

9. Dimitri Payet

Simply put, 2013 has been an outstanding year for Dimitri Payet who has finally found his footing as one of Ligue 1's most ingenious creative talents and earned himself a dream move to Marseille. The player has added both goals and assists to his game and was the standout performer for Lille during the first half of the calendar year.

In terms of goals, Payet has bagged ten in Ligue 1 this year, which is exceptional for a midfielder. This catalogue has provided some beltiers and it has become evident, arguably more this season than ever that Payet has a penchant for the long range strike. In fact, the majority of his goals have come from distance, with Payet's trademark being to cut inside and curl the ball into the corner. His mazy runs and movement, paralleled with his ability to shoot powerfully make him a threat for any team and Payet has proved his efficacy in front of goal in both the colours of red and white, for Lille and then Marseille respectively, over the course of the year. In terms of an English comparison, one could probably compare his playing style to that of Ashley Young. Payet amours running at defenders as well as charging through the middle when playing balls wide to the flanks.

For Lille, in the first six months of the season, Payet almost played as a third striker on the left hand side, because his average position was so high up the field. Thus, the 26 year old often found himself in advantageous positions which allowed him to add goals to his game. In terms of goal scoring form, the player's Marseille career got off to a prodigious start, as he scored a brace on his debut against Guingamp.

Payet has also provided six league assists this year and will be disappointed that only one of these has come for Marseille. Nevertheless, Payet is apt at beating defenders with his prominent pace and delivering the ball into the box. At Lille, where he was almost undisputedly their attacking maestro, He was able to roam the attacking half of the field and often came out of position to create a chance, because he had the confidence to do so. Maybe at his new club, with the likes of Valbuena and Thauvin who like to play in the equivalent manner, Payet is unable to express himself fully as he does not receive the lion's share of the possession. Payet is additionally a dead ball specialist and has notched up the majority of his assists through his balls into the box. He has taken corners for both Lille and Marseille over the last year.

The Frenchman is also a through ball aficionado and likes to impose that side of his game where possible, even if his distribution in this regard still leaves a little to be desired for. This has been demonstrated frequently this year and is one of the reasons why Payet led the assists chart last season.

Payet's principal frustration over the whole year must be his Champions League form. Last season, Payet was unable to make an impact in the competition in 2012 as Lille got knocked out in the group stage and performed torridly throughout. This year, Marseille failed to pick up a single point in during their group stage and Payet was often invisible in the face of frankly higher quality sides such as Arsenal and Napoli. Due to Payet's rather repetitive attacking sequences, he necessitates a number of chances before producing a clear-cut goal scoring opportunity, something he is simply not going to be given against Europe's best.

Payet's main weakness, however, appears to be his inability to track back and contribute in the defensive third. As much as he has been a colossal presence in the attacking third and contributed towards 40% of Lille's goals during the 2012-2013 campaign, goals were conceded as he, alongside other attacking players, have left the defence overexposed. This may be why the winger has not played in some of Marseille's bigger games recently, as he simply does not provide the same defensive option as some of his teammates.

Internationally, it has been a good year for the Frenchman who has been put back into Didier Deschamps' squad this year due to his bright form. The player now has a truly great a chance at playing a part in France's Brazilian adventure next summer and his form last season and indeed this year has made that possible. Payet is maybe yet to perform at a great standard for France this year, and will need to prove his uniqueness compared to other attacking midfield options at Deschamps' disposal. The player has also admitted that one of the reasons as to why he joined Marseille was to help his career with the national side:

Club: Olympique de Marseille

Date of Birth: 22nd July 1991

Position: Attacker



"The prospect of the 2014 World Cup was a key element in my thinking, but not the only one. I wanted to stay in France, but with OM it's also about playing in the Champions League, the chance to evolve in a quality group of players and to achieve high goals in the league. The challenge is raised, it is already exciting. Marseille's history speaks for itself; it is full of titles and emotions. The club is a monument in French sport."