

BIOGRAPHY

The beginnings

Javier Alejandro Mascherano was born on June 8 1984 in San Lorenzo, a town in the Santa Fe province, where many highlights of the Argentine soccer are from, such as Lionel Messi, Jorge Valdano, Gabriel Batistuta and Marcelo Bielsa among others.

In his infancy, Mascherano played for two teams of his city, Cerámica San Lorenzo and Barrio Vila, until he was discovered by former footballer Jorge Solari, in one of the fields of his native neighborhood.

Solari had been informed that there was a 14 year old kid with great potential, when he was able to prove this, Solari added him to a team he had founded in Rosario, called Renato Cesarini, known as a distinguished "Soccer School" of training and education. Ever since his 14 years he was a player who would always make it to the goal, he was quiet but with great personality, he would never shout, he was someone who stood up for his intelligence on and off the court. This was also the time when Hugo Tocalli - who was then the coach of the Argentine youth team – makes him a test and then he calls him to join the Argentina national under-20 football team, in which he will be part of the various categories over the years.

Career Summary

Javier Alejandro Mascherano is considered one of the best in the world in his position, that is defensive midfielder. However, he has also played as a central defender.

Among the most important honours in his career, at National team level are: a South American U-20 and two gold medals at the 2004 Athens Olympic Games and the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games respectively, being the only football player capable to achieve this. At club level he won the Primera División Argentina- torneo de clausura- with the Argentina River Plate, a Campeonato Brasileiro with Corinthians, A Liga Española, a UEFA Champions League, a Copa del Rey, a Supercopa de España, a UEFA Super Cup and a FIFA Club World Cup with the team he actually

plays, FC Barcelona.

Club Atlético River Plate

He then moves to Buenos Aires because he joins the youth ranks of the Club Atlético River Plate, at the same time he also joins the Argentina national under-20 football team, he started to get much attention for his performance, so much as to the Ajax club offers him to join their team, He denies this offer.

In the youth ranks of the "Millionaire" team he becomes champion in the seventh division, while he was enjoying his title, he was also preparing to debut in the Argentina National Football Team in a friendly match against the National team of Uruguay, the opening night of City Stadium of La Plata, an unprecedented event. He then debuted in the Primera Division of the Argentina Football League on August 3, 2003 in the game that beats River Plate 2:1 in New Chicago.

In total, Javier would play over 50 games with this institution, For the final of the Copa Sudamericana in 2003 he was especially requested by the River Plate coach, Manuel Pellegrini, so he had to travel all the way from the United Arab Emirates since in that time he was also contesting in the U-20 World championship taking place there -He then is proclaimed champion of Torneo Clausura in 2004. He will also have the opportunity to play the Copa Libertadores in 2004 and 2005, scoring in that last year, his first official goal in a phenomenal play against Olmedo. His last official match was on July 3, 2005, when the team "Millionaire" wins at home to Club Atlético Huracán 1:0; the match ended in a standing ovation for "el jefecito", demonstrating the respect and admiration he garnered ever since he started in the youth ranks.

Sport Club Corinthians Paulista

His high performance had made several European clubs become interested in signing Javier, but ultimately is Corinthians who do; introducing him officially on July 7, 2005 after paying \$ 15 million for his move there. Despite arriving with the highest expectations in his new team Javier will experience one of the most difficult moments of his career when, soon after arriving in the club Paulista, he suffers a stress fracture in the scaphoid bone in his left foot while contesting a match against Internacional de Porto Alegre, fighting for the Brasileirao. This injury forced him to undergo surgery and keeps him away from the field for

seven months. In this matter, the jefecito recognizes that this situation helped him understand that he should rest from the tremendous demand that required him to be part of his national team - in earlier and later stages - and his club, playing continuously over the years within each competition, something that brought these physical disadvantages.

As for titles, with the "Timão" he will win a Brazilian League. Subsequently, the situation starts to become tense when results begin to be disappointing in the next championship and Emerson Leao becomes team coach, who was already famous for his rivalry with Argentine players. The most critical point is then realized when the Brazilian coach denies Mascherano (along with fellow Argentine player at the time of the Corinthians, Carlos Tevez) approval to play for his National team a friendly match against Brazil in London, arguing that its entire team was needed to overcome the difficult time that the club was going through in the national league. This and other frictions became irreversible for Javier, so he followed in the footsteps of Tevez and make the decision to seek a new football destination.

West Ham United

After many rumors, he moved to Europe on August 30 2006 to be transferred to the West Ham United in a joint operation with compatriot Carlos Tevez, for an amount of over \$ 50 million, this brought several controversies. This transfer turned out to be not positive: he only participated in five matches with the "Hammers", of which only three he played as a starter. As expected, its performance fails to meet their expectations and, as this was not taken into consideration by the coaches, the jefecito realizes his overwhelming desire to leave the entity in which, finally, only stayed for six months.

Liverpool Football Club

In late 2006, the Liverpool expresses its intention to recruit Mascherano, this was somewhat difficult at first because the FIFA regulations prohibit the participation of a player on three teams in one season and Javier had already played for Corinthians and West Ham United, forcing the Anfield team to perform various efforts in this regard, including a request to FIFA to be able to have his services. On January 31, 2007, FIFA would grant the permit after considering the seasons similarities of South American and European football. Later, Liverpool had to wait the approval by the Premier League until it was finally granted. Once these

issues were solved, the jefecito officially debuted against Sheffield United on February 24 2007. In late February 2008 He signed a new contract with Liverpool FC until 2012, after the Reds paid the purchase which would have amounted to \$ 35 million.

In Liverpool, from the start Mascherano becomes an undisputed starter lead by the hand of coach Rafael Benitez, playing continuously in three seasons, performing excellently and even reaching the final of the Champions League 2007 against Milan in which, despite of losing in the final encounter 2-1, is chosen as the best player of the match for Liverpool fans.

F.C. Barcelona

Even knowing that he occupied a privileged position in the team, something that will be implemented effectively August 27, 2010 when Liverpool FC- after trying unsuccessfully to keep him- agrees the transfer of the player to FC Barcelona for the amount of 24 million euros. The agreed terms also included a contract for the next four seasons, the player earning 5.5 million per year plus incentives.

In his introduction, Javier stood up for his modesty: said he came to learn and join a great team, which was a challenge for him. This did not prevent, in the final stretch of the 2010-11 season, for him to have a key role in the Catalan team, compensating with excellence for the absence of some teammates (Carles Puyol, Eric Abidal ...). Thus, his excellent performance in the Catalan club raised him constant praise from his coach, Pep Guardiola:

"Mascherano is a spectacular recruit. For a team like Barca is priceless to have him. It is a success..."

In the practice, Mascherano will achieve during his first season a Liga española and a Champions League, that last one after beating Manchester United 3-1.

Similarly, the beginning of the 2011-2012 season continues to unfold in a very promising way, playing as starter, he won with FC Barcelona the Supercopa de España after beating in the defining game 3-2 to Real Madrid. Subsequently, He is also part of the lineup to win the European Super Cup after beating FC Porto 2-0 at the Stade Louis II stadium located in the Principality of Monaco. The jefecito has quickly become, one of defensive pillars of the team, earning the title of which is considered the

best team in the world.

Following the successes during the closing of the first part of the 2011-2012 season, the club won after beating Japan 4-0 to Brazilian team Santos FC; victory in which Mascherano gets a new honour, FIFA Club World cup 2011. Argentine footballer kept completing meritorious central defense games, to the point that Pep Guardiola said:

"I would never trade Mascherano. I think he's the best signing of Barcelona in the past years, He's unique"

In late July 2012 the renewal with the Catalan club was made official until 2016.

National Team

Since its incipient beginning, the Jefecito was marked as a player of the national team, being part of the Argentine youth team in its different categories: U-15, U-17 (in which he won the 2nd place in the South American U-17 of 2001, then he wins the 4th place in the Trinidad and Tobago World championship in 2001) and U-20 (with which he becomes South American champion of Under-20 in 2003 and also obtains a 4th place in the United Arab Emirates FIFA Club World Cup that year). He also participates with the youth in the Toulon hope tournament and in 2002 he traveled to the World Cup in Korea and Japan where he serves as sparring of the senior team

In almost every competition, Mascherano would perform as captain by choice of his teammates and the coaching staff, having notable performances and also meeting a singular statistic: by that time he had played more games for the Argentina National Football Team than with his club River Plate.

Finally, his international debut in the senior team came at age 19 on July 16 2003 in the match Uruguay 2:2 Argentina in La Plata, on the occasion of the inauguration of the Estadio Unico and lead by the hand of Marcelo Bielsa.

A month and a half later, River Plate would debut in the hands of Manuel Pellegrini.

His case is one of the few in which a player first debuted in a senior team before making it into a club. In this regard, Javier realized that although

he was the youngest at the time, he was not interested, because it was important to feel useful and "give your life in the field for your team" His performance, behavior and sacrifice earned him the praise in the "albiceleste":

"Mascherano is the example to follow (...) I wish all players would love their Team Jersey that much"

Diego Armando Maradona. Power Soccer, October 2008.

"[Javier] is an exceptional player; an emblem for the Argentine people for all that has been achieved with youth and effort. A guy who always has the team on his head (...) who knows his part and the whole"

Cesar Luis Menotti. World Journal, November 2008

In January 2004 becomes champion with the Argentina National Football Team of the pre-Olympic South American Championship in Chile being the team captain and in later years gets to lift twice the Olympic gold medal in the 2004 Athens Olympic Games and the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games respectively.

He managed two second places in the Copa America in 2004 (where he started with only 20 years and one of the best players in the tournament) and in 2007, he scored the latter two goals against Paraguay and Peru. Also participates and reaches the end of the 2005 FIFA Confederations Cup which was held in Germany.

Mascherano has been a constant in calls for his national team beyond the various technical directors who were in charge of the Albiceleste combined: in 2006 he was summoned by the coach José Pekerman to join the Argentine squad that will travel to compete in the FIFA World Cup in Germany where he will start every game. In this competition, Argentina loses on penalties to Germany during quarter-finals of the Cup

The following selection process reaches its strongest point as a reference when in 2008, the-then - team coach Diego Armando Maradona, appointed him as captain (even above star players like Javier Zanetti) and on May 19, 2010 he is confirmed as part of the list of players who will participate in the FIFA World Cup of South Africa 2010. In this competition, He played a great game against Nigeria where Argentina

won 1-0 with a goal from Gabriel Heinze. He later joined the starting lineup in the victory of the Albiceleste's 4-1 against South Korea. Mascherano was admonished during this match, so he was unable to participate in Argentina's victory 2-0 over Greece, as coach Diego Maradona wanted to preserve him for later matches. He then participated in Argentina's 3-1 victory over Mexico during the Round of 16 and also in the 0-4 defeat to Germany during quarterfinals, which caused the removal of the Albiceleste team from that tournament.

Subsequently - and after a period of internship - Sergio Batista becomes coach of the National team and initiates a new process in which confirms Mascherano as reference. However, this step does not end up being successful in terms of results and performance, and ends up in the sudden dismissal of Batista and the assignment of a new coach Alejandro Sabella, in order to face the qualifiers in the run to the World Cup Brazil 2014.

Features as Player

Mascherano is a classic holding midfielder with more skills in taking and recovery than attack output.

In River Plate he inherited the jersey, the position and the nickname of his predecessor in that position, Leonardo Rubén Astrada, who was also the coach who clinched the first division. Javier wore the number 5 jersey in the "Millionaire" team at a very young age and he was able to rise up to the challenge, the jersey came with a sublime story and he knew the caliber of players who wore it before such as Américo Rubén Gallego, Matias Almeyda and Reinaldo Merlo among many others.

Also, his nickname "jefecito" or "little boss" (in tribute to the "Boss" Astrada) makes reference to his constant defensive solvency, mettle and leadership that has characterized him as a player. At a very young age his low profile, maturity and natural descent unfit for such a young boy, has been worthy of praise from his trainers, he exhibited as a pride, as a small giant heart - by their own parents, and also of the sports media and former players who wore the shirt albiceleste:

"I do not exaggerate when I say that Mascherano will be the future central midfielder of the Senior team. That's why Bielsa already made him debut. I am not surprised by Mascherano. Ever since from age 14 he has worked with us and was always at a very high level. "

Hugo Tocalli. Daily Nation, January 5, 2004.

"Great players like Javier Mascherano are like that and is about genetics. The only path that he's got left is a happy one. It is known that experience consolidates certain aspects that, in this case, even without experience they are already evident"

Marcelo Bielsa. Clarín, July 27, 2004

"[A Mascherano] I met him ten years ago (September 2001), in the Under 17 Youth World Championship in Trinidad and Tobago (...) It was a serious kid, polite. Respectful. He was the role model of the team. He seemed like the older brother. He was the Captain (...) The little kid grew big. Years passed. Never saved a sweat when playing and fighting. Never gave up the effort. His commitment is unwavering "

Jorge Parodi. String3, June 2011.

"Javier Mascherano overwhelms. What he's got is completely unbearable. His display is exciting, but it's much more than that. It's quite surgical, but it does not end there (...) he has an aggregate value (...) his heart, that's what makes him be always among the stars, he is as great as his courage and therein lies the difference that transforms him (...) the guy is a true warrior and is willing to fight the last battle "

Román Lucht. Daily Nation, August 22, 2008.

"[Today] There are very few leaders. Something that strikes me is that many coaches decide to put their archers as team captains! In the last decade, the best is Mascherano, who impressed me since I saw him in the Under 17 "

Antonio Rattin. Olé Journal, May 15, 2011.

Despite having this recognition, Mascherano himself has said on more than one occasion that although he has had to be the role model in different teams, he does not like to be called "leader", because he never tells someone what to do, instead he just tries to do a good job and that way give the example, and that's not something that corresponds to his nature either.