Department of Humanities, Northumbria University

Honours Dissertation

The Football League and the game it made: A study of the Development and Transformation of Association Football, 1888–1914

Oliver White

BA Hons History

2015

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of BA (Hons) History.

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations

The FA	The Football Association
The FA Cup	The Football Association Challenge Cup
The (L)eague	The Football League
GFTU	General Federation of Trade Unions

Introduction

Until the midway point of the nineteenth century, football had existed as a sport devoid of any formal regulations.[1] However, on October 26th, 1863, eleven representatives from various football clubs and schools within London, frustrated by the game's lack of common laws, established the Football Association.[2] This organisation created a single set of rules which soon became universally recognised by all of the sport's players and clubs.[3] Following this development, Charles Alcock, the FA's honorary secretary, 'set a light to what one day was to become a worldwide fire'[4] by founding a knock-out completion in 1871, the Football Association Challenge Cup.[5] The tournament's subsequent popularity helped to spread the association game throughout the country.[6] It became an established fixture of the British social scene, and soon began to attract a large number of working-class players and spectators.[7] The FA Cup also made football more competitive. Various clubs, especially those founded in the Northern industrial towns where football was beginning to flourish, became determined to attract the sport's best players to their teams.[8] As a result, several began to poach talented individuals from their rivals or offer inducements in the form of jobs and money.[9] Numerous 'Caledonian mercenaries' were also lured South and underhandedly employed by ambitious clubs.[10] In response, the Football Association, 'a wholly amateur body with wholly amateur aspiration',[11] attempted to limit payments to bona fide expenses and compensation for

[1] Derek Birley, *Sport and the making of Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 257.
[2] Adrian Harvey, *Football: The First Hundred Years, The Untold Story of the People's Game* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 135.
[3] Tony Mason, 'Football', in Tony Mason (ed.), *Sport in Britain: A Social History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 146.
[4] Alisdair R. Wilson, *Football Under The Skin: A Historical Glimpse At Soccer In Tyne & Wear 1879-1988* (Newcastle: Tyne and Wear Museums Service, 1988), p. 7.
[5] Nicholas Mason, *The story of all the world's football games: Football!* (London: Maurice Temple Smith Ltd, 1974), p. 24.
[6] Alfred Gibson and William Pickford, *Association Football & the men who made it: Vol 1* (London: Caxton, 1905), p. 45.
[7] Mason, *The story of all the world's football games*, p. 40.
[8] Mason, 'Football', in Mason (ed.), *Sport in Britain*, p. 147.
[9] Ibid.
[10] James A. H. Catton, *The Real Football: a sketch of the development of the association game* (London: Sands, 1900), p. 56.
[11] Neil Wigglesworth, *The Evolution of English Sport* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1996), p. 116.

'wages actually lost'.[12] However, this failed to check the advancing tide of professionalism. In protest of the FA's restrictions, on October 30th, 1884, 37 clubs, predominantly from the North, announced their intentions to form a rival body, the British Football Association.[13] Faced with this potential source of opposition, the FA reluctantly legalised professionalism on July 20th, 1885.[14]

Despite such progress, football began to suffer from a number of deficiencies. By 1888, Simon Inglis claims that the sport was 'all but dying on its feet'.[15] Many fixtures were subject to last minute cancellations, or at least delay.[16] It was 'no uncommon thing to find games started 30, 40, even 60 minutes late'.[17] Spectators often arrived at matches only to find them abandoned because a club 'could not raise a team'.[18] As well as this, small clubs frequently found their game's called off at the last minute because their opposition had arranged another fixture which promised to attract a higher gate.[19] The structure of the FA Cup also caused problems. Following elimination from the competition, clubs were often left with no other alternative than to participate in a series of 'friendly matches'.[20] However, these fixtures lacked excitement and soon became wearisome.[21] Spectators inevitably became frustrated and disinterested. Many professional clubs, who relied on profitable gates to pay their players' weekly wages, were alarmed by these developments.[22] Something was evidently required to galvanise the sport. William McGregor, a Scotsman living in Birmingham and a committee member of Aston Villa Football Club, believed that an organised, competitive series of fixtures, played 'home and away' between twelve of the country's professional teams, would help to maintain spectator interest throughout the season, and provide the necessary income to meet the

[12] Catton, *The Real Football*, p. 56.
[13] David Goldblatt, *The Ball is Round: A Global History of Football* (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 43.
[14] Catton, *The Real Football*, p. 63.
[15] Simon Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League, 1888-1988: League Football and the men who made it* (London: Willow Books, 1988), p. 5.
[16] J. A. Brierley et al. (eds.), *The Story of the Football League: 1888-1938* (Preston: Guardian Press, 1938), p. 1.
[17] Ivan Sharpe, *The Football League Jubilee Book* (London: Stanley Paul & Co Ltd, 1963), p. 4.
[18] Brierley et al. (eds.), *The Story of the Football League*, p. 1.
[19] John Harding, *For the Good of the Game: The Official History of the Professional Footballers' Association* (London: Robson Books Ltd, 1991), p. 1.
[20] Gibson and Pickford, *Association Football & the men who made it: Vol* 1, p. 99.
[21] Jason A. H. Catton, *The Rise of the Leaguers from 1863-1897* (London: Sporting Chronicle, 1897), p. 14.
[22] Mason, *The story of all the world's football games*, p. 36.

weekly wage bill.[23] In the spring of 1888, he invited Preston North End, Burnley, Accrington, Blackburn Rovers, Bolton Wanderers, Stoke, Aston Villa, West Bromwich Albion, Everton, Wolverhampton Wanderers, Derby County, and Notts County to form the Football League, the first of its kind in the world.[24] As James Catton, a writer for the *Athletic News*, noted in 1897, once initiated, McGregor's competition 'has never known a check'.[25]

However, despite the presence of a plethora of works relating to the association game, there exists a scarcity of secondary literature devoted principally to the League and its impact on English football. Much of the historiography concerning the association game tends to undermine the League's importance, and wider themes and issues relating to the sport are often focused upon in its place. For example, Tony Mason, in his *Association Football & English Society: 1863-1915*, primarily discusses football's overall impact on class consciousness,[26] whilst James Walvin's *Football and the Decline of Britain* relates the association game to broader social and economic trends which served to transform the nature of British life.[27] Moreover, Stephen Wagg's *The Football World: A Contemporary Social History* predominantly focuses on the sport's relationship with the media, as well as the effect of mass consumption on football's growth and transformation.[28] Furthermore, Richard Giulianotti, in his *Football: A Sociology of the Global Game*, pays particular attention to the sport's cultural complexities, especially in terms of its influence on notions of class, gender, ethnicity, business, and nationalism.[29] Of all the literature relating to English soccer, only Simon Inglis' book, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League, 1888-1988: League Football and the men who made it*, focuses entirely on McGregor's innovative tournament.[30] However, Inglis'

[23] William McGregor, 'The League and the League System', in C. W. Alcock et al. (eds.), *The Book of Football: A Complete History and Record of the Association and Rugby Games* (London: The Amalgamated Press, 1906), p. 171.
[24] Brierley et al. (eds.), *The Story of the Football League*, p. 2.
[25] Catton, *The Rise of the Leaguers from 1863-1897*, p. 18.
[26] Tony Mason, *Association Football & English Society: 1863-1915* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1980).
[27] James Walvin, *Football and the Decline of Britain* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1986).
[28] Stephen Wagg, *The Football World: A Contemporary History* (Sussex: The Harvester University Press, 1984).
[29] Richard Giulianotti, *Football: A sociology of the global game* (Cambridge: Policy Press, 1999).
[30] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*.

volume provides only a broad synopsis of the League's growth during its first one hundred years, rather than a critical analysis of its importance to the overall development of the association game.[31]

Thus, the significance of the Football League has largely been underestimated by several scholars. At best, the competition is regarded as one of a number of factors which contributed towards football's development during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In contrast, this dissertation sets out to argue that McGregor's pioneering competition, in the period between 1888 and 1914, played a crucial role in facilitating the development and transformation of the association game. To come to this conclusion, the evolution of the League during its formative years, as well as its impact on the nature and structure of English football, will be analysed in the three following chapters.

Chapter one focuses on the League's initial growth and geographical expansion throughout its early period. It examines the criticism aimed at the League during its infancy, as well as the competition's subsequent popularity following the success of its opening season. Additionally, this chapter discusses both the extent to which the onset of McGregor's competition influenced the structure of the FA Cup, and the Football League's role in encouraging the foundation of a number of parallel league tournaments. Furthermore, it critiques the 'northern-ness' of the League,[32] as well as the South's reaction to the competition's growing popularity.

Chapter two primarily examines a number of the contentious issues which the League faced during its formative period. It discusses the disobedient nature of several of the organisation's clubs, and also evaluates the extent to which such unruliness helped the League to develop during its early years. Moreover, this chapter critiques the influence of the League on the introduction of two significant policies: the retain and transfer system and the £4 a week maximum wage. In addition, this section analyses the difficulties faced by the League's sportsmen, as well as their subsequent unionisation, as a result of the implementation of these regulations. Furthermore, in order to

[31] Ibid.
[32] Tony Mason, 'Football', in Tony Mason (ed.), *Sport in Britain: A Social History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 178.

determine what motivated shareholders and directors to invest in football clubs, this chapter concludes by evaluating the precarious financial condition of many of the League's early participants.

Chapter 3 is predominantly devoted to the Football League's emerging culture of spectatorship amongst the working class populace. It discusses the economic developments which allowed for the competition's growing popularity amongst the proletariat, in addition to offering cultural reasons as to why the League proved so attractive to this social group. Furthermore, this section discusses the importance of the press in encouraging the League's rise to prominence, as well as the competition's effect on two social activities, the consumption of alcohol and coupon betting. Moreover, this chapter assesses both the prevalence of spectator violence during the League's opening seasons, and the architectural limitations of the arenas which accommodated the competition's boisterous enthusiasts. In closing, this section will discuss the impetus for the transformation of several of the League's clubs into limited liability companies, as well as the impact of this development on the competition's proletarian spectators.

Chapter 1: Creation and expansion

On the 22nd March, 1888, at the Anderton Hotel, London, the Football League held its inaugural meeting, attended by seven of its founding members.[33] Amongst these initial representatives, 'a strong feeling was evinced that something should be done to improve the present unsatisfactory state of club fixtures and to render them more certain in their fulfilment and interesting in character'.[34] This chapter will examine the League's subsequent development and territorial expansion throughout its formative years. It will analyse the initial criticism that the competition faced, as well as its rise in popularity following the commencement of its inaugural season. Furthermore, this section will examine both the impact of the League on the organisation of the FA Cup, and its role in providing the spur for the creation of several similar league competitions. Additionally, this chapter will assess the predominantly Northern nature of the League during the competition's early period. In closing, it will evaluate the response of the South, a region where amateurism had remained largely entrenched, to the growing prosperity of the Football League.

The socio-economic and cultural origins of the League were fundamentally Northern and working-class. At the organisation's first meeting, Blackburn Rovers were represented by John Birtwistle, a factory inspector.[35] Burnley's spokesman, George Armistead, was an auctioneer.[36] West Bromwich Albion sent Thomas Smith, a former employee of a spring and scale manufacturing plant.[37] Wolverhampton Wanderers were represented by William Allt, a boot and shoe maker, and Stoke sent Harry Lockett, a local printer.[38] McGregor, who chaired the meeting, owned a drapery shop near Aston Villa's ground.[39] Only Notts County's representative, Arthur Ashwell, a solicitor and

[33] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 7.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Peter Morris, *Aston Villa: The History of a Great Football Club, 1874-1960* (London: The Naldrett Press Ltd, 1960), p. 25.

a former Rugby schoolboy, stood apart from the rest.[40] The League's inaugural members agreed that the competition's fixtures were to be played under the rules of the Football Association, that each club were to play their full strength side in each match, that the price of admission was to be decided by the home team, and that results were to be determined by a system of points based on wins, draws, and losses.[41] Two points were to be awarded for a win, and one for a draw.[42] As well as this, at the end of each season, the four lowest ranked clubs were to retire from the competition, though they were eligible to gain re-entry to the League via an election process.[43] It was hoped that the struggle to avoid this process would produce a competitive spirit amongst the League's clubs.[44]

The Football League's choice of teams was met with some controversy. The *Athletic News* claimed that 'some of the "twelve most prominent" Association clubs, who are to form the new League, have been knocked into smithereens by teams who, so far, have been left out in the cold'.[45] For example, Bootle, then Merseyside's leading football force, were overlooked in favour of Everton, who were largely regarded as the weakest of the twelve selected clubs.[46] The same newspaper also complained that Notts County, having 'just closed their absolute worst season', were 'distinctly fortunate' to gain admission to the League.[47] The selection of Accrington, a club who regularly tasted defeat to teams 'admittedly inferior to them', was likewise criticised.[48] Applications from Nottingham Forest, Halliwell, and Sheffield Wednesday were also rejected.[49] Although the League argued that it was unable to accommodate additional teams due to the fact that its fixtures were

[40] Alan Thomlinson, 'North and South: the rivalry of the Football League and the Football Association', in John Williams and Stephen Wagg (eds.), *British Football and Social Change: Getting into Europe* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991), p. 30.
[41] Sharpe, *The Football League Jubilee Book*, p. 9.
[42] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 14.
[43] Sharpe, *The Football League Jubilee Book*, p. 9.
[44] Sports and Recreations', *The Blackburn Standard: Darwen Observer, and North-East Lancashire Advertiser*, 1 September 1888.
[45] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 8.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 8.

restricted to twenty-two vacant dates,[50] James Catton, a close associate of Nottingham Forest, claimed that the League was 'a mere money-making scheme'.[51] He believed that Notts County had being preferred by the League because they played at Trent Bridge, which had a better tram service than Forest's ground at Lenton.[52] For the League, a better tram service meant potentially more spectators at its matches, and thus greater profits. Although McGregor admitted that some of the 'excluded clubs were superior to those ones among the chosen twelve', the privileged few had been selected for 'having the highest gates'.[53] McGregor had insisted on admitting only one club per town or city to the League,[54] and the competition's founding members all represented municipalities with populations of 80,000 or more.[55] By limiting the number of teams in this way, McGregor hoped to generate enough spectators and gate money per club to make his competition financially sustainable.[56]

Several of the clubs overlooked by the Football League recognised the competition's vast potential.[57] As a result, in March 1888, J. G. Hall, the secretary of Crewe Alexandra, attempted to gather support for the creation of the Combination, a parallel tournament made up of teams rejected by the Football League.[58] This competition was officially established on April 27th, 1888, and included Newton Heath, Grimsby Town, Northwich Victoria, Notts Rangers, Bootle, Small Heath, Long Eaton Rangers, Walsall Town Swifts, Halliwell, Birmingham St Georges, Darwen, Crewe Alexandra, South Shore, Lincoln City, Derby Midland, Derby Junction, Burslem Port Vale, Blackburn Olympic, Leek Town, and Gainsborough Trinity.[59] However, several of these teams were distinctly mediocre. Although Blackburn Olympic had won the FA Cup in 1883, they had since been entirely

[50] McGregor, 'The League and the League System', in C. W. Alcock et al. (eds.), *The Book of Football*, p. 173.
[51] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 10.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Sharpe, *The Football League Jubilee Book*, p. 5.
[55] Neil Wigglesworth, *The story of sport in England* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 103.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Alan Shury and Brian Landamore, *The Definitive Newton Heath F.C.* (Nottingham: SoccerData, 2002), p. 11.
[58] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 8.
[59] Shury and Landamore, *The Definitive Newton Heath F.C.*, p. 77.

overshadowed by the subsequent achievements of their neighbours, Blackburn Rovers.[60] The Combination was ultimately blighted by a lack of central organisation and unfulfilled fixtures.[61] Following a chaotic first season, the league disbanded in April 1889.[62] Despite this, as Simon Inglis notes, 'the alacrity with which Hall copied McGregor's example showed one thing: this league business was going to be mighty popular'.[63]

One of the principal reasons for forming the Football League had been the dissatisfaction at the manner in which ordinary fixtures had been interfered with as a result of incompatible cup ties.[64] To prevent this, John Bentley, secretary of Bolton Wanderers and a founding committee member of the Football League,[65] and William Sudell, a leading figure in the fight for professionalism and the Chairman of Preston North End,[66] proposed that League matches should take place on an agreed date, irrespective of any cup match.[67] In order to guarantee this permanence, the Football Association, unable to simply reschedule cup ties due to the League's lack of available dates for fixtures, agreed to exempt twenty-two clubs from the opening two rounds of its FA Cup competition.[68] Nine of the League's twelve teams were excused.[69] 'Now, instead of the leading clubs being compelled to go through the ordeal of slaughtering the innocents in the initial stages, the innocents will have all the fun to themselves until Christmas… then the real fight for supremacy will commence', wrote the *Athletic News*.[70] *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* also reported that this new development would 'be of great advantage to the members of the "charmed circle"', as it allowed for the FA Cup's later stages to be 'fought out with the keenest rivalry' between the

[60] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 8.
[61] Shury and Landamore, *The Definitive Newton Heath F.C.*, p. 11.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 9.
[64] 'The new Football League', *The Blackburn Standard: Darwen Observer, and North-East Lancashire Advertiser*, 21 April 1888.
[65] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 9.
[66] Dean Hayes, *The Deepdale Story: An A to Z of Preston North End FC* (Chorley: Sport in World Ltd, 1996), p. 210.
[67] The new Football League', *The Blackburn Standard: Darwen Observer, and North-East Lancashire Advertiser*, 21 April 1888.
[68] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 12.
[69] 'Multiple Sports Items', *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 6 October 1888.
[70] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 12.

'champions of the division and the champions of the association'.[71] Although McGregor claimed that the League would never 'aspire to be a governing body', and believed that it was best 'for the whole government of football to be in the hands of the Football Association',[72] the fact that his competition was able to modify the organisation of the FA Cup emphasises the degree of influence it was beginning to hold over English football.[73]

On September 8th, 1888, the Football League's first five fixtures commenced.[74] McGregor claimed that the onset of this competition provided soccer with 'a new lease of life'.[75] Before its establishment, the 'players had been a law unto themselves. They had shown in-and-out form, varying their play according to the strength of their opponents'.[76] In contrast, spectators now knew 'that if a match was announced between Preston North End and Blackburn Rovers, they would see Preston and Blackburn at their best. They would see their strongest elevens, and they would see them fight with grim determination'.[77] As a result, as each sporting weekend approached, the League began to attract considerable attention.[78] Whilst other clubs were forced to advertise their desire for games in the local press,[79] the regimented calendar of the Football League meant consistent interest in its matches. An estimated 10,000 witnessed Everton play Accrington at Anfield,[80] whilst a 'large assemblage of spectators' gathered to watch Wolverhampton Wanderers face West Bromwich Albion.[81] McGregor went as far as to claim that 'attendances at League games became treble what they had been when the same matches were played as friendlies'.[82]

As the Football League's popularity grew, demand for membership from unaffiliated clubs intensified. They realised that being part of the League brought with it a number of benefits.

---

[71] 'Multiple Sports Items', *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 6 October 1888.
[72] McGregor, 'The League and the League System', in C. W. Alcock et al. (eds.), *The Book of Football*, p. 174.
[73] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 12.
[74] 'Multiple Sports Items', *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 11 September 1888.
[75] McGregor, 'The League and the League System', in C. W. Alcock et al. (eds.), *The Book of Football*, p. 173.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] 'Our Football Letter', *Manchester Times*, 13 October 1888.
[79] 'Football Notes', *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 11 December 1888.
[80] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 13.
[81] 'Saturday's Football', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 17 December 1888.
[82] McGregor, 'The League and the League System', in C. W. Alcock et al. (eds.), *The Book of Football*, p. 173.

Sustained competition meant a regular flow of income, as well as consistently large crowds throughout the season.[83] As well as this, several teams wished to emulate the achievements of the 'famous North Enders',[84] Preston's 'invincible' side which negotiated the inaugural League season without losing a single game.[85] Gaining League membership presented clubs with an opportunity to accomplish this goal. As a result of such enthusiasm, the competition's expansion became 'inevitable sooner or later'.[86] Accordingly, in 1891, the number of competing League teams was increased from twelve to fourteen.[87] The competition now included seven clubs from Lancashire, six from the Midlands, and one from the North-East.[88]

Following this, on April 22nd, 1892, the Football League's Management Committee decided to form the competition's Second Division.[89] To achieve this, the Football Alliance, a competition established in 1889 to emulate the League, was to be merged with McGregor's inaugural competition.[90] The lack of any formal transfer agreement between these two domestic competitions had meant that clubs from the Alliance could freely poach players from the Football League, and vice versa.[91] The two leagues agreed that unification represented the easiest way to alleviate this issue.[92] Formerly, the Alliance had acted as an ad hoc 'second division' to the League.[93] After Stoke's retirement from the latter, the Alliance had accepted them as a new member.[94] As well as this, after the Football League made the decision to expand from twelve to fourteen clubs, Darwen, a member of the Alliance, helped to make up the additional numbers.[95] Thus, the two leagues were already associated to some extent prior to their official merger. The three strongest Alliance clubs, Sheffield

[83] Harding, *For the Good of the Game*, p. 2.
[84] 'Football Notes', *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 11 December 1888.
[85] Mason, *The story of all the world's football games*, p. 37.
[86] Brierley et al. (eds.), *The Story of the Football League*, p. 8.
[87] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 23.
[88] Ibid, p. 24.
[89] Ibid, p. 25.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid, p. 22.
[92] Ibid, p. 25.
[93] Ibid, p. 15.
[94] Dinant Abbink, 'England – The Football Alliance', 23 July 2006, <http://www.rsssf.com/tablese/engfootalliancehist.html>, [accessed 18 March 2015].
[95] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 23.

Wednesday, Nottingham Forest, and Newton Heath, were admitted to the Football League's First Division. The remaining eight, Burton Swifts, Grimsby Town, Bootle, Walsall Town Swifts, Small Health Alliance, Crewe Alliance, Lincoln City, and Ardwick, joined Darwen, Burslem Port Vale, Sheffield United, and Northwich Victoria, in making up the competition's new Second Division.[96] As a result of this growth, the League had spread its reach to Manchester, Cheshire, Lincolnshire, and South Yorkshire.[97] Following this, in 1893, the organisation expanded its lower tier to sixteen clubs and invited Liverpool and Woolwich Arsenal to join for the first time.[98] Although the League did not specifically target underrepresented regions, and it was mainly attracted to big cities and municipalities rife with potential spectators, its decision to admit Woolwich Arsenal marked the point at which it made its first foray into the South, a move which helped its prospects to become a truly national identity.[99] By 1905, the League was well on its way to achieving this goal. It had expanded once more, this time to forty clubs, split equally between its two divisions.[100] As a result, its teams located in Lancashire were now rivalled by a growing cluster of clubs across the Pennines.[101] As for the South, London was now represented by three clubs, Clapton Orient in the East, Arsenal in the South, and Chelsea in the West.[102]

Professional football in England was undoubtedly largely a Northern game before 1914.[103] In 1892, the *Nineteenth Century* wrote that in all of the 'large towns, and most of the small ones, north of Birmingham to the Tweed, from September to April, Saturday is consecrated to football'.[104] McGregor and Bentley, the Football League's first two presidents, were associated with Aston Villa and Bolton Wanderers respectively,[105] and the organisation's headquarters were located in

[96] Ibid, p. 26.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid, p. 31.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid, p. 57.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Richard Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 175.
[104] Charles Edwardes, 'The New Football Mania', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 32, No. 188, (1892), p. 622.
[105] Thomlinson, 'North and South', in Williams and Wagg (eds.), *British Football and Social Change*, p. 31.

Preston.[106] The FA Cup Final had traditionally being played at the Oval, the home of Surrey County Cricket Club. However, with Surrey becoming increasingly worried about the damage that the boisterous crowds might do to their pitch, the Football Association, lacking a viable local alternative, agreed to move the fixture to a Northern ground.[107] In 1893, the match was played at Fallowfield, Manchester.[108] The following year, the final was moved to Goodison Park, the home of Everton.[109] Although the fixture returned to London in 1895, the two Northern matches had each attracted far greater attendances than any previous final at the Oval.[110] Furthermore, the FA's decision to return the fixture to the capital was in no way a reflection of the geographical balance of power. Although the 1895 final attracted 45,000 spectators, most were either Aston Villa or Wolverhampton Wanderers supporters 'making a day's outing of it'.[111]

William Pickford, a stout supporter of the Southern amateur game and a member of the council of the FA, was dismissive towards the Football League following its establishment. Looking back at 1888, he wrote, 'We, in the South, did not for a time take interest in it. Twelve clubs struggling under the handicap of having to pay players' wages, as a consequence of their success in securing the recognition of professionalism… That was about all'.[112] Such scorn gave rise to what came to be seen as a straightforward division: the Football League represented working men from the industrial North and the Midlands, whilst the FA epitomised the amateur gentlemen from the South.[113] Indeed, at the time of the League's formation in 1888, there were no professional football clubs south of the Midlands.[114] Despite this, the League's competition certainly aroused considerable interest amongst several Southerners. Alfred Gibson, writing in *Association Football & the men who made it*, claimed that, 'Year after year the League clubs and their doings formed the chief football

[106] Mason, 'Football', in Mason (ed.), *Sport in Britain*, p. 178.
[107] Derek Birley, *Land of Sport and Glory: Sport and British Society, 1887-1910* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 41.
[108] Mason, *The story of all the world's football games*, p. 37.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid, p. 38.
[111] Birley, *Land of Sport and Glory*, p. 41.
[112] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 18.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Brierley et al. (eds.), *The Story of the Football League*, p. 2.

topic not only in their own towns, but in the South. To have paid a visit North and seen an occasional match was a memorable event to the average Southerner'.[115]

In the summer of 1891, cautious of the possibility of their amateur players being lured away by the monetary rewards that the Football League's professional teams could offer,[116] Woolwich Arsenal became the first football club south of Birmingham to adopt professionalism.[117] Soon after, in 1893, they were invited to join the League's Second Division.[118] Their example provided the spur that was needed in the South.[119] At the instigation of William Henderson, the secretary of Millwall Athletic, the Southern League was established in 1894.[120] This competition, designed to mirror the Football League, was received so enthusiastically that a second division was immediately established to complement its original grouping.[121] Thus, Chatham, Clapton Orient, Ilford, Luton Town, Millwall Athletic, Reading, Royal Ordinance Factories, Southampton St Mary's, and Swindon Town were elected to the Southern League's First Division, whilst Bromley, Chesham, Maidenhead, New Brompton, Old St Stephens, Sheppey United, and Uxbridge made up the competition's lower tier.[122] The justification for founding the Southern League came when North London's first professional side, Tottenham Hotspur, who had joined the league in 1895,[123] won, via a reply, the 1901 FA Cup.[124] Their team consisted of three Northerners, two Welshmen, an Irishman, and five Scots.[125] This mattered little to Southern spectators. As Richard Holt describes, 'it was the territory of the crowd not the players that counted… The birthplace of the players was of little significance'.[126] What

[115] Gibson and Pickford, *Association Football & the men who made it: Vol* 1, p. 103.
[116] Phil Soar and Martin Tyler, *The Official Illustrated History of Arsenal: 1886-2005* (London: Hamlyn, 2005), p. 25.
[117] Mason, *The story of all the world's football games*, p. 38.
[118] Birley, *Land of Sport and Glory*, p. 41.
[119] Mason, *The story of all the world's football games*, p. 38.
[120] Leigh Edwards, *The Official Centenary History of the Southern League: 1894-1994* (West Midlands: Paper Plane Publishing Ltd, 1993), p. 15.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Lionel Francis, *Seventy Five Years of Southern League Football* (London: Pelham Books Ltd., 1969), p. 22.
[123] Dinant Abbink, 'England – Southern League Final Tables', 24 July 2005, <http://www.rsssf.com/tablese/engsouthernleaghist.html>, [accessed 18 March 2015].
[124] Mason, *The story of all the world's football games*, p. 103.
[125] Birley, *Land of Sport and Glory*, p. 41.
[126] Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 171.

spectators wanted 'was not local representatives on the field, but the chance to participate in a vicarious battle that would end in victory for their gladiator'.[127] Thus, far from having no interest in the League's system of competition, the South had adopted and absorbed the competitive spirit associated with the inaugural tournament.

Following the onset of the twentieth century, some of the Southern League's clubs began to challenge the Football League's domination of the FA Cup. After Spurs' victory in 1901, both Southampton and Bristol City reached the competition's final in 1902 and 1908 respectively.[128] However, such achievements were minimal, and most of the Southern League's clubs were markedly inferior to those competing in the Football League.[129] Essentially, the Southern competition came to be regarded as the third tier of English football, situated beneath the League's First and Second divisions.[130] By March 1907, the Southern League had accepted the fact that the Football League was the undisputed 'football of the country'.[131] As a result, in order to gain entry into 'the camp', they proposed to create a new national competition, based on a merger with the League.[132] This would allow them to share in the inaugural competition's prosperity and popularity. However, the Football League's Management Committee were 'loath to see a bunch of outsiders muscle in on the act'.[133] They hoped that the best Southern League clubs would eventually join the Football League anyway.[134] The rationality of this was confirmed when the Southern League champions for the previous two seasons, Fulham, successfully applied to join the rival organisation in the summer of 1907.[135] As a result, London now contained four Football League clubs, two of which were close neighbours in West London.[136] Upon joining the League, like other Southern clubs before them,

[127] Birley, *Land of Sport and Glory*, p. 42.
[128] Ibid, p. 231.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Birley, *Land of Sport and Glory*, p. 41.
[131] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 69.
[132] Ibid, p. 60.
[133] Ibid, p. 61.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid.

Fulham agreed to offer Northern teams £20 in order to compensate them for travel expenses.[137] The fact that they agreed to such a demand, despite already being the dominant force in the Southern League, only serves to emphasise the appeal of the Football League to unaffiliated clubs. In March 1909, the Southern League once again attempted to unite the two leagues, this time into a sixty strong competition consisting of a First Division of twenty clubs, and two equivalent second divisions, North and South.[138] However, every one of the Football League's forty clubs rejected this proposal.[139] They wanted 'antagonism', not an amalgamation of the football world.[140] As a result, the Southern League would only be able to watch helplessly as its strongest clubs defected to the dominant Football League over the next decade.[141]

In the twenty-six years following its establishment in 1888, the Football League had expanded from twelve clubs to become a dominant federation of forty teams, split equally between its two divisions.[142] As well as the undisputed hegemony the League held over the North and the Midlands, several teams south of Birmingham were also participating in its fixtures by 1914.[143] Thus, the competition was well on its way to becoming the dominant football force across the whole country. This expansion was an inevitable consequence of the League's popularity. It had bypassed the potential restrictions presented by the organisation of the FA Cup, and it was now free to arrange its fixtures freely and with a reliability which encouraged enthusiasts to gather on the terraces in every increasing numbers. The fact that spectators were guaranteed to see a competitive game each week only helped to intensify the competition's growing appeal. As well as this, the League's vast potential and subsequent success had encouraged the formation of several equivalent competitions, most notably the Southern League. With this, the Football League had helped to belatedly spread professionalism throughout the South, a development which serves to emphasise

[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid, p. 68.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid, p. 69.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid, p. 57.
[143] Paul Felton and Barry Spencer, 'England 1913-1914', 11 February 2000, <http://www.rsssf.com/engpaul/FLA/1913-14.html>, [accessed 20 April 2015].

the competitions growing influence. However, despite such progress, the League was undeniably forced to contend with a number of difficulties during its early period. The following chapter will address these issues, and assess the extent to which the League's response facilitated the development and transformation of the association game.

Chapter 2: Transfers, wages and strife

In 1938, Charles Sutcliffe, a member of the Football League's Management Committee from 1898 to 1927, and the League's President from 1936 until his death in 1939,[144] claimed that the competition's rules and regulations had being 'conceived in a spirit of fairness and equality'.[145] Despite this, the Football League's early years were blighted by quarrels and disputes, and each meeting of the organisation's Management Committee brought with it new problems.[146] This chapter will focus on several of the issues which affected the League during its formative period. It will critique the organisations response to a number of offences, including instances of match fixing, the poaching of professionals, the fielding of ineligible players, and cases of financial transgression. As well as this, it will evaluate the extent to which such unruliness served to benefit the League during its initial stages of development. The introduction of the retain and transfer system, as well the £4 a week maximum wage, will also be analysed, as will the impact of these regulations on the League's professional players. Additionally, this chapter will examine the establishment of the Players' Union, as well as the response of the League and the Football Association to this development. Finally, in order to assert the extent to which club shareholders and directors were motivated by monetary rewards, this chapter will conclude by discussing the unstable financial condition of many of the League's clubs during the competition's infancy.

Several of the Football League's rules were broken by the very same men who had helped to formulate them. Fielding ineligible players was the most common offence. At a meeting on December 2nd, 1889, at which the first punishments were handed out for this transgression, Wolverhampton Wanderers, Stoke and Bolton Wanderers were each fined by a panel consisting of William Allt, Henry Lockett, and John Bentley, each of whom were representatives of the guilty teams.[147] The poaching of a club's players was also a prevalent issue. On December 11th, 1891, in

[144] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 387.
[145] Brierley et al. (eds.), *The Story of the Football League*, p. 7.
[146] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 18.
[147] Ibid.

order to curb this misdemeanour, the League prohibited its players from receiving more than £10 as a bonus or signing-on fee.[148] This represented about a month's wage for the average footballer, which discouraged many from relocating their families following an approach from another club.[149] A number of fixtures were also subject to claims of match fixing. In 1900, rumours were rife that the relegation decider between Blackburn Rovers and Preston North End had been fixed in the latter's favour.[150] During the same season, before Burnley's match against Nottingham Forest, Jack Hillman, Burnley's goalkeeper, had attempted to bribe the Forest players, offering them £2 each to 'take it easy'.[151] Many of the League's members were also liable to put self-interest 'before the good of the whole body of clubs'.[152] For example, in 1895, William Sudell, Chairman of Preston North End, was jailed for three years for fraudulently redirecting funds from his mill business, largely in order to fund his club.[153] As well as this, in May 1911, after the League discovered that there had been 'distinct and flagrant tampering' of Middlesbrough's books, the club was fined £300 and many of its directors were suspended indefinitely.[154] Thus, it is undeniable that professional football in the period before World War I was subject to irregularities amongst its participants.

In 1938, Charles Sutcliffe, a member of the League's Management Committee from 1898 to 1936, wrote that, during the competition's formative years, 'the receipts at Burnley were only £33 18s 4d and those at Preston £39 1s'.[155] In his view, these gates afforded 'some indication of the poverty-stricken means of the clubs at that time and maybe throw some light upon why illegal sources were tapped so often'.[156] However, such unruliness was not without its benefits. It allowed the League, an organisation with few sources of income, to draw approximately half of its revenue

[148] Ibid, p. 24.
[149] Ibid, p. 24.
[150] Ibid, p. 47.
[151] 'Roll-call of shame: the history of British match-fixing', *The Independent*, 15 March 1995.
[152] Brierley et al. (eds.), *The Story of the Football League*, p. 6.
[153] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 29.
[154] 'Association Football', *The Times*, 30 May 1911.
[155] Brierley et al. (eds.), *The Story of the Football League*, p. 8.
[156] Ibid.

from the fines it imposed.[157] For example, during the competition's second season, of its total earnings of £141 11s, £71 1s came from the payment of penalties.[158] By the summer of 1890, poaching, disregarding the fixture list, and fielding ineligible players, were all punishable by a fine of £50.[159] Clubs who failed to play their strongest teams in League matches were also to be levied £25 and deducted two points.[160] Thus, as well as providing the necessary authority to bring many of its disobedient clubs into line, the League's system of fines and restrictions also supplied the organisation with a crucial stream of income during its early period.

The Football League argued that the success of its competition depended on the maintenance of teams of a similar quality. This would keep the outcome of games exciting and help to maintain spectator interest throughout the season.[161] The obvious method of preserving the League's status quo, the sharing of gate money, was resisted by the majority of the organisation's members. A club situated in the centre of a large population could earn potentially three or four times as much as a team located in a small town, and this was more appealing to directors and owners than a sharing of the financial spoils.[162] However, if clubs could be certain of keeping their best players from season to season, then talent would remain equally spread. As a result, the League declared that if any professional player wanted to move to another club, he first had to obtain the permission of his present employer. If a wealthy team wanted a particular player, then the smaller club would have to be satisfactorily compensated.[163] From the beginning of the 1893/94 season, this policy, known as the 'retain and transfer system', was formally implemented.[164] The Football Association regarding the policy of buying and selling players as 'unsportsmanlike and most objectionable in itself'.[165] In March 1899, it wrote, 'some clubs derived considerable pecuniary

[157] Ibid, p. 7.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 21.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Harding, *For the Good of the Game*, p. 2.
[162] Ibid, p. 3.
[163] Ibid, p. 4.
[164] Ibid, p. 5.
[165] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 46.

advantage from training young players and then selling them to more prominent clubs. We think the practice in such cases, when applied to human beings, altogether discreditable to any system, bearing the name of sport'.[166] Despite this, the retain and transfer system remained in place until 1963,[167] a longevity which emphasises the League's ability to dominate policy at the expense of the governing body.

Disagreements over the payment of wages to professional footballers also plagued the League for many years. During the 1890s, the FA had left salaries to the discretion of individual clubs.[168] However, the Football League claimed that many of its sportsmen were able to use this freedom to hold their employers to ransom.[169] As well as this, teams located in smaller municipalities, unlike their counterparts in major cities, found themselves unable to attract the League's best players through wage incentives.[170] They seemed doomed to face deteriorating crowds and bankruptcy.[171] The League's administrators feared that this would destroy the competitions vital balance and 'might even lead to a Super League which, in turn would mean less variety and, once again, smaller and smaller attendances'.[172] In order to alleviate these concerns, the Football Association, at its May 1900 Annual General Meeting, set the maximum wage at £4 per week and prohibited the payment of bonuses to players.[173] Several prominent League chairmen, including John McKenna of Liverpool and Fred Rinder of Aston Villa, firmly opposed this salary cap and viewed it as a hindrance.[174] As representatives of prestigious clubs, they believed that limitations on wages damaged their own interests.[175] How could 'a player be lured to Villa Park or Anfield if he could earn only the same £4 as at another club, regardless of how well or how badly his

[166] Ibid.
[167] Harding, *For the Good of the Game*, p. 287.
[168] Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 293.
[169] Ibid.
[170] 'Football And Trade Unionism', *The Times*, 24 August 1909.
[171] Harding, *For the Good of the Game*, p. 287.
[172] Ibid, p. 3.
[173] Ibid, p. 27.
[174] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 53.
[175] Ibid.

team fared?'[176] However, through under-the-counter payments and incentives offered to players, some teams found ways to circumvent the restrictions.[177] They often found part-time or counterfeit jobs for their players,[178] or offered signing on fees far greater than the £10 limit imposed by the FA.[179] What developed was a 'kind of silent conspiracy in which subterfuge became the norm'.[180] Although the Football Association endeavoured to take action against any breaches of its maximum wage ruling, it was rarely able to find evidence of any financial transgression.[181]

William McGregor, writing in 1906, claimed that 'ninety-nine players out of every hundred' would be 'infinitely worse off' without the Football League.[182] Likewise, John Harding contends that the League appeared to provide its sportsmen with 'security of employment, regular pay and a good working environment'.[183] Despite such statements, the League's professional footballers held no bargaining power whatsoever. They were regarded as little more than assets and pieces of merchandise, and their movement was akin to a cattle market.[184] At a few days' notice, they could be 'bought and sold at the whim of their club committee – to be transplanted, quite possibly, hundreds of miles from any home they had begun to build up'.[185] One correspondent from *The Times* commented that 'their objections to transference are never considered, and they have no share in the huge transfer fees… The whole business is a kind of slavery'.[186] As well as this, although the maximum wage represented a far superior salary to that received by an average skilled labourer,[187] there was no 'minimum wage', and clubs tended to take on large numbers of recruits at low rates.[188] During the 1893/84 season, of the twenty-eight signings made by Aston Villa, half never

[176] Ibid.
[177] Giulianotti, *Football: A sociology of the global game*, p. 6.
[178] Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 293.
[179] Ibid, p. 294.
[180] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 53.
[181] Birley, *Land of Sport and Glory*, p. 234.
[182] McGregor, 'The League and the League System', in C. W. Alcock et al. (eds.), *The Book of Football*, p. 170.
[183] Harding, *For the Good of the Game*, p. 2.
[184] Ibid, p. 18.
[185] Mason, *The story of all the world's football games*, p. 103.
[186] 'Association Football', *The Times*, 1 September 1906.
[187] Mason, 'Football', in Mason (ed.), *Sport in Britain*, p. 160.
[188] Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 293.

played a game.[189] This issue was prevalent amongst many of the League's clubs.[190] As a result, a large proportion of the competition's professionals were forced to retain part-time jobs.[191] Upon retirement, due to a lack of transferable skills, few savings, and a poor education, many of the League's ex-sportsmen were forced into routine manual labour.[192]

Some of the League's professional players were soon roused into taking action to safeguard their own interests.[193] Billy Meredith, a star performer for both Manchester City and Manchester United during the competition's early years, believed that the maximum wage limitations were 'grossly unjust'.[194] In 1906, he wrote, 'What is more reasonable than our plea that the footballer, with his uncertain career, should have the best money he can earn? If I can earn £7 a week, should I be debarred from receiving it?... They congratulate me and give me caps but they will not give me a penny more than men are earning in the reserve team'.[195] This sense of injustice was one of the decisive factors which persuaded Meredith, along with six of his teammates from Manchester United, two players from Manchester City, and one each from Newcastle United, Bradford City, West Bromwich Albion, Notts County, Sheffield United, Tottenham Hotspur, and Preston North End, to establish the Association of Football Players' Union on December 2nd, 1907.[196] Herbert Broomfield, Manchester United's reserve team goalkeeper and the secretary of Union,[197] claimed that 'the professional player is the slave of his club and they can practically do what they like with him'.[198] To alleviate this prevailing trend, the Players' Union stated that its aims were to secure for its members a share of all transfer fees, unlimited wages, and freedom of contract.[199]

---

[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid, p. 296.
[193] Harding, *For the Good of the Game*, p. 8.
[194] 'Football And Trade Unionism', *The Times*, 24 August 1909.
[195] John Harding, *Football Wizard: The Billy Meredith Story* (London: Robson Books Ltd., 1998), p. 126.
[196] Harding, *For the Good of the Game*, p. 42.
[197] Harding, *Football Wizard*, p. 129.
[198] Wray Vamplew, *Pay up and play the game: Professional sport in Britain, 1875-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 255.
[199] 'What the Poor Professionals Want', *The Athletic News*, 15 March 1909.

As the number of protesting players grew, the League, increasingly cautious of the potential threat posed by a 'fully-fledged union, able to act independently before the law', aligned itself with the Football Association against the activists.[200] In return, the FA declared an amnesty. As reported by the *Athletic News*, the governing body 'offered a free pardon to clubs if they would cease to be dictated to by players, if they would refuse to pay players sums of money in violation of rules'.[201] As a result, 'the players lost their power, they ceased to be the real masters'.[202] The Union reacted to this development by affiliating itself with the General Federation of Trades Unions,[203] an organisation founded in 1899 by Britain's leading trade unionists.[204] The GFTU, which primarily functioned as the 'operator of a system of strike support',[205] had been established in order to 'forge an instrument of unity… through which common action might be attained towards the betterment of all working people's lives'.[206] Such pronouncements appealed to 'the sense of solidarity of trade unionists in the era of New Unionism'.[207] On April 1st, 1909, a representative of the General Federation of Trade Unions noted that his organisation appreciated 'the hardships of the players and the effective support a body like the GFTU with its thousands behind it could give'.[208]

The Football League and the FA were both appalled by the possibility of an affiliation between the protesting players and the GFTU.[209] It meant that if the Federation were to call a general strike, then the Players' Union would have to participate.[210] The Football Association, concerned that any strike action would bankrupt clubs in no time, declared that a 'loyalty clause', which required the protesting footballers to withdraw from the Players' Union or have their

[200] Harding, *Football Wizard*, p. 132.
[201] Loyalty to the Football Association', The Athletic News, 8 February 1909.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Mason, *The story of all the world's football games*, p. 105.
[204] Alice Prochaska, *History of the General Federation of Trade Unions, 1899-1980*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), p. ix.
[205] 'General Federation of Trade Unions: History', 2015, <http://gftu.org/content/3/6/>, [accessed 12 April 2015].
[206] Prochaska, *History of the General Federation of Trade Unions*, p. ix.
[207] 'General Federation of Trade Unions: History', 2015, <http://gftu.org/content/3/6/>, [accessed 12 April 2015].
[208] Harding, *Football Wizard*, p. 132.
[209] Mason, *The story of all the world's football games*, p. 105.
[210] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 73.

registrations with their clubs cancelled, was to be inserted into each new contract signed by the players at the end of the current season.[211] Faced with the choice between football and the Union, most of the protestors fell in line.[212] By March 1909, Manchester United's players remained the only activists not to have signed the contract clause.[213] They unanimously resolved to 'stick to the Union, and risk whatever penalties might be inflicted by the FA'.[214] As a result, they were summarily suspended by the governing body.[215] On August 24th, 1909, with the new season fast approaching, a conference between the Football Association and the remaining protestors failed to reach a settlement.[216] Although the Manchester United players pledged to abide by the FA's rules if the governing body agreed to recognise the Union, the Football Association refused to grant the payment of summer wages to suspended players affiliated with the organisation.[217] However, on August 31st, a day before the new season was due to begin, a truce was finally declared.[218] In addition to agreeing to recognise the Players' Union, the FA granted the disqualified footballers permission to play, and reimbursed them for their unpaid summer wages.[219] As well as this, the governing body agreed to reintroduce bonus payments to the players, a conciliatory gesture which supplemented the maximum wage.[220] In return, the unionists pledged their loyalty to the Football Association and withdrew from the GFTU.[221]

The Football League's professional players ultimately gained very little from the settlement of August 1909. Two years later, when Colin Veitch, the Players' Union Chairman, submitted a set of demands to the League's Management Committee, including the desire for free transfers, freedom of contract after five years' service, a share of transfer fees, and an increase in the maximum wage,

[211] Birley, *Land of Sport and Glory*, p. 238.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Points For Players: The Proposed Amalgamation', *The Athletic News*, 15 March 1909.
[214] Harding, *Football Wizard*, p. 135.
[215] Ibid.
[216] 'The Football Conference', *The Times*, 25 August 1909.
[217] Ibid.
[218] 'The Story Of The Football Truce: Mr. Clegg's Address To The Players', *The Athletic News*, 6 September 1909.
[219] Birley, *Land of Sport and Glory*, p. 238.
[220] 'How players won football's 100 years war', *The Independent*', 10 January 2007.
[221] Birley, *Land of Sport and Glory*, p. 238.

his proposals were rejected.[222] In 1912, the Union also failed in its effort to challenge the retain and transfer system in the courts.[223] Furthermore, at several League clubs, competition for team-places was so intense that any protesting professionals could easily be isolated.[224] In addition to this, applications to the Football Association for player representation were continually denied.[225] As a result, the League's sportsmen remained ultimately powerless. Although football offered them 'a route towards social recognition within a meritocratic environment, and life-changing opportunities that were denied elsewhere',[226] they were fundamentally tied to their employers, limited by the restrictions of the maximum wage, and had few prospects upon retirement.[227] The 'dreams of the visionaries', such as freedom of contract, unlimited wages, and a percentage of transfer fees', would have to wait another fifty years before coming to fruition.[228]

Eamon Dunphy, a modern critic and a former professional player, has contested that football was 'never honourable, never decent, never rational or just… those who administered the game, the directors and football club shareholders, were, as the greatest player of the age, Billy Meredith, contemptuously described them "little shopkeepers who governed our destiny"'.[229] Despite this claim, during the League's formative years, shareholders rarely profited from their investment in football clubs.[230] Conversely, several of the League's teams faced the threat of bankruptcy during this period.[231] Leeds City came close to a complete collapse, as did Woolwich Arsenal and Huddersfield Town.[232] Between 1894 and 1901, Accrington,[233] Loughborough,[234] New Brighton

[222] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 83.
[223] Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 298.
[224] Ibid, p. 299.
[225] Wigglesworth, *The Evolution of English Sport*, p. 40.
[226] Giulianotti, *Football: A sociology of the global game*, p. 107.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Harding, *Football Wizard*, p. 144.
[229] Eamon Dunphy, *A Strange Kind of Glory: Sir Matt Busby and Manchester United* (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1991), p. 27.
[230] Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 298.
[231] Birley, *Land of Sport and Glory*, p. 39.
[232] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 86.
[233] Ibid, p. 31.
[234] Ibid, p. 48.

Tower,[235] and Middlesbrough Ironopolis[236] were each forced to resign from the League after suffering from severe financial problems. When clubs did make profits, they were used for ground improvements, strengthening the team, or to meet expenses.[237] As well as this, building and running a stadium which could hold thousands of spectators was an expensive business, and not usually a profitable one.[238] For many directors, investment brought 'its own private and social satisfactions which could not be measured financially'.[239] It offered shareholders the opportunity to hold an honorific office within their local community, and several took pride at running an organisation around which so much enthusiasm was centred.[240]

The Football League undoubtedly faced a number of contentious issues during its formative period. Despite the fact that the organisation was subject to several indiscretions amongst its members, the League's strict implementation of a system of fines helped to alleviate their occurrence. As well as this, the League's regulations served to provide the organisation with a vital source of revenue during its infancy. Furthermore, the Football League's initiation of the retain and transfer system, as well its influential role in introducing the £4 a week maximum wage, had fundamentally transformed the position of the association game's sportsmen. The League had profoundly restricted their movement from one club to another, and had helped to place decisive limitations on their potential earnings. Its attempt to prevent 'the poorer clubs – i.e., those doing business in the less populous districts where the crowds are comparatively small – from losing their best players to the richer ones',[241] had led to a situation in which footballers were bought and sold like chattels. Despite their unionisation in 1907, they remained 'hard-worked and poorly paid'.[242] As a result, they were liable to view their superiors in the boardroom as profiteers 'sitting back and

[235] Ibid.
[236] Ibid, p. 41.
[237] Mason, 'Football', in Mason (ed.), *Sport in Britain*, p. 164.
[238] Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 283.
[239] Ibid, p. 284.
[240] Ibid, p. 285.
[241] 'Football And Trade Unionism', *The Times*, 24 August 1909.
[242] Mason, *The story of all the world's football games*, p. 103.

watching their bank balances grow'.[243] Nevertheless, football was no opportunity to get rich quick. Instead, many shareholders and directors were attracted to football clubs because they presented an opportunity for investors to hold a position of importance within their immediate localities. The importance of communities to the Football League will be explored further in the subsequent chapter, which focuses on spectator behaviour and management during the competition's early period.

[243] Ibid.

Chapter 3: The rise of spectatorship

As the League rose to prominence throughout the closing decade of the nineteenth century, football became 'less of a recreation and more of an entertainment'.[244] During its inaugural season, the League attracted an aggregate total of approximately 602,000 spectators.[245] This figure rose to 1,900,000 in 1895, and reached 5,000,000 ten years later.[246] Crowds of this magnitude were unrivalled throughout the country. This chapter will primarily examine the role played by these spectators during the Football League's early years, especially those of the working-class populace. In addition to assessing the importance of rising real wages, the arrival of the Saturday half-day holiday, and the consolidation of the railway, in encouraging the growth of proletarian spectatorship, this chapter will examine the League's role in re-establishing close social and geographical ties within destabilised urban communities. It will also explore the establishment of sporting rivalries within towns and cities, and the significance of the League's 'culture of masculinity'.[247] Furthermore, this chapter will analyse the crucial role played by the press in promoting the League system of competition to potential enthusiasts. The consumption of alcohol, as well as football-coupon betting, will also be discussed in terms of the impact of the League on their prominence within society. Moreover, this section will evaluate both the extent to which League matches were marred by crowd disturbances, and the means resorted to by authorities within the game to curb their occurrence. As well as this, this chapter will examine the nature of football stadiums during the League's early years, especially in terms of their structural limitations. Finally, this section will assess the effect that the transformation of League clubs into limited liability companies had upon spectators during this period. To achieve this, their role as fund-raisers, as well as their relationship with their clubs, will be examined.

[244] Wigglesworth, *The story of sport in England*, p. 106.
[245] H. MacFarlane, 'Football of yesterday and today: a comparison', *Monthly Review*, Vol. 25, (1906), p. 129.
[246] Ibid.
[247] Giulianotti, *Football: A sociology of the global game*, p. 154.

Tony Mason, in his *Association Football & English Society: 1863-1915*, asserts that the 'majority of those who went to watch professional football matches', during the League's formative period, 'were working-class in origin, occupation and life style'.[248] Indeed, as James Walvin notes, football became the undisputed 'game of the people'.[249] The 'towering brick walls, the clanking of turnstiles, the peeling match posters, and the cries of street-corner programme-sellers' all became ingrained in working-class life.[250] The growth of proletarian spectatorship was encouraged by the fact that large portions of the working-class population were granted a Saturday half-day holiday during the closing decades of the nineteenth century.[251] This allowed labourers to devote their Saturday afternoons to sport, either as participants or spectators.[252] Derek Birley even claims that by the 1880s, 'Britain was foremost in Europe in the amount of leisure the working classes enjoyed'.[253] The rise of association football also coincided with an 'undoubted improvement in real wages'.[254] Stephen Jones suggests that they increased by approximately one-third between 1875 and 1900 and then remained relatively stable until the outbreak of the First World War.[255] Thus, for the first time, the majority of the population had small weekly surpluses to spend on watching soccer matches, predominantly those of the Football League.[256] As well as this, Richard Holt claims that the development and the consolidation of the rail network helped to create 'a truly national sporting life'.[257] By 1850, most major towns in England were connected to the railway.[258] This allowed spectators to travel easily and relatively cheaply to football fixtures.[259]

[248] Mason, *Association Football & English Society*, p. 150.
[249] Walvin, *Football and the Decline of Britain*, p. 6.
[250] Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 159.
[251] Ibid, 166.
[252] Stephen G. Jones, *Sport, politics and the working class: Organised labour and sport in inter-war Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 19.
[253] Birley, *Sport and the making of Britain*, p. 265.
[254] Allen Guttmann, *Sports Spectators* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 105.
[255] Jones, *Sport, politics and the working class*, p. 19.
[256] Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 6.
[257] Ibid, p. 5.
[258] Edward Royle, *Modern Britain: A Social History, Second Edition* (London: Arnold, 1997), p. 11.
[259] Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 5.

Despite such developments, Richard Holt claims that 'the supreme appeal of football', for the working-class populace, 'lay almost certainly in its expression of a sense of civic pride and identity'.[260] During the second half of the nineteenth-century, several towns and cities within England were massively expanded. Their inhabitants became members of 'large administrative, political, and economic units' and 'integral parts of a nation of forty million and of a great Empire'.[261] Britain was becoming 'a land of conurbations'.[262] As a result, several destabilised communities began to desire a 'cultural expression of their urbanism'.[263] This was provided by the establishment of the Football League. Before its creation, spectators were often left disaffected and frustrated by the sport's unreliable and unorganised nature.[264] In contrast, the regimented and frequent nature of the League's matches helped to provide 'a new focus for collective urban leisure in industrial towns or cities that were no longer integrated communities gathered around a handful of mines or mills'.[265] In a world 'where factories employed thousands of men and cities housed hundreds of thousands', the competition helped to 'flesh out a distinctive sense of place within the wider framework of national competition'.[266] Adopting a League club gave spectators 'something to belong to and something in common with thousands of other men'.[267] For J. B. Priestly, supporting a team 'turned you into a member of a new community, all brothers together for an hour and a half… you had escaped with most of your mates and your neighbours, with half the town, and there you were, cheering together'.[268] James Walvin argues that these regional sources of support were 'in a sense almost a return to the pre-modern, traditional world where social life had been determined not by any sense of belonging to, or fondness for, the nation at large, but to the locality and the parish'.[269] With the

[260] Ibid, p. 166.
[261] Ibid, p. 167.
[262] Ibid, p. 6.
[263] Ibid, p. 167.
[264] Brierley et al. (eds.), *The Story of the Football League*, p. 1.
[265] Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 167.
[266] Ibid, p. 168.
[267] Ibid.
[268] Ibid.
[269] Walvin, *Football and the Decline of Britain*, p. 48.

creation of the Football League, these localised passions and attachments were revitalised, on the terraces of grounds throughout the country, through the public expression of sporting enthusiasm.

The Football League's role in promoting and expressing urban loyalties encouraged many local politicians, eager to exploit the growing fervour with which supporters identified with their clubs, to organise civic receptions for triumphant teams.[270] Thousands would turn out for the chance to see their heroes in the flesh. When Preston North End won the League in 1889, they were greeted by an 'intense and spontaneous celebration of welcome'.[271] When the club's players revealed the League trophy, 'the wildest enthusiasm prevailed'.[272] Several of the Football League's clubs were also keen to underline their ties to their communities. Most teams were named after a particular town or district.[273] In addition, some clubs claimed to represent the 'City', whilst others brought together enthusiasts in a 'United' group of supporters.[274] In small towns, fans could direct their interests towards one particular team. However, in several larger cities, two-club rivalries became the norm.[275] The League's 'derby matches' between neighbouring sides sold themselves to potential spectators. They offered the opportunity to determine 'who was to rule the locality both in a sporting and in a wider symbolic sense'.[276]

Intertwined with these ideas of territory, of asserting the superiority of one district over a neighbouring rival, the League also provided 'a vital space for male association'.[277] Its clubs became all-male representatives of their communities, and their virtues accorded with those of their masculine spectators.[278] The competitive nature of the League was 'like a mirror that reflected back the image the crowd wanted to see'.[279] It became a 'celebration of intensely male values', such as

[270] Wagg, *The Football World*, p. 15.
[271] Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 170.
[272] Ibid, p. 171.
[273] Giulianotti, *Football: A sociology of the global game*, p. 15.
[274] Ibid, p. 33.
[275] Ibid, p. 11.
[276] Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 169.
[277] Giulianotti, *Football: A sociology of the global game*, p. 34.
[278] Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 173.
[279] Ibid.

'sticking to the task, persisting, and never letting your mates down'.[280] These were the qualities that spectators appreciated, especially as their own working lives were often governed by similar considerations.[281] As well as this, the League's professional players were 'essentially decent, steady, long-lasting, and respectable, ordinary men with one extraordinary talent'.[282] They were humble and rarely turned down the opportunity for 'a few pints and a chat with "the lads"'.[283] Thus, the Football League became 'a kind of subtle and ubiquitous male language'.[284]

The press also played a pivotal role in developing the Football League's 'culture of spectatorship'.[285] Many football fans came to rely upon the media for information regarding the competition.[286] In 1906, William McGregor claimed that the League's points table, printed weekly by the sporting press, was one of the primary factors which helped to maintain interest in the competition.[287] Newspapers 'constantly whetted the appetite' for the progress of the League's teams, and 'stars' were created by their coverage.[288] As the competition rose to prominence, sections in broadsheets devoted to its fixtures increased in length and detail.[289] These reports were soon given precedence over those of unaffiliated clubs, whose fixtures were simply referred to as 'Other Matches'.[290] Some regional tabloids even took to opening their football columns with the phrase 'The chief interest in Saturday's association matches centred, as usual, in the contests arranged by the Football League'.[291] The *Athletic News*, first published in 1875, became England's leading football tabloid.[292] At the time of the League's establishment, the paper sold a weekly total

[280] Ibid.
[281] Ibid.
[282] Giulianotti, *Football: A sociology of the global game*, p. 117.
[283] Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 2.
[284] Ibid, p. 173.
[285] Guttmann, *Sports Spectators*, p. 85.
[286] Walvin, *Football and the Decline of Britain*, p. 49.
[287] McGregor, 'The League and the League System', in C. W. Alcock et al. (eds.), *The Book of Football*, p. 173.
[288] Walvin, *Football and the Decline of Britain*, p. 49.
[289] 'Saturday's Football', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 17 December 1888.
[290] 'Yesterday's Sports', *Reynold's Newspapers*, 30 September 1888.
[291] 'Multiple Sports Items', *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 1 October 1888.
[292] Mason, *Association Football & English Society*, p. 195.

of approximately 20,000 issues.[293] However, by the autumn of 1896, with McGregor's competition well on its way to being enthusiastically embraced across the whole country, '180,000 copies per week' were leaving the tabloid's Manchester offices.[294] This period also coincided with the appearance of Saturday football specials in several towns throughout the country for the first time.[295] Tony Mason argues that they became 'as much a part of the cultural scene as the gas lamp and the fish and chip shop'.[296] Thus, the press provided a vital stimulus for the League's growth in popularity amongst a nation where mass literacy, as a result of the 1870 Elementary Education Act's introduction of compulsory schooling,[297] had firmly established itself.[298] Simultaneously, as the League prospered, a number of sporting periodicals also gained in prominence.

The Football League's development also helped to encourage the growth of coupon betting within several urban municipalities. The FA, cautious of gambling's effect on the 'hooligan behaviour of the minority',[299] banned bookmakers from stadiums and attempted to 'stamp out the distribution of betting slips' amongst football enthusiasts.[300] Despite this, several periodicals managed to evade this ruling by offering tips and prizes within their sport columns. As a result of the League's regimented fixture list, which allowed for the publication of weekly listings of different matches, competitions of this nature soon increased in popularity.[301] As demand intensified, the potential winnings to be earned increased. For example, one bookmaker from Blackburn raised his offered prize money from £12 to £37 as a result of growing public interest.[302] Despite the fact that the Anti-Gambling League, an organisation founded in the 1890s to tackle this particular 'sin',[303] attempted to

[293] Ibid, p. 191.
[294] Ibid, p. 191.
[295] Jones, *Sport, politics and the working class*, p. 21.
[296] Mason, *Association Football & English Society*, p. 193.
[297] Wigglesworth, *The story of sport in England*, p. 76.
[298] Walvin, *Football and the Decline of Britain*, p. 49.
[299] Birley, *Land of Sport and Glory*, p. 232.
[300] 'Football', *The Times*, 3 April 1909.
[301] Birley, *Land of Sport and Glory*, p. 34.
[302] McGregor, 'The League and the League System', in C. W. Alcock et al. (eds.), *The Book of Football*, p. 182.
[303] Bob Erens et al. *Gambling and Problem Gambling in Britain* (East Sussex: Brunner-Routledge, 2003), p. 6.

prosecute several promoters,[304] the 'pools' became a great success.[305] One northern newspaper claimed to make £70,000 per year from the initiative,[306] whilst an estimated 25,000 coupons were circulating weekly in the Liverpool St Helens area alone.[307]

Although the League undeniably contributed towards the growing popularity of coupon betting, the competition had a somewhat mixed impact on the consumption of alcohol in English towns and cities. In October 1889, the *Athletic News* claimed that the League helped men to negotiate 'the most dangerous part of the week-end afternoon' by offering a viable alternative to strong drink.[308] Furthermore, Nick Jackson, the founder of the Corinthians Football Club and a stout supporter of amateur sporting traditions,[309] had conceded that, without the lure of the Football League, some men would 'spend their Saturday afternoons in a public house'.[310] Despite this, Derek Birley has noted that the Football League 'quickly established a reputation for encouraging drinking'.[311] In 1889, a correspondent from a north-eastern newspaper had complained that 'the headquarters of the game are generally at a public house'.[312] As well as this, in December 1888, the *Licensed Victuallers' Sportsman* had noted that the League had helped to bring 'roaring trade' to taverns across the country.[313] Guy Thorne, in an article entitled 'Sport and Drink', similarly asserted that, after a League match, 'the hotels were always crowded, packed so closely that it was difficult for a latecomer to enter… Drunkenness was very common'.[314] Thus, whilst the attraction of League football may well have encouraged some people to attend its matches as opposed to spending their Saturday afternoons in a public house, for others, the ritual of 'going to a match' undoubtedly

[304] Birley, *Land of Sport and Glory*, p. 35.
[305] Ibid, p. 180.
[306] Mason, *Association Football & English Society*, p. 182.
[307] Birley, *Land of Sport and Glory*, p. 231.
[308] Mason, *Association Football & English Society*, p. 176.
[309] Birley, *Land of Sport and Glory*, p. 33.
[310] 'Is Football Dangerous and Demoralising?', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 23 March 1889.
[311] Birley, *Land of Sport and Glory*, p. 35.
[312] M. Higgins, 'The Spread of Football in North-East England, 1876-90', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 6, No. 3, (1989), p. 312.
[313] Mason, *Association Football & English Society*, p. 193.
[314] Ibid, 177.

involved having a drink at some point during the day.[315] Victory offered the opportunity to celebrate amongst friends, whilst defeat equally encouraged many to drown their sorrows.

In 1986, Norbert Elias claimed that football matches allowed spectators to 'savour the mimetic excitement of the battle swinging to and fro on the playing field, knowing that no harm will come to the players or to themselves'.[316] Despite this, during the League's formative period, the prevailing view in respectable circles was that the competition's establishment had 'greatly lowered soccer's tone' and 'led to frequent discreditable scenes of violence'.[317] As Stephen Jones notes, 'riots, vandalism, assaults (including some on the referee) and confrontations between rival supporters with missiles thrown, pitches invaded and matches abandoned', were common occurrences during the League's early years.[318] In 1892, Charles Edwardes, in an article for *The Nineteenth Century*, protested that the 'new football' was a 'far more effectual arouser of the ungenerate passions of mankind than either a political gathering or a race meeting'.[319] Similarly, Ernest Ensor, writing for *The Contemporary Review*, noted that the sight of 'twenty thousand people, torn by emotions of rage and pleasure and roaring condemnation and applause', made for an alarming spectacle.[320] Disorders such as these were so frequent that spectator violence became 'a tradition' of the association game during the League's formative period.[321]

In order to curb the number of crowd disturbances at its matches, the League imposed a minimum admission fee, set at six pence, for the first time at its 1890 Annual Meeting.[322] Levying gate money was a delicate process. Prices had to be 'high enough to dissuade rowdies and low enough not to exclude the "respectable poor", who were assumed to have the sixpence necessary

[315] Ibid, 179.
[316] Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilising Process* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986), p. 7.
[317] Joe Maguire, 'Images of manliness and competing ways of living in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 3, No. 3, (1986), p. 278.
[318] Jones, *Sport, politics and the working class*, p. 25.
[319] Edwardes, 'The New Football Mania', p. 622.
[320] Ernest Ensor 'The Football Madness', *The Contemporary Review*, No. 74, (1898), p. 758.
[321] Giulianotti, *Football: A sociology of the global game*, p. 49.
[322] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 21.

for entry and enough internalised middle-class morality to keep from wrecking the place'.[323] The League also attempted to pacify spectators by insisting that its fixtures start on time.[324] Incompetent match officials were also disciplined and attempts were made to improve refereeing standards.[325] Despite this, the Football League largely struggled to control the number of disorders at its fixtures. In December 1891, after the subject of crowd violence was discussed by the League's Management Committee, the organisation responded by merely distributing posters to all of its grounds, which advised spectators not to demonstrate against the players or match officials.[326] Following this, in January 1895, after John Lewis, a referee and Blackburn Rovers' representative on the League's Committee, complained about the 'ungentlemanly behaviour' of Derby County's supporters, the organisation responded by warning that any recurrence 'may result in the withdrawal of League matches from the Derby ground'.[327] The use of the word 'may' is significant; as Simon Inglis notes, the League 'rarely clamped down on members when it came to crowd trouble'.[328] In February 1895, after a referee was assaulted by a Woolwich Arsenal supporter, the League retaliated by suggesting that, in order to 'prevent spectators crossing the playing pitch at the conclusion of their matches', clubs 'with ropes surrounding their pitches', should 'install rails instead'.[329] However, the League would ultimately have to wait until 1914 for this policy to become standardised amongst its clubs.[330] In October 1895, following another assault on a referee, this time at Wolverhampton, all of the League's clubs were advised to provide a dressing room for the match officials and the visiting players.[331] However, once more, this provision was read to be 'desirable', rather than 'required'.[332]

[323] Guttmann, *Sports Spectators*, p. 105.
[324] Ibid, p. 108.
[325] Ibid.
[326] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 24.
[327] Ibid, p. 39.
[328] Ibid.
[329] Ibid.
[330] Wagg, *The Football World*, p. 17.
[331] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 40.
[332] Brierley et al. (eds.), *The Story of the Football League*, p. 11.

Some of the Football League's clubs attempted to alleviate the number of disorders at their matches by hiring security guards.[333] Others tried to appease their enthusiasts by 'dismissing a manager, adopting a greater determination to win… or spending more heavily in the transfer market'.[334] In spite of these efforts, several clubs were caught out by the rapidly growing popularity of League football, and many of their grounds were blighted by inadequate facilities.[335] During the 1890s, in order to finance necessary improvements, most of the League's clubs formed themselves into limited liability companies.[336] Despite the fact that this development facilitated the construction of the League's very first major grandstands,[337] some of which included reserved seating to house local businessmen and retailers,[338] standards of accommodation were generally low.[339] 'Huge terraced cattle-pens' were built in order to accommodate 'the maximum number of football supporters at the lowest possible cost'.[340] The vast majority of spectators suffered from an obscured view,[341] and seats, covered stands, and toilets were also in short supply.[342] As a result, terraces were often 'uncomfortable, overcrowded corrals… where, for want of the alternative, you urinated down the raincoat of the man in front of you'.[343]

The transformation of football clubs into limited liability companies often had the effect of sealing off working-class supporters from any significant involvement in their team's affairs.[344] Share prices were almost always out of the reach of fans, such as at Sheffield United where £20 was the set minimum.[345] Despite the fact that some supporters took up one or two shares as an expression

[333] Wagg, *The Football World*, p. 16.
[334] Ibid, p. 16.
[335] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 40.
[336] Ibid.
[337] Mason, 'Football', in Mason (ed.), *Sport in Britain*, p. 52.
[338] Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 160.
[339] Mason, *The story of all the world's football games*, p. 104.
[340] Ibid.
[341] Giulianotti, *Football: A sociology of the global game*, p. 80.
[342] Birley, *Land of Sport and Glory*, p. 232.
[343] Mason, *The story of all the world's football games*, p. 104.
[344] Rogan Taylor, 'Walking alone together: football supporters and their relationship with the game', in John Williams and Stephen Wagg (eds.), *British Football and Social Change: Getting into Europe* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991), p. 113.
[345] Ibid.

of support, the bulk remained in the hands of local businessmen.[346] 'Manufacturers and managers, wholesale and retail, financial and commercial businesses, the building trade, and the food and drink trade', made up approximately two-thirds of this group.[347] In Sheffield, 'a small, interconnected group of industrialists dominated football, passing down their directorships from father to son like family property'.[348] Similarly, West Ham United were run by 'two families involved locally in business on a modest scale. As they controlled an absolute majority of shares, the club was effectively closed'.[349] Rather than encouraging their fans to become shareholders, many League clubs attempted to direct the energies of their enthusiasts towards fund-raising schemes.[350] For example, Leicester Fosse, a limited liability company since 1897,[351] had in 1902 urged their supporters to raise 'a working man's subscription fund' in order to finance the 'sort of team they would like'.[352] Two years later, following Leicester's relegation to the Football League's Second Division, the club's secretary, W. H. Squires, had advised the team's supporters to set up a finance committee 'to provide the wherewithal for securing the services of capable players'.[353] Through schemes such as the 'Million Farthing Fund', several Leicester Fosse supporters donated amble cash to support their team.[354] Despite this, they failed to secure an institutionalised dialogue with the club's Board of Directors, the latter of whom reminded the fans that the club was a '*private* business'.[355] Many of the League's clubs shared this attitude.[356] As a result, in the vast majority of cases, supporter 'investment' was never rewarded.[357] As Rogan Taylor contends, when League clubs 'needed money (i.e. most of the time), they appealed, especially to supporters, as guardians of the common identity

[346] Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 283.
[347] Ibid.
[348] Ibid, p. 284.
[349] Ibid.
[350] Taylor, 'Walking alone together', in Williams and Wagg (eds.), *British Football and Social Change*, p. 114.
[351] Ibid, p. 113.
[352] Ibid, p. 114.
[353] Ibid.
[354] Ibid, p. 113.
[355] Ibid, p. 114.
[356] Ibid.
[357] Ibid, p. 115.

and ethos. When supporters appealed for relationship and openness (i.e. most of the time), the clubs quickly reverted to being private businesses'.[358]

The growth of the Football League had undoubtedly aroused considerable public interest, especially amongst the working-class population. The introduction of the Saturday afternoon half-day, the expansion of the railway, and an increase in real wages, all encouraged the growth of proletarian spectatorship. Nevertheless, the League primarily appealed to working-class spectators because it offered them an opportunity to reassert their cultural identities. Its regimented fixture schedule provided supporters with a consistent source of communal association, and its competitive nature helped to fabricate local rivalries between neighbouring municipalities. Intermingled with these notions of community and territory, the League also provided the basis for the creation of a culture of virility amongst its predominantly male spectators. As Richard Holt summaries, the League's characteristics 'were their characteristics, its virtues their virtues'.[359] Moreover, the League's prominent place within the sporting press helped to expose the competition to the mass of the populace, whilst several bookmakers and public houses also benefited from the League's growing importance within urban communities. However, parallel to its upsurge in popularity, the League also began to attract spectators of a boisterous and disorderly nature. Ultimately, the organisation struggled to control the number of crowd disturbances at its matches. It rarely punished its clubs for failing to control their spectators, and several grounds lacked the facilities to effectively do so. Despite the fact that the majority of the League's clubs formed themselves into limited liability companies in an attempt to resolve this issue, most stadiums were 'built cheaply and shoddily'.[360] Furthermore, by forming themselves into private businesses, several clubs effectively alienated their supporters. Working-class football fans became increasingly peripheral figures, isolated from the affairs of their clubs.

[358] Ibid.
[359] Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 173.
[360] Birley, *Land of Sport and Glory*, p. 232.

Conclusion

Despite initially being disregarded as a mere 'money-making circus' by several of its critics,[361] the Football League had undoubtedly becoming England's foremost weekly soccer competition by the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. It had expanded from an initial twelve teams in 1888, to two divisions of twenty clubs each. Once exclusively based in the North and the Midlands, the competition now encompassed towns and cities from across the whole country. It had succeeded in establishing itself as a tournament set apart from the FA Cup, one characterised by a constant stream of matches and a competitive nature which encouraged vast spectator support. The League had proved to be so popular and innovative that a number of parallel leagues had being established in an attempt to match its achievements. Even in the South, a region which had unanimously failed to embrace professionalism following its legalisation in 1885, the League's system of competition had become 'the accepted form of football strife'.[362]

The League was undeniably forced to address a number of problems during its formative years. Despite the fact that misdemeanours such as match fixing, the poaching of professionals, and the fielding of ineligible players, were prevalent amongst its member clubs, the League's financial stability during this period depended to a large extent on the commitment of these offences. During its earliest years, fines had amounted to almost half of the organisation's total earnings. Preserving the competition's 'vital balance' had proved to be a contentious issue.[363] The League's decision to introduce the retain and transfer scheme, which prohibited its players from joining another team without their current club's consent, as well as the imposition of the maximum wage, had fundamentally weakened the bargaining power of the association game's professional sportsmen. In spite of their unionisation and threats of strike action, the League's players ultimately remained 'beasts' in a 'marketplace'.[364] As a result, they tended to denounce their superiors as 'little

[361] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. vi.
[362] McGregor, 'The League and the League System', in C. W. Alcock et al. (eds.), *The Book of Football*, p. 170.
[363] Harding, *For the Good of the Game*, p. 3.
[364] Ibid, p. 18.

shopkeepers' governing their destiny.[365] Despite this, most shareholders and directors did not expect to profit greatly from football during the League's early years. Instead, several club administrators were motivated by the fact that investment presented them with an opportunity to elevate their own positions within their local communities.

As a result of the League's development, football now appealed to more enthusiasts than ever before, particularly those of the working-class populace. Although the introduction of Saturday afternoon leisure time, the consolidation of the railway, and an increase in real wages, all helped to stimulate the League's growing popularity amongst the proletariat, the competition primarily attracted working-class enthusiasts because it helped to promote 'deeper forms of shared identity' within largely fragmented towns and cities.[366] Notions such as this facilitated the development of sporting rivalries between neighbouring clubs, and the League's competitive nature also enabled it to promote values which were synonymous with those of its predominantly masculine spectators. In addition, the attention afforded to the League by the sporting press helped to spread the competition to a wider audience, whilst several other tabloids, bookmakers, and public houses also began to profit from the tournament's growing prominence within society. However, as the competition's popularity intensified, an increasing number of its matches became blighted by crowd disturbances. Ultimately, the League struggled to effectively curb their rate of occurrence, and several of its clubs were hampered by inadequate facilities, even after they formed themselves into limited liability companies. Often, the transformation of club's into private businesses only served to widen the gap between the League's members and their enthusiastic supporters.

Nevertheless, William McGregor's pioneering Football League had undoubtedly provided the catalyst for the development and transformation of the association game in the period between 1888 and 1914. It had rejuvenated the sport, and subdued its hitherto 'lax and loose' nature.[367] Before its establishment, football matches were susceptible to inconsistences such as cancellations

[365] Dunphy, *A Strange Kind of Glory*, p. 27.
[366] Giulianotti, *Football: A sociology of the global game*, p. 15.
[367] Inglis, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League*, p. 5.

and delays, and a lack of excitement which discouraged interest amongst the masses. In their place, the League provided a structured and competitive series of matches which transformed the association game into a hegemonic 'weekly ritual'.[368] The League became England's principal football competition, and its growth coincided with rising levels of spectatorship at matches throughout the country. As a result of its popularity, football became increasingly regarded as a form of entertainment, rather than a recreational activity. Furthermore, the League's development had stimulated the introduction of the retain and transfer system and the £4 a week maximum wage, policies which profoundly altered the position of the association game's players. Correspondingly, the League's formative years had expedited the unionisation of the sport's professionals for the first time. As well as this, the League's early period had coincided with the formation of several of its clubs into private businesses, a development which saw them take an important step towards their modern form. The League was not without its detrimental aspects. Several of its clubs were disobedient in nature, and many of their stadiums were 'not up to the demands of the new era'.[369] Moreover, the League's development had coincided with rising levels of spectator violence, and the isolation of supporters from the internal affairs of their clubs. In spite of these complications, the League had succeeded in furnishing the next obvious step in football's development following the establishment of the Football Association and the creation of the FA Cup. McGregor's competition had undeniably succeeded in repackaging the sport in a fresh and innovative manner. As a result of the Football League's influence, the association game became the 'most popular and highly organised programme of spectator sport in existence'.[370]

[368] Jones, *Sport, politics and the working class*, p. 19.
[369] Birley, *Land of Sport and Glory*, p. 232.
[370] Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 2.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Journal Articles

Edwardes, Charles, 'The New Football Mania', *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 32, No. 188, (1892).

Ensor, Ernest, 'The Football Madness', *The Contemporary Review*, No. 74, (1898).

MacFarlane, H., 'Football of yesterday and today: a comparison', *Monthly Review*, No. 25, (1906).

Newspapers

'Association Football', *The Times*, 1 September 1906.

'Association Football', *The Times*, 30 May 1911.

'Football And Trade Unionism', *The Times*, 24 August 1909.

'Football Notes', *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 11 December 1888.

'Football', *The Times*, 3 April 1909.

'How players won football's 100 years war', *The Independent*', 10 January 2007.

'Is Football Dangerous and Demoralising?', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 23 March 1889.

'Loyalty to the Football Association', *The Athletic News*, 8 February 1909.

'Multiple Sports Items', *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 1 October 1888.

'Multiple Sports Items', *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 6 October 1888.

'Multiple Sports Items', *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 11 September 1888.

'Our Football Letter', *Manchester Times*, 13 October 1888.

'Points For Players: The Proposed Amalgamation', *The Athletic News*, 15 March 1909.

'Roll-call of shame: the history of British match-fixing', *The Independent*, 15 March 1995.

'Saturday's Football', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 17 December 1888.

'Sports and Recreations', *The Blackburn Standard: Darwen Observer, and North-East Lancashire Advertiser*, 1 September 1888.

'The Football Conference', *The Times*, 25 August 1909.

'The new Football League', *The Blackburn Standard: Darwen Observer, and North-East Lancashire Advertiser*, 21 April 1888.

'The Story Of The Football Truce: Mr. Clegg's Address To The Players', *The Athletic News*, 6 September 1909.

'What the Poor Professionals Want', *The Athletic News*, 15 March 1909.

'Yesterday's Sports', *Reynold's Newspapers*, 30 September 1888.

Published Works

Alcock, C. W., Bassett, W. I., Bentley, J. J., Connell, R. M., Crabtree, J. W., Curtis, E. G., Davis, Alfred, Devey, John, Douglas, W. S., Gordon, J. W., Gould, A. J., Haberstraw A. T., Harris, S. S., Lewis, John, Mainprice, H., Marriot, C. J. B., McGregor, William, Offord, H. J. W., Roose, L. R., Smith, J. H., Spencer, Howard, Vincent, J. E., Wall, F. J. (eds.), *The Book of Football: A Complete History and Record of the Association and Rugby Games* (London: The Amalgamated Press, 1906).

Brierley, J. A., Howarth, F., and Sutcliffe, Charles E. (eds.), *The Story of the Football League: 1888-1938* (Preston: The Guardian Press, 1938).

Catton, James A. H., *The Real Football: a sketch of the development of the association game* (London: Sands, 1900).

Catton, James A. H., *The Rise of the Leaguers from 1863-1897* (London: Sporting Chronicle, 1897).

Gibson, Alfred, and Pickford, William, *Association Football & the men who made it: Vol 1* (London: Caxton, 1905).

Secondary Sources

Journal Articles

Higgins, M., 'The Spread of Football in North-East England, 1876-90', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 6, No. 3, (1989).

Maguire, Joe, 'Images of manliness and competing ways of living in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 3, No. 3, (1986).

Published Works

Birley, Derek, *Land of Sport and Glory: Sport and British Society, 1887-1910* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

Birley, Derek, *Sport and the making of Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996).

Dunphy, Eamon, *A Strange Kind of Glory: Sir Matt Busby and Manchester United* (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1991).

Edwards, Leigh, *The Official Centenary History of the Southern League: 1894-1994* (West Midlands: Paper Plane Publishing Ltd, 1993).

Elias, Norbert, and Dunning, Eric, *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilising Process* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986).

Erens, Bob, Mitchell, Laura, Orford, Jim, Sproston, Kerry and, White, Clarissa, *Gambling and Problem Gambling in Britain* (East Sussex: Brunner-Routledge, 2003).

Francis, Lionel, *Seventy Five Years of Southern League Football* (London: Pelham Books Ltd., 1969).

Giulianotti, Richard, *Football: A sociology of the global game* (Cambridge: Policy Press, 1999).

Goldblatt, David, *The Ball is Round: A Global History of Football* (London: Penguin, 2007).

Guttmann, Allen, *Sports Spectators* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

Harding, John, *Football Wizard: The Billy Meredith Story* (London: Robson Books Ltd., 1998).

Harding, John, *For the Good of the Game: The Official History of the Professional Footballers' Association* (London: Robson Books Ltd, 1991).

Harvey, Adrian, *Football: The First Hundred Years, The Untold Story of the People's Game* (London: Routledge, 2005).

Hayes, Dean, *The Deepdale Story: An A to Z of Preston North End FC* (Chorley: Sport in World Ltd, 1996).

Holt, Richard, *Sport and the British: A Modern History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

Inglis, Simon, *The Official Centenary History of the Football League, 1888-1988: League Football and the men who made it* (London: Willow Books, 1988).

Jones, Stephen G., *Sport, politics and the working class: Organised labour and sport in inter-war Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

Mason, Nicholas, *The story of all the world's football games: Football!* (London: Maurice Temple Smith Ltd, 1974).

Mason, Tony, *Association Football & English Society: 1863-1915* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1980).

Mason, Tony (ed.), *Sport in Britain: A Social History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

Morris, Peter, *Aston Villa: The History of a Great Football Club, 1874-1960* (London: The Naldrett Press Ltd, 1960).

Prochaska, Alice, *History of the General Federation of Trade Unions, 1899-1980*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982).

Royle, Edward, *Modern Britain: A Social History, Second Edition* (London: Arnold, 1997).

Sharpe, Ivan, *The Football League Jubilee Book* (London: Stanley Paul & Co Ltd, 1963).

Shury, Alan, and Landamore, Brian, *The Definitive Newton Heath F.C.* (Nottingham: SoccerData, 2002).

Soar, Phil, and Tyler, Martin, *The Official Illustrated History of Arsenal: 1886-2005* (London: Hamlyn, 2005).

Vamplew, Wray, *Pay up and play the game: Professional sport in Britain, 1875-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

Wagg, Stephen, *The Football World: A Contemporary History* (Sussex: The Harvester University Press, 1984).

Walvin, James, *Football and the Decline of Britain* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1986).

Wigglesworth, Neil, *The Evolution of English Sport* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1996).

Wigglesworth, Neil, *The story of sport in England* (London: Routledge, 2007).

Williams, John, and Wagg, Stephen (eds.), *British Football and Social Change: Getting into Europe* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991).

Wilson, Alisdair R., *Football Under The Skin: A Historical Glimpse At Soccer In Tyne & Wear 1879-1988* (Newcastle: Tyne and Wear Museums Service, 1988).

Web Sources

Abbink, Dinant, 'England – Southern League Final Tables', 24 July 2005, <http://www.rsssf.com/tablese/engsouthernleaghist.html>, [accessed 18 March 2015].

Abbink, Dinant, 'England – The Football Alliance', 23 July 2006, <http://www.rsssf.com/tablese/engfootalliancehist.html>, [accessed 18 March 2015].

Felton, Paul, and Spencer, Barry, 'England 1913-1914', 11 February 2000, <http://www.rsssf.com/engpaul/FLA/1913-14.html>, [accessed 20 April 2015].

'General Federation of Trade Unions: History', 2015, <http://gftu.org/content/3/6/>, [accessed 12 April 2015].

Primary Sources Consulted

Minute Books

'Football League Minute Book, May 1892-April 1895', *Lancashire Archives*, DDFOL/1/1/1/1, 1/1490/11.

Newspapers

'Amnesty Resolution: Settlement Or Truce', *The Athletic News*, 15 February 1909.

'Association Football', *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 8 June 1888.

'Association Football', *The Times*, 1 May 1909.

'Association Football', *The Times*, 7 October 1913.

'Association Football', *The Times*, 12 October 1909.

'Association Football', *The Times*, 22 March 1910.

'Association Football', *The Times*, 27 February 1912.

'Association Football', *The Times*, 28 April 1908.

'Association Football', *The Times*, 29 April 1909.

'Association Rules', *The Times*, 28 September 1895.

'A Unanimous Policy Imperative', *The Athletic News*, 1 February 1909.

'Correspondence', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 8 December 1888.

'English Footballers Indignant', *The Athletic News*, 5 April 1909.

'En Passant', *The Athletic News*, 2 May 1898.

'F.A.'s Opportunity: Coming League Conference', *The Athletic News*, 1 March 1909.

'Football Association Charity Match', *The Times*, 31 August 1908.

'Football', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 22 November 1888.

'Football Notes', *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 27 November 1888.

'Football', *The Dundee Courier and Argus*, 20 November 1888.

'Football', *The Times*, 1 June 1891.

'Football', *The Times*, 2 May 1898.

'Football', *The Times*, 9 March 1909.

'Football', *The Times*, 11 April 1894.

'Football', *The Times*, 11 April 1896.

'Football', *The Times*, 12 February 1901.

'Football', *The Times*, 12 October 1903.

'Football', *The Times*, 13 January 1891.

'Football', *The Times*, 15 October 1909.

'Football', *The Times*, 16 December 1893.

'Football', *The Times*, 17 November 1893.

'Football', *The Times*, 19 May 1903.

'Football', *The Times*, 19 November 1892.

'Football', *The Times*, 22 September 1902.

'Football', *The Times*, 24 April 1893.

'Football', *The Times*, 25 April 1894.

'Football', *The Times*, 26 April 1897.

'Football', *The Times*, 26 May 1903.

'Football', *The Times*, 28 December 1892.

'Football', *The Times*, 29 September 1902.

'Football', *The Times*, 31 May 1904.

'Index', *The Times*, 14 June 1910.

'King's Bench Division', *The Times*, 27 March 1912.

'League Amalgamation: Association's Determination', *The Athletic News*, 15 March 1909.

'League Extension: Advantages & Disadvantages', *The Athletic News*¸ 26 April 1909.

'League Extension: Four Difficulties', *The Athletic News*, 12 April 1909.

'League Loyalty: F.A. Amnesty Accepted', *The Athletic News*, 8 February 1909.

'League & Southern League: Important Meeting in Manchester, Third Division Scheme Squelched', *The Athletic News*, 3 May 1909.

'Middlesbrough's Finances', *The Athletic News*, 12 June 1911.

'Multiple Sports Items', *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 20 June 1888.

'Multiple Sports Items', *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 25 September 1888.

'Multiple Sports Items', *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 28 April 1888.

'Multiple Sports Items', *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 30 October 1888.

'Pastimes', *The Graphic*, 15 September 1888.

'Payments To Players', *The Athletic News*, 1 February 1909.

'Players and Transfer Fees', *The Athletic News*, 25 January 1909

'Players' Union and Wages', *The Athletic News*, 15 February 1909.

'Professional Football', *The Times*, 28 March 1912.

'Review Of The Cricket Season', *The Times*, 15 September 1906.

'Rugby Football', *The Times*, 31 May 1911.

'Sports in Brief', *The Times*, 17 April 1909.

'Sports in Brief', *The Times*, 21 May 1898.

'Sports in Brief', *The Times*, 22 May 1894.

'Sports in Brief', *The Times*, 26 September 1908.

'Staffordshire Rifle Association', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 20 June 1888.

'Suspension Of Professionals', *The Athletic News*, 15 March 1909.

'The Football Association', *The Times*, 8 March 1910.

'The Football League', *The Times*, 14 June 1910.

'The Leaguers in Secret Conclave', *The Athletic News*, 8 February 1909.

'The Loyalty of the Players', *The Athletic News*, 5 April 1909.

'The Payment of Players', *The Athletic News*, 1 February 1909.

'The Payment of Players', *The Athletic News*, 26 April 1909.

'The Players' Union Benevolent Schemes', *The Athletic News*, 6 April 1908.

'The Players' Union', *The Athletic News*, 23 March 1908.

'The Plight of the Players', *The Athletic News*, 15 March 1909.

'The Position of the Players' Union', *The Athletic News*, 8 February 1909

'The Third Division: The Secret Of The Movement', *The Athletic News*, 12 April 1909.

'Transfer Hardships: F.A. Inconsistency', *The Athletic News*, 1 February 1909.

'Wrong Tactics: The Players' Mistake', *The Athletic News*, 5 April 1909.

'Yesterday's Sports', *Reynold's Newspapers*, 16 September 1888.

Secondary Sources Consulted

Published Works

Brailsford, Dennis, *Sport, Time, and Society: The British at Play* (London: Routledge, 1991).

Cole, G. D. H., and Postgate, Raymond, *The Common People: 1746-1946* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1949).

Collins, Tony, *A Social History of English Rugby Union* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009).

Collins, Tony, *Rugby's Great Split: Class, Culture and the Origins of Rugby League Football* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006).

Cunningham, Hugh, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution* (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1980).

Mangan, J. A. (ed.), *Sport in Europe: Politics, Class, Gender: The European Sports History Review – Volume 1* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999).

McKibbin, Ross, *The Ideologies of Class: Social Relations in Britain, 1880-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

Taylor, Matthew, *The Leaguers: The Making of Professional Football in England, 1900-1939* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005).

Walvin, James, *The People's Game: A Social History of British Football* (London: Allen Lane, 1975).