

16. Loïc Perrin

Club: AS Saint Étienne

Date of Birth: 7th August 1985

Position: Defender

It was the summer of 2012, the end of the 2011/12 season, and a period of relaxation and joy was consequently supposed to occur, a time to look back at the past season with pride. Not so, though, for Loïc Perrin. The previous season had been disappointing, to say the least. Perrin was out for more than two-thirds of the season with a crucible ligament injury and, in the games that he did play; he was often played out at right back, which was not his favoured position. He knew that 2012/13 had to be better and, as it turns out it was one of the most successful seasons of his career. Now, in 2014, we look back at a revolutionary year in Loïc Perrin's career, in which he has answered fans and critics alike with a series of impressive performances at his new position: centre back.

After the initial two matches of the 2012/13 season, Loïc Perrin was pushed from the right back position to the heart of the defence at centre back. He shone so exceptionally in his new-fangled role that he became a consistent starter there for his side Saint-Étienne. He soon became an invaluable player for his club, and he was sorely missed whenever he was incapable of playing for one reason or another. Last season, Perrin did not play at centre back in just 7 games in all competitions. During these 7 games, Saint-Etienne's record read as follows: 1 victory, 2 draws and 4 losses. It is clear that from the results of the matches whereby Perrin did not play at the heart of the defence that he is a vital ingredient to his side's success.

The 2012/13 season, the first season in which Perrin played at centre back regularly for Saint-Etienne, ended with a big success for the club. Although they were beaten to 4th spot by Nice, Saint-Etienne finished the season with the 2nd best defensive record out of all the Ligue 1 clubs, an achievement that Perrin was rightfully credited for. Perhaps more significantly, Saint-Etienne additionally managed to win the Coupe de la Ligue after a thrilling cup run that saw them edge past PSG and Lille on the way to a 1-0 victory over Rennes in the final. For Perrin, it was exactly the year that he had been striving for to follow the most disappointing season of his career. A constant in a side that produced some of the most watchable Ligue 1 football that season, that was of course spearheaded by Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang.

Perrin's impressive form has continued into the current season. Saint-Etienne currently lie 5th at the halfway stage of the season, with a game in hand over 4th-placed Bordeaux, but the statistics suggest that they could have been even higher if their captain Perrin had been able to play all of their league games. For injury reasons, Perrin has only been able to play the full 90 minutes in 13 of the 18 league games so far. In these 13 games, Saint-Etienne's record is: 9 wins, 2 draws and 2 losses.



In the remaining 5 games, the record stands at: 0 victories, 1 draw and 4 losses. With Perrin, Saint-Etienne's record resembles that of a title winning side. Without him, the record is comfortably worse than any of the relegation candidates. The impact of Loïc Perrin on this Saint-Etienne team could not be clearer.

So, what in Perrin's game has made him such a successful defender over the course of the past calendar year? At just around 5ft 11 inches tall, Perrin is by no means the tallest centre back you will see, but he is still very strong in the air. This is due to his leap; he can often out jump taller strikers to win his aerial duels. In fact, Perrin managed to score 5 goals in the last calendar year, 4 of which were headers.

Perrin's stature and experience as a full back also guarantees that he is faster than the majority of central defenders in Ligue 1. This is an added benefit when playing at the heart of the defence. It is by no means necessary to be particularly rapid to play in that position, but it can be extremely beneficial, especially when facing quick, agile strikers that are increasingly manifesting themselves in Ligue 1.

Last of all, Perrin has boundless leadership skills, which emanate from spending a vast period of time with the club and playing in a variety of positions, and therefore gaining more and more experience. In fact, Perrin is such a strong leader that he is the current captain of Saint-Etienne, and leads his team from the heart of the defence.

After the disappointment that followed the 2011/12 season, Perrin's conversion to a centre back utterly transformed his fortunes. Over the past calendar year, he has become a leader. He led Saint-Étienne to their historic Coupe de la Ligue victory, and has become an irreplaceable member of the team. If injuries are kind to him, Perrin's 2014 will be just as successful.

'I feel better here.'

Loïc Perrin

On playing at centre-back- 13th March 2013

DID YOU KNOW? Loïc Perrin has played over 200 Ligue 1 matches for Saint Étienne and Les Verts are the only club he has ever played for professionally.