

# A New Face

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Coliseum Alfonso Pérez.

Estadio Montolivi.

Estadio Jose Alvalade.

Despite 500 kilometers lying between these stadiums (and a Portuguese border in the case of Estadio Jose Alvalade), the three of them have more in common than you would think.

Barcelona visited all three one after the other. First Getafe, then local rivals Girona, followed by a trip to the neighbours for Sporting Clube de Portugal. Barcelona won against all three as you'd expect. 9 points from a possible 9. But these weren't typical Barcelona wins. In fact, there was something to these three wins, something about the three sides that set them apart, that made them unique.

As I addressed in my previous posts, Valverde came in, reduced Messi's burden to an extent and gave the midfield around him some structure and the whole team overall. His Barcelona team seem to have one quality that we haven't seen for a while and that's the ability to grind out results.

When I said the three stadiums have a lot in common, I meant that they were home to three away fixtures for us where we did not play well but still managed to get a win. That's the quality that this team has displayed a few matches into the season. After last season's inability to win the league and disappointing defeats to Alaves and Malaga we had to bounce back this season and Valverde has seem to made a team that does just that.

This ability to grind out results is very important in the long run towards the end of the season. We see a high-pressing, energetic, re-motivated Barcelona team this season that looks hungry and looks ruthless on the pitch. Not ruthless as in getting 5-0s and 6-0s each game but making sure the team walks away with the most important thing after each game: 3 points. It's important that the team knows how to put the ball in the back of net when they can't seem to break down teams or find their rhythm.

From last season's shortcomings it's a refreshing change to see us walk out of a match not exactly satisfied or at ease but with a win. Whether that's confronting Shibasaki's unexpected volley past Marc Ter Stegen, Maffeo's man-marking of Leo Messi or Jorge Jesus' astute tactics and backline, this team has found a way to win games when things aren't going their way and this team is ruthless and persistent. This is the new Barcelona, this is Ernesto's Barcelona, this is a false-9 Messi's Barcelona and this is a winning Barcelona.

I, like many others, expect great things from a side that's started the season in such an optimistic way.

- \*\*This article also appears on the official totalBarca page at <http://www.totalbarca.com/2017/10/barcas-new-face>\*\*