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Watford are close to completing the signing of 20-year-old Portuguese striker Vivaldo Semedo from Udinese. (Watford Observer)The Hornets are however braced for the departure of Morocco midfielder Imran Louza, 26, who has reportedly requested a transfer. (Watford Observer) Want more EFL transfer rumours? Check out Friday's full gossip columnFollow the gossip column on BBC SportThe EFL fixture list is out and we know you are bursting to know what you've got to look forward to - or dread - from your team this upcoming season.Here are some key dates to put in your diary:9 August - v Charlton (A)16 August - v QPR (H)26 December - v Leicester (A)1 January 2026 - v Birmingham (H)2 May - v Coventry (H)See Watford's full fixture list here.Your club will soon discover their schedule for the upcoming EFL season. As soon as Thursday, in fact.Want to know who your side will face on opening day? The EFL fixtures will be announced at 12:00 BST - but that's not all.The day will be rounded off by the first round of Carabao Cup being drawn at 16:30 BST. So check back on 26 June to see who your team faces first, last and everything in between.Watford midfielder Giorgi Chakvetadze is wanted by Premier League new boys Sunderland and Burnley, with Birmingham also keen on the Georgian midfielder, 25, who is valued around 5m. (Sunderland Echo)Want more EFL transfer rumours? Check out Wednesday's full gossip columnFollow the gossip column on BBC SportWatford are set to sign Udinese defender James Abankwah, 21, and Chelsea left-back Caleb Wiley, 20, on loan again for the 2025-26 campaign after they both spent the second half of last season with the Hornets. (Sky Sports)Read Friday's full gossip column for more EFL transfer rumoursFollow the gossip column on BBC SportRex FeaturesFrancisco Sierralta has made 17 international appearances for ChileWatford defender Francisco Sierralta has left the Championship club to join French side Auxerre for an undisclosed fee.The 28-year-old Chile international made more than 120 appearances for the Hornets after signing from Udinese in 2020.Sierralta began his career with Universidad Catolica in his homeland and also spent time with Granada in Spain and Parma in Italy.He is joining an Auxerre side who finished 11th in Ligue 1 last season after winning the second division title the previous year.Rex FeaturesFormer Watford midfielder Micah Hyde has returned to the club he spent seven years with as a player after being appointed academy head of coaching.The 50-year-old made 286 appearances for the Hornets between 1997 and 2004, and helped them win promotion to the Premier League in 1999.Hyde joins after five years at QPR as a senior professional development coach in the Hoops' academy. He replaces Jimmy Gilligan, who left Vicarage Road earlier this month.Academy director and fellow ex-Watford midfielder Richard Johnson said he is "looking forward to rekindling the partnership" he had on the pitch with Hyde."I've had the pleasure of knowing Micah for a long time, going back to our playing days under Graham Taylor where we shared great success," Johnson told the club website."It was important to me that Jimmy's replacement not only had the skills and knowledge to do the job so we can keep driving the progress of the academy forward, but it was also of equal importance that the new head of coaching understood the values and standards that Jimmy and I have tried to instill."Micah shares those values and understands the importance of what the football club means to the wider community."Geoff DoyleBBC 3CR sports editorBBC Sport/Rex FeaturesThe Pozzo family are reportedly going through the final stages of selling Italian club Udinese after a 39-year association with the Serie A side. Udinese are owned by Giampaolo Pozzo, the father of Watford owner Gino Pozzo. The two clubs are intrinsically linked and have been since the Pozzos became involved with the Hornets in 2012. So the impending sale of Udinese to a group of American entrepreneurs, reportedly worth approximately 150m, has left Watford fans wondering 'what does that mean for us?'. The timing of this is interesting. The Watford owner and his board have been under pressure from supporters upset about the sacking of the extremely popular head coach Tom Cleverley and the way the club has been run since relegation from the Premier League in 2022. Many fans have questioned whether Gino Pozzo is still the man to take Watford forward and whether he is considering selling up.But in a rare statement a month ago Pozzo reaffirmed his "absolute commitment to Watford" and his responsibility "to make this club the very best that it can be... to make Watford competitive, successful and challenge for a return to the Premier League".So does the impending sale of Udinese mean the Pozzos are going to be putting more money into the Vicarage Road club? Maybe some, but Hornets fans shouldn't expect millions to be ploughed into the transfer market. The sale will mean more in terms of resources than cash. As an example, Gian Luca Nani was sporting director of both clubs - he can now concenres for the on Watford solely.The Hornets won't be spending big on transfers. But they never have done under Pozzo apart from the Premier League years. This has never been the Watford model under Pozzo. In the years leading up to the Premier League, Watford's business was done with free transfers, the majority from Udinese and the other Pozzo-owned club Granada, including bargains like Almen Abdi, Matej Vydra and Marco Cassetti. They also scoured the world for young talent and brought in players from South America and Africa.And that isn't about to change. As Pozzo added in his most recent update: "We are not abandoning the model which has served us well over the years: identifying youth and developing it." Without Udinese, Watford will miss out on the clever trading that has gone on between the two Pozzo-owned clubs. Work permits could also be an issue and it would be no surprise if the Pozzo family ended up buying an Italian or Spanish club in the second or third tier to enjoy the benefits of a 'sister' club.There has long been reports that Pozzo has been looking to sell Watford but the sale of Udinese makes that seem unlikely for the time being. It would put them out of the game and the player trading that they seem to so enjoy. The Premier League brings far more revenue than Serie A so perhaps they are throwing their eggs into one basket in an attempt to get back there. Their summer transfer activity is so far backing up this argument. The Hornets have already snapped up three shrewd free transfers with more on the way. And whereas Hornets fans shouldn't expect big-money transfers this summer, maybe the Udinese sale might mean not having to sell the current stars such as Giorgi Chakvetadze, Kwadwo Baah and Imran Louza. Ben AshtonBBC Sport EnglandGetty ImagesWatford are getting relegated, Plymouth are staying up, Millwall are in the play-offs and Portsmouth are also battling for a top-six spot.Does something sound a bit off? Well, that's what would have happened if the Championship season started on 1 January.Here's a look at the 2025 calendar year table, showing who the form sides were in the second half of the season and who went into freefall.Perhaps the most notable difference between the actual final top six and the 2025 version is that Millwall would be in the play-offs and Premier League-bound Sunderland would not.Burnley and Leeds still comfortably occupy the automatic promotion spots, albeit the Clarets would be unbeaten at the top of the pile with the Whites in second.Coventry improved significantly after Frank Lampard replaced Mark Robins and are third over the course of the year. The Sky Blues would instead be pitted against Bristol City in the play-off semi-final as opposed to Sunderland. Who knows what difference that would have made to their promotion bid...Rex FeaturesPortsmouth - who spent much of the season battling relegation and only secured their Championship safety with two games to spare - are seventh and just one point outside a play-off spot.Pompey sit above Sunderland, who lost their final five games of the season and are down in eighth.The data perhaps shows just how low Regis Le Bris' side effectively had a play-off spot sewn up before their victory at Wembley against Sheffield United to claim promotion.Relegation battlers Oxford find themselves seven places higher than where they actually finished in the 2024-25 campaign (17th), reflecting the good work done by Gary Rowett after he took over as boss from Des Buckingham.Rex FeaturesPlymouth would have survived comfortably had the season begun in January 2025, showing a significant uptick after Miron Muslic replaced Wayne Rooney at the helm.Middlesbrough tailed off significantly in the second half of the season, underpinning why they missed out on the play-offs. It was a drop off that ultimately cost Michael Carrick his job as head coach.Norwich City conceded more goals (32) than any other side in 2025, which counteracted the hard work they'd done at the other end, having been the fourth top scorers (31) since the turn of the year.Rex FeaturesWatford had a disappointing 2025, winning just five of their 23 games and losing 13 to finish bottom of the calendar year table.The Hornets had the joint-worst goal difference along with Cardiff (-10) and head coach Tom Cleverley was sacked following the end of the season.Preston and Cardiff won the fewest games of any side in 2025 (4), which cost the Bluebirds their Championship status and almost led to the Lilywhites dropping into League One as they avoided relegation by one point.Paul Heckingbottom's side would be down if only games this year were counted.Luton and Derby scored the fewest goals in 2025 (19) and attacking output was an issue that plagued both sides throughout the entire campaign. It had major consequences for the Hatters with back-to-back relegations, while the Rams survived by a point - and only on goal difference in the yearly table.Data collated from TransfermarktBen AshtonBBC Sport EnglandGetty ImagesThe 2024-25 Championship season might be over but there are many ways to analyse and reflect on the campaign that has gone before us.Not every club can go up but if there are signs a team is moving in the right direction, it can still be considered good progress - or quite the opposite if things are on the slide.Here is a look at how each of the 18 sides who were in the Championship for the past two seasons got on points wise compared to the 2023-24 campaign.It perhaps comes as no surprise that Sunderland, who won promotion to the Premier League via the play-offs, recorded the most significant improvement after finishing 16th in 2023-24 and picked up 20 more points.Despite a tumultuous season off the field, Blackburn were the second most improved side in the division, gaining 13 points on the previous campaign as they missed out on the play-offs by just two points.Leeds racked up 90 points in 2023-24 but somehow still managed a 10-point improvement as they hit the 100 mark on their way to winning the title in their best-ever season in the second tier.Millwall's seven-point improvement was enough to help them finish five places higher in eighth, but they fell short of the top six by two points.Meanwhile, Bristol City were only six points better off but managed to climb five places and claim a play-off spot, recording their best Championship finishing position since 2007-08.Coventry also only improved by five points but were able to jump from ninth to fifth, perhaps showing just how fine the margins can be in the Championship when it comes to securing a play-off berth.Getty ImagesYou might want to look away now, Hull City fans. The Tigers went backwards more than any other side compared to the previous season under Liam Rosenior, dropping from seventh place and three points outside the play-offs to only escaping relegation on goal difference on the final day.Cardiff went from mid-table in 2023-24 to rock bottom and will drop down to League One for the first time in 22 years. It is pretty clear to see why as the Bluebirds picked up 19 fewer points compared to the previous season.Norwich tumbled to 13th place after finishing in the play-offs a year before - an underperformance which ultimately cost Johannes Hoff Thorup his job as head coach.Preston were 10 points off the play-off places in 2023-24 but picked up 13 fewer points under Paul Heckingbottom in what was their worst season since they were relegated from the Championship in 2010-11.The Lilywhites' downturn was largely due to a major dip in form in the latter stages of the campaign, picking up only one win from their final 15 games (D7 L7) to avoid the drop by just one point.West Bromwich Albion endured a disappointing season - for a club which always harbours ambitions of plying its trade in the top flight - with an 11-point drop off. Albion's final points tally of 64 was their worst in the Championship since 1999-2000.Plymouth may have only been five points worse off than they were in 2023-24 but having survived on the final day that season, there were to be no such heroics this time around and their two-year stint in the second tier is over.Getty ImagesAll data based only on teams who were in the Championship in 2023-24 and 2024-25Geoff DoyleBBC 3CR sports editorBBC SportWatford owner Gino Pozzo, chief executive Scott Duxbury and sporting director Gina Luca Nani have bridges to build. There has been seething reaction and resentment to Tom Cleverley's sacking and it's alarmed them. In a poll in the local newspaper, 94% were against the latest head coach removal. The vitriol has been its loudest since Pozzo took over and it seems to have shocked him and the board. Changes have been made and operation reconciliation has begun. There already seems a softer, more open, approach. The message has been they are still very ambitious, that they envisage keeping nearly all of their best players, and that they are aiming for a Premier League return. What Watford fans will want to see is promises kept and then action taken, rather than words. The supporters are going to take some convincing. Some hardened Watford fans have had enough. They are fed up with the way the club has been run in the past few years and the sacking of the immensely popular Cleverley was the final straw. The board made early inroads in an attempt to lift the mood. The signing of Hector Kyprianou seems a shrewd one. A freebie, a good age - 23 - but with plenty of experience, an international and leadership qualities; he ticks a lot of boxes. But some fans may need more time to forgive the sacking of Cleverley. There is an uneasy vibe at the moment - a disconnection. Those who have paid for their season tickets will hope for change, but expectations are quite low. Pozzo and the board still have plenty of making up to do.Rex FeaturesNew Watford head coach Paulo Pezzolano says building "a clear identity" is his first priority after being appointed to replace Tom Cleverley.The Uruguayan has achieved promotions as a head coach in Spain, Brazil and his home country and Watford says he also has an impressive track record of working with young players."I know what this club stands for its history, its people. It's a big responsibility and a challenge that truly motivates me. I arrive full of energy and eager to work, to build a competitive team that embodies Watford's values," he told the club website."Football is lived here with unique intensity full stadiums, a rich football culture. For any coach, working in England is a dream. I approach it with humility but also great determination."Pezzolano is an advocate of the high press style favoured by so many modern coaches but wants the team to play with "order, balance, and courage".He added: "The fans will see a team they can identify with one that fights, competes and plays with identity." There have been very few Uruguayan managers/head coaches in English football, but Pezzolano follows the likes of Gus Poyet (Brighton and Sunderland) and further back Danny Bergara (Rochdale, Stockport and Rotherham).Watford finished 14th under Cleverley this season, 11 points short of the play-off places.Earlier we asked for your views on the appointment of Uruguayan Paulo Pezzolano as the new Watford boss.Here's a selection of typical responses from Hornets fans.Stewart: A typical Pozzo appointment - a foreign coach with zero experience in the Championship. Squad has some promising youngsters but needs a hefty investment in some fresh blood and letting go some of the older dead wood. Sadly this ownership's approach is testing the loyalty of some of its most ardent supporters. Good luck to him but my expectations are low this season sadly. He won't get the investment he needs to make a success of this team.John: The owners have no track record in recent years of appointing successful managers but I guess the more you change them then statistically one could be successful. My concern would be his lack of experience in this country or the Championship with its relentless nature.Gorry: We needed an experienced coach who can work with a young squad. I wish him very well.Robbie: Who? It doesn't really matter how happy we are with them because if the owners are serious about wanting to challenge for promotion when they seem to don't have the finances to make the necessary additions to the squad to enable this, then they'll be on their way when we are (hopefully) mid-table or worse, halfway through next season.Dave: Lots of fans saying "don't care, don't want him". How about give him a chance and when it does or doesn't work have say then? Yes I agree sacking Clevs was dumb and a stupid move. But it's done now. Move on and get behind the team and let's see what happens.Graham: A patchy CV at best, most recently ending in failure and no EFL experience vs Tom Cleverley, eight years with WFC as player, captain, coach and manager. Enough said. After 50-plus years as a supporter, I'm done with the club until Pozzo leaves.Paul: I'll give him a chance. It seems as though the board has built him up as more than he may be. 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