



LJMU Research Online

Gandy, R

Is there a curse with the FA Cup?

<http://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/id/eprint/21408/>

Article

Citation (please note it is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from this work)

Gandy, R Is there a curse with the FA Cup? Significance, 20 (4). pp. 46-47. ISSN 1740-9705

LJMU has developed **LJMU Research Online** for users to access the research output of the University more effectively. Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may download and/or print one copy of any article(s) in LJMU Research Online to facilitate their private study or for non-commercial research. You may not engage in further distribution of the material or use it for any profit-making activities or any commercial gain.

The version presented here may differ from the published version or from the version of the record. Please see the repository URL above for details on accessing the published version and note that access may require a subscription.

For more information please contact researchonline@ljmu.ac.uk

<http://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/>

Is there a curse with the FA Cup?

Football fans will eagerly anticipate the start of the 2023-24 season in August 2023. But have other football-loving readers noticed that the fate of teams appearing in the FA Cup Final is increasingly concerning, if they are not one of a small, select group? In the 23 seasons since the Millennium, the FA Cup Final has been dominated by five teams: Arsenal appeared 8 times, Chelsea 10, Liverpool 4, Manchester City 4 and Manchester United 6. This means that 32 (70%) of the 46 finalists were from this group, with 10 (43%) finals being between two of them. All other clubs only appeared once, with the exception of Portsmouth, which appeared twice. Only on one occasion were both teams from outside the group (Portsmouth v Cardiff City, 2008).

But what is notable about this period is that most of the finalists outside the group have then been relegated within the next two years (with some in the same season)! This was the case for the three that actually won the Cup (Leicester City, Portsmouth and Wigan Athletic) and five who were Runners-up (Aston Villa, Hull City, Southampton, Watford and Millwall, which as a Championship club in 2004 were relegated to League 1 in 2006). This means that eight of these thirteen clubs (62%) were relegated within two years. Might there be a curse on such clubs that reach the FA Cup Final?

Footballers are a superstitious lot, with personal rituals to bring them good luck, e.g. kissing the goalkeeper's bald head before a match¹. Therefore, believing in curses is not unsurprising; with examples including gypsy curses², buried corpses of seven black cats³, 'The Curse of Béla Guttmann'⁴, and, 'The Curse of Aaron Ramsey'⁵. Some of these are complete rubbish, but others leave you wondering....

So, does getting to the FA Cup Final mean that clubs should start preparing for the worst? Of course, it doesn't. Analyses have shown that the odds of newly-promoted clubs surviving two seasons in the Premier League can be less than 50%, and surviving more than seven seasons less than 25%⁶. Altogether this suggests that the pattern should not be viewed as having any statistical significance whatsoever. But perhaps when supporters of teams outside the elite group get excited and sing that they are 'Going to Wemb-er-ley!' they should keep in mind the old adage to 'be careful what you wish for'....

Rob Gandy PhD DBA BA(Hons) MSc FIS DipHM MHM
Liverpool Business School, Liverpool John Moores University

References

1. <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/1462008-10-most-ridiculous-superstitions-in-world-football>
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2012/apr/25/the-knowledge-football-curses>
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2014/dec/11/racing-club-river-plate-argentina-football>
4. Gandy R. (2023) The Curse of Béla Guttmann, *Fortean Times*, FT427: 47
5. Gandy R. (2015) Curse of Aaron Ramsey, *Fortean Times*, FT325: 53-55
6. Gandy R. (2016) Second Season Syndrome, *Significance*, 13 (3): 22-25