

# The Belgium Road

with Marc Coudron

From the series :  
Best Practice Sharing of  
Innovative and Disruptive  
Field Hockey Skills Erasmus+  
Program 2019 - 2020



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# A talk with Marc Coudron



One of the silent forces behind the Belgian rise is Marc Coudron, ex-record international with 358 selections and president of the federation since 2005.

“As the Lions have advanced to the world top, our hockey girls will do the same.”



# Key messages

- It's possible for any nation to achieve what we did, but it needs a number of things to come together (Marc Coudron)
  - Since 2005 - evolution at all levels
  - Keep values of hockey (respect, fair play, teamspirit)
  - Well managed organization
- “The impossible is temporary” (Mohammed Ali)





# Red lions on top of the world



Belfius - Red Lions World Champions  
<https://youtu.be/n1wijcsiUZM>





# Intro

Many are admiring the Belgium rise in hockey and they have reasons to do so. The Belgium men's team became world champion and the ladies' team are moving up in the ranking fast.

Belgium is for many a great example as it was considered a “medium” hockey country some years ago.

We spoke with Marc Coudron, ex-record international with 358 matches, ex-captain and president of the federation since 2005 of the Belgium hockey federation to learn what others can learn from this ...

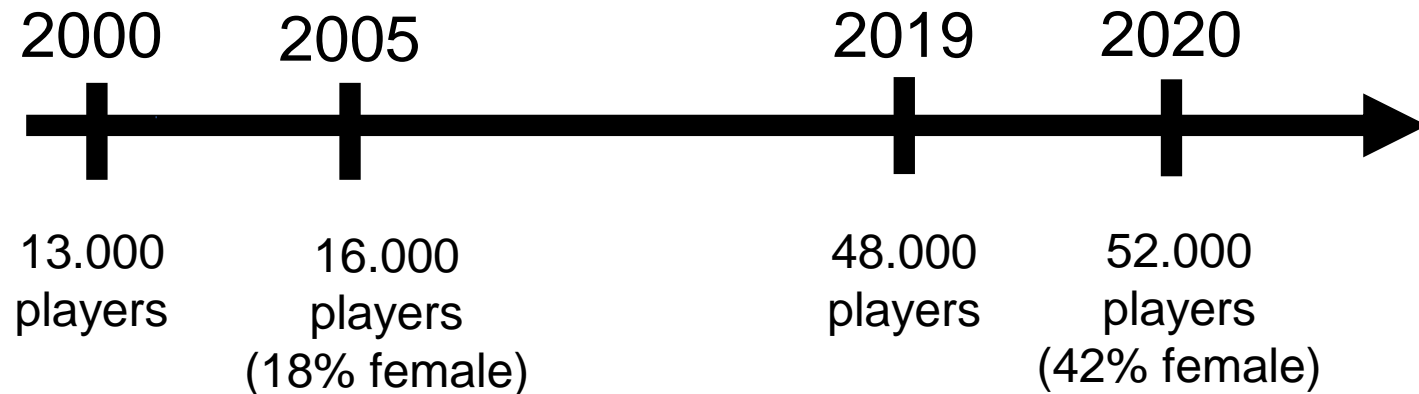


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# Awakening starts 2005

- Clear, quality-driven project
- Quality of league increased by foreigners playing coming to play in Belgium
- Help from the BOIC (Belgian Olympic and Interfederal Committee) and firm belief that hockey can be an Olympic winner
- Hopes of hosting major events in Belgium





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We started the evolution at all levels with a well managed organization. It was important to have a permanent dialogue based on our values on and off the pitch. We had the luck that in 2004 we entered the Olympic committee program - "be gold" -> U16 European Champion

# Positive Image

## Irrefutable values

- Respect
- Fair play
- Friendship
- Tolerance
- Team spirit

## A sport for the entire Family

- (Young) families with children
- Girls and boys
- Young & old(er) alike



**WE RESPECT**

- #01 Je respecte les adversaires
- #02 Je respecte les arbitres
- #03 Je respecte le public
- #04 Je respecte les infrastructures
- #05 Je respecte mon coach
- #06 Je respecte mon club
- #07 Je respecte mes équipiers
- #08 Je respecte mon corps
- #09 Je respecte les perdants
- #10 Je respecte le hockey



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# Strong values and the need to live them every day

The Belgium federation has defined strong values but is also ensuring that they are living them every day.

Those values were discussed with players of the national teams and are used as kind of guiding stars.

*Questions to the audience: What are your values actually? Do you have your values defined? Why are values important? How can they help to build up hockey in your team/club/country ?*



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We needed a strategy to have longterm development at all levels. And we were glad to have the support of the clubs – they wanted to develop too and international players wanted to play in the Belgian league.



# GROWTH OF MEMBERSHIP

**+6-10% every year**

"On boarding"  
of the Clubs is  
ESSENTIAL

## A sport for everybody with strong value

- Young girls = fastest growing segment
- New categories : Ladies – Gents – Hockey Together

## A good proposal for sponsors

- 50% in Flanders – 50% in Brussels & Wallonia
- Belgian hockey community = around 250 000 people (family & friends)
- 95 clubs in Belgium, more and more national spread

## Fastest growing team sport in Belgium

- 2000 13 000 players
- 2005 16 000 players
- 2010 25 000 players
- 2012 30 000 players x 3
- 2014 35 000 players
- 2015 37 500 players
- 2019 49 000 players

# Clubs professionalized and stepped up their efforts

- About 20 years ago the clubs started to professionalize. Clubs started to pay players which also attracted talented players from abroad. This strengthened the national league and thus also the level of the Belgium players playing in the national team. Belgium players also started to play abroad in the strongest leagues in the world.
- The federation and clubs were also open to learn from others and consciously or unconsciously they improved the governance of the clubs by cooperating with the Dutch and German hockey federation. They were hungry ....

*Questions to the audience: in case your club/country can not pay for European top players, what would be possible instead ? What other ways can your clubs contribute to the success of the national teams ? How can your club improve the overall level of hockey in your country ?*





# Belgium development in 4 periods with a clear and inspirational vision

## 2005-2008: Closing the gap

become able to fight an equal game with European top teams

- To be part at Olympic and World up each time, we were lucky to qualify 2008 for the Olympics (4:3 vs GER) -> 9<sup>th</sup> place



# 2009-2012: Keep the flame burning

Once we've closed the gap we need to keep energy, keep improving to keep the inner flame burning and the believe that we can get even better

- We wanted more – with men and women! We started to level the budget (men/women) – in the past men's budget was 8 times higher. We missed the World Cup 2010. But we qualified for London with women and men!
- 2009 and 2011 -> European Champion U18 and then U21 (2012). We had a generation of really good talents.





# 2013-2016: Push to the podium

We want to be a permanent member on the podium

- Our big target was to create the best environment (staff) and to work with the best coaches we could get/pay.
- 2013: European Championship -> men 2<sup>nd</sup> and women 4<sup>th</sup>
- World Cup -> men „only“ 5<sup>th</sup> and women 12<sup>th</sup>
- 2015: European Championship -> men 5<sup>th</sup> and we changed the coach after that
- 2016: Olympic Games Rio -> men 2<sup>nd</sup>



A close-up portrait of Shane McLeod, a man with short, light-colored hair, looking slightly to the right. The background is blurred green foliage.

# SHANE MCLEOD

National Hockey Coach, World Cup Gold Medal winner & Motivational Speaker

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***“Talent wins games,  
but teamwork and  
intelligence win  
championships. “***





**THROWBACK  
THURSDAY**

**ARG VS. BEL  
FINAL  
RIO 2016**



**OLYMPIC  
CHANNEL**



# 2017-2020: Together at the top and stay there

“All together” means to involve everyone (incl. sponsors) into the development.

“Tokyo and beyond” and to go on with development - to stay at the highest level we can reach

- Players pushed themselves “red is the new gold”!
- 2017: European Championship: men 2<sup>nd</sup>, women 2<sup>nd</sup>
- 2018: World Champion men
- 2019: European Champion men









“

If we succeed, it is possible, that others can succeed. Our main problem was our mentality – we always tried not to loose. Now they play to win!

# I believe, you believe, we believe

Marc felt that the tipping point was a moment years ago when they started to believe it is possible to get to the Olympics and win medals.

“It was like pushing through a glass ceiling made by ourselves, it limited us, but now they play to win”.

2006 and 2010 we didn't qualify for the World Cup – but we always know that the bright side of your life will be there! So we had to go for the next tournaments.”

And to say it like Mohammed Ali "Impossible is temporary“.



# Money?

- Money is not decisive but it is an important enabler/booster.
- Olympic Committee committed to supporting a number of olympic sports financially enabling them to reach for gold. The timing was perfect and this impulse helped the national teams to professionalize and to prepare in a more professional way.
- International top trainers were connected to the national teams (which is the case until today) which was a great influx of know-how moving the level up which resulted in the first major international results

*Questions to the audience: What is possible in your country/club in this area ? Have you really tried already all options to get support ?*



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# Main points of the success of Belgium



The most important points are

- Manage the development
- Try to progress
- More sponsors, more trainer, more ..., more ...

Great thanks to the clubs - clubs were supporting with new members and we helped the clubs to develop. We cooperated with KNHB -> not only on a sport level, but also with media, communication, ...

We started in 2005 with 10 water based pitches, now we have got around 50 and around 45 semi-sanded pitches. We are 100 clubs and nearly everyone has an own pitch.

# Reference materials

- <https://www.dnaindia.com/sports/report-men-s-hockey-world-cup-how-red-lions-found-their-roar-2697302>
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- [https://www.nieuwsblad.be/cnt/dmf20170828\\_03038773](https://www.nieuwsblad.be/cnt/dmf20170828_03038773)  
28.08.2017
- 2019 – what a year <https://youtu.be/ZXdu6IJgQKc>
- 2019 – After Movie European Cup <https://youtu.be/vh949V9Tbzs>
- 2018 – Belfius - Red Lions World Champions  
<https://youtu.be/n1wijcslUZM>



# Thanks

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Big thanks to :

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# Thank you



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