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FOOTBALL: RESEARCH IN LAUSANNE, IN "SERIE A" SICILIANS ARE FEW AND EMIGRANTS

LAUSANNE (SWITZERLAND) – Underrepresented and forced into emigration in order to succeed. That is the situation of Sicilian footballers in "Serie A", the most important Italian football league. This is the outcome of a research carried out in Lausanne by Claudio Ballor, AISTS student (International Academy of Sports Science and Technology), a school for future sports managers. The sociology study, positively assessed by Joe Maguire, Professor at the English University of Loughborough, and among the best known experts in the field of Sociology of Sports, aimed to verify the existence of a social issue in Sicilian football. To do so, Ballor has used a sociological method and taken into account both social and economic indicators. The second part of the research analyses the possible causes of the phenomenon.

Thirteen Sicilian footballers are playing in "Serie A" this season, from a total made of 340 Italian players and three out of thirteen are yet to play among the pros. Furthermore, six out of ten moved away from Sicily to start up their professional career. Only 3.82% of all Italian players in "Serie A" are Sicilians. To make a comparison, the urban area of Brescia can count 21 players in "Serie A", nine more than Sicily which has a population almost ten times greater. The Lombardy region leads the list with the highest number of players in "Serie A" this season: 55. If one looks at the demographical aspect, Sicily has 8.5% of the global Italian population. Here the lack of representation becomes ever more evident.

The study has been based on a model of the renowned American expert Jay Coakley, who defines a social classes as "structured forms of economic inequalities". The research has then put into practice thanks to the analyses of several aspects of the Sicilian, as well as of the Italian reality. The indicators used to mark the differences between the two realities were economical and financial, instructional and occupational, regarding networking, availability of facilities, and lifestyle. The final outcome of the observations is that an issue of social class does exist in Sicily, and it is reflected in the football world too, if one analyses it through the aforementioned variables. All the social and economic data have been drawn from the official reports of Sicilian Statistical Yearbook, as well as the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT). Parameters such as the annual average income per person, occupational rate (principally regarding females), insurance rate, bank credit system, and the average family expenses are below the national average in Sicily. Quoting Coakley, "lifestyles of low-income people and those living in poverty seldom involve regular forms of sport participation". It seems to be the case in Sicily, where a research conducted by the CONI (the Italian Olympic Committee) on the practise of sport in 2005, classified Sicily as having the lowest national rate, alongside other southern regions. The same outcome resulted as regards the level of sedentariness: the same regions show the highest rate. It is worth noting that the south Italy falls behind the northern and the central parts of the country as regards the number of professional football players in "Serie A" 2007/08: (South 99, Centre 102, North 139). The centre and north Italy are richer than the southern part.

The data from the educational system confirms the aforementioned trend. The number of graduates from the island's three most important universities in 2001 is only half that of those coming from the city of Milan alone. The importance of education is also related to another important factor explaining the differences among social classes: the social connections. In fact, having an higher education leads to an elevated status and access to

a restricted network of people. The indicator referring to the availability of facilities in Sicily is another weak point. According to the President of Sicilian CONI, Massimo Costa, the island would need 3,200 additional facilities to reach the level of the national average. The development of the region's system of enterprises is, however, is "modest", as defined by the same regional government: in 2004, Sicily had only 56 manufacturing enterprises per 10,000 inhabitants, compared to the national average of 91. A more technical point of view is instead expressed by Fabrizio Giaconia, PR manager of Palermo football club. He points out the lack of football academies in the region, quoting the Lombardy as an example to follow - not by chance the region with the highest presence of footballers in "Serie A" -, as well as the scarcity of Sicilian professional football clubs.

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