

# Davis Cup Finals

Wednesday, 20 November 2024

Team Netherlands

Captain Paul Haarhuis

Botic van de Zandschulp

Wesley Koolhof

Press Conference

KOOLHOF-vandeZANDSCHULP/Alcaraz-Granollers

7-6, 7-6

Team Netherlands - 2

Team Spain - 1

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the press conference for Team Netherlands. Questions in English.

**Q. A question for Botic. Have you been, like, preparing this match against Rafa for, like, a week? Did you know that there was a good chance that you'd play him? How did you manage to handle that?**

BOTIC van de ZANDSCHULP: Yeah, of course he announced a couple weeks ago that he was gonna play here the last event. Of course you're thinking about maybe you can play him, maybe not.

Yeah, first couple of days I was pretty busy waiting, and then I decided to see who I was going to play today, because I wasn't sure. Of course last couple days he was practicing a lot, so I got the feeling he was going to play here the singles.

Yeah, to prepare for that, it's quite tough. It's emotional, emotional match. The atmosphere was great, was amazing.

But also a tough one, everybody cheering for Rafa, so yeah, it's going to be tough, but I think I handled it pretty well in the end.

**Q. Captain, yesterday, Paul, you said you could beat anyone. You proved it today. How did you pull this off, especially in this very hostile atmosphere?**

CAPTAIN PAUL HAARHUIS: Well, the guys just played



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well. I have confidence in the players. That's why I said we could do it.

It kind of went how you kind of see your chances, where do you see chances. Obviously the chances of beating Carlos is smaller than maybe their No. 2 player. And then Botic, I know he can play very, very well. He's shown it so many times, and especially also in Davis Cup.

And then it's 1-0, it's great. Then you have a chance to play well against Carlos. He came up too strong. And then we know we have a good doubles team. They have a good doubles team when you play against the No. 3 singles guy in the world and the No. 3 doubles player in the world. These guys are playing well.

It was a close match, so in the end there was a couple of shots in the tiebreak here and there, but it was very, very high level, and, you know, but I was confident before that they can do it.

**Q. Wesley, it could have been your last game tonight, but you put in an incredible performance. How do you go into these games knowing that each game could be your last?**

WESLEY KOOLHOF: I actually didn't really think about it, to be honest. Also last week in Turin I didn't really think about it. Of course we were very happy with 1-0 from Botic, so basically in the end it was kind of same like last year what happened. Botic putting us 1-0 up and Tallon losing for 1-All. So, yeah, didn't really cross my mind. I think I felt good from the start.

Played very high level today, so I was very happy with that. Could carry Botic a little bit here and there, because obviously a transition from singles to doubles is not easy.

But I was very happy with the performance. It didn't really cross my mind at all. Yeah, it was either Rafa or me in the end, so yeah, personally I'm happy that it was Rafa, but no, at least I extended it for a few more days. I was very, yeah, happy with the performance.

**Q. Botic, what does it mean to be the last man to beat**

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**Rafa?**

BOTIC van de ZANDSCHULP: Yeah, I haven't really thought about it, actually. Of course it's been different. I played him twice. Played him in Roland Garros, Wimbledon.

I think he was a different player there maybe physically. I thought today he was, I won't say struggling, but of course you see he gets older, and the injuries are taking its toll, I think.

So, yeah, I haven't really thought about being the last man to beat Rafa, but maybe I will in a couple of days.

**Q. Congratulations, guys. I have a question to Wesley. In my opinion, you play one of the best matches in your career. I don't know if you agree. So why you end your career so you play that well?**

WESLEY KOOLHOF: You're the first one to ask me that one. No, kidding (smiling). Yeah, well, it's been a year now since I announced it, basically.

The idea was to stop on a high note, to still finish one more year very strong. In the end, won five ATP titles, three Masters, and amazing last season of my career. Yeah, no, it was time to focus on something else.

I know I still have the level to continue for five to seven more years maybe, but no, it's time for something else. Made the decision last year at the end of the year. Never doubted it. Never ever regretted it so far.

I'm very happy with the decision I made and also very happy and thankful, yeah, to still play and perform on such a high level and such a big stage. Was a pleasure playing here today, a lot of emotions going on personally, of course, and also in the stands and with our team and with the opposing team.

No, still no regrets or anything. A few more to go. Hopefully two more to go. No, that's it.

**Q. Another one for you, Wesley. On the point of the atmosphere, I wonder what was it like to play in that atmosphere? It seemed like you really enjoyed being the disrupters tonight. Would you agree with that?**

WESLEY KOOLHOF: Yes, of course. You know that you need to. No, it was a very electric atmosphere from the moment we walked on court with the team ceremony until the last moment Rafa went into the tunnel. It was very emotional for everybody, I have to admit.

But yeah, we just tried to focus on our things. You know it's going to be rowdy. During Botic's match, like the crowd was looking kind of hostile a little bit from time to time, but I guess that's normal, but you try to block that out. I think everyone did a tremendous job doing that. It was a lot of screaming going on. Obviously a lot of clapping with first-serve mistakes and double faults and stuff, but I didn't see Botic do anything. Same with Tal.

Went once to the referee, and obviously you get a lot of boos and stuff. Used to it, and I think we stayed calm, which was very important, because it can, yeah, ignite, as well, on the stands.

But, no, we did a very good job maintaining calmness and coolness, so a very good job from us as a team.

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