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Private jet demand rises as football transfer deadline nears

Bookings peak three or four days before as players fly in for talks and medicals

“Ambitious Wealth



Footballer Robin van Persie boarding a private jet from Manchester to Turkey in 2015 ahead of his transfer to Fenerbahce © Picturematt/Rex/Shutterstock



JANUARY 31, 2017 by: **Hugo Greenhalgh**, Wealth Correspondent

Transfer deadline day, the twice-yearly footballing ritual when players fly around Europe in search of multimillion-pound deals, is sparking a bonanza for private jet companies.

With the winter transfer window set to close at the end of Tuesday and football fans braced for the usual last-minute deals, private jet bookings are up between 20 per cent and 50 per cent year-on-year.

There are about 200 private jets in the UK, according to Luxaviation, a charter company, of which approximately 70 are available for use by the 20 clubs in the Premier League if they need to fly in a player for a hasty medical and signature on a contract. Demand begins to rise sharply in the three or four days before the window closes.

Luxaviation expects its entire fleet of 26 jets to be booked in the run-up to the 11pm deadline and is reporting a 25 per cent increase in business compared with usual

January bookings, as well as a 20 per cent rise compared with last year's winter transfer frenzy.

Bookings in Manchester — home to two of the country's richest clubs — are up 50 per cent compared with the usual level for the time of year.

In London, which has a number of Premier League clubs, requests are up 15 per cent from the 75 charters the week before and almost 30 per cent compared with the same time last year.

"[We have] seen noticeable flight request spikes this week in and around those UK cities hosting Premiership football clubs," said Clive Jackson, chief executive and founder of Victor, another charter company.

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Adam Twidell, chief executive of PrivateFly, said many flights were booked at the last minute for face-to-face negotiations or a medical.

PrivateFly said it had already operated a number of transfer window flights but demand was expected to peak in the hours before Tuesday's deadline. The company is reporting 20 per cent more flights this year over the same period in 2016.

"Airlines don't wait for anyone, so private aviation is the only solution when the clock is ticking and with such high transaction values

at stake," Mr Twidell said.

In addition, many players at European clubs are also flying at short notice from Gabon, host to the Africa Cup of Nations, which finishes on February 5.

Flight costs vary enormously but are well within the reach of the top clubs. A trip on a nine-passenger Cessna Citation Excel from Luton to Madrid costs £10,500, according to Luxaviation. For players heading back from Africa, a Dassault Falcon 2000LXS from Gabon to Luton could set the club back £62,500.

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