

# CASE STUDY: TOPSPORTSLAB / WILLEM II

## SURVIVING THE EREDIVISIE ON €2.5m STAFF BUDGET



### SITUATION

Founded in 1896, named after the King, Willem II has a rich history in the Dutch professional football leagues. Despite never winning the Eredivisie, the club finished runner-up and qualified for the Champions League in 1999. In 2013 Willem II started work with TopSportsLab and got promoted to the Eredivisie. Despite this success, their financial situation was precarious as their budget was nearly the lowest in the league (€2.6m excl. stadium rental fees).

### THE CHALLENGE

Willem II realised that in order to achieve success with a minimal budget, they would have to become smarter and leaner. They made the decision to implement cutting-edge performance management and injury prevention systems by TopSportsLab.

Willem II is historically known for its successful youth academy. Unfortunately, after their relegation in 2012 they had to abandon their ambitions in this area.

### THE VISION

- At the start of the 14/15 season Willem II was in 'survival mode' with far less emphasis on long term strategising.
- Once survival is ensured Willem II would move into a new development phase: *Stabilisation*
  - Key technical staff and loaned players will be offered long term contracts
  - A new long term strategy encompassing a youth development plan would be developed
- Increase operational efficiency across all club functions
- Improve professionalism and increase integration with the youth programme
- Become an attractive transfer club for players in the Netherlands and Belgium once again.

### PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- Subsequent to a successful trial and the club's promotion in 2013, TopSportsLab is confirmed as a long-term strategic partner.
- A structured player tracking, screening, injury prevention and continuous monitoring programme was developed.

#### Performance Enhancement & Injury Prevention:

##### 6 Steps towards continuous improvement

- **Step 1:** A baseline analysis of the athletes is established through professional screening.
- **Step 2:** Periodic assessments carried out to measure on-going physical performance including a series of motor abilities.
- **Step 3:** Individual medical risk profiles are developed for each player allowing Step 4.
- **Step 4:** Creation of custom injury prevention programmes.
- **Step 5:** Continuous player monitoring programmes are introduced which tracks HR data. TSL's proprietary *Overuse Indicator* function proactively identifies players at risk of injury so they can be prevented before they happen.
- **Step 6:** The data is further supplemented and programmes improved through the use of daily player fatigue questionnaires administered through mobile devices.

##### Next Steps

- Full integration with Youth Academy
- Integration of GPS technology to further boost injury prevention
- Further individualisation for athlete improvement plans.

### ACHIEVEMENTS 2013-2015

#### Football

- Promotion to Eredivisie in 2013
- Ranked 9<sup>th</sup> half way through 14/15 season.

#### Financial

- Willem II plays with a squad of 22 players (average Eredivisie: 32).
- Willem II has been able to prepare 2-3 players for transfer to top teams, and they have been able to secure / recruit several key *transfer free* players (formerly on loan).

#### Sports Science

- Willem II ostensibly fit with many wins in the last 10 minutes of the match.
- Implementation of TopSportsLab injury prevention strategy has led to a substantial decrease in general injuries. Magazine *Voetbal International* reported "zero" injuries prior to the second half of the season.

#### Other significant notes

- Willem II has hired a new technical director, Carlos Aalbers, known both as a value creator and an innovator.
- In Jan 2015, head coach J. Streppel signs a 2 year contract.
- Willem II invests in an extra in-season physical screening event in March 2015 to make sure its squad remains intact until the end of the season. Willem II is now ranked 8<sup>th</sup>.
- In Jan 2015 Willem II has re-established its own Youth Academy.