

Who is ...? William Gaillard



William Gaillard is the Senior Advisor to the President of UEFA, Michel Platini.

Biography

William Gaillard, after five years as UEFA's Director of Communications and Public Affairs, is, since 2009, the Senior Advisor to the UEFA President Michel Platini. He advises the UEFA President on political issues, communication and social responsibility.

Prior to joining UEFA, French born William Gaillard had an impressive professional career including Head of Media Relations at the European Commission Delegation to the US (1978-1983, Washington DC), Chief External Relations at the United Nations (UNRWA, Vienna) (Rome), Director of Communication and Political Affairs at the UN International Drug Control Programme (Vienna) and Director of Corporate Communication of the International Air Transport Association (IATA, 1994-2003).



Interview

In 2005 you declared the fight against racism to be the Number One priority in UEFA's social objectives. Have you reached your goals thus far, and what is still left to achieve?

Fighting racism and discrimination is, almost by definition, an endless battle. By evoking a "zero tolerance" policy, UEFA has been able to achieve a great deal of success as far as eliminating blatant racism from the football stands. Gone are the days when people felt free to insult others or throw bananas at players from a different ethnic or religious background. The picture is of course brighter in the countries where the football and the national authorities have been cooperating on both educational and repressive measures. Racism is a social phenomenon, its roots lie in troubled social and economic circumstances and football is very much part of society. As such and because of its popularity and visibility, football becomes often the target of violent extreme political factions that tend to express themselves through racism and other forms of discrimination. Our struggle against these appalling phenomena of which football is a victim is also part of our duty towards society. By aiming to get rid of this scourge football is also contributing to a better, more open and more tolerant society.

The UEFA-Intertoto Cup was last played in summer 2008 and then subsequently integrated into the new UEFA Europa League, just one example of the close ties between UEFA and the regulated sports lotteries. Why do these strong bonds continue to work so well?

Regulated sports lotteries and UEFA operate in the same field with the same values. Both believe in fair and regulated competition. Both rely on sophisticated systems of social redistribution that guarantee the

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development of grassroots sports. Both are active in fighting sporting fraud and the organized criminal networks that are behind it. The values and outlook they hold in common naturally strengthened these bonds and make cooperation inevitable.

The fight against corruption in sport is a constant struggle. What is UEFA doing in this field?

For a number of years UEFA had been carefully monitoring the phenomenon. These efforts were considerably increased two years ago and the relationship with law enforcement authorities Europe-wide, much strengthened. This has implied on the part of UEFA, the dedication to this task of growing financial and human resources. Strict disciplinary measures are naturally associated to this effort. We are also aware that the sporting world cannot cope alone with the challenges ahead and we have been calling for a concerted effort by the European states to criminalise and repress these illegal activities, if need be through the appointment of dedicated prosecutors.

Before joining UEFA, you used to work for the UN International Drug Control Programme. Does this experience help you in any way when dealing with these new challenges now?

I leave the fight against sporting fraud to my excellent colleagues who are experts in this field. Obviously, my background at UNDCP makes me aware that sports is just seen as “another” market by organized crime and that it must avoid becoming the weak link in the crime fighting chain.

Do you think the new UEFA Financial Fairplay initiative can have some positive input against corruption in football?

Although its main purpose remains the financial sustainability of football clubs, the increased accounting transparency that Financial Fairplay measures imply can perhaps provide a useful tool in the struggle against corruption.

Fast forward: Manchester United is facing FC Barcelona in the UEFA Champions League Final. Everyone wants to know your tip –who do you think will win?

Two great clubs, two exciting teams at the top of their form, both 2011 national champions, great players, great coaches, great traditions, really exciting!

Contact

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