

A Series of Unfortunate Events

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The defeat to Madrid in this year's Spanish Supercup hurt more than any other previous defeat. Not because we lost to Madrid – El Clasico is always a 50-50 affair – but because the signs of a decaying squad were on full display. Los Blancos have players like Isco and Kovacic available to bring off the bench, while we're stuck with Alcacer and Vidal.

And this is where the problem starts.

When I say 'unfortunate' I mean unfortunate for the fans. Those who have given their heart, soul, time, and money for this club do not deserve to witness Cruyff's and Pep's work to be torn down in just a few years. And that too at the hands of a few corrupt individuals. It's sickening to see the essence of the club being sold for personal gain and influence; everything is done for the present and nothing is planned out for the future. A major European club is at the mercy of a few men.

Every problem has one place to start fixing from. That one area FC Barcelona need to fix is their midfield – ask anyone and they'll suggest the same. The current players in the middle of the park look like mere shadows of the revered midfielders that the club used to play with. Iniesta is constantly struggling with fitness issues, Rakitic had one great season and did not fit the profile of the midfielder we needed even then and signings like Gomes are cause of bewilderment.

The solution is right there for the club – literally on the bench. Players like Carles Alena and Sergi Samper, graduates of La Masia, have the talent to fill the roles Barcelona need but apparently not the trust they need. Players like Seri from Nice, Roque Mesa from Las Palmas (now at Swansea), Jorginho from Napoli, all fit the profile of the midfielder that Barcelona need but nothing is being done for their signature. Poor decision-making keeps taking its toll on the club and academy.

6 years ago if someone had told me Real Madrid would be getting all the midfield talent available, I'd tell that person they were crazy. But it actually happened. I could not have predicted Madrid would line up like this one day while our midfield

has to suffer the consequences of poor management and stupid decision-making. This post from Blaugrana Central sums it up:

"Real Madrid moved from the muscle of Diarrà, Khedira and Xabi Alonso in midfield to the technicality of Isco, Kovacic, Modric and Kroos, while Barcelona moved from the technicality of Xavi, Iniesta and Busquets to the muscle of Turan, Gomes, Rakitic (and now Paulinho)."

The whole fiasco has been one bad decision after the other: a series of unfortunate events. Barcelona has always been known for having a squad with the right balance of transferred players and academy products. As the era of Sandro Rosell and now, Josep Bartomeu, got on, the use of academy products declined (a big factor in this was that managers after Tito Vilanova were not willing to use La Masia players as frequently as before) and the wrong transfers were being made. The management got involved in corruption and tax issues and enjoyed shady deals such as the Neymar transfer. Players like Sanchez, Thiago, and Pedro were allowed to leave and players that were not needed and not good enough for Barcelona were brought in.

It's sickening how a team like Barcelona, due to these two men, couldn't plan for the future and lost their identity slowly. Replacements and young talents could have been brought in for Xavi and Iniesta but we were busy selling Thiago (now the 3rd best central-midfielder in the world) and buying Alex Song and Jeremy Mathieu.

Modric, Kroos, Isco, Asensio, Kovacic and now Dani Ceballos. This is essentially Real Madrid's whole midfield – players they've signed over the last 5 years who are instrumental to their recent success.

And to think all of these players, **ALL**, could've (should've*) been Barcelona players is something few know and something even less can believe.

Firstly, Luka Modric – undoubtedly one of the two best midfielders in the world right now (your opinion completely whether you rate Kroos higher/lower than Modric). Back in 2008, Barcelona and the club's scout Bojan Krkic Sr. were interested in a midfielder at Dinamo Zagreb by the name of Modric. The club was

in the driving seat to sign him, with the player even posing for photos with a Barcelona shirt. But for some reason the club gave up the chance to sign him. This is what Bojan Krkic Sr. had to say about this:

“Modric was a player with a winning mentality, but the club weren’t thinking about the future, only the short to medium term.”

Something said all those years back is still applicable to the state of the management of this club today. It seems like what Bojan Krkic Sr. had to say was setting us up for the failed transfers that were to follow in the upcoming windows.

However, we had another chance to sign Modric years later. This time he played for Spurs and was involved in messy negotiations over his move, with the possibility of him going to Chelsea. But we did not learn from our previous mistake and as according to a report from SPORT:

In the summer of 2012, the Blaugrana turned down the idea of signing Modric, who instead signed for Madrid for €30 million.

That’s step one in the wrong direction.

In 2013, we sold a gem to Bayern. Thiago Alcantara. I was happy that he would be working with Pep, but I was saddened by the loss of a future elite. The next summer issues arose between the Bayern board and Kroos and he was to be sold. As a gesture of goodwill, Pep Guardiola advised Toni Kroos to join Barcelona and offered him to the club. Kroos, young and upcoming then, was all ready to make the move to Catalunya but just like the Modric deal, Barcelona backed out. Even worse was that Kroos ended up signing for Real Madrid for around €25 million.

Not only was the chance of signing Kroos lost that summer, many reports suggest that Barcelona gave up on signing a young talent by the name of Francisco Alarcon Suarez.

You know him now as Isco.

Apparently he admired the style of the club, but Barcelona were not interested in signing him, the Golden Boy award winner (Best U21 player in Europe), and just

like Modric and Kroos he ended up going to Real Madrid for around €30 million.

The name on everyone's mind right now is Marco Asensio Willemsen, especially after last night. What a player he is honestly, backing that claim up with 2 outstanding goals versus Barcelona in the Supercup.

It's getting a bit ridiculous now as I say even Asensio could have been a Barcelona player. And should have been actually, considering what Mallorca were asking for him.

Gaggioli, the man behind Messi's move to Barcelona in 2000/2001, said that before the 2014/15 season, all of Europe's top clubs were interested in Asensio. Barcelona were the first to go for him. The club bid €2.5 million for him with an extra €2 million to be paid later. Mallorca, however, demanded €4.5 million at once. This amount is next to nothing in the world of football, especially now, considering the player Asensio has become. Eventually, history repeated itself and Barca backed out of the deal – they waited three months before crawling back to Mallorca. But by that time it was too late. Asensio had been snapped up by Real Madrid for €4 million on the encouragement of tennis star Rafael Nadal.

We all know how good Madrid's squad depth is currently. Modric-Kroos-Casemiro can start a game and can be substituted with phenomenal players like Isco-Asensio-Kovacic to replace them. In 2015, Inter Milan were forced to sell Kovacic due to FFP regulations and the transfer of the player was confirmed by Real Madrid for a fee of €29 million. This is where Barcelona's poor decision making came into play – a potential world-class midfielder was available to sign but we went for Turan instead and signed him for €34 million and an additional €7 million in extras.

This summer window was no different. For those who didn't watch the U21 EUROs, one of the standout players was Dani Ceballos of Spain. He played for Real Betis in La Liga and was available to any club for a small €15 million release clause. Both Barcelona and Madrid were interested in him this summer and you can obviously guess now who won that race to sign him. Barcelona just weren't serious enough in their pursuit of the player, who was, in fact, a huge Messi and Barcelona fan since he was a kid. His now deleted tweets were proof of that.

How Barcelona's board manages to let players and opportunities like these get away is honestly beyond me now.

Madrid signed all these world-class players over these last few years and have the depth of dreams in their midfield. Barcelona on the other hand signed Song when they signed Modric, signed Rakitic when they signed Kroos, signed Turan when they signed Kovacic and have signed Paulinho for their Ceballos.

And to think that André Gomes + Arda Turan + Paulinho cost a total of €110 – €130 million is just confusing and shocking to the highest degree.

For comparison, Modric + Kroos + Isco + Asensio + Ceballos cost a total of around €105 million only.

That should be enough for you to realize what's been done to the club.

This post also appears on the totalBarca site
at <https://www.totalbarca.com/2017/08/series-unfortunate-events/>

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