

ITALIAN FOOTBALL CLUBS LOOK TO ATTRACT FANS WITH MODERN STADIUMS



In recent years, Italian football league has faced a considerable decline in popularity. In an effort to draw more fans and increase the revenue, the local clubs now plan to renovate and modernize their stadiums.

Italy and its top-flight league Serie A have for years been considered one of the cradles of European football. The sport has a wide tradition on the Apennine Peninsula and the popularity of it cannot be underestimated. **However, in recent years, Serie A has experienced a rapid qualitative decline, which has also led to a considerable decrease in popularity as well.**

In the 1990s and early 2000s, Serie A was at its peak and flourished. The majority of matches were sold out and featured top class players. From Paolo Maldini to Zinedine Zidane and the Flying Dutchman Marco Van Basten. However, at a certain point financial problems struck Italy. This led to Serie A's stagnation compared to the development of football in Germany and UK.

Owners have not been willing to invest as in the past. Moreover, their economic power has weakened even more recently. The reason was the massive influx of Arab, Russian and Chinese billionaires in the European football.

But the issue is not only a matter of finances or quality. Most German and English clubs own a modern stadium. These stadiums generate significant income as well as attract fans and tourists. In Italy, it seems as if time has stopped in the 1990s, as the majority of stadiums are below the modern European standards. Not only that, the stadiums are owned by the municipality or the state. This means that only a part of the income from the stadium's activity actually ends in the club's treasury.

According to the ESPN newswire, in the 2014/15 Serie A season almost 8,400,000 people attended the matches. On average that is about 22,000 people per match. But in the same season in the English Premier League almost 13,800,000 people attended the matches averaging about 36,000 people per match. While Serie A has stagnated, the English Premier League has developed and has become much more attractive for an average football fan.

But the situation may not be as dark as it seems for Italian football just yet. Some clubs, such as Juventus, have already built a new modern stadium seeing immediate effect. The Juventus Stadium was opened in September 2011 for the new Serie A season. In that season a total of 714,000 people attended matches at the new arena averaging over 37,000 people per match.

In the previous season the club had played their home matches at the old Stadio Delle Alpi and the difference was clear. Only about 436,000 people had attended the home matches. That is an average of about 23,000 people per match – much lower figures than in the next season. It is also worth mentioning that while the Delle Alpi was the property of the municipality, **the Juventus Stadium is owned by the club itself. The new stadium generates higher income which secures the club the much needed financial stability.**

Luckily for Italy, Juventus is not the only club with ambitions to modernize. AS Roma, AC Milan, SSC Napoli and others are planning to either build a stadium of their own or buy out and renovate a stadium of state or city ownership. The goal is to increase the attendance, income and overall popularity of the clubs worldwide. It seems that Italian football could perhaps soon return to its glory days with a more modern and ambitious approach.

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