

ERASMUS UNIVERSITY ROTTERDAM

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Bachelor Thesis [Strategy Economics]

Competition Distortion in the Keuken Kampioen Divisie

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The views stated in this thesis are those of the author and not necessarily those of the supervisor, second assessor, Erasmus School of Economics or Erasmus University Rotterdam

## Abstract

This paper examines the role of Jong teams in the Keuken Kampioen Divisie. The past years there has been a growing concern that Jong teams are causing competition distortion. This study investigates whether that concern is legitimate. Opponents of Jong teams argue that Jong teams play with different players depending on which day you play them and that this is causing an unfair advantage to some teams.

Points per game, number of experienced players, average age, market value and betting odds turned out to be good indicators to prove the possibility of competition distortion. Regression analyses were performed to see if these variables changed significantly solely depending on which day the match is played. Our analysis shows a strong correlation between all variables indicating competition distortion and the day that the Jong teams play their match. The observed effect was largest for Jong Ajax, followed by Jong AZ and lastly Jong Utrecht. Only Jong PSV did not show significant effects pointing to competition distortion.

Interviews were sent out to all twenty teams in the Keuken Kampioen Divisie to find out what the advantages and possible solutions for this problem might be, unfortunately only two teams responded. We conclude that there are too many societal and mainly economic benefits to remove Jong teams out of the Keuken Kampioen Divisie, however there are changes that can be made to the schedule to improve the current situation.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

On Monday September fifth, Jong Ajax beat the champion candidate Heracles Almelo with a final score of 4-0, two of the goals were scored by Lorenzo Lucca and 3 assists were given by Francisco Conceição. Both players usually play for the senior Ajax teams and carry a shared market value of 14 million euros, this while the entire selection of Heracles Almelo is worth only 10.88 million euros according to Transfermarkt (Transfermarkt, z.d.). Heracles's main competitor Pec Zwolle played Jong Ajax on Friday September 30<sup>th</sup>. Instead of facing the, on paper, superior players Lucca and Conceição, Pec Zwolle faced the younger and less experienced Christian Rasmussen and Jaydon Banel, two players who are worth less than 1 million euros together. The final score was a 1-1 draw, which caused Pec Zwolle to catch up to Heracles.

Since the introduction of Jong teams in the Keuken Kampioen Divisie there has been a growing concern that playing against Jong teams can be seen as a lottery and that this is causing a competition distortion, this claim is researched in this paper.

Since the 2013/2014 season Jong teams are a part of the Dutch football pyramid. The introduction of Jong teams was supposed to encourage resistance for young, talented players and thus allow for more talent development. The highest level where Jong teams are allowed to participate is the Keuken Kampioen Divisie, the second tier in the Dutch football pyramid. Jong Ajax, Jong PSV & Jong FC Twente joined the second-tier division in 2013/2014. Since then, Jong FC Twente has left while Jong FC Utrecht and Jong AZ have joined the second tier, currently leading to the participation of 4 Jong teams in the Keuken Kampioen Divisie .

'Jong' teams can be seen as a second team of the biggest clubs, where talented players can receive playing time instead of sitting on the bench with the first team. To ensure fairness the KNVB implemented a few rules for 'Jong' teams (KNVB, z.d.):

- Jong teams can only have players who are 23 years old or younger.
- Jong team goalkeepers cannot be older than 25.

- Players are not allowed to play in the Jong team if they either started in the game of their first team that week or if they played more than 45 minutes in the first team that week.

## 1.2 Relevance

Over the years some of the best Dutch footballers who currently play, for example Matthijs De Ligt, Frenkie De Jong and Cody Gakpo, have started their career in the second-tier division playing for Jong teams. This shows that since the introduction of the Jong teams, the goal of allowing for more talent development has been achieved. This makes one think that the introduction of these Jong teams is a great success. However, despite these great talents who started their careers in Jong teams there has been a growing concern regarding these teams. The main argument being that your chances of winning against Jong teams greatly vary based on which day of the week you play them. The reason for this argument is that they will play with a stronger squad if the game takes place after their first team's game compared to if they play before the first team's game that week. The competition of the Jong teams is saying this is unfair. An example of an opponent the concept of Jong teams is former head coach of Sparta Gert Kruys. In an interview with AD Kruys explained what the biggest issue is with Jong teams: "If we had to play against Jong Ajax, it was still a question of which team they would show up with. It keeps amazing me, it is just completely unfair. They suddenly show up with about nine other names every week. That's just not possible." (Van der Maten, 2020). Kruys is not the only one saying this, there is a large group of opponents who feel that Jong teams are much stronger or weaker depending on which day of the week you play them. When you play a Jong team before their first team plays that week (in the Eredivisie), Jong teams do not line-up their best players, this is to have the possibility to line them up with their first team's game. However, if you play a Jong team after their first team had their match, all players who did not start or played more than 45 minutes could be in the Jong team's line-up. According to opponents of the Jong teams this leads to a stronger Jong team when played after the first team instead of before the first team.

All Keuken Kampioen Divisie teams play the four Jong teams eight times in a season, whether they get to play them before or after their respective first teams is random. A team

can be lucky and only face the Jong teams on Fridays, but it is also possible that a team faces the Jong teams on mostly Mondays, when there might be superior players available.

Because of this, the Keuken Kampioen Divisie is like a casino, says opponent of Jong teams Van Kessel (2022). The specific day you play a Jong team is purely luck. According to Van Kessel, when there is such a big luck factor involved, it is not a fair competition.

Despite the discussions surrounding this topic there has been no academic research yet. This paper aims to draw useful conclusions about the current situation, and in case of a problem this paper will also lead to recommendations to solve this problem.

### **1.3 Reading Guide**

In chapter two of this thesis the main research question is given and explained, as well as all necessary sub-questions with corresponding hypotheses. In chapter three the method and data follow, the data is quickly described and the choices about how this research was conducted are argued here as well. Chapter four covers the results, following the methods explained earlier. All sub-questions and the main research question are answered. Chapter five shows the conclusions about the results and offers ideas for future research. Lastly, the references and appendix close this paper.

## **2. Research questions and hypotheses**

### **2.1 Main research question and hypothesis**

In this thesis, research will be conducted to accept or reject the claim that Jong teams in the Keuken Kampioen Divisie unfairly influence the outcome of the competition. The main research question of this thesis is:

Is there competition distortion in the Dutch Keuken Kampioen Divisie by the 'Jong' teams?

The hypothesis for the main research question is: There is competition distortion by Jong teams. The writer of this paper hypothesizes that Jong teams have significantly different line-ups depending on if they play their match on a Thursday or a Friday (before their first team) or on a Monday or a Tuesday (after their first team). This can easily be concluded by the fact that Jong teams have different players in their line-up depending on which day they play. The opposing teams cannot change anything about this and so the chances of winning

for all teams in this competition against Jong teams is significantly different solely based on which day of the week the team faces a Jong team, this would indicate that there is competition distortion.

## 2.2 Sub-questions and hypothesizes

The main research question of this paper cannot be answered by itself, it needs more clarification and depth. One of the first questions that comes to mind when answering if there is competition distortion is: “what exactly is competition distortion”. This needs answering before more research can be conducted. The first sub-question is:

What is competition distortion? Through which variables can competition distortion be explained?

Competition distortion can be seen in many ways, every aspect that gives teams an unequal opportunity can be seen as unfair. For Jong teams, it can be seen as unfair that they seemingly play with different teams depending on which day you play them. To see if this is truly the case one might look if the average age, number of players with first team experience or the betting odds significantly change depending on when you play the Jong team.

After explaining what competition distortion is and how it can be found one might be able to take a first step towards answering the main research question. However, there are multiple Jong teams in the Keuken Kampioen Division. It is possible that some of the teams cause some sort of competition distortion while others do not. To make right and fair conclusions all teams need to be looked at separately, this brings the following sub-question:

In case of competition distortion, does the degree of competition distortion differ per ‘Jong’ team?

The hypothesis for this sub-question is that the degree of competition distortion does not differ among the Jong teams. The prediction is that all Jong teams play with different teams according to which day they play. Each Jong team will have a much stronger line-up if their

first selection has had a game a few days prior in comparison to when their first team still has a game coming up.

If our hypotheses are right and there is indeed competition distortion, only knowing that there is competition distortion would be useless. Society rarely ever improves by just knowing what is wrong, society improves when solutions are presented. This gives the following third sub-question:

What could be possible solutions to competition distortion?

A possible solution that comes to mind is to let every team play against a Jong team once on a Thursday or Friday and once on a Monday or Tuesday. This is currently not the case, at this moment the playing schedule is assigned randomly, leading to some teams mostly facing Jong teams before the weekend, while others mostly face Jong teams after the weekend. If this could be implemented this might be able to give each team the same chances of winning against Jong teams as well as against other teams. Another possible solution could be to add a new rule for Jong teams, for example players are only allowed to have played a certain number of games for the first team. Later on in this paper these solutions, and maybe others, are thoroughly reviewed to see if they are feasible and if they would solve the competition distortion.

Lastly, assuming that there is indeed competition distortion by the Jong teams, there must be reasons that these teams are allowed to play in the Keuken Kampioen Divisie. The Jong teams must bring advantages to itself, other teams and the whole Dutch football sector. In the final sub-question, all the advantages of Jong teams are looked at and they are being compared to the disadvantages to see if they outweigh them, this brings the last sub-question:

What are the advantages of Jong teams? Do these advantages outweigh the disadvantages?

Because Jong teams still exist and they have generated some world class talents (Matthijs De Ligt, Frenkie De Jong etc.) the last hypothesis is that there must be large advantages that outweigh the disadvantages of Jong teams. And while it might be easier to find advantages



for the Jong teams themselves and for the whole Dutch football sector there should also be either financial or societal benefits for the rest of the teams in the Keuken Kampioen Divisie.

### 3. Method and Data

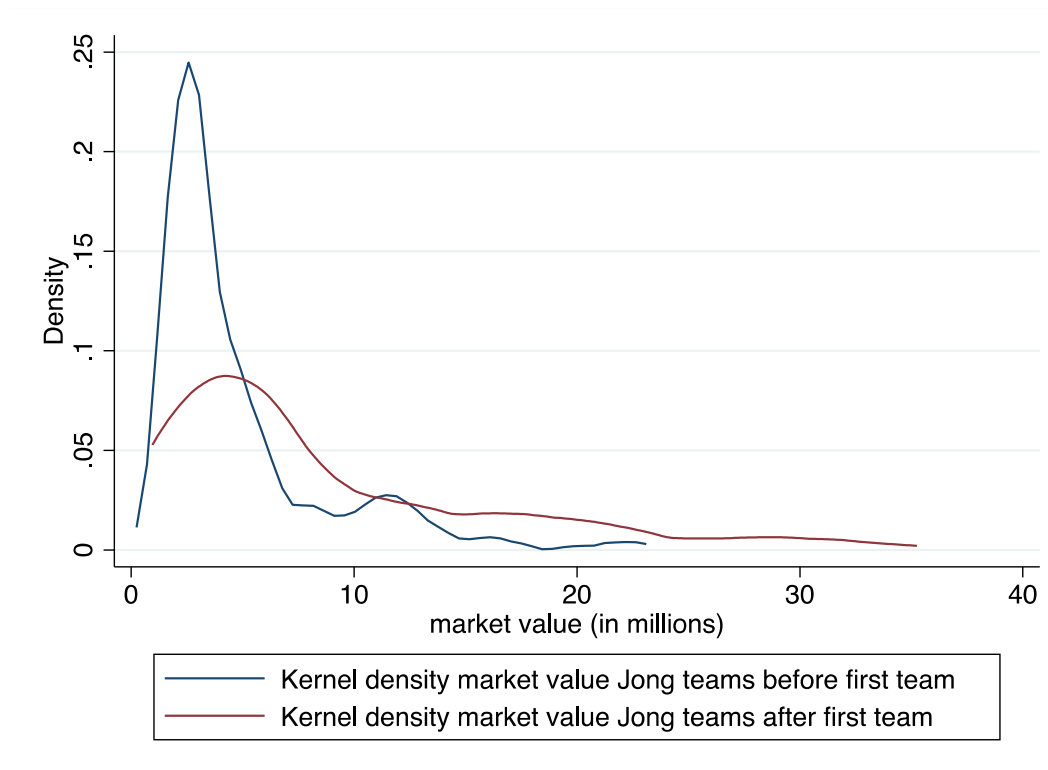
This paper uses mixed methods research, the results are expressed in both words and numbers. Mixed methods research allows for both the detailed, rich insights of qualitative data and the generalizability and high external validity of quantitative data. The main research about competition distortion is conducted through quantitative research, however most sub questions has been answered with qualitative literature research.

Data needed for answering questions about competition distortion from Jong teams is collected by desk research, databases have been investigated, and numbers analyzed. For this research the databases that are used are:

- Transfermarkt (<https://www.transfermarkt.nl>), on this database data such as matchday, results, average age of team, market value of starting eleven of all teams can be found.
- OddsPortal (<https://www.oddsportal.com>), on this website betting odds from all games in the Keuken Kampioen Divisie can be found.

All necessary variables from the past 3 seasons can be collected from these websites. All matches where Jong teams play each other are excluded from the dataset. This is because when Jong teams play each other, a few different rules apply, for example the goalkeeper can have any age, these games could harm the validity of the research into the average age of teams. Also, because the Keuken Kampioen Divisie consists of 20 teams and the Eredivisie consists of 18 teams there are observations where the Jong team plays, but the Eredivisie team does not. When this is the case, this is counted as if they played after their first team. This choice was made because when the first team does not play the Jong team can use all available players just like they can when they play after the first team. This results in a dataset with 384 observations. The completed dataset is imported into Stata where regression analysis can be performed on the data. These regression analyses tell which variables are significantly influenced and this either supports or rejects the hypothesis that there is competition distortion. In this paper effects are considered significant at a

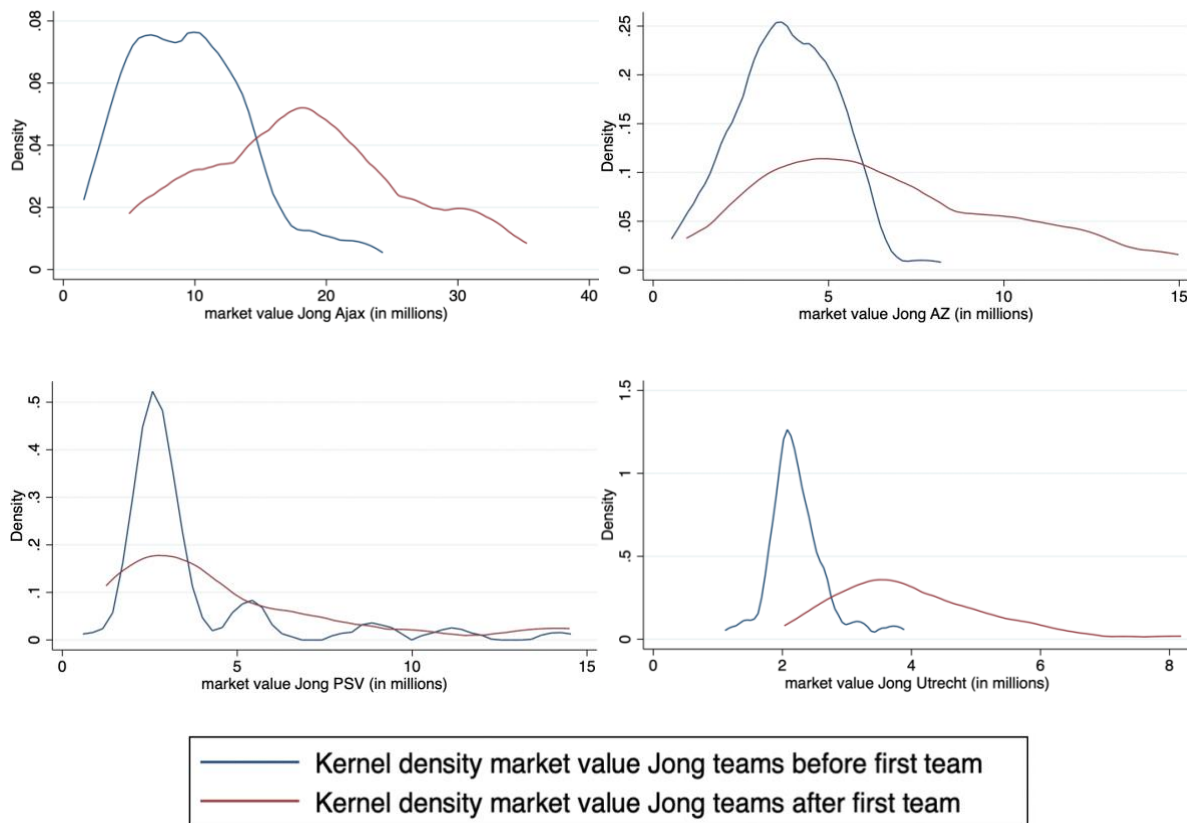
confidence rate of 95%. All matches in the dataset have already been played and nothing about them will ever change, so it can be assumed that if this study were repeated the results would be the same, which proves validity.



**Figure 1**  
*Kernel density diagram of market value of all Jong teams when they play before and after their first team*

Figure 1 aims to describe some of the data and show the problem there currently is. In Figure 1 there are two Kernel densities plotted next to each other. The blue line shows the density of the market value of the Jong teams when they play before their first team, and the red line shows the density when Jong teams play after their first team. A quick look at this already shows the problem at hand. Both lines have a concentrated distribution around their peak with both having a diverging line to the right. However, the red line, corresponding to the market values when the Jong team plays after their first team, is placed more to the right than the blue line. The red line's center of the distribution is almost 2 million euros higher than the blue line's center of distribution. This indicates that when Jong teams play after their first team the market value of their starting eleven is considerably higher. Some teams only face Jong teams on matchdays before their first team

(on the blue line), other teams only face Jong teams after their first team (the red line). This means that some teams get 'lucky' and have a good chance of playing a Jong team which is most likely worth considerably less than when they would have played them a few days later, giving them a better chance at a good result than the unlucky teams who play Jong teams after their respective first teams have played.



**Figure 2**

*Kernel density diagram of market value of Jong teams separately when they play before and after their first team*

Figure 2 shows the problem stated in Figure 1 for every Jong team separately. A look at the data shows that Jong Ajax has two completely different kernel density diagrams based on when they play their match. Jong Ajax's center of distribution of market value is nearly doubled when they play after their first team. This is indicating a big difference what team Jong Ajax puts on the field purely based on the day their match is played, which could be indicating a significant competition distortion. Jong AZ also shows a distribution which is more to the right and diverges further to the right when they play after their first team. It seems to be less than Jong Ajax, however Jong AZ still has different distributions of market value based on when they play. Jong PSV is the only Jong team where there is no

competition distortion at first sight. Jong PSV has two distributions, before and after their first team plays, which look similar. Lastly Jong Utrecht does show two different distributions. The center of Jong Utrecht is almost doubled when they play after their first team and is also diverged to the right a lot more when they play after their first team. Figure 2 is illustrating that Jong Ajax, Jong AZ and Jong Utrecht have different line-ups with different market values based on if they play before or after their first team. This can be a sign of competition distortion.

To help answer some of the other sub questions, for instance solutions for the problem Jong teams bring or advantages of Jong teams, interviews are sent out to people working in the football industry. These are structured interviews where all questions are the same for all respondents. The interviews consisted of 3 open questions so that all respondents could express how they feel about the situation, the questions asked are:

- What do you or your club think could be possible solutions for the assumed competition distortion caused by Jong teams?
- In your or your club's opinion, what are the advantages of Jong teams?
- Do you think the advantages of Jong teams outweigh the disadvantages, or vice versa?

These interviews were sent out to all 20 Keuken Kampioen Division clubs on June first. Out of these twenty clubs, six clubs answered that they did not want to participate in the interview, however two clubs did participate in the interview and gave their opinions.

Besides interviews, literature review was also done to help answer these types of questions. The literature needed is mostly extracted from Google Scholar (<https://scholar.google.com>), this is a database with more than 100 million scientific articles. This gives an overview of already known information about the topic, which helps form a better context for this paper's questions. An attempt has been made to use mainly objective sources where the authors did not have commercial interests.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Competition Distortion across all Jong teams

Before answering the main research question, it is important to answer the first sub question first: What is competition distortion? Through which variables can competition distortion be explained?

In general, both athletes and sports-enthusiasts want sports to be fair, but how can “fair” be defined exactly? Leaman & Morgan (2007) describe unfairness in sports as the principle of when equality of chance beyond differences of skill and strategy is violated. When this happens, it is seen as cheating and lying, for example using enhancing drugs (substances used to improve a person’s performance) is widely seen as cheating in sports and is disapproved. Making the game unfair is seen as wrong because there is a big relationship between sports and ethical reasoning. Simon (2015) explains that positive sportsmanship and fair play is crucial to a person because this maximizes the rewarding feeling that we obtain from engaging in competition and it allows for self-development. The enjoyment of sports and achievements would drastically decline if people were permitted to change the odds in an unfair way. Jong teams follow all the rules that the KNVB made, so they are not cheating or changing the chance of winning in an illegal way. However, the problem is because of the rules that the KNVB made. As said in the introduction, one rule for Jong teams is that players who have played in the same game week in the first team cannot play in the Jong team during that game week. Because of this clubs will save their top talents in matches that are a few days before their first team, because they want them to be available for the first team. However, if the first team has played a match already, all players who did not play more than 45 minutes can play for the Jong team. Resulting in teams having more players available on a Monday or Tuesday (after the first team) than on a Friday (before the first team). Teams that play a Jong team prefer to play them on a Friday to play against a, most likely, weaker team which would increase their chances of winning. This is considered a luck factor that violates the principle of equal chances of winning beyond skill and strategy between opponents of Jong teams. So this is seen as competition distortion.

To support or reject this claim of competition distortion there are a few variables that can explain whether a Jong team is or is not ‘superior’ on paper:

- Number of players with experience in the first team: according to the KNVB, Jong teams have a significant advantage when 3 or more first team players play. However, research has shown that every player with more experience and proficiency increases team performance, even 1 more experienced and proficient player can drastically improve their team (Kim et al., 2015). In this thesis a player is seen as a player with first team experience if they played more than 90 minutes for their first team.
- Results: the most straightforward variable to detect whether Jong teams truly have a superior team or not depending on the day are results. With wins being worth three points, a draw resulting in one point and a loss giving you zero points there can be an analysis whether Jong teams collect significantly more points depending on the day that they play. If this is the case, then this would support the claim of competition distortion.
- Average age of the starting eleven: according to Allen & Hopkins (2015) athletes hit their age of peak performance of athletic abilities at around 27 years old. This is supported by Perevoznik and Pertsukhov (2018) who found that the peak of sportsmanship in football is in the age range of 25 to 29 years. The closer a player is to this age the better his athletic abilities should be. If a Jong team is significantly older and closer to an average age of 27 years on a specific day, this can be seen as a superior team, which impacts the opponents winning changes solely on which day they played, resulting in competition distortion.
- Market value of the starting eleven: there are many independent variables influencing the market value of a player. According to He et al. (2015) the main factor determining a player's market value is his performance. Simply put, better performing players are worth more. If a team has a higher market value on the day they play this means that the team has players who are on average performing better, which could mean that there is competition distortion.
- Betting odds: bookmakers determine betting odds based on the implied probability of a result. If the odds increase or decrease significantly based on when the match takes place, it implies that the chance of winning for a Jong team (and for their opponent) significantly changes only based on which day the match is played. This is exactly what we are looking for in this paper.

**Table 1**

*Effect of matchday after 1<sup>st</sup> team on several variables that indicate competition distortion across all Jong teams*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Constant</b>	<b>Matchday after 1<sup>st</sup> team</b>
Points Jong team	0.94 (0.08)	0.34 (0.13)
Players with experience	0.26 (0.06)	1.71** (0.10)
Average age Jong team	19.71 (0.04)	0.22** (0.06)
Market Value Jong team	4.74 (0.37)	4.13** (0.60)
EU betting odds Jong team	4.21 (0.13)	-1.42** (0.21)
Observations	384	

*Note.* Standard errors are in parenthesis; points Jong team is scored between 0-3, average age Jong team is measured in years, market value Jong team is measured in millions; \*p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01.

Table 1 shows the effect of when the match is played (effect Matchday after 1<sup>st</sup> team) on the variables that could show competition distortion. The variables can be interpreted with the following formula:

$$Y = b \pm aM \quad (1)$$

$Y$  can be seen as the variables on the left side of Table 1; for example Points Jong team.  $b$  is the constant, this is the average amount of the concerning variable without having the effect of when a match is played after the first team, for Points Jong team this is 0.94, so without having the extra effect of playing after the first team Jong teams achieve 0.94 points on average.  $M$  is the effect being looked at, this is the change in the variable caused by the Jong team playing after their first team.  $a$  tells whether the Jong team plays before or after their first team, when the Jong team plays before their first team  $a$  is 0, when the Jong team plays after their first team  $a$  is 1. When a Jong team plays after their first team the average amount of points a Jong team normally achieves can be calculated with formula 1:  $0.94 + (1 * 0.34) = 1.28$ .

This shows that on average Jong teams win 0.34 more points when they play after their first team. The reason behind this can be explained by some of the other variable, for example

while on a matchday before the first team there are on average only 0.26 players with first team experience playing, on a matchday after the first team this significantly increases to 1.97, an increase of almost two players. Besides the number of players with experience the average age of the Jong team also significantly increases with 0.22 years, showing that there is an older team, closer to their peak of athleticism, solely based on when the match is played. One of the most direct links to competition distortion can be seen by the positive and significant increase in market value of the Jong team. While Jong teams carry an average market value of 4.74 million euros in their starting eleven on match days prior to their first team, this number almost doubles when the match is played after their first team. The effect of this is an increase of market value of 4.13 million euros, almost doubling the market value of the Jong teams. Lastly, a very significant effect can also be seen in the betting odds made by the bookmakers. First Jong teams receive an average odd of 4.21, this is an implied odd that gives Jong teams 23.75% of winning. However, when the matchday changes the odds significantly decrease, with 1.42, resulting in a 2.79 odd, this odd implies that the Jong teams have a 35.84% of winning. The day of the match boosts the Jong team winning chances with more than 10%, meaning that the opponent's chances of winning decrease with more than 10%.

#### **4.2 Degree of competition distortion per Jong team**

Before conclusions are drawn it is only fair that all four Jong teams are investigated separately. It is very much possible that some Jong teams are involved in a higher degree of competition distortion than others, it might even be the case that some teams are not causing competition distortion at all. To ensure fair results all 4 Jong teams, Jong Ajax, Jong AZ, Jong PSV and Jong Utrecht, have their own regression analysis and results listed in Table 2 through 5.



**Table 2***Effect of matchday after 1<sup>st</sup> team on several variables that indicate competition distortion Jong Ajax*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Constant</b>	<b>Matchday after 1<sup>st</sup> team</b>
Points Jong team	1.01 (0.17)	0.58 (0.16)
Players with experience	0.65 (0.13)	2.35** (0.21)
Average age Jong team	19.1 (0.05)	0.29** (0.08)
Market Value Jong team	9.70 (0.86)	8.66** (1.30)
EU betting odds Jong team	3.31 (0.19)	-0.97** (0.29)
Observations	96	

*Note.* Standard errors are in parenthesis; points Jong team is scored between 0-3, average age Jong team is measured in years, market value Jong team is measured in millions; \*p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01.

Table 2 shows the effect of when the match is played on Jong Ajax. Just like when the regression is run on all teams, the effect on all variables indicating competition distortion except points Jong team are significant. In relative terms the effect of which day the match is played on Jong Ajax is similar to the average effects on all Jong teams. For example, market value roughly doubles, just like Jong teams in general. However, this effect should not be looked at in relative terms, but rather in absolute terms. In absolute terms the effect on multiple factors can be seen as larger than when looking at all Jong teams combined. For example, the market value increases with 8,66 million euros instead of the 4.13 million euros found in Table 1. Putting this in formula 1 results in an average team value of 18.36 million euro's when Jong Ajax plays after their first team. This is more than the total market value of all other teams in the Keuken Kampioen Divisie according to Transfermarkt (Transfermarkt, z.d.). The effect on other factors such as the number of players with experience and the average age is also larger than when all Jong teams are looked at together. This is indicating that Jong Ajax is causing a higher degree of competition distortion than the average of all Jong teams. A reason for this could be that Ajax is a bigger club than the other three clubs in this research. Ajax in general is worth more and has a selection with players who are worth more. When Ajax plays on a Monday after their first

team they are likely to use previously mentioned players such as Lucca and Conceição who are believed to have a greater impact on the game than players at other clubs.

**Table 3**

*Effect of matchday after 1<sup>st</sup> team on several variables that indicate competition distortion Jong AZ*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Constant</b>	<b>Matchday after 1<sup>st</sup> team</b>
Points Jong team	0.85 (0.16)	0.62 (0.27)
Players with experience	0.15 (0.12)	1.66** (0.20)
Average age Jong team	19.76 (0.05)	0.16 (0.08)
Market Value Jong team	3.81 (0.31)	2.78** (0.51)
EU betting odds Jong team	4.65 (0.28)	-1.76** (0.46)
Observations	96	

*Note.* Standard errors are in parenthesis; points Jong team is scored between 0-3, average age Jong team is measured in years, market value Jong team is measured in millions; \*p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01.

In Table 3 the effect of the matchday on Jong AZ is shown. Although the points scored by the Jong team does increase with 0.62, this effect is not significant. However, all other variables do change significantly. This indicates that Jong AZ also causes competition distortion. One effect that stands out is that the betting odds of Jong AZ changes from 4.65 to 2.89 when the match is played after the first team instead of before, this means that the chance of AZ winning on average increases with 13% based on which day the match is played. Comparing the effects with all Jong teams in general (Table 1) and Jong Ajax (Table 2) shows that Jong AZ is causing almost the same amount of competition distortion as the ‘average’ of all Jong teams. Jong Ajax is causing a higher degree of competition distortion in three of the four significant variables indicating competition distortion, this leads to the conclusion that Jong Ajax has a higher degree of competition distortion than Jong AZ.

**Table 4**

*Effect of matchday after 1<sup>st</sup> team on several variables that indicate competition distortion Jong PSV*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Constant</b>	<b>Matchday after 1<sup>st</sup> team</b>
Points Jong team	1.02 (0.16)	0.04 (0.26)
Players with experience	0.22 (0.10)	1.02** (0.16)
Average age Jong team	19.67 (0.04)	0.07 (0.07)
Market Value Jong team	3.72 (0.39)	1.15 (0.63)
EU betting odds Jong team	4.03 (0.27)	-0.97 (0.44)
Observations	96	

*Note.* Standard errors are in parenthesis; points Jong team is scored between 0-3, average age Jong team is measured in years, market value Jong team is measured in millions; \*p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01.

The effect of playing on a different day on Jong PSV is different from the effect on the previous Jong teams. Table 4 shows the effect of the matchday on Jong PSV. Though the number of players with experience significantly changes, this increase is less than all other Jong teams. Spread out over 3 seasons Jong PSV used roughly half the number of players with experience compared to other Jong teams. It is plausible that because of this all other variables indicating competition distortion are not significantly influenced at all. Because of this the hypothesis that all Jong teams show the same amount of competition distortion must be rejected. Jong PSV certainly shows less competition distortion, it could even be argued that Jong PSV does not contribute to the competition distortion at all.

This is in line with Figure 2. Figure 2 showed different kernel density diagrams for Jong Ajax, Jong AZ, and Jong Utrecht indicating competition distortion. However, there was not much difference in market value for Jong PSV. Jong PSV was the only Jong team having similar teams (based on market value) whether they played before or after their first team. Both Figure 2 and Table 4 show no signs of competition distortion of Jong PSV.

**Table 5***Effect of matchday after 1<sup>st</sup> team on several variables that indicate competition distortion Jong Utrecht*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Constant</b>	<b>Matchday after 1<sup>st</sup> team</b>
Points Jong team	0.87 (0.16)	0.05 (0.27)
Players with experience	0.07 (0.07)	1.60** (0.12)
Average age Jong team	20.24 (0.03)	0.56** (0.05)
Market Value Jong team	2.25 (0.11)	1.80** (0.18)
EU betting odds Jong team	4.76 (0.29)	-1.82** (0.48)
Observations	96	

*Note.* Standard errors are in parenthesis; points Jong team is scored between 0-3, average age Jong team is measured in years, market value Jong team is measured in millions; \*p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01.

Table 5 shows the effect of the matchday on Jong Utrecht. Just like Jong Ajax and Jong AZ this effect is significant on most variables indicating competition distortion. Unlike Jong PSV it is fair to conclude that Jong Utrecht is causing competition distortion. The average age of Jong Utrecht increases with 0.56, meaning that the average age increases by more than half a year. When comparing the effect of matchday on all variables indicating competition distortion with other Jong teams it appears that Jong Utrecht is causing the second least competition distortion. The difference between playing Jong Utrecht on Friday or Monday is smaller than it is for Jong Ajax and Jong AZ . This is most likely because FC Utrecht is the smallest out of the four clubs in terms of squad value and revenue. Compared to Jong Ajax, when Jong Utrecht plays after their first team, the players available are seen as weaker players and are less likely to impact the result.

### **4.3 Implications of competition distortion Jong teams**

Now that strong signals have been found for competition distortion let us look at the implications of this. In the Keuken Kampioen Divisie the main goal of all teams is to earn promotion to the Eredivisie. There are two ways to achieve this. The first way is to become number 1 or number 2 in the final standings, these two teams will both earn direct

promotion to the Eredivisie. A third ticket to the Eredivisie can be won by winning the Play-Offs. In the Play-Offs there are seven teams who will play in a tournament where one team will end up winning and securing the final Eredivisie ticket. The easiest way to enter the Play-Offs (and having a chance at promotion) is by becoming a Period Champion. The Keuken Kampioen Divisie season is split up into four periods, each consisting of ten games. Whoever wins the most points in these ten matches will be Period Champion and will earn a Play-Off ticket. Last season, in the 2022/2023 season, there was a period where criticsasters say that the influence of Jong teams might have affected the outcome of the period standings. This resulted in a different team entering the Play-Offs tournament, which ultimately changed the entire tournament, with possible other winners. This period was the 2022/2023 3<sup>rd</sup> period. Almere City ended up winning the 3<sup>rd</sup> period with twenty points. Slightly behind are NAC Breda and ADO Den Haag, with respectively nineteen and eighteen points and a better goal differential. In their ten matches, Almere City only played Jong PSV, the only Jong team with no significant effects found indicating competition distortion, on a Friday before their 1<sup>st</sup> team had to play. NAC Breda and ADO Den Haag, however, did play other Jong teams in these 10 matches. NAC Breda played Jong Ajax and Jong Utrecht. NAC Breda faced both these Jong teams on a Monday after their first teams had played, both Jong teams had multiple players with first team experience and a higher market value than they tend to use on Fridays before their first team. NAC Breda ended up losing both matches. If NAC Breda would have won or drawn just one of those two matches they would have ended up being Period Champion. The same thing applies to ADO Den Haag. ADO Den Haag also faced two Jong teams after their respective first teams had played, Jong PSV and Jong Utrecht. ADO Den Haag ended up with only one point out of these two matches. If they would have won one of these matches, they would have been Period Champion. Football is still a sport where everything can happen, and everyone can win and lose to anyone. It is not possible to say that if NAC Breda or ADO Den Haag would have played on a different day that this would have led to different results. However, it is fair to say that both teams would have had a significantly better chance at getting a better result if these games would have been played on a different day. Unfortunately, nothing can be changed about this and Almere City won the 3<sup>rd</sup> Period and claimed their Play-Offs ticket. Almere City ended up winning the Play-Offs tournament and earned promotion to the Eredivisie for the first time

in their club's history. It would have been very interesting to see what would have happened if NAC Breda or ADO Den Haag would have earned that Play-Offs spot.

This did not happen just once, it has happened in other cases as well. In the 2020/2021 season 1<sup>st</sup> period something similar happened. SC Cambuur and De Graafschap both had twenty two points after ten games, however SC Cambuur won the 1<sup>st</sup> period (and thus the first spot for the Play-Offs) because of a better goal differential. In the first ten games SC Cambuur had an, on paper, easier schedule by facing Jong Utrecht on a Friday before their first teams, SC Cambuur won the match 5-2. De Graafschap had a tougher schedule, with Jong AZ on a Monday after their first team. Jong AZ started with five players with regular first team experience and ended up winning 7-3. It is not possible to say that De Graafschap would have won if the match would have been played a few days earlier, before AZ's first team, or the other way around, that SC Cambuur would have lost if their match would have been played a few days later. However, this again shows that Jong teams can have largely different teams depending on the day and that this could very well influence the outcome of not only a match, but a whole period, and with that the Play-Offs for the Eredivisie.

This shows the importance of the impact of Jong teams in the Keuken Kampioen Divisie. Jong teams give criticsasters reasons for their criticism; Jong teams influence the outcome of period standings and with this they also influence the outcome of the competition and who earns promotion to the Eredivisie.

#### **4.4 Advantages of Jong teams**

Despite the alleged competition distortion caused by Jong teams there are also supporters of Jong teams in the Keuken Kampioen Divisie. One of the most important reasons for supporting Jong teams is that playing in the Keuken Kampioen Division offers more competition to players. Competition is good for the development of talented players. An article on de Correspondent describes this phenomenon as the so-called talent paradox (De Hoog, 2023). The talent paradox explains that when a group of people participates in a game together, the lower skilled people increase their skills more than others to come closer to the level of the higher skilled people. In the scenario of Jong teams in the Keuken Kampioen Divisie this means that the young talents improve their skills more because it is

necessary to be able to compete with the more experienced and sophisticated teams. This is also supported by Jonker et al. (2010) who explained the significance of competitive level in sports. Athletes who compete at higher sport levels are able to reflect on themselves better which facilitates a higher development of their skills. This means that an advanced sense of reflection may help talented athletes to acquire desirable characteristics during their youth to ultimately reach adult elite levels of competition. In the long term this will be good for Dutch football and the Dutch competition. Some examples of players that benefited from playing on youth teams in recent years are Matthijs De Ligt, Frenkie De Jong, Jurrien Timber, Steven Bergwijn, Cody Gakpo, Teun Koopmeiners, and more whose market value significantly increased these past years.

There are also financial advantages of Jong teams in the Keuken Kampioen Divisie. Research shows that when Jong Ajax visits this results in a rise in ticket sales with 27%, and on television the match gets 57% more viewers than average (KNVB, z.d.). Maybe more importantly, the addition of four Jong teams to the Keuken Kampioen Divisie also meant 8 more matches for all teams. This means 4 more home matches where teams can earn profits on ticket sales and food and drink sales. This was confirmed in an interview with Jurgen Simon of MVV Maastricht (Appendix A). According to Simon the biggest advantage of Jong teams in the Keuken Kampioen Divisie is having more matches, which result in more revenue. This is agreed upon by Olav Ouwerkerk of FC Dordrecht (Appendix B). Ouwerkerk also mentions that Jong teams provide four more home games per year, which provide crucial income. Currently there are not four amateur clubs available who could fill this gap if Jong teams would be taken out of the league. Ouwerkerk lists more advantages of Jong teams. Playing against Jong teams gives families the option to visit a relatively more save game, since Jong teams are considered to not bring as many hooligans as other teams. It is also an opportunity to watch some major talents at the start of their football careers. In this way the Keuken Kampioen Divisie contributes to the greater goal; producing the greatest talents and improving the level of Dutch football.

#### **4.5 Solutions for Jong teams and their competition distortion**

The simplest solution for the competition distortion that is caused by Jong teams is to exclude Jong teams from the Keuken Kampioen Divisie. The Keuken Kampioen Divisie would

return to how it used to be, before the entrance of Jong teams. However, as mentioned by spokespersons of MVV Maastricht and Fc Dordrecht, this is not desirable for the clubs who are affected by the competition distortion. The loss of revenue would negatively affect the teams left in the competition.

A second solution is to change the rules regarding Jong teams. Stricter rules around players who have already played for their first team, or a limit on players with experience could change the current league forgery. Ouwerkerk (Appendix B) perfectly describes why this is not as easy as it might sound. Football is always played by the rules, if clubs do not agree with the current rules there are two moments in a year that they could address this and to try and change the rules. Rules surrounding Jong teams have been around for almost 10 years now, and while all clubs know the risks regarding the selections of Jong teams, no club has ever addressed this to the KNVB to try to change the rules. This will probably never happen because all teams also see the benefits there are and do not want to risk losing them.

A final and least problematic solution is to change the game schedule. Changing the game schedule so that all teams face the same amount of competition distortion. This can be done by only letting Jong teams play either before or after their first team. Or it could be done by making sure that all teams play each Jong team exactly one time before their respective first team and one time after their respective first team. This solution will take some time for the schedule makers, but once implemented this will result in all teams facing a similar amount of unfairness, which in turn makes the competition more fair.

## 5. Conclusion and discussion

Now it is possible to answer the main-research question of this paper: *Is there competition distortion in the Dutch Keuken Kampioen Divisie by the 'Jong' teams?*

Based on all variables found that have a clear link with competition distortion there is only one possible answer: Yes, Jong teams cause competition distortion in the Dutch Keuken Kampioen Divisie. The day on which the match is played significantly changes the amount of points Jong teams and their opponent win per season, the number of players with experience playing, the average age of the Jong teams, the market value of the Jong teams



and the implied odds the bookmakers give both teams. Whether a team plays a Jong team before or after the club's first team changes the whole game. This results in the Keuken Kampioen Divisie being influenced by factors other than skill and strategy, which is unfair and implicates that there is competition distortion present. This is in line with the hypothesis which expected there to be competition distortion. The distortion can be seen in some of the period championships over the last few seasons. There are multiple examples where the team that ended up winning the period had an easier schedule where they played the Jong teams on days before their first teams played, whereas the biggest other contenders for the period championship had to face the Jong teams on harder days after their first team had already played. This way Jong teams and specifically the day a team gets to play them influence the results, showing competition distortion.

The degree of competition distortion differs among the Jong teams. Jong Ajax shows the greatest amount of competition distortion in all categories, this is followed by Jong AZ and then Jong Utrecht. This is in line with how rich these clubs are, Ajax being the biggest out of all the clubs has the best players available that can change the game more than the players of poorer clubs AZ and Utrecht. Jong PSV does not significantly contribute to the competition distortion. This is most likely because even on match days after their first team Jong PSV uses way fewer players with experience, who are worth more and expected to be able to change the result of the game more.

Jong teams and their disadvantages have been around for more than a decade. Jong teams also bring advantages to themselves, the Dutch football sector and even their opponents, who are also affected most by the competition distortion. Having Jong teams in the Keuken Kampioen Divisie helps produce the greatest talents. Multiple big football stars have started their career on Jong teams in the Keuken Kampioen Divisie, where there was more resistance. Furthermore, opponents in the Keuken Kampioen Divisie also gain in both social and economic aspects. The extra matches with Jong teams, which are watched more than other matches, bring a crucial added income to all teams.

Possible solutions like kicking Jong teams out of the league or firmly changing the rules surrounding Jong teams are not desirable because of the advantages that opposing clubs will miss out on if this happens. If the KNVB wants to do something to change the

competition distortion, the most likely solution is to alter the game schedule so that all teams are affected the same.

Limitations of this research are the limited number of responses from teams in the Keuken Kampioen Divisie, only two out of the twenty teams gave a usable response. None of the four young teams provided a response. Their response would have been a good addition to also see their point of view.

This research is the first to scientifically prove the claims that existed surrounding Jong teams. Even though this research proves a clear form of competition distortion, it is not expected to change much about the current situation. Jong teams bring too many advantages to all teams affected.

One thing that is not looked at is the fact that some teams also play European Football midweeks (on Tuesdays, Wednesday, and Thursdays). There are no rules regarding if Jong teams can use players that have played or will play on these days. However, it could be the case that Jong teams decide to use different players to give others rest for the European Matches. Future research could investigate this and maybe find a different degree of competition distortion when there are European matches involved. Another idea for future research could be to investigate Jong teams in different leagues. This could take place in a lower division in the Netherlands, for example the Second Division, where Jong Sparta and Jong Volendam play. But this could also be investigated in other countries, such as Spain where they have La Liga II with several Jong teams. There might be different degrees of competition distortion in other countries. If this is the case it can be good to try and find the reason for this, maybe different rules can be found that might improve the current situation in the Keuken Kampioen Divisie.

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# Appendix A

## interview MVV Maastricht spokesperson Jurgen Simon via email

energyWOIX

Diederik van der Bend <diederik.van.der.bend@energywoix.org>

### Scriptie CompetitieVervalsing KKD

2 messages

Diederik van der Bend <diederik.van.der.bend@energywoix.org>  
To: info@mvv.nl

Thu, Jun 1, 2023 at 2:00 PM

Beste,

Ik ben Diederik van der Bend, economie student aan de Erasmus Universiteit. Ik ben momenteel bezig met mijn scriptie en zou u hiervoor graag een aantal korte vragen willen stellen.

Mijn scriptie gaat over competitie vervalsing in de Keuken kampioen divisie door jong teams, via wetenschappelijk onderzoek heb ik kunnen bewijzen dat jong teams significant de resultaten van andere teams beïnvloeden volledig bepaald door of het jong team speelt voor of na het eerste team van de desbetreffende club. Voor deel 2 van mijn scriptie zou ik graag uw input hebben over de volgende vragen:

- Wat zouden naar uw mening mogelijke oplossingen kunnen zijn voor de competitievalsing veroorzaakt door Jong teams (bv. uitsluiten jong teams, jong teams alleen nog maar voor of alleen na eerste elftal laten spelen, nieuwe verscherpte regels, competitie schema waarin elk team 1x tegen jong team speelt voor hun eerste team en 1x na hun eerste team etc.)
- Wat zijn naar uw mening de voordelen van Jong teams (bv. beter niveau in de competitie, meer groei van de nederlandse spelers op globaal niveau, meer kijkcijfers, meer inkomsten etc.)
- Uitwegen naar uw mening de voordelen de nadelen, of andersom?

Het zou mij enorm helpen als u mij antwoord zou kunnen geven op deze vragen, als u liever antwoord via telefonisch contact kan dit ook (ik ben bereikbaar via 0646698576) of als u tijd heeft dat ik langs kan komen voor een kort gesprek dan is dit ook mogelijk.

Alvast enorm bedankt en een fijne dag nog!

Diederik van der Bend  
573070@student.eur.nl  
0646698576

MVV Maastricht <info@mvv.nl>

To: Diederik van der Bend <diederik.van.der.bend@energywoix.org>

Thu, Jun 1, 2023 at 2:10 PM

Beste Diederik,

Dank voor je mail.

- Wat zouden naar uw mening mogelijke oplossingen kunnen zijn voor de competitievalsing veroorzaakt door Jong teams (bv. uitsluiten jong teams, jong teams alleen nog maar voor of alleen na eerste elftal laten spelen, nieuwe verscherpte regels, competitie schema waarin elk team 1x tegen jong team speelt voor hun eerste team en 1x na hun eerste team etc.)

**Jong Teams worden vaak gezien als bron van competitievalsing. Heb je geluk dan speel je tegen een veredeld A1-elftal (tot 18 jaar), heb je pech dan tref je een team met vijf basisspelers van het eerste elftal. Een team kan dat vele punten schelen, dus ja competitievalsing.**

- Wat zijn naar uw mening de voordelen van Jong teams (bv. beter niveau in de competitie, meer groei van de nederlandse spelers op globaal niveau, meer kijkcijfers, meer inkomsten etc.).

**Voordeel is dat er meer wedstrijden zijn.**

- Uitwegen naar uw mening de voordelen de nadelen, of andersom?

Wij zijn voor- en tegenstander van een vertrek van de Jong Teams uit de competitie. Nadeel is dat er dan minder wedstrijden zijn en dus minder inkomsten voor de clubs. Een alternatief zou zijn (en moet er ook komen) om de nacompetitie in een competitievorm te gieten waardoor het aantal wedstrijden gelijk blijft.

Een ander doorn in het oog bij jong teams is dat wedstrijden op afgelegen veldjes gespeeld worden. Als de jong teams bij de grote jongens willen meespelen, dan dienen ze ook in het stadion te spelen. Het verschil is te groot: de ene week speel je voor een vol stadion met 10.000 tot 18.000 toeschouwers, speel je bij jong FC Utrecht uit dan speel je voor 300 man in een desolate, niet professionele omgeving.

Succes met je onderzoek.

Met sportieve groet,

Jurgen Simon  
Perschef & woordvoerder MVV Maastricht



maak het mee in  
Maastricht  
Region

MVV Maastricht BV  
Postbus 4444, 6202 ZV Maastricht | Bezoekadres Geusselweg 11, 6225 XS Maastricht  
| 043 382 67 57 | www.mvv.nl



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# Appendix B

## Interview FC Dordrecht manager General Affairs Olav Ouwerkerk

energyWOIX

Diederik van der Bend <diederik.van.der.bend@energywoix.org>

Fwd: FC Dordrecht: Nieuwe inzending van Contactformulier BVO

1 message

Diederik Van Der Bend <bendiederik@gmail.com>  
To: Diederik van der Bend <diederik.van.der.bend@energywoix.org>

Fri, Jun 9, 2023 at 2:57 PM

Verstuurd vanaf mijn iPhone

Begin doorgestuurd bericht:

Van: Olav Ouwerkerk <Olav.Ouwerkerk@fcdordrecht.nl>  
Datum: 9 juni 2023 om 11:42:02 CEST  
Aan: bendiederik@gmail.com  
Kopie: info@fcnl@fcdordrecht.nl  
Onderwerp: FW: FC Dordrecht: Nieuwe inzending van Contactformulier BVO

Beste Diederik,

Je hebt een interessant onderwerp voor je scriptie gekozen en het wetenschappelijk bewijs dat je het gevonden is nog interessanter.

Persoonlijk heb ik een simpele opvatting over de deelname van Jong Ploegen aan de KKD. Het woord "competitievervalsing" heb ik derhalve nimmer zelf uitgesproken.

- Elk spel wordt gespeeld volgens de regels. Als je niet eens met de regels moet je die veranderen. In het betaalde voetbal is daar twee keer paar een gelegenheid voor.
- Het is al jaren een bekend gegeven dat de verschillende opties voor het samenstellen van de Jong-selecties zijn gerelateerd aan het programma van het eerste elftal. Niemand heeft daar ooit verdere restricties voor in de reglementen op laten nemen, dan wel een meerderheid verkregen om de KNVB een inperking te laten bepalen.
- Als deelname van de Jongploegen al jarenlang onder onveranderde voorwaarden geschiedt, kan er geen sprake zijn van vervalsing.

Toevoeging hierbij: Het is bijvoorbeeld toch prachtig om de hele gouden generatie van Ajax in eigen stadion te hebben zien spelen.

De KKD is een gesloten competitie waardoor onderaf geen nieuwe clubs instromen. Daarbij is het de vraag welke amateurclubs het niveau structureel hebben om competitief mee te kunnen doen, ook o.b.v. de licentie eisen. De overige 16 clubs hebben de Jongploegen dus nodig om voldoende thuiswedstrijden te kunnen spelen om de inkomsten daaruit te kunnen genereren. Gezien de eisen op de ranglijst is er van een vervelende invloed eigenlijk geen sprake. Bovendien moet je ook maar gewoon van ieder elftal kunnen winnen wanneer je de ambitie hebt om voor de prijzen mee te willen doen.

Wat mij betreft zijn de Jongploegen dus een prima invulling om onze competitie compleet mee te maken en is de KKD een goed platform voor talentontwikkeling. De eerste divisie draagt derhalve inhoudelijk bij aan de grotere doelen. Tenslotte zijn de thuiswedstrijden tegen Jongploegen ideaal voor een gezinsbezoek aan het stadion omdat er door het ontbreken van uitsupporters doorgaans een veilige sfeer aanwezig is.

Succes met je scriptie!

Met vriendelijke groet



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Powered by:  
veneco

Van: Diederik van der Bend <secretariaat@fcdordrecht.nl>  
Verzonden: donderdag 1 juni 2023 14:19  
Aan: Secretariaat <secretariaat@fcdordrecht.nl>  
Onderwerp: FC Dordrecht: Nieuwe inzending van Contactformulier BVO

<b>Naam</b>
Diederik van der Bend
<b>E-mailadres</b>
bendiederik@gmail.com
<b>Onderwerp</b>
Scriptie competitie vervalsing jong teams
<b>Bericht</b>
Beste,  Ik ben Diederik van der Bend, economie student aan de Erasmus Universiteit. Ik ben momenteel bezig met mijn scriptie en zou u hiervoor graag een aantal korte vragen willen stellen. Mijn scriptie gaat over competitie vervalsing in de keukens kampioen divisie door jong teams, via wetenschappelijk onderzoek heb ik kunnen bewijzen dat jong teams significant de resultaten van andere teams beïnvloeden volledig bepaald door of het jong team speelt voor of na het eerste team van de desbetreffende club. Voor deel 2 van mijn scriptie zou ik graag uw input hebben over de volgende vragen: - Wat zouden naar uw mening mogelijke oplossingen kunnen zijn voor de competitievervalsing veroorzaakt door Jong teams (bv. uitsluiten jong teams, jong teams alleen nog maar voor of alleen na eerste elftal laten spelen, nieuwe verscherpte regels, competitie schema waarin elk team 1x tegen jong team speelt voor hun eerste team en 1x na hun eerste team etc.) - Wat zijn naar uw mening de voordelen van Jong teams (bv. beter niveau in de competitie, meer groei van de nederlandse spelers op globaal niveau, meer kijkcijfers, meer inkomsten etc.) - Uitwegen naar uw mening de voordelen de nadelen, of andersom?  Het zou mij enorm helpen als u mij antwoord zou kunnen geven op deze vragen, als u liever antwoord via telefonisch contact kan dit ook (ik ben bereikbaar via 0646698576) of als u tijd heeft dat ik langs kan komen voor een kort gesprek dan is dit ook mogelijk. Alvast enorm bedankt en een fijne dag nog!  Diederik van der Bend 570070@student.eur.nl 0646698576
<b>Akkoord:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ja, ik ga akkoord met de het <a href="#">privacybeleid</a>.</li></ul>

LET OP: Deze e-mail is afhankelijk van buiten de organisatie. Klik niet op links of open geen bijlagen, tenzij u de afzender herkent en weet dat de inhoud veilig is.