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English soccer salaries set to break \$2 billion barrier

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1st June, 2007

THE ARTICLE

English soccer salaries set to break \$2 billion barrier

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."

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.

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 Premiership 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 |

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.

spiraling
edition
coincidentally
level
guide
whopping
time
launched

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."

related
throwing
ownership
reward
currently
positive
forecast
debt

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

English soccer salaries set to break \$2 billion barrier

_____ 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."

AFTER READING / LISTENING

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

break	barrier
--------------	----------------

- 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:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• set• edition• in-depth• spiraling• forking• coincidentally	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• rate• wave• restraint• debt• positive• reward
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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.

	STUDENT 1	STUDENT 2	STUDENT 3
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- 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.

Role A – SOCCER STAR

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.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY YOUR SALARY IS OK

Role B – SOCCER FAN

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.

THINK OF MORE THINGS STARTS CAN DO FOR THEIR MONEY

Role C – PRIME MINISTER

You are the prime minister of your country. You have a PhD. and worked very hard for many years. You have a lot of responsibility. Your salary is less than some 18-year-old soccer stars. This is totally ridiculous.

THINK OF REASONS WHY SOCCER STARS ARE OVERPAID

Role D – CEO OF SOCCER CLUB

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.

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.

LANGUAGE

CORRECT WORD: Put the correct words from a–d below in the article.

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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 (7) _____ to continue. It forecast that the wave of new, foreign ownership of clubs was likely to result in more restraint in spending. (8) _____ is with the case of Manchester, its new American owners are saddled (9) _____ huge debt repayments and costly stadium improvements. Deloitte's Paul Rawnsley suggested this would stop clubs from (10) _____ throwing money at players. He added: "Whilst wages will rise, clubs do have the opportunity to increase the importance of performance (11) _____ 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 (12) _____ winning."

1. (a) reckoning (b) considering (c) according (d) research
2. (a) out (b) in (c) under (d) over
3. (a) deep (b) real (c) out (d) in
4. (a) zigzagging (b) spiraling (c) springing (d) bouncing
5. (a) forking (b) knifing (c) bowling (d) cupping
6. (a) maybe (b) in (c) by (d) not
7. (a) likely (b) similarly (c) unlikely (d) similarity
8. (a) So (b) As (c) Because (d) This
9. (a) wither (b) within (c) without (d) with
10. (a) simply (b) easily (c) hardly (d) correctly
11. (a) relation (b) relative (c) related (d) relations
12. (a) are (b) for (c) with (d) by

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.

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 |
| 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:

English soccer salaries set to break \$2 billion barrier

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."

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