



• England U-17 player Jadon Sancho displays skills to kids at Newtown School in Kolkata. SAMR JANA/HT

England coach hopes big clubs buy young talent

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KOLKATA: The summer of 2017 and a promising start to the FIFA U-17 World Cup can change the way of Premiership clubs buying their way to success. At least Steve Cooper, the England U-17 team coach, hopes so.

"We think we have got good plans with the England teams. We have had a successful summer. It has raised the profile of English talent. Everybody is sitting up and taking notice," he said after Wednesday's 3-2 victory against Mexico.

That win took England to the Round of 16 and Cooper called qualifying with a game to spare a 'luxury'. In two Group F games, England have impressed with players such as Jadon Sancho, Philip Foden, Callum Hudson-Odoi, George McEachran, Rhian Brewster, Joel Latif, and here and Angel Gomes.

But given that Premiership clubs — buoyed by TV revenue and the increasing worldwide popularity of the league fetches — from £191m in 1997, according to BBC, it is now worth £5.14bn and may go up when the auction happens next year — prefer instant gratification of buying rather than promoting their own, these teens could face difficult future.

According to a report in *The Guardian*, Aston Villa, now in the division below the Premiership, earned £85m from television and broadcasting in 2015-16, Crystal Palace got £70m, Arsenal £141m, Chelsea £143m, Liverpool £124m, Manchester City £100m and Manchester United £140m. This isn't the clubs' only revenue stream; there is money to be made from merchandising, gate sales and playing in Europe.

So, clubs would rather invest in Paul Pogba, Alvaro Morata, Alexandre Lacazette and Romelu Lukaku. Things are markedly

different from when Matt Busby built his United squad that ended the club's four-decade trophy drought in 1962. And while this happens, top clubs farm players on loan. Chelsea, who dominate youth competitions in England and have five players in this World Cup squad, alone have some 30 footballers on loan.

"It's more difficult now for young players to get into the first teams because, you know, these owners, they have been spending a lot of money, they want success straightway," said Paul Scholes, a Fergie Fledgling, recently. Manchester United though are not exactly promoting juniors under Jose Mourinho.

"The academies in England can only do what they are doing. They are producing and developing really good talent," said Cooper. "These are still relatively young players. I am sure the opportunity will increase as we have really good players."