

## Case Study - The Bolton Wanderers

Bolton Wanderers was one of the first football clubs in Britain to embrace advanced video analysis systems as a vital tool in helping to prepare its players and coaching staff deliver the optimum performance.



That was five seasons ago when Bolton was promoted to the Premier League in the England competi-

tion, widely regarded as the best domestic football competition in the world. This year, after finishing sixth in the Premier League, the club qualified for European football for the first time in its history. Tied by financial constraints, Bolton originally used two analysis systems before choosing to go with Sportstec's range because of its flexibility and easy use.

"We can use SportsCode from first team level all the way through to our academy teams and specifically tailor it to the needs of each individual team," Dave Fallows, head of the club's Performance Analysis Department, said.

"Each coach, each team and each set of players has different areas they want to work out so it's important for us that we're not confined to one template. With SportsCode we can go off into different areas and focus on key things for each team. We can use it as a tool for analysing training and also helping the sports science department in various ways with different parts of the analysis."

"And the real time feedback we can get from it during games gives the manager the opportunity to look at things as the game's going on, at half-

time and fulltime. Although the club's got so much experience at providing that sort of information to the manager, the information the system can provide during a game and straight after in so much detail can help us answer any questions straight away." Bolton Wanderers' Performance Analysis Department has three members of staff with two working at first team level and one at academy level.

"We're the only club, certainly in this country, and probably even outside, who has three fulltime members of staff doing the performance analysis," Fallows said. "So the club's made quite a significant investment in the analysis side of things which also reflects what the manager's beliefs are and how useful and how vital a tool it is really for everything that we do."

The club boasts one of the biggest staffs in the Premier League with a massive back-up support for the players. Fallows said that again, is a reflection of manager Sam Allardyce's vision where the players are given full support in every aspect of their career so they can perform to the best level. The Performance Analysis Department is an important part of that network.

Having used Sportstec systems for a long time in comparison to many of their rivals, Fallows and his staff rate it highly and have become near-experts at realising the potential this form of technology holds for quick and accurate assessment of a diverse range of subject matter that is of ultimate benefit to the club.

"We have improved the way that we use it each year and have found different ways of working with it as our staff's got bigger on the sports science side and the coach has taken more of an interest in analysis and has seen the benefits of it," Fallows said.

The open manner of Bolton Wanderers' first team manager Sam Allardyce had been a key to greater exploration of what the SportsCode system can deliver.



"If you've got a manager who believes in the value of analysis and who allows you to do your work

and have an input where each game is prepared for and reflected on, I think you can have a really big impact which is what we look to do here," Fallows said.

"The staff all work together and communicate well so we obviously work within the manager's guidelines of what we know but it's such a great set-up at the club in the sense that we can approach the manager with information we've found from games or from training or from anywhere really and he's really willing to sit down and listen to the ideas that we have or the information that we can give him."

"We are guided by the manager but he's also very keen on giving people the freedom and creativity to do their own jobs. We've been fortunate that we've not just been following orders, we've been able to explore our own areas."

Bolton Wanderers is not considered a club of real financial power within the Premier League but has managed to get the best out of a lot of players other clubs didn't want. Its reward after seasons of hard work is the opportunity to play in Europe next season.

"We were one of the first club's to really embrace technology and since then we've seen everyone else who's tried to jump on the bandwagon and get involved but because of the support Sam gave us in the early days we believe we're quite a few years ahead of everyone else," Fallows said. "Having the expertise of the three members of staff that we've got here and the technology that we've got has allowed us to keep exploring new areas."