

Toolstation Western Leagues Suspension Survey

Introduction

Given the current Coronavirus pandemic the Board of the Toolstation Western League is concerned that it might impact on the Leagues ability to complete this football season. In order to fully understand the situation from the perspective of member Clubs, the Board worked with Cognisant Research, a Market Research Society Company Partner, to undertake a short survey.

The survey considered two questions:

- In the event that the 2020/21 season cannot be completed, what would your preference for ending the season be?
 - Full suspension of fixtures until the Government advises that it is safe for fans to re-enter grounds and the season can be completed.
 - Completion of the season on a points per game basis, pending the successful completion of a predefined proportion of fixtures.
 - Season declared null and void.
- In the event the Western League season could be completed on a points per game basis, what minimum percentage of matches would you consider reasonable to finalise the League table and allow for Promotion and Relegation?

This brief report sets out the key conclusions from this study, followed by additional analysis of the questions described above.

Conclusion

Over two thirds (65%) of all Western League Clubs responding to this survey expressed a preference for bringing this season to a competitive conclusion. In the event that the 2020/21 season cannot be completed, 35% of Clubs wanted to suspend fixtures until it was safe for fans to re-enter grounds, whilst a further 30% wanted to end the season on a points per game basis, pending the successful completion of a predefined proportion of fixtures. Just over a third of Clubs indicated they would prefer the season to be declared null and void if it could not be completed.

In terms of what that proportion of fixtures might be acceptable for a point per game finish, an average of the responses from Clubs in both divisions indicated a minimum completion of 75%. Suggesting the point per game outcome is only viable if a minimum of three quarters of this season is completed.

Our Approach

All Club Secretaries were invited to participate in an online survey on October 4th, with a reminder sent on October 13th. The deadline for submissions was October 16th. Club Secretaires were advised not to complete the survey in isolation, rather they should consult with their committee/board.

Who Responded?

In total, 40 responses were received from 37 Clubs. Where duplicate responses were received only the latest response was included in the analysis, to avoid Clubs providing multiple responses and introducing a bias into the results.

Table 1, below, provides a breakdown for the 37 responding Clubs, by Division and County. One Club did not provide a name and has been coded as Unknown.

Table 1 – Participating Clubs

County	First	Premier	Unknown	Grand Total
Devon		3		3
Dorset	1	1		2
Gloucestershire	4	4		8
Somerset	10	7		17
Wiltshire	4	2		6
Unknown			1	1
Grand Total	19	17	1	37

Preference for Ending the Season

Asked what their preference for ending the season would be, in the event the 2020/21 season cannot be completed, the suspension until safe to play and null and void options scored highest at 35% overall, with points per game conclusion scoring 30%.

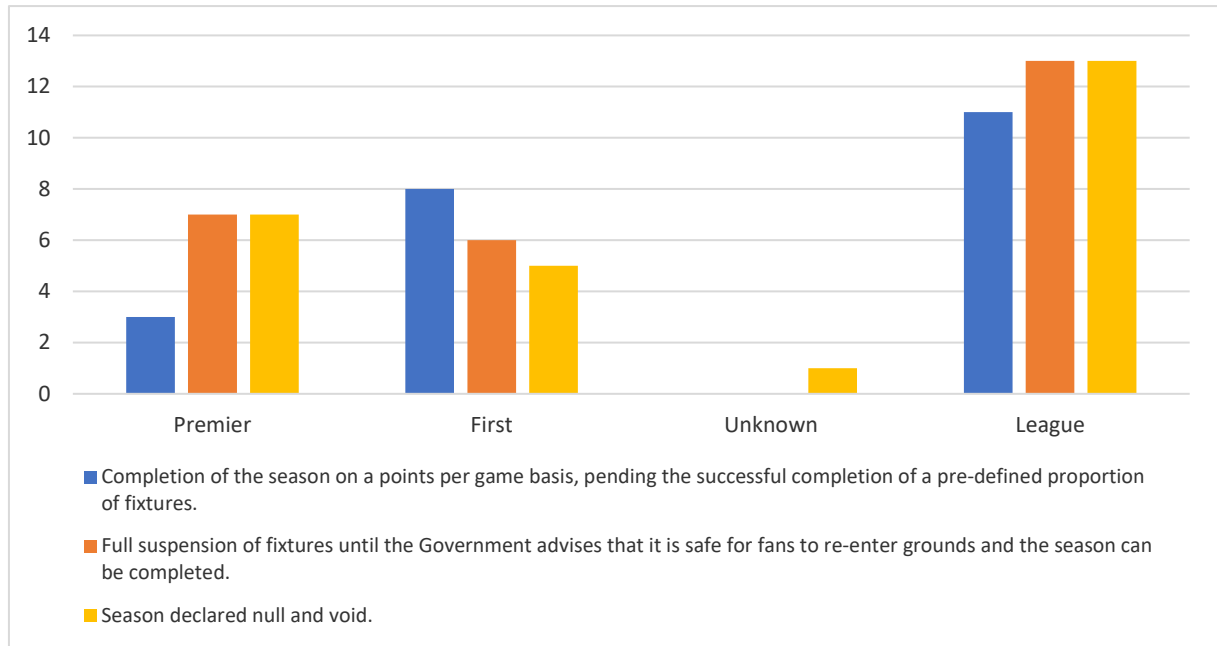
However, whilst the suspension until safe to play and null and void options were the most popular with Premier Division Clubs at 41% respectively, 42% of First Division respondents preferred to complete the season on a points per game basis, pending the successful completion of a pre-defined proportion of fixtures, as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Preference for Ending the Season by Division

	Completion of the season on a points per game basis, pending the successful completion of a pre-defined proportion of fixtures.	Full suspension of fixtures until the Government advises that it is safe for fans to re-enter grounds and the season can be completed.	Season declared null and void.
Premier Division	18%	41%	41%
First Division	42%	32%	26%
League Overall	30%	35%	35%

Figure 1, below, sets out the number of Clubs selecting each option for completing the season. The chart demonstrates the clear difference in opinion between Premier and First Division Clubs.

Figure 1 – Preference for Ending the Season



Points Per Game Conclusion

Asked for the minimum number of matches they would consider reasonable to finalise the League Table, in the event the Western League season was to be completed on a points per game basis, overall the Clubs indicated an average figure of 75%. These figures were consistent across the Premier Division and First Division, where the scores were 78% and 73% respectively.

Figure 2, below, shows the distribution of percentage preferences provided by Clubs across the League, broken down by Division. The Chart shows that across both Divisions, 71% of Clubs identified a percentage completion rate of between 70% and 90%. Whilst this distribution represented a majority of Clubs in both the Premier and First Division, this range was much more popular with Clubs in the Premier Division, selected by 88% compared with only 56% in the First Division.

Figure 2 – % of Games Played to Conclude on PPG

