

Spain's La Liga leads European football in economic revenue and on-the-field results

Spain's La Liga is the best football league in Europe again, taking the Premier League's top spot

Real Madrid remains clearly ahead in football's economic revenue and FC Barcelona is ranked second for the first time. Arsenal has risen to the third spot, thanks to the real estate transaction that allowed the London club to earn £88 million. For the first time, Manchester United (4th) is not among the top three clubs.

On-the-field, FC Barcelona, Real Madrid, Mallorca and Valencia are in the leading group of a hypothetical 100-team table featuring clubs from the five most important European leagues, taking into consideration the percentage of points as well as the points obtained home and away.

Real Madrid and FC Barcelona did not sign any players in the winter market that was clearly affected by the world's economic crisis. Real Madrid has taken better advantage of their summer signings, which have been more prominent than Barcelona's Maxwell and Chigrynski.

Madrid, February 17 2009- La Liga BBVA is once again the top European football club competition. According to the study *Football Transfer Review*, launched at ESADE and produced by Prime Time Sport – the company headed by FIFA agent Esteve Calzada, Spain's league is once again the continent's football benchmark. The gamble made by the Spanish clubs last summer, tied to the excellent economics and on-the-field results registered by La Liga BBVA's teams, have taken the competition to Europe's summit, removing England's Premier League from the top spot.

Real Madrid leads European football in income

The tendency change is related to the economic crisis effect in the European teams. Real Madrid is still ahead of the pack with an income of 407 million Euros followed by FC Barcelona, which reaches the second place for the first time, with 385 million Euros. Arsenal, with 357 million Euros, has improved to third in the rankings, thanks to a real state deal that reported 88 million pounds to the London club. For the first time, Manchester United (fourth) drops from the top three positions with an income of 317 million Euros.

English soccer is no longer the machine that carries European's football industry. All the big Premiership clubs will have ended the 2008-09 season with financial losses, but some special transfers and deals, such as the Arsenal real estate transfer explained above, Manchester United's sale of Cristiano Ronaldo for 80 million Euros or Tottenham's sale of fixed assets for 56.5 million Euros,

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allowed them to stay in the black. The Premier League has become weaker in recent years and its place at the pinnacle of European football has been taken by La Liga BBVA.

Real Madrid has positioned itself as a very solid leader in the income rankings once the extraordinary benefits are taken out. With the same consideration, FC Barcelona would still come in second place, but the difference has been elevated now to 42 million Euros.

Spanish football has reached the first two spots of the European ranking for the first time. And also, for the first time, there is no English club in the first two places. This economic leadership has been also reflected on the pitch.

2009/2010 European football standings

The Football Transfer Review study, focused on the winter market, includes European standings at the end of each league's first half of the season. The standings grade the top 100 teams in the continent, proving Spanish football to be a real success. According to the data analyzed by Prime Time Sport, FC Barcelona and Real Madrid head the European standings ahead of teams such as Inter Milan, Chelsea and Manchester United. Barcelona has collected 86.7% of points played for so far, while Real Madrid has accounted for 78.3%. Real Madrid and Mallorca are Europe's top squads playing at home, having won all games played on their own pitch. Analyzing the effectiveness on the road, FC Barcelona and Valencia CF are the leading teams on the continent.

These spectacular results are due to the effective capability of the Spanish league teams to score goals. According to Prime Time Sport's study, FC Barcelona is the team with the highest scoring average per game, while Real Madrid heads the European teams in scoring average at home. Madrid's team also has the most effective striker in the continent: forward Gonzalo Higuaín. The young Argentinean scores a goal every 80 minutes, which allows him to lead an elite group that includes stars such as Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo, Zlatan Ibrahimovic or David Villa. The top three positions in this category are held by scoring players from La Liga BBVA.

In other specific rankings – the study analyzes more than 30 areas - there is also a big prominence from the Spanish squads. There are some anomalies like RCD Español's. According to the study, the other team from Barcelona ranks second in the continent in goals effectiveness. Español only scored 14 goals in the 19-game first half of the season, but those goals allowed the club to register 23 points, reaching a comfortable position in the table. Real Valladolid and Málaga CF are the second and third-ranked teams in Europe with more draws, while Getafe, on the other hand, is the continent's squad with

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the least draws. Xerez is one of the worst European teams in terms of points and goals scored: a situation reflected by their last place in La Liga BBVA.

The young players' performance is also analyzed in the study. Sporting de Gijón has four delivering constantly, which allows this modest team to be above powerhouses like FC Barcelona and Real Madrid in this important ranking. Sporting, Tenerife and Mallorca are the three teams that change the least players in their respective starting lineups. Nine players from each of these three squads have been on the pitch for more than 70% of the minutes played by their club in the season's first half. By contrast, Getafe, Villarreal and Zaragoza make the most changes, with only four, four and three players respectively having participated more than 70% of the total time.

Sporting is also the team that uses the most the players signed last summer with 100% of them having played more than half of the total minutes of the season's first half. Real Madrid is second in this ranking with their new players averaging 58 minutes per contest. On the other hand, FC Barcelona is one of the last with a very low average of 44 minutes. Only Ibrahimovic has clearly become a starter for Barça, while Maxwell and Chigrynski have seen very limited action.

All the data explained above proves the differences between Spain's top clubs and the rest of teams in their league. This is the reason why clubs who are not fulfilling their early goals, like Atlético de Madrid and Zaragoza, were the most active in the winter market, trying to improve their squads.

The winter market affected by the economic crisis

In its second edition, Football Transfer Review is focused on the winter market. The study comes to an ironic conclusion: despite forming the best league in Europe, Spanish clubs were the ones who signed the least number of players during a winter market deeply affected by the world's economic crisis. According to Football Transfer Review, the transfers of the winter market had a 66% setback compared to the previous season, reaching only 112 million Euros: just 6% of the business generated in 2009's summer market.

La Liga BBVA was the European league that invested the least with its lowest figure in the last seven years: 8.25 million Euros. Very significant is to consider that the majority of Europe's top clubs did not sign any players in the winter market with the exception of teams that had urgencies in the league standings like Atlético de Madrid, Milan or Inter.

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The winter market was used by some teams to encourage some players to leave, reducing the club's squad. Despite that, the amount of loan players has been much greater than the transfers. Spain has changed the way the market operates, developing a new transaction format: 70% have been loans.

This reflection from the economic crisis has not been bad at all for the local players. With the clubs investing less money internationally, 51 players have made their debut in the first division, coming from the clubs' development squads. Málaga leads the Spanish clubs in this ranking with nine development players joining the first team.

Despite the situation explained above, two clubs acted differently. Atlético de Madrid spent the most money in the winter signing period, paying 8 million Euros for Salvio. Real Zaragoza ranked second among European squads in winter signings with the incorporation of seven new players. The only team who signed more was Germany's Schalke 04, who added eight to their squad in the winter. Business-wise, though, Zaragoza developed a very interesting story, investing zero Euros to incorporate all these players.

Without question, the highlight of the winter market was Real Madrid not signing any new players. FC Barcelona did not either, but that had happened before with Pinto being their only winter incorporation in the past five years. This is a clear reflection of the satisfaction both Spanish powerhouses have with their squads, especially if we make a comparison with previous years when Real Madrid signed, among others, Huntelaar, Gago, Lass Diarra and Marcelo.

About Football Transfer Review

The Football Transfer Review study produced by Prime Time Sport was born with the mission of becoming a reference tool in the football world. It gathers, analyzes and comes to independent conclusions about the issues that have an influence in the making of the squads and the players' transfers in the top European and Spanish clubs.

About Prime Time Sport

Prime Time sport is a sports marketing firm founded and headed by FIFA players' agent Esteve Calzada, who formerly was FC Barcelona's general director of marketing. The firm offers integral services for players represented: individual image rights, media relations and management of sporting and economic rights. Prime Time Sport works together with Spanish and European clubs in signing and selling players. The firm also provides consultancy on sports sponsorship to large advertisers and right holders.

To download the complete study, please click the link below:

<http://www.ptsport.tv/files/Football%20Transfer%20Review%202010-%20Winter%20Market,%20by%20Prime%20Time%20Sport%20ENG.pdf>

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