



Famous French People

Le Carré Magique©

by Robert Shepherd

Vocabulary & pronunciation study by Laurent Dufour©

Words are explained alongside the text

Stressed syllables are underlined and in bold*

Hello, you're listening to EnglishWaves and this is Robert Shepherd with Famous French.

This week's Famous French is a little **different** to the episodes you've been listening to so far. We're not focusing on any **particular individual** this time, but rather four individuals who were the key **personnel** in France's **victorious** Euro 84 team.

The men in question were Alain Giresse, Michel Platini, Jean Tigana and Luis Fernández. They formed a **devastating quartet** known as Le Carré Magique.

These four first played together in 1984 when Platini and Tigana were 28 and Giresse was 31. Fernández was just 24 and he was to **complete** a **square** which would go on to win Euro 84 and reach the semi-**finals** of the 1986 **Mexico** World Cup.

Le Carré Magique moved the ball around with lazy **serenity**, **epitomized** by the complete **playmaker** Platini, whose red socks were often down to his **ankles**. These four guys **demonstrated** what can happen when an **exceptional** generation come together. The **brilliance** of the **cohort** was **characterised** by a **unique** combination of teamwork with **creativity** and invention. The French **midfield** managed to **combine** function with beauty and **obtained results** their **labours deserved**.

Giresse was the **paradigm** of how **technical accomplishments** could **overcome physical shortcomings**. **Although** he was only 5 feet 4 inches, the **diminutive** midfielder was a master with the ball at his feet. The **incisive** passing and ball retention which Giresse **possessed** were an integral part of the French game, while his low centre of **gravity** allowed him to **skip** past

devastating (adj.) very impressive

to complete (vb.) to make whole, finish

square (n.) rectangle having all four sides of equal length

to epitomize (vb.) to be a perfect example of

playmaker (n.) player whose role is to create scoring opportunities for his team-mates

ankle (n.) part of the leg just above the foot

cohort (n.) entourage, group

midfield (n.) central structure of a football team

labour (n.) arduous work or effort

paradigm (n.) example serving as a model

accomplishment (n.) acquired ability, skill or talent

to overcome (overcame-overcome) (vb.) to surmount

shortcoming (n.) failure, defect, weakness

diminutive (adj.) tiny, smaller than the average

to skip (vb.) to move by taking short light steps and jumps

opposing challenges with **typical Gallic flair**. His slight **stature** also **belied** an **impressive work-rate** and strong **desire** to win **possession**.

Every great **side** needs a **workhorse** and Tigana was the **engine** of the side. Each **movement** he made appeared to be at pace, **surging** forward and driving the team from the heart of midfield. Yet to focus **solely** on his physical **attributes** is to **ignore** the **subtlety** of passing and the lightness of touch that the man demonstrated. Tigana was more than just an **athlete**, he was a **complete** footballer, **comfortable** and **confident** in **multiple** situations.

Next up, Fernández. His selection gave greater **balance** to a square that had looked **decidedly lopsided** beforehand. In 1982 France had **deployed** a midfield of Giresse, Platini and Tigana in combination with Bernard Genghini. The **latter** was also an **excellent** player, who had grace, **elegance** and a fine left foot. Yet his presence meant the French were **defensively lacking**. Fernández brought a more **combative element** to the team as well as **rejuvenating** a side lacking in youth. His job was to **protect** the French **backline** and he did it with **aplomb**.

Football, like many things, **divides** opinion, but you'd **be hard pressed to** find anyone who doesn't agree that Platini had the best **technique** of the quartet. In fact, many **claim** he is the best French player ever. A **prodigious talent**, he **strolled** around the midfield, **splitting defences at will** with his vision and **astounding** range of passing. Platini was the playmaker, **orchestrator** and brain of the team whose **free-kicks** proved **invaluable**. He had an **ability** to find space in the most **congested** midfields and he used every inch he found to devastating **effect**. His **record** of nine goals scored in the **European Championship** final **tournaments** still **stands** – even though he only appeared in the one tournament.

France may have had home **advantage** in the 84 tournament, but Michel Hidalgo's side still did it **the hard way**. They **topped** a group **featuring Denmark, Belgium** and a Dragan Stojković-inspired **Yugoslavia**. France's 3-2 **victory** over an excellent **Portugal** side in the semifinals is often **considered** one of the best matches in the history of the tournament. Let's hope the boys of 2016 can **emulate** the boys of 1984 and go all the way. Allez les Bleus.

*** Tip !** The following words contain silent letters :

althou(gh), aplom(b), c(h)aracterize, (k)now, lis(t)en, paradi(g)m, su(b)tlety, (w)hose

Gallic (adj.) French

flair (n.) sense of style

to belie (vb.) to give a false idea of

work-rate (n.) amount of effort that a football player or team puts into a game, especially when they do not have the ball

possession (n.) control of the ball

side (n.) team

workhorse (n.) hard-working person

engine (n.) motor, locomotive

to surge (vb.) to move forcefully

balance (n.) equilibrium

lopsided (adj.) uneven, unequal

latter (adj.) last-named

lacking (adj.) deficient

backline (n.) defensive players regarded as a unit

to be hard pressed (exp.) to be in difficulties

to claim (vb.) to state something as true

to stroll (vb.) to walk slowly

to split (split-split) (vb.) to break apart

at will (exp.) at discretion, as or when he chose

astounding (adj.) amazing, stupefying

free-kick (n.) kick awarded after a foul

to stand (stood-stood) (vb.) to remain valid

the hard way (exp.) a way of doing something that makes it more difficult than it needs to be

to top (vb.) to surpass

to emulate (vb.) to imitate