



Module 2 Stages of the scouting process




The stages of the *scouting* process refer to all the steps and the entire organization that is carried out by the *scouting* department of a club. These steps are directly conditioned by the type of club involved (modest club, big budget or first level club, only for grassroots soccer, categories or ages of the players) and by their different objectives. Based on the type of club discussed in module 1, we adapt these stages of the *scouting* process to the type of club we are working for, its characteristics and its specific needs.


Once this has been defined, we define the main stages it should have:


- **Stage 1: STRUCTURING THE SCOUTING DEPARTMENT**
- **Stage 2: OBJECTIVES**
- **Stage 3: ASSESSMENT (VOLUMEN)**
- **Stage 4: MONITORING (FIRST FILTER)**
- **Stage 5: VALIDATION (SECOND FILTER)**
- **Stage 6: DECISION (YES or NO)**


We will define these stages one by one in order to go deeper into each one of them and to have a more specific idea.


 **Stage 1: STRUCTURING THE SCOUTING DEPARTMENT**

 **Stage 2: OBJECTIVES**

 **Stage 3: ASSESSMENT**

 **Stage 4: MONITORING**

 **Stage 5: VALIDATION**

 **Stage 6: DECISION**

Stage 1: STRUCTURING THE SCOUTING DEPARTMENT

Factors to take into account when structuring a *scouting* department:

First, a *good scouting* department must have human resources and staff to carry out all the functions.

Example of a *scouting* department staff

- Director.
- Coordinators.
- *Scouts*.
- Travel Department.
- Reporting Department.
- Institutional Relations Department.

To define the *scouting*

SCOUTING DEPARTMENT STRUCTURES

2 of 2

department, there is a range from a very basic structure (or even no structure as such) to a more complex and professionalized one. This will depend on the type of club and its ability to have more or less human and financial

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Source: own elaboration.

Average structure:

In this case, it would be similar to the previous structure, although using more resources. For example, additional staff as scouts (instead of having 1 or 3, for example, having 3 or 6).

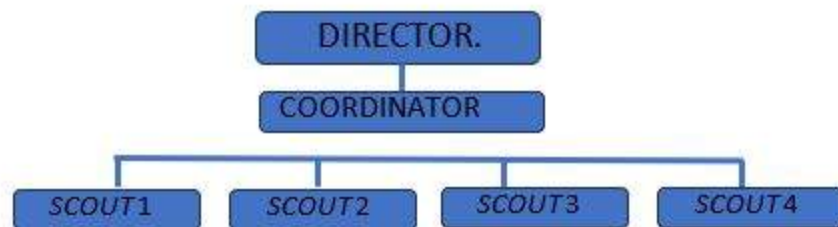
A similar thing would happen in the case of the zones. This level would also improve with respect to less powerful structures. For example, the players' search area could be expanded to the entire province, throughout the entire autonomous community and even to other autonomous communities.

As there is more volume and information, it would also mean better coordination and more meetings to plan, organize and share

information.

In this case, the staff could include a director, a coordinator and several scouts.

Figure 2: Organizational chart example of an average structure



Source: own elaboration.

Complex structure

A complex scouting department structure generally involves a significant investment of financial and human resources.

This may be the case for semi-professional or professional clubs or those that have grassroots teams in higher categories.

In this case you usually have more people doing the scouting function (between 5 and 10 or more) and your scouting area can be

wider ranging, i.e. from your immediate area to a national level, all over the country and including foreign players.

Naturally, the organization is also quite complex, involving an organizational chart that includes more people and positions or functions.

Certainly, there should be a department director, one or two coordinators and a large number of *scouts*. There should also be a travel department or a specific person or persons for travel management and other related logistical aspects.

Figure 3: Organizational chart example of a complex structure



Source: own elaboration.

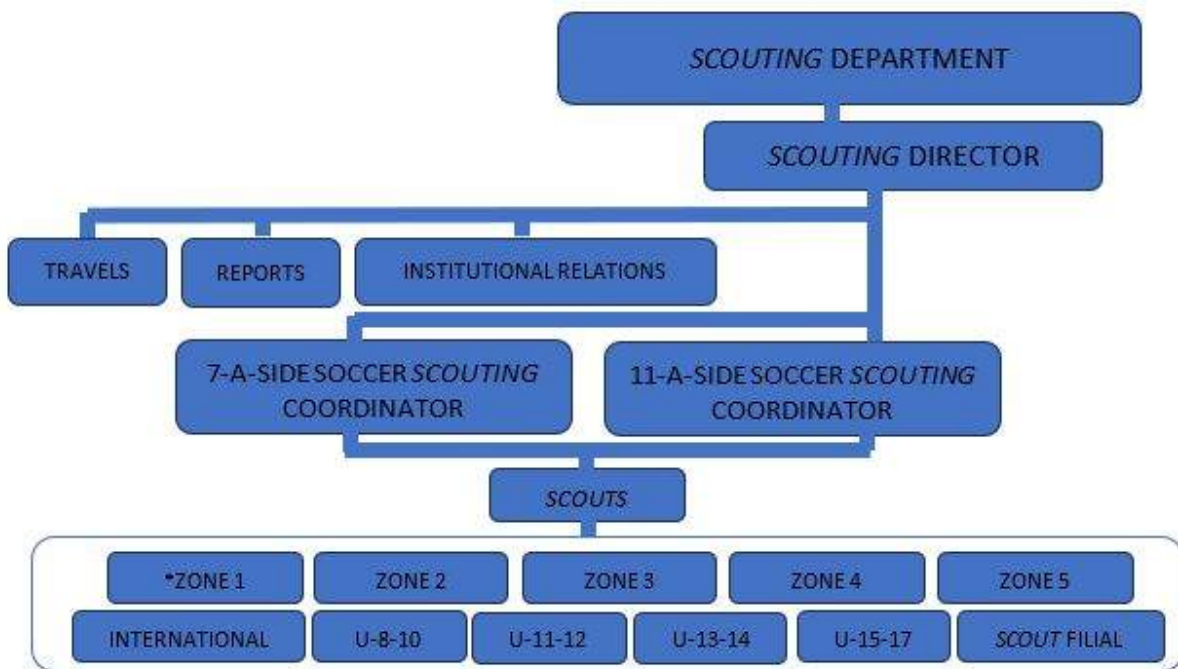
Highly complex structure

This would be the most professional structure that could be found, involving a very large number of staff resources and a wide geographical coverage, together with the economic investment that this implies.

It could be a renowned club, a top club in a country or league that spends a large budget on recruiting or signing players.

In this case, we may find a very large *scouting* department that could consist of a director, several departments for travel management, reports or institutional relations. There are also some coordinators for each stage, zone and a large number of scouts, also organized according to certain criteria (ages, zones, and so on).

Figure 4: Organizational chart example of a very complex structure



Source: own elaboration.

- Zones may refer to counties, provinces, autonomous communities or other regions.

Once we have created the structure of the *scouting* department, including roles and functions, we will define the next stages of the *scouting* process.

CONTINUE

Stage 2: OBJECTIVES

In this second stage, we set the objectives to be followed during the *scouting* process.

It is important to coordinate among different club members in this second stage of the process. This may include coaches, coordinators, scouts and club management or the technical office.

The objectives that we can set will obviously depend, as we said at the beginning of the module, on the characteristics of each club, but we will try to define some of the most important objectives to keep in mind:

Scouting objectives: why is scouting important?

- To have the best players (win titles).
- To anticipate the recruitment of young players.
- To provide players to the first team/filial.

- To monetize players.
- To pay attention to the profiles of players
- To meet needs.
- To expand the geographic coverage of player monitoring as much as possible.
- To cover the largest number of ages and categories.
- To expand the budget.

Below, we will take a closer look at these objectives one by one:

To have the best players (win titles). —

Who doesn't want to have the best players?

Naturally, scouting is important to get the best players in your club, in your teams, in order to have more sporting success and win leagues, tournaments or other competitions, especially in the first teams of the club.

The best teams or clubs are likely to attract the best players, so it is sometimes easier for them to recruit these players, either because they offer themselves or because if you want to recruit them, they are more readily available.

On the other hand, it can happen (and it does happen) that several clubs want to acquire the same player. Other factors then come into play for the player to take the decision.

Some of these factors may include:

- **Distance:** the distance from the player's home to the club that would like to sign him.
- **Category:** the category in which the team involved plays.
- **Club philosophy:** the club's philosophy or playing style.
- **Representative:** if you have a representative, he or she may intervene to recommend the club to sign with.
- **Conditions:** this may refer to economic conditions, residence, study centers and other similar conditions.
- **Sporting project:** the sporting proposal made by the club may influence the player's decision to sign or not for that club. The category where he is offered to play (division of honor, preferential, among others), the position in which he will play for the club (center, midfielder, and so on), the future and the club's commitment to the player. He can also be offered to play at a level that exceeds his age as a way to attract him (offering him to play in the youth team when he is still a cadet, for example).
- **Sympathizer:** in case one of the clubs interested in the transfer is the club for which the player sympathizes or not.

The most mediatic signings are those that have a more important investment of money, but not only players are signed for the first team. Players are also signed for the youth and grassroots teams.

Below is another objective that is often set.

To anticipate the recruitment of young players —

In the past years, it is worth mentioning that clubs have started to recruit talent at a very early age for their grassroots teams.

This happens to avoid that other clubs sign them first and thus create a race to be the first to capture a young (sometimes very young) player.

Usually, clubs or teams of the highest level, with the best categories, have a better chance of finding and signing the most talented players. This happens because they have more resources to invest in the scouting department and because, if they show interest in a player, they can offer him some conditions that would be difficult for them not to accept (as we have mentioned in the previous point).

On the other hand, all clubs want to get the best players, so, as mentioned above, there can be a race to find these outstanding players first and be the first to sign them.

This is why clubs try to anticipate other clubs and one way to do so is to increase human resources (more *scouts*) or to recruit younger players, even if they come from faraway places.

In this case, if the players signed are very young (e.g., U-8), there is a large margin for error. The margin of error refers to the fact that the younger the player is, the further away (by age) he is from being able to reach our filial or first team, which is one of the objectives that can be achieved and that we will develop below.

Now, we will go deeper into the next ambitious objective:

To monetize players

The main objective to be achieved, although it may be

It is also possible that some players may not be able to continue in the first team and a benefit may be obtained from the transfer or sale of some players who have emerged from the club's grassroots. Therefore, the recruitment process carried out with young players can

To pay attention to the profiles of players:

Each club, through the sports management, must define which player profile they want to have as a priority.

Naturally, the best possible and most talented players are sought, but several factors must be taken into account: their physical

This refers to the needs that a

To expand the geographic coverage of player monitoring as much as possible

club's teams may have. This means that teams may need

The scouting department's areas for recruiting players can be defined in this way, so that the areas are well distributed among all the scouts:

- **Local:** if the area(s) for scouting is only the scouting club's own location, the

FIFA establishes strict regulations regarding the transfer of underage players

The aim is to protect their welfare and ensure that their sporting and educational development is not compromised.

The main FIFA regulations concerning this subject are:

Regulations on the **status and transfer of players:**

TO COVER THE LARGEST NUMBER OF AGES AND
CATEGORIES

TO EXPAND THE BUDGET

Specialized *scouts* can be organized into categories and/or ages.

In other words, that a scout, for example, has a specific category or categories to follow:

- First and second division.
- Third division.
- Youth division of honor, national and preferential.
- Honor and preferential division cadets.
- Junior honor division and preferential, among others.
- Or one or more specific ranges to be followed:
 - *Scout 1*: U-7, U-8, U-9.
 - *Scout 2*: U-10, U-11, U-12.
 - *Scout 3*: U13, U13-U14, U15, and so on.

These *scouts* may have the specific function of following and observing players of these ages or categories in one or more areas, as determined by the structure and organization of the *scouting* department.

Another important objective to define is the budget, since everything else will depend on it, ranging from a very limited budget to a very high one. This will obviously condition to a large extent all the resources and the organization of the *scouting* department.

The main expenses that may be incurred, other than salaries, are usually the following:

- **Travel:** most of the time, scouting involves watching soccer matches in the field (field work) and this implies, above all, mileage and tolls that may be incurred if you use your own car; car rental, if you do not use a private car; or transportation tickets (train, bus, cab, boat or plane). Travel may also be required to attend meetings, training or other events.
- **Per diem:** once scouts travel to watch a game or several games, a number of expenses may be incurred. During the journey, during a game, between games or at the end of the game(s), *scouts* may have some expenses regarding per diem: drinks (coffee, water or soft drink) or meals (breakfast, lunch, snack or dinner).
- **Accommodation:** some of the trips may involve the accommodation of the scout(s), either:
 - Due to long distances to be travelled and the need to spend the night at the destination or on the way.
 - Due to the fact that you have to be present during the game for several days and it is not feasible to go and come back several times.
 - This is because travel is by public transport (train, bus, plane) and the schedules of the game/s and transport do not allow for a return trip on the same day.

- **Visas:** this expense will be incurred in the case of trips or travel to foreign countries that require visitors to that country, depending on their origin, to obtain a visa.

Please note that the duration or validity of visas may vary depending on the legislation of each country.

Some visas may also have a very fast processing or validation time (can be obtained in 24 hours or less) or, on the contrary, may require several days.

In many cases, it is possible to request a visa urgently, so that it can be processed more quickly. In this case, the price of the visa is higher, therefore, if possible, you should plan your trip and the corresponding visa in advance.

- **Other:** another expense to be taken into account is whether the *scouts* should be granted bonuses, which should be stated in the contract signed by the scouts themselves. For example:
- **Annual bonus:** *scouts* receive an annual bonus if they fulfill their duties and obligations as defined by the *scouting* department management. This is the fairest of all, since it takes as a parameter the work performed and its quality.
- **Bonus for players:** In this case, a bonus can be received for each player who joins the club as a result of the scouting. These bonuses are usually adjusted according to the age of the players. The older the player, the higher the bonus. This bonus system is in disuse due to the imbalance that generates from one *scout* to another, due to the fact that certain areas with less population or fewer federation licenses or certain ages, are likely to produce fewer recruits due to factors beyond the *scouts'* control.
- **Bonus for debut:** this bonus would be awarded to the *scout* of the zone or age group that carried out the initial monitoring of the player, if this

player debuts in the filial or first team. Occasionally, it may be specified that the debut must be in an official match or even the minutes that the player must play (during the season(s)) in order to receive the bonus.

- **Performance bonus:** in this case, a bonus would be received if the club's sports management considers that the player in question has given or gives a very good performance for the club. It is similar to the previous one, although here the criteria used are subjective.

Similar to the bonus for new players, the last two bonus systems described above (for debut or performance) have also fallen into disuse. Player *scouting* is a complex process involving several people from the scouting department and many others. Once the player joins the club, many coaches are also involved in his training and other departments of the club are involved in making decisions related to the player (coordinators, physical trainers, doctor, managers). To give credit for a player's success to a scout would be like giving credit to a coach who coached him for one season. This goes against the logic and teamwork.

CONTINUE

Stage 3: ASSESSMENT

First, regarding this phase, it should be said that, according to our point of view, it is important to clarify that **the scouts, more than going to see games or teams, go to see players.** This means that it is not so important how the teams play or the results of the matches, although obviously, the level of the league will possibly determine the level of players we can find. Also, although it is not as important how teams play, if a team plays similar to our idea of the game, it may be easier to find players who can fit in. Likewise, although there may be players that could potentially play for us in teams that play differently, playing, for example, a type of soccer with a lot of transitions or direct play may mean that the player that “could be of interest to us” does not excel as much.

A *scout* should look at the actions of specific players. It is possible for a team to win games and not have players that individually catch our attention or, on the contrary, it can happen that a team that loses the game has a player that really stands out.

We have to emphasize the importance of observing the player(s) considering different factors based on their **behavior** during the game.

The term “behavior” refers to everything that the player shows during the game, whether in terms of physical condition, attitude and personality, technical actions, understanding or interpretation of the game, decision making, and so on.

In order to do so, we must also take into account factors to be observed and assessed, since, sometimes, players may compete more or less due to this situation.

Some of them may include:

- **Opponent:** sometimes the opponent, at first, can be a team that, beforehand, seems easy to win (inferior) or, on the contrary, difficult (superior), either because of the type of club, the classification, or results in other matches.

Therefore, the player's behavior in both situations should be taken into account: to see how he acts in an “easy” situation and in a “difficult” one.

Occasionally, players show behaviors that should be taken into account when facing these matches, such as being relaxed, making no effort, being nervous, lacking in participation, being imprecise in technical actions or tactical decisions or, on the contrary, taking a step forward and being competitive, leaders, ambitious or taking decisions at a game level or performing interesting technical actions.

Therefore, we recommend watching players during both situations: “tough” games against teams at the top of the table, and “easy” games against teams at the bottom of it. When playing against “easy” opponents, we will probably see him touching more balls and performing a lot of technical actions. On the other hand, when playing against “difficult” opponents, it can be a good moment to evaluate his level, his ability to win 1-on-1 duels, how he behaves when there is more pressure, and so forth.

- Home/away: another aspect to take into account is the field context, not only in terms of the field characteristics such as the length and width of it, the type of pitch (earth, artificial turf, natural grass, or other), but also whether the game is played at home or away (local or visiting team).

Sometimes, playing at home or on another field can influence the (previously mentioned) behaviors of the players.

At home, they may feel more comfortable, relaxed and this indirectly conditions them to play better, to make a greater effort or, on the contrary, they may not give 100% because they are in a more comfortable and less stressful environment.

The same can happen when playing in a field that is not the usual one. Some players away from home are more self-conscious, more nervous and find it difficult to play at their highest level. The opposite may also happen, they may be more motivated and give their best at all levels: effort, concentration, decision making, and successful technical actions.

- **Result:** the result of a match can also be an aspect that conditions a player. While the match is in progress, the result may vary, both for and against. These factors can cause a player to exhibit different behaviors.

When the result is highly positive and the game is practically over, even if there is still time left to finish it, there are players who relax or behave in unusual or unsuccessful ways. It may happen that they try more individual plays, that they look for individual prominence, to score goals and that they take decisions less than optimal. In this way, we believe that the player does not show his best version.

In the opposite case, when the outcome of the match is very unfavorable, a player may also show poor behavior. Some players, in this case, give up, do not make an effort, take the game for lost and their actions and/or decisions are not the best, with or without the ball.

On the other hand, there are players who, in this situation, are willing to work even harder and give nothing for lost. They are leaders, competitive, ambitious and want to give their best up to the last second.

- **Evolution of the match:** there are some situations during the match that can also affect a player and influence his behaviors.

The following are some examples: a player makes one or more important mistakes (missing a clear goal-scoring opportunity, facilitating an opponent's goal), receiving a yellow card, a hostile crowd, an important injury to a teammate, receiving many fouls.

In these situations, and others, a player may be affected physically or mentally, and this is when his behavior may or may not be equally affected. When faced with adversity, some players find it difficult to compete and they do not give their best version of themselves. On the other hand, there are others who

take a step forward and show themselves capable of overcoming these situations. This capacity for resilience or ability to adapt to difficulties allows them to be themselves without lowering their performance.

In view of all these aspects that can influence a player, he should ideally show his highest level, his best behavior regardless of the context (opposing team, field, result, and so on) and be ambitious and have the attitude to give his best version as a player, give the best possible performance and adapt to all the variables that the context of a match can offer, including a result in favor or against.

This phase of assessment would be the first stage in which we would begin to talk about field work, that is, the scouts' work spent watching matches to find interesting players for a possible incorporation in their club.

In most cases, games are watched in person, i.e., *scouts* travel to the playing fields to watch the games. However, on the other hand, it is also possible to watch matches on different digital platforms and/or through videos or recordings.

This **assessment stage** would be one in which it is aimed to observe **a large number of players**. Hereby we mean that this is like a first look at a lot of games to detect a number of interesting players.

This stage usually occurs during the teams' preseason and the first 10-15 days of the league.

This initial contact allows us to start defining a list of players who have caught our attention and we believe we should follow up on them.

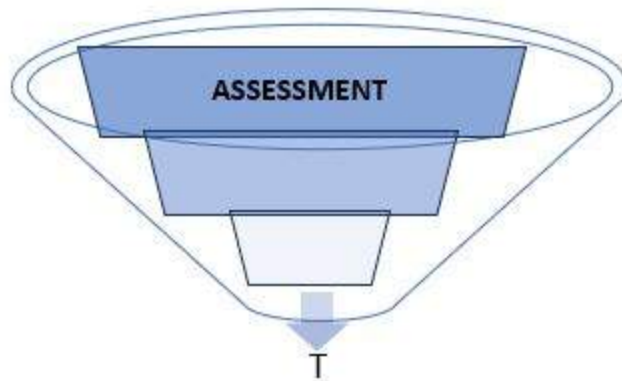
Normally, most of the players we observe are not particularly interesting to us for possible incorporation into our team or club. These players would be players that should not be tracked and we would consider them **discarded**. This is a stage to go through a **first large filter of players**.

However, there are definitely some players that, for whatever reasons (physical/conditional, technical quality, among others), we would like to see again and move on to another stage.

In this case and at this stage, it is possible to make a first basic report of players to have a better control and information of the ones that have caught our attention.

This other stage would be the monitoring stage, which we will develop below.

Figure 5: Assessment stage I scheme



Source: Authors own elaboration

CONTINUE

Stage 4: MONITORING

As we have anticipated, this fourth stage would be one in which, after having discarded most of the players we have seen, we will focus on making a **second selection** of players we are interested in.

This stage, then, is a **second filter** that we must pass to reduce the volume of players considered interesting so that the list is smaller and more limited: the **monitoring list**.

To do this, we will have to look again at the players that have caught our attention at a certain point and decide, once we have watched them again, whether these players are worth monitoring and have them on a reduced list of players.

For this second preview of matches, we can take into account some of the aspects mentioned above (opponent, home or abroad match).

This stage can take us between 8 and 12 days approximately, depending on our area, ages and or categories to be observed.

It is also interesting to take into account those players who are playing in categories above their age, as it is usually an indicator that the player is outstanding.

This player monitoring list can now be shared with sports or *scouting* department managers so that the information is somehow recorded and compiled.

The players that are considered really interesting, players with high interest to be incorporated to our team or club, will pass a second filter and will move to another stage: the validation stage.

Figure 6: Assessment stage II scheme



Source: own elaboration.

CONTINUE

Stage 5: VALIDATION

This stage would be the one that involves that the players observed, who have been monitored and who are judged to be outstanding or very interesting to incorporate them into our club's teams, go through a final filter. Another highly recommended way to pass this last filter and validate players is that they are observed by other *scouts*.

In this way, they can be compared with other players with the same profile or characteristics, age, position, and so on, and be observed by another person. This could provide a different approach or assessment. These validations by other members of the department provide other perspectives, other points of view, starting from scratch and thus avoiding the influence of the negative effects that the continuous observation of the same player by the same *scout* has on the assessment.

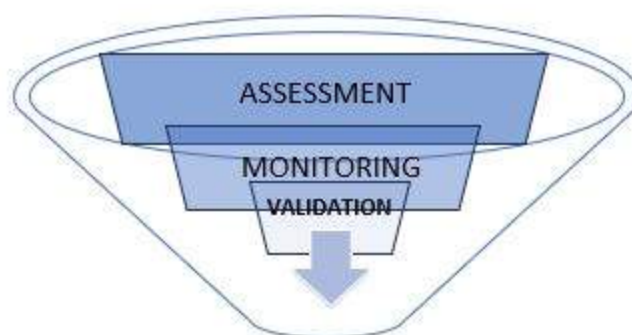
Also, depending on the structure of each club and its *scouting* department, it may be the case (very interesting) that there are people who are specifically dedicated to the validation of players. One of its main functions would be, then, to observe players to validate.

Thus, these **scout and validators** would observe players of the same profile, position and age from other areas in order to compare them and have more information to contrast it in order to make a more consensual, thoughtful decision with less margin for error. These people should have a “good eye”, a good knowledge of our club's squads and players and the general level of the validation area.

These player validation functions can also be performed by *scouting* department coordinators, coaches or club coordinators.

This validation stage usually takes place near the end of the league or season, although the sooner the better, due to the competition among clubs to recruit players.

Figure 7: Assessment stage III scheme



Source: own elaboration.

CONTINUE

Stage 6: DECISION

This would be the last stage of the *scouting* process, which basically consists of **decision making**.

Once the other stages of the player scouting (“assessment-monitoring-validation”) have been passed one by one, we summarize the different stages of the process:

- **Assessment:** large number of players to observe **(first filter)**
- **Monitoring:** we look again at the most interesting players, which have been filtered and passed a **second filter**.
- **Validation:** other *scouts* or coaches observe the players monitored and selected to compare them with players from other areas with the same characteristics and ages in order to pass a **third filter**.

In any of these stages, the *scouts* should make a **report** describing the players who stand out. In the first stage (assessment), the report may be not very extensive or precise, a first outline of the report that can be expanded and refined in the second stage and finally defined in the validation stage.

It is interesting to have different *scouts* report on the same player to get more than one person's views and opinion.

- Physical
- Technical
- Personality
- Conclusions

Once this third filter (validation) has been passed, we have a very short list of players that we can or should be incorporated into our club's teams.

This is when decisions must be made, bearing in mind that when players are incorporated, some of our players are usually removed: if one player comes in, another one goes out.

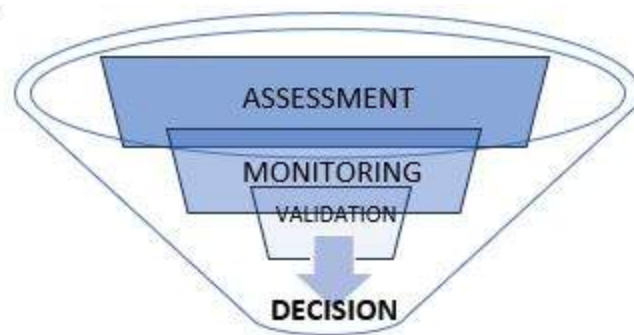
Therefore, those who make the decision must be previously defined: technical secretary, *scouting* director, stage coordinator, coach or a consensus among all or several of the named agents.

It is important for this decision-making process to take into account the type of performance we expect from the player:

- **Immediate/short term performance:** player who we believe that due to his characteristics (especially physical) can give a good performance in the next 2 or 3 seasons and we do not expect him to play longer at the club.
- **Medium-term performance:** the first season may be considered to be one of adaptation or with room for growth or improvement, with the possibility of playing in the club for 4, 5 or more seasons (if we are talking about very young players) and it is expected that they could eventually play in our U-15 or U-16 teams, for example.
- **Future performance (long term):** those who we believe can play with our U-18, U-19 teams or even with our filial or first team.

This will depend to some extent on the age of the player when he joins the club. The younger the player who joins, the more margin for error we have and the further and more difficult it is to reach our top teams. Naturally, when we talk about young players, we must also take into account the progression and room for improvement that they can have in our club, with our training, our coaches and, if we are talking about TOP clubs, they will be surrounded by top level players who will help them to improve.

Figure 8: Assessment stageIVscheme



Source: own elaboration.

Although we have framed each of the stages of the scouting process at the field work level (observing players) within a flexible time frame, it is important to say that the sooner we can observe, monitor, validate and decide on the signing of a player, the better.

It may happen that a player that we have observed at the beginning of the season has caught our attention and we accelerate the decision process, since the agility of this process can be the key to incorporate a player and that no other club anticipates us.

Therefore, we consider it very important to have a well-structured and organized *scouting* department, to maintain good communication and coordination (meetings, calls, among others), to have a clear idea of the player profile we want and the needs that the club's sports management prioritizes.

In addition, we have the agility and speed to attract the best players, the ones that we are sure have the profile and skills to play in our teams.

CONTINUE