

[Download] For the Love of the Ball (B&W): The history and methods of the FC Barcelona youth academy



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This book tells the story of how FC Barcelona has managed to build one of the best soccer teams in the world using primarily the players from its youth academy (nicknamed "La Masia" - the farmhouse). During the 2013-2014 season, 17 of the 25 players of the first team were from La Masia, a historical record. These players, including Messi, Iniesta, and Xavi, have dazzled soccer fans around the world with their dance-like positioning and passing skills. La Masia now trains kids from all continents, including its first American, Ben Lederman. This book reveals that this accumulation of talent is not a coincidence but the result of a 30 year-long plan, set in motion by the brilliant mind of Dutch coach and ex-Barça player Johan Cruyff. Cruyff brought to Barça the attacking, 4-3-3-based soccer style known as Total Football and converted La Masia into a high-throughput factory of players for the first team. Cruyff's brightest pupil, Pep Guardiola (from La Masia), became the coach that won three Ligas in a row and two Champions Leagues in four years with a team full of homegrown players. They have been playing soccer together since their teens and they are all close friends. Some even attend college, which shows that the club cares for education. The author reveals here that the strategy followed by most rich clubs to be at the top (purchase the best players and sell their homegrown) is not self-sustainable because the investors' money does not come from soccer. La Masia, on the other hand, has saved Barça millions of euros. Will the MLS learn this valuable lesson and promote its youth academies, or will it let American soccer fall in the hands of big corporations whose primary goal is to make a profit?

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