

58. Julien Féret

Club: Stade Rennais

Date of Birth: 5th July 1982

Position: Midfielder

The Ligue 1 veteran finally received the plaudits he has strived for throughout his career and fully deserves them after an impressive 2013.

On the face of it, a player with only 3 goals and 4 assists over the course of the calendar year in Ligue 1 does not merit such a high ranking in this year's GFFN 100, but Féret brings much more to the Rennes setup than the final products. One simply cannot help but marvel at the respect he receives from his teammates as well as the wonderfully quick feet he has which enables him to move the ball on quicker and sharper than most players belonging to some of Ligue 1's mid-table sides.

Standing at 6 ft 2 tall, Féret is not your typical attacking midfielder. He possesses great advantages over other, smaller players occupying the same position in Ligue 1 because it is dreadfully difficult to muscle the 31-year-old Frenchman off the ball. Féret is very much aware of this and it gives him the necessary confidence to attempt to surge past defenders and into goal-scoring positions rather than simply passing the ball on.

Yet perhaps Féret's greatest quality is one that seems to very much be dying out in world football, as an ever-increasing number of sides prefer to 'walk the ball into the net'. I am of course talking about the art of shooting: not just getting a clean strike on the ball, but manipulating the trajectory of it as it races towards the goal. Whether you choose to assess his exquisite chip against St Étienne on the 8th of March where he embarrassed Stéphane Ruffier after making a zig-zag run which completely bamboozled Les Verts' back four before poking it over the flailing keeper, or his smart finish against Evian on the 13th of April after a one-two with a Rennes teammate that begun on the halfway line culminating in a quick jink of the feet before firing across goal and slotting home; you will arrive at the same conclusion: Féret's technical ability is most superior.

The future is however uncertain for the man whom many are giving an outside chance of making the French squad for the 2014 World Cup to. Since the arrival of new manager Philippe Montanier, Féret's influence has notably diminished. In 16 performances in all competitions, Féret has failed to find the net and has been unable to muster up a single assist either.



This downturn in form is possibly due to the alterations the new manager has made to Rennes' formation, which forces Féret to play deeper than his preferred position on the shoulder of the main striker. This coupled with the departure of Frédéric Antonetti, who had built a really special relationship with the player has undoubtedly affected Féret. Like most professionals, Féret has had numerous trying periods during his career but has sufficient proficiency to force his way out of the mini-rout he currently finds himself in.

At the time of writing, Julian Féret has yet to extend his contract, which expires in June of next year. Expect the French rumour mill to run riot with stories about the player's possible departure, but Féret might as well pause for thought and assess all the options available to him. After all, he deserves to be playing regularly for a side of a similar standing to that of Rennes. At the age of 31, he most probably has one, big move left in him and it really depends on how much he believes in the project that Philippe Montanier is currently constructing. Will Féret be assured game time? When will Montanier put youth ahead of experience, as Vincent Pajot, Tiemoué Bagayoko, Adrien Hunou and Saido Diallo are all showing signs of rapid progression?

There will always be this tinge of anxiety playing foul in the back of Féret's mind as he remembers his rejection by Rennes as a youngster. Being a late bloomer, having notched his first Ligue 1 appearance as late as at the age of 26, the Frenchman has every right to believe that he can push on and fight for the French international call-up he has so craved. After a rather indistinguishable first half of the 2013-2014 season however, he has most likely left himself with too much to do to earn a seat on that plane to Brazil.

'Féret is now at an international level.'

Frédéric Antonetti

Féret's former manager at Rennes allows his feelings to be clearly known on the subject of the player- 19th April 2013

DID YOU KNOW? Julien Féret spent three seasons at Stade Rennais' youth setup before they chose not to offer him a professional contract, only for the club to sign him seven years later!