

Multilingual and Multicultural Football Teams: A Vital Orchestra of Many Different Voices?

Mehrsprachige und multikulturelle Fußballteams: Eine vielstimmige Harmonie?

A multilingual football team can be compared to a polyphonic orchestra, in which the different instruments succeed in creating a harmonic effect much more varied and complex than the music created by one type of instrument. Can we thus affirm that a team in which players speak different languages and belong to different cultures has more potential than a team where everyone speaks the same language and has the same cultural background?

Looking at the football history of the last decades we get the idea that it might be an asset for a team to have players that speak different languages. Positive examples of successful multilingual teams are the AC Milan in the 1980's - 90's with its three foreign pearls (Van Basten, Gullit and Rijkaard), the FC Inter during the same period with the German players Brehme, Klinsmann and Matthäus and in more recent years Udinese and Bayer Leverkusen, where many foreign players contribute to the success of the team.

To effectively demonstrate the success of multilingual football teams over their monolingual counterparts, the results of interviews conducted with numerous football professionals will be used. The key role of the coach in creating a great team spirit will be analysed. If a high internal cohesion is reached, multilingual teams stand a better chance of succeeding on and outside the field.