6 Scout

Background

Amidst all of the money generated within the football industry, it’s somewhat of a surprise that such a relatively small amount of it goes to scouts. Many scouts do their jobs in return for expenses and a modest salary. It’s only at the high end of the profession that scouts are very well paid and, even then, their salaries are small when compared to those of players, managers, agents, and chief executives. Even a scout that discovers a player that is eventually sold by the club for £20 million, is unlikely to receive any bonus on top of his regular salary.

Scouts are talent-finders and they exist at all levels of clubs. Some watch a lot of schools football and try to find the best young players before they are even teenagers. Other scouts work at first-team level and try to locate players who will go directly into the first-team squad. Scouts are also used to assess upcoming opponents and they often go to see an opponent play a few times and prepare a report for the manager on the strengths and weaknesses of this opposing team.

An ongoing argument in football circles revolves around the scouting of young players by big clubs. Many people feel that the most effective scouts are at lower league teams where a lack of funding means that it’s a necessity to unearth new talent. At a big Premier League club, it’s increasingly difficult for young players to emerge, as the manager often buys an already proven player when he needs one, rather than risking a young home-grown player.

Jargon buster

**Copa Libertadores** *n* South America’s most prestigious continental club competition

**Cruijff turn** *n* move made famous by Dutch legend Johan Cruijff. You trick your marker into thinking you are going one way, before using a 180 degree turn to move the ball in the opposite direction

**diving** *n* (also *simulation* *n*) an attempt to gain an unfair advantage by seeking to convince the referee that a foul has been committed; it involves falling to the ground, and sometimes feigning an injury

**dribble** *v* (also *n*) to move the ball past a defender through short skilful kicks or taps; this is often done at speed, and in tight situations where the attacking player is
closely marked, especially on the wings; Brazilian legend Garrincha’s dribbling skills stunned audiences at the 1958 World Cup; today, wingers Frank Ribery and Nani are among the players most renowned for their dribbling skills

FIFA Ballon d’Or n world football’s most prestigious individual award, it is given to the most outstanding player from the previous season; it is awarded on the basis of votes by coaches, international team captains and journalists from around the world; the award is the result of the merger between the FIFA World Player of the Year award and France Football’s Ballon d’Or in 2010

first touch n a player’s initial control of the ball

keep possession v to keep hold of the ball by passing it from one team-mate to another, and thus denying the opposing team an attacking opportunity

UEFA Champions League n commonly referred to simply as the Champions League, this is an annual competition for European clubs, formerly known as the European Cup; many people consider this continental competition to be the world’s most prestigious competition for clubs; Sir Alex Ferguson has often remarked that the Champions League today represents the highest level of football, higher even than the World Cup

Activity assistant

1) Give the students the following positions: Goalkeeper, Full Back, Central Defender, Winger, Midfielder, Striker. Then ask the students to write what they feel are the most important physical attributes for each position.

2) Ask the students to name two players who play in the same position. Then ask the student to write a short comparison between the two players, using comparative and superlative adjectives.

3) Ask the students what things they think are necessary to do to become a professional footballer. Ask them to write five sentences using must / have to / should / shouldn’t / mustn’t. Follow up with some questions using Do you have to... / Should you ...?

4) Take some upcoming football fixtures from a newspaper or from the Internet. Ask the students to make predictions about who will win each game, using will.

5) Practise the first conditional tense by asking the students which player their favourite club should sign to improve their team. Then ask: What will happen if your club sign this player?