
2010

Bert covered the 2010 FIBA World Championship for Women for *Eurobasket.com* from October 1st to 3rd at the KV Arena in Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic

The whole coverage by Bert of the 2010 *FIBA World Championship for Women* on *Eurobasket.com* can be found [here](#).

Here is Bert's selection of crispy anecdotes which Bert experienced during his stay in Sokolov and Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic where he covered the final weekend of the Worlds (quarterfinals, semifinals and finals).

The President of the Czech Republic, Mr. **Vaclav Klaus**, who attended the quarterfinal game Czech Republic vs. Australia and the final one USA vs. Czech Republic, has been a top sportsman playing basketball for many years in his youth.

At the 2010 *World Championship for Women* final, you could barely see the scoreboard behind the sea of Czech flags... although the board was clearly proclaiming: USA 89 - Czech Republic 69.

After the Czech victories over the Australian *Opals* of **Liz Cambage**, **Kristi Harrower** and **Lauren Jackson** at the quarterfinal stage and over Belarus in the semifinal, you could see and hear a lot of celebrations with cars honking in the street of Karlovy Vary.

Final rankings at the 2010 *FIBA World Championship for Women* is as follows: 1. USA, 2. Czech Republic, 3. Spain, 4. Belarus, 5. Australia, 6. France, 7. Russia, 8. Korea, 9. Brazil, 10. Japan, 11. Greece, 12. Canada, 13. China, 14. Argentina, 15. Mali and 16. Senegal.

You could eat a delicious gulash soup and have an excellent main dish (chicken, potatoes and vegetables) with a fresh beer (pivo) for the price of 90 CZK (3.68 EUR or 5.12 USD) at the *Hockey Club Energie Karlovy Vary's* restaurant.

Some other *WNBA* stars attended *Team USA* games in Karlovy Vary. *Seattle Storm* coach and *WNBA Coach of the Year* **Brian Agler** as well as three-time Olympic gold medalist and 2009 *WNBA* champion **Katie Smith** were among some of them.

6024 people attended the final championship game, a record for the beautiful *KV Arena* (multi-purpose but mainly built for *HC Energie* ice hockey games).

The quarterfinal and semifinal games of Czech Republic were constantly broadcasted and reported on national television *Channel 4* the night and morning after.

Several Czech stars were in the attendance at the Czech Republic vs. Belarus or the USA vs. Czech Republic games: Olympic gold medal winner and multiple world champion Czech speedskater **Martina Sablikova**, Czech actor **Ivan Trojan**, famous former Czech basketball players **Jiri Zidek** and **Jiri Zednicek**, etc.

The *FIBA* slogan was '*Experience the beauty of the game*' and it summarizes exactly what the 2010 *World Championship for Women* was all about indeed.

Belarus' male physiotherapist who said he will put on a dress if team beats Russia was finally not allowed to do so and warm up with his team.

Receptionists and staff at the *Parkhotel Sokolov*, where I have stayed for the coverage of the world championship in Czech Republic for four days, kept asking me how I was feeling about the Czech team's performances in the tournament. This showed how much and how enthusiastically locals followed the women basketball tournament.

The *Red Foxes*, a professional dance team from Ukraine, performed at several games in Karlovy Vary. These young women dancers brought much fun and joy to fans watching the games and created a happy atmosphere in the *KV Arena*.

Czech coach **Lubor Blazek** had let forward **Tereza Peckova** play only 18 minutes (she had scored only 5 points in the game against Korea) in the tournament before the final against the USA. **Blazek** let her play 21 minutes in the final and she scored 11 points!

What a great idea to invite local school children at the KV Arena on Friday, Oct. 1st... they were cheering, supporting players and enjoying games all day long.



Last September, Bert interviewed Jacques Ledure, the Manager of the *Belgian Lions* (Belgian NT), after the *Lions'* qualification for the *EuroBasket 2011* to be played in Lithuania next summer

Bert Larsimont: *How would you summarize, in a few lines, the Belgian Lions' success story and the qualification of the Belgian NT to the next European Championship to be organized in Lithuania?*

Jacques Ledure (Manager of the *Belgian Lions*): If there is only one thing that I know, it's where I want to go and how (this is equal by the way) if the input and means are sufficient.

We will take part in the *EuroBasket 2011* indeed but this is not enough as this is not a final point but just one step forward to go further. "Further" means confirmation afterwards and taking part in all European Championships in the future. If we had to participate only once (in 2011), this would not mean a lot. I think we have to tend towards excellence and therefore measures to reach it have to be taken.

As everyone knows, Belgium is a very complicated country where decision taking is never easy due to the division of powers. All this has an impact on the sport organization in general and the Belgian basketball program in particular. Nonetheless, if we want to reach excellence, it is necessary:

- that all active bodies (federations, *Bloso*, *Adeps* and *Olympic Committee*) get together and determine a common vision;
- that strategic axes be clearly defined;
- that a real organisation be set up;
- that a precise action plan be established;
- that a task force be created to assure a follow-up.

We are obviously far from there and nobody is to blame as everyone is responsible for this situation.

Without a structure as the one mentioned here, our "successes" will be only "one shots" and we will feverishly wait until the next "occasion".

My remarks may seem pessimistic but they are not as I am convinced that we all wish to work in this way. Only one thing is missing: the will to do things together and with some logic. Only if we go over these difficulties we will be able to reach excellence which will push our sport to the top of the hierarchy.

Bert went to the Spirou Charleroi vs. RBC VOO Verviers Pepinster on May 12th, 2010 at the *Spiroudome* in Charleroi, Belgium

On the last day of the *Ethias League*, Spirou Charleroi defeated Leuven 63-76 and secured second rank in the Belgian Division I regular season. **Sacha Massot**, very much inspired, boosted the Spirou team for a win which will actually allow the Charleroi team to reach the playoff semi-finals straight away, without having to be involved into a preliminary playoff round. BC Liège finished the regular season at first rank and will also directly play the *Ethias League Playoff* semi-finals. The two other semi-final seeds will be decided after BC Oostende vs. Union Mons-Hainaut and Okapi Aalstar vs. Antwerp will be played (best of three) late in May.

The team of RBC Verviers Pepinster, the oldest team to play in the domestic top level division -- 25 years in a row -- and most probably what could have been the season's revelation in Belgium if they had better managed their season end, lost any hope of qualifying for the playoff round by being defeated at home against Okapi Aalstar on the very last day: 62-73. On the other hand, Union Mons-Hainaut led by a fantastic **Nate Reinking** defeated Antwerp, already qualified, to get the last qualifying spot for the playoffs: 78-77.

Just a few days before, on May 12th, Bert and his family were invited by *Dexia Bank* to attend the Spirou Charleroi vs. RBC Verviers Pepinster game at the *Spiroudome* in Charleroi, Belgium. After an excellent buffet dinner at the *Spiroudome's* restaurant '*Le Château*', Bert attended the game which turned into a real thriller. He, family and friends sat just behind the RBC Verviers Pepinster players' bench... Bert could even stretch his arm and give a water bottle to thankful Belgian talent **Niels Marnegrave** during a time-out.

Spirou had been severely defeated by BC Oostende on the previous weekend. Pepinster's Head Coach **Juergen Van Meerbeek** had been fired after five consecutive losses and replaced by **Christian Lemaire** in the beginning of the week.

The new coach **Lemaire** almost succeeded in his first game as RBC always stayed close in the match-up against Spirou. Despite several turnovers and missed shots on both sides, the Spirou Charleroi vs. RBC Verviers Pepinster game was very pleasant to watch. On the Pepinster side, US forward **Chris Devine**, born in Alaska, was missing due to injury but the rest of the US squad **Stanley Burrell** (guard, leading the league in assists, ex-Xavier, born in 1984), **Anthony Hilliard** (forward, born in 1986), **Darnell Wilson** (forward, born in 1985), **Brandon Freeman** (guard, ex-Arkansas, born in 1983), and top rebounder **John Tofi** (center, ex-UTEP, born in 1984, who grabbed 12 rebounds against Spirou — see picture, source UTEP) helped by future top Belgian players **Niels Marnegrave** (guard, born in 1987) and **Maxime De Zeeuw** (forward, born in 1987) kept being close.

In the first half, three alley-oops by Spirou forward **Wes Wilkinson** seemed to be the real point of departure for the local team. It was just a small light in the dark as Coach **Bozzi's** men never seemed to reach a large lead. In the second half, US pro **Brent Wright** (Florida in NCAA, Maccabi Haifa, Ventspils, BC Oostende, Cibona Zagreb, Perm, etc.) of Spirou Charleroi played well but was sent out of the game after an eye injury. In the last quarter, Spirou, with **Sacha Massot** well present in the paint and **Chris Hill** very efficient from the free-throw line, led 70-60 with a few minutes to go. **Lemaire's** young team came back into the game mainly thanks to **Brandon Freeman** (offensively) and **Maxime De Zeeuw** (defensively): 70-70. Spirou guard **Jerry Johnson** scored two free-throws and, on the buzzer, Pepinster's young Belgian international **De Zeeuw** missed his last three-point attempt... the ball rolling on the rim and out...

Spirou Head Coach **Giovanni Bozzi** was well aware that his team had been lucky this time while Pepinster's new boss **Christian Lemaire** felt proud of his guys' reactions in the game despite the close defeat. A close loss 72-70 which will finally cost RBC Verviers Pepinster a lot indeed.

Playoffs can start now!

Spirou Charleroi: **Chris Hill** 10, **Jerry Johnson** 10, **Dwayne Broyles** 9, **Nick Jacobson** 8, **Jonathan Tabu** 3, **Andre Riddick** 6, **Wes Wilkinson** 16, **Sacha Massot** 6, **Courtney Sims** 0, **Brent Wright** 4.
RBC Verviers Pepinster: **Stanley Burrell** 2, **Anthony Hilliard** 0, **Darnell Wilson** 16, **Niels Marnegrave** 5, **Anthony Chada** 2, **Brandon Freeman** 22, **Maxime De Zeeuw** 11, **John Tofi** 12.

Bert went to the CEP Fleurus vs. BS Waregem game on Mar. 12th, 2010: in memory of Mr. André Robert, a Belgian basketball pioneer who passed away at age 78

André Robert, the ex-President of Belgium's historical basketball club CEP Fleurus, died at the age of 78 in his hometown Fleurus on Thursday morning. The club had been presided over by **André Robert** from 1965 to 2003. Under his 38-year presidency, CEP Fleurus reached the Belgian First National Division play-offs and played in Korac Cup, one former major European competition, against major opponents like Izmir (Turkey), Kakac (ex-Yugoslavia), Hapoel Tel Aviv (Israel), Vasas Budapest (Hungary), Banco di Roma (Italy) with **Enrico Gilardi** and **Larry Wright**, Jugoplastika Split (ex-Yugoslavia) with **Kukoc, Radja** and **Perasovic** as well as Real Madrid (Spain) with **Corbalan, Romay, Biriukov** and **Alexis**.

André Robert, owner of a small grocery shop, was passionate about basketball. He gave a chance to fantastic players like **Carlo Van Vaerenbergh, Rudy Moortgat, Kurt Mollekens, Christian Marion, Marc Defort, Edgar Yanga, Jean-Marie Barbier, Jean-Marc Jaumin** and even **Eric Struelens** who were or could have been famous Belgian internationals. As President of CEP Fleurus, he was also personally involved in recruiting and hiring some foreign talents: e.g. US players **Tom Newell, Lloyd Batts, Rik Suttle, Herbert Nobles, Dean Marquardt, Mark Plansky** and **Alvin Heggs** as well as former Czechoslovakia's captain and 1985 Eurobasket silver medalist **Stanislav Kropilak**. President Robert liked to work with Coach **Jack De Coninck** from Antwerp, Belgium. With **Jiri Zednicek** as coach (also a FIBA legend), CEP Fleurus of President **Robert** had some great results on the European scene. This was a long time before neighbouring club Spirou Charleroi reached the Euroleague or the Eurocup. The President also gave second chances to excellent Belgian internationals like **Erik Rogiers** (currently Head Coach of Belgian Ethias League club Optima Gent) and the late **Alain Hockins**.

André Robert was incinerated in Gilly, Belgium on Thursday, Mar. 16th, 2010. Last time I talked to the former President, also involved in the Belgian Cup commission in the past and former Belgian National Team trainer, he was attending the Belgium vs. France (with **Parker** and **Turiaf**) game held at the Lotto Arena on 27 August 2009. He was happy that the Lions had won the game and that Team Belgium had reached such a high level on the international scene. **André Robert** (first from the left on the following picture, thank you to **Toni Covato** for handing me over the illustrating pictures on this page) will definitely be remembered as a Belgian basketball pioneer.

Eric Struelens, one of the best Belgian basketball players of all time, wrote something about President **Robert** on Facebook: "*A great man without whom I would maybe have never done what I have achieved!*" CEP Fleurus of new President **Giovanni Mureddu**, now in Division II, played Waregem on Mar. 12th. The game was played in front of a nice crowd in the mythic Salle Bonsecours which could be named Salle André Robert very soon...

CEP Fleurus won the game against Waregem: 79-58. The local attendance honored the late President **André Robert** with long applause before the game and also through the whole fourth quarter. "*Merci Président!*"

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