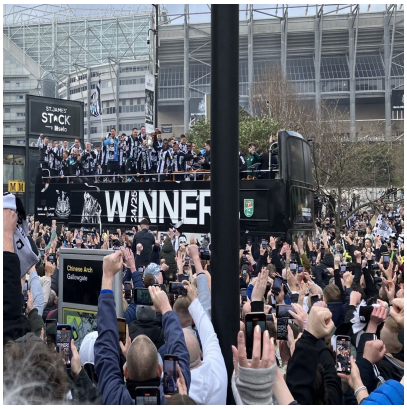


Eddie Howe Has Taken Newcastle As Far As He Can

Description

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Newcastleâ??s owners have decided to keep Eddie Howe for another season. I think this is the wrong call.

We are 13th in the Premier League. 45 points. 13 wins, 6 draws, 16 losses. Sunderland sit above us in 12th on 48. With three games left, the absolute ceiling is 54 points if we win every one of them. That is upper mid-table at best.

Now flip the season the other way. Newcastle have dropped about 25 points from winning positions this year, the most in the league. Hold those leads and you are on roughly 70 points. That is the Champions League places. Not marooned in mid-table, looking up at Sunderland.

The gap between 54 and 70 is the Eddie Howe problem in one sentence.

The defences do not hold

Every time a manager is questioned, the same defences come out. Let me go through them.

â??He was not backed.â?•

This is the easiest one to dismiss. Last summer alone, Newcastle spent Â£125 million on two strikers. Nick Woltemade for Â£69 million from Stuttgart, and Yoane Wissa for Â£55 million from Brentford. Club revenue has more than doubled under PIF, from Â£140 million in the Ashley days to Â£335 million now. Under the new Squad Cost Ratio rules, Newcastle have somewhere between Â£200 and Â£300 million of room to spend on the squad.

The money has been there. It still is.

â??The Isak saga broke the season.â?•

Losing your record signing to a strike a week before the opening day is real. Isak refused to train, missed the Aston Villa fixture, and engineered a Â£110 million Liverpool move that ultimately collapsed. Brutal.

But what did the club do about it? We spent Â£125 million on his replacements.

Woltemade arrived after scoring 17 goals in 33 matches for Stuttgart. He could not score for Newcastle. By late February, Howe had converted him into a left-sided No. 8 in a 4-3-3, playing alongside Sandro Tonali. A Â£69 million striker turned into a midfielder because he could not lead the line.

Wissa has fared worse. Fitness setbacks, tactical adjustments that have not landed. The club is now exploring his sale eight months after signing him.

The summer 2026 plan is reportedly to chase Julian Alvarez, Liam Delap or Dominic Solanke. Which means buying the same position. Again.

Isak walking out is one bad summer. Â£125 million on flops, with the manager turning a Â£69 million striker into a midfielder, is something else entirely. It is recruitment failing, and it is development failing, and both sit close enough to the manager to count.

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â??Champions League fatigue.â?•

Maybe in 23/24. Less defensible now. Howe has had three summers to deepen the squad knowing the demands return. At some point, structural fragility stops being a one-off and starts being the structure.

â??Amanda Staveley left, the director-of-football setup changed.â?•

Front-office churn matters. Paul Mitchell coming in mid-build was real disruption. But the mental fragility was visible last season too. The 25 points dropped from winning leads is an on-the-pitch coaching pattern, not a boardroom one. Alan Shearer called the second-half performances â??pathetic, weak, lazyâ?• in March. Howe himself admitted, â??mentally, weâ??ve let them back in.â?• That is the manager naming the problem out loud, more than once, and not solving it.

Ferguson does not save him

This is the comparison that always shows up. Alex Ferguson lost in his early years at Manchester United, the board kept faith, and he rewarded it by becoming the most successful manager in English football. Therefore, give Howe more time.

The problem is, Ferguson took over in 1986. The Premier League did not exist yet. Television money was a fraction of what it is now. United were not competing with Saudi-funded ownership groups, billion-dollar American capital, or a fixture calendar with Champions League midweeks five months a year. The patience window and the financial reality were different in every direction.

It is a comforting comparison. It is not a fair one. 2026 football does not run on 1986 timelines.

What ambitious clubs do

Look at how Liverpool handled Klopp. When Jurgen Klopp announced his departure in January 2024, he said: â??I am running out of energy. I have no problem nowâ?¦ but I am absolutely fine now. I know that I cannot do the job again and again and again and again. My energy source is not endless.â?•

That is a manager and a club having an honest conversation about the cycle. Klopp had won everything. Liverpool let him leave well. They did not keep him for sentimental reasons. They moved on.

Or look at Chelsea. Five permanent managers in two years under Todd Boehly. I am not arguing for that. Chelseaâ??s churn is a cautionary tale, not a model. But somewhere between Liverpoolâ??s measured exit and Chelseaâ??s chaos, ambitious clubs share one trait. They do not accept stasis. They do not keep a manager because keeping him is easier than the alternative.

Newcastle are taking the easier path.

If he stays, define the bar

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Here is what I would respect. If the owners are committed to Howe for 26/27, tell us what success looks like.

In April, PIF talked about a â??second phaseâ?• and â??Project 2030â?•. The revenue numbers are there. The SCR spending room is there. The project is, apparently, there. So what is the managerâ??s brief inside that project? Top six? A return to the Champions League? Another cup run? A seventh-place â??transitionâ?• with a smile?

Right now, retention reads like inertia. Like a board hoping the season was a blip and the manager will figure it out with another Â£100 million in the summer. That is not a strategy. That is a wish.

If Howe is the right manager for Project 2030, his bosses should be able to say, in one sentence, what they are paying him to deliver. I have not seen that sentence yet. I do not think it exists.

The Brighton trap

Here is what I am actually afraid of.

Brighton spent five or six years being the leagueâ??s most admired overachiever. Smart recruitment, modern coaching, a ceiling of sixth at the very best. They lost their best players one by one, Caicedo, Mac Allister, and fell back to where the structure naturally settles. Mid-table.

That is the Brighton route. Good enough, but never quite. The cope, when it happens, is to point at Leicesterâ??s 2016 title and say miracles can happen.

Miracles can happen. They are also, by definition, not a strategy.

Newcastle are a Â£335 million-revenue club, with PIF backing, in a sleeping-giant city with one of the loudest fanbases in England. Designing the next era around hoping for a Leicester-style anomaly is not ambition. It is ambitionâ??s cope.

Close

I want to be wrong. Eddie Howe gave us our first domestic trophy in seventy years with the Carabao Cup. He gave us two seasons in the Champions League. I will always be grateful for that, and I do not think the man is a fraud. He is a good manager who got us here.

But here is not where this club is supposed to stop.

I want to be wrong about next season. I just do not think I will be.

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