Competitive Balance in Iranian Football League in Two Consecutive Seasons

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Abstract: The degree of competiveness is referred as competitive balance. The more competitive balance of league leads to the uncertainty of outcomes so as to maximize the appealing of competitions. The purpose of present study was to measure the competitive balance in the football league of Iran. Data were secondary derived from the final tables in 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 season. Data analysis was based on C5 and C5ICB index. Results showed that the seasons of 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 were as the balanced respectively.

Key words: Competitive balance · Iranian football · C5 · C5ICB

INTRODUCTION

Football's global popularity is flourished at the start of the twenty-first century [1]. The universe is unimaginable in absence of football. Three percent of world trade belongs to football industry [2]. In recent decades, football industry costs billions dollars [3]. Considering holding 2002 World Cup in Asia and 2010 World Cup in Africa, it is supposed people's attention and interest to football is increasing all over the world [4].

Football in Iran is quite possibly the most popular sport. Guttmann (2004) pronounced that Football was played in Iran as early as 1898 [5]. Football has been a part of life for Iranians for many decades now and is played in schools, alleys, streets and football clubs nation wide. The 2001-2002season saw the introduction of professional football league in Iran.Iranian football league should consider the rules of professionalism to survive in the world of professional competition.

Professional sports leagues require special treatment under the antitrust laws that recognizes their strong and unique interest in maintaining competitive balance. An antitrust exception, proponents argue, is necessary to create the on-the-field competition that draws fans[1]. Under this theory, competitive balance helps a sports league compete with the challenges of professionalism.

Sport organizations try to create some rules and limitations to maximize ambiguity of results in competitions. In a league, if some teams have more power, the league will lose its appeal for being predictable. The more competitive balance is among teams comprising league, the harder predicting competitions is, leading to more appeal. In a balanced league, each team has equal chance to win therefore; all teams can win championship of league [6]. Committees holding football leagues must create conditions to increase competitive balance in their leagues [7]. Sport leagues need some specific competitive balance to survive. If competitive balance is reduced in a league, spectators attending stadium and TV viewers will be decreased in longitude term.

There have been several researches in competitive balance early. Quirk and Fort (1992) examined football league in Netherland. Competitive balance has been decreased considerably in second half of 60's and increased in first half of 70's. Then, it has no clear approach. Moreover, they measured competitive balance in 5 American professional leagues (American League (AL), National League (NL), National Basket ball American (NBA), National Hockey League (NHL) and National Football League (NFL). There was no considerable competitive balance among them [8].

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[1]Mackey v. Nat'l Football League, 543 F.2d 606, 621 (8th Cir. 1976) (considering maintenance of competitive balance as a factor under rule of reason examination of joint restraint on player movement between teams).

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Competitive balance had been declined in AL but it increased in NL from 1999 to 1975 [9]. Zimbalist (2002) observed NBA was the highest imbalanced among 5 American professional leagues. Moreover, Competitive balance has been gradually developed in MLB during 1903 to 1950 [10].

Michie and Oughton (2005) examined leagues of England, Italy, Germany, France and Spain. Competitive balance has been fixed in England for 40 years (1984-1987) but then decreased considerably. There is no clear trend in France but since 1992, it has been increased some. It has been declined considerably in series A of Italy since 1992. At the end of 2004, Italian league had the highest imbalance among 5 European superior leagues. It has been increased lower in Germany but in general, decreased in recently 10 years [11].

Hann, Koning and Van Witteloostuijn (2007) found decrease of competitive balance in England. It was the same in Belgium and Netherland based on weak documents. Also, they found no clear approach in Germany, France, Italy and Spain [12]. Mizak, Neral and Stair (2007) showed competitive balance had been decreased considerably in Major League Base ball (MLB) especially in American league since 1990. The least competitive balance has been in Eastern Association of American league during 1998 to 2003 [13].

Naghshbandi, Yousefi, Boroujerdi, and Jabari (2011a) examined and ranked competitive balance of football super leagues (2009-2010) in Asian countries. Results revealed that five most competitive balanced leagues were from countries of Eastern and Southern Asia. Among Western Asian countries, super leagues of Iran and Pakistan had the most and least competitive balance respectively. Among Eastern Asian countries, super leagues of Vietnam and Malaysia had the most and least competitive balance respectively [14].

Naghshbandi *et al.* (2011b) investigated the changes of competitive balance in Iran pro league from 1995 to 2009. For easier analysis, the findings (C5 and C5ICB) of research had been presented as 3 five year periods: first five years (1995-1999), second five years (2000-2004), and third five years (2005-2009). C5 has being increased during 1995 to 1999 but then had a descending trend. C5ICB has being increased during 1995 to 1998, decreased during 1998 to 2002, increased during 2002 to 2004 and decreased since 2004. C5ICB was the highest in 2004 and lowest in 2007 [15].

Yousefi, Naghshbandi, Jabari, and Elahi (2012) examine the changing trend of CB for these best 3 national teams (Spain, Netherland and Germany) in 2010 world cup since 2006 Germany world cup up to 2010 South Africa world cup. Two models were used to analyze data; C5 and C5ICB. Spain won world cup when had the lowest balanced league among three leagues in this study. C5 and C5ICB showed that CB has decreased in the leagues in Spain and Netherland since the 2006 world cup and up to the 2010 world cup. However, CB has been stable in Germany during this period. CB is considerably decreased in Spain and Netherland. Germany had an acceptable CB [16].

In present study, we aimed to measure the competitive balance in the football league of Iran in the seasons of 2009-2010 and 2010-2011. Iranian football leagueis one of the great leagues in Asia and football is pursued seriously in Iran.

METHODOLOGY

This research was descriptive-analytic. The data were secondary and collected from valid documents and football league tables of final tables in Iran. Two economical indexes were used to analyze the data; concentration ratio (C5) and C5 Index of Competitive balance (C5ICB). These are mathematical models. They were used in several studies [6,11,17-23] to measure competitive balances of several leagues. In a perfectly balanced league, C5ICB equals 100. It is never lower than 100. The more C5ICB is, the less competitive balanced league is. Increase of C5ICB means decrease of competitive balance [11]. Number of teams affects C5. Even in a perfectly balanced league, changing number of teams affects C5. Therefore, C5ICB is a valid instrument.

$$C5 = \frac{total\ points\ won\ by\ the\ top\ five\ clubs}{total\ numbers\ of\ points\ won\ by\ all\ clubs}$$

$$C5ICB = \left[\frac{cs}{s/N}\right] * 100$$

Where, N is the number of the teams in the league.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the C5 and C5ICB in the football league of Iran in 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 season.

Table 1.C5 and C5ICB in Iranian football league

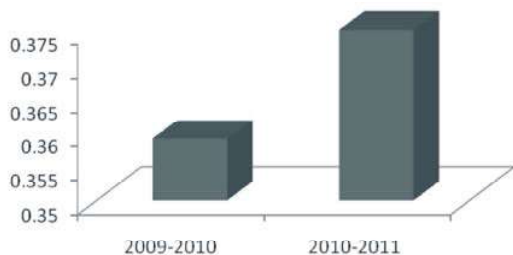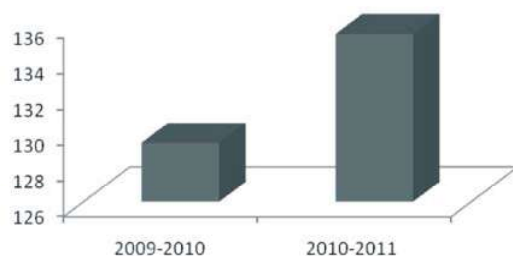| Iranian football league	C5	C5ICB
2009-2010	0.359	129.29
2010-2011	0.375	135.37

Fig. 1: C5 in the seasons

Fig. 1: C5ICB in the seasons

The results of C5 and C5ICB demonstrated the seasons of 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 as the balanced respectively.

Figure 1 and 2 show C5 and C5ICB in the seasons.

DISCUSSION

We found that C5 and C5ICB demonstrated the seasons of 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 as the balanced respectively. Initially, Iran was a successful team in the AFC Asian Cup. Iran has won the Asian Cup three consecutive times (1968, 1972, 1976), a championship record to which the team has not been able to add since. In third millennium, Iranian football is not strong as much as before. Professional league was provided to solve the problems at the start of third millennium.

At first, six different teams won 6 leagues in the row since 2001-2002 season (birth of Iranian professional football). But in 2008, Persepolis regained the title after 6 years and become the first team that won two titles in the new edition of the Iranian League. The next season Esteghlal did the same thing and won the league for second time on the final match day.

Sepahan's dominance started in 2009-10 season where they won the league before the final match day and the same thing happened in the next season.

The national team had poor performance. The last champion of Iranian national team was in West Asian Federation Championship in 2010. Iran could stand in third place in 2004 AFC Asian Cup. In the competitions of leagues, Sepahan of Iran was runner-up in 2007 in AFC Champions League. Further more, ZobAhan Isfahan FC of Iran was runner-up in 2010 in AFC Champions League.

Iranian football has developed in other cities beside Tehran such as Isfahan, Kerman and Tabriz. All these 3 cities are industrial and have faculties. Income of faculties must be partly devoted to sport maintaining all clubs but they only support some clubs. During these years, support of governmental sectors have positively affected sport clubs and disappeared bipolar and traditional conditions of Iranian football; increasing level of league resulted in better quality of football. However, it is effective in short term; some clubs do not benefit from such financial supports so can not compete with others. Football clubs can afford their income by competitive balance. The more balance is the more appealing competitions are; resulted in more welcome by attendance clubs and TV broadcast. However, football clubs have no suitable income through TV broadcast in Iran; competitive balance is just a potential income leading to more appeal not more income. In more countries, private sector is in responsible of football clubs and sponsorship and TV broadcast are prominent resources of their income. In Iran, it is difficult to conduct football clubs in private; they do not benefit from TV broadcast as one of the major income resources so cannot afford their expenses [15].

Up until 2011, the league had no private sponsorship and a large majority of the teams participating in the league belonged to public sector industries and companies. Starting from the 2011-12 season, the league is sponsored by MTN Irancell. It is promising for teams to compete professionally. Iranian football needs a balanced competition in league to come back to golden history of its football.

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