls, whatever their origin”, added FFF head of project Sébastien Pessoa. “We celebrate our sport for all of its aspects, be it education, play, enjoyment or sport.”