

Sports

Chinese football imposes salary cap in new spending crackdown

CFA clamps down on big spending

SHANGHAI: Chinese football yesterday imposed a salary cap of 10 million yuan (\$1.45 million) a year for domestic players and vowed to kick teams out for so-called “yin-yang contracts”. The swingeing measures are part of a ramped-up effort by the Chinese Football Association (CFA) to clamp down on big spending and get teams to toe a tougher financial line. There will also be a limit on bonuses and other financial inducements for domestic players, according to state sports channel CCTV5 and other reports on an end-of-season CFA conference in Shanghai.

Foreign players are not affected by the salary cap, which will be in place for the new Chinese Super League (CSL) season when it starts in the spring. However, each club’s an-

nual expenditure cannot exceed 1.2 billion yuan in 2019, which will decline to 900 million in 2021. Two years ago, Brazilian attacking midfielder Oscar joined CSL side Shanghai SIPG from Chelsea for an Asian-record 60 million euros and Argentine forward Carlos Tevez signed for rivals Shanghai Shenhua, both earning some of the highest wages in world football.

Their high-profile arrivals, along with dozens of other foreign stars such as Brazilians Hulk and Paulinho, triggered fears that Chinese clubs were distorting the international transfer market with overinflated wages and fees. But the CFA has since moved to stop the splurge and force teams to focus on youth development instead, and there is un-

likely to be serious money spent when the winter transfer window opens on January 1. The CFA last year slapped a 100 percent transfer tax on the purchase of overseas players, which significantly reined in Chinese clubs, and the organization limited the number of foreigners each team can field to three a match.

‘NOT SUSTAINABLE’

Among a raft of other new measures, teams must submit contracts for their players and coaches by the end of the year as part of a crackdown on “yin-yang contracts”. Such contracts—one for the tax man and another with the real value of the agreement—are thought to be widespread in football and

showbusiness in China. If the CFA uncovers any tax-avoidance schemes, the offending player or coach face a ban of between one and three years. Their clubs can be deducted points or even kicked out the league. “The association will draw on the experience of advanced overseas leagues to design comprehensive measures to control high wages, high bonuses, high transfer fees and other issues,” Li Yuyi, CFA vice chairman, said earlier this week, according to Xinhua news agency. Li added: “If there’s only investment but no clear idea of what the long-term returns are, Chinese football is not sustainable. “Companies (that own teams) need to understand why invest, what are the rewards and what it contributes to society.” —AFP

Celtic go top as Rangers stutter in front of goal

GLASGOW: Celtic returned to the top of the Scottish Premiership after a 3-0 win over Motherwell as Rangers were held to a goalless draw by Hibernian on Wednesday. Steven Gerrard’s side had led the top flight after beating Hamilton and their Old Firm rivals’ loss to Hibernian on Saturday. Brendan Rodgers’ side have been beaten three times in the league so far—their worst record in a single campaign since the Northern Irishman took over in 2016.

Defender Anthony Ralston opened the scoring at Parkhead in his first appearance of the season after less than half an hour of play. Ralston slotted home after a delicate through ball from forward Odsonne Edouard. A second followed four minutes later from former Chelsea and Manchester City winger Scott Sinclair. James Forrest was brought down by the visitors’ Charles Dunne and Sinclair slotted home from the penalty spot for his third goal in the league this season.

The game was over as a contest seconds before the half-time whistle as 19-year-old Mikey Johnston netted his first competitive goal for the Bhoys after coming on for Edouard. Elsewhere, Rangers failed to score for only the second time in 11 matches as they were held to a 0-0 draw in Edinburgh. Gerrard’s outfit had 19 shots on goal including efforts from the league’s top goalscorer Alfredo Morelos and veteran Northern Ireland defender Gareth McAuley. On Saturday, seven-time straight champions Celtic welcome Dundee looking to extend their advantage at the summit of the table before Rangers’ trip to St Johnstone on Sunday. —AFP

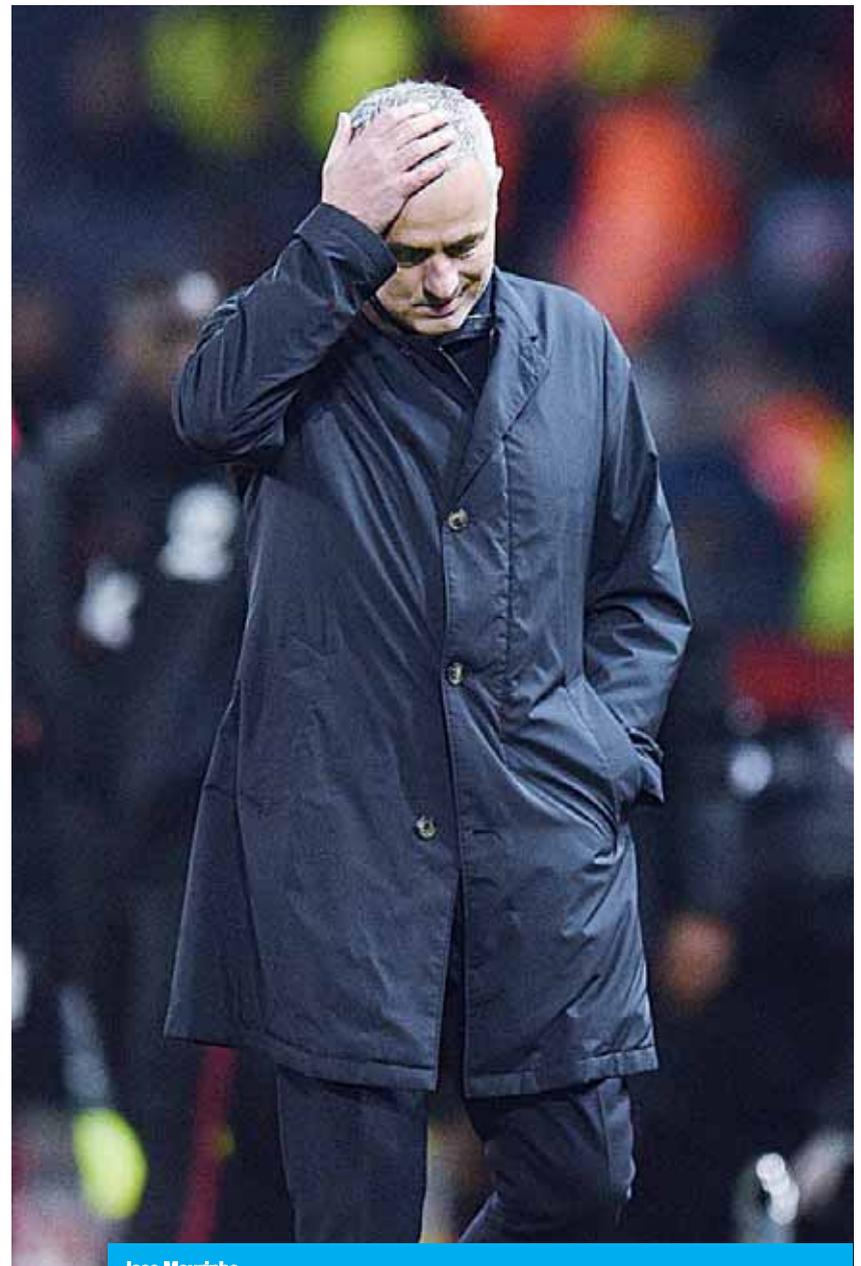
Mourinho ‘proud’ of Manchester United career

LONDON: Jose Mourinho said on Wednesday he is “immensely proud” of his time at Manchester United but refused to delve into the issues that played a part in his Old Trafford exit. Club bosses sacked the Portuguese manager on Tuesday following a 3-1 defeat at Anfield that left the 20-times champions an embarrassing 19 points behind league leaders Liverpool after just 17 matches.

Former United striker Ole Gunnar Solskjaer was announced as Mourinho’s temporary replacement on Wednesday as the club begins its search for a permanent replacement. Mourinho lifted the Europa League, League Cup and Community Shield in his first year at the club before finishing runners-up in both the league and FA Cup, but things have unravelled since the start of his third campaign at the helm. The United boss has made his frustrations about players and some of the club’s decisions clear over recent months but kept his feelings on such matters to himself in a statement released the day after his sacking.

“I have been immensely proud to wear the badge of Manchester United since the first day I arrived, and I believe all United supporters recognize this,” Mourinho said in a statement released to Britain’s Press Association. “Just as was the case with my previous clubs, I have worked with some wonderful people and I believe that some will be my friends for life. “I know that you are all aware of my professional principles. Each time a chapter is closed I show my deepest respect and I don’t make any comments about my former colleagues.”

The former Chelsea, Real Madrid and Inter Milan boss told Sky Sports News he has a future beyond United. “Manchester United has a future without me and I have a future without Manchester United, so why should I now be sharing with you or even with the supporters, any of my feelings? “It’s over. That’s me and that’s the way I’ve always been and I was always very critical of managers that leave clubs and then they come out and they speak about details of what happened and who is to blame for this kind of situation—that’s not me. I just want to finish, it happened yesterday and I’d like to say it’s game over.” —AFP



Jose Mourinho