Twitter Thread by Breaking The Lines

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We are all products of our own environments. Our environments shape our character, our personality, our habits, our identity.

The environment that Ousmane Dembélé grew up in and the environment that FC Barcelona seeks to engulf its youngsters with could not be more different.

The Great Gatsby starts with a life lesson.

"Whenever you feel like criticizing any one, just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had."

Ousmane hasn't had the advantages that La Masia youngsters have had. That's why he's Ousmane.

Like every La Masia youngster, Ousmane grew up with a dream: playing for Barça.

Like every youngster, he fought to stand out amid a talented group of players, the majority of which would fail to go pro.

However, his football education was the polar opposite to that of La Masia.

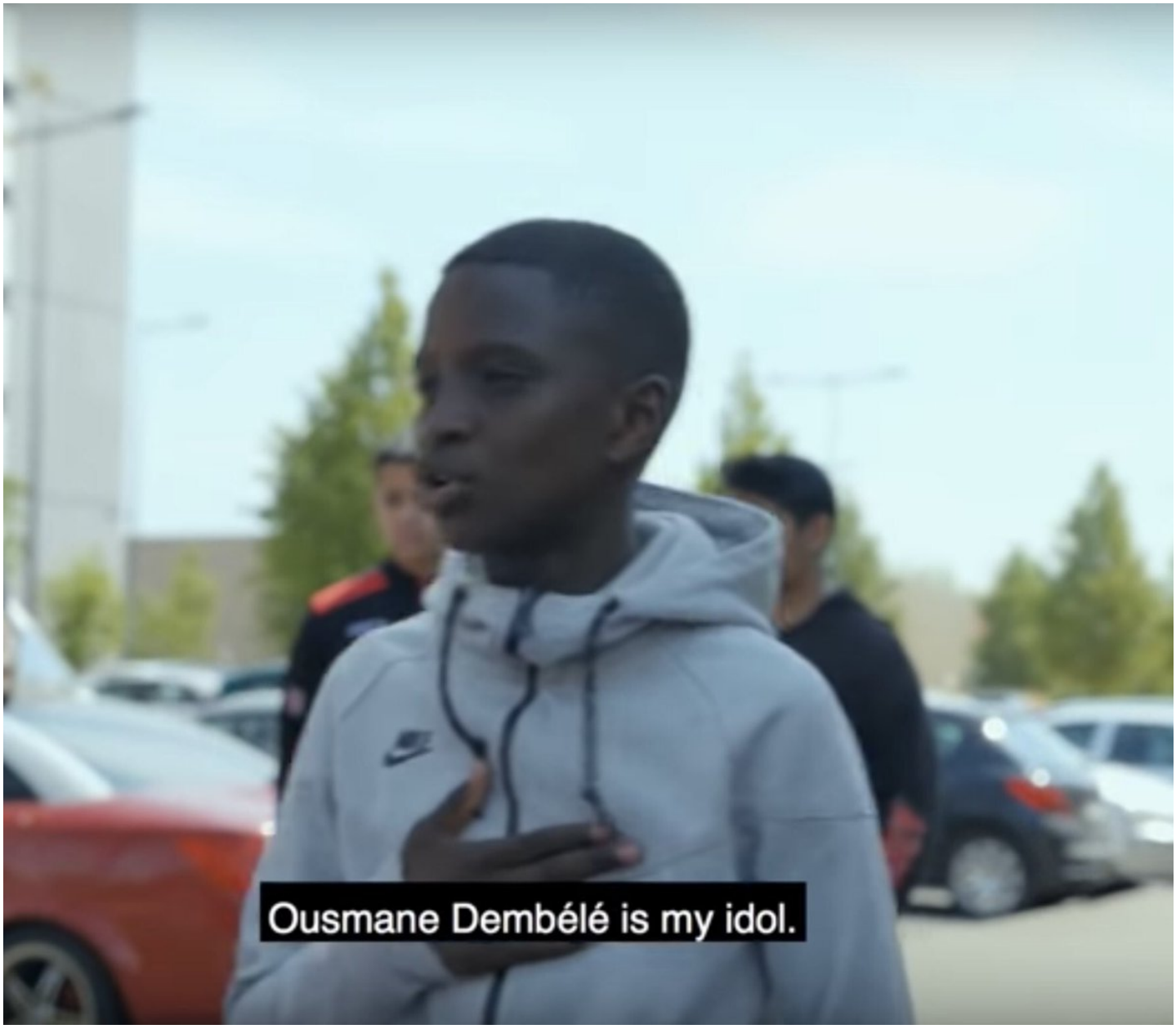
Ousmane did not reside in one of the most expensive academies in Europe: he lived in a low-cost public housing unit in Normandy. He did not play in the well-trimmed pitches of La Masia, he played in the concrete jungles of Évreux. These disadvantages made him the man he is today.

While street soccer encourages individuality & creative freedom, academy-based training like La Masia encourages unselfishness & teamwork.

That's why Barça produce certain types of 20-year-olds like a factory line. It's also why Barça spent €145m on a 20-year-old Ousmane.

Ousmane grew up in a vastly different environment to that of La Masia. It's that kind of environment that made him practice every day for hours on end. It ingrained him with mental fortitude, and it made him never give up until he finally reached the promised land: Barcelona.

Ousmane Dembélé is 21. At 21, he is the 2nd most expensive transfer in club history. He is a World Cup winner. But most importantly, he is a role model to thousands of children who dream of escaping the hood and fulfilling their dream. If you work hard enough, you can achieve it.



It's true that Ousmane must improve his behavior in order to succeed at Barça, but it's also true that the same fans and journalists who criticize his character and question his work ethic have never had to face half the adversities he has had to overcome.

When we overlook the fact that not all of us have grown up in the same environment, we pigeon-hole people into undesirable character traits, we ignore crucial information in order to fulfill our own stereotypes, and we fail to recognize there are different ways to pursue a dream.

At a young age, Ousmane was superior to other kids in his age cohort, kids who trained in academies, due to his relentless work ethic on the streets of Évreux.

He joined Rennes, and soon, he was Rennes' best prospect: at 17, he scored 13 goals in 16 games for their reserve side.



Everyone knew he was ready for first team action, everyone but manager Philippe Montanier, who deemed him too frail for Ligue 1.

Ousmane asked to leave; Rennes refused. And so, with Salzburg, City, and Barça interested in his signature, he refused to train in the summer of 2015.

With the help of new sporting director Mikaël Silvestre, Rennes and Ousmane found an agreement. He became the first academy player in over two years to be promoted to Rennes' first team.

That season, he would announce himself as one of the most exciting teenagers in Europe.

In the midst of all this, Ousmane was caught in a civil war between his club, who allegedly offered to pay him €5m to sign a new contract and to be represented by the club (an illegal practice), and his agent Martial Kodija, who threatened to sue him for €3m in damages.

And yet, like always, Ousmane overcame the adversity. He rejected big-money offers and joined Borussia Dortmund. He didn't understand the culture or understand the language, but he continued his development, proving that he wasn't a one-season wonder, but a mercurial talent.

Suddenly, with Neymar off to PSG, and with Ousmane selected as the chosen one to replace him, he found himself inches away from reaching the promised land.

Just as he had done two summers prior, Ousmane skipped training to push for a move. This time, he was successful.

Despite the fact that he was so frail that the club had developed a personalized muscle-gain program for him, despite the fact that he did not train during preseason, Barcelona were reckless with their new prized possession. Instead of carefully easing him in, they rushed him in.

Dembélé tendrá un plan especial para ganar masa muscular



JOMA

El futbolista francés deberá ganar fuerza física para afrontar con garantías los exigentes partidos del campeonato. Es el camino que siguió Neymar en su etapa en el Barcelona

Moisés Llorens

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Ousmane Dembélé tendrá un plan específico de entrenamiento con el que debe

Ousmane played 25 minutes the first game, then started the next game, and then started the game after. 28 minutes into his third game, he injured his hamstring, an injury that would sideline him for over 3 months.

This would be the first of many hiccups in his Barcelona career.

Barça developed a plan to take precautions with his health: he'd sit out the rest of the year, return to training and come off the bench in January, and return to the starting XI in February.

He returned in January, logged 160 minutes in four games, and got injured once again.



Soon, doubts began to emerge. Doubts over whether he was physically or mentally mature enough to handle a club like Barça. Doubts over whether he could fit into Ernesto Valverde's system. Doubts over whether he was a necessary purchase or a complete waste of money.

The truth isn’t as black and white as it’s made out to be. Both the club and the player share culpability for the injuries. And while Ousmane certainly hasn’t been a dud, having displayed his talent on several occasions, he does need to learn to do the basics off the pitch.

Last week, he failed to inform the club that he planned to skip training due to gastroenteritis. It may seem a small infraction, but it only adds fuel to the fire for those desperate to call him a flop: he takes too long to tie his laces, he doesn’t diet, he parties too much...

Ousmane Dembélé isn’t the finished product yet, but he certainly isn’t a flop either. In fact, he’s the best prospect at the club, a club in which half of its starters are on the wrong side of 30. Ousmane needs to mature, but he needs a bit of patience and forgiveness to mature.

In this day and age, with the microscope of social media, it's clear that his slip-ups in his development, both on and off the pitch, will be magnified and scrutinized. But those who deem him a lost cause would do well to remember Lionel Messi and Luis Suárez during their youths.

Messi was once considered too frail, and his diet and late-night habit of watching Argentine football didn't help either. A troubling injury record stained a remarkable youngster's promise, and had it not been for Pep Guardiola, injuries could have been the bane of his career.



By the time he was 21, Suárez had already gotten sent off for head-butting a ref. He had struggled with weight issues. He would stay up late drinking and partying, and the day after, would show up late to practice.

His on-the-field issues persisted, but eventually, he matured.

With such a frail stature, Ousmane carries the weight of the world on his shoulders.

He carries the weight of his mom, who moved the family from Mauritania in 2007 in search of a better life, who moved the family to Rennes to support him, who took him to every training session.

He carries the weight of his club, the club of his boyhood dreams, who broke their own transfer record to bring him to Catalunya, who expect him to replace Neymar's creative workload now, and who expect him to become the leader of the team in the post-Messi era.

More than anything, he carries the weight of those kids in La Madeleine à Évreux, who spend hours practicing the "Dembouz" move in concrete jungles, who sing "Crochet, crochet, Ousmane Dembélé," and who dream of becoming the next Ousmane Dembélé and escaping to the promised land.