



From the bottom of my heart I welcome a new and interesting undertaking of our Armenian colleagues. A human being is supposed to be always in the process of self-development and perfection. I think that your new rubric will exactly facilitate the development of these opportunities. That is why I accepted at once the offer of my friend and colleague Arno Sargsyan and I am very grateful to him for giving me a chance to tell you few words about my country:

Football in Georgia is the sport No.1, despite the fact that the current sporting results in other kind of sports are even high than in football (e.g. wrestling, female chess, rugby etc.). May 13, 1981 was the most successful day for Georgian football because FC DINAMO Tbilisi won the UEFA Cup Winners Cup this day. Nowadays, people in Georgia think that all of them are at home in two things: football and politics. That's why they are paying a special attention to every detail in Georgian football development as a whole as well as to the licensing matters.

Like in many other European countries the licensing system was introduced in Georgia for the first time in 2003-2004 by the UEFA initiative. The idea was quite incomprehensible and strange from the very beginning. All football clubs were willing to get a licence then, independently, whether they had chances to participate in the UEFA competitions or not. There was a complete chaos in clubs at that period

of time: in particular, there was no booking-keeping at all, undeveloped infrastructure, unqualified staff, no proper communication. Of course, we could not say that our first steps and decisions were quite adequate and right. We, together with our clubs, had been learning and developing the vitally important licensing matters.

Gradually, the licensing administration gained certain experience and became efficient. The first earnest decision was to impose a ban to play European competitions on the National stadium as long as it did not meet the UEFA standards and needed urgent reconstruction. No matches were played on the stadium during one season and then the management undertook certain steps to solve the existing problem. As the result we had a newly renovated National stadium practically in a year. After that, the number of stadiums, where our clubs can play the UEFA qualification matches, has been increasing with every year (1->3 ->4).

Last season we introduced the licensing system into the Domestic Top League too. Both the UEFA and National requirements are identical, the difference is in the stringency of the rules and the sanctions imposed. Today, there is no doubt in the licensing process advantages, because every new season more and more football clubs, involved in the process, improve their standards. Unfortunately, there are some clubs still, which do not fully understand the significance of the licensing process and consider our requirements as a punishment...

There are certain problems in the regional football development too. In the Antique times Jason took out from Poti city (Black Sea coast) to Europe our wisdom – the Golden Fleece. And in the 20th century exactly from the Poti city his Majesty Football entered Georgia. You can hardly find this city on the map of Georgian football today. That's why we have been making every effort to restore the old football traditions in the regions. We want the 1st League (our 2nd division) football clubs to improve their standards under the umbrella of the licensing process and become the basis and reserve for the Top League.

The paradox is that, despite the big popularity of football in Georgia, you can hardly find any fans on the stadiums' stands... Our government approved a new infrastructure development program last year, according to which 8 Georgian stadiums were supposed to be renovated in accordance with the European standards. Next, the war and the world crisis came, which hampered the initiatives badly...

The last season's practice showed that the licensing system required more resources and rational distribution of the existing processes. We separated the UEFA and National licensing process

management, but at the same time we still kept the coordination of both processes. Today, the licensing administration, experts as well as decision making bodies' staff comprised of 30 members.

Due to the club licensing system we managed to coordinate different directions of the GFF activity such as stadiums certification, football schools' and coaches' licensing etc. I do not believe in the existence of any ready-made formula, especially in football, overriding mathematical laws. The licensing process is the obligatory minimum, but not enough to success. Success depends upon other factors such as availability of talents in which the Georgian football has always been rich, but now, as our coaches say, there is a shortage of the promising players in the country... But I am sure that there are actually talents in our country today. The main purpose of the licensing is directed exactly to the process of all-round development of any player under the supervision of the high qualified coaches, on the proper infrastructure. All those involved in the licensing admit that the licensing system plays a decisive role in the successful football development.

I would like to specially underline the UEFA role in the licensing system development as a whole. We always feel the UEFA real and active support in our routine activity. Another very useful and helpful tool is the UEFA seminars. It is the place where we can discuss, argue, share experience in different problematic matters of the licensing process, listen to the opinion of both the UEFA and National Associations' representatives. The licensing system provides new opportunities for the football management and cooperation at the European level.

Finally, I would like to avail of the opportunity once more to appreciate the interest of our Armenian colleagues and wish you success in your activities. I also wish that the matches of our teams become as interesting and important as it was in the past.

Bakar Jordania