



Boro turn towards youth

You've got to hand it to Boro chairman Steve Gibson; he certainly knows how to bolster season-ticket sales. Last year, when sales were slow, Gibson sent Bryan Robson out with the chequebook and he secured Alen Boksic and Christian Karembeu. The result? Season-ticket sales skyrocketed.

The previous summer, the much-trumpeted purchases of Christian Ziege and Paul Ince had the same effect. After the near disaster of last term, Gibson knew that he had to pull something special out of the bag. That something special, as far as most Boro fans were concerned, was stripping the manager formerly known as Captain Marvel of his rank. In his place came Manchester United coach Steve McClaren.

The only slightly worrying aspect is Boro have again appointed a person with no managerial experience. Indeed, of the 11 managers that have been through the revolving door since 1966, (including McClaren, but not Terry Venables — Robson remained "manager" during the

HOW THEY FINISHED	
Premiership:	Fourteenth
FA Cup:	Fourth round
Worthington Cup:	Third round
PREDICTIONS	
Premiership:	Twelfth
FA Cup:	Fourth round
Worthington Cup:	Winners

former's short stay) only four had a managerial history of any kind, and of them, only Malcolm Allison and Lennie Lawrence had managed, albeit unspectacularly, in the top division.

McClaren's swoop for England Under-21 players Jonathan Greening and Mark Wilson from Manchester United indicates a different approach to the transfer market to Robson, who tended to sign players who were the

finished article, or simply finished. That said, McClaren wasted no time in signing 30-year-old Gareth Southgate, who will renew the successful partnership he enjoyed with Ugo Ehiogu at Aston Villa.

However, being a seasoned coach, McClaren will probably be more interested in acquiring younger players with potential so he can develop them. This approach takes time to bear fruit and, although McClaren has a chairman with the patience of Job, he has to balance that against the fact that supporters are paying for ... well, mediocrity would be a start.

Winning a trophy seems a distant hope, although the Worthington Cup is a possibility and would be welcomed by the few hundred fans who saw the last Boro victory in Wales — a 1985 league game at Newport County.

With McClaren in the driving seat, Boro have a better chance this year of steering clear of the pits.

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Gareth Southgate (left) is among the signings made by new Boro manager Steve McClaren



NORTH NEWS & PICTURES

THE BOSS: Steve McClaren

Steve McClaren takes over a club with an ambitious chairman who is prepared to put his money where his mouth is and then let the manager get on with the job

(an odd combination, don't you think?). The fans were telling him to let Robson go two years ago, and Gibson staying loyal nearly cost the club its Premiership

status. McClaren will be given every opportunity to succeed. If he fails, though, he does not have a famous name as Robson does to help him back on the managerial ladder.

Pressure rating: 10/10

THE TEAM HE SHOULD PICK

Schwarzer			
Cooper	Ehlogu	Southgate	Gordon
Greening	Okon	Ince	Windass
Boksic	Job		