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INHOUD

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@TennisHorizon



@Tennis_Horizon

Horizon bestaat vijf jaar. Een mijlpaal.

Dit jaar werd een kleurrijk jaar voor Horizon. Vertrekkend uit een donkere periode met coronabeperkingen kon eindelijk worden uitgekeken naar tornooien en naar nieuwe interclub. Horizon koos ervoor om voortaan te trainen in Castle Club, een prachtige club, gelegen in Wezembeek-Oppem, vlakbij de autostrade maar toch mooi verscholen in het groen in een complex waar men ook kan zwemmen, aan fitness doen, squashen of een sauna nemen...

En tegelijk trok Horizon voor het zomerseizoen ook naar TC De Zeype (Kampenhout) voor de interclub en voor de befaamde Horizon Open.

Een dubbele beweging dus naar Brussel toe voor de dagelijkse trainingen in winter en zomer en naar het rustige Kampenhout voor de interclub en de gezellige sfeer in de zomer.

Hoe is 2022 verlopen voor Horizon? Vijf jaar na de oprichting.

De jaren glijden door onze handen. Jongeren worden eerst groot en dan groter dan de groten. Hun tennisspel groeit mee en met plezier lezen we jaren later hoe het begon. Voor elk van hen. In HorizonTaal. Lees mee.

Johan



Horizon in Castle Club en De Zeype in 2022

Project Horizon wordt opgericht in 2017 en na 5 jaar begint een nieuw hoofdstuk: Horizon speelt interclub voor De Zeype in Kampenhout en organiseert daar voor het eerst hun groot toernooi, de Horizon Open, in juli. Tegelijk worden de lessen en trainingen georganiseerd in Castle Club in Wezembeek-Oppem, een club met 7 terreinen en tal van andere faciliteiten waaronder diverse zalen fitness, spinning, squash en een zwembad.

Castle Club

Voor Project Horizon is het altijd heel belangrijk geweest om heel dicht tegen Brussel aan de slag te kunnen aangezien daar de grote groep spelers ligt die lid zijn van Horizon. Zo werd in 2017 gestart in TC Mounier, een club die amper op enkele honderden meter ligt van Castle Club. Later werd door Horizon ook nog gespeeld in o.a. De Kamme, in Kraainem, dat zelfs nog korter bij Castle ligt.

Tijdens corona was er al een eerste ernstige samenwerking tussen Castle en Horizon toen Horizon daar kerststages en kerstrainingen konden organiseren. Later volgden meer diepgaande gesprekken en vanaf april 2022 werden alle lessen en trainingen van Horizon in Castle Club georganiseerd. Hendrik Van den Borre, eigenaar van Castle Club en Johan Teirlinck slaan de handen in elkaar en beginnen beiden een nieuw hoofdstuk.



Hendrik Van den Borre, eigenaar van Castle Club

Synergie tussen Castle en Horizon

Castle Club heeft zelf een tennisschool (van meer dan 400 kinderen en jongeren) die zich richt op recreatief tennis. Horizon is dan weer gespecialiseerd in competitietennis en telt een groot aantal spelers die in de Belgische top meedraaien, zowel bij de jeugd als bij de volwassenen. Het is dan ook niet moeilijk om



Twee Hendrikken en één Johan

De prachtige infrastructuur van Castle vormt een ideale habitat voor de Horizon-spelers. Voortaan kunnen zij beschikken over 7 overdekte banen in de winter en in de zomer worden dat 6 outdoor banen en 1 overdekte baan, terwijl alle topspelers ter plaatse ook hun fysieke conditie kunnen bijspijkeren in de fitnesszalen.

in te zien dat een samenwerking tussen Castle Club en Horizon bijzonder veel voordelen oplevert. Enerzijds kan Castle een prachtig aanbod doen voor alle recreanten die toch evolueren naar competitie. Zij kunnen onder de vleugels van Horizon zich voorbereiden op toernooi-tennis en op interclub.

Dit is een enorme meerwaarde voor Castle aangezien ze anders telkens hun betere pupillen zagen afvloeien naar omliggende clubs. Nu is zelfs het tegendeel mogelijk want alle spelers in de brede regio rond Wezembeek, Kraainem, Sterrebeek, Zaventem en Brussel kunnen voortaan terecht in Castle Club indien ze zich willen toewijden op competitie. De eerste tekenen dat deze formule aanslaat, zijn al zichtbaar. Een aantal spelers hebben zich al gemeld in Castle om aan te sluiten bij de competitieploeg van Horizon.

De tennisschool van Castle mikt op recreatietennis en Horizon richt zich op competitietennis voor topspelers.

Extra troeven van Castle

Castle heeft een prima restaurant, beschikt over meerdere vergaderzalen, danszalen, een gezellige bar, een zwembad, vele squash terreinen, organiseert een reeks activiteiten in hun infrastructuur, zoals rumba en zumba, aquagym, gevechts- en verdedigingssporten, zwemlessen voor starters, ballet, ... Horizon heeft sinds kort daar nog iets aan toegevoegd: de Art Studio.



In de zomer van 2022 werden de eerste sessies Art Studio gegeven in Castle door Horizon. Dat zijn sessies waarbij een master in de kunsten het creatieve vermogen van jonge kinderen prikkelt en stimuleert. Deze sessies sloegen dadelijk aan en nu worden wekelijkse sessies aangeboden en tijdens de schoolvakanties zijn er ook Art Studio Stages. Doel is de jongeren, net zoals bij tennis, te leren focussen, met aandacht bezig te zijn door continu 'bewust' na te denken over hun werk, hun keuzes en het gebruikte materiaal. Laura Teirlinck, is Master in de Kunsten en leraar. Zij verzorgt de Art Studio-sessies voor Horizon.

De Art Studio van Horizon wil de creativiteit van jongeren ontwikkelen en stimuleren.



Horizontrainingen in Castle

Inmiddels traint Horizon al 9 maanden non-stop in Castle en wordt al druk samengewerkt. Zo geven tal van 'Horizon-coaches' lessen aan de jongsten in de tennisschool van Castle en omgekeerd geven coaches van Castle al trainingen in Horizon. Alex Platevoet is hier de vaandeldrager. Hij sprong dadelijk in het oog en is inmiddels al volkomen geïntegreerd in de groep Horizon-coaches. Lees het interview met Alex verder in dit magazine.

De samenwerking tussen Castle en Horizon verloopt prima. Steeds meer ideeën duiken op om samen te doen. Enkele spelers uit de grote groep jeugdspelers van Castle hebben nu al (een deel van) hun programma binnen Horizon. Zij zullen in 2023 hun eerste toernooien spelen.



Tenniscub De Zeype

Aangezien Horizon traditioneel een 15-tal interclubploegen opstelt, was het zaak om een club te vinden die hen die ruimte geeft. TC De Zeype was dadelijk bereid dit te doen. En daardoor kon Horizon op volle kracht interclub spelen onder de vlag van De Zeype na twee zware coronajaren zonder interclub.

In 2022 werden heel wat schitterende herinneringen op en rond de tennisbaan bij elkaar gespeeld. Het bestuur van De Zeype en alle leden hebben Horizon dadelijk aan de borst gedrukt in de warme en gezellige sfeer in en rond hun clubhuis. Daarenboven werd 2022 gekenmerkt door veel zon en een prima weersomstandigheden. Dat leverde feeërieke beelden op en zwoele tornooi-avonden.



Nationale interclub Dames 1 met Ashley, Rebecca, Eleni en Chelsea met hoogwaardigheidsbekleders

De Horizon Open

De Horizon Open die nu al enkele jaren bestaat verhuisde mee naar De Zeype. De rustige streek rond Kampenhout werd tussen 7 en 17 juli 2022 een ware metropool van top-tennis met internationale en nationale sterren. Het unieke van deze editie van de Horizon Open was dat het enkel open stond voor Dames 1 en 2 en Heren 1 en 2. Met andere woorden: al wie deelnam was al bij voorbaat een hoog gerankte speler uit de Belgische top. Een 4-sterrentornooi voor Dames 1 en een 3-sterrentornooi voor de Heren telde meer dan 160 deelnemers. Het werd een onvergetelijke top-tiendaagse met dagelijks de 'Horizon Dagkranten' waarin de wedstrijden werden besproken van de vorige dag en de spelers werden geïnterviewd. Aan het eind kwam Ring Tv nog langs om een fijne reportage te maken die men nog kan zien op www.ringtv.be/nieuws/tc-de-zeype-haalt-tennistoptalent-naar-kampenhout-voor-horizon-open

De Horizon Open werd een top-moment in 2022 en staat in 2023 weer op het programma van TC De Zeype van 6 tot 16 juli



Paul Liekens, voorzitter van De Zeype

Horizon speelt interclub voor De Zeype

Vanaf half april werd eindelijk weer interclub gespeeld in België. Horizon trad aan op de 4 outdoorterreinen van De Zeype. De ligging is prima: vanuit het clubhuis en het terras kan iedereen de matches volgen. Vele mensen uit de regio zakten af om de topwedstrijden te komen bekijken. Horizon heeft immers een aantal geweldige teams die uitstekend tennis laten zien met de Open reeksen Jongens tot 15 jaar (met Daniel Kucirek en Lukas Tzimas) en Meisjes tot 15 jaar (met Nausicaä Lens, Katerina Hobzova en Dorien Kappetijn) maar zeker ook de Reeks 1 van de Heren en natuurlijk de DAMES NATIONALE 1 waar De Zeype mede-favoriet voor de nationale titel van België was. In dit team spelen Horizon-toppers zoals Eleni Kordolaimi de internationale coach en speler (wereldranking WTA-345), Chelsea Vanhoutte (A Internationaal), Rebecca Van Orshaegen (B-15/4) en Alice Ramé (300 WTA) en Ashley Lahey (430 WTA).

Het palmares van de hele interclub 2022 vind je verder in dit magazine pagina 34.

2022 werd dus een soort tweede start voor Horizon met een veelbelovende samenwerking op twee vlakken en in twee clubs: De Zeype, voor de Interclub en de Horizon Open en de super gezellige sfeer een heel zomerseizoen lang en Castle Club voor een heel jaar trainingen van de competitiespelers van Horizon. Voor 2023 werd al beslist dat deze samenwerkingen gewoon doorlopen. We kijken ernaar uit!



Simon Goffin en andere tenniskenners op de Horizon Open



Daniel Kucirek

Your level of play has impressively jumped up in only 3 years time.

Yes, I confirm that especially in last two years my level of play has increased a lot. I have been not only training with very good players and coaches, but I also have been growing which is a big help for the power that is important especially for the serve and finishing points. Until now I couldn't do it and it is saving me quite a lot of energy. Before I would usually be playing defensive and very long games, but now I can be way more aggressive. When I arrived In Horizon I was C30/2. Two years ago, I was 60 points (C15) and made a big jump to 85 points (B-4/6), the season after I went to 90 points (B-15) and right now I am 95 points (B-15.1 and number 292 of Belgium) and I believe it is quite a good achievement.



Was there some influence of Horizon and the players and coaches there?

There was big influence from Horizon - the coaches and players as already last winter we trained the consistency and playing hard. I was able to play with a couple giants like Alexander Kokorev, Eleni Kordolaimi, Mathieu Pauwels, Yvan Bienfait... and the coaches pushed me a lot to my limits. This winter there were also new heavy players and a new coach who was able to join the journey - Alexandre Platevoet with whom we made some big technical changes and I could learn from his experience this winter. Mathieu Pauwels is always present at every training and physical coach Rebecca Van Orshaegen is helping me with the physical preparation. And of course, Johan

Teirlinck who is helping with general preparation and especially game strategy as I was able to turn many matches thanks to his tactical hints...

In what sense did you improve?

I think I mainly improved on the technical side (forehand, backhand, serve,...) and as mentioned above there are many changes connected with my growth and bigger power – especially with the serve and also with more aggressive game and more consistency to be able to win the point more quickly.

Describe a week's schedule with all elements that are important according to you.

My weekly schedule would be this one: I would wake up at around 6:40 then eat breakfast... and get ready for school for which I leave for at around 7:20. I would finish my school at 16:15 and be home at 17:00 after that I would usually eat and sleep a bit so that I could be ready for training that is from 19:00 to 20:30. Tuesday same thing just in the evening I would have private from 20:00 till 21:00.

Wednesday there would be a small physical training with some other players from 18:00 to 19:00 and then 30min mental training before going to play until 21:00. Rest of the week is similar with a break on Thursday.

For the last two years, I train 6 days a week with one-day break. I have one individual session and one semi-private with Lukas Tzimas and the other days in different group sessions. I have also 3 physical sessions, but I have to admit that I am not always able to do all – certainly a room for improvement.



Daniel after a difficult win against Nicholas De Becker in the final Men 2 in Mounier



You played a great season in 2022. Currently you are number 292 in Belgium. And that is the ‘adult’ ranking. Under 15 you are TOP 3 of the country.

Daniel delivers a drop: speciality of the house

I played a quite remarkable 2022 season especially in Men 2, where I won 7 tournaments – Mounier twice, Lovanium, De Wehzel, Venerie, Laeken, but I got some nice results also in M1 category – Lovanium, De Zeype, Mounier - especially those are bringing extra points for ranking.

In Lovanium I got quite a good result as I won a Men 2 final the same day in Laeken and then followed that with a win in Men 1 in Lovanium with a quite easy score... Then the next match in men 1 was against Terry Verhaegen (ex B-15.4) in hot sun where I won the first set 6/4 and then it started to be difficult for me as physically he was better as he is a firefighter. I still managed to get a lead of 5/4 with my serve, but I was not able to finish it, then it went to tiebreak in which he was a bit better and managed to win the second set 6/7.

After the second set it was really tough for me mentally, but also physically as it was around 30 degrees and the match was already on for more than two hours - he won in the end with a 0/6 in the third set. The same evening I had to play my first match in Lovanium in Men 2 where I battled through cramps because of the match before and ended the match with an underarm serve as it was really hard for me to play... But at the end I finished by winning the whole tournament in Men 2 beating Tristan Winters in the final.

Another interesting match was the final in Men 2 in Mounier where I played Nicholas De Becker (now B-15.2). The match started surprisingly well as he is more of a defensive player and also a physical beast (he played a total of 130 matches this season). I was hitting winners everywhere and he was making quite a few mistakes so I won the first set quite easily but then he did not make one mistake in the second set and I was getting irritated as I did not know what to do. Every rally was 20 shots but heavy shots running left and right. I even said to my coach who was watching that I'm going to give it up as it was impossible for me to find a way to win this match after the second set. In the third set I was winning my serve easily and then the battle was for his serve. I was getting to him mentally as well as I had a couple of supporters and switched my tactic to playing very deep and then drop which made him run even more. At around 3:3 I was getting really tired because the rallies were really long, so I also started to hit hard balls with everything I had because it started to be difficult to move, and it worked too! I took the lead of 5/4 and then cramps started to hit, the last three points in every one of them I got calf cramps, once I felt it the next shot had to be the final one as I couldn't move properly with a 40/30 lead in the final game, I made a winning return and finished a 3H battle.

The interclub was also a memorable one. Your team won the title of Vlaams-Brabant in Regional 1 in MEN.

Would you like to play in 2023 in the national interclubs?

This year the team was on fire with Lukas Tzimas, Yvan Bienfait, Sander Cauwelier, Mathieu Pauwels and Lucas Hertens. I usually played no. 1 and all the matches were very tough but most of them we won all singles and doubles: 6-0. There was really a good atmosphere with people coming to watch the games... Then came the final match against Smash Londerzeel with an incredible team with a B-15.1 and a couple of B-15 players. I played against a giant (1m93 leftie) with a huge serve and a heavy game, but I managed to win and after the singles it was 3-1. It meant that we only had to win a certain amount of games or a set. Knowing that they had strong double players, we focussed again and we made it!

And UNDER 15 you teamed up with Lukas Tzimas. What happened there?

Under 15 I teamed up with Lukas Tzimas also 90 points, we were the only team with two 90 point players so from the beginning we were the favourites...

As the matches went on we were both winning pretty easily and then came the finals in forest hills. I played number one but I was coming back from abs injury so I was not even sure if I was going to play... we start the match and I was pretty dominant and won the first set 6/1. Then came the second set. My opponent started to play the match of his life and I made quite a few



Lukas Tzimas and Daniel Kucirek after the Horizon Champions League

mistakes. At 2-2 in the second set I started having pain in the abs again which meant that I could almost not serve and had a few problems to move and play my backhand. I ended up losing that second set 2/6. In the third set, I decided to go all in with my game, playing full power on every forehand. His coach told him to make me play as much as possible but I was not gonna give up. My tactic was working even though it came with some mistakes. I was not always winning my serve because I had to serve really slow... At 5/5 in the third my opponent had a cramp and so I won his serve. Then it was my turn to serve at 6/5. I



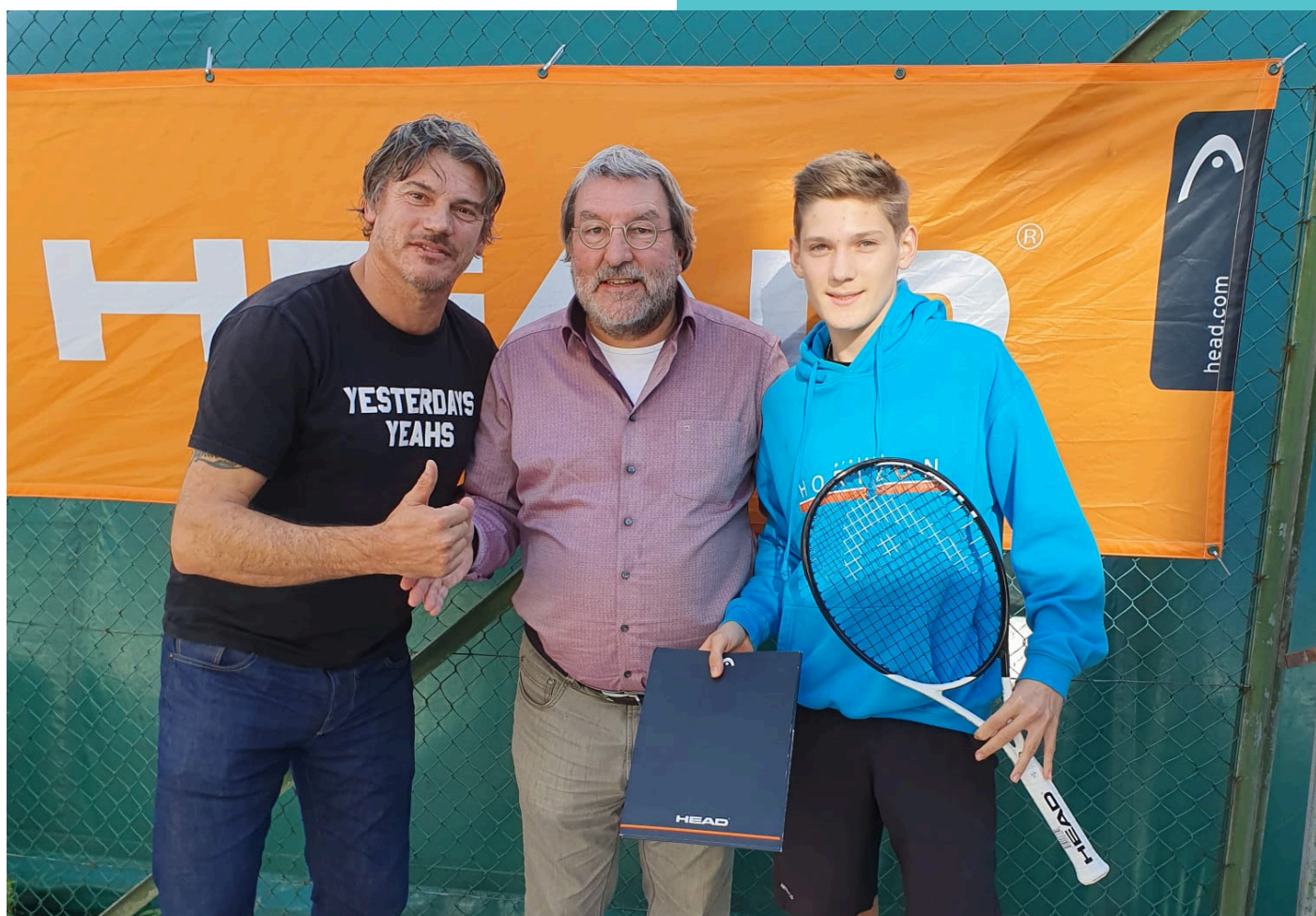
do think he felt a bit nervous. At this point of the match I had the advantage as the more experienced player. He made two return mistakes which helped me a lot and I won the 3h battle whilst being injured. Lukas was able to win in under an hour which meant that no doubles had to be played and we became champions under 15!

Would you like to play in 2023 in the national interclubs?

The plan for 2023 is indeed to play national interclub, where I hope we put together a strong team with very good spirit again.

Will you also play a lot of tournaments in 2023 in Men 1?

Starting by winter 2022 and in 2023 I can now play only M1 – this will not be easy as every match will be tough. In comparison with last year it is clear that I will not be winning tournaments. The goals would be to get to some main draws and like this to make some points to move up to B-15.2.



I would like to also play some tournaments in Czech Republic – where I could hopefully win some under 18 or even some smaller adults' tournaments. I would like to test also some ITF tournaments this year.

Horizon trains in Castle Club now. Do you like the training this winter? You train in the highest group now with your B-15/1 ranking.

Yes, the winter preparation so far is going very well – the only problem is quite low temperature. The atmosphere during and around the trainings is fantastic and we are not only players but also friends able to make jokes and enjoy our almost every day's meetings. With people such as Damian Vavrik, Lukas Tzimas, the Randoux brothers, Alexandre and Guillaume, Kwinten Vandeborgen, Yvan Bienfait, Frantisek Nejdl, Nico Baltazar and many others. Also Mats Herremans (number 111 of Belgium) and coach/player Alex Platevoet hit with us during training.

For now, I believe I am prepared to start winter season with some single tournaments and maybe try some double tournaments too. Anyway, the main goal would be to get ready for spring Interclub and summer tournaments.

Have you already learnt a lot this year? In and aside tennis?

Maybe one special moment – in one of the first tournaments of the year in February in Venerie I played the final against a 90 points opponent – it was a very tough match on the hard court and I won the first set 7-6. In the second set, I was leading 5-4 and advantage and I was serving the match point and point for the tournament title – first service out, but my opponent broke strings and went to change the racket. I told him that it means

Daniel gets a full sponsoring contract with Head

a first service for me. He did not agree and we went to see the tournament referee – he did not know, we called Johan who confirmed but the referee did not know what to do – he called many people and no one was replying on Sunday afternoon.... It took about 30 minutes and finally someone confirmed that I was right. We did a small warm up and I went for the match point again. Unfortunately I lost the point and two games and I was down and upset, but I came back to 6-6 and won the tie-break and the title. Only two sets but almost 3 hours.

You definitely like close matches and adrenaline shots!

Daniel Kucirek became champion of Flanders in the interclub UNDER 15 open with his teammate Lukas Tzimas and will be sponsored by Head in 2023

Vader Dirk Vanderherten, ex-marathonloper, vertelt over zoon Hendrik

Dirk Vanderherten is een top-marathonloper in de jaren 70 en 80. Hij neemt deel aan de Olympische Spelen in 1980 en wordt o.a. 10 de in het wereldkampioenschap Marathon.

Verder wint hij meermaals de Halve marathon van Brussel en werd hij ooit tweede op een 1500m na Ivo Van Damme!

Een wereldtopper dus. Vandaag is hij op stap met zijn oudste zoon, Hendrik, die onlangs de smaak te pakken kreeg van een andere sport: tennis.

Hoe en waar startte Hendrik met tennis?

-Hendrik begon 7 jaar geleden te tennissen in Laken met 1 uurtje, alleen in de zomerperiode. Daarnaast kreeg hij wel tweemaal per week atletiek training wat zeker een bijdrage leverde. De fysieke tests die Horizon tweemaal per jaar organiseert wijzen dit nu ook uit. Daarin presteert Hendrik telkens goed tot uitstekend.

In 2016 zijn we verhuisd naar Steenokkerzeel waar hij in de zomer ook een uurtje les kon krijgen bij Tenza maar de tennisschool aldaar verschrompelde zodat we terug op zoek moesten. Dan hebben we Harry gevonden, tennisleraar bij de Zeype in Kampenhout. Vanaf toen kon Hendrik ook in de winter een uurtje tennissen. Twee jaar later is Harry dan noodgedwongen uitgeweken naar Turkije na zijn huwelijk daar en moesten we weer een oplossing zoeken.

Gelukkig verscheen Johan Teirlinck aan de Horizon. We gingen met hem in zee en Hendrik kon zijn tennistrainingen nu zelfs tot drie uur per week verderzetten.

Inmiddels zijn we progressief geëvolueerd naar 12 uur en zijn we met atletiek gestopt. Wat niet wegneemt dat we nu en dan wat gaan joggen bij wijze van recuperatietraining.

In 2021 kwam je in contact met Horizon. Hoe gebeurde dat?

-Op een toernooi in Machelen versloeg Hendrik een beloftevolle speler van Horizon in het bijzijn van Johan Teirlinck. De verliezer, een Syriër, heeft dit niet kunnen verwerken en stopte meteen met tennissen. Johan moest plots een gaatje opvullen in zijn planning.

Mijn vaste tennispartner, Johan Allonsius, zag een samenwerking met de tennisschool Horizon ook zitten.

Intussen had Horizon in Zaventem, de school van Steve Joly moeten overnemen en uitgebreid tot een tennisschool met Bollettieri-allures. Het lag dus voor de hand om met Horizon in zee te gaan. Ik weet als geen ander dat een sportieve biotoop een noodzakelijke voorwaarde is om succesvol te worden.

Het spelniveau van Hendrik is met een ruk de hoogte ingegaan. Zag je de invloed van de trainingen in Horizon?

-Ik zag Hendrik positief evolueren, zeker. Johan Allonsius die maar nu en dan kwam kijken was onder de indruk van zijn progressie. Uiteraard draagt het grotere volume daar ook flink aan bij. De Horizon-coaches die complementair zijn konden ook snel uitmaken waaraan er moest worden gesleuteld.

De homogeniteit van de leerlingen vormen een toegevoegde waarde. Zelfs de minst goede leerling van Horizon heeft nog een behoorlijk niveau.

Hendrik Vanderherten heeft de snelle benen van zijn vader geërfd



Op welke vlakken werd hij sterker?

-De stressbestendigheid is gegroeid. Aanvankelijk sliep hij voor een wedstrijd minder goed. Dat is nu niet meer het geval. Ik wil graag onderstrepen dat Horizon ook veel aandacht besteedt aan het mentale aspect. Zo is er bijvoorbeeld in het programma wekelijks 1 uur mentale training. Daar leren de jongeren nadenken over hun spel en hun aandachtspunten. De lessen zijn interactief en zo leren ze beter beseffen wat er gaande is tijdens een wedstrijd.

Hendrik speelde in 2022 een goed seizoen.

-De meeste matches werden door Hendrik gewonnen met 6-0 6-0. Ik merkte op dat hij voor ieder punt streed alsof het een matchpunt betrof. Soms kon een toevallige voorbijganger denken dat hij aan het verliezen was omdat de spectaculaire punten vaak door de tegenstander worden gewonnen. Maar Hendrik geeft nooit op en blijft gaan, ook als de bal hard in een hoek wordt gespeeld. Vaak hoorde ik papa's mompelen dat hun zoontje tegen een muur speelde.

Een hoogtepunt waren de interclubs. Hendrik werd met zijn team kampioen van Vlaams-Brabant bij de jongens tot 13 jaar. Vertel.

-Ja, de interclub was de introductie in het competitieve. Hendrik keek er telkens erg naar uit. Samen met zijn teamgenoten begonnen ze wat moeizaam in de eerste ontmoeting met een krappe 2-1 overwinning maar daarna volgden 9 overwinningen met duidelijke 3-0 cijfers. Ook in de eindronde bleken de goede spelers uit andere clubs toch een maatje te klein. Dat was zo in de achtste finale, de kwartfinale en de halve finale van Brabant. De finale in Lovanium was een leerrijke belevenis met veel volk en scheidsrechters. Hendrik genoot ervan en won moeiteloos zonder een spelletje te verliezen van iemand die hem die eerste speeldag had verslagen. We zagen zijn enorme evolutie op amper twee maanden tijd. Zo werden ze inderdaad kampioen van Vlaams-Brabant. En dat gaf een geweldige boost aan het vertrouwen. Hendrik had ook veel zin om te gaan toernooien spelen daarna.

Smaakt dat naar meer?

-Zeer zeker, we ambiëren nu een nationale overwinning in een hogere reeks. Het interclubgebeuren is uniek, het voegt een extra-dimensie toe. De teamgenoten krikken elkaars niveau op.

Zou hij ook in het zomerseizoen van 2023 weer veel toernooien willen spelen? Wat zijn je doelen en verwachtingen?

-Als ik even mijn eigen sportcarrière overschouw: het is belangrijk om de lat hoog genoeg te leggen. Ik zou zeggen: progressief evolueren maar toch 45 punten ambiëren door voldoende toernooien te spelen zonder al teveel aan die trainingsomvang te raken.

Momenteel traint Horizon in Castle Club. Hoe bevalt dat?

-De infrastructuur is een pluspunt. Ik denk aan de altijd beschikbare fitnessruimte, de vele terreinen en aan het personeel voor wie niets teveel gevraagd is. Bovendien ontmoet je er vele andere nationaliteiten wat verrijkend is.



Hendrik traint nu al geregeld met betere groepen. Is dat een uitdaging die hij graag aangaat?

-Vast en zeker. Ik constateerde dat hij minder geconcentreerd begon te spelen als zijn tegenstander zwakker was. Hij moet ook leren spelen tegen spelers die een hoog tempo opleggen, want van nature is hij eerder verdedigend ingesteld.

“Het interclubgebeuren is uniek, het voegt een extra-dimensie toe”

Heb je dit jaar heel wat bijgeleerd? Ook voor jezelf buiten het tennis?

-Wie toernooien speelt, moet alles checken. Dat is de boodschap. In het toernooi van het Zeen won Hendrik vlot de halve finale en diezelfde dag moest hij de finale spelen. Er werd mij mondeling meegedeeld wanneer de finale zou plaats vinden maar toen we aankwamen bleek dat Hendrik met forfait verloren was omdat we een uur te laat waren. Blijkbaar een misverstand. Online stond een ander uur dan wat mij was verteld. Altijd checken dus.

Hendrik had die finale ook kunnen winnen. Heel vervelend dus. Gelukkig won Hendrik aan het eind van het seizoen nog een paar andere toernooien zodat hij toch met een positief gevoel de winter is ingegaan.

Iben Mol writes a letter to Horizon from Finland

Iben Mol is born in 2006 and was one of 3 Mol sisters to join Horizon when it was founded in 2017. Her older sisters Venla (2001) and Oona (2004) were all part of the first training sessions of Horizon in Mounier. They all evolved very fast and got high rankings in a very short time. Both Oona and Iben got to B-15 in 3 years. Oona and Iben won Belgian titles in the Belgian Interclub in 2019, just before corona. In 2020 the whole Mol family moved back to Finland, the home country of their mother Niina. To leave Belgium was especially hard for them as they had to leave their friends and the newly acquired level and spirit that tennis had brought in their lives. They still hope to meet again. This is a letter Iben wrote to us!

Hi Johan and all the people of Horizon,

Life is going well here in Finland. I'm good. There isn't a day that I haven't thought about Horizon. I miss Belgium and the whole Horizon team. Tennis has become more and more important to me. I want to be a pro player no doubt. I train 7 times a week.

Monday 2h

Tuesday 1.30h + 30 minutes physical

Wednesday 1.30-3h

Thursday 1.30h + 30 minutes physical

Friday sometimes more than 2 hours

If I don't have physical, I usually go to the gym. Weekends I have tournaments or if I don't have, I go play with some men or someone wants to hit with me. I miss our trainings and friends and the atmosphere. In Horizon I developed the most as a tennis player. I hope, I can come to Belgium or meet the Horizon group anywhere in the world. Horizon is one of the most important things that has happened in my life. And it's so exciting. The first horizon trip was the most memorable experience for Oona and myself.

This year I got better and better. I've played many championships in Finland, AND I was representing Finland in the European championships in Czech Republic in the summer 2022. It was a fantastic experience. Since I haven't been traveling to tournaments outside my country, I saw the international level is totally different compared to Finlands. I've won many tournaments and I've been in many finals in Finland. I've played my first itfs here in Finland and the best achievement was doubles semifinal. I was runner up in the masters too. I've developed well, serve is going very well since I'm almost 180cm tall. Volleys are a good weapon and so is my forehand. Mentally I got stronger which is also positive. But I'm not close to perfection, backhand I need to train more, and since I'm tall, I have to work well on my footwork. I'm currently playing with Head Mp gravity 305g. The Racket is really good, but I'm not sure 100% if it's the right one for me.

Goals and Dreams

My goal is to be the best version of myself.

I want to become a pro tennisplayer and travel the world to play wta tournaments together with school. My goal is to go to a fine college In America if it's affordable. I am sure that I'll get into one of the colleges. After that, I'll start going to 15-25k tournaments and so on. That's just goals and dreams. Of course I'd like to start as early as possible, but school has to come first. I'm 16 now, I have 2 years to play Itfs and after that it's pro tournaments. I have a very long way to go, but I have so much confidence that I'm sure my level will be good enough in the future to succeed.

In 2023 I'd like to play more itf tournaments. My level is really good for international level. In 2023 I'll work even harder and set up good plans to reach some goals. I haven't set up goals yet for 2023, but an itf title would be a good goal. I'm excited for the new year.

I train and work a lot towards my dreams, and I'm hungry to win. I'm working with what I have, good coaches, good tennis friends and most important good atmosphere.



Oona

My sister Oona's life is going good. Oona is currently studying for her final exams. She trains 5 times a week. She does her own physical training in the gym.

Oona's goals are to play tennis freely and study. She wants to study either in Tampere which is a big city in Finland. Oona is a very hard worker in school as she wants to study medicine. Nowadays she doesn't go to many tournaments but sometimes she does. Oona trains 4-5 times a week. A little less than I do.

Oona is focusing more on studies but in the summer 2022, she did win gold in a tournament at our own club. She has also played doubles and won bronze in a Finnish championship tournament. Oona does also miss Horizon, trainings and the atmosphere. She misses the coaches and the friends. She would also like to come sometime. The Horizon trip in the Easter Break might be an option to meet again.

Oona is currently playing with the Wilson pro staff 295g and is loving it.

Oona's backhand is deadly. It's beautiful. Her forehand has developed also very well. Oona's drops are on point too. Oona got also mentally stronger.

In 2023 Oona wants to play more tournaments. First she wants to concentrate on school and after the exams, she can focus more on tennis.

We both miss Belgium a lot in many ways. Tennis is the most important thing we miss. It's weird to think that we moved almost 2 and a half years ago from Belgium to Finland. Time flies.

Iben



Iben en Oona in Horizontijden. Memory Lane

"There isn't a day that I haven't thought about Horizon."

Iben Mol

HORIZON PRESENTS a new coach: Alex Platevoet



When did you start with tennis?

I started playing tennis with my parents at the age of 5. They soon realised that I loved the sport, so when we moved to Italy, they put me in one of the most well-known tennis clubs in Milan, the Alberto Bonacossa where 12 years later, I played the ITF grade A Trofeo Bonfiglio. I played there for around two years until Bob Brett opened an academy in Lugano. We didn't live that far, although my mom would argue that a 30 min drive is still far. Anyways, I went to meet him. From that day on, he took me under his wing and became my mentor for the rest of my tennis career. Even if I had many other coaches, he remained the one I would go to for technical adjustments, he was known to be the best technical coach.

What was your ambition as a player?

Plain and simple, I wanted to become a professional tennis player. I didn't have the ambition to be number one in the world, or that was more of a dream than an ambition. However I wished I could be top 100.

You went to several places with big reputations.

As I mentioned before, I met Bob when I was young. Later in the years, I still remember when he would invite me to Monaco to play on the weekends. It was a fantastic time because during that period, he trained Nicholas Kiefer (who became world number 4 that same year). He would kindly ask him to hit a few balls with me. I have to say that I was over the moon, even to this day, I can still remember how it felt to be part of such an elite environment. The years went by and I got recruited to the Bollettieri Academy. I was playing in the under 14 La Baule tournament in France, where a coach from Bollettieri saw me. I stayed there for one year, it was one of the best experiences I

could have. A little anecdote, I was there the year Xavier Malisse did semi-final at Wimbledon. That whole year allowed me to see hands on another tennis philosophy. For context, Bob was the kind of coach that was hard on the court. He was very picky on technical details and physical training. He wanted the shots to be simple, pure and right and wanted harmony with your physical abilities. After all he learned from Harry Hopman. I don't think I need to explain who he was.

On the other hand, Nick Bollettieri, an Army paratrooper, had an other vision. For him, it was less about technic and more about hitting a million balls. We would hit hundreds and hundreds of balls from the basket, he used to say : "Even if you don't have the perfect technic, keep on hitting the balls, at some point they will get in. Look at Jim Courier..." This philosophy made me realize that discipline and perseverance were as important as technical prowess and physical abilities.

Anyways, after one year I decided to come back home. I was home sick at the end, and I just needed to get back. Obviously, when I returned I started to practice again at Bob's academy which was now in San Remo (still is to this date). However, when I was 18, I felt I needed something new, something different. That's when I went to Mouratoglou academy in Paris. I knew they would bring an other vision since Patrick is known for his mental and tactical abilities. I was playing good, however, I was never able to break that mental block I had in matches. That's when I met Alberto Castellani, an Italian coach who founded the only training accredited by the ATP (which I am presently doing). He is known for helping players understand their psyche and their mental capabilities. He gave me a lot of advices on how to handle pressure, how to handle difficult moments of a match and ideas on overcoming my mental blocks. However, I felt I was getting at the end of being a tennis player. During all these years, I have met all these amazing coaches, who I admire and admired, and my aim now, as a coach, is to bring all these different experiences together to help players achieve their goals, whatever they are.

Tell us about your past experiences as a coach.

I have been coaching already for the last 10 years. Helping many players, from club players to young and promising juniors. Each one I had the privilege to coach managed to improve and implement the work we did on the court. For some, it meant going from Tennis Europe 400 to top 50, for others, it meant going from C30 to b-15/2 in 6-7 years. I even enjoyed helping older players get comfortable with their swing and technic after many years of struggle. However, what I like the most is to transmit everything I learned during all these years of travelling.

Can we say that your finest talent is technical finesse?

Yes, I consider myself as a technical coach. Of course, I can give advice on all other facets of tennis, however my finest talent is the ability to see technical flows and how to fix them. Those 10 years with Bob were worth everything I went through during my career because now I can transfer that "knowledge" to every player that comes on the court. As he used to tell me, "Tennis is a very difficult sport, technic should not be there to add complexity ; it should be there to simplify your shots".

Technic is not about wanting a swing to be the same as Federer, Djokovic, Shapovalov or other pros. It is more about taking the player and his abilities and giving him the tools to hit the best shots they can. It is all in the details.

That is exactly how we see things in Horizon. How you will attempt to improve your players in Horizon?

By giving them the technical tools to hit the ball well. By teaching them all the different shots possible on the court. And by allowing each player to enjoy learning, giving 100% every single time and to improve their tennis. The way I see a player is not to format them with an idea of how they should be compared to, for example, a Federer or a Serena. I see the player as a unique individual with his or her abilities and give them the tools to be the best version of themselves. I rarely change a swing from A to Z because that takes away the natural feeling of each one, every player needs to keep that as much as possible, so the improvements are in the details. Keeping things simple but right. I love the quote from Leonardo Da Vinci : « Simplicity is the highest form of sophistication. »

Anyways, at the end of the day, here at Horizon we want to win so let's savour the process and enjoy growth together.

Your level of play is still impressive. Can you also help youngsters with some quality sparring?

Well definitely. I still got it haha. Even if I didn't have a single ranking on the ATP, I was A-ranked in Belgium and -15 in France so, as a sparring, I can still play with whomever comes. Now, as a coach, my approach is different. However my competitive nature won't allow these youngsters to surpass me that easily; they will have to work hard.

Tell something about the other Horizon coaches.

I met Johan in the summer, we had long conversations about tennis, his vision with Horizon and the philosophy he brings. I was drawn right away to his program because I felt it was professional, competitive and with his winning mentality, the players would obviously mirror that. The perfect combination for someone like me.

On the other hand, Mathieu brings more of a tactical approach acquired during his many years as a coach. I am amazed at the diversity of exercises he does. Each time there is a specific aim that, at the end of the day, the players can bring to the matches. He knows tennis and knows what can bring an edge. Anyways, I have to say that all the members of Horizon bring something different to the table, but they all have the same aim and philosophy.

At Horizon, some players can be coaches and coaches can be players, we are a group and together we aim for excellence. We like to play with big groups on many different courts. It allows the players to have a different ball each time they switch. Just like in matches, they learn to adapt to different players, speeds and balls. It allows them to adapt easily to all kind of new situations. By having 4 pillars: mental, technical, tactical and physical all working together, we can ensure a great environment for growth. For me it is the only way for a tennis program to work. All the pillars must work in harmony and towards the same goals. That is why we ask for discipline, excellence and perseverance. The path of a tennis player is hard, our job as Horizon coaches is to help them all the way through that process.

Thank you, Alex for this interview. We wish you a lot of success in Horizon!



Damian Vavrik

When did you start with tennis?

I started playing tennis when I was 5 years old. I started in TC Davis with a few group and private lessons there. I moved to TC Eglantiers, during my last orange ball year where I found the coach who had a significant impact on my development since then. It was also the moment when tennis became serious for my life and I started playing even more.

Why did you come over to Horizon?

This summer my tennis buddy Nico Baltazar encouraged me to join Horizon. I was very impressed by the level of the players and the approach of the different coaches from who I can learn a lot. That's why my move to Horizon came very naturally. I believe I can learn a lot from the various players and improve my tennis level, technique, physique and mental which will be crucial for my transition to playing men 1 tournaments. I am also very motivated to bring a positive attitude to the training process, my personality, fun, courage and contribute to the success of the team throughout the season.



Has your level of play improved since you joined Horizon?

Since I started playing at Horizon, my game has definitely improved in different ways, I feel more confident, train with very strong players and benefit from very solid training system offered by Horizon. That contributed to a very good end of the season in early autumn when I made really good results like winning over B-15 players and even claiming my first title in

Men 2 (Animer Wezembeek) which I won starting from the qualifications!

Was there some positive influence of Horizon and the players and coaches there?

The influence from both players and coaches is very, very positive. There are a lot of friendly players, I especially get along well with the Czech gang since I'm Slovak. The coaches are very committed and always ready to give 100% effort which pushes me to go further in every practice. The environment helps me to be focused and serious during trainings but also remember to have a nice laugh here or there. The trainings are very well organized, we do an exercise and receive a feedback right after, I find it really helpful to find out also what others think of it.

"Since I started playing at Horizon, my game has definitely improved in different ways"

In what sense did you improve?

I believe I've improved in a number of aspects of my game. In particular as regards tactical and mental perspective. I've been having mental trainings with Johan Teirlinck each week and we discuss various topics, like different types of players and situations we could come across in tournaments. Also Johan has been very helpful in giving me valuable tips on how to play certain players. Now that the Horizon team trains in Castle club, we have also opportunity to use the facilities there, so I've been going to the gym which helps me to improve physically. And lastly Mathieu Pauwels and Alex Platevoet have also been giving me tips for example on the serve and baseline hitting, this helps me with the quality of my shots.

You announced that you will join Horizon in the interclub of 2023 too. You will play in a national team with Daniel Kucirek and Lukas Tzimas. Are you looking forward to it?

Yes! I am really looking forward to play the interclub for Horizon this season. This is an individual sport so having an opportunity to contribute to the success of the team is something I appreciate. Plus I will play in such a high level team for the first time and will do my best. I am really excited for this year as we will have a very young and talented team with the two Czechs, Daniel and Lukas, maybe the Randoux brothers and Kwinten Vandebergen and others. I feel that we have an amazing team chemistry and we can make great things happen.

Will you also play a lot of tournaments in 2023 in Men 1 and 2?

This year will be my first year in Men 1 where I already won my first match and played a very solid match against a strong B-15/1. I feel I am competitive in the category and am looking forward to playing the best players in Belgium. In Men 2 I belong to the best ranked players and will do my best to confirm my dominance in that category.

Horizon trains in Castle Club now. Do you like the training this winter? You train in the highest group with your B-15 ranking, together with a lot of other players of B-15/1, B-15 and even B-15/2. Do you like that challenge?

I really like the tennis trainings this winter. I have so far never had an opportunity to belong to a team which would play with such intensity and seriousness. Each player is very focused and we always compete and try to do better, we push each other and that makes us stronger. I am up for any challenge, especially when it comes to playing with very good tennis players. I play each week with Daniel and Lukas (B-15/1), played a few times with Mats (B-15/4) but there are more quality players than just them. Horizon showed me that anyone can play with anyone and the ranking is just a number. There are many great players like Nico Baltazar, Franti Nejd, Kwinten Vandebergen, Tristan Lens, Witt Uhlir, the Randoux brothers, Yoren and Milan Rooijakkers, Florence Fedeli, Katerina Hobzova, Nausicaa Lens and many more.



Have you already learnt a lot this year? In and aside tennis?

In tennis I learned so many new important things since joining Horizon, but also I had a successful year apart from tennis. In school I have done well and this is my last year so one last push. Also I discovered a new passion for the gym which is not bad if you want to become a better tennis player. An anecdote about myself is that unlike a lot of people I love chemistry, I even went to the semi-finals of the national Olympiads!

Well done! The chemistry with all Horizon players is definitely working!



Rebecca Van Orshaegen

2022 was een jaar vol verrassingen en wendingen in je leven. In het begin van het jaar was je nog physical coach in Horizon en studeerde je nog ... Vertel

Inderdaad, de eerste helft van 2022 was een zeer drukke periode. Ik was nog volop bezig met het laatste semester van mijn kinesitherapie opleiding waar ik vele uren stage heb gelopen, in combinatie met het schrijven van mijn thesis, lessen, studeren... Maar ik was natuurlijk ook nog actief aan het spelen en aan het coachen. We speelden in april, mei ook verscheidene interclubontmoetingen waardoor een goede planning van groot belang was, want zoals je weet kunnen deze lang duren.

Maar dan studeerde je af en nam enkele weken vakantie alvorens weer nieuwe uitdagingen wachtten ...

Eind juni was ik eindelijk afgestudeerd en dan moet je beslissen wat je gaat doen. Ik besloot om de hele maand juli nog tornooien te spelen en midden augustus op vakantie te gaan met vrienden en familie. Profiteren van de 3 maanden vakantie zoals de studenten dat zeggen.

De diploma-uitreiking was gepland op de grote markt in Brussel begin oktober. Dit was een hele leuke ervaring en dan kreeg ik mijn diploma officieel in handen. Heel trots samen met familie en studiegenoten stond ik daar te glunderen.

Nadien heb ik zeker niet stilgezeten, er waren enkele leerrijke en leuke projecten gepland. Midden oktober maakte ik deel uit van het medisch team op de European Open in Antwerpen waar verschillende internationale tennisspelers aan het werk waren. Hier heb ik verschillende mensen leren kennen en was er een hele aangename sfeer binnen het medische team maar ook binnen de gehele organisatie. Na twee weken tornooi was ik maar enkele dagen thuis alvorens ik opnieuw vertrok. Nu met Team Belgium voor het Wereldkampioenschap Padel in Dubai. Dit was een super leerrijke ervaring waarvoor ik de federatie enorm dankbaar ben dat ze mij deze kans hebben gegeven. We hebben met het hele team prachtige resultaten neergelegd en deze werden beloond met een 4de plaats voor de vrouwen en een 6de plaats voor de mannen! Toch een hele prestatie in een Wereldkampioenschap! Veel emotie, veel werk achter de schermen, een hele mooie groep en vooral een geweldige ervaring waar ik prachtige mensen heb ontmoet.

Wat heb je hieruit geleerd? Zijn er belangrijke lessen die je kan doorgeven aan je leerlingen?

De kansen die je krijgt, grijp deze met beide handen. Niet twijfelen! Je weet nooit welke deuren deze opportuniteiten kunnen openen. Believe in yourself and trust the process! Don't be scared to chase your dreams! If you don't try, you 'll never live your dream!

Recent ben je weer actief als physical coach in Horizon op vrijdagen en zaterdagen maar na nieuwjaar komt er alweer een nieuw avontuur aanzetten.

Inderdaad, met veel plezier en motivatie geef ik wekelijks de conditietrainingen op vrijdag en zaterdag aan de Horizon-spelers. Maar binnenkort moet ik dat even 'on hold' zetten, maar



Thibault Cramenil gaat mijn trainingen overnemen waardoor ik met een gerust hart kan uitkijken naar mijn volgende avontuur.

Ik ga in januari aan de slag met 2 internationale tennisspelers in het dubbelspel in The Australian Open. Beiden staan in de TOP-20 van de wereld. Het is een nieuwe uitdaging en een sprong in het onbekende als kinesitherapeute want ik zal meegaan op de ATP tour. Ik kijk er heel hard naar uit en ben benieuwd wat de toekomst nog in petto heeft.

Wat mogen we je wensen voor 2023?

Een jaar vol leerrijke momenten en onvergetelijke ervaringen zowel op professioneel als persoonlijk vlak maar vooral een goede gezondheid.

Veel groetjes,
Rebecca

*“Believe in yourself and trust the process!
Don't be scared to chase your dreams! If you
don't try, you 'll never live your dream!”*

Eleni Kordolaimi

Eleni Kordolaimi is still a Horizon coach and interclub player, but just like Rebecca she is spreading her wings and discovering the outside WTA-world. After working very intensively as a Horizon coach during the corona years Eleni got great opportunities in the international coaching scene and is now living a remarkable comeback as a player. Read her letter to us.

As of the beginning of 2022 I was still coaching at Horizon and I was lucky enough to be working with a group of great athletes but most importantly great individuals. That of course extended to the rest of the coaches that I was working alongside with. It would be a demanding job to name every single player and coach but what I really appreciated about it is the fact that my working environment provided me with a great amount of security, freedom to express myself with and plenty of room to grow on.

Shortly through the year, beginning of April to be more precise, I got an offer to join the coaching staff of Alison Van Uytvanck and Greet Minnen. It was a coaching dream come true and especially so shortly into my coaching career. I knew the challenge was going to be massive but as I like to dive in the deep since that is where you actually learn the most, I did not second guess of taking the offer. I was fortunate to work with them for a couple of months and within this time frame I had the chance to go on to two Grand Slams (Roland Garros and Wimbledon). So many things learnt and so many memories made. It is absolutely amazing being able to work with and observe the elite of the sport.

I learned a lot of things that helped me as a coach but it also lit the fire in me again to start playing for myself. It was always a chapter that hadn't fully closed but being on that level and seeing things, gave me the push I needed to start playing again. The thing that I took away from being around that level is that nothing great is achieved by mediocre training or mediocre expectations from yourself. Nothing great is achieved by simply talking about your dreams, by simply imagining about them by being only put in in an environment that you are the best in off the bat. However, the most important thing I took away from it is that life is for living and dreams are to be chased

after. People tend to get comfortable or getting used to being comfortable. Many times we all get "sucked in" by a situation that provides security even though we have way more things left in us that we need to chase or want to turn into reality. Life is short and our dreams are so worth going after if they truly mean a lot to us. However, when my chapter with Alison and Greet closed right before I started playing, I had a few sessions with the same players I coached before in Horizon. It was a great feeling watching how they grew, changed, progressed. It was a great feeling having them welcome me as I had never left which is something that I also felt by the coaching staff.

I am really happy to have started competing again. I love playing and deep in me I believe I didn't reach my full potential in the past because of various reasons. Therefore, returning to the role of a player again felt natural to me and it is also something that gives me great satisfaction. I love pushing myself and see how much I can squeeze out of a situation, whatever role I am under up until I feel I have given it my everything and have taken out the most of it as well. Playing again is truly amazing and something I am grateful for. Long term I know it will only help me become an even better coach.

As of right now I have had some good results such as a singles final, semifinal and a couple of quarters as well as a title in doubles. I am happy with how my season started but I surely do know that there is some work to be done still. Going into 2023 I am working on reaching my career high the soonest possible and by the end of the year to be close to the first 200 WTA players. One might think that I might be asking for a lot but in the place I am now in my life with the decision I have taken, even though it might sound cliché, it is a bit of a go big or go home type of situation. I am doing the best I can and I will surely fight to get the most out of my tennis.

Horizon, even though I am currently pursuing my dream as a player just know I do miss everyone I worked for and worked with. Parents and members, thank you for taking me in and always being respectful towards me. For anyone interested, know that my number has not changed and whenever you feel like reaching out feel free to do so as I will be more than happy to see how you are all doing.

Eleni



Jaro Emonds

Dit jaar raakte je gekwetst. Hou gebeurde dat en wat waren de gevolgen? Wat moest je doen? Qua kiné en andere?

Met Pasen vorig jaar ben ik 2 weken gaan skiën. Dat maakte dat ik in totaal in die periode zeker een maand geen tennis gespeeld heb. Daarna ben ik er direct terug ingevlogen met 2 trainingen per week en interclub wedstrijden. Ik wou direct mijn beste niveau tonen, maar heb mij hierbij overbelast met een spierscheur in mijn rug als gevolg. In het begin was de pijn nog draaglijk en kon ik verder spelen als ik een pijnstillertje nam. Maar dat heeft het probleem alleen maar erger gemaakt. Ik kreeg wel oefeningen van de dokter om mijn rugspieren te versterken, maar dat hielp niet.

Toen ik tijdens een wedstrijd mijn rug opnieuw blesseerde gaf de dokter aan dat het beter was te rusten, niet meer te tennissen en mij te concentreren op mijn revalidatie. Ik heb dan in een aantal sessies bij de kine oefeningen gekregen om mijn rugspieren te laten herstellen en te versterken. Ik moet deze oefeningen ook nu nog blijven verderzetten.

Toch is je spelniveau opnieuw met een ruk de hoogte ingegaan. Je speelde bijvoorbeeld heel erg sterk in onze interne competitie eind november, de zogezegde ‘Horizon Champions League’ waar je het moest opnemen tegen hoog geklasseerden maar dat liep fantastisch. Vertel.

Na mijn revalidatie was ik zeer gemotiveerd om terug te tennissen.

Maar toen de interne competitie startte was ik nogal nerveus. Het was immers lang geleden dat ik nog wedstrijden had gespeeld en dan zeker tegen hoger geklasseerde spelers. Ik startte de kwalificatie voor de Champions League tegen Tristan, een heel goede speler. Ik was dus heel nerveus in deze eerste wedstrijd en haalde niet het niveau dat ik wilde halen. Ik heb die wedstrijd dan ook verloren.

De twee volgende wedstrijden in die kwalificatie zat ik beter in het spel en voelde ik mijn niveau telkens weer groeien. Ik heb ook deze wedstrijden verloren, maar ik kreeg toch terug meer vertrouwen.

In de Europa League nadien kwam ik uit tegen Katerina die echt wel op een hoog niveau speelt (90 punten). Met mijn herwonnen vertrouwen slaagde ik erin mij staande te houden. De match ging heel gelijk op tot 6-6, met lange rally's en in een spannende laatste matchbal kon ik een fout afdwingen waardoor ik de match won.

Zou je ook in het zomerseizoen van 2023 weer toernooien willen spelen?

Ja zeker. Maar ik wil het toch wat voorzichtig aan doen. En dan zien we wel hoe ver we geraken.

Wat met de interclub volgend jaar? Je kan weer deelnemen aan de competitie ONDER 17 jaar (zaterdag voormiddag) maar ook bij de heren (op zondag).

Ja, dat zou ik graag willen doen. Ik heb echt wel genoten van de interclub vorig jaar. Ik vond het leuk deel uit te maken van een team. Zeker naar het einde toe begonnen we echt op mekaar ingesteld te geraken. Dus kijk ik er wel naar uit om dit jaar opnieuw interclub te spelen.

Is je rugblessure nu achter de rug?

Ik zit toch nog altijd wat met mijn rug in mijn achterhoofd en zou dus eerder opteren voor de U17. Het gaat veel beter met mijn rug, maar soms heb ik zo nog het gevoel dat er “iets” is.

Wat zijn je plannen?

Dat is niet zo gemakkelijk om te beantwoorden.

Ik voel me goed en krijg meer vertrouwen dus ik wil zeker blijven tennissen. Graag wil ik ook blijven werken om mijn niveau verder te verhogen. En als ik zonder blessures kan spelen wil ik graag ook wat opschuiven in het klassement.

Maar tennis is in de eerste plaats een hobby en een uitlaatklep. Daarnaast heb ik ook mijn studies. Ik zit in het 5de middelbaar Wiskunde Wetenschappen. Dat vraagt natuurlijk ook wat tijd. Het gaat erop aan komen de ideale mix te vinden tussen studies en tennis.

Je kwam met heel Horizon van Zaventem naar Castle Club. Dat is toch een stap. Hoe bevalt dat?

Eigenlijk is er niet veel veranderd voor mij. De coaches zijn dezelfde gebleven. Het is een leuke bende. Het was even wat moeilijker met de lessen in De Zeype gezien de afstand, maar Castle is voor mij vlakbij.



Milan Rooijackers

Milan is geboren in 2008 en daarmee één van de grote beloftes van Horizon. Als 13-jarige begon hij aan dit seizoen en maakte de sprong van jeugdspeler (25 punten) naar het herentennis, waar hij grote stappen zette in de loop van het jaar om tenslotte in één ruk B-speler te worden (65 punten). Daarmee heeft hij bijna hetzelfde klassement bereikt als zijn oudere broer Yoren (70 punten). Milan beantwoordde onze vragen.



Recent ben je overgekomen naar Horizon. Is die stap je bevallen?

Uiteraard ! Ik ben in aanraking gekomen met een serieus werkende tennis school met veel goede en talentvolle spelers en trainers. Door met hen te trainen ben ik ook duidelijk beter geworden.

Hierdoor krijg je ook weer meer plezier in tennissen, mijn wedstrijden werden beter, spannender en ik won ook meer goede wedstrijden met techniek en tactiek.

Je spelniveau is met een ruk de hoogte ingegaan. Zag je de invloed van de trainingen in Horizon? Op welke vlakken werd je sterker de laatste maanden?

De intensiteit van de trainingen is omhoog gegaan. Ook ben ik fysiek en mentaal sterker geworden en kritisch op mezelf.

Je speelde in 2022 ook een fantastisch seizoen. Je sprong van amper 25 punten naar 65 punten! Dat zullen er je weinigen nadoen.

Ik heb 20 toernooien gespeeld. Mijn meest in het oog springende wedstrijd was een heel spannende, in de nacht om kwart voor 2 eindigende, wedstrijd in Bierbeek tegen Kenneth Fraipont :67 75 67, nipt verloren in tiebreak. Verder was er een 1/8 en 1/4 finale in arenal Meise waar mijn niveau hoog was : Bob Beazar in 2x tiebreak verslagen en vervolgens Pedro Costa uitgeschakeld 64 60. En tot slot ook een halve finale in Setpoint tegen de Fin Seppo Lattu, waar ik een dipje overwon 63 06 61

Zou je ook in het zomerseizoen van 2023 weer veel toernooien willen spelen?

Jazeker maar een goede planning is nodig want af en toe was er wel wat hectiek , zeker in de periode van de interclub. Einde van het voetbalseizoen, tennisturnoien en interclub combineren is niet eenvoudig. En af en toe naar school gaan ...

Je traint nu al regelmatig met de betere groepen.

Deze uitdagingen ga ik graag aan. Mijn tennisniveau zie ik toch enorm stijgen waardoor ik ook meer plezier in dit spelletje krijg.

Hoe ziet je wekelijks tennisprogramma er momenteel uit?

- Maandag een uur privé training
- Woensdag avond groepstraining van anderhalf uur, voorafgegaan door mentale training
- Vrijdag, zaterdag en zondag ook telkens anderhalf uur groepstraining

En daarbij speel je nog voetbal ...

Klopt. Goed voor mijn conditie. De voetbaltraining duurt anderhalf uur lang bij de U15A op dinsdag en donderdagavond. In het weekend staat er nog een voetbalwedstrijd gepland die 4x 20 minuten duurt. Mijn positie is achter de spitsen op 10.

Dus je kan wel zeggen dat mijn week in het teken staat van sport.

2 Nejdľ brothers Franti and Albert

The Nejdľ brothers joined Horizon a few years ago. In the meantime they became familiar faces that support a whole generation. Frantisek (2006), Franti for the friends, and Albert (2008) bring some real enthusiasm to the group and their evolution makes everyone dream. The youngest son, Tomas, will be ready soon.



Your level of play has impressively jumped up in only 2 years time.

Franti: Three years ago my ranking was C 30.1 when I started playing at Horizon. After 1 year I felt that trainings were more intensive, more demanding, and I had to think about what were my goals and objectives. I had to change my mentality. I thought this change would be difficult but it was not. The coaches and the players help me a lot. My new goal was set. I went from wanting to play “for fun” to wanting to win every tournament, to give my best and push my limits. By playing few tournaments I still managed to go up to C 15.4. The next year I was a full Horizon player I was feeling strong and happy with all my trainings, I was feeling that my capacity to win is growing. Unfortunately due to Covid-19 I could not play that many tournaments and gained only 1 ranking (C 15.3). But last year was much better. I was trying to give my best - I was coming exhausted home but knowing I was doing better and better. Then finally, the Covid restrictions were gone and we could train regularly. I was planning to play more tournaments than ever before. All the trainings were very professional and I would like to thank for that the HORIZON FAMILY. Thanks to the hard work I managed to get to B+2/6 (=70 points) Hard work pays off.

Albert: I can only confirm what my brother says about difficulties during covid times. I am happy that it is over. I also did major improvements thanks to the Horizon team and coaches in a such short time, jumping from 3 to 35 points in 2 years.

Was there some influence of Horizon and the players and coaches there?

Franti: I learned many new methods during last three years. Also throughout special Saturday activities when we play short matches against other players. It shows us what we are capable to do and what we have to work on yet. This activities bring the Horizon Family together, create beautiful memories and prepare all the players for the upcoming season. What I like is the competition between all the players and the encouragement received from the coaches who make pleasant atmosphere.

Albert: There are a few things that helped me get where I am now. First, there is a bunch of people that I am training with now that are nice on and off the court. We all improve gradually. There are 4 main coaches that all together can make an incredible difference on the players. Their attitude is very nice and their methods that we use are really professional.



Describe a week's schedule with all elements that are important according to you.

Franti and Albert: A week intensive schedule is composed of 5 tennis trainings, 1 mental preparation, 2 physical trainings with a coach and 1 physical training in which some of the players would meet and train together.

You played both a great season in 2022.

Franti: Yes, I am happy about my achievements in 2022. One of the best matches I have played this season was the final in Men 4 category in the Bois de la Cambre tournament. The motivation was clear, I knew that if I win a could be a B ranked player in the next season. The pressure was high on the last match. I played against an opponent about 45 year old. I saw him playing his semifinal and I saw that he was hitting well, he was phenomenal on foot and was capable to play every ball back, even when he was in troubles. The final match went perfectly for me. I knew that I could not let him start playing right left and so I took the initiative. I was playing left right, short to his forehand and backhand and finishing at the net. I won that match because of the variety that I learned in the trainings. The match was close, but the score does not correspond to the difficulty, I managed to win 6-1, 6-1. I have won in this season 26 out of 29 matches in Men 4 and 8 out of 13 in Men 3. I got a vice-champion title of the Brabant region in Men 4 and I enjoyed a lot the ceremony after the season. This was an exceptional year.

Albert: I won some hard and tight matches, I won a tournament in Aspria in 15.2 category and I tested my skills playing with adults in Les Églantiers and Mounier.

What ranking did you have one year ago? And now? What is the plan next year?

Franti: One year ago I was ranked C 15.3 and now my ranking is B+2/6. I would like to be B-4/6 next year but I would prefer not to put myself under too much pressure.

Albert: One year ago I had 10 points, C30.4 and now I have 35 points, C15.5. I am aiming to have 50 points in 2023.

Will you also play a lot of tournaments in 2023?

Franti: I will try to play as much as possible to get experience and maybe try to win some tournaments. As I will play Men 3, I don't have any concrete targets, I think it is important to go to every tournament with a clean head not to be disappointed, possibly to be positively surprised.

Albert: I hope I will participate in a lot of tournaments so my ranking goes up. I have to see how tennis tournaments go together with my school, I hope I will be able to do both.

Horizon trains in Castle Club now. Do you like the training this winter? You train in the highest group with some friends.

Franti: I like a lot the possibilities that the Castle Club offers to all the players and their families. For instance use of the gym area. I think that the Castle staff deserves a big thanks.

The group that I am training with is excellent one; all players are also very good friends. We have beautiful moments together on and outside of the court. On the court, we are focused and professional, we give 100% efforts to profit as much as possible from the training sessions. I remember nice time watching World Cup matches in the clubhouse with other players.

Have you already learnt a lot this year? In and aside tennis?

Franti: I would like to profit from the intensive program at Horizon. I will continue to improve every single shot. I am keen on comparing my game with other players in forthcoming tournaments.

I have learned a lot about other players for example about Damian Vavrik. We see each other at school and we talk about tennis, but not only. I have learned a lot about other players that I knew only by name. I am glad to confirm that tennis creates friendships that last.



Sophia Van Dorp

Hoe en waar startte je met tennis?

Ik ben begonnen met tennis toen ik 7 jaar was. Ik speelde toen op een privé-terrein bij vrienden in de buurt. Toen speelde ik maximaal twee uur per week met mijn papa, puur voor de fun en geen competitie. Op ongeveer 11 jarige leeftijd ben ik lid van een club geworden, het Zeen in Sterrebeek omdat mijn papa daar ook lid werd. Daar had ik ongeveer twee a drie uur les per week. Op die leeftijd begon ik ook met het spelen van toernooien en toen ik 13 jaar was had ik ongeveer 15 punten bij elkaar gespeeld.

In 2021 kwam je over naar Horizon. Waarom?

Om beter te worden. Om mijn techniek te verbeteren, maar ook voor betere resultaten tijdens de toernooien. Verder ben ik ook naar Horizon gegaan om nieuwe vrienden te maken die ook op goed niveau tennis spelen en er voor gaan. Het is beter om in een groep betere spelers te trainen dan recreatieve spelers die er niet voor gaan, dan blijf je zelf ook stil staan.

Je spelniveau is met een ruk de hoogte ingegaan. Zag je de invloed van de trainingen in Horizon?

Op welke vlakken werd je sterker?

De trainingen hadden een grote invloed op mijn spel. Ik zie dat ik een beter matchinzicht heb en dat ik beter weet hoe ik een match moet winnen. Ik weet nu veel beter wanneer ik moet aanvallen en wanneer niet. Ik had voor Horizon veel problemen met het spelen van een match omdat ik niet vast genoeg was en altijd wilde aanvallen. Ik ben qua mentale instelling ook sterker geworden doordat ik nu tactieken gebruik waarmee ik een match kan winnen. Tennis is meer dan techniek alleen en dat heb ik vooral geleerd. Het is vooral vertrouwen hebben in jezelf en niet opgeven, ook al sta je achter.

Je speelde in 2022 ook een fantastisch seizoen. Je sprong van amper 20 punten naar 50 punten!

Ik heb in 2022 veel dames 4 toernooien gewonnen. Ook in dames 3 heb ik enkele matches gewonnen. Ik had voor Dames 4 altijd dezelfde tactiek in mijn hoofd, namelijk alles terug te spelen, in de rally blijven en veel kruisen. Zeker tegen dames



De damensploeg regionale 5 na winst in De Zeype in de nationale eindronde met Daphne Wernaers, Sophia Van Dorp, Marie Brien, Katerina Hobzova

4 spelers werkt dat goed. Na een paar slagen zullen zij de bal buiten spelen of in het net. En dat recept werkte altijd. Elke match was op die manier te winnen. Tijdens mijn laatste dames 4 toernooi speelde ik tegen een hele fanatieke speelster en ze gaf alles terug dus moest ik ook gaan aanvallen om te winnen. Dat had ik dit seizoen veel minder gedaan maar toch lukte het door 'slim' aan te vallen om fouten te vermijden. Van een meisje (nu 75 punten) heb ik 2 keer dit seizoen heel nipt verloren. Ze is net als ik ook heel fanatiek en speelde met veel power dus als ik haar een te zwakke bal gaf dan maakte ze die direct af. Hierdoor moest ik mezelf ook aanpassen en ook met power gaan spelen en toch vast blijven in de rally. Daar heb ik veel van geleerd en hopelijk kom ik haar volgend seizoen weer tegen.

Een hoogtepunt was zeker de interclub. Je werd met je team gewoonweg kampioen van Vlaams-Brabant in Regionale 5. En in de eindronde van België liep het ook vlot! Vertel.

Interclub was heel erg tof en ik heb er echt van genoten. Zeker met Marie, Daphne en Katerina omdat we een goed team werden vanaf de eerste week. We haalden zelfs de nationale eindronde en wonnen daar ook de achtste, de kwartfinale en de halve finale van België. Het spelen van de finale van België in Sint-Truiden was ook een geweldige ervaring. Daar zijn we enorm trots op. Ook in de dubbels hebben we goed met elkaar gespeeld en veel geleerd hoe met elkaar een dubbel te spelen en op elkaar te vertrouwen. Ik kijk nu al uit naar de interclub van 2023.

Zou je ook in het zomerseizoen van 2023 weer veel toernooien willen spelen? Wat zijn je doelen en verwachtingen?

Ik zou heel graag weer veel toernooien willen gaan spelen in 2023. Nu dus dames 3 en hopelijk in de zomer dames 2. Mijn eerste doel is om dames 3 toernooien te gaan winnen en punten te pakken om te stijgen. Ik ga, denk ik, wel meer moeite moeten doen dan in dames 4, maar ik weet dat ik op het niveau van dames 3 speel dus moet dat lukken door er vooral in te geloven en door te zetten. Ik zal dit jaar in dames 3 vast moeten spelen, veel moeten kruisen maar ook meer moeten aanvallen. Dit jaar in dames 3 ben ik ook meisjes tegengekomen die heel agressief spelen maar niet vast zijn. Dan moet ik vooral focussen op het in de rally blijven en hen de fout laten maken. Bij andere meisjes moet ik vooral gaan aanvallen omdat zij ook vast zijn.

Momenteel traint Horizon in Castle Club. Hoe bevalt dat?

Heel tof, zeker omdat we de fitness mogen gebruiken tijdens fysieke training. Ook is er een leuke sfeer in de Castle club.

Je traint nu al regelmatig met de betere groepen. Is dat een uitdaging die je graag aangaat?

Ja dat doe ik wel graag. Ik train ook graag met Katerina en andere goede spelers. Tijdens de Champions League vond ik het niveau van de betere spelers wel hoog maar ik heb geleerd dat ik geen schrik moet hebben en in mijzelf moet geloven om te winnen. Met betere spelers trainen is fijn en je leert er veel van, maar ook met mindere spelers trainen helpt omdat je dan moet aanvallen en het initiatief moet nemen. Tegen een mindere speler sta je mentaal meer onder druk omdat je eigenlijk moet winnen. Van dat soort situaties leer je veel.



De jonge Sophia ontmoette Viktorija Azarenka de toenmalige nummer 1 van de wereld

“Ik ben qua mentale instelling ook sterker geworden doordat ik nu tactieken gebruik waarmee ik een match kan winnen.”

Heb je dit jaar heel wat bijgeleerd? Ook voor jezelf buiten het tennis?

Ja ik heb vooral geleerd om in jezelf te geloven tijdens match tennis en veel tactischer te denken met tennis. Alleen maar aanvallen werkt niet en je moet de zwaktes van je tegenstander en jezelf goed inschatten anders win je niet. Tijdens een interclub match stond ik 6-2 achter in een tiebreak na een hele slechte eerste set. Ik gaf niet op en won de tiebreak en de tweede set met 6-0. De mentale klap die ik het meisje gaf in de tiebreak hielp me in de tweede set. Ze geloofde er niet meer in en daar moet je van gebruik maken om snel te winnen en het af te maken. Daar heb ik van geleerd dat je altijd moet blijven vechten tot het laatste punt en een match zo maar in je voordeel kan veranderen.

Telmo and Nico Baltazar discover Horizon ...

Telmo, the father

You have seen quite a bit of the world and of tennis. Can you introduce yourself for our readers?

Born and raised in Portugal from a very young age I wanted to travel the world and work abroad. It was perhaps due the fact that we lived close to the airport in Lisbon. Seeing all those aeroplanes taking off and landing have certainly given me ideas to live abroad. I have been fortunate also to have a multi-national and multi-cultural family that also likes to travel whenever we can. Once my son Nico began playing tennis this has meant combining leisure with visits to Tennis Academies or staying in hotels with tennis facilities. We have seen a great deal of courts now... If we had to choose some I would say the Evert Tennis Academy in Florida, the Felner Tennis Academy and the Fred Gil Academy both in Portugal as well as the Trnava Tennis Academy in Slovakia. Each have their own qualities but they all know how to make the players feel at home. Nico has been, and at times with Damian Vavrik, at the Felner Academy in Portugal and at the Trnava Tennis Empire in Slovakia for entire weeks. This is good for them to develop as players but also good to gain a sense of responsibility living abroad for weeks in a row in well structured places and professional setting such as those three academies. Perhaps the best episode has been at the Evert Academy. Nico was there only for a day as we were travelling across the United States. So we drop him there early in the morning and when we came to pick him up in the afternoon, he was in a completely different part of the academy practicing with the best players there and being coached personally by Chris Evert. Imagine how we felt when we saw Chris Evert telling Nico how to improve his serve... and I guess that at the moment Nico had no idea who she was...and that he was being coached personally by someone who had won 18 grand slams! This Christmas we will try the South of Spain and visit the Sotogrande Tennis Academy



Chris Evert, Nico and his sister Luisa - three players sharing 18 Grand Slams victories!

Why did you come over to Horizon?

The good advice and recommendation of Tomas Kucirek and Tomas Nejd. They are colleagues at work and we met in a tournament a year ago. I was impressed to see how Daniel and Frantisek had evolved in tennis and the answer that the two Tomas gave me was: get in touch with Johan Teirlinck and his Project Horizon.

Nico has been playing tennis since a very early age in different clubs in the Brussels area (les Eglantiers, Set Wahis, Vietamine, etc) and has had the chance to learn from many good coaches such as Mehdi Seffrioui, Nicolas Wittouck or Vincent Pastur. More recently he has been coached by César Coutinho (César Coutinho Tennis Performance) at Oostkamp practising there - in addition to Les Eglantiers - once a week and during school breaks with excellent team players such as the Belgian number one U14 Nand Vandepoele or rising ITF Junior promises such as Indira Lepage, Romy De Baene, and Aypril Dhelft. In Brussels he practised at Les Eglantiers mostly with his friend and now Project Horizon partner Damian Vavrik. As César Coutinho was returning to Portugal last summer Nico needed to find a new top team. This was the right moment to meet Johan and the Horizon team.



...



How would you describe the methods and style of Horizon?

Positive and always aiming to extract the best of the individual players. Each tennis player is different and unique. They all have different sizes, skills, strengths. Some move better, others prefer to hit hard. Some have strong and accurate serves, others prefer to play more defensively with long exchanges. The way I see the Horizon practices is that there is not an intention to harmonise the style of play of these different players and format them in a "one size fits all" mould. There is instead a focus on the improvement of the individual strengths of each player. This allows the player to develop his or her own strengths without fears. I also like to see Johan and all the coaches developing the

competitive spirit and winning attitude. Tennis is a game where players go through a rollercoaster of emotions during the match. Johan knows that very well. And he knows how to teach players to focus on winning, in maximising their technical and physical tool box with the right attitude to explore the weaknesses of the adversary. This helps them find and use the right tool at the right moment. This is key to success in the game of tennis.

Was there some positive influence of Horizon and the players and coaches there?

Nico's first contact with Project Horizon was during the summer stages at the Castle Club. I saw from the moment he first hit



Nico with Fred Gil - one of the best Portuguese players of all times

with Eleni Kordolaimi and Mathieu Pauwels that he was going to enjoy his time here. The rhythm was intense from the first ball on. He knew that he would have to remain focused and give his best on every ball and at every practice! I also saw him integrating very fast with all coaches and players. This is easily done here because there is a competitive dynamic process of training with points being played constantly and the players moving up or down and to different courts as a result of their performance. This competitive dynamics makes them "game-ready" and forces all of them to give their best in each and every point. It also creates a lively environment throughout the session strengthening the camaraderie necessary to create and maintain a strong team. Today I see that he enjoys every moment of every practice with team players and the friendships that he is developing here.

Has Nico's level of play improved since he joined Horizon?

You have to ask him that. I say that he did improve a great deal already. I see him playing in a more relaxed way, not afraid of missing a ball here or there as he knows that there will be another opportunity to do better in the next ball. I see him also even more focused on the game and just on that whilst in the court. That is perhaps a part of the mental development that a player gets at Horizon which is to fight and making each ball count. This can make all the difference in a match and I have been seeing this evolution already since his time here.

Nico, the son

Will you also play a lot of tournaments in 2023?

Nico: I will certainly try! The issue is that we travel a lot during holidays and most of the AFT and TV tournaments are during school holidays. And these last couple of years the tournaments have been unusually full and it is hard to get a place if not applying in the first 30 minutes of online sign up. In addition I have also other commitments such as being the captain of the Varsity Tennis team at the International School of Brussels and their own tournaments. I enjoy competing for the "ISB - Raiders" and pay tribute to my coaches - Bernard de Koninck and Kevin Horst. I will nevertheless do my best to play as many tournaments as possible including the occasional Junior ITF, interclubs as well as doubles tournaments which I enjoy a lot too. This past week I have already played at Waterloo Tennis (AFT) - And started the season well with a first final after winning against a few 70-points players. My goal is to add more points to the ranking and, by summer, I hope to be playing Heren 1 draws systematically.

Horizon trains in Castle Club now. Do you like the training this winter?

Yes, very much so. I used to practice in Oostkamp (near Bruges) so this club is definitely near home. Castle Club is well equipped also with a good gym allowing us to work out and lift weights. This is essential for me to develop as a player. I also appreciate the good physical training practices with Rebecca van Orshaegen. She is a tough cookie who can really make us work hard and sweat. And the staff at the restaurant and at the reception makes me feel welcome at all times.



Nico with João Sousa - best ever Portuguese tennis player

You train in the highest group with your B-15 ranking, together with a lot of other players of B-15/1, B-15 and even B-15/2. Do you like that challenge?

Yes. It is a privilege to practice with the best of the best. Project Horizon has a great crop of top players (boys and girls) and they are always giving their best in each and every practice. Everybody takes all the exercises very seriously, listening to the advice and never taking no for an answer. This makes us excel. The fact is that playing with the best means that I have to give my best all the time. This increases my level as does to

everyone's level. As people say "a rising tide lifts all boats". Playing with the best has the same effect that is, of improving everyone.

Recently you were accepted in a USA College.

I was born in the USA as my parents worked in Washington DC but moved to Belgium at the age of 2. Nevertheless I always wanted to study and even work there. The US university system has the possibility to combine studies with sports. This made me, for the last couple of years, plan to pursue my studies whilst playing tennis in an American university with the help of a scholarship too. With the support of ASM scholarships (<https://asmscholarships.com/>) I was in touch with different universities throughout the year, talking to a series of tennis coaches and analysing curricula and living conditions including scholarship support. At the end I accepted an offer from Belmont Abbey College, a university based on the outskirts of Charlotte, North Carolina, and that plays in the NCAA II. The university has a good tennis team and, equally important, an excellent academic reputation. I look forward to moving there next summer and pursuing my studies in Sports Management whilst being a member of the "Crusaders" tennis team.

Have you already learnt a lot this year? In and aside tennis?
My father likes to say: "sometimes we win, sometimes we learn". So win or lose we are always learning. All the processes that I had to go to obtain the place in university made me learn that one needs always to work hard to pursue our dreams. Nothing comes easy. The same spirit that I found in the Project Horizon team and that is why I asked my parents if I could increase the number of practices a week. Work hard, win hard!



"Horizon is always aiming to extract the best of the individual players."



Lukas Tzimas

In 2022 Lukas reached big heights. Physically he left 1.80 cm behind him and is looking for 1.90 now, whereas his tennis level has brought him in a few years from C30 (30 points) when he joined Horizon to B-15/1 (95 points) now. He is actually number 311 in Belgian Tennis (Men). Lukas succeeded to win a few very strong Men 2 tournaments and tasted the odd international itf tournament. Born in 2007 Lukas will also be able to play on the international scene in 2023. But the main target will be to perform well in the Belgian Men 1 tournaments as he is keen to confirm his level of play in these tournaments against experienced players.



Lukas has done a great job on the physical side by integrating several high performance physical training sessions a week, and adding some 'homework' to it because a physical build-up of your body is a daily job. Also on the mental and tactical front Lukas has improved a lot. The mental sessions with Horizon have brought his tennis to a more conscious level and that is exactly where he will even become stronger in 2023.

Winning the national title alongside Daniel Kucirek in the UNDER 15 interclub was the perfect climax of a career in youth categories in Belgium. Now moving on to the adults where he did also grab the Provincial title in regional 1, proving by doing so that he is ready for next year's interclub in the national categories.

Nausicaä Lens

Some decent work during several years paid off this year as Nausicaä won some tournaments in Dames 2 before spending the summer in Czechia as she does every year as her mother is Czech. Born in 2008 she reached already this year some great results in the national interclubs. Nausicaä, although still 14 year, got into the national final UNDER 15 in Forest Hills. And in the adults she already played in National Dames 1 and ... won her first match quite easy against a B-15 although she still was B0 (75 points) then. In the meantime Nausicaä became more aware of her talent and she jumped to B-15, ready to go higher this year. Actually she is training in a very strong group in Horizon with a lot of girls such as Florence Fedeli and Katerina Hobzova but also very strong boys (between 65 and 95 points). One of these boys is her brother, Tristan, who is never leaving her side and both are gradually becoming better and better.

Her backhand is a remarkable one handed shot that has surprised many players and her fighting spirit is well known by her opponents. She will participate in 2023 in a lot of Dames 1 tournaments and in the national interclub with Horizon.



Katerina Hobzova

When did you start with tennis?

I started with tennis at the age of 7 or 8, in a small tennis school called Saint-Michel, after going there for a summer stage. Initially, I used to climb as a hobby. The climbing club was organising a summer stage where two sports were combined (half-day climbing and half-day another sport of choice). My mum recommended that I try tennis and I ended up really liking it. The first year I only played once a week and then started playing a little more. I ended up playing four times a week.

Why did you come over to Horizon?

In my previous club, there were no youngsters with whom I could play and most importantly, it was really more of a tennis school than a club. My old club wasn't aimed for players who play several times a week and compete in tournaments but rather for people who play "recreational" tennis. So there was no "structure" that could enable me to improve, not just technically but also physically. We knew that it was necessary to change if I wanted to get better. My dad got advised by players who already played in Horizon and that's how I came over.

Your level of play has impressively jumped up in only 2 years time. How was this possible?

At first, when I came to Horizon, I had 15 points. I would play some tournaments but not many because as my parents are not Belgian, we often go away for holidays. And we also didn't really know how the "system" works... But the first step to improving was getting better physically. During Covid, I started running with my parents and that improved my endurance. It also helped mentally because I understood that you only get better through hard work and overcoming your limits. Then during those 2 years, I just trained and attended as many trainings as possible, tennis ones, physical ones as well as mental ones. Last summers I got the chance to train in Slovakia with a great coach whose father used to train Ivan Lendl). Indeed, there was a period I didn't really feel like I was getting better and my ranking was still really low so I wasn't very motivated, but in the end, it did pay off. After joining Horizon I jumped up to B-15 (90 points) in 2 years time.

That is quite a performance! Was there some influence of Horizon and the players and coaches to achieve that jump upwards?

Horizon offered what I was missing: a structure. What's beneficial is that you get to play against many different players, who play really well and have very high rankings. This is motivating and pushes you to do your best. You also see that it's possible to get a higher ranking, something that I didn't really feel like achievable when I had 15 points. I like when, during trainings, we do exercises that resemble match situations. Because then, during a match, you can use it subconsciously when you're in trouble, because you have trained to play a specific pattern.

In what sense did you improve?

What I improved the most is my consistency and defensive game that has helped me to win in quite a few matches. During tournaments, I really felt like I could rely on it and that helped

me mentally. For instance, there were matches where it definitely didn't look like I had a chance to win, especially when starting in Dames 2, but I literally played for every point, even if sometimes, I didn't play my best tennis. I now understand that to win, always trying to make beautiful points, won't necessarily pay off. I started to take notes about each of my opponents and then used them when I played again against them (which happened quite often). I really tried to focus to keep my tactic. I think that overall my shots got better and I definitely improved my backhand and a little my serve too but there is still a lot of work to do, regarding all aspects of my game.



You played a great season in 2022. We can say it is really the year of the big breakthrough. At the beginning of the year you had only 30 points. And now 90!

I wasn't at all expecting to have 90 points. When we calculated with my dad, based on last year's margins, I was supposed to have 85 points. So I was quite surprised but obviously really happy. The 2022 season was definitely my best one yet. At the end of 2021, I started by playing in Dames 3, when I had 30 points. In my first tournament playing Dames 3, in Saint-Josse, I played 4 matches before losing in the semi-final against Elise Derome (now B-2/6), against whom I then played twice again and was able to win. After that, I won several tournaments

which enabled me to play in Dames 2, in 2022. In my first Dames 2 tournament, to my huge surprise, I was able to get to the quarter-finals, after having to go through several rounds in qualifications, where I lost against Emilie Ballintijn (now B-15), in quite a tight match, when I again surprised myself with the level I was able to play. The match I am the most proud of was against Rania Cruyt (B-4/6). I had lost against her before and when we played again I lost the first set 6-1 but then was able to come back and win. Then, this summer, at first I combined Dames 3 tournaments with Dames 2 because I wasn't sure how far I would get and the aim was to play as much as possible. As there was a mid-season new ranking I had then already 60 points and could play in both categories. One week, I was enrolled in 4 categories (2 tournaments) but it didn't exactly turn out how I thought it would, because I managed to win them all except for one, where I lost in the semi-finals. That week, I played 3 matches per day, almost every day and, at the end, I almost couldn't walk because of all the blisters that my new beautiful shoes had caused me to have. Another "fun" experience was when I won a tournament in Racing in 2 categories and as a reward, received 4 beers and 2 punches of flowers... In the end, it actually turned out to be handy because my younger brother took it to school to teachers who were really pleased.

The interclub was also a spectacular one. Your team won the title of Vlaams-Brabant in Regional 5 and also reached the finals of Belgium. Do you like interclubs?

It was my first year playing interclubs for Horizon, as a result of Covid, and I really liked it. It's different than normal individual tournaments because there's a team spirit. The way you play doesn't only affect you but also the others, so it gives you motivation to do your best and really fight for every game because it can be decisive, if there's a tie. I'm really happy with the result because it wasn't always easy. For my part, the singles were good as I managed to win all my matches but the doubles were sometimes a little more tricky because we were playing against players that were much more experienced in playing together. But it was a great experience and I think we made a great team, reaching the finals of Belgium. There, we played in a club far from Brussels, where they told us that we couldn't play on their surface with our shoes (it was raining so we were supposed to play inside...).

Would like to play in 2023 in the national interclubs?

Next year, I am really looking forward to playing again interclubs and of course, playing in the national one would be great and a new challenge.

Katerina jumped from C-15/5 (35 points) to B-15 (90 points) in one year.

Will you also play a lot of tournaments in 2023 in Dames 1?

I will try to play as many tournaments as possible in 2023. But obviously, I am aware that it'll be much harder, that every match will be tough and I will have to do my best. Every win will be a bonus. I'm not expecting the same results as last year, but the aim would be to get used to the level in Dames 1, and be able to go through the first rounds. Then, I'll see but only time can tell. Of course, my objective is to get a higher ranking or, at least, to keep the present one.

Horizon trains in Castle Club now. Do you like the training this winter?

You train in the highest group now with you B-15 ranking. Do you like that challenge?

Training in Castle Club is definitely more practical for me (or mostly for my parents, who drive me there as it's closer to where I live. I really like the trainings this winter as I get to play with really good players. It is challenging, and at first, getting used to the speed of balls was quite hard, but it's definitely beneficial and helps me to improve. The only thing that wasn't quite great, were the low temperatures on the courts at certain moments of the winter period. But you get used even to this...

Have you already learnt a lot this year? In and aside tennis?

This year, I had "real exams" for the first time and I really had to learn how to balance school and tennis. Aside from that, I "perfected" my cooking skills and can now make pasta! I learned this after getting food poisoning in Mallorca. We ate in a restaurant just next to a dock where Rafa Nadal's yacht happened to be parked so we had the perfect view on it. Nadal was not there but we went to see his Academy at least before... It was really cool but then I came back to Belgium and couldn't eat anything else but pasta and rice for a week.



PALMARES Interclub 2022: DE ZEYPE

Jongens 15 3 = eindronde tweede plaats Vlaams-Brabant met Albert Nejd, Julian Tengan, Vik De Neys en Aron Baranyi

Jongens 15 2 = eindronde derde plaats Vlaams-Brabant met Marco Butera, Mathis De Ranter, Vik De Neys

Jongens 17 3 = eindronde derde plaats Vlaams-Brabant met Jaro Emonds, Albert Nejd en Aron Baranyi

Meisjes 15 4 = eindronde derde plaats van Vlaams-Brabant met Paula Linnemann, Hanne Brien en Azra Pacal

Jongens 13 4 = KAMPIOEN van Vlaams-Brabant met Hendrik Vanderherten, Mageno Devroye en Ivaylo Pamukov

Jongens 15 1 = KAMPIOEN van Vlaanderen met Daniel Kucirek en Lukas Tzimas

Meisjes 15 1 = VICE-kampioen van Vlaanderen met Dorien Kappetijn, Nausicaä Lens en Katerina Hobzova

SUPRA Dames (regionale/nationale) = kwartfinale van België met Lissa Van Quickenborne, Nausicaä Lens, Dorien Kappetijn, Florence Fedeli, Fredo De Dooy, Lotte Vermeylen, Charlotte Schurmann

Dames Regionale 5 = KAMPIOEN van Vlaams-Brabant en VICE-kampioen van België in de nationale eindronde met Katerina Hobzova, Daphne Wernaers, Sophia Van Dorp en Marie Brien

Heren Regionale 1 = KAMPIOEN van Vlaams-Brabant en kwartfinale van de nationale eindronde met Lukas Tzimas, Daniel Kucirek, Yvan Bienfait, Sander Cauwelier, Mathieu Pauwels en Lucas Hertsens

Dames Nationale 1 = HALVE FINALE van BELGIË tegen en in Embourg met Alice Ramé, Ashley Lahey, Chelsea Vanhoutte, Eleni Kordolaimi en Rebecca Van Orshaegen





