

## 64. David Ospina

Club: OGC Nice

Date of Birth: 31st August 1988

Position: Goalkeeper



For David Ospina, 2013 was a year to remember. On a domestic front, Ospina surpassed the 150 appearances mark for OGC Nice as the club finished 4th in Ligue 1; continuing an impressive improvement in league form. In 2010/11 they narrowly avoided relegation, in the 2011/12 season they finished in an unconvincing 13th position, and in 2012/13 they rose to an unprecedented 4th place ahead of established sides such as Lille and Bordeaux.

But, for Ospina, 2013 was a landmark year for his national side, as Colombia secured qualification for the most anticipated international tournament in recent times; the 2014 World Cup in nearby Brazil. Colombia were outstanding during qualification, spearheaded by the irrepressible Falcao, and rear-guarded by Ospina, who established himself as the national side's first choice stopper in place of the ageing Faryd Mondragón. Colombia are at the time of writing ranked 4th in the world, and rose to a highest ever placement of 3rd during the summer months of 2013.

Qualification for the 2014 World Cup translates into a return to the competition for Colombia after a 16 year absence, and David Ospina is in prime position to don the number one jersey for *Los Cafeteros* in June next year. During the qualification stage Ospina earned wide ranging praise for his athleticism and reactions, particularly after a superb performance against Argentina in Buenos Aires in June of this year. Against an attack comprising of Gonzalo Higuaín, Ángel Di María and Sergio Agüero, not to mention Lionel Messi, Ospina was in inspired form, earning great plaudits from both José Pékerman and Alejandro Sabella as Colombia held on for a 0-0 draw.

The Argentina game allowed Ospina's to showcase his finest qualities. The 25 year old stands at just over 6ft, yet is a brilliant shot stopper down low. His reflexes and reactions are consistently talked of in a positive manner, and his ability to get down to save, either at the feet of onrushing attackers, or low to either corner of his goal, mark him out as a goalkeeper at the very top of his game. Ospina also possesses a commanding sense of power in his own area. Just as he excels at getting down low to save, he is also has a springy leap, which means he frequently claims crosses and corners in his own penalty box.

There is no reason why Ospina cannot go on to become a top world 'keeper. He has all the attributes required to excel and, importantly, has a great deal of experience, having been a key figure for Nice since his time at the club began. Two factors may hinder his progress. Firstly, his discipline. The Colombian received three red cards last season in domestic football, and on occasion his temper, or merely frustrations, can get the better of him. Furthermore, although he is exceptionally adept at coming from his line to close down attackers or claim crosses, there is a danger in being too keen to stray from one's line, as it can lead to being overexposed, or to committing rash challenges which can also result in red cards.

Secondly, this season a slight doubt has emerged over his injury problems. Having been previously a constant presence in the Nice goal, Ospina has missed a month of this season's campaign already with knee problems. For both Nice's sake and the sake of the Colombian national team, Ospina must keep fit in the run up to the World Cup; a tournament which Colombia are tipped to do well in, and which could give Ospina greater exposure.

As for Nice's domestic performance this season, the club occupied an unglamorous 15th position at the close of 2013, a far cry from their previous campaign where they contested throughout the year for the European places. Ospina himself was absent from Nice's worst run, which saw them lose four times on the trot, conceding eight goals without reply.

Ospina returned to the Nice starting line up for the Week 18 clash at home to FC Sochaux-Montbéliard, and it was no surprise that Nice consequently kept a clean sheet, and recorded a valuable victory in the process. Ospina is proving more and more crucial to the success of the teams he plays in, as both OGC Nice and Colombia look distinctly more solid with him as the last line of defence. 2014 promises much for the man from Medellín.

*'The coach places his confidence in me.'*

David Ospina

On Claude Puel- 19th October 2013

**DID YOU KNOW?** In 2012, David Ospina was set for a move to Besiktas but OGC Nice pulled the plug when the Turkish side failed to provide 'bank guarantees'.