

Love, Hope and Hatred - 2012/4 Update

Two seasons have passed since 'Love, Hope and Hatred' was published and much has happened in the world of English League derbies. Therefore, people may assume that positions in the book's Derby League Table (see pages 118 & 119) will have changed significantly. But those seasons were only two out of 115 since the League was founded in 1888 and so results in the past two years have not altered overall historical positions in the DLT by as much as people may think. Anyone hoping to see their own derby rising dramatically from twenty-something to the top five is going to be disappointed!

Where there have been movements up and down, usually it is because positions were close when the book was written and therefore only small changes have been required to alter the pecking order. For example, third place was closely contested in the original DLT. The Black Country derby, third in the original list, has lost ground because Wolves were relegated, whereas West Brom retained their Premier status and so the derby hasn't been played. Furthermore, Aston Villa, also in the Premier League, became a greater distraction from the Baggies' derby with Wolves. Sheffield's derby also hasn't been played since the book was published, but United's F.A. Cup semi-final appearance in 2014 gained points for the derby because it slightly closed the 'success' gap between United and Wednesday. Meanwhile, Manchester United and Liverpool met five times in two seasons and their derby was given a substantial boost in 2013/4 as Liverpool overtook United and challenged for the title. These differences in the fortunes of the three derbies chasing third place, though small in an overall historical context, have been sufficient to alter positions in the updated DLT, with the Black Country derby slipping to fifth and the other two shuffling upwards.

There are similar small changes in the updated DLT listed below. Positions in 'Love, Hope and Hatred', i.e. up to the end of 2011/12, are in brackets to show upward and downward trends. There is also a brief explanation of any significant events in the derbies over the past two seasons.

But first, a short overview of the outstanding features of derbies in seasons 2012/3 and 2013/4:-

2012/3 at the top of the Premier League was a case of "after the Lord Mayor's show". 2011/2 had been thrilling to the very last minute, literally, as Manchester City snatched the title with the season's final breath. By contrast, virtually everything had been settled before the final day of 2012/3. In particular, Manchester United had regained their crown with weeks to spare. Even the one unresolved issue, the battle for the final Champions' League place, proved to be something of a damp squib, with Arsenal scoring early and never looking likely to relinquish the points needed to secure the final berth.

If the battle for top prizes was a disappointment, derbies in 2012/3 certainly were not, especially in the Premier League and Championship where it was truly a vintage year. Manchester's derby provided Premier League champions and runners-up. London's big guns fought for Champions' League places. Chelsea took ten points from their four derbies with Arsenal and Tottenham. Had they not done so, North London's giants would both have finished in the top four. As it was, Spurs missed out – again. Chelsea were also involved in their more traditional West London derbies. Spice was added because QPR and Fulham appeared in the top tier *together* for the first time ever. Everton had a rare season of supremacy over Liverpool, the Merseyside clubs finishing sixth and seventh and the North

East's top sides were also tied together, Newcastle sixteenth and Sunderland seventeenth. Derbies flourished at the top of the Championship as well. Forest and Derby were eighth and tenth and primary distractions, Leicester, stoked up their derby credentials by finishing sixth. Meanwhile Brighton and Crystal Palace resumed old hostilities in style, with Seagulls pipping Eagles in the League (they finished fourth and fifth), but Palace beating Brighton in the play-offs on their way to winning promotion. Slightly lower down in the Championship Burnley ended the season above Blackburn for the first time in thirty-two years (incidentally, in doing so Burnley changed the answer to question 16 of the quiz on page 112 of the book)..

Derbies at the very top had their moments in 2013/4 too. Manchester United fans endured the unusual experience of watching their two most hated rivals, City and Liverpool, battle for the Premiership crown, which Red Devils think is their own. But the outstanding features of derbies in 2013/4 happened elsewhere. Old adversaries came together again; clubs re-emerged from the Conference to hint at derby revivals and a few 'new' derbies showed future potential.

Cardiff and Swansea met for the first time ever in the top division. The Bluebirds didn't survive, so 2013/4 may become a museum piece. Chesterfield and Mansfield renewed the bitter 'miners' strike' derby, as the Stags returned from the Conference. Norwich were relegated from the top tier to meet Ipswich in 2014/5. Doncaster and Rotherham swapped places in the Championship. Oxford returned to the League in 2013/4 and Luton and Cambridge United gained promotion to the League at the end of the season. None of these successes have led directly to the renewal of hostilities with old rivals, but League status confers greater derby status. In the Conference itself, Chester emerged phoenix-like to meet traditional derby favourites Wrexham and thereby threaten the Shrewsbury/Wrexham derby. Potential 'new' derbies included Fleetwood's fleeting visit to the fourth tier, in which they met both Accrington and Morecambe. As they relentlessly rise through the tiers, Blackpool are Fleetwood's legitimate future targets. Luton's pursuit of Watford in 2014/5 will involve an immediate 'new' test in the form of Stevenage. Grimsby v Lincoln isn't new. In fact it is one of the oldest derbies of all, but currently it takes centre-stage over Grimsby's top-thirty derby with Hull. Bury v Rochdale isn't new either, but Dale's current dominance is especially galling for Bury, who would prefer to chase Bolton. Meanwhile, Bolton themselves have spent both seasons behind potential 'new' partners Wigan. Perhaps the most important 'new' derby event of all occurred in December 2012 when, for the first time, AFC Wimbledon met their 'bastard' offspring, MK Dons. Their League Cup clash was the first instalment in what will surely be one of the bitterest derbies.

And finally, in the two seasons Accrington won three and drew one derby against Morecambe. In fourteen attempts in the League, Morecambe have yet to win and they have lost no less than ten times.

The Updated Derby League Table

1. (1) **Newcastle v Sunderland** - *England's most consistently competitive derby remained consistently competitive! Newcastle finished higher than Sunderland in both seasons but the Black Cats won three of the derby games and drew the other. Sunderland's derby success was surprising given that they had won only one and lost*

eight of the previous fourteen clashes. The Magpies' overall derby lead has been reduced to 53-48. Sunderland also appeared in the 2014 League Cup final, thereby reducing Newcastle's lead in terms of historic success.

2. (2) **Derby v Nottingham Forest** - *the East Midland's derby continued to chase the North East for top spot. Forest finished higher in 2012/3 and Derby did so in the following season. The Rams won two and lost one of the four derbies and so reduced Forest's overall lead to 37-34. Of particular note was Derby's 5-0 hammering of Forest in March 2014. It equalled their biggest ever victory over their rivals. Their previous 5-0 win was way back in 1898 and, oddly, occurred just a week before Forest reversed fortunes by beating Derby in that year's FA Cup final.*

(it should be noted that the top two derbies increased their lead over the rest of the pack).

3. (4) **Liverpool v Manchester United** - *in 2013/4 Liverpool finished the season higher placed than Manchester United for only the second time in twenty three years. United had won the title easily in the previous season and they also won three of five derbies, with Liverpool winning the other two. The end of 2013/4 was unusually painful for United's fans, as a resurgent Liverpool battled with Manchester City for the title. This 'rock or a hard place' dilemma clarified United's derby priorities, as it became clear that, difficult as it was to stomach, most United fans wanted City to prevail over the even more hated foes from Merseyside.*
4. (5) **Sheffield United v Sheffield Wednesday** - *their derby wasn't played, as Wednesday were a division above United in both seasons. It won't be played in the League in 2014/5 either. Owls therefore put behind them the bitter memory of eleven seasons of Blades' dominance at the start of the 21st Century. United fans had the consolation of an FA Cup semi-final appearance in 2014.*
5. (3) **West Brom v Wolves** - *their derby wasn't played, as Wolves crashed in successive seasons from the Premier League to the third tier, and it won't be played in the League in 2014/5. The Baggies have therefore extended their lead in higher League placings and in years spent in the top Division, but Wolves still lead in terms of overall silverware won. Wanderers have also recovered, gaining promotion back to the Championship for 2014/5, which is good for the derby, though Baggies' fans may disagree!*
6. (6) **Portsmouth v Southampton** - *their derby wasn't played and the clubs are as far apart as they have ever been, with Saints enjoying their time in the Premier League whilst Pompey slipped into tier four in 2012/3, having been deducted ten points. Indeed it could have been worse, as Pompey struggled in the lower tier for much of 2013/4. The South Coast derby, although clinging on to sixth place, is losing ground on the top five and could easily be challenged for sixth spot in the near future.*
7. (7) **Everton v Liverpool** - *Everton's finish above Liverpool in 2012/3 meant that they had been higher placed than the Reds in consecutive seasons for the first time in fifty years. Normal service was resumed in 2013/4 as Liverpool threatened to grab their first League title since the Premiership began. As always, Merseyside's derby suffers blurred focus at times because of Liverpool's 'love affair' with Manchester United*
8. (8) **Ipswich v Norwich** - *their derby wasn't played, as Norwich spent both seasons in the Premier League, a division above Ipswich. But the derby is gaining strength for two reasons. First, a benefit of the Canaries' relegation in 2014 is that the derby resumes in 2014/5. Secondly, the current period of dominance for Norwich, traditionally underdogs, is gradually making the derby more competitive historically.*

9. (9) **Arsenal v Tottenham** – *their derby was generally one-sided. After sharing victories in their 2012/3 clashes, Arsenal not only won both league derbies in 2013/4, but also beat Spurs on their way to winning the FA Cup – Spurs didn't even score in the three meetings. Tottenham have not ended a season above the Gunners for nineteen years and the standing of the derby suffers as a result.*
10. (10) **Manchester City v Manchester United** – *City had the better of things overall. United's haul of a League title in 2012/3 and an appearance in a League Cup semi-final the following year would be more than enough for most clubs, but not when you have to contend with the Sky Blues across the city. City took the title from United in 2013/4; won the League Cup in the same year and were runners-up in the FA Cup a year earlier. They also had three wins against United's single victory in their derbies. Manchester's derby continues to prosper, but has not yet improved its tenth place.*
11. (11) **Luton v Watford** – *their derby has been played in the League for only one season since 1998. Luton have returned from their spell in the Conference, but the gap between Hatters and Hornets remains large. It may therefore seem strange that this derby has held on to its 11th place. True, it is losing ground, but not as quickly as might be expected because traditional underdogs Watford are gradually making the derby more competitive historically. For example, Watford have finished above Luton in all fourteen seasons of the 21st century, but still trail the Hatters 62-41 in overall higher placements.*
12. (12) **Blackburn v Burnley** – *their derby was one of the best in the period and made ground, even if it didn't improve its 12th position historically. Three of four derbies were drawn, but the other was significant. Burnley beat Blackburn for the first time since 1979. No set of fans had waited longer for a derby victory. Also, in 2012/3, after thirty-two seasons of hurt, Clarets ended the year above Rovers. Even better for Burnley, they not only completed the feat again in 2013/4, but also gained promotion to the Premier League, leaving Blackburn behind.*
13. (14) **Cardiff v Swansea** – *their derby was another which gained ground and it moved up a place. In 2013/4, for the first time ever, the South Wales derby was played in the top tier. Each side won one clash, thereby maintaining a unique aspect of this derby, that neither club has ever completed a derby 'double' over their rivals in a single season. Cardiff were relegated at the end of 2013/4, whilst the traditionally weaker club, Swansea held onto their Premier status. The Swans also won the League Cup in 2013, their first title.*
14. (16) **Crystal Palace v Brighton** – *an echo of the derby's glory days in the 1970s occurred in 2012/3, as the clubs met four times. After sharing victories in the Championship, in which Brighton completed the year three points clear of Palace, the two met in end of season play-offs. Eagles beat Seagulls and were elevated into the top tier, leaving a bitter taste on the South Coast. The derby received a substantial boost and jumped a couple of places as a result.*
15. (15) **Fulham v QPR** – *in 2011/2, the clubs met in the top tier for the first time ever and both survived for season 2012/3. Rangers were then relegated. They shared victories in 2012/3, but Rangers' derby success in Dec 2012 was particularly significant, as it was the first time they had even scored against the Cottagers since 1983. Fulham had finished above QPR throughout the 21st century, but that record came to an end in 2013/4, as Fulham were relegated and Rangers promoted for 2014/5. This switch of divisions maintained a remarkable ability of these clubs to avoid each other. They have spent only thirteen league seasons together in the same division.*
16. (13) **Reading v Swindon** – *the clubs haven't been in the same division since 2001/2.*

Royals have finished above Robins from there onwards and in 2012/3 Reading spent only their third season ever in the top tier. Middle-order derbies like this one were tightly contested at the time when the book was published and Reading/Swindon, southern England's oldest, has lost considerable ground for two reasons. First, it hasn't been played, whereas the three to have overtaken it have been close and competitive. Second, Oxford, a cause of significant distraction, especially for Swindon fans, have re-appeared on the league scene after a time in the Conference.

- 17. (17) Bristol City v Bristol Rovers** – *Bristol's finest didn't meet and haven't played each other in the League since 2000/01. The derby therefore continues to lose ground in terms of competitiveness. But its ferocity was confirmed as Rovers lost their League status at the end of 2013/4, prompting "there's only one team in Bristol" taunts from their rivals.*
- 18. (21) Chesterfield v Mansfield** – *Mansfield's re-emergence from the Conference in 2013/4 gave a shot in the arm to this bitter derby and Mansfield had the pleasure of winning the first derby clash, the other being drawn. But Chesterfield had the last laugh, gaining promotion to the third tier; leaving the Stags behind and finishing above Mansfield again, as they have done in every season of the 21st century.*
- 19. (18) Hull v Grimsby** – *the dream continues for Hull, not only enjoying life in the Premier League, but also in 2014 becoming the first of the two clubs to reach an FA Cup final. The nightmare continues for Grimsby, left in the Conference to renew their other derby with Lincoln. Tigers can probably now claim to have caught, if not overtaken, Mariners in historical success.*
- 20. (19) Blackpool v Preston** – *the derby was played once when Preston triumphed in the League Cup. Otherwise Blackpool, traditionally the poor relations, held sway, being a division above the Lilywhites in both years. But the Tangerines struggled and their period of dominance may soon be challenged. Furthermore, rapidly advancing Fleetwood Town (six promotions in ten years) are now only one division below Blackpool, as are Preston.*
- 21. (22) Exeter v Torquay** – *football life in Devon has rarely been as exciting as it has been in recent years. Both clubs played together, alongside Plymouth, in the fourth tier and in 2012/3 both finished above the Pilgrims for only the second time in history (the first being in 2011/2). Torquay won two of their four derbies to the Grecians one, but Exeter finished higher in both seasons and at the end of 2013/4 the Gulls crashed into the Conference, leaving Exeter to their derbies with Plymouth.*
- 22. (20) Birmingham v Aston Villa** – *although a huge city derby, Birmingham's continues to lose ground because of its lack of competitiveness. The two didn't meet in the past two years and Villa have finished above City in all but one of the last thirty-nine seasons. Furthermore, Villa's traditional alternative enemies, West Brom, have been fellow Premier Leaguers and were higher than the Villans in 2012/3 and only two points behind in 2013/4.*
- 23. (23) Millwall v West Ham** – *their derby hasn't lost further ground, but it suffers from similar competitiveness issues as Birmingham's derby. The two clubs didn't meet in 2012/3 or 2013/4 and Hammers have now finished above Lions in every season except three in their entire Football League careers, which began in the early 1920s. Fervent it may be, but this is one of the most one-sided of the derbies studied in 'Love, Hope & Hatred'.*
- 24. (26) Colchester v Southend** – *their derby wasn't played, but it moved up the table because Colchester, historically marginally the weaker club, ended both seasons above Southend, thereby closing the gap to 33-31 in higher placements. This derby is the exact opposite of Hammers/Lions. It isn't especially fervent, but it is statistically*

one of the most competitive derbies of all.

25. (24) **Shrewsbury v Wrexham** – *their derby remains competitive but it is slipping for two reasons. First, Shrewsbury, being in divisions above Wrexham in both seasons, are increasing their overall historical lead over the Robins. Second, Wrexham have been joined in the Conference by a rejuvenated Chester, traditionally the Robins' primary derby partners, who present a considerable distraction from the Shrews.*
26. (25) **Northampton v Peterborough** – *similar forces have impacted upon this derby. Peterborough, the more successful club overall, have been in higher divisions than Northampton in both years. Furthermore, Cambridge United, traditionally at least as strong derby rivals for Peterborough, have re-emerged from their time in the Conference to distract Posh.*
27. (27) **Port Vale v Stoke** – *the clubs didn't meet and the heady days of the 1990s, when Vale were dominant for a time, are long gone. In 2013/4, City enjoyed their fifty-eighth season in the top tier. Vale have never been there, which says it all in respect of the competitiveness of their derby. The Potteries' derby will lose further ground if its clubs don't meet soon.*
28. (28) **Barnsley v Rotherham** – *their derby hasn't been played since 2005/6 and Barnsley have been top-dogs in recent years. But the Tykes were relegated from the second tier at the end of 2013/4 and exchanged places with the Millers, so Barnsley's period of dominance is over for the time being. Tyke's fans may disagree but Rotherham's improvement is good for the future prospects of their derby.*
29. (29) **Coventry v Leicester** – *their derby wasn't played and Leicester continued to extend their historic lead over the Bantams. Furthermore, at the end of 2013/4, Leicester gained promotion to the Premier League. Coventry on the other hand had even more important matters to deal with as they had to play home games miles away in Northampton. Leicester's battles with Nottingham Forest and Derby at the top of tier two detracted from their derby with Coventry but not sufficiently to lower its position in the top thirty - yet.*
30. (30) **Bradford v Huddersfield**. – *the clubs didn't meet in the League, as Huddersfield were in a higher division than Bradford in both seasons, but there were exciting days for the derby in the League Cup. First, in 2013, City became the first fourth tier side to reach a major cup final since Rochdale did so way back in 1962. City's trip to Wembley closed the 'success' gap with the Terriers. But in 2014, Bradford were knocked out of the League Cup – by Huddersfield. There are other derbies knocking on the door of the top thirty, so this derby's place is not secure.*