

Changing managers doesn't always help a football club improve its fortunes, says study

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It may be small comfort to ousted Manchester United manager David Moyes, but research just published in the journal *Managing Leisure* suggests that changing managers doesn't always help a football club improve its fortunes.

In their article 'You don't know what you're doing! The impact of managerial change on club performance in the English Premier League', Stuart W. Flint, Daniel J. Plumley and Robert J. Wilson of Sheffield Hallam University studied data from 36 clubs in the English Premier League from the 2003/4 to 2012/2013 seasons, discovering 60 managerial changes in total. They then correlated the information with the number of points each club earned per season and their final standing in the league table.

What the authors found was that although clubs earned more points after changing managers – which fits with the assumption that clubs change managers because of previous poor performance – clubs in the top half of the league table saw no significant difference in their position after making a change.

As the authors explain: "It might be argued that the difference observed in league position for clubs in the bottom half compared with the top half is understandable given that other teams in the top half are likely to be performing well and, therefore, acquiring more points, making it more difficult to finish above them. In comparison, clubs in the bottom half may be easier to surpass owing to the fact that those other clubs will

be acquiring fewer points."

With a decade's worth of data in front of them, the authors warn that for top-flight clubs striving for a place in Europe or challenging for the title, 'managerial change is unadvisable'. Quite aside from causing instability and not guaranteeing an improved standing in the league, any compensation payments demanded by a sacked manager can mean financial disaster.

But for clubs in the bottom half of the league, the current research suggests that changing managers might be a risk worth taking – especially when continued poor performance and relegation can 'instantly cost clubs around £25 million in revenue'.

While offering important advice to club owners and shareholders, this study sadly offers none for the sacked managers themselves. It would appear, though, that David Moyes should look for employment with a low-ranked [club](#) to improve his own managerial fortunes.

More information: Stuart W. Flint, Daniel J. Plumley & Robert J. Wilson. "You don't know what you're doing! The impact of managerial change on club performance in the English Premier League." *Managing Leisure*. Published online: 28 Apr 2014. [DOI: 10.1080/13606719.2014.910000](#)

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