

21. Clement Grenier

Club: Olympique Lyonnais

Date of Birth: 15th February 1993

Position: Midfielder



It was the beginning of the 2011/12 season, and Grenier knew it had to be his breakthrough year. There were, of course, doubters. After all, Grenier was just 20 years of age at the time, and unproven at Ligue 1 level, having made just 10 career appearances in the competition. It was of course risk for a club like Lyon, one of France's top sides, to put their faith in this young, raw talent, but Grenier was determined to succeed. Two and a half years later, it appears that the gamble paid off. The young Grenier has developed into one of the most exciting French attacking midfielders, and is now almost an irreplaceable part of Lyon's attacking threat.

2013 has been yet another year of impressive development for the young French international. In statistical terms, this has been without doubt the most prolific calendar year of his career. Over the course of 2013, Grenier managed to score 9 goals and make 5 assists in the league, which is an awfully good rate for a midfielder. He has, in particular, developed his goal scoring instincts throughout 2013. Though he scored 9 league goals in 2013, he had only scored 1 previous league goal until the end of 2012. Nowadays, Grenier can be relied upon to chip in with a couple of goals as well as assists over the course of a season.

It is also true that Grenier's presence is vital for the overall result of the team, and this is especially clear if one analyses the matches in which Grenier has played less than 45 minutes. This has happened just 6 times in all competitions so far this season, but Lyon have only managed to win one of those games, a 2-1 Europa League victory against Guimaraes, losing 2 and drawing the remaining 3 matches. They also managed 6 goals, at a rate of exactly one per game, which is comfortably lower than Lyon's overall league average of about 1.5 goals every match. It is clearly evident that Grenier's presence has a positive impact on the team.

But, I hear you say, Lyon are having a poor season by their standards, aren't they? Surely Grenier can't be that impressive if he is part of an underachieving team? Well, as ever, the statistics don't lie; 10th place is no success for Lyon. However, to blame that on the attacking side of their game, the side with which Grenier is almost exclusively involved, would be completely misguided.

At the halfway stage of the Ligue 1 season, Lyon have scored 28 goals in the league. This places them an impressive third in the league if we compare the goals scored so far. The reason behind Lyon's low league position is largely because of their leaky defence. Lyon currently lie in 16th place in Ligue 1 in terms of goals conceded and this, not their attacking force, appears to be the reason behind their slump in the current season.

So, what in Grenier's game allows him to be both a goal-scorer and assist maker? First of all, standing at 6ft 1 inch tall, Grenier is tall and strong enough to be able to come out of 50-50 challenges with the ball, which is a vital skill when playing in midfield. His biggest strength is undoubtedly his passing ability, both short and long distance. Grenier is capable of playing short, sharp passes with team mates that take defenders out of the game, as well as long, cross field diagonal balls to switch play to the side of the field with most space. Grenier's range of passing is one of the most important aspects of his game,

As we have seen, one aspect of Grenier's game that has improved immensely in 2013 is his ability to score goals, and this all comes from his powerful, accurate shot. Grenier can trouble top class goalkeepers with his shot even from long distances, which is why he is one of the club's regular free kick takers. In the last season and a half, Grenier has scored 12 league goals, many of which were brilliant strikes from outside the box. Two spectacular goals from free kicks immediately spring to mind, against Rennes and Nice, and these strikes highlight just how far Grenier's game has come over the course of the last calendar year.

As is clear by his high ranking in the GFFN 100, Grenier has had a brilliant 2013. His passing game remains as strong as it has been throughout his career, but last year he managed to develop an extremely useful ability to pop up with goals himself too. Grenier is only 22 years of age, and it is clear that his future, whether it be with Lyon or elsewhere, will be bright.

'Football is above everything, a pressure. Not a job.'

Clement Grenier

3rd April 2013

#GFFN recommends: @Philby1976: Writer at French Football Weekly, who produces some of the most useful statistical graphics and data collection pieces concerning French football in English.