

15. Ezequiel Lavezzi

Club: Paris Saint Germain

Date of Birth: 3rd May 1985

Position: Attacker

It was the second game of the 2012/13 season, the second game of Ezequiel Lavezzi's PSG career. His side were up against a resolute Ajaccio defence, and frustration was beginning to build. Lavezzi picked up possession, initially beating two men, before taking a heavy touch. He lost control of the ball and, in an attempt to win it back jumped into a two-footed tackle. Red card. Lavezzi was sent off in only his second game for the club, the wickedest possible start. It instigated a run of 9 league games in which Lavezzi did not play. When he returned, he knew he had to deliver. And deliver he did.

Lavezzi played all of the remaining 27 games in the league on the way to helping PSG win their historic Ligue 1 trophy. He played primarily on the left wing, but also had small spells as a right-winger or second striker, and his versatility was crucial in balancing PSG's star-studded attacking line-up. Lavezzi's tally of 11 goals in all competitions in the 2012/13 season was only topped by the prolific Zlatan Ibrahimovic, so it is clear that Lavezzi was a crucial contributor to PSG's attacking force.

Arguably Lavezzi's biggest success last season was in the Champions League, in which he was one of the club's most unfailing performers. Lavezzi managed a very impressive 5 goals in the competition, including a goal in each of the legs during the club's last 16 duel with Valencia. After PSG's eventual victory over two legs against Valencia, Ezequiel Lavezzi was the highest goal scorer in that competition for Les Parisiens at that time (5), even outscoring the prodigious Zlatan Ibrahimovic (3). Although Lavezzi was in noble form in the league too, Europe is where he excelled the most.

This season, under Blanc's management, Lavezzi is having less success, because he has been used largely as a substitute by the French manager. In fact, including every competition in which PSG have played, Lavezzi is yet to play a full 90 minutes for the club, and we are already halfway through the season. His two Ligue 1 goals, though, have come at a goal every 382 minutes, almost twice as good as last season's (698 mins per goal). Although Lavezzi has been deprived playing time, it appears his goal scoring form has not suffered as much as one might expect for a man receiving such disjointed game time.



Rumours began to fly over the Argentinian attacker's future, with many linking Lavezzi to a move back to Italy, but Blanc's was quick to quell the rapidly escalating speculation, stating in December that 'Lavezzi has not talked to me (regarding a transfer).'

So, why is Lavezzi such a difficult player for defenders to deal with? Lavezzi has the two attributes that are the most useful for a wide player in abundance: pace and dribbling. First of all, Lavezzi is an extremely quick player, and if he passes a defender there is very little chance that he will be caught. Secondly, his brilliant dribbling means that the ball sticks to his feet when he dribbles, which makes Lavezzi both brilliant to watch and very difficult to play against. The combination of his dribbling and his surprising strength means that Lavezzi very much resembles fellow Argentine Lionel Messi when on the ball. Aside from these two key attributes, Lavezzi also demonstrates precise passing, which allows him to either split the opponents' defence with a through ball or deliver an accurate cross from out wide. With all of these strengths in his game, it is not hard to see why Lavezzi has been a success at Ligue 1 level.

The player also brings the fun factor to France's capital club and is the self-proclaimed prankster of the squad. Whether he is ruffling the hair of the President of the LFP Frédéric Thiriez during PSG's 2013 title celebrations, tripping over a camera man by lying by the unwitting media worker's feet or feeling up Blaise Matuidi's behind, Lavezzi is always making his colleagues laugh and what is probably most assuring for the PSG board about these harmless antics is that it suggests that Lavezzi himself feels at home and in a state of contentment in Paris.

Overall, 2013 has been a very successful year for PSG's enigmatic Argentinian. Although, in the later stages of the calendar year, Lavezzi was given less playing time than in the previous season, his quality is still there for all to see and, whether it is with PSG or elsewhere, judging by his last year in the French capital, 2014 looks set to be just as impressive for Ezequiel Lavezzi.

'I have always been a bit of a rebel.'

Ezequiel Lavezzi

1st February 2013

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