



'Mentality monsters', injury crisis and a 'not good enough' relegation: WSL Report Card

Here's how each WSL club rated this season, from good to bad.

By Kristy Williams
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Chelsea doing Chelsea things, an almost inconceivable injury crisis robbing City of 749 international caps, Tottenham slowly falling apart and relegated Crystal Palace conceding 60 goals - this WSL season had it all.

The Blues officially lifted the 2024/25 trophy in front of an adoring home crowd at Stamford Bridge, becoming the first team to go through a full WSL season unbeaten and breaking their own record for total points scored after a stoppage-time winner from Aggie Beever-Jones secured a 1-0 victory over Liverpool

They comfortably held off Arsenal and Manchester United to secure the trophy, while Palace finished 10 points adrift of 11th-placed Tottenham to go straight back down to the Championship in what was a rollercoaster season.

Here's every club's WSL season graded.

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1 - Chelsea: A

- **Points:** 60
- **W/D/L:** 19/3/0
- **GD:** +43
- **Leading goalscorer:** Aggie Beever-Jones (9)

Sonia Bompastor's first season in Cobham summed up neatly in four words? Chelsea doing Chelsea things. Six. Straight. WSL. Titles.

They weren't always humming on all cylinders in attack. In many games they weren't the best side. But they just kept winning, and continue to snatch points from the jaws of defeat.

The so-called 'mentality monsters' well and truly living up to their name; it's so normal now that the significance of their accomplishments are almost expected, mundane.

The '4B' backline of Lucy Bronze, makeshift left-back Sandy Baltimore and the assured pair of Millie Bright and Nathalie Bjorn were exceptional, and contributed more to the side's attack than other defences under Emma Hayes.

Erin Cuthbert and Sjoeki Nusken were phenomenal in the midfield, but the forward line through a combination of form and injury probably wasn't a dominant as days gone by on a consistent basis across the season.

One huge positive was the break-out season of academy product Aggie Beevor-Jones, who thrived under increased minutes and trust; proving exactly why she is such a heralded talent in world football when thriving in the biggest moments.

Bompastor said it was her side's ruthless mentality that was the difference this season.

"Probably what made the difference between Arsenal, Man City, Man United and us was the fact we were able to be really efficient and clinical in the games against them," she said. "We dropped points against West Ham, Brighton and Leicester.

"We had the opportunity to win every single game against Man United, Man City and Arsenal [domestically]. That's what made the difference. I think that's the first year we have been in that situation - winning the league with two games left."

2 - Arsenal: B-

- **Points:** 45
- **W/D/L:** 15/3/4
- **GD:** +36
- **Leading goalscorer:** Alessia Russo (12)

You have to wonder where we'd be if Arsenal made the decision to stop accepting mediocrity and let go of Jonas Eidevall sooner. Would draws to Everton, United and a loss to Chelsea in the opening six games have happened, essentially ending their title challenge before it even began? We'll never know.

The Gunners without a doubt played the best attacking football this season with 'Slegersball', but sometimes the gap between their best and worst games was almost unbelievably large (5-1 loss to Villa, anyone?).

In an incredibly difficult situation, it was remarkable what Renee Slegers was able to do so quickly, but it is absolutely still a work in progress; just how on earth such a talented midfield and defence can completely crumble to teams like Villa and Brighton needs to be understood.

But there will be quite a bit of player turnover, but Slegers will also get a full preseason.

More importantly, Slegers has the team happy and confident again for the first time in two seasons. She's figured out how to get the best out of superstar striker Alessia Russo, and aside from one or two poor games, Katie McCabe is one of the best players in the world, never mind the league. They also scored four or more goals in all eight of their final home games - a new WSL record.

Players like Kyra Cooney-Cross, Katie Reid and Vic Pelova got very valuable minutes, while Leah Williamson is back to her Euro-winning best after the nasty ACL injury. Emily Fox might just turn out to be the best right-back in the world.

This season was not a failure, but it does come under the 'what might have been' category in what was somewhat of a rollercoaster.

"When we focus on the task... the emotions don't take control of us because we know what we need to do in that moment and we're focussed on the action that we want to execute and that's what we train in trainings," Slegers said of her emotional squad.

"I think we've been very consistent over long periods of time... we don't see that we lack consistency... I think we have a great foundation, and we believe in what we're doing, and again, if we perform at our best, then we are very good."

3 - Manchester United: A

- **Points:** 44
- **W/D/L:** 13/5/4
- **GD:** +25
- **Leading goalscorer:** Elisabeth Terland (10)

Manchester United securing Champions League football was not on the bingo card of many WSL fans for 2024/25, but here we are.

Despite all the noise off the field and the lack of faith and investment in the women from co-owner Sir Jim Ratcliffe, the Red Devils were able to do it.

The league's best defence (until the final day), led by 23-year-old captain Maya Le Tissier, Millie Turner and a stunning debut season by Phallon Tullis-Joyce, conceded just 12 goals in 21 games - before Arsenal put four past them on the last game of the season. Of their four losses, two were at the hands of champions Chelsea, and another to the Gunners at the Emirates.

There is an instinct to link United finishing third as much to City's downfall as their own on-field play, but that would be disrespectful to a side that looks galvanised and well-led by Le Tissier in the face of constant off-field noise.

Manager Marc Skinner still hasn't quite figured out how to fit Ella Toone and Grace Clinton in the same midfield despite both having strong individual seasons, but Hinata Miyazawa thrived towards the end of the season when he entrusted her with the No. 6 role.

Jayde Riviere and Celin Biset also formed a promising partnership on the right, while Elisabeth Terland had a solid, if unspectacular season to finish at the leading goalscorer.

But there is no doubt if the club is to meaningfully compete across four competitions next season, a lot of investment must be made in depth and quality across the entire side; especially up front.

Despite that, Skinner is determined to go even better next season.

"If you would have said to me at the start of the year, 'you are going to play really well, you are going to have lots of growth in the season, you are going to finish third and get to another FA Cup final', I would have taken that if I am being really honest," he said after losing to Arsenal on the final day.

"But that does not mean I'm not trying to win the league...my ambition is to drive this team and win a title."

4 - Manchester City: F

- **Points:** 43
- **W/D/L:** 13/4/5
- **GD:** +21
- **Leading goalscorer:** Khadija Shaw (12)

What on earth happened up in the blue half of Manchester? Many had City as favourites for the WSL title, particularly given until November 15, the club hadn't lost and even dominated Barcelona at home in the Champions League.

The unbeaten run was only broken by Chelsea, with Lauren Hemp, Vivianne Miedema and Laia Alexandri all missing; before that injury ward got horrifically worse. The downfall has been awful to watch.

This is not on the players. They've tried their guts out and played in positions they never have before, played when not match-fit and super-talented youngsters who should be on loan in the Championship are being burned out with an incredible amount of minutes.

Unfortunately they have missed out on a Champions League spot and finished a distant 17 points behind Chelsea. In the match Mary Fowler ruptured her ACL, there were at least 743 international caps sitting on the bench.

But the positives: Lauren Hemp was in sizzling, Ballon d'Or-winning form before her unlucky knee injury. Alex Greenwood was in career-best form too before also succumbing to a knee issue.

Vivianne Miedema showed why she is the WSL's all-time leading goalscorer before also succumbing to injury, while Fowler was simply sensational and one of the league's best. Yui Hasegawa continues to prove why she is one of the world's best midfielders.

But at the end of the day there needs to be a thorough examination of the injury crisis and recruitment, because Manchester City should never be in this position again. Interim boss Nick Cushing said he was disappointed he was not able to 'deliver' the trophies the club hired him for.

"When I took this role on, it was about winning trophies and qualifying and we haven't been able to be able to deliver that," he said.

"We have been a team that has delivered trophies consistently over a seven-year period when I've been involved (he left in 2020).

"This team should always be delivering trophies and competing in the Champions League. The league position is far below what I expect, but we are not that far away."

5 - Brighton: B

- **Points:** 28
- **W/D/L:** 8/4/10
- **GD:** -6
- **Leading goalscorer:** Fran Kirby, Nikita Parris (7)

Dario Vidosic's first season in charge of the Seagulls was solid if unspectacular, but what it has done is signalled the club's ambitious intent. It's vindicated their faith in the young Australian, who is determined to see his Brighton side play attractive, attacking football, and play out from the back.

They've easily been the most consistent, watchable side outside the 'Big Four. Their statement veteran signings Fran Kirby, Nikita Parris and Jelena Cankovic all had great individual seasons, and also pulling together the entire fabric of the side with their leadership.

Kirby in particular, despite spending time out with a calf injury, looked back to her WSL and Euros winning best, playing all over the field and appearing one step ahead in most matches; her partnership with Parris was intoxicating at times.

But while they score just four goals less than third-placed United, they conceded 25 more goals.

There has already been five departures confirmed by the club, and if they want to continue to play out from the back, they will need to add a number of strong, technically proficient defenders to back up their exciting forward line.

They've finished the season off almost perfectly after upsetting Arsenal and beating Everton, before a disappointing final day loss to Aston Villa.

"A great crowd came out to see us off for season and to give them that win was special. We had to stay together, be resilient and tough and we did all that," Vidosic said after the side's shock upset of Arsenal.

"Going forward we were always a threat, and we scored some fantastic goals."

6 - Aston Villa: C-

- **Points:** 25
- **W/D/L:** 7/4/11
- **GD:** -12
- **Leading goalscorer:** Rachel Daly (8)

That this Aston Villa squad were at very real risk of relegation would've been a shocking statement to utter in the preseason, and they're probably fortunate Crystal Palace were as bad as they were.

A squad featuring WSL legends like Rachel Daly and Jordan Nobbs as well as supremely exciting young budding internationals like Katie Robinson, Chastity Grant, Ebony Salmon, Paula Tomas and Missy Bo Kearns should not be finishing ninth.

Only soon-to-be-relegated Palace have a worse defensive record than Villa, with seven losses of 11 having a two, or more, goal margin. A six-match losing run that started in January was then followed by four straight wins, with Daly, Salmon and Grant in particularly blistering form in attack and covering major issues in defence.

That being said, they have finished the season off extremely well, including incredible upsets against Arsenal and Liverpool. However, it only serves to remind that they really shouldn't be in this position in the first place.

Too little, too late. Finishing sixth after a final day upset of Brighton only seems to paper over the cracks.

After Robert de Pauw was sacked after just nine matches, Natalia Arroyo has had a mixed bag. She was named WSL's Manager of the Month for April, but also in charge of the six-match losing streak in which they looked like a Championship side.

There are promising signs given the end to the season, that finally the club might be headed in the right direction.

7 - Liverpool: C

- **Points:** 25
- **W/D/L:** 7/4/11
- **GD:** -15
- **Leading goalscorer:** Olivia Smith (7)

Liverpool's best is pretty good. The problem is their worst is anything but, and the gap is stark.

There are plenty of positives to draw out of the season, but there's definitely been a regression as the club losing double the amount of matches they did in last season's fourth placed finish.

They only beat one of the 'Big Four' and inexplicably lost to clubs well below them, like fierce rivals Everton, Aston Villa, and Leicester. They also only managed a draw against soon-to-be-relegated Crystal Palace.

The Reds scored just 22 goals in 21 games, with only Olivia Smith and Marie Hobinger presenting as consistent and genuine threats in attack.

'Consistent and genuine' threat doesn't quite do Smith's season justice; while still plenty rough around the edges, the Canadian prodigy is the leading success dribbler in the WSL. The fiery character is only going to get better when she understands how to deal with the added attention from defenders.

But she needs help. The Reds need better depth, better quality and an injection of youth. While the experienced defence is steady, Liverpool should be averaging far more than the goal-per-game they did this season, and you get the feeling the transfer market is the only way to solve it.

The fact the club haven't invested much in the women's side won't help.

After their eighth straight Merseyside derby defeat to Everton, interim boss Amber Whitely said she was still proud of the important the side has shown since she took over from the sacked Matt Beard.

"I think it's important that we reflect on the work that we've done since I've taken charge," she said.

"There are lots of positives to take forward but obviously we want to keep improving. So, we need to take stock of where we're at and then keep moving forward, keep improving each week."

8 - Everton: C+

- **Points:** 24
- **W/D/L:** 6/6/10
- **GD:** -8
- **Leading goalscorer:** Honoka Hayashi, Kelly Gago, Katja Snoeijjs (4)

It's been a turbulent few years for Everton on both the men's and women's side thanks mainly to former owner Farhad Moshiri, but the needle is certainly moving in the right direction under Brian Sorensen.

There's also very promising signs from the new ownership, the Friedkin Group, too in regards to their desire to invest in and improve the women's side.

Sorensen and his Australian assistant coach Stephen Neligan have now had two seasons to help the side implement a patient, possession-based game plan with a confident block,

The discipline and quality of the players in implementing that this season has made them incredibly difficult to breakdown. Just ask Arsenal and Man City, who the Toffees completely had the wood over this season. Incredibly, they kept the world-class Gunners attack to an xG of just 0.7.

The Holmggaard twins - Sara and Karen - have been a revelation this season on both wings, with electric chemistry, combining for nine goals and assists this season.

Irish shot-stopper Courtney Brosnan has been the league's best goalkeeper outside of the top three, while Honoka Hayashi and Matildas Clare Wheeler have done a great job at controlling the midfield.

But they need to score more goal. The addition of French striker Kelly Gago has revitalised the attack, but she can't do it on her own. Another striker or a genuine, and class No. 10 would help connect the attack and unlock the talents the Toffees have.

For his part, Sorensen is excited for the future after a solid, if unspectacular, season; highlighting how far the club has come.

"It's been tough, the last two years. We had no money, we had to sell our best players and had one of the thinnest squads in the league by a mile," he said.

"We have a good defensive record, fifth or something like that in the league so we know we can always rely on that if the game doesn't flow.

"I am very excited for the future, I think we have our core in place and then we can add to that."

9 - West Ham: B

- **Points:** 23
- **W/D/L:** 6/5/11
- **GD:** -5
- **Leading goalscorer:** Shekiera Martinez (10)

Oh what might have been had the Hammers not gotten their season off to an awful start. But so good has the back-end of their season been that manager Rehanne Skinner has been given an extension, with the side losing just three of 11 matches since Christmas; in that time period they've also banged home 24 goals.

That's a far cry from the six winless games they began the season with, scoring just three goals and conceding 11. They won only two matches before the Christmas break and the defence was opening up like a hot knife through butter.

Since then, they've turned Dagenham into a fortress of sorts, holding Manchester City and Chelsea to draws, as well as beating Brighton, Everton and Spurs there. They also came within a whisker of a massive upset against Arsenal away as part of the post-Christmas rejuvenation.

Their defence is still a work in progress, and will need addressing to ensure the beginning of the season is not repeated, but the swift counter-attacking that's been has been sensational to watch at times.

It's perfectly utilised the speed, power and cleverness of captain Katrina Gorry, Viviane Asseyi and. Riko Ueki, who have all had brilliant seasons.

And then there's Shekiera Martinez. Despite only joining in January, she's been nominated for the WSL Player of the Season after scoring 10 goals in 11 games, and leaving defenders of the ilk of Millie Bright and Leah Williamson scrambling.

"I'm really happy at West Ham and have loved every minute of being here, and I think that's showing by my performances on the pitch," Martinez said on the [club's website](#) after winning the WSL's Play of the Month for April.

"I think it's a really exciting time to play for West Ham. The morale and togetherness in this group is amazing and I think that's showing on the pitch. We've grown as a group every single game and we've put in some huge performances against some of the best teams in not only England, but the world.

"We have a strong mentality as a group and approach every game the same - no matter the challenge in front of us, we will always try to be the best versions of ourselves and I love that."

10 - Leicester: D

- **Points:** 20
- **W/D/L:** 5/5/12
- **GD:** -16
- **Leading goalscorer:** Janice Cayman (4)

In the relegation battle right to the end, Leicester's issues weren't with defending, but an inability to score down the other end.

The league's second-worst attack with just 21 goals, too much was left to the likes of Hannah Cain, Janice Cayman and Yuka Momiki, with hardly any possession against imposing defences.

Given the wealth of money at the newly-promoted London City's disposal, there simply has to be some investment in the club's attack in the offseason, because they appear the club most at risk of relegation next season if something doesn't change.

For all their issues in attack, there was plenty to like about the defence at times, particularly given they would often face clubs who would secure 65 per cent of possession.

Cayman's leadership was pivotal, while Jamaican international Chantelle Swaby and Sophie Howard formed a promising relationship in the heart of defence. Young full-back Asmita Ale also looks to have a promising future for both Leicester and England after a strong season.

While they only managed four wins due to those issues in attack, they were the first team to take points off unbeaten Chelsea, and beat both Liverpool and Brighton.

11 - Tottenham Hotspur: F

- **Points:** 19
- **W/D/L:** 5/5/12

- **GD:** -18
- **Leading goalscorer:** Beth England (8)

What on earth is happening at Spurs is a question on the lips of many in the women's football world given what has transpired in North London. Last season's sixth-placed finish and goal of Champions League football now well and truly in the rear-view mirror.

Like Aston Villa, this is a club and squad that should be nowhere near a relegation battle, let alone in the thick of it, with basically every player an established international. Matildas stars Charli Grant, Clare Hunt and Hayley Raso all joined in the preseason with big on and off-field reputations, but through a mixture of playing style and lack of minutes, that's been slowly undone.

It's in defence where the season has completely fallen apart, with Spurs having the league's worst outside of Palace. Too much is asked from a centre-back pairing of Hunt and Molly Bartrip that should be one of the league's strongest.

Vilahamn's insistence on playing out from the back and trying to play a possession-based style like Barcelona, regardless of their opposition or game situation, has seen his leaky defence put under mountains of pressure.

Watching a Spurs game this season is almost like a continual repeat of play out from the back, be pressed, lose the ball in the midfield, panic and rely on Lize Kop pulling out a big save.

Positives? There aren't many. Beth England's phenomenal on and off-field leadership is one; she might just be the best skipper in the WSL but will leave at the end season.

Olivia Holdt and Jess Naz are very exciting forwards who can help the club bounce back, and they've had some good moments this season.

They haven't won a league game since January, but for his part, Vilahamn, who previously said he was targeting European football in 2026, says this season will only serve to make the club better.

"You can say it's a failure this year [but] we also need to go through tough times to get to the next level. You need to look at how you can improve and I'm going to work really hard for this club until they say something else," he said recently.

If we don't show next season that we are better than year one and two, I will raise my hand and say this is not good enough.

"It's tough right now, we don't look good in the table, but I guarantee this year we will have some good learnings to use for the third year."

12 - Crystal Palace: F

- **Points:** 10
- **W/D/L:** 2/4/16
- **GD:** -45
- **Leading goalscorer:** Katie Stengel, Annabel Blanchard (4)

Unfortunately, right from the opening two games of the season, it appeared Palace were odds-on to return right back to the Championship.

A 4-0 loss to Tottenham was compounded by a horror 7-0 thumping at the hands of Chelsea, highlighting just how easily their inexperienced defence could be opened up.

That back-line would go on to concede a whopping 65 goals from 22 matches - an average of 2.9 goals per match - and after a horror 1-7 loss to West Ham on April 27 the whole team looked inconsolable just before their WSL exit was confirmed.

One positive of the horror season was the brilliant off and on-field leadership of Katie Stengel, while youngsters like New Zealand winger Indiah Paige-Riley and Chelsea loanee Lexi Potter had promising moments that leave excitement for their future.

After that loss, manager Leif Smerud, who replaced the sacked Laura Kaminski in March, conceded his side were not up to WSL standard.

"Overall we have to learn from it, as a club and as a team we have to learn from this. Today shows what the season has shown, that we are not good enough to stay in the league," he said after the Hammers thrashing.

"We have to look at the facts and they are that we have not been good enough, not today and not during the season. It's not that difficult, you don't have to be an expert to see that."