

Exploring the Reasons That Stop China from Becoming a Football Superpower

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ABSTRACT

As one of the world's superpowers, China dominates the economy, military, and science. However, in terms of sports, football has yet to achieve the level anticipated by the Chinese, and Chinese football is even further below the world average. After comparing the football culture to neighbouring countries such as Japan and South Korea and conducting data analysis, it is evident that China has implemented football reforms over the last decade, but the results remain unsatisfactory. All current statistics and research demonstrate unequivocally that China's football has ceased to be a world power. This article review summarizes 10 references articles on Google scholars, explaining why Chinese football has lagged behind the world average from the perspective of Chinese society, contains specific examples and facts based on the performance of Chinese football during the last 20 years, in order to provide a detailed explanation of the backward development of Chinese football, and clearly illustrates that the inadequate football population, training, and football league management are all explanations for the failure of Chinese football development.

Keywords: *Football Superpower, Reasons, China*

1. INTRODUCTION

As one of the world's superpowers, China dominates the economy, military, and science. However, in terms of sports, football has yet to achieve the level anticipated by the Chinese, and Chinese football is even further below the world average. After comparing the football culture to neighboring countries such as Japan and South Korea and conducting data analysis, it is evident that China has implemented football reforms over the last decade, but the results remain unsatisfactory. This article used "Chinese football" as the keyword, and searched at google scholar for articles from 2000, and select total of 10 reverences articles in order to provide a detailed explanation of the backward development of Chinese football. This research will assist researchers in better understanding why Chinese football lags behind the world average, as well as providing a theoretical foundation for future proposals. According to studies on Chinese football during the last 20 years, the reasons why Chinese football lags behind the world level are essentially concluded, however, previous research did not cover Chinese football's performance in world matches in recent years.

2. INADEQUATE FOOTBALL ENVIRONMENT

2.1 Limited Availability of Soccer Facilities

The total land area of China is 9.6 million square kilometres, and a standard track football field is 7,140 square meters in size. However, in a poor rural area of China, the main method of income is primarily agriculture. 7% percent of China's agricultural land is required to feed 22% of the world's population [1]; therefore, the rural area in China has no spare space for football constructions. In most cities in China, the land is also scarce. The dense population and surrounding buildings make it extremely impossible to build a standard football field measuring 7140 square meters in such areas. In addition, scarce land is frequently used for the most critical purposes, such as real estate development, school construction, and commercial centre expansion, whether in rural or urban areas. A city's football field is optional so that no town can offer an appropriate field for training and matches. When football is devoid of competitiveness and practice fields, the most critical part of the game is lost. Football players are unable to practice for actual games. The platform and any meticulously stated tactics and plans were all in vain.

2.2 Family Planning

The overall Chinese football performance is rapidly deteriorating. Apart from a scarcity of facilities, one of the primary reasons is that China's population planning policies. Because the vast majority of kids in Chinese households are only child, it is essential to plan for the long-term of the kid. Parents hold the majority of authority over their children's decisions before they turn 18. Most parents would prefer their children to study rather than participate in any sports, as studying in China is more reliable and safety than participating in sports. As a result, China's football population is relatively small. According to figures reported by FIFA, China has roughly 711,235 registered players, which is still far lower than that of European countries with smaller populations (See Figure 3) [2].

2.3 The Educational System in China

China's education and sports education systems are entirely incompatible. Students can only decide between athletics or academics and cannot pursue both simultaneously in high school, as most students do in North America. In China, an annual high schooler examination called "Gaokao" determines the future of high school students. This exam is similar to the SAT in North America, but its difficulty and significance are far greater. Students' score on this exam directly impacts their future education and careers. Thus, the college admission examination has traditionally been China's conventional talent acquisition method, and it is also widely accepted as a measurement of "academic success" by most Chinese. As a result, it is part of the most crucial process for all Chinese students starting from elementary school through high school. Even though "Gaokao" is not the only choice to be successful, it is the best option for most students. Although Gaokao is hugely competitive, students who score highly on it have a brighter future. However, if they choose to pursue in sports, particularly football, it will be challenging for an only child to succeed in playing football. Due to the intense pressure in academics, it's no surprise that fewer and fewer students choose to play football because academic accomplishment is more honourable than any achievement of football in China. Football requires a significant financial investment and a high level of risk, even if a youngster possesses exceptional football talent. Their athletic ability, parental involvement, and a scarcity of Chinese football training sources will also waste their talent. Parents consider football a sort of hobby rather than a career, so nearly no parents wish to see their child start a career in football. Even if a professional football club admits the child, they will inevitably return to school due to their parents' opposition.

3. THE SHORTAGE OF FOOTBALL PLAYERS

3.1 Inadequate On-campus Football Activities

Deng Xiaoping, former chairman of China, once stated in 1982, "football should begin with kids"[1]. This term implies that in order to become a successful football player, it is necessary to begin training them as kids. However, when Chinese football began to deteriorate after entering the World Cup in 2002, the Chinese football association underestimated teenagers' football training. Apart from the relative importance of campus football in China, such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and other major cities, campus football has mostly remained undeveloped and overlooked in other cities. Other courses in schools frequently overshadow physical education, and students are deprived of any opportunity to participate in sports. The Ministry of Education and school administrators pay very little attention to students' sports [3]. Some schools even cancel several football games to offer students extra time to study. As a result, football has degenerated into a non-essential status in schools. Numerous students strive hard to get admission to colleges, and all high school does not promote any sports under the idea of education being the primary objective [4]. Due to the risk of football injury, schools do not permit all football-related activities for safety reasons, and some schools explicitly say that football is banned on CAMPUS [1]. As a result, most students are disinterested in everything but studies. Therefore, promoting football on campus seems to be nonsense.

3.2 Populations of Football Players

Sports, such as table tennis, track and field, swimming, and other sports in China, are unquestionably at a world-class level. After repeated defeats in Chinese football matches, a new round of discussions on the development of Chinese football has been aroused in various media. In addition to venting their emotions, people came up with more rational thinking. But when it comes to football population discussion, "In 1.3 billion of Chinese should be picked out a very strong football easily". In fact, this opinion generally comes from people who do not truly understand sports. The level of a sports event and the number of athletes is not determined by the total population of a country, but the total population of people participating in the sport [5]. However, football is still a long way from these sports. In the past few decades, although China now has many fans who support and love football, it is only the tip of the iceberg for a country with a population of 1.3 billion, and it is rare that football is fully operated as a culture [6]. Chinese football lacks popularity and public support, and it lags well behind the world's football superpowers. Italy, for example, has the world's largest football population. According to

statistics, there are up to 20 million supporters in Italy, accounting for almost 40% of the country's entire population (See Figure 1). Denmark, with a population of only 5 million but 100,000 football players. The United States. Although it is not a football superpower, its football population under 21 increased to 5 million in the 1980s (see Figure 2) [7]. Several international football powers possess advanced training technologies and an outstanding football system. Each stage, from elementary to middle school, high school to colleges, and the professional league has its own football league. Students are given their own opportunities for performance and practical exercises. The heavy focus on football has instilled a clear goal and direction in football players of all ages. As a result, most football players have achieved professional level before the age of 18 and can sign contrast easily with a variety of football clubs. On the other hand, while there are a few football fans in China, the vast majority are fans who claim that they are football fans but do not even know the rules. The amount of "bandwagons-fans" is astonishing.

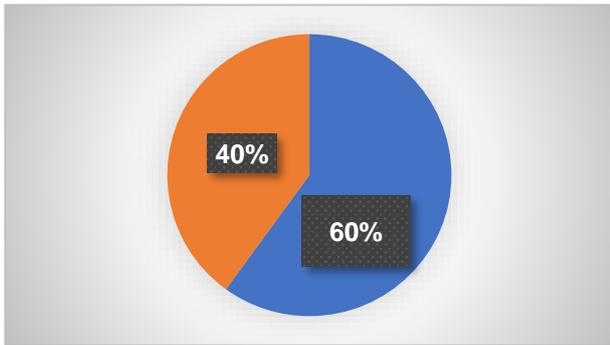


Figure 1. Football player in Italy in 2005 [7].

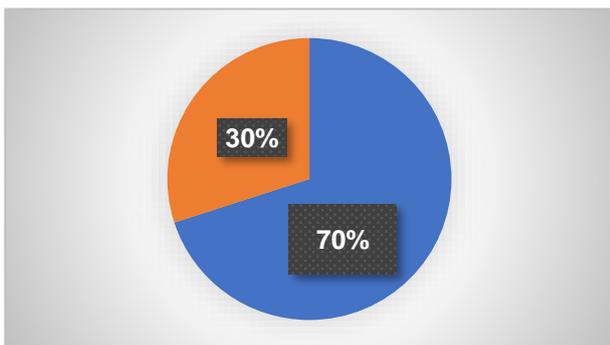


Figure 2. Football player in the US in 1980 [7].

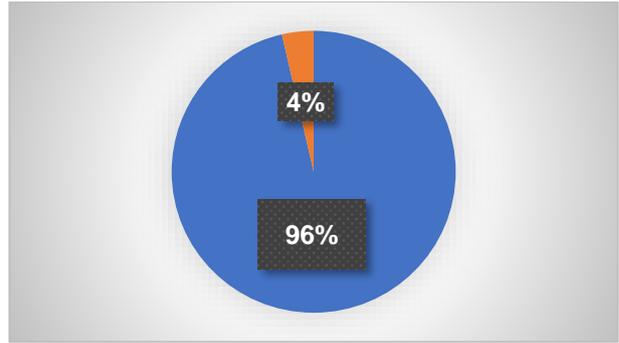


Figure 3. Football player in China in 2019 [2].

4. INADEQUATE OF FOOTBALL LEAGUE AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 Chinese Football League

Since the beginning of the Chinese Super League, the league's legal structure has been chaotic [9]. Transitioning from a college football player to a professional football club is lengthy. Players must comply with several related laws and regulations and invest a significant sum of money in maintaining a stable football career. As a result, it is irrational for football families with low-income family backgrounds, which is why many young players with solid football talents but low-income family origins quit playing football entirely. For a lengthy period, the training level of Chinese football clubs has remained stagnant. The amateur training level deprives players of opportunities to play in an actual match, leaving the team's players unable to develop a tacit understanding between teammates during the game, resulting in abysmal performance on the field. The league's policies and guidelines are unreasonable, and the rules and regulations governing club promotion and relegation are frequently revised. The league's rules and regulations governing promotion and relegation are commonly changed in response to a match's wins or losses, which seems ridiculous compared to other countries' football leagues. Simultaneously, football league teams are pretty inconsistent in their punishment of players. For example, there has been no defined disciplinary standard for athletes who engage in inappropriate behaviours such as drinking and fighting during preparations and games. Law enforcement agents cannot treat all athletes equally, which seriously affects the reputation of the whole football club and the league.

4.2 Administration of Football Leagues

The Chinese football Association is the regulatory authority of Chinese football, with the principal task of managing the league throughout the country. However, the Chinese football Association's chaotic approach to policy formation has resulted in disorder throughout Chinese football. The majority of administrators will

issue new policies but never execute or reform them. Football administrators are corrupt and indifferent to youth and professional football, players lacking clear goals and direction, and the development of Chinese football is stagnating. Simultaneously, the Chinese football Association's inept administration has resulted in several negative occurrences. For instance, the poor manners of fans and players, gambling, match-cheating, bribing officials, and so on [9]. But the Chinese football Association chose to ignore them. In this toxic football environment, players' competitiveness has waned, resulting in terrible records in the game. There is no connection between youth and professional football, resulting in a significant flaw at the top level. During the World Cup, the Chinese were able to plainly see the tremendous disparity between Chinese and international football. Compared to Japan and South Korea, which are strong football superpowers in Asia, and strong football teams in Europe, the Chinese football team's overall combat effectiveness, no matter the technical and tactical abilities, and literacy of the players are far inferior to those of the world football powers. The technical, tactical, physical, psychological, and experiential components of Chinese football all represent the country's current level of performance [10]. Chinese football has never had a representative character such as Yao Ming, inspiring supporters with their spirit and passion. The amateur level of football gradually corrodes people's interest in football.

4.3 Chinese Football Techniques and Skills

Compared with the techniques of Chinese football and world football power, the gap between the Chinese team and the opponent is wide. One of the most prominent gaps is the unreasonable and creative use of techniques by athletes in high-intensity confrontation. According to the technical statistics of the 48th group match of the 16th World Cup: The Chinese team has a total of 19 shots, ranking first from the bottom [10]. The ball possession time in the three games is 50%, 43%, and 47%, and most of the ball possession time is invalid ball possession (i.e., passing the ball in the backcourt and not organizing an attack) [See Figure 4]. A total of 18 free kicks and 16 corner kicks were won in the three games but no goal [See Figure 5].

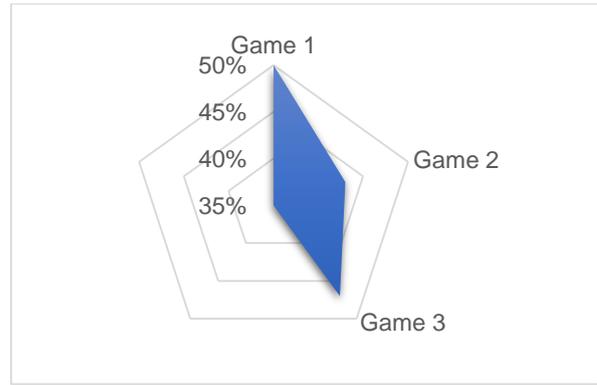


Figure 4. Ball Possession time of three games [10].



Figure 5. Overall performance of three games [10].

These data reflect the serious problems in Chinese football techniques from multiple perspectives. Players have no tacit wisdom, and technical mistakes in passing occur frequently. It is difficult for players to have continuous passing and receiving coordination between players, and their defensive and offensive skills are inadequate.

4. CONCLUSION

The primary reason for restricting the growth of Chinese football is the shortage of skills caused by the lack of Chinese football players. The decaying circular creates such a phenomenon at all levels of football society. Chinese football development is limited, mostly because of insufficient football facilities in China, a lack of school football publicity, and an unsuitable Chinese educational system. These lead to kids and parents eventually losing interest in football and generating prejudice. Numerous negative cycles have led to the decline of the Chinese football population. The remaining minority of football players in China are less excited about competing against football superpowers several times stronger than their scale. Numerous negative circumstances lead to the development of Chinese football, which is considerably below the world average. For parents in China, perhaps China needs a new understanding of football. Researchers could utilize data

on the growth rate of the Chinese football population, the development of youth football leagues, and the remediation of the Chinese football league's management system to determine if Chinese football is progressing or regressing in the future.

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