

# Much More Than Football—The Perennial Popularity of the Premier League

The English Premier League is followed passionately by fans worldwide, over the course of ten months between August and May every single year. With a global presence in 188 countries, carried by over 80 broadcasters in more than fifty different languages, the EPL is the most popular football league on the planet. Its average per-game viewership of over [12 million](#) is colossal compared to La Liga's 2 million, which places a distant second.

All of the aforementioned statistics urge one to ponder over but one question—what is the reason behind the prodigious popularity? Why does the Premier League command a fan following matched by no other football league? Let's have a look at some of the key factors.

## **The Plethora of Quality**

The sheer dominance of one or two teams seen in the rest of the four leagues seems to disappear in the Premier League. Multiple teams fighting for the trophy is almost always on show. Teams like Leicester City, Everton, and Wolverhampton, which usually end up in the middle of the pack, have in recent times, invested heavily in either retaining or bringing in world-class players such as Jamie Vardy and James Rodriguez. A four-time UEFA Champions League-winning coach, Carlo Ancelotti, taking over a mid-table side like Everton, further cements the popular saying, *"There are no easy games in the Premier League."*

In the season of 2019/20, the PL also had a fairly low difference of 1.06 points in average points per game between the team placed first and sixth, significantly better than La

Liga's 1.62. Interestingly, the PL has the lowest average total point difference (20.6 points) between the team that finishes 1st and the one that finishes 5th. The PL stands best placed in this regard—3 points lesser than its closest competitor Serie A (23.6 points).

Unpredictability is also an immense factor when it comes to making any competition a spine-tingling affair. People like spending ninety minutes watching a match, not knowing which way the result can go. Whilst the remaining four of the top five leagues of Europe have at the most, produced only two title-winning teams in the last six years, the Premier League has managed to muster up twice the number of champions in the same duration.



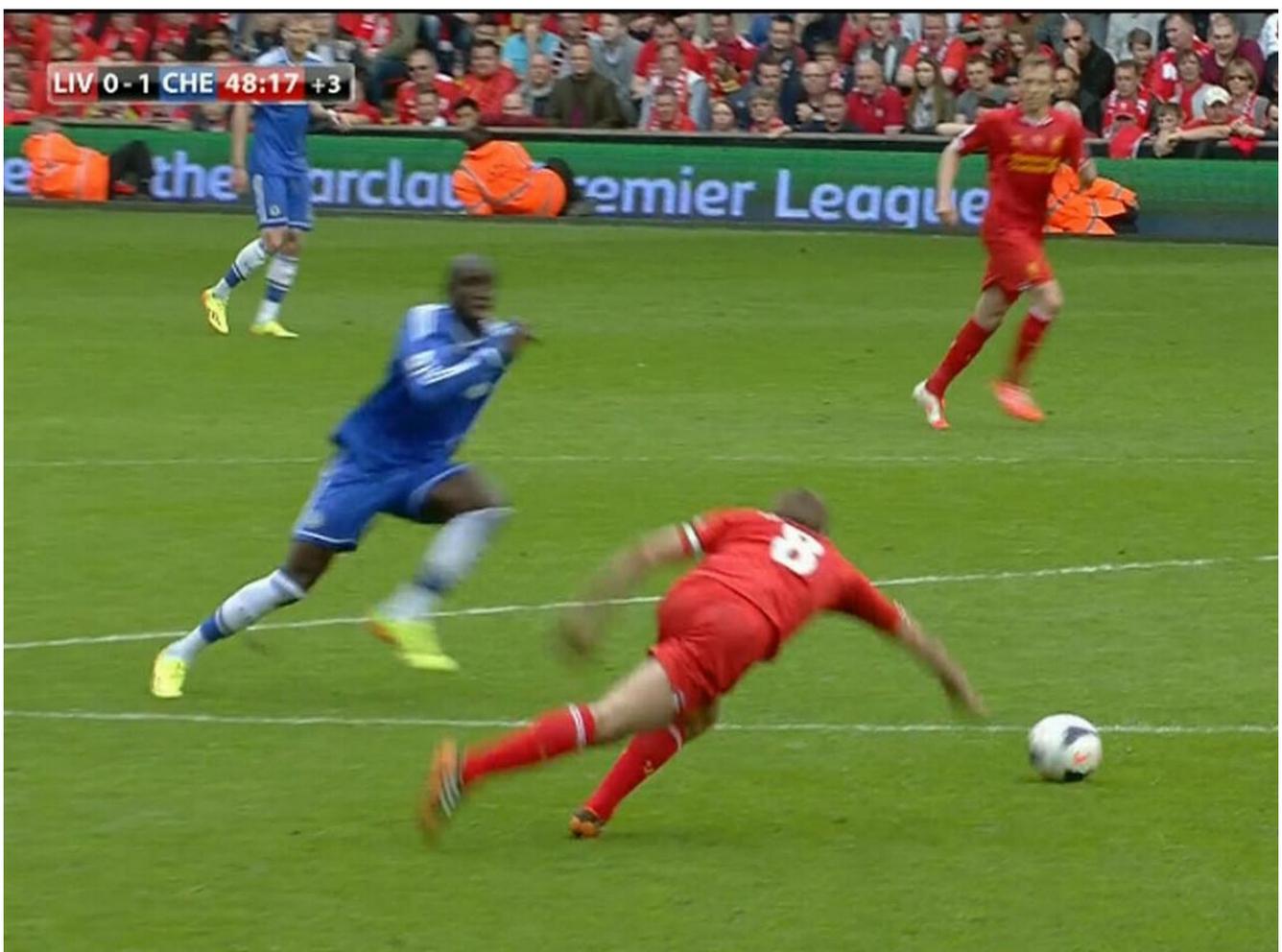
*The Premier League boasts of some world-class footballers making their mark on modern football [Image Credits: Goal.com]*

## **Fierce Competition**

Everyone loves a nail-biting contest—a match that keeps you on the edge of your seat until the very end. With the exception

of the 2019-20 season, in which Liverpool won the title with seven games to spare, the league isn't done and dusted until the last few weeks. It does a great job of keeping the suspense alive for an exceptionally long period of time into the season before the winner can raise their sails.

Manchester City won the 2012-13 title with literally, the last kick of the season in an unforgettable matchday. Steven Gerrard's infamous slip against Chelsea cost Liverpool the title, when they almost had both hands on the trophy, and the moment is etched in the hearts of fans. Occurrences like these serve as a reminder to the fans that no matter which team they support, it will never be easy to get their hands on the prestigious trophy.



*Steven Gerrard's infamous slip that cost Liverpool the Premier League Title [Image Credits: Fox Sports Australia]*

## **The Dogfight at the Bottom**

The Premier League has produced some of the most exciting relegation battles in recent memory. There is a certain thrill about the fight for survival, with teams at the bottom of the table, often putting on passionate performances. One only has to go back to the season of 2019-20 when Aston Villa drew a hard-fought match on the league's final day to avoid relegation by one solitary point. West Bromwich Albion were at the bottom of the table until the very last day of the 2004-05 season, only to pull off one of the greatest escapes of the PL by beating Portsmouth 2-0 on the final matchday of the campaign. Leicester City stared down the barrel of the gun whilst at the bottom of the table on Christmas day of 2014. The team went on to win 7 of their last 9 games to secure a berth for the next season—A campaign they would eventually go on to win.

These do-or-die battles lack the quality and finesse of face-offs between the top teams, but they do tap into the more aggressive and primal instincts of individuals and teams like no other. One tends to turn a blind eye to the action at the bottom of the table in other leagues, but this never seems to be the case in the Premier League.

# WEST BROM 2004/05

LEAGUE  
PREMIER LEAGUE

DATE  
DECEMBER 2004

BEFORE				AFTER			
POS	TEAM	PLD	PTS	POS	TEAM	PLD	PTS
11	MANCHESTER CITY	19	23	11	CHARLTON ATHLETIC	38	46
12	BIRMINGHAM CITY	19	23	12	BIRMINGHAM CITY	38	45
13	BOLTON WANDERERS	19	23	13	FULHAM	38	44
14	NEWCASTLE LTD	19	22	14	NEWCASTLE LTD	38	44
15	FULHAM	19	18	15	BLACKBURN ROVERS	38	42
16	BLACKBURN ROVERS	19	16	16	PORTSMOUTH	38	39
17	NORWICH CITY	19	15	17	<b>WEST BROM</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>34</b>
18	CRYSTAL PALACE	19	14	18	CRYSTAL PALACE	38	33
19	SOUTHAMPTON	19	14	19	NORWICH CITY	38	33
20	<b>WEST BROM</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>10</b>	20	SOUTHAMPTON	38	32

betway

*West Brom's Great Escape of 2004/05 [Image Credits: Premier League News Now]*

## The Side Treats

The introduction of the Fantasy Premier League (FPL) has enchanted fans and increased their overall interest in the league. FPL has seen an amazing response with over 7.6 million users all over the world as of 2020. With users having to choose players from middle and lower-rung teams, even matches between the lesser popular clubs end up being significant as they may affect users' FPL points tallies. Users can then compare their points with friends and other users, somewhat emulating the competition in the league itself. This feature is only available in the Premier League, making its engagement all the more fruitful to the league's success.

Sublime commentary and in-depth match analysis also help make the league more popular and get people to talk about the league and its intricacies. Legendary commentators such as Peter Drury and Martin Tyler have given voice to some of the most defining moments in the league's history. Live programs such as PL Today broadcasted across the world also

bring in perspectives of not just experts but fans too. Heated debates between football pundits featuring the likes of club legends and some of the most revered personalities in football often seen in post-match analyses also make for very engaging content.



*Popular football talk show Super Sunday on Sky Sports [Image Credits: The Joe UK]*

## **Distribution of Financial Resources**

The most optimal way to ensure high competitiveness levels in any sporting league is to distribute finances in the most equitable way possible. Since its inception in 1992, the PL has had an egalitarian redistribution method of total income garnered. Since 2018, the league has adopted a distribution system in which the entire pot of 3.3 billion pounds coming in through sales of TV rights worldwide gets equally distributed amongst all teams. In contrast, revenue distribution in the rest of the four leagues depends heavily on clubs' past performance and popularity-related metrics. This puts smaller teams in these leagues at a huge disadvantage.

The introduction of the 'parachute payment system', in which relegated clubs are awarded about half of the broadcasting revenue received by other teams in the PL for their first two seasons out of the premiership, ensures a safety net from financial ruin for these teams. Aggressive marketing and advertising of derby matches and regional rivalries have also increased its annual TV revenue.

The pure bliss of witnessing the season unfold itself over the course of ten months is something that goes beyond numbers and statistics. The highs and the lows faced by supporters, the drama, the rumours, and the uncontrollable passion present an experience like no other. The highly competitive nature of this league is definitely the primary reason for its massive fan base. The level of raw entertainment the Premier League provides a sense of joy unparalleled by any other league.

*Featured Image Credits: Mytwocents.com*