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# French wonderkid who caught the eye of Newcastle United five years before moving to Tyneside

Former NUFC scout Paul Montgomery has revealed that he recommended a certain Frenchman to the club

By **Andrew Musgrove**  
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**Hatem Ben Arfa of Newcastle United Scores his first goal during the Barclays Premier League match between Everton and Newcastle United**

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The Toulon Tournament is known as one of the best places to unearth the next football teenage sensation.

Countries from across the world are invited each year to showcase their ages groups from U17 to U23 level - and scouts in their hundreds flock to take notes with the hope of finding the next big thing.

The stars who have left their mark include [Alan Shearer](#) in 1991 who was recognised as player of the tournament, and Thierry Henry in 1997, while Newcastle goalkeeper Freddie Woodman was awarded goalkeeper of the year for 2018.

It was back in 2006 when former United scout Paul Montgomery took in the tournament and was blown away by a certain Hatem Ben Arfa.

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**Ben Arfa** was part of the France side that won four titles between 2004 and 2007 - and Montgomery recommended him to Newcastle believing they could snap him up for just £500,000.

"They said they wouldn't pay that sort of money for someone they didn't know," Montgomery told Chronicle Live.



"Later on, they spent a few million on him, and he proved to be a little bit eccentric.

"At the time though he was with Lyon, and the rules over there were that you're a youth player until your 19, and then you sign the pro-contract, so you could get someone for compensation.



**Rennes' defender Jean-Noel Perrier Doumbe (R) from Cameroon vies with Lyon midfielder Hatem Ben Arfa**

"He was a top player at the festival.

"He didn't play as wide man play but supported the front guy, he was regarded as one of France's top players at the time.

"I saw him, and I just thought I want a slice of that.

"Glenn Roeder was the manager at the time - I told him 'we can get this kid' but they didn't go for it."

Ben Arfa would, of course, join Newcastle in 2010 and go on to dazzle and frustrate fans in equal measure.

He arrived having won six league titles with Lyon and Marseille and two French cups - but injury halted his career on Tyneside.

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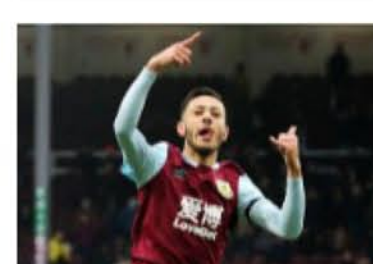
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