

Euro elite entitlement is not a good look for great football clubs

So the football clubs currently in 5th, 6th, 7th and 9th place in the Premier League think they should be in a super Euro league with founders rights to stay there when they cannot currently even get into the slots to qualify for European competition next year. They think they are entitled to compete with other teams that have done well in the past but are similarly gifted a place in the star league. I find it bizarre they should think this a good idea, and even stranger that when their fans and the wider public tells them this is a very bad idea they still do not retreat.

Most people know it is wrong. It is wrong because being an elite team or an elite sporting performer needs a willingness to be regularly tested against the best to prove they are still deserving of the laurels. It is wrong because it demonstrates complacency and arrogance in equal measure. Winning decides who goes to elite tournaments, not buying a permanent place. It is wrong because the many loyal fans of these great clubs are proud of their clubs for what they achieve on the pitch and are ashamed by this proposal. It is wrong because it puts money before sporting values and ignores the sense of community which a team and club represent. Some of the best drama in English football comes in the FA cup when outsider teams can take on and sometimes beat the famous. The league itself is a ladder to climb for the energetic and good, and a series of privileged higher divisions which you tumble from if you lose your edge and skill. It would not be so interesting if everyone stayed put each year, the good and ambitious thwarted and the unsuccessful cushioned.

The pursuit of money by exploiting the fan base more may pose questions some owners and well paid footballers might not like asked. If clubs persist in doing things fans dislike, they might not keep all the fans. If clubs pursue too much money and spend much of it on ever higher footballer wages, they may encourage a backlash against the business model that does this. I have no problem with great footballers earning large sums because they entertain and people willingly pay to see them. I do have problems with badly run clubs running up excessive wage bills they cannot afford and pricing lower income fans out of much of the fun. How many fans would be able to afford time and money on Wednesday nights to travel to the continent to see one of these planned superleague matches? And why would they think it important if some of the best and most successful clubs of the day were kept out by the squatters rights applying to most of the clubs in this planned league? There is also the issue of how many games can a club play successfully in a season, and what can it expect of a great player who will also wish to play for his national team? Allowing players time to play for their country is a crucial part of football's popularity which will be stretched again should this invention go ahead.