



FOOTBALL FOR EVERYONE

**ACTION PLAN
ACCEPTANCE HOMOSEXUALITY
IN FOOTBALL**

Football is for everyone. The Royal Netherlands Football Association (KNVB) stands for an open and safe climate in football. It is of paramount importance that all players, from amateur football to the Premier League, can be themselves, and are able to play on their own level, irrespective of colour, race, religion, gender or sexual orientation. This serves both the interest of individual players, and the good of the game. Players who can be themselves, and feel good about themselves, will give the best possible contribution to their team's performance. In football this is not only desirable, but an absolute necessity.

This will not become self-evident overnight. In recent years, however, the KNVB has taken important steps in this direction. We invest heavily in our nationwide 'Sportsmanship and Respect' programme and take part in the national campaign 'Towards a safer sports climate,' organised by several sports associations. Even so, we realize that things are far from perfect. Recent research¹ has shown that gay sportsmen in the Netherlands do not always feel comfortable playing team sports. As president of the KNVB, this is an issue dear to my heart.

and the reality of the sporting climate. As president of the KNVB, I travel around the country a lot and visit many clubs, ranging from small local amateur clubs to large professional football clubs. All too often I hear administrators say, 'Oh no, this is not an issue here,' or, even worse, 'Oh no, our club doesn't have any gay players.' This is where they make their first serious mistake. **Because, obviously, nearly all football clubs have homosexual players.** Simply recognizing this fact would be a first step. In my view, the national football association must take its responsibility here. We must all make sure that everyone can be

so-called 'pink partners'. Together, we have drawn up eleven action points. This is only the start. Bear in mind that everyone is learning as they go along. The action points will be implemented and integrated in Dutch football in the months to come. We now call upon all clubs and players in the Netherlands to join in. **The KNVB cannot change the sports climate single-handedly. All of us, administrators, coaches and players alike, must take our responsibility.** Commitment to gay acceptance means breaking taboos about the topic, and challenging each other if necessary. Some

clubs are already addressing this issue – you can read more about them in this action plan.

As stated before, the action plan is just a start. The steps we are taking will be further developed and adapted as we proceed. What works in one sport may not work in another. We will find out soon enough what the right approach is. I kindly ask you to grant us some time. We cannot work miracles overnight. Gay acceptance was not achieved in Dutch society in a single day either.

We will continuously monitor the effects of the action plan, together with the organisations that helped us set up the programme. I look forward to seeing the first results and sincerely hope that, in the long run, I will be able to tell you that an increasing number of gay footballers who want to, have felt free to come out. **Because, in all honesty, who really cares whether a goal is scored by a heterosexual or homosexual football player?**

Michael van Praag
President of the Royal Netherlands Football Association

MATCH PREVIEW



Michael van Praag

It is important to note, first of all, that the acceptance of homosexuality is a nationwide social issue. As the largest single sports association in the Netherlands we take our responsibility where we can: on and off the football pitch. Research shows that homosexuality is rarely discussed in football. Gay footballers find it difficult to come out to their teammates. Once they do, responses are overwhelmingly positive. So, there is quite a difference between the perception

himself or herself in the world of football. For the sake of the players and for the good of the game.

We are proud to present our action points encouraging the acceptance of homosexuality in football. Of course, we have not drafted these by ourselves. The KNVB knows the world of football like no other, but we are conscious of the fact that this issue has to be tackled together. Not only with partners from other sports, but especially with the

"The acceptance of homosexuality in football shouldn't even be a matter for discussion, just as origin and religion aren't."



LOUIS VAN GAAL, COACH NETHERLANDS TEAM



¹Motivaction, 2012, The experience of gay male players in team sports

“AZ is against all forms of discrimination, hate or violence. Homosexuality in football should not be a taboo subject in the 21st century. It is time for football to come out of the closet. Football is for everyone.”

MAARTEN MARTENS, AZ



ELEVEN GOALS

EDUCATE

1 Action: Inclusion of the issue of discrimination in general and the acceptance of homosexuality in particular in existing KNVB training material.

Explanation: Focus on the vulnerable position of young people in all KNVB Academy training courses, in particular in the matter of sexual preference. In addition to the training courses for trainers/coaches, the KNVB offers a complete training package for stewards involved in Dutch professional football organisations. This package will offer concrete ways of dealing with homophobic chants from supporters.

2 Action: Inclusion of the issue of discrimination in general and the acceptance of homosexuality in particular in the certification criteria for youth training courses in both amateur and professional football clubs.

Explanation: Certification criteria monitor the approach of youth training schemes regarding the education of players in both amateur and professional football. The issue of the acceptance of homosexuality will be mentioned explicitly and be part of this certification.



INFORM

3 Action: Including the issue of the acceptance of homosexuality in the sports-wide 'Towards a safer sports climate' campaign.

Explanation: The 'Towards a safer sports climate' campaign aims to encourage acceptable behaviour and to prevent and tackle unacceptable behaviour in sport. Sports clubs are encouraged and inspired to join this campaign. As a first step, the sports club will decide which issues they wish to tackle and which elements of the programme are appropriate. At the KNVB's request, the acceptance of homosexuality has been explicitly included in the various elements of this sports-wide campaign.

4 Action: Developing and offering a workshop on promoting the acceptance of homosexuality in both amateur and professional football clubs.

Explanation: A targeted workshop will be offered, with the support of the John Blankenstein Foundation. The workshop instructors will be engaged on the basis of their knowledge of and their experience with the issue. The aim of the workshop is to make football clubs, both amateur and professional, aware of the issue and to offer actual tools to be used for improving the sports climate. The workshop will be offered 1) by the KNVB district offices; 2) as a separate course for football clubs; 3) through the 'Towards a safer sports climate' campaign.



5 Action: Inclusion of the acceptance of homosexuality as an issue on the agendas of existing meetings, both national and regional, held in amateur and professional football.

Explanation: The KNVB, in cooperation with the More Than Football Foundation, organises regional meetings around the KNVB Cup tournament. The professional football organisations act as hosts for the amateur clubs in that specific region. In addition, about a thousand amateur football club administrators meet every year in the autumn at an administrators' conference to exchange views on a range of issues within football. The issue of the acceptance of homosexuality in the world of football will be explicitly put on the agenda of these meetings.

6 Action: Making sure that the issue of the acceptance of homosexuality is explicitly put on the agenda of all existing meetings with supporters' associations and supporters' coordinators of professional football clubs.

Explanation: The KNVB is in continuous consultation with the (representatives of) supporters' associations and supporters' coordinators of Dutch professional football clubs regarding issues such as safety, crowd chants, transport arrangements and ticketing. The issue of the acceptance of homosexuality will be included in the existing consultation forums.



“For Ajax it goes without saying that football is for everyone. Skin colour, age, gender, belief, sexuality or a handicap, it makes no difference. Everyone is welcome at Ajax.”

SIEM DE JONG, AJAX

SUPPORT

7 Action: Appointing a confidential advisor to all the KNVB district offices and at the headquarters in Zeist to support amateur and professional football clubs on the issue of the acceptance of homosexuality.

Explanation: Confidential advisors will act as a sounding board and as an advisory body for associations and clubs in the region. These confidential advisors will be given training in the acceptance of homosexuality. Regional meetings will be organised in all the KNVB districts, in cooperation with the John Blankenstein Foundation, during which the confidential advisor will explain the issue, concrete means of tackling it and provide contact details for any form of support on this matter.

8 Action: Providing support to amateur clubs in drafting rules of conduct with regard to the acceptance of homosexuality.

Explanation: In the KNVB's opinion rules of conduct are most effective when these are not imposed from above but when they are developed by the clubs themselves. A club toolbox has been developed within the 'Sportsmanship and Respect' programme to support amateur clubs in tackling this matter. The toolbox provides answers to the question: “How do we put effective rules of conduct into place?” The toolbox will explicitly refer to the topic of sexual preference.



MAINTAIN

9 Action: The KNVB is refining the “Guideline for tackling verbal violence” with regard to the acceptance of homosexuality.

Explanation: The guideline will be refined to indicate that the KNVB will not accept any offensive or insulting crowd chants based on sexual preference, any more than it accepts other types of insulting or offensive crowd chants. Additionally, we will examine whether the acceptance of homosexuality can be explicitly included in the KNVB standard terms and conditions for professional football, as from season 2013/14.

10 Action: Examine how the acceptance of homosexuality can be further (than is stated in action point 9) rooted in the disciplinary procedures in amateur and professional football.

Explanation: The legal bodies that govern the disciplinary procedures in amateur and professional football will be providing written guidance with regard to how the acceptance of homosexuality can be further rooted in the disciplinary procedures in amateur and professional football. Both behaviour with regard to crowd chants and abuse on the pitch will be examined.



EVALUATE

11 Action: Monitoring and evaluation of the progress and results arising from the action points over the coming years and, if necessary, refining or adjusting these action points.

Explanation: Research by the Fair Play Alliance will act as a baseline measurement and will be repeated within the next three to five years. In addition, the existing monitoring instruments – from both the ‘Towards a safer sports climate’ campaign and the KNVB’s members’ panel – will be used to monitor and evaluate the progress and results of the action plan.



“Just like my teammates I am for equal treatment, in football too. In order to be happy, people must be able to express their preference irrespective of where they are or what they do.”

JORDY CLASIE, FEYENOORD

“PSV supports the action plan of KNVB. The club is against all forms of discrimination and fully supports all initiatives that actively stimulate equality.”

MARK VAN BOMMEL, PSV



ANALYSIS

SEXUAL DIVERSITY AND GENDER IDENTITY

This action plan has been written on the premise that lesbian women, homosexual men and bisexuals must be able to feel comfortable and safe within football. This report refers predominantly to homosexual men. The most visible and greatest stumbling blocks in football are related to homosexuality in men’s football. It is vitally important to the KNVB that lesbian women and bisexual men and women also feel safe and welcome in the world of football. Many of the actions set out in this plan also contribute to this end, and the KNVB will continue to make efforts in this matter.

The KNVB hopes that this action plan along with the ‘Sportsmanship and Respect’ campaign will contribute to a football climate in which everyone feels safe and comfortable. There is no specific focus on transgenders in this action plan. The KNVB is aware of the fact that, for them too, acceptance is often hard to find, also in football. The NOC*NSF organisation can provide information on transgenders in sport as well as contact details for the organisations involved. The KNVB is, of course, more than willing to play a role in this regard.

WIDER HORIZONS

The KNVB action plan is aimed at football. The KNVB supports the NOC*NSF in encouraging and stimulating other sports associations to tackle the issue of the acceptance of homosexuality. Successful actions undertaken by the KNVB could act as a source of inspiration to do so. NOC*NSF will be offering support to other sports associations or their clubs. By joining the ‘Towards a safer sports climate’ sports-wide campaign, this issue could also be brought to the fore in other associations. Additionally the KNVB will raise the acceptance of homosexuality and this associated action plan with UEFA so that the issue will be put on the agenda in the European world of football as well.





CASE STUDY

“ADO DEN HAAG IS FOR, AND BELONGS TO, EVERYONE”

Professional football club ADO Den Haag believes that it is important that everyone feels at home in the club. Whether you are young or old, gay or straight, whatever your origin or philosophy is: football belongs to everyone.

THE HERO' PROJECT

'The Hero' contributes to the fight against bullying, racism, senseless violence and to the acceptance of homosexuality by children in primary education in The Hague. The strength of the project lies in the participation of professional footballers. After all, they act as role models for young people. Experience suggests that these 'heroes' can make a very important contribution to the transmission of values and standards. Put simply, the footballers' words have a huge impact on the children. Twenty schools are visited every season to carry the core message: you are a hero if you do not discriminate. This message reaches approximately 600 children every year. 'The Hero' has just started its seventeenth season.

DISCUSSION EVENING ON GAY ACCEPTANCE

On Thursday 10 May 2012, ADO Den Haag's multi-purpose centre and supporters' home (MFC) organised an evening on the acceptance of homosexuality.

About 40 supporters were present at ADO Den Haag's Supporters' Home. Special guests included Karin Nederpelt-Blankenstein and Casper Boom representing the John Blankenstein Foundation. Casper Boom is an excellent sportsman and plays korfbal (a sport resembling netball) for DQS '46. Casper, who is thirty-two years old, told the gathering that he had kept his homosexuality secret for eight years. He did not feel safe enough in the korfbal sporting environment to come out. In retrospect, however, the response to his coming out was predominantly positive. The evening's message was that everyone should be able to feel safe in his or her environment and that no one should be judged on the basis of where they come from, their philosophy or their sexual preference. In order to achieve a safe sports climate, professional clubs or associations must actively spread the message that everyone is welcome.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Various activities take place in the MFC on the acceptance of homosexuality in football. These vary from an informative evening for supporters to providing mentoring and support to troubled teens who have taken a wrong turning in discriminating against homosexuals.

THE FUTURE

In the future, ADO Den Haag will continue with its efforts to improve the football climate with regard to the acceptance of homosexuality. In doing so it is essential to create public support within the club and the youth training programme, to be very clear on what is and what is not permitted, and to be able to challenge each other when necessary.

ADO Den Haag will continue to organise thematic evenings for amateur clubs with the help and support of the professional football network. The MFC's activities will continue as before.

ADO Den Haag
adodenhaagindemaatschappij.nl



CASE STUDY

“IN MAASTRICHT, THE BALL BELONGS TO EVERYONE”

At the beginning of 2012, COC Limburg and the Maastricht municipality asked professional football club MVV Maastricht to act as an ambassador in a project promoting the acceptance of homosexuality in local sport, with a special focus on football.

MVV Maastricht examined this issue. It became rapidly clear that the acceptance of homosexuality in football can still be seen as a challenge. MVV was already aware that homosexuality was a sensitive issue in the world of football.

The acceptance of homosexuality was raised with the amateur football clubs that MVV worked with in 'Maastricht United'. Initially there was a lot of scepticism: questions and comments such as “Is this really necessary?” and “This doesn't apply to us” were heard. The amateur clubs were, however, impressed by the presentation by COC Limburg and the John Blankenstein Foundation. That very evening, those clubs present promised to embrace this approach. On 11 October 2012 Maastricht United and the MVV Supporters' club signed a charter entitled “The ball belongs to everyone”.

CHARTER:

Welcome to MVV Maastricht:

- We believe that everyone must be able to enjoy football, no matter who they are or where they are from.
- We believe that our club is about winning, equality and respect.
- We will work towards a safe climate in our club in which the homosexuality of players, trainers, staff, spectators or volunteers is accepted.
- We will not tolerate homophobic chants, or any other form of discriminatory chants.
- MVV Maastricht supports the KNVB national action plan and all local initiatives against homophobia in football.

This is just the start. MVV Maastricht, supported by COC Limburg, will learn as they go how the issue of acceptance of homosexuality can best be tackled. As for the supporters, one of them said recently: “I would rather have a gay striker who puts the ball in the back of the net over and over again than a straight one who can't even find it.” We rest our case.

MVV Maastricht
mvv.nl
debalisvaniedereen.nl

CLASSICS

Yet, with the exception of incidental chants, this issue had never manifested itself as a 'problem' within the club, even though, statistically speaking, there had to be some gay players in the ranks of the MVV membership. The club came to the conclusion that the internal climate was apparently not safe enough. First and foremost, MVV does not want to be a club in which members or supporters do not feel safe because of their sexuality; this is not in line with the club's core values.

The acceptance of homosexuality will not happen just like that, but MVV can help by breaking taboos so that the issue can be discussed. This is being done in the club in cooperation with COC Limburg, the youth groups, parents, players and supporters.



COOPERATION WITH THE FAIR PLAY ALLIANCE

The KNVB is working with the Fair Play Alliance in elaborating and implementing the action plan. The Fair Play Alliance was set up in 2008 and comprises: Gay Union Through Sports (GUTS, coordination), NOC*NSF (Dutch Sports Federation), The Dutch Sports Alliance (NSA), the John Blankenstein Foundation (JBF), COC Nederland (a GLBT advocacy organisation) and Movisie. Together these organisations promote the acceptance of gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders in sport. The Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sport support the Alliance financially. Please visit www.alliantie-gelijkspelen.nl for more information.

TEAM



"I fully support the KNVB action plan. This fits in with FC Twente's policy that, in addition to football and atmosphere, solidarity is one of its core values. It goes without saying that every form of discrimination should be rejected."

PETER WISGERHOF, FC TWENTE

THIS ACTION PLAN IS SUPPORTED BY:

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STICHTING
MEER DAN VOETBAL