

TT No.23: *Justin Holmes* - Sun 15th August 2010; **Jeunesse Esch** v FC Etzella Ettelbruck; Luxem'g Div Nationale; Venue: Stade de la Frontière, Esch-sur-Alzette; Score: 0-1; Admission: €7.00; Att: 1,000; Match Rating: 3.

For the second game of my weekend in Luxembourg, I headed back into the south-west of the country to the second city, Esch-sur-Alzette, to watch the current league champions, Jeunesse Esch. Indeed, Jeunesse are by the far the most successful team in Luxembourg, having won the league 28 times and were recently unlucky to lose by just 0-1 on aggregate to the relative giants from Sweden, AIK Solna. They are also by far the best supported team in Luxembourg, last season having an average attendance of 1373, more than double the next highest average.

As the name "Stade de la Frontière" suggests, there can't be too many football grounds closer to an international border than this one, being less than a kilometre away from the border with France. As is quite typical in south-west Luxembourg, the area is not particularly pleasant - the town has a rundown, industrial feel to it. The Stade de la Frontiere, which is a 15 minute walk from Esch-sur-Alzette train station, is a reasonable stadium, with an all-seater stand along the length of one side, open terracing with some seats placed on the steps along the other, and with hard standing behind either goal, although there are large advertising boards completely surrounding both goals. A wooded hill in close view from the main stand provides a pleasant backdrop to the ground - a disused factory behind the main stand provides a less pleasant backdrop from the other side.

Jeunesse were certainly hot favourites to win this game, with Etzella Ettelbruck finishing last season firmly in mid-table whilst Esch won the league, although Etzella were the only team to take all three points away from the Stade de la Frontiere last season. On a truly foul day, with constant drizzle varying in intensity and lingering fog around the stadium, conditions were not conducive to a good game of football, and unfortunately so it proved. Jeunesse were desperately disappointing throughout, with their team lacking any cohesion, struggling to complete passes or fashion chances, whereas Etzella looked a strong, organised outfit which was probably a major factor in Jeunesse struggling to find any rhythm. With virtually the last kick of the first half, Etzella opened the scoring with a crisp shot hit home from 18 yards. The second half saw plenty of battling, but Jeunesse never really threatened to find an equaliser, much to the increasing disdain of the home support, and Etzella held out fairly comfortably for a deserved victory. To watch the Etzella players run towards their small pocket of vociferous and passionate support in celebratory waves said everything about what an achievement and how much it meant to them to win at the home of the reigning champions. Indeed, one point from their opening two games is a poor start to the season for Jeunesse, particularly considering their biggest rivals for the title, F91 Dudelange, have picked up the maximum six points.

