The Belgium vision on youth development

Bob Browaeys
Split 21/11/2012
CONTENT

• Football in Belgium
• Development Vision of the Belgian FA
• The Competition Structure
• The National Youth Teams
• Coach Education School
• The Topsport Schools
• Talent Identification
• Grassroots
CONTENT

- **Football in Belgium**
- Development Vision of the Belgian FA
- The Competition Structure
- The National Youth Teams
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- Talent Identification
- Grassroots
Football in Belgium

- Population: 11,065,600 habitants
- Surface area: 32,545 km²
- National languages: French (40%), Dutch (60%), German (74,000)
- Population density: 355.1 hab/km²
- Max distance: 280 kms
- Clubs: +/− 2000
- Registered players: +/− 400,000
- Teams: 17,902
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Development Vision of the Belgian FA

• Development vision of the Coach Education School is the reference
  – has been developed, taught and adapted for 10 years
  – has been tested in practice during training sessions at the topsport school and in the national youth teams

• Adjustment of the playing systems since the season 2003-2004
  – 5-5, 8-8 and 11-11 instead of 5-5, 7-7, 9-9 and 11-11
  – based upon scientific research (KUL)

• Spreading of the vision towards all Belgian FA projects and Belgian clubs

• The final product has a wide bearing surface: consultation and feedback of clubs, youth coaches, teachers, ...

• Constantly adapted to new trends in international football
Development Vision of the Belgian FA

1. Philosophy = ZONE
2. Programme = LEARNING PLAN
3. Method = GAME and intermediate forms
4. Actor = PLAYER

Youth Formation

Player Formation

adult football player
1. The FUN-aspect
FUN = learning while playing!

- Fun for everyone: from 5 year old to professional player
- Even adults come to the training session to play a game
- Fun for every player, the less talented included!
FUN = learning while playing!

EACH PLAYER

- plays football almost all the time
- touches the ball frequently
- gets many scoring occasions
- can play freely
- is encouraged by his coach
- is supported by the parents
FUN = learning while playing!

We lost, we won, either we have fun!
DEVELOPMENT VISION OF THE BELGIAN FA

2. The EDUCATION aspect
EDUCATION = learning step by step

EXPLORATION = to get used to the ball (5 – 7 years)

INDIVIDUAL development (7 – 17 years):

  - Basic skills and tactics = BASICS
  - Functioning in team = TEAM TACTICS

INTEGRATION in adult football (from 17 years)

Belgian Vision on youth development
DEVELOPMENT VISION OF THE BELGIAN FA

3. ZONE PHILOSOPHY
Zone Individual marking!

A playing concept and not a playing system!
Principles in loss of the ball (B-) and in possession of the ball (B+).

- Principles of zone are applied while playing 11 vs 11 from which the team tactics will be derived.
- The learning plan contains team tactics which are learned in 5-5, 8-8 and 11-11 (next chapter)
To improve

- the reading of game situations
- the process of “decision making”
- the courage to take initiatives
- the collective game (defense and attack)
- the ability to communicate
- the ability to concentrate

ZONE WITH YOUTH FOOTBALL PLAYERS

= Putting brains in the muscles!
DEVELOPMENT VISION OF THE BELGIAN FA

4. THE LEARNING PLAN
THE MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT IN FOOTBALL

• To learn is:
  – a continuous process: objectives of development via…. via…. to (= lines of development)
  – cumulative: the acquired skills represent the basis for the skills yet to be learned

• The model of development in football:
  – based upon the development model in « ball sports »
  – 4 phases of development: fluent transition of one phase into the other
  – the football age is the clue: big individual differences are possible in each development area (f.e. physical inferiority in relation to mental lead, taking into account the biological age)
  – The youth coach chooses learning objectives and contents based upon the level in the model of development
Technical and tactical objectives within the learning plan

Game dimensions / phases of development

- me and the ball (phase 1: 2-2)
- collective game “nearby” (phase 2: 5-5)
- collective game “2° degree” (phase 3: 8-8)
- collective game “far away” (phase 4: 11-11)
**THE MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT IN FOOTBALL**

**Mental objectives within the learning plan**

1. Motivation
2. Self control and self discipline
3. Concentration
4. Self confidence
5. Inter-personal and team relations
6. Lifestyle

**Use of mental skills in training sessions**

- Teaching of mental basic skills

**Use of mental skills in competition**

- Game dimensions / phases of development

- me and the ball (phase 1: 2-2)
- collective game “nearby” (phase 2: 5-5)
- collective game “2° degree” (phase 3: 8-8)
- collective game “far away” (phase 4: 11-11)
**Belgian Vision on youth development**

**The Development Model in Football**

**Physical objectives within the learning plan (taking into account the biological age)**

- **Endurance**
- **Flexibility**
- **Speed**
- **General Power**
- **Specific Power**
- **General Coordination**
- **Specific Coordination**

**Game dimensions / phases of development**

- **5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 - 11 - 12 - 13 - 14 - 15 - 16 - 17 - 18 - 19 - 20 - 21j**

- **Me and the ball (phase 1: 2-2)**
- **Collective game “nearby” (phase 2: 5-5)**
- **Collective game “2° degree” (phase 3: 8-8)**
- **Collective game “far away” (phase 4: 11-11)**
THE DEVELOPMENT MODEL IN FOOTBALL

2 v 2: duel (20m to 12m)
THE DEVELOPMENT MODEL IN FOOTBALL

5 v 5: single diamond (35m to 25m)
THE DEVELOPMENT MODEL IN FOOTBALL

8 v 8: double diamond (60m to 40m)
THE DEVELOPMENT MODEL IN FOOTBALL

11 v 11: 1-4-3-3 (100m to 60m)
### Description of different aspects according to the development model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>U6</th>
<th>U7</th>
<th>U8</th>
<th>U9</th>
<th>U10</th>
<th>U11</th>
<th>U12-U13</th>
<th>U14-U15</th>
<th>U16-U17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5y to 7y</td>
<td>1+K/1+K</td>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>ball acquaintance</td>
<td>Football as a dribbling and shooting game</td>
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<tr>
<td>7y to 9y</td>
<td>4+K/4+K</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>opposition games</td>
<td>Football as a short passing game without off-side rule</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9y to 11y</td>
<td>7+K/7+K</td>
<td>8/8</td>
<td>application 2/2</td>
<td>Football as a halflong passing game without off-side rule</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11y to 17y</td>
<td>10+K/10+K</td>
<td>11/11 (1)</td>
<td>evolution to medium long play</td>
<td>Football as a long passing game with off-side rule</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>U12-U13 application 2/2, 5/5 and 8/8</td>
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<td>U14-U15 evolution to game far away</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>U16-U17 to perfect</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Description of different aspects according to the development model

To learn is a cumulative process

BASICS

TEAM TACTICS

MENTAL

PHYSICAL
### Description of different aspects according to the development model

- Setting out the **basics** and **team tactics** for each development level
- Setting out the training session topics on a **physical** level
- Setting out the characteristics on a **mental** level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BASICS</th>
<th>TEAM TACTICS</th>
<th>PHYSICAL</th>
<th>MENTAL</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5-7 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-5</td>
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<tr>
<td>7-9 years</td>
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<td>8-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>9-11 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-11 (1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-13 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>13-15 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-11(2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>15-17 years</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Adaptation of the team tactics to new trends in international football

- 100% possession of the ball
  ➔ building-up from behind (short, half long and long)
  ➔ aggressive high pressing
  ➔ to counter the counter

- Runs: create space and exploit space (ex. The Villa-run)

- Efficiency in the zone of truth

- Challenging players to make “new” mistakes by playing the most difficult football (also the physical and mental requirements are higher)

- 4-3-3 ➔ 1 holding midfielder
Belgion Vision on youth development

1-4-3-3 with 2 holding midfielders (from 1999 to 2002)
5.8 Villa-run (9): cut-in after a counter movement: first away from the ball (out of vision of his opponent) and than a cut-in behind his opponent.
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5.8 Villa-run (9): cut-in after a counter movement: first away from the ball (out of vision of his opponent) and than a cut-in behind his opponent.
DEVELOPMENT VISION OF THE BELGIAN FA

5.
GAME and INTERMEDIATE forms
"An acquired skill in the application of certain activities (training session) can only be transferred into a new condition (the match) when there exists a maximum of resemblances between the two situations"
Variation of match forms and intermediate forms
1 session can include different training units
In the beginning: most simple match form (f.e. 2 against 1), afterwards evolution to more complexe forms and ending with the most complexe match form (f.e. 4 against 4).
During the recognition phase: starting with the end form, and afterwards evaluating toward the most simple match form needed to solve a problem. Afterwards, more complexe forms are progressively introduced and at the end the same match form is used as at the beginning.
6. FOCUS ON THE PLAYER
FOCUS ON THE PLAYER
Strong learning environment

Definition

- Inspiring and stimulating learning environment
- Interaction youth instructor and player
- Match focused tasks and game situations
- Player is given the opportunity to solve the game problems himself
- Learning environment is responsible for learning results
FOCUS ON THE PLAYER

Let him  - make his own decisions
           - experience (own experience)

Support him, be patient and give him confidence

Help him  - to make the right decisions
            - to find a solution
            - with a positive coaching

Give a man a fish, you feed him for a day ...

Teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime!
More games
More fun
And more brains!
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Belgium Vision on youth development

**Competition structure First Team**

**BELGIUM**

- **Professional Football**
  - 1st National Division (16 teams)
  - 2nd National Division (18 teams)

- **Amateur Football**
  - 3rd National Division (32 teams - 2 groups)
  - 4th National Division (64 teams - 4 groups)

- **Provincial Divisions**
Competition structure Youth Teams

BELGIUM

Professional Football
Elite Label

National Label

Provincial Label
(9 provinces)

Regional Label

Elite Youth
(16 teams)

Serie A
(32 teams - 2 groups)

Serie B
(48 teams - 3 groups)

Labeling system based on quality criteria (checklist)
Competition structure

- U6, U7, U8 and U9 : 5v5
- U10 and U11 : 8v8
- U11, U12, U13, U14, U15, U16, U17, U19 and U21 : 11v11

Elite

- U7 : only friendly games
- U8 - U10 : 2 series of 8 clubs (A + B-teams)
- U11 - U19 : 1 serie of 16 clubs
- U21 : 1 serie of 16 clubs
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The Talent Identification Pyramid

9 National Youth teams
(10 coaches and 8 scouts)
U15, U15F, U16, U16F, U17, U17F, U18, U19, U20

Detection system U14
Players from elite clubs (1st div) and regional selections
9 National coaches, 8 scouts and 21 teachers TSS
Based on maturity (late, normal, early)

Regional selections
Players from 2nd division to 4th provincial
21 coaches and 200 scouts
U12, U13, U14, U15, U16 and U17

EACH PLAYER ON THE RIGHT LEVEL!
National and regional teams: goals

• To search for the most talented players by age group
• To organise training sessions, training camps and games and to provide quality development according to the Belgian FA vision
  ➔ the best with the best against the best
  ➔ it’s all about making new mistakes)
• To make post-game analyses (on strengths and weaknesses) for the player and the club
• To make mental and physical screening (national youth teams)
• To improve communication between Belgian FA and clubs
  ➔ To prepare for a professional and international career
  ➔ To prepare for the A-team (ultimate aim)
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Basic courses 2012-2013

**UEFA-PRO DIPLOMA (240h)**
Management of professional teams

**UEFA-A DIPLOMA (114h)**
coaching of senior teams (until 2nd division)

**CERTIFICATE A (148h)**
coaching of senior teams (until 4th division)

**UEFA-B DIPLOMA (112h)**
11-17 year/postformation/amateur (until 2nd prov. series)

**CERTIFICATE B (60h)**
5 - 11 year

**INITIATOR CERTIFICATE C (60h)**
Vision / didactics / basic motor function / safe sports
Specific courses 2012-2013 (1)

- **UEFA-A Elite Youth**: 150h  
  Started September 2012

- **Crash courses**
  - ex-internationals UEFA-B: 40h
  - ex-internationals UEFA-A: 60h
  - ex-professional players UEFA-B: 60h

- **Course Goalkeeping coach**
  - level I (youth): 36h  
    Start January 2013
  - level II (seniors): 36h  
    Start April 2013
  - level III (prof): 36h

- **Course for Director of Youth Academy**
  - Amateur (level I): 90h  
    Start January 2013
  - Elite (level II): 60h  
    Start April 2013
• Futsal
  – UEFA-B FUTSAL : 120h
  – UEFA-A FUTSAL : 120h

• Physical coach
  – level I (youth) : ? h
  – level II (seniors) : ? h
  – level III (prof) : ? h

• Mental coaching:
  – level I (youth) : 20h
  – level II (seniors) : 20h

• Talent identification : 16h

• UEFA-updating courses (to obtain a UEFA-licence valuable for 3 years)
  – UEFA-PRO : 15h = 15 points
  – UEFA-A : 15h = 15 points
  – UEFA-B : 15h = 15 points
Main principles of our Coach Education

• **Focus on quantity** ➔ to increase the number of qualified coaches (2000 candidates/year)
  - organization of C-level (60 hours) on demand of the clubs
  - on different days
  - low fee

• **Focus on quality** ➔ to increase the number of competent coaches
  - sessions of 4 hours (1x/week) ➔ reflection time
  - content continuously adapted on new trends
  - to coach the (new) instructor
  - mentorship during practical sessions in clubs
  - focus on self-development and long life learning
  - reality based learning
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Total: 337 players
4 additional training sessions (morning)

**total Flanders**
- 243 topsport pupils
- 15 NL teachers football
- 5 NL goalkeepers coaches (3h/w)

**total Wallonia**
- 94 topsport pupils
- 6 FR teachers football
- 3 FR goalkeeper coaches (3h/w)
The objective of the Topsport Project

To offer a supplementary quality education of 4 additional training sessions a week, which is complementary to the education in the club (the HELP-FUNCTION)

Talented players who automatically obtain the topsport status:

- automatically as a youth international
- or after passing a selection test (elite label clubs, national label clubs and provincial final selection)
5 crucial keys of success

1. **All** talented players have the opportunity
   - early and late mature
   - players mainly from 1st division clubs but also from lower divisions and girls from national selections
   - favorable geographical spreading (no problem of transport)

2. **Strong** learning environment:
   - training sessions with all the most talented players
   - 250 extra training hours a year, based upon the development vision of the Belgian FA.

3. A specific **educational** "topsport"-management offering the possibility to obtain a full diploma
   - teachers of football (experience as players and coaches, diploma UEFA-A and pedagogical diploma)
   - smaller class groups, study guidance, specific exams regulations and possibility to train with the A-team
5 crucial keys of success

4. **Guarantee** for continuity and expertise
   - Continuity: same staff of coaches, same learning plan
   - Expertise: 14 years of know-how

5. **100% oriented** to individual development
   - not based upon the formation of a team
   - a modular system with BASICS and TEAMTACTICS objectives and qualitative evaluations (7 per year)
   - learning objectives per training session, per week, per module and per year
   - a specific individual monitoring
From Topsportschool to International level

Dries Mertens (PSV, 87)

Thibaut Courtois (A. Madrid, 92)

Moussa Dembele (Tottenham, 87)

Steven Defour (Porto, 88)

Axel Witsel (Zenit, 89)
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Talent in football

**Talent**: individual qualities which can lead to excellent and lasting high standard performances.

International standards = characteristics on the highest level

1. **Versatility in qualities to excel**:
   - there are top defenders who lack dribbling skills
   - there are top strikers who lack offensive heading skills

2. **Versatility in team functions and positions**:
   - defending versus attacking
   - field players versus goalkeepers
   - defenders, midfielders versus forwards
   - central players versus wingers
Talent in football

Characteristics on a top level

1. Versatility in qualities
   - Defining the **basic competences** or skills a player needs to excel

2. Versatility in team functions
   - Defining the different **profiles** a team needs to excel
Basic competences

A future top player requires 6 basic competences:

1. Winner’s mentality
2. Emotional stability
3. Personality
4. Explosivity
5. Insight in the game
6. Ball and body control

These basic competences are equally important!
Profiles in football

- **Dictionary:**
a description of someone’s qualities or skills.

- **Player’s profile:**
a description of the specific qualities you need to be (become) a top player.

- **Seven different team profiles (1-4-3-3):**

- **International standards:**
have an influence on the profiles and may change them in the (near) future.
Birthmonth

• Detection of talent should be based on the 6 competences and the individual profile (skills), not considering the age (year and month of birth) of the player.

• **Important**: if there is a detection of talent based on «immediate performance» there are remarkable differences between players born in a different month:
  • A player born in January is 11 months older than a player born in December!
  • The older (month of birth) a player, the more powerful (mature) he is, the easier he can make a difference (physically)!
Birthmonth

- Talent detection tournament U14 november 2009 (613 players, first and second division).
- 66% of the competing players born in the first half (january – june) of the year.

![Birthmonth chart](image-url)
Maturity

- **Early mature players**: biologically speaking far more mature (difference up to 2 years with late mature players)
- **Normal mature players**: biological age and age by birth or calendar are the same
- **Late mature players**: biologically speaking less mature (difference up to 2 years with early mature players)

Late mature players are not necessarily small nor will they be the smallest when they grow into adult players.

Both U15 players are born in the same year and are scoring the same average values on speed and jumping strength.
Maturity

Average Age of the Peak high velocity = 13y6m
Most of the players grows with the highest velocity during U14
### Maturity

**How to measure the degree of maturity only by watching?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grow in height</th>
<th>Grow in width</th>
<th>Early mature</th>
<th>Normal mature</th>
<th>Late mature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before puberty</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Till U11</td>
<td>Till U13</td>
<td>Till U15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beginning of puberty</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>U12-U13</td>
<td>U14-U15</td>
<td>U16-U17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of puberty</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>U14-U15</td>
<td>U16-U17</td>
<td>U18-U19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>From U16</td>
<td>From U18</td>
<td>From U20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- • disproportion length legs comparing with the trunk
- • begin hairiness on the legs
- • ↑ muscular mass
- • developed body

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U14</th>
<th>Late mature</th>
<th>Normal mature</th>
<th>Early mature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>153.5</td>
<td>159.4</td>
<td>166.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>54.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figures of talent detection tournament U14 (1995)**
Maturity

- Detection of talent should be based on the 6 competences and the individual profile (football skills), not considering the age (year and month of birth) of the player.

- More (early) mature players have a physical advantage on their late mature colleagues:
  - U13/U14: more mature players are stronger, faster, more competitive!
  - U21: there’s no longer a difference between former early and former late mature players!
  - Unequal battle between early and late mature players and teams!
Maturity

Unequal battle between early and late mature players!

U16 Futurs Belgium (°1993) (late mature players)

U16 Belgium (°1993) (normal and early mature players)
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Grassroots in Belgium

Grassroots = football on the basis of

Youth amateur football (from 5y)
Football for disabled people
Veterans football
Girls football
Football at school

Grassroots = + 95% (!!!) from our football
Grassroots in Belgium: main tasks

- To **promote** football and futsal for youth (boys and girls)
- To let **more youth players play more** hours football per year (football camps, football at school, futsal competitions, ...)
- To organise football activities and promote football for **disabled people**
- To raise the quality of the lessons **football in the schools**
- To guarantee the “**rights of the child**” when playing football
- To raise the **quality of the youth academies** in the clubs in accordance with the development vision of the Belgian FA (= club development)
To raise the quality of the youth academies in the clubs in accordance with the vision of the RBFA (= club development)

5 regional coaches visit the clubs to give support (info sessions, open trainings, feedback about technical organisation, ...)

Financial support for quality audits
Bob Browaeys
Split 21/11/2012

The Belgium vision on youth development