

The worst signings in Premier League history by Stuart Fuller

What do Premier League Managers really know about football? The reserve teams of the top flight clubs often reads like a graveyard of what might have been for some players who arrived with big reputations and even bigger price tags. In the history of the league there have been some truly spectacular flops signed by managers – notice the plural there because it isn't always Harry Redknapp. So here are my top 10 of the worst signings ever made in the Premier League's history.

No.10 - Steve Marlet

In 2001, when Al-Fayed's millions were shooting Fulham up the table under the dream team of Kevin Keegan and Ray Wilkins, a new French striker arrived in London. When Keegan left, Jean Tigana wasted no time in bringing in Lyon striker Steve Marlet for an eye-watering £14m. Tigana had at one point been Marlet's agent. He was so bad that he wasn't just loaned out then given a free transfer four years later, but Al-Fayed started legal action against Tigana based on the signing.

No.9 - Marco Boogers

Rule number 1 in signing a player – watch him with your own eyes. Unless you are Harry Redknapp of course who relied on some grainy video footage of Sparta Rotterdam's Marco Boogers back in 1995 and promptly paid the Dutch club £2m. In his second appearance for the Hammers, away to Manchester United he was sent off for a reckless challenge which in the process he hurt his knee that later required surgery. Redknapp, bought Iain Dowie as a replacement and two years later Boogers contract was cancelled after making just four appearances. He went on to average over a goal every other game in Holland.

No.8 - Tomas Brodin

Between 1992 and 1995 Tomas Brodin won four major trophies at Parma including the European Cup Winners Cup and the UEFA Cup. He was instrumental in Sweden's success at the 1992 European Championships and their run to the 1994 World Cup semi-finals. So expectations were high when the Swede arrived in Leeds in November 1995 for around £6m. Alas, Brodin seemed to like life too much in Yorkshire, piling on the pounds, becoming a laughing stock among Leeds fans. He made only 20 appearances in his two years at Elland Road, scoring four times although two of those were against a West Ham so they don't really count. After a couple of loan moves and the fact he had done all the restaurants in Leeds he moved to Crystal Palace where he played 13 more times before retiring from football aged 28, although he did make one final appearance for a Swedish 3rd tier team in 1998 as a goalkeeper.

No.7 - Afonso Alves

There were a lot of jealous Premier League fans when one of Europe's top scorers in 2006/07 Afonso Alves made the move from Dutch side Heerenveen to Teeside in January 2008. The Brazilian had scored 45 goals the previous season and it was no surprise he was a major target for clubs. The surprise was that he chose Middlesbrough, although they did stump up nearly £15 million for the striker. He scored six goals in the second half of the season, but then struggled, hitting the net just four more times in over thirty games as Boro were relegated from the Premier League. As part of their necessary cost-cutting measures Alves was sold to Al Sadd in Qatar for around £7.5m in 2009. Since then he has played just 65 games for various sides in the Middle East.

No.6 – Mário Jardel

Not one of the big money signings but certainly one that came with a massive goal scoring reputation. The Brazilian had scored for fun in his career in Brazil (93 goals in 123 games), Portugal (183 goals in 184 games for Porto and Sporting Lisbon) and Turkey (22 goals in 24 games for

Galatasaray) before Sam Allardyce took the plunge and bought him for Bolton Wanderers in 2003 for around £1m. Big things were expected on the pitch, but it was off the pitch and his ever growing waistband that was the talk of the stands. After seven Premier League games he was loaned out to Ancona where the fans nicknamed him "lardel" (no need for a translation of that). He went on to play for a further 12 clubs before retiring in 2011 with an impressive 345 goals in 443 games.

No.5 – Xisco

To be fair there are probably a dozen players that could have been featured from Newcastle United in this top ten, so choosing just one was disrespecting the extraordinary flops such as Marcelino. Francisco Jiménez Tejada was signed by Sam Allardyce in 2008 for a cool £5.75m from Deportivo La Coruna. He actually scored on his debut against Hull City but soon dropped down the pecking order of strikers as Allardyce lost the plot. After being considered the 7th best striker at the club, and having played only nine games he was loaned to Racing Santander and then back to Deportivo. He kept returning to the North East until his contract was eventually terminated in January 2013 by Chris Hughton. The Newcastle Evening Chronicle rate him up there with the worst ever strikers to pull on the famous shirt, and they have had a few.

No.4 - Bosko Balaban

A goal in every three games playing in the top level of Croatian football plus goals on the international stage were enough for Aston Villa to splash out nearly £6m on Balaban back in 2001. His eight appearances for the Villians were spread over three seasons, and in most cases he failed to complete the ninety minutes. He didn't come close to scoring, a basic necessity for a striker, especially one who cost so much money. Villa cut their losses in December 2003 and released him from the West Midlands and he joined Club Brugge, where, of course, he averaged nearly a goal every other game

No.3 – Savio

Possibly the most head-scratching transfer in the history of the Premier League. Savio Nsereko was a twenty year old lightweight forward when West Ham paid a rumoured £9m to Brescia for his services in 2009. You probably need to ask the question did anyone ever see him play before he moved to London because few fans saw him once he was here. A total of nine substitute appearances and he was gone, sold to Fiorentina for around £2m plus a player coming the other way. He never started a game for the Viola before he was loaned out to six further sides. In his nine year professional career Savio has played in a total of 80 games and scored only four times. Someone, somewhere must know what the real story was here.

No.2 - Bebé

It is rumoured that Harry Redknapp and Sir Alex Ferguson are good friends. That may be why the Scotsman, who has a reputation for uncovering hidden gems may have listened too much to Harry and bought a player without ever seeing him play. Back in 2010 he shelled out £8m for Tiago Manuel Dias Correia, or Bebé who hadn't actually played a competitive game for Vitória de Guimarães in Portugal. They had bought him five weeks previously from Estrela da Amadora, where he had walked out over a breach of contract. In the next four years the player started a couple of cup games and one Premier League game before being hawked out on loan in 2011 to Besiktas. After further loan periods back in Portugal he was released and joined Benfica. Even by Manchester United's standards, this was a spectacular own goal.

No.1 - Winston Bogarde

There wasn't any doubt who would be number one on this list and in all fairness we should give Mr Bogarde a standing ovation for his £50,000 plus weekly wage over his four year contract meaning

that he pocketed around £10m for just four appearances in the final three and a half years of his time at Stamford Bridge after being deemed surplus to requirements by Claudio Ranieri. His track record before joining the Blues in 2000 was stellar, having played for Ajax, AC Milan and Barcelona, so there was no reason why his arrival at Stamford Bridge wouldn't have been a success. Alas, history tells us a different story and such was the impact of spending over three years without any action he retired from football in 2004.