

## 81. Christian Brüls

Club: OGC Nice

Date of Birth: 30th September 1988

Position: Attacker

After arriving on loan from Gent in Belgium in the summer transfer window, Brüls has been one of the bright sparks in a Nice team who have somewhat under-performed during the current campaign.

Brüls plays mostly on the left wing, but is also able to play as an attacking midfielder behind the striker and on the right wing. His play style revolves around two key aspects of his game: his speed and his technique. Brüls is a very pacey customer, and clearly this will give a lot of problems to Ligue 1 defences, with runs either down the wing or right in behind the defence and towards goal. There is a sense of anticipation that emanates whenever the Belgian has the ball at his feet in a potentially dangerous position for Les Aiglons. Either this is because Nice have little other than Brüls in the way of attacking creativity, or it is because the Gent man frightens Ligue 1 defences with his trickery and inventive passing nature. If the opposition defence loses concentration and Brüls beats the offside trap, it can be very hard to catch him.

This combined with his reliable technique, makes him a very accomplished winger. His first touch is almost always on song, and he has a variety of tricks in his locker with which to beat opponents. This allows him to trick the opposing full back, bomb down the wing and deliver crosses from out wide into his strikers. This makes Brüls a dream to play alongside for strikers; when he is running down the wing, you know that there will be a quality delivery coming into the box. Dario Cvitanich has echoed these assumptions saying he has a better footballing understanding on the pitch with Brüls than with any of his other teammates.

Something that comes across in previous interviews that Brüls has given is that he craves a sense of belonging, and thrives, as most players do, when their achievements are recognised. Indeed, OGC Nice is Brüls sixth club in the space of eight full seasons.

There is no reason why Brüls cannot hope that he has finally found a home on the Côte D'Azur, if Nice can afford the buy-out clause in the player's loan contract at the end of the season.



At 25 years old, Brüls is coming to a point in his career where we stop talking about potential and start expecting results. Brüls has not disappointed, showing his quality in Ligue 1 this season for Nice. You would expect Brüls to take time to adapt to the playing style in France after moving from AA Gent on loan, but he had no such troubles. Within the first 8 games of the season, Brüls had already picked up a goal and 3 assists, and in each of the games in which Brüls had a part to play in a goal, Nice ended up winning. He has now become a key fixture in OGC Nice's lineup, having started all 19 of their league games before the Christmas break. Only fellow midfielder Didier Digard has played as many games for Nice, so it is clear that Brüls has immediately established a first team place at his new club. A statistic that emphasises Brüls' importance to Nice is that if we combine all of the assists of Nice's midfielder's apart from Brüls, we have 4 assists, which is the same figure that Brüls has managed just by himself.

One ingredient that currently fails Brüls is consistency. At times, when he is in good form, it is very difficult to defend against him. However, he can often have series of games during which he goes missing in games. Last season, he had a run of 14 games in a row in which he neither scored nor made an assist for Gent. This season, he had a run of 10 such games, coinciding with Nice's horrible run of 7 straight defeats. If Brüls can improve this aspect of his game, he can move onto the next level in his career and really become a top player. If he can consistently manage to produce the performances which keep defenders guessing for the whole 90 minutes with his skill and speed, his goals and assists tally will shoot up and I am sure he will be on the radar of some very serious European clubs.

This highly creative player has added a more exotic flavour and refined taste to Nice's attacking setup, adding a new offensive dimension whilst alleviating the pressure off of Dario Cvitanich, last season's talisman. While Brüls' 2014 is not assured because of the club situation, you never know, he may have finally found his footballing home.

*'If I didn't have football I would have been a carpenter.'*

*Christian Brüls*

20th December 2013

**DID YOU KNOW?** Christian Brüls' nickname is 'Tintin'. He was given it during his time at Maastricht in the Netherlands when he was the only Belgian player in their squad.