



# Aims and Purpose

**In this study, I aim to provide an in-depth insight and analysis of;**

- **The Culture and Heritage of FC Barcelona**
- **The Youth Academy Philosophy at FC Barcelona in the capital of Catalonia**
- **Various aspects of the current Operation (staff, recruitment, facilities etc.)**
- **Coaching Culture, Methodology, Technical and Games Programmes**
- **S.W.O.T analysis of the Youth Academy and Club**

# Catalonian Culture

Barcelona is the capital of Catalonia and the second largest city in Spain with a population of 1.6 million. Barcelona today is one of the worlds major global cities influencing tourism, architecture, cultural-sporting, education, fashion, science and the arts. Having overcome the regime of General Francisco Franco in the 1970s, Barcelona has managed to retain its independent Catalan language and culture. The Catalan flair for beauty has evolved into its own unique art and sporting culture clearly influenced by the likes of Gaudi, Picasso, Dali and Joan Gamper.



## Club Heritage

FC Barcelona was founded by Joan Gamper on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1899. Unlike many other Football Clubs the supporters own and operate FC Barcelona. FC Barcelona is the only club to have played Continental Football every season since 1955 and one of only 3 Clubs not to have been relegated from La Liga. In 2009 FC Barcelona became the first Spanish Club to win the treble and in the same year winning all 3 Super Cups completing a record sextuple Club Honours. They have won 62 Domestic Honours and 19 International Trophies.



# FC Barcelona Club Crest

For the first 11 years of FC Barcelona's history the Club used the city coat of arms on its crest but the board decided the Club needed its own emblem and started a competition in which fans produced their own ideas.

The competition was won by an unknown fan and over the years slight changes have been made but the original 3 main elements have always remained.



1899



1910



1920



1936



1939



1946



1960



1974



1975



2002

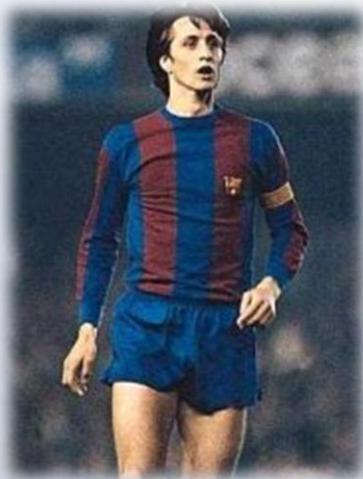
**St Jordi's Cross** – St Jordi (St George) is the patron Saint of Catalonia and was a soldier of the Roman Empire who later became a Christian martyr.

**FC Barcelona Club Colours** – Joan Gamper founded FC Barcelona in 1899 and used the colours of his native Swiss club, FC Basil in which he played before moving to Spain.



## ‘mes que un club’ (more than just a club)

30 years in the making... FC Barcelona Academy was founded in 1979 by Johan Cruyff. The Club are under no disillusion that it has taken around 30 years, not 5 years, to implement the Structure and Culture they have today. They believe their Method of ‘Total Football’ makes them unique. They are quite open that it is their way not the way.



# One club one identity

The ‘mes que un club’ is constantly on display. On the Sunday morning after playing Seville on the Saturday night the Senior team train, not only on the pitch next to U7s Benjamin team playing, but they also watched the end of their game. Similarly the Barcelona Senior Women players were greeted by the senior men’s team before training. Players all bond in individual hugs before training as a display of preparing to enjoy working together.



# Club Vision founded by Louis Van Gaal



- FCB THE philosophy of FC BARCELONA is that the team is most important.
- FA THE team is more important than any player.
- FCB THE players have the obligation TO meet and defend the IDEA of the CLUB.
- FA THE greatest number of players DEVELOPED into the first team.



# Culture and philosophy Summary



- Embrace the Catalan independence and flair
- Length of time taken to implement and refine the model
- Clarity of philosophy and vision
- Stood test of time with refinements
- Considered experiences for players within the methods
- Players understand the privilege
- Winning mentality 'Their way'
- Senior team 'aspirational' not 'hierarchical'



## ‘La Cantera’ (the quarry)

‘La Masia’ (meaning Farmhouse) was an old country residence built in 1702 positioned next to the famous Barcelona Stadium the Camp Nou. La Masia was remodelled in 1979 to house and educate young Academy Players. The Academy concepts and development has remained protected and progressive under Cruyff, Van Gaal, Robson, Rijkaard, Guardiola and now Vilanova.





## World Class Investment

On June 1<sup>st</sup> 2006 the Ciutat Esportiva Joan Gamper Training ground was opened, located in urban Sant Joan Despi, at a cost of 77.5 million euros. The new academy is set in around 35 acres, designed to accommodate 17 teams. The facility boasts 5 grass pitches, 4 artificial grass pitches, 1 multi-sport pavilion, 1 grandstand building by pitch 1, 3 gymnasiums, 1 dressing room building, different training areas for goalkeepers and technical aspects. A pool and sauna area built specifically for recuperation of injuries. This construction bought an end to 'the farmhouse' but not 'La Masia'.



# Ciutat Esportiva Joan Gamper Training Facility



*més que un club*

LA MASIA

LA MASIA

CENTRE DE FORMACIÓ  
ORIOL TORT

LA MASIA

CENTRE DE FORMACIÓ  
ORIOL TORT



## ‘La Masia’ concepts

- Education for U16s is all day with training in the evening, Juvenile educated in mid afternoon sessions,
- Juvenile players have single rooms, U16s double rooms,
- Multi cultural open plan environment,
- Life skills sessions cooking, cleaning, diy etc,
- Life lessons sessions with motivational key speakers,
- Constant reminders of FC Barcelona and La Masia history and the privilege of being part of one club one culture,

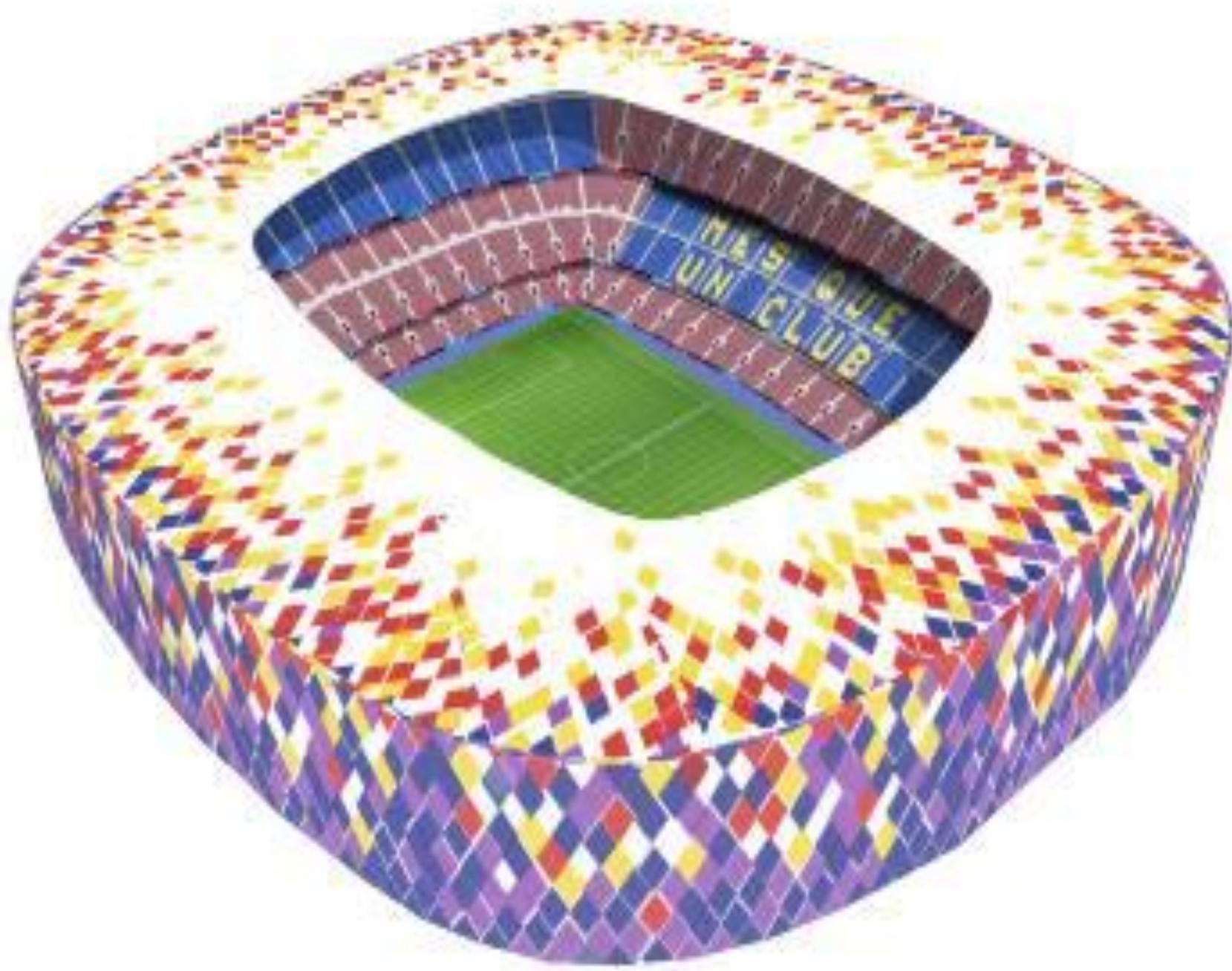




# UN EQUIPO MADE IN LA MASIA

JUGADORES DE LA MASIA ● JUGADORES DE FUERA ○





# The Barcelona Way - Methodology Principles

1. FIRST PRIORITY - The football player

2. OWN FOOTBALL STYLE

3. TRAINING - Interaction between the players and our style.

4. MANAGER/ COACHES - Essential to transmit message.



Trust the system - “We want to have the ball to PLAY and ENJOY”

The Play and Win mentality existed in 1970's at Barcelona and Cruyff changed this to “PLAY and ENJOY”.



# THE METHODOLOGY

- The Style
- Correct distribution in field
- Protect the ball
- Movement of Players
- Each Player has an important role in the team
- Interpretation and Game understanding
- Individual and collective participation
- Individual qualities to serve the Team



# Methodology Observation and Summary

- Player analysis on Behaviour, Learning and Development
- Players understand the system and their role,
- Players play with freedom and without fear,
- Emphasis on technical quality,
- Everything on the move in game situations,
- Players challenged with speed, tempo and thought,
- Players are prepared to keep the ball longer,
- Players get on the ball as often as possible,
- Balance of Deliberate and Free thinking,
- Everything for the benefit of the team,



# Training Principles

Work across 3 phases over 2 hour micro phases

- ⚽ Co-ordination tasks
- ⚽ Rondo/Positional
- ⚽ Tactical Games



# The System

The current system whilst flexible and rotatable around personnel and situational dynamics is reminiscent in many ways of the Metoldo (method) or W W formations used by the Italians in the 1920s and Hungarians in the 1950s.



The 1-2-3-2-3 is worked into every practice both technically and tactically.



# Importance of The System in possession



- **Full backs** look to get very high up the field, flexible flank players that will exploit inside.
- **Play out from back.** Centre Backs drop to edge of box and sometimes deeper **GK** is crucial component of this and defenders will happily bounce ball off GK to relieve pressure.
- **Deep centre midfielder** (pivot) will come deep and receive in between centre halves **“Bouncing ball”** in short to players in tight areas is a very common trend all the way through the programme. Players can deal with pressure, and it dislodges opponents from their defensive line to spoil their shape and create pockets of space to exploit.
- **Rotation everywhere**, especially between wide strikers and full backs, central midfield 3 and forwards. Players happy to receive the ball not on the “safe side” but square to the opponent so that they can use the outside/ inside of foot to “roll” them. They can either “escape” this way and keep possession or draw the foul.
- 2 wide strikers (of the 3) remain high and wide to form the **“Structure”** that underpins the **FCB Barcelona Methodology**. They **“pin”** back the opposition back four and it allows the central striker to exploit pockets of space in central areas, coming short to receive in between the lines and to create pockets of space for midfielders to drive into in order to get in and around and in beyond the back four.



# La Cantera Technical & Games Programmes

Juvenil	16-18	10	11v11	40-50	2 x 45 mins
Cadet	14-16	8	11v11	40-50	2 x 40 mins
Infantil	13-14	6	11v11	50-60	2 x 35 mins
Alevin	11-12	6	7v7	50-60	4 x 15 mins
Benjamin	9-10	6	7v7	40-50	4 x 13 mins
Pre Benjamin	7-8	6	7v7	40-50	4 x 13 mins



# Leagues and competitions

- There is no Academy league, just Local, Regional and National leagues.
- Up to Cadet Category leagues and competition controlled by Local Catalonia Football Federation.
- Juvenil leagues and competition controlled by Spanish Football Federation.
- Promotion and relegation at all ages.
- Leagues and results are printed in newspapers by The Catalan Football Federation. With one Million users, it is very popular and promotes the winning mentality and competition early.
- Opportunity for Local, Regional, National and International tournaments is very high frequency.



# Summary of Technical & Game Programme



- Trust in The System and education of principles.
- Little concern of differentiation.
- Number of competitive games per year for all ages.
- Deliberation in intervention methods at certain training phases.
- Frequency and duration of Learning blocks.
- Creativity 'New ideas that have value' .
- The 'Rondo'.
- Contribution to the team 'cause and effect'.
- Prepare to stress and stretch players learning in situation dynamics.
- Winning mentality .
- Players remaining on task crucial to development.
- Transition in development through stages in development.
- Position understanding and game relevance.



# Recruitment

- The professional youth teams play in the same leagues as the local teams.
- Barcelona compete locally and regionally up to Infantil and National from Cadet.
- Natural process of selection into appropriate competition.
- Players sign to their respective club for a 2 year period, which the club is bound and committed to.
- After the 2 years the player is free to go wherever they like with no compensation until U16s.
- Barcelona only employs full time scouts to recruit players at U14s Nationally in Spain and Internationally at all ages.
- Players are recruited and analysed primarily how they learn, how they behave, how they develop.



# Physical Education in Catalonia

- The schooling system in Catalonia appears to support the culture of creativity.
- In primary schools children have 2 x 1.5 hours sessions on movement skills and invasions games.
- In contrast secondary schools have 2 x 2 hour PE sessions where children can select which activity they do.
- Observed was a class of 28 children on a concrete playground playing basketball, handball, tennis, football and skipping games. Multi sport ethos.
- The football was played with Futsal rules and the concrete like sheet glass so the ball moved at very high speeds.



# Coaches

- Only recruit coaches who have some form of affinity to the club ie as a former player, have played against, teach in a Catalan school etc.
- Most of the coaches have been at the club for over 10 years.
- All the coaches from Pre Benjamin to 1<sup>st</sup> team hold the UEFA A Licence and most are Pro Licence holders.
- All ages have min of 2 coaches with one of the coaches having a physical education or sport science qualification also.
- The Academy employs 10 full time and 17 Part time Coaches.
- Coaches stay with age category and the group is passed on.
- Interventions observed varied from showing and telling players to setting tasks, praising and questioning.
- Most of the showing and telling was done in the co-ordination and positioning phases, with reminders and praise in the rondo and game phases.
- Concept is to support players early then step away, check their understanding in games and remind and confirm if necessary.
- The basis is to produce players than make deliberate situation decisions and instinctive situation decisions.



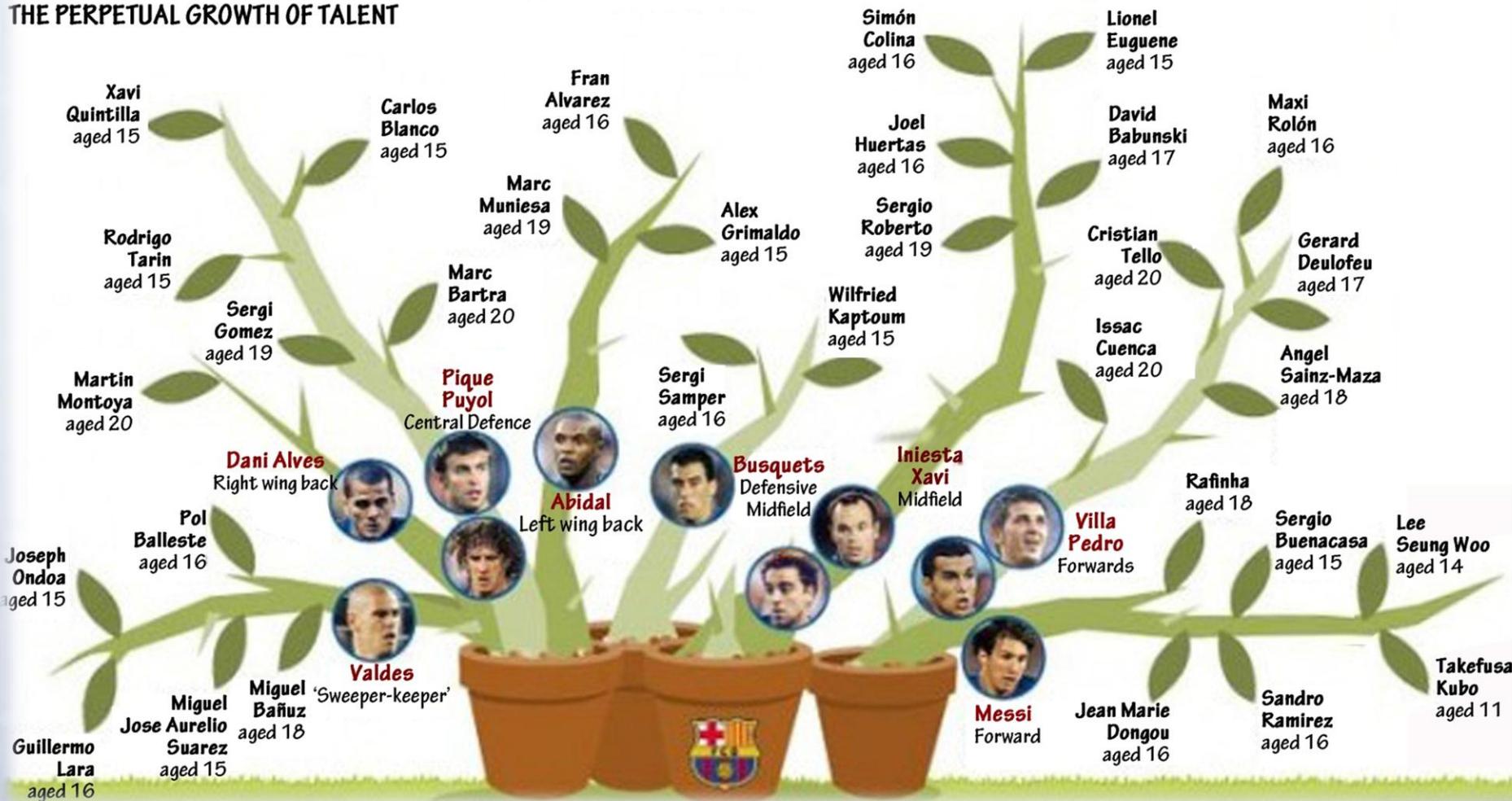
# Conclusion

What has been clear from observing and understanding FC Barcelona is their strength in a brand, values and philosophies. The importance of having Coaches that understand the Club culture and the blend of football and science to developing players. The Club have a distinct desire in having and embracing the Local and National culture was evident in terms of playing and coaching styles. The structure of youth football in Spain provides strength and bond to grass roots local football with value and respect that this is where all their players have spent their formative football experiences and learning. The amount of games played particularly against local teams is staggering with little consequence of any injuries. The Club appear very clear on the experiences they want their players to have in terms of culture, education and football. It is not sessions that are prescriptive but methodology and philosophy. Coaches had a huge degree of autonomy in terms of delivery but adopted the values of the Club in terms of structure and teaching. The importance of having highly qualified staff with a sense of belonging was very strong and a real emphasis on CPD every week for coaches. The words all the time used by staff were freedom, expression, creative and the way they want to develop players tactically to dominate games was imperative. A real value is placed on International football early, from U15s player can be selected to represent. Finally the importance of having a system and structure that stems right from the U6s to senior teams made for seamless transition as players moved through stages of development.



# THE FUTURE OF F.C. BARCELONA

THE PERPETUAL GROWTH OF TALENT



John Griffiths 2012

