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Vodafone ends \$60m Man Utd shirt deal

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25 November, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Vodafone ends \$60m Man Utd shirt deal

Vodafone has ended its four-year \$60 million shirt sponsorship deal with British soccer giants Manchester United. The shock decision came two years earlier than expected. It increases the pressure on the club's unpopular new owner, American Malcolm Glazer. A carefully planned campaign by United supporters against the American tycoon urged Vodafone to end its sponsorship. The supporters were angry that Glazer bought the club and said United was a "tainted brand". Other factors that ended the deal may be the team's lack of recent success and the sudden departure of its popular captain.

United executives were putting a brave face on the news. Vodafone's exit means there is now a big hole in the club's financial resources. This may get worse because the team may fail to reach the lucrative Champions' League competition. Such a failure means saying goodbye to potential revenue of up to \$18 million. It is uncertain if Glazer will use his personal fortune to support the club. United's commercial director Andy Anson was upbeat, saying: "The Manchester United shirt is the most iconic in sport." He is confident of securing a new deal with a world-class partner. United already has Nike and Pepsi as sponsors.

WARM-UPS

1. MY SPONSOR: You are going to be sponsored by a company. Think about the company you would like as a sponsor. Talk with the other “sponsored students” in the class about your sponsor, why you chose each other and how you both benefit.

2. ADVERTISING: You are responsible for buying advertising in a multinational company. Choose three of the following and explain your choices to your partner(s).

- Sponsorship
- TV commercials
- Publicity stunts
- Ads on the side of buses / planes
- Newspapers / magazines
- Internet banners
- Freebies / Giveaway promotions
- Flyers at train stations

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Mobile phones / plugs / sponsorship / pressure / business magnates / tainted brands / depleted financial resources / personal fortunes / sport icons / deals / Nike

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. SPONSOR: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word “sponsor”. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. MATCH: The companies on the left are sponsors. The organizations / mountains / events on the right want sponsoring. Match the sponsors with the organizations, etc. Justify your matches with your partner(s).

- Vodafone
- Sony
- Marlboro
- Microsoft
- Playboy
- Rolex
- Starbucks
- Boeing
- NASA
- The United Nations
- The WTO (World Trade Organization)
- The WWF (World Wildlife Fund)
- The Olympics
- The British royal family
- The White House
- Mount Everest

6. PULLOUT: A famous international company pulls out of a big-money sponsorship deal with a top sports team half way through the contract. In pairs / groups, decide on which of these responses the sports team might consider is best.

- a. Put a brave face on things and find a new sponsor.
- b. Sue the sponsor for breach of contract.
- c. Forget about sponsorship and find new ways of generating revenue.
- d. Enjoy the kudos of being the only non-sponsored team in the league.
- e. Talk to the old sponsor’s main rival and offer a half-price sponsorship deal.
- f. Say bad things about the old sponsor until it publicly apologizes.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. Vodafone has ended its sponsorship deal with Manchester Utd. T / F
- b. The club's Russian owner is now under great pressure. T / F
- c. Manchester United's supporters are unhappy that Vodafone pulled out. T / F
- d. The team and its captain recently parted on friendly terms. T / F
- e. Manchester United executives are putting a brave face on the pullout. T / F
- f. The team will definitely reach the finals of the Champions' League. T / F
- g. Manchester United's commercial director sounded very sad. T / F
- h. Manchester United has other multinational sponsors. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| a. deal | gaping |
| b. expected | defective |
| c. tycoon | optimistic |
| d. tainted | thought |
| e. departure | getting |
| f. big | agreement |
| g. lucrative | financier |
| h. fortune | profitable |
| i. upbeat | wealth |
| j. securing | exit |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| a. ended its four-year \$60 million | fortune to support the club |
| b. shock | on the club's unpopular new owner |
| c. increases the pressure | a new deal |
| d. ...urged Vodafone to | decision |
| e. the team's lack | end its sponsorship |
| f. United executives were putting | shirt sponsorship deal |
| g. there is now a big | goodbye to potential revenue |
| h. failure means saying | a brave face on the news |
| i. Glazer will use his personal | of recent success |
| j. confident of securing | hole in the club's financial resources |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Vodafone ends \$60m Man Utd shirt deal

Vodafone has _____ its four-year \$60 million shirt sponsorship deal with British soccer giants Manchester United. The _____ decision came two years earlier than expected. It _____ the pressure on the club's unpopular new owner, American Malcolm Glazer. A carefully _____ campaign by United supporters against the American tycoon urged Vodafone to _____ its sponsorship. The supporters were _____ that Glazer bought the club and said United was a "tainted brand". Other _____ that ended the deal may be the team's lack of recent success and the sudden _____ of its popular captain.

end
shock
planned
ended
departure
increases
angry
factors

United executives were putting a _____ face on the news. Vodafone's exit means there is now a big hole in the club's _____ resources. This may get _____ because the team may fail to reach the lucrative Champions' League competition. Such a _____ means saying goodbye to potential revenue of up to \$18 million. It is _____ if Glazer will use his personal fortune to support the club. United's commercial director Andy Anson was _____, saying: "The Manchester United shirt is the most _____ in sport." He is _____ of securing a new deal with a world-class partner. United already has Nike and Pepsi as sponsors.

iconic
failure
financial
confident
uncertain
brave
upbeat
worse

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Vodafone ends \$60m Man Utd shirt deal

Vodafone has ended its _____ - _____ \$60 million shirt sponsorship deal with British soccer giants Manchester United. The _____ decision came two years earlier than expected. It increases the _____ on the club's unpopular new owner, American Malcolm Glazer. A carefully _____ campaign by United supporters against the American tycoon urged Vodafone to end its sponsorship. The supporters were angry that Glazer bought the club and said United was a "_____ brand". Other factors that ended the deal may be the team's lack of recent success and the sudden departure of its _____ captain.

United executives were putting a _____ face on the news. Vodafone's exit means there is now a big hole in the club's financial resources. This may get _____ because the team may fail to reach the lucrative Champions' League competition. Such a failure means saying goodbye to potential _____ of up to \$18 million. It is uncertain if Glazer will use his personal _____ to support the club. United's commercial director Andy Anson was _____, saying: "The Manchester United shirt is the most _____ in sport." He is confident of securing a new deal with a world-class partner. United already has Nike and Pepsi as _____.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'new'** and **'deal'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "SPONSORSHIP" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about corporate sponsorship and the advantages and pitfalls.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- shirt
- shock
- pressure
- campaign
- tainted
- departure
- brave
- hole
- goodbye
- fortune
- iconic
- confident

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What do you think of Vodafone pulling out of the sponsorship deal?
- c. Do you think Vodafone should have stayed for the full four years?
- d. Do you think sponsoring soccer teams is a risky business?
- e. What different factors do sponsors need to think about when they sponsor a person (Tiger Woods) a team (Man Utd.) or an event (the Olympics)?
- f. What are the benefits to sponsoring companies of sports shirt sponsorship?
- g. Can you think of any sponsorship deals that went badly wrong?
- h. Who are the biggest sponsored stars in your country and who are the sponsors?
- i. What would you think if the Olympics became the "Coca Cola Olympics"?
- j. Do you think sports authorities should reject sponsorship from tobacco companies?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. What do you know about Manchester United and Vodafone?
- d. Do you think sports teams care about the product or service the sponsor makes or has?
- e. What would happen to sport if sponsorship were to be banned?
- f. Do you think Manchester United's executives are worried about Vodafone's pullout?
- g. Does the pullout have any other bad effects on the club apart from the loss of revenue?
- h. Which world sports team or player would you sponsor?
- i. Have you ever put a brave face on something?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

SPONSOR ME: In pairs / groups, discuss the advantages and disadvantages of sponsoring the people, events, countries or organizations in the table below. Write the name of the best sponsor for each sponsored party in the right hand column.

	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES	BEST SPONSOR
The Olympics			
George W. Bush			
The United Nations			
Brad Pitt			
The United Kingdom			
The G8 Summit			
Amnesty International			
Other			

- Change partners and compare and share your ideas.
- Decide on the best sponsor for each sponsored party.
- Decide on which sponsored party would give the best financial returns for the sponsor.
- Make and give a presentation about what you think is the best sponsored party / sponsor partnership and why.
- In pairs / groups, discuss the content and quality of the presentations.
- Vote on the presentation you thought was best.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on the troubled English soccer team Manchester United. Find out about the problems with the Malcolm Glazer takeover. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. SPONSORSHIPS: You are the CIAO (Chief International Advertising Officer) for your company. Your CEO has given you a lot of money to sponsor the following – (1) a sports team or player, (2) an international event and (3) an international organization. Write a proposal for your CEO that includes your three choices. Write your reasons for choosing them. Explain what you wrote to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all have similar ideas?

4. SPONSOR ME: Write a letter to a big company telling them why it would be a good idea for them to sponsor you or your company or school. Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things? Ask your partner(s) if they think the company should sponsor you.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T b. F c. F d. F e. T f. F g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| a. deal | agreement |
| b. expected | thought |
| c. tycoon | financier |
| d. tainted | defective |
| e. departure | exit |
| f. big | gaping |
| g. lucrative | profitable |
| h. fortune | wealth |
| i. upbeat | optimistic |
| j. securing | getting |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| a. ended its four-year \$60 million | shirt sponsorship deal |
| b. shock | decision |
| c. increases the pressure | on the club's unpopular new owner |
| d. ...urged Vodafone to | end its sponsorship |
| e. the team's lack | of recent success |
| f. United executives were putting | a brave face on the news |
| g. there is now a big | hole in the club's financial resources |
| h. failure means saying | goodbye to potential revenue |
| i. Glazer will use his personal | fortune to support the club |
| j. confident of securing | a new deal |

GAP FILL:

Vodafone ends \$60m Man Utd shirt deal

Vodafone has **ended** its four-year \$60 million shirt sponsorship deal with British soccer giants Manchester United. The **shock** decision came two years earlier than expected. It **increases** the pressure on the club's unpopular new owner, American Malcolm Glazer. A carefully **planned** campaign by United supporters against the American tycoon urged Vodafone to **end** its sponsorship. The supporters were **angry** that Glazer bought the club and said United was a "tainted brand". Other **factors** that ended the deal may be the team's lack of recent success and the sudden **departure** of its popular captain.

United executives were putting a **brave** face on the news. Vodafone's exit means there is now a big hole in the club's **financial** resources. This may get **worse** because the team may fail to reach the lucrative Champions' League competition. Such a **failure** means saying goodbye to potential revenue of up to \$18 million. It is **uncertain** if Glazer will use his personal fortune to support the club. United's commercial director Andy Anson was **upbeat**, saying: "The Manchester United shirt is the most **iconic** in sport." He is **confident** of securing a new deal with a world-class partner. United already has Nike and Pepsi as sponsors.