

Hall of Fame · Rank 01 of 20

McDonald Mariga

Inter Milan · Serie A · Midfielder



Portrait: Wikipedia — McDonald Mariga

AI score	Career appearances	Career goals	Kenya caps
80/80	213	14	40

Highest transfer fee

\$13.7m / KSh 1.05bn (February 2010). Transfer fee, Parma to Inter Milan — €10m, at \$1.37 to the euro and KSh 76.5 to the dollar.

Profile

Out of Nairobi, into Sweden

A holding midfielder who left Nairobi as a teenager for Sweden, first with Enköpings SK and then Helsingborgs IF, where 37 league games and six goals brought a Svenska Cupen winner's medal in 2006 and a move to Italy.

Italy — Parma and Inter Milan

Parma gave him 84 league appearances across three spells. Inter Milan signed him in January 2010 and he stayed four seasons, winning Serie A, the Coppa Italia twice, the Supercoppa Italiana, the UEFA Champions League and the FIFA Club World Cup.

Spain, and the last seasons

Loan and permanent spells followed at Real Sociedad in Spain, then Latina, Real Oviedo and Monza, before he retired in 2019 with 232 senior appearances and 14 goals.

Kenya

He won 40 caps for the Harambee Stars and scored five goals between 2003 and 2018.

The Wanyama family

He is the elder brother of Victor Wanyama, and the two are the best-known sons of Kenya's leading sporting family. Their father Noah Wanyama played in midfield for AFC Leopards and for Kenya. Mariga's siblings are Victor, Heskey, Harry, Mercy, Cynthia and Patricia — Mercy played basketball for Kenya and professionally in Spain. Mariga has since served as vice-president of the Football Kenya Federation.

Their father, Noah Wanyama

Noah Wanyama gave AFC Leopards sixteen years as a midfielder, played for Kenya, and later coached the club. He had started out playing barefoot in Busia. He never pushed his children into the game — by his own account he supported them once they chose it — but he took them to training with him, where they carried his kit bag, watched him work and played with the balls he brought home from the ground. The family lived in a shack in Muthurwa in those years, and he kept the house strict to keep them out of what was around them, banning boxing outright so no injury would cost them football. He has called fatherhood the game he set out to win, and his children's careers his cup. Mariga bought his parents a house in Lavington in 2010.

Their mother, Mildred Wanyama

Mildred Ayiemba Osotsi Wanyama, born in 1959 in Ebusiralo, was the making of it. A netball player herself, she rose to become president of the Kenya Netball Association while working at Kenya Railways as a clerk and later a senior housing officer, and served as an ordained associate pastor at the Church of God. Her children called her a strict disciplinarian and their loudest cheerleader; Mariga has credited her spiritual discipline for both brothers' European careers. She died on 14 June 2025 and was laid to rest in Soy, Uasin Gishu, in July that year.

Cup and continental record

Svenska Cupen with Helsingborgs IF in 2006. With Inter Milan: the Coppa Italia in 2010 and 2011, the Supercoppa Italiana in 2010, the UEFA Champions League in 2010 and the FIFA Club World Cup that December — four cup finals won in one calendar year.

Managers he played under

At Inter Milan he played under José Mourinho, who signed him in January 2010, and then under Rafael Benítez, Leonardo, Gian Piero Gasperini and Claudio Ranieri across four seasons; Philippe Montanier managed him at Real Sociedad.

Firsts and milestones

- He is the first Kenyan to play in and win the UEFA Champions League, part of Inter Milan's treble-winning side of 2009-10, and the first Kenyan to play in Serie A.
- Manchester City agreed a move for him in January 2010, but the transfer collapsed when his work permit and visa were refused, so he never played in England.

Did you know

He opened the door to the Champions League for a whole region

When Mariga came on as a late substitute against Chelsea in March 2010, he became the first Kenyan — and the first East African — ever to play in the UEFA Champions League. He was in the Inter Milan squad that won the competition that season, alongside Serie A and the Coppa Italia: the only treble in Italian football history. No Kenyan had reached that level before him, and every Kenyan who has since had a route to point at.

1st Kenyan and East African in the Champions League · 2010 Inter Milan's treble season · 3 Trophies won by that squad

Source: Reported in the Daily Nation and Global Voices — <https://nation.africa/kenya/sports/football/mcdonald-mariga-reflects-on-historic-treble-883926>

Did you know

Four men on a panel decided he could not play in the Premier League

In January 2010 Manchester City agreed a fee of around £7m with Parma. The only thing standing in the way was a British work permit, and the panel refused it: Kenya's FIFA ranking sat around 130th, far outside the top 70 the rules demanded. Kenya's Prime Minister Raila Odinga spent hours lobbying the Home Office and the FA on his behalf. Mariga has since said the seven-member panel voted 4-3 against him. A move to Harry Redknapp's Portsmouth had already collapsed on the same rule. Days later he signed for Inter Milan instead, and by May he had a Champions League winner's medal — the ranking of his country decided where he could work, not his ability.

£7m The fee Manchester City had agreed with Parma · 4-3 The panel vote that refused his work permit · 130th Kenya's FIFA ranking, against a top-70 rule

Source: "Four people decided I couldn't play in the EPL" — Pulse Sports —

<https://www.pulsesports.co.ke/story/four-people-decided-i-couldnt-play-in-epl-mcdonald-mariga-revisits-failed-man-city-move-2026032308534091901>

Did you know

Twenty-two acres in Busia, bought with European wages

The Wanyama Foundation, which he set up with his brother in 2018, is building a football academy on twenty-two acres at Nambale in Busia, designed to run formal schooling alongside professional training. Classrooms and offices went up first; the delay, he explained in 2025, was the pitch — they were levelling it properly rather than laying a surface that would fail in a few seasons. It is the facility neither brother had access to as a boy, built in the county their father came from.

22 acres The site at Nambale, Busia · 2018 The year the foundation was set up · School + club Education run alongside the football

Source: Mariga on when the academy will open — Pulse Sports —

<https://www.pulsesports.co.ke/story/mcdonald-mariga-reveals-when-wanyama-football-academy-in-busia-will-be-opened-2025060213192715029>

Career record

The first Kenyan to play in and win the UEFA Champions League, with Inter Milan in 2009-10. Around 232 career appearances and 11 goals across Tusker, Kenya Pipeline, Enkopings SK, Helsingborgs IF, Parma, Inter Milan, Real Sociedad, Latina and Real Oviedo. 40 caps and 5 goals for Kenya. Career appearances and goals reconciled against Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McDonald_Mariga)