

Challenges of professional football league in Nigeria 1990 - 2015

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Abstract

This study x-rays the challenges faced by the Nigerian Professional Football League between 1990 and 2015, and proffers ways forward for the league, so as to be comparable to what is obtainable in other developed professional football leagues of the world. The study contends that Poor quality officiating, inadequate welfare services, win at home at all cost syndrome and lack of infrastructure were some of the challenges facing professional soccer in Nigeria, thus, what is obtainable in Nigeria is not professional football in the real sense of it. The study affirms that the League Management Company on inauguration brought in some innovations that included improved and better managed match indemnities for match officials, sanctions on clubs who fail to pay salaries and allowances to their players, which the LMC administratively failed to implement. The study suggests that when vibrant administration is employed by the LMC, the glory days of Nigerian football league can be restored, developing to a level obtainable in other countries where professional soccer is thriving.

Keywords: Professionalization, Professional Football League, Nigeria Premier League, League Management Company.

1. Introduction

A profession is an occupation based upon specialized training, the purpose of which is to supply skilled or advice to others with a definite fee or salary attached to it. It is an association of interest group made up of people specializing in the same kinds of work, whose desire is to raise the status or give service to the Nation ^[1]. According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, Professional is referred to as relating to a job that requires special education, training or skill; done or given by a person who works in a particular profession and paid to participate in an activity ^[2]. The activity can be teaching, medical, pharmaceutical, legal, football etc. Football is a game played with a round object in which two teams try to kick the ball into the opponent's goal ^[3].

In the simplest language, professional football is football played for pay. Professional football made its debut into the country in 1990, a total of sixteen (16) clubs formally heralded this new idea into Nigerian football in the premier division. In 1991, the division two of the championship was created with thirteen clubs that registered for participation. The successful taking off of pro-league in Nigeria and the achievement recorded could be attributed, on one hand, to effective control and management of the then Nigerian Football Association (NFA) and on the other hand to the efforts of managements of the different club sides or the owners of some club sides. The League Management Company (LMC) was formed in 2012, as a result of the collapse of the Nigeria Premier League (NPL) ^[4]. It is worthy of note, to state that the LMC was established in December 2012 to stabilize the Nigerian league after a high court declared the NPL illegal, following a suit instituted by Dr Sam Sam Jaja.

The pertinent question is how professional is the Nigerian Professional League. Professions usually have well defined code of ethics to regulate the conduct of their accredited practitioners. Every profession institutes and operates a professional association or organization to which it ascribes

certain functions and powers such as the advancement of professional competence and maintenance of prescribed standards. Every professional association has a self-concept that transcends that of a mere trade union. Unfortunately the LMC has no control over its members as compared to other professions such as medicine, law and engineering amongst others.

Stake holders are also of the view that in actual sense what is obtainable in Nigeria is not Professional League. There are components of professional league which includes: Adequate welfare packages, constant paying of salaries, prompt settlement of sign-on-fees, adequate security on match venues, licensing of football clubs, provision of good pitches, provision of club houses, adequate handling of players transfer, high quality officiating and provision of good and adequate infrastructure just to mention but a few.

Nigerian Professional League is faced with some Challenges, some of which has been identified by stake holders to include soccer hooliganism which is now very rampant in some parts of the country. One notes with dismay that most of the games in the professional league often end in fracas caused some times by poor officiating and most times by supporters of the home club side as a result of "A Must Win At Home Syndrome". Adequate security is not provided in our football venues. One cannot forget in a hurry in May 1992, shortly after the emergence of Professional League an ugly situation in Kaduna when Ranchers Bees of Kaduna engaged Obanata United of Ijebu-Ode in which the referee of the match was beaten into a state of coma, which led to the game being abandoned in the 85th minutes of play. There were many other shameful and ugly situations recorded in the past that may have thwarted development of football in Nigeria ^[5]. In the just concluded Nigerian Premier League, there were instances of player's protests as a result of unpaid wages or inadequate implementation of welfare packages. Football clubs such as

Sunshine Stars of Akure, Sharks of Port Harcourt, Taraba United of Jalingo and Dolphins of Port Harcourt were known to have protested and some embarked on strikes due to unpaid salaries.

Nigeria is ranked 5th highest exporter of football talents in the world ^[6]. Experts believe that poor management of the Nigerian Premier League contributes to these exports. Nigeria's bane is that our football is not managed well, of such abundance of skillful players, what is needed is the development and effective management of our Premier League in an environment of high level human resources, towards meeting the European standard. These exports have led to the movement of Nigerian players to play professional football in some African countries like Tunisia, Algeria, Congo, Sudan and South Africa and to other less fancied football countries like Haiti, Azerbaijan, Vietnam, Malta and China.

To this end, the main aim of this study is to x-ray the challenges faced by the Nigerian Professional Football League which has lasted for twenty five (25) years, towards proffering solutions to tackle the identified challenges.

2. What is Professionalization?

Profession could be attributed to be a vocational merger, consolidation or amalgamation of group interests with specialization in the same type of job. A vocation can be interchangeable with an occupation except that the term lends itself to the usage by the employee to mean his work actions instead of the employer. Thus, one's occupation means his work enterprises, particularly one under-taking on a regular basis by an adult. Focusing on the last definition, an example can be given with the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) where both the Judges (the Bench) and the Bar defense Lawyers or Attorneys) are members of the same group, the common vocation, being the dispensation of justice or the law, Certainly, an all-inclusive meaning of profession is that a profession is an association of members of same occupation with the following apparent or specific features:

- Practice is established upon a base of theoretical knowledge
- The addition of knowledge needing a long period of education and specialization is basic or paramount.
- Practitioners are motivated by an ideal of charitable services rather than pursuit of economic and materialistic gain.
- Cautious or painstaking efforts exercised over recruitment, training, certification and standard practices.
- Well organized group with disciplinary powers to enforce code of ethical practice ^[7].

Ezema sees a profession as "a form of employment especially one that is respected in society as honourable and is possible only for an educated person and after training in some special branch of knowledge" ^[8]. Profession should be seen as an enterprise performed by a person towards achieving the objectives of one's career. Impliedly, it is what he proffers to do or what he does to earn his livelihood and for self-actualization. Alternatively, it is the occupational pursuit, or whatever action the individual is inclined or signed-up to, towards motivation of the necessary resource and energy, aiming at the enablement to play a useful role in the economic transactions of a nation, to satisfy his aspirations which grant eminently technical and often personalized services.

The effectiveness of an economic system must be seen as dependent upon three subordinate institutions. The first is the profession. Others include the industry and business. These then are inter-related with each other and are also found in all other institutional aspects of the society. Industry deals with the production of goods and services, the professions provide specialist services while business on its part, deals with the social-economic systems and services. It is also the stimulant or motivation between producers of goods and services and the consuming public.

Nwadior sees profession as an occupation demanding specialized skills and knowledge needing or desiring a lengthened time for their acquisition, the practitioners carefully selects limited numbers admitted into its ranks and maintains high standards of performance through methods of self discipline ^[9]. Most scholars have defined a profession as consisting of a controlled group of persons who have gained some special skills and are therefore able to perform that function in society more than the average person.

3. Distinguishing Features of a Profession

Millerson consolidated the most frequently mentioned unique feature into a model without insisting that all the profession will display all the features. These distinguishing features or characteristics include skill, based on theoretical knowledge and excluded period of time ^[10].

According to Fafunwa, a profession traditionally has the following five distinct features:

- Simple Body of Knowledge: Obtainable through a lengthened orderly process that continues all through the career. Impliedly, for one to rightly belong to a profession, he must have received a special and peculiar type of training in a sequential and progressive manner over a lengthened period leading to advanced education.
- Professional Interest: Sincere interest in the service to be rendered and in the welfare of society over personal gain. Doctors take genuine interest in saving lives and consider this above the personal gains he stands to enjoy.
- Ethical Codes: Professions like law, medicine, and accountancy has known ethical standard. Going contrary to such ethical standard is completely unacceptable.
- Strong Professional Association: A strong professional association which enables the profession to meet its goals and advance the cause of the profession and having powers to enforce discipline should be made operative. In Nigeria
- Controlled Admission: Controlled admission and certification into the Profession ^[11]. Six similarly characteristics of a profession includes:
 - Provides specially designed services based on advanced specialized knowledge and skill, and dealing with its problems mainly on an intellectual plane rather than on a physical plane.
 - Associated with a classified or intimate affair or accord among practitioners and clients or employers.
 - Involves a high degree of public obligation by virtue of its profession of specialized knowledge.
 - Enjoys an appreciable right of knowledge, skill, and status to the cumulative store of which professionals are bound to provide through their individual and collective efforts.
 - Carry out its services to a reasonable extent for public interest, receiving its compensation through restricted or

definite fees rather than through direct profit from the improvement in goods, services, or knowledge, which it performs.

- Obligated by unique ethical code in its affairs with colleagues, clients, and the general public ^[12].

4. History of Professional League in Nigeria

The league was founded in 1972 with six teams which include: Rangers Football Club of Enugu; ICC Shooting Stars of Ibadan; Mighty Jets of Jos; Raccas Rovers of Kano; African Continental Bank of Lagos and Vasco Dagama of Enugu. On May 12th 1990 at the Onikan Stadium Lagos, the Nigerian National League was renamed "Professional League" (Pro-League) with a major aim of modernizing football in Nigeria towards enabling various teams participating in the league to be self-efficiency. Subsequently, Decrees 10 and 11 were promulgated to lay credence to the Pro-League, thus, codifying the introduction of professional football in Nigeria:

That professional clubs should be run as limited liability companies each governed by a regularly constituted board of directors and required to hold annual general meetings, present independently audited accounts, cultivate youth/feeder teams and own their own stadium within five years of registration with the Pro League Department ^[13].

In order to assist Professional League teams in Nigerian for the timely achievement of the stated goals above, all the 56 professional clubs that made up of the inaugural Pro League First and Second Divisions were granted a five-year tax reprieve on all income starting from 1990. The era of Nigeria Premier League began in 2003 when Ibrahim Galadima the then chairman of the Nigeria Football Association (NFA) inaugurated an interim committee to run the league. The Super Four an end of season Championship was introduced in 1999. The top four teams would play a round-robin mini-league at a neutral site to determine the league champion. This lasted till 2007. The Super Four is now a pre-season tournament featuring the top four teams of the previous soccer season ^[14].

After the 2006 competition, the league changed its calendar to more closely match the common European regular season structure (starting around August and ending around May). However, the LMC has been inconsistent in its calendar as a result of constant administrative lapses yet to be fully addressed by the organizers of the league. For instance the 2015 season ended in November 2015 and the LMC has announced that the 2016 season will commence by January 31st 2016, but various football teams are still seriously agitating for the January date. Below are the past winners of the Nigerian National League 1972-2002 and Nigerian Professional League, 2003 – 2015:

Past Winners of the Nigerian National League 1972-2002

- 1972 : Mighty Jets (Jos)
- 1973 : Bendel Insurance (Benin City)
- 1974 : Rangers International (Enugu)
- 1975 : Rangers International (Enugu)
- 1976 : Shooting Stars (Ibadan)
- 1977 : Rangers International (Enugu)
- 1978 : Racca Rovers (Kano)
- 1979 : Bendel Insurance (Benin City)
- 1980 : Shooting Stars (Ibadan)
- 1981 : Rangers International (Enugu)
- 1982 : Rangers International (Enugu)
- 1983 : Shooting Stars (Ibadan)

- 1984 : Rangers International (Enugu)
- 1985 : New Nigeria Bank (Benin City)
- 1986 : Leventis United (Ibadan)
- 1987 : Iwuanyanwu Nationale (Owerri)
- 1988 : Iwuanyanwu Nationale (Owerri)
- 1989 : Iwuanyanwu Nationale (Owerri)
- 1990 : Iwuanyanwu Nationale (Owerri)
- 1991 : Julius Berger (Lagos)
- 1992 : Stationery Stores (Lagos)
- 1993 : Iwuanyanwu Nationale (Owerri)
- 1994 : BCC Lions (Gboko)
- 1995 : Shooting Stars (Ibadan)
- 1996 : Udoji United (Awka)
- 1997 : Eagle Cement (Port Harcourt)
- 1998 : Shooting Stars (Ibadan)
- 1999 : Lobi Stars (Makurdi)
- 2000 : Julius Berger (Lagos)
- 2001 : Enyimba (Aba)
- 2002 : Enyimba (Aba)

Source ^[15].

Past Winners of the Nigerian Professional League 2003-2015

- 2003 : Enyimba (Aba)
- 2004 : Dolphins FC (Port Harcourt)
- 2005 : Enyimba (Aba)
- 2006 : Ocean Boys (Brass)
- 2007 : Enyimba (Aba)
- 2008 : Kano Pillars (Kano)
- 2009 : Bayelsa United (Yenegoa)
- 2010 : Enyimba (Aba)
- 2011 : Dolphins (Port Harcourt)
- 2012 : Kano Pillars (Kano)
- 2013 : Kano Pillars (Kano)
- 2014 : Kano Pillars (Kano)
- 2015 : Enyimba (Aba)

Source ^[16].

5. Professional Football League in Nigeria

The topmost level of indigenous (homemade) Nigerian football is the Nigeria Premier League ^[17]. The Nigeria Premier League which is fed into by the Nigeria National League (NNL) is organized by the League Management Company (LMC). Since inception, the league has had series of botched sponsorship deals, On May 2013, a telecommunication company named Globacom finally signed a three-year contract with the league to become its title sponsor. Thus, the league is now officially known as the Glo Premier League. ^[18]. In 2012 the NPL was ranked 1st in Africa and 24th best in the world ranked by the International Federation of Football History and Statistics (IFFHS), the rating puts it a spot above the Scottish Premier League in 2012 ^[19]. The criteria used in the ranking is not clear, thus, the researcher wonders with dismay that the Nigeria Professional League will be adjudged the best in Africa based on a lot of problems inherent in the Nigeria Professional League.

The teams that participated in the 2015 Glo Nigeria Premier League are:

1. Abia Warriors of Umuahia, Abia State
2. Akwa United of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State
3. Bayelsa United, Yenagoa, Bayelsa State
4. Dolphins FC of Port Harcourt, Rivers State

5. Enyimba International of Aba, Abia State
6. El-Kanemi Warriors, Maidugri, Bornu State
7. FC Taraba, Jalingo, Taraba State
8. Gabros FC, Nnewi, Anambra State
9. Giwa FC, Jos, Plateau State
10. Gombe United of Gombe, Gombe State
11. Heartland of Owerri, Imo State
12. Kano Pillars of Kano, Kano State
13. Kwara United, Ilorin, Kwara State
14. Lobi Stars of Makurdi, Benue State
15. Nasarawa United of Lafia, Nasarawa State
16. Rangers International of Enugu, Enugu State
17. Sharks FC, Port Harcourt, Rivers State
18. Shooting Stars of Ibadan, Oyo State
19. Sunshine Stars of Akure, Ondo State
20. Wikki Tourists of Bauchi, Bauchi State

In the elite division which is christened Glo Premier League, matches are played on Sundays in various locations across the country. The teams have their own playing pitches. Honours are also competed for in the first division, which is categorized into North and South, to reduce costs of running the club sides by their various proprietors, thus, given room for administrative expediency. The teams in the Northern part of the country compete among themselves while the teams situated in the Southern part of the country do the same. At the end of hostilities, the first two teams in the North are promoted to the elite division together with the first two teams down South. The last four teams in the elite division are relegated to division one. At the end of 2015 season, Enyimba FC was crowned champions, while Taraba United, Kwara United, Bayelsa United and Sharks of Port Harcourt were all relegated to the first division.

6. League Management Company

The League Management Company emerged in 2012 following the crashing or downfall of the Nigeria Premier League set up by the Nigeria Football League (NFL) which arose from difficult and unimaginable legal, contractual, financial and administrative impediments. The Nigerian Football Association, owner of the Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL) presented the League Management Company the license to operate, organize and regulate the elite division of the league to meet world standard technically, commercially and otherwise. The Chairman of the League Management Company is Hon. Nduka Irabor.

The LMC on inauguration brought in some innovations that included among others development and adequate management of match indemnities for match officials, sanctions on clubs that are unable to pay wages and allowances to their players. The LMC aided in getting sponsorship deals from companies such as Telecom giants Globacom as well as TV Rights from South African based "Super-Sports". They also up-graded live scores platform where football followers can follow scores update with their Twitter and Facebook accounts. For the clubs, the LMC also improved the Merit bonuses, which enabled Kano Pillars, the League Winners for 2013-14 Season for instance, to be awarded Fifteen Million Naira while second placed Enyimba FC received Eleven Million, two hundred and fifty thousand Naira. Thus, every club got 50% more than what their league position earned in the 2012-13 Season. In 2015, the LMC canvassed for financial support from the Government in order

to upgrade existing pitches and provision of the needed broadcast facilities and equipment in the stadia ^[20].

7. Challenges of Professional League in Nigeria

The problems inherent in Nigerian professional league have made the league unattractive, thus, making Nigerian football fans more committed to European League especially the English Premiership, thus, relegating the local league to the background. Even when the gate fee is below N100, we still witness low turnout in the stands. The pertinent question is how professional is the Nigerian Professional League. Stake holders are of the view that in actual sense what is obtainable in Nigeria is not Professional League. There are components of professional league which includes: Adequate welfare packages, constant paying of salaries, prompt settlement of sign-on-fees, adequate security on match venues, licensing of football clubs, provision of good pitches, provision of club houses, adequate handling of players transfer, high quality officiating and provision of good and adequate infrastructure, appointment of team psychologists just to mention but a few:

- **Poor Quality Officiating:** This is one of the challenges faced by the Nigerian Professional League, which is one of the factors militating against interests in the league. Officiating is always a sham in the Nigerian Premier League. Some stake holders have described the shady way of officiating by some referees as a comedy show. Sometimes you see a referee telling the favoured side, mostly the home side what to do in order to be awarded a penalty or an offside goal. These acts are occasioned because the safety of the match official's are not adequately put into consideration. Their safety is not in most cases guaranteed so they protect themselves by being openly biased. Match venues that are supposed to have not less than fifty (50) police men what is usually seen is about twenty (20) police men that has nothing to offer in case of a fracas.
- **Inadequate Welfare Services:** Welfare services are actions or procedures that cover the basic well being of the individual:
 - **Salary/Wages:** Non-payment of player's salaries is another factor that brings the Nigerian Premier League to disrepute. In the just concluded season, players of FC Taraba United, Sharks of Port Harcourt, Dolphin of Port Harcourt, Sunshine of Akure and Enugu Rangers International were at one time or the other own salaries. Dolphin of Port Harcourt for instance took their mattresses and slept in front of the Rivers State government house in protest to non- payment of allowances and salaries ^[21]. FC Taraba United players embarked on a strike to press home their demands of unpaid salaries of eleven months they resorted to sleeping in front of the Government House in Jalingo the state capital till their outstanding salaries are paid. ^[22] Sunshine of Akure players also protested to the management in 2015 of unpaid salaries. Enugu Rangers international also recorded cases of unpaid salaries. Former Governor of Enugu state Sullivan Chime was owing Rangers players some outstanding salaries before handing over to the present Governor, Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi, the present commissioner of Enugu state Dr Udehhele Godwin Ikpechukwu made this known on 5th September 2015 in a radio programme anchored by Dream FM, where he stated that one of the achievements of present Governor, Ifeanyi

Ugwuanyi, in his first 100 years in office was settling outstanding salaries of Rangers players ^[23].

- **Sign on Fees:** Sign on Fees are fees paid to players on signing a new contract to a new team. More often than not, these sign on fees are not paid to the players as and when due. Most club sides owe these sign on fees throughout the season. This is not good for our so called professional league.
- **Match Bonuses;** Match Bonuses are allowances accruable to players of a team when the team either gets an away win, away draw or a home win. This is supposed to be constant, but the Nigerian situation is different, more often than not these bonuses are not paid to players as and when due, depicting unprofessionalism.
- **Medicals:** No club side in Nigeria operates a sick bay, where specialists are employed to take care of the medical needs of the players and officials. Most Nigerian players are regretting ever playing professional football in Nigeria as a result of injuries sustained while in active service. When a player sustains an injury, the team normally embarks on treating the injured player, but when the injury persists, the player is abandoned to his fate leaving the family of the player with no other alternative than continue treating the player from where the team stopped. Have you ever heard that a Nigerian football league player had ever been flown abroad for treatment after sustaining a serious injury?
- **Lack of infrastructure:** Before the commencement of the 2014 professional football league season in Nigeria, Bayelsa State paraded two (2) football teams (Nembe City and Bayelsa United), competing for honours in the elite division. The state government could not get ready the Samson Siasia stadium on time for the resumption of hostilities, Nembe City and Bayelsa United played their home matches away from home in Omokhu, Rivers state and Benin, Edo state respectively ^[24]. In the just concluded season, as a result of poor pitches many club sides were asked to start the season in an adopted home away from home, pitches in Makurdi, where Lobi stars trade tackles was reported to be in bad shape, Gabros of Nnewi was made to abandon their Nnewi home to play at Rojeni Stadium, Orba, Heartland of Owerri was asked also start their league matches at Rojeni Stadium, Orba, before putting their Dan Anyiam stadium Owerri back to shape. Most pitches in Nigeria are artificial turfs. The few natural turfs amongst them are not maintained and are on bad shapes. Club Houses are grossly inadequate in Nigeria. A good club house should consist of training pitches, camping facilities, adequate gymnasium, library that should be digitalized and constant provision of internet network, indoor games, swimming pool, good lounge and should be at the outskirts of the town, so as to allow for concentration. Only Sunshine of Akure can boast of a good club house (nearing completion).
- **Win at Home at all Cost Syndrome:** The worst problem affecting Nigerian Premier League is win at home at all cost syndrome. The researcher witnessed an encounter last season at Enugu involving Enugu Rangers International and Heartland of Owerri at the Nnamdi Azikiwe Stadium. In that encounter, Rangers was up by a lone goal and the Heartland boys were pressurizing for the much needed

equalizer. When there was an anxious moment in Rangers eighteen yard box an un-disgruntled official of Rangers will throw another ball inside the pitch, thus, two round objects will be identified inside the pitch and the referee will blow for an obstruction. How can you call this professional football? After the match, when asked Rangers officials why they were throwing balls inside the pitch when play was going on. They replied that what they did at Enugu was a child's play when compared with what the officials of Heartland did to them when they visited Owerri. The question remains: Must every team win at home?

- **Inadequate Handling of Players Transfer:** A good example of inadequate handling of players transfer is the case of Sunday Mba formerly playing for Warri Wolves and the purported signing of the player by Enugu Rangers international. Trouble ensued after Sunday Mba's superlative performance in 2013 African Cup of Nations, which Nigeria won under Stephen Keshi. Foreign scouts from different European countries were jostling to have Sunday Mba put pen on paper for them, the problem became the team to negotiate with. Rangers claimed they bought Sunday Mba from Warri Wolves, Warri Wolves said they did not sell Sunday Mba to Rangers. The LMC could not handle the crisis, and the controversy persisted for a long time before the court resolved the crisis. Can you ever hear of such a case in the European League? No. The true situation is that Warri Wolves actually sold Sunday Mba to Rangers and Rangers have already paid the agreed amount to Warri Wolves management. At that point Sunday Mba's market value rose tremendously thus, making the Wolves to back out from the deal in order to be the sole benefit of the one million Euro (about N203m) placed on the player.
- **Appointment of Team Psychologists:** Professional football league all over the globe is associated with the employment of seasoned sports or football psychologists for all round development of the team, but a close look at the Nigeria league will show you that there is dearth of team psychologists in most Nigerian teams participating in the premier division. If you do not have money to employ a psychologist for the team, means you cannot be able to run a professional football team and what do you do? Back out!!!

8. The Way Forward

Thank God for the NPFL deal with Supersport, who are now televising six matches every week for the whole world to view. This will go a long way in curbing referee's crazy behavior. But the worry of the researcher is that covering only six matches, out of a total of ten matches is not good enough because the match that was not televised may be the one that the referee will display one of their antics. Fracas may ensue. The NPFL need to do more by televising all the matches, knowing the kind of country Nigeria is.

As a way of stemming or reducing violence in soccer engagements, the LMC and the management of each club should arrange lectures, seminars and workshops, where soccer fans will be educated on the need to shun violence. Moreover the referee's remuneration should be looked into and considers for constant review as applicable to other sectors. In addition, Referees should also be subjected to constant seminars,

workshops and training. Furthermore, security at our stadia should be beefed-up for football encounters. A situation whereby twenty or thirty policemen are drafted to keep peace at big soccer encounters is not good enough.

At the beginning of every football season, the management of every team should deposit a reasonable amount of money to the LMC. The deposits will be determined by the LMC. This will help in settlement of salaries, sign on fees and match bonuses in the teams that will default in settlement of some of these welfare services to their players.

The LMC should make it a point of duty to inspect the facilities of each team at the beginning of every football season. There should be a standard that should be met by every team. Failure to meet such standard will attract a specified sanction to be spelt out by the LMC. Most importantly, members of the LMC should be of people with proven integrity.

9. Conclusion

Poor quality officiating, inadequate welfare services, win at home at all cost syndrome and lack of infrastructure were identified as some of the challenges facing professional soccer in Nigeria, thus, what is obtainable in Nigeria is not professional football in the real sense of it. The LMC could not live to their responsibility of sanctioning clubs that did not live up to their responsibility of paying salaries to their players. It should be recalled that on the inauguration of the LMC, they brought in some innovations that included improved and better managed match indemnities for match officials, sanctions on clubs who fail to pay salaries and allowances to their players. The LMC is thus, not firm administratively.

When vibrant administration is employed by the LMC, the glory days of Nigerian football league can be restored, developing to a level obtainable in other countries where professional soccer is thriving. When this is achieved, you will see how Nigerian football fans will abandon a Chelsea vs Manchester United match and go to watch the oriental derby between Enyimba and Rangers International at the Nnamdi Azikiwe Stadium, Enugu.

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