

## **Notes on: Mourinho – Made in Portugal**

### **Introduction**

FC Porto, under José Mourinho, became only the 6<sup>th</sup> side in history to win their domestic league and cup and the European competition in which they were involved, and then as if the treble were not enough, they also won the Champions League Championship.

In spite of his accomplishments and high profile, people are somewhat wary of his outlandish statements, mannerisms and demeanor, which can be mistaken for Latin arrogance. In reality, he is much more about self-confidence, bordering on arrogance.

He is a dedicated family man and despite the steely determination to succeed as a coach, there is the vulnerability and awareness of the transient nature of the job that every football manager must feel.

It is only natural for those with a sense of ambition in any walk of life to seek out new challenges and greater financial reward.

Perhaps Mourinho's greatest achievement was to restore the Portuguese football to a position not seen since the glory days of Eusebio's Benfica in the 60s.

From an early age Mourinho has lived and breathed the game, cultivating his studious approach, learning first from his father, whose own coaching career spanned almost 20 years, and later in a more formal environment with a degree in Sports Science from a Lisbon university.

In addition his stints as assistant coach to Bobby Robson and Louis van Gaal and the time spent coaching in the lower divisions of the Portuguese league provided him the necessary experiences he needed to become a professional manager.

When appointed manager of FC Porto, he promptly announced 'next season we will be champions' tells you everything you need to know about his conviction and ambition.

Today, Mourinho combines the man-management skills of Alex Ferguson with the meticulous, studious approach of Arsene Wenger.

Here is a man who succeeds in being the players' confidant, in fostering an unbreakable team spirit and group culture, but at the same time manages to maintain a healthy distance and ensure that even the most egocentric of the modern game's pampered superstars are fully aware of who's in charge.

## **The Return**

After feeling frustrated as an assistant coach, and feeling that now was the time for him to be on his own, Mourinho left Barcelona.

“ I know it will be a struggle – I don’t belong to the ‘clan’, those who deal the cards and set up the game. I was never a successful player, so I won’t have that to back me up.”

Nevertheless, Mourinho returned to Portugal under no real pressure. Although he knew he faced unemployment, he wasn’t afraid of the future.

“ I’m not the least bit afraid of the future. I have great confidence in myself and in my knowledge. I know that I can make a difference and that I can win.”

The experiences at the Nou Camp were an endless source of knowledge, both in terms of theory and practice. Bobby Robson left all the homework to Mourinho – the planning and the preparation. On the other hand, van Gaal was very methodical and planned everything right down to the very last detail. He gained 2 very essential elements from these 2 great coaches: planning and action.

Robson was about training and having a direct contact with the players. He’s also an attacking coach, who concentrates mainly on the final part – finishing, scoring.

With van Gaal, everything was programmed in great detail. All that was left for me was the training on the pitch.

A 3<sup>rd</sup> source of knowledge was the great players of Barcelona “ You can’t help but learn when you coach players of this caliber. You to show them that we’re right -- they just don’t accept it because you say it. It is through these interactions that I developed one of my main virtues as a coach – I call it ‘guided discover’.”

“Guided discovery’ - that is they discover according to my clues. I construct practice situations that will set them on a certain path. I would often stop the practice and ask them what they feeling at a certain moment. I took their responses and we worked things out until all of us came to a conclusion.”

Mourinho was now much more of a all-round coach and he had more knowledge.

“ I have well defined ambitions and objectives. I have a document outlining my direction. Barcelona has given me very much, least of which is exposure in my own country.”

It was during his period of unemployment that Mourinho drew up his document, his ‘Bible’, which steers his professional life. “I drew up a document that has never been and never will be published. It is my ‘training file’ – it contains the objectives and methodologies for my practice, and how to achieve these. In fact, this document is

nothing more than the systematic down of my ideas – ‘the evolution of my training concepts.’”

I have always written everything down at the end of every practice.

Patience is one of Mourinho’s qualities, perseverance is another.

When offered the job at Benfica, Mourinho said yes – though this was not his final answer. He had never gone into any project without first knowing all the details. Of the many questions he asked, he wanted to know what expectations the president had of the future coach.

Upon accepting the job, he went reclusive for a few days to evaluate his team.

“ I made an analysis and came to the conclusion that I was faced with a badly ranked team, made up of old or foreign players of dubious quality – in short, it was a weak squad with no future and no ambition. It was a team that was used to losing and wasn’t too worried about this.” He had a group of unmotivated men with little self-confidence. Benfica lacked a work ethic.

“ There weren’t many talented players, and so I had to make the group work as a block, as a whole – that would be its strong point. The group would always be more important than single player. “

There were only 2 possibilities – you were either on the boat, or off it.

“ I made 2 promises to the team: the first was the guarantee of ‘quality work’, which would improve them individually and as a team. The other promise was that I would be ‘direct’. They would be the first to know and they would hear it from me – there would be no rumors. The door to my office will always be open. “

There was the question of aggressiveness during practice, which was non-existent. Practice at Benfica was ridiculous. Everyday a group of nice guys would kick the ball about a bit, and do some running – and that was it.

“ The first I did was add some players from the B team to training, they were highly competitive and motivated. The addition of these young players modified the competitive situation and in a certain way, the mindset of all the others. In addition, I reduced the area of the training so as to increase aggressiveness and competitiveness. The closer the players were to each other led to more physical contact and more aggressiveness. I also introduced the mandatory wearing of shinpads.”

The team changed radically in 2 months time.

He had a problem with Maniche in a training session vs the B team. Maniche was red-carded for a hard tackle and Mourinho told an assistant coach to have Maniche run laps around the field until halftime. After 8 minute time, he had only done 2 laps. Mourinho was not happy. He met with Maniche and said to him; this can only mean 1 of 2 things:

“ You either have a problem on your mind, or you have a physical condition. So you will train with the Z team and come see me when you feel you no longer have this problem. “

A few weeks later Maniche was Benfica’s captain. In the training room, Mourinho is known as Maniche’s ‘godfather’.

In dealing with a difficult player, Mourinho said: “ in reality, there are attitudes or mindsets in our professional and social life that can’t be changed within a reasonable space of time.” A tug of war existed that had to be dealt with. It was always what was best for the team. A transfer became necessary.

With José Mourinho, every player knows 5 days before a match which team will be playing from the start. In the practices throughout the week, they also get to understand how they will play and which tactics will be used.

“ Attack when we have the ball and offensive press when the opponents have the ball. I asked the midfielders to pass the ball to each other, thereby forcing the opponent midfielders to run, and told them that when they were sure they could, they should launch quick counterattacks.

### **The Transition**

In Spain, the law states that a coach can only work there if he has held the same position in his country of origin for at least 2 years. ( Mourinho was being considered to coach Atletico Madrid, but did not qualify according to the stated law)

What impressed me most about José Mourinho was his capacity to mold a young team in his image – an aggressive, motivated, and winning team.

Charisma, leadership, and a great deal of work and study were, and still are, the main qualities and ingredients of his success.

The important thing is to work with dignity. One must be careful not to want too much and risk losing everything.

His ambition was to go as far as he could in his chosen profession, but not at any price. His principles were untouchable, as was his loyalty.

### **Preparing The Future**

The most accurate reflection of Mourinho’s personality was when he said ‘ we will be champions next year.’ Everything was summed up by that single sentence: confidence, determination and the desire to convey his unshakable will to win.

When Mourinho took over at FC Porto, it was important that he make the rules of the game clear to everyone and to motivate his new 'tribe.' Upon his first meeting with the team, " I promised them quality work on my part and I told them that they would be valued."

" I found a Porto made up of players who were very different to those I left behind when I moved to Barcelona with Robson. Ambition was nowhere close o what I had been in the past. Winning or losing were the same to them, as was getting any titles. That wasn't my team. There were very few players that I could count on."

" I was faced with a dilemma. Should I grab hold of 10 or 12 players – those who would move into next season with me – and start working with them seriously, focusing on the future; or should I motivate the entire group and try to make those who weren't in line with my methods fit in better ?"

Theoretically weaker teams should be humble and never provoke the stronger one.

"I am going to have to find players that are mentally strong in this squad."

' The concept of club is more important than any player.' This is Mourinho's opening slide in his document, the one that sets the basis for the whole program.

### **A Clean Sweep**

For only the 2<sup>nd</sup> time, he would be starting a season with a squad of his choice. He felt confident of the players he had chosen – that they would allow him to fight for the national title.

Now it wasn't enough to be a good player to join the ranks of Porto. Mourinho decided also to carefully analyse the players' character – their moral fiber. He was also looking for good men.

In order for the team to work, it must be made up of men of character who view the group as more important than any individual by himself.

" I told Jorge Costa that I always played with those who are the fittest, and that I don't need to be friendly or on good terms with a player in order to put him on the pitch."

" **resting with the ball** " – it's about alternating moments of great intensity and pressure with periods of rest with the ball, which is nothing more than gaining ball possession but with the intention of resting. It's possession for possession's sake, with no sporting objective. I have the ball at my feet, I have the game under control and I don't run, thus allowing me to rest."

Mourinho's game plan for an upcoming big game:

“ From a defensive point of view, as much pressure as possible, or as we say technically, ‘offensive pressing’ on the opposing goal. Very close lines, with the defensive line very close to the midfield line so that the forwards can put pressure on the opponent's defense. This means that the defenders must be able to play with 40 meters of open space behind them.

In the midfield, a very well defined triangle, with the emphasis on ball possession, excessive ball possession time. Thus, we went in search of the ball. When we don't have the ball, we immediately start looking for ways to regain it. This wears the players out, and so once they've regained the ball they have to decide if they attack successfully or if they must rest and keep the ball moving.

In the end it was our ability to manage the game; we rested more than the others.”

“ When you win, you can go up to 2 weeks without playing. However, when you lose, it's best to play the following match the very next day.”

In order to boost player morale, the message I transmitted to them was one of complete superiority over our opponents. I wanted them to feel that they were better, and had everything in their future to win.”

“ I believe that when we are mentally strong, those people who seek to intimidate and disturb us have exactly the opposite effect. Instead, they give us the strength and courage to carry on our way.”

Leading up to extra time and the possibility of penalty kicks, Mourinho said:

“ Don't be afraid of a penalty shootout. I don't want you to feel pressurized to be all over them in order to avoid penalties. I want you to play without taking risks, waiting for the right moment.”

‘Group culture’ is an essential aspect of Mourinho's method of working.

“ I am sure that winning the national championship never starts on the first day of the league. There's a history made up by each of us, that leads us to that final victory. It's that history, in its entirety, that turns us into champions.”

The training leading up to final in Seville had been a fantastic week of work, with specific training aimed at the final. In addition to the technical and tactical work, a psychological analysis of each player had been carried out. The team was very strong and determined.. The system had been tested behind closed doors against the B team and a few variations were also part of the sessions. Mourinho always likes to have a top player that he can bring in off the bench at a critical moment to change the course of the game – an impact substitution.

“All the video and PowerPoint clips we would watch in order to study every defensive and attacking move of our opponent down to the very last detail were taken along for the final preparation phase immediately before the match.”

Mourinho prefers that his team stay in the city center so they can feel the ‘atmosphere’ of the opponents and their supporters. He believed in relaxation, contact with the outside world, getting a feel for the atmosphere of the opponent and having access to local culture were all important leading up to the match.

After dinner the final and most important meeting took place. “I announced the team, presented the game plan on PowerPoint, situation by situation, what to do, how to react, how to adapt and how to win..... Finals were made to be won.”

“Only by keeping our emotions under control, can we win finals. We must play as a team.”

Mourinho wanted to wear the opponent out with their ball possession, ball movement, and consistent pressing.

Concerned about defending against taller players, he advised: “don’t defend from behind, they’re tall and will massacre us. Defend on the outside as far out as possible, rest with the ball, touch the ball, and, above all, a lot of emotional control.”

### **On Top of Europe**

Having won the treble in the previous season, the previous victories could only be viewed as a stimulus to renew their conquering spirit. The past season had been ‘unforgettable’, but not unrepeatable.

“I won’t let them be dazzled by all of this. I’m going to demand even greater ambition and humility. This is the only way we can continue to win.”

The danger of the past could rob them of their future. “I think that prevention is better than cure.”

“I have no doubts whatsoever that I am ready for conflict.”

Mourinho will take action that will provoke response – he wants to see how the players will react to certain adverse situations. “I need to know if success has harmed us in any way.”

Mourinho is a coach who develops constantly. His ideas, training methodology and concept of play are continuously evolving. He is not the same today as he was 2 years ago. Nothing stays the same.

After losing a league game with Porto (after a long runs of victories) and the players were very upset, Mourinho said to them: “ I wanted them to understand there was no problem losing this game. I didn’t think that game should result in any punishment. We lost because we had to lose at some point. It was as simple as that. “ So we left with our heads held high, knowing we had done everything to avoid defeat.

His game plan in an important Champion’s League game: “ we had to control the game by holding on to the ball, never letting the opponent take the initiative, and never, never staking everything on counter-attacking.”

As soon as the game began, we got hold of the ball, and didn’t give them a chance to pressure us.

Before the game, I told the players that we had 2 options: we either dominated or controlled the game.

By **dominating**, I mean a team that attacks in the opponent’s half, looking to score and having ball superiority.

**Controlling** the game means playing further back, with all spaces filled up, with a system designed to keep the ball, going on the attack with an objective, passing and circulating the ball along the last line of men.

I even admit to feigning injury in order to stop the game or reduce its intensity.

I asked my players for domination and, only as a last resort, control.

In preparing for the Final vs Monaco, we started by watching many of the opponent’s games. I already knew everything about Monaco, but I wanted my players to know everything too. Above all, I wanted them to see the individual qualities of the key players and then I gave each player an individual DVD of his immediate opponent. Afterwards, we had a group discussion on the information delivered.

After winning the Champions League Final, I felt comfortable that I could publicly express my wish to move abroad, in search of new emotions, challenges and experiences. And who knows, great difficulties that would force me to make further progress and become an even better coach.

I didn’t want to be the best coach at 40 and a has-been at 50.