

THE IMPACT OF EX-FOOTBALLERS ON THE AZERBAIJAN PREMIER LEAGUE

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Annotation: The Professional Football League (PFL) first organized the current Azerbaijan Premier League in 2007. The PFL is a company that has the responsibility to organize the Premier League, which is the top tier and the First Division, which is the second tier of Azerbaijani football. The Azerbaijan Premier League replaced the Top Division, which existed from 1992 to 2007.

Since then, the championship has produced a lot of players from different clubs around the country. The league attracts foreign players from other continents. Most of the foreign players play as professionals and leave the league after the expiration of their contracts or after they retire, but most of the Azerbaijani ex-footballers remain in the circle even after their contract ends or after they retire.

Throughout my research period, I contacted various club administrators, the Professional League and the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan officials and collected lots of data. For example, according to the PFL and the major clubs in Azerbaijan, there is a great impact of former Azerbaijan footballers on the league and around the football fraternity. In this article will be presented the famous ex-footballers' activity and their influence on contemporary football life in Azerbaijan.

Keywords: *ex-footballer, Azerbaijan Premier League, impact, professional, club.*

Introduction. In the 1990s, teams like Neftchi Baku, Kapaz, Turan Tovuz and Shamkir dominated the league. These clubs were dominated by domestic players who were the main participants and played as professionals

for the top clubs. One of Azerbaijan's oldest club, Kapaz were known for their unbeaten run as the club's final record for the 1997–98 league campaign stood at 22 wins, 4 draws and 0 losses, out of 26 games total, an unbeaten run not matched in any single season by any team in an Azerbaijani league division. This record was achieved with mainly a team with players of Azerbaijani origin [7]

As the league entered a new century, the Neftchi Baku found them facing new competitors. Emerging Khazar Lankaran and Inter Baku challenged them. The country's football received a major blow in 2002 when UEFA imposed a two-year ban in response to a long-standing conflict between the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan and the majority of the country's top-flight clubs. The domestic championship was abandoned as a result of the conflict and the top clubs prevented their players from playing for the national team.

The 2010s brought a bright start and domestic players had more exposure outside the football territory of Azerbaijan. Neftchi emerged as a champion after six years of the unsuccessful run. In the next season, Neftchi repeated its domestic success after sealing its seventh title in the club's history. [1]

This project aims to research the influence the players of Azerbaijani origin, who also played in the league have on the league. Football has become a truly global sport. With its worldwide reach, never as prominent as in this millennium, every major league is able to attract hidden talents from different corners of the globe and these talents create an impact on the league after their career. In Azerbaijan, it is the other way round. Majority of the players making an impact on the league after retirement are the ex-footballers.

The research will also be conducted to show the potentials up-and-coming football talents have after their career. It will give practical knowledge of the roles that are available and how getting a position can be attained.

A critical example is one of Azerbaijan's most successful footballers that are now the coach of Qarabag football club, Gurban Gurbanov. Under Gurban Gurbanov's management, Qarabag became the second team to represent Azerbaijan in the European Cup [2]

The author's own journalistic knowledge, enthusiasm and active participation in covering the Azerbaijan Premier League will underpin the research and project

According to Paul, Campbell that "nowadays the fact that many ex-footballers in other parts of Europe make the best coaches or managers are not new and it is becoming a trend. However, this is not just about the ex-players who were paid to play the game at a professional level" [3, p. 75]. Nowadays the fact that many ex-footballers in other parts of Europe make the best coaches or managers is not new and it is becoming a trend. However, this is not just about the ex-players who were paid to play the game at a professional level. The opinion that ex-footballers often make the best coaches or managers and have some impact on clubs is a reference to footballers that have played the game at any level for an extensive period of time.

Profoundly this project will draw directly on the experience and what was learned during the mobile video and photography module of the MA Sports Journalism program. The conceived outcome of this project goes beyond the successful completion of Master's research, it will give an insight into the huge responsibility footballers have in the Azerbaijan Premier League and how their impact can be sustained.

Methods. In my project/mini-dissertation, I undertook qualitative methods, which involve interviews. It was the best for describing, interpreting, contextualizing, and gaining in-depth insight into the specific concept of the influence of ex-Azerbaijani footballers on the domestic league.

The interviewees were specifically individuals who are in the football industry. They included coaches of Azerbaijan Premier League clubs who also played in the league, club official, Azerbaijan Professional League official and a football fan.

The interviews were conducted in the club's bureaus and in the offices of the officials.

I selected the participants by going through their profile to make sure they have a good knowledge of Azerbaijan football and have been involved by playing, administration or supporting a club.

About eight individuals took part in the interview sessions.

The form of the interviews can be considered to be semi-structured because it was open and allowed for new ideas to be brought up during the interview as a result of what the interviewee said. I used semi-structured interviews because they are widely used in qualitative research methods.

Each interview lasted for about 10 minutes and they were recorded with video camera for motion images and with microphone for sound [4].

Analysis of the result. The new millennia have seen rapid change in major aspects of Azerbaijan Professional Football League. This is not just about the coverage, technology, or improved management, it is also about how some of Azerbaijan's great former football players have automatically become successful in managing Azerbaijani clubs and competing in European and international schemes.

It is clear that Azerbaijan is one of the leagues and indeed countries with a propensity for putting ex-professional players at the helm of a club. This is also done in other countries and leagues such as the SPL and Scotland, the EPL in England, the Series A in Italy and the NPFL in Nigeria.

There is a potential for ex-footballers to be influential and successful in their career as coaches or club managers in Azerbaijan and with Azerbaijani clubs. However, the ultimate success is when they become successful managers by leading domestic clubs to international glory or abroad [5]

With this project, people will understand the importance of ex-footballers in the league and how they have contributed and will still contribute to the improvement of the league and the current footballers.

Conclusion. By the way of conclusion, Azerbaijan football is getting global attention and it has become even more pronounced as the game has developed to be more globally popular. If the success of ex-footballers who are managing clubs in Azerbaijan is well articulated and promoted, it will reduce the search for foreign managers who sourced from Italy, Spain, France or Germany [6].

Currently, seven out of the eight coaches in the Azerbaijan Premier League clubs are ex-footballers who played as domestic professional in the league. Their impact on the league is great and it also helps to develop young talents from the grassroots. For instance, some clubs hire ex-footballers to also coach in the age-grade category. From the U9 -21 most of the coaches and team managers are former Azerbaijani footballers who played in the domestic league. Like in many major leagues in the world, ex-footballers play vital roles in their football leagues. It is clear that Azerbaijan Premier League is one of the leagues with great

potential for putting ex-professional players in key positions. Therefore, their impact will be felt in all areas of Azerbaijani football [7].

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ВЛИЯНИЕ ЭКС-ФУТБОЛИСТОВ НА ПРЕМЬЕР-ЛИГУ АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНА

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Аннотация: Профессиональная футбольная лига (ПФЛ) впервые организовала нынешнюю Премьер-лигу Азербайджана в 2007 году. ПФЛ - это компания, которая несет ответственность за организацию Премьер-лиги, которая является высшим уровнем и Первым дивизионом, и вторым уровнем азербайджанского футбола. Премьер-лига Азербайджана заменила Высший дивизион, который существовал с 1992 по 2007 год.

С тех пор чемпионат произвел множество игроков из разных клубов страны. Лига привлекает легионеров с других континентов. Большинство легионеров играют как профессионалы и покидают лигу по истечении срока их контрактов или после выхода на пенсию, но большинство бывших азербайджанских футболистов остаются в кругу даже после окончания контракта или после выхода на пенсию.

На протяжении всего периода исследования я связывался с различными ад-

министраторами клубов, представителями Профессиональной лиги и Ассоциации футбольных федераций Азербайджана и собрал много данных. Например, по данным ПФЛ и основных клубов Азербайджана, бывшие азербайджанские футболисты оказывают большое влияние на лигу и футбольное сообщество. В этой статье бу-

дет представлена деятельность знаменитых бывших футболистов и их влияние на современную футбольную жизнь в Азербайджане.

Ключевые слова: экс-футболист, Премьер-лига Азербайджана, удар, профессионал, клуб.

EX-FUTBOLÇULARIN AZƏRBAYCAN PREMYER LİQASINA TƏSİRİ

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Annotasiya: Peşəkar Futbol Liqası (PFL) cari Azərbaycan Premyer Liqasını ilk dəfə 2007-ci ildə təşkil etmişdir. PFL, Azərbaycan futbolunun ikinci pilləsi olan birinci liqanı və Birinci Divizionu təşkil etmək məsuliyyətini daşıyan bir kompaniyadır. Azərbaycan Premyer Liqası 1992-2007-ci illərdə mövcud olan Top Divizionun yerini almışdır.

O vaxtdan bəri çempionat ölkənin müxtəlif klublarından çox sayda oyunçu yetişdirmişdir. Liqa digər qitələrdən olan xarici oyunçuları cəlb edir. Əcnəbi futbolçuların əksəriyyəti peşəkar kimi oynayır və müqaviləsi bitdikdən sonra və ya təqaüdə çıxdıqdan sonra liqanı tərk edirlər, lakin azərbaycanlı keçmiş futbolçuların əksəriyyəti müqavilə bitdikdən

sonra və ya təqaüdə çıxdıqdan sonra da həmin mühitdə qalırlar, fəaliyyətlərini davam etdirirlər.

Tədqiqat dövründə müxtəlif klub rəhbərləri, Peşəkar Liqa və Azərbaycan Futbol Federasiyaları Assosiasiyası rəsmiləri ilə əlaqə qurub çoxlu sayda məlumat toplamışam. Məsələn, PFL-ə və Azərbaycanın əsas klublarına görə keçmiş Azərbaycan futbolçularının liqada və futbol çevrəsi ətrafında böyük təsiri var. Bu yazıda məşhur keçmiş futbolçuların fəaliyyəti və onların Azərbaycanın müasir futbol həyatındakı təsiri təqdim edilir.

Açar sözlər: Keçmiş futbolçu, Azərbaycan Premyer Liqası, təsir, peşəkar, klub.