

45. Mounir Obbadi

Club: AS Monaco

Date of Birth: 4th April 1983

Position: Midfielder

When Russian billionaire Dmitry Rybolovlev's takeover ushered in a new, mega-rich era for Monaco in December 2011, great things were bound to happen. However, amidst the arrival of some of the biggest names in football, few would have expected one of the great success stories to come from one of the more low-key signings, but that is exactly what has happened.

Moving to the Stade Louis II from Troyes in January 2013 for the relatively minuscule sum of 1.2 million Euros, Mounir Obbadi has gone on to become one of the key players in a star-studded line-up over the course of an impressive 12 months at the club.

The player himself freely admits a sense of amazement at the position he finds himself in: "Toulalan, Moutinho, Obbadi – spot the mistake" read a text message sent to his friend and former coach Jean-Marc Furlan earlier this season. Yet while his move to Monaco was indeed low-key in comparison to the megastars like Falcao and co., Obbadi has more than earned his spot at the heart of the side and fully vindicated the gamble that coach Claudio Ranieri took in bringing him to the club.

A combative defensive midfielder, the former PSG youth player has shown himself to be extremely gifted at holding onto the ball while also demonstrating an outstanding short passing game and a penchant for powerful long-range strikes. This skill set allows him to offer more than a simple ball-winning defensive midfield role in front of the back four as he is as comfortable and composed with the ball at his feet as he is at winning it back.

Standing at 5 ft 7, Obbadi is relatively short compared to many of the players in his position in the modern game and comes out second best in the majority of aerial duels. Meanwhile, his eagerness to join attacks may not be suited to teams whose style of play demands a more conservative holding player, but in this Monaco side he has found a perfect fit.

Upon arrival at the club at the start of the year, Obbadi went straight into the line-up and played in every game as his side battled their way to promotion. This season, meanwhile, he has played in all but one of their matches so far.



During this time, he has proven to be increasingly influential in their performances and has even added a few exquisite goals to his game in recent weeks. Firing home a superb long-range strike against Nantes in November - ending a three-match losing streak for Monaco in the process – he also scored an equally impressive 25-yard half-volley against Lyon in October.

So far this season, the stats speak volumes about Obbadi's ever-increasing centrality to his side and outline his all-round game. With 18 appearances this season and 1,532 minutes played, Obbadi is the most-used midfielder under Claudio Ranieri. Averaging around 65 passes per game and boasting a pass success rate of 87.9%, Obbadi can count himself among the leading distributors in the league. Now, after spending years in France's second tier, he looks comfortable among France's elite and represents a risk that has paid off handsomely for Ranieri.

And while this key role is something that has surprised the Morocco international, he seems to be taking it well within his stride. Speaking to L'Equipe, he admitted: "I'm not going to lie, I've played a lot since the start of the season and it wasn't something I was expecting, but I've always believed in myself. I said to myself at the start of the season that I have nothing to lose."

Despite the millions upon millions of Euros that have been lavished on other buys and have seen Monaco become overnight title contenders, Obbadi is a guaranteed starter at the heart of the side and has proven to be just as pivotal as any of the other acquisitions. Now 30 and undoubtedly at his peak, an exciting 2014 run-in will give Obbadi the perfect opportunity to cement his place as a club legend.

Finally, back in the Morocco squad, the box-to-box midfielder should now be able to add to his four caps - an underwhelming figure for a player who has developed to such a high level. An anti-star among some of the biggest names in world football, Obbadi is not afraid of roaring at his team-mates when necessary and, based on his performances in 2013, nor should he be.

'Monaco insisted on seeing me and I accepted their offer straight away. You don't refuse a team like that.'

Mounir Obbadi

11th March 2013

DID YOU KNOW? Mounir Obbadi made his international debut for Morocco in 2005 but only received another cap 8 years later after impressive performances in the Monaco shirt in 2013.