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 an able to play on their own level, irrespective of colour, race, religion, gender or sexual orientation. The KNVB, as the representative of football and the good of the game, embraces the integral value of the rights of every individual, irrespective of colour, race, or gender. We support the mental well-being of players at all levels, irrespective of their sexual orientation. The KNVB is an issue-dear to my heart.

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 realise that things need to develop further. Recent research has shown that gay sportsmen in the Netherlands do not always feel homophobia playing team sports. As president of the KNVB, this issue is dear to my heart.

As president of the KNVB, I travel around the country and visit all clubs, ranging from small local amateur clubs to large professional football clubs. At the end of each visit, my administration asks, “If not, this is not an issue here, is it even worse? Oh no, our club doesn’t have any gay players. This is where they make their first set-backs. Gay acceptance was not seen as a tabula rasa by the KNVB. The KNVB cannot change the sports climate single-handedly. All of us, administrators, coaches and players, must take our responsibility.

Commitment to gay acceptance means breaking taboos about the topic, and challenging each other if necessary. Every club contributes to a safer news for all. Within this context, the KNVB has set up an action plan in the national campaign ‘Towards a safer sports climate’. The KNVB is working on the acceptance of homosexuality and the reality of the sporting climate.

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Because, obviously, nearly all football clubs have homosexual players. Simply accepting this fact would be a first step. In my view, the national football association must take their responsibility here. We must all make sure that everyone can be

so-called ‘back partners’. Together, we have drawn up action plan points. This is not the start. It is in real that everyone is willing as they go along.

The action points will be implemented and stipulated 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, must take our responsibility.

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“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.”

LUIJS DE JONG, AZ

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 schoolboys involved in Dutch professional football organisations.

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 valuation 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 and 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.

SUPPORT

7. Action: Appointing a confidential advisor to all the KNVB district offices and at all 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 ‘Sportmanship 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.

9. Action: Developing a guideline for the disciplinary procedures in amateur and professional football which explicitly includes the acceptance of homosexuality.
   Explanation: Research by the Fair Play Alliance will act as a baseline measurement and will be repeated within the next three years. The guideline will be refined to indicate that the acceptance of homosexuality can be further rooted in the disciplinary procedures in amateur and professional football. Additionally, we will examine whether the acceptance of homosexuality can be explicitly included in the KNVB standard terms and conditions of insulting or offensive crowd chants. Additionally, we will provide 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.

10. Action: Providing support to amateur clubs in drafting rules of conduct with regard to the acceptance of homosexuality.
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11. Action: Establishing a baseline measurement and will be repeated within the next three years. The guideline will be refined to indicate that the acceptance of homosexuality can be further rooted in the disciplinary procedures in amateur and professional football. Additionally, we will examine whether the acceptance of homosexuality can be explicitly included in the KNVB standard terms and conditions of insulting or offensive crowd chants. Additionally, we will provide 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.

MAARTEN MARTENS, AZ
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) nested 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 nested 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.

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 transgender 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 transgender 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.

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

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 the associated action plan within UEFA so that the issue will be put on the agenda in the European world of football as well.

The KNVB is working with the Fair Play Alliance in elaborating and implementing the action plan. The Fair Play Alliance was set up in May 2013. The Alliance is a network of sport federations, organisations and clubs who are committed to fair play and who want to work together against discrimination in football. The KNVB is proud to be a member of the Alliance.

The Fair Play Alliance has created an action plan that can be adopted by any football federation who want to work for a safer sports climate. The action plan focuses on, amongst other things, discrimination and racism.

The KNVB is inviting its fellow football federations to join the Fair Play Alliance and to adopt the action plan. We are convinced that a safer sports climate is the goal for football. It is the responsibility of all football federations to work towards this goal.

This acTion pLan is supporTeD By:

The KNVB is in continuous consultation with the KNVB districts, in cooperation with the John Blankenstein Foundation, COC Nederland (a GLBT advocacy organisation) and Movisie. COC Limburg, the youth groups, parents, players and supporters. These vary from an informative evening for professionals to a football game for the general public.
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, xenophobia and 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 models can play a very important contribution to the ‘transmutation of values and standards’. Put simply, the footballers’ words have a huge impact on the children. Many of the actions set out in this plan also contribute to this end, and the KNVB will continue to make efforts in this area.

About 40 supporters were present at ADO Den Haag’s Supporter’s Centre. Special guests included Casper Blankenstein and Casper Boom representing the John Blankenstein Foundation. Casper Boom is an excellent sportman and proud footballer (his sport resembling rugby) for DOS 79. Casper, who is thirty-four years old, told the gathering that he had kept his homosexuality secret for eight years. He did not feel safe enough in the football sporting environment to come out. In retrospect, however, the response to his coming out was overwhelmingly 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 teams 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.

Case Study “ADO Den Haag is for, and belongs to, everyone”

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

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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 complaints 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 moment, these clubs pledged to work towards this approach. On 11 October 2012 Maastricht United and the MVV supporters’ club signed a charter entitled ‘The ball belongs to everyone’.

The 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 themes of prejudice, racism, anti-Semitism, and inequality are 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.

CLASSICS

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This is just the start. MVV Maastricht, supported by COC Limburg, will work as they go to raise the issue of acceptance of homosexuality even further. AvH is a club in which members or supporters do not feel safe or secure in their sexuality: they are 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, patients, planners and supporters.

MVV Maastricht

nyanc@mvvmadden.nl

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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: