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Best possible conditions for young talents: new methodology for the analysis and further development of youth academies in German professional football

In order to continue to optimise the conditions for training and supporting talents in the Bundesliga and Bundesliga 2, the DFL Deutsche Fußball Liga is introducing a new methodology for the analysis, quality assurance and further development of youth academies in cooperation with the German Football Association (DFB).

The objective, among other things, is to coordinate all support measures concerning the academies using a holistic approach. The current certification and the associated star classification based on rigid criteria, which have been used for all locations, will be replaced by an individual analysis together with the respective club in future. Thus, apart from defined fundamentals, considerations will focus more strongly on focal points and objectives in particular that have been set by the clubs themselves. Various areas, such as management, football training and further support of the players in the youth academies are analysed and developed further both individually and in consultation. As a result of this cooperation, an individual concept emerges for each location, and the respective club is responsible for implementing it.

A paradigm shift with regard to youth academies

This paradigm shift with regard to the youth academies – from result orientation to process consultation – is accompanied by even closer cooperation between the DFL, the DFB and the clubs. The youth academies can also network with each other more strongly, maintain an intensive exchange concerning key topics and learn from one another. A corresponding exclusive service portal for academies and a reference database of the DFL and DFB serve as aids for generating knowledge, looking up practical examples and expert opinions and carrying out detailed comparisons and in-depth analyses. The DFL is taking on an active role with regard to recognising current trends and further technological developments and will provide encouragement for putting specific new applications into practice as an interface to the clubs.

A more individual and flexible approach

“Associations and clubs are taking on an even more active role. Based on the already excellent work in the academies, this more individual and flexible approach should achieve an even higher level of training for youth players. After all, our common objective is a world-class level of German football – also with the help of the youth academies,” says Andreas Nagel, Director of Sport & Youth Development at the DFL.

The successful system “youth academies” was introduced to the Bundesliga in 2001 and to Bundesliga 2 one year later. Since then, the 36 clubs have been obliged to maintain an academy for junior players in accordance with the licensing regulations of the DFL. So far, a total of more than 1.5 billion Euros has been invested in this way of promoting young talent by professional clubs. Each season, an average of 5,588 young talents – distributed across all age groups – are trained in the academies. Every year, around 70 players make it into a professional squad of a Bundesliga or Bundesliga 2 club.

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