

THE 2015  
TOTAL DUTCH FOOTBALL.COM  
TOP 50



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# THE 2015 TOTAL DUTCH FOOTBALL.COM TOP 50

## INTRODUCTION

From being a small boy, I have always been a huge fan of both football and professional wrestling and at around the age of 10-years-old, I came across a monthly magazine brought to newsagents from the makers of the world famous *Sports Illustrated* all about pro wrestling. It was simply named *Pro Wrestling Illustrated*.

It was a publication I regularly read as well as *Shoot* and *Match* weekly magazines to feed my football addiction. In 1991, PWI began this new craze that instantly grabbed my attention more than no other magazine had before. They revealed the 'PWI 500'.

The 'PWI 500' section in the magazine listed (in rank order) the top 500 professional wrestlers in the world that year. Counting down from 500, this revealed to me many, many talents that I have not discovered as of yet. This was released every year, and still to this day is the best selling edition of the magazine each year. I studied and read and read over and over again that edition in 1991 and I came up with an idea. What if *Match* or *Shoot* revealed the top 500 footballers in the world?

Thinking back to 1991, I used to love to tune into the 'BBC Radio 1 Top 40' show every Sunday afternoon too... maybe I'm a tad obsessed with countdowns. Anyways, reflecting on the idea, I thought about it each year the 'PWI 500' was released. As years went on, I felt that this would have grown into a hugely successful plan, gaining great recognition with people in the game, possibly gained its own award ceremony on TV with the emergence and exposure SKY Television in the United Kingdom was just beginning to give to the game back then.

Meanwhile, it was all pie in the sky, a pipe dream - as it never happened... Then in 2012, no-one seemed had the same thoughts until *Four Four Two* magazine revealed their 'FFT 100' ranking from 100 down to one, the best footballers across the globe. So this became the birth of this years, the first ever, TotalDutchFootball.com Top 50. Now instead of listing the 'best' players, myself and the great team of writers decided on showcasing some of the talents that the Eredivisie and Eerste Divisie are famous of producing year after year.

Each player you will read about in this publication were born after 1st June 1992, making them under-23 on 1st June 2015. We feel these are the players that in future years will transferring from the Dutch league to the big leagues, which I'm sure all readers will agree is already a yearly occurrence.

I hope you all enjoy reading as much as the team and I enjoyed compiling it and you never know - if the wife and the full-time job allow me, it may well return in 2016.

**Will Burns**

## CONTENTS

TITLE	PAGE
<b>PLAYERS 50-41</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>PLAYERS 40-31</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>PLAYERS 30-21</b>	<b>5-7</b>
<b>PLAYERS 20-11</b>	<b>8-12</b>
<b>PLAYERS 10-1</b>	<b>13-22</b>
<b>CREDITS</b>	<b>23</b>

I started on Twitter around June 2014, and was basically looking for a website to write for. Within the month I found TotalDutchFootball.com, being intrigued, I contacted Will asking if I could help him with the website.

Fast forwarding a year later, we have had several interviews with players such as Alireza Jahanbakhsh (our number 19 in this list), making a presence at podcasts and being published in the many publications and we feel it's time for the next step.

Therefore we created this magazine with the team for our many readers. We hope you enjoy our magazine as such we did compiling it! Please do not hesitate to contact us regarding anything football related, as we both can be found on Twitter.

**Martijn Hilhorst**

50

**HIDDE JURJUS**

TEAM: DE GRAAFSCHAP  
 POSITION(S): GK  
 DATE OF BIRTH: 09/02/1994



The Lichtenvoorde born, Hidde Jurjus is a talented young 'keeper who had a breakout season with De Graafschap in the Eerste Divisie, culminating in Jong Oranje selection. The 21-year-old has been with *de Superboeren* since 2013 and is a renowned shot stopper. He played 27 games in De Graafschap's promotion winning season last campaign. In the Promotion Playoffs, Jurjus kept four clean-sheets out of six games to propel his side to the Eredivisie and his talents will be called upon numerous times in the upcoming season to keep De Graafschap in the elite league.

*Rogier Waalder*

49

**MARCEL RITZMAIER**

TEAM: PSV EINDHOVEN  
 POSITION(S): CM  
 DATE OF BIRTH: 22/04/1993



A tenacious battling left-footed midfielder that has spent the last five years under contract at PSV after making a name for himself in the junior ranks of SK Austria Kärnten. Although, now 22-years-old, the Austrian may well need to move on from Eindhoven to gain vital first-team experience with quality of players such as Andres Guardado, Adam Maher and Jorrit Hendrix ahead of him. Ritzmaier has previously ventured out to SC Cambuur during the 2013/14 season to some good success under then-coach Dwight Lodeweges, appearing 31 times and notching three goals on the way.

*Will Burns*

48

**STEVEN BERGWIJN**

TEAM: PSV EINDHOVEN  
 POSITION(S): RW/LW  
 DATE OF BIRTH: 08/10/1997



After making his Eredivisie debut towards the end of the last campaign, Bergwijn is set for a bigger role this season. The 17-year-old is a technical winger, who has already drawn comparisons with Memphis Depay. It is easy to see why - quick, skilful with an ability to beat opposition with ease. The highlight of his career so far was winning 2014 Under-17 European Championships 'best player' award in which Holland reached the final, only to be beaten by England. Throughout the competition, he showed both his ability to score and create goals, proving his potential to go on and be a real star of the modern game. He has a lot of work to do and needs to get more games next season, but his determination to succeed will stand him in good stead. **Our youngest member of the 2015 Total Dutch Football Top 50.**

*Jake Jackman*

47

**ANTHONY LIMBOMBE**

TEAM: N.E.C. NIJMEGEN  
 POSITION(S): LW  
 DATE OF BIRTH: 15/07/1994



Limbombe was a new signing for runaway Eerste Divisie champions N.E.C. Nijmegen last season and had an immediate impact. The fast and pacy winger contributed 16 goals in his 36 appearances in both league and cup competitions. Capped at Under-19 level for Belgium, Limbombe uses his speed, flair and trickery to get past opposing defenders in spite of his small stature. Limbombe made his Champions League debut at age 16 for his previous club KRC Genk. He will prove to be a handful for more than a few Eredivisie defences this season.

*Rogier Waalder*

46

**RAI VLOET**

TEAM: PSV EINDHOVEN  
 POSITION(S): AM  
 DATE OF BIRTH: 08/05/1995



Vloet is an attacking midfielder that is held in high regard by coach Philip Cocu, who handed the youngster nine substitute appearances last year. In addition, Vloet notched four goals in 13 starts for the Jong PSV side in the Jupiler League and he looks set to get more game time as Georginio Wijnaldum packed his bags for Newcastle United. He certainly has a great future ahead of him playing as a number ten or a secondary striker, he shows great composure in the box which could be vital off the bench for PSV this coming term. Starred in the Toulon Tournament for the Oranje this past summer, scoring twice against Costa Rica. He is the son of technical director at Sparta Rotterdam - Wiljan Vloet, a former player himself in the seventies and early eighties.

*Will Burns*

45

**MIKE VAN DER HOORN**

TEAM: AJAX AMSTERDAM  
 POSITION(S): CB  
 DATE OF BIRTH: 15/10/1992



Van der Hoorn has found a nice niche for himself in the Ajax squad. Not the most talented player, van der Hoorn is a physical presence with a high work rate. He has made a name for himself as a force to be reckoned with through the air. While he is not the long term answer for Ajax at center-back he is a capable replacement and adds good depth. Sadly, van der Hoorn might be most well-known for his conceded penalty against AC Milan in the Champions League two years ago, which cost Ajax a spot in the knockout stages. "Mikey" as he is affectionately known as by the Ajax fans, is trying to put that behind him though and develop himself as a weekly squad player for the Amsterdammers.

*Alex Pieter*

44

**JAIRO RIEDEWALD**

TEAM: AJAX AMSTERDAM  
 POSITION(S): LB  
 DATE OF BIRTH: 09/09/1996



Hailing from Haarlem; Jairo Riedewald signed his first professional contract with Ajax in March 2013 after coming through the Amsterdam club's famed youth academy which he joined from SV Overbos at age 11. Riedewald made his first team debut in a 3-0 away win in the KNVB Beker in December 2013 against IJsselmeervogels before making his Eredivisie debut three days later away to Roda JC Kerkrade. Aged 17 years and 104 days, Riedewald became the youngest scoring debutant in club and league history, netting twice after coming on as an 80th minute substitute to turn a 1-0 defeat into an improbable 2-1 away victory. A capable left back, centre half or holding midfielder; the 18-year-old Riedewald has established himself both domestically and internationally, where he has also been capped by the Netherlands at U15, U16, U17 and U19 level.

*Steven Davies*

43

**SIMON TIBBLING**

TEAM: FC GRONINGEN  
 POSITION(S): CM  
 DATE OF BIRTH: 07/09/1994



Twenty-year old Simon Tibbling joined FC Groningen in last January's transfer window from Djurgårdens IF and made an immediate impact making 17 Eredivisie starts scoring once. However this summer saw him grab the most attention, breaking through as a real star at this summer's Under-21 European Championships for champions Sweden, Tibbling usually deploys the central midfielder role back in Groningen. For his homeland, he shone in a more offensive role on the wings. Against rivals Denmark, he was inspirational, bringing great energy and dynamism. Before collecting his gold medal, Tibbling found the net twice in four outings. Edwin van der Loos will do well to keep the Swede over the next twelve months. Tibbling's versatility along with tremendous close control, creativity and intelligence means he could be attracting clubs all over Europe.

*Will Burns*

42

**THOM HAYE**

TEAM: AZ ALKMAAR  
 POSITION(S): CM  
 DATE OF BIRTH: 09/02/1995



Thom Haye has quickly established himself as a key part of AZ's team at the age of 20. This technically gifted, ball playing midfielder was a mainstay for AZ last season playing 28 games and contributing three assists. Haye has been involved in Dutch youth teams at every level and is a current Jong Oranje member. Haye is looking to bring his game up to the next level this season and with his contract expiring in June 2016, could see himself move to a bigger club, if AZ don't decide to cash in on him earlier. With Jordy Clasie now left Feyenoord, Haye could very much be in the frame to replace him.

*Rogier Waalder*

41

**RICHAIRO ZIVKOVIC**

TEAM: WILLEM II (on loan from Ajax)  
 POSITION(S): ST  
 DATE OF BIRTH: 05/09/1996



Born in Assen; Richairo Zivkovic was signed to the youth academy of FC Groningen from FVV Foxhol at age 11. At 16 years and 88 days he became the youngest debutant in club history, coming on as an 84th minute substitute in a 2-0 victory against Heracles Almelo on 2nd December 2012. On 3rd August 2013, Zivkovic surpassed Arjen Robben as the youngest player ever to score for FC Groningen and after netting 11 times in 35 appearances in 2013/14, elected to join Ajax the following season; signing a three year contract. Despite setting the Eerste Divisie alight for Jong Ajax in 2014/15, scoring 18 times in 25 appearances; the young striker appeared on just 11 occasions for the first team, scoring twice. Zivkovic, capped at both U18 and U19 level by the Netherlands, will spend the entire 2015/16 campaign on loan at Willem II.

*Steven Davies*

40

**LUCAS ANDERSEN**

TEAM: AJAX AMSTERDAM  
 POSITION(S): AM  
 DATE OF BIRTH: 13/09/1994



Lucas Andersen is part of the large Danish contingent at Ajax. Andersen showed flashes of his ability last year, but nothing prolonged to ensure his future in Amsterdam. The training-staff is a fan of Andersen, but fans are becoming frustrated at the hyped youngster. Andersen has failed to make it as a winger and has not made an impact in midfield when placed there either. He is a technically talented player, but his lack of strength and physicality has created problems for him, especially in European competition. His downfall on the wing has been his lack of pace. The Ajax midfield is crowded and someone is likely on their way out, with Andersen and Thulani Serero being the two biggest candidates. Unless Andersen shows something this season, he is primed for a career as an Eredivisie squad player.

*Alex Pieter*

39

**RICARDO KISHNA**

TEAM: AJAX AMSTERDAM  
 POSITION(S): RW/LW  
 DATE OF BIRTH: 04/01/1995



Ricardo Kishna has been the talk of many transfer rumors of late. The talented winger has not been on the best of terms with Ajax trainer Frank de Boer. Kishna has immense potential and Ajax want the winger to stay and try to work things out. Kishna is a left footed winger who will compete with Viktor Fischer for minutes and games on the left wing. Kishna has tremendous pace and footwork. He can beat defenders off the dribble or simply outrun them. On this day, Kishna is - arguably - one of the most talented player at Ajax. However, he has a habit of going missing during matches. Ajax would be wise to hold on to Kishna, they just might have a gem on their hands. Only time will tell.

*Alex Pieter*

38

**TERELL ONDAAN**

TEAM: WILLEM II  
 POSITION(S): RW  
 DATE OF BIRTH: 09/09/1993



Terell Ondaan is another promising winger plying his trade in the Eredivisie and he has showed that he has the quality to influence matches since making his league debut. Last season he played in 33 league matches, contributing two goals and five assists to Willem II. His side managed to finish above FC Twente, who had a considerably better squad, which highlights the hard working mentality of the Willem squad and Ondaan is the symbol of that with his defensive contribution being impressive. He is a good dribbler and causes opposition defences when with the ball, while he is also adept at challenging aerially. The next season could see Ondaan develop into a player who bigger clubs start to take notice of.

*Jake Jackman*

37

**LUCIANO SLAGVEER**

TEAM: SC HEERENVEEN  
 POSITION(S): RW  
 DATE OF BIRTH: 05/10/1993



The Eredivisie is filled with young talented wingers and Heerenveen's Luciano Slagveer is another who could develop into a very dangerous player. Playing for Holland at every youth level, he has shown that he has always been destined for the top of the game. Even though it seems difficult for him to make the step up to the full Dutch side given the competition, it is within Slagveer's capabilities. Capable of playing on either flank, he works hard and his movement makes him a goal threat in the final third. Last season, he scored 12 times and provided three assists showing that his game centres more on scoring rather than creating. A good finisher with an eye for a wondergoal, as he displayed with his acrobatic volley against Ajax last season.

*Jake Jackman*

36

**MITCHELL DIJKS**

TEAM: AJAX AMSTERDAM  
 POSITION(S): LB  
 DATE OF BIRTH: 09/02/1993



Born in Purmerend; Mitchell Dijks was recruited into the youth ranks of FC Volendam (then a partner club of Ajax) in 2009, before switching to Amsterdam; making his first team debut in August 2012 in the Johan Cruyff Schaal against PSV and his league debut later that month against NEC. The giant left back appeared eight times for 'de Godenzonen' during the 2012/13 campaign; helping the club to its 32nd Eredivisie title. A season-long loan at sc Heerenveen followed but a lack of first team opportunities upon his return to Amsterdam saw Dijks sold in the summer of 2014 to newly promoted Willem II. A first team regular and key man in Tilburg; Dijks made 30 appearances for the Tricolores until June this year and the 22-year-old, capped by the Netherlands at U16, U18, U19 and U21 level, opted to re-join Ajax on a three year contract.

*Steven Davies*

35

**LUUK KOOPMANS**

TEAM: PSV EINDHOVEN  
 POSITION(S): GK  
 DATE OF BIRTH: 18/11/1993



Young goalkeeper Luuk Koopmans spent his childhood sleeping in his PSV pyjamas and now has his chance to prove his wears at his dream club. Signed from FC Oss in the off-season Koopmans will need to bide his time to unseat Jeroen Zoet but his has the ability and determination to do so. As first choice 'keeper in the Eerste Divisie for FC Oss over the past two seasons Koopmans has built up an impressive highlights reels of lightning fast reflexes and incredible shot stopping. He will need to bide his time in the Jong PSV team initially but he will be ready and able whenever the opportunity presents.

*Rogier Waalder*

34

**JORRIT HENDRIX**

TEAM: PSV EINDHOVEN  
 POSITION(S): CB/DM  
 DATE OF BIRTH: 06/02/1995



Jorrit Hendrix has been on the radar for a few seasons now at PSV and one senses that season 2015/16 might be his breakout season. This 20-year-old defensive midfielder has already played 40 Eredivisie matches and 15 Europa League matches so he has great experience already at a young age. As he is equally adept in the centre of defence, the departure of Karim Rekik may present the chance for Hendrix to establish himself in the first team.

*Rogier Waalder*

33

**KEVIN DIKS**

TEAM: VITESSE ARNHEM  
 POSITION(S): RB  
 DATE OF BIRTH: 06/10/1996



To be a first team player in the Eredivisie at 18-years-old is impressive. While Vitesse are still heavily involved with Chelsea, Kevin Diks made the eleven and even surpassed Wallace (who was on loan from Chelsea). However the club are beginning to produce their own players and Diks is an example of that after settling into the first team instantly, while his potential to develop makes him one of the most exciting prospects to watch. The full back is a good tackler and showed good reading of the game throughout the season with his ability to intercept passes. He is a young full back with plenty of potential, who is already strong defensively, but he needs to work on his attacking output, especially given the role of the modern day full back.

*Jake Jackman*

32

**WARNER HAHN**

TEAM: FEYENOORD  
 POSITION(S): GK  
 DATE OF BIRTH: 15/06/1992



Standing at a giant 6ft 6inches, Warner Hahn is set to challenge Kenneth Vermeer for the number one jersey at De Kuip. Signing from FC Dordrecht in the summer of 2014, Hahn was then sent by then-Feyenoord coach Fred Ruiten to work under Ron Jans last season at PEC Zwolle to great results. The big stopper made 36 starts in league and cup games, conceding a credible 34 goals. Hahn shows great composure and concentration flustering oppositions attackers, thwarting their attempts at goal. Hahn has great reflexes for a big guy and a tremendous shot-stopper that could mature into a front-runner for a national call-up, however he will not be able to contest such places whilst sitting on the bench as cover for Vermeer.

*Will Burns*

31

**VINCENT JANSSEN**

TEAM: AZ ALKMAAR  
 POSITION(S): ST  
 DATE OF BIRTH: 15/06/1994



Janssen started his career just as any other football player - step by step, upgrading clubs at the same time, he then eventually ended up at Feyenoord in 2009. Constantly netting goals, he became top scorer for the Under-18s but it was not enough for the Rotterdammers to give him a contract and he left to play for Jupiler League side Almere City FC. Which was a huge step down, but Janssen showed great character and start developing in a tremendously smart striker who perfectly picks his moments. With that, and scoring 19 goals in 34 matches last term, several Eredivisie clubs were interested to sign him and he eventually opted for John van de Brom's AZ Alkmaar, who bought him for around €800,000. As of time of writing, Janssen has notched ten goals in just four pre-season matches.

*Martijn Hilhorst*

# 30

## ANASS ACHAHBAR

TEAM: FEYENOORD

POSITION(S): ST

DATE OF BIRTH: 13/01/1994



Den Haag born Anass Achahbar, represented VCS before signing with Feyenoord and made his professional debut in August 2011 in a 2-2 home draw with sc Heerenveen. His first goal coming in the 68<sup>th</sup> minute of a KNVB Beker home clash with AGOVV in the September shortly after replacing Jerson Cabral in a 4-0 victory. Sporadic appearances under then-coach, Ronald Koeman led Achahbar to join German second tier outfit, Arminia Bielefeld on loan in 2013/14 for a miserable campaign that ended with Arminia eventually relegated. Achahbar, capped by the Netherlands at U17, U19 and U20 level, spent the first half of 2014/15 in the shadows as his contract wound down until coach, Fred Rutten gave the young striker the chance to earn himself a new deal at the club. He seized this opportunity with a run of four goals in three games in late March and early April 2015; the 21-year-old sandwiching a memorable brace at home to eventual champions, PSV between important strikes at FC Dordrecht and AZ Alkmaar. Having captured the imagination of Het Legioen; the club handed the young forward a new two-year deal in May 2015. With a contract



until the summer of 2017 thanks in equal measure to the faith shown by outgoing Feyenoord coach, Rutten and a rich run of goal-scoring form; the future appears bright for the once forgotten marksman. A natural finisher; his success will largely depend upon how he fits into the plans of new Feyenoord coach, Giovanni van Bronckhorst with: Elvis Manu, Colin Kazim-Richards, Mitchell te Vrede, Bilal Başaçıkoğlu and returning club legend, Dirk Kuyt all vying for an attacking berth.

*Steven Davies*

# 28

## JESPER DROST

TEAM: PEC ZWOLLE

POSITION(S): AM

DATE OF BIRTH: 11/01/1993



Born in Nunspeet, 18 miles west of Zwolle, Jesper Drost stayed close to home when making a career for himself. Zwolle has been his territory for the now 22-year-old for the last twelve years, working his way through the ranks at FC Zwolle until making the first team some five years ago. The 5ft 9inch playmaking midfielder has proved to be a vital part of Zwolle's emergence back to prominence in the Eredivisie, making over 100 appearances for Ron Jans' outfit with last season being his best. In 2014/15, Drost played almost every minute of the season notching eight goals and creating the same amount leading Zwolle to sixth place, their best ever finish in Eredivisie history. Drost is an intelligent creative midfielder that would rather locate a pass to a more advantaged team-mate than find a shot on goal. He owns a great first touch with the ability to attack the opposition with dribbles in and around the box, and drag defenders out of position to lay the ball off to the goal scorer. Anyone playing in front of this number ten



will thrive off the chances produced. Drost could be held in the highest regard if he stayed in Zwolle for the duration, however ambition may scupper those plans and the likes of Ajax, PSV or Feyenoord may poach the youngster away from IJsseldelastadion. Meanwhile, at the time being he is committed to Zwolle, as he put pen to a contract until the summer of 2017 last year.

*Will Burns*

# 29

## RYAN THOMAS

TEAM: PEC ZWOLLE

POSITION(S): LW

DATE OF BIRTH: 20/12/1994



Not many would have foreseen Ryan Thomas' materialization from the unknown which is New Zealand youth football to the Eredivisie after landing a contract with PEC Zwolle in March 2014. Even though he had a growing reputation in his homeland, Thomas' trial at Zwolle in 2013 came as a complete surprise. Even young Ryan had to pay for his own flights and accommodation after being tracked by youth academy director Rini Coolen. Although he initially struggled to acclimatize to living in a hotel during his first few months at the club, Thomas' status rose greatly as the season progressed, culminating with silverware and two goals in Zwolle's shock 5-1 KNVB Beker final pasting of Ajax in April 2014. A three-year extension showed Zwolle clearly saw him as a great asset. Mainly used as a central attacking midfielder in New Zealand, Thomas has been more commonly deployed at Zwolle as a left winger with great success. Thomas has shown he can cause major damage from the wing, sprinting at defenders with his swift pace and technical gifts, while his dazzling dribbling style and miniature stature allow him to cope with any challenge. Although, his lean frame means that defensive work is not



his strong point. It has been two years now since a successful trial that led to a initial one-year deal with the Blauwvingers, and still only 20-years old, Thomas is classed as his country's hottest prospect and what were once pipe dreams of a move one of Europe's top leagues now seem perfectly possible. With nearly fifty games under the tutelage of Ron Jans at Zwolle, Thomas is using the Eredivisie experience to grow from strength to strength.

*Will Burns*

# 27

## GASTÓN PEREIRO

TEAM: PSV EINDHOVEN

POSITION(S): AM

DATE OF BIRTH: 11/06/1995



PSV's summer signing Gastón Pereiro arrives with a reputation as one of the most gifted players to come out of Uruguay in recent years. He commenced his youth career at Racing de Montevideo, but his talent was so clear that he was swiftly picked up by Nacional at the age of 13. After years of careful grooming by the club, the gifted youngster was introduced to the first team and soon became its main creative outlet. A tall, left-footed, intelligent midfielder, Pereiro is capable of playing anywhere across the attacking midfield line. Possessing a brilliant technique, vision and ability to pick the perfect pass, the 19-year-old is most comfortable with the ball at his feet orchestrating plays. Along with his cool head and a technical ability to bring any teammate into the game, he is equally adept at finishing off team moves. Indeed, with a height of 6ft 1inch along with his highly polished finishing ability, Pereiro will be a constant danger through late surges into the opposition area. However, as capable as he is in the box, an isolated Pereiro tends to go missing at times, as seen by his performances at the recent Under-



20 World Cup. With compatriot Luis Suarez setting the precedent, his move to Holland is seen as the ideal step for his development. His natural talent and physical capabilities are already at a level to ensure a smooth transition into the Eredivisie. Supported by a professional and modern training and tactical set-up, Pereiro will have the necessary environment to develop into an elite attacking midfielder. Provided he is given the opportunity to play consistently and with a certain level of freedom, Pereiro has the potential to reach the greatest heights of European football.

*Martin da Cruz*

# 26 MARKUS HENRIKSEN

TEAM: AZ ALKMAAR  
POSITION(S): CM  
DATE OF BIRTH: 25/07/1994



Henriksen was tipped for big things after breaking through at Rosenborg and it was a coup for AZ to secure his signature in 2012. Since the move, he has been a regular in the side, but he will be hoping to push on over the next couple of years. He has long been seen as one of the brightest talents in Scandinavia as he has the attributes to excel both defensively and offensively. The move to AZ was wise as they are known for developing players and he was always going to get regular first team football in the Eredivisie. He is a central midfielder by trade, but he is able to play as an attacking midfielder, either centrally or on the wing. Henriksen is capable of making an impact in the final third with his late runs causing problems for opposition defenders. Last season, he scored seven goals and got four assists, which is a good return for a centre midfielder and shows his quality as an attacking force. The Norwegian has a good physique and he is capable of challenging for the ball aerially. His tackling is an area he could improve in the coming years and he needs to make better decisions when on the ball, but he is only 22 and has lots of time to develop into a great midfielder. He is already a regular in the



Norwegian national team, which shows his talent, but he is yet to take the Eredivisie by storm and become one of the best players in the league. The midfielder needs to move to the next level in the Eredivisie before a move to a bigger league is on the agenda. To do this, he needs to be more influential and make more match winning contributions on a regular basis. The next 24 months are crucial to where the midfielder's career is headed, he will either move to a bigger league and see his reputation grow, or be a player who stays in the Eredivisie for the majority of his career.

Jake Jackman

# 25 JOOST VAN AKEN

TEAM: SC HEERENVEEN  
POSITION(S): CB  
DATE OF BIRTH: 13/05/1994



Throughout the years, the Netherlands have had a mixed record with defenders, but Joost van Aken is a somebody who could develop into an excellent player. Last season, he played 33 times for Heerenveen which allowed him to break into the Jong Oranje (Dutch U-21) set-up. At the age of 21, he is at the start of his career and defenders don't peak until much later, which gives Van Aken lots of time to mature. He is a left-footed centre back, who likes to take the ball out of the back four, which is, of course the Dutch way. His passing is a weak part of his game, which is surprising, but it is an area he can work on in the coming years. The Dutch youth international is an impressive tackler and is very focused in game, which limits the amount of errors he makes. He is also decent in the air, as he won 2.9 aerial duels per game last season. Van Aken also made 2.3 tackles and 2.6 interceptions on average per game in the last campaign. His height (6 ft 4 1/2 in) makes him a threat from set pieces, and although he didn't score in the 2014/15 campaign, he netted twice in eight matches in the previous



season. Van Aken has extended his contract until 2018 with an option for another year at Heerenveen, which suggests he is going to stay at the club for a little while yet. This is a positive move for the defender as he will be getting regular first team football in his homeland, allowing him to develop into a really good centre back. It's too early to suggest where he will end up, but he has the attributes to grow into a full international.

Jake Jackman

# 24 ADAM MAHER

TEAM: PSV EINDHOVEN  
POSITION(S): CM/AM  
DATE OF BIRTH: 20/07/1993



In 2012, after a breakthrough season with AZ, Maher was seen as one of the biggest talents in Holland. Notching 11 goals with seven assists, he managed to make the preliminary Oranje squad for Euro 2012. Carrying his impressive form into the 12/13 season, he earned himself a move to Dutch giants PSV. At AZ, he was a conventional number 10 and was often compared to Wesley Sneijder due to his excellent technique and attacking mentality. However since joining PSV, their formation and the presence of Georginio Wijnaldum have forced him to adapt his game. Although he struggled playing in a deeper role in the first season, he excelled this season, scoring seven goals and five assists whilst improving his all-round game to become more of a box-to-box midfielder, much like his manager Phillip Cocu. His main strength is his passing, shown by his excellent through balls and set-pieces. He also has an extremely good long shot on him and is dangerous running with the ball. These attributes give him many different options in and around the box, and make him a huge threat for opposition defences. After a poor season



in 2013/14, Maher is now on his way to becoming one of the biggest talents in Dutch football. Memphis Depay has left PSV and others key players are possibly set to leave. However, it's likely that Maher will stay with the Eredivisie champions for another season to continue his development. With fellow midfielder Wijnaldum packing his bags, Maher has the chance to become even more important and pivotal to the team, potentially breaking into the Oranje squad for Euro 2016, before a probable move to a major European league.

Fin Crebolder

# 23 ARKADIUSZ MILIK

TEAM: AJAX AMSTERDAM  
POSITION(S): ST  
DATE OF BIRTH: 28/02/1994



Twenty-one-year-old Arkadiusz Milik is an intriguing prospect at Ajax - he has the ability to become the next great Ajax number nine. Milik is a versatile player who can put the ball in the net in a number of different ways. He can shoot from distance, win balls in the air and clean up garbage in front of net. The Polish striker, who played in the Bundesliga for Bayer Leverkusen before coming to Ajax, was often the victim of poor service during much of last year. While strikers took much of the blame for the Amsterdammers' scoring woes, the wingers and midfielders did not provide much assistance. A healthy Viktor Fischer and a revamped midfield should help Milik this season. The recently acquired Yaya Sanogo, on-loan from Arsenal, will provide Milik with healthy competition for his spot. Milik has also been capped by the Polish national team and has proved he can perform on the biggest stage. Milik signed with Ajax after his loan and



has made it known he is quite comfortable in Amsterdam. Ajax is known for the strikers they have produced in the last decade, including the likes of Luis Suarez and Klaas-Jan Huntelaar. Milik has a long ways to go to be mentioned alongside those two. There is no doubting he is a talented player who can go on to achieve good things in Amsterdam.

Alex Pieter

22

**RICK KARSDORP**

TEAM: FEYENOORD  
 POSITION(S): RB  
 DATE OF BIRTH: 11/02/1995



Luke Wilkshire his only competition for the right back slot at De Kuip which the 20-year-old made his own in 2014/15 in the absence of the injury-plagued Australian; the ball is firmly in Karsdorp's court in 2015/16. Feyenoord's financial difficulties have prompted 'De Stadionclub' to promote from within over making expensive signings thus making De Kuip an ideal environment for Karsdorp to develop into one of the best full backs in the country over the next few years, attaining full international recognition and an inevitable move to one of Europe's elite leagues.

Steven Davies

21

**ELVIS MANU**

TEAM: FEYENOORD  
 POSITION(S): RW/LW/ST  
 DATE OF BIRTH: 13/08/1993



Manu's ability to go on and become a full international for Oranje, due to the huge competition currently in Holland for the attacking positions. Manu needs to first and foremost become a regular for Feyenoord. If he manages that, he needs to become much more productive in the final third. Many in the Eredivisie look for moves abroad, but Manu needs to prove himself in Holland before any talk of that comes his way.

Jake Jackman

**WHICH CLUB HAS THE MOST TOP 50 PROSPECTS?**



According to our Top 50, Frank de Boer's Ajax can look forward to the best future of all the clubs with 11 players inside the top 50 ranked, with another one out on loan to Willem II. PSV and Feyenoord both have nine players in joint second place with AZ in fourth with four prospects.

Ajax - 11	PSV - 9
Feyenoord - 9	AZ Alkmaar - 4
FC Groningen - 3	FC Twente - 3
Heerenveen - 3	N.E.C. Nijmegen - 2
PEC Zwolle - 2	Vitesse - 2
De Graafschap - 1	Willem II - 1

# 20 JÜRGEN LOCADIA

TEAM: PSV EINDHOVEN  
POSITION(S): ST  
DATE OF BIRTH: 07/11/1993

Jürgen Locadia has been in and out of the PSV side for the last two seasons and this year could be his time to breakthrough. He has already played 69 times in the Eredivisie, scoring a total of 25 goals which is a superb return when you take into account that the majority of his appearances have come from the substitutes bench. At the age of 21, Locadia already has a good reputation in Holland, but he needs to be a first team regular to push on and show just how far he can go in the game. With Luuk de Jong firing on all cylinders last year at the Philips Stadion, his chances look slim at this time. Locadia is a strong finisher, who is most comfortable when in the penalty box. He is strong with both feet, while he is also useful at holding the ball up. One of the most impressive things about his game is his physicality, standing at 6 foot 3 inches tall, Locadia has the strength to be a real handful in the opposition half. Furthermore, he has the pace to play off the last defender, and can make dangerous runs beyond the line of defence. It is clear that Locadia needs first team football to develop further and last season he was held back after the purchase of De Jong from Borussia Monchengladbach last summer, who had an excellent first season in Eindhoven - Locadia only managed to make 23 appearances and only five of those came as a starter. Linked with a loan move to PEC Zwolle, that could be useful to further himself as a footballer. He has all the attributes to develop into a



Jake Jackman

great striker, but he needs to be managed correctly and PSV head coach Philip Cocu may be just the man for the job. Even though the loan rumours are running rampant, his two goals in a pre-season warm-up against a strong Olympique Lyonnais side, may have changed Cocu's mind and he might want to keep the striker around.

## STRENGTHS

- COOL FINISHER
- GOOD IN THE AIR
- GREAT PHYSICAL STRENGTH
- RAPID PACE

## WEAKNESSES

- PROGRESS SLOWED DUE TO LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES
- WEAK DEFENSIVELY

# 19 ALIREZA JAHANBAKHSH

TEAM: N.E.C. NIJMEGEN  
POSITION(S): RW/LW  
DATE OF BIRTH: 11/08/1993



Alireza Jahanbakhsh – an exotic name which suits this technical gifted player. The Iranian playmaker is currently at his third season with N.E.C Nijmegen. He already spent one year in the Eredivisie and last season in the Eerste Divisie. After becoming champions in the second tier, N.E.C and Jahanbakhsh are ready for another crack at the Eredivisie. Alireza was – without a doubt – the best player in the Jupiler League last season. Scoring and assisting constantly and he even won 'De Gouden Stier' (the league's Best Player award) that season. However, his road to success is also worth the mention. Being from Iran, it was harder for him to develop into the player he now is, not having the required experienced coaches or facilities. Starting with Iranian third-tier team Damash Karaj in 2011, he was almost immediately scouted by SC Damash, who played in the highest Iranian division. It was almost crystal clear that this was not the end of Alireza's progression, three years after his debut at Damash Karaj, 'Ali' left his country to play in a Western competition with N.E.C. Nijmegen. After three months at the club, he was called up for the Iranian national team. At that time (October) he have not notched a goal in the Eredivisie as of yet, however this followed in December against AZ Alkmaar. He was later selected by national manager Carlos Queiroz for that summer's World Cup where he squared off with Lionel Messi, Angel Di Maria against Argentina. It was expected that someone who played in the World Cup wouldn't stay in the second tier in Holland, but scouts were having misplaced doubts.

Because a year later, 'Ali' was responsible for N.E.C's title and developed even more than expected. Jahanbakhsh was on the verge signing with Brighton and Hove Albion this summer, but he decided to wait for better option. A player with his technical and scoring abilities should not settle, with all due respect, for a team in the second division in any country. We at TotalDutchFootball.com had an interview with him a few months back, which can be found [here](#).

Martijn Hilhorst

## STRENGTHS

- SKILFUL DRIBBLING WITH BOTH FEET
- GREAT VISION
- GOOD RANGE OF PASSING

## WEAKNESSES

- NEEDS TO IMPROVE FINISHING
- LACK PHYSICAL STRENGTH
- INCONSISTENT



# 18

## BILAL BASAÇIKOĞLU

**TEAM:** FEYENOORD  
**POSITION(S):** RW/LW  
**DATE OF BIRTH:** 26/03/1995



Born in Zaanstad to a Turkish father and a Moroccan mother; Bilal Başaçıkoğlu spent time in the youth ranks of Ajax, HFC Haarlem and RKSVC Pancratius before being taken on at SC Heerenveen. The versatile Başaçıkoğlu progressed through the ranks in Friesland, making his debut as a substitute in a resounding 5-2 home victory against RKC Waalwijk in November 2013. His first goal for *De Superfriezen* came in a 5-1 demolition of AZ Alkmaar away from home in the Eredivisie just a month later; the young winger opening the scoring and later adding an assist for teammate, Hakim Ziyech, who completed the rout. Predominantly right-footed, but a threat on either flank, Başaçıkoğlu went on to play 25 times in all competitions in 2013/14; netting on six occasions. A big money move for the young starlet followed; Feyenoord paying €2.5million to secure Başaçıkoğlu's services on a four-year deal on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2014. Başaçıkoğlu made his league debut for *De Stadionclub* in August 2014 in a 1-0 victory away from home at ADO Den Haag in the Eredivisie; making what would be a rare starting appearance, he was replaced by Ruben Schaken with new Feyenoord coach, Fred Rutten, later deeming Başaçıkoğlu as one for the future but not necessarily the present at the club. The scintillating form of the previous campaign failed to show again in 2014/15, as Başaçıkoğlu, capped not only at U18 and U19 level by the Netherlands but also at U20 and U21 level by the country of his father's birth, Turkey, struggled to find his feet in Rotterdam. Spending much of the campaign sitting on the bench, Başaçıkoğlu made just 18 appearances in all competitions, 13 of these as a substitute. With a contract that runs until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2018, time is on the



Steven Davies

20-year-old's side and with Feyenoord seemingly resigned to losing a host of their star performers each year, opportunities will surely arise for the young winger to prove his worth to new coach, Giovanni van Bronckhorst. The promise that led the Rotterdam giants to part with €2.5 million will resurface if Başaçıkoğlu earns the time on the pitch to do so. Eligible to play for three countries and having already represented both the Netherlands and Turkey at various youth levels; where will Başaçıkoğlu's international future lie?

### STRENGTHS

- VERSATILE WINGER
- QUICK FEET

### WEAKNESSES

- INCONSISTENT

# 17

## RENATO TAPIA

**TEAM:** FC TWENTE  
**POSITION(S):** CM  
**DATE OF BIRTH:** 28/07/1995



It could have been a whole different story for Peruvian midfielder Renato Tapia. While under a youth contract with Sporting Cristal, then-central defender Tapia spent time at Tottenham Hotspur and Liverpool for trials, with both rejecting him as they did not deem him good enough to play English Premier League football. With the Reds also deeming Tapia would not prove to be a good defender predicting he could only grow to a maximum of 6 foot 2 inches. In the summer of 2013, he impressed on trial in Enschede and he signed a four-year commitment with the Eredivisie side. After a year in Holland, he made his debut last season as the 6ft 1inch central midfielder and Tapia is fitting in well at FC Twente. Five goals from 12 starts with five substitute appearances has certainly opened some eyes, and the Peruvian looks set to play more a part this coming season. As the games to goal ratio suggest, Tapia is a very offensive player and with his muscular build, he can make the marauding runs without any hassle. He can hold his own defensively too due to his power. Even at just 19-years-old, Tapia is terrifying in the midfield battles with a great strong tackle in his possession. During the 17 appearances, he made a total of 34 successful challenges and intercepted 20 balls and if he does not win the ball, he will die trying. When sitting deep in the midfield you can expect Tapia to thread the needle from long range for the attackers ahead of him, with a great route one ball he has in his locker. If he is playing an advanced role, his movement is superb. Whether its creating space for colleagues or holding the ball, dishing out the one-two looking to draw a foul, he can do it all. There is always room for



Will Burns

Improvement and Tapia could do with improving his reactions and speed. There has been times when balls have been lost in good positions when he has been unable to reach the supply in time. However, all in all he is a strong contender to become a real star next season. With Feyenoord profiting from the sale of Jordy Clasie, Tapia could eventually fill his boots at De Kuip and if the cash-strapped Twente receive a decent offer, I'm sure they would need their arm twisted to sell.

### STRENGTHS

- STRONG PHYSIQUE
- AGGRESSIVE TACKLING
- ACCURATE LONG RANGE PASSING

### WEAKNESSES

- DOES NOT POSSESS GREAT PACE
- SLOW REACTIONS

# 16

## HANS HATEBOER

TEAM: FC GRONINGEN

POSITION(S): RB

DATE OF BIRTH: 09/01/1994



FC Groningen's home-town boy, Hans Hateboer is a hard-working, enthusiastic right-back and while he started out his career as a central defender, the 21-year-old has emerged as one of the best right sided defenders (if not the best) in Dutch football. The youngster was born in Beerta, a 30 minute drive west of Groningen and started his career at amateur sides THOS and BV Veendam before the Eredivisie side signed him up to a youth contract at age 12. Standing at 6 foot 1 inch, Hateboer has matured into strong player that uses a lot of power to make surging runs down the right flank, helping his side out in attacking situations. He also possess tremendous stamina that can cover any defensive challenge that may bestowed upon him and will truly run that line more times that the referees assistant during the ninety. He currently has 46 first-team appearances under his belt after making his bow January of last year in an away game at RKC Waalwijk. Hateboer was starting for the *Pride of the North* and it was going well making the surging runs down the right, which was a sign of things to come for Groningen fans. The fearless rookie announced his arrival just past the half hour mark, leaving the left-back for dead, playing the ball across goal to give Michael de Leeuw to make it 1-0. However, the euphoria was cut short deep into the second half, as young Hans was unfairly shown a straight red card after performing a strong-looking sliding tackle on Remy Amieux. Although, this did not deter his coach Edwin van der Looi, and he was back

on the team-sheet three weeks later at home to Heerenveen. From there, Hateboer has gone from strength to strength and pundits are predicating big things for the full-back. If he has an successful season coming up, one has wonder can Groningen deter any potential suitors. For a player who averaged a solid 2.5 tackles and 1.5 interceptions per game last season, Groningen would be well within their rights asking for a hefty fee.

*Will Burns*

### STRENGTHS

- LIKES TO GET FORWARD
- STRONG IN POSSESSION
- RAPID PACE
- GREAT STAMINA
- BRAVERY

### WEAKNESSES

- OCCASIONALLY BAD TEMPERAMENT
- POOR DISCIPLINE

# 15

## DALEY SINKGRAVEN

TEAM: AJAX AMSTERDAM

POSITION(S): CM/AM/LW

DATE OF BIRTH: 04/07/1995



Twenty-year-old Daley Sinkgraven is primed to make a big leap this season in his development and Ajax and coach Frank de Boer will be ready to reap the benefits. The young midfielder from SC Heerenveen impressed in his short time spent with Ajax last season. The son of a football coach (Harry Sinkgraven) - and it shows, young Daley has an excellent understanding of the game for such a young player. Before being captured by Ajax, Sinkgraven had made 37 appearances for Heerenveen under Dutch legend Marco van Basten notching four goals but opportunities at the Amsterdam Arena have been sparse so far. While at the Friesland club, he caught the eye of *De Godenzonen* who moved for him in the January transfer window in a monster €7million deal. The playmaker put pen to paper on a five-year commitment and De Boer handed him the number eight shirt. Himself and new club captain Davy Klaassen could form a dynamic duo together; both are very technical players, who are prototypical Ajax midfielders. On his day, Sinkgraven is possibly most assured and reliable dribbler in the league and accompany that with his accurate passing and great vision and he could follow in the footsteps of Wesley Sneijder or Rafael van der Vaart. Once or if Klaassen departs, as it could be only a matter of time, Sinkgraven can be expected to fill his role. Ajax could be his stepping stone to fulfil his dream of playing at the Nou Camp against Barcelona but For the time

Being, the yong playmaker is in a good place in Amsterdam. He has a mentor in Klaassen and the ability to compete in Europe. Sinkgraven has a lot of developing to do, but he could turn into a special player someday and that dream of Barcelona may not seem so out of reach.

*Alex Pieter and Will Burns*

### STRENGTHS

- GREAT TECHNICAL ABILITY
- VERSATILE MIDFIELDER
- TREMENDOUS DRIBBLER
- SUPERB VISION
- ACCURATE PASSING

### WEAKNESSES

- LACKS PHYSICAL STRENGTH
- LACKS COURAGE

# 14

## ALBERT RUSNÁK

TEAM: FC GRONINGEN

POSITION(S): CM

DATE OF BIRTH: 07/07/1994



Plenty of players have been brought into the big English clubs and seen their amount of playing time restricted as a result of the competition at the club. Albert Rusnák was struggling to break into the first team at Manchester City, and needed to move to develop into the player he could be. He was restricted to games in the City development squad, which was useful for a while, but he needed to be playing competitive matches and the Eredivisie was perfect for him as he is a technical player. His performances in the league for both Cambuur and Groningen were impressive and he has already emerged as one of the most exciting players in the league. He is a versatile player, capable of playing a number of positions in the attacking third. He played the majority of matches last season in central midfield, which is where he plays best, but he also featured on either wing a number of times. The Slovak scored ten goals and got seven assists across all competitions for the two Dutch clubs last season. **He claimed god-like status at FC Groningen last May, scoring twice in the 2-0 KNVB Beker final win over PEC Zwolle.** Showcasing all this in his first full season of regular football, it is not surprising it is reported that he is being scouted by several top European clubs. Rusnák is playmaker in the midfield, with several impressive parts to his game. He is an excellent set-piece taker and rarely loses the ball when he is running with it. His low centre of gravity and his close ball control makes him difficult to dispossess. The midfielder is also threatening from distance and has the ability to thread dangerous through balls to create attacks. Albert Rusnák has been linked with a Manchester City

### STRENGTHS

- FREE-KICK SPECIALIST
- EXCELLENT LONG RANGE SHOOTING
- KILLER THROUGH BALLS
- GREAT CLOSE CONTROL

### WEAKNESSES

- POOR MARKING AND TACKLING
- WEAK IN THE AIR

*Jake Jackman*

# 13

## VIKTOR FISCHER

TEAM: AJAX AMSTERDAM

POSITION(S): LW

DATE OF BIRTH: 09/06/1994



Danish left-winger Viktor Fischer has arrived at Ajax's pre-season training camp with a chip on his shoulder. After sustaining an injury last season which limited him severely, Fischer took a step back in his development. Although, he still managed to be included on the roster for this summer's Under-21 European Championships for Denmark. He did manage to find the back of the net in the tournament, but was not spectacular for the Danes. Fischer was once touted as one of Ajax's biggest talents; the left-footed winger has had his moments in Amsterdam, however finding consistency has been his biggest issue. Fischer will battle the talented Ricardo Kishna, assuming he remains with Ajax, for games on the left-wing for the Amsterdammers. Fischer has had his share of attitude problems in the past. Hopefully he has put those issues behind him and is ready to contribute for what looks to be a promising Ajax attack. Fischer had already made 52 appearances for the club, scoring 16 in the process, however he is just 21-years-old. Meanwhile, it is still yet to be seen how Fischer handles his return from injury - he missed a significant amount of time and crucial stage in his development. One of Fischer's strengths is his quickness and burst, if he gains these back in full he should be fine. Before his injury, he was on the radar of big clubs in Italy and England. Fischer will have to

### STRENGTHS

- VERY ATTACKING-MINDED
- COOL AND CALM FINISHER
- CONFIDENT IN FRONT OF GOAL

### WEAKNESSES

- POOR DECISION MAKER
- ATTITUDE PROBLEMS
- SLOW TO REACT WHEN POSSESSION IS LOST

*Alex Pieter*

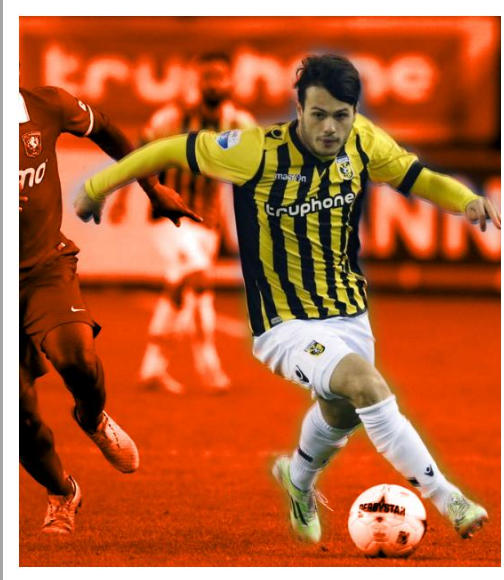
# 12

## VALERI QAZAISHVILI

TEAM: VITESSE ARNHEM

POSITION(S): CM

DATE OF BIRTH: 29/01/1993



Martijn Hilhorst

Valeri Qazaishvili started his career at FC Saburtalo, which is a football academy in his home country Georgia. After some years he finally made his debut in the Umaglesi Liga, Georgia's highest division. Scoring once in nine matches, 'Vako' left the club for Sioni Bolnisi where he only was for six months, because then a little club called Vitesse spotted his talent and took him to the Netherlands. Being two months at the club, Valeri made his debut for the Arnhem side in the away game versus FC Twente in November 2011. Fast forwarding two years, Qazaishvili was named 'Georgian Talent of the Year' and his prize eventually gave him a contract extension at the club. He now has a commitment until the summer of 2018, which puts Vitesse in good position when a club is interested in Vako, but of the looks of it, Valeri won't be leaving his club that soon. This transfer window could prove to be excellent for the Georgian playmaker. His two colleagues in the Vitesse midfield, Marko Vejinovic and Davy Pröpper both left for respectively Feyenoord and PSV and this could pan out perfectly for him. Qazaishvili was arguably the most creative one at Vitesse, but never quite received the compliments for his brilliant way of tearing up a defence with a 'Iniesta-like' pass. It is almost an insult that literally no club seems to rate Valeri highly, while he proved the has the technical abilities of a true playmaker, but he also has a set on lungs needed for a dynamic midfielder. Vako plays in the middle, but with his qualities (dribbling, technique) he could also be a false nine. 'Vako' can't hide anymore. His arguably better colleagues left the club and it's now his time to take control and be the player to watch. He looks a lot like former Heerenveen man Filip Djuricic with his playing

style, but unlike the Serbian, Vako also has some defensive abilities. One way for Vako to gain some exposure is that Vitesse have drawn Ronald Koeman's Southampton in the third qualification round of the Europa League. Let's hope he will manage to gain some new admirers, because his talent may already surpassed those needed for the Eredivisie.

### STRENGTHS

- EXCELLENT PASSING RANGE
- STRONG DRIBBLING SKILLS
- GREAT BALL CONTROL
- GOOD ENERGY AND STAMINA

### WEAKNESSES

- SHORT OF PHYSICAL STRENGTH
- LACKS BRAVERY

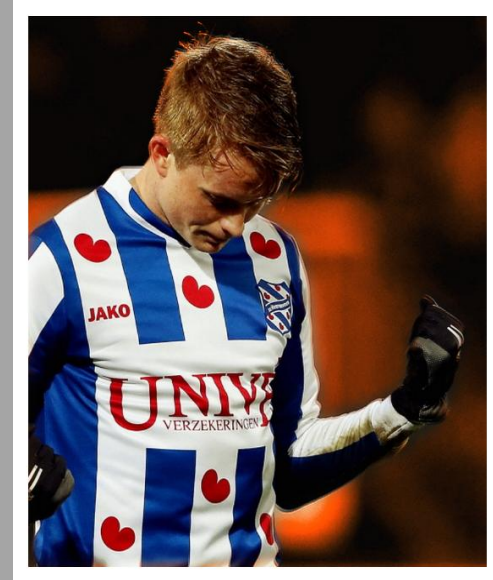
# 11

## SAM LARSSON

TEAM: SC HEERENVEEN

POSITION(S): RW/LW

DATE OF BIRTH: 10/04/1993



Explosive Swedish winger Sam Larsson came on the scene in the Eredivisie last summer and not a lot was known about the youngster from Göteborg. Like always at Heerenveen, they churn the talent out as quick as they buy new soon-to-be-starlets in and after Bilal Başaçıkoğlu up sticks for Feyenoord, head coach Dwight Lodeweges lined up Larsson as his replacement. The Friesian side snapped him for a snip at €1.5million from Allsvenskan side IFK Göteborg and this was met with outrage from their fans and many in the Swedish media, in regards to the low amount that the club received for the winger. After just one season, no-one cannot deny that he possibly is already worth double or treble that amount already. Larsson began his career at the small club of IK Zenith before joining Göteborg in 2010 and even in his teens, pundits were raving about how good of a player Larsson could become. Larsson is primarily a right-footed left-winger that likes to cut inside and torment central defenders, although he has been known in his homeland to be utilised sitting behind the striker. Larsson is still very much developing technically and his finishing and left foot could do with some improvement. However, his pace is frightening and he will run himself into the ground over the 90 minutes and beyond. He is very difficult to tackle as his close control and dribbling technique is mind blowing at times while rapidly giving full-back's sleepiness nights. In a great debut season, Larsson made 25 starts for Heerenveen and contributed with eight goals and four assists. Three of those creations came in Heerenveen's 4-1 home victory over Vitesse where Larsson terrorised the away side's on-loan

right-back Wallace (from Chelsea) so much that the Brazilian was hauled off at half-time by Arnhem coach Peter Bosz. What does the future hold for the young Swede, well sky's the limit. Eredivisie champions PSV were sniffing around him this summer as a replacement for Memphis Depay as they prepare for the UEFA Champions League and he could have fit right at home in Eindhoven. With the skills that Larsson has in his locker, he could end up in one of the big leagues within the next twelve months and giving Heerenveen yet another monster profit off a youngster they have nurtured at the club.

Will Burns

### STRENGTHS

- RAPID PACE
- COMPOSED FINISHING
- TREMENDOUS DRIBBLING
- GREAT STAMINA

### WEAKNESSES

- WEAK PHYSICALLY
- POOR DEFENSIVELY

# 10

# TONNY VILHENA

TEAM: FEYENOORD

POSITION(S): AM

DATE OF BIRTH: 03/01/1995



Tonny Emilio Trindade de Vilhena joined the Feyenoord Academy in 2003 from VDL-Maassluis, making his debut as an 82<sup>nd</sup> minute substitute for the Rotterdammers nine years later in early January 2012 in a 2-1 defeat at VVV Venlo and making six appearances in total that season. Vilhena's first goal for *De Stadionclub* came the following season in the 2-0 away success at AZ Alkmaar in November 2012 and with 31 appearances and a tally of four goals in all competitions in 2012/13, the talented midfielder began to establish himself under coach, Ronald Koeman as Feyenoord finished the campaign in third place, losing out on goal difference to PSV who took the second Champions League qualifying place. However, it was the following season that saw Vilhena, who was, on occasion, deployed centrally as well as in his more accustomed position on the left-hand side of the midfield three, really come to the fore, making 37 appearances in all competitions for the Rotterdam giants and finding the back of the net on six occasions as Feyenoord made a late title surge before eventually finishing four points behind champions, Ajax; securing a vital Champions League qualifying spot by way of consolation.

Expectations were high for Vilhena last season, but with Koeman, having left Rotterdam for pastures new in England with Premier League outfit Southampton, replaced by Fred Rutten coupled with the return of Karim El Ahmadi from Aston Villa, the young midfielder found his role marginalised; appearing 31 times with 12 coming from the bench. Frustrated with life under Rutten and with his contract at De Kuip expiring in the summer of 2016, Vilhena was linked with a move with former coach, Koeman interested in taking him to *The Saints* in January 2015, but a move failed to materialise with Feyenoord rejecting a £3million offer in the winter, leaving the young midfielder to see out the remainder of the season in Rotterdam where in May, Rutten was eventually sacked and subsequently replaced by former assistant, Giovanni van Bronckhorst.

Rumours persist that Koeman will return in the summer transfer window with Vilhena high on his wanted list following the arrival of Feyenoord captain, Jordy Clasie this summer. A member of the successful squad that prevailed in the 2011 Under-17 European Championship as well as the 2012 equivalent for the Netherlands; Vilhena sealed the 2012 crown by scoring the decisive fifth penalty in the final shootout against Germany. Whilst also earning recognition at U15, U16, U17, U19 and U21 level; Vilhena was an unused substitute for the full national team under Louis van Gaal for back-to-back home qualifiers for the 2014 World Cup – a 3-0 victory over Estonia on 23<sup>rd</sup> and a 4-0 thrashing of Romania on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2013 respectively and is yet to make his debut as a full international.

With a contract that runs until June 2016, a frustrating last campaign spent as much on the bench as in the team and rumours of interest, it appears the midfielder's future lies away from De Kuip. How soon that occurs may rest upon how Vilhena fits into the plans of Van Bronckhorst. A move in either the summer or winter transfer window is likely if the Rotterdam club wish to recoup anything from the sale of the talented 20-year-old.

*Steven Davies*

## 2014/15 EREDIVISIE STATS

APPEARANCES	10(11)
MIN PLAYED	1067
GOALS/ASSISTS	0/0
SHOTS PER GAME	1.5
DRIBBLES PER GAME	0.3
PASS ACCURACY	80%
KEY PASSES PER GAME	0.8



ALL STATS PROVIDED BY OPTA

### STRENGTHS

- GREAT BALL CONTROL
- RAPID PACE
- POWERFUL LEFT FOOT
- GREAT ENGINE/STAMINA
- EXPERIENCE (ALREADY OVER 100 GAMES FOR FEYENOORD)

### WEAKNESSES

- WEAK IN THE AIR
- POOR CROSSING

# 9

# ANWAR EL-GHAZI

TEAM: AJAX AMSTERDAM

POSITION(S): RW/LW/ST

DATE OF BIRTH: 03/05/1995



Anwar El-Ghazi is one of Ajax's most intriguing prospects heading into the 2015-2016 season, the 20-year-old winger, who has also been used as a striker, was born and raised in Barendrecht. He began his career at local side BVV Barendrecht before moving onto Feyenoord at age 11. From there he spent two years in Rotterdam, then packed his bags for a spell at Spartaan '20 before joining Sparta Rotterdam. From there, the Amsterdam scouts spotted him and took him to Ajax by El-Ghazi was eighteen in 2013.

Having dual citizenship, El-Ghazi is eligible to represent both the Netherlands as well as Morocco on senior level. He is yet to declare which nationality he wishes to represent at full international level but he made his bow for the Netherlands Under-17 side in a friendly in 2011. He has then gone onto to play for the Under-18 and Under-21 levels for the Oranje. For the Amsterdammers, he made his debut in the 2014 Johan Crujff Schaal against PEC Zwolle, coming on for Ricardo Kishna in a disappointing 1-0 loss in front of the Amsterdam Arena faithful.

El-Ghazi has great pace and footwork for a player of his stature standing at 6 foot 2 inches. He can beat players with his strength and physicality or run by them with his speed. He is also not afraid to shoot from distance, though this is an area of his game that must improve. El-Ghazi will primarily be used on the right-wing this coming season although he can play on either. The left-wing position will likely be shared by Viktor Fischer and Ricardo Kishna while El-Ghazi and Lasse Schöne will handle duties on the right side. Up to now, El-Ghazi has made 31 appearances for Ajax in all competitions and bursting on the scene, last campaign, he provided eight assists and scored all nine goals of his career so far. **No other Ajax player was involved in more goals last season.** This pre-season, El-Ghazi has looked good, netting a goal against Greek giants Panathinaikos in a recent friendly, while playing in the striker position in the number nine shirt.

In a well-publicised event, the Dutch media focused when El-Ghazi met Cristiano Ronaldo in the off-season. Very ambitious, like most young Ajax talents, he has his mind set on club on the level of the Galácticos of Real Madrid. El-Ghazi has the potential to make it, he is an extremely talented and driven player, but he is still a raw talent that must be nurtured in Amsterdam and would be best served staying at least two more years in Amsterdam.

*Alex Pieter and Will Burns*

## 2014/15 EREDIVISIE STATS

APPEARANCES	23(8)
MIN PLAYED	2172
GOALS/ASSISTS	9/8
SHOTS PER GAME	2.3
DRIBBLES PER GAME	1.9
PASS ACCURACY	76.7%
KEY PASSES PER GAME	1.1



ALL STATS PROVIDED BY OPTA

### STRENGTHS

- COMPOSED FINISHING
- GREAT CLOSE CONTROL
- STRONG ON THE BALL
- RAPID PACE
- UNPREDICTABLE DRIBBLING

### WEAKNESSES

- POOR LONG RANGE SHOOTING
- LACK OF DEFENSIVE CONTRIBUTION
- CREATES UNNECESSARY FOULS

# 8

# JEAN-PAUL BOËTIUS

**TEAM:** FEYENOORD  
**POSITION(S):** RW/LW  
**DATE OF BIRTH:** 22/03/1994



Jean-Paul Boëtius was signed by Feyenoord from the youth ranks of HOV/DJSCR, before progressing through the grades in Rotterdam and being handed his first team debut at the age of 18 by coach, Ronald Koeman in De Klassieker against Ajax on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2012 at De Kuip. Boëtius, the cousin of Dutch international, Urby Emanuelson, announced his arrival in the first team with an equalising first-half strike after Christian Eriksen had given Feyenoord's great rivals the lead in a match that eventually finished 2-2.

The pacey left winger, who is also adept at using both feet, quickly established himself as a regular under Koeman; making 22 appearances in all competitions in 2012/13 and hitting the back of the net on four occasions as Feyenoord finished in a frustrating third place in the Eredivisie standings with only goal difference separating the Rotterdam giants from the lucrative Champions League football. The following campaign was Boëtius' most productive to date in a Feyenoord shirt; with the young winger, who lists former Bayern Munich, Feyenoord and Netherlands goal-machine, Roy Makaay as his boyhood idol, playing 32 games and scoring 11 goals whilst being ranked third in assists amongst players in the Eredivisie, as *De Stadionclub* pushed eventual champions Ajax all the way, finishing just four points off the summit but consoling themselves with a second place finish and the opportunity to qualify for the group stages of Champions League.

It was expected that 2014/15 would see the winger continue to shine as one of the Eredivisie's brightest talents. However, with Ronald Koeman, having left De Kuip for pastures new with Southampton in the English Premier League, being replaced in the Feyenoord hot seat by Fred Rutten, Boëtius, despite featuring in more games, found both form and goals in short supply; making 42 appearances in all competitions (14 as a substitute), netting on five occasions and, most tellingly, being taken off 18 times during the course of the campaign. Dissatisfied with his diminishing role at De Kuip and with his contract due to expire in the summer of 2016, Boëtius became the subject of intense transfer speculation prior to the appointment of Giovanni van Bronckhorst as Feyenoord coach following the sacking of Rutten in May which in turn prompted talk of a possible contract extension.

A part of the successful Oranje squad that triumphed at the U17 European Championship in 2011; Boëtius also received recognition at U19 and U21 level before making his full international debut against France in a friendly. Despite being selected as part of the preliminary Dutch squad in preparation for the 2014 World Cup, he was eventually omitted by Bondscoach, Louis van Gaal.

After a disappointing last campaign, Boëtius will be looking to recapture his scintillating best with much resting on how his undoubted talents are utilised by new Feyenoord coach, Giovanni van Bronckhorst.

*Steven Davies*

## 2014/15 EREDIVISIE STATS

<b>APPEARANCES</b>	<b>22(11)</b>
<b>MIN PLAYED</b>	<b>1932</b>
<b>GOALS/ASSISTS</b>	<b>4/3</b>
<b>SHOTS PER GAME</b>	<b>1.4</b>
<b>DRIBBLES PER GAME</b>	<b>0.9</b>
<b>PASS ACCURACY</b>	<b>80.2%</b>
<b>KEY PASSES PER GAME</b>	<b>1.2</b>

ALL STATS PROVIDED BY OPTA

## STRENGTHS

- RAPID PACE
- NO FEAR DRIBBLING
- GREAT AT READING THE PLAY
- COMPOSED TEMPERMENT
- GREAT SKILL WITH BOTH FEET

## WEAKNESSES

- LACKS PHYSICAL STRENGTH
- POOR CROSSING AND DELIVERY

# 7

# DAVY KLAASSEN

TEAM: AJAX AMSTERDAM

POSITION(S): AM

DATE OF BIRTH: 21/02/1993



Davy Klaassen came up through the Ajax youth system after arriving in Amsterdam in 2004. Expectations are high for the 22-year-old from Hilversum and for the forthcoming campaign, he has been trusted with the captain's armband by manager Frank de Boer for the 2015/16 season, which shows the confidence that the staff have in him. He will wear the number ten shirt for Ajax and will be expected to be a facilitator and creator in the midfield. **He already has three Dutch championship medals** along with a Johan Cruyff Schaal and on the verge of starting his fifth season in Ajax's first-team squad.

Klaassen is a true professional and is more mature than he age indicates and he is likely to be flanked by youngster Daley Sinkgraven, who joined from Heerenveen in last winter's transfer window. Klaassen will be tasked with mentoring the young attacking midfielder, who may eventually replace him. Although, the two have looked promising working together this pre-season and could join as one of the best midfield partnerships in years at the Arena.

Ajax struggled to score goals during stretches last year and often times the strikers were blamed, and rightfully so, but the midfield also shared fault. Too often was the midfield stagnant and lacking creativity. De Boer and co are hoping with the addition of Nemanja Gudelj from AZ Alkmaar and a year of added experience for youngsters Daley Sinkgraven and Riechedly Bazoer that the midfield will become more dynamic, create more chances for the attackers and Klaassen will be expected to be the vocal point of the midfield to guide them through the season.

Additionally, Klaassen already has two appearances for the national team, but a strong season could propel him into a regular squad player for the Oranje. With Wesley Sneijder and Rafael van der Vaart aging there are midfield spots open for the taking.

Klaassen is currently under contract until the summer of 2018 and a strong season could see him on his way out after this term. There is also a chance he could depart during the winter window if Ajax does not progress in Europe and if a bigger club is willing to pay a hefty transfer fee.

Ultimately, Klaassen will likely follow in the footsteps of his Eredivisie contemporaries, Georginio Wijnaldum and Jordy Clasie, and make a move to a mid-table English team, or a club of similar caliber. Klaassen has the potential to play for a club that is a Champions League competitor if he continues to progress, but he is unlikely to make such a move directly from Ajax anytime soon.

Alex Pieter



## 2014/15 EREDIVISIE STATS

<b>APPEARANCES</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>MIN PLAYED</b>	<b>2587</b>
<b>GOALS/ASSISTS</b>	<b>6/9</b>
<b>SHOTS PER GAME</b>	<b>1.4</b>
<b>DRIBBLES PER GAME</b>	<b>0.4</b>
<b>PASS ACCURACY</b>	<b>82.3%</b>
<b>KEY PASSES PER GAME</b>	<b>1.4</b>

ALL STATS PROVIDED BY OPTA

## STRENGTHS

- GREAT LEADERSHIP SKILLS
- STRONG AWARENESS AND VISION
- HARD-WORKING
- KILLER THROUGH BALLS

## WEAKNESSES

- LACKS PACE
- WEAK IN AERIAL DUELS



# 6

# RIECHEDLY BAZOER

**TEAM:** AJAX AMSTERDAM

**POSITION(S):** DM/CM

**DATE OF BIRTH:** 12/10/1996



Bazoer started playing football at his local club Elinkwijk, a club who shaped several professional players such as Ibrahim Afellay, Zakaria Labyad and name you may have heard of... Marco van Basten. Bazoer played until 2006 for Elinkwijk before PSV signed the promising youngster. The Eindhoven outfit wanted to immediately give him a professional contract at the age of 16, but Bazoer was hesitant hearing that both Ajax and Manchester City were keen to sign the defensive midfielder. He then signed with Ajax in November 2012, which made PSV furious and latter accused Ajax of working behind their back with the *Godenzonen* countered by stating it was Bazoer's choice to switch teams. Ajax only had to pay €75.000 for the youngster (€12.5k per year). The only downside was that Riechedly could not play that season (2012-13), because amateur players (which he then officially was) could not be registered for the remainder of the season.

Fast forwarding until he was eligible to play football: in August 2013, Bazoer debuted playing for Jong Ajax against Telstar in Eerste Divisie. Riechedly was not playing that well, being dragged around position. Playing as centre-back, defensive midfielder and attacking midfielder, Bazoer wasn't comfortable with this situation. However, Frank de Boer saw his potential and selected him for a tour in Indonesia where Ajax played two friendlies versus Persija Jakarta and Persib Bandung. This apparently gave Bazoer the much needed boost and he competed in the Jupiler League again, but he was more convincing and grown up than before. De Boer spotted his development and gave him his debut in the first team of Ajax in the KNVB Beker match in October 2014 versus SDC Putten. Not even a month later, Bazoer scored his first professional goal against - newly-promoted side - N.E.C. Nijmegen in the Eerste Divisie.

His development at the club was sky-rocketing, which resulted in his Eredivisie debut two month later against Willem II (a 5-0 Ajax victory). It was immediately clear that Bazoer bring something to the table the Amsterdammers was missing, because since his debut he mostly played for the Ajax's first-team. His first goal came in February 2015 in the home game against cash-strapped FC Twente scoring the 2-1 and Riechedly even managed to score against Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk in the Round of 16 Europa League tie, Dnipro later on became runner-ups of the tournament, losing the final against Sevilla.

Being a technical-gifted, powerful midfielder, Bazoer's qualities are fairly simple to describe: Yaya Touré. Of course, not on his level yet, but he does showed similarities with the Ivorian midfielder. One downside to having such a young player is his consistency. Bazoer have excelled this season, but he also had matches where he was completely invisible. A logical next step is his debut for the Oranje, but this has not happened yet, but Bazoer represented every Dutch national squad since U15, so it's just a matter of time. One of the biggest advantages for 'RB' is his age. He is just 18-years-old, only Steven Bergwijn (number 48) is younger in our 'Top 50'. If Bazoer can manage to keep this steady development, he will be a regular in the national squad. Being compared to Toure already, Bazoer has some pressure on his shoulders, but the comparison is justified. We expect that it will not take long before Europe's top clubs are eyeing this magnificent midfielder.

*Martijn Hilhorst*

## 2014/15 EREDIVISIE STATS

<b>APPEARANCES</b>	<b>14(3)</b>
<b>MIN PLAYED</b>	<b>1215</b>
<b>GOALS/ASSISTS</b>	<b>1/0</b>
<b>SHOTS PER GAME</b>	<b>1.5</b>
<b>DRIBBLES PER GAME</b>	<b>1.3</b>
<b>PASS ACCURACY</b>	<b>86.2%</b>
<b>KEY PASSES PER GAME</b>	<b>0.3</b>



**ALL STATS PROVIDED BY OPTA**

## STRENGTHS

- GREAT VISION
- MIDFIELD POWERHOUSE
- COMPOSED PERSONALITY
- EXCELLENT TECHINQUE

## WEAKNESSES

- LACKS CONSISTENCY

# 5

# JESUS MANUEL CORONA

**TEAM:** FC TWENTE  
**POSITION(S):** LW  
**DATE OF BIRTH:** 06/01/1993



Jesus Manuel Corona is a 22-year-old, 5ft 8inch winger nicknamed "El Tecatito", who replaced the outgoing Nacer Chadli (left for Tottenham Hotspur) at FC Twente in August 2013, on a free transfer from Liga MX side Monterrey after rejecting a new contract from the Mexican club. The winger suffered a frustrating time in his homeland with Monterrey and was unable to force himself into the starting line-up in a team packed with experienced internationals.

However, Corona's opportunity did arrive during the 2012 Club World Championships, where Monterrey came away with up a respectable third position. Coach Victor Manuel Vucetich's decision proved to be a great one as Corona notched two goals in four appearances and was rightly named Man-of-the-Match in a semi-final defeat to Chelsea. Corona showed in the tournament that he is perfect example of a speedy winger with a tremendous dribbling ability to torment full-backs down either flank.

Which the defenders of Eredivisie have come to learn over the last twelve months when "El Tecatito" has been his most impressive. After spending some time for Jong Twente in the Eerste Divisie, last year, the Mexican started 29 Eredivisie games and notched nine goals and created four assists. The consistency of Corona at Twente, has enhanced his skills vastly. Speed and dribbling has already been mentioned, but his first touch has come on leaps and bounds while in Enschede. **The winger completed the most dribbles in the Eredivisie last season (95) before Memphis Depay (80) and Adnane Tighadouini (73).** The light touches he can perform allows him to shoot from outside the area or distribute the ball to his teammates if he decides they are in a better position. Corona's talent is undeniable and he's becoming the complete winger with the ability to slot in up front with his calm finishing.

This past summer, Corona has represented his country in two major tournaments, Copa America and the CONCACAF Gold Cup. He was the only player to be selected for both tournaments by Mexico's head coach Miguel "Piojo" Herrera - which shows the faith the national manager has in him. In an warm-up friendly in June, Mexico fell 2-0 to Brazil and Corona was hailed as the only player that threatened the Selecao. Dribbling with no inhibition and appeared likely to write his name on the score sheet. However, Brazil became aware and Corona had a quieter second half when the Brazilians double-teamed him on a few occasions.

Although Corona signed a four year deal at the Enschede club, he will probably most not see that contract out. With FC Twente in financial trouble, the club have tried to offload one of their prized assets to no avail. Eredivisie champions PSV considered Corona as an option to replace the outgoing Memphis Depay, however, the Mexican's wages put PSV sporting director Marcel Brands off any deal for the winger. So Twente await an offer from some of the clubs from Europe's big leagues who may get Corona at a cut-price deal due to Twente's desperate financial state. If this is the case, the vultures will be ready to pounce to steal the player away from the Eredivisie.

*Will Burns*

## 2014/15 EREDIVISIE STATS

APPEARANCES	27
MIN PLAYED	2309
GOALS/ASSISTS	9/4
SHOTS PER GAME	2
DRIBBLES PER GAME	3.5
PASS ACCURACY	77.1%
KEY PASSES PER GAME	1.3



ALL STATS PROVIDED BY OPTA

### STRENGTHS

- ELECTRIFYING SKILFUL FEET
- GREAT FIRST TOUCH
- NO FEAR DRIBBLING
- COMPOSED FINISHING
- RAPID PACE
- WINNING MENTALITY

### WEAKNESSES

- SMALL WEAK STATURE
- FAILS TO TRACK BACK OFTEN
- CAN BE SELFISH

# 4

# SVEN VAN BEEK

TEAM: FEYENOORD

POSITION(S): CB

DATE OF BIRTH: 28/07/1994



The Gouda-born Sven van Beek was a product of the Feyenoord Academy which he joined in 2005 after spells with SV Donk and Sparta Rotterdam, before rising through the grades being transformed from a striker to a defender in the process. Van Beek went on to make his first team debut in January 2013 against PSV in the KNVB Beker in a 2-1 defeat at the Philips Stadion.

After being named as an unused substitute the previous weekend, Van Beek was named on the bench several more times in 2012/13 but the towering defender had to bide his time for his league debut which finally arrived on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2013 in the fierce De Klassieker against arch rivals Ajax at the Amsterdam ArenA which hosts won 2-1. Fifteen more appearances followed for the young defender, who was also named on the bench 29 times over the course of the 2013/14 campaign.

He became one of the main beneficiaries of the defensive exodus from De Kuip that followed the success of Louis van Gaal's Netherlands side at the 2014 FIFA World Cup. Van Beek relished the opportunity to step into the positions vacated by the departures of Stefan de Vrij to Lazio, Bruno Martins Indi to FC Porto and Daryl Janmaat to Newcastle United. With new Feyenoord coach, Fred Rutten putting his faith in the impressive central defensive tandem of Van Beek and Terence Kongolo over the likes of veteran Dutch national team member, Khalid Boulahrouz and old warhorse, Joris Mathijsen, Van Beek went on to make 44 appearances for *De Stadionclub* in all competitions. The big defender even weighed in with two goals over the course of the 2014/15 season; the first, which was also the first of his professional career, came in a 2-1 UEFA Europa League victory over Standard Liege at De Kuip in October 2014. His second, and his first league goal for the Rotterdam giants came just under a month later on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2014 in a 2-0 victory at home to PEC Zwolle.

Having solidified his place at the heart of the Feyenoord rear-guard, the 20-year-old has also received recognition on the international stage, being capped at both U19 and U21 level for the Netherlands. He will be the rock on which to build for new Feyenoord coach, Giovanni van Bronckhorst who succeeded the sacked Rutten in the hot seat at De Kuip in May this year as Feyenoord's promising season ultimately fizzled out with a fourth place finish meaning the club entered and subsequently crashed out of the Europa League playoffs at the hands of SC Heerenveen 3-2 on aggregate over two legs.

Contracted to Feyenoord until June 2018 and a mainstay at the heart of the Feyenoord backline, Sven van Beek has all the attributes required to follow in the footsteps of predecessors, De Vrij and Martins Indi, who, having progressed through the youth system in Rotterdam, established themselves in the first team and the international set-up before making lucrative moves abroad. However, with Van Beek known to interest both Tottenham Hotspur and former coach, Ronald Koeman's, Southampton, the Rotterdam giants may have a fight on their hands to hang on to the impressive 20-year-old in the coming months.

*Steven Davies*

## 2014/15 EREDIVISIE STATS

APPEARANCES	33
MIN PLAYED	2956
GOALS/ASSISTS	1/1
TACKLES PER GAME	2.1
INTERCEPTIONS PER GAME	2.0
PASS ACCURACY	87.7%
KEY PASSES PER GAME	0.3



ALL STATS PROVIDED BY OPTA

### STRENGTHS

- EXCELLENT IN THE AIR
- PHYSICALLY STRONG
- GOOD COMPOSURE ON THE BALL
- AGGRESSIVE TACKLER
- GREAT PASSING RANGE

### WEAKNESSES

- POOR CONCENTRATION
- MEDIOCRE PACE

# 3

# TERENCE KONGOLO

TEAM: FEYENOORD

POSITION(S): CB/LB

DATE OF BIRTH: 14/02/1994



After joining Feyenoord's highly-rated Varkenoord academy when 15, Terence Kongolo worked his way up the ranks and waited patiently until Ronald Koeman handed the Swiss-born defender his first team debut in 2012. Capable of playing both at left-back and in the centre of defence, Kongolo was a great substitute for Koeman's disposal and it was until the 2013/14 season where young Terence surged into the limelight.

Kongolo held down a place as a left wing-back and impressed then-Oranje coach Louis van Gaal so much, he became a surprise inclusion in the World Cup 2014 squad, getting the nod over the more experience duo of Karim Rekik and Patrick van Aanholt. He went on to make one appearance on the left in a 3-5-2 formation and became one of five Feyenoord players that played in the 2-0 win over Chile.

After Feyenoord sold central defensive pairing Bruno Martins Indi and Stefan de Vrij in the summer of that year, Kongolo signed a new deal with the club knowing that this was his chance to make an impact. He succeeded however it was a difficult season at De Kuip for head coach Fred Rutten. Rutten started the defender 39 times in league and cup and Kongolo did not disappoint and even though the side finished a poor fourth, the youngster was the bright spark within a dark, dull season.

Known for his strong in the tackle approach, **the most impressive stat last season for Kongolo was the minimal amount of fouls conceded, he was averaging just 0.9 fouls per game.** Standing at just above six foot, he has an imposing physique with great agility which are tremendous characteristics for a centre-back. His solid technique on the ball with tremendous pace are excellent attributes for a left-back. He holds great intelligence with concentration and decision making is no problem for Kongolo, whether he decides to clear the ball after incepting the ball or choose to pass to a team-mate, he seems to make the right choice often. Last season in the Eredivisie, he nailed a 87.3% pass success rate and averaged 6.5 clearances per outing.

He has created a great central defensive partnership with Sven van Beek (*number four in the Total Dutch Football Top 50*) and if Feyenoord can deter any interest for the pair, the Rotterdammers could be set to challenge Ajax and PSV for a top two spot.

Hard-working with a winning mentality, when it comes to central defenders in Holland, it hard pressed to find a better prospect than Kongolo. Surely Feyenoord have a fight on their hands to hold this emerging talent at De Kuip any longer. His younger brother Rodney is learning his trade at Manchester City, could this be possible link up? Former manager Ronald Koeman is now in charge at Southampton and after taking Jordy Clasie and Graziano Pelle to the St. Marys Stadium, perhaps Kongolo could be the next to move to the South Coast of England?

However, Kongolo while in Rotterdam could further improve with former left-back Giovanni van Bronckhorst taking the reins at Feyenoord. Whatever the future holds for Kongolo, it certainly appears to be a good one.

Will Burns

## 2014/15 EREDIVISIE STATS

APPEARANCES	32 (1)
MIN PLAYED	2894
GOALS/ASSISTS	0/1
TACKLES PER GAME	2.1
INTERCEPTIONS PER GAME	2.4
PASS ACCURACY	87.3%
KEY PASSES PER GAME	0.3



ALL STATS PROVIDED BY OPTA

## STRENGTHS

- TALL, INTIMIDATING PHYSIQUE
- VERSATILITY
- STRONG BUT FAIR TACKLING
- RAPID PACE
- VERY AGILE
- HARD-WORKING
- GREAT INTELLIGENCE

## WEAKNESSES

- LACK OF EUROPEAN/INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

# 2

## HAKIM ZIYECH

**TEAM:** FC TWENTE  
**POSITION(S):** AM  
**DATE OF BIRTH:** 19/03/1993



Hakim Ziyech is one of the most exciting talents in the Eredivisie and he has shown that since breaking through at Heerenveen. After the departure of Memphis Depay from the league, Ziyech has the potential to step up and become the star of the league. FC Twente are in a difficult financial situation, but they will try to resist any interest in Ziyech as he could be the key to getting them back up the table and into Europe.

Last season was a significant one for Ziyech as he moved from Heerenveen to FC Twente and his form continued to improve. The 22-year-old showed his skill and consistency throughout his first campaign with FC Twente and he will be keen to build on that over the following years.


His impact in the final third was very impressive last season as he managed to score 11 goals and get 16 assists. In the league, there weren't many players who bettered Ziyech's impact and at the age of 22, he will only improve. During the 2014/15 campaign, he had a goal involvement per minute of 100.9, which is excellent for someone his age in a major league. FC Twente were a poor side during the season and for Ziyech to have the figures he did is doubly impressive.

Nobody created more goals than Hakim Ziyech last season, and his game is heavily reliant on creating opportunities for his team mates. He is an attacking midfielder who can play in the middle of the park, or further forward behind a striker. In addition, he can play on the flanks, but he is more effective when played in a central position as it allows him to roam and find pockets of space in the final third. When used on the wing, he can get lost and his game becomes far less effective.

Ziyech has an excellent set piece delivery, while he can score from free kicks, which is a key part to his game. His long shots are often dangerous and that gives him another string to his game as defenders don't want to back off, due to his ability to score from distance, but if he gets closed down, he has the quality to beat the defender and play a through ball into the open space. He is dangerous when he is running with the ball as he has the skill to glide past defenders and he is difficult to dispossess when he has possession. There aren't many weaknesses to his game, but he struggles defensively especially in the tackle, which is why he wouldn't be a good central midfielder in a more demanding league.

Ziyech has been linked with a move away this summer, which isn't surprising considering his form over the last 12 months and the obvious potential that he possesses. Wolfsburg were the latest club linked with a move for the Dutchman which could be something that gathers pace if Kevin de Bruyne leaves the German club. Otherwise FC Twente will want to keep hold of their playmaker who could use another year in the Eredivisie to finally make his international debut.

*Jake Jackman*



### 2014/15 EREDIVISIE STATS

APPEARANCES	31
MIN PLAYED	2723
GOALS/ASSISTS	11/16
SHOTS PER GAME	3.6
DRIBBLES PER GAME	1.5
PASS ACCURACY	73.1%
KEY PASSES PER GAME	2.7

ALL STATS PROVIDED BY OPTA

### STRENGTHS

- EXCELLENT SET PIECE TAKER
- VERSATILITY
- GREAT CREATIVITY AND VISION
- CLEVER CLOSE CONTROL
- LONG RANGE SHOOTING

### WEAKNESSES

- PHYSICALLY WEAK

# 1

# JETRO WILLEMS

**TEAM:** PSV EINDHOVEN

**POSITION(S):** LB

**DATE OF BIRTH:** 30/03/1994



When Erik Pieters, the Oranje's first choice left-back, was ruled out of Euro 2012 with a foot injury, his PSV teammate, Jetro Willems took his spot in the starting line-up, at the age of just 18. He became the youngest ever player to play in a European Championship and although it was a poor tournament for the Dutch, and every player struggled, Willems' youth and inexperience showed, particularly in the second group game against arch-rivals Germany, where he hugely looked out of place. An experience like this would have dented many a young player's confidence, but he did not allow it to affect him in the long term, and secured a starting spot in the PSV team whilst Pieters was out injured.

Willems followed Kevin Strootman to the Eindhoven side from Sparta Rotterdam in August 2011 and that season, aged 17 he made his initial breakthrough, making 20 appearances. He impressed and held his starting place for the 2012/13 season, appearing 36 times and getting six assists, impressing in the Europa League in particular. He continued to improve throughout 2013/14, playing 38 times in all competitions, scoring four and creating five assists, as he started to gain interest from major European clubs.

After originally being shunned by Louis Van Gaal, Willems changed Van Gaal's mind and broke through the provisional 2014 World Cup squad but, injury prevented him from being able to travel to Brazil for the World Cup. Despite this personal setback, last season proved to be Willems' best to date, as he was key in PSV finally winning the Eredivisie again.

His excellent link up with Memphis Depay on the left came to be crucial and prominent in creating chances and goals, as they had an almost telepathic connection throughout the season. Another trademark move for PSV involving him was his excellent service for Luuk De Jong, as he got 16 assists (13 in Eredivisie) throughout the season, with a large amount of them being crosses for De Jong to finish. He has always been an attacking-minded full back, but last season he showed that more than ever, constantly making overlapping runs and getting forward whenever possible in a very attacking PSV set-up.

For the first time since Euro 2012, Willems is also now the first choice left-back for the Oranje and continues to link up excellently with Depay at international level as shown by their performances against Spain and Latvia in recent times. The defender has been linked with major European clubs such as Manchester City and Real Madrid for the past few years, and if he continues to develop as well as he has been, there is no reason why he cannot succeed at those type of clubs.

In the short term, he will most likely stay at PSV for the 2015/16 season to develop his game further at a club where he is seen as a key player, and consolidate his place in the Dutch squad in the build up to Euro 2016, where he will be ready to perform far better than he did as a raw 18-year-old four years earlier.

*Fin Crebolder*

## 2014/15 EREDIVISIE STATS

APPEARANCES	30
MIN PLAYED	2455
GOALS/ASSISTS	2/13
TACKLES PER GAME	1.6
INTERCEPTIONS PER GAME	2.3
PASS ACCURACY	78.5%
KEY PASSES PER GAME	2.5



ALL STATS PROVIDED BY OPTA

### STRENGTHS

- LOVES TO GET FORWARD
- ACCURATE CROSSING
- GREAT LINK-UP PLAY WITH ATTACK
- PHYSICALLY STRONG
- STRONG AWARENESS

### WEAKNESSES

- DEFENSIVE POSITIONING
- POOR IN THE AIR

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