

= Ryan Gauld =

Ryan Gauld ( born 16 December 1995 ) is a Scottish professional footballer who currently plays as an attacking midfielder for Portuguese club Vitória F.C. on loan from Sporting Clube de Portugal and the Scotland national under @-@ 21 football team .

He began his professional career at Dundee United , where he helped them reach the 2014 Scottish Cup Final and his abilities on the ball earned comparisons to Lionel Messi from the Scottish media . In July 2014 , he transferred to Sporting for a fee of around £ 3 million , and has mainly appeared for the club 's B team . Gauld also represented Scotland at under @-@ 19 level , and has been called up for their senior squad .

= = Early life = =

Ryan Gauld was born on 16 December 1995 in Aberdeen and grew up in Laurencekirk , Aberdeenshire , where he was a pupil at Mearns Academy .

In 2002 , Gauld began to play for Brechin City Boys Club ( now renamed Brechin City Youths ) , where he was part of a successful team alongside John Souttar and Euan Spark . The trio also developed their skills at coaching schools run in Dundee by Ian Cathro , before they all joined Dundee United 's youth system in 2006 at the age of nine .

= = Club career = =

= = = Dundee United = = =

Gauld made his Scottish Premier League debut as an 87th @-@ minute substitute for Johnny Russell in the final match of the 2011 ? 12 season , a 2 ? 0 win away to Motherwell on 13 May .

On 24 January 2013 , Gauld signed an extended contract keeping him at the club until January 2016 . Later on in the 2012 ? 13 season , on 1 April , he made his first start against St Johnstone at McDiarmid Park and marked the occasion with his first senior goal to open a game which ended 1 ? 1 .

On 4 November 2013 , during the 2013 ? 14 season , Gauld 's contract was further extended , to run until May 2016 . Five days later , he scored twice in a 4 ? 0 win against Motherwell at Fir Park . On 15 December 2013 , the Daily Record reported that Manchester United 's Scottish manager David Moyes wanted to personally " scout " Gauld , and take the opportunity to run the rule over the potential of other young Dundee United players such as defenders John Souttar and Andrew Robertson . However , the following day , also his 18th birthday , Gauld 's contract was further extended until May 2017 . Around the same time , he was being tracked by English Premier League pair Everton and Liverpool , Italy 's A.S. Roma and Spain 's Real Madrid .

On 12 April 2014 , Gauld played in the Scottish Cup semi @-@ final at Ibrox , as United defeated hosts Rangers 3 ? 1 to advance to the Final . He made the run into the penalty area from which Stuart Armstrong scored the opening goal , and assisted the second from Gary Mackay @-@ Steven . Five days later , he was shortlisted for the PFA Scotland Young Player of the Year award , which was eventually awarded to his teammate Robertson . In the Cup Final on 17 May , Gauld replaced Mackay @-@ Steven for the final 26 minutes as Dundee United lost 2 ? 0 to St Johnstone at Celtic Park . Gauld 's season ended with eight goals in 38 games across all competitions , of which six were scored in his 31 league matches .

= = = Sporting Clube de Portugal = = =

On 2 July 2014 , Sporting Clube de Portugal announced the signing of Gauld from Dundee United , for an undisclosed fee rumoured to be in the region of £ 3 million . He signed a six @-@ year contract with a ? 60 million buy @-@ out clause . He credited Sporting 's track record of developing

players such as Luís Figo , Cristiano Ronaldo and Nani for his decision to join them . Despite being put into the club 's B @-@ team , Gauld was named in the 25 @-@ man squad to play in the UEFA Champions League after impressing manager Marco Silva during training sessions .

He made his debut for Sporting B on 10 August 2014 , replacing Palhinha at half time in a 1 ? 0 defeat away to Farense . Seventeen days later , in his fourth match for the club , he scored for the first time , netting the second in a 3 ? 0 home victory over Desportivo Aves . On 7 December , he scored a second goal , opening a 4 ? 3 win at Lisbon neighbours Clube Oriental de Lisboa with a 20 @-@ yard volley . On 21 December , he was sent off for two bookings in a 3 ? 1 triumph at Vitória de Guimarães B. He finished the season with three goals from 26 games for the B @-@ team , the third coming on 7 February 2015 , when he equalised as the team came from behind to win 2 ? 1 against SC Olhanense .

Gauld made his debut for the first team on 29 December 2014 in a Taça da Liga game against Vitória S.C. , playing the full 90 minutes in a 2 ? 0 win . On his second start for the Sporting first team on 14 January 2015 , Gauld was named man of the match in a 1 ? 0 win in the same competition , against Boavista . Having been fouled by goalkeeper Daniel Monllor , he won the penalty converted by Junya Tanaka for the only goal . Four days later , he made his Primeira Liga debut , replacing André Martins for the last 25 minutes of a 4 ? 2 win over Rio Ave at the Estádio José Alvalade . Gauld scored twice for the first team in a 3 ? 2 defeat away to neighbours Belenenses in a Taça da Liga group game on 21 January .

In his second season in the Portuguese capital , Gauld scored his first goal of the B @-@ team 's campaign on 26 August 2015 , the only one of the away match at S.C. Covilhã in the 84th minute . He followed this on 12 September with a strike in a 4 ? 0 triumph at Oriental . Gauld matched his goal tally in Segunda Liga from the previous season on 3 October , when he opened a 1 ? 1 draw at FC Famalicão , and succeeded it on 28 November with his fourth goal of the campaign , assuring the same result at Gil Vicente F.C.

On 20 July 2016 , amidst interest from England 's Sheffield Wednesday , Gauld was loaned to Portuguese top @-@ flight team Vitória F.C. for the upcoming season , alongside his teammate André Geraledes .

= = International career = =

Gauld has been capped ten times at under @-@ 19 level , scoring two goals . He made his debut on 9 October 2012 against Armenia , replacing Matthew Kennedy after 66 minutes of an eventual 4 ? 0 win in a European qualifier at New Douglas Park in Hamilton . He scored his first goal on his fourth cap on 3 September 2013 , against Iceland at the Forthbank Stadium in Stirling , a 20 @-@ yard free kick to equalise in a 1 ? 1 draw .

On 6 November 2013 , Gauld was called into the Scotland under @-@ 21 squad for the first time , for the match against Georgia later that month . He scored his first goals for the under @-@ 21 team on his third cap on 8 September 2014 , a brace in a 3 ? 0 win away to Luxembourg at the Stade Municipal de Differdange , at the end of a failed European qualification campaign . On 30 September 2014 , Gauld was called up to the senior Scotland national football team for Euro 2016 Group D qualifying matches against Georgia and Poland , but did not play . On 10 October 2015 , Gauld was sent off for a foul on Marcus Coco in a 1 ? 2 2017 UEFA European Under @-@ 21 Championship qualification loss to France at Pittodrie in his hometown .

= = Style of play = =

Gauld 's ability on the ball , and his small and slight stature , led him to be compared to Lionel Messi , a comparison made by the British press since 2013 . At Dundee United , he was tutored by Ian Cathro , who favoured creativity and passing over the physicality often expected in Scottish football . After his transfer to Sporting , BBC Sport columnist Richard Wilson predicted that Gauld would be better suited to the style of football in Portugal , due to its slower tempo and its concentration on a passing game . Gauld himself has spoken of his preference for Portuguese

football over its Scottish equivalent , and expressed relief at the lower media interest in him at Sporting , opining that comparisons with Messi were exaggerated and premature .

= = Career statistics = =

As of 30 April