

INITIATIVE FOOT CITOYEN

# DAVID BETTONI (AS Cannes)



**At AS Cannes, the club he has been part of for most of his life, U19 coach David Bettoni is responsible for ‘fine-tuning’ young footballers who might, one day, turn professional. An avid follower of the Master Your Emotions course last season, he has tailored the lessons on empathy to his players to give them the best possible conditions for success.**

**In the gentle autumn sun, we take you, through his own words, into the everyday life of an altruistic coach, a coach who is applauded...**

“**A**gain 0-0... So again, be patient in your frustration and, in particular, remember what you did, remember the determination with which you played, the solidarity you showed. Defensively, you were strong. In attack, you had lots of chances. It was almost a perfect match... I say almost because you didn't win and you know that, at this level, winning is important. But keep going, you're on the right track. Whether you liked it or not, you were playing OL. And against them, you were strong, you held your own and you had fun. You boosted your confidence and you took some risks! This week, you've been amazing in training, I could sense something shifting and you reproduced it on the pitch. This determination, being

demanding on yourselves, the objectives you have to put into every exercise – it's there. If you want to have a chance of turning professional one day, you have to be demanding; this is the quality you need... I wanted to congratulate you, well done! I'm really proud to train guys like you.” Then David goes quiet... Spontaneously, the whole AS Cannes U19 squad applauds. Touched, moved, they applaud the coach. And almost certainly themselves as well, in a way, since they put in so much energy and intense effort in their ultimate quest for perfection, so that one day their dreams might come true and they might enter the world of professional football. In their ‘Himalayan’ training programme, they know that this Sunday afternoon's match on the

synthetic pitch of the Maurice Chevalier stadium, a few hundred yards from the La Bocca stadium, was an important step in the right direction. They know that they have taken another step forward this week, but that there is still a long way to go, as David has explained...

### Conversations in the dressing room

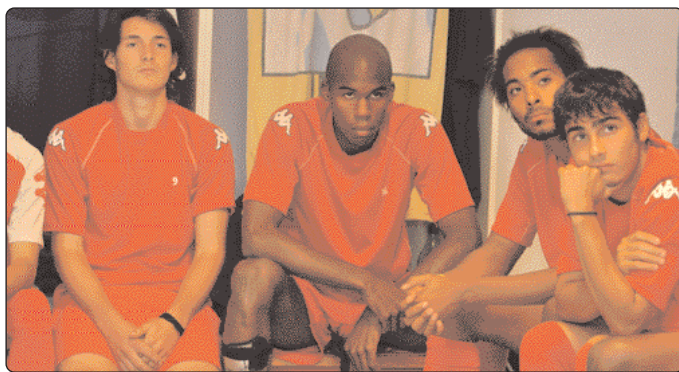
... It was a Thursday afternoon in late October. As usual, David Bettoni, former AS Cannes professional now in charge of the club's U19s, had been talking to his players, taking stock, finding out what they thought about these first few months of working together. As he explained at the Master Your Emotions sessions run by the Swiss Education4Peace

foundation and Foot Citoyen, David is a “perfectionist, a worker who is always trying to improve things”. Through the programme devised by Catherine Schmider, an incredible teacher of non-violent communication and relaxation therapy, who wants to enable everyone to enjoy life, to be fully themselves and to live in harmony with others, he has been supported in his belief in the importance of listening to others and showing empathy to improve his relationship with his players and his people management skills. So, he encourages dialogue... And now, beneath the stand at the La Bocca stadium, in the dressing room reserved for the academy youngsters, it's his turn to speak, to explain things, to express his desire to succeed – and especially to see his players

succeed – his passion, his conviction, his faith. David has listened to them... He has heard them! Facing his 'audience', sitting on the benches, he arrives. Standing up, his hands gesturing, his eyes shining and the veins in his neck bulging, his determination bursts forth in every word and gesture. He addresses his leading players, his links to the others on the pitch, whose role within the squad he particularly values. "Christopher, you told me I belittle you! I belittle you...? When I talk to you about lack of precision, am I belittling you? Amine, when I ask you to start training quickly, am I belittling you? Lamine, when I tell you off for missing four passes out of five, am I belittling you? No, I'm not belittling you! I'm being realistic, clear-headed, because playing at the top level requires excellence and constant rigorous-ness. Do you think I picked you in order to belittle you? No, you're here because I believe in you, I believe in your qualities. But you have to show these all the time because what you're aiming for is right, right up there". He steps back to the board and taps the top of a pyramid. He returns to his players. David is a boxer. He punches, dodges, retreats, punches again...

### Achievable objective

"I like setting traps for them, making them react... They're a good group, maybe too nice, they find it hard to rebel and say things that might make others angry." All eyes are on the top of the pyramid. David opens the discussion... which he directs: "Amine, what's your objective?" "To be a pro!" "Yes, but what about today? This afternoon? To be a pro is your ultimate goal. But there are thousands of steps you have to take to get there. So for today, your objective is to persevere, to not give up, to lose fewer balls. In everything you do today, you should have this in your mind. And this evening you'll

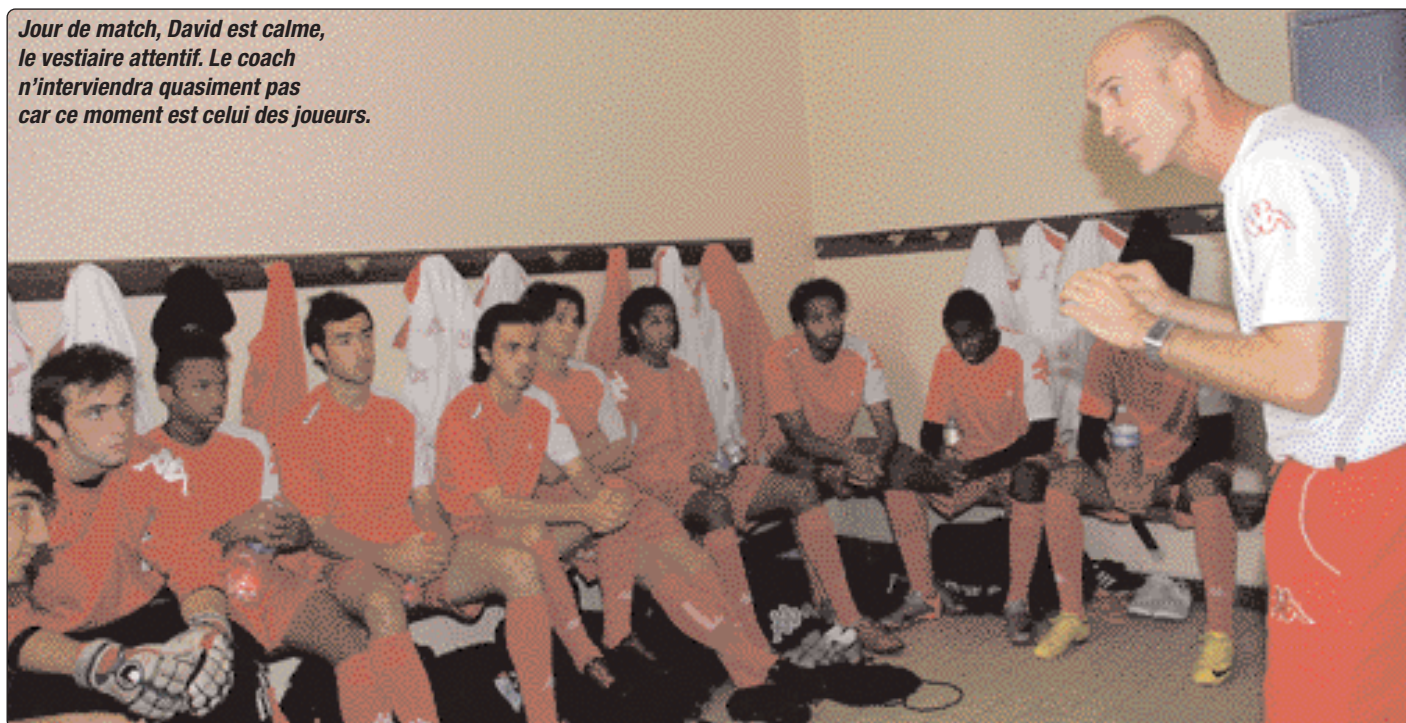


ask yourself: 'Did I achieve my objective for today?'" "And tomorrow, you'll start again, with a new objective... To keep your head up and protect the ball. Short-term objectives, achievable objectives, which, if you take them one at a time, might enable you to achieve

to make it... After getting his breath back, David returns to the middle, as close to his players as he can get: "Nadir, what's your objective for Sunday?" "To win!" "Yes, but everybody plays to win. That's natural... On Sunday, though, you're objective is to have fun. The fun of playing..."

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**Jour de match, David est calme, le vestiaire attentif. Le coach n'interviendra quasiment pas car ce moment est celui des joueurs.**



your ultimate goal. And every player, at every session, will have his own objective... You can't go from here, where you are now, up to there just like that. Am I belittling you? No, on the contrary, I'm telling you how to get there because I want to see you up there..." There are more and more nods of approval. You can sense that, in the players' minds, objectives are taking shape, the desire

Because as an U19 international at AS Cannes, you've forgotten the innocent pleasure my kids enjoy. By making a pass, you pass on the fun. For strikers, the fun of scoring, taking a chance, being creative. For defenders, the fun of winning a one on one. For midfielders, the fun of winning the ball back. For the team, the fun of playing together. FUN!" David returns to the board. He

emphasises, 'hammers' the word with his finger. "FUN!" "With a pass, you give enjoyment. For strikers, the enjoyment of scoring, taking a chance, being creative. For defenders, the enjoyment of winning a one on one. For midfielders, the enjoyment of winning the ball back. For the team, the enjoyment of playing together. ENJOYMENT!" David returns to the board.



**Vendredi matin, séance «explosivité», David est en alerte. « On n'a pas le temps de se demander quoi faire. Plus le temps de réaction est court, plus on est fort. »**

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Coup franc «banane» d'Amine qui termine sur la barre. Contre l'OL, il ose tout, comme ses partenaires dans les 30 derniers mètres.

He emphasises, 'hammers' the word with his finger. "ENJOYMENT!" "Some of your parents will be coming to watch you this weekend. I think they'll want to see you smile. It's important that they can see you're enjoying yourselves. But you, you forget the compliments, the words of encouragement. Sonny, when I tell you to push forward, I'm not belittling you. I say it to you, Sonny, because you're great to watch when you do what you are capable of. It's your game... And ever since you were really young, you've enjoyed playing like that. So that's your objective... You will enjoy pushing forward and penetrating." Everyone's eyes are wide open. You can sense that these attentive 'pupils'

can't wait to get onto the pitch now, to show that they've understood... It's time to let them off the leash.

### Explaining the whys and wherefores

At 9am on Friday morning, everyone's kitted up in the dressing room. There are some smiles... the previous day's training was good. But already, they have to start again with the same intensity, maybe more, because today the focus is on explosiveness. A few instructions here and there and two toros take their places. But David is no toreador, he is a picador. His voice is firm, his words brief and dynamic, like short strides at the beginning of a

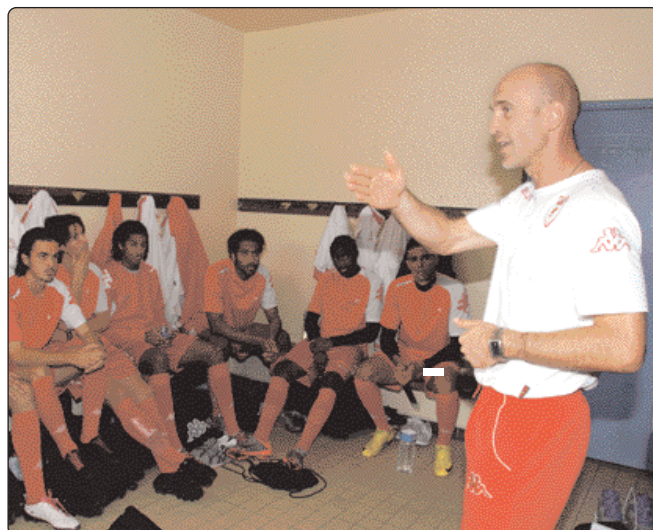
100m race... For 20 minutes, David moves them around, encourages them, yells at them, congratulates them, yells at them again. After yesterday's session, everyone is surprised. Once the exercise is finished, the coach in the baseball cap takes his group to the other side of the pitch for a debriefing, in order to get away from any negative feelings they might associate with the scene of the 'drilling'. Calmly, his voice steady again and a good distance away, he explains his approach. He weighs every word, showing their importance. "It's called a psychological awakening. At the back, you need to be switched on, to be quick, intense, responsive... You've just seen the importance of moving from one action to the next, I put you

in a match situation, when you don't have time to think, when you have to move from one phase to another, when you have to make decisions in a very short space of time... That's where professionals have the edge, in their speed of reaction. I attack, I lose the ball, then I defend. No time to say to yourself, 'Crap, I've lost the ball'. I defend, I win the ball, then I attack..." David sends the players off to the fitness coach. He steps back, but keeps watching. "I think they're ready." With a large number of new players in this season's squad, David has had to adapt his methods. "In previous years, I did 80% competitive play and 20% training. Here, I've got lots of new players. They've got to catch up in a very short space of time, so it's more like 50/50. But they're making progress." He joins Manu, his friend and colleague, in charge of the category below at AS Cannes, in the centre circle. Each of them has half a pitch. His head moves from right to left, he watches movements, players, attitudes... "We're going to finish with a tactical exercise, focusing on defensive positioning and repositioning. Tomorrow, we will prepare for the match against Lyon. Then that's it. I'll have no more to add. The match belongs to them, it's up to them. I'll just make a few adjustments, but that's all. I won't say any more... DAVID! Pass it, firmly. It's the impact that counts!" And David smiles... So do his players!

### Explication de gestes (suite)

#### Le jour du match

«Le coach est proche de ses joueurs et son corps bien droit. Il est directif, signe de rigueur mais aussi de transmission. Le regard est détendu et serein et le bras droit en activité (correspondant au travail de l'hémisphère gauche) peut nous faire comprendre qu'il est ici porté sur le langage et non dans la stratégie comme dans la photo suivante.»



#### Le jeudi, avant l'entraînement

En premier lieu, on remarque le pied gauche avancé, ce qui correspond à une activité de l'hémisphère droit du cerveau. Il s'agit de la zone chargée d'élaborer les calculs et les stratégies. Autour de cette discussion pour un entraînement, on pourrait en déduire que l'entraîneur est dans un discours plutôt axé sur la tactique. Le corps est équilibré et légèrement en avant, signe d'une ouverture au dialogue, mais ce coach garde une distance qui rappelle qu'il est l'entraîneur. Ses paumes de mains vers le bas sont la preuve qu'il tempère ses propos. C'est une attitude propice à la pédagogie.

