

THE AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

This is a personal account of 108 Championship winners, from 1888/89 to 2006/07. The book includes the Football League champions to 1992 and the Premier League champions from 1993 onwards.

I saw my first game at Nottingham Forest's City Ground in 1955, so it is with a slight sense of unease that I realize I could have seen 53 of these championship teams; nearly half. I'm suddenly aware of my age! Of course, I haven't seen anything like 53, especially since some date from well before the blanket coverage of the game on TV. Also, like some of my readers perhaps, the dominance of Liverpool in the 1970s and Manchester United in the 1990s makes it difficult for an old man like me to distinguish between the seasons. Writing this book has been somewhat cathartic then. I hope you will not feel I have over-simplified the identification of key events and players in each season; in any case, the statistics are included to allow you to draw your own conclusions.

There is just enough detail about each season to fix it in my mind, and hopefully in yours too. It is not intended to take the place of detailed accounts in club histories, to which you may need to refer for other facts and stories. I've presented the seasons in club order in the first section of the book, though the results and line-ups grids are in date order.

Today's concept of a team manager is something that was quite slow to develop. Everton and West Bromwich Albion managed perfectly well without one until after the Second World War. They had a club secretary of course, who would deal with players' contracts and sometimes team selection, though often both these issues were in the hands of the club directors. Tom Watson, manager of championship teams at Sunderland and Liverpool, is sometimes recognized as the first manager, but I suspect he would have expected to be called club secretary rather than team manager. I have followed the example set by Messrs White and Turner, authors of 'The Breedon Book of Football Managers' and included a (sec) for secretary after some of the managers' names when their tasks are thought to have been mainly administrative.

The "first at top" and "last at top" entries work as follows. I disregard the first three games of the season, so the first League table is calculated at the fourth game. The "first at top" date is when the eventual champions first get to the top of the table. This might be after the fourth game of course, and you will find a couple of examples where clubs waited until the last day of the season! The "last at top" date needs a little more definition. This is the date after which the eventual champions did not lose their place at the top.

The "date won" entry is the date at which the eventual champions could not be caught. Some clubs could be assumed to have won the title at an earlier date, given a massively superior goal average or difference. However, given the unpredictability of football, I think it better only to take the points totals into account when identifying the date won.

There are a number of references to a 'Scots Count'. Most clubs in the first few seasons of the Football League were as dependent on 'imports' as the leading Premiership teams are today. The Scots Count is a rough average of the number of players, out of 11, that were regular members of the team and born north of the border. We can play the same game with today's champions, although we will have to rename it as a "Non-UK Count". I have resisted the urge to classify the Premier League champions in this way, but since it is recent history you are welcome to have a go yourself!

Tony Brown
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