

THE EVOLUTION OF THE MODERN COACH

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Whether we realise it or not, we have well and truly arrived in the modern football era. The same game we all grew up loving has evolved from the beautiful game into a global business. The football climate throughout the world has changed in so many ways, most notably within the last five years. Worldwide media follow the game 24/7, with hundreds of websites and TV stations tracking the moves of every team, both on and off the pitch. Fans, with the help of social media outlets, are now stakeholders whose opinions have a voice. [FINANCIAL](#) rewards have multiplied and consequently spiralled out of control with colossal transfer fees, contracts, and endorsements. This has generated a society that demands success so the pressure on everyone within the game is immense. The biggest change however, is within the players themselves. Today's performers are elite athletes who, with the help of having access to the best in Sport Science and training facilities, are faster, stronger, more powerful and tactically aware than ever before. The modern professional game is played at a frightening mix of speed and quality; these changes are consequently spiralling down and beginning to affect every level of the sport.

With so many changes in the game, the demands on coaches have increased significantly. Years ago, the coach was the boss, who ruled by authority along with a certain amount of fear. It could be argued that Sir Alex Ferguson was the last successful prototype of this type of manager.

Today's coaches must be multi-functional, and be equally competent as a manager, tactician, trainer, psychologist, physiologist, and sometimes even a counsellor. You simply cannot coach the same way as you did ten, fifteen, or twenty years ago for a number of reasons. With physical advances, the game is now faster and played at a greater speed. This has had a knock-on effect tactically and technically. With the game played at a quicker pace, players have less time on the ball and have to make quicker decisions in

and out of possession. Mental qualities like concentration, confidence, and temperament are now vital requirements in order to be a top player.



As a result of all these changes, the type of [TRAINING](#) the game demands has altered tremendously. If players' abilities are tested within four dimensions of a game (technically, physically, mentally, and tactically), then training exercises should be designed to do the same. Today's training is about connecting the session to the game and developing winning habits. Gruelling fitness sessions that centre only on the single physical dimension are now outdated. 'Walk through' or 'shadow play' practices that focus on simply tactical scenarios have also been made largely redundant. In order to meet the demands of the game today, all training must replicate game stimuli and therefore incorporate the four dimensions required. Sessions have to be game related, with a focus on high tempo so that the players can see the connection between the practice field and the game.

Another area that has changed in the modern era is how players are managed. In today's game, old methods of motivation and communication like yelling and screaming are guaranteed to have limited effect. It can almost be demotivation in action. If you want to be successful in the current climate, the modern coach must be partners with their players and sell their vision every day. Manuel Pellegrini will not get the best out of Joe Hart this season if he simple leaves him out of the squad and brings him back three weeks later. Players today need to understand the coach is working with them and not against them. A coach who can cultivate high standards and a winning culture in their team, will have a huge chance of success. Whether you are dealing with multi-millionaire Champions [LEAGUE](#) players or youth players, you must be able to connect and communicate.

With the Premier [LEAGUE](#) season only three months old, there have already been two coaching casualties, and both for the same reasons. Paolo Di Canio and Ian Holloway both paid the price for similar reasons. 'Losing the dressing room' is fundamentally translated to the team's failure to buy into the methods or philosophies of their coach. If the players do not see value in the sessions, the coach's ability to influence the team will be almost non-existent. It is not about being friends with the players, or even being popular, but the top coaches must communicate with the players constantly and earn credibility with their honesty.



So the question for coaches in the modern game is centred on how you will evolve with your training and methods to create 'buy in' from your players and achieve the requisite performances when they matter. Doing what was done yesterday, or doing it 5% better is no longer a formula for success. To adapt this change, coaches must make it meaningful for the players. It has to be about a philosophy over results. Teams like Arsenal, Barcelona, and Borussia Dortmund are prime examples of this vision. Whether it is the first minute of the game, or the last minute, these teams never sacrifice their [IDENTITY](#) – regardless of the score. The successful coaches in the game today are embracing the revolution. The great Italian coach, Arrigo Sacchi once said, "As long as humanity exists something new will come along – otherwise football dies."

The time is upon us. Top flight coaches like Pep Guardiola, Brendan Rodgers, André Villas-Boas, Jürgen Klopp and José Mourinho are part of a dynamic group who are leading the way in the modern revolution. Don't let the expensive suits or "special" press conferences fool you. They possess a compendium of coaching, management and leadership qualities that can only be possessed or acquired from a progressive, player centred way of thinking.

It is now up to the rest of the coaching world to try and keep up with them.