



CBC Dutch Touch INTERNATIONAL Soccer Program



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During our recent spring trip to Holland (3-16 to 3-27, 2011), the CBC DutchTouch International Soccer Program paid a return visit to the professional club NEC Nijmegen, of the Dutch Eredivisie. We have met a wonderful man there named Remco ten Hoopen. This year we observed his training sessions and had a couple of very insightful talks with him. Remco has been a professional coach at NEC for the last 11 years, and he was a member of the Dutch U17 National team as a player before an injury sent him into coaching. At NEC, Remco's duties have included: goalkeeper trainer, Youth Technical Coordinator and Youth Coach (U10).

Rob Staggenborg, a journalist who was part of our group, posed the following questions to Remco by email after we returned to the States and Remco answered in great detail.

I was the journalist who was traveling with the American group of players and coaches that trained with you at NEC Nijmegen the week of 20 March. Needless to say, we were very impressed with a few of the things you spoke about. As I am writing a written article for American audiences, I would like to pose a few questions to you.

1. After the u8s(U10) played the game in which they scored their 100th goal, you spoke to us about one of the players - a black player (#8) - who you brought into the program despite reservations of some of the other coaches. You said with this player "only 100 percent positive with this player." ... Tell us, how difficult was it to break that player of early bad habits that limited him as a player and teammate?

I will try to answer all off your questions you asked me, and I keep doing that as long as you need it. It's no problem for me to answer questions and put time in it, because it's always for the kids. Development, fun and competition, that's what sport is all about and if I can share my knowledge with people like you and also people who are reading your articles, it will be win, win and in the future I can learn from people how they react on articles, maybe meet those people sometime, so we share our knowledge to be a better person, coach and trainer.

I hope you understand my English typing, so you can make a good story of it!!!

The first question I answer is about Vinay Saltani. It's not an under 8 player but a under 10, born in 2001.

We draft (scout) him from an amateur club just 1,5 mile from NEC. HE was playing in the highest U9 league in the region. We scouted him in August 2009. On that moment we invited him to train with other talented players his age, what we do on Sundays.

The first session I saw him do things in the game what was very unusual for u9 kids. Especially

when he didn't have the ball!!! A lot of coaches and scouts are only watching players with the ball! I believe in that but more important what can he do WITHOUT... Is the player a natural runner? Does he have the guts to call for the ball? How fast is he (footskills). In the first session i was already impressed, but he didn't play well with the ball! Our scouting didn't believe in him and during the sessions it got worse and worse. Still I believed in this kid, try to explain his talent. On the last moment they had enough about my complaining and moaning, that they give me what I want, this kid in the NEC program. He started in August 2010 in our program, his first 14 sessions and games were horrible, but I was keeping faith in him, looked through the mistakes he made, and kept pushing him to the thing I know he is good in. Meanwhile (question 2 combined) I talked to his father. Asked him what happens with Viany the last year, what happens at home, what did they do at the amateur club etc etc. I talked with him and I made the appointment that we had a small contact after every session that he was watching his kid. I told him what I thought Vinay did good that session, and the only thing dad had to tell Vinay was the good things i just told him after sessions! Meanwhile I told Vinay the same things in an eye to eye contact after the session or game. During the weeks you saw him grow. every session he got better and better, until the moment you saw him play that game! It was all about talking positive, build up his confidence, build up his trust by teammates. Basically I was putting a lot of energy and time in this player. Talked with him , his dad, his teammates. Looked at his mental qualities, try to find a player that combined him, and find a player who was totally his opposite. I let him do drills and sessions with those 2 players to give him a good feeling with the player who was close by him (feels safe) but also give him a boost - to train also out of his comfort zone with this player who is totally different than him, BUT still in that SESSION I provided him only with POSITIVE energy!! So he was developing himself out of his confort zone but still get positive reactions. During the season starts August till this moment, I give him 9 out of 10 positive coach moments, and one "negative" - I don't talk about negative but more a develop-coach-moment in a sandwich feedback (good thing- develop thing- good thing to close the conversation) Important in that case was (and is with everybody) to let THEM GIVE THE ANSWERS, so I asked him questions with WHY? WHAT WAS ALSO POSSIBLE? etc etc.

Important with this is that I worked with all my kids this way! Positive and trust in the kid. let him know that I believe in them, that they can make a lot of mistakes in the game, even that it means that we lose the game. The players must have the will to win games!! My will is to develop them in games!

Trust, talk and believing in, those are keywords. Positiveness. Vinay is a kid where I'm extra proud of, because I was the only one who saw his potential, and now he is once a week training with an age group above him.....

2. How do parents fit into the picture of your system? What role are they expected to play, how many times in the u8(U10) divisions do you have to warn your parents for being overly involved or overly critical.

(Question 2) Meanwhile it is clear that parents play a very very important roll during top sport of their child. Parent can make and break their own kid! That's the reason I talk a lot with parents. I need to know everything. If the parents are in a divorce, that their kitten died, their brother or sister has the flu or whatever. When I know everything I can handle during the session. Put an arm around him, listen to him, talk to him. But sometimes, talk with him because for example a kid didn't want to eat... I talked with him and during a long period he started to eat, that was a big step.... But only because that he trusted me and had the guts to talk about it (was a man from Morrocco, very proud people, for him a big step) So parents are important to support their kids. Forbidden for them to coach soccer thing by the games. In the beginning of the season that happens a lot, always I send my assistant to them to tell NOT TO COACH, words as shoot, pass, action etc, etc - I have parent meetings a lot where I talk about this sort of thing. I explain to them that sometimes I give the players an assignment, for example, only play with your left leg today, or only actions (1 vs 1), don't pass.... If parent coach PASS it will be very confusing for the kid.

In the whole program from u10 till u19 that's a rule..... Don't coach only support. But again, contact with the parent, talk about their kid about their progress etc, etc - its very important. I'm very close to them. It's not unusual, I'm basically the only coach in our program who thinks like this and talks a lot. It's because of my norms and It fits me as a person..... It's personal.

3. Soccer is a physical game. How much emphasis is put upon the themes of physicality and toughness at the early u8 (U10) age groups? How important is weight training and agility drills and non ball drills at that early age?

The third question is very tough to answer. I will try to explain. If we talk about power-training and weightlifting, kids can do that from the moment they are FULL-GROWN, around 17/18 years old (we test that in a hospital....) Then they get a powerlift program..... But soccer-training is also power-training and conditioning. During sessions you try to put their limit a step higher, also by toughness. For example I play 2 vs 2, and they MUST win. I play referee, but don't call a lot. Sometimes a kid take the ball in a not fair way but I let it go.... kid can complain, or be tough, stand up quick and try to get the ball and help their teammate. With those things we work with skill like the one you saw in session that Friday. the one with pressuring the ball and backup, in this drill you can give other assessment so the drill changed into another form. Still the back up and pressuring but now with the goal, to get the ball. If players are going to use their body to protect the ball and keep ball possession, they have to be strong and smart and practice both of those things.... And so there are a lot of form you can combine soccer, soccer-conditionion (don't run rounds....) agility, soccer-strongness etc, etc. It's all based on the soccer-game.

I hope I answered the question good and you understand... Keep asking things if you need to... I will answer asap.