

RIGHT TO ASK - lorenzo zacchetti

Football Business magazine continues to push the boundaries of commercial soccer interaction. Our Right To Ask feature gives both magazine readers and visitors to the Football Business website the opportunity to put thoughts and opinions to the world's leading authorities on sports commerce. In this edition, EuroCalcio editor **Lorenzo Zacchetti** responds to your questions on the great Italia stadia debate.

Q. Why has it taken so long for Italian club Chief Executives and Presidents to understand the benefit of reassembling and rebuilding stadia that will offer new and prosperous revenue streams?

Lorenzo: The lack of perspective is one of Italy's major problems, at all levels. Furthermore, club officials could not take that step alone, as no club in the Peninsula owns their stadium: they're all the property of local City administrations. The debate over the state of the arenas has been going on for a very long time, but everyone was expecting money to come from the central Government in the instance of our Euro 2012 bid being successful. Its rejection forced clubs to implement a

whole new plan.

Q. Italian football has always been associated with money, but do you think too much attention was given to playing squads rather than stadia?

Lorenzo: Surely it was. Back in the 90's, we had the so-called "seven sisters", with clubs who would not only compete for the domestic title, but also ruled European Cups. Both Lazio and Parma had massive teams, while their presidents Sergio Cragnotti and Calisto Tanzi were destroying their own companies Cirio and Parmalat, inflicting huge damage on investors and the Italian economy in general.

Q. Are there any other prominent clubs who are considering new stadia options?

Lorenzo: Claudio Lotito has been talking for some years about his project of the 'Stadio Delle Aquile', Lazio's new home-ground. Milan and Inter are considering new options, while Torino would love to renew their historical Stadio Filadelfia. This may be the end of ground-sharing, which has been the normality for Italian sides for decades. No city where there is more than one club has more than one stadium.

Q. Has the country rested on its laurels following the extensive redevelopment in the lead-up to 1990?

Lorenzo: Italia 1990 may have been a success on a sporting, commercial and hospitality side, but not for the concerns of stadia renewal. The Delle Alpi, for example, which was built for the event, is an example of what a modern arena must not be, and the only solution is to demolish it. The San Nicola in Bari is oversized, considering the local club has been a Serie B outfit for most of its existence, and our most famous arena, the San Siro, has paid a big price for the World Cup. Since the third tier was added, there is a lack of light and air getting to the playing surface, and that's why it is often in a disgraceful state.

Bribery allegations and political scandals paved the road to the World Cup. The very fact we have totally useless athletic tracks in almost every of our stadia is a result of that.



Q. How much do you feel the future prosperity of the Italian game may rest upon decisions made regarding stadia over the next ten years?

Lorenzo: If Italy has any chance to fill the gap that separates the Serie A from the Premier League, the stadia issue will play a major role in that. Actually, the biggest income for clubs comes from broadcast rights, but ticket sales are falling. We need more comfortable arenas and also new strategies to implement incomes, such as club museums, restaurants, official merchandising stores and so on. Another big issue is security, but that goes along with the renewal of the stadia.

Q. Italian football fans are passionate and hugely traditional, so is there opposition to redevelopment because it is seen as the loss of identity?

Lorenzo: In the last few years, Ultras from many clubs united under the slogan "No to modern football".

They believe Sky's influence on the league's organisation is too big and they may be right, as there were major changes about the timing of the matches, Serie B was moved to Saturday and, more generally, money looks as the only reason for which the game is still played.

On the contrary, I disagree with them about their refusal to approve of all-seater stadia and restrictions about away fans. If we want families to rejoice football, we need to make our arenas a safer place. We have to follow the example shown by England and the innovation seen in Germany.

Q. How much of the new thinking needs to be done by the football authorities, as opposed to the clubs, **e.g. with legislation, or financial** subsidies and incentives for development?

Lorenzo: For now, we're talking about good ideas. To make them become reality, there has to be an

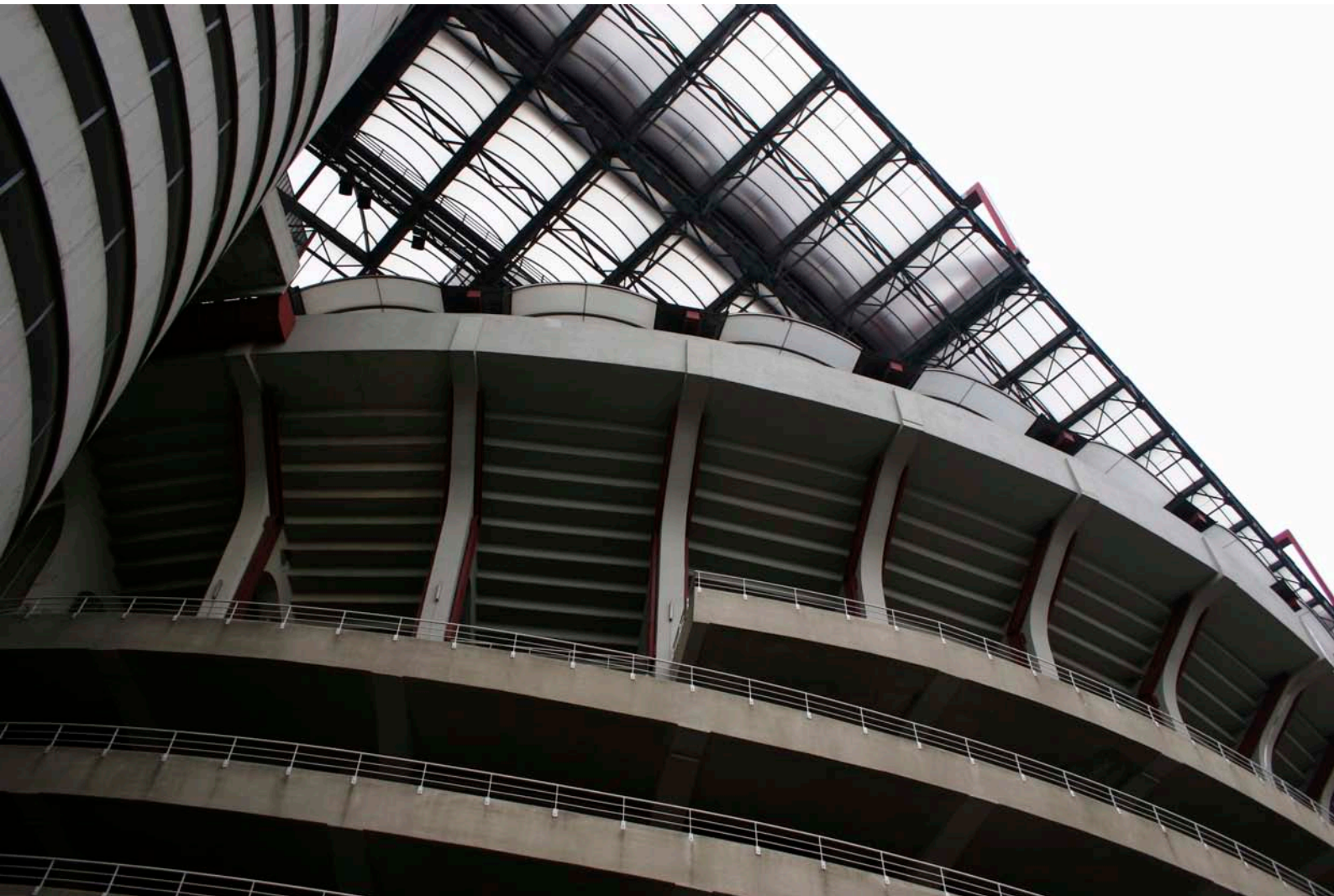
agreement between clubs, the F.A., the Lega Calcio and of course the political level. A good example comes from Bologna: a few minutes after his club gained promotion to the top-flight, president Cazzola was blasting city major Sergio Cofferati for not being passionate about his plan for a new stadium. Cazzola said it was hard for him to guarantee the security of many passionate fans on the last day of Serie B action and was worried about the new season in the top tier.

Furthermore, not all clubs have the means to buy their stadium from the government or to build a new one. Sponsorship deals and tax deductions will be very important. In conclusion, I have a feeling we're still a long way away from the solution to our perennial problem.

Each fortnight, Football Business gives you the chance to interact with a leading authority in soccer commerce.

Simply visit www.football-business.net for more information and to put your questions forward.

Below: San Siro's imposing exterior



PASSION and politics

While the appeal of Italian football remains strong and resilient to an expectant and demanding nation, there are many obstacles yet to be overcome in the sporting arenas in which the game is played. While most top-level stadia across the whole of Europe have been updated and redeveloped over the past twenty years, Italy remains stuck within the shadows and echoes of the 1990 World Cup – the last time any significant investment was put into the physical building blocks that showcase some of the finest football in the world. *Football Business magazine* looks at six Italian football stadia, whose very existence paints classic and challenging combinations of great potential with deep-seated problems.

GIUSEPPE MEAZZA

CLUBS: Milan, Inter
CAPACITY: 82.955
Opened 1925, last renewed 1990

Its nickname is “La Scala del calcio” testifies how this stadium is a phenomenon all around the world, with a three-tier structure offering a hugely impressive sight for the players who exit the tunnel from the central stand to the pitch. The Curva Nord (North Stand) is for Inter fans, while the Curva Sud is for the Milan support. As the local clubs share the same ground, the empty stand is reserved for away fans. More than 50,000 tourists visit the stadium and its museum each year. San Siro is also one of Italy’s most famous concert venues.

ENNIO TARDINI

CLUBS: Parma
CAPACITY: 28.000
Opened 1923, last renewed 1993

Close to the centre of the small Emilia city, is it named after the former club president, who passed away a year before the stadium was opened. It was enlarged in 1990, as the gialloblu were promoted to the Serie A for the first time in their history. In the summer of 2006 the central stand was demolished and rebuilt, but still it’s a temporary solution. Current Parma president Tommaso Ghiardi plans to expand the Tardini and add commercial facilities, but the club Ultras (based in the Curva Nord) are against the project.

RENZO BARBERA

CLUBS: Palermo
CAPACITY: 37.342
Opened 1932, last renewed 1990

Its name was changed three times. At its unveiling, it was named Stadio Littorio as a symbol of the Fascist Regime. After the Second World War it was newly titled La Favorita, after Ferdinando di Borbone’s mansion just near the stadia, and in 2002, its newest unveiling saw it take the name of Renzo Barbera, after a former rosanero president in the 1970s. In 2005, when Palermo entered UEFA Cup, a new stand for 5,000 away fans was built between the Curva Sud and the central stands. This sector is nicknamed “the cage” as it’s protected by bulletproof glass and massive iron nets.

STADIO OLIMPICO

CLUBS: Roma, Lazio
CAPACITY: 72.698
Opened 1933, last renewed 1990

Located in the heart of the Capital City, the Olimpico is part of the Foro Italico sport complex that belongs to CONI (Italian Olympic Committee). Reconstruction works in 1989 became way bigger and more expensive than thought, and eventually the arena was all but demolished and reconstructed, with the only exception being the Monte Mario stand. Both respective home sections are very distant from the pitch, so spectators cannot see too clearly, but the magic in being there is incomparable.

SANTELIA

CLUBS: Cagliari
CAPACITY: 25.000
Opened 1970, last renewed 2003

In 1970 Cagliari won their only Scudetto and the club decided to move from the old Amsicora to a bigger venue, which at the time boasted a capacity of 70,000 fans. In the following years, it was subject to a number of changes, and now holds just 25,000. Club president Massimo Cellino has been trying to build a new stadium in Assemmini, where Cagliari usually train, but local government is strongly against his plan.

SAN NICOLA

CLUBS: Bari
CAPACITY: 58.100
Opened 1990, last renewed 1990

It’s nicknamed ‘the starship’ for his shape, but also because the stadium is unbelievably oversized for the needs of the local club, who are Serie B strugglers. It was built for the World Cup, when Antonio Matarrese (current Lega Calcio president) was at the helm of the Italian F.A. The stadium hosted five matches. In 1991, Matarrese announced UEFA’s decision to host the Champions League final in San Nicola as his personal success, but since then, the biggest event hosted in Bari has been an out-of-season summer football. The stadium is named after the Saint of the city and maybe only he can help Bari regain their top-flight status.