The English Premier League has come to resemble the proverbial “game of thrones” this season. A long-anticipated managerial merry-go-round recently began its spin on the Premier League, landing, some—many might say most—of the world’s top football managers’ jobs within the league.

Highly-sought bosses Jurgen Klopp and Massimiliano Allegri are already sitting comfortably in their respective jobs with Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspurs. Now, we have the influx of former Bayern Munich coach Josep “Pep” Guardiola at Manchester City, former Italy manager Antonio Conte at Chelsea and the returning Jose Mourinho at Manchester United, eight months after his stint at Chelsea last season ended with a capitulation of form which led to his subsequent sacking. The billing is, frankly, rather spectacular, with enough intensity and personality in there to power a soap opera.

Since the start of the season in August, all three incoming star managers have enjoyed mixed starts, with all three employing varying tactics, methods and leadership styles to impose their imprint on their respective teams. We thought it would be a great idea to distill some of the leadership characteristics that have made the three managers so successful at this high level of sportsmanship. Here are three key characteristics each that underlie their respective management philosophies:

1. THE PRAGMATIST — JOSE MOURINHO (MANCHESTER UNITED)

Mourinho is obviously the one with the slight advantage, having managed Chelsea to three league titles in two separate stints. He knows how to win in this league, although he struggled incredibly last season before his aforementioned sacking.

His pragmatism:
- One size never fits all

Mourinho’s mantra is “winning.” That seems rather silly considering he is a football manager, but the man has made a career out of winning at all costs. If what he is trying to win is a seven-foot giant that would tackle the opposition’s key player out of the stadium and into the storm drain, he would do it without blinking an eye. He always has a solution for each specific problem that’s stopping him from winning.

- Keep your real cards close to your chest

Mourinho talks a lot. At times, you might even think he is oversharing, but he is really just saying everything he wants you to hear. What he truly thinks is something not many people would really know. The man’s reputation as a strategic thinker goes beyond the football field. Talk of intentional mind games and media distraction strategies abound, and when they circulate that much, they must be true to an extent.

- Stand your ground

Mourinho famously stood his ground last season despite being a tribune, “hearing for the unfair treatment of club [Eden] Hazard,” a revolt from some of his team’s biggest stars and his team’s humiliating form throughout the season. He was under pressure, doggedly maintained his position on these matters up until the day he was sacked on Dec 17.

2. THE PHILOSOPHER — PEP GUARDIOLA (MANCHESTER CITY)

Guardiola comes with amazing pedigree, having forged sensationally good teams during his stints at Barcelona and Bayern Munich.

His philosophy:
- Always ready to motivate

Conte tends to say less after matches. Not because he has nothing to say, but because his throat would’ve taken a battering from his incessant shouting of instructions to his players from the touchline during the game. He leaves little to chance and sees himself as de facto motivator for the team, a role he seems glad to play constantly.

- Help your people understand

Conte has managed to successfully turn the team’s formation, tactics and training approaches on their heads with a little to chance and sees himself as de facto motivator for the team, a role he seems glad to play constantly.

3. THE DRIVER — ANTONIO CONTE (CHELSEA)

Conte is the upstart, having dominated the Italian Serie A with his Juventus team leading up to his appointment as Italy’s head coach. He is unsettled outside of Italy.

His drive:
- Always ready to motivate

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CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Given the success that all three managers have had throughout their respective careers, there are obviously many paths one can take to achieve success. However, what is certain is that you have to first chart a path that you want to take. Keep in mind that leadership styles vary and not all players will agree with the manager’s style, but having “a” style would certainly be a prerequisite if one wants to lead successfully at all.

This is no different in an organisation. Leader need to know where they are going if they expect their employees to follow them. There will surely be people who do not agree with your vision.

Historically, all three managers have famously fallen out with some of the best players in the world. It doesn’t mean they are bad managers or that those players are not up to scratch. It’s just a disagreement over working styles. There will be times when your methods have your whole department on point. Trust your methods, especially if you’ve seen results. However, before anything else happens, think about what kind of leader you would like to be based on your personality and your strengths. It starts with that.

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