



**THE  
SCOUTING  
NETWORK**

**NEWSLETTER  
FEBRUARY 2008**

**THE SCOUTING NETWORK**

Worldwide Football Scouting & Consultancy Services

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

## THE SCOUTING NETWORK FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER

We hope you find this month's 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 Middlesbrough 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.

### STATISTICS

It's an old saying: There are lies, damned lies, and statistics. And at times you can't help feel that you can make numbers show anything you want. When the Association of Football Statisticians recently brought out a book celebrating the 100 best footballers ever to play the game, it drove home the point. Fine, nobody would quarrel too much at making Pele number one. But George Best never got on the list at all. And Iran's Ali Daei finished five places higher than Dennis Bergkamp.

There's no doubt that crunching the numbers does have its place in sport. In America, Billy Beane has become a celebrity for the way he's taken the Oakland A's from being a minor baseball side to major challengers against the giants of the sport. He did it by spending hours amassing detailed statistics on players and recruiting those whose performances were way beyond their reputations. And before Christmas when he came to England to speak at the 'Future of Football' conference he got an attentive audience.

Sir Alex Ferguson, Sam Allardyce, Martin O'Neill and Alan Curbishley were among the top names who sat listening closely to Beane's thesis that the same principles which had helped him change the approach to finding players in Baseball could work just as well in 'Soccer'. Beane's ideas are about to be put to the test for real in America, because he is overseeing the development of San Jose Earthquakes, who will rejoin Major League Soccer this year. But there are those – including, it has to be said, Beane himself – who remain unsure whether a pure statistical approach can work in a game as fluid as football. He admits: "European football is a challenge when it comes to measurement because you have players from all over the world, where you can't collect data. It is a fluid sport that doesn't stop and start. But that said there are numbers that matter."



And that's a point which has not been lost on The Scouting Network's managing director Derek Bragg, who has built a model which is designed to get the best of both worlds. Within TSN's extensive database of players from all over the world there are detailed statistics from our partners OPTA, which provide a dispassionate overview of how an individual player's performance compares against statistical averages for the League he plays in. But significantly there are also extracts from scouting reports on each player, words to paint a picture of a performance that taps into the intuitive opinion of football people who understand the broader contribution a player can make to a game.

Bragg says: "I read Billy Beane's book 'Moneyball' some time ago, and I have to say found it quite fascinating. It followed Oakland's progress in the 2002 season when they were second only to the Yankees in number of wins, and it went into detail on the recruitment process and how Beane found good players who were underrated by the rest of the market. It struck me at the time that the principles he used in Baseball could apply to football in exactly the same way.



**opta**  
sportsdata



“Our aim when we’ve been building the database that sits behind TSN’s business has been to provide a reference point where clubs can do due diligence on players they are looking at signing. Our statistics are independently compiled and reliable, and the snapshots taken from scouting reports are just as dispassionate. For instance, a club asked for statistically the 10 most attacking left backs in Europe, when sitting down with a group of our scouts, we came up with 9 or the 10 based on our scouting reports. If four of the five different scouts who have reported on a player mention he lacks pace then it’s a fair bet that he does indeed lack pace. It gives our clubs a thorough picture of a player before they spend time and money on scouting the player themselves.”

They say you can prove anything with statistics, but The Scouting Network clients are rapidly discovering that where finding good players is concerned, actually you can’t prove anything without them.



## TSN CONTINUES ITS SUPPORT TO YOUTH FOOTBALL

As part of our effort to support the game at all levels, TSN has joined forces with League Football Education (LFE), an organisation set up by The Professional Footballers Association (PFA) and The Football League to manage the educational and welfare needs of Apprentices throughout England and Wales. TSN will provide scouting reports of all the players who attend the Assessment Trials in May this year, plus help in trying to place released Apprentices in to other Clubs. Together with a number of other joint projects, TSN is pleased to be associated with such a major voice in youth football.

## TSN TEAM

Derek Bragg - Managing Director  
 Tim Henderson - Head of Club Liaison  
 Graham Allner - Support Centre Manager  
 Paddy Connolly - Database Manager  
 Kevin Russell - UK Scouting Co-Ordinator  
 Paul Bilecki - Head of Youth Identification  
 John Connolly - Head of Club Liaison (Scotland)  
 Shawn Bishop/Gary McNab - Head of Club Liaison (South Africa)  
 Samantha Rich - Administration Support



## SHORT PLAYER VIDEO CLIPS NOW AVAILABLE IN DATABASE

Following the successful response by clubs to our 48 hour service for 90 minute DVD’s, we have now begun to add short 3, 5 and 10 minute video clips of selected European players in to our own database for existing clients. By the summer, it is proposed that TSN will have a good proportion of these clips on most players within the database.

For more information on how to purchase these 90 minute DVD’s, please contact supportcentre@thescouting-network.co.uk



## TSN SUPPORT TO MLS SUPERDRAFT 2008

At last months MLS SuperDraft in Baltimore, USA, TSN launched its US College Soccer database to the MLS and USL, giving the franchises and clubs access to our independent scouting assessments throughout the season, rather than a snapshot at the combine, two weeks before the draft. Strategically positioning scouts in key cities throughout the USA to monitor the best college players, we have now presented users with a unique flow of assessments and statistics.



## HOME MADE GOALS

Following England's disastrous Euro 2008 qualifying campaign, many people pointed their finger at the team's lack of firepower up front. Maybe on paper there are more than a few attacking players who should be good enough to deliver at national level, but the reality is the Premier League is lacking English goals.

Comparing the five main European leagues, English goals are only one third of the total while in Italy they are almost 60%. In Serie A all of Sampdoria's strikes have been netted by Italian players (plus one own goal) as have the strikes of Cagliari and Empoli. Only the famous Athletic Bilbao can boast the same record of 100% domestic goals in the other national championships below.

The Premier League's top English scorer at the moment is Reading's hit man Dave Kitson, but guess what, he has never been called up!

OPTA, a partner of The Scouting Network, provide detailed statistics on all aspects of football that can help highlight tactical trends or player potential.

Country	% dom.goals	Most domestic goals	Top domestic scorer
France	51 %	Lyon, 25	Benzema (13) Lyon
Germany	36 %	Hannover, 17	Klose (9) Bayern
Italy	59 %	Sampdoria, 24	Borriello (11) Genoa
Spain	48 %	Espanyol, Valladolid, 28	Guiza (11) Mallorca
England	33 %	Aston Villa	Kitson (8) Reading

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

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For further information contact: Jennie Mould at Make-a-Wish on 01527 64406



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

### This month – Our Partners UMBRO



It will be a bitter-sweet summer. For the first time since 1994 a major tournament will come and go without England being involved, however, much of the football community will take a professional interest in what happens in Austria and Switzerland during June, it simply won't be the same without that bit of raw emotion that your own country's games always generate.

The knock-on effect throughout the game will be considerable, and nowhere more than at sports-wear giant Umbro, where the peak summer sales that an England campaign generates will be hit, but just as the FA have responded to the disappointment by planning for the future, so have the company who have been making the country's kit since before 1984. This month a new away kit will be launched just before Fabio Capello takes his first game in charge.

Simon Marsh, their International Director of Football, explains: "Nobody will hide the fact that England's failure to qualify for Euro 2008 is a blow to our business, but we think it also will underline the fact that we are here for the long haul. Just like Fabio Cappello we are already working on plans for the World Cup qualifying campaign for 2010 and are excited about the prospects. As a company which focuses purely on the sport of football we have an understanding of the game and therefore we've been around long enough to know that things occasionally don't go to plan and you just have to get on with it."

That long-term vision is well illustrated in Umbro's partnership with The Scouting Network. They have used TSN since last year for a long term project to work in Academy football to identify the potential stars of tomorrow, with the aim to develop brand loyalty among emerging players that will stand the test of time if they make it on to the big stages of the Premier League and England.

Marsh explains: "It has always been a key strategy of our marketing to work with significant individuals in the game. The pinnacle of that is the England national team, and as a brand we think it is of prime importance that we have one or a number of leading figures within that team who can be identified with the Umbro brand.

"We've been very fortunate over the years to have such a strong relationship with Alan Shearer, Michael Owen and John Terry. We want to continue that into the future. It's important for the stature of the brand to be involved with a number of England's leading players. We also benefit because they provide tremendous feedback to our technical team and play an important part in the development of new products.

"The competition to sign the biggest stars to endorse and work with, a brand is probably fiercer now than it has ever been, and that's why we have enlisted the help of TSN to help identify the potential stars of the future. I'm don't profess to be a judge of 13 or 14-year-old footballer so we wanted to build a network of people whose opinions we could independently trust and The Scouting Network play an important part in that process."



The company will at least have Sweden at Euro 2008 to fly the Umbro flag, but regardless of events on the field this will be a big summer for them when the planned takeover by American giants Nike Inc is completed. The Umbro brand will still keep its focus purely on football, but will have the backing of a billion dollar corporation.

Marsh says: "We're really excited because it should help us develop much further. Nike took the Converse brand and quadrupled their business without damaging their own performance, and we believe the same sort of effect is possible in the football market place. We're hoping that the sheer power of their machine will help us grow and grow quickly."

### CONTACT US

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