

TT No.22: *Justin Holmes* - Sat 14th August 2010; **FC Progrès Niedercorn v CS Pétange**; Luxembourg Div Nationale; Venue: Stade Jos Hauptert, Niederkorn; Score:1-2; Admission: €7.00; Club Magazine with insert: Free; Attendance: 420.

Having feared that I would only be able to take in one match during my long weekend in Luxembourg, with all but one if not all weekend games in the Division Nationale kicking off at 4pm on Sunday afternoons, however the week before it was announced that this was game was brought forward to the Saturday for television purposes.

Luxembourg is, for the most part, a surprisingly beautiful, rural and enchanting country, however as one makes one's way south west from Luxembourg City, the impression is anything but, as the train makes its way through modern, ugly industrial towns littered with disused factories. Niederkorn itself is an unremarkable, soulless commuter town, and the ground, which is about a 25-minute walk from Niederkorn train station, is located amongst industrial estates, which did not bode well for an attractive football venue. However, once inside the ground, the Stade Jos Hauptert did pleasantly surprise, closely-lined, on three sides with fir trees giving a deceptively rural feel to it. Facilities, even by Luxembourg league standards, are limited, with just one all-seater stand and hard standing around the other three sides of the pitch. Anyone wishing to stand behind a goal would be disappointed when attending a match in Luxembourg, as the norm appears to be for huge advertising hoardings to be positioned high and wide behind and around the goal - ideal to stop any wayward shots, but not so ideal if one's preferred vantage point is behind a goal. Club magazines were distributed free of charge upon entry, with a one-page insert providing brief details of today's match.

Today's match was a derby match between clubs separated by a mere 4 kilometres, between two of the also-rans of recent seasons in the Luxembourg Division Nationale. Indeed, CS Pétange's honours consist of one Luxembourg Cup title in their history, and Progrès Niedercorn have not achieved any honours since 1981. Progrès only avoided a relegation play-off on goal difference last season, with Pétange only four points better off, finishing 9th in the 14-team division. Both teams opened the season with 2-2 draws. Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of the match was the referee, who has been selected to officiate in the upcoming Italy-Faroe Islands Euro 2012 qualifier.

The game itself was not the most inspiring, almost completely devoid of the expected intensity of a local derby, as much from the spectators as from the players. It was a fairly even affair until Pétange took the lead on 38 minutes with a wonderful goal from fully 25 yards, driven low after given far too much time and space by the Progrès defence. On the stroke of half time, Pétange doubled their lead when a goalmouth scramble ended with a shot scrambled away by the defender, but not before, according to the linesman, the ball had crossed the line. From where I was sitting, not from the best of angles, it did look like the ball had

crossed the line, but the lack of protests from the players was quite symbolic of a seemingly apathetic approach to the match. The second half was a rather tepid affair, with Pétange sitting on their comfortable lead and Progrès struggling to string passes together or create chances. They did pull a goal back, but not until the game entered added on time at the end of the game, and so Pétange claimed a thoroughly deserved three points.

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