

Human anamnesis of a football coach

/ Dimensions of coaching personality of Jozef Vengloš 18.2.1936 - 26.1.2021 /

After Jozef Vengloš had gone to the football heaven, most of the media attention was quite stereotypically focused on the facts of his coaching career, and that is why we, as the insiders of the coaching branch, have focused on his coaching personality, the specific contributions he made to the coaching practice at both club or national team level. Based on the authentic testimony of his sons Juraj and Jozef, we have tried to present the personality of the legend and master of the coaching craft and coach of the century in Slovakia as they perceived him. In addition, we will enrich this personal description with how he was viewed by his former charges during the active stage of coaching and offer the opinions of his successful players from the Slovak football scene such as Ondrej "Morjo" Daňko, Ľubomír Moravčík, Anton Ondruš, Ján "Šivý" Pivarník and Ján Švehlík.

This is how Jozef Vengloš is viewed by his son Juraj Vengloš, a former Slovan Bratislava player, FIFA player agent and owner of Central Sport Management :



How did you begin to perceive football as the son of a coach? How did you and your brother get into football, train and play in the youth teams where your father coached adults? How do you remember that time and what stands out in your mind the most ?

Way back as I and my father were in Sydney, Australia, but I was so young. From my father's previous account, I know that it was in Australia that he began to apply the middle mountain team training, which later became his specialty. As a little boy, I was attending the practices with my father, for example in Košice and even I went into the locker rooms and I got to know players like Štafura, Pollák, Daňko, Bomba, etc. My father built a club with a family background and we, as children of the players and the coach, used to kick the ball during practice.

After moving to Bratislava, I also started playing for Slovan at the youth level and I was also in the national under- 16 football team. For 17 years I played in the position of right midfielder and right wing. I wasn't happy when my father went to matches, but when he came back, of course, he guided me in several areas and gave me advice. He did it in a very gently way. Together we held the philosophy that if I were good enough, I would break into the league. But I wasn't that good. I have never wanted to take advantage of my father's name, and he didn't want to get involved tactfully.

My older brother Jozef and I lived with the game of football, because we accompanied or father until a certain age up to Sporting Lisbon (1983). Later, due to our duties at school, it wasn't possible any longer, so we caught up on it during the school holidays. When he was working in Kuala Lumpur, I interrupted my studies for one year and so I could spend the time with him. There I had the opportunity to watch how he formed a team and how he gained respect and recognition of his players. I admired his overall humane approach not only to the players but also to the officials, thanks to which they held him in high esteem. However, I must say that when it was necessary, he got tough, because in Asia, the discipline of players was not so obvious.

Your father was a respected coach. How did this fact affect you and how did the proximity to the football environment help you ? How did your father affect your performance in football and your outlook on football ?

Thanks to the fact that I moved around within the football world, I was also able to educate myself in issues related to this sport better, and thanks to the fact that I participated in interesting meetings with my father, the experience gained at those meetings as well as detailed knowledge of the football background and players allowed me to get to the essence of the player's agent's work faster. At the same time, my name obliged me not to spoil what my father had scored with his work and approach. It was a commitment I made that I did not want and I don't think I ever did break in my previous activities as a player's agent.

He conducted his relationship to us the same way as he appeared in the football environment and showed his attitude to people - humanly and friendly. However, when it was necessary to get tougher, I also remember getting my ears boxed. The fact that my father and I got on well may have resulted from the fact that we were exactly born on the same day, February 18th. It helped me a lot that, thanks to my father, I could get a better look under the cover of football world, but I have never tried to misuse it, on the contrary, I am faithful to his legacy and the good name he made in the football branch.

Who do you think decisively influenced your father in his coaching career ?

The turning point was when he got hepatitis before the end of his playing career in Mexico and couldn't play any longer. Jim Šťastný suggested him to work as an assistant. He and my father's uncle Mr. Bačkor, who also played for Slovan, led him to football actually and influenced him the most professionally.

What do you consider to be his strongest feature responsible for his becoming an internationally recognized coaching personality and succeeding in a way in which no one else in Slovakia has ever succeeded in the same extent ?

My father was continually learning. By participating in many FIFA projects and thanks to his excellent communication with people, he had a huge circle of acquaintances from both the global and domestic football environment. He was aware of the importance of continuing education for a football coach, and it was through his decent communication with appropriate people, that he opened the door to the highest football coaching forum.

What did he consider to be as his greatest success in coaching ?

It was certainly the club period in Slovan Bratislava during the years 1973-76 with two national champion titles and the work with the national team of Czechoslovakia with the title of European champion in 1976 in which his club players dominated in the composition of the team. Of course, the bronze medals from the 1980 European Championships and the advancement to the quarterfinals of the 1990 World Championships also have their place in the gallery of his coaching achievements.

Who did Jozef Vengloš consider to be his best friends in the football industry?

It was certainly Václav Ježek, his football colleague and partner on the coaching bench during the historically greatest period of success of the Czechoslovak national team. They had a beautifully professional and human relationship and complemented each other perfectly. He also had many friends abroad, such as Andy Roxburgh, Craig Brown, Walter Gagg, Roy Hodgson and Gerard Houllier, who also recently went to football heaven. He and Houllier were good friends when my father coached Celtic Glasgow and Houllier was Liverpool at that time. Of course, he had a wide circle of friends, but these probably dominated the hierarchy of his closest ones ...



In the picture from left : Laco Borbély (President of ÚFTS), Andy Roxburgh (UEFA technical director), Jiří Zlámalák (at that time the director of the education department at FAČR) in an interview with Dr. Jozef Vengloš (AEFCA Symposium 2008 in Frankfurt)

This is how his players perceived him

Ondrej „Morjo“ Daňko, *former national player of the Czechoslovakia and creative leader of VSS Košice:*



Right from the first moment after assuming the position of coach of VSS Košice, he focused on team building, cohesion, team spirit. At his instigation, a clubhouse was established at the stadium, where players and their families met together after the match. Their wives and children were also present. The women brought cakes, desserts, sweets. The club successfully tried to bring families closer together.

In the evening after the match, the players went with their wives or girlfriends to the cafe, where there was music and dancing. This happened on the day of the match. The next day the players had a day off and the following day was for recuperation with massages, whirlpools. Over time, the team was working as one family. Women were also involved in club life as they met

outside matches, and the wives of players were instructed about proper lifestyle, nutrition, sleep, recovery, etc. Joint holidays were introduced in the summer, via the LPO to the sea. The whole families took part. The players had practice in the morning, and in the afternoon they were together with their families. The team also had joint events and especially activities for children. There were joint events, trips, birthday parties, participation in weddings, etc.

Another significant change after the arrival of Jozef Vengloš was the help in ensuring the post - professional life of all players. Coach Vengloš acted as a father, as a mentor and explained that one day football life would end, therefore everyone should think about the future. Under socialist conditions few players could secure themselves for the rest of their playing career. He emphasized the importance of education and, in cooperation with officials, he created the conditions for players who did not have a high school diploma to obtain secondary education. He persuaded players who had a high school diploma of the importance of higher education at university. Several players graduated from high school during that period, and others gained college diplomas and degrees. This approach to life had other advantages, and as most players' minds changed, they took more responsible for their lives, their lifestyle and for their families. Another advantage was the fact that the university studies of key players delayed the basic military service, so the team remained compact for many years. The lineup changed minimally for several years (players did not leave, did not get lost, many completed military service after the age of over 30).

During the work of coach Vengloš in Košice, the number of trips abroad increased significantly. These trips were used not only for gaining football experience in confrontation with various playing styles against strong opponents (at that time Hungarian, Romanian, Bulgarian and Ukrainian football with Dynamo Kyiv were the best teams in Europe), but also to improve the outlook and social growth of players. The long-term trips of VSS Košice to Australia, America or Asia are especially unforgettable.

A novelty was also the middle mountain training in the High Tatras, which used a lower partial pressure of oxygen to increase fitness indicators. Spending time in the Tatras was the main purpose of winter training, but it was also used in the main period to restore and improve fitness. He developed this training model in cooperation with fitness trainers Ján Hunčár and Anton Zrubák.

He stressed the importance of good interpersonal relationships. He had excellent cooperation with officials (Kropáč, Nógrády, MUDr. Juhás), there was mutual trust with the assistant coach, with masseurs, with doctors and colleagues, coaches of youth teams within the club. Overall, there were very

good and harmonious relations with the management of universities and high schools. The national team players had individual study plan, the club paid the teachers and when it was necessary the club paid travel expenses to university professors from Bratislava. The cooperation and assistance of the VSS factory (both management and workers) was also at a good level. Coaches and players had discussions with workers and students in Košice and all over the region. Visits outside Košice were also used for preparatory matches and to promote sympathy and gain fans throughout the region.

Coach Vengloš was an excellent psychologist, pedagogue, knowing how to get people involved. He deserves our respect. He trusted players, officials, and colleagues. He was transparent and open. With his behavior and demeanor he inspired people. He gave out positive emotions. He knew that a coach's success depends not only on the game's strategy and tactics or the individual strengths of the players, but also on how he works with the players as a social group. He significantly changed the course of the whole club, improved the training process, and was able to influence and regulate the behavior of players and actions within the team. He kept the principle that nothing can be done only on the basis of intuition and experience. The coach must be trained and be able to implant the knowledge and skills of individual players properly, always keeping in mind team needs. It is the inestimable value of coaching that determines a coach's success.

Ľubomír Moravčík, former national player of the Czechoslovakia, player for Plastika Nitra and international player in France, Germany, Japan, Scotland, played at the World Cup:



In my eyes, it is a prime example of how a coach should behave during his career and how to achieve success. Experience in the game is not enough. You need to be educated, and he was the best example of that. Especially since he was constantly improving and was a step ahead of everyone. He combined the past playing experience with the constant acquisition of new knowledge and then applied it on the field. In addition, he combined undeniable coaching quality with his personal touch, and was able to get his ideas across to his players. He was able to pass his professional knowledge on to his players and teach them new things. He was able to get players to understand his ideas and the players accepted them. What he knew as a coach, he could teach his players. He also guided me personally in the Czechoslovak national team, especially as a teacher who taught me a lot and also explained a lot. Later while in the Celtic club, our relationship was more like a partnership, because I already knew what he expected and I had taken advantage of what he had taught me on national team. Thanks to him, I was well prepared for this role through my experience on the national team. For example, in the Old Firm derby he put me on the offense with Henrik Larson and thus freed me from the burden of the defense. I was able to fly while on the offense. I scored two goals. He knew how to make a strategic change for the benefit of his team. He had perfect reactions to situations, and he was able to surprise his opponent. He knew how to use the players' strengths strategically, advising and guiding them for the benefit their performance. He was able to direct me as a player in what to improve and what to get rid of in order to get better performance.

Anton Ondruš, former national player of the Czechoslovakia, captain of European champions, player of Slovan Bratislava, international player in Belgium, Switzerland, France:



Jozef Vengloš formed an exceptional team at Slovan, which was the basis of the team of European champions in 1976. We talked a lot about football and about tactics. We saw Vengloš and Ježek as equal coaches, and saw ourselves as partners with them. Vengloš presented us the perceptive side of the match and the strategic tactical specifications. Tono Zrubák supplemented them very well, especially in terms of the conditioning component of the training. By mutual collaboration they created a progressive training model.

Vengloš made decisions about tactics and to me he was a great person and a great coach. Together with Ježek, he created a team with a clear concept and a clear team hierarchy, thanks to which everyone knew what he expected of them. Vengloš was able to explain the nuances of individual tactics to us and had a great intuition for the game. He led us to team cohesion, so everyone accepted their position in the team. I have always liked him very much and he considered us as his own players, and therefore we would have been ashamed to disappoint him. Perhaps that is why we managed to create with the Czechoslovak national team a 23 match winning streak, which was at that time (1974-76) a European rarity, crowned with the title of European Champions.

Ján "Šivý" Pivarník, former national player of the Czechoslovakia, European champion, Slovan Bratislava player:

I felt really sad that he left us. I had experience with Jozef Vengloš in '69-'70 in Košice. He was the only coach (and I had ten of them), who ran all the drills with us during our training, so you couldn't slack off. He was the first to train with us in middle mountain conditions (Štrbské Pleso - Solisko). He motivated

us with his own example that if he could do it, for us it would be a piece of cake. Everyone had to go at full throttle and no one had a leased place in the basic lineup. It all depended on the performance of the match nomination.



I have never before experienced a coach taking us to the theatre before an important derby match to relax with our wives (VSS derby - Loki in Košice). It was the same way at Slovan as well. He was ahead of his time in many ways. For example, on the national team, he had a key responsibility for preparation. At half-time, when we were failing to win, he explained the details of a particular opponent to each player in order to support and encourage the players. Even in difficult moments he was a gentleman with an encouraging vocabulary.

As far as I know, everywhere he went he was successful. I experienced it in VSS Košice, Slovan Bratislava, and when representing the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. He always brought something new to his coaching work. What fascinated me the most was that he also cultivated his team from the intellectual point of view by pushing us in our education. He actually was interested in what would happen to us after the end of our active playing career. I experienced coaches who said it had to be either school or football.

He was thinking about our future instead of us, which no other coach did. This human dimension always fascinated us and that is why we always stood behind him. I remember Bearzot and Hidalgo tried to learn from us about training in the middle mountains. The fact that he established himself in international competition was the result of both his professional and personal qualities. I don't know if any other coach from the Eastern bloc will ever breakthrough in Western European football. Wherever he was, the positive results of his work were evident.

Ján Švehlík, former national player of the Czechoslovakia, European champion, Slovan Bratislava player:

At Slovan I was trained by several renowned coaches, but I would definitely put Jozef Vengloš in first place for several reasons. His football philosophy and discussions on various topics brought me to life. I must say that he shaped me



not only as a player, but also as a human being. He introduced me to great football, and when it was necessary he encouraged me. He had a personal approach, which I haven't seen in any other coaches. At some stages, it looked like a father-son relationship. Besides football, he always stressed the need for both general and coaching education. Under his coaching I became a European U-23 champion as well as a senior European champion.

Demonstrational trainings in the middle mountainous environment helped us a lot to achieve above-standard fitness readiness. It also helped me a lot during the preparation for a match, when he would describe in detail the defenders playing against me. That helped me a lot during the matches. From my point of view, it was a great positive personality that shaped me in terms of playing and in my personal life, for which I am very grateful. He taught me about humility that has accompanied me up to this day. He had a perfect vision of football and was able to enter into the development of the player's personality not only in terms of performance on the field, but also in terms of the player's personal development.

A view from the coaching branch

UFTS (*Football Coaches Union of Slovakia*) as a professional organization of Slovak football coaches, has already stated on its website that it has lost an excellent **coaching personality, a great person and an expert, Dr. Jozef Vengloš**, who contributed to the significant success of Czechoslovak, Slovak, European and international football. We consider it an honor and a duty to recall on the pages of our magazine his varied and successful **coaching career**

and his commitment and professional work within the structures of **FIFA and UEFA** and for the European Football Coaches Alliance AEFCA (formerly UEFT).



Photo: UEFT Basel Symposium, 2005: Laco Borbély, Láďa Valášek, Arnošt Hložek, Walter Gagg, Roman Tulis, UEFT President Dr. Jozef Vengloš and Jiří Zalabák.

Dr. Jozef Vengloš was elected President of the AEFCA in 1996 at the 6th AEFCA General Assembly in Limassol. He became its third president in the history of this European football coaching

organization. Under his leadership, the AEFCA has developed into a honored, dignified and respected partner of UEFA and FIFA. He used his rich experience, expertise and contacts for the benefit of the AEFCA. His personality, professionalism and great sense of responsibility influenced the direction and successful future of the AEFCA. He served until his retirement in 2013, and thanks to his undeniable merits, he was appointed to be the first honorary president of the European Coaching Association in 2013 in Antalya.



Photo: joint meeting of AEFCA, SFZ and ÚFTS with Dr. Vengloš - the first honorary president of the European Coaching Association (Trenčianske Teplice, November 2, 2013)

Dr. Jozef Vengloš was a real ambassador of this game and gave it his vast and long-standing experience. He **chaired the UEFA Technical Development Committee** for years, leading a world-class life as a frequent traveler. As a **technical instructor, technical advisor and lecturer at UEFA and FIFA**, he lectured around the world. He was a **member of the FIFA Technical Study Groups** for several times at the 1986 World Championships in Mexico, 1994 in the USA, in 1998 in France and in 2002 in Korea / Japan. He gave lectures in connection with the **FIFA Project** and so called **FIFA Academy**, and he also led **Olympic Solidarity Courses**.

Photo from the UEFT Basel symposium, 2005: Arnošt Hložek, Jiří Zalabák, Laco Borbély, Dr. Jozef Vengloš and Zdeněk Sivek



He coached five national teams: Czechoslovakia, Slovakia, Australia, Malaysia and Oman. He led the

Czechoslovak national team in a record of 76 matches, the **Slovak national team** in 16 matches. After the division of the common state, he became **the first coach of the Slovak national team**. The coaching victories of Vengloš with **national team selections are well known** :

1970 – 1972 National team coach under 23 – **European Champion**, European Championship – Yugoslavia 1976: **gold medal** (assistant coach of Václav Ježek in Czechoslovakian national team), European Championship -Italy 1980: **bronze medal** (coach of the Czechoslovakian national team), World Championship – Spain 1982: coach of the Czechoslovakian national team) World Championship – Italy 1990 **quarterfinal** (coach of the Czechoslovakian national team). **He led the team selection of the world for seven times.**



Photo: Dr. Vengloš as coach of Celtic Glasgow

He also achieved remarkable successes at the **club level**: he coached FC Sydney Prague (built a **top team**), VSS Košice (significant improvement of game performance, **2nd and 3rd place** in Czechoslovak league), Slovan Bratislava (**won the title of Czechoslovak champion twice** , most valuable achievements

for Vengloš), Sporting Lisabon, FC Kuala Lumpur (**League champions and League Cup Winners**), Aston Villa (**first non-British coach in the history of the English league**), Fenerbahce Istanbul, Celtic Glasgow, Jef United Ičihara (Japan). For his professional knowledge, he also **held positions in the Slovak Republic: official adviser of the President of the Slovak Republic, official adviser of the Minister of Education, member of the Slovak Football Union Executive Committee.**



Photo from the UEFT 2010 symposium in Warsaw: Vlado Weiss, Milan Ivanka, Dr. Jozef Vengloš, Laco Borbély

For his commitment, success, expertise and human approach, he has received a **number of awards** at the Slovak, European and global levels:

➤ In 2007, he was awarded the UEFA "**Diamond Council of Merit**"

for football development.

- On the occasion of the centenary of FIFA in 2014 at the Congress in Paris, he received the "**FIFA Centennial Order of Merit**".
- The Slovak Football Union and journalists declared him **Coach of the 20th century in Slovakia**. He is a member of the **Slovak Football Hall of Fame**.
- 2001 - **Crystal Wing** award of the sports category for excellent results in coaching and for long-term representation of Slovak football around the world.



No other Slovak football coach has gained such a reputation in the world as Dr. Jozef Vengloš. In the photo, we see him at UEFA in the company of the most important and most successful representatives of the

coaching profession. Even among this absolute top personalities he had many friends and admirers, such as Andy Roxburgh, Craig Brown, Walter Gagg, Roy Hodgson and Gerard Houllier. The current AEFCA President Walter Gagg (the third from the bottom left in the photo) also visited Dr. Vengloš up until his last moments of his life in his home in Bratislava.

He was recognized as an expert all over the world. He was an educated, decent and sophisticated man. There is no doubt that Jozef did a job for Slovak, European and international football. Jozef Vengloš died on January 26, 2021. He was 84 years old and was also a member of our organization. **The Union of Football Coaches of Slovakia expresses its sincere condolences to the family and the bereaved. We honor his memory! R.I.P.**

The article was prepared, interviewed and realized by Laco Borbély and Andy Singer as a tribute, with great respect and appreciation to the greatest coach in the history of Slovakia.

