

# Capello masterclass

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Fabio Capello led Milan to the UEFA Champions League title in

1994 (©Getty Images)

Fabio Capello's combination of passion and pragmatism has proven a winning formula as both a coach and player. He has won titles at each of the four clubs he has coached, AC Milan, AS Roma, Real Madrid CF and Juventus as well as the UEFA Champions League with the Rossoneri in 1994. Now enjoying a break from club management after leading Madrid to the Spanish title for the second time last season, he spoke with uefa.com at the recent UEFA Symposium for Coach Education Directors.

**uefa.com: Which coach influenced you most as a player?**

**Fabio Capello:** I had a coach in youth football, Giovan Battista Fabbri, he influenced me a lot. Then Helenio Herrera more than others. He taught me not to be scared of my opponents, to be determined and to have confidence to win.

**uefa.com: When did you understand you wanted to become a coach?**

**Capello:** When I quit playing. People were already saying I had the right qualities to be a coach and I started with youth football immediately. It was something I really liked because I'm a man from the country so I like to be on the pitch. I was eager to teach the young kids how to improve in this world both technically and as a person.

**uefa.com: Can you describe an exercise you did in training which helped a player improve?**

**Capello:** In order to improve you have to first find your player's weak points, but you can only improve a person or

a player if he understands that everything you do is with the purpose of improving him and not just to expose his weaknesses. The best thing that happened to me, I think it's worth telling, is when I was coaching Clarence Seedorf at Real Madrid. After two months with him I asked him, "Do you think you can shoot?" He said: "Yes, very well." I told him he could shoot only in one way. In football you shoot in several ways, with the outside of your foot, with the inside, and I gave him a small lesson. He is a lad with great character and determination and he started to work hard and improved a lot.

**uefa.com: If you hadn't played the game you probably would not have been able to explain things like that to a player ...**

**Capello:** Yes, in fact this is the discussion among coaches who have played and those who haven't. Coaches who haven't played work more on tactics than technique because correcting a champion is not always easy.

**uefa.com: What three pieces of advice would you give to a young coach ...**

**Capello:** They need to be humble, with a strong personality and he must be respected by his players. He needs to speak with his players but not become their friend. If you become a player's friend, the others are immediately jealous and then start to think someone is playing just because he is a friend of yours. You have to find a way to play according to the players you have in the squad. Never stick to only one system. I think that is the biggest mistake you can make. Many people think there is one only good system but I think there are many.

**uefa.com: What do you think of this UEFA Champions League compared to last season?**

**Capello:** It will be very interesting even though a big side like Bayern Munich is missing. This year Bayern would have been a very good team in the Champions League. Arsenal, Liverpool and Chelsea are very competitive. Italian teams are as well and Barcelona. I think the winner will come from those teams, even if the other Spanish sides can also be very competitive.

**uefa.com: The UEFA Champions League is a marathon, not a sprint. How do you change the approach between the group stage and the knockout rounds?**

**Capello:** The group stage is fair because not all teams start the season at the same time so it allows you to recover from a slip. In the knockout stage we go back to the old days and it is much tougher, more stressful. All Champions League games are like that because there is a lot of pressure, but do-or-die ties are something different. You cannot afford any mistakes. You also need luck.

**uefa.com: As a coach do you prepare differently?**

**Capello:** Preparation for the last two games of the group stage is like in the knockout stage but you rarely fight as much as you do against a team you have to eliminate. Preparations for a knockout tie are different. The away goals rule is a key factor and there are more things to evaluate. It's not just a matter of one point or three. Everything is more difficult.

*Fabio Capello was speaking with Gabriel Marcotti*

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