

The football prima donnas

The total wage bill for players in the English Premier League has just risen above £1 billion. Are footballers worth the huge salaries they receive?

1 Are you watching Euro 2008? Which reply (a–e) is closest to your own? Compare your answer to a partner.

(a) "Every match"	(b) "Most games"	(c) "A few matches"	(d) "I might watch the final!"	(e) "Absolutely not!"
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2 Say the following figures. Then scan the six blog entries (a–f) to see what each figure represents.

£130,000	6,000,0000	13%
£120,000	1,000,000,000	90

<p>(a) Is John Terry worth the £130,000 per week he receives at Chelsea? Absolutely not! The salaries paid to footballers today are totally obscene. Paying these kinds of wages just pushes up the price of a ticket, so real fans cannot afford to see their own team. Ticket prices for Manchester United this season have risen by 13%. AF.</p> <p>(b) Why is everyone talking about footballers? Look at tennis stars; motor-racing drivers. In every sport, we pay our stars well because that is what they are: stars. Dan.</p> <p>(c) So accounting firm DeLoittes has announced that the annual wage bill in the Premier League clubs will exceed one billion pounds this season. Every salary is linked to performance, just like any other area of business from banking to sales. Players should be rewarded for their ability. High salaries are fine, as long as there is a clear link between ability and pay. Paul.</p>	<p>(d) What exactly do these prima donnas do to earn their money? Fight like children; pretend to be injured; cheat; buy fast cars; get fined for speeding. Hardly good role models for my children. Jennifer G.</p> <p>(e) We all know that the careers of all sportspeople are short; they could get injured at any time. They need to consider how to plan for the future, like all of us. Footballers don't work for just 90 minutes once a week, but train every day. Long may they continue to entertain us! Ivy.</p> <p>(f) We are constantly being told that the Premier League is the best league in the world. Yes, I do enjoy watching Michael Ballack, Fernando Torres and Cristiano Ronaldo. I would enjoy getting their salaries, too: each is paid over £120,000 a week. To put that figure in some kind of context, it's over £6 million a year! Not bad for a couple of games twice a week! JC.</p>
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3 Read the blog entries. Which are 'for' and which are 'against' high football salaries?

4 Find one word in each line which does not form a collocation with the word at the end.

4.1	(a) increase	(b) expand	(c) pay	(d) raise	(e) decrease	(f) get	(a) SALARY
4.2	(a) earn	(b) cut	(c) receive	(d) reward	(e) reduce	(f) negotiate	
4.3	(a) attractive	(b) clear	(c) substantial	(d) annual	(e) huge	(f) monthly	

5 In small groups, discuss the questions and report your ideas back to the class.

- (a) Are Premier League footballers worth their high salaries?
- (b) Do you think that other sportsmen and women are over-paid?
- (c) Can you think of any other professions where employees receive too much pay? Which are under-paid?