

Notes on Mourinho: Anatomy of a Winner

The modern coach must strike a balance between strength and sensitivity.

He was doing what it said on the tin marked 'special'.

His methods defied analysis because he kept getting so much right and so little wrong.

I believe that, when we are mentally strong, those people who seek to intimidate and disturb us have exactly the opposite effect. Upon hearing the whistles and jeers ... I felt as though I were the most important person in the world.

Alex Ferguson can accept adversity with good grace.

After Mourinho arrived at Chelsea, he handed out a strict code of conduct to every squad member.

Alex Ferguson always gave the impression of being willing to fight for his players if necessary, Arsene Wenger of regarding them almost as his own flesh and blood. Mourinho infuses the players with his own super-confidence.

The Chelsea players said that Mourinho's behavior, instead of being a distraction, actually helped them to lighten the pressure in pursuit of the biggest prizes.

Selective myopia is a widespread affliction among coaches.

Through success you get a bit of power. You know what you stand for. You know what people think of you. And this power, this control you have over people, becomes ingrained in you. You develop a stronger personality. All successful managers have the strength of personality. You use your position to be powerful, more powerful than you basically are.

Coaches are role models for players and fans. They have a duty to behave better than anyone else.

In our job, sometimes we get a bit paranoid.

At times, Wenger has defended the indefensible.

While working as TV commentator, Mourinho said you can see the futility of how we sometimes behave.

Mourinho was a teacher for 3 years before he went into football full time.

Mourinho wanted only players willing to gear everything, including their social lives, to the demands of success.

The trouble with being a top level coach is that it involves a lot of acting.

When there is a lull, you come to expect a storm, and the other way around.

Only the players really know what and who I am.

He (Mourinho) is an exceptionally gifted psychologist.

Early on when Mourinho realized that he would not be a top professional player, he announced that he would instead strive to become the best coach in the world. His own father, who was also a coach, already knew that his son had a talent for reading the game.

He speaks English, French, Spanish and Italian.

On youth development: even the most gifted need an inner drive.

He attended coaching school in Scotland because coaches from all over the world went there.

As soon as he walked on the training pitch, you knew he was different from the rest of us. It was how organized he was, and the way he put things across.

It was immediately obvious that he had come with a coaching background. When he did training exercises, he was much more firm and outspoken. He exuded confidence in his own ability. There was no hesitation, no self-doubt.

I just love listening to the guy because he talks sense.

As an assistant at Barcelona under Bobby Robson: Jose was very good. He listened, learned, looked, remembered. He was bright, alert and intelligent.

Jose wouldn't pull any of my punches (as an interpreter for Robson). He wasn't afraid – even with Figo.

Here he was, in his early 30s, never been a player, never been a coach to speak of either, giving me reports as good as anything I ever got from the top professional people I'd brought in to scout for me at World Cups when I was with England.

On Stoichkov: “ I'd heard he was a difficult character to have around the club. Yet I found him quite the opposite. He was a pro who didn't muck about in training – he trained right and played right. “

As an assistant for Louis van Gaal: He could read the game and he analysed the opposition so well that, after my first year, when we won the Spanish championship, I was happy for him to stay for 3 years.

A coach has to observe and correct.

van Gaal: “ I am a believer in ball possession and positional play. So we do a lot of positional play in a session. Then you can see if someone can really coach. And he could. He could see what the players had to do. And there was the quality of his analyses.”

To get to the top, you must be able not only to organize players but handle a team, to find the right chemistry. That's the difference.

Mourinho was a little bit arrogant, not always a respecter of reputations. I don't want yes-men, because you need people who will say, No – there's another way.

Mourinho was getting restless as an assistant and was ready to be a head coach. He would analyze van Gaal's decisions and compare them unfavorably with those he would have made. There were books and videos to study and time to start collating his thoughts on coaching in a computer document for strictly private use.

He had fashioned a disciplined, resilient unit.

“Don’t go into a cage unless you know how to get out of it.” He was ready to move too soon and was advised to wait and gain more experience. It proved to be good advice.

When Chelsea, backed by Abramovich’s billions, lost to Monaco, the minnows, Mourinho underestimated the power of football to overcome economics. It must have been the only thing he had neglected to learn during his prolonged and comprehensive education.

Mourinho’s attention to detail was fascinating.

Andy Roxburgh says Mourinho is the product of an advantageous upbringing and an ideal education, supplemented by the finest example of work experience in the history of employment.

Mourinho says: “after 15 years, I’m an overnight success.” It is less important for a coach setting out on his career to be instantly recognizable to millions **than to have learned the elements of the craft.**

When asked why so many failed players had become successful coaches, Mourinho responded: “more time to study – while the chosen ones are still playing, the rejects are learning and, increasingly, they are landing the top jobs.”

There is still a public perception that in order to be a competent coach you have to have been a famous player. But that’s always the case.

The top player starts with the experience and the players immediately respect him and listen to him. But it’s only a start.

When Sacchi was asked how he could coach without having played, he replied: “I didn’t realize you had to be a horse to be a jockey.”

Roxburgh insists that there are countless examples of how a teaching background could help to launch a coach. Teaching is about communication and organization.

Mourinho was educated in the global method of training. It involves the development of technical, tactical and fitness elements together through the medium of small-sided games.

It was portable goals and small sided games, double penalty box games, wingers' game – an endless stream of games.

The players would be learning without realizing it.

On the silver goal rule in the UEFA Cup, Mourinho advised his players: “Imagine 2 different 15 minute scenarios – one in which they were winning, the other losing.” How would they handle it? Because those few minutes might be all they had to win the match. He wasn't voicing negative opinions about the rule – it was there, and he would train his players to make the most of it.

The guys at the top clubs and national teams are **obsessed with detail**.

Preparation is fundamental to Mourinho's approach. And writing things down. Mourinho leaves the absolute minimum to chance. He prefers to do as much as possible through preparation.

Good players perform their best when the environment is right. Different qualities suit different contexts. It's a matter of chemistry.

All the coaches have all the same tools (support staff and equipment) – It's how they use the tools, how they relate the information to football players.

Coaches wear 3 hats : Selector – Coach - Manager

Selector – pick and balance the team – decide which players to get to improve the team.

Coach – training people to be better and gelling them into a team.

Manager – handle the players, maintain discipline and so on.

When you take over a club, you have to build and maintain 3 teams – The team that is playing, the team that is not playing, and the team behind the team.

When Mourinho hands out the behavior guide to the players, from then on, each practice, each game, each minute of your social life must center on the aim of being a champion...He said he need everyone on board.

The last thing a coach needs is malcontents.

The squad was cut to 23 and Mourinho would be working only with players who had a reasonable chance of contributing to matches – there would be no clutter, no wastage of effort.

No individual is greater than the club. Each member is there because Mourinho feels he can trust him. Trust is fundamental to what he calls his 'methodology'.

When Mourinho appointed John Terry to be the Chelsea captain, he told him: “ on the training pitch and around the place, be the speaker and out in the games, get my words across to the players.”

“ Guided discovery ” – by which Mourinho means that players at a certain level must be led gently to lessons rather than told what to do.

Mourinho describes his coaching style as flexible and evolutionary – I am different today from 5 years ago – but very demanding in terms of the commitment required from the players during training. “ We go for quality and high intensity during short periods.”

The way you use small sided games to develop technical, tactical and fitness training – a global view of training. I believe in the global method. My fitness coach works with me on the tactical systems, advising on time, distance and space. I want to develop tactical aspects of the game: how to press, when to press, transitions, ball possession, positional play. After that other things come – the physical and psychological aspects are part of the exercise. The emphasis of the work is always tactical.

John Terry says “ training is enjoyable everyday, and you learn so much. Even the players on the fringe of the first team enjoy training. The players just love Mourinho's coaching and man-management ”

“The best way to be a great player is to play football. A good coach must know more than just football. He must be a coherent leader and make all his men feel big, not small.”

Mourinho on Joe Cole: “ after he scored, the game finished for Joe. I need eleven players for defensive organization and I had just ten. Joe had 2 faces – one beautiful and another which I did not like.”

Football is not about making tricks – it’s about knowing when to do it. Keep it simple and show that you can defend. Joe Cole listened to Mourinho and completed the journey from stage act to international footballer.

Mourinho’s criticism is always constructive.

Deco on Mournho: “ Mourinho is special because he is one of the few people capable of changing a player’s mentality. He didn’t change the way I played – he improved it. He got me thinking a lot more.”

Mourinho has never been interested in players who are reluctant to learn.

“ Transitions have become crucial. When the opponent is organized defensively, it is very difficult to score. The moment the opponent loses the ball can be the time to exploit the opportunity of someone being out of position.”

“ In training sometimes I practice keeping a minimum of 5 players behind the ball, so that when we lose it we can still keep a good defensive shape. The players must learn to read the game – when to press and when to get back to their defensive positions.”

The most unusual facet of Mourinho’s management pertains to his bonding technique. He actually behaves like one of the players, a sort of twelfth man. He is more like an older brother, or the leader of the gang.

The players have been led to believe in each other. They all shared the conviction that they could not lose. Successful teams have no fear of losing. Mourinho had the knack of being able to transmit his ‘amazing confidence to every player.’

Everything Mourinho has done in his coaching career, from day with the youth teams he coached, has been written down in notebooks and retained.

Jose’s clever enough to know which players can absorb words and which need to be shown things visually.

It is almost standard coaching practice to order your players to chip away at match officials in the hope of obtaining a marginal decision sooner or later.

A willingness to make ruthless decisions. It's one of the elements of management. He can like you as a person, but make a decision that hurts you. You must be able to separate your human feelings from the cause of the team. The most exciting part of management calls for tough decisions to be made very quickly.

“ Keep calm – and always give the other coach a problem. Don't just send on a big striker for another big striker. Change it. Give your opponent things to think about.”

Mourinho on press conferences: the ultimate purpose of each of these communications is not to communicate as such but to increase his team's chance of winning. In a press conference, he is not talking to the people in the room as much as to his players, other managers, the FA and so on.

The publicity he attracts take pressure off his players.

In the area of mind games, it's competitive instinct at work. Ferguson would have to be granted a place in the mind game hall of Fame.

Mourinho is happiest when the players come in for training, and the boss becomes a bit of a lad.

Moyes on Mourinho: “ I suspect that he has the same fear of failure that the rest of us have. It's probably what drives him. “

Mourinho insists that his players behave as a unit on and off the field. He said no player could place himself above the rest or act like a star.

Mourinho studies the opposition in great detail. He spends hour after hour preparing his team for their next opponent, if necessary changing tactics from one game to the next.

He has the total belief in what he's doing and the fact that he's not afraid to voice an opinion.

Words like 'faith' and 'unity' are easy to say, but they are difficult to translate them into medals. Only the special ones can make their players grow.

He says things that are relevant and thought-provoking. He avoids clichés.

Things must be done in phases and you cannot skip a phase. You have to do one after the other. He was talking about tactics.

Although it is true that football is becoming more tactical, the fantastic player will always be able to decide a game with a piece of brilliance. And if you have better players, you can have a better tactical organization.

The intellectual level of coaching in England has been raised by his presence. His outstanding qualities are organization and mental effort.

The only fantasy Mourinho himself acknowledges is that of leading his country. "My career as a coach will only make sense when, in a few years, I have the opportunity to train the national squad."