



When Wim de Gier was still attending primary school, he did not even dare to order a croquette (kroket in Dutch) at the local snack bar. He stuttered and especially had difficulty with the letter k. And so the young Wim ultimately chose a ham sandwich again after a number of failed attempts to say k-k-k-kroket (a Dutch snack). He ran regularly back home crying, but even then he had already decided that he would, at some point, be able to "just" pronounce a kroket without stuttering...

In the year 2013, the now 50-year-old Wim de Gier travels around the entire world as Senior Global Project Manager for LeasePlan, which is active in 31 countries. He holds presentations and lectures in different languages for groups of people almost on a daily basis and he is also a popular speaker in the area of Project Management and Social Business at international conferences. For example, not so long ago, he was flown from the Netherlands to Boston in the United States, where he managed, as "keynote speaker", to effortlessly captivate an audience of more than 1,700 people. No, he has not been stuttering for a long time. Because by his own account he was already focused on getting rid of it at some point when he was a child...

Wim de Gier told his "croquette" story during the "Concentration & Focus" meeting organized by the Topsport Community on April 4, 2013 in Noordwijk. "Because we were together in a boxing ring, there was immediately a very intimate, warm atmosphere and you got a feeling of 'you can't escape'. Due to the whole setting and the introductions by neuropsychologist, Margriet Sitskoom, and Pieter van den Hoogenband, it felt very safe to share personal stories with each other." And so Wim de Gier not only told about his earlier "snack bar problem", but also about his great passion for skydiving and hang gliding.

He travels abroad on a regular basis for this passion and he has also participated in various Dutch and world records.

### Meditation

In turn, the resident of Wijk bij Duurstede listened breathlessly to the "focus experiences" of the ex-top athletes. "In my work, I come into contact with many different stakeholders and cultural differences. And often everyone wants to interfere in everything and have their say. If you are not careful, you lose sight of what you ultimately want to achieve and that is to bring a project to a successful conclusion. How do you keep that focus? How do you separate the main issues from the side issues? Top athletes, like no others, can close themselves off from the world around them. Previously, I was also always able to do that well when I was still doing Zen meditation. Partly due to the meeting in Noordwijk, I have begun to meditate again, something that I haven't done in ten years. I even arranged a space in my house especially for this purpose. So thanks to the Topsport Community..."

"Before the meeting, I was quite curious about how it would go. It takes a little getting used to if you suddenly find yourself standing next to famous (ex-)top athletes", Wim de Gier says as he shares his experiences of April 4.

"But I noticed already within a few minutes that I was totally not thinking anymore about what someone had achieved in sports in the past. Yes, of course I found it enormously fascinating to hear how Pieter was so focused on finishing well during the 100 free-finale at the 2004 Games in Athens that he broke his finger during the tapping. And yes, the manner in which the hockey team in Sydney 2000 approached the necessary penalty series also made me think and the same is true for Hans van Breukelen, who told once again about 'his' experience in the European Championship final in 1988. At the same time, I thought it was wonderful to see how Hans, in turn, was also interested in the stories of people from the business world, like me."

### Energy

"All in all a very energetic event. I have the feeling that 'we' could all do much more together and that the Topsport Community should be able to make the knowledge and experiences more accessible to a broader audience in some way or another. In my opinion, a subject such as 'focus' is also very well suited for a conference, and here you could also connect representatives from the world of sports, business and science with each other at management level. To me, that seems like a nice challenge for the Topsport Community for the coming years", says Wim de Gier, who was invited to the meeting in Noordwijk aan Zee through his relationship as e-office partner. "One of the best 'business gifts' I have ever had."