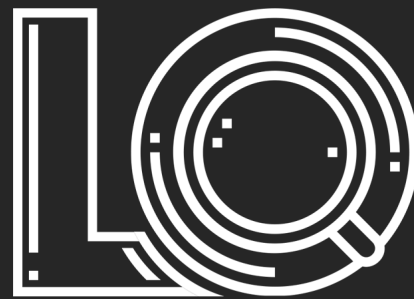


# LATTE

## QUARTERLY



Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training... Everything FM | **Issue Two**

## Editor's Note

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I am a huge lover of the great sequels: Back to the Future Part II, Godfather Part II and The Empire Strikes Back...they each continued the story and themes from the previous instalments and widened the world in which they were set. I believe the same could be said for Latte Quarterly Issue Two, where we have continued to feature the original Latte writers of accordingtofm, FM Adventure & FM Samo, but have also invited blackseafm and FM Eadster to put forward two insightful articles for your reading pleasure.

We kick-off Issue Two with a look at "Football Manager After People", an insight into the thought processes and decisions made by Chris (FM Eadster) as he embarked on his quest to edit FC Pripyat into Football Manager 2020.

Following that belter is "Scouting on a Shoestring" from FM Adventure, who explores his approaches in Football Manager 2020 with semi-professional Glentoran FC. We're not all blessed with a huge scouting budget in FM20 and sometimes the little quirky ways to identify talent can make all the difference.

Our second guest writer, Du aka blackseafm, ponders on 6 areas of learning that all FM players can take away and apply to their playstyles. This is an all-encompassing piece, which delves on a lot of 'Latte Quarterly' issues...such as tactics and analysis. I think you will like it.

Next up is AccordingtoFM, who explores the mysticism around Football Manager under his part-time guise of 'MythMike'. It's a humorous and relatable piece, which might just hold some FM truths.

Lastly we have FM Samo, who takes a look at how he has applied training in Football Manager 2020 with La Liga's Eibar. "Train to Win" explores Samo's weekly training schedules with a focus on gearing it towards the match-day and tactical aspects of "La Furia": Samo's bold and direct style of football in FM20. You should love it.

I hope you will enjoy our sequel, please grab yourself a latte and launch yourself into Issue Two...

**FMGrasshopper**

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### LQ Issue Two:

**Football Manager After People**

By FMEadster

**Scouting on a Shoestring**

By FMAdventure

**Learning on FM**

By BlackSeaFM

**MythMike**

By AccordingtoFM

**Train to Win**

By FMSamo

## Football Manager After People

By FMEadster

The lengths that some go to in order to build a save narrative are remarkable, and one stand-out save in FM20 to follow has been from Chris Eadie (aka FM Eadster). FM Eadster has used the Football Manager 2020 Editor to resurrect not only a former club, but also Soviet Russia's 9th nuclear city: Pripyat, Ukraine. Chris introduces us and walks us through some of the steps taken in order to bring his FM20 save to life...

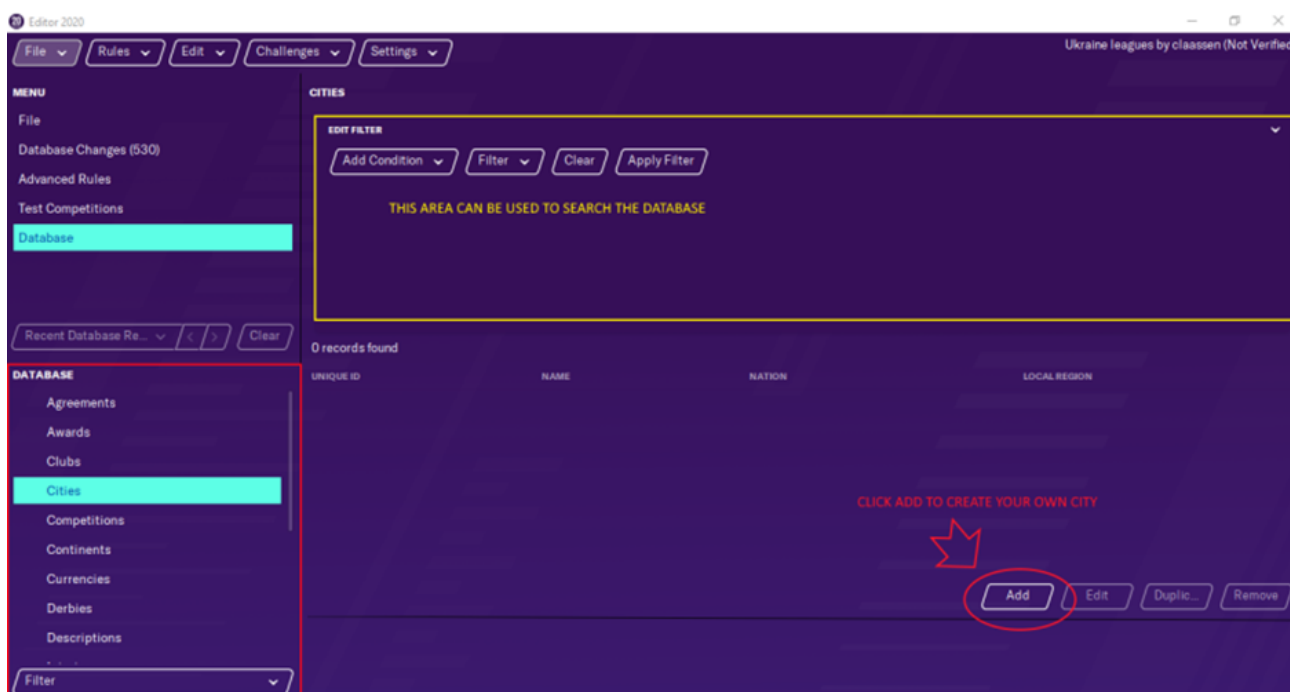
To create the Ukrainian league structure that FC Pripjat will enter into I used Claassen's FM19 database and imported it into the FM20 editor. Originally I did intend to create the Ukrainian football pyramid myself, but I found the editor to be somewhat counter-intuitive at times and updating a league in one part of the editor didn't necessarily mean it was correctly updated across the entire database. My major stumbling block was setting up regional divisions which offered promotion into a country-wide division above. I searched the SI forums in the "editors hideaway" but very often my searches turned up no results or results that were not really relevant. There is so much historical stuff on there, and given I have never had a presence on the forums it can sometimes feel a little overwhelming for someone new

coming along. Reading some of the comments and answers to other people's questions it was clear to me that prior knowledge of the editor would be assumed by any potential helpers, something I don't have. Constructing an entire football pyramid was a step too far, but creating a city and a football club was not. It was time to introduce Football Manager After People...

Firstly, I will show you how I went about creating FC Pripjat.

### Step One—Create a City

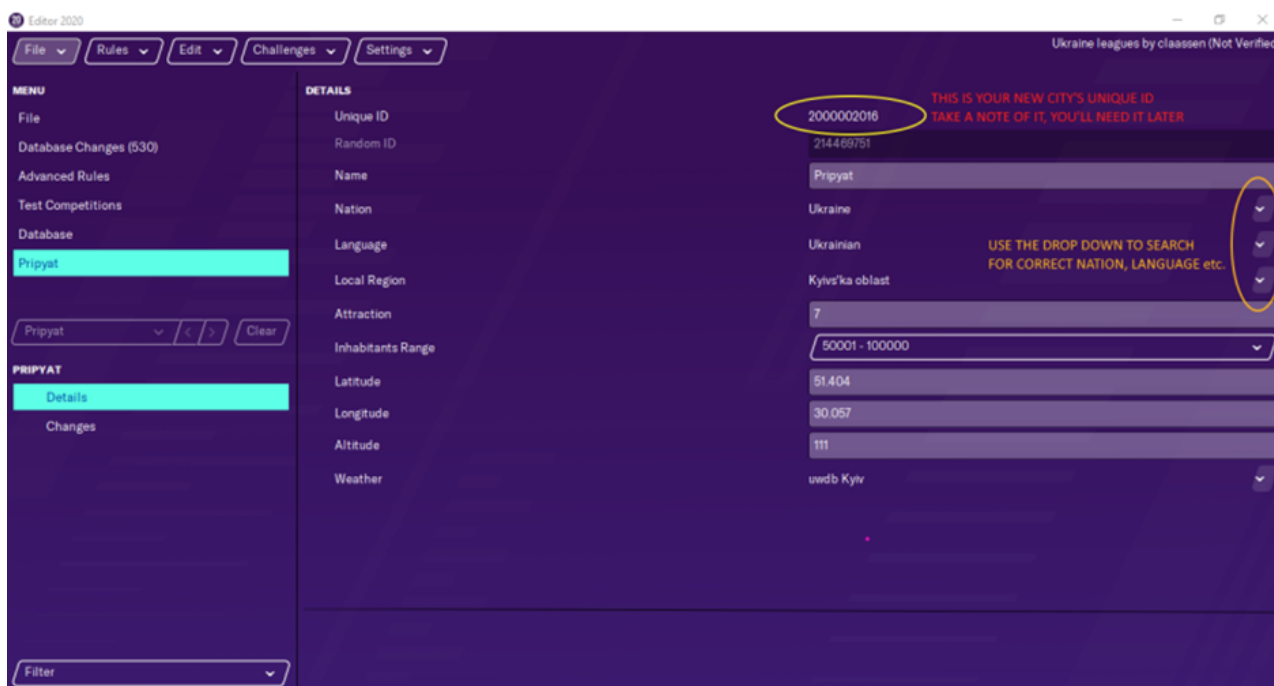
Upon loading up the database you wish to edit, in this case Claassen's FM19 Ukrainian league structure. This is the screen you are presented with.



# Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training... Everything FM

On the bottom left (Red Box) are all the things you can edit within the selected database. You can see I have selected Cities. In the highlighted yellow box you can search for anything, within the parameter you've selected on the bottom left, and filter results how you wish.

I searched for Pripyat and, unsurprisingly, Pripyat is not in the database. I had to create the entire city itself. This is easier than you might think.



First thing to do is make a note of your new city's unique ID, keep a note of this as it will be easier to search via ID later on. You can give your city a name and use the drop down menus (Orange) to search for a nation, language and local region.

Next is 'attraction' - this attribute is important. It governs how attractive a place your city is to live in, on a scale of 1-20. This impacts directly on how many players want to come and join your club. Initially, I thought to set this as 1. It is, after all, a nuclear exclusion zone. However, after some testing I found that when I loaded the game only six players in the entire database were interested in joining FC Pripyat. I decided to search other cities in the Ukraine for comparison. Kyiv is rated 19 in the database, Lviv scored 16. Clearly these are too high for my new city. So I decided to check some cities in the Donbass region of Ukraine. This area is essentially a warzone at the present time with Russian backed rebels holding control of large

areas. Shakhtar Donetsk can no longer play their home games in the city due to the fighting. Donetsk scores 4/20 and Mariupol 5/20. I decided that as we are, "RE-building Pripyat" it should score slightly higher than these two war torn cities. You can see I settled on 7/20. This resulted in 16 players happy to join us when we started the save.

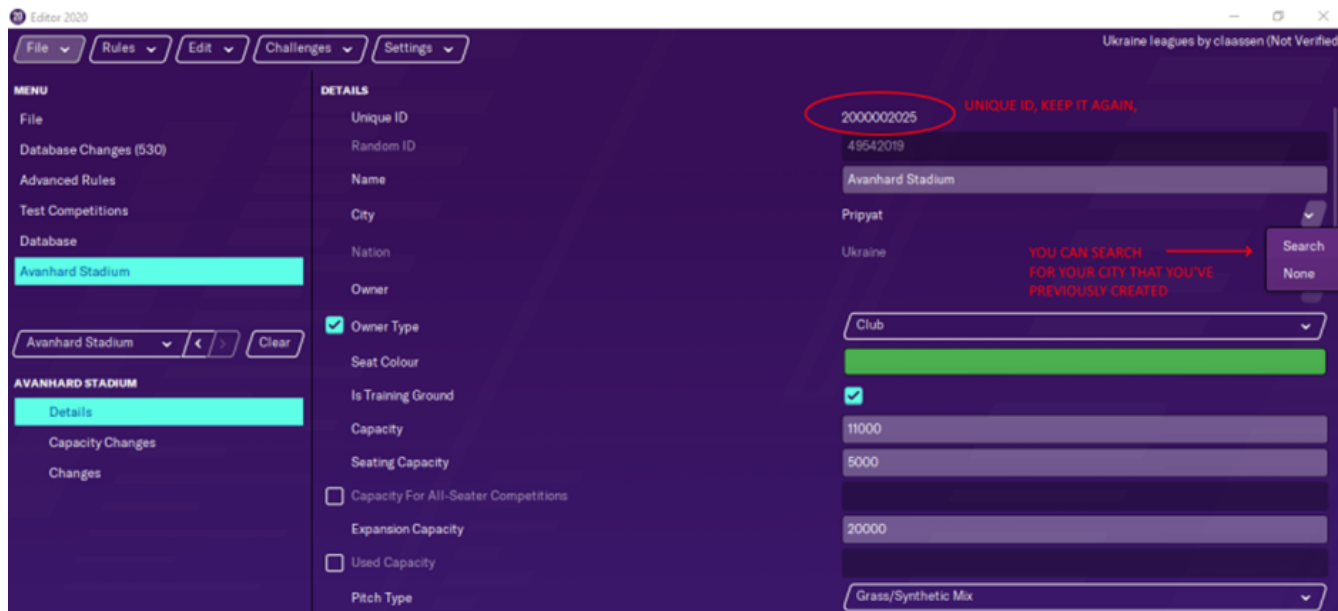
Inhabitants - At the time of the evacuation Pripyat was home to around 51,000 people and was still growing. A fifth nuclear reactor was due to be completed at Chernobyl with another two being planned. Latitude, Longitude and altitude were easy, I looked up these values.

Weather - Initially, I thought about creating the climate myself but upon searching cities closest to Pripyat I found that they all used the same weather database. I searched for this and entered it here. Now we need a stadium for our city.

# Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training... Everything FM

## Step Two—Create the Stadium

Following the same procedure as before, this time selecting Stadium from the menu on the bottom left then selecting ADD, we are presented with this screen.



Once again make a note of your unique ID. Once you have named your stadium you will need to tell the database what city the stadium is in. To do this click the drop down menu and click search. Here you can enter the unique ID of your newly created City, Pripjat. Everything else in this section is fairly self-explanatory. I have used capacities that the new stadium in Pripjat was due to hold. It was never opened due to the disaster but in Ruslan Chepiga's world they have spent the last 6 months redeveloping the site to its former glory.

We have a City, we have a stadium, now we need to give them a Football Club.

## Step Three—Create the Club

Finally we are ready to actually create the club. This time when you select Club from the bottom left hand side menu and click add, you'll notice there are many more options along the left hand side. I didn't edit everything here, being new to the editor I wanted to keep things as simple as I could.

This is where things get interesting and you need to consider your options carefully. I'll not

go through them all but let's look at the 'details' section.

Once again your club will be given a unique ID, keep this for later. Now you can give your club a name, nickname and hashtag amongst other things. Select your nation, and the city you've created in the database.

The next important parameter to decide on is the club's starting reputation. This is absolutely vital, you can see I decided on 400, I did a bit of searching through the division I intended to put FC Pripjat and found the lowest reputation in the division was 500. For comparison, Manchester United's reputation in the database is 8,650.

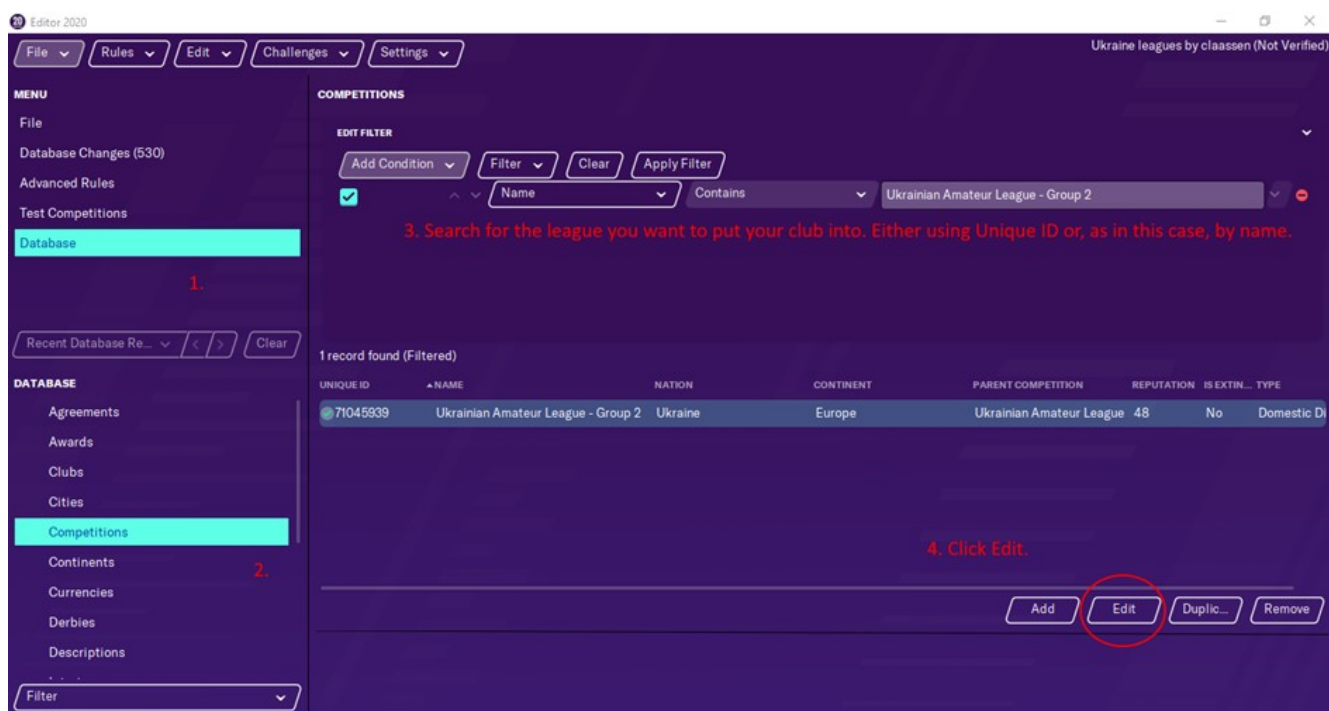
Next we need to assign the stadium we created to our new club. You can search for the stadium name by selecting the drop down menu and entering your stadium's unique ID. You then need to give an estimate of the attendance, I have gone for 2,000 I read in some literature that FC Pripjat was attracting crowds of around 2,000 despite playing in the fifth tier.

# Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training... Everything FM

Assigning values for the facilities was difficult. In the end I compared values from across the division I would be going into. The lowest for any parameter was 3 so I selected that for Training, Youth Coaching and Youth facilities. I gave Youth Recruitment and Youth Importance higher values as Pripyat had a very young demographic at the time of the disaster and it is something I am keen to continue in the save.

## Step Four—Putting your Club in a League

We need to find the league you want to put your club into. As mentioned at the start I am using Claassen's extended database which activates the fourth tier of the Ukrainian football pyramid. After some studying I decided to put FC Pripyat into the Ukrainian Amateur League - Group 2. The fourth tier is split into three groups, roughly by region. Most of the teams in Group 2 were from the Kyivs'ka Oblast, the same as Pripyat.



After clicking Edit you will be taken to the following screen where you can, unsurprisingly, edit the league.

So what I did here was check the teams listed in this league, as this is a FM19 database, some of the teams are no longer in this league in real life. I clicked one of them and removed them. I then simply clicked ADD and I could search for my newly created club and add them to the division, simples.

## Step Five—Add Players and Staff

After much deliberation I decided that when I set up the save I would allow the game to create players for playable teams. I was

concerned I would not have enough players interested in joining the team at the start. In all my test runs FC Pripyat were relegated as they didn't have enough real (i.e. not greyed out) players. If this happened the save would be over before it had really started. This meant I didn't need to add any players in the editor. So, I decided to have a bit of fun with some staff members. If you read my save reveal you should know who Valentin Letvin is. If you don't you can read about him over at [fmeadster.wordpress.com](http://fmeadster.wordpress.com).

I created Valentin Letvin in the database and made him FC Pripyat's Director of Football and Head of Youth Development.

# Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training... Everything FM

So, how did I do this. It is much easier than you might imagine. This time we select 'people' from the menu and then select ADD to create a new person. You'll then be taken to the next screen. There are many parameters you can edit here. The first thing you need to do is select 'details' and give your staff member a name, date of birth, place of birth etc. You can be as in-depth as you want to be with this. You will want to then look at the 'club contract' section. First things first, use the drop down menu beside 'club' to search for your new club. Next give your staff member a job, I have given Valentin two jobs, I felt this was realistic given the small stature of the club. I've also given him a very long contract and high loyalty rating. He can't leave!

The screenshot shows the staff profile for Valentin Letvin in Football Manager 2019. The interface is dark-themed with purple and green accents. At the top, the player's name 'VALENTIN LETVIN' is displayed, along with his position 'Director of Football / Head of Youth Development - FC Pripjat'. The date '1 JUL 2019 Mon 9:00' and 'INBOX' are visible in the top right. Below the name, there are tabs for 'Overview', 'Contract', 'Reports', 'Interaction', 'Comparison', and 'History'. The main profile area includes a photo of Valentin Letvin, his age (58 years old), nationality (Ukrainian), gender (Male), and 'No youth caps'. It also shows his contract details: 'Contracted to FC Pripjat', 'Director of Football / Head of Youth Development', and '£40 p/w until 13/6/2028'. A reputation section shows a 4-star rating and 'Continental A Licence'. The 'STAFF ROLES' section lists various roles, with 'Director of Football' and 'Head of Youth Development' selected. The 'DATA ANALYSIS' section includes 'Judging Player Data', 'Judging Team Data', and 'Presenting Data'. The 'MENTAL' section lists 'Adaptability' (9), 'Determination' (7), 'Level of Discipline' (3), 'Man Management', and 'Motivating'. The 'KNOWLEDGE' section lists 'Judging Player Ability' (7), 'Judging Player Potential' (7), 'Judging Staff Ability' (7), 'Negotiating' (13), and 'Tactical Knowledge' (11). The 'PERSONALITY' section shows 'Spirited'. The 'WORLD KNOWLEDGE' section shows a world map and progress bars for 'Ukraine', 'Moldova', and 'Brazil'. At the bottom, there are sections for 'HISTORY' and 'PLANS'.

I hope you enjoyed this little insight into how I used the editor, it is by no means comprehensive but should help anyone to do some simple editing. Why not give it a go and create something unique.



**FMEADSTER.WORDPRESS.COM**

# Scouting on a Shoestring

By FMAdventure

**Scouting players is vital at every level of the game. It isn't all about that top level of the game where you can get a second or third opinion on that highly rated wonderkid. FMAdventure takes us through his approach at the other end of the scale.**

One of the staples of any long-term Football Manager save is establishing an effective scouting method. FM20 has taken me to a semi-professional club with a minimal scouting budget, so I am not afforded my usual luxury of a padded-out team of highly experienced Scouts who can roam the World in search of the next Wonderkid. The situation I find myself in leads me to resort to a variety of different methods in order to find that next elusive signing!

Firstly, it might help to explain the main issue I have faced in this save due to my low scouting budget. The club have a fairly low knowledge base of players and we have been unable to implement a higher scouting package to allow further expansion of that.

With that in mind, here are some of the processes I've gone through.

## Searching by Skillset

Plenty of football clubs have a specific ID of player that they want within their team, be it based on physicality, technical ability, character based or a mixture of each. My own club, Glentoran, even once allegedly turned down the chance to sign a young George Best because he was deemed to be "too small".

Sometimes it helps to search using a preset level of attributes if you have a tactic that

requires a specific type of player. For instance, if you employ high intensity pressing then you'll want to sign players who have the physical attributes to be able to cope with those stresses.

It can also be useful to use the 'Find Similar Players' option if you want to find a direct replacement for a particular player. This will allow you to use elements of that player's profile as a base for searching for someone new.

I find that this method is not the most successful at a low level in-game where you don't have a massive pool of players to search from, however, you can find relative success with this if you are lenient in your search values. For example, I will often set the parameters to find players who match 3 out of 5 of the stated attributes – making an allowance for a shortfall in certain areas.

## Player and Staff Recommendations

This is another one that has had limited success for me but is worth attempting regardless. You shouldn't ignore the knowledge or relationships that your squad have which may benefit your team! Asking a player or a staff member for a potential signing could land you an unexpected gem, even allowing you to specify what level of player you'd like to consider: is it someone who is first team ready or someone for the future?

## Scouting the Internationals

In my Glentoran save for FM20, I have spent a considerable amount of time manually looking through the Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland U21 and U19 squads to find any potential signings. I've concentrated mostly on players with contract that are due to expire, put them



on a shortlist and then waited for the right opportunity to swoop!

This has been a great resource for my transfer business and into my third season I have no less than six first team squad members that I have recruited through this method. As my club's reputation grows I'll begin to do the same with the Scottish, Welsh and English underage squads also.

## Scouting the Opposition

Sometimes your own judgement is the best judgement. Every so often you will come up against a player in game that stands out amongst the rest and you just feel compelled to make a move for them. In real life, examples you could consider are Cristiano Ronaldo (Sporting v Manchester United, 2003) and Eduardo da Silva (Dinamo Zagreb v Arsenal, 2006).

In my own FM19 save with Groningen I made a £1.5m move for a Vitoria Guimaraes winger who

tormented my full back for 90 minutes in a European Competition qualifier. 5 seasons and over 150 appearances later he moved on to Barcelona for a fee in the region of £80m! The player was previously unknown to me and if it hadn't been for that European game, would quite possibly have stayed that way.

## A Gift from the Gods

You can set in place convoluted plans and schemes to pore over pages and pages of potential recruits but sometimes a player's name just falls into your lap by pure chance. A recommendation from an agent, a random rumoured transfer as the window opens, a name that appears in the social media screen.

Now that you've found your prime target, the hard work begins. Transfer negotiations, contract discussions and promises are just another hurdle before the hours on the training ground and integrating the newbie into your tactical set up! That's where the fun really starts.



# Learning on FM

By BlackSeaFM

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**When I reflect on the psychological attraction of Football Manager (FM), one of the roots that emerges is the way that it stimulates problem-solving and learning.**

**Here I seek to organise that learning around half a dozen central principles.**

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## **It might not be the match engine**

It is true that the settings of the match engine might be slightly awry, resulting in a higher than expected incidence of certain actions. But before you angrily dispatch an email to Sports Interactive (SI i.e., the game's producers), reflect for a moment.

Ask yourself whether you're certain that it's all down to the match engine: are you actually doing all you can to remove the perceived problem? For example, if in one-on-ones your striker keeps whacking the ball straight at the keeper, are you training him to dribble round the keeper or to place shots? In your recruitment, have you paid sufficient attention to technique and composure? Or too much attention to shots-on-target rather than ability to convert? In your team training, do you need to allocate more time to chance conversion?

And after you've ranted at the match engine – which we all do, because it can prove cathartic – reflect on the fact that it's the same for both teams. If SI were to adjust the match engine so that you score a higher proportion of one-on-ones, you'd also concede more

## **Sometimes there is indeed a one-stop solution**

You start conceding corners at the back post, so you designate someone to mark the back post. That might indeed fix it. Sometimes a single solution will do.

I don't necessarily mean there's only one solution available. In this example, you could alternatively try devoting more time to defending corners in team training.

I just mean that sometimes one solution proves sufficient.

But if all problems on FM were like that, the game would be less intriguing by far. So...

## **Often solutions are indirect and multi-faceted**

Conceptually this third principle comprises two points, but I combine them here because in practice they often go together.

Take, for example, the thorny problem of a striker persistently straying offside. In seeking a solution, it will probably prove necessary to think on a number of levels.

You might first look at the player. Insufficient anticipation? Poor decision-making? Lack of appreciation of off-the-ball movement? Too little pace to break the offside trap?

For some of these at least there are player-training solutions.

Perhaps you could try to train him, as a preferred move, to break the offside trap (although this can make things worse if they

become over-enthusiastic). Or to move into channels between, rather than behind, defenders.

The problem, however, may require you to look beyond the player and to consider his teammates. Are other players showing sufficiently to provide alternative options? Could the delivery be better?

A further area to consider is the interaction between player and tactics. Changing the player's duty (from, say, Pressing Forward-attack to -support) or role (from, say, Target Man to False 9) might reduce the number of offsides by encouraging the player to drop deeper.

There's a need to consider team tactics. For example, playing less direct and working the ball into the box might well reduce the number of offsides. Or you could think about team training – devoting match preparation time to attacking movement, for example.

The point here is that there's no single, direct, solution -- no instruction from the bench ('Stop getting offside, you \*\*\*\*head'); no post-match rebuke ('Which part of the offside rule do you not understand?); no preferred move – well, not exactly ('teach him to stay onside' is not quite the same as attempting to teach him to break the trap).

You'll probably need to employ a number of methods, none of them exactly direct.

## **Most of the time you need to think contextually**

Social media is full of FMers exchanging fixes. For example, someone publishes their 'fail-safe' tactics that took Stenhousemuir to European glory – but when you adopt them, it doesn't go so well. The tactics require high pressing and you haven't trained your players to do that. And in any case they don't have the work rate. Or the tactic requires a Trequartista and you don't have one of those.

To take another example: supposing you can fix that offside problem – are you sure you want to do so absolutely? If your team scores hitting a high balls over the defence for your striker to run onto, removing offside from his game might result in you struggling to score.

On FM, almost everything is contextualised.

## **Some problems are intractable**

In formulating the fifth principle, I almost wrote 'insoluble' – but then I reflected that, just because I haven't hit on a solution to a problem doesn't mean that there isn't one available.

Take, for example, the question of how to play against ten men. If the opposition has a player sent off early on, I usually find we manage to wear them down. But if they're sent off later – in the 50th minute, say – I often find that the supposed advantage fails to materialise – and they might even go up the other end of score a late winner. Sickening. Humiliating.

I've tried various things. Increase the tempo to wear them out. Play wider to stretch them. Pass into space, since there'll be more of it. Or just keep everything the same in the hope we'll naturally gain a superiority. But I have no confidence in any of these strategies. The best hope I've found is not to go too attacking, in the hope I can draw them out so that they'll leave gaps, but I can't say I have evidence that works.

Perhaps I have to accept that the siege mentality that a sending-off induces in the opposition compensates for their deficit in numbers, so that there's no advantage to be had. Sometimes, it seems, you just have to live with it.

## **Collaborative learning can be fun**

Because so much problem-solving on FM is contextual, there's little to be gained by going online simply to ask other FMers for the answer.

# Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training... Everything FM

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But outlining the problem and inviting people to probe it and provide avenues to explore – that can prove both effective and entertaining.

There is, though, a question of etiquette. If I see someone continually asking, for example, which players they should select I do find myself wondering, rather crossly, why we're all having to play their game for them and what the point of that is.

## **Coda: Underlying attributes for managers**

Players have underlying attributes for such qualities as consistency. I think managers too need to have, beneath their profiles, some unstated attributes. They are as follows:

Patience: it can take time (a) to identify solutions and (b) for those solutions to take effect.

Commitment to reflective learning: when problems arise, it doesn't pay to soldier on, (no doubt, bad temperedly). Accept there's a problem; watch incidents in a match again; look at the data in the form of statistics and heat maps; listen to your data analyst.

Curiosity: about the problems (ask yourself, 'What caused that?') and solutions ('I wonder what would happen if...?')

Here I have focused on learning about FM. It strikes me there's also an article to be written about learning from FM. If when playing FM you have, for example, to develop patience and a willingness to explore multifaceted options, might that carry over to one's work IRL (in real-life)?

Blogs set in the  
Black Sea region  
of Caucasia,  
Eastern Europe  
& Western Asia...

[blackseafm.com](http://blackseafm.com)



# MythMike

By AccordingtoFM



The regular Football Manager player may not think they follow many superstitions, but dig a little deeper and I bet the little quirks start to appear. I personally am not regularly a paranoid or overly superstitious person, I don't check my horoscope or care about a black cat, until I start to play Football Manager. The fact we don't really know many of the inner workings of the game means we can only go off what's worked in the past. Or what's gone against us. The following is a list of myths you should abide by or face the wrath of the FM gods.

Never make a substitution during a highlight. What if there's a set piece in the same highlight and the player you subbed out was due to score thus killing the highlight? Don't do it. Wait until your attacker heads it 10 feet over the bar then make your sub.

One more game is a popular phrase to bring out in the early hours of the morning. It does, however, hold some truth, if the game is giving you a good run of green then do all you can to not stop that. For sure, the next time you power up the players will be acting like they're the ones who were up past when the milk gets delivered and your form will drop off a cliff.

What to do then when your form has more red lights than an M25 tail back? Changing tactics, boosting morale and analysing the stats can distract from the continue button. No, better to simply take the two minutes to save (no one wants to be that guy) and reboot your laptop. Give it 2-3 minutes powered down, maybe unplug it as well to make sure that no bad luck remains in the power cables. Once you load up again your form will turn and it'll be green all the way. Easy.

# Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training... Everything FM

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Don't be tempted to take to social media to crow about an unbeaten run until it is over. Acknowledging this run in any way will cause complacency within the players and they will down tools for the next few games. Only following the first defeat can you then look back on what a run it was and bask in the praise of your peers. This could be why we haven't heard from many content creators since FM17 as they haven't yet been defeated.

Similar to the above, never open an interaction to praise a players good run of form or hot streak in front of goal. This will almost certainly end the run and make your attackers become more non-league than legend.

Got a player who's in fire in preseason? Don't make the mistake of pinning all your hopes on that player who scores at a goal a game throughout friendlies. There's no chance he's scoring again unless it's the fourth in a 4-1 win at home to the bottom side. Sign someone new and expensive now, real quality doesn't show until the pressure is on.

Picture the scene, it's a tight game, you're the underdog following back to back to back promotions, you win a penalty. Stop. Don't watch the highlight, just close your eyes and let it play out. FM will see you don't care much and allow you to score sealing that final champions league spot. You may, however, watch a penalty if you are 3-0 ahead with a minute to go, there's no way your taker is missing that.

More than four goals up at half time? Put the kettle on and do some of that housework you

promised to do, there won't be any highlights in the second half anyway.

You're scouting the opposition line up to see who you're facing, notice someone with an unusual name but he's trash. No problem, right? Wrong! You better believe that Max Sax is going to score a brace against you. Don't do it, don't even acknowledge the opposition. See also: "ooh is that the real Messi playing for Cowdenbeath? Oh, it's John Messi... and now he's scored."

You'd darn well better not mention the C word during your half time team talk. No matter the score, big lead, tight game, draw against a top side. As soon as you tell the lads to not get complacent, that's exactly what they're going to do. Nothing in their body language will say it, they may even leave the dressing room pumped up, but that second half slide is coming. See also the 'concentrate' shout. Nothing will get your players to lose focus quicker than asking them to concentrate for the next few minutes.

I don't care if they're on 54%, don't substitute any of your back line if you're yet to concede. Leave that newgen who needs game time rooted to the bench, he's not getting minutes today. It may not be his fault, it might have happened either way, but you making the change has just lost your players their clean sheet bonus... unless that was your intention.

Just some of the key myths to watch out for next time you're playing. Feel free to get involved on twitter using #MythMike with your FMMyths.



# Train to Win

By FMSamo

**All Football Managers crave the three points. A lot goes into getting them and one aspect that is sometimes overlooked is training. Samo takes a look at how he sets his training routine up to gear his side up for success.**

“How do I want my team to play?”

It's probably the most important question us Football Managers will ask ourselves. Some find it difficult to answer. We want to set out to win matches obviously but it's getting to that point that is often tricky. Tactics are obviously vital, the quality of the players slotting in to each of those roles in the tactic are equally as important. What about the work on the training pitch?

The change to the way that training works on Football Manager was a welcome one for me and it was also often talked about and requested by so many other players of the game. Why then, into its second iteration on the game, do we still see so many not taking control of it themselves? I really think it could give you that additional percentage of performance that could lead to your side earning the win come matchday. That's why I've decided to go through the reasons why I've set up training the way I have, to gear the sessions towards the type of players I want at the club and how we set up on the pitch come matchday.

## Style of Play

I've dubbed my playing style on Football Manager 2020 “La Furia”. It's a bold, brash and direct style of football that's all about being

aggressively in our opponent's faces. We're playing a high defensive line and a high line of engagement too, we press hard and we press high. When we lose the ball we try and win it back as quickly as possible and when we win it back we attack the opposition. I'm looking for aggressive, hard working players who'll fight for the cause and give their all.

That's how I want us to play. How does that go into the training schedule I've set up for my side?

## Training to Win

Training is about players working hard to better themselves and preparing for that upcoming match. The beginning of our Monday to Sunday training plan is about recovery. La Liga matches are played out over Friday to Monday, but for the purpose of building my base plan, I've chosen Sunday as matchday so our Monday is about a recovery session and a match review session.

Recovery sessions are vital at the best of times but greatly reducing our injury risk, fatigue and improving the conditioning of our players after the effort they put into every match is hugely important. I'd like to hope everyone else does this already, but if you don't, I would definitely recommend filling up the available spaces in your medical team with the best physios and sports scientists you can find. It's bound to have a positive effect on your players.

As the seasons have gone on and more midweek European matches have come into play, the time between matches gets shorter and shorter. I'm not shy in scheduling double

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recovery sessions on a Friday after a Europa League Thursday night match to get the players in a good position and ready to go again for our league match on the Sunday.

You would like to think that all teams now review their previous match and discuss what was good and what wasn't. I've only recently started scheduling in the match review session the day after a match. It's dedicated to analytically reviewing the previous match (presumably with the data analysts employed at the club?) and it increases our team cohesion, which I'm a big believer in, while also working on our tactical familiarity going forward. It's a great post-match that still works on what you want to achieve going forward. It's so important to get your players all singing from the same hymn sheet.

Once they're rested and recuperated, the hard work starts all over again. I chose to start off with an overall session. I envisage this as the players coming together and just getting their week of training off to a good start, getting them moving. The description states that it's a session "where the players put a small amount of work into every area of their game". It's good to get each unit together and have them generally working a little bit on each attribute area. It also increases our tactical familiarity, team cohesion and makes the players happier, while slightly increasing their risk of injury and fatigue. It's a good warm up for them because the second session of the day is physical.

I could have the players doing one of the more specific physical sessions, such as endurance or resistance, but I opt for the general physical session as it works that range of attributes, a few of which are absolutely vital to the Furia style of play and my own personal favourite attributes. Stamina and work rate are so important to the system as I expect my players to be able to last the 90+ minutes in each match. We press hard and pressure the

opposition into making mistakes. Players already capable of that are high up on my recruitment list, of course, but it needs to be worked on in training too to collectively make us even better at it.

Do you use that extra session available to you? I do, daily from Tuesday to Friday. I think our players can take it. Even with their intensity levels being set to double alongside their individual roles and additional focuses added on top of our daily sessions, their workloads are still only medium. The only day when our intensity goes into orange levels is on Tuesday's with that previously mentioned physical session. The last session on that day is a ball distribution one. Would you believe me if I said the ball retention session doesn't train passing? We aren't known as a slick, short passing side, but the passing attribute covers all ranges of passing. While the defensive unit are defending against the attacking one and working on key attributes for that, the goalkeepers are also working on their distribution too, including their passing and kicking.

The next few days are dedicated to the four game situations that are a key component of Tactical Periodisation, the approach to training that I've written about previously. These are offensive and defensive organisation and the transition from defence to attack and vice versa. We aren't a patient attacking side so we don't train it nor do we play with any wingers so we don't train overlaps. We do rely on our wing backs for width though so we train attacking down the wing and we're unapologetically direct so we of course train that. Alongside training key aspects of our play such as off the ball movement, that (direct) passing again, crossing and finishing it also improves the familiarity with our creative freedom and passing style, plus improving our team cohesion and player happiness. Happy players working as a team is what I aim for.



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Chance creation and conversion speak for themselves. We want to create chances and score goals so my players need to improve all attribute areas related to those two actions. Then it's onto our transitions. Pressing is an absolutely vital part of our game, one of the main aims in our style of play is to be in the faces of our opponents. It works on our aggression, tackling, anticipation, teamwork and work rate, all key components of the press. Then we practice restricting the space our opponents can play in when we lose the ball by working on our concentration, marking and positioning, amongst other attributes.

The final aspect of our four game situations is defending. We aren't the strongest team in the league so I put a bit more of a focus on defending in comparison to our attacking training, meaning there's three defensive training sessions on Friday's. Defending from the front is so important in football today and it's no different in my side. The priority of that

session is the forwards working on their tackling, marking, concentration and positioning however it also works on the team's overall pressing intensity and marking in terms of tactical familiarity.

There's five defensively focused sessions to choose from from the remainder of the options and there are two final sessions I've allocated for our week putting in hard work on the training ground. Firstly, I choose defending engaged over defending disengaged. It works the players in getting more aggressive, one of the key attributes for my style of play. Then I go for wide defending as opposed to ground or aerial defending. The formation we play is a 3-5-2 meaning that there's only one line of defence out wide. My thought is we need to really put a focus on being strong at defending the opposition's attacks from out wide, plus, again, it also sees us working on that all important tactical familiarity, team cohesion and happiness.



## Preparing to Win

The eve of a match is all about those final preparations. Depending on whether we're at home or away, there's a slight difference in the amount of preparation we're able to do. My priority is always a teamwork session. This stems from previous versions of the game and the previous way you could set up training. As you've seen throughout, I'm a big advocate of the team gelling and the teamwork match preparation session greatly improves our team cohesion.

Similar to our post-match session reviewing the match, we work with the analysts to preview the match. This increases our team cohesion, slightly increases our sharpness, works on our tactical familiarity and, in my head, enables our analysts to get the players completely up to speed with our opponents and how they play, devising ways for us to defeat them.

Then, depending on the time of the season and our upcoming opponents, I'll choose between match tactics, attacking movement or defensive shape. These sessions give us a slight boost ahead of the upcoming match, alongside some additional benefits with tactical familiarity, team cohesion and certain attributes being worked on as well.

That's how we prepare at our training ground to win our next match, to win three points every week, in order to finish as high up the table as we possibly can. Everyone is entitled to play Football Manager in any way they want, you might completely hand control of training to your coaching staff and still be doing incredibly well. I find I get a much more rewarding experience while I'm playing the game when I'm putting together my training session strategy. If you haven't done it before, why not give it a try too?



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