



## **ANTE-POST GOLD: Lock in Pre-Season Value: Beat the Bookies Before a Ball is Kicked**

In this article, I explore how to gain an edge in ante-post betting markets by getting in early to capture genuine value.

I'll focus specifically on football — and in particular, the English Premier League for the upcoming season. I'll examine both extremes of the market and demonstrate how valuable opportunities can often be found at either end.

### **The Big-Price Sweet Spot: Ante-Post Value in the Outsiders**

If you've read my BTTS Gold article, you'll know my "bread and butter" bets revolve around high strike-rate plays. But at heart, I'm a true value hunter — and like any punter, I chase those massive-price winners just as much as the next man. Over the years, I've landed some huge hits:

- A 500/1 golf winner (1000/1 on the exchange) on Si Woo Kim to win The Players Championship.
- Multiple 500/1 darts floor-event winners (a real goldmine my son specialises in — though he's keeping his secrets close for now!).
- Last season in F1, we backed Nico Hülkenberg at 750/1 for a podium, spotting horrific weather conditions that one bookmaker completely overlooked.

But my crowning glory?

Backing Leicester City to win the 2015/16 Premier League at 5,000/1. That wasn't luck. It came from deep pre-season research — spotting value the market had entirely missed. That same edge — identifying what bookmakers get wrong before a ball is even kicked — is exactly what I hunt for in ante-post markets today.

### **How I Spotted This Monster Value?**

I like tracking emerging trends to find an edge before the market catches on. One I spotted early: the Premier League's TV revenue distribution was quietly levelling the playing field. Funds are now shared

far more equally than in previous decades, 50% of UK broadcast revenue is split evenly among all 20 clubs, International and commercial rights are also divided equally. Massive spending no longer guarantees automatic dominance. Even smaller clubs suddenly have budgets that allow them to genuinely compete. The first loud signal came in 2015/16 when I backed Leicester City to win the title at 5000/1 odds. That miracle season wasn't just a fluke, obviously lady luck always plays a part, however this was early proof of a structural shift. Today the trend is undeniable. The old hierarchy is breaking down. Recent seasons show the so-called "big guns" — Manchester United, Chelsea, Tottenham and others — frequently struggling with inconsistency and underperformance. Meanwhile, intelligently run mid-tier clubs are thriving and regularly punching well above their weight:

- Aston Villa — regular European challengers
- Bournemouth — competitive and well-managed
- Brentford — consistent over-performers
- Crystal Palace — solid and increasingly dangerous

To put the financial equalization in perspective: even the lowest-earning Premier League club now receives more in TV money alone than historic giants like Ajax generate in total annual turnover. All teams have realistic budgets to compete these days. Leicester at 5000/1 was the first explosive confirmation.

The "outright winner" market no longer offers the kind of value it once did, bookmakers have adjusted their odds so heavily that big returns are extremely unlikely on any team. That said, I'm still actively value hunting and have already spotted a few newer markets for next season that I believe could deliver another big-priced winner.

## Value Hiding at the Other End of the Market

I want to focus at the other end of the market where I still believe huge value can be found in the shorter price plays.

Next, I'll discuss three lower-odds trades I made this season. These haven't been confirmed as winners yet — with roughly 9 games still to play — but I'd like to explain the thought process behind each one, which I formed well before the season began.

### Manchester United to Finish Top 4 at odds of 5/1 (6.0)

I targeted this play the moment they lost the Europa League final on May 21, 86 days before the Premier League even kicked a ball!

While supporters drowned their sorrows over the defeat and the prospect of no European football the following season, I spotted the angle I always hunt for: teams with no European commitments. But this one had far more juice than usual, I've always targeted: sides without midweek European games. This time, though, it carried exceptional upside.

In an era where more clubs than ever are involved in some form of European competition, it had been a full decade since Manchester United last faced this scenario — and before that, you have to go all the way back to 1981/82!

With all the other realistic top-four contenders bogged down by heavy European schedules, my attention shifted to Manchester United's recruitment strategy.

The previous season's main shortcoming had been their impotence in front of goal, but they addressed this brilliantly in the summer window with the signings of Matheus Cunha and Bryan Mbeumo — both proven, high-quality Premier League attackers — capped off by the acquisition of Benjamin Sesko, one of the most promising young forwards in world football. I've been tracking Sesko since his RB Leipzig days, even as imbecilic pundits (Tim Sherwood in particular, who embarrassed himself) kept insisting he wasn't good enough!

Now for the final piece of the jigsaw: the price!

At 5/1 (decimal 6.0), that implied just a 16.7% probability — which I strongly disagreed with — so I went big on it.

This trade hasn't landed yet (with roughly 9 games remaining), but it's now trading around 1.5, so I've locked in some profits. It's already a successful trade in my book!

## **Chelsea LAY Bet to NOT Finish Top 4 @ 1.65**

This trade is far from settled — it's currently trading at 2.42. The main purpose of this article is to walk you through my exact thought process on these trades, whether I end up winning or losing on this one. So here we go...

Let's start with why backing Chelsea at those odds was appalling value. 1.65 implied a 61% probability of them securing top 4, and that was miles off the mark. Like many others, I (and plenty of punters) assumed Manchester City, Arsenal, and Liverpool would lock up the top three spots. What I obviously didn't see coming was Liverpool turning into my local pub — with a completely broken Slot machine!

That left just one spot in my head for the top four — yet I felt there were a multitude of teams genuinely in the race for that final Champions League place.

Aston Villa, Manchester United, Newcastle, plus outsiders like Crystal Palace, Bournemouth, and even Spurs (who I included at the time!) all looked capable of pushing hard. We're talking roughly 7 teams scrapping for that fourth spot, yet the bookies priced Chelsea as if the race was already over, giving them odds that screamed over confidence! I'll take the field all day long in that scenario.

Couple that with how Chelsea is currently run: some kind of Moneyball-style experiment where they treat young players like commodities — flipping them for profit with seemingly no clear long-term structure or plan in sight. Way too risky and unsustainable for my liking.

Lastly, let's touch on the misguided market confidence — and how it played right into our hands.

Chelsea's victory in the FIFA Club World Cup final against PSG on Sunday, July 13, 2025 (winning 3-0 to lift the trophy) sparked a surge of optimism. The markets bought into the hype, inflating Chelsea's odds for the upcoming season as if they were invincible world champions.

All I could think was: It's been 49 days since the 2024-25 Premier League finished (May 25, 2025), and you've just burned energy on this "Mickey Mouse" tournament. The new 2025-26 season is on the horizon — bringing a packed schedule with the revamped Champions League, domestic cups, and a full Premier League grind. You're piling extra fatigue on top of an already heavy previous campaign, with no real rest before the serious stuff starts (new PL campaign kicked off mid-August 2025).

This is the exact flipside of the logic behind the Man Utd trade: we know heavy fixture congestion catches up eventually — extra games in a meaningless summer tournament only accelerate that toll for Chelsea. The market's post-triumph euphoria created overpriced odds, and we happily waded it. In short, while others celebrated, we saw red flags — and value on the other side.

## **Manchester United to finish Higher than Chelsea @ 3/1**

This bet was simply a natural combination of the two previous trades (Chelsea's overpriced hype while seeing cracks in their setup). I viewed this head-to-head finish as essentially a coin-flip proposition — true 50/50 in my eyes. So when the bookies offered 3/1 (4.0) on United to end the season above Chelsea, it was too good to pass up — I gobbled it up immediately!

Right now, only 3 points separate the two sides (United on 51 points in 3rd, Chelsea on 48 in 5th after 29 games, as of mid-March 2026). My original assessment that this was "Even-Stevens" has played out perfectly so far.

Even if it ultimately loses, the value has always been firmly on our side and we know that consistently taking value positions like this leads to long term profits.

## **Now the real work starts again!**

The 2026/27 Premier League is just 163 days away and my brain is already locked in!

I'm starting to dial in potential opportunities for next season. No odds or markets are live yet, but I'm always hunting for the next big mismatch. Here's a quick example of the kind of early, fleeting thoughts I had last night while watching Spurs' ongoing demise this season and the now-realistic chance they could actually get relegated. I immediately saw two clear roads with potential value:

- One where the market overestimates them (clinging to "big-club status," recent history, or a bounce-back narrative).
- One where the market underestimates them (writing them off too early).

Let's look at the first road — the one with the most potential: Spurs getting relegated. This could be golden. I can already picture the markets installing Tottenham as very strong favourites for the Championship title next season (they're a "big club" with Premier League pedigree, talent, and resources, after all).

My radar would be firmly on laying them at odds-on and taking the field over them all day long.

You don't need me to trot out the old cliché about a wet, windy night at Stoke to highlight just how tough the Championship really is. We might even see some of that classic Leicester magic again in backing Spurs to get relegated at huge odds!

Now let's look at the second road where the market underestimates them.

My gut feeling is this may not have as much value potential, but escaping relegation by the skin of their teeth they will not be a fancied team. They have had horrific injury list this season especially in defence and key players Maddison and Kulusevski to name a few, with a fully fit squad, quite a bit of good youth talent, probably a new manager and no European football they may offer value in the top 10 and top 6 markets for example.

Like I said earlier this above example is just there to highlight how early I am thinking about next season and the way I think, often just ignoring the crowd. I could quote John Paul Getty's famous quote about observing the masses and doing the opposite or pontificate about being a contrarian investor but the bottom line all I am really talking about is good old fashioned, working class VALUE!

## **2026/2027 English Premier League Ante-Post Portfolio - Early Bird Offer**

By the time the first ball is kicked in the 2026/27 Premier League, I expect to have a solid portfolio of ante-post picks ready — anywhere from 25 to 50 bets in total. I'll be targeting the usual high-value markets:

Outright Winner, Top 4, Top 6, Top 10, Relegation, Top Goalscorer, and a newer one I'm particularly excited about, Top Assists.

I believe there's real each-way value to be found at big odds in the assists market — if we're sharp and get in early. All these ante-post selections (including the full research, reasoning, and ready-made portfolio) will be exclusive to our Silver Membership level.

Silver is still available at our ridiculously low Early Bird launch price (£99 per year, billed annually) to reward our founding supporters in this new venture. This limited-time offer won't last forever — once the cap is reached, pricing will increase permanently. Check out the full membership plans and join today:

<https://www.betting4profits.co.uk/membership>