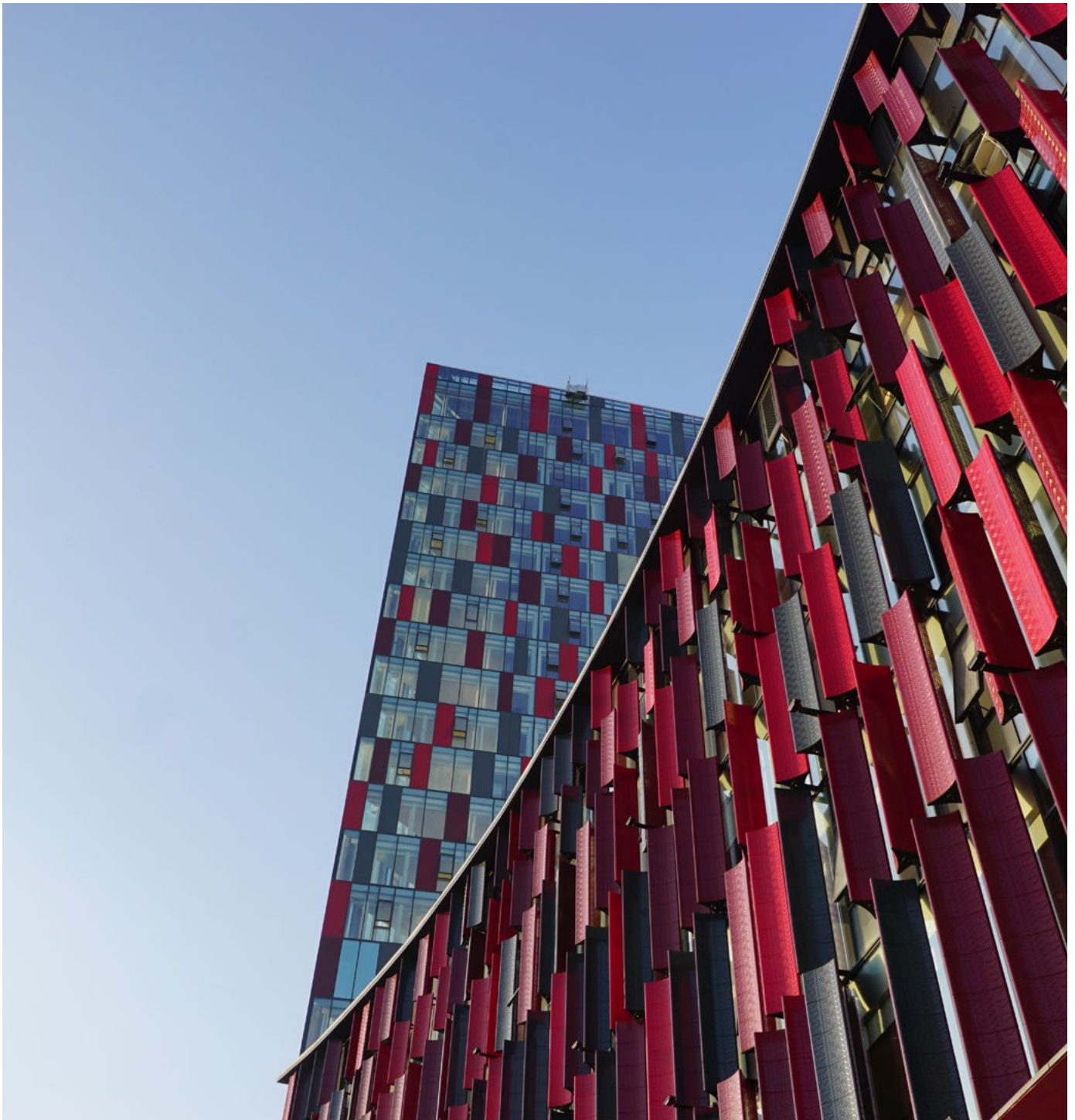


FBIN 28

MAGAZINE

January 2023



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FOREWORD

We at FBIN want to thank all of our readers and members for their support in 2022 and wish them a happy new year and a great start to 2023. In the coming year, we are excited to shape new partnerships, launch new initiatives and further expand our network for the benefit of the football business industry.

We have a range of offerings planned, including events and new resources, to help our readers and members succeed. We have also added new team members to our organisation to ensure we continue to provide top quality services and resources to our community. We look forward to an exciting year!

This year we will be hosting events and creating content on several key topics, including:

- Sustainability and social responsibility: from green initiatives to community engagement programs. Organisations are adopting responsible practices, making it an increasingly important subject.
- Using and relying on data and analytics in the football business world. From player performance tracking to fan metrics, data is playing an ever-growing role in decision making at all levels of the industry.
- Technologies such as virtual and augmented reality which are being used in a variety of ways within the industry, from training and coaching to fan engagement and content creation.

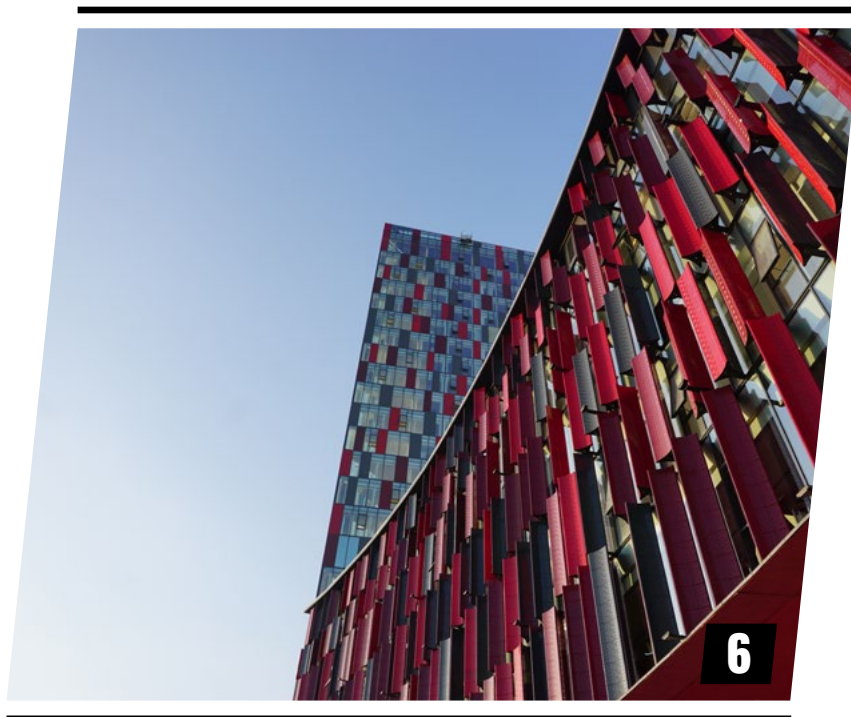
We invite everyone in the football business industry to become a member of FBIN and take advantage of our valuable resources and networking opportunities.

Enjoy reading our magazine and thank you again
for your support!



Jonas Bogaert

Strategy & Business Development FBIN
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6

PAGE 6
**“THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO
 STRUCTURE THE CLUBS THEMSELVES
 WITH HEALTHY MANAGEMENT SO
 THAT THEIR BUSINESS CAN GROW
 SUSTAINABLY”**

*Interview with Dritan Kadia from the Albanian
 Football League.*



10



32

PAGE 10
**“A LEADER MUST KNOW HOW
 TO SHARE SUCCESSES AND
 ACHIEVEMENTS WITH THE REST OF
 HIS SQUAD”**

Interview with Richard Feuz from Servette FC.

PAGE 14
VfL WOLFSBURG’S US STRATEGY

*Creating a competitive advantage through real
 impact.*

PAGE 18
**HOW TO START A CLUB FROM
 SCRATCH – THE STORY OF PACIFIC FC**

We spoke to Josh Simpson from Pacific FC.

PAGE 20
SPORTSBUSINESS MEETS GEN Z

Bas Schnater about Gen Z.

PAGE 26
**FOOTBALL CLUBS NEED TO LOOK
 FOR RISK ALLOCATION AND NEW
 GROWTH POTENTIAL**

*Philipp Mokrohs about creating new sources
 of revenue.*



14



38

PAGE 30
**A WINTER OF DISCONTENT OR A NEW
 BEGINNING FOR EUROPEAN CLUB
 FOOTBALL IN 2023?**

Guest article by LTT Sports.

PAGE 32
**SUSTAINABILITY IS ALSO A TEAM
 SPORT, JUST LIKE FOOTBALL IS.**

Guest comment by Nicole Bekkers from FC88.

PAGE 34
THE ASIA STRATEGY OF CELTIC FC

Insights into the club’s activities in Asia.

PAGE 38
ARENA OF THE FOREST

*How AGF Aarhus plans their future in a
 sustainable stadium.*

PAGE 40
**SUSTAINABILITY IN TIMES OF ENERGY
 CRISIS IN EUROPEAN TOP FOOTBALL**

Impulse by our Network-Member Sponsors.

PAGE 44
**WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION IN
 EUROPE**

The Hoffmann Liebs column.

PAGE 46
**“WE WANT TO STAY WITHIN
 BOUNDARIES AND BE RESPECTED FOR
 HUGE INNOVATION AND PORTRAYAL”**

*Interview with Andrew Whitham from Lincoln
 City FC.*

PAGE 50
**KRC GENK AND ZETLY JOIN THE FBIN
 FOOTBALL NETWORK**



34

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FBIN

“THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO STRUCTURE THE CLUBS THEMSELVES WITH HEALTHY MANAGEMENT SO THAT THEIR BUSINESS CAN GROW SUSTAINABLY”

The Albanian Football League, the Liga Profesione e Futbollit, recently joined the European Leagues. We talked to Dritan Kadia, General Secretary of the league about the reason to join and the goals as a member of this organisation as well as the issues of and recent developments in Albanian football.

By Thomas Maurer

Mr Kadia, the Albanian Football League recently joined the European Leagues. What effects does this membership have?
The Albanian Professional Football League was recently accepted in the European Leagues along with the Professional Football League of Bulgaria and Malta as Development Members. This membership occurred after submitting our application, and of course the full approval from other members.

The members aim for the development of football and the protection of the rights of domestic football, its clubs, players and fans. The European Leagues cooperates with other football associations, such as FIFPRO, the Global Union for Professional Football Players, European Club Association (ECA) etc.

I want to highlight that the acceptance in the European Leagues is an important milestone for Albanian football. We believe that we will get the best out of our membership in this important international network in a club level, benefiting from the unique experiences and opportunities that this partnership offers.

Can you tell us a bit about the league? How many people work for it? How is it structured?

The Albanian Professional Football League was founded in December 2018. There are currently 10 member clubs, who currently play in the “Abissnet Superiore” category. Its mission is to improve the level of professional football in Albania even further and bring in even more income for members to reinvest in football. Due to this being a continuous, dynamic development process, we currently cannot say that we have a traditional organisational structure, as we are very limited in terms of budget and human resources. In cooperation with such prestigious international organisations, we aim to soon create the right infrastructure with enough human resources for an administration that will help the league grow and support its membership with realistic projects and innovation in Albanian football.

Is the Liga Profesione e Futbollit only responsible for the first tier of Albanian

club football? And how is the relation with the national association?

In fact, I would like to focus on this. There currently exists a process between members to increase memberships with clubs that are part of the first division (second tier). However, this is being processed and we are expecting results. The Albanian Professional Football League operates closely with the Albanian Football Federation, focusing on marketing and representation. For the league, this partnership is incredibly important, as we can always rely on the valuable experiences and resources of the federation in every step of the further development of the league.

What are the latest developments of the league?

Two years ago, the APFL was strongly engaged in being an advocate for sport in Albania. The aim of this movement was to change the sponsorship law in Albania, in order to make it more attractive for businesses. In our opinion, this can secure more support for sport in general, especially football. The existing sponsorship law has not generated any revenue for sport in our country. The sacrifice of football to raise awareness in the government was painful, as clubs boycotted the championship for three consecutive months. As a result, we received a promise that things would change.

Another achievement was the sale for the first time of the name of the Superliga for a 3-year period. It is true that the amount does not affect the clubs that much, but it is a good start. In Albania, it is considered an achievement.

Another success I would like to mention is the participation in the process of the new contract for the official broadcaster of Abissnet Superiore, which ultimately brought in 40% more income for our football, starting this season.

What projects would you like to focus on now as member of the European Leagues?

It might sound strange, but bets in Albania have been banned for a few years. This means that a good source of income for sport has been outlawed. Our acceptance

in the EL has opened new horizons for us. We will apply for different projects in the European Leagues and are prioritizing two of them.

We are looking at the possibility of selling TV broadcasting rights abroad, which the European Leagues have made possible with its existing members, where more than 10 leagues have achieved this within a period of last two years, something they had lacked the means to achieve earlier on.

“Having a successful club from the sporting point of view requires a good quality supporting administration.”

Dritan Kadia

General Secretary, Liga Profesione e Futbollit

There is also a very good opportunity for the sale of the rights to set quick bets, by means of which the professional leagues have massively increased their value in the market, achieving everything that they could not have by negotiating with the betting associations themselves. These are the two projects that we were promised to soon apply for and profit from.

Can you tell us a bit about the Albanian clubs. How are they doing, how are they positioned?

If we are discussing Albanian clubs, I would not hesitate to express reality. They are not in good shape. Everyone is trying to give their best. The club presidents of Abissnet Superiore and more are a very important asset for the existence and functioning of clubs. Coaches, players and every other participant in football activities, including the federation, sacrifice a great amount of themselves and their families to keep alive a dream, a passion. With the myriad of problems this country has, it cannot be any other way. It simply mirrors the Albanian reality in general.



Dritan Kadia General Secretary, Liga Profesioniste e Futbollit

What are the biggest issues of the clubs currently?

In itself, this is a short question, but there might not be enough rows to discuss it. The main purpose of clubs is to achieve sporting success. Aside from the financial and sporting aspect, I would like to emphasize three main directions where our clubs have a lot to do.

In the legal aspect, we still have clubs that formally function as non-profit organisations, which hinders investments and their long-term stability.

In the administrative aspect, in Albania, the largest part of club budgets, making up 90-95%, goes towards the wages of players and technical staff. This needs to change. Administration teams are low in numbers and without proper qualifications. Having a successful club from the sporting point of view requires a good quality supporting administration. This is an aspect where Albanian clubs need much improvement.

In the aspect of infrastructure, many investments have been made as a result of the collaboration of the government and the Albanian Football Federation in building new stadiums. On the other hand, there is a lack of training fields for the first tier clubs and football academies too. The federation has taken on a project for the construction of 100 training fields in the whole country.

Technical club staff is making good use of technology, there being an obvious technical, tactical and physical improvement of teams through the use of video analysis. This has been achieved in collaboration with the federation. This was done in cooperation with the federation after the courses conducted by the latter. But the use of software for managing clubs, academies and players is still in its infancy.

May you tell us a bit about the economic situation of the clubs? How many people are working at the clubs, especially in the areas not directly related to sport? What budgets are we speaking of and what are the most important revenue streams?

The need to secure the future has made clubs think about football for the youth, in schools and academies, starting from young ages. Every club has its own model in terms of its structure and development in the sporting aspect. Some clubs have invested massively in the youth, building a healthy structure and receiving financial benefits from this vision. There are some football schools that operate with the need to develop their infrastructure. To raise a child into a football player, there need to not only be basic conditions, but also to build the necessary infrastructure for the child's accommodation, schooling etc.

The minimal responsibilities of a football club, due to licensing, entail that there need to be more than 20 people in its membership, where about 30% need to not have an association with the sporting aspect.

As for your question about our clubs' source of income, they are similar to those of other surrounding countries, with the feature that part of the income from sponsors is almost zero, and donations from presidents play an important role in supplementing the necessary income for the survival of clubs. What remains are the proceeds from participation in competitions for UEFA, revenue from TV broadcasting rights, tickets. Club budgets are quite low and it is thought that despite the informality, the annual turnover of the first tier is 8-10 million euros.

How do the attendance figures in Albanian football look like?

We do not have accurate records on the number of fans per match, as the source of this number comes from the delegate's report. However, the number of fans in the stadium, on top of other things, has come to increase due to improved conditions in stadiums and the construction of new, modern stadiums. Today, the average number of fans per match is estimated to be around 2.500 spectators, this number being influenced by the number of spectators in the

derby matches in Tirana, where the number reaches 15-20.000 spectators.

How do you support the clubs? Are there for example any educational offers like workshops; do you market any assets centralised; do you offer centralised tools/software, so that this is cheaper or free for the individual clubs?

One of the main aspects of collaboration is education, where along with the Albanian Football Federation, we have created a training programme for different roles within the club administration. This has allowed for the licensing of coaches, medics, physiotherapists, video-analysts, sports directors, as well as the UEFA CFM certification (Certificate in Football Management).

We have had offers from software companies to provide clubs with tools/software, but at the moment it seems that we are far from concluding such a project, although the League would be a good opportunity to make such a project a reality.

Where do you see potential to grow for the clubs and the league as a whole?

Clubs are investing in football academies, teams of different age groups and women's football. The federation has unravelled a strategy for football for the period 2022-2025, which it has called "Football for the Nation". This strategy has very ambitious objectives. For example, it is intended that the number of registered players will increase from 17,000 to 23,000 players, and to double the number of licensed trainers. What we are currently working on, which is part of this strategic document, is "Unravelling of the strategy to support clubs". We have based this strategy on three main pillars: legal, administrative, and technical regulation. The league will support the development of this strategy to the best of its ability.

We try to inspire and educate people working in football, is that a topic for you as well? To further educate people working at the clubs or those working for them in the future?

Naturally this is a very good initiative, and we will keep supporting it in the future. The main obstacle that we are focusing on at the moment is the lack of trained employee and lack of engagement of existing ones with many duties, which we are trying to overcome precisely through education.

Where do you get inspiration from?

Football is the most widespread sport in Albania. Inspiration stems from the game itself. We want football to grow as much as possible, relying on academies to bring in new talent. We want our teams for boys and girls to perform as well as they can, while at the same time entertaining their supporters so that the football community can grow and thrive.

Are you exchanging a lot with other leagues, maybe also other clubs or even sports organisations? And is this also a reason why you joined the European Leagues? Sport, especially football, creates many opportunities to network. Naturally, we and

our members have a lot of contact with clubs and different sports organisations. Our joining in the European Leagues did not surprise us as we met old friends again, however we are now part of a network with common interests.

What is the next big project of the Liga Profesioniste e Futbollit?

Earlier we mentioned a number of problems with our clubs. What we have identified as the most important is to structure the clubs themselves with healthy management so that their business can grow sustainably. For this we have obtained agreement from all members and are building a detailed strategy by formulating a series of guidelines as models based on the experience of the Leagues and the operation of successful European clubs. ■



“A LEADER MUST KNOW HOW TO SHARE SUCCESSES AND ACHIEVEMENTS WITH THE REST OF HIS SQUAD”

Richard Feuz started working at Servette FC in 2016. Since 2020 he is leading the club as CEO. In this interview he speaks about success, leadership and the recent projects of Servette.

By Thomas Maurer



How is Servette doing at the moment?

After having made a satisfactory “mercato” this summer in all points of view, including breaking the club's sales record, and having played almost the half of the championship, we are second on the table, still undefeated at home this season, and we have an amazing dynamic despite having still one of the smallest budgets of the league.

At the business level and even facing Covid, Servette has been growing day by day in the three years since I took over the management of the club, proving that our marketing and commercial approach is successful and working.

Are there any big projects you are working on?

Our main project is to bring back Servette FC to the top of the league regularly, because in my opinion it's where it has been and deserve to be. That's why, we are working so hard and with so much dedication.

One of the important focuses on which we are working on is trying to leverage our local fan base and make it growth with a strong identity and get them on board with the club vision since last three seasons.

This go through a targeted marketing, attractive merchandising, fun and varied activities on gameday, etc.

During the two years of the pandemic, we also put a strong emphasis on the digitalization of our platforms, in order to make our fans and partners feel always close to the club, despite the physical distance. This allowed us to adapt and still achieve significant commercial growth through these digital platforms, despite this difficult period.

All of this will definitely help us to strengthen our identity in the city and make feels fans and partners they are part of it, because we need them to get back to the top.

Also, the format of the league in Switzerland is changing to a new one next season. It would be for the club a new challenge to keep growing our fan base and make it more attractive for them to always keep improving their live experience.

Another big project we are still working on daily is our women team and its academy. We launched it in 2017, by merging with another Geneva's team which at the time was in the bottom of the Swiss second division. I have been the Project Manager at the time and since then I am the Sporting Director.

From that moment on, we have put a lot of energy and time into this project which is very important to us for two reasons. Firstly, through women's football and our visibility in Geneva and Switzerland, we must be a driving force for the development of women's rights and equality. Secondly, Servette FC is a competitive football club, and we want to set up winning projects with every team we have in competition.

After five seasons of existence, the team was champion of the second division during its first season of existence, and since then has finished at the first of the regular Swiss “Super League” three times in a row, qualifying as a result of it for the three last UEFA Women's Champions editions.

This season and until now, the team is once again performing very well, having won all of its games at the halfway point of the championship and leading the championship by several points.

Do you think Servette is working successfully currently?

I humbly think I can answer yes!

Indeed, at the sporting level, we've been working for three years to restructure our way of working, doing largely with the people who were already in place, in order to

make the club pass a course and to be able to aim again at the top of the classification.

On the operational and administrative side, we have also restructured a lot since 2020 and can count on very competent staff, which helps to develop our club more and more every day.

“Success will only come with what I call ‘The Three P’s’: always Perserve, always have great Perspective and always have a great Purpose in a project.”

Richard Feuz
CEO Servette FC

Also, I think that the economic stability that we have been able to achieve in the last few years is also a reflection of the good functioning of the club. We have managed these two years of pandemic, always staying within green numbers and that is also for us a great achievement.

For these reasons I am very positive about the future of the club, although it will be important for all of us to challenge ourselves every day and continue to work very hard, because it's what deserve this organization.

When is a football club successful, how would you define success?

Success will only come with what I call “The Three P's” : always Perserve, always have great Perspective and always have a great Purpose in a project.



Richard Feuz CEO, Servette FC

If these three P's are combined with intensive work, a vision, strong values, a lot of discipline and of course a strong team spirit, I am convinced that an organisation or a project can only have success and a great future.

That's why during those three years, we've been working so hard setting up club's values and pillars such as Morality, Rules, Structure, Team Spirit and Winning Mentality.

We did it because we think without them, we wouldn't achieve anything important. That is for us the first step of a winning project, because sporting success on the pitch is only a consequence of it.

What makes a club successful, what are the most important factors?

Vision, Consistency, financial balance, long-term plan, separation of powers among the leaders, clear tasks for everyone in the club, trust, stability, and respect.

You are a very young leader. What is your idea of leadership?

Leadership is showing the way to your team through hard work and reachable goals. It's also creating an atmosphere for the team with values such as trust, listening, kindness and building a learning mindset. If you manage to galvanize and inspire your team, they will feel motivated, and you can climb any mountain with them. It's important to always remember that success comes from teamwork and alone you can't achieve very much.

A young leader has always to be eager to learn, discover and acquire knowledge and



Servette FC Chênois Féminin played in the UEFA Women's Champions League in 2020/21 and won the Swiss Super League in the same year.

skills from others. I think it is with these traits, he could tend to inspire his staff to help them to reach greater heights of efficiency at work.

Also, I don't think is about the age nor trying to be the boss but is about to be the captain of the ship anytime and do everything is necessary to achieve the goals of the team, trying to challenge yourself and the status quo daily.

That's why is important to have a great team around you because they are the one who challenge you and you can learn every day from them. I believe in the idea of growing through feedback because it works for everyone at any time in life.

Finally, the demonstration of success around your team and group is the key. A leader must know how to share successes and achievements with the rest of his squad. Otherwise, all the rest of the process is useless.

Do you see a change of the working environment in football? Like it is changing

generally, with remote work, less strict hierarchy, more flexibility, etc.

I don't think there has been a revolution as a result of this pandemic, but it's clear that this period has forced us to rethink things and change our habits.

I think that's one of the good things about having to learn to work differently. Remote work has been a challenge to set up in an industry where human contact and presence seemed to be mandatory, even three years ago.

I think it has helped, if not forced, management to have much more organized and structured work lines to allow employees to work from home in a comfortable way. Once organized, I think that this flexibility is a plus for employees, especially those who have families or live far from their place of work.

I don't think you should confuse hierarchy with trust in your teams. If there is confidence and each employee is motivated by his tasks at work and clearly knows his mission and objectives, there are all the ingre-

dients for him to be productive and happy to work for the company, at the office or from home.

Football clubs often have the problem that the "importance" of staff in sports and non-sports is not balanced. What's your take on that?

For me, it is impossible to separate the development of one from the other. Servette FC was still in the third division in 2015 and in the second division in 2019.

If today it plays in the top positions of the league and aims at the European spots, it is because we have been very careful to develop all the departments of the club at the same time, it's in my opinion a crucial point.

Although it is important to remember that the reason of being of a football club is the players and the technical staff, it is unreal in my point of view to pretend to build a serious and ambitious club without an important administrative and operational department too. ■



VfL WOLFSBURG'S US STRATEGY

CREATING A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE THROUGH REAL IMPACT

When thinking about entering a foreign market, the first question we need to ask is “What are the fundamental challenges we face?”. In case of VfL Wolfsburg, we identified the following essential issues: VfL is one club of many in a highly competitive market and faces a rather low sporting interest in the men's team, also due to the lack of hardly any international stars. Additionally, the club's US centered initiatives experienced little focus in the past, which makes it impossible to build upon already existing infrastructure. Limited financial and human resources played a role retrospectively as well as nowadays.

We can only be successful in the long run if we find a positioning with clear USPs that are relevant - differentiating - and authentic.

Relevant for fans and sponsors, differentiated in terms of finding a market niche and authentic by identifying and deploying the club's strengths and values.

Focusing on the latter, VfL Wolfsburg has two core strengths compared to the competition: World-class Women's football and (Environmental) Sustainability.

“Our only chance in the US market is a convincing, focused and sustainable positioning.”

Claudio Demmer
Manager Innovation at VfL Wolfsburg

Sustainability and female empowerment are promising focal points for an authentic, relevant, and differentiating positioning with current momentum and long-term growth potential that goes beyond sporting performance and thus ensures resilience in the market.

Why are our strengths relevant?

ESG (Environment - Social - Governance) and DEI (Diversity - Equity - Inclusion) including gender equality are strategically important priority issues for US CEOs and their companies and a top priority for decision-makers and thus potential sponsors. Furthermore, both topics have shaped the US sports discourse for a while and will probably continue to do so in the future, which is also reflected in existing initiatives by leagues and associations (e.g., SheBelieves or Green Sports Alliance). US consumers are increasingly embracing sustainability and demanding more sustainability and DEI from brands, resulting in an increasing relevance for consumers and potential fans. Additionally, sponsors support teams that reflect their values. Sustainability and gender equality are very

important issues that already limit the selection of potential partners by themselves because common values play an important role in partner selection processes.

Most importantly, the unique role of women's soccer in the United States supports the club's extraordinary position in women's football. The USA has the most successful women's national team in the world and the interest in first division games is significantly higher than in Germany, for example. The TV and stream viewer numbers are also increasing significantly, and, in the US, women drive more than half of soccer-related social media conversations.

Why are our strengths differentiating?

The only US club with a focused sustainability positioning is the newly started Vermont Green FC (4th division). For more established clubs, it is difficult to achieve a top position in this area. Initiatives by larger clubs focus primarily on the stadium. Obviously, sustainability positioning can only be found very sporadically in younger US clubs.

In addition, female empowerment is implicit in women's clubs and occasionally actively played out by US clubs. With Angel City FC (NWSL), the first professional club has just started (very successfully) to explicitly place female empowerment as a mission at the center of sporting, partnership, and social activities.

And notably, so far there is no visible competition from European clubs in either area. While no US-initiatives of European clubs can be found on sustainability, the only relevant example on female empowerment is the strategic cooperation between Lyon and OL Reign whereas the focus there is set more on the general technical departments. Of various US academies and camps from European football teams, none have a clear DEI or women's focus.

Concludingly, if played out holistically and in the right way - sustainability and female empowerment offer potential for effective differentiation from other European and most US clubs being active in the US-market.

Why are our strengths authentic?

Our women's team has long been one of the most successful in the world and by far the most successful in Germany in recent years. The sportive success is accompanied by substantial work in diversity topics (including gender equality) through our very own Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) department.

We are demonstrably one of the top sustainable clubs in the Bundesliga (see e.g., Imug study) and a leader among European professional clubs. Sustainability is at the heart of our comprehensive CSR commitment and also substantially being worked on by our CSR team (e.g., VfL Wolfsburg has been the first Bundesliga club to publish a certified GRI-Sustainability Report in 2012).

As components of an overarching CSR concept, the two topics of sustainability and the advancement of women support each other and result in a coherent overall picture of the work we provably do at VfL Wolfsburg.

Change perspective - Creating real assets in the core market

A core insight after the strategy process was, that it wouldn't be sufficient to continue selling Germany-located products and events to US-companies. By doing so, mostly US companies with an interest in the German market or in the comparably low TV-reach in US television could be addressed. Our conclusion was the need to start creating own club assets in the USA to be present with a range of events, products, and societal impacts directly in the market. This would eventually lead to a sustainable penetration of the market and a competitive advantage compared to other European sports sites.

With StrongHER, we have recently started such an US-initiative in the field of female empowerment in Chattanooga (Tennessee), creating on-site impact and making the club accessible for fans and for potential partnerships in the US. StrongHER focuses on supporting young girls from deprived communities, ranging from the ages of ten to 21, to get free access to (football-) training, on-demand mentoring sessions by experienced female athletes and education opportunities, for example through a planned StrongHER scholarship program with local education institutions.

To secure the quality and implementation, we have strategically partnered with strong local organizations, such as Operation Get Active or Chattanooga FC, to create a joint and permanently active ecosystem. The piloting project in Chattanooga serves as a learning journey to us and our partners and we are constantly adjusting. Our goal

“Internationally, VfL Wolfsburg is amongst the clubs posting the most women’s football content on Twitter and Facebook.”

Dr. Panagiotis Papageorgiou
CEO and Founder epik GmbH



Claudio Demmer Manager Innovation, VfL Wolfsburg

is to expand StrongHER to several neuralgic locations throughout the USA. By doing so, we seek to become an active member of the community on-site rather than simply acting as a pure sales-organization offering little to no impact.

Do good, but also speak up about it

We seek a good balance between posts on external platforms and on our own channels by considering different project

phases, the type of content, and the type of platform we use for communication. Especially for new strategic projects, like StrongHER, in a large and special market like the USA, we need to build credibility and reach first. We get this through external influencers and media. Our posts are shared by us either way and can even be published again later on our own platform as evergreen content.

The more established the project is, the more the own platform is prioritized. In a sentence: When starting a new project, the

delta between own and external reach is usually significant and needs to be shifted the other way by sustainable media work. All in all, we believe that the strategic mix between impact creation and continuous presence on-site as well as smart PR, while focusing on our two identified core strengths, will lead to sustainable success and by holistically established projects like StrongHER, we’re embarking on a journey to become an integral part in US communities. ■



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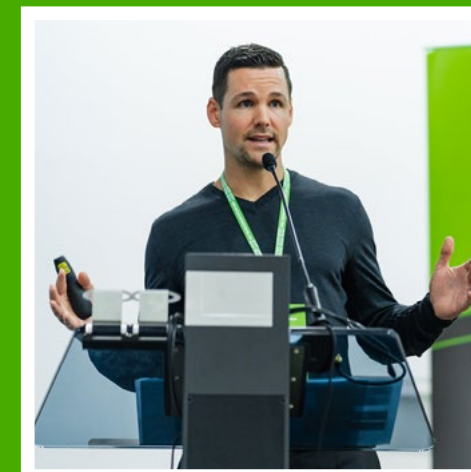
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S4E2

How to build a successful youth academy



S4E3

How to start a club from scratch – The story of Pacific FC

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HOW TO START A CLUB FROM SCRATCH – THE STORY OF PACIFIC FC

In this episode of the Football Business Podcast, we spoke with Josh Simpson, Co-Owner and President of Pacific FC, about how he and two other partners founded the club and their mission to put Canadian football on the world map. This is the summary of the podcast.

By Quang T. Pham

“I had zero experience as a football executive back then, but I did have a nose for business, my business know-how, and my 20-year football career, and that is how it all came together.”

Josh Simpson
Co-Owner & President FC Pacific

Josh started playing professional football at age 10, including for Canada’s U-15 and U18 national teams. Then he proceeded with his playing career at the University of Portland and went on to play for many European teams, including Millwall (England), Kaiserslautern (Germany), Manisaspor (Turkey), and BSC Young Boys (Switzerland).

When the opportunity to establish the Canadian Premier League arose in 2017, Josh and two other partners founded Pacific FC with the mandate of reshaping Canadian football’s future. Josh’s international playing experience, financial expertise, and infectious enthusiasm became valuable assets to a newly-founded club in a brand new league.

Why are the Canadian Premier League and the Canadian National Team combined together?

The idea is similar to the Major League Soccer (MLS) combining with the US national teams to package soccer into a one-stop shop. That’s how the Canadian Soccer Business was formed to drive Canadian football forward. One centralized governing body is responsible for negotiating all the commercial interests, rights, and assets for the Canadian Premier League’s clubs and the men’s and women’s national teams. So it is a unique approach to attract more partners

or sponsors via a one-stop-shop for soccer in Canada.

Was there a role-model club that inspired Josh when starting from scratch?

As an ex-professional, Josh had the experience of hundred stadiums worldwide, but the one that struck his mind was Queens Park Rangers in England due to its unbelievably intimate atmosphere. It was the atmosphere and the operation size that his team built out the framework from.

The challenges when it all started...

Canada is the land of many amazing things, one of which is hockey - the national sport. On the other hand, soccer is still new to Canadian sports fans, but luckily soccer is the fastest-growing sport in Canada. It’s also the number one sport for immigrants or so-called new Canadians. Secondly, it was

very challenging to come to a new city that had never had a professional league before and to explain to the people what it meant.

The unique-selling points of Pacific FC

Josh believes the best way to pitch to potential investors is to invite them to a home game, since the club’s unique proposition is its incredibly tight and intimate in-stadium atmosphere. Secondly, Pacific FC desires to be best-in-class in every aspect, from service, food & beverage, and hospitality for all levels of fans. Lastly, the exciting playing style is crucial in evoking emotions and feelings.

The role of “net positive” to the club’s development

Josh was one of the keynote presenters at the [Future of Football Business Conference] in Graz in September this year, where he discussed Pacific FC’s journey to net positive. Josh highlighted once more in this episode that net positive means giving more than you receive, or is Canada better off because Pacific FC is here? Net positive is a probably never-ending journey, and the club is trying to put things in motion. There are hundreds of metrics, but Pacific FC focuses on three key pillars: community, infrastructure, and youth development. For example, the club spent a great deal of effort in its first year building a 60,000 sq. ft. training facility for the first team, the youth team, and local communities. Another example is when Pacific FC’s new jersey, created by an Indigenous artist sold out within hours of its release.

The next big projects

First is the Starlight stadium’s expansion plan from 5750 seats to 10,000 seats with a new grand main stand with hospitality suites. Josh believes this will bring Pacific FC to the next level as it can attract international brands or host national teams’ games. Second is the Athletes Village for young players, since housing in Canada is becoming too expensive for them. Josh and his team addressed that to the city mayor, Stew

Young, and Pacific Fc will jointly invest in this athlete village, a multifamily complex with 6-stories. The goal is to support and further take care of local young players. That will be an excellent accommodation beside the training ground so young players can easily commute to schools, training grounds and their houses. The club’s long-term vision is to streamline its youth development to build better players that can make Pacific FC better in competitions or have higher ROI in player trading. Still, the most crucial aspect is to produce not just great athletes but also well-educated members of society. ■

“A lot of people, even today, still don’t understand what the Canadian Premier League is or are still not behind soccer, despite the massive movement in the country.”

Josh Simpson
Co-Owner & President FC Pacific



SPORTSBUSINESS MEETS GEN Z

Bas Schnater summarizes the most important findings about the Gen Z and states how the sports industry could appropriately respond to their changing demands.

By Bas Schnater

“Conversations around the needs of Gen Z are often based on conference-echoing: repeating what someone else once said at a conference.”

Bas Schnater

This September, I had the opportunity to be part of an interesting panel discussion at this year's World Football Summit in Seville. The conversation was initiated around Gen Z's content consumption & distribution and how they want to experience modern sports. The topic is one that is frequently discussed and is usually subject to many assumptions. The topic is generally discussed by people from older generations, making assumptions about Gen Z behavior without any research to back their opinions. Conversations around the needs of Gen Z are often based on conference-echoing: repeating what someone else once said at a conference. Fortunately, the large global consultancy firms do a lot of research around the characteristics of Gen Z. Understanding this generation provides the foundation on responding in an appropriate manner. This article will summarize the most important findings and how the sports industry could appropriately respond to changing demands by Gen Z.

Important note: all the research has been conducted before Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 which would significantly impact results like mental health and environmental issues.

Gen Z characteristics

Before diving into the details of this article, it is important to start by identifying who belongs to Gen Z. Although some overlap between generations is possible, generally Gen Z is born after the mid 90's until the beginning of 2010's. Roughly between when Ajax won the Champions League and when Bayern Munich and Dortmund played the Champions League final. Therefore, people in Gen Z are roughly between 13 and 25 years old at the time of writing. Generations surrounding Gen Z are the older Millennials (beginning 80's-mid 90's) and the younger Generation Alpha (after early 2010's). People in Gen Z are highly educated, and generally more highly educated than their parents. Logically, their income is significantly higher.

An interesting observation has been made around Gen Z's interests in sport in the last decade as well. The European Club Association's Fan of the Future report states that Gen Z have far less interest in football compared to previous generations (ECA, 2020). One of the reasons mentioned is that the competition for attention from other entertainment sources is fierce and thus Gen Z needs to make choices. The New York Times reported earlier that only 23% of Gen Z said they were passionate sports fans compared to 42% of Millennials. In fact, 27% said they disliked sports altogether. This provides a problem as sports fandom is formed in the early years (The New York Times, 2022). If an interest in sports is not triggered during these years, it is likely to never be formed. Therefore, a strategy targeted to Gen Z is a strategy for future interest.

Before diving further into the football context, it is important to better understand Gen Z's general motivations and considerations to life. This article is built as follows: first, Gen Z's standpoint towards an item is discussed. Then, some tips on how to respond as a sports organization are shared. This is a list of suggestions and is by no means exhaustive.

Gen Z in general

Sports organizations typically use a technology-based “spray-and-pray” approach to engage with Gen Z, whether it's via the metaverse, NFT's or e-sports, but additional research could drastically increase the scope and focus of efforts in engaging Gen Z, since their mindset differs substantially from those of preceding generations. A small list of events happening in Gen Z's formative years:

- Gen Z has seen religiously motivated terrorism around the European continent with mass shootings, hijacked trucks and bombings in Paris, Brussels, Nice, Copenhagen, Berlin, Stockholm and more).
- Gen Z has experienced times of continuous political tension with Russia, even escalating to war on the European continent.
- Gen Z has experienced a global pandemic which have completely derailed their formative years with lockdowns and severe freedom-restrictive measures.
- Gen Z is the first highly educated generation with all the pressure of having to constantly perform and over-exceed.

- Gen Z has witnessed environmental outcries by scientists and activist communities roughly being ignored and labeled as ‘dramatic’.

Needless to say, Gen Z's fully globalized mindset has resulted in them gaining full access to all the world's problems. Since Gen Z is always-on and is in constant connection with the latest news (50% of the news consumptions happens via social media of which 15% via TikTok) (McKinsey, 2022), they have many reasons to be worried. As PwC puts it: Gen Z is not very different to Millennials, they share a need for instant gratification. From a customer experience perspective, Gen Z is also more loyal to brands and companies, they expect a mobile experience first and show higher feel for design (PWC, 2018). This explains many characteristics of Gen Z which are fundamental to understand if you, as a sports organization, wish to engage with this fan segment. This is an area where all the reports from EY, Deloitte, PwC and McKinsey agree: give Gen Z more influence and help them in shaping the future.

Psychological well-being

For Gen Z, health goes further than gym visits and healthy eating habits. Mental health hygiene is also a key well-being consideration for Gen Z. All reports agree that Gen Z suffers from severe mental health issues. This ranges from worries about financial situation, the environment and even their own careers. This can be explained. Consider this: according to your parents (early Millennials or even Gen X) you have all the power to shape your own future, design your own life and become whatever you want, as long as you put in the effort. That puts an immense amount of pressure on Gen Z. It can be read as the reason for not being successful is your own fault, regardless of circumstances. And this has affected how Gen Z handles the pressure. According to EY, more than 1/3rd of Gen Z says that they usually or almost always experience feelings of anxiety or depression. The most commonly mentioned fears are performing bad on an exam, climate change and other mental health issues



(EY, 2022). Other concerns are cost of living and unemployment (Deloitte, 2022). As EY states, “Gen Z carries the weight of the world on its shoulders”. What helps Gen Z in addressing mental-health is having role models. In the past, top Gen Z athletes like gymnast Simone Biles tennis player Naomi Osaka Gen Z have publicly spoken out having suffered from mental health issues. While professional athletes may get professional guidance in solving their problems, this is not the case for everyone. In fact, Gen Z is quite unlikely to seek professional help to solve their issues regarding mental health and substance disorder issues due to affordability. Gen Z falls into the least engaged segment of health-care consumers compared to other generations (McKinsey, 2022). Instead, they seek out for self-diagnosis methods and cures via social media and other digital tools. This does not come as a surprise since Gen Z also use these same tools to collect news (McKinsey, 2022).

“Gen Z carries the weight of the world on its shoulders.”

EY

Interestingly, Gen Z takes a different approach to their mental health issues. They are a lot more in touch with their emotions: thanks to social media influencers, the taboo of talking about mental well-being is far lower compared to previous generations. It has made Gen Z more comfortable to discuss these issues.

How to respond as a sports organization

Knowing that Gen Z suffers from mental health issues AND they are more likely to self-diagnose, a huge opportunity exposes itself to sports organizations. The answer: creating more relevant content:

- Be a resource for tackling mental health issues. Many sports clubs or federations have a sports psychologist employed, which helps academy- or first-team players. This knowledge can be used to create a series of short-form content tackling issues Gen Z are passionate about. The result: improved fan attraction and retention in Gen Z, since they show far more brand loyalty
- As the ECA report suggests, Gen Z is more likely to follow football players than clubs, so use key players or academy players (which are also Gen Z) to reach out to Gen Z. Find out who they follow and make this the club's main social media representative

Political

Gen Z makes up 16% of the population and will grow to a staggering 30% in 2030, making it the largest consumer cohort alive (Cushman & Wakefield, 2020). That also means they are not yet the voting majority which means their democratic political influence is limited. Yet, they are the generation who are expected to take care of the aging population, to fight the worsening environmental conditions (more on that later) and to cope with increasing financial and political instabilities. It has



made Gen Z stressed and frustrated. According to EY, Gen Z is largely untrusting to the world around them as they have seen little change over the last decade. They've seen the world address many concerns but that has triggered very few solutions. For example, 72% of Gen Z's agree that the gap between the richest and the poorest is widening. Also, only 11% of Gen Z believes that their country is highly committed to tackling climate change (Deloitte, 2022). Combined with the limited voting power Gen Z has during elections, it has left them largely distrusting institutions and society (EY, 2022). This distrust has triggered an interesting characteristic: Gen Z shows high engagement to the local community by purchasing locally produced and sourced goods which houses important fan engagement opportunities for sports teams.

*“Gen Z has inherited
a world on fire”*
EY

Fortunately, Gen Z is also ready to embody change needed to ensure a better tomorrow. Gen Z has inherited a world on fire but is passionate to take action. The majority of Gen Z (72%) thinks it is either very or extremely important to change what is wrong in the world (EY, 2022). This sense of activism defines the generation and provides opportunities for sports organizations to get Gen Z engaged.

How to respond as a sports organization

- Help Gen Z by empowering them to drive positive change. Help to set up food banks, engage in environmental programs and promote Gen Z's social initiatives
- Speak up as a sports team against issues Gen Z is worried about. Some small football clubs like Forest Green Rovers and Lewes FC are leading the dance and are taking bold first steps that completely connect with Gen Z's values. Bigger Premier League clubs

like Tottenham Hotspur and Liverpool are also scoring high in The Green League organized by UN's backed Sport Positive Summit (BBC, 2022).

- Activism towards institutions is important to Gen Z. Economic Inequality, Climate Change and Racism are highly relevant so a sports team that helps combat these issues (i.e. temporary food banks initiated by football clubs during the pandemic) will receive significant sympathy from Gen Z
- Facilitate Gen Z in helping the local community. As Gen Z is more engaged with the local community by sourcing locally and supporting initiatives, this especially is a great opportunity for local oriented football clubs to tap into Gen Z's agenda.

Career and behavior

Gen Z has a different approach to what employment means to them. Their number one priority is to actually enjoy what they do. Gen Z finds it important that their employer is aligned with their personal beliefs and that they enjoy the work that they do. 64% of Gen Z says it is important that their employer shares their values. However, only 45% agrees that businesses have a positive impact on society (Deloitte, 2022). It may explain why 40% of Gen Z has rejected jobs in the past when the corporate values did not align with their personal beliefs. Also 40% of Gen Z says they are likely to leave their jobs in the next 2 years (McKinsey, 2022). These numbers expose two very important elements. Firstly, it explains a labor market movement

called The Great Resignation where hordes of employees are quitting their jobs. If jobs don't align with Gen Z's personal values, they move on or don't even enter a company. It also exposes why companies should have a strong CSR-profile: not only because Gen Z are their current and future customers but also as Gen Z are the current and future workforce. Secondly, the reason behind these high workplace mobility numbers: dissatisfaction with salaries. Almost half of Gen Z's live from paycheck-to-paycheck and worry that they won't be able to cover their expenses. This has resulted in 43% of Gen Z's having a second job (Deloitte, 2022).

More recently, Gen Z has started to respond to these circumstances. On TikTok the term quiet quitting has become mainstream, describing doing nothing more than the work goals require. Combined with the mental health issues as discussed earlier, it seems a response to the hustle-mentality which has defined its previous generations (McKinsey, 2022).

Fortunately, solutions are also able to be identified. Almost 75% of Gen Z's prefer hybrid or remote work options. No more than 19% say that always working in the office is their preferred option. Yet, the main motivators for Gen Z to work for their current organizations (and thus motivators for accepting a job) are good work/life balance (32%), appropriate learning and developing opportunities (29%) and higher salary (25%) (Deloitte, 2022). McKinsey also supports these findings and adds 'meaningfulness of work' to the list of future job requirements (McKinsey, 2022).

How to respond as a sports organization

Support mental health in the workplace (pay close attention here, sports industry). Many sports business talents leave the sports industry already after a few years and - from personal observation - mental health seemed to be a common issue. Pay attention to adequately safeguarding the work-life balance like compensating over-work-hours as sports business jobs are consuming and draining

- Working in football specifically is also mentally demanding. It often means working easily 40+ hours and match days with limited to no financial or time compensation. Providing professional mental health support in the workplace can lead to retaining these talents longer
- Making a lot of money is not the most important driver to employment for Gen Z, although it is a very important factor for resigning. In general, the football industry is known for its low pays, so keeping the right talent on-board means installing proper compensation schemes.
- Invest in the right workplace culture. Gen Z prioritizes finding fulfilling careers and if the jobs they're employed at doesn't reflect this, they are likely to leave soon again
- Implement hybrid working strategies. Gen Z does actually want to work, it just means that the appropriate work/life balance and recognition needs to be in place.
- If all companies are struggling to attract Gen Z employers, then so are your sponsors. Sports clubs can jump in by gathering their sponsors vacancies and to host a Purpose Driven Job Fair.

Environmental

The environment: one of the main topics of Gen Z's concerns. Many Gen Z's are not happy about how the world is fighting the environmental battle. 75% of Gen Z believe the world is at a tipping point when it comes to responding to climate change. More worryingly, less than half (44%) of Gen Z's are

optimistic that the planet can be saved. It explains why almost 90% of Gen Z's is making some form of effort to protect the environment. This varies from using recyclable mugs, buying second-hand clothes and items and buying food that is locally or organically produced (Deloitte, 2022). Simultaneously, 75% always recycle. Also, 60% finds it extremely important to buy from brands that take action to preserve the environment (EY, 2022). In summary, Gen Z shows what EY calls Intentional Consumerism. Gen Z gravitate towards brands that share their values, while quickly dismissing those that don't. In a sports team context, it may be difficult to pick a new team, but it could partially explain why Gen Z is skipping stadium visits more often compared to their previous generations.

Large companies still have a long way to go to play their part. Only 15% of Gen Z's strongly agree that large companies are taking substantive actions. And as mentioned before, only 11% believes their countries are doing enough. When it comes to employers, Gen Z's are slightly more optimistic. 18% feels their employer is strongly committed to fight climate change. This may be the result of the activism by Gen Z: almost half has put pressure on their employer to take action. And when the employers listen, Gen Z's show more loyalty to these employers. Gen Z would like to see their employers invest more on activities like banning single-use plastics at the workplace, offering sustainably oriented employee benefits, providing training on how to make a positive impact and providing incentives to make better environmental choices (i.e. carbon footprint competition with colleagues) (Deloitte, 2022). When it comes to nutrition, Gen Z is also paying closer attention. The younger consumers are the ones changing their eating habits in favor of the environment. 60% of Gen Z has changed what they eat with 20% having undertaken major changes in their eating habits (McKinsey, 2022).

How to respond as a sports organization

- Jump onboard the ecological band wagon immediately. For example, become the first club ever to sponsor or

support global ecological initiatives like The Ocean Cleanup who's mission is to get rid of plastics in oceans and rivers.

- Provide environmental-friendly food alternatives inside the stadium. This can be animal-friendly certified meat options or offering of vegetarian substitutes
- Prioritize climate action as a key strategic pillar and empower staff and fans to do their part. Facilitate recycling inside the stadium, for example by collecting old sports clothes via a clothing sponsor
- Help fans and staff decrease their carbon footprint by providing public transportation solutions to/from stadium
- Get rid of single-use cups and other plastics in stadiums. Many Gen Z's see this as a major issue and may be a reason for Gen Z's not visiting stadiums
- Help employees decrease their carbon footprint via logistics plans or a competition to reduce their carbon footprint.

Financial

Finances are also a major concern for Gen Z. Gen Z has moved away from a mindset of fame-and-fortune but rather is motivated to work hard to shape a secure, stable, and impactful future. In general, 42% of Gen Z rate that becoming rich is either very or extremely important, a clear distinction is made here for Eastern markets (China and

Lewes FC Signs 18th Century Pirates for 2022/23 season

Lewes FC is proud to announce that it will provide a home this season to a statue called 'Inexorable' commemorating Anne Bonny and Mary Read – trailblazing female pirates largely erased from history. The piece of art demonstrates a partnership of two strong, independent, rebellious women whom history has tried to ignore. Initially designed to be in Devon but rejected by a local council as 'inappropriate', Lewes FC was keen to house the statue at their home ground The Dripping Pan, where they are famous for being the only club in the world to split resources equally between women and men footballers.

Source: Lewes FC website

Japan). In total only 20% of Gen Z is looking to become famous. Gen Z has become a lot more conservative: 77% of Gen Z believe it is very or extremely important to save money to buy or do things in the future (EY, 2022). As EY states, this is producing a generation of savers. Deloitte concludes that finances is the top reason why Gen Z is so often feeling stressed, with concerns about the long-term financial future (47%) and day-to-day finances (42%) as main factors (Deloitte, 2022).

It perhaps explains the rising popularity of the FIRE-movement (Financial Independence, Retire Early). Although mostly popular with millennials, Gen Z has also joined the bandwagon with 25% wanting to leave the workforce earlier than the standard retirement age (Goldman Sachs, 2021). It triggers a behavior of constant self-negotiation on how to manage their finances. And it seems that Gen Z is more willing to take financial risks to achieve financial success. Thanks to the recent gamification of trading and the rise of financial influencers, 43% of Gen Z has held cryptocurrency at some point. Though, most Gen Z's have already stepped out (PYMNTS, 2022). It defines Gen Z's position towards finances: willing to jump onboard hype trains but as easily letting it go again. An explanation could be that trading in crypto's have left Gen Z with significantly less disposable income, only increasing their financial worries.

Altogether, it seems like Gen Z is trying to find its way to financial literacy with a few challenges on its path (Forbes, 2022). This can create great opportunities for sports clubs to jump the bandwagon and help Gen

Z to become more financially literate.

How to respond as a sports organization

- Support Gen Z's struggling with economic uncertainty and financial stress. Provide flexible payment plans and financial support to employees
- Provide financial fitness training to Gen Z. Use the knowledge in the academy and the finance department to train Gen Z on how to safely allocate income over assets like savings, investments, and spending.
- Tell the real story behind betting and crypto. Instead of trusting that a crypto-partner will take on this responsibility (!), help Gen Z make the choice on some basic rules of investing

Overall, it is challenging to get Gen Z engaged. They are demanding and already wanted improvements yesterday rather than today. Similar to how the blog started, ECA has already concluded that Gen Z has to spread its time over many different entertainment sources, partially ditching football interest. Unless football clubs use the available information to drastically re-engage this generation, a permanent gap could occur. Because of what would happen if this Gen Z, with its declined interest in sports, grow up to become parents and passes that declined sports interest onto their children? It will become increasingly more difficult to get fans to the stadiums or engaged in the first place. Therefore, it would be wise to start setting up strategies around Gen Z (like we had at my old club AZ Alkmaar) to keep them engaged. ■

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FOOTBALL CLUBS NEED TO LOOK FOR RISK ALLOCATION AND NEW GROWTH POTENTIAL

Today, football is defined almost exclusively by sporting performance: Entrepreneurial well-being and sporting success are closely linked – but the clubs must also think about ways creating new sources of revenue.

By Philipp Mokrohs

Customer expectations are changing faster than companies can react to them. Customers are more informed, better connected and have more sophisticated ideas. This change affects different industries. However, the sports market is particularly affected. Sports institutions are more than ever required into sponsorship deals, TV funds and donations. These are sources of income ultimately based solely on the sport itself.

the current times show that Football clubs need a holistic strategy that provides orientation, reduces complexity and spans the many individual topics. With the clear goal of strengthening the brand and creating new sources of revenue - also independent of sporting success!

Being Different – not just better!

Define what business you are really in

Great organizations stop and ask themselves, “why?” And they answer this ques-

tion by anchoring themselves to a higher sense of purpose which can endure over time, giving their brands a stronger focus, a greater salience and a broader field to play in. So what business are you really in? What is its true north? Is it really just about football after all? Your brand should be more ambitious than define itself as, simply, football. Perhaps it is about shared entertainment. Or maybe it is about collective identity, or content development. Or, quite possibly, none of these. Whatever the answer is, this will be the first step in challenging the conventions of an industry that is completely concentrated on the “what” - and fully unaware of the “why”. Great brands transcend the boundaries of their industries by rethinking their reason for being and shaping their experience around

“Football clubs try to escape this dependency. One way out is to inspire other customer groups and the development of new business areas.”

Philipp Mokrohs

Many football clubs have historically developed very strong brands that offer untapped potential today. In contrast to companies - from large corporations to successful start-ups - football still sees its brand primarily as a logo that markets football emotions to fans and partners. But

their point of view on the world. For example: Burberry is not in the business of fashion, but of Britishness. Red Bull doesn't sell soft drinks – it gives you wings. And Prada stands for contemporary aesthetics, not fashion. And the way these brands choose and shape their touchpoints seamlessly reflects these core ideas.

Create football's first true ecosystem

GAFA is an acronym for the brands that exemplify platform thinking at scale: Google, Amazon, Facebook, and Apple. Though initially rooted in focused lines of business-Amazon's online book fulfilment, for example they prove that the design of desirable experiences can allow a company to profitably extend across multiple sectors. GAFA brands also share an identifiable trait-a-log-in that provides access to a personalized ecosystem of offerings within a single branded space. Informed by your data, an ecosystem considers the ‘real life’ on texts surrounding you and seeks synergies across experiences, ensuring more relevant services and products, offered directly or through partners, all linked by the same sense of purpose.

The world of football is waiting for someone to create the first true Ecosystem. How are you going to really involve fans and provide them with worthwhile products, services and experiences, all joined up together around what you ultimately stand for? How are you going to create immersive experiences for fans an ocean away? How are you going to leverage the immense power of digital to create deep emotions rather than forgettable e-gadgets?

Be your fans' co-brand

From the age of mass communications, we have shifted to the age of mass communica-

tors. We now live in a world of, potentially, seven billion brands - ourselves. Individuals actively managing their own identities, developing and distributing content on a global scale at every second. The role of brands today is therefore to help their customers build their personal brands, acting as enablers of personal value creation and flexing their own identities in favour of – well, anyone.

Once monolithically defensive of their identities, brands like Coke must now surrender their name and make their identity available to their customers' personal brand.

So gone are the days where a football club was the untouchable idol communicating unidirectionally. Clubs that fail to quickly recognise this Copernican change are destined to become increasingly irrelevant beyond the football pitch. The opportunity is to become the first Age of You football brand, rethinking itself as an ingredient to its fans' personal identity and creating groundbreaking opportunities to interact and involve.

Reimagine touchpoints

Most clubs think of innovation as merely updating their existing touchpoints. To them, rethinking their brand is merely about aligning the stuff they have to a new identity.

You must aim higher. You must not simply do things differently. You must do different things. Is it just about the stadium, the fan store and the website? Great brands don't just renew touchpoints – they go off the beaten track and invent new ones to become part of people's lives and to extend to completely new audiences. And when they do that successfully, they become unique, winning segments out of the reach of any competitor.

You have the opportunity to transcend the typical football touchpoints and to surprise, by creating unexpected online and offline experiences.

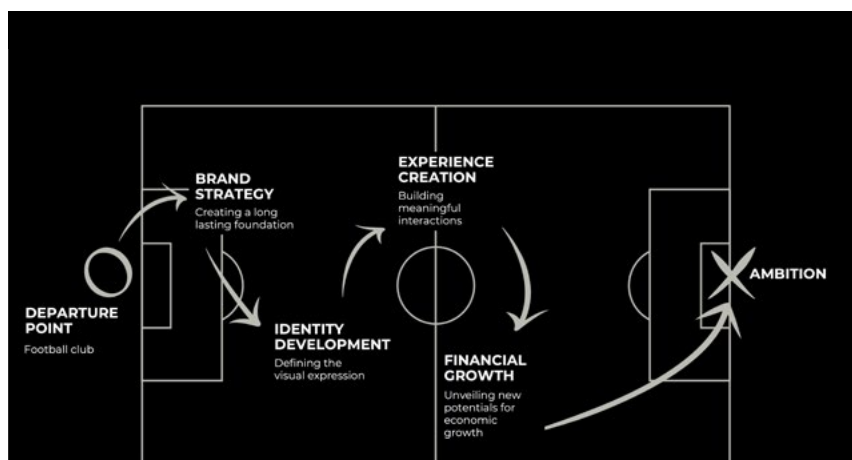
Create responsive experiences

Technology is constantly raising consumer expectations. And, conversely, greater expectations are constantly driving new technology. We are not just wanting brands to be able to meet our needs, but to anticipate them based on who and where we are – and deliver upon them at the right time, in the right place. Systems such as Intel's Audience Impression Metric Suite transform digital signage into an intelligent, situation-aware content. These technologies work in conjunction with digital displays to sense viewer responsiveness and determine gender and age group, then adapt messages accordingly.

The extent to which you could benefit from this is enormous, creating highly individualized content distribution and tailored experiences according to profile, moment and location. Walt Disney World has spent more than a year rolling out a system that changes how visitors do everything from enter their hotel rooms to ride Space Mountain. The experience has become much more personalized and tailored to you. Among other perks, the system provides a

“Create influence beyond the football space, sustainable uniqueness and long-term business value.”

Philipp Mokrohs



Setting up the game plan: Having clear targets along the way

Derivation of your Future Vision

service called FastPass+, which allows visitors to prebook front-of-the-line access to three rides, parades or character meet-and-greets. The system also strives to make it easier for guests to buy food and merchandise — just stand at the register and swipe your wristband, called a MagicBand, which also functions as room key, park ticket and V.I.P. access. All data stored about you is targeted precisely to your needs or used to personalize what you experience.

“Change your role as as a brand to change your role as a Club, ultimately enabling it to leapfrog beyond the comfort zone, the standards and the boundaries of contemporary football.”

Philipp Mokrohs

Measure the right things

How should You define the success of a brand/business transformation? What are the right metrics? And how can they be used to manage the brand and optimise investments? I recommend a framework that would allow the Club to track performance along the dimensions that matter the most in developing the brand. You need to look at both internal and external fac-

tors, measuring change also within the organisations and, externally, looking at the real benchmarks – not just the conventional ones. Look at tangible economic value, rather than fuzzy brand equity measures.

Big challenges. But also - a clear mandate to go ahead and actively shape the future. To create brand growth, you should set up a game plan with clear targets along the way and focus on different options:

- innovations from the brand and from the needs of your fans
- exploitation of the potential in the brand
- brand stretching (new product categories, target groups and markets)
- brand cooperation (e.g. brand alliances)

With the claim: Development of new business areas that are complimentary with Football - new target groups, new custom models, new business models. And be aware that what changes our society will also have a lasting effect on the future strategy of football clubs: New, young target groups, Sports & Health, Home and responsibility, Community & Diversity, Agility.

The sooner football clubs - and probably any sport club, league or institution - adapt to new trends and business models, the better. And the more effectively they operate, the bigger will be their financial leeway to invest in new areas to increase profitability and to create a broader base to achieve their actual goal achieve sporting success. A rethinking is essential to reposition yourself for the future. ■



About the author:

Philipp Mokrohs is a Sportbusiness-Expert for Strategy, Brand and Marketing with a demonstrated history of working in the sports industry just as the Head of Brand Strategy and Brand Management at FC Bayern and as the Director and Authorized Officer Brand, Marketing & Partnerships at Hamburger SV.

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A WINTER OF DISCONTENT OR A NEW BEGINNING FOR EUROPEAN CLUB FOOTBALL IN 2023?

The last few years have been testing ones for the European football industry: badly hit by the Covid pandemic especially in 2020-21, the current season was supposed to be the first one free of significant limitations. Recovery was supposed to be on track. But global economic volatility, rising cost of living, and not least a major military conflict in the heart of the European continent raging since February 2022, have dampened any potential enthusiasm somewhat.

As we face the coming winter, the football ecosystem outwardly seems to be operating as normal: games are being played, new broadcasting deals are being signed and the summer transfer window was one of the most energetic on record. But below the surface we can feel the signs that something does not seem to be quite right.

Rising costs of energy have already led some clubs and entire leagues to come up with mitigation plans, including modification of kick-off times or even stipulating the maximum amount of time that floodlights can be used for. It also remains to be seen whether maintaining the quality of the grass pitch during the winter months will be worth switching on the UV grass maintenance systems, and especially the under-soil heating – or whether clubs would prefer to postpone games and wait for kinder weather to save a bit.

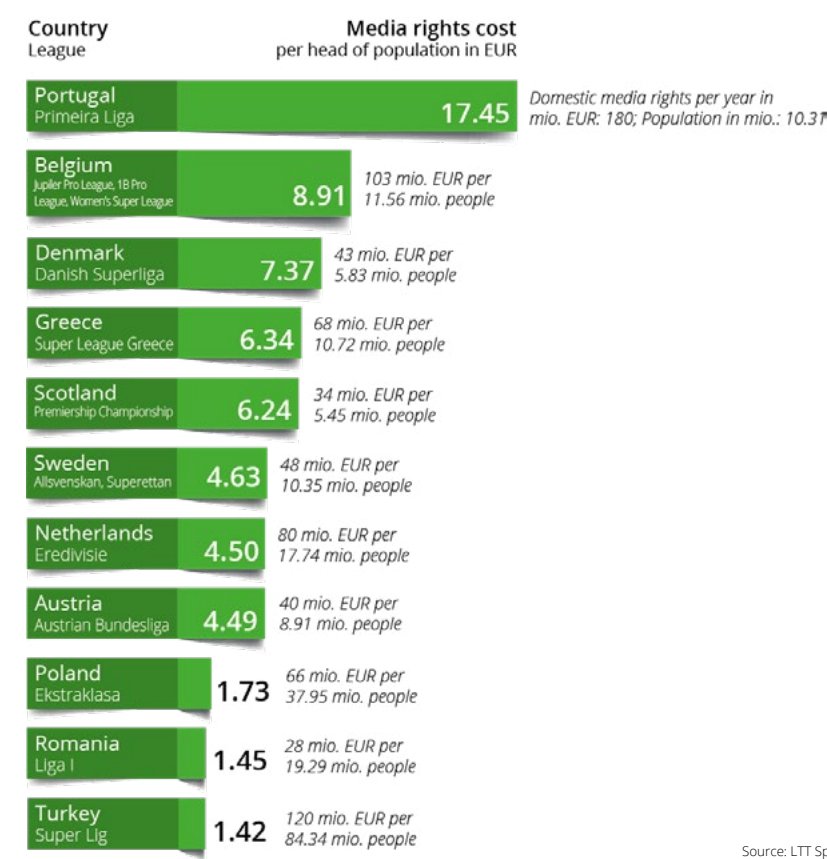
But this is just the tip of the iceberg, so to say: there are far more significant challenges facing the football industry over the next seasons than just the cost of electricity, because, let's face it, if a club cannot afford its electricity costs, then something must be wrong with its business model, right? And

the business model is the crux of the matter: in the European context, over the last several decades the virtuous revenue mix has generally been taken to include a combination of broadcast fees, matchday takings and sponsorship/commercial income. If we look at the UEFA club licensing and benchmarking report from 10 years ago and the most recent one released in early 2022, the only two revenue streams that can be compared like-for-like are media and

stadium. During this time, broadcasting has kept the same 35% share of combined club revenues in both financial years 2010 and 2020, but match day has shrunk from 21% to 12%. All this with the backdrop of Covid, of course, and with overall revenues rising from €12.8bn in 2010 to €20.6bn in 2020.

However, such a zoomed-out look at European football finances does not allow to

The cost of television rights in relation to a country's population Selection Bottom 49 Europe



Source: LTT Sports
Graphic: FBINM

Comparison of leading Polish clubs vs. leading English clubs: Same percentage but very different absolute amounts of revenue

Annual source of revenue 2021/22	Average Polish Ekstraklasa clubs (€ millions)	%	Average Premier League clubs (€ millions)	%
Match day	1.3	15	40.3	13
Broadcasting	4.0	45	178.2	57
Commercial	3.6	40	94.9	30
Total	8.9	100	313.4	100

Source: LTT Sports

see the full picture. For instance, the significance of media rights as a revenue stream is far lower for clubs playing in leagues outside of the so-called Top-5 major leagues in Europe. In what we jokingly call the “Bottom-39”, the average proportion of media rights in the mix is less than 8%: very few leagues outside of the top ones are able to generate sizeable media deals, let alone those that will cover a significant percent of their clubs’ turnover. Not surprisingly, this is linked to the demographic aspect: the Top-5 are also some of the largest countries in Europe by Population, and when it is linked with economic factors such as bigger GDP per capita and levels of disposable income, it serves to produce much richer media rights deals per head of population than in smaller nations.

So, what does this mean for clubs and leagues in the Central European battle ground, where counties are generally on the smaller side, but football traditions are rich and there are plenty of “heritage” teams with big track records? A few years ago, it was generally assumed that following the “English football business model” is the path towards development: build the media/matchday/commercial streams up, and then thrive. If you have a league that sells its broadcasting rights, a modern stadium and a good commercial team working the corporates in your environment, you will be quids in and competitive, right?

Sure, that will work to a degree, but what was not so widely looked at was if you start at €10m annually and grow it by 10% over 10 years, you will reach a turnover of €26m. But if you start at 100m and grow it by the same percentage over the same period, you

will end up with a turnover of 260m, meaning the gap between the two hypothetical clubs over a decade would jump from 90m to well over 200m. So, is it even possible to outcompete clubs from the Top-5 on their own turf?

This leads us to a very harsh realisation: in modern football business, clubs have to compete on the global market, but most of them can only rely on local resources to finance all of that, if they have to rely on their own sources of revenue without recourse to a “sugar daddy” or other “non-market” methods. This means that whilst for some clubs outside of the Top-5 leagues, the ones with the largest commercial potential and significant brand value, they end up in a scenario of being too big for their local environment and not big enough for the global one, for a lot of others the race to deliver a level of quality that is “expected” from a mass-market football showing is increasingly becoming a challenge. And will probably become even more of a challenge as people’s wage packets are squeezed and the habit of attending football matches is eroded for younger generations. All the while, the top clubs from the top leagues will keep disappearing into the distance.

Does this mean we should all just switch to watching the EPL, La Liga and the Champions League? No, of course not! The lesson here is that clubs from outside of those ecosystems need to review their priorities and re-balance their business models using these factors:

1. For clubs and/or leagues that are not satisfied with the limitations imposed by their own geo-economic reality,

they will need to find alternative solutions such as regional competitions with other similarly sized clubs, or collective selling of rights and properties that goes beyond the national level

2. For clubs and/or leagues that are satisfied with their domestic environment and what it can provide, they would do well to re-focus on the local space and its needs, in order to be able to build better and more robust links with the community in order to ensure its support when the going does get tough, especially if the economic challenges of recent times continue
3. Developing and selling players can be a business model in itself, but this places teams in a service provider position to the “buyer” clubs – and can you really be a service provider and a competitor simultaneously?
4. Using European competition participation as the business model does offer a handful of clubs access to large non-domestic revenues and a mechanism to outcompete the rest of their domestic rivals, but if this is not supported by development of the domestic environment and its other clubs, it can produce a disconnect effect and tensions in the football ecosystem
5. Delivering quality at the local level should not mean bringing an ersatz-EPL or UCL product, but rather something that is locally crafted and singular, akin to the “craft beer” approach to market. ■

SUSTAINABILITY IS ALSO A TEAM SPORT, JUST LIKE FOOTBALL IS.

With FC88 Nicole Bekkers challenges the status quo within the football industry on end-of-season football clothing by reworking and upcycling clothing into sustainable fan items.

Guest comment by Nicole Bekkers, Founder of FC88

In 2022 the professional football industry has seen a huge increase of clubs launching their own sustainability reports. With focus on reducing plastic waste in their stadium, putting extra solar panels on the roof of training facilities and lowering their carbon emissions footprint in order to reach their CSR goals. And while we are thrilled that more clubs see it as their responsibility to act on this topic, we are also surprised that one major topic is often overlooked.

Clubs are looking for actionable topics to make sustainability a relevant subject to their fans. But let's be honest, this is still difficult. One of the most obvious topics within the whole sustainability agenda is the football kit. With an ecosystem of (lifestyle) collections of football jerseys, hoodies, shirts, and track suits. And even 3rd and 4th jerseys coming out to meet the demands of the fan. Or is it? The same fan is struggling with paying their bills. And a football jersey costs over 90 euro easily.

In the search for tangible actions, the club often overlooks the items the team and staff are wearing every single day. Items that end up in storage, incinerators, or landfills when the new jersey is launched. And we are not talking about the merchandise products at fan shops and online stores. We

are talking about the clothing worn by the team: training gear, pre-match tops, football jerseys. An average club will use over 50.000 of these items each season. With over 60% eventually ending up on landfills and in incinerators when the season ended. Imagine how big this pile of football clothing is when you know that there are over 150 professional football clubs in Europe alone.

UEFA launched its sustainability strategy called 'Strength Through Unity' in 2022. Just a thought but what if, with the help of UEFA and the European Club Association (ECA), football clubs in Europe collectively reuse the clothing that was used by their teams? A collective solution that helps clubs with a sustainable and tangible solution for their left-over stock. With added value so much bigger than only potential financial returns. The real value is in relevant communications with a (younger) fan demographic, it's in involving CSR colleagues within clubs to maximize impact on the football community. And it's in activating shirt sponsors in a collective responsibility to give old product a second future.

Football is team sport. Maybe we should look at sustainability within football the same way. Strength through unity, right? ■



Left: Founder Nicole Bekkers with an upcycled bag.
Bottom left: Production of sustainable FC Bayern Munich fan-items.
Bottom right: Reworked jersey from Portugal.
Top: Weekend bags by FC88.





THE ASIA STRATEGY OF CELTIC FC

Cheng Zeng, in charge of the international business development of the club, gives insights into the club's activities in Asia.

By Cheng Zeng

Celtic Football Club was formed to do good. On November 6, 1887, Brother Walfrid founded the club to feed the poor and deprived children and unemployed of the East End of Glasgow and to give an under-privileged community a pride and an identity.

A Social Mission Statement summarises the Celtic outlook. While “the primary business of Celtic is as a football club” there is also “the responsibility of being a major Scottish social institution promoting health, well-being and social integration... regardless of gender, age, religion, race or ability”.

The ethos of ‘Football for Good’ and the vision of inclusiveness and openness are two pillars for Celtic FC to drive its international strategy.

The Start

Celtic FC was one of the earliest UK football clubs opening to internationalists especially Asian players back to 2000 to 2010 era.

The club had successively signed Shunsuke Nakamura (2005) and Koki Mizuno (2008) from Japan, Cha Du-Ri (2010) and Ki Sung-Yueng (2010) from South Korea, Du Wei (2005) and Zheng Zhi (2009) from China, Mark Viduka (1998) and Scott McDonald (2007) from Australia.

The signing of the famous Asian stars and their successful career in Scotland gave the club a great opportunity to explore new business opportunity in the East of the world.

The Territories

Based on what the club have built up, Australia, Japan, China and South Korea are four key markets in Asia. But we are also working hard to expand our brand and business to Southeast Asia and Middle East.

Aussie Connections

Since Dan Lavery became the first ever Australian born player to play for Celtic in 1948-49, various Aussie stars have followed in his footsteps, most notably ‘The Wizard of Oz’ Tom Rogic.

In June 2021, Ange Postecoglu was appointed the Celtic first team manager, becoming the first Australian to take charge of a major side in European football.

Harry Kewell joined the Celtic FC coaching team in the summer of 2022, becoming first team coach in Ange Postecoglou’s backroom team. And Aaron Mooy joined the Celtic first team in the summer of 2022 from Shanghai Port FC, China.

Celtic FC Women secured the services of highly-rated youngster Jacynta Galabadaarachchi in the winter transfer window of 2021. The 21-year-old player was named as the Women’s Young Player of the Year (2021/2022) at the PFA Scotland Awards.

Far East Connections

Kyogo Furuhashi arrived at Celtic Park in the summer of 2021 from Japanese side Visel Kobe. He had a phenomenal start at the club with 7 goals in 9 games including a hat-trick at Celtic Park debut. His quick settle down and incredible success strengthened the club’s confidence to sign another three Japanese Internationalist Daizen Maeda, Reo Hatate, Yosuke Ideguchi in January 2022.

The four Japanese Bhoys’ fantastic efforts, attitude and contribution to the club last

year have been exemplary on and off the pitch. It would be true to say that they have raised the bar at Celtic Football Club.

On 23 November 2022, Celtic FC was delighted to announce the signing of Japanese central defender, Yuki Kobayashi. The 22-year-old player will be able to join up with his new Celtic team mates once the registration window opens in January 2023.

In July 2021, Shen Mengyu (right of the picture below), the 21-year-old young star made history to join Celtic FC and become the first ever Chinese women’s footballer in UK. With an eye for goal and an assist, Shen brings great techniques and experience to Celtic FC Women and she had a season to remember, winning team silverware – a League Cup and Scottish Cup Double.

Another Chinese international, the 20-year-old winger Shen Menglu (left of the picture below) joined Celtic FC Women in the summer of 2022 with immediate impact by scoring two goals.

Objectives in Asia Brand.

Celtic, as a brand, is massive in Europe. But in terms of international market and non-English speaking counties, we are facing strong competition with other European football giants. Developing Celtic brand awareness and ensuring our games are being shown in targeting countries are critical to our strategy.

Fan base.

“Football without fans is nothing”, is a famous quote attributed to legendary Celtic FC manager, Jock Stein as well as a perfect demonstration how the club appreciate the importance of growing supporters in the world.

Commercial.

Generating commercial revenues is a natural but ultimate goal for the club to enter a completely new market. It always requests significant time and effort investment, but we’d like to deliver a clear message that we are in this for the long term.



Jacynta Galabadaarachchi



Shen Menglu & Shen Mengyu



Harry Kewell



Ange Postecoglou

How to achieve the goals?

There are obviously very big cultural and language differences between Scotland and those countries in Asia such as Japan, South Korea and China. The overall key is to get in sync and establish a true connection with the audiences there by providing authentic and localized contents.

Taking Japan as an example, when the club announced Kyogo Furuhashi and got the chance to re-engage with Japanese fans, we immediately find a digital agency based in Japan to assist in the launch of Celtic FC Japanese website, Celtic FC Japan Twitter, Celtic FC Japan Online Store, and Celtic FC official SportsNavi (Yahoo! Sports) account. It gives the club a direct channel to know how Japanese fans think, act and response, and what they expect from the Japanese players and the club.

There are other ways to build brand and develop fan base, such as broadcast, media productions, live online events (such as virtual fan party), prize draw and promotions on social media, fan club, watch parties, legends and ambassador, player appearance, trophy tour, first team tour, charitable events, etc.

The invest of brand build would ultimately enable us to generate commercial revenues from the followings:

- Sponsorship
- Merchandise

- Licensing
- Celtic TV - broadcast and media productions
- Match breaks (sports travel)
- Club partnership programme
- International soccer academy partnership programme
- Team tour

Last, recruiting talented players from the targeting territories is extremely helpful for either brand build or business development over there. But when Celtic FC evaluate an opportunity, players' ability and football reason are always come first.

The Achievements

Marketing Reach

SPFL and Celtic games have started to broadcast on DAZN in Japan in August 2021 and currently broadcasting on SPOTV NOW.

Our social media following in Japan continues to rise at a steady rate since it launched in the summer of 2021. The follower numbers of Celtic Japan Twitter have reached to nearly 70k which places Celtic as the 9th most popular European Football Club in Japan.

We have performed strongly on our video views on Sponavi with a total views 130.14M through 188 videos and a total views 2.06M through 95 articles since July 2021.

There were 100,000 visitors to Celtic TV website during 2020/2021 season. Top 5 countries for subscribers: 1. UK 2. USA 3. Australia 4. Canada 5. Japan.

The club have launched official Chinese digital accounts since 2014, including Weibo, Tencent Sports, Dongqiudi, and Hupu Sports.

Commercial

- First team tour – just completed Australia tour during World Cup break.
- **Sponsorship**
 - Announced two Chinese sponsorship: Hytera (2016) and Dahua Technology (2020).
 - A South Korean sponsorship has been secured and will go to public shortly.
- **Merchandise & Licensing**
 - have recently launched partnership with the famous Japanese football manga Aoashi to create co-branding merchandise.
 - https://store.celticfc.com/players/celtic-x-japan?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=shop&utm_campaign=aoashi_launch
- **Broadcast and media productions**
 - constantly drive subscription revenue through Celtic TV in global and Asia market.
- **Club Partnership**
 - signed a small youth football development project with the Chinese Super League club, Guangzhou R&F in 2017.

- **International Soccer Academy Partnership**
 - Celtic FC is world famous for its soccer academy and youth footballer development. Before Covid, the club had over 70 international soccer academy partners in 22 countries.
 - Specifically in Asia, the club signed academy partners and launched soccer camps and coach education workshops in Australia, China, India, Kuwait and Malaysia in recent years.
 - The club welcomed the first ever Chinese youth team visit to Glasgow to train with Celtic Soccer Academy coach in the summer of 2019.
 - The first ever Celtic FC Japan soccer camp is on the way and will go to public shortly.

The next Steps

The clubs are passionately looking for Digital Media Partner to drive brand growth, Commercial Partner to explore new revenue streams, Football Partners (including club partner, soccer academy partner and women's football partner) to deliver Celtic Football Philosophy, Travel Partner to provide money can't buy match day experience, and Promoter or Presenter to organize a Celtic FC Japan Tour in the coming year. ■

About the author:

Mr. Cheng Zeng, who graduated from the Football Industry MBA of University of Liverpool with a Merit in 2014, is a Chinese football business professional, with a profound knowledge of both global and Asian football industries. Cheng joined Celtic FC in 2014 and he is in charge of international business development and leads the Asian Project.

“ARENA OF THE FOREST” - HOW AGF AARHUS PLANS THEIR FUTURE IN A SUSTAINABLE STADIUM

In this article, FBIN talked with Søren Højlund Carlsen, Head of Media and Communication of AGF Fodbold about the decision behind the construction of a new stadium, the benefits and the overall challenges. We also discussed AGF, its mission and objectives.

By Bruno Ivich.



What were the main factors behind the decision of the construction of a new stadium?

We as a club have wanted a proper football-stadium instead of the athletic stadium, that has been our homeground for many years. Now it is real and the vision is here. It started two years ago when two local donors; Lind Invest and the Salling Foundation put forward the financial means for the project and therefore the project could start. We

are so grateful to the donors for making this happen.

Right now, our club is maxed out with sponsors and hospitality, so also commercially the decision to build a new stadium definitely makes sense. But it will mainly be of benefit to the fans who in the future could support the club in our modern, football-stadium close to the pitch.

With the new football-stadium, AGF will fulfill a long-standing wish; a stadium without a running track, so that the audience is closer to the pitch. This fact simply creates a better atmosphere, improving in general the comfort.

The Arena of the Forest will have a capacity of 20,000 seated spectators and there is a possibility to expand to 24,000 seats. Overall, we want to bring more sponsors and hospi-

tility, and without a doubt more space in the stadium will allow us to grow. For the last 8 years we have had record sponsorship growth in Denmark with 70 million Dkr. in revenue, which is about 9.4 million euros.

What are the main differentiators of this new stadium in comparison with others?

Our new stadium will be a proper football-stadium, with the characteristics of being sustainable with recycled and old materials that come from our previous stadium. The sustainable part is very important for us as a club.

The main differentiator is the design and how it blends into the forest and connects with the context of the city. It will use plenty of wood, and we will also have a plaza with museums, stores, among other things. The stadium will be a center for events and concerts mainly during the summer time. The overall cost budget of the stadium is 585 million Danish kroner which is approximately 80 million euros.

I would say that the new stadium matches AGF and Aarhus fantastically. It respects the surroundings in the forest, but at the same time has a majestic expression in the way it rises. It is modern in the use of wood, but at the same time it blends with the old stadium building.

There is a lot of functionality around the design, where you can work with the density, so you can adjust according to wind and draft. Another good detail is the overhang from the arches, which means that you will be standing in dry weather when you are waiting to enter. A third is that the corridors are level-free and uninterrupted. It is a beautiful stadium.

How do you think this new stadium will help boost revenues and the growth of the team?

The challenge right now is that we reached our limit with hospitality packages and sponsors. The previous stadium could host 1000 VIPs, and now we are expecting to host 2500 VIPs in the future. So for sure, the new stadium will boost revenues commercially and allow us to keep growing. With reference to match revenues, we will also have



24,000 seats, which is more than now.

In your opinion what will be the main benefits of a new stadium as well as it challenges?

Overall, the benefits are evident, we want to offer our fans a great stadium that will support the growth of the club. The Arena of the Forest will focus on giving out a spectacular experience to fans and other visitors. The main challenges will be to work around having no stadium for a while and finding a new place to play while our stadium is being constructed.

In a few sentences how would you describe the new stadium?

The Arena of the Forest is a dream come true. It is a collective effort of the donors, the club, fans, private institutions and municipalities to make a stadium that will blend so beautifully in with the forest and the city of Aarhus.

Is it common lately to see new stadiums in Denmark being constructed?

It is not common to see new construction projects around stadiums. The last new one was in 2017. Of course there have been some smaller stadium projects over the last 20 years. The majority of the stadiums in Denmark are owned by municipalities, in our case it is the same and we have a lease for many years going forward.

What are the main values and concepts you want to transmit through this stadium?

We want to transmit what the stadium represents and what our city is. Thus, the main values are sustainability in a unique location that is a landmark of our club and its origins. This project will bring enjoyment to our fans and we are proud that the stadium will blend in well with the city and our spectacular forests.

How would you describe the fans of the team?

I think our fans are the most loyal and fantastic fans in Denmark. For example, we have been relegated 3 times in the last 20 years and they still have always supported us. We have a record attendance for the club with 14,000 spectators per match in the Danish League this season. Aarhus is a one club city where fans love football and are extremely passionate.

Please tell us more about the team, its mission, vision and objectives?

AGF is one of the oldest clubs in Europe, founded in 1880. We have been 5 times champions of Denmark, our last one was in 1986. We also have won the most national cups with 9, our last one was in 1996. For the last 25 years we have been struggling a bit, but for the last 6-7 years we have almost always been competing for the top 6 in the table in order to qualify for the playoffs. We are confident that our hard work and the support of the community will allow us to provide great results for the fans in the future at the new stadium. ■

SUSTAINABILITY IN TIMES OF ENERGY CRISIS IN EUROPEAN TOP FOOTBALL

By Thorsten Dum, Lukas Kimpel & Axel Sierau

The current energy crisis is mainly caused by an increase in global gas demand as a consequence of the Russia-Ukraine war. In Europe, there is a lack of energy for an affordable price for everyone, as renewable energy sources are not enough to meet the high demands. Heating homes and maintaining buildings has seen a drastic increase in costs, which is a problem for the private sector and companies, industry, factories, and farmers alike. Thus, improving the energy performances of buildings and operations is extremely important to solve the short-term energy crisis and make energy performances sustainable and competitive for the future. Currently, the emergency plan by the EU is to reduce 15 % of gas consumption until March 2023 voluntarily. Furthermore, provisional power generation sources are being installed to overcome fossil-based electricity. Renewable energy shall lower the negative effect and solve the energy problem itself. Hence or therefore, it has become imperative to promote the use of renewable energy sources – such as solar, hydro, wind, and bio hydrogen.

How does the energy crisis effect the world of football?

It has become clear that if all entities alike need to be more economical and sustainable in terms of saving energy, football must not be a distinction and must make its contribution. For instance, it is not understandable that pitch heating or floodlights are going full force during all seasons. If electricity is scarce or rationed, floodlights might be cancelled due to a lack of energy. Banning sports in the darker evening or having players cold showers – just two options that have gotten into the sport management discourse. Rational to do or just nice to have? Effective and efficient or pure actionism?

If there are talks about rationing energy and households being more economical in that regard, professional football also needs to do its due diligence and must rethink and restructure the current concepts and strategies in terms of sustainability. Football involves millions of fans, who are expected to adapt and make a change, and so must the football clubs. In this regard, clubs must

make a change to start the discourse about ecological change and avoid conflicts with their fan base. If there will be no change by football clubs, they will feel the effect of the crisis and the sport will start to realize that it could be painful on various elements for the management of the clubs. This could include but is not limited to schedules, formats of sportive competition, business models, or international travel. For example, Gran Vía, Madrid's largest and most important shopping street until the 1960s, had a 3-month electricity ban, but one La Liga matchday and the energy consumption of the arena nullified the whole progress.

To date, some football clubs have already begun to implement sustainability strategies, however football-specific key performance indicators and measures are still in their infancy.

In our research, we first set out to examine examples of clubs reacting to the energy crisis by implementing energy-saving methods. Not surprisingly and due to the current and ongoing crisis, data situation is somewhat manageable around Europe's Top 5 Leagues. Interestingly, most exam-

ples found are based in Germany. Below, we present some recent examples of Europe's Top 5 Leagues:

Watford Football Club (EFL Championship)
Recently announced a long-term partnership with leading global energy management and net zero consultancy ClearVUE which includes consultancy, training, and the installation of an energy management system at the club's arena.

Borussia Mönchengladbach (Bundesliga)
Usually had their arena light up in green every day, now only on matchdays and to try to reduce lighting everywhere in and around the arena. The club management is also appealing to their staff to save energy as best as they can.

FC Bayern München (Bundesliga)
Is starting to lower their pitch heating and further the system will now function with an air heat pump. Like Mönchengladbach, Munich is decreasing its arena lighting from 6 to 3 hours per day and also is turning down the heating by 2 degrees in winter, while doing the opposite in summer, 2 degrees less cooling. The water remains cold in its sanitary facilities.

SV Werder Bremen (Bundesliga)
Introduced an energy task force in March 2022, to assess energy saving potential, e.g., fridges in catering areas remain off in between matchdays. Air conditioning units are also adapted to the flow temperature of the heating system during the summer.

The above-mentioned actions of the clubs are related to an acute reaction to the current energy crisis. This means that they have introduced actions and methods directly related to the crisis. However, football must become even more sustainable. That means they must measure sustainability and must analyse their key figures in context to the 17 sustainable development goals (SDG). Those have been developed by the United Nations (UN) in September 2015, should also be a given for the football world. In fact, the UN have understood to use the voice of football to achieve behavioural change by creating “Football for the Goals” (FFTG). FFTG is a United Nations initiative that provides a platform for the global football community to engage with and advocate for the SDGs. It is an opportunity to build on football's powerful and influential reach and to work together to become agents of change by aligning messaging, strategies, and operations with the aspirations of the SDGs.

Energy consumption / saving – Current best practices in analogy of UN's 17 SDGs

In our research, we specifically focussed on clubs that are aligned with the objectives of the 17 SDG's. Specifically examining parameters and actions of arena and club facilities, transportation, and some other (such as electricity, cooling, and heating), we present a table to make an overview of

the current best practice examples in European top football. The best practice examples refer to energy-saving actions that have already been implemented based on the SDGs.

In addition, many clubs have started energy management partnerships to have experts to deal with most of the work, such as Manchester City and Masdar, Juventus Turin and Alperia or Atlético Madrid and Capital Energy with the latter providing energy systems, assessments, and green energy.

Implications for the football business

So, what does all this mean for the football business and how can best practice examples help other clubs?

We split the implications in two parts: The first part is to address the urgency of the topic (ACT NOW) and the fact that clubs need to act quickly, specifically to save energy resources, is the second part (ACT EARLY).

ACT NOW

As mentioned, changes are bound to happen and to avoid only acting when it gets worse clubs should already assess their current energy consumption, either with partners or by themselves. If clubs act slowly and wait for the crisis to turn worse

Forest Green Rovers
Arena and Club Facilities:
 100 % green energy and carbon neutral gas: Solar panels on arena for self-generation;
 Organic pitch
Transportation: Special buses and trams on matchdays incl. new station: Free bike parking at the stadium; Charging ports for electric vehicles: Eco-friendly team bus
Other: Eco Park as new arena: energy to build arena drastically reduced




Olympique Lyon
Arena and Club Facilities:
 1000 m2 of solar panels on the roof of the training centre and more in OL Valley; Geothermal system for heating; Renewable resources bought to fund projects
Transportation: Special buses and trams on matchdays incl. new station: Free bike parking at the stadium; promoted by the city
Other: Sensors for energy mapping of buildings



VfL Wolfsburg
Arena and Club Facilities:
 100 % green energy since 2011; Solar electricity generation; LED floodlights; Central building energy control
Transportation: Promote free travel for employees and volunteers: Tickets function as public transportation tickets (common in Germany)
Other: Constant audits for constant improvement



Tottenham Hotspur
Arena and Club Facilities:
 100 % renewable energy; REGO-backed electricity and carbon neutral gas for the stadium; Technologies for renewable energy such as air source heat pumps; LED lighting
Transportation: Partnership with Bolt to win prizes via steps on matchdays



Clermont Foot
Arena and Club Facilities:
 100 % natural lawns – no heating or light therapy; Connected to District Heating System; LED lights and LED screen
Transportation: Partnership with local transport network to increase tramway on matchdays – free tram on weekends



1. FC Köln
Arena and Club Facilities:
 100 % green energy: LED lighting; Management system according to the ZNU standards
Transportation: Set the goal of converting vehicle fleet to electric cars and hybrid cars: Programme of cycling to work





Participate in the **FBIN Club Tool Box Survey**

**We want to find out how football organisations
work with CRM systems, ticketing tools
and other tools and services.**

**What tools do you use?
Which tools would you recommend?
How do you find the right tools?
How much do you spend on tools?**

**Take part in the survey
and receive access to
the report in advance.**

GO TO THE SURVEY

**Based on this survey,
we will create a report with the findings.**

the pressure by the public, governments, and stakeholders to act immediately will get worse and the public might demand clubs to be more conscious about their energy consumption.

We compile a list of four areas where we see an impulse to act now:

1. **Lighting:** needs to be reduced and which should not be a big hurdle
 - Unnecessary lighting can be avoided, such as the Bayern and Mönchengladbach examples
 - LED lights will save a huge amount of electricity
2. **Heating and cooling** need to be reduced too
 - Reducing it during the respective seasons is an easy step
 - Staff, players, and fans should be urged to do the same in their private housings in a combined effort to fight the crisis
 - Technology has evolved, investments in new pitch heating and cooling technologies can be profitable in the long run

3. Team, staff, and fan **transportation** needs to be improved
 - Free public transport ticket included in match ticket
 - Bike or walking programmes
4. Renewable **resources** found in each category
 - Try to switch to green energy as soon as possible to not rely on resources affected by the crisis
 - Partnerships with green energy companies legitimate
 - On top of that, constant monitoring is necessary to improve strategies and avoid non-renewable resources in every area possible.

ACT EARLY

If clubs do not act early, they might face financial issues once the crisis turns worse. Thus, implementing preventive strategies might come at a cost at first, but these will reap financial benefits due to cost savings. Potential benefits can then be re-invested in new technologies to provide even better energy-saving strategies. As grim as the sit-

uation of the energy crisis might seem, the football business sits in the driver's seat in this case. We conclude that it will be worth thinking about four major pillars in terms of sustainability strategies in football:

- Energy-saving strategies
- Reduction of energy consumption
- Cost-Reduction (favourable return of investment)
- Energy-saving and production technologies

From a managerial point of view, it will be complex to start as soon as possible and be prepared. Financially speaking many clubs will need strategies in place, if they will not, they will potentially face financial risks as well as delegitimizing effects on their brand and societal image. Ignoring the upcoming crisis will lead the clubs into a negative spiral from which most of them can hardly escape and recover. The considerations set out here apply not only to clubs and national associations, but also to major tournaments such as those organised by FIFA or UEFA. Act now – act early! ■

WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION IN EUROPE

What sports organizations and companies must now do to ensure an adequate protection of whistleblowers (and avoid fines under EU and national regulations).

By Dr. Philipp Wehler

Germany and other countries of the EU have been dragging their feet regarding their obligation to transpose binding EU legislation for the protection of whistleblowers into national law. But this period will soon end and once it does the sports industry in Germany will need to act and install whistleblowing systems almost across the board. Only small organizations are exempt from the need to install whistleblower protection systems. But considering recent discoveries of wrongdoings in sports organizations, an effective whistleblowing system throughout the sports world, regardless of the size of the organization, is very much desirable.

The deadline for implementing the “EU Whistleblowing Directive”, which entered into force on 16 December 2019 expired approximately one year ago in December 2021. With the transposition phase now well “in overtime”, implementation in Germany and other EU countries is, however, on the home stretch. The German Law for the protection of whistleblowers, the infamous “Hinweisgeberschutzgesetz” (“HinSchG”) as it will be known in Germany (once again exposing the German language’s preference for long complicated words) is expected to enter into force early 2023. So now is the time for all actors in the sports industry to get ready and take measures to comply with the new regulatory requirements.

It is the current German government’s view, and rightly so, that whistleblowers play an important role when it comes to uncovering and punishing wrongdoing in the sports

world. However, in the past there have been repeated cases in which whistleblowers have been disadvantaged because of reporting or disclosing wrongdoing. The new legal landscape shall exclude these disadvantages and give whistleblowers legal certainty when disclosing wrongdoing. The HinSchG is “intended to reconcile the goal of improved whistleblower protection with the interests of companies and public administration, which are obliged to take whistleblower protection measures, in such a way that bureaucratic burdens remain manageable”. Can these goals in fact be reconciled? What “bureaucratic burdens are actors in the sports world facing under the new law?

Generally, sports clubs, federations and companies need to take action to implement whistleblowing systems according to the HinSchG if their employee headcount exceeds 49. In such case and up until the headcount reaches 249 employees, a transitional period (“grace period”) for the establishment of internal reporting channels will continue to apply until 17 December 2023. Where a company or entity has more than 249 employees, speed is of the essence since the regulatory obligations will enter into force within a few months following the adoption of the law by German parliament. In case an organization already has a whistleblowing system (which is more common in the UK, the United States or Switzerland), it needs to check whether the system complies with the EU and national regulation or adapt their systems to meet the new legal requirements.

Multi-level reporting system

To protect potential whistleblowers, the German HinSchG provides for a multi-level reporting system consisting of internal and external channels and the disclosure of violations against certain legal obligations such as criminal or environmental law. While internal reporting channels are to be set up directly by the employers, external reporting channels will be installed at the level of the federal government or the federal states in Germany. External reporting channels are established, for example, at financial regulatory body BaFin and the Federal Cartel Office. Whistleblowers can, in principle, choose between internal and external reporting channels. This means that whistleblowers can report wrongdoing to a governmental hotline and are protected under the mechanisms of the HinSchG in this case.

This equal ranking of internal and external reporting channels was long disputed in the enactment procedure of the EU Whistleblowing Directive. In the eyes of many, preference should have been given to internal hotlines/reporting channels. However, the EU decided to give equal priority to internal and external channels. It is highly advisable for sports employers to make use of the option to install an internal whistleblowing channel. The main reason is that an internal whistleblowing system gives organizations an opportunity to address potential wrongdoing, once it is flagged by whistleblowers, without the sometimes hysteric public outcry and media frenzy over unproven accusations and accompanying reputational damage.

In addition, the HinSchG will provide whistleblowers with a safe opportunity to disclose violations to the press or media in a case where a complaint had been brought to an internal whistleblower channel but not been dealt with properly by the organization or if the violation poses an immediate threat to the public interest.

Design and operation of the reporting system

Internal whistleblower channels must be designed and maintained in such a way that the identity of the whistleblower and third parties mentioned in a report remain confidential and unauthorized third parties are prevented from accessing the information. Companies must therefore ensure a high level of data protection. Therefore, internal whistleblowing channels are often staffed with external legal counsel which ensures the highest level of confidentiality and a proper handling of a complaint.

An internal reporting channel must enable the receipt of information orally or in text form and, if the whistleblower so desires, also through personal meetings. For the acceptance of the internal channels and to create little to now threshold for using a channel, it is urgently recommended that employers enable a digital, i.e., web-based submission of information via digital whistleblowing systems which many services providers (such as Hintbox in Germany) offer on a software as a service (SaaS) basis at little cost.

Despite intense criticism during the legislative process, the current German draft does not provide for an obligation of an entity to enable the submission of anonymous reports. However, despite the lack of a legal obligation, it is advisable for employers to generally accept and process anonymous reports. Experience shows that the acceptance of whistleblower systems increases significantly with the possibility to submit anonymous reports.

The receipt of a report must be confirmed to the whistleblower within a period of seven days after receipt. To take follow-up action, an impartial department or person must be appointed to receive the reports and remain in contact with the whistleblower to request further information, if necessary. Within three months, the whistleblower must also be informed of any planned or initiated follow-up measures.

Furthermore, the government draft of the HinSchG contains numerous regulations on the documentation of whistleblowing as well as the possibilities for whistleblowers to check and correct reports.

Protection of whistleblowers

Whistleblowers who comply with the provisions of the HinSchG are afforded special protection. All forms of reprisals against whistleblowers are prohibited. This includes warnings, dismissals, demotions, or refusals of promotion. It also prohibits the transfer of tasks, changes in the place of work, changes in working hours, negative performance appraisals, bad references, and inclusion on “snitch lists”. This means, for example, that a footballer could not be demoted to a lower team of that same club for exposing potential wrongdoing by his employer to a reporting channel. In addition, a reversal of the burden of proof in favour of the whistleblower applies, according to which it is presumed in proceedings before courts or authorities that a disadvantage suffered was a reprisal for the report or disclosure. However, this protection only applies to whistleblowers acting in good faith, not to obviously abusive reports.

Need for action by companies and entities in the sports sector

It is urgently recommended that affected employers introduce a whistleblower system as an internal reporting channel as soon as possible. A failure to set up an internal reporting channel despite the existing legal obligation constitutes an administrative offence punishable by a fine.

In the context of the introduction of an internal reporting channel, companies, clubs, and the like must examine the legal framework, such as checking which legal entities or subdivisions require a whistleblower system or whether - in the context of group structures - the possibility of creating a central reporting office should be considered.

In addition, the co-determination rights of a works council (where established) must be observed and, if necessary, company agreements negotiated. As part of the implementation, data protection notices must also be created, deletion processes and deadlines defined and both physical and technical data protection precautions taken. In addition, processes must be defined to ensure compliance with the provisions of the HinSchG regarding feedback and the initiation of follow-up measures. This should be seen as a management task with a strong focus on all legal and compliance aspects involved.

Finally, an organization should aim to promote comprehensive acceptance of the reporting system internally. This should include training the employees accordingly. A whistleblowing system can only achieve its purpose and represent an important component within the framework of the respective compliance organization if it is accepted by everyone in the organization. This requires a promoting “tone from the top” and a general positive stance towards good governance. To promote employees’ trust in a whistleblower system, it can also be useful to regularly appoint an independent external ombudsperson to receive hints from whistleblowers. Properly prepared and implemented, a whistleblower system offers companies an important instrument for identifying and remedying grievances at an early stage. This not only helps to avoid heavy fines, but also reduces the liability risks of management bodies and improves the integrity of the entire organization. ■

About the author:

Dr. Philipp Wehler is a partner and co-head of the sports law practice at one of Germany’s leading sports law firms Hoffmann Liebs. Hoffmann Liebs provides innovative whistleblowing solutions and serve as ombudspersons to many clients in the sports industry such as clubs, agencies, and federations.

“WE WANT TO STAY WITHIN BOUNDARIES AND BE RESPECTED FOR HUGE INNOVATION AND PORTRAYAL”

Andrew Whitham, Director of Commercial Affairs of Lincoln City Football Club speaks about the partnership with San Diego Loyal SC and some interesting projects that the English League One team is working on.

By Bruno Ivich



Photos: Lincoln City FC

Lincoln City FC has had a rise as a non-league team to being a League One team, with two promotions. The team has played in the prestigious Wembley Stadium twice in 5 seasons and now have their own training ground. Five years ago this was not possible. The training ground is a first class

facility for the club's first team and academy. Overall, Lincoln City FC has grown massively in the last few years.

Why and what were the factors behind the partnership with San Diego Loyal SC?

There is a close link between our team and

San Diego Loyal SC due to some of our investors being based in the United States. Furthermore, there is another link with the US as former USA international Landon Donovan is the club's strategic advisor. Thus, it makes sense for us to help grow our international audience over in the US.



Andrew Whitham Director of Commercial Affairs, Lincoln City Football Club

Lately, besides the US, we have seen huge growth in streaming from Mexico, South Africa and Australia with iFollow being popular around the world. Our objective with this partnership is to engage with our audiences and later expand to new projects overseas.

What specifically does the partnership consist of?

The partnership mainly consists of engagement with our American audience and followers. With San Diego Loyal SC there is the potential for merchandise exchanges and to work together on community projects. At this stage, the partnership is at its initial stage, but it completely makes sense because of all the shared values and the connection between teams. The final idea is to blend and understand different cultures around football and explore what else we could do together.

Why is it relevant as a smaller club to focus on this partnership topic?

For Lincoln City FC this partnership is a key growth area that helps the investors' profile and drives engaging datapoints of a wider

audience located in the United States. We are confident that the partnership is just the beginning of lots of projects we could do together between the two clubs.

How do you think the new partnership will increase revenues? What sort of results do you expect?

At this stage we do not expect our new partnership to increase our revenues. Now, we want to initially engage with the American market and with San Diego Loyal SC. Afterwards, we will see results and understand our growth in engagement, on understanding different audience data and analyzing the passion for both supporter groups. Later on, we may receive audience and financial growth, but as of now we just want to get started and see how it goes.

What are the main objectives of Lincoln City Football Club? Short term? Medium term? Long term?

Lincoln City Football club wants to compete at the highest level possible with sensible growth strategies. We want to stay within boundaries, and be respected for huge innovation and portrayal. We want to

“Everything we do at the club is measured with the final objective of making our fans proud.”

Andrew Whitham



sustain our football league status and grow through the football pyramid.

What is an interesting fact about Lincoln City that the majority of fans do not know?

One fact is that twenty percent (20%) of our fans travel for more than 90 minutes to see our home games. Another fact is that we as Lincoln City FC are the lowest ranked team to reach the FA Cup quarter-finals in over a century. We played against Arsenal in 2017 at the Emirates Stadium.

What factors do you think differentiate Lincoln City from any other team you know?

Lincoln City within its team has a committed process driven approach. Everything we do at the club is measured with the final objective of making our fans proud. We want winning football, but our approach is unique, it is more about how it is achieved internally with our processes.

Are there any interesting or disruptive projects that the team is working on?

Currently, Lincoln City FC is redeveloping the north stand of our stadium, which will be home to our partner charity, Lincoln City Foundation. This will lead to increased capacity, as well as a better community outreach, and continued growth with raising

awareness for mental health and supporting education.

What are some of the greatest challenges at this present date in Lincoln City FC? How would you solve them?

The main challenges are trying to compete with bigger and better funded clubs. For us, the solution is efficiency at the lowest cost possible, with commitment with regulators, innovation and our process driven approaches. ■

"The main challenges are trying to compete with bigger and better funded clubs."

Andrew Whitham



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KRC GENK JOINS THE FBIN FOOTBALL NETWORK

The Belgian top club joins the global football business network with the aim to develop their fan engagement programs together with FBIN.

With four national titles and five cup wins, KRC Genk is the third most successful club in Belgium in the past 25 years. Together with their supporters they write a unique story. Professionalism and talent development are literally in the club's DNA and as a source for talent KRC Genk is proud to have been able to bring many big names to major competitions in Europe.

Now the club, currently leading the table of the Jupiler Pro League, becomes the latest member of the FBIN Football Network.

FBIN is a global platform for people working in football industry with the goal to promote international exchange, share knowl-

edge and facilitate strong, sustainable connections. Full focus lies on non-sporting topics, such as organisational development, commercialisation, or marketing.

With the FBIN Football Network, FBIN supports rights holders in their development and growth by providing them with inspiration, knowledge, connections, and services.

"In support of the FBIN network we are looking forward to bring our fan engagement programs towards a next level with respect towards our unique local and talent focused identity," says Tim Evens, Fan Service Coordinator of KRC Genk.

"With FBIN, we are currently building a global platform for leaders, curious people, forward-thinking minds and ultimately for all people who work in the football business industry. FBIN aims to become a central hub for people who are looking for inspiration, new ideas and potential solutions to problems and who want to exchange ideas with colleagues from all over the world in an educated and reliable way. We are proud that one of the leading Belgian clubs trusts us to support them in their endeavours. Welcome to the network, KRC Genk," says Thomas Maurer, Managing Director of FBIN. ■

ZETLY JOINS THE FBIN FOOTBALL NETWORK



The Polish tech company is the latest organization to become a member of the global football business network.

Zetly is a company that uses blockchain technology to create multi-level sports platforms. Zetly creates a unique ecosystem and marketplace for offering club tokens, NFTs, sports memorabilia and a decentralized digital wallet all in one place.

As member of the FBIN Business Network, Zetly will be present at FBIN events and publish relevant content on FBIN's channels that will help football organisations

to understand the opportunities of blockchain-based technology and to show them what developments are possible.

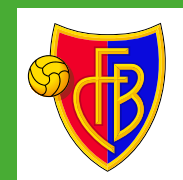
"We are glad that Zetly joins our FBIN Business Network. I am sure that football organisations within our network and beyond will benefit from their vast know-how. I already look forward to supporting the first projects," said Thomas Maurer, Managing Director of FBIN.

Michał Glijer, CEO of Zetly added: "FBIN is a prestigious organization that brings together many strong brands operating in football. We intend to take an active part in all events organized by IFBN. We are coming to MeetUp in Bratislava soon. Then at the next events. We are proud to have been able to join this community." ■

JOIN THE FBIN FOOTBALL NETWORK

The FBIN Football Network is a global platform for decision-makers, shapers and leaders in football business who are looking for exchange, inspiration, new ideas and solutions to problems.

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Crowdmanager.io is the Fan Engagement and Fan Data Management platform that brings fans closer to sports brands. With more than 150 clubs, leagues and federations we engage, and reward millions of fans across the world.



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Royal Belgian Football Association

The Royal Belgian Football Association, RBFA for short, was founded in 1895 and currently includes over 1,800 clubs and has around 450,000 members. Since 2021, the association has been based in the newly built headquarters in Tubize.



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Hoffmann Liebs is a transregional commercial law firm from Düsseldorf with around 60 lawyers. We advise companies, associations and foundations as well as the public sector.



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PAOK FC

PAOK FC was founded in 1926 from Greek refugees of Constantinople. Its colours are black and white and its emblem is the Two Headed Eagle, a symbol of the Byzantine Empire. PAOK is one of three clubs that were never relegated from the Greek top flight.



www.paokfc.gr
info@paokfc.gr

NŠ Mura

NŠ Mura is a football club in Slovenia with tradition, deeply involved with the region of Prekmurje. A club, that made a strong come back from 3rd division and have managed to win the championship in 2020/21 for the first time ever.



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Zetly

Zetly is a company that uses blockchain technology to create multi-level sports platforms. Zetly creates a unique ecosystem and marketplace for offering club tokens, NFTs, sports memorabilia and a decentralized digital wallet all in one place.



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The Football Brain

The Football Brain is a Central Information System for sports organizations. Much like the human brain, it aggregates all the data in one place, makes connections between data and improves the decision making process.



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FC Basel

With currently 20 championship titles, FC Basel is the second most successful club in the history of Swiss football. Internationally, FC Basel is also one of the most successful clubs in Switzerland thanks to successful campaigns in the Champions League and the European Cup.



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<p>Seyu Seyu is an IT solution that helps sport industry partners to mitigate the financial burden of the crisis by reimbursing season ticket holders with a VIP remote fan experience via which they can connect with the team on the pitch in real-time.</p>  <p>www.seyu.hu tom.vechy@seyu.hu +36 30 890 2438</p>	<p>DVTK DVTK is one of the biggest multisport-club in Hungary, with more than 3,000 athletes. Our biggest and most popular family member is the football team, which is playing in the modern and beautiful DVTK Stadium.</p>  <p>www.dvtk.eu info@dvtk.eu +36 46530440</p>	<p>Azerion Sports Azerion Sports is a software and hardware independent company with tailor-made solutions. It helps clubs through a platform that ensures that the fans are mapped, involved and easy to approach. Via this platform Azerion Sports automates all commercial activities. This creates a real-time overview of turnover, occupation and spending.</p>  <p>www.azerion.com/azerion-sports info@azerion.com</p>	<p>Knowledge Partner Johan Cruyff Institute</p>  <p>johancruyffinstitute.com</p>
<p>Horizm Horizm unlocks the digital audience opportunity in sport, connecting brands interested in reaching sports fans with rights holders looking for ways to better value and monetize their digital content.</p>  <p>www.horizm.com sam.grimley@horizm.com</p>	<p>Fortuna Liga The Fortuna Liga is the Slovak top division with 12 member clubs. The fully professional league was founded in 2009. The league has made major steps in the last five seasons with growing revenue numbers from centralized deals with media and naming rights partners. The league is an ordinary member of European Leagues.</p>  <p>www.fortunaliga.sk sekretariat@futbalulk.sk</p>	<p>Tymes4 by Ormer ICT Ormer ICT is a ticketing technology provider for professional football organisations. Our Tymes4 ticketing platform helps to bring ticketing to a higher level: grow revenue, bring efficiency, build fan engagement, while integrating more and better.</p>  <p>www.tymes4.com f.eijsden@ormer.nl</p>	<p>Knowledge Partner 4 Nations Football Consulting</p>  <p>www.fournations.football</p>
<p>Knowledge Partner Bernd Schusky</p>  <p>www.brandmanagementcanvas.com</p>	<p>Knowledge Partner Overdose</p>  <p>www.overdose.digital</p>	<p>Knowledge Partner Fan Experience Company</p>  <p>www.fanexperienceco.com</p>	<p>Knowledge Partner Ganassa</p>  <p>www.ganassa.jp</p>

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