

Player Profile: Hulk



Full name: Givanildo Vieira de Souza

Position: Forward

Date of birth: 25 July 1986

Birthplace: Campina Grande, Brazil

When Brazilian forward Hulk burst onto the football map in 2008/09, it was more than just his marvellous nickname that grabbed people's attention.

As his moniker suggests, immense strength afforded by his stocky build is one of his foremost attributes. But what makes Hulk such an exciting prospect is the fact he allies speed, astounding acceleration and a generous dose of skill to his powerful frame. Add to that a left foot that produces one of the most powerful shots in the modern game and there is little doubt that FC Porto have again unearthed a special talent.

After taking his professional bow with Esporte Clube Vitoria in his native Brazil, the teenager took the bold step of emigrating to Japan. There he played for three clubs in quick succession, racking up an impressive goal ratio, especially at Tokyo Verdy. At the club from the Japanese capital (which plays in green, hence giving rise to his nickname) Hulk scored no fewer than 44 goals in 55 league appearances, which persuaded Porto to invest six million euros to bring him to Europe in the summer of 2008.

Stunning debut

Upon signing for Porto it appeared that Hulk would have his work cut out as he attempted to break into a forward line of proven performers in Lisandro Lopez, Cristian Rodriguez and Tarik Sektioui, all of whom had enjoyed an excellent 2007/08 season. But injury to the Moroccan winger gave Hulk an early chance to shine and he needed no second invitation. His official debut at the Estadio do Dragao in the first league match of the season against Belenenses was notable for two incidents.

The Brazilian hit a free-kick so hard into his own player, Mariano Gonzalez, acting as a decoy in the wall, that the unfortunate Argentine was ruled out of action for three weeks with a knee injury. Soon afterwards Hulk struck a quite magnificent shot into the top corner of the net from fully 25 metres. The Porto faithful had a new hero.

Hulk quickly established himself in Porto's three-man attack alongside Rodriguez and Lisandro. Indeed, he proved to be the Dragons' most potent weapon, both in the middle but also when straying to either flank, with his quick footwork and phenomenal bursts of speed taking him past defenders with ease and setting up numerous goals for his team-mates.

Fast learner

Accused of selfishness after his first games in Portugal, with the striker tending to put his head down and head for goal whenever he got hold of the ball, Hulk further impressed onlookers with how quickly he improved this aspect of his game. He obviously listened carefully to the words of wisdom from experienced Porto coach Jesualdo Ferreira, and soon began making the right decisions as regards serving his team-mates or going for goal individually.

Such has been Hulk's impact in his first campaign in Portugal that many believe it will be sooner rather than later that the exciting marksman makes the step up to one of Europe's biggest clubs.

by Tom Kundert (20/03/2009)

Club	Appearances*	Goals
Esporte Clube Vitoria	-	-
Kawasaki Frontale	11	1
Consadole Sapporo	38	25
Tokyo Verdy	55	44
FC Porto**	20	8

* League appearances only

** Up to 20 March 2009