Sport › Football › Manchester City FC

Man City have possible Fernandinho replacement in Douglas Luiz - but cannot play him!

Douglas Luiz has been named player of the tournament in Toulon but Manchester City will still not be able to use him next season

By **Stuart Brennan**
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SPORT

MADRID, SPAIN - APRIL 02: Antoine Griezmann of Atletico de Madrid battle for the ball with Douglas Luiz of Girona during the La Liga match between Club Atletico de Madrid and Girona FC at Wanda Metropolitano on April 02, 2019 in Madrid, Spain. (Photo by Quality Sport Images/Getty Images)

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Manchester City could already have a Fernandinho replacement in their own ranks ... but a Catch 22 situation means they are unable to play him!

Douglas Luiz has just been named best player at the prestigious Toulon Tournament, following in the footsteps of Javier Mascherano, Thierry Henry, Alan Shearer and David Ginola.

The defensive midfielder was signed by the Blues for £10million two years ago but has spent the last two seasons on loan at sister club Girona.

Manager Pep Guardiola was impressed by Luiz's displays when he joined the first team squad on pre-season tour in the USA, and that prompted City to try to get the player a work permit.

City ran into tough FA rules which dictate that players from top Fifa-ranked countries like Brazil need to play in at least 30 per cent of that country's international games over a two-year period.

They appealed on the grounds that Luiz was a "special exception", backing it up with letters from both Guardiola and former Brazil coach Tite, who once said of Luiz: "He is great... the torque, the capacity, the passes, the smooth feet, good first touch, the ball protection ..."

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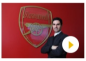
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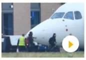
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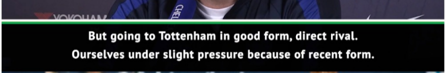

But going to Tottenham in good form, direct rival.
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Douglas Luiz did well for Manchester City in last season's pre-season tour

But the FA were not in a listening mood and Luiz had to go out on a second loan to Girona, where he made just one start in a difficult first season.

This season has been much better, with Luiz making 20 starts and seven substitute appearances in a season which saw him suffer with injuries, and also saw the club relegated.

He has been in competition with fellow City loanee Aleix Garcia, but his problem is that until he can break into the Brazil squad, he is not going to get a work permit.

And until he gets a work permit, and plays for City – with coaching from Guardiola and his assistants - he is not likely to break into the Brazil squad.

Ironically, his chances of making the full international squad have been lessened by Fernandinho’s return to play for his country at the age of 34, when it seemed his days with the Selecao were over.

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Luiz enhanced his chances with some good displays for the Brazil under-23 team, who beat Japan on penalties in the Toulon final, and he claims that he has improved greatly this season.

He recently admitted that the work permit refusal had been frustrating, adding: “I made a good pre-season in the team, so Pep Guardiola backed me, he spoke publicly about my performance. This made me frustrated that I did not get the visa.

“My style of play has changed a lot. In the first season here, being very young, things did not happen the way I imagined.

“So this season I'm much better off with the new style of play I've been working on since pre-season with City.”

Luiz was asked to play as the main defensive midfielder for Girona, a different role for him, but he thinks he coped well.

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Douglas Luiz picked up vital experience last season, playing against La Liga's top teams

“It was not so difficult, because I have a good ball out that helps a lot to the team,” he said.

“My biggest difficulty was in the marking, but with time and a lot of work I'm improving, as I've been doing since the pre-season with Pep, in Manchester City, and here in Girona.”

And he thinks that two seasons of trying to defend against players like Lionel Messi, Antoine Griezmann and Luis Suarez have brought greater maturity.

“It was special because they are players that I watched on television and PlayStation and today I can realize the dream of facing them. But on the field we are rivals and each defends his club,” he said.

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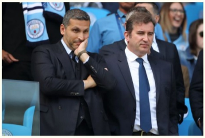

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