

20. Remy Cabella

Club: Montpellier HSC

Date of Birth: 8th March 1990

Position: Midfielder



The euphoria of winning the Ligue 1 title had died down. Olivier Giroud, the club's top scorer, had left to English club Arsenal. Montpellier needed a new talisman, a new player to lead their attack. Somebody needed to stand up and be counted. The pressure fell on the shoulders of a young 22 year old Frenchman: Remy Cabella. And boy did he deliver.

The previous year had been an unprecedented one for Montpellier. Against all the odds, facing 'bigger' teams like Lyon and Marseille, they managed to win the Ligue 1 title. It was a breakthrough year for the club, but not quite so ground-breaking for the young Frenchman. Many saw the potential he had but, even though his club achieved great things that season, personally Cabella only managed 3 goals, the same as the previous year, and 2 assists from 29 games. He had established himself as a key first team player for Montpellier, but not yet as a match winner. So, little did people expect that Cabella would have such an explosive next 1 and a half years.

Montpellier, in general, declined after their Ligue 1 triumph. This is due to a variety of factors, not least of all the departures of key players like Olivier Giroud, but one player shone above all during the days of darkness. Remy Cabella finally found his footballing self at the club, and began displaying some brilliant form. He began completely outwitting the opposition's defensive players in his attacking midfield role, both scoring goals and making assists. It would always be difficult to help replace a prolific striker such as Giroud, who scored 21 goals and made 12 assists in their championship-winning season, but Cabella's form went some way towards doing just that.

Last season, Cabella managed to score 7 goals, more than in the rest of his Ligue 1 career combined, and make 7 assists, which was comfortably a more impressive total than any of his teammates; involving himself in a total of 14 goals. The 22-year-old dealt with the expectation on his shoulders as if he was an experienced veteran. He was like a man possessed over the course of that season.

Cabella must have thought that the odds were against him in replicating another season of personal prowess, but he would have been wrong. The 2013-2014 campaign began, and Cabella began to top his outstanding exploits of the previous season. He was on the radar of some big clubs in the summer, but clearly Cabella felt that he had unfinished business with Montpellier, and he was proved right.

Just halfway into the season, with Montpellier still struggling for form, Cabella has once again presented himself as what is commonly referred to as the silver lining. He already has 6 goals and 5 assists from the first 18 games, which places him third in the ranking for Ligue 1's most creative player. Cabella is no longer only making waves in Montpellier with his creative, attacking play; he is raising eyebrows all over France. When one begins to consider that he is just 23 years old, you begin to realise why Cabella has broken into the top twenty talents in the GFFN 100.

So how has he managed it? Well, Cabella clearly has a style of play that causes considerable tribulations for opposition defenders, especially in the past calendar year. When he faces up to defenders during 1 on 1 situations, he is difficult to contend with. One of his much-loved skills is the step-over, which he arguably uses more frequently and with more propensity than anyone else in the league, which adds a layer of complication for the opposing defender, giving Cabella the upper-hand psychologically in these types of situations. Cabella also shows maturity beyond his years in terms of his ability to read the game. This, paralleled with the buoyancy he possesses to vary his distribution makes him the most potent of creative midfielders. Last of all, perhaps Cabella's most telling improvement I'm 2013, is that he is scoring goals, many of which are spectacular. Chips from distance against Kazakhstan and Chile immediately spring to mind from his performances for France, both of which were stunning finishes. Over the past year, he has gained the confidence to attempt such strikes, and it is paying off for him.

2013 has been a fantastic year for the pint-sized Frenchman, nothing short of that breakthrough year that he had so been craving. His eye for a pass and serenity in front of goal is currently the only thing stopping Montpellier from being in serious trouble, Cabella looks like he is enjoying the fight. If he does move, in January or in the summer, whoever signs him will be a much better team for it. If he stays, Montpellier have a real gem on their hands, perhaps the last remaining key to the heights they once reached almost 2 years ago.

'Manchester United? Too early to talk about it!'

Remy Cabella

2nd November 2013

#GFFN recommends: @LaureJames: Often found at the Daily Mail or Sky Sports, this multilingual football journalist is a Montpellier specialist and French football connoisseur also.