



Non-negotiables with Antonio Conte - "I'm an honest person and I don't like to tell a 'good lie' to keep my players happy."

We sat down with Antonio Conte to discuss the key coaching values and philosophies he won't compromise on – his non-negotiables.

By **James Descombes** Published: 4 October 2022 - 1.48pm

Football

Premier League

Tottenham Hotspur



As a player, Antonio Conte was a winner.

With Juventus, the Italian midfielder won five Scudettos and a Champions League title.

His hard-work, leadership and tactical knowledge saw him promoted to captain of the Old Lady between 1996 and 2001, and ensured he became an integral part of the Italian national team which went to World Cup and European Championship finals.

Conte's hard work and intelligence have held him in good stead as a manager, too.



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He's won league titles with Juventus, Chelsea and Inter Milan, as well as managing his country.

At Spurs he faces a different challenge. Taking Tottenham back to the top, winning trophies and even changing the culture of the club.

In an exclusive interview with BT Sport, we delved deeper to find out the Italian's non-negotiables – the core coaching philosophies he won't compromise on to try and help bring success to Spurs.

What are your non-negotiables?

I think every manager has their own principles that are not negotiable. For me, for sure, it's hard work.

To explain your idea of football you need time to work with your players. You need time to work on their physical aspects and their mentality, because you have to try and transfer your principles to them.



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Why is hard work so important to you?

Because in my life nobody ever gave me something for free.

I was a player with good quality, but not top, top quality.

But with work rate and great commitment, great desire and the will to improve myself – to stay at the end of training sessions and improve my technical aspects – only with this big effort throughout my career was I able to play for 13 years for Juventus and to be the captain, and then to play with the national team and in the World Cup. At Juventus, we won everything.

Do you look for a little bit of yourself in players?

In my experience it's really important to have a really good person, an honest person and a reliable person, because during the season you have one or two periods where it's not good. But if you can count on not only good players, but good people, for sure this will help you overcome moments of difficulty.



What do players have to demonstrate to you to get opportunities to break into the first team?

I have to see the desire and the will to improve themselves. I want to see that the players here want to improve, to have great behaviour and to create good human relationships. This is important for me.

As a coach I'm an honest person and I don't like to tell a 'good lie' to keep my players happy. I prefer every time to tell the truth. But I think with the truth you can build something important with your team and with your players.

How important is it to balance hard work and enjoyment for your players? We've seen the videos of the players hard at work training in South Korea and with fitness coach Gian Piero Ventrone.

Yes, but it was for many players the first training session when we were in Korea. They had a bit of difficulty training.

But at the same time, my staff are very prepared and our story speaks very clearly – we've not had many injuries and we're always a team that's really fit and always runs at high intensity.

In my opinion, you need to get the player in the best situation to exploit his quality.

“I read a book and in this book there's a phrase. “leave

your shirt much better than the way you found it.” I like this.”
– Antonio Conte

Dejan Kulusevski recently said you’re the most motivated person he’s ever met. Is your motivation the key to your success?

The manager has to be good to cope with 50 or 60 people. You have 24 or 25 players, but you also have your staff and the therapists and doctors that help the club.

You’re trying to find the right key for every single player. The right key to go into their head, into their mind, into their hearts – and also with your staff.

We’re not all the same. You have to try and understand every single player and know the right key to access his mind and his heart. This is very important.

How challenging is it to get players onboard with your coaching philosophies?

It’s a big challenge, for sure. But I like a big challenge and my story speaks clearly throughout my career. I like to face a big challenge and to build something important.

And also when you’re going to leave a place where you work, for me it’s very important to leave a situation much better than the situation that I found when I arrived.

I read this from the New Zealand All Blacks. I read a book and in this book there’s a phrase, “leave your shirt much better than the way you found it.” I like this.

Can players redeem themselves if they break your non-negotiables?

Work is not negotiable and I won’t compromise about this, but at the same time my staff and I like to explain what we’re doing and the reason why we’re doing it – the tactical aspect and the physical aspect, because the players have to be involved.

The players aren’t machines, this has to be very clear. They’re people and there’s a human side that is very important.

They have to be involved in every situation that we’re going to face. When a player understands why you’re doing something, they understand that the situation will improve themselves and then you have a player that will give you not 100%, but 200%.



Do you have to deal with players differently when managing a club vs managing your country?

Yes, it’s totally different. With the national team you don’t have a lot of time to work with your players. I remember that very well with my two years with Italy. You have to be good to exploit every single moment of the day.

I remember well that every training session we recorded and showed them and tried to exploit every single moment.




Every single moment we tried to create not only a group of players but a team.

With the national team, if you are good enough to create a team you have a lot of advantages because it's very difficult to do.

If you can create a team in a short time you have a big possibility of having a good tournament or winning a trophy.

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