

sport

IF THE CAP FITS



“They are young players, young boys, rich boys and this is the problem.”

– Fabio Capello, England manager, talking about his players.

IN THE IMMEDIATE aftermath of England’s disastrous World Cup campaign, newspapers pictured some England players laughing and joking after the humiliating defeat to Germany.

Whether such reports should provoke outrage is a matter of opinion, but what they have done is put player and manager wages under close scrutiny.

The Football Association pays Fabio Capello £6 million a year to manage the England football team. Yet even after their dismal performance, the team’s worst world cup showing in years, the FA maintains Capello is “the best man for the job”.

Many would argue this extraordinary salary is simply the inevitable result of market forces, yet with the England football team’s manager earning more than 30 times the prime minister each year, it isn’t surprising that people are asking why.

English Premier League clubs spent a staggering £1.3 billion on players’ wages during the 2008/09 Premier League season, according to a recent report by Deloitte. For every £100 that comes into Premier League clubs, £67 now goes out on wages.

A salary cap would prevent the richest clubs from using their superior monetary clout to attract all the best players, according to some critics

of the modern game, who say that a level playing field would make for a more exciting league. Under the current system, only four teams have won the Premier League and only members of the big four (Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool and Manchester United) have finished in the top two since 2000.

Kevin Keegan, a former manager of the national team said “The [Premier] League is in danger of becoming one of the most boring but great leagues in the world. I don’t see what we can do about it, do you?”

The average earnings of the big four clubs is triple the average for the remaining 16 teams. Critics of the current system point out that when a team from the remaining 16 finds or develops a good player from their training academies, one of the big four simply buy them. It’s also said that salary caps could prevent clubs ending up in financial ruin through overspending on player’s wages to reap immediate success.

Michel Platini, the president of Uefa, has warned that player wages are threatening the stability of the game and recently brought his pleas for limitations on salaries and transfers to the European Parliament. He says, “For the past 15 or 20 years, we have grown tired of hearing that there is no need to regulate, the market regulates itself perfectly, that excesses and imbalances will disappear of their own accord. We know



now that none of this is true. In football, as in the economy in general, the market is incapable of correcting its own excesses, and it was not the Uefa president who said so, it was Barack Obama.”

However, the Premier League and the European Club Association, which represent 137 leading teams, disagree and vehemently oppose any Europe-wide financial regulation, judging Platini's comments as unwanted interference.

“I sometimes say to footballers' agents ‘The difference between you and me is that, if tomorrow there was no more money in football, I'd still be here, but not you.’”

Arsene Wenger

The main argument by those against a salary cap is that, if clubs have to live within their income, the richer clubs will still dominate. However, although correct the top four clubs in each European league earn, on average, four times the income of other clubs in their league there are other ways to make the leagues more competitive.

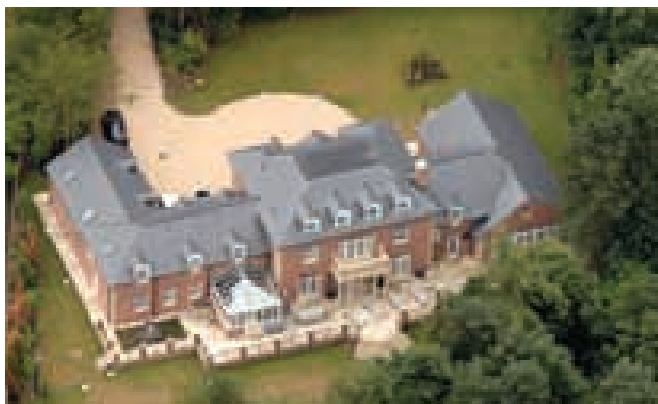
A recent survey revealed that eight out of ten fans say footballers' wages should be either cut or capped, according to the survey of 4,000 supporters on behalf of Virgin Money.

The Virgin Money Football Fans' Inf ation Index found that 40% of match-day supporters advocate a wage cut for their own club's players while only 20% of those surveyed say that footballers should be free to earn as much as they can. The introduction of a league-wide wage cap is supported by 41% of fans and it is most staunchly backed by football's most loyal demographics – 30 to 34-year-olds and season-ticket holders.

“When I was a teenager at Dundee and I saw the senior players I used to think ‘Well if I'm with Arbroath at that age, getting £30 a week and all the kippers I can eat, I'll be doing pretty well for myself.’” Gordon Strachan

An unsurprising statistic, given that the average match-day expenditure for a football supporter is now £89.53, in addition to expensive TV subscriptions to watch football.

Malcolm Clarke, chairman of the Football Supporters Federation,



agrees “Like any other industry, football has to learn to live within its means and look after its customers, many of whom are suffering as a result of the recession,” he said. “If this means more ticket price reductions and a bit less for the top players, so be it.”

“A successful career used to be about winning things, now it's about how much money you end up with”. Graeme Souness

In the Premier League, the average player earns more than £20,000 a week, or £1.1m a year, with the highest paid players – such as England internationals Rio Ferdinand, Ashley Cole, Wayne Rooney, Frank Lampard and Steven Gerrard – earning up to £130,000 a week, or almost £7m a year.

There are also many advocates of salary caps within the top echelons of the Premier League, among them Fulham's Mohamed Fayed. Fayed is one of the current system's most vocal critics “I worry that [salary caps] won't happen, because the Premier League and the FA are run by donkeys who don't understand business, who are dazzled by money” he said. “If the world wants to keep players in pocket for tens of thousands of pounds every week, then let the Premier League and the FA negotiate with Sky and other broadcasters for a share of the billions that they make in profit from our product, from my product. Because, at present, they don't. All around the world, football fans are paying to watch top matches on TV. And yet do most clubs see any of that money? No. We are hopelessly dependent on our end-of-season League placing to determine our share of the cash and it makes a difference of feast or famine every season. Yet even then, except for the top four clubs, we're only talking about a difference of few million, which doesn't get you far. I want to help other clubs. I speak my mind, and other chairmen should too. They need to wake up from their coma and join me in this fight with the Premier League and the FA. We all need big balls in this business.”

One person who won't care what Fayed thinks is Manchester City's new signing, Yaya Toure. *The News of the World* reported that Toure's new salary will rise to £221,000 a week from next April when the UK government's new tax bracket comes into force.

Twenty seven-year-old Toure, who played just 16 games for Barcelona last season, told the newspaper “It's a dream come true.”

TOP PREMIER LEAGUE WAGE BILLS

	2008/09	2007/08
Chelsea	£167m	£172m
Manchester United	£123m	£121m
Liverpool	£107m	£90m
Arsenal	£104m	£101m
Manchester City	£83m	£54m

ALL TOO PREDICTABLE?

English Premier League top four places

	2009-10	2008-09	2007-08	2006-07	2005-06
1	Chelsea	Man Utd	Man Utd	Man Utd	Chelsea
2	Man Utd	Liverpool	Chelsea	Chelsea	Man Utd
3	Arsenal	Chelsea	Arsenal	Liverpool	Liverpool
4	Spurs	Arsenal	Liverpool	Arsenal	Arsenal

Scottish Premier League top two places

	2009-10	2008-09	2007-08	2006-07	2005-06
1	Rangers	Rangers	Celtic	Celtic	Celtic
2	Celtic	Celtic	Rangers	Rangers	Hearts

	2004-05	2003-04	2002-03	2001-02	2000-2001
1	Rangers	Celtic	Rangers	Celtic	Celtic
2	Celtic	Rangers	Celtic	Rangers	Rangers

FAIR GAME?

John Terry, Chelsea and England	£150,000/week
David Cameron, UK prime minister	£3,800/week
Frank Lampard, Chelsea and England	£150,000/week
Consultant Doctor working for the NHS	£3,400/week
Steven Gerrard, Liverpool and England	£140,000/week
Head Teacher - average UK salary	£1,000/week
Ashley Cole, Chelsea and England	£120,000/week
British soldier (starting salary)	£240/week

WHERE YOUR MONEY GOES

Rio Ferdinand

CARS: Has owned an Aston Martin Vanquish, a Bentley Continental GT, Bentley Arnage, Cadillac Escalade, Porsche Cayenne and a Ford F150 pick-up truck. The Manchester United player was banned from driving for 28 days



after he was caught speeding after overtaking a police car at 105mph on the M6 in Staffordshire.

HOMES: Owns property in Caribbean, Morocco, Croatia, Cheshire and London

Wayne Rooney

CARS: The Manchester United star has owned an Aston Martin Vanquish, BMW M3, Mini GP, Mercedes CLK, Lamborghini Gallardo Spyder, a Cadillac Escalade, Porsche 911, Range Rover and Bentley Continental among others. Reportedly spent more than £750,000 on vehicles.

HOMES: Owns £4.5m mansion in Cheshire, £5m villa in Cheshire and a £320,000 Florida flat.

Ashley Cole

CARS: Has owned an Aston Martin DBS V12, Range Rover Sport and was found guilty of driving at more than 100mph in a 50mph zone in his black Lamborghini Gallardo

HOMES: £3.5m mansion in Surrey and a villa in Morocco.

Steven Gerrard

CARS: Is thought to have spent more than £600,000 on cars including a Range Rover Sport HST, Bentley Continental, Porsche 911 Turbo, Mercedes SLK, Aston Martin Vanquish and BMW X5.

HOMES: £2.5m mansion in Formby, Merseyside and £5m on three penthouse apartments.

John Terry

CARS: Terry's owned a Ferrari F430 Spider, Aston Martin DBS V12, Range Rover Sport, BMW X5, Bentley Continental and a Porsche 911 Turbo.

HOMES: Owns £2.5m mansion in Oxshott, Surrey

Frank Lampard

CARS: Owns an Audi Q7, Ferrari 612 Scaglietti, Mercedes G Wagon and an Aston Martin DB9

HOMES: Owns a £8.5m townhouse in London.

BRITONS SHINE IN BARCELONA

EUROPEAN ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

WITH ONLY TWO years to go before the 2012 London Olympics, Britain's athletes celebrated their largest ever medal haul in the 76-year history of the European Championships. The team won a total 19 medals, beating the previous British best set by the golden generation of athletes – including Roger Black, Linford Christie and John Regis - who won 18 medals at Split in 1990.

UK Athletics head coach Charles van Commenee said “Overall, it is very encouraging for the next few years. Quite a few athletes stepped up a level, but there is a lot of work to be done. We have too many athletes at home with injuries. And we don't have enough athletes across the events – especially the field events, especially the women.”

London 2012 Olympic games organising committee chairman, Lord Coe, believes the future is bright for the team ahead of their home Olympics although he knows van Commenee still has work to do.

“I think the team is in really good shape with two years to go and what Charles will be figuring out is the route through for some of these European medalists to challenge again in 2012,” he said.

“What he needed to do when he came into the job was challenge the culture. He had to take people out of their comfort zone and he has done that.”

“It's now a team that is buzzing and they are on the move. It is still a long time to 2012 but there is real light at the end of the tunnel.”

MEDAL TABLE

RANK	COUNTRY	MEN'S				WOMEN'S				TOTAL			
		G	S	B	Tot	G	S	B	Tot	G	S	B	Tot
1	RUS	3	1	2	6	7	5	6	18	10	6	8	24
2	FRA	7	3	3	13	1	3	1	5	8	6	4	18
3	GBR	5	7	3	15	1	0	3	4	6	7	6	19
4	GER	1	3	2	6	3	3	4	10	4	6	6	16
5	TUR	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	4	3	1	0	4
6	ESP	1	2	2	5	1	1	1	3	2	3	3	8
7	UKR	0	1	1	2	2	2	0	4	2	3	1	6
8	POL	2	2	2	6	0	0	3	3	2	2	5	9
9	BLR	1	0	1	2	1	1	0	2	2	1	1	4
10	CRO	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	2

BRITAIN'S MEDALISTS

GOLD (6)

MO FARAH 10,000M
 MO FARAH 5,000M
 ANDY TURNER 110M HURDLES
 PHILLIPS IDOWU TRIPLE JUMP
 DAI GREENE 400M HURDLES
 JESSICA ENNIS HEPTATHLON

SILVER (7)

MARK LEWIS-FRANCIS 100M
 CHRISTIAN MALCOLM 200M
 MICHAEL BINGHAM 400M
 CHRIS THOMPSON 10,000M
 MICHAEL RIMMER 800M
 RHYS WILLIAMS 400M HURDLES
 MEN'S 4X400M RELAY

BRONZE (6)

MARTYN ROONEY 400M
 MARTYN BERNARD HIGH JUMP
 JENNY MEADOWS 800M
 PERRI SHAKES-DRAYTON 400M HURDLES
 CHRIS TOMLINSON LONG JUMP
 WOMEN'S 4X400M RELAY

