



*The best student writing ...*

Spring 2018

A background image featuring a blue wooden plank surface. Scattered across the surface are several white flower petals. At the bottom of the image, there is a row of yellow and white daisy-like flowers.

*Hello  
Spring....*

The best student writing online and in print...

# What is the new UEFA Nations League, and why should I care?

By Andrew Shaw

Typical. You wait two years for a huge football competition pitting some of the world's best teams against each other and then two come along almost at once. The first is of course the 2018 World Cup, but it's the second that's got people squinting their eyes and saying "what the hell is that?" As usual, we've got the answers.

This September will see the debut of a new tournament called the UEFA Nations League, UEFA's attempt at improving international football. That means less meaningless friendlies – looking at you, 2003's England vs Australia – and more evenly-split matches between teams of similar quality. One look at who England have drawn in their mini group (Croatia and Spain) shows the world of difference from the teams they're usually

matched up against in these sorts of group stages (Algeria, Massachusetts United and the People's Republic of the Dark Side of the Moon).

That's not to say it'll just be a competition for Europe's big guns – a total of 55 nations from across the continent will be taking part. Each country's position in the league tables will be decided on by their UEFA ranking from the year before. Once again, England find themselves sitting pretty in the top league, surrounded by all the biggest names in European football, including Germany, France and the mighty Switzerland (credit where credit's due, they were the only team to beat Spain in 2010 and were two minutes away from taking Argentina to penalties four years later).

All mini groups will play each other, with the four winners of League A playing each other in a one-legged semi-final to be held next summer, followed by a final match to decide who will be crowned the Nations League champion.

The first really interesting part comes at the opposite end of the tables. In a new direction for international football, the four sides that finish bottom of their groups will be relegated, to be replaced the year after by the top four sides in the league below. This surprise move could fairly easily result in England going from hosting games against some of the world's best teams at Wembley to being forced to play significantly less prestigious teams: Bosnia and Herzegovina for example, or Wales.

But the excitement doesn't end there. Unlike mere friendlies, which have a

pretty small impact on the famously reliable FIFA rankings, the Nations League will have a direct effect on the Euros, and could lead to second chances for qualification for some teams.

Each league gets four play-off spots, meaning the 16 best teams across every group and league, who haven't already qualified for the Euros, will have one last opportunity to book themselves tickets for Europe's premier international football competition.

Less pointless thrashings – still looking at you England vs Australia – more teams of similar quality facing off and the chance of winning a slightly more respected trophy than the Confederations Cup all make the UEFA Nations League an intriguing proposition for fans of the beautiful game. 🍷

## LEAGUE A

**Group A1:** Germany, France, Netherlands

**Group A2:** Belgium, Switzerland, Iceland

**Group A3:** Portugal, Italy, Poland

**Group A4:** Spain, England, Croatia

## LEAGUE B

**Group B1:** Slovakia, Ukraine, Czech Republic

**Group B2:** Russia, Sweden, Turkey

**Group B3:** Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Northern Ireland

**Group B4:** Wales, Republic of Ireland, Denmark

## LEAGUE C

**Group C1:** Scotland, Albania, Israel

**Group C2:** Hungary, Greece, Finland, Estonia

**Group C3:** Slovenia, Norway, Bulgaria, Cyprus

**Group C4:** Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, Lithuania

## LEAGUE D

**Group D1:** Georgia, Latvia, Kazakhstan, Andorra

**Group D2:** Belarus, Luxembourg, Moldova, San Marino

**Group D3:** Azerbaijan, Faroe Islands, Malta, Kosovo

**Group D4:** Macedonia, Armenia, Liechtenstein, Gibraltar

# VISIT OUR SHOP



**KETTLE HOODIE**



**#JOURNOREQUEST  
HOODIE**



**#JOURNOREQUEST  
T-SHIRT**

**KETTLEMAG.TEEMIL.COM**