

14. MISCELLANEOUS

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14.1 STATISTICS

The Football Association receives frequent statistic-related requests. Unfortunately, The FA does not hold an archive of statistics. However, we hope the links and information below will point you in the right direction. Please remember to browse TheFA.com for useful facts and figures.

PARTICIPATION

Our resident historian has estimated that there are approximately 1.5 million adult males who regularly play 11-a-side football for registered teams. Full-time professional players make up around 2,250 of these players. In addition, there are also 30,000+ female players.

Taking into account all those involved – players, officials, spectators etc – football boasts in the region of 3 million participants every weekend.

Football in England is as healthy and successful as it has ever been. The game has more spectators, participants, revenues and media interest than at any time in its history.

- 7 million adult 'recreational' participants, plus 5 million children in schools
- 500,000 volunteers
- 37,500 clubs, including 9,000 youth clubs; 2,000 competitions
- 26,000 schools (18,000 primary)
- 45,000 pitches (21,000 facilities)
- 30,000 FA-qualified coaches
- 27,000 FA-qualified referees
- £350m invested via the Football Foundation since 2001

ATTENDANCE

Last season there were more than 33 million admissions at professional football matches played in England (Premier League, Football League, FA Cup, Carling Cup, and England Internationals). There are a number of spectators that are "members of supporters' clubs", but supporters are not generally registered in the same way that players are, so it is not possible to say how many people different watched matches last season.

Nevertheless, The FA Premier League average match attendance in 2004/05 was 33,890, the second highest in Europe. Meanwhile, The Football League is the largest, most successful and most watched 'second' league in Europe.

The Sky Sports (formerly Rothmans) Football Yearbook is a good source for attendances, both League and Cup, for each post-war season and up to the last completed season.

For a running total of League attendances for the current season it may be worth contacting The FA Premier League or The Football League themselves. Contact details can be found in the FA Directory on TheFA.com.

The Political Economy of Football contains both domestic and foreign attendance statistics and can be found at www.footballeconomy.com.

TV FIGURES

Up-to-date viewing figures for live and edited broadcasts are difficult to come by. The most effective method of acquiring such figures would be to contact the relevant broadcaster.

Television audiences for recent international matches have reached up to 26 million. Indeed, the scope and reach of the game across all levels of society is considerable. The FA Cup Final 2005 was viewed live in 169 countries whilst 4 of the top 5 UK sport broadcasts in 2004 were football matches.

14.2 BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALLER

A career as a Professional Footballer is one of the most glamorous and attractive a young person can hope to enter after leaving school. Unlike many careers the road to becoming a professional footballer can start before the age of 9 and may continue to 18 years old with many obstacles in the way. However the vast majority of players suffer the disappointment of being released along the way.

Parents or guardians and players need to be realistic and appreciate the extremely small chance of successfully overcoming all the obstacles. A key part of their involvement should be to enjoy and learn from the experience of being associated with a professional club and playing against the best players around the country. Some players who are released will come back and develop at a later stage, while others take with them experiences and good habits to fulfill their potential at youth football and non-League level.

RECRUITMENT & PATHWAYS

Some football clubs still hold trials or talent days for aspiring footballers. However, these are becoming a thing of the past.

Instead, all FA Premier League and Football League clubs have vast networks in place that helps them to pinpoint the best young talent in their area. Many run community schemes which allow them to keep in touch with the people who run the sport at grassroots level such as local schools and with the managers of county or district teams.

In addition, talent scouts are employed to watch games at both youth and senior level with a view to recruiting potential talent. Scouts develop their own contacts and are generally accountable to Youth Development Officers or Academy Directors for young players and Chief Scouts for senior players. The vast majority of young players of the future will join Football Academies or Centres of Excellence at their local professional club.

ACADEMIES & CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

The game's future, from a domestic point of view as well as from the perspective of a successful England senior side, depends upon ensuring that the best young players are given every opportunity to fulfil their talent and potential.

At the heart of The FA's commitment is the Charter for Quality programme, which ensures best practice in terms of the coaching and education received by young players. As part of the Charter for Quality, all Premier League clubs must have Academies and all Football League clubs must have Centres of Excellence. In the past, youth structures at clubs were fragmented and inconsistent.

Football Academies are special development centres that aim to provide talented young players with top quality coaching, development, education and medical care. The emphasis



of Academy Football is not on winning trophies and leagues, but is focused on developing players with the aim of giving them the best opportunity to become professional footballers.

Key benefits include access to expert medical and physiotherapy assistance, a commitment to child protection standards, coaching and development by the best coaches with education and welfare support to assist in the all-round development of students.

All League clubs (except those with Academies) must have Centres of Excellence. Fifty-three are in operation, predominantly at Football League clubs, offering young players high standards of training and development. Centres of Excellence have been in existence at clubs for many years under The Football Association's Programme for Excellence, but the Charter for Quality has introduced enhanced standards.

Many non-League clubs also run their own development schemes or community projects.

BECOMING A STUDENT

Places at Football Academies/Centres of Excellence are limited and competition is high; only the very best players are invited to join. Football Clubs have an extensive network of scouts who are experienced in spotting players with exceptional skills who can develop to play at the highest professional level.

Potential students are invited to the Academy or Centre of Excellence to train with existing students and meet staff who will observe the player, determining whether they reach the required standard in terms of skill, ability and attitude, both on and off the field. Players who meet the standard expected will be offered the opportunity to register as a student.

The best way to be spotted is by playing regularly and playing consistently well.

Opinions of coaches, scouts and managers differ when it comes to identifying what it takes to become an elite player. Different individuals will place different emphasis on particular attributes according to their personal beliefs and the needs of the Club. Generally, however, these attributes can be placed into four categories:

- Athleticism - Speed, Strength, Power, Flexibility, Stamina
- Mentality - Attitude, Confidence
- Technical Ability - Passing, Shooting, Tackling, Dribbling etc.
- 'Football Intelligence' - Not necessarily the IQ of a player but the intelligence towards playing the games, the ability to perform the techniques in a game situation

THE HARSH REALITY

It is the dream of many young players to follow in the footsteps of their heroes, aspiring to play for a professional club and maybe even one day for their country. Football Academies and Centres of Excellence aim to produce players who will have a career in football at the highest professional level and will feature as regular members of a club's first team.

However, from the 1% of boys who attend Centres of Excellence, Academies and Youth Training Schemes, only a minority attain the status of being a professional footballer. Students who do not make the grade can still be involved in football even after leaving an Academy or Centre of Excellence. This can range from continuing to play at local level, to becoming a referee or coach.

All those who are involved with developing youth players hope that those who are unsuccessful use their experiences to develop into mature and sensible individuals who will continue to enjoy all aspects of football.

Even for those who do make it, it is important to remember that football is a very short career averaging less than 10 years, hence the emphasis on boys at school and professional clubs preparing for a second career. Education and welfare form an important part of the approach at the Academies and the considerable support of the Footballers' Further Education and Vocational Training Society allows every opportunity for players to follow both academic and vocational courses.