

Russian Football Clubs Spend Record Low Due to Ruble Devaluation

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Zenit St. Petersburg's goalkeeper Yuri Lodygin (3rd R, front) and PSV Eindhoven's Jeffrey Bruma (2nd R) jump for the ball during their Europa League round of 32 second leg soccer match at the Petrovsky stadium in St. Petersburg on Feb. 26, 2015.

Two years after Russian clubs spent a record 112 million euro (\$122 million) in their February transfer window, teams have had to face the stark reality they no longer have access to bottomless coffers due to the ruble's collapse.

Brazilian midfielder Willian arrived at Anzhi Makhachkala in 2013 amid much fanfare following a 35 million euro move from Shakhtar Donetsk but there will hardly be any new names when the league resumes on Saturday following a three-month winter break.

Due to the financial crisis the 16 clubs in the top division have only spent around five million euros in total, the lowest amount in recent history.

It is little wonder spending has dried up. Willian's price tag was worth 1.41 billion rubles (\$24 million) in 2013 but it would now equate to 2.28 billion (\$38 million), making such high-calibre players really expensive for even the wealthiest clubs.

The most extravagant purchase this time round was the 3.5 million euro (\$3.8 million) shelled out by Lokomotiv Moscow for Partizan Belgrade striker Petar Skuletic.

The ruble's devaluation has also had an impact on foreign footballers already in the country, with a number of clubs in negotiations to try to fix the exchange rate with their players.

"Hosting matches in the group stages of the Champions League without spectators due to the faltering ruble ... has not helped our current financial situation," CSKA Moscow general director Roman Babaev told TASS news agency.

"Everyone is experiencing difficulties and our club is no exception. Our budget has increased by around 70 percent."

More Modest

FC Krasnodar owner Sergei Galitsky told RBK Sport agency: "Many teams in the league are being more modest in terms of buying new players ... the currency crisis [means] at our club wages are increasing".

While foreigners like Portugal defender Rolando are reluctant to go to Russia because of the dwindling salaries, there is also uncertainty over the number of overseas players each club will be allowed next season.

The Russian Football Union wants to implement a "10+15" plan that would involve teams submitting squads of 10 foreigners and 15 nationals.

The Ministry for Sport has not given the proposal its backing, saying it hampers the interests of the national team, so no one knows what system will be in place next season.

While money matters have been the main talking point in the ongoing crisis, club managers have to rally the players to produce their best form because in the league it is 'business as usual.'

Zenit St Petersburg coach Andre Villas-Boas will be hoping his men can reproduce the form that helped the league leaders thump Krasnodar 4-0 in their last match before the winter break.

With 13 games left to play this season, Zenit enjoy a seven-point cushion over second-placed CSKA and Villas-Boas wants his players to find their stride as quickly as possible when they take on lowly Ural Yekaterinenburg on Saturday.

"To get the team back into the rhythm of playing competitive games is not easy therefore the opening few games will be of particular importance," said the former Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur boss.

CSKA's chances of securing a third successive league title suffered a blow during the break

when striker Seydou Doumbia decided to join AS Roma.

A matter of weeks after the Ivory Coast forward scored twice in the Moscow club's 2-1 victory over Manchester City in the Champions League, he moved to the Italian capital for a fee of 14.4 million euro.

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