

A Portfolio of Winning Football Betting Strategies

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1. Lay The Draw Revisited

There have been a fair number of “systems” sold over the last few years that have involved “laying the draw” in live in-play football matches, with a view to locking in a profit as and when a goal is scored. I am also sure that a number of us have actually tried this out with real money only to find that our carefully selected match has either ended goal less, or the wrong team scored first resulting in little or no movement in the draw price, and therefore not providing us with the opportunity to make a decent return, or even worse, the original favourite scores a quick equaliser and really puts the boot in!

A recent check on the “usual suspects” football forums showed that there are still a large number of active threads where the various match selection techniques continue to be discussed and even traded on. One fresh idea that came to mind is the option of waiting until the half-time whistle has blown.

At this stage of the game, if the match is currently being drawn, irrespective of the score line, e.g. 0-0, 1-1, 2-2 etc then the full time odds on the draw on the in-play markets would be considerably shorter than those prior to kick off. The general consensus is that these prices would average out at around the 2.6-2.8 mark although games involving an original strong odds on favourite, for example Man Utd versus Wigan would give draw odds, given a level first half, considerably higher. This higher draw price would be counter balanced by those games involving closely matched teams such as Bolton versus Blackburn. Virtually everyday of the week Betfair will have a list of games that will go in-play at kick off and these are the games that this approach can be applied to. Having reviewed a good sample of these games the average profit was around the 0.70 points per match.

The major league matches from England, Scotland, Spain, Italy and Germany will have an In-Play market on Betfair and these generally have very good liquidity providing endless opportunities to apply the “Lay The Draw Revisited” trading technique. The temptation for most of us would be to concentrate on the English Premiership matches given its extensive coverage on Sky and also most games are now shown live around the globe however would this be the right choice of matches to follow?

A few hours of research on a very useful football data site enabled a check of the last 3 seasons of some of the major leagues that Betfair provide In-Play markets on to determine the number of matches which were level at half time and more importantly how many would have had a nasty sting in their tail by having zero goals scored during the second half. For layers of the half time draw this is the worst result as the whole bet is lost, unless you were to bite the bullet and minimise your losses with 5-10 minutes to go but you know what happens then a late goal goes in!!!

The following tables show the results that were found during the research and are based on the average lay price of the draw in matches being drawn at half time to be 2.70 and a potential average profit of 0.70 points per successful trade.

ENGLISH PREMIER	HT DRAW	UNCHANGED(no 2nd half goals)	TRADED(at least one 2nd half goal)
2009/2010	143	38	105
2008/2009	171	50	121
2007/2008	156	35	121
AVG	156.67	41	115.67

The potential profit is:- (A) minus (B) = **+11.27 points**

(A) Traded games (at least one 2nd half goal) 115.67 x 0.70= 80.97

(B) Less Unchanged games (no 2nd half goals) 41.00 x 1.70= 69.70

LA LIGA	HT DRAW	UNCHANGED(no 2nd half goals)	TRADED(at least one 2nd half goal)
2009/2010	172	39	133
2008/2009	169	28	141
2007/2008	162	36	126
AVG	167.67	34.33	133.33

The potential profit is:- (A) minus (B) = **+34.97 points**

(A) Traded games (at least one 2nd half goal) 133.33x0.70= 93.33

(B) Less Unchanged games (no 2nd half goals) 34.33x1.70=58.36

BUNDESLIGA	HT DRAW	UNCHANGED(no 2nd half goals)	TRADED(at least one 2nd half goal)
2009/2010	126	35	91
2008/2009	115	28	87
2007/2008	127	28	99
AVG	122.67	30.33	92.33

The potential profit is:- (A) minus (B) = **+13.07 points**

(A) Traded games (at least one 2nd half goal) 92.33x0.70= 64.63

(B) Less Unchanged games (no 2nd half goals) 30.33x1.70=51.56

SERIE A	HT DRAW	UNCHANGED(no 2nd half goals)	TRADED(at least one 2nd half goal)
2009/2010	162	44	118
2008/2009	170	26	144
2007/2008	166	40	120
AVG	166	36.67	127.33

The potential profit is:- (A) minus (B) = **+26.79 points**

(A) Traded games (at least one 2nd half goal) $127.33 \times 0.70 = 89.13$

(B) Less Unchanged games (no 2nd half goals) $36.67 \times 1.70 = 62.34$

SCOTTISH PREMIER	HT DRAW	UNCHANGED	TRADED
2009/2010	103	30	73
2008/2009	104	27	77
2007/2008	88	21	67
AVG	98.33	26	72.33

The potential profit is:- (A) minus (B) = **+6.43 points**

(A) Traded games (at least one 2nd half goal) $72.33 \times 0.70 = 50.63$

(B) Less Unchanged games (no 2nd half goals) $26.00 \times 1.70 = 44.20$

Summary

Surprisingly the Scottish and English Premier leagues have shown the lowest return on investment in our comparison calculations; with the star performers being Spain's La Liga at 12.27% and the Italian Serie A league at 9.49%. Having said that if you spend some time prior to kick off to make a note of teams that have a track record of low scoring games and also those that have had a higher than average number of draws you will be able to improve considerably on these figures by avoiding matches when these teams are involved.

2. Overs/Unders 2.5 goals Rating Method

This particular market is a very popular one with the bookmakers and exchange users alike, in fact on the matches that are available to bet in play huge amounts can be traded as the minutes tick away during the game. This method has been designed to highlight a simple yet effective way to help find games that are likely to be either low scoring or the complete opposite and these can be used to place outright bets or to find matches to trade in play.

Although the method only takes a few minutes to work through on an individual match you may be wise to stick to your particular favourite leagues as on a busy weekend there are literally hundreds of matches that will be available for betting purposes and as a result the task may become too daunting to rate them all.

One suggestion is to stick to the matches that are going to be turned in play on the Betfair exchange. These can be found from the football coupon option on the Betfair menu by selecting that particular days “in play” coupon. It may also pay to concentrate on league matches as cup competitions can provide upsets as the bigger teams may choose to rotate their squads by resting some of their top players.

The ratings method is applied to the last four league games that each team have competed in and a very useful site for finding this data can be found at

<http://www.h2hstats.com>

The site is free to use but to make full use of all of the information that it contains you will need to register.

Ratings Method

For each team apply the following rating for each of their last four results

- (a) If the result included 3 goals or more then award +0.50 points
- (b) If the result included both teams scoring then award +0.75 points
- (c) If the result was 2 goals or less then award -0.50 points
- (d) If the result included only one team scoring then award -0.75 points

Both (b) and (d) are determined irrespective of the number of total goals scored in that particular match.

Lets apply these to a recent game

25th Oct

Leeds Utd v Cardiff

Leeds Utd

Last 4 league results

Home loss 1-2 +0.50, +0.75

Away win 2-1 +0.50, +0.75

Away loss 1-2 +0.50, +0.75

Home loss 4-6 +0.50, +0.75

Rating +5.00

Cardiff

Last 4 league results

Away win 2-1 +0.50, +0.75

Home win 3-2 +0.50, +0.75

Away win 2-1 +0.50, +0.75

Home draw 0-0 -0.50, -0.75

Rating +2.50

Overall match Rating +7.50

Good results have been obtained by concentrating on those games that have either a +5.00 or -5.00 overall rating. The positive score is a good indication that the match will involve goals and has a strong possibility of ending in an over 2.50 result, and the negative score is likely to lead to a low scoring match.

Clearly the above example would lead you to favour an over 2.5 goals result but it may surprise you know that the bookmakers had this pretty much as evens either way and the best pre match price available for an over 2.50 result was 2.05....and the final score was a 4 nil win for Cardiff and an overs bet landed.

3. La Liga Specials

There is a growing swell of acceptance amongst the media and football fans alike that the top Spanish League is at present the most exciting spectacle in the world of football. With the national teams recent victory at the 2010 World Cup and lots of opportunity to see teams like Barcelona and Real Madrid live on the satellite channels it is easy to form the same opinion. These two teams have dominated the league title for the last two decades and most weeks they are at prohibitive odds to win their respective games so can we profit from backing them in a different manner.

Barcelona

During the 2009-10 domestic season Barcelona scored the first goal in 34 of their 38 league matches which equates to odds of 1.12. In numerous games and in particular those where they were playing away from home odds of 1.30+ were available for them to score first and that represents excellent value in any book. So far at the time of writing they have played 9 league games and scored first in 7, of those 4 were away games and yes you have guessed it....they scored first in all 4.

Real Madrid

Contrast that with Real Madrid's record where during the 2009-10 season they only scored first in 25 of their 38 league games which equates to odds of 1.52. They typically are priced up at much shorter than this and therefore the value lies with laying them in this market, or if you are feeling speculative backing their opponents to score first. Again so far this season they have played 9 league games and have only scored first in 6 of them, interestingly all three games that they haven't scored first have been when they were playing away....is that the Mourinho factor? Two of those away games ended scoreless.

As with all forms of punting thinking out of the box can bring dividends as these two examples demonstrate.

4. Early season profits

At the start of each new domestic football season the pundits and tabloids alike are busy speculating on how the pre-season transfer market dealings will impact on the performance of the various teams in each league. The managers and the coaches have had a matter of a few weeks to try and work out how the new faces are going to gel with the squad members retained from the previous season. This situation can throw up some very interesting results during the early part of the season.

The question from a punting perspective is, can a profitable angle be found during this first month or two before the main protagonists settle down to their normal level of form? There are some wonderfully informative and more importantly free research resources out there that can be found on the internet, and one that is well worth a visit is www.football-data.co.uk.

After spending some time look at the early part of the season results of the past few years a trend appeared to be forming that may not yet have been picked up on by the bookmakers radar. This trend could possibly provide the perfect opportunity to take an advantage.

The Method

The number of draws in the early part of the season appears to be on a downward curve and to demonstrate this let's take a look at a German second tier league which is traded with both by the bookmakers and more importantly for us by Betfair.

German Bundesliga 2 (Second Division)

Season	Matches *	No of Draws	%age
2009/10	54	11	20.37%
2008/09	54	13	24.07%
2007/08	54	13	24.07%

**Played in the first 6 rounds of games.*

The Bundesliga 2 produced an average percentage of draws over the last 3 full seasons of 22.84%

As you can see the first 6 rounds of games this league was below that of the overall season average, so how can this offer a profitable strategy?

“LAY THE DRAWS IN THE EARLY PART OF THE SEASON”

The Staking Plan

Given the relatively low number of games that are likely to end in a draw, combined with the average lay odds in the region of 3.30-3.75 we can be quite bold in our plans to lay the draw.

Each team is to be treated as a separate lay sequence and the first match they play in will start with a 1 point lay stake.

Therefore, for Round 1 matches you lay the draw using a 2 point stake i.e. you will be laying Team A not to draw and Team B not to draw.

If the Team A v Team B match ends in a draw then these teams are treated in their next matches as 2 point lay bets for their respective next matches.

i.e. Team A v Team C means we would be laying the draw to 3 points (2 points against team A and 1 point against Team C).

Team B v Team D means we would be laying the draw to 3 points (2 points against Team B and 1 point against Team D)

If the team wins or loses their match revert back to 1 point lay stake for this team on their next match.

Very occasionally a team will have 2 draws on the bounce, in which case they would be treated as a 3 point lay stake for their match. i.e.

Team A (drawn 1st 2 matches) 3 points lay stake on the draw **plus** 1, 2 or 3 points for the opposing team (depending on their draw / play history this season).

3 points is the **maximum** level that we use for an individual team, and in the last 3 seasons we would have only reached this situation on a handful of occasions.

Past Results

We applied the staking plan across each of the last three seasons and allowed for 5% Betfair commission deductions for winning lay bets. The overall results were:

Season	Bundesliga 2
2009/10	+33.49
2008/09	+10.32
2007/08	+33.09

The 2010/11 season has recently finished its first six rounds of games so how did our Early Season Profits method perform on these?

Season	Bundesliga 2
2010/11	+58.82

Judging by this outcome the current trend would appear to be here for a while longer. It is fair to say that the latest season potentially over performed or was this merely a correction to the 2008/9 results, either way the levels of profit shown during the four seasons managed to average **over 5.6 points per week** for each of the first 6 weeks.

Before we contemplate using this method on the remaining part of the season you need to consider that there is every likelihood that there will be a spate of draws to come as the current 13% level is unlikely to be maintained. Keep your powder dry and take advantage of this micro method for the early part of next season and hopefully for years to come.