

The Hungarian Legend Ferenc Puskás Historical moments, performance and memory in the Arab world

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Abstract: Little known in Hungary is the recognition and popularity that Hungarian sporting legend Ferenc Puskás enjoys in the Arab world today. The latter is not only due to his undoubtedly unrivalled footballing skills and his performances for the Hungarian national team and Real Madrid. His years as a coach in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, during which he repeatedly managed to achieve the maximum that the conditions of the time allowed him, have also played a decisive role. The aim of this study is to give a brief account of the life story of the football star and his relations with Egypt, as well as a summary of the events and experiences of his time in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, with particular reference to the repercussion in the Arab media. Among the media sources we relied on to compile this paper, we can list the Egyptian weekly *Sabah Al-Kheir*, the independent daily *Elwatan*, Egypt's largest opposition daily *Al-Wafd*, the Kuwaiti daily *Al-Jarida*, and the state-backed UAE electronic newspaper *Al-Ain*, in addition to several entrusted portals and websites.

Keywords: Ferenc Puskás; Hungary; Football, Real Madrid.

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Resumo: Pouco conhecido na Hungria é o reconhecimento e popularidade que a lenda do esporte húngaro Ferenc Puskás desfruta no mundo árabe hoje. Este último não se deve apenas às suas habilidades futebolísticas indubitavelmente incomparáveis e suas atuações na seleção húngara e no Real Madrid. Seus anos como treinador na Arábia Saudita e no Egito, durante os quais conseguiu repetidamente alcançar o máximo que as condições da época lhe permitiam, também tiveram um papel decisivo. O objetivo deste estudo é fazer um breve relato da história de vida do craque do futebol e suas relações com o Egito, bem como um resumo dos acontecimentos e vivências de sua passagem pela Arábia Saudita e Egito, com particular referência à repercussão na mídia árabe.

Palavras-chave: Ferenc Puskás; Hungria, Futebol; Real Madrid.

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Introduction

Even today, Hungary's former legendary footballer Ferenc Puskás is widely known in the Arab world, yet hardly anyone has heard of his country of origin. This undivided admiration is a testament to both his unrivalled footballing skills and his adventurous life story. Born into a humble family, the sporting legend has also enjoyed an unparalleled career in Hungary and abroad thanks to his dedication and talent. He was a prominent figure in the Golden Team, which was unbeatable for many years and is still proudly remembered in Hungary. His career was not disrupted by the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. Although he was forced to emigrate, a new phase of his life began. Overcoming the initial unfavourable circumstances, he was almost completely renewed and became a pillar of the world-class Real Madrid. He retired from professional football at the age of nearly 40 and had achieved many outstanding results ever since. With the exception of Antarctica, he visited all continents to share his experiences before returning to Hungary permanently in 1991. He had also spent several years in the Arab world coaching the Saudi Arabian national team and the professional football team of the Egyptian Al-Masry Sporting Club. Thanks to his professionalism, his achievements, and his interpersonal qualities, he had built up a legendary reputation that is still cultivated in various Arab media forums. In order to present the memory of Puskás in the Arab world, this study briefly describes his life and achievements from his childhood to his years at Real Madrid. After that, we look back at the history of Hungarian-Arab football relations in the first half of the 20th century, and present Puskás' performances in Egypt as a player of the Hungarian national team. This is followed by a detailed presentation of the events and experiences of his years spent in Saudi Arabia and Egypt as well as a separate part illustrating the reactions of Arab media regarding to his personality. Finally, we conclude our study with a kind of framework that describes Puskás's last years in Hungary. In addition to the relevant literature, this publication also contains articles about the Hungarian star striker published in various Arab media forums. Moreover, the authors of this paper selected two of the Arabic newspaper articles of the era, the full English translation of which is provided at the end of the article.

Childhood

The world-famous Hungarian football legend was born on 1 April 1927 in Budapest, as the first child of a poor family.^{III} After his birth, his family moved to Kispest, where his father, Ferenc Purczeld Sr.,^{IV} played football for Kispest FC.^V The little Puskás grew up in a modest servants' flat (a so-called town house) right next to the football field, in the neighbourhood of several famous sportsmen such as Mihály Patyi, Nándor Bányai (Breier) Bányai and the Bozsik brothers, István and József ("Bozsik Cucu"), who later became Puskás' teammate in the Kispest Football Club and the Golden Team.^{VI} During this period, football was the most popular pastime among boys who played on the field all day with their home-made rag balls.^{VII} The most skilful among them, including Puskás Jr.,^{VIII} were able to continue training as a junior with the Kispest FC, mostly under the guidance of the older Puskás.^{IX}

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Figure 1. The two-years old Puskás



Puskás'Öcsi'

He was only 16 years old when he made his debut for Kispest's senior team in the 1943 National League against the Oradea Athletic Club's team. He proved so talented that he was invited to join the national team in August 1945 after World War II.^X His exceptional qualities soon became known abroad, and Western clubs tried to sign him.^{XI} However, he did not want to move abroad and insisted on his football club, which merged into the People's Army Sports Federation in December 1949 and changed its name to Budapest Honvéd SE.^{XII} Instead, he became a stable member and then captain of the Hungarian national team, which became the Olympic champion in Helsinki in 1952 under his leadership.^{XIII} The following year at the European Cup, they defeated Italy^{XIV} in the final of the European Cup,^{XV} and in a meeting called the "match of the century", they won 6–3 victories at Wembley Stadium over the previously unbeaten English team at home.^{XVI} The Golden Team's unbeaten run came to an end in the final of the 1954 World Cup in Switzerland, where they were unexpectedly and controversially^{XVII} defeated by West Germany.^{XVIII} Puskás, who played the entire match with an injured ankle and scored a valid goal, could only receive the silver medal from the FIFA president. On the other hand, the fact that FIFA Puskás was chosen as the best player of the World Cup and the Hungarian national team as the best team in the tournament was a bit of a satisfaction.^{XIX}

Real Madrid's "Pancho"

Despite the defeat at the World Cup, the national team soon found itself and proved unbeaten again in eighteen matches.^{XX} In the fall of 1956, they also defeated the Yugoslav and then the Soviet national team, which later played the Olympic final against each other on 8 December in Melbourne. Puskás also played abroad with his club team during the 1956 revolution,^{XXI} and due to the Soviet bloodshed, he did not return home after the illegal participation of the Budapest Honvéd in South America.^{XXII} There was a short break in his career at that time, as FIFA banned him from the game for 18 months through the intervention of the Hungarian Football Federation. He visited various clubs abroad, where he was rejected on the grounds of his punishment, his overage (he was 31 at the time) and his obesity. It came as a big surprise after all this, after months of omission, he was finally signed by Real Madrid, the top club of the era. With superhuman strength, Pancho (as he was nicknamed by the Spaniards) got himself back into top form and played alongside the club's world stars – Alfredo di Stéfano,^{XXIII} Raymond Kopa,^{XXIV} Francisco Gento^{XXV} and Héctor Rial^{XXVI} – for almost ten years.^{XXVII} During this period, he set records that have still not been broken to this day.^{XXVIII} He was a one-time cup winner in Spain (1962), and he also managed to win the title of goal scorer four times there, which makes him the most successful scorer in the history of sports with his previous performance in Hungary.^{XXIX}

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Puskás' last competitive appearance as a player came on 28 May 1966, in the first leg of the cup quarter-final against Real Betis,^{XXX} at the age of 39 years and 36 days. His official farewell match took place three years later, on 26 May 1969, in the Real Madrid-Rapid Wien match of honour, where he was celebrated in a euphoric mood by 70 to 80,000 Spanish fans.^{XXXI} After his retirement, he travelled around the world as a coach.^{XXXII} The greatest success of his career in this field came with the Greek club Panathinaikos.^{XXXIII} Under his management, this team won the Greek championship twice between 1970 and 1972, and reached the Champions League final for the first time in 1971, where only the leading team of the age, Ajax Amsterdam,^{XXXIV} could beat it.^{XXXV}

Figure 2. Puskás's player licence issued by Real Madrid FC



Historical background of Egyptian-Hungarian football relations

The Arabs, especially the Egyptians, became acquainted with Hungarian football in the 1920s. By this time, football had already gained widespread popularity in the country and its national team had been featured on the international stage for the first time at the 1920 Summer Olympics^{XXXVI} in a commendably way. Four years later, at the 1924 Summer Olympics^{XXXVII} in Paris, the Egyptian team managed to surpass its previous achievement, finishing in eighth place.^{XXXVIII} The national eleven of Egypt and Hungary met for the first time at these Olympic Games on 29 May. At the one-and-a-half-hour meeting, the initially underestimated Egyptian team eventually won 3–0, which entered the history of the sport as the "Egyptian blow".^{XXXIX} Hungary also failed to beat the Egyptians in the second match, played in Cairo on 19 February 1932, and the result was a draw without a goal.^{XL}

Egypt, as the first Arab national team in Africa, managed to make it to the World Cup in 1934, where it played its first match against Hungary at the Giorgio Ascarelli Stadium^{XLI} in Naples on 27 May. Hungary won the match 4–2, bidding farewell to the opponent.^{XLII} It then took 56 years for the Egyptian national team to once again compare their skills with other teams in a World Cup match.

At the same time, Hungarian club teams visited the Arab country several times at the request of the Egyptian Sports Federation^{XLIII} or at the initiative of the Hungarian side. In 1928 Ferencváros, in 1929 MTK, in 1938 the team of the amateur Hungarian University, and in 1939 Újpest visited Egypt, where friendly or official matches were played with local teams. The Al-Mosawerr and / or the Egyptian Gazette reported on their performance each time, analyzing them extensively and praising the knowledge of Hungarian players and coaches.

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Hungarian footballers contributed greatly to the technical development and prestige of Egyptian football not only with their play, but also with their professional management. Outstanding among the latter stood Pál Titkos,^{XLIV} who was the manager of the Egyptian national team from 1957 to 1959. As a result of his work, the Egyptian national team he led finished first in the African Cup of Nations in Cairo in 1959, winning the trophy for the second time. Thanks to his contribution, this period, i.e. "the 1950s, was a 'golden age' for the history of Hungarian-Egyptian football, based on the sports relations of the pre-World War II era."^{XLV}

Figure 3. Hungarian team defeated Egypt 4: 2. Standing: Takács, Feldmann, Toldi, Markos, Lázár, Teleki, Palotás, Szücs Gy., Szabó, Futó, Fábíán P. Squatting: Sternberg, P. Szabó, Vincze.^{XLVI}



Source: Umminger, 1990.

Puskás as a player in Egypt

The Egyptian press and sports audience followed the performances of the Hungarian Golden Team with great interest, especially in the first half of the 1950s. The interest in the Hungarian national team rose exponentially in 1953, after the 6–3 victory at Wembley Stadium. Thanks to this heightened curiosity, and not least the nationalist Egyptian leadership's joy over the British defeat, the world-famous Hungarian players made their first foreign trip to Egypt following their devastating victory over England, after being invited to a four-week visit by the Egyptian Football Federation on January 26, 1954.

The national eleven played just five matches during its stay in the Arab North African nation. The Hungarians, led by Puskás, who was already widely known in Egypt at the time, competed for the first time against the Cairo regional team on 1 February, where they won 13–1. In the second match, the Cairo City team was beaten 2–0, and in the third match, they won 3–0 in the presence of Deputy Prime Minister Gamal Abden-Nasser^{XLVII} and in front of 25,000 spectators on 12 February, where Puskás scored two of the goals. The fourth match was against the Suez Canal Zone team with a final score of 14–2. Despite the destructive defeat of the Egyptian team, the fans paid undivided admiration to the Hungarian players, and hugged them on the field when they stopped the game for a short time due to a sudden downpour. This was also the highly publicised occasion when Puskás met the left-back defender of the Egyptian national team that won the 1924 Paris match, and was already working as a police officer at that time. The Golden Team played its final match against the national team of Egypt in front of 25,000 spectators at the National Stadium in Cairo on 21 February, at the end of which the home team were eliminated 3–

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0. After the match, President Neguib^{XLVIII} and the President of the Revolutionary Council presented a dedicated photo to the guest players. The President also described the Hungarian team as excellent and the most wonderful ("I have ever seen").^{XLIX}

Figure 4. President Neguib welcomes the Hungarian football players warmly and with a smile. The picture shows Ferenc Puskás.



Source: *Le Progrès Egyptien*, 1954.

Short detour in Saudi Arabia

After his breakup from Panathinaikos of Greece, Puskás returned to Spain, where he took over as coach of FC Murcia in late 1974. However, it soon became clear that the election was very unfortunate. No less was expected of Puskás than the rescue of a club on the verge of elimination, for which, however, there was neither the well-trained players nor the necessary cooperation on the part of the club's management. After five months, he finally gave up the hopeless effort and left the club. Shortly after his resignation, however, he was approached by Saudi Arabia's embassy in Spain and asked to fill the position of head coach of the national team. Puskás accepted the offer, despite the fact that, to his greatest surprise, his former Madrid team-mates Di Stefano and Héctor Real, were also invited to lead the Saudi national eleven. Di Stefano refused the Saudi request, so in the end only Puskás and Real left for the Saudi Kingdom. However, the conditions in the Middle Eastern oil power at the time shocked the two football stars. When they started working together in July 1975, there was hardly a stadium in the country with adequate seating. For this reason, most of their time was spent organising and creating the right conditions until they took up the field against Afghanistan on 22 November, which they defeated 2–0. Despite the success, however, several factors made it difficult for team members and their professional leaders to work together. For example, the communication difficulties,^L the local training system and the mentality^{LI} of the players made it very difficult for Puskás to achieve the expected results. Despite these problems, the Saudi team performed reasonably well in the Asian Cup qualifiers in Iraq, the Palestinian Cup in Tunisia, and the Gulf Cup in Qatar. However, the expected partnership with the players could not be established in a year, so Puskás and Real got up from the bench together and left the country behind.^{LII}

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Under their leadership, the Saudi Arabian national football team has played 16 matches, winning five of them and playing a draw. In the matches, they scored a total of 22 goals^{LIII} and received 27. Based on the final result, it can also be concluded that there was no significant difference in the performance of the Saudis and their opponents in most of the matches.^{LIV} Despite the tension and modest results, the Saudis are still proud that their coach was once the world-famous Hungarian footballer. The Saudi Arabian national football team commemorated his time in the country by presenting his achievements as manager on its official website in both Arabic and English.^{LV}

The "Boss of the Channel"

After Saudi Arabia, Puskás first coached Chile's Colo Colo in Santiago de Chile in the 1976–1977 season, before returning to Greece, where he led the later champion AEK Athens until the 23rd round. Following the termination of his contract, he travelled to Spain, where he was approached by Dezső Bundzsák^{LVI} from Egypt, inviting him to Port Saida as a coach.^{LVII} However, Puskás was hesitant about his previous experience in Saudi Arabia and only said yes after being personally approached and persuaded in Madrid in 1979 by Sayed Metwally,^{LVIII} a board member of the of the Egyptian football club Al-Masry. He signed for three seasons for a monthly salary of \$ 3,500^{LIX}.^{LX} In addition to a tax-free income, the club funded his accommodation and full board in an Egyptian hotel.^{LXI}

The announcement was initially met with some scepticism by the Egyptian public and media, doubting that the world-famous Hungarian footballer would commit to a team that finished in the middle of the Egyptian league.^{LXII} The joy and excitement was all the greater when Puskás really arrived. From the agreement with the Al-Masry club, they unanimously hoped that the value and importance of Egyptian football would increase on a global scale with his professional leadership. For this reason, greeting boards, articles, analyses, reviews, and shorter and longer versions of his biography were published almost everywhere. The heightened interest was well illustrated by the fact that a special article in the August 2, 1979 issue of the Egyptian weekly Sabah Al-Kheir^{LXIII} devoted Puskás to his arrival in Egypt: *“This small piece of news was enough for more than 15,000 Port Said residents to gather in the small stadium^{LXIV} of Al-Masry club^{LXV} to watch the miracle of football and the world-famous legend, the father of the powerful shots from which so many goalkeepers had suffered! What a thrill it was as he showcased his football skills on the first day in Port so that Egyptian fans could enjoy some of his shots and art that he still possesses. [...] Puskás’ bright name has survived in the world of football, one of the few who remains in the minds of football fans, whether they see or hear him. He was the star of the Hungarian national football team, the strongest team ever seen in a stadium, for nine years, during its golden age from 1947 to 1956.”*^{LXVI}

On 18 October 1979, the same weekly newspaper further praised Puskás by comparing his work with world-renowned coaches in Egypt such as Hidegkuti (Al-Ahly Sport Club) and the British Thomson (Ismaili Sport Club): *‘Hidegkuti was successful because he worked with a sensible management board and a well-assorted group of players, while Thomson, with his serious personality, was an excellent tactician. Puskás, on the other hand, is the best and most intelligent coach in Egypt.*^{LXVII} This praise for Puskás had remained constant throughout the first year of the star coach's stay in Egypt, and he never once received criticism from anyone about his professionalism, in fact. On 12 December 1980, Sabah Al-Kheir proudly pointed out that *‘thanks to Puskás’ efforts, Al-Masry had achieved good results last year and this year as well. His team is striving to play high quality football and finish in the top four in the league at the end of the season. For now, Al-Masry is in fourth place. His team scored 14 goals, half of which was scored by*

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Mosaad Nour alone, while his opponents only managed to hit the net 10 times. [...] Al-Masry have not lost a single football match at home this season. These are commendable achievements.^{LXVIII}

The first – clearly hasty and impatient – criticisms of Puskás and his tactical ideas appeared in the Egyptian press about a year and a half after the Hungarian coach's arrival in Egypt. In this regard, the harshest criticism was also voiced by the weekly Sabah Al-Kheir on 22 January 1981, when it openly demanded Puskás' removal as soon as possible and the search for a much more suitable foreign coach for Al-Masry. Above all, the author of the article, generously disregarding the local conditions, blamed Puskás for the fact that Al-Masry had failed to improve their performance spectacularly despite his contribution, thus disappointing the fans.^{LXIX} He also complained the fact that during his one-and-a-half year coaching career, only one young player made it into the seniors, even though he also led Al-Masry's youth team. In connection with the latter, he emphasized that the preparation and selection of young players for the top team was one of the key conditions for his employment in Egypt, not only condemning Puskás' effectiveness but also accusing him of unspoken breach of contract.^{LXX} He insisted that "*Puskás is a professional coach who wants ready-made players*". In his view, the Hungarian coach did not bring anything new to the life of the Egyptian football club from a tactical point of view, as "*since Puskás took control over the team, we have found that all his training has been limited to improving the physical fitness of the Egyptian players. Compared to the start of the 1979–1980 league championship, we haven't seen any tactical vision in the stadium, especially now that another championship is imminent.*" To justify the negative criticism, the journalist even drew a simplistic and crude parallel between Puskás and the Egyptian coach of the Minya^{LXXI} football team: "*this season, Minya, which only made it to the league this year, won five games, played the same number of draws and lost seven. Now the difference between Al-Masry coached by Puskás, and Minya, trained by an unknown Egyptian, is only three points. Is this logical?!*"^{LXXII} However, this example is a rare, one might say exceptional occurrence and Puskás' work was generally praised in the Egyptian press in the most complimentary terms during his four years in Egypt.

On his departure, the 20 October 1983 issue of the Sabah Al-Kheir specifically highlighted Puskás' efforts to form a creative and strong football team during his first two years in Port Said. However, it drew attention to the fact that the recognition belongs not only to him, but also to the team's former coaches, who had already provided him with well-prepared players when he arrived in Egypt.^{LXXIII}

However, the results achieved under the conditions of the time were clearly due to Puskás. The players' morale was clearly on the rise and they have increasingly taking the initiative on the field, launching imaginative attacks against their opponents. Thanks to all this, the Hungarian coach managed to lift Al-Masry out of the midfield, which under his professional guidance had grown into a worthy opponent of Zamalek^{LXXIV} and Al-Ahly^{LXXV} teams, who were openly favoured by the system.^{LXXVI} Therefore, Puskás himself considered it the maximum achievable, when the Green Eagles finished the first season in the third place in the ranking, having previously won or drawn a series of friendly and official matches against the two Egyptian stars.^{LXXVII} However, he even managed to surpass that by getting his team to the Egyptian Cup^{LXXVIII} final in 1983 and 1984. Thus, although Al-Masry did not succeed in winning the championship hoped for by the fans, Puskás still enjoyed such widespread respect and honour across the country that many Egyptian parents named their children after the Hungarian sport legend. His memory has been cherished by the Al-Masry club ever since, and his memorial plaque was inaugurated in 2011 at the headquarters of the Egyptian Football Federation in Cairo.

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Figure 5. Ferenc Puskás



Source: Sabah Al-Kheir, 1983.

Snippets about Puskás in the Arab media

Filgoal, one of the largest and best-known Egyptian and Arab sports websites, has published a detailed biography of Puskás on its own website, complete with numerous pictures and in-depth analysis. The extensive, multi-page profile outlines all stages of Puskás' life, his achievements, his crises and his illness: "Puskás is a name by which Hungary is known [...] When we talk about Hungary, the first name that comes to mind is Puskás [...] Puskás is one of the football legends who made the history of Hungary. Real Madrid also granted him Spanish citizenship." The author then goes on to emphasise that in Egypt, and especially in Port Said, fate led Puskás to establish a new kingdom. It is not surprising, therefore, that some shops in Port Said are decorated with Hungarian flags, due to the overwhelming popularity of Ferenc Puskás. Under the guidance of the Hungarian coach, Al-Masry was able to adopt new forms and tactics. He points out that the latter soon paid off, as the team finished third in the 1979–1980 season behind Al-Ahly and Zamalek for the first time in 27 years. Al-Masry continued its good form with Puskás the following season and finished third in the league for the second time. The author of the article, with a slight positive bias in his tone, also points out that the closeness of winning the title alone at one stage of the season was enough to make Puskás the most beloved and popular figure in Port Said. With regard to the third unfortunate season of 1981–1982, already described above, the author focuses only on the up-and-coming, undoubtedly triumphant phase when the football team took the lead in the first round of group matches. He takes his account of events and his praise of Puskás right up to the final Port Said meeting of the 22nd round, which proved to be a turning point, while at the same time highlighting the fierce competition that Al-Masry were meanwhile facing from the two dominant clubs, Ahly and Zamalek.^{LXXIX} He adds, "In Port Said, there was not a street in Port Said that lacked those who were called the Puskás. The name of Puskás has not been forgotten in that city and never will be."^{LXXX}

In addition to the above, the website also adds an interesting addition to the description of Puskás' personality by telling the story of the relationship between the Hungarian coach and one of his most famous fans, the Egyptian disabled Hamada Al-Masry. Hamada was a small child when Puskás arrived in Port Said. His father, a football lover, used to take him to Al-Masry's training sessions, which he followed by sitting in one place as he was unable to walk. His condition caught the eye of Puskás, who took him under his wing. He gave him physiotherapy before and after training, and by the end of his long career in Egypt, Hamada's condition had improved dramatically, and he was not only able to walk but also to pass the ball. Hamada is no longer a

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child, but he still attends Al-Masry's matches and cherishes the memory of Puskás, without whom he would still be immobile.^{LXXXI}

Figure 6. Hamada and Puskás



Source: Almasryclub.com

Figure 7. The latest fresh picture of Hamada



Source: Almasryclub.com

Puskás' reputation in the Arab world is also reflected in the fact that writings praising him and his work have appeared not only in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, but also in countries whose national teams have played against the team he managed. The Kuwaiti daily *Al-Jarida*, for example, emphasizes that "*Ferenc Puskás is the legendary and magical striker of the Hungarian national team and Real Madrid, who must not be forgotten.*"^{LXXXII} The full biography of Puskás can also be found on the Wtskora sports website in Arabic.

In its review, the article explains: "*The world of football is full of beautiful and incredible stories, but Puskás' is the most beautiful of all: he was an exceptional player and truly deserved to be one of the greatest football legends in history.*"^{LXXXIII} The Egyptian daily *Elwatan*^{LXXXIV} reports, incorrectly at certain points, that "*the Hungarian revolution ended football competitions, thus Puskás had no choice but to stay in Spain, where he formed an exceptional duo with Real Madrid legend Alfredo Di Stefano. Puskás had received numerous local, regional and national titles and honours.*"^{LXXXV}

Egypt's largest opposition daily *Al-Wafd*^{LXXXVI} published a lengthy tribute to Ferenc Puskás in its 29 April 2014 edition. "*Puskás was a member of the Hungarian football Golden Team and the top scorer, and even the greatest Hungarian footballer. He made a major contribution to*

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the prestige of the Hungarian national team. [...] He scored 352 goals^{LXXXVII} in 341 Hungarian championships and 159 goals in 179 Spanish league matches. [...] He also led Real Madrid for a long time,^{LXXXVIII} reaping great victories. [...] He was also the top scorer^{LXXXIX} in Europe in 1948. [...] According to the International Federation of Football History and Statistics, Puskás is the greatest top scorer of the 20th century."^{XC}

On 2 April 2020, the state-backed UAE website and electronic newspaper Al-Ain published a biography of Puskás on the occasion of his birthday, detailing the crisis period between 1956 and 1958 and his exceptional performances for Real Madrid: *"Puskás is the diamond of Hungary. He was signed by Real Madrid at the age of 31 and played for the Spanish team until he was 39 years old. Six-time Spanish champion with Real Madrid; four-time Spanish top scorer, one-time Spanish Cup winner^{XCI} and three-time European champion.^{XCII} [...] The top scorer title awarded each year also bears his name."* The website has even produced an illustrated summary table detailing his achievements for Real Madrid.^{XCIII}

Figure 8. Summary on Puskás's achievements



Back in Hungary

He first visited Hungary from emigration in 1981 and after 25 years he played again on home soil in the Budapest-Vidék (countryside) Old Boys' Meeting on 6 June,^{XCV} prior to the Hungary vs England World Cup qualifier. After that, he visited Hungary for a few weeks every summer, and after the 1989 regime change, he settled in Hungary in 1991, where he was the head coach of the national team for four matches. For many years afterwards, he represented the MLSZ^{XCV} (Hungarian Football Federation) and the Hungarian government as a member and head of various international delegations. However, his health steadily worsened from 2000 onwards and he was hospitalised continuously from 2002 onwards due to Alzheimer's disease.

During his illness, the Népstadion was named after him^{XCVI} in 2002 and Real Madrid even travelled to Budapest for a gala match to honour him. His condition deteriorated in September 2006 and he passed away on 17 November.^{XCVII} His death marked the passing of a sporting legend who had scored 517 times in 528 top-flight matches during his career.^{XCVIII} He is remembered for his induction into the FIFA Hall of Fame in 1998 and his inclusion in the FIFA 100 list of the world's best footballers in 2004. He is also considered by the IFFHS^{XCIX} as the best European footballer of the 20th century and FIFA named its 2009 award after him for the player who scored

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the most beautiful goal of the year. Finally, a musical about his life was produced and premiered on 20 August 2020 at the Erkel Theatre,^C directed by Vajk Szente.

Figure 9. The world-famous and one of the greatest footballers of all time, Michel Platini with Puskás, during his last illness



In conclusion, we tried to portray the so rich different stages of life of the football star and his relations with Egypt, providing a summary of the events and experiences of his time in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, with particular focus on the repercussion in the Arab media. We have to say that the popularity of the legend Ferenc Puskás is more than exceptional in the Arab world. The reason for this recognition is not only due to his unrivalled footballing skills and his performances for the Hungarian national team and Real Madrid, but also for being a professional and successful coach in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, as well as his human attitudes towards others.

HOLD ME ACCOUNTABLE IN TWO YEARS LATER!^{CI}

Puskás in Port Said!

This small piece of news was enough for more than 15,000 Port Said residents to gather in the small stadium of the Al-Masry club to watch the miracle of football and the world-famous legend, the father of the powerful shots from which so many goalkeepers had suffered!

What a thrill it was as he showcased his football skills on the first day in Port so that Egyptian fans could enjoy some of his shots and art that he still possesses.

Puskás' bright name has survived in the world of football, one of the few who remains in the minds of football fans, whether they see or hear him. He was the star of the Hungarian national football team, the strongest team ever seen in a stadium, for nine years, during its golden age from 1947 to 1956.

Puskás gave the most beautiful examples that stopping football does not depend on the player's age, but on the effort he is able to make. Puskás retired from football in 1967 at the age of 40, and after a long life with the ball, it was natural for him to become a professional coach.

Puskás began his coaching career at Spanish club Victoria^{CII} before moving to Greece to train the Panathinaikos Athens.

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He managed to take the team to the European Champion Clubs' Cup final and then spent a year coaching the Saudi Arabian national football team. However, this period was short and did not allow him to build a truly solid national team. The last club he coached last year was AEK Athens^{CIII} in Greece, which finished first in the Greek football league.

Puskás, the star of the golden era of the Hungarian national football team and Spanish club Real Madrid, is now in Egypt for a price of three thousand five hundred dollars a month, paid by a businessman from Port Said.

Bundzsák, the current coach of the Egyptian national team, and Sayed Metwally, a businessman from Port Said, called. There were no long negotiations, I accepted the offer immediately without any preconditions," said Puskás. Egypt is no stranger to me, I visited it several times as a player. I think I will become a fan of Egypt," he added.

Puskás is the third Hungarian coach in Egypt. The first was Hidegkuti, the coach of the Al-Ahly club, who had built an unrivalled reputation for himself. The second is Bundzsák, the new manager of the Egypt national football team.

Puskás did not promise to Al-Masry to win either the league or the cup. He just gave them his word to try to reach them. He said the fruits of his labour would only be available after two years. He wants to start with youth under the age of 1517, who will become his mainstay in the top team after the time period he sets has elapsed. Once that happens, he will then be able to say he is in the race to conquer the top," Puskás said.

Training has begun at Al-Masry Club. The truth is that the Egyptian players seem tired after every training session. Initially, Puskás focuses on physical fitness, which he gradually tries to increase. I watched a training session on the beach, which was preceded by a lecture in the dressing room. The daily training consists of running at least five kilometres on the beach.

The programme I have developed, said Puskás, is for all teams and all ages, not just the adult frame. I don't know the frivolity and I don't differentiate between players. I will appreciate those who make an effort. For me, seriousness is paramount. I can assure you that, to my delight, everything is still fine between players and staff to this day. I am sure that much can be achieved if this fruitful collaboration between the audience, the players and the administrators continue.

He deducts two Egyptian pounds from the player for each minute if he is late.^{CIV}

Beautiful football is a thing of the past!

Puskás speaks very proudly about old-time football. It would take volumes, books and many days to tell you about it. A simple answer to a simple question is not enough. This is not a question you ask me and I can answer it in a moment - Puskás emphasized.

He added: "Hidegkuti is my friend. He is a very good coach who, to the best of my knowledge, has had many successes in Egypt. Unfortunately, I have not seen a single team play in Egypt, so far. It can be assumed that football has also developed in Egypt since the 1960s.

Regarding Al-Masry, Puskás says his task is to educate new young players who can be relied on for the next two years and to solve the goalkeeper problem. He focuses on training them on a daily basis and getting to know their knowledge and abilities as much as possible, even if the club is determined to sign a foreign goalkeeper for next season.

Puskás enjoys everything in Port Said. He is moving in the town in a Mercedes Benz with his driver.^{CV} He is greeted and welcomed by everyone. He is currently staying in a luxury hotel awaiting the completion and furnishing of the holiday home he has received as a gift from the governorate. In addition to all this, the question remains as to whether Puskás will succeed in what the Egyptian coach has failed?

So, let's wait two years, as Puskás promises!

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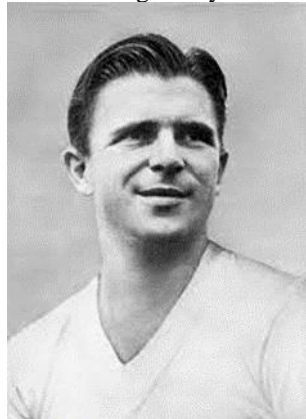
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Figure 10. Puskás with players in Port Said



Source: Sabah Al-Kheir, 1979.

Figure 11. The Legendary Ferenc Puskás



WILL PUSKÁS LEAVE AL-MASRY?^{CVI}

The former board of directors of the Al-Masry club met in the summer of 1979 and decided to bring in a foreign coach to train the senior team. Sayed Metwally undertook to contract a great coach for his club. Metwally travelled to Greece^{CVII} and, after intense attempts,^{CVIII} brought Puskás with him for training Al-Masry. Puskás was warmly welcomed by Al-Masry fans.

It is true that the Al-Masry Club benefited in the media from Puskás, who kept the team away from the near-elimination position it was in at the end of each season. However, it is also a fact that the fans of the club hoped that the team would benefit much more than that from Puskás' participation.

One of the key conditions of Puskás' contract is to oversee the youth teams at the club. How many young people has Puskás given a chance to during his last year and a half in Port Said? He only gave a young man, Hossam Ghariba, a chance to join the senior team. Some people say that Puskás is a professional coach and wants ready-made players. On the other hand, the same can be

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said of English coach Michael Evert, who has so far given Jamal Abdallah, Mohamed Helmy and others a chance. The coach of the Al-Ittihad is also constantly renewing his team.

The current situation does not suggest that Al-Masry Club intends to renew its contract with Puskás again. Al-Masry's board of directors will now have to look for another foreign coach to replace Puskás. Actually, this is not impossible for club president Sayed Metwally, who has already done a lot for Al-Masry since joining the club. His task now is to speed up signing a new coach for next season. Both English and German coaches have already proven their competence in this area.

Al-Masry Club is now in its golden age under its current board of directors. Its fans hope that their dream of their lives will come true in the light of this golden age and their club will win the Egyptian League title.

Will Al-Masry Club renew its contract with Puskás, or will another foreign coach come?

This question is often arising among Al-Masry fans. Will we find an answer to this question from Al-Masry officials? We hope so.

Ever since Puskás took control over the team, we have found that all his training has been limited to improving the physical fitness of the Egyptian players. Compared to the start of the 1979–1980 league championship, we haven't seen any tactical vision in the stadium, especially now that another championship is imminent. The latter prompted me to ask Puskás about his game plans. Puskás replied that the abilities of the Al-Masry players were limited. With the exception of Mosaad Nour,^{CIX} none of the players can meet his expectations, so he compensates for the shortcomings by increasing the intensity of training and improving the strength of the players. I kept quiet here, I didn't say anything. So, let's see what Puskás is doing. Indeed, Puskás seemed to have a firm belief that physical fitness was the main reason why Al-Masry Club eventually finished third in last season. In fact, however, we have not seen a single player suffering from muscle spasm or any other football injury last year, from the start of the tournament until the end of the season. And this season, Al-Masry fans have been expecting good results.

In this season, however, it didn't show the achievements his fans hoped for. The team played well at the start of the league, which lasted until the match in Mansoura.^{CX} This strong start gave Port Said fans hope that their dream would come true and their team would win the league title. After the fifth week, however, the team's performance fluctuated, winning just six matches, reaching the same number of draws and losing five games after the 17th round of the league. This season, Minya, which only made it to the league this year, won five matches, played the same number of draws and lost seven. Now the difference Al-Masry coached by Puskás, and Minya, trained by an unknown Egyptian, is only three points. Is this logical?!

Notes

^I An associate professor at the Kodolányi János University (Budapest, Hungary), Institute of Welfare Society, Department of International Studies. He holds a PhD in History of international relations between the Socialist countries and the states of the Arabian Peninsula. He has published various articles and book chapters, focusing on the Middle Eastern countries' internal and external conflicts as well as their security problems in the modern era.

^{II} Egyptian Historian, researcher, and visitor lecturer (Academy of Scientific Research and Technology, Egypt, and Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary). He achieved his PhD at the Szeged University in 2014. He is author and chief-in-editor of several multilingual books and papers specialized in modern history and international relations, as well as a translator of more than thirty books. He is a principal investigator of 5 international projects, and effective member of another four. This paper was supported by Tempus Public Foundation.

^{III} According to popular tradition, 1 April is the day of fools. For this reason, Puskás deliberately falsified his original date of birth, which he celebrated on April 2. (BORSI-KÁLMÁN 2008. 10.)

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^{IV} The family changed their surname from Purczeld surname to Puskás in 1937, when the head of the family obtained a football coaching qualification.

^V Ferenc Puskás Sr. transferred from MÁV Gépgyári SK to Kispest FC in 1927, where he played midfield until 1936. After graduating as a coach, he was head coach of Kispest between 1937–1942 and 1945–1947, as well as of Budapest Honvéd from 1948 to 1951. Under his professional guidance, Kispest won two championships.

^{VI} BÁN–HARMOS 2005. 7.; HÁMORI 2001. 11.

^{VII} Puskás later recalled that thanks to constant practice, at the age of six or seven, their sense of the ball was already so developed that they could keep it in the air “almost indefinitely” with their head or feet. (DÉNES–JAMRICH 1998. 11–13.)

^{VIII} According to the regulations of the era, players could only be signed up for the youth team from the age of 11. Although the little Puskás had not yet reached the age limit, he insisted on his appointment when his permanent teammate, József Bozsik, a year and a half older than him, was selected. With his determined action, he managed to get in at the cost of a minor fraud (his date of birth was dated two years earlier, and the name of Miklós Kovács was mentioned on his first certificate). (DÉNES–JAMRICH 1998. 13–14.; HÁMORI 2001. 12–13.)

^{IX} As a coach, his father initially had a rather unfavourable opinion of the young Puskás' performance. He did not think his son would become a good football player because he considered him lazy. However, this only further strengthened the determination and ambition of his son, who trained himself even more resolutely. (HORVÁTH 2011. 134.)

^X The Hungarian national football team played against Austria for the first time after the Second World War on 19 and 20 August 1945. Puskás made his debut in the second match, which ended in a 5-2 Hungarian victory, where Hungary took the lead with his goal kicked in the 12th minute. He was also a member of the winning team against Romania on 30 September and scored two of the seven Hungarian goals in the match. (HÁMORI 2001. 21.; SZEGEDI 2016. 7.)

^{XI} Juventus Turin, for example, offered him 40 million lire in May 1947 after seeing his performance in a national team match in Italy. In addition to an apartment, a car, and a salary of his choice, he was also offered the chance to bring his father along as coach. Although Puskás eventually declined the offer after much deliberation, he was nevertheless summoned by the Hungarian secret police a year later and interrogated for an alleged border crossing attempt. (SZÖLLÖSI 2007.) https://www.nemzetisport.hu/minden_mas_foci/20070115/lakas_kocsi_alomfizetes/ (Downloaded: 11.12.2021)

^{XII} Another decisive factors in his stay in Hungary were his insistence on his family and his fear that the political system of the era would take revenge on his relatives for his departure. This was later accompanied by his marriage to the excellent handball player, Erzsébet Hunyadvári in 1950. Their common and only child, Anikó, was born in 1952 in Budapest. (DÉNES–JAMRICH 1998. 28–29.)

^{XIII} At the final in Helsinki, Hungary defeated Yugoslavia 2-0 on August 2, 1952. The first of the Hungarian goals was scored by Puskás in the 70th minute.

^{XIV} At the Rome stadium inauguration, Hungary defeated Italy to 3–0 on 17 May. With this match, the Hungarian national team managed to gain victory on Italian soil after 28 years. (DÉNES–JAMRICH 1998. 90–91.)

^{XV} The predecessor of the European Championship.

^{XVI} Puskás considered this match to be the best beautiful result of his life and the so-called 'pull-back' goal to be his favourite. The English, who even mocked Puskás's low height and overweight before the meeting, suffered another devastating defeat (7–1) at the Népstadion in Budapest in a rematch held in May of the following year. (DÉNES–JAMRICH 1998. 92–115.)

^{XVII} Eyewitness accounts differ on whether Puskás was offside when he scored his second, equaliser in the 87th minute of the match. The official television footage allows no clear verdict, as it fails to show Puskás' position at the moment when the ball was passed. Referee William Ling first wanted to allow the goal, but changed his mind after talking to Welsh linesman Benjamin Mervyn Griffiths. (BORSI-KÁLMÁN 2018. 25–26.; DÉNES–JAMRICH 1998. 125–130.)

^{XVIII} From 14 May 1950 to 4 July 1954, the Golden Team did not suffer defeat on the pitch. During this period, 36 matches were played, of which only four ended in a draw. (DÉNES–JAMRICH 1998. 124.)

^{XIX} Hungarian public was less forgiving for the defeat in the final, which led to riots in Budapest. Puskás was proclaimed one of the scapegoats of the failure and was subjected to regular fan atrocities, so he and his teammates were guarded by the police for days after returning home. (BÁN–HARMOS 2005. 80–81.; DÉNES–JAMRICH 1998. 157–161.)

^{XX} In addition to sport, Puskás also made film history when he played the title role in the 1956 black-and-white Hungarian film satire 'The Miracle Striker'. However, the original premiere of the film was cancelled due to the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, and in the censored version of the film, released on 17 September 1957, the scenes of Puskás, who had emigrated in the meantime, were re-recorded with Nándor Hidegkuti. Nowadays, Hungarian television is once again broadcasting the original version of the film, shot with Puskás. He later appeared for a scene in the 1985

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Hungarian action comedy "The Enchanted Dollar", where he played foot tennis with Flórián Albert, György Kárpáti and Csaba Hegedüs. (DÉNES–JAMRICH 1998. 75–76.)

^{XXI} Puskás's international recognition and the anarchic conditions in Hungary during the 1956 revolution were well illustrated by the fact that the false news about his alleged death during the fighting in Budapest caused general shock abroad. (BORSI-KÁLMÁN 2008. 69–70.)

^{XXII} Due to the political conditions of the period and his illegal emigration, he could no longer play in the Hungarian national team. He was later declared a traitor; a file was opened about him under the name "Vándor" (Wanderer) and a wanted notice was issued against him. Until then, he had scored 84 goals in 85 national team matches, which in itself is a world record.

^{XXIII} Alfredo Di Stéfano, nicknamed Saeta rubia (1926–2014): Argentine-Spanish footballer and coach. He is considered one of the greatest footballers of the twentieth century.

^{XXIV} Raymond Kopa, also known as Raymond Kopaszewski (1931–2017): French footballer, World Cup bronze medallist (1958) and winner of the Ballon d'Or in 1958.

^{XXV} Francisco Gento López (1933–): world-famous Spanish footballer, player of the Spanish national team from 1955 to 1969.

^{XXVI} José Héctor Rial Laguía (1928–1991): Argentine-Spanish footballer and coach who played for the Spanish national team from 1955 to 1958.

^{XXVII} Real Madrid president Santiago Bernabéu de Yeste once told the international press that the difference between the two star players in his clubs was that Di Stefano was deeply respected by all of Spain, while Puskás was very much loved by all of Spain. (HÁMORI 2001. 68.)

^{XXVIII} Among other things, Puskás is credited with scoring four goals in the 1960 Champions League final (Real Madrid-Eintracht Frankfurt 7–3), a record that is still unbreakable, and three in the 1962 final (Benfica-Real Madrid 5–3). He also became European Cup top goal scorer (12 goals in seven games) in 1960 and he is the only one to score a hat-trick in two different European Champion Clubs' Cup or UEFA Champions League finals.

^{XXIX} In addition to football, 'Pancho' also tried to earn merit in the field of gastronomy. The Salchichas Puskás (Puskás Sausages) brand was registered in 1963, but its small butchery, which produced spicy sausages from Debrecen, went bankrupt four years later. His restaurant, Pancho Puskás, opened in 1967 near the Santiago de Bernabéu Stadium, proved to be much more successful. However, he sold it after getting a coaching position in Vancouver. (DÉNES–JAMRICH 1998. 248.)

^{XXX} Also known as Real Betis Balompié or just Betis. It is a Spanish professional football club based in Seville, at the Estadio Benito Villamarín. Founded in 1907, it plays in La Liga, having won the Segunda División in the 2014–15 season.

^{XXXI} Real won the meeting 4–2. By comparison, the Ajax-Milan European Cup Final was also held at the Santiago de Bernabéu stadium two days later, attended by "only" 30,000 spectators. (BÁN–HARMOS 2005. 33.; DÉNES–JAMRICH 1998. 243.)

^{XXXII} Puskás had coached in a total of ten countries, including Spain (1967, 1968–1969, 1974–1975), USA (1967), Canada (1968), Greece (1970–1974, 1978–1979), Saudi Arabia (head coach, 1975–1976), Chile (1976–1977), Egypt (1979–1984), Paraguay (1985–1986), Australia (1990–1991) and Hungary (1992–1993).

^{XXXIII} Panathinaikos or Panathinaikos FC is a Greek football team based in Athens. Founded in 1908, it has won the Greek championship 20 times, the Greek Football Cup 18 times, and the Greek Super Cup 3 times.

^{XXXIV} Also known as Amsterdamsche Football Club or just Ajax Amsterdam, or simply Ajax. It is a Dutch professional football club based in Amsterdam. Historically, Ajax has been the most successful club in the Netherlands, with 35 Eredivisie titles and 20 KNVB Cups. In addition, it is regarded as one of the country's big three clubs.

^{XXXV} Despite the spectacular successes, Puskás found it increasingly difficult to tolerate the interference of Greek officials and military officers in the team's professional affairs. The conflict finally led to a break-up in 1974, when, in the heat of a dispute, he suddenly kicked his opponent between his two legs, and then quickly left the country. (DÉNES–JAMRICH 1998. 250–258.)

^{XXXVI} At the 1920 Summer Olympic Games, held from 28 August to 2 September, 14 national football teams competed, and Egypt alone represented the non-European world alongside the other countries. It was eliminated in the first round of the competition. However, the picture is clouded by the fact that they were beaten 2–1 by Italy, one of the classics of the era, on 28 August 1920. It is also worth noting that while they were one goal behind the Italians, the Luxembourgers, for example, were beaten by three goals to the Dutch, while the Yugoslavs lost by seven to the Czechoslovakians and the Greeks by nine to Sweden.

^{XXXVII} The Olympic Football Tournament in Paris took place from 25 May to 9 June 1924. The 1924 Summer Olympic Games were held from 4 May to 27 July.

^{XXXVIII} The Egyptian team's success was enhanced by finishing eighth out of 22 countries on four continents.

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^{XXXIX} According to a contemporary report, "reasons for the defeat suffered from Egypt included the discord among the players, the incompetence of the coach, the tiring journey, the unqualified hotel accommodation, many injuries, and the hurtful domestic press opinions".

For more details regarding the meeting, see:

http://www.mob.hu/engine.aspx?page=ShowContent2&content=mgr_belso_plakat_kisol36_html (Downloaded: 27.12.2021) According to the International Football Federation website, the match in Paris was watched by 4,371 spectators with Spain's Collina refereeing.

<http://www.fifa.com/tournaments/archive/tournament=512/edition=197020/matches/match=32303/report.html> (Downloaded: 27.12.2021)

^{XL} Date, kick-off time: Friday, 19 February 1932, 15:00 (UTC+02:00). Competition: International Friendly. Referee: Rinaldo Barlassina, Novara/Italy. Attendance, venue: 6 500, Prince Farouk Stadium, Cairo. For more details on the game, see the European Football Database, the complete archive of all European national team matches: <https://eu-football.info/match.php?id=5639> (Downloaded: 27.01.2021)

^{XLI} Also known as Stadio Partenopeo. The stadium was able to accommodate 40.000 people and it was destroyed by bombings during the World War II

^{XLII} <http://www.fifa.com/worldcup/archive/edition=3/results/matches/match=1119/report.html> (Downloaded: 27.12.2021)

^{XLIII} It organises the football league, the Egyptian Premier League, the Egypt national football team and the Egypt women's national football team. For more information about the Federation, see: <https://www.efa.com.eg/> (Downloaded: 27.01.2022)

^{XLIV} Pál Titkos (1908–1988) played for MTK between 1929 and 1940. He scored 95 goals in 231 league matches. Twice Hungarian champion, footballer of the year in the 1936–1937 season. He scored 13 goals for the Hungarian national team between 1929 and 1938 and was a member of the Hungarian team that won the silver medal at the 1938 World Cup. He was the Secretary General of the Hungarian Football Federation between 1950 and 1955.

^{XLV} For more information on sports relations, see ABDALLAH ABDEL-ATI ABDEL-SALAM MOHAMED 2015. 101-106.

^{XLVI} UMMINGER 1990. 381.

^{XLVII} Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918–1970) was born in Bacus district, Alexandria. He was one of the best known and most charismatic Arab politicians and the second president of the Republic of Egypt. He served as a military officer in Egypt, Sudan, and Palestine. He was the leading figure of the Free Officers Movement. As a statesman, he acted as deputy Prime Minister from 1953 to 1954, Prime Minister of Egypt for three terms (February 1954 – March 1954, April 1954 – September 1962, June 1967 – September 1970), and President of the Republic in one term from 23 June 1956 to 28 September 1970. He was also a prominent figure in Arab nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s and one of the main organisers of the non-aligned movement.

^{XLVIII} Mohamed Neguib (1901–1984): Egyptian politician, military officer, President of Egypt. As a professional soldier, he was initially a member of King Farouk's Egyptian personal guard and later took part in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. After the overthrow of the monarchy and the proclamation of the Republic, he was elected president in 1953. However, his conservative views soon brought him into conflict with the Revolutionary Command Council, and the conflict soon developed into a power struggle with Nasser. He resigned in February 1954 but returned to the post of head of state at the demand of civilian and military groups. Nasser, however, successfully consolidated his power behind the scenes and became prime minister. In November 1954, he forced Neguib to resign, who was subsequently placed under informal house arrest in a villa in the suburbs of Cairo, from which he was released only in 1972. For more information, see ABDALLAH ABDEL-ATI AL-NAGGAR–PRANTNER 2021. 236–237.

^{XLIX} J. NAGY 2017. 24–28.

^L Rial in French, while Puskás tried to speak English with the players, who in turn consistently conversed in Arabic. (HÁMORI 2001. 126.)

^{LI} Puskás later remembered appreciatively how faithful the Saudis were. However, he immediately added to the words of praise that the players promised something only in the rarest of cases. He formed a much more depressing opinion of them when he said the players grumbled dissatisfied every time, they were asked for anything and went to training as if they had done a favour. (Ibid.)

^{LII} Puskás's stay in Saudi Arabia was also overshadowed by the fact that his beloved mother had died during his time there.

^{LIII} It should be added that six of the 22 goals scored in 16 matches were born only in the match against Afghanistan on 28 November 1975.

^{LIV} As Puskás put it this way, "we didn't get beaten to pieces". The only exception was the match against Iraqis on 1 April 1976, when the Saudis were knocked out 7–1.

^{LV} For more information, see: <https://www.ksa-team.com/coaches.php?id=33> (Downloaded: 25.12.2021)

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^{LVI} Dezső Bundzsák (1928–2010) was a Hungarian footballer and coach, and manager of the Egyptian national team from 1979–1980.

^{LVII} Egyptian commercial city located in the northeast of the country, north of the Suez Canal. It was founded during the construction of the Suez Canal.

^{LVIII} A well-known Egyptian businessman who led the Al-Masry Club for 28 years (1980–2008). His exceptional personality was well-loved in Port Said, where his birthday was regularly celebrated even after his death in 2009.

^{LIX} At the exchange rate of the period under review, 1 US dollar was equivalent to 0.6 Egyptian pounds. On this basis, Puskás' monthly income was equivalent to 2,100 Egyptian pounds. By comparison, the earnings of senior Egyptian civil servants were between 60 and 70 Egyptian pounds at the same time.

^{LX} His monthly salary later rose to \$4,500 thanks to the team's success.

^{LXI} The only thing he didn't get was the promised car he didn't need anyway, as the football pitch was not far from the hotel. (HÁMORI 2011. 127–128; MORSY 2015.)

^{LXII} Al-Masry finished sixth out of 12 teams in the 1978–1979 Egyptian Premier League.

^{LXIII} Sabah Al-Kheir literally means "good morning". Also, the name of the Egyptian weekly newspaper published by the Rose Al-Yousef Foundation. Its first editor-in-chief was Ahmed Bahaa-ed-Din, one of the youngest Egyptian editors-in-chief after Mustafa and Ali Amin. The first issue of the weekly was published on 17 January 1956 with Ahmed Bahaa-ed-Din's now famous slogan: "For young hearts and liberated minds".

^{LXIV} The stadium, inaugurated in 1955 and closed in 2019, was able to accommodate nearly 18,000 spectators

^{LXV} A well-known Egyptian football team based in the city of Port Said. Founded in 1920, the club had won the Suez Canal Regional Football Championship seventeen times.

^{LXVI} Hold me accountable in two years later! Sabah Al-Kheir. 2/1230 August 1979. 60–61.

^{LXVII} Off the field! Sabah Al-Kheir. 18/1241 October 1979. 62.

^{LXVIII} Al-Masry determines this year's league winner?! *Sabah Al-Kheir*. 25/1303 December 1980. 58–59

^{LXIX} The most fundamental problem with the Egyptian players was their mentality, which was completely unknown to Puskás. The Hungarian coach had been consciously prepared to become a professional footballer since he was a little child. Because of this, it was incomprehensible to him the lack of commitment he often experienced among his players. He once resignedly remarked that his players only took training seriously just before the matches. In addition to their inappropriate attitude, he criticized their stubbornness for disregarding his professional instructions. According to him, "I ask them to bomb into the net, but they will not hit the gate twenty-seven times out of thirty shots. Before that, we hit the goalkeeper twenty-nine times out of thirty! Here the player does what the ball commands, even though he should dictate the ball!" (HÁMORI 2001. 100.)

^{LXXLXX} This criticism is also correct in the fact that for Puskás, the player's talent and aptitude was the criterion for selecting into the senior team, not that he was a member of Al-Masry's youth team. In this spirit, several talented young players (such as Tarek Soliman, who had already proved himself at the FIFA World Youth Championship, or Hesam Saleh) were signed under the presidency of Sayed Metwally. (MORSY 2015.)

^{LXXI} It is an Egyptian city with a football club. It lies about 245 km south of Cairo, on the west bank of the Nile. It is the seat of the Minya Governorate. It is considered a cultural centre and a famous university and industrial city. Its industries are cement, chemicals, fertilizers, furniture, consumer goods.

^{LXXII} Will Puskás leave Al-Masry?! *Sabah Al-Kheir*. 22/1307 January 1981. 60.

^{LXXIII} The league will start tomorrow at last! *Sabah Al-Kheir*. 20/1450 October 1983. 59.

^{LXXIV} Zamalek is one of the most famous and successful Cairo-based clubs in the Egyptian football league and one of the best-known in Africa and the Middle East. It was founded in 1911. Over the past century, it has won numerous domestic and international titles and cups.

^{LXXV} Al Ahly Sporting Club, commonly known as Al Ahly, is an Egyptian professional sports club. It is one of the most successful football clubs in the world. It was founded in 1907.

^{LXXVI} The open preference for the two Egyptian star teams was occasionally reflected in obvious abuses to the detriment of Al-Masry. The most striking example of the latter was in the 1981–1982 season, half of which was dominated by the Green Eagles. However, the Egyptian Football Federation used the mass brawl between the fans after a lost home match against Zamalek as an excuse for banning the team from home ground. As a result, they had to play all of the remaining matches on an away field, which they lost. Thanks to a series of failures, Al-Ahly eventually finished in fifth place. (MORSY 2015.)

^{LXXVII} In the 1979–1980 season, Al-Masry defeated the Zamalek at home and played a 1-1 draw away. They also played a draw at home with Al-Ahly and suffered a debatable defeat in a very spectacular and exciting meeting in Cairo. The following season, when the team finished third again, they managed to beat Al-Ahly by one goal at home. (MORSY 2015.)

^{LXXVIII} In the match, Al-Ahly could only equalize in the last minutes against Al-Masry, who had been leading until then, and then scored the winning goal in overtime. (MORSY 2015.)

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- LXXXIX <https://www.filgoal.com/articles/384997> (Downloaded: 23.12.2021.)
- LXXX <https://www.filgoal.com/articles/384997> (Downloaded: 23.12.2021.)
- LXXXI Ibid.
- LXXXII *Al-Jarida*, 7 June 2021.
- LXXXIII <https://wtskora.com/bios/%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%B3-%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%B4%D9%83%D8%A7%D8%B4-%D8%AC%D9%88%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%B1-ferenc-puskas/> (Downloaded: 24.12.2021)
- LXXXIV It is an Egyptian daily news portal and printed newspaper published by Future Publishing, Distribution, and Press. The portal provides breaking news reports, political analyses, and other general economic and entertainment coverage to an audience of Arabic speakers worldwide.
- LXXXV *Elwatan*, 24 September 2018.
- LXXXVI Launched in 1984, it is an opposition paper as a sounding board for the Liberal Democrat neo-Wafd party.
- LXXXVII More specifically, he scored 358 goals in 349 Hungarian league matches.
- Puskás.com: His achievements as a player. <http://www.puskas.com/hu/eletrajz/eredmenyei.html> (Downloaded: 13.12.2021)
- LXXXVIII The above statement by the author can be considered a strong exaggeration. The fact is that Puskás was a mainstay at Real Madrid for years, where, however, he had not held a leading position. For this reason, the writer presumably wanted to refer here to his four-time Spanish goal-scoring title.
- LXXXIX In 1948, he won the honorary title with 50 goals
- XC *Al-Wafd*, 29 April 2014.
- XCI He won the title with his team in 1962. He also played in the final in 1960 and 1961.
- XCII Real Madrid won the European Champions Cup with Puskás in the 1958–1959, 1959–1960 and 1965–1966 seasons. However, the above article does not mention that Puskás and his teammates also managed to win the Intercontinental Cup in 1960.
- XCIII For more details, see: <https://al-ain.com/article/ferenc-pusk-s-real-madrid> (downloaded: 22.12.2021)
- XCIV The return of Puskás and the full-house match of the old boys at the Népstadion (People's Stadium) was the closing scene of András Surányi's 1982 documentary about the Golden Team.
- XCIV In Hungarian: Magyar Labdarúgó Szövetség (MLSZ). It is the governing body of football in Hungary.
- XCVI In 2014, the stadium of the Puskás Akadémia FC football club also took its name (Puskás Akadémia Pancho Arena) in Felcsút. In addition, a football academy in Felcsút, a primary school in Kispest and several streets across Hungary and Australia have been named after him. Finally, the minor planet 82.656th, discovered on 10 August 2011, also bears his name.
- XCVII Puskás was declared dead of the nation and laid to rest in St. Stephen's Basilica on 9 December 2006, following an impressive funeral service. Eltemették Puskás Ferencet (Ferenc Puskás was buried). *Origo*, 09.12.2006. <https://www.origo.hu/sport/futball/20061209puskastemetes.html> (Downloaded: 12.12.2021)
- XCVIII Puskás.com: his achievements as a player. <http://www.puskas.com/hu/eletrajz/eredmenyei.html> (Downloaded: 13.12.2021)
- XCIX International Federation of Football History & Statistics, IFFHS.
- C It is located in the Hungarian Capital, Budapest. Being the largest theatre in the city, it was made part of the Hungarian State Opera House in 1951.
- CI Puskás' work in Egypt was closely followed by the weekly Sabah Al-Kheir. From the numerous articles of the newspaper, we selected two articles with different content and translated them from Arabic into English, which are published in full below. This is the first article, which was written by: Ezzat Al-Shamy, journalist and sports analyst. Photo by Salah Ahmed, and published by Sabah Al-Kheir, 2 august 1979 /1230. 60–61.
- CII The author's statement is wrong, as Puskás started his coaching career at Hércules Alicante Club in Spain in 1967. He then coached the American San Francisco Gales (1967) and the Canadian Vancouver Royals (1968), before returning to Spain to manage the Deportivo Alavés in the Basque Country during the 1968–1969 league season. The author of the above article was presumably referring to the latter, given the football club's hometown of Vitoria-Gasteiz. Puskás spent a year there without leaving a deep impression on the locals, which is hardly to be admired given the football team's performance at the time (14th place in the second division).
- CIII The Greek football team was founded in Athens in 1924. It is based at the Nikos Gumas Stadium. Since its foundation, the football club has been a 12-time Greek champion and a 15-time Greek Cup winner.
- CIV Referring to our previous comparison, the two Egyptian pounds deducted for each minute of delay corresponded to the earnings of an average civil servant for about one day.
- CV The author of the article is presumably referring to Ibrahim, Puskás' right-hand man and assistant, who transported Puskás with his own car when needed. As mentioned earlier, Puskás did not get an own car, so if he was not transported by Ibrahim, he asked one of his players to lend his car if justified.

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^{CVI} Sabah Al-Kheir, 22 January 1981. /1307. 62. The article was written by Mohamed Algabry.

^{CVII} Puskás was already in Spain when he received the request from the Egyptians.

^{CVIII} This statement contradicts the claim in the previous article that Puskás immediately accepted the assignment. The truth lies somewhere in between, on the golden mean, as already referred to earlier in this paper.

^{CIX} Mosaad Nour (1951–2011) – nicknamed Kastan – is a former Egyptian footballer and historical star of Al-Masry.

^{CX} Mansoura is a city in northern Egypt, about 120 km from Cairo. It was founded in 1221, when the Crusaders besieged Damietta. It is currently the commercial and administrative centre and the seat of the Dakahlia Governorate. It has had a football club, the Mansoura Sporting Club, since 1932.

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