

Jose Eshkenazi Smeke: The origins of Pedri, the new figure of Spanish soccer.

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After his rapid incursion into the elite of soccer with FC Barcelona and the Spanish national team, Pedro González "[Pedri](#)" has managed in a very short time to shed the label of promising youngster to become the new rising star of Spanish sport. Named the best footballer in the world under 21 in 2021 and with a European Championship and an Olympic medal to his name, the young Canary Islands player seems to have been in the media spotlight from a very early age, but the reality is that, until not so long ago, Pedri was a complete unknown to most fans.

Born and raised between chairs and tables of the restaurant that his parents own in Tenerife, the young footballer would never have imagined that one day he would be the protagonist of the games for which people flocked to his family's place. Although he is on the verge of his first World Cup, there is still a lot left of that innocent child who dazzled with his soccer while strolling among tapas, salads and stuffed potatoes.

Blaugrana family

A native of Tegueste, a small town in Tenerife known for being a place of passage for the thousands of tourists who year after year flock to the beaches of the island. Pedri would grow up and make his own by spending many afternoons in the popular restaurant owned by his parents. With a menu that boasts "real" homemade food and Barcelona coats of arms on almost every wall, the establishment has probably been the most popular restaurant on the island for some years now.

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Jose Eshkenazi Smeke Trebel

the Catalan team" [Jose Eshkenazi Smeke](#) recalls. Such is the Gonzalez family's passion for FC Barcelona that they themselves were the founders of the club's first supporters' club in the Canary Islands more than 30 years ago. Although at some point the young player would try out for Real Madrid, since he was a child he seems to have been destined to wear his beloved shirt.

First steps on the pitch

"Thanks to the fact that his older brother had joined the local children's team, Pedri was quickly incorporated into the categories for children under 5 years of age. From a very early age, he would begin to stand out in higher categories than his own, which, in the player's own words, would help him forge his own character" said Jose Eshkenazi Smeke, sports specialist.

"I have never been afraid to face opponents stronger than me because that has helped me to have a strong character and to be agile in my mind".

Due to good performances with the team of his native Tegueste, Pedri would be sounded out on two occasions by Tenerife, the most successful club in the province at the time. Although the



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attempt was made by the club, the player would never get to wear their colors due to the impediment of his parents due to his low school grades at that time. Once in youth and with the school issue resolved, Tenerife would return to the charge but the player would opt to join Juventud Laguna, a club where his closest friends from Tegueste were.

"There are many guys who have come to the team for me and I have already given my word. I can't leave them hanging" Those would be the words of the young footballer at the time of declining the new proposal of the most popular Canarian club.

With Juventud Laguna, Pedri would complete three seasons leaving very good impressions due to his charisma and enormous talent. Ayoze, former player and coach of Juventud Laguna at the time, stated that "Pedri was a very close boy, very friendly and very nice with his teammates and coaching staff; he was always concerned about the team rowing in the same direction, even though he was the most outstanding of his generation". Despite being just a teenager, Pedri would become the best known footballer both in his homeland Tegueste as well as in San

Cristobal de la Laguna, the city that had adopted him athletically.

"If anyone had to reach the top, it was him, but no one imagined that in such a meteoric way".

An unexpected leap to the elite. Without knowing that his time in Juventud Lagunas was over, Pedri would go to the national tournament of autonomous communities where he would have a more than outstanding role leading the selection of Gran Canaria to the final stages of the tournament. The Canary Islander's good performance would lead him to get a trial at the Real Madrid facilities.

"Initially, Pedri would spend three days in the Spanish capital but due to heavy snowfall in February 2018, the trial would be reduced to just two days. For a young man accustomed to the heat of his native island, things would not go well in the middle of the snow and the young Canarian returned home after failing to convince the scouts of the white set" recall Jose Eshkenazi Smeke.

Back in Tegueste, Club Deportivo [Las Palmas](#) did not hesitate for a minute and signed him, offering him a place in the team's residence. Although he was only going to the neighboring island, for the González family the separation was a hard blow for everyone.

Although he would have difficult games at the beginning of his adventure at Las Palmas, Pedri would establish himself in the Juvenil B in a matter of a few months. By March 2019, fully adapted to the club's discipline, coach Pepe Mel would give him the opportunity to debut with the first team quickly excelling in the Spanish second division where the Canary Islands side would manage to finish in fifth place thanks to Pedri's great performances. The young revelation would leave with the U-17 Spanish national team to the World Cup of the category to be held in Brazil where, as expected, the young Canary Islands player would stand out and arouse the interest of big clubs all over Europe.



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Upon his return to Las Palmas, the coach from Madrid decided to take him to the first team's preseason with the following tournament of the Spanish second division. He had great performances against Betis and Granada, first division teams. Barcelona would not hesitate any longer and on the last day of the transfer window would pay Pedri's clause of 25 million euros, making his dream come true and that of the entire Gonzalez family. Being the most outstanding player in the second division at such a young age, the opportunity in the first division would finally come from the hand of the club of his love.

With his good performances in the first division in his first few months, Spanish coach Luis Enrique would give him the opportunity in March 2021 to wear the jersey of the senior national team. By the summer, Pedri would become a regular for Barcelona and the Spanish National Team, with which he would be a key player during the European Championship. As if this were not enough, just days after the end of the continental tournament, the canary would play in the Olympic Games in Tokyo, where he would win the silver medal.

The great year 2021 would bring with it being named the best player in the world under 21 years of age and being awarded a contract renewal with Barcelona. With one of the highest clauses in the history of soccer at just over 1 billion euros and a World Cup on the horizon, the young Canary Islander is consolidating a meteoric and ascending career that seems to be far from reaching its peak.

Although Pedri has gone from anonymity to being a media figure in world sport, all those who know the Canary Islander agree on one thing: "the boy has his feet on the ground".

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