

# The Super League Conflict: Why Everyone is Upset With This Project?

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**Abstract:** The Super League is a project competition thought of as an alternative to the present Champions League. In this regard, this new competition was designed to operate independently of FIFA and UEFA, which are the governing bodies of football worldwide and in Europe respectively, and would feature a semi-closed group of European teams (15 permanent and five selected based on their domestic results) from England, Spain and Italy (teams from France and Germany were also on the list but the selected clubs, PSG, Bayern München, and Borussia Dortmund declined the offer to join). This move made FIFA and UEFA condemn the proposed Super League, arguing against the ex-clusiveness of this closed league and considering a dangerous precedent that can be followed by other football clubs. The disagreement has escalated to legal actions and sanctions from FIFA and UEFA against the clubs that joined the Super League which, in turn, have started their own legal actions against the two international bodies. Even if the project seems to be abandoned, the situation is still ongoing and it's difficult to predict the future of sport management after this bold move of several football clubs against the two governing bodies. The present article tries to analyze the situation using conflict analysis in order to find out future scenarios for all the actors involved.

**Keywords:** Super League, FIFA, UEFA, conflict, sports governance.

## Introduction

In our days, sport is a big business, with huge sums of money involved. The sports industry is estimated to account for more than 500 billion \$ in 2022, with estimations of 700 billion \$ in 2026. Thus, it comes as no surprise that it is also a major source of legal disputes. "The unique investment of competitive egos, emotions, expectations,

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and money in international sports almost guarantees a dividend of highly charged disputes... and the structure for resolving them is complex” (Nafziger, 2009). Modern sports organizations are dynamic, made up of people with increasingly diverse backgrounds, opinions, values, and expectations about work, but often the tension to manage these emotions and the responsibility to manage billions of dollars budgets can lead to disputes, which in turn can lead to conflicts (Sandu, 2015).

### **What happened?**

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 2021, six English football clubs (Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, Manchester United, Manchester City, and Tottenham), three Spanish teams (Atletico Madrid, Barcelona, and Real Madrid), and three Italian teams (AC Milan, Inter Milan, and Juventus) announced that they would start a new football competition, called the Super League, the financier being JP Morgan Chase. This new league would consist of 20 clubs, with 15 of them being a permanent part of the competition (the twelve above plus French PSG and Germany’s Bayern München and Borussia Dortmund) and five additional clubs able to qualify annually based on their domestic results. The purpose of the new competition was to “improve the quality and intensity of existing European competitions throughout each season, and to create a format for top clubs and players to compete on a regular basis” (Houben *et al.*, 2022).

The project met a lot of bad reactions from political bodies, football fans, managers, and coaches, including from UEFA and the world football body FIFA, and disintegrated rapidly, the English clubs being the first to leave after outrage from their own fans and the British government. The British clubs were followed quickly by the Italian ones, letting only the Spanish ones to stick to the proposed project.

Besides the negative reactions, FIFA and UEFA also announced the possibility that each of these football clubs to be sanctioned with financial penalties and, most importantly, with a ban against both the club and the players regarding their participation in any competition governed by both UEFA and FIFA, meaning that the players would not be allowed anymore to play in the international games for their countries or in the international inter-clubs competitions like Champions League, UEFA Europa League of Conference League.

In order to avoid this, the nine clubs that withdrew from the project sent to UEFA a ‘Club Commitment Declaration’ setting out the position of the Clubs, including their commitment to UEFA Club Competitions as well as national club competitions (UEFA, 2021). In short, by doing this, the nine clubs acknowledge and accept that the Super League project was a mistake and apologize to fans, national associations, national leagues, fellow European clubs, and UEFA. Besides this, each club will make a donation totaling an aggregate of €15 million, to be used for the benefit of children, youth and grassroots football in local communities across Europe, will forfeit 5% of their prize

money from a single season in European competition, and agree to have financial fines imposed if they seek to play in such an unauthorized competition (€100 million each) or if they breach any other commitment they have entered into in the Club Commitment Declaration (€50 million each) (UEFA, 2021).

Regarding the three Spanish clubs, they complained against FIFA and UEFA to a Spanish court which subsequently sought guidance from the Luxembourg-based Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU). The president of Real Madrid, Florentino Perez, who was elected by the 12 initial clubs as the President of the new league, announced that he feels bad for the English and Italian clubs because they didn't respect their side of the agreement and that himself and the rest of the clubs, he represents will not be afraid of the UEFA and FIFA threats and that he will continue the project.

The aim of this article is to analyze the situation and come up with possible scenarios for it. In order to do that, we need to properly understand the sources of the conflict and their interests by using two conflict analysis models, not before we say something about corporate governance.

### **Corporate governance**

Corporate governance can be conveniently understood as the set of processes, customs, policies, laws, and institutions that affect how a corporation or company is directed, administered, and controlled (Leusse *et al.*, 2009). Such consideration also takes into account the relationships existing among the many stakeholders involved and the objectives for which the corporation is governed. In Europe, there are already serious concerns over the governance of the European football industry, especially towards the top of the football pyramid, which has “developed into a ‘business’ that has increased the tendency towards legal disputes and cultural clashes, as a result, football now exists in an environment of legal uncertainty” (Arnaut, 2006, p. iv).

Corporate governance is an important aspect of modern industrial management where most research has been focused on conventional industries and stock-listed corporations. The sports industry has thrived on commercial development. However, there is a danger of over-commercialization which can undermine the integrity and social value of sport. The lengthy debate over the peculiarity of the sports industry, especially in league sports, coupled with heavy discussions on the way the sport has been commercialized globally over the last two or three decades, has shown particular concerns on the corporate governance issues in the sport industry (Walters, 2007).

Professional sports leagues consist of several individual teams or clubs. At the top level, clubs not only operate as individual firms but also collectively act as cartels within their industries (Sloane, 1971). Especially in Europe, a sports club is often operated as both a commercial entity and a local community hub simultaneously.

Corporate governance in sports is about setting up mechanisms in order to balance its social and sports roles to protect its integrity from the inevitable trend of commercial development. Joes Luis Arnaunt (2006), Chair of Independent Europe Sport Review stated: “Sport governing bodies must understand and accept the requests of political institutions towards sport governing bodies regarding the need for proper governance” (p. iv). In reality, the European Union (EU), UEFA, and Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) are working together for better governance in football which indicates the need to protect football’s sporting nature and social functions from increasing business orientation.

The contemporary literature on corporate governance in professional football draws attention to many areas—political interference, game regulators, revenue generation and distribution, competitive balance, investors’ behavior, management structure, fan involvement, and so on. In the last two decades, the development trend of professional games has become more of a business and less of a social institution. Therefore, corporate governance on the subject of football development has raised serious concerns from some economists, government officers, and industry professionals. On a macro level, corporate governance is a key element in enhancing investor confidence, promoting competitiveness, and improving economic growth. On a micro level, corporate governance is important in promoting football not only as a high-profile social institution but also as an exciting entertainment industry.

Despite football being described as “the people’s game”, under today’s business approach, “the people” are considered ‘customers’, the game more as the ‘product’ and the club a ‘brand’. The over-development of football commercialization has led to the over-exploitation of its “customers”. Traditional fans are priced out, undermining the values of football clubs as a community-based social institution. Hamil (1999) recognizes the danger of the current commercial approach as it can erode the fans’ loyalty and football’s social value, therefore, putting the game at risk. Although a monopoly position is impossible for a club to achieve, league competitions can be dominated by a few big clubs. A high level of dominance produces unbalanced league competition; unbalanced league competition reduces the outcome of uncertainty, which can arguably deter supporters from attending matches (Football Governance Research Centre, 2003, 2004, 2005). In this light, FIFA and UEFA’s first argument against the Super League (where no one is relegated) was the unfair competition system, on one hand, and the increased financial gap between the Super League clubs and the rest of them.

### **Club ownership in countries from where the Super League was formed**

For our research, the type of ownership of the 12 founding clubs is very important to understand the way and the aim of their management.

In England, most football clubs are privately owned limited companies, and commonly owned by local or foreign businessmen, mostly from the UAE and the USA. In the past, a

club's profitability also came second to its traditional values. Critics (Conn, 2007, Wheel, 2011) believe the commercialization of football development has gone too far—clubs have lost touch with their communities, priced out ordinary fans, and damaged the traditional value of social cohesion and inclusion which football sought to uphold.

In Spain, many clubs are owned by members. Real Madrid and Barcelona are the most well-known of the clubs where members democratically elect their presidents. Smaller clubs like Athletic Bilbao, are also owned by their members. In addition, in the case of Barcelona, the club represents a traditional Catalan value of intolerance of dictators throughout history. Barcelona's famous slogan "more than a club" clearly indicates the centrality of higher social values.

In Germany, the German FA maintains a policy that members of every Bundesliga club own at least 51 percent of their club. This ensures a connection between clubs and their local communities. Recently, league administrators voted to continue their ban on foreign ownership of clubs, therefore, the German league will continually remain a domestic affair. German Football League (DFL) president Reinhard Rauball stated in 2008 that "The Bundesliga thrives on its stability and balance, the protection of the competitions must be maintained" (The Independent, 2008).

In Italy, clubs are owned by businessmen who see clubs as prestigious assets reflecting their business images and representing their own personalities. From their points of view football clubs are part of their lives and social images—making the clubs too valuable to sell.

### **The juridical context**

Like any other professional sports activity, football (or soccer) has its own governing bodies and laws that organize it from the sports activity to a commercial one. It is not the place to mention all of them because this is not the aim of the article. Regarding our case study, there is an article (101) inside the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) that will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Article 101 of the TFEU prohibits: (i) agreements between undertakings, decisions by associations of undertakings, and concerted practices that; (ii) may affect trade between Member States; and (iii) which have as their object or effect the prevention, restriction, or distortion of competition within the internal market.

FIFA, UEFA, national member associations, and football clubs constitute (associations of) undertakings within the meaning of Article 101 TFEU. Besides regulatory activities, they also conduct commercial activities related to the organization and marketing of international sports events like licensing of broadcasting rights and sponsorship agreements. That means that the rules of these governing bodies, which are binding on their members, amount to a decision by an association of undertakings within the meaning

of that provision. Taking into account that the rules can—and most likely will—have a cross-border impact, there can also be no doubt about their effect on trade between Member States. In our case, one of the things that FIFA and UEFA are trying to argue is that the TFEU rules relating to breakaway competitions are enforced here in order to restrict the new competition. On the other hand, the Super League representatives argue that neither of the three points of article 101 mentioned above can be applied in their case and that FIFA and UEFA are the ones who don't respect them.

Even so, the third paragraph of Article 101(3) TFEU says that competitions are not prohibited if they: (1) contribute to improving the production or distribution of goods or to promote technical or economic progress; (2) allow consumers a fair share of the resulting benefit; (3) be indispensable to the attainment of these objectives; and (4) not afford undertakings the possibility of eliminating competition in respect of a substantial part of the products or services in question. Regarding this, the Super League: (1) is just a closed competition meant to distribute wealth, and goods (merchandise and football players) between the 15 permanent members and the five occasional ones; (2) does not promote any technical or economic progress; (3) does not provide a fair share of the profits to all the members and the rest of the football world; (4) eliminates the competition with its organization, financial gain and exposure.

There are another two articles that need to be mentioned here, this time from the UEFA Statutes, Articles 49.1 and 49.3. Article 49.1 states that UEFA has the sole jurisdiction to organize or abolish international competitions in Europe in which member associations and/or their clubs participate. FIFA competitions are not affected by this provision. Article 49.3 furthermore states: "International matches, competitions or tournaments which are not organized by UEFA but are played on UEFA's territory shall require the prior approval of FIFA and/or UEFA and/or the relevant Member Associations in accordance with the FIFA Regulations Governing International Matches and any additional implementing rules adopted by the UEFA Executive Committee".

Both articles are the spearhead of both governing bodies against the Super League because they can deny any other football competition access to the existing market because: (1) all of the Super League clubs are members of the UEFA and their national associations are members of FIFA; (2) the Super League competition would be played on UEFA's territory; and (3) the Super League founders didn't ask for UEFA's approval.

### **The economical context**

In short, the majority of fans, neutrals, and professionals are saying that the reason for such a decision lies in the fact that these clubs deal with falling revenue, the inability to qualify for the UEFA Champions League and the promise of securing hundreds of millions of dollars/euros just for playing in this new format.

The 12 founding clubs are one of the biggest and most notorious football clubs in the world, they play yearly in the top Champions League competition where they receive a lot of money for their results, TV rights, and the fans who buy the tickets but the two years of COVID-19 affected them with games postponed and fans banned from stadiums. As a result, their revenues suffered.

All 20 clubs in Deloitte's Money League, which includes the 12 breakaway clubs, reported a 12% drop in revenue in 2019–2020 (from 9.3 billion euros in the 2018–2019 season to 8.2 billion euros in the 2019–2020 season. The next season, things were even worse, with a 2.41-billion-dollar loss in revenue by the end of the season due to the pandemic.

This situation led the owners to look for alternative sources of income and the European Super League provided one. The amount of money involved in this project is enormous with the US investment bank JP Morgan (which is financing the league) promising 3.25 billion euros to start it, along with 200–300 million euros as a “welcome bonus” for each of the 20 clubs. Taking into consideration that Chelsea, the winner of the Champions League in 2021 received around 100 million euros for its results in the competition, only the “welcoming bonus” triples that without doing anything else than be one of the 20 clubs' part of the new competition.

Besides the money mentioned above, the Super League is seen as “the Goose with the golden eggs” that keep coming to the owners because, as mentioned before, there is no relegation in this new competition, no matter how bad your results are. This means that the prize money and TV rights are coming by default without the risk of not qualifying for the Champions League, for example, which could mean a loss of money and TV deals.

### **Actors and interests**

The main actors of this conflict are the football clubs who organized the proposed Super League and FIFA and UEFA.

The first ones have stated that their main interest is to secure a stable financial future for their clubs. They argue that the current structure of European football, which is governed by FIFA and UEFA, does not provide enough revenue for the top clubs, a problem that can be resolved with the new competition where the closed organization can increase the revenue through more lucrative television and sponsorship deals. As an argument here, the clubs argue that the Super League would provide a more competitive and exciting competition, as it would feature the best clubs and players in Europe playing against each other on a regular basis rather than playing twice to four times in a year.

Another interest of the founding clubs is to have bigger control over the organization and broadcast of the matches, as well as the revenue sharing, which they believe would be more beneficial for them than the current revenue-sharing model of UEFA. Now, everything is controlled by the UEFA, in a small proportion, even the revenue obtained

from ticket sales, and the founding clubs' demand to have a bigger control over mainly the broadcasting of their matches.

### **FIFA and UEFA**

FIFA's and UEFA's positions are certainly inspired by commercial motives too. The departure of 20 of the most important football clubs in the world would mean a big loss of the revenues that UEFA is receiving from its three major international competitions—Champions League, Europa League, and Europa League II—through the sale of tickets, broadcasting rights and merchandising. Even if the preservation of their financial benefits is a big incentive itself, both organizations rely on a popular discourse about solidarity within the football pyramid and the organization and proper conduct of competitions with respect to fair play and meritocracy because the decreased revenue will have a knock-out effect on the solidarity mechanisms within the traditional sports model, where some of the benefits generated by top clubs and players are meant to trickle down to small members and youth teams.

### **The fans**

Fans of football clubs have had mixed reactions to the proposed Super League. Some fans support the idea, believing that it would provide a more competitive and exciting competition, featuring the best clubs and players in Europe. They also believe that financial stability and control over the revenue would benefit their clubs in the long term.

However, many fans have expressed opposition to the proposed league. They argue that it would harm the sport by creating a closed league of elite teams that would dominate football and exclude many other clubs. Additionally, fans are concerned that the league would negatively affect the traditional rivalries and local communities and also would make access to the matches more difficult and expensive.

At the same time, an important percentage of the fans are criticizing the international bodies exactly on the same topics as the Super League clubs. Firstly, they criticize UEFA and FIFA for the increase in ticket prices imposed by some presidents, for the way UEFA and FIFA managed the television rights that have forced supporters to subscribe to three different streaming services to be able to follow their team in every competition, for the imposition of tight calendars with matches on unrealistic days and at unrealistic times where El Clasico Real Madrid-Barcelona is played in Dubai or Riad at a time when the fans from Europe or the US can't see it just for them to earn a few million more, to name but a few.

At the end of the day, the fans will go with the flow and stay behind their favored clubs if they perceive that a new competition is to their benefit. In all cases, I think that the fans should be taken very seriously by the other two sides because they have the power to influence the course of action for both sides.



## **Why is the Super League so problematic?**

Well, the critics have two directions, one is about the idea of sport and competition and the second is the financial one. As mentioned above, one of the problems with this new competition is that of a close clique where your presence is guaranteed just by being a member. For many, sport is a fair-play competition where there are winners and losers, according to each's ability. If no club can't be relegated, the idea of a fair-play competition is seriously affected because this exclusivity goes against the principles of promotion and relegation, which are fundamental to European football leagues. Secondly, the amount of money involved in this new competition is huge and it is very hard to see the founding club's initiative in another way than wanting bigger revenues and putting the idea of competition in second place.

In their statement after the announcement of the new competition, the founding clubs represented by Florentino Perez, Real Madrid's president, said that this move comes after several rounds of meetings with UEFA's management in order to reform the current Champions League in order to provide higher-quality matches and additional financial resources for the overall football pyramid at a time when the global pandemic has accelerated the instability in the existing European football economic model. Florentino Perez, who would also be the first chairman of the Super League said that "football is the only global sport in the world with more than four billion fans and our responsibility as big clubs is to respond to their desires".

If that is not enough to start a conflict with UEFA, FIFA, fans, and ex-players, the founding clubs, having guaranteed this large amount of money, want to continue taking part in their domestic leagues, without taking into consideration the (already) big difference between their wealth and power and the rest of their competitors, again affecting their domestic competitions where already, for the past 20–30 years are the same winners as the founding clubs of the Super League which, again, already are the biggest and wealthiest in the world.

## **Trends**

From the perspective of FIFA and UEFA a breakaway league, such as the Super League, constitutes a threat to the traditional pyramidal football model. At the same time, a breakaway league will be a competitor against UEFA's own football competitions. Therefore, from FIFA and UEFA's point of view, it is entirely natural for them to try to discourage such attempts in the future.

One important discussion here that, in the future, will shape all the moves made by both sides is the harshness of the sanctions for the clubs and athletes that want to repeat the Super League story. By announcing a ban on competing in FIFA and UEFA competitions, not only for clubs but also for the players involved, both international forums can face a

legal counter-attack regarding the right to free movement and to work as was the case with other governing bodies like NBA and International Skating Union.

On the other hand, from a practical perspective, clubs might just not be impressed by a ban on participating in UEFA competitions, for example, because a breakaway league would replace the latter. Secondly, it is doubtful that sporting bodies can impose such penalties on clubs or players. As stated by the European Commission in the International Skating Union case, any penalty imposed may have to be clearly justified on the basis of a legitimate objective and shall be proportionate to it. Most important here, and I'm returning to the financial aspect, is whether UEFA and FIFA can really risk losing money from the fact that 12 of the most important football clubs and let's say approximately 30–40 superstars are banned from international competitions because the TV channels will not pay the same amount of money for broadcasting rights, the main sponsors will do the same and the fans will prefer doing something else than paying at least 30–40 euros to see a game without the main superstars.

Another aspect worth mentioning here is the popularity trend of the Super League which was not at its best in the first days after the announcement and continued to worsen in the following months:

- The Premier League's all-time top goal scorer and pundit (TV expert) Alan Shearer called on the Premier League to ban the six English clubs involved in the organization of the Super League.
- "I fell in love with popular football, with the football of the fans, with the dream of seeing the team of my heart compete against the greatest. If this European Super League advances, those dreams are over, and the illusions of the fans of the teams that are not giants of being able to win on the field competing in the best competitions will end" – Ander Herrera, PSG.
- "Kids grow up dreaming to win the World Cup and the Champions League—not any Super League. The enjoyment of big games is that they only happen once or twice a year, not every week. Really hard to understand for all football fans out there..." – Mesut Ozil, former Arsenal and Real Madrid player.
- "Today I wake up to crazy news! An insult to my belief: football is happiness, freedom, passion, fans and is for everyone. This project is disgusting, not fair and I'm disappointed to see clubs I represented involved Fight against this!" – Lukas Podolski, former Arsenal player.
- "This so-called 'Super League' is anything but 'Super'. This greedy and callous move would spell disaster for our grassroots, for women's football, and the wider community only to serve self-interested owners, who stopped caring about their fans long ago, and have complete disregard for sporting merit. Tragic" – Luis Figo, former Barcelona, Real Madrid and Inter Milano superstar.

- “The reaction to it is that it’s been damned and rightly so. I’m a Manchester United fan and have been for 40 years of my life but I’m disgusted, absolutely disgusted. I’m disgusted with Manchester United and Liverpool the most. Liverpool say they’re the people’s club, ‘You’ll Never Walk Alone’, the fan’s club. Manchester United, 100 years, born around workers around here, and they’re breaking into a league without competition, that they can’t be relegated from” – Gary Neville, former Man United player and current TV pundit.
- The UK government expressed its opposition to the Super League and threatened legislative action to prevent it. Prime Minister Boris Johnson, along with other politicians, voiced concerns about the impact of the Super League on the football pyramid and the cultural significance of football in society.
- Managers of the clubs involved have refused to be drawn into making strong statements so far, with perhaps the exception of Pep Guardiola at Manchester City who said “This it is not a sport. When the relation between effort and success doesn’t exist, it’s not a sport. It’s not a sport if it doesn’t matter if you lose.”
- Former Southampton player Francis Benali: “It is about money and greed, it’s a closed shop... it’s just been widely condemned by virtually everybody”.

As we can see from the above, everyone seems to be against the Super League, from the political actors to people who worked or still work for the 12 founding clubs and, of course, to the fans.

But things are way ahead than these interviews or Twitter posts because, last year, on July 11, 2022, in Luxembourg, started a two-day hearing in the high-profile European Super League case in the European Court of Justice. The request for this comes from Madrid’s Mercantile Court where the three remaining clubs, Barcelona, Real Madrid and Juventus were suing the UEFA and FIFA, for infringement of articles 101 and 102 of the TFEU (Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union). They are accusing the two governing bodies of having a monopoly on the authorization and organization of international competitions, of the exclusive exploitation of their rights, and of threatening clubs and players who participate in the Super League with sanctions. The three clubs already have won a first battle with UEFA and FIFA at the ECJ who ordered European football’s governing body to withdraw the fines already imposed on the founding clubs.

On the other hand, still waiting for the final decision in this case, the prospects for a revived European Super League were knocked back last year by advocate general Athanasios Rantos at the Court of Justice of the European Union who argued that UEFA and FIFA are within their rights to impose sanctions on clubs who join any breakaway. According to him, “The FIFA–UEFA rules under which any new competition is subject to prior approval are compatible with EU competition law. Whilst the Super League is free to set up its own independent football competition outside the UEFA and FIFA ecosystem, it cannot however, in parallel with the creation of such a competition, continue to

participate in the football competitions organized by FIFA and UEFA without the prior authorization of those federations” (MacInnes, December 15, 2022).

### **What will happen next?**

The first thing that will happen is the final decision of the ECJ, most probably by the end of 2023 or the first trimester of 2024 (based on the moment the ECJ received the case and the average time needed for a verdict). In particular, the principle expressed in Article 49.1 of the UEFA Statutes that UEFA has the sole jurisdiction to organize or abolish international competitions in Europe in which member associations and/or their clubs participate, is hard to reconcile with the case-law of the Court of Justice of the European Union and it is likely to be too broad to be compatible with Article 101 of the TFEU.

Article 49.3 of the UEFA Statutes is also problematic. While it provides an opening for the organization of international matches, competitions, or tournaments that are not under UEFA, it does not contain any “objective, transparent, non-discriminatory and verifiable authorization criteria”. While restrictions on the organization of alternative competitions may be permissible, for example, to protect the match calendar of UEFA and domestic leagues, rules should be drawn up to make such a concern explicit and to describe what criteria will be used to determine whether such a concern may prevent the organization of alternative competitions, such as the Super League.

In conclusion, the verdict is uncertain and it will depend upon the way the ECJ judges will see a correlation between the UEFA regulations, the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and the rules and organizational form of the Super League.

At this moment, based on the analysis of the situation, the interests of the parties, and the current context, I can say for sure that if the verdict is against the Super League, the project is dead. Everyone, except the owners of the 12 founding clubs, is against the project, from the political actors to the fans and mass media. A negative verdict will only cement their opinion even more. For the past two years, everyone has been quiet about the new competition and, except Barcelona, Real Madrid and Juventus, is concentrated on the existing domestic and international competitions. Next year there is the Olympic games in Paris and the European Championship and the players are fully concentrated for them; being afraid of the drastic sanction from FIFA is the last thing they’ll need so I don’t think that the topic will recur as powerful as it did in 2021.

But this doesn’t mean that there will not be another discussion about another competition in the future. Football is a growing industry that needs more and more revenues in order to keep its nickname as the “king game”. With the rise in the financial power of Arabic football clubs, the European ones will need even more money than before. In the same time, there can always be another pandemic, an international conflict, natural

disasters or the lack of capacity to play yearly in the Champions League so there will always be the need (or greed) for more money. With high players like JP Morgan who want to invest large resources into European football, with the financial success of NBA, HHL, HFL or MLB, all closed competitions without the relegation feature, and with the growing upset of the big football clubs about the way the revenues are distributed by UEFA, there is just a matter of time before another project is proposed.

## **Conclusion**

The European Super League, as initially proposed, was met with widespread controversy and opposition from fans, players, clubs, and governing bodies in the world of football. All of them criticized mainly the exclusivity of the Super League which was seen as an attempt by a select group of elite clubs to create an exclusive competition, potentially sidelining smaller clubs and undermining the principles of merit-based competition and the financial inequality that would result from that because it could further exacerbate financial disparities in football, concentrating wealth and resources among the participating clubs while leaving others at a disadvantage.

I think everything is about the money in this story and I'm sure that UEFA would have said yes to a project from which it could gain extra money. The last year's revenues from the Champions League stood at around 3 billion euros. Doing a quick comparison, JP Morgan would invest 3.25 billion just to start the project and would offer 200–300 million euros as a welcoming gift for all the 20 participating clubs. For an average of 250 million euros per club, that would add another 5 billion euros just in the first year. The main sponsor, JP Morgan, and each of the 20 clubs could have negotiated with UEFA a series of actions that would have put UEFA in a difficult position to say no, like:

- A yearly percentage paid by each club to the UEFA that would be a drop in the ocean for the clubs. A 10% from each club only from participating in the competition would be around 500 million euros, which stands as 1/6 from the revenues generated by the Champions League.
- Investment in youth football (already done by every football club) which would continue and guarantee the social value of sports. Besides this, the Super League can extend the competition to the youth level (as in the case of the Youth Champion League) and have the same competition for women. In this way, the Super League would silence the UEFA's critics about the fact that such a move would kill smaller clubs or the youth level and is not considering women.
- Scheduling the competition mid-week so that the domestic competition would not be affected by this, so that the UEFA calendar remains the same.

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