

OTHER TALENTS OF THE ULMA GROUP

FROM FOOTBALL FAN TO PRESIDENT OF MONDRAGON C.F.!



— **XABIER ETXEBERRIA**
ULMA PACKAGING

“THE KIDS ARE BACK, YOUTHS TURN UP AND CHEER AND THAT CREATES JOY IN THE FOOTBALL CLUB.”

— Since 2016, Xabier Etxeberria has been working in the documentation area of ULMA Packaging and for 4 years he has been President of MONDRAGON C.F.

He started as a director of Mondragón Club de Fútbol in 2015 for a couple of years helping out in any matters that arose. *“I came here to help without really knowing what I was getting into,”* Xabier tells us.

Both Xabier and all the members of the Board of Directors joined the Club with the sole intention of lending a hand in sports management, financial management, sponsors ... after two years, the Board of Directors offered him the chance to be President as the then President of Mondra, Ramón Azkarate, wanted to step down. Ramón had already been in the job for a few years and wanted a change. In the 2017/2018 season, Xabi took over the presidency, a position he still holds to this day.

“The experience is wonderful, intense, stressful, enriching ... we can add lots more adjectives, but in general the experience has been very positive,” says Xabi.

Making my work at ULMA compatible with the position of President of Mondragón Club de Fútbol is not complicated, but it does involve

making an extra effort. It's like having two jobs, you leave ULMA and go to your second job, and if you add weekends ...

Since the pandemic began in 2020, the Club has had to go through a lot of uncertainty in its day to day operations; the general restrictions would sometimes be modified twice in one week. On the one hand we have the measures imposed by the Basque Government and on the other, those imposed by the Arrasate City Council, because when you're using a municipal facility (Mojategi) the council itself sets the conditions for training, use of changing rooms ... *“It was impossible to plan anything. This has been going on for a very long time”* says Etxeberria.

In August 2020, at the beginning of the pre-season, the schedule included friendly matches against teams in the same division. When they were going to play the first game, the rival team called to say that they could not play because one of their teammates tested positive; since Mondragón Club de Fútbol had everything ready for the game, it was decided that the two senior teams (Division of Honour and Preferential) would play each other. The day after the game, one of the players tested positive and the 22 players were confined to their homes for 10 days. This situation made many players

consider leaving football during that season or while the pandemic lasted, for fear of more lockdowns and losing or having problems at work or falling behind in their studies.

Now it seems that everything is returning to normal, training is back to what it was before, the whole team trains together without having to do it in small groups, changing rooms are back in use, competitions have returned in all categories, the fans have returned to the stands ... and it really shows. *“The atmosphere in the stands, the heat and the excitement of the crowd is something that we have missed dearly,”* he says. *“The kids are back, youths turn up and cheer and that creates joy in the Football Club.”*