

Dutch company is acquiring central position in global sports community

## Global innovations in sport start at Sport eXperience

**EINDHOVEN-** A year ago the Dutch sports innovation program Sport eXperience started guiding start-ups and scale-ups in the field of sports and technology. Within one year time the program has organised three rounds of workshops for entrepreneurs who work on innovations in sports and want to market their product. Moreover the program -headquartered in Eindhoven- managed to expand its network across borders at a very swift pace. It is now growing out to be a global sports community. Read this article to see what a couple of start-ups that participated in the program have to say.

In the world of sports there are a lot of people with excellent ideas that never go to market. Simply because these people do not have the right experience to start a business. The coaches at Sport eXperience have a lot of experience in sports innovation and business. They believe society can benefit from sports innovation. By using a customer centric approach they support companies in their international growth ambitions and they guide start-ups in developing a sound strategy. Moreover they link them to a valuable global network in sports.

### **Icebyk- 'increase of brand credibility and contact with relevant networks'**

Steve Ellis is the founder and owner of Icebyk, one of the companies that took part in the innovation program in 2016. Steve studied engineering at a technical university and practised top sports. When he combined his interests this resulted in a bike that is fit for riding on ice.

The bike lets its users have an awesome experience on ice but at the same time it is a product for a sleeping market. "I looked at the bike from the point of view of an engineer," Steve explains: "but what I really needed was someone to look at the bike from a market perspective. Moreover I needed a relevant network. For that reason I started looking for an accelerator program that is aimed specifically at the combination technology and sports. That is when I found Sport eXperience."

"I talked to Arno Hermans, founder of Sport eXperience and he was really clear about what he is good at which is: making your brand more attractive, defining a clear business strategy and getting you into contact with a relevant network. And that is exactly what happened. Sport eXperience helped me to define a structured approach and to increase my brand credibility. Finally they helped me get into contact and reach a cooperation agreement with Ice-World international, an organisation that exploits mobile ice rinks around the globe. They now develop, produce and distribute the bikes while I focus on the use of bikes during events and future innovation."

### **FreeSense Solutions- 'building blocks that help you get moving in the right direction'**

Start-up FreeSense Solutions is developing a sensor in order to be able to measure the pressure on horse reins. During horse dressage the pressure on the reins needs to be very low. The sensor helps to gain quick progress. Moreover less power on the reins improves the wellbeing of the animal. The app that is connected with the sensor creates a load share ratio for the horse. Something which is very interesting for the breeder's market.

"The product is still in its infancy," Alex Serrarens explains. "Our company has a lot of expertise in the field of technology but in order to get a sound understanding of the market we work together with a launching customer. Sport eXperience helped us in that process. The main question we had before we entered the program was if we should market the product ourselves or have another company market it for us."

"The workshops and coaching at Sport eXperience helped us define a focussed approach and to choose for working with a launching customer. Moreover we gained more focus in our communication. My advice to other starting companies in sports innovation is to contact Sport eXperience. They do not offer you an instant solution

but they will offer you building blocks that help you move into the right direction. And they provide you access to a relevant network.”

### **B-Dam – ‘the extra support I needed to decide to do it’**

Joost Hopmans is starting an international training centre for professionals in freestyle wind- and water sports in the Dutch province of Zeeland. Joost has worked as a sports consultant for the province of Zeeland for a great number of years and now combines his job at Sport Zeeland with part-time entrepreneurship.

When Joost started thinking of starting a business in water sports he coincidentally came across Sport eXperience on Social Media. Later on he also heard founder of Sport eXperience, Arno Hermans being interviewed on the radio. “That was the moment that I decided to call him,” Joost says: “ and afterwards I immediately registered for the first round of workshops Sport eXperience organised in January and February 2016.”

“Four experts in the field of sports innovation and business made me think about my strategy, about what target group I should address and what direction I wanted to take. After six weeks I decided to register for the chamber of commerce and to focus on professional riders. The training centre is aimed at everything that happens outside the water. Strength training, injury prevention, life skills, nutrition, and video analysis for instance.”

“Sport eXperience helped me make choices and helped me in my positioning. My strategy is to aim at professionals first and make a step towards general sports at a later moment. When I tell professionals about the story of B-Dam they really believe in it. The short and intensive period of coaching at Sport eXperience has forced me to think the idea through and has led to the fact that I actually decided to go and do this!”

### **Idrættens Analyseinstitut- ‘a proposition in sports innovation that is unique in the world’**

Idrættens Analyseinstitut is a Danish independent non-profit organisation for Sport Studies founded by the government in order to monitor and look into sports trends. Henrik Brandt is Director of the institute and has visited Sport eXperience in the Netherlands a number of times.

“We discovered a gap between trends in sports in the field of participation, social inclusion and health on the one hand and business on the other hand”, Henrik explains. “Then we bumped into this specific program for innovators in sports. Sport eXperience helps us gain inside in the business side of sports and shows us how to stimulate entrepreneurship in the field of sports. We are currently in the Netherlands on a study trip to see examples of sports innovations.”

“That is what we are putting on the agenda in Denmark. We are now going to organise a sports innovation festival and Sport eXperience helps us. They are very good at the business side of sports and in combination with their network they offer a proposition that is unique in the world.”

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