Oh my goodness me, is that time of year already? Well no actually it's not! By my reckoning it's about three weeks too early for the start of the football season, I want to have a life before my Celtic addiction kicks in again, but I've had that rant already and the season is now upon us. So lie back, close your eyes and deeply inhale the intoxicating effects of Scottish football and Celtic and to hell with the real world as we're all set for another two horse race with all the twists and turns of a 100m sprint because unless 10 Arab sheiks sweep into Scotland to buy the ten other SPL clubs in the next few days, the gulf between the top 2 and the also-rans will remain as chasmal as we've seen since it was realised Paul Le Guen wasn't quite the hot managerial property everyone had pegged him for. That's right it's time to dust down your Paddy Power
accounts and start gambling again (provided you're over 18 of course).

Now, all those melodramatic *Sky Sports* ads for Old Firm clashes accompanied by a dramatic piece of classical music would have you think that meetings between the top 2 decide not only the destination of the Scottish title, but also the destination of your soul and once and for all, who's the greatest superhero – Batman or the Pope. But funnily enough,
last season the meetings of the Glasgow clubs wasn't the deciding factor
in the title race – Celtic's inability to put away the minnows was. Lenny had "Walter" in his pocket getting the better of their four league meetings last season, taking seven points out of a possible twelve to Rangers' four. Listeners to his last appearance on the podcast will know that St Anthony doesn't need reminding of us dropping 5 out of 9 points against I.C.T.

OBLIGATORY CORPORATE PLUG
Rangers v Hearts
Sat. 12.30pm Sky Sports 2
Hibs v Celtic
Sun. 12.30pm ESPN
Money-Back Special
If **there are more than four goals in either of the above games**, Paddy Power will refund all losing 1st Goalscorer, Last Goalscorer, Correct Score and Scorecast singles on that match.
Conditions

With the English Premier League still reluctant to let the Old Firm clubs move south and milk their cash cow, **money is tighter than a pair of skinny jeans on Robbie Coltrane** for all SPL sides. Neither Celtic nor Rangers has done much in the way of spending, but by and large they've managed to hold on to their key players from last season, especially us, with Rangers finishing last year with a few loan signings who've now gone home.

Rangers' chances of defending their title will depend on how Super Sally Ally takes to management. Will he be one of the few who slot perfectly into the manager's seat after being a right hand man or is his greatest attribute being able to take credit for things he had very little to do with by associating himself with more successful people? We're well aware of his ability to score goals and make us **feel immensely queasy by flirting with Sue Barker on** *A Question Of Sport*, but his capacity to guide a team to league success something that hasn't been proven. He has inherited a winning team, but one that benefited from Celtic's collapse almost as much as they claimed the title for themselves. Under Walter Smith, Rangers played a brand of football with all the aesthetic appeal of Jo Brand in a basque, particularly in Europe. Pargmasmithism as my RST mate called it was tedious, but it was all about getting the job done. Smith called on his vast experience to guide his team to the title and there have to be serious questions about McCoist's ability and desire to do the same and questions already about his relationship with Smith & Whyte.

Thanks to the mindless death-threats sent the way of Neil Lennon and the difficulties the human

mind has separating sympathy from genuine affection, the actual performance of the Celtic manager was somewhat secondary to other events – and rightly so. There's no doubt that Lennon had a tremendously difficult time last season dealing with the hatred aimed in his direction. It's hard to truly gauge how big an impact his traumas had on the players, but in reality it matters little. **Give a professional footballer an excuse not to perform and he'll grab it like it's a glamour model's silicone-enhanced bosom** . If there is a silver lining to throwing away a league title, it's the fact that at least we got themselves in the position to throw away a league title. There's still time for a change, but as yet Celtic have kept the vast majority of their key players from last season and augmented them with a few potentially useful signings so you'd expect us to be capable of performing to a similar level in the season ahead.

Aiming to top **the best of the rest mini-league** are Hearts whose promising season fizzled out like a firework that's been stored in an overly damp room. The Edinburgh club that make events on *Dream Team* look like the stuff of factual documentary have been busy adding to their squad with a few interesting additions to an already burgeoning squad (**John Sutton** could be a decent bet in the **SPL Top Goalscorer betting**) That argument implies a level of the 'quantity over quality' approach, but amongst the vast ranks they've got some quality and with Jim Jeffries at the helm, you'd expect that progress to be maintained at least and more than likely built upon.

So what are our expectations:

Shockeroony, Harry Brady picks Celtic for the SPL at 8/11

Top Goalscorer

G Hooper

5/2

M Higdon

25/1

S Thompson

100/1

N Jelavic

10/3

D Healy

33/1

D Mackie

100/1

D Goodwillie

7/1

S Vernon

33/1

S Whittaker

350/1

A Stokes

15/2

K Kyle

50/1

J Forrest

350/1

K Lafferty

12/1

S Maloney

50/1

D Templeton

350/1

K Commons

16/1

J Daly

50/1

S Brown

500/1

J Sutton

16/1

D Murphy

66/1

J Ledley

500/1

S Naismith

16/1

J Murphy

80/1

|P McCourt

500/1

G Samaras

20/1

A Kirk

80/1

S Davis

500/1

G O'Connor

20/1

S Higgins

100/1

W Flood

750/1

Difficult as we don’t know of other arrivals (Bellamy please please), but Commons might be an

outside bet.

EPL

Chelsea

13/5

Championship

West Ham

9/2

1 st **Div**

Sheffield Wed

11/2

2 nd **Div**

Swindon

9/1

SPL

Celtic

8/11

Div 1

Dundee

9/4

Div 2

Brechin

12/5

Div 3

Peterhead

7/4

Stick your own predictions below, on twitter @celticrumours or @harrybradycu or on Facebook.