English soccer salaries set to break $2 billion barrier

URL:  http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0706/070601-soccer.html

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1st June, 2007
The salaries of soccer players in England’s top level Premiership are set to break the $2bn barrier for the first time in the competition’s history. This is according to the 16th edition of the “Annual Review of Football Finance”, carried out by accounting firm Deloitte. The report was launched on May 31st and is available online at just under $1,000. This in-depth guide to European soccer finances is packed with facts and figures and trends from all of Europe’s top-flight leagues. The section on salaries paid by English clubs shows a spiraling of wage demands by players and their agents. The London club Chelsea topped the payroll list, forking out a whopping $225m in salaries for its stars. Manchester United, Arsenal and Liverpool were next. Perhaps not coincidentally, all four teams regularly finish in the top four positions at the end of each season.

The Premiership is currently the top-earning league in the world. However, Deloitte’s said that although salaries have been increasing at a rate of nine percent a year, the trend is unlikely to continue. It forecast that the wave of new, foreign ownership of clubs was likely to result in more restraint in spending. As is with the case of Manchester, its new American owners are saddled with huge debt repayments and costly stadium improvements. Deloitte's Paul Rawnsley suggested this would stop clubs from simply throwing money at players. He added: “Whilst wages will rise, clubs do have the opportunity to increase the importance of performance related pay structures.” He predicted this would have a positive knock-on effect, saying: "This will both insulate the business in future when on-pitch results are not so good, and also help motivate and reward players and management for winning."
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WARM-UPS

1. FOOTBALL (SOCCER): Walk around the class and talk to other students about football (soccer) and money. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your original partner(s) and share what you found out.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

   salaries / barriers / competitions / finances / facts and figures / payrolls / teams / leagues / trends / foreign ownership / stadia / debts / opportunities / rewards

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. SALARIES: With your partner(s), decide how much people in these professions should earn. Change partners and tell each other your earnings. After you have finished, discuss which professions are most important. Are these the highest paid ones?

   • soccer player
   • F1 driver
   • accountant
   • English teacher
   • president / prime minister
   • Hollywood movie actor
   • firefighter
   • nurse

4. BIG MONEY: What would you like to earn big money for? Choose your top and bottom three from the table. Talk about these with your partner(s).

   • playing sport
   • dancing
   • computer gaming
   • computer programming
   • studying English
   • being CEO of a big corporation
   • writing books
   • doing charity work
   • taking photographs
   • being a world-famous doctor

5. 2-MINUTE DEBATES: Have these fun, short debates. Change partners and topics often. Students A argue the first part; students B, the second.

   • Top sports players deserve to earn millions. Vs. Sports stars are overpaid.
   • The proper, best word is “football”. Vs. The proper, best word is “soccer”.
   • Sports players shouldn’t earn more than doctors. Vs. This is no problem.
   • Women soccer stars should get as much money as men. Vs. Absolutely not!
   • Soccer is the best sport in the world. Vs. Soccer is boring.
   • Soccer stars should get paid more than actors. Vs. Actors deserve more.

6. SOCCER: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with soccer. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

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BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article’s headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

a. England’s top soccer star will soon earn $2 billion a year.   T / F
b. An accounting firm sells a cheap yearly review of soccer finances.   T / F
c. Salaries are high because players fly first class around Europe.   T / F
d. The highest-paying clubs usually finish in the top positions.   T / F
e. England’s Premier League is the world’s biggest revenue earner.   T / F
f. Accountants predict soccer salaries will continue to spiral upwards.   T / F
g. An accountant believes salaries will be related to performance.   T / F
h. The accountant believes this will be bad for football clubs.   T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

a. carried out    paying
b. in-depth    spur on
c. forking out    by chance
d. whopping    self-control
e. coincidentally    huge
f. trend    conducted
g. restraint    protect
h. saddled    movement
i. insulate    comprehensive
j. motivate    burdened

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

a. for the first time in the    money at players
b. packed with facts    $225m in salaries
c. a spiraling of wage    earning league in the world
d. forking out a whopping    competition's history
e. Perhaps not coincidentally, all four    demands by players
f. The Premier is currently the top-    on-pitch results are not so good
g. more restraint    debt repayments
h. saddled with huge    teams regularly finish in the top
i. stop clubs from simply throwing    and figures and trends
j. insulate the business in future when    in spending
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While Reading / Listening

Gap Fill: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

English soccer salaries set to break $2 billion barrier

The salaries of soccer players in England’s top _______ Premiership are set to break the $2bn barrier for the first _______ in the competition’s history. This is according to the 16th _______ of the “Annual Review of Football Finance”, carried out by accounting firm Deloitte. The report was _______ on May 31st and is available online at just under $1,000. This in-depth _______ to European soccer finances is packed with facts and figures and trends from all of Europe’s top-flight leagues. The section on salaries paid by English clubs shows a _______ of wage demands by players and their agents. The London club Chelsea topped the payroll list, forking out a _______ $225m in salaries for its stars. Manchester United, Arsenal and Liverpool were next. Perhaps not _______, all four teams regularly finish in the top four positions at the end of each season.

The Premiership is _______ the top-earning league in the world. However, Deloitte’s said that although salaries have been increasing at a rate of nine percent a year, the trend is unlikely to continue. It _______ that the wave of new, foreign _______ of clubs was likely to result in more restraint in spending. As is with the case of Manchester, its new American owners are saddled with huge _______ repayments and costly stadium improvements. Deloitte's Paul Rawnsley suggested this would stop clubs from simply _______ money at players. He added: “Whilst wages will rise, clubs do have the opportunity to increase the importance of performance _______ pay structures.” He predicted this would have a _______ knock-on effect, saying: "This will both insulate the business in future when on-pitch results are not so good, and also help motivate and _______ players and management for winning."
LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

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________________________ soccer players in England’s top level Premiership are set to break the $2bn barrier for __________________ competition’s history. __________________ the 16th edition of the “Annual Review of Football Finance”, carried out by accounting firm Deloitte. The report was launched on May 31st and is available online at just under $1,000. This __________________ European soccer finances is packed with facts and figures and trends from all of Europe’s top-flight leagues. The section on salaries paid by English clubs __________________ demands by players and their agents. The London club Chelsea topped the payroll list, forking out a whopping $225m in salaries for its stars. Manchester United, Arsenal and Liverpool were next. Perhaps not coincidentally, all four teams regularly finish in the top four positions at _______________

The Premiership is currently the top-earning __________________. However, Deloitte’s said that although salaries have been increasing __________________ percent a year, the trend is unlikely to continue. It forecast that the wave of new, foreign ownership __________________ result in more restraint in spending. As is with the case of Manchester, its new American owners __________________ repayments and costly stadium improvements. Deloitte's Paul Rawnsley suggested this would stop clubs from ________________ players. He added: "Whilst wages will rise, clubs do have the opportunity to increase the importance of performance related pay structures.” He predicted ________________ positive knock-on effect, saying: "This will both insulate the business in future when on-pitch ________________, and also help motivate and reward players and management for winning."
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AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'break' and 'barrier'.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>break</th>
<th>barrier</th>
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</table>

• Share your findings with your partners.
• Make questions using the words you found.
• Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

• Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
• Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>set</th>
<th>rate</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>edition</td>
<td>wave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in-depth</td>
<td>restraint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spiraling</td>
<td>debt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forking</td>
<td>positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coincidentally</td>
<td>reward</td>
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</table>

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**STUDENT SURVEY**

Write five GOOD questions about SALARIES in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>STUDENT 1</th>
<th>STUDENT 2</th>
<th>STUDENT 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q.1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Q.4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Q.5.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A’s QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

a) What did you think when you read the headline?
b) Do you think soccer stars should be paid big money?
c) Which sport do you think deserves the highest pay?
d) Do you think playing soccer for 15 years is a difficult job?
e) What are the disadvantages of playing soccer for a living?
f) Would you like to buy the Deloitte “Football Finance Review”?
g) Do you think its right that only the rich clubs win every time?
h) Do you think soccer starts are greedy?
i) Do you think England’s Premiership is the best league in the world?
j) Do you think the game is “soccer” or “football” (or it doesn’t matter which)?

STUDENT B’s QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

a) Did you like reading this article?
b) Why do you think England’s league is the world’s most lucrative?
c) Do you think soccer players will ever earn as much as American football and baseball players?
d) If the English league is so good, why do you think England’s national team is so bad?
e) Would you invest money in a soccer club?
f) Would you like to play sport for a living?
g) Do you think soccer players should be paid according to how they perform in each game?
h) Do you think soccer players are motivated more by money or winning trophies and medals?
i) Do you think it’s right that soccer players earn more than prime ministers and presidents?
j) Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

a) What was the most interesting thing you heard?
b) Was there a question you didn’t like?
c) Was there something you totally disagreed with?
d) What did you like talking about?
e) Which was the most difficult question?
**SPEAKING**

**ROLE PLAY:**

Are soccer players paid too much? Team up with classmates who have the same role as you. Develop your roles and discuss ideas and “strategies”. Discuss whether a limit should be placed on soccer stars’ salaries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role A – SOCCER STAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You think the money you get is about right. You have a special talent no one else wants. People pay to see your talent. You are a top athlete. People have to understand you will have no salary after you are 35.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY YOUR SALARY IS OK**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role B – SOCCER FAN</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your salary is low. You pay a lot of money to enter the stadium. You love your soccer team but you think many of the stars do not try hard enough. Your team loses too often. The players play badly or are injured. They should do more for the money they earn.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THINK OF MORE THINGS STARTS CAN DO FOR THEIR MONEY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role C – PRIME MINISTER</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You are the prime minister of your country. You have a PhD. and worked very hard for many years. You have a lot or responsibility. Your salary is less than some 18-year-old soccer stars. This is totally ridiculous.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THINK OF REASONS WHY SOCCER STARS ARE OVERPAID**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role D – CEO OF SOCCER CLUB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your job is to win trophies, make money and keep your fans happy. You need the best players to do this. The best players are expensive. This is simple economics.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THINK OF REASONS WHY SALARIES CAN NEVER BE TOO HIGH**

Change roles and repeat the role play. Comment in groups about the differences between the two role plays.

In pairs / groups, discuss whether you really believe in what you said while you were in your roles.
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WRITING:
Write about sports salaries for 10 minutes. Correct your partner’s paper.
HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google’s search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information about England’s Premier League. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. SOCCER POSTER: Make a poster about the different countries around the world that have top level soccer leagues. Show your poster to your class in the next lesson. Vote on the best one(s).

4. MAGAZINE ARTICLE: Write a magazine article about the role soccer plays in your country. Is it a big part of culture? Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Which article was best and why?

5. LETTER: Write a letter to the head of England’s Premier League. Ask him three questions about soccer salaries being so high. Give him three pieces of advice about how to keep good players. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.
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ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. F  b. F  c. F  d. T  e. T  f. F  g. T  h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. carried out  conducted
b. in-depth  comprehensive
c. forking out  paying
d. whopping  huge
e. coincidentally  by chance
f. trend  movement
g. restraint  self-control
h. saddled  burdened
i. insulate  protect
j. motivate  spur on

PHRASE MATCH:

a. for the first time in the competition's history
b. packed with facts and figures and trends
c. a spiraling of wage demands by players
d. forking out a whopping $225m in salaries
e. Perhaps not coincidentally, all four teams regularly finish in the top earning league in the world
f. The Premiership is currently the top-earning league in the world

g. more restraint in spending
h. saddled with huge debt repayments
i. stop clubs from simply throwing money at players
j. insulate the business in future when on-pitch results are not so good

GAP FILL:

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LANGUAGE WORK

1 - c  2 - a  3 - d  4 - b  5 - a  6 - d  7 - c  8 - b  9 - d  10 - a  11 - c  12 - b

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