Football’s Secret Trade: How the Player Transfer Market was Infiltrated

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Contacts:  
Katy Smith, Publicity Manager katysmith@wiley.com 01243 770215 (Mon-Wed)

“This book began with a riddle. We wanted to know why a company based in a redbrick house in the English town of Rochdale was lending £2 million to two-time European champion FC Porto to sign a striker…”

- Alex Duff and Tariq Panja

So begins the no-holds-barred exposé on the financial transactions of the world's favourite sport.

Despite the global financial crisis, the size of the football transfer market has continued to rise, increasing seven-fold in value the last two decades - more than the FTSE share index.

The transfer fees that clubs pay to sign top players now top €4 billion a year but, in Football’s Secret Trade, authors Alex Duff and Tariq Panja show how much of the money has been flowing out of the game as a small group of wealthy investors including Russian oligarchs, English racehorse owners and a former billionaire gold miner have seized the opportunity to enter this booming market.

While some have moved in on the territory of banks and lent money to clubs in exchange for a share in fees generated by Cristiano Ronaldo, Neymar and dozens more of today's stars, others have acquired obscure teams to get a piece of the pie.

Between them, these wealthy investors have amassed hundreds of millions of euros in profits. At the same time, they have managed to stay out of the spotlight the world’s most popular sport brings. Readers will discover...

- Who is the mystery British investor behind the offshore company that has lent $700 million to UK and Spanish clubs over the last seven years
- How Chelsea, Real Madrid and Bayern Munich lost out in the financial battle to sign Brazilian superstar Neymar
- Who are the businessmen and agents who have secretly invested in the player transfer market through anonymous UK companies for more than a decade
- How Atletico Madrid, refused credit by banks, turned to a former Soviet Union official and British tax exile for funding on the way to reaching the Champions League final.

Duff and Panja follow the money along a trail very few know about, from nondescript offices in the U.K. and ramshackle stadiums of little-known South American clubs, to offshore bank accounts in the Caribbean.

Readers should be warned - they won’t see a major transfer deal in the same light again.

Football’s Secret Trade will be published in April 2017 and will be available wherever books and ebooks are sold.

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