



WELCOME
to the
Australasian Premier League

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The Australasian Premier League

Introduction

The Australasian Premier League (APL) is a new concept envisaged by Libero Consulting, which will enable soccer in Australia and the surrounding region to both expand and develop into a premier spectator sport within the Australasian context. Soccer is without doubt the football code with the most potential in Australia, since more people playing the world game on every weekend than any other team sport in the nation. Moreover, the first national competition in Australia was the National Soccer League, however the failure of this competition to capture the imagination of both the soccer and general sporting public has not allowed the game to progress and prosper at an elite local club level.

In order to be able to develop significant interest in the local game, it is self evident that good administration, marketing and producing a good product are all essential ingredients to develop the world game further. We have seen with Rugby Union its popularity explode in Australia especially with the international flavour of the Super 12 rugby. Soccer must follow a similar path. It has the benefit of being both international and the most popular game in the world something that holds back both AFL and Rugby League. This is why Libero Consulting puts forward the concept of an Australasian Premier League. The term Australasian obviously means Australia and New Zealand, however the well renowned World Book Encyclopaedia uses this term geographically to define the area between the Malay peninsula, the Pacific ocean and Antarctica. The major football nations of this region, for instance Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia encompass this geographical area.



Why a regional profile?

With the inclusion of teams from South East Asia, the APL will bring more sponsorship, investment and commercial opportunities to soccer in this country. Channel 7 as the major broadcaster of this new league will have the opportunity to market and develop its relationships in this fast growing area of Asia.

Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore are all soccer mad countries, who are genuinely looking for growth and more prestige in their football opportunities. The recent Manchester United tour into South East Asia indicates what potential there is for growth in the fan base within the region. A team from Bangkok, Thailand may also be considered.

Furthermore, player retainment has been a problem with the NSL, as many Australian talents are trying their luck or plying their trade overseas. This expanded competition will pour more money into the local game to retain several star players, whilst the profile of the league will also benefit. Similarly, FIFA's new transfer ruling which disallows players under 18 from going overseas will enable clubs to develop and keep talent thus the quality of the league does not suffer.

WHY AN AUSTRALASIAN PREMIER LEAGUE MODEL?

A synopsis of the holistic benefits of the Australasian Premier League (APL):

- Significant implications for tourism, away team fans can follow their teams.
- the APL can develop sporting relations which can improve foreign relations.
- The APL can generate increased domestic travel into and within regions, and attract people with little or no previous interest in soccer.
- The APL will assist in the promotion of the heritage, history, lifestyles and tourist attractions of Australian cities.
- Huge Promotional opportunities presented through the usage of marquee, franchise and or Star players.
- Brand recognition, branding values should focus on the total atmosphere and entertainment package. Focus on the aura of the Socceroos, soccer traditions and internationalism of Soccer.
- A Better product will increase in ground attendance, atmosphere, expanded supporter base, merchandise/ food and beverage/ season ticket sales.
- As part of their professional obligations, the players are also contracted to undertake public liaison, school visits and advertising commitments. School children have greater access to players and the public image of soccer and soccer players has changed commensurate with the professionalisation of the code.

- exciting changes to branding and entertainment increase the profile of soccer, widen its spectator appeal and make it far more competitive in terms of the discretionary leisure dollar.
- Improved spectator experience through the development and or usage of current premier sporting venues like Telstra Dome, Aussie Stadium, Ballymore etc.
- The APL can be at the forefront of the development of night sport and associated entertainment packaging which will transform the social landscape, the Australasian Premier League can become a social as well as a sporting occasion.
- A new philosophy regarding the links between players and public will be developed through the APL. Supporters of each team will feel a strong bond with the players. Indeed 'ownership' of the team would be focussed on, in much the same way as it is prevalent in England Premier Football fan support landscape.
- Develop the passion, atmosphere, colour and drama of professional Soccer in Australia.

Libero Consulting is currently conducting an Australia wide soccer survey, to ascertain the views of both soccer people and non-soccer people on their preference for a new National soccer league model. The initial feedback has significantly indicated that the Australasian premier league model is the most popular and viable. The fact is that without synergies and a strong product the National Soccer league is not viable as a competition.



Libero submits that the Australasian Premier League is the only viable model long term.

By including teams from Singapore, Malaysia, New Zealand and Indonesia the audience market will be definitely larger. This will interest potential sponsors to come on board as the potential target audience is bigger than what AFL, NRL and even what Super-12 has at this stage.

The major obstacle of the Australasian premier League is possibly political. That is whether FIFA and the Oceania and Asian Football Confederations may not allow teams from other confederations to partake in a domestic competition.

However, we submit that there is significant precedent, which may/will allow FIFA (for the good of the game) and the AFC to allow the Australasian competition to go ahead.

For example:

- teams from Wales (Cardiff City, Wrexham and Swansea) participating in English Nationwide leagues.
- Vaduz FC of Liechtenstein participating in Switzerland regional league.
- Vancouver Whitecaps from Canada participating in old North American Soccer league which featured such teams and players like the New York Cosmos and Tampa Bay Rowdies and players like Pele, Cruyff, Neeskens, Cubillas etc. Teams from Edmonton and Toronto also partook. The old NASL was an attempt to develop soccer to the final frontier USA/Canada.
- The proposed Alpine league featuring the best teams from Switzerland and Austria.
- CONMEBOL inviting Mexican teams like America, Necaxa and Cruz Azul to partake in Libertadores Cup.
- Football Kingz participating in Australian National Soccer league.
- If the AFC is likely to invite champion teams from Australia to partake in it's AFC champions league, there is no reason why the OFC/Australia cannot request some Asian teams in it own members national league/APL.

It is evident that FIFA will allow in some instances teams to partake in other countries leagues. The clear philosophy here is for the good of the game.

Australia needs to take the next soccer step as does the countries of New Zealand and Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia who have been left behind by Thailand, China, Korea, Japan and even Vietnam in terms of success in the international arena.

The opportunity to synergise is a win-win for all countries via the Australasian Premier League.

Sponsorship is a big issue at the moment. Most Sports want a piece of the pie and as we have seen the Sydney Swans viz a viz the AFL have suffered in the sponsorship market due to the Rugby World Cup to be held in Australia later in the year. Soccer at the national level needs a product to sell which is palatable to both commercial and pay TV as well as to other potential market sponsors. The AFL and NRL have the best club football product to sell to the market. The NSL does not currently have this product. The best soccer product is overseas in the English Premiership, Spanish La Liga, Italian Serie A, UEFA Champions League.

That is where the best players and generally high profile and best teams are based.

Here in Australia as a net exporter of soccer player talent, we require a product or league to keep some of our better players and also recruit some quality players from overseas i.e. Asian, South American, European and African markets.

To do this we need finance and supporter bases.

The Australasian Premier league will synergise 5 major markets with the linchpin being Australia. With more money available we can keep more of our better players and also include exciting talent from overseas.

In essence the Australasian Premier league will fundamentally change Soccer on a national level thus support the other two strong areas of Australian soccer the national teams and the junior participation area.

The Australasian Premier League can provide the impetus to:

- To keep players in Australia through better salaries, lifestyle, competition and conditions.
- To get players from overseas we need more finance.
- Lobby the Minister of Immigration to allow a small quota of overseas soccer players and or coaches to be able to migrate to Australia under a new Soccer player business category. This may entice some good players from Europe and South America with there families to make Australia their home as well as add to the calibre and expertise of soccer in this country. We do this with athletes like Tatiana Gorgieva and Dimitri Markov who have both won medals for this country and have added a new dimension to Athletics and the notion of being Australian.

COMPOSITION

Composition of new Australasian Premier League

The new Australasian Premier League, will have a majority Australian flavour however will also encompass local club teams from the following countries:

Nation and Club	Stadium	Stadium Capacity
AUSTRALIA		
Perth Glory	Subiaco Oval or new Perth Oval Stadium	
Brisbane Strikers or new Queensland Strikers team	Ballymore Stadium whilst also games in Townsville, Cairns and Gold Coast	
Melbourne Knights or new North West Melbourne outfit	Telstra Dome	
Olympic Sharks or new team representing inner, south and west Sydney	Aussie Stadium	
South Melbourne or new Victoria United team representing south east Melbourne	Bob Jane Stadium or Telstra Dome	18,000 or 55,000
Adelaide Force or new a mainstream FC Adelaide team	Hindmarsh Stadium	

Northern Spirit or Sydney Spirit a new team representing north and east Sydney	North Sydney Oval	
Wollongong Wolves	WIN Stadium	15000
Newcastle Breakers	Marathon Stadium	20000
NEW ZEALAND		
Football Kingz	Westpac Trust Stadium Wellington or North Harbour Stadium Auckland	
SINGAPORE		
A new Singapore Stars team or Geylang United	Stadium of Singapore	55000
MALAYSIA		
Kuala Lumpur Kings Bukit Jalil	Stadium or Merdeka Stadium	100,000 or 40,000
	Selangor Shahalam Stadium	80,000
INDONESIA * subject to political situation		
Java or Jakarta Jaguars	Utama Senayan Stadium	100,000

The league can incorporate an 14 team home and away series, with the possibility of play-offs, much like the current NSL to decide the yearly champion. A two year moratorium on the relegation of clubs can put in place in order for the league to fully develop, before new teams who fulfil the requisite criteria can come into the league.

The league will have three solidarity mechanisms to protect the financial viability of all clubs as well as the countries.

- A Salary Cap tied to 50% of turnover of the club.
- Only 4 foreigners allowed to be on a clubs roster at any one time. Australian and New Zealand teams must offer at least 1 of the 4 roster positions to a talented Pacific islander player i.e. Fiji, Solomon Islands or Vanuatu.
- A tour based fixture whereby teams travelling away into Asia or Oceania are protected from recurring jet lag and travel problems by team friendly fixturing like the super 12 rugby.

MARKETING

The commercial opportunities an Australasian Premier League can provide

- A relaunched national competition with a more prestigious and international profile, thus to get away from the current stigma that pervades the NSL. The crucial point here is that this league is in essence a fresh new entity, and not a reinvention of the NSL.
- Provide synergies for major TV broadcasters i.e. HSV Channel 7 can link in or sell broadcasting rights to both Malaysian and Singaporean broadcasters, thus provide sponsors with a larger consumer audience that is not available to other football codes. There is huge scope for cross promotion by companies from all participating countries.
- More money would be made available for clubs to spend on players, facilities, marketing and administration.
- Currently, several Australian players play for soccer teams in the Singaporean and Malaysian league, thus this team competition is a natural progression.
- The Countries covering the Australasian premier league would have a populace of over 300 million people.
- Opportunity to develop an Australian Soccer League second division, for local clubs only.



Marketing the APL

Libero Consulting has a ready plan of action regarding marketing, research and demographics. Libero is currently conducting a new soccer survey which is aimed at ascertaining what national soccer league product is best suited to the Australian market. In brief we aim to raise and identify issues of attendance, image of the game, popularity, participation and understanding of the code.

Corporate backing of the APL is a high priority for Libero Consulting. With the opportunity to lock in sponsors interested in international exposure and cross promotion of services and products, the APL's strategic goal is to attract sponsors such as:

- Heineken or Tiger Beer (beverage sponsor)
- Renault or Toyota (car manufacturer)
- Qantas, Singapore, Malaysian or Virgin Blue (airline carrier)
- Adidas or Nike (sporting manufacturer)
- Telstra, Singtel, Vodafone or Optus (IT and communications)
- National Australia Bank or AXA (banking and finance)
- Channel 7, CNBC Asia or ESPN/Star Sports (broadcasting)
- Quit (campaign)
- Unicef (charity organization)

Of the above potential sponsors, one will ascertain the primary naming rights of the APL. The rest may offer corporate signage and commercial backing of the league to some agreed extent.

Soccer being an international sport allows for a myriad of marketing and advertising opportunities. Some we can suggest are formalizing a dynamic APL internet portal, offering fans and sponsor's employees and their families membership incentives, organizing competitions where prizes include sporting experiences like seeing a European Champions League match or attending the FA Cup final, or winning football kits and merchandise etc.

We also plan to approach individuals in the sports and entertainment spotlight to be ambassadors for the game and new league. They will be seen at matches, soccer

clinics, partake in charity matches and pre match entertainment, lending their interests and promoting the APL whenever they can. Such individuals may include Megan Gale, Kylie Minogue, Rove McManus, Jimmy Barnes, or indeed Michael Schumacher when in town for the F1 Grand Prix. Furthermore we can invite international star players to attend or partake in major APL matches. Other initiatives are to invite super clubs such as Manchester United, Juventus, Leeds etc., to train here in their off season, or offer such teams an annual cup tournament and prize.

Consistent marketing of the game in all mediums is essential, be it in the press, on the airwaves and on the world wide web. Moreover Libero Consulting submits that a enhanced highlights package program be shown by the prime broadcaster which may include a half hour of world football highlights followed by an hour of APL round highlights, including the chance for another channel (competition rules) to show delayed transmission of a game. We believe this is adequate in helping draw fans and fostering a loyal fan base.

Of course marketing research by respective TV broadcasters will show when such a packaged program should be aired and played.

Of particular interests is the substantial participation of soccer at youth level by both sexes. It correlates in increased market share, so marketing and promotion of the APL should be extended to and aimed at both sexes. It is a superior advantage

and an edge that soccer has over other football codes not just in Australasia but worldwide. This edge may be translated as locking in sponsors for commercial air time whose products and services are geared at young women, and not necessarily just men.

All inclusive marketing

Marketing of the league can and we believe should be inclusive of all fans and players including the disabled. We propose that there exist a concerted effort by any new Soccer Australia board to also promote and deliver disable friendly media. To promote well the inclusive nature of the code, its technical skill and poise showing all, abled and disabled in our communities the true virtue of the sport that is also know as "the beautiful game".

An example of disabled participation and marketing of the game may be to sponsor an amputee team from Cambodia or Sierra Leone to visit Australia and play before an APL match or at half time - *for the good of the game*.

Funds can be raised at the ground to help support the enjoyment of the code for our disabled fans and players. Moneys raised can go back into improved stadia amenities and access for the disabled or aid in the funding of future tournaments. It can go into buying kits and strips for kids or in clearing fields in countries where children who want to play football cannot because of land mines. Our game is unique in that it is played the world over and in situations of political upheaval and uncertainty. The game and its supporters here should be given a chance to make a difference and contribute in any way they can - to feel a part of the wider football family that the sport enjoys.

Moreover we propose that a separate officiating football body (under SA) be formed to overlook all aspects of disabled football participation and that administrative roles such as the below be realized:

- * Disability Football and Projects Officer
- * Disability Football Research Officer
- * National Training Co-ordinator
- * Gifted and Talented Disability Football Co-ordinator

Overall when approached and studied properly, the marketing potential of the APL and soccer in general is enormous. Libero Consulting also submits that current dynamics such as the NSL board restructure as well as the very recent and huge success of teams such as Manchester United and Liverpool in South East Asia means that if there were ever a time to "take the bull by the horns" - that time is now.

The changes implemented by the Crawford report are fundamental to the development of the Australasian Premier league. The Australasian Premier League and Libero Consulting support all recommendations made in the Crawford report. In fact Libero Consulting has made submissions to the Crawford Inquiry in which has been noted in the final report.



Audience of the Australasian Premier League

The Australasian Premier League will mainly focus on 8 major demographics, which in our research are fundamental to the success of the league. The flavour of Soccer in this country should be based on a vibrant and sexy spectator sport theme with a international dimension.

The vital demographics:

- young couples or partners
- aspirational/ lifestyle young women (major consumers)
- soccer playing juniors and their parents
- the traditional NSL fans i.e. Older aged ethnic groups and their families
- the high end of town and the latte/lifestyle set
- new immigrants to Australia, i.e. the new huge Asian group and Malaysian/ Singaporean university students studying in Australia.
- the Grandstand and atmosphere fans as we call them i.e., like the Perth Glory hill fans who follow British traditional style fan chanting
- fans in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore who although soccer fanatics aspire to have a better domestic product to follow.

APL Estimated accumulative TV audience:

Nation	Conservative Estimate	Potential Audience
Australia	4.5	8-9
New Zealand	1.5	4
Singapore	1	2
Indonesia	60	180
Thailand**	18	54
Malaysia	4.5	12
Other	4	7+
TOTAL	93.5	267

- Figures shown are factors of 1 million.
- ** a team from Thailand may be included down the track.

A glimpse into Soccer's broadcast potential was partly realized last year, even in an AFL dominated Melbourne:

The 100 most popular shows on Melbourne TV in 2002.

1. World Cup Soccer Final, Brazil v Germany. Nine
2. Big Brother Final Eviction. Ten
3. Anzac day Football, Collingwood v Essendon. Nine

9. World Cup Soccer QF, Brazil v England. Nine
14. World Cup Soccer, England v Argentina. Nine
15. Another 4 places in the top 100 where the World Cup made it's presence felt.

Participation in Sport – ABS Survey Results

Sport	Adult Numbers	Junior Numbers	Total Nationally
Rugby Union	45,500	36,900	82,400
Rugby league	91,500	95,100	186,600
Soccer	192,200	323,400	515,600
AFL	188,000	174,400	362,400

Popularity

Libero submits the following articles which are indicative in supporting the popularity and scope of the new APL:

Soccer dives on AFL

By Shaun Phillips

May 22, 2003

SOCCKER'S strike at Australian rules is producing results, according to a nationwide survey. The world game is just five points behind Australian rules in the popularity stakes - and closing fast.

Soccer has grown from a 28 per cent interest factor in the first Sweeney Sports Report in 1988 to 47 per cent.

It is now the fifth most popular sport behind swimming (59 per cent), cricket (57), tennis (55) and Australian rules (52).

The rise is consistent with soaring junior participation rates, which put soccer way out in front of football. And soccer has now taken over from Aussie rules as the most-played football code in Melbourne private schools such as Xavier College, Caulfield Grammar and Wesley Grammar.

The AFL has recognised the threat, last week launching a football curriculum program it hopes to have adopted around the country. The success of the 2002 World Cup, the glamour of international competitions such as the English Premier League, and the star performances of Australians such as Mark Viduka and Harry Kewell have captured the public imagination.

Administration at the national level has lurched from crisis to crisis, but Australians were seeing the bigger picture, according to Sweeney Sports'

Martin Hirons.

"Soccer is certainly the sport to watch over the next 10 years," he said. "It's why the AFL spends \$20 million on grass roots development each year." Victorians remain the staunchest fans of Aussie rules, with 70 per cent expressing an interest compared with 43 per cent for soccer.

The latest Sweeney survey also found:

- THE Melbourne Cup for the first time topped the AFL Grand Final as Australia's best sports event.
- IAN Thorpe was our top sporting role model.
- WAYNE Carey's approval rating slumped from 39 per cent to 23 per cent in the wake of the Rude Boy scandal.
- JAMES Hird was the most highly regarded AFL footballer.
- CRICKETERS Adam Gilchrist, Glen McGrath, Brett Lee and Ricky Ponting soared in the popularity stakes.
- AUSTRALIAN rules was the top crowd-puller, with 27 per cent of people surveyed saying they attended matches compared with 25 per cent for cricket.
- USE of the Internet to keep track of sports has soared from 25 per cent in 2000 to 43 per cent.

Mr Hirons said Carey's slide was consistent with falls suffered by Shane Warne, Mark Philippoussis and Jelena Dokic when they endured public relations trouble.

"It goes to show that the public is not very forgiving of sports people when they are seen to be doing the wrong thing, and that is reflected in their marketability," Mr Hirons said.

Warne was 22nd on the latest popularity list, with 49 per cent approval. The Sweeney Sports Report was compiled from a national survey of 1297 people, aged from 16 to 65, between October and March.

If you can kick it, Australia will watch it

By Philip Derriman

May 22 2003

It's official Australia is footy mad, and not just league and Australian rules. More and more Australians are turning to the world of line outs and penalty shoot-outs, with rugby union and soccer now almost as popular as the big two.

The annual Sweeney Sports Report survey has found that 37 per cent of Australians are interested in union, just short of league's 39 per cent. Fourteen years ago only 15 per cent of Australians had an interest in union, compared with 34 per cent in league.

Soccer is booming too from 28 per cent 14 years ago to 47 per cent today. The popularity of Australian rules is also up, to 52 per cent. Clearly, soccer has benefited from last year's World Cup exposure and high-profile Australian players.

The director of Sweeney Sports, Martin Hirons, attributed rugby union's rise to a combination of factors: the game had gone professional, Australia had won the World Cup twice, sponsorship income had multiplied, league stars had been recruited and spending had gone up on grass roots development.

"There have been enormous changes to league, too," he said. "League reached a peak in the mid-'90s, and the pinnacle was around the time of the Tina Turner campaign. League was really marketing itself as a sport then nationally, it was one of the first sports to do so.

"Then, all of a sudden, Super League came in and destroyed the fabric of the game. League must be wondering now where its growth is going to come from."

The Sweeney survey, conducted by Melbourne-based Sweeney Research, measures the number of people interested in each sport not their level of interest and so does not necessarily reflect actual attendance and TV ratings. On both these counts, league and Australian rules are still well ahead of their rivals. Mr Hirons said Australian rules remains "a success story of Australian sport", having expanded to a national competition while maintaining solid crowd numbers.

"We're not measuring passion," he said. "Passion is about how often people go and how often they watch on TV. Australians are still passionate about Aussie rules and rugby league. It's unusual for many AFL attendance to be under 20,000."

Mr Hirons thought rugby union's World Cup this year might well push it ahead of league in next year's survey.

In other survey results, swimming is still No. 1 in Australia with 59 per cent, but that's a 5 per cent drop over the past year. Cricket moved to second place with 57 per cent, ahead of tennis which dropped to 55.

Mr Hirons said: "Basketball was saying a decade ago it was going to be Australia's No. 1 sport by 2000. Today, the bottom has fallen out of the game."

[image] Jack Silvagni and dad Stephen at the Auskick promotion.

Picture: RAY KENNEDY

Soccer set to challenge football, study finds

May 22 2003

By Michael Lynch in the age

Powered by its global reach and the attractions of its international competitions, soccer is now poised to challenge Australian rules as the country's No. 1 football code, according to a major sports marketing and research study released yesterday.

In its survey of the Australian sports landscape, the 16th annual Sweeney sports report also reveals that the Melbourne Cup is now the most significant sporting event of the year (relegating the AFL grand final to second position) and suggests that Wayne Carey's off-field misdemeanour's have hit the former Kangaroo champion hard, with a dramatic decline in his "sponsorship attractiveness" recorded in the past year. In contrast, Australia's all-conquering Test cricketers found their sponsorship ratings soaring.

The Sweeney research, which measures sports and sportsmen across a range of commercial and community interest indicators, shows that the market position of soccer has increased substantially in recent years, particularly in 2002-03.

Interest in the game has been rising in all areas - participation, attendance, radio listening, television viewing and print media readership - according to Sweeney director Martin Hirons.

"The round-ball game, bolstered by interest in last year's World Cup and Oceania's direct qualification into the next soccer World Cup, registered record levels of interest in the summer of 2002-03 . . . it could soon be challenging Australian rules for football code supremacy," Hirons said.

While soccer showed the most spectacular growth, rugby union tracked its upward trajectory for similar reasons and has now caught up in popularity with the other "traditional" Australian football code, rugby league.

"(It) is now virtually equal with rugby league on all measures. With its World Cup to be played in Australia later this year, expectations are that it will eclipse league," Hirons said.

Swimming (with 59 per cent of the population declaring themselves in some way interested) remains the most popular sport, but its rating fell 5 per cent. Swimming's ranking surges when there are major events, of which there were few in the survey period. It holds its high overall ranking because of its huge participation rate of 41 per cent.

If measured purely on television viewers, swimming is only the fifth most popular sport, behind cricket, Australian rules, tennis and soccer.

Australian rules, with an interest level of 52 per cent, remained where it was last year. It ranks poorly as a participation sport (only 5 percent compared with swimming (41 per cent), tennis (26 per cent), golf (23 per cent), fishing (27 per cent), and soccer and cricket (11 percent).

But it is the most popular sport for attendance (27 per cent), just ahead of cricket's 25 per cent, and ranks second best for television audiences, just behind cricket but ahead of tennis and soccer.

In a separate analysis of sponsorship effectiveness, the Sweeney survey found:

The Melbourne Cup has overtaken the AFL grand final as the nation's "most important" sporting event. Wayne Carey's sponsorship attractiveness "fell dramatically" following his off-field misdemeanour's - illustrating, says Hiron, that as with Shane Warne, Mark Philippoussis and Jelena Dokic, "

Australians are not impressed by sporting heroes who appear to transgress accepted moral or behavioural standards".

Test cricketers Adam Gilchrist, Ricky Ponting, Matthew Hayden, Glenn McGrath and Brett Lee, along with golfer Adam Scott, greatly boosted their sponsorship potential.

Ownership issues

The issue of ownership of NSL teams by Rugby League or AFL team has often concerned the soccer follower in the past. If soccer is going to compete with the major football codes, two approaches may be taken. Firstly, to preclude ownership of teams by rival codes (clubs) like what has happened in England or Italy for the most part, thus avoiding any conflict of interest and competing marketing and administration issues.

Secondly, the APL can follow the Spanish (Real Madrid/Barcelona) Greek (Olympiakos/Panathinaikos), Russian (CSKA Moscow) or Argentinian (River Plate/Velez Sarsfield) experiences whereby a club can take multi-sport approach thus basketball, soccer and volleyball teams can be run by the one club. Linking netball (for demographic growth) and soccer could be a formula which may be considered in Australia.

The recently developed USA soccer leagues in Major League Soccer and Women's United Soccer Association, can also be used as a model for ensuring club ownership structures are stable and economically viable. We do not want a repeat of the collapses that have tarnished the image of the local game over the past decade. The ideal ownership model is a combination of franchise, social club, private or public company owned teams like Perth Glory or South Melbourne.

The issue of a second division

The idea of a National exclusive Australian Second division can also become a reality as it will give smaller clubs and current NSL clubs who miss out on the APL an opportunity to develop and grow in order to reach the benchmark required to play in the APL.

The idea of a second division has been floating around the Australian soccer experience for a while. Teams that may miss out on the APL can partake in the 2nd division whilst new teams can also come on board thus providing scope and opportunities for regional and smaller yet expanding clubs:

A sample of this league could be:

- Parramatta Power
- Marconi
- Sydney United
- Penrith or Gosford-Wyong
- A team from Cairns, Gold Coast or Townsville
- A second team from Adelaide
- A second team from Perth
- Bulleen Zebras (Melbourne)
- Green Gully (Melbourne)
- And even possibly down the track a team from a Pacific Islands i.e. Fiji.
- A team from Canberra, Darwin and Tasmania.

GOVERNANCE

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND THE AUSTRALASIAN PREMIER LEAGUE:

The Australasian Premier League will be an independent entity licensed by Soccer Australia.

Soccer Australia will control the licensing rights and be the major controlling stakeholder however the APL's administration and board of directors will be independent.

The board of the Australasian Premier league will be made up of 5 to 6 directors. A separate administration will be set up to compliment the APL board, with a high profile CEO at the helm.

The stakeholders and/or shareholders of the Australasian Premier league will structured as follows:

- A majority equity stake or share will be owned through the licensing agreement by Soccer Australia.
- A minority equity stake or share will be allowed for Corporate, long term sponsors, telecast partners and the clubs.
- Models of APL ownership we are currently considering is the NFL, SANZAR (super-12 rugby), the English Premiership League set up and the Major League Soccer (USA) organisation (please note further corporate modelling analysis is currently being undertaken by Libero Consulting).

The best practice corporate governance principles (i.e. in relation to the Corporations Act 2001 company requirements) that will govern the APL board include:

- Libero recommends the APL board have a majority of independent directors.
- Soccer Australia has at least one director nominated to the board.
- Defining when a director will be independent.
- Recommending that the chairperson be an independent director, and not be the CEO.
- Recommending the Board have nomination, remuneration and audit committees comprised of a majority of independent directors.
- Requiring the disclosure of the remuneration policies of the APL.
- The CEO will not be a board member.

- The APL will either be based at Melbourne Docklands Precinct (Australia's Sporting Capital) or Sydney (Darling Harbour Precinct).
- The CEO of the APL will be a one of the faces of soccer in this country.
- The company structure of the APL can be in the form of a public company, private company, company by guarantee or share capital.

What is good corporate governance?

In the recent release by the Australian Stock exchange Corporate Governance Council in its Principles of Good Corporate Governance and Best Practice Recommendations, it was noted (ASX Corporate Governance Council, Principles of Good Corporate Governance and Best Practice Recommendations, March2003) :

Corporate governance is the system by which companies are directed and managed. It influences how the objectives of the company are set and achieved, how risk is monitored and assessed, and how performance is optimised.

Corporate Governance of the new APL will be in-line with the recommendations of the Crawford Report and the above mentioned philosophy. The Australasian Premier League will incorporate best practice and utilise the best available talent within its administration.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Libero Consulting and its partners believe the way forward for soccer in Australia is to develop an elite national league product, which can compete for the mainstream sporting fan and major corporate sponsorship. This vision certainly requires some international or regional profile. Libero Consulting welcomes interested parties to help develop this proposal and make an elite prestigious soccer competition a reality in Australasia.

Libero Consulting is concurrently liaising with major IT companies here in Australia and overseas in the fields of content delivery and IT sports marketing. These companies have approached Libero with quite some interest and verve and look to offer their expert advice and IT infrastructure to and for all fans and players of the code.

These companies are willing to contribute, promote and invest in the game and the region on a very large scale. They understand the complexities and political machinations and have expressed specifically to deliver their expertise. To create cutting edge and lucrative revenue streams for the new pending board, helping the new board administer a successful viable competition for the good of the game and all its followers.

For further information regarding this proposal and or the corporate sector companies that have approached us, please contact Libero Consulting. See next page for contact details.



Contact Details

Libero Consulting

Libero Consulting is a Sports consulting agency in Melbourne that specializes in football/soccer offering specialist advice and solutions for major competition proposals such as:

- The Star League (News Corp initiative for Asia, 2001)
- Australasian Premier League (current)
- UEFA Cup Competition (current)
- Tender to prepare Greece/Turkey European Championship bid 2008 (2002)
- Commonwealth Cup Football Tournament (earmarked for 2006 games)

Libero Consulting is headed by Mr. Peter Paleologos, Managing consultant and founder. Peter has an extensive knowledge of the game here and abroad. His network of associates extends far and wide from Europe to South America. He is the only Australian ever to be offered a scholarship into FIFA/ CIES Sports Management course in Neuchatel Switzerland. He attended the Football Expo in Cannes 2000, promoting Oceania and it's wealth of footballing talent. Furthermore he has contributed recommendations to the Independent Crawford Enquiry into the sport.

Libero Consulting can offer sound and current advice on the sport of soccer and can initiate meetings with major prospective investors and corporations wanting be to involved in the business and game that is football.

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