

Billionaire Altrad ready to rescue Six Nations

SYRIAN billionaire Mohed Altrad is in talks for his construction company to take over as the headline sponsor of the Six Nations with immediate effect.

Tournament chiefs are yet to find a replacement for long-term backer RBS, although NatWest has made a cut-price bid for the 2018 rights.

Despite the competition kicking off in under four months, Altrad Group is hopeful of securing a long-term contract.

'Altrad Group is in talks,' Altrad, who owns French club Montpellier, told *The Mail on Sunday*. 'The tender process is still out for the 2018 competition, so we have maybe two months to come to an agreement if it is going to happen.'

Six Nations CEO John Feehan initially set out to secure a £100million deal over six years.

That represented a £6m-per-year price hike and Feehan has since had to revise the cost amid tough market conditions linked to Brexit.

But Altrad, who made his fortune in scaffolding having grown up in the desert, is primed to make his move.

'They are asking for a lot of money but the money is not a problem for us,' he said. 'If we are going to sponsor

EXCLUSIVE

By **Nik Simon and Rob Robertson**

the Six Nations, we want it to be an arrangement over several years.'

The Six Nations board have been looking to secure another long-term deal following the end of RBS's 14-year partnership.

The concern among the nations is that any further delays could lead to the 2018 championship lacking a backer, which would blow a significant hole in the finances of Wales, Scotland and Ireland.