



The Bielmont stadium in Verviers.



The Leburton stadium in Tubize.



European Under-17 Championship

A month away from kick-off

THE BELGIAN FA (URBSFA), IN CONJUNCTION WITH UEFA, WILL HAVE THE HONOUR OF HOSTING THE 2007 EDITION OF THE FINAL ROUND OF THE EUROPEAN UNDER-17 CHAMPIONSHIP, WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE FROM 2 TO 13 MAY.

In the wake of the resounding success of EURO 2000, this is the second time in ten years that Belgium has had the honour of welcoming an international football tournament, and it can only express its satisfaction at the trust which has been placed in it.

This competition is a marvellous showcase for the stars of the future, as was seen on past occasions with players such as Luis Figo of Portugal, Thierry Henry of France and Wayne Rooney of England. Apart from that, an agreement is already in place that Eurosport will broadcast more than half the 16 matches, which underlines the importance of an international youth competition such as this.

Six centres

Six towns have been chosen as venues for the matches in this tournament, namely Eupen, Ronse, Tournai, Tubize, Verviers and Visé. The stadiums, which belong to second and third-division teams, have been renovated and most of them have the capacity to accommodate over 5,000 spectators. The Belgian FA is convinced that this competition will be a true people's festival. With this in mind, it will propose tickets at a particularly attractive price (between two and five euros) and will be organising many different events in conjunction with the matches.

Apart from Belgium, who are coached by Bob Browweys and qualify automatically as the host country, seven other nations will take part in the final round, for which the draw will take place on 4 April at the national centre in Tubize. On this occasion, Marc Wilmots, the former skipper of the Red Devils, will grace us with his presence.

Double stakes

The stakes are high in this European Championship. The top two teams from each group will not only go through to the semi-finals of the competition but will also qualify automatically for the 2007 U-17 World Cup in the Republic of Korea. The fifth

place for Europe in this global tournament will be disputed by the two teams that finish third in their respective groups.

With the new UEFA coefficient rankings for the under-21s, under-19s and under-17s being published recently, reflecting our national teams' excellent results, this tournament comes at just the right time for Belgium. It will have the possibility of demonstrating the effectiveness of its youth player development work and will once again be able to demonstrate its organisational know-how. In short, the Belgian FA and the whole of Belgian football just can't wait for 2 May to arrive!

Pierre Cornez

The stadiums

EUPEN Stade du Kehrweg – capacity 3,250 (750 seats)

RONSE Stade Orphale Crucke – capacity 5,100 (900 seats)

TOURNAI Stade Luc Varenne – capacity 6,200 (2,500 seats)

TUBIZE Stade Leburton – capacity 4,200 (1,800 seats)

VERVIERS Stade de Bielmont – capacity 6,000 (2,600 seats)

VISÉ Stade de la Cité de l'Oie – capacity 6,000 (2,600 seats)



Belgium's Under-17 team.