



# THE SCOUTING NETWORK

## NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2007

### THE SCOUTING NETWORK

Worldwide Football Scouting & Consultancy Services

[www.thescoutingnetwork.co.uk](http://www.thescoutingnetwork.co.uk)

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We hope you find this months articles of value, bringing to you features from client clubs which probably affect the majority of clubs worldwide. The value of scouting will of course be a major characteristic of the newsletters, hopefully promoting the different ways clubs go about their process of player recruitment and opposition team evaluation.

The newsletter has been written to keep clubs informed from all levels of the professional game, whether it be from Middlesborough in the Premiership to Halifax in the Conference, where we aim to touch a bit of every club in the process. We would be interested in any feedback you may have or articles that you feel would benefit the footballing community, by contacting us through our website.

### THE TSN PROCESS

When Sir Robert Baden Powell started the scouting movement he gave them the instruction: "Be Prepared". Nearly 100 years later everybody at The Scouting Network has discovered it is an equally appropriate motto for our own organisation. In two and a half years the company has developed dramatically and is now a genuine worldwide operation, where it is fair to say that preparation has been a huge secret to that success, and continues to be vital as the organisation goes forward.

One weekend in November The Scouting Network found itself covering a total of 48 matches, 34 of them in England and another 14 dotted throughout Europe. It was the biggest test of resources to date, where the process of supporting so many clubs request from a converted Country House near Redditch in Worcestershire was successfully achieved.



It begins on Tuesday or Wednesday when the updated list of matches to be covered is compiled. Our UK Scouting Co-Ordinator Kevin Russell then begins the task of allocating scouts to matches, in consultation with Managing Director Derek Bragg. The aim is always to ensure scouts are at a match closest to their home to keep down travelling costs both for ourselves and our clients. Kevin then supervises the job of sending out all the faxes applying for tickets and car parking where necessary. It's a unique part of our service that because we are accredited both by the Football League and FA Premier League as an organisation we can handle all this work directly without adding to the administrative workload for any of our client clubs.



It's also essential that the scouts know when their report is needed. For team assessments especially speed is vital – on this particular weekend 22 of the team reports were in preparation for matches being played in midweek, so they had to be ready to go to managers by Sunday. The following morning four of the player assessments carried out at matches in Europe had to be with the Chief Scouts who had requested them.

Derek Bragg says: "That's an area where we benefit from having a staff who have all worked in football, they understand the pressure of planning for the next game as soon as the last one is over, and we also know the importance of confidentiality. Each report is prepared only for the client club which has asked for it, and is not seen by any of our other clubs. We also know that despite having lots of work at our end is not an excuse we can ever consider – our job is to deliver the report at the right time."

Each of our scouts has been specifically trained to a required standard before the start of the season, often going to games from either the Conference to the Premier League in one week. Once home after the game, they will log on to the secure, internal area of our website and follow the template to produce their report..... continued on page 2



Sunday morning is then hectic in the office, as it is strict policy that each report will have been read, checked and edited by either Derek, Kevin or Graham Allner before it can be released to the club. Derek says: "We sometimes have to be strong and make a club wait for half an hour, but anything that leaves us under our banner must have been signed off to the right quality."

The rest of the operation, thankfully, happens automatically. The TSN computer system automatically picks up the comments on individual players and files them in the database, which means that well over 12,000 unique independent reports on individual players this season will be available to clients who use our database to check out potential targets.

There might just be a moment for a cup of tea . . . and then the whole process starts all over again for the next set of games!



**SUCCESSFUL DEBUT AT SOCCEREX**

This year's SoccerEx was held in South Africa, aimed at promoting the country to the football community and coincide with the 2010 World Cup draw. TSN promoted our unique International Scouting and Consultancy services, gaining contracts with clubs in Denmark, Holland, Russia, Australia, Scotland and the USA, as well as meeting plenty of good contacts within the game.



Sepp Blatter opening SoccerEx 2007

**LAUNCH OF TSN SOUTH AFRICA**

At SoccerEx, TSN officially launched its South African office, tasked with servicing our current clients in the region and developing our business within South Africa and beyond. The team who were busy at SoccerEx comprises Shawn Bishop, a product of our Soccer Management and Scouting course, and South African international playing legion Gary McNab, who will also be responsible for the scouting of potential emerging talent in the region.



**TSN WELCOME VITESSE ARNHEM**

Progressive Eredivise club Vitesse Arnhem have become the latest Dutch club to utilise the full range of unique scouting, database and support services. Following a visit to our offices in the UK, both the Technical Director and Chief Scout were sufficiently impressed to sign up and we look forward to a long and successful partnership.



**AFRICAN CUP OF NATIONS**

As part of our ongoing support to client clubs, TSN will again be covering the African Cup of Nations, which this year will be held in Ghana between 20 January and 10 February 2008. As always our end of tournament report will have a summary on every player who takes the field, plus this time we will have a library of DVDs of every game. If you wish to pre-purchase this report, then please contact TSN.



**UMBRO ENDORSEES**

England's senior squad may be recovering from the shock of failure to qualify for Euro 2008 but there is cause to be far more hopeful about the crop of talent yet to emerge. Stuart Pearce's Under 21 side are six points clear at the top of their qualification group for Euro 2009, and Umbro endorsees are well represented in the squad. Joe Hart, Nedum Onuoha, Andrew Taylor, Fabrice Muamba, Billy Jones, Andrew Surman and Michael Mancienne have all figured highly in the management thinking.

Umbro endorses big stars like John Terry and Michael Owen, but is always looking into the next generation and its partnership with The Scouting Network is aimed at helping to identify up and coming youngsters who will take the brand forward in the years ahead.



## CHELSEA - GRANT vs MOURINHO

Many Chelsea fans feared the worst when 'The Special One' departed – but Opta's statistics show that Avram Grant has been pretty special himself. Comparing his first six games to Jose Mourinho's last six reveals that the Blues have not only scored more – the 6-0 win over Manchester City boosted that – but have been more solid defensively.

The key improvement has been the conversion as the team have finished off twice as many chances, despite having fewer shots overall.

The Blues also appear to have been more adventurous. They have got the ball forward more often and used the longer ball with more regularity.

While their passing accuracy in their own half is slightly lower, Chelsea have been more accurate in opposition territory and in the final third. It's a good example of how detailed analysis from Opta, a partner of The Scouting Network, can help provide key tactical information.

Jose Mourinho	Chelsea	Avram Grant
6	Games Plaed	6
	Goals / Attempts	
7	Goals	11
1.17	Ave Goals Per Game	1.83
14.2	Shots (excl blocked shots)	11.1
33%	% Shots on Target	46%
8%	% Goals to Shots	16.5%
	Passing	
86%	% Short Passes	89%
14%	% Long Passes	11%
81%	Overall Pass Completion %	83%
94%	Pass completion own half	92%
71%	Pass completion opp half	73%
62%	Pass completion final third	64%
	Crossing	
26%	Cross completion %	16%
	Defending	
6	Goals Conceded	2
1.00	Ave goals conceded per game	0.33
72%	Tackles won %	80.5%
	Discipline	
15.8	Fouls	11.1
15	Yellow Cards	7
0	Red Cards	3

For more information on Opta contact Mark MacCombie via e-mail on [mm@optasportsdata.com](mailto:mm@optasportsdata.com) or by phone on 0207 902 0612

# EVERY MONTH THE SCOUTING NETWORK NEWSLETTER WILL FOCUS ON ONE OF OUR CLIENT CLUBS

## This month – Morecambe FC



It's probably just as well for Sammy McIlroy that he's been through the thrill – and then the mill – of promotion to the Football League before. It was ten years ago that he took Macclesfield into the elite, so when his Morecambe team were the surprise winners of last season's Conference play-off final he knew exactly the whirlwind that was coming. The celebrations lasted a few days, the hard work hasn't stopped since.

"You have to improve everything," says the 53-year-old former Manchester United star. "Obviously you talk to the players about what going up a level means, and you have to see if they are good enough. I'd watched a lot of League Two football last season and I thought we were capable of competing, but the higher you go the more you get punished for mistakes and that has happened to us. I told the players from the start that they would have to respond to those challenges, and so far they've more or less done that.

"But the way the players have to step up a level on the pitch is only a reflection of what the whole club has to go through, you have to improve everything. We've looked at the facilities, the stadium, the safety, the security, everything like that. Then on the football side we've tried to drive forward our training facilities, give the groundsman more resources for the pitch, and work at our youth system to get a better academy up and running. Everybody has to lift their standards."

Morecambe's standards haven't stopped improving since McIlroy took charge nearly two years ago, first as caretaker when Jim Harvey was unwell and then as permanent boss. There are plans now for a new 8,000 capacity stadium in the seaside town and the club is slowly putting itself on the football map. It's a labour of love for a man who has tasted the top of the game, both as a player in nearly 350 games for United and an international manager with Northern Ireland.

He says: "What happened when I was at Macclesfield was a fantastic experience, going all the way from the Conference into the old Second Division. We found ourselves alongside clubs like Fulham, Gillingham and Manchester City and even when we got relegated I'd still say it was a great experience.

"This is a bit different because we really are making something from nothing. When I took over I could never have dreamed we would get into the League so quickly, but having got there we have to set ourselves out to grab the opportunity and stay. It amuses me when I hear managers sometimes talking about a three or four year plan. Managers don't get that time, unfortunately, you have to make the most of everything that is happening right now, that's why I make no bones that my aim for this season was only to stay in the League, consolidate and then look to move on.



"That's why it is so important to make sure the facilities and everything off the field keeps up with what's happened on it. When I took over we were training on the beach twice a week. We were there, we were at the local college, and we also used a bit of spare land behind the stadium that's used as a car park now. Now we've organised fantastic facilities at Preston Sports Arena, and we've also got a school in Morecambe with a plastic pitch, that is ideal when the weather is hostile. It's all about taking excuses away from the players, if we can get planning permission for the new stadium, the plan for that will include high quality training pitches on the site and that will move us forward again."

Morecambe have done well in their first season of League football, establishing themselves in the middle of the table after the first couple of months and McIlroy is proud of how players he has brought through are making an impact.

"We've got some match winners on their day. People like Garry Thompson, Carl Baker and Damien Allen have attracted a lot of attention and rightly so, but the one thing we have got beyond all else is spirit. There are no superstars, no people who think they are better than the rest. That takes you a long way."

## CONTACT US

The Scouting Network  
Bordesley Hall  
The Holloway  
Alvechurch  
Birmingham B48 7QA Tel: 01527 585870 Fax: 01527 61009

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