

## ***AND SO WHAT IF CRISTIANO IS 'TAPET'?***

by **Georgi FILIPOV** (Bulgaria) / **Laura TOMA** (Romania)

### ***Summary***

*The fight for the rights of lesbians and gays has taken big strides over the last few decades. But there are still some fields where to be a gay is an untouchable topic and football is one of them. The people from Bordeaux, football professionals and fans, are revealing the reasons which are not letting this barrier to be crossed.*

### **Article**

Have you ever imagined that your favorite player Cristiano Ronaldo or Lionel Messi is homosexual? Many fans probably have never thought on this issue. Others might have taunted the opposing star in anger simply because they suffered during a game. But imagine one of them to recognize himself as gay. Would you be shocked? Will you feel stuffed? Or you will respect him less?

Perhaps the fans of Girondins Bordeaux should ask themselves the same questions. Yoann Gourcuff, one of the best French football players, was their idol for several years. And he is one of those who are suspected of being gay. But it seems that at least until the end of his playing career it will not be clear if it is true. Meanwhile Gourcuff is under pressure even from some teammates in Le Blues team. He was named "tapet" from Franck Ribery during the camp of the French national team before Euro 2012.

"The issue is very complex, as in football the topic of diverse sexuality is taboo. Players prefer to keep it to themselves. There are players who have confessed, but after the end of their career", Fabien Pujo, the coach of amateurs of Lormont, the second best football team in Bordeaux, said.



"If a gay footballer's name would become public, the media pressure would be huge for him, according to Paul, a Law student in Bordeaux and a Girondins Bordeaux football fan. "Media have a great interest in football players' personal life and that's why the gay players tend to protect themselves from this exposure hiding their sexual orientation", he said.

Paul also considers that many gay players are afraid of taking the step of admitting their sexual orientation also because of the fans. "I think in our generation, we don't really care if a player is gay or not; he is just a football player. Even we don't share this kind of sexuality, it is not an issue for us".

Not the same thing he can say about the older football fans. He suggests that there are different generations' perceptions of this issue. "I think that there is a big gap between the young and older generations of fans. For us, the young generation, the most important is the quality of the show, the performance, but the older fans are more intolerant; the homophobic insults are still commonly used by them when they sit in the stands".

There are very rare cases of players who talk openly about their different sexuality, but the biggest problem seems to be that even inside the football community topic is considered abnormal. "Recently the president of Montpellier called one of his players 'tapet'. The words from a senior manager sound more aggressive and offensive", Pujo said.

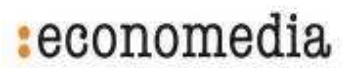
He recalls the case when the coach of the French national team Didier Deschamps prohibited to play with reserve pink shirts when coaching the Italian side Juventus. He thought that it was "the color of homosexuals".

It is considered that even the culture plays a crucial role here. "In France it is a cultural problem. People with different sexuality does not feel welcome. There is a big difference between understanding of homosexuality in France and the Nordic countries, where sexual difference is considered very normal and people are not afraid to talk about it", Alexandre Gasparotto, physical training coach in Lormont, said.

Both coaches believe that in the lower levels of French football there are many players who do not disclose their sexuality, although the pressure from fans and the industry is much smaller.

---

**FILIPOV Georgi** has worked as a sports journalist since 1992. I started as a reporter in 24 Hours daily, then participated in starting the leading nowadays sports daily 7 Dni Sport. I have worked in *Standart* daily in the period 1994-1997. Since 1998 with little breaks I work for Capital weekly firstly and later for the whole Economedia. Since 2008 I am the Sports desk editor of the integrated team of Economedia publishing group. In 2007 I received Bulgarian award of excellence in sports journalism Brothers Ekserovi. I have covered Olympic Games in 2000, 2008 and 2012, FIFA World Cup in 1998 and 2010 and many other competitions.



**TOMA Laura** is an experienced journalist interested in Diversity issues and intercultural trainer. Founded Media Institute for Diversity, an association of journalists that should support a well-balanced coverage of minorities. As an UNESCO Fellowship holder, studied Intercultural Communication (MA) in the UK and graduated 'with Distinction' in Nov 2011. Member of Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research (SIETAR UK) and member of International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP).

