



## Famous French People

### Le Carré Magique©

by Robert Shepherd

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 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.