

## 95. Lucas Déaux

**Club:** FC Nantes

**Date of Birth:** 26th December 1988

**Position:** Midfielder



It happened at about quarter past ten on the evening of the seventeenth of May 2013. It being FC Nantes' promotion back to Ligue 1 after four long years of knocking around in France's second tier. Rewind to shortly after kick-off that night when something happened that might have put the celebrations on hold and for Nantes midfielder Lucas Déaux it was a moment of shame.

FCN knew a point against the already relegated Sedan at home would seal their return to France's elite. Things would not get off to an auspicious start for Les *Canaris*, as Déaux was sent off after three minutes for head-butting a Sedan player. This plunged the team and the crowd into uncertainty and it took an own-goal in the second half to give FC Nantes the one-nil victory; promotion assured, albeit not in the fashion they would have desired. Nevertheless, cue scenes of delirium with a large-scale pitch invasion. The camera cut to the figure of Lucas Déaux on the sidelines, in tears.

When reflecting on the events of that night in May, Déaux accepts that his behaviour was idiotic and it was fairly obvious that Déaux was ever so slightly overly pumped-up for this game. A quick glance at his Twitter feed showed him retweeting large amounts of Nantes fans' messages of encouragement in the run-up to the game. Even his manager, Michel Der Zakarian remarked how Déaux appeared to be "over-excited" in training ahead of the match.

Lucas Déaux began his career at Stade de Reims, the town being his birthplace, and was a part of the side that was promoted in 2011/12, when he played 31 league games. He claims that this experience of being promoted out of Ligue 2 with Reims yet not getting to experience Ligue 1 with his home-town club was a contributing factor to his pre-match state of mind on that fated night in May. The fact that he was made to start anew with another club; he just could not entertain the idea of coming so close again without the rewards. Also Reims-Sedan are rivals something a *rémois* like Déaux was well aware of.

Fast-forward to the end of 2013 and FC Nantes are in the upper echelons of Ligue 1, much to the surprise of many. Déaux himself is a regular starter having only missed two league games, one due to a suspension for a red card. He is very much an integral part of the Nantes midfield. Often partnered with fellow defensive midfielder Birama Touré he is charged with breaking up the play in the middle of the park and feeding the ball to one of Nantes' attacking quartet. Made up of two wide-men, a number 10 and the lone striker.

Déaux is adept at winning the ball back and while he has committed, on average, two fouls per match he has picked up just one yellow card. He is averaging at an impressive 2.4 interceptions a game in Ligue 1 this season. This is good going for a player in his position, especially given his inexperience at the highest level and the fact Déaux only turns 25 on Boxing Day 2013. He is a hard-working midfielder who does not shirk a challenge and likes to get stuck in, but his judgement and ability to analyse situations at pace before making the decision of whether or not to dive in to a challenge puts him a cut above the rest.

Lucas Déaux has become a fan favourite with the Nantes faithful and he maintains an active profile on Twitter. He comes across as a straight-talking and down to earth kind of guy. Yet there remains a sort of energy that veers towards eccentricity. Der Zakarian has allegedly nicknamed him '*Le barjot*' this roughly translates as '*nutcase*'. Thankfully this sense of idiosyncrasy has been well channelled on the pitch as he has become an important member of Nantes' first XI. He reads the game well and brings a great level of on-field focus.

Off the pitch he seems to have developed a friendship with American summer recruit Alejandro Bedoya, if Twitter is anything to go by. Déaux is a self-confessed Americophile, he has spent his last three holidays stateside. This bromance will undoubtedly help the American to settle into a new country and league.

At the beginning of December, Nantes beat Valenciennes at home with a late winner. At the end of the match, Déaux remained on the pitch and ran over to the Tribune Loire- 'the Kop'. He took the microphone off the ultra in charge of leading the chants and led a full stand in a call and response chant. The reaction was incredible, the response from the crowd deafening. He seems well taken with the club and its fans. After the dark days at Reims, Lucas Déaux is enjoying being an integral part of arguably France's most exciting club of 2013.

*'There are too many roundabouts, too much construction and too much traffic here.'*

Lucas Déaux

On Nantes

**Quotes of the Year: Patrice Evra:** "And what's the other one called, Screwdriver? Rolland Screwdriver. All he does is talk."

*Patrice Evra lashes back at pundit Rolland Courbis in an extraordinary interview with Téléfoot.*