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## DERBY BOOKING POINTS

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This preview was researched by the analysts at [Football Form Labs](#).

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### Strategy Summary:

*Passions are high in big derby games, but does this automatically lead to an increase in the number of booking points in the Premier League and therefore a betting on football angle? The short answer is no, but some derbies are dirtier than others.*

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### **We have identified below what we would describe as the big derby clashes:**

Looking at every Premier League game over the last 17 years since the 2002/03 season (not including the current campaign), the average game has seen 3.2 yellow cards and 0.15 red cards (or 35.84 booking points). We've also looked at this over the last five years to see if a similar pattern is still being seen and as a result we get on average per game: 3.4 yellow cards, 0.14 red cards and a booking points average of 37.37, providing an almost identical path.

Below are the derbies highlighted as significant Premier League clashes which we will take a further look at:

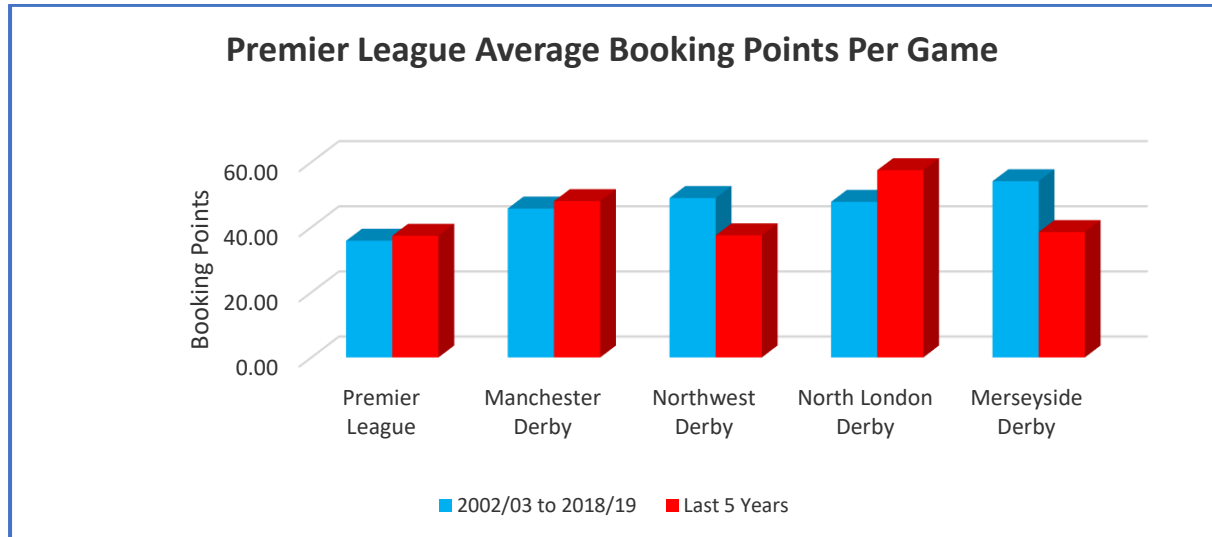
- *Man Utd v Man City (Manchester Derby)*
- *Arsenal v Spurs (North London Derby)*
- *Everton v Liverpool (Merseyside Derby)*
- *Liverpool v Man Utd (Northwest Derby)*

From the four derby matches above we have identified 136 games across the last 17 years that these have occurred. The average match has seen 49.15 booking points, with 4.2 yellow cards and 0.29 red cards in this time, which is considerably more than the Premier League average over the same period. That works out at around an extra caution per game and with spread betting companies

drastically increasing the booking points line for these big derby games, that can give us an angle to profitably bet on Premier League football by selling in the spreads.

There are, however, some derbies which are more affected than others. The **Merseyside derby** is certainly one of the biggest in English football, with both teams relishing the opportunity to get one over the other. Across the last 34 league matches between Liverpool and Everton, there's been 14 red cards and 149 yellow cards. In terms of booking points, it's produced 54.1 per derby since 2002/03, but if we look at this over the last five years excluding this season, we can see this has considerably tailed off. There's been just 38.5 booking points per game from their last 10 matches as it seems the rivalry has somewhat softened, as the Toffees fail to keep up with their red neighbours although the premier league odds on the booking points may suggest otherwise.

Interestingly, the **North London derby** has only seen an average of 47.8 booking points per game from their 34 matches over the last 17 years, which is relatively low seeing as they hate one another. But given Spurs' meteoric rise to be at much shorter odds for the Premier League title over the last decade, we've seen the booking points per game rise to 57.5, with 50 yellow cards and 3 red cards being seen in the last 10 clashes over a five-year period, making it the Premier League's most ferocious derby over that period. The other derby that has seen a rise in booking points in recent years is the **Manchester derby**, as City are another improving team that now sees them as one of - if not the best - performing side over the last five years, that in turn has heated this rivalry. Finally, the **Northwest derby** has taken a huge dive in ferocity as although the rivalry clearly remains amongst the fans, the departure of Sir Alex Ferguson's as well as key player rivalries has meant that on the field this is very much a tamer affair.

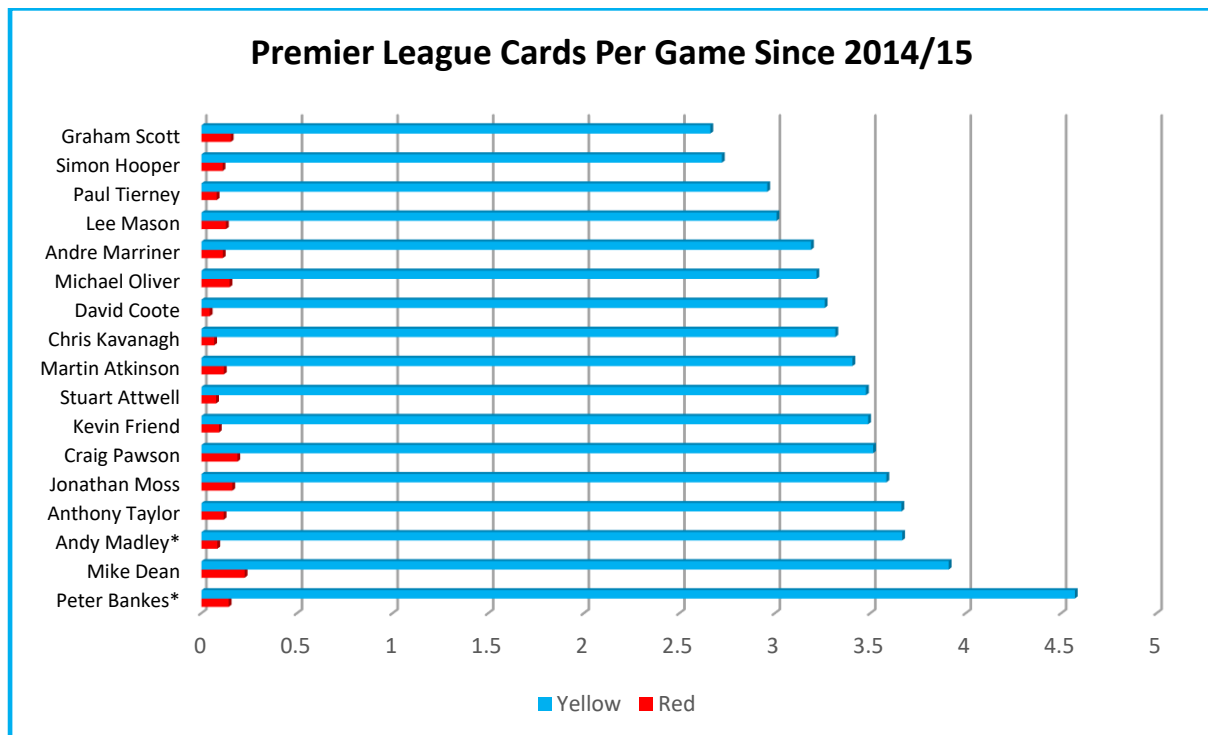


Looking in further detail we can see that over the last five years the two 'dirtiest' sides who remain in the league have been London clubs Chelsea and West Ham. Comparing how they've fared against each other we can see that on average per game there's 4.8 yellow cards, 0.1 red cards and a booking points average of 50.5 over their last 10 games, which is certainly a considerable margin above the league average as it seems the mixture of two dirtier teams and the added local rivalry does have an effect. Meanwhile, the fairest teams have been Liverpool and Brighton, who although have only faced one another four times since the Seagulls were promoted for the 2017/18 season, they've had an average of just 0.75 yellow cards, zero red cards and 7.5 booking points per game in

their four meetings, which is almost next to nothing! That surly can provide an angle to bet on football in that head-to-head.

## Referees

The officials can have an impact on the amount of bookings in a given game and so we can use this to add to the value of a sell or buy depending on the fixture and premiership odds. The table below is a guide of refs that can be good to get inside – **Mike Dean** is proven to be a little more trigger happy than his fellow match officials. *(Both Peter Banks and Andy Madley are the only referees yet to officiate 15 or more matches and so the data set is probably not yet representative of them).*



\*Refereed fewer than 15 PL Fixtures

## Conclusion:

When it comes to these derby matches it is evident that almost all of them have had more yellow and red cards than your average game in that same league, but we're looking for matches that may provide more booking points than anticipated by the bookies, or most likely, much tamer affairs than they previously envisaged.

The first angle is to try and look at a potential **sell/lay** on the **Merseyside derby** if the football betting odds are in line. This match has historically been a very hotly contested fixture but in recent years the divide in quality has certainly been apparent and we'll look to take advantage of that. The other big English derby is the **North London derby** that is now the fiercest in the league, while both Arsenal and Spurs currently top the table on booking points per game this campaign at 25.9 and 24.7 respectively (as of 24/03/2020) and so any lower than expected values we'll look to **buy**.

The third and final fixture we highlighted was the league leaders Liverpool against Brighton. Indeed, they currently have 10.2 and 13.7 booking points per game on average this term respectively and so

any line lower than 35 could present an opportunity to sell, not to mention their total of just 7.5 in their four head-to-heads up to end of the 2018/19 season. However, we'd be cautious even using the best odds in football given the lack of recent data between the two and the Seagulls hiring Graham Potter within the last year.

**North London derby – Buy if spread  $\leq 55$**

**Merseyside derby – Buy if spread  $\geq 35$**