

Muslim footballer on £40,000-a-week may be forced to quit Newcastle because of row over wearing shirt sponsored by payday loan firm Wonga

- **Senegalese Papiss Cisse is refusing to wear shirt with new sponsor**
- **Under Sharia law, Muslims must not benefit from lending money**
- **Cisse has offered to wear a charity brand instead but club are holding firm**
- **Other Muslim players at the club have indicated they have no problem**
- **Row has rumbled on for weeks with no end in sight**

By Steve Robson

Muslim footballer Papiss Cisse may be forced to quit Newcastle United because of a row about the club's new sponsorship deal with payday loan firm Wonga.

The Senegalese striker, who is estimated to earn in the region of £40,000 a week, trained on his own on his return from his summer break last week after refusing to wear the branded training kit, as well as the match day shirt, because it is against his religious beliefs.

Under some interpretations of Shariaw law, Muslims must not benefit from lending money. Interest is not paid on Islamic bank accounts or added to mortgages.



Deadlock: Papiss Cisse has refused to wear Newcastle's new strip sponsored by loans company Wonga

Former West Ham striker Frederic Kanoute - also a Muslim - was allowed by Sevilla to wear an unbranded shirt while they were sponsored by gambling company 888.com.

Newcastle signed a £24million deal with Wonga to replace Virgin Money as Newcastle's sponsors last year.

The move provoked anger with some fans who were unhappy with the club being sponsored by a company which charges up to 5,853 per cent annual interest on short term loans.

Cisse has offered to wear charity-branded kit to resolve the dispute but that proposal has so far been rejected. The row has now been rumbling on for a number of weeks leading to speculation that Cisse may even be forced to quit the club.

Objections: Payday loan company Wonga charges 5,853 per cent annual interest rates on short term loans



Trouble ahead: Newcastle manager Alan Pardew must do without Cisse as the row rumbles on



Papiss Demba Cisse, pictured in January 2012 before signing for Newcastle United, is refusing to wear the club's sponsor's logo

Cisse, who did wear the Northern Rock and Virgin Money logos, made club chiefs aware he was uncomfortable wearing the new Wonga shirts when the controversial deal was announced at the end of last season, although other Muslim players at the club, including Hatem Ben Arfa, have not taken his stance. The player and club have been involved in lengthy negotiations, even calling in the footballer's union the PFA, to resolve the situation which was hoped to be resolved before the players flew off to Portugal for a week's intensive training.

On Tuesday night, after their opening pre-season win over Motherwell in Scotland, manager Alan Pardew announced he was taking his full squad to Portugal, including Cisse.

But the striker was not on the flight which left Newcastle airport this afternoon and his absence has increased speculation that he could be forced to quit St James's Park. Cisse joined Newcastle in a £9million deal from Freiburg in January last year and he was an immediate success in the coveted Newcastle No 9 shirt, scoring 13 goals in 14 games. While Ba flourished last season, before he quit for Chelsea in the January transfer window, Cisse struggled and he scored just eight league goals last season, although he did add four in Newcastle's journey to the quarter-finals of the Europa Cup.



Furious: Newcastle United fans have been making their feelings about the club's owners known in recent months