

= Maikel Kieftenbeld =

Maikel Kieftenbeld (Dutch pronunciation : [ˈmɪkəl ˈkɪftənbɛld] ; born 26 June 1990) is a Dutch professional footballer who plays as a defensive midfielder for English club Birmingham City .

Kieftenbeld began his football career with his hometown club , VV Lemerleveld , before joining Twente 's youth system as a young teenager . Twente let him leave for Eerste Divisie (second @-@ tier) club Go Ahead Eagles in 2007 , and a year later , he made his senior debut and signed his first professional contract . He spent two seasons as a regular member of GA Eagles ' first team before joining Eredivisie club Groningen in 2010 . He played as a right back during his first year with Groningen , switching to midfield in his second season . Appointed vice @-@ captain for 2013 ? 14 , he took on the captaincy during the season , and helped the club qualify for European football for the first time in seven years . He captained Groningen to victory in the 2014 ? 15 KNVB Cup final to win the first major trophy in the club 's history . Ahead of the 2015 ? 16 season , he joined Football League Championship (second @-@ tier) club Birmingham City .

He played for the Netherlands Beloftenelftal at the 2012 Toulon Tournament , and was capped five times for his country at under @-@ 21 level .

= = Personal life = =

Kieftenbeld was born on 26 June 1990 in Lemelerveld , in the municipality of Dalfsen , Netherlands , where he attended Heilig Hartschool primary school . After leaving school he began a college course in business economics , but did not complete it . He came from a sporty family . His mother , Anja , and one of his sisters played volleyball , another sister rode horses . His father , Joop , coached in the lower reaches of Dutch amateur football , including at SV SDOL of the Vijfde Klasse and the reserve team of Tweede Klasse club VV Lemerleveld , the hometown club where Maikel began playing football at the age of five .

= = Club career = =

= = = Go Ahead Eagles = = =

Kieftenbeld was spotted by scouts from Twente , but after four seasons in their youth system , the staff believed he was not up to the required standard , so in 2007 he moved on to Deventer @-@ based Eerste Divisie (second @-@ tier) club Go Ahead Eagles . The following summer , he took part in the first @-@ team 's pre @-@ season training camp in Germany , and made his senior debut on the opening day of the 2008 ? 09 Eerste Divisie , on 8 August 2008 away to VVV @-@ Venlo . He entered the game to replace the injured Ceriel Oosthout just before half @-@ time with his team 1 ? 0 down ; they lost 5 ? 0 . In September , he signed his first professional contract , for three years with an option for a fourth . He scored his first senior goal on 24 April 2009 ? the winning goal as Go Ahead Eagles beat Veendam 2 ? 1 ? and finished the season as a first @-@ team regular with 30 league appearances .

In his second season , he helped Go Ahead Eagles to reach the final round of the promotion play @-@ offs , in which they lost to Willem II . In April 2010 , Kieftenbeld was being linked with a move to AZ , the reigning Dutch champions . By the beginning of June , all parties had agreed terms , but the financial situation at AZ and a change of ownership meant the deal did not proceed .

= = = Groningen = = =

= = = = 2010 to 2013 = = = =

On 17 June 2010 , the 19 @-@ year @-@ old Kieftenbeld signed a four @-@ year contract with

Eredivisie club Groningen , who paid a ? 300 @, @ 000 fee for the player . He was presented as a right back , despite only ever having played in midfield . In his first season at Groningen he did indeed play at right back , competently enough , but in a 5 ? 1 defeat away to Feyenoord , he struggled against Ryo Miyaichi , a player with pace and ability with both feet , and eventually fouled him to concede a penalty . Groningen finished the season in fifth position , thus qualifying for the play @-@ offs for a place in the Europa League . Kieftenbeld was sent off in the first leg of the semi @-@ final , so was suspended for the second . He was replaced at half @-@ time in the first leg of the final , which Groningen lost 5 ? 1 to ADO Den Haag , and was an unused substitute in the second leg as they recovered from the four @-@ goal deficit only to lose out on penalties .

In his second season , Kieftenbeld played regularly in his preferred position in midfield . He scored his first goal for Groningen on 30 October 2011 in what finished up as their biggest win ever against Feyenoord , by six goals to nil . Kieftenbeld 's goal was the second of the six , a powerful drive from 30 metres (33 yd) . In the January transfer window , Groningen turned down what was described as a substantial bid for him from Belgian Pro League club Club Brugge ; having let Danny Holla join VVV @-@ Venlo on loan , they were not prepared to lose another midfielder . His performances over the season earned him the supporters ' vote as Player of the Year .

Kieftenbeld was more often substitute than starter in the first few weeks of 2012 ? 13 under new manager Robert Maaskant , but went on to re @-@ establish himself in the side . A minor knee injury sustained during the mid @-@ season training camp meant he missed a couple of matches , and thereafter his appearances in the starting eleven were intermittent , whether through suspension or just not being selected . Groningen finished in seventh place , albeit 19 points behind Twente whom they faced in the play @-@ offs . Kieftenbeld put in a strong performance in the first leg in a 1 ? 0 defeat at home , but a 3 ? 2 loss in the second leg confirmed that Groningen would not qualify for the Europa League .

== == 2013 to 2015 == ==

Ahead of the 2013 ? 14 season , Maaskant 's replacement Erwin van de Looi appointed Kieftenbeld vice @-@ captain , with Rasmus Lindgren as captain . He began the season on the bench , but soon came back into the starting eleven , frequently wore the captain 's armband in Lindgren 's absence , and reduced his yellow @-@ card count in the first half of the season from his usual five or six to just one . Towards the end of the season , he captained the side even when Lindgren played ? at the latter 's recommendation ? and according to the club 's website , he was the inspiration for a ten @-@ match unbeaten finish that meant Groningen qualified for European football for the first time in seven years . Technical director Henk Veldmate said he was a " worthy ambassador " for the club both on and off the field . Amid interest both from other Eredivisie clubs and from abroad , including Club Brugge , Kieftenbeld signed a new two @-@ year contract . The negotiations were lengthy , but the player said he was happy staying where he was appreciated , and the prospect of European football played a part . According to the club , the player insisted on a release clause being included in the contract .

Groningen entered the 2014 ? 15 Europa League in the second qualifying round . After a goalless draw in the away leg , opponents Aberdeen took a two @-@ goal lead in the second leg . Kieftenbeld scored a headed goal just before half @-@ time to reduce the deficit , but Aberdeen held out and Groningen were eliminated . Afterwards , Aberdeen 's Jonny Hayes spoke of the motivation they drew from over @-@ confident remarks reportedly made by Kieftenbeld and others ahead of the second leg which they perceived as disrespectful . Domestically , Kieftenbeld missed only one match in all competitions , through suspension , and played every minute of Groningen 's 2014 ? 15 KNVB Cup run . In the quarter @-@ final , he " hammered in the fourth from the edge of the box " in a 4 ? 0 defeat of Eredivisie club Vitesse Arnhem , and Groningen beat another top @-@ flight club , Excelsior , 3 ? 0 in the semi @-@ final . In the final , Albert Rusnák 's two goals were enough to beat cup @-@ holders PEC Zwolle , and Kieftenbeld as captain lifted the first major trophy in the club 's history .

Kieftenbeld was twice shortlisted for the Eredivisie 's annual Maatschappelijk Speler (Community

Player) award , which brings with it a ? 50 @,@ 000 prize to be donated to a social project of the winner 's choice . He was actively involved with Kids United , a football team for children with disabilities . Although he did not win on either occasion , his charity still benefited when the 2015 winner , Jeroen Zoet , shared the prize money with the other two nominees . In late July 2015 , English club Birmingham City made a bid for Kieftenbeld 's services that triggered the release clause in his contract . Although Groningen accepted they could not stop him leaving , they were disappointed not just at losing their captain so soon before the start of the new season , but at losing a player who did so much for the club in the community .

= = = Birmingham City = = =

On 27 July , Kieftenbeld signed a three @-@ year contract with Football League Championship (second @-@ tier) club Birmingham City . The fee was officially undisclosed , but the release clause figure was widely reported as ? 250 @,@ 000 . He went straight into the starting eleven for the opening game of the season , playing alongside Stephen Gleeson in a 4 ? 2 ? 3 ? 1 formation , " clattered around midfield breaking up play , putting in tackles and generally making it uncomfortable " for the opponents , and kept his place for the next few league matches . After David Davis 's fine performance in the League Cup tie against Aston Villa was followed by mistakes in midfield in a poor defeat at home to Rotherham United , manager Gary Rowett included Davis alongside Kieftenbeld and Gleeson as Birmingham won 2 ? 0 at Brentford . Minor injury restricted Kieftenbeld to a seat on the bench against Blackburn Rovers in early November , and Davis took over his role as Rowett reverted to a two @-@ man central midfield . Although Rowett said Davis was unlucky not to start the visit to Brighton & Hove Albion at the end of the month , Kieftenbeld returned to the side to provide " a bit more control " ; he was involved in an incident when Liam Rosenior suffered knee damage in what Brighton manager Chris Hughton described as a " just a whole @-@ hearted challenge " .

Having scored just five times in more than 200 league matches in the Netherlands , Kieftenbeld registered three goals in 22 days in January 2016 . In the 89th minute of the match at home to Brentford , he won the ball in midfield , played it through to James Vaughan , and kept running ; when Vaughan shot across goal , Kieftenbeld arrived at the far post just in time to slide the ball home for the winner . At Derby County two weeks later , he ran on to a clearance and hit a powerful volley from outside the penalty area wide of the goalkeeper to complete a 3 ? 0 victory , and repeated the feat in the next match , at home to Ipswich Town . The goals earned him a nomination for January 's Championship Player of the Month , but he lost out to Hull City 's Abel Hernández .

= = International career = =

Kieftenbeld made his first appearance in international football for the Netherlands Beloftenelftal (Promises Team) , an under @-@ 21 team providing a stepping @-@ stone between the under @-@ 19 team and the full under @-@ 21 team , in March 2010 . He played the first half of a 2 ? 1 defeat in a friendly match against Slovenia U21 . After Leroy Fer and Dirk Marcellis were requisitioned for the senior squad in August 2010 , Kieftenbeld received his first under @-@ 21 call @-@ up , and made his debut as a second @-@ half substitute in a 2011 European Championship qualifier against Liechtenstein , He also played against Spain in September with the group already won : taking the field after 66 minutes , he was sent off 12 minutes later for a foul on Ander Herrera . He made his first start for the under @-@ 21s in a friendly against Denmark in November 2010 , playing at right back in a 3 ? 1 win ; his through ball set up Bas Dost for the third goal . He played in two more U21 friendlies , against the Czech Republic and Germany , and was an unused substitute in four Euro 2013 qualifiers in 2011 and 2012 . His last international appearances were at the 2012 Toulon Tournament , at which the Netherlands were represented by the Beloftenelftal ; he played in four of their five matches .

= = Style of play = =

Dutch journalist Michiel Jongsma suggests that Kieftenbeld 's position of choice is as a holding midfielder in front of the defence , where he can best use his energy in recovering the ball . He is comfortable on the ball and able to distribute it , but can be careless in possession , and " he really tries to shake up things when the play has gone dormant . In that lies his weakness as well ? he can pick up silly fouls and cards from time to time . " With Groningen , he averaged eight yellow cards a season . According to Groningen 's technical director Henk Veldmate , speaking in 2014 , his battling style and never @-@ say @-@ die attitude made him the sort of player with whom supporters could identify . In a 2011 interview , Kieftenbeld described himself as a perfectionist who always wanted to improve , and said that he sometimes put too much pressure on himself .

= = Career statistics = =

As of match played 7 May 2016

= = Honours = =

= = = Club = = =

FC Groningen
KNVB Cup : 2014 ? 15