

Sepp Blatter could face an early challenge to his Fifa presidency from Michel Platini

Sepp Blatter did his best to hide the tensions at the heart of Fifa during the Ballon d'Or ceremony on Monday night, but there are increasing signs that the president will struggle to see out his full term to 2015, and could be forced out by the end of the year.

Blatter's fate would appear to rest on Michel Platini's appetite for unseating him early, with growing speculation that the Uefa president would have the support of the professional clubs and leagues for an early tilt at the Fifa job.

Platini owes his position to Blatter's support, but is perhaps the only figure with the stature to move to unseat his mentor.

The impending publication of a Swiss court report into the ISL bribery scandal will have an impact on events. The document will name two Fifa officials who accepted bribes, including current executive committee member Ricardo Teixeira, and will serve as a reminder of the sort of conduct tolerated by Blatter during his tenure.

Blatter's grip on power depends on the support of Congress and an embattled executive committee, many of whom were present in Zurich for the ceremony.

Worawi Makudi (cleared of profiting from development funds), Issa Hayatou (recently sanctioned by the IOC for accepting "bribes" from ISL), Chuck Blazer (under investigation by the FBI) and Manilal Fernando (part of the Mohammed Bin Hammam delegation at last year's notorious Trinidad "bribery" meeting) all mingled with Lionel Messi and Co in the VIP lounge.