

COMPLEX SOCCER by Pau Marti

Pau Martí Vicente – Spain UEFA Pro License football coach (Adelaide United FC, Kitchee SC, Hong Kong national team, FC Barcelona)

The truth is that I still do not dare, I am not sure if I will ever do it, to write about Complexity and Football, although I was a student of Paco Seirul-lo and Natalia Balagué, and I have read, I read and I will read some books about it. But what is clear to me is that soccer, as a collective sport, is 100% complexity. Following the theories of complexity and Dynamic Systems, soccer (and the soccer player) is a complex system where all the parts are part of the whole and the whole is conditioned and conditions all the parts. And what does this mean?

Pepu Hernandez (basketball coach): "I am the players' assistant, they are the protagonists".

The other day I had the good fortune to participate in a philosophical-football debate with illustrious coaches such as Ivan Palanco, Cristian Catena and Enric Duran, around the slogan so fashionable lately, "Football belongs to the players". It is all very well to support this statement, but it is not clear to me that everyone is clear about exactly what it means, does this mean that the role of the coach is not influential, can we, as coaches, not influence the way our team plays and look for the best way to play to achieve our objectives as a team, should we transfer all the responsibility to the players and withdraw to the side to observe, do we really have no influence at all?

In a world, that of soccer training, where we have spent years separating the parts, analyzing and training them, now it turns out that there are no such parts, nothing can be separated from anything, because everything is united, everything depends on everything and conditions everything. I think we have spent too much time correcting when what we should have done is to observe more, observe what the players do, how they react to mistakes (their own and their teammates'), how they understand the game, how they relate to each other, how they react to their coach's indications. If we had observed as much as corrected, we would have realized sooner that yes, soccer is complex, and much easier than we think.

Because complex soccer is the soccer of soccer players, and YES, the soccer player needs the coach, and a LOT, but not to tell him what and how he should act, but to help him to find optimal answers to the multiple situations and constant changes that he is going to find in the match. Only if we understand what the player means can we really help him. Without leaving aside the person and knowing that when he acts he does so in function of an unstable context.