Day 3. People and pathway

Thursday 17 December 2026. Live online session, about two hours, with Arabic interpretation

Do our selection, our staff and our pathway serve the model?

Today the model becomes the measure for people. Who you select, who coaches which age group, and how a player reaches the first team. After today you can finish your Academy Blueprint and send it to the course group.

Stories

Seba Tawfiq

Principle. Make room for the player nobody has a category for

Lesson. Give the outlier a real place in the group. The pathway for a player like her may not exist yet when the talent appears.

Discussion. Who in your academy is the player nobody has a category for yet?

Selection meeting, two players and one place

Your model says that after losing the ball we win it back together within seconds, and that in attacking organisation we play forward through the lines.

Judge both against the model again. Which behaviours belong to the player, and which to his birthday?

Virgil van Dijk, the boy they called lazy

Principle. Know the person before you judge the attitude

Lesson. Ask about the player's life before you label his behaviour. A lot of talent is lost to a label.

Discussion. Which player in your group have you judged without knowing what happens at his home?

Harry Kane, the late developer two clubs let go

Principle. Judge the player against the model, after the birthday

Your call. He is 11, born late in the school year and small for his age. Two clubs have said no. Would your selection process have kept him?

Lesson. At 11 you are judging a birthday and a growth curve as much as a player. Keep late developers in the system long enough to see who they become.

Discussion. How many of your squad were born in the last three months of the selection year?

Mohamed Salah and four buses to training

Principle. Access is part of the pathway

Lesson. Talent is spread across the whole country, access is not. A pathway brings the training to the child, or brings the child to the training at a cost the family can carry.

Discussion. Which talented 13-year-old in your region never reaches your club because of distance?

Saad Al-Shehri and the first-team offer

Principle. Staff who stay with a generation carry the model

Your call. Al-Nassr offers him its first team. In his place, would you take it?

Lesson. An age-group job can be a career. A coach who follows one generation from under-19 to under-23 builds the trust that wins tournaments.

Discussion. What would make a top young Saudi coach choose an age-group job over a first-team job?

Salem Al-Dawsari, from the Al Hilal academy to Asia's best

Principle. The academy plans the route after the debut

Lesson. A homegrown first-team player needs a planned route. A real debut, real minutes, and a step into a harder league when the time is right.

Discussion. What is the next Al-Dawsari in your club missing right now, minutes, a loan, or a coach who believes in him?

Saudi U-17, a national team that played a year up every week

Principle. Play up, every week

Lesson. Weekly matches against older opponents count for more than a few camps. A group-stage exit also shows the work is not finished.

Discussion. Which of your best under-15 players should be playing every week against under-16s?

Homework

Finish your Academy Blueprint and send it

Work on it alone, or together with colleagues from your club. Fill in the templates on this site, or print the PDFs.

- [ ] Fill in the Goal Setting Worksheet. One outcome, one performance and one process goal, each tied to a principle.
- [ ] Fill in the 90-Day Implementation Plan. Every action has one owner.
- [ ] Complete the staff map in the plan. Who writes the model, who trains it at each age, and who checks it on match day. Use names.
- [ ] Plan the school exam weeks and the mid-year break as lighter weeks.
- [ ] Check the whole Blueprint against the Blueprint Rubric. Score each line yourself.
- [ ] Send the finished Blueprint to the course group.

For the season

- [ ] Use the Pre-Match Checklist and the Post-Match Analysis for your next four matches.

Templates

- Goal Setting Worksheet. academy.klemengradisar.com/templates/goal-setting/
- 90-Day Implementation Plan. academy.klemengradisar.com/templates/90-day-plan/
- Blueprint Rubric. academy.klemengradisar.com/templates/pitch-rubric/

Clips

- Bio-banding at the academy, Thomas Broich, Borussia Dortmund. youtu.be/HmxFJ0nyLRg?t=225
- How your birth month impacts your success, Memeable Data. youtu.be/eYRgTj9MRLg?t=26
- Dan Ashworth on what a technical director does, TNT Sports Football. youtu.be/2X7ElEXFKiE?t=82

- The impact of a first-team debut for young players, Channel 4 Sport. youtu.be/o6q0jyHNf64?t=0

Reflection

Which decision in your academy will you now check against the model first?