

Introduction

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Manchester United won their 20th title April, 22nd 2013 setting a new record. They also have the chance to set the all-time point record if they win the final three games.

We focus on the key issues of development, investing, responsibility, building/re-building and dedication and how Sir Alex Ferguson achieves these key issues specifically with strong leadership abilities.

Upon his arrival, he set a "long term by excellence" focus, urging them to emulate David Beckham as a skinny 13-year-old footballer of the 1990s and Gary Ne...

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3. Set High Standards—and H

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1. Start with the Foundation

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Upon his arrival at Manchester, in 1986, Ferguson set about creating a structure for the long term by modernizing United's youth program. He established two "centers of excellence" for promising players as young as nine and recruited a number of scouts, urging them to bring him the top young talent. The best-known of his early signings was David Beckham. The most important was probably Ryan Giggs, whom Ferguson noticed as a skinny 13-year-old in 1986 and who went on to become the most decorated British footballer of all time. At 39, Giggs is still a United regular. The longtime stars Paul Scholes and Gary Neville were also among Ferguson's early youth program investments. Together with Giggs and Beckham, they formed the core of the great United teams of the late 1990s and early 2000s, which Ferguson credits with shaping the club's modern identity.

It was a big bet on young talent, and at a time when the prevailing wisdom was, as one respected television commentator put it, "You can't win anything with kids." Ferguson approached the process systematically. He talks about the difference between building a team, which is what most managers concentrate on, and building a club.



2. Dare to Rebuild Your Team

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2. Dare to Rebuild Your Team

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Even in times of great success, Ferguson worked to rebuild his team. He is credited with assembling five distinct league-winning squads during his time at the club and continuing to win trophies all the while. His decisions were driven by a keen sense of where his team stood in the cycle of rebuilding and by a similarly keen sense of players' life cycles—how much value the players were bringing to the team at any point in time. Managing the talent development process inevitably involved cutting players, including loyal veterans to whom Ferguson had a personal attachment. “He’s never really looking at this moment, he’s always looking into the future,” Ryan Giggs told us. “Knowing what needs strengthening and what needs refreshing—he’s got that knack.”

the youth team, but I'm here to assist you with the team. That's the assistant manager's job." And I said, "Right, boss," and pointed out that I could benefit from the training. At first I said, "No, no, no," but I thought, "I'll give it a try. No promises." Deep down, he delegated the training to him, and it

8. Never Stop

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3. Set High Standards—and Hold Everyone to Them

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Everything we did was about maintaining the standards we had set as a football club—this applied to all my team building and all my team preparation, motivational talks, and tactical talks. For example, we never allowed a bad training session. What you see in training manifests itself on the game field. So every training session was about quality. We didn't allow a lack of focus. It was about intensity, concentration, speed—a high level of performance. That, we hoped, made our players improve with each session.

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4. Never, Ever Cede Control

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“You can’t ever lose control—not when you are dealing with 30 top professionals who are all millionaires,” Ferguson told us. “And if any players want to take me on, to challenge my authority and control, I deal with them.” An important part of maintaining high standards across the board was Ferguson’s willingness to respond forcefully when players violated those standards. If they got into trouble, they were fined. And if they stepped out of line in a way that could undermine the team’s performance, Ferguson let them go. In 2005, when longtime captain Roy Keane publicly criticized his teammates, his contract was terminated. The following year, when United’s leading scorer at the time, Ruud van Nistelrooy, became openly disgruntled over several benchings, he was promptly sold to Real Madrid.

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5. Match the Message to the Moment

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When it came to communicating decisions to his players, Ferguson—perhaps surprisingly for a manager with a reputation for being tough and demanding—worked hard to tailor his words to the situation.

When he had to tell a player who might have been expecting to start that he wouldn't be starting, he would approach it as a delicate assignment. “I do it privately,” he told us. “It's not easy. I say, ‘Look, I might be making a mistake here’—I always say that—but I think this is the best team for today. I try to give them a bit of confidence, telling them that it is only tactical and that bigger games are coming up.”

6. Prepare to Win

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Ferguson's teams had a knack for pulling out victories in the late stages of games. Our analysis of game results shows that over 10 recent seasons, United had a better record when tied at halftime and when tied with 15 minutes left to play than any other club in the English league. Inspirational halftime talks and the right tactical changes during the game undoubtedly had something to do with those wins, but they may not be the full story.

When their teams are behind late in the game, many managers will direct players to move forward, encouraging them to attack. Ferguson was both unusually aggressive and unusually systematic about his approach. He prepared his team to win. He had players regularly practice how they should play if a goal was needed with 10, five, or three minutes remaining. "We practice for when the going gets tough, so we know what it takes to be successful in those situations," one of United's assistant coaches told us.