

# RYAN SESSÈGNON

## FULHAM FOOTBALL CLUB

Kouassi Ryan Sessègnon was born in Roehampton (London, England) on 18 May 2000, along with his twin brother Steven, and together they joined Fulham's under nine squad in 2008.

On 9 August 2016 Ryan took part in his first competitive fixture for Fulham, an EFL Cup tie against Leyton Orient, aged only 16 years and 81 days. Soon after, on 20 August 2016, he made his Championship debut for Fulham in an away match against Leeds United.

Although Ryan played his first few matches as a left-back, he is equally adept playing further forward down the left flank, versatility Fulham have made use

of by deploying him regularly as both a left-midfielder and as a left-back.

Ryan is a quick, agile, technical wide player who can run up and down the left flank, able to work hard for his team in defence as well as using his dribbling and crossing ability to cause difficulties for opposition defences.

At the end of the 2016/17 season, Ryan had made 30 appearances for Fulham, scoring seven goals. He signed his first professional contract with Fulham in the summer of 2017, a three-year deal running until 2020.

Ryan's 50<sup>th</sup> senior appearance for Fulham was also the setting of his first hat-trick for the club, a 5-4 away win against Sheffield United. The first of these goals saw Ryan, from just inside the opposition's half, cut inside his marker from the left flank and run at the defence, using an overlapping run as a decoy, before striking with his weaker right foot, driving the ball past the 'keepers left hand and into the bottom corner. The third of his goals involved picking up a cross field pass on the left corner of the penalty box, facing up against his marker, threatening to curl in with his right foot before cutting onto his left and driving low into the far corner.

Internationally, Ryan has played for England at under 16, under 17 and under 19 level. In the summer of 2017, he was part of the England team won the Euro Under-19 finals, defeating Portugal 2-1 in the final. Ryan ended the tournament as joint-top scorer, alongside international team mate Ben Brereton.

After Fulham's 5-4 victory over Sheffield United on 21 November 2017, their manager Slavisa Jokanovic, no doubt keen to keep feet on the ground and interest at bay, said of Ryan "It's always the same question – Ryan, Ryan, Ryan. He is growing up in the right direction."

How long Ryan will remain playing in the second tier of English football is unknown, but if he continues to impress and improve as he has been, it is unlikely to be much longer before a move, most likely to a Premier League side, materialises.

# VINÍCIUS JÚNIOR

CLUBE DE REGATAS DO FLAMENGO

Vinícius José Paixão de Oliveira Júnior was born on 12 July 2000 in São Gonçalo, a municipality in the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). He made his debut for Flamengo on 13 May 2017, as a substitute in the 82 minute of a home 1-1 draw against Atlético-MG. Since then, Vinícius Júnior has made a number of appearances for Flamengo, both in the Campeonato Brasileiro Série A and the Copa Sudamericana, mainly as a substitute.

Vinícius Júnior mainly lines up on the left of a front three, either using his acceleration to drive past opposition full backs with the ball at his feet, or looking to run in behind the defensive line,

breaking the offside trap and latching onto through passes. Being primarily right footed, he prefers to cut in from the left touchline, or fake to move inside before pushing the ball down the line and using his pace to beat his man.

Vinícius Júnior, talking about the impact of Flamengo coach Reinaldo Rueda towards the end of 2017, quoted him as saying that “if I improve in my one-on-ones, nobody will be able to stop me”

Vinícius Júnior was a key part of the Brazil under-17 side that were victorious in the South American Under-17 Football Championships, held in

February/March 2017. As well as being part of the winning team, he also took the personal honour of top scorer in the tournament, scoring 7 goals in 8 appearances, including two each against Ecuador and Colombia.

Vinícius Júnior was expected to join up with 'la selección brasileña Sub 17' again for the FIFA U-17 World Cup, held in India in October 2017, however Flamengo decided that with his lack of preparation with the national team, along with his regular involvement in Flamengo fixtures, that his development would be served best by not travelling.

Vinícius Júnior has benefited from the Flamengo "Pratas do Ninho" project, which helps young players at the club transition from youth football to the professional level.

On 23 May 2017, he signed a contract to join Spanish giants Real Madrid once he turns 18, for €45 million. It is planned that he will return to Flamengo on loan

from Los Merengues until the summer of 2019.

He scored his first professional goal for Flamengo on 10 August 2017 in a Copa Sudamericana second round, second leg tie against CD Palestino of Chile. Ten days later, on 20 August 2017, he scored his first two goals for Flamengo competing the Campeonato Brasileiro Série A, in a 2-0 win over Atlético-GO.

He demonstrated his pace and determination in the first of his goals against Atlético-GO, chasing a through-pass from midfield, overtaking his rival defender in the process and finding a finish in the near corner from about 8 yards out.

Vinícius Júnior will hope that his move to Real Madrid will not stall his development, given the level of competition for places. It may well be that a loan move would provide him with the regular competitive environment that might be crucial at this important stage in his development.