

= Belgium national football team =

The Belgian national football team has officially represented Belgium in association football since their maiden match in 1904 . The squad is under the global jurisdiction of FIFA and is governed in Europe by UEFA ? both of which were co @-@ founded by the Belgian team 's supervising body , the Royal Belgian Football Association (RBFA) . Periods of regular Belgian representation at the highest international level , from 1920 to 1938 , and 1970 to 2002 , have alternated with mostly unsuccessful qualification rounds . Most of Belgium 's home games are played at the King Baudouin Stadium in Brussels .

Belgium 's national team have participated in three , quadrennial major football competitions . They appeared in the end stages of twelve FIFA World Cups and five UEFA European Football Championships , and featured at three Olympic football tournaments , including the 1920 Olympic tournament which they won . Other notable performances are victories over four reigning world champions ? West Germany , Brazil , Argentina and France ? between 1954 and 2002 . Belgium has longstanding football rivalries with its Dutch and French counterparts , having played both teams nearly every year from 1905 to 1967 . The squad has been known as the Red Devils since 1906 ; its supporters ' group is named 1895 .

During the national player career of forward Paul Van Himst , the most @-@ praised Belgian footballer of the 20th century , Belgium took third place at Euro 1972 . After that , they experienced two golden ages with many gifted players . In the first period , which lasted from the 1980s to the early 1990s , the team finished as runners @-@ up at Euro 1980 and fourth in the 1986 World Cup . In the second , under guidance of Marc Wilmots in the 2010s , Belgium topped the FIFA World Rankings for the first time in November 2015 .

= = History = =

Belgium was one of the first mainland European countries to play association football . Its practice in Belgium began on 26 October 1863 , after an Irish student walked into the Josephites College of Melle with a leather ball . Initially an elitist pastime , during the following decades association football supplanted rugby as Belgium 's most popular football sport . On 1 September 1895 , ten clubs for football , athletics , cricket and cycling founded the Belgian sports board Union Belge des Sociétés de Sports Athlétiques (UBSSA) ; a year later UBSSA organised the first annual league in Belgian football .

On 11 October 1900 , Beerschot AC honorary president Jorge Díaz announced that Antwerp would host a series of challenge matches between Europe 's best football teams . After some organisational problems , on 28 April 1901 , Beerschot 's pitch hosted its first tournament , in which a Belgian A @-@ squad and a Dutch B @-@ team contested the Coupe Vanden Abeele . Belgium won , and also beat the Netherlands in all three follow @-@ up games ; FIFA does not recognise these results because Belgium fielded some English players . On 1 May 1904 , the Belgians played their first official game , against France at the Stade du Vivier d 'Oie in Uccle ; their draw left the Évence Coppée Trophy unclaimed . Twenty days later , the football boards of both countries , and five other nations , founded FIFA . At that time , the Belgian squad was chosen by a committee drawn from the country 's six or seven major clubs . In 1906 , the national team players received the nickname Red Devils because of their red jerseys , and four years later , former Scottish footballer William Maxwell replaced the UBSSA committee as their manager . In 1912 , UBSSA began governing football only and was renamed UBSFA . During the Great War , the national team only played unrecognised friendlies , with games in and against France .

At the 1920 Summer Olympics , in their first official Olympic appearance , the Red Devils won the gold medal on home soil after a controversial final in which their Czechoslovak opponents left the pitch . This triumph led them to an all @-@ time high second place in the World Football Elo Ratings . In the three 1920s Summer Olympics , they achieved fair results (four wins in seven games) , and played their first intercontinental match , against Argentina . Over the following decade , however , Belgium lost all of their matches at the first three FIFA World Cup final tournaments . According to

historian Richard Henshaw , " The growth of [football] in Scandinavia , Central Europe , and South America left Belgium far behind " . Although World War II hindered international football events in the 1940s , the traditional derby against the Netherlands was kept alive with unofficial matches .

Belgium qualified for only one of eight major tournaments during the 1950s and the 1960s : the 1954 World Cup . According to journalist Henry Guldemont , some of his Swiss colleagues regarded the 1954 Belgian team as " favourites for the world title " after a promising draw in the opener against England . However , they were eliminated after a loss to Italy in the second (and last) group match . The day before the tournament began , the Belgian , French and Italian football boards founded UEFA . Two bright spots in these decades were wins against World Cup holders : West Germany in 1954 , and Brazil in 1963 . In between , Belgium defeated Hungary 's Golden Team in 1956 . The combination of failure in competitive games , and success in exhibition matches , gave the Belgians the mock title of " world champion of the friendlies " .

The team 's performance improved during the early 1970s , under manager Raymond Goethals . Fully dressed in white , as the White Devils , Belgium had their first victories at World and European Championships at the 1970 World Cup and Euro 1972 . At that Euro appearance , their first , they finished third by winning the consolation match against Hungary . In 1973 , the denial of a match @-@ winning goal in their last 1974 World Cup qualifier cost Belgium their appearance at the finals . The next two attempts to reach a major finals were also fruitless . Beginning with a second @-@ place finish at Euro 1980 , the 1980s and the early 1990s are generally considered as Belgium 's first golden age . Coached by Guy Thys , they achieved their spot in the 1980 final with an unbeaten record in the group phase ; in the final , they narrowly lost the title to West Germany with the score 1 ? 2 . Starting with the 1982 World Cup , and ending with the 2002 World Cup , the national team qualified for six consecutive World Cup end stages and mostly progressed to the second round . During this period , managers Guy Thys , Paul Van Himst and Robert Waseige each guided a Belgian selection past the first round . In addition to receiving individual FIFA recognitions , the team reached the semi @-@ finals of the 1986 World Cup . After reaching the Euro 1980 final , they were unsuccessful at subsequent European Championships , with early exits from their appearances at Euro 1984 and Euro 2000 . During the late 1990s , they played three friendly tournaments in Morocco , Cyprus and Japan , sharing the 1999 Kirin Cup with Peru in the latter . The greatest talents of the Belgian team during this golden age were retired from international football by 2000 , yet in 2002 , Belgium defeated reigning world champions France , and reached the World Cup round of 16 .

After the 2002 World Cup , the team weakened with the loss of more veterans and coach Waseige . They failed to qualify for five successive major finals from Euro 2004 until Euro 2012 , and went through an equal number of head coaches . In between , a promising new generation was maturing at the 2007 European U @-@ 21 Championship ; Belgium 's squad qualified for the following year 's Summer Olympics in Beijing , where the Young Red Devils squad finished fourth . Seventeen of them appeared in the senior national team , albeit without making an immediate impact . Belgium finished in second (and last) place at the Kirin Cup in May 2009 , and lost against the 125th FIFA @-@ ranked team of Armenia in September 2009 . After Georges Leekens ' second stint as national manager , his assistant Marc Wilmots became the caretaker in May 2012 .

After two matches as interim coach , Wilmots agreed to replace Leekens as manager . Following his appointment , the team 's results improved , such that some foreign media regarded it as another Belgian golden generation . The young Belgian squad qualified as unbeaten group winners for the 2014 World Cup finals , and earned Belgium 's second ever place in a World Cup quarter @-@ finals with a four @-@ game winning streak . Belgium qualified for Euro 2016 with a match to spare in October 2015 , and took the top spot in the FIFA World Rankings for the first time in November 2015 , to stay first for five months . In the following year , Belgium could not confirm their role as outsider at the European Championship with a quarter @-@ final exit ; this prompted the RBFA to dismiss Wilmots . In the 2018 World Cup qualifying allocation , they were seeded first in their group .

= = Kit = =

In home matches , the team 's outfield players traditionally wear the colours of the Belgian flag : black , yellow and red . Red dominates the strip and is often the sole jersey colour , hence the Red Devils nickname . The away colours are usually white , black or both ; in 2014 , the squad introduced a third , yellow kit . Their shirts are often trimmed with tricolores at the margins . Since 1981 , the RBFA emblem has been the national team 's badge ; the previous badge was a yellow lion on a black shield , similar to the escutcheon of the national coat of arms .

For their first unofficial match in 1901 , the Belgian team wore white jerseys with tricoloured bands on the upper arms . Around their third unofficial game in 1902 , it was decided that they would put on a " shirt with national colours ... [that would indicate ,] with a stripe , the number of times every player has participated in an encounter " . Since 1904 , Belgium 's classic all @-@ red jersey design has been altered twice . In 1904 ? 05 , the squad briefly wore satin shirts with three horizontal bands in red , yellow and black ; according to sports journalist Victor Boin , the shirts set " the ugliness record " . During the 1970s , manager Raymond Goethals chose an all @-@ white combination to improve the team 's visibility during evening matches ; as a result , they were temporarily known as the White Devils .

Six clothing manufacturers have supplied the official team strip . Since 2014 , it has been produced by Adidas , who was also the supplier from 1974 to 1980 , and from 1982 to 1991 . Former kit manufacturers are Umbro (1970 ? 1973) , Admiral (1981 ? 1982) , Diadora (1992 ? 1999) , Nike (1999 ? 2010) and BURRDA (2010 ? 2014) .

= = Home stadium = =

Numerous former and current venues in 11 urban areas have hosted Belgium 's home games . Most of these matches have been played in Brussels at the Heysel Plateau , on the site of the present @-@ day King Baudouin Stadium ? a multipurpose facility with a seating capacity of 50 @,@ 122 . Its field also hosts the team 's final training sessions before domestic games . Since 2007 , most physical preparation takes place at the National Football Centre in Tubize , or at Anderlecht 's training ground in the Neerpede quarter . Apart from Belgian home friendlies , at the international level Belgium 's national stadium has also hosted six European Championship games .

In 1930 , for the country 's centennial , the venue was christened the Jubilee Stadium with an unofficial match between Belgium and the Netherlands . At that time , the stadium had a capacity of 75 @,@ 000 . In 1946 , it was renamed Heysel Stadium after its city quarter . This new name became associated with the tragedy preceding the 1985 European Cup final between Juventus and Liverpool ; 39 spectators died after riots in the then antiquated building . Three years after the disaster , plans were unveiled for a renovation ; in 1995 , after two years of work , the modernised stadium was named after the late King Baudouin . In May 2013 , the Brussels @-@ Capital Region announced that the King Baudouin Stadium would be replaced by Eurostadium , elsewhere on the Heysel Plateau ; two years later , a 2019 date was set for the stadium 's completion .

= = Team image = =

= = = Media coverage = = =

The first live coverage of a Belgian sporting event occurred on 3 May 1931 when journalist Gust De Muynck commentated on the international football game between Belgium and the Netherlands on radio . Later , football broadcasts were also televised . As 60 per cent of Belgians speak Dutch and 40 per cent French , commentaries for the national team matches are provided in both languages . The games are not broadcast in German ? the third official language in Belgium . During Belgium 's tournament appearances in the 1980s and the early 1990s , Rik De Saedeleer crowned himself the nation 's most famous football commentator with his emotional and humorous reports .

Initially the matches were transmitted mainly on public television channels : the former BRTN in

Dutch , and the RTBF in French . Since 1994 , commercial channels such as vtm and its sister channel Kanaal 2 , and VIER in Flanders , have purchased broadcasting rights . As of July 2016 , the round @-@ of @-@ 16 match against the United States at the 2014 World Cup was the most @-@ watched programme in Belgian television history , with an audience of over four million viewers out of 11 @.@ 3 million Belgian citizens .

In April 2014 , the VRT started transmitting a nine @-@ piece , behind @-@ the @-@ scenes documentary about the national team filmed during the 2014 World Cup qualifiers , titled Iedereen Duivel (Everybody Devil) . Cable broadband provider Telenet broadcast an eight part documentary about individual players titled Rode Helden (Red Heroes) .

= = = Actions = = =

Multiple events were organised for the fans during the squad 's peak popularity in the 2010s . During the 2014 World Cup qualifiers , a string of interactive events called the Devil Challenges were organised . The premise was that small groups of international players would do a favour in return for each of the five comprehensive chores their supporters completed (" colour Belgium red " , " gather 500 @,@ 000 decibels " , etc .) , all of which were accomplished . In June 2013 , the Belgian national team 's first ever Fan Day attracted over 20 @,@ 000 supporters ; a second was held after the 2014 World Cup . On the days of Belgium 's 2014 World Cup group matches , large dance events titled Dance with the Devils (a pun on the title of a 2001 D @-@ Devils ' trance album) took place in three Belgian cities . This type of happening was repeated during Belgium 's Euro 2016 group matches , in Antwerp 's Lotto Arena .

Occasionally , the Belgian team directly supported charity . They played at minimum five unofficial games of which the returns were for charitable purposes : two against France , in 1914 and in 1916 , and three against the Netherlands , in 1926 , 1932 and 1941 . In mid @-@ 1986 , when the Belgian delegation reached the Mexico World Cup semi @-@ finals , the squad started a project titled Casa Hogar , an idea of delegation leader Michel D 'Hooghe . Casa Hogar is a home for street children in the Mexican industrial city of Toluca , to which the footballers donated part of their tournament bonuses . In August 2013 , the national team supported four social projects through the charity fund Football + Foundation , by playing an A @-@ match with a plus sign on the shoulders of their jerseys and auctioning the shirts .

In 2002 , the national squad held its first anti @-@ racism campaign in which they posed with slogans . A home Euro 2012 qualifier was given the theme of respect for diversity in 2010 ; this UEFA @-@ supported action was part of the European FARE Action Week . Ex @-@ Red Devil Dimitri Mbuyu ? the first black Belgium player (in 1987) ? was engaged as godfather , and other foreign , current , and former footballers who played in the Belgian top division participated .

= = = Supporters = = =

Fans of the Belgian national team display the country 's tricolour national flag , usually with an emphasis on the red element . In 2012 , local supporter clubs merged into one large Belgian federation named 1895 after the foundation year of the RBFA . One year later , 1895 had 24 @,@ 000 members . The nationwide interest in the football squad has also been reflected by the occasional presence of Belgian monarchs at their matches since 1914 . One of the greatest moments for the Belgian team and their 12th man was in mid @-@ 1986 when the Belgian delegation at the Mexico World Cup received a warm " welcome home " . When the World Cup semi @-@ finalists appeared on the balcony of Brussels Town Hall , the adjoining Grand Place square was filled with an ecstatic crowd that cheered as though their squad had won a major tournament .

The team 's deterioration after the 2002 World Cup lead to their absence from the end stages of the next five major tournaments , and strained the national side 's popularity . Between 2004 and 2010 , local journalists called the Belgian footballing nation " mortally ill " . Some fans continued to support their squad in bad times . Ludo Rollenberg was one of the most loyal fans attending the team 's games worldwide since 1990 , missing only the Japanese Kirin Cup in 1999 , and two other matches

by 2006 . He was the only supporter to attend their game in Armenia in 2009 . In 2008 , hope surged when Belgium 's U @-@ 23 won fourth place at the Olympics in Beijing ; several of these Olympians later appeared on the senior team .

Just before the kick @-@ off of a 2014 World Cup home qualifier , Belgium 's footballers saw a first tifo banner , sized 10 @.@ 5 by 11 @.@ 5 metres (34 by 38 ft) depicting a devil in the national colours . The presence of many Belgian players in top leagues abroad , such as the Premier League , and promising results under Marc Wilmots , increased fans ' enthusiasm and belief in a successful World Cup campaign . Because of this popularity peak , two Belgian monuments were decorated in national colours for the 2014 FIFA World Cup event ; the Manneken Pis statue received a child @-@ sized version of the new Belgian uniform , and facets of the Atomium 's upper sphere were covered in black , yellow and red vinyl .

= = = Nickname and logo = = =

After a 1905 match , a Dutch reporter wrote that three Belgian footballers " work [ed] as devils " . A year later Léopold FC manager Pierre Walckiers nicknamed the players Red Devils , inspired by their jersey colour , and the achievement of three successive victories in 1906 . Since 2012 , the team logo is a red trident (or three @-@ pronged pitchfork) , an item that is often associated with the devil . Before that , the national squad had three official anthropomorphous mascots . The first was a lion in team kit named Diabolix , a reference to the central symbol in the Belgian coat of arms that appeared on the team jerseys from 1905 to 1980 . In accordance with their epithet , the next mascots were a red super @-@ devil and a fan @-@ made modern devil .

= = Rivalries = =

Belgium 's main football rivals are its neighbours the Netherlands and France , with which it shares close cultural and political relations . The matchup between the Belgian and Dutch team is known as the Low Countries derby ; as of June 2016 they have played each other in 125 official games . The clash between the Belgian and French sides is nicknamed le Match Sympathique in French (" the Friendly Match ") ; they have contested 73 official games as of June 2016 .

Belgium won the first four ? unofficial ? matches against the Netherlands , but lost their first FIFA @-@ recognised contest . The two national teams played each other biannually between 1905 and 1964 , except during the World Wars . They have met 18 times in major tournament campaigns , and have played at least 35 friendly cup matches : in Belgium for the Coupe Vanden Abeele , and in the Netherlands for the Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad @-@ Beker . The overall balance favours the Netherlands , with 55 wins against 41 Belgian victories . The Low Countries ' squads co @-@ operated in fundraising initiatives between 1925 and 1941 ; they played five unofficial games for charity , FIFA and the Belgian Olympic Committee .

The first match between Belgium and France , the Évence Coppée Trophy played in 1904 , was the first official game for both teams and the first official football match between independent countries on the European continent . Until 1967 , the sides met almost annually . As of May 2016 , France has played most often against Belgium in international football . Belgium have the better record , with 30 wins to France 's 24 .

= = Management = =

Since 1904 , the RBFA , 23 permanent managers and two caretaker managers have officially been in charge of the national team ; this includes one national footballer selector . As of 15 July 2016 , a crew of over 20 RBFA employees guides the player group ; it has no head coach after the dismissal of Marc Wilmots . As of 15 July 2016 , Wilmots is statistically the best performing Belgium manager with an average of 2 @.@ 18 points per match . These results led to Belgium 's top FIFA ranking spot in 2015 , and earned him the title of Best Coach of the Year at the 2015 Globe Soccer Awards . Under Guy Thys , the squad achieved record results at World and European championships ; World

Soccer magazine accordingly proclaimed him Manager of the Year in 1986 .

Rather than developing innovative team formations or styles of play , Belgium 's managers applied conventional tactics . At the three 1930s World Cups , the Red Devils were aligned in a contemporary 2 ? 3 ? 5 " pyramid " . In 1954 , Doug Livingstone 's squad played in a 3 ? 2 ? 5 " WM " arrangement during World Cup matches . Throughout most of their tournament games in the 1970s , the 1980s and the 1990s , the team played in a 4 ? 4 ? 2 formation . Since Raymond Goethals ' leadership in the 1970s , a key strength of the Belgian squad has been their systematic use of the offside trap , a defensive tactic that was already intensively applied in the 1960s by Anderlecht coach Pierre Sinibaldi . According to football journalist Wim De Bock , " master tactician " Goethals represented the " conservative , defensive football of the Belgian national team " ; he added that in the 1970s , the contrast between the Belgian playing style and the Total Football of their Dutch rivals " could not be bigger " .

In an attempt to win a game at the 1998 World Cup , Georges Leekens chose a 4 ? 3 ? 3 arrangement for Belgium 's second and third group matches . Robert Waseige , Belgium coach around 2000 , said that " above all , [his] 4 ? 4 ? 2 system [was] holy " , in the sense that he left good attackers on the bench to keep his favourite formation . Wilmots opted for the 4 ? 3 ? 3 line @-@ up again , with the intention of showing dominant football against any country .

= = Players = =

= = = Current = = =

The following 23 players were in the final squad for Euro 2016 . Note that Eden Hazard served as captain following Vincent Kompany 's injury , and that the RBFA listed all wingers as forwards .

Caps and goals are correct as of 1 July 2016 after the game against Wales ; only FIFA @-@ recognised matches are included . The player numbers for Euro 2016 were assigned on 31 May .

= = = Recent = = =

The following footballers were part of a national selection in the past 12 months , but are not part of the current squad .

Notes