



Bart Caubergh: I don't agree that the Russians are morose and closed people

Bart Caubergh, Fitness Coach, "Krylia Sovetov" FC, tells us that Russia isn't as scary as Western television makes it out to be

I was born in Tongeren, an old town with some 30 thousand people who speak Dutch. Incidentally, this is one thing that I can't get right in my head: how such a small country as Belgium has three languages – Dutch, French and German – in comparison with such a huge country as Russia, which has just one official language!

I have been playing football since I was 5 and I have always been a decent player, but not quite good enough for the professional level. By the time I was 23 I had received my Master's degree in Physical Education and Sport Sciences and my UEFA A license when I was 26. I taught at University and football school, working as fitness coach in the Academy of KRC Genk, and then at some point I realized I had to make a choice: carry on or become a professional coach. Just at this time KRC Genk,

and its head coach Frank Vercauteren invited me to become the club's new fitness coach. Now, Frank and I work at "Krylia Sovetov". I think I was one of the youngest professional coaches in the country. With Genk we won the championship and the Supercup and then, all of a sudden, Frank announced he was leaving Genk for "Al Jazira" Club in the UAE. That was quite a sensation: Vercauteren was leaving Belgium, the champions, and was going straight for the Middle East! One night he called me and asked if I also wanted to go to the Emirates. Honestly, I had no plans of leaving, I was quite happy with my comfortable life, and all that came to mind when I thought of the Emirates was a desert in 45 degree heat. I had just a few hours to decide whether I should jump on that train or let it leave without me. I did some research, looked at pictures of Abu Dhabi and made the decision: work