

## CASE STUDY

# How Watford FC uses Blinkfire Analytics to optimize & value sponsorships



## OVERVIEW

Since the Pozzo takeover of Watford FC during the 2012-13 season, there have been key club developments in both strategy and vision, leading the club into a new age. Premier League regulars since the 2015-16 season, Watford has built a proactive marketing strategy, adding value to their brand and boosting revenue potential by connecting with new fans, stakeholders, and sponsors.

Watford lives as a Challenger brand within the soccer industry, challenging the norm and gathering a loyal following of fans by creating a unique offering. Watford might have fewer resources compared to other teams, but they are ambitious and spot gaps in the market to find better ways of delivering what fans want. They live by the words - "Creating History, Respecting Our Past".

### Digital & Social

One of Watford's main objectives is consistent social growth across all club-led channels powered by the data and platform of Blinkfire Analytics. This strategy allows Watford to increase brand exposure for their major partners through assets while positioning the club with future partners.

At the forefront of Watford's digital strategy is expanding its fan base demographics and better engaging with new fans. Successfully engaging these audiences also helps drive revenue directly and indirectly for the club.

## CHALLENGE

During early COVID and the pause of the 2019-20 season, Watford experimented with new ideas and carried many forward to the Championship season. Changing consumer habits during lockdown allowed Watford to change their commercial offerings across digital channels. As a Blinkfire Analytics customer since 2018, the club knew the platform and Customer Success team would unlock valuable insights to help them develop new strategies.

### Relegation

The biggest challenge for the club was that Championship football also meant Championship budgets, coupled with the reduction in ticket revenue from COVID. Previous social media and marketing strategies needed to be adapted, paused, or halted altogether.

This also meant a decline in eyeballs across Watford's channels because the lack of Premier League interest. Watford's hard work the past few seasons meant the team could maintain fans domestically and internationally, but not being one of the 20 Premier League clubs meant a decline in growth globally. Using Blinkfire Analytics' demographics and social media reports, Watford focused additional efforts on regions where the team picked up new squad members. This helped bridge the gap until the club's promotion at the end of the season.

Blinkfire's technology has allowed Watford to get a greater understanding of our social presence and the true value of our digital output. The use of certain aspects of the platform helps to drive strategic thinking and enables us to become better decision-makers in the process.

**Owen Arnold**  
Marketing Manager, Watford FC

### Plans & Strategies

Despite relegation, the club was aware of the importance of social media as a way to continue connecting with their fans. By telling emotional and personal success stories about the club, and players, Watford boosted their profile -- for reasons other than Premier League games. Watford adds value across social and digital by promoting the club's vision and values in strategic markets while also connecting with like-minded fans around the globe.



## SOLUTION

With COVID and no Premier League, Watford adapted quickly. The club created new offerings to stay relevant for new audiences and kept existing fans engaged, informed, and educated.

Watford's brand positioning is a club based on tradition plus a modern and proactive approach towards innovation. Watford used Blinkfire's social media analytics to develop activations on new platforms as a value-add for commercial partners by appealing to new fans with disruptive and creative content.

The best example of this was Watford adopting an aggressive TikTok strategy to capture the market. Watford promoted their partners through video in a unique and fun way. **Year-to-date, TikTok is Watford's best channel for social growth, increasing its audience by more than 80%.**

In order to maximize strategic success, Watford provided insights reports for key stakeholders. Using Blinkfire's platform, the club was more aware of how to strategically use assets to promote main sponsors on social media, maximizing exposure and return on investment for their sponsors.

Watford viewed the success of certain digital content series as a way to showcase future activations, many of which were sponsorship-led. Watford's in-depth analysis helped them monetize outside-the-box commercial opportunities to match their "Disruptor or Challenger" positioning strategy. Because of the real-time nature of Blinkfire's data, Watford could export insights and make decisions based on changing user habits.

## RESULTS

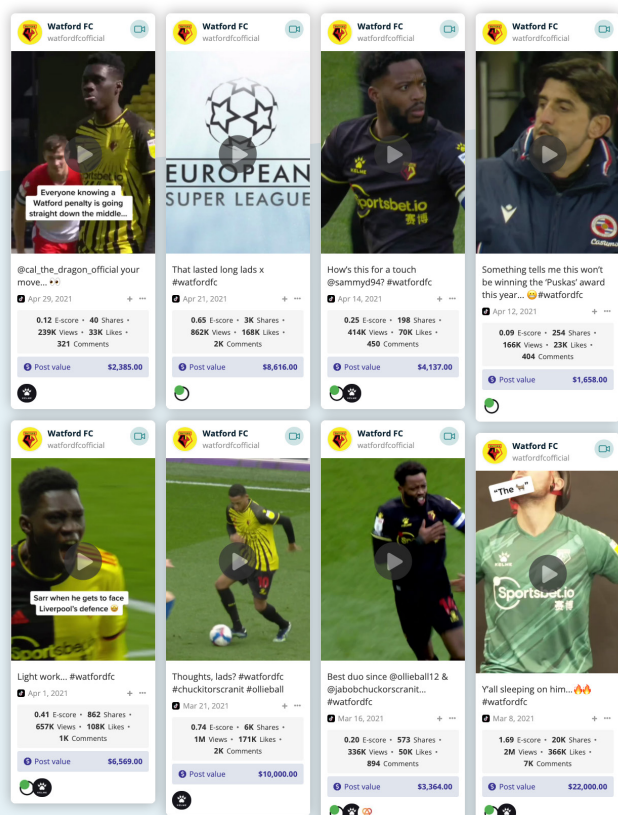
Blinkfire's ease of use, real-time sponsorship valuation, and automated reporting helped the club when demonstrating success to key stakeholders.

Watford also used Blinkfire's Global Ranking Report and custom Entity Group to compare and benchmark against industry competitors. This allows for competitive analysis and unlocking industry trends.

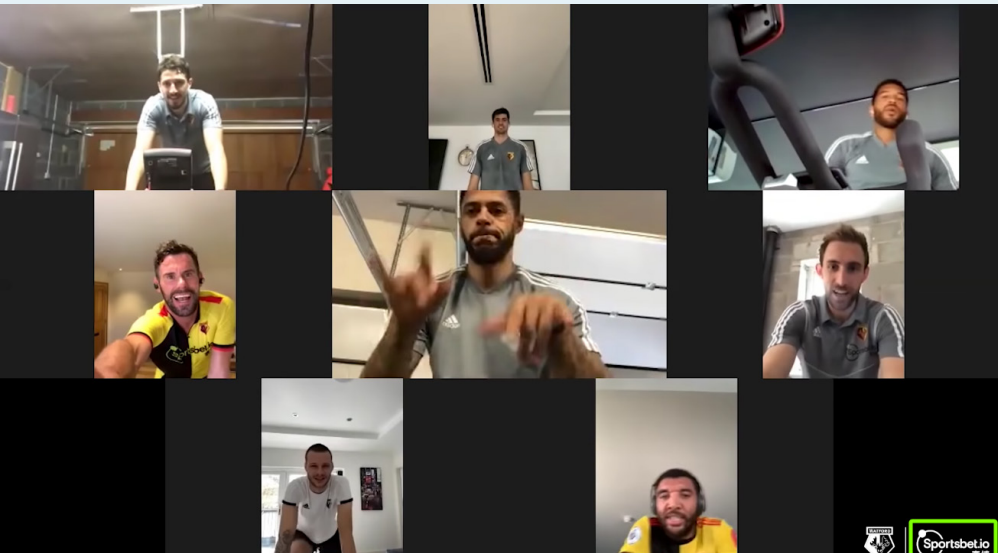
## 3 SOCIAL MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



**1. "We Are Back"** The promotion graphic series gave exposure to the club's biggest sponsors for the season.



**2. TikTok Growth** Third most valuable channel behind Instagram & Twitter; 120% follower increase past 365 days.



**3. "Ben Foster + Cycling"** A success story during COVID was an activation with then front-of-kit sponsor Sportsbet.io. Ben Foster led a cycling workout with teammates over Zoom. This type of social media content quickly became the norm during the lockdown and COVID.



Blinkfire Analytics is the leading business intelligence & marketing analytics platform to evaluate sports, media, and entertainment sponsorships across social media, digital, and Advanced TV. Using artificial intelligence, machine learning, and proprietary computer vision technology, Blinkfire Analytics measures media value and impact – allowing rights holders, players, influencers, agents, and brands to better engage their fans and sponsors across real-time, always-on platform. Many of the world's top teams and leagues rely on Blinkfire Analytics' real-time, always-on platform for sports and entertainment sponsorship evaluation to quantify engagement and sponsorship dollars.

To learn more about Blinkfire Analytics, email at [bizdev@blinkfire.com](mailto:bizdev@blinkfire.com) or visit [www.blinkfire.com](http://www.blinkfire.com).

