

55. Mickaël Landreau

Club: SC Bastia

Date of Birth: 14th May 1979

Position: Goalkeeper



Mickaël Landreau has been around for what seems like an eternity, since 1996 to be precise, and it is a testament to his longevity that he is still, at 34 years of age, one of the top Ligue 1 goalkeepers. It is not, however, on his past form that Landreau has made the GFFN 100. We have based the decision on his form since he joined his current team, SC Bastia, at the very end of 2012.

Landreau left his old club, Lille, where he previously had won the league and cup double, under controversial circumstances. He was reported to have fallen out with general manager Frédéric Paquet, and was quoted as saying: 'the most important thing is to blossom on the pitch. I could not anymore.' Well, he would certainly blossom at SC Bastia...

Since his debut for Bastia, a 2-1 away win against Reims, he has not missed a single Ligue 1 game – playing the full 90 minutes in each fixture, as one would naturally expect a goalkeeper to do so. Just before Landreau arrived, Bastia were in 17th place, teetering on the brink of relegation. The arrival of the veteran 'keeper soon solidified their defence, and propelled them to a 12th place finish – comfortably avoiding the drop by 9 points.

The statistics support the suggestion that Landreau played an integral part in the amelioration of Bastia's defence. In the first 19 games of the 2012/2013 season, which did not involve Landreau, Bastia conceded 41 goals. In the next 19 games, during all of which Landreau was ever-present, Bastia only conceded 25 goals. That figure is almost a goal less for every game played.

Landreau was rewarded for his good work by Bastia with a one-year extension to his contract. He had initially been brought in on a one year deal, as Bastia were not sure if the 34-year-old's powers were quite what they used to be, but after his impressive first season at the club the manager, Frédéric Hantz, had seen enough to warrant an extension. This season, however, is set to be much more than any ordinary one for Mickaël Landreau...

After signing his contract extension, Landreau announced that, after 18 years as a Ligue 1 goalkeeper, he would finally retire at the end of the season. As is fitting for such an illustrious career, it looks like fate has played its part to set up the perfect final match. The last game of the season for Bastia is a match against Nantes, Landreau's first ever club, at the Stade Furiani. It is, in Landreau's own words, 'just as it was for my very first match for Les Canaris back on 2 October 1996.' It is widely expected that both sets of fans, Nantes and Bastia, will pay a joint tribute to the veteran French goalkeeper, and it is hard to think of a man who deserves such an honour more.

In another strange coincidence, Landreau is broke Jean-Luc Ettori's all time record appearances for a 'keeper in Ligue 1, 602, in one of Bastia's most valued fixtures of the season. According to Landreau, 'if everything goes according to plan, I will break the record during another fairly special match: the Corsican derby against Ajaccio in Week 16 in December.' While the sides battled out a close encounter which ended in a one-all draw, Landreau's name was etched in the history books.

So, just how has Landreau been able to maintain such a high and consistent level of performance over 18 years of Ligue 1 football? At just above 6 foot tall, he is surprisingly small for a goalkeeper, and he has never been the quickest or had the best dive, so what is his goalkeeping style? Landreau, now at 34 more so than ever, relies on his wonderful sense of positioning to come up with key saves. Of course, this is a skill that develops with experience, and Landreau has progressed over the years a brilliant sense of positioning. He may not be particularly tall, and may not have the strongest leap, but he often does not need it – he is already in the correct place to save the ball. This sense of positioning, a skill that develops with age rather than worsens, is one of the main reasons why Landreau has been a top quality 'keeper for so long.

It is also important to note Landreau's contribution to the French national side throughout his career. Although his last competitive appearance came in 2008, he has been a consistent fixture as 3rd choice goalkeeper for France in recent years. Although he is realistically very unlikely to play, Landreau still brings important qualities to the squad. He is picked to help out the younger players in the squad and teach them, for example, how to deal with the pressure of playing for their country. It is for this reason why Landreau is preferred over other goalkeepers such as Stéphane Ruffier and Cédric Carrasso.

Throughout the years, Mickaël Landreau has given his heart and soul to French football. If this list were based on players' whole careers, Landreau would surely be much higher up the order. However, the fact that he has found himself a place the GFFN 100, based purely on his 2013 form at the age of 34, is a huge tribute to the quality and endurance of the veteran French goalkeeper.

'There is a sense of pride yes. To complete that amount of matches, it is something.'

Mickaël Landreau

On breaking Ettori's appearance record- 3rd December 2013

STATS CENTRAL: Mickaël Landreau has won 6 club trophies to date with three different clubs: Nantes, PSG and Lille.