

Transcript

Football experts will tell you that the most important thing about the game is winning. It does not matter how well or how badly you play as long as you win, as there is nothing greater than winning. Well, maybe there is one thing, beating one of your local rivals for example, which then makes that victory even sweeter.

Though the origin of the term is a little unclear, it is generally accepted that the word derby originated from folk football times in the UK. These were matches between two different parts of a village that took place over the whole day, throughout the whole town and involved everyone in the area. The games were often violent as players defended their local honour while others saw the match as a way of taking revenge on disliked neighbours.

This feeling has continued through the ages right up to the present time and the derby game can often provoke high tension and emotion, which sometimes leads to violence among the supporters. Derbies are rarely described as cooperative or celebratory but rather as fierce or highly charged affairs and the supporters know that they will have bragging rights if they win but that they will have to endure taunts if they lose, until the next game comes round of course. These games are so tense that form is often thrown out of the window as the derby atmosphere acts as a great leveler for both teams.

So, what is the biggest derby game in Britain? Perhaps the Merseyside derby between Liverpool and Everton? Manchester United versus Manchester City or the North-London derby game between Tottenham and Arsenal? We asked some football fans what they thought.

Tim: I'd have to say The Old Firm, so Rangers-Celtic is the biggest derby. I think because they are not only the biggest teams in Scotland, they're also always competing for the same competitions and there's a very long sectarian history between the two fans.

Paul: There are a lot of big derbies around, of course, there's Everton-Liverpool, Man United-Man City and lots and lots of them in London but I've got to say the biggest derby in Britain is undoubtedly Celtic versus Rangers. Both teams are big teams they're both battling for the championship every year and there's the huge religious divide as well.

Simon: I would say Celtic-Rangers simply because, not just the history I mean all derbies have got history, but there's the religious aspect to it all. I think the Scottish fans, and in particular the Glaswegian fans are quite, sort of, vociferous in their support and they actually generally dislike each other I think.

Well, a unanimous decision. The Old Firm game in Glasgow between Celtic and Rangers is generally regarded as the biggest derby game in Britain. It's been played since 1888 and, as the earlier speakers suggested, the games represent something more than just football. This can be seen from looking at their respective histories, with Rangers receiving most of their support from the Protestant community in Glasgow while Celtic were founded by Irishmen, wear green and their fan base is generally Catholic. There is little love lost between the two sets of fans, though there has been a decline in the violence that affected these games. That still does not mean that the passion, the noise, the excitement, the sense of history and of course, the bragging rights have diminished. Not at all.

Boca Juniors versus River Plate in Argentina may claim to affect 90% of all supporters in the country when they play, fans from Roma and Lazio in the Italian capital or Sevilla and Betis in Andalucia in southern Spain may argue that they hate their opponents more, while Fenerbahce and Galatasaray are playing for the pride of two continents in their games in Turkey, but I have to agree with the earlier comments, the biggest derby in football? If you know your history, it has to be The Old Firm game between Rangers and Celtic.