

41. Alex

Club: Paris Saint Germain

Date of Birth: 17th June 1982

Position: Defender



For a certain Brazilian as 2011 drew to a close, it looked like it was all over. His dream, what he had been doing since he was a small child, it seemed as if his time was up. 2011 had been, undoubtedly, the worst year of his long career, and many thought it would be the last. As Alex looked onto the horizon from his London residence, he must have wondered if it was the end. And so it may have been, if it wasn't for a French club who gave him another chance.

Alex's career at Chelsea was going very well until late 2010. He was a first team regular at Stamford Bridge, and it looked like he may have even gone through to finish his career at the club, such was his success. That all changed, though, in the harshest of ways. Late in 2010, it became clear that Alex needed an operation on his knee. He lost his place in the first team, and never got it back. In the whole of the next calendar year, Alex made just 5 starts, either dropped or injured for almost all of the games. Alex was already getting on in football terms, being 29 years old, and many wondered whether it was the end of his career at the top level of world football. Clearly, a certain Parisian club thought differently.

At the beginning of 2012, Alex was given another chance. He must have thought it a late Christmas present. PSG, the same club who would sign players like Ibrahimovic and Thiago Silva, players at the top of their game, were interested. Alex would have been willing to eat you whole, never mind bite your hand off, if you offered that to him in his days on the side-lines for the Blues, and he took his chance without even a second thought.

Even so, few predicted what was to come in the next two years. Alex looked a man transformed from his days at Chelsea, and that hunger for keeping out the opposition and seeing out games returned with a new determination and drive. Alex soon became a first team regular at PSG, forming a brilliant partnership with Thiago Silva, and keeping out one of PSG's most highly rated youth products Mamadou Sakho from the team, so much so that it triggered Sakho's move to Liverpool last summer. The Silva-Alex partnership worked so well because it combined experience, strength and aerial prowess with speed, agility and craft. The players complemented each other perfectly, and Alex's career was rekindled once more.

This partnership with fellow Brazilian Thiago Silva is perhaps one of the main reasons why Alex has been succeeding in 2013. Alex has never been the quickest, especially as he has aged, but having someone as fast and agile as Silva at the back has helped take a huge weight of Alex's shoulders. This means Alex, over the past year, has been able to display the real strengths in his game. He is strong, tall and brilliant in the air. Alex is often handed the job of picking up the tall, target-man type striker that PSG come across, while Silva will deal with the small, tricky type that Alex would otherwise have trouble with. At Chelsea, Alex's main partner was John Terry, a player who is wonderful in the air, just like Alex, but has never been the fastest player either.

2013 must surely rank a one of the best years in Alex's career. He may have had better purely based on statistics, but if we look at where he came from, just a year or two earlier, it is astonishing what he has achieved at PSG. In his short stay at the club, he has already racked up 55 Ligue 1 appearances, scoring 4 and assisting 2, on the way to helping PSG win the Ligue 1 crown they so desperately wanted. Even at the age of 31, Alex still looks and feels like he can keep going and extend his career for another few years at least. His current deal runs out next summer and we shall see if he can convince the PSG board to extend his stay. His being in the side may be hindering the chances for other younger defenders in the first team but Les Parisiens look set to have as successful a season as any across all competitions, so why change a winning formula?

If we could take a peek at one of Alex's dreams midway through 2011, it would probably resemble what has happened to him in the past 2 years, at least in terms of football. He has, with the help of PSG, prolonged his career and at the highest level of European football too.

'I want to stay at PSG. I have lots of friends here and I want to continue playing here.'

Alex

6th July 2013

DID YOU KNOW? Alex is adjudged to have made a series of homophobic comments in 2013 including: *'It is Adam and Eve not Adam and Adam for a reason.'* On a Brazilian TV programme called 'Jesus Football Club'.