

THE BIG SPORT DEBATE – "ARE FOOTBALLERS PAID TOO MUCH?"



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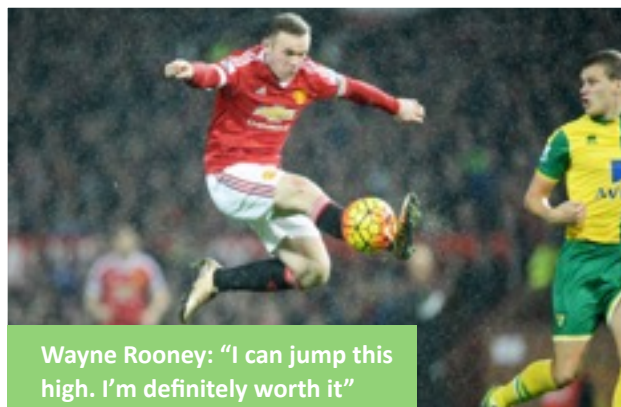
In recent weeks, protests about ticket prices at football matches have really kicked off (pardon the pun). Liverpool fans walked out of a game for the first time in the club's history, and Borussia Dortmund fans in Germany pelted the pitch with tennis balls. So what's making them so angry?

Football is the most popular sport on the planet and the men's game has never been richer. The Premier League is the most profitable in Europe, and Sky and BT Sport paid a total of £5.136 billion for the right to show Premier League matches on their channels for just three years from 2016. BT Sport also paid £897m for the exclusive rights to broadcast Champions League and Europa League matches for three years.

But, even with so much cash flying around, fans have been complaining that they don't get any of the benefit. Many think that too much money is going to players and clubs, and that fans are being ripped off to pay players' wages.

HOW MUCH?!

An average full-time worker in the UK gets £27,600 a year, but the average footballer in the Premier League gets £44,000 a week, or £2.288 million a year. The best-paid players, such as Wayne Rooney and Sergio Agüero, are thought to earn about £250,000 a week, which is £13m a year – or 471 times more than the average worker in the UK! This is just a player's basic wages – they also get bonuses for winning games and competitions, and can earn millions from sponsorship deals.



Wayne Rooney: "I can jump this high. I'm definitely worth it"

However, you could argue that because these players are some of the best in the world at what they do, they deserve to get paid a lot. Plus footballers usually retire in their early 30s (or younger if they get a serious injury), so they have a much shorter career than most people.

But, if fans stopped going to games, the atmosphere wouldn't be as good and the TV coverage would seem much duller than normal. Plus if young fans can't afford to go, clubs won't have any fans in the future! However, last season 95.9% of Premier League tickets were sold, so there are enough fans willing to pay (for now at least).



Sergio Agüero: "Overpaid? Me? Come on, look at this face – it's worth £100,000 a week at least"

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Boxer Floyd Mayweather was the world's best-paid sportsman last year, earning £215m



Google boss Sundar Pichai was given £138m of shares in the company recently, making him the highest-paid chief executive in America

WHAT THEY SAY (OR RATHER, DON'T SAY)

Footballers in this country are represented by the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA), so we asked them a few questions:

1. With the average Premier League player being paid around £44,000 a week, should there be a salary cap [a limit on how much players can be paid]?
2. Can you justify players being paid £250,000 a week or more?
3. Are you concerned that all of the money in the game is going to players, agents and clubs at the cost of the fans?
4. As long as stadiums are full and clubs are making money, do you care that ordinary people and kids, the fans of the future, are being priced out of watching the game?

IT'S NOT JUST FOOTBALLERS WHO GET PAID LOADS



Robert Downey Jr is thought to have been the best-paid actor in 2015, earning £57m

Unfortunately, even though we gave them three weeks and reminded them twice, the people at the PFA didn't seem to want to answer, so maybe footballers don't particularly care about any of those things...

HAVE YOUR SAY

What do you think? Do footballers get paid too much? Or do they deserve every penny they get? Take part in our poll and share your opinions at firstnews.co.uk/polls.



GLOSSARY

Premier League – an English professional league for men's association football clubs. It is at the top of the English football league and is contested by the top 20 clubs in the country. The second tier of the English football league is known as the Championship.

THE BIG SPORT DEBATE – "ARE FOOTBALLERS PAID TOO MUCH?"

Carefully read this week's "THE BIG SPORT DEBATE – ARE FOOTBALLERS PAID TOO MUCH?" and then answer the following questions.

PART A: FIND AND EXPLAIN THE FACTS

- A1.** What have football fans been protesting about in recent weeks?
- A2.** How much have Sky and BT Sport paid for the right to show Premier League matches on their channels?
- A3.** What does an average full-time worker in the UK get paid?
- A4.** How much do the best-paid football players earn?
- A5.** What is the name of the association that represents footballers in this country?

PART B: DEDUCE AND INFER INFORMATION

- B1.** Why is it significant that last season 95.9% of Premier League tickets were sold?
- B2.** Suggest why the people at the PFA didn't respond to the questions asked by *First News*.
- B3.** Look at the pictures showing "It's not just footballers who get paid loads." What do they suggest about what is valued in our society?
- B4.** Both sides of the argument are presented in this report, but can you find any evidence to suggest that the writer might be biased in favour of the argument that footballers are paid too much?
- B5.** Do you think that this debate is an appropriate topic for the *First News* poll? Justify your answer.

PART C: QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND DEBATE

- C1.** Can footballers' wages be justified considering what people from other professions get paid? For example, paramedics earn around £28,000 a year and full-time firefighters earn around £25,000. Compare this with the fact that an average footballer in the Premier League gets £2.288 million a year.
- C2.** If footballers' wages can be justified, then shouldn't female footballer players get the same high wages? When the men's and women's teams of Arsenal both won the FA Cup, the women were paid £5,000 as a team and the men received £1.8m. Discuss your views on this.
- C3.** Does it really matter if fans can't afford stadium tickets to watch the matches? Football matches are widely televised now so fans can just watch their team on the television.

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PART B: DEDUCE AND INFER INFORMATION

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B4. Both sides of the argument are presented in this report, but can you find any evidence to suggest that the writer might be biased in favour of the argument that footballers are paid too much?

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AIM OF THE NEWS COMPREHENSIONS

News reports are unique non-fiction texts. Being real, they naturally engage students, and with the range of topics that are covered, help to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the wider world outside the classroom.

The reports are ideal for short, focused comprehension or discussion activities. Along with the opportunity to find fascinating facts and appreciate the opinions of those involved, there is plenty to be inferred and deduced to understand in more depth what is being reported. Like authors, journalists play with language, so news 'stories' are rich nuggets of text to investigate and provide the opportunity for a literacy programme.

TEACHER ANSWER GUIDE

The teacher answers are intended to provide a guide to the reading skill each question is practising. Suggestions are given for a starting point for responses that students would be expected to give at the start of KS3. Further suggestions then give fuller, more developed responses that students will work towards by the end of KS3, in preparation for the non-fiction elements of GCSE English Language.

PART A

A1. What have football fans been protesting about in recent weeks?

Possible answer:

Starting point

- In recent weeks, football fans have been protesting about ticket prices at football matches.

Development

- Liverpool fans walked out of a game for the first time in the club's history, and Borussia fans in Germany pelted the pitch with tennis balls.

A2. How much have Sky and BT Sport paid for the right to show Premier League matches on their channels?

Possible answer:

Starting point

- Sky and BT Sport paid a total of £5.136 billion for the right to show Premier League matches on their channels for just three years from 2016.

Development

- BT Sport also paid £897 for the exclusive rights to broadcast Champions League and Europa League matches for three years.

A3. What does an average full-time worker in the UK get paid?

Possible answer:

Starting point

- An average full-time worker in the UK gets 27,600 a year.

Developed answer

- An average full-time worker in the UK gets 27,600 a year, but the average footballer in the Premier League gets £44,000 a week, or £2,288 million a year.

A4. How much do the best-paid football players earn?

Possible answer:

Starting point

- The best-paid players, such as Wayne Rooney and Sergio Aguero, are thought to earn about £250,000 a week.

Developed answer

- The best-paid players, such as Wayne Rooney and Sergio Aguero, are thought to earn about £250,000 a week, which is £13m a year or 471 times more than the average worker.

A5. What is the name of the association that represents footballers in this country?

Possible answer:

Correctly identified information

- Footballers in this country are represented by the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA).

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PART B

B1. Why is it significant that last season 95.9% of Premier League tickets were sold?

Possible answer:

Starting point

- It is significant that last season 95.9% of Premier League tickets were sold because that is a high percentage and it shows that despite high ticket prices, football fans were still willing to purchase them.

Development

- It is unlikely that the Premier League clubs will take the concerns of their fans seriously if they continue to be able to sell their match tickets to them at a high price.

B2. Suggest why the people at the PFA didn't respond to the questions asked by *First News*.

Possible answer:

Starting point

- It is well-known that the issue of footballers' wages is controversial. As the PFA is responsible for working in the best interests of footballers in this country it is likely that the organisation would not want to get drawn into a tricky discussion which may end up reflecting badly on those that they represent and thus angering their clients.

Development

- Indeed, the organisation would have wanted to protect itself. *First News* was asking pertinent questions and the PFA would have known that they would be quoted. Therefore, they would have wanted to avoid having their answers on record.

B3. Look at the pictures showing "It's not just footballers who get paid loads." What do they suggest about what is valued in our society?

Possible answer:

Starting point

- The other pictures show a boxer, an actor and Google boss Sundar Pichai. This seems to suggest that entertainment is very highly valued in our society. The direct role of sportspeople and actors is to provide entertainment. Furthermore, even though Google is a search engine and has many educational uses, it can still be linked to people's desire for entertainment because it can also be used to search for and purchase tickets for the matches and shows in which the sportspeople and actors appear. Or it can be used to search for and purchase videos, games and music.

Development

- Notably, key health officials, farmers, military personnel and teachers are not amongst those "who get paid loads." Yet surely those roles are the foundation of society and entertainment should be a secondary concern?

B4. Both sides of the argument are presented in this report but can you find any evidence to suggest that the writer might be biased in favour of the argument that footballers are paid too much?

Possible answer:

Starting point-one piece of evidence with simple comment

Developed answer-two or more pieces of evidence with some detailed explanation

- The captions that accompany the pictures of the highly paid footballers seem to suggest that the writer might be biased in favour of the argument that footballers are paid too much. The caption of the picture of Wayne Rooney jumping to kick the ball says: "I can jump this high. I'm definitely worth it." The picture of Aguero on his knees, seemingly making an appeal, is captioned: "Come on, look at this face - it's worth £100,000 a week at least." Therefore, the captions are funny and do seem to gently mock the amount of money that these highly-paid footballers earn.

- The subtitle: "How much?!" with the use of the exclamation mark also serves to make footballers' wages seem ridiculous.

- The writer is also quite scathing about the PFA. The people at PFA did not respond to the questions posed by the *First News* team. Thus the writer suggests that perhaps "footballers don't particularly care" about the concerns of their fans.

B5. Do you think that this debate is an appropriate topic for the *First News* poll? Justify your answer.

Possible answer:

Starting point

- Yes, this is an appropriate topic for the *First News* poll because it is likely that many *First News* readers will be football fans themselves and so the issue is likely to interest them. Indeed, the price of match tickets may well affect some readers directly.

Development

- Furthermore, it is also an important topic because it links in with concerns about wealth distribution. There has been a lot of media coverage in recent times about how the top 1% of the population own more than half of the world's wealth. Focusing on footballers' wages enables *First News* readers to consider such wider issues as well.

(Reward alternative answer if a convincing explanation is provided.)

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PART C

Questions for discussion

C1. Can footballers’ wages be justified considering what people from other professions get paid? For example, paramedics earn around £28,000 a year and full-time fire fighters earn around £25,000. Compare this with the fact that an average footballer in the Premier League gets £2.288 million a year.

Possible answer:

Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only the most elite football players play in the Premier League. In order to get a place in a Premier League club they often have to dedicate their entire childhood to the sport and they make sacrifices in terms of their academic education and social life. They have to make such sacrifices despite knowing that few succeed to the top level and that they are choosing an uncertain future. Therefore, Premier League footballers are highly skilled and dedicated professionals and they deserve to be paid highly. • Even if they are lucky and don’t get injured, footballers usually retire in their early 30s. Therefore, they need to be paid well because that money has to support them for a long time after they’ve finished playing. • Due to the popularity of the league, Premier League footballers are treated like celebrities and have to endure close scrutiny and invasion of their privacy from the media. They need to be paid highly in order to compensate for this and so that they can afford appropriate security to protect themselves and the members of their family. • Footballers can’t be blamed for the values of the society of which they are a part. The money is only available for their wages because people are prepared to purchase the expensive match tickets, pay for Sky Sports and buy football merchandise. Paramedics, firefighters and the like are public sector workers and so it is the responsibility of the Government to ensure that they are made to feel valued through their pay and working conditions. Footballers can’t be blamed for taking the money offered to them. If the system needs to change then it is not the responsibility of footballers to make that change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no justification for paying Premier League footballers millions of pounds a year when all that they have to do most weeks is attend a few training sessions, eat healthily and kick a football around for 90 minutes in front of a large crowd. People from all walks of life make sacrifices in order to get their dream job but they aren’t paid such excessive amounts. For example, doctors train for around 10 years to be a GP and 14 years to be a surgeon and yet a top salary for a speciality hospital doctor is still only around £69,000 a year. Furthermore, the average week of a firefighter involves 48 hour shifts and visiting horrific accidents and scenes of trauma. Firefighters put their own lives at risk on a regular basis in order to save the lives of others. Yet they can expect to earn just £25,000 per annum. Surely few would argue that doctors and fire-fighters are of less use to society than footballers? So footballers should not be so highly paid. • Although many Premiership footballers do retire in their early 30s, opportunities often arise for them to become coaches or media pundits and so they still earn good money after they have had to stop playing. Furthermore, firefighters, policemen and soldiers do not get millions of pounds a year and yet it might be argued that they are more likely to get injured in their line of work or to have to stop working because of stress or post-traumatic stress disorder. Therefore, early retirement does not justify their pay packet of millions of pounds a year. • Footballers often court the media in order to get sponsorship deals or money from magazines. Therefore, that should be compensation enough for the invasion of privacy; they shouldn’t need such high wages as well. • Premier League footballers and their agents negotiate their high wages. They use their popularity to hold clubs to ransom. Therefore, they have to take some responsibility for the current situation. If they were willing to play for less, ticket prices wouldn’t have to be so high.

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C2. If footballers’ wages can be justified, then shouldn’t female footballer players get the same high wages? When the men’s and women’s teams of Arsenal both won the FA Cup, the women were paid £5,000 as a team and the men received £1.8m. Discuss your views on this.

Possible answer:

Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female footballers have to train hard and make sacrifices in the same way that the male football players do. Therefore why should they be paid less? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women’s football doesn’t generate enough interest to justify equality on the pay scale. Female football players are paid less because their sport makes less. There simply isn’t the money to pay them on the same scale as their male counterparts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women’s football makes less money because fans and sponsors don’t support it in the same way. However, it doesn’t seem logical that men’s football is somehow more inherently interesting to watch than women’s. So it must be a case of socialisation. People are socialised to accept men’s sports as dominant and thus women’s football isn’t given the same platform as the men. In which case, it doesn’t seem fair that women should be paid less because of old-fashioned prejudices about women and football. Indeed, the England women’s national football team came third in the FIFA Women’s World Cup in 2015 which is better than the men have done in their World Cup campaigns recently. The men haven’t reached the semi-final since 1990. 	

C3. Does it really matter if fans can’t afford stadium tickets to watch the matches? Football matches are widely televised now so fans can just watch their team on the television.

Possible answer:

Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a matter of principle. Football has always been enjoyed by the masses. It doesn’t seem fair that passionate, committed fans should be unable to attend matches and see the game that they love because they’ve been priced out by the money grabbing antics of the very players they idolise. If the game becomes elitist then the atmosphere will be lost because business executives and their clients may well be in attendance but the genuine fans will not. Consequently the TV coverage will not be as exciting and young people, the fans of the future, may lose interest. Even to watch the matches at home, fans have to pay for Sky and/or BT Sport and some families may not be able to commit to those charges on a monthly basis so will still be priced out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attending the matches used to be more important for people because the only matches screened were FA Cup finals and the occasional England versus Scotland match. Matches weren’t regularly televised until the 1960s. However, now that they are, people can gather with their friends to watch the matches on the television and they don’t need to go to the stadiums anymore.