

= Chamois Niortais F.C. =

Chamois Niortais Football Club ( often referred to as simply Les Chamois ) is a French association football club based in the commune of Niort , in the Deux @-@ Sèvres department of western France . It was founded in 1925 by Charles Boinot , the son of the owner of a local chamois leather factory . The club 's badge shows a chamois goat standing on a football . The club 's home stadium is the Stade René Gaillard in Niort , which has a capacity of 10 @,@ 898 although in the last 20 years attendances have generally averaged below 5 @,@ 000 per match due to the club 's relatively small fan base . Chamois Niortais has traditionally played in an entirely blue home strip , although away strips regularly differ .

For the first 20 years of the club 's existence they played in local leagues around the Centre @-@ Ouest region . In 1945 , after the Second World War , the side joined the Championnat de France amateur . They achieved promotion to Division 3 in 1970 and stayed in the division for the following eight seasons . Between 1980 and 1984 , the team played in Division 4 before winning promotion back to Division 3 . The club gained professional status for the first time the following year when they were promoted to Division 2 . After another promotion in 1987 , they played in Division 1 for the only time in the 1987 ? 88 season , but were relegated after one season .

Chamois Niortais were relegated to the Championnat National in 2008 , and relegated again a season later , thereby losing their professional status . After finishing as runners @-@ up in the Championnat National , the team were promoted back to Ligue 2 for the 2012 ? 13 season .

= = History = =

= = = Early years = = =

After the First World War , local chamois leather factory owner , Theophile Boinot , established the first sports club in Niort , Amicale Club Niortais . Soon after , the football section of the club was founded and named Étoile Sportive Niortaise . In 1923 , many players were conscripted into the French army . In 1925 , a number of the players returned to the town and Boinot 's son , Charles , set up the first proper association football team in the town , which he named Chamois Niortais Football Club .

For the first season , the presidency of the club was entrusted to Jean Gavaggio , a chemical engineer at the Boinot factory . Georges Poussard , also a worker in the factory , was appointed as the club 's first secretary . The original team played in a fully white strip , and competed in the regional championship of the Ligue de Charentes . In 1929 , the Swiss footballer Franchina was named as the club 's first manager and the first committee was elected . Throughout the 1930s the club continued to grow in size , enlisting more players and members , despite the team performing relatively poorly in the league .

For the 1932 ? 33 season , Chamois Niortais joined the DH Centre @-@ Ouest , the highest level of regional football in France , and finished eighth in their first season . The side achieved consecutive sixth- and seventh @-@ place finishes in the next two seasons , before being relegated to the Promotion d 'Honneur in 1936 . The team played in the division for three seasons , until they gained promotion back to the DH Centre @-@ Ouest at the end of the 1938 ? 39 campaign . In 1939 , Joseph Boinot was appointed president of the club . The following year the club pulled off a major coup with the signing of Czechoslovakia international Ferdinand Faczinek , who played for the club for one season before transferring to FC Sète at the end of the 1940 ? 41 campaign , after which the Second World War halted competitive football for two years in France . In 1943 , the club were one of the founder members of the Championnat de France amateur ( CFA ) , the highest level of amateur football in France .

= = = After the Second World War = = =

Chamois Niortais were soon relegated from the CFA and returned to the DH Centre @-@ Ouest in 1945 . Led by Faczinek , who had returned to the club as player @-@ manager in 1943 , the side won the DH Centre @-@ Ouest for three consecutive seasons . Despite this success , Faczinek left the club in 1948 and was replaced by former France international Maurice Banide . The team re @-@ joined the CFA for the 1948 ? 49 season and played in the division for the following five campaigns , achieving a second @-@ place finish in 1951 , when they finished behind Stade Quimpérois by five points . In 1953 , the side finished bottom of the division and were relegated back to the DH Centre @-@ Ouest . Following the relegation , manager Nicolas Hibst was sacked and replaced by Georges Hatz , who had previously coached AJ Auxerre . The side remained in the DH Centre @-@ Ouest until 1960 when , under the guidance of Nordine Ben Ali , they won the league title by a single point ahead of Poitiers FC to return to the CFA .

The side struggled in their first season back in the third tier , achieving a tenth @-@ placed finish . After being runners @-@ up in the division for two consecutive seasons in 1961 ? 62 and 1962 ? 63 , the team secured a number of mid @-@ table league finishes under Kazimir Hnatow . After Hnatow left Chamois Niortais in 1966 , the club 's fortunes on the pitch began to diminish and they were eventually relegated at the end of the 1968 ? 69 campaign after ending the season with just 12 points from 26 matches . Upon the restructuring of the league system , the team joined the newly formed Division 3 in 1970 . They played there for the following eight years , but never finished higher than fourth in the division . In 1978 , the club finished last and were again relegated to the fourth level , but were immediately promoted back to Division 3 after finishing as runners @-@ up in 1979 . However , they again finished bottom of the division and in 1980 returned to Division 4 , where they played for the next four seasons . In April 1984 , Patrick Parizon was appointed as manager and the following month , the side secured a third @-@ placed finish to gain promotion back to Division 3 . In 1984 ? 85 , the team lost only three matches in the entire campaign as they finished comfortably top of the division . A 2 ? 1 victory over Montauban on 18 May 1985 confirmed their promotion to Division 2 for the first time in the history of Chamois Niortais .

== = Professional status == =

Thanks to the promotion , Chamois Niortais became a professional club for the 1985 ? 86 season . The season began well for the side , as they achieved a 1 ? 0 win against USL Dunkerque on 16 July 1985 . They went on to accomplish a respectable fifth @-@ placed finish in their first season with a total of 37 points . The next campaign saw unprecedented success for the team , as they racked up a 17 @-@ match unbeaten run on the way to the league championship . Their title triumph was confirmed with a 2 ? 0 victory over US Orléans at the Stade René Gaillard on 23 May 1987 .

The following season turned out to be the club 's only season to date in the top tier of French football . The season began with a 1 ? 1 draw with RC Lens and the side 's first victory came against Montpellier HSC on 1 August 1987 . The team also managed a win in their first ever televised match , defeating AS Saint @-@ Étienne 2 ? 1 on 18 August 1987 . After a promising start , the team languished around the bottom of the division for the majority of the campaign , and were eventually relegated back to Division 2 on 10 June 1988 , after being beaten 3 ? 0 by SM Caen , finishing just one point behind RC Lens .

The relegation saw the end of Patrick Parizon 's reign as head coach as he was replaced by Victor Zvunka . Zvunka remained manager for the following three seasons , until the side were relegated to Division 3 at the end of the 1990 ? 91 campaign . The team returned to the second tier after just one season as they comfortably won Division 3 . The next 13 consecutive seasons saw a number of mid @-@ table finishes in Ligue 2 , until a poor 2004 ? 05 campaign , in which the team lost 21 of their 38 league matches . Philippe Hinschberger was appointed as the new manager in 2005 , and he successfully escaped from the Championnat National at the first attempt , securing the title with a 2 ? 0 victory over Sporting Toulon Var on 13 May 2006 . Niort found the following two seasons difficult in Ligue 2 , finishing 16th in the 2006 ? 07 season and then suffering relegation in 2007 ? 08 after conceding an injury time goal to US Boulogne .

= = = To regional football and back again = = =

Denis Troch was hired as the club 's new manager in August 2008 , and despite hopes of a swift return to Ligue 2 , the team performed poorly throughout the 2008 ? 09 campaign . The side failed to win a league match during the first three months of the season , and that form continued into 2009 . They went into their final match of the season , away at Pacy Vallée @-@ d 'Eure , requiring three points to avoid successive relegations . However , the side could only procure a 0 ? 0 draw and were relegated to the Championnat de France amateur for the first time since 1970 . The relegation saw the end of Chamois Niortais 's era as a professional club , as they were forced to become a semi @-@ professional outfit due to the DNCG rules . In June 2009 , Pascal Gastien was appointed as manager for his third spell in charge of the club , handed the task of achieving promotion back to the Championnat National at the first attempt . The club won the CFA Group C that season , and was subsequently promoted back to the National division for the following campaign . Niort secured their third @-@ tier status with an 11th @-@ place finish in the 2010 ? 11 season . The following season , the team finished as runners @-@ up in the Championnat National behind Nîmes Olympique to return to Ligue 2 for the 2012 ? 13 campaign and regain their professional status .

= = Colours and badge = =

The badge of Chamois Niortais features a chamois goat standing on a football , and the background of the crest is royal blue , which has featured in the club 's home colours since its founding . When the club was founded in 1925 , Chamois Niortais adopted a white strip . Since then , however , the club has usually played in a home strip of royal blue jersey , shorts and socks . In the 2007 ? 08 season the team played in a gold and black kit for the first time , to commemorate 20 years since the club competed in Division 1 .

For the following season , the home kit reverted to the usual all @-@ blue strip and the jersey currently has a white sash across it . The away kit for the current season is the reverse of the home strip , and consists of a white jersey with blue sash , white shorts and white socks . For the 2009 ? 10 season , the club 's kits are produced by Italian sportswear company , Erreà , and the main shirt sponsor is Cheminées Poujoulat .

= = Stadium = =

When Chamois Niortais were founded , the club had no fixed home ground and played friendly matches at various venues in and around Niort . In 1926 , when the team joined the Ligue du Charentes , the club adopted the small Stade de Genève as their first home . They continued to play at the Stade de Genève for the majority of the following 50 years until , in the early 1970s , it was announced that the side would move into a new stadium . On 3 August 1974 , the Stade Venise Verte was opened , with the inaugural game being an exhibition match between Chamois Niortais and Dynamo Kyiv . Some time later , the stadium was renamed the Stade René Gaillard in honour of René Gaillard , the former mayor of Niort .

At present , the stadium has four stands : the Tribune d 'Honneur , the Tribune Pasages , the Tribune Populaire Nord , and the Tribune Populaire Sud . The four stands currently have a combined capacity of 10 @, 898 , with 1 @, 324 of these being standing places . The stadium is typical of many continental European grounds , with an athletics track between the pitch and the stands . Next to the stadium there is a small annexed ground where the club 's reserve and youth teams play their matches . The first televised match at the ground took place on 18 August 1987 , when AS Saint @-@ Étienne were beaten 2 ? 1 . The record attendance at the stadium was set on 24 October 1987 , when 16 @, 715 people saw Chamois Niortais defeat Olympique de Marseille by two goals to one in a Division 1 encounter .

= = Supporters = =

Chamois Niortais have always had a relatively small fan base , with very few fans from outside of the area around Niort . The club has one main supporters ' organisation , named " Unicamox 79 " . The name is taken from " uni " , the French for united , " camox " , the Latin word meaning chamois . The 79 symbolises the department number of Deux @-@ Sèvres . The organisation has no history of violence or extremism , and works closely with the football club to try to improve the atmosphere at home matches .

To date , the highest ever average attendance in a season was 10 @,@ 142 during the club 's Division 1 campaign of 1987 ? 88 . Since then , the average attendance has usually been under 5 @,@ 000 spectators . In the 2008 ? 09 season , the average was as low as 2 @,@ 348 when the club was playing in the Championnat National .

= = Current squad = =

As of 9 June 2016 .

Note : Flags indicate national team as defined under FIFA eligibility rules . Players may hold more than one non @-@ FIFA nationality .

= = = Other teams = = =

The club also fields a reserve team , which competes in the DH Centre @-@ Ouest , and has youth teams ranging from under @-@ 7 to under @-@ 15 .

= = Managers = =

Since the appointment of the first Chamois Niortais manager , the Swiss coach Franchina , there have been 31 different first @-@ team managers . Three of the coaches , Kazimir Hnatow , Robert Charrier and Pascal Gastien , have had more than one spell in charge of the club . The current manager is Pascal Gastien , who was given the job in 2009 after Denis Troch was sacked following the side 's relegation from the Championnat National . Gastien , a former Chamois Niortais player , is currently in his third spell as manager . To date , the only manager to have coached the club in the top division of French football is Patrick Parizon , during the 1987 ? 88 season . The club 's longest @-@ serving manager was Ferdinand Faczinek , who had a five @-@ year tenure between 1943 and 1948 .

= = = Managerial history = = =

= = Honours = =

= = Records = =

= = = Club = = =

Biggest win : 9 ? 0 ( v. Velles , Coupe de France Seventh Round , November 1997 )

Highest league finish : 18th , Division 1 ( 1987 ? 88 )

Record home attendance : 16 @,@ 715 ( v. Marseille ? 24 October 1987 )

= = = Players = = =

Most league appearances : 435 ? Franck Azzopardi

Most league goals : 51 ? Joël Bossis

Most league goals in one season : 17 ? Walquir Mota ( 1995 ? 96 )