

# Sport and money

## Discussion

Match these sportsmen and sportswomen to their sports:

- |                       |                |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| 1. Michael Schumacher | a. athletics   |
| 2. Tiger Woods        | b. tennis      |
| 3. David Beckham      | c. Formula One |
| 4. Venus Williams     | d. football    |
| 5. Marion Jones       | e. golf        |

All of these professionals are multi-millionaires as a result of salaries, prize money, sponsorship and endorsements.

- Who do you think is paid the most? Why? Who is paid the least? Why?
- Are they paid too much, in your opinion?
- How much do the top sportsmen and women get paid in your country?
- Who is one of the highest paid? Do you think (s)he deserves that salary?

## Reading

Read this father's view and decide which sport he is talking about. Can his criticism apply to sports in general?

### IMMORAL EARNINGS?

What in the world is happening to professional sport? When I was a kid, it cost \$5 to get a decent seat at the stadium, and my dad would buy me a hot dog and himself a beer which would bring the total cost to about \$10.

Last Saturday I took my little boy to see the Giants play. After the parking, tickets, refreshments and souvenirs, I walked out of there with \$75 less in my pocket. Just ask me how soon I'll be going back!

But it got me thinking: why am I paying so much to watch a group of men throw a ball around? And then I realised: I was paying

Billy Slater's salary: \$350,000 a year. And Matt Jerrold's salary: \$500,000 a year. Oh, and how could I forget Sal Ibarra's new contract – \$3 million over the next three years.

Where is the perspective here? What are our priorities as a society? There are 35,000 homeless in this city who don't have a roof over their heads, clothes to keep them warm or food to fill their stomachs. And we are paying these men 6- and 7-figure salaries to keep ourselves entertained! Something's gone wrong.

Look back at the article and answer these questions with a partner:

1. What things did the man have to pay for at the baseball game?
2. Why does he say "Just ask me how soon I'll be going back"?
3. What does he mean when he says that he's paying the players' salaries? Do you agree?
4. Why does he start talking about homeless people?

## Discussion

1. Do you basically agree with the man or does he have an old-fashioned, nostalgic view of sport?
2. Do you go to live sport events? What is the most expensive sports event you have been to? Was it worth it?
3. Have you ever paid to watch a big sports event on pay-TV? If so, how much did you pay?

## Language

Read this text and underline all the expressions with 'worth':

### A UK FOOTBALL MATCH

Going to see my football team is not cheap – the cheapest seat is £20 – but I think it's worth it. Usually you get your money's worth – especially with our new centre forward, Rivaldo. Apparently, he's on £4 million a year, but he's such a brilliant player, I think he's worth every penny.

Recently, I took my whole family to see a game. There are some guys who sell tickets illegally outside the stadium – they're called ticket touts – and you can get into trouble if you buy from them. Normally, I would have said that it's more trouble than it's worth, but

since I'd brought my whole family, which was going to be very expensive, I thought it was worth a try. So, I went up to one of these guys and negotiated four fantastic seats for £80 – quite a bargain for such an important game and such great seats. They were actually worth around £120. When we tried to get into the stadium, we were told that our tickets were forgeries! £80 down the drain! You can imagine how we felt!

So, we went back home to watch the game on TV. My advice is never buy from a ticket tout. It's not worth the risk.

Now complete the expressions with one word:

1. I . . . . . it's worth it.
2. You get your . . . . . worth.
3. He's worth every . . . . .
4. It's more . . . . . than it's worth.

5. I thought it was worth a . . . . .
6. They were actually worth . . . . . £120.
7. It's not worth the . . . . .

How do you say these in your language?

What do you think '£80 down the drain' means?

## Discussion

The average professional footballer in the Premier League in England earns £400,000 a year – around £7,600 a week. He trains, on average, for three hours a day and plays one or two games a week for 10 months of the year. This means he earns around £520 per hour. So, after one training session, he is £1500 richer. For the very top players, multiply all these figures by 6 or 7. People argue that the following reasons justify the salaries. Which do you think are good reasons?

1. It's a short career – 18 years maximum – then you're finished as far as playing is concerned.
2. Top players can't go out partying and eating and drinking whatever they want. They have to look after themselves and be highly disciplined. They have a severely restricted social life for maybe 20 years.
3. Your career could end at any time through injury.
4. It requires a very high level of skill, which only a very few people possess. They should be rewarded for that.
5. Julia Roberts gets \$4 million to make a film, so why shouldn't top footballers get similar pay? They are just like film stars.
6. Top players are high profile superstars who can't leave home without the media following them. The money they get is compensation for having no private life.

## More issues

1. The men's Wimbledon tennis champion wins £477,500. The women's champion gets £430,000. What is the reason for this? Women nearly always get less than men in sport. Why is this?
2. Some people think that money has ruined sport. People used to play for the glory of winning. Now they are open to bribery and corruption. What would you do about it?