

JJ Gabriel

Match Report: Manchester United U18 vs Liverpool U18

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By Willam Rees

JJ Gabriel

Current club

Manchester United

Nationality

England

Best position

Left Winger/#10

Date of birth (age)

06/10/2010 (15)

Height

175cm

Foot

Both



Current level

U18

Potential level

Premier League Starter

Dribbling and carrying - *The ability to progress towards goal by dribbling past opponents in 1v1 and 1v2 situations and to carry the ball into better zones on a high tempo.*

- Elite ball control for his age, incredibly quick feet, touches are tight, and he can change direction instantly to unbalance defenders.
- Weaves through traffic with ease; used shot fakes and body shifts to beat multiple players on both of his solo goals.
- Carries the ball with purpose lots of his touches were forward-facing, always looking to beat his opponent 1v1.

Playmaking - *The ability to find pockets of space in between the lines, receive in an open body position, combine with teammates and use short passes to progress the ball into better zones.*

- Operated in pockets as a 10 and drifted wide when needed, showing good awareness of when and where space opened up.
- Didn't create much for his teammates today due to United dominating and him playing more as an individual attacking outlet, but he played with the right ideas and kept the ball moving.
- Scans frequently and adjusts his body orientation accordingly; he looked to have a strong understanding of passing combinations even if he wasn't creating for others.

Runs in behind – *The ability to make well-timed, high speed runs in behind to receive the ball in behind the defensive line.*

- Most of his threat came through balls to feet or in tight spaces, but he showed good timing drifting off the back shoulder when he moved into the winger role.
- Picks moments to slip behind defenders when the ball is central, but United's dominance meant most of his actions were played into his feet. He made a couple of decoy runs to open space for a teammate.
- Didn't act as a pure off-the-shoulder runner, preferred receiving in the pockets or facing defenders, and driving at them.

Final pass – *The ability to create high-quality opportunities for teammates with accurate final passes by using crosses, short passes and through passes.*

- Not heavily involved as a major creator for others as most of his creative actions were individual attacking moments.
- When he released the ball, it was usually accurate and sensible, but he didn't play many decisive passes. He also made a few passes that he didn't hit purely which ended up with loss of possession.
- More of a ball-progressor and finisher in this match than a chance-creator.

Creating and converting chances – *The ability to get into high-quality scoring positions and using different types of finishing techniques to convert chances relatively often.*

- Exceptionally clinical only took four or five shots and scored three, all difficult finishes and he was exceptional with both feet.
- First goal was a solo action created entirely through feints and shot fakes; second was a powerful right-footed strike after beating multiple defenders; third was a well placed finish from a cutback.
- Constant threat whenever he received between lines, defenders struggled to stop him without fouling.

Dynamic pressing - *The ability to correctly decide when to apply pressure and to correctly do so with a high approach speed, good deceleration and correct use of the body.*

- Out-of-possession contribution was fine — nothing really stood out, but he pressed when he needed and stayed engaged throughout the full 90 minutes.
- Showed willingness to work back even though the game didn't demand much defensive action due to the 7-0 scoreline.
- Approaches with good speed and energy, though still developing the physicality to make these actions more impactful.

Tracking back - *The willingness to support the own fullback, to sprint back once the ball is played past, and the ability to defend 1v1 and track overlapping or underlapping opposition fullbacks.*

- Tracked his runner when he needed to and his overall work rate was better than expected for a player this technical and young.
- Rarely in proper defensive duels because United controlled possession, but he carried out his responsibilities.
- Physically still developing, so he avoids heavy contact but he positions himself intelligently so he can avoid it.

Conclusion

JJ Gabriel showed why he's viewed as one of the most exciting young attackers in the country. Technically he was outstanding, his balance, tight control, and ability to glide past players made him the most dangerous forward on the pitch despite still being physically behind older opponents. His hat-trick was built pure individual quality and clean finishing. He plays with freedom, confidence, and a natural feel for the game that you usually see at the senior level. He stayed involved in and out of possession, and never shied away from taking responsibility. A performance that reflects both his talent and the trajectory he's already on at Manchester United.

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