

Analyzing the transfers made in the Premier League since 1992 — Part 1



Prathamesh Mahankal

Follow

Jul 7, 2019 · 4 min read

Transfer season is one of the most exciting times in a football season. We all are keen to know which player our club will sign next. From a player going for a record fee to a player going for an absolute bargain, a transfer season has it all. In these series of articles, I will be analyzing all the transfers which have taken place in the English Premier League right from the year it started, that is, 1992.

However, before I begin, I would like to thank Ewen, who took the crazy efforts to extract all the transfer data from Transfermarkt, in accordance with their terms of use. You can check out his Git repo [here](#). With that, we can now start with the analysis. All the code I wrote for this analysis can be found [here](#).

This is the data I have:

In [6]: `df.head()`

Out[6]:

	club_name	player_name	age	position	club_involved_name	fee	transfer_movement	fee_cleaned	league_name
0	Arsenal FC	Martin Keown	26	Centre-Back	Everton	£2.70m	in	2.70	Premier League
1	Arsenal FC	John Jensen	27	Central Midfield	Brøndby IF	£1.44m	in	1.44	Premier League
2	Arsenal FC	Gavin McGowan	16	Defender	Arsenal U18	-	in	0.00	Premier League
3	Arsenal FC	Alan Miller	22	Goalkeeper	Birmingham	NaN	in	NaN	Premier League
4	Arsenal FC	Jim Will	20	Goalkeeper	Sheffield Utd.	NaN	in	NaN	Premier League

Fig 1.0: The data frame I am using for my analysis

Looking at the data, we see that we have the club, player name, his position and more importantly the fee he was signed for. First, let us understand the spending behavior of the PL clubs over the years. Grouping the data by seasons we will see if there are any irregularities in the spending behavior.

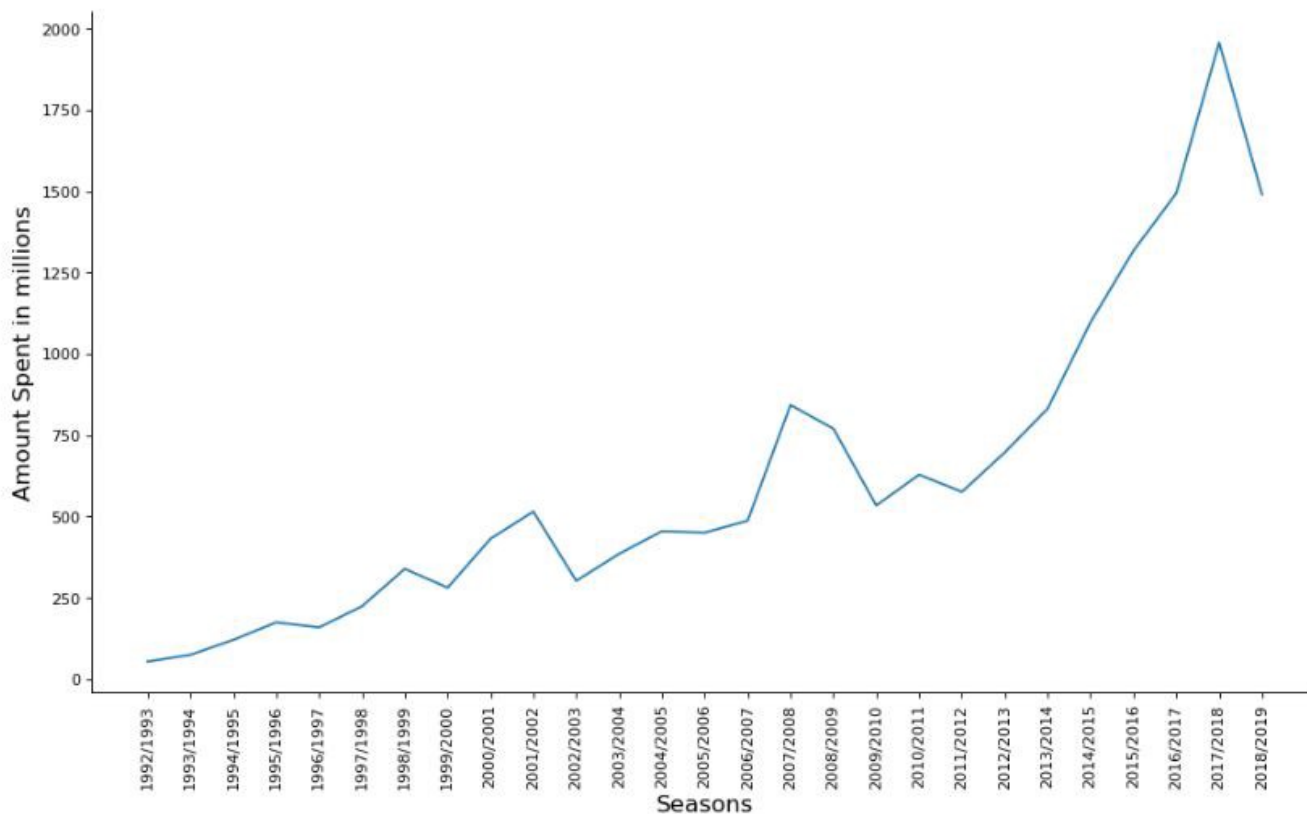


Fig 1.1: Amount Spent on transfers every window

Quite predictably, we see that the amount spent on transfers has mostly kept increasing since 1992. However, there are a few dips in between. The dip from the 2008–09 season till the start of the 2009–10 season should most probably be because of the Great Recession. After that, starting from the 2012–13 season, there has been a meteoric rise in the amounts spent by clubs over the next five years. Not only were the clubs now spending a huge amount of money overall, but also they were not afraid to spend a fortune on one single player. This is how the maximum amount spent by a club in a transfer season on one player varied over the years.



Fig 1.2: Max amount spent on one player every season

As you can see, as the years have gone by, the clubs are now more willing to take a risk and pay a fortune to get the player they want. To explain this further, I will use Fig 1.3. There you can see how the number of players signed for over 50 million has increased over the years, especially the last two seasons. Though it is not surprising that all these players were bought by the clubs which are in Top 6 in the Premier League. Man City leads the way, obviously, with 6 such signings, closely followed by United and Chelsea at 5. However, many of those 50 mn+ players helped City win the league twice in two years, so I don't think City really cares.





Fig 1.3: Stats showing how the clubs now take more risk

What is worth noticing is the third stat. Of the 20 players that were bought for over 50 million, 10 players i.e. 50 percent of the players were midfielders. Be it the class of Paul Pogba or be it the wizardry of Kevin De Bruyne, it is the midfielders that make noise both on the pitch and in the transfer market. And it's not just these two. Over the years, the demand for midfielders, in general, has increased by leaps and bounds, way faster than the that for any other category. This is best explained by Fig 1.4



Fig 1.4: Amount spent per season by position

The number of midfielders signed by clubs was increasing hand in hand with the number of defenders and forwards till 2011, after which the former started growing at a much faster rate, leaving the other two behind. Also, notice the meteoric rise in the

amount spent on goalkeepers in the last two seasons. And I must say, the team that did sign these expensive goalkeepers (City, Liverpool, and Chelsea) have fared really well in the last two years, signifying the importance of a world-class goalkeeper in the squad.

That brings me to the end of this section of my analysis of the Premier League transfers. Let me know how it was, and what else you would like me to analyze. In our next section, we'll see how these transfers have varied with the nationalities and previous clubs of these players. Till then, adios!

[Soccer](#)[Football](#)[Soccer Analytics](#)[Football Analytics](#)[Data Analysis](#)[About](#)[Help](#)[Legal](#)