
2000

Bert went to a ULEB Euroleague basketball game in December 2000: Spirou Charleroi (BEL) vs AEK Athens (GRE)

AEK Athens played Spirou Charleroi on December 20th and got all it could handle before escaping with an 89-97 victory behind from sharpshooter **Ibrahim Kutluay**. Charleroi was not lucky, mainly out of the key. And that often makes the difference in tough and tight games. Shooting guard **Jacques Stas** put Spirou Charleroi into the game in the first quarter, scoring 15 points without a miss. He quickly showed AEK that this was not going to be an easy game. Indeed, the Greek visitors trailed 13-3 after the first 6 minutes. Stas moreover defended well against Macedonian AEK shooting guard **Urbica Stefanov** until Spirou second guard **David Desy** relieved him. But not with the same result as the Macedonian guard hit two three-pointers to pull Athens within 20-23 at the end of the second quarter. For the rest of the period it was mainly Estonian forward **Martin Mürsepp** and British center **Andrew Betts** who kept AEK Athens into the game. Surprisingly, former NBA center **Mürsepp** was then kept on the bench. It seemed like Spirou Charleroi was going to take advantage of the situation. But Spirou's shots just did not go in. So instead of building a larger lead as minutes passed by, AEK was getting closer and closer: 40-38.

From that point, **Betts** and **Mürsepp** did not really influence the game anymore, which says something about the strength of the Greek team's roster. Third quarter ended on the following score: 59-61. With two minutes to go, it was 78-80. By that time, Spirou Charleroi was playing without its two US players: point guard **Lenny Brown** was called for his fifth foul with 7 minutes to go, and **Batiste** sprained his ankle in the middle of third quarter and it affected his play the rest of the game. Belgian team still rose to the challenge but could not manage to stop one player: Turkish forward **Ibrahim Kutluay** who scored 32pts (28pts in last twenty minutes). **Kutluay** broke open the zone defence which seemed to put AEK in trouble during third quarter. At the same time, Spirou **Ron Ellis** was called for his fourth foul, the first sign of foul trouble that ended with three of the Belgian players (**Brown**, **Ellis** and **Jerome**) with five each. **Kutluay** took his responsibility and never let it go away. Spirou Charleroi would have deserved to gain, at last, its second victory in ULEB Euroleague, but it just could not avoid committing errors which led to defeat.

Bert went to a ULEB Euroleague basketball game in November 2000: Spirou Charleroi (BEL) vs Kinder Bologna (ITA)

Full attendance at La Coupole on November 8th to see the local team Spirou Charleroi being defeated by Kinder Bologna. American playmaker of Spirou Charleroi, **Lenny Brown**, was missing as he went back to the US for family reasons. Also missing on local side: Belgian center **Daniel Goethals** still recovering from injury.

On the other hand, all Kinder players warmed up on court. Spirou Charleroi challenged the Italian team only in the first quarter (which ended on the score of 16-21).

From time to time, **Jacques Stas** and **Ron Ellis** remained the only two Spirou players able to reach a very high playing level quickly set by the host team of Bologna. Kinder was lead by an excellent **Antoine Rigau**, French silver medalist at the last Sydney Olympics.

At half-time, Kinder Bologna was leading by 11 points and everybody already had the feeling that this game was history. Both Kinder centers **Andersen** and **Rashad Griffith** (the \$1.2 million man) as well as Slovenian forward **Matjas Smodis** (impressively outscored Charleroi with a 7-0 all by himself in the start of the second quarter) and power shooter **Jaric** rather easily controlled traffic under the basket.

The margin reached 18 points after third quarter. Kinder Coach **Messina**'s team is probably the best balanced and the strongest one which Bert has ever seen, even stronger than Jugoplastika Split or Real Madrid which he got the chance to see in the 80s. Final score of this game: Spirou Charleroi 58 vs Kinder Bologna 80.

But everyone in La Coupole was happy (even Bert's friends who came to attend a basketball game for the very first time) to have seen Kinder Bologna, considered by many as the possible 2000-2001 Euroleague winner. Bert will also

attend next Spirou Charleroi Euroleague games to be played at La Coupole in December. The Belgian team will then face TAU Vitoria (SPA) and AEK Athens (GRE).

Bert went to a ULEB Euroleague basketball game in October 2000: Spirou Charleroi (BEL) vs Lions Saint Petersburg (RUS)

On October 18th, Spirou Charleroi hosted the mysterious Russian team of Saint Petersburg. Indeed, having been banned by the Russian basketball federation for not competing in a FIBA European Cup like any Russian clubs, the Saint Petersburg Lions were sentenced by fed responsables who decided at the beginning of the season that Saint Petersburg was not allowed to play any Russian league games. The Russian team coached by **Miodrag Vefkovic** even had to prepare its Euroleague season in San Marino and Italy.

Two Spirou players were missing because of injuries: guard **Jacques Stas** and center **Daniel Goethals**.

Very quickly, Spirou Charleroi took the lead in this first Euroleague game. **Lenny Brown** and **David Desy** played a tough defense on **Keith Jennings**, the US playmaker of Saint Petersburg. Spirou **Lenny Brown**, **Ron Ellis**, **Michael Batiste** and **John Jerome** were excellent at shooting in the first and second quarters. The only difficulty faced by Charleroi were at rebounding, with Lions **Dzevad Alihodzic** and **Evgeni Kissourine** doing an efficient job under the baskets. Negative point on the Spirou scouting too: very bad free throw percentage (only 5/10 in the first 20 minutes). Score: 23-19 after first quarter and 48-39 after second quarter.

Third and fourth quarters were not so good on either side. First Russian guard **Sergej Bazarevich** and finally playmaker **Keith Jennings**, ex-Le Mans (FRA) and Real Madrid (SPA), managed to break the Spirou tempo. More than once, **Ron Ellis** (definitively the boss in the local team, thanks to his experience on the European scene) and his Spirou partners could have "killed" the game but a poor field goal percentage and a better defense of Lions **Derek Hamilton** (ex-Hapoel Jerusalem), **Sergej Bazarevich**, **Keith Jennings**, **Dzev Alihodzic** and **Marko Verginella** made Spirou Charleroi efforts unsuccessful. La Coupole's attendance (3500 people) had to wait for three pointers of both Belgian **Wouter De Wilde** and **David Desy** to finally see their favorite team win its first ULEB Euroleague 2000 game. Final score: 80-68.

Bert will also attend next Spirou Charleroi Euroleague game to be played at La Coupole on November 8th. The Belgian team will then face the Italians of Virtus Kinder Bologna, with French Olympic silver medalist **Antoine Rigaudeau**.

Bert went to a basketball game in February 2000: Spirou Charleroi (BEL) vs Bayer 04 Leverkusen (GER)

On February 22nd, Spirou Charleroi hosted the excellent team of Bayer Leverkusen (ranked 2nd in the German first national league this season) for a friendly game at "La Coupole". Two third of the seats were busy to attend Spirou US center **Eddie Elisma**'s comeback. The German team had excellent stats in the first half: 12/19 from the field and 5 three-pointers. Spirou Charleroi US players **Rich Morton** and **Bill Varner** played very well in the first half as well as **Evans**, **Hansen** and **Larkio** for Leverkusen. Half-time was reached with a score of 46-38 for Spirou Charleroi. In the second half, Spirou Charleroi recovered after a bad start and thanks to forward **Richie Morton** (26 pts on that night) as well as center **John Weatherspoon** (6 pts in the second half). Spirou **Eddie Elisma** had good stats in each sector of the game.

Score in second half: 46-46, 52-46, 60-49, 68-55. And Leverkusen came back into the race (with **Mike Hansen** -20 pts on the whole- as Bayer best scorer): 68-61, 72-66 and finally 78-75. A 3-point victory for Spirou Charleroi after a good game and a nice evening for the attendance...

Remember the name of **Mathias Weber**, the junior international German forward of Bayer Leverkusen. He is very athletic. Very strong in defense (following examples of experienced **Hans Gnad**), Mathias seems to be the player of the future in Germany. **Weber** is the second young player who really impressed Bert last season, the first one being **Sepelev** (see the Basket Mag scouting page) of Saratov (RUS).

Bert went to a basketball game in January 2000: Spirou Charleroi (BEL) vs Pamesa Valencia (SPA)

On January 12th, Spirou Charleroi could not avoid a loss in the first leg of the Saporta Cup 1/16 finals. Indeed, the Belgian team lost against an impressive Spanish team of Pamesa Valencia lead by a wonderful **Bernard Hopkins** (11 rebounds and 33 points). The Spaniards very quickly took the lead: 5-13 after 5 minutes. Spirou Charleroi Head Coach **Bozzi** asked for a time-out and his team came back into the game with better defense and shooting percentage: 38-45 at half-time. Both Spirou players

John Jerome and **Jacques Stas** were injured.

Once back on the floor after the break, **Hopkins**, **Beard** and **Markovic** started the showtime by scoring from all ranges: 42-55 for Valencia with 15 minutes to go. The end of the game was not a problem for the leading team of the Liga ACB, the Spanish first basketball league.

Attendance: 3500

Spirou Charleroi: **Varner** 14pts; **Morton** 13pts; **Cleymans** 20pts; **Marion** 4pts; **Beeuwsaert** 8pts;

Goethals 12pts; **Stas** 2pts; **Weatherspoon** 2pts.

Pamesa Valencia: **Hopkins** 33pts; **Alvarez** 4pts; **Albert** 7pts; **Maluenda** -; **Beard** 17pts; **Rodilla** -; **Markovic** 14pts; **Alonso** 3pts; **Luengo** 3pts.

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