

FAN OUTRAGE SCUTTLES ‘SUPER’ SOCCER PLAN

Sports fans in Europe obviously carry much more influence than their counterparts in North America.

A good old-fashioned fan uprising amazingly brought a halt to what was termed by some as a money-grabbing, to-hell-with-the-little-guy plan to shake the very foundation of the most important aspect of life in Europe — soccer. That’s actually ‘football’ to a European; ‘soccer’ to us in North America.

When the earth-shaking, shocking transformation of the European soccer world was announced on April 18 — one that would have created a ‘Super League’ of 12 of the most powerful and influential teams in England, Spain and Italy — fans in many parts of Europe went berserk. Whereas a similar situation in North America may have resulted in a one- or two-day protest, only to die down in the face of powerful owners and influential media, the outcome in Europe was far different.

Football (soccer) fans, fearing a huge disruption to the sporting world as they know it, protested loudly — in person, with huge gatherings; online, with major social media outcries; and threats.

The noise and fan outrage was too much for the six English teams involved in the Super League — Manchester United, Arsenal, Chelsea, Manchester City, Tottenham Hotspur and Liverpool — which within two days all announced a withdrawal from the pan-Europe plan. That left the six others — AC Milan, Inter Milan, and Juventus from Italy and Atlético Madrid, Barcelona and Real Madrid from Spain — spinning their wheels in the wilderness.

The Super League concept lasted all of two days, before the fans got their wish and scuttled the arrangement. The 12-team Super League would have created opportunities for vast millions of dollars for the 12 teams, but left the smaller teams in their wake scrambling for whatever media crumbs and dollars might be left over.

This may be a European story, but millions of Canadians avidly follow European soccer. Many of them couldn’t care less if Tom Brady or Connor McDavid exist, but can’t live without knowing about every step taken by Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo, and other Euro stars.

In sport, money usually talks. But in this case, it was an enraged fan base that won the day. Literally overnight, the Super League was left in a stupor.

- **Dwight Perry** of the Seattle Times: “NFL teams are required to provide three-dozen sliced oranges for visiting teams, The Athletic reported. Players’ parents, however, are not allowed to accost coaches over their kids’ playing time.”
- **Patti Dawn Swanson**, aka the River City Renegade, on reluctance by people in this COVID era to gather in large groups: “. . . Likely will make some quite antsy, like a Hertz rent-a-car clerk seeing **Tiger Woods** approach the counter.”
- **Mike Bianchi** of the Orlando Sentinel: “One of my favourite quotes of all-time comes from trailblazing woman car racer **Janet Guthrie**, who was once asked how much does brute strength play into being competitive on the race track. ‘You drive the car,’ Guthrie deadpanned, ‘you don’t carry it.’”
- Ex-defenceman **Bill Mikkelsen**, to TSN, on playing for the worst team in NHL history — the 8-67-5 Washington Capitals of 1974-75: “We had a good team. We were just in the wrong league.”
- **Steve Simmons** of SunMedia, on the apparent grumpiness of a certain NHLer: “If **Jeff Carter** walks into a restaurant in Pittsburgh late in the afternoon do they cancel happy hour?”
- NFL Memes, on Twitter: “**Zach Wilson** looks like the actor who would play **Zach Wilson** in a Disney movie about **Zach Wilson**.”
- **Mike Bianchi** of the Orlando Sentinel: “Alabama Heisman Trophy-winning wide receiver **DeVonta Smith** was measured recently at 6-foot and a scant 166 pounds. I’m not saying he’s too skinny to withstand the pounding of the NFL, but he is the only player in the upcoming draft who uses a Cheerio as a Hula Hoop.”
- **RJ Currie** of sportsdeke.com: “MLB hired former WWE ‘sizzle planner’ **Brian Stedman** for league strategy and development. Soon, instead of a manager sitting a pitcher down, he’ll come out and hit him with a chair.”

- **Headline at TheOnion.com:** “Depressed **Javier Baez** points at seats directly behind third base before pitch.”
 - **Another one from TheOnion.com:** “NCAA fines Alabama football players for receiving championship rings as gifts.”
 - **Janice Hough** of leftcoastsportsbabe.com, after Bucs QB Tom Brady said players would have trouble ‘trying to block the right people’ after the league relaxed its jersey-number restrictions: “Hey, Tom, not all NFL players need reading glasses.”
 - **Patti Dawn Swansson** again, on those outfits that **Ralph Lauren** designed for U.S. Olympians: “I can’t tell if he’s dressed the U.S. team for the next space-shuttle mission or an expedition to the South Pole.”
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