

## **2013 Holland Trip Recap**

CBC Dutchtouch just returned from its 6th trip to the Netherlands and once again it was a trip of a lifetime. With the exception of very unseasonal weather (very cold and wet - rain and snow), the trip fulfilled the expectations of all 38 players, parents and coaches that made the trip. As usual, Jan Pruijn organized a tremendous program of activities for our 10 days in country, achieving the perfect balance of soccer activities and cultural experiences. This trip may very well have been the best of all - I seem to say that after every trip! Jan has the incredible ability of always creating new experiences and improving on 'the best-ever trips of the past'.

The group attended 4 professional games - all with different experiences and atmospheres - from the 2nd division Dutch game of De Graafschap vs Volendam, to the rowdy crowd at Borussia Moenchengladbach vs Werder Bremen in the German Bundesliga, to the Amsterdam ArenA to watch the storied Ajax 11 vs PEC Zwolle, to the final night in country to see NEC Nijmegen vs Heerenveen. European professional soccer is a very different experience and you must be there to realize it. Our young players played 5 matches vs local youth teams, winning 3 of them and playing very well throughout all the games, and had 5 training sessions led by professional Dutch coaches.

In addition, we spent time at NEC Nijmegen and Ajax Amsterdam watching youth games and training of the young players of those professional clubs. Everywhere we trained or played, the hospitality of the local people was tremendous - the facilities are awesome and the overall atmosphere is very conducive to wanting to play your best. It is by design that Dutch soccer is so good - highly educated coaches, wonderful and plentiful training facilities and the attention to detail are the trademarks of Dutch youth development. You really need to see the number and the quality of the training facilities that seem to be almost everywhere. In addition to the soccer experience, the group visited the following: the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, the '44-'45 War Museum in Groesbeek, the Canadian War Cemetery, The Bridge Too Far in Arnhem, the Palace Het Loo in Apeldoorn, the Castle Doornenburg, the OBC Bi-Lingual school in Bemmelen, Richard Kregting's soccer shop in Nijmegen, shopping in downtown Nijmegen and the usual canal cruise and tour of downtown Amsterdam. We are very fortunate that where we stay in the eastern part of the country (very near Germany) is very rich in World War II memorabilia as it there that much of the war took place. All of these visits contributed to a well-rounded total experience that left a lasting impression on our entire group.

Many thanks to our wonderful hostesses Astrid and Isabella who made sure that we got the most of our Dutch experience through food and culture. Martin, our bus driver, was also most helpful throughout the trip. And a trip to Groesbeek would not be complete without spending time at the comfortable and welcoming de Oude Molen, led by Vincent, Werner, Bo, Sharon, Britt and the rest of the wonderful staff. It really becomes a home away from home with the warm hospitality that is afforded to us. Special thanks to our Dutch coaches - Tom Vrenken, Els Thuenissen, Joost van Elden, Henk Schaap, Remco ten Hoopen, Harry Jansen and Theo Derks. And, as always, the biggest thanks is shared -- to Jan Pruijn who organizes the daily program so that everyone has a great experience - and to the parents, players and coaches who made the trip possible by deciding to go.

As we say good-bye to the 2013 Holland Spring Trip, we look forward to the trip in 2014 - the dates are March 12 -23, 2014. As a footnote, bus # 5 ran on schedule into downtown Nijmegen and room # 6 was not quite the same at de Oude Molen. Thanks to everyone for making this another memorable trip. Dutchtouch has now taken 164 people from St. Louis to the Netherlands over the past 6 years. Jan has already promised a bonus for the 200th person to make the trip.