

## 2016: A memorable year for British sport

By [Jack Davies](#), Deputy Editor (2017)

Wednesday 25 January 2017



Image: Wikimedia

### 1. Leicester City's Premier League Heroics

Far and away the most unbelievable moment from 2016 and indeed for a long time was Leicester City's fairytale rise to the zenith of English football. By claiming the Premiership title in May, they surprised pundits, journalists and even their own fans. Claudio Ranieri's first season as Leicester boss proved an incomprehensibly successful one. Players such as Riyad Mahrez, N'Golo Kante and England's Jamie Vardy shone as the Foxes battled their challengers and wrote their names into footballing folklore. Long has English Football's top division been dominated by established, megabucks clubs. To see Leicester lift the trophy not only brought a tear to the eyes of many a romantic football fan, but gave hope to all smaller clubs by showing that team spirit, support, and brilliant management can trump billions and take you to the top.



Image:Wikimedia

## 2. Team GB's Astonishing Olympic Success

You'd have had to have been living under a rock to not know that 2016 was an Olympic year, and for three summer weeks in Brazil's Rio de Janeiro, our athletes captivated the nation. Gymnast Max Whitlock won Britain's first ever gold in the sport, winning a second two hours later. Mo Farah defended his 5000M and 10000M titles, the women's hockey side won Britain's first gold in a team sport for almost 30 years, going unbeaten in the process, Laura Kenny and husband Jason won five cycling golds between them, and Sir Bradley Wiggins eighth medal made him GB's most decorated Olympian of all time. In all, the Rio Olympics proved a record breaking one for Team GB, winning 67 medals (their highest tally since the London games of 1908), and beating major Olympic power China into third to finish as runners-up to the USA. The Paralympians also took second place in Rio. In three of the previous four games, Paralympics GB finished as runners-up. In fact, surprisingly, it was only at the home games in 2012 that Britain fell below second for the first time since the 1990s. Standout British stars were Kadeena Cox, who managed an incredible two golds in different sports, Dame Sarah Storey, who at 38 won three golds in cycling to take her medal tally to a whopping 25, and swimmer Stephanie Millward, who was GB's biggest medallist in Rio with five. Such success saw GB almost their London haul.



Image: John Connor, Flickr

### 3. Andy Murray's Great Year

2016 proved to be something of an annus mirabilis for Scottish tennis player Andy Murray. The year started with the birth of his first child, which was but the first landmark of an historic year. He began his playing year by reaching the final of the Australian Open, losing to Novak Djokovic, and was runner-up to the same opponent in June at the French Open; the first British player to reach a final on clay court for almost 80 years. Thus began an overwhelming summer for Murray, who stormed to his second Wimbledon title, defeating Milos Raonic in straight sets in the final, and then in August defended his Men's Singles title at the Rio Olympics. More honours followed, including a third BBC Sports Personality of the Year Award, the World Number One spot, and a knighthood. 2016 was the year when Murray truly cemented his place amongst the greats of British sport.



Image: Wikimedia

### 4. Bolt's Treble Treble

Usain Bolt is a man who needs no introduction. At the turn of the year, Bolt was an enigmatic 6-time Olympic gold medallist, and the fastest human ever timed. 2016, though, saw Bolt complete an historic treble by winning the men's 100M, 200M and 4 X 100M Olympic sprinting titles for an unprecedented third time in a row. This incredible feat continued Bolt's dominance of the short-distance running world since his emergence at the Beijing Olympics eight years ago. Bolt's charisma and appeal was immortalised through the hilarious image of him and Canadian Andre De Grasse. Bolt (now famously) turned and smiled at him as he sailed casually over the finish line. Perhaps what makes Bolt truly great though is his inimitable persona - the Jamaican slowed slightly, turned to cameras and grinned knowingly as he crossed the line during the 100M final, confirming that he too knows what the rest of us do: he is, simply, the greatest sprinter of all time.



Image: Wikimedia

#### 5. Masterful Danny Willett

The most prestigious of golf's four majors, The Masters is held at the Augusta Golf Club in Georgia, USA. Fans of British golf had been waiting 20 years to see a Brit claim the famous green jacket. That was until 2016, when Danny Willett won his first major to become the first Englishman to win the tournament since Nick Faldo in 1996. Finishing three shots clear of his closest rivals, Willett's win proved a marquee moment for The Masters, ending the American dominance that had endured over two decades.



Image: Sporting Life

#### Honourable Mentions

Far too much happened in 2016 to make my list, but I'll try to squash any notable omissions into this 'honourable mention' section. In cycling, Chris Froome defended his Tour de France title to claim his third yellow jersey. In F1, Nico Rosberg finally overcame Mercedes teammate Lewis Hamilton to snatch his first championship, and then shook the racing world with his decision to retire aged 31. Stateside, the Chicago Cubs won the World Series, ending a 108- year wait for baseball's ultimate championship. Carolina Panthers had a remarkable NFL season, before capitulating to the Denver Broncos in the Super Bowl. England's rugby went the year unbeaten, while enigmatic Irishman Conor McGregor claimed MMA's UFC Feather and Lightweight titles, Real Madrid won the Champions League for a record eleventh time, and the USA won golf's Ryder Cup. In boxing, Anthony Joshua continued his unbeaten record and claimed the his first world title, while Tony Bellew claimed the WBC Cruiserweight World title in an historic fight at Goodison Park, home of his beloved Everton FC.



Image: Sky Sports



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