



Building Future Stars from Youth Academies

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*Football academies are among the most important features in making soccer clubs **successful**. They train young players to **become stars**, saving clubs money rather than buying expensive players. Clubs like Manchester United develop talents like Marcus Rashford, who grow up with the fans proud. Also, Academies make **big profits** by **selling talents**, like Brighton selling Moises Caicedo for \$115 million. This money is used to improve training fields and hire better coaches. In England, the Premier League's homegrown rule mentions that teams need players trained in local academies. These players connect with fans, who love watching them grow and run in the first team in the future. Academies also find talent worldwide, like Barcelona, which signed young Lionel Messi from Argentina. This makes clubs more successful and boosts jersey sales. **Homegrown players** understand the club's culture and want the team to win games. For example, Red Bull Salzburg's academy players reached the Europa League semi-finals. Overall, **youth academies** build strong teams, **save cash**, and make fans excited.*

Imagine a system where young dreams translate into millions of dollars in value created; welcome to the business of football academies. What drives a football club's success? According to FIFA, there were 128,694 professional male footballers at 3,986 clubs in 135 countries worldwide¹. These statistics show how serious people are in this sport and can not be replaced forever. Football academies and football clubs have different purposes. Academies focus on training young players to develop their skills and prepare them for professional careers. In contrast, football clubs are organized teams that compete in leagues and tournaments, their main goal is to win games and championships. While academies provide specialized training with coaches, clubs emphasize teamwork and competition. Financially, academies may rely on funding from clubs or sponsors, while clubs generate income through ticket sales or are sponsored by other brands. This paper will explore all the reasons why the club should run the youth academy and the benefits of it, with details and examples.

Football clubs are organizations that compete in football leagues and tournaments. Their winning matches depend on several factors. For example, having a strong youth academy in one of the areas will help the most promising players to go to that club. This means teaching them the skills is affecting the level of the team. Football academies, on the other hand, are programs run by football clubs to raise young players. The main goal of the academy is to develop talented players who can join professional teams. Increasingly, it's the young players from within their academies. This paper will address the topic of how football clubs invest in and profit from youth academies, starting with how youth academies work in professional football clubs. After considering some research questions based on this topic, my main research question became "How do football clubs profit from youth academies?". I wanted to discover and find out why football clubs invest a lot of money in the upbringing of young players in their clubs. Football clubs invest heavily in youth academies for

¹ FIFA publishes Professional Football Report 2023

their financial and strategic advantages. Academies develop skilled players at a lower cost than transferring senior players, with a high cost. This reduces dependence on expensive transfers and minimizes adaptation challenges. Academies also generate profits by selling talented players after they grow up. These profits recover training costs and can be used in further investments. Also, these players strengthen the club's identity, as fans connect with homegrown players. Youth academies transform young talent into millions in value and help the club become competitive in the league and tournaments. This system drives both financial stability and on-field performance. They also shield clubs from volatile transfer market fluctuations. Overall, academies are a cornerstone of modern football's economic and competitive landscape.

As part of my research, I have explored existing sources and literature on training young players. According to [playerscout.co](https://www.playerscout.co), this shows the main reason for training young players is to make them join the main team in the future². This means that the club thinks that it is a cost-effective way to train young players rather than buying adult players who can run in the main team right away. For another example, according to [socialfootballsummit](https://www.socialfootballsummit.com), “Mid-sized clubs often integrate academies as strategic assets, with player sales subsidizing operational costs and embedding academies into their business models. Finally, for top clubs, academies provide an affordable means to fill squad positions while increasing the odds of discovering world-class talent.”³ This site also mentions that top clubs want to fill their squads with young players to save money. Moreover, investing in youth academies allows clubs to build a strong foundation for the future. When clubs train young players, they can create talent that not only understands the club's culture but also grows up with it. This connection can lead to better teamwork on the field.

Next, building off the previous argument, there is a policy about homegrown players in football leagues. To explain the homegrown policy in the Premier League, according to [Givemesport](https://www.givemesport.com), the homegrown player rule, introduced before the 2010/11 season, requires each team to have a 25-player squad with at least 8 homegrown players, defined as players who have been registered with a club in England or Wales for at least three years before their 21st birthday, regardless of their nationality, meaning even a player from South America or Asia can qualify if they joined an English academy at 16 and stayed until 19—limiting clubs from filling their teams with foreign talent. This rule was created to help the Premier League develop better British players, pushing clubs to nurture local talent rather than just buying expensive superstars from different leagues and countries. As a result, clubs are almost forced to spend money on better coaching and training facilities to produce skilled players who can meet the homegrown and compete in the league, benefiting the clubs by either strengthening the first team or generating profit through player sales.

As the paper has already mentioned, the clubs are highly recommended to use the money for the academies. Consequently, using money means using better coaching and training facilities. This investment would benefit the clubs, as a strong academy can produce talented players who can either help the first team or sell at high prices, which translates to increased revenue for the club. This investment in academies is an intelligent decision by the Premier League because it builds a solid future for the team. By focusing on homegrown players, clubs can create stars who know the league well and can play for a long time. These players can either step up to the first team or be sold to other clubs to bring a benefit to the club. To add on,

² PlayerScout. “The Truth about Football Academies 2019: The 10 Most Asked Questions.”

³ Football Benchmark. “The Business of Football Academies: How Clubs Create Value from Youth Development? - SFS.”

having better coaching and facilities makes the club more attractive to talented young people who want to join. In the end, the homegrown rule mandatorily makes clubs grow their talent, which saves money and strengthens the team over time. It also helps the English national team by giving more local players a chance. Clubs that ignore this rule will miss both talent and cash in the long run. As a consequence, there is no reason to develop their academies in England.

Thirdly, according to Medium, “Getting wind of these players before they play with the first team helps build familiarity. They make their first appearance, then their first couple of appearances. They play a full 90. And, before you know it, they’re a mainstay in the starting XI. An uncommon story, sure, but one far more adored by fans than the £80 million transfer. Because you feel like you were part of their development.”⁴ This site says that the fans are also looking for and becoming interested in youth players. Also, fans enjoy when youth players show impact in the match compared to a transfer of £80 million to their club. The reason is that Fans prefer homegrown players because they feel proud to watch them grow from the youth team to the main team. These players often represent the club's values and create a strong connection with the club and fans. Additionally, seeing local talent succeed brings excitement and makes fans feel more loyal to their club. This sense of pride also strengthens the bond between the club and its community near the club, as fans see their local kids making their wishes come true. For example, a player like Marcus Rashford, who came through Manchester United’s academy, became one of the star players and is loved by Manchester United fans. When homegrown players succeed, it creates a story that fans can follow for years, making every goal or big moment even more special. Moreover, these players often stay loyal to the club longer because of their deep connection, which can save the club money in the long run by avoiding expensive transfers. Finally, youth academies help clubs save money and plan for a strong future. According to RedBull, “In September 2014, already the results of Red Bull Academy speak for themselves – three years later, the U19s were crowned UEFA Youth League champions. A year on, FC Red Bull Salzburg reached the Europa League semi-finals with six academy graduates. Nowhere in Europe are more academy players making the step into the top tier of competitions.”⁵

Youth academies save clubs money and find a strong future by developing talent in-house, reducing the need for expensive transfers. The Red Bull Academy is talented at this project; their six academy graduates helped FC Red Bull Salzburg reach the Europa League semi-finals. This shows how investing in youth can produce high-quality players who can play in the first team. Academies also allow clubs to develop players in their system, ensuring long-term squad stability and reducing reliance on unpredictable transfers. When a club trains its own players, it does not need to spend a large amount of money on acquiring players. This saved money for not using it for transfers can go to better facilities or more coaches. Plus, homegrown players often stay loyal. A study by Steve Bullough, in the introduction, outlined how 78% of respondents to The Football Supporters Association national survey felt that it was important for their club to have local players representing them.⁶ There are a few reasons why this loyalty and connection are important for the club. First, homegrown players feel like they belong to the club because they grew up in its system. They are not just there for a paycheck, if they are homegrown, they could get a real bond with the team and fans. This makes

⁴ Bell, William. “The Homegrown Effect: Why We Root for Academy Players.”

⁵ Kapeller, Reiner. “How Red Bull Academy Is Making the Footballers of the Future.”

⁶ Bullough, Steve, and James Jordan. “Youth Academy Player Development in English Football.”

them want to stay longer, which saves the club from spending extra money on new players. Third, these players often understand the club better. They should have been taught its rules, style, and history since they were young. For example, a player who got trained in one club knows what the fans expect and tries harder to make them proud. Overall, youth academies don't just produce talent, they provide a major reason why fans keep supporting players and the club to succeed.

Youth academies also serve as a financial powerhouse for football clubs, offering the benefit of generating substantial revenue and expanding their global presence in a highly competitive market. Many clubs, particularly mid-sized ones, try to develop young players in their academies to sell them to larger teams for massive transfer fees, creating a significant income stream that can transform their financial stability. According to Skysports, for instance, Brighton & Hove Albion sold their academy graduate Moises Caicedo to Chelsea for a record-breaking £115 million in 2023, a move that allowed the club to use money to train young players again, such as upgrading their training facilities and stadium, while also funding new signings to keep the team competitive in the Premier League.⁷ For another example, to explain how the football club benefits from selling their youth club player, every football fan knows about Cole Palmer. According to PlanetFootball, Cole Palmer, one of the most talented youth players from Manchester City, did not have a spot on the team. As a result, Manchester City decided to sell him to Chelsea for £42.5m.⁸ It is not just about making money from this, it allows these clubs to be financially viable without the benefactor model employed by wealthy owners.

Aside from dollars and cents, youth academies allow businesses to seek talent from all over the world, broaden their global reach, and appeal as a club. Clubs at the top level like Manchester City and Barcelona actively searched continents like South America, Africa, and Asia for players from a very young age, with notable examples being Brazilian wonderkid Savinho being signed by Manchester City or the example of Barcelona deliberately headhunting overseas players like Argentine megastar Lionel Messi through their youth academy (La Masia). It creates a loyal fan base for those regions and gives international fans a chance to pique their interest in the club. That global exposure drives merchandise sales like jerseys and scarves and increases ticket revenue when the club tours and plays in international competitions like the Champions League. Clubs are therefore investing in youth academies that will not only secure their financial future in the long run but also ensure their status as global football giants, capable of contesting both on and off the pitch for years to come.

Youth academies also help clubs build a strong team for the future by finding young players who can grow into future stars. For example, when clubs like Manchester City train players like Savinho, their main goal is to make him a key player in the future. This makes the club stronger and keeps fans excited to watch their team. To add on, if there are players from a lot of countries, the club becomes more popular all over the world. According to nss sports, "The case of Liverpool sets an example: despite Mohamed Salah dominating the list of top-selling Reds jerseys, it was the arrival of winger Dominik Szoboszlai that thrilled international supporters."⁹ The site has researched the uniform sales from the club and superstars like Mohamed Salah and

⁷ "Moises Caicedo: Chelsea Sign Brighton Midfielder for British-Record Fee of £115m."

⁸ Watach, Nestor. "The £442million Man City Have Made from Selling Academy Graduates under Pep Guardiola."

⁹ sports, nss. "Football Clubs: Who Earns the Most from Shirts."

Dominik Szoboszlai, someone who plays for Liverpool, England, is not from or born in England. Mohammad Salah is from Egypt, and Dominik Szoboszlai is from Hungary. It is a smart way for clubs to stay successful while connecting with fans everywhere.

To sum up, Youth academies are the main interest of modern football, bringing cash and wins for clubs. They train young players to become stars, saving clubs tons of money compared to splashing out on transfers. These homegrown talents, like those from Red Bull Salzburg or Barcelona's La Masia, grow up playing in the club and improving the level of their team's play. The Premier League's homegrown rule makes clubs focus on local young people, building teams that make fans proud of their talents. Academies also focus on huge profits when players are sold. Players from Brighton are cashing in £115 million for Moises Caicedo. Academies help clubs by scouting kids from places like South America or Africa, increasing jersey sales, and making the club a big deal worldwide, like Liverpool did with players like Dominik Szoboszlai. Fans go wild for homegrown players, loving their stories way more than expensive signings. In short, youth academies turn players' dreams into genius business plans, keeping clubs strong, winning, and close to fans' hearts. They are a game changer for football's soul and wallet.

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