

## 38. Thiago Motta

Club: Paris Saint Germain

Date of Birth: 28th August 1982

Position: Midfielder



One of the most enriched footballers currently plying their trade in France, Thiago Motta has been at the top teams across Europe, be it FC Barcelona or Inter Milan, and played pivotal roles in those very teams' successes whilst he wore their colours. It was perhaps no surprise therefore that Thiago Motta brought this ability with him from Milan to Paris and in the meantime has won the title of PSG's most understated player in terms of importance.

Every international club needs a player that acts as the glue which keeps the squad in tact no matter which languages are being spoken or what the situation is. Thiago Motta has become that man, partly down to his own qualities on a human level, but also partly down to chance.

First of all, Motta's ability to speak French to an adequate level paralleled with his fluent Italian and Portuguese (Brazil) enables him to interact with the core of the foreign contingent of the current PSG squad, with the vast majority of the South American players originating from Brazil in Marquinhos, Thiago Silva, Lucas and Alex. Marco Verratti is of course Italian and so was PSG's manager Carlo Ancelotti, at least for the first half of 2013.

That ability to ease communication between different sectors of the squad whilst also being an extremely accomplished and decorated footballer in your own right is what makes Thiago Motta's 2013 contribution frankly outstanding. What does he do on the pitch?

At the age of 31, Thiago Motta is not bouncing across the pitch as he may have done during his Barcelona playing days. Instead, in a tactical change that Laurent Blanc implemented, the Brazil-born midfielder sits as the deepest of the three in the centre of the park, giving licence to the usual pairing of Marco Verratti and Blaise Matuidi to provide further attacking options. The latter in particular has done so in recent months and has really added a new dimension to the PSG attack in the process. Where in some games, Ancelotti's PSG may have struggled to score, Blanc's outfit is able to commit more men to each attack as Thiago Motta reserves himself to making timely interceptions if the opposition ever troubles him that is.

In truth, Thiago Motta's role in terms of active defending with regards to coming up against one on one duels with the opposition is limited because he realises his ability to track back is not what it once perhaps was. PSG are rarely hit on the break in Ligue 1 and when they are, Verratti or Matuidi will track the opponent from behind and Thiago Motta will look to hold them up for as long as possible, ensuring that when it comes to defensive duties, Motta is rarely left to do the job alone, but instead a sort of tag team forms to more effectively crowd out the opposition attacker.

Motta's technical abilities were gifts from a higher being. Despite his sometimes cumbersome nature when having the ball at his feet, his passing radar is unparalleled in Ligue 1. The vision, experience and level-headedness he brings to an otherwise often argumentative PSG team when it comes to berating referees and match officials (Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Thiago Silva and Marco Verratti are principle culprits for the aforementioned crime) adds a touch of class to the player's game which simply cannot be taught, making Motta's achievements more impressive with the supposed effortless aura he gives off when on the pitch.

PSG's midfield is much more coherent this season than in the last and that is because Thiago Motta has yet to suffer an injury that sidelines him for a substantial period of time as he did in the 2012/2013 campaign. His presence makes the difference in what would already be a world class midfield with the likes of Marco Verratti and Blaise Matuidi in it.

2013 has also been a year of further international progression for Thiago Motta. Having only received a call up at the late age of 29 for Italy, Thiago Motta is making every chance he gets count. This was noticeable in a recent friendly Italy had vs Germany where Motta played the majority of the encounter and gave a good account of himself as the game eventually ended in a one all draw.

Eventually, Thiago Motta will be pushed out of the PSG starting XI and eventually for the squad all together because of his age, and with supposed targets including Paul Pogba being mentioned, this may be Motta's only complete season that he plays an integral part in for the team he joined in January of 2012. While his brilliance is undoubted, his contribution in terms of goals and assists for 2013 were comparatively weak and he was often out injured, otherwise Motta would have finished much higher in this year's GFFN 100.

*'For me, Marco Verratti is one of the most technically gifted players in the world.'*

Thiago Motta

On his 'protégé' Marco Verratti

**DID YOU KNOW?** Thiago Motta says he always dreamed of playing at PSG, the club where Brazilian legends like Ronaldinho, Raí and Leonardo used to play.