

## **Esther Vergeer Dutch Wheelchair Tennis Player**



Esther Vergeer is Dutch wheelchair tennis player with a commendable career to her merit. Her records speak volumes about her grit and determination to overcome her biggest rival – her physical disability.

Winner of 42 Grand Slam tournaments, 22 year-end championships and 7 Paralympics titles, Esther continued her reign as the top ranked wheelchair tennis player from 1999 until her retirement in February 2013. She was undefeated singles player since

January 2003 and ended her career on a winning streak of 470 matches. Esther is often mentioned as the most dominant player in professional sports.

Born on 18 July 1981 in Woerden, Netherlands, Esther was a budding athlete, when at the age of six she became unconscious after a swimming lesson. She was diagnosed with a build-up of fluids in her brain that led to three internal haemorrhages. Esther had to undergo several surgeries. After her third operation she lost sensation in her lower legs and ended up in a wheelchair.

It was a long journey for Esther during her rehabilitation, where she learnt to play volleyball, basketball and tennis in a wheelchair. Esther pursued basketball for several years and played at the club level. She even represented the national wheelchair basketball team and won the European championship in 1997.

However, it was tennis that she was most interested in and went on to pursue it as a professional. In her whole amazing career, Esther won 695 singles matches and lost 25. She had the honours of winning the unofficial World Championships at the age of 17, a title she went on to retain 13 times in a row. To commemorate her illustrious career, Esther was awarded the Laureus World Sports Awards in 2002 and 2008.

Esther even started the Esther Vergeer Foundation, Team ParaStars and took on countless ambassadorships.