

78. Kossi Agassa

Club: Stade de Reims

Date of Birth: 2nd July 1978

Position: Goalkeeper



A crucial part of one of the most surprising French teams of 2013, Kossi Agassa has been a mainstay in the Stade de Reims goal helping the side sit in eighth over the winter break.

Nicknamed "Magic Hands" in his native Togo, Agassa has made over 100 appearances for the Champagne region club since joining from Spanish side Hercules CF in 2008.

In the second half of the 2012/13 season, Reims began producing results after having a very poor mid-section of the campaign by failing to win for 15 games. That run included wins against Lyon and Paris-St Germain and every single victory was complimented by a clean sheet, showing the importance of the then-newly-promoted side's goalkeeper to their success.

Strong defensive characters like Anthony Weber, Franck Signorino and Mickaël Tacalfred were vital in keeping Reims in Ligue 1 in 2013, with Reims finishing with the second worst goals tally with 33, one more than the side that eventually finished dead last: Troyes. In the final 18 games of the 2012/2013 season, Agassa conceded just 16 goals which really helped SDR stay in games and pick up crucial points, especially with their cursed scoring issues limiting them upfront.

Agassa's individual input is highlighted by the fact the side conceded six times in four games which the Togolese international missed, picking up four points, which was boosted by a win against a struggling Nancy. It showed just how much they needed him to keep other sides out as they failed to keep teams out without him.

At the close of 2013, Reims have gone from strength to strength in their climb up the table, buoyed by the fact they have only lost four of their 19 games so far. Agassa conceded 21 in 18 games, which is a good return for a mid-table side. With a +2 goal difference, Reims are proving that after a lot of work over the summer, they are being more efficient in exploiting their goalscoring opportunities.

That is not to say that Kossi Agassa has not been a busy. In the first half of the 2013/2014 campaign he has made 33 saves and 41 blocks with an average of just over 4 interceptions a game showing how actively involved he is in the club's success.

Much like a fine wine, it seems like Agassa has improved with age and is now one of the central figures at the Stade Auguste Delaune. In the calendar year, the stopper had 14 clean sheets in his 37 appearances for the club. Statistics do not lie, and such an impressive figure suggests that we are talking about one of the most underrated goalkeepers in European football. Agassa is a calm and collected man with several seasons of experience with Reims. A perhaps underrated quality, considering the squad has undergone major changes in the last 3 years. At 35 and having been to a World Cup with Togo, he has that added know-how at the very top level which alone commands respect.

It's visible on the field of play, too. He's regularly barking orders at his defence and with every shot that he stops, he makes sure he takes the time to tell his defenders what they did wrong. It might irritate those in front of him on occasion, but it's contributing to the robust nature of their defending as a whole and they make less mistakes because of it. That's not to say he's not talented between the sticks because he certainly provides an extra wall of protection for the Reims goal. He is an excellent shot-stopper with good athleticism, which can sometimes bail him out of a bad situation or make up for initial poor positioning.

He has some flaws, he has a tendency to punch more often than bring crosses to his chest which can cause a free-for-all in the box. He also tends to push some saves back into a dangerous area rather than palm the ball out of play or clear. At Agassa's age, mistakes like those are not acceptable.

Overall, Agassa heads into 2014 full of confidence in his side's ability to stay well clear of any relegation battle and continue to upset the apple cart in France. He knows full well that he is at the latter end of his career. Hopefully Agassa can gain more recognition before he calls it quits. He merits that much.

'If we finish 17th we have done our job.'

Kossi Agassa

On Reims' 2012/2013 season- March 2013

DID YOU KNOW? Kossi Agassa boycotted a Togo World Cup Qualifying fixture against Cameroon in March 2013 because of tactical disagreements with manager Didier Six.