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A cosmopolitan ball



JURGEN BRAUER AND SANDRO MENDONCA



Brazilian-born Deco plays for Portugal



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Along with many Thais, we have been watching Euro 2008, and it is worth watching from several angles.

We checked up, for instance, on the players' business life from the perspective of international trade. By examining just which clubs the national players play for, we could determine which nations import and export players to other Euro 2008 national teams, and also what percentage of national team players stay to play for home country league clubs.

The result is a picture of a rather globalised football economy. Of 368 national players involved at Euro 2008 (16 squads, 23 players each), 191 play for foreign clubs - that's an astonishing 52%.

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Croatia and the Czech Republic sport the most lopsided export trade performance, exporting 21 and 20 respectively, but importing none to their league clubs.

Germany and Spain exhibit the top trade deficits - German clubs import an amazing 38 players but the country exports only four, while Spain imports 23 and exports five.

Sweden and Portugal are founts of talent, serving the largest number of markets - their player exports go to 11 and 10 different countries respectively.

German clubs collectively achieve the highest import score (38 imported players from 14 other Euro 2008 countries). Only England does better - 43 from 13 Euro 2008 countries. But, then, England is not in the running.

We also examined the national background of the players within each of the Euro 2008 national teams. We find a cultural variety and richness that should please dedicated internationalists. At least 59 "non-national-origin" players play in the competition. That is players who either were born outside the country they now represent or who have at least one foreign-born parent.

Coming from 31 nations, these first-generation or foreign-born players contribute, on average, 3.7 players per Euro 2008 team, or 16% of the total. (Among the coaches, it's four out of 16, or 25%.)

The most cosmopolitan squad by far is Switzerland, with 11 out of 23 players being of foreign extraction (47.8%). It draws players from far and wide - Turkey, the former Yugoslavia, Kosovo, Italy, Spain, Colombia, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast and Austria.

France (nine), Austria (six) and Germany (six) come next in terms of absolute numbers of non-native or first-generation nationals.

On the other hand, the most homogeneous teams are the Czechs, Greeks, Romanians, and Russians - all use pure home-grown talent.

Of the 59 "non-natives", most are sourced from Europe (32 players, or 54%), two-thirds of the remainder are from Africa (18, or 31%), and half of those play for France. The rest are from South America (seven players), and one each from Asia and Oceania.

The largest single-nation source pools are Brazil (six players) and, surprisingly, Germany (also six). One "German" plays for Austria, two for Turkey, and three for Croatia.

This is followed by Turkey (two play for Austria and three for Switzerland), and the tiny but vibrant archipelago of Cape Verde (two for Portugal, and one each for Sweden and Switzerland).

Football mirrors an increasingly commercially linked and culturally diverse Europe, and, indeed, the world. It reflects migration trends, historical heritages and geographic proximities.

While national and EU integration policies struggle along, host-country fans admire, even adore, the migrated talent. With its combination of passion and openness, football scores a spectacular goal.

We eagerly anticipate an even more cosmopolitan World Cup 2010 in

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South Africa.

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