

March 2018

The LFF

London Football Focus

The beautiful game from across the capital

10 Places to ignite
your football love affair



PLUS  FULHAM  WEMBLEY  ROY HODGSON

Getting into football

Ten of the best places to kickstart your love affair with the beautiful game

Wembley Powerleague

Overlooking the iconic Wembley Stadium, these floodlit pitches are within walking distance of many accommodation options. With great transport links and shopping opportunities nearby, Wembley Powerleague is a great choice for any football fan.



Camden Rhino Turf

With floodlit pitches and changing rooms (inc. showers) on site. Camden Rhino Turf is one of the most complete and well-maintained football facilities in the capital.



Hackney Marshes

These iconic grass pitches are considered by many to be the home of Sunday League football. Who wouldn't want to follow in the footsteps of David Beckham, Sol Campbell and John Terry?



Blue Hut Youth Centre

5 a-side astroturf pitches at a reasonable price make the centre perfect for a quick game with your friends or something more serious. Complete with floodlit pitches and free parking.



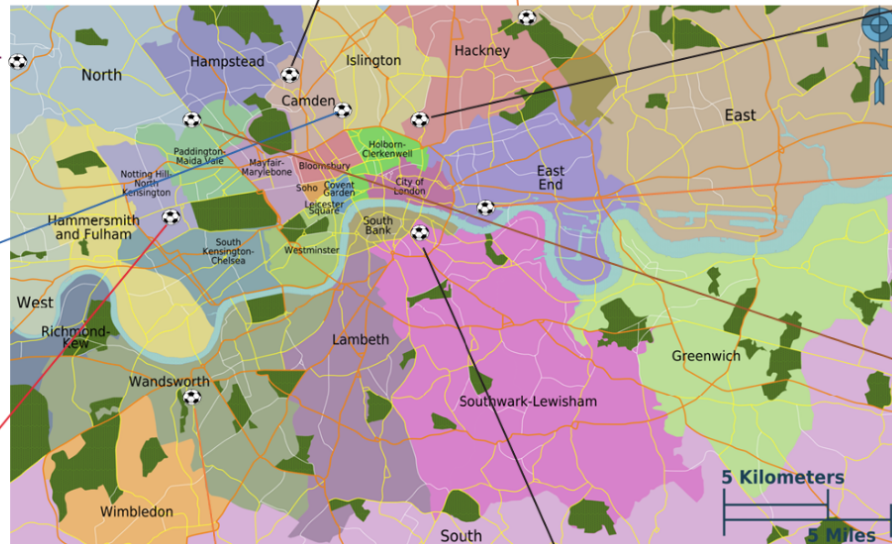
Calthorpe Project Sports Facilities

Wonderfully maintained astroturf pitches with free parking facilities. Perfect for a late night kick about or something more serious.



Holland Park

Large green space in Kensington. Pitch (below) perfect for 11 a side matches with expansive grassy areas free of charge. Can get muddy underfoot so be sure to bring a change of footwear!



Paddington Recreation Ground

Huge range of facilities for 5, 7 and 11 a side games (below). Custom-made astroturf pitches (above) suitable for all weather, if you are! Large green area features a cafe and open space for a



Wandle Recreation Centre

Perfect for sessions both during the day and late at night. Well equipped with changing rooms and parking on site and great transport links.



Tabard Gardens

Set in the centre of a bustling area of Southeast London, these custom-built pitches are perfectly placed and suitable for all ages.



The Verdict: Fulham



In this edition of Fan Focus, Fulhamish.co.uk editor Jack Collins looks over the Whites so far this season and tells us what to expect between now and the end of the campaign.



A 1-0 defeat to [Sunderland](#) in December left Fulham 8 points off the play-offs staring down the barrel of a fifth consecutive season in the Championship. Fast forward three months and they sit comfortably in 4th position, having collected a remarkable 39 points from the 15 matches since.

Collins describes Fulham's emerging style of play as "expansive, attacking possession football which grinds opponents down", adding "it's no coincidence that the Whites have a habit for late winners". The displays of [Ryan Sessegnon](#), the 17-year-old breakout

star, have only strengthened an already formidable squad, which fuses experienced heads with exciting young talent. Key players such as [Tom Cairney](#) and [Kevin McDonald](#) have been added to in January by clever loan signings in [Matt Targett](#) from Southampton and Newcastle's [Aleksandar Mitrovic](#) both of which have hit the ground running.



Fulham have been in good form at home, collecting 10 wins and 36 points.

Another highlight for the Cottagers has been the managerial performance of [Slavisa Jokanovic](#). The Serb has consistently improved Fulham year on year, and the 49-year-old is a name often in the reckoning for any Premier League job. Collins describes Jokanovic as "a top quality coach, who wants to get his players playing a brand of possession football". At times in the past, relations between the manager and board have become fractious, but Collins hopes these problems will not resurface: "touch wood, those days are behind us and a harmonious relationship going forward should keep the gaffer at the club for another season at least".



Ryan Sessegnon has scored 14 goals in his first season as a professional

Data analyst [Craig Kline](#) left the Cottagers in October after it emerged he dictated transfer policy, blocking moves for anyone he did not see fit and Collins saw it only as a positive: "The behind the scenes issues appear to have been left in the past". He added that it "seems to have created a majorly happier camp at the Cottage".

Collins remains realistic when it comes to Fulham's prospects for the end of the season, with the gap to second place Cardiff City at 8 points: "It would be great to catch Cardiff, but it would take a spectacular slide from the Bluebirds to allow anything of the sort to happen", adding "playoffs look the most likely option right now". In last-season's playoffs, the Cottagers underperformed as they lost [2-1 on aggregate to Reading](#). Collins was defiant in describing "this team is better than that one and we're finding ways to win games that we simply wouldn't have a year ago." He concludes with an optimistic thought that will encourage many Fulham fans: "there's no reason that promotion should be out of the picture right now".

Jack Collins is the editor of the website [fulhamish.co.uk](#), which he regularly contributes to. He often appears on the weekly Fulhamish Podcast, which is available [here](#).



Wembley Stadium: Curse or blessing for club football?

Wembley Stadium has undoubtedly been one of the most iconic venues in the world for nearly a century.

Since its 2007 [reopening](#), at a staggering cost of over £1bn, more events have been held there than ever before. While football regularly takes centre stage at the so-called "home of English football", events organisers have extended the stadium's appeal to other sports such as boxing and rugby, as well as music festivals and concerts from today's biggest artists. However, despite bringing huge employment, investment opportunity and acclaim to the area, a few concerns have arisen over its appropriateness for regular club football.

Following concern over a supposed "Wembley hoodoo" following disappointing European results last season, Tottenham Hotspur have grown into their temporary home, averaging over 2.5 points per game in the Premier League. Despite this, some journalists and fans remain uneasy over Tottenham playing every other week at a stadium which is supposed to be so special. They have a point. Reaching Wembley used to be a huge achievement for any club side; getting to a semi-final or final still represents a hugely successful season for many clubs. In recent weeks, both [Newport County](#) and [Rochdale](#) have celebrated trips to Wembley for FA Cup replays, yet this has been as much about revenue for these lower league clubs as it was for the opportunity to play at such an illustrious venue. One of the major draws of playing for England was turning out at Wembley Stadium for The Three Lions, however that experience is nowhere near as special as it once was.



The Tottenham tenancy has not come without its issues for the area, either. While local businesses have relished the increased trade and tourism in and around Wembley, at times scenes have turned ugly. Following Spurs' 1-0 over Crystal Palace last November, a [huge fight erupted](#) between supporters of the London rivals outside one of the local bars, leading to huge animosity between the fans.

Wembley's 90,000 capacity means the record Premier League attendance has been broken 3 [times](#) this season

It is clear that Wembley's status as an iconic venue will remain forever, but has it lost some of the special appeal that it once had? Only time will tell.