

TT No. 131: Justin Holmes - Sun 28th November 2010; **AS Monaco II** v Les Genêts d'Anglet; Champ de F Amateur Grp C; Venue: Stade Lucien Rhein, Menton Score: 0-1; Admission: €6.00; Programme: N/A; Attendance: 150; Match Rating: 3.

After watching AS Monaco the day before, I decided to watch their reserve team for their league match in the Championnat de France Amateur Groupe C, the regional fourth tier of French football - France being one of the countries where reserve teams are allowed to play in competitive games against non-reserve teams, although this level is the highest that reserve teams can climb in the system.

Monaco's reserves do not play in Monaco, rather in the coastal town of Menton, less than 7 kilometres east of Monaco and just a kilometre from the Italian border. There is a train station, Menton Garavan, located less than 5 minutes' walk from the stadium, however I chose to use the main Menton station and enjoy a stroll through the very pleasant, typically southern French town and along the scenic seafront.

Only a road separates the seafront from the Stade Lucien Rhein, which is a scenic ground with relatively good modern facilities whilst still retaining a unique feel and look about the place. There is a modern silver coloured unusually designed main stand, which incorporates all of the facilities of the stadium. Hard standing would be available along the opposite side and behind one of the goals but strangely officials would not allow persons to be anywhere other than in the all-seated stand. From the main stand, the beach and yachts make for a pleasant backdrop, as does a large, wide and imposing hill behind the main stand.

Despite being newly promoted into this level of football, Monaco's reserves would have been strong favourites to win this game. They were in second place in the league, on the back of an excellent run, having lost only one game all season, back in mid-August, and have won three of their last four games. It would be a tough game for the visitors from the Basque country, Les Genêts d'Anglet, who are struggling near the foot of the table with just three wins from their 12 games played this season and have the worst defensive record in the league.

So, in the way that seemingly only football can defy logic and reason, it followed that the visitors would claim the victory and keep a clean sheet into the bargain. They scored the only goal of the game on 20 minutes when Ludovic Louit tapped in after a well struck free kick into the penalty area caused confusion. Monaco dominated much of the game although they rarely looked like scoring, and even when they did, they found the Anglet keeper in top form, most notably a quarter of an hour from time, when he saved a penalty by pushing the ball up into the air in the opposite direction to which he dived but still managed to get back up and dive in the other direction to catch the ball on the line just before a Monaco forward connected to score. Despite Monaco having most of the possession and a

succession of corners in the closing stages of the match, Anglet held out for a victory which the players celebrated wildly as if they had won a major cup match.

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