



# Examples of Football Role Models by Country

Sexuality and gender identity is still a taboo topic in the world of football, especially within the men's game. Currently, there is only one openly gay male football player, who is still actively pursuing his career. That player is Robbie Rogers, who came out in 2013 and currently plays for LA Galaxy in the USA. However, there are several active and former players and coaches in Europe who support diversity and acceptance in football for all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Their positive actions to stand up for acceptance and inclusion demonstrates that they are positive role models in football. Some of them are listed below:

## The Netherlands

### Arjan Robben

**Robben openly supported** Thomas Hitzlsperger (ex-professional player and ex-German international) when he came out as gay.

### Louis van Gaal

van Gaal was a guest on the KNVB-boat at the Gay Pride canal tour in Amsterdam. He is a well-known person in global football and has worldwide respect for his knowledge. He once said: "The world of professional football as we know is a world full of machos. A gay man will probably think that those are difficult circumstances to live and work in. That's not how it's supposed to be and we want to change it. But you can't change it in one single day."

### Ron Vlaar

Vlaar is a player at AZ Alkmaar. He was a player for the Dutch national team but suffered from a knee injury. Will probably be back in Danny Blind's squad in the future. When he was the captain of Feyenoord Rotterdam, **he said** that there is no place for homophobia in Dutch football. He was the first Dutch player ever to speak about the subject.

### Arnold Smit

Smit is a former professional football player, openly gay and board member of the John Blankenstein Foundation. He is a confidant / counsellor at the VVSC, the players union of the Netherlands.

### Wensley Garden

Garden is a former professional football player and openly gay. He played for Helmond Sport (Dutch football club) for three seasons.

### Patrick Kluivert

Kluivert is a former professional football player and took part in a Gay Pride Parade in Amsterdam in 2013.

### Ronald de Boer

de Boer is a former professional football player and took part in a Gay Pride Parade in Amsterdam in 2013.

### Pierre van Hooijdonk

van Hooijdonk is a former professional football player and took part in a Gay Pride Parade in Amsterdam in 2013.

### Aron Winter

Winter is a former professional football player and took part in a Gay Pride Parade in Amsterdam in 2013.



## Belgium

### Vincent Kompany

He is the captain of Manchester City FC and the Belgian national team. Kompany has backed the *Football v Homophobia* campaign in its work to help fans and clubs tackle prejudice in the game. He once said: “We’re proud to be supporting the Football v Homophobia campaign. We hope that it sends out a message that there is no place for discrimination in football, nor in any sport.”

### Radja Nainggolan

Nainggolan is under contract with AS Roma and a former teammate of Dessena's at Cagliari. He is against homophobia, saying: “My sister is in a relationship with a woman. She is happy and it’s important to me that she can live how she wants.” In March 2014 Nainggolan wore rainbow laces as part of an anti-homophobia demonstration.

### Hannes Van der Bruggen

Van der Bruggen plays for KAA Gent. He was one of the faces of the ‘*Sports4ever1-campaign*’ in Belgium: A campaign about LGBT-diversity in sports from the Flemish government.

### Riana Nainggolan

Nainggolan is the sister of Radja Nainggolan, football player at AS Roma. She was one of the faces of the ‘*Sports4ever1-campaign*’ in Belgium: A campaign about LGBT-diversity in sports from the Flemish government.

### Toby Alderweireld

Alderweireld is a player in the Belgium national team and supported the ‘*Red Card Against Homophobia*’ campaign when he played for Ajax Amsterdam.

### Sven Kums

Formerly played for KAA Gent; now plays for Udinese. **He supported** the rainbow laces campaign in Belgium.

## Italy

### Giorgio Chiellini

Chiellini has been playing for Juventus in Turin since 2004. He supports underprivileged children and children with disabilities who suffer from discrimination, thus demonstrating how diversity is important, and discrimination should not be a part of football or other parts of society.

### Daniele Dessena

He is currently playing for Cagliari Calcio. He joined the rainbow laces campaign and kept wearing them for the next game, even after being insulted for it on social media.

### Cesare Prandelli

Former coach of the Italian national football team. He took part in a gay football tournament as a guest and he said that he couldn’t find any difference between hetero-players or LGBTIQ players, because there aren’t any, all that matters is the technical aspect. “If you play football, it is because you want to play football. That’s all and this is beautiful”.

### Billy Costacurta

A former Milan AC player; he said during an interview that at the time when he decided to end his football career, the “changing room” he left was one ready to accept LGBTIQ people on the field. He says that it’s the **right time to make a change**.



## Germany

### Manuel Neuer

Neuer is the goalkeeper of Bayern Munchen and the captain of the German national team. In an interview he said that being gay should not be a taboo topic anymore, and that the football gay community needs a role model to come out and lead the fight for them. "Their sexual preference should not matter because what's important is their performance on the pitch. Fans won't make an issue out of their sexuality. For them the only thing that matters is how well they perform on the pitch."

### Mario Gomez

Gomez plays for VfL Wolfsburg and the German national team. He said that openly gay players would probably feel better if they 'come out' and don't have a secret anymore. "They will feel free." The DFB (Deutscher Fußball-Bund) had said earlier that it's best to keep it to yourselves because it could harm to your career. Gomez didn't agree.

### Joachim Löw

Löw is the manager of the German national team. Ballack's agent (former German international) accused Löw of being gay. In an exclusive interview with Die Welt, Löw responded to these accusations. "I'm not gay, nor am I wearing a wig. And I don't have a problem whatsoever if one of my players is gay."

### Thomas Hitzlsperger

Hitzlsperger was the first German football player to be open **about his sexuality**, even though he only came out after he retired as a professional player. Ever since, he has supported a number of initiatives against homophobia in football across Europe.

### Philipp Lahm

Lahm was one of the first German national players who spoke in public about tolerance towards homosexual football players. He said in 2007, "*Wenn ein Spieler schwul ist, ist er trotzdem mein Mannschaftskollege, und für mich würde sich im Umgang mit ihm nichts ändern*" ("If a player is gay, he is still my team mate. For me, nothing would change regarding our interaction") He received the "Tolerantia-Preis" for his statement.

### Lukas Podolski

Concerning the coming out of Thomas Hitzlsperger, Podolski said via Twitter "Brave and right decision. Respect, Thomas Hitzlsperger. His outing is an important sign in our time."

### Thomas Müller

He spoke out positively via Twitter/Facebook concerning the "*Coalition for Action – against homophobia and sexism*" from fans of the club St. Pauli, "*Wäre doch auch mal eine Idee für die FC Bayern Marketing Abteilung!*" (Love is Love no matter what gender. Football should get rid of this intolerance).

### Nadine Angerer (former German national player)

She came out as bisexual according to the media, and speaks in public about topics like "football and gender". She said for example that she was upset about stereotypes like "*Das sind alles Lesben*" ("all female players are lesbians") or "*Mannsweiber*" ("bulldogs").



## England

### Casey Stoney

Stoney is a professional football player in England who plays for Arsenal and the English national team. She knew she was gay since the age of 17 and publicly spoke about her sexuality in 2014. She met her wife when they were both playing for Lincoln Ladies FC, and have since had children together. Stoney is considered to be one of the most influential gay women in her country.

### Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain + Theo Walcott

These professional players and England internationals both joined the rainbow laces campaign and featured in a **Stonewall commercial** against homophobia.

### Ellis Cashmore

Cashmore undertook a lot of research about homophobia in and around football stadiums. He came to the conclusion that 91% of the 3500 people he communicated with didn't have any problems with a footballer being gay. He quoted one of the fans, "I'd rather have a good player being gay, than a bad one being heterosexual". He suggests that gay footballers remain hidden because of the clubs "We think that they don't want them to be openly gay".

### Danny Shittu & Shane Lowry

Both are professional football players for Millwall FC and appeared in a **video clip** in 2014 talking about the need to tackle homophobia and supporting the work of their club in this area.

### Emma Whitter

Whitter is a striker for Millwall Lionesses and talked about the need to tackle homophobia, and her own experiences of coming out as gay in this 2014 **clip** from Millwall FC.

### Chris Ramsey

The former QPR boss has spoken to the press about the need to tackle all forms of discrimination in football, including homophobia and sexism.

### Chris Hughton

The Brighton and Hove Albion Manager spoke out in support of his club's *Football v Homophobia* designated game in February 2016.

### Matt Jarvis

A professional footballer for West Ham United, Jarvis appeared on the cover of Attitude magazine in 2013 and talked about the importance of professional footballers feeling comfortable to come out.

### Matt Bloomfield

A professional footballer for Wycombe Wanderers football club. In 2011 Bloomfield became the first professional player to sign the UK Government's charter against homophobia and transphobia in football.

### Jess Fishlock

Fishlock is a Welsh international and club player for Seattle Reign FC in the USA and came out in the media in 2015. She urged for greater respect in football, talking about her own experiences of homophobia.

### Lianne Sanderson

Sanderson is an England International and midfielder for the Western New York Flash FC in the USA. Lianne has spoken openly about being gay to the media for a number of years.



## France

### Yoann Gourcouff

Gourcouff was on the cover of gay-magazine TETU in France. He doesn't think being gay is a problem whatsoever.

### Lilian Thuram

Thuram is an ex-French international player and World Champion. He has set up a foundation for inclusiveness in football and often raises awareness about homophobia in football with the media, "Racism or homophobia, I don't see any difference".

### Thierry Henry

Henry is an ex-French international, ex-Arsenal player and World Champion. He often **denounces** homophobia in football.

### Vikash Dhorasso

Dhorasso is an ex-French international player and twice France Champion. He has been a sponsor and sometimes player for the activist team "Paris Foot Gay".

### Olivier Rouyer

Rouyer is an ex-French international player, French Champion, team manager and TV consultant for CANAL +. He came out as gay after his retirement in 2008. He revealed that he was fired from his post of team manager at AS Nancy Lorraine in 1994, because of his sexual orientation. He regularly speaks to the media about homophobia in French football, "The football world is too macho..."

### Michel Hidalgo

National and International player (1952-66). Above all, he is known as coach of the French National Team (1976-84) and he is considered as the man who revived "Les Bleus". He has actively sponsored and taken part in the *b. YOURSELF* events against homophobia in football for young players in the Parc des Prince.

### Frédéric Thiriez

Former president of the LFP – French Professional

League (2002-16). He has supported and sponsored many actions to raise awareness about homophobia in football. He has also often spoken about this issue in the media, "Homophobia, on the field and elsewhere, it must stop!".

### Jean Claude Hammel

President of AJ Auxerre (France champion in 1996) from 1963 to 2009. When he signed the Charter against homophobia in Football, he declared to the media, "We must educate young players to respect everybody".

### Alain Cayzac

Former president of PSG (2006-08) he has without hesitation sponsored the Paris Foot Gay team and helps this NGO to build its educational programmes.

### Louis Nicollin

President of Montpellier HSC (France 1st League champion in 2012). Famous for his bluntness in the media he was punished, in 2009, for a homophobic speech on TV. After a match he suggested that a player was a "petite tarlouze (little sissy)". After having discussed this with LGBT organisations, he decided to apologise publicly. He even accepted to appear at the end of an activist video of Paris Foot Gay FC, stating, "Forget homophobia, it's just for little sissies!". This made the whole French football world laugh.

