



The New
Football Pools



Football Fever 4
The Achievers Report

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Football Fever 4 – The Achievers Report

It's a debate that can be heard every week in every ground, pub and living room around the country: whether your favourite team, or your biggest rivals, have under-achieved or over-achieved.

Who are the game's biggest under-achievers and over-achievers? And how do you decide what constitutes 'achievement' anyway?

Here at The New Football Pools we've endeavoured to bring you – for the first time – the answers to those questions.

We've taken the start of the Premier League in August 1992 as our benchmark, and our statisticians have poured over thousands of results, league tables, club records and financial data.

Our statisticians looked at:

- where each of the current 92 League clubs were in 1992
- how they've performed in league and cup competitions since then
- the size of each club, based on average attendances, club investment etc
- the impact of transfers (in and out of clubs)
- the impact of changes in club ownership, financial difficulties etc

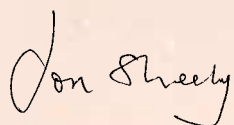
Combining these factors, we've then rated all 92 clubs, season by season, based on what each club could have been **expected** to achieve and comparing that with its **actual** achievements that season.

By doing this we've created a level playing field for all clubs, so that the achievements of smaller clubs can be assessed on equal terms against football's big boys.

We started each club on the same mark for August 1992, but over the course of the Premier League era we can see some dramatic changes in clubs' achievement ratings as events both on the field and in the boardroom have an effect.

In the report that follows we've provided a commentary on each club, alongside various league tables which identify the game's biggest over-achievers and under-achievers.

Some of the results will surprise you, but we hope you enjoy debating it.



Jon Sheehy
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The New Football Pools Football Fever 4 – The Achievers Report

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Welcome to 'The Achievers Report 2008' from The New Football Pools (available to download from www.footballpools.com/achievers).

The report puts all 92 English league clubs on an equal footing so we can reveal, for the first time, which clubs have over-achieved during the Premier League era, and which ones have – sadly for their fans – under-achieved.

How have we calculated this?

Each club's achievements have been ranked for each season since 1992 (when the Premier League and the new Football League structure were established) based on a complex array of statistics, including:

- **The club's 'starting position' in 1992**
- **Stadium capacity and average attendances 1992-2008**
- **Changes in club ownership and associated investments**
- **Financial difficulties, including administration**
- **Transfers in and out since 1992**
- **League and Cup performances each season**

Each club starts from the same position in August 1992 (the 'benchmark' figure of 100), and then the factors listed above are used to calculate the club's achievement rating for the season. This then becomes the benchmark for the following season. And so on, until we get to 2008.

So who are the biggest over-achievers?

The top five (starting with the biggest over-achievers) are:

- 1 **Doncaster**
- 2 **Portsmouth**
- 3 **Reading**
- 4 **Hull City**
- 5 **Wigan Athletic**

Donny topped the Achievers Index for the remarkable feat of rising from 21st in the Fourth Division at the end of the 1991-92 season, to promotion to the Championship in 2008.

If that wasn't enough to justify top spot, let's not forget that Doncaster Rovers were a Conference side as recently as 2003, and in the five years they've been back in League football they've finished no lower than 11th (between 1992 and 2000 they finished **higher** than 11th only once!). After a bright start to their Championship season Rovers' fortunes have dipped somewhat, but we won't let that detract from their stunning achievements in recent years.

Reading would undoubtedly have been our top achievers had they not been relegated from the Premier League last season. They finished a remarkable 8th in 2006-07 – almost qualifying for Europe – but their form deserted them last term (particularly away from the Madejski Stadium) and they ended up in the final relegation spot. A decent start to the campaign, including that controversial 'phantom' goal against Watford, suggests an immediate return to the top flight could be on the cards.

And the biggest under-achievers?

At the bottom (starting with the biggest under-achievers) are:

- 1 Sheffield Wednesday**
- 2 Wolverhampton Wanderers**
- 3 Nottingham Forest**
- 4 Coventry City**
- 5 Manchester City**

The Owls take that unenviable award despite being a relatively successful Premier League side in the early 90s, finishing ahead of the likes of Liverpool on more than one occasion. That's one of the reasons Wednesday's struggles in more recent seasons (remember that 16th place in Division Two in 2004?) are felt more acutely by Owls fans. After finishing 16th and just three points clear of relegation last season, the Hillsborough faithful will have higher hopes this term.

Wednesday fans will be hoping the club can make the Championship play-offs, at least, this season, and Wolves supporters will be similarly optimistic. They will remember that single Premier League season of 2003-04, but in four subsequent attempts to return the club have finished in a play-off spot only once. They were the early season pace-setters, but will Wolves be able to maintain that through to next May?

Forest – young man – haven't been in the top flight since 1999, and for the last three years they were stuck in the relative obscurity of League One. No offence to League One, but this is a club that, in 1996, made the last eight of the UEFA Cup and were founding members of the Premier League. The bookies odds suggest Forest won't make the Championship top 10 this season, and based on early results it appears they won't be wrong.

Coventry had nine seasons in the Premier League – more than Wednesday or Forest – but their decline in recent years has been just as marked. Seven campaigns in the second tier have failed to bring a single play-off spot, and last term they finished a solitary point off relegation. They've been inconsistent so far this season (a not uncommon trait for the Sky Blues) but a play-off spot should be on the cards if the front pairing of Eastwood and Morrison delivers the goods.

Manchester City being fifth-lowest achievers is hardly surprising. Mark Hughes is the 12th manager in 16 years to try to turn back the 30-year tide of under-achievement. But the arrival of Abu Dhabi United (City bought by United? Who'd have thought!), shortly followed by Robinho, must have given Sparky a smile wider than the Manchester Ship Canal. But be warned, City faithful, achievement will now be measured in Champions League terms.

Who are the biggest over- and under-achievers in the Premier League?

The top three achievers are:

- 1 Portsmouth**
- 2 Hull City**
- 3 Wigan Athletic**

Pompey were just edged out of the overall top spot by Doncaster Rovers, but they were comfortably the top flight's biggest over-achievers, and last season's 8th place was their highest league finish for over 50 years. The Fratton Park faithful will be hoping this season's relatively poor start doesn't mean the club peaked last term.

With Hull City, it's hard to know if they've peaked. Their 16-year achievements are remarkable, and the opening to their first Premier League campaign was equally impressive, including that unforgettable victory at The Emirates. The question is, can they maintain it and confound the pundits by keeping the Tigers off the endangered list?

In 1994, Wigan finished 89th out of the 92 league clubs, and last season they finished 14th. No other club can match that rise, so their third place in the Premier League's achievers list (and fifth place overall) is well-earned.

The bottom three achievers are:

- 1 **Manchester City**
- 2 **Tottenham**
- 3 **Middlesbrough**

Last season was City's worst for under-achieving (having brought in Sven and spent a Thai-dy amount in the transfer market), but for the fans it was just the latest in a long list of under-achieving seasons. But the dramatic events on transfer deadline day have consigned the Shinawatra shenanigans to a footnote in history. Not even Nostradamus could have predicted the arrival of the Abu Dhabi royal family and Brazilian superstar Robinho on the same day. City fans are famously optimistic, but they're also used to false dawns following a Blue Moon, so any talk of a 'Big Five' could be premature even by their standards.

Tottenham are a Premier League perennial 'dark horse' as far as the pundits are concerned, but the fans down the Lane could be forgiven for wondering if the animal in question is three-legged, such is the regularity of their club's under-achieving. Once again, Spurs were tipped by some as candidates for breaking the Big Four's dominance this season, and once again there will be fans in North London already ripping up their betting slips.

Middlesbrough's under-achieving may have been less dramatic than Spurs', but it's been notable nevertheless. Boro have been among the League's biggest spenders over the past 10 years, with ambitious chairman Steve Gibson backing his managers in the transfer market. Unfortunately, so far it's not brought a top six finish. Boro had a relatively quiet summer transfer-wise (receipts from outgoing players almost matching the spend on new arrivals), so it will be interesting to see if last season's 13th place finish can be improved upon. Early form suggests that won't be easy.

What about the Premier League's 'Big Four' – have they under-achieved or over-achieved?

Arsenal were the biggest over-achievers of the so-called 'Big Four', largely because of their success in the late 1990s, but also because of the 'Double' achieved in 2002 and the undefeated Premier League season of 2003-04.

As the world's biggest club, **Manchester United** *have* to achieve, so anything less than a league title and at least one cup is under-achievement at Old Trafford. Fortunately for the club, that doesn't happen too often. Failing to win the league title in three seasons between 2003 and 2006 was under-achieving by United's standards.

Chelsea certainly over-achieved during the late 1990s when, under Ruud Gullit and then Gianluca Vialli, they achieved successive top-four finishes and won domestic and European cups. Given their resources, today's Blues can be expected to achieve to the same level as Manchester United, and despite two league titles they have slightly under-performed against that benchmark – particularly in the league in the past two seasons. Looks like that may change this term.

Liverpool are the biggest under-achievers of the 'Big Four', the only ones without a Premier League title and only one runners-up spot to their name. On the plus side, they've continued their long tradition of cup success at home and in Europe, but that can't make up for the lack of league silverware. But the fans are more optimistic this season than for many a year.

Who have been the biggest under- and over-achievers of this millennium?

Carlisle United, Hull City and **Portsmouth** are the biggest over-achievers since 2000, with **Leicester City** the biggest under-achievers. The Premier League's biggest under-achievers of the millennium are **Newcastle United**, and with all the turmoil at St James's Park this year the Toon Army won't be betting on the club losing that wooden spoon by the time of our next report.

Read on for more 'league tables' and a brief report on how each of the 92 clubs has performed since 1992.

Football Fever 4 – The Achievers Report Overall standings (Clubs 1-92)

1	Doncaster Rovers	21	Dagenham & Redbridge
2	Portsmouth	22	Plymouth Argyle
3	Reading	23	Preston North End
4	Hull City	24	Walsall
5	Wigan Athletic	25	Rochdale
6	Cheltenham Town	26	Macclesfield Town
7	Aldershot	27	Arsenal
8	Carlisle United	28	Watford
9	Scunthorpe United	29	Manchester United
10	Accrington Stanley	30	Southend United
11	Morecambe Town	31	Blackburn
12	Bolton W	32	West Ham United
13	Yeovil Town	33	Chelsea
14	Colchester United	34	Wycombe Wanderers
15	Sunderland	35	Burnley
16	Hereford United	36	Barnet
17	Swansea City	37	Chesterfield
18	West Bromwich Albion	38	Everton
19	Northampton Town	39	Blackpool
20	Stoke City	40	Rotherham United

Overall standings (Clubs 1-92) continued

41	Newcastle United	68	Bristol Rovers
42	Crewe Alexandra	69	Chester City
43	Gillingham	70	Bradford City
44	Bristol City	71	Millwall
45	Liverpool	72	Tranmere Rovers
46	Barnsley	73	Oldham Athletic
47	Leyton Orient	74	Bournemouth
48	Hartlepool United	75	Grimsby Town
49	Port Vale	76	Sheffield United
50	Lincoln City	77	Southampton
51	Stockport County	78	Norwich City
52	Aston Villa	79	Leeds Utd
53	Birmingham City	80	Exeter City
54	Charlton Athletic	81	Cardiff City
55	Peterborough United	82	MK Dons
56	Bury	83	Shrewsbury Town
57	Huddersfield Town	84	Brentford
58	Fulham	85	Leicester City
59	Ipswich Town	86	Luton Town
60	Brighton & Hove Albion	87	Notts County
61	Middlesbrough	88	Manchester City
62	Tottenham Hotspur	89	Coventry City
63	Derby County	90	Nottingham Forest
64	Swindon Town	91	Wolverhampton Wanderers
65	Crystal Palace	92	Sheffield Wednesday
66	Darlington		
67	Queens Park Rangers		

Football Fever 4 – The Achievers Report

League-by-League

Barclays Premier League Achievers Index 1992-2008

1	Portsmouth	30
2	Hull City	26
3	Wigan Athletic	25
4	Bolton W	21
5	Sunderland	18
6	West Bromwich Albion	17
7	Stoke City	16
8	Arsenal	11
9	Manchester United	10
10	Blackburn	8
11	West Ham United	8
12	Chelsea	8
13	Everton	4
14	Newcastle United	3
15	Liverpool	1
16	Aston Villa	-6
17	Fulham	-9
18	Middlesbrough	-10
19	Tottenham Hotspur	-10
20	Manchester City	-21

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League-by-League

Coca-Cola Championship Achievers Index 1992-2008

1	Doncaster Rovers	32
2	Reading	29
3	Swansea City	17
4	Plymouth Argyle	14
5	Preston North End	13
6	Watford	10
7	Burnley	6
8	Blackpool	4
9	Bristol City	2
10	Barnsley	-1
11	Birmingham City	-6
12	Charlton Athletic	-6
13	Ipswich Town	-9
14	Derby County	-10
15	Crystal Palace	-11
16	Queens Park Rangers	-12
17	Sheffield United	-16
18	Southampton	-16
19	Norwich City	-17
20	Cardiff City	-18
21	Coventry City	-22
22	Nottingham Forest	-23
23	Wolves	-24
24	Sheffield Wednesday	-25

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League-by-League

Coca-Cola League One Achievers Index 1992-2008

1	Cheltenham Town	24
2	Carlisle United	23
3	Scunthorpe United	22
4	Yeovil Town	20
5	Colchester United	19
6	Hereford United	18
7	Northampton Town	17
8	Walsall	13
9	Southend United	9
10	Crewe Alexandra	3
11	Leyton Orient	-1
12	Hartlepool United	-1
13	Stockport County	-5
14	Peterborough United	-6
15	Huddersfield Town	-8
16	Brighton & Hove Albion	-9
17	Swindon Town	-10
18	Bristol Rovers	-12
19	Millwall	-14
20	Tranmere Rovers	-15
21	Oldham	-15
22	Leeds Utd	-17
23	MK Dons	-19
24	Leicester City	-20

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League-by-League

Coca-Cola League Two Achievers Index 1992-2008

1	Aldershot	24
2	Accrington Stanley	22
3	Morecambe Town	22
4	Dagenham & R'bridge	16
5	Rochdale	13
6	Macclesfield Town	12
7	Wycombe Wanderers	7
8	Barnet	5
9	Chesterfield	5
10	Rotherham United	4
11	Gillingham	3
12	Port Vale	-2
13	Lincoln City	-3
14	Bury	-6
15	Darlington	-11
16	Chester City	-12
17	Bradford City	-13
18	Bournemouth	-15
19	Grimsby Town	-16
20	Exeter City	-17
21	Brentford	-19
22	Shrewsbury Town	-19
23	Luton Town	-20
24	Notts County	-20

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Club-by-Club

Accrington Stanley

When the Premier League kicked off in August 1992, Accrington were playing Northern Premier League football at the likes of Barrow and Gainsborough, and in 1999 they dropped into the First Division of the Unibond League.

In fact, Stanley didn't reach the Conference until 2003, so to reach the Football League in 2006 is some achievement. The fact that such a small club has now established itself in League Two says a lot about the way it's run, but have they now reached their limits?

Aldershot

The 2008-09 season is the first time the Shot have played League football in the Premier League era.

The club went bust in March 1992 and returned the following season under a new name (adding the 'Town' suffix) and in Division Three of the Isthmian League – five rungs below the Football League. Good crowds, good managers and an enthusiastic playing squad allowed them to climb to the Conference by 2003.

Having missed out on promotion from the Conference via the play-offs in successive seasons, Aldershot's players became full-time professionals, and last season they won the title. Talk about bouncebackability – those fans who were around when the club was wound up in the High Court in 1992 must still be celebrating.

Arsenal

It's hard to over-achieve when you're one of the country's biggest clubs with enormous spending power, but it's fair to say that Arsenal's Premier League history has been in a generally upward curve.

Undoubtedly it peaked at the early part of this millennium, when the Gunners won the title twice (including the 'Double' for a third time) and the FA Cup twice, but even the 2007-08 Arsenal vintage is still a much better one than the squad that finished 10th in the first Premier League season.

But, despite that, Arsenal don't figure highly in our over-achievers table, simply because any club that could spend £7.5m on players in the mid-1990s (albeit on the legendary Dennis Bergkamp) and can regularly attract some of the biggest crowds in the country has to be expected to achieve.

Aston Villa

There's no doubting that Villa should have achieved more in their recent history. A club with the clout to attract some of Europe's best players and managers, having one of the best stadiums in the country and with a huge fan base, should have achieved more in the Premier League era than two League Cups and an Inter-Toto Cup.

We reckon Villa peaked in 1996 when, under Brian Little, they finished 4th in the Premier League, won the League Cup (for the second time in three seasons) and reached the FA Cup semi-finals. Having done that, they then floated on the Stock Exchange and invested heavily in the transfer market pre-season, 5th place in 1997 was a big disappointment.

Only twice this century have Villa finished in the top six in the Premier League. Last season was one of those occasions, and they've looked impressive so far this season, so perhaps under Martin O'Neill they can start to shed that under-achievers tag and keep their big-name players happy?

Barnet

It's been a roller-coaster ride for Barnet fans, who have not seen the club's rise to the Football League be the catalyst for greater things.

The Premier League era started well for Barnet, with promotion from Division Three, but that promotion was clouded by financial problems at the club, and a year later that almost led to the club's expulsion from the League.

Relegated back to Division Three after just one season, Barnet couldn't get themselves back out. Despite a couple of play-off appearances, the Bees were relegated to the Conference in 2001, not getting back into the League until 2005. Since then they've made their home in the bottom half of League Two – a lower position than they were in 16 years ago.

Barnsley

Fans of the South Yorkshire side will have enjoyed their club's brief dalliance with the Premier League 10 years ago, but before and since they've been on a regular diet of Championship and League One football (or the various incarnations of those divisions).

The Tykes were in the lower half of the old Second Division 15 years ago, and they have been there for the past two seasons, so you could argue that little has changed at Oakwell.

With stiff competition from the two Sheffield clubs, as well as Leeds United further up the M1, it's little surprise that Barnsley survive on gates of around 12,000 and don't have huge multi-national sponsors to provide much-needed income. A spell in administration, plus changes in ownership, haven't helped, and it's fair to say we're unlikely to see Barnsley over-achieve in the near future.

Bolton Wanderers

Bolton are part and parcel of the Premier League these days, but when the FA's new league took its bow Bolton were plying their trade in what had become Division Two.

It was a fairly meteoric rise to the top, however. Bolton spent just one season in Division Two, and then two seasons in Division One, before a memorable 4-3 play-off final win against Reading saw them reach the Premier League. Although they bounced between the two divisions for a few seasons, Bolton have been in the top flight since 2001.

Given that Bolton started the 1992-93 season boasting average gates of around 6,000 and playing in 100-year-old Burnden Park, their success in becoming a top 10 Premier League side is nothing short of remarkable. But are they heading downhill without big Sam?

AFC Bournemouth

It would be cruel to say Bournemouth under-achieved last season. Despite the 10-point deduction for going into administration, it was only on the last day of the season that the Cherries' relegation from League One was confirmed.

For the majority of the past 15 years, Bournemouth have been a lower-half Division Two/League One club, with more headlines off the pitch than on it.

Attracting home crowds of less than 5,000 and having little cash to spend on new players, the Cherries have probably achieved all that could be reasonably expected of them. And with a 17-point penalty to beat, achievement this season would be League survival.

Bradford City

Getting to the Premier League was probably the worst thing that ever happened to Bradford City, because the financial cost of relegation put the club into a worse league position than it was in 15 years ago.

City's rise from Division Two to Premier League coincided with the club's Stock Market listing and the signing of its first million-pound player, Lee Mills. That famous last-day win against Liverpool, which ensured City's Premier League survival, led to a rapidly rising wage bill, not helped by the signings of the likes of Benito Carbone and Dan Petrescu.

When relegation from the Premier League followed and the big-money contracts couldn't be sustained, City spiralled into debt, and administration soon followed. The club slowly drifted down the leagues and last season managed a mid-table finish in League Two. It's been a high price to pay for trying to live the dream.

Brentford

The Bees have kept themselves busy during the Premier League era: three relegations, a promotion, five play-off appearances, 12 managers (including former chairman Ron Noades) and three different club owners.

For most of the 1990s, crowds at Griffin Park were on the rise, but the turmoil that engulfs the club on a regular basis has clearly had an impact. Back in 1992 they were averaging gates of more than 7,000 in the old Third Division, but in their last season in the third tier (2006-07) the average attendance was down to around 5,600.

But given the size of the club and the resources at its disposal, you couldn't expect Brentford to achieve any more than it has.

Brighton & Hove Albion

Three relegations, three promotions, relegation battles, a ground share, a new stadium, 12 managers and two unsuccessful seasons in the Championship. Brighton's last 16 years in one sentence.

The Seagulls finished the 1992-93 season in 9th spot in Division Two under Barry Lloyd, and last season they finished 7th in League One under Dean Wilkins (who has since been replaced by Micky Adams), so League-wise they've hardly moved, but their Achievers graph looks like Neil Warnock's heart monitor.

After narrowly missing out on the play-offs last term, anything less than a top six finish this time will be under-achievement for the Seagulls.

Bristol City

Despite losing the Championship play-off final to Hull City, last season was one of massive over-achievement for Bristol City.

Most of the previous 10 seasons had been spent playing third tier football, so to win promotion from League One and then claim fourth spot in the Championship was as shocking as finding Dean Windass in the Premier League.

It's worth remembering that when the Premier League started City were a mid-table Division One side. Star striker Andy Cole was sold to Newcastle United for £1.75m, and despite spending over £1m on players City were relegated to Division Two in 1995. They reached the play-offs twice, but until last season it appeared the under-achievers tag was going to stick.

Bristol Rovers

Rovers started the 1992-93 season in the same division as their city rivals, but for the majority of the past 16 years they've played second fiddle to them.

Rovers do tend to get about half the average attendance City attract, and they have never had a wealthy benefactor to bankroll the club, so it's little surprise they haven't achieved the sort of success we often expect from a big city club.

After six seasons in the fourth tier, last season in League One was one of consolidation for Rovers (although they did reach the FA Cup quarter-finals), but it will be a big shock if they emulate the success their near-neighbours have enjoyed of late.

Burnley

There's a long and proud tradition at Turf Moor, and the club enjoys a strong following in the heart of Lancashire, but it's not the 1950s anymore.

Although the club hasn't yet reached the Premier League, it's enjoyed some good seasons since the League was restructured, and the past eight years have been spent in the Football League's top tier, albeit most of them in the bottom half of the table.

Mind you, that's still a great achievement. The Clarets had only just claimed promotion for the Fourth Division when the Premier League started. They've also done well to attract 10,000+ crowds on a consistent basis over the past 16 years, even when they were struggling in Division Two.

Bury

This is a small club where achievements come in tiny increments, like promotion to Division One in 1997 and the prospect of gates of at least 6,000.

Only Crewe had lower gates than the Shakers in Division One at that time, and although the club splashed out £600,000 in transfer fees it could not bring them success. After two seasons, they were back in Division Two. This season will be Bury's seventh successive year in the bottom division.

Attendances at Gigg Lane are back down to the same levels they were in 1993 (around 2,600), so anything higher than mid-table safety would be a big achievement for Bury. If early season form is a reliable yardstick (and often it isn't) then the Shakers will do that easily.

Cardiff City

When you compare 1992 with 2008, it's easy to assume that Cardiff City have over-achieved.

In 1992 they finished 9th in the Fourth Division and had average gates of around 6,200. In 2008 the Bluebirds finished 12th in the Championship and reached the FA Cup Final. Average crowds were close to 14,000.

But when you look at how much has been invested in the club in the past eight years, and the players they've signed (Hasselbaink and Robbie Fowler being just two), it's hard to avoid the conclusion that Cardiff City have, in fact, been among football's biggest under-achievers in recent times. The fans should probably expect more.

Carlisle United

As a new Premier League season kicks off, Carlisle fans are hoping that last season's play-off place will be the catalyst for a concerted push for promotion to the Championship.

The 1990s and early 2000s saw promotions and relegation dog-fights that have gone to the last minute of the last day (step forward, Carlisle legend Jimmy Glass!), so we reckon they were over-achieving by taking six years to finally be relegated to the Conference.

Since then, Carlisle have gone from the Conference to the fringes of the Championship in four years. For a club that once struggled to attract 3,500 people through the gates, that's quite an achievement.

Charlton Athletic

If this report had been written two years ago, we would have to have said that Charlton were definite over-achievers.

But last season's 11th place finish in the Championship compares less than favourably with the 7th place in the same league in 1992, so have the Addicks stood still for 16 years? No, not quite.

Charlton's success in maintaining a decent Premier League record was not the result of major investment or massive gate receipts, but in the wheeler-dealing in the transfer market and the coaching abilities of Alan Curbishley. By 2005, a top half finish had become a benchmark season – hence the under-achieving figures since then.

Chelsea

Until the late-1990s, Chelsea were a mid-table Premier League side. It was only when Glenn Hoddle and Ruud Gullit were in charge – backed by Ken Bates's cash – did fortunes begin to change. Top six finishes became a regular feature, as did Cup Finals.

And those fortunes sky-rocketed when Bates sold cash-strapped Chelsea to Roman Abramovich in July 2003, and he immediately handed Claudio Ranieri a £100m transfer kitty. Two years, over £60m and one manager later, the Premier League title was delivered to Stamford Bridge – followed immediately by another.

But achievement has to be judged against what should be expected of a club based on its financial and playing resources, and on that basis we have to say that Chelsea's achievements – as good as they are – are only what the fans (and Abramovich) should expect. We'd suggest the real over-achieving years were under Viali.

Cheltenham Town

Sixteen years ago, anyone outside a five-mile radius of Whaddon Road, Cheltenham, would have been laughed at had they suggested Cheltenham Town would be a League club by the turn of the century.

But that's exactly what the Robins did achieve, having climbed from the Southern Premier League to Football League Division Three within three seasons.

Having then secured a couple of top-half finishes in their first two seasons, Cheltenham then secured promotion to Division Two via the play-offs. Despite a relegation the following year, the Robins have fought their way back and are now embarking on their third successive season in League One. No wonder they're the fifth-biggest over-achievers.

Chester City

Chester's story during the Premier League era isn't exactly a happy one.

Apart from two seasons (both of which ended in relegation) they have spent their time no higher than the fourth tier of football's league pyramid, and four of those seasons were spent in the Conference.

Average crowds have hovered around the 2,500 mark season after season, so there's been very little in the piggy bank for any of the 16 managers in 16 years to spend.

Chesterfield

There's been so much going on off the field at Saltergate since 1992 that fans could be forgiven for not worrying about whether their team has under-achieved or over-achieved. Frankly, they're probably just glad they have a club to follow.

Well documented financial problems, allegations of fraud and rows with the local council about plans for a new stadium have overshadowed any on-pitch achievements by the Spireites. But those achievements have been minimal, it must be said.

Chesterfield started the 1992-93 season in Division Three and finished it in 12th spot. Last season they finished 8th in the equivalent League Two. But on crowds of less than 5,000, you'd be mad to think they should be achieving much more than that.

Colchester United

Just as the Premier League was a new arrival in 1992, so were Colchester United.

The Us had won the Conference title that year to make their way back into the Football League after a two-year absence. Their first season was reasonably successful, with only four points separating them from a play-off place. But it took five more years before promotion was achieved, via the play-offs.

Colchester's achieving peak was the 2006-07 season, their first-ever season in football's second tier. They finished 10th and most games in their 5,500 capacity stadium were sell-outs. It's a shame they couldn't maintain it – they were relegated back to League One last season.

Coventry City

Founder members of the Premier League, the Sky Blues never finished a season in the top half of the table before they were relegated in 2001 (despite having signed Craig Bellamy for £6.5m from Norwich City).

With so much Premier League experience, you would have thought Coventry would make a quick return back to the top flight, but it's been seven seasons since that relegation and they haven't had a sniff of promotion – not even a play-off spot.

No doubt the succession of managers at the club (eight since 2000) hasn't helped, but since 1998 the Sky Blues have struggled to make any impact on the pitch.

Crewe Alexandra

The club is famous for Dario Gradi, its youth development programme and its knack of selling on players for big profits, but not for success on the pitch.

Still, as Crewe started the Premier League era in Division Three and are now in League One (having been a Division One/Championship club for eight seasons) you could say they've over-achieved...a little.

Any club that can get from Division Three to Division One (their best position for 122 years) on crowds of around 5,000 has done better than could be expected, but should a side with Rob Hulse and Dean Ashton up front have done better than finish 14th in 2001?

Crystal Palace

Although Palace were one of the clubs that made up the first Premier League, they've only been in that league in four of the 16 seasons it's been played, and on each occasion they were relegated.

Three promotions and three play-off appearances don't tell the full story of Crystal Palace's achievements since 1992, since the story also has to include the colourful chairmanships of Mark Goldberg and Simon Jordan, as well as a spell in administration.

Although Selhurst Park holds 26,000, it's rarely full, and average gates of around 17,000 have meant there's only money to spend on signing players if there's money coming in from selling them – like Ian Wright, Chris Armstrong and Gareth Southgate. No wonder Palace's Achievers graph is flat-lining.

Dagenham & Redbridge

A series of mergers led to the formation of the club in 1992, and few people would have foreseen that in 2007 they would be a Football League club.

Even those die-hards who would have had the League as a target must have thought it was becoming a distant dream when the Daggers dropped into the Isthmian League in 1996.

It took four years to get out of the Isthmian League and another seven seasons to achieve promotion from the Conference, but that hardly disguises the well-earned sense of achievement that must be felt in that particular corner of Essex.

Darlington

Darlington are one of the few teams in the Football League to have spent the past 16 years in the same division – the bottom division, to be precise.

Whether it's Division Three or League Two, the Quakers have been there, and usually in the lower half of the table. There was one bright hope, in 2000, when they reached the play-off final (only to lose to Peterborough), but the next season they could only manage 20th position.

Last season Darlington also made the League Two play-offs, so for their fans' sake let's hope history doesn't repeat itself. But looking at their record, who would bet against it?

Derby County

In 1992, Derby County were arguably one of the biggest clubs outside the new Premier League.

Although a First Division club in name, thanks to the backing of director Lionel Pickering they were able to spend like a Premier League club, and during the 1992-93 season they attracted average gates better than five Premier League clubs. However, it was to be four years (and, ironically, after Pickering's spending spree ended) before promotion was achieved.

Derby spent six seasons in the top flight and saw crowds double to almost 30,000, but they could do no better than 8th. Last season saw them back in the Premier League after an absence of five seasons, but despite a huge influx of new players and the 12th best average attendance in the league they finished rock bottom with a record low of 11 points. Under-achieving isn't something Paul Jewell has been used to, but will he have to get accustomed to it at Pride Park?

Doncaster Rovers

Who would have thought – who could have thought – that the Donny Rovers who were a mediocre Fourth Division side in 1992 would become a Championship outfit in 2008?

And when you add in the fact that five of the intervening seasons were spent in the Conference, attendances dropped to less than 2,000 and the club's former chairman was sent to prison for an attempted insurance scam, it's a small wonder the club is in the Football League at all.

The fact Rovers have reached the dizzy heights of the Championship from the Conference in just five seasons is testament to managers Dave Penny and Sean O'Driscoll, and a series of playing squads that refused to accept they were a minnow club. So take a bow Doncaster Rovers – our over-achievers extraordinaire.

Everton

Despite average attendances of 36,000+ and being relatively active in the transfer market, only once have Everton finished in the Premier League top four. That was in 2005 – the season that, ironically, Wayne Rooney was sold.

Premier League ever-presents, Everton haven't yet recaptured the heights of the 1980s, when they regularly out-performed their rivals from across Stanley Park.

In 11 of those 16 Premier League seasons, the Toffees finished in the bottom half of the table, and on a couple of occasions avoided relegation on the very last day of the season.

Given the size of the club and its spending power, this probably explains why there's a general sense of under-achievement around Goodison.

Exeter City

Welcome back, Exeter City. After five seasons in the Conference they achieved promotion via the play-offs last term and can now take their place back in the Football League.

Not that their previous 10 years in the League was a bed of roses. Relegation battles, rising debts, administration, a ground sale, a former chairman convicted of fraud – could it have been any worse? Well, you could have Michael 'King of Pop' Jackson and Uri 'King of Spoons' Geller as club directors!

It may not be a big club, but failing to finish in the top half of the table for nine consecutive seasons has to be regarded as under-achieving, even for Exeter City, and it explains the general downward trend in their Achievers graph.

Fulham

When the Premier League got underway in 1992, Fulham were a mid-ranking Division Two side, and it wasn't until 1999 – under Kevin Keegan – that they got themselves just one promotion away from the top flight.

By the time that promotion to the Premier League occurred, in 2001, Keegan had gone off to manage England and his successor at Craven Cottage, Paul Bracewell, had made way for Jean Tigana.

None of those managers had been shy in spending Mohammed Al Fayed's cash, and neither were the likes of Chris Coleman and Lawrie Sanchez, but so far real success in the top flight has eluded them. Nevertheless, for a club averaging gates of 4,200 in the early 1990s to now be a well-established (if not successful) Premier League outfit is an achievement worth recognising.

Gillingham

The Gills were on the bottom rung of the Football League ladder when the 1992-93 season kicked off, and after several indifferent seasons they achieved promotion to Division Two while the shadow of administration hung over Priestfield.

Things picked up, and in 1999 they reached the Division Two play-off final (losing to Manchester City on penalties) and the following season went one better, beating Wigan 3-2 in the final. Three mid-table seasons in Division One followed, but the Gills then had successive relegation battles and succumbed to the second of those. Another relegation followed last season to complete the slide back down the ladder.

Gillingham's over-achieving peak was 2001-02, when they finished 12th in Division One and reached the FA Cup 5th round, but the decline since then has been steep.

Grimsby Town

The Mariners haven't always been a League One or League Two club. Back in the early 1990s, when they regularly attracted crowds over 6,000 to Blundell Park, they were setting their sights on the Premier League and a place at the top table for the first time since 1948.

Sadly, those hopes never materialised and Town struggled to make the top half of Division One. They've not been in that second tier since 2003, and now find themselves as a mid-table League Two side, and average gates are down to just over 4,000.

As it turned out, that 1992-93 season, when the Mariners finished 9th in Division One, was their best performance in the Premier League era. The years since have been...err...Grim.

Hartlepool United

Remarkably, only one league position separates the Hartlepool of 1993 (16th in Division Two) with the Hartlepool of 2008 (15th in League One).

Despite cash injections from new owners, a move to a new stadium that boosted gate revenues, and five play-off appearances in six seasons, the Championship – let alone the Premier League – has been a distant dream.

But you couldn't say they've under-achieved, as it took extra time at the Millennium Stadium to deny Pool a place in the Championship in 2005 at the expense of Sheffield Wednesday. Perhaps, in their 100th year, Hartlepool will confound us all.

Hereford United

The Bulls joined the Football League in 1972, but for the majority of the Premier League era they occupied a spot in the Conference, after financial problems in 1996 forced them to sell players and relegation from Division Three followed.

The club, to their credit, stuck by long-serving manager Graham Turner (now in his 14th season at Edgar Street) and after nine seasons in non-league football they finally won promotion via the play-offs in 2006.

Their first season back was hardly impressive – finishing 16th – but last term they won automatic promotion to League One, the first time for 30 years they have been in the third tier of the football pyramid. It made them one of the biggest over-achievers of last season.

Huddersfield Town

There have been enough peaks and troughs in Town's recent history to create a new mountain range.

The mid-1990s were when they planted their blue and white flag at the summit, having moved into a brand-spanking stadium up the road and almost immediately gaining promotion to Division One via the play-offs.

Unfortunately, Terriers fans didn't realise at that time it was the summit, but Town's five seasons in the second tier didn't generate a single play-off place. Since 2001 it's been League One or Two football in Huddersfield, so the fans must have a sense of under-achievement at the Galpharm.

Hull City

Hull City are in the Premier League. That's so remarkable it's worth repeating. Hull City are in the Premier League.

When the new FA-run league first began in 1992, Hull were a Division Two side playing the likes of Exeter and Mansfield at Boothferry Park in front of 4,000 fans. This season they'll be filling the impressive 26,000-seater KC Stadium for the visit of...well, you know exactly who.

That achievement is remarkable enough, but when you add in the fact that 10 years ago Hull were just two places away from dropping into the Conference, it becomes the stuff of Hollywood movies. City have had several owners over the past 16 years, and even a spell in administration, but it's a fair bet the Chairman's drinks cabinet is well stocked with Champagne for this season.

If we'd started this report at 1998 instead of 1992, Hull would be top by miles.

Ipswich Town

It's hard to say 'Ipswich Town' without saying 'Sir Bobby Robson'. Pity, then, that those championship-challenging, cup-winning days are three decades in the past.

Town were in the very first Premier League, but after three seasons of struggling to make their mark they found themselves in Division One. After five 'nearly' seasons they made their way back into the promised land and, under George Burley, had a stunning first season back in the Premier League – narrowly missing out on a Champions League berth.

But they've under-achieved consistently since then. Despite spending £14m on new signings, Town were relegated in 2002 and have been in Division One/the Championship ever since. At least they haven't under-achieved as much as Norwich!

Leeds United

If you took 1992 and 2008 in isolation, Leeds would probably run away with the title of football's biggest under-achievers.

Leeds entered the Premier League era as reigning League Champions, and they ended last season in the League One play-off final. Almost 50 league positions separated the 1992 side from the 2008 version.

It's the highs in between – when Leeds, under George Graham and then David O'Leary, were building into a major Premier League force – that just about save Leeds from the ignominy of being branded the biggest under-achievers. Good job for Leeds we didn't start the report in 2000.

Leicester City

After banging on the door unsuccessfully for three seasons, finally the Foxes were admitted into the Premier League in 1994, winning the play-off final at the third attempt.

Initially it was only a season-long admittance, but Leicester took the play-off route again in 1996 and found themselves back among the big boys.

They had five reasonably successful seasons in league and cup (including two League Cup Final wins), but Peter Taylor's sacking in October 2001 precipitated a rapid decline. Relegation followed that season, and despite a brief Premier League return in 2003 it's been a pretty bleak few years for the Foxes. Will relegation to League One be their lowest point, or do Leicester have further to fall? Early season indications suggest the former, which will be a mighty relief for the fans.

Leyton Orient

The past 16 seasons for the O's can best be described as 'steady'. A relegation to contend with, a promotion to celebrate (briefly) and a couple of lost play-off finals to endure, but otherwise steady as she goes.

Orient have been the archetypal mid-table club – their average position over those 16 seasons is 14th which, coincidentally, is where they finished in League One last season.

Mind you, the O's are now in the same division as Leeds United and Leicester City, so maybe the fans think they've over-achieved?

Lincoln City

If most of the Nineties were relatively uneventful for Imps fans, the Noughties have been anything but.

Relegation...club up for sale...chairman becoming manager...supporters trust taking over...administration... five successive play-off failures. After all that, it must have been something of a relief that last season Lincoln enjoyed a headline-free season to finish 15th in League Two.

Lincoln is a typical small club. With average attendances at Sincil Bank around 4,000 and a capacity a shade over 10,000, unless Roman's best mate comes along then achievement will be measured in small steps, not giant leaps.

Liverpool

So, have the Reds been under-achievers or over-achievers? Looking at their Premier League history, there's a (Jimmy?) case for both.

A Champions League title, a UEFA Cup, two FA Cups, three League Cups and three other appearances in European and domestic finals. Plus top four finishes in 11 out of 16 seasons.

On the other hand, seven league titles in the Eighties, but none since. Only one second place finish in 16 seasons. Plenty of money spent (£10m on El Hadji Diouf, £14m on Djibril Cisse, £11m on Heskey, for instance) but little return as far as the Premier League goes.

The Achievers graph says Liverpool have stood still during the Premier League years, but will this season be when that line starts heading north? With Torres banging them in, anything's possible.

Luton Town

Despite an FA Cup semi-final appearance in 1994, it's been a downward trend for the Hatters since 1992, which bottomed out in 2001 when Luton were relegated to Division Three. That descent had taken just nine years.

Luton had started to over-achieve a few years ago when they won the League One title and then claimed a creditable 10th place in the 2005-06 Championship, but successive relegations then followed – the second following administration and a 10-point deduction.

Given the 30 point start they're having to give the rest of League Two, it will be the over-achievement story of the decade if Luton can hang onto their Football League existence this season.

Macclesfield Town

Back in 1992, the bookies would have called for the men in white coats if you'd walked in and tried to put a tenner on Macclesfield achieving League status by 1998.

Not to worry, had you gone ahead anyway the bookies would have been stuffing your straightjacket full of crisp notes, because the Macc Lads achieved exactly that.

Things got even better a year later, when Town made it to Division Two, and although they've since dropped back and are now struggling in League Two, given their resources (gates of less than 2,500 and a transfer kitty the tooth fairy could match) it's a staggering achievement to be in the Football League in the first place.

Manchester City

You probably won't be surprised to hear that City are the Premier League's biggest under-achievers by some distance.

They finished the last season of the old First Division in 5th, ahead of Liverpool, Chelsea, Villa, Spurs and Everton, among others. The nearest they've come in the Premier League era to emulating that was in 2005, when Stuart Pearce (who'd taken over from Kevin Keegan towards the end of the season) led City to an 8th place finish.

The £30m+ spent on players last season by Thaksin Shinawatra failed to bring a change in fortunes. But for City's new 'saviours', Abu Dhabi United, £30m is the sort of sum you spend on one player, not a squad. Time will tell whether the royal family's investment is a long-term one, but if other superstars follow Robinho into "Middle Eastlands" then the new owners' predictions of Champions League football and a 'Big Five' could become a reality. And then we'll all have to stop cracking jokes at City's expense!

Manchester United

Is there anything Sir Alex's Ferguson's side haven't achieved since they captured the very first Premier League title? No, we couldn't think of anything either.

But have they over-achieved? That's a very different question, and one that has caused much debate here at the New Football Pools.

Looking at the facts – 10 Premier League titles, two Champions League trophies and enough domestic cup silverware to fill Fergie's house – it seems a clear-cut 'yes'.

But United were already becoming the dominant force by 1992, and in recent seasons that dominance has been eroded by the likes of Chelsea and Arsenal.

When you're the world's biggest football club, there's not much opportunity to over-achieve.

Middlesbrough

It took Boro a while to establish themselves as a true Premier League club, but now they have it's easy to see why we regard them as under-achievers.

Boro have been among the League's biggest spenders over the past 10 years, with chairman Steve Gibson demonstrating his ambition and desire for achievement by backing his managers with big bucks in the transfer market, as well as investing in the impressive 35,000-capacity Riverside Stadium.

Sadly, the likes of Brian Robson, Steve McLaren and Gareth Southgate have failed to deliver anything better than 7th place in the Premier League, and the only trophy won was the League Cup in 2004. Whichever way you look at it, for a club of Middlesbrough's size surely that has to be regarded as under-achieving?

Millwall

Twice in the past has Millwall's bid to reach the Premier League been thwarted in the play-offs, and when you add that to the fact the Lions were in the FA Cup Final four years ago, and the UEFA Cup the season after, it's a disappointment they now appear to be struggling in League One.

Their best season was undoubtedly 2001-02, when they achieved 4th spot in Nationwide Division One (losing to Birmingham in the play-off semis) and had average gates of more than 13,000.

Their worst season was probably 1997-98, when they were just five points from relegation to Division Three, having won just one of their last 10 games. But after last season's 17th place in League One (avoiding the relegation zone by four points), can the new investment coming into the club allow it to reach the potential shown in the early Nineties?

MK Dons

For the purposes of this report, MK Dons and Wimbledon FC are one and the same, because as far as their official league records are concerned, they are one and the same.

On that basis, Wimbledon/MK Dons can be regarded as one of the most under-achieving clubs of the Premier League era.

The evidence is clear. The club were Premier League members for the first eight seasons it existed (three times finishing in the top half) and reached three domestic cup semi-finals, but within six years they had dropped down to League Two.

Wimbledon were always small by Premier League standards, and MK Dons are even smaller (despite the argument that moving to Milton Keynes would help the club grow), but any club that finishes ahead of Liverpool, Villa and Chelsea shouldn't be in League Two just over 10 years later.

Morecambe

If you look at Morecambe's record, season by season, over the past 16 years it looks like steady progress, but not spectacular.

From the Northern Premier they established themselves as a Conference side before pushing for Football League elevation on a regular basis. After reaching the play-offs, or coming close, for several seasons, the Shrimps finally achieved their dream in May 2007 with a 2-1 play-off final success at Wembley against Exeter City.

But that underplays Morecambe's achievements. Even in Conference terms they were a relatively small club (gates of 1,200 were good, but not against the 2,500 that the likes of Crawley, Hereford or Telford could attract), and in their promotion-winning season they came up against no less than eight former Football League clubs. And last season they managed a very respectable 11th place in League Two. Morecambe, we salute you.

Newcastle United

Big under-achievers, obviously? Well, not exactly. In recent years, perhaps, but not so much in the 1990s. OK, trophy success has famously eluded the Magpies, but outside the Toon Army who remembers that the club wasn't a founding member of the Premier League?

Newcastle's first four Kevin Keegan-inspired seasons in the top flight almost brought two titles. And that was before the big spending on the likes of Shearer, Ferguson, Dyer and Robert, to name but four. Their average Premier League position of 9th is nothing to write home about, but the Magpies made two FA Cup Finals, two FA Cup semi-finals, the UEFA Cup semis and the Champions League second group stage.

It's only since 2003 that their record suggests they've under-achieved, and the Gallowgate faithful who bet on an Ashley-backed revival must – like King Kev himself – be wondering whether that was such a Wise move. Whatever next on Tyneside?

Northampton Town

In footwear terms, Town are more Church's than Jimmy Choo's, but there's plenty of League clubs who'd be happy to have been in those shoes over the past decade and a half.

Fifteen years ago, while Manchester United were claiming the first Premier League title, Northampton were 90 minutes away from leaving the Football League. They needed to win at Shrewsbury to stay up, and they came from 2-0 down at half-time to do just that.

A year later they did finish bottom of the League, but they kept their place because Conference winners Kidderminster didn't have a ground that met League requirements. Fourteen years, three promotions and two relegations later, Northampton are secure in League One. Is that under-achieving? Is it Cobblers!

Norwich City

There's not been a lot for the Canaries to sing about over the past 15 years, since finishing the 1992-93 Premier League season in a remarkable third spot behind Manchester United and Aston Villa.

Only three of the following 15 seasons were spent in the Premier League, and two of those seasons ended in relegation. The rest of the time, you can find Norwich in Division One/League One, attracting decent crowds but rarely threatening to make the play-offs, let alone promotion.

Premier League third in 1993 and Championship 17th in 2008 – two facts that tell you a lot about the recent achievements at Carrow Road. One of the Championship's biggest under-achievers.

Nottingham Forest

The Forest that kicked off the inaugural Premier League in August 1992 was a Forest that had just lost a League Cup Final, been in the FA Cup quarter-finals, and finished a creditable 8th in the final First Division campaign.

That same Nottingham Forest haven't been in the top flight since 1999, and for the past three seasons were plying their trade in League One. A bit of a come-down for a side that, 10 years earlier, had made the last eight of the UEFA Cup.

But whilst Forest have undoubtedly under-achieved in a big way, there are signs that things are picking up at the City Ground. But early season results suggest this Championship campaign won't be the one that puts them firmly back on the road to the Premier League.

Notts County

The very first 'Football Fever Report' named Notts County as the most stressful team for fans to follow. Well, here's more bad news for County fans – it's also one of the biggest under-achieving clubs in the game.

Until the second half of the 1991-92 season, it looked odds-on that Notts County would take their place in the first Premier League season, but a late collapse saw them fall into the relegation zone and miss out on the Premier League riches by four points.

As County tumbled down the League pyramid, gates dropped from an average of over 11,000 to less than 5,000. And just like in 1992, County finished last season in 21st place. It just happened to be three divisions lower than 16 years ago!

Oldham Athletic

When you make bold promises and then fail to deliver, you can't be surprised when people suggest you've under-achieved.

During his brief ownership of the Latics in the early part of the decade, local businessman Chris Moore pledged Premier League football within five years. He left before he could make good on that promise, but the records suggest it was a pretty unlikely scenario.

Oldham did appear in the first two Premier League tables, but at the wrong end of both, and by 1997 they were playing Division Two (third tier) football. In fact, between 1992 and 2001, the Latics failed to finish in the top half of any league they competed in. They may have halted that trend in the last few seasons, but the label of big under-achievers remains.

Peterborough United

They won't have known it at the time, but those Peterborough fans watching their heroes during the 1992-93 season saw them at their Premier League-era peak.

It's been pretty much downhill ever since – until last season. The club's first promotion in eight years has taken the Posh back into League One, where they spend five seasons up to 2005.

During those five years Peterborough could finish no better than 11th, so the Posh faithful will be hoping that the club can over-achieve for a change.

Plymouth Argyle

As recently as 2001, Argyle were struggling to rise about mid-table in Division Three, so the fact they then achieved two promotions in three seasons is pretty remarkable.

At the start of the Premier League, Plymouth were two divisions further down, battling to recover from a demoralising relegation. They just missed out on promotion in 1994, but were then relegated the following year. It wasn't until 2004 that Argyle made the Championship, but they've been there ever since.

Average gates at Home Park have doubled over that period from less than 6,000 to around 13,000, which is evidence of just how far Argyle have come since 1992.

Portsmouth

When you compare 1992 with 2008, it may be difficult to see why Pompey are our second biggest over-achievers, but the devil is in the detail.

On more than one occasion between 1992 and 2001, Portsmouth came close to dropping into Division Two, and if that had happened they would probably have never made the Premier League. Three times, in fact, their survival came down to the very last day of the season.

So to have gone from those end-of-season nail-biters to be an established Premier League side pushing for a European place (and with an FA Cup triumph to boot) is outstanding. And to do that on crowds of less than 20,000, and without spending £30m every summer, is nothing short of a miracle.

Port Vale

There have been plenty of ups and downs for Port Vale over the course of the past 16 seasons. The ups have included two Autoglass/LDV Vans Trophy successes, a promotion to Division One, two FA Cup 5th round appearances and – best of all! – a Littlewoods Pools ‘Giant Killers Award’ for their FA Cup win against Everton in the 1994 tournament.

But those achievements have been countered by several seasons fighting Division One relegation battles, and in recent years dropping slowly down League One until the almost inevitable relegation last term. That puts Vale in the League’s fourth tier for the first time since 1986.

Preston North End

Back in 1992, Preston were 39 places away from the Premier League, and it wasn’t until 2000 that they found themselves with an opportunity to join football’s elite.

That first season in Division One ended in play-off heartbreak, losing 3-0 to Bolton in a one-sided final, and twice since have Preston fallen at the play-off hurdle, so last season’s 15th place was clearly something of an under-achievement at Deepdale.

Nevertheless, operating on a tight budget and with crowds of less than 15,000, to be considered as one of the regular pre-season tips for the Championship play-offs (if not promotion) is an achievement in itself. Perhaps this season they can go all the way?

Queen’s Park Rangers

Having finished the first three Premier League seasons in the top 10, to now be a struggling Championship side smacks of significant under-achievement.

The reality is that the QPR of the early 1990s was undoubtedly over-achieving, and the QPR of today is probably a more realistic assessment of the club’s size and capabilities.

Financial problems have beset the club since the start of the Millennium, and the recent merry-go-rounds in the boardroom and the manager’s office have to be taken into consideration when you assess the club’s overall performance. But despite having three billionaire backers, we think the Rangers fans who now believe anything but the Premier League is under-achieving need a reality check.

Reading

In Division Two with average gates of around 4,000, the 1992 Reading vintage is very different to the one that almost sneaked into the UEFA Cup 15 months ago.

Although life at the Madejski Stadium has been more financially beneficial than the days at Elm Park were, Reading have never been one of the game's big spenders, so their 8th place in their debut Premier League season was a huge achievement.

Surprisingly they couldn't build on that last season and are now back in the Championship. Had Reading stayed up, they would have been the biggest over-achievers in this report.

Rochdale

If we were being harsh, we'd say that still being in the Football League is achievement enough for Rochdale. They have spent the entire Premier League era in the bottom division (in all its guises), and they've averaged a very modest 13th place over those 16 seasons.

But if last season is anything to go by (Rochdale almost made League One, only to lose 3-2 to Stockport in the play-off final at Wembley), perhaps the Spotland club are about to end a 34-year sequence and break out of League Two this season? Now that really would be an achievement.

Rotherham United

As recently as 2004, Rotherham United were a Championship club. A struggling one, perhaps, but a Championship club nevertheless.

So to now be in League Two is disappointing for Millers fans, but given their well-publicised financial difficulties it's probably not a huge surprise. Having come perilously close to extinction, being in administration and having 10 points deducted, it would be churlish to suggest Rotherham have under-achieved.

With another big points penalty to overcome this season, our achievement benchmark has to be 23rd spot, but the way they've gone about wiping out that deficit suggests we've underestimated them.

Scunthorpe United

OK, it was just one season in the Championship, but to get there was a real feat for the Iron, and it rocketed them up our Achievers list.

Under Nigel Adkins they achieved a minor miracle and won the League One title in 2006-07, ending a 42-year wait to reach football's second tier.

Not surprisingly, they were favourites to be relegated from the Championship last season, and despite a bright start they didn't disappoint the pundits. History suggests they won't match those achievements for a good few years, but they're League One form this term gives the fans hope.

Sheffield United

Who scored the first Premier League goal? Blades striker Brian Deane, against Manchester United, of all people. Sadly, that's the biggest mark Sheffield United have made on the Premier League.

After two seasons in the top flight, the Bramall Lane outfit were relegated, and apart from the 2005-06 season they haven't been back. For the other 13 seasons, they have existed in football's second tier, and a series of 'what might have beens'.

Managers such as Dave Bassett, Howard Kendall, Steve Bruce and Neil Warnock all failed to deliver the lasting success that Blades fans crave. The club should have done more, and so we have to conclude that Sheffield United have under-achieved big style.

Sheffield Wednesday

The Wednesday faithful have little to crow about, because their team has under-achieved even more than their city rivals...and every other club in the League.

Wednesday spent eight years in the Premier League, finishing 7th on three separate occasions and out-performing the likes of Liverpool and Chelsea more than once. Ironically, it was only when the Owls brought in expensive imports such as Paulo Di Canio and Benito Carbone did their fortunes begin to change.

The Owls left the Premier League in 2000, and six seasons in the second tier have brought a 9th place finish and four serious relegation battles. Today's Wednesday is a far cry from the one that finished 7th in that debut Premier League season, lost to Arsenal in both the FA Cup Final (after a replay) and League Cup Final, and celebrated midfielder Chris Waddle winning the football writers' Footballer of the Year award.

A stadium like Hillsborough warrants a successful club in it.

Shrewsbury Town

Football, Shropshire and over-achievement don't go together naturally. Anyone wishing to challenge that should take a look at Shrewsbury's recent record.

In 16 seasons they have finished 18th or lower on seven occasions, and their highest Football League finish since 1994 has been 7th. There's no real reason why Town should have under-achieved – there are many smaller clubs in the lower leagues – but for some reason they have.

Between 1994 and 2006, Shrewsbury failed to finish in the top half of a league for two successive seasons, and a succession of managers have failed to halt that steady but inexorable decline.

Southampton

It's going to be difficult to over-achieve when your best squads are regularly broken up by the necessity to sell the best players to your rivals.

Managers from Ian Branfoot and Alan Ball, to Dave Jones and Gordon Strachan, all found that the Saints had to keep the books balanced by offloading their stars. Striker Alan Shearer, for instance, was sold to Blackburn before the first ball in the Premier League was kicked, and the likes of Dean Richards, Kevin Davies, James Beattie and Tim Flowers have been among other big-name transfers out of The Dell and St Mary's.

Saints were Premier League regulars until 2005, and have found it difficult to adjust to life in the Championship. Last season they finished just two points off relegation to League One. And does the fact that Southampton have had 14 managers in 16 years give us a clue as to why the club has under-achieved to such an extent?

Southend United

There were no promotions to celebrate at Roots Hall between 1991 and 2004. There were, however, a couple of relegations.

At the end of the 1998-99 season, Southend were just six points away from dropping out of the league altogether, and between 1996 and 2004 they finished in the top half of the table only once.

But in recent seasons Southend have been transformed, and they can now be classed as over-achievers. Despite severe debts and employing six managers in seven years, they managed to achieve promotions in 2005 and 2006, and got over the disappointment of relegation in 2007 to reach the League One play-offs last term. Is this a Premier League club in the making? We'd say No, but we'd have said the same thing about Hull City.

Stockport County

Congratulations to Stockport on their League Two play-off success last term, but let's not get carried away into thinking this is small club that is over-achieving.

Back in the 1990s, Stockport were regularly challenging for promotion to Division One, and in 1997 they finally achieved it. It was the same season they reached the League Cup semi-finals. During their five years in Division One, Stockport attracted crowds of over 8,000 and went to White Hart Lane for an FA Cup fifth round tie against Spurs (which they lost, 4-0).

As is so often the case in football, one relegation led to another, and before you could say Edgeley Park Stockport had dropped two divisions. And, despite last season's play-off win, it's hard to escape the conclusion that County's recent history has an air of under-achievement about it.

Stoke City

When the Premier League began, there were no trips to Old Trafford, Highbury or Anfield for Stoke fans to look forward to. Instead, their Division Two fixture list included such glamorous venues as Dean Court, Home Park and Brisbane Road.

And as recently as 2002, Stoke City were still playing their football in Division Two, so the fact they are now part of the biggest league in the world must be difficult for some of the Potteries faithful to comprehend.

No doubt the 28,000-capacity Britannia Stadium will be full to bursting for every home game, and it will be arguably an even bigger achievement if Stoke confound the bookies by holding onto their top flight status for at least one more season. Nevertheless, they've shown so far they won't be Premier League pushovers, particularly at home.

Sunderland

Before the Stadium of Light there was Roker Park, and before Mick McCarthy and Roy Keane there was Terry Butcher and Mick Buxton.

For Sunderland fans in the early part of the Nineties, the Premier League was just a dream. They were more concerned with ensuring the famous 'Roker Roar' helped the team avoid relegation to Division Two. Between 1991 and 1995, relegation battles were a constant feature of Sunderland's season.

Sunderland fans may be used to relegation – it's happened to them three times from the Premier League – but they've also had four promotions from the Championship/Division One and two top seven finishes in the Premier League. The Toon Army might not agree, but for a club that was one point from relegation to Division Two 15 years ago, we'd say that was a case of over-achievement.

Swansea City

The Swansea City that swept to promotion from League One last season is a very different one to the Swansea City that started the 1992-93 season in the equivalent division.

It's not just the new stadium or the fact that attendances at home games have almost trebled. It's that this is now a club going forwards, not backwards.

The 1990s weren't great for Swansea. They struggled in Division Two, and when they were eventually relegated to Division Three they struggled there also. In 2003, after the club changed hands several times and came close to bankruptcy, City finished 21st in Division Three – their lowest placing for almost 30 years. Four years and two promotions later, Swansea City's transformation is complete.

Swindon Town

Those of you with long memories will recall Swindon being a Premier League side 15 years ago. It was brief and unsuccessful (Town won only five games all season), but they were there.

As we've illustrated more than once already, one relegation is often followed swiftly by another, and that was precisely Swindon's fate. Although they immediately secured promotion back to Division One, they couldn't mount a charge back to the Premier League. In fact, 17th was their best finish before relegation beckoned again in 2000.

Beset by cash problems – including two periods in administration and defaulting on a £600,000 tax bill – Swindon have spent most of the past eight years in the League's third tier, but those are the very reasons they've over-achieved since 2000.

Tottenham Hotspur

Premier League ever-presents, Spurs have probably been the most consistent in failing to live up to their big club billing.

In domestic cup competitions their recent record is fairly impressive, but despite investing millions in top players and top managers, real Premier League success has evaded the men from White Hart Lane.

Before the arrival of Martin Jol in 2005, Spurs' best Premier League finish had been 7th in 1995, when Jurgen Klinsmann was their star attraction. Jol led Spurs to successive 5th place finishes, but Juande Ramos could manage only 11th last season and he was a hot candidate for the managerial chop almost as soon as this season started.

Only Manchester City in the Premier League have under-achieved more than Spurs, but as they have never left the Premier League perhaps Spurs fans should be more disappointed than City's?

Tranmere Rovers

From 1992 to 1995, there was a sense of inevitability that Tranmere would make the Premier League. Three times in a row they made the Division One play-offs, and three times they came up short.

Whether those experiences knocked the stuffing out of them is something we can only ponder, but the facts do speak for themselves – from 1995 to 2001, Tranmere didn't even manage a single top-half league finish, although during that period they reached a League Cup Final and two FA Cup semi-finals.

Tranmere have been a League One outfit since 2001, but only once have they made the play-offs, in 2005. The following season was their low point, when they could finish only 18th. The fact they've stayed in League One for three more seasons is something of an achievement.

Walsall

While the first crop of Premier League clubs were bathing in ass's milk, Walsall were enduring a cold financial shower.

Times were tough at the Bescot Stadium. The club – then in Division Three of the new Football League structure – was losing a reported £8,000 a week, which left virtually nothing in the piggy bank for transfers.

Despite those severe financial pressures, Walsall have done pretty well on the field, winning four promotions (against three relegations) and last season achieving a respectable 12th spot in League One. Overall, we'd say they've earned their over-achievers badge.

Watford

Watford's heyday was the 1980s, when Graham Taylor and Elton John seemed to appear on 'Match of the Day' more often than John Motson's sheepskin overcoat.

The Premier League-era Watford have spent most of their time in the second tier. They did achieve promotion twice (both times via the play-offs), but on both occasions they finished their season in the top flight in 20th spot.

Watford have invested Premier League-style sums to try to stay with the big boys, but even by Championship standards they're not a big club. Getting to the Premier League twice is why we've marked them as over-achievers.

West Bromwich Albion

These days we think of Albion as either being in the Premier League or at the top end of the Championship table, but 15 years ago things were very different.

In the 1993-94 season, for example, only a last-day win at Portsmouth kept West Brom in Division One, and then only on goal difference. A year later they finished 19th, and the season after that they set an unwanted club record of 11 straight defeats.

For a club attracting some of the biggest gates in Division One, that was a clear under-achievement, but they've certainly turned that around in the past eight seasons. If they beat their best Premier League finish of 17th they will have taken it up another notch. But surely the bookies won't be wrong?

West Ham United

Now, not a lot of people know this, but the Hammers weren't part of that first Premier League season. They had to wait another year before taking their bow in the new league.

Since then, West Ham have spent all but two seasons in the Premier League, and in seven of those 13 seasons they finished in the top half of the table. So much for those who only associate the Hammers with relegation battles!

If it wasn't for the fact that they've regularly splashed out on big money transfers (over £60m in the past three years), we'd have rated their over-achieving even higher than we have. But financial pressures – not helped by the £30m now owed to Sheffield United over the Carlos Tevez affair - mean new boss Gianfranco Zola won't have such a generous transfer kitty. Tough times ahead for the Hammers?

Wigan Athletic

Yes, of course Wigan have over-achieved in the past 16 seasons. The real question is – how much have they over-achieved?

In our assessment, quite a lot actually. They may have a superb stadium these days and top players in Zaki and Heskey, but Wigan Athletic's position in the early 90s was far more humble. When they were in Division Three in 1993 and attracting crowds of less than 2,000, even the most optimistic supporter could not have dreamt of becoming a firmly-established Premier League outfit. Dave Whelan's input has been key, but their subsequent success is due largely to managers who have spent wisely in the transfer market and players who have delivered results on the pitch.

As recently as 2003, Wigan were in Division Two (two promotions away from the Premier League), so the progress they made under Paul Jewell is quite phenomenal. And unlike so many other sides promoted from the Championship, Wigan have kept hold of their top flight status and entertained the fans along the way.

Perhaps Wigan peaked in 2006, when they finished 10th in their first Premier League season and reached the League Cup Final, but is the fact they've stayed there without spending stupid money an even bigger achievement?

Wolverhampton Wanderers

With Wolves' resources and crowd-pulling potential (they attract some of the biggest crowds outside the Premier League), they should have more than one season in the top flight to their name.

Wolves – backed by Sir Jack Hayward – spent steadily in the 1990s trying to get into the Premier League, but could only muster two play-off appearances for their efforts. Ironically, it was after Sir Jack retired and Wolves cut back on the spending that they finally achieved promotion.

Disappointingly for the Molineux faithful, that 2003-04 Premier League season was their one and only, and in their four Championship seasons since then they have made the play-off positions just once. Only Sheffield Wednesday have under-achieved more than Wolves in the Championship.

Wycombe Wanderers

It's hard to mention Wycombe without talking about the Martin O'Neill years, when he led the Adams Park side to a Conference and FA Trophy 'double' in 1993, and then followed it up with immediate promotion from Division Three and then 6th spot in Division Two.

Anything after that would look like under-achieving, which would be harsh on Wycombe. O'Neill left for Norwich in 1995 and Wycombe haven't won a promotion since, but they have been in both the FA and League Cup semi-finals and been in the League Two play-offs twice.

So although they haven't been able to sustain the blistering start they made to the Premier League era, it's still an impressive achievement for Wycombe Wanderers to now be a leading League Two side.

Yeovil Town

From Isthmian Premier League to the Football League in six years is a fairytale in itself, but to be in League One two years later is a story that even the most impressionable child would find hard to swallow.

But that's just what Yeovil Town did achieve, and we haven't even mentioned the fact they also won the FA Trophy in 2002, missed out on the 2004 Division Three play-offs on goal difference and lost the 2007 League One play-off final.

Had Yeovil achieved promotion to the Championship last season they would undoubtedly have been the biggest over-achievers in this report. So was that 18th place finish a blip, or a more realistic assessment of where the club stands?

Barclays Premier League

	Season ending																
	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Arsenal	100	95	103	99	109	114	117	115	113	108	114	110	117	113	112	108	111
Aston Villa	100	107	103	95	106	99	94	91	99	95	98	90	97	90	85	91	94
Blackburn Rovers	100	109	111	114	98	91	95	87	80	86	97	107	101	95	106	100	108
Bolton Wanderers	100	108	104	112	107	110	106	101	100	103	105	104	113	120	119	124	121
Chelsea	100	101	97	99	101	108	117	120	118	115	112	109	107	114	113	109	108
Everton	100	100	96	95	100	93	86	87	89	89	88	99	86	103	97	100	104
Fulham	100	99	91	88	83	90	91	94	95	95	91	90	100	93	91	97	9
Hull City	100	94	99	99	90	85	80	86	90	99	99	98	104	108	106	106	126
Liverpool	100	96	93	97	99	101	104	96	102	108	111	103	101	110	104	98	101
Manchester City	100	92	83	80	78	72	65	70	84	82	90	97	89	94	85	88	79
Manchester United	100	104	106	104	107	106	104	106	106	110	105	108	105	104	103	106	110
Middlesbrough	100	95	88	93	96	85	86	94	90	86	91	86	89	93	91	90	90
Newcastle United	100	120	131	122	130	125	120	118	117	116	118	121	113	107	106	103	103
Portsmouth	100	106	95	93	89	102	91	93	90	86	82	109	113	116	119	125	130
Stoke City	100	102	105	101	104	97	90	92	93	90	94	89	94	92	90	97	116
Sunderland	100	91	96	88	106	105	106	111	120	124	115	108	112	114	109	111	118
Tottenham Hotspur	100	104	93	96	96	94	89	95	91	88	85	81	79	79	86	91	90
West Bromwich Albion	100	103	96	93	95	92	92	94	87	91	101	100	108	115	109	111	117
West Ham United	100	102	105	105	108	104	106	113	111	108	110	102	101	104	112	109	108
Wigan Athletic	100	94	88	93	94	101	107	109	107	105	101	108	117	122	128	126	125

Coca-Cola Championship

	Season ending																
	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Barnsley	100	102	97	105	103	112	104	100	106	99	93	87	89	88	98	95	99
Birmingham City	100	96	93	98	91	90	93	89	86	88	93	97	106	101	96	99	94
Blackpool	100	97	89	96	102	98	90	88	83	97	96	94	91	88	83	110	104
Bristol City	100	97	96	85	80	88	95	84	79	77	73	80	85	83	81	88	102
Burnley	100	104	114	109	101	104	96	98	114	118	120	117	111	105	104	101	106
Cardiff City	100	106	98	90	80	89	77	92	88	89	93	95	91	88	89	85	82
Charlton Athletic	100	95	97	93	99	92	95	91	100	114	111	111	115	106	104	99	94
Coventry City	100	103	107	100	97	91	103	99	92	84	88	86	90	84	90	83	78
Crystal Palace	100	94	106	100	99	105	91	94	92	90	93	88	97	94	93	88	89
Derby County	100	91	94	93	98	105	109	107	101	99	96	89	84	90	80	91	90
Doncaster Rovers	100	103	103	107	105	102	97	95	95	96	99	103	115	120	126	125	132
Ipswich Town	100	101	98	93	92	95	95	95	96	112	102	99	98	96	90	88	91
Norwich City	100	124	119	105	96	92	85	90	86	85	94	90	98	97	92	85	83
Nottingham Forest	100	86	94	110	107	83	88	84	77	79	72	80	75	68	65	70	77
Plymouth Argyle	100	101	108	93	100	93	86	81	80	80	87	95	104	103	106	112	114
Preston North End	100	96	99	91	101	97	95	112	117	126	118	116	114	120	122	120	113
Queens Park Rangers	100	118	116	118	97	95	91	90	104	95	92	100	107	107	98	97	88
Reading	100	106	114	121	113	113	110	109	103	103	103	112	110	108	125	136	129
Sheffield United	100	98	95	92	86	88	79	76	70	75	71	87	85	80	92	87	84
Sheffield Wednesday	100	96	99	94	93	100	94	91	83	77	74	72	70	78	74	80	75
Southampton	100	100	100	105	99	97	102	104	108	113	113	118	115	103	96	93	84
Swansea City	100	108	105	105	98	101	91	95	99	96	91	85	90	96	102	101	117
Watford	100	97	97	103	95	91	94	103	101	98	91	89	92	94	108	107	110
Wolverhampton W	100	98	95	92	85	89	86	85	82	79	81	86	86	83	79	81	76

Coca-Cola League One

	Season ending																	
	1992	1993	1994	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Brighton & Hove A	100	99	91	91	88	83	75	74	77	84	95	100	90	98	97	92	85	91
Bristol Rovers	100	90	92	92	95	88	81	91	84	88	75	62	65	70	74	73	85	88
Carlisle United	100	93	96	96	100	91	96	85	78	80	83	88	86	81	90	105	119	123
Cheltenham Town	100	102	102	102	102	100	103	114	116	122	120	127	123	120	115	121	126	124
Colchester United	100	106	100	100	102	104	105	112	109	107	107	106	105	108	102	113	122	119
Crewe Alexandra	100	101	102	102	115	112	118	123	117	115	119	113	116	114	112	112	108	103
Hartlepool United	100	96	93	93	91	90	87	82	76	85	90	98	101	106	109	99	95	99
Hereford United	100	100	97	97	97	104	95	92	89	90	90	86	92	99	96	101	106	118
Huddersfield Town	100	93	91	91	98	104	96	96	98	100	93	97	86	88	95	97	89	92
Leeds United	100	92	98	98	97	91	91	98	100	107	101	96	87	78	73	84	70	83
Leicester City	100	98	100	100	97	103	114	116	117	120	116	104	109	107	95	92	84	80
Leyton Orient	100	102	97	97	95	90	89	94	98	88	96	85	85	83	86	98	95	99
Millwall	100	104	107	107	104	98	93	92	99	101	105	109	107	107	103	97	93	86
MK Dons	100	106	116	116	114	109	114	103	99	94	87	84	80	73	68	66	74	81
Northampton Town	100	93	86	86	88	89	97	107	95	103	100	97	93	104	103	109	112	117
Oldham Athletic	100	98	94	94	87	84	84	84	79	83	83	86	85	78	72	77	82	85
Peterborough United	100	109	107	107	102	99	94	91	90	94	97	93	97	90	87	88	88	94
Scunthorpe United	100	93	94	94	96	91	90	95	103	101	97	97	99	84	105	109	125	122
Southend United	100	103	109	109	109	108	101	89	80	84	90	89	83	85	96	108	106	109
Stockport County	100	104	103	103	96	96	100	110	107	104	104	104	98	91	86	77	85	95
Swindon Town	100	107	105	105	96	99	93	90	90	88	80	89	93	98	99	91	94	90
Tranmere Rovers	100	107	107	107	106	101	100	98	98	101	94	89	89	90	89	83	85	85
Walsall	100	105	100	100	103	105	106	102	113	111	116	118	120	116	114	109	109	113
Yeovil Town	100	106	100	100	97	99	101	103	106	104	107	107	109	114	117	115	126	120

Coca-Cola League Two

	Season ending																
	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Accrington Stanley	100	108	103	104	109	107	101	96	99	104	108	115	124	119	128	123	122
Aldershot	100	109	111	115	112	112	119	116	120	119	117	120	121	122	119	120	124
Barnet	100	104	96	98	99	93	97	90	99	84	89	87	95	98	101	104	105
Bournemouth	100	91	88	84	86	89	101	106	95	107	81	89	98	106	94	89	85
Bradford City	100	104	108	100	107	99	104	108	114	112	98	93	88	93	90	84	87
Brentford	100	93	93	99	89	86	76	87	82	87	91	83	81	91	94	84	81
Bury	100	107	101	106	109	120	121	115	109	106	101	102	95	92	90	87	94
Chester City	100	95	103	96	95	98	94	94	91	86	80	85	89	87	91	91	88
Chesterfield	100	100	102	105	112	118	115	112	101	108	107	104	103	102	102	101	105
Dagenham & R'bridge	100	108	102	94	88	83	80	89	93	108	110	104	97	97	96	112	116
Darlington	100	94	89	87	90	82	80	84	91	86	87	87	83	86	85	83	89
Exeter City	100	99	91	84	86	80	84	86	84	84	87	81	79	77	74	77	83
Gillingham	100	97	99	99	114	116	118	121	125	127	129	127	120	118`	111	108	103
Grimsby Town	100	103	100	102	98	95	100	105	101	100	100	98	90	81	91	85	84
Lincoln City	100	103	98	101	97	102	107	106	105	99	93	105	105	107	103	101	97
Luton Town	100	86	85	84	82	91	83	86	84	77	80	88	79	83	89	80	80
Macclesfield Town	100	94	101	112	106	112	128	121	117	116	116	114	114	120	113	112	112
Morecambe	100	100	99	102	107	109	109	104	108	100	105	110	107	106	108	113	122
Notts County	100	93	99	90	94	85	88	90	96	94	87	86	83	78	77	83	80
Port Vale	100	107	109	105	108	113	111	110	109	101	96	99	105	103	105	104	98
Rochdale	100	99	101	96	97	99	95	95	102	106	111	105	101	106	104	108	113
Rotherham United	100	106	104	104	104	106	102	108	109	110	107	111	110	108	106	104	104
Shrewsbury Town	100	97	106	103	103	100	96	90	83	88	92	81	83	79	84	89	81
Wycombe Wanderers	100	103	115	121	116	113	111	113	115	117	114	109	103	101	104	104	107

Achievers Index 1992 vs 2008

Barclays Premier League

	1992	2008	Change
Portsmouth	100	130	30
Hull City	100	126	26
Wigan Athletic	100	125	25
Bolton Wanderers	100	121	21
Sunderland	100	118	18
West Bromwich Albion	100	117	17
Stoke City	100	116	16
Arsenal	100	111	11
Manchester United	100	110	10
Blackburn Rovers	100	108	8
West Ham United	100	108	8
Chelsea	100	108	8
Everton	100	104	4
Newcastle United	100	103	3
Liverpool	100	101	1
Aston Villa	100	94	-6
Fulham	100	91	-9
Middlesbrough	100	90	-10
Tottenham Hotspur	100	90	-10
Manchester City	100	79	-21

Achievers Index 1992 vs 2008

Coca-Cola Championship

	1992	2008	Change
Reading	100	129	29
Swansea City	100	117	17
Plymouth Argyle	100	114	14
Preston North End	100	113	13
Watford	100	110	10
Burnley	100	106	6
Blackpool	100	104	4
Bristol City	100	102	2
Barnsley	100	99	-1
Birmingham City	100	94	-6
Charlton Athletic	100	94	-6
Ipswich Town	100	91	-9
Derby County	100	90	-10
Crystal Palace	100	89	-11
Queens Park Rangers	100	88	-12
Sheffield United	100	84	-16
Southampton	100	84	-16
Norwich City	100	83	-17
Cardiff City	100	82	-18
Coventry City	100	78	-22
Nottingham Forest	100	77	-23
Wolverhampton W	100	76	-24
Sheffield Wednesday	100	75	-25

Achievers Index 1992 vs 2008

Coca-Cola League One

	1992	2008	Change
Cheltenham Town	100	124	24
Carlisle United	100	123	23
Scunthorpe United	100	122	22
Yeovil Town	100	120	20
Colchester United	100	119	19
Hereford United	100	118	18
Northampton Town	100	117	17
Walsall	100	113	13
Southend United	100	109	9
Crewe Alexandra	100	103	3
Leyton Orient	100	99	-1
Hartlepool United	100	99	-1
Stockport County	100	95	-5
Peterborough United	100	94	-6
Huddersfield Town	100	92	-8
Brighton & Hove Albion	100	91	-9
Swindon Town	100	90	-10
Bristol Rovers	100	88	-12
Millwall	100	86	-14
Tranmere Rovers	100	85	-15
Oldham	100	85	-15
Leeds Utd	100	83	-17
MK Dons	100	81	-19
Leicester City	100	80	-20

Achievers Index 1992 vs 2008

Coca-Cola League Two

	1992	2008	Change
Aldershot	100	124	24
Accrington Stanley	100	122	22
Morecambe Town	100	122	22
Dagenham & Redbridge	100	116	16
Rochdale	100	113	13
Macclesfield Town	100	112	12
Wycombe Wanderers	100	107	7
Barnet	100	105	5
Chesterfield	100	105	5
Rotherham United	100	104	4
Gillingham	100	103	3
Port Vale	100	98	-2
Lincoln City	100	97	-3
Bury	100	94	-6
Darlington	100	89	-11
Chester City	100	88	-12
Bradford City	100	87	-13
Bournemouth	100	85	-15
Grimsby Town	100	74	-16
Exeter City	100	83	-17
Brentford	100	81	-19
Shrewsbury Town	100	81	-19
Luton Town	100	80	-20
Notts County	100	80	-20

