

GRSA INTERNATIONAL ATW MAGAZINE

JULY 2026



GRSA IN BEIJING

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Consistency Under the Spotlight: Djokovic Questions Wimbledon Roof Decision

Novak Djokovic has never been afraid to challenge decisions he believes are inconsistent, and during his Wimbledon quarter-final against Felix Auger-Aliassime, it was the tournament's handling of the Centre Court roof that drew his frustration.

With the match level at one set apiece, officials decided to close the retractable roof before the start of the third set, despite there still being sufficient daylight to continue play. Both Djokovic and Auger - Aliassime expressed a preference to remain outdoors, but the decision stood.

Djokovic questioned the consistency of the ruling, telling the tournament supervisor:
"We're an outdoor tournament."

He continued:
"The other day you didn't close it until 8:20, 8:30. Now you want to close it at 7:40. Where's the consistency?"

As the discussion continued, Djokovic added: "You're so proud of your rules and you're not sticking to any kind of rules. You have no idea what the rule is."



The exchange reignited a debate that surfaces regularly in professional tennis: should tournament officials apply greater flexibility to changing conditions, or should rules be enforced consistently, even if players disagree?

Unlike the Australian Open and the US Open, where all main show courts feature retractable roofs, Wimbledon has roofs only on Centre Court and No.1 Court, while Roland Garros has one on Court Philippe-Chatrier. Moving from outdoor to indoor conditions can subtly alter a match, with changes in lighting, humidity, ball speed and atmosphere all influencing play. For that reason, the timing of a roof closure can become a significant talking point.



Ultimately, Wimbledon officials have the authority to decide when a roof should be closed, taking into account factors such as fading natural light, player safety, scheduling and the practicalities of avoiding interruptions during a set. The decision is not made by the players.

The incident also raises a broader question that extends beyond a single match. In a sport built on precision and fairness, consistency in the application of rules is just as important as the rules themselves. Whether or not one agrees with Wimbledon's decision, players are entitled to expect that similar situations will be judged in a similar way.

For many, the debate was never simply about an open or closed roof. It was about the confidence that every competitor, regardless of ranking or reputation, is playing under the same standards.

Doubles at a Crossroads: ATP Proposal Raises Fears for Players' Careers

Men's doubles is facing one of the most consequential debates in its professional history after players were informed of proposals that could significantly reduce both tournament opportunities and prize money from 2028.

According to reports published during Wimbledon, the ATP is considering reducing Masters 1000 doubles draws from 32 teams to 16, while doubles fields at ATP 500 and ATP 250 events could fall from 16 teams to eight. The reported proposal would also alter the distribution of tournament prize money between singles and doubles from approximately 80–20 to around 90–10 in favour of singles. These are proposals rather than confirmed final regulations, but their potential impact has already caused considerable concern among doubles specialists.

For the players affected, the issue extends far beyond reduced earnings. Halving draw sizes would remove a substantial number of places from the tour, leaving many established professionals without access to the tournaments on which their careers depend.

Former doubles world No. 1 Marcelo Arévalo told CLAY that players had met at Wimbledon and were united in their opposition. He argued that tennis is enjoying a period of financial strength and that opportunities should therefore be expanding rather than contracting.

"I don't understand why there's a proposal to put so many colleagues' careers at risk in times of such prosperity," Arévalo said. "Several could lose their jobs."

Mexican doubles specialist Miguel Ángel Reyes-Varela offered a similarly measured warning. While acknowledging that professional tennis must make commercial decisions, he argued that finance should not become the sport's only guiding principle.

"We all make decisions based on business, on money. That is perfectly understandable," he told CLAY. "But it cannot be the only compass, the only path forward."





The debate exposes a genuine commercial difficulty. Singles drives the majority of television coverage, ticket demand and sponsorship attention at most tournaments. Gerard Tsobanian, chief executive of the Madrid Open, has previously argued that doubles does not attract enough spectators to justify its cost in its current form. He has suggested that more leading singles players should compete in doubles, or that participation might be linked to a minimum singles ranking.

That view reflects the organisers' challenge: doubles requires courts, officials, prize money, player services and scheduling space, yet matches involving unfamiliar specialists can struggle to attract audiences away from the main singles programme.

However, reducing the specialist circuit could create a self-fulfilling problem. Doubles players already receive less promotion, fewer show-court assignments and limited opportunities to build recognisable public profiles. Cutting draws and prize money may make the discipline even harder to market, while removing the very players capable of developing long-term partnerships and distinctive doubles identities.

The issue is particularly relevant to the wider racket-sports community. Doubles is not simply singles played by four people. It demands different movement patterns, formations, communication, reactions and tactical understanding. Its rapid exchanges at the net also place unique demands on racket preparation, string performance and equipment consistency.

There is room for innovation. More prominent scheduling, improved storytelling, stronger promotion of established partnerships and selective opportunities for leading singles players could all increase doubles' visibility. Recent experiments elsewhere in tennis have demonstrated the commercial appeal of placing doubles in a dedicated spotlight, although changes that prioritise celebrity participation have also drawn criticism from specialists concerned about losing access to their own events.

The ATP must ultimately balance commercial sustainability with its responsibility to provide a viable professional structure. Yet this cannot be treated simply as an adjustment to a spreadsheet. Behind every place removed from a draw is a player, a partnership, a coach and a career built around a legitimate and historic form of the sport.

The question is not whether doubles should evolve. It almost certainly must. The more difficult question is whether tennis can modernise it without diminishing it.

From Soldier to Centre Court: Soonwoo Kwon's Remarkable Wimbledon Return

Every Wimbledon has its feel-good story, but few have been as extraordinary as that of South Korea's Soonwoo Kwon.

The former world No. 52 and two-time ATP Tour champion arrived at the All England Club not after a full season on tour, but while still completing South Korea's compulsory military service. With special permission from the Korean Armed Forces Athletic Corps, Kwon was allowed to leave military duty temporarily to compete after earning his place through the Wimbledon qualifying event.

Military service is mandatory for most able-bodied South Korean men and typically lasts around 18 months. During that time, Kwon's opportunities to compete internationally were heavily restricted, although his strong performances in Challenger events earned him permission to travel abroad for Wimbledon.

Speaking to CLAY, Kwon explained how military life had changed him. "A soldier never loses."

His coach, Daniel Yoo, described a highly disciplined routine of early mornings, structured training and strict military regulations, saying the experience had given Kwon greater maturity and self-control.



The interview also touched on the unique political backdrop surrounding South Korea. Although active fighting ended in 1953, North and South Korea remain technically at war because only an armistice—not a formal peace treaty—was ever signed. As a result, compulsory military service continues to play an important role in South Korean society.

Kwon's return to Wimbledon represented far more than another tournament appearance. It was the reward for months of balancing military obligations with elite-level tennis, demonstrating remarkable resilience and determination to keep his professional career alive.

In a sport where players often speak about sacrifice, Soonwoo Kwon's story serves as a reminder that, for some athletes, representing their country extends well beyond the tennis court.

Beyond the Roar: The Real Aryna Sabalenka

To many tennis fans, Aryna Sabalenka is one of the sport's fiercest competitors. Her booming groundstrokes, emotional celebrations and uncompromising intensity have helped establish her as one of the dominant players of her generation.

But in a candid interview with The Guardian, the World No. 1 revealed that the person behind the powerful on-court persona is very different from the image many people have of her.

Sabalenka admitted she understands why some people initially find her intimidating, explaining that her naturally serious expression and reserved demeanour can give the wrong impression.



"When you see me for the first time, you're probably going to think that I'm a b****... When you get to know me better, you understand that it's just something I was born with."

She also spoke openly about the emotional side of professional tennis, admitting that trying to suppress her emotions earlier in her career only made things more difficult. Rather than hiding her passion, she has learned to channel it, working closely with her team to better understand how she performs under pressure.

Away from competition, Sabalenka describes herself as someone who avoids conflict, enjoys making people around her happy and still carries fond memories of growing up in Belarus. The contrast between the fierce competitor seen on Centre Court and the relaxed personality away from tennis is striking.

The interview comes after a challenging few months on court. Following a difficult clay-court season, Sabalenka admitted she briefly questioned everything before regrouping for Wimbledon, where she once again reminded everyone why she remains one of the sport's biggest stars. Although her campaign ultimately ended earlier than she had hoped, her openness throughout the season has earned praise from fans who appreciate her honesty as much as her tennis.

For many years, Sabalenka has been recognised for the power of her game. Increasingly, however, she is also being admired for something less visible—her willingness to speak openly about pressure, emotion and the realities of competing at the very highest level.

Sometimes, the strongest players are the ones prepared to show their human side.

Coco Gauff Steps Behind the Camera



Coco Gauff continues to expand her influence beyond the tennis court, announcing a new partnership with Tennis Channel as executive producer of two original documentary shorts set to launch this summer.

The films will explore two subjects close to Gauff's heart: the evolution of fashion in tennis and the legacy of pioneering American champion Zina Garrison, whose impact on the sport helped pave the way for future generations.

The 2025 French Open champion said the project is an opportunity to celebrate not only the athletes, but also the people and cultural movements that have shaped tennis.

"I'm excited to explore how iconic players and moments have shaped the way we see tennis and ourselves. Through these films, I hope to celebrate the people and cultural forces that have helped define tennis and continue to shape its future."

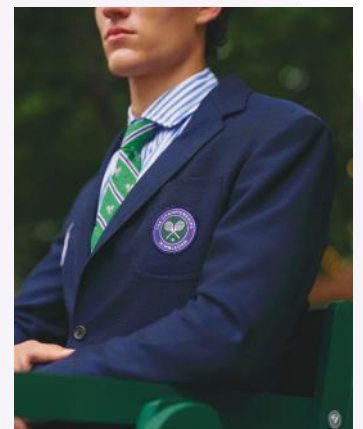
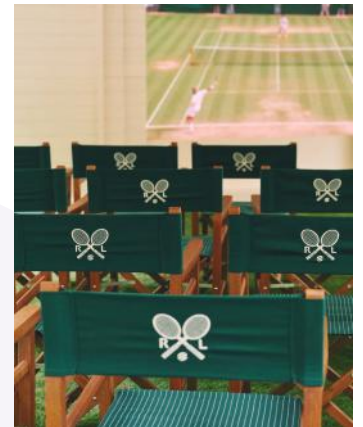
Still only 22 years old, Gauff has already established herself as one of the leading voices in the sport. This latest venture highlights her growing interest in storytelling and using her platform to preserve tennis history while inspiring the next generation.

As elite athletes increasingly build careers beyond competition, Gauff's move into filmmaking demonstrates that her ambitions extend far beyond lifting trophies. With these documentaries, she hopes to tell the stories that have shaped the game—and ensure they continue to inspire future champions.

Ralph Lauren Extends Iconic Wimbledon Partnership

Few partnerships in sport are as instantly recognisable as Wimbledon and Ralph Lauren, and in 2026 the relationship entered an exciting new chapter.

The All England Club and Ralph Lauren announced a multi-year extension of their partnership, taking the collaboration into its third decade. Since becoming Wimbledon's Official Outfitter in 2006, Ralph Lauren has become synonymous with the tournament's timeless style, dressing on-court officials and creating collections inspired by the Championships.



To celebrate, the brand transformed London's Sloane Square into an immersive Wimbledon experience, complete with a Ralph's Coffee pavilion, vintage and contemporary collections, oversized Polo Bear sculptures, live match screenings and interactive activities. A portion of proceeds from selected experiences will benefit The Royal Marsden Cancer Charity, continuing Ralph Lauren's long-standing commitment to cancer research and care.

The celebration also included the launch of an exclusive Wimbledon Purple Label capsule collection and an enhanced retail presence inside the All England Club, reinforcing the brand's unique connection with one of the world's most prestigious sporting events.

More than a sponsorship, the Wimbledon-Ralph Lauren partnership has become a defining example of how sport, fashion and tradition can come together to create an experience that extends far beyond the court.

Miu Miu, New Balance and Coco Gauff Unveil Wimbledon Collection

Luxury fashion and tennis came together once again as Miu Miu and New Balance celebrated the launch of their 2026 Wimbledon collection with an exclusive event at Miu Miu's flagship store on London's New Bond Street.

Joining the celebrations was world No. 2 Coco Gauff, who has become one of the sport's biggest style icons both on and off the court. The latest capsule collection features co-branded apparel alongside two new versions of the popular 530 SL sneaker, combining Miu Miu's luxury aesthetic with New Balance's sporting heritage.

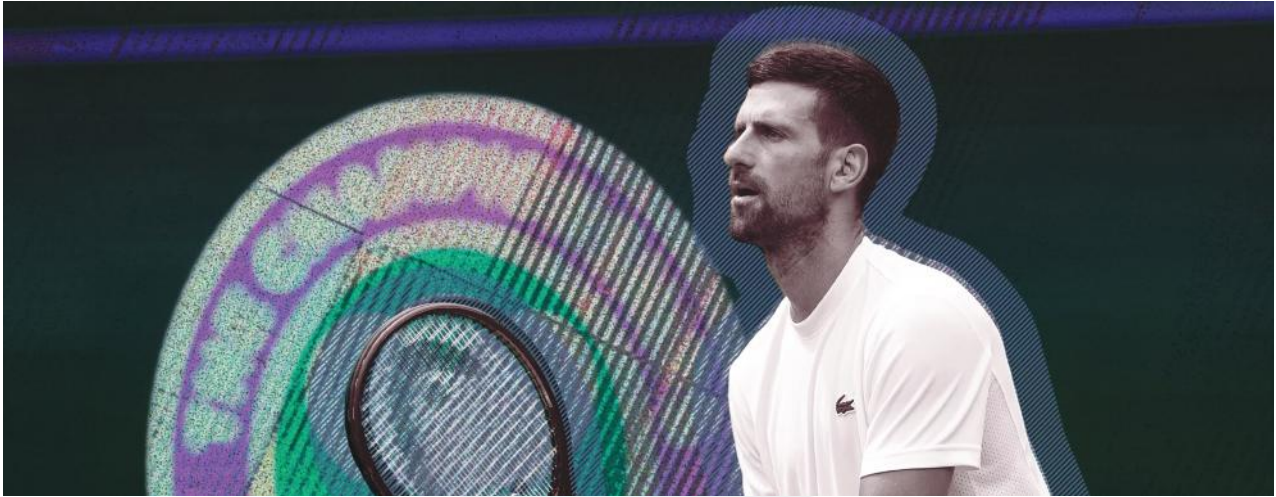


Now in its fifth year, the Miu Miu and New Balance partnership continues to go from strength to strength. After being named Collaboration of the Year at the 2025 Footwear News Achievement Awards, the latest Wimbledon-inspired collection demonstrates why the collaboration remains one of the most sought-after in luxury sportswear. Previous releases have sold out quickly, highlighting the growing demand for premium fashion inspired by tennis.

The launch reflects a wider trend across the sport, with Wimbledon increasingly serving as the perfect stage for brands to merge performance, fashion and lifestyle. As players like Coco Gauff continue to influence culture beyond the court, collaborations such as this demonstrate how tennis has become one of the most influential forces in global fashion.



Djokovic Expands His Influence Beyond the Court



As Novak Djokovic continues his pursuit of a record-extending 25th Grand Slam title, the Serbian star has already taken another significant step—this time away from the tennis court.

Just days before Wimbledon, global investment firm General Atlantic announced Djokovic's appointment as its new Global Strategic Advisor, a role focused on leadership, innovation, resilience and the future of health and wellness businesses across the firm's portfolio.

The appointment is notable not because Djokovic is retiring—far from it—but because he is joining one of the world's leading investment firms while still competing at the highest level of professional tennis.

Founded in 1980, General Atlantic manages approximately US\$126 billion in assets and has investments spanning technology, consumer products, healthcare and sports-related businesses. Djokovic's experience as one of the most successful and disciplined athletes in history, together with his growing portfolio of investments in health and wellness companies, makes him a natural fit for the advisory position.

Over recent years, Djokovic has invested in businesses including hydration, nutrition and recovery, reflecting his long-standing interest in performance, longevity and athlete wellbeing. His new role demonstrates how today's elite athletes are increasingly building careers beyond sport long before retirement.

The move also reflects a wider trend across professional sport. Icons such as Serena Williams, Roger Federer and Maria Sharapova have all expanded into investing and business, but Djokovic's appointment stands out because it comes while he remains one of the sport's leading competitors.

Whether this marks the beginning of an even larger business career remains to be seen. For now, however, Djokovic continues to prove that success at the very highest level is no longer confined to what happens on the court.

Cruz Hewitt Makes Dream Start with Maiden ATP Tour Victory

The Hewitt name returned to the ATP Tour winners' circle as Cruz Hewitt, the 17-year-old son of former world No. 1 Lleyton Hewitt, claimed his first senior tour victory with an impressive straight-sets win at the Washington Open.

Making his main-draw ATP singles debut, the young Australian defeated American qualifier Marcos Giron 6-3, 6-4 in just 74 minutes, announcing himself on the professional stage with a composed and confident performance.



The victory carried extra significance, coming at the very tournament where his father lifted the title in 2004 during a career that included 30 ATP singles titles and the 2002 Wimbledon crown.

"It's a pretty special moment," Hewitt said after the match. "Seeing my dad play this tournament and to get my first tour win, it feels really cool."

The teenager also paid tribute to his father's legacy by recreating one of Australian tennis's most recognisable celebrations—a trademark right-arm bicep curl that became synonymous with Lleyton Hewitt's fighting spirit.

"He just always did it and when I was little I've just always seen it," Cruz explained. "It's cool to be able to do that now because obviously my dad has been a huge part of where I am today."

Growing up around the professional tour has given Hewitt a unique perspective on life at the highest level, and he admitted that seeing his father's name displayed among the tournament's former champions provided extra motivation during qualifying.

"It's very surreal," he said. "Kind of inspirational to look up at it as well."

"I do feel pretty comfortable to be at the tournaments. It's pretty exciting because I've dreamed of playing at these tournaments and I've seen behind the scenes and to be in the gym and the locker room with these guys, it's pretty cool."

Hewitt's breakthrough victory could now set up an all-Australian showdown with top seed and defending champion Alex de Minaur, should the world No. 1-ranked Australian progress through his next match.

While comparisons with his father are inevitable, Cruz Hewitt's first ATP Tour victory represents the beginning of his own journey. At just 17 years of age, he has taken an important first step onto the sport's biggest stage, showing both the composure and determination that have long been associated with one of tennis's most famous surnames.



Did You Know?

Lleyton Hewitt became the youngest men's world No. 1 in ATP rankings history when he reached the top spot in November 2001 at just 20 years and 268 days old—a record that still stands today.

An advertisement for MSV Bussard tennis string. The background is a photograph of a bird of prey, likely a falcon, in mid-flight over a red clay tennis court. The bird's wings are spread wide, showing detailed feather patterns. A tennis ball is on the court near the bird's feet. In the bottom left corner, there is a large image of a roll of MSV Bussard tennis string. The string is white with a red and black label that reads 'MSV TENNIS', 'MSV BUSSARD', and 'CONTAINS 1 SPIN'.

MSV BUSSARD TENNIS STRING FOR ULTIMATE CONTROL.

Control: 95%-100% Spin: 85%-100% Power: 85%
(Scores depending on diameter; source: www.stringingpedia.com)

STOP GUESSING YOUR STRING TENSION

Every stringer knows the moment. A freshly strung racket leaves the machine looking perfect, yet one question remains: How does the stringbed actually perform? Reference tension alone cannot tell the whole story. Racquet geometry, string type, gauge, pattern, machine condition, clamp setup, and technique all influence the final result. That is why professional stringing needs measurement, not assumption.

The ERT 300 Tenniscomputer gives stringers a fast, objective way to check stringbed stiffness, or DT. This is the stiffness of the complete stringbed under a simulated ball impact. Clip the compact device onto the center of the strings, press the button, and within seconds receive a clear DT value. That number turns an invisible playing characteristic into useful, repeatable data.



For a stringing business, this creates immediate value. Measure each racquet directly after stringing and record the DT alongside the racquet, string, gauge, and machine tension. When the same customer returns, you have a reliable benchmark. You can reproduce a preferred setup more consistently, identify unusual results before the racket reaches the court, and make smaller, better informed adjustments. Instead of discussing tension only in pounds or kilograms, you can talk about how the finished stringbed responds.

The ERT 300 is equally useful for monitoring tension loss. A new reading after several hours of play shows how far the stringbed has moved from its original condition. Players no longer need to wait until control disappears or the strings feel lifeless. With periodic checks, restringing decisions can be based on measured change as well as personal feedback.

This information supports a better conversation between player and stringer. Some players want more control, while others are searching for additional power, comfort, or touch. The measured DT value creates a practical starting point for discussing those preferences. Changes can then be introduced carefully, and the result can be checked after every new string job. This makes future recommendations more personal, more consistent, and easier to explain.



The device can also support quality control inside a busy workshop. If several stringers work on the same machines, DT measurements provide a shared reference for completed jobs. Unexpected readings can reveal that a machine needs checking, that a clamp may require attention, or that a technique should be reviewed. Finding these differences before delivery protects the reputation of the service and helps every team member maintain the same professional standard.

Tournament players often carry several matching racquets and expect each frame to feel as similar as possible. Measuring every completed stringbed makes comparisons easier and helps the stringer identify differences that cannot be seen. A player can change rackets during a match with greater confidence because every frame has been checked against the desired target.

That matters because great service is built on confidence. Customers want to know that their racket has been prepared carefully and that their favourite response can be recreated. A documented DT value gives the stringer a professional quality control point and gives the player a simple reference they can understand. It also makes comparisons between identical racquets easier, helping competitive players carry matched frames and switch confidently during play.

The ERT 300 does not replace the knowledge, craftsmanship, or conversation of the stringer with the player. It strengthens all three. Experience tells you what to recommend. Measurement shows what the completed job delivers. Together, they create a more consistent process, a more credible service, and a racket tuned with purpose.

Stop guessing your string tension today. Measure the result, record the data, and give every player the confidence to step onto court knowing their equipment is ready.



Stringer Solutions

with Richard Parnell



Machine Ergonomics

I often get asked why a certain machine costs twice or three times as much as another. The answer is simple, ergonomics and its ease of use.

A really top class machine is designed to have everything a stringer needs in the right place and easily accessible with the least amount of effort possible. The stringer's job is already time sensitive, so any help in saving time is very welcome, especially in tournament settings.

Quite a few years ago I was asked to organise the stringing service for a tour event and the machines proposed were constant pull drop weight machines. I refused, not because the machine couldn't attain the desired tension, it could, however the time needed to string a racket using that machine would have made a stressful time much worse. The quality of the alloys and materials were also not as solid as the professional machines which could have led to frame deformations and low DT's, not what I wanted.

Having the clamps glide effortlessly as well as "holding" the string and not crushing it are all time saving qualities of a professional machine. Easy installation of the racket on the turntable is assured and most machines have height adjustments to look after the stringer's posture. Some have machine tilting possibilities that again make the stringer's job easier.

The quality of the tension head pulling motor is paramount when a machine is being used for high volumes. A cheap electric machine will have a subpar motor that won't hold up to the job demanded and workload.

Having all buttons in an easily accessible place saves time. For example, a knot over-tension button, an automatic & manual turntable lock, a pre-stretch option all mean that the work is a little more effortless.

I consider the machine an investment and I always advise stringers to go for the best machine you can afford, even if it means paying for it over an extended period of time, it will be worth it in quality produced and effort not wasted.

A stringer shouldn't need to move around behind the machine as everything is in its place, this is one way to gauge how good the stringer really is.

Whichever machine you can afford, they can all produce a top quality restring, some take a little longer and a little more effort.

Enjoy and look forward to your next restring.

Alexandrova Forced to Retire After Heat Ordeal in Memphis



Extreme conditions once again highlighted the physical demands of professional tennis after top seed Ekaterina Alexandrova was forced to retire during a gruelling three-hour battle at the WTA Memphis Tennis Classic.

The world No. 19 collapsed on court late in the deciding set of her opening-round match against 16-year-old Kristina Liutova, with temperatures reaching 34°C as the contest stretched beyond the three-hour mark.

Alexandrova was trailing 5-4 in the third set when play was halted so she could receive lengthy medical treatment. Despite the efforts of the medical team, the Russian was unable to continue and was forced to retire, bringing an unfortunate end to a fiercely contested encounter.

The retirement handed Liutova a memorable victory in her first-ever WTA Tour main-draw match, marking a dream start to her professional career.

The emotional teenager was visibly moved after the match, leaving the court in tears following the unexpected conclusion to one of the biggest wins of her young career.

Liutova now advances to the Round of 16, where she will face American Maya Joint.

The incident serves as another reminder of the challenges elite players face when competing in extreme heat. As tennis continues to expand into regions with demanding summer climates, player welfare and scheduling remain important topics of discussion, with governing bodies continually reviewing measures designed to protect athletes during periods of high temperatures.

Wimbledon Sets New Attendance Record After Rain-Free Championships

A fortnight of uninterrupted tennis helped Wimbledon welcome a record number of spectators, with the All England Club confirming that 550,151 fans attended the 2026 Championships – the highest total in the tournament's history.

The record surpassed last year's figure by 1,381 spectators, with consistently favourable weather playing a significant role. It was the first rain-free Wimbledon since 2019, allowing play to remain on schedule throughout the 14-day event and providing spectators with an uninterrupted experience both on and off the courts.

Several individual attendance milestones were also achieved, with new single-day records set on Days 7, 12 and 14, the latter culminating in the men's singles final, where Jannik Sinner defeated Alexander Zverev to lift the Wimbledon title.



The women's singles final also produced a memorable occasion, as Linda Noskova overcame fellow Czech Karolina Muchova to become Wimbledon champion in the tournament's first all-Czech women's final.

Despite setting a new attendance record, Wimbledon remains the smallest of the four Grand Slam tournaments in terms of total spectators. The Australian Open welcomed more than 1.1 million fans, while the US Open attracted over 900,000 spectators. The French Open also recorded a larger attendance, with 589,500 visitors during its main draw.

Much of the difference comes down to tournament structure. Wimbledon remains the only Grand Slam whose main draw is played over 14 days, while the other three majors run for 15 days. In addition, the Australian Open, Roland-Garros and the US Open stage their qualifying competitions on-site during the week before the main event, extending spectator access and increasing overall attendance. Wimbledon continues to hold its qualifying tournament at a separate venue.

Even so, the latest figures underline the enduring global appeal of the Championships. Combining tradition with world-class tennis, Wimbledon continues to attract hundreds of thousands of fans each year, and with another record now established, the iconic grass-court major remains one of the most sought-after events on the international sporting calendar.

After years developing strings, we realized there was a major gap in the market.

There were plenty of strings for recreational players, and plenty that claimed to be top-tier for advanced players.

But we noticed that even the best strings lacked tension maintenance or had very short playability duration. They would either go dead or break after just a few hours of play.

So we began an exhaustive search with specialized string engineers and the best factories in the world.

The first thing pro players asked for was durability. For many lower-ranked professionals, having to restring twice a day while traveling the ITF Futures circuit and paying \$15 for labor per racquet was unsustainable.

The biggest issue until now: durable strings were usually too stiff and harsh on the arm. But we didn't want that. We wanted a durable string with great feel and comfort. "Impossible," the engineers told me. I didn't give up.

Now, imagine a string that already has those two key attributes: durability, both in tension maintenance, stability, and great feel. But that wasn't enough for Genesis. We needed a string that also delivered excellent spin potential, control, and power. There were already strings on the market with those three attributes, but asking for comfort, durability, and tension retention as well seemed unreachable.

Two years testing hundreds of prototypes and a firm conviction in our goal gave us ***Hexa Infinite***.

This string is the light at the end of the tunnel. It's a real way to help professional tennis players solve more than one problem at once. And for us at Genesis, who love achieving big goals, creating and launching this string has been a dream come true. Our intention is for more players to have access to a string of far better quality than anything previously on the market.

By Richard Groenewold

GENESIS[®]

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3rd ANNUAL GLOBAL STRINGERS CONFERENCE

12th - 15th of November - Estepona, Málaga



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TRADE SHOW

FESTIVITIES



ONLINE COURSES



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OFFERS ONLINE STRINGING
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**START YOUR JOURNEY OR
PERFECT YOUR CRAFT**

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grsa-international.com

A stylized graphic of a knot, possibly a reef knot, rendered in a light purple color. It features a vertical green line passing through the center of the knot.

PARNELL KNOT

designed by stringers for stringers



THE NEW 2026 **HEAD**® / PARNELL KNOT
STRINGING MACHINE IS NOW AVAILABLE

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GRSA International Education and Examinations in Beijing

GRSA's latest programme in China brought advanced education and professional examinations together across five intensive days.

GRSA International returned to Beijing in July for a programme of advanced stringing education led by GRSA Founder and President Richard Parnell.

The programme began with a GRSA Tour Masterclass, giving participants the opportunity to explore the standards, knowledge and decision-making required when working at the highest levels of professional racket service.

The masterclass was followed by an afternoon of examinations, during which eight candidates undertook their GRSA Tour examinations.

Preparing for professional environments

Tour-level stringing demands much more than the ability to complete a racket quickly.

Stringers must be able to work accurately and consistently while following precise instructions. They also need to inspect equipment carefully, maintain detailed records, communicate effectively and remain composed when faced with deadlines or unexpected problems.

These standards become particularly important in tournament environments, where a player may require several identically prepared rackets and an urgent request can arrive at any moment.

The Tour Masterclass allowed participants to examine these responsibilities in greater depth before the afternoon's examinations.



The eight GRSA Tour examinations assessed each candidate against defined professional standards. Completing an examination at this level requires concentration, technical control and the ability to apply knowledge under pressure.

From Pro Stringer to Pro Master

Following the Tour Masterclass and examinations, GRSA delivered two further courses in Beijing.

The GRSA Pro Stringer course took place over two days and focused on developing the technical knowledge, consistency and working practices expected from a professional stringer.

Participants were required to look beyond simply completing a stringing pattern. Attention was given to racket inspection, preparation, technique, accuracy and the reasoning behind each stage of the process.

The programme then progressed to the two-day GRSA Pro Master course.

At Pro Master level, stringers are expected to demonstrate a deeper understanding of racket service and a greater ability to assess unfamiliar situations. This includes identifying potential problems, selecting appropriate procedures and maintaining high standards across different rackets and specifications.

The course encouraged participants to consider not only how they work, but how they evaluate their own performance and continue improving.

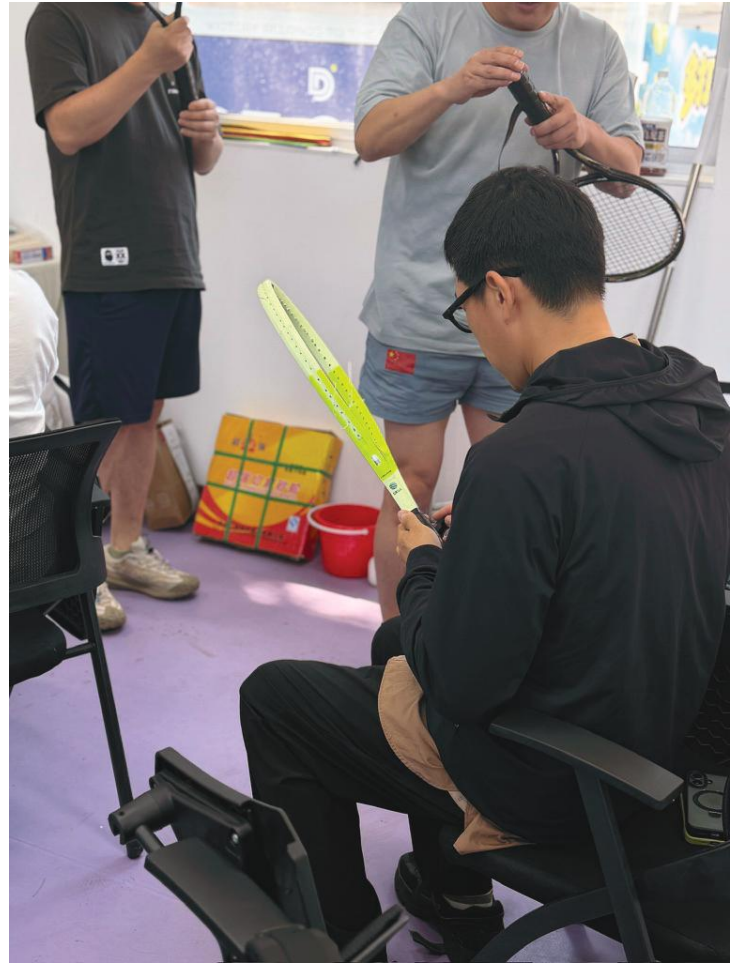
Education with measurable standards

Combining education with examinations made the Beijing programme particularly valuable. Courses provide the environment in which stringers can expand their knowledge, practise techniques and discuss different approaches. Examinations then offer an objective way to measure whether the required standards have been achieved.

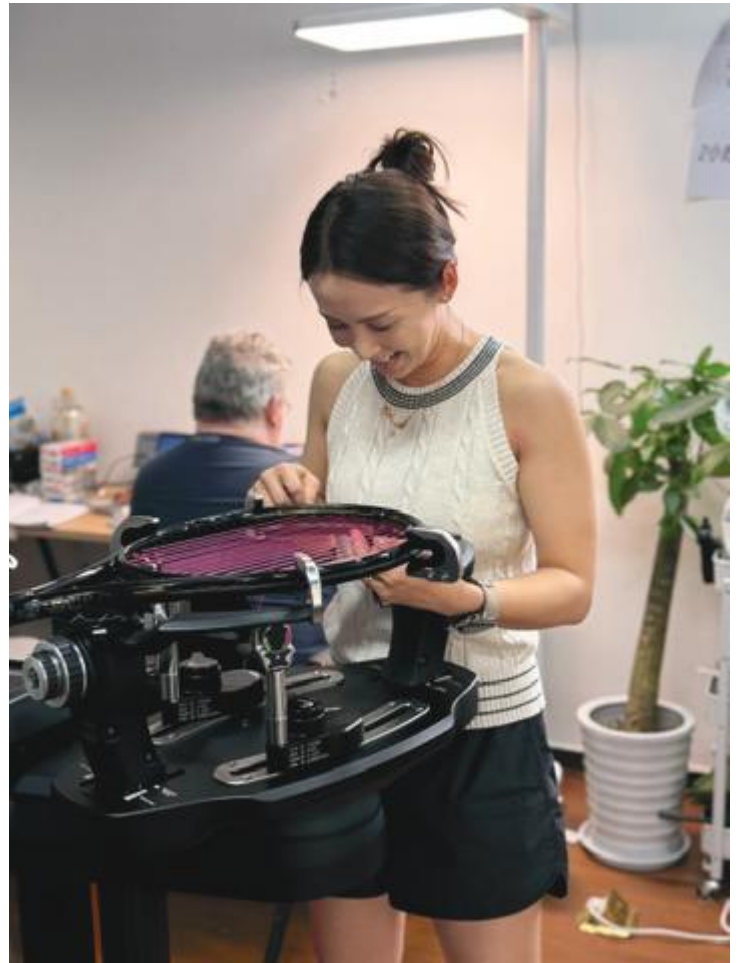
This distinction is important to GRSA International. Professional certification must represent demonstrated knowledge and ability, not simply attendance at a course. Across the five days in Beijing, participants moved through several advanced levels of stringing education, from the demands of Tour-level work to the broader technical and professional expectations of the Pro Stringer and Pro Master programmes.

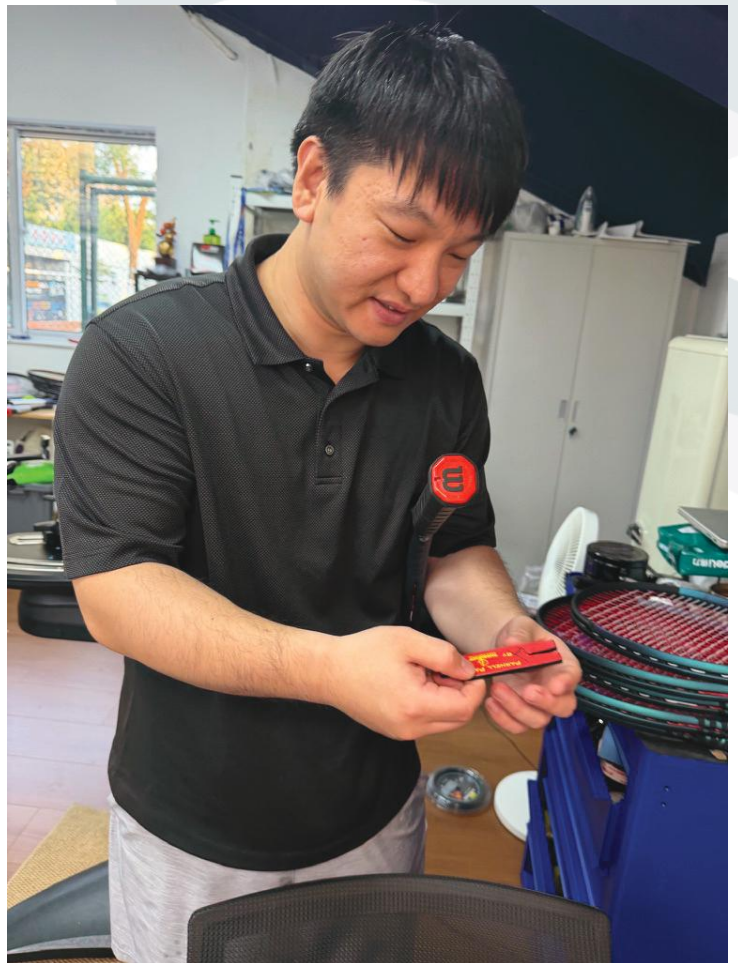
The programme reflected GRSA's continuing commitment to Excellence through Education and to supporting the development of skilled, knowledgeable and responsible stringers around the world.





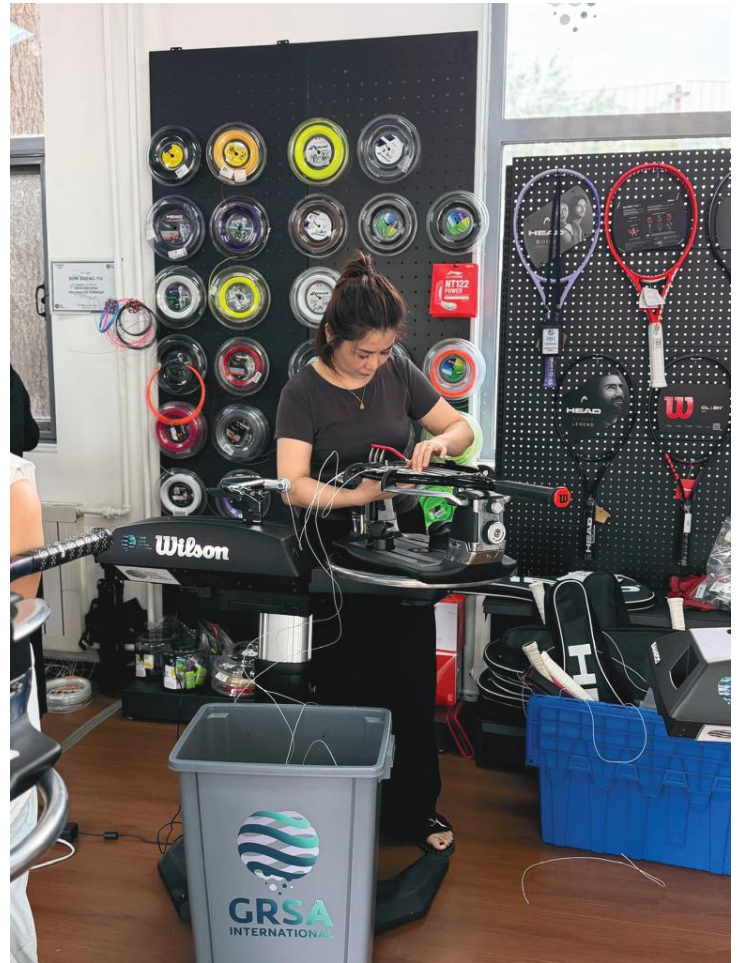












GRSA Shenzhen Workshops May-June 2026

Pro Stringer certification workshop
Pro Master Stringer certification workshop

From the 29th May to 1st June 2026, the Global Racquet Stringers Association (GRSA) concluded an intense four-day training event in Shenzhen, China.



Workshop Structure

The event was divided into two distinct sessions to cater to different skill levels:

2-Day Pro stringer certification workshop

2-Day Pro Master stringer certification Workshop

Facilitated by Kenneth Leong and Jia Chen Ren, both GRSA Tour stringers and instructors who lead GRSA China operations. This intensive session concluded with certification exams for participants.

Key Curriculum & Skills

Participants were trained and assessed on several professional standards required for GRSA Certifications:

Stringing the GRSA way: 3 golden rules of racket stringing.

Customer service topics: Considerations when selecting rackets, strings, gauges and tension.

Racquet Customization: Matching two frames for weight, balance, and swing-weight within 30 minutes.

Grip & Grommet Maintenance: Skills included installing new grommet sets and increasing grip sizes using heat-shrink sleeves.



THE COUNTDOWN HAS BEGUN

The 3rd Annual GRSA International Conference is Taking Shape

There is something incredibly exciting about watching an event come together. Months of planning, conversations with partners, confirming speakers, organising activities and fine-tuning every detail are now becoming a reality as we prepare to welcome the global racket service community back to Spain for the 3rd Annual GRSA International Conference, taking place from 12th–15th November 2026 at the beautiful Sol Marbella Estepona Atalaya Park on Spain's Costa del Sol.



Although November may still seem some time away, registrations have already been arriving from around the world, with attendees travelling from countries including Spain, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Greece, Romania, Ireland, Singapore, Indonesia, Hong Kong China, mainland China, the United States and Hawaii—and we're delighted to see our international community continuing to grow year after year.

One of the things that makes the GRSA Conference different is that it has never been just another conference.

It is four days of education, collaboration and friendship.

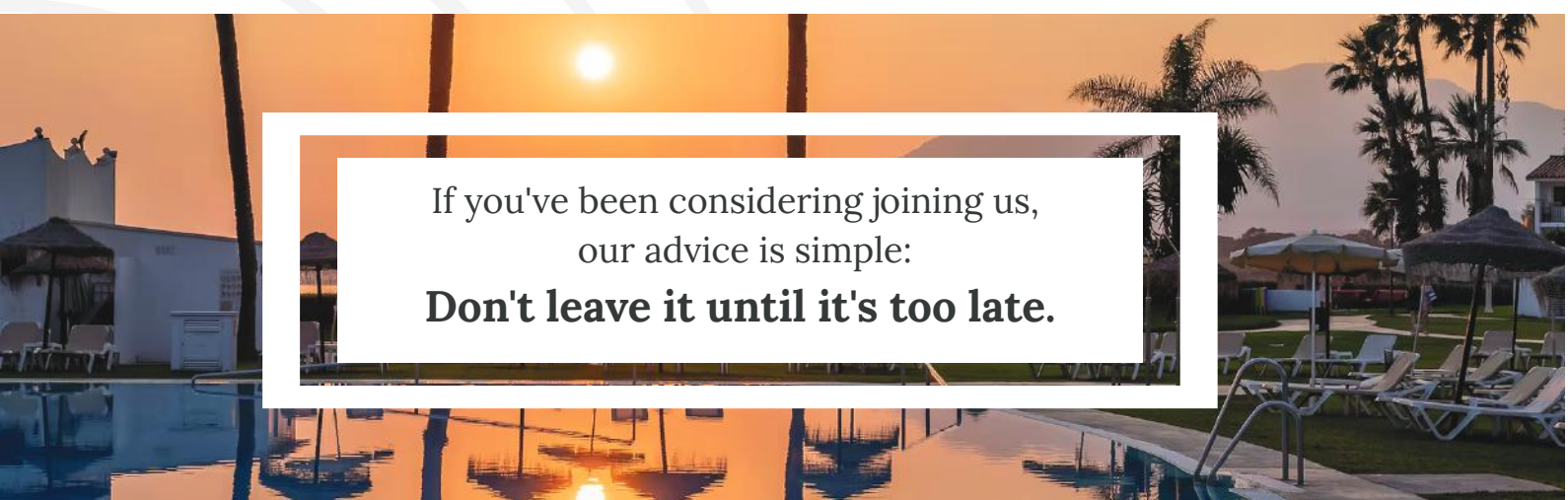
Whether you have been stringing for thirty years or have only recently entered the industry, the conference is designed to bring together people who all share the same passion. Throughout the weekend you'll have the opportunity to learn from experienced professionals, discover new products and technologies, exchange ideas with colleagues from around the world and spend time with the industry's leading manufacturers and brands.

Alongside the educational programme, attendees can look forward to practical workshops, live demonstrations, our trade exhibition, on-court activities, social events, evening entertainment and, perhaps most importantly, countless conversations that simply couldn't happen anywhere else.

Many of the friendships and professional relationships formed during previous conferences continue long after everyone has returned home, and that sense of community is something we're incredibly proud of.

This year's event promises to be our biggest and most exciting yet.

Our partners continue to play an essential role in helping us deliver an unforgettable experience, while the organising team is working hard behind the scenes to introduce several new surprises that we'll be revealing over the coming months.



If you've been considering joining us,
our advice is simple:
Don't leave it until it's too late.

Every registration helps us finalise numbers for workshops, activities and social events, and naturally accommodation availability becomes more limited as we move closer to November. Securing your place early means you can simply look forward to enjoying the event rather than worrying about availability later.

Accommodation Update

The dedicated GRSA hotel booking link is no longer available.

However, conference attendees can still book directly with the Sol Marbella Estepona Atalaya Park. When contacting the hotel, simply let the reservations team know that you are attending the GRSA International Conference, and they will be able to assist you with your booking. Whether this will be your first GRSA Conference or your third, we can't wait to welcome you to Estepona this November.

Four days..... One incredible community.

An experience you'll remember long after the final knot has been tied.

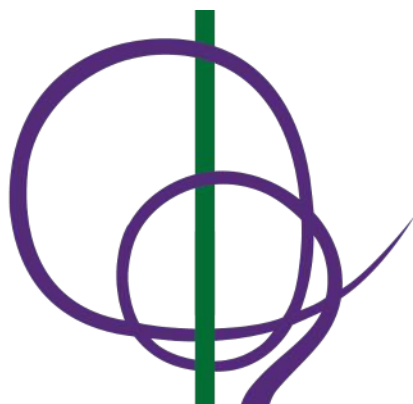
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to seeing you there!**



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NICK DOWN

TALKS UNSQUASHABLE

This month's racket on the list of Non-Standard Rackets comes from the current range of Unsquashable rackets. Like many, it has a ring at the throat, it is similar to the Prince Triple Threat pattern. The one that features in this report is the syn-tec pro.

It made the list due to the positioning of the knot-holes. It is a challenge to the stringer because it normally requires two piece stringing to avoid long, unequal lengths of string running along both sides of the head at the head end of the string bed. This racket has a shared hole, where you would normally tie off the last main on the 2nd last main, rendering that unsuitable as a tie-off on both sides.

The answer is to accept the long, unequal runs along the outside of the frame or string the top 5 crosses up from the last main on the short side and then string down from the last main on the long side. Ensuring that a hard-weave is achieved on the last cross at the throat.

Or my preferred option of a 2 piece string job, keeping both sides even, avoiding long runs of string on the outside of the frame and stringing all crosses down from the head to the throat. As well as those points, it helps to make it slightly easier to achieve the hard-weave at the throat.

In these photographs the example is strung at the factory, with long runs of string on the outside of the frame. However, my stringing instructions are when opting to string the same racket with 2 pieces of string, using the knot-holes provided by the factory, that are fine.

Tod Harrity of the USA uses an unsquashable racket with a ring at the throat, although his is a signature model.

There are 4 models of Unsquashable racket, with a ring at the throat, on the current range.



Next Month:
Standard Open-throat Racket.



Nick's Nugget

Weaving crosses "one ahead", becomes more difficult on the last few cross strings. The advantages become non-existent and no longer save time.

This racket has 16 mains and 17 crosses.

Mains

Start and finish at the Head.

Starting at the Head,

LH1 to below ring.

above ring to LH2.

RH1 to Above ring.

below ring to RH2.

RH2 to RH3,

RH3 to Above ring.

below ring to RH4.

LH2 to LH3.

LH3 to below ring.

above ring to LH4.

LH4 to LH5

LH5 to below ring

above ring to LH7.

RH4 to RH5

RH5 to above ring

below ring to RH7.

LH7 to LH9

LH9 to below ring

above ring to LH12

Tie-off at LH10.

RH7 to RH9

RH9 to above ring

below ring to RH12

Tie-off at RH10 (once crosses are installed. Hold with a product from Parnellknot and a starting clamp until then).



Crosses

(May start at either side).

1st Cross starts at either LH6 or RH6 and runs between the two.

Tie-off may be either RH4 or LH4. If starting at LH6 cross must go under the first main.

If starting at RH6, the string must go over the first main it reaches.

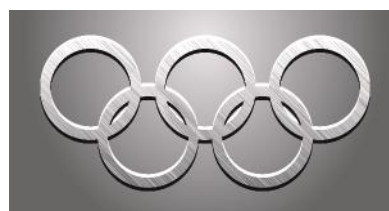
There are then another 16 crosses. There is one shared hole on both sides at LH9 and RH9.

The last cross at the throat runs between LT1 and RT1 and it must be Hard-weaved.

Tie-off is either LT2 or RT2.

Squash's Olympic Road Becomes Reality

LA28 qualification details give the sport and its players a clear destination



After decades of campaigning, squash is no longer fighting simply to enter the Olympic Games. It is preparing for them.

The sport will make its Olympic debut at Los Angeles 2028, with men's and women's singles competitions featuring 16 athletes in each draw. Matches will be staged in a temporary, purpose-built venue on the Universal Studios Lot, officially named the Comcast Squash Center at Universal Studios.

Competition is scheduled to run from 15 to 24 July 2028, beginning one day after the opening ceremony. The relatively small draws will make qualification exceptionally demanding: only 32 squash players in total will become the sport's first Olympians.

The approved qualification system includes five possible routes: continental games, a host-country allocation, places determined through the world rankings, universality positions and a final world qualifying tournament.

That last event, scheduled for 6 to 10 June 2028, will award one Olympic place in each gender, offering a final opportunity for players who have not qualified by another route.

The structure gives global representation a role while still ensuring that much of the field is drawn from the strongest players in the professional rankings. With only 16 positions available per draw, however, established names cannot assume that reputation alone will be enough.

The significance extends beyond the athletes who eventually reach Los Angeles. Olympic inclusion can influence government funding, federation planning, youth participation, broadcasting and commercial support. National programmes now have a fixed deadline around which they can build, while young players can aspire to an Olympic medal rather than regarding it as something unavailable to their sport.

The venue also offers squash an unusual showcase. A glass court on one of the world's most famous production lots creates the potential for a striking television presentation, combining the sport's speed and close-quarters intensity with a recognisably Los Angeles setting.

Dr Anne Smith Honoured with World Squash Lifetime Membership

Four decades of dedication to squash have earned Dr Anne Smith one of the sport's highest honours, with World Squash awarding her Honorary Life Membership in recognition of an extraordinary career of service.



A former international player, Dr Smith has played an influential role in shaping the sport at every level. Over the past 40 years she has served as a World Squash Vice President, chaired both the Medical Commission and Anti-Doping Commission, and acted as a technical delegate at some of the sport's biggest international events.

Her impact has also been felt throughout Canadian squash, where she has held leadership positions as President and Vice President of Squash Canada, as well as President of Squash Ontario.

The honour was presented during an on-court ceremony at the World Squash Junior Championships, where World Squash President Zena Wooldridge paid tribute to Dr Smith's remarkable commitment and lasting influence on the sport.

"Our clean record within anti-doping is a major part of why squash is now in the Olympics, and that record is in large part what Anne has contributed to our sport," said Wooldridge.

"It's a great pleasure to present this to you as only our third ever Honorary Life Member. A huge thanks to you for your contributions."

Receiving the award, Dr Smith reflected on her long association with the governing body and her passion for the sport.

"It's been a great experience to be part of World Squash for many years," she said. "I really enjoy it and hope I can continue to contribute for the next number of years. I really appreciate this award, it's a huge honour."

Becoming just the third recipient of World Squash's Honorary Life Membership places Dr Smith among an exclusive group whose dedication has helped shape the future of the sport. Her work in governance, athlete welfare and anti-doping has left a lasting legacy, while helping to strengthen squash's credibility on the world stage and support its successful journey to Olympic inclusion.

AI Arrives on the Padel Court

A new French partnership promises instant statistics, heat maps and automatically generated highlights.

The familiar post-match debate—who covered more ground, controlled the net or produced the decisive points—may soon be supported by far more than memory.

SportAI has announced a partnership with French racket-sports technology company LiveXperience that will bring AI-powered match analysis to a network of more than 400 padel court cameras across France.

The integration is designed to turn ordinary club matches into data-rich experiences. Players will be able to access match statistics, rally analysis, ball tracking, heat maps, positional information and automatically edited highlights generated from the court footage. The rollout is due to begin during summer 2026.

LiveXperience's existing technology already provides live streaming, real-time scoring, on-screen graphics, instant replay and sound features controlled through a smartwatch. SportAI will add a deeper analytical layer to that footage, making information once associated with elite competition available to recreational and club players.

The attraction for players is obvious. Instead of relying entirely on impression, they can review where they stood, how rallies developed and which patterns repeatedly produced success or failure. Coaches may also use the footage to support technical and tactical feedback.

There are benefits for clubs too. Digital highlights encourage players to share their matches, while statistics and progress tracking give them additional reasons to return. In a market where clubs increasingly compete on experience rather than court hire alone, technology can become an important point of difference.

It would be premature to describe the system as a substitute for coaching. Data can show where a player moved or how a rally unfolded, but interpreting that information and turning it into meaningful improvement still requires judgement. The most promising model is therefore not artificial intelligence replacing the coach, but AI providing the coach and player with better evidence.

SportAI, founded in 2023, has also worked with MATCHi and Save My Play and has acquired Padelytics, another padel analytics company. Its wider platform covers tennis and pickleball as well as padel.

Padel's next technological step may therefore be taking place not at the professional tour's biggest arenas, but on everyday club courts—where every match can become a source of statistics, highlights and learning.

Padel's Richest World Cup Heads to Doha

Record prize money signals a new level of ambition for international team competition

The International Padel Federation has confirmed that Doha will host the men's and women's FIP World Cups in both 2026 and 2028, with record prize money attached to the two editions.



The 2026 World Cup will take place from 2 to 7 November at the Khalifa International Tennis & Squash Complex. Sixteen men's and sixteen women's national teams will compete, with the total prize fund reaching €1.2 million—the highest amount awarded at an official padel competition.

That figure will increase to €1.35 million for the 2028 edition. In both tournaments, the money will be divided equally between the men's and women's competitions.

The announcement is more than a financial milestone. It indicates how quickly international padel is maturing. Tour events remain central to the professional game, but a well-funded World Cup gives national-team competition greater importance and provides players with another prestigious title beyond the regular circuit.

Doha has already established itself as one of padel's most experienced major-event hosts. The Khalifa complex has staged the Qatar Major Premier Padel since 2022 and was also the venue for the previous World Team Championships. The FIP cited infrastructure, athlete conditions, organisational experience, security and financial guarantees among the reasons for awarding Qatar two consecutive editions.

Equal distribution of the prize fund is equally significant. Women's padel continues to attract larger audiences, stronger partnerships and deeper playing fields, and the World Cup's structure recognises that the men's and women's competitions should carry equal value.

A €1.2 million fund will not transform every player's career. It does, however, send a clear message about the direction of the sport: international padel is becoming more professional, more commercially valuable and increasingly confident about its place on the global sporting calendar.

Can Anyone Stop Coello and Tapia?

Padel's leading pair have answered early-season pressure with another dominant run

Arturo Coello and Agustín Tapia remain the standard against which every men's padel partnership is measured—but their 2026 season has not been entirely straightforward.

The world number ones experienced a run of finals without titles during the middle of the campaign, with Alejandro Galán and Federico Chingotto among the pairs capable of disrupting their rhythm. Galán and Chingotto defeated them in the Gijón P2 final, reinforcing the sense that the leading partnership could be challenged.

Coello and Tapia's response has been emphatic.

They captured the Italy Major in Rome, followed by titles in Valencia, Valladolid and Bordeaux, completing four tournament victories in succession. By 13 July, Coello's official FIP record for the season stood at 44 victories from 49 matches, six titles and first place in both the world ranking and the season race.

Their success begins with an extraordinary balance of qualities. Coello provides reach, power and imposing coverage on the left-handed side of the court. Tapia supplies creativity, disguise and an instinctive ability to change the shape of a point. Together, they can dominate with force but are equally comfortable winning through patience, positioning and variation.

Yet their partnership is not sustained by talent alone. Tapia has spoken about the importance of communication, friendship and protecting the relationship between partners, arguing that looking after one another makes the competitive process easier. That stability has become particularly valuable during the more difficult periods of the season.

The obvious challengers remain Galán and Chingotto. Their speed, discipline and defensive quality allow them to extend rallies and deny Coello and Tapia easy attacking positions. Other partnerships can trouble the number ones on individual days, but matching them consistently across an entire season remains a different challenge.

That is what separates dominance from an isolated winning streak. The best pair is not necessarily the one that never loses; it is the one that reacts most convincingly when defeat arrives.

Coello and Tapia have already demonstrated that ability. After falling short in several finals, they did not make dramatic changes or allow frustration to divide them. They rebuilt momentum and promptly produced one of the strongest sequences of their partnership.

So, can anyone stop them? On a given court and in a single final, certainly. Several opponents have already proved it.

The more difficult question is whether anyone can stop them often enough to take away the number-one position. As 2026 moves into its decisive stages, that remains unanswered—and it is precisely what makes the rivalry so compelling.

Nike Set to Enter the World of Padel



For months it had been little more than industry speculation. Now, reports suggest that Nike is officially preparing to enter the world of padel, with a launch expected in 2027.

While many fans immediately assumed the sportswear giant would introduce a full range of rackets, the more interesting story may lie elsewhere. If Nike's history in tennis is anything to go by, the brand doesn't need to manufacture equipment to dominate a sport. Nike has never produced tennis rackets, yet it has helped shape the image of modern tennis through its athletes, apparel and footwear.

That same formula could prove even more effective in padel.

With the sport experiencing explosive growth worldwide—particularly in the United States—Nike has an opportunity to enter a market that is still defining its identity. Rather than competing head-to-head in an already crowded racket market, the brand is expected to focus on what it does best: premium footwear, performance apparel and creating a lifestyle around the sport.

The timing is particularly significant. Padel remains relatively young in North America, giving Nike the chance to influence how the sport is perceived by a new generation of players. Industry commentators also believe the company could invest heavily in club partnerships, direct-to-consumer retail and grassroots player development, creating an ecosystem that extends far beyond products alone.

Another key question is athlete sponsorship. Nike already represents some of the biggest names across global sport, and many expect the company to sign a marquee padel player before investing in the next generation of talent, particularly in emerging markets such as the United States.

Whether Nike eventually produces rackets or not may prove largely irrelevant. If history has taught us anything, it is that the company succeeds by building aspiration rather than simply selling equipment. Should its reported move into padel become reality, it would mark one of the biggest commercial milestones the sport has seen—and another clear sign that padel has moved firmly into the global sporting mainstream.

Whether you're a seasoned player or just picking up a paddle for the first time, discovering where you can join open competitions is part of the fun in this ever-growing sport. Here are some upcoming dates – and for full details, head over to the Pickleball Global website.

WPC SERIES - ISTANBUL**EID:** 2369 **EUR** 55**Organizer:** Pickleball Global**EVENT - TOURNAMENT****Starting:** October 29, 2026 to November 01, 2026**City:** 56**Tournament Venue:** Tryp By Wyndham**Registration Deadline:** October 11, 2026 (OPEN)**Tier Level:** 3**WPC SERIES - JOHOR BAHRU****EID:** 2148 **USD** 60**Organizer:** Pickleball Global**EVENT - TOURNAMENT****Starting:** November 12, 2026 to November 15, 2026**City:** Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia56**Tournament Venue:** TBD**Registration Deadline:** October 24, 2026 (OPEN)**Tier Level:** 3**Pickleball Bologna OPEN 2026****EID:** 2355 **EUR** 30**Organizer:** Simone De Cicco**EVENT - TOURNAMENT****Starting:** October 02, 2026 to October 04, 2026**City:** Grand Tour Italia, Via Paolo Canali,
Bologna, BO, Italia56**Tournament Venue:** Pickleball Bologna**Registration Deadline:** September 30, 2026 (OPEN)**Tier Level:** 3**MORE
INFO**

Toyota Takes Pickleball Across Malaysia

Five stops, a RM175,000 prize fund and a format built around participation



Toyota Malaysia has entered the country's rapidly developing pickleball market with a nationwide five-stop tour carrying RM175,000 in total prize money.

Organised by UMW Toyota Motor with the support of the Malaysia Pickleball Association and relevant state associations, the Toyota Malaysia Pickle Tour will visit Sarawak, Sabah, Johor, Penang and Selangor between August and September 2026.

The series begins at STAR Pickleball in Kuching on 1 and 2 August, followed by Kota Kinabalu on 15 and 16 August. Johor Bahru hosts the third stop on 5 and 6 September, before the tour moves to George Town on 19 and 20 September and concludes at PLAYA Racquet Club in Subang Jaya on 26 and 27 September.

Its format is deliberately social. Players register individually before being placed into teams by the organiser under the slogan "Solo Entry. Team Glory." Junior and adult categories are available, with participation open to eligible Malaysians from the age of seven.

Open-play sessions and introductory clinics will run alongside the competition, allowing new players and families to become involved without entering the main tournament.

That wider approach is important. Toyota is not merely attaching its name to a professional event; it is taking the game into several different regions and investing in participation at community level.

For pickleball, mainstream corporate support offers visibility and organisational strength. For Toyota, the sport provides access to an active, social and increasingly diverse audience.

The partnership illustrates how quickly pickleball is entering the commercial mainstream in Malaysia. What began as a relatively small recreational community is now attracting nationwide tours, established international organisations and major consumer brands.

Malaysia Becomes the New Home of APP Asia

Pickleball's Asian expansion gains a permanent base and an ambitious new tournament circuit

Malaysia has been selected as the permanent home of the Association of Pickleball Players' new Asia headquarters, placing the country at the centre of one of the sport's most significant international expansion projects.



The decision supports the newly launched APP Asia Tour, a continental circuit designed to connect professional competition with amateur participation, player development and the community-led culture that has helped pickleball grow so quickly.

The first major showcase of the new structure will be the Leapmotor APP Penang Open, staged from 22 to 26 July 2026 at Pickle By The Sea on Penang's Gurney Drive. The event will welcome players ranging from novice level to the professional ranks, alongside hospitality areas, fan activities and community programmes.

Penang will not be an isolated stop. Following the Malaysian event, the APP Asia Tour is scheduled to continue through China, Chinese Taipei, Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City and India during the remainder of 2026. That geographical spread reflects the speed with which pickleball is moving beyond its North American base and establishing a genuine competitive structure across Asia.

The APP has also announced that the Selkirk Academy will be introduced in Malaysia, giving players access to clinics, structured training and development opportunities. It is an important element of the project: professional tournaments may attract attention, but sustainable growth depends equally upon coaches, clubs and pathways for new players.

Malaysia already possesses many of the ingredients required to become a regional hub. Its multicultural population, established tourism sector, growing collection of dedicated facilities and location within South-East Asia make it accessible to players from across the continent.

The arrival of a permanent APP headquarters now gives that growing community something more substantial: an international organisation, a recognised tour and a platform from which the sport can develop.

For Asian pickleball, Malaysia is no longer simply hosting events. It is becoming part of the sport's global infrastructure.

Community Club Helping Drive Pickleball's Global Growth

As pickleball continues its remarkable rise around the world, community clubs are playing an increasingly important role in introducing new players to one of the fastest-growing sports on the planet.

One such success story can be found in Kenilworth Pickleball Club in the United Kingdom, where a small group of enthusiasts has built a thriving community in just a short space of time.

Established in 2024, the club was created to address a common challenge facing many emerging pickleball communities. While interest in the sport was growing rapidly, opportunities to play locally were limited, with many clubs operating at full capacity and requiring players to travel considerable distances to find a court.



Determined to make the sport more accessible, the founders secured equipment, booked indoor courts and began introducing family members, friends and newcomers to the game. What started as a grassroots initiative has since developed into a welcoming club that continues to attract players of all ages and abilities.

Blending elements of tennis, badminton and table tennis, pickleball has become renowned for its simple learning curve and highly social atmosphere. Played on a badminton-sized court using solid paddles and a lightweight perforated ball, the sport rewards strategy, precision and consistency rather than power alone, making it equally appealing to beginners and experienced competitors.

A key factor behind Kenilworth's growth has been access to high-quality facilities through its partnership with Kenilworth Multi Academy Trust (KMAT) and KMAT Leisure. The spacious indoor courts allow multiple matches to be played simultaneously, creating an ideal environment for coaching sessions, recreational play and organised competitions.

The club has also placed inclusivity at the heart of its philosophy. New players are welcomed at every session, with experienced members providing guidance and helping newcomers quickly build confidence on court.

Looking ahead, the club hopes to expand coaching opportunities, encourage greater youth participation and host more local tournaments as interest in the sport continues to grow.

While Kenilworth's story is rooted in one community, it reflects a much broader trend. Across Europe and beyond, clubs like this are helping introduce thousands of people to pickleball, demonstrating how grassroots initiatives, supported by strong local partnerships, are playing a vital role in the sport's rapid international expansion.

Japan Open 2026: Five Events, Five Winning Nations

Tokyo produced a genuinely international set of champions as P. V. Sindhu and Christo Popov led the Japan Open winners.

The 2026 Japan Open ended with champions from five different nations standing at the top of the podium across its five disciplines.

Held in Tokyo from 14–19 July, the BWF World Tour Super 750 tournament brought together a high-quality international field competing for a total prize fund of US\$950,000.

India, France, Indonesia, South Korea and China each finished the event with a title.

Sindhu returns to the top

P. V. Sindhu produced one of the tournament's defining performances in the women's singles final.

Facing Japan's Akane Yamaguchi in front of a home crowd, Sindhu completed a 21-17, 21-17 victory to claim her first Japan Open title and her first Super 750 crown.

The result ended a lengthy wait for another title and made Sindhu the first Indian player to win the Japan Open.

For a player whose career already includes a world title and two Olympic medals, the victory was an important reminder of her ability to compete successfully at the highest level.



Another landmark for Popov

France's Christo Popov defeated home finalist Koki Watanabe 21-11, 21-19 to win the men's singles title.

Popov entered the final ranked fourth, while Watanabe's run to the championship match represented an impressive performance in front of his home supporters.

The title continued a significant season for Popov, who had already won the European title in April. His success in Tokyo added another major achievement to a year in which French badminton has continued to build momentum.

Doubles drama

Indonesia took the men's doubles title through Fajar Alfian and Muhammad Shohibul Fikri.

They defeated South Korea's Kim Won Ho and Seo Seung Jae, preventing the top-ranked finalists from taking the title and giving Indonesia its place among the five winning nations. South Korea nevertheless claimed success in the women's doubles through Kim Hye Jeong and Kong Hee Yong.

Their final against China's Jia Yi Fan and Zhang Shu Xian developed into the most dramatic contest of the day. After losing the opening game, Kim and Kong recovered to force a decider and eventually completed a 14-21, 21-15, 30-29 victory.

The extraordinary final-game score reflected how little separated the two pairs. China completed the list of champions in the mixed doubles, where Feng Yan Zhe and Huang Dong Ping defeated Hong Kong China's Tang Chun Man and Tse Ying Suet.

A tournament with global reach

Japan had finalists in both singles events but ultimately finished without a title. Nevertheless, Watanabe and Yamaguchi ensured that the home crowd remained closely involved in the final day.

The spread of champions also illustrated the increasingly competitive nature of international badminton. No single nation dominated the programme, and each discipline produced its own distinct story.

Sindhu's return to the winner's podium, Popov's continued rise, Indonesia's men's doubles success, South Korea's dramatic comeback and China's mixed-doubles victory gave the 2026 Japan Open a truly international conclusion.

Home Success and Historic Triumphs at China Open

China celebrated a successful home campaign at the China Open, claiming two doubles titles as the prestigious HSBC BWF World Tour Super 1000 event concluded with a series of high-quality finals and several memorable performances.

The standout match of the tournament came in the mixed doubles, where an all-Chinese final delivered an absorbing contest between Guo Xinwa and Chen Fanghui and defending champions Feng Yanzhe and Huang Dongping.

After 87 minutes of intense badminton, Guo and Chen emerged victorious 25-23, 20-22, 21-15 to secure their second Super 1000 title, adding to their All England Open triumph from last season.

Having seen several opportunities slip away in the second game, the pair regrouped impressively to dominate the decider and claim one of the biggest victories of their partnership.

Reflecting on their success, Chen credited the team's resilience throughout the week.

"We learned to absorb pressure while putting pressure on our opponents, and that's been the biggest takeaway from this tournament," she said.

China enjoyed further success in the women's doubles, where Liu Shengshu and Tan Ning successfully defended their title with a 21-14, 21-19 victory over Japan's Yuki Fukushima and Mayu Matsumoto. The win continued their outstanding season, giving the young pairing a remarkable third Super 1000 title from just four tournaments at this level.

There was disappointment for the home crowd in the women's singles final, however, as former world champion Akane Yamaguchi of Japan produced another composed display to defeat China's Chen Yufei 21-18, 21-16 and lift the title.

The men's singles final delivered another piece of badminton history. Chou Tien-chen of Chinese Taipei became the oldest player ever to win a Super 1000 men's singles title at the age of 36 after overcoming France's Toma Junior Popov 21-15, 7-21, 21-13. Chou's victory was a testament to his experience, determination and enduring quality at the highest level of the sport.

The men's doubles crown went to Indonesia's Fajar Alfian and Muhammad Shohibul Fikri, who fought back after losing the opening game to defeat South Korea's Kim Won-ho and Seo Seung-jae 16-21, 21-19, 21-19 in another thrilling final.

With world-class performances across every discipline, the China Open once again demonstrated why it remains one of the flagship events on the international badminton calendar.



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