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Spanish clubs cut tax debt

AFP, Madrid

Spain's professional football clubs have slashed their debt to the country's tax office by around 200 million euros (\$250 million) since Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy took office in December 2011, Budget Minister Cristobal Montoro said Wednesday.

"At the start of this legislature football clubs had a debt of over 700 million euros and now it is around 500 million euros," he said during an interview with radio Onda Cero.

"What we have done is demand that they pay up like in any other sector. Football clubs are companies and these companies should not be financed by all Spaniards," he added.

La Liga, Spain's top football league which includes powerhouses Real Madrid and Barcelona, the home of star players like Leo Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, is one of the world's most popular.

But Spanish football teams have not been immune to Spain's economic woes, which started when a decade-long property bubble burst in 2008, throwing millions of people out of work and causing the country's public debt to soar.

Spanish authorities have long tolerated clubs' traditionally loose finances because of the prestige and popularity they bring to a country where passion for the game runs deep.

Squeezed by the financial crisis that has plunged Spain into recession, Rajoy's conservative government in 2012 signed an agreement with the football league for clubs' tax debts to be gradually repaid.

Under the agreement from the 2014/15 season clubs will have to deposit 35% of their income from television rights with the league, and it will then be used as security against them failing to pay the tax authorities on time.



Tottenham v Besiktas

Live from 1:00am (Friday)

Totti, Xavi make history

AFP, Paris



European football greats Francesco Totti and Xavi Hernandez set Champions League records for oldest goalscorer and appearances on Tuesday but neither could cap that personal land-

mark with victory for their sides Roma and Barcelona respectively.

Totti turned 38 last weekend and he made sure he would remember it as he scored against Manchester City to level the game at 1-1 -- Sergio Aguero having given the hosts the lead with a penalty -- to break Ryan Gigg's record set when he was 37 years and 289 days old.

The game finished 1-1, a result that is of more help to the Italian side than the English champi-

Bayern Munich top the group with six points from two matches, having beaten CSKA Moscow 1-0 in a match played behind closed doors after UEFA punished the Russians for unrest at a group game last season, with Roma on four and City struggling to avoid bowing out in the group stage for the third time in four years.

Xavi, now no longer first choice after a career at Barcelona that has brought him three Champions League trophies among many other winners medals, broke compatriot Raul's appearances record of 142 when he came on as a substitute in the second-half of their game with Paris Saint Germain.

However, the 34-year-old was unable to help

RESULTS

Manchester City (ENG) 1 (Aguero 4-pen) Roma (ITA) 1 (Totti 23) CSKA Moscow (RUS) 0 Bayern Munich (GER) 1 (Mueller 22-pen) APOEL Nicosia (CYP) 1 (Manduca 32-pen) Ajax (NED)1(Andersen 28) Paris Saint Germain (FRA) 3 (Luiz 10, Verratti 26, Matuidi 54) Barcelona (ESP) 2 (Messi 11, Neymar 56)

Schalke 04 (GER) 1 (Huntelaar 56) Maribor (SLO) 1 (Bohar 37) Sporting Lisbon (POR) 0 Chelsea (ENG) 1 (Matic 34) Shakhtar Donetsk (UKR) 2 (Teixeira 52, Adriano 85) Porto (POR) 2 (Martinez 89-pen, 90+3)

BATE Borisov (BLR) 2 (Polyakov 19, Karnitskiy 41) Athletic Bilbao

turn around a gripping encounter as the French champions prevailed 3-2 at the Parc des Princes to split the group wide open.

PSG -- who were only denied a semi-final spot by Barcelona on away goals two years ago -- top the group on four points with Barcelona a point back while Ajax, who were held 1-1 by APOEL Nicosia, are third on two points.

"I am very satisfied. It was an extraordinary match and what I will take away from it was our collective performance," said PSG coach Laurent Blanc, who had come in for some criticism after a stuttering start to the defence of their league

"I think for those who like Paris Saint-Germain and French football it was a good eve-

Elsewhere 2012 champions Chelsea gave home town of Lisbon as another former resident of form Athletic Bilbao.

of the Portuguese city Nemanja Matic, who played for Benfica, scored the only goal in a 1-0 victory over Sporting Lisbon.

With Schalke having to come from a goal down to force a 1-1 draw at home to surprise packets Maribor, who are yet to be beaten in the group stage, Chelsea have a two point lead in the group.

"Three points is three points. We lost two at home and now we have picked up three away from home," said 51-year-old Mourinho.

"Chelsea are a young team who sometimes show a lack of efficiency in front of goal. Sporting lost but they have shown they have the qualities that can see them qualify (for the knockout stage).'

Group H may lack the star quality in terms of glamorous clubs but it looks like being a thriller as Sporting's rivals and the club where Mourinho established himself as a top coach at Porto showed real character to come from 2-0 down and draw 2-2 with Ukrainian side Shakhtar Donetsk in Lviv.

Colombian star Jackson Martinez was their saviour, netting in the 89th minute and then converting a penalty in the third minute of time added on to take him joint top of this season's scoring charts with three alongside team-mate Algerian international Yacine Brahimi.

They top the group by one point from Belarus champions BATE Borisov who pulled off a manager Jose Mourinho a joyful return to his remarkable 2-1 home win over a hopeleslly out

'Tweet brought me luck'

PA, London



Francesco Totti Francesco Totti became the oldest player to score in the Champions League with his goal against Manchester City. And the Roma captain has thanked City for giving him extra motivation to score on Tuesday.

The 38-year-old striker was reminded through City's official Twitter account hours before his team's Champions League encounter at the Etihad Stadium that he had never scored in England.

So Totti put things right when he cancelled out Sergio

Aguero's opener to earn Roma a 1-1 draw. "City's tweet? It really brought me luck," Totti told the

Gazzetta dello Sport. "It was a beautiful goal and a good performance.

"I really wanted to score as soon as possible as I had not found the back of the net this season. "But above all, I am thrilled for my team because we have

shown a lot of strength, which was not easy." The goal saw the former Italy international surpass Ryan

Giggs to become the oldest player to score in the Champions League.

"It really wasn't something I was thinking of when I was

CITY **TWEET**



We're looking forward to hosting you @OfficialASRoma, and a legendary player such as Totti. He's never scored in England, has he? #CityvRoma — Manchester City FC (@MCFC) September 30, 2014

ROMA REPLY

"You're right, @MCFC. Our Capitano has never scored in England. But there's always a first time for everything ..."

on the pitch," Totti said. "Records arrive thanks to the help of your team-mates and what really matters is the result of the team.

"My main focus is on the team and not on myself." The outcome in England allowed Rudi Garcia's Roma to

remain unbeaten and move to second in Group E after two

Roma are two points adrift of group leaders Bayern Munich and three points clear of City.

"After the group was drawn, few people gave us any hope of doing well," Totti said. "But we have proved that we can play against any team.

"We have shown we are strong and competitive and we fear no one.

"Nothing has changed," he said. "Our aim is to progress to the next round and we know it's not going to be easy because City and Bayern Munich are very strong."

Bayern eye next round

AFP, Berlin



Bayern Munich are already eyeing a place in the Champions League's knock-out phase after their win at CSKA Moscow left them top of their group following consecutive opening

The German champions ground out a 1-0 win in Russia on Tuesday after Thomas Mueller converted a first-half penalty to leave Bayern top of Group E with six points having also beaten Manchester City 1-0 in Munich last month.

Bayern can now book their place in the last 16 with home and away wins against AS Roma in their next two matches and Pep Guardiola's side are eager to have their progression confirmed as soon as possible.

"That was definitely a small step towards the second round," said captain Philipp Lahm. "For the first time, the pressure isn't on us, but on our

opponents (in the group), we are happy."

Roma, who are second in the group on four points after drawing 1-1 at Manchester City on Tuesday, host Bayern on October 21 with the return leg in Munich on November 5. CSKA were forced to play Tuesday's game behind closed

a group game last season led to UEFA imposing a ban. "It doesn't make football much fun," was Lahm's verdict

on football without spectators. Moscow played a defensive 5-4-1 formation to thwart the Germans' star-studded attack and goal-scorer Mueller admitted it was a frustrating night.

"It wasn't exactly a pleasure to play, but these are the games you have to win. You have to work for the win," said Mueller.

"Not only because of the absent fans, but also the way CSKA played it was a strange game.

"But we could and should have scored more goals and CSKA were constantly dangerous on the break."

A small band of hardy Munich fans made the long journey to Moscow to cheer their team's victory -- watching the match from the 18th floor of an apartment block overlooking the stadium.

But Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge was unimpressed at a Champions League match being played behind closed doors.

and no emotions," said Rummenigge. "I have been in football for 40 years and have never expe-

"It was a strange game because there was no atmosphere

rienced anything like it, nor do I want to again."



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