Name: _____ Date: _____

How Did Erling Haaland Score 36 Goals?

Reading level 10 (6th grade) · 1217 words

How does a player score 36 goals in one Premier League season? On May 28, 2023, the Premier League reported that Erling Haaland of Manchester City had done exactly that, in 35 appearances, and won the Golden Boot as the league's top scorer. The old record was 34, and it had stood since 1994-95, long before he arrived. Appearances means games played. His numbers explain a striker's job and the ways soccer counts goals, minutes and chances.

First, what counts. Under the Laws of the Game, a goal is scored when the whole of the ball passes over the goal line, between the posts and under the crossbar. The team with more goals wins. The 36 are league goals only. Across every competition that season, Opta Analyst counted 52 goals, because the Champions League and cups count separately. Add his 8 assists and he was part of 44 league goals, which the Premier League listed as a joint record for a 38-match season.

Now the job. Coaches describe a striker as the player who leads the line, holds the ball up and threatens the space behind the defense. Strikers usually play alone or with a partner. In a 4-1-4-1 shape, a lone striker also has to keep possession and press the other team's center backs. Coaches' Voice warns that a single striker can be isolated and easily overloaded. A striker's runs in behind try to get on the end of through balls, and they can push the defense back, which opens space for teammates.

A job like that does not mean many touches. In October 2025, Opta found that Haaland averaged 24.2 touches of the ball per 90 minutes, the third-lowest among Premier League players with at least 300 minutes that season. In 2022-23, the same table shows 4.0 shots per 90. At the start of 2025-26 that worked out to about 5.5 touches for every shot: 24.2 touches divided by 4.4 shots per 90. A striker's work is measured less by how often he handles the ball than by what he does with a chance.

Why was 36 so hard to reach? The old record of 34 was set in 1993-94 and matched in 1994-95. In those years each club played 42 games, because the league had 22 clubs. The league now has 20 clubs and 38 games. The best total for a 38-game season had been 32, set in 2017-18, and Haaland passed it with his 33rd goal in April 2023. A 42-game season also gave those players four more games than a 38-game season gives anyone now.

His start was fast. He scored ten goals in his first six Premier League games, including two hat-tricks, which are games with three goals. Across all competitions he scored six hat-tricks in 2022-23, the most by a Premier League player in one season, through November 2026. On December 28, 2022, two goals at Leeds took him to 20 Premier League goals in just 14 matches, the fewest the league had ever seen, through November 2026. The player who held

the old mark needed seven more matches.

Goals are one way to count. Another is expected goals, or xG. Opta Analyst says xG measures the quality of a chance by calculating the likelihood that it will be scored, using information on similar shots in the past. The scale runs from zero to one. Zero is a chance that is impossible to score. A shot worth 0.1 is expected to go in about one time in ten. A penalty gets a fixed value, 0.79, based on how often penalties have scored.

What goes into the number? Opta lists the distance to the goal, the angle to the goal and the type of shot, such as a header or a volley. Its model learned from nearly one million shots. So a header from far out gets a low value. A shot from close, in the middle, gets a high one. Add up the values and you get a team's or a player's expected goals. The method has limits. Sky Sports notes that xG struggles to account for where the defenders stand.

Here is what that showed about 2022-23. Per 90 means a total scaled to a full 90-minute game, so players who play fewer minutes can still be compared. Per 90 minutes, Opta's table gives Haaland 1.17 goals and 0.92 xG. He scored more than the chances were worth. In 2023-24 it was 0.95 goals and 1.03 xG, a little less. In 2024-25 it was 0.72 and 0.72, level. Even a top striker's year depends partly on how the shots happened to fall. In 2022-23 his non-penalty goals were 0.94 per 90, so penalties added the rest.

The list of Golden Boots shows the same ups and downs. After 36 league goals in 2022-23, Haaland scored 27 in 2023-24, five clear of the next player. That award was announced on May 19, 2024. In 2024-25 he scored 22. The Golden Boot goes to whoever finishes the season with the most league goals. In 2025-26 he scored 27 in 35 games and won a third Golden Boot, announced on May 24, 2026. Each Golden Boot counts only Premier League goals. The record for most Golden Boots is four.

There was also Europe. On March 14, 2023, Haaland scored five goals in a 7-0 Champions League win over Leipzig, which made it 8-1 over the two games, at minutes 22, 24, 45+2, 52 and 57. UEFA's report said only two players had scored five in a game before. The Champions League is a separate competition, so none of those five count in the 36. That season his 12 Champions League goals made him the competition's top scorer, and he reached 30 career Champions League goals in 25 matches by October 2023.

The league's quickest-to-100 list also changed. On December 2, 2025, Haaland scored his 100th Premier League goal in his 111th game. The previous quickest player needed 124 games. A hundred goals in 111 games works out to about 0.9 goals a game. Fewer games means more goals per game, but it does not tell you who will keep scoring for the longest time. A fastest-to record compares games played, not minutes or years.

Where does it stand today? Through November 4, 2026, one report counted 121 Premier League goals for Manchester City. A club table of league games, as of October 31, 2026, gave 121 goals in 141 games. In 2025-26 he scored 27 goals in 35 games with 8 assists. In

the 2026-27 season he has 9 goals in 9 games. In the three seasons after 2022-23, the league's top scorer finished with 27, 29 and 27, so the record of 36 still stands. It would take 37 goals in a season to change it.

Norway played the 2026 World Cup, its first since 1998, and Haaland scored seven goals, one report said. Norway reached the quarter-finals for the first time and lost 2-1 to England after extra time in July 2026. A World Cup counts for the national team, so those goals are in neither the 121 nor the 36. A striker's year is made of league seasons, cup nights and national games, and each counts in its own list. The 2026-27 league season is only nine games old.

Questions

1. Why were the 36 goals counted as league goals only?

A. Cup and Champions League goals are in separate lists
B. The cups did not count in 2022-23
C. He scored no other goals

2. What does an xG of 0.79 on a penalty mean?

A. Penalties always go in
B. A fixed value from how often penalties score
C. The kicker has 79 touches

3. In 2022-23, Haaland's goals per 90 were 1.17 and his xG per 90 was 0.92. What does that show?

A. He scored fewer goals than the chances were worth
B. He scored more goals than the chances were worth
C. His chances were all penalties

4. In "a single striker can be isolated," what does isolated mean?

A. Sent off the field
B. Cut off from teammates
C. Given extra time

5. Before Haaland, what was the record for goals in a Premier League season?

A. 34
B. 32
C. 44

6. How many Premier League goals did Haaland score in 2025-26?

A. 22
B. 36
C. 27

Words to know

striker: front attacker
touches: ball contacts
expected: predicted
possession: holding the ball

Answer key: How Did Erling Haaland Score 36 Goals?

1. A. Cup and Champions League goals are in separate lists
2. B. A fixed value from how often penalties score
3. B. He scored more goals than the chances were worth
4. B. Cut off from teammates
5. A. 34
6. C. 27