



International Journal of Business & Applied Sciences

Volume 8 Issue 2, 2019 (Special Issue)

ISSN: 2165-8072

ISSN: 2471-8858

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Business and Applied Sciences
Academy of North America

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A Celebration of unsung Heroes in Football – A Spotlight on Russia’s Leonid Slutski

Nnamdi O. Madichie

This study explores the exploits of Leonid Slutski - CSKA Moscow manager and Manager of the Russian National Football Team. The study is based on a general review of managerial exploits and football team performance at both the club and country levels. Primarily the study is based on personal observations and a review of the secondary data sources. The study highlights the impact of football managers/ coaches on team performance drawing upon case illustrations from “unsung heroes” which, by definition, include little celebrated managers such as Ronald Koeman (Southampton Football Club UK), Claudio Ranieri/ Nigel Pearson (Leicester Football Club, UK); and Christopher Patrick - aka “Chris” Coleman (former coach of Fulham, Coventry and now the Welsh National Football Team) to support the contention of the “unresolved question” of managerial sacks and team performance. The study is the first to explore managerial resilience from the Baltic context. It also provides a pioneering effort in exploring and celebrating management practices of football managers who are described as “unsung heroes” – with implications drawn from the exploits of Sir Alex Ferguson at Manchester United.

Keywords: Talent Management, Football club versus country, CSKA Moscow, Leonid Slutski

Introduction

Founded as Obshestvo Lyubiteley Lyzhnogo Sporta – Amateur Society of Skiing Sports (OLLS), CSKA Moscow has gone through five other name changes before settling for CSKA (Central Sports Club of the Army) Moscow in 1960. The club plays its home matches at the 18,630-capacity Arena Khimki and has been a major force in Russia for many decades having finished fourth in their debut Soviet Top League season in 1936. The club had also won the USSR Cup in 1945 and followed that up with league success a year later in 1946. Amongst its other achievements, CSKA Moscow was the first of five Soviet Top League titles in six years, winning the League and Cup double in 1948 and 1951 respectively. The club also

claimed the championship again in 1970, earning them a first appearance as a Russian side in the European competition.

Although CSKA Moscow won the Soviet Top League in 1991, the team has struggled since the collapse of the USSR (Soviet Union) – it was not until 2003, under Valeri Gazzaev, that they finally won the Russian Premier-Liga. The club has claimed two more titles since, adding to five Russian Cups, but arguably their greatest achievement came in the UEFA Cup in 2005. CSKA Moscow became the first side from Russia to win a European title as they came from behind to beat Sporting Clube de Portugal 3-1 in the final in Lisbon.

Such success can be attributed to the management of the team and hence the need to explore the leadership traits of the man at the helm in the recent team success – Leonid Viktorovich Slutski – a Russian professional football coach and a former player (albeit with a short playing career) who took over the reins at CSKA Moscow on 26 October 2009. This study explores the “role of managerial attributions in shaping an understanding of talent management and the effectiveness of talent management systems within the emerging market context” (notably Russia). This is considered in the light of the article on mid-season change of 4 games before and 4 games after the manager’s sack. This study draws inspiration from Bruinshoofd and Ter Weel’s (2003) ‘Manager to go?’ – as a theoretical backdrop for PFC Central Sport Club of the Army aka CSKA Moscow under the leadership of Leonid Slutski since 2009 to date.

A review of the literature is undertaken at two levels – first a review of talent management based on the whether it is in its infancy or adolescence (Thunnissen, Boselie and Fruytier, 2013a); the relevance of context (Thunnissen, Boselie and Fruytier 2013b); a rethink of the giftedness and talent in sport (Tranckle and Cushion, 2006); and the mediators of talent and factors that affect successful talent identification and development (Turnbull, 2013). Second, a review of team performance in sports – from the three-season comparison of match performances among elite youth rugby league players (Waldron et al., (2014), to understanding the work and learning of high performance coaches (Rynne and Mallett (2012); coaches’ learning and sustainability in high performance sport (Rynne and Mallett, 2014); environmental contexts and culture change in a professional sports teams (Rynne, 2013); short-term versus long-term impact of football managers (Hughes et al., 2010); an econometric evaluation of the firing of a coach on team performance (Koning, 2000); and more importantly seven reasons for CSKA’s regeneration (Rogovitski, 2013).

Talent Management: A Conceptualisation

The literature on Talent Management (Al Ariss, Cascio, and Paauwe, 2014; Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, and González-Cruz, 2013; Thunnissen, Boselie, Fruytier, 2013a; Garavan, Carbery and Rock, 2012; Lewis and Heckman, 2006) have

highlighted the importance of the concept within organizations. While Lewis and Heckman (2006) undertook a critical review of the literature on talent management, Garavan, Carbery and Rock (2012) called for a mapping of talent development to fit the scope and architecture of organizations. Such mapping seems consistent with movement towards a pluralistic approach and the relevance of context (Thunnissen, Boselie, Fruytier, 2013b). It is in the light of this search for context that this study seeks to explore a sport organization, CSKA Moscow, with a view to deriving a veritable approach to understanding how to grapple with the complexities within organizations (see Jacobson, 2010; Norman, 2014). Before delving into talent management in sport, however, it is only appropriate to get some clarification as to what the concept means in a general context (see Table 1 for an exploration of studies on this subject).

According to Schon and Ian (2009) “the global war for talent” has gathered momentum in the last decade, having witnessed global changes that intensified the competition in pooling talent internationally and thereby challenging aspects of organizational development. Similarly, Chambers et al. (1998; cited in Schon and Ian, 2009) proclaim that “better talent is worth fighting for” and McKinsey (2008) claimed that next 20 years would be very smart and demanding where technically literate and intellectually equipped people will be placed in driving seat of the subject matter. Citing McKinsey (2008), Khan, Ayub and Baloch (2013: 31) define talent as “the sum of a person’s abilities – his or her intrinsic gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence, judgment, attitude, character and drive.” This definition also includes an individual’s ability to learn and grow. The global war for talent is also narrated by Richard et al. (2011) in their white paper for Development Dimensions International (DDI), which defined talent as a “mission critical process” that ensures organizations have the quantity and quality of people in place to meet their current and future business priorities (see also Michaels, Handfield and Axelrod, 2001).

Please label this: Table 1 A brief selection of studies

Paper/ Year	Title	Publication
Grusky (1963)	Managerial succession and organizational effectiveness.	American Journal of Sociology: 21-31.
Khanna and Poulsen (1995)	Managers of financially distressed firms: Villains or scapegoats?	Journal of Finance, 50, 919-940.
Doherty (1998)	Managing our human resources: A review of organizational behavior in sport.	Sport Management Review, 1(1), 1-24.
Koning (2000)	An econometric evaluation of the firing of a coach on team performance.	Mimeo, University of Groningen, September.
Monk (2000)	Modern apprenticeships in football: success or failure?	Industrial and commercial training, 32(2), 52-60.
Bruinshoofd and Ter Weel (2003)	Manager to go? Performance dips reconsidered with evidence from Dutch football.	European Journal of Operational Research, 148(2), 233-246.
Tranckle and Cushion (2006)	Rethinking giftedness and talent in sport.	Quest, 58(2), 265-282.
Beechler and Woodward (2009)	The global "war for talent"	Journal of International Management, 15(3), 273-285.
Hughes, Hughes, Mellahi and Guermat (2010)	Short-term versus Long-term Impact of Managers: Evidence from the Football Industry.	British Journal of Management, 21(2), 571-589.
González-Gómez, Picazo-Tadeo and García-Rubio (2011).	The impact of a mid-season change of manager on sporting performance.	Sport, business and management: An international Journal, 1(1), 28-42.
Tansley (2011)	What do we mean by the term "talent" in talent management?	Industrial and commercial training, 43(5), 266-274.
Rynne and Mallett (2012)	Understanding the work and learning of high performance coaches.	Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy, 17(5), 507-523.
Rynne (2013)	Culture Change in a Professional Sports Team:	International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching, 8(2), 301-304.

	Shaping Environmental Contexts and Regulating Power: A commentary.	
Thunnissen, Boselie and Fruytier (2013a)	A review of talent management: 'infancy or adolescence?'	The international journal of human resource management, 24(9), 1744-61.
Thunnissen, Boselie, and Fruytier (2013b)	Talent management and the relevance of context: Towards a pluralistic approach.	Human Resource Management Review, 23(4), 326-336.
Ogbonna and Harris (2014)	Organizational Cultural Perpetuation: A Case Study of an English Premier League Football Club.	British Journal of Management, 25, 667-686.
Rynne and Mallett (2014)	Coaches' learning and sustainability in high performance sport.	Reflective Practice, 15(1), 12-26.
Waldron, Worsfold, Twist and Lamb (2014)	A three-season comparison of match performances among selected and unselected elite youth rugby league players.	Journal of Sports Sciences, 32(12), 1110-1119.

Furthermore, the process covers all key aspects of an employee's "life cycle," selection, development, succession and performance management (see Richard et al., 2011). As these authors argue, there is a strong plea for better talent and better business performance where they revealed that high score in human capital posted higher stock market returns and better safety records (Richard et al., 2011). Similarly, Khan, Ayub and Baloch (2013: 34) pointed out that "talent management is not a democracy," claiming that the concept was based on the contention that companies had to focus on their potential talent, rather than behaving neutrally for all employees. According to them, "potential employee, if deployed accordingly and rewarded in sophisticated way then in result he or she would be adding remarkably in the value creation of organization" (Khan, Ayub and Baloch, 2013). Indeed, these authors specifically contended that:

Organizations must focus on the classification between talents; it should hunt the talent, carve their potentials, and use their potential appropriately on the basis of strong commitments and long term affiliation (Khan et al. 2013: 35). With the passage of time, however, organizations must invest in it and provide all possible opportunities in the shape of trainings and developments and last but not the least, engage them in stretched assignments with justified compensations. Such practices definitely enhance the performance of professionals and their readiness will definitely be sharpened. In his review of Davies and Davies book on talent Management in Education, Madichie (2015)

opined that “the key emphasis here is on leadership and this is outlined in the “stages of leadership development” as illustrated in five key stages encompassing (i) trust, (ii) empowerment, (iii) collaboration, (iv) alignment, and (v) transformation...”

Citing previous research (Yeung, 2006; Ruppe, 2006; Dunn, 2006; Chugh and Bhatnagar, 2006; Lewis and Heckman, 2006; Lewis, 2005; Branham, 2005; Bennett and Bell, 2004), Beechler and Woodward (2009: 640) also argued that “trends for talent management, talent wars, talent raids and talent shortage, talent metrics retention and concerns for talent strategy are expressed in the literature, across various countries [including] China, India, and across Asia.” These authors (see Beechler and Woodward, 2009: 641) also pointed out that “various aspects of talent management are recruitment, selection, on-boarding, mentoring, performance management, career development, leadership development, replacement planning, career planning, recognition and reward.” According to them, “competition and the lack of availability of highly talented and skilled employees make finding and retaining talented employee’s major priorities for organizations.”

Table 2. Interpreting Haskin

Verbatim	Reference	Key Message
“We can learn a lot about management from watching kids in action ...”	Shellenbarger (1999).	Observe
“Stories [help us understand] one thing in terms of another [as we] apply a story from one domain to another”	Gargiulo (2002: 34, 100).	Stories or narratives
“...the merits of far-ranging non-business to business analogies in order to shine light on less visible, perhaps slightly contrarian, business principles.”	von Ghyczy (2003)	Extrapolation, transferability
Soccer is a “fitting metaphor [...] for describing what business and leadership look like”	Jenkins (2005:19); Madichie (2009).	Fitting metaphor
“[...] everyone wants to discuss something new and sexy – [we must not, however] leave the basics behind”	Whitehead, (2011:15).	Sticking to the basics
In a world where many make management “more complicated than it needs to be” ...business leaders who execute best “know how to simplify things...”	Nottage (2004: 26) Bossidy and Charan (2002: 70)	Simplicity

In order to attract and retain the best talent anywhere in the world, an organization must have a strong and positive employer brand (Brewster et al., 2005). Talent has become the key differentiator for human capital management and for leveraging competitive advantage. Further, Pfeffer

and Sutton (2006) reflect that the typical HRM/talent mindset, which looks at performance results as an opportunity for an “assessment” of ability, leads to lower performance and unhappy staff who do not fulfil their potential and thus would reflect low talent engagement – an area which needs a special research focus (see Fombrum, 2006). Silvano and Ryan (2014: 102) also recently argued that “the global migration and movement of talent plays an important role in the economic growth and competitiveness of many nations.”

Talent management in sports

In their paper “Manager to go?” Bruinshoofd and Ter Weel (2003) examine whether the forced resignation of managers of Dutch football teams leads to an improvement in the results and reached the conclusion that “conclude from this that sacking a manager seems to be neither effective nor efficient in terms of improving team performance” (see p. 233). These authors set out to investigate a particular, and arguable unique “experiment” by investigating hiring and firing policies of Dutch football teams in order to observe whether it was justified that managers were set aside due to poor (short-run) performance (see Bruinshoofd and Ter Weel, 2003: 234). According to them, “during the period 1988– 2000, there have been 125 turnovers in the highest Dutch football league for a diversity of reasons. Taking into consideration that there are 18 teams in the Dutch football league this means that each team had on average seven managers in this period.”

Khanna and Poulsen (1995) investigate such cases for firms, which are in financial trouble. These firms appear to sack managers, who cannot be fully blamed for poor performance. As Bruinshoofd and Ter Weel (2003: 235) pointed out: The intriguing ‘experiment’ [in their study, was that the] ‘treatment’ group consists of managers, who have been forced to resign because of disappointing results; the ‘control’ group consists of managers, whose position we define as ‘sackable’, but who have remained in control.

Indeed, these are situations in which the performance dynamics are comparable to those after which managers have been forced to resign due to poor performance. Consequently, the authors suggest that “sacking a manager after poor performance does not lead to an improvement in team performance.” According to Bruinshoofd and Ter Weel, 2003: 245) “an unresolved question is why managers are sacked if it does not materially improve performance. For football our results suggest that it is not his experience (stay at the team) or the ability to deal with performance dips.” As far as the measurement of performance goes Bruinshoofd and Ter Weel (2003: 236) argue that in “the league tables, team performance is measured by the number of points obtained during an entire season. During a season, this variable is strictly non-decreasing (excluding extraordinary penalties by the football association). Measured in total number of points earned,

performance can increase or stagnate, but never decrease. In illustrating the pre-sack dip, we prefer a performance measure that can decrease when performance stagnates. In addition, the “shock effect” implies that we are looking at a period of time shorter than a full season of football, or accumulation of results to date.

Koning (2000) went beyond the “short-run analysis” by taking into consideration a longer time horizon, comparing performance in all games (during the season) prior to resignation with performance in all games (during the season) after resignation. He concludes that performance did not, by default, increase due to forced resignations orchestrated by the board or top management. As he points out, the board of a football team is inclined towards a much shorter time horizon – sometimes as short as the immediate effect in the first game after resignation (see Koning, 2000). Indeed, Koning (2000) observed that only 3 out of 10 (or 30 percent) of successors to a sacked manager had won their first game, whereas 3 or more (about another 30 percent) only managed a draw. This also suggests that there is no conclusive evidence of an immediate ‘shock effect’ after sacking a manager. In the case of voluntary resignation, 4 out of 10 (about 40 percent) successors managed to win the first game and 2 (or 20 percent) managed a draw. These percentages have implications for performance expectations vis-à-vis actual results following managers’ sack. As Bruinshoofd and Ter Weel (2003: 238) point out: “...in terms of performance we observe three distinct features prior to forced resignation: performance is not extremely good to begin with; it declines sharply over a four-game period; and, it ends up at a low level. We apply these criteria to all teams and all seasons to identify those instances in which a four-game period exhibits these three characteristics.” These four pre- and post-succession are illustrative gauges for performance related sacks. As Bruinshoofd and Ter Weel, 2003: 245) put it:

It turns out that would the manager have been allowed to stay, he would have done slightly better than his successor in improving performance. This is an important result for two additional reasons. First, it seems to become clear there is no such thing as a ‘shock effect’ [...] the sacking of a manager seems to be a costly way of signaling there might be something wrong with the team [...] the manager is often assigned as the scapegoat when performance is temporarily poor [...] Secondly, in large companies, CEOs are often blamed for poor performance. The aforementioned ‘scapegoatism’ is related to the leadership versus managerial qualities of those at the helm of organizations both within and outside of sports organizations.

Case Illustrations

In a bid to situate the exploits of the silent managers such as Slutski, illustrations are drawn from other silent and/ or salient managers that have

been able to demonstrate some talent management skills such as the likes of Ronald Koeman of Southampton, recently sacked José Mourinho of Chelsea, and the troubled Luis Van Gaal of Manchester United (all at the time of conducting the study

– Mourinho has since replaced Van Gaal at Manchester United).

Ronald Koeman

In a recent article Lea (2015) opined that “for the second year running, Southampton lost key players in the summer, but rather than panic, they simply kept faith with the philosophy that had already served them so well.” He went on to add that the departure of key talents from the club, had robbed “the south- coast club of three talented stars approaching the primes of their careers.” A year earlier, Southampton lost even more first-team players: Rickie Lambert, Dejan Lovren, Adam Lallana, Calum Chambers and Luke Shaw all moved on to pastures new. Mauricio Pochettino, the manager, also left, for Tottenham, leading many to predict Southampton would face a relegation battle. That they were never threatened by relegation, and actually spent much of the campaign challenging for a UEFA Champions League spot, is testament to the fine work done by Pochettino’s successor, Ronald Koeman, and the long-term planning, direction and infrastructure in place behind the scenes. Southampton have long given the impression that they are routinely thinking two steps ahead. Potential replacements for players likely to leave are earmarked months before bids are submitted, with the continent also scoured for managers who might fit the bill should the position at Southampton suddenly become vacant. There is a thriving analytics department that seeks out the marginal gains that are seen to be of critical importance in modern sport, with another group of staff dedicated to recruitment. Southampton’s academy, meanwhile, is arguably the best in England, with Gareth Bale, Theo Walcott, Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, Lallana and Shaw among its most notable alumni.

Les Reed, the executive director of football, is responsible for ensuring the operation runs smoothly and that Southampton’s work in different areas is coherent and coordinated. It has been described as “an eminently sensible way of running a Premier League club in the modern era, where the average tenure of managers decreases almost year on year. The set-up is sacrosanct at Southampton, with incoming individuals forced to fit into a pre-existing structure” (see Lea, 2015). Such a system prevents an over-reliance on a single figure, and means that when coaches or players move on the established way of working does not follow them through the exit door. One illustrative lesson may be learned from Southampton, where, as Lea (2015) opined:

Continuity is paramount. The approach has brought a great deal of success in recent years; it is easy to forget that Southampton were competing in

League One, England's third tier, as recently as 2011. After a difficult start to the current campaign, Koeman's side have been excellent of late, losing just one of 10 top-flight games since mid-August. Arguably one of their best performances came in their Boxing Day 4-0 (which could have easily been 6-0) drubbing of Arsenal (in second position in the leagues after 18 out of 38 games for the 2015/ 2016 season). Indeed, the terrific run of Southampton under Koeman, has ensured that they are now in twelfth place, ahead of embattled champions Chelsea (see Lea, 2015). Whether, or not, an unlikely place in the Champions League is achieved, the likes of Shane Long, Sadio Mane, Virgil van Dijk, and Victor Wanyama amongst others, are sure to attract attention from elsewhere next summer. Koeman, too, has won plenty of admirers and could be a target for a major European side in need of a manager ahead of the 2016/17 campaign. His current employers will not panic if he decides to move on; that is simply not how they work. As another push for European football gathers pace, Southampton continue to act as a shining example for similar-sized clubs to emulate (Lea, 2015).

José Mourinho "The Special One"

Described as the underdog who became an over-dog, José Mourinho, son of a Portuguese goalkeeper who never made it himself as a player and got his break as an unknown thanks to Sir Bobby Robson, the former England manager. In charge at Sporting Lisbon in the mid-1990s, Robson took a shine to "this young, good-looking ex-schoolteacher who spoke very good English" and took him under his wing, first in Portugal and then at Barcelona. In Catalonia, Mourinho's supreme facility with languages led to a translator's post, then a coaching role and finally the offer of a managerial job in Portugal. Twelve years on, he hasn't stopped running since. In happier times, Mourinho went nine years without losing a single home game. Arguably Mourinho can be incredibly self-centered but his trophy count is a good indication why, in Luís Lourenço's biography, there is a foreword by Manuel Sérgio, the professor when a young Mourinho was taking a sports science degree, acclaiming him as "a coach of the stature that Maradona and Pelé were as players". Mourinho, at his best, collects silver in the way other people collect stamps (Taylor, 2015a). He is a trophy machine and it would be absurd to think he will not be offered a quick return to the sport.

As Ronay (2015) points out, Mourinho's methods were progressive. In the four-square world of English football his minor tactical shifts – the rejigging of the midfield, the sole striker – were effective. But it was his uniquely "unignorable" presence that led the way. At Old Trafford in his first season he stood in the tunnel and shook every Manchester United player's hand as they ran out, congratulating these slightly bemused-looking senior pros on the basic achievement of getting to play in his presence. Chelsea won 2-1. Banned from the touchline against Bayern Munich, he allegedly hid

himself in a laundry basket and was wheeled into the dressing room to give his team talk.

José Mourinho's first departure from Chelsea, after a falling-out with Abramovich, left him unscarred. He went on to glorious success with Internazionale in Milan. But already a kind of built-in managerial obsolescence was starting to show. Thrilling, magnetic, relentlessly challenging personalities can also be rather draining. At every club, Mourinho has seemed to suffer what has been called "third season syndrome" a kind of scorched earth effect. His behavior has been disturbing at times. At Madrid, he was caught on film poking a Barcelona coach in the eye during a side-line scuffle. Feuds with fellow managers, opponents and now even his own players have become increasingly personal and poisonous.

Ronay (2015) also highlights that, "After Chelsea sacked the obstreperous Portuguese, English football has to say goodbye to the sport's most gloriously hyperbolic figure, again." Indeed, the recent description of José Mourinho is rather instructive. As Taylor (2015a) recently reported, the "story of Mourinho's career [as] a succession of brief and sometimes wild flings without ever settling into a long-term relationship. Yes, the sex can be amazing at first – but the split is not always amicable." Ronay (2015) pointed out that while "most managers get 10 years at the very top. Mourinho has had 12." For a man who is essentially a self-made phenomenon, powered by brains and chutzpah, by always being the smartest and most provocative guy in the room, it has been a draining and indeed diminishing run of success."

According to him, Mourinho won the Champions League with Porto in 2004 and was headhunted by Roman Abramovich, Chelsea's ambitious, financially incontinent new owner. A lolling, purring, supremely confident figure, he famously announced at his first Chelsea press conference that summer that he was "special" (see Ronay, 2015). And so, he was, the first really modern celebrity-superstar manager, who found in England a very receptive new home. Mourinho's response to the challenge of managing empowered superstar players was to look and dress and speak like their much cooler, cleverer richer older brother. He sought the spotlight, in part as a way of drawing attention from his players, in part simply because he liked it. In his first season in England he was voted GQ's Man of the Year and the sixth sexiest man alive by a panel chaired by Elton John and Claudia Schiffer.⁴

As Taylor (2015)⁵ points out, "perhaps the saddest part, now José Mourinho has been sent to the guillotine, is that everything has unraveled so quickly that it will not be hugely popular to say in his defense that he still belongs to the small and exclusive band of managers whose achievements give him authentic greatness." Mourinho has learned the hard way that managers, like players, have spells of good and bad form

and, ultimately, it has cost him his job. Yet we should still recognize what we are dealing with here. Without greatness, there is no fall, no tragedy. How else can we categorize a manager who has won eight league championships in four different countries, the European Cup with two clubs, the UEFA Cup, the FA Cup, three League Cups, the Spanish Cup, the Italian Cup and so many manager of the year awards it is difficult to keep track. Taylor (2015a) sums up thus:

All that can really be said for certain is this was supposed to be the season when Mourinho showed he was capable of creating a dynasty at Chelsea. Sir Alex Ferguson lasted 26 years at Manchester United. Arsène Wenger is approaching two decades in the job at Arsenal. Mourinho? He took offence to the suggestion everything tended to unravel in the third season but, once again, we are at the same stage, with the same questions and suspicions. It happened at Chelsea in his first stint, it divided Real Madrid into a state of civil war, and it partly explained why United took a long, hard look when they needed someone to replace Ferguson, then turned the other way. This is the story of Mourinho's career: a succession of brief and sometimes wild flings without ever settling into a long-term relationship [...] It is the one challenge that has always been beyond him and, at this stage, the overwhelming conclusion is that will probably always be the case. According to Taylor (2015b), Manchester United will want assurances from José Mourinho that he understands the club's traditions and is willing to fall into line if they decide that the former Chelsea

⁴ According to Ronay (2015) "Portuguese Man of Phhhwoaaaaaaar" was the Daily Mirror headline above a 2005 profile of this "ruggedly handsome, intelligent, rich suave sophisticated ... dark and brooding enigma." Before long, Mourinho was pictured kicking a ball around gravely with Shimon Perez in an – apparently doomed – attempt to summon peace in the Middle East. Despite his sack, however, offers will come, perhaps from the Football Association should England need a new manager after the summer's European Championships. Mourinho is unlikely to accept such a low-throttle option, even if currently his own status is hard to gauge, a superstar entity that is either in a process of terminal decline or periodic retrenchment. Meanwhile his recent replacement and former sacked compatriot at the same Chelsea, The Dutch coach Guus Hiddink is back at the helm of affairs in what has become the musical chairs attributed to the Club.⁵ <http://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2015/dec/17/jose-mourinho-great-manager-flaws-chelsea-sacked-manager-should-take-over-from-louis-van-gaal>.⁶ While the club are giving serious consideration to moving out the Dutchman after three damaging defeats in a row, there is still concern at the highest level of Old Trafford about Mourinho's managerial style and specifically the elements of his work that led them to

decide against employing him when Sir Alex Ferguson retired in 2013 (Taylor, 2015b). Manchester United were acutely aware of Mourinho's strengths but also mindful about the amount of conflict he tends to generate, as well as his reluctance to promote younger players. Ferguson regularly attracted controversy and had a fractious relationship with the Football Association but the feeling at Old Trafford is that Mourinho goes even further with his own outbursts and, in the worst moments, brought Chelsea into disrepute, leading to a one-match stadium ban earlier in the 2015/ 2016 season.⁷

Leonid Viktorovich Slutski

"It is true. I got the injury at 19 when I was climbing a tree looking for a neighbor's cat. I ended up as a hero in my village because I saved the cat. Unfortunately, I also fell out of the tree and injured my knee."⁸

Compared to other football coaches such as Sir Alex Ferguson and José Mourinho (recently sacked Chelsea manager), there isn't much to say about Leonid Viktorovich Slutski apart from the fact that he was born 4 May 1971 in Volgograd; is a Russian professional football coach and a former player (albeit with a short playing career as captured in the above quote), and currently coaches CSKA Moscow – a job he has held since 2004.

The above is against the backdrop of a short professional career, which spans Krylia Sovetov in order to replace Juande Ramos (from Spain) at the CSKA helm. In December 2009, under Slutski, CSKA reached the knock-out stage of the Champions League for the first time in the club's history, before being knocked out by José Mourinho's Inter Milan in the quarter-finals. Two years later the achievement was repeated, when CSKA defeated Inter Milan at the San Siro in the last game of the group stage. It was also under the guidance of Slutski, CSKA Moscow reached the UEFA Champions League quarter-finals for the first time in 2010, and have lifted the domestic cup twice.

Towards the 2012/13 season Slutski strengthened the team defense and re-organized the attack, which helped the team set a record of 15 games without conceding, and to win all the games where the team scored first, resulting in a championship.⁹ Overall, in terms of achievements, CSKA Moscow won the Russian Premier League in 2012/2013; the Russian Cup in 2010/2011 and 2012/2013; as well as the Russian Super Cup in 2012/2013.

Discussions

Talent management in sport has grown over the last decade with the constantly revolving chairs in the recruitment and retention of players and coaches in a range of sports from Rugby, through hockey to football. In the case of the UK, while Arsenal Football club has been renowned for

grooming players for loans, transfers and outright sale to other clubs notably

Manchester City, Chelsea football club has been a notable example in the turnover of managers. For the purpose of this study, however, unlike the recruitment and retention and/ or talent management of players, the focus has been on managers and their talent management skills. These skills may be attributed to management and/ or leadership skills of the profiled managers from Ronald Koeman at Southampton through Jose Mourinho at Chelsea to Leonid Slutski at CSKA Moscow – an outlier to the English League. Talking about management vis-à-vis leadership skills, Haskin's study highlighted some key leadership traits in football such as patience, dexterity, improvisation, defiance and/ or risk-taking, opportunity recognition especially of unoccupied spaces, as well as having a clear strategy (see Table 2). Starting

⁶ Meanwhile Man United are deliberating about how long Van Gaal should be given after a sequence of three wins out of the last 13 games has caused the club to fall to sixth place in the Premier League table – a position that would mean Europa League football next season – and nine points off the top.

⁷ Equally, we are entitled to ask serious questions of him now his second spell at Chelsea has gone the same way as the first, and it is legitimate to wonder whether all the various bees in his bonnet had started to buzz so out of control he simply could not handle it when his team lost their way.

⁸ Leonid Slutski, CSKA Moscow coach (On the bizarre end to his playing career).

Table 3 Lessons and Scenarios

Lessons	Scenarios
# 1. Be deliberate, be patient	Unlike other games delineated by a prescribed length of time, I learned early on that the soccer clock has two unique aspects. First, it really never stops. It does not stop after goals, or when the ball goes out of bounds, or even when a player appears injured. Thus, players cannot and do not run at full speed for the entire game. Rather, the game has a flow that is at times at full speed, but most of the game exhibits a deliberate, patient pace.
# 2. Develop perseverance, determination, and grit	The first four opponents were not any taller, faster, stronger, or more skilled than my son and his teammates. All four, however, won. Each game was close until the second half. The opponents were in better condition and they were able to play with just as much intensity, bursts of acceleration, and crispness at the end of the game as they had at the beginning.
# 3. Acquire a unique dexterity and ambidextrousness	Most American children learn through basketball, baseball, and American-style football to dribble, pass, catch, shoot, and hold onto a ball with their hands. Unfortunately, as soccer captures their heart, it is not unusual to see most six- year olds, as a soccer ball arcs toward them, reach out and catch it or knock it away with their hands – it is instinctive. The best players were the ones who transitioned the quickest to dribbling, passing, catching, shooting, and controlling a soccer ball with their feet.
# 4. Be prepared to re- direct	Soccer was once described as a game of “legs and lungs.” This is more true if “and head” is added. No other youth sport uses a player's head to so great an extent. Sure, there are the physical aspects – winning balls in the air, deflecting shots, and thwarting an opponent's attack all with a timely header. With few time outs for coaching, and with teammates in constant motion, players must think for themselves, in real time. The best teams knew when to push up, when to switch the field, when to overlap, or when to attack.

# 5. Dare to improvise	Chris knew when to let an incoming pass continue through his legs. Greg and Michael always seemed to seize the right moment for a give and go. And, Daniel knew when to juggle the ball for just a split second to gain control and then send it to the right wing where Steven had a step on his defender. None of these moments were scripted. None were in a play book. None were in response to a coach's side-line call. Players simply had a feel for how best to respond to unfolding circumstances, perceiving a promising moment for using their creative skills.
# 6. Discover the unoccupied spaces	The space occupied by 22 young soccer players and one soccer ball is less than one percent of a soccer field's physical area. There is lots of open space that offensive players must scan to exploit and that defenders must protect. As best as I can tell, Wal-Mart, and its imitators, do not limit themselves to the retail landscape they will use...all open spaces, and many ineffectively occupied spaces, appear to be in their sights.
# 7. Turn defense into offense	Sometimes the best offensive weapon on the team was Jake, our stout defenseman. He could blunt an opponent's up-field thrust and start an offensive fast break. Jake knew when to lead his defender teammates to midfield where they could receive drop-back passes to switch the field or intercept the opponent's attempts to clear the ball. There were many games when our defenders were critical to the team's offense.

Lessons	Scenarios
# 8. Define the rules often and clearly	William arched a long, down-field pass to a sprinting midfielder who took a powerful shot that whistled past the goal keeper's ear. It was an exciting moment. Alas, the side judge waved his flag. No matter how spectacular, no matter the score, no matter how precise the pass, the goal was negated by the midfielder being off side. The rule is simple and there is nothing to be gained by breaking it. In practice, the kids were taught the rule ... reminded of the rule ... and instructed to play by the rule. There are not many rules in soccer that constrain play – the off- side rule, however, is one of them.
# 9. Do not let others, or an historical mindset, define you	The state quarterfinal game was played on a field outlined across adjacent baseball fields. The edges of the goal keeper's box were barely two steps from the side-lines and the midfield circle nearly touched the top of the 18-yard line. Our team had played on fields earlier in the season that had an uphill and a downhill end; some that were much larger than their home field; some that were mostly dirt; some that were smooth while others were not; and some whose chalk lines were hard to see. Youth soccer fields seemed to come in all sizes and conditions. The pre-game walkabouts were critical to develop a physical context for the game. They had to relinquish the home-field context etched in their minds.
# 10. Be defiant to a point – some dissent is healthy	It is important to be clear – there is no room for knowingly breaking laws or being disrespectful of people in (or out of) authority. And, yet, those two fundamentals leave room for politely, and in an informed manner, taking on the role of a “devil's advocate”, declaring dissenting views, and even sometimes being disobedient. There is nothing wrong with offering a warning to one's leaders or colleagues – e.g., the business should move slower, study a scenario more, re-consider this, or refrain from doing that. Most managers prefer having to consider ways to assuage an employee who asks probing, provocative, poignant questions rather than repeatedly trying to motivate an unengaged one.
# 11. Are there women?	The score was tied with our cross-town rival. In the second half, our team's offensive probes had come to naught. Suddenly, our midfielder faked a dribble to the left causing the defender to lean right. Maggie quickly moved in the opposite direction, speeding past the defender with a breakaway. At the top of the box, she shot the ball towards the upper right corner of the net. Goal! We won! Maggie was the heroine! Maggie moved on – she did not try out for the team the next year. No one seemed to know why. Maybe it was simply the age of the kids, the difference in neighborhoods, priorities, friends, or other interests arising.

⁹ <http://www.sports.ru/football/148961733.html>

With the ‘patience’ element, he argues that unlike other games delineated by a prescribed length of time, the football clock has two unique aspects. First, it really never stops. It does not stop after goals, or when the ball goes out of bounds, or even when a player appears injured. Thus, players cannot, and do not run at full speed for the entire game. Rather, the game has a flow that is at times at full speed, but most of the game exhibits a deliberate, patient pace.

The implications of this are clear – longevity, long-term strategy and dexterity are of the essence. No manager better exhibits this trait than Sir Alex Ferguson and his reign at Manchester United (see Elberse, 2013). When it comes to the second element, dexterity, Haskin pointed out that “the best players were the ones who transitioned the quickest to dribbling, passing, catching, shooting, and controlling a ball with their feet. This is closely related to improvisation, which was expressed in terms of “daring to improvise,” and described by Haskin as “the headiness the best players possessed.”

According to him (see Haskins, 2013: 926): Lance was great with heel passes at just the right moment. Chris knew when to let an incoming pass continue through his legs. Greg and Michael always seemed to seize the right moment for a give and go [...]. None of these moments were scripted. None were in a play book. None were in response to a coach’s side-line call. Players simply had a feel for how best to respond to unfolding circumstances, perceiving a promising moment for using their creative skills.

Defiance has more to do with risk-taking whether it is in terms of receiving a booking, being sent off (in the case of players) or perhaps getting sacked by the management (in the case of coaches). As Haskins (2013: 931) points out:

“It was a hard slide tackle, just short of connecting with the ball. Mitch got a yellow card. David went high for a header, inadvertently elbowing his opponent. He got a yellow card. Jason had been tugged on all game long – he said something unkind to the referee. He got a yellow card. Roger could not stop – he knocked the opponents’ goalie off his feet. He got a red card and was ejected. David went up hard for a header, elbowing his opponent ... again! He got a second yellow card which immediately turned into a red card. He and Roger were now on the bench for the remainder of the game and the next. For the rest of this game, the team played with two fewer players than the opponent. We lost”.

Finally, it is appropriate to have a clear strategy, be it plan A or plan B in case the script on the field of play changes (as it more often than not, does). Haskin highlights this in terms of “define the rules often and clearly,” where he explained that (Haskin: 2013: 929): No matter how spectacular, no matter the score, no matter how precise the pass, the goal was negated by the midfielder being off side. The rule is simple and there is nothing to be gained by breaking it. In practice, the kids were taught the rule ... reminded of the rule ... and instructed to play by the rule. There are not many rules in soccer that constrain play – the off-side rule, however, is one of them.

Similarly, the label he proposes, “do not let others, or an historical mindset, define you,” has implications beyond having to embark upon “pre-game walkabouts [...] critical to develop a physical context for the game” and having to “relinquish the home-field context etched in their minds.” We have seen how complacency at Chelsea led to the sack, for the second time, of a true trophy winning manager, Jose Mourinho. This could be interpreted as taking every game as seriously as the past or next. The bottom-line in this context is determination, resilience and consistency – some of these themes are recurrent in both Rogovitski (2013) assessment of CSKA Moscow as well as in Elberse’s (2013) assessment of Sir Alex Ferguson’s Formula for Manchester United.

In highlighting the morale of the story from Haskin’s study, some key points that sum up the leadership traits include traits such as having a clear strategy especially in the traits that have also been identified in entrepreneurship discourse – i.e. risk-taking (consistency of selection; Vágner Love’s return), opportunity recognition (transfer market savvy; failure of opponents), dexterity (beating the bottom half; Elimination from Europe), and patience (patience with the coach). Starting with the entrepreneurial (or perhaps intrapreneurial) trait of “risk-taking,” Rogovitski clearly highlighted that “the backbone of the team (CSKA Moscow) has remained constant for many years, with the defense, especially, undergoing minimal changes over recent campaigns” (consistency of selection) – see Table 3.

The ability of CSKA Moscow to retain the likes of Akinfeev, Honda and Dzagoev meant there was no major reshufflings – and that trio’s consistency was key to title glory. Furthermore, resigning an ex-player or “ex-Army man” (Vágner Love’s return), which is normally considered in risk even if not uncommon in football, did contribute to the team’s success as he “demonstrated what a top player he is [...] Scoring five times after the mid-season break” (see Rogovitski, 2013).

Secondly, where opportunity recognition is concerned, CSKA Moscow comfortably got the most out of the transfer market in terms of quality-to-price ratio (transfer market savvy). As Rogovitski (2013) put it: Signings like Brazilian right-back Mário Fernandes and Sweden duo Rasmus Elm and Pontus Wernbloom did not just add strength-in-depth; they became integral players, with the latter particularly impressing throughout the campaign. All arrived with sensible price tags and made far greater impacts than some of the big-money buys elsewhere in the Premier-Liga. Another opportunity recognition element is the ability to capitalize on the failure of opponents “...this year the ‘Army Men’ did not falter and took full advantage when Zenit lost crucial ground with away draws against FC Kuban Krasnodar and FC Rostov.” This trait is like “dexterity” and/ or improvisation, which translate into having “no room for complacency” – another recipe for success. As we are told in the particular case of CSKA Moscow, “the championship was not won in games against direct rivals [but through the] ability to put away weaker

opponents (i.e. beating the bottom half) without mercy.” We are also told how the painful elimination (i.e. elimination from Europe) of CSKA Moscow from the UEFA Europa League play-offs proved a blessing in disguise, as Slutski’s men refocused and fought successfully (see Tables 5 and 6).

Table 4. Rogovitski 7-pointer

Reasons	Description
Transfer market savvy	CSKA got the most out of the transfer market in terms of quality-to-price ratio. Signings like Brazilian right-back Mário Fernandes and Swede duo Rasmus Elm and Pontus Wernbloom became integral players having arrived with sensible price tags than elsewhere in the Premier-Liga.
Consistency of selection	The backbone of the team has remained constant for many years, with the defense, especially, undergoing minimal changes over recent campaigns. Their ability to keep the likes of goalkeeper Igor Akinfeev and playmakers Keisuke Honda and Alan Dzagoev meant there was no major reshuffling – and the trio’s consistency was key to title glory.
Failure of opponents	CSKA were seven points ahead of Zenit at one stage but only managed a third-place finish. Lessons learned? CSKA did not falter and took full advantage when Zenit lost away against FC Kuban Krasnodar and FC Rostov.
Beating the bottom half	The championship was not won in games against direct rivals – for instance, CSKA took just a point from matches against Zenit – but thanks to an ability to put away weaker opponents ‘without mercy.’
Vágner Love's return	Many doubted the wisdom of re-signing the tempestuous Brazilian, but the 28-year-old forward demonstrated his worth by scoring 5 times after the mid-season break – supplementing an attack that already boasts the likes of Ahmed Musa and Seydou Doumbia.
Elimination from Europe	Without the biggest squad, CSKA’s painful August departure from the UEFA Europa League play-offs proved a blessing in disguise. With just domestic matters to concentrate on, Slutski’s men refocused and fought successfully on two fronts.
Patience with the coach	As Slutski admitted after CSKA’s loss to Swedish side AIK in the Europa League play-offs, “I have asked to leave several times already.” However, his resignation was refused and he went on to prove his worth. According to official CSKA sources, “Slutski is a clever person, he learns from his and others’ mistakes. CSKA were close to winning the title last year but the team were not good enough in the end. Now everything’s worked out.”

Table 5. CSKA Moscow Ten-year European record

Year/ Season	Record
2014/2015	Group stage
2013/2014	Group stage
2012/2013	UEFA Europa League play-offs
2011/2012	Round of 16
2010/2011	UEFA Europa League round of 16
2009/2010	Quarter-finals
2008/2009	UEFA Cup round of 16
2007/2008	Group stage
2006/2007	UEFA Cup round of 32
2005/2006	UEFA Cup group stage

Note: UEFA Champions League unless indicated otherwise Source: UEFA. Retrieved from: <http://www.uefa.com/uefachampionsleague/season=2016/clubs/club=54266/profile/index.html#>

A final identifiable trait was the gesture made by Slutski offering to step down (patience with the coach) is a humble gesture especially if personal targets are not achieved within time frames. For example, Slutski's gesture, "I have asked to leave several times already," even though declined, seemed to pay-off in the end – "debunking earlier criticism that he didn't have what it takes to win a championship."¹⁰

¹⁰See Rogovitski (2013) Retrieved from: <http://www.uefa.com/memberassociations/news/newsid=1957684.html#>

Table 6. Leonid Slutski's Match Log 2015

Date	Competition	Phase	Team A	Score	Team B
28.07.2015	UEFA Champions League	Third qualifying round	CSKA Moskva	2-2	Sparta Praha
05.08.2015	UEFA Champions League	Third qualifying round	Sparta Praha	2-3	CSKA Moskva
18.08.2015	UEFA Champions League	Play-offs	Sporting CP	2-1	CSKA Moskva
26.08.2015	UEFA Champions League	Play-offs	CSKA Moskva	3-1	Sporting CP
05.09.2015	UEFA EURO	Qualifying round	Russia	1-0	Sweden
08.09.2015	UEFA EURO	Qualifying round	Liechtenstein	0-7	Russia
15.09.2015	UEFA Champions League	Group stage	Wolfsburg	1-0	CSKA Moskva
30.09.2015	UEFA Champions League	Group stage	CSKA Moskva	3-2	PSV
09.10.2015	UEFA EURO	Qualifying round	Moldova	1-2	Russia
12.10.2015	UEFA EURO	Qualifying round	Russia	2-0	Montenegro
21.10.2015	UEFA Champions League	Group stage	CSKA Moskva	1-1	Man. United ¹¹
03.11.2015	UEFA Champions League	Group stage	Man. United	1-0	CSKA Moskva

Source: UEFA. Retrieved from:

<http://www.uefa.com/teamsandplayers/coaches/coach=250011091/profile/index.html#>

¹¹ While Manchester United only managed a 1-0 win in November 2015 (see Henson, 2015), another high-flying English side, Manchester City, lost 1-2 exactly a year earlier despite having only a 37 percent possession of the game (see McNulty, 2014). Post-match transcripts read: "CSKA's victory was the first by a Russian side away to English opposition since Spartak Moscow's win over Ray Harford's Blackburn Rovers in September 1995." Russian sides have lost six and drawn eight of their subsequent visits before tonight."

¹² Wayne Rooney's late header secured Manchester United victory over CSKA Moscow and top spot in Champions' League Group B at a nervy Old Trafford. Only an excellent David de Gea save and Chris Smalling's last-ditch block had prevented Seydou Doumbia putting the visitors ahead a minute earlier.

Conclusions and Implications

The choice of the case was based, not just due to the feat of CSKA Moscow as current champions of the Russian League, but also because it took the club seven long years to achieve that glory. Further insight was also gleaned from Rogovitski (2013) who highlighted “seven reasons for CSKA’s regeneration” from grass to grace. Unlike the ruthlessness of Roman Abramovich (my opinion, based on my observation of how often the Russian oligarch and owner of Chelsea Football Club in the English Premier League has sacked coaches), the management of CSKA Moscow have been a bit patient with Slutski. This goes to show that a leader deserves a second chance, following his leadership traits including risk-taking. Indeed, according to CSKA Moscow adviser Valeri Nepomnyaschi (see Rogovitski, 2013): Slutski is a clever person, he learns from his and others’ mistakes. CSKA were close to winning the title last year but the team was not good enough in the end. Now everything’s worked out.

Indeed, by extending the discourse to an under researched culture – Russia – this study has a myriad of managerial implications. From the musical chairs that have come to characterize Chelsea football Club under the ownership of Russian Billionaire Abramovich, and the U-turn to his usual brutishness, has recently re-signed ‘the special one,’ José Mourinho to the delight of fans (Ashton, 2013):

The owner is starting over, breaking off from his summer holiday to be at Stamford Bridge to show some solidarity at the start of the season. Abramovich, Mourinho and the fans are back together again, one big happy family after six miserable years apart. He has responded to their wishes by bringing Mourinho back to Stamford Bridge. It has been just over 10 years since Abramovich bought the club from Ken Bates and turned them into the one of the biggest forces in European football overnight. They have won three Premier League titles and four FA Cups in that time (the same as Arsenal under Arsene Wenger’s entire 17 years at the club). This gesture or course of action is consistent with the themes identified in the success of CSKA Moscow-- notably Vágner Love’s return; and Patience with the coach (in this case, Mourinho, ‘The Special One’ who was central to the resurgent Chelsea in the team’s glory days) and now José Mourinho having been sacked yet again by Chelsea, but nonetheless deemed suitable to take up the reins at Manchester United.

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