

Saturday, Oct 22 2011 **Cruyff: All great teams have home-grown players... otherwise they end up like City and Tevez**

By [Rob Draper](#)



One club: Cruyff is a great believer in loyalty

Johan Cruyff remembers the first time he set eyes on Pep Guardiola. The scrawny teenager was playing in Barcelona's youth team and Cruyff had just been appointed first-team manager at the club. 'He was a boy and the people said to me, "Oh, he's one of the best".'

'So (over the next year) I looked for him in the reserves, but he didn't play in the reserves. So then I looked at the first youth team, and he didn't play in that team. And eventually I found him in the third youth team.

'So I said to the coaches, "You said he was the best one!" And they said, "Yeah, but physically..." I said, "Put him there (in the reserves). He will grow. Don't worry, everybody grows". And they said, "Yeah, but we will lose". I said, "If we lose, we lose. We need to create players". And he did very well.'

It is, of course, a glorious understatement. Apart from winning six league titles, the European Cup and the Olympics as a player, Guardiola has gone on to win two European Cups, three league titles, a World Club Cup and the Spanish Cup in three seasons as Barcelona coach. In fact, it would not be pushing it to say that he and Cruyff have transformed the face of global football.

Not with their playing, although Cruyff, along with Pele and Diego Maradona, will always find himself at the top of those lists of the world's greatest ever footballers, but more with their coaching contributions.

Ultimately the ascendancy of what Neil Warnock derided last week as 'tippy-tappy football', as demonstrated by Barcelona and Spain, who is currently winning almost every title they contest, started with the appointment of Cruyff as Barcelona manager in 1988.

He convinced the club not just to change their entire style, to model the football he had been taught by Rinus Michels at Ajax and with Holland, but also to embrace a new philosophy of creating their own players from the youth team, which 23 years on

culminated in their extraordinary Champions League victory over Manchester United at Wembley fielding seven home-grown players.

'A long time ago, Spanish football was based on a different basis while Ajax, Dutch football, was based on different things. At Barcelona you could change it. A lot of people came after me [to continue the work]. But the people who control the ball very well, they're the most important players. And weak, smaller players, to survive they had to have a better technique than the others. Normally everyone grows - some a little later, some at different times, but everybody grows. A lot of things will change but the base of football is always technique, always should be technique.'

Mind over matter: Barcelona's Messi and Fabregas show that skill is the way forward



As recently as five years ago there was a feeling abroad that football was being invaded by giants, that muscular, physical players would dominate the future. Then came Leo Messi, Andres Iniesta, Xavi, Cesc Fabregas, David Villa, David Silva. 'We could have changed that,' says Cruyff, immodestly but not without reason.

Cruyff has an apt analogy to hand. He was speaking after a practice round at the Old Course, St Andrews, where he was playing at the recent Alfred Dunhill Links Championship, the European PGA Tour that pairs up professional golfers with celebrity amateurs.

'It's like golf: if you hit 100 balls and 90 go another way than the way you want them to go, you're going to look for another sport,' he said. 'You can enjoy yourself if the ball does what you want - it's fun. If it doesn't, then it's not.'

Cruyff's philosophy is a constant thorn in the side of English football, not just because the focus on the technical has gone against the grain here, although Sir Trevor Brooking is now working to change that at the FA . It is Cruyff's belief in creating players through youth teams that has been counter-intuitive in the globalised football world, where the likes of Chelsea and now Manchester City have attempted to buy in whole teams in short periods.



Grand designs: Cruyff at Barcelona

'Normally, all the great teams of the past had more than half from the local community,' said Cruyff. 'You take Ajax [from the Seventies], you take AC Milan [from the late Eighties, early Nineties], you take Barcelona in my time, Celtic from that time [1967], Manchester United in 1999. It gives you something extra. Maybe it's not much but it's local people who have been there and know the public.'

It is fundamental to Cruyff's vision that a club should have a culture to which players brought up in the youth system must be loyal and to which players brought in from the outside must adapt.

While personnel may change, the philosophy endures, and the collective is more important than the individual. The day the Dutchman spoke, he was digesting the news of Carlos Tevez's alleged refusal to play against Bayern Munich. Tevez's 'owners' are now seeking his fifth club in five years and he has publicly stated that he dislikes the city in which he works. The Argentine may still struggle with English after five years in the country, but he makes Cruyff's point eloquently.

'You have to fit 11 players together. You can't have 11 individuals. You need to have a team. That's why someone from outside needs to adapt to the majority. If the majority don't know where they come from, because they're all different, then what do they adapt to?'

Out in the cold: Carlos Tevez trains alone

Of Manchester City's current model, he says: 'One day it will struggle, for one thing. And you're just allowed to play 11.'

He concedes that Barcelona are also one of the biggest spenders in the European transfer market but insists that the balance is different. 'You always need a mixture. You can buy pieces to be better, because you can't create everybody, it's impossible. But you have to create your own mentality, your own people. It's very difficult to buy a team.'

As for City's spending spree, he is instinctively aghast. 'You can't lose so much money. It's absurd. You can't do it. It's the responsibility you have. How many teams don't lose money? Who's going to pay it?'

City have the huge wealth of Sheik Mansour behind them and the owner has converted almost £400million worth of City's debt into equity in the club.

But Cruyff has little time for the argument that outlawing such lavish spending on teams, which UEFA's financial fair play rules will effectively do from 2013, is the equivalent of

pulling up the drawbridge to protect the status of the likes of Barca, Bayern Munich and Manchester United while keeping the nouveau riche such as Chelsea and City out. 'You can create players,' he says, by way of a challenge. Players that would presumably then be bought by the elite clubs? 'But then you have the money and you can create another one.'

It is an idealistic vision of football but Cruyff's voice in the modern game is often one of studied unworldliness. He disowned his own country after they attempted to kick Spain off the pitch in the 2010 World Cup final, and insists that he was sad to see Holland resort to such tactics to quell Spain's stylish football, ironically inspired by Dutch football. 'They [Holland] played a game they normally don't do. You can expect from other teams that type of play but not from Holland. You must never do what's not yours.'

And he is predictably unenamoured with the current philosophy of Jose Mourinho's Real Madrid, the controversial coach having just been given a two-match ban for poking the eye of Barca coach Tito Vilanova.

'Like I said before, football is not only about winning. Madrid have a very good team. They just have bad luck that they are playing the same competition as Barcelona. They played well last year. They just didn't win the championships because Barcelona were there.

'That's not shameful. Not at all. Of course, you like to win. But there are limits of winning and I think that Madrid have always been a team of high-quality persons, fantastic environment, coach (leader) to the whole world and they're losing all that. And that's a pity. It's not good.'

Real Madrid, in short, are losing their soul? 'Yes, because what you going to achieve with this? At the end of the day you have one point more than Barcelona. That's what you want to achieve?'

Mourinho might feel that was the point of football. 'Yeah, but that's people from outside sport. He has never been a player so it's difficult to judge. But I think in the world there's much more responsibility for the coaches of Madrid, Barcelona, Manchester United, all the big teams. You have more responsibility than just being the coach. There are wider responsibilities to all the children.'

It is why he is full of praise for Sir Alex Ferguson. Cruyff contrasts United's tactics in the Champions League final, where they attempted to match Barca but lost 3-1, with Mourinho's attempts to break up the game with fouls and defensive play. 'Ferguson did

what he had to do, which means he can be proud of the club. Go for it. That's perfect. And at the end you can see if you win or lose.'

Perhaps Cruyff is a dreamer. But given his achievements on and off the pitch, which are unlikely to be matched, he has probably earned the right.