

Robert's Rant: Super League collapse a glorious week for soccer

By **Robert Belardi** Opinion

Under normal circumstances when you want to build a long-lasting structure, usually you build it from the ground up. What you don't do is construct it on top of a previously-built foundation that simply needs some tweaking.

Two Sundays ago, the world shook. Soccer fans around the world were filled with distaste and anguish. Twelve of Europe's largest soccer clubs had come to an agreement to introduce an all-new Super League as the sports latest new vision in over 150 years of existence.

It was reportedly began by President of Real Madrid Florentino Perez who was preparing to become chairman of the Super League alongside President of Juventus Andrea Agnelli.

If there's one thing this sport teaches anyone it is the global game is for the fans and by the fans.

In a time where fans have been forced to sequester in their own homes and remain on the sidelines until another day, this forced many people out of their shells.

Pundits like former Manchester United fullback Gary Neville and Rio Ferdinand shared their fan perspective and ripped this apart immediately.

Neville said you might as well disown your own club and the grassroots system that has been built in the United Kingdom would have been squashed. Ferdinand said this is a war on football, it's embarrassing and similarly to Neville, touched on how lower professional clubs would have suffered.

On April 20, fans came with banners. They came with vehement messages, lambasting the owners and the American investors over this perturbing idea.

Chelsea supporters, including former goalkeeper Petr Cech, marched in front of the gates of Stamford Bridge before The Blues were set to take on Brighton and Hove Albion in protest.

Shortly after, Chelsea FC declared they would be opting out, then Manchester City announced it. Then all six English clubs involved opted out.

Atletico Madrid and then all three Italian clubs hit the deck as well. Agnelli admitted defeat but he did say he is still convinced about the idea. Perez opted to stand by the Super League. FC Barcelona still remained convinced that opting out of the Super League would have been an historic error, as per theScore.

The idea that lasted around 72 hours was also harshly criticized by soccer's governing bodies. UEFA threatened to ban clubs from participating in the Champions League and in future World Cups. But the fans publicly shaming their own clubs in a sport that is tribal by all stretches of the imagination must have left a sour taste in all of their mouths.

Following many apologies and issues stated, there is a lot of damage done. How can fans trust their owners now? How can supporters wear the shirt with pride right now knowing what has just occurred? It will take time surely. Maybe even a change in ownership and management would do the fans justice.

Probably why Executive Vice Chairman of Manchester United Ed Woodward called it a day.

Meanwhile, in North London last week, Arsenal supporters protested against their owner Stan Kroenke and called for his resignation.

There was a lot at stake. The Super League couldn't happen. It would ruin soccer as we know it. From the grassroots levels all the way to the top tier leagues. All the money is funnelled from top leagues down to other pro leagues in their own countries. The Super League would have destroyed that.

The hope is UEFA, FIFA, club presidents, owners and fans find another way. Find a way to spread the wealth. Find a way to make many teams competitive. Find a way to turn around the narrative that soccer is all about the money. Because the message was clear the Super League was about money. Lately, the entirety of the sport revolves around it.

It might also be fair to say the fight against the Super League isn't over just yet. With Juventus conceding yet still believing, and with Real Madrid and Barcelona still convinced, expect more proposals moving forward.

As of now, no team is viewed with the same love and passion. The fight is with the fans and the call to action is clear.