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FOOTBALL

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DEBATING MATTERS
TOPIC
GUIDES

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MOTION:

**“PREMIERSHIP
FOOTBALLERS
DESERVE ALL THE
REWARDS THEY GET”**

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INTRODUCTION

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When in November 2007 the sports minister Gerry Sutcliffe described Chelsea captain John Terry's wages as 'obscene' [Ref: [BBC News](#)] he spoke for many, both inside and outside the game. Chelsea has become synonymous with the vast wealth floating around the game, with the players becoming the most visible beneficiaries of Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich's injection of cash [Ref: [The Times](#)]. With the average wage of a Premiership footballer topping £1 million [Ref: [The Times](#)], a recent survey found that 64 per cent of the public feel that footballers are the most overpaid group in society [Ref: [The Times](#)]. The Archbishop of York has argued they should pay higher taxes [Ref: [The Times](#)]. He said it was just not right that a Belfast porter could earn £131 a week while a guest at the Beckham's World Cup send-off party paid £50,000 for a ticket. The response to Sutcliffe and other critics has been fierce [Ref: [The Times](#)]. Daniel Finkelstein said footballers' pay was entirely in keeping with their market value and Duleep Allirajah wondered why footballers were being singled out. Shortly afterwards, the controversy surrounding the alleged rape at Manchester United's Christmas party brought the topic back into focus [Ref: [Independent](#)]. Terence Blacker saw such incidents as evidence of the moral degeneracy of footballers who have become divorced from the ordinary working people who pay their wages [Ref: [Independent](#)], while James Lawton saw it as a symbol of the excess specific to English football. Simon Barnes countered that, regardless of the veracity of the claims, much of the criticism was nothing more than snobbery. Meanwhile, Sol Campbell's complaint that players were subject to unacceptable levels of abuse [Ref: [BBC News](#)] – a claim supported by some of the game's leading names [Ref: [BBC News](#)] – suggested a footballer's life may not all be about easy



THE FOOTBALL DEBATE IN CONTEXT

money, although Rod Liddle argued this comes with the territory [Ref: [The Times](#)]. Are footballers overpaid, over-indulged and under-performing prima donnas? Or are they uniquely talented individuals who entertain millions and have a right to be rewarded accordingly?

THE FOOTBALL DEBATE IN CONTEXT

You're going home in the back of a limousine

It was not always thus. There was a wage cap in British football until 1959, and there have been repeated calls over the last few years for football to follow the example of top US sports like American football, which introduced a wage cap in 1994 [Ref: [BBC News](#)]. Although a cap has been adopted in the lower leagues [Ref: [Accountancy Age](#)], it is argued that such a policy would be extremely difficult to implement without damaging the quality and competitiveness of the Premier League, and that other entertainers do not face similar curbs on their earnings [Ref: [Accountancy Age](#)]. There have been complaints that high wages lead to over-inflated ticket prices, but Crystal Palace chairman Simon Jordan believes that compared to other forms of entertainment like West End theatre, football is not that expensive [Ref: [Guardian](#)]. Jim White, though, argues that young people have been priced out of watching football, and that as wages and ticket prices rise so do expectations – fans expect to be entertained and are less tolerant of failure.

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England are staying home

This point about expectations helps explain why footballers' wages get so much media attention: England's failure to qualify for Euro 2008. It is no coincidence that the players who've received the most criticism in relation to wages and behaviour – Terry, Ashley Cole [Ref: [Daily Mail](#)], Joey Barton [Ref: [Independent](#)] – are all English. There is a perception that their obsession with a celebrity lifestyle is having a detrimental effect on the quality of English football [Ref: [Independent](#)].

Who bought all the pies?

There are also broader social concerns being played out in the microcosm of football. Within days of England's failure to qualify, UEFA president Michel Platini blamed free market economics and big business for destroying English football [Ref: [Guardian](#)]. Many ask whether it's a mark of a fair and just society that footballers can earn hundreds of times as much as arguably more valuable workers like nurses simply because they're lucky enough to have been born with a highly marketable talent. The Mayday for Nurses campaign sought to tap into this unease by asking footballers to donate a day's salary to a fund for nurses. But critics detected snobbery, and it caused a furore amongst those who thought footballers were being made scapegoats – criticised in a way that high-paid professionals like bankers and lawyers are not and when the real money in football is in the hands of owners [Ref: [The Times](#)]. Critics argue what footballers deserve to be paid should be decided by the market – by what fans are willing to pay and owners spend on pursuing success. Should footballers be expected to set an example, or are they bearing the brunt of a lack of proper political debate in society?



THE FOOTBALL DEBATE IN CONTEXT CONTINUED...

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The player is a %?#!?

Should footballers' wealth and status go hand in hand with the expectation that they behave as good role models?

Footballers are influential figures – used to promote causes such as environmentalism [Ref: [Observer](#)] and anti-racism [Ref: [Guardian](#)] – and blamed when they set a bad example on and off the pitch [Ref: [Guardian](#)]. But Rod Liddle argues it should be their skill and talent that does the talking, and Nicky Campbell thinks it is a tragedy that George Best is now remembered for his personal problems rather than his undoubted genius.



ESSENTIAL READING

Claridge versus the MP

BBC Sport 24 November 2007

Michel Platini: 'I am afraid of what has happened to football'

David Conn *Guardian* 20 November 2007

Let's get real – the problem is wages

Simon Jordan *Observer* 2 October 2005

For

Laugh at the crass footballers, but do not resent their wealth

Simon Barnes *The Times* 21 December 2007

Obscene wages for all

Duleep Allirajah *spiked* 16 November 2007

Fine. So what should a sports minister be paid?

Daniel Finkelstein *The Times* 7 November 2007

That's rich: Gareth Southgate should be applauded for tough stance on nurses

Alyson Rudd *The Times* 12 October 2007

Against

Poor Sol may cry foul but it's footballers who need a good kicking

Janet Street-Porter *Independent on Sunday* 23 December 2007

This is England: A country where football enjoys excess in all areas

James Lawton *Independent* 20 December 2007

Game will pay price for selling its soul to foreign legion

Gaby Logan *The Times* 31 August 2007

Wealth that buys nothing but disloyalty and disrespect

Rob Hughes *The Sunday Times* 5 June 2005

In Depth

Football's money men making loudest noise

Jim White *Daily Telegraph* 5 January 2008

Give 'Mayday for Nurses' the red card

Duleep Allirajah *spiked* 15 March 2007

More gravey train than slave ship

Hugh McIlvanney *The Sunday Times* 5 June 2005

Football is not a matter of life and death – it's less important than that

Mick Hume *The Times* 17 May 2004

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BACKGROUNDERS

Normal rules don't apply in football's parallel universe

Terence Blacker *Independent* 12 December 2007

Boys 'look up to footballers, not fathers'

Daily Telegraph 3 December 2007

Are footballers' wages fair or ridiculous?

BBC Sport 606 31 May 2007

Levelling the playing field

Guardian Unlimited 1 May 2007

The time when footballers were almost slaves

Boris Mellor *Arsenal Times* 26 March 2007

Don't blame the footballers – blame the parents

David James *Observer* 7 January 2007

Remember George's genius and drop all this role model cant

Nicky Campbell *Guardian* 1 December 2005

Let these poor footballers talk with their feet

Rod Liddle *The Sunday Times* 25 September 2005

Foul! Time to send football's bad boys off TV

Amelia Hill and Denis Campbell *Observer* 6 March 2005

The state of football

YouGov Survey Results 1 November 2003

The salary cap proposal of the G-14 in European football

Késenne Stefan *University of Antwerp* 1 July 2003

The Political Economy of Football

Should footballers' wages be capped?

Yahoo Answers

Should footballers be role models?

tiscali.community

Money in football

dooyoo

Annual review of football finance 2008

Deloitte

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ORGANISATIONS

Mayday for Nurses

Professional Footballers' Association



IN THE NEWS

Barton: Rebel with an amazing capacity for trouble
Independent 28 December 2007

Hangover from party that turned into night of shame
Independent on Sunday 20 December 2007

Mr Average of football nets £1m
The Sunday Times 18 November 2007

Owners retain monopoly on game's true wealth
The Times 7 November 2007

Flak comes at Gerry Sutcliffe from all angles
Times Online 2 November 2007

Gareth Southgate angered by nurses' charity
Times Online 11 October 2007

Nurse appeal short-changed as footballers fail to pay up
The Times 10 October 2007

Eto'o: Players are worth wages
BBC Sport 11 August 2007

Premiership wages 'to top £1bn'
BBC News 30 May 2007

Footie fat-cats
The Sunday Times 7 April 2007

John Terry's greedy, says JT
The Sun 17 February 2007

Bruce urges pay cuts to start the ball rolling on path to salvation
The Times 13 January 2007

If the cap fits
BBC Sport 27 May 2006

Footballers ought to pay more tax, says Archbishop
The Times 23 May 2006

Survey reveals footballers' wages
BBC Sport 11 May 2006

Wenger against cap on salaries
BBC Sport 31 December 2005

Chelsea pay means players are no longer just famous
The Times 7 December 2005

Football FD writes off wage cap
Accountancy Age 11 August 2005

Football FDs back player wage caps
Accountancy Age 29 July 2004

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- I am a sixth form student and would like further details about events in my area
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organisation

Professional role
(if applicable)

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Postcode

Email address

School/work phone

Mobile phone

**“TEENAGE CITIZENS
THINKING DEEPLY
ABOUT...SOCIAL
ISSUES”**

IAN GRANT, CEO, BRITANNICA

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The rights and wrongs of animal testing have been disputed for decades. In the early part of this decade the debate was dominated by animal rights groups, whose activities led Cambridge University to abandon its plans for a primate research lab in 2004 [Ref: BBC News]. Since then supporters of animal experimentation have become more vocal and effective at getting their points across. Spurred on by a protest organised by a 16-year-old boy in Oxford [Ref: BBC News], a new pro-vivisection campaign group called Pro-Test was established and, alongside existing groups, has argued more persuasively for the importance of animal experiments.

The issue remains highly contested, not least because in recent years the number of experiments conducted on animals has increased due to new scientific discoveries. In May 2008, the primatologist Jane Goodall proposed that a Nobel prize be set up for advancing medical knowledge without experimentation on animals [Ref: Guardian]. Two fundamental issues are at stake. First, there is the scientific question of the nature of the contribution that animal experiments make to medical and scientific progress. Second, there are ethical questions about the moral status of animals.

These ethical questions first came to prominence in the 1970s, when the publication of Peter Singer’s book *Animal Liberation* helped launch the animal rights movement. The main question raised is this: Should we expand our sphere of moral concern to include animals on a more equal basis, or is there something unique about human beings that justifies us in using animals for our own ends?

KEY TERMS

- 3Rs (Replacement, Refinement and Reduction)
- The principles of the 3Rs - Replacement, Refinement and Reduction - were originally developed by UFAW Scholars, Professor William Russell and Rex Burch, and are now widely accepted internationally as criteria for humane animal use in research and testing.
- Noxious stimulus
- Speciesism
- Vivisection



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“Premiership footballers deserve all the rewards they get”

