

## 32. Lucas Digne

Club: Paris Saint Germain

Date of Birth: 20th July 1993

Position: Defender

2013 has been a breakthrough year for Lucas Digne, a full back who represents one of France's most promising young talents. Having come through the system of French football right from the bottom, Digne has recently finally made it in the country's top league, with the league's top team, PSG. A remarkable feat for a player who is still just 20 years old, and remains far from hitting his prime. Digne's ability and maturity at such a young age is why many pundits believe him to be the long-term successor of Patrice Evra in France's left back position.

Although those involved in the French youth system circles were already aware of Digne's high potential, he only really burst onto our television screens in the past two years. In early 2012, he made his Ligue 1 debut, with Lille, in a 3-0 home victory over St Étienne. Soon enough, he was the regular left back for Lille, and had cemented his spot by the end of the season, at the age of just 18 years old. His pace and sharp thinking injected some much needed drive and energy into a Lille side which ended up finishing a highly respectable 3<sup>rd</sup> place in Ligue 1 that year.

The 2012/13 campaign, though, was when Digne had his first real shot at a full Ligue 1 season. He played 33 games for his club in the league, more than any other defender apart from Marko Basa, and made a lasting impression on not only his teammates, but also the rest of France that was watching him. The undoubted highlight of that season, and perhaps his highlight of 2013, was his fantastic winner against Bastia in the 85<sup>th</sup> minute. Idrissa Gueye squared the ball to him and, still 25 yards out from goal, Digne crashed a powerful shot into the top corner past the helpless Landreau to give Lille a vital 3 points. In doing so, Digne showed that he could be very competent in the final third, not just when he is defending his own goal.

As the 2012/13 season came to a close, many Ligue 1 players were looking forward to a period of relaxation before pre-season, spending time away from football with their families. For Lucas Digne, though, this was not the case. France was about to take part in the U20 World Cup, and Digne was the first choice left back for his country's team. In fact, he started all 7 of France's games in the tournament, scoring goals against Ghana and Turkey in the process, as France claimed the World Cup title. Digne was a vital member of the squad, as he already had the experience of a full Ligue 1 season under his belt, and was able to dominate almost all of the wingers that he came up against.



However, Digne's summer was not without another twist. As is often the case with France's promising young players, it was not long before the country's top current team, Paris Saint Germain, were after his signature. Soon enough, a deal was agreed between Lille and PSG, though to be around €15 million, that saw Digne make the move to the capital to play for the Ligue 1 Champions. Up until the end of 2013, Digne has found it much harder to get consistent playing time at PSG, having played just 7 of PSG's 19 Ligue 1 games so far this season. However, it is pretty easy to understand why. Digne is still young, and Laurent Blanc is clearly keen to integrate him into the team slowly, and only give him the first team spot when it is fully clear that he is the best man for the job. It only seems a matter of time though until Digne becomes PSG's first choice full back.

So, what in Digne's game has made him so sought-after by many Ligue 1 sides? As a left-footed left back with bags of pace, Digne is a real threat going forwards. He has an accurate cross from his left boot, which has led to 2 assists at the U20's World Cup in 7 games for the youngster. In defence, he shows maturity well beyond his years. Last season for Lille, despite playing 33 games, he picked up just 3 bookings. Digne tends to be measured in the way he approaches his defensive work, and is thus very effective at winning the ball back from his opponents. Rather than bounding up and down his left flank to make last-ditch challenges, Digne takes a measured approach. Despite this, with the energy that only young players like Digne have, he never seems to stop running for the 90 minutes, which allows him to both be a nuisance going forwards, and very solid when defending.

Overall, Lucas Digne must be delighted with how his 2013 calendar year has gone. He established himself as a starter at one of France's top clubs with Lille, helped his country to an U20 World Cup victory, and earned himself a move to PSG, Ligue 1's current Champions. The future is undoubtedly bright for this youngster, and no doubt we will be seeing him in France's full colours very soon.

*'The most surprising thing about these players is their professionalism. They will stop at nothing for perfection.'*

Lucas Digne

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