

28. Grégory Sertic

Club: Girondins de Bordeaux

Date of Birth: 5th August 1989

Position: Midfielder

Bordeaux or sometimes more appropriately named 'Bore-deaux' were everybody's least favourite draw specialists in French football for the most part of 2013. As Les Girondins go through a period of transition, replacing some of the more experienced and complacent members of the squad with initially obscure, cost effective signings from South America or products of their very own youth academy. Although Sertic signed his first professional deal with Bordeaux over five years ago now, he certainly belongs to the latter category. At the age of 24, Sertic took advantage of the immense faith Bordeaux manager Francis Gillot placed upon his shoulders to fill the defensive midfield role, typically alongside either Landry N'Guemo or Lamine Sané. It is however important to note that Sertic remained the constant in the starting XI while the other defensive midfielders in the squad vied for a position alongside the Frenchman over the course of 2013.

While Sertic possesses the necessary talent to incisively and delicately carve out chances and distribute the ball wide to one of the designated Bordeaux wingers, his other defensive midfield partner in Francis Gillot's system tends to play the role of the 'ball-gatherer', disrupting the opposition's flow of play, even if they fail at times to fully win the ball back to start their own attacks. The 24 year old Franco-Croatian midfielder notably spent a season at France's most prestigious footballing academy, Clairefontaine, as well as with three other youth academies before integrating into Bordeaux's junior setup. This forced Sertic to adapt to changes in tactics, position and formation at a very tender age and the fact that he was exposed to as many different ways of teaching the game as possible can only have provided him with a greater amount of ammunition for when he reached the professional stage.

With just three assists in the league during this calendar year, many may be wondering why a midfielder that is ranked so highly in this year's GFFN 100 does not have more to his name. Accepting that Bordeaux's current game plan at the time of writing is one that heavily relies on its wingers can best dispel these doubts. Often, Sertic notches up the 'assist of the assist' by releasing the likes of Henri Saivet or Nicolas Maurice Belay into space with a delicate through ball, which they can then recover and deliver a cross in to target man Cheick Diabaté or cut inside and find Ludovic Obraniak on the edge of the area. This is perhaps the best way of explaining away Sertic's rather weak assist tally for 2013.



In terms of goals, the story is similar but different. Sertic is not renowned for scoring week-in, week-out but when he does find the back of the net, he provides precious moments for Bordeaux fans to savour for weeks after. Strikes in September and November against Lorient and OGC Nice respectively were nothing short of mouth-watering, the latter goal being especially impressive, with astonishing drive and accuracy behind the ball to score one of the very first goals for an opposition team in OGC Nice's brand new Allianz Riviera stadium.

Sertic's omnipresence in the Bordeaux side over the course of the year has been nothing short of impressive, as Mr Consistent made certain that Les Girondins were never completely overrun by opposition in league matches. He keeps a cool head among some colleagues with rather fiery personalities. This is evidenced by the fact that of all the games that Bordeaux played at a national level in 2013 when Sertic started, they have only lost one game by more than two goals, when they recently capitulated at home to a Nantes side in red-hot form in November.

As for an international career, Sertic is of dual-nationality, meaning he could represent either France or Croatia at international level. Although it currently remains unknown whether or not current Croatian manager Niko Kovač has an interest in introducing Sertic to the setup, he certainly has the ability to become a crucial asset for that country. Having represented France at U21 level on several occasions, there may yet be a part of Sertic that is holding on to an unlikely dream of playing for Les Bleus' senior side. This is not to say that Sertic lacks the ability, but simply that the defensive midfield position is one of the most highly contested areas of the field at present, with the likes of Blaise Matuidi, Paul Pogba, Yohan Cabaye, Étienne Capoue and many more all battling for those spaces.

To conclude, Sertic's 2013 was one of immense progression and success. Let us not forget that Bordeaux were this year's Coupe de France victors, edging out Evian TG FC in a closely contested 3-2 final matchup. It may be another season or two before the rest of Europe takes the notice which Sertic's play merits, but if any side can force through their interest early, they could well reap the rewards for seasons to come.

'That's what I want. To become a leader in this team.'

Grégory Sertic

On Bordeaux- 21st September 2013

DID YOU KNOW? Grégory Sertic has already won 5 major trophies in his career with Bordeaux, two Trophées des Champions (2008,2009), Ligue 1 (2008/09), Coupe de la Ligue (2008/09) and Coupe de France (2012/2013).