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## **Vodafone ends \$60m Man Utd shirt deal**

URL: [http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0511/051125-manchester\\_united.html](http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0511/051125-manchester_united.html)

## **Contents**

The Article	2
Warm-ups	3
Before Reading / Listening	4
While Reading / Listening	5
Listening Gap Fill	6
After Reading	7
Discussion	8
Speaking	9
Homework	10
Answers	11

**25 November, 2005**

## **THE ARTICLE**

### **Vodafone ends \$60m Man Utd shirt deal**

Vodafone, the world's largest mobile phone group, has pulled the plug on its four-year \$60 million shirt sponsorship deal with British soccer giants Manchester United. The shock move came two years earlier than expected and piles on the pressure for the club's unpopular new owner, American sports magnate Malcolm Glazer. Ongoing attacks against the United brand by supporters infuriated with Glazer's takeover of the club seem to be partially behind the decision to pull out. A carefully orchestrated campaign against the American owner exhorted United as a "tainted brand" and entreated Vodafone to end its sponsorship. Other expediting factors may be the team's recent drought in trophy success and the sudden departure of the club's long-term captain under acrimonious circumstances.

United executives were putting a brave face on the pullout, which has left a sizeable hole in the club's financial resources. This has been exacerbated by the team being on the brink of elimination from the lucrative Champions' League competition, which means saying goodbye to potential revenues of up to \$18 million. It is uncertain whether Glazer will dip further into his personal fortune to allay any fears of financial uncertainty. Commercial director Andy Anson remained upbeat. He said: "The Manchester United shirt is the most iconic in sport." He added: "Initial soundings and discussions with a number of world-class potential partners have been very encouraging and we are confident of securing a new deal." United already has a slew of multinational sponsors including Nike and Pepsi.

## 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 purchasing advertising in a multinational company. Choose three of the following. Explain your choices.

- 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 lucrative sponsorship deal with a top sports team half way through the contract. With your partner(s), think of the pros and cons of these responses the sports team might consider. Which 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 explore new ways of generating revenue.
- d. Capitalize on the kudos of being the only non-sponsored team in the league.
- e. Approach the old sponsor’s main rival and offer a half-price sponsorship deal.
- f. Badmouth 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 pulled the plug on its sponsorship with Manchester Utd. T / F
- b. The club's Russian owner is now under great pressure. T / F
- c. Manchester United had an ill-fated campaign of sponsoring orchestras. T / F
- d. The team and its captain recently parted amicably. T / F
- e. United executives are putting a brave face on the pullout. T / F
- f. The team is a dead cert to reach the finals of the Champions' League. T / F
- g. Manchester United's commercial director sounded very disheartened. T / F
- h. Manchester United already has a slew of multinational sponsors. T / F

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

- |                    |                   |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| a. pulled the plug | alleviate         |
| b. magnate         | facilitating      |
| c. orchestrated    | edge              |
| d. expediting      | nasty             |
| e. acrimonious     | tycoon            |
| f. sizeable        | optimistic        |
| g. brink           | ended prematurely |
| h. allay           | lot               |
| i. upbeat          | big               |
| j. slew            | planned           |

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

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| a. has pulled the plug on its four-year | with Glazer's takeover of the club     |
| b. The shock move came two years        | hole in the club's financial resources |
| c. piles on                             | circumstances                          |
| d. supporters infuriated                | of elimination                         |
| e. under acrimonious                    | \$60 million shirt sponsorship deal    |
| f. United executives were putting a     | slew of multinational sponsors         |
| g. a sizeable                           | brave face on the pullout              |
| h. on the brink                         | upbeat                                 |
| i. remained                             | the pressure                           |
| j. United already has a                 | earlier than expected                  |

## 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, the world's largest mobile phone group, has pulled the \_\_\_\_\_ on its four-year \$60 million shirt sponsorship deal with British soccer \_\_\_\_\_ Manchester United. The shock move came two years earlier than expected and \_\_\_\_\_ on the pressure for the club's unpopular new owner, American sports magnate Malcolm Glazer. Ongoing attacks against the United brand by supporters \_\_\_\_\_ with Glazer's takeover of the club seem to be partially behind the decision to pull out. A carefully \_\_\_\_\_ campaign against the American owner exhorted United as a "tainted brand" and entreated Vodafone to end its sponsorship. Other \_\_\_\_\_ factors may be the team's recent \_\_\_\_\_ in trophy success and the sudden departure of the club's long-term captain under \_\_\_\_\_ circumstances.

United executives were putting a \_\_\_\_\_ face on the pullout, which has left a \_\_\_\_\_ hole in the club's financial resources. This has been exacerbated by the team being on the brink of elimination from the \_\_\_\_\_ Champions' League competition, which means saying \_\_\_\_\_ to potential revenues of up to \$18 million. It is uncertain whether Glazer will \_\_\_\_\_ further into his personal fortune to \_\_\_\_\_ any fears of financial uncertainty. Commercial director Andy Anson remained upbeat. He said: "The Manchester United shirt is the most \_\_\_\_\_ in sport." He added: "Initial soundings and discussions with a number of world-class potential partners have been very encouraging and we are confident of securing a new deal." United already has a \_\_\_\_\_ of multinational sponsors including Nike and Pepsi.

*expediting*  
*infuriated*  
*giants*  
*acrimonious*  
*plug*  
*orchestrated*  
*piles*  
*drought*  
*alloy*  
*lucrative*  
*slew*  
*brave*  
*dip*  
*sizeable*  
*iconic*  
*goodbye*

## LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### Vodafone ends \$60m Man Utd shirt deal

Vodafone, the world's largest mobile phone group, has \_\_\_\_\_ on its four-year \$60 million shirt sponsorship deal with British soccer giants Manchester United. The shock move came two years earlier than expected and \_\_\_\_\_ the pressure for the club's unpopular new owner, American sports \_\_\_\_\_ Malcolm Glazer. Ongoing attacks against the United brand by supporters \_\_\_\_\_ with Glazer's takeover of the club seem to be partially behind the decision to pull out. A carefully orchestrated campaign against the American owner exhorted United as a "\_\_\_\_\_ brand" and entreated Vodafone to end its sponsorship. Other expediting factors may be the team's recent \_\_\_\_\_ in trophy success and the sudden departure of the club's long-term captain under \_\_\_\_\_ circumstances.

United executives were putting a \_\_\_\_\_ the pullout, which has left a sizeable hole in the club's financial resources. This has been exacerbated by the team being on \_\_\_\_\_ elimination from the lucrative Champions' League competition, which means saying goodbye to potential revenues of up to \$18 million. It is uncertain whether Glazer will dip further into his personal fortune to \_\_\_\_\_ any fears of financial uncertainty. Commercial director Andy Anson remained \_\_\_\_\_. He said: "The Manchester United shirt is the most iconic in sport." He added: "Initial soundings and discussions with a number of world-class potential partners have been very encouraging and we are confident of securing a new deal." United already has \_\_\_\_\_ multinational sponsors including Nike and Pepsi.

## AFTER READING / LISTENING

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

- 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:

- |                |           |
|----------------|-----------|
| • plug         | • brave   |
| • move         | • brink   |
| • ongoing      | • goodbye |
| • orchestrated | • upbeat  |
| • tainted      | • iconic  |
| • acrimonious  | • slew    |

## 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 the plug?
- c. Do you think Vodafone should have stayed the course and stayed for the four years it signed to?
- d. Do you think sponsoring soccer teams is a risky business?
- e. What different factors do sponsors need to consider in sponsoring a person (Tiger Woods) a team (Man Utd.) or an event (the Olympics)?
- f. What are the benefits of sports shirt sponsorship to sponsoring companies?
- 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 produces or provides?
- 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 adverse effects on the club besides loss of revenue?
- h. Which world sports team or player would you sponsor?
- i. Have you ever left a company under acrimonious conditions?
- 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 a perfectly fitting sponsor for each sponsored party in the right hand column.

	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES	PERFECT 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 provide the greatest financial returns for the sponsor.
- Make and give a presentation regarding what you think is the best sponsored party / sponsor partnership and why.
- In pairs / groups, discuss the content and quality of the presentations and vote on the one 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 Manchester United and the controversy over 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 provided you with huge sums 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 and 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 major 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. pulled the plug | ended prematurely |
| b. magnate         | tycoon            |
| c. orchestrated    | planned           |
| d. expediting      | facilitating      |
| e. acrimonious     | nasty             |
| f. sizeable        | big               |
| g. brink           | edge              |
| h. allay           | alleviate         |
| i. upbeat          | optimistic        |
| j. slew            | lot               |

### PHRASE MATCH:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| a. has pulled the plug on its four-year | \$60 million shirt sponsorship deal    |
| b. The shock move came two years        | earlier than expected                  |
| c. piles on                             | the pressure                           |
| d. supporters infuriated                | with Glazer's takeover of the club     |
| e. under acrimonious                    | circumstances                          |
| f. United executives were putting a     | brave face on the pullout              |
| g. a sizeable                           | hole in the club's financial resources |
| h. on the brink                         | of elimination                         |
| i. remained                             | upbeat                                 |
| j. United already has a                 | slew of multinational sponsors         |

### GAP FILL:

#### Vodafone ends \$60m Man Utd shirt deal

Vodafone, the world's largest mobile phone group, has pulled the **plug** on its four-year \$60 million shirt sponsorship deal with British soccer **giants** Manchester United. The shock move came two years earlier than expected and **piles** on the pressure for the club's unpopular new owner, American sports magnate Malcolm Glazer. Ongoing attacks against the United brand by supporters **infuriated** with Glazer's takeover of the club seem to be partially behind the decision to pull out. A carefully **orchestrated** campaign against the American owner exhorted United as a "tainted brand" and entreated Vodafone to end its sponsorship. Other **expediting** factors may be the team's recent **drought** in trophy success and the sudden departure of the club's long-term captain under **acrimonious** circumstances.

United executives were putting a **brave** face on the pullout, which has left a **sizeable** hole in the club's financial resources. This has been exacerbated by the team being on the brink of elimination from the **lucrative** Champions' League competition, which means saying **goodbye** to potential revenues of up to \$18 million. It is uncertain whether Glazer will **dip** further into his personal fortune to **allay** any fears of financial uncertainty. Commercial director Andy Anson remained upbeat. He said: "The Manchester United shirt is the most **iconic** in sport." He added: "Initial soundings and discussions with a number of world-class potential partners have been very encouraging and we are confident of securing a new deal." United already has a **slew** of multinational sponsors including Nike and Pepsi.