

29. Salomon Kalou

Club: LOSC Lille

Date of Birth: 5th August 1985

Position: Attacker



If one could summarise Salomon Kalou's 2013 with one phrase it would be 'topsy-turvy'. He returned from the Africa Cup of Nations at the beginning of the calendar year in scintillating form, and there was a lot of promise surrounding the Ivorian going into the 2013/14 season. However, as the current campaign begins to take shape, he has not been able to reach the same heights as in the previous season, and has been criticised by many of the Lille faithful themselves. Although Kalou has, and always has had, a lot of natural talent, in recent times his ability to appear both consistent and motivating in showcasing his talent has often come into question.

Salomon Kalou's start to the calendar year saw him produce some of the best form of his career thus far. In the final 15 games of the 2012/13 Ligue 1 season, Kalou managed a significant 12 goals and 3 assists. In those 15 games, his 12 goals were the most scored by anyone in Ligue 1, more than even the mercurial Zlatan Ibrahimovic. There is no question that Kalou was the main reason behind Lille's success in the first half of the calendar year of 2013 and they were unfortunate to miss out on continental qualification in May 2013, although their abhorrent first half of the 2012/2013 campaign left them ultimately with too much to do.

Kalou managed to get that number of goals in the first half of 2013 because he was finishing prolifically. When he was given a chance by his teammates, he would seem to always find a way of putting it away. In fact, the majority of his goals were not at all spectacular, but were just well taken when the chance came. His finishing inside the box was his real strength; in fact 11 of those 12 goals were scored from inside the 18 yard box, most of them being rather routine finishes from around 6 or so yards out.

However, in this strength lies one of Kalou's main weaknesses. As a striker, he relies almost solely on being able to finish chances. When things are going well and he is in good form, he takes his chances, and his scoring record appears to be brilliant. However, Kalou often finds himself in prolonged spells of goal scoring drought, where his concentration levels are not what they can be, and suddenly his finishing is nowhere near as consistent. Unfortunately for the Ivorian, this was exactly what happened at the beginning of the 2013/14 season.

If Kalou's form in the first half of the calendar year was spectacular, his form in the second half of the year was disappointing to say the least. In the opening 19 games of the Ligue 1 season, he scored just 6 goals, meaning he was ranked 18th in terms of Ligue 1's top scorers at the halfway stage of the season. Compared to his blistering form earlier in the year, this was a considerable step down for Salomon Kalou, and the Lille fans began to turn against their front man, who is well-known for being on notoriously high wages for a club of Les Dogues' financial means. But how did this spell of bad form affect a player who looked untouchable just a few months previously?

As we have mentioned previously, Kalou's game relies on his acute sense of positioning, and his ability to finish chances when they come. What has happened recently to Kalou is not to do with a lack of chances; a talented player like Kalou tends to still have a knack of getting into good positions even when they are in a bad run of form. Rather, it is down to the fact that he was just physically unable to put away most of the chances that came his way. Just as Kalou can put together a run of games in which he cannot stop scoring, as he did in the first half of 2013, he is just as capable of putting together a run of games in which he cannot start scoring, and this is what frustrates fans so much. Finishing relies heavily on confidence, and when a player does not have it, like Kalou in recent months, it is often very hard to get it back. If Kalou could improve his consistency, he could raise his game to the next level, but given the nature of his game, and the fact that it relies so strongly on confidence, consistency is something that is very hard to come by for Salomon Kalou. Something he may never come by, being a player naturally so sensitive mentally.

All in all, Kalou has had an impressive calendar year. Despite the aforementioned criticism, his impulsive and instinctive finishing, when they are apparent, make him into one of the most accomplished forwards in France's top flight. If he had been able to continue the brilliant form he had earlier on in 2013, he would be ranked much higher on this list, but even so, the Ivorian remains a force to be reckoned with, and strongly merits his place on the GFFN 100.

'In football, nobody is untouchable. But we must accept with the squads they have, we are underneath them.'

Salomon Kalou

On AS Monaco and PSG- 26th October 2013

DID YOU KNOW? Salomon Kalou tried on several occasions to obtain Dutch citizenship when at Feyenoord so that he could represent the Netherlands internationally, but was denied a fast-track by the Immigration department so he ended up representing Ivory Coast instead.