Puma reports strong quarterly sales after Euro 2016

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German sportswear firm Puma reported a stronger-than-expected rise in second quarter sales on Wednesday, helped by the European soccer championships in which its sponsored player Antoine Griezmann of France was the top scorer.

Puma reported a quarterly net profit of 1.6 million euros ($1.76 million), compared to a loss of 3.3 million a year ago. Sales rose a currency-adjusted 13 percent to 827 million euros, beating average analyst forecasts for 819 million.

Sales grew fastest in the Europe, Middle East and Africa region, up a currency-adjusted 23.5 percent, boosted by Puma’s sponsorship of five national teams at Euro 2016, including quarter-finalists Italy, plus players like Griezmann and Portugal goal keeper Rui Patricio.

Puma also noted that its sponsored English soccer teams Leicester and Arsenal took the top two slots in the Premier League this season, helping apparel sales rise 19.5 percent in the quarter.

Chief Executive Officer Bjorn Gulden said the gross profit margin - down to 45.6 percent in the quarter from 46.7 percent a year ago - was still under pressure due to sourcing in the strong U.S. dollar, but added Puma had managed to rein in costs.

Puma said partnerships with celebrities like Rihanna and Kylie Jenner were helping it win more space at key retailers, while it is also optimistic for the upcoming Rio Olympics, with the likes of Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt wearing Puma products.

The firm confirmed it expects sales to grow by a high single-digit percentage this year, while it sees its gross profit margin remaining flat from last year's 45.5 percent, with operating earnings between 115 million and 125 million euros.