

# Analysis of Textual Meaning on Lyrics of Supporter's Chant to Support Football Players in English Premier League

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## ABSTRACT

The spoken language phenomenon in social interaction, like in the sports discourse domain, is always exciting but rare to be discussed. This study focuses on the textual meaning of the supporting chants to support football players sung by supporters of the English Premier League (EPL), especially from the six biggest clubs (The Big Six). It is a qualitative descriptive study using content analysis. Within the Systemic Functional Linguistic approach, this study reveals textual meaning through the analysis of Theme and Rhyme consist of the Topical Theme; Unmarked Topical Theme and Marked Topical Theme, Textual Theme, and Interpersonal Theme. The data are clauses taken from the football player supporting-chant lyrics from the supporters of the big six clubs. The analysis results are obtained through domain, taxonomy, componential and cultural themes analysis. Six chants are analyzed by textual meaning. Topical Theme analysis shows the development of a topic in the lyrics of supporting chants. Textual Theme indicates the connecting clause from the previous. Interpersonal Theme shows the interaction and transacting socially. These themes created a smooth information flow on the chant. Besides, it brought the meaning of these lyrics delivered well to the listener.

## ARTICLE INFO

*Paper type:*  
Research Article

*Article history:*  
Received 24/03/2020  
Revised 15/06/2020  
Published 26/10/2020

*Keywords:*

- Chant
- Supporter
- Football Players
- Theme-Rhyme
- Discourse
- Lyric

## 1. Introduction

Language as an expression has a message from the speaker to the listener that could bring speakers experience and identity (Nirmala, 2018). The message could be a suggestion, an expectation, something ridicule or it could be the ideology of the speaker (Purwanto, 2008). (Halliday & Hasan, 1989) explained that the language, verbal or written, is a medium to declare our thinking. In our society, the kind of verbal expression could be a speech, discussion, song, etc. This study focuses on exploring a particular kind of song genre. The song is related to each level of society such as children, teenagers, and adults even the elderly. Besides, a song could send the message differently better than other communication media. In this term, a song is a media to share feeling such as happy feelings or disappointed feelings, messaging, appreciation, motivation, or even derision.

A song certainly has a background story and culture (Gordon & Djonler, 2019), it is one of the elements focused on this study. Some researchers analyzed meaning, culture, and the effect of songs (Coats, 2016; Plemenitaš, 2016). A song could convey the feeling and invoke the intended emotions. Some studies analyzed the lyric of songs using Van Dijk's critical discourse (El-falaky, 2015; Fadhilah, 2019; Putri & Triyono, 2018). Those studies analyzed text analysis, social cognition and social context, and also ideology. Another research explored the main character in the song. The researchers found the construction of character in a tribute song through transitivity analysis (Zahoor & Janjua, 2016). Studying a song could also investigate culture, attitude, social, and situation context through Systemic Functional Linguistics (Arif & Triyono, 2018).

Some studies of a song found the problem of knowing the message, the interaction, and the function. Generally, the song is analyzed semantically to find out the meaning inside (Trisnantasari, 2017). However, a song meaning can be identified through other approaches. Songs representing the social, situation, and cultural context can deeply be perceived through SFL. For example, the research entitled *Textual Meaning in Song*

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*Lyrics* analyzed song lyrics by textual meaning in Systemic Functional Linguistics (Firdaus, 2013). It was aimed to know the intention of the song. He found three types of textual meaning; Topical Theme, Textual Theme, and Interpersonal Theme. Each theme had not been explained in detail yet. It is only mentioned its frequency. Whereas textual meaning explains clauses as semiotic resources to express a message, or it is what the clause is going to be about (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Investigating language meaning massively use pragmatic (Kondoahi, 2013; Sophiadi, 2014) or semantic (Ranabumi, 2018; Uba, 2019). However, the researcher believes that investigating the textual meaning is best using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics.

Some language studies digging the meaning of song lyrics had been varied. There had been many genres used as the subject of the research like a local song (HANG, 2016; Osuolale-ajayi, 2017), a pop song (Manurung & Gurning, 2014), rock song (Sophiadi, 2014), children song (Wicaksono & Utomo, 2017) or even an anthem (Khorsand & Salmani, 2014). Those researchers had been exploring many genres of a song like pop, rock, religious, folk, children, or jazz, etc. Even though, there is a domain of language and song genre that is still rarely touched by other previous researchers. There are still few researchers who examine the domain of language use in sport and focusing on its song genre, especially in football or soccer. In this domain, there is a song genre commonly called a supporter chant which is the contemporary song genre. From the reviews of some previous studies above, the first research gap is likely to be revealed. This first gap is investigating a kind of song genre in football matches that is the supporter chant. It is interesting to examine the language used in the supporter chant.

In Cambridge Dictionary, a chant is a kind of song which contains words or phrases repeated many times. Merriam Webster defines it as plainsong or a monotone song. Also, a chant means to sing in the Online Etymology Dictionary. Armstrong & Young (1999) also told that a chant on football can be defined as a unique public expression of collective identity that conveys encouraging and disapproval or words filled with emotion. This study seeks to examine the football chant in the English Premier League since the history of football chant is initiated from Hooligans of fans of the EPL. In expressing the feeling, a chant usually expresses something good, for example giving a stimulus like supporting and motivating. This study focuses on the type of supporting chant. The messages of supporting chants are realized by the lyrics.

The lyrics of supporting chants are part of a football match discourse. According to Halliday, a discourse is called functional (Halliday, 1994) which means in a functional concept, there are three meta-functions; those are ideational, interpersonal, and textual. A song analyzed by ideational meaning finds the representation of the event and the main character. Meanwhile, interpersonal meaning identifies the position of the participants, how the speaker placed the other participant at different angles (Fatoni et al., 2020). The last metafunction is about textual meaning. The textual meaning will become the analysis point in this study. According to (Djatmika, 2012), the function of textual meaning is creating a message. Halliday explained that clauses are classified in Theme and *Rhyme* element (Halliday, 1994). The Theme is one element in a clause that has a special status assigned. In addition, it is indicated by position in the clause. The Theme is the element that serves as the point of departure of the message. As a message structure, a clause consists of the Theme and accompanied by the *Rhyme*. A message consists of a Theme combined with a *Rhyme* (p.38). The Theme is the starting point of a clause; while the remainder is the *Rhyme*. The Theme is "the element which serves as the point of departure of the message. It introduces the main information to be conceived later by the *Rhyme* (Halliday, 1985). The Theme is the element placed at the beginning of the sentence. His main contribution is represented by the concepts of the thematic progression in which he shows how theme becomes the *Rhyme* in the following clause and how the theme is repeated in consequent clauses. The *Rhyme* is different from the term 'rhyme' since it is the constituent of a sentence that adds the newest information. The *Rhyme* is the reminder of the message and it develops the theme. Theme-*Rhyme* classification refers to the organization of the clause as a message. In short, the theme is what is spoken about, whereas the *Rhyme* is what is said about the theme. It also can be stated that the Theme is "what the participants have agreed to talk about while the *Rhyme* is the speaker's new contribution to the subject of the theme.

The result of those elements is the information flow in the writer or speaker's viewpoint (Santosa, 2003). Moreover, in the interpretation of their research, (Gunawan & Aziza, 2017; Yunita, 2018) explained the relationship between clauses and showing the information flow created by a writer to the reader. Further, indeed, some previous studies only dig the textual meaning in general, such as the frequency and mentioning the three types of textual meaning existing in the discourse (Dewi, 2017).

Therefore, the second research gap initiating this study is how the speaker's language expression influences the listener. The messages from the speaker, up to the clause level, will be analyzed on how they represent the information flow. Textual analysis will answer this second research gap. In textual meaning,

Theme and *Rhyme* are the building's element of information flow. The theme is the main point of message in a clause and it becomes attention in clauses. Whereas *Rhyme* is the next element to develop the theme as new information (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). There are three kinds of textual meanings such as topical meaning, interpersonal meaning, and textual meaning. Topical meaning (Eggins, 2004; Santosa, 2003) is the theme that develops the topic of discourse. It consists of Unmarked Topical Theme and Marked Topical Theme. Unmarked Topical Theme is the typical theme in English clauses that are usually started with a subject. Meanwhile Marked Topical Theme is a non-typical theme that is characterized by other than the subject, such as complement, adjunct, or a predicator. Interpersonal meaning is used to interact and transact socially. The Interpersonal theme can be characterized by some constituents as the mood at the beginning of the clause. It is limited to the form of interrogative (yes/no question) and modal adjunct: mood adjunct (maybe, I think, just), vocative adjunct, and comment adjunct (fortunately, unfortunately), polarity (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The last theme is the textual theme or meaning. It is used to connect the previous cause or the correlation between clauses in context (Eggins, 2004).

Reviews of some researches and theories are a prefix of a research background that carries the research gap. The first is language and genre of song research on football domain, i.e. the football supporter chant is still rare. The second research gap is the use of textual metafunction consisting of the Theme and *Rhyme* analysis which can reveal how the delivery of the information flow or meaning in the football supporter chant. In short, this study aims at analyzing textual meaning on supporter's chant lyrics to support football players in the English Premier League that is related to the writer or speaker's viewpoint. The chant is focused only on the supporting chant from the big six supporters to the players. Therefore, the study aims at answering the following research question: What is the textual meaning of each chant in the English Premier League? Besides, the specific objective that this study tries to attain is exploring the textual meaning of six supporting chants in the English Premier League through the analysis of the Theme and the *Rhyme* of the clauses of the chants.

## 2. Research Methods

This study adopted the descriptive qualitative method. This method was used to reveal everything of the qualitative information. It describes every data accurately and describes the characteristics of an individual, group, situation, or phenomenon (Sutopo, 2006). The data for this study were words and clauses from the lyrics of the chants for football players in the English Premier League. There were six football clubs in the English Premier League to investigate which are Man City, Liverpool, Chelsea, Tottenham, Manchester United, and Arsenal. There was one chant lyric from each supporter of the club downloaded from fanchant.com. The lyrics, in this study, filtered only on the chant to support the player. These data were analyzed through Systemic Functional Linguistics in terms of Theme and *Rhyme* in Textual Meaning which was developed by Halliday (1994), Halliday & Mattisen, (2014), and Eggins (2004). Further, the technique of the analysis used the technique of (Spradley, 1980), it consists of domain analysis, taxonomy analysis, componential analysis, and also the cultural theme analysis to find the conclusion of all the process and answer the question of the researcher. In this study, analyzing the data using the textual meaning and also Spradley technique could be a good combination of language research.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Based on the research's focus, the data of supporting chant was divided into six clubs. They are placed on the domain which is analyzed by textual meaning; topical theme, textual theme, and interpersonal theme as the analysis categories. On this table below, the clubs' column downwards is the domains that are the source of the data, while the textual column divided into four cells is the taxonomy which is the category to analyze the data. Then, componential analysis is the correlation of domain analysis and taxonomy analysis. The cross meeting among them will show the pattern of the research result. The last is the cultural theme. It contains the interpretation of those patterns linked to the situation context and cultural context in the frame of language phenomena.

**Table 1** Textual Meaning Categories Table of Supporting Chant

Club	Textual Meaning				Minor Clause	Total
	Topical Theme		Textual	Interpersonal		
	UTT	MT				
M. City	4	0	1	0	2	7
Liverpool	2	1	5	0	1	9
Chelsea	5	0	1	0	5	11
Tottenham	5	0	0	0	1	6
Man.United	4	0	1	1	1	7
Arsenal	4	0	3	0	3	10
Total	24	1	11	1	13	50
Percentage	48%	2%	22%	2%	26%	100%

Note: UTT: unmarked topical theme; MT: marked topical theme

In table 1 above, the researchers found 50 clauses in six clubs of the Premier League. There are major clauses and minor clauses. Major clauses consist of 24 clauses that are categorized as the unmarked topical theme and only 1 clause that is categorized as the marked topical theme. In the textual theme, there are 11 clauses. The last theme is the interpersonal theme. In the six clubs of the English Premier League above, researchers only found one clause of the interpersonal theme. Besides, there are minor clauses. The percentage is the second-highest that is 26% or 13 clauses of the minor clause. The minor clauses were found in the chants of Man. City, Liverpool, Chelsea, Man. United and Arsenal club supporters. The examples of the minor clauses are:

- Ooooooo Balotelli : minor clause
- Mo Salah, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la : minor clause
- Torres : minor clause
- Wayne Rooney (Wazza) : minor clause
- Eddie, Eddie : minor clause

The minor clauses in each lyric were dominated by the name calls of the football player. The supporters intended to support the football player. The types of minor clauses are Calls. The Calls are addressed to a particular player that is called in the chant. It means that the supporters give the interaction to the football player that they support through the chant. This interaction is one of the strategies to express attitude. The function of the minor clause is aligned with Martin's explanation that minor clauses are also used to react or coding a speaker's attitude. In addition, Martin adds that a minor clause is a way to express the attitude in English (Martin, 1992). The attitude of the supporters can be seen from how they call the players.

Furthermore, indeed, the major clauses are the point analysis in this research. It was analyzed using the textual meaning. In the table above, the total clauses of Man. City club are 7 clauses. It consists of 4 clauses in Unmarked Topical Theme and only one clause in the textual theme. The clauses in Unmarked Topical Theme are dominant. Here the example:

**SFL Table 1.** He's a striker

He	's	a striker
S	F	C
Unmarked Top. Theme		Rhyme

**SFL Table 2.** He's good at darts

He	's	Good	at darts
S	F	C	Adj.
Unmarked Top. Theme		rhyme	

**SFL Table 3.** He's fucking class

He	's	fucking class
S	F	C
Unmarked Top. Theme		rhyme

**SFL Table 4.** He drives around the moss side with a wallet full of cash!!...

He	Drives	around moss side	with a wallet full of cash!!...
S	F / P	Adj	Adj
Unmarked Top. Theme		rhyme	

By those examples, it can be seen that the information flow is arranged from the important thing. The important thing is about Balloteli, the player they support at the chant. They make Balloteli as a topic in those lyrics. Then, the topic is developed one by one. The clause is categorized as Unmarked Topical Theme because the subject is the element of mapping the theme (Halliday, 1994). The message is concerned with what the supporter thinks and feels. Besides the topical theme, there is a textual theme in these lyrics. Here the example:

**SFL Table 5.** but when he plays

But	When	he	Plays
Conj.	Conj.	S	F / P
Textual	Theme	<i>Rhyme</i>	

The textual theme in this session is to continue the next clause with the previous clause. A textual theme in the type of conjunction is a word or group that links the clauses in which it occurs structurally to another clause (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The existence of the Textual theme in the lyrics above has the function to make the listener understand the connection of the storyline in the chant.

The next club is Liverpool club. The lyric has 9 clauses. The dominant clause is categorized in Textual Theme, which is 5 clauses. Then, researchers found 2 clauses as Unmarked Topical Theme and one clause as Marked Topical Theme. The first clause is categorized as Textual Theme. Here the examples:

**SFL Table 6.** If he's good enough for you

If	He	's	good enough	for you,
Conj.	S	F	Adj	C
Textual Theme	<i>Rhyme</i>			

The textual theme connects this clause with the previous clause. Eggins explained that the element of textual theme do not express experiential meaning but which are doing important cohesive work in relating the clause to its context (Eggins, 2004). After the speakers create one idea of Mo Salah, they develop the idea using Unmarked Topical Theme.

**SFL Table 7.** He's good enough for me,

He	's	good enough	for me,
S	F	Adj	C
Unmarked Topical Theme		<i>Rhyme</i>	

By using the subject "he", the speaker placed the participant as an important thing. It is justified with Eggins, the constituent of topical theme creates the attraction from the writer to the reader (Eggins, 2004). In other clauses, the speaker uses the Textual Theme to connect that idea with the other. For example:

**SFL Table 8.** If he scores another few

If	he	scores	another few
Conj	S	F / P	C
Textual Theme	<i>Rhyme</i>		

**SFL Table 9.** Then I'll be Muslim too

then	I	'll be	Muslim too
Conj	S	F	C
Textual Theme	<i>Rhyme</i>		

**SFL Table 10.** If he's good enough for you

If	He	's	good enough	for you,
Conj	S	F	Adj	C
Textual Theme	<i>Rhyme</i>			

Those clauses create a whole idea from the sequence clauses. In a study, Chang & Lee (2019) said that the textual theme makes the writing is more effective. In this lyric, the speakers use more conjunction (if and then) to create a situation in a lyric. For this situation, the speaker brings the listener that Mo Salah is a good player in Liverpool. Isti'anah argues that the textual theme is designed to attract the listener (Isti'anah, 2019). Besides, this lyric has one Marked Topical Theme to indicate that the speaker does not involve the part of the subject. The speaker uses complement to show the thematic energy in a clause. Here the example:

**SFL Table 11.** Where I wanna be...

where	I	wanna be
C	S	F
Marked Topical Theme	<i>Rhyme</i>	

Halliday (1994) stated that the Marked Theme is a thematic element that indicates the development of the speakers' idea. Eggins (2004) stated that Marked Topical Theme is indicated that the subject of a clause is involved in the thing stated as the marked topical theme. The chant lyric indicates that the supporter will follow the player. Mo Salah, wherever he goes.

Chelsea's club is the third club in Premier League which the supporters chant had been analyzed. The table above identifies that the supporters' chant of Chelsea's club has 11 clauses. The dominant theme is the Unmarked Topical Theme; 5 clauses. Another theme is the Textual Theme and only one clause which is categorized as Textual Theme. This finding is similar to Man. City's chant. Unmarked Topical Theme is followed by Textual Theme. Unmarked Topical Theme contains focused information (Alyousef, 2016). Meanwhile, Textual Theme contains conjunction.

**SFL Table 12.** He (Torres) is a blue

He	Is	a blue
S	F	C
UTT	<i>Rhyme</i>	

**SFL Table 13.** Now he's got a proper job

Now	he	's	got	a proper job
Conj.	S	F	P	C
Textual Theme	<i>Rhyme</i>			

The existence of Unmarked Topical Theme and Textual Theme in this lyric becomes the hints for suggesting the message to the listener. The listeners enjoy the song and directly follow to support Fernando Torres as a football player in Chelsea's club. The text development and coherence are realized by Topical Themes linking to the preceding text to form topic continuity and Textual Theme functioning as lubricants to enhance relevance at the joining point (Chen, 2019).

Tottenham's chant becomes the next lyric that is analyzed in textual meaning. Furthermore, the researchers found only Unmarked Topical Theme in Tottenham's chant. There are 5 clauses as Unmarked Topical Theme. In addition, this is the dominant one. The existence of Unmarked Topical Theme, like written in the data example bellow, emphasizes the expression of love from supporter to football player; Eric Dier. The message in the lyric is delivered well. The clauses as a message occur when participant presents as an important

point (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Besides, Thomas Bloor and Meriel Bloor explained that the existence topical theme in any clauses makes the meaningful structure of the clause (Bloor & Bloor, 2004).

**SFL Table 14.** I love Eric Dier

I	love	Eric Dier
S	F / p	C
UTT	<i>Rhyme</i>	

**SFL Table 15.** Eric Dier loves me

<i>Eric Dier</i>	<i>loves</i>	<i>me</i>
S	F / P	C
UTT	<i>Rhyme</i>	

Next is the supporters chant for Manchester United player named Wayne Rooney. There are 4 clauses as Unmarked Topical Theme, one clause as Textual Theme, and one clause as Interpersonal Theme. Unmarked Topical Theme becomes the dominant theme in this chant. Unmarked Topical Theme explains the power of supporters and Rooney as the football player in Man. United. Here the example:

**SFL Table 16.** I saw my mate the other day

I	saw	my mate	the other day
S	F / P	C	Adj
Unmarked Topical Theme	<i>Rhyme</i>		

**SFL Table 17.** He said to me

He	said	to me
S	F / P	C
Unmarked Topical Theme	<i>Rhyme</i>	

**SFL Table 18.** He's seen the white Pele

He	's	seen	the white Pele
S	F	P	C
Unmarked Topical Theme	<i>Rhyme</i>		

In the first clause, the supporters express a supposition. Then in the next clause, Rooney, as the player they praise, is mentioned as a white Pele or good player of Man. United. It shows that Unmarked Topical Theme exposes the information inside the clause. It is in line with what Yunita mentioned in her research that the topical theme tells the listener or the reader what the text is talking about (Yunita, 2018).

Besides, there is one clause as Textual Theme and one clause as Interpersonal Theme. In this chant, the interpersonal and textual theme helps the chant presenting the message. The textual theme brings the logical sequence of the event in the chant. Whereas the interpersonal theme brings up the emotion and close relationship between the listener and the participants told in the chant. It is reciprocal with Chen (2019) that the Textual Theme and Interpersonal Theme are the lubricants to enhance relevance at the joining point. Textual and Interpersonal Theme creates the meaning continuously and makes the chant easy listening. The message from the chant will be easy to understand since the listener feel familiar with the event and the participants mentioned in the chant.

The last club in Premier League is Arsenal Club. Arsenal's chant has 4 clauses as Unmarked Topical Theme and 3 clauses as Textual Theme. Unmarked Topical Theme means that participants or actors has an important role in this chant. The supporters show that Eduardo Silva is a good player in Arsenal Football Club. This is the example of Unmarked Topical Theme.

**SFL Table 19.** He came to us

He	came	to us
S	F / P	C
Unmarked Topical Theme	Rhyme	

**SFL Table 20.** He scored more goals than Darren Bent

He	scored	more goals than Darren Bent
S	F / P	C
Unmarked Topical Theme	Rhyme	

By this lyric, the supporter brings the listener to support Eduardo Silva. Gunawan and Aziza explain that when a text uses a topical theme, the reader easily understands the thread (Gunawan & Aziza, 2017). The quality of writing is good if attention is given to the thematic progression of information in the text.

Meanwhile, Textual Theme in this lyric means continuity of activities in a discourse in the lyric. The speakers use a conjunction to connect clause with the previous clause. The examples of Textual Theme are:

**SFL Table 21.** But he'll be back

But	He	'll be	Back
Conj	S	F	C
Textual Theme	Rhyme		

**SFL Table 22.** And Darren Bent will still be cack

And	Darren Bent	will	still	be	cack
Conj	S	F	Adj	F	C
Textual Theme	Rhyme				

The existences of Textual Theme complete and also connect the information flow in the chant lyrics. The listener becomes easy to understand what idea of the speaker wants to say (Bloor & Bloor, 2004).

Finally, in the six clubs of Premier League, the total clauses are 50 clauses of Arsenal, Man. City, Man. United, Tottenham, Liverpool, and Chelsea. Each chant was analyzed by the textual meaning. The result shows that the Topical Theme; Unmarked Topical Theme is the dominant theme of each chant. There are 22 clauses or 48% of Unmarked Topical Theme. Then, it is followed by Textual Theme which appears 22% or existed in 11 clauses. Marked Topical Theme and Interpersonal Theme show the same frequency, which is 2% or it is only found in one clause.

## 5. Conclusion and Suggestion

Two conclusions have been reached in this research. First, the unmarked topical theme dominates the use of theme in the supporter chant of the big six in the field of supporting chant to players. The domination of the Unmarked topical theme indicates that the prime messages presented by the supporter of the clubs at the beginning of the clauses are the player they support. Then the existence of the textual theme expresses the logical of the clause so that each event on the clause is well connected. These facts imply the information flow of the discourse which belongs to the second conclusions.

Second, there are different patterns of information when the Unmarked Topical Theme is dominant rather than Textual Theme or Textual Theme is dominant rather than Unmarked Topical Theme. Manchester City, Chelsea, Tottenham, Manchester United, and Arsenal chants are arranged on the dominant of Unmarked Topical Theme. It indicates that participant at the beginning of clauses is the important thing to tell on each lyric. The speakers suggest the listener focus on the football player as the main point. Meanwhile, Liverpool's chant has the dominant frequency of Textual Theme. It indicates that the supporters try to tell the listener about the event that happened experienced by the participant.

The research of the textual meaning of discourse can be one of a tool of critical discourse analysis research through Systemic Functional Linguistics. The theme and *Rhyme* analysis is a part of language metafunction to study the meaning and register of such language. This research was focusing only on textual meaning. So, it in fact provides some future opportunities for future research. Future research can develop other parts of this area. The next researcher can examine other metafunction like the ideational and interpersonal meaning of chant supporters. The researcher also suggests to the next researcher to dig the textual meaning or other metafunction of song genre in football or soccer like club anthem. The next researcher can also examine the meaning other types of supporter chant-like on the mocking chant or probably the supporters chant in other leagues.

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