

72. Eric Abidal

Club: AS Monaco

Date of Birth: 11th September 1979

Position: Defender



Despite serious health issues at the start of the year, Eric Abidal is back in many senses of the word. Not only is the Lyon-born defender now playing the beautiful game again having made a most unlikely and incredible return from a liver transplant, but Abidal is also back in France with AS Monaco, where he started his career, and is playing once again for the French national team.

Abidal showed enormous strength to make a return to football for the second time in April of 2013. Abidal only ended up playing 5 games for Barcelona at the end of last season due to the timing of his return, but to be able to fit straight back into the highest level after such a long time out from the game shows the brilliance of a man who can be a role model for all. For this reason alone, the 34 year old pretty much qualifies for the GFFN 100, but he has of course made the cut because of his performances this year since his recovery.

Abidal reacted to not being given a new contract by Barcelona tearfully, but he soon picked himself up and despite suitors in the form of Lyon, Nice and New York Red Bulls, Abidal chose a move to Monaco, where he has quickly become a key player at the heart of the back four. At the age of 34, the Frenchman is able to provide vital experience of playing at the highest level that the side needs. Indeed the Frenchman ended 2013 at centre back for both club and country despite being a traditional left back, but due to a slight loss of pace it appears that this is the place for him. Abidal's experience proved invaluable for AS Monaco at the heart of the back four as they look to put their stamp on Ligue 1. His ability to calmly pass his way out of danger and generally appearing composed on the ball allows him to make some vital clearances and interceptions in the process with relative ease.

One weakness, perhaps, of Abidal playing in this position, is his lack of height and his shortcomings when it comes to the aerial battles. With the physicality of the Ligue 1 game increasing this season he has found himself exposed, and indeed in his few international games in 2013, he has maybe performed below expectations. It does indeed seem that Abidal should not be included in Didier Deschamps' French World Cup squad, as the Frenchman simply no longer stands out amongst a set of highly talented young defenders that the country is now producing. In our opinion anyway, Abidal should have played his last game for the national team, and at least this way, he can focus on playing club football at the highest level with Monaco for as long as possible.

It could be argued, that despite impressive performances, Abidal has not been so terrific for Monaco either. His centre back partnership with Ricardo Carvalho, while only 6 months young at the end of 2013, is far from perfect and they often leave each other uneasy with their lack of pace. Another theory for their strange lack of communication on the pitch could be their inherent former rivalry, with the two footballers arriving from such great rivals in Spain. However, although they do not offer speed in abundance, they can provide vital experience, and Monaco's defensive statistics continue to be impressive during this campaign.

Despite the almost natural downturn in Abidal's footballing abilities, we can only judge him on the majority of his performances in Ligue 1 in 2013 and for the most part he has been a great presence for AS Monaco. Abidal's international career might be nearing the end, but the player has enjoyed great successes during his time with France and will surely go down as one of the great French sportsmen of all time, a role model for all. His fighting attitude seems to inspire teammates and that is one of the main reasons why the newly promoted side are highflying.

'Playing in the World Cup and winning it, that would be some ending...'

Eric Abidal

On the Brazil 2014 World Cup- 20th September 2013

DID YOU KNOW? Eric Abidal's former teammate at Barcelona Dani Alves offered the Frenchman his liver when found out that his friend was in need of a transplant.