

Interview with Thomas Tuchel, Mainz 05 coach, regarding the ebm-papst Indoor Championships in 2010

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Mulfingen,
Thomas Tuchel, coach of the German Mainz 05 professional football team, answered questions about the 2010 ebm-papst Indoor Championships

ebm-papst: Mr Tuchel, in early January 2009, your team, the A-Juniors of Mainz 05, competed in the ebm-papst Indoor Championships in Mulfingen. Your boys played well, but ended up taking "only" 4th place. Do you still have good feelings about the tournament?

Thomas Tuchel: Absolutely. The tournament survives and thrives due to the good mix of teams and exceptional organisation. One can compete against top teams. Last year, we made it to the semi-finals, but then minor details intervened. Despite this, we were highly satisfied.

ebm-papst: Mainz 05 played seven times in the seven ebm-papst Indoor Championships. This means that obviously, the ebm-papst Indoor Championships are especially important to you. Why is that?

Tuchel: You'd really have to ask our Youth Co-ordinator, Volker Kersting, who has also been with us for seven years. Before I brought my team to the Championships, he told me about the high standards of sportsmanship and the ideal basic conditions, such as the new hall and the wonderful food and lodging. All of that proved to be true.

ebm-papst: How do you assess the chances your club's A-Juniors will have at the eighth ebm-papst Indoor Championships in January 2010?

Tuchel: This depends on the composition of the squad for the tournament. Basically, the primary focus is on preparing for the outdoor season. However, the chances are also good that our team will have a successful indoor tournament.

ebm-papst: How do Germany's young 18 to 20-year-old football players measure up in international competition?

Tuchel: Since Matthias Sammer took over the reins for young players in the German Football League (DFB), a new spirit of success has taken hold. This is proven by the international titles won recently, even though the success of youth work must not be judged by titles. In any case, we can stand up well to any international comparison.

ebm-papst: In your assessment, has the establishment of the three-division A-Juniors German league proven worthwhile?

Tuchel: The German league has definitely proven worthwhile. The teams are better matched; even the best teams are now regularly challenged by teams who play at the same level. Moreover, the split into three divisions means that all teams also have acceptable travel distances, which reduces expenses significantly for the clubs.

ebm-papst: Wouldn't it be better to have a single-division first juniors league in Germany?

Tuchel: I don't think so. Bundling the teams into one league would make people more focused on results and push developing talented players into the background. This would also result in substantial extra costs and effort in organising away games. After all, we have to remember that many players still attend school.

ebm-papst: Relatively few players from the German A-Junior league teams make the leap to professional football. Why is that?

Tuchel: I don't know the detailed numbers, but I'm not sure I would agree with such a broad statement. I think most young German pro players come from the respective U19 teams of the national leagues.

ebm-papst: You personally have had a steep career ascent: from A-Youth coach to coaching the active pro team. Were you able to take players along with you from the A-Youth to the first team?

Tuchel: You bet. Eugen Gopko, one of the current players on our U19 team, has played on the first team, as has Adriano Grimaldi, who came to us from Leipzig during the summer. Jan Kirchhoff, who unfortunately is still injured, is likewise on the pro squad. In exhibition games, we have also used players such as Stefan Bell, Manuel Schneider and Petar Sliskovic from our A-Junior squad.

ebm-papst: What do the pros have that A-Juniors are missing?

Tuchel: That would be quite a broad statement too, and there is no single answer, as great differences exist between individuals. Basically, the players from our youth training centre are very well trained, but they have to learn to compete successfully against older players on the pro squad and perform in front of a crowd of spectators.

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