

GRSA INTERNATIONAL ATW MAGAZINE

JUNE 2026

ZVEREV'S REWARD



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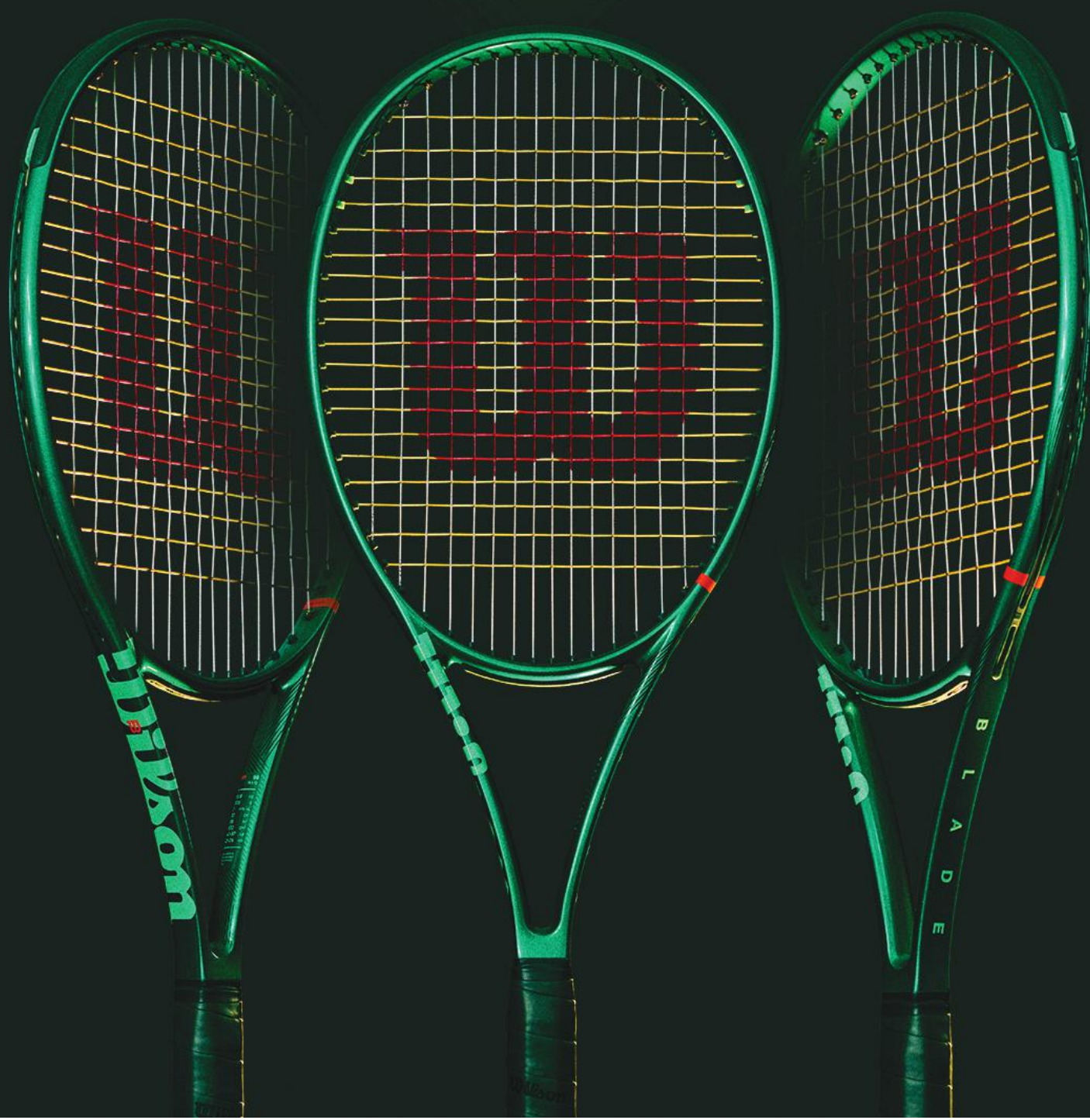


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Zverev's Grand Slam Breakthrough: What Comes Next After Roland Garros?

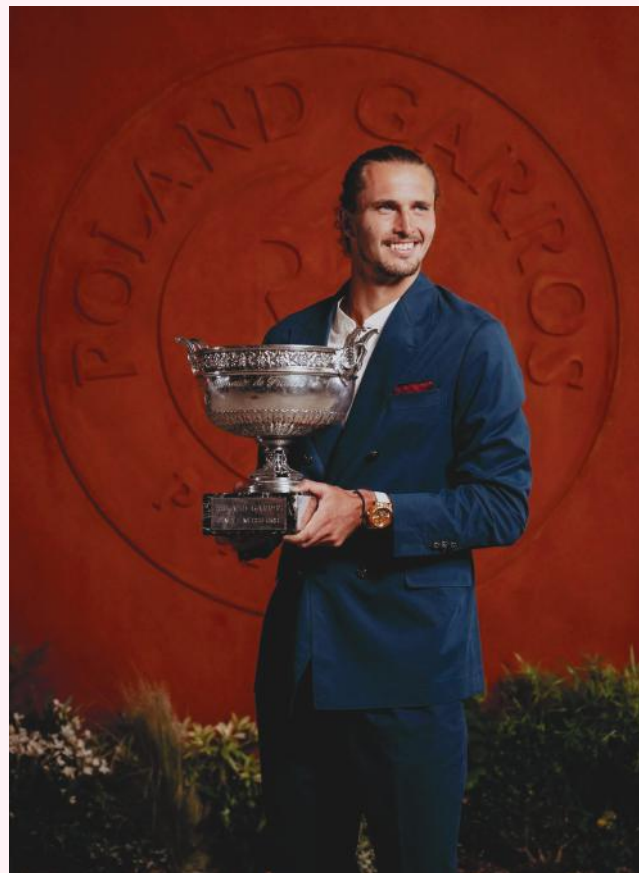
For years, Alexander Zverev carried one of the heaviest labels in men's tennis: world-class talent, but without a Grand Slam title to validate it. That narrative finally came to an end at Roland Garros 2026, where the German defeated Italy's Flavio Cobolli to claim the first major crown of his career.

The victory was more than a trophy. It was the culmination of a journey marked by near-misses, heartbreak and relentless scrutiny. At 29, Zverev has finally crossed the threshold that separates the very good from the truly elite.

The significance of the moment cannot be overstated. Before Paris, Zverev had fallen short in all three of his previous Grand Slam finals. The defeats were particularly painful because two of them slipped agonisingly close to becoming triumphs. He squandered a two-set lead against Dominic Thiem in the 2020 US Open final and came within touching distance of glory before Carlos Alcaraz denied him in the 2024 Roland Garros championship match.

Those disappointments created a question that followed him everywhere. Every major tournament brought renewed discussion about whether he would ever lift one of tennis's biggest prizes. Every press conference seemed to include a variation of the same query.

Now, that conversation is over.



Standing on Court Philippe-Chatrier with the Coupe des Mousquetaires in his hands, Zverev spoke openly about the relief he felt. The pressure, expectations and constant reminders of what he had not yet achieved have finally disappeared. For the first time in years, he can compete without the burden of proving he belongs among the sport's greatest players.

That freedom could make him even more dangerous.

Throughout his career, Zverev has possessed all the tools required to win majors: a formidable serve, exceptional movement for his height, powerful groundstrokes and the ability to thrive in long physical battles. What has often been questioned is not his game, but his ability to deliver in the biggest moments. Roland Garros may have changed that permanently.

The challenge now is determining whether this triumph becomes the start of a new chapter or the crowning achievement of his career.

History offers examples of both paths. Some players capture their first Grand Slam and immediately build on that success, collecting multiple major titles once the psychological barrier has been removed. Others struggle to replicate the intensity and motivation that drove them to their breakthrough moment.



Zverev himself has already hinted at his ambitions. Rather than dwelling on his maiden Grand Slam victory, he has spoken about pursuing the next one. That mindset suggests a player who sees Roland Garros not as the finish line, but as the beginning of something bigger.

However, the road ahead remains demanding. The men's game is packed with elite competitors, led by younger stars such as Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner, who have already established themselves as regular Grand Slam contenders. Maintaining consistency against a new generation hungry for success will be no easy task.

Yet one thing is certain: Alexander Zverev enters the next phase of his career as a different player. The question is no longer whether he can win a Grand Slam.

Now, the question is how many more he can win.

AUGER-ALIASSIME REACHES NEW HEIGHTS WITH CAREER-BEST WORLD NO. 4 RANKING

Felix Auger-Aliassime's impressive Roland Garros campaign has delivered another milestone for Canadian tennis.

After reaching the quarter-finals in Paris for the first time in his career, the 25-year-old has climbed to a new career-high ranking of World No. 4, cementing his place among the sport's elite and further enhancing his growing legacy.

Although his run ended against eventual finalist Flavio Cobolli, the Canadian left the French capital with much more than ranking points. His breakthrough performance on the Paris clay completed a remarkable Grand Slam achievement, making him the first Canadian man in history to reach at least the quarter-finals at all four major championships.

It is a testament to the versatility that has defined Auger-Aliassime's career. From the hard courts of Melbourne and New York to the grass of Wimbledon and now the clay of Roland Garros, he has proven he can compete deep into the second week regardless of surface.

The reward is a rise from World No. 6 to World No. 4, surpassing his previous career-best ranking of No. 5 and placing him alongside some of the biggest names in Canadian tennis history.

Only two other Canadians have ever occupied a Top 4 position in either the ATP or WTA rankings. Milos Raonic climbed to World No. 3 following his memorable run to the Wimbledon final in 2016, while Bianca Andreescu reached World No. 4 after capturing the US Open title in 2019.



Now Auger-Aliassime joins that exclusive company.

A Place Among Canadian Greats

The new ranking places the Montreal-born star level with Andreescu as the second-highest-ranked Canadian player ever, trailing only Raonic's career-high mark of No. 3.

His achievement also strengthens an impressive chapter in Canadian tennis history, with seven players having reached the Top 10 across the ATP and WTA Tours.

Highest-Ranked Canadians in ATP and WTA Rankings History

- No. 3 – Milos Raonic (ATP, 2016)
- No. 4 – Bianca Andreescu (WTA, 2019)
- No. 4 – Felix Auger-Aliassime (ATP, 2026)
- No. 5 – Eugenie Bouchard (WTA, 2014)
- No. 8 – Carling Bassett-Seguso (WTA, 1985)
- No. 9 – Victoria Mboko (WTA, 2026)
- No. 10 – Denis Shapovalov (ATP, 2020)



For a nation once considered an outsider in the tennis world, the list highlights the extraordinary progress Canadian tennis has made over the last two decades.

Eyes on the Next Target

While World No. 4 represents a major breakthrough, Auger-Aliassime still has ground to make up if he hopes to climb further.

The gap between fourth and third remains substantial, with Alexander Zverev currently holding a significant advantage in the ATP rankings. However, Auger-Aliassime's consistent results over the last 12 months suggest there may still be room for further upward movement.

More importantly, his recent performances indicate a player entering the prime years of his career with growing confidence and maturity. Long regarded as one of the most gifted talents of his generation, he is now beginning to pair that talent with the consistency required to challenge for the sport's biggest prizes.

The opportunity to build on his momentum arrives immediately.

With the clay-court season complete, Auger-Aliassime turns his attention to grass, opening his campaign this week at the ATP 250 tournament in 's-Hertogenbosch. Installed as the tournament's top seed, he receives a first-round bye before facing either Hubert Hurkacz or Márton Fucsovics in his opening match.

Fellow Top 10 stars Alex de Minaur and Daniil Medvedev are also in the draw, ensuring a strong field as players begin preparations for Wimbledon.

If his Roland Garros performance is any indication, Auger-Aliassime arrives on grass with more confidence than ever—and a new career-high ranking to prove it.

USTA TARGETS 35 MILLION PLAYERS BY 2035 THROUGH MAJOR COACHING INITIATIVE

Tennis participation in the United States continues to reach record levels. According to figures published by the USTA and the Physical Activity Council, nearly 26 million Americans played tennis in 2024, making it one of the country's fastest-growing participation sports. Rather than simply celebrating that growth, the United States Tennis Association (USTA) has set an ambitious target: increasing participation to 35 million players by 2035.

At the heart of that strategy is USTA Coaching, a standalone organisation launched in 2024 to support coaches at every level of the game. The initiative is designed to provide education, certification, resources and career development opportunities for coaches working in professional, collegiate, community and recreational tennis.

The programme has made an encouraging start. Within its first nine months, USTA Coaching attracted nearly 14,000 members, achieved a reported 30% monthly engagement rate and received more than \$1 million in investment from the USTA. More than 20 dedicated staff members have been assigned to support the initiative as it continues to expand.

The USTA believes that coaches play a critical role in growing participation. While professional players inspire fans to pick up a racket, it is often coaches who determine whether beginners enjoy the sport enough to continue playing. Research across participation sports consistently shows that coaching quality and positive early experiences are important factors in long-term player retention.

The organisation is also working to strengthen coaching as a profession. USTA Coaching offers certification pathways, educational workshops and networking opportunities designed to help coaches develop sustainable careers. Future plans include an online marketplace, a coaching job board, university partnerships and the expansion of the US Open Coaching Conference, which features contributions from leading figures in the sport, including Billie Jean King.

The initiative is strategically important for American tennis. The US Open remains the USTA's largest revenue-generating asset and provides much of the funding that supports the organisation's wider programmes and grassroots development efforts. Increasing participation creates a stronger connection between recreational players, fans and the professional game, helping to secure the sport's future at every level.

Whether the ambitious "35 by 35" target is ultimately achieved remains to be seen. However, the scale of the investment demonstrates a clear commitment to one principle: growing tennis begins not only with elite athletes, but with the coaches introducing the game to the next generation of players.

BEYOND THE RANKINGS: ALI COLLINS AND THE HIDDEN COST OF LIFE ON TOUR

To many aspiring players, professional tennis represents the ultimate dream. Travelling the world, competing at prestigious events and climbing the rankings appear to offer an exciting and rewarding life. Yet, as more former and current players have begun to reveal, the reality behind the scenes can be far more complicated.

Former British professional Ali Collins recently shared the personal story behind her decision to retire from professional tennis at just 25 years old. Her reflections provide a powerful insight into the mental and emotional challenges that often remain invisible behind the results sheet.

Looking back on her career, Collins described how she struggled with anxiety and loneliness despite achieving many of the milestones young players aspire to. The defining moment came during a tournament when she was required to complete a routine anti-doping test. Dehydrated after competition and unable to provide a sample, she began drinking large amounts of water in an effort to finish the process.

What followed was a frightening medical episode. Collins became severely unwell, suffering intense headaches, vomiting and significant physical distress. After undergoing medical examinations, she was informed that she had consumed too much water. Although the immediate health scare eventually passed, the psychological impact lingered.

In the months that followed, Collins experienced severe health anxiety. Panic attacks, breathing difficulties, racing thoughts and constant fear became part of daily life. What initially appeared to be a reaction to one isolated incident gradually revealed something deeper: years of accumulated stress and pressure that had been quietly building throughout her professional career.

Rather than continuing to push through, Collins made the difficult decision to step away from professional tennis and focus on recovery. Through therapy, meditation and significant lifestyle changes, she slowly rebuilt both her physical and mental wellbeing.

Today, her connection to tennis remains strong, but her role within the sport has changed. Instead of pursuing rankings and titles, she now works with players on confidence, emotional regulation and managing anxiety under pressure.

Her story is a timely reminder that mental health challenges do not discriminate based on achievement. Behind every ranking, every trophy and every social media highlight is a human being navigating the demands of elite sport. Collins' journey demonstrates that recognising when to prioritise wellbeing is not a sign of weakness, but often one of the bravest decisions an athlete can make.

For Collins, leaving professional tennis was not the end of her story. It was the beginning of a different chapter—one dedicated to helping others avoid reaching the same breaking point she once faced herself.

COBOLLI CRACKS THE TOP 10 AFTER DREAM ROLAND GARROS BREAKTHROUGH

Flavio Cobolli may have fallen one match short of the Roland Garros title, but the Italian leaves Paris having achieved something equally significant: a place among the world's top 10 players.

The 24-year-old enjoyed the finest fortnight of his career at the French Open, reaching both his first Grand Slam semi-final and final before eventually succumbing to Alexander Zverev in a gripping five-set championship match. While the trophy slipped from his grasp, the rankings reward for his efforts has been substantial.

This week, Cobolli climbs from World No. 14 to World No. 10, securing his Top 10 debut and becoming just the seventh Italian man to reach the ATP elite since the rankings were introduced in 1973.

It is another landmark moment for Italian tennis, which continues to enjoy one of the strongest eras in its history.

Joining an Exclusive Club

Cobolli now takes his place alongside some of the most celebrated names in Italian tennis.

The list began with Roland Garros champion Adriano Panatta, who reached World No. 4 in the 1970s, and has since expanded to include players such as Fabio Fognini, Matteo Berrettini, Lorenzo Musetti and current World No. 1 Jannik Sinner.

Italian Men to Reach the ATP Top 10

Adriano Panatta – Career-high No. 4
Corrado Barazzutti – Career-high No. 7
Fabio Fognini – Career-high No. 9
Matteo Berrettini – Career-high No. 6
Jannik Sinner – Career-high No. 1
Lorenzo Musetti – Career-high No. 5
Flavio Cobolli – Career-high No. 10



Italy's success extends beyond the ATP Tour. On the women's side, Francesca Schiavone, Flavia Pennetta, Roberta Vinci and Jasmine Paolini have all reached the WTA Top 10, underlining the nation's growing influence across professional tennis.

For Cobolli, the achievement places him firmly among the leading figures of a generation that is reshaping the sport.

A New Generation Continues to Rise

Born in 2002, Cobolli becomes only the fifth male player born in 2002 or later to break into the ATP Top 10. The exclusive group also includes Carlos Alcaraz, Holger Rune, Lorenzo Musetti and Ben Shelton.

The milestone highlights both his rapid development and the depth of talent emerging among tennis's younger stars, but ironically, the circumstances surrounding his Top 10 breakthrough were bittersweet.

Cobolli advanced to the Roland Garros final after compatriot Matteo Arnaldi was forced to withdraw from their scheduled semi-final due to illness. Rather than celebrating immediately, the Italian admitted his emotions were mixed.

"When Matteo came to tell me, I was almost in tears," Cobolli revealed afterwards. "I was ready to play, but I felt very sorry for him. At the same time, my team and family reminded me of what we had achieved. Reaching the Top 10 is something we've dreamed about for a long time."

The emotional reaction reflected the close bond shared by many of Italy's leading players, who have collectively helped elevate the country's standing within the sport.

Italian Tennis Enjoys a Parisian Surge

Cobolli was not the only Italian to benefit from a breakthrough fortnight in Paris.

Arnaldi enjoyed the deepest Grand Slam run of his career, reaching the semi-finals and soaring from World No. 104 to No. 34. The leap moves him within touching distance of the career-high ranking of No. 30 he achieved in 2024.

Former Wimbledon finalist Matteo Berrettini also continued his resurgence. After reaching his first Grand Slam quarter-final since 2022, the former World No. 6 climbs from No. 105 to No. 48. The result was especially significant given that Roland Garros 2026 marked his first appearance at the tournament since 2021 following a lengthy spell disrupted by injuries and illness.

Meanwhile, Argentina's Juan Manuel Cerúndolo emerged as one of the tournament's surprise stories. After stunning World No. 1 Jannik Sinner in the second round, he advanced to the fourth round and rises into the Top 50 for the first time, moving from No. 56 to No. 45.

More Than a Ranking

For Cobolli, however, the spotlight remains firmly on a breakthrough that could redefine his career. Just a year ago, he was viewed as a promising talent searching for consistency at the highest level. Today, he is a Grand Slam finalist, a Top 10 player and one of the most exciting figures in men's tennis, where the future leads is still to be seen.

Pliskova's Remarkable Return: From Learning to Walk Again to Wimbledon Hopeful



When Victoria Mboko slipped on the grass at the HSBC Championships and was forced to retire injured, Karolina Pliskova immediately recognised the fear on the teenager's face.

The former World No. 1 has been there herself.

"I felt really bad for her," Pliskova said afterwards. "If she felt something move in the knee, then I think something serious happened."

For Pliskova, those memories remain vivid.

Less than two years ago, her own career appeared to be in jeopardy after suffering a devastating ankle injury just minutes into her second-round match at the 2024 US Open. Initially, the Czech star feared something was broken. The reality was even worse.

All the ligaments and both tendons in her left ankle had ruptured.

"Only the bones were holding it together," she recalled.

What followed was a lengthy and painful recovery. Surgery was required, followed by a second procedure months later after complications developed. At one stage, Pliskova was unable to walk properly and had to rebuild strength and mobility from scratch.

"You forget how to walk," she said. "You lose all the muscles and mobility. The ankle is difficult because your whole body depends on it."

Given the severity of the injury, few would have predicted the success she is enjoying today.

Now 34, Pliskova has quietly put together one of the most impressive comeback stories on the WTA Tour. After beginning the season ranked outside the world's Top 1,000, she is guaranteed to return to the Top 100 following another strong week at Queen's Club.

Quarter-final appearances in Linz, Madrid and Queen's have helped her compile a 16-7 record in 2026, far exceeding the expectations she had during her recovery.

"If you cannot walk, you're not thinking about playing tennis," Pliskova admitted. "My goal was just to get better. Maybe go for a run again or play some padel. Being back in the Top 100 wasn't really on my mind."

The road back was far from straightforward.

An initial attempt to return late last season left her feeling physically and mentally unprepared. Then, just as she planned to restart her career in Brisbane, a minor injury to her other leg disrupted preparations and left her heading into the Australian Open short of match practice.

Yet Melbourne ultimately provided the breakthrough she needed.

Drawn against former US Open champion Sloane Stephens — a player who had beaten her six times in their previous seven meetings — Pliskova feared the worst. Instead, she produced one of her most important victories in years.

**"That first win meant a lot," she said.
"It gave me hope and the joy to
compete again."**



Confidence continued to grow throughout the clay-court season, where victories over Ekaterina Alexandrova, Maria Sakkari and Elise Mertens highlighted that Pliskova still possesses the weapons that once took her to World No. 1 and two Grand Slam finals.

Now the focus shifts to grass, a surface that has long suited her powerful game.

A Wimbledon finalist in 2021, Pliskova believes she could once again become a dangerous opponent at the All England Club.

"If I can get through the first rounds, then I can be dangerous," she said with a smile. "You need confidence, but you also need matches. Right now, I have matches."

After everything she has endured, simply competing again would have been a victory.

Instead, Karolina Pliskova has returned as a genuine contender.

From Dog Concierges to Dog Bans: Tennis' Great Pet Divide

Just days before Wimbledon reinforced its policy of restricting access for pets, Roland Garros highlighted a very different approach to life on tour.

The French Open attracted widespread attention this year after introducing a dedicated dog concierge service for players travelling with their pets. The initiative reflected a growing trend on the professional circuit, where dogs have become increasingly common companions for players navigating the demands of a global tour.

From Aryna Sabalenka's Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Ash, to the small dogs accompanying several other players around the grounds, pets were a visible presence throughout the tournament. Roland Garros even provided official accreditation passes for the dogs, while dedicated staff helped care for them during practice sessions, matches and media commitments.



While the images inevitably generated smiles on social media, the idea reflects a more serious reality. Professional tennis can be a lonely profession, with players spending much of the year travelling away from family and friends. For many athletes, pets provide routine, companionship and emotional support amid the pressures of competition.

The French Open's approach demonstrates how tournaments are increasingly looking beyond the court to improve the player experience. Recovery areas, family facilities, childcare services and now pet care have all become part of the modern tournament landscape.

Of course, not every event shares the same philosophy. Wimbledon has maintained its long-standing position that only service and security dogs are permitted on site, highlighting the contrast between the sport's most traditional championship and one of its most progressive.

Neither approach is necessarily right or wrong. One prioritises heritage and operational simplicity; the other embraces the evolving needs of today's athletes.

What is clear is that dogs have become an increasingly visible part of professional tennis culture. Whether they are carrying their own accreditation at Roland Garros or staying at home during Wimbledon fortnight, tennis' four-legged companions are now very much part of the conversation.

WTA Launches Style Unpacked to Showcase the Personalities Behind the Players

The Women's Tennis Association (WTA) has taken another step into the lifestyle and digital content space with the launch of Style Unpacked, a new athlete-focused short-form series designed to highlight the personalities, fashion choices and individual stories of its players.

Created in partnership with creative agency Run Deep and production company Far Media, the series moves beyond traditional match highlights and on-court performance to explore how players express themselves away from competition. Through conversations centred on style, identity and personal interests, Style Unpacked aims to provide fans with a more intimate look at some of the tour's biggest stars.

The initiative reflects a growing trend across professional sports, where athletes are increasingly viewed not only as competitors but also as cultural influencers. Fashion has become an important platform for self-expression within tennis, with players using their apparel, accessories and personal style to connect with audiences beyond the sport itself.

The first episodes feature WTA players including Camila Osorio and Victoria Mboko, offering insights into their fashion inspirations, routines and personalities away from the court. By focusing on the athletes as individuals rather than solely as competitors, the WTA hopes to strengthen fan engagement and attract new audiences interested in lifestyle, fashion and culture.

The launch of Style Unpacked is part of the WTA's broader digital strategy to expand its reach and create more year-round content. As tennis organisations continue to compete for attention in an increasingly crowded media landscape, initiatives like this demonstrate how the sport is evolving beyond match results to tell richer stories about the athletes who drive it.

For fans, it offers a fresh perspective on the women of the WTA Tour—revealing not just how they play, but who they are.



No Dogs at Wimbledon? Tradition Meets a Changing Tour

Professional tennis has become increasingly pet-friendly in recent years. From Aryna Sabalenka and Mirra Andreeva to Marta Kostyuk and other touring professionals, players are more frequently travelling with their dogs as they navigate the demanding realities of life on the road. At some tournaments, pets have become a familiar sight in player areas, training facilities and hospitality spaces, reflecting a broader shift towards supporting athlete wellbeing.



Wimbledon, however, continues to draw a clear line.

Ahead of this year's Championships, the All England Lawn Tennis Club confirmed that only service dogs and security dogs are permitted on site. Personal pets, regardless of their role as companions, are not allowed within the grounds.

The decision highlights an interesting contrast between Wimbledon and many other events on the professional calendar. While tournaments such as Roland Garros have embraced a more relaxed atmosphere around players' pets, Wimbledon remains firmly committed to its long-established traditions and operational protocols. Given the scale of the event, the volume of spectators and the logistical challenges involved in managing one of the world's most prestigious sporting events, the policy is perhaps not surprising.

Yet the discussion raises a broader question about the modern professional athlete. Today's players are increasingly open about the mental and emotional demands of competing at the highest level. Long periods away from family, constant travel and intense performance pressure have led tournaments to explore new ways of supporting player welfare. For many athletes, pets provide companionship, routine and a sense of normality amid an otherwise highly structured existence.

Wimbledon's position is unlikely to change the travel habits of most players, but it does illustrate the balance every tournament must strike between tradition, practicality and evolving expectations. As tennis continues to modernise, questions like these are becoming more common.

For now, though, one of the sport's oldest institutions has made its stance clear: strawberries and cream are welcome at Wimbledon, but the dogs will have to stay at home.

Two Grand Slams, Two Philosophies, Roland Garros has embraced the growing trend of players travelling with their pets, even introducing dedicated care services. Wimbledon, meanwhile, continues to prioritise tradition and operational simplicity by limiting access to service and security dogs. Neither approach is inherently better, but together they highlight how differently tournaments are choosing to shape the player experience.

Wimbledon Brings a Taste of SW19 to New York's Central Park

For the first time in its history, Wimbledon is taking its famous grass-court experience across the Atlantic, recreating an authentic Wimbledon grass court at Wollman Rink in New York City's Central Park from 26–29 June 2026.

The unique activation will transform part of Manhattan into a temporary slice of SW19, complete with a full-size grass court maintained by Wimbledon's own groundskeeping team, ensuring the playing surface reflects the standards associated with The Championships.

The four-day event will feature the Wimbledon Court Invitational on 27 June, an exhibition showcasing former tennis stars including Andre Agassi, Caroline Wozniacki, James Blake and Eugenie Bouchard. Attendance will be available through a free public ballot.

Fans will also have the rare opportunity to step onto a genuine Wimbledon-style grass court themselves. Public play sessions are scheduled for 28 and 29 June, with places allocated through the ballot system.

Beyond the tennis, organisers are bringing several of Wimbledon's most recognisable traditions to Central Park. Visitors will be able to enjoy strawberries and cream, sip Pimm's, and watch live coverage of Wimbledon matches on large screens throughout the venue.

The event represents another step in Wimbledon's efforts to connect with international audiences, giving New Yorkers a chance to experience the atmosphere, traditions and playing surface that have made The Championships one of the most iconic events in sport.

For tennis fans, opportunities to play on grass are rare. To do so on a court built and maintained to Wimbledon standards, in the heart of New York City, makes this one of the most unusual and memorable tennis experiences of the year.



Aryna Sabalenka Opens Up on Mental Health Struggles After Roland Garros Heartbreak

World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka has spoken candidly about the emotional toll of her shock Roland Garros exit, revealing that she sought professional help in the aftermath of one of the most painful defeats of her career.

The Belarusian star admitted that she visited a psychiatrist following her dramatic quarter-final loss to Russia's Diana Shnaider at Roland Garros 2026, a match in which Sabalenka appeared to be cruising towards victory before suffering a stunning collapse.

Speaking about her recovery, Sabalenka explained:

"I went to see a psychiatrist. I was looking for a way to leave what happened behind. It helped me a lot. I learned a lot about myself. These situations make you stronger. I definitely needed some time to recover after Roland Garros."

The admission comes after an emotionally charged defeat in Paris. Sabalenka led 6-3, 4-1 and appeared firmly in control before Shnaider mounted an extraordinary comeback to win 3-6, 7-5, 6-0. The world No. 1 later described the experience as falling into a "deep, deep, dark hole" mentally.

In her post-match press conference, a visibly devastated Sabalenka struggled to process the loss.

"No thoughts, no emotions. I just want to quit tennis right now."

She later reflected more deeply on what happened:

"I guess mentally I got into a very deep, deep, dark hole over there, and I just couldn't get back mentally on track."

The defeat was particularly difficult because Sabalenka entered Roland Garros as one of the title favourites and was chasing her first French Open crown. Having already won multiple Grand Slam titles and established herself as one of the dominant players on the WTA Tour, the loss represented a rare moment where emotions overwhelmed her on court.

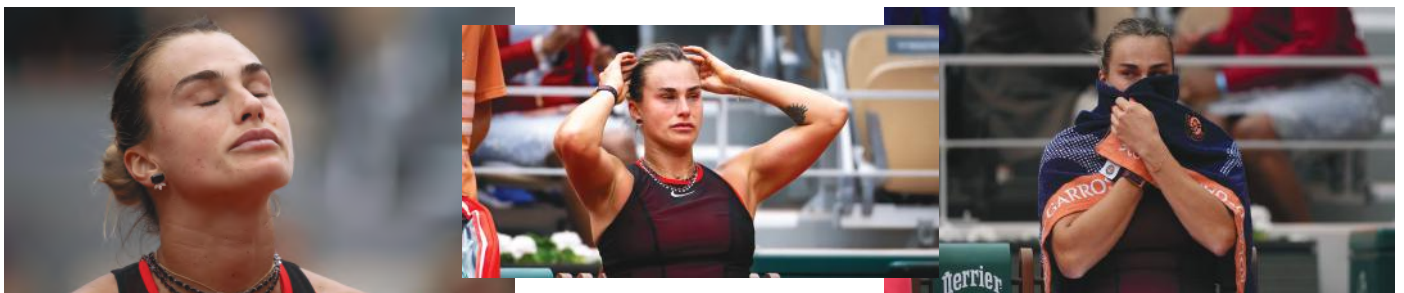


What has resonated with many fans is Sabalenka's willingness to speak openly about seeking help. Mental health has become an increasingly important topic in professional sport, and her comments add to a growing number of elite athletes discussing the psychological challenges that come with competing at the highest level.

Now back on court and looking ahead to the grass-court season, Sabalenka says the experience has ultimately helped her grow.

"I learned a lot about myself. These situations make you stronger."

For one of tennis's fiercest competitors, the road back from Roland Garros was not just physical—it was mental. And by speaking openly about that journey, Sabalenka may have delivered one of the most important messages of her career.



MSV BUSSARD TENNIS STRING FOR ULTIMATE CONTROL.

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

Wilson Turns Heritage into a Brand Experience in Beijing

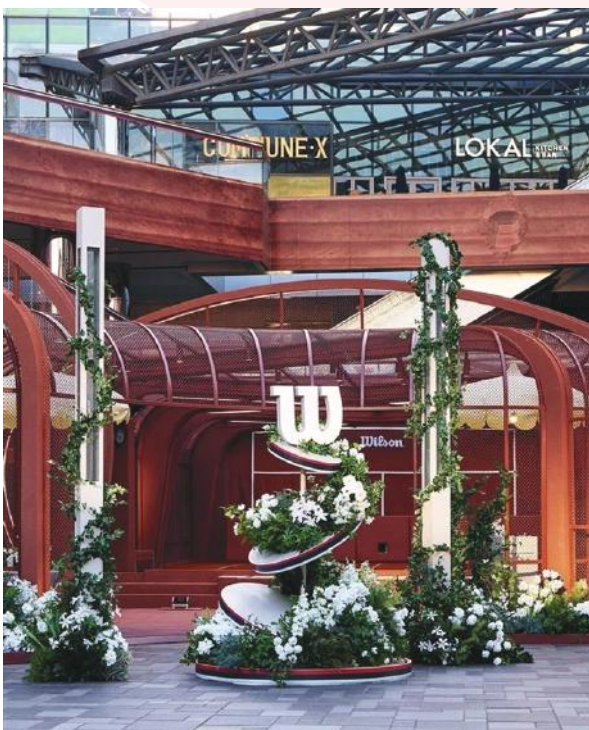
As tennis continues to surge in popularity across China, Wilson has taken a different approach from many brands looking to capitalise on the sport's growing appeal. Rather than focusing solely on new products or athlete endorsements, the iconic American company has chosen to tell a story—its own.

The brand's latest activation, "Classics Accompany Time," is an immersive pop-up experience in Beijing that celebrates Wilson's deep roots in tennis through a carefully curated blend of heritage, retail and culture. Designed to evoke the elegance and romance of tennis's golden eras, the installation showcases how a company with more than a century of sporting history can leverage its past to strengthen its future.

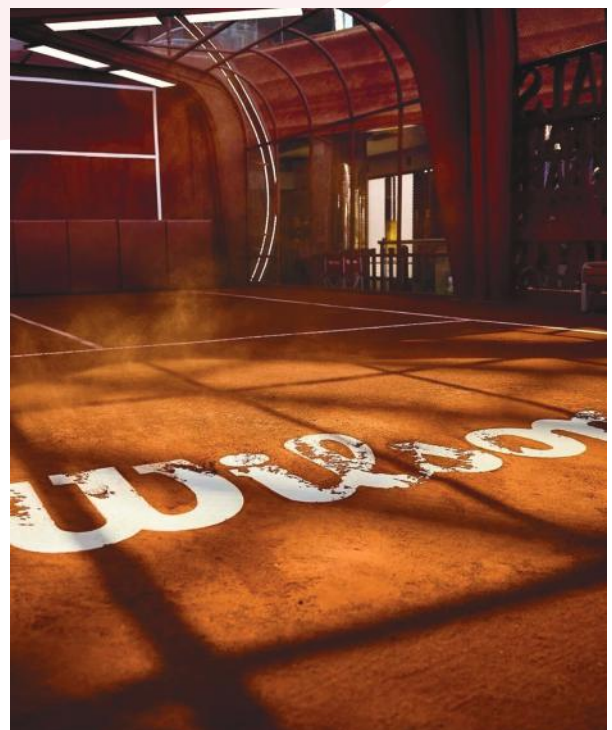
Bringing Tennis Heritage to Life

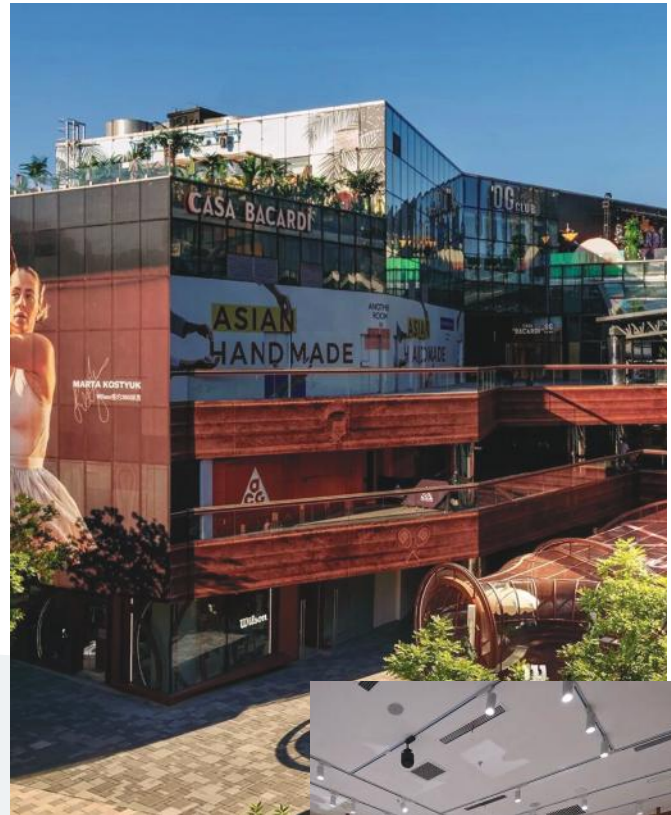
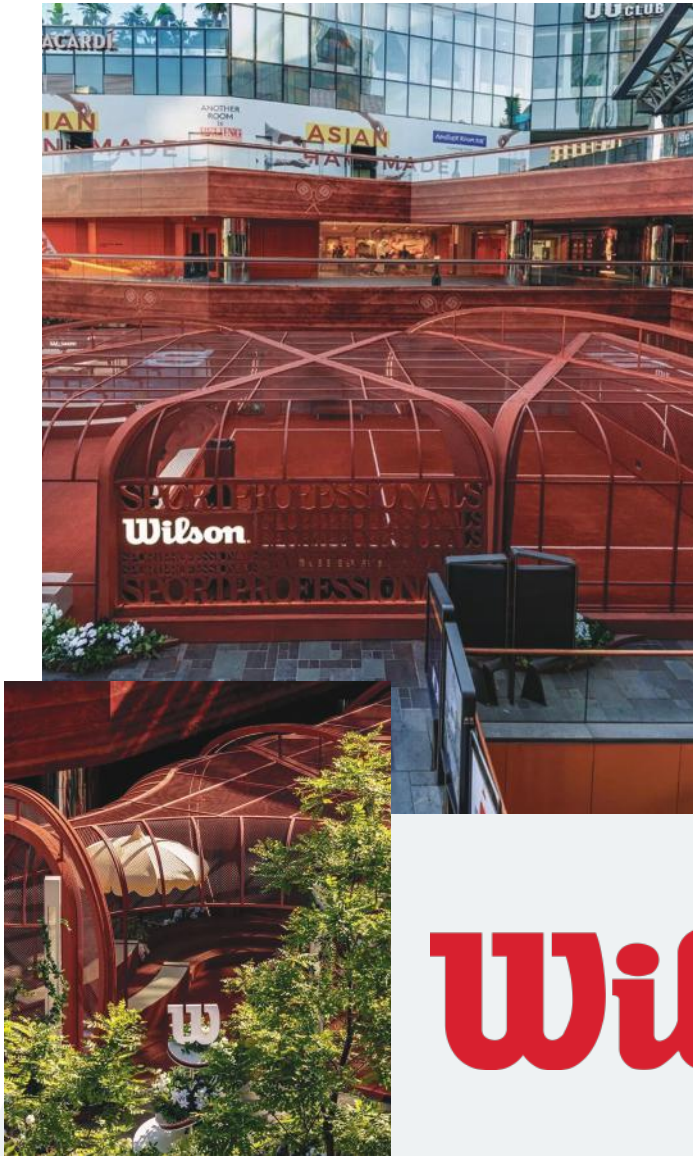
Located within a premium retail destination in Beijing, the activation transforms an entire commercial space into a tribute to classic tennis culture. The design language draws heavily from traditional tennis aesthetics, with clay-court-inspired colours, vintage-inspired architecture, archival racket displays, heritage apparel collections and storytelling elements woven throughout the experience.

Visitors enter through a striking Wilson-branded structure that resembles a grand tennis pavilion, surrounded by floral installations and classic design motifs. Inside, the experience blends museum-style displays with retail opportunities, showcasing the evolution of Wilson's racket technology alongside contemporary collections.



Wilson®





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Perhaps the most eye-catching feature is the venue's visual connection to clay-court tennis. Warm terracotta tones dominate the space, immediately recalling the atmosphere of Roland Garros, while oversized Wilson logos appear as though painted directly onto a clay surface. The effect is both nostalgic and aspirational, transporting visitors into a world where tennis is as much about culture and lifestyle as it is about competition.

A Brand with Genuine Tennis Credentials

Wilson's decision to focus on heritage is particularly significant in today's marketplace. As tennis experiences unprecedented growth in China, many lifestyle and fashion brands have begun incorporating tennis-inspired aesthetics into their collections and marketing campaigns.

Wilson, however, possesses something many newcomers do not: authenticity.

Founded in 1914, the company has been intertwined with the history of tennis for generations. Wilson rackets have been used by some of the sport's greatest champions, including Pete Sampras, Roger Federer, Serena Williams and countless Grand Slam winners. The brand supplies equipment across every level of the game, from grassroots participation to the professional tours.

The Beijing activation serves as a reminder that Wilson is not borrowing from tennis culture—it helped create it.



The Rise of Tennis Lifestyle Marketing

The project reflects a broader trend within the tennis industry. Increasingly, brands are recognising that tennis has evolved beyond a sport and into a cultural movement. Fashion houses, luxury brands and lifestyle companies are embracing tennis-inspired aesthetics, particularly among younger consumers drawn to the sport's blend of tradition, wellness and sophistication.

Major tournaments have adopted similar strategies. Wimbledon, Roland Garros, the US Open and the Australian Open have all expanded beyond competition to create lifestyle experiences, pop-up events and cultural activations designed to engage fans away from the court.

Wilson's Beijing project mirrors this evolution by creating an environment where visitors can experience tennis history rather than simply purchase tennis products.

Why China Matters

The timing of the activation is no coincidence. China has become one of tennis's most important growth markets, driven by increasing participation numbers and the success of Chinese players on the international stage.

The emergence of stars such as Zheng Qinwen, alongside the return of major international tournaments to the region, has fuelled renewed interest in the sport. Tennis is increasingly viewed not only as a recreational activity but also as a lifestyle associated with health, prestige and global culture.

For Wilson, investing in experiential retail allows the brand to connect with this new generation of tennis enthusiasts while reinforcing its status as one of the sport's most established names.

More Than a Pop-Up

What makes "Classics Accompany Time" particularly noteworthy is that it goes beyond traditional retail marketing. The activation functions simultaneously as a showroom, museum, cultural exhibition and brand statement.

In an era when consumers increasingly value authenticity and storytelling, Wilson has chosen to showcase its history rather than simply advertise its products. The result is an experience that feels less like a shop and more like a celebration of tennis itself.

As brands continue competing for relevance within the rapidly growing tennis market, Wilson's Beijing activation demonstrates that sometimes the most powerful marketing tool is not innovation alone—but a genuine legacy built over generations.

Stringer Solutions

with Richard Parnell



An easy tip on how to pass the string through a tight space between the frame and the clamp.

Once you have strung all the center strings going through the bridge, the string starts coming through the grommet at an angle.

When you get to this point just bend the tip slightly so that it isn't straight, this means that when it comes through the grommet and hits the machine clamp, it will just slide and not get stuck against the clamp. Saves a few seconds every time and makes the whole process more fluid.



Any personal tips to help your fellow stringers? Let us know and get them published in the Stringer Solutions part of the **GRSA ATW Magazine**.

Markéta Vondroušová and the grey area between rules, fear and humanity

Markéta Vondroušová has spent much of her career proving that tennis rarely follows a straight line. In 2019, she reached the Roland-Garros final as a teenager. In 2021, she won Olympic silver in Tokyo. In 2023, she became the first unseeded woman to win the Wimbledon singles title. Now, at 26, her career has entered a very different chapter.

The International Tennis Integrity Agency has confirmed that Vondroušová has been suspended for four years after refusing an anti-doping test during an out-of-competition test attempt at her home at around 8pm on 3 December 2025. An independent tribunal ruled that there was “no compelling justification” for the refusal. Her suspension runs until 21 June 2030, and during that time she cannot play in, coach at, or attend events organised or sanctioned by the ITF, WTA, ATP, the Grand Slams or any national association. She has the right to appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

It is important to be clear: this was not a positive doping test. The case centres on refusal to provide a sample. Under anti-doping rules, refusing a test carries a starting-point sanction equivalent to a positive test, because the system cannot allow athletes to avoid a potentially worse outcome simply by declining to be tested.



Vondroušová, however, has strongly rejected any suggestion that she doped. In an emotional statement posted on Instagram, she wrote: “I have never doped. I have never had a positive test.” She added that throughout her career she had undergone “countless anti-doping controls” and had always stepped onto court “with a clear conscience”. According to her statement, she was tested again three days after the incident and the result was negative.

Her words also reveal the human cost behind the legal language. She described the previous seven months as “the hardest of my life”, saying they had been filled with uncertainty, fear and exhaustion. She wrote that the process had taken away her “joy”, her “confidence” and the sense of security she once had. “For the first time in my life, I do not have a plan,” she said.

During the hearing, Vondroušová argued that stress, poor mental health and concerns for her safety had affected her decision-making. Earlier in the process, she also referenced the 2016 attack on fellow Czech player Petra Kvitová, who was injured when an intruder entered her home. The tribunal considered Vondroušová's explanations, along with testimony from the Doping Control Officer, but ultimately found they did not justify the refusal.



That is where this case becomes bigger than one player. Anti-doping systems depend on surprise testing. Without it, clean sport becomes harder to protect. Players know they can be tested at any time, including outside their allocated one-hour whereabouts window. But this case also raises uncomfortable questions about how those systems operate when they enter an athlete's private space, late in the evening, and collide with fear, anxiety and personal safety.

The rules are clear. The consequences are severe. But Vondroušová's statement is a reminder that athletes are not simply names on a sanctions list. They are people living under constant scrutiny, pressure and control.

Whatever happens next, the case will remain one of the most difficult and thought-provoking integrity stories tennis has faced: a collision between the need to protect clean competition and the need to preserve humanity within the systems built to police it.

Roland Garros Comes to the Heart of Paris

While the world's best players battled for Grand Slam glory at Roland Garros, tennis fans in Paris were given the opportunity to experience the magic of the tournament in a very different setting. In one of the most creative activations of this year's French Open, long-time tournament partner Perrier transformed the historic Cour de la Monnaie at the Monnaie de Paris into a temporary clay-court tennis venue.

Located on the banks of the Seine, just a few kilometres from Roland Garros itself, the Monnaie de Paris is France's oldest institution and has produced the nation's coinage since 864. For one evening, however, the centuries-old courtyard exchanged history for sport as a full-size clay court was installed within the magnificent architecture of the landmark building.

The event brought together tennis, music, fashion and Parisian culture in a celebration of Roland Garros beyond the tournament grounds. Former French star Jo-Wilfried Tsonga took to the court alongside a number of well-known figures from sport, entertainment and fashion, while guests enjoyed an atmosphere that blended exhibition tennis with a stylish summer soirée. Music producer and DJ Bob Sinclar provided the soundtrack, turning the venue into one of the most talked-about off-site events of the tournament fortnight.

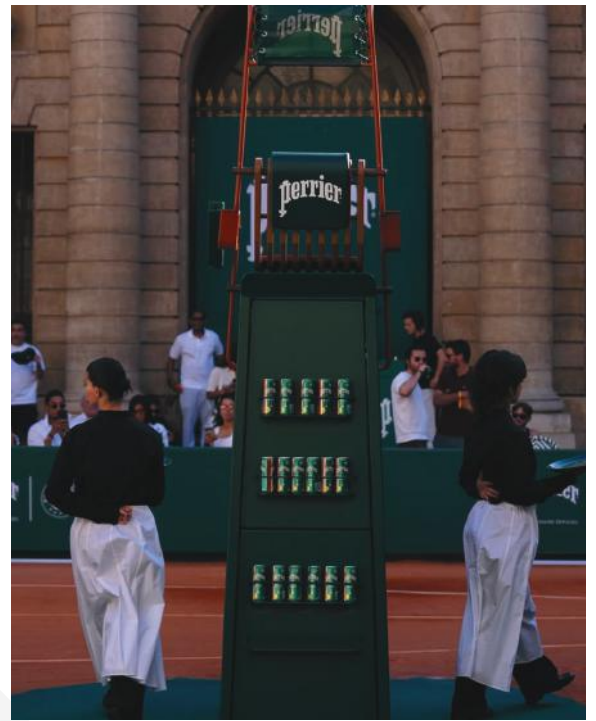
The transformation was striking. Clay, court markings, umpire's chair, sponsor branding and courtside seating recreated the unmistakable aesthetic of Roland Garros within one of Paris's most iconic courtyards. The result was a venue that felt simultaneously historic and contemporary, highlighting the growing trend of tennis tournaments extending their presence beyond the stadium gates and into the wider city.



Roland Garros Beyond Roland Garros

The Monnaie de Paris activation was far from the only example of the French Open reaching beyond its traditional home.

Over recent years, Roland Garros has increasingly embraced city-wide experiences designed to bring tennis closer to the public. Pop-up courts have appeared in some unexpected locations, including temporary courts installed beneath the Eiffel Tower and on public squares throughout Paris. These projects allow thousands of fans to engage with the sport without needing a tournament ticket.



The tournament has also expanded its fan zones and public viewing areas across the city, offering live match screenings, interactive activities and coaching experiences. During the Olympic Games in Paris in 2024, Roland Garros itself became part of a wider sporting showcase as it hosted the Olympic tennis competition, introducing the famous clay courts to a broader global audience.

Sponsors have played a significant role in these initiatives. Perrier, one of Roland Garros' longest-standing partners, has regularly created immersive experiences that combine the elegance of French culture with the energy of elite sport. The Monnaie de Paris project was perhaps the most ambitious example yet, transforming a national landmark into a temporary tennis destination.

A New Era of Tennis Experiences

Modern sporting events are no longer confined to the competition venue. Grand Slam tournaments increasingly seek ways to connect with fans through lifestyle, entertainment and cultural experiences that extend far beyond the matches themselves.

The Monnaie de Paris installation demonstrated how Roland Garros has embraced this evolution. By bringing a clay court into the heart of the city, organisers and partners created an event that celebrated not only tennis, but also Paris itself.

For one evening, the spirit of Roland Garros left Porte d'Auteuil and crossed the Seine. The result was a unique blend of sport, history and culture that perfectly captured the character of the French Open and the city that hosts it.



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

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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



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Parnell Media

Parnell Media is a UK based award-winning creative agency, helping organisations communicate, engage and grow through strategic content, video production, photography and drone services. Founded by Alex Parnell, the agency works with clients across the UK and internationally, delivering creative solutions that combine compelling storytelling with commercial impact.

Specialising in the construction, engineering, manufacturing, technology and corporate sectors, Parnell Media supports businesses with everything from brand storytelling and social media campaigns to event coverage, aerial content, corporate communications and marketing assets. The agency has delivered projects throughout the UK, Europe, North America and beyond, partnering with organisations ranging from ambitious local businesses to global brands. Parnell Media has also produced televised content for major broadcasters and retailers, including Channel 5 and QVC.





By blending creativity, technical expertise and a deep understanding of client objectives, Parnell Media creates content that not only looks exceptional but drives engagement, strengthens brands and delivers measurable results. Recognised through industry awards and trusted by clients worldwide, the agency prides itself on building long-term partnerships and helping organisations tell their stories in a way that resonates with their audiences, wherever they are in the world.



After sharing such an unforgettable experience at last year's GRSA International Conference, we are incredibly excited to announce our 2026 event.

From November 12th to 15th, the GRSA international community will come together once again – this time at the stunning Sol Marbella Estepona Atalaya Park in Málaga, Southern Spain.

The friendships, energy, learning, and sense of community that made our previous conferences so special are exactly what we hope to continue building together this year.

It's an amazing opportunity to meet new people, learn from some of the best stringers in the industry, connect with market leading brands, enjoy beautiful surroundings, and take part in some very special team building activities and events.

This year's conference will feature:

- Expanded workshops and practical demonstrations
- International networking opportunities
- New guest speakers and industry collaborations
- Evening entertainment and social experiences
- Tournament activities and hands-on sessions
- Exclusive GRSA surprises throughout the weekend



We encourage everyone to reserve accommodation early using our dedicated hotel booking link, the exclusive GRSA room rates are only available until July 15th, 2026 or until the allocated rooms sell out.

Over the past few years, this conference has become far more than simply an industry event. It has become an annual opportunity for people from around the world to reconnect, exchange knowledge, support one another, and celebrate the incredible international stringing community we continue to build together.



Book your conference place by clicking the link below!

CONFERENCE BOOKING

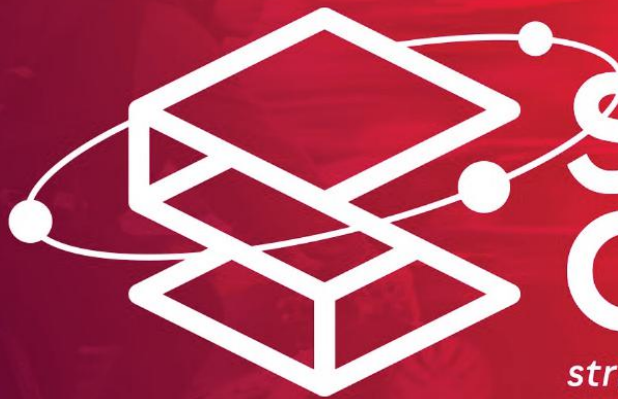
Estepona is a resort town on the Costa del Sol in southern Spain. A palm-lined promenade, the Paseo Marítimo, runs next to the Playa de la Rada beach. Nearby are the restaurants and water sports facilities of Puerto Deportivo, plus a fishing port and the cove of Playa del Cristo. The whitewashed old town centers on the flower-filled square of Plaza de las Flores, home to the eclectic artworks of the Colección Garó.

Estepona is famous for beautifully preserving its authentic Andalusian charm. Known as the “Garden of the Costa del Sol,” it draws visitors and residents with its pristine Blue Flag beaches, exceptional gastronomy, and mild year-round climate.

Join us in this beautiful Place, close to Marbella, and the heart of the Costa Del Sol, it's the perfect setting!

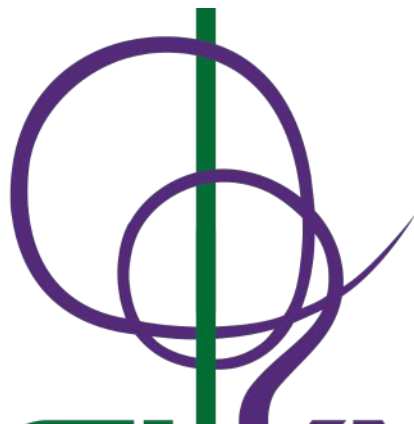
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NICK DOWN

TALKS

Unsquashable Double String Power is the subject of this month's addition to the list of Non-Standard Rackets.

Unsquashable has been around for a long time. You can still get DSP rackets in a few places, but not from Unsquashable itself, because it is discontinued. There are some other models from Unsquashable on the list of non-standard rackets, that are more recent and in the current range.

The DSP models number at least 5 or 6 and are headed up by the DSP4500, which I have used for this article. The number of strings can vary, but this one is 16/19, but there are insufficient holes for knots to opt for 2 pieces of string, so I have a 1 piece example, using Unsquashable Tour-Tec Pro 1.18 string.

The Brand Unsquashable has long been associated with Jahangir Khan, believed by many to have been the greatest player of all time. His run of 555 wins is in the Guinness Book of Records and surpasses all sports. Apparently, he has owned Unsquashable at some point in the past but it is now UK based near Manchester, with Jahangir as an ambassador of the brand.



The DSP4500 starts and finishes the mains at the head, I have designated the left side as the short side. The top two crosses are off the short side and the rest of the crosses are off the long side, starting at the 3rd cross and finishing with a hard weave at the throat.



Next Month:
Unsquashable Syn-Tec Pro.



Nick's Nugget

Use a starting clamp as a bridging tool, whenever you find the string won't reach the tensioner.

Mains

LH1 to LT1LOW

LT1LOW to LT1HIGH

LT1HIGH to LH2.

RH1 to RT1HIGH

RT1HIGH to RT1LOW

RT1LOW to RH2

RH2 to RH3

RH3 to RT2HIGH

RT2HIGH to RT2LOW

RT2LOW to RH4.

LH2 to LH3

LH3 to LT2LOW

LT2LOW to LT2HIGH

LT2HIGH to LH4

LH4 to LH5

LH5 to LT3

LT3 to LT4

LT4 to LH6.

RH4 to RH5

RH5 to RT3

RT3 to RT4

RT4 to RH6

RH6 to RH8

RH8 to RT5

RT5 to RT7

RT7 to RH10.

LH6 to LH8

LH8 to LT5

LT5 to LT7

LT7 to LH10

LH10 to LH9

LH9 to RH9

RH9 to RH7

RH7 to LH7

LH7 to LH6 tie off.

RH10 to RH11(3rd Cross)

A further 16 crosses

Tie-off at LT5.

There must be a hard weave at the throat.



Shameena Riaz Earns Asian Games Berth, Following Family Legacy in Japan

For Shameena Riaz, securing a place at the Asian Games was about more than just qualification — it was about continuing a proud sporting family tradition.

The 20-year-old Tamil Nadu squash player clinched the final spot in India's women's squad after Akanksha Salunkhe was forced to retire injured during their decisive playoff match. Salunkhe conceded while trailing 8-9 in the opening game, handing Shameena a coveted place on the team.

What makes the achievement even more meaningful is the location of this year's Asian Games. The event will be staged in Japan, the same country where her father, former India hockey star Mohammed Riaz, made his own Asian Games debut in 1994. A two-time Asian Games medallist, Mohammed's journey has long served as an inspiration for his daughter.

"I have always dreamed of playing in the Asian Games," Shameena said after sealing qualification. "There was pressure because it was a do-or-die match. I spoke with my coaches, worked on staying calm, and focused on what mattered most — winning."

The emotional significance of the moment was evident immediately after the match. Shameena embraced her father and shared a simple but powerful message: "I have done it."

Reflecting on the achievement, she added: "He has played in the Asian Games, and now I am going to play in the same event in the same country. It is a very emotional moment."





India Finalises Squash Squad

The men's team was also completed on Monday, with Velavan Senthilkumar and Suraj Chand earning the remaining places in the squad.

In the women's section, veteran Joshna Chinappa and Tanvi Khanna joined Shameena on the final roster.

Earlier qualifiers included Abhay Singh, Veer Chotrani and Anahat Singh, who secured their places through their higher world rankings. Abhay and Veer will represent India in the men's singles competition, while Anahat and Tanvi are set to compete in the women's singles draw.

For the mixed doubles events, India will field the pairings of Velavan Senthilkumar and Joshna Chinappa, alongside Suraj Chand and Shameena Riaz.

Preparations Intensify

With the squad now confirmed, the Squash Rackets Federation of India is stepping up preparations for the Games. A national training camp is scheduled from 1-8 August, and officials are planning to bring in three top-35 international players as sparring partners. The federation is also looking to appoint a foreign coach to strengthen the team's preparations ahead of the continental showpiece.

Did You Know?

Mohammed Riaz was a key member of India's hockey setup during the 1990s and won two Asian Games medals. Nearly three decades later, his daughter will represent India at the same multi-sport event in the very country where his Asian Games journey began – a rare father-daughter sporting connection on the international stage.

Princeton Women Set Sights on Another Title Defence in 2026-27

Fresh from capturing both the Ivy League championship and the inaugural Ivy League Tournament crown, Princeton University's women's squash team has unveiled a demanding 2026-27 schedule as it looks to extend its dominance on the collegiate stage.

The Tigers will contest 13 regular-season matches, compete in the CSA Ramsay Cup Individual National Championships in New York for a third consecutive year, and enjoy home-court advantage when the CSA Team Championships return to Princeton for the first time since 2017.

Championship Events Return to Familiar Ground

The collegiate calendar continues to evolve. The Ivy League Tournament, introduced last season and won by Princeton as the top seed, will now be hosted by the institution whose men's team earns the No. 1 seed. Meanwhile, the CSA Team Championships will leave Philadelphia's Arlen Specter US Squash Center after a four-year stay and return to campus venues, with Princeton selected as the 2027 host.

A Schedule Packed with Elite Opposition

Princeton's schedule once again reflects its position among the nation's elite. The Tigers will face all 10 of the other teams that finished inside the final CSA top 11 rankings last season.

The campaign opens at home on 21-22 November when Drexel and Tufts — ranked ninth and 11th respectively last season — visit the Racquet and Recreation Fieldhouse. Those fixtures begin a stretch of nine home matches.

One of the season's marquee fixtures arrives on 31 January when Princeton travels to Penn in a rematch of the 2026 CSA Howe Cup final. The Ivy League regular season concludes on 14 February at Columbia before Stanford visits Princeton a day later for the final regular-season contest.

Star-Studded Line-Up Returns

Leading the way is Zeina Zein, the reigning two-time Ramsay Cup individual national champion, who enters her senior year as one of collegiate squash's most decorated players. She is joined by fellow senior Emma Trauber, a three-time All-American, and rising sophomore Alex Jaffe, the 2026 Ivy League Rookie of the Year.

The Tigers also welcome back seven of the nine players who formed the core of last season's starting line-up, including Sam Jaffe, Caroline Eielson, Hermione Cao and Sonya Sasson.

With experience, depth and championship pedigree throughout the squad, Princeton enters the new season as one of the favourites not only to retain its Ivy League titles but also to challenge once again for national honours.

Orfi Makes History as Youngest-Ever British Open Champion

Amina Orfi's remarkable rise continued in Birmingham as the Egyptian teenager etched her name into squash history, becoming the youngest women's British Open champion ever at just 18 years old.



The prodigious talent overturned a game deficit to defeat fellow Egyptian and former World No.1 Nour ElSherbini 7-11, 11-8, 11-5, 11-8 in a captivating final at the Rep Theatre, securing one of the sport's most prestigious titles.

In doing so, Orfi erased a record that had stood for 94 years. The previous mark belonged to England's Susan Noel, who was 19 years and eight months old when she claimed the British Open crown in 1932.

The victory caps a sensational period for Orfi, who only last month became the youngest women's World Champion after also defeating ElSherbini. With back-to-back triumphs on the sport's biggest stages, the teenager is rapidly establishing herself as one of squash's most exciting stars.

"It feels amazing," said Orfi after lifting the trophy. "To win these two titles back-to-back after the World Championships is very special. I was very tired coming into the final, but it was a great match."

Marathon Effort

Orfi's route to the title was anything but straightforward. Less than 24 hours before the final, she had survived an epic 110-minute semi-final battle against top seed and World No.1 Hania El Hammamy.

The gruelling encounter became the longest women's match in British Open history and the joint fourth-longest women's match ever recorded, underlining the physical and mental resilience required for Orfi's championship run.

Did You Know?

Orfi's British Open triumph means she now holds both the World Championship and British Open titles before her 19th birthday — a feat few players in squash history can match.

Padel Marks Olympic Day with Global Growth and a Clear Vision for the Future



As the sporting world celebrates Olympic Day, the International Padel Federation (FIP) is highlighting a remarkable period of expansion that has transformed padel into one of the fastest-growing and most inclusive sports on the planet.

Today, padel is played by an estimated 38 million people across 178 countries and territories. Supported by more than 85,000 courts and 27,000 clubs worldwide, the sport now boasts 100 national federations affiliated to the FIP, underlining its growing international influence.

A Permanent Presence on the Multi-Sport Stage

Padel's development is no longer measured solely by participation figures. Its sporting credibility has been reinforced through inclusion in many of the world's leading multi-sport events.

The sport now features on the official programmes of the European Games, Asian Games, South American Games, Mediterranean Games, African Games and FISU University Championships, demonstrating its ability to integrate seamlessly into major international competitions.

Setting Standards for Equality

One of padel's strongest success stories is its commitment to inclusivity.

Women account for almost half of all players globally, making padel one of the most balanced sports in terms of participation. At elite level, the FIP promotes equality through combined events, equal prize money and comparable media visibility for men's and women's competitions.

The federation's investment in education is equally important. Through the FIP Academy, young players, coaches and officials benefit from structured development programmes designed to support the sport's long-term growth.

Built for Modern Cities

As international federations increasingly focus on sustainability, padel offers practical advantages that few sports can match.

Courts can be constructed quickly, dismantled efficiently and transported for reuse at multiple venues. This flexibility has enabled the sport to create spectacular settings in city centres, indoor arenas, coastal locations and even floating platforms.

The ability to adapt to different environments while limiting infrastructure demands makes padel particularly attractive for modern host cities.

A Competitive Pathway for Every Generation

More than 700 tournaments are organised globally through a structured pyramid that includes Premier Padel, the CUPRA FIP Tour and FIP Beyond, a programme created for amateur competitors.

Youth development remains a central priority. The FIP Promises Tour is expected to stage 160 tournaments worldwide during 2026. In the first half of the season alone, 4,750 junior players competed across Under-12, Under-14, Under-16 and Under-18 categories, with participation expected to reach between 8,000 and 9,000 by year's end.

The FIP Ranking now features more than 12,000 players representing over 120 nations who have competed in official tournaments during the past two years.

Expanding Reach Through Media and Digital Platforms

Padel's rise is being fuelled not only by participation but also by unprecedented visibility.

Tournament broadcasts during 2026 are expected to reach audiences in more than 240 countries, with global viewership surpassing 100 million people.

Current projections indicate that the official FIP website will attract approximately 4.5 million users and generate 70 million page views by the end of the year. Across social media, engagement continues to accelerate, with annual totals forecast to reach 500 million Instagram impressions and significant growth across all major platforms.

These figures have already positioned the FIP among the most-followed international sports federations on Instagram.

Chasing the Olympic Dream

For the global padel community, Olympic Day represents more than a celebration of sport. It serves as a reminder of how far the discipline has progressed in a relatively short period.

With growing participation, expanding infrastructure, strong commitments to equality and sustainability, and an increasingly global audience, padel continues to strengthen its position within the international sporting landscape.

For the FIP and its national federations, the journey continues — driven by the ambition of one day seeing padel take its place on the Olympic stage.

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.

RAVENNA OPEN PICKLEBALL**EID:** 2413 EUR 30**Organizer:** Fabiano Borghesi**EVENT - TOURNAMENT****Starting:** July 31, 2026 to August 02, 2026**City:** Casal Borsetti, RA, Italia56**Tournament Venue:** Casal B Sport**Registration Deadline:** July 27, 2026 (OPEN)**Tier Level:** 3**WPC-HATYAI****EID:** 2439 THB 1000**Organizer:** WPC TEAM**EVENT - TOURNAMENT****Starting:** August 21, 2026 to August 23, 2026**City:** Hat Yai, Hat Yai District, Songkhla, Thailand56**Tournament Venue:** Piqqa Pickleball**Registration Deadline:** August 08, 2026 (OPEN)**Tier Level:** 3**WPC SERIES - MALAYSIA****EID:** 2458 MYR 218**Organizer:** WPC Malaysia**EVENT - TOURNAMENT****Starting:** August 27, 2026 to August 30, 2026**City:** Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia56**Tournament Venue:** 91 Sports Arena**Registration Deadline:** August 20, 2026 (OPEN)**Tier Level:** 4**MORE
INFO**

CityPickle Returns to Hudson Yards as Urban Pickleball Continues Its Rise

Pickleball's remarkable growth story has found one of its most iconic homes once again. CityPickle, the urban pickleball concept that has become synonymous with bringing the sport into New York City's most recognisable locations, has returned to Hudson Yards for its fifth season.

Set against the dramatic backdrop of Manhattan's modern skyline, including the striking Vessel structure, the seasonal installation transforms premium urban space into a vibrant pickleball destination. The courts officially reopened on June 1, offering daily court bookings, coaching programmes, clinics and open-play sessions for players of all skill levels.

Pickleball in the Heart of Manhattan

What makes the Hudson Yards location unique is its ability to blend sport, entertainment and city life. Rather than being confined to traditional sports clubs, CityPickle places pickleball directly into one of New York's busiest commercial and cultural districts, making the sport highly visible and accessible to residents, office workers and tourists alike.

The venue features multiple courts, organised programming and social events designed to appeal both to experienced players and newcomers discovering the game for the first time. Free court access during selected hours further lowers the barrier to entry, helping introduce even more people to the sport.

The Urban Sports Revolution

CityPickle's success reflects a wider trend in recreational sport. As cities become increasingly crowded and traditional sports facilities harder to access, operators are finding creative ways to transform underutilised urban spaces into sporting destinations.

From rooftop padel courts and pop-up tennis installations to temporary basketball venues and city-centre running events, sport is moving beyond dedicated facilities and becoming integrated into everyday urban life. CityPickle has been one of the pioneers of this movement, demonstrating how pickleball's compact court dimensions make it particularly well suited to unconventional locations.

Why Pickleball Keeps Growing

Few sports have experienced growth comparable to pickleball in recent years. Combining elements of tennis, badminton and table tennis, the game is easy to learn, highly social and accessible to players of all ages and abilities.

While the sport first exploded in popularity across the United States, it has since expanded internationally, attracting investment from professional athletes, major brands and sports entrepreneurs. Dedicated facilities continue to open around the world, while professional tours and televised events have helped increase visibility.

For many participants, however, the greatest appeal remains its community aspect. Pickleball encourages social interaction in a way few sports can match, making it particularly attractive in urban environments where people are increasingly seeking shared recreational experiences.

More Than Just Courts

CityPickle's Hudson Yards operation represents more than simply a place to play. It has evolved into a lifestyle destination, combining sport with social gatherings, coaching, events and premium hospitality experiences.

The partnership with Atlantis Paradise Island Bahamas further reinforces this positioning, linking the sport to leisure, travel and lifestyle branding rather than purely athletic competition.

As pickleball continues its expansion, installations like CityPickle demonstrate how the sport is reshaping perceptions of urban recreation. By bringing courts into the heart of one of the world's most dynamic cities, CityPickle has shown that modern sport can thrive not only in dedicated venues but also in the spaces where people live, work and socialise.

With its fifth season now underway, Hudson Yards once again becomes a showcase for one of the fastest-growing sports on the planet—and a glimpse into the future of urban sporting experiences.



What Pickleball Can Teach Us About Leadership



Pickleball may be one of the fastest-growing sports in the world, but according to leadership experts, its lessons extend far beyond the court.

A recent Forbes Coaches Council article explores how the game mirrors many of the challenges leaders face every day. While pickleball appears simple on the surface, success depends on strategy, communication, adaptability and trust — qualities that are equally important in business and organisational leadership.

One of the sport's most valuable lessons is the importance of partnership. In doubles play, success rarely comes from individual brilliance alone. Players must communicate clearly, understand each other's strengths and work together under pressure. Effective leadership operates in much the same way, relying on collaboration rather than control.

The game also rewards patience and smart decision-making. Experienced players know that every point does not require a powerful winning shot. Instead, they focus on consistency, positioning and waiting for the right opportunity. Leaders face similar choices, often achieving better results through measured decisions and long-term thinking rather than impulsive actions.

Adaptability is another key theme. Conditions on a pickleball court can change quickly, forcing players to adjust their tactics and respond to unexpected situations. Strong leaders demonstrate the same flexibility, adapting to changing markets, new challenges and evolving team dynamics.

Perhaps most importantly, pickleball reinforces the value of continuous learning. Even experienced players must keep refining their skills, analysing mistakes and seeking improvement. Leadership follows the same path. Growth comes not from achieving perfection, but from maintaining a willingness to learn and develop over time.

As pickleball continues to attract players of all ages and backgrounds, its popularity serves as a reminder that leadership is often less about authority and more about relationships, resilience and self-awareness.

Whether on the court or in the workplace, the most successful individuals are often those who communicate effectively, adapt quickly and never stop learning.

Wei Chong Embraces Fresh Start with Wooi Yik as RTG Backing Continues

Man Wei Chong has expressed relief after retaining his place in Malaysia's elite Road to Gold (RTG) programme, despite the uncertainty that comes with forming a new men's doubles partnership alongside Soh Wooi Yik.

The 25-year-old is among a group of national badminton players who recently signed their contracts for the 2026 RTG cycle, securing continued support as they begin a crucial phase of preparation towards the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games.

For Wei Chong, remaining in the programme is an important vote of confidence at a time when rankings are likely to fluctuate following Malaysia's high-profile doubles reshuffle.

The RTG committee has acknowledged the challenges faced by players entering new partnerships and has allowed them a period of adjustment to rebuild chemistry and improve their world standing.

"RTG haven't put too much pressure on us," said Wei Chong after training at the Academy Badminton Malaysia (ABM) in Bukit Kiara.

"They understand that we've split from our previous partners, so even though we've changed pairings, they've still given us a chance.

"Hopefully, Wooi Yik and I can improve our ranking."

The RTG contracts are reviewed annually, with athletes required to meet specific performance benchmarks. While Wei Chong chose not to elaborate on the exact targets, he confirmed the agreement covers a one-year period.

At present, Wei Chong is ranked World No. 9 alongside former partner Tee Kai Wun, while Soh Wooi Yik and Aaron Chia occupy the No. 3 position in the world rankings.

Although the reshuffle is expected to cause short-term disruption in the standings, Malaysia's coaching team believe the new combinations could strengthen the nation's medal prospects heading into the next Olympic cycle.





Under RTG requirements, athletes must finish the year inside the world's top eight and also secure a top-eight placing at this year's BWF World Championships. The standards become even more demanding in 2027, when athletes are expected to break into the world's top four.

Despite the challenge, Wei Chong is embracing the opportunity and is eagerly anticipating his first tournament with Wooi Yik at next month's Japan Open.

The new partnership will begin its campaign after Wei Chong's recent return from injury. The shuttler was sidelined for several weeks earlier this year after suffering an anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injury to his right knee, but he is now back on court and steadily rebuilding his fitness.

"There are still two to three weeks before the Japan Open, so I still have a lot of work to do because I've been out for about two months," he said.

"Wooi Yik and I will also need to discuss our game and how we want to play together."

For Wei Chong, teaming up with one of Malaysia's most accomplished doubles players presents a valuable learning opportunity.

"He is one of Malaysia's best men's doubles players and has achieved excellent results. It's a great opportunity for me to learn from him and gain more experience."

With RTG support secured and a new partnership ready to take shape, the coming months will provide the first indication of whether Malaysia's bold doubles reshuffle can deliver the Olympic success it is designed to achieve.

Geelong Set to Welcome the World's Best Senior Shuttlers in 2027

The Badminton World Federation (BWF) has announced Geelong, Australia, as the host city for the BWF World Senior Championships 2027, bringing one of the sport's largest participation events to Oceania.

The championships will take place from 28 November to 5 December 2027 and are expected to attract around 2,500 players, officials and supporters from across the globe. Competition will be held across age categories ranging from 35+ to 80+, highlighting badminton's appeal as a lifelong sport.

BWF President Khunying Patama Leeswadtrakul said the decision reflects the federation's commitment to expanding badminton's global footprint and creating opportunities for players of all ages. "Taking the BWF World Senior Championships to Australia and Oceania reflects our firm commitment to elevating badminton as a truly global sport and expanding opportunities for players around the world," she said.

"Badminton belongs to everyone. We want badminton to be a sport of choice that is accessible to people everywhere, across all communities, genders, ages and abilities."

Badminton Australia President Julie McDonald described the successful bid as a significant achievement for the sport in the country, "Hosting the BWF World Senior Championships 2027 is an incredible achievement for badminton in Australia and a proud moment for our entire community," she said.

"This event will not only bring the world's best senior players to our shores, but also inspire participation, strengthen connections across generations, and create a lasting legacy for the sport nationwide."

The event will be the first BWF Major Championship held in Australia since the BWF Sudirman Cup Finals in 2017, underlining the nation's growing importance on the international badminton stage.

Beyond the championships themselves, the tournament forms part of BWF's broader vision to develop a structured global senior circuit from 2027 onwards. The proposed system would see players earn ranking points through approved events, leading to official World Senior Rankings and seeding for future championships.

Leeswadtrakul noted the increasing number of players aged 35 and above who continue to compete at a high level and said the federation aims to support badminton as a "sport for life" through a sustainable global senior competition structure.

With world-class facilities and a strong sporting culture, Geelong is expected to provide an ideal backdrop for the championships, which will celebrate not only world-class competition but also the enduring passion of players who continue to thrive in the sport well into their senior years.



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