

The Battle for Premier League Survival

As 2017 comes to an end, which teams go into the New Year with a relegation scrap on their hands?

By Kathryn Batte

Thursday 28 December 2017



Crystal Palace's unprecedented poor start to the campaign has left them in the relegation battle mix. Image credit: Wikimedia Commons.

THE PREMIER LEAGUE never fails to surprise us. Every year there is at least one team that defies the odds and makes the likes of Paul Merson and Phil Thompson eat their words. Burnley have been that team so far with Sean Dyche's men currently sitting in seventh, just five points behind fourth-placed Liverpool. At the other end of the table, the experienced sides of Stoke and West Brom have struggled for form and both face a battle for Premier League survival in 2018.

As the new year approaches, I would argue that any team below ninth-placed Everton could be dragged into the relegation scrap and many of them will have to spend money in January to give them the best possible chance of beating the drop. Let's take a closer look at the sides who could find themselves playing Championship football next season.

Watford (10th):

Marco Silva arrived at Vicarage Road in the Summer after impressing during his brief stint as manager of Hull in the second half of the 2016/2017 season. Silva's side started the season well and were sat in fourth place after four matches, just two points behind leaders Man City. However, a run of six league games without a win saw them drop to tenth with teams behind them closing the gap. The Hornets were just six points above the relegation zone before their Boxing Day win against Leicester but are now eight points

clear of eighteenth-placed Bournemouth. Despite a run of poor results towards the end of 2017, I'm pretty certain Watford will be safe and shouldn't really get dragged into a serious relegation scrap. However, in previous years they have been known to get complacent towards the end of the season so Silva will have to make sure his team stay consistent throughout the year.

Huddersfield (11th):

David Wagner's side have been a breath of fresh air this season. It's fair to say most pundits predicted they would struggle; but, in Leicester City-esque style, the West Yorkshire side are proving everyone wrong. Okay, they are not on course for the title, but the club is writing its own fairy tale for its fans. Not only did they give Manchester City a close game but a 2-1 victory against Manchester United showed the rest of the league that they are no pushovers. Wagner seems to have a great relationship with his players and everyone knows their roles and responsibilities in the team. The resilience they have shown indicates to me that they have the belief and the ability to stay-up this season but it is very easy for newly-promoted sides to get dragged into the relegation battle if they go on a poor run over the festive period. They may need to bring in a couple of fresh faces in January in case they lose any key players to injury.

Brighton (12th):

With five wins, six draws and nine defeats, Brighton currently sit in 12th place, five points above the drop-zone. Chris Hughton's team have only suffered one hammering this season (a 5-1 loss at home to Liverpool) and the majority of their defeats have been by a single goal. The Seagulls' problem has been finding the back of the net with the majority of their goals coming from either Glenn Murray (5) or Pascal Groß (4). Brighton don't have the biggest squad and I feel they need at least one more striker in January that can weigh in with a few goals. Although they currently sit in 12th, unless they invest some money into their squad in January, I think Hughton's side could struggle in the second half of the season.

Stoke (13th):

After a run of one win in eight games, Stoke got a vital three points at home to West Brom on the 23rd December and another valuable point at Huddersfield on Boxing Day which may have eased the mounting pressure on manager Mark Hughes. Since promotion with Tony Pulis in 2008, Stoke have rarely flirted with the possibility of relegation in their nine-year stint in the top of flight of English football. However, Potters' fans have been frustrated as they look to have been dragged into the fight for survival and a few were calling for Hughes' head a couple of weeks ago. But as we all know, football can change dramatically in a matter of weeks and the Midlands club have managed to climb to 13th with the future perhaps looking more promising. Stoke should have enough in their squad to ensure Premier League status in 2018 and the experience of Hughes over other managers could prove vital.

Southampton (14th):

The Saints have perhaps been overlooked as relegation candidates this season but a run of one win in eleven games and a 5-2 thrashing at the hands of Spurs on Boxing Day has left them just two points above the relegation zone. Mauricio Pellegrino hasn't found managerial life in England particularly easy and his side have struggled for goals. They will be without top scorer Charlie Austin for at least three games as he serves a retrospective ban for violent conduct but the striker has also picked up an injury so could face longer on the side-lines. It will be interesting to see if the Saints are patient with Pellegrino and how much money they will give him to spend in January. Wantaway central defender Virgil Van Dijk is set to complete a rumoured £75 million move to Liverpool and that money must be re-invested or Southampton could be in the thick of it come May.

Newcastle (15th):

Rafa Benitez achieved promotion back to the Premier League with Newcastle at the first time of asking last season but was left frustrated after not being given a sizeable transfer budget in the summer. Despite a reasonable start, the Magpies went on a run of eight defeats in nine games before a much-needed 3-2

victory against West Ham at the weekend. Just one point separates Benitez's men from eighteenth-placed Bournemouth and the Spaniard has made it clear he needs funds to strengthen his squad in January. Newcastle have been here before and know the consequences of not investing wisely. Provided Benitez is backed in transfer market, the Toon have every chance of staying up but it could go down to the wire.

Crystal Palace (16th):

It's fair to say Crystal Palace didn't make the best of starts to the season. Frank De Boer lasted only four games in charge with his side bottom of the table having gained no points and failing to score a single goal. His replacement, Roy Hodgson, was given his first job back in football since he was sacked as England manager and the experienced boss has overseen somewhat of a revival since taking charge at Selhurst Park. Palace picked up their first points of the season with a 2-1 victory over Chelsea in October and, prior to their fixture against Arsenal, went on a record unbeaten run in the Premier League (eight games). They're still very much in the relegation battle but their squad is more than good enough to stay in the division under the care of a safety-first manager. Finally, Wilfred Zaha has been instrumental to the Eagles' revival, so keeping him fit will be crucial to any attempt to steer clear of the drop come May.

West Ham (17th):

West Ham surprised more than a few people when they appointed David Moyes as manager after the sacking of Slaven Bilic in early November. Moyes finished bottom and was relegated with Sunderland last season and it took four games before he saw his first win as Hammers manager with a 1-0 victory at home to Chelsea. Moyes was only given a six month contract by the London club and results have been inconsistent since he has taken charge. West Ham may have a stronger squad than other clubs around them, but they need their big players to step up. Record-signing Marko Arnautovic had a disappointing start to his West Ham career after failing to score in his first nine appearances but he now has five goals in five games and looks like a new player under Moyes. If West Ham can find a level of consistency in 2018 they should have too much to go down, but first they need to fulfil the potential their squad has.

Bournemouth (18th):

After two impressive seasons in the top flight, Bournemouth have struggled in their third consecutive year in the Premiership. Last season's top scorer, Joshua King, has only managed three goals so far with Callum Wilson netting five and Jermain Defoe two. Only bottom side Swansea have lost more games than Eddie Howe's men and they face an almighty struggle for survival in 2018. With Jermain Defoe side-lined for up to ten weeks after fracturing his ankle in the Carabao Cup against Chelsea, Bournemouth will have to look elsewhere for goals. Howe may claim he doesn't need to replace the centre-forward in January but the stats speak for themselves and whilst he may have a spirited side, that isn't always enough to get you over the line.

West Brom (19th):

The Baggies parted company with Tony Pulis in November after a run of ten Premier League games without a win and appointed the former Crystal Palace manager, Alan Pardew, as his successor. Fast forward to the end of December and that run is now eighteen games long and the club find themselves three points adrift from safety. No team has won fewer games this season and goals have been hard to come by. Ironically, in Pulis the Baggies had the ideal man who could have saved them from relegation and they perhaps panicked too soon in sacking the Welshman. West Brom have experience in the likes of Gareth Barry and Chris Brunt but they are a side low on confidence and Pardew has not yet been able to spark a revival. You feel once they get their first win under the new manager they could put a run of results together but it needs to happen soon. Like most sides around them, they desperately need to recruit a goal-scorer in January but finding the right man is never easy.

Swansea (20th):

Last season, Swansea appointed Paul Clement to steer them to safety and he managed it with a game to

spare. However, he has not been able to replace top goal-scorers Gylfi Sigurdsson and Fernando Llorente after they both left in the summer for big money to Everton and Tottenham, respectively. Wilfred Bony came the other way from Manchester City but the Ivory Coast international has managed only two goals since his return to the south coast of Wales and on-loan Chelsea striker Tammy Abraham is without a goal since October, making the Swans the lowest scorers in the division. Clement was sacked following a 3-1 defeat to Everton and Carlos Carvalhal has been appointed as his replacement. Carvalhal arrives at the Liberty Stadium after a run of seven games without a win brought his time as Sheffield Wednesday boss to an end by “mutual consent” less than a week ago. The Portuguese coach has only been given a six-month contract at the Liberty Stadium and faces an uphill struggle to ensure a seventh season of Premier League football for the Welsh side. He must be backed in the transfer market to stand any real chance of keeping the Swans up this season.



Most Read Discussed

1. [Men's Football 3s fight back to win on Derby Day](#)
2. [Premier League Round-Up: Gameweek 15](#)
3. [Zidane the greatest of all time](#)
4. [Mind over Matter: An insight into the psychology of boxing](#)
5. [Women's sport to open and close Roses 2019](#)
6. [Is lad culture really a bad thing?](#)

Write for Nouse Sport

[Get in touch with the editors](#)

[Join the Facebook group](#)

More in Sport

[York 'Movember' total revealed](#)

[Premier League Round-Up: Gameweek 15](#)

[Premier League Round-Up: Gameweek 14](#)

[Men's Football 3s fight back to win on Derby Day](#)

[Premier League Round-Up: Gameweek 13](#)

[Netball 1s show Roses mettle in front of large crowd](#)

[About Nouse](#)

[Who's Nouse](#)

[Website Credits](#)

[Contact Us](#)
[Advertising](#)
[Archives](#)
[Student Discounts](#)
[Print Editions](#)
[Mini-Sites](#)
[Nouse on Twitter](#)
[Nouse on Facebook](#)
[Nouse on Google+](#)

© 1964-2018 Nouse

[Policies](#) |

