

## UK Managers Report

Firstly, on behalf of Iain, Tonks and myself can we thank you all for your support and commitment to our section. This is always greatly appreciated and the hard work that goes on unseen by others is always seen by us the management team that represents you all. THANK YOU!!!!

The report would normally be over the 2023/24 season but due to circumstances this report will mainly involve the recent European Championship that were held in France April 2024. This was the first championship in many years with several reasons impacting on the hosting of this event. I would like to thank the French Firefighters Committee for their outstanding efforts and their determination to host the prestigious event. I do not think any of us that were lucky enough to attend could have a single complaint with the organisation and facilities we were met with.

The squad travelled from far and wide and showed the commitment levels of all, these commitment levels would be demonstrated throughout for what was a very physical and mentally a very challenging tournament.

The management team requested a training venue to be sourced and this was achieved through outstanding efforts of Iain McAdam, this allowed us to focus on the squad the squad fitness levels but above all allowed the squad to introduce themselves and begin to bond together which I see as a vital part of a tournament mentally and mind set, as each player would be asked to play and support each other in every aspect possible.

Our first match of tournament took place against France who had already beaten Germany earlier that day in a very close match. The surface although having been watered was very hard causing players to take extra care with their passing and touch control. The team started cautiously with the surface playing a part in this but with only 1 player (Ben Wood) having played in previous tournament I think the occasion and nerves also played a part in this. However, we scored a goal after a shot fell to Reece Pearson and we started to look more comfortable. The French team had several good footballers and fought their way back to equalise. With both teams looking to secure a point we lost concentration and lost a poor goal in the last minute to lose the match 2-1.

Our second match was against Germany who looked a physically more challenging team with the UK demonstrating great resolve and discipline with several challenges going unpunished. This was another very close game but with the new points system of 4 point for a win it was imperative we took maximum points and we managed to achieve this beating Germany 1-0 with a goal from Marc McKenzie . This was a great way to finish the first day's matches.

The third match was against France with this match being vital a previously that day Germany had beaten France (meaning France on 8 points and both Germany and UK teams on 4 points). If we could manage a win we would tie France currently a top of table. The match was very tense due to this importance, but lessons learnt from the first encounter allowed the players to be more aware of certain tactics and game play that is always part of these tournaments and not what UK players are normally faced with. We took the lead from another Marc McKenzie goal and showed more determination and better discipline to hold onto a and secure another 1-0 victory, putting winning the championship in our own hands.

The final match against Germany was the cup final of many previous tournaments and both teams knowing that if Germany won it could be decided on pens and goal difference. The UK team's performance in this match was personally I thought their best. The team played well and confidence throughout the team grew even more so when we took the lead again through a Reece Pearson. The team continued to play good football and this resulted in a penalty award to UK, Paul Lomax stepped up but unfortunately missed this would have given the team breathing space, this seemed to give Germany a boost and the team had to withstand a lot of high balls and set pieces with Germany trying to play to their strengths. The team defended superbly and held out to win the match and the tournament. An outstanding achievement.

We the management team would like to thank you all for all your hard work and support without you this result would not have been achieved. A special mention to Iain McAdam for his work in the planning and organisation from start to finish.

Colleagues and Committee Members I have not been looking forward to this part of my report as most of you know having previously submitted a letter delivered by Iain, I will stand down as manager of the UK Football Section as of today and completion of my report. I have tried to always do my best and

commit myself to delivering success for this section for 30 years as a player, a captain, a coach and finally as a manager. This without any shadow of doubt has been an honour and a privilege and I can never thank you all or the previous managers that allowed me to be involved enough. I have always asked for commitment and I always looked at myself as a player and manager to ask 'could I do more or have I done enough' and with this in mind due to family and work commitments I feel I have let you down and not attended enough matches due to work and family commitments. I can not finish without thanking certain people probably far too many to mention but Iain and Tonks thank you for supporting me and for having the guts to question selections and decisions this I know was always with what was best for the team in mind, I could not have asked for a better supporting team, it's been a privilege. Personally, without any doubt I would not be here or have been part of the UK section without Maurice Smillie, you have permitted me to have times I don't deserve, everything from my first Strathclyde selection to Scotland and then UK section is down to you, the experiences we have shared will never be repeated and thank you will never say enough Mo.

To the new manager and his team I wish you every success, no pressure but you are taking on a job that the last manager won the European Championship.