MINO RAIOLA AND JONATHAN BARNETT DISMISS SALARY CAP PLANS: "HOW CAN YOU CAP A TALENT? WHAT ABOUT A CAP FOR ACTORS, JOURNALISTS OR DOCTORS?"

— Raiola and Barnett, President and Vice-President of The Football Forum, participated together with Director Daniele Boccucci at WFS Live.

— All three speakers expressed strong opposition against FIFA's new agent regulations and reported plans to implement salary caps. "It would be like going back to Russia's communist times", said Raiola, who predicted that FIFA will be "out of existence in 10 years."

November 26th 2020 – Mino Raiola and **Jonathan Barnett** are two of the most successful agents in world football and they have come together to form **The Football Forum**, with Raiola the President and Barnett a Vice-President of this international movement of football agents and players.

The aim of The Football Forum is to develop the best professional practice of football agency and the best employment-related standards for players. Several related topics were discussed during a panel at WFS LIVE, which featured Raiola, Barnett and The Football Forum Director **Daniele Boccucci**. Titled **'Setting the Record straight: Understanding Football Agents Like Never Before'**, it was moderated by Italian journalist **Gianluca di Marzio**.

The main talking point to emerge from the panel was that of salary caps and Raiola and Barnett each had strong views as they argued against this idea.

"This cap would be going back 75 years ago in economically Russian communist times, it is not of this world anymore," Raiola stated. He went on: "Why should we do a cap when clubs earn more money than a normal company? Real Madrid and Barcelona last year almost made a billion. Do we ask them to cap? Do we ask them to say the tickets are too high? Or the shirt rights are too high and you cannot sell the shirt for 100 million? [Agents] are only there to be part of the industry that the players created by their talent. If there's a salary cap for players then there should be a salary cap for actors, for journalists, for doctors, for artists. How can you cap a talent?"

Barnett then picked up the baton, adding: "Why should there be a salary cap? People go to football to watch great players, so they deserve the money. Everything else around football is incidental. If you don't have great players then you don't have a game. I'm vehemently against it, not because I'm an agent but because I don't believe in salary caps for anything. When you go to do a deal with a club, it's run by chief executives and very successful businessmen and nobody forces them to pay one penny more than they want to. It's a fallacy. So, they're paying what they think is the right money."

Boccucci had his say too, saying: "With salary caps for players and with new agent's regulations that someone is threatening to issue, we think it would be really detrimental for football. This is simply not good for football."

For The Football Forum, one goal is to have dialogue with FIFA and to work with world football's governing body to set the rules together. Barnett stated: "FIFA have come out with rules about agents. Not one member of the FIFA hierarchy has ever set foot in an agent's office. Not one of them really knows what an agent does. How can they make rules? We agree there have to be rules. We are quite prepared to sit down with FIFA and help to write the rules. They have never wanted to do that. They just want to impose a set of rules on us."

Raiola went a step further and predicted that FIFA will be out of existence within 10 years and opined that there is no need for such a body in football. He said: "We're not saying the world is perfect. There are bad directors of football, there are good directors of football. There are bad agents, there are good agents. But there is a system to regulate that and that system is the quality system, and not what they want to do. The economic markets regulate themselves. The best will survive and the worst, at the end, they will die, and this is normal."

One final issue related to FIFA that has angered Barnett and Raiola recently has to do with image rights and the use of players' names and images in the FIFA21 video game by EA Sports. Gareth Bale – a Barnett client – and Zlatan Ibrahimović – a Raiola client – have spoken about this on social media with the hashtag #TimeToInvestigate. On this, Barnett said: "The image rights belong to the player. It's their image. It's for them to sell and it's for them to have, nobody else. It's simple. There's nothing to discuss. A player owns his own image rights or sells them. They're not taken from him. That's illegal and that's it."

It was certainly a passionate panel, one of the many fascinating roundtables held during this week of WFS Live, which has been running from Monday November 23rd and which will conclude on Friday November 27th. It's still possible to buy a ticket, with 10% of the ticketing revenue to be donated to the Common Goal Covid-19 Response Fund.

WORLD FOOTBALL SUMMIT: WHERE THE FOOTBALL INDUSTRY MEETS

World Football Summit is where the football industry's leading stakeholders meet to shape the future of the beautiful game. Our platform has evolved from an annual gathering held in Madrid, focused on the European market, to a growing series of events that cover the challenges and opportunities of the different regions and sectors in this thriving industry. WFS is powered by a global community of influential professionals sharing a unique passion for the business of sports and a mission to spark discussion, share knowledge and promote innovation to drive progress for the game and the industry.

WFS LIVE: BUILDING FOOTBALL'S ROADMAP FOR THE FUTURE

Building on the success of its inaugural edition, in which 3,400+ industry professionals gathered to kick-off football's new beginning after the hiatus imposed by Covid-19, the second edition of WFS Live, from November 23-27, will bring the football industry's most influential community together once again to share experiences and lessons learned during the restart of competitions, pool strategies for the crucial times to come and explore new paths for the industry to continue moving forward in the so-called new normality. Building football's roadmap for the future is the motto of this 5-day digital networking gathering in which 120+ leaders from across the globe and the different sectors within the industry will engage in 40+ conferences, roundtables, keynotes and workshops addressing the most pressing topics affecting the business of football.

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