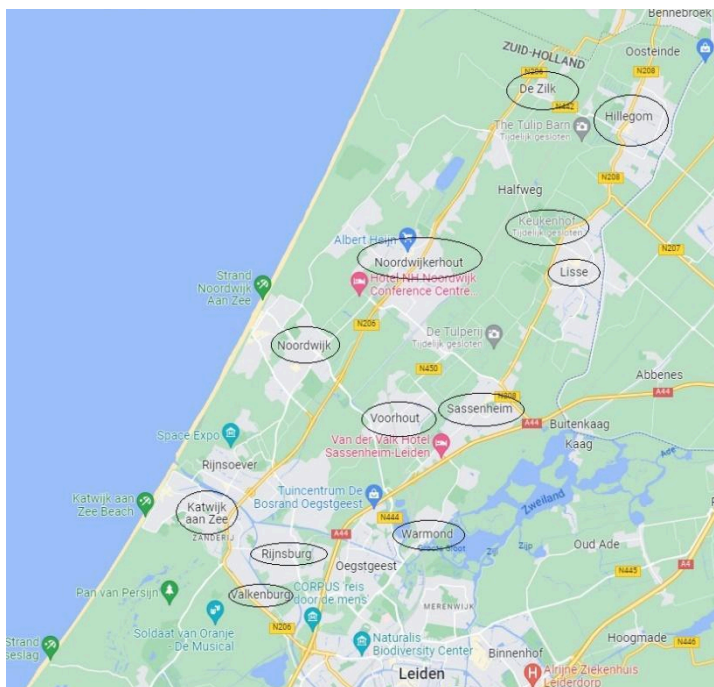


The flower bulb area

Over here we have the flower bulb area (translation: De Bollenstreek) which is an area above Leiden and close to the sea. I do not have to explain why they call it the flower bulb area, do I?

In the image below you see three places which are remarkably close to each other: Katwijk, Rijnsburg and Noordwijk. What makes this area so remarkable regarding football is that Quick Boys, Katwijk (both residing in Katwijk), Rijnsburgse Boys and Noordwijk all play in the Second Division, this is the Dutch 3rd tier. At the moment they are ranked #1, #2, #4 and #16.



In previous cup round (which has been played last Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday) they were all still in the cup (last 32). On Tuesday Katwijk played at home versus a strong Eredivisie side, FC Twente and narrowly lost, 2-3. On Wednesday Quick Boys also met an Eredivisie team, Fortuna Sittard, who are doing quite well in the league. Quick Boys had a great run last season as well: beating NAC and De Graafschap (both at the time in the First Division) at home and in the end got narrowly beaten by AZ Alkmaar away in Alkmaar after penalties.

This year Quick Boys earlier eliminated Eredivisie team Almere City and last Wednesday they trashed Fortuna Sittard, 3-1 and they gave Sittard no chance at all. Thursday, I visited Rijnsburgse Boys as they had to take on First Division top team FC Volendam, they were by far the better side and eventually claimed victory, 2-0. Earlier that evening Noordwijk hosted Eredivisie team Willem II, Noordwijk is struggling in the Second Division but earlier also won versus FC Dordrecht. In a fierce battle they won versus Willem II, 2-1. This means that out of the last sixteen teams in the Cup 3 teams are from the flower bulb area!!

In the Netherlands there is a closed professional football system which means that when you are in the 1st or 2nd tier you can not relegate, even being the bottom team. Are there any teams in the third tier who have problems with this, actually not. It seems strange but when you look further it is not. There are a lot of principle Saturday teams, these teams do not want or are allowed to play on Saturday, this is mainly due to religion. Apart from this mainly all teams in the third or lower tiers do not want to gain promotion tot this 2nd tier because of the fact that it isn't interesting for them in financial terms. Firstly, they have to change the matchday sometimes, because the second division mainly play their matches on Friday and Monday. Secondly there will be a lot of extra regulations concerning the contracts of players, you must contract more players which means more financial responsibilities. Thirdly and this is in my honest opinion an especially crucial factor: these teams attract big crowds, especially when they play against each other. In case that one team will enter the Second Division they will lose a lot of money because when they play at home versus e.g. Helmond Sport this will attract a much smaller crowd than when they play versus each other.

From players perspective it is in a lot of cases also more interesting to play in the third tier. The ground and facilities are sometimes simply better than teams who play in the bottom half of the second tier. The salary can be better as well, certainly when considering that a lot of players in the third tier are able to work next to football as they train in the evening or can combine it quite good with a study.

Recently there has also been a rise of players who play in the third tier and progress to professional levels. When players will be out of contract at professional clubs (no matter which age, so also quite young players) they know when making one step back they might make two steps forward. Last summer two Quick Boys players (Offerhaus and Owusu) joined second division side Telstar, Burgering who joined FC Den Bosch from GVVV and is doing extremely well and Mulder who joined FC Emmen from HHC Hardenberg at the age of twenty-five and is now their captain. Eddachouri joined Telstar from Koninklijke HFC the summer before and is now leading goal scorer in the league with fourteen goals.

There are also examples of players who reach a higher ceiling than the ones mentioned before, and I am sure some of the ones I mentioned before will reach a higher ceiling. But examples of players who really hit a high ceiling are e.g. Nasser El Khayati who joined Burton from Kozakken Boys and made a name for himself at QPR and ADO Den Haag. Milan van Ewijk, the highly rated Coventry City player, who joined ADO Den Haag from Excelsior Maassluis in 2019. What about Dirk Kuijt, who joined FC Utrecht from Quick Boys, the rest is history.

So, when taking all into account:

- ❖ the flower bulb region is a remarkable football mad area where football really has an enormous impact in the society.
- ❖ the second division (third tier) is a league with really high standards (facilities, level etc.)
- ❖ the second division is a league where (young) talented players play and have the qualities to make a step forward.

Apart from my X account @DProFootball I have also the X account @HollandSaturday which is only dedicated to Football in the Second Division (our third tier), it is in Dutch btw.

Recently I also joined BlueSky @dpfootballscout.bsky.social and LinkedIn DutchProFootball Scouting !