

## Interview Martin van Brandwijk

### **'Good vibes at BRESS'**

**BRESS, also known as Breda Student Sport, targets, as the name suggests, mainly Breda students. But, BUAs and Avans staff and alumni are also more than welcome to play sports there at a much-reduced rate. Recently, Martin van Brandwijk (47), a former student of the Logistics and Transport Engineering programme, started as BRESS' board chairman. How did he end up at BRESS? What are the goals for his new role and how does he look back on BUAs?**

**You started studying Logistics in 1996 and then worked at what was then known as NHTV for seven years. What was your role?**

Martin: 'Right! I worked for the Housing, Facilities and Planning office. I was involved in all kinds of things. The department was responsible for all facility matters, including all renovations, so I was also involved in the renovation of the Archimedesstraat building, which housed Leisure & Events. Everything was possible there. We formally had a five-year contract, which could not be extended. In the end, they stayed there for about thirteen years. That was cool. We painted the whole lecture hall black and that became the Blackbox. But, in addition to the facilities and those renovations, we were also responsible for class timetables, for instance.'

**Why did you leave this job?**

'It ended up being a pretty intense time. My then supervisor passed away and as a result I became the interim housing manager. That role did not really suit me at that time and I knew I wanted to look beyond NHTV, spread my wings. I then went to a real estate company called Colliers and currently I work at a project management agency. But I have always said I would come back one day, because I find it a very pleasant and dynamic employer!'

**What did you take from your studies and still apply in your work today?**

'During the programme, I really learned to communicate and work together. I also still apply the principles of project-based work. Above all, I had the time of my life there and made the best friends. We all stayed in Breda as well. A few friends left for a while, but almost all of them came back. I also still occasionally get in touch with staff such as Leo Kemps, Jan-Willem Proper and Nico van Os.'

**How did you end up at BRESS as the chairman of the board?**

'Through Nico van Os, I was told that BRESS was still looking for a new chair. I have actually been on all kinds of boards since my student days. It started with 't VAT (now study association BELO) and I was also on the board of student parties at, then still, NHTV. After my studies, I ended up on the board of the hockey association and in recent years at my children's primary school, but there you have to leave after eight years. So, it was time for something new.'

**Did you used to play sports yourself at BRESS?**

'Yes, I did have a membership card. Back then you got a discount to play sports at different locations in Breda. BRESS did not have its own building back then. In my time, we still had one hour of sports classes every week through school. Maarten van Rijn used to teach these. That was in the current BRESS building.'

**What is your favourite sport?**

'I like all sports. I watch almost all sports during the Olympics. I play hockey myself, but I love skiing the most. But I also regularly, when the weather is nice, get out on my mountain or road bike and I play football a lot with my two boys.'

**Do you have specific plans as chairman of the board?**

'My mission as chair is to continue to strive for a high level of student and staff well-being, giving students and staff the opportunity to play sports at an affordable rate to promote well-being and health. In doing so, the focus in the coming years will be on possibly expanding the target group to include students in secondary vocational education and making the premises more sustainable and future-proof.'

**I understood that the gym was recently refurbished, can you tell us more about that?**

'Yes, it has become really nice. They have the latest fitness equipment. You should come and admire it and try it out. This new gym was partly made possible with the support of BUAs. We will also be working on improving the toilets and the roof in the near future. And we are one of the last places to have a squash court in Breda!'

**Can you talk more about that collaboration with BUAs?**

'The board includes representatives from both BUAs and Avans. Fortunately, at both educational institutions, BRESS is high on the agenda. So, together we make new plans. For example, there is now also a student working on a study of what BRESS can do with esports. And at BRESS, students work in catering, reception and, for example, physiotherapy students from Avans are involved in sports lessons.'

**Do you also work with students from institutes for secondary vocational education (mbo)?**

'We are currently exploring this. In education, mbo is increasingly connected to higher education, so we also want to make sports accessible for mbo students within BRESS. We can actually help in bridging that gap through sports. We are discussing this with the mbo schools in Breda. But it will also have to be seen whether this connects with this group of students. Higher education students often move away from home and then look for a new sports club, while mbo students usually come from the immediate area and live with their parents. They then often already have a sports club they are affiliated with. It would be cool if this works. BRESS is really a student club with a good vibe.'

Go to [www.bress.nl](http://www.bress.nl) for more information and the sports on offer.

*Author: Elles van Steenis*