

US OPEN

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Diede de Groot

Press Conference



D. de GROOT/Y. Kamiji

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THE MODERATOR: Congratulations.

DIEDE de GROOT: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Hour and 13 minutes on the court. Give us your thoughts on the match. Very efficient, very businesslike championship match.

DIEDE de GROOT: Yeah, I was actually expecting a longer and bigger fight, I think, seeing the history that we have on this court. We have played three sets, I've been down to win the championships on that court, so I was definitely expecting one of those battles.

I was on top. I was on top of my game. So yeah, good result. Very happy.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Congratulations on another win.

DIEDE de GROOT: Thank you.

Q. 12 consecutive slams now, third calendar slam. What does this mean to you? Does this winning ever get old?

DIEDE de GROOT: It's one of those funny things where you sort of get used to it, so, like, the special feeling. I saw Coco win yesterday, like, the first time will always be the best one. So yeah, like the special feeling or the excitement from it, it's a little bit less, but, like, I know at this point what I do for it every day. I know at this point it's not just coincidence that I won just this one slam, I can do it over, over, over again.

So I think I appreciate it more these days. So that's the difference (smiling).

Q. Congratulations. Do any of these achievements

stand out apart from the rest, as far as this many US Opens in a row or total Grand Slams in a row? Is there any you're most proud of?

DIEDE de GROOT: So I always like to say that I don't really keep track of the numbers. I'd like to really not worry about it too much, because then you're going to start to think about, oh, I want to reach this or I want to reach that.

I really just want to focus on my game, and that's what I did today. So that's what I'm really proud of. But I think just being this consistent is what I'm really proud of. Being able to do it multiple times in the year, yeah.

I don't even have a goal to never lose, like, that's a really strange goal to have that, but because I think I have that goal, like, I think about myself, what do I have to do, where can I find the key points, and I think because I focus on them so well, I manage to win.

Yeah, the consistency is, I think, what I'm most proud of.

Q. Congratulations. I just have two questions. One is how has your game changed in the last year, if at all? My second question is: Do you have any relationship with Esther Vergeer, do you know her, does she train you, was she your idol growing up or anything like that?

DIEDE de GROOT: First question.

Q. How has your game changed.

DIEDE de GROOT: So I think my serve has really been one of the things that I try to work on. Throughout so many matches this year, I have showed that it has improved a lot. Unfortunately there are still one or two matches, probably a lot more, where it doesn't work quite yet.

But then from sitting down in a wheelchair, it's a very difficult shot. Like, you have to hit up to hit it over the net. So it's never going to be, like, one of those two-meter-tall guys where we're going to hit down and hit aces. That's part of wheelchair tennis so you try to make the serve as good as you can.

Yeah, I think it's working, getting better, and I'm, like it's an up-and-down kind of thing, but it's more up these days. So



I'm happy about that.

Then in terms of the relationship...

Q. Esther Vergeer.

DIEDE de GROOT: About the relationship with Esther, we worked together a couple of years ago where she was mentoring me in really things besides the tennis court. So she wasn't training me about tennis but she was training me how I could maybe find sponsors or how can I manage food training -- not training, media, for example, like really the things that come besides the tennis court.

She's taken on a couple of other jobs where they have become really important. Also, I have grown into the tennis player that I am now where the relationship has changed a bit, like we're more equals now. She's doing other things and I have my own career.

It's still a very good relationship. We see each other often, yeah.

Q. We talked Friday about you have been really happy with your serve this year, but then Friday you felt there was a bit of a wobble. Watching you, there was plenty to love about your serve today but I just wanted to know how you were feeling about it today?

DIEDE de GROOT: Yeah, I took a little bit of speed off. Also because I think sometimes you can hurt the opponent more with high percentage and more maybe like a second-serve spin ball instead of, like, the fast first serve where they just have to block it and put it in the corner.

Yui did that a lot today. Even though I was hitting first serves, she hit it in all of the corners so I couldn't reach it.

Yeah, I'm really happy with how I still managed to believe in myself and keep going, even though I was sometimes getting those return winners.

Q. She was matching you pound for pound with winners, wasn't she? Wasn't really letting you have anything. Even though it was a short one, shortest you and Yui have ever played here...

DIEDE de GROOT: Yeah, I think so.

Q. She still made it tough on you, didn't she?

DIEDE de GROOT: Yeah, all of the games were tight. There were a few games, maybe 40-15, but the rest of the games were, all of them were tight.

So I think that shows that Yui is always someone that you have to be so aware of. She can change the game like that.

Q. When you have won this many in a row and this many championships in a row, where does the motivation to keep training and working hard come from? Is it a fear of failure or to keep up your standards? Where do you find your motivation?

DIEDE de GROOT: It's in those improvement points. I like to be challenged. The past two, three months I have been training with the guys at home. The same guys that play here in the men's division.

It shows that I'm capable of, like, a higher level. I really enjoy that. Like, even though I can't always beat them (smiling) sometimes I do, but it's very rare, but I'm challenged. Like, they challenge me to push harder, to hit harder, to have higher percentages. That's what I really like at the moment.

But also just looking at a match like this, where can I still improve. That's what I really enjoy. These days it's not just tennis player anymore. I'm also doing a lot of things besides tennis. I try to do stuff for the Esther Vergeer Foundation where we motivate kids to start to play sports, any sports, doesn't necessarily have to be tennis.

Yeah, there are so many things next to tennis which I'm also doing at the moment, so I'm really enjoying it.

Q. Embarrass them. Who have you had your best win against? Tom, Scheffers, or Ruben?

DIEDE de GROOT: Tom, Scheffers, and Ruben.

Q. All of them have gone down to you?

DIEDE de GROOT: Yeah, we play short tiebreaks and stuff. Sometimes I get the win. Yeah, it makes me very happy. But they tell me to not tell anyone, so I'm sorry (smiling).

Q. You could tell everyone.

DIEDE de GROOT: No, no, of course I think if I would play a match I don't think I would win. The fact that I can give them a good opponent, makes me happy.

Q. I guess you have to defend five majors next year, right? The gold medal too. When do you start thinking about 2024 and how exciting that can all be?

DIEDE de GROOT: So usually because this question is

asked a lot, already at the start of the year, but then I always say, like, there are so many Grand Slams still to play until the Paralympics. So it's really, like, I plan now I'm gonna have holiday so I'm excited for that, but like literally the only goal I have in my mind is Australia. I'm not thinking ahead that much yet.

And I think really taking it step by step is what's keeping me going and don't think about the hard stuff yet. Just focus on one thing at a time.

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