



Football Rivalries Report



By The New Football Pools
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Welcome to the Football Rivalries Report 2008

Where would football be if we didn't have rivalries? Those clubs, or even countries, that we most look forward to playing - and defeating.

Even when we're not playing each other, we take great pleasure in seeing those rivals lose. They may not be in the same division, let alone be challenging our club for honours, but that doesn't stop most fans feeling a sense of satisfaction at seeing their rivals fail.

But where does that rivalry come from? Is it simply because they are near-neighbours, or is it jealousy at another club's success? Or are there social or economic reasons that are simply mirrored by the football clubs?

And which are the biggest rivalries in English football?

Here at The New Football Pools we've endeavoured to discover answers to those questions.

Through the Football Fans Census we questioned almost 6,000 passionate football fans across all 92 League clubs, to identify who they thought were their biggest footballing rivals.

Having found out *who* those rivals were, we then asked *why* they were their biggest adversaries, to understand whether it was because:

- **they are neighbours**
- **they have always been rivals, for whatever reason**
- **they're jealous, because their rivals have been more successful**
- **they meet regularly in the league**
- **or because the rivalry goes much deeper than football**

Armed with those answers, our statisticians have put together a league table of the top rivalries using a complex formula based on:

- **the survey responses of both sets of fans**
- **the respective league and cup records of the two clubs**
- **the regularity of league and cup meetings between the rivals**
- **the two clubs' records when playing each other**
- **the impact on attendances when they meet**
- **transfers between the clubs, and fans' reactions to those transfers**
- **off-the-field factors, such as media coverage of the rivalry**

Some of the results may surprise you, but we hope you enjoy debating it.



Jon Sheehy
Marketing Director
February 2008

The Football Rivalries League 2008

- 1.** West Bromwich Albion and Wolverhampton Wanderers
- 2.** Ipswich Town and Norwich City
- 3.** Liverpool and Manchester United
- 4.** Portsmouth and Southampton
- 5.** Cardiff City and Swansea City
- 6.** Aston Villa and Birmingham City
- 7.** Sheffield United and Sheffield Wednesday
- 8.** Bristol City and Bristol Rovers
- 9.** Newcastle United and Sunderland
- 10.** Brighton and Crystal Palace
- 11.** Derby County and Nottingham Forest
- 12.** Blackpool and Preston North End
- 13.** Darlington and Hartlepool United
- 14.** Luton Town and Watford
- 15.** Blackburn Rovers and Burnley
- 16.** Port Vale and Stoke City
- 17.** Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur
- 18.** Grimsby Town and Scunthorpe United
- 19.** Everton and Liverpool
- 20.** Leeds United and Manchester United



The Top 20

1. West Bromwich Albion and Wolverhampton Wanderers

Albion's Hawthorns ground is just four miles away from Villa Park, and just a shade over five miles from St Andrews, but fans insist their biggest rivalry is with Wolves, whose Molineux home is 12 miles away.

Three quarters of Baggies fans reckon the Wolves rivalry is bigger than that with Villa or Birmingham City, and 97 per cent of Wolves fans agree.

It's a Black Country clash that has been helped by the fact the two sides have evenly-matched records and evenly-matched histories.

In 154 League and Cup games since 1886, Albion have won 61, Wolves 52 and there have been 41 draws. Both teams have averaged around 1.5 goals per game, and both have won 46 per cent of the matches played on their own grounds.

Wolves' heyday was the 1950s, when the side containing the likes of Billy Wright and Ron Flowers won the League Championship three times. They ended that era with an FA Cup win in 1960 (minus Billy Wright), and missed out on a League and Cup double by just one point. They also won the League Cup in 1974 and 1980, and were UEFA Cup runners-up in 1972.

Albion's sole League title came in 1920, but they have a League Cup win in 1966 under their belt, five FA Cup wins- the last in 1968 - and last competed in the UEFA Cup in 1982. They have also spent three seasons in the Premier League, compared to one by Wolves.

Last season was a memorable one. The Baggies won the first Championship match 3-0 at the Hawthorns, while Wolves won the return 1-0 in March. In between, the sides met in the fourth round of the FA Cup, with Albion winning easily, 3-0 at Molineux.

The rivals met again in the play-off semi-finals, with West Brom winning the first leg 3-2 at Molineux. Kevin Phillips, scorer of two of Albion's goals that day, also netted the only goal in the second leg. Unfortunately for Baggies fans, Derby's Stephen Pearson scored the only goal in the Wembley finals, to restore the Rams' Premiership status.

For both sets of fans, there's a strong sense of "sleeping giants". Despite Wolves' cash injection from Sir Jack Hayward in the 1990s, real success has eluded them. The club is regularly in the Championship play-offs, or on the fringes of, but that one season in the Premiership is all they have to show for it.

Wolves' fans disappointment won't have been helped by seeing Albion gain promotion twice, although each time they've struggled to hang onto that lofty status. The Baggies have the upper hand again this term, but only time will tell whether they sustain it.

2. Ipswich Town and Norwich City

East Anglia wouldn't be regarded as one of English football's hotbeds, but there is no doubting the fierce and long-standing rivalry between its two biggest clubs, Suffolk's Ipswich Town and Norfolk's Norwich City. In fact, according to our survey it's the most reciprocated rivalry in the English game, with 99 per cent of fans from both clubs naming it.

The gap of 40 miles doesn't make those East Anglia 'Old Farm' derbies any less intense, and this, combined with the regularity and closeness of the games, and the recent fortunes of both clubs, put it ahead of all but one rivalry in League football.

Over the last 16 seasons, Town and City have been in the same division in 13 of them, and those 25 encounters (including this season's 2-2 at Carrow Road) have brought 11 wins for Norwich, nine for Ipswich and five draws. Only three times over that period has one team won both matches: Norwich in 2003-04 and 1994-95, and Ipswich in 1992-93.

Overall, the records are even closer. In 89 matches since the end of the Second World War, the Tractor Boys have won 38, the Canaries 34 and there have been 17 draws. But Norwich have the satisfaction of winning both FA Cup ties between the rivals.

It is, however, Ipswich Town who have had the most success. Norwich's only major successes were League Cup wins in 1962 and 1985, whereas Town have won a League title, been runners-up twice, and won the FA Cup and UEFA Cup.

And it seems supporters elsewhere in the world are aware of the intense rivalry that exists between the clubs. During a UEFA Cup tie at Portman Road some years ago, fans from Helsingborg in Sweden chanted "Stand up if you hate Norwich" – much to the delight of the home crowd.

The rivalry, however, goes much deeper than football. The fact Norwich has city status and Ipswich doesn't is a long-standing issue that generates fierce debate in Suffolk. Also, many in Ipswich would prefer the town to be more closely associated with the metropolitan feel of London than the quiet, rural traditions of East Anglia.

3. Liverpool and Manchester United

Despite both having traditional same-city rivals, it is clear that fans of Liverpool and Manchester United now regard their own rivalry as being greater than the rivalries they have with Everton and Manchester City respectively.

Almost nine out of ten Liverpool fans, and two thirds of United supporters, put this rivalry ahead of any other they have.

Again, there is a strong cultural dimension. The rivalry between clubs and supporters is mirrored by those between the two working class cities themselves, with Manchester resurgence as England's "second city" arguably surpassing Liverpool's industrial and maritime heritage. Whether in music, the arts or in sport, the rivalry between Liverpool and Manchester is intense and very real.

No wonder, then, that more than half of the fans of both clubs say their rivalry goes much deeper than football.

Wherever you look, there are rivalries to be debated. Who was the greatest manager: Busby or Shankly, Paisley or Ferguson? The greatest player: Best or Keegan, Charlton or Hunt? The most passionate supporters: those on the Kop or those in the Stretford End?

Liverpool have won a record 18 League titles, versus 16 by Manchester United, but they have never won the Premier League. The fact United have won it nine times is one of the key reasons this rivalry has overtaken that with Everton in the minds of Liverpool fans, even though Liverpool have five European Cup wins to United's two.

In 169 matches going back over 110 years, more than 450 goals have been scored, but generally it is the home team that prevails. Almost half the games have been won by the home team, with Liverpool winning only 15 of 80 games in Manchester, and United winning 22 of 79 at Anfield.

One of the most memorable games of recent years was the FA Cup 5th round clash in 1999 at Old Trafford. Michael Owen gave Liverpool an early first half lead, but Dwight Yorke equalised with two minutes left and then Ole Gunnar Solksjaer won it for United in injury time.

A few brave souls have turned out for both clubs over the years. Most fans will remember Peter Beardsley's time at Anfield, but he also had a brief and unsuccessful spell at Old Trafford. Paul Ince won a sack of trophies with United before joining Liverpool, via Inter Milan, in 1997, and back in the 1960s striker Phil Chisnall joined Liverpool from United.

But probably the most famous United name to wear a Liverpool shirt was Sir Matt Busby, who was the Anfield club's captain prior to the Second World War, and became manager at Old Trafford in 1945. So perhaps United fans owe Liverpool a very big 'thank you'!

4. Portsmouth and Southampton

Twenty miles apart, but the strength of feeling between the two sets of supporters runs so deep that you would think the respective stadia were just 20 feet apart.

The rivalry is deep and heart-felt, and in our survey more than half the fans of both clubs said the rivalry went much deeper than football.

Perhaps it has something to do with their sea-faring traditions. While Portsmouth has long been seen as the 'home' of the Royal Navy, Southampton has been a major port for the Merchant Navy.

Portsmouth fans believe their club has had more success, rising through football's ranks, while Saints supporters reckon they are the South Coast's 'big' club.

Locals suggest 1976 was a watershed. Both clubs started the 1975-76 season in Division Two, but by the end of that season Saints had stunned Manchester United in the FA Cup Final at Wembley – the only major trophy success in their history – and Pompey had been relegated to football's third tier for the first time in 1962. And, to make matters worse, Southampton's Cup Final hero, Bobby Stokes, was born and bred in...yep, you guessed it, Portsmouth.

Post-War, the clubs have met 35 times in all competitions, with Southampton winning 19 times and Pompey just eight, but in the last meeting – in the Premiership in April 2005 – Portsmouth won 4-1 at Fratton Park as the Saints slid towards relegation. They have also met four times in the FA Cup since 1905, with Saints victorious on all four occasions.

But undoubtedly the biggest headlines involving the two clubs in recent times concern one man: Harry Redknapp. He joined Pompey in 2002 and took them into the Premiership in his first full season in charge, only to resign in 2004 and then turn up, weeks later, as boss of Southampton. His tenure at the Saints included that 4-1 defeat at Portsmouth, but a year after arriving at St Mary's Stadium he quit and returned to Fratton Park.

You couldn't have written a better Hollywood script if you'd tried!

5. Cardiff City and Swansea City

Considering it's more than eight years since they last met in any competition, the rivalry between Cardiff and Swansea is stronger than most in League football. Had they met more often, and hadn't a fifth of Cardiff fans cited Bristol City as key rivals, these two adversaries would undoubtedly be higher up our league table.

The two cities are next-door neighbours in South Wales, and the rivalry is deeply embedded both culturally and in sporting terms.

In April 2006, former Cardiff chairman Sam Hammam criticised some of the Swansea players when they paraded an anti-Cardiff banner around the Millennium Stadium after Swansea's defeat of the Bluebirds in the Football League Trophy Final.

Cardiff have won just two of the last 10 meetings between the two clubs, and since their first meeting in 1929 Swansea have the better record between the rivals, winning 23 of the 57 games, with Cardiff notching up 19 wins.

Probably the greatest game between them was played on 27th December 1980, a Second Division clash at Cardiff's old Ninian Park ground. With just a few minutes left, the home side were 3-2 down, but won a free kick some 35 yards from goal. John Buchanan's right-foot drive flew into the top corner and the game was saved.

The rivals have met in 12 Christmas fixtures over the years, with Cardiff winning six and Swansea just two. In 1951 the teams played each other on Christmas Day and Boxing Day in the Second Division, with a 1-1 draw at Swansea's Vetch Field being followed 24 hours later by a 3-0 Cardiff win at Ninian Park.

6. Aston Villa and Birmingham City

There will be much debate in the West Midlands about the fact this historic rivalry plays second fiddle locally between that of West Brom and Wolves.

It's a rivalry that dates back more than 100 years, and Aston Villa can justifiably claim to have the upper edge over their near neighbours.

That's based not just on their superior record in derby matches (48 wins to Birmingham's 37 since 1887), but also on the clubs' respective trophy cabinets. Seven League Championships, seven FA Cup Final wins and a European Cup, compared to a solitary League Cup success for Birmingham.

Ironically, that 1963 League Cup win for City came against their bitter rivals, with the Blues winning 3-1 over the two legs.

Birmingham have the better Premiership derby record, with four wins from the nine games played to date, but Villa's three wins have been in the last three match-ups. And while Villa have been Premiership ever-presents, this is only the fifth season in the Premiership for the Blues.

One of the players in the Birmingham side last time they met – in November 2007 – was defender Liam Ridgewell, one of the few players to move from Villa Park to St Andrews. And Ridgewell was in the headlines for all the wrong reasons when he turned the ball into his own net for Villa's first goal in a 2-1 win.

Midfielder Des Bremner also played for both clubs in the 1980s, and Villa chairman Doug Ellis was a Birmingham director back in the 1960s.

7. Sheffield United and Sheffield Wednesday

One of the oldest, and most closely-fought, rivalries in English football.

Back in October 1893, when the clubs first met, Wednesday were known simply as 'The Wednesday'. That game ended in a 1-1 draw – the first of 37 drawn games between the two clubs.

The sides have met 119 more times since then, with the Blades edging it 44 wins to the Owls' 38. Twelve of those games were in cup competitions, and the FA Cup record is three wins apiece, with three of those six ties going to replays.

The most famous FA Cup clash between the two was undoubtedly the Wembley semi-final in April 1993, when the famous old stadium became a sea of red and blue. It was those in blue and white who were first to celebrate, a Chris Waddle free kick giving Wednesday the lead. Veteran striker Alan Cork nabbed an equaliser, but Mark Bright tapped in the winner in extra time.

Wednesday took Arsenal to a replay in the final, only to lose to an Andy Linighan header in the last minute of extra time with Wembley's first penalty shoot-out looming. Wednesday also lost the League Cup Final that year, again to Arsenal – much to the delight of Blades fans, no doubt.

The Blades have lost just one of the last eight derby games, but they have never beaten Wednesday in the Premier League. Of the four encounters between 1992 and 1994, three ended in draws – the Owls won the other 3-1 at Hillsborough.

Only twice since the 1960s have the local rivals been in the same division for three seasons, but that relative paucity of derby games has only added to the fans' fervour when they do meet.

8. Bristol City and Bristol Rovers

The rivalry in the West of England city is so fierce that the two sets of fans can't even agree which is the oldest club. Rovers were formed in 1883 but didn't join the Football League until 1920; City were formed a year later, but have been playing professionally since 1901.

But one thing they can't argue about is that City – the Robins – have the better derby record, with 43 wins to Rovers' 29. A further 33 games have ended all-square.

With City on a seemingly upward curve, league meetings between the two are now much less common than they used to be. In the 1980s and 1990s, the two clubs met almost every season, in either the Second or Third Divisions, as their relative fortunes ebbed and flowed.

City, arguably, have slightly the upper hand on league records, having had four seasons in the top flight in the late 1970s, as well as numerous seasons in what is now the Championship. Rovers, on the other hand, have never been higher than football's second tier.

Cup success has eluded both clubs, but in the mid-1980s they did meet in the FA Cup second round in successive seasons. City won 2-1 at Eastville in 1983, but Rovers got their revenge almost exactly a year later, winning 3-1 at Ashton Gate. And last year in the Johnston Paints Trophy area final, Rovers beat City 1-0 in a replay, prompting wild scenes of celebration and a pitch invasion.

City's fan base is largely from the southern end of Bristol, while Rovers have a stronger presence in the north and east of the city, which may explain why a third of fans in the city reckon the rivalry goes beyond matters on the pitch.

Perhaps fuelling their rivalry is the fact that the two sets of fans meet annually in a charity match, held at one of the city's two stadia, and it's as closely-fought as any of the professional games.

9. Newcastle United and Sunderland

Tyneside versus Wearside. Geordies versus Mackems. Magpies versus Black Cats. However you describe it, this North East derby always has an edge, and the rivalry between the two sets of supporters is as passionate as ever.

The Toon Army will claim to have the bigger, more successful club, but it's now more than 50 years since Newcastle United won a major trophy, and their last League title was as far back as 1927. Sunderland's last FA Cup success was in 1973, and their last League title in 1936, so the Wearsiders could claim a slight statistical victory.

Some historians says the inter-city rivalry dates back to the English Civil War, when Newcastle allegedly supported the Cavaliers and Sunderland the Roundheads. During the Jacobite Rebellions of the 17th and 18th centuries, Newcastle was said to have come out in support of the House of Hanover, and Sunderland the Stuarts.

That's probably why more than half the clubs' fans we surveyed reckon there's more to the local animosity than simply being near neighbours.

The rivals have met 138 times since 1898, with the Magpies winning 50 of them to Sunderland's 43. Newcastle are undefeated in the past eight meetings – all in the Premier League – but the recent glut of North East derbies hides the fact that, during the 1970s and 1980s, meetings were all too rare.

But if you think that Newcastle have the upper hand when it comes to League records, it's worth remembering that as recently as 2001, Sunderland finished ahead of the Magpies in the Premier League, and that season enjoyed a 2-1 win at St James' Park.

Since 1914, the clubs have met just once in the FA Cup. Holders Newcastle hosted Sunderland in a quarter final tie in March 1956, but the Wearsiders won 2-0 for a famous victory – only Newcastle's third FA Cup defeat since 1950.

Oh, and one other small stat fact to mention: Sunderland's record victory, and Newcastle's biggest defeat this century, came in the same game in 1908. To make matters worse for the Toon Army, it was a 9-1 loss at St James' Park.

10. Brighton and Crystal Palace

It's hard to pinpoint when, or why, this rivalry started, but both sets of fans believe it's as intense as any rivalry in English football. There's a mutual dislike and, according to our survey, with 46 per cent of fans across both clubs believing the rivalry goes beyond football. But exactly why they are such bitter rivals is harder to determine.

It probably started in earnest back in the mid-1970s when, after a 12-year hiatus, the clubs clashed in the old Third Division (Palace having dropped from First Division to Third with successive relegations).

At that time both clubs had high-profile managers. Alan Mullery and his Palace counterpart, Terry Venables, had been team-mates at Spurs a decade earlier.

Ironically, Palace's first Third Division game in that 1974-75 season was at Brighton's Goldstone Ground, and the Seagulls won 1-0.

Large numbers of Palace fans would make the 45-mile journey down to Sussex, and many would head for the aptly-named Palace Pier. Trouble in the town centre was a frequent occurrence.

The rivalry was undoubtedly fuelled in the early 1980s when Alan Mullery left Brighton after five years and, a year later, turned up at Palace. Having criticised Palace's management and fans in the past, his appointment wasn't exactly popular and attendances at Selhurst Park dropped.

Since 1920 the clubs have met 89 times in league and cup, with Brighton winning 35 to Palace's 32. It's a fixture where the home team generally wins, although in their most recent meetings – the 2005-06 Championship season – both games were won by the away team.

In 1976 the sides were involved in a controversial FA Cup first round tie that went to two replays (eventually won by Palace), and a year later both clubs achieved promotion to the Second Division – Brighton finishing second and Palace third.

Palace have had brief spells in the Premiership, but in each of the four seasons they were relegated. Since being in the top flight in 1983, Brighton have led a see-saw existence between league football's other three divisions, so since 1989 the two clubs have found themselves in the same division only twice.

11. Derby County and Nottingham Forest

Arguments may rage about the biggest rivalry in the West Midlands, but in the East Midlands it's no contest – the Rams and Forest, or the 'Sheep' and the 'Trees', as the fans often refer to each other. Nine out of ten fans of each club agree it's their biggest rivalry.

But despite being two of the oldest League clubs, and having first met competitively back in 1892, meetings between the Trent rivals have been relatively few. Only 79 competitive matches so far, with Forest having the slightly better record – 33 wins to the Rams' 27.

Those with slightly longer memories will recall Derby and Forest being two of the pre-eminent English clubs of the 1970s, with three titles between them. And the common factor in all those trophy successes was, of course, Mr Brian Clough.

Cloughie knew all about the rivalry between the two sets of fans when, after having guided Derby to two title wins, he joined Forest (via Brighton and Leeds) and steered them to a League and League Cup double in 1978, followed by European Cup success in 1979 and 1980.

Forest's climb from relative obscurity to European glory coincided with Derby's slide down the League. The same month Forest lifted the European Cup for the second time, Derby were relegated to the old Second Division, and by 1984 the Rams were in Division Three. Forest meanwhile, were finishing in the top half of the First Division in 14 out of 15 seasons.

Derby at least had the distinction of winning the last Premiership meeting between the sides, in April 1999, and have had the greater success in recent years, having been in the Premier League in five of the last 10 seasons (compared to Forest's one).

12. Blackpool and Preston North End

Hard to believe right now, with both clubs in the Championship, but back in the 1950s there was no bigger game in English football than this West Lancashire derby.

In that decade Preston were runners-up twice in the First Division and once in the FA Cup, while Blackpool were League runners-up, FA Cup winners and FA Cup finalists.

Preston were founder members of the Football League, and its first champions in 1889, a season in which they were undefeated in both League and FA Cup. During their 1950s heyday they boasted the likes of Tom Finney, Charlie Wayman and Tommy Docherty in their playing ranks.

Blackpool's Cup-winners of 1953 – the so-called "Matthews Final" – included hat-trick hero Stan Mortensen, Bill Perry and, of course, wing wizard Stanley Matthews.

While Preston's decline began almost as soon as Tom Finney retired, Blackpool maintained their top-flight status throughout most of the 1960s, and so between 1961 and 1967 the rivals were a division apart.

In fact, between 1974 and 1987 the Lancashire rivals only met in the FA Cup and League Cup (Preston winning on each occasion), with various promotions and relegations conspiring to separate them.

In the 1990s there were league meetings in Division Two, and thanks to Blackpool's play-off win last season the two clubs are now head-to-head in the Championship.

December's Championship match-up at Deepdale was the first League meeting between the rivals for almost eight years. There was trouble off the pitch and on, not helped by referee Mark Clattenburg refusing Preston's appeal for a penalty. Visitors Blackpool won the game 1-0, and Preston slumped to the bottom of the table.

Overall, the rivals have met only 89 times in League and Cup, dating back to 1901, and it's the Lilywhites of Preston who have the upper hand, with 43 wins to Blackpool's 29. But Seasiders fans have the consolation of knowing that their record win – and Preston's record defeat – was a 7-0 derby victory at Deepdale in 1948.

13. Darlington and Hartlepool United

Based on the fans' survey alone, you could argue this is a bigger rivalry than Newcastle United and Sunderland, as 95 per cent of supporters across both clubs named each other as their bitterest rivals, while fans of the Premiership rivals could muster a relatively lacklustre 90 percent.

Given that these two clubs have spent the majority of their existence in the bottom two divisions of the Football League, it's no surprise they have met on 147 occasions since 1921.

And over those 80-odd years, the argument over who's biggest – and who's best – has raged on. On the basis of the derby games, it would be impossible to choose between the two. Hartlepool edge it overall, with 60 wins to Darlo's 57, but Darlington have scored more goals.

Hartlepool's promotion to League One at the end of last season means there are no derby clashes this season – only the fifth time in the past 20 seasons that the Teesside rivals won't have met.

The last encounter was at the Darlington Arena last March in front of more than 10,000 fans. Hartlepool arrived with a record-equalling run of 21 games unbeaten, while the Quakers were undefeated in 12, so something had to give. In the end, Hartlepool ran out comfortable 3-0 winners, thanks in no small part to two-goal hero Eifion Williams.

The win over their local rivals helped extend Pool's position at the top to five points, and despite late-season jitters – during which time Walsall took over top spot – they still achieved automatic promotion.

It was a painful result for the Darlington faithful, who have only seen their side beat Hartlepool in a League game once since 1999.

14. Luton Town and Watford

OK, it's not Liverpool and Manchester United, or Arsenal and Spurs, but in the neighbouring counties of Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire there's a football rivalry just as strong, and one that often erupts off the park as well as on when the two clubs meet.

In fact, one esteemed footy magazine once described it as the fiercest rivalry in English football.

Had the two clubs met more often than they have, these long-time foes would be challenging for a much higher spot in this Rivalries Report.

Although Luton had a brief dalliance with the Football League at the start of the 20th century, it wasn't until 1920 that the Hatters' established themselves as a fully-fledged League club. Among the other clubs joining that newly-formed Division Three was Watford.

Both games that first season ended 1-0 to the home side, and it's a pattern that has been repeated many times since. Across the 84 league and cup games since 1920, half have been won by the home side, and only 25 per cent by the away team.

Due to various relegations and promotions, the clubs didn't meet between 1937 and 1963, and in the seasons up to 1980 those clashes were fairly sporadic. In the 1980s – as Second and then First Division clubs – they met season after season, but apart from one season together in the Championship the rivals haven't met in the League since 1998.

A memorable season for both was 1981-82, when the two clubs were promoted to the top flight. For Luton fans, however, there was the satisfaction of pipping their neighbours to the Second Division Championship trophy.

In 1984 and 1985, Luton and Watford met in memorable FA Cup ties, Watford winning the first 4-3 in a replay that went to extra time, and went on to reach the final. Luton got their revenge a year later, triumphing in the third round after two replays.

It's been nip and tuck ever since. Seven of the last 10 meetings have been draws, and both clubs have suffered the highs and lows of both promotion and relegation.

15. Blackburn Rovers and Burnley

They may not have met in a league game for seven years, but both sets of supporters reckon this is their biggest rivalry.

Both these clubs were founder members of the Football League, and both have two League titles to their name. Rovers have the upperhand on FA Cup wins – six versus one – but it wasn't until 15 years ago that their paths began to diverge.

While Burnley spent the early 1990s climbing their way out of the Fourth Division, Blackburn – with millionaire owner Jack Walker – were building a side that would lead them to Premiership glory. Their respective stadia were just 10 miles apart, but for the fans it must have felt like 10 million miles.

In 1993-94 Rovers were Premiership runners-up, but the following season Kenny Dalglish's expensively-built side – including England striker Alan Shearer – took the title, while Burnley were relegated back down to English football's third tier.

Burnley and Blackburn did meet in the old Nationwide First Division for two seasons between 1999 and 2001 after Rovers were relegated from the Premiership. It took them two seasons to get back.

In that second season, when Rovers finished second to Fulham, six of their points came at the expense of Burnley. A 2-0 win at Turf Moor the week before Christmas (in front of a season's best crowd of over 21,000, which caused the closure of the M65) was followed by a 5-0 win at Ewood Park in April.

That season's dominance by Rovers was not typical of their rivalry with the Clarets, which historically has been very close. Across 91 league and cup matches since 1888, the win tally is 39-37 in Blackburn's favour. Before the 1980s, Burnley had the superior record – but only just.

The last derby game was a fifth round FA Cup tie at Turf Moor in 2005. Burnley had scalped Liverpool and Bournemouth to reach the last 16, and the fans were confident of seeing off the Premiership strugglers. The game never lived up to the pre-match hype and ended in a goalless draw. Rovers won the replay 2-1 at Ewood Park.

16. Port Vale and Stoke City

Less than five years ago there was speculation that these Potteries rivals would actually merge and form one club, based at the Britannia Stadium.

In late 2002 Vale went into administration, and one of the rumoured consequences was a merger with local rivals Stoke City. The letters pages of the local paper showed the depth of feeling that such a merger would have created, and the plan never got off the ground.

Remarkably, it was the second time such a merger had been mooted. Back in 1926, the Vale board considered a merger, but fan backlash put paid to the scheme.

Neither side has had much success in winning major trophies, with Stoke's single League Cup win in 1972 being the only piece of silverware they've claimed. Despite that, the clubs have still managed to avoid being in the same division for more seasons than not.

The rivals have met in the league only 44 times since 1920, and didn't meet once between 1957 and 1989. The 1990s saw regular clashes in what was then the Football League's First Division, but since 2002 Stoke have been mainstays of the Championship, while Vale have been trying to end an eight-year stay in the third tier.

In the derby games that have happened, very often the pre-match build-up – and the city centre aftermath – has been greater than the on-field action. The clashes are characterised by few goals, with an average of just two per game, and a biggest margin of 4-0 to Stoke in 1931.

Perhaps the absence of regular meetings explains why only 54 per cent of Stoke fans named Vale as their biggest foes – compared to 96 per cent of Vale fans who named Stoke – or maybe fans of the Championship side think they've 'outgrown' their League One rivals?

17. Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur

Spurs fans are clear on who their biggest rivals are, but Gunners fans aren't so sure. Spurs may be the nearest, and possibly the bitterest, but some sections of the Arsenal faithful see Chelsea or Manchester United as their true rivals.

Still, the North London derby remains one of the most eagerly-anticipated clashes of any Premiership season. They are two of the Premier League's ever-presents, and they have met every season bar one since 1950.

Arsenal have the better record in these derby games, winning 67 of their 156 league and cup matches, compared to Tottenham's 49. They also haven't lost to Spurs since November 1999 – an unbeaten run stretching to 20 games.

Arguably the best clash in recent memory was the nine-goal thriller at White Hart Lane in November 2004. It was only Martin Jol's second league game in charge at Spurs – and his first as permanent manager – and although he will have been delighted to see his side score four against the Gunners, he will have been as sick as the fans were at conceding five.

Seven months earlier, Arsenal had claimed their third Premiership title by taking a point in a 2-2 draw at...you guessed it...White Hart Lane.

Player transfers between the two clubs are fairly rare. In the 1970s, defender Willie Young and goalkeeper Pat Jennings made the short move to Highbury, but the most controversial transfer was undoubtedly that of Sol Campbell in 2001.

After nine years and more than 250 appearances at Spurs, Campbell moved to Arsenal in 2001 under the so-called 'Bosman ruling' after failing to agree a new contract at Spurs. Having told fans he would stay at the club, and declaring publicly he would never play for Arsenal, it was hardly surprising he received a hostile reception when he returned to White Hart Lane for a derby game later that year.

18. Grimsby Town and Scunthorpe United

Regardless of whether they're in North Lincolnshire or South Humberside, the proximity of the two clubs makes for an entertaining, long-standing rivalry – even though, since the early 1970s, league meetings have been few and far between.

And when the local rivals do meet, goals are at a premium – an average of just over two per game since they first met in 1951. Still, the older generation of Grimsby fans still talk about the day, in September 1966, they thrashed Scunny 7-1 at Blundell Park. Not quite a record league win for the Mariners, but not far off.

The Iron, of course, can take solace from the fact they're now two divisions ahead of Town – something neither club has ever achieved before.

Town, on the other hand, do have the edge when it comes to silverware, with a collection of title wins from the lower divisions sat alongside an Auto Windscreen Shield trophy from 1998. Scunthorpe, on the other hand, have only a single honour to their name: a Division Three (North) title from 1958.

Among recent encounters, perhaps the most memorable came in the 1982-83 season, when Grimsby were in Division Two and Scunthorpe in Division Four.

The sides met in the first round of the League Cup, with the Mariners winning the first leg 2-1 at the Old Showground, and then hanging on for a 0-0 draw in the return at Blundell Park.

Four months later they met in the third round of the FA Cup, and again the Second Division side came out on top, winning 2-0 at home in a replay after a 0-0 draw.

In the six domestic cup games between the rivals to date, the Iron have scored just one goal and failed to win a game. It's a dominance reflected in their League encounters, with Grimsby winning almost half the 53 games, and Scunthorpe just 13.

19. Everton and Liverpool

Manchester United may have eclipsed the Toffees as Liverpool's biggest adversaries, but the rivalry between the Reds and Blues still has plenty of passion locally.

It's known as one of the friendliest rivalries in football, with banter flowing on a daily basis through every home, office and factory in the city. It's a rivalry that splits the city in two – you're either Red or Blue, simple as that – and it's one that dates back to the birth of Liverpool FC in 1892.

Everton had existed since 1878, and from 1884 were playing home games at Anfield, renting the ground from owner John Houlding. But after a dispute about the rent, Everton moved to Goodison Park and Houlding decided to form his own football club, Liverpool FC.

Some fans stayed loyal to Everton, while others began to support the fledgling club, plying their trade in the Lancashire League, and so one of football's most famous rivalries was born.

Perhaps the rivalry is no longer as strong as it once was, but it still means a lot on Merseyside, and particularly for Evertonians, who have no other identifiable rivals. Only four per cent of Liverpool fans, however, cited Everton as their biggest rivals in our survey. Perhaps they were not expecting this season's battle for fourth place!

Since 1894 there have been 201 league and cup matches played between them, with Liverpool winning 77 and Everton 63. Of the last 20 games – all in the Premiership – Everton have taken 16 points to Liverpool's 37.

20. Leeds United and Manchester United

Manchester United have many rivals, but the bitter relationship between their fans and those of Leeds United is so intense that it merits a position ahead of even that of the Reds' rivalry with that of near neighbours City.

The two major industrial and business centres of the north have an economic and social rivalry that dates back to the industrial revolution, but the football rivalry goes back only to the days of Busby and Revie in the 1960s and early 70s.

Both called United, both chasing silverware on a regular basis. The Reds arguable had the edge over the Whites in the 1960s, but the next decade belonged to the Whites, as Manchester United struggled through the post-Busby era.

The Reds held the upper hand over Leeds throughout the 1980s, as the Elland Road club were relegated from the top flight, but the two rivals staged an epic battle for the 1991-92 League title – the last before the arrival of the Premiership. The battle was won by Leeds after a dramatic late-season stumble by United, but since then it has been the Old Trafford club's fans who have had most to celebrate.

An intense rivalry it may be but, as far as their respective records are concerned, it's not a close one. Whether measured in domestic or European trophies, or simply the meetings between the two sides, Leeds lose the argument.

But that has never prevented the fans from making their dislike of each other evident, the media from televising most of the recent meetings, or the players from producing some dramatic action.

One memorable encounter was the 4-3 win for the visitors at Elland Road in March 2002, with Leeds coming back from 4-1 down to almost snatch a point at the death.

It's a rivalry that is always guaranteed to make headlines, whether it's the spat between Roy Keane and Alfie Haaland, or the transfers of Gordon Strachan, Eric Cantona, Rio Ferdinand or Alan Smith.



And some other notable rivalries...

- 21.** Chester City and Wrexham
- 22.** Chesterfield and Mansfield Town
- 23.** Northampton Town and Peterborough United
- 24.** Bury and Rochdale
- 25.** Manchester City and Manchester United
- 26.** Coventry City and Leicester City
- 27.** Millwall and West Ham United
- 28.** Accrington Stanley and Morecambe
- 29.** Colchester United and Southend United
- 30.** Macclesfield Town and Stockport County

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