



Overs/Unders Against Different Opposition

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The bookies are never keen to part with their money and over the past 10 seasons (2009/10 to 2018/19), backing over/under 1.5, 2.5 or 3.5 goals would unsurprisingly have yielded a loss if backed on a consistent basis across Europe's top five leagues. That's the Premier League, La Liga, Serie A, Ligue 1 and the Bundesliga, while using the football betting odds in our database, the following return of investment (ROI) would have been delivered over this time period:

League	GPG	U 1.5	O 1.5	U2.5	O 2.5	U3.5	O 3.5
Bundesliga	2.91	-17.25%	-3.44%	-7.87%	-4.44%	-5.40%	-9.92%
Premier League	2.75	-11.95%	-4.50%	-8.50%	-3.22%	-5.43%	-8.87%
La Liga	2.75	-9.15%	-6.28%	-6.70%	-6.27%	-3.51%	-14.62%
Serie A	2.66	-11.74%	-4.75%	-6.11%	-6.65%	-4.40%	-12.14%
Ligue 1	2.52	-16.54%	-2.98%	-6.97%	-6.32%	-5.69%	-10.89%

However, we wondered if there was any value to be had backing overs/unders when certain opposition types were encountered. We took a look at how bottom-six sides did hosting top-six outfits or fellow bottom-six teams, as well as the reverse (top-six sides either hosting those in the bottom six or in the top six). We've used their starting position from before each fixture took place, though for the season's opening round of matches, we've determined their current position by the previous year's final standings, while promoted teams have been counted as bottom-six material prior to a new campaign.

The biggest value was to be found in Serie A, where there was a 4.93% return in the football betting market at under 2.5 goals when top-six outfits hosted bottom-six sides, while under 3.5 goals was up a decent 3.99% as well. Serial champions Juventus were a particularly interesting case in point, with under 2.5 resulting in a -8.54% loss, though with under 3.5 goals producing a 12.23% gain. The Bianconeri are

more efficient than enthralling, and with no realistic prospect of re-jigging their approach as they seek to get the best out of Cristiano Ronaldo, we'd expect that trend to continue for a while yet. Looking beyond the dominant force in Italy, other teams that found themselves in the top six produced a combined 7.78% profit when backing over 2.5 goals.

Situation (Serie A)	U 1.5	O 1.5	U 2.5	O 2.5	U 3.5	O 3.5
All games	-11.74%	-4.75%	-6.11%	-5.65%	-4.40%	-12.14%
Top six hosting bottom six	-13.23%	-5.42%	4.93%	-15.04%	3.99%	-23.65%
Bottom six hosting top six	-17.54%	-1.68%	-8.91%	-1.25%	-6.08%	-6.04%
Top six hosting top six	-8.80%	-5.41%	-4.10%	-6.89%	-1.11%	-19.25%
Bottom six hosting bottom six	-14.64%	-3.20%	-4.60%	-6.12%	-4.93%	-10.48%

Although no one beyond Juve has been able to land the Serie A title in recent times, while Milan have sunk to a low ebb, there remain a number of big teams in Italy with the likes of Inter, Napoli, Roma and Lazio all kicking about. That kind of depth is also demonstrated in Spain and especially England, but not so much in Germany and France, where beyond Bayern, PSG and Dortmund, European heavyweights are in short supply. With that in mind, we're not too surprised that Ligue 1 and the Bundesliga threw up the least interesting results amongst these top leagues for opposition types.

Situation (La Liga)	U 1.5	O 1.5	U 2.5	O 2.5	U 3.5	O 3.5
All games	-9.15%	-6.28%	-6.7%	-6.27%	-3.51%	-14.62%
Top six hosting bottom six	-21.40%	-3.10%	-12.38%	-4.14%	-4.54%	-12.99%
Bottom six hosting top six	0.44%	-8.69%	1.03%	-13.21%	3.24%	-27.71%
Top six hosting top six	-16.94%	-3.93%	-7.44%	-8.02%	-6.07%	-7.75%
Bottom six hosting bottom six	-13.99%	-4.99%	-12.26%	1.40%	-4.57%	-13.14%

Over in La Liga, there was a modest 3.24% profit to be had backing under 3.5 goals when bottom-six sides were at home to the top six in La Liga, though of course in Spain three teams have stood head and shoulders above the rest over the past decade. Backing under 3.5 goals when Atletico, Barca and Real have visited one of the minnows has also proven profitable (4.75%), with the latter leading the way with a 5.98% ROI. With Diego Simeone at the helm the market will tend to react and drop the price for under 3.5 to account for their system, while with Real and Barca somewhat going through transition periods of their own, we could see this remaining a profitable strategy for the foreseeable future.

The next best value to be found was in Premier League betting, where both over 2.5 goals (2.13%) and over 3.5 goals (4.36%) were profitable when bottom-six teams hosted one of the top six. However, what captured our attention was how different this has been in the early part of the season before the league settles down to some semblance of normality:

Market	ROI	ROI (1 st 10 games)	ROI (games 11-38)	ROI (last 10)
U1.5	-1.39%	-28.02%	8.26%	17.07%
O1.5	-7.03%	-0.79%	-9.86%	-14.74%
U2.5	-12.49%	-23.68%	-8.43%	-2.41%
O2.5	2.13%	9.8%	-0.65%	-9.69%
U3.5	-10.26%	-19.16%	-7.04%	-9.7%
O3.5	4.36%	23.27%	-2.49%	2.45%

Indeed, limited to just the first 10 rounds of fixtures, the profit to be had on over 2.5 goals in the Premier League jumped significantly from 2.13% to 9.8% where the bottom-six side hosted a top-six team, while over 3.5 goals saw a mammoth leap from 4.36% to 23.27%. However, over the rest of the season from games 11 to 38, both over 2.5 and 3.5 produced negative returns, so you'll have to get in early when the action renews.

Looking at the difference in the first 10 games compared to the rest of the season, it's clear to see that backing under 1.5 goals in this situation would have been a disastrous strategy early doors. However, beyond this there was some value to be had down that road, and especially in the final stretch where the hosts were fighting tooth and nail for survival, and were clearly succeeding in keeping things tight.

There are a few factors this could be put down to. Low-scoring encounters perhaps shouldn't be expected so much with teams fresh and raring to go after a summer's break. Perhaps more importantly though, it hints at defensive frailties that are yet to be ironed out on the training pitch, as key partnerships involving a new signing or two take time to gel. Of course, many clubs will start the new term with a different man in the dugout, which should leave them less likely to be as organized defensively with new coaching methods for squads to digest. Naturally, as the season progresses, weaker teams will typically strive to frustrate the big guns and hold out for a point, and recognizing the more miserly outfits that are capable of doing so should unearth the best Premier League odds.

The same has been true in Italy where over the opening 10 weekends, backing under 1.5 or under 2.5 would have resulted in 28.38% and -22.84 losses respectively when bottom-six sides host a team from the top six. By contrast, a 10.21% profit was there to be had getting behind over 2.5 goals in these scenarios early on in the campaign.

Interestingly, the polar opposite has been true in Spain, where over the first 10 games where bottom-six sides have hosted a top-six outfit, under 1.5 goals has produced a 25.43% profit, under 2.5 goals 23.23%, and a more modest 11.66% for under 3.5 goals. Going back to the point about there only being three truly elite sides in Spain, limiting the visitors to just Atletico, Barca and Real see each of these increase massively (under 1.5 at 46.33%, under 2.5 at 34.42% and under 3.5 at 25.61%).

There definitely appears to be opportunities to catch the bookies unaware at the start of a new campaign. England and Italy provide fertile ground for backing a few goals in the opening stages when weak outfits host the strong ones, though as the season enters its climactic stage, it's worth keeping an eye out for some low-scoring encounters in these types of games in England.

Meanwhile, the giants of Spain shouldn't be backed to the hilt against weaker teams early on – especially as none of Atletico, Real or Barca are hitting quite the same impressive heights of a few years ago. The profit that's been available on low-scoring affairs has been staggering, and with none of the at their very best, we'd expect a couple of quick payouts when the coronavirus pandemic is over.

There's certainly reason to keep an eye on under 3.5 whenever Juve are hosting a struggling outfit too, while when the other sides at the top are hosting bottom-six teams, it's well worth having a look at the price for over 2.5 and 3.5 to see what's on offer.