

Malouda: I felt like an orphan when Jose left

By Bruno Salla



Malouda

Disturbed and upset by José Mourinho's departure from Chelsea, Florent Malouda, the Blues' main target last summer, logically questioned his future at Stamford Bridge.

But after a slight dip in confidence, the former Lyon winger has recovered to become a key player for Chelsea. The France international talks exclusively to ESP-Nsoccernet about his experiences at the Premier League club.

After Chelsea's last two wins against Valencia (2-1) and Bolton (1-0), can we say today that the club is back on track and not in crisis anymore?

No, we cannot. We can still get over the trouble we have been through but we have to work hard and give ourselves the tools of our ambition. There's no doubt about the quality of the players. We need a few wins in a row to close the gap in the Premier League and consistency is the key. Because we can beat anyone in one single game. We have lost some confidence, we are still looking for the best chemistry. I feel now like we are on a kind of pre-season process and only good results will help us.

Can Chelsea still win the championship? Isn't it too late already?

No, it is not. But it won't be easy. I remember with Lyon we were once ten points behind Monaco and we ended up being champions (in 2003-2004). But it was the French Ligue 1 and I'm not sure we could have done the same here, where it is much different. It's very hard to come back from behind when you have around eight or ten points difference. We're not allowed any more mistakes and we can't rely on our opponents' eventual failure.

Honestly, right now we can't pretend we can win the Premier League considering our level. Even if we won in Valencia and Bolton, we are not dominating and we didn't really control the game.

How did you cope with Mourinho's departure?

His departure saddened me. A lot. For a while I even was very, very upset. He is the one who signed me and trusted me. I respect him a lot. But as a player, I need to respect the decision which has been made, try to forget about it and get back to work and be good on the pitch. What has been the most disturbing is the way Mourinho left his position and how I've been informed about it.

The night before, we were all at the screening of the movie (Blue Revolution) on Mourinho's time at Chelsea and what he has brought to the club. And the following morning I get a text message on my cell phone telling me he isn't the coach anymore. I felt like an orphan. Especially as I've just arrived in a new club in a foreign country and he was the one that made me come to London. I really felt like his departure was more a personal issue than anything else, the club wanted him out.

When you see Mourinho leaving and Drogba questioning his future at Stamford Bridge there are some reasons there to be worried no?

I asked myself many questions indeed. Mourinho was the main reason I came to Chelsea. Would I still be wanted after he left? I did wonder and I went to ask some questions to the most appropriate people at the club. They convinced me they are happy with my performances so far and I want to focus 100% on my job now. Although I'm a bit frustrated as I had the luck to enjoy Mourinho's coaching, but not enough.

What is so special about Mourinho's coaching?

He has this ability to be relaxed all the time, very confident about himself and the team and that has a very positive effect on the players. With him you feel stronger. He prepares everything from A to Z and knows how to stimulate you when needed. He is a special man.

Avram Grant's promotion has been a radical change, no?

It's different. He observes a lot and is more discreet.

What have you learned since you've been in England?

In Lyon, I was used to a more calculated game, slower. Here it goes faster and we have to take more risk. The physical involvement is total and we don't calculate as much as in France. Even when you're leading 1-0 you keep on playing to score another goal. When you go and play against the worst ranked team, in front of you they're ready to die on the pitch to beat you. It took me a while to adjust my game but I still always finish the game with pain somewhere in my body.

Have you already thought: 'I should have come earlier to England, I wasted a precious time in Lyon'?

I would have loved to come before but I didn't get the opportunity. I think I left France at the best time. I had played four years in Lyon and those were fantastic moments. I needed to live that. Without this experience I wouldn't have been able to play in a team like Chelsea now. I wouldn't have arrived there with the same confidence, the desire to exist in such a changing room and to contend for a starting spot.

Even if you have been elected best player of the French league, when you arrived in England they don't care about that. You start from ground zero and need to prove. Here, the French league is unknown anyway. Here you are more viewed as the player that did cost 20 millions, like Didier (Drogba) and Michael (Essien). But I deal with it, it's fine.