

Ajax's Academy

1) Discussion

- a) What teams are known for promoting youth?
 - b) Does your favourite team play with a lot of young players? If so, who are they? If not, would you like them to?
 - c) Who are the best young players in the world?
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2) Vocabulary

a) Match the vocabulary to the definition.

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| 1) To Excel (verb) | a) Very important for success or development. |
| 2) To Lay the foundations (phrase) | b) A young person who have exceptional abilities or talents. |
| 3) Immense (adjective) | c) In a way that is one of a kind or special. |
| 4) Pivotal (adjective) | d) Very large or great. |
| 5) Uniquely (adverb) | e) To perform very well. |
| 6) Prodigy (noun) | f) Important and making a big contribution. |
| 7) Instrumental (adjective) | g) To start or establish the basic parts needed for something. |
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b) Complete the sentences with the vocabulary from exercise 2a.

To Excel

To Lay the Foundations

Immense

Pivotal

Uniquely

Prodigy

- 1) Matt Busby helped _____ for Manchester United's future success.
- 2) The purchase of David Silva from Valencia in 2010 was a _____ moment for Manchester City and their progress.
- 3) Diego Maradona is _____ admired by people in the city of Naples.
- 4) Kai Havertz has _____ in his role as a false 9 at Arsenal.
- 5) Kylian Mbappe and Erling Haaland are considered modern _____ in world football, with their extraordinary skills and young age.
- 6) Lionel Messi's contributions to FC Barcelona were _____, with countless goals and assists that led to numerous trophies.
- 7) Toni Kroos was an _____ part of Real Madrid's midfield for 10 years. He contributed greatly to the success and dominance of the team in Europe.



3) Quick Read - Read the article quickly and answer the question.

- a) Which players are mentioned in the article?
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De Toekomst

Ajax Amsterdam's youth academy, often referred to as "De Toekomst" (The Future), is renowned for producing some of the finest talents in football history. This prestigious academy has been a launchpad for numerous football legends and these players not only excelled at Ajax but also left an indelible mark on the global football stage.

Johan Cruyff joined Ajax's youth ranks in the late 1950s and made his first-team debut in 1964. Cruyff's influence on the game is immeasurable. He won eight Eredivisie titles and three consecutive European Cups with Ajax before moving to Barcelona, where he continued his illustrious career. As a player and later as a manager, Cruyff revolutionised football with his visionary playing style and philosophy, laying the foundations for "Total Football" and influencing generations to come.

Frank Rijkaard emerged from Ajax's academy in the early 1980s, debuting for the senior team in 1980. Known for his versatility and composure, Rijkaard helped Ajax secure multiple domestic titles and the UEFA Cup Winners' Cup in 1987. He later achieved immense success with AC Milan, winning two European Cups. Rijkaard also enjoyed a stellar international career, winning the UEFA European Championship with the Netherlands in 1988. As a manager, he guided Barcelona to two La Liga titles and a UEFA Champions League triumph.

Dennis Bergkamp entered the Ajax academy as a young teenager and made his first-team debut in 1986. His technical brilliance and creative flair helped Ajax win the Eredivisie in 1990 and the UEFA Cup in 1992. Bergkamp's career flourished further at Inter Milan and Arsenal, where he became a legend. At Arsenal, he won three Premier League titles and four FA Cups, and his inventive play style earned him a place among football's elite.



Clarence Seedorf began his journey at Ajax in the early 1990s, making his senior debut in 1992. He played a pivotal role in Ajax's 1995 Champions League victory before moving to illustrious clubs like Real Madrid, Inter Milan, and AC Milan. Seedorf is uniquely distinguished as the only player to win the Champions League with three different clubs. His tactical intelligence and skill earned him a lasting legacy in world football.

Matthijs de Ligt is one of the recent prodigies from Ajax's academy, debuting for the first team in 2016 at just 17. As a formidable centre-back, he captained Ajax to a domestic double and the Champions League semi-finals in 2019. De Ligt's performances earned him a transfer to Juventus, where he continues to develop into one of the world's leading defenders.

Ajax's academy has been instrumental in shaping the careers of numerous football icons. Johan Cruyff, Frank Rijkaard, Dennis Bergkamp, Clarence Seedorf, and Matthijs de Ligt are just a few examples of the exceptional talents nurtured at De Toekomst. Their contributions to football are a testament to the academy's enduring legacy and its commitment to excellence in developing world-class players.

4) Discussion

- a) What do you think about Ajax's academy?
- b) Which players from the article do you think had the best career?
- c) Why do you think the Ajax academy is so successful?

