

# Footballers' frequent transfers leave their wives and children feeling lonely

April 10 2018, by Tony Trueman

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Professional footballers' frequent transfers to new clubs leave their wives and children feel isolated and lonely as they move around the country, research says.

The British Sociological Association's annual conference in Newcastle heard today [Tuesday 10 April] that some players' performance on the field was affected by their wives' unhappiness.

Dr. Graeme Law, of York St John University, told the conference that of 34 players in the four professional English leagues he interviewed, most said their partners or children had suffered from loneliness as a result of their transfers.

One Premier League player told him: "After the first couple of times she stopped making friends with the neighbours or even introducing herself to them because she thought 'what's the point?' because if you make a good friend and then you have to say goodbye, it's not easy. She just became a recluse. It's tough, real tough."

Another Premier League player told him: "I moved 14 times in 11 years, so it was tough for me but even tougher for my missus. At the start she was ok with it but it got to the stage that we were somewhere for four months and just got sorted and we were off again. And you get no warning sometimes, it's like 'right you are moving to whoever' and you are there 24 hours later. It gets even harder with kids, I mean they had to move school – no mates."

A Championship League player told him: "I got sold and we had no choice really, we all had to move. My wife was distraught as the kids were settled at school, she had her friends. But that was what life was like."

Other players said their family's unhappiness had affected their game. One Premier League player said: "When I moved [to a Championship club], my wife didn't settle and because of that I didn't settle. It showed on the pitch. I didn't score in my first 10 games and I got dropped. So that meant losing out on bonuses. I then got shipped out on loan because as the gaffer said 'we can't afford you when you are playing like this.'"

An England international player said: "It's hard for both of you to begin with, when you move. You both feel isolated, it took me a few months to find my feet because I was conscious of her – not that I'm blaming her, but I knew how tough she was finding it and I was worried."

Dr. Law told the conference: "What these quotes indicate is that the wives and children of footballers suffered feelings of loneliness and isolation when their partners moved clubs.

"The majority of interviewees gave detailed accounts of how their partners frequently expressed concern about feeling lonely. An unintended outcome for some players was that sudden moves caused instability in their home life. This also impacted on their own working lives, as it started to impact on their on-pitch performance.

"Due to the short career expectancy and unpredictability of their career, many participants expressed a need to chase money, especially when they were being paid more than they had been previously."

Provided by British Sociological Association

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