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The Opposing Fortunes of the Liga MX and Campeonato Brasileiro, 1990-2013

by

Ryan Hunt

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Drake University

Des Moines, IA

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Background

Football¹ has been ingrained in the lives of Latin Americans since the days the sport was introduced to them by European immigrants and businessmen, and the sport still enjoys an elevated status in the region. Football is not only important to people for its entertainment value, but has become an industry with substantial economic power. When Mexico was on the brink of missing qualification for the 2014 World Cup this past fall, ESPN Deportes columnist Hector Quispe estimated that failure to qualify would cost Mexico over six hundred million dollars in lost revenue.² Not only would merchandise sales such as jerseys, equipment, and other apparel fall, but clubs would also stand to lose sponsorship and broadcast money. Further, businesses such as restaurants and bars would stand to lose out on the business of millions of spectators choosing to watch the Mexico matches outside their homes. The fact that Brazil estimates that the upcoming World Cup will generate over \$10.5 billion in revenues is a testament to the economic power of the game.

However, over the period of the last three decades or so, the domestic game in Latin American countries has experienced an almost universal decline due to myriad related factors: the exodus of talent, declining infrastructure, low attendances, and fan violence, to name a few. One league, however, has managed to not only maintain its health but to improve its standing in the global context: Mexico's Liga MX. For this study, I am going to compare the differing fortunes found in the recent history of Mexico's Liga MX with those of Brazil's leading domestic football league, the Campeonato Brasileiro Serie A (Hereafter referred to as Serie A or Campeonato Brasileiro for brevity).

¹ I use the term 'football' for the sport that Americans call 'soccer'. 'Football' is the proper name for the sport that is used by the rest of the world.

² Quispe, Hector. "\$600 Million and 8 Years." *ESPNdeportes.com*. October 16, 2013. (Accessed February 10, 2014.)

The wavering of support for football can be seen in protests in Brazil, host of the World Cup this upcoming summer. Brazil has said it will spend almost eleven billion dollars of public funds on World Cup-related projects (stadium improvements and new stadium construction, infrastructure improvements, etc.) by the time the competition starts.³ Public tensions came to a head in protests and demonstrations against the government during Brazil's hosting of the Confederations Cup in June and July of 2013 and have continued sporadically since. The initial protests "were sparked by an increase in the price of the cost of public transport in various cities around the country and quickly metamorphosed into demonstrations against corruption, the shabby quality of government health and other services, and the high price the country is paying to host the Cup."⁴ Upon viewing and reading about protests in Brazil over the country's hosting of the 2014 World Cup, I raised the question to myself of why such a football-crazed country would demonstrate so evocatively against it, especially considering that the state has always had a hand in Brazilian football. Football fandom and success on the soccer pitch, combined with a definitive style and flair for the game have made football a key item in Brazilian identity. Are these ongoing protests against the Brazilian government's use of public funds for World Cup preparation a sign that Brazilian society cares less about football than it once did? Is football less involved in that identity today? My hypothesis is that the decline in Brazilian domestic football may have played a part in that shift from support to protest over public expenditures on football. In that interest, I am going to examine the differences between Brazil's Serie A and Mexico's Liga MX, and compare the historical trends that caused Brazil's difficulties and Liga MX's rise to prominence.

³ Lewis, Jeffrey. "Brazil Anti-World Cup Protests Turn Violent in São Paulo." *The Wall Street Journal*. January 25, 2014. (Accessed online January 27, 2014.)

⁴ Ibid

There are a number of factors that render these two leagues as natural points of comparison. First is the format of the leagues. Serie A is the lone Latin American league to follow a traditional round-robin format⁵ in which each team plays every other team twice, home and away, and the champion is the team that accrues the most points over the course of the season. Every other domestic league follows an *Apertura* and *Clausara* format in which the season is split into two titles. Teams must first qualify for the playoffs, and then a champion is crowned after advancing to the final match and emerging victorious. The Apertura and Clausara titles are essentially completely separate seasons that occur consecutively. The second, and more important point of comparison, is in the financial health of the respective leagues. Serie A, like most other domestic leagues in Latin America, has been in a state of decline for roughly twenty years, while in that same time period Liga MX has experienced rapid growth and a rise to prominence.

To demonstrate the decline of the Campeonato Brasileiro and the rise of Liga MX, I will compare the two leagues across a number of platforms. The first chapter will focus on players, and demonstrate the extensive migration of Latin American players to European leagues over the past few decades. Chapter 2 will document the changes in league formats and the competitive balance of each respective league over a roughly twenty year period. The final chapter analyzes the financial health of clubs by examining the transfer policies and records of each league and then concluding with an inspection of stadiums in each country.

⁵ This format was adopted in 2003 after a series of seasons in which the format changed. The round-robin follows the European format.

Historiography

The study of Latin American football to date has been rather limited. Tony Mason notes in the introduction to *Passion of the People?*⁶ that many histories of Latin America, such as the *Penguin History of Latin America* or the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Latin America*, fail to give football its due attention, if the game is mentioned at all in their volumes. However, football is a key aspect in daily life for Latin Americans, and merits further attention in the study of its history. The study of Latin American football is especially lacking when compared to the wealth of scholarship on European football. European history studies of football have examined the concept of ‘fandom’ and identity, exploring the ties between the club one supports and its role in identity, and there is a great amount of sociological literature on the social significance of sport⁷. Other studies of European football have focused on violence and hooliganism, which is especially prevalent in the English game, due to its working class roots. These themes are much less present in Latin American football. Spectator violence does occur in Latin America, as in almost every part of the football world, as Dunning and his collaborators concluded, though it has taken a different form than the hooliganism prevalent in England and continental Europe.

Much as in Europe though, Latin American football represents much more than just a game. Players can rise up and enter the national pantheon of heroes if they work hard and play well, such as Pele in Brazil or Diego Maradona in Argentina. Failure can have dire consequences, as shown by the brutal murder of Colombian star Andres Escobar after he scored

⁶ Mason, Tony. *Passion of the People?: Football in South America (Critical Studies in Latin American & Iberian Culture)*. (New York: Verso Press, 1994.)

⁷ Dunning, Eric, Patrick Murphy, and John Williams. *Football on Trial: Spectator Violence and Development in the Football World*. (London: Routledge, 1990.)

an own goal⁸ against the United States in the 1994 World Cup, resulting in his side's elimination from the competition. Football is ever-present in the public consciousness of Latin America due to its association with identity, politics, and economics. The key historiographical themes that have emerged in studying football in Latin America are as follows: Football as a political tool; football as an identity former, and football as an agent of globalization.

As will be detailed below, football in Latin America has long been closely associated with the political arena. At the local, regional, and national level, football has allowed both local actors and state leaders to use the game for their own political purposes, such as Argentine President Juan Peron's sponsorship of the sport to curry favor with the public. The sport has always been closely associated with identity as well. In England, clubs are often associated with a certain profession, such as the ironworkers and West Ham United; in Brazil, where the national team is traditionally made up of football artists rather than just players, a different type of identity has emerged- one that glorifies the artistry and flair of its players. Finally, football has also been both an agent and a manifestation of globalization over time. From the early adoption of European club names by South American sides, to the increasing migration of Latin American players to Europe, the football world has reflected the global trend of a 'smaller world'.

Football and Politics

One of the key historiographical themes on Latin American football is its application as a political tool. The sport has been utilized at both the national and local level for political gains. Both populist leaders and military dictatorships have manipulated the game in different ways to meet their own political ends. State involvement in the game has been especially heavy in Brazil

⁸ An own goal is when a player inadvertently directs the ball into his own net, resulting in a goal awarded to the opposing team.

and Argentina. Political involvement in Latin American football is especially notable in that a similar situation is not found in its European counterpart. While in Europe political leaders may attend games to acknowledge the popular significance of the sport, or award championship trophies, government involvement in Latin American football goes much deeper.

From the beginnings of football's rise in Latin America it has been encouraged by governments. In Brazil and Argentina particularly, government was instrumental in the transition of the game from amateur social clubs to professionalism. Political leaders attended early matches between clubs to offer their support of the game. Following that, leaders began to back up that support with monetary aid. In 1906 the President of Brazil offered a cup for competition between state teams (no league was yet formed), followed by the Argentine Congress voting to provide money for a competition in 1908, though the Argentines' plan failed to materialize. As David Goldblatt demonstrates, as football became more established as a popular pastime, it became involved in national patriotic celebrations. For example, football tournaments became part of the centenary festivities in Argentina, the first World Cup hosted by Uruguay celebrated the centenary celebration of their independence, and the new stadiums of Boca Juniors and River Plate in Buenos Aires opened on Independence Day (May 25).⁹

The Populist Period

The Populist Period marked a turning point towards heavier state involvement in the sports. Populist governments incorporated football as a way of reaching the people. David Goldblatt has outlined the differing approaches of two populist leaders, Getulio Vargas¹⁰ in

⁹ Goldblatt, David. *The Ball is Round: A Global History of Soccer*. (London: Penguin Books, 2008)

¹⁰ President of Brazil from 1930-45 and 1951-54.

Brazil and Juan Peron¹¹ in Argentina, in his extensive history of the game.¹² In Brazil, Vargas' regime adopted a top-down approach to the game, utilizing it as a method of social control along the lines of other popular activities, such as Carnival. The Vargas government forever changed the relationship between football and government by providing funding and loans to football clubs. For example, Vargas authorized that club Flamengo be given land for a stadium in downtown Rio de Janeiro, as well as a low-interest loan to aid in the construction of both the stadium and an office building. This practice was then imitated by state and local politicians in Brazil seeking to gain popular support and votes. The most egregious example of this was the building of the stadium Maracana in preparation for Brazil's hosting of the 1950 World Cup. While critics argued that the state funds should be spent on schools and hospitals, instead the regime chose to build a stadium that would mark Brazil's modernity. The result was the magnificent Maracana, a stadium with a capacity of over one hundred and sixty thousand, and a testament to Brazil's embrace of the modern.

Football was also used by Vargas as part of the both the 'developmental and biological nationalism',¹³ of Vargas' Brazil. Under Vargas, Brazil embraced the fact that there had been widespread miscegenation and incorporated this as part of their identity. Thus, Brazil welcomed the talents of black and mixed race players into their national side. Brazil was the sole representative from South America at the 1938 World Cup, and this tournament would prove to be a 'coming-out party' of sorts for the Brazilians as a soccer power. The 1938 team was led by the "classic, colored full-back, Domingos Da Guia and the wonderfully elastic black centre

¹¹ Argentine President from 1946-52 and 73-74, known for his populist policies.

¹² Goldblatt, *The Ball is Round*

¹³ Goldblatt, *The Ball is Round*, 285

forward Leonidas.”¹⁴ Led by Leonidas’ 8 goals, Brazil managed to finish in third place, their best ever finish in the tournament to that point. The importance of having two black stars on the national team was that their Brazilian identity was more important than their black one, reflecting the success of Vargas’ efforts at cultivating a ‘Brazilian’ nationalism.

Brazil’s entrance into World War II on the Allied side provided Vargas a further opportunity to assert his Brazilian nationalism. Brazil at that point had substantial German, Italian, and Japanese communities. With Brazil’s entrance into combat, Vargas took steps to curtail public displays of ethnic identities. Football clubs fell under the jurisdiction of this policy. Thus, club names that reflected a non-Brazilian identity were changed. Sao Paulo’s Palestra Italia club became known as Palmeiras. Other name changes cited by Goldblatt are Curitiba (German immigrant club) to Coritiba and Belo Horizonte (also Italian) to Cruzeiro.¹⁵

Peronist Argentina experienced a different type of state promotion of the game along with involvement similar to that of the Vargas regime in Brazil. During his Presidency, Peron sponsored government aid to sport and physical education as a sign of Argentina’s ‘cultural progress’. According to Mason, Peron used his sponsorship of sports (not exclusively football) to foment popular support, using slogans such as ‘Peron sponsors sports’ and ‘Peron, the first sportsman’.¹⁶ The regime also promoted popular participation in the game beyond just spectatorship with the Evita Championships tournament. First held in 1950, the Evita Championships was a youth tournament sponsored by Eva Peron’s Social Aid Foundation. The tournament was for thirteen-fifteen year old amateur players with no other restrictions on participation. The state provided the uniforms and equipment necessary, and also gave free

¹⁴ Glanville, Brian. *The Story of the World Cup*. (London: Faber, 2001), 36.

¹⁵ Goldblatt, *The Ball is Round*, 286.

¹⁶ Mason, *Passion of the People*, 66.

medical exams with participation. With over 150,000 participants in the first tournament, the Championships were an effective way for the populist regime's health service to reach a broader base and gain exposure.

Argentine football also experienced a great deal of state involvement under Peron. Similar to Vargas in Brazil, Peron's government funneled state funds to clubs for stadium construction and other fees. David Goldblatt notes that the government also exerted control over the Argentine Futbol Association (FA). AFA presidents were often directly appointed by Peron, for example Oscar Nicolini and Valentin Suarez. These Peronist appointments became important when Argentina declined to participate in the 1950 and 1954 World Cups, due to the fact that defeat or failure of the national team would reflect poorly on the national government.

Football under Military Regimes

The relationship between football and the state continued under the military regimes from the 1960-80's. In turn for popular support, governments continued to sponsor football. The World Cup victories of 1970 and 1978 by Brazil and Argentina, respectively, were used to enhance the legitimacy of the home regimes. In Argentina the state remained involved in the game by providing funds to keep failing clubs afloat and reorganizing the league schedule and composition. In Brazil the military government applied its own training methods to the national teams. Both nations would use football as a diversion in the 1980's.

Military rule in Argentina continued providing funds to football. The largest undertaking was the commitment of seven hundred million dollars to development for hosting the 1978 World Cup, which came mostly from the government. The World Cup project came at the expense of social welfare spending. The government also used football to curry patriotic support

for the Falklands/Malvinas war with Britain, broadcasting matches alongside news coverage of the war.¹⁷ The government also reorganized the national league and tournaments to provide more matches, which was used to keep people (specifically protesters) occupied.

In Brazil, football felt the effects of the military regime most acutely in its national team. The military government sought to apply the modern scientific training methods for soldiers to its football team, with limited success. The 1978 World Cup team, under Captain Claudio Coutinho, attempted to focus on fitness, endurance, and organization, eschewing the individualistic and artistic aspects of traditional Brazilian tactics. The result was an uninspiring and unimpressive exit at the second group stage due to some rumored underhanded tactics by the host and eventual champion Argentines.¹⁸

Football and Local Politics

Brenda Elsey's *Citizens and Sportsmen: Futbol and Politics in Twentieth Century Chile*¹⁹ has revealed that football clubs have a relationship with local politics as well as national ones. Elsey posits that locals in Chile used football clubs as a ground for political expression and subsequently as a launching pad for campaigns for local office. The football club initially became a setting for political expression since it was not viewed as a politicized setting. Thus Political discourse in the environment of the football club came under less scrutiny. The connection between the clubs and politics strengthened as political parties began making ties with clubs in order to win municipal elections. A reciprocal relationship then evolved between parties and football clubs. Via these relationships, footballers came to see city politics as an

¹⁷ Mason, *Passion of the People*, 72.

¹⁸ Goldblatt, *The Ball is Round*, 630

¹⁹ Elsey, Brenda. *Citizens and Sportsmen: Futbol and Politics in Twentieth Century Chile*. (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2012)

accessible means of effecting change. For political parties, these collaborations were a method to recruit supporters. As the relationship between political parties and clubs developed, football directorships became a vehicle for middle and working-class men to begin careers in local politics. For example, Matus, a physical-education teacher, later ran for Congress with support of the Radical Party. As treasurer of the Workers' Football Association, Matus had gained exposure in political circles as well as a good reputation among workers.²⁰

Football and Identity

The second main theme in the literature about Latin American football is its role in identity formation. Beginning with its origins in Britain, football has always been a part of forming and confirming identity. Bill Murray's *The World's Game*²¹ describes how the sport emerged in Britain as an upper class leisure activity, was then adopted by the lower classes, and then how clubs became closely tied to local identities. For example, West Ham United, nicknamed the Irons or Hammers, has origins in the ironworks industry, and its supporters are traditionally working class. Another British example is Glasgow Rangers and Celtic in Scotland, with Rangers aligned with Protestantism and Celtic with Catholicism. Latin American clubs have experienced identity along class lines as well. In the Argentine league, River Plate supporters are commonly associated with a more upper class base than rivals Boca Juniors, traditionally representative of Argentina's working class. Beyond local support of clubs, Latin American football's history has seen the game factor into national identities. Historically, Latin American countries developed a reputation for playing the game in a style that was unique, and that uniqueness is part of Latin American identity. Brazil is the best example of how football and

²⁰ Elsey, *Citizens and Sportsmen*, 71.

²¹ Murray, Bill. *The World's Game: A History of Soccer*. (Urbana : University of Illinois Press, 1996)

identity interact, and as such, more literature focuses on Brazil than any other Latin American nation.

Brazil's style of play has been labeled 'O Jogo bonito', 'The Beautiful Game'. Brazilians take pride in playing a style that is not only effective at winning, but pleasing to the eye as well. The Brazilian style is historically different from traditional European styles of play. Susan Milby outlines the contrasts between the traditional tactical and stylistic approaches of Brazil and Germany.²² Through the 2002 World Cup, the traditional German style was predicated on positional discipline and solid defense, with a predictable, direct attack.²³ One observer stated that, "Particularly in the second half of this century, Germany's achievements on the international soccer scene have been less of a surprise, but rather very predictable. Their soccer has been solid and effective, if hardly ever spectacular or magnificent."²⁴ West Germany's triumph in the 1974 World Cup Final was a prime example of the effectiveness of the German style. The Germans had plowed through the first rounds of the tournament, failing to turn in any impressive performances in the process of reaching the Final, where they would defeat the *Total Football*²⁵ style of the Dutch with a pair of opportunistic goals.²⁶

In contrast, Brazil's traditional tactical philosophy has been "a football based on attack, a joyful game of individual self-expression."²⁷ A significant part of Brazilian tactics is the emphasis on the short pass and the dribble. Milby argues that this part of the Brazilian style

²² Milby, Susan Pavelka. *Stylin'! Samba Joy Versus Structural Precision: The Soccer Case Studies of Brazil and Germany*. (PhD Dissertation, Ohio State University, 2006.)

²³ Recently, under managers Jürgen Klinsman (2004-2006) and Joachim Löw, the German national side has shifted to a more creative attacking style, with midfielders Bastian Schweinsteiger, Mesut Özil, and Thomas Müller being prominent examples of inventive attacking players in the national side.

²⁴ As quoted in *Stylin'! Samba Joy Vs. Structural Precision*, 66-67.

²⁵ Total Football involves players being versatile and interchangeable- defenders can attack, forwards defend, etc. If executed properly, it is said to be among the most aesthetically pleasing styles of football.

²⁶ Glanville, *The History of the World Cup*, 192.

²⁷ Mason, *Passion of the People*, ix.

developed from favelas²⁸, making this style uniquely Brazilian. When played in the favelas, with large numbers and a compressed space, close control in small areas became a necessary skill in order to compete. Thus, the style of play that emerges is directly intertwined with the players' uniquely Brazilian upbringing and informal training in the game.²⁹

Another significant portion of Brazilian football identity is the manner in which Brazil's style is innovative. Eduardo Galeano³⁰ describes Brazilian Domingos Da Guia's evolution of the fullback position. Where previously defenders would hoof the ball away from danger at first opportunity, Da Guia developed his own style that came to be known as *domingada*. "Domingos let his adversaries stampede by vainly while he stole the ball; then he would take all the time in the world to take it out of the box. A man of imperturbable style, he was always whistling and looking the other way. He scorned speed. He would play in slow motion, master of suspense, lover of leisure."³¹

Christopher Gaffney has added a new angle to the literature on football and identity by examining the role of the stadium as a maker and expression of identity in Latin America in his book *Temples of the Earthbound Gods: Stadiums in the Cultural Landscapes of Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires*³². In his study of Rio de Janeiro's stadiums, he finds that the stadium acted as an instrument of societal transformation. In the first three decades of the twentieth century, Brazilian identities fragmented along class, racial, and geographic lines. Over a short period of time, stadiums changed this dynamic to a more unified identity. Gaffney states that "By the 1950

²⁸ Urban slums in Brazil

²⁹ Milby, *Stylin! Samba Joy Versus Structural Precision*, 73.

³⁰ Prominent Uruguayan journalist, author, and novelist.

³¹ Galeano, Eduardo, *Soccer in Sun and Shadow*, trans. by Mark Fried. (New York: Verso, 2003) Page 73

³² Gaffney, Christopher, *Temples of the Earthbound Gods: Stadiums in the Cultural Landscapes of Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009)

World Cup, the stadiums of Rio de Janeiro were relatively egalitarian public spaces where a wide spectrum of society understood themselves to be part of a collective national enterprise.”³³

Gaffney cites the construction of Vasco da Gama FC’s Estadio Sao Januario as a key event in this transition. Vasco da Gama FC, despite its association with the Portuguese community in Rio, was one of the first in Brazil to add black, mulatto, and lower class whites to its football team. In 1921 Vasco earned promotion to the first division of the league by virtue of winning the second division. However, the team to be relegated (demoted to the second division), Paissandu Cricket Club, made up of white elites, was protected from having to compete against the black and mulatto teams of the second division by a rules change that kept Vasco in the second division. Vasco won promotion the next year, and in 1923 won the first division title. In response, the elite-run league instituted measures to retain their hegemony over lower class teams. Among the rules were prohibitions against fielding players of subaltern employment, literacy requirements, and the requirement that each club possess a football-only stadium for use, which the poorer clubs did not have and would struggle to construct.

In response, the community associated with Vasco began collecting money for stadium construction. Though the architecture of the stadium preserves some elements of the Portuguese identity of the club founders, such as the traditional Portuguese blue and white tile on the facade and the Maltese cross of Admiral Vasco da Gama³⁴, the new stadium became a shared space for the blacks, mulattos, and lower class whites that claimed membership in the club, along with the middle and upper class Portuguese who paid for its construction. This resulted in a more blended identity that was increasingly Brazilian rather than any other distinction.

³³ Gaffney *Temples of the Earthbound Gods*, 42

³⁴ Famous Portuguese explorer from the 15th and early 16th century who discovered the route to India, paving the way for the Portuguese Empire.

Another example of the stadium's role in Brazilian identity cited by Gaffney is the construction of the Maracana stadium for the 1950 World Cup. After siding with the Allies in World War II, FIFA awarded the hosting of the 1950 World Cup to Brazil. The Brazilian regime under Dutra³⁵ saw this as an opportunity to project an image of a modern Brazil. In turn, Brazil needed facilities that demonstrated this to visitors. The presence of a magnificent stadium would put Rio at the same level as other great cities of the world. The result was the Maracana stadium, which at its opening had a capacity of over 150,000 spectators, putting it among the world's highest capacity stadiums. The construction of the stadium was heralded as a sign of Brazil's modernity and emergence onto the world stage.

Football's relation to identity is not restricted to the national level, but is important in local identity as well. Almost every league has a club that is traditionally supported by elites, and usually a rival that is the 'people's club'. In Argentina, River Plate is the former, and Boca Juniors the latter. In Brazil, Fluminense traditionally has a higher-class fan support, and other clubs such as Vasco da Gama are more associated with working class supporters. The club one supports can be deeply ingrained in identity. Eduardo Galeano states that in Uruguay, you are either a Penarol or Nacional supporter from birth, and Uruguayans often identify themselves on these lines, choosing either 'I'm a Penarol' or 'I'm a Nacional'. Galeano writes that identification along those two club lines was so prevalent in society that prostitutes in Montevideo would use the jerseys of the two clubs to attract customers.³⁶

Football and Globalization

³⁵ Euricio Gaspar Dutra, President of Brazil 1946-51.

³⁶ Galeano, *Soccer in Sun and Shadow*, 109.

The final over-arching theme in literature on Latin American football is the role it has played in globalization³⁷. Known as ‘The World’s Game’, football has been a global activity since its origins in the early twentieth century. The most important tournament in football is the *World Cup*, which contributes to globalization by bringing thirty-two nations together for one event. The World Cup further contributes to globalization by being held in different countries each time. The visitors that the tournament attracts number in the hundreds of thousands and also cause interactions of culture.

Football’s origins in Latin America are a direct result of globalization. The sport was initially brought to Latin America by Europeans, who then popularized it. European clubs often toured South America in the first decades of the twentieth century, and it became common for Latin American clubs to adopt the names of European ones, such as Barcelona Sporting Club in Guayaquil, Ecuador, or Everton de Vina del Mar in Chile. Over the course of the twentieth century, Latin American players, particularly Brazilians and Argentines, have increasingly migrated to play in European leagues. Pierre Lanfranchi and Matthew Taylor have noted that football has become a global economic activity, which is evidenced by how Latin American clubs are increasingly dependent on transfer fees³⁸ from European clubs to survive fiscally.

Lanfranchi and Taylor cite European immigration into South America as a leading cause of the initial migrations of South American players to Europe. The large Italian contingent in Buenos Aires allowed Italian clubs to import Argentine players and then declare them Italian citizens due to ancestral Italian roots. Three of the starters from Italy’s 1934 World Cup winning

³⁷ The broad definition of globalization used for this paper is ‘process of international integration arising from the interchange of world views, products, ideas, and other aspects of culture.’

³⁸ In football, players change teams differently than in American sports. Rather than having drafts or trades (which do exist, though are rare in football), one club pays the other club for a player’s sporting rights, and the player then switches teams, usually receiving a portion of the fee as well.

side were naturalized Argentines. In Brazil, growing Italian communities naturally formed football clubs, with Palestra Italia (now known as Palmeiras) the most prominent. Palestra Italia became the largest exporter of players to Italy. Twenty-six Brazilians registered in the Italian league between 1929 and 1943; fourteen of these players came from Palestra Italia.³⁹

The years post WWII saw many European leagues place limits on the number of foreign players a team could have. While this initially limited South American migration, Spain's dual citizenship agreements with many former colonies negated the quota rules. The higher wages on offer in Europe contributed to South American stars moving to European clubs, with Alfredo di Stefano moving to Real Madrid in 1953 being perhaps the most prominent example.

The globalizing effect of football has not been kind to Latin America. The increased South American presence in European leagues has led to Latin American clubs becoming increasingly economically dependent on fees from European clubs. It is easy to see why when comparing the makeup of national teams from late mid-century to those of present day. When Brazil won the 1970 World Cup, all twenty-two members of the squad played in the domestic league; in 2006, just two members of the national side played in Brazil.⁴⁰ With such a large loss of 'star power', the Brazilian and Argentine leagues (historically the strongest in Latin America) have suffered greatly.

The global nature of the modern game is at the root of Latin American football's current struggles. More money in European leagues means higher salaries, and if European clubs raise salaries, Latin American clubs must do the same to remain competitive. Players are now sought

³⁹Pierre Lanfranchi and Matthew Taylor, *Moving with the Ball: The Migration of Professional Footballers* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 81

⁴⁰Rory Miller and Liz Crolley, *Football in the Americas: Futbol, Futebol. Soccer*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2007), 1-2.

after in a global market, where before that market was more regional.⁴¹ Rachman also illustrates that the problem of the global market is not just that European clubs want Latin America's best players. Rather, seeking to increase revenues, the biggest European clubs, such as Real Madrid or Manchester United, have targeted football fans in Latin America as well. The threats from globalization have led to a restructuring of the domestic game, as national governments increasingly force clubs to incorporate and run along a true business model, in place of the old fallback of government support.

Mexico does not feature much in the literature about Latin American football for a number of reasons. Firstly, Mexico has not experienced the same level of success in international tournaments as other Latin American countries, particularly Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina, and therefore less attention is given to Mexican football history. Secondly, Mexican football took longer to reach a high level of popularity than in other countries, with interest and support for the game really improving with the 1970 World Cup hosted by Mexico. Thirdly, Mexicans playing abroad (and attracting more attention) is a fairly recent phenomena, while Brazilian and Argentine players moved to the more prominent stage of Europe in earlier periods.

⁴¹ Rachman, Gideon. "Beautiful Game, Lousy Business: The Problems of Latin American Football." In *Football in the Americas: Futbol, Futebol, Soccer*. ed. Rory Miller and Liz Crolley. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2007), 165.

Chapter One-The Migration of Players

One trend over the past two and a half decades has been that of the best football players from all over the world migrating to Europe to play in higher quality leagues and earn higher wages. For example, Bill Murray calculated that the average salary for a top division player in Mexico in 1995 was \$150,000 (about \$210,000 in today's dollars), compared to \$48,000 in Brazil.⁴² In Europe, they can earn substantially more; twenty-two year old Brazilian forward Neymar will earn almost ten million dollars this year. National teams are made up of a nation's best players, and are often fan favorites. As more South American players migrate to Europe to play, their home country fans are not able to watch them play as much and lose a little bit of that connection that comes with seeing a skilled player perform for a fan's favorite team. Alan Gilbert notes that skilled Latin American players typically follow a pattern in which they begin playing for a local team in their national league, move to a better team or to a leading club in Brazil, Mexico, or Argentina (where the most money is compared to other Latin American leagues), before making it to Europe if they are deemed good enough⁴³. There is also an increasing trend for European clubs to sign Latin American players at increasingly younger ages, such as Argentina's Lionel Messi, a four-time Ballon d'Or⁴⁴ winner and arguably the best active player, who was signed by FC Barcelona at the age of thirteen. Table One lists the number of players in the World Cup squads of Brazil and Mexico that were based in domestic leagues or internationally for the past seven tournaments.

⁴²Murray, Bill, *The World's Game*, 161

⁴³ Gilbert, Alan, "From Dreams to Reality: The Economics and Geography of Football Success". In *Fútbol, Fútbol, Soccer: Football in the Americas* eds. Rory Miller and Liz Crolley (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2007), 52-72.

⁴⁴ Soccer's version of an 'MVP' award, the Ballon d'Or is awarded in December by FIFA to the player deemed to have performed the best over the past 12 months. Votes from coaches, journalists, and international captains determine the winner.

Table One-Domestic vs. International Players in World Cup Squads⁴⁵

Year/Host Nation	Domestic Players (Brazil)	International (Brazil)	World Cup Result	Domestic (Mexico)	International (Mexico)	World Cup Result
1986/Mexico	20	2	Quarterfinals	21	1	Quarterfinals
1990/Italy	10	12	Round of 16	N/A	N/A	DNQ [^]
1994/USA	11	11	Champion	20	2	Round of 16
1998/France	9	13	Runner-up	21	1	Round of 16
2002/S. Korea & Japan ^{^^}	13	10	Champion	19	4	Round of 16
2006/Germany	3	20	Quarterfinals	19	4	Round of 16
2010/ South Africa	3	20	Quarterfinals	14	9	Round of 16

[^] Mexico did not qualify for the 1990 World Cup due to the ‘cachirules’ scandal. Mexican national teams at all levels were banned from international competition during a two year period (1988-1990) after it was discovered that Mexico used overage players in qualifying matches for the 1989 FIFA World Youth Championships.

^{^^} The number of players allowed in a World Cup Squad was changed from twenty-two to twenty-three players starting with this World Cup.

There is a clear trend of more Brazilian stars playing internationally with each passing competition.. This trend has relegated Latin American clubs to ‘feeder- league’ status, in which they provide talented players for overseas clubs to sign. The influence of Latin American player movement is demonstrated by the English Premier League (Europe’s most prestigious and competitive domestic competition over the past decade and a half). In 1992, only fifteen foreign players appeared on opening day. By 2003, that number rose to one hundred twenty seven⁴⁶, and

⁴⁵ 1; Guy Oliver, *The Guinness Record of World Soccer*, 2nd revised edition, (New York: Guinness World Records Limited, 1995). 2; Jan Alsos, Planet World Cup <http://www.planetworldcup.com/index.html>. Accessed February 1, 2014

⁴⁶ Alan Gilbert, “From Dreams to Reality: The Economics and Geography of Football Success”, 68.

a recent survey has found that over sixty percent of players in the EPL are foreign⁴⁷. Granted, not all of these players are Latin American, but many of the current stars hail from South America, such as Sergio Aguero of Argentina (Manchester City), Ramires of Brazil (Chelsea), and Luis Suarez of Uruguay (Liverpool), and there are more South Americans entering the league than ever.

The act of pulling a country's best players away from their domestic league robs the teams of a marketing tool, and is one of the reasons that attendance is down in Serie A and that many clubs are struggling financially. From the data in Table One, it is evident that Mexico has delayed the trend of losing its best players to Europe, which helps to account for Liga MX's period of success. By keeping its best players at home, Mexican clubs were able to attract more support from fans in the form of match attendance and club membership, while also earning more television revenue because teams had marketable stars.

It is also clear that lack of talent has not kept Mexicans away from European leagues. When Mexican players go abroad, they tend to do very well. For example, forward Hugo Sanchez scored 218 goals in 318 appearances for Atletico Madrid and Real Madrid in Spain between 1981 and 1992, winning the Pichichi award for the league's top scorer four consecutive times from 1985-88 (an as yet unequaled record). Defender Rafa Marquez is a more recent example, winning four La Liga titles with FC Barcelona (2005, 2006, 2009, 2010) and two UEFA Champions' League titles (2006, 2009).

⁴⁷ Raffaele Poli, Roger Besson, and Loic Ravenel. "2014 Demographics Study". CIES Football Observatory. Nuechatel, Switzerland.

Table 2: Number of Latin American players in Top 5 European Leagues⁴⁸

Year	EPL champ	EPL All Teams	Serie A champ	All Serie A	Bundesliga champ	All Bundesliga Teams	La Liga Champ	All La Liga Teams	Ligue 1 Champ	All Ligue 1
1999	0 Manchester United	15	4 AC Milan	55	1 Bayern Munich	9	4 FCB	71	0 Bordeaux	13
2000	0	22	Lazio 5	55	3	16	6 Coruna	93	4 Monaco	24
2001	0	19	9 Roma	76	3	17	4 Real Madrid	98	1 Nantes	41
2002	1 Arsenal	16	6 Juve	76	4 Dortmund	32	7 Valencia	102	4 Lyon	44
2003	2 MU	19	4	74	4 BM	42	5 RM	87	4	41
2004	2 Arsenal	28	6 AC	64	2 Werder Bremen	45	6 Valencia	109	4	40
2005	0 Chelsea	18	4^	68	5 BM	40	8 FCB	94	5	47
2006	1	21	14 Inter	75	7	35	7	113	4	52
2007	1 MU	38	13	66	4 Stuttgart	44	8 RM	108	5	49
2008	2	38	16	100	5 BM	55	7	103	5	64
2009	3	52	14	108	5 Wolfsburg	55	6 FCB	95	6 Bordeaux	55
2010	2 Chelsea	51	11	115	3	50	7	100	5 Marseille	52
2011	5 MU	49	5 AC	124	4 BD	39	7	107	2 Lille	45
2012	3 Manchester City	46	3 Juve	148	3	31	4 RM	88	2 Montpellier	50
2013	4 MU	48	4	149	4 BM	31	6 FCB	92	7 PSG	49

Table 2 illustrates the growing presence of Latin American players in European leagues over the past fifteen years. Listed here are the number of Latin American players on the champion team of each league for its respective year, with that team noted. The years with just a number listed indicates a repeat champion from the year before. The next column over lists the number of Latin American players in the entire top division for each of the countries. The discrepancies in number of Latin American players between leagues can be explained by a number of factors, such as league playing style, weather, and ease of immigration. Though there is not always year-to-year growth in the numbers, the general trend for all top five European

⁴⁸ "Foreign Players Statistics". http://www.transfermarkt.com/en/premier-league/gastarbeiter/wettbewerb_GB1.html. Accessed January and February 2014.

leagues⁴⁹ is one of increasing numbers of Latin American players. This has not always been the case. Pele, widely considered the best player of all time, never played a competitive match for a European side. However, since the 1980's, it has not been rare for exceptional South American talents to move to European teams; for example, Argentine great Diego Maradona enjoyed prolific spells at FC Barcelona from 1982-84 and Italy's Napoli FC from 1984-1991.

Beginning with this period, the top clubs in European leagues have been able to import Latin American talent. What has changed over the past fifteen years is an expansion in the volume of Latin American players on European teams. While in the period of the late 1990's and early 2000's, it was mostly top South American players moving to top European clubs, with the 'galactico'⁵⁰-era Real Madrid sides providing the best example of this, you now find more Latin American players on mid- and low level finishing teams.

The number of Latin Americans on the league champion teams has remained within a relatively static range over the fifteen years depicted in the table. The expanded volume of Latin American players is due to the fact that now even the less prestigious European teams can afford to have flashy Brazilians and Argentines in their team because of the financial decline of South American domestic leagues. High volumes of foreigners playing in the league is not a new phenomenon in Italy and Spain- both La Liga and Italy's Serie A have a long history of welcoming foreign talent. However, even in Germany, England, and France there has been quite a significant spike over the past decade and a half. Even England, where Marcelo Mora y Araujo

⁴⁹ The five leagues generally accepted as the best in world football are (in no particular order): The English Premier League, Germany's Bundesliga, Italy's Serie A, Spain's La Liga (Primera Division), and France's Ligue 1.

⁵⁰ The *galactico* policy of Real Madrid teams (under club president Florentino Perez) saw the Spanish club recruit highly skilled and easily marketable foreign stars to the team, usually paying huge transfer fees, such as Frenchman Zinedine Zidane's then-record transfer from Juventus in 2001 for 75 million Euros, or Brazil's Ronaldo, recruited from Italy's Inter Milan in 2002 for the comparative bargain of 30 million Euros.

notes that it is most difficult for South American players to succeed⁵¹, has seen a notable increase in the number of South Americans in the league. The lack of a strong history of South American players can be explained by a number of factors- the playing style of the EPL was drastically different from the South American leagues players grew up in, the harsh weather, difficulty adapting to England both culturally and on the pitch, etc. However, Table 2 illustrates that South American players have an increased presence even in the league that has been the least hospitable to them historically. It is also clear that South Americans are enjoying success in the EPL as well, as the number of Latin Americans on the past six English champions has increased.

⁵¹ Marcelo Mora y Araujo, "Round Pegs in Square Holes? The Adaptation of South American Players to the Premiership." In *Football in the Americas: Futbol, Futebol, Soccer*. eds. Rory Miller and Liz Crolley, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2007)

Chapter 2: League Formats and Competitive Balance

Competitive Balance/Parity

A level playing field is considered an ideal in sports-everyone wants a chance at winning a championship. Being able to put out a competitive team is very important to drawing support. Successful teams, or at least teams with a good chance of success, bring in more support from fans in terms of match attendance and merchandise sales. So, it is logical to think that a league with more parity, where more teams have a chance at winning the championship would be in better shape financially and attract more fans. Luiz Martins de Melo argues that Brazilian football has suffered financially in recent times due to spending beyond its means and under-funding. Low economic growth in Brazil during the 1980's and 1990's has also compounded the money problems experienced by the league and its clubs.⁵² I believe that a lack of parity has also compounded the problem in Brazil. In this chapter I will compare the competitive balance in Liga MX and the Campeonato Brasileiro by analyzing the number of teams that have come close to or won championships, average final position in the standings, and the number of points accrued in the competition. This data will show that Liga MX has experienced greater balance over the past two decades than Serie A.

⁵² Luiz Martins de Melo, "Brazilian Football: Technical Success and Economic Failure". In *Football in the Americas; Football, Futbol, Soccer* page 193. Eds. Liz Crolley and Rory Miller, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2007)

Table 3: Average finishes of clubs with at least three seasons in Serie A, 2003-2013⁵³

Club	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Avg
At. Mineiro	7	19	20*	n/a	8	12	7	13	15	2	8	11.1
At. Paranaense	12	2	6	13	12	13	14	5	17*	n/a	3	9.7
Bahia	24*	n/a	14	15	14	16.75						
Botafogo	n/a	n/a	9	12	9	7	15	6	9	7	4	8.6
Corinthians	15	5	1	9	17*	n/a	10	3	1	6	10	7.7
Coritiba	5	12	19*	n/a	n/a	9	17*	n/a	8	13	13	12
Criciuma	14	21*	n/a	16	17							
Cruzeiro	1	13	8	10	5	3	4	2	16	9	1	6.5
Figuerense	11	11	16	7	13	17*	n/a	n/a	7	20*	n/a	12.7
Flamengo	8	17	15	11	3	5	1	14	4	11	11	9.1
Fluminense	19	9	5	15	4	14	16	1	3	1	17*	9.4
Goias	9	6	3	8	16	8	9	19*	n/a	n/a	6	9.3
Gremio	20	24*	n/a	3	6	2	8	4	12	3	2	8.4
Guarani	13	22*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	18	n/a	n/a	n/a	17.6
Internacional	6	8	2	2	11	6	2	7	5	10	15	6.7
Juventude	18	7	14	14	19*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	14.4
Nautico	n/a	n/a	n/a	15	16	19*	n/a	n/a	n/a	12	20*	16.4
Palmeiras	n/a	4	4	16	7	4	5	10	11	18*	n/a	8.7
Parana	10	15	7	5	18*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	11
Ponte Preta	21	10	18	17*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	14	19*	16.5
Portuguesa	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	19*	n/a	n/a	n/a	16	12	15.3
Santos	2	1	10	4	2	15	12	8	10	8	7	7.2
Sao Caetano	4	18	17	19*	n/a	14.5						
Sao Paulo	3	3	11	1	1	1	3	9	6	4	9	4.6
Sport Recife	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	14	11	20*	n/a	n/a	17*	n/a	15.5
Vasco Da Gama	17	16	12	6	10	18*	n/a	11	2	5	18*	11.5
Vitoria	16	23*	n/a	n/a	n/a	10	13	17*	n/a	n/a	5	14

*indicates the club was relegated to Serie B for the next season

Table 3 lists the position in the final standings of Brazilian teams that spent at least three of the past eleven seasons in the top flight, with the last column being the average

⁵³ Marcelo Lemme De Arruda, "RSSF Brasil - Resultados Históricos." *The Rec Sports Soccer Statistics Foundation*. RSSF Brasil. <http://www.rssfbrasil.com/historical.htm#brasileiro>. Accessed January and February 2014.

final position of the club. Most European leagues see the same 2-5 clubs finish in the top positions each year, so you would expect to see multiple clubs with an average below five. The Campeonato Brasileiro does not follow that trend- only one club had an average finish below 5 (Sao Paulo), and only two others had an average below 7 (Internacional and Cruzeiro). This reflects the competitive nature of the league, since it is not dominated by the same clubs at the top of the standings year after year. The fact that fourteen clubs have an average between 7 and 12 proves that the league is very balanced, as there is a lot of variation in how teams perform season-to-season.

The level of parity also means that there are sometimes drastic changes in performance over the space of just a few seasons⁵⁴. Corinthians, perhaps the most famous example (and the biggest club to go down), were relegated to Serie B after finishing in 17th in 2007, just two seasons after winning the title. They then won the Serie A title again just 4 seasons later in 2011. Such turnarounds are remarkable in football, since there is no draft of amateur players for teams to retool around, and player turnover is dependent on transfers, which require (oftentimes large) fees. There are multiple examples of drastic changes in performance- in both directions- in just these eleven seasons listed. Vasco da Gama finished second in the league just three years after being relegated and demoted to the second division, and then were relegated just two seasons later after finishing in 18th-a drop of sixteen league positions in just two years. Santos finished 15th in 2008 after finishing as the runner-up in the season prior- a drop of thirteen places in one year. However, Cruzeiro's drop from 2nd in 2010 to 16th in 2011 signifies the largest single season drop in the eleven year span. Fluminense's title in 2010, after finishing 16th the season prior, is the largest jump upward in the standings in one year.

⁵⁴ Such drastic changes are not common in European leagues, which are typically dominated by a small number of teams with the most money.

Table 4: List of Champions and Runners-up, Campeonato Brasileiro, 1990-2013⁵⁵

Year	1 st stage Champ	1 st Stage Runner Up	Playoff Champion	Playoff Runner Up
1990	Gremio	Atletico Mineiro	Corinthians	Sao Paulo
1991	Sao Paulo	Bragantino	Sao Paulo	Bragantino
1992	Vasco da Gama	Botafogo	Flamengo	Botafogo
1993*	Corinthians*	Palmeiras*	Palmeiras	Vitoria
1994^	Palmeiras	Corinthians	Palmeiras	Corinthians
1995**	Botafogo	Santos	Botafogo	Santos
1996***	Cruzeiro	Guarani	Gremio	Portuguesa
1997	Vasco da Gama	Internacional	Vasco	Palmeiras
1998	Corinthians	Palmeiras	Corinthians	Cruzeiro
1999	Corinthians	Cruzeiro	Corinthians	Atletico Mineiro
2000****	Cruzeiro	Sport Recife	Vasco da Gama	Sao Caetano
2001	Sao Caetano	At. Paranaense	At. Paranaense	Sae Caetano
2002	Sao Paulo	Sao Caetano	Santos	Corinthians
2003*****	Cruzeiro	Santos	n/a	n/a
2004	Santos	Atletico PR	n/a	n/a
2005	Corinthians	Internacional	n/a	n/a
2006	Sao Paulo	Internacional	n/a	n/a
2007	Sao Paulo	Santos	n/a	n/a
2008	Sao Paulo	Gremio	n/a	n/a
2009	Flamengo	Internacional	n/a	n/a
2010	Fluminense	Cruzeiro	n/a	n/a
2011	Corinthians	Vasco	n/a	n/a
2012	Fluminense	Atletico Mineiro	n/a	n/a
2013	Cruzeiro	Gremio	n/a	n/a

Table 4 Notes:

*Format Change. This year's championship followed a new format. 32 teams from both Serie A and Serie B were sorted into 4 groups of 8 teams. Each team played the other teams in the group twice for 14 matches total. The top 3 teams in Groups A and B automatically advanced to the next stage while the top two teams in Groups C and D played a knockout round to determine who advanced to the second phase. The second phase sorted the eight teams into two groups of four, with the group winners advancing to a two-leg final. Corinthians and Palmeiras accumulated the highest point amounts in the first phase.

^ Indicates that championship followed the two phase format, and the teams listed for that year are the ones the accumulated the most points through the first phase

⁵⁵ Lemme De Arruda, Marcelo. "RSSF Brasil - Resultados Históricos." *The Rec Sports Soccer Statistics Foundation*. RSSF Brasil

** The format for this year was another change. 24 teams were separated into two groups of 12. There were two phases of single round-robin (11 matches). The top finisher of each group for each phase advanced to the semi-finals of a playoff.

***The league format reverted to a single round robin (23 matches), with the top 8 qualifying for a seeded playoff. This format would be followed for every year until 2002, with the exception of 2000.

****Due to a controversial legal complication, this year's league presents yet another format change. All teams from Serie A- Serie D (125 in all) were eligible. This year's championship is officially titled the Copa de Joao Havelange. Teams were sorted into three groups (based on which division they competed in). Qualifying teams from the first phase were then placed into a 16-team knockout bracket to determine the champion. The two teams listed for this year's regular season champion are the top two finishers from the Blue Module (The most difficult one, comprised of Serie A teams).

*****Starting in 2003, the Campeonato Brasileiro eliminated the playoff system and switched to a true round-robin format where each team plays every other team both home and away, with the championship awarded to the team that accumulates the most points.

Another way to measure the competitive balance of the league is to count the number of teams that have won a championship, or come close. This is useful in determining how open a league really is, since there is usually a sizeable gap between first or second and the rest of the group. Due to the fact that Serie A followed a playoff format for a number of years, in which teams finishing as low as 8th qualified for the tournament, for the years 1990-2002 the first two columns in Table 4 list the two teams that accumulated the most points in the first phase of the league competition. In order to include teams that had performed well enough to have a good chance at winning the championship (perhaps even earn the status of favorite) but for some reason may have faltered, I have included teams that finished runner-up in both the round-robin phase and the playoff phase. As the league switched to a round-robin format without playoffs starting in 2003, for those years I have listed the first place finisher and the runner-up in the final standings.

The Table shows that nineteen different Brazilian clubs came close to winning a championship or won a title. Of those nineteen, only eleven actually won a playoff championship (if from 1990-2002) or the league title (if post-2003). Bragantino (1991), Atletico Mineiro

(1990,'99, and 2012), Vitoria (1993), Portuguesa (1996), Guarani (1996), Internacional (1997, 2005, 2006, 2009), Sao Caetano (2001, 2002), and Sport Recife (2000) all came close. However, six of these eight teams were so-called 'flash-in-the-pan' periods of success that weren't sustained-akin to a 'Cinderella' season for an NCAA basketball tournament team. Of that group, only Atletico Mineiro and Internacional can claim sustained performance in the top flight, with average finishes over the past eleven seasons of 11.1 and 6.7, respectively. What this means is that while there has seemingly been a large amount of parity in the Serie A due to the large year-to-year variances in team performance, the competitive balance in the Campeonato Brasileiro has not been as level as in Liga MX.

Table 5: List of Mexican Champions and Runners-up, 1990-2013⁵⁶

	Apertura Champ	Apertura Playoff Runner Up	Clausara Champ	Clausara Runner Up
1990	Puebla	Universidad Guadalajara		
1991	UNAM	America		
1992	Leon	Puebla		
1993	Atlante	Monterrey		
1994	Tecos	Santos Laguna		
1995	Necaxa	Cruz Azul		
1996	Necaxa	Atletico Celaya		
1997	Santos Laguna	Necaxa	Chivas Guad.	Toros Neza
1998	Cruz Azul	Leon	Toluca	Necaxa
1999	Necaxa	Chivas	Toluca	Atlas
2000	Pachuca	Cruz Azul	Toluca	Santos Laguna
2001	Morelia	Toluca	Santos Laguna	Pachuca
2002	Pachuca	Tigres UANL	America	Necaxa
2003	Toluca	Morelia	Monterrey	Morelia
2004	Pachuca	Tigres UANL	UNAM	Chivas
2005	UNAM	Monterrey	America	Tecos
2006	Toluca	Monterrey	Pachuca	San Luis
2007	Chivas	Toluca	Pachuca	America
2008	Atlante	UNAM	Santos Laguna	Cruz Azul
2009	Toluca	Cruz Azul	UNAM	Pachuca
2010	Monterrey	Cruz Azul	Toluca	Santos
2011	Monterrey	Santos Laguna	UNAM	Morelia
2012	Tigres	Santos Laguna	Santos	Monterrey
2013	Tijuana	Toluca	America	Cruz Azul

Listed in Table 5 are the Mexican league champions. Mexico's top flight football league, like the Serie A, has changed formats multiple times over the past two decades. Prior to 1996-97, the Mexican league crowned just one champion-so the table lists just the champion and the runner up in the years from 1990-96 in the first two columns. Beginning in 1997, the league switched to a two season format, *Invierno* and *Verano* (Winter and Summer, respectively), then

⁵⁶ Macario Reyes Padilla, "México - List of Final Tables." *RSSSF Archive*. RSSSF Archive, 2002. <http://www.rsssf.com/tablesm/mexhist.html#pro>. Accessed February 2014.

changed the names to *Apertura* and *Clausara* (Opening and Closing) after the 2001-02 season. For the years 1997-2002, the Winter Champion and Runner-up are listed under the *Apertura* heading and the Summer ones under the *Clausara* heading.

Liga MX currently uses a single table with round-robin scheduling to determine playoff qualification (The top 8 teams qualify). Prior to 2011, the league used a “*liguilla*” (little league) system in which the eighteen teams are divided into three groups of six⁵⁷. The teams played fifteen group phase matches, and the top two teams in each group advance to the playoffs, plus the two third-place teams with the highest number of points. Leagues that use playoffs to determine the championship limit predictability and increase the competitive balance, since the team that wins the playoff tournament is not necessarily the team that performed the best over the course of the season. Playoff systems have a higher degree of randomness in results due to the smaller sample size. For example, you wouldn’t expect the team that finished 8th to beat the team in first very often if they played ten games- but they might win one or two. In a playoff system, a less talented team may defeat the superior team because they performed better in the game (or in Liga MX, over the course of two-legged playoffs⁵⁸). This holds true in every sport- all it takes is one team getting ‘hot’, or some bad luck to change a team’s playoff fortunes.

Liga MX has seen sixteen different teams win championships in the past twenty-four years, and six more clubs have appeared in a final without winning a title. The Brazilian Championship has seen twelve different clubs win titles over the same period. From this data, we can conclude that there is more parity in the Liga MX because a higher number of teams have won championships.

⁵⁷ In the years where the top division had 20 teams, they separated into 4 groups of 5, with the top two teams in each group advancing to the playoffs.

⁵⁸ In the Liga MX playoffs, teams play 2 matches- one at each team’s home field.

The following tables also illustrate the high level of balance within the Liga MX over the past two decades. Table 14 lists the group winners and their point totals from 1990-96. Out of a possible 114 points available each season the group winners (presumably the best teams) had a median average of 46.5 points per season, and never higher than 53. To compare this with a European league and give some perspective, 46 points would have earned a team 9th place in the EPL in 2012-13. Table 15 lists Liga MX group winners and their points after the switch to a two-championship format in 1996-2002. Out of a possible 51 points available during the first phase, the median value for group winners is 31. For the years 2002-03 through 2012-13, the average points of the top teams stays in a consistent range between 30 and 33. If that rate was expanded to a 38-game season, that would be an average of 67 points in the season, which, for perspective, would have earned sixth place in the EPL in the 2012-13 season. This data shows that the teams at the top have improved-but what about the other good teams? Has there been a gap between the top 4 sides and the rest of the league like in Europe?

Table 6 lists the point totals of the eight teams that qualified for the playoff round each season, and the average total for each year. A gradual downward trend in the average point totals of playoff teams from 1996-2002 represents a greater competitive balance in the league in years when Liga MX was beginning to boom. Table 8 covers the years 2002-03 (The year of the name change to Apertura and Clausara from Invierno and Verano) through 2013. The same trend of competitive balance is found here. The average points of playoff teams dropped from 32.4 in 2002 to a low of 26 in the Apertura 2008, and remained below 30 for all but four of the twenty-two competitions. This clearly demonstrates a very level playing field- higher averages would indicate more teams doing better, but would also mean that the teams not qualifying for the

playoffs were performing more poorly. The lower averages in Liga MX indicate a league that has been more balanced than Serie A, as demonstrated in the following tables and Figure 2.

Table 6: Group Winners and Point Totals 1990-1996⁵⁹

Year	Group 1 Winner (Points)	Group 2 Winner (Points)	Group 3 Winner (Points)	Group 4 Winner (Points)	Average Points of Group Winners
1990	UNAM (46)	Uni. Guadalajara (UAG) (40)	America (48)	UANL (40)	43.5
1991	America (43)	UNAM (55)	Chivas Guad.(41)	Monterrey(47)	46.5
1992	UNAM(44)	Chivas (45)	Necaxa(46)	Atlante(50)	46.25
1993	Atlante(41)	Necaxa(54)	Cruz Azul(44)	Leon(47)	46.5
1994	Santos Laguna(45)	Atlante(42)	Cruz Azul(48)	UAG(51)	46.5
1995	America(51)	Cruz Azul(48)	Chivas(52)	Santos Laguna(35)	46.5
1996	Veracruz(50)	Atletico Celaya(52)	Cruz Azul(56)	Necaxa(55)	53.25

⁵⁹ Macario Reyes Padilla, "México - List of Final Tables." *RSSSF Archive*. RSSSF Archive, 2002. <http://www.rsssf.com/tables/m/mexhist.html#pro>. Accessed February 2014.

Table 7: Group Winners and Average Points, 1996-2002⁶⁰

	Winter Group 1 Winner	Winter G2 Winner	Winter G3 Winner	Winter G4 Winner	Verano G1 Winner	Verano G2 Winner	Verano G3 Winner	Verano G4 Winner	Avg. Points of Group Winners
1996-97	Atlante 38	Necaxa 29	Chivas 31	Santos Laguna* 34	Toros Neza 34	America 37	Chivas* 34	Santos Laguna 26	32.9
1997-98	Leon 32	Cruz Azul* 31	Morelia 28	America 29	Atlante 23	Toluca* 33	S. Laguna 26	Necaxa 32	29.25
1998-99	Cruz Azul 40	Morelia 27	Necaxa* 32	Toluca 36	Cruz Azul 31	America 31	Necaxa* 22	Toluca 39	32.25
1999-2000	Toluca 32	Cruz Azul 27	Atlas 38	Necaxa 30	Toluca* 40	Morelia 24	Santos Laguna 31	Chivas 27	31.1
2000-01	Cruz Azul 33	Atlas 25	Necaxa 28	Pachuca 28	Atlante 23	UANL 27	Santos Laguna* 28	America 28	27.5
2001-02	Cruz Azul 30	Toluca 32	Necaxa 27	UANL 36	Atlas 30	La Piedad 37	Necaxa 27	UNAM 32	31.4

*Indicated team won championship

The 2002-03 season marked a league format change- the number of teams increased to from eighteen to twenty, so the points total is from 19 matches, not 17 as in previous years. This year the name of the Winter and Summer tournaments changed to Apertura and Clausara respectively. (RSSSF Mexico)⁶¹

⁶⁰ Macario Reyes Padilla, "México - List of Final Tables." *RSSSF Archive*. RSSSF Archive, 2002. <http://www.rsssf.com/tables/m/mexhist.html#pro>. Accessed February 2014.

⁶¹ Ibid

Figure 1: Group Winners and Point Totals Winter Seasons 1996-2002

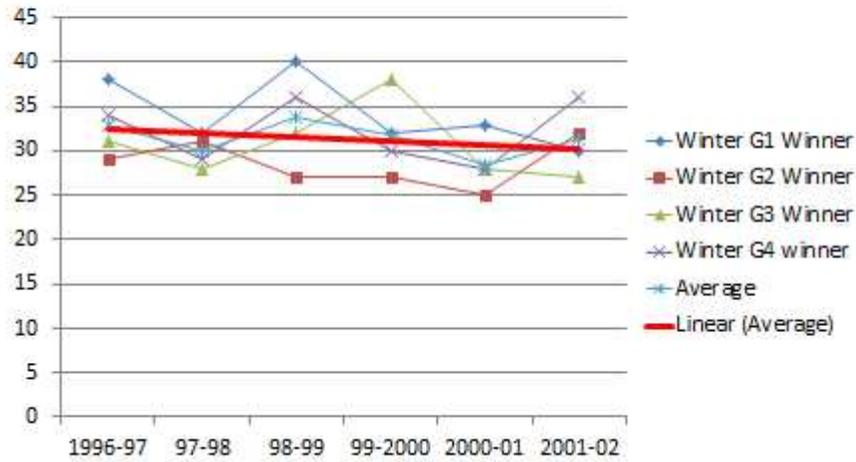


Figure 1 presents the point totals of Liga MX group winners in the winter seasons from 1996-2002. The red trend line shows a gradual decline in the amount of points accrued by teams finishing at the top of groups, indicating more parity.

Table 8: Group Winners and Average Points, 2003-2013⁶²

	Apertura Group 1 Winner	Apertura G2 Winner	Apertura G3 Winner	Apertura G4 Winner	Clasuar a G1 Winner	Clasuar a G2 Winner	Clasuar a G3 Winner	Clasuar a Group 4 Winner	Avg. Points of Group Winners
2002-03	America 43	UNAM 33	Morelia 32	Chivas 27	Toluca 33	Monterrey* 34	Morelia 35	Atlante 34	33.9
03-04	Pachuca* 36	UNAM 38	Tigres UANL 38	Atlante 31	Toluca 30	UNAM* 41	Jaguars Chiapas 42	Chivas 34	36.25
04-05**	Atlante 24	Toluca 32	Veracruz 35	n/a	Morelia 35	Cruz Azul 31	Necaxa 28	n/a	30.8
05-06	America 38	Toluca 30*	Monterrey 35	n/a	Atlante 27	Pachuca 31*	Chiapas 30	n/a	31.8
06-07	Cruz Azul 30	Monterrey 27	UNAM 29	n/a	Chivas 31	Pachuca* 39	America 30	n/a	31
07-08	Toluca 34	Santos Laguna 38	Chivas 31	n/a	Toluca 27	Santos Laguna*31	Chivas 33	n/a	32.3
08-09	Atlante 27	UNAM 26	San Luis 29	n/a	Pachuca 36	UNAM 28	Toluca 36	n/a	30.3
09-10	Toluca 35	Morelia 33	Cruz Azul 33	n/a	Chivas 32	Monterrey 36	UNAM 28	n/a	32.8
10-11	Monterrey*32	America 27	Cruz Azul 39	n/a	UANL* 35	Atlante 27	UNAM* 35	n/a	32.5
11-12**	Chivas 30	Cruz Azul 29	UANL 28	n/a	Santos Laguna* 36	Monterrey 32	America 32	n/a	31.2
12-13	Toluca 34	Tijuana* 34	Leon 33	n/a	Tigres 35	America* 32	Atlas 32	n/a	33.3

*Indicates team won championship

**Format change- The league reduced its size from 20 to 18 teams, and sorted into three groups of 6 instead of four groups of 5. The number of matches played in the first phase dropped from 19-17.

*** Before the 11-12 season, there was a format change to a single table with the top 8 teams qualifying for the knockout phase. For the 11-12 and 12-13 seasons, the table lists the top three finishing teams from the round robin phase as a substitute for the group winners.

⁶² Macario Reyes Padilla, "México - List of Final Tables." *RSSSF Archive*. RSSSF Archive, 2002. <http://www.rsssf.com/tables/mexhist.html#pro>. Accessed February 2014.

Table 9: Point totals of teams qualifying for Liga MX playoffs⁶³

Year									Max Points	Average
89-90	46	46	40	38	48	40	40	39	114	42.1
90-91	43	35	55	45	41	39	47	43	114	43.5
91-92*	44	40	45	41	50	46	45	44	114	44.4
92-93*	41	54	47	46	47	45	37	44	114	45.1
93-94*	45	42	39	48	46	40	51	43	114	44.25
94-95*	51	46	42	48	52	41	40	35	108	44.4
95-96	50	53	52	55	56	51	50	50	102	52.1
Invierno 1996	38	31	29	23	31	30	34	19	51	29.4
Verano 1997	30	28	37	34	28	25	26	27	51	29.4
Invierno 1997	32	30	31	29	28	23	29	23	51	28.1
Verano 1998	23	30	33	30	26	26	32	30	51	28.7
Invierno 1998	40	34	27	26	32	31	36	26	51	31.5
Verano 1999	31	26	31	25	22	19	39	34	51	28.4
Invierno 1999	32	23	27	22	38	28	30	28	51	29.7
Verano 2000	40	28	24	24	31	26	27	25	51	28.1
Invierno 2000	33	30	25	25	28	26	28	26	51	27.6
Verano 2001	27	28	28	27	28	25	25	23	51	26.4
Invierno 2001	30	26	32	24	36	32	27	26	54	29.1
Verano 2002	37	35	30	27	32	27	27	27	54	30.2

This year the league had ten teams qualify for the playoff round. The teams with the lowest four point totals of the ten competed in a pair of two-legged playoffs to advance to the quarterfinals. For these years, I have just included the point totals of the teams that advanced to the quarterfinal stage.

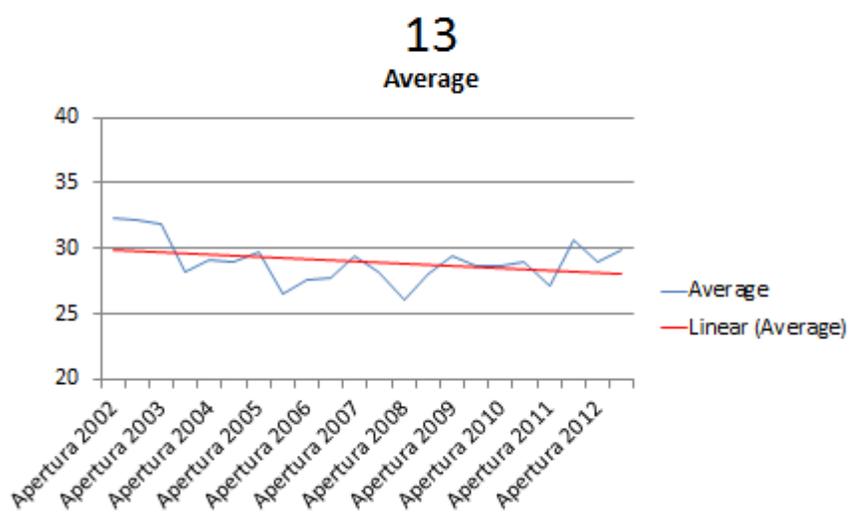
⁶³ Macario Reyes Padilla, "México - List of Final Tables." *RSSSF Archive*. RSSSF Archive, 2002. <http://www.rsssf.com/tablesm/mexhist.html#pro>. Accessed February 2014.

Table 10: Point Totals of Liga MX Playoff Qualifiers, 2002-2013⁶⁴

Year									Max Points	Average
Apertura 2002	43	41	26	33	29	32	28	27	57	32.4
Clausara 2003	33	32	34	34	35	24	34	32	57	32.2
Apertura 2003	36	29	38	31	38	27	25	31	57	31.8
Clausara 2004	30	27	41	32	42	23	34	27	57	28.2
Apertura 2004	35	32	27	32	31	29	24	23	51	29.1
Clausara 2005	35	30	29	31	24	28	28	27	51	29
Apertura 2005	38	31	24	30	28	35	30	22	51	29.8
Clausara 2006	27	25	22	31	24	30	30	23	51	26.5
Apertura 2006	30	27	26	29	27	26	27	29	51	27.6
Clausara 2007	31	39	28	25	25	30	23	22	51	27.8
Apertura 2007	34	24	38	33	31	29	25	22	51	29.5
Clausara 2008	27	26	31	24	33	31	30	24	51	28.2
Apertura 2008	27	22	26	26	29	27	26	25	51	26
Clausara 2009	36	26	26	23	28	25	36	24	51	28
Apertura 2009	35	21	33	30	30	26	33	27	51	29.4
Clausara 2010	32	30	36	25	25	28	28	25	51	28.6
Apertura 2010	32	30	27	26	25	39	25	25	51	28.6
Clausara 2011	35	26	25	27	26	35	31	26	51	28.9
Apertura 2011	30	29	28	27	26	26	26	26	51	27.2
Clausara 2012	36	32	32	31	31	28	28	27	51	30.6
Apertura 2012	34	34	33	31	27	26	23	23	51	28.9
Clausara 2013	35	32	32	30	29	29	29	23	51	29.9

⁶⁴ Macario Reyes Padilla, "México - List of Final Tables." *RSSSF Archive*. RSSSF Archive, 2002. <http://www.rsssf.com/tables/m/mexhist.html#pro>. Accessed February 2014.

Figure 2: Average Point Totals of Teams Qualifying for Liga MX Playoffs 2002-



Chapter 3: Transfer Policies and Stadiums

The finances of football clubs is key to reasons for decline. To examine the two leagues, I am going to compare transfer records and stadium construction in this chapter. Many Latin American football clubs are now dependent on transfer fees from abroad to survive financially, but Liga MX is one exception. Since the mid-1990's, Brazilian clubs have followed a trend of selling their best players to European teams for high fees and profit margins. Over the same period, Mexican clubs have kept their star players (for the most part) and have invested a large portion of their transfer profits in bringing in new players, while Brazilian clubs have put a lower amount of transfer profits towards replacing players. What this indicates is that when Mexican players are sold, they are generally replaced with a similar caliber player, while in Brazil, a player sold for a high fee is replaced by a less talented player, lowering the quality of play in the league. Better financial health has also enabled many Mexican clubs to build new stadiums to improve the game experience and attract more fans to games. Brazilian clubs have only been able to do this fairly recently, with help from the federal government stemming from hosting the World Cup in 2014.

Table 11: Serie A League Transfer Net Profit Margins⁶⁵

Year	Serie A Transfer Profit (Euros)	Number of transfers Out
1993/94	5,785,000	23
94/95	8,975,000	36
95/96	22,000,000	45
96/97	42,990,000	73
97/98	32,600,000	87
98/99	50,295,000	100
99/2000	64,699,000	132
99/01	46,600,000	148
01/02	87,315,000	194
02/03	37,600,000	223
03/04	63,030,000	283
04/05	60,270,000	347
05/06	74,035,000	423
06/07	115,760,000	525
07/08	136.610.000	757
08/09	92,892,500	901
09/10	75,358,000	866
10/11	43,000,000	870
11/12	13,665,000	780
12/13	88,330,000	734
13/14	210,800,000	412

The Serie A has seen a dramatic rise in both the number of transfers and the profits from them over the past two decades, as demonstrated by Table 11. Table 11 lists the season, the net transfer profits⁶⁶, and the number of transfers out. The transfer profits from the 1993/94 to the 2013/14 represent a thirty-six fold increase in transfer profits. The obvious trend is of both increasing profits and number of transfers-Brazilian players have very clearly become in high demand, and come at a premium price. Large profit margins also indicated that the money from transfer fees is not being put towards buying replacement players, but to other areas of the clubs. A low profit margin with a high number of transfers would indicate that clubs are spending that

⁶⁵ "Campeonato Brasileiro Transfer Expenditures" Transfermarkt.com http://www.transfermarkt.com/en/serie-a/transferuebersicht/wettbewerb_BRA1.html Accessed February 2014.

⁶⁶ Calculated by subtracting gross money spent from gross money received from transfers.

money from transfers on bringing in new players-however, there is only one year since 1995/96 with a profit margin lower than \$22 million (2011/12). Many Latin American clubs have become dependent on transfer fees to survive fiscally, and this can be seen in the high profit margins.

Table 12: Liga MX Net Transfer Margins 2006-2013⁶⁷

Year	Net Transfer Profits (Euros)	Net Transfer Revenue	Total Transfers Out
2006-07	1,040,000	27,450,000	292
07-08	-1,130,000	40,130,000	327
08-09	-2,425,000	41,775,000	410
10-11	-19,940,000	15,820,000	395
11-12	-9,815,000	26,670,000	458
12-13	6,120,000	12,350,000	474

Table 12 notes a different trend in Liga MX than in Serie A. There are fewer transfers, lower profit numbers (when there is any profit at all), and lower net revenue numbers. Only two of the last six years have seen Mexican clubs receive more in transfer fees than they spend. The profit margins of Liga MX in Table 12 show that Mexican clubs have spent more of the money they bring in than their Brazilian counterparts. This indicates that Mexican clubs have been in better fiscal shape, allowing them to spend money bringing in players instead of club maintenance.

⁶⁷ "Liga MX Transfers". Transfermarkt.com http://www.transfermarkt.com/en/liga-mx-apertura/transferuebersicht/wettbewerb_MEXA.html Accessed February 2014

Table 13: Liga MX Ten highest transfer fees Paid⁶⁸

Player	Club To	Club Departing	Fee	Year	
Christian Benitez	America	Santos Laguna	8,000,000 (Euros)	11/12	
Duvier Riascos	Pachuca	Tijuana	7,600,000	13/14	
Dorlan Pabon	Monterrey	Parma	4,830,000	13/14	
Aldo di Nigris	Chivas	Monterrey	4,600,000	13/14	
Aquivaldo Mosquera	America	Sevilla	4,200,000	09/10	
Everton	UANL	Deportivo Brasil	4,000,000	09/10	
Ariel Nahualpan	UNAM	LDU Quito	3,900,000	13/14	
Damian Alvarez	Pachuca	Tigres UANL	3,900,000	10/11	
Andres Rios	America	River Plate	3,700,000	13/14	
Daniel Montenegro	America	Independiente	3,600,000	09/10	

Table 14: Liga MX Ten highest transfer fees received⁶⁹

Player	Club Departing	Club Arriving	Fee	Year
Christian Benitez	America	Al-Jaish	11,700,000	13/14
Jackson Martinez	Jaguars	FC Porto	8,800,000	12/13
Dorlan Pabon	Monterrey	Valencia	8,000,000	13/14
Hector Herrera	Pachuca	FC Porto	8,000,000	13/14
Duvier Riascos	Tijuana	PACHUCA	7,600,000	13/14
Chicharito	Chivas	Manchester United	7,500,000	10/11
Diego Reyes	America	FC Porto	7,000,000	13/14
Jean Beasejour	America	Birmingham	4,800,000	10/11
Pablo Barrera	UNAM	West Ham	4,800,000	10/11
Teofilo Gutierrez	Cruz Azul	River Plate	4,800,000	13/14

⁶⁸ "Liga MX Transfers". Transfermarkt.com http://www.transfermarkt.com/en/liga-mx-apertura/transferebersicht/wettbewerb_MEXA.html Accessed February 2014

⁶⁹ Ibid

Table 15: Serie A Ten Highest Transfer Fees Received⁷⁰

Player	Club Departing	Club Arriving	Fee	Year
Neymar	Santos	FC Barcelona	57,000,000*	13/14
Lucas Moura	Sao Paulo	Paris Saint-Germain	40,000,000	12/13
Oscar	Internacional	Chelsea	32,000,000	12/13
Bernard	Atletico Mineiro	Shakhtar Donetsk	25,000,000	13/14
Robinho	Santos	Real Madrid	24,000,000	05/06
Alexander Pato	Internacional	AC Milan	22,000,000	07/08
Paulinho	Corinthians	Tottenham	19,725,000	13/14
Nilmar	Internacional	Villareal	16,500,000	09/10
Fred	Fluminense	Lyon	15,600,000	05/06
Fred**	Internacional	Shakhtar Donetsk	15,000,000	13/14

*This was the fee reported. However, in January 2014 a scandal broke that FC Barcelona had falsified its report of this transfer and actual fee paid was over eighty million euros.

**Not the same player as the Fred listed immediately above him.

Table 16: Serie A Ten Highest Transfer Fees Paid⁷¹

Player	Club To	Club Departing	Fee	Year
Alexander Pato	Corinthians	AC Milan	15,000,000	12/13
Leandro Damiao	Santos	Internacional	13,000,000	13/14
Javier Mascherano	Corinthians	River Plate	11,800,000	05/06
Vagner Love	Flamengo	CSKA Moscow	10,500,000	11/12
Ganso	Sao Paulo	Santos	9,100,000	12/13
Nilmar	Corinthians	Lyon	8,800,000	06/07
Luis Fabiano	Sao Paulo	Sevilla	7,600,000	10/11
Thiago Neves	Fluminense	Al-Hilal	7,000,000	11/12
Wesley	Palmeiras	Werder Bremen	6,000,000	11/12
Walter Montillo	Santos	Cruzeiro	6,000,000	12/13
Marcelo Moreno	Shakhtar Donetsk	Gremio	6,000,000	11/12

Tables 13, 14, 15, and 16 also clearly illustrate the discrepancy in transfer money between the two leagues. Table 13 shows the high transfer fees that top Brazilian players can

⁷⁰ "Campeonato Brasileiro Transfer Expenditures" Transfermarkt.com http://www.transfermarkt.com/en/serie-a/transferuebersicht/wettbewerb_BRA1.html Accessed February 2014.

⁷¹ Ibid

command. The highest fee for a player from Serie A is over eighty million Euros (Neymar). The highest fee paid for a Liga MX player is just under twelve million euros, and is the only Liga MX transfer to crack double digits. The fee for Christian Benitez would struggle to crack the top 25 list of fees paid for Serie A players.

These four tables indicate differences in the financial health of their respective leagues. There is also not a lot of significant difference between the amounts of the highest fees paid by each league's teams. The easy explanation for a few of the higher fees is that Brazilian clubs do have more to spend- Table 15 clearly demonstrates the high transfer incomes for Serie A. A second reason for some of Serie A's top fees paid is that they are paying the premium that comes with buying Brazilians (Javier Mascherano is the only player on that list that is not Brazilian). However, Brazilian clubs have spent a much lower portion of the income from their highest fees received compared to their highest fees spent. Liga MX's top ten fees received total 65 million Euros, and their top fees spend total 48.3 million Euros- coming out at 74%. The fees of Brazilian clubs, on the other hand total 266.8 million Euros, while spending only 100.8 on the top fees, which equates to a ratio of just 38%.

Stadiums

The stadium is the theater of soccer, and its importance to the game is undeniable. Its imposing profile dominates the surrounding landscape. Eduardo Galeano says that even an empty stadium communicates power, history, and meaning⁷². Christopher Gaffney states that “Stadiums matter to us because they are places where we share common emotions in a common place in a limited time frame. Stadium games, concerts, and spectacles are momentous occasions that live on in our collective memory.”⁷³ They are “monuments, places for community interaction, repositories of collective memory, loci of strong identities, sites for ritualized conflict, political battlefields, and nodes in global systems of sport.”⁷⁴ A pleasant stadium experience brings fans back to games, and even in this era of rising television revenues, putting people in the seats is still an important source of income in addition to providing a good atmosphere for matches. With all this in mind, it is clearly important for clubs to keep their home grounds well-maintained and in good shape. And though old stadiums may have that ‘historic’ feel and atmosphere, renovations and improvements are always welcomed by fans. Well-kept stadiums are one indicator of a league’s financial health. Tracking stadium age, renovations, and new constructions is a good way to evaluate the health of the facilities in each league.

⁷² Eduardo Galeano, *Soccer in Sun and Shadow* Kindle Location 402.

⁷³ Christopher Gaffney, *Temples of the Earthbound Gods : Stadiums in the Cultural Landscapes of Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires..* p 3.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 4

Table 17: Stadiums- Liga MX⁷⁵

Club	Stadium	Year Built (Year Renovated)	Capacity	Owner
America	Azteca	1966 (1985)	105,000	Televisa
Atlante	Estadio Olimpico Andres Quintana Roo	2007	20,000	State of Quintana Roo
Atlas	Jalisco	1960 (1970,1999)	56,713	Clubes Unidos de Jalsico A.C. (4 teams)
Chiapas	Victor Manuel Reyna	1982	31,500	Chiapas State Government
Cruz Azul	Estadio Azul [^]	1947 (1996)	35,161	Grupo CIE (Corporacion Interamericano de Entretenimiento)
Chivas Guadalajara	Omnilife	2010	49,850	Jorge Vergara (Owner of Omnilife)
Leon	Leon	1967	33,943	City of Leon
Monterrey	Tecnologico	1950 ^{^^}	38,622	Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education
Morelia	Morelos	1989 (2011)	35,000	State of Michoacan
Pachuca	Hidalgo	1993 (2004)	30,000	Pachuca Group
Puebla	Cuahtemoc	1968 (1985)	42,648	State of Puebla
Queretaro	Corregidora	1985	41,247	Government of Querataro
Santos Laguna	Estadio Corona	2009	30,000	Grupo Modelo
Tijuana	Estadio Caliente	2006	21,000	Grupo Caliente (Casino Operating Company)
Toluca	Nemesio Diez (La Bombonera)	1954	27,000	Toluca FC
Tigres UANL	Universitario	1967	42,000	Universidad Autonoma de Nuevo Leon
Pumas UNAM	Olimpico Universitario	1952	63,000	Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico
Veracruz	Luis de la Fuente	1967	30,148	State of Veracruz

⁷⁵Stadium Data gathered from official websites for each club.

Table 17 Notes:

^Plans for construction of a new stadium are in progress

^^ The new Estadio de Futbol Monterrey is scheduled to open later this year, and the ownership will be split between beverage company FEMSA and the state of Nuevo Leon.

Table 18: Serie A Stadiums⁷⁶

Club	Stadium Name	Year Opened (Renovated)	Capacity	Owner
Atletico Mineiro	Mineirao	1965 (2012)*	62,000	Minas Arena
Atletico Paranaense	Arena de Baixada	1999 (2014)*	28,000^^	Atletico Paranaense
Bahia	Itaipava Arena Fonte Nova	2013 *	55,000	Bahia State government
Botafogo	Maracana	1950 (2000,2006, 2013)*	78,838	State of Rio de Janeiro
Chapecoense	Arena Conda	2008	21,000	City of Chapeco
Corinthians^	Estádio Municipal Paulo Machado de Carvalho (Pacaembu)	1940 (2007)	40,200	City of Sao Paulo
Coritiba	Estadio Couto Pereira	1932 (2005)	37,182	Coritiba FC
Criciuma	Heriberto Hulse	1955 (1992)	28,749	Criciuma Esporte Clube
Cruzeiro	Mineirao	1965 (2012)*	57,483	State of Minas Gerais
Figuerense	Estadio Orlando Scarpelli	1960	19,900	Figuerense FC
Flamengo	Maracana	See above	See above	See above
Fluminense	Maracana	See above	See above	See above
Goias	Serra Dourada	1975	60,000	State of Goias
Gremio	Arena do Gremio	2012	60,540	Gremio FC
Internacional	Estadio Beira Rio	1969 (2013)*	50,000	SC Internacional
Palmeiras	Allianz Parque	2014	45,000	Palmeiras
Santos	Vila Belmiro	1916 (1997)	16,800	Santos FC
Sao Paulo	Morumbi	1960 (1996,2000,2009)	71,200	Sao Paulo FC
Sport Recife	Ilha de Retiro	1937	35,000	Sport Recife
Vitoria	Barradao	1989	35,600	Vitoria SC

⁷⁶ Stadium data gathered from official club websites and the official FIFA World Cup 2014 website: <http://www.fifa.com/worldcup/destination/stadiums>.

Table 18 Notes:

*Indicates that the stadium will be used to host World Cup matches this summer, and that some or all renovation funding was provided by the federal government of Brazil.

^ Corinthians are scheduled to move into a new stadium, which is currently completing construction, after the arena hosts matches during the World Cup. The Arena de Sao Paulo, to be called Corinthians Arena in the future, will have a capacity of 48,000, and be privately owned by the club.

^^ The post-renovation capacity will be 44,000

Tables 17 and 18 offer comparisons between Brazil and Mexico in terms of stadium size, age, date of renovation (when applicable), and ownership. Brazilian stadiums are larger on average than Liga MX⁷⁷. The leagues vary on new stadium construction and stadium renovations. In the past thirty years, Liga MX has constructed seven new stadiums, with another falling just outside the thirty year range (the Estadio Victor Manuel Rayna, opened 1982), one more that is set to open this summer, and another that is in the first stages of planning. The Serie A has opened six new stadiums over that same time period, with three of them in the past three years (Allianz Parque, Arena de Gremio, and Itapaiva Arena Fonte Nova). However, if we rule out stadiums constructed for the upcoming FIFA 2014 World Cup⁷⁸, that number shrinks to five. Additionally, six Liga MX stadiums have undergone renovations in the past thirty years, leaving just five clubs that have not built a new stadium, renovated their current one, or without concrete plans for a new construction. Nine⁷⁹ Serie A stadiums have undergone renovations fourteen times over the past thirty years. However, only eight of those renovations were not due to World Cup funding from the government, and four of the renovations were done by two teams. That leaves three Serie A teams without a renovation or new stadium in the past thirty years, and four that would not have had stadium upgrades without Brazil's World Cup bid.

⁷⁷ 47,994 vs 39,046, respectively in terms of the average capacity of all stadiums in each league

⁷⁸ Hosting the World Cup causes the data to skew high, since the government typically either pitches in some funding to defray to cost or covers the cost of construction completely, and without this aid, it is unlikely that the new stadium project(s) would have occurred.

⁷⁹ Flamengo, Fluminense, and Botafogo all share the Maracana, so I am counting stadiums, not clubs.

Serie A stadiums are also older on average than Liga MX's. The average age of Brazilian top-flight stadiums is a decade older than their Liga MX counterparts- 44.05 years old to 33.44. The timeline of the renovations and new stadiums is also important. Just one of the "new"⁸⁰ Liga MX stadiums has opened in the last 3 years (Omnilife Stadium, July 2010), meaning that Mexican clubs with new stadiums have had a longer period of time to reap the benefits of new stadiums. The Estadio Corona (opened 2009), Estadio Caliente (opened 2006), Estadio Olimpico Andres de Quintana Roo (opened 2007) have all provided their clubs with the benefits of a new stadium. Gremio Arena (2012), Itapaiva Arena (2013, Allianz Parque (2014), and Corinthians Arena (2014) have all opened too recently for the effects to be felt, but the investment in stadium infrastructure has seemed to benefit the league overall.

The key difference between the two leagues in terms of stadiums is in the ownership pattern. Only two Liga MX stadiums are owned by clubs, seven are owned by state or municipal government, six by businesses or corporations, and three by universities. This means that the clubs did not have to invest money in stadiums, and could afford higher transfer fees for better players or higher wages to keep talented ones. Twelve of the eighteen Serie A stadiums (Botafogo, Flamengo, and Fluminense all share the Maracana) were owned by the club, and only six are owned by local government. The significance of this is that the clubs that own their stadiums had to pay for maintenance, improvements (when not associated with the World Cup), and any new construction, which can be prohibitively expensive, and nearly impossible to do without outside investment. The stadium ownership model of Liga MX made it easier for clubs to make improvements and renovations, as well as move into new stadiums.

⁸⁰ Meaning opened in the last thirty years.

Conclusion

The past two plus decades has been a period of opposing fortunes for Liga MX and the Campeonato Brasileiro. Mismanagement and financial problems have plagued Brazilian teams since the early 1990's, precipitating a period of decline that has seen the Serie A fall from its status as the world's top league to one that merely supplies talented players for other leagues to purchase. Meanwhile, the Liga MX has improved from a league not even ranked in the top 25 by the International Federation of Football Statistics to one that consistently is rated in the top ten in the world. However, the hosting of the 2014 World Cup has provided investment in the Brazilian league and the beginning of improvements.

There are three main reasons for Serie A's fall from grace and Liga MX's rise to prominence: Transfer policy, stadium management, and competitive balance. Financial instability bred the need for new sources of income for Serie A clubs, beginning the cycle in the mid-late 1990's of selling the league's best players in order to survive that has continued to today. During the same period, Liga MX has kept hold of its top stars, and fans and sponsors have repaid the league for its investment.

Stadiums falling into disrepair is also in part due to the financial problems that hounded Brazilian football in the two prior decades. Clubs already short on cash could not afford to upgrade or maintain their stadiums, a problem compounded by the private stadium ownership model followed by most clubs in the league, though the upcoming World Cup has rectified the problem somewhat. Liga MX partnered with local governments and private businesses in stadium ownership, allowing its teams to invest money elsewhere.

Lastly, Liga MX has had a greater competitive balance than Serie A in the past twenty years. Fans support teams that win, and more teams that win titles or have a healthy shot at

winning one bring more fans to the stadiums and more money to the club. Liga MX's playoff format gives more teams a chance at success, and therefore a higher amount of teams bringing in more money. The increased level of competition has also meant more money from broadcast fees for the league. The policies pursued by each league have brought them to where they are today, but both leagues appear to be on upward trends at present. Liga MX seems poised to continue its upward surge in prestige, but must continue to hold on to its stars if it is to do so; the Serie A, helped by the Brazilian government ahead of the World Cup, has made improvements over the past few years that may see it regain its former glory on the world stage.

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VITA

Ryan Samuel Hunt was born April 16, 1990. He is the son of Russell and Michelle Hunt. A 2008 graduate of Marmion Academy, Aurora, IL, he received a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in History from Drake University, Des Moines, IA, in 2012. In August, 2012, he enrolled in graduate study at Texas Christian University. While working on his Master of Arts degree in History, he held a Graduate Assistantship during the years 2012-14. He is a member of Phi Alpha Theta.

Abstract

Ole, Ole? The Opposing Fortunes of the Liga MX and Campeonato Brasileiro, 1990-2013

By Ryan Samuel Hunt, M.A., 2014
Department of History and Geography
Texas Christian University

Thesis Advisor: Susan Ramirez, Neville G. Penrose Chair of Latin American History

In the past, Brazilian Football used to be the pinnacle of the sport worldwide. People all over the globe knew of the flair and artistry of the country's abundantly talented players. The Campeonato Brasileiro Serie A was consistently rated amongst the top two or three leagues in the world up until the mid-1990's, but has encountered a period of decline that has seen it slip from its perch as its top players have moved to other leagues. In contrast, Mexico's Liga MX has been the exception to the trend of fading domestic football leagues in Latin America, ascending from an unremarkable league to consistently achieving a top-10 IFFFS ranking during the 2000's, experiencing tremendous growth in prestige, economic clout, and talent level. This study compares the two leagues across several factors: Competitive Balance, Player Migration, Stadium Maintenance, and Transfer Policy, revealing part of the reason for Liga MX's elevation.