



# Setting their stall out

**H**ail the Teesside squirrels. Mindful of the fact that a tough December fixture list is approaching, the five points stored away in November provide a thin but useful safety buffer between Boro and the drop zone.

This is all in accordance with the club's Premiership tradition of securing a lower mid-table position before

December, and then losing the plot completely to ensure being among the first in the queue for the new year relegation sales. Hell, last year they were so keen that they started queueing up, flask and sandwiches in hand, at the beginning of November, having secured by then a place in the bottom three.

In recent seasons, Boro seem to be drawn towards the bottom three like some people are drawn towards street vendors — "Roll up

people, I've got three places only for a trip to the fairytale land of the Nationwide League — don't miss out . . ." Seen from the Premiership League, the Nationwide League is a bit like a fairytale I suppose — Grimm.

With clashes between now and the year end

against Liverpool, Manchester United and Arsenal, the result of the sternest test of Steve McClaren's regime will be reflected in Boro's league position come January 1.

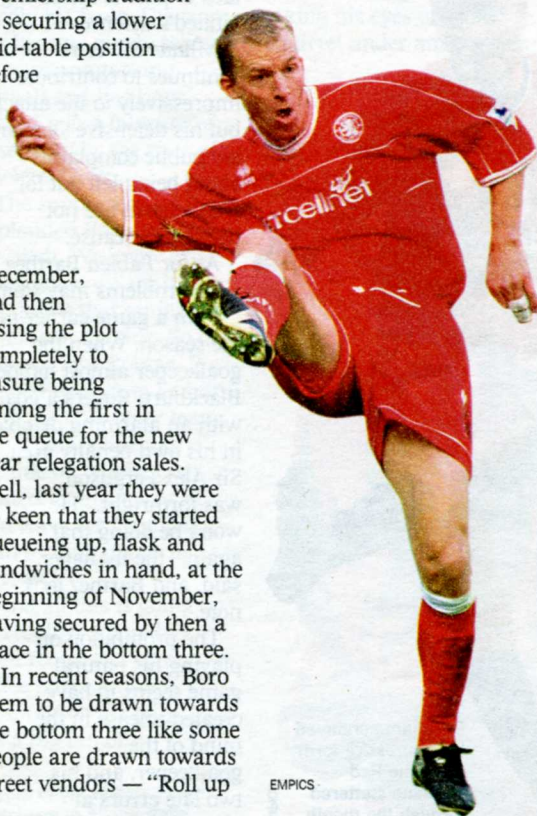
Although the recent defensive record of three goals conceded in six games (and only one of those was from open play) is very impressive, the team is not scoring enough goals and will do well to have more

than 21 points by the end of the year. However,

if McClaren can do the same thing to the Boro midfield and front-line during December as he has done with the defence in recent weeks, then the players could find themselves as dizzy as the rest of us will be on New Year's Day, suffering from the rare comfort of mid-table vertigo.

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**Robbie Mustoe, the player of the month, doing his best to resist the gravitational pull of the bottom three**



EMPICS

## RESULTS

November 3

**Derby County** (h) Won 5-1.  
(4-4-2): Schwarzer - Stockdale, Southgate, Ehiogu, Queudrue - Marinelli, Ince, Mustoe, Greening (Johnston 78) - Boksic (Deane 84), Nemeth (Windass 78).  
Scorers: **Nemeth 49, Marinelli 57, 82, Boksic 61, Mustoe 73.**  
Referee: **N Barry.**  
Attendance: **28,117.**  
Position: **13th.**

November 17

**Aston Villa** (a) Drew 0-0.  
(4-4-2): Crossley - Stockdale, Ehiogu, Southgate, Queudrue (Cooper 46) - Marinelli (Stamp 71), Mustoe, Greening, Johnston - Nemeth (Windass 80), Boksic.  
Booked: **Boksic, Queudrue, Greening.**  
Referee: **P Jones.**  
Attendance: **35,424.**  
Position: **14th.**

November 25

**Ipswich Town** (h) Drew 0-0.  
(4-4-2): Crossley - Stockdale, Southgate, Ehiogu, Queudrue - Marinelli (Hudson 89), Greening, Mustoe, Johnston (Wilson 77) - Boksic, Nemeth (Windass 75).  
Referee: **D Pugh.**  
Attendance: **32,586.**  
Position: **14th.**

## GOALS

Left-foot	2
Right-foot	3
Headed	0



## FIXTURES

<b>Today:</b>	
Liverpool	(a)
<b>Dec 15:</b>	
Manchester United	(h)
<b>Dec 22:</b>	
Fulham	(h)
<b>Dec 26:</b>	
Newcastle United	(a)
<b>Dec 29:</b>	
Arsenal	(a)
<b>Jan 1:</b>	
Everton	(h)

## WEBSITES

**Official:** www.mfc.co.uk  
**Fansites:** www.mss.org.uk  
www.middlesbrough.rivals.net

## ATTENDANCES

Season's average: **28,898 (13th)**

**opta**  
opta stats

**PLAYER OF THE MONTH**

	Index score
Robbie Mustoe	1,250
Carlos Marinelli	1,180
Franck Queudrue	1,128
Jonathan Greening	1,103
Robbie Stockdale	991

The longest-serving player in the present first team by far, having signed in 1990, Mustoe eclipsed the club's bigger names in November.

**opta**  
opta stats

**JUST FANCY STAT**

- 10** Carlos Marinelli made ten successful **dribbles** last month — more than any other player
- 21** Number of **tackles** made by Robbie Stockdale — more than any other player last month
- 1** Boro **conceded** only one goal last month, their lowest total since January
- 0** Jonathan Greening and Gareth Southgate had **not missed** a minute of first-team action up to the end of November
- 18** Premiership **goals** scored by Brian Deane for Boro since joining in the 1998-99 season

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