

# THE PREMIER LEAGUE

## UNITED RULES

### SEASON 7

## 1. BEGINNERS START HERE

**UNITED** is a play-by-mail (PBM) football game, invented by Alan Parr, to whom many people are eternally grateful.

Each player takes the role of a football team manager, and has total control over coaching, team selection, tactics, buying/selling players and finances. The season is divided into 10 sessions, plus a 'close season' session to tidy up loose ends. Most sessions will contain 2 league matches and some cup matches, for each of which you must submit a team. From here on, the term manager will refer to you, the reader, and the term player will refer to a member of your team. I suggest you read the rules several times if possible. For ease of use, I suggest you start with the sections with titles in CAPITALS. These are the vital bits, the rest you can live without knowing right away. The GM is me, Martin Burroughs, the mug running this league. If you don't understand anything in these rules, please ask- I'll be glad to explain.

## 2. THE SQUAD

Each player has the following characteristics:

**2.1 A NAME**- chosen by the manager at the start of a players' career. It is a very good idea not to choose overly similar names (eg Johnston and Johnstone).

**2.2 A SPECIALIST POSITION**. There are currently 5 possible positions, but more may be added later:

**GOALKEEPER**- Abbreviated to **Gk**

**SWEEPER**- Abbreviated to **Sw**

**DEFENDER**- Abbreviated to **Df**

**MIDFIELDER**- Abbreviated to **Mf**

**FORWARD**- Abbreviated to **Fw**

The **Df + Mf + Fw** players of a team are collectively known as the "**outfield**"

**2.3 AN AGE**. Age **SBY** is a schoolboy (the youngest player) , Age **APP** an apprentice (one year older), then Age I (one year older again), II,III,IV and so on until players retire. At the end of each season, each player will age one year, and will lose skill levels (see below) equal to his new age. Youth players, however, do not lose levels on ageing.

**2.4 A SKILL LEVEL**. Players with a skill of less than 2 must retire instantly, leaving the league never to return. There is no upper limit, but normally 16 is the highest you will see. Players may be trained to become more skilful, but lose skill on ageing.

**2.5 A FITNESS MODIFIER** of up to +2. Players on fitness -3 or lower are unable to play. Fitness is affected by fatigue, by resting and by coaching. If a player plays 3 or more matches in a session (4 or more for Gk), his fitness falls by 1 immediately after the third match. If he plays no matches his fitness rises by 1.

**At the start of a season**, youth players have fitness 2, older players have fitness 0. For more details see sections on injuries and coaching.

### 3. TEAM SELECTION

A manager must not break the following rules when selecting a team for a match:

- (i) There must be **EXACTLY 11 PLAYERS**. In the event that a manager is physically unable to field 11 players for a match, he must field as many as possible. He may be fined for so doing at the GMs discretion.  
**NB**-If you are fielding less than 11, please write "11 players not available" underneath the team list, so I realise what's happening!
- (ii) There must be **exactly one Gk**.
- (iii) There must be **at least two players in each outfield area**.
- (iv) There **may** be one **Sw**.
- (v) **THE 3 TIMES RULE**. The area total (see below) of any outfield area cannot be more than 3 times that of any other outfield area.  
e.g. if the Fw area totals 20, neither Df or Mf areas could be above 60, or less than 7.  
This restriction applies after all additions (see section 5), but before injuries and sending offs (see later) and has no effect on Gk or Sw. If your team breaks this rule, surplus area levels will be ignored (I will attempt to redistribute added levels to balance.)

**NB**. An **AREA TOTAL** is the combined skill+fitness levels of every player in that area, plus any extra levels as per section 5. In the case of Gk and Sw, area totals are more or less the same as player levels, as only one of each is in that position at a time.

### 4. PLAYING A MATCH

The GM will compare the area totals of the two teams in a match (A and B, say) as follows:

- (i) If team A's Fw area total is greater than team B's Df area total, then A earns a number of attacks equal to the difference.  
**NB Experienced players should note that a Sw does NOT add his levels to the Df in this league!**
- (ii) The team with the highest Mf area total gets attacks equal to half the difference.
- (iii) If team A's Df area total is greater than team B's Fw total, then team A earns a number of attacks equal to one fifth of the difference. If team A is playing a sweeper behind the defence, this rises to one third of the difference.

All fractions of attacks are rounded up, and then each of the attacks is treated as follows to see how many produce shots, then goals:

- (iv) Attacks have first to beat the Sw (if playing!). For each attack, there is a percentage chance of it being stopped equal to  
$$30 + (\text{Sw level} \times 2) \%$$
  
(eg a level 10 Sw stops  $30 + 10 \times 2 = 50\%$  of attacks.) Attacks passing the Sw become shots.
- (v) Each shot has a 35% chance of being off-target. If a side has scored 2 goals this rises to 40%, then by a further 5% after each goal scored, to a maximum of 75%. This is to curb ridiculous scorelines (with luck!)
- (vi) Finally, on-target shots come up against the Gk. This is similar to the Sw test, but the percentage is  
$$40 + (\text{Gk level} \times 2.25) \%$$

## MATCH EXAMPLE:

UNITED UNITED				Vs.	CITRUS CITY			
POS'N	NAME	SKILL	FIT		POS'N	NAME	SKILL	FIT
Gk	WASSALL	2	2		Gk	Orange	5	-2
Df	DRAPER	6	1		Sw	Lemon	12	0
Df	TYLER	4	2		Df	Lime	4	0
Df	PARR	6	-1		Df	Grapefruit	5	2
Mf	LEWIS	11	2		Mf	Ortaline	3	0
Mf	DICKSON	8	0		Mf	Tangerine	14	1
Fw	STRETCH	9	-1		Mf	Seville	11	1
Fw	HUBY	10	1		Mf	Minneola	10	2
Fw	CARTER	7	-1		Mf	Jaffa	3	2
Fw	BASS	4	-2		Fw	Valencia	8	2
Fw	BURROUGHS	15	-1		Fw	Outspan	3	0

If neither team added any extra levels (unrealistic: see section 5), the attacks would be as follows:

First, City have broken the 3 times rule, as their defence is 11 and their midfield 47! So the midfield level for the match is reduced to 33.

United would get  $41 - 11 = 30$  attacks from their forwards.

City would get  $(33 - 21) / 2 = 6$  attacks from a superior midfield.

United gets  $(18 - 13) / 5 = 1$  attacks from its' Df over City's Fw line.

So United have far more attacks. City's Sw and Gk are likely to stop more attacks than Stokes, but United should still win with so many more attacks.

## 5. ADJUSTMENTS TO LEVELS

There are many ways in which area totals can be increased for a team in a match:

### 5.1 HOME ADVANTAGE (HA)

Apart from certain special matches (eg cup finals), in each match the first named side plays at home (as you would probably expect). The home side has 7 extra levels to split between the three outfield areas. (See also the groundsman, section 9.4.)

### 5.2 GREAT PERFORMANCE POINTS (GPPs)

Occasionally in a season a team plays above itself. To mirror this a manager has a number of GPPs (around 30 per season) which can be used as and when he sees fit, though no more than 10 GPPs can be used in any one game. Unused GPPs cannot be carried between seasons. See section 14 for more details.

### 5.3 PLAYING FOR A DRAW (PFD)

A team choosing to PFD has 7 extra levels to split between Sw, Df and Mf areas, but its total shots will be halved (round up fractions).

### 5.4 OFFSIDE TRAP (OST)

Provided they do not have a player in the Sw position, any side can play the OST in a match. This simply halves the number of shots the opposition's forwards get, but doubles any shots from the opposition's midfield.

### 5.5 HARDNESS (H)

In each game a manager can choose to add extra levels by playing hard. The number of extra points can be from 0 (weeds) to 10 (assassins), spread over the various areas as the manager desires. If a manager wished to, he could play 10 hardness in each and every match. See section 6 for more details on the effects of hardness.

**(NB All the above affect AREA TOTALS, not individual player levels.)**

## 5.6 EXTRA LEVELS ON GK OR SW

A TOTAL of 5 extra levels (from any mix of allowed sources) can be played on each of Gk and Sw in a match. Extra levels can only be played on the Sw if one is playing.

## 6. Discipline

### 6.1 RED/YELLOW CARDS.

For each player in a team there is a chance that he will be booked (incurring 4 DPs) or sent off (10 DPs):

Booking chance =  $1.5 \times (3+H) \%$

Sending Off chance =  $0.25 \times (3+H) \%$

Where *H* is the total hardness used by your team (excluding the Gk).

### 6.2 PENALTIES.

There is a 10% chance of conceding a penalty for every hardness point used. Each 10% chance is separate, so a team could concede as many penalties as it plays hardness points. If no hardness is used, there is still a 5% penalty chance.

The chance of a penalty being scored is:

$$50 + (4 \times \text{penalty takers skill}) - (2 \times \text{Gk skill}) \%$$

to a maximum 95%

### 6.3 EFFECTS OF DISCIPLINE.

Players who are sent off are deemed to operate at half their total level in that match. Disciplinary Points (DPs) are cumulative through the season. Reaching 10 DPs brings a 1 match ban, 20 DPs a 2 match ban, and so on. At the end of the season, DPs are rounded to the nearest 10, and then 20 DPs are subtracted (minimum 0 of course).

**NB** All suspensions start in the first match of the following session.

A list of players suspended and their positions will be printed each session.

### 6.4 GOALKEEPERS.

A goalkeeper is a separate case to the rest of the team. The chance of him being booked/sent off depends not on the teams hardness, but only on hardness played on the Gk himself.

**E.G.** If you play no hardness on the Gk, there is a 0.75% chance of him being sent off.

## 7. Injuries

A major consequence of hardness is that your opponents get injured. For each player the chance of injury is (your total hardness+2.5)%. The chance is halved for the opposition Gk.

A player plays at half his normal in the match in which he is injured.

Injured players lose fitness as a result, the amount of fitness lost being shown on the game report in brackets. There is a 30% chance of no fitness loss, 15% chance of 1 level fitness lost, 15% of 2 levels, and a 10% chance of each of 3,4,5, or 6 fitness levels being lost.

This fitness loss (if any) takes place at the end of the session, for reasons of simplicity. Should a player be injured twice or more in a session, only the most severe injury will apply.

## 8. PLAYING OUT OF POSITION

A player may play in a different position to his normal one, but will not be as effective in it, although he will eventually acclimatise.

**8.1 GOALKEEPERS** cannot play elsewhere, and no other player can play in goal.

**8.2 OTHERWISE** any player may play in any other position at 2 levels lower than normal. eg a Sw could play as a Fw, a Fw as a Df, a Df as a Fw, a Fw as a Sw and so on.

**8.3 ACCLIMATISING** If a player plays for 8 games in another position in a season, he is deemed to have acclimatised to it, and will in future lose no levels in it.  
eg a Fw plays 8 games in Df. He then becomes a Fw/Df, and is equally good in both positions. Such a player is known as dual-qualified.

**8.4 YOUTH PLAYERS** may play and acclimatise out of position, but such matches will not count towards level gains.

## 9. BACKROOM BOYS

These off-field staff use their experience as ex-players to aid your team. Any age 5 player (or older) in your team can be turned into an age I backroom boy at any time (but not after retiring!). Once becoming a backroom boy, the former player cannot play in matches. Backroom boys age to age II at the end of their first season, then retire at the end of their age II season. Conversions to Backroom Boys can either happen at the start of the session (in which case you can use his ability that session but can't play him) or at the end (when you can play him but don't get to use his ability.)

### 9.1 SCOUT

A scout can be used to scout one match per session, bringing back area totals for both teams, shown as first as raw levels, then after taking into account additions, injuries, sendings off etc.

Any scouting which does not specify the names of both teams involved may be ignored by the GM. eg "Scout my home opponents next session", or "if I get through in the FA cup, scout my opponents in the next round." This restriction is for purely practical purposes: managers can find their future league opponents from the fixture list printed in the close season issue, and I don't do cup draws until after scouting.

There is no limit on the number of scouts you can own or use.

### 9.2 PHYSIO

A physio lowers the fitness lost by any injury by one level. An injury which doesn't affect fitness, except in the current match, is cancelled altogether. You may own multiple physios, but only one is effective.

### 9.3 COACH

A coach lowers the cost of increasing a player by one skill level by 1 CP. This applies to every player coached, not just one per session. You may own multiple coaches, but only one is effective.

### 9.4 GROUNDSMAN

A groundsman adds 2 levels to home advantage, in home matches only of course. You may own multiple groundsmen, but only one is effective.

### 9.5 YOUTH COACH

A youth coach can train one youth player once per session. Each training is equivalent to playing in one match, e.g. an apprentice who is trained once by a youth coach can only play one match in the same session. No youth player may be youth coached more than once per session. You may own multiple youth coaches, but only a maximum of two are effective. Youth coaches do not train in the close season.

## 10. COACHING

### 10.1 COACHING POINTS (CPs)

At the start of each session (including Close Season), a team receives CPs as follows:

1 CP for each non-youth fit player (fit means better than -3 fitness.)

10 CP for winning a league, FA Cup or PLS game (but not Youth Cup games.)

5 CP for drawing a league game or PLS game (but not the PLS final, which is replayed.)

No more than 15 CPs may be carried over from one session to the next, or from one season to the next. CPs may not be traded.

### 10.2 COACHING PLAYERS

**To raise a player by 1 skill level costs his new level in CPs.** A player can only be raised by 3 skill levels in a season, except age 1 players who can be raised 5 levels, and youth players who cannot be coached for skill. A player can only rise by one skill level per session.

**To raise a player by 1 fitness level costs that player's age in CPs** (For youth players, the cost is 1 CP). A player can only rise 1 fitness level through coaching in a session, although he can rise by resting at the same time (so it possible to rise by 2 fitness a session if both apply.)

**NB Experienced players should also note that Gk and Sw are NOT DOUBLED in cost.**

## 11. YOUTH PLAYERS

Youth players are your clubs future. In any one year, you can discover 6 schoolboys. You discover a youth player simply by telling me you want him. All youth players begin their careers at skill level 2 and fitness 2.

### 11.1 SCHOOLBOYS

Schoolboys (SBYs) gain 1 skill level for every 3 matches played. Due to their age however, they may only play 1 match per session. At the end of the season they become apprentices.

**NB.** If you fail to discover your quota of 6 schoolboys in a season, you may still discover the remainder the next year, although they will of course have aged to become level 2 apprentices.

**NB 2.** If a schoolboy were to play, say, 10 matches in the season, he would obviously have gained 3 levels. The last match would be carried forward to his apprentice year.

### 11.2 APPRENTICES

Apprentices (APPs) gain 1 level per 4 matches played, and can now play up to 2 matches a session. At the end of the season they become Age 1 players, providing they reach skill 5. Otherwise they fail to make the grade and leave the game. Any partial levels left at the end of the apprentice season are lost (eg level 9+2 matches becomes level 9)

## 12. Deals

### 12.1 PRIVATE DEALS

Managers may exchange any combination of players, cash and backroom boys, provided the GM is informed by both managers of the deal taking place (both managers must provide similar details). The GM may in extreme cases veto deals he considers unfair to a manager.

Deals normally take place at the same time as the auction, but may take place at the start of the session of both managers inform the GM.

Loans and delayed-payment style deals are not allowed, for bookkeeping reasons. You may simulate a loan by (say) selling a player, then buying him back a couple of sessions later as a separate deal. But note that the manager you sell him to isn't obliged to sell him back!

### 12.2 THE AUCTION

At the end of each session (before the transfer deadline) there is an auction. In the auction will be a certain number of lots provided by the GM (usually about 7 players, and 1 other lot), plus any items that managers may want to sell.

Lots will be auctioned strictly in the order shown in each issue. A manager may submit one bid for each lot, with the highest bid winning. The amount actually paid by the winning bidder is halfway between the highest bid and the second highest (or the reserve price if only one bid). e.g. The highest bid is 400k, second highest is 300k, price paid is 350k.

Your bids may be made conditional on earlier lot sales only, and you must include a name for any unnamed players bid for (or the bid will be ignored).

Each lot will have a reserve price, normally equal to the players non-league value (see below), although managers may put any reserve price on players they put in.

Tied bids will go in favour of the team with the lowest league position. Bids which would take a club below its' maximum debt will be lowered to the limit.

Backroom boys-unless otherwise stated, any backroom boys put in the auction by the GM will be age 11.

### 12.3 NON-LEAGUE SALES

If for some reason a manager does not want to place players in the auction, he may bypass it and sell players directly to a nominal non-league. Players reaching the non-league are, for all game purposes, dead.

The price received for a player is

$$(7-\text{age}) \times (\text{skill level}-2) \times 10\text{k},$$

plus 15k per match towards next level for youth players.

With youth players counting as age 0.

### 12.4 THE TRANSFER DEADLINE

No transfers between players or sales to the non-league are allowed in the last 3 sessions of the season, and there will be no auction in these sessions. After the transfer deadline, the next opportunity for deals/sales is after ageing in the close season.

## 13. Finance

Money is measured in k, or thousands of pounds. It is exchanged in obvious ways (selling players and so forth) and can be also gained or lost in other ways as follows:

### 13.1 INCOME

**Prize Money** (added in close season):

400k	FA Cup Winners
200k	FA Cup Runner-up/Premier League Shield Winner
100k	FA Cup Semi-finalists/PLS Runner-up/Youth Cup Winner
50k	PLS last 6/Youth Cup Runner-up/leading scorer in each division (if one clear winner)
25k	Leading scorer in division (each, if split)

**Divisional cash:**

Division	Per Session	Winners	2nd	3rd
1	95k	500k	300k	150k
2	80k	300k	200k	100k
3	65k	200k	100k	50k

Infinite amounts may also be gained or lost if the GM messes up!

### 13.2 DEBT

A club can go into debt to a maximum of a 1000k deficit. Up to that sum, interest will be charged at 10% per session.

Should a club go into debt by more than 1000k, the GM will sell off that clubs players to the non-league, beginning with the oldest players (lowest level first if more than one of the same age). Clubs may not borrow money from each other.

## 14. Great Performance Points (GPPs)

As stated in section 5.2, GPPs are used as additional levels in matches, with a maximum of 10 per match.

Your total GPPs for each new season will be 30, plus (or minus) any bonus GPPs gained/lost in the last season under your managership, as follows;

-1 GPP for each NMR.

+1 GPP possible for each 'Clean Sheet' (i.e. a set of orders without errors: each session I choose randomly perhaps 1 in 4 or 5 to get a GPP).

+1 GPP for Manager Of The Month.

+/-1 or more GPPs at the GMs discretion (very rare!)

## 15. Tournament Structure

### 15.1 THE PREMIER LEAGUE

There are 3 divisions of 10 teams each, with 3 points awarded for a win (1 for a draw). At the end of each season, the top 3 clubs of divisions 2 and 3 are promoted, the bottom 3 teams in divisions 1 and 2 are relegated. In the event of teams being level on points, league positions will be decided by best goal difference, then most goals scored, then away goals scored, then by looking at the results when the 2 teams concerned played each other in the league. If teams are still even after that, and the positions are important, then play-off matches will be held in the close season.

**15.2 THE FA CUP** is the main cup competition, stretching throughout the season. There will be a one-leg knockout format, with semi-finals and final at neutral venues. Draws will be settled by a replay at the opposing ground. If there is no result after 90 minutes, 30 minutes extra time is played. In extra time, player levels have (fitness-2) added, so unfit players fade off. If it is still a draw, the side which has scored the most away goals will be the winner. If there still isn't a winner, there will be a penalty shoot-out (5 attempts by each side, each taken by a different player, then sudden death.)

#### NON-LEAGUE TEAMS

A certain number of non-league teams will be involved, which will be designed by the GM. The first round of the FA Cup will comprise the 6 bottom teams from the previous seasons Division 3, plus 10 non-league teams. These will be designed in advance by the GM, and each will play to a fixed formation and tactics, with between 70 & 95 raw levels per team, plus the usual additions. They will play a maximum of 5 hardness. Players sent off/ injured will miss the next match, and be replaced by a level 4 substitute in the same position. Non-league teams will be assumed to uniformly have fitness 0.

**15.3 THE PREMIER LEAGUE SHIELD (PLS)** is intended as an early-season competition. In each round, each team plays 2 others, with the teams with the best performances (judged by 3 points for a win, 1 for a draw) going on to the next round. The best 14 teams make round 2, the best 6 make round 3, and the best 2 of those contest the final (at a neutral venue). If teams are tied on points, best goal difference in that round will be the first decider, then goals scored, then most points across all rounds, then goal difference across all rounds and finally goals scored in all rounds. If there is still a tie, extra teams will be moved into the next round. **Face To Face Tie break:** If at any time in the above tie break procedures there are only two teams involved, and those teams have played each other in the PLS this season, the team which won that game will progress.

A tie in the final will lead to a replay as per FA Cup replays.

**15.4 THE YOUTH CUP** will have its matches skewed towards the end of the season, when youth players will be of higher levels. Teams for the Youth Cup may include up to 2 over-age players, as well as youth players. Clubs unable to field a full team of 11 will be fined 10k per player missing per match.

Youth Cup matches are played at neutral grounds, and do not have replays. In the event of a draw, there are 5 penalties per side, taken by the 5 highest level players in your team unless you specify otherwise. If there is a draw after the first 5 penalties, the match goes to sudden-death penalties, each taken by a different person until a result is found. The winner and runner up of the previous year will get a bye in the first round, and will play a friendly youth match instead, which will count for youth qualification etc.

## 16. Revealed Information

In the close season, the GM will publish summary information on each team. This will not include any player details, but will include a record of the number of players in each position, and the number of players of each age, and backroom boys owned. It may also include other details such as leading goalscorers, honours, GM commentary etc. Managers are invited to provide extra details like Ground name, team colours, motto etc, to add some colour.

For each match, the number of attacks, shots and goals (for each side!) will be shown, along with names of goalscorers, players injured and disciplined, and the formation of each team. Formation will be shown in the standard manner (eg 4-2-4, 5-3-2 etc), with the number of defenders first, and with any sweeper counting as a Df for this purpose only.

Using scouts (9.1) will of course give more information to the manager concerned.

## 17. Miscellaneous Bitlets

17.1 **GOALSCORERS** will be decided randomly, with Fw most likely to score, and higher level players likewise. **Goal times** are spread randomly over the 90 minutes, plus injury time. For every injury in a match, 30 seconds of injury time will be played.

17.2 **ORDER OF SESSIONS** Within each session, events take place in the following order: coach players, play matches (League, FA Cup, PLS, Youth Cup, FA Cup Replay, other matches, in that order), receive income, auction and deals, payment of interest. Other events don't need a time (I think).

17.3 **SUGGESTIONS.** Your suggestions as to how these rules/the game can be improved are always very welcome.

17.4 **(ANTI-)COPYRIGHT.** These rules are anti-copyright, which means you are actively encouraged to use or abuse them, and even to set up your own league using them, as long as no profit-making is involved, and as long as a similar statement to this is included.

17.5 **THE CLOSE SEASON** At the end of each season is one slightly strange session, in which a number of events occur to round off one season and start the next. To begin with, all players/backroom boys are aged (see 2.3). Income is then collected, prize money awarded, and training takes place. The transfer deadline ends, and players may be traded or sold to non-league. This is followed by the close season auction. Finally, any new rules for the coming season take effect and fitnesses are reset (see 2.5) Also in the close season, a team summary for each team is printed-see section 16.

## 18. COST/TURNAROUND

Cost will be £8 for the season. For season 7, this gamefee should be paid directly to a charity of your choice. Managers joining in the first half of the season pay the full rate, managers joining in the second half pay nothing for the remainder of the season. Refunds not usually given (I lose enough on this as it is!) Issues of The Premier League seem to be roughly 6 weekly, with the odd glitch (admittedly more glitch than not lately: but hey, at least I'm still here!)

## 19. A CAST OF THOUSANDS

All the following have helped in some way, either through advice or ideas or bits of stolen rules or whatever: Martin Draper, Ian Le Brocq, Keith Morton, Arthur Owen, Alan Parr, Richard Ramsden, Peter Stanton, and all those who have provided suggestions and complaints.

**MARTIN BURROUGHS**

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