

Roland Garros

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Dylan Alcott

Press Conference

D. ALCOTT/A. Lapthorne

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THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. How does it feel to retain your title here?

DYLAN ALCOTT: I'm bloody happy, to be honest. It's awesome. It's been obviously such a crazy year. For Roland Garros to even get up is pretty awesome, let alone wheelchair tennis, put on the main court today for the first time.

As soon as I saw that, I had a spring in my step, to be honest. I like a big, big occasion.

I stuffed up the US Open, lost in the final. I think winning today made the trip worthwhile, you know what I mean? I'm really proud of how I played. I had a really good time out there.

Q. Well done on speaking out when you weren't happy with wheelchair tennis not being given a chance in New York. You finally got there. You got on Suzanne Lenglen here. How happy that you're actually being listened to and given these chances?

DYLAN ALCOTT: Oh, mate, it's cool. I can't believe it. When we missed out on the US Open originally, I just wrote those tweets because I was really sad, to be honest. As someone with a disability not to be included just because of our disability was tough.

I didn't think anyone would listen. The next thing it's on the third page of the New York Times, Andy Murray has called me on the phone. The support from the world of tennis has been amazing. I get to play on Rod Laver Arena back in Australia, 10,000 people there, a million people watching on TV, that kind of stuff. My match was live on Australian TV today, which is so cool.

The media, to the public, people want to watch because it's entertaining sport. It means a lot to me, more so for not just us but the next generation of young people with a disability. You know what I mean? To show them that you are going to be included. Just be proud of who you are, things like that. You will get the support.



ROLAND-GARROS

To the French Open for really putting us on a high stage today was really cool. It really was. I was shocked. I didn't know that was going to happen. To the organizers, thank you. I love the clay. I didn't think I liked clay, to be honest. I hate getting dirty. I play well on it. I think I like it now (laughter).

I had an awesome week here.

Q. Popularity question. I'm doing a book on the Paralympics. When Oscar Pistorius, I know it's a bad name now, was earning millions of dollars, worldwide popularity, I asked who the next star would be. Your name came up quite a lot. How do you think you got to that point where people know you? What more needs to be done to create more opportunity for disabled people?

DYLAN ALCOTT: Great question. I like to be known for my tennis ability. But I'm also a broadcaster in Australia. I have my own radio show, my own TV shows. I commentate the tennis.

You know what, I remember I got an opportunity to work on TV during the Australian Open. They said, We want you to interview Rafael Nadal after the match. But how you going to do that? Because he's standing up. I said, I'm just going to put a microphone in his face like everybody else. They kind of went, Oh, yeah. Might look at me different.

I remember seeing a photo of that, me interviewing Rafa. When I was a little kid, I never saw anybody like me in the media, on TV, anything. That used to break my heart.

I remember I saw that. It was like, Wow, it's just normal. Two tennis players talking to each other. You know what I mean?

The only reason I had cut through is because I had support. Nothing to do with me. It's to do with my family backing me in, my coaches, my team. But also the Australian media and the Australian public going, We care about these dudes. You know what I mean? That's because I used to put myself out there.

Six years ago I played the Australian Open, there were six people there watching me. Did I think anybody would care eventually? No. But I tried. I can't believe it.

So I just want more athletes around the world with disabilities to have the same opportunities I've had. I know I'm the lucky one. But I want people, whether it's not even just sport, getting a job, going on a date, getting married, things that people take for granted that are often harder for people with disabilities because we're not given the chance. That's why I do what I do.

I love winning Grand Slams, but it's not the reason I get out of bed. It's not. It's to provide opportunities and try and change perceptions and things like that, you know what I mean?

Also, I promise you my story will end out better than Oscar's as well. Won't be going down that path.

Q. How about the money side of things? Are you close to being millions of dollars?

DYLAN ALCOTT: No. I mean, I'm not going to complain. I'm not complaining. I've got great sponsors and great partners that make my career worthwhile.

The next big thing for us is obviously the prize money, trying to increase the prize money at the Grand Slams. I'm not complaining, because 10 years ago you won nothing. It's getting better. But hopefully it keeps getting better and better.

The reason is, I get it, no one used to want to watch, so the prize money was lower. Now, people are buying tickets and if it's broadcast and things like that, we want more and more prize money.

But in saying that, I don't play for the money. I play because I love it. I play because it gives me a profile to help people.

But I'm not complaining. I've got some of the biggest brands in the world sponsoring, ANZ Bank in Australia, Toyota, Coca-Cola, POWERade, Nike. I got massive. NEC, OCS. Naming them all now (laughter). I have great partners. I'm definitely not complaining, that's for sure.

Q. I saw Djokovic post a couple of points, it wasn't yourself but other players on social media in his spare watching the wheelchair tennis. You know him well. You seem friends. What kind of impact does that have?

DYLAN ALCOTT: It's massive. It was like when we didn't get in the US Open, I almost fell out of my wheelchair when Andy Murray calls me and goes, Hey, man, I've been speaking to Roger, Novak, Rafa and the boys, and we put in the WhatsApp. They can't believe you're not there either. We're going to try to help.

I can't believe they even know my name, let alone in the

locker room. Like, when I first started playing tennis, I know these guys, I was always wondering, are we an inconvenience to them? Are we in the way? Like there's wheelchair players?

Now they're like, G'day, Dyl. Saw your match. How good is your backhand going? It's like we're equals in a sense.

If it's good enough for them, it's good enough for the public. It's good enough for center court. It's good enough for sponsors. It's good enough for people to buy tickets. It's good enough for TV.

For them to support it, it shows people that I'm going to watch that, too, which is epic.

I was lucky enough to win a basketball gold medal when I was 17, the Beijing Paralympics. I never met LeBron James. But when I play tennis, I'm sharing the locker room with Roger, Rafa, Andy, Novak. They're right there. It's like no other Paralympic sport.

I feel privileged to play it, I really do. I love it. I just want to build the sport so when I retire, the next generation of kids can get sponsors, they can afford to come, can afford to buy a wheelchair. People do watch them. That's what I want to try and do.

Without the support of the big top players, you guys, everybody, I don't know if it would be the case. So I'm very appreciative.

Q. It's only a few months till the Australian Open. Hopefully that goes ahead. Do you feel like winning here gives you a platform to go seven in a row?

DYLAN ALCOTT: It does. You know what I'm going tomorrow? I'm flying home, going into hotel quarantine for two weeks. Can't go outside, can't leave your room, can't do anything. It's to keep Australia safe, so I'm appreciative. It's got to be done.

My girlfriend and I, I don't know what we're going to do. I mean, I know what we're going to do (smiling). It's going to be good.

I love Australia and I hope everybody can get there safely. I'm just going to go home, work my ass off, hopefully win a seventh in a row. I also don't know how many more I got left in me, to be honest. I'm just going to enjoy them all while I can.

I'm looking forward to the Paralympics in 2021. Also want to send my love. The world is in a weird spot right now. Hope everyone is keeping safe. Hopefully we can get everybody there safely in Australia.

Q. You said you don't know how much time you're

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going to have with tennis. Transitioning out of Paralympic sport is a tough issue for disabled athletes. Have you thought about that, how industries can help disabled people transition into work?

DYLAN ALCOTT: Yeah, mate. I mean, I've got about eight jobs at home, to be honest. I'm looking forward to sleeping a bit more when I finish tennis. I'm very lucky.

I have a consulting company at home where we educate governments and corporates to better understand the needs of people with disabilities so they can get jobs, so they can do the things they want to do.

I mean, I'm sorted. But I've got heaps of things. I want to do some acting. I'm launching a new food company in Australia called Able Foods. I got lots of things going on.

I always think, Why can't Brad Pitt be in a wheelchair? Why can't Jimmy Fallon be in a wheelchair? I'm lucky I have a big profile in Australia already. Why couldn't I do that in Hollywood? Why couldn't I do it that in England, somewhere else around the world?

The thing with that is, in saying that, I might play tennis next year, pretend to retire, miss it, I might keep playing. I'm getting older. I'm 29. I'm washed out. I'm 30 in December.

I'm just going to live in the moment. I always live in the now. I'm not thinking too far ahead. I'm going to keep loving playing tennis, keep working my ass off, keep trying to make everybody proud, see what happens after that.

You're right, man, we around the world need to provide more people more opportunities for people with disabilities just to do whatever they want to do, whether it's bank, work in the media, go on a date, whether it's go to a bar and get drunk, whatever it is. We always have to support people. So just going to keep trying to do that. It sounds like you're doing the same, Nate. Sounds like you've got a new book going out. Give it another plug.

Q. I don't know when it's going to come out. But if you don't mind, what are you concerned maybe about Tokyo going ahead?

DYLAN ALCOTT: I'm not a doctor. I'm not a medical expert. All I'm hoping is that it can get done safely. I want it to go ahead, but only as long as we're all safe but also the people of Japan are safe. You know what I mean?

I will obviously cry every day if it gets canceled. You can control what you can control. I can't control a pandemic. I'm just going to keep training, do what I can, hopefully get the chance to represent my country one last time at

the Paralympic Games and defend my gold medal. That's the plan.

Thanks, guys. Thanks for supporting me, wheelchair tennis. I F'ing love you all.

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