



FIFA

Professional Football

Journal

Edition N°3

[READ ONLINE](#)

[SUBSCRIBE](#)



Foreword



Club Football



Coaches



Players



Leagues



Stadium Management



Football Stakeholders



FIFA Regulatory



Talent, Analytics
& Performance



Women's Football



FIFA Foundation
& CSR



Marketing &
Fan Engagement

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Foreword

Dear readers,

I'm delighted to introduce you to the third edition of FIFA's Professional Football Journal, which contains knowledge, insights and experience from across the football industry.

The last months have been a challenge for many industries as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and football is no exception. However, thanks to creative thinking, passion and dedication, FIFA has been able to literally keep the ball rolling to strengthen and develop the sport we love.

Through numerous recovery and support initiatives, such as the COVID-19 Relief Plan and the FIFA Fund for Football Players, FIFA is not only providing financial assistance, but also ongoing operational support, to keep the game going when it needs it most.

This edition of FIFA's Professional Football Journal will provide you with articles, interviews and reports from leagues, clubs and players around the world that have continued to inspire and entertain us throughout this difficult period.

It also highlights the tireless work of our 211 Member Associations and the many football stakeholders around the world, who work with such dedication to bring happiness and joy to so many people through football.

We hope that you enjoy this selection of star-studded interviews, industry insights and heart-warming stories, and draw inspiration and motivation from them to continue growing the game we all love.

Yours in football



Fatma Samoura
FIFA Secretary General



01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Introduction from FIFA Professional Football

Dear football friends,

It's been a busy time in professional football with the second half of 2021 marked by a flurry of player transfers taking place.

As you may know, and as a core part of FIFA's vision to create a more competitive and balanced ecosystem, FIFA is currently revising the transfer system's regulatory framework.

Over the last few months, we have been working with actors across the game to develop key principles that have been agreed by the Football Stakeholders Committee at its **last meeting**. Based on these principles, detailed proposals will be presented by the end of the year to the FIFA Council, on international transfer of players and transfer windows (i.e. registration period). More information is contained within this edition of the journal (visit **Chapter 8 "FIFA Regulatory"**).

In addition to these important reforms, and in line with our efforts to continue sharing insight and best practice to develop the game, FIFA Professional Football has launched a range of stakeholder-related initiatives, such as **the Diploma in Club Management**. The programme provides global football executives with the tools to compete at the highest level off the pitch and take their respective clubs to the next level. The inaugural course has now surpassed the halfway mark and will run until the beginning of 2022, with a ceremony to be held at the Home of FIFA in Zurich to celebrate the conclusion of the first edition. It will be the course's second in-person component after last month's session took place from 22-25 September in Madrid. We invite you to **read the in-depth** article featuring a video summary and accompanying images of this landmark hybrid event bringing together course participants both on-site and online to enjoy a diverse schedule of lectures, speeches and field trips in the Spanish capital. Should you be interested in the second instalment of the course, make sure to stay tuned for information later this year regarding the application procedure for 2022.

The first half of 2021 also saw another important accomplishment being achieved for **the FIFA Fund for Football Players** project whereby a total of 1,005 applications were approved by a joint Steering Committee, composed of FIFA and FIFPRO representatives, to allow over a thousand players from around the world to receive financial relief in the first phase of the fund for which FIFA has allocated a total of USD 5 million.



With two action packed months of 2021 still to come, we are truly excited about this current season of football, which, to the delight of everyone passionate about the beautiful game, has seen a gradual return of fans to stadiums, restoring the vibrant and unique atmosphere that football provides all around the globe.

To share your ideas and comments with us, please feel free to write to us at **prof.football.journal@fifa.org**.

It's time for kick-off – happy reading!

Emilio García Silvero
Chief Legal & Compliance Officer

Ornella Desirée Bellia
Head of Professional Football

FIFA Diploma in Club Management Madrid session

An event uniting club executives and the game's leading voices

- **Madrid was the site of the first in-person session for the FIFA Diploma in Club Management, a new initiative introduced by FIFA in 2021 as part of its vision to make football truly global.**
- **An international cohort of club executives came together in a four day hybrid event as part of the course's September module**
- **Course participants heard from a diverse line-up of first-class speakers including legends of the game and leading football executives and visited important institutions and installations in Spain's capital.**



“Inspiring.” This was the word that Philippe Senderos, the former Switzerland defender, used to sum up the experience of attending the Madrid leg of the FIFA Diploma in Club Management in September. Senderos, now sporting director at Swiss top-flight club Servette FC, was among the participants who gathered in the Spanish capital for the first in-person session of the 2021/22 diploma programme, which began in March and continues until early next year.

It provided an opportunity to hear from leading figures such as Club Atlético de Madrid's CEO Miguel Ángel Gil, Sevilla FC's Football General Manager Monchi and former AC Milan, AS Roma, Juventus, Real Madrid CF, England and Russia coach Fabio Capello. Furthermore, there was the chance to visit the headquarters of both the Royal Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) and LaLiga. Due to Covid-19, this was the first gathering of the diploma's inaugural cohort, which provided an important opportunity to finally connect with fellow participants. The networking possibilities were enhanced by the fact that the first two full days of the session – Wednesday 23 and Thursday 24 September – took place at the Estadio Wanda Metropolitano against the backdrop of the World Football Summit.

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

FIFA Diploma in Club Management Madrid session

"This diploma gave me the opportunity to learn a lot from different speakers who came and also to learn from the people who are the participants on the course," Senderos said of the session, which ran from 22-25 September. "This a big part of this course, the networking side. We're rich in a lot of qualities and capabilities here on this course so it's amazing to be part of it. You learn a lot from everyone at coffee breaks and lunches. It's very important to have this feeling with people in networking."

"What's interesting is hearing the different ways of how clubs are managed," he added. "You talk to people in South America and it's different to people in Europe with the way they manage different situations, so you learn from other people's experience which is a very big plus. A lot of people taking part have a lot more experience than me and they've been in the game in positions of responsibility for longer than me, so they've experienced a lot more. For me it's very inspiring to learn from them and challenging because I need to learn from this and try to adapt it to my environment."

Wide range of speakers

The FIFA Diploma in Club Management is designed to give knowhow and insights into key areas in the management of football clubs, and this was certainly reflected by the range of speakers who addressed the course participants in Madrid. From Atlético CEO Gil, for example, who spoke on Day 1 at the Metropolitano, the diploma participants heard how the Rojiblanco had successfully created a set of values centred on "being different" from their neighbours Real Madrid. Gil explained too how Atlético had sought to take that brand overseas, through satellite clubs in Mexico, Canada and India. He even attracted two surprise guests to the session in David Villa and Juanfran Torres, members of the Atlético side who won the Spanish league title and reached the UEFA Champions League final in 2013/14.



Philippe Senderos, Sporting Director, Servette FC

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

FIFA Diploma in Club Management Madrid session

There were further insights from the reigning champions of Spain courtesy of a number of club officials. In an illuminating round table, Communications Director Rafael Alique and the club's business division represented by Iñigo Aznar, René Abril, Alejandro Urriago and Fernando Fariza spoke about topics including the forging of a strong club identity, Atlético's stadium move, and how to attract new fans through innovative digital coverage. The club's academy director and deputy director, Emilio Gutiérrez Boullosa and María Teresa Chirivì respectively, later shed light on the Atlético youth system.

Another perspective on youth development in the Spanish game came from Eduardo Covelo, the academy director of RC Celta – a club whose canteranos (academy graduates) contributed 71% of their 55 league goals scored in 2020/21. Covelo explained the importance of the personal touch in building a connection between young academy footballers and their families and the club.

A highlight of Day 2 at the Metropolitano was a fascinating and wide-ranging discussion moderated by the Diploma's Co-director, Ornella Desirée Bellia, which involved Fabio Capello, Monchi and Michel, and also featured contributions from the former Italy captain and FIFA World Cup winner Fabio Cannavaro, one of the course participants who appeared via Zoom.



Iñigo Aznar, Fernando Fariza, Rafael Alique, Alejandro Urriago and René Abril, Atlético Madrid



Miguel Ángel Gil, David Villa, Rafael Alique, Juanfran Torres, Maheta Molango and Ornella Desirée Bellia

Topics covered included the position of the Sporting Director, with Monchi underlining the need for well-defined roles within a club, while Capello cited the importance in his coaching career of having “intelligent people” around him rather than “yes men”. The challenges presented by today's global game arose too, such as integrating players from diverse countries and cultures, with Michel recalling the 17 different nationalities in his squad during his time at Olympiacos while Monchi noted: “a dressing room is multi-cultural – food, cultures, religions, customs.” There were reflections too on the impact of social media, the radical change in player preparation brought by advances in sports science, and the increasing need to treat players as individuals – the “social component”, as Monchi put it.

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

FIFA Diploma in Club Management Madrid session



María Teresa Chirivì, Emilio Gutiérrez Boullosa, Atlético Madrid



Eduardo Covelo, Academy Director, RC Celta



Michel, Monchi, Fabio Capello, Ornella Desirée Bellia



Pierfilippo Capello, Senior Counsel, Withers Worldwide

To illustrate further the broad selection of subjects, Pierfilippo Capello, a senior counsel in litigation and arbitration at Withers Worldwide, delivered a presentation on digital cards and blockchain technology, addressing the accompanying question of image rights for football players and clubs. And as well as breadth, there was impressive depth to these subjects according to diploma participant Eric Huwer, the Finance Director at Hamburger SV. He explained: "I thought it would be a nice networking event but in the end the content is really deep, the talks are really well-prepared, the programme is really at a high level. It's really an honour to be part of it."

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

FIFA Diploma in Club Management Madrid session

"It's so inspiring to get new perspectives, to get to know new problems and especially new solutions," he continued. "In the football business, we're all challenged by more or less the same issues but the perspectives, the differences – relating to ownership, to cultural aspects, to entertainment – are really inspiring. I feel humbled being part of this group of such sophisticated people from all over world. We'd known each other over Zoom so meeting in Madrid has been so much fun and it's really an honour to be here with these guys."

Juan Pablo Ángel, the former Colombia forward now working as a technical consultant for LAFC, shared his reflections: "The presentations have been focused on themes that interest all of us (and that often you don't have access to in a course) and there's been a wide variety in terms of the experts. [The course] covers a series of topics, which is important – not to be an expert in them but to have a certain amount of knowledge so that when you're connected with a certain organisation, you can have an empathy for all the different areas of a football club."



Juan Pablo Ángel, Technical Consultant, LAFC



Eric Huwer, Director of Finance, Hamburger SV



Madrid field visits

Beyond the Metropolitano, the diploma cohort had the opportunity of a tour around the Santiago Bernabéu on the third morning of the course, with some of them having already visited the famous home of Real Madrid on an evening outing to watch Los Blancos' midweek fixture against RCD Mallorca.

There were also the aforementioned visits to the headquarters of both the RFEF and La Liga. At the former venue on Friday 24th, the group toured the federation's installations and museum.

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

FIFA Diploma in Club Management Madrid session



*Carlos del Campo Colás, Ornella Desirée Bellia,
Maheta Molango*



José Carlos Franco García and Olivia Archanco, LaLiga Tech

The final destination on Day 4 of the session was LaLiga's HQ, to hear presentations from key figures working for the Spanish league authorities: Carlos del Campo Colás, Deputy Director; Octavi Anoro, Head of LaLiga's Global Network; José Carlos Franco García, Director of Technology and Data at LaLiga Tech, Olivia Archanco, LaLiga Tech's Consumer Strategy Director; and Edouard Legendre, the Sponsorship and Strategic Planning Director of Ogilvy.

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

FIFA Diploma in Club Management Madrid session

Commenting on the Madrid session and the impact of this programme as one of FIFA's stakeholder-related initiatives, Ornella Desirée Bellia – Head of FIFA Professional Football as well of Co-director of the Diploma – said: "Our President Gianni Infantino's dream and vision is to have a more competitive and balanced football ecosystem, where in 10 years' time, at least 50 clubs from all around the world will be able to compete at the highest level. We designed this programme with this dream in mind, and our objective is to give club executives the most innovative tools to be able to compete at the top 'off the pitch'. This session in Madrid was a fantastic opportunity to meet in person so many great club executives and football minds, learn from each other and enjoy being together after a long period of Zoom meetings."

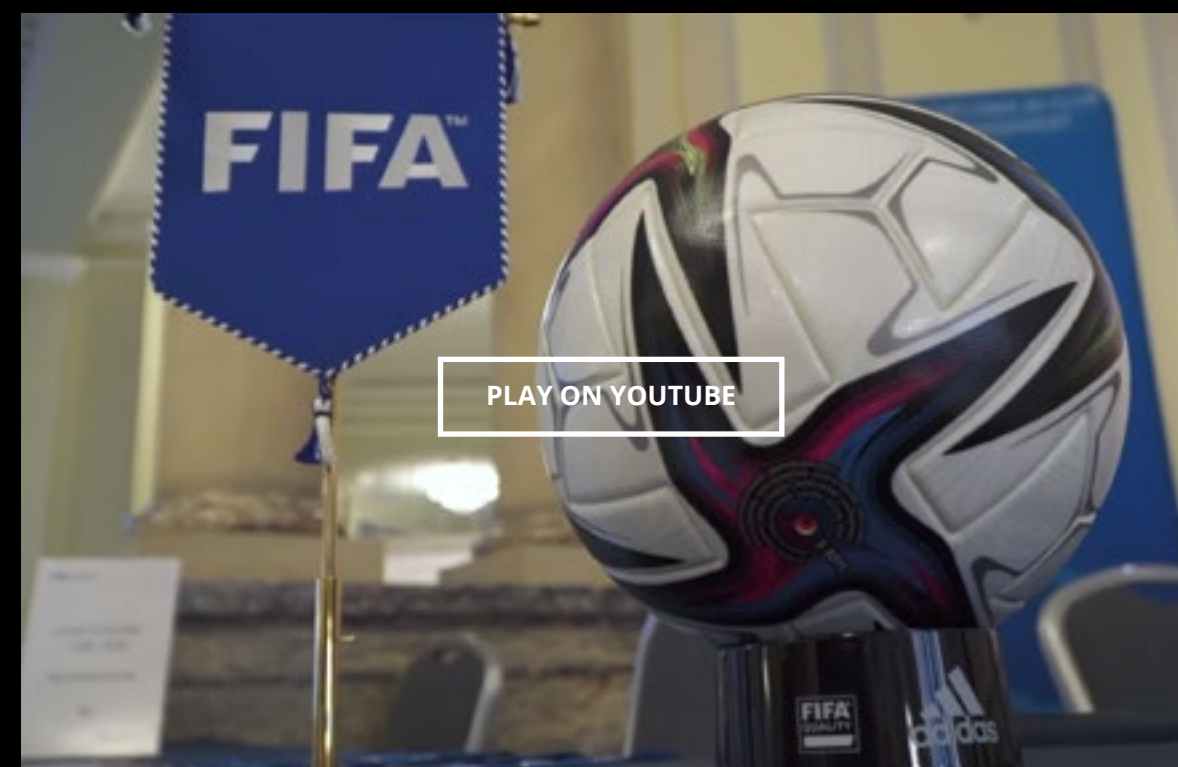
A summary of the highlights of this Madrid session of the FIFA Diploma in Club Management can be seen via the video and image gallery below.



Ornella Desirée Bellia



Edouard Legendre, Ogilvy



Lecture by Octavi Anoro (LaLiga Global Network)



Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

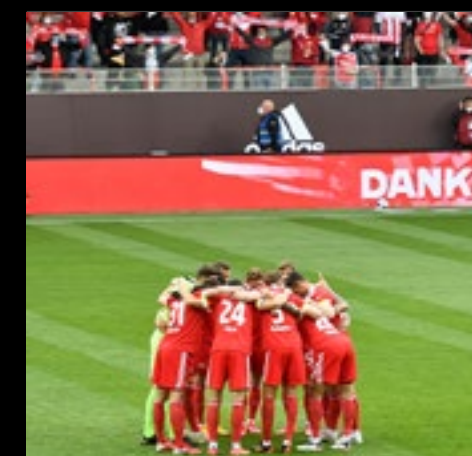
10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Club Football

In this issue's section on the club game, we shine the spotlight on three more clubs with a unique identity. **1. FC Union Berlin**, known as Die Eisernen (The Iron Ones), have always blazed their own trail and pursued a distinctive philosophy in terms of how the club should be run, being fully aware that their fans must be the driving force behind all their actions. In addition, **Atlanta United's Vice President and Technical Director Carlos Bocanegra** talks us through the MLS outfit's successful beginnings and strong focus on community engagement. Finally, we take a closer look at Danish club **FC Midtjylland**, who are in the process of building their very own "gold mine" while also aiming to leverage science and analytics.



1. FC Union Berlin

Ambition and identity:
an eternal dilemma

[READ MORE](#)



Executive interview: Carlos Bocanegra

Vice President and Technical
Director, Atlanta United

[READ MORE](#)



FC Midtjylland

Building a "gold mine" and aiming
to profit from science and analytics

[READ MORE](#)



1. FC Union Berlin

Ambition and identity: an eternal dilemma

- **From their roots as a working-class club, 1. FC Union Berlin developed into a symbol of protest against the political structures in the former East Germany, establishing a strong bond with their supporters and not compromising their club identity because of commercial interests.**
- **There is no sign of music, competitions, sponsor events or any other kind of entertainment during half-time breaks at Union's home ground, the Stadion an der Alten Försterei. "It's all about football and only football," says Head of Communication Christian Arbeit.**
- **Despite their financial limitations, Union finished seventh in the German top flight last season.**

Stay true to the club's values and resist the temptation of commercialisation – or adopt the mainstream business-driven structures of top-level football at the risk of sacrificing the club's identity. That is ultimately the choice facing Bundesliga side 1. FC Union Berlin in the years to come as they find themselves caught in no man's land between idealism and reality as a club which has consistently gone against the trends of modern football.

Before the 2020-2021 season kicked off, Head of Communication Christian Arbeit admitted that Union Berlin would be fighting just to stay in the top flight, given their financial limitations compared to the rest of their fellow Bundesliga clubs. Union bring in about a third of Bayern Munich's TV revenue (EUR 29 million), while their kit sponsor hands over EUR 2.5 million, small change in comparison to the EUR 70 million that VfL Wolfsburg receive. The unsung Berlin club's record transfer fee is also just EUR 6.5 million (from the sale of Sebastian Andersson to 1. FC Köln last season)

However, despite their financial disadvantages, Union managed to finish the season in seventh place, and astonishingly "Die Eisernen" were even in contention for a UEFA Champions League spot for much of the season. All over the world, supporters would normally be thrilled to see their team succeed on so many levels, but Union's fans are not only embracing their club's current success but are also focused on resisting the mechanisms of the modern game.



Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



The origins of those sentiments can be traced back to the time after World War II when, as a working-class club, Union Berlin developed into a protest against the political regime of the time and became a refuge for people who felt they like they did not belong with the rest of society. The notion of “us against them” became a common theme, and the club have done their utmost to give their fans a voice and respect their wishes, forging a special bond between the club and fans.

Consequently, half-time breaks at Union Berlin are a world away from the spectacles on show at most other stadiums around the world. You will not find any fan-cams, entertainment, loud music blasting through speakers, marketing campaigns, sponsor competitions or cheerleaders at the Alte Försterei.

“During matchdays, we don’t hit our fans with trailers, advertisements, cheerleaders or fun events on the pitch at half-time. The fans don’t come to see a band or a quiz or a presenter going nuts with a microphone. We don’t make them feel as if they are just there to support a money-making machine. We do it out of respect for the match and the fans who should be allowed to celebrate however they want to,” Arbeit explains.

“Scheisse, wir steigen auf!” (“Damn, we’re getting promoted!”) read one banner at the Alte Försterei two seasons ago when fans were cautious about life in the top flight. Where else in Europe would you find fans who do not want promotion? But the banner offered a glimpse into the mindset of a club that has consistently gone against the grain of modern football.



“We give the fans space to come up with ideas and then turn those ideas into reality. That was the case when we arranged the stadium living room for the summer of 2014 [when fans could bring their sofas to the stadium to watch the World Cup] and that was also the case with the Christmas carols when we started them 15 years ago. The fans have to feel welcome to put forward ideas about what needs to be done at the club. In that way, they feel like they are part of the club. They are not outsiders who buy tickets. They are part of the place itself,” says Arbeit.

Union are currently flying high. Last season’s predictions about them having a real battle on their hands to avoid relegation vanished into thin air as they made a mockery of their underdog status. Given the dramatic financial boost from TV funds on the back of their lofty finishing position in the Bundesliga, most experts would expect them to splash out to help them write another chapter in their unexpected success story.

But this is a club unlike any other and their managers are keeping their feet solidly on the ground despite the club’s bright future. Indeed, fans can rest assured that the club will not compromise their identity for a sudden urge to go along with more established and modern business methods in the quest for success.

“What is special about our club is that the people who are running it – like the president or the executive board – have been Union Berlin fans themselves since childhood. We don’t need a marketing agency to develop a concept for how we should present ourselves. The club is run by its own fans. There is a very clear idea of who we are and what we don’t want to become. And that won’t change,” says Arbeit.

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Club executive interview

Carlos Bocanegra, Vice President and Technical Director, Atlanta United

Atlanta United's Vice President and Technical Director reflects on the club's achievements to make an instant connection with the community.

- **When the club was founded in 2014, one of the main pillars of its strategy was to become an integral part of the community.**
- **The club works to develop under-privileged areas of Atlanta's Westside to combat poverty. It is not a coincidence that the Mercedes-Benz Stadium is situated in that part of town.**
- **In its first three seasons, Atlanta United raised their profile through significant wins: the MLS Cup, the US Open Cup and the Campeones Cup.**
- **The club also wants to engage fans through a "high intensity, high octane" game of football.**

A century ago, the city of Atlanta was considered to be the vital centre for all Southern railways. Today it continues to be a thriving city for business and travel. The Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, for instance, enjoyed a 22-year streak as "busiest airport in the world" from 1998 to 2020. These very ideals of "connecting" and "connection" also form the basis for Atlanta United. Its mantra is "to unite and connect."

When the club was founded in 2014, one of the main pillars of its strategy was to become a part of the fabric of the community. Owner, Arthur Blank, is a previous transplant to Atlanta, and outwardly expresses his desire to see it grow. Blank is a cofounder of The Home Depot – the largest home improvement retailer in the USA – and owns both Atlanta United and the National Football League's Atlanta Falcons.

Blank continues to meaningfully contribute to the local community, for example by developing under-privileged areas of Atlanta's Westside to combat poverty. It is no coincidence that Mercedes-Benz Stadium is situated in that part of town. Residents have come to learn not only about Blank, but what his sports franchises represent through his involvement.



[PLAY ON YOUTUBE](#)

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

For Atlanta United, the club officially began to play as a Major League Soccer (MLS) franchise in 2017 and has achieved a lot in a short time. The club won an MLS Cup, a US Open Cup and was the first MLS team to win the Campeones Cup within its first three seasons. It also qualified for the Concacaf Champions League in 2019 and 2020.

“We did put an emphasis on trying to win early and often,” says Carlos Bocanegra, Vice President and Technical Director of Atlanta United. Bocanegra credits the hype and fanfare baked into the club when it launched.

“When you’re at the beginning —when you’re launching any product, especially in sports — a winning team was very helpful for the city to latch onto.”

Bocanegra said the combination of having the willing presence of the club’s owner, being given the resources to be successful and a two-year head start to try and build momentum into its first season proved to be the right one.



Those two years before the team’s debut on the pitch were marked by a focus on integrating into the community. Whether it was attending pub crawls or other events, Atlanta United wanted to build a strong connection to its burgeoning fan base, but also to establish that it was a team people would want to support. That included inviting fans to provide input on everything from the club’s name, its colours and a mascot to the choice of beer that would be offered at the stadium.

And Mercedes-Benz Stadium itself represents a big part of the draw. Reputed to be one of the world’s best stadiums, it is a main driver to connect fans and the community to Atlanta United. The state-of-the-art facilities speak directly to the fan experience. For instance, the stadium holds 71,000 people (expandable to 75,000 for American football matches in the NFL), but seats are 21 inches wide which translates into comfortable seating. Its “Window to the City”, provides a view of the Atlanta skyline and its retractable roof allows for natural lighting, giving the feel of an outdoor event at a controlled temperature. Its technology is widely admired, with such features as a 63,000 square foot video board that gives a 360-degree video screen in high definition where fans can watch live-action highlights. The stadium emphasises “fan pricing” designed to be ultra-affordable.

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

These details add to the fan support the team receives. Bocanegra emphasises the diverse make-up of the crowds on matchdays, representing how cosmopolitan the city of Atlanta has become. Like its owner, many are transplants who have adopted the team as its own. Football is still relatively new in the USA and Bocanegra sees this as a unique aspect of the sport. Many people who support Atlanta United likely grew up without having a MLS franchise to support, he says, and so the bond becomes strong almost immediately for the most ardent of fans.

Bocanegra credits the club's successful launch to the excitement generated by its fan base. To that end, Atlanta United wanted game play to be exciting and "high intensity, high octane" for its supporters. And Atlanta United have aspirations to become a recognisable global brand. How it will achieve that is to one day win the Concacaf Champions League and participate in — and win — the FIFA Club World Cup. Atlanta United place a premium on building visibility through playing in the Concacaf Champions League. It is here that the overall benefit to the club becomes clear. It is not an exceptional opportunity, not only in terms of play, but also in terms of business, commercial, sponsorship and attracting talent.

But to have a sustainable model, this requires players coming through the academy to get into the first team and to contribute to play. Bocanegra says that academy players take to the pitch in the United Soccer League (USL), but reside at the training ground with the first team. The academy launched six months before the first team was up and running. The training ground has six pitches altogether, three grass and three artificial.



Mercedes-Benz Stadium also serves as an excellent recruiting tool. It offers an array of amenities, everything from a full restaurant, to hot and cold tubs, saunas, a barber chair and the tactics room. "When you are recruiting players and you can show them that you have this to offer, it's a big help," says Bocanegra.

Combining these two aspects together, this helps to foster a winning mentality within the club.

When all is said and done, the ideal set-up is for some of Atlanta United's young players to take positions overseas, come back and then help the team win. "It's just part of what we want to build," says Bocanegra.

With a new MLS season already underway in 2021, the club has once again set its sights on winning. Atlanta United's immediate goals are to get into the play-offs and hopefully to take the MLS Cup – most assuredly with Atlanta fans cheering them on.

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

FC Midtjylland

Building a “gold mine” and aiming to profit from science and analytics

- **FC Midtjylland have launched their own academy and are aiming to emulate FC Barcelona’s La Masia by producing a future Ballon d’Or winner.**
- **Part of the academy’s philosophy is to integrate the club’s senior players with youngsters from the age of five, asking them to join coaching lessons, teach them tricks and share their experience.**
- **Guldminen (“The Gold Mine”) is part of a long-term strategy to improve the senior squad and talent development by using statistical data and analytical research, which has already been implemented in player recruitment and match analysis for a number of years.**

If confidence is currently at an all-time high at FC Midtjylland, it is hardly surprising. “The Wolves” may not have defended their Danish Superliga title last season and they also recently lost highly rated coach Brian Priske to Royal Antwerp in Belgium, but the Jutland side, who were born out of a merger between Ikast FS and Herning Fremad 22 years ago, proved they had the ambition and strength to compete with the European elite when they held Liverpool and Atalanta to impressive draws in their UEFA Champions League debut season.

However, the unsung Danes will not rest on their laurels on the back of their impressive international campaign. The club plans to expand its stadium, build a new training facility for the first team, and further develop their Guldminen youth academy, through which they are aiming to emulate the success of Barcelona’s prestigious La Masia academy by producing a future Ballon d’Or winner.



Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

The school, which first opened its gates in 2019 to children from the age of five, is in high demand on the back of the club's remarkable Champions League campaign and their impressive record of producing young talent. Currently, 75 youngsters have made their way to the promised land, but more than 200 young footballers are expected to be enrolled in the academy in the future.

Most people would expect children to receive invitations on the back of their football skills, but instead balance and coordination feature as key enrolment criteria, with youngsters taking classes in judo, athletics, dance and yoga to develop their athletic abilities and strengths.

Star performers from the senior squad like Erik Sviatchenko, Anders Dreyer and Pione Sisto play a key role in providing inspiration for the youngsters to succeed at the academy. Senior players share their experience of taking part in big games, teach the kids new tricks and occasionally eat with the youngsters too. Danish national-team captain Simon Kjær, who developed his talents at the FC Midtjylland academy before taking his first steps in a long and impressive career, praises the initiative and says, "If I'd had the opportunity to offer something like that for my boys, I would certainly have done it."

The academy is symbolic of the scientific and analytical strategy that characterises FC Midtjylland's approach to success in football, whether in their training methods (from the age of five up to the senior squad), their tactical solutions on the pitch or in recruiting young talent. Despite being a very young club, FC Midtjylland have already used statistics and data to great effect in terms of analysing the game to maximise the benefits on the pitch and to provide underrated players with an unexpected chance to shine – with the aim of offloading them for large profits in the future.

As such, FC Midtjylland received around EUR 35 million in transfer fees by selling Alexander Sørloth, Rasmus Kristensen, Simon Kjær, Bubacarr Sanneh and Paul Onuachu after developing them into first-team regulars. All of them, with the exception of Sanneh, graduated from the academy.

The club began applying deeper metrics in 2014. They appointed throw-in and ball-striking experts to analyse their players' strengths and weaknesses, to evaluate individual performances, and to produce a strategy to hurt their opponents. Some football experts criticised the initiative, claiming that a Moneyball approach (the use of statistical analysis by so-called smaller teams to help them compete by buying assets that are undervalued by other teams and selling ones that are overvalued by other teams) could not be transferred from baseball to football – but FC Midtjylland subsequently proved them wrong.

Seven years ago, the club installed a special scouting system to analyse more than 60 leagues, looking at statistical and mathematical data from player performances across the world in an effort to eliminate the most subjective impressions of a player. Today, FC Midtjylland approach matches with almost forensic precision in terms of analysing their opponents. The club are now particularly famous for their strength at set pieces, and impressively, 49% of their goals last season were scored in this way.

There is certainly some symbolism in the fact that FC Midtjylland have named their school "The Gold Mine". Data science and football theory is making a difference for the Jutland side, and with youngsters from the age of five being invited to learn and live by the club's philosophy, "The Wolves" are already creating a platform for their next golden generation.



Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches**
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Coaches

In recent decades, football has developed into a high-performance sport driven by meticulous preparation and detailed data analysis. Former players, some of whom are among today's leading coaches, can attest to this ongoing evolution, as can any devout student of the game. As part of this process, the role of coaches has also been unmistakably transformed, creating a vastly different environment to work in, involving many variables that must all be taken into account when leading a team towards glory. To find out what has changed along the way and learn about their individual approaches to achieving success, we sat down with **Ralf Rangnick** and **Sabri Lamouchi**.

Having played, coached and led the development of football in different parts of the world, these two luminaries not only embody an innovative, success-driven and culturally astute mindset, but also offer fascinating insights and advice on how to deal with the challenges and trends of the modern game.



Interview: Ralf Rangnick

How a transparent philosophy can create sustainable success

[READ MORE](#)



Interview: Sabri Lamouchi

Cultural adaptation, empathy and getting your ideas across

[READ MORE](#)

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Interview Ralf Rangnick

Ralf Rangnick reveals how a transparent philosophy lies at the heart of any sustainable success

- **Ralf Rangnick shot to fame when, on a German football TV show in 1998, he identified zonal marking as football's next frontier.**
- **By 2018, under Rangnick's leadership, RB Leipzig had gained promotion from the regional league (division 4) to the Bundesliga (division 1) and had reached the UEFA Champions League.**
- **Rangnick stresses that there is a completely different kind of respect today for coaches who weren't necessarily huge established stars in their active careers as players, but who developed their methodological skills in youth football.**
- **Rangnick says data will become football's next frontier, and that success and failure will in future be determined by the quality of information available to teams.**

Ralf Rangnick was recently appointed as the Head of Sports and Development at Russian side FC Lokomotiv Moscow. And somehow, it might seem fitting that the 63-year old Rangnick, nicknamed the "Football Professor", is now to bestow his wisdom on a football culture that was for so long heavily inspired by one of his biggest role models in terms of tactical analysis, the Ukrainian coaching legend Valeriy Lobanovskiy, who sadly passed away in 2002.

It was back in 1983, on a cold winter's day in February when Rangnick was player-manager at sixth-division hometown club FC Viktoria Backnang, that he first crossed paths with Lobanovskiy in a meeting that would form the basis of his footballing philosophy. "We had arranged a game against Dynamo Kiev, and from the beginning I had the feeling that something was different. It was as though they had an extra man and our players had no time. You were under pressure from three or four players at once. After the game, I was able to talk to Lobanovskiy through an interpreter and I asked him if I could watch their training sessions at a local sports school."

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Since then, Rangnick has developed into one of the brightest tactical minds in German football and he became one of the visionaries of zonal marking and pressing, the ball-oriented zonal marking technique. He has been a tremendous influence on German football and has played a big part in German coaches becoming some of the most sought-after commodities in modern football, with Thomas Tuchel, Marco Rose, Jürgen Klopp, Julian Nagelsmann and others all having been taught or at least been influenced by Rangnick.

Rangnick enjoyed tremendous success as a head coach, but also as a sports director and head of development for a number of smaller but also bigger, more established and more prestigious clubs in Germany. But he says he feels that clubs have generally benefitted most from his management skills when his responsibilities were more centered around building the club than simply being about what takes place on the pitch.

“I remember, all the way back to my first job in football with Viktoria Backnang in 1983, that I was more successful when I wasn't working purely on coaching and training the players every day, but also was allowed to work on 'club building' and developing other areas as well,” he says.

Rangnick emphasises that in order to be sustainably successful, you need to have a plan for how to develop a club – a concept and strategy that has worked wonders at a number of his previous clubs, which he was able to take to the next level. This approach also worked well at amateur level at Viktoria Backnang, where Rangnick took over a team “where it was completely normal to drink alcohol or have a smoke after games. Within the space of four or five weeks, we had turned the team into a highly professional spirited one and were constantly instilling professional values and standards in the players, which became second nature to them after just two months,” he says.

Arguably, his greatest achievement came with RB Leipzig, where he fostered a vision anchored on youth supported by technological development and analysis to raise the standards in terms of recruitment and identifying young talent, turning Leipzig from a fourth-division regional side into a UEFA Champions League outfit.



Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches**
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

"The successes at Leipzig were without precedent in the last hundred years and they won't be repeated in the next hundred years, either. If you combine real teamwork with a clear plan based on guiding principles, have concrete ideas of how the whole thing should work and bring in the right employees, then you can actually make these things happen."

At Leipzig, players underwent blood and saliva tests. They were also tested for gluten and lactose intolerances and allergies, and their diets were tailored to the results. Experts were also brought in to help them maximise the benefits of sleep.

This kind of data will become football's next frontier according to Rangnick, and he says that in the future, success and failure will be determined by the quality of information available to teams.

"When I was head coach at Ulm (1997-1999), my assistant and I had to transfer video clips from one cassette to another for the debriefing of our match. Nowadays, there are video analysts and experts, and there are platforms that do this automatically at the touch of a button. So, the technical evolution has made it a lot easier for coaches.

"In terms of data, artificial intelligence will no doubt play an even more important role in the next few years, for example if Mainz 05 want to cause Bayern Munich problems or if you are the overwhelming favourites to beat a smaller team, as was the case recently at the Euros in the match between Germany and Hungary. Data plays a very important role, both in terms of scouting and in the tactical pre- and post-match analysis, but at the end of the day, it still depends on what the head coach and his coaching team do with the data. The way you analyse it is what sets coaches apart."

Watch the video interview

Ralf Rangnick Interview (part1)

[PLAY ON YOUTUBE](#)

Ralf Rangnick Interview (part2)

[PLAY ON YOUTUBE](#)

Ralf Rangnick Interview (part3)

[PLAY ON YOUTUBE](#)

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Interview Sabri Lamouchi

“When players trust you and you trust them, everything is possible”

Sabri Lamouchi

- **Lamouchi was part of a hugely talented generation at AJ Auxerre, who took France by storm by winning the title in 1996 under the leadership of legend Guy Roux**
- **The former French international says players are generally left with an enormous void to fill following the end of their careers, and encourages them to plan well ahead about how to approach that challenge.**
- **As one of the few coaches to have managed teams on three different continents, Lamouchi lists cultural adaptation, empathy and the ability to get your ideas across and create trust as key pillars in becoming successful in different environments.**

Despite his huge talent and even though he enjoyed great success during his playing and managerial career, thanks to his humble nature Sabri Lamouchi has managed to stay largely under the radar. As a discreet man who is keen to protect his privacy, Lamouchi – who has always operated without an agent – has kept himself out of the limelight and adopted a fairly low profile in the world of football.

Born in Lyon in 1971 into a large working-class family with strong North African roots with a Tunisian father and French mother, Lamouchi soon learned the benefits of hard work, humility and dedication. He used those qualities to great effect with his eye for the game when he developed his talent, particularly during his time at Olympique d'Alés, where coach Léonce Lavange and the director of the youth academy really triggered his passion for the game.

All of this provided the platform for his highly successful playing career, winning French titles with AJ Auxerre and AS Monaco and captaining Serie A outfit Parma to a Coppa Italia triumph in 2002, although he also endured his fair share of hardship and regrets during his career and later as a coach.

“You always have regrets. Only those who do nothing don't get it wrong, I would say. One of my biggest regrets was at the 2014 FIFA World Cup with Côte d'Ivoire when we conceded a last-minute penalty against Greece which eliminated us. A draw would have been enough to qualify and then we would have played Costa Rica in the next round,” says Lamouchi, who describes luck as a crucial factor when games are decided by such narrow margins.

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

"Luck can change the life of a country, a club, or a player, and of course the life of a coach."

Lamouchi emphasises that it was already clear to him from an early age (18-19 years old) that he had ambitions of going into coaching at some stage. But the former French international, who was capped 12 times by Les Bleus, says players are generally faced with an extraordinarily tough mental and occupational challenge when they approach the end of their careers.

"It is quite unsettling to go from 20 years of a very intense life into a void. You no longer have a club or a contract, and you no longer have a salary, objectives or ambitions. You no longer know what to do. You leave the game without knowing what to do; no training, no plans whatsoever. That is why it is important to prepare for your life after your playing career as early as possible and, above all, to know what you want to do, not necessarily in football, but really you need to know what you want," says Lamouchi, who says that he did at least have a clear notion of what he definitely did not want.

"What I didn't want to do was to distance myself from the game. Football is an extraordinary chance. It's been my entire life and it is a real passion. I am very conscious that I made my passion my job, first as a player and now as a coach. That's real luck."

His lack of experience as a coach meant that, when he was handed the reins to the Côte d'Ivoire national team in 2012, it came as a huge surprise to most of the football world. But Lamouchi quickly proved that he was up to the task by steering Didier Drogba and co to their third successive FIFA World Cup finals, and today Lamouchi stresses that it was his time as a player amongst the absolute elite of European football that had groomed him for life as a coach.

"My career as a player served me well because, when you have to deal with world-class players, in certain situations you know more or less what they think – before a big match, before a big competition and when they are faced with big challenges. I knew that because I had had the opportunity to play for big clubs and with great players, and you know what is going on in a dressing room and how the players think."



Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Lamouchi is one of a select few coaches to have managed teams on three continents – Europe, Africa and the Middle East – at both club and national-team level. He brings an enormous amount of experience to the table in terms of how to implement coaching philosophies and how to adapt them to different cultural environments.

“The demands of matches, training sessions, the eye for detail, reaching your goals, striving to be the best – it is always the same, be it in Africa, Europe or the Middle East. But it’s the ability to adapt, to empathise with others, to quickly figure out what your plans are and then make them clear to your players which will define whether you will be successful. You have to listen, but it is up to you to take the first step, to approach your listeners and bring them into your world and your universe. When players individually and collectively know what your game plan is, and what they have to do with and without the ball, it makes everything easier. And when they trust you and you trust them, anything is possible if you have well-defined and clear plans,” Lamouchi concludes.

His lack of experience as a coach meant that, when he was handed the reins to the Côte d'Ivoire national team in 2012, it came as a huge surprise to most of the football world. But Lamouchi quickly proved that he was up to the task by steering Didier Drogba and co to their third successive FIFA World Cup finals, and today Lamouchi stresses that it was his time as a player amongst the absolute elite of European football that had groomed him for life as a coach.

“My career as a player served me well because, when you have to deal with world-class players, in certain situations you know more or less what they think – before a big match, before a big competition and when they are faced with big challenges. I knew that because I had had the opportunity to play for big clubs and with great players, and you know what is going on in a dressing room and how the players think.”



Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players**
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



Players

After dedicating the majority of their lives to the game they love, making a successful transition from being actively involved on the pitch to taking on the challenges that await after hanging up their boots can be anything but easy for many players. In fact, the previous section highlighted just how difficult it can be. Therefore, in this issue's Players segment, we take a look at two former international footballers who handled this shift with aplomb, albeit in two very different roles and domains. We spoke to the former President of the Croatian FA, FIFA Legend **Davor Šuker**, as well as former Germany international **Josephine Henning**, about their respective post-playing careers and why football will always be a central part of their lives.



Davor Šuker

From Golden Boot winner to Croatian FA President

[READ MORE](#)



Josephine Henning

From Football Pitches to Art Studios

[READ MORE](#)

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Davor Šuker

From Golden Boot winner to serving as the Croatian FA President

Davor Šuker's on-pitch leadership qualities came to the fore during his tenure as Croatian FA President spearheading a nation's global revival

- **The former striker, who lifted the Champions League with Real Madrid, noted that the Croatian FA has upped its investment in the country's footballing infrastructure and women's and youth football.**
- **Šuker expects the Croatian national team to perform well at the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™.**

Davor Šuker reflects on his storied career with great fondness and immense pride. Acclaimed as the greatest Croatian striker of all time after hitting 45 goals in 69 international appearances, the former Croatian FA President cites the 1998 FIFA World Cup™ as his career highlight.

Croatia finished the tournament in third place, behind hosts and winners France and runners-up Brazil. Šuker was in the form of his life, with his six-goal haul enough to land him the adidas Golden Boot.

"Finishing in third place with Croatia at the World Cup in France was the crowning moment of my career and claiming the Golden Boot was a consequence of what was a great achievement for us as a team," he commented.

"I'm very proud of the fact I'm still the national team's all-time leading goalscorer. Needless to say, the trophies I won with Real Madrid [CF] mean an awful lot to me, especially the Champions League."

The virtuoso forward showcased his goalscoring instincts and lethal left foot throughout a sparkling career that began in his native Osijek back in 1984.

After making his mark at NK Osijek, Šuker went on to enjoy hugely successful spells at GNK Dinamo Zagreb, Sevilla FC and Real Madrid. He cemented his reputation as a gifted striker in an eight-season stint in the Spanish top flight, where he plundered 114 goals in 239 outings. The talented hitman struck a rich vein of form as a member of a legendary Los Blancos side, with whom he secured a league title, the Champions League, the Spanish Super Cup and an Intercontinental Cup.

Šuker, now 53, also graced the Premier League, enjoying brief spells at Arsenal FC and West Ham United FC, before bringing the curtain down on a glittering career at TSV 1860 München.

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



After calling time on his playing career, there was little doubt that Šuker would go on to achieve big things in the world of football administration. He initially established his own football academy, before making the move into governance when he became a member of the Croatian Football Association's assembly in 2010. Just two years later, he was elected Croatian FA President.

"That transition all happened very quickly. Even when I was still playing, I had it in my mind that I would one day pass my knowledge and experience on to the next generation," he recalls.

"That's how the football academy came about. I wanted to give young players that initial encouragement to go on and take football more seriously."

Šuker reveals that the skills he honed during a footballing career that saw him lead the line for both club and country guided his time at the helm of his country's FA.

"Anyone who's ever been a part of a dressing room knows just how important teamwork and togetherness are when it comes to pursuing any goal. In that sense, my playing experience was very helpful," he explains.

When asked which of his achievements in football administration can be compared to his on-pitch feats, Šuker proudly points to the fact that he was part of the two biggest successes achieved by the national team, as a player and in the presidential hotseat: a third-place finish at the 1998 World Cup and a runners-up spot in the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia™.



Following a presidential tenure spanning nearly ten years, Šuker singles out COVID-19 as the biggest challenge he faced in the role.

"The coronavirus pandemic was the toughest period I've ever had, especially when the world of football came to a standstill. That was terrible," he recalls.

"It was at that point that those of us who live and breathe football realised just how important the game really is to us. When everything started back up again, we struggled to get used to life without fans, because... football is ultimately all about the fans."

Šuker expressed his satisfaction at the progress made during his time in charge.

"During my presidency, Croatia qualified for every major tournament, which is an exceptional achievement for such a small country," he enthused, describing the 4-2 defeat to France in a thrilling 2018 World Cup final as "the biggest success in the history of Croatian sport".



Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders


08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



One of Šuker's presidential promises was to increase investment at all levels of the game to help catapult Croatia to the top table of world football and he certainly came good on that promise. Indeed, in the May 2021 instalment of the FIFA/Coca-Cola World Ranking (the most recent update at the time of writing), Croatia occupied 14th place, two spots above the Netherlands and just two places behind Germany.

"I've always said that the most important thing is to invest in the foundations, because, after all, the players who go on to represent the Croatian national team always start out at small clubs," Šuker insisted.

"We've done a great deal in this regard in recent years, but the challenge is to keep working day in, day out to improve the football infrastructure."

In reference to the funding efforts and the work done to upgrade facilities and ramp up investment in women's and youth football, the former chief stressed that "we made a significant step forward".

"All this guarantees a bright future for Croatian football," declared the six-time Croatian Footballer of the Year, who has lofty expectations for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 on the back of his country's stunning performance at the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia.

World Cup ambitions

Šuker is looking to captain Luka Modrić to once again lead Croatia, a nation with a population of 4.1 million, to great heights.

Can Croatia exceed expectations?

"I'm expecting big things from the World Cup in Qatar. I hope to see us head there with a really strong team that offers just the right blend of youth and experience," he closed.



Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Josephine Henning

From Football Pitches to Art Studios

- **Josephine Henning enjoyed great success as a player, with four UEFA Women's Champions Leagues, four Frauen-Bundesliga titles and an Olympic gold medal to her name.**
- **The 31-year-old German enjoyed the highs and lows of professional football before retiring due to injury.**
- **She has now taken her talents from the pitch to the art studio as a full-time artist ready to embark on new adventures.**
- **The former VfL Wolfsburg, Paris Saint-Germain and Arsenal player speaks exclusively to FIFA about her journey so far.**

Every child has a dream, particularly for their future career. What was yours?

I was never a child who only had one dream and wanted to be the best footballer or the best artist in the world. I had many interests in sport, particularly football, but I liked painting and drawing, even music too. I was just a child who enjoyed doing different things.

How did you get into football, and when did you first express an interest in the beautiful game?

I got into football with my dad. He would take me and my brother to a pitch just around the corner from where we lived.

He would say to us, "On this pitch, anyone can play", whether they were boys or girls. I think I was the only girl who played there though! He would always make sure that the teams were fair, which helped!

My dad and I realised that I was good enough, and when we moved to another city, there was a local girls' team which I was able to join.

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

What were the main factors that helped you make the step up from youth to professional football?

As a player, I was always very athletic, that was my big strength. However, I was always curious and willing to learn. That was a significant factor – I felt as though I wanted to achieve things so I had to ensure that I was willing to learn and train hard. I would often ask coaches questions so that then I could achieve whatever I wanted to.

That clicked when I was about 18. Only a year or so later, just I was about to move from 1. FC Saarbrücken, the club where I started my career, who were often yo-yoing between the first and second division, I received an offer from 1. FFC Turbine Potsdam, who were the German champions at the time. It was a big step, but I felt that it wasn't too big. That was the point where it all started for me.

Who were your biggest influences, the people who helped you, whether on or off the pitch, to play at the top level of the game?

Most of the time, you don't see who is talking about you in a positive way and who is helping you. These are the most important things because it comes from the coaches and the talks between them. They will say "Hey, have you seen this girl? Maybe we should keep our eyes on her, maybe we should get her working with a specialist coach." These are the things that you don't see, the things that go on behind the scenes which are so important in terms of having a great support network.

That helped me a lot, whether it was for the club or the national team and the connection between the two. It all helped me move from youth to professional level, but I didn't really know it at the time.

I never had a role model in the sense of I wanted to be like a certain player. It was the small things that inspired me. This was also true if a player questioned something or came up with different ways to approach a problem.



It would often be the captain who would stand in front of the group and say that they wanted to protect the group. A lot of my team-mates inspired me, especially when they showed bravery and courage. You can really be amazing in this structured world and be someone who stands out through the way you act and in what you do.

What does it feel like to win a trophy? How does each trophy differ from the next?

Winning a trophy feels different every time. Every season is different, every tournament is different, and the road to winning a particular trophy is different. One thing they all have in common is that, for one moment or for one day, it shows you that you can do anything because you have shown that you can give your all to reach your goal and to fulfil your dream.

For me, it was only one or two days because I then had my next target in mind. Winning a trophy is always special though, and you really feel like you can achieve whatever you want to. That's the crazy power of sport and the hope it gives you.

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

You suffered several injuries and setbacks during your career. How did you overcome them?

When I moved to Potsdam, I suffered a bad knee injury. Cartilage problems get worse the older you get, so it's not good to start your career at a club like that, but I wanted to play so much.

Looking back 15 years later, it's crazy to see how much I wanted to play. I managed to do it with the help of great physios and experts throughout my career. Most importantly, it was because my mindset was right

I knew I had to take care of my knee. Physios and conditioning have developed a lot over the years, but at that time I really had to figure it out myself in terms of what was good for me. When you're young, you want to play so much that you go over the limit and that's not good, but I was a player who had to learn from her mistakes to get better.

I had to run into obstacles so that I could figure out what wasn't working. Mindset is the most important thing for players who go through chronic problems and injuries. You have to work on your mindset every day.

How difficult was it to decide to retire from football? Could you have continued despite the injuries, or did you simply feel that the time was right?

I don't think that there is ever a right time and anything can change in a split-second. I was in London, playing for Arsenal, and I knew that after the Olympics, I had played for longer than I ever thought would be possible. I was very privileged in that I played with great players for great clubs so that we could reach our goals and win trophies. After the Olympics, I felt like something was changing. It didn't feel like I could go through another season with an injury and still believe that I would be able to get through it. That was what it had been like ten years earlier as I always told myself, "OK, one more season".



I had always wanted to do art, I was always drawing, painting and studying. I knew that I wanted to become a full-time artist at some point, so I decided to commit to art 100%. I wasn't deciding against football, I wasn't saying no to football – I was just curious and I felt I needed some time away from football and to switch off.

That took at least two years of reflection. It's so important that you give yourself time. It's a different life as an artist. To be a free artist, coming out of a structured system in football, it took some time and I'm still adapting to life as an artist.

Where did your passion for art come from and how did you get into it? Were you always painting and drawing, even during your time in football?

Yes. It was easy in hotels when I was travelling with football as all I needed was a pen and a piece of paper rather than a canvas and some paint. I grew up in an artistic family – my mum is a theatre painter so she paints stages, my dad was an actor, and my brother is a musician so there was a lot of creativity in the family!

It's not that it was clear that I had to be an artist, I was always open to new ideas. I have always had the freedom to do what I wanted. Whatever you want to do in life, you can do it! I'm very thankful for that, that's a value I have – there are no restrictions.

I think my family influenced me a little bit with their careers, but they gave me options and showed me what's possible. But I decided whether I wanted to pursue it or not.

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

When did you realise that you could make a career as an artist?

There was never a point where I thought "I can make a career out of this". It just came naturally. I always had a passion for it. I love to plan and create things from a blank canvas and put my work up on the wall or wherever I want. Every time I touch a pen or a pencil, it just makes me calm. I don't know how people cannot use art or some form of art like music to reflect and get through this crazy world. I use it to bring out my emotions. If I couldn't do that, I would explode!

The best thing for me as an artist is the ability to work with different charities, projects and people through my own art. That is the most freedom I have as an artist.

It looks as though, even though you took a big decision to become an artist, football is still an important part of your life. How important is football in your artistic work?

Football and sport is such a big part of me. I love it. The joy and the passion around sport is precious and raw. The emotions when you connect with people and show what you are feeling, that to me is what sport is all about. You feel something and it comes out, whether you're a supporter or a player. Sport allows you to be human and to be whoever you want to be. I never get tired of creating art in sport. That's exactly who I am. It's natural for me to follow these passions.

What are your future ambitions?

I just want to develop as a person. I want to reflect, even though sometimes I don't have the time for it. I also want to look forward and develop my skills as well as my view of the world, seeing where I can be useful for other people. The biggest thing is when we feel connected to other people and we say, "I would love to do this, so how can my painting help change someone's view of things?" We can create something together.

The mural I'm painting right now is in Cologne. Looking at a 40-metre wall on which you have a painting inspires you and gives you energy every day. I would be happy if a player said to me, "It's a really cool place to be and it helps me get ready to go back onto the pitch."

If it's a painting for a charity, I have so many challenges in my mind and thoughts about what I want to do with my art, so I am curious to see where it leads me and to find out where I can be useful and helpful for others.

What advice would you give to a young girl who wants to be a professional footballer? How important is it to have a plan B in your career in case you face a sudden setback?

I did a bachelor's degree in health management, and after that I decided to study graphic design when I was in Paris and then interior design when I was in London, so yes, having a plan B is important. You have to manage your time so that it doesn't affect your health when you're playing football. It's self-management because you need to be at your best in football and you cannot be distracted. You can do something alongside football, like I did. I would have gone crazy if football was all I had, and it helped me be a better player.

You really have to find out what kind of person you are and what distracts you and how much can do at the same time. You have to listen to yourself but also ask other people for help. In women's football, we want to be professional and grow every year so that we can live on the money we earn. You can have a career after football, but it all depends on the individual. You have to manage and be fair to yourself but having a plan B is very important.

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



What are your thoughts on where women's football is today and its development since you started out?

Women's football has developed a lot since I started playing, with TV deals and the important campaigns conducted by FIFA and UEFA. Of course, there is still a lot more to do. We get asked a lot of the same questions in terms of "Are we doing enough?" "Are we getting more professional?" There are so many men and women fighting for the right things that, yes, it is getting more professional.

It's good to face the problems, but we need to find out where each problem is and what we can do to help solve it. For example, I went to Ghana with Tabea Kemme and we were part of an initiative called "Play Soccer Ghana", which was supported by the "Common Goal" campaign set up by Juan Mata. That's where we realised the importance of asking the right questions and going deeper into the problems to find solutions.

I'm a big fan of identifying what the current objective is. What is the biggest problem and how can we get deeper into it? I think getting your head down and working on the solution and going directly to the decision-makers and players is important.

Are there any improvements or changes that you would like to see in women's football?

There is so much I would like to see. In Germany, I want us to have an active players' union. We allow players to play for teams but we need to let them be themselves, give them a voice.

In women's football in general, I would like the players to be listened to more often. Ask them "What is it like?" when they are moving clubs. As players, you can have three weeks off, and for two of those weeks you might be moving to another club but your holiday is over because you have to travel and restart in a new environment. And then you may get injured in your first two weeks at your new club. These are small things that you maybe think aren't that important, but they do matter.

It always starts with visibility. Give the players visibility. Give them a voice and don't put them in a framework in which they have to function. They need freedom in this game.

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues**
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



Leagues

Although many football leagues around the world are long-standing and steeped in history, there are increasing numbers of new models and formats being explored by associations and their partners to help develop the game in their respective nations. In the “Leagues” section of this issue, we look at two such examples of new divisions and the impact they are making. First, we chart the impressive growth of the **Canadian Premier League (CPL)**, as it continues to boost the profile of the sport across the nation, providing an increasingly well-supported alternative to Canada’s first sporting love, hockey. Secondly, we look at the fledgling **Nepal Super League (NSL)**, which is already making significant strides in developing a commercial model, attracting support and building a clear pathway for young players to develop.



The Canadian Premier League

Breaking barriers at record pace

[READ MORE](#)



New Nepal Super League

Plotting growth after the success of season one

[READ MORE](#)

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues**
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



The Canadian Premier League

Breaking barriers at record pace

How do you build a professional football league? It is a daunting challenge at the best of times, but doing it during an unprecedented global health crisis is simply a tour de force, and one the Canadian Premier League, Canada Soccer, the clubs and other stakeholders have pulled off with bravura in a country that has long been infatuated with ice hockey. FIFA has assisted the league with funding from the world governing body's **Forward Programme**, a key driver in FIFA President Gianni Infantino's vision for a truly global game. Now in its third season, the Canadian Premier League is blossoming, leaving growing pains behind, and looking to a bright future in a region that is thriving and continuing the momentum that hosting all FIFA events including the upcoming 2026 edition of the game's quadrennial showpiece, the FIFA World Cup™ has generated.

Peter Montopoli, General Secretary of Canada Soccer, **Jair Bertoni**, FIFA's Director of Member Associations for the Americas region and **David Clanachan**, Canadian Premier League Commissioner shared their thoughts with us.



Peter Montopoli,
General Secretary of Canada Soccer

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues**
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



Why is the Canadian Premier League (CPL) important for Canada and what was the vision behind its creation?

The establishment of the CPL is a testament to the ever-increasing interest in and growth of the world's sport in Canada. Canada has a strong history of hosting record-setting FIFA events and the professional game arrived in Canada [again] as a legacy of one of these events – the FIFA U-20 World Cup Canada 2007, when the national football stadium was built to host the competition. The stadium resulted in the arrival of Major League Soccer (MLS) and Toronto FC the following season. The CPL is an important part of the Canada Soccer Player Pathway along with our provincial and territorial member associations, with increased opportunities for young Canadian players to play professional football on home soil.

Is the CPL a game-changer?

The CPL, boasting eight teams from coast to coast, has raised the profile for the sport in these regional markets. The additional playing opportunities for young Canadians provides inspiration for many players who might otherwise not continue to pursue their dream of playing the game professionally. In both the league and the Canadian Championship, minimum requirements for playing time for young Canadians have been introduced to ensure that players on the CPL team rosters will develop. Most notably, the Canadian Championship has expanded to include these eight CPL clubs along with the three Canada-based MLS clubs and two semi-professional clubs from Ontario and Quebec, which has created a coast-to-coast competition that engages fans on an annual basis.



Why was now the moment to do it?

Hosting the FIFA World Cup 2026 along with our neighbours in Mexico and the United States provides the ideal runway for the Canadian Premier League to establish itself from coast to coast and contribute to the continued momentum that the game of football has had in our country over the past decade of hosting record-breaking FIFA competitions and National Teams' success on the international stage.

Were you confident that relaunching the professional game in Canada would prove successful?

We have always felt that more football under the right conditions would ensure success for the expansion of the game across various levels of engagement and the CPL was launched at the right time, with strong corporate support to deliver stability in the short and long term. The popularity of the sport is at an all-time high based on the success of Canada Soccer's national teams, the hosting of record-setting FIFA events, and the opportunity for Canada to co-host the FIFA World Cup 2026™. With 25% of new Canadians identifying football as their favourite sport combined with Canada's focus on immigration, the world's game will become even more relevant than it is today.

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues**
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



How does the FA seek to engage with the CPL?

The CPL and its eight clubs are members of Canada Soccer. Engagement occurs through the Annual Meeting of the Members as well as through the Professional Game Committee, where ideas and input in respect of the professional game are discussed, and where necessary policy or rule changes affecting the professional level are formulated, discussed, and debated. Operational support is provided through Canada Connect and the TMS system for registrations, player contracts and movement; competition management is handled through COMET, which is also the platform for referee assignments, disciplinary procedures and the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program. All eight CPL clubs are licensed through the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program, which has four main goals to support the clubs and raise the level of club football across the board in Canada.

These goals include: to understand and safeguard club football; to raise the level of professionalism in club football administration; to identify and share best practices of our clubs and leagues to further development; and to formalise requirements for participation in national and regional club competitions. Proven referee development opportunities are also provided for the advancement of match officials to the highest level of the game.

Is there a good exchange of ideas and interaction?

Regular touchpoints occur through the ongoing operational support that is provided by Canada Soccer for the Canadian Premier League. As with all Canada Soccer Membership, there is an opportunity to collaborate through the various touchpoints with additional engagement through various functional areas of Canada Soccer with the relevant areas within the Canadian Premier League.

Can these clubs help improve the national team?

The Canadian Premier League is an important part of the Canada Soccer player pathway and provides professional playing opportunities at an important development stage in that pathway. The impact of the CPL on the National Team will not be immediate given the developmental nature of the league but will be cumulative over the years as players continue to be provided with additional playing opportunities both within the league and through the Canadian Championship.

What should the CPL become by 2026 when Canada will co-host the FIFA World Cup™?

By 2026, the CPL will have a strong regional presence in multiple markets in most Canadian provinces and territories where our member associations are also operating development programmes on the Canada Soccer Player Pathway. It will be important for the CPL as well as for our member associations to continue to align with our national teams' tactical identity to ensure that development ultimately leads to the strongest and widest pool of players available on the road to 2026.

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues**
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



How important is the CPL for the region?

The region is very diverse and includes a mix of countries with a strong footballing culture at all levels, countries that have seen solid football development and others with great athletes with the potential to grow the game. Thus, the continental footballing landscape and the local circumstances are very different, but there is a need to continue the professionalisation and development of football in many of the countries. What is undeniable is that all of them share the same passion for football. It is against this backdrop that the CPL should be assessed. As one of the top ten economies in the world, Canada offers a valuable market for having a professional football league of its own and creating a pathway for its young players. In this sense, establishing the CPL was a major milestone and FIFA is providing the support needed to consolidate it in the upcoming years. Additionally, as a crucial part of this project, the Canadian football stakeholders made huge investments based on the accomplishment of a clear long-term vision. How does this impact the region?

There is no doubt that having a strong professional league in Canada lifts the level of competitions not just at national level, but also at regional and global level. To illustrate this, one need look no further than the CPL teams now qualifying for the second round of the Concacaf Champions League, the continent's top club competition. This shows that football at elite level in Canada is developing successfully and that the CPL has played a crucial role in this achievement, providing the league's teams with the necessary conditions and environment to train their talent and offering players and coaches the right level of competitiveness on the pitch.



Jair Bertoni,
FIFA's Member Associations
Director – Americas

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues**
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



How did your subdivision assist in the creation of the league?

FIFA President Gianni Infantino's vision is for football to be truly global and the development of domestic football is a key aspect to achieve this. We want to increase the number of clubs around the globe that can compete at the highest level but, even more than that, if one considers the big picture, the creation of a successful professional league benefits both club and national-team football. Ultimately impacting football positively at national and international level. In fact, the more opportunities a football association gives national players to play in a competitive and professional environment, the more it enlarges the pool of talented footballers who could potentially be identified and developed with a view to strengthening its representative teams and, thus, the greater its chances of excelling in international tournaments. So, when Canada Soccer shared its vision for the future of football in Canada with us, we welcomed its interest in establishing a men's professional league as a priority to strengthen the game at national level. The FIFA Member Associations Americas Subdivision worked diligently to explore the ways in which FIFA could contribute to this important initiative via the FIFA Forward Programme, the flagship development programme for our member associations. In this process, one of the key points addressed was the sustainability of the league – from a financial viewpoint, so that the logistic and organisational requirements are fulfilled, to the sporting side, i.e. ensuring that players can play regularly and extensively throughout the year and take their game to the next level.

To give more concrete financial information, the 2019 season had a total costs of approximately CAD 37,9 million (USD 29 million). Since the first edition of the league, FIFA has been contributing with USD 500,000 per season. Within this context, a challenge to be considered is, for example, financing teams' travel in light of the long distances existing in Canada. So, our first step was to identify the main components that would ensure such sustainability and strategically discuss with Canada Soccer and the CPL where exactly those funds were needed and subsequently invested. Throughout this consultation process, since the project's inception, our subdivision has closely supported Canada Soccer and now the CPL and put FIFA's expertise at their disposal to make the creation of the league a success.

How does the assistance process work?

As per the FIFA Forward Regulations, there is a clear obligation for FIFA and Canada Soccer to sign a contract of agreed objectives in every Forward cycle (lasting four years) to formalise our commitment to supporting the league. In this framework, in order to access the funds, Canada Soccer has to submit a project application every year. Based on a formal agreement between Canada Soccer and the CPL ("funding agreement"), the investment – both the actual amount and how it will be allocated – is pretty much set every year. Nevertheless, before the application is sent, we evaluate the results of the previous season of the league to verify the key learnings and the elements that can be improved in the future, for example whether to invest in the same areas or boost other ones.

Looking to the future, considering that the current cycle (Forward 2.0) will finish in 2022, we need to conclude a new contract of agreed objectives for the next cycle (Forward 3.0 – 2023-26). To this end, an exhaustive joint evaluation of the results attained during the current cycle will serve to gauge the objectives to be achieved and the areas to be enhanced. So, we will engage with Canada Soccer and the CPL to discuss what should be improved, how best to serve the clubs, players, referees and coaches and more generally speaking football in Canada, and how FIFA can contribute more efficiently, including by offering our expertise in key aspects related to the league.

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues**
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



What have some of the early positive developments been since the inception of the CPL?

On the sporting side, as mentioned before, the CPL clubs have shown a high standard of football, with some qualifying for the second round of the Concacaf Champions League, meaning they are now competing against major professional clubs from the US and Mexico. It is clear that the Canadian clubs are catching up rapidly. Unfortunately, the promotion and growth of the league were challenged due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but we need to applaud the league for its efforts and for taking concrete measures to restart play once the government gave the green light for football to return. Amongst other changes, the CPL had to reshuffle the format to adjust to the shorter amount of time available before the end of the year, offering the teams the opportunity to play and keep their players active, with a certain level of preparation and competition, in these difficult circumstances.

Fortunately, the 2021 season has just started at a normal pace. Additionally, the experience and competitive standard of these players are being taken to another level, allowing them to compete for their club and country. You will certainly see some players from the league being part of the Canadian men's national team in the future. From a financial point of view, the success of the first editions of the league has attracted interest in investing in what they call the "franchise model". Atlético Ottawa is a concrete and recent case, and more domestic and international investors will certainly be interested in joining the league with financial capital. Commercially

speaking, the league is being consolidated, with sponsors coming on board gradually. For a league, like any other sporting project, there is an initial growth trend, followed by repositioning or consolidation, and finally the need to be creative and pragmatic for the sake of reinvention, including on the commercial and operational side. The league is quite new, so the trend now is to grow. Logically, COVID-19 has posed obstacles in terms of income and spectatorship, but there have been positive steps taken jointly by Canada Soccer, the CPL and other football stakeholders to overcome those difficulties.

At the same time, major cities have expressed their interest in being involved in the league by hosting a club franchise, proving that there is an appetite for football throughout Canada. All of this illustrates the unity in the Canadian football community and, in particular, that the league is here to stay and will continue growing in sporting and financial terms.

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues**
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



What is the potential of the CPL?

The future is bright for the league as long as the stakeholders continue to commit to the project in the long run, thoughtfully putting football development first and anticipating business opportunities. When we first looked at the concept of the league, the idea was to reach between 16 and 20 clubs by 2026. There is a strong sense of enthusiasm around the potential growth in the number of clubs, which, by leveraging football's growing profile and popularity in Canada, will positively impact the average attendance and sponsors' financial contributions, not to mention the rising number of football lovers who will consume football products in different forms (through media platforms, buying merchandising, etc.). At the moment, there is a conservative approach to the future, based on growing steadily to ensure revenue and operations for the league. With the FIFA World Cup 2026 on the horizon, we believe that the league will boost interest in football, especially among the youngest generations. There is also call for addressing some key points to improve in the medium and long term.

For example, the need to reflect on the implementation of financial control mechanisms and increase the investment in youth development. The former will certainly ensure the financial health of the clubs and sustainability of the league whilst keeping any high spending on players' contracts under effective control. Regarding youth development, clubs only have a first team for the time being. Is it then desirable to have youth teams? That is how leagues usually bring through considerable talent and simultaneously reduce the salary costs of their rosters. It is not possible to immediately jump into a full structure without understanding if the means to do so are available. It is not only about finances – more and fully capable referees and coaches are also needed

to improve the professional side of the game. On a different note, the league is currently sharing some stadiums with other sports. In this sense, it is also worth considering whether specific football venues are required to enhance the experience and conditions of football for participants and spectators alike. Governance-wise, the relationship between Canada Soccer and the league is perfectly clear and sound via the funding agreement, making this a win-win partnership where the association benefits from having this top-level football on its doorstep, helping it to scout talent and keep those talented young players at home for their continuing training, development and education. The professional clubs of the CPL now have a chair and voting power at Canada Soccer's congress [the Annual Meeting of the Members], giving them a voice to shape the future of professional football in the country together with the association.

The league also benefits media-wise and commercially from Canada Soccer's support from a regulatory and governance point of view. This partnership is fruitful and providing the expected outcomes for the benefit of football as a whole in Canada in the lead-up to what is going to be a landmark in the history of our game in the country: the FIFA World Cup.

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues**
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



What's the biggest challenge in building a league from scratch?

You have to find the right partners. Stadiums and infrastructure are among the most important aspects of the league, especially when launching seven clubs simultaneously. You also want to establish and cultivate a greater fanbase while making it accessible to all.

Is the CPL looking towards particular other leagues for guidance and inspiration?

We have had communication with many leagues - including La Liga in Spain and the Bundesliga in Germany - which has certainly helped us.

What is the financial model of the CPL and the clubs?

CPL clubs are owned individually by the owners and each club owns an equal share of the league and its company Canadian Soccer Business (CSB).

How do you ensure clubs operate on a sound and sustainable basis?

That comes down to our ownership model. We have a long-term growth strategy in place. To be good in business, you must stay in business, and we are taking a managed and staged approach to how we grow the league. Our mission is to create a solid foundation that will help grow the game and be a force on the world stage.



David Clanachan,
*Canadian Premier League
Commissioner*

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues**
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



How do you reflect on the first season and the abbreviated second season?

There were so many success stories in 2019 – HFX Wanderers’ massive fan support and attendance, Calgary’s Cavalry FC beating the Vancouver Whitecaps in the Canadian Championship, the creation of and drive behind our fan and supporters’ movements and the overall general support of the league in our first year, to name but a few. Last year, we were ready to hit the ground running and we launched a new schedule that was widely well received and changed because of fan and supporter feedback. We also launched our eighth club with historic ownership group Atlético Madrid in Ottawa, as well as new 2020 Macron home kits at community events in all our markets. Then March arrived... We didn’t give up and we fought, working diligently for months to be able to create, launch and successfully run The Island Games (the 2020 season held in a bubble in Charlottetown). It was 37 days of fans across the nation and around the world viewing all eight CPL teams compete for a chance to become the 2020 CPL champions, all done safely, successfully, and completely COVID-19-free.

Do you feel that the CPL has achieved its goals so far?

The CPL has had a great start and we added our first expansion club, Atlético Ottawa. We had to adapt our goals because of the pandemic, but we surpassed those goals and expectations by successfully and healthily completing The Island Games in 2020 on Prince Edward Island and beginning our season in Winnipeg in 2021 to be able to complete our full season primarily at home stadiums with fans. We have seen our teams compete in the Canadian Championship against MLS clubs, and compete at the Concacaf level, and handle it very well. But we still have much work to do to continue to build our game in Canada.

Do you feel that the CPL has achieved its goals so far?

The CPL has had a great start and we added our first expansion club, Atlético Ottawa. We had to adapt our goals because of the pandemic, but we surpassed those goals and expectations by successfully and healthily completing The Island Games in 2020 on Prince Edward Island and beginning our season in Winnipeg in 2021 to be able to complete our full season primarily at home stadiums with fans. We have seen our teams compete in the Canadian Championship against MLS clubs, and compete at the Concacaf level, and handle it very well. But we still have much work to do to continue to build our game in Canada.

Building on 2019 and 2020, what are the objectives for this season?

To rebound from the pandemic – back to a level of normalcy for our supporters and fans – as well as fine-tune and grow the business. We want to deliver an entertaining and exciting season for fans to enjoy in person. Finally, the CPL is preparing to welcome Saskatoon and is continuing expansion discussions with several potential partners.

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues**
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



In which areas, be it commercial, broadcast, operations, etc., is improvement required?

We can never stop improving all aspects of our business – we have just begun. In operations, we need to continue with the creativity and the flexible mindset that we have shown exist in our league. Our partners at Mediapro and OneSoccer have been terrific and will continue to push us to greater heights. Our commercial group certainly needs to build on the momentum and create new support from partners, but also continue to deliver value to our existing partners.

How can the clubs develop their grassroots operations?

It's all about community and obviously the lack of integration in our communities for the past year and half has had an impact and will continue to do so as we return to normal life. We have introduced Zoom mentor sessions and presentations to reach out. We are still small and thus nimble. Our players and coaches are out there and contribute extensively in the communities. The focus is on getting back to supporting our club communities, integrating with youth and local football clubs, organizations, clubs and members of the community. Our clubs have established affiliations with the football grassroots organizations across Canada. We have a long-term national community initiative that we plan to launch this year that will support the communities we play in that we are very excited about - stay tuned!



Will it help to create a pathway for aspiring players?

Of course, 100%. The fundamental purpose of the CPL is to provide many more professional opportunities to players, coaches, referees, and administrators in the game in Canada. Talent is universal, but opportunity is not - what we are creating right now for the first time is for young Canadians to test whether they have what it takes to be a professional in our sport.

How do you ensure a natural engagement with the fans?

We continue our focus on growing the culture and widening our fan base. Football has been embraced by communities across our country and the CPL is here to help grow the game and fan culture in Canada. We are proud that we have been very inclusive with our supporters and fans throughout our start up and believe this is the way to grow the game organically at the community level, including the engagement of fans that represent what Canada is.

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

New Nepal Super League

Plotting growth after the success of season one

Nepal seeks to tap Super League promise

- **The All Nepal Football Association (ANFA) and fledgling league are plotting growth after the success of season one.**
- **The Nepal Super League's (NSL's) huge audiences on television and traction on social media are prompting interest from sponsors and commercial partners.**
- **FIFA Forward funding and strategic help have accelerated football development in Nepal and have encouraged other nations to adopt similar business models.**

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues**
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

After Kathmandu Rayzrs caused a stir by winning the inaugural Nepal Super League (NSL), football leaders are bullish about the NSL's impact in the South Asian nation.

The Rayzrs beat Dhangadhi FC 1-0 in the final of the three-week long tournament to secure the title in May.

ANFA President, Karma Tsering Sherpa, describes the NSL's first edition as "a milestone for professional football development in Nepal" amid concerted efforts to grow the "beautiful game", the country's most popular sport.

"It attracts huge crowds, be it a local game or international. It is organised at every level and is much-loved everywhere. Fans in Nepal are crazy about their team and their players," says Sherpa, who pays tribute to the "tremendous hard work" of NSL chairperson Ashrayata Karki Chaudary.

FIFA's chief objectives in helping to create the league were fostering youth development in Nepal through football and assisting ANFA in building a sustainable business model.

Sanjeevan Balasingam, FIFA Director of Members Associations Asia & Oceania, says: "Nepali football had long been plagued by governance issues with the result that there were no leagues organised for four successive years until, using FIFA Forward funds, the Martyr's Memorial League was revived in 2018-2019.

"It was an important stepping stone that needed to be established before the first franchisee-based football league in Nepal could be launched."

FIFA helped ANFA to formulate a strategic plan for the league, and football's governing body also encouraged the association to embrace good governance measures by way of revising its statutes and employing best-practice financial accounting and oversight.

The league's opening season, Sherpa says, "helped to connect the fans with the game they love and the players they follow. NSL has helped Nepali football reach new heights and given such a high level of competitiveness in the games."



Holding night-time games under floodlights was an innovation for Nepal and, though crowds were not allowed in due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the tournament attracted huge audiences on television and across social media platforms.

Another first for Nepali football was the involvement of sponsors partnering with the league to unlock new revenue opportunities.

Nirvana Chaudhary, managing director of league sponsor CG Corp Global, highlights the benefits of the NSL "for youth development through sports", noting that the league attracted stakeholders from the private sector and the participation of Nepal's provinces.

The NLS's seven teams played six matches, with the top four teams qualifying for the play-offs. The top two contested one play-off to book a final spot; the winners of a third- and fourth-placed match met the losers of the first play-off for the other final berth.

League organisers introduced rules around player recruitment and club spending to ensure fair competition. Players were placed into three categories, with each club allowed to sign one marquee player. The clubs could also each sign three foreign players. All other players were allocated through an auction.

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Sherpa says the participating clubs were “happy” with the tournament but offered suggestions for improvements for the 2022 season. They called for an increase in preparation time and for the competition to be spread over a longer period.

Next season sees the addition of one more club, although the format is likely to remain the same. Sherpa said the league organiser, Nepal Sports and Events Management, is looking at ways to improve NSL broadcasting and sponsorship.

Sherpa says the 2021 edition is the launchpad to grow the NSL for the next five years and beyond. He cites benefits to Nepali football as the NSL will be a showcase for local players to then play abroad and will help with the scouting of players for the national team.

“We hope to cash in on this and further improve the quality of the game and the tournament in five years’ time,” he says.

“Though we took a hit financially in this edition of the NSL, we are grateful towards FIFA for the financial assistance they gave for the national team, allowing it to travel by chartered flights to Iraq for a preparatory match and then to the venue of the FIFA World Cup qualifiers’ second round, arranged in a bubble format in Kuwait.”

Asked how the new league would develop football at elite and grassroots levels in Nepal, Sherpa says discussions have taken place with NSL clubs to establish their own football academies and run grassroots programmes.

“We are also planning to implement the club licensing certificate with the clubs. We want the NSL to help make football more professional in the country,” he explains, adding that agreements have been reached with the NSL to spend the income it generates on youth football development.

For FIFA, the NSL marks a huge step towards addressing some of the issues facing Nepali football. With the support of the FIFA Forward 1.0 Programme, ANFA has upgraded football facilities across Nepal, including the first-ever girls’ football academy in Rautahat, and has organised grassroots activities. Plans are underway to construct a national centre of excellence in Pokhara.

FIFA’s Balasingam says the ongoing success of the Nepal Super League will “encourage other nations to adopt similar models”.

Speaking of the potential for more sponsors and commercial partners, he adds: “We aim for sustainable development and would like more corporates and teams to be involved with this league over time.”

FIFA is also keen on ANFA developing a franchisee-based league for women.

“The long-term goal is for the holistic development of Nepali football so that the Nepal national teams and club sides become more competitive at the Asian level. This would ensure the commercial potential of the clubs and member association is greatly strengthened,” Balasingam concludes.



Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management**
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Stadium Management

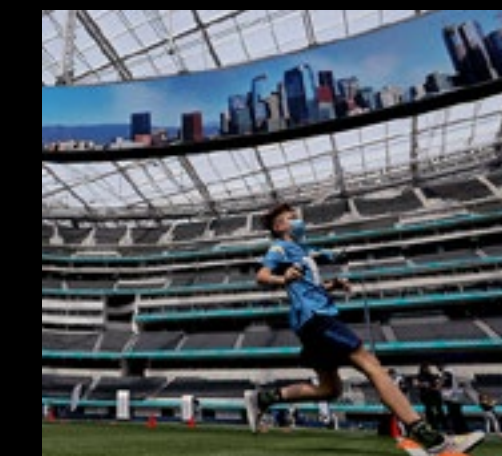
The role of stadiums is fast evolving in serving up ever more digital, engaging and interactive experiences for fans and players alike. Following a quiet year at arenas around world football, it is a joy to see them slowly filling up again. This issue's "Stadium Management" section takes us on a tour of a trio of US stadiums, which are often considered best in class when it comes to delivering a next-level fan experience. We begin with the case study of **Atlanta's iconic Mercedes-Benz Stadium**, exploring how its design and the concepts behind it create incredible emotional moments for spectators. Delving deeper, the second article focuses on the entertainment-driven and commercially focused nature of **SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, California, and Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas, Nevada**, providing lessons for operators around the world who are interested in creating a new breed of stadium experience.



Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Placing a Premium on the Emotional Investment

[READ MORE](#)



Stadium Management

Learning from the US experience

[READ MORE](#)



Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Placing a Premium on the Emotional Investment

- **The key factor underpinning the construction of Mercedes-Benz Stadium was ensuring that fans could connect to it on an emotional level.**
- **Technology is inherent to the stadium's strategy and creation to provide supporters with experiences designed to be awe-inspiring and to keep them coming back.**
- **Painstaking due diligence with stadium personnel around the world set Mercedes-Benz Stadium executives on a "adapt or avoid" path in order to create the optimum matchday experience.**

The construct of a sports stadium can be awe-inspiring. But, looking past the cement, steel and glass, the ideals behind it can surpass even the most majestic of structures. For Mercedes-Benz Stadium, the key factor underpinning its stadium strategy was to evoke a certain feeling among the thousands of fans who visit the arena in its home in Atlanta, Georgia.

This mandate originated with Arthur Blank, cofounder of The Home Depot, the largest home improvement retailer in the United States, who is the sole owner of the National Football League's Atlanta Falcons and of Major League Soccer's (MLS) Atlanta United.

When Mercedes-Benz Stadium was built in 2017, the intention was not only to serve as the home of its two teams, but also to be considered the premier venue for some of the biggest events from around the world, says Tim Zulawski, who leads all strategy, growth and management of revenue generation, sponsorship sales and service for the Atlanta Falcons, Atlanta United and Mercedes-Benz Stadium.

Entering into a public-private partnership with the state government of Georgia, the transformation to Mercedes-Benz Stadium took about a decade at a cost of USD 1.6 billion for construction. AMB Sports + Entertainment holds all of the operating rights and responsibilities and works collaboratively with the state, meeting regularly with its oversight board. As such, the company receives all of the operating profits and nets any positive return or incurs any operating losses as it bears the risk of all of the operational expense.

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Corporate sponsorship sales serve to support revenue generation, which helps to pay down any debt the stadium owes, says Zulawski. To date, Mercedes-Benz Stadium has secured USD 1 billion in contractual value, partly through its naming rights deal signed at an undisclosed value in 2015 for 27 years. There are a further ten founding partners, which include Coca-Cola and reputable international brands from different industries.

Corporate partners that support the stadium enjoy the benefits of large-scale advertising through a 70,000 square foot, integrated light-emitting diode digital canvas that houses displays in various shapes and sizes offering many partners timed brand exclusivity.



“Technology is inherent to the stadium, both in strategy and creation,” says Zulawski. Mercedes-Benz Stadium works with two major Fortune 1000 partners, which is integral to bringing the technological experience to life. This means many things, including constant free Wi-Fi connectivity, cashless registers, digital ticketing and a first in the stadium world: a 60,000-square-foot, 360-degree Halo video board that is suspended from a retractable roof and designed to provide all fans with a close-range and augmented experience.

Affordable food and beverage pricing structures were also designed for the stadium. “We have street pricing, which can be a USD 2 bottle of water, a USD 2 Coca-Cola or a USD 5 draft beer,” he says. “You can have hundreds of combinations with a family of four who end up spending USD 30 at our stadium. Our focus was to make the food a part of the experience.”

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

It is the fan experience that continues to drive strategy. Zulawski points to the stadium's previous windowless venue, which did not really give stadium-goers a sense of where they were. "We were hyper-focused on building windows to the city, so when you are consuming an event at the stadium, you know you are in Atlanta because you can look to the right and see the whole city skyline," he says.

The executive team at Mercedes-Benz Stadium took on painstaking due diligence to significantly benchmark the building of the stadium by taking key learnings from around the globe on what people did and did not like, and then undertaking an adapt or avoid approach, says Zulawski.

The proof is in matchday attendance. Mercedes-Benz Stadium houses 42,500 seats using its lower two levels, a common configuration for football matches, but also has the flexibility to expand the football configuration to over 70,000. In 2017, it broke the MLS's single-match attendance record, with a 71,874 attendees. In 2019, the average attendance across the season was around 53,000 and in March 2020, just before the pandemic hit, the stadium was at full capacity, at around the 72,000 mark. Post-pandemic, two Atlanta United matches in 2021 each had at least 40,000 people in attendance. But, a Mexico v. Honduras match in June, as a part of MexTour, hosted 70,000 people. "This was the largest crowd for soccer globally," Zulawski points out.

"It's all about value creation —and value creation for you," says Zulawski. "All the unique attributes and features — everything was centred around how do we 'wow' the fan of today, tomorrow and well into the future."



Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Transcending sports and entertainment

How football stadium operators can learn from the US experience

SoFi Stadium - A Stadium of Dreams

- **The scope of the SoFi Stadium project transcends sports and entertainment. The stadium plays a central role to community life; it is a place to spend time with friends and family.**
- **Allegiant Stadium was built as part of a public-private partnership, ultimately costing USD 1.9 billion.**
- **The Allegiant Stadium has helped create jobs and generate income.**

The National Football League (NFL) in the USA unveiled the SoFi Stadium and Allegiant Stadium in 2020. Both are regarded as cutting-edge venues designed with the users in mind, not just during a game but throughout their visit. There is no doubt that both offer a state-of-the-art experience and that both have a story involving passionate people who wanted to create experiences of a lifetime, not just for football fans, but for anyone who comes to enjoy an event.

Walking into the SoFi Stadium, one of the first things fans see is a massive double-sided video board that weighs close to 1 million kilograms, is about 110 metres, contains 268 speakers and supports 6,500 square metres of digital LED. In other words, it is unmissable.

And this is just one piece of the structure that franchise owner Stan Kroenke envisioned as a “football palace” when he sat down with his fellow NFL owners to propose relocating the St. Louis Rams to Los Angeles. Lore has it that promises were made that the team would enjoy luxury that had never before been seen in the stadium world and that the structure itself would be unparalleled in all of North America.

It was privately funded, costing USD 5 billion and has so far lived up to expectations. Situated on what was previously the Hollywood Race Track, the actual stadium is the NFL's largest at almost 300 thousand square metres and a seating capacity of 70,000 with the possibility of adding another 30,000 if need be.

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Bungalows, although pricey, give those lucky few the opportunity to be close to a receiver scoring a touchdown. The Executive Club features marble-paneled elevators and four shiny bars offering a range of high-end beverages.

The aim is for the stadium to become an international venue that offers sporting events on a wider scale. However, in addition to the stadium as a sports and entertainment arena, there are plans for its 298 acres to be used as a recreational space for families. The green campus has a man-made lake that provides an ideal backdrop for a summer picnic. The office buildings that are being built will house NFL Media alongside other businesses. There are plans for 500 square feet of retail space, a hotel that offers 300 rooms as well as over 300 apartments.

The stadium serves as the nucleus of what its owners hope will be a global destination for entertainment and a homestead giving southern Californians a place of which to be proud.

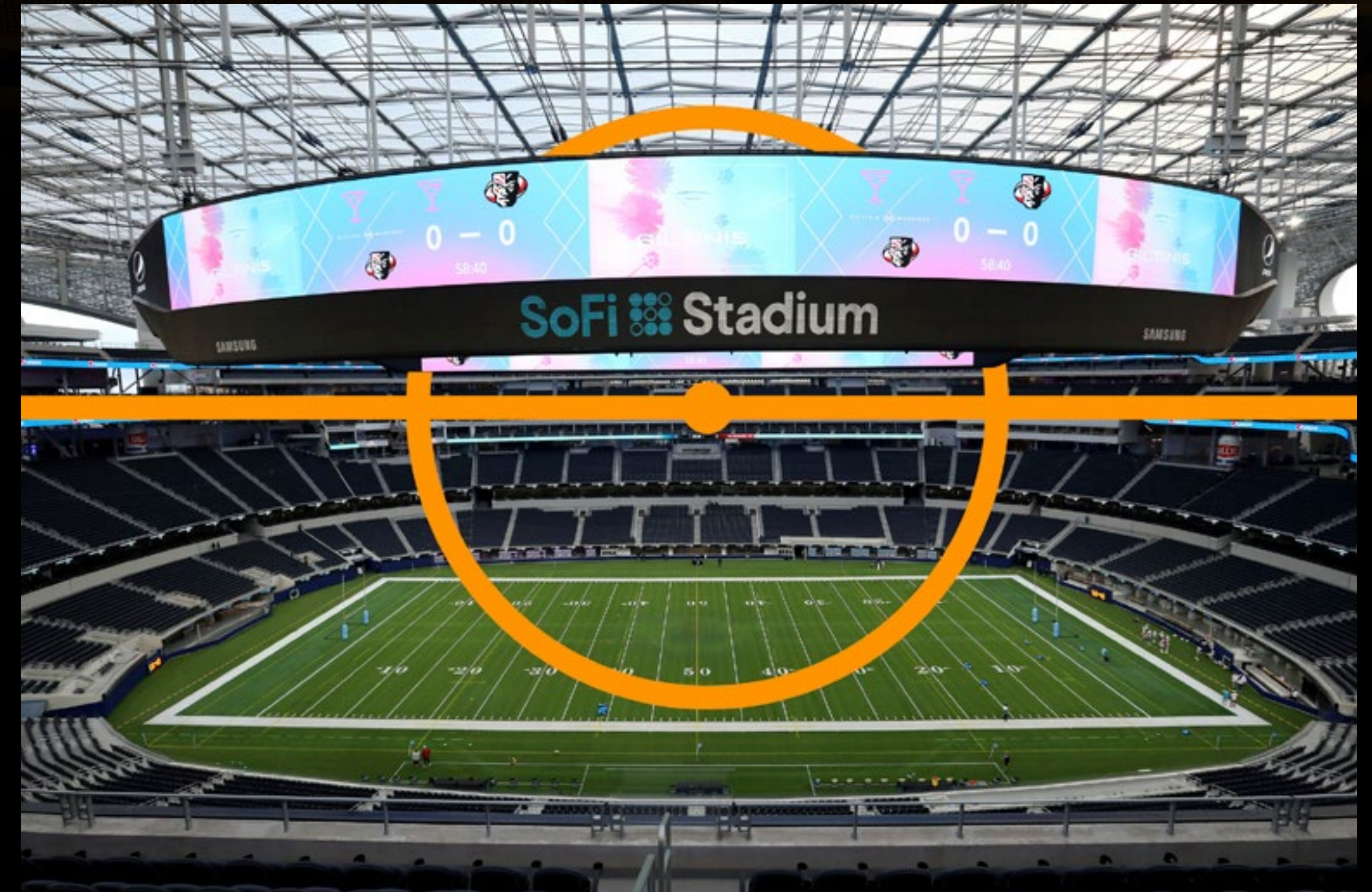


Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management**
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Allegiant Stadium

Had the Las Vegas Raiders gone with their original move from Oakland, California to Los Angeles, Allegiant Stadium would never have been constructed. As fate would have it, however, it is where the storied NFL team now makes its home. Welcomed with open arms, the sentiment was that the Raiders were a brand full of star power, which perfectly aligns with the Las Vegas name known throughout the world.

When the decision was made to build a dedicated stadium, it came in the form of a public-private partnership. The split was USD 750 million in public funding and USD 1.1 billion from the Raiders. The total cost of construction came to USD 1.9 billion.

Revenue generation for the Raiders was expected to hit around the USD 130 million mark in its inaugural year, sourced from broadcast rights, premium seating and suite sales, concessions, tickets, merchandise and stadium naming rights.

Allegiant Stadium is located next to the famed Las Vegas strip and sits on 62 acres of land. Among its various attributes, it has a seating capacity of 65,000, includes 2,200 TVs, almost 7,000 square metres of video boards, 8,800 square metres of field event space, and over ten individual event spaces. At its heart, Allegiant Stadium is expecting to generate USD 620 million annually, intended to support the community and create 6,000 permanent jobs for the state of Nevada.

The stadium is also home to the University of Las Vegas Football, but the hosting goes beyond their games. Stadium backers intend to open Allegiant Stadium up to an additional 20-25 events across the sporting spectrum to continue to garner revenue.

After being the venue for the recent final of the Concacaf Gold Cup between the United States and Mexico at the start of August, on its roster are also other events such as the Las Vegas Rugby Cup WWE SummerSlam . It is also a place for music entertainment. This summer Illenium will play at the arena, as will country singer Garth Brooks and famed rock band Guns N' Roses. Further still, Allegiant Stadium may become a home to a Major League Soccer franchise. In 2019, the league confirmed that leadership was in talks with Bill Foley, owner of the Vegas Golden Knights, which plays in the National Hockey League, on an expansion team.

The stadium aspires to be a venue synonymous with world-class entertainment.



Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders**
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



Football Stakeholders

Despite the diversity present across stakeholder groups in our global football community, a common thread for us all, particularly in the past 18 months, has been the need to constantly evolve with our sport and our society to protect and grow the game. In the “Football Stakeholders” interviews contained in this issue, we spoke with two men about the changes and transitions taking place in their respective fields. Firstly, what is it like to have spent three decades at the very top of world refereeing, and now to be overseeing the evolving role of technology in the Laws of the Game? We caught up with the most recognisable referee in world football, **Pierluigi Collina**, to find out about his iconic career and his vision for the future of officiating. Secondly, how does a single organisation effectively represent and support professional football leagues around the world, and how did the pandemic force it to intensify its activities to ensure football could come back safe and sound? **Jérôme Perlemuter, the General Secretary of the World Leagues Forum**, answers these questions and outlines key issues facing football leagues in the post-pandemic world.



Pierluigi Collina

Bringing a cool head to the refereeing evolution

[READ MORE](#)



World Leagues Forum - Jérôme Perlemuter

How to ensure a global voice

[READ MORE](#)

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Pierluigi Collina

Bringing a cool head to the refereeing evolution

- **Pierluigi Collina expands on how the FIFA Referees Committee is improving standards for the next generation of male and female match officials.**
- **The legendary Italian talks up the VAR system's benefits in making referees' jobs easier.**
- **The FIFA programme is well underway to produce tech-savvy match officials for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™.**

Pierluigi Collina built a formidable reputation as a firm but fair referee in a 27-year career officiating the beautiful game.

The Italian, instantly recognisable for his bald head and intimidating stare, garnered the respect of players, coaches and fans alike.

After earning his stripes as a referee in the Italian lower divisions, he rose to prominence in the 1990s, officiating Serie B and Serie A matches before world football's governing body promoted him to the FIFA Refereeing International List in 1995. He got the nod to referee the 1996 Men's Olympic Football Tournament final and went on to take charge of two group-stage matches at the 1998 FIFA World Cup France™.

The pinnacle of Collina's illustrious career – in which he was named FIFA's Best Referee of the Year six times – were two showpiece football finals in three years.

He was in the global spotlight officiating the dramatic 1999 UEFA Champions League final when Manchester United beat Bayern Munich 2-1 thanks to an injury-time winner from Ole Gunnar Solskjær. Collina's no-nonsense approach to refereeing was again on show at the 2002 FIFA World Cup™ final between Brazil and Germany in Yokohama, Japan. Ronaldo's brace sealed the win for Brazil.

Since retiring in 2005, Collina has played a pivotal role in the evolution of refereeing; after having been at the helm of Italy's Serie A referees committee from 2007 to 2010, he spent eight years as UEFA's Chief Refereeing Officer and finally was appointed chairman of the FIFA Referees Committee in 2017.

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Reflecting on his career, Collina pinpoints some essential qualities that a referee must possess to succeed at the highest level.

"As with other activities or professions, it's a mixture of different qualities. Talent is the starting point but then even the most talented referee must be ready to work hard every single day and for every match, it doesn't matter if it's the World Cup Final or a second division match in the referee's country," he says.

"Being open minded and ready to accept changes is also important in a world that moves forward very quickly."

Collina's wealth of experience smoothed his move from the field of play to helping a decision-making body on officiating issues. He admits the transition from officiating to being responsible for refereeing in a football organization "wasn't easy".

"As a referee, my success depended on my own performances on the pitch and I was responsible for them. Now I depend on something that is in someone else's hands."

Collina states that in his new role it was critical for him to "immediately understand that a referee might be very good even if he or she is completely different to how I was. It's easy and perhaps normal to like those who have similar characteristics to yours, but in actual fact, it's better to look for dissimilarity".

As a referee who had mostly positive results, Collina admits that he had to "quickly understand how a referee who is facing a very difficult moment might feel psychologically".

"As a coach of referees, the support I can offer is, among the others, to help referees to be resilient and to get back from a negative moment as quick as possible."

The FIFA Referees Committee has contributed to FIFA President Gianni Infantino's vision of making football truly global.

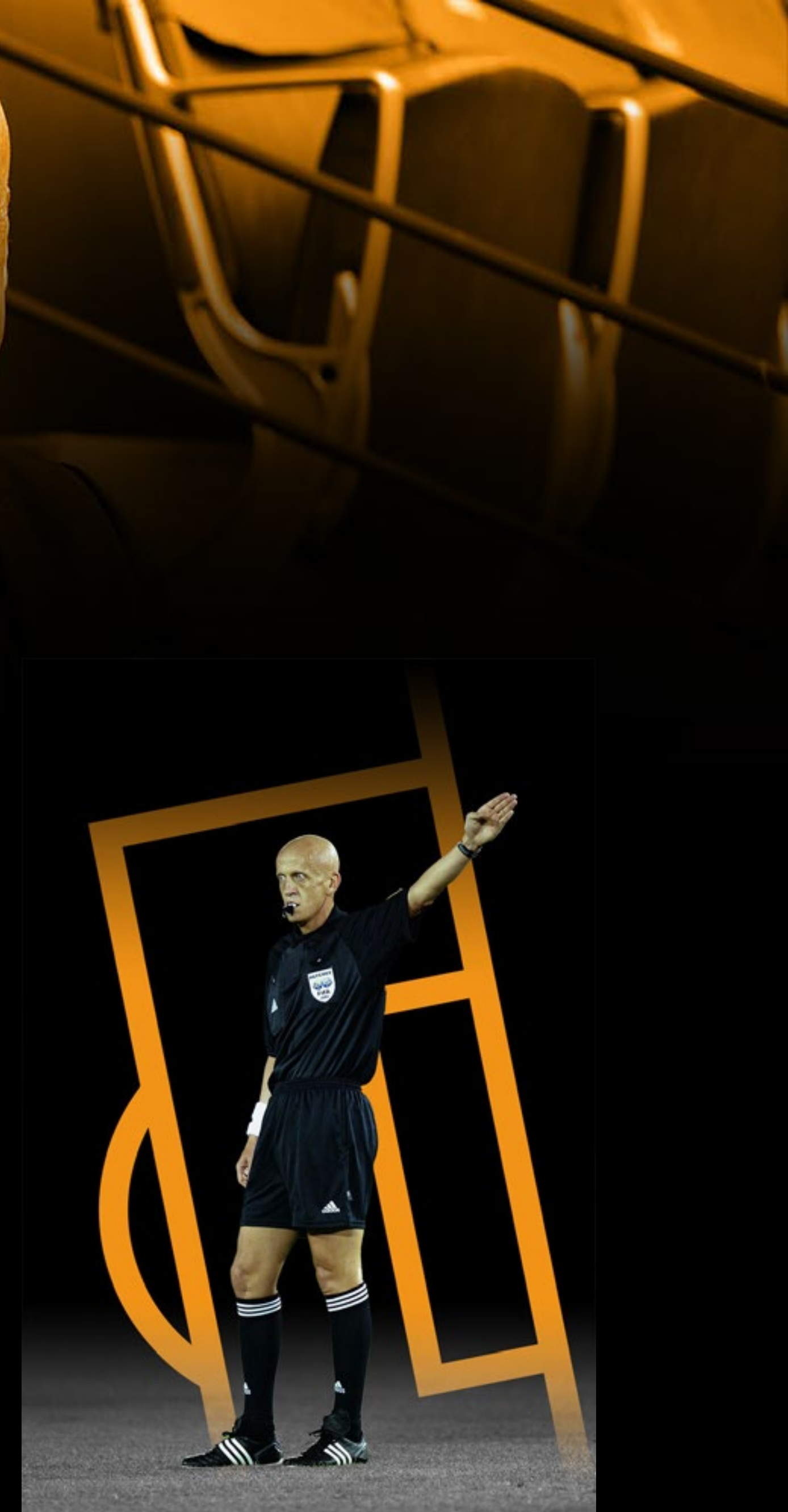


Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

"One of the tasks of the FIFA Referees Committee is to support the development of refereeing worldwide. Therefore, we not only care about what happens at World Cups, but we also work hand in hand with member associations and confederations to enhance the level of refereeing from grassroots to top level football," says Collina.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, FIFA Refereeing has provided support to more than 400 virtual seminars worldwide.

Technology, one area of focus, has had a considerable impact on the development of the game on many levels.

Collina acknowledges how far technological advances have come in comparison to the days when he was growing up stating that "matches were covered by two cameras with one for each half of the field of play, making the task of a referee less difficult, because very little was shown on TV back in those days." It certainly is a stark contrast to the pioneering broadcast technology used at the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia™ final in Moscow, where more than 40 high-definition cameras were used "to show every small detail".

"It creates much more entertainment for TV viewers, but also more difficulties for referees, who have only one pair of eyes," he says.

"And they are criticised if they miss something that only a camera was able to show." According to Collina, the implementation of technology in the game has addressed this previously unbalanced challenge in an effort to "to help referees."



Collina believes FIFA's introduction of technology, including goal-line and VAR technology, has made referees' jobs easier, not least by helping them to prepare for matches.

The Italian, known for doing his homework on teams, players and coaching tactics before officiating matches, says the technologies are crucial to boosting refereeing standards.

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

"A key factor in making a good call on the pitch is to know in advance what is going to happen and to be one step ahead. Referees cannot be surprised by something and they cannot justify a mistake by saying, "I was not expecting that", he insists.

"Knowing teams' tactics such as zonal or man-to-man defending during a corner kick or a free kick as well as knowing players' individual characteristics, for example, a left forward's favoured foot when playing in a 4-3-3 formation, might make all the difference."

Collina recalls his preparations for the 2002 FIFA World Cup final.

"I spent hours in front of a TV fast-forwarding and rewinding VHS tapes of the matches played by Brazil and Germany during the tournament to know everything about the two teams," he remembers.

Today, technology offers the possibility to get this information quite easily. Through just a few clicks on the computer, a referee can get dozens of clips showing how a team plays, or the main characteristics of a player."

Collina believes that the introduction of the VAR in football by FIFA at the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia has produced "very positive results" for match officials.

"Those major mistakes which affected the final result of important matches have almost disappeared," he says.

"I deliberately use the word 'almost' as the use of VARs won't give football perfection and there is still room for improving its use."

He first discussed how to offer referees technological support in November 2014.



"In less than seven years, we went from an idea to a tool used in all major competitions," he says. "And now many more member associations are showing an interest in implementing the system."

"For this reason, FIFA is developing a new kind of VAR system: more affordable and less demanding on human resources. At the same time, the 'five-star' VAR system is being improved, with semi-automated offside technology currently in its development phase."

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Collina is busy on other fronts, too. The development of female match officials also falls under his remit. He says that officiating must keep pace with the rapid growth of the women's game, which was accelerated by the success of the FIFA Women's World Cup France 2019™.

"We are working on this very carefully, trying to convince member associations to give female referees the opportunity to develop, to be offered the same support as male referees and the same opportunities on the pitch," he says, noting that female referees and assistant referees have gained valuable officiating experience at the last two editions of the FIFA U-17 World Cup™ and the FIFA Club World Cup™.

"They are provided with the same preparation as male referees. I hope we are not far from the time when we speak of 'male' or 'female' referees, but simply of 'referees!'"

The FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™ provides another set of challenges for FIFA. A programme to ready match officials for the tournament started soon after the 2018 showpiece won by France.

The cancellation of the FIFA U-17 and U-20 World Cups due to COVID-19 has impacted the project. But virtual seminars since February 2020 – focusing on areas such as fitness, interpreting the Laws of the Game and football understanding – have been vitally important for the candidates seeking to be named match officials.

"Candidates for Qatar 2022 will be constantly monitored by our fitness coaches and medical staff to get them at the World Cup in the best physical condition. They will also be provided with the latest interpretations of the Laws of the Game, including the changes which might be decided by The IFAB [The International Football Association Board] at the beginning of next year."



"Knowing football and how it is played is a relevant part of match officials' preparation. As a result, we have a dedicated staff of football coaches working with us to provide referees with this knowledge. We want the selected match officials to be ready to deal with the challenges of such an important tournament and deliver top performances, and we will work even harder to make up for lost time," Collina adds.

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Interview Jérôme Perlemuter

How to ensure a global voice

In this exclusive interview, the General Secretary of the World Leagues Forum (WLF), Jérôme Perlemuter, explains that the organisation's modus operandi shifted from day-to-day activities to helping leagues and members overcome the crisis.

Perlemuter feels that the WLF has established itself in world football and can now work more intensely on tackling topics such as governance, financial control and the use of technologies.

"One of the challenges for the WLF is to ensure that governing bodies consider and recognise the importance of domestic leagues and their member clubs in the football arena," says Perlemuter.

**WORLD
LEAGUES
FORUM**

"Having football fully back is also part of having our life back."
— Jérôme Perlemuter, General Secretary, World Leagues Forum

As the General Secretary of the World Leagues Forum (WLF) since 2017, Jérôme Perlemuter has steered his organisation through one of football's darkest ages. The WLF helps improve governance structures within the global game and represents leagues and their member clubs before sporting and political institutions.

At the beginning of the global health crisis, countries, leagues and clubs went into lockdown, and by the time the sport slowly sputtered back into action, the landscape had dramatically changed.

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

"All clubs and leagues were deeply affected by the economic crisis originating from the pandemic," reflects Perlemuter. "Clubs and leagues that relied on transfers, on fans attending matches and on other sources of revenue were significantly impacted in their finances, bringing them to the brink of bankruptcy. And this impact will continue to be felt over the coming years. Fortunately, vaccines are working against the many variants that currently exist; these will help us to get our football back. People must overcome the crisis and enjoy life again. Having football fully back is also part of having our life back."

It is a message of hope from Perlemuter after the pandemic prompted the WLF to intensify its activity, rising to an unprecedented challenge and seeking to find solutions alongside football's other major stakeholders, including FIFA. The organisation's modus operandi shifted from day-to-day activities to helping leagues and members overcome the crisis.

"Solutions had to be found to get football back in the context of a pandemic," explains Perlemuter. "Innovation and creativity were key to achieving resiliency. The WLF helped leagues to exchange expertise concerning the best possible solutions when it comes to hygiene protocols and relations with players. For the WLF, the exchange of information and advice was a key element that helped overcome the pandemic. We also continued to work with FIFA on appropriate amendments to football regulations."

In 2021, the WLF has resumed its normal agenda, allowing Perlemuter and his team to focus on long-term projects under the direction of Chairman Enrique Bonilla, the former President of Liga MX in Mexico. The organisation's statutes provide that the chair alternates between Europe and the rest of the world.



Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



“The idea is for our organisation to be balanced and have a truly global perspective,” says Perlemuter. “The WLF is a young organisation. The first three to four years were mainly used to position the WLF in the football landscape; we believe that this has been achieved. Currently, the perspective is to launch a common project with leagues, as well as to provide services to our members. We are trying to help developing leagues to have a better structure. There are many areas that we are working on: governance, financial control and use of technologies, among others.”

The fight against discrimination is another field in which the WLF is helping leagues to exchange best practices and explore common projects. In 2019, it set up a task force against racism to that effect. The WLF will also soon be releasing a report on women's football – for which the organisation partnered with former FIFA Council member Moya Dodd – focusing on best practices to promote the women's game.

Those initiatives demonstrate that, while the WLF has grown, the organisation is still building its voice for the future. With 42 leagues as members, the body has an excellent and far-reaching platform to help shape the game, with concern for player welfare a priority in an industry that churns and turns ever faster.

“One of the challenges for the WLF is to ensure that governing bodies consider and recognise the importance of domestic leagues and their member clubs in the football arena,” concludes Perlemuter.

“Most of the football industry lies in domestic competitions. There are 4,000 professional clubs and 130,000 professional players around the world. These clubs are the ones that educate and develop players and set the structure and path for them to become the stars of tomorrow. Even though all these players are professionals, most of them do not necessarily have high salaries or play for their national teams. Every single player and every club is meaningful and essential.”

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

FIFA Regulatory Reforms, Legal Publications, Projects and Events

Across FIFA and its Legal & Compliance Division, 2021 picked up where the year 2020 left off, with a number of important accomplishments being achieved. In this issue of the Professional Football Journal, we revisit some of these achievements, milestones and events by taking an in-depth look at areas that set the tone for what is to come, which will include further developments such as regulatory reforms, legal publications, projects and events.

I. The Football Tribunal

Following the approval by the FIFA Congress on 21st May 2021, the FIFA Football Tribunal began official operation on the 1st October 2021. This new entity is essentially a consolidation of the existing FIFA bodies into a single umbrella body, which will be comprised of the following three specific chambers:

- **The Dispute Resolution Chamber:** Decides on employment-related disputes between players and clubs, and disputes related to training rewards;
- **The Players' Status Chamber:** Decides employment-related disputes between coaches and clubs or associations, transfer-related disputes between clubs and regulatory applications related to the international transfer system and the eligibility of players to participate for representative teams; and
- **The Agents Chamber:** Decides disputes involving football agents, following the approval of the FIFA Football Agent Regulations.

The Procedural Rules Governing the Football Tribunal govern the organisation, composition and functions of the Football Tribunal.

A short presentation of the Football Tribunal can be seen below:



For more information on the Football Tribunal, please click [here](#)

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory**
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



"This is a historic moment, and marks the first full-scale review of the governance structure and powers of the FIFA dispute resolution system. Concerning the composition of the Football Tribunal, I'm happy to announce that FIFA has been actively encouraging stakeholders to propose female candidates for the new positions in the hopes of ensuring gender balance within the newly created chambers."

Emilio García Silvero, FIFA Chief Legal and Compliance Officer



"The Football Tribunal will become the single regulatory decision-making body, consolidating the powers currently attributed to the PSC and Dispute Resolution Chamber and will be competent to pass decisions on football-related disputes and regulatory applications. Along these lines, the Football Tribunal will become the institutional umbrella of three chambers: 1) The Dispute Resolution Chamber; 2) The Players Status Chamber; and 3) the Agents Chamber."

James Kitching, FIFA Director of Football Regulatory

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory**
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



II. Professional Football Reports

FIFA Professional Football has been conducting analyses on the most important topics and trends in professional football, producing two landmark reports so far in 2021 (download and read the reports' highlights below):



the FIFA Global Competitive Balance Report

The 2020 Global Competitive Balance Report presents the level of competitiveness in every country around the world and gives a data-driven account of how domestic competitions have developed in recent year.

[DOWNLOAD PDF](#)

[READ ONLINE](#)



the FIFA Comparative Analysis of Second and Third Divisions

This report is a landmark study of how second and third-tier competitions and the participating clubs are run in the top 25 FIFA member associations, based on the men's FIFA/Coca-Cola World Ranking.

[DOWNLOAD PDF](#)

[READ ONLINE](#)

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory**
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

III. Transfer market reports

As society and sport continues to adapt to the ever-changing challenges posed by the pandemic, FIFA keeps developing football's operations and regulations to ensure that the game continues to thrive. Despite the uncertainty, football continues, and so does the movement and transfer of players around the world.

This section includes an overview and summary of the major updates in relation to the global transfer market, which have taken place in the first few months of 2021.

Global Transfer Market Report 2020

FIFA charts the transfers of professional male and female players, and published the 2020 edition of the FIFA Global Transfer Market Report, which reviews the transfer activity during the previous year. For the first time, the report also included the transfers of amateur footballers worldwide. Thanks to changes in July 2020 to the **FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players (RSTP)** and enhancements to the Transfer Matching System (TMS), FIFA has been able to process and facilitate transfers of amateurs in TMS.

The transfer of football players represents not only the largest movement of sports people but also the largest in terms of economic or social activity.

For more information, the FIFA Global Transfer Market Report 2020 is available [here](#).

International Transfer Market Snapshot January 2021

January 2021 was the first international transfer window of the year, and FIFA decided to publish a snapshot report immediately after the closing of the transfer window in order to present a clear picture of the international transfer market at that moment.

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is continuing to take a heavy toll on the social and economic life of everyone around the world, has not left football untouched either. This was reflected in the Global Transfer Market Report 2020, but the impact seems to be even more severe when we look in detail at the transfer market in January 2021.

For a breakdown of transfer types and the distribution of transfers by confederation and member association, you can download the **FIFA International Transfer Market Snapshot – January 2021** from [legal.FIFA.com](#).



Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory**
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



International Transfer Snapshot June - August 2021

Following January's report, FIFA published its International Transfer Snapshot (June – August 2021), an analysis of player transfer activity during the last transfer window.

According to the report, the number of transfers for men remained at the same level as last year with only a slight decrease in the total amount of transfer fees agreed. In the women's game, there was a dramatic increase in the number of transfer during this year's mid-year registration period compared to the same registration period in 2020.

Key findings include:

- 7,748 international transfers involving men's professional players during the mid-year registration period – approximately the same as last year.
- USD 3.72 billion in total fees involving international transfers of men's professional players.
- 576 international transfers involving professional female players completed during this year's mid-year registration period – an 8.7% increase compared to the same registration period in 2020.
- 72.2% increase in the number of transfers involving a fee for a professional women's player compared to the same registration period in 2020 – 31 transfers in total.



This is the second consecutive year that FIFA has published the snapshot shortly after the conclusion of the international transfer window, providing an overview of global transfers involving both male and female players.

FIFA will publish an in-depth analysis of the characteristics of international transfers concluded over the course of the whole year (2021) in January 2022.

To download the full snapshot, please click [here](#) or visit legal.fifa.com.

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory**
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



Ten Years of International Transfers

In late August 2021, FIFA also published a report on international transfers in the men's game during the 2011-2020 period, the most comprehensive review of transfers across the globe ever produced. Key take-aways and findings from the report include:

- USD 48.5 billion spent on transfer fees over the past decade.
- 200 FIFA member associations involved in international transfers.
- Top 30 clubs in terms of transfer fee spend are European.

In addition to the points above, the report confirms that transfer market activity increased steadily over the past decade. From 11,890 transfers conducted in 2011 to a peak of 18,079 in 2019, a total of 133,225 international transfers and loans of professional players took place, while USD 48.5 billion was spent on transfer fees during the period.

You can read the entire report on ten years of international transfers [here](#) and on [legal.FIFA.com](https://www.fifa.com/legal).



Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory**
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



IV. FLAR (Football Law Annual Review)

Transparency and openness in relation to the operations, initiatives, decisions and challenges of football are of paramount importance to FIFA today. At the same time, the opinions, views and proposals of football stakeholders and lawyers working on current legal and procedural matters also make a key contribution to strengthening the game. As world football's governing body, FIFA's role is to bring together perspectives and insights from the football community, promoting discussion and sharing information with legal practitioners from around the world.



"The Football Law Annual Review is part of what the new FIFA is about. It's part of the new transparency, openness and professionalism we want to give to the world."

Gianni Infantino, FIFA President

The 3rd edition of the FLAR took place in March 2021, and looked at the challenging and ever-changing impact of the pandemic on the football legal world. The two-day event opened with FIFA presenting a full legal and compliance overview of 2020 as well as the outlook for 2021, before exploring a range of key topics on the current legal agenda.



"Football has changed enormously in the last 20 years and it's certainly time to look at whether a system that was designed 20 years ago is still suitable and appropriate. This is not a popularity contest. With the benefit of discussing with all stakeholders, we need to do what we think is best for the game and that's also why this kind of exchange with professionals knowledgeable in this area is beneficial for FIFA."

Alasdair Bell, FIFA Deputy Secretary General (Administration)

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory**
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



“We are thrilled by the positive response triggered by the FLAR. Discussing our agenda in an open manner and listening to the input of external stakeholders is of paramount importance in order to further strengthen the legal foundations of the game across the world.”

Emilio García Silvero, FIFA Chief Legal & Compliance Officer

Expert speakers, FIFA Legal leaders and practitioners from across the industry gave presentations which triggered open discussions (that were streamed live on FIFA.com) on the following topics:

- the new FIFA eligibility rules to play for representative teams;

- minimum labour standards for female professional players;
- the reform of the transfer system;
- new rules for international transfers involving amateurs; and
- the new rules for the employment of coaches.

Re-live the highlights of the third edition of the FIFA Football Law Annual Review (FLAR) in the video below.

With over 1,000 people tuning in from across the world, and many more watching the on-demand recordings of the **presentations and discussions**, the 3rd edition of the FLAR successfully shared key information with many in the global legal football community.

The material for the Football Law Annual Review is accessible **here**.



Third edition of the FIFA Football Law Annual Review (FLAR)

[PLAY ON YOUTUBE](#)

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory**
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



V. Football Stakeholders Committee

In line with The Vision 2020-2023, FIFA's blueprint to "make football truly global", FIFA is constantly reviewing how rules and regulations across the industry affect everyone in the ecosystem, working with a diverse range of contributors to ensure that the game evolves fairly for all. From a legal perspective, there are a series of committees which advise and assist the FIFA Council and FIFA Congress. The Football Stakeholders Committee (FSC) supports the FIFA Council on all matters relating to football, particularly the structure of the game, as well as on all technical matters. The FSC is composed of representatives of the most important actors of the game, including players, clubs, leagues, national associations and confederations.

The most recent meeting took place virtually on 14 May 2021, with the FSC confirming the general set of principles of FIFA's third reform package (which we detailed in full in the second edition of the Professional Football Journal). The principles concerned the following topics:

1. International Transfer of Minors
2. Squad sizes
3. Registration periods (transfer windows)
4. Financial regulation



Additionally, the Task Force Transfer System outlined a set of objectives for additional matters, which were confirmed by the FSC, namely:

- I. Respect of Collecting Bargaining Agreements
- II. Sporting just cause
- III. Registration

For more information on meeting no. 09 of the FSC and the individual principles, please click [here](#).

This meeting was the last one with the current composition of members who served the 2017-2021 term. The next meeting will be held with new members (to be decided in the coming months). To mark the completion of the first-ever term of office of the FSC, the members of the FSC were also presented with a document outlining **the historical record and achievements of the committee**.

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory**
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



VI. FIFA Fund for Football Players

Building on the revision of the FIFA Disciplinary Code in 2019, which bolstered the framework for dealing with the non-payment of players' wages, FIFA has gone one step further during the past 12 months. In partnership with FIFPRO, FIFA has launched an initiative to provide a financial safety net for players around the world, protecting the livelihoods of the game's key figures.

The FIFA Fund for Football Players (FIFA FFP) was established following an agreement reached by FIFA and FIFPRO in 2020, to provide financial support to players who have not been paid and have no chance of duly receiving the wages agreed with their clubs.

"The FIFA FFP is a landmark mechanism designed to protect football's main protagonists: the players. Thanks to this novel initiative and the recent conclusion of its first cycle of applications, 1,005 players will receive much-needed financial support during trying times. FIFA stands committed to maintaining this important collaboration with FIFPRO to ensure that all forthcoming application periods are administered and processed successfully towards 2022," said Emilio García Silvero, FIFA's Chief Legal & Compliance Officer, following **the announcement of the outcome of the first application period in May 2021.**

The FIFA FFP agreement in collaboration with FIFPRO is a clear reflection of how FIFA interprets its role as world football's governing body, underlining its commitment to helping and reaching out to those in need, especially within the football community, starting with the game's principal figures: the players.

Please click [here](#) for FIFA's report on the FIFA FFP.



Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance**
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



Talent, Analytics & Performance

Talent in football is often defined as a natural aptitude or skill, a gift that people are born with. In fact, it is something nurtured and developed, dependent upon a combination of technical, educational, cultural and environmental elements. Creating and honing formulas for spotting and developing talent is ever more important and lucrative in global football, and requires holistic techniques on and off the pitch. The "Talent" section of this issue shares behind-the-scenes insight from two of the best in the world at creating such environments. We analyse Bilbao outfit **Athletic Club's Basque-centric philosophy**, which prioritises local identity and loyalty, and look at Portuguese giants **Benfica's enriching approach to building well-rounded players**, rooted in both tradition and futurology.



Athletic Club

Strength in limited numbers

[READ MORE](#)



Benfica's player development

Balancing quality technical training & educational enrichment

[READ MORE](#)

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Athletic Club

Strength in limited numbers

Basque-only and proud: Athletic Club's story of loyalty and perseverance

- **Since 1912, Athletic Club have fielded only Basque players. Around 85% of their academy players graduate to the first team.**
- **"I know the difficulties of working in these conditions, as I've been dealing with these circumstances since I was a child, but I've come to terms with them," says Sporting Director Rafael Alkorta, the former Spain international and Real Madrid centre-back.**
- **Athletic are one of only three clubs – the others being FC Barcelona and Real Madrid – never to have been relegated from the Spanish top tier.**

In an age in which globalisation, worldwide scouting networks and enormous transfer fees have changed the game, Athletic Club have resisted the temptation to adopt mainstream business methods. By contrast, they have remained loyal to their unique philosophy, sticking to a strict policy of fielding only players born or raised in the Basque regions of Spain and France.

While their rivals have the luxury of recruiting talent from around the globe, Athletic are restricted to harvesting the fruit of their own youth academy and selecting players from a handful of other clubs in the region. It might seem to be a massive competitive disadvantage, but Sporting Director Rafael Alkorta, the former Spain international and Real Madrid centre-back, who was brought up at Athletic, has had a lifetime's experience of adjusting to the limitations of their recruitment policy.

"I don't look at other clubs or compare us with others. I know the difficulties of working in these conditions, as I've been dealing with these circumstances since I was a child, but I've come to terms with them. We've got to accept the realities of our situation and understand our limitations and leverage them, turning them into a strength," says Alkorta.

In the context of modern football, the fact that Athletic Club remain a force to be reckoned with in Spanish football is a minor miracle given their restrictions. Their last Spanish title dates back to 1984 but they have been in four Copa del Rey finals over the last decade and – along with FC Barcelona and Real Madrid – have never been relegated from the top flight.

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance**
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



Alkorta also makes it clear that the tradition of only signing Basque players hasn't prevented the club from fulfilling its potential. "Athletic have always prioritised tradition and it has never prevented us from enjoying lots of success, winning trophies and staying clear of relegation. Our philosophy has given us more power to compete," says Alkorta, stressing that the key to success is the club academy.

Astonishingly, some 85% of Athletic's squad members are graduates from the youth academy based in Lezama and, on average, two home-grown players break into the first team every year. The efficiency of the Athletic system is very evident, with the likes of Iker Muniain and Aymeric Laporte being the latest stars to come out of Lezama.

For the upcoming season, there will be three Basque sides in Spain's La Liga, but none of them can compete with the impressive regional scouting network of Athletic Club.

"We have 156 feeder clubs helping us to find the right players," Alkorta says.



Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance**
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



But despite their scouting system and well-coordinated youth set-up, Athletic will occasionally be forced to look elsewhere for options. It's a difficult task, Alkorta explains, as clubs worldwide are well aware of Athletic's limitations.

"Of course, my transfer options are very restricted given our policy and if we identify a Basque player within another team that we would like to bring to Athletic, it certainly won't be easy to sign him," says Alkorta.

But while Athletic may struggle to recruit prolific Basque players from other clubs, it can be an equally gruelling affair trying to sign players from Athletic. There is no incentive for Athletic to offload their star players for anything less than their release clause, simply because the transfer money that they might be in line to receive can usually not be spent beyond the region's borders anyway.

Consequently, Bayern Munich were forced to pay over GBP 30 million for Spain international Javi Martínez in 2012, while Manchester City forked out GBP 57.2 million to activate the aforementioned Laporte's release clause.



Alkorta emphasises that Athletic won't prevent players from leaving, but he says the club tries to foster a strong sense of loyalty in the players from the first day they enter the academy. In addition, the club attempts to create a clear pathway from the academy to the first team, by continuously pushing promising youngsters to play with higher age groups.

"Our strategy is to make youngsters identify with Athletic from the first time they are introduced to the club. But sometimes they still want to leave and we have to understand and accept that. However, our youngsters know that there is a much greater chance of playing at the top level with Athletic and money should never be the most important thing to them," Alkorta concludes.

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Benfica's player development

Balancing quality technical training & educational enrichment across all ages

- **Benfica are proud that they develop well-rounded players, balancing technical training with educational enrichment across all age groups.**
- **The Portuguese giants have a holistic approach, because football is a part of society and – according to Benfica Technical Director Pedro Marques – the sport has an obligation to give back.**
- **The club try to grow their world-famous academy commercially on a global scale.**

At Benfica, they practice futurology, in other words: they decipher what the future of both the beautiful game and society will hold. What did the recent European Championship tell us about where the game going is? Will players need quick decision-making and polyvalence to respond to the demands of the future? What did we learn from the global health crisis and how will it shape the years to come?

This is more than simply an academic exercise. It feeds into the essence of Benfica's youth academy – how can the club develop well-rounded players, balancing technical training with educational enrichment across all age groups? This requires a holistic approach, because football is part of society and – according to Benfica Technical Director Pedro Marques – the sport has an obligation to give back.

*“Football may not be a part of your future, but your education is something that you carry for life”
— Pedro Marques, Technical Director,
SL Benfica*



Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance**
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



At the club's state-of-the-art Caixa Futebol Campus, south of the capital Lisbon, 90 youth players enjoy an education in the broadest sense: football front and centre with nine pitches, gyms and 360s simulator to develop, monitor and hone their skills. At the same time, their academic performance is encouraged at all levels. Education and well-being are part of to the player model as the club want their youth players to think about life outside of the game as well, because elite sport is merciless. Very few reach the top and the pathway is packed with obstacles and complications. Players need a plan B.

At Benfica, all players receive an education passport, mapping their academic career and the life skills acquired. This is all part of their personal development programme. From a young age, youth players are handed responsibilities, which is a way for the club to promote and impart core institutional values such as fair play, solidarity, respect and tolerance. At U-10 and U-11 level, players have to take care of the training kits. This responsibility and autonomy grows over time, with school and studies playing an important role. Through the Benfica Foundation, the players and the staff take part in charity work once a month.

In 2017, the club invested in a private college so that players from U-16 upwards can fit their education around their training sessions. Benfica also provide support classes on their campus for any players that may be struggling in school.

'It's education and football side by side,' stresses Marques. "Benfica have different strategies to make them realise that education is important: football may not be a part of your future, but your education is something that you carry for life. First and foremost they are persons, individuals, and there is a quote from Jesse Marsch that I heard some time ago: 'Good people make great players, not the other way around'."

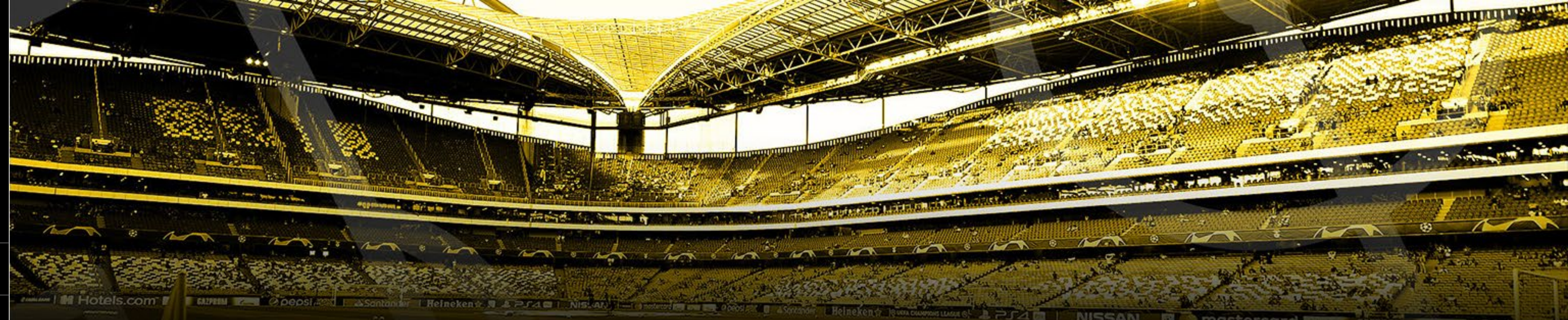


On the commercial side, meanwhile, Benfica believe that they have developed a special model for their academy that can be used all over the world. In an interview last year, Global Expansion Director Faria de Carvalho explained that Benfica are utilising what they call their "major asset" – their academy – to take on Europe's elite because they do not share the commercial reach or appeal of the biggest clubs in Europe

"The Portuguese league does not have the global viewership we would like to have. The top ten to 15 clubs in the Deloitte Money League, fortunately for them, have a worldwide viewership, making it easy for them to expand on a B2C [business to consumer] level to get as many fans as possible. We understand that it is very difficult to compete in that arena and have decided to engage worldwide on a professional level."

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance**
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



Instead of selling exposure through commercial sponsorships, Benfica are exporting know-how on the fundamentals of football. From the academy, which has produced two Golden Boy winners in the past four years in Renato Sanches and João Félix, the Portuguese club are selling the teachings of their academy to other football clubs in what they call the “Business 2 Football” (B2F) model.

“We have decided to put all our chips on that,” Carvalho says, describing their core product: coach training, team training camps, consultancy and player development.

“We consider our academy to be one of the best in Europe and probably the world – at least we’ve been getting some awards. In the last five years, if you look at the players we have sold who have come through the academy, I don’t think any other academy in the world has sold as many as we have. We are renowned for that. This is really what makes us different and gives us something special to offer. The Benfica football system and our ‘Made in Benfica’ brand can live with any club on the planet.”

Faria de Carvalho has the facts to back it up. In the past decade, Benfica have sold developed academy players for a combined USD 440 million (over USD 1 billion in total player sales), with João Félix’s reported USD 156 million transfer to Atlético Madrid a club record.



Technical Director Pedro Marques explains that “talent can be born anywhere but at the top, what makes the difference is your head, the mental side. That’s why we commit to developing well-rounded players, well-rounded individuals, because that will bring more longevity in the career of the player, more longevity after their careers too if something happens.”

It also allows the players to manage the expectations of playing for one of Europe’s biggest clubs and the dream of following in the footsteps of marquee players like Bernardo Silva and Renato Sanches. They can be blinded and ultimately disappointed by a future that may never arrive, even more so in a world filled with the glamour and glitter of perfect social media lives.

“We like to think that we are here to develop good players and first and foremost to develop good people,” says Marques. “We like to think that, here at our Benfica campus, we have a school of football for life.”

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football**
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Women's Football

In any sport or indeed any industry, role models and progressive organisations set higher standards, raise expectations and inspire others around them to do the same. This has always been true of football as it has developed, but it is even more important specifically in the context of the women's game. After decades in the dark, it is now the biggest growth opportunity in global football, increasing in terms of participation, professionalisation and commercial value. In the dedicated section of this edition, we share four examples of best practice from the cutting edge of women's football development. Firstly, we speak to the woman overseeing the development of the female game at FIFA, **Sarai Bareman**, about **the FIFA Benchmarking Report: Women's Football**, a landmark publication that explains the landscape and its huge potential. We then take a tour of women's club football in three confederations, looking at the pioneering work of **France's Olympique Lyonnais**, the success of **the Portland Thorns in the USA's Pacific Northwest**, and the evolution of **CONMEBOL's Libertadores Femenina in South America**.



Portland Thorns FC

Breaking down the club's wild success

[READ MORE](#)



Women's Football

The FIFA Benchmarking Report

[READ MORE](#)



CONMEBOL

Libertadores Femenina 2021

[READ MORE](#)



Olympique Lyonnais

The eternal search for excellence

[READ MORE](#)

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football**
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Women's Football

The FIFA Benchmarking Report

As part of its overall **vision to make football truly global and accelerate the growth of women's football**, FIFA recently published a landmark report on the development and professionalisation of the elite women's football landscape around the world.

We spoke to Sarai Bareman, FIFA Chief Women's Football Officer, about the origins, lessons learnt and next steps from Setting the Pace, the FIFA Benchmarking Report.



[DOWNLOAD PDF](#)

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football**
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



What is the FIFA Benchmarking Report?

The FIFA Benchmarking Report is a document published by FIFA in May 2021 and developed over a nine-month period in collaboration with the Deloitte Sports Business Group. The study provides important insights into several key areas of the elite women's football landscape at league and club level, including sporting, finance, fan engagement, player and COVID-19 related matters.

The information came from a survey completed by 30 top-tier women's football leagues from around the world and 282 of their clubs, with the aim of helping to guide key decisions shaping the future development and professionalisation of women's football.

The document was written with the aim of supporting women's football stakeholders to better understand this landscape and to maximise its huge potential.

Why was the report produced?

As we have seen, the women's football landscape is evolving very quickly. We regularly see anecdotal examples and indicators in many different areas and countries demonstrating the growth of women's football but, for the first time, this report provides concrete facts and data about the current realities and opportunities that exist to professionalise and grow the women's game in a sustainable way.

Whilst many clubs and leagues continue to navigate the impact of COVID-19 on football, this report provides key insights into the reality of the women's game, as well as the many opportunities and challenges, both on and off the pitch, for players, clubs and leagues around the world.

It is paramount, as we look to the future of our game and take decisions that will impact generations to come, that we base these decisions on a clear understanding of where we are – with important insights into what is working well in the current context.

That's the main value that this report adds: it is an important document to support the decision-making process of the stakeholders involved in the game based on factual data.

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football**
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

What were the key learnings obtained from the data?

There are important insights in every section, but in terms of areas for growth, two of the key areas and insights from the survey were the commercial opportunities and the business case that women's football has.

In particular, what stood out for me are the opportunities that exist around the broadcasting and marketing of women's football. From the data we saw that, particularly when compared to the men's game, there's a relatively small amount of revenue being generated on average by leagues and clubs from the broadcasting of matches, as well as the average investment by leagues and clubs into marketing.

This underlines the huge growth opportunity in terms of revenue generation for the women's game, broadcasting matches and having more women's games, and obviously therefore more players, showcased on TV and across the various digital platforms that are available.

Aside from the commercial opportunities, what else came out of the report?

One of the insights from the survey findings that we've already discussed at length is that of specialist roles within clubs that really seem to make the difference in terms of sporting performance. There's a base level of support staff that needs to be around a team, such as the head coach, assistant coaches, etc. However, where we saw the staffing and human resourcing making a difference in terms of sporting performance, it really came down to specialist positions, such as nutritionists and psychologists, and in women's football – also physiotherapists.

When we're talking about elite-level football, it's important to have high-quality resources around the players, especially when it comes to player welfare, well-being and certainly from a medical perspective. We have seen these specialist positions become the norm in the men's game – it's an expectation for male players at the elite level that these support systems are available to them. In my view, it should be no different in women's football. We want our players to be given the best possible chance to perform well on the pitch, and in order for that to happen we have to give them the best possible conditions to succeed.



Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football**
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



Moving forward, how will the report help?

The aim of the report is that it is useful, not only to inform FIFA's decisions on the game, but also for all women's football stakeholders to help them maximise their business case.

This report is an important starting point and first step, however, it is vital that we now build on this and use the data that leagues and clubs have provided to work with all stakeholders across football to develop the women's game further.

It is another first step in this exciting journey.

Will we see a second edition of the report?

Yes, that's our intention. In line with FIFA's vision and objectives to accelerate and professionalise the women's game, it's our ambition to publish this kind of report on a regular basis. I believe an annual report would be optimal, especially to capture the changes that take place season-to-season, to not only help us here at FIFA to achieve our own objectives, but also to inform stakeholders and support them in their decision-making.

Some of the key highlights and insights from the report include:



13 is the average national-team ranking for leagues in which 80% or more participating clubs have a girls' youth structure (Other leagues' world ranking = 28).

For leagues in which 80% or more participating clubs have a girls' youth structure, the average national-team ranking is 13, compared to a ranking of 28 for all other leagues.



Leagues with both club licensing systems and financial controls have a higher proportion of clubs that are profitable.

Leagues with both a club licensing system and financial controls have a higher proportion of clubs that are profitable or break even (36% compared to 32%) and a higher average club revenue (USD 0.9m compared to USD 0.3m).

Table of Contents

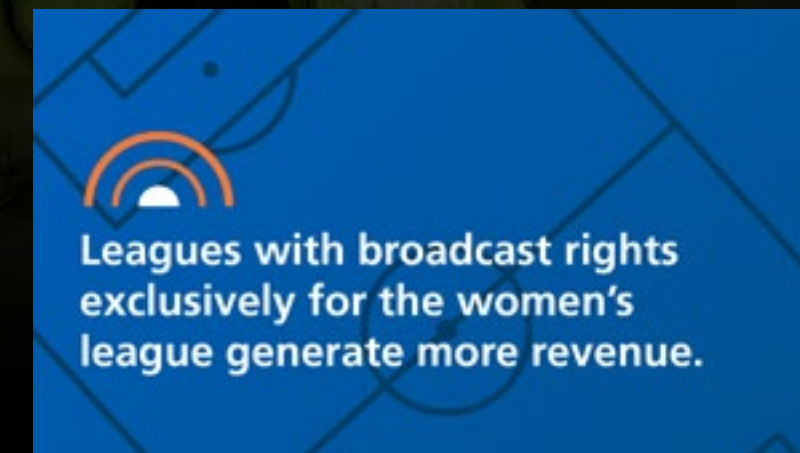
- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football**
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



In 65% of leagues surveyed, teams with the highest qualified coaches outperformed other teams, underlining the importance of coach education and development in the women's game.



Clubs with access to the most facilities tend to outperform other clubs in their league: 50% of teams with access to the most facilities were league champions in the last five years, compared with only 23% for all other clubs.



Broadcasting women's football on traditional and digital platforms represents a significant growth opportunity, with broadcast income currently accounting for an average of 6% of revenue for clubs and 18% of revenue for leagues that were surveyed.



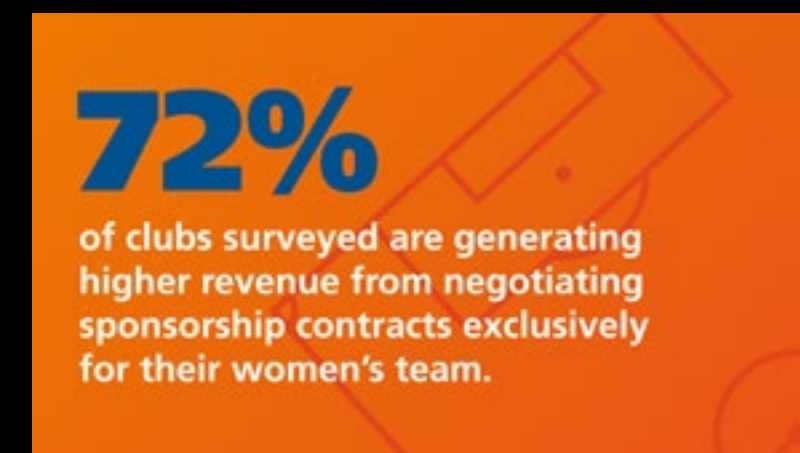
Teams offering a season ticket had higher average league attendances (1,400 compared to 1,000) and earned higher revenue (USD 0.8m compared to USD 0.3m).



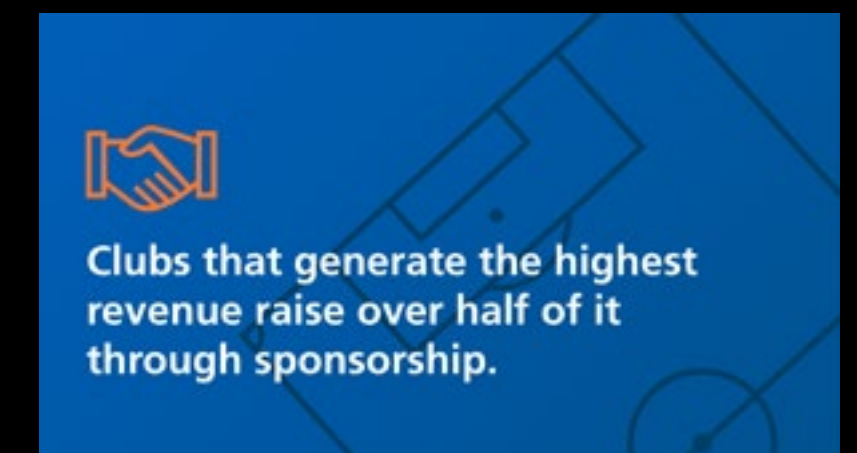
Clubs with a written strategy for women's football tend to have higher average club revenue (USD 0.6m compared to USD 0.3m), more facilities available to the first team and higher match attendances (1,400 compared to 700).



Leagues that negotiate broadcast rights exclusively for the women's league generate, on average, USD 0.7m revenue from broadcast compared with only USD 0.1m for leagues that do not.



Regarding sponsorship, 72% of clubs reported that they negotiate some of their sponsorship contracts for the women's team only. On average, these clubs achieved a higher total revenue and sponsorship revenue.



The clubs that generate the highest revenue (in excess of USD 1m) raise over half of it through sponsorship, compared to less than a third for clubs averaging revenue of less than USD 1m.

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football**
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

CONMEBOL

Libertadores Femenina 2021

CONMEBOL promotes its club licensing strategy to raise the women's game

- **Founded in 2009, the CONMEBOL Libertadores Femenina, also known as the Copa Libertadores Femenina, is an annual women's football competition between clubs from CONMEBOL's ten member associations.**
- **The tournament was created to promote the growth of the female game and is CONMEBOL's flagship club competition for women.**
- **The CONMEBOL Libertadores Femenina 2021 will be the 13th edition in the competition's history and will take place in Paraguay and Uruguay from 3 to 21 November.**
- **For the first time, it will feature a compulsory club licensing system for all participating teams.**

Women's football is soaring as it continues to formalise in countries around the world. This is evidenced by the first-ever CONMEBOL Women's Football Congress, held in 2020, where leaders from South American football met to discuss the future of the women's game.

This is one of many examples of what is transpiring in the region. In 2009, CONMEBOL, the South American Football Confederation, made a decisive move to promote the development of the female game by launching the CONMEBOL *Libertadores Femenina*.

Since its inception, the tournament has steadily built momentum to become the most important international competition for women's club football throughout South America. It has experienced exponential growth, with club participation rising to 16 from ten in its first decade and the number of matches climbing to 32 from 22 in the same period.



Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Progress now takes the shape of a new club licensing system for all of the participating teams that will be featured in the 2021 edition.

The intention is to “create a pathway that allows clubs to improve their overall standards and meet the minimum requirements necessary to put the discipline on a professional footing”, says Fabimar Franchi Benavides, the Head of Sustainability and Women's Football Development at CONMEBOL.

At the same time, it will enable the CONMEBOL Libertadores Femenina (also known as the Copa Libertadores Femenina) to support club growth and player performance.

“This will create the potential for more investment and will offer a more attractive entertainment proposition for sponsors and football fans alike,” says Benavides.

CONMEBOL perceives the licensing system as a tool that will allow it to gradually improve club standards and the Libertadores Femenina, by establishing minimum requirements that will be met and processes that will be put in place for the first time by all clubs that qualify for the 2021 tournament.

“We are convinced that the progress shown in the competition will be bolstered by the implementation of the women's club licensing system,” says Benavides.

The criteria set are divided into five categories that are designed to reflect the wider social, economic and political contexts: sporting, infrastructure, administrative, legal and financial.

“We consider these categories to be reflective of all of the fundamental aspects needed to achieve the professionalisation of women's football in South America,” adds Benavides.

However, they are also critical to help develop the women's game from the bottom up. For example, the sporting criteria establish that clubs must have a youth team and also provide guidelines to train their technical staff.

Benavides emphasises that all of these categories will be gradually enforced until 2022, which will allow clubs to adapt and make the necessary investments to participate in the tournament. CONMEBOL will provide training and other support initiatives in domestic competitions.

CONMEBOL began to work closely with FIFA for the 2018 edition to evaluate and analyse the profiles of the participating clubs.

“The aim was to understand the gaps between them and what specific things were needed to promote the development and professionalisation of women's football,” says Benavides.

Over a three-year period, CONMEBOL held individual meetings with each participating club to conduct checks and assessments, evaluating not only the domestic football landscape in each country, but also the position of the Libertadores Femenina itself. Benavides notes that CONMEBOL was able to examine each club's plans and challenges in depth and, in some cases, either the progress or the difficulties encountered by clubs involved in the competition on more than one occasion.



Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football**
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



“This input meant that we could learn and understand the needs and challenges across the region,” she says.

While conducting its analysis, CONMEBOL led working groups with the club licensing managers of its member associations to understand each country’s perspective and administrative dealings. It also took strategic decisions regarding the Libertadores Femenina’s rules with the aim of delivering a tournament that would both reflect and incentivise the required changes for all stakeholders.

“That is why we are sure that the next edition [the 2021 tournament] is the appropriate time for the implementation of the licensing system, given that all stakeholders were involved in defining the requirements and implementation plan,” says Benavides.

That is not to say the process is free from challenges.

One of CONMEBOL’s hurdles is presenting the licensing system as a tool for progress and showing that it is not intended to exclude clubs, while reiterating that it is not mere optional guidance. To foster understanding, the confederation is providing training and coordination sessions to its member associations and their clubs. CONMEBOL also plans to create a roadmap for clubs to further incentivise them to make the necessary investment to professionalise women’s football, thus ensuring growth, sustainability and development over time.



“As a leading institution, CONMEBOL’s goal is for clubs to set an example and become world champions,” underlines Benavides.

“We are therefore seeking to promote and develop football through these measures, meeting all of clubs’ and women’s football’s needs.”



Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Olympique Lyonnais

The eternal search for excellence

A commitment to gender equality, massive wages and an eternal search for excellence: how Olympique Lyonnais turned their women's team into a virtual dynasty

- **Lyon President Jean-Michel Aulas was ahead of his time in 2004 when he transferred substantial financial resources to the launch of Olympique Lyonnais' women's team to kickstart a new era for women's football.**

- **Setting a new agenda for gender equality within football, the Olympique Lyonnais women's team today enjoy the same facilities as their male colleagues.**

- **Thanks to an impressive EUR 10 million budget, Olympique Lyonnais are aiming to win their 15th French title in the season to come.**

In July 2017, French sports paper L'Équipe published a creative cartoon in connection with their coverage of Alexandre Lacazette's transfer from Olympique Lyonnais to Arsenal. In the cartoon, Lacazette is about to undergo his medical in London, when the doctor asks: "Which club do you come from?" to which Lacazette replies: "Lyon". Reacting with great surprise, the doctor says: "I didn't realise they had a men's team."

The cartoon is testament to the dynasty that Olympique Lyonnais President Jean-Michel Aulas has managed to build in France's third-largest city. Previously, Lyon, which lies some 200 miles south of the French capital, was mostly known for incredible restaurants, its amazing annual lights festival and several UNESCO World Heritage Sites. But now, the erstwhile capital of the Gauls has become synonymous with the home of perhaps the world's most successful women's club.



The team were launched in 2004 as Olympique Lyonnais' President Aulas took a huge gamble and invested heavily in the women's team, as the first major club in the world to do so and before many top clubs such as Juventus and FC Barcelona followed suit. It was a revolutionary and unprecedented move that was to pave the way for an explosive development within women's football. Part of the strategy was to pay top female performers high-end salaries and, more importantly, to treat the women's team in the same way as the men's team.

"Within men's football there was a huge resistance, inside clubs, inside the association and in society in a general sense," Aulas told the UK's The Guardian newspaper.

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football**
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

"I thought I had to take responsibility and proceed with those changes."

But Aulas, who built his fortune at Cegid, a company specialising in the development of management and accounting software, did not just show his commitment by pumping financial resources into the side. He also fostered a unique relationship with the players.

"It's very important, especially for high-level players, that if you are going to expect a lot from them then you should also offer a lot. And, in that sense, the investment off the pitch is promoted through their accomplishments," Aulas said.

So, while the financial support is there for everyone to see, the abstract and social support is also very evident at Olympique Lyonnais, with Aulas being present at as many women's matches as men's matches.

Today, the men's and women's teams are put through their paces at the same training ground, and they enjoy the same facilities in terms of medical staff, liaison officers, mental coaches, and other areas – all the way from the academy to the senior teams. Other big clubs are gradually starting to show the same degree of commitment to gender equality, but it was Olympique Lyonnais who originally kickstarted a new approach within the set-up for the women's team for others to follow.

Olympique Lyonnais take it as far as chartering private jets for their women's team for European away fixtures and offer the full VIP treatment in and out of airports.



Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football**
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

The effect of Aulas' financial, social and egalitarian commitment has been immense. In the last decade, Olympique Lyonnais have enjoyed countless victories and maintained their goal difference close to 1,000. The New York Times has called Olympique Lyonnais the equivalent of the Harlem Globetrotters, a team that never lose. In their short history, the trophy cabinet is growing at the same pace as the list of illustrious names which have been added to their squad. And today, Olympique Lyonnais can already boast of having won the French title no fewer than 14 times, the French Cup eight times and the UEFA Champions League an astonishing seven times.

Olympique Lyonnais offer their players salaries of up to six figures and, last season, coach Sonia Compastor had the luxury of building a squad from a budget of around EUR 10 million – twice as much as most other clubs are able to offer. Olympique Lyonnais have built a squad which has featured world star performers like Dzszenifer Marozsán, Saki Kumagai, Lucy Bronze and Wendie Renard, not to mention a former winner of The Best FIFA Women's Player award, Ada Hegerberg.

But such players do not join Olympique Lyonnais to simply add extra zeros to their bank balances. They go there because there is a self-sustaining emphasis on fostering continuous improvement. Olympique Lyonnais have managed to provide conditions for their female players to enjoy the same respect as their male colleagues, set up a perfect training environment and encourage an excellence-seeking climate around the club.



Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Portland Thorns FC

Breaking down the club's wild success

A commitment to gender equality, massive wages and an eternal search for excellence: how Olympique Lyonnais turned their women's team into a virtual dynasty

- **Since 2013, Portland Thorns have won the championship of the NWSL play-offs twice, reached the semi-finals three times and were named runners-up once.**
- **No one expected the team to perform at the level they do, because women's professional football failed twice before.**
- **A football culture dating back to the 1970s has translated into an avid fan base.**
- **"We are – and were from the start – one club," explains Mike Golub, President of Business at the club. That equality allows both the men's and women's teams to shine.**

Portland Thorns FC have earned a reputation for excellence since their founding in 2012. In their inaugural year, the team placed third during the regular season, but won the first National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) championship. The club had the highest average attendance across the league in their first seven seasons. They also set a league attendance record of 25,218 in August 2019 when they sparred against the North Carolina Courage. And, since 2013, Portland Thorns have won the championship of the NWSL play-offs twice, reached the semi-finals three times and were named runners-up once.

"Our success was a confluence of several factors – a great women's soccer tradition, terrific facilities including one of the best soccer venues in North America and the immediate and sustained success the Thorns had on the field," says Mike Golub, President of Business at Portland Timbers and Thorns.

Looking back, no one at the C-suite level expected the lauded track record the club enjoys.

"There was no reason to believe that this was going to be a success near- or long-term because there wasn't any precedent for it," says Golub.



Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football**
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



The initial excitement surrounding the two previous women's leagues ultimately subsided, with each lasting only about three years. Despite the scepticism over long-term prospects, owner Merritt Paulson and top brass forged ahead to create Portland Thorns. This was a market known for its dedication to the women's game across the sporting landscape.

"We felt that, for the game, it was the right thing to do," explains Golub.

He credits some significant reasons for the club's many achievements. Portland, Oregon boasts a long football history dating back to the 1970s. In 1975, the Portland Timbers entered into the first iteration of the North American Soccer League (NASL). Golub notes that several of the original Timbers remained visible either playing for respected clubs or raising the game in other ways.

Legendary Timbers player Clive Charles, in the squad from 1978-1981, went on to lead the women's football team at the University of Portland in the mid-to-late 1980s and served as head coach for the women's U-20 national team in the mid- 1990s. "So there's been this culture around soccer for several decades—and that really plays a part in our success," says Golub.

Infrastructure-wise, the Thorns stepped into an ideal set-up.

The club was the first to come under the same ownership as a Major League Soccer (MLS) franchise. At the time of the Thorns' launch, the Timbers were the only MLS club to take a NWSL team.

"We are —and were from the start— one club," says Golub.



Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football**
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



While the on-the-pitch component has a dedicated staff, the business is run as one single entity.

“We’ve created an internal culture around that,” says Golub. It’s that one club, two teams mentality, giving equal weight to both, that creates the environment in which both teams thrive.

But, the Thorns rely solely on their reputation when it comes to attracting exceptional talent.

“I think if you’re a top women’s soccer player you want to go somewhere where you can play in front of record crowds, to a city where the club is so embraced, to a place that has great facilities, and where you know the team and the club will be appreciated,” says Golub.

With consistent fan turnout, that appreciation shows. Gaining a large following around the team was relatively easy due, in part, to the level of play, says Golub. But, the benefit to a storied football culture is the sense that the game courses through the veins of its many fans. That was one of the reasons the Providence Park stadium got a USD 85 million renovation in 2017: to boost the fan experience while supporting greater seating capacity.

“Win or lose, Thorns fans are totally into this game,” says Golub. “There’s an intensity and a commitment to the club that’s really genuine. That’s at the heart of it. We’ve never marketed this as anything but the best women’s soccer in the world.”

Golub points to an exceptional general manager and coaching staff and their ability to identify and develop talent. But, equally, he points to the culture on the pitch. The chemistry underpins everything. “You’ve got to have talent and the right people in place, but you must also have the right chemistry,” he says.

That winning combination is clearly marked by a team effort. The 2021 Challenge Cup is a good example. Two out of the four games in which the Thorns participated were without their national-team players, yet the club went undefeated. It was not the first time either, as witnessed during the 2019 FIFA Women’s World Cup™ when the Thorns lost the most members of any club who went to participate in the event. And, more than likely, it won’t be the last.



Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

FIFA Foundation & CSR

Football inspires people around the world on a daily basis and has the power to bring about positive change through actions both on and off the pitch. Harnessing this power to drive social and community impact is a growing duty of stakeholders across the global football ecosystem. Turning our attention to such topics in this section, we share two perspectives from either end of the footballing spectrum, the grassroots and elite clubs, both of which showcase the beneficial outcomes the beautiful game can create. We begin in Armenia, going behind the scenes at the very first event held under the umbrella of the **FIFA Foundation Campus Programme**, which is aimed at improving the lives of underprivileged young people through sport and education. We then travel across Europe, and up the footballing pyramid, to Germany. Our interview with **Michael Meeske, the Managing Director of the Bundesliga's VfL Wolfsburg**, sheds light on the club's leading role in raising the subjects of corporate social responsibility and sustainability in our sport.



FIFA Foundation
The FIFA Foundation Campus Programme's first pilot project

[READ MORE](#)

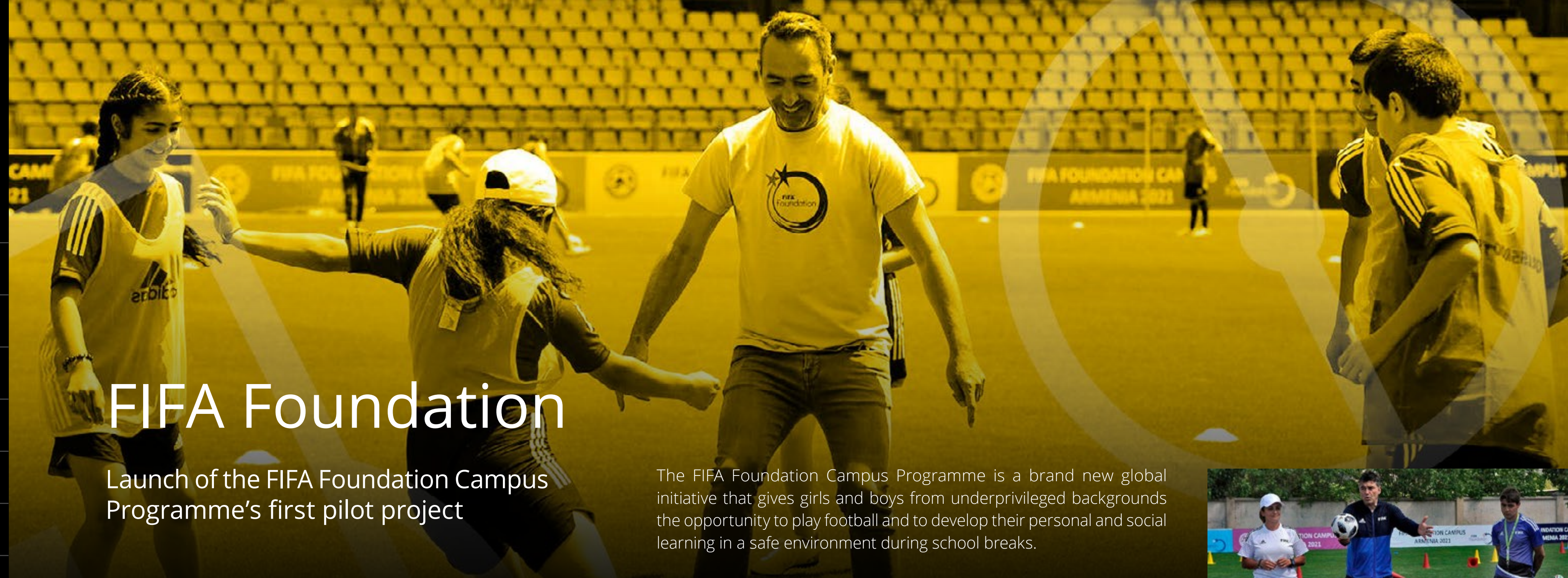


VfL Wolfsburg
Leading by example in CSR and sustainability

[READ MORE](#)

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR**
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



FIFA Foundation

Launch of the FIFA Foundation Campus Programme's first pilot project



In May 2021, the FIFA Foundation launched its first pilot project of the FIFA Foundation Campus Programme, in Yerevan, Armenia.

The FIFA Foundation Campus Programme is a brand new global initiative that gives girls and boys from underprivileged backgrounds the opportunity to play football and to develop their personal and social learning in a safe environment during school breaks.

The initiative mobilises football as a tool for social change and to improve the lives of young people, whilst contributing to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which are central to the work of the FIFA Foundation.

The week-long FIFA Foundation Campus event in Armenia saw these principles put into practice with learning for kids both on and off the pitch. It brought together girls and boys from orphanages, displaced families, national minorities and others who have a mental health condition, to the dedicated FIFA Foundation Campus grounds for the week, based at the Football Federation of Armenia (FFA) Technical Centre.

FIFA's Director of Refereeing, Massimo Busacca, trained the children in a session on respect and fair play on the pitch, highlighting to his young players the importance of carrying these values with them through life.

The children also had the opportunity to visit a national forest to plant trees and to gain a practical understanding of environmental protection. Following this, they spent time at an educational theme park that focuses on allowing kids to discover different careers.



The week-long FIFA Foundation Campus event in Armenia saw these principles put into practice with learning for kids both on and off the pitch. It brought together girls and boys from orphanages, displaced families, national minorities and others who have a mental health condition, to the dedicated FIFA Foundation Campus grounds for the week, based at the Football Federation of Armenia (FFA) Technical Centre.

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR**
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

FIFA Foundation

Launch of the FIFA Foundation Campus Programme's first pilot project

FIFA's Director of Refereeing, Massimo Busacca, trained the children in a session on respect and fair play on the pitch, highlighting to his young players the importance of carrying these values with them through life.

The children also had the opportunity to visit a national forest to plant trees and to gain a practical understanding of environmental protection. Following this, they spent time at an educational theme park that focuses on allowing kids to discover different careers.

The culmination of the week's FIFA Foundation Campus Programme was a football tournament played at Armenia's national football stadium in Yerevan. At the end of the competition, all of the children were presented with a diploma and gifts from Youri Djorkaeff, FFA President Armen Melikbekyan, UN Resident Coordinator Shombi Sharp and Armenian football legend Khoren Hovhannisyán. All grassroots coaches and young leaders received a diploma from Armenian national team coach Joaquín Caparrós.

Speaking about the FIFA Foundation Campus Programme, Youri Djorkaeff said: "This has been an unforgettable week, not just because we launched the Campus Pilot Programme, but because we saw the difference it can make. The skills and talents these kids discovered and developed this week, from our work on and off the pitch, are going to stand them in good stead in life. They have discovered a new source of happiness and joy – football – and our next step will be to bring this programme to other needy communities of kids around the world and continue to use football as a force for good."

UN Resident Coordinator for Armenia Shombi Sharp said: "[The] FIFA Foundation brings together two really important points that support the Sustainable Development Goals: one, the role of sports in achieving the goals and the other is the role of supporting the youth, our future, in providing solutions for the challenges that they face today. It was great for us to be able to partner with the FIFA Foundation and we look forward to doing it again."



The FIFA Foundation's vision is to deliver social change through football and to inspire humanity towards a healthier, fairer and more inclusive world. The FIFA Foundation Campus programme is committed to raising tomorrow's champions on and off the pitch and believes that out-of-school time represents an opportunity to give children the chance to dream and fulfil their potential.

More news on the FIFA Foundation Campus Programme and participating countries, as well as its other initiatives is available on [FIFA.com](https://www.fifa.com).

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

VfL Wolfsburg

Leading by example in CSR and sustainability

"As a Bundesliga club, we have to lead by example. That is the only way to stay true to yourself and connect with others."

— *Michael Meeske, Managing Director, VfL Wolfsburg*

- **VfL Wolfsburg have been a leading force in raising the subjects of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability. The Bundesliga outfit has collaborated with the United Nations on projects aiming to provide solutions to these long-term issues.**
- **Michael Meeske, VfL Wolfsburg Managing Director, explains the importance of football clubs and organisations monitoring sustainability and CSR and providing in-depth reports of their exemplary work to the public.**
- **Meeske also discusses the club's efforts to provide solutions in areas outside of their environmental work by promoting diversity, detailing social responsibility objectives, and explaining what the club has learnt from the impact of COVID-19.**

VfL Wolfsburg have three managing directors who are in charge of different business units. You are in charge of marketing, sales, internationalisation and digitalisation, which also covers sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR). In the last few years, the club has put CSR and sustainability at the top of its agenda, making it a trailblazer for sustainability in Europe. What does sustainability and CSR mean for a club like VfL Wolfsburg in general?

Sustainability is essential for successful football. To follow the road to success, you have to think in the long term and take a holistic approach to football. If you don't, you rely on short-term success and end up focusing only on short-term gains. That should not be the objective, whether at business, social or environmental level. As a Bundesliga club, we have to lead by example. That is the only way to stay true to yourself and connect with others. That's why we have made sustainability one of our core values and have, in collaboration with the United Nations, established very ambitious climate protection goals for our club.



Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR**
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

VfL Wolfsburg

Leading by example in CSR and sustainability

Ten years ago, CSR became one of the club's central management pillars. In 2013, VfL Wolfsburg became the first-ever football club to publish a GRI-certified sustainability report (Level B). In 2016, the club was recognised as the most sustainable club in the Bundesliga sustainability index, and in 2021 it was again ranked as Germany's most environmentally sustainable club. Why is it especially important for football clubs and organisations to report on their sustainability activities, as you do in your GRI report?

The sustainability report is a central communication tool for us. It is a comprehensive document that contains the actions and measures that we implement for society and the environment. It helps us be transparent. It also allows anyone who is interested to get a clear picture of what we do and why we do it. All our cards are on the table and that is essential, especially when it comes to sustainability. We showcase our most important activities but also present areas where, in the past, there have been shortcomings that could be improved and proactively addressed. When selecting topics, we use the most relevant studies and GRI standards.



Every four years, the club publishes detailed CSR reports entitled "Gemeinsam Bewegen" (Moving Together), and for each one a separate progress report is published. What does Gemeinsam Bewegen mean for the club at a societal and communication level?

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

VfL Wolfsburg

Leading by example in CSR and sustainability

The people in and around Wolfsburg closely follow what we do, which brings with it a great deal of responsibility. In other words, we are in the spotlight, which is what has prompted us to make sustainability a central tenet of our brand identity. Our aim is not only to inform people about what we are doing but also to make them think and, above all, to encourage them to become part of the solution. People are passionate about football and it can be a great motivator. We want to use this influence to raise awareness of social issues and inspire people in the region. We want to “move together”.

It's not just about ambitious climate protection projects; it is about standing up for what you believe in and conveying values. Diversity plays

a big role in this – the rainbow-coloured captain's armband is a symbol for the numerous actions in that regard – as does fighting discrimination, racism and homophobia.

At the heart of our CSR and sustainability work are numerous programmes that we implement together with our partners in the region. We work closely with countless companies, associations, educational institutions and municipalities and pursue long-term goals. I'd also like to mention our Anstoss VfL (VfL kick-off) project at this point. In the last five years, as part of the project, we have built up an extensive network of social partnerships with schools, day-care centres and clubs by providing them with a range of resources.

At the end of 2019, VfL Wolfsburg signed the “Sports for Climate Action” letter of commitment that is part of the United Nations Sports for Climate Action Framework. How important is it for football as a whole to take action against climate change?



Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

VfL Wolfsburg

Leading by example in CSR and sustainability

International climate protection is one of the greatest global challenges facing humanity. To limit the effects of climate change, we need to act quickly. Our ambition, however, is to go one step further than the Sports for Climate Action letter of commitment; we became the first European top-flight football club to support the United Nations' Race to Zero campaign and have pledged to take ambitious climate protection measures to make a quantifiable contribution and limit global warming to below 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial levels. Our plan is to live by our values of climate protection at the club and set a benchmark for the league as a whole. After all, we can only achieve CO₂-neutral football together. Even if it is not always possible for a football club to act sustainably in all areas due to its operations, we want to show that successful climate protection and a successful VfL Wolfsburg are not mutually exclusive.

Sports facilities consume resources, emit greenhouse gases and generate costs. The same is true when it comes to travel, whether for teams, staff or fans. Efficiency is key if we are to improve in all areas as a club, and to do so, we need clear and, above all, ambitious targets. We want to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions to net zero and be climate-neutral by 2025. To achieve this, we must follow a two-pronged strategy: reduction and offsetting. In terms of reduction, we have set ourselves a fixed goal: reducing our greenhouse gas emissions by 6.45% per year from the 2017/18 season onwards, meaning that by 2030 we will have reduced our emissions by about 55%. We can achieve this if all our processes gradually become CO₂-saving solutions.

Many people in the world of football think of VfL Wolfsburg as a forward-looking, innovative and generally modern club. You were the first club in the Bundesliga to use only LED floodlights and you have been using 100% green energy since 2011. What other sustainable practices and processes has the club implemented and can you tell us a bit about some of the most important sustainability projects that will make the club even more environmentally friendly?



In the last ten years, we have significantly reduced our CO₂ footprint. All of our business areas were analysed in detail in relation to our carbon footprint. The main bulk of our carbon footprint comes from heating, electricity consumption and team travel. We are focusing on these areas to reduce our emission levels. However, fan mobility represents the largest share by far and we cannot dictate to our fans how they should travel to and from matches. Nevertheless, we do share the responsibility for their emissions. We want to have more influence on fan mobility and are working on concepts that will hopefully encourage fans to use environmentally friendly modes of transport. For instance, the emissions generated by fans attending matches can be offset by buying eco-friendly tickets.

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR**
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

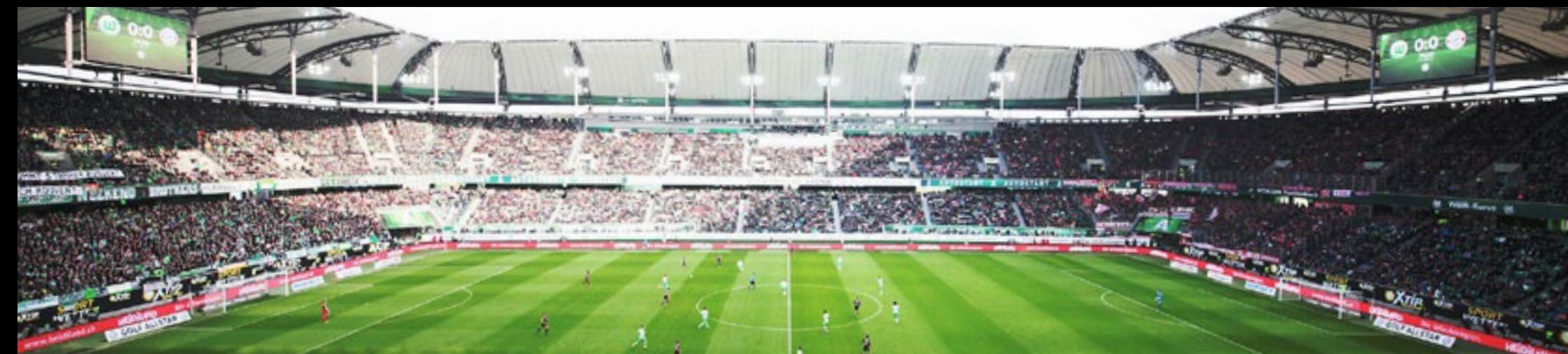
VfL Wolfsburg

Leading by example in CSR and sustainability

We've taken a few important steps towards achieving climate neutrality in the last few years, including switching to 100% green electricity (2011), ensuring new buildings meet the latest energy-efficiency standards and protecting natural resources by consistently using LED lights, return and deposit systems, and recycled paper and sustainable office supplies, with the support of our environmental partner, memo AG.

Now, in partnership with the United Nations, we are going one step further and want to significantly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions over the next few years through concrete measures. In recent months, the e-charging infrastructure at the office has been expanded and our players and employees will be encouraged to use our all-electric Volkswagen ID company cars if they need to travel. This means that VfL will also be contributing to climate-friendly mobility. Another driver in the green movement is using your own solar power. In the coming year, we will be expanding our photovoltaic system to generate even more green and inexpensive sun-powered electricity in the future. We're also planning to switch to more environmentally-friendly natural gas.

Aside from these initiatives that are aimed at reducing the club's environmental impact, you are also running several social programmes involving both club staff and the entire men's and women's teams. Can you tell us a little about the projects and what the club's goals are in terms of social responsibility?



As the most popular game in the world, football has a responsibility to address important social issues. We're leveraging the power of the Bundesliga to implement and publicise social projects in the region, in Germany and at international level. We advocate for inclusion and integration, we are committed to diversity, and we raise awareness about all forms of discrimination such as racism and homophobia. This is about how we behave; when it comes to racism and xenophobia, it's not about blaming anyone but about addressing the "them versus us" mindset and getting to know "the other". It's about engaging with the topic of diversity. Football has the opportunity to promote diversity and to be an ally to everyone who needs one. That is one of our club's central messages. We live diversity and explicitly reject racism and discrimination.

In 2018, we launched an extensive marketing initiative on the topic of diversity. At the heart of the campaign was #Vielfalt (#Diversity), which was promoted through advertising and a video. Last year, as part of our annual diversity week, our players wore a jersey that integrated the rainbow colours, sending a clear message against exclusion. We also hosted a FIFA tournament for people with a refugee background in that same week, which was a massive success. Since 2018, when our captains first walked onto the pitch wearing the rainbow armband, our diversity weeks have been greatly talked about in the region. In fact, in 2019, no fewer than 65 partner clubs, totalling more than 650 teams, joined our campaign and they have been proudly wearing the rainbow armband ever since. For the 2020 diversity week, we went one step further by printing the Volkswagen logo on our jerseys in rainbow colours, showing that Volkswagen, our parent company, are also firm believers in diversity. In addition to diversity and anti-discrimination, we naturally also place a special emphasis on education and health, and in doing so we also promote the personal commitment of our employees. For example, the entire club is involved in the annual "Moving Together" day, which is particularly close to all of our hearts: 11 teams consisting of employees, pros and managing directors, go out to support 11 social projects in 11 places.

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR**
- 12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

VfL Wolfsburg

Leading by example in CSR and sustainability

Another way in which the club engages with society is through stakeholder dialogue, in which the club specifically engages with its fans, but also with the local community, in a transparent way to understand what is expected of the club in social terms. Can you tell us a little bit more about what is discussed in this type of dialogue and the impact it has? How does the club translate the outcome of these discussions into concrete action?

Transparency and open dialogue are important to understand what social, environmental and economic expectations are placed on us. We regularly participate in discussions in the region and at association level, and we also organise forums ourselves that focus on CSR. In 2018, for example, we joined forces with Volkswagen to host the "Football Moves Society" discussion event, which was followed by two workshops: "Measuring the Impact of Commitment" and "Sustainable Sponsorship".

VfL Wolfsburg's view seems to be that modern football should be based on three pillars: optimal conditions for the players, a captivating stadium experience for the fans and, whenever possible, reducing its impact on the environment to an absolute minimum. How far has the club progressed in terms of translating these goals into reality, and which challenges still need to be addressed in the medium and long term in order to achieve its sustainability goal?

Sustainability is and continues to be a marathon. Even though we started ten years ago, we are still learning new things every day. We've been helped along the way by our many different and expert partners. They've supported us in, for example, calculating our carbon footprint and developing new, science-based ways of reducing it.



In the past year, we have once again focused especially on climate protection, which now has a special status at VfL since we signed the United Nations letter of commitment. We have already mentioned the roadmap for this.

If we want to save our planet within ten years, it is my hope that football will be ready at the end of that period to host climate-neutral matches and cup competitions and to work with sponsors and service providers who have also committed to achieving climate neutrality. I can even imagine spectators helping their favourite teams and clubs to successfully continue their climate-neutral journey. The "You can change the world" motto has been around for generations, but it has never been truer than for our generation. For me, and for many other people, football can indeed change the world.

Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

VfL Wolfsburg

Leading by example in CSR and sustainability

What concrete lessons and conclusions has the club drawn from the COVID-19 pandemic, and what objectives does the club have with regard to its activities and commitments, especially with regard to CSR and sustainability?

We didn't want anyone to feel alone during the COVID-19 pandemic, so we at VfL Wolfsburg showed our solidarity with #wirhelfen (#wehelp). This was a way of helping people and organisations in and around Wolfsburg who needed or were offering help by actively lending a hand. We mobilised a tried-and-tested network of committed people from the Volkswagen factory, the local authorities and the club, and we directly reached out to fans and members. We had a telephone campaign too, one aspect of which was to call season-ticket holders and fans to ask how they were doing and to offer them our support in their daily lives. Football has the power to show us how we can grow when faced with challenges. Today more than ever, we are responsible for safeguarding the future of the game in all of its forms and, more generally, the livelihoods of future generations.

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Marketing & Fan Engagement

The last year has reminded us more than ever how important fans are to the beautiful game. Symbolically, they are at the core of the identity and activity of our clubs, leagues and commercial stakeholders, representing both the proud, traditional past and the exciting, digital future of the sport. Attracting and maintaining the loyalty and attention of fans is a core priority for any football organisation as well as its partners, and the focus of the "Marketing" section in this issue. We sat down for an interview with the Chief Commercial Officer of **Qatar Airways** to understand how the multiple award-winning carrier brings the global game to the world and take a journey through the tales and tactics of **FC Barcelona**, **AS Roma**, **Parma Calcio 1913**, **New York City FC** and **Las Vegas Lights FC**, to reveal insights into the stories these clubs share with their supporters and the chances they provide for fans to play active roles within them.



Qatar Airways

Bringing the global game to the world

[READ MORE](#)



AS Roma

Taking your most devoted fans on the road with you

[READ MORE](#)



FC Barcelona

A digital strategy to conquer the world

[READ MORE](#)



Las Vegas Lights FC

Involving fans in the design of the team's home shirt

[READ MORE](#)



New York City FC

Involving fans in approving the club's logo

[READ MORE](#)



Parma Calcio 1913

Fan engagement alla Parmigiana: a recipe for allegiance

[READ MORE](#)

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Qatar Airways

Bringing the global game to the world

Football can produce emotions and feelings across borders and cultures like no other sport. More importantly, however, the beautiful game brings together people from all walks of life. For it to continue to thrive, develop and professionalise on the global stage, a network of strong and reliable partners that work together on the basis of shared missions and values is paramount. In this issue of the Professional Football Journal, we feature **Qatar Airways**, the national carrier of the State of Qatar, which became a FIFA Partner and the organisation's Official Airline in May 2017. Following the agreement, an innovative partnership ensued, which has seen the global airline support all FIFA competitions, including the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia™, the FIFA Women's World Cup France 2019™, the 2019 and 2020 editions of the FIFA Club World Cup™, and, of course, the highly anticipated FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2021™ and FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™. We spoke with the multiple award-winning airline's **Chief Commercial Officer, Thierry Antinori**, to learn more about how Qatar Airways supports a wide range of exciting international and local initiatives, including through a vast portfolio of football sponsorship deals, and what role the sport plays in its strategic efforts to enrich the global community that it serves.

Considering Qatar Airways' brand message of "Going Places Together", one could say that FIFA, as the world governing body, and Qatar Airways, as a leading global airline, share not only a common mission, but also the mutual values of sport. What is the airline's relationship with football and what importance does it have within the organisation?

Qatar and the Arab world are football-obsessed!

Ever since I first set foot in this region, I have observed that football is a great equaliser across all walks of life. If you take a stroll in Doha's neighbourhoods, people are always playing together. On the weekends, large groups gather to watch big league matches at cafes and pitches are full of children playing football out in the open.



- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Qatar Airways

Bringing the global game to the world



Football is the most popular sport in the world and brings people together, while sport, in general, is an important pillar of Qatari culture. This aspect hits very close to home with our message of "Going Places Together".

It is not enough for us to be a world-class airline; we want to be a company that delivers excitement and plays a role in bringing the global game to the world.

Just like football's global reach and popularity, Qatar Airways' operations cover all corners of the world, something that is not only reflected by servicing more than 1,000 airports across more than 160 countries, but also through the airline's extensive portfolio of sports and, in particular, football sponsorship deals. What is the strategy behind these partnerships and how do you evaluate which organisations – in this case within football – are a good fit for the company?



We take great pride in our sponsorship portfolio, and our football partnerships in particular.

Each one carries its own unique identity, a way for us to connect with more people and be a keen supporter of the football world.

We look for potential partners that match our passion and have the same commitment to their fans as we have to our passengers.

That is why we have alliances with clubs like Paris Saint-Germain, who have a reputation for style and sophistication on and off the pitch. Paris also has a rich street football culture even in its deepest suburbs.

Or take, for example, our partnership with Boca Juniors with the iconic La Bombonera stadium, which is home to an electrifying atmosphere. The local fans share a common devotion to the club that is well recognised around the world.

If you look at FC Bayern Munich, they set high standards through their winning culture, which reflects our values in the pursuit of excellence.

We pay close attention to clubs with a dedicated fan base and strong fan culture.

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Qatar Airways

Bringing the global game to the world

As a FIFA Partner, Qatar Airways can look ahead with FIFA to truly exciting and historic times on the horizon, with the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2021 a prelude to the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, which sees the world's biggest sporting event coming to the Middle East for the first time. What objectives has Qatar Airways set itself both from a logistical and a brand engagement perspective in relation to the road map for both events?



We are beyond excited for the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2021 and the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. It will be the first time that these enormous tournaments will be played on Arab soil. From a logistical standpoint, as the home airline, we will be prepared to provide seamless connectivity for travelling fans from all the represented nations. At the moment, we are already operating again in over 140 destinations worldwide and intend to gradually further expand our network.

Our award-winning hub, Hamad International Airport, voted the Best Airport in the Middle East for the last five years, is undergoing expansion as we look forward to featuring a spectacular 10,000m² tropical garden, a central concourse, and over 11,000m² of retail and F&B space. These expansion plans will increase our airport capacity to more than 53 million passengers by 2022.

Our digital outreach aims to capture the imagination of people who choose to fly with us and build an emotional connection with the audience as they interact with our brand.

We always try to highlight our warm Qatari hospitality and our dedication to creating a luxurious travel experience.

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Qatar Airways

Bringing the global game to the world



It is widely accepted that football is nothing without supporters. Understandably, fan engagement is therefore a key feature of sports organisations'

communications efforts, which have been on display particularly during and as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. You have produced powerful content around the absence and return of fans to stadiums of late with the #QRFanthem campaign. What will your consumer engagement strategy look like in the post-COVID-19 era, a time when friends and families all over the world long to reconnect with each other and also want to travel to once again see their favourite football and sports teams in action, specifically in the lead-up to and during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022?

The post-COVID-19 world would be the perfect opportunity to restore the magic of flying. In the build-up to the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, we want our content to combine our passion for aviation and football, tailored towards a global audience.

We consistently feature football superstars and world-class teams, and that helps build brand recognition amongst our passengers. Whether it be our in-flight safety videos or commercials for our latest partnerships, we have repeatedly aimed to deliver captivating campaigns.



Speaking of engaging the world's football fans in the lead-up to the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, we know that Qatar Airways has always been open to embracing innovation and new technologies, and creating unique experiences for fans to enjoy the game in the digital space, and specifically on social media. What can football lovers around the globe look forward to from the airline in this regard?

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Qatar Airways

Bringing the global game to the world

Well, innovation is something Qatar Airways has always embraced, even during the pandemic. Fans can rest assured that when they fly with us, safety and comfort are aspects that we never compromise on. We recently introduced our new Business Class Suite on the new-generation Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner. We were the first airline to introduce COVID-19 vaccine authentication in collaboration with the International Air Transport Association (IATA).



We were also the first global airline to offer passengers 100% touch-free in-flight entertainment technology, minimising the risk of COVID-19.

Our extensive network is something we take great pride in, and that enables us to connect fans across the world. We want to continue pairing innovation and world-class service to offer the best possible experience to our passengers.

It is also important to see our logo displayed on LED boards and jerseys, as it creates an association with the game that elevates our brand presence. It helps us be recognised on the world stage, even though our reputation precedes us.

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Qatar Airways

Bringing the global game to the world

Aside from its intrinsic and essential relationship with fans, the game of football is also very much built on the values of respect and solidarity, especially in relation to CSR activities. What is Qatar Airways' involvement in social and community projects and how does football play a role in these?



Our continual efforts to protect the planet for future generations and serve the communities that we are linked with are something we take great pride in. In the current landscape, our Airbus A380 fleet has been deemed environmentally and operationally unfeasible, which is why we have chosen to park all our superjumbos.

From an operational standpoint, Qatar Airways has a strong waste management and energy optimisation programme through our modern, fuel-efficient fleet of aircraft. We are also committed to our strategy of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, a pledge we undertook as part of the oneworld alliance.

We remain highly supportive to our community through initiatives such as the Educate A Child programme, championing medical causes around the world with Orbis UK and playing an active role in leaving a lasting social legacy after the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, through Qatar's Generation Amazing programme.

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Qatar Airways

Bringing the global game to the world

In your role as Qatar Airways' Chief Commercial Officer, you naturally maintain an unbiased position as far as any personal allegiances are concerned across the football landscape. Nevertheless, what is your all-time and most recent favourite football moment?

I think my best football moments will forever remain all the games we played with my friends after school on the street or at urban playgrounds in my hometown of Metz, France as a young teenager. We were just passionate and each game was our World Cup. We were counting down the hours during lessons every day, and ran off to play after the school bell freed us!

But, of course, I also have some favourite moments as a spectator in the stands. As a French national, I had the chance to be at the Stade de France as my country won the 1998 FIFA World Cup final 3-0. It was a crazy atmosphere. Another great France v. Brazil game that I loved attending was the 2006 FIFA World Cup quarter-final in Frankfurt, which was a very intense and tight match. I am definitely ready for more in Qatar at the FIFA World Cup 2022.



Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

AS Roma

Taking your most devoted fans on the road with you

AS Roma triple fan base with innovative and creative social media engagement

- **Around six years ago, AS Roma began rebuilding their communication platforms to create more compelling and engaging content for their massive fan base**
- **The club have since launched over 20 new official social media accounts on different platforms in 14 different languages, which has helped them lift follower numbers from five million to an impressive 15 million**
- **Their Missing Children campaign and player-signing announcements on social media were viewed more than 10 million times and won praise across the world**



"Don't miss out on this exclusive opportunity to have your photo on AS Roma's new team bus. It's easy and for only EUR 19.27, you can be part of the Roma experience. Upload your photo and ride with us everywhere we go."

This was a message on all AS Roma communication platforms in December 2014 when the Italian side unveiled a brand-new team bus prior to the club's annual Christmas bash at Villa Miani. Along with the presentation, the Giallorossi promoted a campaign called #ridewithus which gave fans the opportunity to submit their favourite AS Roma-related photo of themselves to be included on the mosaic club crest on the inside of the bus. The campaign was part of an innovative PR strategy to take AS Roma down a less trodden path, break new ground with a cutting-edge touch and set it apart from other clubs in terms of creativity and innovation.

AS Roma

Taking your most devoted fans on the road with you

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

AS Roma may have finished the past season in a somewhat disappointing seventh position in Serie A, but in terms of fan-engagement activities, especially on social media, the Giallorossi have taken on a commanding position amongst the top teams in Europe for a long time. This is very much due to the fact that AS Roma have been able to internationalise their audiences by breaking down communication barriers between the club and fans, especially those who live outside Italy.

In 2020, AS Roma was the only football club to be included on the Fast Company's prestigious annual list of the world's most innovative companies, which includes businesses from 39 countries. Roma's inclusion on the 2020 list was prompted by the club's innovative use of social media to help search for missing children. Roma partnered with charities all over the world displaying posters of over 100 missing children alongside videos confirming the arrivals of Chris Smalling, Pedro, Marash Kumbulla, Borja Mayoral and other players. The videos went viral as they were shared by club fans and were viewed more than 10 million times. In addition, seven children who featured in the Roma campaign were found unharmed.

The club launched over 20 new official social media accounts in 2015 – on different platforms and in different languages – to exploit the enormous range of news being produced on AS Roma in newspapers, on radio and not least on their own TV channel. With the launch of the new Swahili account, AS Roma now communicate in 14 different languages on social media, with official accounts in Italian, English, Arabic, Indonesian, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Bosnian, Turkish, Dutch, Farsi, Pidgin and Chinese.



01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

AS Roma

Taking your most devoted fans on the road with you

In 2020, AS Roma was the only football club to be included on the Fast Company's prestigious annual list of the world's most innovative companies, which includes businesses from 39 countries. Roma's inclusion on the 2020 list was prompted by the club's innovative use of social media to help search for missing children. Roma partnered with charities all over the world displaying posters of over 100 missing children alongside videos confirming the arrivals of Chris Smalling, Pedro, Marash Kumbulla, Borja Mayoral and other players. The videos went viral as they were shared by club fans and were viewed more than 10 million times. In addition, seven children who featured in the Roma campaign were found unharmed.



In the last few years, AS Roma have been active across all major social media channels, including Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, WeChat and Weibo, with witty and self-disparaging posts, which have helped them increase their tally of social media followers from five million to an impressive 15 million. One of their brightest moments was in 2017 when the club decided to combine the announcement of their eSports team with the signing of Lorenzo Pellegrini. The club posted a 26-second clip of a virtual player playing FIFA 17, and when he scored a wonderful goal, the camera revealed that the man controlling the console was in fact Pellegrini himself.

Humour has gone a long way towards engaging fans and increasing the number of social media followers, for example, when Swedish international goalkeeper Robin Olsen was announced with an Ikea-style manual guide under the headline "Delivery for #ASRoma". The announcement received no fewer than 25,000 likes, had more than 5,000 retweets and even got a reply from the Swedish furniture company.

Aside from their new language channels, AS Roma have also gone to great lengths to strengthen their ties with their international fans, such as when, for the 2018 FIFA World Cup™, where Italy failed to qualify, they decided to support the Super Eagles from Nigeria on social media. The initiative was born out of gratitude to Nigerian radio presenter Mark Otabor following his passionate words about the Roma v. Barcelona UEFA Champions League match in the spring of 2018. The bond since blossomed through the club's Pidgin-language social media account, along with a subsequent partnership with the Nigeria Football Federation.

Over the last couple of years, AS Roma have succeeded in making compelling and engaging content with a less formal tone, and if they are able to display the same innovation and creativity on the pitch, the club could certainly be in for some very successful seasons ahead.

Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

FC Barcelona

A digital strategy to conquer the world

"They have Mickey Mouse, Barça has its football stars."

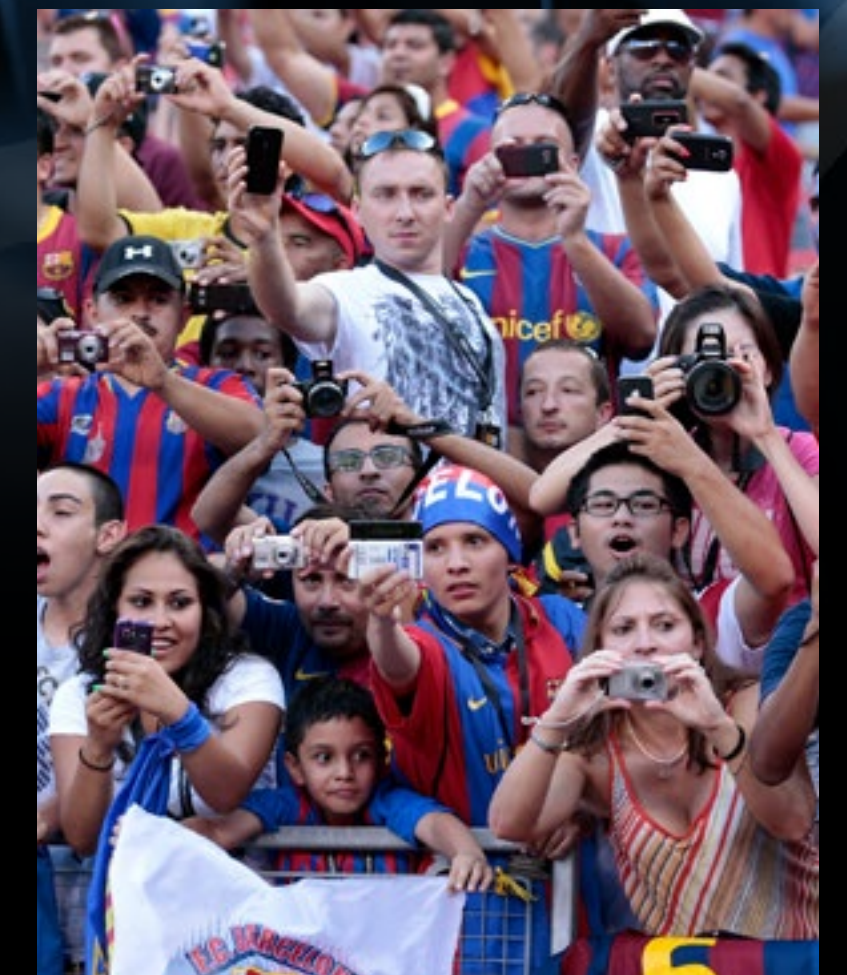
— *Dídac Lee, former Board Member and Head of Digital Area, FC Barcelona*

- **If you want to capture the next generation of fans, you need superb digital content.**
- **Dídac Lee used to sit on the FC Barcelona board of directors and he led the club's digital strategy. Lee says that clubs need to look outside the football industry for inspiration.**
- **As part of the strategy, the club launched the Culers membership programme.**
- **Barça's content is far more than just "short-form" clips aimed at Generation Z. A local filmmaker will produce the La Masia series, which focuses on a young player coming through the ranks of the famed youth academy.**

From Johan Cruyff to Lionel Messi, FC Barcelona have always been at the forefront of the very best the global game has had to offer, and nowadays the club also excels in the virtual arena where it is forging a global fanbase.

The Spanish club has long understood that its competitors are no longer solely on the pitch. To stay ahead of the global tech brands, FC Barcelona, an evergreen in pioneering and innovation, developed a digital strategy that entices fans, differentiates the club and conveys its values.

FC Barcelona have more than 400 million followers on social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and TikTok), people who, one way or the other, identify themselves with the club. Barça know that today's currency is fan attention, even more so among "Gen Z", the next set of football fans.



01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

FC Barcelona

A digital strategy to conquer the world

Fan attention generates revenue. On a global scale, the Blaugrana's revenue is unsurpassed, yet there are limits to TV rights, merchandising and ticketing. According to Dídac Lee, a former FC Barcelona board member and driving force behind the club's digital strategy, "It is not realistic to think that we are going to triple the income from the TV rights."

A strong digital strategy complements the income from those traditional revenues, currently around EUR 100 million, but any aim to triple this figure may, given the pandemic, be too ambitious.

At the heart of the strategy is Barça Studios, which "centralises the creation, production and commercialisation of FC Barcelona's audiovisual output, and includes the management of club television channel Barça TV." Barça Studios feeds content to Barça TV, which is available round-the-clock, with match highlights, first team squad member interviews and archive footage such as the longest sit-down chat with the legendary Cruyff ever recorded.

The vision, as Lee explains, is simple: "FC Barcelona is not just a football club, but an entertainment and content company as well." Barça Studios, inspired in part by Disney, one of the world's most recognisable entertainment brands, allows Barcelona to tell its own story and diversify assets.

When devising a new and wide-reaching digital strategy for FC Barcelona, Dídac Lee did not look to traditional arch-rivals Real Madrid as a benchmark. Nor did the Barcelona board member compare his club to other established international football brands, like Manchester United, or those pursuing global recognition, like Paris Saint-Germain.

Instead, Lee, the former head of Barcelona's digital area, measured the Catalan giants against one of the world's biggest entertainment companies.



Table of Contents

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

FC Barcelona

A digital strategy to conquer the world



„Disney have their own parks, Barça has the Camp Nou stadium. They produce cartoons while Barcelona produces its content as well. They have merchandise, the club has a lot of merch. And they have Mickey Mouse, and Barça has its football stars,” he said with a smile.

As part of the strategy, the club launched the Culers membership programme.

For EUR 29.99 a year (the price in Spain), fans are offered the opportunity to “feel closer to Barça”, with benefits including discounts on tickets and merchandise. It is separate to becoming a socio, or club member, which typically takes three years of temporary membership for those without close family members who are existing members.

Another benefit of the Culers membership is unlimited access to Barça TV+, the club's new subscription-based over-the-top (OTT) streaming service. Described by Lee as the “jewel in the crown” of the digital strategy, Barça TV+ includes on-demand highlights of first-team matches, exclusive player interviews, live coverage of FC Barcelona's women's team's matches and documentary series.

Catalan director and independent filmmaker Albert Serra will produce the La Masia series, which focuses on a young player coming through the ranks of the famed youth academy, his journey and the human drama stories around him. The series will dovetail with FC Barcelona's values: teamwork, respect, humility, hard work and competition. FC Barcelona's digital strategy is therefore about exposure, fan loyalty, monetisation, innovation and transforming the club into a strong media brand beyond the realms of sports.

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

FC Barcelona

A digital strategy to conquer the world

Catalan director and independent filmmaker Albert Serra will produce the La Masia series, which focuses on a young player coming through the ranks of the famed youth academy, his journey and the human drama stories around him. The series will dovetail with FC Barcelona's values: teamwork, respect, humility, hard work and competition. FC Barcelona's digital strategy is therefore about exposure, fan loyalty, monetisation, innovation and transforming the club into a strong media brand beyond the realms of sports.

It is also about values and identity, but in recent history no discussion about FC Barcelona was complete without accounting for the influence of Lionel Messi, the club's mercurial lodestar over so many years.

The Argentinean generated global attention like no other player throughout the past two decades, giving FC Barcelona a brand recognition of enormous magnitude.

While Lee is a huge admirer of the Blaugrana's former number 10, he also thinks that the club's digital, fan-centric model will continue to thrive even in the post-Messi era. The numbers back his claim. Even in seasons when the club did not excel, no one matched FC Barcelona's online popularity. And that's the way they want to keep it in Catalonia.



Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Las Vegas Lights FC

Involving fans in the design of the team's home shirt

Enlisting supporters to build a fan engagement platform: a case study on Las Vegas Lights FC

- **To build fan engagement, Las Vegas Lights FC asked supporters to help design its 2020 kit.**
- **The overwhelming response warranted further fan involvement and transformed into 17 different shirts for each of the club's 17 regular season home games.**
- **Challenges tied to lead time and purchase minimums with no assurances of sales led to the club selling shirt designs to sponsors.**
- **Club owner and CEO Brett Lashbrook underscores the value of creating a more interesting fan experience as being paramount to the success of the club beyond what is transpiring on the pitch.**

When it comes to fan engagement, it is perhaps a truism that football in the second division of a major market has to work a little harder to garner attention. The solution, of course, is to find creative, out-of-the-box ways to capture mindshare.

Las Vegas Lights FC, which reside within the United Soccer League, understand this well and embrace the challenge of creativity. The club looks to the Las Vegas backdrop for inspiration – a city often referred to as the entertainment capital of the world with its nightly aura of neon lights, beloved singers and magical, death-defying feats that continue to capture the imagination of people from all corners of the globe, says club owner and CEO Brett Lashbrook.

In 2019—year two for the club, Las Vegas Lights FC launched a jersey initiative designed to engage fans and capture new ones. The club issued a directive requesting fans to help to design the 2020 kit. Receiving close to a thousand submissions, the response was overwhelming, says Lashbrook.



Las Vegas Lights FC

Involving fans in the design of the team's home shirt

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Following some reflection, club executives decided to take the initiative further. The 2020 jersey challenge transformed into 17 different shirts for each of the 17 regular season home games. Las Vegas Lights FC encouraged fans to continue submitting their ideas to a dedicated web address, [LightsFC.com/JerseyDesign](https://lightsfc.com/JerseyDesign), and also made a limited number of jerseys available for purchase during each home game.

Ideas sprang from an elementary school-aged child, a high schooler who created a jersey as a school project for a graphic design course, the head of one of the club's supporter groups and a fan from another country that follows the club on Twitter, all of which made it onto the slate for production.

Lashbrook says the programme took its lead from what some of the big clubs overseas, like Chelsea FC, FC Barcelona and Manchester City, were doing. They were seen sporting different-coloured jerseys frequently, which was confounding and refreshing all at once. For Las Vegas Lights FC, the only proviso was that the shirts had to remain true to the team's colours: shock blue, neon yellow and neon peach.

Initially, an American online shoe and clothing retailer based in Las Vegas, served as the kit sponsor. The club recognised that the company (now owned by Amazon) had a penchant for the local art scene and could be an effective partner in capturing the essence of what the club stands for as a proud Las Vegas team. The first jersey sported a neon tube, leaving fans either loving or hating it, but with the sense of wanting more.

Challenges were tied to lead time and having to purchase minimum quantities, with no inkling of whether or not the shirts would sell. Those sorts of issues get amplified at the minor league level, says Lashbrook. One solution was to sell the shirt design to sponsors. These included the Nevada Donor Network, which encourages the Hispanic community to donate their organs upon death.



Las Vegas Lights FC

Involving fans in the design of the team's home shirt

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

This resulted in the creation of a dedicated kit that featured various human organs to promote awareness. The club followed up with a shirt nod to the Vegas Golden Knights, a Las Vegas hockey team that plays in the National Hockey League which launched around the same time as Las Vegas Lights FC (2017-2018). On the heels of the hockey team experiencing a wave of success, a football shirt that resembled their uniform was manufactured and called the "Golden Knights' Lights Night".

zLF28oXh.jpeg

Other shirts were created for breast cancer awareness, National Hispanic Heritage Month, in support of the National Football League's (NFL) Las Vegas Raiders as well as to celebrate American Independence Day, with a 4 July red, white and blue jersey that replicated the "famous" 1994 US men's national team's denim jersey.

But COVID-19 caused production to stop halfway through. Las Vegas Lights FC managed to produce eight shirts in all before having to put an end to the initiative.

Lashbrook describes programmes such as these as a means to help build the soccer narrative and culture. It is about the importance of focusing on everything that happens outside of the 90 minutes on the pitch. He underscores the value of creating a more interesting fan experience as being paramount to the success of the club.

"We can't guarantee wins and we can't guarantee goals," says Lashbrook. "But what we can guarantee are smiles and laughs."



Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



New York City FC

Involving fans in approving the club's logo

New York City FC: how 100,000 fans participated in creating their logo, long before the club had played a single game

- **A year before New York City FC (NYCFC) officially began to play, the club launched a badge initiative, asking fans to vote for their favourite and handing the final decision over to them.**
- **Matt Goodman, Chief Operating Officer and Chief Commercial Officer at NYCFC, explains all the small details that made the project a big success.**
- **The club hosted a “Badge of Badges” campaign, where interested individuals were given an opportunity to show their artistry by submitting their own badge creations.**
- **Executives looked to the club’s mission statement and values, which emphasise empowerment and inclusivity, to create the initiative on the pitch.**

For any new club, the big question is: how do you build a robust fan base when you have to begin from scratch? Creating a strong fan engagement platform proves to be an essential measure. This was true of NYCFC, which in 2014 – a year before the club officially began to play – launched a programme that put fans right at the centre.

NYCFC had some challenges to overcome, despite being part of the same group as the New York Yankees and English Premier League giants Manchester City. Mainly, the club had to contend with the fact that it resided in a market deemed to be one of the most competitive for sports, media, entertainment and more.

In considering how to reach a new fan base to build a groundswell of excitement, executives looked to the club’s mission statement, of empowering people to have better lives through football, for some answers. They also took account of NYCFC’s values, in which inclusivity plays a big part.



New York City FC

Involving fans in approving the club's logo

01. Foreword

02. Club Football

03. Coaches

04. Players

05. Leagues

06. Stadium Management

07. Football Stakeholders

08. FIFA Regulatory

09. Talent, Analytics & Performance

10. Women's Football

11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Given the many and varied strategic issues involved in launching the club, the powers-that-be landed on its logo initiative as the best means to engage fans and hand the ultimate decision on the design of its permanent badge over to them.

"The primary goal is establishing the tone of the relationship with your fans at the outset," says Matt Goodman, Chief Operating Officer and Chief Commercial Officer at NYCFC.

Part of this meant ensuring that NYCFC supporters could feel as though they were taking part in building the club while participating in the creative process. Listening to fan feedback was imperative in fostering a dialogue from which to move forward.

In March 2014, NYCFC unveiled two designs created by artist Rafael Esquer, intended to reflect the uniqueness of New York City. For example, the typeface of the badges were done in the Gotham style (an American typeface) to replicate the lettering used on many buildings across the city.

The white, blue and orange colours are a nod to the New York City flag. One of the badges, the "shield badge", mirrored the official seal of New York City, which is considered to be historic. The other, the "circular badge", was inspired by the New York City subway token. Created by the Transit Authority, this token was in use between 1953 and 2003.

The badge's binding nature – tying the fans, the club and the city together – shows the true importance of focusing on fan engagement. "It isn't just the city that's being reflected, but also what the club stands for," says Goodman. "When you look at the storyline around the creation of our badge, it was very purposeful," he says.



New York City FC

Involving fans in approving the club's logo

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

The results were telling. Over 100,000 people participated within a four-day voting window. This, says Goodman, was strategic on the club's part to create a sense of urgency in order to build momentum. "It shows the power of our population, too," he adds, pointing to the excitement that New Yorkers demonstrated in having a football team they could call their own. It is also a testament to how international the city is, with football sometimes serving to connect people who support it elsewhere in the world. To have it closer to home meant something big.

The badge initiative was not limited to Esquer's work. While fans could vote on their favourite badge, the club hosted a separate digital activation that had launched a month prior in the lead-up to releasing Esquer's two designs. Known as the "Badge of Badges" campaign, interested individuals were given an opportunity to show their artistry by submitting their own badge creations over a two-month period.

NYCFC set up a "badge configurator" – a tool they could work from for their designs, which would then become a pixel of the official team badge mosaic. This fan-generated piece of art remains on permanent display within the club's facilities.

The success of the overall programme came in the form of fans contributing and sharing in the club's creative process. This, in turn, sparked great fanfare around NYCFC's pre-launch. The club had 20,000 season ticket holders in its 2015 inaugural season and drew an average attendance of 29,000 that same year.

Goodman sums up why this fan engagement platform was so successful: "It authentically connected the fans to the club," he says. "For them to have the opportunity to vote on and have an impact on the identity of NYCFC – it doesn't get much more meaningful than that."



Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement



Parma Calcio 1913

Fan engagement alla Parmigiana: a recipe for allegiance

Parma Calcio 1913 and their fans, particularly the club's season-ticket holders, have been on a memorable journey to get where they are today.

It has been a rollercoaster ride for the Ducali, from the highs of winning the 1995 and 1999 editions of the then UEFA Cup to the lows of facing bankruptcy in 1968, 2004 and 2015, but, if anything, the connection with the steadfast supporters has been reinforced.

Whether it's the number 12 shirt being reserved for fans, or every season-ticket holder's name being embroidered on previous club kits, this relationship has been admired even by those who do not feel the same attachment to Parma.

The passion for Parma has been passed on through the generations within the local, tight-knit fanbase. When Parma FC were dismantled due to bankruptcy in 2015, a new club was formed in their place, with "Calcio 1913" (the year of the original club's foundation) added to the name, and the city's mayor spoke openly about the need for the community to get behind the revamped team.

The fans listened and responded in abundance as a whopping 10,089 season tickets were sold, breaking the previous Serie D record set by ACN Siena, who filled 3,774 annual seats.

After back-to-back promotions, interest started to emerge from business leaders worldwide. Consequently, the club was able to attract new sources of investment in addition to those obtained by the club's previous owners. A remaining 10% of club shares belonged to crowdfunding supporters, who were integral during the club's relaunch.



Table of Contents

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Parma Calcio 1913



The new Chinese investors knew the fundamental role that the fans had played in the club's history and upward trajectory. The local feeling around the club remained present during and after the new ownership's arrival as supporters felt as connected with their team as ever before. Employing former Parma player Hernán Crespo as Vice-President was a move that went down well with fans.

The combination of business intelligence and the fans' passion saw Parma complete a hat-trick of promotions, swiftly returning to Serie A.

The connection didn't stop there. In the club's first match back in the Italian top flight, at home to ACF Fiorentina, local fans were treated to general-sale tickets costing EUR 1 – the same price that Parma FC had been sold for during the 2015 debacle.

For their first season back in Serie A, the 2018/19 campaign, Parma had sold 11,050 season tickets, more than the tallies from each of the past five seasons. Importantly, they avoided instant relegation back to Serie B. Fans would enjoy two more seasons in Serie A that saw their team rekindle their rivalry with the likes of Juventus FC, AC Milan, FC Inter Milan, AS Roma, Fiorentina and SS Lazio, with whom they had engaged in so many blockbuster tussles in the 1990s.

- 01. Foreword
- 02. Club Football
- 03. Coaches
- 04. Players
- 05. Leagues
- 06. Stadium Management
- 07. Football Stakeholders
- 08. FIFA Regulatory
- 09. Talent, Analytics & Performance
- 10. Women's Football
- 11. FIFA Foundation & CSR

12. Marketing & Fan Engagement

Parma Calcio 1913

In the summer of 2019, Parma took their bond with their supporters to greater heights. Working with digital agency Caffeina, the Una Storia Infinita (A Never-Ending Story) campaign was brought to life in every corner of the city.

A 105-metre-long scarf (as long as a football pitch) was the centrepiece of the campaign. Every season-ticket holder was able to sign it in the town's main square and it was subsequently brought to the Ennio Tardini Stadium for the opening match against Juventus.

Before the encounter with The Old Lady, a photo booth was set up by Caffeina, where fans could take a picture with the scarf. It comes as no surprise that some timeless photos were created and later shared on the club's Instagram channel, featuring supporters of all ages.

According to Caffeina's CEO Tiziano Tassi, the campaign was integral in "combining physical and digital media to stimulate the fans' passion and unite fans of all generations". Special tickets for under-30s were also created for the new season, with free admission offered for under-8s. Significantly, Parma also had the cheapest season ticket price in Serie A at EUR 170.

Last year's takeover by an American company has propelled the global interest in Parma. Their fans have been involved every step of the way and have been rewarded for their dedication. After suffering relegation to Serie B last season, their incredible support will be needed once more but is sure to be recognised.

