

The Shackleton Scholarship Fund - Shackleton Scholar's Report 2008

VISIT OF RENE VAN RIJSWIJK – FOOTBALL COACH

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Patrick Watts, M.B.E.
President, [Falklands Football Club](#)
Chairman, [Falkland Islands Overseas Games Association](#)

Background

For 10 years the Falklands Football Club had been unsuccessful in their attempts to secure the services of a Football Coach. In September 2008 the President of the Club, Patrick Watts visited the Dutch 1st Division team Cambuur Leeuwarden and spoke with the Managing Director of the Club, Mr. Alex Pama. The possibility of a coach visiting the Falklands was discussed.

Cambuur Leeuwarden are the most progressive club in Holland in terms of coaching, and they run a very successful 'coaching school' which attracts youths from all over the world, but primarily from the United States.

In October 2008 the Falklands Football Club confirmed their participation at the forthcoming Island Games on the Finnish island of Aland (Baltic Sea) between 27 June – 4 July 2009. The Committee, and Team manager Jimmy Curtis, expressed their desire to have a coach visit the Falklands and Patrick Watts was asked to pursue this task.

Further contact was made with Mr. Alex Pama and he identified 37 years old Rene van Rijswijk who agreed to undertake the task over a two weeks period. Mr. Pama also kindly agreed to waive the normal fee associated with this type of commitment.

Coach

Rene van Rijswijk played professional football in Holland for 13 years. He began his career at RKC Waalwijk in 1993, making his debut against the mighty Ajax of Amsterdam on 15 August. Following 3 successful seasons with the Brabant side he was transferred to the 1st. Division team Cambuur Leeuwarden where he played for 4 seasons.

After scoring 7 goals in 31 appearances in 1998/99 he attracted the attention of the Premier Division team NEC Nijmegen who signed him from Cambuur. He stayed with NEC for 5 seasons before moving back to Cambuur in 2004 for a further 2 seasons. In all he scored 30 goals in 301 appearances.

During the last 3 years Rene van Rijswijk has studied psychology at the Open University and has obtained his official Trainers Diploma. He is the coach of the Cambuur Leeuwarden U14 team. While visiting the Falklands he stayed at 13, Brisbane Road (Patrick & Sila Watts).

Schedule

In order to ensure that as many football players and prospective players as possible were able to benefit from the visit of a professional coach, Patrick Watts drew up a schedule, in association with the Football Club. This offered coaching opportunities for youngsters of 5 years old and upward, also to youth and senior levels. It also offered coaching for girls interested in playing football, for persons who may wish to coach in the future and GCSE sessions for the F.I.C.S. students. Three training periods were set aside each day (with the exception of the 2 free days permitted) running from 1030 – 1200, 1430 – 1600 & 1800 – 1930. Under an agreement with Alex Pama, two 'free' days were inserted in the programme. On one of these Rene van Rijswijk drove to Volunteer Point to see the King penguin colony. The second day he spent pursuing his favourite hobby of collecting fossils at Port San Carlos. As most children were on their school holidays several Junior & Senior Camps were inserted in the programme under the auspices of the Leisure Centre Manager Steve Dent.

Introduction

A small reception for 30 invited guests was held at the Malvina Hotel on 29th December, which

provided an opportunity for Rene van Rijswijk to meet a selection of people associated with his visit. His Excellency the Governor and Mrs Huckle kindly attended along with the Hon. Secretary of the Shackleton Fund, Ms. Carol Peck. Members of the Falkland Islands Overseas Games Association, Football Club Committee, players, former players, some parents of the 'Kids' team and several youngsters were introduced to the Coach.

Object

As there was such a considerable difference in the ages and ability of those attending the Coaching classes, Rene van Rijswijk had to be extremely versatile in his approach to each scheduled group.

The **Infant/Junior School** sessions were heavily over-subscribed with more than 20 'kids' attending, and on most occasions the youngsters had to be divided into two groups. The objective of the visiting Coach with this group was to acquaint them with exercises to enhance their technical skills. Modern day thinking leans heavily towards technical skills. This involves the need to master the ball and as they progressively get better at mastering the ball, this will be reflected in their progressive advantage over their opponents in games. Without this solid base it becomes more difficult to play good football when they grow older. Rene van Rijswijk concentrated heavily on their basic skills such as dribbling, stopping the ball, changing direction while in possession of the ball, passing an opponent, short range passing (accuracy, technique, adjusting speed of the ball) and keeping the ball in the air. Training cones were used regularly in all of these sessions.

The visiting Coach reported: 'All the kids that participated in the Open Sessions and the Junior/Senior camps were very enthusiastic and eager to learn and so very easy to work with. What made things a little harder was the fact that there was a big age/quality difference within the groups. This made choosing the right exercises a little more difficult. I would choose an exercise and it would be too easy for some and too difficult for others. This got better as I got to know the kids individually as time progressed'.



Rene van Rijswijk coaching the Junior boys



Junior boys practice dribbling and stopping the ball

1st Team Squad Coaching

As many as 22-24 players regularly turned out for these 9 specialised sessions. The Coach concentrated very much on various exercises that the players can use in the future. These involved positional play (ball possession, coaching/talking, keeping the field of play wide, putting pressure on an opponent), passing (short-range, one-two's, adjusting the speed of the ball & timing their runs).

Other aspects of the Coaching sessions included 'one on one' and 'two on two' defending and attacking movements which concluded with the player shooting at the goal. He also encouraged the defenders to talk more with the goalkeeper and accordingly introduce a better understanding between defenders and their 'keeper.

Rene van Rijswijk participated in one practice game as this enabled him to talk directly to the players during the course of the match, as opposed to shouting instructions from the touch-line.

He reported: 'Everyone worked really hard during the sessions and working together with Jimmy Curtis (Team manager) went very well. We accomplished much in the short period of time we had at our disposal and I'm very positive about the chances of the team to make a good impression during the Island Games. There are a number of conditions for that to happen and I discussed these with the players and with Jimmy on a number of occasions. First of all most players need to get fit and some players have to improve their fitness levels dramatically in the time remaining before the Island Games. This means that they will have to train individually, outside of the regular training sessions. Most players seem willing to do this. Another important issue is the fact that the team needs the co-operation of everybody who would like this team to achieve success for the Falklands.



Coaching session with the Stanley First Team Squad and Rene van Rijswijk

Coaching for Coaches

Two sessions were scheduled and not surprisingly most of the Stanley First Team Squad Members and the Team Manager attended. During the first session Rene van Rijswijk chose to instruct on the topic of 'honesty and trust.' He asked: 'Should a coach at all times be honest or should he be more political and diplomatic towards his players?' Considerable discussion ensued. The visiting Dutch Coach gave an example of a well known coach in Holland who had said something derogative about two of his players to another coach after a press conference when he thought that the microphones had been switched off, but they were still 'live' – much to his embarrassment.

The impact that this would have on the team was discussed at great length. The second of the 'Coaching for Coaches' session concentrated mainly on what tactical style to adopt and which would be best suited for the Falklands team during their preparation and eventual appearance at the Island Games. A traditional 4-4-2 system is generally used in the Falklands but at various times during the two weeks, the Stanley team practiced 4-3-3.

Unfortunately the **FICS – Girls only coaching (all ages)** session was poorly attended, due to the fact that many of those who had expressed an interest, were either on holiday on West Falklands or in some cases, back in Britain. However it is an ill-wind, as the proverb goes, and a group of Junior players, sensing perhaps what might transpire, turned up in their kit and received an additional hours coaching!

The **GCSE** sessions attracted 5-6 students which although slightly disappointing, proved to be just enough for the visiting Coach to conduct two courses with the youths who are preparing to take their GCSE Physical Education examination in the future. Again many prospective candidates were unable to attend due to not being in Stanley at the time. A more academic approach was taken with the blackboard and chalk featuring prominently. Several girls participated in these two sessions. During his visit Rene van Rijswijk took part in the New Years Day game between the Veterans eleven and the 'Kids' team, while he also journeyed to Mt. Pleasant to coach the Stanley First team as they beat the Tri-Services by 2-0.

He was also able to attend the F.I.O.G.A. fund raising evening at Government House and was persuaded to show his skills with the ball and achieved 100 'keep ups' with relative ease. An auction, inspired by a Stanley lady, that enabled the highest bidding lady to secure the first dance with the Dutch coach raised £100 for FIOGA funds! Without doubt the first ever visit by a

professional football coach to the Falklands was a massive success. It has set a marker which will enable the Football Club's management to continue the process that Rene van Rijswijk has introduced. The Falklands Team Manager Jimmy Curtis said: 'Rene van Rijswijk's visit will have a great impact in the short term, thanks to the specific tactical and technical training techniques shown to the players with respect to tournament football, particularly with the forthcoming Island Games in mind.

But also in the long-term with grass roots training which if conducted from a young age or conducted with regular repetition will result in footballers young and not so young becoming technically better. I also believe that the psychological impact of his visit should not be underestimated with the huge interest and enthusiasm generated by his coaching sessions, but also the confidence building and general uplift to the Falklands First Team Squad is there for all to see'. One First team squad player wrote: 'I feel that I am a much better player now, than I was before his visit'. A parent e-mailed saying: 'All the youngsters loved him, they never stopped talking about what he has taught them and they will continue to talk about his visit for many years'. The Falkland Islands Football League and the Falkland Islands Overseas Games Association are grateful for the financial support that they so promptly received from the Shackleton Scholarship Fund. This funding played a large part in ensuring that the visit of Rene van Rijswijk could materialise and bear fruition.