

A Rough Guide to Why Liverpool and Manchester United Hate Each Other

Shortly before Manchester United's visit to Eastlands for the 166th derby with their noisy neighbours City on Sunday, Wayne Rooney was asked if the Manchester rivalry was now the biggest in English football. The England striker said it was not. "City have had their success recently, but I would probably say that United and Liverpool is still the biggest game," he said, via David McDonnell of the Daily Mirror.

This answer was not given just because Rooney is a Merseyside lad who grew up a diehard Everton fan. *It is because the rivalry between Manchester Utd and Liverpool is one of the oldest and fiercest in all of football. In fact, for football fans, it might just be one of the biggest rivalries in modern life, giving "cats vs. dogs" a run for its money.*

So why do fans from the two cities located 30 miles apart hate each other so much more than a number of local derby opponents? The origins of the rivalry go back to the 19th century, and they have nothing to do with the football field...

The Rivalry Was Originally Economic

During the Industrial Revolution of the early 19th century, Manchester and Liverpool were both thriving economically. Manchester was known as "Cottonopolis" due to its abundance of textile factories. Liverpool, on the other hand, benefited from being a port city, with vast quantities of goods flowing in and out of its docks. Toward the end of that prosperous century, however, the Manchester Ship Canal was completed. This meant ships no longer had to dock in Liverpool—they could carry on up the Mersey all the way to Manchester via canal. *This trade route is why Utd and City both have ships on their crests, and it caused vast great resentment from the people of Liverpool, who lost potential income and jobs when the ships no longer stopped at the docks.*

The Rivalry Then Moved to the Pitch

So, why don't Liverpool fans begrudge City supporters too? And why don't Utd fans hold a grudge against Everton? The answer lies in both teams' history and heritage of success, and the fact that they each have a long-running expectation of winning trophies—often at the expense of one another. Both clubs believe they are the greatest club in English football, and they have 121 major trophies between mind their guests of the running tally.

The Players Give No Quarter

Since Phil Chisnall moved from Utd to Liverpool in 1964, not a single player has transferred between these two clubs. To put that disdain in perspective, nine players have moved between Barcelona and Real Madrid since then. In modern times, the rivalry has been intensified by the actions of certain players.

Fan Abuse Keep Escalating

Vitriolic insults and unpleasant incidents between fans of the two teams show no signs of abating. While acts of hooliganism have certainly decreased since the '80s, a small and very unpleasant contingent of Liverpool fans have mocked Manchester Utd with sick songs about the Munich Air Disaster that claimed the lives of eight players. Certain Utd fans have returned the ill-judged taunting with songs mocking the Hillsborough and Heysel tragedies. Fans have also been known to attack players. After the 1996 FA Cup Final—decided by a brilliant goal from Eric Cantona—one Liverpool fan spat at the Frenchman and another attempted to throw a punch at Sir Alex Ferguson. Additionally, Liverpool fans are banned from the entrance to the away end at Anfield after an egg was thrown at Ferguson during the '90s.

Conclusion

So, the uninitiated should continue to be prepared to witness a fierce football rivalry as Manchester Utd and Liverpool prepare to meet again soon.