



ANDREW ON WEDNESDAY

My 2016 team of the year

These are the 11 players that would make my 'football team' line-up for this year.

1 **Goalkeeper:** Undoubtedly, I would put Peppi Azzopardi in there. Not only because he has gained enough weight (!) to cover 65% of the 'lasta' but also because he keeps getting 'balls' thrown at him (and his programme) and you need to give it to the man – he has managed to weather the storm except for the occasional slip-up. Every goalkeeper needs to be sharp, reflective and able to deviate the onslaught – kudos to Peppi Azzopardi who has managed to do that for these last 150 years since *Xarabank* started getting broadcasted (well it feels like 150 years let's face it).

2 **Central Defender – Left side:** Minister Helena Dalli merits to lead the back line. She is one of the few ministers who remind us that this government has 'left' roots. She has defended the civil rights agenda tooth and nail and with an intensity that has been grossly undervalued. Most of her ministerial work has been unassuming and has gone unnoticed. Every defender needs to be fit, hard working and swift at responding and anticipating the moves of the opponent – Minister Dalli fits the bill.

3 **Central Defender – Right:** This position goes to Tenor Joseph Calleja. He takes the ball up the field and gets a go at it as well. Tenor Calleja manages to do that well. Apart from the fact that he has a towering physique he has managed to defend the love for classic music and kept our name floating around the opera houses. Every central defender is at the centre of attention and is in the right place at the right time – as long as there is a wide lens taking a shot you will most surely get the tenor in it with an 'impromptu' contribution.

4 **Left Back:** I would ask Magistrate Joe Mifsud the passionate, fervent, avid and fanatical Inter fan (I know you're a Juventus fan, just couldn't hold myself!) to play on that side of the field. Magistrate Mifsud comes across clearly in his sentencing that his ideology is grounded in striving towards the serenity of the community. He has grown as a person and in my opinion doing very well for himself. He has the ability to make good judgement, a crucial skill for magistrate and footballer alike. I have analysed many of his sen-

tences and they ooze community cohesion and respect. Maybe he quotes Pope Francis a bit too much for my liking but having said that his sentences are founded on humanity and social justice not vindictiveness and hatred.

5 **Right Back:** My choice of right back goes to MP Claudio Grech. He has managed to keep the right leaning positioning of the PN without over-doing it. He does remind us that the PN might have some ideology rushing through its veins founded on Christian Democratic principles that the party seems to be making a concerted effort to conceal (you could ask Edwin Vassallo about that). Claudio remains, as I've had numerous occasions to say during this year, one of the best MPs the Opposition has (even though I very much doubt this is appreciated within the party). Somehow, except for the occasional document and accompanying media reaction, he has been kept under wraps not to use a trump card (apologies for the pun) but because like many others I see in him a potential party leader, that is, if he doesn't get fed up earlier on. Like every wing back, Claudio has perseverance, ready to use all the width of play and is adventurous – contained by the rules of play.

6 **Holding midfielder:** Charles Miceli will take on this position. The role of every midfielder is to keep the ball as much as possible and to defend in strength and numbers when required. If there is one thing a good holding midfielder needs to have is his ability to read the game. I cannot think of anyone better than Charles to interpret the next move, lead the game plan and stand with it with conviction and commitment.

7 **Box-to-box midfielder:** Steve Hili should flourish here (yes, yes, who the hell is he). I've just read the book of this stand-up comedian based in the UK, 'State of the Nation'. Apart being entertaining it is probably one of the most insightful books I've read (that says it all!). His rendition of Maltese society can't get any better than that. Now a box-to-box midfielder would have an insatiable drive to run endlessly. His determination would be key but in all of this running every player in this role needs to think things through, and yes take the occasional risk.

He might leave the rear guard a bit exposed but this needs to be done by gut-feeling and good judgement. A good box-to-box midfielder needs to be able to build trust with his team mates. Steve will never make a Pogba at any stage in his life (sorry for bursting the bubble bro!) but he will take a shot at it and will hopefully manage to kill it. Steve's humour will keep us realising what a silly nation we tend to be.

8 **Attacking midfielder:** Archbishop Charles J. Scicluna is my choice of attacking midfielder (no I'm not 'short' of choices!). An attacking midfielder is a very important element in every football team. I know that if there is anything C.J.S. is good at, it surely isn't sports bless him. However, he remains, in my opinion, a valuable element in my choice of squad. An attacking midfielder is often torn between defending, managing and having a go at it. This Archbishop I'm sure has found himself in a number of conundrums this last year, and seems to love it. I've been told he turns to oxeye daisy's at times and makes a they-love-me-they-love-me-not prediction when he takes a dig at the Labour run Government before going at it – which he seems to do with baseness and waywardness. Much as I like the archbishop, he risks reminding us of Archbishop Gonzi, not only in terms of size, but also in attitude. It is increasingly important to have a Church leader who challenges the establishment and speaks his mind for once but maybe he takes his mission/vision a step too far. What I need to see is a bit of Pope Francis in him in 2017 and is ready to criticise the institution he leads; the parishes that are in shambles, the cult that is taking over spirituality, the haemorrhage of those that attend Mass, the social agenda that is being sold to the highest bidder (whether it is government or the private sector). An attacking midfielder goes forward but needs to chase the ball back as well.

9 **Wide midfielder, left:** If Prof Alan Deidun was 80 years old, I would aspire to be like him when I grow! However by and large he is my age. Deidun, as I affectionately call him, is a professor of international repute, grounded in the social agenda, a public intellectual and an academic

activist all in one (maybe that explains the 'hawsla'!) He does what he thinks is right, talks in the way he believes is adequate. As always the case a party and their brainwashed hogs and apologists will obviously find this situation threatening but Alan holds his ground. He will play wide will bring in the ball whatever the situation and whoever is this opponent. (I remember him playing for Barcelona, or was it Balzan, but he did his best, ran like mad, tried to create chances, put in the ball in the opponents' half and would chase every move he makes – *dak kien zmien Deidun!*). The wise midfielder is probably one of the most underrated roles in the game but is crucial when the game plan needs a change. Alan is one of my favourites much as we disagree on a number of issues.

10 **Wide midfielder right:** Rachel Portelli, this young lady who is developing her repute is my choice of Number 7. She is a diabetes sufferer herself but also a survivor. Midfielders are characterised by running the furthest, by being in the thick of the action, by finding solutions when everything has failed and this is what Rachel has been trying to do in her epiphany.

11 **Striker:** President Marie Louise Coleiro Preca will take the honours of the most prestigious player on the field of play. Like all other Presidents, President Marie Louise Coleiro Preca has managed to design a presidential role around her that has grown in stature. I believe that initially she tried to do a Cremona and went around streets expecting that everyone is happy that she got her appointment but in all truth in such roles people take their time to decide what they make of their leaders, because what matters is the test of time. Now in my opinion the current President had a slow start but with time she has grown in stature and stamanship. Her writings, appeals and official speeches are a clear indication that she is on the ball, focused and making good use of her time and role. Her appeals to decor in our political class, to challenge the way our communities relate to reach other are symbols we need in our community – raising €5.5 million tops it up.

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In-Saki Ing RADAW MALTA and 9.05am 'I quidam

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