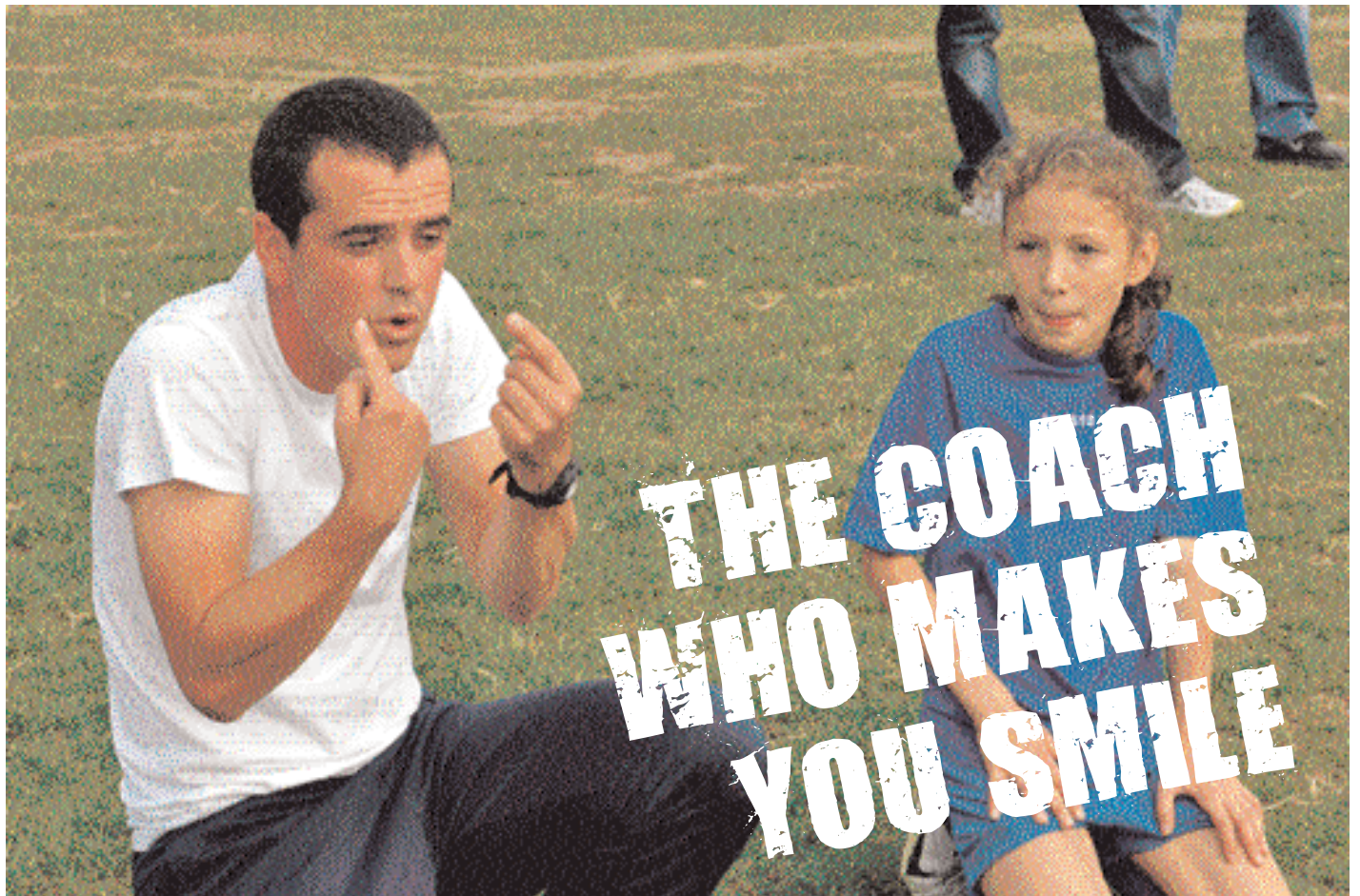


INITIATIVE FOOT CITOYEN

« (OBS) Nicolas Longo »



Last season, Nicolas Longo, responsible for the US Cannes BO women's teams, attended around ten Master Your Emotions sessions, run jointly by the Swiss foundation Education4Peace and Foot Citoyen. In October, we visited the man described initially as "rather quiet", who led the final sophrology session with a real sense of calm. Demonstrating new-found confidence and empathy, this 'coach that cares' has smiles on his players' faces throughout their training sessions. A real joy!

Like a menacing shadow, 'he' approaches the group of girls at US Cannes-La-Bocca Olympique. Near the centre circle, the area that marks the boundary between the two half-pitches, 'he' moans, shouts and barks, exasperated by a refereeing decision he disagrees with and desperate for his daughter to win. "But no, you saw it, it was a handball... And what's with all this stoppage time?" 'He' is heard and, because she's also a little frustrated at being pegged back by the boys of Olympique Suquetan (2-2), from beneath her curly brown hair Kayla vents her anger: "Yeah, he robbed us!" Now, kneeling in the middle of his team of girls (who play all their matches against boys) for the morning's short debriefing, USCBO coach Nicolas Longo looks kindly at his player. His voice is controlled, raised slightly so that 'he' too can

hear what's said: "Why did you say that, Kayla? Do you think he wanted to stop us winning? Of course he didn't! Do you know how old our referee this morning is? 13... And do you know that, if he hadn't made the effort to referee for us, you wouldn't have been able to play and enjoy yourself? Personally, I thought the referee was excellent. And I thought you were amazing. I was proud of you, you played brilliantly. You enjoyed yourselves and I enjoyed watching you. I'm really pleased. So next Sunday, we'll try to do the same again, continue to play an attacking game and score more goals, and maybe we'll win. But one thing is sure: we'll have fun again. Agreed?" "Yeahhhhh!!!" And at the old Hespérides stadium, near the sea and the famous Croisette, 'he' walks away, hanging his head slightly, overwhelmed by a group of

smiling, jubilant girls. Nicolas asks one of the mums to go with the girls to the dressing room and shakes the hand of the opposing coach, who's relieved by the result, his male pride intact. Then, without an ounce of nastiness, Nico slips over to 'him': "It was good, wasn't it?" That's what he's like, Nico, on the touchline with his broad smile, his words of encouragement, his calm-

ness and his contagious good humour.

His football matches his personality. Simple, attractive, upbeat, he has already attracted more than 80 female players to the La Bocca club, aged 7 to 31! At the start of the season he didn't mention promotion or relegation to his teams, U11, U15, U18 or senior. He just said: "It is our constant duty to keep the girls





Explication de gestes (suite)



« La position est très intéressante, où l'on voit l'entraîneur se mettre au niveau de son public, tout juste plus haut pour asseoir son statut. Proche, détendu, il cherche le regard de la jeune fille et crée ainsi une communication visuelle et instaure un climat de confiance. »

(Hamidou Msaidié, fasciathérapeute)



Shirley pouffe, Emeline éclate de rire... Elle a confondu la gauche de la droite !



Echauffement, match, debriefing, Nico (r)assure et se régale de l'écoute de Shirley (en haut, à gauche), du talent de Cyrielle (ci-dessus) et de la répartie d'Alexia (en haut à droite).

motivated by reminding them that football is fun, original and friendly. The message tends to get across rather well. Girls who went of to try swimming or horse-riding for a year have come back... Another one, an intrepid goalkeeper, is hooked, as her father explains: **"She carried on because it was Nicolas and because she knew she would have a great time. Now, she can't do without it"**

Flash Gordon in the flesh!

And it is easy to see why when Nico livens up a training session at the Mûriers stadium... He's like Flash Gordon! A bubble of timidity and energy, he's constantly running from one group to another, as if trying to move faster than

the eyes that could be watching him. On Thursday evening, it's the turn of the U18 and senior teams. For 'his' ladies, he has concocted a tailor-made training programme, taking into account each player's schedule and availability. At precisely 7pm, since the pitches and time slots are in short supply, there are just three of them, warming up with the ball. Nico and his colleague Franck carry on regardless, keeping them constantly on the move. Then a group of six arrives. They say their hellos and then head onto the neighbouring pitch, where they 'copy' the others. After explaining what's happening, Nico goes and finishes setting out cones at the other end of the half-pitch. Having offered 10 more tips and just as many words of encouragement, he leads his group of... 20 into 3

more explosive exercises. Between hoops and a ladder laid flat on the ground, he jumps, leaps, shows them what to do... Then, as the exercises get under way, with running, shooting and crossing, he goes from one to another, talking to them, offering individual advice for the collective good. He is smiling, calming... Through his empathy and care for each individual, this 'coach that cares' shows everyone how to enjoy the game and stretches them... When a girl forgets the rules, he goes over to her, nabs her with a joke, explains the point of the exercise, encourages, corrects, congratulates, etc. For two hours, it's a natural flow of words, laughs, jokes and bouts of hard work. Nico has not had to shout once, and yet they've all heard him. And like a starry summer sky, from the

La Bocca stadium smiles twinkle everywhere in the Cannes night.

The next morning, look who's back! On the same pitch as the previous evening, next to the AS Cannes U19 pitch, two equipment caddies are set out near the substitutes' benches... Nico is running around the penalty area, putting down balls. At his signal, a player is hitting a succession of shots from 20 metres. **"She couldn't come yesterday because she's on a course. Rather than leave her to run on her own, I've prepared a short session."** Ah yes, one last snippet of information before Nico gets back to what he's best at: two years ago, with his U13s from Cannet-Rochville, he won the U13 French Women's Cup! It just goes to show...

Jeudi soir, entraînement collectif aux allures de séance individuelle, tant Nicolas se démultiplie. Écoutées, valorisées, conseillées, les filles s'éclatent.

