

Manuel Pellegrini's Manchester City Beginning to Take Shape

By

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ETIHAD STADIUM, MANCHESTER—Questions have been asked about Manuel Pellegrini in recent weeks. After a superb opening day performance against Newcastle, City went on a run of three poor league games, only taking four points from Cardiff, Hull and Stoke. Looking lethargic and bereft of ideas going forward, as well as shaky at the back, they looked anything but potential Champions.

Now, after a confidence-building win in their Champions League opener against Viktoria Plzen, which saw City score three goals and play with freedom and zest, they've outplayed and outfought Manchester United. City won 4-1 and dealt United a psychological blow in the process.

It seems Pellegrini's desire to implement a high-tempo attacking style is starting to get through to his players.

Yaya Toure, despite what some overly critical City fans like to tell you, is having a superb season, and he was the stand-out player in the win over United. His tackling and driving runs are what make him special, and all of that was on display against United. When he plays like he did in the Derby, there are few midfielders in world football capable of offering what he does.

His fellow defensive midfielder, Fernandinho, is also a high-energy player who loves to tackle, and his effectiveness in games is becoming obvious. The two players look capable of becoming a superb pairing.

Whereas City sometimes looked slow and cumbersome in the attacking third during the dying embers of Roberto Mancini's tenure, they now have pace to burn.

New signing Jesus Navas is yet to set the world alight in a Blue shirt, but is a constant outlet when City look to drive forward, and with Aguero returning to his very best, City now have a blisteringly quick forward line. It will be difficult for sides to hold a line against them with those two looking to make runs in behind.

Then there's Samir Nasri, who looks like a player reborn under the tutelage of Pellegrini. His influence has been increasing since the Chilean arrived, and the last two matches have seen him take on a central role in the side. He's always looking to get on the ball and create—a far cry from the player so clearly bereft of confidence at the end of last season. His form gives City options and creativity in attack.

Who was City's best player against United?

Yaya Toure Samir Nasri Vincent Kompany Alvaro Negredo Sergio Aguero Submit Vote vote to see results

One of Pellegrini's other summer signings, Alvaro Negredo, is also making a name for himself amongst the City fans, with his physical, hard-working style giving City a focal point in attack. Whereas Edin Dzeko can sometimes look uninterested, Negredo is a constant thorn in the side of the opposition defence.

And with the return of Vincent Kompany, who was outstanding against United, City have strengthened what looked to be a shaky back line. He looks back to his best after a few weeks out with injury, and he brings confidence to everyone. He must remain fit, though, because City struggle to cope without him.

David Silva, Micah Richards and Gael Clichy are all set to come back into contention over the coming days, with City looking like they have the best squad of players in the league.

It seems that after some difficult performances in the early weeks of his tenure, Manuel Pellegrini is slowly but surely implementing an improved style of play at City. They have more options and more pace than last season, and as a result, they look more difficult to figure out.

If City continue to assert themselves as well as they did against United, they will be very difficult to beat.