

= 2004 Football League Cup Final =

The 2004 Football League Cup Final (known as the Carling Cup final for sponsorship reasons) was a football match that took place on 29 February 2004 at the Millennium Stadium , Cardiff . It was the final match of the 2003 ? 04 Football League Cup , the 44th edition of the Football League Cup , a competition for the 92 teams in the Premier League and The Football League .

It was contested between Premier League sides Bolton Wanderers and Middlesbrough , both of whom had never won in their previous appearances in the final . Bolton 's run to the final included a win away to holders Liverpool in the fourth round , while requiring extra time against Southampton in the next round and losing the second leg of the semi @-@ final against Aston Villa . Middlesbrough needed extra time against lowly Brighton & Hove Albion in their first game , and later advanced on penalty shootouts against top @-@ flight Everton and Tottenham Hotspur ; they then won home and away against league leaders Arsenal in the semi @-@ finals .

Middlesbrough scored two goals in the first seven minutes , from Joseph @-@ Désiré Job and a Boudewijn Zenden penalty . Kevin Davies got a goal back in the first half after an error by Boro goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer , but Middlesbrough kept the score at 2 ? 1 for their first major trophy . In doing so , they qualified for the 2004 ? 05 UEFA Cup , their first European competition .

= = Background = =

Bolton were playing in their second League Cup Final , having lost the 1995 edition 2 ? 1 to Liverpool . Middlesbrough too had never previously won the competition : in 1997 they lost the final after extra time in a replay against Leicester City , and a year later they lost 2 ? 0 to Chelsea after extra time . In 1997 , they also lost the FA Cup final to Chelsea , and were relegated from the Premier League . Although Middlesbrough , founded in 1876 , were without a major trophy , Bolton had 4 FA Cups from 7 finals between 1894 and 1958 .

Bolton and Middlesbrough had already met once in the league season , at the former 's Reebok Stadium on 13 September 2003 . The hosts won 2 ? 0 with goals by Bruno N 'Gotty and Kevin Davies in each half for a first victory of the campaign .

= = Route to the Final = =

= = = Bolton = = =

As a Premier League team , Bolton began in the second round , hosting Walsall of the First Division at the Reebok Stadium . They won 3 ? 1 with two goals ? one a penalty kick ? by Brazilian debutant Mário Jardel . In the next round on 28 October , they again hosted a second @-@ tier team , this time Gillingham , and won 2 ? 0 with goals by Stelios Giannakopoulos and Henrik Pedersen , in front of a notably low crowd of 5 @,@ 258 .

In the fourth round , Bolton had their first trip , and their first game against top @-@ flight opposition , facing Liverpool at Anfield on 3 December . Jardel scored the first goal within five minutes , with Danny Murphy equalising with 20 minutes remaining . Youri Djorkaeff would have put Bolton back into the lead , but referee Mike Riley disallowed it for an earlier handball ; they scored minutes later from Jay @-@ Jay Okocha 's free kick . Liverpool got a second equaliser from a 25 @-@ yard Vladimír ?micer strike , but with a minute remaining Salif Diao fouled Kevin Davies in the penalty area and Djorkaeff sent the resulting spot @-@ kick past Liverpool goalkeeper Jerzy Dudek to win the game . Thirteen days later , in extra time at home to the Premier League 's Southampton , Pedersen volleyed the only goal with five minutes remaining .

On 21 January 2004 , Bolton hosted Aston Villa in the first leg of an all @-@ Premier League semi @-@ final . Okocha gave them the lead with a second @-@ minute free kick , and further strikes from Kevin Nolan and Stelios gave them a 3 ? 0 lead after 17 minutes , with Juan Pablo Ángel getting one back for the visitors soon after . Ángel got another goal in the second half , before N

'Gotty 's header and a second Okocha free kick gave Bolton a 5 ? 2 victory . Six days later in the second leg at Villa Park , Bolton lost 2 ? 0 to a Villa team who had Gavin McCann sent off in the first half , but advanced to the final 5 ? 4 on aggregate .

= = = Middlesbrough = = =

Middlesbrough , also of the Premier League , began the competition in the second round by hosting Brighton & Hove Albion at the Riverside Stadium , and defeated the Second Division team 1 ? 0 with a goal from Malcolm Christie at the start of extra time . In the next round , they travelled to Wigan Athletic of the First Division and won 2 ? 1 with Massimo Maccarone and Gaizka Mendieta 's first goals of the season , despite the hosts at the JJB Stadium scoring a late free kick through Jimmy Bullard .

They met their first top @-@ flight opposition in the fourth round , hosting Everton . After 120 goalless minutes , the match went to a penalty shootout in which Mendieta scored the winner after Middlesbrough goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer saved from Leon Osman . The quarter @-@ final at another Premier League team , Tottenham Hotspur , also went to a shootout . Darren Anderton scored for the hosts within 63 seconds , the first goal Boro conceded for over 11 hours . With four minutes to play , Middlesbrough striker Michael Ricketts equalised after a cross from George Boateng . The shootout , in which Schwarzer denied Mauricio Taricco and Kasey Keller blocked from Mendieta , went to sudden death , in which Middlesbrough 's goalkeeper saved from Gus Poyet and Franck Queudrue scored Boro 's winner .

In the semi @-@ finals , Boro faced Arsenal , the leaders and eventual unbeaten champions of the Premier League season . In the first leg at Highbury on 20 January 2004 , Queudrue exploited a mistake by Arsenal defender Martin Keown and passed to Mendieta , who then assisted Juninho for the only goal of the game . On 3 February , Boro hosted Arsenal in the second leg ; Keown was sent off at the end of the first half for a professional foul on Maccarone . In the second half , Boudewijn Zenden put Middlesbrough ahead and Edu equalised . With five minutes remaining , Arsenal 's José Antonio Reyes scored an own goal by deflecting Stuart Parnaby 's shot , making Middlesbrough advance to the final 3 ? 1 on aggregate .

= = Match = =

= = = Pre @-@ match = = =

Bolton manager Sam Allardyce , who was building a reputation for signing unwanted foreign veterans such as N 'Gotty , Djorkaeff and Iván Campo , predicted that a win would help him sign more players in the summer . However , he thought that success would also lead his 13 players who would be out of contract , to demand more money for a renewal .

On @-@ loan Middlesbrough right @-@ back Danny Mills , a self @-@ acknowledged " hate figure " from opposition fans due to his physical style of play , declared that he would ignore any abuse from Bolton fans .

= = = Summary = = =

Middlesbrough manager Steve McClaren had not even sat down when his team took the lead . Mendieta 's pass let Zenden run down the left wing and cross for striker Joseph @-@ Désiré Job to put Middlesbrough ahead in the second minute . It was the fastest goal scored in a final , a record broken the following year by Liverpool 's John Arne Riise .

After Job 's early goal , Bolton went on the attack , with Djorkaeff forcing Schwarzer to make a near @-@ post save . In the seventh minute however , Middlesbrough won a penalty when Job was tripped in the Bolton box by Emerson Thome , under " minimal contact " . Zenden stepped up to take the spot kick and beat Bolton goalkeeper Jussi Jääskeläinen , despite slipping and the goalkeeper 's

foot touching the ball . Later , Thome nearly scored an own goal from Juninho 's cross .

Davies scored for Bolton on 21 minutes when an error by Middlesbrough goalkeeper Schwarzer allowed his shot to go inside his near post . Bolton continued to attack , and Schwarzer made a double save from winger Per Frandsen and Djorkaeff . The latter had two more chances soon after , missing the target with the first . Boro pleaded for a second penalty when Nicky Hunt pulled Job , but referee Riley did not give it .

The second half had fewer incidents . Schwarzer saved a header from Nolan , while Juninho had two opportunities for Middlesbrough . In the final few minutes , Thome made a crucial block against Mendieta , and at the other side of the pitch Ugo Ehiogu did the same to thwart Stelios .

= = = Match details = = =

= = Post @-@ match = =

Winning manager McClaren called the victory a " great reward " for Middlesbrough 's players , managers and chairman Steve Gibson . Captain Gareth Southgate also dedicated the win to the fans and Gibson , calling the chairman " the biggest fan we 've got " . Gibson himself called the win " 128 years in the making " and predicted the team would " kick on " from it .

McClaren praised his goalkeeper Schwarzer for recovering from his error that allowed Bolton 's goal , in order to make saves that won the match . He also said that the team should not become carried away by their qualification for Europe , and instead concentrate on the upcoming game against Birmingham City .

By winning the final , Middlesbrough qualified for the following season 's UEFA Cup , their first European competition . They beat Baník Ostrava in the first round and came first in their group featuring Villarreal , Partizan , Lazio and Egaleo . They then defeated Grazer AK in the third round before being eliminated by Sporting .

Columnist Henry Winter The Daily Telegraph wrote that it was the best League Cup Final since Luton Town beat Arsenal in 1988 . He praised all four of Middlesbrough 's back line for their " alert defending " , and noted the hard work in midfield by Boateng that allowed Zenden , Juninho and Mendieta to create chances . He also lauded Bolton 's fans and the efforts of Okocha , Djorkaeff and Davies , while noting how Bolton 's Campo was effective despite " the odd pantomime dive " . Alan Smith of the same newspaper opined that 33 @-@ year @-@ old Southgate was the most deserving winner , as reward for his consistency since arriving in an " average " Boro side in 2001 . Southgate 's only other medal had come in the same competition for Aston Villa eight years prior .

In June 2013 , Juninho said that winning the League Cup with Middlesbrough was better than when he won the FIFA World Cup with Brazil in 2002 .