

Here are some of the Russian oligarchs and Russian sponsors in the soccer world.
Business Insider



Photos in Gallery©Paul Gilham/Getty Images Roman Abramovich was hit with UK sanctions.

Roman Abramovich, owner of Chelsea FC

On March 2, Chelsea Football Club's Russian oligarch owner Roman Abramovich announced he would sell the English soccer powerhouse. Abramovich, who has a net worth of \$13.6 billion, purchased Chelsea's parent company in 2003 for \$230 million.

According to Bloomberg, Abramovich has made his money as the majority shareholder of Evraz, the second largest steelmaker in Russia.

Abramovich has been close to Russian President Vladimir Putin since the fall of the Soviet Union, during a time period when the oligarch amassed massive wealth from dividends and selling assets from the Soviet Union, acquiring large stakes in companies like Aeroflot.

"I would like to address the speculation in media over the past few days in relation to my ownership of Chelsea FC," Abramovich said in his statement regarding the club's sale. "As I have stated before, I have always taken decisions with the club's best interest at heart.

"In the current situation, I have therefore taken the decision to sell the club, as I believe this is in the best interest of the club, the fans, the employees, as well as the club's sponsors and partners," he added.

Then, on Thursday, Abramovich was formally sanctioned by the UK government for "preferential treatment and concessions from Putin." His assets in the country, including Chelsea FC were seized by the UK government, and the club will use a special license allowed by the government to keep operating for the remainder of the season.

Abramovich can no longer go ahead with his planned sale of Chelsea, and players and staff will still be paid, but the club can no longer buy or sell new players, or sell new tickets for the time being.

In response to the news, Chelsea's shirt sponsor, mobile phone company Three, immediately suspended its sponsorship deal worth \$52 million dollars a year, and is removing the logo from the team's jerseys.



Photos in Gallery Alisher Usmanov, an Uzbekistan-born Russian telecom and metals billionaire, has been in the direct crosshairs of UK and EU sanctions.

Usmanov, who also owns major stakes in Russia's metals industries, is worth \$18.4 billion, according to Reuters, and has formerly sponsored Everton Football Club and Arsenal Football Club in the British Premier League.

On March 1, the EU froze Usmanov's assets alongside 26 other individuals "in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence of Ukraine," according to the Guardian. The EU also described him as a "pro-Kremlin oligarch with close ties to Putin."

From 2017 until March of this year, Usmanov's company, USM Holdings, held a sponsorship deal for Everton's training facilities, and also had a £30m deal for naming rights regarding Everton's stadium.

Following the sanctions, Everton cut all ties with Usmanov and USM. Usmanov's yacht has sat docked in Hamburg, Germany this week as the oligarch was unable to pay wages for the ship's crew due to US, UK, and EU sanctions.

"Everyone at Everton remains shocked and saddened by the appalling events unfolding in Ukraine. This tragic situation must end as soon as possible, and any further loss of life must be avoided. The players, coaching staff, and everyone working at Everton is providing full support to our player Vitalii Mykolenko and his family and will continue to do so," the club said in a statement, according to the Guardian.

"The club can confirm that it has suspended with immediate effect all commercial sponsorship arrangements with the Russian companies USM, MegaFon, and Yota."

"I believe such a decision is unfair and the reasons employed to justify the sanctions are a set of false and defamatory allegations damaging my honour, dignity and business reputation. I will use all legal means to protect my honour and reputation," Usmanov said in response.



Photos in Gallery©Reuters/John Sibley Maxim Demin, owner of AFC Bournemouth

Maxim Demin is the Russian-British owner of the British Premier League team Bournemouth FC after he bought a 50% stake in the club in 2015 for £850,000. By 2019, his company AFCB Enterprises gained full ownership of the club.

His cash injection into the club has helped them significantly improve and compete in the Premier League more consistently. Demin is unlikely to face sanctions because he is also a UK citizen and is not currently pressured to sell the club, [according to the Sun](#).

The Russian flag outside of Bournemouth's Vitality Stadium, however, was taken down.



ANP Sport/Getty Images Valeriy Oyf, owner of Dutch club SBV Vitesse

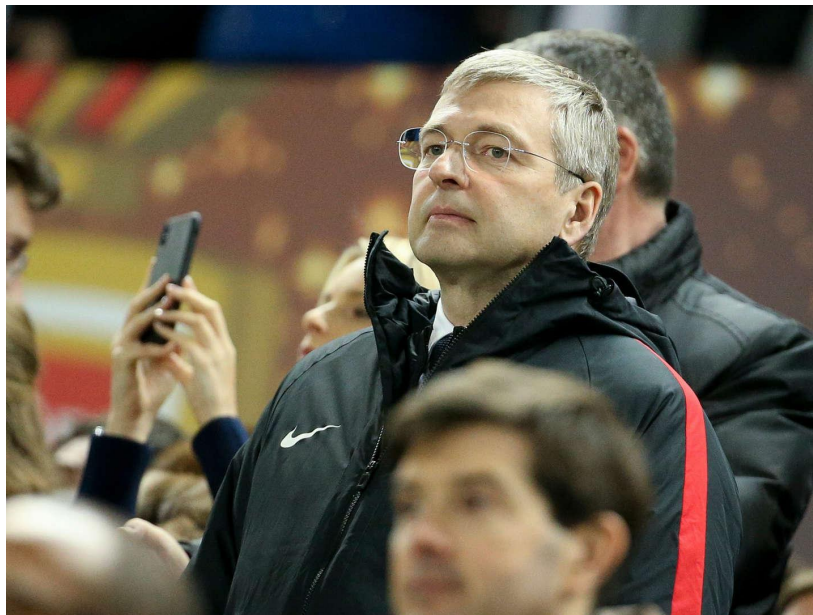
Valeriy Oyf is the Odesa-born Russian owner of Dutch soccer club Vitesse and has been since 2018. According to the Mirror, Oyf has not appeared on any sanctions lists in Europe so far. Oyf, who is known to generally be a secretive owner, is an oil, gas, and mining magnate from Russia.

According to Bloomberg, he made his money as CEO of the Highland Gold Mining Company, through managing assets for oligarchs like Abramovich at Millhouse Capital. He has also sat on the board of Russian gas company Gazprom and has served in the Omsk state senate.

He has maintained a close business relationship to Abramovich, with young Chelsea players also regularly being loaned out to Vitesse over the last several years.

In early March, Vitesse issued a statement about Russia's war in Ukraine. "Everyone at Vitesse is deeply shocked by the horrifying situation in Ukraine. Vitesse speaks out for peace and finds it heartbreaking to hear, read and see the news from Ukraine. Our thoughts are with everyone in Ukraine. Every Vitessenaar eagerly hopes that a peaceful solution will be found as soon as possible," the club said, according to De Telegraaf, adding that the statement reflected Oyf's views.

Oyf's personal net worth is unknown, but over the past three years, he has invested millions into the club.



Jean Catuffe/Getty Images Dmitry Rybolovlev, president of AS Monaco in France and owner of Cercle Brugge in Belgium

Dmitry Rybolovlev is the Russian billionaire owner of two European soccer clubs, AS Monaco in the Ligue 1 french league, and Belgian club Cercle Brugge.

In 2010, Rybolovlev left Russia after selling a majority stake in Uralkali, Russia's potassium fertilizer producer.

In 2011, he purchased a majority 66.6% ownership stake of Monaco, becoming the club's president. He has lived in the principality for a decade, and in 2017 the french club won the league title under his ownership.

According to Forbes, his net worth is close to \$6.7 billion.

Rybolovlev has not been formally sanctioned by the EU, US, French or Belgian authorities, and his yacht has been sailing [between St. Maarten and other areas](#) as other magnates have faced sanctions.

He was named in a 2017 US law that required the treasury department to identify oligarchs close to the Russian government, [according to the Washington Post](#).

According to French outlet L'Equipe, the oligarch is safe to stay as AS Monaco president for now and is not under immediate pressure to sell his stake in the club, which is listed under his daughter's name.

At Cercle Brugge, Rybolovlev is the club's sole owner, meaning that any potential sanctions could spell financial jeopardy for the club.

On Wednesday, Rybolovlev and the two clubs [issued a](#) statement saying that he would donate to the Red Cross "in order to help the innocent people in Ukraine suffering during the armed conflict."

"It is imperative to support those suffering most. Monaco, Cercle Brugge, myself & various companies invested in by the Rybolovlev family trust, have decided to donate towards humanitarian aid," [the statement said](#).



Frederic Scheidemann/Getty Images Gazprom, Russia's largest gas company and a prominent sponsor in the soccer world.

Russia's largest gas supplier has also been the Union of European Football Associations' (UEFA) biggest brand sponsor for years, which changed recently.

On February 24, German soccer club FC Schalke 04 announced that it was terminating its shirt sponsorship with Gazprom.

"The board of directors of FC Schalke 04, with the approval of the supervisory board, decided to prematurely end the partnership between S04 and Gazprom," the club said in a statement.

Days later, UEFA announced that it was ending its sponsorship deal with Gazprom, which was worth \$45 million a year and was the organization's biggest sponsorship deal, [according to AdWeek](#).

"UEFA has today decided to end its partnership with Gazprom across all competitions. The decision is effective immediately and covers all existing agreements including the UEFA Champions League, UEFA national team competitions, and UEFA EURO 2024," the organization said in a statement.

The UEFA Champions League final in 2022, which was set to be held in the Gazprom stadium in St. Petersburg was officially moved to Paris as well.