

2014

Bert attended the excellent Division II game *CEP Fleurus vs. Gent Hawks* on Dec. 19th, 2014

CEP Fleurus had a slow start... Maybe too slow to be able to win a high level basketball game like the one enjoyed by enthusiastic basketball fans who showed up at the *Salle Andre Robert* in Fleurus on Friday, Dec. 19th, 2014. Turnovers, bad passes or wrong choices accumulated for the hosts early in the first quarter. Power forward **Gregory De Pooter** and elegant player **Joao-Pedro De Decker** for the visitors capitalized on the situation. The scoreboard evolved clearly in favour of the *Hawks*. When the scoreboard showed 5-18 in the first quarter, referees had already taken some strange decisions which mainly perturbed the *Gentenaars*. Mad about such decisions, **Gregory De Pooter** first and **Wim Dobbelaere** right afterwards kicked some chairs placed along the sideline and showed some signs of frustration. The *Hawks'* Head Coach **Wim Meiresonne** asked his players to stay calm and not to overreact after referees' decisions. *CEP Fleurus* needed some time to really get into the game and, thanks to a tougher defense, was able to come back in the race by the end of the first period (14-22). Experienced player and ex-*Hawk* **Sebastien Bellin** looked pretty inspired as he came off the bench and truly put the *CEPmen* into orbit by hitting two superb three-pointers in a row and grabbing important rebounds. His mates **Arne Steinbach** and **Christian Ilongo** in offense as well as **Lars Maesfrancx** at rebounding followed the tempo in the second quarter. *CEP Fleurus* even took the lead at 35-33. Coach **Jean-Marie Barbier** looked satisfied about the nice come-back of the home squad and could also count on his young talented players **Thomas Mertens** and **Max Mureddu** who offered him reliable rotations. The *Gentenaars* managed to stay only 2 points behind at half-way (39-37) and the whole attendance could feel that the *Hawks* had definitely not said their last word.

The beginning of the third quarter was nonetheless largely in favour of the *CEPmen*, led by their Captain **Christian Ilongo**. The scoreboard showed 45-37 when the *CEP* key player **Kevin Jonniaux** got injured (knee). He had not been too well since the beginning of the game but his loss affected the local team's game for sure afterwards. The plays gained in intensity and the cheerful little crowd kept supporting their favourite team anyway. If some staff members of each club had not intervened on the court to stop their players do something wrong when the scoreboard showed 47-46, supporters would have then witnessed the start of a brawl which could have involved some nervous big men right in front of the officials' table. Two staff members, one on each side, were excluded by the referees who looked unable to control the game again. All fans and observers could feel the tension and the excitement was at its climax in the small gym. After a few minutes of patience, the game resumed and the *Hawks* with a fantastic **Laurent Lhote** at playmaking took the lead again: 47-51. *CEP* shooter **Kevin Jonniaux** was back on the court despite his injury but was not very proactive. Nevertheless, his *CEP* mates managed to have a nice rush and young guard **Max Mureddu** nailed a beautiful three-pointer on the buzzer at the end of the third quarter. He tied the game anew: 52-52.

The last quarter was really thrilling and entertaining too. The game actually remained wide open until the scoreboard displayed 64-65. A crucial three-point shot was hit by **Wim Dobbelaere** on an assist by **Gillis Mestdag** who had obviously committed a traveling violation but the referees remained silent! The *CEP* bench vehemently expressed unhappiness about the referees' lack of decision and was eventually called a technical foul. Last vain efforts by **Estime Vangu** did not help much on the *CEP* side (although it was still 70-73 with only 47" left on the clock) and **Laurent Lhote** kept being almost flawless for the *Hawks* (hitting 8/9 from the free-throw line). **Greg De Pooter**, **Gillis Mestdag** and **Hans Van Langenhove** also finished the work either from the line or from long range for the visitors: 71-81 as final score. The well-balanced *Hawks'* team proved again that it deserves the great results recorded so far this season and the *CEPmen* showed that they are able to really challenge high-ranking opponents when they play right. A perfect evening with lots of mixed feelings for basketball lovers!

Free highlights made available on the *Telesambre* website: http://telesambre.be/basket-cep-fleurus-cep-fleurus-gand_d_12180.html.

Score evolution: 14-22, 39-37, 52-52 and 71-81.

Best scorers:

CEPF: **K. Jonniaux** 2, **C. Ilongo** 18, **T. Mertens** 6, **S. Bellin** 12, **E. Vangu** 17, **A. Steinbach** 10, **L. Maesfrancx** 3, **M. Mureddu** 3.

Hawks: **W. Dobbelaere** 16, **R. Spaens** 8, **G. De Pooter** 13, **G. Mestdag** 8, **J.-P. De Decker** 16, **L. Lhote** 17, **H. Van Langenhove** 3.

Belgacom Spirou, presented to press and media, defeats LF Basket Lulea in nice, friendly game on Sep. 19th, 2014

It was a perfect sports night in Charleroi, Belgium on Friday Sep. 19th: the football (soccer) team *Sporting Charleroi* won against their guests of *Zulte Waregem* 2-1 in an important regular *Jupiler League* game and, not far from the *Stade du Pays de Charleroi*, the local basketball team *Belgacom Spirou Charleroi* hosted *LF Basket Lulea* of Sweden in an interesting friendly game.

The new *Spirou* team was officially presented to the press and media in the late afternoon. Then, around 800 fans gathered at the *Spiroidome* to attend the first home game of the season played against *LF Basket Lulea* (ranked 7th in Sweden-Basketligan in 2013-14) and had the chance to discover the well-balanced *Spirou* squad. **Christophe Beghin**, **Sacha Massot**, **Dylan Page** and **Justin Hamilton** were missing (injuries) but new recruit **Esben Reinholt** from Denmark was well present. *Belgacom Spirou* had a hard time in defense in the first minutes of the game but quickly reacted well. **Amaury Jadin** had just been on the floor for a few seconds when he hit a three-pointer to give *Spirou* a 9-8 lead. *Belgian Lion* **Wen Boss Mukubu** even made 11-8 right afterwards. **Eric Wise**, who shows a great potential and looks like he has a strong personality, had been very proactive in the start of the first quarter. US forward **Alex Wesby** worked hard and was quite efficient from all ranges for the Swedish opponents. The Swedish coaching staff was happy to see **Leigh Enobakhare** and his mates be dynamic yet sometimes clumsy. **Jaraun Burrows** put the Swedish visitors in front on a spectacular dunk after *Spirou* turned the ball over: 11-12. The first quarter ended on a spectacular shoot from downtown hit by **Christopher Ryan** for the Swedes and a very impressive defensive play by **Leigh Enobakhare** in the last seconds of the first quarter: 11-15 after 10 minutes. **Loic Schwartz**, **Eric Wise** again and **Will Hudson** played efficiently and *Spirou* took the advantage in the start of the second quarter: 21-19. Thanks to experienced guards **Zabian Dowdell** and **Mark Lyons** who hit big threes, *Belgacom Spirou* of Coach **Jacques Stas** took a larger lead: 31-26. Mainly thanks to **Wesby** and **Ryan**, the Swedish team came back in the race immediately afterwards: 31-31 and even 31-32 at half-time.

Greek player **Alexandros Sigounas** of *Lulea* controlled the air and was often fouled when driving towards the basket. Suddenly, the scoreboard showed 34-37. Two baskets in a row by **Will Hudson** brought *Spirou* closer to their visitors of the evening. It became a very intense game: 44-44, 48-48 and 54-49 for *Spirou* on a converted three-point attempt by **Wen Mukubu**. The third quarter eventually ended on the following score: 55-51.

It remained a pleasant game all the way to the final buzzer. *LF Basket Lulea*'s Head Coach **Peter Oqvist** had to take a time-out when *Spirou* recorded a 7-point lead (60-53 with 7'31" left in the game). **Jacques Stas** looked unhappy less than one minute afterwards when he also had to take a time-out right after an impressive 0-5 run by the convincing and talented Swedish hosts. **Eric Wise** kept looking strong and **Will Hudson** worked hard in the paint. Both players did a great job offensively and *Spirou* had again a rather large lead: 68-60. **Mark Lyons** hit a fantastic three-point shot in the last minutes of the game to make 73-65. Although a last missed three-point attempt by *LF Basket Lulea*'s shooter **Alex Wesby** could have changed things, last efforts proved to be vain for the Swedish side. The *Spirou* players secured the win in the last seconds of the game and made their fans very happy. Nine *Spirou* players have scored in this game. The attendance had seen a rather good first basketball match-up at the *Spiroidome* this season. No doubt, it will be interesting to follow the results of both teams in 2014-15.

Belgacom Spirou of new President **Giovanni Bozzi** clearly focuses on youth this season. Young players **Anthony Lambot**, **Michael Fusek** and **Loic Schwartz** played against *LF Basket Lulea* on Sep. 19th. After the last disappointing seasons, *Spirou* hopes to recover and wants to re-gain credibility vis-a-vis their fans and partners.

Best scorers:

Spirou: **E. Wise** 15, **W. Hudson** 12, **L. Schwartz** 13, **M. Lyons** 11, **A. Jadin** 3, **Z. Dowdell** 11, **L. Enobakhare** 2, **E. Reinholt** 2, **W. Mukubu** 8.

LF Basket: **A. Wesby** 19, **J. Burrows** 13 and **A. Sigounas** 14

25th U20 World Tournament in Tourcoing, France from Jun. 18th to 22nd, 2014: les Bleus defeat Turkey in the final.

The *World Basketball Tournament of Tourcoing*, France has become a classic over the years. Eight teams showed up in at the *Sport Center Leo Lagrange* in Tourcoing from Jun. 18th to 22nd, 2014. Besides a selection of excellent US prospects (the *USA Elite Team* of Coach **Linzy Davis**), the seven other teams involved in the tourney are currently in their preparation campaign for the *U20 FIBA European Championship for Men* which

will be held in Crete, Greece from Jul. 8th to 22nd. Turkey of Head Coach **Erhan Toker** advanced out of a tough Group A with Croatia, Germany and the *USA Elite Team* and reached the final after struggling hard against Israel at the semi-final stage. France of Coach **Jean Aime Toupene** made it out of Group B, also including Israel, Great Britain and Montenegro, and qualified for the final after winning over Croatia in the other semi-final.

Led by their star **Mouhammadou Jaiteh** of *JSF Nanterre*, who decided not to enter the *NBA* draft last April, the French U20 squad was able to dig the gap in the second half of the final against Turkey. **Mouhammadou Jaiteh** and **Guerschon Yabusele** grabbed several rebounds to secure the French side's win over the Turks. The Turkish captain **Tayfun Erülkü** of *Mersin BSB* scored 14 points in only 15 minutes of play in the tourney's final game but at the end of the day it did not help much. Two forwards combined many efforts at the rebound for the losing side : **Metin Türen** of *Darüssafaka* and **Berk Demir** of *Pertevniyal Gencik* who had 6 each. **Mouhammadou Jaiteh** finished as best scorer with 20 points for France. His mate **Timothee Luwawu** of *Antibes Sharks* helped him with 13 points scored in the game played at 17 :00 Jun. 22nd. The French players were more efficient in transition, creating more fastbreak situations than their opponents. *Les Bleus* also outscored the Turks 38-26 in the paint.

On behalf of *www.eurobasket.com*, I attended the event and watched the four games scheduled on Saturday, Jun. 21st. One of my sons and I hid in one corner of the gym, opposite to the bench of present teams. As far as the *USA Elite Team* is concerned, beside *Baylor* commit swingman **Mark Vital**, young Nigerian-American center **Abdulhakim Ado** and on rare occasions former *Fresno State* center **Robert Upshaw**, I was not much impressed by most of the other players on the US selection of Coach **Linzy Davis** (who looks as fit as ever).

I saw the game between the US squad and Montenegro at the *Leo Lagrange Sport Center* on Jun. 21st, watched the Germany vs. *USA Elite Team* game (**Mark Vital** was not given much time to show his skills) and Croatia vs. *USA Elite Team* (**Vital** scored 10 points but played only 15 minutes) broadcasted in web streaming on Jun. 19th and 20th respectively. I also had a close look at some of the stats published on the tournament organizing committee's *Facebook* website... I previously had that very same overriding impression of disappointment about Coach **Davis'** selection when his team including **Jordan Hamilton** came to the *World Tournament of Douai* a few years ago. That does not mean that any of the players in the 2014 *USA Elite Team* were not interesting, it is only that they did not convince me much.

My awards and honorable mentions were based on the potential value I perceived for each player seen in Tourcoing. What made me pick **Mark Vital** as the best swingman among those I saw on Jun. 21st is his power drive game, his athletic gift, his jump and quickness. In only one or two actions, he showed that he is a strong and explosive wing that can excel on the break. Yet two defensive plays by the *Baylor University* 2016 commit were enough to convince me : his shot-blocking skills can be a positive asset to a team's defense. If he expands some other parts of his game like his outside shooting, he can become a great player to watch in the future. He looked like he felt lonely in the *Elite* group after the game against Montenegro, sitting all by himself at the cafeteria or in the stands. I personally do not think that the guy is overrated (what some observers keep telling about **Vital**) but I might be wrong... Only time will tell. Meanwhile, I believe he would be a perfect fit in a team with **Tayfun Erülkü** of Turkey, **Igor Koulechov** of Israel, **Milija Mikovic** of Montenegro and **Mouhammadou Jaiteh** of France who have impressed me much.

Criteria for awards or honorable mentions are always tough to define anyway. It can sometimes just be a question of feeling or becoming head over heels for a talented player.

Final : France vs. Turkey : 80-60

Score evolution : 16-16, 39-32, 61-46 and 80-60.

Best scorers :

France : **A. Rozenfeld** 7, **K. Harley** 7, **B. Sene** 2, **C. Potens** 6, **A. Labanca** 6, **T. Luwawu** 13, **A. Chassang** 7, **C. Gaillou** 2, **J.D. Biog** 2, **M. Jaiteh** 20, **G. Yabusele** 8.

Turkey : **D. Sanli** 8, **D. Cevik** 6, **M. Türen** 6, **A. Kocal** 7, **K. Özmizrak** 2, **B. Demir** 6, **T. Altunbey** 9, **K. Kanter** 2, **T. Erülkü** 14.

Final Standings : 1. France, 2. Turkey, 3. Israel, 4. Croatia, 5. Montenegro, 6. Germany, 7. Great Britain and 8. *USA Elite Team*

Tournament's Top 5 (based on combined evaluation):

1. **Mouhammadou Jaiteh** (France)
2. **Milija Mikovic** (Montenegro)
3. **Kenneth Ogbé** (Germany)
4. **Abdulhakim Ado** (Nigeria/*USA Elite Team*)

5. **Nikola Zizic** (Montenegro)

My All-Tournament First Team:

PG: **Tayfun Erülkü** (Turkey)
SF: **Igor Koulechov** (Israel)
F: **Mark Vital** (*USA Elite Team*)
F/C: **Milija Mikovic** (Montenegro)
C: **Mouhammadou Jaiteh** (France)

My All-Tournament Second Team:

PG: **Ismet Akpinar** (Germany)
SG/F: **Luka Djurovic** (Montenegro)
F: **Kevin Harley** (France)
F: **Alexandre Chassang** (France)
C: **Abdulhakim Ado** (Nigeria/*USA Elite Team*)

My Honorable Mention Awards:

Naor Sharon (Israel), **Rafael Menco** (Israel), **Metin Türen** (Turkey), **Kartal Özmizrak** (Turkey), **Robert Upshaw** (*USA Elite Team*), **Maximilian Ugrai** (Germany), **Karlo Zganec** (Croatia) and **Joshua McSwiggan** (Great Britain)