

CRISTIANO LUCARELLI: ALSO FOOTBALLERS THINK

By Walter Ego

For those who have ever asked themselves whether football players have a brain, the answer was given by Cristiano Lucarelli on 30th April at the UCL, where he held a lecture by the title *Money, Politics and Violence: Is there any more space for passion in Italian football?*

Cristiano is not only a good football player who preferred making a choice in life, that is being a Livornese playing with Livorno rather than with a “big” team where he would surely have gained more; he is mainly a man who likes thinking and speaking his mind, without laying in the golden cage in which football players, according to him, are in some ways obliged. Well, a golden cage full with *veline* – Italian semi-naked TV showgirls – is far more enjoyable than being hostage of the Talibans, but for those who have a brain, as well as good feet, this could be a limitation. And Cristiano has shown in these years, confirmed by his lecture, that he has a good head not just in football terms.

The UCL's terraces were crammed, with many Lucarelli's supporters arrived on purpose from Livorno to listen to his speech and many journalists, both Italian and British. After the introduction by John Foot – reader at the UCL and author of the book *Calcio: A History of Italian Football* – followed by the story, in an ironic key, of the main events of Cristiano's life and professional career told by his agent Carlo Pallavicino and the viewing of a video with a selection of the best goals scored by Lucarelli taken from the film *99 Amaranto*, the topic of the evening were the questions from the audience, to which Livorno's forward answered smartly, passionately and with a touch of humour. To the question: “Would you prefer to play here in England or in Italy?” Lucarelli answers: “If I could I would come and play with Livorno here in England!”. He skates cleverly – “every time I hear this kind of questions I never understand whether who makes them is kidding or not!” – the question of an English journalist who, a bit too provokingly, asks if the situation in Italian football mirrored a widespread lack of legality in Italy as a whole; but does not avoid pointing out the lack of courage by some football players who

prefer not to speak their minds, both for fear of losing their popularity and as their clubs do not much appreciate “thinking” players. And right about that, to whom who asks what he thinks about Di Canio – still much beloved by the West Ham supporters – Lucarelli answers: “Even not sharing his political ideas, I admire him as a person ‘cause he talks his mind”.

“Here in England you get clapped even though you lose a match, whilst in Italy the daily life, simply going to shopping, it is not easy if your team is relegated to a lower division or just loses any match. You can always encounter anybody ready to offend you, or something worse...”. By these words the discussion reached its climax, with Lucarelli showing his concerns about the problems affecting the Italian football; on the Italian striker’s opinion there is one main cure: the education to defeat. This is a problem that, on our opinion, should be faced in a serious way by the Government, by football clubs, by the organised supporters and by journalists in particular; do not forget that some pseudo-journalists do nothing but exacerbating people on TV, radio and papers.

About his professional future he does not deny that there could be chances to leave Livorno at the end of the season “but this decision – Cristiano adds – will be taken by my manager only after the end of the Italian championship while I will be on holidays on a beach!”. “For the time being – the striker continues – my only interest is Livorno”. This could sound like an outward declaration, but the audience will already have understood that Cristiano Lucarelli speaks his mind and in fact he adds, half-jokingly, that one of the requisites that his potential future club should have is to let him think. And talk.

To point out that ANSA – the main Italian journal agency – has ununderstandably reported, after the lecture, that Lucarelli said that he would go to Fiorentina, something which is absolutely false. This is the kind of journalism that we would never like to read, that harms football, a journalism that in Italy puts the emphasis on where, supposedly, Lucarelli will play instead of reporting his lecture at the UCL: Lucarelli 99 – ANSA 0.

Forza Cristiano Lucarelli!

PS: Sorry English friends, but together with the lecture by Lucarelli, I would highlight another "lecture": the one that Milan gave a few days ago in Athens. Despite the problems in our football, on the pitch we have won both the World Championship and the UEFA Champions League: not that bad we think...

For further information:

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