The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

'Worse Than Omsk': A New Book Explains Why Abramovich Passed on Tottenham

January 07, 2019



Anton Novoderezhkin / TASS

A damning comparison to one of Russia's grittiest cities sold the deal for Roman Abramovich and turned London's Chelsea Football Club into an international powerhouse.

Before making the purchase, Abramovich entertained investing in Chelsea's London-rival Tottenham Hotspur, a new book on the origin story of the English Premier League says. The deal-breaker was reportedly a ride down the streets of the Tottenham district of London.

"While his Mercedes trundled along Tottenham High Road, he looked out and said in Russian, 'This is worse than Omsk,'" reads an excerpt published by The Sun tabloid on Sunday.

Related article: Abramovich Ordered to Explain Wealth to Extend U.K. Visa, Media Reports

In their new book, Wall Street Journal football writers Joshua Robinson and Jonathan Clegg also report that Abramovich's 2003 purchase of Chelsea for 140 million pounds ($178.5 million) was a fluke.

The authors reportedly write that the Swiss bank USB, hired by Abramovich to examine the Premier League's finances, had mistakenly said that another London club, Arsenal FC, "were categorically not for sale."

Robinson and Clegg estimate the Premier League's "wildest gold rush" generated a 10,000 percent increase in value for its 20 clubs, according to a book review published by The Times.

"Some were fraudsters, gangsters, thugs or just idiots with more money than sense," the authors write of the Russian, Arab, U.S., Chinese, Spanish and Thai owners who have since bought up the clubs.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/01/07/worse-than-omsk-new-book-why-abramovich-bought-chelsea-instead-of-tottenham-a64056