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# **Gianluigi The Great**

**A 700 – word article**

**By**

**Hannah Lawrence**

Gianluigi Buffon will turn 39 tomorrow and incredibly he is still the number one goalkeeper for Juventus and Italy. Holding endless records and honours for his club and the national side, as well as attaining individual achievements, Buffon is a legend of the game and one of the greatest goalkeepers in football history.

Entering his 26<sup>th</sup> year in the game, Buffon has played his entire career in Serie A for only two clubs. For those who can remember and enjoyed the Channel 4 show 'Football Italia,' most English football fans would have first seen 'Gigi' playing for Parma on a Sunday afternoon when the programme would broadcast a top live Serie A match. It is hard to believe we are still watching this great Italian keeper three decades on from the days of James Richardson's quips on the show and seeing Roy Hodgson on the side line for Inter Milan. With seemingly the same shot stopping skills and stamina now as he had when he made his debut, Buffon's ability and fitness looks better than ever. It is looking increasingly likely this unique goalkeeper could play way past his 39<sup>th</sup> Birthday, and remarkably continue to do so at the top level of the game.

Starting his career in Serie A with Parma, Buffon played in the club's youth team for 4 years before making his first team debut in 1995 at the age of 17. He made 220 appearances for Parma before moving to Juventus in 2001, where in his first season with the club he realised his dream of winning the Italian league title. Within two years with 'The Old Lady,' Buffon had won another Serie A title, a Supercoppa Italiana and, on a personal note, he was named UEFA Best Goalkeeper in 2003. It was the start of a trophy and individual honours laden stay with Juventus which has so far seen him at the club for 16 years.

Holding the record for the most clean sheets in the history of Serie A with 275, and for the national side, 68, if you needed any proof of just how good Buffon is, this is it, along with numerous titles this world-class shot stopper holds; most penalties saved for Italy, longest run

in a Serie A season without conceding a goal, 974 minutes during the 2015-16 season, most Serie A goalkeeper of the year awards, the list just goes on and on.

Of course, winning more awards and lifting as many trophies as he can for Juventus as well as with Italy is the priority for Buffon, but with his stamina, high fitness level, and still one of the best in his position, Italy's number one must surely have his sights on playing well into his forties and maybe becoming one of the oldest goalkeepers in Italian football history. He certainly has the athleticism and ability to do this, however, Buffon has 7 years to go before he can over take goalkeeper Andrea Pierobon who was still playing for Italian side Cittadella at the age of 45. Albeit he was shot stopping in Serie B, and without the outstanding achievements of Buffon, but it still should be recognised as a great record and one Buffon would surely like to aim for and is more than capable of accomplishing.

In the hunt for his 8<sup>th</sup> Serie A title this season, it is a credit to Buffon that he has turned down moves to other top European clubs to stay in his native Italy and set phenomenal records that will go down in Serie A and world football history. I for one have thoroughly enjoyed following Gianluigi Buffon's career from the days of watching him on 'Gazzetta Football Italia' through to now, on digital television's sports channels, social media as well as numerous online sites. Times may have changed as to how we now watch the beautiful game, but one feature has stayed the same; Gianluigi Buffon's astounding goalkeeping skills, his determination, passion, and ability to keep on winning.