



EFAF to enter new decade of success

A very successful decade for European American Football has just ended, and - even more important - prospects for the years ahead seem to be even more promising. German-native Sebastian Vollmer became the first non-kicking player drafted to the NFL after starting playing football in an European club institution. And not only did Vollmer make an impressive debut with the New England Patriots, but already there a lot of players in his footsteps. More Europeans than ever earned college scholarships in recent years, so a few more Vollmers could be seen in the near future. The top European-based youth programs after 30 years of distinctive developmental work finally can compete at least with the average U.S. high school in terms of building up talent pool.

Of course this is just one indication for the progress made (however one of great importance for young athletes) - but at least equally impressive are figures that show the development of the competitions within Europe. When the (then-new) EFAF (the European Federation) Board of Directors decided to focus action on expanding these competitions, there were 10 teams from only 6 nations competing for Eurobowl 2001. For the season just ahead 50 clubs from 22 nations will be involved. Not only the number of clubs is five times the one of 2001 but above all the goal to spread American Football and EFAF competitions around the whole continent has certainly been accomplished. This originates in the increasing number of young players starting football earlier than ever before thanks of the work done by national federations. This is also supported by the increasing EFAF development budget which for instance allows to hold clinics for the coaches in the new territories where football has spread.

The broad positioning across Europe is accompanied by progress at the top as well: When the next European champion for national teams (EC 2010) will be determined this summer, six nations will be able to compete in the final tournament for the first time. And the stage for crowning the champion will be more adequate than ever as Frankfurt's Commerzbank Arena, long-time home for Frankfurt Galaxy from the NFL Europe, continues its American Football tradition in a close partnership with EFAF.

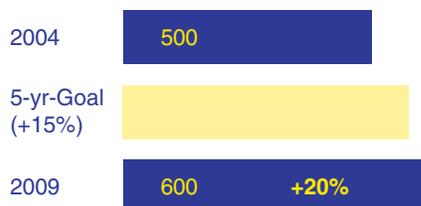
Countries Involved in EFAF Club Competitions



5-Year Consolidation/Expansion Targets Attained

(Status Quo compared to Targets set forward by the 2004 EFAF General Assembly)

Tackle Club Teams at Senior Age Level (20+)



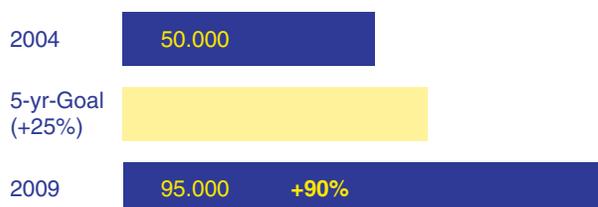
Status Quo 2009 **4.3%** above target

Tackle Club Teams at Junior Age Level



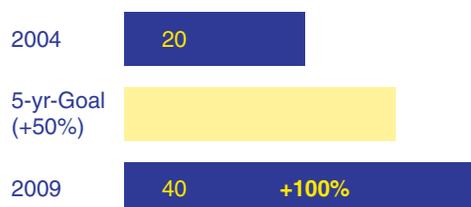
Status Quo 2009 **4.0%** above target

Members of Clubs in EFAF Member Federations



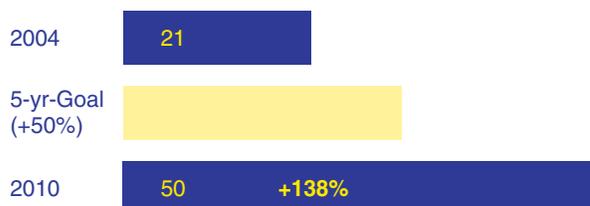
Status Quo 2009 **52.0%** above target

Women Tackle Clubs Teams at Senior Age Level



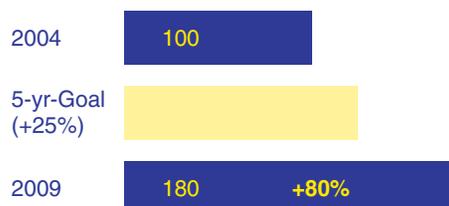
Status Quo 2009 **33.3%** above target

Clubs in EFAF Competitions



Status Quo 2010 **58.7%** above target

Flag Club Teams (all age levels)



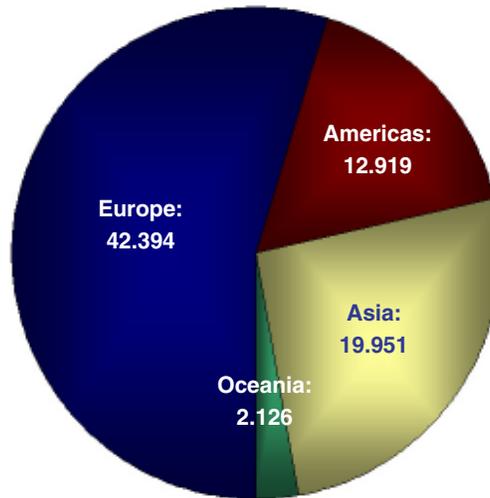
Status Quo 2009 **44.0%** above target

Beyond that, the next highlight for European American Football is already in preparation: Austria will host IFAF's fourth World Cup for national teams in 2011, a fitting reward for this country's development in the last decade. Like no other nation the Austrians have embraced EFAF's offer to fuel local development by making use of the expanded variety of international competition. Six Eurobowl trophies won by Austrian teams, the advance into the elite six national teams for EC 2010 and the successful bid for hosting the World Cup have tremendously boosted the appreciation the sports of American Football receives within Austria. No other EFAF member federation is that close to challenge soccer as top discipline attention-wise in its country than the AFBÖ (the Austrian Federation).

Where there is light, there is shadow - especially when the task is such a magnificent as promoting a relatively new and cost-intensive sports on a continent widely addicted to soccer for more than a century. Whenever some national federations and with them EFAF and the sports of American Football as a whole blossom, elsewhere some problems seem to be too difficult to overcome.

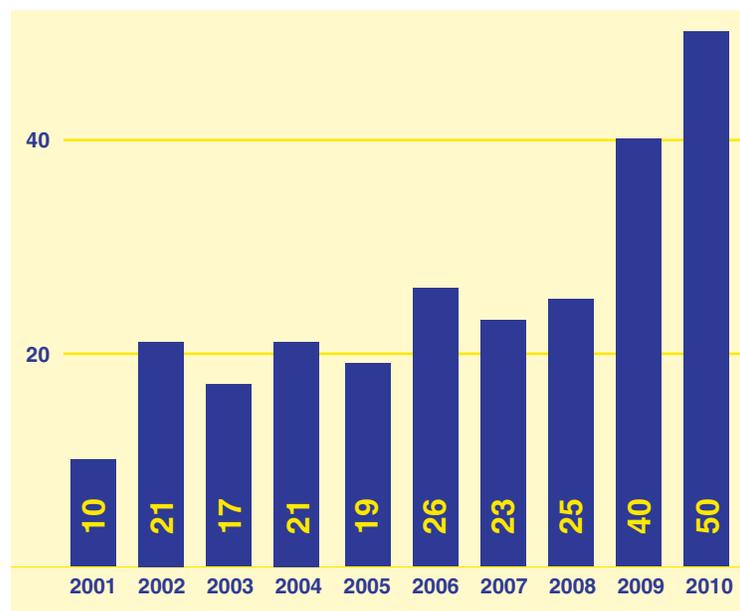
Male Tackle Football Players Outside the U.S.

at Senior age level (20+) - according to IFAF



EFAF may as it has recently been successfully proven assist national federations in case of problems where financial problems unfolded and have been resolved with the help of concessions or administrative assistance of the whole European American Football community. However, it is better to avoid those problems beforehand. Of course this is no easy task as most federations operate on comparatively small budget. So the blueprint for leading an American Football federation in Europe to success may not be derived out of financial resources which may (but possibly may not) be generated somewhere in the future. Even the well-funded NFL Europe failed with that approach.

Number of Teams in EFAF Club Competitions



A look at the federations in good standing as of now reveals that nearly all of them share one thing in common: Austria's collection of European titles and presence on national TV, Germany's attendance figures and admittance into the biggest stadiums of the country, Spain's logistic efforts to be back-to-back hosts of European Junior Championships, Switzerland's history of fielding teams in all competitions year after year, all these and a lot of other accomplishments are the result of hard work and continuous efforts.

And the list may easily be extended, as all EFAF member federations excel in some way. Sweden for example has set its special focus on the struggle for more gender-equality in sports. Especially in a sports which like no other is falsely attributed to be an exclusively male activity, that is a very challenging task, but one which the Swedes have mastered already to great extent. So it is no coincidence that Sweden will host the first Women's World Championships this summer. Elsewhere special attention is awarded to youth development, with quite a success. Not only in France, where American Football already has a long heritage, but also in Russia, where the sports still is a novelty in most places of the country, but already more than 3,000 girls and boys play Flag or Tackle Football. The Russians and a number of other „young“ federations already have their eyes set on developmental assistance to their neighbours - the Russians and Irish will host the Eastern and the Atlantic Cup, Turkey, Serbia and Hungary in recent weeks took every effort possible to expand the Challenge Cup into Croatia and Romania. So they have already assumed this special „spirit“ of solidarity, for which for instance especially France or Finland are known for decades now. No matter where or when a championship or tournament will be played - you can rely on one thing for sure: Their teams will be there and be ready to compete.

All the progresses across Europe were acquired step by step and were made possible only because of a long-time continuity in the organizational ranks of the respective federations. Wherever such continuity has been disrupted, it most often took more than just a few months to get back on track - sometimes it was a matter of years, which were lost for American Football in the respective countries.

Ten years ago EFAF was in a similar state: The European Championships had to be postponed, Junior European Championships were operated by NFL Europe, depending on financial decisions outside of Europe on a year-to-year basis, while the top clubs of the continent preferred to play only nationally and turn a cold-shoulder to Europe. Step by step all these issues have been addressed, and EFAF by now is ready to enter a new decade of success for American Football in Europe.

Tackle Football Leagues in the World

(with multi-month scheduling formulas leading up to national championships at senior age level)

