



Fire & Ice: A Study of Contrasting Approaches to Football Management

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Arsene Wenger stands today as one of the most respected figures in world football for a wide variety of factors. Standing for consistency and quality, his purpose was found in football management rather than an eight-year playing career in France included a league title with

Strasbourg in 1978–79. His stature and credentials in the game is second to none reflected by the fact that he has been serving as FIFA’s chief of global football development following his retirement from management. His principles aided in building a persona and a brand which few could challenge, much less surpass. Born in France, in 1949, he is famous for having managed Arsenal F.C for 22 years which made the second longest serving a club after Sir Alex Ferguson. As his autobiography titled, “My life in Red and White”, Arsene Wenger had immense loyalty to his club perhaps an evidence of divine intervention that his name should sound so close to the place he called home for 22 years.

Appropriately called ‘Le professeur’ by the media, which indicates the love and affection which came his way from the British media, which is arguably one of the most challenging in the entire sport of football. Perhaps it was a Masters degree in economics which earned him the respect but followers of the English premier league would attest to the fact that there have been fewer classy and sophisticated managers to have graced one of the oldest leagues in the world. As his autobiography reveals, Wenger brought in an era of scientific management to British football. It extended to scout in, play as training, and diet meticulously planned to ensure maximum performance, thereby bringing forth globalisation to the sport which was played with celebrating bad boys from the decades gone by.

Wenger’s penchant for developing young talents, emphasising on attacking football, relying on philosophy when most managers resorted to downright pragmatism through defensive football and most importantly, the ability to operate on a tight budget despite losing his talents to richer clubs are to be immensely appreciated. Wenger was unceremoniously kicked out from management with one year remaining on his contract following quite a strong narrative calling for his ouster owing to lack of trophies one in the last decade office management at Arsenal. This chapter dives into what management principles Arsenal had put into place with Wenger at the helm (Wenger 78).

As Arsenal’s manager, Arsene Wenger was one of the longest serving managers in the EPL. He initially played football for amateur clubs and then went on to play for Strasbourg in the French league. In 1981, he completed his coaching qualifications and was appointed at Cannes, Nancy and later Monaco. ArseneWengerwas recruited to Arsenal while coaching in Japan and arrived as a relatively unknown manager in 1996, bringing a scientific approach to training. During his time at Arsenal, the club won three EPL titles and seven Football Association (FA) Cups. In 2004, the team (nicknamed “The Invincibles”) was unbeaten throughout the season. ArseneWengerleft Arsenal at the end of the 2017/2018 season (Berndt 34).

Findings

Arsene Wenger has his own brand or relation to all fields he needs to be involved in. The fact that he was very careful about what he spoke in front of the press, showed that he understood the publicity of his role. He never criticized his players only and in fact defended them critically. He also believed that a player’s belief is seen in their play and attacking play is the right kind for a big club like Arsenal.

Performance

Managerial philosophy	“I am accountable for the results of my team and the way they play football”.
Player management Philosophy	“In my line of work, we are constantly making decisions that punish people, while making others happy”.

Tactics	“That is our structure of the team, to attack. If you get our players to defend then I do not think we will be so efficient. We have to play every time we can”.
The club	“I am appointed to perform and do the best for my club. It’s all I focus on”.

Person – expression

Context

The supporters	“I always say when you wake up in the morning and you can go to a football game, you hope it can be a moment of happiness in your life. We have to try to give that to people”.
External parties	“.. .people who comment, their job is to comment, so you have to live with that”.

Arsene Wenger also knew that losing was part of the sport and described it as a scar or a suffering. But as any good team should work, he was always supported by the Managers to attain his objectives.

Mourinho : The Controversial One

The following quote clearly illustrates how the game had already begun and his mind with the press conference as beyond the mind games which he would have with the opposition manager, it is also about managing expectations with the fans as well as with the players and also conveying clear directives or clarifications from his end to club ownership.

“When I go to the press conference before the game, in my mind the game has already started.”

(Khan 1)

This section is an analysis of how Jose Mourinho had quite a number of arsenal at his disposal, weapons he could utilise to either deflect, evade, celebrate, praise his stock up, deter opposition managers from engaging in any sort of confrontation with him among many others. In its peak, Mourinho was extremely effective in conveying an agenda. With time, with perhaps age, maturity, experiences of failures of different kinds, his approach has evolved over time. It is also to be noted that Mourinho was a target for journalists to evoke a reaction from. The very least he was the most amenable to get a controversial statement off, thereby making him a prime candidate for a barrage of instigating questions. The narratives which were being manufactured by media or fans alike can only be rebuked by managers in the few circumstances which allow them.

Excerpt

Following a poor start to Chelsea’s season, the following was the press conference excerpt between Mourinho and journalist Ben Smith from BBC Sport following a match against Macabi Tel-Aviv in the Uefa Champions League in 2015.

(R): Jose, when you came to England you said you were a special one, when you came back you were a happy one, what are you today?

(J): Special and Happy (22).

The reporter was asking about the mental state and the confidence level of the manager given the poor start Chelsea head suffered under him. This auto be taken into context of how the personality of renia was as he sort in his first press conference as he came as Chelsea manager for the first time in 2004 as well as how he saw himself as “happy” at the start of a second stint in 2013. So, given the change of circumstances now how Mourinho perceived his stock given that for the first time in career he was no longer untouchable as the start to a quite poor and their seemed to be a pattern developing about a “third season syndrome.”

Mourinho had a pattern developing. In the first season, he was correcting the ship and building and changing the personnel to suit his recruitments echoing his ambition and mentality. In the second season, he often achieves the success accrued from the work with more familiarity developing within the squad with the methods of Mourinho’s methodology. By the third season, players may have developed some resistance over time and the reaction which was capably manufactured by the management team no longer has the expected result. The approach grows stale over time. Interestingly, Jurgen Klopp’s methods have an expectation of being less effective over a longer duration to exposure. His seventh season in Dortmund was catastrophic and his performance with Liverpool F.C. has been below par at best and shocking to be fair. Most managers need to reinvent themselves given a longer tenure or they have a shorter project not lasting more than 3 years.

”Special and happy”, as a response indicates that he was no given into the narrative that his methods are not as fruitful as it once was.

Excerpt

(R): Do you believe that you still have all the qualities that made you such a great manager? A lot’s been made of third season in your time at clubs, what do you say to that?

(J): Look, my third season in Porto, I didn't have third season, my third season in Inter I didn't have third season. My third season in Chelsea in the first time I won the FA Cup and Carling Cup and I play the Champions League semifinal. The third season in Real Madrid, I won the Super Cup I lose the Cup Final and I went to Champions League semifinal, These are my third season, so click google instead you made stupid question, click google and try to find (23).

The reporter is drawn from the narrative that Jose's third season has historically been problematic as his methods have an expiry date owing to the fact that the players do not respond to the methods over a long period. Mourinho is very clear when he is faced with accusations hinting at any supposed weakness he may have. It is dismissed with clarity and logical arguments. He was not entirely happy with the narrative being spread in the media against him and his displeasure was clearly visible in the tone as well as the words he had used, "stupid". He could also be upset about the fact that his managing capabilities are limited and on the spiral downwards owing to the fact that the season has been quite poor. The fact that Mourinho also insists that the reporter check the statistics as regards successes in the third season by asking him to google the data is quite telling about how he clearly dismisses the narrative.

Excerpt

The context is the same with the conversation continuing between the manager and the journalists.

(R): Jose, you know what I am getting at though don't you? How important is it for you to build (Cutting the conversation)

(J): No, you spoke about the third season and I am telling you that the question is stupid because the third season is what I told you (24).

(R): But Jose you know the point of the question?

(J): I know I know the point is the question is stupid. I am sorry.

The discussion continues as the reporter is ending at the fact that the third season is when the results fall and is often the time when his tenure comes to an end, either by mutual agreement or sacking. Mourinho is quite adamant that this narrative is not the case as is evidenced by his interruption not allowing the reporter to express this clarity of thought in the press conference which would then be very difficult to defend as there is enough proof for the narrative indicated by the press.

Excerpt

(R): I am asking how important is it to you as a man to show people that you can create a dynasty at a football club?

(J): I have nothing to show to anyone. Nothing (27).

Jose's answer in line 27, "I have nothing to show to anyone. Nothing," is suggestive of the fact that his success is proof enough and deserves respect for accomplishments. The idea of Dynasty is relevant to suggest a comparison between the stalwarts of British football namely, Sir Alex Ferguson and it is quite clear that Mourinho is quite adamant as to not embark on a comparison with the all-time great as his profile does not have a 'dynasty' built. This clearly indicates that Mourinho gets a little aggressive and a tad rude so as to not get drawn with comparisons with managers who have performed better in certain regards than he has. Furthermore, when backed into a corner his self-confidence and brand persona does not allow him to be humble to take a position beneath any other manager in any circumstance.

Excerpt

(R): Sorry, Jose, Arsene Wenger admitted Gabriel deserved to be sent off but he also found Diego Costa deserve red card in the same mentality. What is your opinion?

(J): In my view is this. That is why sometimes I am very proud of my people and my club and I played against Arsenal I don't know 12, 15, 18 times I don't know and only once he didn't moan (28). And, in that day we lose the game, we lose the cup, was not good for us, we behaved in

fantastic way, no excuses, not crying, not moaning, just Mr. Jose Mourinho, my players, and Chelsea Football Club (29).

This is following a heated match between Mourinho's Chelsea and Arsenal Arsenal winger where an Arsenal defender was sent off in controversial circumstances and the Chelsea forward was also deserving of potentially a red card as well. Following the loss, Arsenal Wenger was quite adamant about the injustice done as it was felt that the sending off was an incorrect decision. Jose Mourinho and Arsenal winger have had a very unpleasant and uncomfortable relationship with each other and it was quite evident that Mourinho wanted to highlight one of the possible reasons for how Arsenal winger always found himself wound up as he was commonly found to be in disagreement with the referees' decisions which Mourinho referred to as "moaning".

Excerpt

(R): You haven't answered the question (Diego Costa incident)

(J): Man of the match for me (33).

This was in furtherance of the same press conference where the reporter had persistently dug further into the topic not to be distracted by Mourinho's unclear answers. Finally, Mourinho wanted to put an end to the conversation as it was quite evident that Diego Costa was found to have been in the wrong but it is unlike Mourinho to acknowledge or accept wrongdoing of this magnitude. There's just phones what is quite hilarious as Diego Costa was far from the man of the match as he had not really influence the game by scoring goals or assisting it, also the fact that a defender had scored in the

same match as had Eden Hazard was also crucial moments which would have resulted in man of the match award being given to one of those two players.

Excerpt

The context of this exchange was following the match between Arsenal and Chelsea in the premier league in the season 2014 - 2015. The match was at Arsenal's home ground, the Emirates stadium, London. Chelsea, apart from being one of the challengers of Arsenal, are also based out of London, thereby leading to a harsh atmosphere in the stadium following an unfavourable result for the home crowd. The Arsenal supporters chanted, "boring, boring" against Chelsea is playing style, and in this particular context Jose Mourinho responds;

(J): you know, I think "boring" is ten years without a title that is very boring. You know, you support the club and you are waiting, waiting, waiting, and false so many years without a premier league title I think that is very boring (36). But, maybe they are singing not to us because

when you are at home and you want to win the game and you take your number nine maybe for the home fans they want more maybe they want to play Groud and Welbeck together in front and try to win the game in the last period (37). You know, I think we had very good performance

and the boring team is the second team with more goals in the premier league, is the best in goal difference, is the second team with more goals only Man City (Manchester City (football club)) scores more goals than us (38). So, I think we score a lot of goals and a period where we don't

have Diego Costa, we don't have Remy and we have only one striker (39) that we need to work in a way where he has to be able to help us in all these matches we are having, which change and rebuild our dynamic (40) and we are not scoring so many goals as before but even so we are the second team with more goals scored.

Mourinho has been plagued by the "boring" tag as a manager despite his statistics at various clubs showing otherwise. This narrative is mostly due to the fact that Mourinho plays very cagey or defensive football and set his team to avoid defeat or to not lose rather than chasing a win in most complicated matches, particularly in cup competitions and against the top teams. Mourinho had clear arguments regarding the "boring" tag. Firstly, he attacked the Arsenal fans taking a job at their barren patch of not having won trophies for a considerable amount of years. He says that not winning a trophy is boring. Secondly he attacks the allegation with statistics as Chelsea have the best goal difference at the time and more importantly, the number of goals scored by Chelsea is second only to Manchester City. Moreover, he takes a jibe at Arsenal for not having exercised the option to play two strikers at a time and go ultra offensive. He further defends the style by stating lack of fit strikers at their disposal as one of the main reasons why it could be perceived as defensive football.

With his managerial success no longer being a question of certainty, Mourinho's attitude and approach to press conferences took a turn for the worse. He often resorted to using the public domain as a place to motivate the players by criticising them at various junctures, which is arguably one of his biggest mistakes though he would never admit to them at any stage. Mourinho's main management style is unique as it provokes the players into either becoming the best version of themselves or be hurt and spiral downwards in their career. It is also interesting that the control and the agenda which he had had at the early years of his career had escaped him after numerous failures and sackings.

It could be argued that Mourinho's failures were due to the fact that he could not reinvent his footballing style to suit the younger generations who are more sensitive and were not used to the hard-hitting approach of the decades gone by.

Controversy was arguably manufactured by Mourinho when his team was either facing a loss or had lost a high profile match. It ranged from Mourinho picking fights with the opposition camp to spew expletives at the referee to get himself sent off fully aware of the consequences. By distracting the press away from the loss, the topic of conversation will be what he had done or said or the manner of his behaviour as reported by several news agencies. It was a deliberate ploy to control the narrative. In September 2021, managing AS Roma, in a match against Atlanta in the Italian Serie A, Mourinho got sent off for abusing the referee for not granting a penalty for his team in the 53rd minute. It is posited that he knew what was going to happen and did it to spur his players on to show passion and commitment to strive for victory much harder and secondly, to deflect the impending loss blaming it on the decision.

Mourinho chose to utilise press conferences to create a persona which would aid in his successes as a manager by creating an image of dominant, alpha manager who had tasted success at every job in his earlier roles as manager. Mourinho also took a wide variety of approaches depending on the situation. He was evading and aggressive when an unpleasant narrative was being discussed. He was ruthless in responding to provocations by other managers. It was never in jest or merely an emotional outburst but it is posited that it was a clear manner of functioning of his. He was not one who minced words and even interrupted journalists when he wanted to take over the topic of discussion. It was a master class in deflection when he faced the press after a loss. His rivalry with Wenger is recorded and his approach is crucial in the light of building, projecting and maintaining an image in public life. He was an artist at it in the earlier years of his career most undoubtedly.

The management principles of Arsenal Wenger represented are contrasted with Mourinho's approach to handling the press through various examples. To that end, ArseneWenger's autobiography was relied upon to shed light on his management principles and his visionary approach to scientific principles of football management. Since the nature of the text is not beyond question as regards to its status as an academic piece of work, research was clear on where autobiography stood in the contemporary times of literary research. It was evident through the findings that an Autobiography, though not considered critical pieces of literary work by many, still has immense value in the arena of specialised knowledge, clarifying narratives, revealing truths and perspectives. Since the information stemming out of football clubs is limited, it was pertinent to hear from the source directly as regards how they are perceived and felt about football.

The aspects of management which has special significance in any group which is imbued with multiple oral cultures, power imbalances, greatly influential in corporate and educational spheres. There needs to be clarity on the process of developing a positive atmosphere through focus on specific individuals and their emotions, conveyed through the various levels of team building. The philosophy to management implemented by Arsenal winger is necessary to appreciate his stance on media management, which is also discussed. The brand persona of Wenger and the effort to meticulously sculpt the same and build narratives through relationships developed with media personnel over time. His genial and sophisticated nature could be his strengths to elicit favourable narratives from press conferences. It was no coincidence that Arsenal Wenger came to be known as 'Le Professeur' by British media, which is symbolic of the positive and powerful narrative he had in his favour until the advent of social media. With mass media, globalisation, fan fueled narratives, it became increasingly difficult for Arsenal Wenger to highlight his achievements of consistency given the context in which the club was operating in. The stadium expansion plans and the bullying competitive enterprise of super rich clubs changed the landscape of football.

The next phase is that of a manager whose style could be considered contrary to that of Arsene Wenger, whose approach could be viewed as fiery emotions and passion as opposed to Wenger's calm and reassuring demeanour. The contrasting styles of these two managers is highlighted through the various attitudes and agenda represented through press conferences during their tenure. Jose Mourinho's ability to challenge trophies by provoking the team and individuals to push themselves beyond human limits saw him being touted for greatness. Though his achievements could never be belittled at Porto FC, Mourinho's career is nowhere close to how he or anybody would have expected to go after his enthralling success. His aggressive style of management was pivotal in success but it is possibly due to the sensitive nature of the younger generations which sees his man management methods has increasingly combative, rather than in firing. His subsequent jobs at Manchester United saw him criticise his own players in press conferences, leading to a distracting dressing room atmosphere. His time at Tottenham Hotspur did not get them any silverware which they desperately hope to achieve with Mourinho. It could also be the evolution of football statistics and tactics which has severely crippled the effect Mourinho's tactics which used to have incredible effect in the early decade of his career.

Ambition and mentality comes to mind when one thinks of Mourinho, whereas stability and consistency are the prime examples of Arsene Wenger's reign. Risk is no longer worth taking for most clubs in their pursuit of trophies as it could mean a terribly hostile atmosphere in case things go South. It is posited that Mourinho is representative of the changing dynamic in the contemporary world as regards a mentor mentee relationship, teacher student relationship, Boss subordinate relationship et cetera. The need of the hour is to reinvent and be dynamic with the evolving needs of the nature of the job.

Managers of a younger breed are finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the most sensitive generation of players due to their limited experience handling players of various personalities. Many managers expect the same level of professionalism which they had professed and practised during their playing careers and since most of the younger breed of managers where exceptional football players during their time, Managers who have had excellent careers are finding themselves in a little bit of concern trying to enforce and create an environment of self-discipline which is the more experienced managers have managed to develop over decades.

Media management was crucial, especially at the early stages, as it provided an opportunity to garner support from stakeholders of the club, particularly the fans. A stable and productive relationship with the media is of increasing importance owing to the lack of patience by ownership in contemporary football, which demands rapid results. Fans are an integral element to a football club as discussed before. Arsene Wenger had taken up a great responsibility as he left that there was enormous pressure on a leader. After a loss, he could not help but blame himself and be held responsible for some people to cry. With increase in tenure, the control over

the club also increases and that in turn leads to more responsibility, real or imagined. Wenger's penchant for directness aided in this. He acknowledged the role the media had even before the power they came to wield in the 21st century. The media often brings forth narratives regarding the capacity of the manager and are often the first to reveal disparaging elements or circumstances in the squad. Before the advent of social media, print and television media held the narratives regarding the public opinion of managers.

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