

## **A Study on the Management Strategy of Chinese Football Reserve Personnel in Professional Clubs**

Fan Xiaodong, Sun Jinrong  
(Wuhan University of Technology, Wuhan, P.R. China Hubei 43007)  
(E-mail: fxdxj@163.com)

**Abstract** This paper gives a brief review of the development history of Chinese football, analyzes the current situation and problems of reserve football personnel management in Chinese professional football clubs as well as some problems of the system, operation, competition, training etc. Based on the above, the author brings about some suggestions and solutions to the management strategy and gains the sustainable development mode of Chinese football reserve personnel management in professional clubs.

**Key words** Football; Professional clubs; Reserve personnel; Management; Innovation

### **1 Introduction**

In modern society, the professional sport has already become an important part of the sports industry. It symbolizes the socialization and the developmental level of the industry. The development of professional sports shows great boosting function to economics and culture in the world. In China, professional sports reform begins from football as a pilot. After a decade of professional reform, we can see clearly that healthy, orderly professional football leagues and the market which pushes them forward are the key points to continuously improve the level of football sport. The reserve personnel which promote the sustainable development of football sport is the key part of a healthy football market. In this paper, the current situation and existing problems of the system of reserve personnel in professional Chinese football clubs are analyzed and studied as well as some issues of the system, management, operation, competition, training etc. On the basis of the above study, some suggestions and solutions are provided in the hope of providing a theoretical reference to the training of Chinese football reserve personnel in professional clubs.

### **2 A Historical Review of Football Development in China**

The development of modern football has had nearly a hundred years' history since football arrived in China in the last century from Europe. The development has gone through 3 stages: amateur development, professional development, and professional reform. At the beginning of the last century, the football developed slowly and had a low level of competition due to the unrest social environment, backward politics, economy and other reasons. After the founding of People's Republic of China, the development of football came to professional from amateur stage. Under the planned economy, the football sports was in the form of local professional teams, concentrating financial, material and human resources for specialized training. The standard of football was greatly improved, and gradually became popular.

During 1980s, the development of football came into its bottom due to the repeated failures in the Olympic Games and World Cup. The Olympics strategy led a serious investment deviation made by sports department at all levels. The development of football had a severe shortage of funding which led to the reduction of football teams and players. The football was in great difficulties.

In 1990s, football began to seek road to development driven by the reform of market economic system. On the basis of summarizing successful development experiences of western professional football, in 1994, China Football Association launched the Chinese Football League after two years' planning and testing, and began the market-oriented reform of football. After years of hard work, the reform achieved initial success. By the end of 2005, there had been up to 3.63 million audiences on the scene of professional football league club, and more than 10 billion television viewers as well. Football league matches almost became a household name. Its impact extended far more beyond the sports circle. The development of football was greatly improved and the shortage of reserve football personnel was released in a certain sense.

However, due to unexpected changes in thinking and short preparing time, the professional reform lacked scientific research and accurate prediction; And inadequate regulations and standards brought a

series of problems: such as unclear goal, distorted market behavior, unfair competition, disordered market signals etc. Those provided breeding grounds for corruptions and constrained the healthy development of professional football clubs. There were many unavoidable problems and contradictions under the superficial prosperity of the Football League, such as “match fixing”; “gambling”; “low quality of players”, so that the attendance of the league declined sharply from 4 -5 million people to 4 -5 thousand, or even to 4- to 5 hundred people. After the “Club Strike”, “Assaulting Referees”, the Chinese Football League reached the brink of collapse. There was a big gap between China’s professional football league and the Western Leagues. Even in Asia, there was a certain gap between Japan’s. China’s professional football league had to be reformed.

### **3 An Analysis on the Current Situation of Reserve Personnel Management in China’s Professional Football Clubs**

The construction of reserve team was set up along with the birth of professional football clubs. Referring to the experience of foreign countries with higher levels in professional football, China Football Association prescribed that any clubs participating in the professional league must establish their own second and third line force in the purpose of training reserve personnel. However, looking back at professional football, clubs played a limited role in reserve personnel management. That will be illustrated as follows:

#### **3.1 “Three-tier Network Training System” was the main mode of reserve personnel management in a professional football club**

In the early days, according to the experience of sports activities in former Soviet Union, China set up amateur youth football training institutions and football classes in amateur sports schools in various places. In this way, China established a “Three-tier Network Training System”: basic teams, training sites, and traditional sports schools on the bottom; sports schools, middle schools and amateur sports schools in the middle; the national team and provincial teams on the tip. The national wide system created a huge number of football talents and made China’s football keep maintaining the middle upper level in Asia.

Under the planned economy system, the reform of professional football was inevitable affected in management. The cultivation and utilization of physical assets had long been considered as the state’s task and public goods so that they should be invested by the state. That thinking led to the unable of putting cultivating back-up personnel timely into the center of the club operations in the reform of China’s professional football. Most of the clubs still relied mainly on training and selection system of amateur sports schools, sports academies. It seriously violated the principle that the reserve personnel should be trained mainly by professional clubs.

According to the Yearbook of National Sports Statistics 2007, the number of the first level professional football clubs was 765, second-level 4454 (including the sports school and competitive schools), three-level 25,453 (including amateur sports school and sports schools). From the statistics, we can see that the construction of the reserve personnel was actually nominal. For a long time, that led to the situation that the development of professional football clubs and the football sports were not coordinated with each other: on the one hand, the clubs paid players salaries beyond their values because of the lack of reserve personnel; On the other hand, clubs were unable to take into account the training of reserve forces because of the heavy financial burden. Vicious competition and poor circulation caused the problem become more and more seriously.

In foreign countries with advanced football development, football clubs, as the mainstay of the market, have become the bases for football reserve force, such as: the United Kingdom has a number of 73, 000 young reserve team; Germany, 26214. There is rarely a professional club in China really having more than one youth teams. Some clubs ignore the second and third teams and even adopt renting and other means to deceive in checks. During the long-term market operation, China’s professional football clubs haven’t taken the responsibility of training reserve personnel.

#### **3.2 Flaws in the system restricted the development of reserve personnel management**

During the transition of the old and new systems, the management system changed as market-based from executive-level management system. That broke up the single linear model in the old planned economy. In addition to the original national youth amateur training, there appeared football schools, clubs and other amateur training methods run by corporations, individuals, collective etc. They gradually became important sources of reserve personnel of China’s professional football clubs. By the year of 2008, the statistics of schools and amateur clubs in some areas are as follows:

The birth of football schools and amateur football clubs became important sources of reserve personnel. However, during several years of market operation, there appeared some problems such as poor conditions, various scales, high charges, insufficient financial supports, relatively low coach level, lack of unified management and marketing operation etc. It was therefore difficult to cultivate real promising football talents. The cause of this phenomenon was that football schools and amateur football clubs were not in accordance with the professional football clubs in management.

**Table 1 Statistics of Football Schools and Amateur Football Clubs in Some Key Areas in China**

Area	Football	Amateur football clubs
Beijing	3	33
Tianjin	2	20
Shanghai	0	151
Liaoning	2	19
Guangdong	1	6
Sichuang	0	42
Guangzhou	2	116
Yanbian	1	14
Shenzhen	0	16
Shenyang	4	17
Dalian	1	13
Xi'an	8	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>469</b>

Looking back, the market operation of China's professional football clubs only paid attention to the economic benefits brought by occupational contests and ignored the market promotion as commercial clubs and the training of reserve personnel. However, the development of world-renowned professional clubs is quite different. On the one hand, they focus in the Professional League; on the other hand, they also depend on the mechanism of football schools and amateur clubs, making recruiting club members as their main source of income. For example: Bayern Munich in Germany has a professional team, an amateur team, 24 youth teams, and 4 million members ; football clubs in the United Kingdom carried out the "Blue Partner" program. They visited the community 359 times, had 165 games for charitable competitions, established 27 football training camps which 64,000 young people participated in, 1000 young people received regular weekly club guidance. Then fan club of youth developed from 400 to 2500. Tickets, merchandise, membership fees became the club's main source of income.

## 4 Solutions and Suggestions

### 4.1 Grasp the development of policies; actively promote the concept of sustainable development

In 2004, China Football Association decided to launch a super professional football league system on the basis of a decade of Chinese League Championship. "Super League club standard" states: a club must have at least one team to participate in Premier League, one team has participated in the Olympic League, a youth team and a young team .The creation of the new system puts the training of the reserve personnel at the first place. The system specifies the constructional structure of the club, trying to put the training of reserve personnel into the international track so as to fundamentally change the status of lacking football talent and provide sufficient football talents to the sustainable development of professional football clubs and continuous improvement of China's football level.

### 4.2 Strengthen management functions; form a diversified development model

China's professional soccer club apparently can not take the main responsibility for training reserve personnel. We can only make it out of the transition period and become the main football reserve force by doing the following: actively absorbing the participating power of all social circles, changing the concept and gradually forming a diversified development mode. The above can be specified as three points:

- (1) Actively linked with the local primary and secondary schools to form a model of combination of physics and teaching and co-management.
- (2) Put the local football schools, amateur clubs and other individual training units in the name of clubs, making use of the favorable facilities, unified management, high level coaches to form a scaled reserve talent management group.
- (3) Positively change the functions of the club, face to a multi-management model, actively

participate in various social campaigns, and expand their own propaganda, well received by members to promote the mass base.

## **5 Conclusion**

Whether reserve personnel of professional football clubs can move toward health management, competition, training has an inseparable relationship with the government's strong external monitor. In Europe, the training of reserve personnel for professional clubs are coordinated and managed together by the national associations. The England Football Association, known as "the cradle of football talent", launched a set of unified national standards for personnel training for different clubs with various training methods. That changed the situation that various skill level in training young players in different clubs. The Unification of the British Football Association in training scheme for young players avoided the stop of training program of single club caused by the changes of coaches and investments. Chinese Football Association and the local football associations should strengthen their functions in the management of reserve personnel training system and establish a whole set of unified competition and training programs, actively organize various kinds of football activities to form a stable model for training reserve personnel.

## **References**

- [1] Decorative Leather Harness Brave Our Country Athletics Sports Professionalism Development Process Studied the[J]. Sports Article to Give Moral Guidance Publication, 2008(12) (In Chinese)
- [2] National Statistical Bureau. 2003 Statistical Reports[N]. Chinese Series Scheme of Entrapment 2004-1-21 (In Chinese)
- [3] Zheng Zhiqiang. Discusses Professional Sports Market Characteristic[J]. Xi'an Sports Institute Journal 2008,(06) (In Chinese)