



GRSA INTERNATIONAL ATW MAGAZINE



ABU DHABI

DOHA



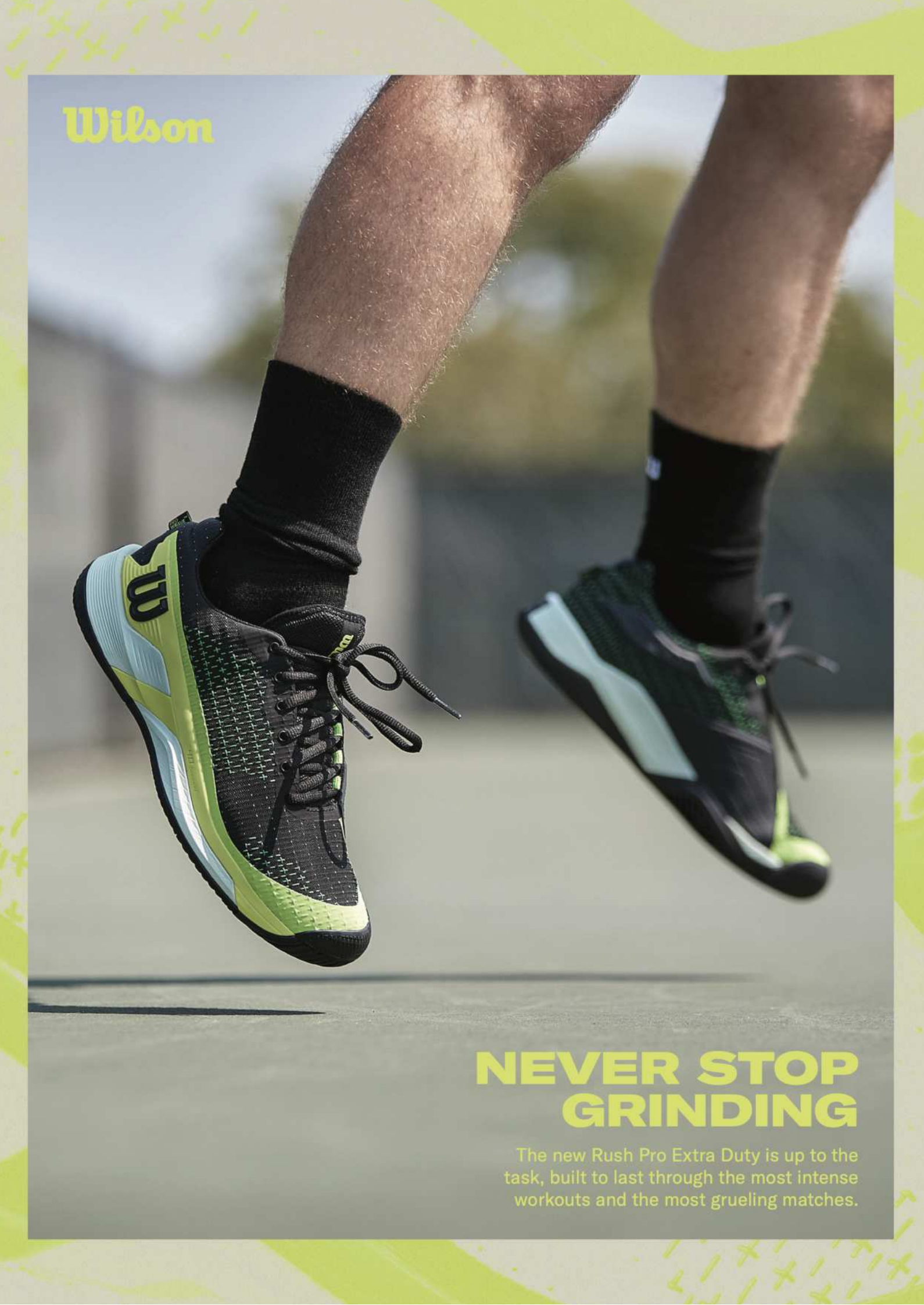
ROTTERDAM



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A dynamic photograph of a person's legs running, wearing black Wilson Rush Pro Extra Duty sneakers with bright yellow accents. The background is a blurred outdoor setting. The entire image is framed by a yellow border with a pattern of small white plus signs.

Wilson

NEVER STOP GRINDING

The new Rush Pro Extra Duty is up to the task, built to last through the most intense workouts and the most grueling matches.

CONTENT

Section 1 - Tennis

Upsets, extreme heat and a historic final in Rio, Mubadala Open, Rotterdam Open, Doha and Dubai all played their part in making February a special month for tennis fans.

Section 2 - GRSA INTERNATIONAL

Stringer Solutions looks at time management and its importance, there are more places and dates where you can find our managers.

Section 3 - Squash

Nick continues with the UnSquashables, this time it's the turn of the syn-tec pro. We also look at some of the news from around the world, including the farewell of a legend.

Section 4 - Padel

A new partnership emerges as Wilson and Premier Padel join forces, plus, a new and exciting change in flooring promises a faster paced game.

Section 5 - Pickleball

The stars were out for the Pickleball Slam, Agassi and Graff were joined by some very special celebs... Surprisingly entertaining, but why wouldn't it be?

Section 6 - Badminton

Ellis and Smith prepare for the All England Championships, as do other top players. Taiwanese badminton Chou Tien Chen is victorious.

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



DAVIS CUP®

THE WORLD CUP OF TENNIS®

The Davis Cup Qualifiers were played on a home-and-away basis on 1-4 February 2024.

Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Czechia, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Slovakia and USA were the 12 winning nations and will be the ones to advance to the Finals Group stage in September, the dates, 10th to the 15th, they'll be joined by 2023 finalists (Australia and Italy) plus the important wild cards (Great Britain and Spain) completing the 16-nation line-up.



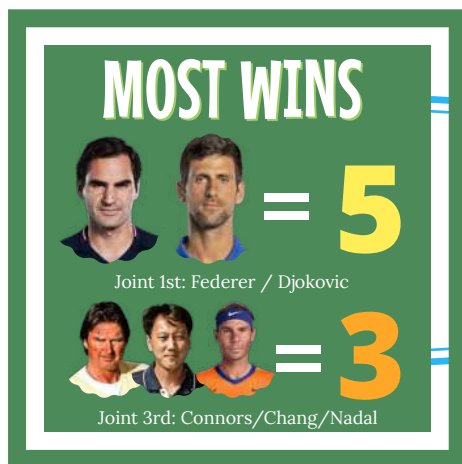
Losing Nations

Chinese Taipei, Croatia, Hungary, Israel, Kazakhstan, Korea, Peru, Portugal, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland and Ukraine were losing nations and are set to compete in a World Group I tie in September.

Keep up to date with all of the Davis cup news by visiting the official website, just click on the logo to go straight there!

INDIAN WELLS

6 - 17 March, 2024

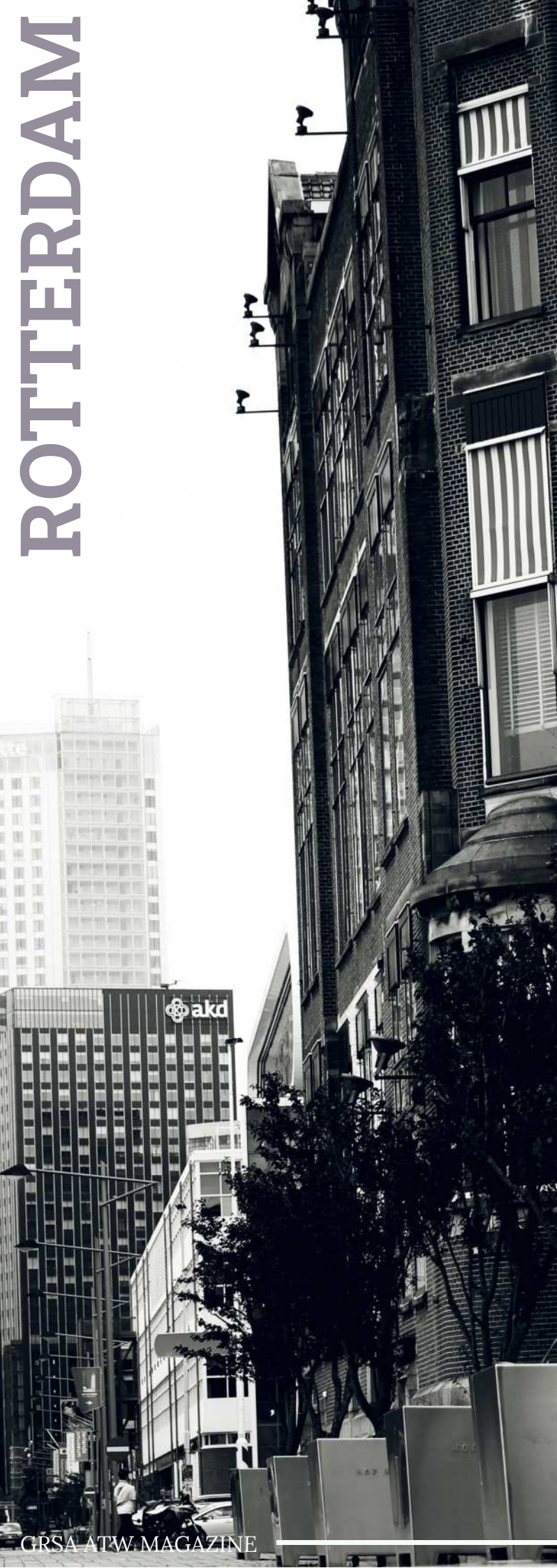


This year's BNP PARIBAS OPEN promises to be a jam packed, energetic and explosive event with Djokovic looking to take the lead on the most wins, if he were to win, he'd take the lead on 6 titles at Indian Wells compared to Roger Federer's and his own 5. Carlos Alcaraz has been in sending messages to the field letting them know he's extremely focused on defending his 2023 title.

Sinner will obviously be looking to add to the collection, fresh off the back of an incredible performance at the AO. Another previous winner of the men's title, Taylor Fritz also says he's up for the challenge and feels like he's playing in his backyard when he plays here.

Then there's Rafa, having won here 3 times, he's not in the best condition but we've seen in the past that his form doesn't need to be 100% to take the crown, well, not 100% of the time anyway!

Who will be the dominating force? Who will make the most noise? We will find out soon enough!



ROTTERDAM



Since its inception in 1974, the Rotterdam Ahoy has witnessed the remarkable presence of numerous tennis legends. From the likes of Tom Okker and Arthur Ashe, Bjorn Borg and Jimmy Connors, to more recent icons such as Lleyton Hewitt and Roger Federer, this esteemed ATP 500 tournament has served as a platform for both current champions and emerging talents in the sport for nearly five decades. Concurrently, it serves as a premier arena for wheelchair tennis at its pinnacle.

The ABN AMRO Open epitomises innovation, rendering it an inclusive event catering to a diverse audience. Whether it's a family seeking a day of entertainment, business guests fostering connections, or individuals intrigued by the intersection of sports and society, this tournament offers something for everyone. At the ABN AMRO Open, spectators are immersed in the pinnacle of tennis action, embodying the essence of the sport's grandeur.

Past champions of this tournament were back to try and take the crown again, Félix Auger-Aliassime, Rublev and Monfils, Jannik Sinner, last year's runner-up out to show them who's boss. There were some interesting opening matches in qualies, Maxime Cressy and Zizou Bergs were both victorious on day 1, as was wild card Gijs Brouwer, his win over Luca Van Assche was a surprise indeed, and a convincing one at that, 6-3, 6-3, unfortunately he lost in round 2 to David Goffin who was dismissed later by Rublev.

Two other wild cards for the event, Guy Den Ouden and Thijs Boogaard, weren't so fortunate as they both bowed out in the first round in relatively close matches.

Felix Auger-Aliassime had a tough match against Maxime Cressy but came away with a pass to the next round, after winning 7-6, 7-6, other wild cards Jesper de Jong and Dino Prizmic both lost on day 3. Day 4 saw Andrey Rublev, Hubert Hurkacz, Alex de Minaur, Alexander Bublik, Marton Fucsovics, Alexander Shevchenko and Jan-Lennard Struff all make it through to the next round but not without some very close calls, especially the match between Jan-Lennard Struff and Alejandro Davidovich Fokina, what a battle between these two hard hitters, 4-6, 7-6, 7-6.. it was a joy to watch and a little insight into how hard some of the higher seeds are working to work their way up.

The venue is just amazing and really gives off a special vibe, the atmosphere is equally as special. Originally opened in the 50's, the Sportpaleis, isn't the only part to the complex, but it is the "Sports Palace" and where this unique event takes place. The boxed style seating arrangement really gives it a different feel. You're never too far away from the court or from fellow spectators, so it's a real immersive treat. Seated theatre capacity is 16,000+, so you can imagine how it feels in there.



Day 5 and the most entertaining match by far was that of Andrey Rublev against Felix Auger-Aliassime, these two always show up and despite Andrey getting ousted by Sinner at the AO in the quarter finals, this time he had a bitt between his teeth, you could see his determination. They have met on 5 occasions, Rublev has a 4-1 record over Felix, but that's all good on paper, we know it's on the day that counts, and what a match, 3-6, 7-6, 7-5, it wasn't an easy win but you could see that Andrey wanted it more, he was more aggressive in his baseline shots and very decisive when pushing forward.

Alexander Shevchenko dismissed Holger Rune on day 6, did anyone see that coming? Well Holger didn't and simply said he "took his eye off the ball", quite literally. That said, it was still a 3 set match and far from a walkover. Grigor Dimitrov also made it into the final 8 by beating Marton Fucsovics, two sets but it was close, one break could have made all the difference for Marton.

Day 7, the last 8, and 8 amazing players to take to centre court. Out of the 4 matches, only 2 of them were over 3 sets, those were the matches between Alex de Minaur vs Andrey Rublev, there were some outstanding points, final score 7-6, 4-6, 6-3. The other match was between Grigor Dimitrov vs Alexander Shevchenko, a battle that saw Grigor come out victorious, 7-6, 3-6, 6-4.

In the other two matches, Sinner took on the Canadian Milos Raonic, and homegrown Tallon Griekspoor had the task of taking on the slightly younger Emil Ruusuvuori from Finland, it was close contest between the two, but the home crowd definitely seemed to lift Tallon and carry him over the winning line as he set up a semi-final against the in-form Sinner who beat Milos.



Semis and the Final...

Rotterdam closes with some spectacular tennis.

Jannik Sinner showcased his mastery on day 7 at the ABN AMRO Open, surging forward with determination, while de Minaur got his revenge and special birthday present.

The top seed triumphed over the home favourite Tallon Griekspoor with a convincing 6-2, 6-4 victory, securing his ticket to the final at the ATP 500 event in Rotterdam for the second consecutive year. Sinner seized control of the match early on, reminiscent of their last-four encounter at the same venue twelve months prior. Displaying a remarkable display of skill, he concluded the intense 82-minute battle with some of his finest tennis of the week, captivating the audience under the shelter of the Rotterdam Ahoy's roof.

Reflecting on his performance in the post-match interview, Sinner shared, "Today, during the pre-match practice session, we focused on maintaining high intensity, feeling the court, and finding our rhythm. I knew I needed to elevate my game, and I'm pleased to have risen to the occasion, securing another opportunity to compete in the Rotterdam final."



A year ago at the ABN AMRO Open, Alex de Minaur endured a heart-wrenching defeat, relinquishing two match points against Grigor Dimitrov in the quarter-finals coinciding with the Australian's 24th birthday.

However, there was no repeat of such disappointment for De Minaur as he marked his 25th birthday in Rotterdam this past Saturday. The fifth seed delivered a scintillating performance in the second semi, securing a resounding 6-4, 6-3 victory over Dimitrov, avenging last year's defeat and earning a spot in the final match against top seed Jannik Sinner.

Expressing his elation in the post-match interview, De Minaur remarked, "I'm thrilled with my performance throughout the entire match. It was perhaps one of my most consistent displays from start to finish. Nevertheless, I'm always aware that Grigor is capable of raising his game and competing fiercely until the very end. I had to navigate through some challenging break points, but I managed to produce some of my best tennis when it mattered most."

"Maintaining my composure on serve during critical moments was crucial today. I'm grateful for the opportunity to continue fighting in this tournament."

Jannik Sinner secured his second title of 2024 by clinching the Rotterdam Open trophy with a victory over Alex de Minaur in the Netherlands. Sinner, now ascending to world No. 3, continued his impressive streak with his 15th consecutive tour win and 12th title, prevailing in straight sets against the Australian, who managed to break back twice, once in each set, but Sinner maintained his composure to seal the win.

Sinner emerged victorious in the Rotterdam Open, claiming his second title of 2024 with a triumph over Alex de Minaur.

The Italian, who had claimed the Australian Open last month, showcased formidable form throughout the tournament, dropping just one set on his path to the final. He navigated past challenges from home favourite Botić van de Zandschlop, the experienced Gael Monfils, and the powerful Milos Raonic, before defeating Dutchman Tallon Griekspoor in the semi-finals.

De Minaur, seeded fifth in the event, secured straight-set victories over Grigor Dimitrov in the semi-finals and Andrey Rublev in the quarter-finals.

However, in the final showdown, Sinner extended his unbeaten record against the Australian, now world No. 3 after claiming the crown, with seven consecutive wins over De Minaur, who rose to ninth in the rankings.

Despite facing setbacks, Sinner demonstrated resilience, hitting 23 winners in the final and recovering from break points in both sets, particularly when serving for the opener at 5-4, where De Minaur saved four set points.

Reflecting on the match, Sinner commented, "I served for the first set at 5-4, and he played an incredible game there."





MUBADALA
ABU DHABI
OPEN



MUBADALA

Elena Rybakina, currently ranked World No. 5, secured her second title of the season with a commanding victory over No. 14 Daria Kasatkina in the final of the Mubadala Abu Dhabi Open. This victory marks Rybakina's seventh career title on the Hologic WTA Tour and her fourth on a hard court surface.

Seeded as the No. 1 player at a tournament for the second time in her career, Rybakina enjoyed a successful week in Abu Dhabi, overcoming challenges from opponents such as Danielle Collins, Cristina Bucsa, and No. 8 seed Liudmila Samsonova.

"I approached this week without any specific expectations due to some issues I faced in Melbourne, so it was important for me to get back on the court and gain momentum," Rybakina commented. "I'm really proud of my performance this week. With each match, I felt my confidence growing."

Rybakina's victory in Abu Dhabi improves her season record to 11-2, following her earlier triumph at the Brisbane International last month. She shares the second-highest number of wins on tour with Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka, trailing only Jelena Ostapenko's tour-leading 13 victories.



Despite her loss in the final, Kasatkina has demonstrated a strong start to the season, reaching her second final of the year in Abu Dhabi after making her first appearance in Adelaide in January. With a record of 9-4, Kasatkina currently ranks sixth on the tour in terms of match wins this year.

Both players put in a stellar performance at the WTA 1000 tournament / The Qatar TotalEnergies Open in Doha. Rybakina started with a bye into the second round, Kasatkina began her campaign with a first-round match against Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova but unfortunately was unsuccessful and she lost in 2 straight sets.



IGA - DOHA - 2024

Iga Swiatek, the reigning World No.1, emerged victorious at the Qatar TotalEnergies Open, clinching the year's first WTA 1000 title and etching her name in history as the first player in nearly nine years to secure a Hologic WTA Tour event three consecutive times.

Swiatek demonstrated her resilience in a hard-fought battle against World No.4 Elena Rybakina, prevailing with a 7-6(8), 6-2 victory to extend her winning streak at the Doha event to 12 matches. Despite facing a double-break deficit in the first set and saving a set point in the tiebreak, Swiatek showcased her unwavering determination to claim her 18th career singles title and the first of the 2024 season.

Reflecting on her triumph, Swiatek expressed her satisfaction, stating, "I'm happy that I remained focused and concentrated on the right aspects throughout the week. It was crucial not to get distracted, especially considering the pressure of being the defending champion for the third consecutive year. I'm grateful for the experience and hope to build on it in the future."

In a remarkable statistical achievement, Swiatek's three-peat in Doha parallels the accomplishments of longtime World No.1 Serena Williams, who last achieved this feat by securing her third consecutive Miami Open title in 2015. With this triumph, Swiatek now boasts an impressive 13-1 career win-loss record at the Qatar TotalEnergies Open, with her sole defeat at this event occurring in the 2020 second round against Svetlana Kuznetsova.



DOHA

2024

Carlos Alcaraz spoke about Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic.

Carlos Alcaraz faced a disappointing setback as he was compelled to withdraw from the ATP Rio Open due to an ankle sprain injury. Sharing an update with his followers on Instagram, Alcaraz disclosed that it's a grade II lateral sprain, something that needs a few days of rest. However, he reassured fans that he will be ready to defend his Indian Wells title.

Ranked as the World No. 2 presently, Alcaraz also anticipates his return to the court for an exhibition match against Rafael Nadal in Las Vegas on March 3rd. In a recent interview with Marca, the Spanish tennis prodigy addressed Rafael Nadal's assertion regarding Novak Djokovic being the greatest player in tennis history.

Acknowledging Djokovic's superior statistical achievements, Alcaraz emphasized the undeniable numerical superiority of the Serbian player over himself and other tennis greats like Nadal and Federer. However, he also stressed that determining the best player transcends mere statistics.

Alcaraz highlighted the subjective nature of such assessments, acknowledging that while Djokovic may have the most impressive numbers, the debate over who truly holds the title of the greatest player is nuanced. He echoed Nadal's sentiments, agreeing that Djokovic's numerical supremacy is evident, yet maintained that personal opinions play a significant role in such discussions.

The conversation also touched upon Djokovic's milestone achievement in 2023, where he matched Margaret Court's record for most singles Majors in history, a remarkable feat that further solidified his legacy in the sport.

As the tennis world continues to debate the legacy of its greatest players, Alcaraz's perspective offers a nuanced understanding that goes beyond mere statistics, recognising the complexity of determining tennis greatness.



Injuries, doubts and the future!



Wondering about Ons Jabeur's future in professional tennis is a natural consideration given her recent performance and health concerns. Despite being a consistently strong player in recent years, she has yet to clinch a Grand Slam title, a goal that has eluded her thus far.

At 29 years old, Jabeur faces the reality of aging in a sport where youth often dominates. The emergence of younger talents like Aryna Sabalenka and Iga Swiatek, both notably younger, adds to the pressure of competition.

However, the primary concern lies in Jabeur's ongoing battle with a troublesome knee injury. Her recent withdrawal from the Dubai Championships underscores the severity of her condition, with Jabeur expressing frustration at being unable to perform at her best.

Knee injuries, common yet debilitating for tennis players, raise doubts about Jabeur's ability to continue competing at the highest level. Her statement regarding the pain and limitations she faces on the court paints a concerning picture of her current situation.

The uncertainty surrounding Jabeur's return to the court and her long-term prospects adds a somber note to her career trajectory. While she may hope to return soon, the lingering effects of her injury cast a shadow of doubt on her future in the sport.

In contrast, the anticipation surrounding Carlos Alcaraz's return to the Cinch Championships brings a glimmer of optimism to the tennis world. Despite suffering an ankle injury at the Rio Open, Alcaraz's positive outlook on his recovery offers hope for a swift return to the court.

As fans eagerly await updates on both Jabeur and Alcaraz's conditions, the contrasting narratives serve as a reminder of the unpredictable nature of professional sports and the resilience required to overcome setbacks.

RIO OPEN 2024: A Sizzling Tennis Spectacle

Claro

The Rio Open presented by Claro has once again ignited the clay courts of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, with scintillating tennis battles. As the sun blazed down on the Jockey Club Brasileiro, players grappled with both their opponents and the sweltering heat. We take a little look at some of the highlights, surprises, and moments that defined this thrilling ATP 500 tournament.

A Fiery Start

The opening day witnessed intense clashes, as players fought for supremacy. A couple of key matches set the tone:

1. Laslo Djere vs. Bernabe Zapata Miralles: Djere, a former champion, faced a spirited Miralles. The Spaniard pushed Djere to the limit, but the Serbian prevailed in a hard-fought battle.
2. Francisco Cerundolo vs. Francisco Comesana: An all-Argentine duel unfolded, with Cerundolo prevailing in a tight contest. The clay-court specialists showcased their finesse and resilience, unfortunately he was dismissed by fellow countryman Sebastian Baez (5) later on in the competition.

3. Hugo Dellien vs. Cameron Norrie: Defending champion Norrie stepped onto the court, visibly fatigued due to the scorching temperatures. Despite his suffering, he secured a convincing victory against Bolivian Dellien, but he lost out to Mariano Navone in the semis, the heat just got the better of him. It was quite painful to watch at times, he really looked uncomfortable and had various visits from the physio and doctor, Navone wasn't happy about the delays, Norrie was happy to make it to the end of the match even though he lost.

Seeds Toppled Early

- Carlos Alcaraz (Seed 1): The young Spaniard, eyeing a second Rio title, suffered an early exit. His dream of becoming the first player to win Rio multiple times was dashed at the hands of Thiago Monteiro, a bit of a shock considering that he is fit and seemed on form.



- Nicolás Jarry (Seed 3): The Chilean, a clay-court specialist, fell in the first round. His aggressive game failed to withstand the heat and pressure. He was dispatched by Yannick Hanfmann, but it was a real up and down match, Yannick won the first set 6-1, but then Jarry pulled a set back taking it to a third set that could have gone either way but it was Hanfman who seemed more in control. Final set finished 7-5 to the non-seeded German.

The tournament, culminated in a historic all-Argentine final. Sebastián Báez and Mariano Navone faced off in a thrilling showdown.

Báez's Dominance: A Fifth Title

Sebastián Báez, the fifth seed, showcased his prowess on the clay courts with a convincing 6-2, 6-1 victory over his compatriot. The 22-year-old qualifier, Mariano Navone, fought valiantly but couldn't match Báez's relentless power and precision, but he'd also had a strong match the day before against Norrie.

For Báez, this triumph marks his fifth career title and undoubtedly the most significant one. The \$392,775 prize and 500 ranking points earned by the winner add to the allure of this prestigious event.

Crowds and Players Call for More South American Tournaments

Despite the somewhat tepid final, the crowds in Rio de Janeiro were treated to an all-Argentine spectacle. The passionate fans, hungry for top-tier tennis, flocked to witness their countrymen battle it out on the red clay.

Several high-profile players, both past and present, have voiced their support for more top tournaments in South America. The success of the Rio Open and the Argentina Open earlier this month underscores the region's appetite for world-class tennis.

Báez's Rising Star

Sebastián Báez's meteoric rise continues, and this Rio Open victory solidifies his position as one of the game's rising stars. With his aggressive baseline game, powerful groundstrokes, and unwavering focus, Báez is poised to make further waves on the ATP tour.



Looking Ahead

As the ATP tour moves forward, players and fans alike hope for more opportunities to witness top-level tennis on South American soil. The Rio Open has once again proven that the passion for the sport burns brightly in this corner of the world.

Congratulations to Sebastián Báez, the 2024 Rio Open champion, and to Mariano Navone for an impressive run. **Until next year, Rio!**

Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships

The Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships were in full swing in Feb, and the action on the courts was nothing short of electrifying. As the sun blazed down on the outdoor hard courts, the world's top tennis stars battled it out for supremacy. Let's dive into the riveting stories of the seeded players who faced unexpected twists and turns in the early rounds, and there were some absolutely brilliant matches.

Anna Kalinskaya Stuns Third Seed Coco Gauff

In a sensational turnaround, Russian powerhouse Anna Kalinskaya sent shockwaves through the tournament by defeating the third seed, Coco Gauff. The match was a rollercoaster ride, with Kalinskaya rallying from a set down to secure a 2-6, 6-3, 6-4 victory. Gauff, known for her explosive game, couldn't find her rhythm against Kalinskaya's relentless groundstrokes. The Russian, fresh off her quarterfinal appearance at the Australian Open, continued her impressive form in Dubai, advancing to the semifinals from the qualifying rounds



Sabalenka's Early Exit

The world number two and reigning Australian Open champion, Aryna Sabalenka, suffered a second-round upset at the hands of an unseeded opponent. Her exit left fans in awe and raised eyebrows across the tennis world. Sabalenka's powerful game failed to find its usual groove, and she bowed out of the tournament, leaving the draw wide open. The Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships witnessed a seismic shift as one of the favourites crashed out early



Swiatek's Triumph and Sabalenka's Misfire

On a busy day for the tournament's top seeds, Iga Swiatek, the reigning French Open champion, successfully navigated her tricky first encounter. The Polish dynamo showcased her versatility and determination, securing a straight-sets victory. However, the other big gun, Aryna Sabalenka, misfired. While Swiatek advanced, Sabalenka's early exit left fans wondering about the unpredictable nature of tennis. The Dubai courts witnessed both triumph and heartbreak, reminding us why we love this sport

American tennis sensation Coco Gauff found herself embroiled in a heated dispute with the chair umpire during her second-round match at the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships. The incident, which lasted over four minutes, became the focal point of her clash against former world No. 1, Karolina Pliskova.

Tension escalated when the umpire erroneously ruled Gauff's first serve out, leading to confusion as Pliskova hit the ball into the net. Despite Gauff's successful challenge, she was denied the point and forced to retake the serve. The umpire's decision had inadvertently hindered Pliskova, leaving Gauff visibly frustrated.

Gauff, known for her fiery determination, engaged in a spirited exchange with the umpire as she passionately defended her case. The crowd watched in anticipation as the young American made her point, gesturing animatedly and demanding clarity. Rather than letting the disagreement derail her focus, Gauff channeled the adrenaline from the argument. Down a set and trailing in the second, she fought back with renewed vigor. In a remarkable turnaround, Gauff clawed her way back into the match. She took the second set 6-4, and the decider saw her relentless pursuit of victory. The crowd rallied behind her, sensing the shift in momentum. Gauff's grit paid off as she secured a 2-6, 6-4, 6-3 comeback win over Pliskova. She would later fall to Anna Kalinskaya in another great match.

Before making it to the final, Kalinskaya had to battle it out with N°1 seed Iga Swiatek and a battle it was, a very close match with both players holding each other to a very high standard. Iga looked comfortable but just couldn't find the answer to Anna's hard hitting determination. 6-4. 6-4 was the final score and Jasmine Paolini was waiting for her in the final. A final that was end to end power and top tier tennis. Jasmine pushed back and managed to pull off a tremendous victory and deserved title. Well done Jasmine!



In the Room

With Richard Parnell

Preparing for Tour Stringing.

This month's thoughts, in the room, are to do with the preparation needed before getting into tour stringing.

I am often asked the best route to get into tour stringing and most of the stringers asking this question, tend to want to jump in at the deep end.... Not a good idea.

Club tournaments are the best preparation for a stringer, as discipline and organisational skills are learned away from the stress and pressure of working with the best players in the world.

By starting at a lower level of tournament, the same basic skills are needed but without the mad time constraints. The days aren't as long, and on-courts are almost unheard of.

Fighting for the right space to set up your machine is a rite of passage and often the first place you are offered is next to the toilets or in some dark corner "out of the way". Stringing is an all important part of any tournament, no matter how big or small, and although the stringers never get any recognition, they are an irreplaceable cog in the wheel and fighting for a decent place is easier in a club environment.

The same tools and supplies are needed and as the work is often all done by one person, it can be just as challenging as a full blown tour event. In a GS stringing room, you often have someone to stencil and someone to cut out strings, not so at a club or Futures event.

Having patience and working up to a larger event means that when it happens, you are more than ready to take that giant step.

Club players can also benefit from the work of a tour quality stringer and be lucky to have you stringing their rackets.

Be part of the change.

Please send any thoughts to: online@grsa-international.com

Promote positivity and your expertise will shine brighter.

FUN FACTS

In countries like China and Indonesia, badminton is like a religion. Players get mobbed in the street. In China, it is a national sport, and Lin Dan, their star player, is treated like David Beckham.

Rajiv Ouseph

1 The Sunshine Double is a feat in tennis achieved when a player wins the titles of the Indian Wells Open and the Miami Open back-to-back.

To date, 11 players have achieved this in singles, 22 in doubles.

No surprise that in men's singles, Federer and Djokovic are the most successful with 3 and 4 respectively. In women's singles, Steffi Graff won 2 and is the holder of the title of most sunshine double wins.

2 Venus and Serena Williams refused to play the Indian Wells tournament from 2001 to 2014 despite threats of financial sanctions and ranking point penalties. The two were scheduled to play in the 2001 semifinal but Venus withdrew due to an injury. Amid speculation of match fixing, the crowd for the final loudly booed Serena when she came out to play the final and continued to boo her intermittently through the entire match, even to the point of cheering unforced errors and double faults.

3 The BNP Paribas Open has become one of the largest events on both the men's and women's tours. In 2004, the tournament expanded to a multi-week 96-player field. Winning the BNP Paribas Open and the Miami Open back to back has been colloquially termed the Sunshine Double. Dubbed the "Grand Slam of the West", it is the most-attended tennis tournament in the world after the the four majors, with over 450,000 visitors during the 2015 event.

4 The inaugural Wimbledon Championship started on 9 July 1877 and Gentlemen's Singles was the only event held. It was won by Spencer Gore, an old Harrovian rackets player, from a field of 22. About 200 spectators paid one shilling each to watch the final.



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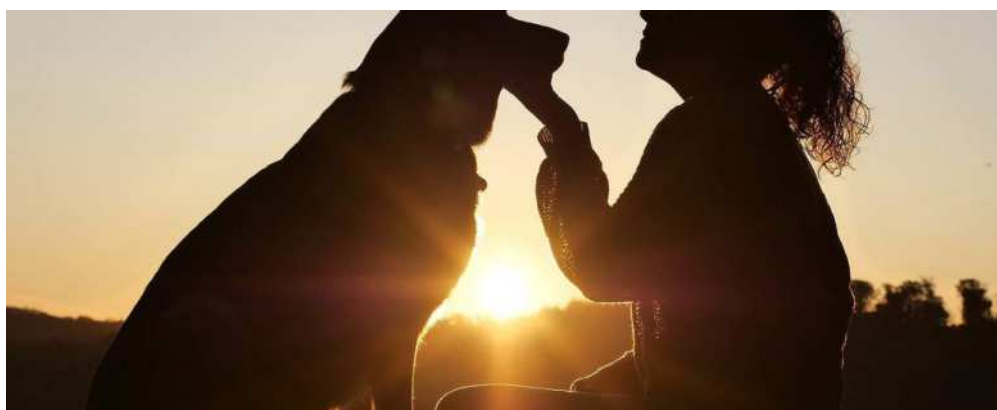


ADOPTAS.ORG

by Alejandro Davidovich Fokina

GRSA continues to support the hard work of this special organisation. Alejandro and his team don't just work hard on the court, they spend time helping the staff of **ADOPTAS** in making sure all the animals are taken care of and all needed procedures are looked after.

Veterinary care of dogs includes vaccines, these prevent infectious diseases and often save the life of the animal. Veterinarians vaccinate against distemper, hepatitis, rabies, parvovirus, and leptospirosis, which are contagious to animals but not humans. After eight or nine weeks of life, your puppy will be at the best age for the first vaccination. Repeat the vaccination after four weeks to ensure your puppy is adequately and fully protected. For example, if your puppy receives his first core vaccination at eight weeks, he will need a second combination vaccination at twelve weeks. Your veterinarian will discuss with you the intervals of the next vaccinations. It will also give you information on protection against rabies, which you should not neglect if you live in a district with a risk of rabies or if you travel abroad with your puppy. To be vaccinated, the dog must be healthy and dewormed.



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!

Stringer Solutions

with Richard Parnell

TOP
TIP

Time is Money!!

This month let's concentrate on time management and its importance in everything other than a restring.

Firstly, let's look at "normal" stringing workloads and the value of your time, easily calculated by the price of a restring. If the stringing charge is 20€ per racket and it takes you 20 minutes to string that racket, then you don't have to be Einstein to work out your price per minute.

Now comes the question, why would you need to calculate the value of your time?

Because players can often request a small add-on to the restring. This could be changing the grip, changing the grommets and bumper, removing a rattle in the racket head, or even repairing a "creaking" butt cap.

All of these services take time and Time is Money!! Stringers often overlook this as a separate source of income.

I have worked with two players who insist on always playing with new overgrips with each restring. I calculate how long I take for each overgrip, which includes taking off the used one, and charge accordingly.

Why wouldn't you??

If you are asked to replace a grommet set, on certain frames this can take as much time as a restring, require some specific tools that aren't free and require the skill set to complete the task. Installing a leather grip properly is not the easiest thing in the world and although you might consider it an easy task, it isn't, it is part of your expertise and being a full-service racket technician.

To sum up, any use of your time, whether it is for a restring or any other service requiring your expertise, charge for it. You're worth it.

Remember – The difference is in the small details.

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

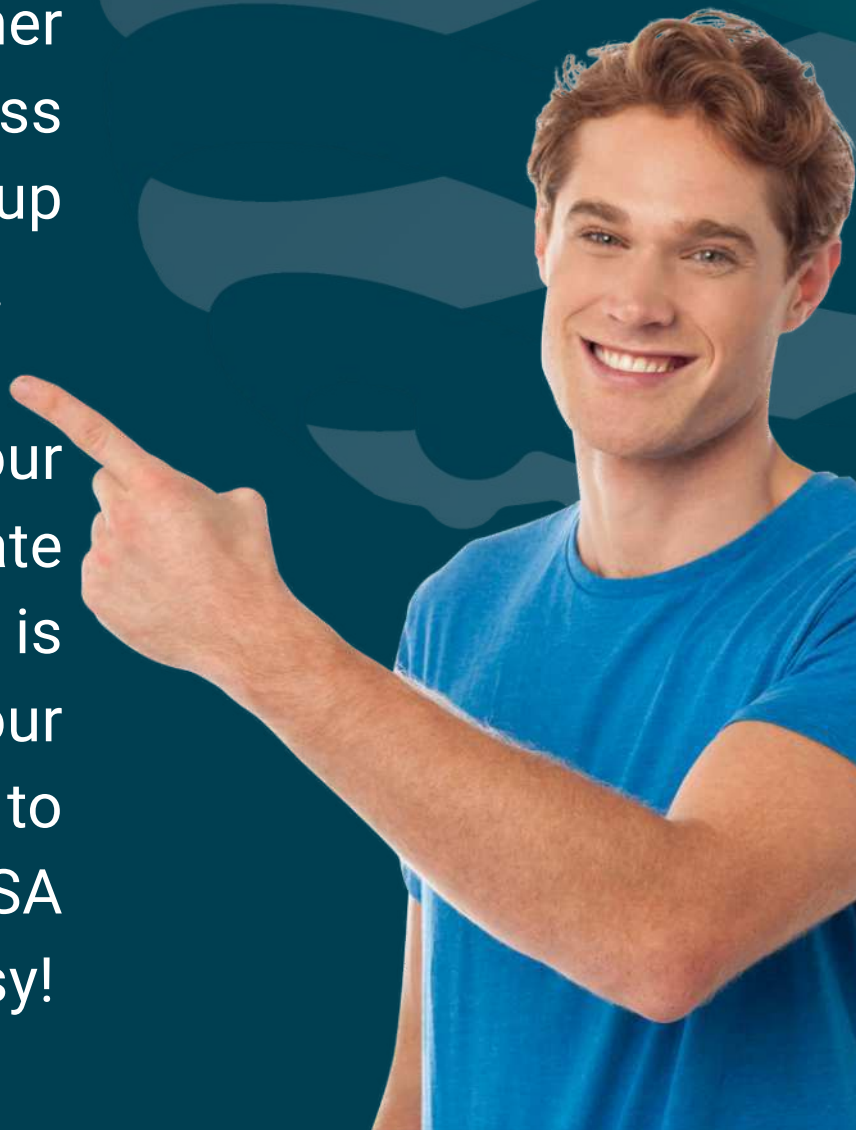
DID YOU KNOW?

GRSA is the only association to recognise all valid certifications and provide the **GRSA** equivalent totally **free of charge!**

Q. What do I need to do to get my GRSA certificate?

A. Join GRSA International, take either the personal or business membership or sign-up for one of the courses.

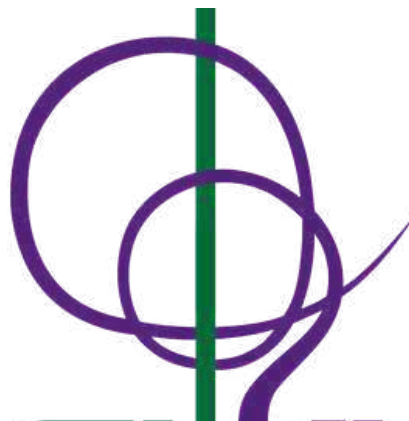
We'll send you your membership certificate and all you need to do is send us a picture of your existing certification to receive the GRSA equivalent, it's that easy!





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GRSA MANAGERS WHERE ARE THEY?

Richard Musters



Dimitri Kaijser



GRSA BENELUX

Miami Open

Miami, USA

March 20th - 31st 2024



Monte Carlo Masters

Monte Carlo, Monaco

April 7th - 14th 2024



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Dani Peniza

GRSA Venezuela & Colombia



Madrid Open

Madrid, Spain

April 22nd - May 5th 2024



WIMBLEDON

GRAND SLAM

London, UK

July 1th-14th 2024



team.ve@grsa-international.com - team.co@grsa-international.com

If you're looking to say hi to any of our managers, here are some of the events that some of them will be at in the coming months

Even though they will be busy at work, drop them a line beforehand and maybe get a chance to ask them for some tips, say hello or (if permitted) even see them at work.

**Mike
Stephens**



BNP Paribas masters 1000

Indian Wells, USA

March 4th-17th 2024

EASTER BOWL

Indian Wells, USA

March 20th- April 1st 2024

SOCON Tennis Championships

Chattanooga, Tenn

April 16th-21st

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The tournament experience is an initiative **GRSA** really believes in, it's designed for stringers looking to gain more experience, more knowledge and be part of the wonderful world of tournament stringing.

We're already looking at dates for this year and will announce them soon, but this is your chance to let us know if you're interested.

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MORE INFORMATION**

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YOU HAVE THE
ABILITY TO PASS
THE TOUR
CERTIFICATION?



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MORE EVENTS
WILL BE COMING
SOON!



GRSA

NO STRINGS ATTACHED

GIVING BACK

EDUCATION THROUGH SPORT



NICK DOWN
Talks

Syn-Tec Pro



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Nick's Nugget

**Keep a sharp tip, all the time,
to assist with threading and
ultimately, getting faster.**

Mains

Start and finish at the Head.

Starting at the Head,

LH1 to below ring.

above ring to LH2.

RH1 to Above ring.

below ring to RH2.

RH2 to RH3,

RH3 to Above ring.

below ring to RH4.

LH2 to LH3.

LH3 to below ring.

above ring to LH4.

LH4 to LH5

LH5 to below ring

above ring to LH7.

RH4 to RH5

RH5 to above ring

below ring to RH7.

LH7 to LH9

LH9 to below ring

above ring to LH12

Tie-off at LH10.

RH7 to RH9

RH9 to above ring

below ring to RH12

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



Crosses

(May start at either side).

1st Cross starts at either LH6 or RH6 and runs between the two Tie-off may be either RH4 or LH4. If starting at LH6 cross must go under the first main.

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

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

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

Tie-off is either LT2 or RT2.

Next month:

Standard Open-throat Racket.

Mazen Hesham Triumphs in Houston Men's Squash Open

In a riveting showdown at the HSC 2024 Houston Men's Squash Open, Egyptian sensation Mazen Hesham showcased his mettle, outlasting the formidable Marwan Elshorbagy in a grueling five-game battle. The crowd held its breath as the two warriors exchanged thunderous rallies, each point echoing through the arena like a heartbeat. Hesham's lightning-fast reflexes and deceptive shot selection left spectators in awe. His victory sets the stage for an epic final clash with the indomitable Ali Farag, who dispatched fellow countryman Karim Abdel Gawad in the semifinals. Farag dominated and took the victory and title with an 11-4, 11-9, 11-5 win.



David Champion Bids Farewell: End of an Era for England Squash



After an illustrious 23-year tenure, David Champion, England's revered National Coach, has decided to step down from his position. His legacy is etched in the annals of squash history, having nurtured and guided countless talents to greatness. From grassroots development to elite training camps, Champion's commitment to the sport has been legendary. His departure leaves a void, but it also opens doors for fresh perspectives and new strategies. As England bids farewell to a stalwart, the squash community eagerly awaits the next chapter in its journey.

Rising Stars: Todd Harrity's Breakthrough at Squash On Fire Open

Todd Harrity, the homegrown hero, blazed a trail at the Squash On Fire Open, announcing his arrival on the big stage. With precision drives and lightning-quick movement, Harrity dismantled opponents, leaving spectators in awe. His quarter-final breakthrough was a testament to years of hard work and total focus. As the squash fraternity celebrates this rising star, Harrity's journey serves as inspiration for aspiring players worldwide. Keep an eye on this name—it's destined for greatness.



Hong Kong to Host 2024 WSF World Team Championships

The squash world is abuzz with anticipation as Hong Kong, China prepares to host the prestigious 2024 WSF World Team Championships. The city's iconic skyline will serve as the backdrop for intense battles on the glass courts. National teams from across the globe will converge, their players fueled by pride and ambition. The stakes are high, and the quest for team supremacy will unfold in a symphony of skill, strategy, and sheer determination. As the countdown begins, squash enthusiasts worldwide mark their calendars, ready to witness history in the making.



SQUASH

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MAINTAINS TENSION

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mm
[18 gauge]

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LAYER

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metres
[30 feet]

made in
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ASHAWAY

Racket String

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BADMINTON

Super Nick[®] ZX

SQUASH

MonoGut[®] ZX Pro

TENNIS

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world class racket strings for 200 years

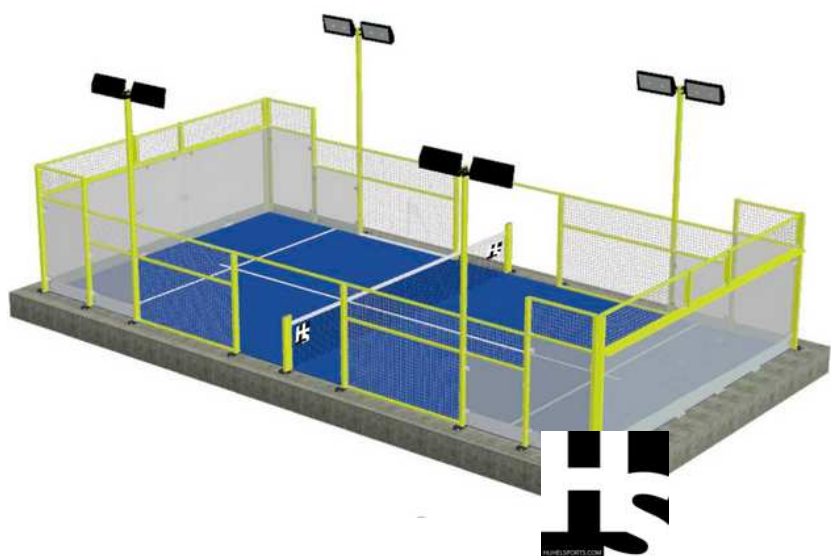
HUHEL SPORTS

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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

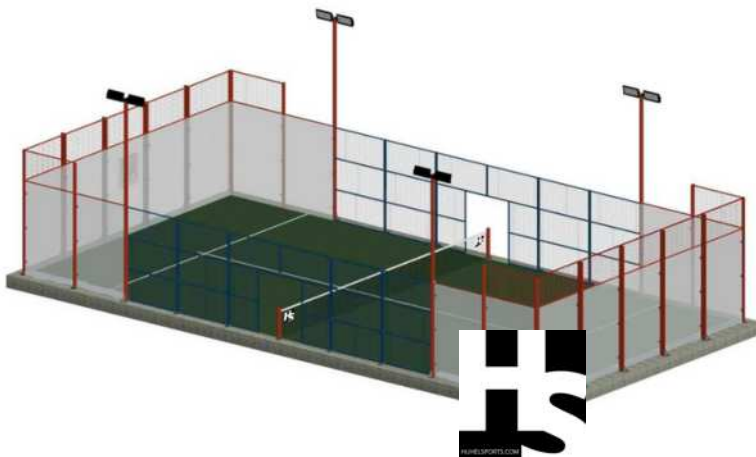


EUROPE COURT

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



HIGH QUALITY - PERSONALISED ALUMINIUM

Mondo Becomes Premier Padel's Official Turf Provider

In a groundbreaking collaboration, Premier Padel, the global professional padel tour, and Mondo, a renowned leader in sports flooring and equipment manufacturing, have forged a new sponsorship and licensing agreement. The centerpiece of this partnership is Mondo's cutting-edge turf product, now christened as the "Premier Padel Official Turf". From 2024 until the end of the 2026 season, this high-end turf system will grace padel courts across the globe.

Mondo's **PREMIER SUPERCOURT X3** is the pinnacle of artificial turf technology. Developed through rigorous research and development, it promises unparalleled on-court performance, elevating player experience and safety. As the Riyadh Season P1 kicks off, players and fans alike will witness this revolutionary surface in action. The Premier Padel Finals in Barcelona will also showcase the same turf, ensuring consistency and excellence throughout the season.

Eno Polo, CEO of Premier Padel, expressed excitement about the partnership: "Our professional players need a consistent surface to perform at their best during Premier Padel tournaments worldwide. We believe that the 'Premier Padel Official Turf' will not only enhance aesthetics but also provide optimal visibility for fans, both courtside and online."

Mondo, equally thrilled, stated: "Formalizing this partnership with Premier Padel—the elite professional padel circuit—is an honour. Our commitment to delivering top-tier sports surfaces remains unwavering, and we are confident that our new artificial turf system will exceed expectations."

The 2024 Premier Padel season, spanning 25 tournaments across 18 countries, promises an exhilarating journey for players and fans. As the year unfolds, the "Premier Padel Official Turf" will be a constant companion, ensuring thrilling matches and unforgettable moments on the court.



Wilson Becomes Premier Padel's Official Ball Sponsor

Premier Padel, the leading professional padel tour worldwide, has teamed up with Wilson Sporting Goods Co., the global sports equipment giant, to redefine the game. The partnership, forged with a shared commitment to excellence, innovation, and global growth, promises to elevate padel to new heights.

Crafting the Future of Padel Balls

Wilson, a name synonymous with sporting excellence, stepped onto the padel court with purpose. Together with Premier Padel and the International Padel Federation (FIP), they embarked on a mission: to create padel balls that would redefine the game. And so, the collaboration began—a fusion of expertise, passion, and player-centric design.

Designed for those languid rallies, where finesse meets strategy.

The Premier Padel Speed ball glides gracefully, allowing players to orchestrate their shots with precision. Its controlled bounce and soft touch make it ideal for slower playing conditions, ensuring rallies that unfold like melodic compositions.

When the tempo quickens, the Premier Padel ball steps up.

Its lively bounce and responsive surface ignite the court, urging players to unleash their power. In venues with faster playing conditions, this ball becomes the heartbeat of intense exchanges—a testament to Wilson's engineering prowess.

Players at the Heart of Innovation

What sets these balls apart? The answer lies in the players themselves. Premier Padel engaged the very athletes who breathe life into the sport. Their feedback, insights, and dreams shaped the ball's DNA. From the practice courts to championship showdowns, players tested and refined—ensuring that every serve, every volley, resonates with their spirit.

A Vision Beyond Borders

Jason Collins, Global General Manager of Wilson Racket Sports, encapsulates the vision: “We’re not just serving a ball; we’re serving a global community. Padel transcends boundaries, and our sponsorship with Premier Padel aligns perfectly with our mission — to take this exhilarating sport to new markets, new hearts.”





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The pickleball event calendar is filling up, we try to bring a few different options when it comes to competitions, if you'd like more information, use the link in the logo below for more dates & venues.

WPC SERIES - 2024 WPC VIETNAM**EID:** 1392 **PRICE** USD 60**Organizer:** Pickleball Global**EVENT - TOURNAMENT****Starting:** April 03, 2024 to April 09, 2024**City:** Đường Ven Biển, Phước Thuận, Xuyên Mộc, Bà Rịa - Vũng Tàu, Vietnam**Home Club:** Carmelina Beach Resort**Registration Deadline:** March 17, 2024 (OPEN)**Tier Level:** 3**2024 Malta Pickleball Open****EID:** 1256 **PRICE** EUR 27**Organizer:** Steffi Pace**EVENT - TOURNAMENT****Starting:** September 12, 2024 to September 15, 2024**City:** Birgu, Malta**Home Club:** De La Salle**Registration Deadline:** August 15, 2024 (OPEN)**Tier Level:** 3**Sicily Pickleball Open****EID:** 1383 **PRICE** EUR 40**Organizer:** CLAUDIO FORTE**EVENT - TOURNAMENT****Starting:** August 08, 2024 to August 11, 2024**City:** Siracusa, SR, Italia**Home Club:** Pickleball Siracusa**Registration Deadline:** August 03, 2024 (OPEN)**Tier Level:** 1**MORE
INFO**



Feb 4th - 2024 - Hollywood

An entertaining and surprisingly engaging display of sporting prowess unfolded as tennis greats **Andre Agassi** and **Steffi Graf triumphed** over their rivals in the **Pickleball Slam 2** event, held at the **Seminole Hard Rock Casino** back on the 4th of Feb. The formidable duo bested opponents **John McEnroe** and **Maria Sharapova** to claim the coveted £1 million purse, captivating audiences worldwide.

The event marked a convergence of tennis and pickleball, with Agassi and Graf showcasing their adaptability and skill in the rapidly growing sport of pickleball. Joined by former tennis pros turned pickleball enthusiasts **Jack Sock** and **James Blake**, the stage was set for a thrilling showdown.

Agassi and Sock kicked off the proceedings with a gripping victory over McEnroe and Blake in the first match, displaying finesse and precision on the court. Meanwhile, Graf and Sock emerged triumphant in a tense encounter against Sharapova and Blake in the second match, demonstrating their unwavering determination.

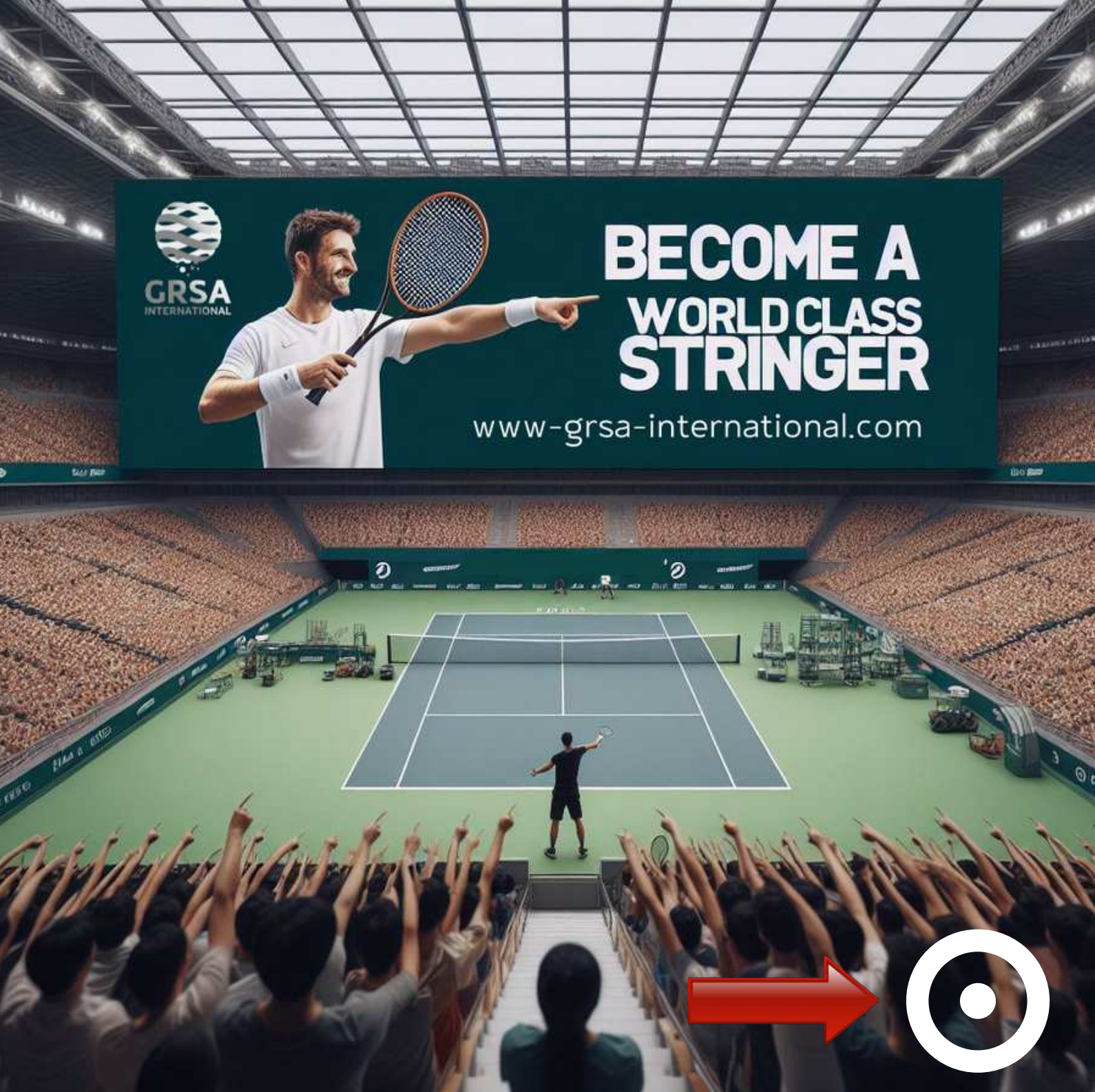
The climax of the event saw Agassi and Graf clinch victory in the final match, completing a clean sweep and solidifying their status as pickleball champions. Despite facing formidable opponents and the pressure of the moment, the legendary duo maintained their composure and delivered an unforgettable performance. **The highlights can be seen on YouTube, click the logo to go see it!**

Reflecting on their win, Graf expressed optimism about their plans for the winnings, highlighting the potential for positive impact beyond the realm of sport. The event not only showcased the competitive spirit of the players but also served as a testament to the growing popularity and appeal of pickleball.

Throughout the tournament, moments of tension and drama unfolded on the court, with McEnroe's fiery temperament and Sharapova's competitive drive adding to the spectacle. However, in the end, it was Agassi and Graf who emerged victorious, etching their names into pickleball history.

As the curtain fell on Pickleball Slam 2, fans were left eagerly anticipating the next chapter in the ongoing saga of sportsmanship and camaraderie. With the boundaries between tennis and pickleball blurring, the stage is set for an exciting future where athleticism and innovation converge in the pursuit of excellence.





The industry's first course dedicated to preparing you for the competition environment.

GRSA have listened to stringers around the world and created a unique course that prepares you for the competition environment. If you're already at the Certified Pro Master level, the next step is to improve those skills and ready yourself for the tournament scene. Before getting to a tour level, the experience from smaller competitions and studying advanced techniques, are key to prepare for that high level and demanding tour setting. By learning how to speed up your stringing, how to minimise material wear, organisation skills and more, you're allowing yourself the chance to earn these two specialist certifications and bridge the gap between your existing level and the tour certification. If you're an active member you can access the exams in a bundle, if not, take the course!

2024 US OPEN Pickleball Championships: A Grand Slam of Paddle Sports

The world of sports is buzzing with anticipation as the 2024 US OPEN Pickleball Championships draw near. This annual event, held in the heart of America, brings together the finest paddle athletes from across the globe. Whether you're a seasoned pickleball enthusiast or a curious newcomer, this championship promises thrilling matches, fierce rivalries, and unforgettable moments.

Venue and Dates

The 2024 US OPEN Pickleball Championships will be held at the sprawling **Palm Springs Convention Center in sunny California. From April 15th to April 20th, the center court will witness intense battles as singles, doubles, and mixed doubles players vie for the coveted titles.

This year's championship boasts an impressive lineup of players. Keep an eye out for:

- Sarah "Smash" Johnson: The reigning champion, known for her lightning-fast reflexes and powerful smashes.
- Diego "The Dink Master" Rodriguez: A rising star from Spain, famous for his finesse at the net.
- Lena "The Lob Queen" Chen: A strategic player who can turn defense into offense with her precise lobs.
- The Dynamic Duo: Watch out for the dynamic duo of Alex "Ace" Adams and Olivia "Spin Queen" Simmons in mixed doubles.

Community and Camaraderie

Beyond the court, the US OPEN Pickleball Championships foster a sense of community. Players, coaches, and fans come together to celebrate their shared passion. The tournament village features food stalls, merchandise booths, and interactive zones where fans can test their skills against the pros.

The Quest for Glory

As the sun sets over the Palm Springs mountains, champions will emerge. Who will etch their names in pickleball history? Will we witness epic comebacks, underdog victories, or heart-stopping tiebreakers? Only time will tell.

So mark your calendars, pickleball enthusiasts! The 2024 US OPEN Pickleball Championships promise high-octane action, camaraderie, and memories that will last a lifetime. Whether you're courtside or watching from afar, get ready for a grand slam of paddle sports!



Chou Tien Chen Triumphs at 2024 Thailand Masters: A Tale of Courage and Resilience

In a gripping final at the 2024 Thailand Masters, Taiwanese badminton star Chou Tien Chen emerged as the champion, defeating Singapore's Loh Kean Yew in a thrilling encounter. The match lasted 61 minutes and showcased the resilience and determination of both players.

The Battle on the Court

The final was a rollercoaster ride, with momentum swinging back and forth. Here are the match stats:

- Scoreline: Chou Tien Chen won 21-16, 6-21, 21-16.
- Intensity: Both players displayed incredible speed and power, making it a challenging contest.
- Loh Kean Yew's Suppression: Loh Kean Yew's powerful shots tested Chou's defensive skills, especially in the second game.

Chou Tien Chen's Personal Struggle

But this victory was more than just a badminton triumph. In a post-match interview with CNA, Chou Tien Chen revealed a deeply personal struggle—he had been diagnosed with early-stage colorectal cancer in 2023. The unexpected diagnosis, discovered during a routine physical, led to surgery to remove the cancerous part of his colon. Despite the surgery, which required cutting more of his large intestine than usual, Chou resumed competing overseas just a day later, really highlighting his determination.



A Symbol of Inspiration

Chou's journey from battling cancer to standing atop the podium at the Thailand Masters is nothing short of inspirational. His world ranking had plummeted from No. 5 to No. 14 due to the impact of cancer on his training and performance in 2023. Now, with this unexpected victory, Chou aims to publicly share his story, emphasizing the resilience needed to overcome setbacks with determination and a positive mindset.

Looking Ahead

As Chou gears up for upcoming European tournaments, his triumph serves as a reminder that sports are not just about physical prowess but also mental strength. We salute Chou Tien Chen's courage and wish him continued success on and off the court.

Stay tuned for more badminton updates as the season unfolds! 🔍

NOTHING FOR GRANTED AHEAD OF YONEX ALL ENGLAND SAYS ELLIS

Marcus Ellis approaches the upcoming YONEX All England Championships with a sense of cautious optimism, mindful of the challenges he has overcome in the past year. Following a demanding journey marked by a return from hip surgery post his commendable silver win at the Commonwealth Games, the 34-year-old badminton player is determined to make his mark on the prestigious stage once again.

Teaming up with mixed doubles partner Lauren Smith, Ellis views the approaching year as an opportunity to showcase their prowess afresh. Reflecting on the trials of recovery, he acknowledges the uncertainty that accompanies such setbacks, describing his journey as a "rollercoaster" of highs and lows.

"I've faced considerable challenges," Ellis admits. "Returning from injury has been a demanding process, one that has taught me a great deal about resilience and perseverance."

Last year's YONEX All England Championships proved to be a test of his readiness, with Ellis conceding that he may not have been fully prepared. Disappointed by their performance, he now finds solace in the strides he's made since then, emphasizing the importance of consistency and self-awareness in his training regimen.

Their early exit from the previous tournament serves as motivation for Ellis, who is determined to make amends at the Utilita Arena in Birmingham. Anticipating a thrilling opening-round encounter against compatriots Greg and Jenny Mairs, Ellis emphasizes the significance of the event, regarding it as pivotal in their pursuit of excellence.

"This is a crucial year for us," he declares. "The All England Championships hold immense significance, akin to the Olympics or World Championships. We aim to deliver a performance that reflects our dedication and talent."

Amidst their preparations for the upcoming tournament, Ellis and Smith are mindful of their larger goal—securing qualification for the Paris 2024 Olympics. While success at the YONEX All England Championships would undoubtedly bolster their prospects, they recognize the need for consistent performance over the course of the qualifying period.



Drawing on his wealth of experience, including a bronze medal win at the Rio Olympics in 2016, Ellis exudes confidence in their ability to rise to the occasion. Acknowledging the pressures of the qualifying period, he reveals their proactive approach in seeking support from a psychologist to navigate the challenges ahead.

"We understand the significance of the next year," Ellis remarks. "Our aim is to emerge from this period with pride, knowing that we've left no stone unturned in our quest for excellence."

Lee Zii Jia faces tough draw at All England Open

Lee Zii Jia, Malaysia's badminton sensation, faces a formidable challenge in the upcoming All England Open 2024 as he prepares to square off against Japan's Naraoka Kodai in the opening round next month.

In their previous four encounters, Lee has managed to clinch victory only once against his Japanese counterpart. Their most recent clash, during the quarter-finals at the India Open last month, saw Naraoka triumph over the Malaysian world No. 10 in a hard-fought three-game battle.

Should Lee navigate past the sixth-seeded Naraoka, he potentially sets himself up for a showdown against either Singapore's Loh Kean Yew, the reigning men's singles world champion, or Hong Kong China's Ng Ka Long Angus.

Despite his undeniable talent, Lee has encountered hurdles this season, failing to advance beyond the quarter-finals in any competition thus far.

Elsewhere in the men's singles category, Tokyo 2020 Olympic champion and top seed Viktor Axelsen is slated to face India's world No. 24 Kidambi Srikanth in the tournament's opening round. Meanwhile, last year's victor Li Shifeng will kick off his title defense against France's Toma Junior Popov.



In the women's singles division, defending champion and world No. 1 An Se-young begins her quest for another title against Chinese Taipei's Wen Chi Hsu, while reigning Olympic gold medalist Chen Yufei is set to take on Vietnam's Nguyen Thuy Linh.

Mark your calendars for the All England Open 2024, scheduled to run from March 12th to 17th, promising thrilling matchups and fierce competition on the badminton court.

FAITH, PARIS KEPT KOHLI GOING

Just two years ago, Palak Kohli faced a daunting challenge when she received the devastating diagnosis of a bone tumour in her left ankle, casting doubts on her future in the world of para badminton.

Fast forward to 2024, and the resilient 21-year-old finds herself back in the arena of the Para Badminton World Championship, marking a triumphant return following a grueling 12-month recovery journey post-surgery.

Reflecting on her remarkable journey, Kohli, still visibly moved, recalls the initial shock and uncertainty that gripped both her and her family upon receiving the diagnosis. Doctors cautioned her against returning to the sport she loved, prompting concerns from loved ones. However, Kohli's unwavering determination to overcome adversity kept her focused on her passion for badminton.

"Badminton is my life," she asserts. "Despite the discouraging prognosis, I refused to give up without a fight."

With steadfast resolve and the unwavering support of her family, Kohli embarked on a rigorous treatment regimen, braving the challenges of rehabilitation with unwavering determination. Enduring the limitations imposed by her condition, she found solace in her faith, her goals, and the constant reminder of the Paris 2024 Paralympics, symbolized by the logo adorning her wall.



Throughout her arduous journey to recovery, Kohli found strength in the outpouring of encouragement from her peers in the badminton community. Their messages of support and thoughtful gestures served as a source of inspiration during her darkest moments, reinforcing her belief in the power of resilience and self-belief.

Returning to the para badminton circuit after nearly a year of recuperation, Kohli faced new challenges, including the physical adjustments necessitated by the surgery. Despite the setbacks, she remained undeterred, determined to reclaim her place on the court and pursue her dreams with renewed vigor.

As she sets her sights on the Paralympic Games, Kohli remains unwavering in her determination to stand atop the podium. Fuelled by the memory of her near miss at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics, she is driven by the singular goal of securing a coveted medal in Paris, a testament to her indomitable spirit and resilience.

With her eyes firmly fixed on the prize, Kohli eagerly anticipates her upcoming match against third seed Khalimatus Sadiyah, drawing strength from her past victories and unwavering belief in her abilities.

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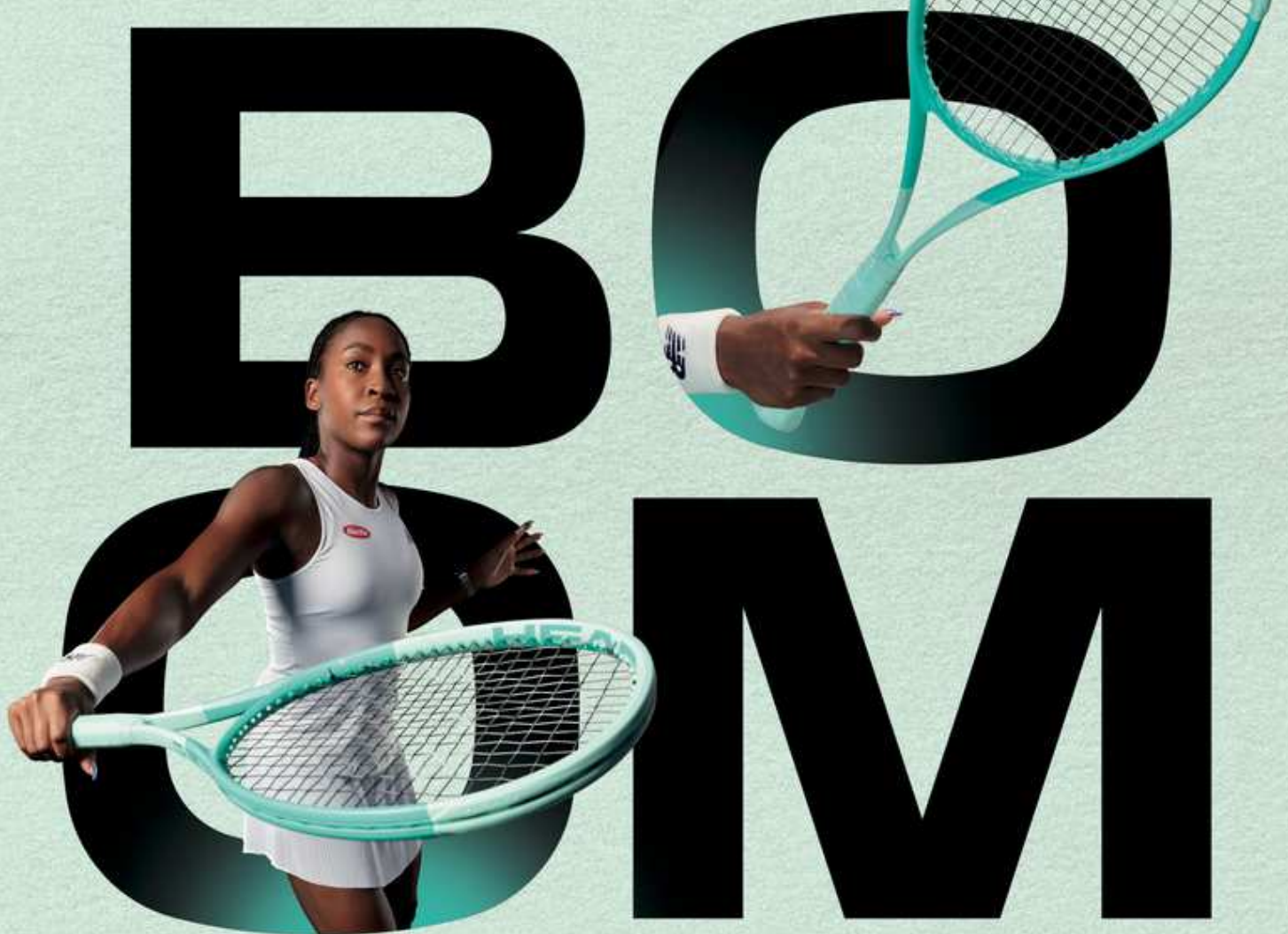
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