

Arsene Wenger Interview.

By Alfred Galustian: Profile Alfred has been a Technical Youth Instructor in 29 Countries; Clubs worked with AC Milan, Bayern Munich, Real Madrid, Arsenal, Olympique Marseille. Federations: French Football Federation/China FA/Irish FA. He is the International Director of Coerver Coaching



Arsene Wenger Profile:

Head Coach: Monaco (France), Grampus Eight (Japan), Arsenal (England)

Achievements: (Arsenal) English Premier League Champions, FA Cup Winners, and Finalists UEFA CUP

Questions to Arsene Wenger by Alfred Galustian

AG (Alfred Galustian): What should a good Youth Development Program focus on?

AW (Arsene Wenger): The most important under 14 years old is Technique. After 14 Speed becomes more and more important. Not physical speed but reaction and speed with the ball. I think like your program.

AG: What are some problems facing Youth Development

AW: I think what you told me in other countries is right. Most of the most experienced, talented and professional coaches want to work at the older ages under 18 and above. Also that is where the best pay is. Consequently under 14 players are coached by volunteer coaches. I think training of better Youth Coaches is essential. The French Federation saw this and I think it is evident to see their success. At professional Clubs especially, Youth Coaches are under pressure to win. Also they feel they have to copy the style of the first team. I think this is often a mistake. Young players need freedom of expression to develop as creative players. They should be encouraged to try skills without fear of failure. At a young age winning is not the most important thing. The important thing is to develop creative and skilled players with good confidence.

AG: I have worked over the years at Arsenal with your Youth Development and it seems in the last few years under Liam (Brady) and Don (Howe) there has been a big improvement at your club.

AW: Yes, the Youth Program at this Club is very important to us. We have achieved very good results through all the age groups and this year won the under 17 National Championship. I think in the future we need to look at our youth department to provide more players for the first team think it is important for a club to have a good amount of players that have roots with the club and region.

AG: Which are the leading Youth development programs?

AW: I think France is a very good example. The Academies in England are also very promising and I think were a reaction to what was happening in France.

AG: What qualities do you look for in a young player?

AW: Game Intelligence, Technique, Speed. but again if the technique and attitude is there then you can build on that.

AG: Japan has two players playing in Italy, Nakata and Nanami. What effect will this have if any on Japanese soccer development ?

AW: I think it has a significant effect. It makes that game more popular with more publicity. The young players in Japan have models playing at the highest level and for the players themselves it gives them invaluable experience and confidence.

AG: What is important for Japan Soccer to improve?

AW: I think the success of the J-League is important and especially that the professional Clubs establish and take responsibility for developing young players. Again for this, good coaching and facilities are needed.

AG: Do you still follow J-League results

AW: Yes I try to.

AW : Alfred how is your program going in Japan

AG: Our Coerver Program in Japan has produced over 55 boys in last 5 years for J-League Youth Teams and we do many coaching clinics for youth coaches all over Japan.

AW: That's great. Keep me advised on your program.

AG: What are the strengths and weaknesses of Japanese players?

AW: The strengths are: They are dedicated, usually much more so than other European and South American players. They are committed to team work. They are mobile and quick. Physically they have very good fitness (stamina).
The weaknesses: Sometimes they lack confidence. They are not selfish enough in positions that matter. Creating and scoring goals especially. They lack physical power compared to top Nations.

AG: Can this lack of physical power be compensated for?

AW: Yes, by increasing the level of technique, speed and mobility.

AG: Are there major differences for you to coaching in Europe than Japan.

AW: Many things are similar. I think generally the Japanese players have more intensity in practice but generally I do the same things.

AG: Thanks Arsene. I know you just came back from the UEFA final so I appreciate your time.

AW: It was good seeing you again Alfred. I am glad you are involved in Japanese soccer. Your work is important. Japan is one of my favourite places and I am glad you enjoy it too.