



FULFILLING DREAMS

ROBIN VAN PERSIE & VIVIANNE MIEDEMA

An iconic photo of two iconic footballers. It depicts Vivianne Miedema and Robin van Persie, twenty years younger than they are today. Vivianne must have been eight or nine and dreaming of one day being a professional footballer. Robin, around twenty, career well underway, was in his last season at Feyenoord, on the verge of embarking on an adventure at Arsenal. Now, twenty years older and wiser, Vivianne and Robin look back at this special moment.

VIVIANNE ON ROBIN

“The photo was taken during a Feyenoord fan day. I was lucky that Robin saw me and stopped. I remember I was buzzing with excitement. It was just a quick snapshot, but to me it was special.”

Age difference

“Ever since I was a little girl I’ve always wanted to be a professional footballer. I grew up thinking I was going to play with Robin one day, not being aware of the age difference at all. I was going to be one of the boys and play for Feyenoord and the Dutch national team. When I was ten or eleven, I realised that I really did have this talent and that there is women’s football, there’s a national team, there’s the Eredivisie.”

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Big hero

“Robin was my big hero. He was always there, as an invisible friend, to inspire me. He played for Arsenal, just like me, and he played for my favourite club Feyenoord. I’ve always looked up to him. I love his playing style, I think we’re quite similar in the way we play. He is a lefty and I am a righty, but we both also use our weaker leg. We’re both a ‘9’ and ‘10’ in one. We both love to drop deep and create opportunities for others. Robin has scored many amazing goals, and I’m not too bad of a goal scorer myself. So I’ve definitely adopted part of his playing style. It’s great that we’re both top scorers for our national team. Making it to 100 goals would be a big milestone for me. I’m 27 and just coming back from an ACL injury, so I still have a couple of years left in me.”

Change and be better

“I love that Robin can sometimes seem like a life coach with his statements. One of my favourites is: change and be better. This reflects the player I am now. My mindset has always been: tick off the boxes and on to the next thing. I never stood still to allow myself to enjoy the big moments in my career. Now that I’ve gone through a long recovery, I realise you need to take time to appreciate what you’ve achieved. Some of my achievements are big milestones and they deserve to be celebrated. I hope that from now on I can learn to enjoy those moments more.”

FlowSports

“I started working with FlowSports at a young age. I just had played for Heerenveen for two or three years and Leoni was the one who helped me take my first big step to Bayern Munich in 2014. Leoni and her colleagues have always been there for me. They’ve played a big part in my career. You get to know one another, you care about each other. It’s great to have that kind of relationship in a crazy world like the football world.”

Keep pushing boundaries

“There are a few things I’m very proud of. Professionally, winning the Women’s Euro at home in 2017 was unreal. From a personal point of view, coming back from my ACL injury has been the toughest challenge in my career. Working so hard and successfully making it back to the pitch is something to be proud of. Besides that, I’m pretty happy that I’ve always stayed myself, that I stand for what I think is right. My aim is to keep pushing boundaries in the women’s game and help others do the same. I’m proud that I’m not just known for being a footballer but also for who I am as a person. Just like Robin. I hope to continue that for the rest of my career.”

ROBIN ON VIVIANNE

“Every time I look at this picture, I feel incredibly proud of what Vivianne has accomplished. It was taken in front of the Maas building. At that time the Feyenoord training ground was exactly in front of the Kuip. It is heartwarming to see that this sweet little girl who asked for a picture with me twenty years ago, is now in the heyday of her career.”

All-time top scorer

“It must have been extremely difficult for Vivianne to make a name for herself in football. Nowadays, a young girl can play football anywhere, but that was hardly the case when she just started. There were virtually no facilities at all, she had to do it all by herself. So it's even more of an accomplishment that she made it to the top. She played at Bayern Munich, she is a forward at Arsenal now, and she is also the all-time top scorer for the Dutch national team. We both are, but considering she has scored approximately twice as many goals as I did, I consider her the true top scorer.”

Share support

“I like to think I played a modest role in putting women's football on the map. From the moment women's football was upcoming, I shared my support on my social media for the accomplishments of the OranjeLeeuwinnen and individual players. I was one of the first male players who wanted to give women's football a platform, because I thought they really deserved it.”

Role model

“The girls have created that platform themselves over the years. Miedema has played an incredibly significant role in that process. It was a team effort of course, reaching a World Cup final together and winning the European Championship, among many other feats. Still, I consider Vivianne to be one of the pioneers in women's football. She is the star player and the role model for younger girls who aspire a career in football. That's a remarkable accomplishment.”

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All the right choices

“Vivianne is a worldclass player, she is a goal-getter and lethal in the box. What I love about her is what coaches look for in any player: she can assess an opportunity in two seconds and act on it perfectly. In situations like that she's totally in control. Her final step is perfectly timed, her body positioning is good, the point of contact is spot on. She makes all the right choices. Whether the result is a goal or not, Vivianne knows how to turn an opportunity into a real chance. For me that makes the difference between a good player and a top player. Another of Vivianne's strong qualities: when things go wrong and she misses a chance, she stoically continues to do her thing and sticks to the plan. Only top athletes have that strong mindset.”

“I wish Vivianne lots of happiness and fun, but it looks like she is having a great time at both her club and privately. It's probably more appropriate to wish her good health and fitness, especially since she had to cope with a significant knee injury last year. The mental part can have a great influence on a footballer's career. Disappointment, not doing well in the match, some players don't know how to deal with that and start doing other things. Not Vivianne. She is mentally very strong. I'm really a fan of her, I'm a member of the Miedema fan club.”

