



Pascal Monfort Interview

LE BALLON / NUTMEG

*Please tell us a little about your agency:*

Three of us founded Nutmeg in late 2014: myself, Matthias Leullier and Ulysse Meridjen. Personally, I worked at *Nike* for 8 years then consulted for them through my own consulting practice. I also teach fashion history and work as a fashion director for *L'Équipe's* monthly luxury magazine, *Sport et Style*. Matthias manages a production company that does the biggest concerts in Paris, and he produced all of Hedi Slimane's fashion shows since his days at *Dior Homme*. Ulysse's background is in major tech companies, and he handles all of our business development and the agency's general management.

*What kind of work do you guys do?*

Strategic consulting, marketing, prospective, trends, innovations and events related to football and football culture. We are committed to building premium and international initiatives for our clients. We want to be able to impact and influence influencers and the types of football fans who want brands and teams to talk to them differently. One thing we are really eager to do is work on an international scale: that means appealing to a team's fans but also its virtual fans - people who will probably never be able to attend their favourite team's matches. There is a lot of interest in China, Korea, Japan and Australia for example. Every idea has to be global.

*Why the name Nutmeg?*

Well, it's a reference to the football playing technique of course. It's an analogy, too. For us, a nutmeg on the field is an audacious, bold and creative move that is also very efficient. It makes the fans roar but it also eliminates your direct opponent. It impacts the game and its outcome. The agency aims to be the same: audacious, bold, creative and impactful for our clients.

*What is the agency's relationship with the city it is based in, Paris?*

We do a lot of events and activations here in France, but Paris has international traction - everyone knows about it and many want to visit. It's a unique city: the world's fashion capital, the city of elegance, creative youth, museums and art galleries. In Paris, we are lucky to have probably the best music video directors, artistic directors and photographers. There is tremendous talent on our doorstep.

*What are the kinds of services you provide and events you organise?*

We live by two rules at *Nutmeg*. First, something we say to every client, we want to stay true and authentic. The last thing we want to do is alter or misrepresent football culture. It's all about keeping the passion alive and well. Secondly, and I think it is fairly new in our field, women are very important to us. Everything we do has to be female-friendly. There are currently three women working with us at the agency and their feedback matters. Women, girls, they keep coming to us and asking for help. Regarding *Le Ballon League* for example, we have so many girls asking us to help build a league for them. They struggle here to put together a team, get pitches or get attention. So we're working on that. In October, we will create a tournament with teams from *Le Ballon League* and invite a few new teams, but also we'll do a mini-tournament for women. They're super excited about that and so are we.

*Please tell us about the agency's clients?*

We are lucky to have longstanding relationships with great brands and organisations. In terms of brands, we have worked with *Beats*, we work with *Heineken*, Paris Saint Germain (PSG), *Galeries Lafayette*, *Levi's* and a lot with *Nike*. We do strategy consulting, recommendations and creative direction. We like to think of ourselves as a hub of ideas for the *Swoosh's* people. We worked twice on the launch of the French national football team's jersey. We went to New York with *Nike* and PSG for the launch of the away kit, where we put together the photoshoots, marketing



activations, etc.

Our highlight was probably the time we took over *colette* for PSG's darklight jersey launch. The concept store was entirely in the colours of the jersey. People came to have a drink and see the kit. Then we went to the stadium, the Parc des Princes, in the players' bus. We privatised the entire stadium and invited about 60 influencers. We displayed their names around the stadium on the screens and hung jerseys with their names on in the locker rooms. There were also a few players there who the guests got to meet. It was awesome.

With *Levi's*, we worked on their collaboration with PSG. The American brand invited people to a game and created a special capsule collaboration. We did a special jean jacket, with the players' autographs embroidered by *Lesage*, the atelier owned by *Chanel* that works on all the haute couture shows. It was auctioned during PSG's foundation dinner, and that bad boy went for 9,000 Euros [£7,060]!

*You also worked with Nike's UK team, didn't you?*

Yes, and it showed why we believe our agency is valuable to these people. What we try to do is always work with the outside perspective of our clients. So for the British, it was like, 'let us tell you what England and the England football team represent for France and the rest of the world.' For us, it is the country of music, of cool, of acid humour - and we tried to instill these values in the work we did for them on their positioning through *Nike UK*. We were also consulted on the image of Daniel Sturridge.

*Please tell us more about Le Ballon.*

So *Le Ballon* is two things. First, there is the bar. I actually launched that before the agency. I wanted to create a place for cool people to watch games together. There was nothing like it in Paris.

It started by taking over a place during the World Cup, followed by PSG's games at different locations. Now for Euro 2016, we are taking over another bar in the Marais. It will be our place everyday, for every game. We want cool foreigners who are in town to come hang out and cheer with us. Also, a couple minutes walk from the bar, we're opening our pop-up concept store. We will have memorabilia, *Le Ballon League* team jerseys, artwork, music and rare and awesome products. Downstairs, there will be a patch-customisation atelier powered by *Avery Dennison*.

The second aspect of *Le Ballon* is the league we created two seasons ago. Currently we have 8 teams made of 100 Paris influencers and cool people working in media, retail, music, TV, creative industries, etc. It has really grown. For games we have groups of ultras and mini-tifos with flags - there is a real energy out there on the field. The teams are really putting a lot of effort into it: they designed their jerseys, they have beautiful *Instagram* accounts and there is great creative direction all the teams. On our site you can check out the scores, the stats, the best players, etc. We took some of them to NYC last summer to play against local teams - it was really something!

*What other projects are you currently working on?*

We're doing some big stuff for *Galeries Lafayette*, which for us embodies the best Paris department store experience. During Euro 2016 we'll do a bunch of cool things, like setting-up the store in football themes, and we'll have scarf vending machines, conferences, etc. The ambition is to get bigger. We're convinced that the passion for football will only grow. More and more brands, not only sports brands, are eager to get into football. The future looks bright!

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