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Xherdan Shaqiri



He is like Odysseus returning home from his long voyage. Now that he is back in his home city of Basel, from Chicago, where he captained Fire FC, footballer Xherdan Shaqiri is once more planting his studs on home turf. The player has rejoined FC Basel, having first put on the team's shirt in 2001, at the age of ten. This comeback comes in the wake of his retirement from the Swiss national team in July 2024. "He won the hearts of the Swiss and gave us some unforgettable moments, thanks to the magic of his touch and his goals," in the words of Swiss football boss, Dominique Blanc. The footballer, born into a working-class family in Kosovo just before the disintegration of Yugoslavia, has received a number of nicknames from his fans over the years: XS, the Little Prince, Shaq... During the most recent European championship, the player, aged 33, gave the Swiss a performance to remember. Xherdan Shaqiri scored a blistering goal against Scotland. The player, who stands 1.70 m tall, ended his last competition in Swiss national colours by slamming the ball into the back of the net past English goalie Jordan Pickford, during a penalty shoot-out, in a match that Switzerland nonetheless ultimately lost. In Switzerland, football fans are now flocking to watch all of FC Basel's matches. One such match was the September encounter with Stade Nyonnais, a team recently promoted to the Challenge League, who held their own against the great FC Basel. XS's presence turned this Swiss Cup match into something of a national event attracting 4,000 spectators. It was the man himself, in the 123rd minute, who scored the winner for FC Basel! STÉPHANE HERZOG

Swiss sanctions decision sparks criticism

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began, Switzerland has more or less matched all of the European Union's sanctions against Russia, not least to prevent itself from becoming a conduit for sanctions circumvention. The Federal Council made the first notable exception to this rule in October when it opted out of a measure requiring commodity traders to ensure that their foreign subsidiaries do not undermine the EU sanctions. The decision has sparked considerable criticism abroad, with the United States ambassador to Switzerland, Scott Miller, calling it "very disappointing" – which in itself shows that the Swiss policy of deciding on a case-by-case basis whether to adopt sanctions can have drawbacks. (MUL)

Marianne Jenni succeeds David Grichting

When it comes to representing the interests of the Swiss Abroad and providing Swiss consular services around the world, responsibility within the Federal Administration lies with the Consular Directorate (CD). The Federal Council has appointed Marianne Jenni as the CD's new director general. Jenni, currently serving as the Swiss ambassador to Ecuador, will start in her new post on 1 January 2025. She has previously worked in places including Paris, Lagos, Rome, London, Baghdad and Cape Town. Jenni succeeds David Grichting, who has headed the CD since April 2023 but is now taking on a new role within the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). (MUL)

Basel to host the 2025 Eurovision Song Contest

Since Swiss singer Nemo won the 2024 Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) in the Swedish city of Malmö (see "Swiss Review" 4/2024), Switzerland has been locked in as the next ESC host. We now know that the 2025 competition will take place in Basel, watched by an expected worldwide audience of well over 100 million. Basel eventually got the nod ahead of Geneva. Berne and Zurich had also been in contention. None of the four bids enjoyed unanimous political support, due to moral concerns or the financial challenge of hosting the event. See also: www.revue.link/escbasel (MUL)

A mountain changes shape

There was a spectacular rockfall on the Grosses Tschingelhorn (2,849 m) this October, when some 100,000 m³ of debris broke off the side of the mountain, which is located on the border between the cantons of Glarus and Grisons. The summit ridge now looks very different. The event made headlines not least because this is one of the more photographed mountain silhouettes. Situated just below the summit ridge is a famous gap in the rock called Martinsloch. Twice a year, the rising sun shines through the Martinsloch opening for just a few minutes. People come from far and wide to witness the spectacle. (MUL)