

# Koeman's iron fist is making an impact at Barcelona, but it's not likely not enough to save him

Al Arabiya senior sports presenter Liliane Tannoury on why the Barca boss will find it almost impossible to stay the course at Camp Nou



Ronald Koeman has said he has spoken with Lionel Messi about Luis Suarez's exit from Barcelona. Reuters



Liliane Tannoury  
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With an iron fist approach that has led to a difficult conversation with Lionel Messi and the departures of Luis Suarez, Ivan Rakitic and Arturo Vidal, Ronald Koeman has been doing his best to make his mark at Barcelona.

He has had the courage to dismiss players he considers lacking in speed and flexibility, and he has changed the tactical system from a traditional 4-3-3 to 4-2-3-1. The last time Barca regularly played with that formation was under manager Bobby Robson in 1996/97.

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That's some impact after 50 days in office.

Koeman was hired for two main reasons. The first is that he has been a supporters' idol since he scored the goal at Wembley in 1992 that gave Barcelona their first European Cup. When leaders are in trouble, there is no one better to hide behind than a hero.

The second reason is Koeman's strong personality and charisma, and those characteristics are apparent. He is leading a transition that no one before him had the courage to begin.

Inspired by Johan Cruyff's Dream Team, Koeman's new Barcelona features faster and more objective ball movement, without the negative possession of Quique Setien's time in charge.

It was bold to change the tactical system. The 4-3-3 system was implemented by Frank Rijkaard and perfected by Pep Guardiola, architect of one of the strongest teams of all time.

However, despite these profound changes and having signed a contract until June 2022, Koeman is unlikely to remain at Camp Nou after March 2021, unless extraordinary fortune comes his way.

The club presidential elections, scheduled for March, could be brought forward after a motion to dismiss incumbent Josep Maria Bartomeu was approved last week.

A change of date would not change the roster of five candidates to succeed Bartomeu: Joan Laporta, Lluís Fernández, Agustí Benedito, Víctor Font and Jordi Farre.

The fight is likely to be between Laporta and Font, and Koeman will not have an easy time with either of them.

Font told Spanish radio programme *El Larguero* that if he wins, he will stick to his plan to appoint Xavi Hernández as coach even if Koeman has a great season.

His main rival, Laporta, has criticised Koeman for dismissing Suárez and the management responsible for hiring the Dutchman as coach.

On the field, the start is promising for Koeman, despite the recent draw with Sevilla at home. With the club in institutional upheaval, depleted finances and disoriented management, the team impressed the fans with the emergence of young talents such as Ansu Fati, Pedri, Trincao, Araujo and Konrad.

Koeman's Barcelona is combining present and future, a team run by a coach with authority and someone strong enough to set a new style.

With little support from prospective upper management, it seems this new Barca will not be around for long, whatever its success.

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