Globalization and why I am not so excited by the World Cup anymore

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1966 and all that!
1970 World Cup – first truly “global” soccer tournament
1970 – 1990, World Cup often meant seeing great players for first time
Since mid-1990s – possible to watch multiple soccer leagues
Club soccer has become real business

- Soccer teams around for nearly 150 years
- 1990s saw significant commercialization of game in Europe – working-class-pastime became “gentrified”
- Improved stadia, professional merchandising, and huge increase in TV broadcasting revenues
- Clubs have gone to financial markets for investment capital, and there is multinational ownership
- Restrictions on soccer labor market removed – resulting in higher transfer fees, higher wages, and clubs being able to sign more foreign players
FIFA now has real competition
Until 1990s, soccer teams supported by local fans, and rivalries were local, e.g., “El Clasico” in Spain

Advent of UEFA Champions League has resulted in pan-European rivalries becoming as important

TV coverage of Champions League and major European leagues, as well as merchandising, has expanded global “support” for clubs such as Chelsea

Players once known only locally are now household names, and followed wherever they play – “Chicharito”

Consequence: no need to wait for four years to see the great players anymore, and club allegiance often matters more to soccer fans than respective international teams