



SCOUTING

IL TALENTO DI SCOPRIRE IL TALENTO

Un viaggio nel cuore del gioco del calcio, per provare a dare risposta alla domanda più importante e più delicata: di cos'è fatto il talento?

C'è qualcosa di molto più prezioso, raffinato e raro del talento.
È il talento di riconoscere le persone di talento.
(Elbert Green Hubbard)

Una serie documentaria di
Paolo Barberi, Alessandro Falcone, Vittorio Moroni, Gian Piero Palombini.

SCOUTING

the talent to discover the talent

a journey into the heart of the game of soccer, to try to give an answer to the most important and most delicate question: what is talent made of?

there is something much more valuable, refined and rare than talent is the talent to recognize talented people
Elbert Green Hubbard

a documentary series by
Paolo Barberi, Alessandro Falcone, Vittorio Moroni, Gian piero Palombini



On the soccer fields of the urban suburbs, in the dusty courtyards of the Brazilian favelas, in the concrete parking lots of the Parisian banlieues or in the academies of the great soccer clubs, there is a treasure to be discovered. Everywhere the same, impersonated in many different ways: talent is what makes the difference between an ordinary kid and a champion, between who is only good and who has the makings of a champion.

It is a treasure that can revolutionize the life of a boy and his family, a bet that can be worth a fortune, a deal that can move millions, decide the season or the cycle of a club or a national team.

But what exactly is football talent? Is it a simple gesture or an attitude? Is it a gift received at birth or something that can be manufactured with the right training? And above all, how do you find it, with direct observation or with an algorithm that processes complex data and information? What details do you need to pay attention to so you don't miss out on a potential champion?

In order to recount this mystery, we went in search of the most significant and revolutionary European experiences of the last 70 years: we met with the great talent scouts and coaches, we were told about the methods, the schools and the different working philosophies. We compared principles, techniques and results; we were told the stories of champions and failed promises, of those who are lost and those who made it, from Paolo Rossi to Ibrahimovic, from Zola to Messi. And since the concepts of talent and excellence do not only belong to soccer, we entered the temples where prestigious auditions take place and interviewed people whose job it is to identify the talent of others, such as Andreas Manolikakis, teacher and selector at the Actor Studio, Élisabeth Platel, director of the dance school of the Paris Opera and maestro Riccardo Muti who recently founded the Italian Opera Academy to transmit the teaching of Italian opera to young musicians from all over the world.

Meeting with selectors from different disciplines, we tried to understand whether the secrets to discovering talent are similar to those of soccer, perhaps even universal, having fun imagining Riccardo Muti and Maradona, Al Pacino and Paul Pogba, Roberto Bolle and Harry Kane



THE STORY

Anyone has talent. What is rare is the courage to follow that talent to the dark place it leads to.
(Erica Jong)

We have divided our narrative into 3 themes, which allow us to move freely in time and space and compare in the same episode discoverers and champions of the past with those in activity today (on the field or in the grass).

1. DISCOVERING TALENT
How do you recognize a star?
2. CULTIVATING TALENT
How do you preserve and grow talent?
3. MANAGING (OR BURNING?) THE TALENT
When to launch a player in order not to burn him



Our look will range from Italy's most controversial talent scout, Luciano Moggi (discoverer of champions such as Paolo Rossi, Claudio Gentile, Gaetano Scirea, Gianfranco Zola, Zlatan Ibrahimovic...), to Dutch genius Piet De Vissier (Neymar, Ronaldo, De Bruyne...), to Sven Mislintat, for 10 years scouting for Borussia Dortmund (Hummels, Lewandowski, Aubameyang, Dembélé).

It will tell the story of the birth of the Clairefontaine national academy, which allowed the worldwide resurrection of French soccer, thanks to the discovery and cultivation of talents such as Didier Deschamps, Thierry Henri, Kylian Mbappé, to the extraordinary experience of the Barcelona cantera (Messi, Iniesta, Pedro...), from the English academy of Lillleshall, to the Danish experiment of Midtjylland, based on algorithms through which winning players are selected. From the comparison of such different experiences, the great parabolas of the champions who have made - and are making - the history of soccer will emerge, but also the stories of those promising players whose talent has never blossomed or whose growth was halted too early.



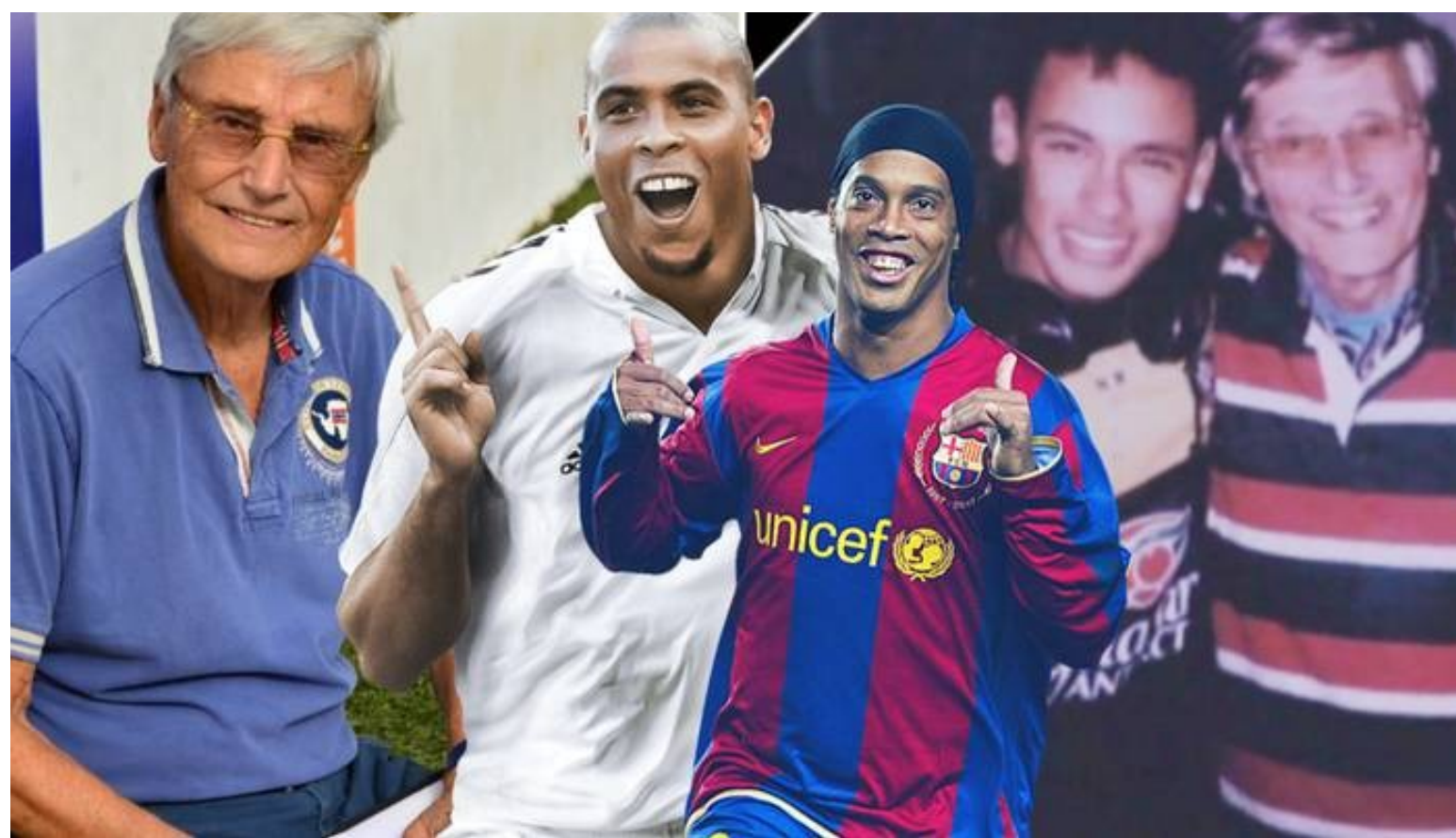
THE CHARACTERS

"There is no such thing as luck: there is the moment when talent meets opportunity."
(Seneca)

Italy. In the 70's Luciano Moggi, after being rejected as a player in a tryout at Juventus, offers himself and gets the job of talent scout for the Bianconeri; thanks to the job that gives him a living - train conductor at the State Railways - he has the opportunity to travel for free; he takes advantage of this to view young people everywhere and to create, card after card, folder after folder, an immense database, with which he will be able to discover some of the most important talents in the history of Italian and world soccer: Paolo Rossi, Claudio Gentile, Gaetano Scirea, Zlatan Ibrahimovic. E' "la vecchia scuola" fatta di intuito e passione, doti che durante una vacanza in Sardegna lo spingono a inoltrarsi verso un campetto sperduto per visionare e poi scegliere Gianfranco Zola; negli anni successivi Zola sarà uno dei campioni più amati dal pubblico di Napoli, prima, e del Chelsea, poi, tanto da essere persino nominato "Sir", baronetto, dalla regina Elisabetta.

Faced with the increasingly technological evolution of the scouting profession, Moggi, still maintains: "I do not believe in the method of highlights, I do not believe in algorithms, there is only one option to discover a champion: to observe him live on the field". He adds, "...And pretend not to be interested, so as not to attract the attention of the competition."

In Holland there is another great talent scout, of whom Mourinho says: "I can't find talents like he can": Piet De Vissier, the man who discovered Ronaldo "the Phenomeno", Neymar, Kevin De Bruyne and David Luiz.



Vissier has developed a method for analyzing players from around the world, giving scores to 5 different attitudes: skill, game vision, physicality, mentality, character.

His motto is, "Good players discover themselves. But I discover them" and to find them "you have to focus on every action of the players. I pay attention to the mentality. That's why I don't just go to games, but also to training sessions. I want to smell the grass, I observe everything a footballer does right and wrong."

While Ajax's first team revolutionized the modules of the game of soccer, in the Academy a young coach invented a training method for beginners that would influence coaches around the world: his name is Will Coever and his method is still used today; it was perfected in the early 80's by the duo Alfred Galustian and Charlie Cook (one of the legends of Chelsea).

In France, at the end of the 1980's, the philosophy of the INF Institut National du Football changed radically. The age for selections was lowered and the Center, which up until then resembled a military training camp, became a center of excellence. For this reason, André Merelle, former director of the Institut, recalls: "We concentrated less on the physical aspect and more on individual technique. Because if you don't know how to control the ball and you're not able to pass it to your teammate in the right way, you can never be a high-level player. I've always thought that every minute spent training without the ball is a minute wasted." This change in philosophy occurred at the same time that INF moved from Vichy to Clairefontaine in 1990, becoming the main football recruitment center in the Paris area, the most populous in France.

Within a few years, thanks to its innovative methods and avant-garde structure, Clairefontaine became a reference model. The Federation financed the creation of thirteen other pre-training centers (the so-called Pôles Espoirs) scattered throughout the country and, at the same time, many Ligue 1 clubs structured their youth sectors according to principles similar to those of the Institut, obtaining excellent results. Nantes, for example, in those years launched Didier Deschamps, Marcel Desailly and Christian Karembeu, who would leave an indelible mark on French soccer in the 1990s. In 1998, the World Cup was raised to the skies of Paris by a generation of players who grew up following the rules of this revolution.



In Spain in the 90's, Cruyff became the manager of Barcelona: in addition to winning the Champions League in 1992, he imposed that the club have a "cantera", the youth sector, like that of Ajax: same rules, same game plan, strong sense of belonging. This is the "Masia", the football training center that in the zero years will lead to the domination of Barcelona, with a Champions League final won by 7 players who grew up in the youth sector (plus Pedro who entered in the final). At the base of the successes and the dominance of the "Generación Dorada" of Spanish soccer (in addition to Barça's 2 Champions, there are two European titles and a World Cup) are the theories of Horst Wien, a German coach, author of "Football for young people", the official guide of the Spanish Federation.

In England, the Lillleshall Soccer School was born. Established by then-England manager Bobby Robson and FA technical director Charles Hughes, the goal of the "Hogwarts of football" was to provide the country's best 16 players with "the opportunity to develop as a talented young player, selected in the ideal environment, with the best coaches, for a maximum period of time". Each chosen one was selected through a series of tryouts at the local level, until the best 14-year-olds in the country were identified, with the ultimate goal of equipping them for international soccer. The result of that experiment are the careers of Sol Campbell, Joe and Andy Cole and the Golden Ball Michael Owen.

In the 2000s the "Moneyball method" exploded, inspiring a book and later a successful film set in baseball, and telling the true story of Billy Beane, the manager of the Oakland Athletics who theorized the construction of a winning team through the application of a statistical model. In Denmark Matthew Benham, inveterate gambler, decided in those years to buy Midtjylland, saving it from a situation of troubled waters. The championship was won by coach Rasmus Ankersen and his algebraic scouting methods: 20 consecutive victories, 31 days out of 33 at the top of the standings, +4 over Copenhagen, a colossus in those parts, with a team made up of players discarded by the top clubs, but functional to certain roles, "a sort of island of defective toys". Some overweight, some extravagant, some unorthodox: unique in their way of expressing themselves in certain roles. Chosen through a statistical evaluation of their past performance, isolated from forms and environmental factors. Their status as "discarded" players obviously guaranteed a very low purchase price and high capital gains.



OUT OF THE BOX

Nothing is more common than wasted potential.
(Howard G. Hendricks)

Finally, there is also space for the stories of the outsiders, to reiterate, if there were any need, that no one really knows where talent comes from. This is demonstrated by the many stories of those who started out with a thousand difficulties, far from the limelight, managed with sacrifice to transform their passion into a job.

Elisabet Spina, who became the first trainer qualified with the maximum score. At first a footballer with an excellent vision of the game, with the jerseys of Fiorentina and Reggiana, she ended her career at only 28 years old after winning an Italian Cup. "I stopped because I was offered the opportunity to coach children. And I couldn't wait to start"... A choice that today has led her to scout young stars in Tuscany for AC Milan, thus becoming a champion of the most important mission, today, of the Rossoneri club: scouting new talent.

Rui Marques, a Portuguese boy who, after being the king of fantasy soccer, triumphing in the official rankings of three European countries, went from theory to practice and was hired as an observer by Legia Warsaw, one of the most important teams in Ekstraklasa, the highest division of the Polish league.

Giovanni Muroli, currently the grandfather of all scouts in activity, who at the age of 84 still travels hundreds of kilometers every month throughout northern Italy, looking for youngsters to launch in the youth teams of Genoa.



DIRECTOR'S NOTES

"With talent you win games, but it's with teamwork and intelligence that you win championships."
(Michael Jordan)

Scouting intends to narrate soccer and scouting as an art form: the series draws on the experiences of "Why do we dance" (Marco Pianigiani, 2019) and "Zidane: a 21st Century Portrait" (Douglas Gordon, Philippe Parreno, 2006), in which the technical gesture is filmed and told as an artistic expression. Thanks to specially shot footage, soccer leaves the stadiums and becomes an artistic form that can be read by the general public. Among scouting legends, software and algorithms, different intelligences, the series intends to explore this variegated, mysterious and surprising universe, with its protagonists and their stories, through a continuous passage from the past to the present and with an eye to the future and its transformations.

As far as the use of archival material is concerned, priority will be given to "behind the scenes", with unpublished interviews, national schools, training sessions, commentary services, market negotiations, and television comparisons, enhancing the sports story "on the field" in order to then use the fundamental steps and most significant images of soccer played in a rational and "thoughtful" manner. In order to understand the real extent and availability of the necessary archives, an expert archive producer is carrying out research aimed at the precise and complete identification of the materials.

THE AUTHORS



Vittorio Moroni - He writes for cinema, theater and television and has directed several films and documentaries as a director. Graduated in directing at the Cinema School of Milan (1995), with a master in Hollywood at Universal Pictures (2000) and winner of the Solinas Award with *Il sentiero del gatto* (2000), *Una rivoluzione* (2003), *Se chiudo gli occhi non sono più qui* (2009, special mention). As a screenwriter he wrote for cinema: *L'immensity* by E. Crialese (*Wildside* 2020 in pre-production), *Terraferma* with and by E. Crialese, (*Cattleya* 2011, Special Jury Prize at the Venice Film Festival), *Razzabastarda* with and by Alessandro Gassman (*Cucchini*, *Dap Italy*, 2013). For television he wrote: *Reputation* with Daniele Luchetti, TV series (*Fremantle* 2020, in development). He has also written and directed for cinema: *Tu devi essere il lupo* (50N, 2004, David and Nastro nomination for best new director), *Le ferie di Licu* (50N, 2006, Nastro nomination for best doc, Best Film festival of Villerupt, Festival of Toronto Hot docs), *Se chiudo gli occhi non sono più qui* (50N, 2013).



Paolo Barberi - Author and director, he is a founding member of the Italian Association of researchers and filmmakers Exploring the Metropolis. As director he debuted with the documentary *The Well, Voices of Water* from Ethiopia (Italy, 2011) broadcasted worldwide, selected in over 100 festivals and winner of 26 international awards. He then made the documentary *The Remnants* (Italy, Switzerland, 2017), co-produced by Rai Cinema and RSI and winner of the SSA Jury Prize / SUISSIMAGE at Vision du Réel Festival 2018. In 2020 he produced *Sono innamorato di Pippa Bacca*, a documentary by Simone Manetti (Italy-Canada, 2019), winner of the Golden Clog award at the 2018 IDFA Forum Festival in Amsterdam and selected at HOT DOCS FORUM 2018 in Toronto.



Alessandro Falcone - Author, journalist and screenwriter. In recent years he has concentrated on the writing of television programs and the development of historical and costume documentaries. Among his most recent works are *Il crac Parmalat* (*Fremantle* for *Crime&Investigation*), *Riina. Le Verità Nascoste* (*Stand by Me* for *National Geographic*), *MondMilito* (24 episodes, *Nacne* for *Rai Storia*), *Gli Angeli del Rugby* (*Nacne* for *Rai Cinema*), *Il Leone di Orvieto. Giancarlo Parretti and the climb to MGM* (*Suttvuess* for *Rai3*), *Ci vediamo in Tribunale* (*Stand by Me* per *Rai2*), *Buro Casa Finalmente* (*Fremantle* for *Living Channel*). He has edited the research of archive material for several historical documentaries. As a journalist he has written several investigations for *RaiNews24*, *Current* and other Italian broadcasters, as well as articles on lifestyle, sports and in-depth analysis for the web and print media.



Gian Piero Palombini - Author, screenwriter and director of documentaries. Born in Rome in 1974, after graduating he worked as a producer for several satellite channels; later he signed reportages and historical and costume documentaries for Rai and other broadcasters. Among the last works he signed as author *Il crac Parmalat* (*Crime&Investigation*), *Il Leone di Orvieto. Giancarlo Parretti e la scalata alla MGM* (*Rai 3*) and *Gli Angeli del Rugby* (*Rai Cinema*), *Cercando Stella - La vita di Celeste Di Porto* (*Rai3*), the reportages *The new dependencies* (*RaiNews 24*) and the play *Un partigiano come presidente-Il giovane Sandro Pertini*; he signed the direction of the documentary *TogliattiGrad* (*Rai Cinema*, presented at the 32nd Turin Film Festival) and *Tiberio Mitri - Non pensavo che la vita fosse così lunga* (*Rai 3*).