



# Chance is a fine thing

When looking at some of the goals Boro have scored this season it would be easy to have grave suspicions about the integrity of some of the opposing players.

How else to explain Frank Sinclair's bizarre own goal in the 1-0 win against Leicester? Or Verón's day-dreaming that handed them the winner at Old Trafford? Not forgetting the defensive lapse that allowed Robbie Mustoe to secure the points at Derby.

Of course, there is no

suggestion of any collusion. The good luck that was absent during Boro's relegation-FA Cup Final-League Cup final season of 1996-97 has finally found its way to the North East and is making up for lost time. It seems that Lady Luck is settling in quite nicely by the Tees.

But it is more than luck: for the first time in a good few years, Middlesbrough are now looking like a Premiership outfit. Two years ago, Bryan Robson's squad cost around £51m and finished 12th. Steve McClaren's squad cost

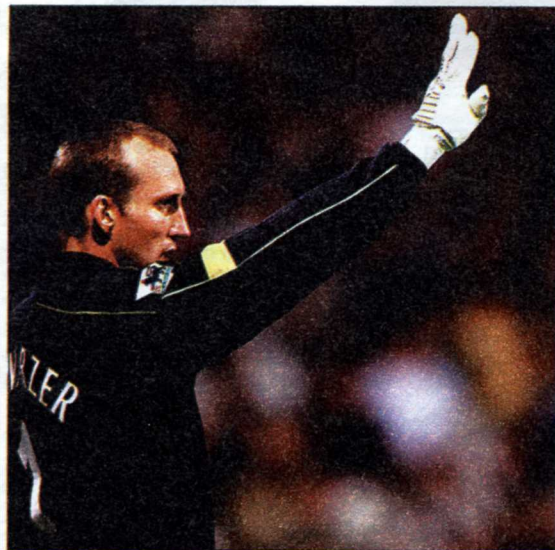
around £30m (£14m of which was spent on Ehiogu and Southgate) and could finish higher.

However, in terms of quality at a low cost, look no further than two loan players who have made a fantastic contribution. The influence of Franck Queudrue and Benito Carbone cannot be underestimated and it is inconceivable that both will not be full time Boro employees at the beginning of next season. Queudrue's passing, vision and work-rate has won him many admirers, while Carbone's ball skills remind the faithful of Juninho in his prime.

Boro go into the penultimate month of the season with Premiership status assured, a mid-table finish likely, and with an outside shot of creeping into Europe. And the fans that stayed away earlier this season are becoming convinced of the benefits of spending Saturdays at the Riverside instead of MFI.

They've realised the only DIY worth anybody's time on Teesside is the expert fix-it job being performed by McClaren.

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Schwarzer, like Middlesbrough overall, has been sold

## RESULTS

March 2  
**Leicester City (h)** Won 1-0  
(4-4-2): Schwarzer - Stockdale, Ehiogu, Southgate, Queudrue - Greening (Windass 81), Ince, Mustoe, Whelan (Murphy 71) - Carbone, Boksic (Nemeth 90)  
Scorer: **Sinclair** og 4  
Booked: **Ince, Carbone**  
Referee: **E Wolstenhome**  
Attendance: **25,734**  
Position: **12th**

March 6  
**Southampton (a)** Drew 1-1  
(4-4-2): Schwarzer - Festa, Southgate, Ehiogu, Queudrue - Wilkshire, Mustoe, Greening, Whelan - Carbone, Boksic (Stockdale 62)  
Scorer: **Whelan** 57  
Booked: **Queudrue**  
Sent off: **Festa**  
Referee: **U Rennie**  
Attendance: **28,931**  
Position: **13th**

March 16  
**Liverpool (h)** Lost 2-1  
(4-4-1-1): Schwarzer - Stockdale (Marinelli 81), Festa, Southgate, Queudrue - Wilkshire (Nemeth 73), Ince, Mustoe (Gavin 73), Greening - Carbone - Boksic  
Scorer: **Southgate** 89  
Referee: **A D'Urso**  
Attendance: **31,253**  
Position: **13th**

March 23  
**Manchester Utd (a)** Won 1-0  
(4-4-2): Schwarzer - Stockdale, Ehiogu, Southgate, Queudrue - Greening (Wilkshire 20), Ince, Mustoe, Whelan - Boksic (Windass 79), Carbone  
Scorer: **Boksic** 9  
Booked: **Queudrue, Ince**  
Referee: **S Bennett**  
Attendance: **67,683**  
Position: **10th**

March 30  
**Tottenham H (h)** Drew 1-1  
(4-4-2): Crossley - Stockdale, Ehiogu, Southgate, Queudrue - Wilkshire (Murphy 58), Mustoe, Greening, Whelan (Windass 89) - Carbone, Boksic  
Scorer: **Queudrue** 69  
Referee: **P Dowd**  
Attendance: **31,258**  
Position: **11th**

## opta PLAYER OF THE MONTH

	Index score
Mark Schwarzer	1,060
Frank Queudrue	1,030
Gareth Southgate	852
Benito Carbone	815
Paul Ince	739

Who do Middlesbrough use in goal - Mark I or Mark II? They certainly have healthy competition in that department. Crossley did well when filling in, but Schwarzer was reinstated on his recovery from injury, with some success

## JUST FANCY STAT

- 1** Boro scored a solitary **goal** in all five of their March Premiership matches
- 8** By the end of the month Boro had lost just one of their last eight **home games**
- 13** Alen Boksic had more **shots** than any of his team-mates
- 16** Robbie Mustoe was Teesside's **toughest tackler**
- 197** Benito Carbone made more **successful passes** than anyone else in Steve McClaren's side



## GOALS

Left-foot	2
Right-foot	1
Headed	1
Own goals	1

## FIXTURES

April 20: **Blackburn Rovers** (h)  
April 24: **Ipswich Town** (a)  
April 27: **Chelsea** (h)  
May 11: **Derby County** (h)

## CROWD SCENE

Season average **28,693 (14th)**

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