

I'm realising that writing this column at least two weeks' ahead of publication isn't conducive to talking wisely about the sporting events at the forefront of my past mind. Because as is so hilariously proven time after time, my seemingly nuanced predictions often end up wide of the mark by the time you pick The Diary up. As was the case with at least some of my Champions League predictions - the moment I penned my backing of Napoli in these pages was the moment I waved goodbye to any chance of that £200 windfall from the speculative bet I placed on them to win the competition. So, to learn from my mistakes, I'm not going to preview or even mention anything happening in the window between me writing and you reading. Instead, let's look even further ahead to the summer of sport - but more specifically, June.

Firstly though, let's recap a few things that are signed and sealed. Plymouth Argyle will play in the Championship next season after a superb season was capped off with them winning the League One title, having won a staggering 101 points from 46 matches. I think it's a stretch to define Plymouth as a local team for us in the West Dorset-East Devon-South Somerset area, but seeing as we haven't got many better candidates playing at the professional level they'll have to do. If BBC Spotlight talk about them, so will I - and I'm sure a few of you readers are part of the "Green and White Army". Argyle will be playing in the second tier of English football for the first time since 2010 and will compete with some other 'local' teams - Championship mainstays Bristol City and (really stretching the local definition here) Southampton who have dropped out of the Premier League after an 11-year spell. Rarely are there many south-west teams in the Championship, so it's nice to have a solid representation in what many football fans consider to be the most competitive league in the world. I fully expected Bournemouth to also be playing Championship football next season, but hats off to the Cherries who've turned

their fortunes around and secured Premier League survival. Sure, they've been buoyed a little by a mid-season takeover which boosted the transfer kitty in January, but I'd still claim that their squad is on paper the league's weakest. Gary O'Neil has done a masterful job in his first managerial role to steer the club to safety - emulating Eddie Howe's over-achievements on the south coast. Bournemouth fans would love O'Neil to become Howe 2.0.

So some good news for the pro teams in our local area. But the fortunes of these teams are in stark contrast to one of our true local sides, Yeovil Town - who were playing Championship football less than a decade ago, but will spend next season in the sixth tier - at the same level as Weymouth and Taunton. Now when you actually look at the sizes of all three towns listed, they're very similar - Yeovil in fact has a slightly smaller population of around 50,000, compared to Weymouth's 55,000 and Taunton's 60,000. Historically Yeovil have spent the majority of their seasons in the regional leagues, and with new local owners coming in to restore a fractured relationship with fans, perhaps it's not all doom and gloom as it appears?

But Glovers fans will undoubtedly be reeling from the steady slide down the football pyramid they've recently experienced, and looking back on the halcyon days of the 2012-13 season. The 2013 League One Play-Off Final, inarguably the greatest moment in Yeovil's history, saw them pitted against Brentford - and it was one of the first few games where I was truly following my now beloved Bees. For Yeovil to win that match under the Wembley arch was staggering given the size of the club, but look at how drastically the two clubs' fortunes have diverged since then. Fingers crossed that things start to improve for the club soon after a wretched few years.

So what's on the horizon for June then? Here's my five top sporting events to keep an eye on:

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Summertime means tennis time, and it's not long now until the grass courts of Wimbledon are back under the spotlight. But before then it's the Parisian clay taking centre stage. Novak Djokovic is, right now, the top ranked player on the men's tour, but is being very closely tailed by the young 20-year-old prodigy Carlos Alcaraz. Current form would suggest that these two are the favourites for French Open glory – I'd lean towards Novak for his unrivalled experience on the big occasion. Although on clay you can never write off Rafa Nadal – but at the time of writing his injury status makes him a doubt. On the women's side, the favourite seems a bit clearer – 21-year-old World No. 1 Iga Swiatek is already a two-time French Open champion and seemingly already the 'Queen of Clay'. The women's game always throws up unexpected champions at Grand Slam tournaments, but my ever-so-slightly educated opinion suggests Swiatek's likely closest challenger will be the 19-year-old American sensation Coco Gauff. But be prepared for them both to crash out in the first round – that's what makes tennis so interesting. The French Open takes place throughout the end of May and the first couple of weeks of June, wrapping up on Sunday 11th.

During that time, we've got some big football finals. Firstly, a Manchester derby FA Cup final – the first cup final between the two sides in history. City are obviously the favourites, and are on course for a treble at the time of writing. Right now their team, in my opinion, is the best iteration of Manchester City that we've ever seen – Guardiola has reached new levels tactically and is getting the best out of his star talents. But up against an improving Man United team who've already tasted silverware this season with the League Cup, the intensity of the rivalry coupled with City's need to juggle a few more competitions could see an upset. Their most recent meeting at Old Trafford saw United come from behind to claim a famous 2-1 victory – and manager

Erik ten Hag is certainly capable of repeating that feat at Wembley on June 3rd.

A week later and City could be preparing for a second final in seven days - the Champions League final in Istanbul. Of course, that's if they get past Real Madrid in the second leg of a currently ongoing (at the time of writing) semi-final. The victors of City and Real will take on the winners of the Milan derby semi-final between AC and Inter. And whilst AC are hoping to have the opportunity to banish their Istanbul demons after Liverpool's famous Miracle of Istanbul triumph in 2005, it looks unlikely they'll be returning to Turkey having slumped to a 2-0 first leg defeat to their cross-city rivals. Either way, it'll definitely be a showstopper of a final – whoever progresses out of Manchester City and Real Madrid is the clear favourite, but don't write off the Milan finalist.

If you're looking for a change of pace, stick on the US Open (Golf) between the 15th and 18th of June. Now I'm not a massive golf aficionado so can't offer any great insights, but I can tell you that the course for this year's tournament is the Los Angeles Country Club. And besides being found in Beverly Hills next door to the Playboy Mansion, it's also a rarely tested course on the professional circuit. Early odds with the bookmakers suggest that the three favourites are Jon Rahm, Scottie Scheffler and Rory McIlroy – but I then quickly found out that these three are also the world's top 3 right now, so not a particularly useful bit of knowledge! Keep an eye out for last year's US Open winner Matt Fitzpatrick, the 28-year-old from Sheffield, as he's also highly tipped.

And last but certainly not least, the Ashes is back on home soil. What a difference a year can make – last time out England were hopeless down under and were quite frankly battered in a one-sided Ashes series. But under the new stewardship of Brendon McCullum with Ben Stokes as

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captain, and it's looking like it could be a much closer affair. Don't get me wrong, Australia are in scintillating form and are still on the pedestal, there to be shot at. They've got a world class bowling attack that will come up against England's newfound strength in our top six batsmen. Perhaps where the series will be decided is at the other end of play, with England's bowling arsenal still heavily dependent on long-time saviours James Anderson and Stuart Broad, whilst Australia's batting order lacks the fear factor of England's. The first test is at Birmingham's Edgbaston from the 16th to the 20th of June – and the whole series will be wrapped up at the end of July after five tests.

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