

Hiddink My Man

Tonight I wrote a piece on my hopes for Guus Hiddink to be the Man. Before our esteemed editor had time to post it (I am the only site journo too lazy to post myself due to my erratic internet connection, it is so emotional that I plan to treat it with a Valentine Day-chocolate, and for merlin to wipe out my worst English gaffes – as I do not speak Proper English, the seemingly very important thing for a Chelsea manager. Well neither does Guus Hiddink, nor Roman Abramovich you....no, I'm not allowed to use that word.)

Guus obviously did set aside his chores for Russia before this week's training games and agreed to Chelsea already. Great afternoon news.

Rapidly done and a decisive action really needed after the surprise ousting of Big Felipe. (And even if he failed at Chelsea, Big Felipe is a great manager and one of the ten best. Guus however is in my book The Best). I have to admit I did not believe it to be possible.

To me three things define a great manager. Many might not agree, but I simply think that football have changed so much the last ten years that many have not been emotionally or intellectually prepared to keep up. Most managers sure has not. Even new ones like Mark Hughes are scarily conservative and not up to the demands of top football today.

They are; man motivation, ability to change games and develop players. I think the main tactical changes that defined football in the 60's, 70's and 80's simply do not matter much today. 4-4-2 is basically dead, as is 4-3-3. Football is such a versatile game now that the number games are only interesting to the tv channels so they can put up the team sheet in a way that even dumb ones might understand. Scolari was accused of being too rigid in his 4-3-3 and that was why he failed...I never saw Scolari as a system man married to a certain system. He believed in a flowing football with attacking wing backs, which meant that he in reality played something like 4-5-1 with the wingers being more flexible and interchangeable with the full backs.

Anyway, the tactical game is not that much for me hence I have never had that much regard for managers that play old time football board games in their match preparations. The main reason for my lower admiration for the tactical game (and hence Italian football) is that I want intelligent and creative players, not soldiers marching according to orders on the pitch. Most tactical managers are terribly inflexible and can change very little during games,; I give you almost any Italian manager, Sven Göran Eriksson and others as evidence number 1.

Guus Hiddink hardly invented modern management, but he put it all together in one person. He learned the most from Holland's total football during the 70's. Brian Clough and sir Rednose in their unimitable and not all that kosher ways were from the beginning excellent motivators of players. Clough was a numbers player, but he sure could scare the stuffing and great play out of players that really was not that great. So can Ferguson, and he has learned to change the games. He is running off with the PL despite Man U not being close to as good as last year really. José Mourinho is a modern manager that also have the two first.

Guus Hiddink has never ever had all that great players to his disposal, at least not when he started working with them. Still he has with PSV, South Korea, Australia and Russia proved that he can make a footballer out of just anyone. He is simply an amazing man when it comes to develop strengths and abilities the players themselves never knew they

have. A late exemple plays for Tottenham today. Pavlyushenko was before the Euros a maybe talented footballer, but mainly a disaster on the pitch. Guus saw something in this tall gangly player and worked him ruthlessly when he had the Russian players collected before the Euro. In the tournament Pavlyuchenko probably was the biggest surprise to anyone that had seen the Russian team before the tournament. We already knew about Arshavin, so his success was less a surprise, so was Zhirkov. Had anyone set the odds for Pavlyushenko becoming one of the tournament's great players William Hill would have given you odds that would have enabled you to have a 6-month vacation at least. Hiddink's latest find is the 18-year old Dzagoev, that Europe will have to pay fortunes for if they want him to play in the big leagues. The kid is a sensation.

Game changer. I loved José Mourinho mainly for his ability to change the games. It did not always work as when at St James's he put on three men at halftime and then lost two due to injury and carding during the second half. But the guts he had. You always knew that JM would never fear to make an early substitution if he felt the need and bugger all with player confidence and ego. More times than not did he change the game. I do not think he was that much of a half time yeller to change games, which I think is Ferguson's main forte as game changer, plus throwing football shoes on his stars and send them packing if they do not obey him. Ferguson reign by fear, Hiddink reign by love.

Guus Hiddink can present 11 players playing one kind of a game first half. The same eleven can come out as a totally different team with a totally different game plan in the second half. You only recognise them because the jerseys. And if they don't then off the worst offenders go or he will shift from defending to attacking all the way into the wall. Guus Hiddink is still the best game shifter the world of football have seen, and that is the football I love. If one thing do not work, change it and change it while we still can do something about the game. He knows intimately what he can get out of the players. He has said that he wants to watch, learn and step back to think. Ideal for national football, harder in a club where there is 24-hour pressure. Still I believe he will surround himself with a team that allows him to step back and think before he knows how to implement the talents of Chelsea's players in the games. We might have bigger training staff than normal because of this as he will also continue as Russia's manager.

The third I have already touched on. Hiddink develops players, they do not need to be kids. He develops old players as well. He simply does not care about the age and experience thing. He has well proven this with his national teams as well in PSV. Dzagoev is a fresh example. Hiddink plays him like he is a veteran, not a pimply kid. I do not think JM is nearly as good at this yet. Ferguson is good at it with the way he finds and develops players. Wenger's only strength as manager is developing kids, but he can not handle finished players. Hiddink can handle them all.

Chelsea is the first time Guus Hiddink tries his hands on a team full of "finished" stars and I am totally excited about how it will turn out. I think and hope we will see reborn players using old names like Ballack, JT, even Lampard though he has been our best this season, Drogba. We might as well se Stoch as Quaresma as Deco2. So full of belief am I about Guus Hiddink that I believe he might even be able to rejuvenate Malouda, though it might take a bit longer. The first few weeks will probably be about business as usual more or less, but by the time we face Juventus already I think Ranieri will be shaking in his boots. Ranieri have never ever had a football philosophy of his own, and he will not figure out anything about how Hiddink will play the old lady of Torino. Ranieri is a responder and he must have nightmares of preparing for a game against a manager he can not figure out.

My gosh, this is exciting and interesting.

I honestly never thought it would be possible to get Hiddink. No doubt Roman have played the entire role in this. Well, Roman pays his, not too minor wages, at Russia, whether it is directly or indirectly. They have a great rapport, no JM egowars there. I think Roman put such a pressure on the Russian football federation that they might have thought KGB was back. After all, we do tend to forget that Roman Abramovich has poured as much money into Russian football, stadium developments, the national team and academies as he has poured into Chelsea. He probably made a phone call with an offer they simply could not refuse or a siberian tiger head might appear.

That Guus thinks it is possible to do both, is testament to the fact that he obviously thinks he is getting close to accomplish what he set out to do with Russia and Russian footballers and that he can ease off the pressure for a while.

The only thing that puts onions on the salmon is that I still believe Guus when he says that Russia comes first and that he will return. That is when we might determine whether Russian or Chelsea football comes first for Roman. Three months of Guus is not even wetting my appetite but I gratefully will take it above any suggestion any one else in the world has put forward for Chelsea this time. (I have not changed my view that firing Scolari was stupid, but when it was done we could not have prayed for a better solution).

So why did Guus take Chelsea on? He is 62, multimillionaire and self-admittedly lazy. He enjoys the good life and really, he has very little to prove.

But there is one thing he has to prove. One thing only. So forget the league, even the FA Cup. Guus Hiddink is here to land the big eared one. He took an anonymous PSV to the semi in the Champions League while also being Australia-coach. He sees the potential I see in Chelsea. A team capable of winning the Champions League despite a rather poor league season so far. He wants it.

Guus Hiddink have come to Chelsea to make a one time stab at the big one, with no preparations only his skill set to prove that it still is possible. Tremble United, Barca and whatever your names are. Chelsea has a manager to match a great group of players.

Buckle up Chelsea fans, I think we are in for a ride that will be exhilarating and probably the most exciting since Chelsea became the highest point pickers in the Premier League ever. What it will serve up to us, I do not have the faintest idea – but to me Guus Hiddink is and has always been the ideal manager for Chelsea.

GO BLUES!