

GRSA INTERNATIONAL ATW MAGAZINE

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CONTENT



Section 1 - Tennis

We have seen a tremendous year of sport, and thinking that the end of November and December would be quiet months was really not the ideal thought, so buckle up and catch-up on Alfie, Holger, Jack Drapper, Hall of Famers, MSV and much more.

Section 2 - GRSA INTERNATIONAL

New members with new certifications, GRSA NSA share their first project and why they have chosen Unite Nepal. PTR UK & SPAIN are offering a great package.

Section 3 - Squash

Karakal is on the radar of Nick Down, he looks at these very special rackets. WSF Men's World Team Championship is back.

Section 4 - Padel

The end of an era, upsets and amazing achievements.

Section 5 - Pickleball

Tips on how to use your non-dominant hand, plus Palm Springs is just around the corner.

Section 6 - Badminton

In badminton we look at the 2023 BWF World Tour Finals, Fazza Dubai Para Badminton International and Guwahati Masters Super 100 as there have been some truly mesmerising performances and stand out personalities.

GRSA *members have a number of benefits, some appear here in the magazine and online, check out our community.*

Jack Draper Clinches UTS Grand Final Victory and Eyes Bright 2024 Campaign

British tennis sensation Jack Draper closed out 2023 on a high note with a remarkable victory in the Ultimate Tennis Showdown (UTS) Grand Final in London. The 21-year-old, nicknamed "The Power," displayed his tennis prowess under the innovative format devised by super-coach Patrick Mouratoglou, winning all five matches and securing a career-defining win against world No. 8 Holger Rune.



In a thrilling final clash, Draper dominated with a convincing scoreline of 12-14, 15-12, 13-10, 19-7, earning a substantial payday of \$546,800, including a generous Christmas bonus from the UTS Grand Final's bonus pool. Despite finishing 2023 with \$737,907 in prize money, the UTS triumph significantly boosted Draper's earnings and sets the stage for an exciting start to the 2024 season.

Looking ahead, Draper expressed ambitions to fulfill his potential, aiming for Grand Slam success and a top-ranking position. As he prepares for the Australian Open as an unseeded yet formidable contender, Draper sees the UTS Grand Final victory as a valuable momentum-builder for the challenges ahead.

"To finish this strong and play some great tennis in my home country, in my home city, is amazing," Draper remarked, reflecting on his challenging 2023 season marred by injuries. The lightning bolt tattoo on his arm symbolises his dedication, reflecting his belief that hard work and determination can pave the way to achieving greatness.

As Draper eyes a promising 2024 season, his UTS Grand Final victory becomes a pivotal moment in his career. With unwavering focus and determination, he aims to rise in the ATP rankings and establish himself among the elite players in the tennis world. The lightning bolt tattoo serves as a reminder of his commitment to his goals.

"I've just got to keep on working and hopefully I'll get to their level soon," Draper affirmed. As he looks towards the challenges and opportunities that the new year will bring, Jack Draper stands ready to make his mark on the tennis world, fuelled by the triumph of the UTS Grand Final and a steadfast commitment to his goals.



Leander Paes, Vijay Amritraj, and Richard Evans Set for Prestigious Induction into International Tennis Hall of Fame in 2024



In a historic moment for Indian tennis, former doubles World No. 1, Leander Paes, is poised to make history as the first Indian player to be inducted into the esteemed International Tennis Hall of Fame. Paes, an eight-time men's doubles Grand Slam champion and a Davis Cup record holder, will receive this prestigious accolade alongside two other luminaries, broadcaster and promoter Vijay Amritraj, and distinguished journalist Richard Evans. The induction ceremony is scheduled to take place on the 20th of July 2024, in Newport.

The announcement marks a significant milestone for Indian tennis, as Paes and Amritraj will be the first two Indians to be honoured in the Hall of Fame, and the first Asian men to be elected in their respective categories. Leander Paes expressed his gratitude, stating, "It has been my life's honour to play for my country for over three decades in a sport that has given and taught me everything." Paes, who reached the pinnacle of the Pepperstone ATP Doubles Rankings in 1999, also holds an Olympic bronze medal in men's singles from 1996.



Paes, with an illustrious career spanning 462 weeks inside the Top 10 of the Pepperstone ATP Doubles Rankings, including 37 weeks as No. 1, stands as one of the tennis greats. Notably, he is one of only three men in tennis history to achieve a career Grand Slam in both men's and mixed doubles, boasting a total of 18 Grand Slam titles.

Joining Paes in the Hall of Fame are Vijay Amritraj and Richard Evans, both recognised for their exceptional contributions to the sport. Amritraj, a former Top 20 player, has not only been a prominent figure in tennis broadcasting in Asia and the Middle East but has also played a pivotal role in expanding professional tennis in India.

Richard Evans, a seasoned tennis historian and journalist with over six decades of experience, has reported on more than 200 Grand Slams and authored 23 books during his illustrious career. Evans played a crucial role in the early growth of the ATP Tour and served in key positions, including Wimbledon's first press officer in 1973 and ATP European Director from 1974-77.

In a congratulatory message, Hall of Fame president and Class of 2017 inductee Kim Clijsters stated, "I am thrilled to congratulate Leander Paes, Vijay Amritraj, and Richard Evans on their election to the International Tennis Hall of Fame." She commended the trio as trailblazers who have left an indelible impact on tennis, contributing to the global expansion of the sport. The Class of 2024 will be celebrated in the coming year, marking a momentous occasion in the annals of tennis history.

Holger Rune Reflects on Novak Djokovic's Impact on the Next Generation Tennis Stars



In the fiercely competitive world of tennis, the indomitable Novak Djokovic has once again proven his dominance by clinching three out of the four Grand Slam titles and securing the year-end No. 1 spot in 2023. Among those aspiring to challenge Djokovic's supremacy is the talented Holger Rune, who recently shared his insights on the invaluable experience gained from facing the Serbian powerhouse.

Rune acknowledges Djokovic's exceptional standards, labelling him as an "extremely high standard" that serves as a crucial benchmark for emerging players. Despite Djokovic's formidable presence making it challenging for the younger generation to clinch major titles, Rune sees this as an opportunity rather than an obstacle. The 20-year-old player appreciates the chance to witness and learn from the enduring greatness of Djokovic, describing it as a taste of the "real world" of professional tennis.

In a recent interview on the Advantage Connors podcast, Rune expressed his perspective, stating, "I actually like that Novak is still here because, you know, for us young players to really see what the real world is, in a way, what the real deal is, you know... Novak is like an extremely high standard, and I think for us so close to see that is very helpful."

Despite Djokovic's age of 36, Rune recognises that the Serbian maestro shows no signs of slowing down. Djokovic's remarkable feat of being on par with Margaret Court's all-time record of 24 Grand Slam titles further solidifies his status as a tennis legend. As the younger players, including Rune, Alcaraz, and Sinner, aim to establish themselves as the new dominant force in tennis, the first formidable challenge they face is overcoming Djokovic in major tournaments.

Rune remains optimistic about the prospect of the next generation taking the reins in tennis, emphasising the importance of their rivalry for the sport's growth. "For the sport, it is really cool, really great to have this rivalry between the three of us," he remarked, envisioning a future where the trio of Rune, Alcaraz, and Sinner can dominate the tour. However, Rune acknowledges that their ascent requires consistently beating the seasoned Djokovic, acknowledging, "We need to try to get him out of there."

In a departure from the usual competitive narratives, Rune shares that he draws motivation from within, regardless of his rivals' victories or defeats. Reflecting on his competitors' achievements, he notes, "All of us have been doing very, very well. Sinner had a phenomenal season, Alcaraz also with the Wimbledon title... It doesn't matter if Sinner is winning a tournament or losing in the first round. I mean, I wish him the best, but it does not affect my motivation and will to win, and again for the sport, it's really cool."

Serving Inclusivity: The Rise of Para Standing Tennis in Great Britain

In the ever-evolving world of tennis, a new and inclusive chapter is being written with the advent of Para Standing Tennis (PST), also known as adaptive standing tennis. Tailored for individuals with physical impairments seeking to engage in tennis without the use of a wheelchair, this innovative approach is expanding rapidly in Great Britain, fostering a sense of community and competition among players with limb loss, limb deficiencies, cerebral palsy, acquired brain injuries, and those of short stature.

Acknowledged by the International Tennis Federation (ITF) and embraced by national tennis federations, including the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA), para standing tennis has become a global phenomenon with a growing list of players and competitions spanning countries worldwide.

Understanding the game involves familiarising oneself with its classifications. PST 1 caters to upper limb amputees or similar impairments, while PST 2 encompasses below-knee amputees, individuals with mild cerebral palsy, or other impairments with a similar mobility level. PST 3 includes above-knee or bilateral below-knee amputees, those with bilateral arm impairment, or moderate to severe cerebral palsy. Finally, PST 4 is tailored for individuals of short stature or with other impairments impacting mobility.

Played on a full-size tennis court, the rules largely mirror traditional tennis, with one notable exception. Participants with greater court restrictions or those falling under the Short Statured category (PST 3 or 4) are allowed two bounces, whereas PST 1 and 2 are limited to a single bounce.

In a significant stride towards inclusivity, the LTA has joined forces with national partners such as Limb Power, CP Sport, and the Dwarf Sport Association. Together, they aim to make tennis accessible to diverse communities, placing a particular emphasis on the burgeoning world of para standing tennis. The recent inauguration of the para standing tennis festival at the National Tennis Centre in Roehampton marked a pivotal moment in this journey.

Enthusiasts from across the country flocked to the festival, immersing themselves in the joy of playing tennis and gaining a firsthand experience of the sport's unique offerings. Hosted by the LTA and 'The Last Leg' Presenter, Hills, the event also provided players with an extraordinary opportunity to meet two former world No.1s boasting an impressive 27 Grand Slam titles between them—Andy Murray and Gordon Reid. Fellow Brit Alfie Hewett lent his support, taking to social media to promote the festival and champion the cause.

This festival, serving as a launchpad for the development of para standing tennis as a recognised disability tennis format in Britain, signifies a turning point. Looking ahead, the LTA is committed to supporting a series of domestic competitions, fostering an environment where more individuals can not only play but also compete, igniting a passion for para standing tennis around the country.

As the sport continues to break barriers and redefine inclusivity, para standing tennis emerges as a symbol of resilience, camaraderie, and boundless possibilities. The echoes of tennis balls bouncing on courts now carry a new rhythm—one that harmonises with the diverse stories and abilities of those who play the game standing tall, creating a future where everyone, regardless of physical ability, can find their place in the world of tennis.



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ALFIE HEWETT

British wheelchair tennis sensation, Alfie Hewett, secured a coveted nomination for the BBC Sports Personality of the Year 2023, marking the end of an incredible year for the athlete.

Hewett's outstanding achievements in 2023 include claiming the world No. 1 spot in both singles and doubles, clinching five Grand Slam titles, reaching the finals of all major singles tournaments, securing Masters singles and doubles trophies, and achieving the coveted title of ITF World Champion.

The 26-year-old's remarkable performance extended beyond the individual accomplishments, as he played a pivotal role in leading the Lexus Great Britain team to victory at the World Team Cup. His unbeaten record in all team ties underscored his prowess and leadership on the UNIQLO Wheelchair Tennis Tour.

From modest beginnings to commanding attention on prestigious courts like No. 1 Court at Wimbledon and captivating huge audiences during the Championships, his impact on the visibility and popularity of wheelchair tennis has been remarkable, and has propelled him to global stardom.

While content with his achievements so far, the athlete remains focused on his continued dedication to the sport, with aspirations to clinch the elusive Wimbledon singles title in 2024, a long-time personal goal as it is the one grand slam he is yet to win.

Professional ambitions notwithstanding, Hewett is passionate about promoting his sport and creating opportunities for individuals with disabilities, and is an inspiration to young athletes everywhere, serving as a symbol of the profound impact sports can have on changing perspectives and lives.

Reflecting on the increased popularity of his sport and the part he has played, Hewett noted - "To see so many fresh faces, it's a massive thing for me. It's what I want to try to do with my platform - I want to see more people with disabilities being given that opportunity."

Rafael Nadal Announces January Comeback in Brisbane After Year-Long Hiatus

In a much-anticipated revelation, Rafael Nadal, the 22-time Grand Slam champion, has declared his return to competitive tennis after a challenging year marred by injury setbacks. The Spaniard's absence from the court since a surprising second-round defeat at the Australian Open in January has been a source of speculation and concern for fans worldwide. Now, with unwavering determination, Nadal has chosen the Brisbane International in January as the stage for his long-awaited comeback.



Nadal, who had been sidelined due to a hip injury, conveyed the news through a video shared on social media. In the heartfelt announcement, the 37-year-old expressed, "After one year outside of the tour, I think it is the right moment to be back. So I feel ready to announce that I will be back in Brisbane in the first week of the season."

This marks a significant milestone in Nadal's recovery journey, promising a return to the competitive arena. His last match, a second-round loss to Mackenzie McDonald at the Australian Open earlier this year, left fans and experts alike wondering about the future of the legendary player.

The excitement surrounding Nadal's return has been fuelled by his positive outlook on the progress made during his rehabilitation. Speaking about the recent developments, he shared, "Until now, I didn't know if I would ever play tennis again, and now I think so. What has changed from a few weeks ago to now is that now I know that I am going to play tennis again."

The ATP 250 event in Brisbane, scheduled to begin on December 31, sets the stage for Nadal's comeback, raising hopes that he will also participate in the upcoming Australian Open. Despite his recent challenges and a drop in the ATP rankings to 666th, Nadal remains a formidable force in the tennis world.

As the tennis community eagerly anticipates Nadal's return to the court, the charismatic Spaniard aims to prove his doubters wrong. The journey ahead is uncertain, but Nadal's resilience and determination to reclaim his spot among the tennis elite make his comeback a storyline worth following.

However, legendary coach Rick Macci has expressed reservations about Nadal's potential impact upon his return. Macci, acknowledging Nadal's diminished level, stated, "I wish Rafa all the best, but he's not at the exact same level he was before, so I don't think he's a contender to win a Slam."



"After a year away from competition, it's time to come back. It will be in Brisbane, the first week of January. I'll see you there."

MSV

TENNIS



Mauve Sports

MSV is a small, independent, German family business that has successfully established itself in the market as string and grip suppliers in 50 countries worldwide. The company also offers other products such as Tutor tennis ball machines, the MSV MiniSTT String Tension Tester device and the MSV Tennis Pointer as a training tool.



DONNAY RACKETS - EXCLUSIVE TO GERMANY

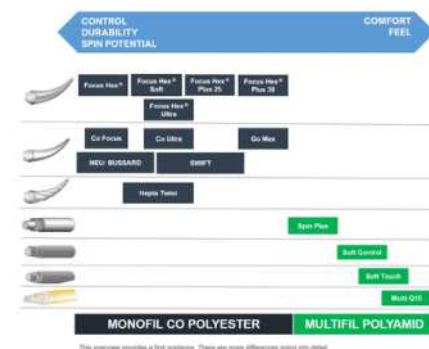
Did you know that MSV are exclusive distributors of Donnay rackets. If you're an avid Donnay user then check out the website to find the best prices on Donnay Rackets, including the Allwood Octa 102 Tennis Racket.

The DONNAY Allwood Octa 102 tennis racket is best suited for all players who need a very high level of arm protection without wanting to sacrifice very good control and manoeuvrability. The flexible frame is very forgiving and supports a sensitive game.

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The goal of this well oiled machine is not only to give exceptional customer service, but to provide quality product without the high-end price tag. So, you won't see famous players plastered over their packaging as they feel this really does not send the right message. You won't see them boasting about making their own strings, they don't, but what they do is make sure they have found the best materials on the market by using independent and recognised institutions that are not paid by the big companies to talk well about their products.

If you're looking for alternatives in strings, grips and accessories, MSV have a wide range of materials on their website. Look out for some great features in the coming months as MSV team up with GRSA.



MSV

TENNIS



Unlocking the Power of Racket Sports: A Comprehensive Approach to Health



In the quest for optimal brain function and overall well-being, the renowned neuropsychiatrist, John Ratey, MD, asserts that exercise stands out as the most potent tool. Ratey, an Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, extensively discusses the scientifically proven benefits of exercise in his bestselling book, "Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain."

The manifold advantages of regular exercise encompass enhanced learning ability, the growth of brain cells, stress reduction, and the alleviation of conditions such as anger, anxiety, and depression. Moreover, exercise boosts focus, attention, and alertness while lowering the risk of neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. It also contributes to reduced blood pressure, among other health benefits.

While any form of exercise is beneficial, adhering to public health guidelines suggests aiming for at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity on at least 5 days a week. This includes activities like brisk walking, jogging, cycling, and swimming. Integrating strength or resistance training is recommended for building muscles, strengthening bones, and protecting joints. More intricate activities such as yoga, rock climbing, gymnastics, and martial arts contribute to skill-building and agility.

Yet, amidst the diverse array of exercises, certain sports emerge as particularly exceptional in delivering a comprehensive set of health benefits. Racket sports, including tennis, pickleball, squash, badminton, and racquetball, take centre stage due to their unique ability to simultaneously challenge the cardiovascular and brain systems. According to Ratey, the combination of taxing both the brain and body amplifies the positive impact compared to aerobic exercise alone.



Beyond physical fitness, racket sports offer a rare blend of aerobic activity, strength building, flexibility enhancement, and mental fortitude. The intricate movements required in these sports demand quick strategic thinking, making them stand out among other physical activities. Furthermore, the social aspect of playing racket sports, fostering connections with others, adds another layer of health benefits.

Forbes has even gone so far as to declare squash as the world's healthiest sport, emphasising the holistic advantages of engaging in racket sports. A large-scale study published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine supports this claim, revealing that regular participation in racket sports significantly reduces the risk of early death. In a cohort of over 80,000 individuals spanning nine years, those who played racket sports regularly demonstrated a 47% lower risk of mortality, outperforming other popular exercises like swimming.

In essence, racket sports emerge as the ultimate mind and body activity, providing a perfect amalgamation of high-intensity interval workouts, balance drills, resistance training, and mental exercises. So, for those seeking a time-efficient approach to maximize health benefits, picking up a racket and hitting the court might just be the ideal solution.

The evidence overwhelmingly supports the notion that racket sports offer a holistic and unparalleled approach to physical and mental well-being, making them a standout choice for individuals looking to optimise their health.



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Women's Ace Comebacks: A Sneak Peek at Tennis Stars Returning to the Court in 2024

In the dynamic world of professional tennis, comebacks are as thrilling as match points, and 2024 promises to be a year of resilience and triumph. Elina Svitolina's remarkable return in 2023, crowned with the WTA Comeback Player of the Year award, sets the stage for a lineup of formidable players eager to make their mark once again.



Leading the charge is Naomi Osaka, the four-time Grand Slam champion, who took a hiatus following the birth of her daughter, Shai, in July. Osaka, now ranked at a special No.46, expresses a newfound perspective, stating, "I feel more like I'm playing for Shai." Her return, scheduled for Brisbane and the Australian Open, adds an exciting dimension to the upcoming season.

Another name making waves is Angelique Kerber, a three-time Grand Slam champion, who embraced motherhood with the arrival of her daughter, Liana, in February. With a special ranking of No.31, Kerber's eyes are set on the 2024 Paris Olympic Games, aiming to add another milestone to her illustrious career.



The enigmatic Emma Raducanu, winner of the 2021 US Open, faces a unique comeback journey. Hindered by injuries and surgeries, the 21-year-old Briton, now ranked at No.298, is set to return in Auckland and the Australian Open. Despite the challenges, Raducanu's tenacity and the memory of her Cinderella run in New York fuel her determination.



Amanda Anisimova, after a hiatus due to mental health struggles, brings her artistic flair to the tennis court once more. Ranked officially at No.370 and holding a special No.61, Anisimova's comeback is a testament to her resilience and changed perspective.

In the category of others to watch out for, former US Open semifinalist Anastasija Sevastova has already made a comeback at the WTA 125 event in Andorra, showcasing her trademark drop shot. The return of Bianca Andreescu and Paula Badosa from stress fractures adds more intrigue, along with the resurgences of Caroline Wozniacki and Jennifer Brady.

As the tennis world eagerly anticipates these comebacks, the stories of triumph over adversity promise a thrilling 2024 season. Each player brings a unique narrative, and their journeys inspire fans worldwide. In the game of tennis, resilience is not just a skill; it's a champion's trademark.

The court is set for an exhilarating year of comebacks, each player poised to redefine their narrative and leave an indelible mark on the sport. As the tennis season unfolds, these stories of resilience, determination, and triumph will undoubtedly capture the hearts of fans around the globe.

Wimbledon's Grand Vision: Expansion Plan Gains Local Approval for 2030 Transformation

WIMBLEDON, England - In a significant stride toward a grand transformation, the All England Lawn and Tennis Club (AELTC) has secured a pivotal approval from the Merton Council's planning committee for its ambitious expansion plan at Wimbledon. The proposal entails the construction of an impressive 8,000-seat retractable-roof stadium and the addition of 38 new grass courts on the former grounds of Wimbledon Park Golf Club, acquired by the AELTC in 2018.

Unlike its counterparts, Wimbledon has traditionally held its qualifying tournament offsite, in nearby Roehampton. The green light from the local planning council marks a historic move that could see Wimbledon's qualifiers take place on its hallowed grounds by 2030. The proposed stadium, featuring a retractable roof, is poised to become a new show court, adding to the allure of the prestigious Grand Slam.

The Merton Council's approval is a crucial step in a series of local endorsements required before the AELTC can commence the development on the adjacent Church Road site. The current site, home to the renowned Centre Court since 1922, faces spatial constraints that limit the creation of new stadiums, forcing qualifying matches to be held offsite. The conversion of the former golf club into an extension of the Wimbledon experience presents an opportunity to address these limitations.

Sally Bolton, AELTC Chief Executive, expressed enthusiasm about the future prospects, stating, "Our proposals will both secure the future of The Championships for generations to come by bringing qualifying to SW19 and provide a transformation in community amenities — including a new 23-acre park for everyone to enjoy on land which has been inaccessible to the public for over 100 years."

Despite the approval, the plan is not without its detractors. Some locals argue that covenants on the land prohibit the proposed Wimbledon expansion. The final course of action will be directed by a series of government decisions, with the Wandsworth Council's Planning Committee set to make a crucial decision in the coming weeks.

Wimbledon's rich history, intertwined with the southwest London town, has witnessed several milestones since its inception in 1877. The proposed expansion is not merely about adding seats but aims to enhance the overall Wimbledon experience, with plans for a community-accessible boardwalk around a lake and shared use of new courts and facilities.

As other major tennis tournaments globally undergo expansions and renovations, Wimbledon seeks to keep pace with its counterparts. The approval from the local planning committee sets the stage for a potential opening of the expanded facilities for The Championships in 2030, ushering in a new era for one of the most prestigious tennis events in the world.

In the Room

With Richard Parnell

A YEAR IN REVIEW

January

Regularly clean the stringing machine (every 20-30 restrings), with adjustments for multifilament strings. In tournament settings (20-30 rackets daily), daily cleaning is standard, focusing on machine calibration, cleanliness, turntable, clamp rails, and clamps.

February

Adjust the stringing machine's height to elbow level for ergonomic stringing. Wilson's Baiardo machine offers adjustable stringer profiles for optimal height and angle, reducing the risk of back strain (pg 16).

March

Focus on ergonomics for a stringer's stance; professional machines aim for ease of use. A skilled stringer minimizes movement behind the machine, emphasizing efficiency (pg 18).

April

Follow a set order when stringing rackets with different tensions for a player. String in ascending tension order to maintain tension differences between rackets, starting with the lowest (pg 18).

May

Choose short side placement carefully when stringing rackets; certain rackets require specific sides due to grooves. Recommended placement is on the left to align with grommet modifications (pg 22).

June

Certification enhances stringing skills and professionalism. GRSA recognises other associations' certificates, offering equivalent levels for free to GRSA members. Certification raises awareness and standardises stringing as an art (pg 20).

July

Photos opportunities at all events

August

Use social media positively; avoid criticising stringers. Encourage learning from mistakes and provide constructive solutions to improve skills (pg 14).

September

Highlight the challenges of tournament stringing, including limited resources and demanding schedules. Advocate for better conditions and recognition for stringers (pg 20).

October

Discuss player interaction during tournament stringing. In public areas, representatives often bring rackets due to player popularity. GRSA's Competition Master Certification addresses etiquette and conduct in tour stringing rooms (pg 20).

November

Acknowledge the constant need for learning in stringing. Emphasise the importance of staying updated on new products and technologies to improve stringing skills (pg 20).

FUN FACTS

TIS THE SEASON

Doctor, Doctor I'm
scared of Santa

Doctor: You're suffering from
Claus-trophobia.

- 1** **Father Christmas didn't always wear red clothes!**
Now, we all know that Father Christmas loves the colour red. His hat, trousers... in fact, everything is red! Did you know that years ago... he originally used to wear green?
You've got to switch it up sometimes!
- 2** **Prince Albert was Queen Victoria's husband. In 1848 he put up a Christmas tree at Windsor Castle, ever since it has become a tradition!**
Who puts the fairy on top of your tree?
- 3** **Imagine not being able to celebrate Christmas? That seems like a crime in itself! Between 1647 and 1660 Christmas was banned and was changed to a day of fasting. It was banned because Oliver Cromwell believed that because it was a religious day, it should be taken seriously with no parties!**
- 4** **Did you know that Christmas pudding wasn't always like a cake?**
It was originally made in the 14th century it was more like a soup and was known as "frumenty". It was made from beef and mutton with currants, prunes, raisins, wines and spices.
- 5** **In the UK, we all love a Christmas cracker during our Christmas dinner, especially if we win and get a toy! (Yes, even the big kids)**

Did you know that a man called Tom Smith actually invented them? Tom Smith lived in London and made wedding cakes and sweets. He visited Paris and discovered a sugared almond called a 'bon bon' which was wrapped in tissue paper, this gave him the idea for crackers!



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ADOPTAS.ORG

by Alejandro Davidovich Fokina

In a world where countless cats and dogs are abandoned and left to fend for themselves, the tireless efforts of organizations dedicated to their rescue, nurture, and re-homing are invaluable. **Adoptas.org** is one such organization, working diligently in Spain to provide a second chance for these vulnerable animals. We aim to shed light on the remarkable work carried out by **Adoptas.org**, with the involvement and support of renowned tennis player **Alejandro Davidovich Fokina**. Furthermore, it emphasizes the urgent need for public support and donations to help save the lives of these deserving animals.

Alejandro Davidovich Fokina: A Champion for Animal Welfare

Beyond his accomplishments on the tennis court, Alejandro Davidovich Fokina demonstrates a profound compassion for animals. His partnership with Adoptas.org exemplifies his commitment to making a difference in the lives of abandoned cats and dogs in Spain. Fokina's involvement serves as a powerful reminder that individuals, regardless of their field, can contribute to animal welfare and promote a more compassionate society.

Adoptas.org: Rescuing, Nurturing, and Re-homing Abandoned Animals

Adoptas.org is an organization at the forefront of animal rescue in Spain, tirelessly working to provide a lifeline to abandoned cats and dogs. Their dedicated team goes to great lengths to rescue animals from precarious situations, providing them with much-needed care, nourishment, and medical attention. Once rescued, the cats and dogs are placed into foster homes or shelters, where they receive nurturing and rehabilitation. Working diligently to find suitable forever homes, matching the animals with caring adoptive families who can provide them with the love, care, and security they deserve. **Adoptas.org**, through their efforts, have saved countless lives.

By supporting **Adoptas.org**, you become an integral part of the rescue mission. Your donations can help fund medical treatments, provide food and shelter, and support the ongoing efforts to find permanent homes for these animals. Together, we can create a compassionate community that values and protects the well-being of all living creatures.



Check out their new-look website, but more importantly, see the animals they are looking after and helping re-home, you might find the one!



PTR EXTENDED OFFERS

As official global racket stringers certification and education partner, GRSA is proud to share that both PTR UK and PTR SPAIN have launched a special offer to their members.

If you belong to PTR in the UK or ESP, when you sign up to GRSA's business membership, you'll have access to two very special courses. As an additional incentive, if you're in the first 50 (of each country), there is a very special goodie bag that will be sent to you completely free of charge.

For PTR UK members, Wilson have put together a great package for you and they're sure you'll put it to good use. As for Spanish members, HEAD will be sending out a special pack filled with some essentials. **CLICK THE LINK BELOW!**



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Stringer Solutions

A YEAR IN REVIEW

TOP
TIP

Did you miss anything? Well, we have a small recap of this years Stringer Solutions. Feel free to go back to the full article.

January

When mounting rackets, the logo can be up or down, but GRSA recommends facing it up to ensure proper knot placement, especially if grommets are enlarged. Mounting consistently in the same way may lead to worn grommets in the same spots.

February

Consider using specific tie-off grommets provided by the brand. Tournament stringers often tie off mains on mains and crosses on crosses to avoid premature breakage. GRSA suggests using designated tie-off locations but allows flexibility.

March

Cross string tension significantly impacts playability. String tension choices for different string types and constructions are crucial. The article covers misconceptions, feel, power, and tension changes for various racket designs.

April

Increasing knot tension (20% or 4 kg recommended by GRSA) is considered best practice. Tightening outer strings enhances the perceived quality of the string job without affecting tension.

May

Shaped monofilament strings may twist. Weave cross strings carefully to avoid bird nesting, and dropping the string's tip reduces twisting. These measures help preserve string quality.

June

Adjust string tension based on court surface:

Grass court: Slightly raise tension for better control.

Clay court: Lower tension for higher bounce and more power.

Hard court: Adjust tension depending on court speed.

July

Power pads, small leather blocks between strings and frames, prevent shear breakage at high tensions. In tournaments, these pads are not removed to replicate the original placement.



August

Starting blocks, spacers for starting clamps, move the string away from grommets, reducing stress. This prevents the string from being clamped twice, enhancing overall string bed quality.

September

Avoid the Double Half Hitch (DHH) knot for modern stringing, as it may weaken or crimp the anchor string, leading to premature breakage. GRSA recommends the Pro Knot or Parnell Knot.

October

The compression mat is crucial for reducing stringer fatigue during long hours. Suitable footwear, like soft cushioned running shoes, is recommended. Stringing barefoot is discouraged due to potential hazards.

November

Use compression socks to alleviate fatigue during extended stringing sessions, especially in tournaments. Taking care of your feet from the start can significantly improve comfort throughout the event.

Throughout the year we have tried to provide insight into techniques, stringer tips, materials and equipment. The idea of this article is to share knowledge and at the same time bring stringers together.

If you'd like to share your opinions on certain things that you feel are solution for stringers, please share it with us, email: online@grsa-international.com. We welcome all ideas and are always looking for helpful tips that can be useful to others.



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RECENT CERTIFICATIONS



Nate Pagel

New member to GRSA based in the US and a GRSA Certified Pro Master Stringer.



Avram Catalin

New member to GRSA based in France and a GRSA Certified Pro Stringer.



Sergej Stehle

New member to GRSA based in Germany and a GRSA Certified Pro Master Stringer.



Hanu Patel

New member to GRSA based in Germany and a GRSA Certified Pro Stringer.

If you're a GRSA member and have recently passed a certification exam, send us through your proud picture moment and we'll share with the GRSA family around the world. info@grsa-international.com



GRSA NSA chose **Unite Nepal** who operate in Lamjung and Pokhara, as its first collaboration because both charities share the same core values and tennis related missions. Richard first met Lee in 1990 at Lew Hoad's Campo de Tenis in Mijas Spain, where Lee was a tennis coach and Richard did the stringing, and for the past few years they have spoken about combining forces.

The area of the **Unite Nepal** charity where **GRSA NSA** aims to make the greatest impact is the tennis academy founded in Pokhara in 2018 by Lee Williams to educate through sport. GRSA will provide racket stringing equipment and training to 3 adults and tennis equipment and coaching to 24 disadvantaged children for whom tennis is currently out of reach.

GRSA NSA believes it can create a sustainable source of income for the future racket stringers and improve the lives of children who live in extreme poverty

Lee Williams, founder of the non-profit foundation **Unite Nepal**, held various roles in sport, including tennis coach and owner of a tennis academy in Spain, before going to Nepal in 2017

He felt he wanted a radical change and decided to sell his assets to raise funds to take care of street children in Kathmandu including 16 homeless children living on a rubbish tip

He then discovered Pokhara, badly damaged from the 2015 earthquake, and started providing food to children in remote schools. He founded Unite Nepal to fund food programmes and buy tennis equipment and clothing for children. He works closely with the Gorkha Welfare Trust and currently feeds over 150 children every day in remote schools who would not otherwise eat during the day. He and 3 other coaches provide children with free weekly "grass roots" tennis coaching and daily after-school coaching at Kaski District Tennis Club to the more advanced players, including Pradip Khahka, now Nepal's number one player

Unite Nepal's mission is to be as useful as possible on any front and to take on anything where it can be of help. However, food remains its main mission following its Feed 150+ project launch in 2018. The Community kitchen project was started in 2022 and its latest project, a community medical centre, is currently under construction.





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NICK DOWN
Talks

Karakal Core Bridge

KARAKAL
EVOLUTION BY DESIGN



One of the newest additions to the list of non standard squash rackets is Karakal's Next Gen Core Bridge. This type of pattern is in wide use in the Karakal current range.

I have used the Core 110 in this example, but there are others that share this pattern.

There are 14 mains that wrap around a bridge in the shape of part of a ring. The mains must only be pulled at the head, which means two at a time. It also means starting at the throat, in order to finish the mains at the head.

This pattern is similar to the Prince Powerbite range in that it starts at the throat in order to finish at the head. It is also similar, but not identical, to any of Wilson's Powerhinge models for the same reason.

The similarities end there, because there are no shared holes on this pattern unlike the Powerbite models from Prince or the Wilson models.



Nick's Nugget

It defeats the object, if you weave quickly, then have multiple attempts at entering grommets, undoing good work, if trying to go faster.

There are 18 cross strings

My example has used a two piece (4 knot) method. This avoids a long run of string along the outside of the frame, that is better to look at and I've mentioned this before a few times, it's not unusual.

According to Karakal the position of main strings on the bridge will make a difference between power or control by utilising 'click bridge' technology; I've used a picture to explain this from the Karakal website.

Mains

Start at the throat ring in the centre:-

Above ring to LH1

Below ring to RH1

LH1 to LH2

LH2 to below ring

Above ring to LH3

RH1 to RH2

RH2 to above ring

Below ring to RH3

RH3 to RH4

RH4 to above ring

Below ring to RH6

LH3 to LH4

LH4 to below ring

Above ring to LH6

LH6 to LH8

LH8 to below ring

Above ring to LH11

RH6 to RH8

RH8 to above ring

Below ring to RH11

Tie off both sides at H8.



Crosses:-

1st cross is at H5 (either side, if starting on L, go over 1st main. If starting on R, go under 1st main)

Skip H6 H8 and H11 on both sides.

Last cross is T1 (both sides- must be a hard-weave).

Tie off H at H4 (either side)

Tie off T at T2 (either side).

NEXT MONTH:- Unsquashable DSP
(Dual String Pattern)



Yannik Omlor and Simon Rösner orchestrated an upset for Germany, toppling No.8 seeds Hong Kong to claim the lead in Group H at the WSF Men's World Team Championship in New Zealand.

In the initial match, Omlor, ranked 86th globally, secured a 3/1 victory over Tang Ming Hong, the 80th seed, providing 9/12 seeds Germany with an early advantage. The intensity escalated in the second match as Tsz Kwan Lau staged a remarkable comeback from two games down against Raphael Kandra, eventually levelling the tie with a 3/2 win.

The fate of the contest rested on the shoulders of 36-year-old Simon Rösner, a former world No.3 and a veteran of seven previous championships who retired in 2020. Rösner, rolling back the years, dominated with a resounding 3/0 triumph over world No.49 Henry Leung.

Reflecting on the victory, Rösner commented, "It was a challenging and closely contested match. Yannick played exceptionally well. Although Raphi had an advantage, he couldn't seal the deal. At that point, I wasn't anticipating having to secure the win! So, I had to mentally prepare myself and ensure I emerged victorious in the end."

Expressing satisfaction with his performance, Rösner added, "I'm pleased with how I played and that I can still compete at this level. It's a gratifying result, and I'm enjoying being back on the court with familiar faces after so many years. Now, I'm eager to achieve the best possible outcome for Team Germany."

Sharing the distinction of participating in eight separate championships was Alan Clyne, a 37-year-old integral to No.7 seeds Scotland's commanding victory over Canada.

In other matches, tight contests unfolded as teams vied for top spots in their respective groups. Notably, in Group E, No.5 seeds USA and 9/12 seeds Czech Republic engaged in a thrilling 15-game battle. Czech Republic's Jakub Solnický set the tone with a narrow win over Andrew Douglas, while Timothy Brownell secured an 11-7, 10-12, 9-11, 11-9, 11-9 victory against Viktor Byrtus. Shahjahan Khan clinched a 3/2 win over Daniel Mekbib, bringing the scores to a 2/2 tie.

At the Mercury Baypark Arena, hosts New Zealand faced a close encounter but ultimately succumbed to No.6 seeds Wales with a scoreline of 2/1. The Chileshe brothers, Temwa and Lwamba, were defeated by Owain Taylor and Emyr Evans, while home favourite Paul Coll secured a 3/1 win against Joel Makin.

Additionally, the top four seeds entered the draw on this occasion. Defending champions Egypt, as the top seeds, emerged victorious against Malaysia. No.2 seeds England triumphed over South Africa, No.3 seeds France overcame Australia, and No.4 seeds Switzerland defeated Nigeria in their respective matches.



WSF MEN'S WORLD TEAM SQUASH CHAMPIONSHIP

TAURANGA, NEW ZEALAND 2023

After a hiatus of four years, the WSF Men's World Team Championship marked its return in New Zealand, showcasing eight thrilling encounters in Tauranga at the Mercury Baypark Arena and the Devoy Squash and Fitness Centre.

The host nation kicked off the biennial event with an electrifying victory over the Republic of Korea. With New Zealand's top player and world No.3, Paul Coll, resting after securing the New Zealand Open title, the responsibility fell on second-string Lwamba Chileshe, ranked 104th globally, to lead the team.

Facing Dongjun Lee, Chileshe encountered a challenging start, conceding the first game 11-8. Despite levelling with an 11-5 win in game two, he found himself trailing again after game three as unranked Lee aimed for an upset. Fortunately, Chileshe regained composure, securing the next two games 11-5, 11-6. His teammate and brother, Temwa Chileshe, sealed the team's victory with a 3/0 triumph over Hyeon Beom Kang, while Elijah Thomas contributed with a straight-games win against Ji Donghyun.

Reflecting on the match, Lwamba Chileshe expressed, "It was a mix of fun and stress! Being up first, I felt the pressure and a bit nervous, but I'm genuinely happy to secure the win for the team."

Meanwhile, at the Devoy Centre, Australia and Malaysia navigated comebacks to avoid upsets against the Netherlands and Ireland, respectively. Australia's Rhys Dowling and Dylan Molinaro emerged as heroes against Thijs Roukens and Sam Gerrits, following Joseph White's defeat to 2022 World Junior Champion Rowan Damming. For Malaysia, Sanjay Jeeva and Ameeshenraj Chandaran rescued the team, defeating Sean Conroy and Oisin Logan after Addeen Idrakie's loss to Sam Buckley.

In other debut performances, Cook Islands and Tahiti faced defeats against Czech Republic and Germany at the Mercury Baypark Arena. Meanwhile, at the Devoy Centre, Philippines and Samoa experienced setbacks against South Africa and Canada.

Brian Tapurau of Cook Islands shared his thoughts, stating, "It feels very good - but a bit of an eye-opener. It's cool being out on the world stage with everyone."

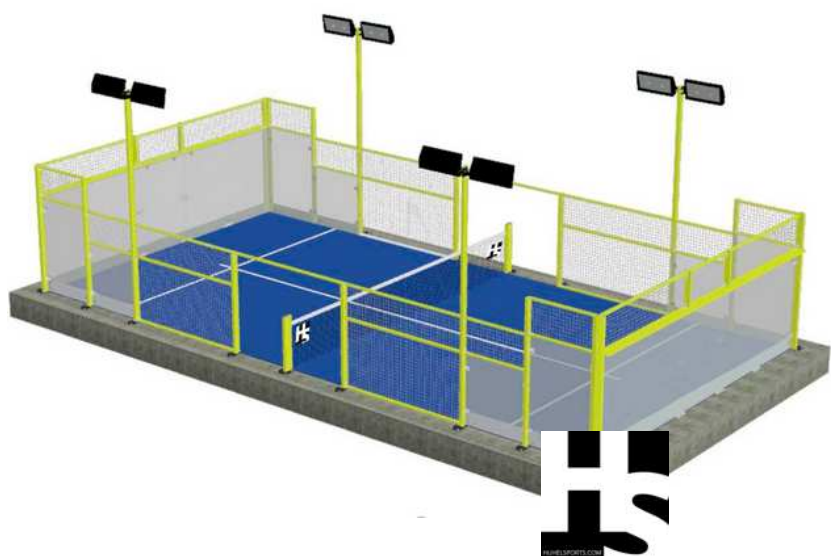
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INDIVIDUAL PANORAMIC COURT

Anchor plates in galvanized steel for then fastening of the structure and glass, measurements of 250x200x15 (8 units), 495x250x15 (4 units) 150x120x15 (8 units)

Structural system of aluminum profiles, dimensions of the pillars 150x45x1.7 (8 units), 106x232x3 (4 units), 90x45x1.7 (8 units)

Top horizontal beam on 281x91 glass bottoms (2 units) Welded mesh 50x50x4mm

Lighting rods integrated into the structure

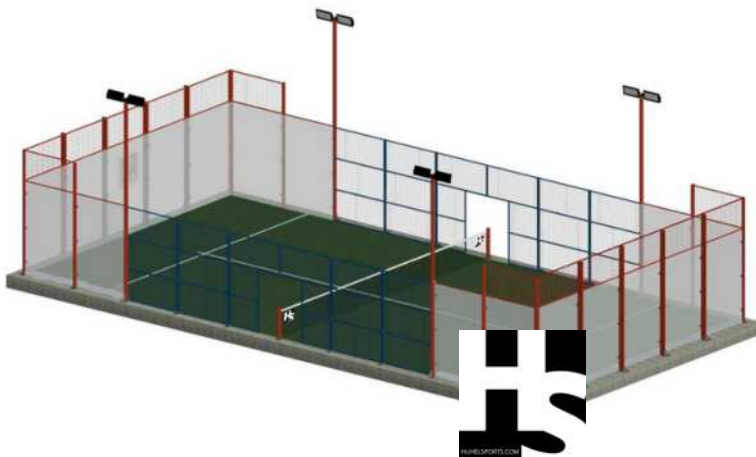


EUROPE COURT

Structural system of aluminum profiles, dimensions of the pillars 1920x45x2 (8 units), 150x45x1.7 (8 units), 115x115x1.7 (4 units), 150x45x1.7 (8 units)

Galvanized steel mounting plates for the securing of the structure and glass, measurements of 300x250x12(8 units), 250x200x12 (8 units), 200x200x12 (4 units) 200x200x12 (8 units)

Structure designed and constructed in accordance with local technical code of building standards



COLISEUM COURT

Anchor plates in galvanized steel for the fastening of the structure and glass, measurements of 450x250x25 (4 units), 200x200x12 (8 units)

Structural system of aluminum profiles, dimensions of the pillars 221x117x3 (4 units) and 150x45x1.7 (8 units)

Top horizontal beam in 281x91 glass bottoms (2 units)

Welded mesh 50x50x4mm

M8 stainless steel screws of type A2 for the fastening of glass panels and meshes

Lighting rods integrated into the structure

Structure designed and constructed in accordance with local technical code of building standards



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TIME TO LOOK BACK

WPT Masters Final

This month saw the World Padel Tour's Masters final take place in Barcelona. It was the last WPT tournament in history so we're going to recap on the previous winners and share the latest victors of this world class event.

2013: Iciar Montes and Ale Salazar / Sanyo Gutierrez and Maxi Sanchez

2014: Sanchez Alayeto Twins / Sanyo Gutierrez and Maxi Sanchez

2015: Marta Marrero and Ale Salazar / J.M Diaz and Maxi Sanchez

2016: Sanchez Alayeto Twins / Paquito Navarro and Sanyo Gutierrez

2017: Sanchez Alayeto Twins / Pablo Lima and Fernando Belasteguin

2018: Marta Marrero and Alejandra Salazar / Pablo Lima and Fernando Belasteguin

2019: Alejandra Salazar and Ari Sanchez / Pablo Lima and Ale Galan

2020: Gemma Triay and Lucia Sainz / Fernando Belasteguin and Agustin Tapia

2021: Ari Sanchez and Paula Josemaria / Juan Lebron and Ale Galan

2022: Gemma Triay and Alejandra Salazar / Juan Lebron and Ale Galan



2023 Winners: World Padel Tour Masters Final

Surprises in the finals of the last WPT Masters Finals



In a thrilling showdown at the World Padel Tour Master Final 2023, the dynamic duo of Paquito Navarro and Fede Chingotto emerged victorious, securing their place in padel history. The Spanish-Argentine pair demonstrated unmatched prowess as they outplayed Juan Lebron and Alejandro Galan in a captivating final, clinching the title with a commanding score of 6-1, 6-4.

Navarro, a seasoned padel professional, showcased his affinity for championship moments by adding the Master Final trophy to his collection. Partnering with Fede Chingotto, they navigated a challenging path to the title, notably overcoming the number one couple in the semifinals. The pair's resilience and strategic brilliance were on full display, breaking their opponents' serves and claiming the golden points with finesse.

This triumph marked a poignant moment for the winning duo, considering that Navarro and Chingotto are set to part ways in 2024. Despite the impending separation, they bid farewell on a triumphant note, savouring the sweetness of victory in the final World Padel Tour Master event.

In another riveting clash, Delfi Brea and Bea Gonzalez etched their names in the annals of padel history by claiming the Master Final title in the women's category. The formidable duo showcased their exceptional skills, overpowering Jessica Castelló and Aranza Osoro with a convincing 6-4, 6-1 victory.

The victory not only marked Brea and Gonzalez's ascension as the latest Master Final winners but also capped off a spectacular end to their season. Ending 2023 with a remarkable seven titles, including the last four consecutive victories, they surpassed Gemma Triay and Marta Ortega to claim the coveted number 2 spot in the rankings.

As the curtain falls on the World Padel Tour Master Final 2023, the padel world eagerly anticipates the next chapter in the sport's unfolding saga. Navarro and Chingotto's triumphant farewell and Brea and Gonzalez's stellar rise have left an indelible mark, setting the stage for an exciting season ahead.





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If you're a pickleball fan, here's a list of some of the competitions you might be interested in, you never know, one might be near you!

2024 RANDERS OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS**EID:** 1322 **PRICE** EUR 30**Organizer:** Kenneth Pedersen**EVENT - TOURNAMENT****Starting:** May 10, 2024 to May 12, 2024**City:** Randers, Denmark**Home Club:** Arena Rander**Registration Deadline:** April 20, 2024 (OPEN)**Tier Level:** 3**International pickleball championships in Rome (Italy) - 3rd edition****EID:** 1261 **PRICE** EUR 42**Organizer:** Marcello Molinari**EVENT - TOURNAMENT****Starting:** May 10, 2024 to May 12, 2024**City:** 00044 Frascati RM, Italia**Home Club:** New Country Club - Pickleballroma**Registration Deadline:** May 05, 2024 (OPEN)**Tier Level:** 3**WPC SERIES - 2024 WPC INDIA (15,000 USD Prize Money)****EID:** 1350 **PRICE** USD 50**Organizer:** Pickleball Global**EVENT - TOURNAMENT****Starting:** May 01, 2024 to May 05, 2024**City:** Bengaluru, Karnataka, India**Home Club:** Bengaluru International Exhibition Centre**Registration Deadline:** March 31, 2024 (OPEN)**Tier Level:** 3**MORE
INFO**

Unleashing the Power of Your Non-Dominant Hand in Pickleball

Pickleball enthusiasts, brace yourselves for a game-changer! Amidst the spins and power plays, we often overlook a key player—the non-dominant hand. Switching your paddle to the "other" hand might seem like a risk, but it's a move that can transform your pickleball game.

Precision takes a backseat as you navigate the court, but hidden within the challenge lies a significant advantage: the development of a potent two-handed backhand.

The power dynamic shifts when your non-dominant hand takes the lead, reshaping your game. Introducing a non-dominant forehand not only boosts power but also brings a refreshing consistency to your backhand shots. This subtle adjustment eliminates the pulling motion linked to the dominant hand, refining your technique and elevating your pickleball skills.

Why bother with the non-dominant hand? Picture those pivotal moments when the ball hovers just out of reach, and a quick hand switch becomes your saving move. With a bit of prior practice, you can turn potential failures into game-saving plays.



Dedicate some time to drills designed for your non-dominant hand, preparing you for unexpected challenges and cultivating an unconventional, formidable playing style.

The overlooked non-dominant hand harbours untapped potential. Embrace this uncharted territory to refine your skills and add a unique dimension to your game. The transformative power of your non-dominant hand might just be the key to unlocking your full potential on the court. So, next time you play, consider the surprising benefits of wielding your non-dominant hand—it could be your ticket to pickleball greatness!



IN OTHER NEWS



Tennis stars Genie Bouchard, Jack Sock, Sam Querrey, and Donald Young are gearing up for their inaugural appearance on the 2024 Carvana PPA Tour at the Hyundai Masters powered by Invited, scheduled to unfold at Mission Hills Country Club in Rancho Mirage, CA, from January 10-14. Sock, having previously participated in the 2023 PPA North Carolina Open where he clinched the Mixed Doubles title alongside World No.1 Anna Leigh Waters, is ready for another challenge. Meanwhile, Querrey is set for his second consecutive appearance at the Masters.

The Hyundai Masters marks the professional pickleball debut for both Genie Bouchard and Donald Young, who are eager to hone their skills and ascend to the pinnacle of the sport.

Sock is slated to engage in mixed doubles with Canadian World No.2 Catherine Parenteau and doubles with Collin Shick. Bouchard, on the other hand, will join forces with Utah native Tyler Loong for the doubles category. Querrey has chosen to team up with his close friend Wes Burrows in doubles and former USC tennis standout Kaitlyn Christian for mixed doubles. Additional partnerships for the event will be unveiled in the lead-up to the tournament.

"I'm so excited to make my PPA Tour debut at the Masters in Palm Springs in January," said Bouchard. "I don't really have any expectations as this will be my first event. I'm training hard and am excited to compete against the best players in the world. This will be a great moment to start my pickleball career."

"Competing in the PPA Tour event in North Carolina last summer was a great experience," said Sock. "I'm excited to play a full schedule of tournaments in 2024 and I'm thrilled to partner with a champion in Catherine Parenteau to play the first event in Palm Springs."

As one of the prestigious "Slams" on the PPA Tour, the Masters holds a distinguished status, offering the most coveted ranking points to players striving to claim the pinnacle in the world of pickleball. The upcoming edition of the Masters, featuring the participation of Genie Bouchard, Jack Sock, Sam Querrey, and Donald Young, alongside the likes of Anna Leigh Waters and the men's World No.1, Ben Johns, promises to be a thrilling kick-off to the 2024 season.

These renowned tennis champions, now venturing into the realm of professional pickleball, will have the opportunity to compete across various categories, including singles, doubles, and mixed doubles. The Masters serves as a crucial battleground for athletes eager to solidify their positions and make strides toward achieving greatness in the dynamic and competitive world of pickleball.

"The 2024 PPA season is set to be the biggest and most exciting year of pro pickleball yet," said PPA Tour founder and CEO Connor Pardoe. "The level of play has never been higher, and we're looking forward to welcoming new talent to the tour. Genie, Jack, Sam and Donald have proven themselves on the tennis court time and time again, and now fans will be able to see them train to challenge the top players in the world on the pickleball court."

Genie Bouchard, a Wimbledon finalist in 2014, achieved a career-high Women's Tennis Association ranking of No.5, making history as the first Canadian to reach the Top 5 in singles. Jack Sock, a four-time Grand Slam champion (3 doubles, 1 mixed doubles), Olympic Doubles Gold, and Mixed Doubles Bronze Medalist, reached No.8 in singles and No.2 in doubles during his tennis prime. Sam Querrey, with a career-high singles ranking of No.11 in 2018, made waves with a run to the Wimbledon semifinals and US Open quarterfinals. Donald Young, a Grand Slam doubles finalist, attained top-50 rankings in both singles and doubles.

Despite the shared skills of hand-eye coordination, touch, and court awareness between tennis and pickleball, the transition for tennis players to pickleball presents challenges. Notably, players often grapple with play around the non-volley zone line (Kitchen Line), involving dinks, volleys, and movement in that area. Success in pickleball requires patience to strategise in dinking while maintaining balance during movement.

The PPA Tour, the pinnacle of professional pickleball, witnesses top players battling weekly to determine the world's best. The Masters, a highlight on the tour, will host Genie Bouchard, Jack Sock, Sam Querrey, and Donald Young. Tickets for the event are available at ppatour.com. Fans can catch the tournament action on FS1, FS2, Tennis Channel, PickleballTV, and the PPA Tour YouTube Channel, with the full broadcast schedule accessible at ppatour.com/watch.

In addition to the professional matches, approximately 1,000 amateur players across various levels and age divisions participate in each PPA Tour stop.

To see more...



Major League Pickleball (MLP by Margaritaville) has unveiled its plans for the 2024 season, mapping out the year-long breakdown by level for its 24 franchises, evenly distributing them between the Premier and Challenger Levels. In a distinctive and innovative approach, MLP utilised a Dutch Auction process to determine the league levels, with the 12 highest bidding teams earning a spot in the Premier Level, while the remaining 12 teams will compete in the Challenger Level for the 2024 season.

The decision-making process through a Dutch Auction reflects the robust commitment and investment from MLP's owners, a distinguished group comprising some of the world's most successful entrepreneurs and business leaders. The growing sponsorship revenue, increasing audience viewership, and escalating franchise values underscore the unwavering dedication of MLP's ownership.

Bruce Popko, MLP Chief Operating Officer, highlighted the significance of the financial commitment from team owners, emphasising its role in fostering collaboration with key stakeholders. He noted, "This financial commitment from team owners is another vital step in the continued collaboration with our key stakeholders, MLP's owners and players, to construct a thriving professional pickleball business for years to come."

Major League Pickleball is witnessing a surge in team valuations, with values reaching eight figures. To sustain this positive trajectory amid the sport's rising popularity and widespread participation, team owners are intensifying their investments in their teams and the league's financial structure. Notably, this includes substantial support for player salaries, ensuring equal pay and playing time for both female and male athletes on coed teams. This strategic investment aims to solidify the league's position and contribute to the sustained growth of professional pickleball.

2024 MLP Premier Teams
Arizona (AZ) Drive
Columbus Sliders
Dallas Pickleball Club
D.C. Pickleball Team
Los Angeles (LA) Mad Drops
New Jersey (NJ) 5s
New York (NY) Hustlers
Orlando Squeeze
Seattle Pioneers
St. Louis Shock
Texas Ranchers
Utah Black Diamonds

As part of the 2024 Major League Pickleball (MLP by Margaritaville) schedule, all teams are slated to engage in up to 40 regular season matches, distributed over eight scheduled regular season events. It's worth noting that individual team schedules may vary across MLP's 15 regular season events, allowing for a diverse and competitive season.

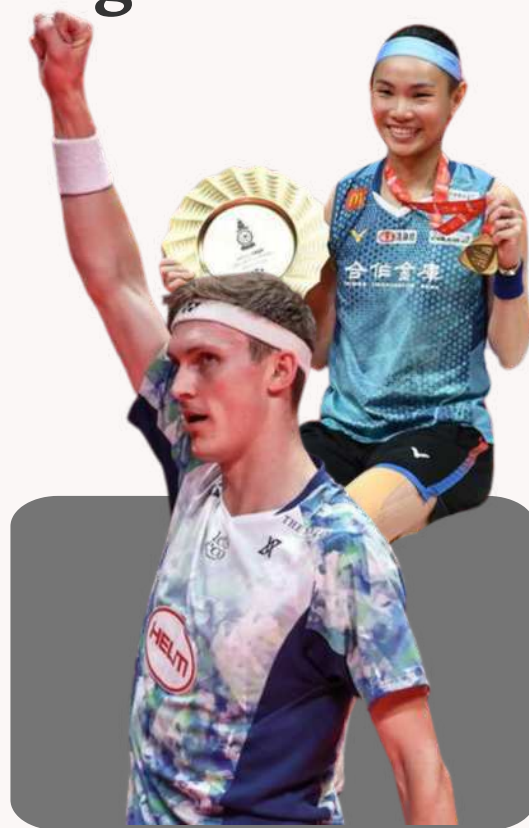
2024 MLP Challenger Teams
Atlanta Bouncers
Austin Pickleballers
Bay Area Breakers
Brooklyn Aces
California BLQK Bears
Chicago Slice
Florida Smash
Frisco Pandas
Las Vegas Night Owls
Miami Pickleball Club
Milwaukee Mashers
SoCal Hard Eights

Additionally, participating teams are set to partake in the Mid-Season Championship, a pivotal event taking place from July 11-14 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This championship serves as a significant highlight within the MLP schedule, offering teams a chance to showcase their skills and compete for mid-season accolades. The inclusion of the Mid-Season Championship adds an extra layer of excitement and competition to the overall MLP calendar for the 2024 season.

Axelsen and Tai Triumph at 2023 BWF World Tour Finals in Hangzhou

Hangzhou, People's Republic of China - In a thrilling culmination to the 2023 BWF World Tour Finals, Olympic champion Viktor Axelsen and Chinese Taipei's Tai Tzu-ying secured the men's and women's singles titles, respectively, in a showcase of exceptional badminton prowess.

Axelsen's dominant performance saw him secure a historic fifth season-ending championship, breaking a tie of four titles with Lee Chong Wei and matching the Malaysian's record of three consecutive crowns. Facing 2018 winner Shi Yuqi, Axelsen exhibited unparalleled strength, triumphing with a commanding 21-11, 21-12 victory in just 49 minutes. The Danish champion showcased his resilience after being tied at 9-9 in the opening game, scoring nine consecutive points to seize control. Axelsen continued his dominance in the second game, pulling clear from an 8-8 tie and winning nine of the next 10 points. His opponent, Shi Yuqi, struggled with numerous errors, ultimately succumbing to Axelsen's precision.



As the final point sealed Axelsen's victory, the crowd erupted in cheers, witnessing yet another chapter in badminton history. The triumphant champion fell to his knees, roaring in celebration before tossing his racket into the stands, a gesture met with enthusiastic approval from the spectators.

In the women's singles final, Tai Tzu-ying orchestrated another remarkable comeback, defeating Carolina Marin 12-21, 21-14, 21-18 in an hour and 13 minutes. Tai, who had already demonstrated her resilience by saving four match points against An Se-young in the semifinals, claimed her fourth BWF season-ending crown.

Marin initially dominated the match, securing the first game in just 21 minutes and taking a 4-1 lead in the second. However, Tai, reminiscent of her previous comeback, skilfully manoeuvred Marin around the court, winning six consecutive points to take control. Despite a high error count from both players in the deciding game, Tai's exceptional drop shot and strategic play allowed her to clinch victory.

The crowd erupted in delight as Tai secured her third championship point, reclaiming the title she last won in 2020. With an 11-11 head-to-head record against Marin, Tai's victory underscored her prowess on the badminton court.



Thrilling Ups and Downs at the 5th Fazza Dubai Para Badminton International 2023

In a tumultuous journey through the 5th Fazza Dubai Para Badminton International 2023, French player Thomas Jakobs has faced both triumphs and challenges alongside his men's doubles partner, David Toupe. Battling a setback earlier in the year due to Toupe's back injury, Jakobs remains undeterred as he navigates the competition, recently emerging victorious against Noor Azwan Noorlan of Malaysia in the Wheelchair WH2 men's singles.

Reflecting on the tournament's tough doubles group rounds against powerhouse teams from China and Korea, Jakobs acknowledges the formidable task ahead as he prepares to face Tokyo 2020 champion Daiki Kajiwarra in the quarterfinals. Despite the hurdles, Jakobs highlights his recent successes, clinching the singles bronze and doubles silver with Toupe at the European Para Games in August. Currently ranking seventh in singles and fourth in doubles in the Race to Paris standings, Jakobs sets his sights on the upcoming world championships in February and the Paris 2024 Paralympics, drawing motivation from the prospect of competing on home ground.

Meanwhile, Martyn Ford of Australia, in the men's singles WH2 category, shares an unexpected journey into badminton after being introduced to the sport by his wheelchair Australian Football League (AFL) companions just a year ago. Despite facing challenges on the court, Ford expresses gratitude for finding a supportive community within the para-badminton circuit. He emphasizes the camaraderie that extends beyond the game, where players, despite being competitors, come together to help and enjoy each other's company.

Switzerland's Cynthia Mathez overcame physical discomfort to advance to the quarterfinals of the women's singles WH1. Dealing with both a shoulder injury and hand pain due to arthritis and ligament damage, Mathez opted for physiotherapy instead of surgery. Her resilience shines through as she looks forward to competing with partner Marc Elmer in the mixed doubles against Manh Giang Hoang and Thi Hong Thao Hoang of Vietnam.



Despite grappling with inner ear problems and the looming threat of recurring issues, Thailand's Sujirat Pookham has fought her way through the competition. Battling imbalance and pain after the Spain tournament in February, Pookham faces setbacks in major tournaments, including the Hangzhou Asian Games. Undeterred, she emerges victorious in the group stage, defeating Auricelia Nunes Evangelista of Brazil, and sets her sights on a quarterfinal clash against Korea's Kwon Hyunah.

Dynamic Duo Triumphs Again: Ponnappa and Crasto Clinch Guwahati Masters Super 100 Title

In a stellar display of skill and determination, the Indian women's doubles pair of Tanisha Crasto and Ashwini Ponnappa emerged victorious at the Guwahati Masters Super 100 tournament, securing their second Super 100 title. The dynamic duo faced off against the formidable Chinese Taipei team of Sung Shuo Yun and Yu Chien Hui, clinching the title in a commanding straight-game victory with a scoreline of 21-13, 21-19.



This triumph comes hot on the heels of their runner-up finish at the Syed Modi International Super 300 tournament in Lucknow, showcasing their resilience and ability to bounce back with a resounding win. The 40-minute final in Guwahati witnessed the second-seeded Indian pair's unwavering focus and skill on the court.



Having bagged their third title of the year, Ponnappa and Crasto showcased their dominance right from the onset, securing an 11-7 advantage at the interval in the opening game and maintaining control throughout. Despite a brief fight-back from their opponents in the second game, the Indian pair held their ground, ultimately sealing the victory with the required two points.

The partnership between 34-year-old Ashwini Ponnappa and 20-year-old Tanisha Crasto, formed in January 2023, has proven to be a winning combination. Their success adds another chapter to India's badminton narrative, with the duo forming an integral part of the country's representation in women's doubles. Notably, they were key members of India's squad at the Asian Games in Hangzhou, China.

Ashwini Ponnappa, a seasoned doubles player with previous successes alongside Jwala Gutta, transitioned smoothly into a new partnership after parting ways with Sikki Reddy in 2022. Joining forces with the young and talented Tanisha Crasto, who initially excelled in mixed doubles, proved to be a strategic move. The duo's collaboration has brought a dynamic dimension to India's women's doubles badminton scene, with victories at the Abu Dhabi Masters Super 100 and Nantes International Challenge preceding their recent triumph in Guwahati.

Ponnappa and Crasto's journey is not just a testament to their individual prowess but also to the strength of their partnership, contributing significantly to India's growing prominence in international badminton. As they continue to etch their names in the annals of the sport, one can only anticipate more victories and accolades for this formidable women's doubles pair.



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