

## European Super League: Money Over Meaning

Europe's biggest clubs exposed as planning a break-away league that could undermine the fabric of football

By [Will Hadley](#)

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Real Madrid winning their third Champions League in a row... are they getting bored? Photo: Anton Zantsev

THE END OF THE PREMIER league as we know it? No more Champions League? The Three Lions without Harry Kane? It might sound ridiculous but if the recent leaks from German newspaper Der Spiegel are to be believed, then it could all happen as soon as 2021.

The explosive emails published in early November reveal a secret plan by Europe's 'elite' clubs to leave their national leagues as well as all UEFA competitions to form a 'European Super League.' The 11 founding members, including the likes of Chelsea, Bayern Munich, and Real Madrid would not face relegation and could be joined by five 'initial guests' chosen from the remainder of Europe's national leagues.

If any of this initially sounds appealing then I would urge you to think about it again. The entire concept of a so-called 'league', where clubs cannot be relegated, or even permanently promoted to the top flight, stands in opposition to everything that has made football compelling for well over a century.

A European league in which the worst teams are not replaced with new blood at the start of every season would quickly become a stale and mediocre mess full of overplayed and under-motivated players. Without the threat of relegation, there's nothing to stop players from mid-table clubs simply downing tools half way through the season once a title challenge slips out of reach. Imagine watching a Premier

League in which last years' relegation fodder like West Brom, Swansea and Stoke were all perpetually guaranteed a place at the end of last season while Wolves were denied entry from the Championship. I don't know about you but I'd rather watch paint dry.

Still, perhaps the appeal of watching a league made solely of the "super fixtures" that make the Champions League so interesting could be enough to sway some people. Watching Real Madrid vs Chelsea or Bayern battering Arsenal 5-1 every week does sound appealing at first, but this fundamentally negates what makes these matches so fun in the first place - the fact that they don't happen very often. Like a Granit Xhaka screamer or a Lorus Karius save, these matches in the Champions League are not regular occurrences, which is exactly why when they do happen they're worth watching. Put them on every weekend in some tin-pot Super League and you're killing the very thing that makes them so enticing.

For these 'elite' clubs, the aim of being the best through fair competition gave way to the profit motive a long time ago. To them, the shift to a European Super League, even if it becomes stale and lacks any real value as a test of who Europe's best team is, can only be a good thing if it makes them more money.

There is no doubt that the league would be one of the most marketable 'entertainment products' ever created, and would make billions in TV revenue, particularly in overseas markets where these clubs have growing fanbases - but at what cost? The Super League would be an utterly soulless exercise in corporate branding with away fans unable to afford the travel costs involved and many of football's traditional local derbies lost. In the American fashion we'd be tuning in every week to watch Franchise United vs McDonalds fight over a meaningless plastic trophy. No thanks. Give me Wigan knocking Man City out of the FA Cup or Leicester winning the Premier League at 5000/1 odds any day of the week. That's what football is about at its core.

As for how the FA and UEFA should deal with this, it seems that the only option is to come down as hard as possible on any club or player that joins the Super League. The idea of banning any player who takes part from playing for their national team has been floated by some at FIFA and while it may seem extreme, it may well be one of the few measures available strong enough to act as a deterrent. As bureaucratic and corrupt as the Football Associations of the world can be, the answer is not to allow the clubs to run their own league. Giving the biggest clubs their own playground takes away any ambition for the majority of clubs in the wider game. It would be like the inmates running the asylum; an experiment with disastrous consequences for the fabric of the sport as a whole.



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Anonymous

20 Nov '18 at 10:25 pm

What an excellent article

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