

Georgian Football's Rise: Triumph and the Impact of Success

In 2024 Georgia qualified for the European Championship for the first time in its history. Today, football is deeply woven into the country's identity, and Georgia is widely seen as a football-loving nation. But this success did not come easily. Georgian football has lived through years of disappointment, heartbreak, criticism, and hard work. For a long time, it was something people joked about, sometimes even Georgians themselves.

The real shift began in 2018 with the launch of the UEFA Nations League. That competition marked a new chapter, symbolized by Giorgi Chakvetadze scoring the first goal in the tournament's history. From that moment, Georgian football started to change. The national team came painfully close to qualifying for Euro 2020, only to fall to North Macedonia. That defeat remains one of the most emotional moments in Georgian football history. The circumstances made it even harder: COVID-19 restrictions kept fans out of the stadium, meaning the team played without the support of the Komagebi, and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia was unavailable due to the virus. The atmosphere, the energy, and the belief were all missing.

Still, the team did not stop believing. When the next season began, something shifted. Public support grew, attitudes changed, and stadiums slowly filled again. Georgian footballers finally began receiving the appreciation they had worked for over so many years.

The word "Komagi" means a dedicated supporter in Georgian, and "Komagebi" are the heartbeat of the national team's fan culture. Since 2010, they have followed the team everywhere they could, creating an unmistakable atmosphere before and during matches. Their role became especially visible during the 2023/24 season, when they found themselves constantly in the spotlight. Media outlets lined up for interviews, and their presence became part of the national team.

One of their most powerful traditions is the pre-match march. While these gatherings were not new, they were still nothing compared to March 2024. During March 2024 Streets were filled with supporters, journalists, cameras, drones, and live broadcasts from almost every major channel to capture this amazing support from "Komagebi". Nearly 200 "Komagi" traveled to Germany, and together with other Georgian fans, they created an atmosphere that caught the attention of all of Europe. Their passion became a symbol of Georgian football's rise.

This success also reshaped sports journalism in Georgia. Football content exploded across television and digital platforms. Articles, live reports, and video stories multiplied, and sports journalism moved into the spotlight. During Euro 2024, Georgian sports journalists were everywhere, including in Germany, where hundreds worked directly from stadiums. Interest in sports journalism as a career has grown significantly, playing its own role in the development of Georgian football. While domestic leagues still struggle for attention, progress is clearly on its way.

Georgia's Euro 2024 campaign marked a historic moment. After defeating Portugal and reaching the Round of 16, media outlets across Europe described Georgia as one of the tournament's most impressive debutants. German streets filled with Georgian fans, led by the "Komagebi", creating scenes that will be remembered for years. Many Georgian journalists were present to share these moments with audiences back home. However, a troubling reality emerged: sphere is lacking sponsors, media organizations or public institutions are needed to grow this part of journalism. This raises serious questions about the future structure and independence of sports journalism in the country.

The players themselves gained long-overdue recognition. More Georgian footballers are now playing in Europe's top five leagues, and striker Giorgi Mikautadze finished the tournament among its top scorers. These achievements matter far beyond individual success. They elevate Georgian football's reputation and strengthen the role of sports journalism in telling its story.

The rise of football in Georgia has had an impact far beyond the pitch. It brought a sense of unity and pride rarely seen before. Children left their screens behind to play football outside, inspired by what they saw. The national team's journey showed what is possible when belief, talent, and support come together. As more Georgian players succeed internationally, they bring attention, opportunity, and economic value back home.

One chapter of Georgian football history has closed, but a new one has already begun. There is still much to prove and even more stories left to tell.