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MANCHESTER UNITED **V**
REAL SOCIEDAD

OFFICIAL

2013/14

PROGRAMME



GIANT SQUAD POSTER // RAFAEL INTERVIEW // EURO MASTER GIGGS // DAVID MOYES

MEET THE VISITORS

REAL SOCIEDAD



PLAYER PROFILES

Sociedad have a long-established tradition of using Basque-born players, but also boast plenty of international quality. Meet tonight's opposition page 26-28



IMANOL AGIRRETXE

La Real's home-grown striker is hoping to add another big-name scalp to a list that includes Barcelona and Valencia – he can't wait for a first taste of OT action p30-31

TOUGH TIMES...

With many players who came through the youth ranks together, the Basque-dominated squad is a tight-knit group, but they've been struggling so far this term. Can they turn it around this evening? ➔





BASQUES, TAKE A BOW



Introducing Real Sociedad, here at Old Trafford tonight to face the Reds for the first time in competition...

In 1989, The Royal Society Football Club of San Sebastian, to give Real Sociedad its full title, had a problem. Its policy of using locally born players nurtured through the youth system was faltering badly. Competition for Basque-born players with their local rivals Athletic Bilbao worsened matters, Athletic using their higher status and financial muscle to snare the best Basque quarry, poaching players from nearby Sociedad, Alaves and Osasuna.

Until 1989, *La Real*, the Basque country's second biggest club with average crowds of 24,000, was completely reliant on local talent. They only took players from the immediate province of Guipuzcoa, while Athletic were prepared to twist their own rules by recruiting from the partly Basque neighbouring regions of Navarra, or La Rioja, famous for wine rather than its Basque background.

Real Sociedad's strategy had stood for decades and often served them well. They are still eighth in the respected all-time Spanish league table, but the early '80s was their high point, bringing their first league title. League champions twice in succession, they also reached the semi-final of the European Cup. Bars in San Sebastian's old town – where numerous flags bear the legends like 'Tourists beware, the Basque country is not Spain' – still

proudly display posters of that side, immortalising legendary goalkeeper Luis Arconada, Perico Alonso, father of Real Madrid's Xabi Alonso, and the striker whose name inspired much juvenile British laughter during the 1982 World Cup, Lopez Ufarte.

When Athletic, with a world-class keeper of their own, Andoni Zubizarreta, matched Sociedad's achievement, winning the league in the following two years, Spanish football was again dominated by the Basques. Many in the region saw it as justification of their fight for independence. As arguably Europe's oldest race they had survived the repression of their ancient laws and complex language under the regime of General Franco, and now their sporting teams were triumphing over foes with far greater resources. Admirers of Peter Shilton, Pat Jennings or Ray Clemence may have disputed the opinion, but the Basques also claimed they were producing the best goalkeepers in Europe because of the defensive influence of their other national game *pelota* (imagine a game of squash with the ball travelling at over 150mph).

Real Sociedad were a big name. Steve Coppell chose them as opponents for his August 1986 testimonial, inviting them to Old Trafford for the only meeting so far between the clubs. The 12,826 crowd could have been



La Real provide a source of local pride

MEET THE VISITORS



Estadio Anoeta: *La Real* taking on Shakhtar on Matchday 1



John Toshack managed the club in two spells: 1985-89 and '91-94

etter (though playing five testimonial games in 1986-87 hardly helped) but they saw *La Real* steal the show in a 1-1 draw. *La Real* won the Copa del Rey later that season and haven't won a trophy since.

In 1988, under their Welsh manager John Toshack, they finished second to Real Madrid, scored 61 league goals and reached the Spanish cup final. A year later, though, the once triumphant club found themselves suddenly, and unexpectedly, floundering. They'd slipped to 11th position, managing just 38 league goals. Toshack left for Real Madrid and with Athletic replacing their striker Loren, the usual rotation, that of recruitment from the *cantera* (youth system), offered no strikers of the desired class.

"We called a meeting," said a club spokesman, "And we decided that the most important factor for us was a goalscorer. It was then that we made the decision to sign an outsider, the first non-Basque Sociedad player of the modern era."

Once this momentous decision had been made, Basque nationalism dictated that the outsider could not be a Spaniard. So they chose a scouser: John Aldridge, because "Aldridge is a killer in the box. He was strong, fast and polemical. We had to sign him."

Aldridge could never claim to have

**"ALDRIDGE WAS A KILLER
IN THE BOX. HE WAS STRONG,
FAST AND POLEMICAL.
WE HAD TO SIGN HIM"**

John Aldridge became the club's first non-Basque signing



supported Real Sociedad as a boy. Nor was he initially enthusiastic about moving. Three years earlier, he had realised his dream by signing for the team he watched home and away as a youngster, Liverpool. Aldridge had been the top scorer in the classy 1988 championship winning side, but Toshack recommended him to *La Real*, who offered £1.5 million and a salary far bigger than Aldridge's at Anfield. He took it, though he wasn't even sure where San Sebastian was.

That it is gloriously situated on a shell-shaped bay soon lifted the reluctant newcomer's spirits. The town's baroque architecture makes it one of the most elegant and fashionable Spanish seaside resorts.

"We couldn't believe it when I got there and saw two beaches and this wonderful promenade," recalls Aldridge. "I turned to my wife. Her smile made me realise there were good times ahead. I said: 'I didn't realise it was going to be this good.'"

Nor did Aldridge appreciate the significance of being Sociedad's first non-Basque player for over three decades.

"I'd been told that they mistrusted outsiders and that you had to be Basque to be fully accepted but I wasn't aware of the importance at all," he stated. "I could see my name in graffiti around the town, but couldn't



MEET THE VISITORS



Aldridge was pleasantly surprised by seaside San Sebastian



understand the Basque words around it. When I asked somebody what it meant they got a bit embarrassed. It said: 'No outsiders welcome here'."

Aldridge avoided talking about the political situation, told journalists he was there to score goals and was welcomed by his new team-mates.

Sociedad have since moved to a new 32,000 capacity home, but in 1989 resided at the Estadio Atocha, a tight and inadequate stadium in the town centre by the train station, not dissimilar to Millwall's old Den. Cramped for the home team, maybe, but also highly intimidating for visiting teams. Aldridge performed well in front of sceptical fans on his debut. They weren't sceptical two weeks later when he scored two goals against Barcelona in the Nou Camp.

Aldridge bagged 22 goals in his first season, 1989/90, including eight in six successive games, a club record that has yet to be bettered.

La Real were so happy with his contribution that when he returned for pre-season training they had signed two more English players, midfielder Kevin Richardson (right) from Arsenal for £750,000 and striker Dalian Atkinson – their first black player – from Sheffield

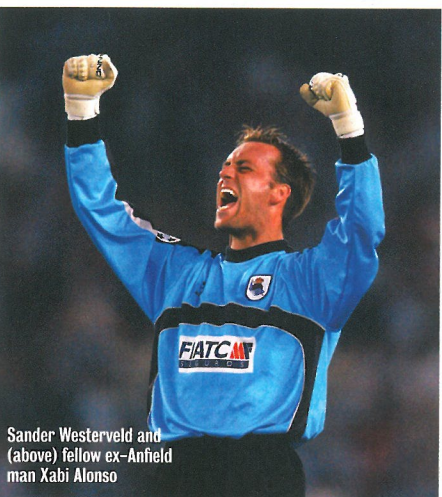
Wednesday for a club record £1.75m. The three appeared together on the front page of *Marca*, Spain's best selling newspaper, standing behind the Real Sociedad flag under the headline 'Extranjeros, Si'. (Foreigners, yes.)

Borrowing Aldridge's textbooks, Richardson learned a few Basque words and phrases, which was appreciated. He, too, enjoyed his time at the club, as have the numerous foreign

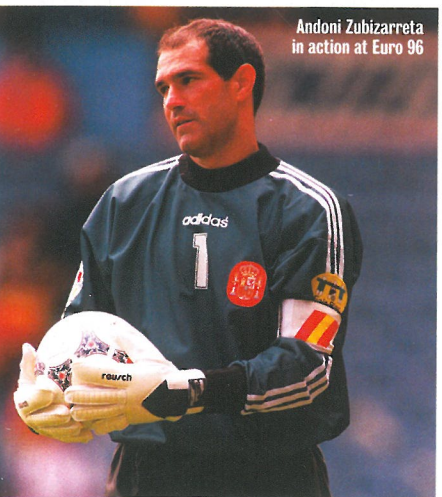
players who've joined since, such as Sander Westerveld, Darko Kovacevic, Nihat Kahveci and the Russia midfielder

Valery Karpin, all of whom came close to leading *La Real* to the title in 2002/03, losing to Real Madrid on the final day of the season – an achievement which led to huge celebrations in the city of 188,000 souls. That was the last time Sociedad played in the Champions League, but last season's surprise fourth-placed finish – they played three seasons in the second division from 2007 to 10 – means they're back and the 5,900 travelling fans inside Old Trafford tonight are determined to enjoy the occasion.

As for those supporters who initially objected to Aldridge's arrival? They weren't so accepting of his decision to leave and held up "Don't Go" banners inside the Atocha.



Sander Westerveld and (above) fellow ex-Anfield man Xabi Alonso



Andoni Zubizarreta in action at Euro 96

MEET THE VISITORS



SQUAD FOCUS

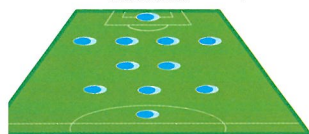
al went down to an injury-time
e-kick in Germany on Matchday 2,
ving them rooted to the foot of Group
t was a galling outcome for the
sques after working hard to protect a
int seemingly earned by Carlos Vela's
ualiser. The ex-Arsenal man lined up
the right of an attacking midfield
ee, with Haris Seferovic up top.

ayer Leverkusen v Real Sociedad,
06.10.13

(4-2-3-1)

Bravo

Martinez Mikel | Martinez de la Bella
Bergara
Vela Zurutuza Griezmann
Seferovic



GOALKEEPERS

1 | CLAUDIO
BRAVO

AGE 30

NATIONALITY CHILEAN

LEAGUE APPEARANCES 200

ng-serving stopper has been Chile's
1 for nearly a decade. He was unlucky
Matchday 2, conceding a rebound for
verkusen's opener after a fine save.
had little chance with Hegeler's
inning dead-ball winner.

3 | ENAUT
ZUBIKARAI

AGE 29

NATIONALITY BASQUE

LEAGUE APPEARANCES 27

one-club man, Zubikarai came up
ough the youth ranks at *La Real*
d learned his trade in the club's
eam. He's been the regular back-up
Bravo over the last few seasons
d had a run in the side last autumn.

DEFENDERS

02 | CARLOS
MARTINEZ

AGE 27

NATIONALITY BASQUE

LEAGUE APPEARANCES 139

Tall, big-striding right-back eats up
the ground on the flank and carries
an aerial goal threat, too. Like many of
the current first-team squad, he came
through Sociedad's B team before
graduating to the senior ranks.

03 | MIKEL
GONZALEZ

AGE 28

NATIONALITY BASQUE

LEAGUE APPEARANCES 215

Another experienced local boy,
centre-half Mikel has started both
Champions League ties in Group A
and captained the side against
Leverkusen on Matchday 2.

06 | INIGO
MARTINEZ

AGE 22

NATIONALITY BASQUE

LEAGUE APPEARANCES 68

Curiously he's listed as a midfielder in
UEFA's submitted list, but Inigo Martinez
is the club's first-choice centre-half,
ever-present in the club's first eight
La Liga games. He made his debut for
the Spanish national side in August.

15 | ION
ANSOTEGI

AGE 31

NATIONALITY BASQUE

LEAGUE APPEARANCES 170

When selected, Ansotegi is a towering
presence at the heart of the Sociedad
back line. In recent times he's been
behind Mikel and Inigo Martinez, but
started and captained in the last league
game before the international break.

19 | LIASSINE
CADAMURO

AGE 25

NATIONALITY FRENCH/ALGERIAN

LEAGUE APPEARANCES 140

Born in Toulouse to an Algerian father,
Cadamuro is now a full Algerian
international. His versatility is an asset
to Sociedad as he is able to play
centre-half or in either full-back position.

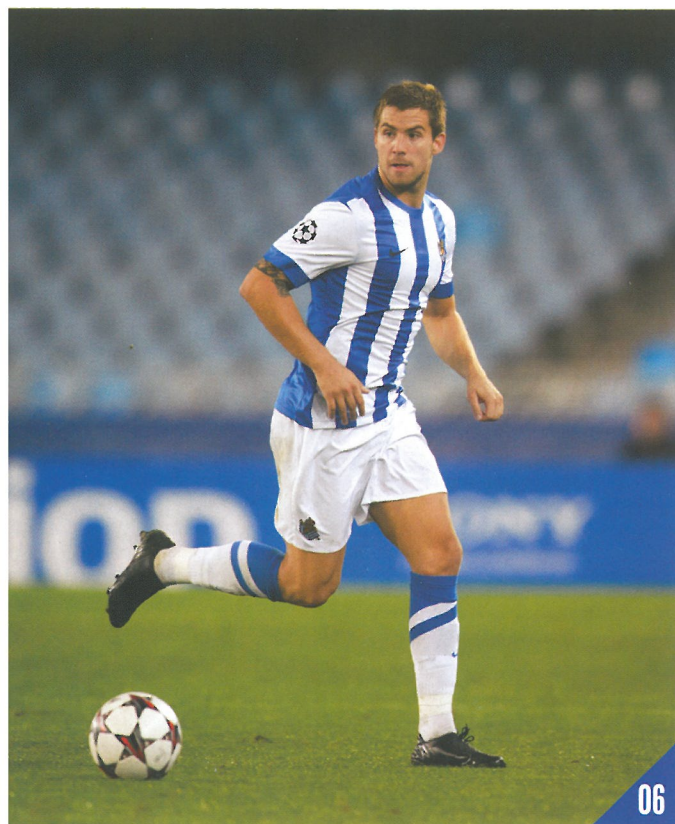
20 | JOSE
ANGEL

AGE 24

NATIONALITY SPANISH

LEAGUE APPEARANCES 13

Spanish Under-21 international is in his
second season on loan from Roma. He's
generally a back-up to Alberto de la
Bella at left-back, but featured in recent
draws against Sevilla and Malaga as
boss Arrasate rotates his squad.



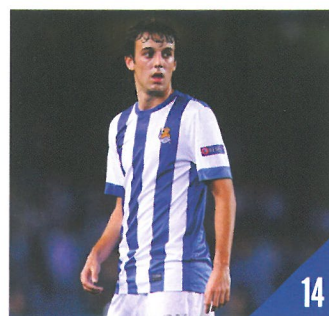
06



24



04



14

Statistics correct to 06.10.13

MIDFIELDERS

22 | DANI ESTRADA

AGE 26
NATIONALITY BASQUE
LEAGUE APPEARANCES 138

Left-back Estrada was handed a start in the recent game against Barcelona but had a torrid first half against Neymar and co, who were 3-0 up in no time at all. In fairness, he won't be the only defender to suffer at Barça's hands this term.

24 | ALBERTO DE LA BELLA

AGE 27
NATIONALITY SPANISH
LEAGUE APPEARANCES 123

Left-back made his way through the lower leagues in Spain, before joining Sociedad for their promotion campaign in 2009/10. He's played very little of the Basque club's four games in Europe so far this season.

04 | GORKA ELUSTONDO

AGE 26
NATIONALITY BASQUE
LEAGUE APPEARANCES 110

Defensive midfielder suffered relegation in his first season with the senior team back in 2006, but was a mainstay of the promotion campaign. He provided an effective shield against Leverkusen, despite the late disappointment.

05 | MARKEL BERGARA

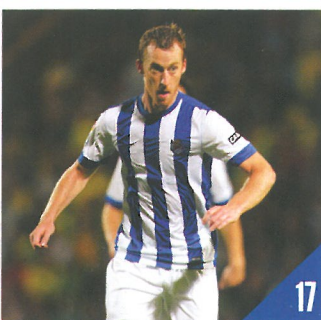
AGE 27
NATIONALITY BASQUE
LEAGUE APPEARANCES 112

Another defensive midfielder, who's been an automatic pick thus far in the Champions League. He'll be looking to provide a solid platform alongside Elustondo and atone for the late foul that led to Leverkusen's winner.

10 | XABI PRIETO

AGE 30
NATIONALITY BASQUE
LEAGUE APPEARANCES 320

The lone survivor from Sociedad's last Champions League campaign in 2003/04 (albeit he never rose from the bench). Prieto is a skilful right-winger with a decade's experience at the club. May also take a spot-kick if required.



17

14 | RUBEN PARDO

AGE 20
NATIONALITY SPANISH
LEAGUE APPEARANCES 48

Young midfielder was a key member of Spain's U19 European Championship winning team in 2011. He's often deployed from the bench to add energy and craft in the central spaces late on.

17 | DAVID ZURUTUZA

AGE 27
NATIONALITY FRENCH/BASQUE
LEAGUE APPEARANCES 126

Born in France but raised in the Basque country, attacking midfielder Zurutuza likes to play as a no.10, where he started the recent games against Leverkusen and Rayo Vallecano.



Manager: Jagoba Arrasate

Age: 35

Nationality: Basque

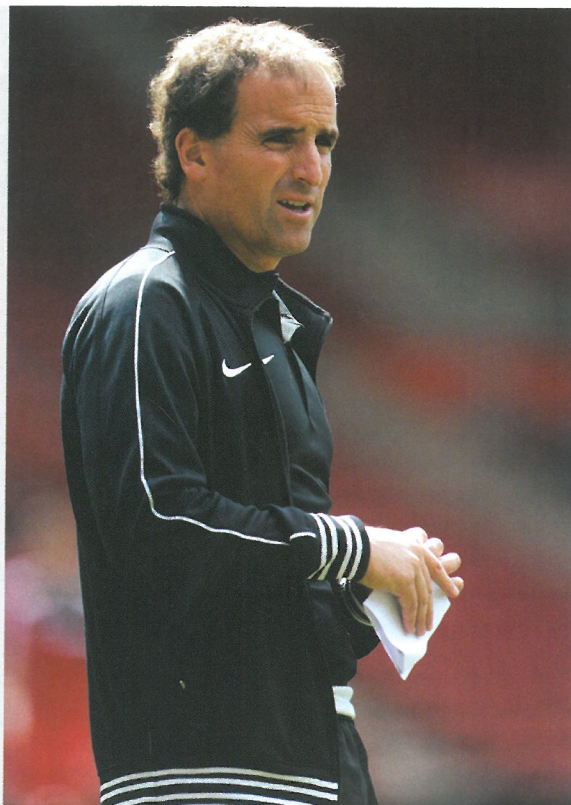
Former clubs: Berriatuko, Elgoibar

Former assistant manager Arrasate was promoted to the top job this summer after the incumbent – Philippe Montanier – turned down the offer of a new contract.

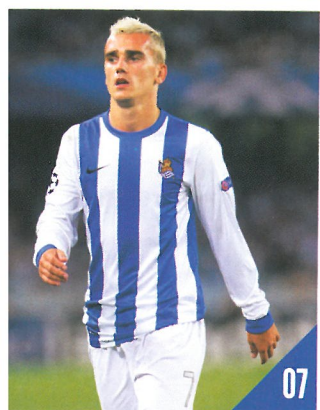
After a solid start it's fair to say the new man has found it tough going as the 2013/14 season develops. Early optimism, founded on an opening day win over Getafe and comfortable progress past Olympique Lyonnais to the Champions League group stage, has been swept aside by an eight-game winless run from early September up to the international break (this section went to press ahead of the weekend's visit to Valencia).

That's left Sociedad firmly in the bottom half of the early *Liga* table and without a point in Group A after two games, so Arrasate's last hope of qualification to the knockout stage is to turn around the team's fortunes in this double-header against United.

With plenty of Basque pride in the ranks, his side won't lack for effort in the attempt tonight.



18



07

MIDFIELDERS

13 | JAVIER
ROS

AGE 23

NATIONALITY BASQUE

LEAGUE APPEARANCES 13

Rocky midfielder has spent most of his early career with Real Sociedad B, but managed to push through into the first team last season. He came on as a late sub against Bayer Leverkusen.



08

07 | ANTOINE
GRIEZMANN

AGE 22

NATIONALITY FRENCH

LEAGUE APPEARANCES 151

French attacker is something of an adopted Basque, having been with the club since 2005. By trade a left-winger, this versatile bottle-blond can switch flanks, play as a striker, or even drop back into midfield if required.

08 | HARIŠ
SEFEROVIC

AGE 21

NATIONALITY SWISS

LEAGUE APPEARANCES 8

Seferovic signed from Fiorentina in the summer and has shown his range of finishing with a cute chip on debut against Getafe and a fierce long-range volley against Lyon. He likes to work the left channel and is one to watch tonight.

09 | IMANOL
AGIRRETXE

AGE 26

NATIONALITY BASQUE

LEAGUE APPEARANCES 160

Last season, this home-grown striker was second only to Carlos Vela in the scoring charts, with 13 goals to his name. The highlight was an injury-time winner against Barcelona in January, after being 2-0 down (exclusive interview overleaf).

11 | CARLOS
VELA

AGE 24

NATIONALITY MEXICAN

LEAGUE APPEARANCES 77

Vela signed from Arsenal in summer 2012 after a season-long loan. He's been the club's main source of goals in recent times, helping secure their qualification to the group stage and netting against Leverkusen on Matchday 2.

18 | CHORI
CASTRO

AGE 29

NATIONALITY URUGUAYAN

LEAGUE APPEARANCES 37

Left-winger has featured in all four Champions League games, brought on as a late sub in each. He scored the other two in that comeback win over Barça last term but is yet to register for *La Real* in 2013/14.



11

MEET THE VISITORS



**EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW**

IMANOL AGIRRETXE



a Real's homegrown dangerman has a tendency to score important goals in big games. So, excited by the opportunity to test himself at Old Trafford, he is again hoping to rise to the occasion

The kids kicking a ball on the beautiful beaches in San Sebastian don't dream of playing for Barcelona or Real Madrid. As the Atlantic waves crash nearby, they long to follow in the footsteps of Javier de Pedro, Mikel Arteta or Imanol Agirretxe – all of whom came through Real Sociedad, a junior club who often train on the sands.

Agirretxe, 26, is centre-forward for Real Sociedad. In January, he came off the bench when his team had been 2-0 down against Barcelona. They stormed back and he scored the winning goal to make it 3-2 in the last minute, ending the Catalans' unbeaten run five months into the season. Ahead of his visit to Old Trafford, where he'd love to add another glorious scalp, we caught up with the big no.9...

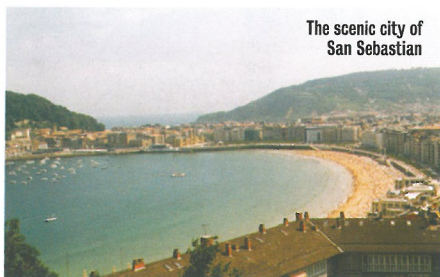
How does it feel for a local boy to wear the colours of La Real?

The club has been part of my life from as long as I can remember. The training ground is 10 minutes from where I grew up in a village close to Donostia (San Sebastian). I've always been a fan, I used to go to games with my father. My

idol was Darko Kovacevic, a big striker who scored a lot of goals in two spells for the club. We were winter champions [top at the halfway point] and came so close to winning the league with him and Nihat up front in 2003.

Describe the Champions League experience so far. Your qualifying games against Lyon looked superb...

They were great occasions. First, to win 2-0 in France against a very good team in front of our many travelling supporters. And then to win 2-0 at home to qualify for the Champions League for the first time since 2003.



The scenic city of San Sebastian

But you've lost both games so far in the group stage...

We attacked against Shakhtar at home, had chances, didn't take them. Then we got hit twice in the second half. In Germany against Leverkusen, we played well. We took a lot of possession and scored, but lost to a goal in the 92nd minute. It's frustrating.

Last season was one of progression for Real Sociedad, wasn't it?

We didn't start well, but we got better and better. We played with joy. Our defence was the best in the league, just 29 goals conceded. For a club like ours to finish in the top four is a great achievement.

And you scored to end Barcelona's unbeaten run and beat Champions League contenders Valencia 4-2 in the best league game of last season...

They were very special moments, highlights which I'll look back on and relish one day. Barcelona is one of the best teams in the world, Valencia are a great team who had finished in the top four for many years. By beating them

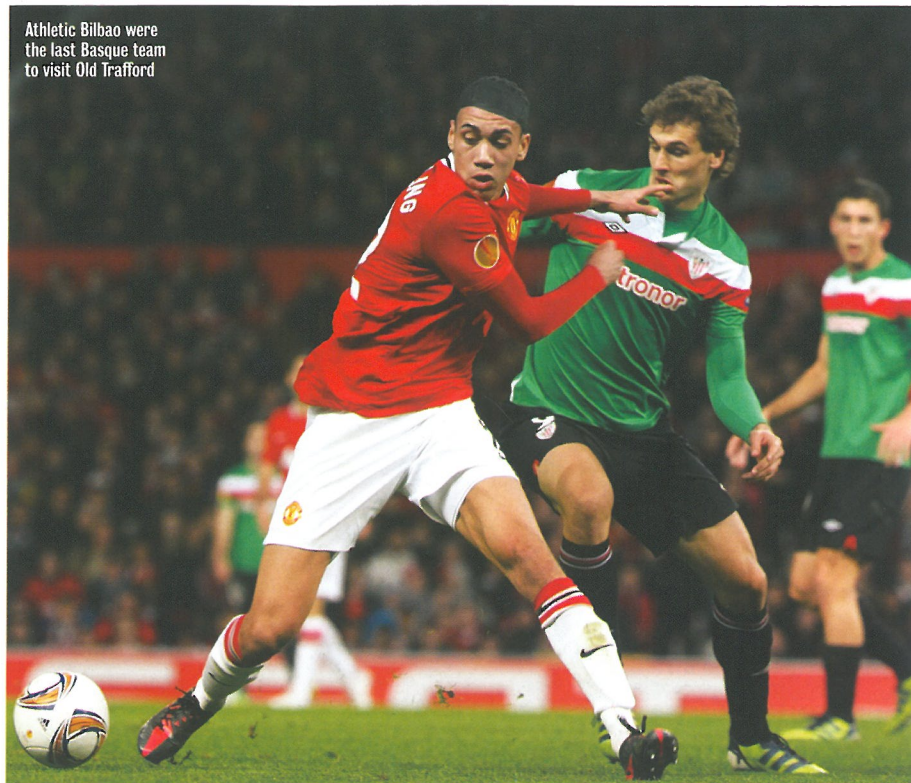
MEET THE VISITORS



Tormenting
Barcelona



Athletic Bilbao were
the last Basque team
to visit Old Trafford



[Agirretxe scored twice], we made sure they didn't, and both those results really helped us finish fourth.

Last year's slow start left you 18th after 10 games before the club finished strongly. Why do you think the club has started slowly again in 2013/14?

We haven't started well, but the atmosphere remains good in the dressing room. We have almost the same team, we have fantastic players, we have confidence that we can do what we did last year and rise up the table. We'll work hard and get our reward.

"MANCHESTER UNITED IS A TEAM THAT EVERY FOOTBALLER WANT TO PLAY AGAINST. I'M NO DIFFERENT"

What do you know about Manchester United?

Manchester United is a team that every footballer wants to play against. I'm no different, it's a dream to play at Old Trafford. I was excited when we were drawn with them. I've played in friendly games in England, but never a competitive match against a big club. Our club is looking forward to it, the players and the fans. Many of our supporters are going to Manchester. They will be with us, singing and supporting us.

Athletic Bilbao were the last Basque team to play United two seasons back...

I hope that we get the same results as they did! They're the biggest rivals of ours - it's an intense rivalry, but a healthy one too. The fans get on well, they drink a beer together in the old town before we play them here. They always joke with

each other like any rival fans, but it's all good. Football is hugely popular in the Basque Country. We're proud of our history and our football clubs.

Real Sociedad had to turn to youth after you were relegated in 2008. Over half the current squad came from the B team. You finished 15th in 2011, 12th in 2012 and fourth last season. Your project seems to be working...

The club had economic problems, so it was important that we promoted young players. But *La Real* has always done that though, it's important.

I came through cantera [youth system] and made my first team debut at 18. It's a good thing, we're proud of the players who've come through, the local players who've realised the dream of playing for their club. But we also have a mixture of international players, who we welcome. It all makes for a vibrant dressing room.

