



UEFA President Michel Platini has joined public officials and UEFA member association presidents in Belgium to mark the 100th anniversary of the 1914 Christmas truce.

UEFA President Michel Platini joined public officials and UEFA member association presidents in Comines-Warneton, Belgium, today to mark the 100th anniversary of the World War One truce.

The special part played by football in the truce on Christmas Day in 1914 was honoured by a sculpture commissioned by UEFA and unveiled at the commemoration. To coincide with the event, UEFA published a four-minute film featuring European football icons. It brings to life the extraordinary events in Flanders 100 years ago, when, on a cold December evening, soldiers on both sides of the battle lines lowered their arms, started singing Christmas carols and played football.

Mr Platini said: "We are gathered here as one to mark that moment of brotherhood and friendship which reassures us of our shared humanity. I find it particularly moving to imagine those young men 100 years ago finding a common language in football to express their shared brotherhood.

"Today football is a universal language which opens our hearts, which enables contact between cultures and brings people together across all borders and frontiers. All those years ago, football provided a vital bridge for the spontaneous expression of humanity. So it was perfectly normal for European football to pay a glowing tribute to them now, to all those who decided on that evening to think about something positive and play the game they loved."

The short film produced by UEFA features Mr Platini, England and Manchester United FC legend Sir Bobby Charlton, France coach Didier Deschamps and former Germany and FC Bayern München player Paul Breitner.

The current players to appear in the film are: Wayne Rooney (Manchester United FC striker and England captain), Hugo Lloris (Tottenham Hotspur FC goalkeeper and France captain), Bastian Schweinsteiger (FC Bayern München and Germany midfielder) and Philipp Lahm (FC Bayern München midfielder and former Germany captain).

Prime Minister of the United Kingdom David Cameron recorded the following message commemorating the centenary of the truce: "World War 1 profoundly changed our world and 100 years on it, it is right that it is remembered. Every war is cruel, but this war was unlike any other. The death and the suffering was on a scale that outstrips any other conflict. Yet there was this unique moment, when the guns fell silent and football united people. When the armies set out, many thought that they'd be home by Christmas, so as we approach the centenary of that unlikely game of football, it is right that Europe's football family remembers and cherishes the peace that we now have. "

President of France François Hollande added his voice to commemorations by saying: "On

Christmas Day 100 years ago, in a spirit of goodwill, men emerged from their trenches to share a moment of friendship. At the front on that 25 December, the shelling and shooting stopped. Just for a few hours, but long enough for young French, English, German and Belgian soldiers to exchange looks and smiles, and to play a spontaneous game of football. This universal sport briefly gave those soldiers a chance to lay down their arms and their uniforms. They were no longer Frenchmen, Englishmen, Germans or Belgians that Christmas morning in 1914; they were just men. This story is the greatest tribute that could ever be paid to sport and to football."

Sir Bobby Charlton said: "I am absolutely flattered to have the opportunity to take part in this film. It is such a great feeling to imagine that, in something that is completely devastating like war, football brings everyone together. Football is such a dramatic game – and for those two forces to come together in the middle of a war and to say that it is a disgrace and that it shouldn't be happening. It is something that I am unbelievably proud of."

London-based creative agency Designwerk and sculpture specialists MDM were commissioned by UEFA to produce a special memorial to celebrate the remarkable events 100 years ago between Ypres and Lille. The look and feel of the sculpture reflects the surroundings of the event. It is made from rusted steel, sitting on a stone platform, marking a moment of hope and inspiration while observing reproductions of German and British trenches. There are two black cracks running to the ground from the monument to each trench, connecting past and present.

Script author Michael Morpurgo said: "I think it's very significant that UEFA have done this and that the politicians and footballers from different countries have joined together, realising and understanding the significance of this particular story for us today. That's why they've done it. That's why you're making this film. It's because we all recognise that this was a moment of real hope for the men who took part in it.

"It was dashed hope, but then all these years later it has been to a great extent, a realised hope. Sadly they weren't alive to see it but it seems to me that, for all nations, when you go to war you don't fight a war in order to make another war afterwards.

"If there was a thought in the head of those soldiers it must have been: I'm doing this, yes because I want my side to win, but I want my children and my children's children to live in peace. And I bet that that was in the heads of an awful lot of soldiers, whatever the colour of their uniform during that war. They were prepared to go through what they were going through, yes because they were told to and yes because they wanted to win, but at the end of the day if

it was worth doing at all, then it was worth doing so that there would be peace. And everyone could go home and this thing could stop."

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