








Module 2. The role of the scout



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1. The main functions of a scout

As we have discussed in the previous module, a properly conducted *scouting* process can lead a club to a better performance in its competitions, increasing its chances of success. This process will make sure that there is a steady flow of qualified players coming to the club and will bring both financial and sporting profitability back to it.

In order to perform this function properly, the *scout* must attend games, tournaments and competitions to analyse the performance of the players. The aim is to identify technical, tactical, physical and mental skills.

Next, we will see the tasks that a scout will have to perform in order to carry out his job efficiently.

The tasks a *scout* performs are varied, but they can all be grouped into a more general function: **to monitor and evaluate players according to the guidelines set out by the sports management.** Thereafter, we

can break down the different functions that are necessary for this primary function to be fulfilled.

1. Monitoring players —

- Ongoing monitoring of potential players over time to assess their progress and consistency.
- The performance of players varies over time, especially when dealing with players who are still undergoing training. During their formative stages, players develop skills and/or abilities that they did not previously have or were not capable of mastering at a certain level. The monitoring of the player must be regular enough so that the progress of the player is always up to date.
- Monitoring the player's progress and development over time. Ensure that their performance is consistent throughout a single game, and also throughout the season, from one game to the next, and from one phase of the season to the following one. By doing so, we will be able to rule out that a good performance does not result from a single day, a good game or specific circumstances.
- These issues affecting performance are cyclical; sometimes they are manageable and sometimes they are not. For example, watching games during the first few games of the calendar, and especially during the middle of the season, often provides more reliable information about players than end-of-season games. Factors affecting the final matches of the competition can significantly influence the level of players' performance: reaching classification goals, expiration of contracts, high temperatures, psychological fatigue, exam periods and upcoming vacations for players in training soccer, among others. These factors

contribute to the fact that players, of any age, are already thinking more about the next season and other non-sporting aspects of their lives.

- Reports and recommendations are updated as necessary. If the player shows some progress in certain aspects, or on the contrary, if his performance is not improving, the *scout* will have to modify his report without any hesitation, since players can vary in their performance for many reasons.

2. Identifying talented players —

- The role of a *scout* is to identify and discover players with outstanding potential and skills that make them stand out from other players.
- To do so, he needs to search/investigate different leagues, youth categories and competitions to find promising candidates. According to the club in which he works, there will be some leagues that will be more suitable than others; but it must be taken into account that a player's talent can be anywhere, there are many circumstances that can make a player develop his talent later: possible injuries, slow maturation, changes of residence, and so on.

3. Assessing performance factors —

- In general, the job of the *scout* is to evaluate a player's performance and future potential, in different contexts if possible. Therefore, different performance factors are observed and evaluated.

- Analysing the technical skills of the players, such as ball handling, dribbling, passing and shooting, and in general all those actions performed when the player has the ball.
- Evaluating tactical aspects, such as tactical intelligence, decision making and understanding the game system. As Lillo (2012) rightly says, “we are facing a collective game in which there is interaction with the rest, we are conditioned by others and we condition others. The environment is conditioned by all of us and the environment conditions us. We are all conditioned and conditioners at the same time” (p. 57). The ability to “read” the circumstances of the game and take the right decisions in a changing environment is important for soccer players at a certain level. Thus, the player's decision making will be a key aspect, as well as his ability to understand the game and make the best possible decision at any given moment. When a player plays technically very well, if he is not able to take good decisions, he will not be an efficient player for the collective game of his team.
- Identification of physical variables. Since players are increasingly better prepared, faster than ever, and repeat efforts at a higher intensity, it will be key to detect players who have these characteristics and/or potential to develop it, so that they can adapt better to the demands of elite soccer.
- Regarding the psychological aspect, the player, in order to perform at a high level, must be mentally and attitudinally prepared. Aspects such as attention, concentration, communication, self-confidence, effective handling of stressful situations, positive attitude, emotional control and the ability to remain emotionally constant throughout the game and the season are evaluated.
- Evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the players observed. Every player has strengths and weaknesses, and the *scout* will have to know how to recognize them and reflect them in their reports. In this way, if the player joins his club, these “weak” aspects can be improved.

- Identification of players that fit the playing style and needs of the team. Furthermore, it is important to take into account the specific features and characteristics of the player being followed, as well as the context in which the player will find himself if he joins the team, as his adaptation will also determine part of the successful contract. Therefore, the player must adjust to the style of play of the new team and be able to develop and improve his potential. A player whose playing style is very different from what is required of him by the club may have greater difficulties in adapting to the sport.

4. Preparing detailed reports —

- Reporting facilitates information sharing with the different departments and facilitates decision making.
- The reports on a soccer player prepared by a *scout* should be detailed and complete, providing a thorough evaluation, highlighting strengths, weaknesses, technical and tactical characteristics, as well as personality and behaviour on the field and, if possible, off the field.
- We will develop in depth the elaboration of reports in course 5. In general terms, here are some of the key elements that are usually included in these reports.
 - **Personal information:** full name, age, playing position, height, weight and nationality.
 - **Technical profile:** evaluation of the technical skills of the player, including ball control, dribbling, passing, shooting, heading, among others. It can include information about the player's mastery with both legs and his ability to execute specific technical moves.

- **Tactical profile:** analysing how the player adapts to different playing systems, his tactical understanding of the game, ability to read it and take quick decisions on the field. This can include information on their positioning, movements without the ball and participation in collective plays.
- **Physical profile:** assessment of the physical qualities of the player, such as speed, endurance, strength, agility and jumping ability. Information about past injuries or any relevant physical concerns may be included.
- **Psychological profile:** feedback on competitive attitude, on-field behaviour, teamwork ability, discipline, and ability to handle pressure and adversity.
- **Game feedback:** details about the player's performance in specific matches, including highlighted strengths, areas for improvement, key moments and their impact on the outcome of the game.
- **Performance potential:** evaluation of the player's potential for growth and improvement, taking into account his age, actual level and future expectations.
- **Comparisons:** comparing the player with others in the same position, level or playing style, highlighting similarities and differences.
- **Recommendations and conclusions:** summary of the main conclusions of the report and recommendations regarding the club's interest in hiring the player, possible areas of development or future monitoring.

- Organize all incoming information. The *scout* must filter this information to keep what is truly important to the club. Therefore, he must give priority based on the criteria given by the club.
- Use tools and technology to collect and analyse statistical data, providing a more objective view of player performance. The *scout* should be up-to-date and able to work with new technologies within the possibilities of the club for which he works. Data is increasingly used and it has been demonstrated that, although it is not a defining factor when it comes to dealing with recruitment, it is an important support for better decision taking.

6. Developing a wide contact network —

- The *scout* should establish and maintain relationships with agents, coaches, and other *scouts*. In addition, he should use this network to obtain information about players and transfer opportunities. This is key to anticipating other clubs.

7. Working with other club departments —

- **Strategic planning**

If requested by the club, the *scout* should contribute to the team's short- and long-term strategic planning by identifying specific areas in need of reinforcement.

- **Work closely with the coaching staff and the club's sports management.**

The *scout* has the responsibility to keep a close, fluid and professional relationship with the coaching staff and sports management. This is critical to ensure that talent identification and evaluation efforts are aligned with the team's needs and objectives in both sporting and strategic terms. Usually, it is up to the club to determine who will be contacting the *scout* so that no interference is created.

Figure 1. The main functions of a *scout*



Source: own elaboration

The main functions of a scout	
Monitoring players	
Identifying talented players	
Assessing performance factors	
Preparing detailed reports	
Collecting and analysing data	
Developing and maintaining a contact network	
Working with other club departments	

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2. Scout objectives

The main objective of a *scout* is to provide the club with promising players for the future. Furthermore, he must collaborate with the improvement of the staff through the incorporation of players with short-, medium- or long-term potential. His work is oriented towards these fundamental objectives. The *scout* focuses on identifying outstanding players through the observation of matches aiming at the possible integration of players into the club. Therefore, the *scout* will aim to identify players who will complement and improve the overall quality of the existing team, according to the requirements of his club.

In other words, the scout must think in the short, medium and long term. Therefore, he needs to look for players who show potential for the future, contributing to the sustainability of the team's level beyond the current season. This is even more important in formative soccer, where it is important to avoid making additions to solve specific deficits in the team with players who, initially, are going to have a short career at the club.

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3. Scout responsibilities

1. OPTIMIZING RESOURCES

2. PRESERVING CONFIDENTIALITY AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS.

A *scout* must bear a great responsibility because part of the future success of his or her club depends on it. He must do an effective job that maximizes the club's resources, and his work must result in the acquisition of players performing well compared to their market value.

1. OPTIMIZING RESOURCES

2. PRESERVING CONFIDENTIALITY AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS.

Any information obtained by the *scout*, whether by observation or other means, is strictly confidential. The importance of this confidentiality lies in the fact that it is usually regulated by written contracts signed by the *scouts* themselves, thus illustrating the importance of this confidentiality.

A *scout* must be respectful to everyone, including the families of players, the players, the members of opposing teams, and even the agents. In *scouting*, sensitive information is handled; therefore, the *scout* must always keep the

information confidential. The following are some basic points that the *scout* should keep in mind.

- **Confidentiality protection.** *Scouting* reports contain sensitive information about players, including details about their performance, medical history and personality. Keeping this information confidential ensures that it is handled with care and is protected from unauthorized disclosure.
- **Integrity of the recruitment process.** Confidentiality is essential during the transfer process to avoid information disclosure that could affect the negotiations. *Scouts* must keep discretion and confidentiality about the players they are evaluating and the club's transfer strategies. Reports will be kept private and should only be shared with the club.
- **Professional ethics.** High ethical standards are essential to the reputation and credibility of the *scout* and the club itself. The *scout* should keep in mind that he represents his club. Therefore, he should always be respectful of everyone and make himself respected.

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4. The scout's profile

The role of the *scout* is increasingly important in soccer; nowadays, many clubs want to ensure that they have as much information as possible to be able to incorporate the most talented and potential players into their teams.

Therefore, the ability of the *scouts* who make up these *scouting* departments will be decisive in achieving these objectives. In this respect, clubs should look for *scouts* who are as well prepared as possible to ensure the best possible information given their capabilities.

Next, we will develop the skills that a *scout* must have in order to develop an efficient, quality and professional work.

First, a *scout* must have a deep knowledge of soccer in all aspects: technical, tactical, conditional, psychological, social, and so on. This training may be provided during coaching courses, scouting courses, training in physical activity and sport sciences specializing in soccer, among others.

As well as having this general and specific knowledge of soccer, which will be covered in these courses, the *scout* should have a thorough knowledge of the club in which he will work, its idiosyncrasies, the values and profiles required of the players to be incorporated.

This person must be an entrepreneur with experience and skills in the technological world aiming to collect and organize all the data digitally. Above all, he must be able to understand this information, analyse it, and apply it according to the criteria set forth by the club.

On the other hand, it is very important that this person has good communication skills in order to transmit this information to the interested parties. May it be through reports, meetings, presentations or lectures.

Experience in soccer clubs, whether as a player or in any facet within a coaching staff, is not essential, but it is helpful. The experience will be useful to get first-hand knowledge of the feelings players may have when facing competitions, victories, defeats, injuries, frustrations, illusions, and so forth.

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS THAT A GOOD SCOUT SHOULD HAVE:

- **Availability on unusual dates and schedules.** As competitions are increasing, the *scout* must be prepared for intensive working days. He must be willing to travel many miles, if necessary, as well as to attend games during good and bad weather.
- **Commitment.** The *scout* must be committed to the project. This is key to getting him closer to success and to be able to work more effectively.
- **Positive attitude and sharing joy, illusion and optimism.** The *scout* should remain calm and professional in both successes and failures.
- **Teamwork capacity.** We must not forget that we work within a structure, therefore, the *scout* must be able to listen and accept other opinions. He should be clear about what his opinion is, but be open to accept possible improvements.
- **Discretion.** The *scout* has to be someone who goes unnoticed, without making a lot of noise, so as not to “wake up” the competence.
- **Professionalism and methodology.** The *scout* must be methodical, organized, attentive to all details and capable of organization. Furthermore, he must know how to assess the data, avoid confusion, and have and maintain his own opinion. Also, he should not recommend players based on rumours, nor without having seen them recently.
- **Extensive knowledge of players and teams.** If possible, the *scout* should have prior knowledge of the competitions in which he will be working.
- **Experience.** It is difficult to have a trained eye without previous experience. Any previous experiences, as a player or as a coach, will help the *scout* to work on this experienced eye.

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5. Binomial analyst-scout: comparison between the two roles. Differences and similarities

It was common, until recently, to have a single person performing the functions of both the *scout* and the tactical analyst. The need for specialization in these areas has been identified as soccer has become more complex and competitive. Nowadays, it is common to find different professionals dedicated exclusively to each of these tasks. This distribution of roles will allow the professional to give more detailed and, therefore, precise attention, both when identifying potential players and when analysing his own and his opponent's game. By having specialized experts in each area, clubs can take more informed decisions and maximize the team's performance on the field.

It is relatively common to confuse the roles of the analyst and the *scout* in soccer teams. Although their functions have certain similarities, their focus is different. As we have seen in the previous module, *scouting* is the process of recognizing and carefully examining the game of soccer, in order to analyse its functioning and/or the factors that develop it.

When we mention the role of the *scout*, we are talking about the person who will focus on the analysis of the elements that determine the development of soccer.

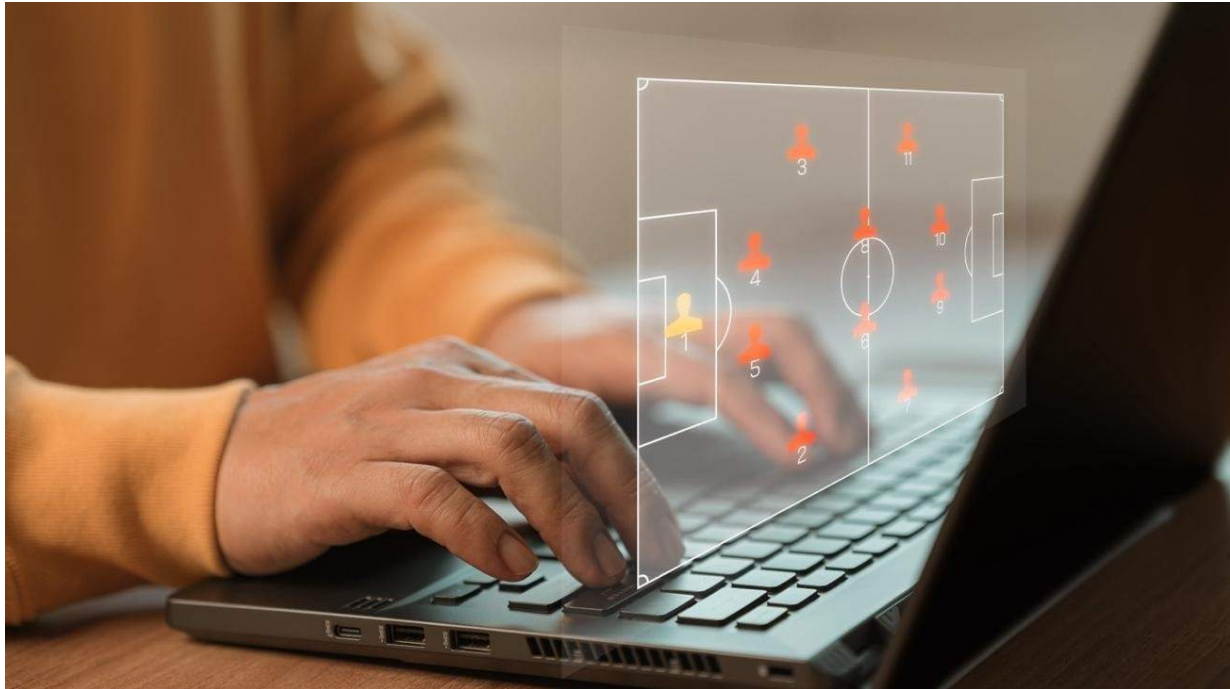
The *scout* is the professional in charge of searching and evaluating talented soccer players. His job consists of observing live or video matches, analysing players' performance, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and selecting the players he considers to be the best for the club in which he works. *Scouts* are very important for the short/medium- and long-term future of soccer teams.

The *scout* will have to know, first hand, what requirements the club is looking for when recruiting a new player, what the club's philosophy is, the values they intend to transmit, what is the profile and level required to join the club, and so on.

In addition to recognizing all these aspects, the *scout* must have the ability to promote the player in his new team. In other words, he should consider how he thinks the player would adapt. In addition, the *scout* must know all the details about the player concerned, beyond his soccer virtues. This involves knowing his personality, his environment, his family context, his culture and even the climate in which he is accustomed to living. Also, it is important to consider whether this will be the player's first experience outside his environment. These details, although they may seem irrelevant, are

key to successful adaptation and will help us to make the right decision when choosing between one player or another.

Figure 2. Software analysis of a soccer analyst



Source: Mundo Deportivo, 2023, <https://lc.cx/Lt3WhP>

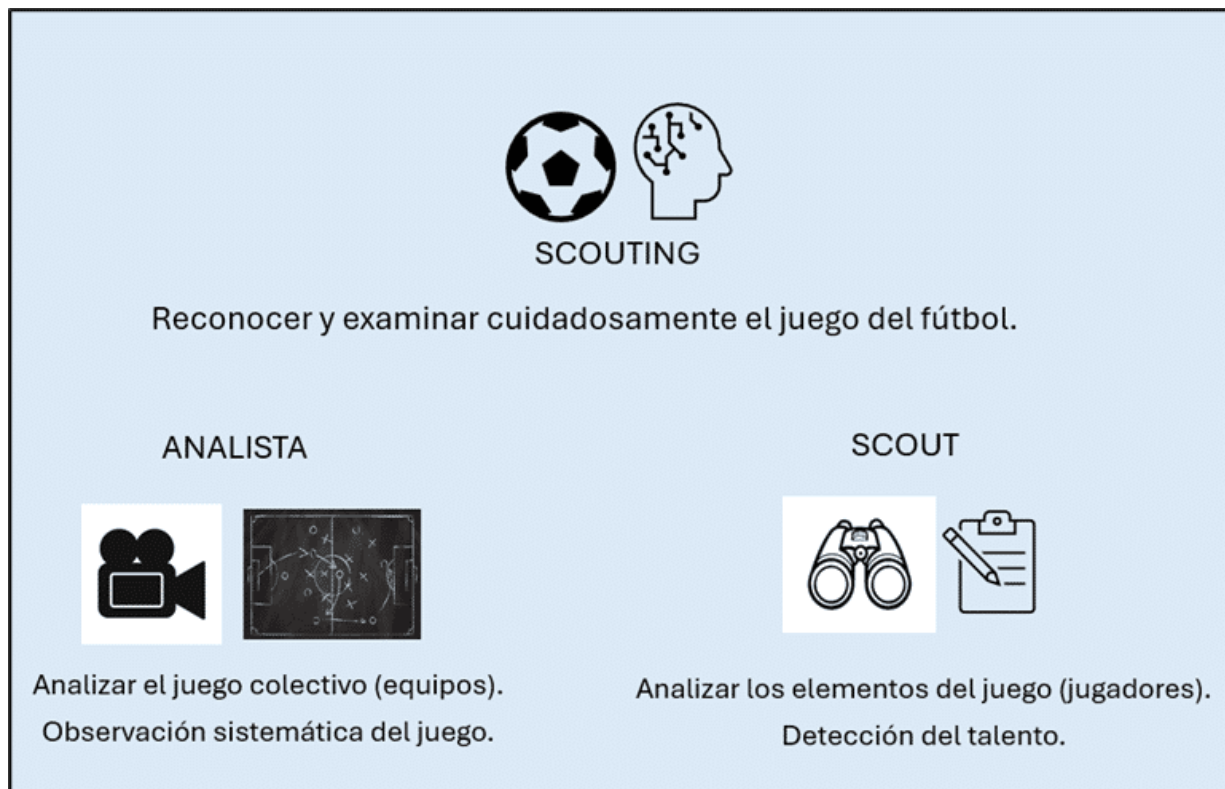
On the other hand, the tactical analyst in soccer is the person in charge of studying and analysing the tactical aspects of the teams during the matches, both of the opponent's game as well as the one of his own team.

His functions are usually the following:

- **Analysing matches.**

Observing and analysing matches, both live and on video, to identify patterns of play, teams' strategies, their playing tendencies and verify if the team's own plan is developing positively.

Figure 3. Difference between analyst and scout



Source: own elaboration

Scouting	
recognize and carefully examine the <i>game</i> of soccer	
analyst	
scout	
analysing collective play (teams). systematic observation of the <i>game</i> .	
analysing the elements of the <i>game</i> (players). identifying talented players.	

So far, we have seen the differences between the two roles -tactical analyst and *scout*-, now we will develop the similarities between the two roles.

Both roles share the goal of providing crucial information to improve the performance of their team.

Understanding of the game

Both the analyst and the *scout* must have extensive knowledge of the game, as well as a thorough understanding of the playing style of the club in which they work. Understanding the tactical aspects, both offensive and defensive, as well as technical and physical

Observation and analysis of the game

In both cases, it will be necessary to be a good observer, to detect things that are obvious and that not everyone notices; to do this, they will have to observe the game in detail.

Ability to summarize

Both will have to clearly and concisely present all the relevant information so that both the sporting director - in the case of the *scout* - and the coach - in the case of the analyst - can take the best decisions based on quality information.

Ability to collect and summarize data

Both roles involve collecting a large amount of data. The *scout* collects information on players, teams and matches; while the tactical analyst collects data on positions, movements, ball possession, among others. In addition, they must have the ability to summarize and convey all this

Being good at communicating

Both roles involve effective communication with the coaching staff and other team members. The *scout* shares his reports and recommendations on potential players with the coaching staff, and his reports should be concise and useful, while the tactical analyst, through his presentations,

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Self-assessment

1. What benefits can a properly conducted scouting process bring to a soccer club?

- Increase the number of sponsors.
- Improve performance in competitions and a steady flow of talent.
- Improve the stadium infrastructure.
- Creation of new marketing strategies.
- Increase ticket prices.

SUBMIT

1. Which aspects are evaluated in the technical profile of a soccer player?

- His physical condition and resistance.
- His medical background and past injuries.
- His behaviour off the field and public relations.
- His ability to lead the team and his tactical knowledge.
- His technical skills such as ball control, dribbling, passing, shooting, and heading.

SUBMIT

1. What does the data collection process involve in *scouting*?

- Create *marketing* strategies for the club.
- Sort and filter information to keep what is important according to your club's criteria.
- Organize events for fans.
- Design the team uniform.
- Assess only the physical performance of the players.

SUBMIT

1. Which is the general function of a scout in soccer?

-
- Organize events for fans.
 - Coach youth players.
 - Monitor and evaluate players according to the guidelines set out by the sports management.
 - Manage the finances of the club.
 - Design *marketing* strategies for the club.

SUBMIT

1. Analysts can provide high-quality information on potential players or areas of interest, while scouts can support this information with quantitative data and detailed analysis.

True

False

SUBMIT

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