

## MANAGEMENT AND CONFLICTS IN PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL.

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In relation to a study on opinions and competences among Danish players, we examined the theme, 'conflicts'. The most interesting conclusions will be presented here. The investigation can be read in the book (Danish version), "Bedre fodbold - bring hjernen i spil" (Olesen, Bjørkman og Sørensen, 2011), or in English, "Better football – bring the brain into the game."

### Aim of the research.

The aim of the research is to find ways to incorporate scientific analysis of the professional football player's way of reacting in a world of completion and corporation. We will try to identify the ideas and opinions of players and managers in daily work. The study might give inspiration to a different conflict management including both participants : managers and players.

### Methodology and data.

The study was initiated during seminars where players found themes and created the questions which are the sole foundation of the investigation – 203 questions organized in 15 themes. Data was collected and systemized in relation to the fifteen themes. Two-hundred and seven players answered the questionnaire. Players were divided into groups according to age, experience, and place in the team.

The investigation contains the answers from a group of coaches and managers from the Danish Superliga. Therefore, the possibility of an investigation of the area of conflicts between the management and players in the daily work suddenly emerged.

### Conflicts

Conflicts are often looked upon as a non-constructive phenomenon that kills the energy in groups. You can interpret conflicts in a different way. For example, conflicts are an area where the energy is set free – the direction decides whether it is a killer or an energizer. Conflicts might create surprising results. To understand the possibilities in the area of conflicts, it is important when you are dealing with professional footballers. The management can see disagreement as a tool to create development instead of using it as an element of conservatism – underlining the existing hierarchy in the group. Hierarchy is not always for the benefit of the team. Incorporating conflicts in more open-minded dialogues can provide mental energy and vitamins to the brain.

### The average danish player –“middelboe” – and conflicts.

*Middelboe* is aware of the importance of *good balance and social communication in the job*. He sees the dialogue as an important element in the daily routines. Therefore he has competences to deal with conflicts in a different

way. He is interested in the discussions, if there is a solution in the end. Although he, in some ways, feel that conflicts are a waste of time.

Conflicts are often related to creativity and innovation. *Middelboe* is not very keen on new ideas. Creativity and innovation are created in environments, which are related to knowledge in open-minded active group with a constant drive towards new ways of doing the job. The dialogue is the essential tool in the management of a football squad if you are seeking new ways to succeed. *Middelboe* will support the process.

*To start conflicts during the game or on the training ground is not the way Middelboe wants to do it.* He will leave that to others. He is not very good at coaching. He is not that willing to interfere with the other players. *The management could change the culture of training, providing more focus and space for internal coaching amongst players. Maybe the top-down solution is not the very best and most efficient.*

*Middelboe* shows a very large and profound respect for the management in the clubs.

### The management and conflicts.

The managers do not speak about the importance of life outside football. He does not see the will to handle conflicts and create a common attitude as a strategy of development. Conflicts are a tool only for him, not the players.

Belief in players is not a basic value when it is about respect for the management, fitness, and the ability to control disappointments or success. The management believes strongly that players would sacrifice the team for their own benefit.

Innovation is not the brand of many managers.

### Conclusions.

The many different opinions between the players and the management can be the platform for development if the dialogue would be free from control. The result would be more focus on innovative solutions and positive energy in the team work. If not, there might be an traditional ending of conflicts.

### Reference:

- Olesen, Bjørman og Sørensen: Bedre fodbold – bring hjernen I spil. Aalborg. 2011.