

# **Premier League Managers – nationality and club playing history since 1992**

**Football Economics**  
September 2016

## Introduction

In this analysis, we look over the life of the Premier League to consider the extent to which top-flight clubs still look to former players to manage their club and at the shifting mix of nationalities of top-flight managers with a focus on English managers.

Eddie Howe at Bournemouth and Alan Pardew are examples of English managers returning to the teams they played for. Still, these are the only two English Premier League managers to have played for their club, and indeed, only one other current Premier League Manager has done so. But how does this compare to the longer-term trend?

Of course, managers that have a successful history at a club usually enjoy at least a period of goodwill from fans and, along with a familiarity with the club's set-up and area, and the fact they may already be on the coaching staff could make a player a more likely candidate to be manager.

### Premier League Managers that played for their club

Our analysis starts at the end of August 1992 and considers five year intervals. In 1992, 9 of the 24 managers (the league shrinks to 20 in all other years) had played for their club. Examples include George Graham at Arsenal, Peter Reid at Manchester City and Graeme Souness at Liverpool.

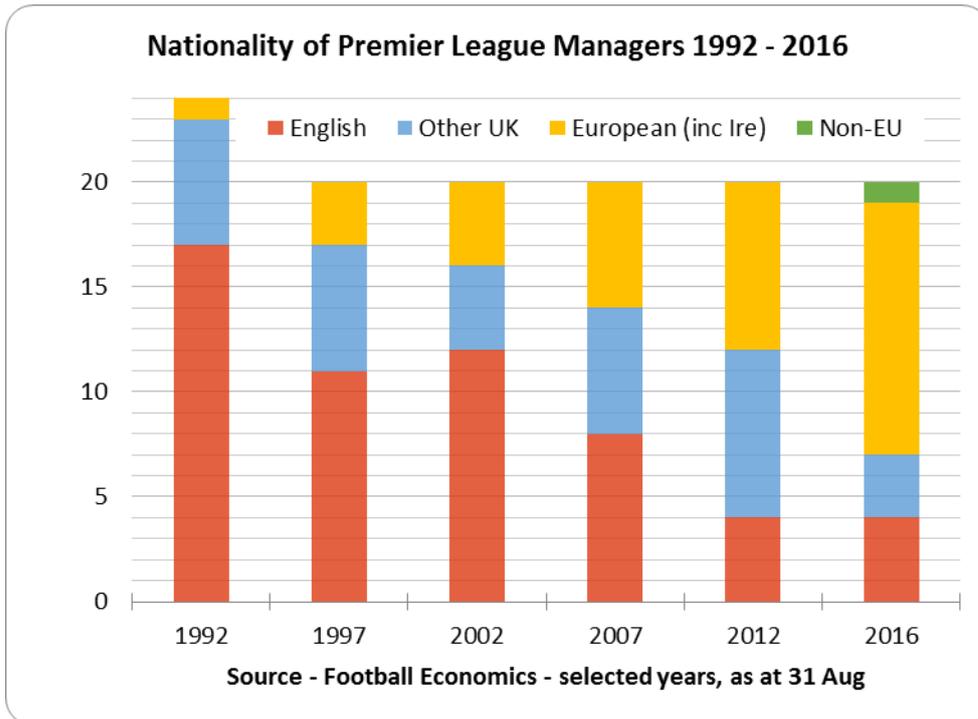


Five years on, in 1997, this had shrunk to 7 out of 20 (35%). In 2002, it had fallen further to 4 (20%), and in 2007 it was a 5 (25%). In 2013, for the first time ever, no manager in the Premier League had played for their club previously – Wigan were relegated with Roberto Martinez and were replaced by Cardiff (Malkay Mackay), Hull (Steve Bruce) and Crystal Palace (Ian Holloway) – none of whom had played for those clubs.

In the last two years however, the decline has been partially reversed and Premier League teams have started the season with managers that have played for the club. Indeed, this figure now stands at three, with Bournemouth (Eddie Howe), Crystal Palace (Alan Pardew) and West Ham (Slaven Bilic) opting for former players.

A key trend since the start of the Premier League has been the significant increase in foreign managers which followed the influx of players from overseas and we consider that trend below.

**Longer-term trend in nationality of Premier League Managers**

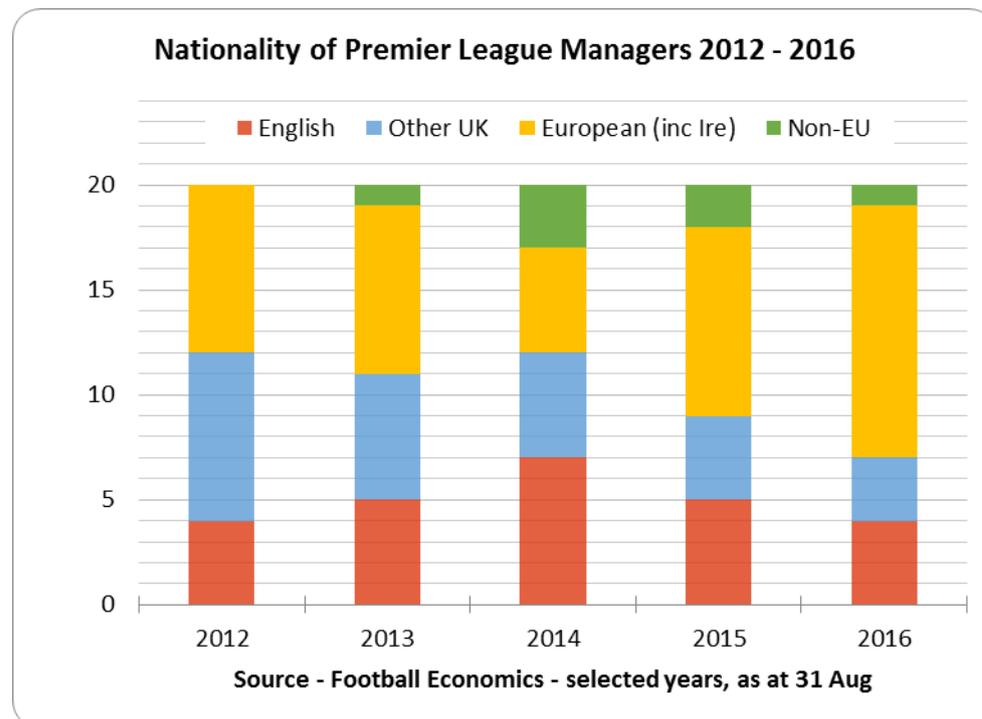


There has been a striking decline in managers from the UK, and England in particular. In 1992, the only non-UK manager came from Ireland (Joe Kinnear at Wimbledon). This year, 13 out of the 20 came from outside the UK. In 1992, 17 out of 24 managers were English, while this year, the figure was 4.

This clearly represents a small pool of English managers in the top flight, and none of them will be managing a team competing in Europe this year.

Over this longer time period, a relevant trend may be the increase in foreign ownership of Premier League clubs. Roman Abramovich became the first foreign owner in the Premiership in 2003 but by August 2014, eleven Premiership clubs were majority controlled by foreign owners. Looking at whether foreign owners are more likely to appoint managers from overseas or without club playing history could be examined in further analysis.

## Recent trends in Manager nationality



Looking at more detail in the mix of nationalities in the Premier League over the last five years highlights the growth of European managers, and those from outside of Europe (predominantly South America).

The number of English managers grew to 7 in 2014 but has fallen back again to 4. Still, it's other UK managers have suffered the most – with the combined number of Northern Irish, Scots and Welsh falling from 8 in 2012 to 3 in 2016.

Whilst the long-term decline in English managers appears to have been arrested in recent years, it's notable that few of the English managers are managing the top sides. Indeed, it's been six years since the last manager to manage an English club in the Champions League when Harry Redknapp managed Tottenham in the 2010-11 season<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Gary Neville managed Valencia in the Champions League last season and, according to Sky Sports, became only the fifth Englishman to ever manage a team in the competition  
<http://www.skysports.com/football/news/11095/10093459/gary-neville-joins-small-group-of-english-champions-league-managers>

## Summary, conclusions and further research

In summary then; in terms of Premier League managers who played for their club:

The era when most top managers had played for their club appears to be long gone. However:

- The number of Premier League managers who played for the club has risen from zero in 2013 to 3 in 2016

The mix of nationalities of Premier League managers has transformed beyond recognition in the past 20 years, and is still changing:

- UK managers were a minority in the Premier League for the first time in 2015.
- For English managers, numbers declined substantially over the first 20 years of the Premier League (from 17 in 1992 to 4 in 2012)
- For the combined number of Northern Irish, Scottish and Welsh managers the major falls have happened in the last four years (from 8 in 2012 to 3 in 2016)
- The English managers that remain in the Premier League are not managing the top clubs, and none are gaining experience in the Champions' League.

As an indicator of progression from playing to managing at the top level of club football, these results suggest that for the vast majority of clubs, former players have not been developed sufficiently to take over the managerial reigns.

Further analyses could look systematically at the number and success of English managers in overseas leagues (Bobby Robson, Terry Venables, Roy Hodgson, Gary Neville). Research could also consider whether these trends are replicated in other European leagues, whether managers with club experience are more successful and if there's a link to investment in manager development, or foreign ownership.

We think manager development is key for clubs and countries, and will be looking more at the topic in future analysis.

### Notes to Editors:

Football Economics is a UK-based think tank providing insights to the football world through independent research and analysis.

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