

## 4. Thiago Silva

“Overweight ladyboy”. An insult that Thiago Silva would most certainly never use to describe another person, let alone another footballer, but one that he was instead at the receiving end of from former Marseille loanee Joey Barton. There are distinct differences between a player like Silva and another like Barton. Thiago Silva shows all signs of having understood the concept of footballing responsibility, and that he is able to let his supreme talent speak out for him against the few critics he has. Barton does not have enough footballing confidence to let his performances do the talking, and, as a result, foolishly lashed out at the Brazilian whom Barton had every right to be jealous of.

Thiago Silva’s lack of a response to Barton’s onslaught in May 2013 was emblematic of his demeanour on and off the pitch. The term ‘class’ is one that is frankly overused when describing footballers, but Thiago Silva categorically embodies it.

After a €42m move to the current French champions in 2012, Thiago Silva was under extreme pressure to perform to the best of his reported abilities. If that was not enough weight on the already undisputed leader of the Brazilian national team’s shoulders, he was then made captain of Paris Saint Germain, a role that he fulfilled throughout 2013 as a calendar year. A period of adjustment was indeed necessary, but the brief length of that period before Thiago Silva appeared truly at ease with his new surroundings was testament to a skill that distinguishes the player from other household name central defenders in the football world: the ability to adapt rapidly to a different environment.

As 2013 began, Thiago Silva’s increased physicality, both in terms of towards his defensive duties but also when in Ligue 1 compared to his time at AC Milan was finely apparent. A defensive player is often best judged by using the counter-factual, and the fact that Thiago Silva picked up one single card for indiscipline in the league throughout the entire calendar year is evidence that proves the density and refinement of his tackling ability, the attribute which is most often brandished about when discussing the player’s case for the best central defender in world football.

In the art of defending, consistency is undisputedly king. Thiago Silva matches his mastery of the aforementioned skill with equal aptitude both in possession and with regards to ball distribution. This enables both Brazil and Paris Saint Germain to construct attacks from the very depths of their defensive line. With the tactic of pressing becoming increasingly prevalent in the modern game, central defenders generally have limited time to both control and distribute the ball efficiently. Thiago Silva’s athleticism and close technical control ensure that not only does he satisfy the increased demand for centre backs to harbour a more diverse footballing skillset, but also he perhaps surpasses those requirements.

At the age of 29, Thiago Silva’s game is unlikely to become more comprehensive in terms of its standing, even if his performances continue to warrant increased praise. Frankly, the way in which Thiago Silva has simply dominated opposing forwards with an obscene calmness and consummate ease in Ligue 1 over the course of this calendar year almost suggests that the true majesty of his talents are underused in a division where the player is rarely tested throughout ninety minutes. This is no disrespect to French football’s top-flight division, which is growing in both stature and quality month-on-month, but more so testament to Thiago Silva’s insanelly comprehensive skill-set. Furthermore, his role as a father figure to the other members of the PSG squad will become of increased importance, as the club looks to progress to the upper echelons of the continental football scene and ultimately, Champions League glory.

Alongside Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Thiago Silva was undoubtedly the marquee signing, with the new owners’ intention of sending a message to rest of the European footballing world regarding Paris Saint Germain’s intentions to domineer. Thiago Silva has consequently been able to use the influence that he has with President Nasser Al Khelaifi especially to surround himself with compatriots such as Marquinhos and Lucas Moura in 2013, which have certainly aided the defender to feel more at home in Paris. Arguably, without these additions, Thiago Silva would have considered, much like Ibrahimovic, to suggest that he was interested in leaving the club.

**Club:** Paris Saint Germain  
**Date of Birth:** 14th February 1987  
**Position:** Defender



Despite a brief summer flirtation with Spanish giants FC Barcelona, who made a concrete approach to prise Brazil’s captain away from France, Thiago Silva stood firmly loyal to what is his seventh club side in his career. Recognition must be given to PSG for making the appropriate steps to ensure their consistent central defender and, more crucially, their unflinching leader remain. He was handed a one-year contract extension in August 2013 until 2018, almost as a warning shot to any other potential suitors to ward off.