
2004

Bert went to a basketball game in December 2004: *Dexia Namur (BEL) vs VBM-SGAU Samara (RUS)* in the Qualifying Round of the FIBA Euroleague.

Ann Wauters did not miss her comeback on Thursday Dec. 2nd. In her first game with the Russian side of *VBM-SGAU Samara*, the Belgian player was a key actor in the 66-77 victory of her team against *Lotos VBW Gdynia* of Poland. **Wauters** played during 24 minutes, scored 10 points, grabbed 9 rebounds and dished 1 assist. In July, when she left French team *US Valenciennes* to *VBM-SGAU Samara*, **Wauters** had a foot stress fracture. After three and a half months of rehab, **Wauters** was finally back on court and already had excellent stats indeed.

One week later, 3500 spectators saw **Wauters** enter the *Spiroidome Arena* in Charleroi, Belgium. The *Volgaburmash Samara* players had a very hard time against Belgian team *Dexia Namur* in the first half, but they managed to take the lead early in the third quarter. A lead they never gave away afterwards, although the Russian team won the game with the smallest margin (final result: 67-68). **Ann's** game stats were as follows: 27 minutes on court, 2/6 from two-point range (33%), 2/4 from the free-throw line (50%), 11 rebounds (7 defensive, 4 offensive), 1 personal foul, 4 turnovers, 1 block-shot, 6 points. **Wauters** was the leading rebounder for *VBM-SGAU Samara*.

In front of a nice crowd including some members of the neighbouring French team *US Valenciennes*, *Dexia Namur* lost the game against *Euroleague* favourites of *VBM-SGAU Samara* by only one single point on Dec. 9th. On the *Dexia* side, Polish NT player **Elzbieta Miedzik** finished the match with 16 points and US pro player **Nakia Sanford** was the best rebounder of the game with 13 boards. *Dexia* Polish playmaker **Lara-Szymanska** lost a few very important balls at the beginning of the match, but the Russian team also missed a few good opportunities to score. Thanks to **Anna Wielebnowska's** performance, *Dexia Namur* was leading 21-15 in the first quarter. At the beginning of the 2nd quarter *Dexia's* very aggressive defense managed to dig a gap of 10 points. The *Dexia* girls were able to hold on to their advantage thanks to *WNBA* player **Sanford's** input (29-21 in the 15th minute). Unfortunately, the Belgian team was not able to keep this gap. The game was very tight and *Dexia Namur's* defense took many rebounds (second US player **Rebekkah Brunson** was very present at the rebound) even though they lost 14 balls. *VBM-SGAU Samara* then started to take the advantage of strength and experience. The game was still tight, but the Russians had more open shots and thanks to that, they took a small lead. Third quarter was rather disappointing for the local team (*Dexia* lost the quarter 8-20 indeed). The end of the game was mainly disputed around free throws. Disappointing French guard of **Edwige Lawson** of *Volgaburmash* was fouled out with five minutes to go. Unfortunately, it was not enough for the hometeam to catch up and take the win. **Allison Feaster**, American *WNBA* player also involved in the *Euroleague* with *US Valenciennes*, who was sitting just behind *VBM-SGAU's* bench could congratulate her former teammates **Lawson** and **Wauters** for their fifth success in a row in this competition.

VBM-SGAU's **Sheryl Swoopes** and **Maria Stepanova** were brilliant. They are a nice combination. **Swoopes** did not play much but was decisive at the end of the game. She was followed by her own Russian-English interpreter, a young lady who translates every word of the *VBM-SGAU Samara* coach to **Swoopes** (even just before a substitution). Amazing! Special mention also for **Tatiana Shchegoleva** (7/8 from the free-throw line), **Olga Naymushina** (2/3 from three-point range) and **Ilona Korstine** (4 assists) on the Russian side.

Bert went to a basketball game in October 2004: *CEP Fleurus (+ 25, Div. 4) vs Union Huy (Div. 1)* in Belgian Cup 1/16 Final.

Waw! THIS GAME IS FAN-TAS-TIC!!! 18 years after *CEP Fleurus* had hosted a Division 1 team at home, a fantastic game took place in the club's facilities on October 6th, 2004. Last Division 1 opponent of *CEP Fleurus* in the small gym of *Bonsecours* had been *Cuva Houthalen* indeed. It was in 1986... This time, the local team was hosting *Union Huy* with such great players as British player **Mark Hawley** (198 cm, born in 1974), Nigerian center **Muhammed Lasege** (211 cm, coming from *Louisville Eagles College*), former *Belgian Lions* **Erik Cleymans** (age 34, ex-*Spirou Charleroi*, *Evreux*, *BC Liège*, etc.) and **Butch Tshomba** (ex-*Wurzburg*, *Leuven*, etc.), US duo **Kris Hill** (coming from *Sallen*

Basket in Sweden -- see picture)-**Brian Heinle** (ex-*BC Liège* and *Power Wevelgem*) as well as future Belgian stars **Julien Rahier** and **Lionel Bosco**.

CEP Fleurus is an amateur team. Local players started this Belgian Cup 1/16 Final game very well. They took good notice of the 25 bonus points they were offered at the start (5 points per division and 5 extra points per non-Bosman player under Belgian Cup rules). A good crowd of many "old" supporters had made a short trip to the gym to cheer on local players **Zaki Ayyoub**, **Fabien Muylaert**, **David Mukeba**, **Christophe Batardy**, **Arnaud Dimbala**, **Sam Semijebero** and **Romane Sculier**.

Although young talent **Veron Tabu** (former guard of *Union Mons Hainaut*,) was missing because of foot injury for *Union Huy*, the players of head coach **Christian Lemaire** had to fill in a gap of 25 points as quick as possible to get a chance to qualify for the next round. The *Union Huy* players were aware that *CEP Fleurus* has great ambitions this season. US duo **Hill-Heinle** had some trouble inside at the beginning of the game. *CEP* took the lead: 37-8 when **Lemaire** took a first time-out for *Huy*. **Ayyoub** and **Semijebero** had been very productive in fast-break for *CEP*. Mainly thanks to Belgian veteran **Kalut** and big three-pointers by **Cleymans** and other teammates, *Union Huy* came back into the game just after this time-out: 39-23. But suddenly, the visitors tried to play inside with **Heinle** and **Hill** but missed many shots again. The visiting team's defense was not perfect either and *CEP Fleurus* reached half-time with a rather large lead: 53-32. **Ayyoub** had already scored 12 points and **Semijebero** 11 points in the first half attended by a very hot, excited and enjoying home crowd. Most supporters were just remembering the good old days when the local club had played in *FIBA's Korac Cup* against such big teams as *Real Madrid*, *Banco di Roma*, *Jugoplastika Split*, *Izmir*, *Hapoel Tel Aviv*, *Vasas Budapest*, etc.

Action was at its best in the third quarter as **Heinle** seemed to be back on court to put *Union Huy* on the right track. But **Ayyoub** continued to play well and suddenly **Fabien Muylaert** hit some three-pointers for the home team. It was 59-43 after 27 minutes. Young forward **Rahier** of *Union Huy* also played better before leaving the court because of injury. End of the third quarter, *CEP* was still leading by 16: 64-48. In the fourth, the local team still reached a 20-points lead mainly thanks to **Muylaert** joined by veterans **Batardy** and **Sculier**. The team of coach **Pat Verdun** did very well and finally won under the score of 93-77 as the home crowd was singing and cheering like it had done it some 18 years earlier. Playmaker **Ayyoub** had a total of 23 points for *CEP Fleurus* and best scorers **Kris Hill** and **Erik Cleymans** had 14 for *Union Huy*. Big surprise at this stage of the competition for sure...

Bert went to a basketball game in September 2004: Belgium vs Germany in the FIBA Women's Euro 2005 Qualifying Round.

Although attendance was not big, it was a very pleasant night at the *Spiroudome* in Charleroi on September 15th, 2004. Just about 750 people attending a good game of basketball in this huge and very cosy arena which can host a crowd of maximum 7000. In this qualifying round game for the next *2005 FIBA European Championship for Women* to be organized in Turkey, the Belgian national team was hosting a very good team of Germany. European MVP and *WNBA* star **Ann Wauters** as well as playmaker **Kathy Wambe** were missing on the Belgian side. The Germans very quickly took the lead mainly thanks to former *WNBA* players **Marlies Askamp** and **Linda Fröhlich**. Belgian Head Coach **Benny Mertens** was forced to take a time-out when the score reached 12-20 for Germany. Although not always very quick, hardworking German guard **Andrea Harder** (born in 1977) played very well and provoked many fouls, enabling her to get many free-throw attempts. The *Belgian Lionnes* came back thanks to the great field goal percentage of **Anke De Mondt** (she hit several big shots from all ranges). They reduced the gap thanks to **De Mondt** who scored her 12th point of the evening on a free-throw just before the buzzer: 27-31.

Belgians played better in the second quarter: **De Mondt** still scored but former *UNLV* star **Fröhlich** reached 11 points to keep Germany on top: 34-37. Experienced **Askamp**, **Fröhlich** and **Harder** had a good tempo and lead a nice team of Germany until a bit less than one minute in this second quarter. Belgian center **Laurence Van Malderen**, freshly hired by the Italian club of *La Spezia* for the 2004-2005 season, grabbed important rebounds and started to make some nice moves inside, allowing the *Lionnes* to come back into the game. Two or three big plays by tall girls **Van Malderen** and **Callens** before halftime made it possible for the Belgians to tie the game: 48-48!

The German ladies started the second half like they did in the first: their efficient trio **Askamp-Fröhlich-Harder** continued to impress the small crowd. It was very quickly 52-56 for the visitors! But **De Mondt** hit big shots again and

was helped by an excellent **Van Malderen** inside. Belgium was just two points behind: 62-64. The few German fans (see www.diefaenz.de) enjoyed the game and... Belgian beer too. They even served beers to some Belgian supporters who had been teasing them when ordering: "Zwei Bier, bitte!" A big assist by **De Mondt** to Belgian young talent **Daphne Theunissen** for an easy lay-up allowed Belgium to take the lead at the end of the third quarter: 66-65.

Andrea Harder played with no style but it was certainly not a question of style at this stage of the game: she was also very efficient and pushed her team to a 70-74 advantage. Former Ukrainian **Oksana Agabalova**, who plays for the first time with the Belgian team in this campaign, had not shown all her potential until then and was called a fourth personal foul with 6'21" to go in this game. She was supported by some of her clubmates from *Dexia Namur* who were present in the *Spiroudome* that night: Polish guard **Krysztina Szymanska-Lara**, etc. The German girls were strong and **Linda Fröhlich** lead her team to 76-81 with 2'33" left. The fifth foul of **Marlies Askamp** and a technical foul by the German coach could have put **Fröhlich** and her teammates into trouble. Moreover, the experience of new Belgian **Agabalova** played a big role (and will still be influential in the future for sure) when the *Lionnes* suddenly came back at 80-81 with 2'19" to go. But **Fröhlich**, **Harder** and pointguard **Richter** run the court very well and kept on scoring. After 80-85, **Van Malderen** and her teammates could not make enough big plays to assure a win. Two free-throws were offered to the Belgian girls with less than one second when the score was 87-89. **Benny Mertens** and his players hoped to equalize but the first attempt was missed. The second one was in. The German players and their fans could enjoy a great victory by the closest margin of one point. Second loss in a row for the Belgian girls after a previous defeat by just two points (on a tip-in in the last seconds) against Romania.

Bert went to a basketball game in March 2004: US Valenciennes Olympic (FRA) vs Euroleasing Sopron (HUN) in Northern France, FIBA Euroleague Quarterfinals.

The French team of US Valenciennes (injured French international player **Audrey Sauret** was not back for the first confrontation which I attended on March 2) played the Hungarians of Euroleasing Sopron (with freshly hired Lithuanian player **Jurgita Stremykite**).

What a crowd in Valenciennes, Northern France -- 3,000 people all dressed in yellow and black (the colours of USVO) supported their players to the Final Four. And it seems that US Valenciennes can make it again this season! Of the three French teams which have qualified for the quarterfinal playoffs, only group winner US Valenciennes Olympic have come out on top. In such a tight competition as this season's Euroleague Group B, USVO finished in first place, just ahead on points of Lotos Gdynia and MiZo Pecs, which shared their 9-5 record. **Ann Wauters** (12 rebounds), US shooter **Allison Feaster** (19 points) and French playmaker **Edwige Lawson** (five assists) were impressive and were helped by **Suzy Batkovic** (very tough defense and grabbing important rebounds at the end of the game) in the second half to lead the French team to a 80-68 victory over the Hungarians of Euroleasing Sopron. But the Yugoslav talented playmaker of Euroleasing **Gordana Kovacevic** and young Hungarian forward **Anna Vajda** had not said their last word and did welcome USVO on March 5 for a tough second leg game. Sopron won that one at home, pushing USVO to a third game.

I was really impressed by the duo of guards **Lawson-Feaster** of USVO on March 2. Belgian center **Wauters** (ranked third at the 2003 Player of the Year referendum set by famous Italian newspaper "La Gazzetta dello Sport") inside as usual and Australian center **Suzy Batkovic** with great assists and big plays in the final minutes. Also remember the following name of Sopron young talent: **Anna Vajda** (born in September 1984 in Budapest, 191 cm and 76 kg). She is tall, mobile and can play at high and low post. She shoots from the 3-point range with success and hits big baskets after grabbing rebounds. Otherwise, **Gordana Kovacevic** of Yugoslavia is Sopron's main scorer: 18 points on Tuesday, March 2.

In the third leg and last match-up of the Euroleague quarterfinals in mid-March, USVO finally defeated Euroleasing-Orsi 62-59 (19-19, 17-17, 12-12 and 14-11) and earned its ticket to the Euroleague Final Four which will be played in mid-April in Pecs, Hungary.

Bert went to a basketball game in January 2004: Dexia Mons Hainaut (BEL) vs KK Hemofarm Vrsac (YUG) in Mons, Belgium.

Bert attended the FIBA Europe League game (11th day of competition) Dexia Union Mons Hainaut vs KK Hemofarm Vrsac at the Halles de Jemappes (in the vicinity of Mons, Belgium) on January 13th, 2004. Vrsac was ranked first in the Yugoslavian EFES League (tied with Partizan Belgrade) before visiting Mons. The first quarter of the game remained very balanced. Austrian center of Dexia Mons, **Bernd Volcic**, scored inside but also from 3-point-range. However, **Nebojsa Bogavac** from KK Vrsac immediately responded and at the end of the first quarter the Yugoslavians lead 17-22.

In the second quarter, Vrsac played tough defensively and caused many turnovers for Dexia Mons. Belgian team's guard **Jean-Marc Jaumin** was not having a good night and **Veron Tabu** could not relay him efficiently enough. **Bogavac**, who played very well through the whole game, scored again from the 3-point area and was helped by centers **Vladimir Tica** and **Savo Dikanovic**. Both players were very impressive underneath the basket. **Tica** is a young talented forward/center able to shoot behind the 3-point line (born on 11-06-1981, 208 cm, 106 kg) and **Dikanovic** (born in 1975, 211 cm and 116 kg) is more experienced (played in Greece for a while at Olympiakos). By halftime, KK Hemofarm had a 6-point lead: 35-41.

Serbian shooter **Ivan Gemaljevic** and Lithuanian forward **Evaldas Jucys** of Dexia had a huge impact in the third quarter and Mons could take the lead (51-55). The last quarter was also very intense. Belgo-American player **Jim Potter** grabbed 9 rebounds through the game but missed a lot of easy shots in the paint. US center **George Evans** (a former American GI) and **Jucys** scored for Dexia Mons but Vrsac did not panic and continued to steal balls allowing easy fast-breaks which ended with many lay-ups or 3-pointers. Free-throws were missed in the last minutes by Dexia's players. Vrsac of Head Coach **Aco Petrovic** could stay ahead until the last second and finally won the game 79-82.

MVP of the game was **Nebojsa Bogavac** (guard, 199 cm, 96 kg, born on 14-12-1973) of KK Vrsac who scored 34 points that night. **Bogavac** played in several clubs including: KK Mojkovac (from 1987 to 1990), KK Gorstak, Kolasin (from 1990 to 1992), KK Temko, Niksic (from 1992 to 1994), KK Proleter Zrenjanin (from 1994 to 1996). He experienced his full affirmation in KK Lovcen, where he played from 1996 to 2000. His model player is **Dusko Ivanovic**. His nicknames are: Bogi and Trumo. Best scorer for Mons was **Bernd Volcic** on January 13th.

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