

and issued warrants to freeze assets belonging to him, his father, and three family businesses, according to reports from Brazil. Both insist they are innocent.

The Seventh Federal Court of Santos sent a list of assets to be seized to notaries in São Paulo as well as São Vicente, Praia Grande, Guarujá and Santos where Neymar owns properties.

In his short career the father of one, he has a son, Davi Lucca, with former girlfriend Carolina Dantas – has been ranked the world's 23rd highest paid athlete by Forbes magazine and has accumulated many of the trappings of extreme wealth.

He paid £10 million for the 78ft Italian-made yacht Nadine, named after his mother, in 2012 when he was just 20. Last year he added a £7 million jet – with his initials NJR on the tail – to his collection of “toys”.

The purchase came after Neymar made headlines when he chartered a private plane to pick up Serbian model Soraya Vucelic, whom he met in Ibiza in the summer of 2014.

However, the player – described by Pele as “a wizard with magical feet” – has been dogged by allegations of financial irregularities, not least over his transfer to Barcelona.

The latest headlines concerning Neymar's tangled tax affairs are unlikely to impress the roster of



sponsors who provide most of his earnings including Nike, Panasonic, Red Bull and Santander.

In November, Neymar Sr told a Spanish radio station his son's tax problems could result in him leaving the Spanish champions altogether.

He said: “Since we arrived in Spain we have been under attack [from the tax office] and it has extended to Brazil. For the last two and a half years, we have had to defend ourselves from accusations.”

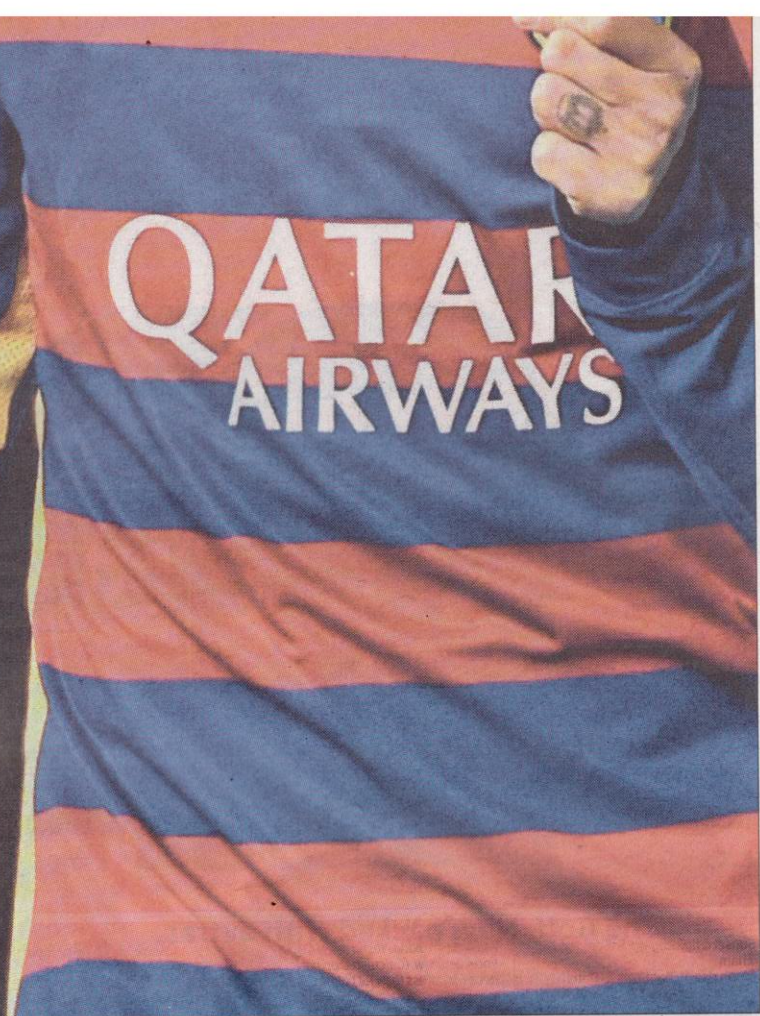
The Brazilian is not the first Barcelona star run into trouble with the tax man. The Spanish authorities charged team mate Lionel Messi and his father with tax fraud in October and a trial start date has been set for

the end of May. Last month defender Javier Mascherano was sentenced to a year in prison over a £1.2 million tax fraud but is likely to escape jail by paying an extra fine.

According to Iagaro Jung Martins, an auditor with Brazil's federal tax agency, Neymar will also stay out of custody if he simply pays his fine.

He said: “He can still appeal that decision, but it is a step forward. Nothing changed to what was in place last year: if he pays what he owes, the case is closed. Our legislation isn't too harsh.”

.....  
Sport Pages 50-56



## Gatwick oil rush closer to reality following ‘stellar’ first test drill

**Nick Goodway**

City Correspondent

THE great Gatwick oil rush has come a step closer following “stellar” results from initial drilling in the hills near London's second airport.

Having created a minor stock market oil stampede last year when it first said there could be 100 billion barrels of oil beneath the ground in the south of England, UK Oil & Gas today said its

first test well had produced significant quantities of “black gold” when it ran for the first time yesterday.

“The results from this well are absolutely stellar,” said Steve Sanderson, chairman of the Horse Hill development and chief executive of its biggest investor UKOG.

“They are well beyond my best expectation. It means we have gone from knowing there is oil in the ground to establishing that these wells are going

to be commercial.” Yesterday's test saw oil flow naturally from around 900 metres below ground to the surface for more than seven hours at a rate of 463 barrels per day.

Mr Sanderson said that was the equivalent of “one of the best producing wells in the United States”.

This first well has been drilled vertically and Mr Sanderson believes the next stage of drilling horizontally could produce even greater flows of oil. Even-

though his company wants to build between a dozen and two dozen wells on the 4.5 acre Horse Hill site, allowing it to extract oil from the 55 square miles covered by its licence.

He claims this should have little environmental impact. “The wells and pumps will all be located underground and we will need something like one tanker every two hours to take the oil away,” he said.

Green Party leader Natalie Bennett

visited the site, which is about seven miles north of the airport, last Friday and saw the dozen protesters there, as well as visiting the drilling operations.

Mr Sanderson said the company must now apply for new planning permission and permits from the Environment Agency, Health and Safety Executive and the Oil and Gas Authority to move on to the next stage.

.....  
Stock Market report Page 39