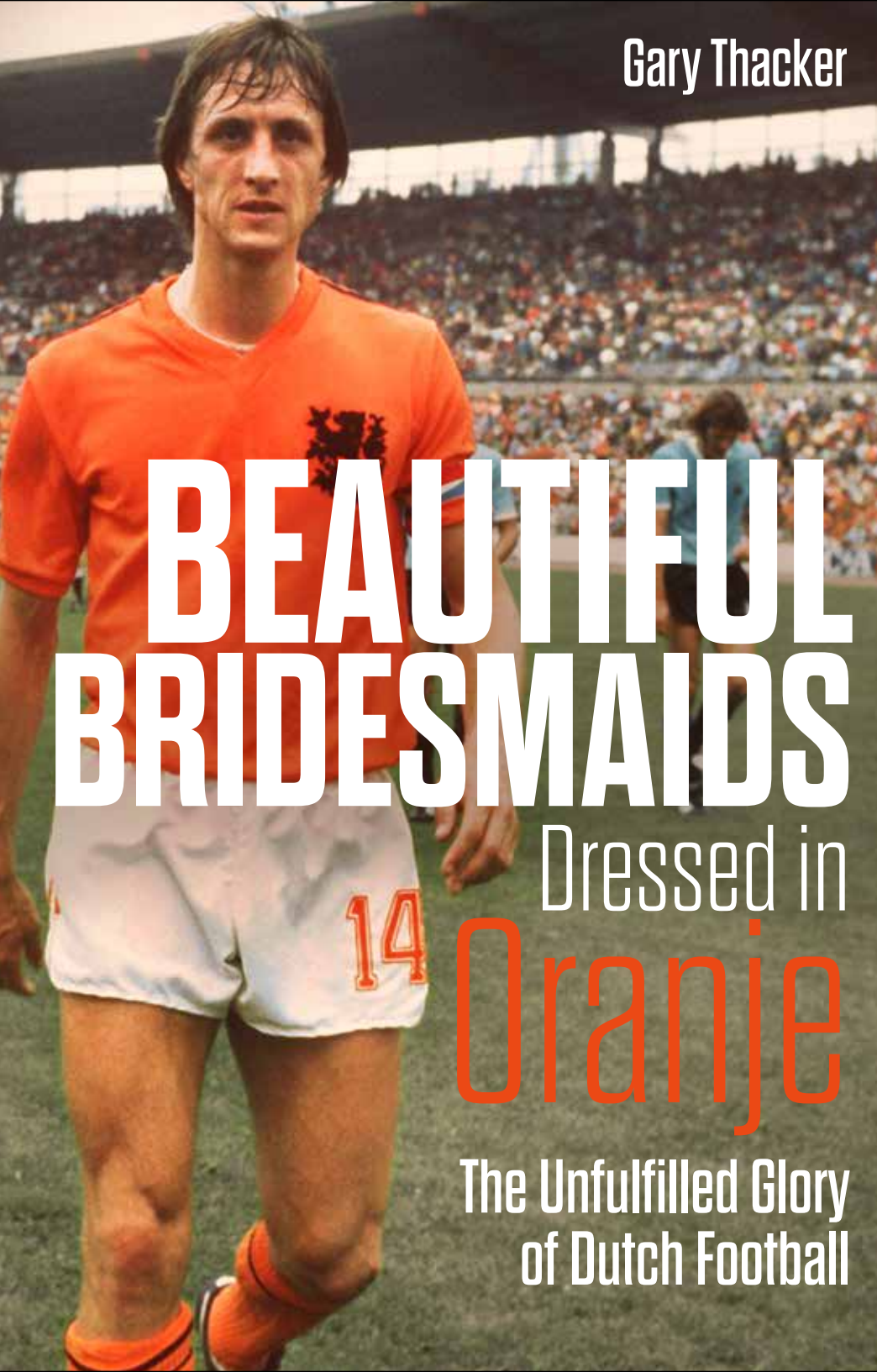

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BEAUTIFUL BRIDESMAIDS

Dressed in Oranje

The Unfulfilled Glory of Dutch Football

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pitch

CONTENTS

PART 1

A Brief History of Oranje

From birth until the First World War

As with so many continental countries, football was introduced into the Netherlands by Britons taking the game with them on their travels. In this case, a group of English students studying in the Netherlands were the midwives, and the first Dutch football club, Haarlem Football Club, was formed in 1879 by Pim Mulier, who would later go on to found the 'Nederlandschen Voetbal-en Athletischen Bond' (NVAB) (Dutch Football and Athletics Association). This organisation evolved into the KNVB (Royal Dutch Football Association).

Despite its name, Haarlem's main sporting endeavours were in the field of rugby, and played games at weekends, in a field occupied by cows during the week, and a number of unobliging trees at all times. Clearly, the situation was less than ideal and in 1883, after many complaints from both injured participants and the parents of younger players fearing similar incidents, rugby was dropped in favour of what was seen as the far less physically intimidating game of association football. Now freed from its reputation for injuries, trauma, trees and cow pats, both the club and its new sport flourished, with membership of the NVAB booming.

Within Haarlem itself, Haarlemsche FC and Haarlemsche FC 'Excelsior' joined in.

From Amsterdam came Amsterdamsche Sportclub, Amsterdamsche FC 'RAP' and Voetbal-Vereniging 'Amsterdam'. Rotterdam also added three new clubs in the form of Rotterdamsche Cricket-en Football-Club 'Concordia', Rotterdamsche Cricket-en Football-Club 'Olympia' and Voetbalvereniging Rotterdam. The others were Delftsche FC and Haagsche Voetbal-Vereeniging. By 1895, however, the popularity of football had demanded exclusive attention. The athletics element of the organisation was jettisoned and the organisation was renamed as NVB, the Nederlandse Voetbal Bond. A decade later, a collaboration between the

Dutch banker, Cornelis August Wilhelm Hirschman, and French journalist Robert Guérin resulted in the Fédération Internationale de Football Association. Dutch football had an important hand in the founding of FIFA. Some 30 years later, the NVB was granted royal status and the organisation we know today as the KNVB (Koninklijke Nederlandse Voetbalbond) was born.

On 30 April 1905, the Netherlands national team played its first official fixture, facing Belgium in a one-off match for the Coupe Vanden Abeele in Antwerp. The Dutch recorded a 4-1 victory. Drawing 1-1 after 90 minutes, a period of extra time was played to decide the issue, during which Eddy de Neve added a further three goals to an earlier strike to make him the first Dutch player to score for his country; the first player to score a hat-trick; and the first player to score the winning goal in a cup final for the Netherlands. It so happened that, on that day, all of the goals were scored by the Dutch team, as the Belgian strike was an own goal by Ben Stom. During his brief career on the international stage, De Neve would play three times, scoring six goals. The template for the goalscoring legends of Dutch football to come was created by Eddy de Neve back in 1905.

The team of the time was coached by former part-time Sparta player, and full-time Rotterdam tailor, Cees van Hasselt. Four years earlier, Van Hasselt had organised a game against Belgium but, as it had not been officially sanctioned by the NVB, and selection of players was restricted to the area of South Holland, it was deemed to be an unofficial game, and is not included in international records.

Van Hasselt would remain in post until 1908, leading the Dutch in 11 games, six of which were won and five lost, with eight of the 11 against Belgium. He would be the only Dutchman to take charge of the national team until 1946, when Karel Kaufman took over at the end of the Second

World War. In between, nine British coaches would take charge of the team, including, briefly in October 1910, the legendary coach and visionary, Jimmy Hogan, for a game against Germany. Hogan had been appointed as coach of FC Dordrecht earlier the same year, and would stay with the club until 1912, despite thinking the attitude of many players in the Netherlands was 'primitive', as Norman Fox relates in *Prophet or Traitor: The Jimmy Hogan Story*, and that 'they drank like fishes and smoked like factory chimneys but were a jolly lot of fellows, intelligent and able to pick up the science of the game'.[4] It's a trait that would prove very useful many years down the line. The Netherlands triumphed 2-1. It was the first confrontation in a rivalry that would become as intense as any in international football.

Two years later, the Dutch faced England in an unofficial friendly game. By now, after sitting out the original invitation to join FIFA with typical isolationist arrogance, the FA, still staunchly amateur, had decided to indulge this strange continental enterprise, if only to lend it some legitimacy and dignity. Such haughtiness was only reinforced when the Dutch fell to an embarrassing 12-2 defeat. The game was memorable, however, for the fact that the Dutch wore what would become their trademark Oranje shirts for the first time. For the game against Belgium in 1905, and in all games preceding this one, they had worn a white shirt with a red, white and blue diagonal sash; colours taken from the Dutch flag. The design has also been worn on a number of occasions as a change strip in more contemporary times, for example, in the 2006 World Cup against Portugal.

By 1908, the Netherlands were ready for their first international competition and entered the Olympic Games. Van Hasselt had moved on and the team was led into the

4 Fox, Norman, *Propztor?: The Jimmy Hogan Story,* (Manchester: The Parrs Wood Press, 2003)

London Games by Edgar Chadwick, who had formerly managed the Haarlem and HVV Den Haag clubs in the Netherlands. The game was still in its nascent form at this level and, despite eight teams officially entering, only six competed. Hungary withdrew for political reasons due to the crisis in Bosnia, and Bohemia withdrew after losing their FIFA membership. With the Dutch scheduled to play the Hungarians, they received a bye to the semi-final where they faced hosts Great Britain at London's White City, on 22 October 1908.

The British team was, in fact, largely the England team, but wrapped in the Union Flag, rather than the Cross of St George. Having crushed Sweden 12-1 in the quarter-finals, they were in no mood to let up against the Dutch and notched a comfortable 4-0 victory, with West Ham United's Henry Stapley scoring all four goals. It was, however, a relatively close affair compared to the other semi-final, where Denmark crushed France 17-1. Such was the French embarrassment, they declined to play the bronze medal game against the Dutch, and returned home. Instead, Sweden were promoted in their stead, and the Dutch overcame their Scandinavian opponents 2-0 with goals from Jops Reeman and Edu Snethlage. Despite only limited tournament success in London – winning just a single game – the Dutch team returned home with medals that suggested they were the third best team on the planet, albeit that logic was produced from a competition involving only six countries, all from Europe.

Snethlage had been born in Ngawi, then part of the Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia, and in March 1909, opening the scoring during a 4-1 friendly victory over Belgium, became the Netherlands' accredited top scorer with seven goals. Completing his hat-trick in the same game, he raised that tally to nine. It was to be a short-lived accolade, though. Sixteen months later, Jan Thomée scored against Germany, taking his

total to 11. The following year, another record was broken, but this one stands even up to the time of writing. On 2 April 1911, HVV Den Haag player Jan van Breda Kolff became the youngest ever player – just 17 years and 81 days old – to play for the Netherlands national team, when he debuted in a game against Belgium. He would score the second goal in a 3-1 victory, also meaning that he is the youngest player to score for the Oranje. As with Snethlage, Van Breda Kolff was born in the Dutch East Indies, in the city of Medan, Sumatra. Although the goal would be the only one of his international career, Van Breda Kolff played all four games in the Olympic tournament of the following year.

In 1912, the Dutch took their place at the Olympics in Sweden. Following the 1908 tournament, they had played 16 friendlies against varied opposition, losing only four times, each of them against England. With that record as encouragement, they would have entered the tournament with some confidence. That said, only one player retained his place in the squad from the previous Olympics, Sparta Rotterdam's Bok de Korver.

In Sweden, places had been allocated for 16 countries to compete, although only 11 actually took part. In a truncated first round, five teams received byes to the quarter-finals, with the Dutch needing extra time to get past the hosts, securing a 4-3 victory, thanks to an early extra-period goal by Jan Vos. In the quarter-finals, they defeated Austria 3-1, after being three goals clear inside the first 30 minutes. It meant a semi-final date against Denmark. A 4-1 defeat extinguished any hopes of further glory, but once again, the Dutch triumphed in the bronze-medal clash, trouncing Finland 9-0.

De Korver collected his second bronze medal, and would later go on to captain the Dutch team and accumulate 31 caps, a record at the time. In the following year, his last representing the Netherlands, De Korver would be part of a team that

reached a landmark for the development and progress of Dutch football. Facing England at Houtrust, home of HVV Den Haag, on 24 March 1913, De Korver and his team-mates became the first Dutch side to defeat England. The Dutch had suffered the three worst defeats in their history against England – 2-12, 1-9 and 1-8 – but a brace by Huug de Groot gave the Oranje their first win over the English and ensured the Sparta Rotterdam player a place in the annals of the Dutch national team.

The following year saw Englishman Tom Bradshaw take charge for the home game against Belgium, in a one-off appointment as coach of the national team. The 2-4 defeat hardly encouraged his retention. In the same year, FIFA decreed that the 1916 Olympic football competition would also be considered the World Football Championship for Amateurs. That innovation would have to wait, though. By now, Scot Billy Hunter was coaching the team. He would be one of only two Scots to lead the Dutch – the other being Tom Sneddon in 1948 – and would be in charge for a mere four games, although the curtailment of his tenure had little to do with disappointing results. A 2-4 win in Belgium saw his reign off to a good start. Then a 4-4 home draw with Germany was followed by another victory over Belgium, this time at home. On 17 May, the Dutch lost 4-3 to Denmark. It was their final game before the conflagration of the First World War plunged the world into four years of tragedy. In so many ways, on the other side of those years, the world would be a very different place.

The inter-war years

The Netherlands wouldn't return to international football until 9 June 1919, marking their return with a 3-1 victory over Sweden. They were led by Englishman, Jack Reynolds. The former winger had enjoyed an itinerant playing career

in England, before moving into coaching after retirement, joining Swiss club, Fussballclub St Gallen 1879 in 1912. He had been due to take over the German national team in 1914, but war prevented him taking up the appointment, and after the resumption of football, the Dutch offered him the post of leading the Oranje. Between 1915 and 1925, Reynolds had been contracted to Ajax, and would share his national duties with the demands of club commitments. Following a two-year period with Blauw-Wit Amsterdam, he would return to Ajax in 1927, and stay there for the next two decades. Considered by some to be one of the early pioneers of Total Football at the club, he would lead Ajax to eight league titles and when, in the 1940s, a certain Rinus Michels played under him at the De Meer Stadion, the torch of Total Football was passed into safe hands.

By 1920, the Olympic football tournament resumed in Belgium. The Dutch would be led by another Englishman. Fred Warburton managed three Dutch clubs – Amsterdamsche FC, Hercules Utrecht and HVV Den Haag – before being offered the chance to take the national team to the Olympics, inheriting the role from Reynolds. He would stay in post until 1923.

By this time, England and the other home countries had decided to withdraw from FIFA, apparently in a fit of pique after seeing their power and influence within the organisation diminished by the rising number of members. Despite that, the Great Britain team were still allowed to compete in this Games, organised by FIFA, because it was thought unreasonable to deny them entry to the football when they were taking part in other Olympic sports. Doubtless, however, there may well have been a measure of *Schadenfreude* among the FIFA hierarchy when the Great Britain team was eliminated in the first round following a 3-1 defeat to Norway.

It would be the last tournament that a Great Britain team would decide to compete in until 1948. Professionalism was already a part of the game in a number of countries, with Belgium, the hosts for the 1920 tournament, among them. In 1923, the FA sought assurances that amateurism would be strictly maintained in the Olympic tournaments. The request was declined, thereby implicitly accepting the principle of an 'Open' tournament, allowing both amateurs and professionals to compete side by side. For the arch-traditionalists of the FA, this was a step beyond all reason. They picked up their ball and went home, sulking all the way. It was also the last tournament without South American teams, although Egypt had competed in 1920, breaking the European monopoly. If the British exit was less than auspicious, the Dutch, who remained amateur more through necessity than principle, would fare much better.

Again 16 places were allocated for the tournament but, despite the havoc endured in post-war Europe, only one country failed to take their allotted place. With the Polish–Soviet War still flaring, Poland's first-round tie with Belgium was awarded to the hosts in a walkover. On 28 August, the Dutch opened their campaign with a comfortable 3-0 victory over Luxembourg, taking them into a high-scoring quarter-final against Sweden. After 90 minutes, the scores stood at 4-4, but that was only after a late penalty by Japp Bulder kept the Dutch alive. The 24-year-old forward had just won the Dutch league title with his Groningen-based club Be Quick, and would score half of his total of six international goals in this tournament. The game was finally decided after 115 minutes when Jan de Natris scored the goal that put the Dutch into the final four. In the semi-final, however, they tumbled to defeat by three clear goals against the hosts.

The tournament was fated to end in farce though. The final pitted the Belgians against Czechoslovakia. All seemed fine when Robert Coppée converted a penalty after six

minutes to give the hosts the lead. It was, however, the second goal, scored by Rik Larnoe, that ignited problems. The award of the goal by English referee John Lewis, supported by compatriot linesmen, C. Wreford-Brown and A. Knight, infuriated the Czechs and ten minutes later, with tempers at boiling point due to a perceived blatant bias by the referee, they walked off the pitch and refused to return and resume the game.

The Belgians were awarded the gold medal, with Czechoslovakia being disqualified, leaving the silver and bronze medal positions to be competed for in a strange knockout mini-tournament, which eventually saw the Dutch lose out 3-1 to Spain in what was the final to decide the tournament's runners-up. The silver medals therefore went to Spain and, for the third successive tournament, the Dutch went home with bronze medals. Despite a good measure of fortune, it would be difficult to dispute that, at least among the competing countries of continental Europe, they were performing consistently well in tournaments and were clearly a force in European football.

Three years later, on 25 November 1923, the Dutch invited Englishman Robert Glendenning to take charge of the national team for the friendly against Switzerland in Amsterdam. Born in County Durham, Glendenning had started his career with local club Washington United, before moving on to Barnsley where he played in the FA Cup Finals of 1910 and 1912. The former was lost to Newcastle United after a replay. The latter followed a similar pattern, but this time Barnsley triumphed over West Bromwich Albion in the replay, after Glendenning set up the winning goal for Harry Tufnell. After the First World War, he would briefly return to playing at Accrington Stanley, before retiring and moving into coaching. A 4-1 victory against the Swiss, with a team comprising many debutants, was clearly impressive enough,

but following the game Glendenning would return to club football with Koninklijke HFC.

Two more brief appointments to coach the national team would follow, with Billy Townley in 1924 and John Bollington the following year. By 1925, however, Glendenning was reappointed. Initially, he shared his time between the national job and his position at the Haarlem club. With the 1928 Olympics in prospect, though, a full-time commitment was required and he took over the Oranje exclusively. He would stay in post until the Second World War. During his time in charge, as well as the 1928 Olympics, Glendenning would lead the team into two World Cup tournaments and 87 games in total, winning 36. Until 2017, when Dick Advocaat, then in his third term in charge of the Netherlands, recorded his 37th victory, no coach of the Dutch national team had won more matches than Glendenning.

The 1924 Olympic tournament in France had grown to include 22 teams, and a preliminary round was required to bring the number down to 16, allowing a knockout competition to proceed from there. Given the Dutch team's position as three-times bronze medal winners, they were excused this task and took their place in the first round proper against Romania on 27 May, skating to a comfortable 6-0 victory. Their quarter-final task against Ireland was a different matter, though, ending in a 1-1 draw after 90 minutes. Fourteen minutes into the extra period, Ocker Formenoy scored his second, and the deciding, goal to take the Dutch into the semi-finals, where they would be eliminated 2-1 by eventual champions Uruguay.

On 8 June, they faced their regular four-yearly task of securing bronze medals when they played Sweden. The game ended with a 1-1 draw, requiring a replay, which would take place the following day, ahead of the final. The first match had attracted a crowd of less than 10,000 but, with the Stade Olympique in Colombes full for the final, more than 40,000

watched the replay. Sweden won 3-1, and the Dutch fell into the unaccustomed position of fourth place, and went home without a medal.

The following year, during a friendly against Sweden, defender Harry Dénis played his 32nd international game for the Oranje, surpassing the number set by Bok de Korver. The HBS Craeyenhout player would go on to rack up 56 caps before retiring in 1930. His record would stand until 1937, when it was passed by Feyenoord's 'Puck' van Heel.

The next Olympic tournament held out a promise of success for the Dutch, with the competition held in the Netherlands. As well as Uruguay travelling across the Atlantic, the reigning champions were joined by Argentina, Chile, Mexico and the United States as the tournament took on a more global identity. Perversely, however, the success of attracting more countries and the growing worldwide popularity of the game would weigh against the Olympics, convincing FIFA that they no longer needed the support of the IOC. Two years later, they would launch their own competition as the World Cup was born.

Despite home advantage, the tournament was a disappointment for the Dutch. After a preliminary round meant 17 entrants were reduced to 16, ill fortune saw the hosts paired with the reigning champions. The Uruguayans were a much more accomplished team, and despite the support of almost 30,000 fans in Amsterdam's Olympisch Stadion, the South Americans comfortably accounted for the Dutch in a 2-0 victory, setting them on the way to retaining their crown. In what has often been disregarded by Olympic and football historians, however, the Dutch then took part in a type of repêchage competition, alongside Belgium, Chile and Mexico, for what was loftily described as the Consolation tournament.

A 3-1 win over the Belgians saw the Dutch into the final against Chile, who had been the first team eliminated from the competition when they lost 4-2 to Portugal despite leading

2-0 after 30 minutes, when the teams were reduced from 17 to 16. To round out what was surely a flawed concept anyway, the game ended in a 2-2 draw, after which lots were drawn to decide the winner. The Netherlands won the lottery, but the trophy was awarded to Chile. Has there been a stranger way to win a trophy, especially for a team who had been eliminated from a tournament before it had even truly begun?

Less than a year later, at FIFA's congress in Barcelona on 18 May 1929, the federation awarded the hosting of the first World Cup to Uruguay. There was an undeniable logic for this; as well as celebrating the country's centenary, the South Americans were also twice Olympic champions, and had been the first South American country to support FIFA's competition as part of the Olympics. But a number of other countries, including the Dutch, were less than enamoured by the decision. Alongside the Netherlands, Italy, Sweden, Spain and Hungary had also thrown their hats into the ring, hoping to be selected as hosts. For the most part, the football tournaments within the Olympic Games had been held by European countries, with the South Americans only latterly joining the party. The Dutch, especially, having hosted the Olympics and its football tournament in 1928, considered themselves prime candidates, but when it became clear that FIFA were swinging heavily in favour of Uruguay, all of the European countries withdrew their applications.

Whilst football at the Olympics had seen the Dutch largely prosper, as football moved into the era of the World Cup, the coming years would not be kind to them. The Oranje sun was setting, and a time in the footballing shadows awaited the Netherlands.

The inaugural World Cup went ahead without the Netherlands, and indeed most other European countries. For reasons ranging between cost of travel, concerns of time required, fits of pique for being denied as potential hosts and

a marked reluctance to join in with something that looked destined to fail, only Yugoslavia, Romania, Belgium and France competed. The latter were somewhat compelled after political pressure from FIFA president Jules Rimet, who feared that if his own country opted out, it would be the death knell for the nascent competition. Uruguay triumphed, beating Argentina in the final and, more with an unsteady step, than a jaunty confident stride, the FIFA World Cup was born.

Four years later, the tournament was staged in Europe, as Italy became the Continent's first hosts. Both this tournament and the one that followed would be played out under the growing malevolent shadow of fascism that would later lead to the Second World War. With Mussolini in power in Italy, the second staging of a World Cup would seethe with political influence and intrigue.

After almost having to strong-arm countries to take part in the initial tournament, with 32 nations applying to compete in Italy, a qualification competition was required. The Dutch were placed into Group Seven, alongside perennial rivals Belgium, plus the Irish Free State. Each team would play twice, once at home and once away, with the top two teams qualifying. If it seemed an overly grandiose way of eliminating one of three teams, Group Eight was a far better example of that overcomplicated scenario. Germany and France were placed in a group alongside Luxembourg. The first couple of games saw the Grand Duchy entertain the Germans and then the French. After conceding 15 goals to their visitors, the final rubbers were abandoned as the hapless hosts could not qualify. It has the appearance of an elaborate exercise, but it was also an efficient way of both separating the footballing wheat from the chaff, and offering due respect to all entrants.

Things were even stranger in South America. Uruguay declined to defend their title, both because their attendance at Olympic Games held in Europe had not been reciprocated

when they hosted the inaugural tournament, and the costs of travel. It left Argentina facing Chile, and Brazil playing Peru to decide which two countries would represent South America. Then, after thinking better of their application, both Chile and Peru withdrew, meaning there were no qualification games at all on the continent.

Back in Group Seven, the Dutch took a watching brief on 25 February 1934, as Belgium visited Dublin's Dalymount Park to face the Irish Free State. The growing stature of football was illustrated by an estimated crowd of 35,000, as a see-sawing game finished in a 4-4 draw. The result favoured the Dutch more than either of the participants. Eight days into April, the Irish visited the Olympisch Stadion, with the home team knowing that a victory would see them set fair for qualification.

Things looked to be heading in the right direction when Johannes Smit gave the home team the lead after 40 minutes. Three minutes later Johnny Squires, who had hit all four of the Irish goals against Belgium, equalised. Things got even worse after the break when Paddy Moore scored. Now it was the Irish looking well set to qualify. Three goals in just over quarter of an hour, though, two from Elisa Bakhuys and one from Leen Vente, swung things in favour of the Dutch.

With the Irish programme now complete and a single point accrued from a draw, the two points gained for the win meant qualification was assured for the Dutch. The result in Belgium would decide who joined them in Italy. Three weeks later, in Antwerp's Bosuil Stadion, the Belgians looked to be in pole position when Laurent Grimmonprez put them ahead early in the second period. By the time that Bernard Voorhoof notched the home team's second goal, though, strikes by Smit, Bakhuys and Vente had given the Dutch the lead. Bakhuys would add a fourth late on to seal the victory and put the Dutch in top position.

Perhaps perceived as mere icing on the Dutch cake at the time, that late goal from Vente against the Irish now assumed a vital importance. Had it not been scored, the records of the Belgians and Irish would have been identical, requiring a play-off to determine who would qualify. With goal average applied to the two teams tied on a single point each, that strike made all the difference and the Irish were eliminated. The qualifications were minor victories at best, however. A 4-5 home defeat for the Dutch in a friendly against France a couple of weeks before travelling to Italy seemed an ill portent for the competition, and so it proved. Both teams would be eliminated in the first round. The Belgians were comfortably beaten by Germany, and the Netherlands' first foray into World Cup competition came to an abrupt end as, despite goals from Smit and Vente in a spirited fightback, they lost 3-2 to Switzerland in the first round.

Between the end of the 1934 World Cup and the 1938 tournament, the Netherlands played a series of 15 friendlies across Europe, winning seven times. They suffered reverses only against Germany and England, until 1937, when they lost to Belgium in April and France in October, ahead of the qualifying games for the upcoming tournament held in France.

Like some recurring dream, the Dutch were again placed into a group with Belgium. This time, they were joined by Luxembourg. Denmark should also have been in the group, but had withdrawn. As had happened when Germany and France faced a similar proposition four years earlier, the minnows lost out to both teams, although the Belgians only scraped over the line 2-3. In late February of 1938, ahead of the final rubber of the group, the Netherlands entertained Belgium in a friendly at Rotterdam's Stadion de Kuip, coming away with a 7-2 victory, despite only being a single goal ahead at the break.

Two months later, in a much more even encounter, a 1-1 draw in Antwerp again sent both teams through to the finals.

The Dutch would play one more friendly before making the short journey to France. Some 50,000 crowded into the Olympisch Stadion for the visit of Scotland. Sadly, it would be a disappointing game for the home fans. With just three minutes remaining, the Scots were leading 0-3 and, if the late goal Vente scored offered any consolation, it was of the merest kind. Was this defeat the sort of warning that the loss to France had been four years earlier?

If the 1934 tournament was full of Italian symbolism for their fascist regime, the one in France had the impending dark cloud of the Second World War hanging over it. Austria had been subsumed into the German Reich meaning the *Wunderteam* would be absent and, with the Spanish Civil War still raging across the Pyrenees, and the German and Italian air forces involved in the bombing of civilians there, public hostility to a number of teams present was understandable and intense.

The first round of the tournament paired the Netherlands with Czechoslovakia in a game played at Le Havre's Stade Municipal on 5 June. Other than SK Zidenice's Oldrich Rulc, the opposition team was drawn exclusively from the clubs based in Prague. Six came from AC Sparta, and the remaining four from SK Slavia. Whether that club-orientated cohesiveness gave the Czechs any advantage is unclear, but after finishing goalless following the regulation 90 minutes, the Dutch capitulated in extra time, conceding goals to Josef Kostalek, Oldrich Nejedly, and Josef Zeman. They were again eliminated in the first round. The Dutch experience of World Cup football had been a salutary lesson and it would be a long time before things improved. In fact, for the next 36 years, the Dutch record in international football would deteriorate further.

A 2-2 draw in a friendly against Denmark saw out the year's fixtures in October, and across the following 18 months,

a motley collection of results hardly suggested an upturn in fortunes. Victories over Hungary and Belgium, twice, were contrasted with some embarrassing returns. A 7-1 thrashing suffered against the Belgians in Antwerp and a 4-5 loss to Luxembourg, both coming in March 1940, were particular low points. Then, in what turned out to be their last game before war broke out, they beat Belgium 4-2 at the Olympisch Stadion, being four goals clear with just a quarter of an hour to play. The game saw the second cap of Abe Lenstra who, despite being robbed of possibly the best years of his career by the war, would go on to play 47 times for the national team, scoring 33 goals and becoming an icon of Dutch football in the late 1940s and 1950s. It was also the last game in which Glendenning would lead the team.

In May, Glendenning's team made the short journey to play against Luxembourg. The game never took place. On 10 May, German forces invaded the Netherlands. Glendenning returned to England, but died in November of that same year, aged 52. He was buried in Bolton, and the KNVB has maintained his headstone in honour of his contribution to Dutch football.

Post-war: 1946–72

Dutch international football resumed in 1946 when, with Karel Kaufman – the first Dutchman to take control of the side since Cees van Hasselt almost four decades earlier – in charge, they visited Luxembourg to play a friendly. Despite having a team containing six players making their first appearances for the Oranje, and only Henk Pellikaan having more than a dozen caps, they ran out 2-6 winners with RFC Xerxes's Faas Wilkes – who carried the nickname of The Mona Lisa of Rotterdam – scoring a hat-trick on debut. Kaufman would remain in charge until November 1946 when, playing their first game across the Channel since the Olympic Games of 1908, the Netherlands

visited Huddersfield and were roundly beaten 8-2 by England, with Tommy Lawton scoring four times. The Chelsea striker would later remark on the amount of space he was allowed in the game. He took full toll, and the Dutch paid the full price. Before the war, Jesse Carver had been a defender with Blackburn Rovers and then Newcastle United in a ten-year career. When the conflict ended, then in his late thirties, he turned to coaching, first with Huddersfield Town before moving to the Netherlands with Rotterdam club, Xerxes in 1946. Faas Wilkes, hat-trick hero from the game against Luxembourg, coming from the same club, had benefitted from Carver's enlightened attitude to coaching, where work with the ball largely replaced the traditionally unwavering emphasis on physical exercises. The club made huge strides under Carver, and in 1947 he was invited to take over from Kaufman. He would stay in charge for two years and, across eight friendly games ahead of the London Olympics of 1948, lost only once.

Sadly, despite this excellent record, Carver could not inspire the Dutch to success on the competitive stage. After beating Ireland 3-1 in the preliminary round, the Dutch fell 4-3 after extra time to Great Britain in the first round. Carver would then move on and manage some of the biggest clubs in Serie A, over the next 15 years or so, including Juventus, Lazio, Torino, Roma and Internazionale. He was briefly succeeded by Scot Tom Sneddon, before Kaufman returned for a second, albeit somewhat brief, tenure. A third would follow in the 1950s. In 1949 the KNVB turned to Jaap van der Leck.

In 1950 Wilkes, who together with Abe Lenstra and Kees Rijvers was one of the 'golden trio' of Dutch football, signed for Internazionale. Lenstra would stay in the Netherlands, but Rijvers would also leave the country, signing for French club AS Saint-Etienne in the same year that Wilkes moved to Italy. The Dutch game would remain amateur for a few years longer, and the moves gave Wilkes and Rijvers the opportunity to cash

in on their talents. Sadly for both players, and the Netherlands national team, it also meant that they were banned from representing their country. representing their country. That unfortunate situation persisted until the Dutch game finally went professional four years later. Rijvers would later coach the national team for three years from 1981.

In 1953, the Dutch region of Zeeland suffered terrible floods and a game was arranged in Paris between France and a team representing the best of Dutch football to raise funds for the victims. With typical authoritarian pique, the KNVB not only refused to lend the game authenticity by allowing the national team to play, it also offered up official opposition against the game taking place at all. Nevertheless, better counsel prevailed and the game went ahead. The accruing publicity and goodwill it created was a key factor in driving an unwilling KNVB, metaphorically kicking and screaming, into the professional era.

World Cup football returned in Brazil in 1950. The Dutch declined to enter, as would be the case four years later in Switzerland. It meant that Van der Leck would have a number of friendlies to play before the next major international competition, the Olympic Games of 1952 in Finland. During the former DOS Utrecht coach's time leading the team, it would be difficult to describe the Netherlands' games as staid and boring. In that run of friendlies, they conceded seven goals on three occasions, scored six once and five twice, incredibly losing two of those three games, and won only four in total.

It was hardly a surprise, therefore, when they were eliminated in the preliminary round of the Olympics; neither was the scoreline, as they succumbed 5-1 to Brazil. It would be the last Olympic tournament to which the KNVB would send a team. The game in the Netherlands became professional in 1954, although there was hardly an upswing

in results. After 1952, the Dutch would choose not to enter one World Cup and the first European Championship, and failed to qualify for four World Cups and three European Championships. Jaap van der Leck left the national team in 1954 following three successive defeats; a 4-0 loss to Belgium, a 6-1 defeat in Sweden, followed by a 3-1 reverse in Switzerland. He returned to the Dutch club scene, where he would continue coaching top clubs until retirement in 1971 after four years with Willem II.

Kaufman returned for a single match, before Austrian Friedrich Donnenfeld served a similarly brief tenure. The much-travelled Donnenfeld bookended a run of three Austrians to coach the national team over the next 18 months or so, although only Max Merkel would serve for a significant number of games, losing only twice in ten matches. When Merkel left in 1956 to return to club football, Heinrich Muller took over for a game before Donnenfeld's second term in charge. Englishman George Hardwick then became head coach for five games but, aside from Merkel's relatively successful period, results were inconsistent at best. With the Olympics no longer an option, the next target was the 1958 World Cup, and the KNVB appointed the experienced Romanian coach Elek Schwartz to head the drive for qualification. Moving from Rot-Weiss Essen in West Germany, where he had enjoyed some moderate success, Schwartz would head the national team until 1964, across 49 games. Next to Glendenning's total of 86, Schwartz's reign would be the longest in the history of the Netherlands, and would remain so until the turn of the century.

On the face of it, that length of tenure suggests a successful period for Dutch international football, but that was hardly the case. At this stage, the game in the Netherlands was still in the doldrums and results under the Romanian varied enormously. A seven-goal mauling by the West Germans during a friendly

in Cologne was a particular low point, but balancing that out against a victory over the newly-crowned world champions Brazil in 1963, illustrates the fluctuating fortunes of the team. In the Low Countries, expectations were also low, often with results to match.

Qualification for the World Cup in Sweden eluded the Dutch when they missed out in a qualifying group containing Austria and Luxembourg. With both teams beating the Grand Duchy home and away, the issue would be decided by the games against Austria. Hardwick's final game in charge had been a 3-2 defeat in Vienna. With ten minutes remaining, the Dutch led 1-2, but Karl Koller equalised for the hosts, and with time almost out, Karl Stotz converted a penalty to give the home side victory. The consequence was that in his second game in charge, after defeating Luxembourg 2-5, Schwartz would need to conjure a victory when the Austrians visited in September 1957. Despite Abe Lenstra, by now in the veteran stage of his career, equalising an early Austrian goal just past the hour mark, the required victory failed to materialise and the Dutch missed out.

Things were beginning to change in the Dutch club game, though. In 1959, Vic Buckingham was appointed to coach Ajax. Previously, he had spent six years at West Bromwich Albion, after taking over from Jesse Carver, when the former head coach of the Dutch national team left England for Italy and Lazio. Buckingham would win the Eredivisie title in 1959/60 with Ajax – averaging a more than impressive 3.2 goals per game. To round things off nicely, they defeated arch-rivals Feyenoord 5-1 in the game that confirmed that the title was going to Amsterdam. Dutch club football was still largely amateurish in outlook, despite having officially been professional for some time, but Buckingham could see great potential in the way they played. He was suitably impressed by the title triumph. 'I thought they were the best team in

Europe, even then,'[5] he said. Buckingham was often described as a man ahead of his time in the game, and the coronation he foresaw for his club would have to wait a decade or so.

'Their skills were different,' Buckingham mused, talking of the players at Ajax – a young Johan Cruyff, who was making his way through the ranks at the club, very much included. 'Their intellect was different and they played proper football … I influenced them but they went on and did things above that which delighted me. For instance, two of them would go down the left side of the field passing to each other – just boom-boom-boom – and they'd go 30 yards, and two men would have cut out three defenders and created a vast acreage of space.'[6] The germ of the team that would conquer European club football was being tenderly nurtured by Buckingham.

In *Brilliant Orange,* David Winner contends that, 'Buckingham's philosophy was simple, and in that simplicity lay its beauty. "Possession football is the thing, not kick and rush," he asserted. "Long-ball football is too risky. Most of the time what pays off is educated skills. If you've got the ball, keep it. The other side can't score"'[7] Dutch football was eager to learn, and the Ajax side coached by Buckingham would lead the way. It wasn't quite the finishing school it would become. That would need to wait until Rinus Michels arrived, but as Cruyff would acknowledge later, Dutch football was learning lessons. Referring to Buckingham and Keith Spurgeon – who would succeed Buckingham when he returned to club football in England with Sheffield Wednesday in 1961 – Cruyff related that, 'They were open-minded but, tactically, you have to see where we were at that time. Football in Holland then was good but it was not really professional. They gave us some professionalism because they were much further down the

5 Winner, David, *Brilliant Orange* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000)
6 Wilson, Jonathan, *Inverting the Pyramid* (London: Orion, 2014)
7 Winner, David, *Brilliant Orange* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000)

road. But the tactical thinking came later with Michels. It started then.'[8]

That arrival wouldn't happen until 1965, however. After Spurgeon left, Austrian Joseph Gruber and Jack Rowley would coach the club, before Buckingham returned in 1964. If it was a less successful time in terms of trophies, however, other benefits would accrue, especially a young skinny boy who went by the name of Johan Cruyff, referred to by Buckingham as 'a useful kid'.[9] Buckingham granted that 'kid' his debut as a 17-year-old on 15 November 1964 in an away league game at Groningen. Ajax lost 3-1. Two months later, on 21 January 1965, with the club perilously close to the foot of the table, Buckingham left Ajax.

The new man in charge was Rinus Michels. Five years later, Buckingham, then at Barcelona, tried unsuccessfully to take Cruyff to Catalunya, but was stymied by the Spanish league's restrictions. Much as Michels had succeeded where Buckingham had been frustrated during his second term at Ajax, Michels would again succeed in completing the deal that Buckingham had seen blocked, when Cruyff moved to Barcelona in 1973. If the club scene was moving forwards as the 1960s progressed, however, the national team was lagging some way behind.

After giving the European Championship a miss in 1960, the next opportunity to qualify for a major tournament was the 1962 World Cup in Chile. Ahead of the qualifying competition, the Dutch were in a typically inconsistent run of form. That 7-0 loss to West Germany had been followed by a 7-1 victory over Norway merely weeks later. They had then lost three consecutive games, before a goalless draw against Netherlands Antilles broke the sequence. They had

8 'Everyone can play football but those values are being lost. We have to bring them back' *The Guardian*, 12 September 2014

9 Winner, David, *Brilliant Orange* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000)

then won twice, lost, won and then lost again before the qualifiers began.

Placed into Group Four alongside Hungary and East Germany, Dutch confidence would not have been high. With only one team to qualify, a 0-3 home defeat to the Hungarians in the opening rubber, on 16 April 1961, did little to change that feeling. This wasn't the magical collection of Puskás and his team-mates representing Hungary, but with established players such as Karoly Sandor and the thrusting talents of a young Florian Albert and Janos Gorocs, there was still too much talent for the Dutch. A 1-1 draw away to East Germany was insufficient to turn hopes around and when Hungary won 2-3 in East Berlin, the die was cast. Neither team could catch the Hungarians' six points, and the game where the Dutch should have hosted Hungary was deleted. Visa problems had complicated matters, but as the game was now only of academic importance anyway, there was little point in trying to resolve what seemed to be intractable political problems. The final rubber between East Germany and the Netherlands fell into a similar category, but this was played out, resulting in a 3-3 draw. The Dutch had failed to qualify, and very few were surprised.

If qualifying for the World Cup had proved to be beyond the Dutch, to do so for the second running of the European Championship, then officially called the European Nations' Cup would hardly be likely to offer an easier route. They had opted out of the original running of the tournament four years earlier but, with only four qualification spots open for the finals, any team hoping to progress would need to negotiate three rounds of matches, each with home and away legs.

In what was very much *de rigueur*, following their elimination at the qualifying stage for the 1962 World Cup, the Dutch had lost five of the seven friendly games they'd played, including an embarrassing 0-4 home defeat to

Belgium … Their only victories had come in a 4-0 triumph over Northern Ireland, and a hardly competitive 8-0 romp against Netherlands Antilles. To claim that hopes were high as the qualifiers began in November 1962, therefore, would have been wide of the mark.

A preliminary round was required to whittle the entrants down to 16, allowing a couple of knockout rounds to establish the four teams who would progress to the semi-finals and final to be played in Spain. Not unreasonably, the Dutch were required to sing for their supper by playing Switzerland for a place in the first round proper. The first leg was played at the Olympisch Stadion on 11 November 1962, and more than 64,000 hopeful, rather than expectant, souls turned up to watch.

With 15 minutes left to play, qualification seemed to be slipping away. Tonny van der Linden had given the home team an early advantage, but the Swiss had drawn level through Charly Hertig just before the break. Now, with time drifting away, and the home leg to come, the Swiss were favourites. Sjaak Swart, then in the middle of a 17-year career with Ajax, restored the Dutch lead on 75 minutes, and another Ajax player, Henk Groot, scored a minute later. The following March, a 1-1 at the Wankdorf Stadium, Berne completed the progress. Hurdle one had been cleared.

With any number of much more taxing games possible, the Dutch were relieved to be paired with Luxembourg in the official first qualifying round. With the alternatives comprising Italy, France, Spain, Hungary and the Soviet Union, among others, a tie with the footballers of the Grand Duchy seemed like a more than favourable draw. Two single-goal friendly triumphs before the next stage augured well. A victory over France in April was followed up by that vastly encouraging win against Brazil the following month; after which, a home leg against Luxembourg appeared to be comfortable fare. The

Grand Duchy had only played one 'official' full international game in the two years before the match, a 3-1 defeat to the Soviet Union.

Within five minutes of kick-off the home crowd of around 36,000 could have been forgiven for expecting an easy victory as debutant Klaas Nuninga put the Dutch ahead, firing home from the edge of the area. The time between that strike and the Luxembourg equaliser by Paul May some 25 minutes later would, however, be the only time that the Dutch would have the lead across both legs of the tie. The home team struck the post twice in the second period, but the game ended in a disappointing draw.

The second leg was also held in the Netherlands, at Rotterdam's Stadion de Kuip. Luxembourg had agreed to forego home advantage in pursuit of greater financial rewards accruing from larger attendances than would have been possible at their home stadium.[10] The process would be repeated in succeeding years across similar qualifying encounters, and also some UEFA club competitions. Having the game staged in the same stadium where they had infamously defeated the Dutch 4-5 in a friendly in 1940 hardly seemed to pan out as a disadvantage, however.

With the opportunity of a second home game in order to correct the result of the first leg, expectation was still high in the Netherlands. Rumours began to circulate that the home players had eased down during the first leg, happily settling for a draw. The implied rationale was that the KNVB wanted to ensure a bumper crowd for the second leg. It feels like an unlikely scenario and may have been a mere 'plaster' to cover the wounds of an embarrassing result, but more than 42,000 attended the game anyway.

10 http://www.rsssf.com/tablesl/luxnedres.html

On 30 October, the teams met again. Strangely perhaps, Robert Heinz, the Luxembourg coach, made two changes to his line-up in attack, replacing goalscorer Paul May and Nicholas Hoffmann with Camille Dimmer and Henri Klein. The decision would bring generous rewards. Perhaps giving the lie to any talk of an engineered result in the first leg – or at least suggesting the head coach had no knowledge of it anyway – Schwartz also made changes. The first goal came after 20 minutes, but it was the visiting 'designated home team' that scored. Dimmer, an engineer by trade who was then playing for lower-league Belgian club Royal Crossing Club Molenbeek, justified his manager's enlightened decision and Luxembourg's prospects appeared brighter as they went ahead.

It took 15 minutes for the Dutch to find an equaliser through Pieter Kruiver. Kruiver had been part of an 'all change' front three from the first leg, including Peter Hendrik Petersen and, winning his third cap, Piet Keizer. Then just 21, Keizer would go on to enjoy success with Ajax, winning three European Cups, captaining them to the trophy in 1972, and playing a part in the World Cup campaign of 1974. This game wouldn't be an auspicious memory in such an outstanding career, however. Dimmer grabbed his second of the game midway through the second period and, despite increasingly frantic efforts to redress the balance, the Dutch were defeated. Any talk of having taken it easy in the first leg were now consigned to the column labelled, 'Who were you trying to kid" and the Dutch press illustrated the country's displeasure. 'Who are we going to play against now? San Marino? Andorra? Liechtenstein?'[11] *De Telegraaf* demanded the following day.

It was portrayed as a Halloween of a day for Dutch international football, but the fact that Schwartz remained in post for a further seven months was also a comment

11 *De Telegraaf* – 31 October 1963

on the general state of the game in the Netherlands. How embarrassing was the defeat? Perhaps on reflection, it may not have been as bad as the picture painted by the press. Luxembourg met Denmark in the next round for a place in the finals, earning two draws, 3-3 at home and 2-2 at home – actually in Luxembourg; the Danes were less of a financial draw than their near neighbours. Amsterdam was the chosen venue for the play-off game, but playing in the Netherlands failed to spark any Grand Duchy magic this time. Luxembourg lost 1-0 and the Danes progressed to Spain. Having beaten Malta, Albania and Luxembourg to do so, it's questionable whether any team before or since has had an easier passage to the last four of a European Championship.

The standing of Dutch football at the time was perhaps illustrated as their next three games were completed without recording a victory and, when the qualifying campaign for the 1966 World Cup began with a laboured 2-0 home victory over Albania, Schwartz was replaced by Denis Neville. The Englishman had begun his coaching career in Denmark with Odense Boldklub, before moving on to Atalanta in Italy and to Belgium with Koninklijk Berchem Sport, and then the Netherlands with Sparta Rotterdam and Holland Sport, before his dozen years as an itinerant club coach landed him the job with the Dutch national team. He lasted just over a year. It was not a glorious tenure, and after leaving in 1966, Neville moved back to England and managed Canvey Island. He was the 14th, and at time of writing, the last Briton to coach the Dutch national team.

Group Five of the World Cup qualifying competition comprised the Dutch, Switzerland, Northern Ireland and Albania and, when Neville took charge of the squad, the Dutch at least had those two points from the home victory over the Albanians on the board. Ahead of the return in Tirana, they played one of their regular friendlies against neighbouring

Belgium, going down to a late goal by Jef Jurion. The game was notable for the debut of DWS Amsterdam defender Rinus Israel who, two years later, would move to Feyenoord, earning the nickname Iron Rinus and legendary status with the Rotterdam club. He would win three league titles there, including a domestic double and lift the European Cup in 1970, as Dutch clubs began their domination of the Continent. His knee injury would also play a key part in the strategy of the Dutch at the 1974 World Cup.

In October 1964, the Dutch visited Albania and returned with another 2-0 victory. A goal from Hennie van Nee two minutes into the game and another by Frans Geurtsen two minutes before the final whistle was barely satisfactory. It was hardly a wildly encouraging result given the games ahead in the group, but the points were added to the table. Before the next rubber, a visit to Belfast, a couple of friendlies saw a 0-1 victory in Israel and a 1-1 draw at home to England. It meant that now on a run of four games without defeat, including three victories, there was some measure of confidence ahead of the Northern Ireland game in March 1965.

Some 25,000 fans crammed into Windsor Park to see if a team containing the blossoming talents of a 20-year-old George Best could deliver a victory. The Irish had already beaten the Swiss at home, and then lost to them in Lausanne, and had high hopes, but an early goal by Van Nee suggested Neville's team could add to their points haul. Five minutes later, though, Johnny Crossan equalised and, when Terry Neill added a second just after the hour, the game was done.

A few weeks later, the return game was played in Rotterdam and a 0-0 draw was far more valuable to the Irish than to a Dutch team whose aspirations of qualification had run into the buffers. In October, another 0-0 at home to the Swiss virtually killed off any lingering hopes and a 2-1 defeat in Bern not only delivered the *coup de grâce*, but also saw the end of

Neville. Finishing third in the group, albeit just three points from top spot, may have been par for the course in qualifying tournaments for the Dutch but, perhaps unrecognised at the time, a number of new faces were making their names, along with Swart, Keizer and Israel, who had already worn the Oranje shirt.

The new coach was the German, Georg Kessler. He had joined the KNVB the previous year. Kessler would be in charge of Dutch efforts to reach the finals of both the 1968 European Championship and the 1970 World Cup … Despite later success in club football in the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria and West Germany, his efforts would fall into the same category as every other coach of the Netherlands national team seeking to qualify for those tournaments since 1938.

By the time Kessler began his term, significant things were happening in Dutch club football. After being appointed to take over from Buckingham at Ajax, Rinus Michels quickly turned a team struggling against relegation into a championship-winning outfit. Three successive Eredivisie titles were secured in 1965/66, 1966/67 and 1967/68, with another added in 1969/70. KNVB Cup triumphs in 1966/67, 1969/70 and 1970/71 also brought two domestic doubles. A few years later, Austrian Ernst Happel would not only take Feyenoord to domestic success, but also secure the European Cup. Michels and Happel were the two coaches that would guide the Oranje in the 1974 and 1978 World Cups, when Dutch football came so close to touching the sky. Back in 1966, however, that would have felt more like pie in the sky.

Kessler began with a 2-4 defeat to his native country, before successive wins sent the Dutch into the qualifying tournament for the 1968 European Championship on a relative high. They were placed into a group alongside Hungary, East Germany and Denmark. The Dutch campaign opened with a game against Hungary. Their opponents were coming off the back

of an encouraging performance in the 1966 World Cup, and by this stage Florian Albert was at the height of his powers. He would be awarded the Ballon d'Or the following year.

More than 61,000 fans were in the Stadion de Kuip for the game, and were delighted to see the home team in a two-goal lead entering the final 20 minutes. The Hungarians had started well, and appeared the more threatening, but Miel Pijs's piledriver from distance gave the Dutch the lead ten minutes before the break. The second goal would herald more for the long-term future of the team than mere immediate concerns. With the Dutch looking the better team now, ten minutes after the restart a debutant once described as 'a useful kid' cut in from the left and fired home. 'Hello world. My name's Johan Cruyff!'

It should have locked the game out but, when experienced goalkeeper Eddy Pieters Graafland could only parry a shot, Dezso Molnar followed in to score. Nerves took hold as the visitors pressed for an equaliser. In a matter of two seconds, a shot rattled the bar and another was headed from the line, but a goal was coming. It arrived with three minutes remaining, as a header from Kalman Meszoly went in after being pushed against the bar. Had the Dutch held on for the win things could have been very different, but from that point on the fate of the group was always in Hungarian hands.

Two friendly defeats followed, first at home to Austria and then away to Czechoslovakia before the next qualifier. The latter of those two games saw another player destined for greater things enter the international fray as Wim Suurbier made his debut. A 2-0 victory over Denmark eased things a little, but only relatively. The Hungarians were galloping clear, racking up four successive wins that guaranteed them top spot. In contrast, the Dutch continued to labour; a 4-3 defeat in East Germany was followed by a 2-1 reverse in Budapest to eliminate all hopes of progress. A victory over East Germany,

thanks to another Cruyff goal, hardly lifted spirits and the programme was completed with a 3-2 defeat in Denmark. A review of the team for that final group game though offered hope for the future; joining Cruyff, Keizer, Suurbier and Israel, the latter's Feyenoord team-mate, Wim Jansen, made his debut. The tousle-haired midfielder was another who would feature in the 1974 World Cup.

A run of half a dozen friendlies followed with typically mixed fortunes, although going into the first of the qualifiers for the 1970 World Cup, a record of only one goal in four games – and that in a home defeat to Belgium – suggested that qualification would be an uphill struggle. The goalless draw with Scotland on the last day of May 1968, however, saw two more stars of 1974 step forward as Rob Rensenbrink, then at DWS Amsterdam, but later of Anderlecht, and Feyenoord's Wim van Hanegem made their debuts.

In a group with Bulgaria, Poland and Luxembourg – following the catastrophe of 1963, even the prospect of facing the Grand Duchy looked problematical – the Dutch would kick off their campaign against the supposed minnows of the group. As in 1963, both games between the two would be played in the Netherlands. If that was considered an ill portent by some, such fears were allayed on 4 September 1968 when Feyenoord team-mates Jansen and Van Hanegem eased the Dutch to victory in what was designated as the away game. A 2-0 reverse in Sofia was less encouraging, but the Dutch got back into winning ways the following March completing the job in the official home game against Luxembourg with a 4-0 win. Tougher tasks awaited, though.

In May, Poland visited for their second game of the group, having already rattled in eight goals at home to Luxembourg. In a tight game that looked destined for a goalless draw, a last-minute goal by substitute Sjaak Roggeveen secured the points for the home team. Any Dutch momentum was quickly halted,

however, in the return rubber four months later. Henk Wery's opening goal offered hope, but replies by Andrzej Jarosik and Wlodzimierz Lubanski saw Poland home and extinguished Dutch hopes. A home draw against Bulgaria, who topped the group, completed the programme, and to all intents and purposes brought the curtain down on Kessler's time at the head of the team.

He would be in charge for three friendlies before being replaced – a home defeat to England, a draw in the return game, and a 0-1 victory in Israel. In the first of those games, Kessler would give debuts to two more of Ajax's stars, Ruud Krol and Gerrie Muhren. Given that just a month earlier Feyenoord had won the European Cup, a team featuring a strong representation from the Rotterdam club and the burgeoning talents coming out of Ajax, defeating the Bulgarians should surely have not been beyond the talents of the Dutch. But, as David Winner described in *Brilliant Orange*, 'the Netherlands then had no tradition of even competing at the top level'[12] and they fell away.

Chosen to replace Kessler was Frantisek Fadrhonc. The 56-year-old Czech had been in Dutch club football since the early post-war years. Starting in Tilburg, he'd coached Willem II from 1949 to 1956, winning the league title in 1952 and 1955, Sportclub Enschede from 1956–62, and finally Go Ahead Eagles from 1962 until he was appointed by the KNVB in 1970. With no time for preparation, Fadrhonc was dropped right into the qualification battle for a place at the 1972 European Championship, in a group alongside Yugoslavia, East Germany and old friends, Luxembourg.

In the previous qualification campaign, the Dutch had been able to ease themselves into the fray with a couple of encounters against the minnows of the group. That option wasn't open to them this time, as they began with what always

12 Winner, David, *Brilliant Orange* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000)

looked like a key encounter, at home to Yugoslavia on 11 October. Despite falling behind to a first-half goal by Dragan Dzajic, a penalty from Israel, five minutes after the restart, secured a point. Exactly a month later, they fared worse in another key fixture, falling to a 1-0 defeat in Dresden, as Johan Neeskens wore Oranje for the first time. Three weeks later, a little hope was restored when a brace from Cruyff secured a 2-0 victory at home to Romania in a friendly. The Dutch would have to wait until February 1971 to resume their qualification campaign. By that time, though, East Germany's four points from successive victories and Yugoslavia's three put the Dutch total of a single point in the shade.

In the New Year, Luxembourg turned up at the Stadion de Kuip and faced a six-of-the-best spanking, as braces by Cruyff and Keizer were added to strikes from Willi Lippens and Suurbier. To be in with any realistic chance of hauling themselves over the qualification line, a win was required from the next game in Yugoslavia. As it was, though, a 2-0 defeat locked out any hopes of progress. The Dutch had just two fixtures remaining, at home to East Germany and the 'away' game with Luxembourg, played at Eindhoven's Philips Stadion, but before they played again Yugoslavia would have seven points with two games to play, both at home.

Six months after the defeat in Split, East Germany visited the Stadion de Kuip and, despite going a goal down, the Oranje ran out 3-2 winners. Although the game had little real impact on the qualification process, another player whose participation, or more precisely non-participation, in the 1974 World Cup would be pivotal made a goalscoring debut. The Ajax libero Barry Hulshoff had just turned 25 when selected for the game, and it would be his strike that equalised the early German goal. Piet Keizer scored the other two.

A few months earlier, along with his Ajax team-mates, Hulshoff had won the first of the three European Cup winners'

medals he would collect with the club. A titan of a player, his career with the Oranje would be cut short by a knee injury that denied the Dutch his mighty presence in West Germany for the World Cup. A key piece missing from the Dutch jigsaw meant that their Total Football was anything but total. How valuable was Hulshoff to the Dutch? His international career ended in 1973, just two short years after his debut. A measure of his worth is that in 14 games, he scored six times – from the libero position of centre-back. Only nine goals would be conceded in those games, whilst 51 were scored by the Dutch; 11 of the 14 games were won, two drawn, and only one lost.

Six days after the Dutch win, Yugoslavia completed qualification with a goalless draw at home to the East Germans, and then surprisingly followed it up recording the same result against Luxembourg in a game of interest only to statisticians. An 8-0 romp in the last game of the programme, with Hulshoff scoring again in what was nominally the 'away' game against Luxembourg, rounded out another unsuccessful qualification campaign.

It meant that, since 1938, the Netherlands had failed to qualify for any major tournament, either World Cup or European Championship. That unenviable record would end with qualification for the 1974 World Cup. A country with a post-war pedigree of unmitigated failure would spark into life and, for six years or so, would be the planet's footballing guiding light. To appreciate how the success of two Dutch clubs had produced the nucleus of a team that would entrance the world in West Germany, and come so close again in Argentina, it's necessary to jump back a few years and examine the development and triumphs of Ajax and Feyenoord. The future was bright. The future was Oranje, and this was why.