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UEFA Super League

In April 2021, an idea that could have changed the whole history of European football came out between the 12 of the best football clubs in Europe. Under the president of the Real Madrid Football Club, Florentino Perez, 12 clubs (including Atletico Madrid, Real Madrid, Barcelona, Juventus, Inter Milan, AC Milan, Manchester City, Manchester United, Arsenal, Liverpool, Chelsea, and Tottenham) decided to form their own league, known as the European Super League. The primary purpose of this project is to rebel against the original system of Union of European Football Association competitions and earn substantial financial benefits that were lost due to the Covid-19 pandemics.

The main reason for establishing European Super League European clubs felt that the UEFA was not protecting their players. Top clubs around Europe are able to attend UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League under the UEFA. In addition to European competitions, the clubs have to participate in their own league for their country. Despite the fact that players need at least 72 hours of break between each match, the competitions can pressure players' stamina, eventually causing injuries or players to burn out. However, UEFA did not protect these players because of their benefits. Instead of protecting the players from the grueling schedule, UEFA decided to create another European competition starting from the 2021/22 season, known as the European Conference League. UEFA claimed to give more European clubs a chance to attend their competition from different countries. However, the top football clubs suspected UEFA's action as a way to earn more benefits. In addition, another competition would gain them more broadcasting fees, sponsorship, tickets fee, and advertisement for their match. However, more players would be roughly pressured by the harsh conditions of UEFA competitions. Europeans were hugely disappointed with UEFA's attempt to gain benefits through top players, regardless of their conditions and schedules.

Another reason for creating the European Super League is the huge financial loss from the Covid-19 pandemics. Millions of clubs around the world lost a massive amount of benefits from the coronavirus pandemics. The European Super League was funded by the US investment bank, JP Morgan. It is claimed that 12 clubs will earn around 42 billion dollars to attend the European Super League. This can earn each club a total of 300 million dollars for attending the league. Since most clubs had a huge financial loss due to the pandemic, the profit gained through entering the Super League will help restore the loss. In addition, the 12 clubs will be able to make more profits through sponsorships, broadcast, tickets, etc. These clubs knew that the fans would be eager to watch these competitions between the top teams. Therefore, they were confident about the success of the European Super League.

Regardless of these benefits, the majority of the football fans went against the Super League. The football fans were concerned that the creation of the Super League would result in other minor clubs being bankrupt. The gap between the rich and poor clubs will continue to expand as the European Super League runs. Fans will stop watching small clubs' football matches and turn their attention toward the Super League, resulting in the club's financial loss. Small clubs would then have to sell their star players to bigger clubs; as the process repeats, the majority of the minor football clubs will soon be bankrupt. Most football fans from the 12 clubs considered their club's involvement in the European Super League a disappointment. A legend from Manchester United, Rio Ferdinand, stated that this project is a "disgrace" and referred to the current situation as "war on football!". European football fans also raised their voice about their concern about European football turning into American soccer. 3 out of 4 vice-presidents of the European Super League are American. The majority of the businessmen attending the Super League turned out to be American. In addition, the leading company funding this huge project is JP Morgan, an American investment banking company.

Additionally, it was stated that the European Super League system would run a lot similar to the American MLS league, with its existence of playoffs. Because of these characteristics of American sport, fans were concerned that European football would lose its own color. The British newspaper stated as "American takeover of football"

Football fans' concerns and uneasiness turned into anger and protests against their own clubs. They created slogans saying "Say no to Super League" through protests and social media. After their fans' brutal action, 9 of the 12 clubs had exited the project. This had claimed an official end to the European Super League project.

As a football fan, I can't entirely agree with the establishment of the European Super League. The real excitement of the sports competition comes from the miracles of the underdogs, a contender who has a low chance of winning compared to other teams. We are entertained by new star players from an underdog team in each competition, which always surprises us. Like the famous quote, "ball is round," anything can happen in a football match; a dark horse team can defeat the titleholder. However, the creation of a segregated league would make the miracles very rare. This could mean an end to miraculous events in football competitions.

But why do we tend to cheer for the underdog teams? It is because of the "underdog effect." Underdog effect is a psychological effect that makes a person unintentionally cheer for a more likely losing team. For example, for a strong team in soccer, such as France or Germany, beating a weaker team would be common; therefore, it will be considered boring. However, if a more vulnerable team defeats the defending champion, our brain suspects it as an unexpected event. Because of a surprise, our brain releases positive emotions. An example of this unexpected event took place in the 2018 World Cup: South Korea's national team considered one of the weakest participants in the competition, defeated the German national football team. This was Germany's exit in the group stage in 1938. This kind of underdog effect leads up to fans cheering for the weaker teams making miracles.

My solution to this problem is making a group to represent the players' opinions. Each team can have one player to represent the voice of their teammate. Players would then be able to express their opinion about specific football issues. Football associations will hear more from the football players' perspectives and respect their thoughts on particular issues. UEFA and the football players could find an agreement that could benefit both sides. Players should have the authority to speak for their safety and express their opinion.

Additionally, UEFA should pay more attention to the voice of a variety of football clubs. For many players' safety, UEFA should not open another European competition. Even though the UEFA Conference League can provide opportunities for weaker teams to enter European competition, most of the players from bigger clubs would have to suffer under a grueling schedule. The players would not only feel tired from the matches, but also from traveling to other countries. Furthermore, these leagues would cause big teams to travel toward different countries, which increases their chance of injuries.

Because every solution could eventually lead to more problems, UEFA should listen to different football clubs around Europe when setting laws. Each club can have one representative speak to the European football association and discuss new rules that could be held. If different opinions approach from different clubs, UEFA should work to follow the majority's pick. If UEFA decides not to change its attitude, then the European Super League could come into reality.