

# Tips from the U.K.'s Top Professional Youth Academies

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## Club Philosophy

- **People-** skilled personnel secured for key roles and challenged to “add value”
- **Place-** safe, secure and quality facilities
- **Program-** syllabus of work which challenges elite players in all aspects of their development
- **Pathway-** clear path of progression through the various academy levels



# Creating Culture

- Through our daily actions
- The way we speak and behave
- Shared clear goals and targets
- Challenging environments/experiences
- Pushing the boundaries of best practice
- Everyone contributes



# Talent ID

- Ability
- Awareness
- Attitude
- Athleticism
- In that order, or they cannot play for the club

# Development v. Results

- Results and league positions do not matter- “the players must win”
- Developing the person is as important as developing the player
- The best should always play against the best in order to properly challenge and develop players
- Player development must be embedded in the **club DNA** and understood across every department...by the board of directors, executive team, everyone
- Focus on the process and not the outcome. The outcome will take care of itself if the process is right.

**Purpose:**

Develop Champions League  
Players

**Objective:**

Create a world class  
academy and infrastructure

- Coaching, player ID, sports science, performance analysis, education and welfare, facilities



- **Club Philosophy:**

- Develop the person; develop the player

- Create an environment where children love to learn



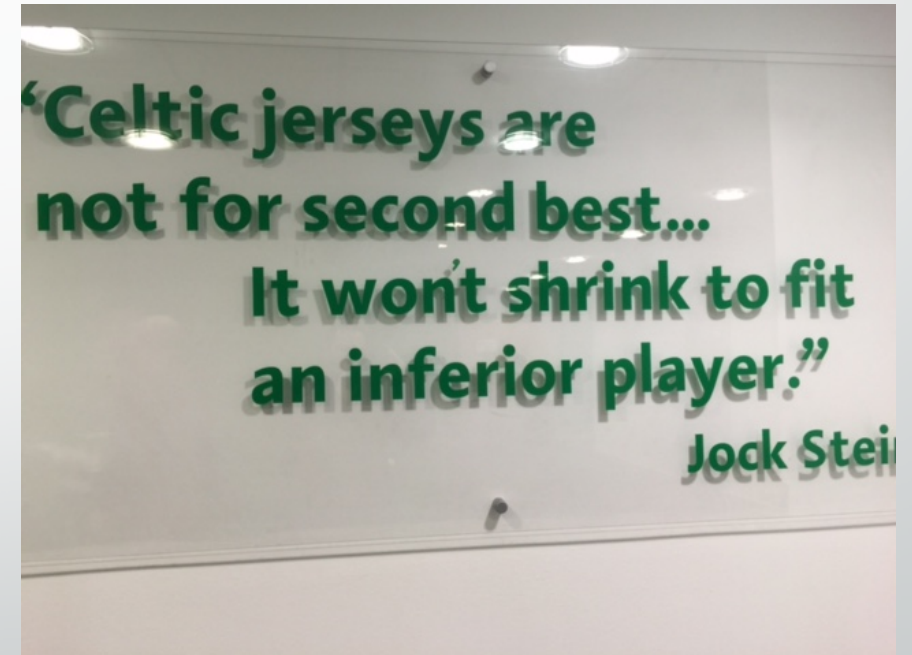
# Academy Structure

- U8-U12= Juniors
  - Two coaches in charge of every age group
  - Three training sessions a week
  - “Celtic Turns”/Ball Mastery 20-30 minutes every session
- U13-U16= Intermediate
  - Two coaches in charge of every age group
  - Nine training sessions a week (17 hours)- the most contact time in Europe
  - Weight training sessions with sport science staff
- U17-U20= Professional Academy
  - No “competitive” soccer/football (for points, trophies, etc.) in Scotland until U17



# Advice

- Be careful with what you normalize- set and keep high standards
- Everyone must have a growth mindset and contribute to the culture
- Culture and mindset are the “soil” from which everything grows
- “Character is how we treat others who can do nothing for you.”
- Develop the inner skills (mental talent) as well as the outer skills (technique, athleticism, tactics, etc.)



# Focus on the 5 R's in training

- Retention of the ball
- Receiving the ball
- Releasing the ball
- Running with the ball
- Regaining the ball

COMFORT  
ZONE

- No willingness to experience stress or failure- everything is easy

COURAGE  
ZONE

- Willingness to try new things
- Growth mindset- success and failure

MAGIC  
ZONE

- Successful with higher order skills
- "Unconsciously competent"

## Under Jose' Mourinho and Carlo Ancelotti

How to Be the Best- going  
from good to great:

- Facilities
- Staff
- Values
- Philosophy
- Football Education
- Player Outcomes





- **Playing philosophy:**

- “Our team plays a creative, attacking and winning style of football.”

- Job descriptions for every position

- Player handbooks

# Attacking Midfielder - No. 10

## Key Responsibilities:

### Attacking

- Play in between the midfield and forward players, usually within the width of the penalty area (don't drop too deep).
- Get available / free to receive the ball.
- Create space and scoring chances for others.
- 'Provide' for the forwards and wingers, especially behind the defence.
- Score goals – from distance and within the penalty area.
- Be a forward runner where appropriate.



### Defending


- Understand and apply pressing. Always have contact with striker (communicate with him and also listen to players from behind).
- Prevent forward passing outlets of the opposition – 'screening'.
- Mark and control the 'holding midfield' player.
- Recover in to a deeper position to assist central midfielders when necessary.



### Skills

- Positioning and knowledge of how to find and create space.
- 360 degree awareness on and off the ball.
- Play on the ? turn.
- Tight control and receiving skills.
- Turning and protecting / shielding skills.
- Passing ability – often in 1 touch (disguise).
- Combination player (through 360 degrees).
- Pass 'off the run'.
- Penetrate with quality forward passing.
- Intelligence / awareness.
- Attack the penalty area – scorer with both feet inside and outside the box – 1 touch finishing.



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- Champion= high attitude and high energy
  - Talent ID
    - Athleticism
    - Intelligence
    - Character
    - Technique
  - “Visual Cultural Standards”
    - How it looks to outsiders/bystanders

## Under Sir Alex Ferguson

- No tactics until 13 other than short corners, building from the back and creating the “always attack” mentality.
- Give players the opportunities to play in different shapes- no set system of play
- Always reminding players of the heritage and tradition with photos and quotes of former players in the locker rooms and training facilities





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- Questions?