

# Russia Proposes Tough Salary Cap for Football Stars

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Russian football bosses have called for star players' salaries to be capped at just \$31,000 a month in a move that could change the face of football in the 2018 World Cup host nation.

Top Russian clubs, many of them financed by government-owned companies, have massively increased spending on stars over the last decade.

However, recently some clubs have faced financial problems or fallen foul of UEFA's financial play restrictions, such as Dynamo Moscow, banned from European competition this season for breaking FFP rules.

The proposals published Monday by the Russian Football Union would cap the monthly wage of a player aged over 23 at 2 million rubles (\$31,000) a month, far lower than the current wage for a typical first-team player at a top club. Younger players would face lower wage limits.

A club would be allowed to have five players exempt from the cap in a manner similar to Major League soccer's designated player rule. Only three of the exempt players could be aged over 23.

That could force an exodus of dozens of players across the Russian Premier League as clubs try to persuade them to renegotiate contracts to a fraction of their former value. Another difficulty is that top players, wary of the fluctuating value of the ruble, often insist that Russian clubs pay them in euros.

Salary limits are common in U.S. sports but rare in Europe, where UEFA rules only stop clubs from posting large overall losses.

The plans, which were drawn up by the former head of the Russian state auditing agency, are pitched as a way to restore financial discipline and stop clubs falling foul of UEFA rules.

"The RFU's financial regulations, if they are revised and adopted from the year 2016, will be able to exert a long-term positive effect on clubs' behavior," the Russian Football Union said in an online statement.

Players would be allowed to receive certain bonuses and living allowances outside the terms of the limit.

Similarly to UEFA rules, the RFU proposals would also limit clubs' overall financial losses, beginning with a maximum loss of 750 million rubles (\$11.6 million) for the 2015-17 period. Clubs would also be mandated to cut wage costs to 60 percent of income by 2018, the year of the World Cup.

Russian football already features rules not found in most European clubs, including a limit on the number of foreign players. Only six non-Russians can be on the pitch at any time under a rule designed to encourage clubs to raise homegrown talent, but which detractors say leads to inflated salaries for Russian players.

The idea of a salary cap has the backing of Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko, who is due to take over as president of the RFU in September, although it is not clear whether he backs the numbers featured in the new proposals.

Mutko, who also oversees Russia's World Cup preparations and sits on FIFA's executive committee, is running unopposed for the vacant presidential post after his only rival withdrew from the race.

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