



Basques, Catalans and Galicians play the attack against Spanish selection

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Will the Euro 2008 be the last big competition of football competed by an united Spanish national selection? The claims of the communities of Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country in sports overcame, on December 29th in Bilbao, a symbolic cape. By signing the San Mamés statement, the representatives of the three autonomous governments try to speed up the recognition of their respective "national" selections. Outside match Country Basques-Catalonia (1-1), Miren Azkarate and Anxela Bugallo, Basque and Galician ministers of Culture, and Josep-Lluís Carod-Rovira, vice-president of the generalitat of Catalonia, approved a text saying that their communities « detain [...] exclusive competence for the promotion of sports » and announcing that « as part of this competence [...] will be promoted the participation of their own clubs and confederations at the higher level of competition, as well as the full involvement of their own federations in the international confederations ».

Acknowledgment. The promotion of clubs aimed by the text leaves sceptical. The participation in European competitions passes by qualification in a national championship. It is difficult to imagine FC Barcelona, Athletic Bilbao or Deportivo Coruna leaving the Spanish Liga to play regional competitions of small level. On the other hand, the acknowledgment of a national football selection is a true hobbyhorse for these three communities which enjoy the most advanced statutes of self-government in Spain. The subject has crystallized the passions. In October, 2006, a first match between Basques and Catalans gave rise to nationalist claims in the presence of the presidents of both autonomous governments. June, 2007, in the Venezuela, the Basque team gathered behind a streamer « We are a nation: make it official! » In September, the deposit of a law proposal for the acknowledgment of teams by Catalan nationalists caused incidents in the Parliament of Madrid. Catalan and Basque deputies wearing their selection's jersey while a deputy of the popular Party (right) went up to the stand dressed in the Spanish jersey.

Would such acknowledgment be a sports disaster for Spain? Not necessarily. If some Catalans of high level still appear in globalize FC Barcelona, the Spanish national team don't dip any more into Galicien or Basque reservoirs which clubs play usefulness in the Liga. Besides, the poor understanding between players of different regions is regularly moved forward to explain the recurrent poor performances of the national team. Sportingly always, autonomous selections are ready. These last seasons, Basques beat Bulgaria, Uruguay or Nigeria while the Catalans won against Chile and in Ecuador. Public opinions will to be fan from new colours. They arrived to burn a Spanish flag, at the end of December, in the stadium of Bilbao.

Affiliation. Remain to persuade the leaders of international football. To be affiliated to FIFA, the federation of a region must obtain the approval of the federation of the State on which it depends. This disposition allowed, in 2004, the membership of New Caledonia. Other condition: a federation is accepted only after affiliation to a continental confederation. And UEFA changed its statutes in 2002 in order that only the federations of « independent States acknowledged by the UNO » will be accepted. A modification made for closing the door to the Gibraltar membership under the pressure of Spain...