

STRATEGIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH FOOTBALL

MODULE 4. GENERAL GUIDELINES
OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL
STRUCTURE



-EVOLUCIÓN-
ES CONMEBOL

STRATEGIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH FOOTBALL

4.1 General Guidelines of the Organizational Structure

CONMEBOL has been implementing different initiatives aimed at raising and optimising the quality standard in the areas of Children's and Youth Football in South America.

This work contemplates the interdisciplinary training of athletes, fully assisting their evolutionary stages, the development of their skills, promoting high-performance training and competence.

The success of youth clubs is based on the strategic basis of the training processes within the framework of a structure and organisation planned according to the context, priorities, objectives, the demands of Football 2.0.

Figure 1: Showdown, on the Line, of Two Young Football Players



Source: CONMEBOL and Associations Member of CONMEBOL, 2019. Own file, unpublished.

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To understand the training process, it is important to analyse the developing athlete's sociocultural context and interpret the social and sports environment where the child and young person is.

Football is a singular sport, with cultural, ethnic, social, and economic differences, where psychological and emotional aspects play a significant role, and many times the same theory that originates in a certain country or context does not adapt to others. Practical field experience and correct assessment of the environment play an important role. We must observe children's football and youth football as two processes dependent on each other, but with different realities and objectives.

This organisational stage must be very well structured and planned, since it will provide the athlete with the essential basis to elite football.

For this it is essential:

Training of the interdisciplinary teams of Football Managers. Their efficient performance will result in assertive results in the management of the teams to lead them to sporting challenges.	An infrastructure adapted to the training needs, equipped with supplies and materials for playing football.	National competitions for the expansion and inclusion of all sectors of society.
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The proposal is to think deeply about the implications of football. The profile of the Football Managers today is different, and for these new times more comprehensive approaches are needed that put the football player at the centre of the training task of the Football Managers. This should lead to the understanding and empowerment of the evolutionary stages, emotional life and ethical decisions of these boys and girls in such a way that, through training and sports competition, the interdisciplinary approach supports their personal and social development processes. These young athletes who play football are a gift to the world from South America, with a lot of talent and high-performance athletes, with their own identity and horizons open to world-class Football 2.0.

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4.2 Human Resources for Technical Management

The task of training children and the young in the field of football requires structure and management from human resources. Those in charge of these tasks must understand and contribute to achieving the training objectives, as a progressive path of professionalism at the highest competitive level.

Therefore, the training of trainers is of utmost importance; the constant training of those field professionals who will have the responsibility of being at the forefront of the children and young people who will represent us in international competitions in the future.

Figure 2: Youth Club Training



Source: CONMEBOL and Associations Member of CONMEBOL, 2019. Own file, unpublished.

In this sense, within the framework of the training of South American players, educators must preserve the historical, social and cultural characteristics of the Association Members, as well

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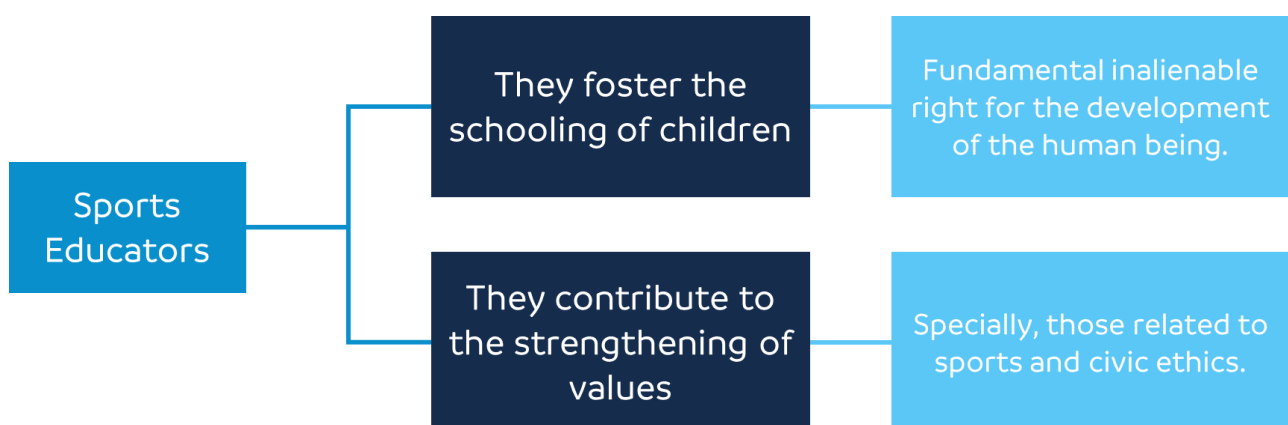
as the clubs and institutions that promote football in the continent, as expressed by the renowned DT Reinaldo Rueda (2018):

Each association and club must teach the historical process of development in their country. When they get to the U-17, the athletes must know who has built their history, because they are wearing the national jersey, they must feel identified and know that what they are representing is the flag of their country. As coaches, we are also committed to make a historical review with the athletes. We have to illustrate these values and make everyone in their federation know the roots of our family tree in South American Football. (Rueda, 2018)

For the training of young people in youth clubs, interdisciplinary teams are important in order to provide players and their families with comprehensive care and training, without losing sight of the fact that training is a shared responsibility; a task that belongs to the family in the first place, and to formal school in the second.

Sports trainers promote the schooling of boys and girls as an inalienable legal right and as one of the central areas in the development of every human being that contribute to strengthen values, especially those related to sports and citizen ethics. It is worth quoting Reinaldo Rueda (2018): “The school will be the second home again when the family is the first school again”; this reflection highlights the current challenge faced by everyone who works in the educational field of boys, girls and young athletes.

Figure 3: Role of Sports Trainers



Source: self-made.

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It is relevant that the Football Managers, from CONMEBOL youth clubs, develop a new way of working in an interdisciplinary way with young players; that is approaching training or the game as the result of a whole that goes beyond the result of individualities, game strategies or physical preparation.

This “whole” is defining for a correct implementation of the interdisciplinary action-approach, since many can think of it as simply having a doctor, a psychologist and a pedagogue on campus, but that is not the case, since if that pedagogue or that doctor does not meet regularly with the coaches or the physical trainers to discuss how the team is doing, or what the goals are and what is expected from the players to achieve success, if that dialogue and team work does not happen in practice, you do not have the interdisciplinary whole that South American Football of the 21st century requires.

The Interdisciplinary approach allows Football Managers to have an understanding and a comprehensive action of the processes that are developed simultaneously within the personal and relational field of young people.

Thus, in practice, the interdisciplinary approach of youth football allows Football Managers to have an understanding and comprehensive action in everything related to the processes that take place simultaneously within the personal and relationship context of the young players of the CONMEBOL youth clubs. These athletes develop as high-performance professionals, and, at the same time, as public figures; they are in the showcase of the new successful models of the 21st century.

Considering the advances in scientific knowledge in the interdisciplinary action-approach in working with youth clubs, CONMEBOL confirms the need for coaches and the interdisciplinary team necessary to accompany children and young people during their different phases. It is important to understand that they do not have the same demands or the same behaviours and their growth is not always equivalent to a pattern of doing, thinking or feeling. Besides, it is not possible to treat or mould them as small adults, especially when today the presence of women on the field is a reality and that men and women have their particular and original journeys of physical and psychological development.

Thus, today, it is essential to know the specific characteristics and priorities of each of the stages of childhood and adolescence, for men and women, focusing on the evolutionary aspects of boys and girls who play football with an objective of being high-performance athletes, both on and off the field.

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The interdisciplinary approach and work allow those responsible for CONMEBOL youth clubs to perfectly know the different phases of growth of boys, girls and young athletes who play football, enabling Football Managers to implement a training practice that respects the level of the child, showing a positive attitude that favours both the learning of the South American game, as well as the fundamental human principles that should guide the person in their private and professional life.

Figure 4: Importance of Taking an Interdisciplinary Approach and Work



Source: self-made

It is interesting to highlight the work of both the coach and the psychologist, the doctor or the pedagogue -to cite an example of the interdisciplinary approach-, facing the task of creating the conditions for children and young athletes to train so that they can adequately stimulate the proper neuromotor development for each growth phase of the boy or girl player.

All of this within the framework proposed by CONMEBOL for South American Initial Football, which implies that the Interdisciplinary Coaching Teams develop training plans, didactic means, motivational tools and behavioural guidelines that are created for boys and girls, according to their specific growth phase, their attitude towards life and football based on fair play, team spirit and camaraderie.

Moreover, we should also consider the fact that football, especially at this age, is fun and that children and young people have the right to play it for fun. For this reason, although youth clubs are geared towards high performance, South American Grassroots Football must be essentially simple, exciting and rewarding for the young player.

In conclusion, it can be affirmed with theoretical and practical certainty, and the passion of South American football at heart, that everything proposed by CONMEBOL, from the Table of Experts, in this section, is not a dream or an intellectualisation of football, but rather the expected and real goal for a way of working in today's football.

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Figure 5: Technical Talk before Starting a Match



Source: CONMEBOL and Associations Member of CONMEBOL, 2019. Own file, unpublished.

Thus, today, the interdisciplinary action-approach is played out as a competitive advantage, since it allows Grassroots Football and youth clubs to combine different views and knowledge in favour of children's rights. Boys and girls, with a clear South American background, make the field a school of life, where quality, creative and clean football is played.

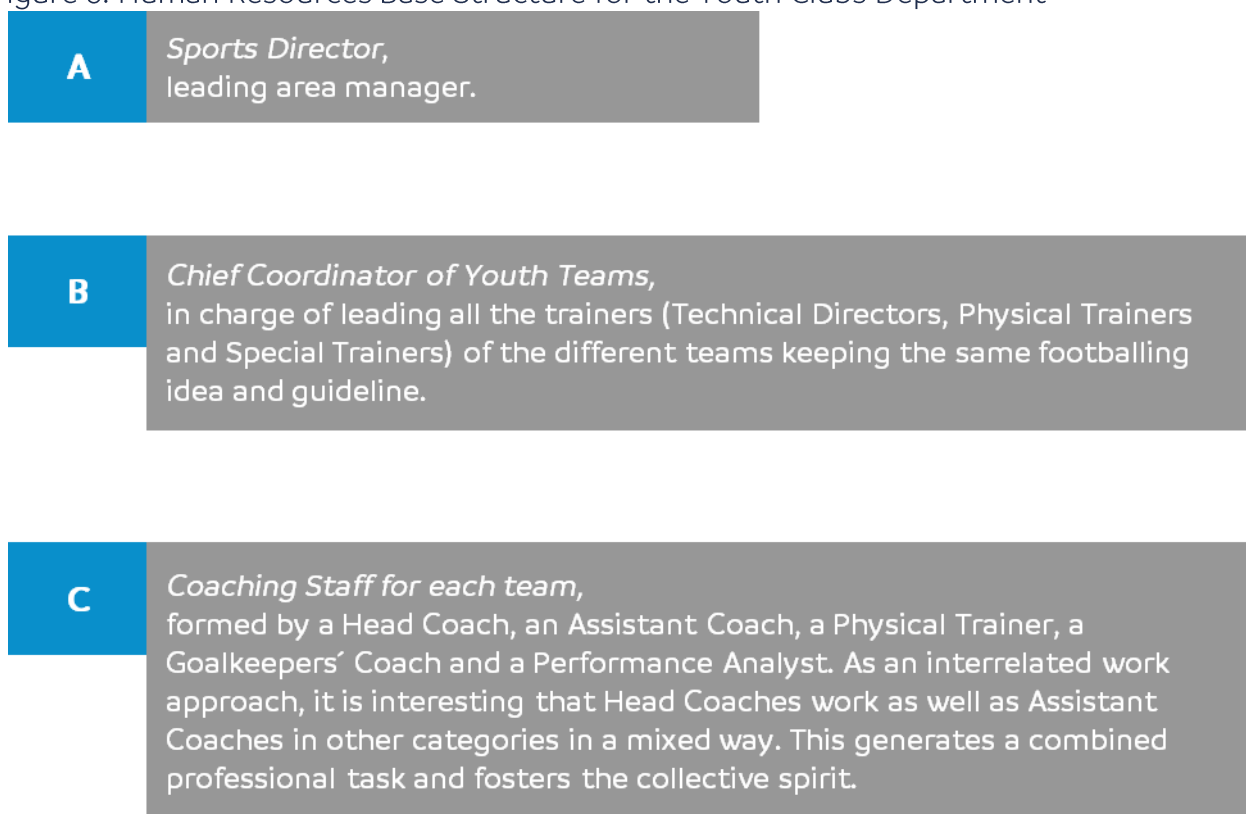
To achieve this goal, without a doubt, both the coach and the physical trainer or the pedagogue who are part of the interdisciplinary teams of youth clubs are key members of the coaching staff of the 21st Century South American Educational Football.

The fundamental task of managing human resources in the field of Children and Youth Football is to provide answers to the changes experienced in society in general and in the world of South American Football.

Based on the recommendation of the Table of Experts of Youth Teams, the base structure of Human Resources for the Department of youth clubs comprises:

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Figure 6: Human Resources Base Structure for the Youth Clubs Department

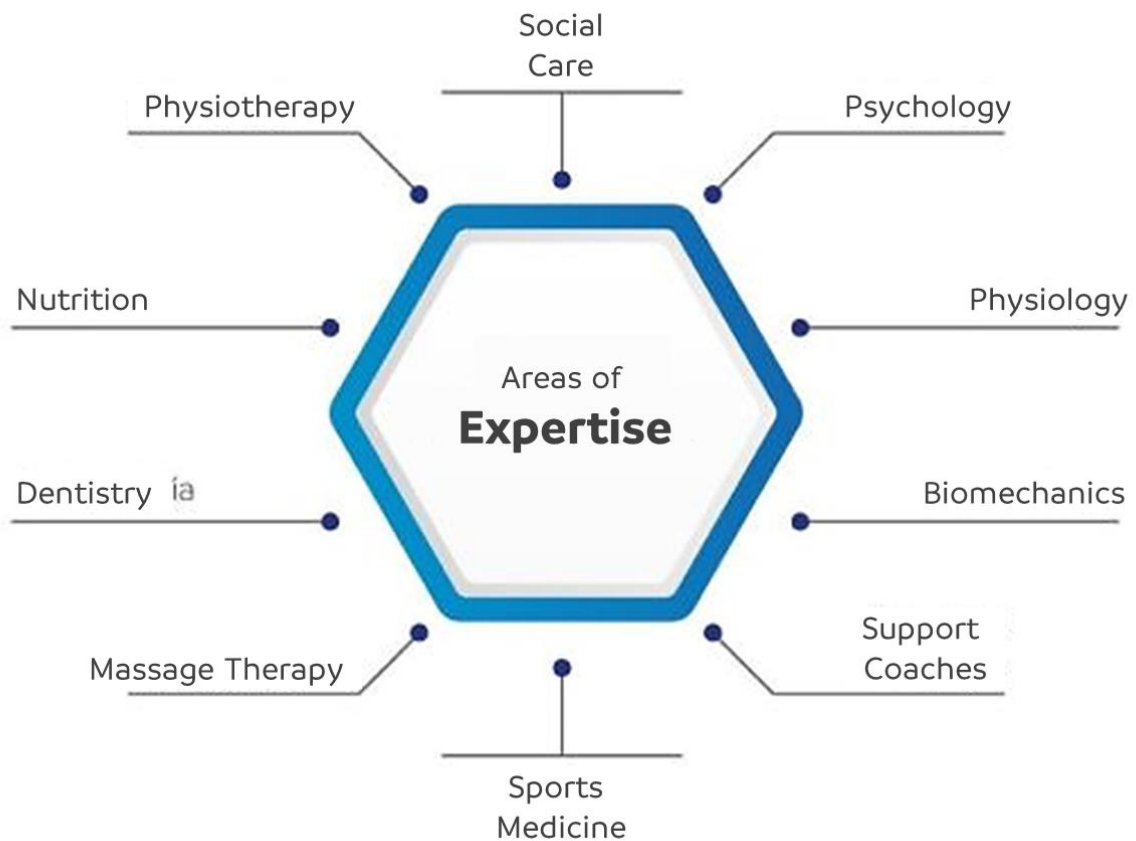


Source: self-made

Once the Department of Youth Clubs was set up, we began to integrate specialists from different areas.

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Figure 7: Knowledge Areas that Support Football



Source: self-made

In the planning area of the training process, the fitness instructor, physical trainers, technicians, and special trainers participate, in addition to the physical therapist, who should also be considered part of this same training team.

The next area will be made up of physical trainers and sports medicine physicians, who will carry out the physical field and laboratory tests; then they will analyse the results. This process should be done at least three times during the season.

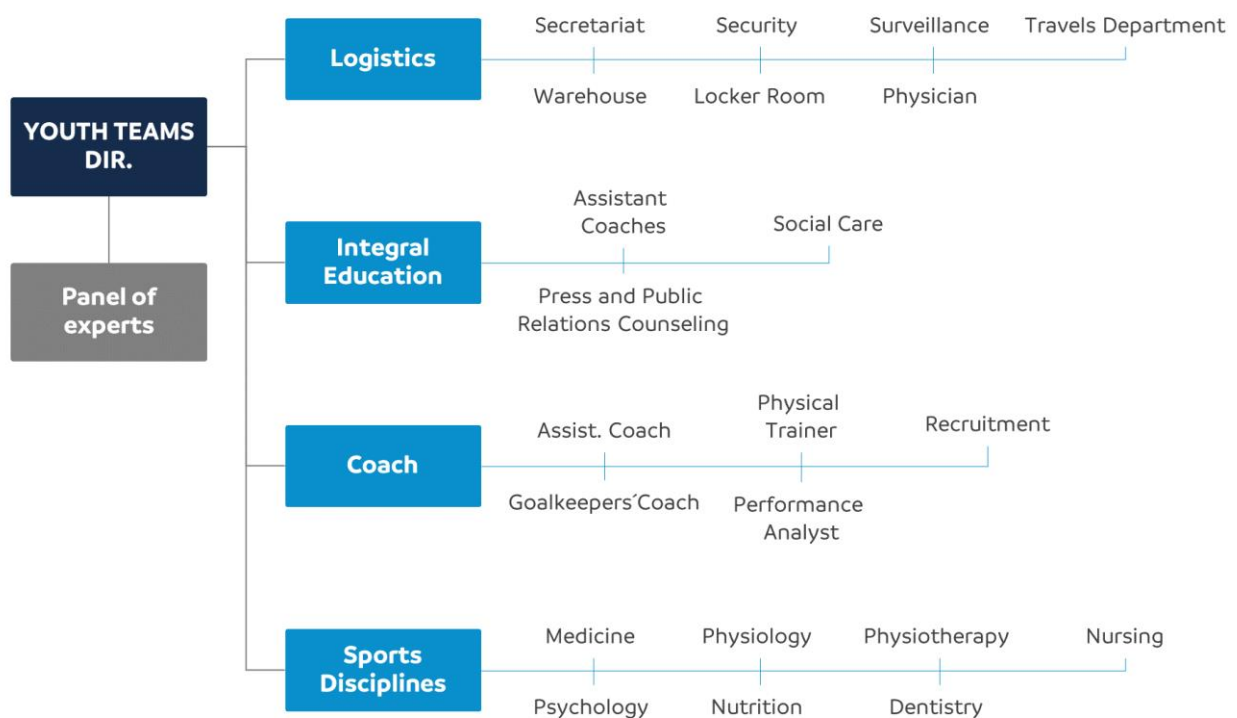
As part of the following area, professionals who will be in charge of anthropometric measurements and monitoring all of the parameters are included. Bear in mind that these studies are not only important for the detection of excessive adipose tissue for sports, but also for the control of biological development and height growth.

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The technology area (video analysis, GPS system, specialised software) is of utmost importance in today's football. This tool offers relevant data to be used in planning a first division or youth team and in better understanding the performance of football players in official matches.

Nutrition is a fundamental aspect of a high-performance athlete, a great training accompanied by poor nutrition becomes a mediocre training. On one hand, the function of this area is to guide the young football player to a proper diet and plan the weekly nutritional plan. The nutritional area must coordinate everything related to football players' meals and, in the First Division, regulate breakfasts and lunches, offer a nutritional guide for dinner (non-control time) and meals in their non-athletic life. The high-performance athlete must be aware that he or she is a full-time footballer in the nutritional aspect.

Figure 8: Youth Club Management: Panel of Experts



Source: self-made

Regarding continuing education, it would be interesting to sign agreements with academic organisations so that children and young people can continue studying without losing the school year beyond the inconveniences caused by competitions and travel through sports

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development projects and education. The proposal may be contemplated in the framework of the Club License, as a requirement for clubs and to encourage education.

Within this project, pedagogues and educators could be integrated into the group dynamics of youth clubs to accompany school subjects, such as the example of youth clubs in Uruguay, where the state assigns an educator to the teams and clubs.

Training in the study of other languages, educational assistance agreements, career planning, financial education courses, social media, nutrition and cooking, addictions, connections to the media, are topics of interest and current events for football players.

Coaches and the interdisciplinary team must assume that:	During their development, children and young people do not have the same demands or the same behaviours, and their growth is not always equivalent to a pattern of doing.
Today, for the coach and the interdisciplinary team it is essential to know:	The specific characteristics and priorities of each of the stages of childhood and adolescence, of the players, men and women.
The interdisciplinary action-approach is played out as a competitive advantage, since:	It allows Grassroots Football and youth clubs to count on the wealth of different views and knowledge, with a clear South American accentuation.

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Recommendations

To have a Football Manager and specialists in each of the proposed management areas.

To train managers and specialists of football with vision and spirit of interdisciplinary training work that CONMEBOL proposes to the base categories

To set up systems, regulations and structures that help to work in teams that dialogue and build a Football 2.0 proposal as a South American identity for children and young people who play football.

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4.3 Technological Infrastructure and Equipment

Training work in Children's Football and Youth Football requires internal logistics that cover all aspects related to the organisation of youth clubs, such as planning, training, nutrition and the necessary materials for football players to play on adequate fields, with gender-separated changing rooms and toilets, with spaces for the medical attention required in the field of sports, sports clothing and quality hydration equipment.

In addition, external logistics, which consists of the correct organisation of travel, hotels, and places of concentration and training of the team, must be added.

All these variables have a direct impact on the training and competition process of youth clubs. It should be borne in mind that sports infrastructure, in current football, is of vital importance to sustain a process that overcomes youth clubs. The footballers who make up the youth clubs require high-performance sports training centres adapted to the demands.

Department of Physical-Motor Training, Neurocognitive and Evaluations:

The operation of a broad structure such as the Youth Club Department of an association requires the participation of different areas. Each of them covers different disciplines, which must work in an interrelated way.

It is essential to have a professional organisation that works in a cohesive way, accompanying the growth and development of the young footballer of the youth club.

The idea of the Department of Physical-Motor Training, Neurocognitive and High-Performance Sports Medicine is precisely to have a professional organisation that works in a cohesive way, accompanying the growth and development of the young footballer of the youth club.

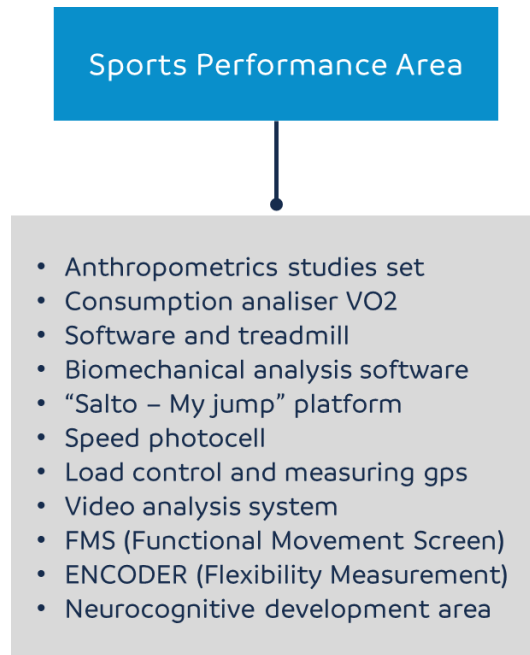
The professionals who participate in this department must be: trainers, physical trainers, coordinators, clinical physicians, athletes, orthopaedists, paediatricians, kinesiologists, physiologists, nutritionists, psychologists and video-analysis specialists.

All the components, although they have specific functions, must work in a coordinated way, since the issues that make up the department are linked together.

The functions of this department are various and are divided into areas, as the organisation chart shows.

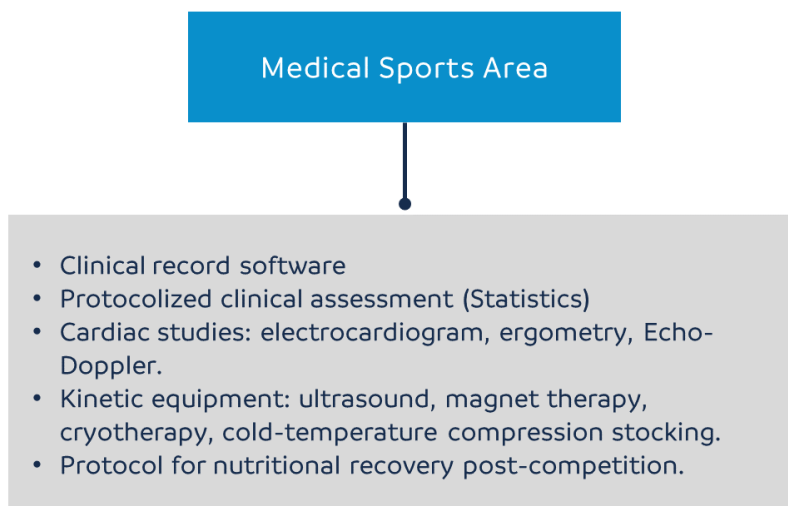
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Figure 9: Department of Physical-Motor Training, Neurocognitive and Performance Assessments Equipment Materials



Source: self-made

Figure 10: Composition of the Sports Medical Area



Source: self-made

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4.4 Interaction and Relationship with the Clubs

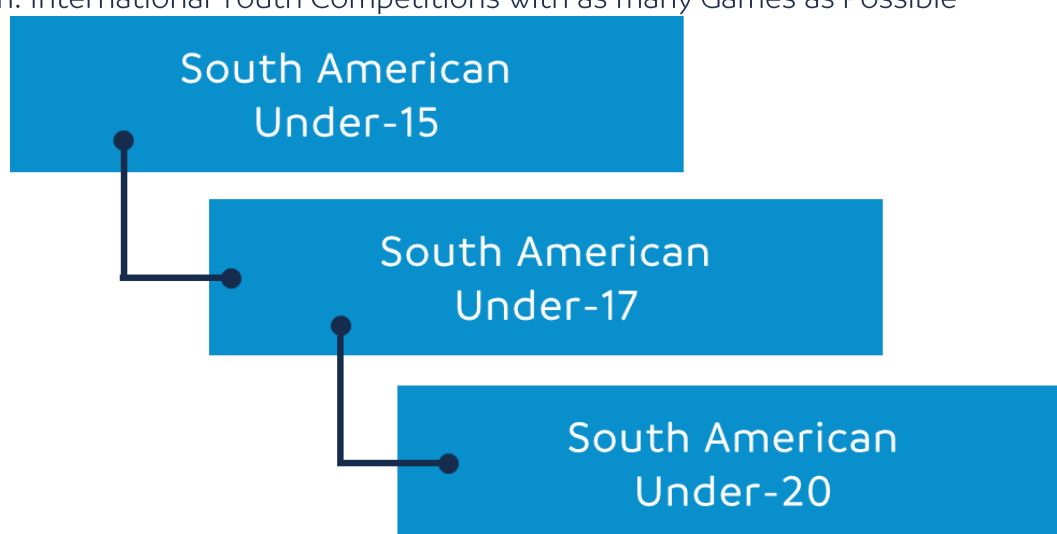
For the optimal development of youth clubs, a constant professional relationship with the clubs is necessary; which translates into fluid communication, allowing both parties to know their projects, both those of the Youth Team and those of each Club.

In the spirit of CONMEBOL's current line of work, the aforementioned Clubs-Nationals relationship that guides the growth and development of the footballer, results in natural interaction, since youth clubs are mainly nourished by the youth areas of the clubs and the football players. In turn, both men and women are professionally registered in these sports institutions.

4.5 Competition as an Essential Element of Training

This is a relevant premise both in CONMEBOL's vision and in the context of world football in the 21st century, where a system of quality and quantity competitions is essential in the training of a football player; since the accumulation of international competitions, with the jersey of each national team, is a vital factor in their sports preparation, as well as for the development of their personality in training until they become a high-performance professional. Boosting the possibilities of play at the local and international level by those who train him or her adds experience, growth and marks the gradual progress of the skills and abilities of the footballer in training.

Figure 11: International Youth Competitions with as many Games as Possible



Source: self-made

The practice of children's football and the adaptation of the formats and elements of competition to the possibilities of the child and, therefore, of each growth phase of the football player, is of vital importance, without forgetting that for the child to experience a natural teaching learning process, the game must be adapted to the child.

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The adapted children's competitions must guarantee that the child not only enjoys the games, but also produces an accumulation of sports experiences preparatory for the next youth period.

This type of competition, appropriate to the conditions of each evolutionary phase that the small footballer should experience in each year of children's football, will be the essential foundations on which the footballer will build in subsequent stages of youth football.

The practice of children's football and the adaptation of the formats and elements of competition to the possibilities of the child are of vital importance.

Competition in the world of youth football is an essential training element. The footballer grows and develops in training and competition. A well-programmed training cycle without adequate and demanding competition for each growth phase does not show significant progress. Competence at each evolutionary level is essential for a process of constant improvements to occur.

The result of competences will be decisive in youth training and will prepare, for the better, the national football player when he or she is required to compete in international youth competitions.

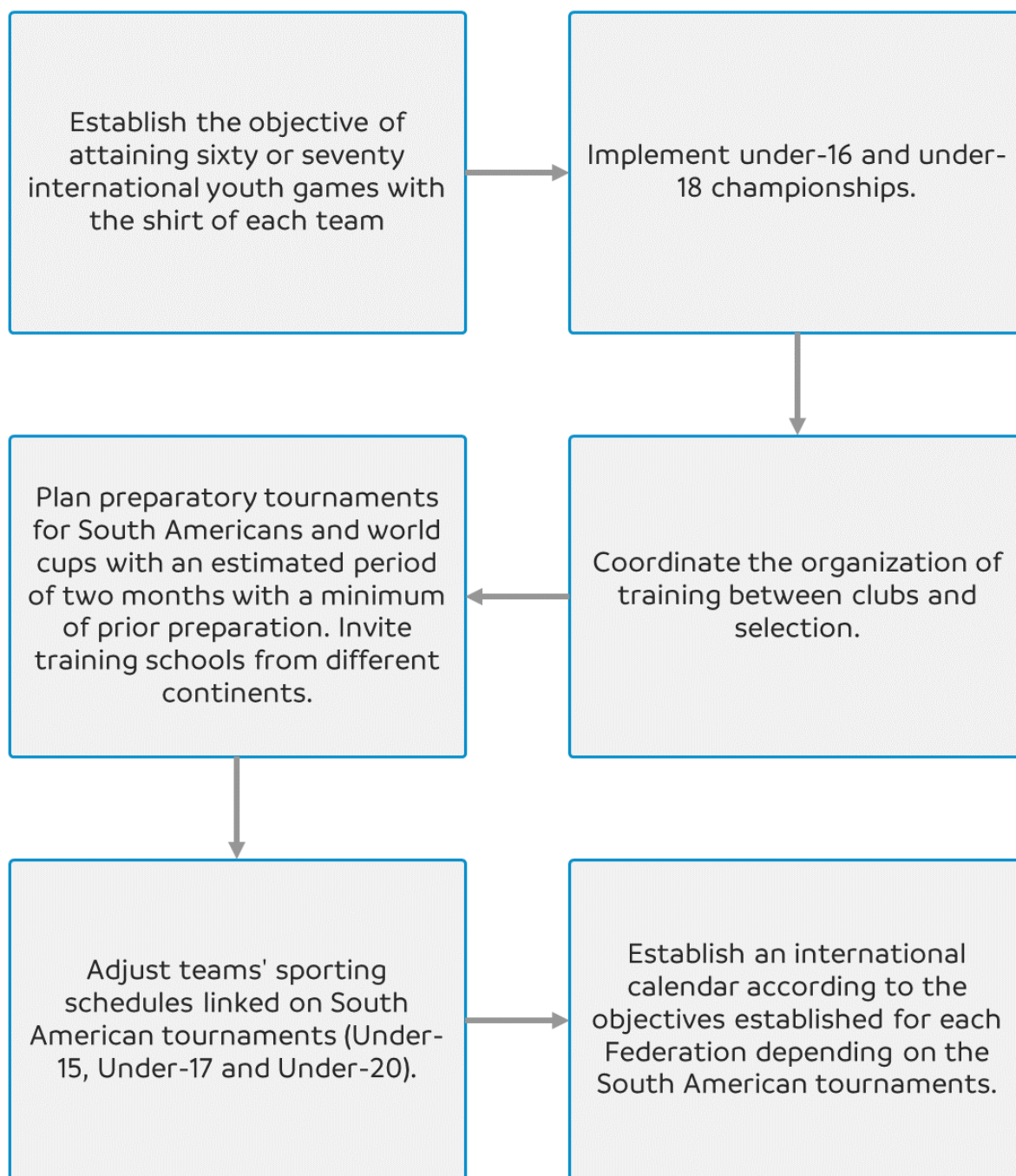
The organisation of a quality and quantity competition system is essential in the training of a young football player. The accumulation of a certain amount of international competitions with the shirt of each team is a vital factor in the preparation of the national team player.

We consider competition essential as an element of progress and growth of the young football player, as long as it is taken in its proper measure, not only by football players, but above all, by those who train and lead them.

Until the age of 13, when the athlete finishes children's football, there should be no pressure for a specific outcome since it is purely educational and playful stage. But, at the moment that the young athlete enters youth football, the competition is more demanding and the desire to win and develop a winning mentality is part of the football player's training with projection to the First Division.

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Recommendations



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4.6 Youth Clubs Talent Selection System

The recruitment is the first step in a sports project to achieve success.

Recruiting a footballer for youth clubs can be done in different ways and implementing different strategies. Generally, the South American U-15 or U-17 Youth Team footballer comes from the clubs of each Association Member, that is, the footballers in training are previously recruited and incorporated by the clubs. In those countries where children sing with clubs at a very young age, a very close relationship between the professionals of the National Teams and the clubs will be crucial in a joint task comprised by constant follow-ups of those young people with great projection and football talent.

However, in other Federations, young people join clubs only when they are thirteen or fourteen years old. Considering that our South American continent presents these diversities, we must approach different strategies for the detection of the youth club footballer.

Recruiting a footballer for Youth Clubs can be done in different ways and implementing different strategies.

Each Federation member, depending on its own reality, should evaluate the possibility of creating Recruitment and Training Centres in strategic locations in each country to optimise this search process from each association in early stages. The recruitment, election and final education of each youth club will be a comprehensive process that includes football, physical, mental and socio-cultural aspects of the national team footballers.

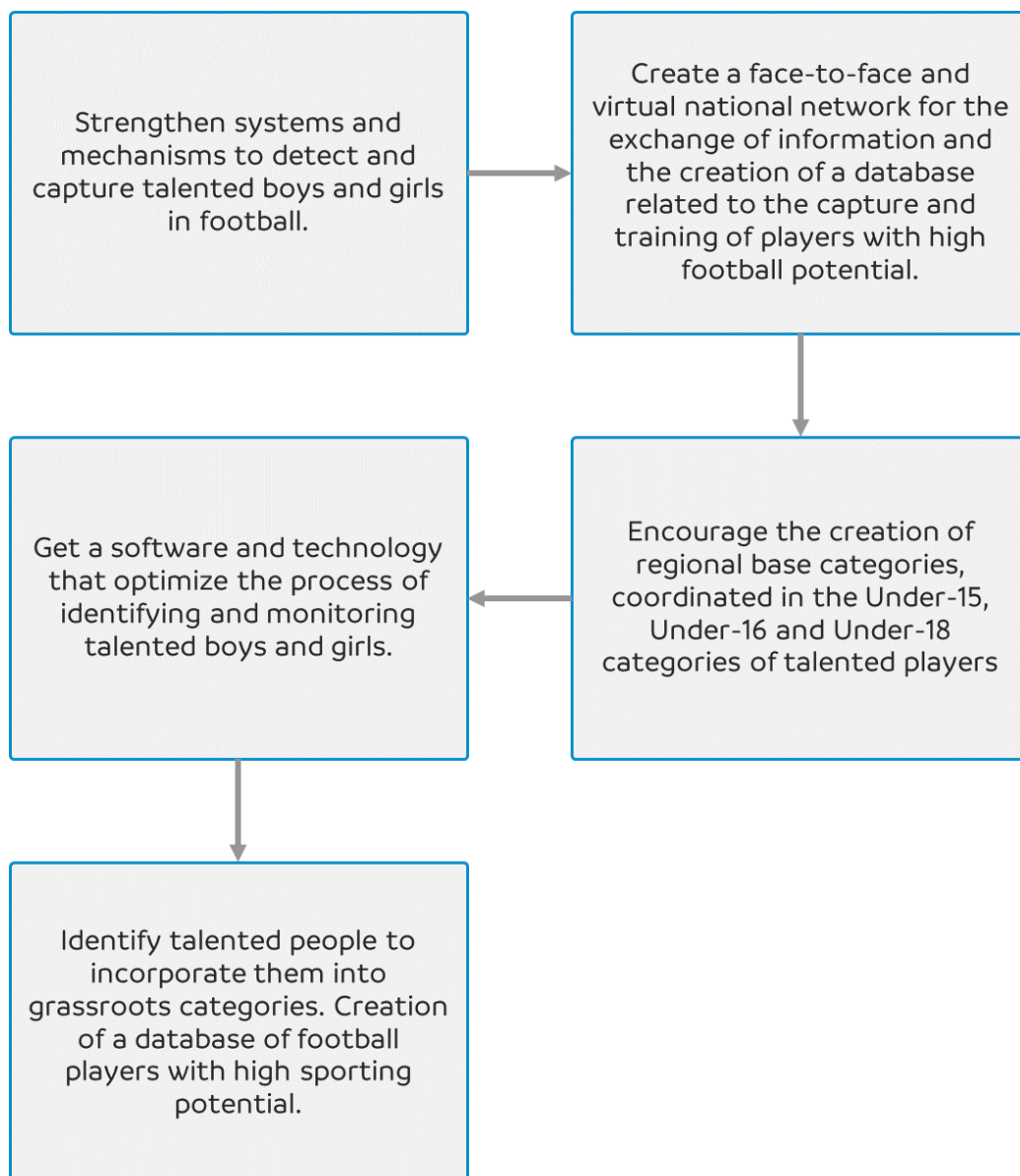
There are essentially two technical aspects to consider in the recruitment of child and youth talent: an optimal individual technique (South American natural talent) and a good understanding of the game of football, both of which must then be developed in the teaching-learning process and training in clubs and in national teams. As a third aspect, knowledge of the socio-cultural environment of the chosen child or young player (family, study, and nutrition) will be essential for later help by the federation member if necessary.

On the other hand, technology should be a tool that optimises this recruitment process through software and audio-visual material with which each Association Member can have exhaustive knowledge and monitoring of the performance of footballers who develop in clubs

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or in the training centres. Beyond that, the best evaluation is the one that is carried out in person through the coordinators and coaches of each youth club.

Recommendations



4.7 Interrelation between Youth Clubs and the National Team

The youth club process aims to form an Absolute Team to compete internationally. For the fulfilment of this goal, it is essential that the youth club project is closely related to the Major National Team project.

All youth clubs must train with a uniform planning model and methodological training system. The methodology to transfer an athlete from a U-15 to a U-17 team should not undergo any changes in the training process. This training style should follow a natural methodological continuity with the logical modifications required by each of the growth phases in regards to levels of cognitive complexity and physical demands, but without modifying the line of the project.

All youth clubs must train with a uniform planning model and methodological training system.

Throughout this module the idea of teamwork, an interdisciplinary approach and good communication has been sustained so that the South American footballer is educated in a training and competitive space that is coherent and not the result of different parts patched together.

In this sense, in the training process experienced in youth clubs, special attention should be paid to the opportunities provided by a close relationship with the First Team Project in order to consolidate a common idea and vision of football that each country wants to develop in the face of international competitions.

To achieve this interrelation between National Teams and Clubs, it is important to have a Sports Coach who works to link both areas within each Federation, always based on a unique idea and project.

This interrelation between Teams and Clubs seeks, regardless of eventual changes that may occur, the continuity between the Absolute Teams and the Youth Team to be guaranteed, in such a way that there is a solid common thread that promotes even the team of older people, such as the final link in a process that begins in the U-15 and ends at the peak of footballing excellence that each player reaches in their personal and sports career.

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The interrelation in the comprehensive project with the First Team pursues 3 great objectives in the short, medium and long term:

Figure 12: Objectives of the Comprehensive Project with the First Team

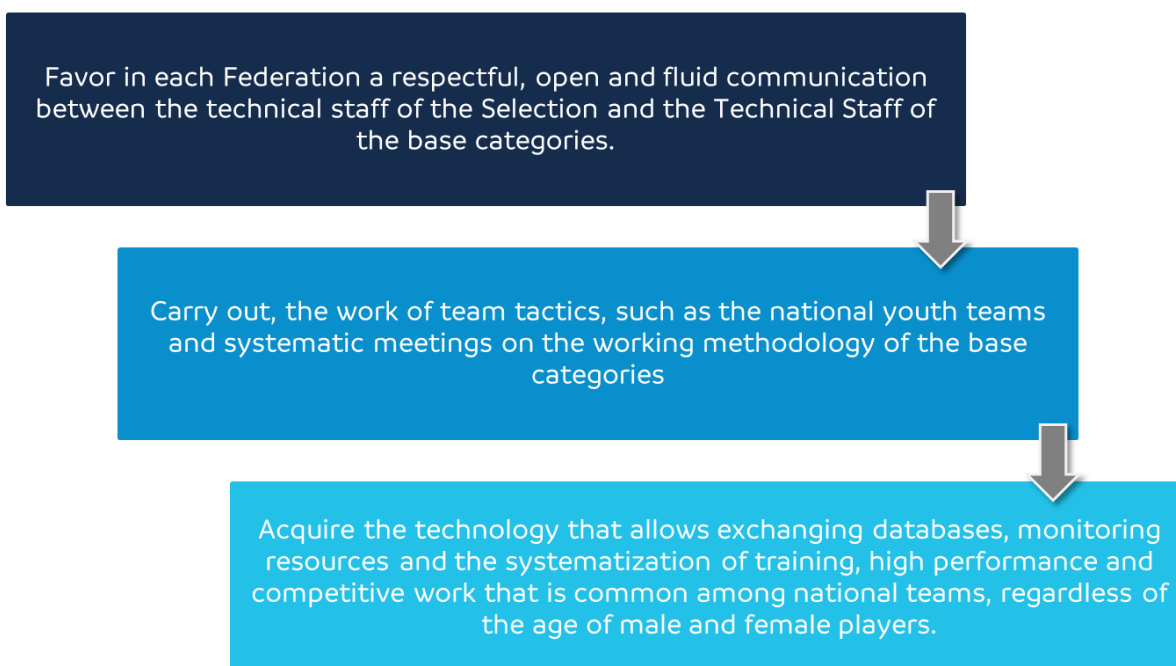


Source: self-made

Goal of the youth club process is...	To form an Absolute Team to compete internationally
All youth clubs must train with ...	A planning model and a uniform training methodological system.
The transfer of a U-15 to a team U-17 ...	Should be a natural methodological continuity.

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Recommendations



The Future of Football

Technology facilitates meaningful and exciting experience with product innovations increasingly adapted to the needs of the sport. Performance, training load and injury prevention are key factors for footballers. Electronic devices provide increasingly sophisticated evaluation results of the training routine. The analysis tools that allow the athlete's physical condition to be detected in time are becoming increasingly sophisticated and the field of artificial intelligence research yields real-time information results from the footballer's body on the playing field.

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Figure 13: Celebration of Youth Players after a Goal



Source: CONMEBOL and Associations Member of CONMEBOL, 2019. Own file, unpublished.

During the World Cup in Russia, the implementation of the VAR video arbitration contributed to the clarification of decisions on the playing field. The VAR team was available to the referees during the 64 World Cup matches from the video operating room, located in the Moscow International Press Centre.

With the principle of “minimum interference, maximum benefit” (IFAB protocol), the objective of the VAR is that football is fairer. Verification is the examination of an incident made by the referee, which corresponds to one of the four types of decisive situations in which a clear and manifested error could have been made. The checks do not have to be communicated to the referee who directs the match.

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A review, on the other hand, is the consequence of a check: when the video assistant referee believes that a clear and manifested error has been made, he may choose to report it directly to the referee or to recommend that the referee carry out a review on the spot of game and decide for himself. Football technology is the immediate present.

Conclusion

South American Football has its own identity and high international recognition, both for the quality and for the high potential for learning and continuous improvement shown by the super stars that thrill crowds, both in South America and in the rest of the world.

Strengthening youth clubs is strengthening South American Football, which is not limited to winning cups or championships, but rather those victories represent achievements in the training of boys, girls and young athletes; that from the paddock to the stadium develop a training path that makes these boys and girls the best version of themselves, both as high-performance players and assertive people.

Achieving this accomplishment requires organised work, thought and implementation based on sound criteria and principles, clearly communicated and that can be put into practice from the reality and needs of current football.

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Figure 14: Celebration of the Youth Football Club after a Goal



Source: CONMEBOL and Associations Member of CONMEBOL, 2019. Own file, unpublished.

Today, Educational Football requires interdisciplinary technical teams, where the figure of the pedagogue is as important as that of the coach or the sports doctor, because it is about training footballers in a comprehensive way; attending to the evolutionary stage they are going through and the new social contexts in which they live. Thus, new communication technologies, neurosciences, scouting, social networks and the emotion-body-thought link should be part of the training plans and the strategic approach of each competition.

The Training of Values

It is impossible to split the strictly specific training process from human and personal factors. The influence of socio-cultural aspects affects the training of the young athlete.

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We live in a time of permanent changes, so, in the construction of values, the orientation must encompass concepts of education, humility, solidarity, respect, trust and honesty.

Figure 15: Applauding to the Fans at the end of a Match



Source: CONMEBOL and Associations Member of CONMEBOL, 2019. Own file, unpublished.

According to the account of Professor Juan Cruz Anselmi (2018), Master Jorge Bernardo Griffa, one of the greatest football trainers of all times in Argentina, claims that the footballer in training has two paths to choose: that of possible success or that of certain failure. The first, to the footballer, is a path full of thorns, obstacles and inconveniences. The second requires no effort; it is the most comfortable and the shortest. And comfort is not good at all; not in football or in life. (Anselmi, 2018).

The entire scope of schooling and academic education must be complemented by the theme of values and how these influence the athlete's education process; we quote the idea of Diego Simeone extracted from his book *Match by Match. If You Believe You Can*:

Values within the group are essential. Without them we are nothing. They make you stronger and more consistent. What I have was instilled in me by my family. The Vélez club school was also very important. The values that you transmit to a child are what will mark you later in

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life, beyond what you can become as a footballer. The older the person, the more difficult it is to change or turn them to the right path. Therefore, when they are very young, they must be morally educated. Even above the football teachings that you transmit to them as a coach. The values in life that you show them are more important than the practical lessons in football. (Simeone, 2014, p. 20).

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Summary

Organizational structure



Training

Talent selection



Management

Skills



Human Resources

Infraestructure



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Closing

In the journey of the elite football is fundamental:

- The training of interdisciplinary teams of Football Managers to face efficiently the sports challenges.
- Infrastructure adapted to the needs of training and the practice of football.
- National competitions for expansion and inclusion of all sectors of society.

The path to professionalization of the highest competitive level requires:

- Structure and management of human resources
- Complete understanding of training objectives
- Constant training of field professionals

Essential aspects of logistics for training work in children's and youth football:

- Planning
- Nutrition
- Sexed changing rooms and toilets
- Spaces for medical care
- Quality sportswear and hydration equipment
- Travel organization
- Hospitality
- Places of concentration and training

Accumulation of sports experiences

- The football player grows and develops in competition.

Technical aspects to take into account in attracting child and youth talent:

- Optimal individual technique (South American natural talent).
- Good understanding of the game of football.
- Knowledge of the socio-cultural environment of the child or young person chosen (family, study, nutrition).

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