

10. Florian Thauvin

The 2012-13 campaign was an incredible success for Florian Thauvin, but also one wrapped in controversy surrounding his transfer window manoeuvres and is fast earning the rather maligned reputation as one of French football's greatest troublemakers. His transformation in just two and a half seasons on the pitch is however venerable. Thauvin accomplished in converting himself from a bit part performer grappling in Ligue 2 during the 2011-2012 campaign, to SC Bastia's best player in Ligue 1 in a period of 6 months from August 2012 until January of the following year. This earned "Flo-Thauv", as he has started to refer to himself on social networking platform Twitter, a move to Ligue 1 heavyweights Lille from the Corsican club in January 2013. Thauvin was then loaned back to the Corsicans for the remainder of the season, but glittering performances on the pitch in the first six months of this year made the player personally confident that he should be playing in the Champions League, Europe's top-tier competition, and thus when Lille failed to qualify for the competition, he forced through a move to Marseille. This move on deadline day of the summer window was amid interest from the likes of Arsenal and Newcastle, but the player did not think he was old enough to make the move away from his homeland as of yet. This episode from the 20 year old midfielder has dented his reputation in France and beyond, with many now referring to him as the 'brat' of French football with Lille boss Rene Girard adding that he felt the France U21's international should have been banned for his 'appalling' actions.

Thauvin's controversial actions over the course of 2013 were not merely limited to transfer activities. During the U20's World Cup in Turkey during the summer, Thauvin scored and then proceeded to celebrate by mimicking somebody shooting a gun. This was amid the treacherous internal problems that the country and others around it were facing and caused a particular backlash of abuse against Thauvin from the locals throughout the rest of the tournament, which France of course went on to win.

Back to Thauvin's actual footballing performances meanwhile, the year began at Bastia with the player in exhilarating form. Thauvin added 8 goals to his 2012/13 season count, with two of these coming in a famous 4-1 victory over Lyon, where centre back Dejan Lovren was simply unable to cope with the pace and panache of the youngster, who left him for dead on many more than just one occasion. It was not only the Frenchman's form in front of goal that impressed during the first six months of this year, however. Thauvin appeared to form a fantastic partnership with Wahbi Khazri at the Corsican club and the pair of them split defences on the counter attack for the most part of the second half of the 2012/2013 campaign. Such performances meant that Thauvin beat the likes of Lucas Digne, Marco Verratti and Remy Cabella to the UNFP Ligue 1 Young Player of the Year Award 2013. However, despite the obvious success at Bastia, criticisms were still made of Florian's imperfect performances; Thauvin can be a little selfish at times and this can be demonstrated by the fact that despite the ten goals, he only provided one assist in 2012-2013, which occurred in a 3-1 win over Montpellier. Nevertheless, he has already contributed double that amount this campaign, showing signs of improvement. This is likely because Thauvin respects and admires his teammates at Marseille more than his former Bastia counterparts. Furthermore, the 20 year old must also improve his decision-making when in the final third as he likes to cut inside and shoot probably a little too much.

Arguably, Thauvin's greatest asset is his movement off the ball. He works tirelessly to provide options for his central midfielders, even if they decide not to play the ball that he is offering. It is this expressly, which makes him cut out for future success. Marseille are plainly regarding the player as somebody who is maybe not mature enough to make a sufficient impact during the big, crucial games at the time of writing, however. The player will be disappointed with the club's effort in the Champions League, despite a very tough group, and will be upset that he was left on the bench for many of the key games, including Arsenal at home. Thauvin will also be frustrated that he was unable to make a strong introduction into the competition, as he failed to perform at any great level when featuring in this year's competition, although he did score in a 3-2 away defeat to Napoli. In the league, he didn't play in the match against Monaco and played less than 15 minutes in games against PSG and St Étienne, once again showing Elie Baup's reluctance to start him in the vital fixtures. Since then, however, he has become a regular part of the team and has started to provide goals for the team, scoring four goals in five games in November.

Another feat that Florian Thauvin can be exceptionally proud of is assisting his nation to win the U20 World Cup this summer and it was a place where the Frenchman highlighted his ability to a worldwide audience. The player contributed three goals to his team on the way to glory, which included a wonderful individual performance with two goals in a 2-1 against Ghana in the semi-finals. Thauvin will hope that it is not long before a full international call up. He has stated that he wants to make Didier Deschamps' World Cup squad for next summer but this does seem very unlikely. Arsène Wenger, however, has backed the youngster's cause saying that the player has the talent to go. There is a lot of competition for places though, so how Thauvin performs in the coming months will be fundamentally important if he is to fulfil his dream.

Club: Olympique de Marseille
Date of Birth: 26th January 1993
Position: Attacker



Overall, 2013 has been a wonderful year for Florian Thauvin and one within which he has eclipsed all expectation. If it was not for his handling of his future in the summer, where he appeared to temporarily go on strike at Lille before his dream move was granted, he could have perhaps finished even higher in this year's GFFN 100. As it is, however, Florian Thauvin can certainly be proud of his tenth placed finish here.