

2018/2019



**LIGUE 1
PREVIEW GUIDE**

As Ligue 1 begins again, there is a rare air of expectancy. No, there haven't been the sort of blockbuster transfers of the likes of Kylian Mbappé or Neymar, just the usual flow of some of the league's best players to England and Spain, in the form of Malcom, Fabinho, Thomas Lemar, Issa Diop, and others. But there have also been a number of brilliant signings made under the radar, and given the recent record of French clubs in turning young players around for considerable profit, the league's official new slogan "The League of Talents" may be more apt than the casual observer may realise.

Paris Saint-Germain, of course, remain prohibitive favourites for the title, but have enough weaknesses, particularly at left back and in defensive midfield as new manager Thomas Tuchel toys with the idea of a back three. Still, though, this marks a decided summer of change for the champions, for whom Gianluigi Buffon is their only signing, a marked contrast from previous spending. Still, though, a full season of Neymar and further development from Kylian Mbappé should leave them well-placed to repeat.

Away from the capital, Lyon and Marseille haven't experienced much in the way of movement, with both clubs losing only a few spare parts, as Nabil Fékir's mooted move to Liverpool failed to come to fruition. The additions of Léo Dubois and Martin Terrier follow on from their recent trend (Lucas Tousart, Tanguy N'Dombélé) of buying young players from other clubs, hoping to reap the benefits by selling them on. Les Gones' attack should be scintillating, but a lack of depth at centre back and in defensive midfield remain a worry ahead of the Champions' League.

That could open the door for Marseille to be PSG's chief challenger, then, with Rudi Garcia's side offering much continuity, only adding reinforcement at centre back in the form of Duje Caleta-Car. The Europa League could again be an issue, as could consistency at centre forward, but France's best-supported side should continue the progress they have made since Frank McCourt's purchase of the club.

Elsewhere, Monaco are at it again, with Thomas Lemar and Fabinho making their exits, only to be replaced by a cadre of youngsters. Leonardo Jardim has worked wonders throughout his time in charge in Monaco, but is a top-three finish from the current squad too much of an ask? Rennes and Saint-Étienne have both improved their sides in the summer as well, and should figure prominently in the race for Europe, if not the Champions' League.

That these sides would spend is no surprise given the prizes on offer, but even the likes of Strasbourg (Matz Sels), Nîmes (Denis Bouanga), and Toulouse (Mathieu Dossevi) have looked to spend this summer, making the league's strength in depth much greater. This is further buoyed by a handful of new managers, with Miguel Cardoso (Nantes) and Patrick Vieira (Nice) among those best-positioned to make an immediate impact given the quality of their sides.

Finally, as ever, Ligue 1 looks to continue to be a superb incubator of young talent, with Sofiane Alakouch, Umut Bozok (both Nîmes), Jordan Siebatcheu (Rennes) and Olivier Boscagli (Nice) among the best in this regard. Whether it's discovering the next hot prospect or simply enjoying a break from the non-stop nature of the Premier League, Ligue 1 has something for everyone, and the season ahead should be as exciting as the last few!

--Eric Devin

Chief Features Writer, Get French Football News

*All squad information and player ages correct as of 6 August, 2018



AMIENS SC

LIKELY XI

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	Position	Points
2017/2018	Ligue 1	13th	45
2016/2017	Ligue 2	2nd	66
2015/2016	National	3rd	55
2014/2015	National	11th	41
2013/2014	National	6th	49

KEY MAN: RÉGIS GURTNER

Striker Moussa Konaté remains at the club, but the departures of Gaël Kakuta, Harrison Manzala, and Serge Gakpé mean that the team's attack could again struggle for goals. Last season, however, the team's defence was the league's fourth-best, and Gurtner, despite the odd moment of madness, was at the heart of much of that. Only Baptiste Reynet of Dijon made more saves last season, and only four goalkeepers had a better goals-against average. His distribution can be wanting at times, and his rushes off the line are occasionally ill-advised, but Gurtner remains one of Ligue 1's most underrated goalkeepers, a performance he will no doubt have to reprise if Amiens are to continue their stay in France's top flight.



AMIENS SC

SIGNING TO WATCH: JUAN FERNEY OTERO, ESTUDIANTES

Amiens signed Konaté after last season started for a club-record €3.5M, and the big Senegalese proved an ideal target man, netting thirteen times in just 28 starts. Thus, the signing of Otero comes as somewhat of a surprise, as Amiens would seem to be fairly set in the scoring department. However, watching film of the Colombian, one sees that he is not only effective leading the line, or playing off of a more natural centre forward, but also an adept wide player, using his pace and compact frame to press from the front whilst also being a fine taker of set pieces. With countryman Stiven Mendoza also in the fold for a full season, Amiens' attack could be vastly improved as a result of their investment in South American talent.

SQUAD ANALYSIS:

Last year, Amiens were one of several teams to surprise by punching above their weight, practicing an ethos of frugality and defensive solidity. While Christophe Pélissier's side didn't quite scale the heights of Montpellier or Nantes in battling for a European place, they nevertheless survived, and in comfortable fashion. Amiens should theoretically be able build on that this year, with a great deal of continuity in defence and midfield. Khaled Adénon proved a competent and reliable centre back, and the versatile Bakaye Dibassy was even more impressive, giving the manager a base upon which to construct his rather prosaic side. That continuity should serve Amiens well, but with the caveat that aside from Caen and Strasbourg, the competition has improved rather markedly, with the promoted sides already making canny moves in the market. Otero is an exciting signing, but the question for Amiens at present is now that Ligue 1 is accustomed to Pélissier's style, will maintaining the status quo be enough for survival?

STRENGTHS:

The defence will undoubtedly again be the peg upon which Amiens hang their hat. Veteran Issa Cissokho has departed but the regular back four of Dibassy, Adénon, Prince Gouano and Oualid El Hajjam all return, with Jordan Lefort back from a spell on loan at Quevilly. Konaté should again be a reliable focal point as a centre forward, and while midfield lacks much inventiveness, it will again play with the sort of resolute physicality and organisation (if not passing acumen) that made it an underrated part of the northern side's solidity.

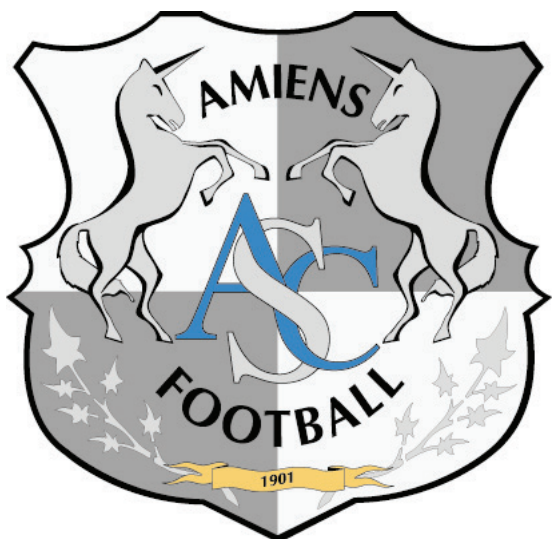
WEAKNESSES:

Konaté had a quietly solid season, but one would be remiss not to mention the part that Kakuta, Gakpé and Manzala played in his scoring record, through their link-up play and pace. Certainly Mendoza and Otero both have an exciting style of play, but don't necessarily project the sort of hard-working ethos that Pelissier's sides have relied upon. Elsewhere, Gouano must improve his discipline, as his three red cards last year were the most in the league, while lack of depth in midfield could yet be a concern with the departures of Guy N'Gosso and Emmanuel Bourgaud.

VERDICT:

Amiens were written off here last year, but stayed up comfortably, even with the sale of Tanguy N'Dombélé. However, as disciplined as Amiens were under Pelissier, much of their cause was helped by how poorly some rivals performed. This year's promoted teams are unlikely to be as abject as the sides they've replaced; Amiens will again have a fight on their hands.

PREDICTED FINISH: 18th



AMIENS

SC

SQUAD LIST

NAME	POSITION	NATIONALITY	AGE	AT CLUB SINCE	FORMER CLUB
Régis Gurtner	GK	French	31	2015/2016	Le Havre
Matthieu Dreyer	GK	French	29	2018/2019	SM Caen
Prince Gouano	CB	French	24	2017/2018	Atalanta
Jordan Lefort	CB/LB	French	24	2013/2014	-
Khaled Adénon	CB	Beninese	33	2015/2016	Vendée Luçon
Mathieu Bodmer	CB/DM	French	35	2017/2018	EA Guingamp
Bakaye Dibassy	LB/CB	Malian	28	2016/2017	Sedan
Julien Ielsch	LB	French	35	2015/2016	Red Star
Oualid El Hajjam	RB	French	26	2014/2015	-
Sekou Baradji	DM	French	34	2017/2018	-
Bongani Zungu	CM	South African	25	2017/2018	V. Guimarães
Thomas Monconduit	CM	French	27	2015/2016	AJ Auxerre
Eddy Gnahoré	CM	French	24	2018/2019	Palermo
Guessouma Fofana	CM	French	25	2015/2016	Lyon-Duchere
Mahdi Talal	CM/AM	French	20	2017/2018	Angers
Réda Rabeï	AM	Algerian	24	2016/2017	ES Wasquehal
Rafael Kurzawa	LW	Polish	25	2018/2019	Górnik Zabrze
Stiven Mendoza	LW	Colombian	26	2017/2018	Corinthians
Quentin Cornette	RW	French	24	2016/2017	Montpellier
Moussa Konaté	ST	Senegalese	25	2017/2018	Sion
Juan Ferney Otero	ST/LW	Colombian	23	2018/2019	Estudiantes
Matheus Casini	CF	Brazilian	22	2018/2019	-
Bachibou Koita	CF	Nigerien	24	2017/2018	-
Christophe Pélissier	Manager	French	52	2014/2015	Luzenac
Bernard Joannin	President	French	65	2011/2012	-

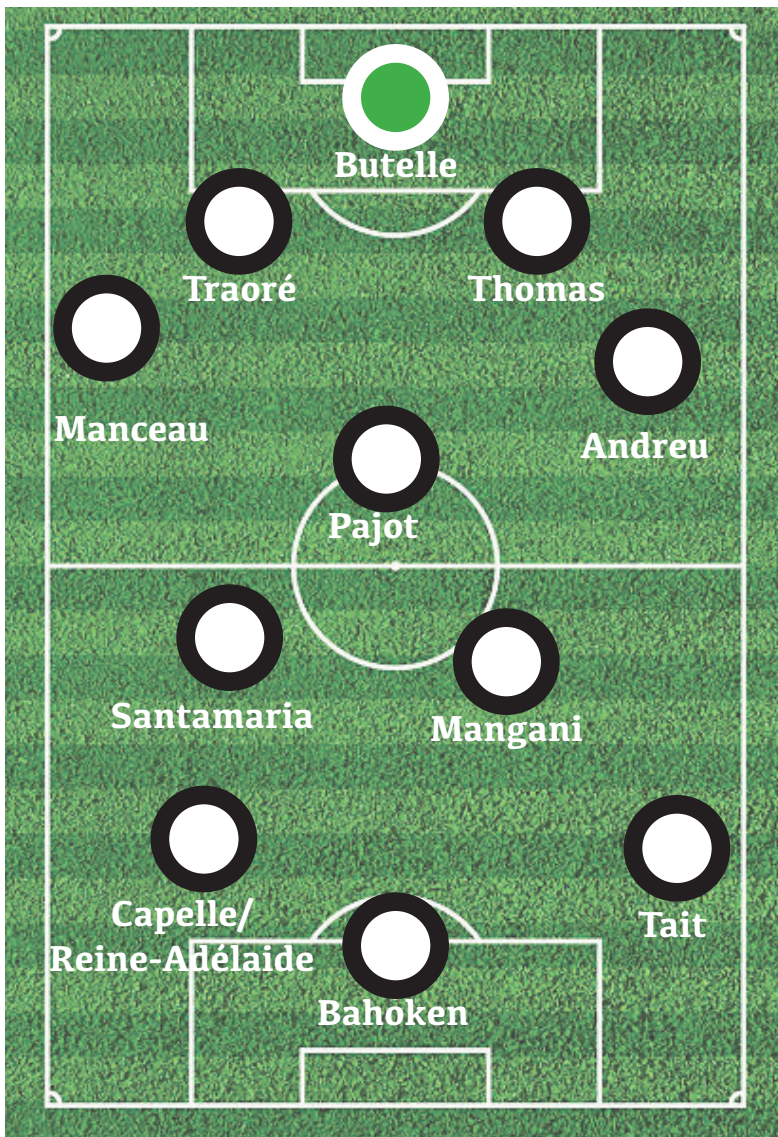


ANGERS SCO

LIKELY XI

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	Position	Points
2017/2018	Ligue 1	114th	41
2016/2017	Ligue 1	12th	46
2015/2016	Ligue 1	9th	50
2014/2015	Ligue 2	3rd	64
2013/2014	Ligue 2	9th	55



KEY MAN: FLAVIEN TAIT

Karl Toko Ekambi earned most of the plaudits in Angers' attack last season, but Tait sparkled once the Cameroonian was moved to a central position, allowing him to play on the left. In thirteen starts there, he registered four goals and three assists whilst maintaining the defensive work ethic for which Angers are known. Tait's versatility was key last season in allowing Angers to cope with injuries, but this season, he should be key to the team's creativity, easing the burden on Thomas Mangani. Mangani has a better range of passing, but Tait's more direct style, combined with his eye for goal, allows Le SCO to offer more variety going forward; his play may yet be the difference between relegation and survival.

ANGERS SCO

SIGNING TO WATCH: JEFF REINE-ADÉLAÏDE, ARSENAL

Reine-Adélaïde struggled with fitness after spending the second half of last season on loan in France, but when he was fit showed more than enough to impress veteran manager Stéphane Moulin. Skillful on the ball and with a good turn of pace, the youngster should be given every opportunity to replace Billy Ketkeophomphone on the right flank, allowing Angelo Fulgini to play in a more natural central role, with Angers perhaps moving to more of an orthodox 4-3-3 in the process. Reine-Adélaïde also is a fairly hard worker defensively, something which only makes sense in a Moulin side. Still only twenty, being a regular starter could see him finally start to fulfill the not-inconsiderable promise he has shown for France's various youth sides.

SQUAD ANALYSIS:

Clearly the elephant in the room is the departure of Karl Toko Ekambi to Villarreal; the Cameroonian was converted to a centre forward by Moulin and made a big splash in scoring 17 goals last season. His nominal replacement, Stéphane Bahoken, doesn't exactly inspire confidence, but Angers seem to lose a top-quality striker every year without missing a beat; one would be foolish to bet against them coping with the loss of Toko Ekambi. In the other direction, the arrivals of Harrison Manzala and Reine-Adélaïde add spark to the wings, while Vincent Pajot will restore no small level of combative spirit to the midfield after arriving from Saint-Étienne. Overall, Angers look set to maintain their solid defensive spine, and their young-ish midfielders, particularly Baptiste Santamaria and Angelo Fulgini, should benefit from another year's experience. A late departure (Romain Thomas?) could yet play havoc with their hopes of survival, but Moulin's penchant for organisation should see the team's time in Ligue 1 extended.

STRENGTHS:

No Ligue 1 manager in the recent past has done more with less than Stéphane Moulin, the veteran manager having kept Angers in the top flight despite consistently losing key players. In attack Moulin relies upon an experienced and combative back line, and even though the quartet of Ismaël Traoré, Thomas, Yoann Andreu and Vincent Manceau are another year older, they should again offer the short of consistency that is rare in the table's lower reaches. Midfield will also be improved with Vincent Pajot rejuvenated after a frustrating spell at Saint-Étienne.

WEAKNESSES:

Bahoken's goal return for Strasbourg wasn't awful, having netted six times in 18 starts, but Angers' style compared to that of his former team makes his acquisition somewhat confounding, especially with no real competition given the departures of not only Toko Ekambi but also Enzo Crivelli and Baptiste Guillaume. More is expected from the wide players this season, but Angers could find goals in short supply. Ludovic Butelle impressed upon his return to France, but isn't getting any younger, a concern shared with the back line as well.

VERDICT:

The attack does seem to be lacking in venom, but few would have expected Toko Ekambi to have the sort of breakout season he had last year. Moulin's knack for organisation and improving players should see Angers keep their heads above water, barring injury.

PREDICTED FINISH: 15th



ANGERS

SCO

SQUAD LIST

NAME	POSITION	NATIONALITY	AGE	AT CLUB SINCE	FORMER CLUB
Mathieu Michel	GK	French	26	2016/2017	Nîmes
Ludovic Butelle	GK	French	35	2017/2018	Club Brugge
Anthony Mandrea	GK	French	21	2017/2018	-
Romain Thomas	CB	French	30	2013/2014	Carquefou
Ismaël Traoré	CB	Ivorian	31	2015/2016	Stade Brestois
Mateo Pavlovic	CB	Croatian	28	2016/2017	Werder Bremen
Ibrahim Cissé	CB	French	22	2018/2019	Tours
Yoann Andreu	LB	French	29	2015/2016	Gazelec Ajaccio
Saliou Ciss	LB	Senegalese	28	2017/2018	Valenciennes
Rayan Aït Nouri	LB	French	17	2018/2019	-
Vincent Manceau	RB	French	29	2008/2009	-
Abdoulaye Bamba	RB	Ivorian	28	2016/2017	Dijon FCO
Baptiste Santamaria	CM/DM	French	23	2016/2017	Tours
Vincent Pajot	CM/DM	French	27	2018/2019	Saint-Étienne
Thomas Mangani	CM	French	31	2015/2016	Chievo Verona
Angelo Fulgini	CM/RM	French	21	2017/2018	Valenciennes
Jeff Reine-Adélaïde	RW	French	20	2018/2019	Arsenal
Pierrick Capelle	LW/RW/LB	French	31	2015/2016	Clermont
Loïc Puyo	CM	French	29	2017/2018	AS Nancy
Harrison Manzala	RW	DR Congolese	24	2018/2019	Amiens SC
Flavien Tait	AM	French	25	2016/2017	Chateauroux
Dorian Bertrand	AM	French	25	2018/2019	SO Cholet
Thomas Touré	LW	Ivorian	24	2017/2018	Bordeaux
Billy Ketkeophomphone	RW	French	28	2015/2016	Tours
Wilfried Kanga	RW	Ivorian	20	2017/2018	Paris S-G
Stéphane Bahoken	CF	Cameroonian	26	2018/2019	RC Strasbourg
Férébory Doré	CF	Congolse	29	2015/2016	Botev Plovdiv
Stéphane Moulin	Manager	French	50	2011/2012	SO Chatellerault
Saïd Chabane	President	Algerian	53	2011/2012	-



GIRONDINS DE BORDEAUX

LIKELY XI

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	Position	Points
2017/2018	Ligue 1	6th	55
2016/2017	Ligue 1	6th	59
2015/2016	Ligue 1	11th	50
2014/2015	Ligue 1	6th	63
2013/2014	Ligue 1	7th	55

KEY MAN: NICOLAS DE PREVILLE

De Prévile's arrival last season came late in the window, on the heels of an anemic exit from the Europa League. He failed to bed into the side, scoring just four times in the league despite being given ample time on the pitch. Part of his frustrations surely centred around not being the focal point going forward, with Malcom's propensity for individual displays being the team's method of attack. Now, with the Brazilian having departed, De Prévile should be given the reins of the attack, by being both a creative outlet and by scoring, influencing play through his ability on the ball and his movement off it. If he comes close to recapturing his best, Bordeaux should again be in the thick of the battle for Europe.



GIRONDINS DE BORDEAUX

SIGNING TO WATCH: ACADEMY PRODUCTS

Bordeaux have signed just one player permanently, meaning that most new faces will have to come from the team's academy. Jules Koundé was the first player to impress under Gus Poyet; Zaydou Youssouf and Aurélien Tchouaméni now look set to be given a long leash, with Youssouf scoring the match's only goal against Ventspils in the Europa League. Domestic competition is unlikely to be quite as obliging, but Poyet has no trouble upsetting the established order to give players in which he sees promise a chance, something he showed in playing Koundé ahead of Paul Baysse last season. Neither player (both are central midfielders) are likely to make anyone forget Malcom, but both have shown immense promise.

SQUAD ANALYSIS:

Youssouf Sabaly could join Malcom and Diego Rolan in heading towards the exit, and all three will surely be missed, but Gus Poyet now has a youngish side at his disposal, not unlike his time at Brighton, where his development of the likes of Ashley Barnes and Lewis Dunk saw him far surpass expectations. Alongside those youngsters, however, there remains a solid veteran spine with the experience of Jaroslav Plasil, Younousse Sankharé and Benoit Costil, meaning that Poyet isn't totally trusting his faith in a set of teenagers. Early progress in the Europa League hasn't exactly seen the team playing Champagne football, but a pair of narrow wins will surely go a long way to boost this team's confidence and keep them pushing the league's best sides for the European places. Bordeaux may not play the prettiest football in Ligue 1 this season, but the array of young talent on show means that Poyet's side will still be worth a watch.

STRENGTHS:

Again, the spine of this side, despite the age of Plasil, is vastly experienced, and won't be asked to do more than that with which they are comfortable, leaving the attacking burden to the front three and Tchouaméni. That should allow Bordeaux to strike a good balance, with the experienced Costil also likely to be an influential figure at the back. De Préville could well work his way into this section come the end of the season, if he can play with the confidence he had shown at Lille or Reims.

WEAKNESSES:

Like a handful of other sides in this guide, Bordeaux have a solid base with a great potential for improvement, but are still putting themselves at risk with so many young players being looked upon as important pieces. Lack of depth at fullback and defensive midfield with the departures of Sabaly, Jérémy Toulalan, Soualiho Meïté, and Diego Contento is also a worry, and if Bordeaux do spend this summer, one would hope it would be to bolster one or all of those positions.

VERDICT:

Bordeaux started last season under Jocelyn Gourvennec in fine form but the wheels came off after an embarrassing loss to Paris Saint-Germain in October. Poyet's arrival brought about a renewed level of focus, and while Bordeaux should continue to be hard-working and robust, the improvements made by other sides mean they are ultimately unlikely to return to Europe.

PREDICTED FINISH: 8th



GIRONDINS DE BORDEAUX

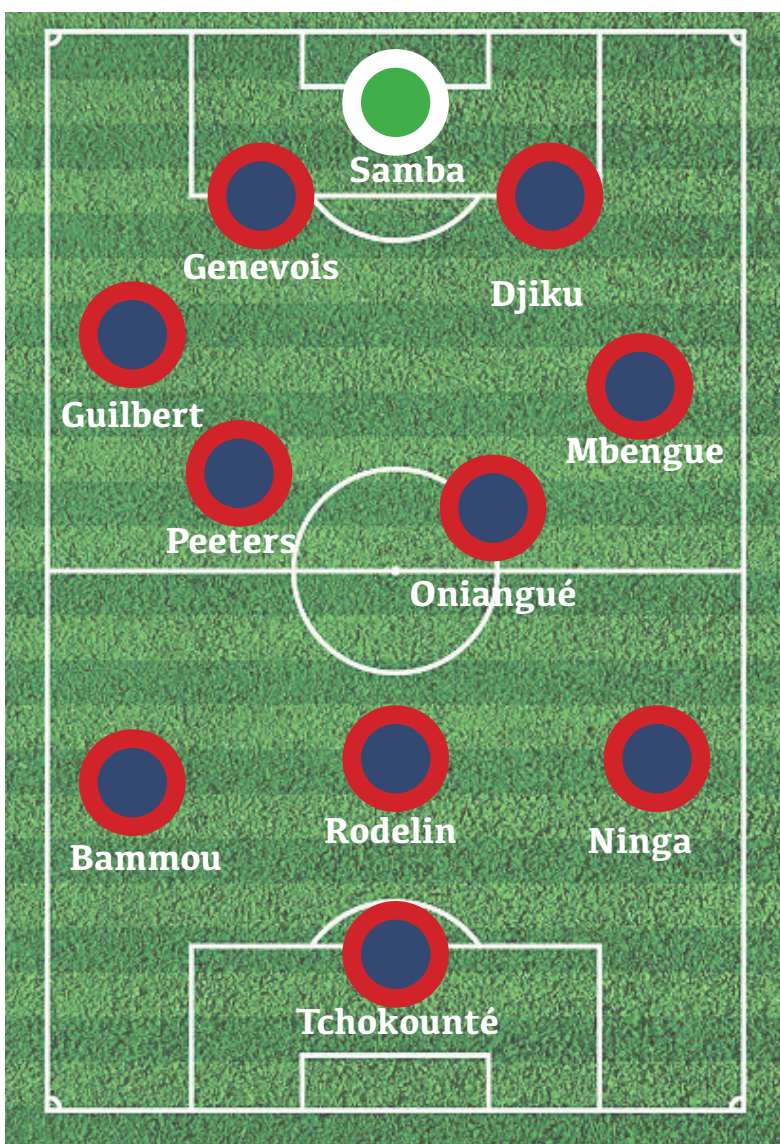
SQUAD LIST

NAME	POSITION	NATIONALITY	AGE	AT CLUB SINCE	FORMER CLUB
Benoît Costil	GK	French	31	2017/2018	Rennes
Jérôme Prior	GK	French	22	2014/2015	-
Gaëtan Poussin	GK	French	19	2017/2018	-
Over Mandanda	GK	French	19	2017/2018	-
Jules Koundé	CB	French	19	2017/2018	-
Vukasin Jovanovic	CB	Serbian	22	2017/2018	Zenit S. Petersburg
Pablo	CB	Brazilian	27	2015/2016	Ponte Preta
Paul Baysse	CB	French	30	2017/2018	Malaga
Igor Lewczuk	CB/RB	Polish	33	2016/2017	Legia Warsaw
Maxime Poudjé	LB	French	25	2011/2012	-
Théo Pellenard	LB/CB	French	24	2014/2015	-
Youssef Sabaly	RB/LB	Senegalese	25	2017/2018	Paris S-G
Milan Gajic	RB	Serbian	22	2015/2016	OFK Beograd
Otávio	DM	Brazilian	24	2017/2018	Atlético Paranaense
Lukas Lerager	CM	Danish	25	2017/2018	Zulte Waregem
Younousse Sankharé	CM	Senegalese	28	2016/2017	Lille OSC
Valentín Vada	CM/AM	Argentine	22	2014/2015	-
Jaroslav Plasil	DM/CM	Czech	36	2009/2010	CA Osasuna
Aurélien Tchouameni	CM	French	18	2018/2019	-
François Kamano	LW	Guinean	22	2016/2017	SC Bastia
Samuel Kalu	RW	Nigerian	20	2018/2019	KAA Gent
Jonathan Cafú	RW	Brazilian	27	2017/2018	Ludogorets
Zaydou Youssouf	RW/CM	French	19	2017/2018	-
Nicolas de Préville	CF/LW	French	27	2017/2018	Lille OSC
Gaëtan Laborde	CF	French	24	2014/2015	-
Alexandre Mendy	CF	French	24	2017/2018	EA Guingamp
Gustavo Poyet	Manager	Uruguyan	50	2018/2019	Shanghai Shenhua
Stéphane Martin	President	French	47	2016/2017	-



SM CAEN

LIKELY XI



FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	Position	Points
2017/2018	Ligue 1	16th	38
2016/2017	Ligue 1	17th	47
2015/2016	Ligue 1	7th	54
2014/2015	Ligue 1	13th	46
2013/2014	Ligue 2	3rd	64

KEY MAN: RONNY RODELIN

With so much flux around this team, it is no surprise that Rodelin is the key to Caen's survival. His form in 2017-18 wasn't as imperious as it had been in the season prior, but the former Lille man still was the difference in a handful of matches, and remains the club's only player capable of turning a match on his own. Ivan Santini has departed, to be replaced by a combination of Yacine Bammou and Malik Tchokounté, meaning that Rodelin's role looks to now be as more of a creative presence than a goal-scorer, having played most often as a number ten in preseason. However, he will have to be back to his very best if Caen are to survive the massive amount of squad churn which they have undergone this summer.

SM CAEN

SIGNING TO WATCH: MALIK TCHOKOUNTÉ, PARIS FC

Well-known to new manager Fabien Mercadal from their time together at Paris FC, the lanky Cameroonian has been prolific in his time in France's lower divisions, and even as he approaches thirty shows no signs of being unable to adapt his style of play as he moves up the ranks into Ligue 1. Deceptively quick, with a good first touch and the aerial ability one would expect from his frame, Tchokounté has been leading the line for Caen in their friendlies, and looks set to continue to do so as the Norman side start their season without Santini, last season's leading scorer. If Tchokounté can successfully bridge the gap to the top division in France, Caen's currently slim hopes of survival will receive a massive boost.

SQUAD ANALYSIS:

Caen's squad has been simply gutted this summer; the departures of Julien Féret and Rémy Vercoffre weren't entirely unexpected, and Youssef Ait Bennasser's return to Monaco was a given following the expiry of his loan deal, but coupled with the departure of longtime central defender Damien da Silva on a free to Rennes and the sale of Santini, the spine of this side is gone, as is the experienced manager, Patrice Garande, whose achievement in keeping Caen in Ligue 1 only looks more impressive in hindsight. His replacement, Mercadal, has a decent amount of experience, and impressed with Paris FC, but competing in a Ligue 1 which increasingly is divided between haves and have-nots looks a tall order. The arrivals of Bammou and Casimir Ninga add proven Ligue 1 talent to the attack, but the defence looks much more of an issue at present, particularly with Mercadal seeming to prefer a rather open 4-2-3-1 in the early going.

STRENGTHS:

Ronny Rodelin can be thrilling, and Tchokounté looks a motivated presence leading the line. Add to this Bammou and Ninga being given more opportunity than they had previously and the attack should provide for the odd moment of excitement. Adama Mbengue was one of Ligue 1's better left backs before being injured last season, and on the opposite flank, Frédéric Guilbert's rampaging style continues to be as compelling as ever. Mercadal will also do well to continue to develop the team's youngsters, including Jan Repas, Jessy Deminguet and Timo Stavitski.

WEAKNESSES:

Where to start? Goalkeeper Brice Samba looked a promising prospect at Marseille, but even a loan spell to Nancy failed to see him earn playing time. His lack of experience is a major question mark, as is depth in central defence, as Romain Genevois has been partnering Alexander Djiku in preseason. Midfield is also surely a source of worry, as new signing Prince Oniangué is decidedly a level below Ait Bennasser, while Stef Peeters will be forced to take on a more defensive role in Mercadal's re-tooled 4-2-3-1.

VERDICT:

Caen were never going to have an easy time of staying up, but the departure of Garande and so many experienced players makes relegation a near-certainty. Caen are unlikely to be as badly cut adrift as some sides have been in recent years, but anything more than thirty points would be a huge achievement for Mercadal.

PREDICTED FINISH: 20th



SM CAEN SQUAD LIST

NAME	POSITION	NATIONALITY	AGE	AT CLUB SINCE	FORMER CLUB
Brice Samba	GK	French	24	2017/2018	Marseille
Erwin Zelazny	GK	French	26	2018/2019	Troyes
Paul Reulet	GK	French	24	2012/2013	-
Thomas Callens	GK	French	19	2018/2019	-
Alexander Djiku	CB/RB	French	23	2017/2018	SC Bastia
Romain Genevois	CB/RB	Haitian	30	2016/2017	OGC Nice
Jonathan Gradit	CB	French	25	2018/2019	Tours
Issa Marega	CB	French	20	2018/2019	-
Adama Mbengue	LB	Senegalese	24	2017/2018	Diambars
Emmanuel Imorou	LB	Beninese	29	2014/2015	Clermont
Chaker Alhadur	LB	Comoros	26	2015/2016	Nantes
Yoël Armougoum	LB	French	20	2017/2018	-
Frédéric Guilbert	RB	French	23	2017/2018	Bordeaux
Mouhamadou Dabo	RB	French	31	2016/2017	Troyes
Ismaël Diomandé	DM	Ivorian	25	2016/2017	Saint-Étienne
Baissama Sankoh	DM/CB	Guinean	26	2017/2018	EA Guingamp
Stef Peeters	CM	Belgian	26	2017/2018	Sint-Trudense
Prince Oniangué	CM	Congolese	29	2018/2019	Wolverhampton
Jessy Deminguet	CM	French	20	2017/2018	-
Fayçal Fajr	AM	Moroccan	30	2018/2019	Getafe
Jeff Louis	AM/LW	Haitian	25	2015/2016	Standard Liège
Christian Kouakou	LW	Ivorian	27	2016/2017	Tours
Jan Repas	LW	Slovakian	21	2017/2018	NK Domzale
Ronny Rodelin	RW/AM	French	28	2016/2017	Lille OSC
Timo Stavitski	RW	Finnish	19	2017/2018	Rovaniemen Palloseura
Enzo Crivelli	ST	French	23	2018/2019	Angers
Casimir Ninga	ST/LW	Chadian	25	2018/2019	Montpellier
Yacine Bammou	ST/RW	Moroccan	26	2018/2019	Nantes
Malik Tchokounté	ST	Cameroonian	29	2018/2019	Paris FC
Fabien Mercadal	Manager	French	46	2018/2019	Paris FC
Gilles Sergent	President	French	59	2018/2019	-



DIJON FCO

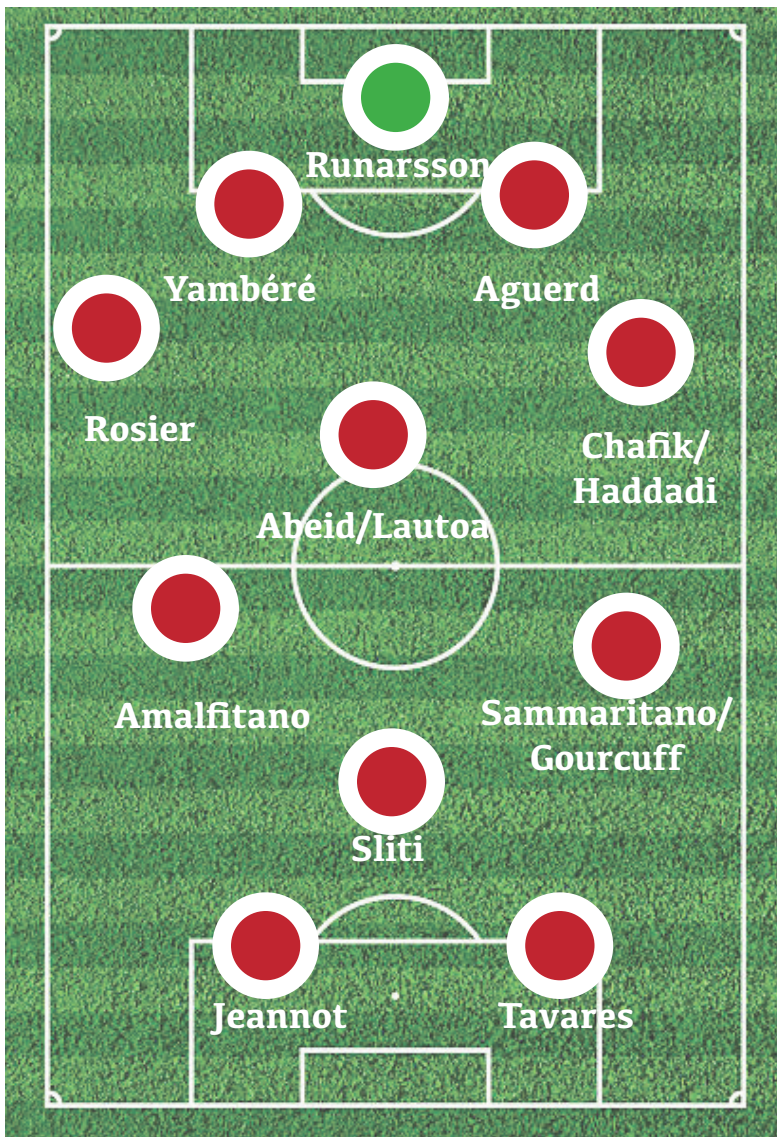
LIKELY XI

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	Position	Points
2017/2018	Ligue 1	11th	38
2016/2017	Ligue 1	16th	37
2015/2016	Ligue 2	2nd	70
2014/2015	Ligue 2	4th	61
2013/2014	Ligue 2	6th	57

KEY MAN: NAÏM SLITI

Sliti spent last season on loan with Dijon from Lille, and his option was picked up for a cut-rate €2M after contributing seven goals and six assists last season. He failed to sparkle at the World Cup, following a fine performance for Tunisia at the Africa Cup of Nations in 2017, but still looks capable of continuing the sort of performances which saw him in the Ligue 2 Team of the Season in 2015-16. Small but possessed of a wiry strength, Sliti thrived centrally last season, both in a 4-2-3-1 and in a 5-2-1-2, but is also capable playing wide on the left. The arrival of Yoann Gourcuff may mean his position is still to be determined, but his inventiveness will be key no matter where Olivier Dall'Oglio fields him.



DIJON FCO

SIGNING TO WATCH: RUNAR ALEX RUNARSSON, NORDSJAELLAND

The departures of starter Baptiste Reynet and his deputy, Benjamin Leroy, mean that a new 'keeper was Dijon's top priority this summer, and they seem to have done well with the signing of Iceland international Runarsson. Still only 23, he hasn't featured much for his country, despite his famous name but was named his club's player of the season as Nordsjaelland finished third. Runarsson is slightly undersized for a 'keeper, but shows no fear in coming off his line to punch or claim, and has fine reflexes, and above-average distribution. His handling needs some work, but he has all the makings of an above-average Ligue 1 'keeper, meaning that the superb (if overworked) Reynet may not be missed as much as some had feared.

SQUAD ANALYSIS:

Dijon under Olivier Dall'Oglio have consistently endeavoured to play attacking football, and the summer's signings, Gourcuff in particular, mean that little has changed in that regard. Certainly how Runarsson will adjust to life in Ligue 1 is no small matter of concern, but he seems to be acquitting himself fairly well in friendlies. Many key players are another year older, which is some source of worry, but in truth Dijon had bad luck with injuries last season, particularly in the form of Wesley Lautoa and Mehdi Abeid, who each missed close to half of the season. Though Chang-Hoon Kwon will miss much of the current season through injury, Dijon's acquisitions last season in the form of Cédric Yambéré and Papy Djilobodji proved canny enough in defence, and there is hope that Nayef Aguerd and Senou Coulibaly, despite a seeming lack of pedigree, can replicate that, allowing Lautoa to either play as part of a back three or move into a central midfield that looks to be lacking depth.

STRENGTHS:

The attack, particularly once Kwon returns from injury, will be dangerous, with Sliti clearly earmarked as the focal point, even with the arrival of Gourcuff. Julio Tavares, Wesley Saïd and Benjamin Jeannot are a capable enough set of forwards, and new signing Jules Keita, late of Bastia, adds a wicked turn of pace and fine ability on the ball. The three fullbacks, Fouad Chafik, Valentin Rosier and Oussama Haddadi are all also capable, though Dall'Oglio's recent experiments with playing Chafik on the left bear watching as to how well that switch succeeds.

WEAKNESSES:

Dijon's midfield struggled last season to evince much dynamism, and Dall'Oglio has tried to reconcile that by playing a 4-3-3 with Frédéric Sammaritano central, adding creativity. This role should eventually go to Gourcuff, but neither inspires confidence in terms of their injury record or defensive workrate. The central defence came off well enough last season, but Aguerd and Coulibaly lack the level of experience of Djilobodji or Cédric Varrault, meaning that Runarsson might be kept as busy as Reynet, who comfortably led Ligue 1 in saves last season.

VERDICT:

Dijon always look to be rickety at the back, but their penchant for flair and Dall'Oglio's ability to get the best out of his attacking players continues to impress. The club doubled down on their manager, recently giving him an extension, and particularly once Kwon returns, this team should have just enough goals to stay up.

PREDICTED FINISH: 17th



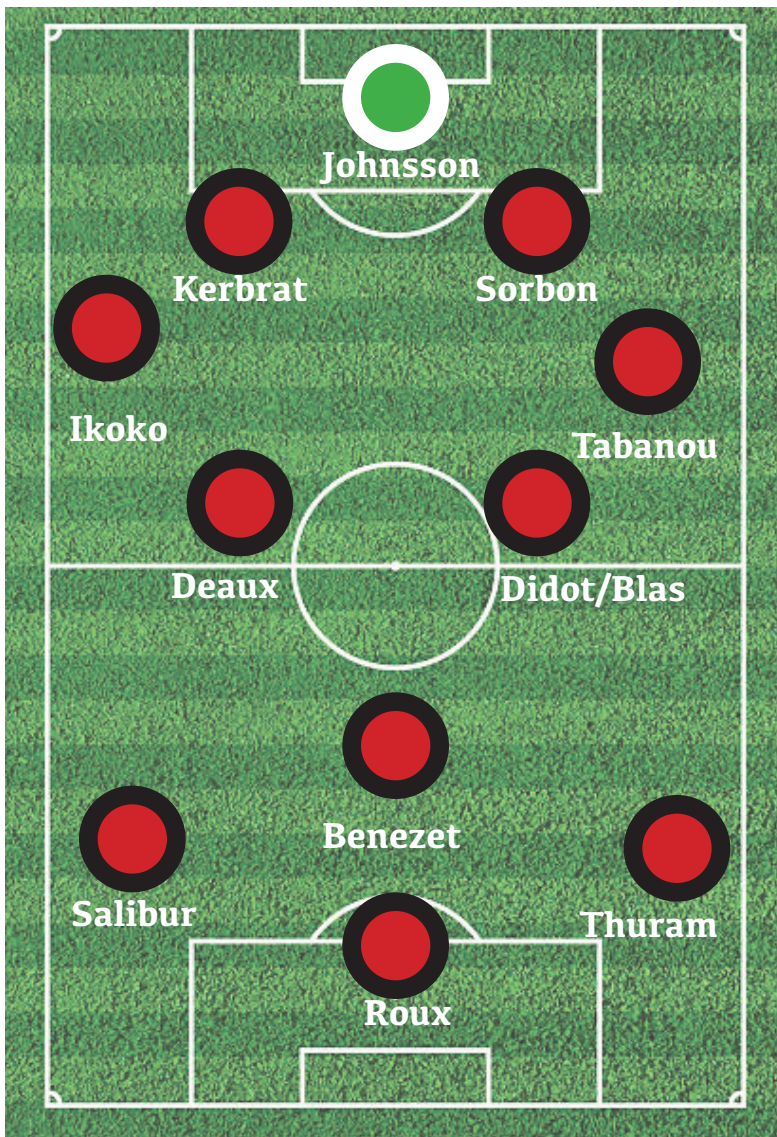
DIJON FCO SQUAD LIST

NAME	POSITION	NATIONALITY	AGE	AT CLUB SINCE	FORMER CLUB
Runar Alex Rúnarsson	GK	Icelandic	23	2018/2019	Nordsjaelland
Bobby Allain	GK	French	26	2016/2017	Red Star
Lévi Ntumba	GK	French	17	2018/2019	-
Arnold Bouka Moutou	LB	Congolese	28	2016/2017	Angers SCO
Oussama Haddadi	LB	Tunisian	26	2015/2016	Club Africain
Wesley Lautoa	CB	French	30	2017/2018	Lorient
Cédric Yambéré	CB	French	27	2017/2018	Bordeaux
Nayef Aguerd	CB	Moroccan	22	2018/2019	FUS Rabat
Senou Couilbaly	CB	French	23	2018/2019	FC Mantes
Fouad Chafik	RB/LB	Moroccan	31	2016/2017	Stade Lavallois
Mickaël Alphonse	RB	French	29	2018/2019	Sochaux
Valentin Rosier	RB	French	21	2016/2017	Rodez AF
Jordan Marie	DM	French	26	2013/2014	-
Enzo Loiodice	CM	French	17	2018/2019	-
Mehdi Abeid	CM	Algerian	26	2016/2017	Panathanaikos
Romain Amalfitano	CM	French	28	2014/2015	Newcastle
Florent Balmont	CM	French	38	2016/2017	LOSC Lille
Yoann Gourcuff	CM/AM	French	32	2018/2019	Rennes
Frédéric Sammaritano	LW	French	32	2015/2016	AJ Auxerre
Naïm Sliti	LW	Tunisian	26	2018/2019	LOSC Lille
Jules Keita	LW	Guinean	20	2018/2019	-
Chang-Hoon Kwon	LW/AM	Korean	24	2016/2017	Suwon Bluewings
Julio Tavares	ST	Cape Verdean	29	2012/2013	Bourg-Peronnas
Benjamin Jeannot	ST	French	26	2017/2018	Lorient
Wesley Said	ST/LW	French	23	2017/2018	Rennes
Olivier Dall'Oglio	Manager	French	54	2012/2013	Olympique Ales
Olivier Delcourt	President	French	50	2012/2013	-



EA GUINGAMP

LIKELY XI



FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	Position	Points
2017/2018	Ligue 1	12th	47
2016/2017	Ligue 1	16th	50
2015/2016	Ligue 1	16th	44
2014/2015	Ligue 1	10th	49
2013/2014	Ligue 1	16th	42

KEY MAN: MARCUS THURAM

Prior to Thuram's arrival from Sochaux, Ludovic Blas and Marcus Coco were Guingamp's youngsters to watch. With neither progressing last season, Thuram took on that role, making real strides under Antoine Kombouaré, despite the odd bump in the road as he adjusted to the pace of Ligue 1. Whether playing wide on the left, leading the line on his own or providing a foil for Jimmy Briand, his industry made him the ideal complement for the former Lyon player. Nolan Roux should take Briand's place centrally, but Thuram's energy and physicality make him, rather than Yannis Salibur or Nicolas Benezet, Guingamp's key attacker, and likely the difference between a relegation battle and a top-half finish.

EA GUINGAMP

SIGNING TO WATCH: NOLAN ROUX, FC METZ

Late of Metz, the peripatetic Roux joins his sixth professional club in Guingamp, despite having only turned thirty in March. His spells at the more ambitious likes of Lille and Saint-Étienne were less than successful, but he has offered a decent level of scoring both last season (albeit with relegated Metz) and at Brest earlier in his career. Guingamp are neither challenging for Europe nor scrapping for relegation; Roux is thus unlikely to surpass or equal the fifteen-goal season as he had for Les Grenats, but should better the paltry four goals he recorded for Sainté two years ago.

SQUAD ANALYSIS:

Guingamp continue to sustain themselves in Ligue 1 on the cheap, and this summer has been no exception, with the arrival of Roux on a free their only notable transfer move to date. That they couldn't keep hold of Grenier, who looked revived, if not back to his form of four or five seasons ago, will disappoint, combined with Jimmy Briand's departure, but this side's combination of experience and solidity in defence with just enough flair should allow them to finish comfortably mid-table. The investments made by the likes of Saint-Étienne and Rennes mean that battling for Europe is unlikely, barring breakout seasons from their cadre of young players, with Jérémy Livolant the latest to join Blas, Coco and Thuram in the first team. Depth in defence and midfield are slight concerns, as Kombouaré doesn't seem to trust Lebogang Phiri or Felix Eboa Eboa, but the versatile Lucas Deaux can be a linchpin in both areas, having played at centre back at Nantes.

STRENGTHS:

Guingamp played fantastic football at times last year, particularly after the arrival of Clément Grenier; the departures of the former France international and Briand mean that while there will be less flair in this side's approach, Kombouaré can once again call on a veteran spine, with the acquisition of Roux adding even more experience. Lucas Deaux, the ageless Étienne Didot and the defensive duo of Jérémy Sorbon and Christophe Kerbrat aren't getting any younger, but they and 'keeper Karl-Johan Johnsson will offer Guingamp a strength uncommon in mid-table.

WEAKNESSES:

Roux sparkled at Metz, and has always been a willing worker, but one strong season doesn't inspire confidence in his continued production going forward. Salibur, Benezet, Yeni N'Gbakoto, and Thuram are all exciting attackers, to be sure, but none are exactly known for the scoring prowess, meaning that goals could be hard to come by this season. Too, while Guingamp have plenty of experience, age is a matchless foe, and a long season could exert undue pressure on the likes of Sorbon and Didot, both 35 before the campaign starts.

VERDICT:

The axiom about standing still being equivalent to moving backwards doesn't seem to apply to Guingamp, who continue to approach the game in prosaic fashion whilst relying on a team largely built by Jocelyn Gourvennec. Relegation would be a shock, as would a battle for the European places, but for where this club was a decade ago, mid-table security is its own reward.

PREDICTED FINISH: 12th



EA GUINGAMP SQUAD LIST

NAME	POSITION	NATIONALITY	AGE	AT CLUB SINCE	FORMER CLUB
Marc-Aurele Caillard	GK	French	24	2017/2018	Clermont
Karl-Johan Johnsson	GK	Swedish	28	2016/2017	Randers
Denis Petric	GK	Serbian	30	2017/2018	Angers
Franck Tabanou	LB	French	29	2017/2018	Swansea City
Pedro Rebocho	LB	Portuguese	23	2017/2018	Benfica
Felix Eboa Eboa	CB	Cameroonian	21	2017/2018	Paris S-G
Jeremy Sorbon	CB	French	35	2013/2014	SM Caen
Djegui Koita	CB	French	19	2018/2019	-
Christophe Kerbrat	CB/RB	French	32	2011/2012	Plabennecois
Jordan Ikoko	RB	DR Congolese	24	2016/2017	Paris S-G
Cheikh Traoré	RB	French	23	2017/2018	Chateauroux
Lebogang Phiri	CM	South African	23	2017/2018	Brondby
Lucas Deaux	DM	French	29	2016/2017	Gent
Ludovic Blas	CM	French	20	2015/2016	-
Etienne Didot	CM	French	35	2016/2017	Toulouse
Yannis Salibur	RW	French	27	2015/2016	Clermont
Yeni N'Gbakoto	RW	DR Congolese	26	2018/2019	QP Rangers
Nicolas Benezet	LW/AM	French	27	2015/2016	Evian TG
Abdoul Camara	LW/AM	Guinean	28	2017/2018	Derby
Marcus Coco	LW	French	22	2015/2016	-
Jimmy Briand	CF	French	33	2015/2016	Hannover 96
Nolan Roux	CF	French	30	2018/2019	Metz
Marcus Thuram	LW/CF	French	21	2017/2018	Sochaux
Nathaël Julan	CF	French	22	2017/2018	Le Havre
Antoine Kombouaré	Manager	French	54	2016/2017	Lens
Bertrand Desplat	President	French	48	2010/2011	-



LILLE OSC

LIKELY XI

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	Position	Points
2017/2018	Ligue 1	17th	38
2016/2017	Ligue 1	11th	46
2015/2016	Ligue 1	5th	60
2014/2015	Ligue 1	8th	56
2013/2014	Ligue 1	3rd	71



KEY MAN: NICOLAS PEPE

It took a while for Pépé to find form after arriving from Angers for an eye-watering €10M, but his return of thirteen goals as a wide player was truly impressive. Much of that was down to the ability of Christophe Galtier to install a system that used a more physical centre forward as a foil for Pépé, in the form of Lébo Mothiba. Now, with Loic Rémy and Jonathan Bamba into the side, Lille have goals across their forward line, and Pépé looks to be afforded even more space in that configuration. His passing and decision-making still need improvement, to be sure, as does his defensive work rate, but Pépé just about singlehandedly saved Lille's season in 2017-18 and now looks to push Les Dogues even further.

LILLE OSC

SIGNING TO WATCH: LOÏC RÉMY, LAS PALMAS

Rémy's early days of promise haven't panned out as planned; he had one blistering season at Newcastle, but his career since leaving France has been marked by seemingly as many transfers as goals. Even a spell at Las Palmas, a Spanish side known for their relatively high-octane style of play, seemed to do little to re-ignite his career. At 31, Rémy isn't one for the glue factory, but neither is he so young that he can expect to be given further chances in Europe's top leagues. Galtier is one of the very best at organisation, but he has also rejuvenated the seemingly stalled careers of no small number of attacking players, including Brandão and Max-Alain Gradel. Whatever ability there is left in Rémy, Galtier is surely the ideal to bring it out of him.

SQUAD ANALYSIS:

From relegation candidate to European contender, it would appear that in placing Lille even in the top half of the table would be taking an outsize appreciation of Galtier's managerial abilities. Sure, he was superb within limited means at Saint-Étienne, but this Lille side seem to lack the focus and superb individual defenders that he had at his disposal at the Geoffroy-Guichard. It is true that there is no equivalent to Loïc Perrin among Lille's ranks, but the summer signings look canny indeed, with Jonathan Bamba on a free potentially being the biggest bargain in France this summer. Add in the experience of José Fonte and the dynamism of Xeka to replace the departed Yves Bissouma and one can make the argument that this is now a more balanced and experienced squad, and that with Galtier having had a summer to install his methods, a real opportunity awaits Les Dogues.

STRENGTHS:

The two wide players, Pépé and Bamba, are some of Ligue 1's most exciting, even if they are still improving their decision making. Their deputies, including Jonathan Ikoné, Anwar El Ghazi, and Luiz Araujo aren't far behind, either; Lille have one of Ligue 1's deepest set of attackers, even if quality and consistency can be lacking. Central defence looks to be improved by the arrival of Fonte and the return to full fitness of captain Adama Soumaoro, with decent depth there as well.

WEAKNESSES:

Is everywhere else an option? The two young goalkeepers, Mike Maignan and Hervé Koffi both have a rick in them, even as they continue to improve, while the fullbacks, despite evincing a great deal of promise, are also callow and suspect defensively. Midfield is full of potential, but lacks any measure of depth or experience; the loss of Bissouma, who sparkled after Galtier's arrival shouldn't be undersold, even as Xeka returns from a loan spell at Dijon in which he impressed before being benched after not being allowed to return to Lille.

VERDICT:

Despite some pessimism, Galtier has been there before, and this team, with its pace on the wings and capable, if not superb defenders, will be able to hit teams on the counter successfully. It would be foolhardy to expect as much success this season as he'd had with Sainté but a comfortable top half finish seems reasonable.

PREDICTED FINISH: 7th



LILLE

OSC

SQUAD LIST

NAME	POSITION	NATIONALITY	AGE	AT CLUB SINCE	FORMER CLUB
Mike Maignan	GK	French	23	2015/2016	PSG
Adam Jakubec	GK	Slovakian	21	2017/2018	Spartak Trnava
Hervé Kouakou Koffi	GK	Burkinabé	21	2017/2018	ASEC Mimosas
Youssef Koné	LB	French	23	2015/2016	-
Hamza Mendyl	LB	Moroccan	20	2016/2017	-
Fodé Ballo-Touré	LB	French	21	2017/2018	PSG B
Edgar Ié	CB/RB	Portuguese	24	2017/2018	Belenenses
Junior Alonso	CB/LB	Paraguayan	25	2016/2017	Cerro Porteno
José Fonte	CB	Portuguese	34	2018/2019	Dailian Yifang
Gabriel	CB	Brazilian	20	2016/2017	Avai
Adama Soumaoro	CB	French	26	2011/2012	-
Kouadio-Yves Dabila	CB	Ivorian	20	2017/2018	AS Monaco
Zeki Celik	RB	Turkish	21	2018/2019	Istanbulspor
Thiago Mendes	DM	Brazilian	26	2017/2018	Sao Paulo
Arton Zekaj	DM	Serbian	18	2018/2019	FK Sopot
Thiago Maia	CM	Brazilian	21	2017/2018	Santos
Xeka	CM/DM	Portuguese	23	2016/2017	Braga
Fares Bahlouli	AM	French	23	2016/2017	AS Monaco
Anwar El Ghazi	RW/LW	Dutch	23	2016/2017	Ajax
Nicolas Pepé	RW/ST	Ivorian	23	2017/2018	Angers SCO
Luiz Araujo	LW/RW	Brazilian	21	2017/2018	Sao Paulo
Yassine Benzia	ST/AM	French	23	2015/2016	Lyon
Jonathan Ikoné	AM/LW	French	20	2018/2019	Paris S-G
Jonathan Bamba	RW/ST	French	22	2018/2019	Saint-Étienne
Imad Faraj	RW	French	19	2017/2018	-
Lebo Mothiba	ST	South African	22	2018/2019	-
Loïc Rémy	ST	French	31	2018/2019	Las Palmas
Christophe Galtier	Manager	French	51	2017/2018	Saint-Étienne
Gérard Lopez	President	Spanish	46	2016/2017	Fola Esch



OLYMPIQUE LYONNAIS

LIKELY XI

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	Position	Points
2017/2018	Ligue 1	3rd	78
2016/2017	Ligue 1	4th	67
2015/2016	Ligue 1	2nd	65
2014/2015	Ligue 1	2nd	75
2013/2014	Ligue 1	5th	61



KEY MAN:

MEMPHIS DEPAY

As influential and dynamic as Nabil Fékir was last season, the Dutchman's second half of the season was beyond description, earning him consideration for the league's player of the season award, despite a middling 2017. With Fékir back late from the World Cup and likely to be disappointed or distracted after his failed move to Liverpool, manager Bruno Génésio will look to Depay to be the team's focal point in attack in the early going, and perhaps throughout the season. He showed his ability to play a variety of positions successfully and whether Lyon play a midfield diamond or a 4-3-3, the former Manchester United man should be able to make a significant impact, giving Lyon's attack the potential to push for the title.

OLYMPIQUE LYONNAIS

SIGNING TO WATCH: MARTIN TERRIER, LILLE OSC

Terrier was superb for Strasbourg in the season's early going last year, thriving in Thierry Laurey's attack-minded diamond as either a number ten or as one of the two strikers. Injuries dogged the second half of his season, but his form for Lyon in the club's friendlies has been imperious and he may even have played his way into the starting eleven, at least until Fékir is back up to full speed, with Depay playing as the number ten in that case. Quick, with a deceptively wiry strength and good with either foot, even if Terrier isn't a fixture in the starting eleven, his ability to play multiple positions and impact a match from the bench means he will be an improvement on the likes of Maxwell Cornet as Génésio's best bench option in attack.

SQUAD ANALYSIS:

With Fékir looking to have extended his stay at the Parc OL, Lyon have almost an embarrassment of riches in attack, and if the match were played solely in the opponent's final third, it would be they, and not Paris Saint-Germain who would be prohibitive favorites for the title. However, that is clearly not the case, and despite Lyon's second string of attackers likely being good enough to qualify for Europe in Ligue 1, there remains serious doubts over the side's depth, particularly in defence with the departure of Mouctar Diakhaby. The youngster hardly excelled when given a chance, but his move to Valencia leaves Lyon looking thin indeed if the team can't pull off the capture of Yerry Mina from Barcelona. The midfield and fullback positions are well-stocked, but there is also an issue of depth in defensive midfield, where Lucas Tousart seemed exhausted last season, and in goal, meaning that Lyon will likely fall off the pace at some point.

STRENGTHS:

Attack, attack, attack. Lyon not only scored a whopping 87 goals last season, they had four players reach double digits in the league, in Bertrand Traoré, Fékir, Depay and Mariano Diaz. Adding Terrier, who has shown from his time with Les Espoirs that he has the potential to be as potent, means that in terms of depth and versatility, Lyon have arguably the league's best attack, with their dynamic young midfield not far behind. Anthony Lopes is also Ligue 1's best 'keeper, despite the odd rick; Lyon should be able to genuinely push for the title this year.

WEAKNESSES:

Defensive midfield and centre back are prime issues, depth-wise; even if Mina is signed, a fourth centre back is needed, given the team's Champions' League campaign. There is also still no orthodox defensive midfielder to spell Tousart. Pape Chiekh Diop and Christopher Martins Pereira are intriguing options, but neither has yet to really convince; a potential injury to the former Valenciennes man would derail Lyon's ambitions, however modest. Mathieu Gorgelin is simply not of a Ligue 1 standard in goal and one feels Lyon have missed a trick there.

VERDICT:

Lyon may spring a late surprise in the form of Mina or another defender to shore up their defence and could make a genuine title challenge, but the feeling here is that with Marseille not in the Champions' League, Les Gones will struggle to match their Olympic rivals domestically as both chase PSG.

PREDICTED FINISH: 3rd



OLYMPIQUE LYONNAIS

SQUAD LIST

NAME	POSITION	NATIONALITY	AGE	AT CLUB SINCE	FORMER CLUB
Anthony Lopes	GK	Portuguese	27	2011/2012	-
Mathieu Gorgelin	GK	French	27	2011/2012	-
Anthony Racioppi	GK	French	19	2018/2019	-
Fernando Marcal	LB	Brazilian	29	2017/2018	Benfica
Ferland Mendy	LB	French	23	2017/2018	Le Havre
Jeremy Morel	CB/LB	French	34	2015/2016	Marseille
Mapou Yanga Mbiwa	CB	French	29	2015/2016	AS Roma
Oumar Solet	CB	French	18	2018/2019	Stade Lavallois
Marcelo	CB	Brazilian	31	2017/2018	Besiktas
Léo Dubois	RB	French	23	2018/2019	Nantes
Rafael	RB	Brazilian	28	2015/2016	Manchester United
Kenny Tete	RB	Dutch	22	2017/2018	Ajax
Lucas Tousart	DM	French	21	2015/2016	Valenciennes FC
Jordan Ferri	CM	French	25	2012/2013	-
C. Martins-Pereira	DM	CM/DM	21	2017/2018	-
Tanguy N'Dombélé	CM	French	21	2017/2018	Amiens SC
Pape Chiekh Diop	CM/DM	Spanish	20	2017/2018	Celta Vigo
Olivier Kemen	CM	French	22	2015/2016	Newcastle
Houssem Aouar	CM/AM	French	20	2016/2017	-
Nabil Fekir	AM	Algerian	25	2013/2014	-
Bertrand Traoré	AM/ST	Burkinabe	22	2017/2018	Chelsea
Martin Terrier	AM/ST	French	21	2017/2018	Lille OSC
Memphis Depay	LW/AM/ST	Dutch	24	2016/2017	Manchester United
Mariano Diaz	ST	Dominican	25	2017/2018	Real Madrid
Maxwel Cornet	ST/RW	French	21	2014/2015	FC Metz
Amine Gouiri	LW/ST	French	18	2017/2018	-
Myziane Maolida	LW	French	19	2017/2018	-
Reo Griffiths	ST	English	18	2018/2019	Tottenham
Bruno Genesio	Manager	French	51	2015/2016	-
Jean Michel Aulas	President	French	69	1987/1988	-



OLYMPIQUE MARSEILLE

DROIT AU BUT

LIKELY XI



FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	Position	Points
2017/2018	Ligue 1	4th	77
2016/2017	Ligue 1	5th	62
2015/2016	Ligue 1	13th	48
2014/2015	Ligue 1	4th	69
2013/2014	Ligue 1	6th	60

KEY MAN: FLORIAN THAUVIN

Thauvin's meteoric rise has finally reached its pay-off. After an impressive 2016-17 in which he played a fine foil to Bafé Gomis, Thauvin took Marseille on his shoulders last season, leading the team to within a point of the top three and a European final. There were other factors in those shortcomings, notably a lack of depth and injuries to teammates, but while Thauvin didn't exactly impress against OM's domestic rivals, some fine performances in Europe served as a strong counter-narrative to his undesired tag of not delivering in the biggest matches. Buoyed by a World Cup win, he will surely be motivated to ensure his place in the France squad but also to take Marseille back into the Champions' League.

OLYMPIQUE MARSEILLE

SIGNING TO WATCH: DUJE CALETA-CAR, RB SALZBURG

While not a regular for his country during their run to the World Cup final, Caleta-Car nonetheless impressed in the two appearances he did make, building on a burgeoning reputation following his time in Salzburg. A big, powerful centre back with a fine range of passing as well, the Croatian, 22 next month, strikes the right balance between youth and experience, especially given Salzburg's Europa League matches. He is unlikely to start immediately given his busy summer, but should displace Jorge Rolando as Adil Rami's regular partner soon enough, adding needed depth to a squad that was stretched to the point of breaking by season's end.

SQUAD ANALYSIS:

If it's not broke, don't fix it seems to be Marseille's current transfer strategy, adding only some needed depth at centre back in the form of Caleta-Car after a torrid season from third-choice Aymen Abdennour. Another specialist left back would still be ideal given Henri Bédimo's seemingly frosty relationship with Rudi Garcia, and of course another striker as the club's pursuit of Mario Balotelli emphasises, but Marseille otherwise have good depth and a decent level of talent throughout the squad, especially with Rémy Cabella potentially returning after a strong season on loan with Saint-Étienne. This is a team of players largely in their primes, who are willing to work for Garcia, having already seen tangible results in a fine European campaign. Marseille are back in Europe this season, but the focus will surely be on qualifying for the Champions' League domestically rather than another taxing high risk-low reward Europa League adventure.

STRENGTHS:

Marseille have one of Ligue 1's most exciting talents in Thauvin, and an exceptional goalkeeper in Steve Mandanda. Jordan Amavi and Hiroki Sakai struggled to some extent with fitness last season, but are a superb pair of attack-minded fullbacks when fit. The midfield, anchored by Luiz Gustavo, has depth and balance, with the likes of Maxime Lopez and Grégory Sertic able to provide a different look when the situation dictates.

WEAKNESSES:

For all of Thauvin's exploits last season, Marseille would do well to note that the other top sides in France all had multiple goal-scoring options; even Monaco could count on Rony Lopes to support Radamel Falcao, a situation with which l'OM were unfortunately unfamiliar. Kostas Mitroglou and Valère Germain impressed in flashes, but neither had the sort of consistency needed to cement a place in the top three. The centre backs were solid last year, but could be undone by a pacy opponent, something of which Garcia will no doubt be more mindful this season.

VERDICT:

With Lyon lacking depth in key areas and Monaco again undergoing their customary turnover, Marseille (whisper it) should be favourites to come second to PSG, provided Garcia can ably navigate what looks to be a crowded slate of fixtures with the start of the Europa League.

PREDICTED FINISH: 2nd



OLYMPIQUE MARSEILLE

SQUAD LIST

DROIT AU BUT

NAME	POSITION	NATIONALITY	AGE	AT CLUB SINCE	FORMER CLUB
Yohann Pele	GK	French	35	2015/2016	FC Sochaux
Steve Mandanda	GK	French	33	2017/2018	Crystal Palace
Florian Escales	GK	French	22	2016/2017	-
Romain Cagnon	GK	French	21	2017/2018	-
Henri Bedimo	LB	Cameroonian	34	2016/2017	Lyon
Jordan Amavi	LB	French	24	2018/2019	Aston Villa
Christopher Rocchia	LB	French	20	2017/2018	-
Tomas Hubocan	CB/RB	Slovakian	32	2016/2017	Dynamo Moscow
Duje Caleta-Car	CB	Croatian	21	2018/2019	RB Salzburg
Adil Rami	CB	French	32	2017/2018	Sevilla
Aymen Abdennour	CB	Tunisian	29	2017/2018	Valencia
Lucas Perrin	CB	French	19	2018/2019	-
Rolando	CB	Portuguese	32	2015/2016	FC Porto
Hiroki Sakai	RB	Japanese	28	2016/2017	Hannover 96
Boubakar Kamara	DM/CB	French	18	2017/2018	-
Luiz Gustavo	DM/CB	Brazilian	31	2017/2018	Wolfsburg
Grégory Sertic	DM/CB	French	28	2016/2017	Bordeaux
Morgan Sanson	CM/DM	French	23	2016/2017	Montpellier
Andre Zambo Anguissa	DM	Cameroonian	22	2015/2016	Stade de Reims
Sascha Marasovic	CM	French	20	2018/2019	-
Florian Thauvin	AM/RW	French	25	2016/2017	Newcastle United
Maxime Lopez	AM	French	20	2014/2015	-
Lucas Ocampos	LW/ST	Argentinian	24	2015/2016	AS Monaco
Dimitri Payet	LW	French	31	2016/2017	West Ham United
Bouna Sarr	RW/RB	Guinean	26	2015/2016	FC Metz
Yusuf Sari	RW	Turkish	19	2017/2018	-
Saïf-Eddine Khaoui	AM	Tunisian	23	2016/2017	Tours
Valere Germain	ST	French	28	2017/2018	AS Monaco
Clinton N'jie	ST	Cameroonian	24	2016/2017	Tottenham Hotspur
Rudi Garcia	Manager	French	54	2016/2017	AS Roma
Jacques-Henri Eyraud	President	French	50	2016/2017	-

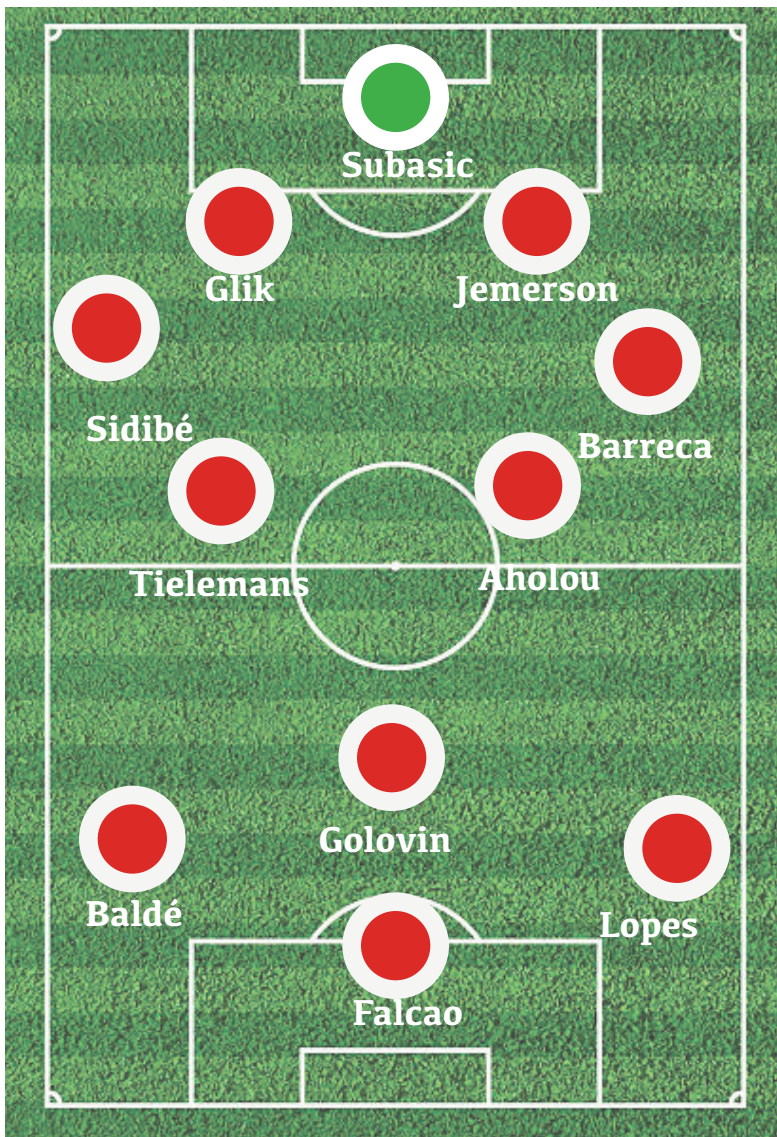


AS MONACO

LIKELY XI

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	Position	Points
2017/2018	Ligue 1	2nd	80
2016/2017	Ligue 1	1st	95
2015/2016	Ligue 1	3rd	65
2014/2015	Ligue 1	3rd	71
2013/2014	Ligue 1	2nd	80



KEY MAN: RONY LOPES

Last season was Lopes' fourth in Ligue 1, having been on loan at Lille and then making a move to Monaco. He had shown flashes of his talent previously, but it was hard to foresee the kind of breakout season that he had last year, scoring 15 goals to allow Monaco to hold off hard-charging Marseille and Lyon for second place. Now, with Thomas Lemar and João Moutinho gone, he will be tasked with not only repeating that level of production but also being the team's creative hub. Pacy, superb on the ball and comfortable on either flank, Lopes' versatility was key in him seeing so much of the pitch last season, but now with the first half of 2018 as evidence, he should be the team's focal point.

AS MONACO

SIGNING TO WATCH: JEAN-EUDES AHOLOU, STRASBOURG

It's tempting to put Golovin here, but Aholou will be one of the keys to any success Monaco have this season, with the departures of Fabinho and Moutinho necessitating a restructured midfield. Aholou had spent time in Lille's system, but hadn't impressed, or even played professional football until 2016-17, when he joined Ligue 2 side Orléans. A strong season there saw him snapped up by promoted Strasbourg, and he adjusted well to Ligue 1, offering controlled, yet dynamic play in midfield. He also chips in with the odd goal and while not on the level of his new teammate Youri Tielemans in that regard, his versatile box-to-box presence will mean that Monaco's continued flux won't be as painful as some had thought.

SQUAD ANALYSIS:

Another summer, another season of Monaco selling key players, another spring with the club finishing in the Champions' League places? Perhaps not; while sales have been the order of the day for four summers running now, the losses of Fabinho and Moutinho can't be understated, as the two had been constants throughout Monaco's recent revival, skilled but also willing to work hard to allow the team's flair players to thrive. Aholou is a canny buy in their stead, but this team still is lacking a proven focal point going forward outside of the oft-injured Radamel Falcao. That, combined with Lyon and Marseille holding fairly steady this summer, and Rennes' improvements, means that this squad, especially having to play in the Champions' League concurrently, could be the edition of Monaco that slips out of the top three, despite their experience in defence and in goal in the shape of Kamil Glik, Jemerson and Danijel Subasic.

STRENGTHS:

Jemerson and Glik were slightly below where they had been in the title-winning season, but Monaco were still the league's sixth-best defence. Subasic appears to be back to his best after a strong World Cup, and the talent that the attack has in Lopes, Keita Baldé and Falcao means that there will be goals scored as well. Stevan Jovetic and Moussa Sylla offer changes of pace from the bench as well, meaning that this side has good balance throughout. Djibril Sidibé and Jorgé Serrano can be liabilities in defence, but are a fine pair of attacking fullbacks.

WEAKNESSES:

Like most Monaco sides at the beginning of a given season, this team has little to no experience in European football, or even in being a first-team regular. Jardim is likely to weave his magic here, but it's important to remember that not all of Monaco's buys in recent times have necessarily come off, with Youri Tielemans' middling season a case in point. How much patience, for example, can be afforded Golovin if he struggles to adjust to what will surely be a tight race for the top three?

VERDICT:

It's not an easy call to make, but this edition of Monaco has the makings of being the side that can't quite find form in time to stay in the top three. Jardim is one of Europe's best coaches, but he has been able to call on some level of experience through his years at Monaco, something which is lacking outside of Falcao and a few defenders.

PREDICTED FINISH: 5th



AS MONACO

SQUAD LIST

NAME	POSITION	NATIONALITY	AGE	AT CLUB SINCE	FORMER CLUB
Seydou Sy	GK	Sengalese	22	2014/2015	-
Diego Benaglio	GK	Swiss	34	2017/2018	Wolfsburg
Loic Badashile	GK	French	20	2016/2018	-
Danjiel Subasic	GK	Croatian	33	2011/2012	Hajduk Split
Jorge	LB	Brazilian	22	2016/2017	Flamengo
Julien Serrano	LB	French	20	2017/2018	-
Benoît Badiashile	CB	French	17	2018/2019	-
Antonio Barreca	LB	Italian	23	2018/2019	Torino
Kamil Glik	CB	Polish	30	2016/2017	Torino
Jonathan Panzo	CB	English	17	2018/2019	Chelsea
Andrea Raggi	CB/LB/RB	Italian	34	2012/2013	Bologna
Jemerson	CB	Brazilian	25	2015/2016	Atletico Mineiro
Almamy Toure	RB	French	22	2014/2015	-
Djibril Sidibe	RB	French	26	2016/2017	Lille OSC
Ronaël Pierre-Gabriel	RB	French	20	2018/2019	Saint-Étienne
Jordy Gaspar	RB	French	21	2017/2018	Lyon
Soualiho Meité	DM	French	23	2015/2016	Zulte Waregem
Kévin N'Doram	DM/CB	French	22	2016/2017	-
Youri Tielemans	DM/CM	Belgian	21	2017/2018	Anderlecht
Pelé	DM	Bissau-Guinean	26	2018/2019	Rio Ave
Jean-Eudes Aholou	DM/CM	Ivorian	24	2018/2019	Strasbourg
Youssef Aït Bennasser	CM/DM	Moroccan	21	2016/2017	Nancy
Adama Traore	AM/LW	Malian	23	2015/2016	Lille OSC
Aleksandr Golovin	AM/CM	Russian	22	2018/2019	CSKA Moscow
Jonathan Mexique	CM	French	23	2015/2016	-
Romain Favre	CM	French	20	2018/2019	-



AS MONACO

SQUAD LIST

NAME	POSITION	NATIONALITY	AGE	AT CLUB SINCE	FORMER CLUB
Ibrahima Diallo	CM	French	19	2018/2019	-
Sofiane Diop	AM	French	18	2018/2019	Rennes
Gil Dias	LW	Portuguese	20	2015/2016	Braga
Willem Geubbels	LW/ST	French	16	2018/2019	Lyon
Rony Lopes	RW/AM	Portuguese	22	2015/2016	Manchester City
Samuel Grandsir	RW	French	21	2018/2019	Troyes
Keita Baldé	ST/RW	Senegalese	23	2017/2018	Lazio
Jordi Mboula	RW	Spanish	19	2017/2018	Barcelona
Wilson Isidor	RW	French	17	2018/2019	Rennes
Moussa Sylla	LW/ST	French	18	2018/2019	-
Stevan Jovetic	ST	Montenegrin	28	2017/2018	Inter Milan
Pietro Pellegrini	ST	Italian	17	2017/2018	Genoa
Falcao	ST	Colombian	31	2013/2014	Atletico Madrid
Leonardo Jardim	Manager	Portuguese	43	2012/2013	Sporting Lisbon
Dimitri Rybolovlev	President	Russian	50	2011/2012	-



MONTPELLIER HSC

LIKELY XI

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	Position	Points
2017/2018	Ligue 1	10th	51
2016/2017	Ligue 1	15th	39
2015/2016	Ligue 1	12th	49
2014/2015	Ligue 1	15th	42
2013/2014	Ligue 1	9th	52



KEY MAN: JUNIOR SAMBIA

Michel Der Zakarian is set to play a back three again after the system saw Montpellier push for a Europa League spot before falling short. How the team sorts itself out in front of that back three remains to be seen, and key to its success will be how the manager uses Sambia. Logic, and the summer's business, dictates that it will switch between a 3-4-2-1 and a 3-4-1-2, with Sambia being the difference. Able to play in a box-to-box role, affecting play with diagonal balls, or just off the strikers, but not the most disciplined defensively, Sambia's creativity was often under-used. If Der Zakarian gives the former Niort man just a bit more freedom, he could blossom into one of Ligue 1's best young midfielders.

MONTPELLIER HSC

SIGNING TO WATCH: FLORENT MOLLET, FC METZ

Injuries and the emergence of Ismaïla Sarr frustrated Mollet's progress since joining Metz after a fine 2015-16 with Créteil, but his performances from the new year onwards last season were very impressive, netting seven goals and giving his side a faint hope of survival. He, like Sambia, isn't the most defensively-minded, and that could see him chafe under Der Zakarian, but the feeling here is that what Mollet can offer in the top flight is far closer to what we saw last season than in his first. How Der Zakarian uses him certainly makes this an open question, but even as Andy Delort may be a more recognisable name, Mollet has far more potential to positively influence Montpellier's season.

SQUAD ANALYSIS:

Montpellier have surprisingly not been picked apart this summer, despite a strong season, with Nordi Mukiele the only first team regular to have departed as of this writing. While they slipped slightly in the run-in after battling for a top six finish for most of the season, Michel Der Zakarian, who most, including myself had seen as an uninspiring choice, made this team hum by switching to a back three with the ageless Hilton at the heart of the team. A youngish midfield continued to improve, and Rubén Aguilar was quietly one of Ligue 1's better right backs. Now, with Andy Delort, Mollet and Damien Le Tallec in the fold, this season's version has more depth and attacking options, meaning that a mid-table finish should be the very least La Paillade can expect, unless (and it's a not unsizable unless) the team start to chafe at the manager's disciplinarian style.

STRENGTHS:

The team's organisation and experience will undoubtedly be their strongest suit, with the defence adding needed depth in the form of Le Tallec, a product of Rennes' academy. Benjamin Lecomte was generally excellent in goal last year, and the fullbacks and central midfielders were excellent as well, with Paul Lasne enjoying a renaissance and the younger pair of Ellyes Skhiri and Junior Sambia continuing their development apace, reflecting the good work Der Zakarian had previously done with Jordan Veretout and Valentin Rongier at Nantes.

WEAKNESSES:

After the departures of Mukiele and Jérôme Roussillon, Montpellier are very thin at wingback, and while the defence was impressive last season, Hilton's age will inevitably be an issue, no matter how well-organized Der Zakarian has his side. The strikers are a decent group, but Delort has struggled since his return to France, and neither he nor Giovanni Sio inspire confidence in sustaining a high level of play over the course of the season. Finally, Der Zakarian's methods can be taxing on his sides mentally, and that could also become an issue into his second season.

VERDICT:

The losses of Mukiele and Roussillon will sting, but in reality, their departures may be addition by subtraction, and the summer arrivals give the team much more depth. Even though Montpellier might not be the most aesthetically pleasing, Der Zakarian knows how to get a tune out of this squad, and they could again push for Europe.

PREDICTED FINISH: 10th



MONTPELLIER

HSC

SQUAD LIST

NAME	POSITION	NATIONALITY	AGE	AT CLUB SINCE	FORMER CLUB
Dimitry Bertaud	GK	French	20	2017/2018	-
Benjamin Lecomte	GK	French	27	2017/2018	Lorient
Jonathan Ligali	GK	French	27	2010/2011	-
Damien Le Tallec	CB	French	28	2018/2019	Red Star Belgrade
Morgan Poaty	LB	French	21	2016/2017	-
Daniel Congre	LB/CB	French	33	2012/2013	Olimpo
Hilton	CB	Brazilian	40	2011/2012	Marseille
Nicolas Cozza	CB/LB	French	19	2017/2018	-
Bryan Passi	CB	French	21	2017/2018	-
Pedro Mendes	CB/RB	Portuguese	27	2017/2018	Rennes
Ambroise Oyongo	LB	Cameroonian	27	2017/2018	Montréal
Ruben Aguilar	RB	French	25	2017/2018	Auxerre
Facundo Piriz	DM	Uruguyan	28	2018/2019	Akhmat Grozny
Ellyes Skhiri	DM	French	23	2015/2016	-
Paul Lasne	CM	French	29	2014/2015	AC Ajaccio
Junior Sambia	CM/AM	French	21	2017/2018	Niort
Killian Sanson	CM	French	21	2016/2017	Evian TG FC
Florent Mollet	AM	French	26	2018/2019	Metz
Keagan Dolly	LW	South African	25	2016/2017	Mamelodi Sundowns
Petar Skuletic	ST	Serbian	28	2018/2019	Genclerbirligi
Souleymane Camara	RW/ST	Senegalese	35	2008/2009	OGC Nice
Isaac Mbenza	RW/LW	Belgian	22	2016/2017	Standard Liege
Andy Delort	ST	French	26	2018/2019	Toulouse
Giovanni Sio	ST	Ivorian	29	2017/2018	Stade Rennais
Jérémie Por-san-Clemente	ST	French	20	2017/2018	Marseille
Michel Der Zakarian	Manager	Armenian	55	2017/2018	Stade de Reims
Laurent Nicollin	President	French	45	2017/2018	-



FC NANTES

LIKELY XI

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	Position	Points
2017/2018	Ligue 1	9th	52
2016/2017	Ligue 1	7th	51
2015/2016	Ligue 1	14th	48
2014/2015	Ligue 1	14th	45
2013/2014	Ligue 1	13th	46



KEY MAN:

EMILIANO SALA

Nantes have struggled in their pre-season, as new manager Miguel Cardoso adapts to a squad in flux after a raft of departures. The Portuguese will thus surely be glad of retaining Sala, scorer of twelve goals in each of the last two seasons. Adept at playing on his own or partnering another centre forward, Sala is a physical presence, but not one without a level of craft. Not the quickest, he instead relies on intelligent positioning and strong link-up play. Cardoso has experimented with a 4-4-2 and a 4-2-3-1 early in his tenure, and a 4-3-3 could be employed as well with the arrival of Lucas Evangelista, but no matter the system, another strong season from Sala will be the difference for Les Canaris this year.

FC NANTES

SIGNING TO WATCH: LUCAS EVANGELISTA, UDINESE

Despite being just 23, Evangelista has already completed four seasons in Europe, most recently in the Portuguese league with Estoril, where he will have been well-known to Cardoso. A canny presence in central midfield as a box-to-box player, but also capable of playing as a number ten, he should do well to complement Valentin Rongier with a range of both long and short passing and ability on the ball, but also good acceleration and a bit more defensive solidity than the Frenchman. His acquisition means that not only will Nantes likely look to play on the counter, but will also be able to be tactically flexible without making substitutions, no small matter given the squad's lack of depth in central areas.

SQUAD ANALYSIS:

Fans of Nantes will be disappointed with the departure of Claudio Ranieri, but in Cardoso, the team have brought in one of Europe's best at developing young talent. His spells with Shakhtar Donetsk and Braga in particular resulted in overachievements, and while he only has one season as a head coach upon which to call, his fifth-place finish with Rio Ave make him likely to follow in the footsteps of the charismatic Sergio Conceicao. The loss of captain Léo Dubois will be hard to stomach, but truthfully, the spine of a team that battled for Europe for most of last season remains, and the addition of Evangelista should more than counter the losses of Yacine Bammou and Adrien Thomasson, allowing the team to play more narrowly and exert more control in midfield. Another battle for Europe is unlikely, but Nantes are well-positioned to extend their stay in Ligue 1, particularly if they can avoid a late swoop for the likes of Diego Carlos or Abdoulaye Touré.

STRENGTHS:

Ciprian Tatarasanu's form dipped in the run-in, but for much of the season, he was one of Ligue 1's best goalkeepers, and Carlos and Nicolas Pallois form a powerful central partnership; Nantes should continue to be as sound as they have been since their latest promotion. Sala has been effective since joining Nantes, and midfield should now exhibit more fluency and control, particularly as Valentin Rongier is two years on from a cruciate injury. Finally, Lucas Lima remains one of Ligue 1's best kept secrets at left back, as good as any in the league going for-

WEAKNESSES:

Nantes' main issue last season was finding consistency and quality in wide areas, and little has changed. Joris Kayembé's injury will have certainly the team's success in that regard, with the inconsistent Majeed Waris on the right and with Gabriel Boschilia preferred on the left; both loanees have something to prove but could still come up short. At right back, Enock Kwateng has shown much promise, but with only ten matches in the league, may take some time to acclimate, potentially placing Les Canaris in early relegation trouble.

VERDICT:

Nantes are unlikely to pull up any trees this season, but should be more attractive and consistent under Cardoso. A late transfer departure could yet upset the team's balance, but for now, stability and consistency should allow for a fifth consecutive season in Ligue 1.

PREDICTED FINISH: 13th



FC NANTES

SQUAD LIST

NAME	POSITION	NATIONALITY	AGE	AT CLUB SINCE	FORMER CLUB
Ciprian Tataransu	GK	Romanian	32	2017/2018	Fiorentina
Maxime Dupé	GK	French	25	2011/2012	-
Quentin Braat	GK	French	21	2016/2017	-
Lucas Lima	LB	Brazilian	26	2016/2017	Arouca
Fabio	LB/RB	Brazilian	28	2018/2019	Middlesbrough
Diego Carlos	CB	Brazilian	25	2016/2017	Estoril
Nicolas Pallois	CB	French	30	2017/2018	Bordeaux
Koffi Djidji	CB/LB	French	25	2011/2012	-
Matt Miazga	CB	American	23	2018/2019	Chelsea
Anthony Walongwa	CB	DR Congolese	24	2014/2015	-
Enock Kwateng	RB	French	21	2015/2016	-
Andrei Girotto	DM	Brazilian	26	2017/2018	Tombense
Rene Krhin	DM	Slovakian	28	2018/2019	Granada
Abdoulaye Touré	DM	French	24	2012/2013	-
Valentin Rongier	DM	French	23	2015/2016	-
Lucas Evangelista	CM	Brazilian	23	2018/2019	Udinese
Samuel Moutoussamy	CM	French	21	2017/2018	-
Gabriel Boschilia	LW/AM	Brazilian	22	2018/2019	AS Monaco
Alexander Kacaniklic	LW	Swedish	26	2016/2017	Fulham FC
Alexis Alegué	LW	French	21	2015/2016	-
Santy Ngom	LW/ST	Senegalese	25	2017/2018	Suze-sur-Sarthe
Joris Kayembé	RW	Belgian	23	2017/2018	FC Porto
Majeed Waris	RW	Ghanian	26	2018/2019	FC Porto
Kolbeinn Sigthorsson	ST	Icelandic	28	2015/2016	Ajax
Yassine El Ghanassy	LW	Belgian	28	2017/2018	Oostende
Kalifa Coulibaly	ST	Malian	26	2017/2018	Gent
Préjuce Nakoulma	ST/LW	Burkinabé	31	2016/2017	Kayserispor
Emiliano Sala	ST	Argentinian	27	2015/2016	Bordeaux
Miguel Cardoso	Manager	Portuguese	46	2018/2019	Rio Ave
Waldemar Kita	President	Polish	65	2007/2008	FC Lausanne



OGC NICE

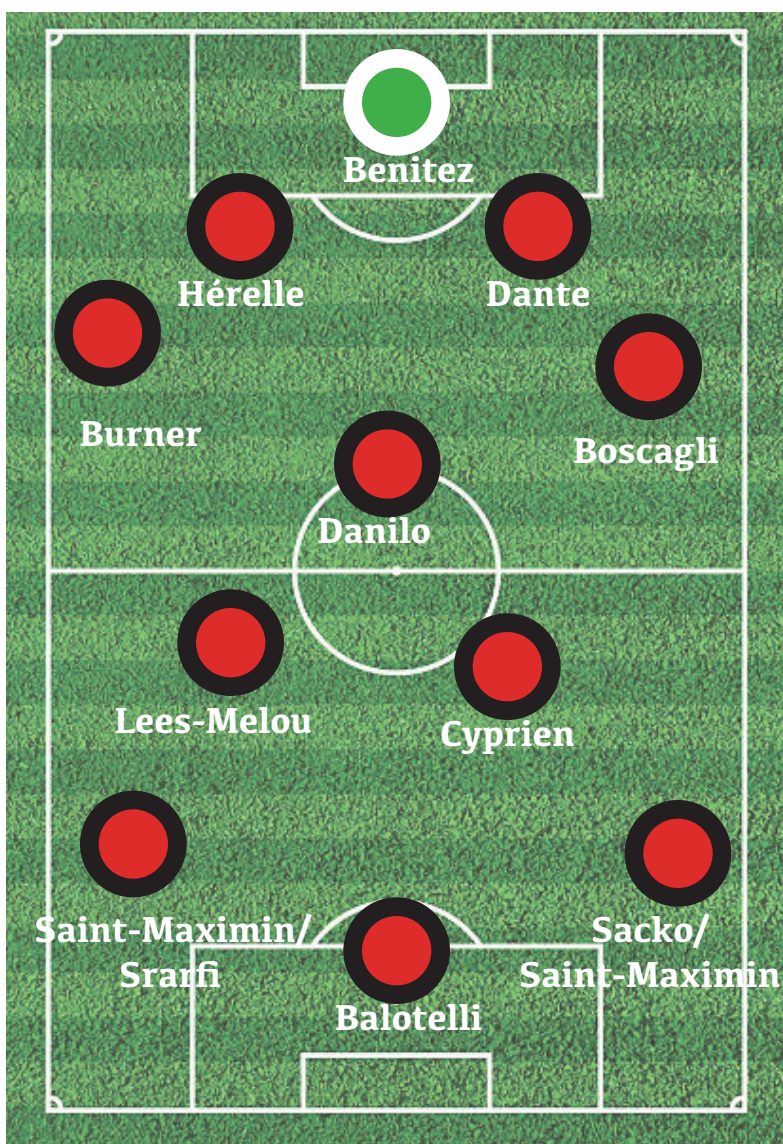
LIKELY XI

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	Position	Points
2017/2018	Ligue 1	8th	54
2016/2017	Ligue 1	3rd	78
2015/2016	Ligue 1	4th	63
2014/2015	Ligue 1	11th	48
2013/2014	Ligue 1	17th	42

KEY MAN: WYLAN CYPRIEN

Cyprien's form prior to a cruciate injury saw him being considered as having an outside shot at making France's squad for this summer's World Cup, scoring eight goals in 2016-17 before his season was ended prematurely. His recovery has been slow, with a few setbacks, but his form in the run-in offered flashes of his old self. With another full summer of recuperation, he should be back to his best. Patrick Vieira looks to play a 4-3-3 similar to Lucien Favre's; that should see Cyprien played in a more attacking role, taking on a goal-scoring role as Nice cope with the loss of Alassane Pléa. If Cyprien can come close to recapturing his best, Nice should be firmly in the discussion for Europe.



OGC NICE

SIGNING TO WATCH: DANILO BARBOSA, SC BRAGA

The loss of Jean Michaël Seri to Fulham will surely sting, but in the 22-year-old Barbosa, Nice have signed a canny replacement. The Brazilian, winner of the Silver Ball (no mean feat for a defensive midfielder) at the U-20 World Cup, has sparkled for Braga and also impressed in a loan spell at Valencia. A powerful and direct player, he impresses foremost with his physicality, making him a radical change from the diminutive Seri, but also has outstanding ball retention skills and a decent eye for goal, having scored four times in only fifteen starts last season. His positional play and discipline can be sometimes suspect, but for a mere €6M and bonuses, he looks money well spent on the earliest evidence.

SQUAD ANALYSIS:

Mario Balotelli's will he-won't he flirtation with Marseille continues to drag on, but for now the Italian is back in training, and looking primed to resume his good form under Vieira. The losses of Seri, Maxime Le Marchand and Pléa will be difficult to absorb, but Olivier Boscagli should be able to step in at left back, and a healthy Cyprien has the potential to be more influential than the Ivorian. Pléa, then, is the biggest miss, with Mickael Le Bihan the only striking option beyond Balotelli. Still, though, in the form of the likes of Cyprien and Pierre Lees-Melou, there should be enough goals for Nice to play on the front foot, even if the defence looks weaker with Dante another year older and Christophe Hérelle still relatively unproven at this level, despite a decent season with Troyes. The bottom line here is that Vieira has chosen well in establishing continuity with the style of Favre; the attack may be weaker but Nice should still be one of France's better sides.

STRENGTHS:

Nice arguably have the league's most depth in midfield, even with the departure of Seri. The trio of Cyprien, Barbosa and Lees-Melou are ably backed up by Rémi Walter, Adrien Tameze, Jean-Victor Makengo and French youth international Vincent Marcel. The young wide players look ready to kick on as well after showing promise under Favre; Allan Saint-Maximin, January signing Ihsan Sacko and Bassem Srarfi are all just 21. Too, despite Balotelli's situation, the mood around the club remains positive, with Vieira saying the right things in the early going.

WEAKNESSES:

For all of their talent, this is an extremely young side, and while these youngsters are no doubt talented, they still have much to do to see Nice reach the heights they had in 2016-17. The full-back positions are of particular concern, with Arnaud Souquet having been linked with a move away and Christophe Jallet the only player on either flank with any real level of experience. If Balotelli goes, scoring could be an issue as well, as relying on goals from midfield could leave Nice too open on the counter.

VERDICT:

Nice have lost some important players this summer, but have a squad filled with promise and a manager eager to prove himself in a top league in Vieira. If Balotelli stays, a tilt at the top three isn't unimaginable, given the flux at Monaco, but if he goes, Nice could struggle as they haven't in several years.

PREDICTED FINISH: 9th



OGC NICE SQUAD LIST

Yoan Cardinale	GK	French	24	2014/2015	-
Yannis Clementia	GK	French	21	2018/2019	-
Mouez Hassen	GK	French	23	2012/2013	-
Walter Benitez	GK	Argentinian	25	2016/2017	Quilmes
Olivier Boscagli	LB	French	20	2015/2016	-
Romain Perraud	LB	French	20	2017/2018	-
Racine Coly	LB	Senegalese	22	2017/2018	Brescia
Malang Sarr	CB	French	19	2016/2017	-
Christophe Hérelle	CB	French	25	2018/2019	Troyes
Dante	CB	Brazilian	34	2016/2017	Wolfsburg
Gautier Lloris	CB	French	23	2014/2015	-
Christophe Jallet	RB/LB	French	34	2017/2018	Olympique Lyon
Arnaud Souquet	RB	French	26	2016/2017	Dijon FCO
Youcef Atal	RB	Algerian	22	2018/2019	Kortrijk
Patrick Burner	RB	French	22	2016/2017	-
Rémi Walter	DM	French	23	2015/2016	Nancy
Danilo	DM	Brazilian	22	2018/2019	SC Braga
Adrien Tameze	CM/DM	French	24	2017/2018	Valenciennes
Jean-Victor Makengo	CM	French	20	2017/2018	SM Caen
Wylan Cyprien	CM	French	23	2016/2017	RC Lens
Pierre Lees-Melou	RW/AM	French	25	2017/2018	Dijon
Bassem Srarfi	RW/AM	Tunisian	21	2016/2017	Club Africain
Ihsan Sacko	RW/AM	French	21	2017/2018	Strasbourg
Allan Saint-Maximin	LW/RW	French	21	2017/2018	AS Monaco
Vincent Marcel	RW	French	21	2016/2017	-
Hicham Mahou	RW	French	19	2018/2019	-
Mario Balotelli	ST	Italian	26	2017/2018	Liverpool
Mickaël Le Bihan	ST	French	26	2015/2016	Le Havre
Ignatius Ganago	ST	Cameroonian	19	2018/2019	-
Patrick Vieira	Manager	French	42	2018/2019	New York City FC
Jean Pierre Rivere	President	French	61	2011/2012	-



NÎMES OLYMPIQUE

LIKELY XI



FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	Position	Points
2017/2018	Ligue 2	2nd	73
2016/2017	Ligue 2	6th	64
2015/2016	Ligue 2	14th	43
2014/2015	Ligue 2	13th	46
2013/2014	Ligue 2	15th	44

KEY MAN: UMUT BOZOK

Nîmes had three players in the Ligue 2 team of the season on the way to finishing second last year, but none caught the eye more than Umut Bozok. A product of Metz's academy, after leaving Les Grenats, he signed on with Marseille Consolat, leading the third tie in scoring two season ago despite being just 19. His good form continued last season, as he topped the scoring charts in Ligue 2, leading his side to promotion and looking to be worth every bit of the €150K that the club had paid for him. He has also shown good form for Turkey's youth international sides, and has formed a fine partnership with the more physical Rachid Alioui, using his speed and close control to become the focal point of an attack-minded 4-4-2.

NÎMES OLYMPIQUE

SIGNING TO WATCH: DENIS BOUANGA, LORIENT

That Bouanga, a Gabonese international, failed to make the move back to Ligue 1 following Lorient's relegation was somewhat of a surprise, but he is now granted the opportunity to prove himself in the top flight after a sterling season with Les Merlus. His playing time was limited in the run-in following a serious dip in form, but at 23, he should relish the opportunity to establish himself as a late bloomer in the footsteps of his countryman Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, who turned 24 before earning his move to Borussia Dortmund. Bouanga is not as pacy as the Arsenal attacker, but offers better close control and more creativity, something that Nîmes will need to replace after the departure of Romain del Castillo.

SQUAD ANALYSIS:

Nîmes have moved decisively to replace last season's loanees, Olivier Boscagli and del Castillo, in the form of Bouanga and former Tours left back Florian Miguel, while also adding depth and experience in midfield in the former of former Guingamp man Moustapha Diallo, a canny and combative signing who will no doubt be anxious to prove himself after falling out favour in Brittany. Loans will continue to be important for Les Crocs, though, with Paul Bernardoni joining from Bordeaux after winning the Ligue 2 'keeper of the year last season. Loïck Landré should start in central defence after joining from Lens, and Baptiste Guillaume adds depth at striker as well. Nîmes have done well to strengthen and no doubt Bernard Blaquart will endeavour to keep them playing on the front foot, it is merely a matter of how well his approach will translate to the top flight. Dijon and Strasbourg have shown it is more than possible, and Nîmes look better equipped to do the same given the quality they have at the back.

STRENGTHS:

The departure of del Castillo may sting slightly, but there should be no doubt about how Nîmes play to stay up, with the signing of Bouanga breaking their transfer record by more than twenty-fold. In Bouanga, Alioui, and Bozok, they should have the tools to do so. Right back Soifane Alakouch is still just 19, but has already been a regular for the French U-21s. The additions of Diallo, Landré and Bernardoni make the team's spine stronger as well, and manager Blaquart, despite a relative lack of experience, has shown himself to be quite the canny operator.

WEAKNESSES:

Nîmes' first eleven are a dead cert to stay in the top flight, but a lack of depth could be troubling, especially in defence where veterans Hervé Lybohy and Féthi Harek are both 35. Striker and fullback also are positions lacking reliable second choices, and how Miguel is able to adapt to life in the top flight could be telling indeed. Recently, there has also been some unrest among the squad related to bonuses, while on the pitch, there is also the chance that for all their attacking verve, the quality of defending in Ligue 1 will nullify all of Nîmes' brilliance.

VERDICT:

Nîmes should feel confident of staying up, although that certainly could change with an injury or two, or a late swoop from a more monied side for a key performer. Bozok is one of France's brightest young talents, and the feeling here is that he and his side will make a big impression in the season to come.

PREDICTED FINISH: 14th



NÎMES

OLYMPIQUE

SQUAD LIST

NAME	POSITION	NATIONALITY	AGE	AT CLUB SINCE	FORMER CLUB
Paul Bernardoni	GK	French	21	2018/2019	Bordeaux
Baptiste Valette	GK	French	25	2017/2018	Excelsior Virton
Yan Marillat	GK	French	23	2016/2017	-
Martin Sourzac	GK	French	26	2017/2018	-
Anthony Briançon	CB	French	24	2014/2015	-
Féthi Harek	CB	Algerian	35	2014/2015	SC Bastia
Loïck Landré	CB	French	26	2018/2019	Genoa
Hervé Lybohy	CB	Ivorian	35	2018/2019	Paris FC
Floran Miguel	LB	French	21	2018/2019	Tours
Sofiane Alakouch	RB	Moroccan	20	2017/2018	-
Gaëtan Paquiez	RB	French	24	2016/2017	-
Moustapha Diallo	DM/CM	Senegalese	32	2018/2019	EA Guingamp
Abdel Malik Hsissane	DM	Moroccan	27	2018/2019	-
Téji Savanier	CM	French	26	2015/2016	Arles-Avignon
Théo Valls	CM	French	22	2015/2016	-
Pierrick Valdivia	CM	French	20	2015/2016	Sint-Truidense
Sada Thioub	RM	French	23	2016/2017	EA Guingamp
Antonin Bobichon	RM	French	22	2015/2016	-
Denis Bouanga	LW/RW	Gabonese	23	2018/2019	Lorient
Renaud Ripart	RW/LW	French	25	2012/2013	-
Pangiotis Vlachodimos	LW	Greek	26	2017/2018	Panathanaikos
Umut Bozok	CF	Turkish	21	2017/2018	Marseille-Consolat
Rachid Alioui	CF	Moroccan	26	2016/2017	EA Guingamp
Baptiste Guillaume	CF	Belgian	23	2018/2019	Angers SCO
Clément Depres	CF	French	23	2015/2016	-
Sami Ben Amar	CF	Moroccan	20	2018/2019	-
Bernard Blaquart	Manager	French	60	2015/2016	Tours
Rani Assaf	President	Lebanese	44	2015/2016	-



PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN

LIKELY XI

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	Position	Points
2017/2018	Ligue 1	1st	93
2016/2017	Ligue 1	2nd	87
2015/2016	Ligue 1	1st	96
2014/2015	Ligue 1	1st	83
2013/2014	Ligue 1	1st	89



KEY MAN: NEYMAR

One is tempted to put Kylian Mbappé into this space after his fantastic World Cup, but even if the Brazilian's season was aborted and he displayed no real commitment to returning to action, he is still the best player in France. His World Cup histrionics made him a worldwide figure of fun, but his creativity and scoring ability are all but unsurpassed in world football. His level of motivation and focus will set the tone for his teammates as they adjust to a new manager in Thomas Tuchel and no small amount of squad clear-out under the eye of FFP. His influence on the side has been questionable, but if he brings a renewed attitude, as the QSI project chugs into its eighth season, some tangible results can be had.

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN

SIGNING TO WATCH: GIANLUIGI BUFFON, JUVENTUS

There is no need to detail the Italian's decorated history here, only to emphasise that he is a proven winner at the very highest level. Questions may linger about his age, and how Alphonse Areola will respond to his arrival after a relatively strong season that saw the Frenchman decisively displace Kevin Trapp, but Buffon's arrival shows a clear intent that the focus remains, above all, on the Champions' League, and installing a presence in the dressing room for whom respect is universal, with the hope of assuaging some of the rifts that may have developed in the squad, particularly around the team's Brazilian axis.

SQUAD ANALYSIS:

PSG's superb attacking triumvirate (Neymar, Mbappé and Edinson Cavani) means that they will no doubt win the league at a canter, but this is still a very flawed squad, to the point that Tuchel has spent a great deal of time experimenting with a 3-4-3/3-4-1-2 in pre-season, using Layvin Kurzawa and Thomas Meunier as wingbacks. There is certainly merit to that system, as it camouflages Kurzawa's defensive shortcomings and the lack of an orthodox holding midfielder aside from Lassana Diarra, but depth also remains an issue. If Tuchel were to use all of Marquinhos, Thiago Silva, and Presnel Kimpembe, there would be no depth at centre back, nor any competition for the inconsistent Kurzawa at left back. While a lack of movement in this direction is disappointing, Tuchel does appear to continue Unai Emery's work in bringing through young players, with Timothy Weah in particular being given opportunities in preseason, although Goncalo Guedes' potential role remains undefined to date.

STRENGTHS:

Even with the odd growing pain for Mbappé and Neymar's injury, PSG still thundered to an incredible 108 goals against only 29 conceded last season, proving that even within the parameters of Ligue 1, their attack is still something to be feared. In Kimpembe and Marquinhos, PSG also have two of the world's best young centre backs, while Thomas Meunier is similarly skilled at right back. Marco Verratti and Adrien Rabiot look fit and ready to atone for their World Cup absences as well, despite Rabiot's supposed desire to move to Barcelona.

WEAKNESSES:

Financial Fair Play has seen PSG offload Javier Pastore and Yuri Berchiche this summer, but the lack of arrivals is far more worrying than who has departed. Kurzawa is simply not of the calibre that PSG require, at least as an orthodox left back, and the lack of a defensive midfielder will likely haunt the champions at some point as well, despite a public pursuit of N'Golo Kanté. There is also still no small amount of frisson in the dressing room, and poor performances could yet exacerbate those divisions, as they bubbled to the surface on occasion last season.

VERDICT:

Lyon's attack is impressive but lack depth in defence, Marseille struggle against their peers, and Monaco are again in flux; it's hard to see past another title for PSG domestically, but the Champions' League is again the promised land, as it has been since the QSI takeover.

PREDICTED FINISH: 1st



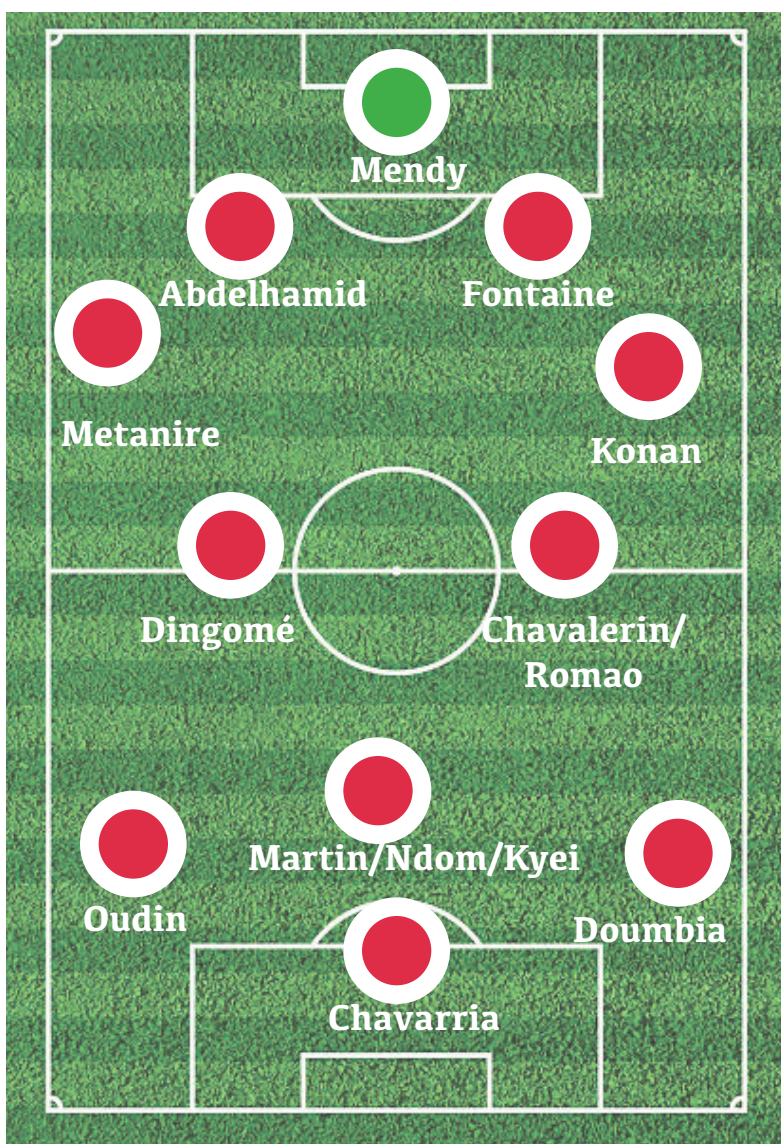
PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN SQUAD LIST

NAME	POSITION	NATIONALITY	AGE	AT CLUB SINCE	FORMER CLUB
Remy Descamps	GK	French	22	2017/2018	-
Gianluigi Buffon	GK	Italian	40	2018/2019	Juventus
Kevin Trapp	GK	German	28	2015/2016	Eintracht Frankfurt
Alphonse Areola	GK	French	25	2013/2014	-
Sébastien Cibois	GK	French	20	2017/2018	-
Layvin Kurzawa	LB	French	25	2015/2016	AS Monaco
Stanley N'Soki	LB	French	19	2018/2019	-
Thiago Silva	CB	Brazilian	33	2012/2013	AC Milan
Marquinhos	CB	Brazilian	24	2013/2014	AS Roma
Presnel Kimpembe	CB	French	22	2014/2015	-
Thomas Meunier	RB	Belgian	26	2016/2017	Club Brugge
Dani Alves	RB	Brazilian	35	2017/2018	Juventus
Alec Georgen	RB	French	19	2017/2018	-
Lassana Diarra	CM/DM	French	33	2017/2018	Al-Jazira
Gonçalo Guedes	LW/AM	Portuguese	21	2016/2017	Benfica
Christopher Nkunku	CM/AM	French	20	2015/2016	-
Marco Verratti	CM	Italian	25	2012/2013	Pescara
Adrien Rabiot	CM/DM	French	23	2012/2013	-
Julian Draxler	LW	German	24	2017/2018	Wolfsburg
Jese	LW	Spanish	25	2016/2017	Real Madrid CF
Kylian Mbappé	RW/ST	French	19	2018/2019	AS Monaco
Angel di Maria	LW/RW	Argentinian	30	2015/2016	Manchester United
Neymar	LW	Brazilian	26	2017/2018	Barcelona
Giovani Lo Celso	CM/AM	Argentinian	22	2016/2017	Rosario
Timothy Weah	RW/ST	American	18	2018/2019	-
Jean Christophe-Bahebeck	RW/ST	French	25	2011/2012	-
Edinson Cavani	ST	Uruguayan	31	2013/2014	Napoli
Thomas Tuchel	Manager	German	44	2018/2019	Borussia Dortmund
Nasser Al Khe-laifi	President	Qatari	44	2010/2011	-



STADE de REIMS

LIKELY XI



FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	Position	Points
2017/2018	Ligue 2	1st	88
2016/2017	Ligue 2	7th	55
2015/2016	Ligue 1	18th	39
2014/2015	Ligue 1	15th	44
2013/2014	Ligue 1	11th	48

KEY MAN: PABLO CHAVARRIA

Chavarria was a willing worker but to little effect during his prior spell in Ligue 1 in 2014-15. In many ways, Chavarria's play in that season was emblematic of the team under Antoine Kombouaré, as Lens weren't shy about playing on the front foot but lacked the quality to make an impact going forward. After a middling campaign under Michel Der Zakarian, Chavarria blossomed under David Guion, playing both centrally and on the right. With fourteen goals and nine assists, he and Rémi Oudin proved ideal foils for Jordan Siebatcheu. Now, with Siebatcheu having departed for Rennes, Chavarria will be tasked with leading the line, and will need to be at his best to keep the Champagne club in the top flight.

STADE de REIMS

SIGNING TO WATCH: GHISLAIN KONAN, VITORIA DE GUIMARÃES

Reims have had more money to spend this season than many would have anticipated, their coffers bolstered by the sale of Siebatcheu. That they would break their transfer record, previously a shade under €2M, was no surprise, but that they would more than double it for a left back certainly was. Konan, however, looks set to repay the club's faith in him. A full international for the Ivory Coast at 22, he was an energetic presence for Guimarães last season, offering a wicked left foot as well as a good turn of pace and a deceptively powerful physique. Reims will miss Diego Rigonato, but in Konan, the left side of their attack has been massively bolstered and his relationship with fellow new signing Moussa Doumbia could prove the key to survival.

SQUAD ANALYSIS:

Nîmes were Ligue 2's best attack last season, but Reims were only a goal poorer and also had the best defence. Neither of those placements are likely to repeat themselves, but Reims have shown considerable intent this summer, both in the lack of sentimentality with which they dispensed with captain Danilson da Cruz and the money that they spent on Konan. Under David Guion, Reims last season moved from the prosaic to a more expansive style of football, but maintained a solid defensive base. In addressing their needs at left back, should continue in that vein, provided the departure of Julian Jeanvier can be capably covered. The signing of Thomas Fontaine seems promising, but he has yet to play in the top flight in his career. The signings of Tristan Dingomé and Alaixys Romao will add needed experience in this regard, but the primary question dogging this side will be whether Guion persists with an open 4-3-3 or a more conservative 4-2-3-1 with neither Chavarria or Grejohn Kyei a natural striker.

STRENGTHS:

Reims have one of the more balanced squads of a promoted side in recent memory, and have been canny in adding experience in the form of Dingomé and Romao. Guion, a former centre back, remade this team in his own image last season without spending any money, so his ability to improve players is manifest. His willingness to play attacking football when necessary could also be important; Dijon have showed this can be a blueprint for survival that is not only successful but keeps the players onside in a long season.

WEAKNESSES:

That Reims really have done little to overhaul this squad could also be their downfall. For all of the Ligue 1 experience that this side have, none of these players save Romao have particularly impressed. Siebatcheu's departure will certainly catch the eye, but Kyei is an intriguing prospect in his stead. The feeling here is that Jeanvier will be a bigger miss, as a solid defence is more likely to keep Reims up than an unproven attack, especially with the departure of Rigonato, whose thirteen assists were second in Ligue 2 last season.

VERDICT:

Reims surprised with their dominance under Guion last season, and given the losses suffered by many sides which did stay up (Caen, Strasbourg), the level of continuity which they will enjoy should see them avoid the drop, and join Dijon and Strasbourg as sides in the bottom half of the table who play on the front foot.

PREDICTED FINISH: 16th



STADE de REIMS

SQUAD LIST

NAME	POSITION	NATIONALITY	AGE	AT CLUB SINCE	FORMER CLUB
Edouard Mendy	GK	Senegalese	26	2016/2017	Marseille
Johann Carrasso	GK	French	20	2015/2016	Metz
Nicolas Lemaitre	GK	French	21	2017/2018	-
Yunis Abdelhamid	CB	Moroccan	30	2017/2018	Dijon
Thomas Fontaine	CB	Malagasy	27	2018/2019	Clermont
Axel Disasi	CB	French	20	2017/2018	-
Patrick Bahanack	CB	Cameroonian	21	2018/2019	-
Ghislain Konan	LB	Ivorian	22	2018/2019	V. de Guimarães
Moussa Bana	LB	Cameroonian	21	2017/2018	-
Romain Métanire	RB	French	28	2016/2017	Kortrijk
Hendrick Cakin	RB	French	25	2017/2018	Nantes
Alaixys Romao	DM	Togolese	34	2018/2019	Olympiakos
Nolan Mbemba	DM	French	23	2017/2018	V. de Guimarães
Xavier Chavalerin	CM	French	27	2017/2018	Red Star Paris
Tristan Dingomé	CM	French	27	2018/2019	Troyes
Aly Ndom	CM	French	22	2015/2016	-
Hassane Kamara	LW	Gambian	24	2015/2016	Chateauroux
Marvin Martin	AM	French	20	2017/2018	Lille OSC
Mathieu Cafaro	AM	French	21	2017/2018	Toulouse
Virgile Piechocki	AM	French	21	2017/2018	-
Moussa Doumbia	LW	Malian	23	2018/2019	Rostov
Pablo Chavarría	RW/CF	Argentine	30	2016/2017	RC Lens
Rémi Oudin	CF	French	21	2016/2017	-
Grejohn Kyei	CF	French	22	2014/2015	-
Anatole Ngamukol	CF	French	30	2017/2018	Red Star Paris
David Guion	Manager	French	50	2017/2018	Cannes
Jean-Pierre Caillot	President	French	57	2004/2005	-



STADE RENNAIS

LIKELY XI

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	Position	Points
2017/2018	Ligue 1	5th	58
2016/2017	Ligue 1	9th	50
2015/2016	Ligue 1	8th	52
2014/2015	Ligue 1	9th	50
2013/2014	Ligue 1	13th	46

KEY MAN: BENJAMIN BOURIGEAUD

Bourigeaud has been linked with a move to Dortmund, but given the increased potential Rennes have shown under Sabri Lamouchi, it is no wonder that he has chosen to stay in France. Rennes' fine form saw them earn a Europa League place after years of near misses, and Bourigeaud will be important not only in terms of his versatility, but also building on last season's dynamic performance. Playing wide on either flank, or as a central midfielder, Bourigeaud contributed ten goals and seven assists, no mean feat for a player not considered to be the focal point of attack. The arrivals of Clément Grenier and Jordan Siebatcheu could see those numbers dip, but Bourigeaud will remain equally as influential.



STADE RENNAIS

SIGNING TO WATCH: JORDAN SIEBATCHEU, STADE DE REIMS

Rennes have hardly been shy about spending money in recent windows, and this summer has been more of the same, with Siebatcheu arriving for €9M after a season in which he scored 17 goals and assisted a further seven to see Reims earn promotion. Still just 22, this was on the heels of a strong season on loan for Chateauroux, meaning that he can score in a variety of ways. Decent in the air, and speedy enough, especially over short distances to gain separation, Siebatcheu is a good finisher with both feet. Too, while he certainly has an eye for goal, is also remarkably unselfish and intelligent in linking play with others, something that will be he a boon to Sarr and Bourigeaud.

SQUAD ANALYSIS:

Rennes' most recent friendlies have seen them play an accomplished draw against Dortmund and batter Everton 4-1. These results must be taken with a grain of salt, to be sure, but also of an indication of how Rennes can continue to push up the table. The attack, already accomplished, has been decidedly improved by the arrival of Grenier to replace Wahbi Khazri, and another season of development will surely bolster the play of Ismaïla Sarr, once the Senegalese is back in the squad. The further additions of Roman Del Castillo and Rafik Guitane will give Lamouchi an enviable amount of options, no small matter as his team head into the Europa League. Questions remain over depth in certain areas, particularly in defence and goal, but overall, even with the sale of promising centre back Joris Gnagnon, this team is improved and could even push for the Champions' League should one of Marseille or Lyon struggle.

STRENGTHS:

Lyon and PSG have more depth in attacking areas, but beyond those two more monied clubs, Rennes' versatility and youth in their forward ranks is unparalleled, combining intelligence, pace, and ability on the ball in equal measures. Central midfield remains an area of strength, with the emergence of James Léa Siliki to partner Benjamin André an impressive development. Thomas Koubek has generally been solid as well in goal, and despite the odd rick, Benoit Costil has hardly been missed, while Hamari Traoré impressed as a marauding right back.

WEAKNESSES:

Damien Da Silva may seem a canny transfer on a free at just thirty years of age, but last season saw his play dip considerably, making him a potential liability. Depth in that position is less of a concern, but Thomas Koubek lacks a reliable back-up in goal, while both Clément Chantôme and the (currently injured) Jakob Johansson lack much attacking nous in midfield, something which could rob Rennes of much of their dynamism. There is also the question of how a team with little European experience adapts to the Thursday-Sunday rhythm of the Europa League.

VERDICT:

Rennes have good depth at most positions, and a good balance of youngsters and experience. The arrival of Lamouchi got this squad on the same page, and with some excellent summer business, a genuine push for the Champions' League should be expected.

PREDICTED FINISH: 4th



STADE RENNAIS

SQUAD LIST

NAME	POSITION	NATIONALITY	AGE	AT CLUB SINCE	FORMER CLUB
Abdoulaye Diallo	GK	Senegalese	26	2009/2010	-
Thomas Koubek	GK	Czech	25	2017/2018	Sparta Prague
Edvinas Gertmonas	GK	Lithuanian	22	2014/2015	Atalntas Klaipede
Ludovic Baal	LB/LW	French	31	2015/2016	RC Lens
Gerzino Nyamsi	CB	French	21	2018/2019	-
Mexer	CB	Mozambican	29	2014/2015	CD Nacional
Ramy Bensebaini	CB/LB	Algerian	23	2016/2017	Paradou AC
Jérémy Gelin	CB	French	21	2017/2018	-
Damien Da Silva	CB	French	30	2018/2019	SM Caen
Romain Danzé	RB	French	32	2006/2007	-
Mehdi Zeffane	RB	Algerian	26	2015/2016	Lyon
Hamari Traoré	RB	Malian	26	2017/2018	Stade de Reims
James Léa Siliki	CM	French	22	2017/2018	-
Jakob Johansson	CM/DM	Swedish	28	2018/2019	AIK
Denis Will Poha	CM/AM	French	21	2016/2017	-
Clément Chantôme	DM	French	30	2016/2017	Bordeaux
Clément Grenier	CM/AM	French	27	2018/2019	EA Guingamp
Benjamin Bourigeaud	CM	French	24	2017/2018	RC Lens
Benjamin Andre	CM/RW	French	28	2014/2015	AC Ajaccio
Romain Del Castillo	RW/AM	French	22	2018/2019	Lyon
Adrien Hunou	AM	French	24	2013/2014	-
Rafik Guitane	AM	French	19	2017/2018	Le Havre
Faitout Maouassa	LW/RW/LB	French	19	2017/2018	Nancy
Ismâïla Sarr	LW/RW	Senegalese	19	2017/2018	Metz
Diafra Sakho	ST	Senegalese	28	2017/2018	West Ham United
Jordan Siebatcheu	ST	French	22	2018/2019	Stade de Reims
Sabri Lamouchi	Manager	French	46	2017/2018	El Jaish
Olivier Létang	President	French	47	2017/2018	-

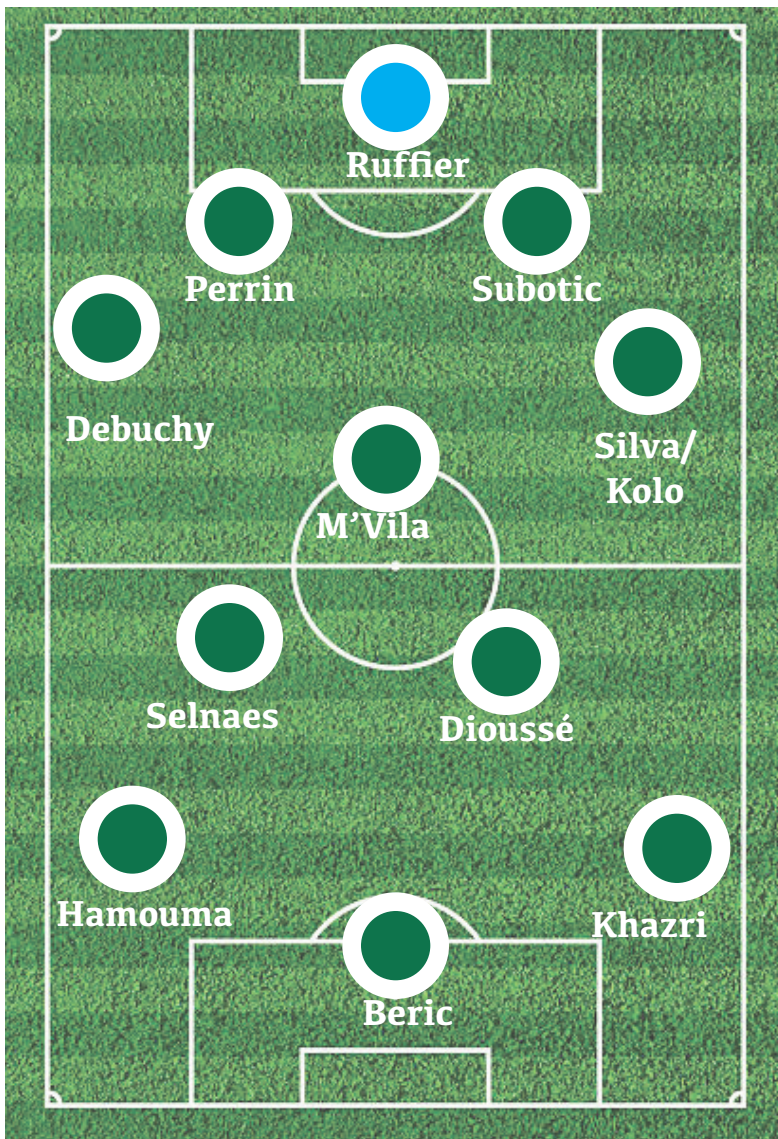


SAINT ETIENNE

LIKELY XI

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	Position	Points
2017/2018	Ligue 1	7th	55
2016/2017	Ligue 1	8th	50
2015/2016	Ligue 1	6th	58
2014/2015	Ligue 1	5th	69
2013/2014	Ligue 1	4th	69



KEY MAN: ROBERT BERIC

Beric's struggles with injury seem never-ending, and such was Sainté's dissatisfaction with him that he was sent out on loan last season, where he struggled to make an impact with Anderlecht. His return to the club in January, with Jean-Louis Gasset now in sole charge, saw a remarkable renaissance, as the Slovenian netted 7 times in 15 matches, proving himself a needed focal point as Sainté battled for European football before falling just short. Seemingly comfortable with starting or coming off the bench last season, Beric should be first choice now, his physicality, hold-up play and aerial prowess the primary outlet in a 4-3-3. If Beric can continue last season's good form, Sainté should return to the top six.

SAINT ETIENNE

SIGNING TO WATCH: WAHBI KHAZRI, SUNDERLAND

That Sainté managed to pip Rennes to the Tunisian attacker, who was so influential for the Breton side last season, was no small surprise, and he should start immediately, likely on the left side of attack. His directness and goal-scoring ability should be a good counter to Romain Hamouma's tendency to play as more of an orthodox winger on the opposite flank. Too, Khazri may even surpass his performances, if not his raw numbers (nine goals in 24 matches) for Rennes, given that in a 4-3-3, he will have next to no defensive responsibility. Discipline is an issue for Khazri given his temper; he was one of Ligue 1's most-booked players last season, but should he keep his head, he could be key to Les Verts' continued renaissance.

SQUAD ANALYSIS:

In keeping hold of Mathieu Debuchy and Yann M'Vila this summer, Sainté laid down a serious marker as to their intent in terms of progressing under Gasset. While not qualifying for Europe was a disappointment, Les Verts' defensive record under the veteran manager, particularly in the new year was hugely impressive, with only PSG bettering their record of 17 goals conceded in 2018. The departure of Jonathan Bamba is disappointing, to be sure, but the positivity around this side is sky-high, with the addition of former Sevilla and Nice defender Timothée Kolodziejczak giving the defence needed depth and allowing a veteran side to remain fresh throughout the season. That said, it's hard to see Sainté pushing higher than sixth, given the resources of those clubs tipped to finish above them, but this team should be back to the level it was under Christophe Galtier, no mean feat given how poorly last season started.

STRENGTHS:

Loïc Perrin is now on the downside of his career at 33, but he is still a superb defender and an exemplary captain. He, Stéphane Ruffier, M'Vila and Neven Subotic bring a remarkable level of experience, skill and resolve to the spine of this team, who should be one of Ligue 1's best defensive units. The fullbacks, in the form of Debuchy and one of Gabriel Silva or Kolodziejczak, also look strong, even if depth is a slight worry there with Ronael Pierre-Gabriel and Saidy Janko having moved on.

WEAKNESSES:

In Beric, Hamouma, Khazri, and Loïs Diony, Sainté have a capable stable of attackers, when they're on form, but that being on form is a matter of some question, as Khazri's time in England showed. Diony, too, was superb at Dijon, but had difficulty with his move to the Chaudron, failing to score last season. There is also no natural playmaker, which means that for all of this side's defensive organisation, goals could still be an issue, with an excess of draws frustrating potential progress.

VERDICT:

This side is full of experience, and Gasset was hugely impressive after being given sole control of the team. Had Rennes not made the investments they had, Sainté might even have an outside shot at the Champions' League. Without a European campaign to distract, this side should be a handful for any opponent.

PREDICTED FINISH: 6th



SAINT ETIENNE

SQUAD LIST

NAME	POSITION	NATIONALITY	AGE	AT CLUB SINCE	FORMER CLUB
Stéphane Ruffier	GK	French	31	2011/2012	AS Monaco
Jessy Moulin	GK	French	32	2011/2012	-
Timothée Kolodziejczak	CB/LB	French	26	2018/2019	Tigres
Gabriel Silva	LB	Brazilian	27	2017/2018	Udinese
Cheikh M'Bengue	LB	Senegalese	30	2016/2017	Stade Rennais
Pierre-Yves Polomat	LB	French	24	2013/2014	-
Neven Subotic	CB	Serbian	29	2017/2018	Borussia Dortmund
Leo Lacroix	CB	Swiss	26	2016/2017	FC Sion
Loic Perrin	CB	French	33	2003/2004	-
Mathieu Debuchy	RB	French	33	2017/2018	Arsenal
Yann M'Vila	CM/DM	French	28	2018/2019	Rubin Kazan
Assane Dioussé	CM/DM	Senegalese	20	2017/2018	Empoli
Ole Selnaes	CM	Norwegian	24	2015/2016	Rosenborg BK
Wahbi Khazri	AM/ST/LW	Tunisian	27	2018/2019	Sunderland
Arnaud Nordin	LW	French	20	2016/2017	-
Romain Hamouma	RW	French	31	2012/2013	SM Caen
Oussama Tannane	RW	Moroccan	24	2015/2016	Heracles
Kevin Monnet-Paquet	RW/LW	French	29	2014/2015	FC Lorient
Lois Diony	ST	French	25	2016/2017	Dijon FCO
Robert Beric	ST	Slovenian	27	2015/2016	Rapid Vienna
Jean-Louis Gasset	Manager	French	64	2017/2018	-
Bernard Caiazza	President	French	64	2009/2010	-
Roland Romeyer	President	French	72	2010/2011	-



RC STRASBOURG

LIKELY XI

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	Position	Points
2017/2018	Ligue 1	15th	38
2016/2017	Ligue 2	1st	67
2015/2016	National	1st	58
2014/2015	National	4th	65
2013/2014	National	17th	35

KEY MAN:

DIMITRI LIÉNARD

For much of the first half of last season, my choice of Liénard in this role looked foolish indeed, but after January, the midfielder was quietly one of Ligue 1's more influential attackers. Possessed of a fantastic strike from a dead ball and with a brilliant range of passing, Liénard thrived once manager Thierry Laurey settled on a 4-3-1-2, playing as the most advanced of the midfield three, able to cut inside and link play or to pull wide and offer a cross into the box. Liénard is also an underrated defensive presence, having ranked second in the squad in tackles last season, and will surely be called upon more in this regard with the departure of Jean-Eudes Aholou to Monaco.



RC STRASBOURG

SIGNING TO WATCH: MATZ SELS, NEWCASTLE

Bingourou Kamara had looked bright in flashes last season before being felled by injury, and his deputy, Alexandre Oukidja, was competent enough before decamping to Metz on a free, but the opportunity to sign Sels, given his vast experience was simply one that club president Marc Keller couldn't pass up. Sels was denied an opportunity at Newcastle after the loan signing of Martin Dubravka was made permanent, but with Champions' League experience aplenty (Lyon fans may remember his historic performance in a 1-all draw against Gent in 2015) and a Belgian title as well, he is far from short on quality. Still only 26, he has no realistic hope of displacing Thibaut Courtois for Belgium, but will be motivated to prove himself in Ligue 1.

SQUAD ANALYSIS:

Strasbourg were one of Ligue 1's pleasant surprises last season, playing attractive, attacking football and causing some major upsets along the way, including victories over PSG and Lyon. However, a squad that wasn't particularly young is now another year older, and will struggle to replace two of their more dynamic players in Martin Terrier and Aholou. Despite the arrival of Lamine Koné, the defence will also need retooling after the departures of Bakary Koné, Ernest Seka, Kader Mangane and Dimitri Foulquier. However, Keller has been unafraid to spend this summer, and in addition to Sels, the arrivals of Adrien Thomasson on a free from Nantes, Stefan Mitrovic and bulky target man Ludovic Ajorque (14 goals for Clermont in Ligue 2 last season) are intriguing ones. If Laurey can sort out his defence, Strasbourg will have a puncher's chance of staying up, but a unit that was third-poorest last season doesn't look to be massively improved, despite the experience of Serbian international Mitrovic.

STRENGTHS:

Sels was underused at Newcastle, but probably becomes one of the league's better goalkeepers, something that will no doubt lower Laurey's blood pressure. The midfield will once again be resolute, with France youth international Ibrahima Sissoko a canny buy as a deputy for the more experience group of Liénard, Jonas Martin, Jérémy Grimm and Anthony Goncalves. Thomasson can prove to be a spark, but exactly how he fits into this side remains a mystery, while Kenny Lala was a reliable presence at right back last season.

WEAKNESSES:

Last season, Strasbourg had a high turnover rate in attack, bringing in Idriss Saadi and Nuno Da Costa; that has continued apace at present with Ajorque replacing the departing Stéphane Bahoken and Jérémy Blayac. Laurey struggled to get consistency or end product from his strikers last season, and that could remain an issue. Defence is also a concern, with youngster Anthony Caci playing at left back in preseason and Lamine Koné or the little-used Pablo Martinez set to be Mitrovic's partner, leaving the back line bereft of much Ligue 1 experience save Lala.

VERDICT:

Strasbourg were one of the feel-good stories of Ligue 1 last season, but it's simply too hard to ignore their defensive record, despite the arrival of Sels. The attack, buoyed by Thomasson and Ajorque could improve, even markedly, but it's unlikely to be enough to extend the eastern side's stay in the top flight.

PREDICTED FINISH: 19th



RC STRASBOURG

SQUAD LIST

NAME	POSITION	NATIONALITY	AGE	AT CLUB SINCE	FORMER CLUB
Matz Sels	GK	Belgian	26	2018/2019	Newcastle
Bingourou Kamara	GK	French	21	2017/2018	Tours
Lamine Koné	CB	Ivorian	29	2018/2019	Sunderland
Kenny Lala	RB	French	26	2017/2018	RC Lens
Stefan Mitrovic	CB	Serbian	28	2018/2019	Gent
Ismaël Aaneba	CB/RB	Moroccan	19	2016/2017	-
Duplexe Tchamba	CB	French	20	2014/2015	-
Anthony Caci	LB/DM	French	21	2016/2017	-
Pablo Martinez	LB/CB	French	29	2017/2018	Angers SCO
Abdallah Ndour	LB	Senegalese	24	2015/2016	FC Metz
Ibrahima Sissoko	DM	French	20	2018/2019	Brest
Jérémy Grimm	DM	French	31	2013/2014	Colmar
Jonas Martin	CM/DM	French	28	2017/2018	Real Betis
Anthony Goncalves	CM	French	32	2016/2017	Stade Lavallois
Dimitri Liénard	CM/LW	French	30	2013/2014	FC Mulhouse
Benjamin Corgnet	AM	French	31	2017/2018	AS Saint-Étienne
Adrien Thomasson	AM/LW	French	24	2018/2019	Nantes
Idriss Saadi	ST	Algerian	26	2017/2018	Cardiff City
Moataz Zenzemi	LW	Tunisian	19	2017/2018	Club Africain
Nuno Da Costa	ST	Cape Verdean	27	2017/2018	Valenciennes
Ludovic Ajorque	ST	French	24	2018/2019	Clermont
Kévin Zohi	ST	Ivorian	21	2017/2018	-
Thierry Laurey	Manager	French	54	2016/2017	Gazelec Ajaccio
Marc Keller	President	French	50	2012/2013	-

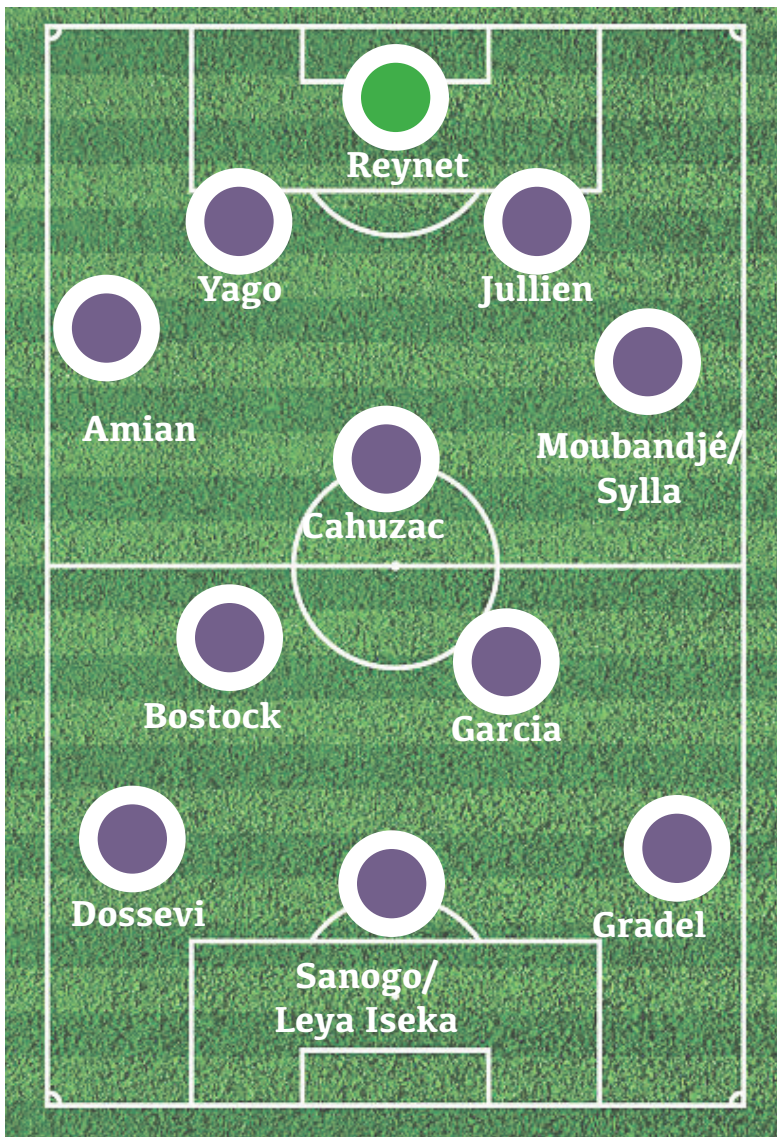


TOULOUSE FC

LIKELY XI

FORM GUIDE

Season	Division	Position	Points
2017/2018	Ligue 1	18th	37
2016/2017	Ligue 1	13th	44
2015/2016	Ligue 1	17th	40
2014/2015	Ligue 1	17th	42
2013/2014	Ligue 1	9th	49



KEY MAN: MAX GRADEL

Gradel's incandescent 2014-15 season for Saint-Étienne seems a distant memory at this point following his move abroad and subsequent struggles with injury. In taking Les Verts close to the top three, he was one of the league's best players in a system geared towards his style of play. With Andy Delort out on loan, some combination of Gradel and Yaya Sanogo are now the attack's focal point. Delort has been effective at times in his career, notably at Caen, but Alain Casanova's side was at its best last season when Gradel was let loose. Adding the pace of Aaron Leya Iseka and the creativity of Manu Garcia will help as well, but in Gradel, Casanova has a proven performer who can help this side improve.

TOULOUSE FC

SIGNING TO WATCH: JOHN BOSTOCK, BURSASPOR

Bostock seemed to be finally delivering on the promise that he had shown as a teenager in England after winning the Ligue 2 Player of the Year in 2016-17, but his form tailed off badly after the departure of Casanova, and Lens, having hoped to battle for promotion, instead ended up in a relegation scrap. A January move to Bursaspor saw him make just eight appearances, but the hope here is that a reunion with Casanova can put the former Spurs midfielder back on track. He will be afforded every opportunity to start for Toulouse, and should impress in a box-to-box role, chipping with some much-needed scoring and allowing Les Violets to play with a dynamism they often lacked last season.

SQUAD ANALYSIS:

Toulouse lost their best defender and their superb young 'keeper in Issa Diop and Alban Lafont this summer, so a mid-table finish may, at first glance, seem counterintuitive, given they only stayed up after winning a play-off against AC Ajaccio. The departure of both will be hard to absorb, to be sure, but in Mathieu Dossevi, Baptiste Reynet, Bostock and Leya Iseka, this team has much more balance to it. Too, Casanova will perhaps not feel as much pressure as Mickaël Debève and Pascal Dupraz, having restructured the squad as he saw fit and not being forced to shoehorn in overpaid veterans to a young squad. Casanova made his reputation as a developer of players, something that the fiery Dupraz simply wasn't, preferring experience over potential; one can easily see the likes of Kelvin Amian, Clément Michelin and Alexis Blin starting to deliver on the promise they had first shown under Dominique Arribagé.

STRENGTHS:

Reynet's goals-against average may not catch the eye, but anyone who watched him toil at Dijon know his talent, ensuring that the loss of Lafont won't equate to a poorer defensive record. Midfield will also provide a good deal of stability in the form of Yannick Cahuzac, but the additions of Bostock and Garcia, as well as Blin being fit, should see Toulouse play more positively, evoking Casanova's first spell in charge. Too, while there are few top class talents in the side, there is an enviable level of depth throughout, no small matter in Ligue 1.

WEAKNESSES:

Gradel has shown himself to be an impressive talent in the right situation, and Sanogo showed flashes as well, but this team was stodgy and overly reliant on an ineffective set of attacking players last season. Casanova will have them playing more coherently, but the question remains whether they have the talent to capitalise on his system. Defence is also a source of worry, as Christopher Jullien could join Diop in departing, which would leave a talented, but very callow back line save Francois Moubandjé.

VERDICT:

There is admittedly a bit of optimism here based on the abilities of Casanova to rekindle Toulouse into a team that can, if not challenge for Europe, avoid being a dour relegation-threatened mess. His vast experience in Ligue 1 and at the club in particular should see Toulouse improve, but things could just as easily go sour.

PREDICTED FINISH: 11th



TOULOUSE

FC

SQUAD LIST

NAME	POSITION	NATIONALITY	AGE	AT CLUB SINCE	FORMER CLUB
Marc Vidal	GK	French	27	2009/2010	-
Baptiste Reynet	GK	French	27	2018/2019	Dijon FCO
Mauro Goicoechea	GK	Uruguayan	30	2015/2016	FC Arouca
Issiaga Sylla	LB/LW	Malian	24	2012/2013	Horoya AC
Francois Moubandje	LB	Swiss	28	2013/2014	Servette
Steven Fortes	CB	Cape Verdean	26	2017/2018	Le Havre
Steeve Yago	CB/RB	Burkinabe	25	2012/2013	-
Christopher Jullien	CB	French	25	2016/2017	Freiburg
Kelvin Amian	RB	French	20	2016/2017	-
Clément Michelin	RB	French	21	2016/2017	-
Alexis Blin	DM	French	21	2015/2016	-
Yann Bodiger	DM	French	23	2015/2016	-
Somalia	DM	Brazilian	29	2015/2016	Ferencvaros
Yannick Cahuzac	DM	French	33	2017/2018	SC Bastia
Ibrahim Sangaré	CM	Ivorian	20	2016/2017	AS Denguéle
John Bostock	CM	English	26	2018/2019	Bursapsor
Manu Garcia	AM	Spanish	20	2018/2019	Manchester City
Max-Alain Gradel	LW/ST	Ivorian	30	2018/2019	Bournemouth
Jimmy Durmaz	LW	Swedish	29	2016/2017	Olympiakos
Quentin Boisgard	AM	French	21	2017/2018	-
Mathieu Dossevi	RW	Togolese	30	2018/2019	Metz
Yaya Sanogo	ST	French	25	2017/2018	Arsenal
Ola Toivonen	ST	Swedish	32	2016/2017	Stade Rennais
Firmin Mubélé	ST/RW	DR Congolese	24	2018/2019	Rennes
Aaron Leya Iseka	ST	French	20	2018/2019	Anderlecht
Corentin Jean	ST/RW	French	23	2016/2017	AS Monaco
Alain Casanova	Manager	French	56	2018/2019	RC Lens
Oliver Sedran	President	French	50	2001/2002	-