INTERNATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL FUTEBOL

Posted by STLCoach - 25 Sep 2009 02:27

The U-20 World Cup is underway in Egypt and the USA starts play on Saturday against European champion Germany.

Launched in 1977, the U-20 World Cup is FIFA's oldest youth world championship and has become famous for introducing to the world superstars of the future. To name a few: Diego Maradona, Enzo Francescoli, Dunga, Davor Suker, Luis Figo, Roberto Carlos, Thierry Henry, Xavi, Ronaldinho, Michael Owen and Lionel Messi.

Of the 23 players on the U.S. roster at the senior World Cup in 2006, 15 had played in a U-20 World Cup.

At the 2007 World Cup, the U.S. team, which featured Michael Bradley, Freddy Adu and Jozy Altidore, celebrated a 2-1 upset over Brazil in group play and finished seventh. The Americans' best ever finish was fourth, in 1989, with a Bob Gansler-coached team that featured goalkeeper Kasey Keller, who won the Silver Ball as runner-up MVP.

Coach Thomas Rongen's U.S. roster for the 2009 U-20 World Cup includes seven MLS players, eight collegians and three foreign-based players.

All three U.S. first-round games will be televised live:
Saturday, Sept. 26 vs. Germany 10 a.m. ET ESPN Classic/10 am ET/PT Galavision
Tuesday, Sept. 29 vs. Cameroon 12:45 p.m. ET ESPN2
Friday, Oct. 2 vs. Korea Republic 12:45 p.m. ET ESPN2

In total, the ESPN networks will broadcast seven games live and Galavision will air 12 games live or delayed. In addition, all games will be available live online at espn360.com. Click HERE for complete TV schedule.

Here's a look at some of the stars who on display in Egypt ...

SERGIO ASENJO (Spain). Considered the top young goalie in Spain, Asenjo is already a starter at Atletico Madrid and the heir apparent to Iker Casillas on the national team.

DOUGLAS COSTA (Brazil). The playmaker has often been compared to Ronaldinho and is the most highly touted on a team comprised entirely of Brazilian-based players. Manchester United is reported to covet Douglas Costa at the right price. He has been outstanding in infrequent spells with Gremio, but the Porto Alegre club has placed a $30 million price tag on him.

JAMIE HOLLAND (Australia). The 20-year-old midfielder is one of the few players at Egypt '09 to have played at the senior national team level. Holland played for the Socceroos in their successful World Cup 2010 qualifying campaign. He joined Dutch champion AZ from the Newcastle Jets in January.

RABIU IBRAHIM (Nigeria). The 18-year-old midfielder helped Nigeria win the 2007 Under-17 World Cup in South Korea and will be one of the key players for the Flying Eagles in Egypt. He spent last season in Sporting Lisbon's youth academy but has been loaned this season to Portuguese third division club Real SC. After the U-20 World Cup, he could join Nigeria's national team, which finds itself in a tight race for a berth in the 2010 World Cup.

VLADIMIR KOMAN (Hungary). Born in Ukraine and raised in Hungary, he made his Serie A debut for Sampdoria at the age of 18. He has since been loaned out, first to Avellino last season and more recently to Bari, where he will spend the 2009-10 season. Koman is part of a promising Hungarian team that was a semifinalist at the 2008 European U-19 championships.

RANSFORD OSEI (Ghana). Won the Golden Ball (MVP) and Golden Shoe (top scorer) as the leading scorer at the 2009 African Youth Championship, which the Black Satellites won. He has bounced around clubs since leaving Kessben at the age of 17. He was denied work permit to play for Poland's Legia Warsaw and recently joined Dutch club FC Twente on loan from Israel's Maccabi Tel Aviv.

MOHAMED TALAAT (Egypt). The pressure will be on Talaat and the other young Pharoahs when they open the tournament Thursday in Alexandria. A sellout crowd of 80,000 is expected. Talaat played briefly in the United Arab Emirates before joining Al Ahly last season. The 20-year-old forward has been compared to national team star Mido for his talent -- and moodiness.

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BRASIL VS FRANCE WED 2-9-11

Posted by STLCoach - 09 Feb 2011 03:35

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THEY PLAY FEB 9, 2011 ESPN 2 2PM

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ROONEY GOAL 2.12.11

Posted by STLCoach - 14 Feb 2011 04:57

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the link below is to the rooney goal on sat feb 12, 2011.

Happy Days Are Here Again! Thanks to Rooney and young Brazilians

By Paul Gardner

Just this once I'm going to rank English soccer ahead of Brazilian and give Wayne Rooney pride of place in the weekend's soccer happenings for his superb goal against Manchester City.

It’s being described, repeatedly, in the British press as a bicycle kick, but it certainly was nothing of the sort. An overhead volley, for sure, but not a bicycle kick. What then? Well, we’ll call it a Rooney, for the moment -- because the spectacular effort owed everything to a few seconds of wonderful inventiveness turned into astonishing gymnastic action and climaxing in a searing shot and a goal. And not just any old goal, as it happens, but the winning goal in a tense local derby -- the goal that might well have sealed the EPL title for ManU.

A true bicycle would have seen a quick, elegant pedaling movement giving birth to the shot, followed by a smooth landing by Rooney. But Rooney has never been an elegant player -- his talent rests on

muscular athleticism, and all of that came through with amazing force as Rooney launched himself skyward, threw up his right leg and met the ball almost perfectly.

I have a photo of the crucial moment in front of me. There is nothing pretty about it. Awkward, yes, but pretty, no. Rooney's body is twisted, one leg points upward, the other dangles, the left arm is lowered, the right is outstretched -- this does not look like anything that could be practiced or rehearsed. And I'm sure it never has been.

English players do not specialize in bicycle kicks (in fact, the only one I can recall who perfected the action was Scottish rather than English -- Denis Law). But here was Rooney inventing, in a flash, his own not-too-silky version, and giving us a moment of sheer soccer genius, breathtaking to watch, a goal that no one who's seen it -- and by now, who hasn't seen it? -- is ever going to forget.

And so, to second place Brazil. On Saturday Brazil beat Uruguay 6-0 with a rollicking display of wonderful-to-watch soccer. Soccer full of artistry, trickery, beauty, nuances and subtleties allied with strength and speed, dazzling individual displays bursting forth repeatedly from a matrix of clever and satisfying team play.

For me, that all adds up to the real Brazil, the magicians of The Beautiful Game. Yet these were really only apprentices, not masters -- this was the Brazilian under-20 team, on its way to being crowned under-20 champions of South America, and qualifying for the London 2012 Olympics, and this year's U-20 World Cup. The Sorcerers' Apprentices.

This final game, this demolition of Uruguay -- and I can only say poor Uruguay, they didn't deserve this -- was a revelation. Sure, Brazil had been winning and scoring goals -- its record going into this game was 8 games played, with 6 wins, one tie and one loss. The loss -- inevitably -- being to archrival Argentina by the minimum 1-0 scoreline.

After that loss, one wondered: Was this free-scoring Brazilian team going to founder because it was not paying enough attention to defending? It was scoring over 2 goals per game, while giving up nearly 1 goal per game. That one goal doesn't sound like a big deal, but winning teams these days usually manage to keep that figure closer to 0.5.

But these 20-year-olds stuck to their style, a risk-taking attacking style, and against Uruguay -- poor Uruguay, I repeat -- everything worked superbly. And the Beautiful Game was accomplished despite a heavy, rain-soaked, cut-up field that looked anything but beautiful.

The boy to watch -- he celebrated his 19th birthday during the tournament -- was Neymar, from Santos. We'd seen him, last year, playing for the senior team, tying the U.S. defenders in knots. All the opponents in this tournament knew about him, none of them could stop him. He ended as the top scorer, with 9 goals, none better than the final one of the four he scored against Paraguay -- a smooth run, ending with a perfect chip over the goalkeeper ... Messi himself could not have done it better.

Against Uruguay, Neymar was actually outshone by Lucas, a short, stocky, muscular No. 10 whose forceful running and dribbling and deadly right-footed finishing earned him a hat trick.

Six times the boys from Brazil celebrated with some silly dancing routine -- but six times we got to see those radiant smiling faces, and nothing lights a soccer field up more than the real Brazilian game, and Brazilian smiles.

Of course this wasn't a two-man show: the lanky fullback Danilo scored an impudent goal, while midfielders Fernando and Casemiro kept the game flowing with timely tackles and intelligent passing;

Willian was nominally a forward -- he looked the part, played with considerable skill and verve, yet didn't find the net too often, though he was usually involved in the buildup to the scoring. From the skinny Oscar came a soccer intelligence that his bright inquisitive eyes suggested. And, if you're interested, they played a 4-4-2. Sort of. Maybe it was a 4-3-2-1, or sometimes a 4-3-1-2. Fluid, in other words. But above all, free-wheeling, with players enjoying themselves.

No, it didn't have the almost unreal efficiency of Barcelona -- things broke down a bit too often for that. But it did have something that Barcelona -- or indeed any pro team -- does not, can not, have ... the enthusiasm and the unrestrained eagerness of youth.

Coach Ney Franco -- about whom I know very little -- no doubt deserves the highest praise for creating the organization necessary for team play, but not stifling the kids' individuality and enthusiasm in the process.

I hope we shall see more of this merry band in action during the U-20 World Cup in Colombia this summer. In the Olympics, sadly, things will be different. That is an under-23 tournament, plus a couple of over-age players, so the chances are high that most of these boys will be replaced by older players. But for now, we've been shown that the spirit of the old, glorious Brazil is still alive, among the boys.

We can draw the conclusion that the modern game, the grownup game, finds the boys' tactical fluidity too undisciplined, their all-out offensive play too risky, and their joyous spirit simply too immature. How utterly sad. This is, after all, supposed to be a game, isn't it?

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SHAKHTAR AND BARCELONA ADVANCE!!

Posted by STLCoach - 08 Mar 2011 16:49

SHAKHTAR DEFEATS ROMA 3-0 IN UEFA CHAPIONS LEAGUE TO MOVE ON TO ROUND OF 8!! WILLIAN HAD 1 GOAL 1 ASSIST , HUBSCHMAN 1 GOAL, AND EDUARDO HAD A GOAL.

BARCALONA ALSO DEFEATS ARSENAL 3-1 TO ADVANCE. YOU CAN WATC THE BARCA MATCH TONIGHT (WED) AT 7PM ON FOX SPORTS MIDWEST

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Re: INTERNATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL FUTEBOL

Posted by STLCoach - 24 May 2011 08:45

Does It Matter Any More?

By Paul Gardner

Seven years ago the tiny state of Qatar (population: 1.7 million, about that of Philadelphia) jumped into the soccer headlines. A country that small -- especially one with no soccer tradition -- really doesn't stand a cat in hell's chance of developing a competitive national team. Not to worry -- the Qataris came

up with a plan to help ensure that its national team qualified for the 2006 World Cup.

Some found the plan daring and innovative, to others it was outrageous and disgraceful. The Qataris would find good foreign players and simply naturalize them overnight into Qatari citizens. It was announced that three Brazilian players, ignored by their own country, were about to become Qatari citizens. The implication was that more would follow.

Those who were shocked at the move had simply not been paying attention. Qatar already had a national team full of naturalized players. Its coach was Frenchman Philippe Troussier, who let it be known that naturalizing foreigners was probably the only way that Qatar was ever going to qualify for the World Cup finals.

He was wrong about that -- Qatar has since found another way to qualify -- but the argument about players switching their nationality rages on. FIFA used to have pretty stringent rules about this: if you'd ever played for one country, at any age level, that was it -- you couldn't switch allegiance. The regulation was simply too harsh to be implemented without obvious unfairness, so in 2006 it was relaxed, allowing players to switch countries up to the age of 21, regardless of which country they may have played for before that.

Qatar saw a loophole and jumped in. FIFA, aghast at what it saw as abuse of its own ruling, nixed the Qatari plan. There would be no "overnight" citizenship for soccer players -- a residency of at least two years would be required for soccer eligibility. Qatar, of course, did not qualify for the 2006 World Cup in Germany.

But the problem did not go away. After that World Cup, Sepp Blatter -- having noticed a sprinkling of naturalized Brazilians on various national teams (Alessandro Santos with Japan, Antonio Naelsen with Mexico, Clayton with Tunisia, Deco with Portugal, Marcos Senna with Spain) -- professed to be alarmed at what he saw as an "invasion" of Brazilians -- "If we don't take care about the invaders from Brazil," he warned, future World Cups might see as many as 16 finalists "full of Brazilian players. It is a danger, a real, real danger."

Blatter's exaggerations aside -- there were, after all, those who felt that the advent of more Brazilian-style soccer would improve the World Cup -- controversy still swirls around the issue of a player's nationality, or allegiance, even of his patriotism. But the question raised these days is rather different: people are asking whether it's that big a deal ... does it really matter?

The idea of a naturalized player is now generally accepted -- the problem has moved on, it is now a matter of the number of such players any team should carry. The most convincing evidence comes from club soccer that -- so international has it become -- has almost rendered the matter of nationality academic.

The situation in England offers the most dramatic evidence. This season's champion, Manchester United, has as two of its top players, captain Nemanja Vidic, a Serb, and goalscorer Chicharito Hernandez, who is Mexican; other regular starters include French, Korean, Brazilian, Bulgarian and Dutch players. When neighbors Manchester City won this year's FA Cup, the winning goal was scored by Yaya Toure, from Ivory Coast, and the captain who lifted up the trophy was the Argentine Carlos Tevez.

Arsenal's French coach Arsene Wenger has repeatedly fielded teams without a single English player. There has been no uprising by the Arsenal faithful. Well, not yet, that is. Arsenal has not been winning, and a losing record might engender a scapegoat-ish version of xenophobia.

While club fans are clearly prepared to accept foreign players (winning ones, that is), national teams still pose something of a problem. The repeated calls -- in England and other European countries -- for a limit to be placed on foreign players have, at their base, the fear that too many foreign players in the domestic league must, inevitably, lead to a weakening of the country's national team, if only because native players will then have fewer chances to play regularly.

One can point to England's poor international record for support of that idea, but the reasoning is highly unconvincing because England's record has never been good, including the distant days when foreigners were virtually non-existent in English soccer.

Conversely Italy, which started importing players back in the 1930s, has an international record that includes four World Cup titles. Spain -- the current world champion -- has a league in which nearly one in five of the players are foreigners.

Built into the national eligibility debate is another thorny problem -- that of dual citizenship, that allows players to choose which country they want to play for. This is one to keep your eye on because the USA, as a heavily immigrant country, produces many young players with dual citizenship (in soccer terms, a choice between their country of birth, the USA, or that of their parents) and would therefore seem particularly vulnerable to losing players who have grown up in this country -- a case in point is Giuseppe Rossi, born and raised in New Jersey, but who chose to represent Italy.

Qatar will shortly, no doubt, re-enter the argument as it prepares to host the 2022 World Cup. With qualification assured, the aim of the Qataris now becomes that of putting together a team that will uphold the country's honor during the tournament proper. In addition to its fabulous wealth, the country also has 11 years to fashion the team.

That's not enough time to suddenly produce a string of star Qatari players. But it's plenty of time within which to begin naturalizing foreign players. More than enough time to make a mockery of FIFA's two-year residency requirement, and probably enough to get around any new regulations that FIFA may come up with.

FIFA's obvious move would be to place a limit -- a quota -- on the number of naturalized citizens any national team can have. But that would pose a difficulty. It is an accepted fact that a competitive host team greatly buoys the excitement of a World Cup. So why would FIFA pass a regulation, clearly aimed at Qatar -- the country that FIFA itself voted in as host -- that would severely hamper Qatar's ability to organize a successful World Cup?

It seems unlikely that many of the players on the Qatar team that will take the field in 2022 will list their birthplace as Qatar. Like it or not, the strict country-of-birth requirement that used to rule national-team eligibility is already a thing of the past. Is Blatter's personal nightmare of the Brazilians At The Gates moving ever nearer?

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Bribery scandal benefits Blatter

Posted by STLCoach - 25 May 2011 07:57

Bribery scandal benefits Blatter
by Paul Kennedy, May 25th, 2011 12:54AM

[MY VIEW] Will the USA get a second bite at the apple? FIFA President Sepp Blatter didn't rule out the possibility of a re-vote in the wake of the continuing investigation into Qatar's victory in the race to host the 2022 World Cup.

Not much about FIFA's politics is unscripted, so it's not outside the realm of possibility that Blatter already knows what evidence the whistle-blower, a former Qatar bid committee employee, has.

The whistle-blower's lawyers were reported to be negotiating with FIFA over the terms of their client's testimony -- expected to be given on Wednesday -- regarding charges that FIFA executive committee members Issa Hayatou and Jacques Anouma collected $1.5 million each for their votes in the 13-9 victory Qatar over the USA in the final round of secret balloting Dec. 2 in Zurich.

Both Hayatou and Anouma say they're innocent, and the Qatari organizers issued a 1,700-word statement, blasting the "distressing, insulting and incomprehensible" allegations of bribery made by the Sunday Times last week to British Parliament.

It should be noted that the Sunday Times reporters did not publish the report itself, presumably for fear of a libel suit.

The Qataris aimed their attack on the messengers, the Sunday Times reporters posing as lobbyists in their undercover investigation that led to the suspension of two other FIFA executive committee members last fall.

“They do not state when the alleged bribes were to be paid, how the negotiations with the individuals concerned had been conducted or crucially how they came to know of the alleged bribes,” Qatar’s bid committee said in its statement. “On any proper view, their evidence is worthless.”

We'll know soon enough what evidence the whistle-blower has of meetings where the bribes were supposed to have been discussed.

To strip Qatar of its 2022 hosting rights would solve a very practical problem for FIFA: holding the 2022 World Cup in the Qatari summer.

But it would require that the bribery charges stick, which would mean that Hayatou and Anouma would also have to take the fall.

That would be a shocking turn of events as Blatter just came back from South Africa, where he won support of the leadership of the African Soccer Confederation that Hayatou heads in his battle for re-election as FIFA president against his lone challenger, Qatari Mohammed bin Hammam.

But the lingering controversy has already had a more immediate effect. It's all but ruined bin Hammam's chances in the June 1 election.

Blatter linked Guinean Amadou Diallo, accused of acting as a go-between in the alleged bribery of Hayatou and Anouma, to the Goal Bureau, a FIFA development project once headed by bin Hammam.

FIFA secretary general Jerome Valcke went so far as to dismiss reports that bin Hammam had been asked to withdraw his candidacy in wake of the scandal.

Valcke's dismissal got more coverage that the initial reports themselves.

And left the bumbling bin Hammam on the defensive, yet another Blatter challenger headed to defeat

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Re: INTERNATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL FUTEBOL

Posted by STLCoach - 31 May 2011 07:57

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The Barcelona Way -- Part 2

By Paul Gardner

The day before last Saturday's Champions League final between Barcelona and Manchester United, an irritating article appeared in the Wall Street Journal, which told us that we -- meaning, one gathers, almost everyone except the authors -- don't know what we're watching: "But here is something most people don't know about Barcelona: Unlike every other famous soccer team in the world that thrives on possession and ball control, they do something unique during matches. They run as if their bikini briefs are on fire."

This far from original observation was backed up by a totally unconvincing stat which held that, during its six knockout-round games in the Champions League, Barca's players had run a total of 390 miles, while its opponents had run "only" 380 miles, a difference of a mere 3 percent, surely not statistically significant, but which was then built up into a claim that Barca's "central weapon, and perhaps its defining strength, is what happens when the other team does get its cleats on the ball ..." In other words, Barca's strength is defense.

In the sense that attack is the best form of defense, that may well be true. But only if, as with Barcelona, the attack is sustained, intelligent, skillful. Are we supposed to ignore the beauty that involves while we tick off, from our handy list of coaching essentials, work rate and tackles?

But those are the sort of observations, backed up by bad stats, or by badly interpreted stats, that occur so easily to people who seem intent on downplaying the skillful side of the game. People to whom the success of a team like Barcelona will remain a mystery -- and evidently an annoyance -- unless it can be explained in puerile defensive terms.

What Barcelona has been doing these past few years is to emphasize that in soccer it is a mistake to even think that offense and defense are separate compartments of the game. The two are intertwined in almost every move of the game, a mutual reliance that involves the inevitable problem: to bolster one aspect is to deprive the other. It is the abiding curse of the modern game that it is now enveloped in a cloying mist of cautious play brought about by an overemphasis on defense.

Barca, for sure, has its defensive qualities. Separating them out from the team's overall attacking style is not an easy -- nor necessarily a useful -- exercise. To acclaim them as the bedrock of Barcelona's style and of its success is simply fatuous.

Equally absurd -- and another of the carefully constructed coaching myths, most of them designed to underline the importance of coaching -- is the idea that star players are somehow damaging to a team, that star players are always selfish, that a team is better off with out them.

Barca is the greatest example we have right now of a team that plays as a team, as a tightly knit unit

that knows how to play -- simultaneously -- offense and defense. It is also a team that has a collection of superb individual stars. Including, of course, the greatest individual player to be seen in today's game, Lionel Messi.

Analyzing Messi is like dissecting Mozart or Rembrandt or Tolstoy -- the results are always unsatisfactory, always counter-productive, for they leave us with something so much less impressive than what we started with. Is it helpful, or in any way rewarding to separate Messi into a sequence of muscular movements, of lightning synaptic connections? Or to make him sound like a coaching manual, nothing but a collection of tactical platitudes, which will inevitably end up praising him because he does his defensive duties, because he tracks back?

If it is agreed that Messi is a soccer genius -- and this seems now to be the widely held opinion -- then any sort of materialistic analysis is not going to bring understanding. Genius does not abide by the accepted guidelines, the usual measuring sticks, the standard scientific norms. Speaking of Messi, his coach Pep Guardiola said, somewhat tautologically, "I think his genius is impossible to describe. That's why he is a genius." Which is more or less what the 19th century essayist William Hazlitt had in mind with his "rules and models destroy genius and art."

The message is that Messi, the superstar on this wonderful Barcelona team, should be left alone to do what he instinctively does. But genius in soccer cannot be an isolated talent, it can only flourish in the group, in the team. A fact that gives the macho brigade yet another opening to downgrade skill as they claim that the star's life is made easy by others who are doing "the dirty work" for him -- a phrase clearly meant to position the star as an effete Little Lord Fauntleroy and the "workers" as brave heroes who should really be getting the praise.

That is another coaching shibboleth utterly laid to waste by Barcelona. Who are the "workers" on Barca, these industrious slaves whose only purpose is to spend all their time feeding the ball to Messi? Xavi and Iniesta, maybe? Oh, come on -- two players who, while not in the Messi class, have considerable claim to dwell among the second tier of soccer geniuses. Where was this "dirty work" anyway, in a game during which Barcelona committed only five fouls?

ManU's Alex Ferguson, right after he had seen his champion team made to look very ordinary indeed, praised Barcelona as the best team he's ever faced in all his long coaching career (it began back in 1974) and gave us, in five monosyllabic words, a terse but all-embracing comment on their style: "They play the right way ..."

One can hear a certain wistfulness in that praise, a regretful look back by Ferguson to the glory days of Scottish soccer, the soccer he must recall from his boyhood or from the tales told by his elders of the traditional Scottish soccer of highly skilled attacking players and an on-the-ground, short-passing style. That was the right way, but as far as the Scots are concerned, it has sadly faded away, to be nothing more than a romantic memory.

But not for Ferguson -- there's no doubt that his ManU teams have always been more skilled than the average English team, have always included a greater emphasis on talented attacking players.

Ferguson's teams undoubtedly try to play soccer the right way, but within a hostile environment he has had to compromise to live with the traditional thud-and-blunder requirements of the English domestic game.

Last Saturday, Ferguson saw -- well, suffered, I suppose -- the beautiful, majestic power of Barcelona. "They do mesmerize you with their passing," he said. He praised Barca's style laconically, but with real feeling. This was "the right way."

So where do we go from here? A more skilled, closer-to-Barca, ManU? Possibly. A much wider attempt by coaches everywhere to adopt Barca's style -- which has shown that it is not only a delight to the eye, but is a winner, too? Alas, that seems doubtful -- the dead mass of conventional coaching opinion and what passes for original thinking within the profession will find proof, yet again, either that the Barca way doesn't really work, or that it is a fluke, and we shall be back to the glutinous platitudes of the coaching manuals, the very ones that ... "destroy genius and art."

No one is saying that playing "the right way" is the easy approach. It is, in fact, the greatest of soccer's challenges and, as such, it is the only worthwhile one. Ferguson says he is ready for it. How many other coaches will follow his lead?

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