
Football: I won't sell Newcastle, vows Ashley

By Editor

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NEWCASTLE, July 10, 2008 (AFP) - Newcastle owner Mike Ashley insisted Thursday he has no intention of selling the Premier League club despite appealing for new investors.

Recent reports claimed Ashley was keen to off-load Newcastle, with an American investment group and a company owned by relatives of Osama bin Laden both linked with bids.

Ashley's Sports Direct empire saw profits for the year to April halved after a drop in sales, fuelling speculation he needed to cash in on Newcastle.

But, asked about any plans to sell the club, the billionaire told the Evening Standard: 'That is not true. I would say that I am keen to have partners in Newcastle. That's a very expensive seat I sit in.'

The Saudi Binladin Group, run by Osama bin Laden's half-brother Bakr bin Laden, have distanced themselves from Al-Qaeda but Ashley still gave short shrift to that link.

'I think I'll start with people from Newcastle, not in some cave in Afghanistan,' he said.

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