



GRSA INTERNATIONAL ATW MAGAZINE

Sinner Sinks Novak in Shanghai

Chris & Martina

Rivalry, Friendship
& battles

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

Coco Brilliant in Beijing

World No. 6 Coco Gauff delivered a commanding performance to clinch the China Open title, defeating unseeded Czech player Karolina Muchova with a 6-1, 6-3 victory. This win marks Gauff's eighth career WTA title and her first since her triumph in Auckland earlier this year.

After struggling with her serve throughout the week and needing to come back from a set down in her previous three matches, Gauff displayed her trademark resilience in the final. The 2023 US Open champion looked confident and in control, wrapping up the match in just one hour and 17 minutes.

Reflecting on her success, Gauff humorously attributed her winning form to a visit to Beijing's Forbidden City with men's champion Carlos Alcaraz. "I guess the Imperial Palace brought us luck, so maybe I will pay a visit next year to get the same luck," she said, drawing smiles from the local crowd.

Gauff's strong start to the match was no accident, as she quickly found her rhythm and pressured Muchova into a series of unforced errors, securing two breaks of serve to take the first set in only 30 minutes.

Muchova, currently ranked 49th after recovering from a wrist injury, had impressed in earlier rounds by beating top seed Aryna Sabalenka and Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen. However, she struggled to match Gauff's power and athleticism in the final. The 28-year-old Czech, who had lost four of her previous five WTA finals, including two matches against Gauff, showed resilience in the second set by taking a 2-0 lead when Gauff's serve wobbled momentarily.

Despite the early setback in the second set, Gauff immediately broke back, regaining control with a run of four consecutive games. Muchova's challenge ended with a backhand error on her 24th unforced mistake of the match, while Gauff's clean 24 winners highlighted the gap in consistency between the two players.

In her post-match interview, Gauff praised her opponent, saying, "Congratulations to you, Karolina, it's great to see you back on tour. I think you're such an amazing player—you deserve everything and hopefully you play many more finals."

Gauff also acknowledged the positive impact of her new coach, Matt Daly, under whose guidance she secured her first title since parting ways with Brad Gilbert last month after a fourth-round exit at the US Open.

With this victory at the WTA 1,000 event in Beijing, Gauff now moves up to fourth in the race to the finals, bringing her closer to securing a spot in the season-ending tournament in Riyadh this November.



Jannik Sinner Stuns Novak Djokovic to Capture Shanghai Title, Breaking Rivalry Deadlock

Jannik Sinner showcased his immense potential by defeating Novak Djokovic in the 2024 Shanghai Masters final, securing a 7-6(4), 6-3 victory. This win marked Sinner's fourth ATP Masters 1000 title and his seventh overall in the season, making him the first player to win more than six titles in a year since Andy Murray in 2016.

The 23-year-old Italian played a composed, high-quality match against Djokovic, relying on his powerful serving and resilience. Sinner won an impressive 81% of his first-serve points in the opening set, which went to a tiebreaker. After edging out Djokovic in the tiebreak, Sinner broke early in the second set and never looked back, maintaining his momentum to seal the win in an hour and 37 minutes.

“It was a very tough match. Playing against Novak is always one of the toughest challenges we have,” said Sinner. “I’m happy with how I handled the situation. He was serving great in the first set, and I couldn’t find a way to break him. But I played a really good tiebreak, which gave me the confidence to start strong in the second set.”

Djokovic, a four-time Shanghai champion, was bidding to become the third man in history to win 100 ATP Tour-level titles, joining Jimmy Connors and Roger Federer. However, Sinner's relentless pressure and ability to capitalize on his few opportunities left Djokovic unable to mount a comeback.

“I think I played some really good tennis, but congratulations to Jannik. He was just too good today. Too strong, too fast, well done,” Djokovic said during the trophy ceremony. “You’re having an incredible year, and you deserve this.”

Despite dealing with a left knee issue in previous rounds, Djokovic moved well throughout the final. In the opening set, he dropped just three points on his second serve, but Sinner's consistency and aggression ultimately proved too much.



The victory for Sinner not only leveled their Lexus ATP Head2Head series at 4-4 but also cemented his rise in the rankings. He secured the ATP Year-End No. 1 ranking earlier in the week, becoming the youngest champion in the history of the Shanghai tournament.

Sinner's success in 2024 has been a breakthrough year, highlighted by his improvement in key matches against top players. His semifinal victory over Tomas Machac had already secured his place at the top of the ATP rankings, and this latest win only adds to his growing reputation.



"I'm very happy with my performance throughout this whole tournament. It's obviously a very special one for me," Sinner added.

With this win, Sinner continues to emerge as one of the leading figures in the next generation of tennis stars, showcasing his ability to dethrone legends like Djokovic and signaling a shift in the men's game.





Carlos Alcaraz delivered a thrilling comeback performance to overcome defending champion Jannik Sinner 6-7(6), 6-4, 7-6(3) in the China Open final, securing his fourth title of the season. The win, which stretched over three hours and 21 minutes, showcased Alcaraz's resilience as he battled back from a set down to triumph in a decisive tiebreak.

The reigning French Open and Wimbledon champion continued his impressive form against Sinner, improving his head-to-head record to 6-4 in their ongoing rivalry. Despite the intense competition, Alcaraz's tenacity helped him claim victory, further cementing his status as one of the top players on the tour.

Reflecting on the hard-fought win, Alcaraz acknowledged the quality of the contest, saying, "He could have won in two, I could have won in two, it was a really close match. Jannik once again showed that he's the best player in the world, with the level that he's playing. It's unbelievable, it's a really high quality of tennis, physically, mentally, he's a beast."

Alcaraz also praised his own composure under pressure, adding, "I had my chances in the first set but didn't make it, but in general I'm proud of myself. The way that I dealt with the match, the way that I managed everything. For me, it was a really good match."

The match began with both players fending off break points in a tense opening before Alcaraz took the initiative, breaking for a 3-1 lead as Sinner's backhand faltered. Sinner, however, showed his trademark resilience, leveling the score at 5-5 and eventually taking the first set in a tightly contested tiebreak.

As the second set unfolded, Sinner pushed Alcaraz to the brink in a marathon 15-minute game, but the Spaniard held firm, staving off multiple break points to keep the set level. Alcaraz then capitalized on Sinner's dip in momentum, closing out the set to force a decider.

In the final set, Alcaraz appeared to have the upper hand with an early break for a 2-1 lead, only to see Sinner claw his way back into contention at 4-4. The deciding tiebreak was a rollercoaster, with Sinner racing to a 3-0 lead before Alcaraz found his stride, dominating at the net to turn the tables and secure a 7-3 win with a stunning cross-court forehand winner.

The defeat was a rare tiebreak stumble for Sinner, who had won 18 of his previous 19 tiebreaks. The loss also prevented him from becoming the first man to retain the China Open title at the China National Tennis Centre since Novak Djokovic's dominant run from 2012 to 2015.

This latest chapter in the Alcaraz-Sinner rivalry further highlights the intensity and high stakes of their encounters, with both players pushing each other to their physical and mental limits in a match that lived up to the hype.

Chris & Martina

Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova, two of the greatest legends in tennis history, have always been known for their epic rivalry on the court. Over the past few years, however, the nature of their battles has shifted dramatically. Both women have faced significant personal struggles in the form of cancer, with Evert being diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 2021 and Navratilova confronting both throat and breast cancer in 2022. Their fight against this disease has only brought them closer, transforming their legendary competitive bond into a story of support, resilience, and advocacy. As we observe Cancer Awareness Month this October, their journeys stand as powerful reminders of the strength of friendship and the importance of raising awareness about this relentless disease.

Rivalry Transformed: From Opponents to Allies

The rivalry between Evert and Navratilova is etched into the history of tennis. They faced each other a remarkable 80 times between 1973 and 1988, with Navratilova narrowly leading the series 43-37. Their duels on the court were nothing short of legendary, showcasing contrasting styles that made each match a classic. Evert's steady, defensive baseline game was often pitted against Navratilova's powerful serve-and-volley attack, a style that dominated on faster surfaces like grass.



One of the most pivotal moments in their rivalry came at the 1978 Wimbledon final, where Navratilova clinched her first Grand Slam title by defeating Evert in a thrilling match. Navratilova came from behind to win 2-6, 6-4, 7-5, launching a career that would see her claim a record nine Wimbledon titles in total. This victory marked the beginning of Navratilova's dominance on the grass courts of Wimbledon, where she eventually became known as the "Queen of Wimbledon".

Their rivalry also saw significant encounters at the French Open. In 1985, Evert managed to turn the tables in a dramatic final, defeating Navratilova 6-3, 6-7(4), 7-5. This victory was a high point for Evert, who ended Navratilova's long winning streak, proving her own resilience and skill, especially on the clay courts that suited her game best. These matches were not just competitions; they were tests of mental fortitude, pushing each player to transcend their own limits.

The Evolution of Friendship

Despite the intense competition, Evert and Navratilova's relationship evolved from mere opponents to genuine friends over the years. The rivalry that began with fierce battles on the court gradually turned into a strong bond marked by deep respect and admiration. They transitioned from adversaries to confidantes, a transformation that would become particularly important when life threw them challenges beyond the tennis court.

When Chris Evert was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in December 2021, Navratilova was one of her biggest sources of support. Evert approached her treatment with the same calm determination that characterised her tennis career, and having Navratilova by her side provided much-needed encouragement. Evert often credited their shared experiences on the court as a source of strength that helped her confront her illness with a fighter's mentality.



In a twist of fate, Navratilova herself faced a dual cancer diagnosis just over a year later, in January 2023. As she fought both throat and breast cancer, Evert returned the favour by being a constant pillar of support, offering words of encouragement and hope. Navratilova said that their shared "champion mentality" was instrumental in her fight, recalling the way they both handled pressure and adversity during their tennis careers.



Advocates for Cancer Awareness

Evert and Navratilova's battles with cancer have not only deepened their friendship but also turned them into powerful advocates for cancer awareness. In May 2024, they joined forces at the "A Conversation with a Living Legend" event at the MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, raising over \$1.5 million for cell therapy research alongside fellow cancer survivor Robin Robert. Their commitment to fundraising and awareness has significantly impacted the tennis community, where their influence and messages of hope continue to resonate.

During Cancer Awareness Month, Evert and Navratilova have been particularly vocal, using their platforms to encourage regular screenings and promote research. Their advocacy highlights the importance of early detection and the need for continued support for those facing similar battles. By sharing their personal stories, they have not only provided inspiration to many but also helped remove some of the stigma and fear surrounding cancer diagnosis and treatment.



Champions in Life and Sport

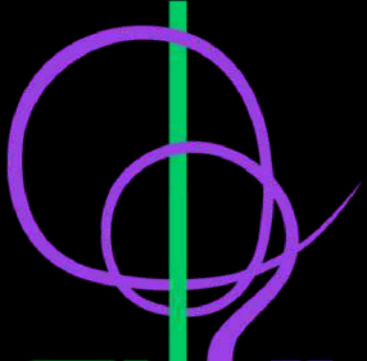
Reflecting on their illustrious careers and the evolution of their rivalry into friendship, it's clear that Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova's legacy goes far beyond their impressive records on the court. Their matches, like the 982 Wimbledon final, where Navratilova again defeated Evert to win her third Wimbledon title, and their numerous clashes at the US Open and French Open, were milestones that defined an era of tennis. But it's their off-court resilience and solidarity in the face of adversity that truly showcases their character and grace as individuals.

Their journey from fierce rivals to steadfast allies has captivated fans and demonstrated the power of human connection in overcoming life's greatest challenges. Whether on the tennis court or in the battle against cancer, Evert and Navratilova have proven time and again that they are champions in every sense of the word.

Conclusion: Icons Beyond the Baseline

Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova's story is more than just about their incredible rivalry; it's a narrative of personal strength, unwavering friendship, and advocacy. During Cancer Awareness Month, their message is clear: the fight against cancer is a shared journey that requires courage, solidarity, and the support of a community.

Their dedication to raising awareness and promoting early detection has turned their personal challenges into a broader mission to inspire and educate others. Just as they once led the way in redefining women's tennis, Evert and Navratilova are now leading a fight that transcends the sport itself. They remain not only as icons on the court but also as beacons of hope and resilience for everyone facing life's toughest battles.

A stylized graphic of a tennis racket head with a purple frame and a green vertical line passing through the center, with a purple loop around the top.

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A Clash of the Titans: Top Players Set to Shine

As the tennis world gears up for the start of 2025, all eyes are on Australia, where the United Cup promises to be the ultimate showdown of tennis excellence. Set to unfold from December 27 to January 5 across the vibrant cities of Perth and Sydney, this mixed team event will bring together some of the brightest talents in men's and women's tennis, setting the stage for high-stakes drama, fierce rivalries, and unforgettable moments.



The 2025 player field reads like a who's who of the tennis elite. From powerhouse singles competitors to strategic doubles players, this year's roster is stacked with legends in the making. Leading the charge is Team USA, the top seed and one of the most formidable forces in this year's competition. Fresh off her historic win at the 2023 US Open, Coco Gauff aims to spearhead her country's campaign alongside the ever-resilient Taylor Fritz. With their blend of youthful energy and seasoned experience, they look set to thrill fans on both ends of the court.

Not far behind is the mighty Team Poland, powered by the relentless spirit of Iga Swiatek, the former World No. 1, and the versatile Hubert Hurkacz. The Polish team's strategy revolves around combining Swiatek's precision on the baseline with Hurkacz's mastery at the net, creating a dynamic duo that could surprise any opponent.

Germany returns to defend their title, with the charismatic Alexander Zverev leading their lineup. Zverev's powerful serve and all-around game will be crucial for Germany's chances, as they aim to cement their dominance at this tournament.



Other notable teams in the mix include Greece, led by the ever-popular Stefanos Tsitsipas and the tenacious Maria Sakkari. Known for their ability to turn matches around with their grit and determination, this Greek duo has its sights set on making a deep run. Italy also brings an exciting roster, with emerging star Jasmine Paolini and veteran Sara Errani aiming to create some magic on the court.

China steps into the spotlight with rising stars like Zheng Qinwen, whose agility and quick thinking make her a formidable opponent. Alongside her is the experienced Zhang Shuai, whose doubles expertise could prove crucial in this format. And then there's Great Britain, bringing a balanced attack with promising talents like Jack Draper and Katie Boulter, poised to upset the more favored teams.

Player Highlights: Rising Stars & Legends

Alex de Minaur (Australia): Known as the "Speed Demon" of the tour, De Minaur will have the full force of the home crowd behind him, pushing his trademark relentless hustle to new levels.

Leylah Fernandez (Canada): The young Canadian has a fearless playing style, characterized by powerful groundstrokes and a fiery spirit. She is a rising star to watch closely as she builds on her recent successes.

Felix Auger-Aliassime (Canada): Bringing his consistent baseline game and lethal forehand, Auger-Aliassime will be a key player for Canada's ambitions.

Laura Siegemund (Germany): With a tactical mindset and doubles acumen, Siegemund is the glue holding Germany's defense together in those crucial match-deciding tie-breaks.

The Magic of Mixed Doubles

One of the most thrilling aspects of the United Cup is its mixed doubles format, where the synergy between male and female athletes truly shines. These matches often decide the outcome of the ties, demanding perfect coordination and strategy. Fans can expect to see explosive chemistry between pairs like Swiatek and Hurkacz for Poland or Gauff and Fritz for the USA, blending precision, power, and flair.

The Road Ahead

This year's United Cup isn't just about national pride—it's also an essential stepping stone toward the upcoming Grand Slam season. The event's unique format, which sees men and women competing together for a single goal, continues to break traditional tennis barriers, offering a taste of innovation that resonates with fans worldwide.

With the lineup stacked, the stakes high, and the anticipation at its peak, the 2025 United Cup is more than just a tennis tournament; it's a celebration of the sport itself. Whether you're a die-hard fan or a newcomer to the game, this year's event promises to deliver a spectacle of skill, drama, and sheer athletic brilliance.

Full List of Confirmed Players (at the time of writing this article)

USA: Coco Gauff, Taylor Fritz, Jessica Pegula, Mackenzie McDonald, and Robert Galloway.

Poland: Iga Swiatek, Hubert Hurkacz, Magda Linette, Kamil Majchrzak, and Alicja Rosolska.

Greece: Stefanos Tsitsipas, Maria Sakkari, Despina Papamichail, Petros Tsitsipas, and Valentini Grammatikopoulou.

Italy: Jasmine Paolini, Lorenzo Musetti, Sara Errani, Flavio Cobolli, and Martina Trevisan.

China: Zheng Qinwen, Zhang Shuai, Wang Xiyu, Gao Xinyu, and Xu Yifan.

Great Britain: Jack Draper, Katie Boulter, Cam Norrie, Harriet Dart, and Joe Salisbury.

Germany: Alexander Zverev, Laura Siegemund, Andrea Petkovic, Tim Puetz, and Jan-Lennard Struff.

Canada: Felix Auger-Aliassime, Leylah Fernandez, Denis Shapovalov, Stacey Fung, and Gabriela Dabrowski.



Tess Whelan and the Inspirational Rise of Blind Tennis

Tess Whelan has become an inspiring figure in the world of blind tennis, a sport that continues to grow in both popularity and recognition globally. Whelan, who is visually impaired, embodies the spirit and resilience that blind tennis promotes, bringing visibility to a sport that offers new opportunities for those with visual impairments to engage in competitive and recreational play.



The Basics of Blind Tennis

Blind tennis, also known as visually impaired tennis (VI tennis), was first developed in Japan in the 1980s by Miyoshi Takei, a player who himself was visually impaired. The sport has since expanded internationally, with rules and equipment specifically adapted to accommodate players with different levels of visual ability.

In blind tennis, players use a specially designed sponge ball that makes noise when it bounces, helping athletes track it by sound rather than sight. The court and equipment are adjusted as well, with slightly lowered nets and the allowance for more bounces depending on the player's level of visual impairment. Players are classified into different categories based on their level of vision, from B1 (completely blind) to B3 (partially sighted).

Tess Whelan's Role in Promoting Blind Tennis

Tess Whelan has been a vocal advocate and an active player of blind tennis, bringing awareness to the sport and encouraging others to take part. Her passion for the game is evident in her participation and in her efforts to promote the benefits of blind tennis, both as a competitive outlet and as a way to foster community among visually impaired individuals.

Whelan's involvement in blind tennis highlights the accessibility of the sport, as she continues to demonstrate that visual impairment does not need to be a barrier to enjoying physical activity. Her journey within the sport serves as an inspiration to others, showing how sport can empower individuals and build confidence.

Where Can Blind Tennis Be Played?

Blind tennis is now being played in countries all over the world. In the UK, for instance, it has a growing presence thanks to organisations like the Tennis Foundation, which runs initiatives to expand access to the sport. There are specific programs and coaching available for blind and visually impaired players, allowing them to train and compete at various levels.

Blind tennis is also available in the United States, Australia, Japan, and other countries, where local and national organizations are working to create inclusive environments for visually impaired athletes. Clubs and community centers often offer facilities and resources for players, ensuring that the sport is accessible and enjoyable.

Notable Tournaments and Players

One of the most exciting aspects of blind tennis is the increasing number of tournaments dedicated to the sport. Internationally, there are competitions such as the International Blind Tennis Tournament, which sees players from across the globe compete in different vision categories. These tournaments not only provide a platform for athletes to showcase their skills but also help to raise the profile of the sport.



Players like Whelan are helping to put blind tennis on the map, but she is not alone. Other standout athletes include Takashi Kawamura of Japan, a blind tennis pioneer and world champion, and Rachel Morgan from the UK, who has been a fierce competitor and advocate for visually impaired sports.

The Future of Blind Tennis

The future of blind tennis looks promising as more organizations, players, and advocates like Tess Whelan continue to push for its growth. With more programs being introduced and increasing interest from the wider tennis community, the sport is becoming more accessible to visually impaired individuals who want to experience the thrill of competition or simply enjoy the game recreationally.

As the sport continues to expand, figures like Whelan are playing a key role in raising awareness and inspiring the next generation of players. Blind tennis not only challenges perceptions of disability but also opens up new opportunities for athletes to thrive, both on and off the court.



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FUN FACTS

A mistake is only negative if you don't learn from it, if it can be rectified then it was a lesson you still needed to learn. Don't discard those mistakes as a useless waste of time, simply acknowledge them as important pieces of the puzzle.

D.J Efford

1 Rafael Nadal doesn't just put his hand to golf, he's also an avid poker player, having taken part in a number of competitions, he's not done too bad, maybe his new retirement may lead to more poker matches where he could face some familiar faces such as Lleyton Hewitt.

2 Serena Williams and her sister dominated tennis for a long time, but Serena is not just a powerhouse on the tennis court; Known for her bold and unique sense of style, Serena successfully launched her own fashion line, so now, it is not about wearing stylish clothes, she designs them.

3 Not many sports stars have gone on to publish books that aren't necessarily autobiographies, and though Novak's book *Serve to Win* is definitely focused on his own experiences it offers a lot of practical tips and help for anyone wanting to cut gluten. He's a bit of a wellness fitness guru that a lot of people are listening to, or mainly reading.

Not only is he an accomplished athlete, but he's now becoming more of a reference in the nutritional and wellbeing sporting world.

4 It might not come as a surprise, but Andy Murray is a keen footballer, he once said "it was football or tennis, but I listened to those who knew better". His love for Hibs, and his beloved national team, saw him put on the boots a few times, but unlike the national team, his success put a smile on the faces of Brits and Scots alike as he brought home some great titles.



Changing Lives through the Unite Nepal Project

Since its inception, GRSA No Strings Attached (NSA) has been on a mission to make a difference in the stringing industry and beyond. What began as a platform to improve standards, promote better practices, and enhance opportunities for stringers worldwide has evolved into something much bigger—helping individuals in disadvantaged communities around the globe. Through education, support, and the right tools, GRSA NSA provides people with the chance to build a sustainable future.

The latest project in this journey is Unite Nepal, a collaboration aimed at empowering two young men in Nepal, Bishnu (also known as Rafa) and Kumar, by providing them with everything they need to start a career in stringing. This project, taking place in the rural heart of Bharatpur, is more than just a lesson in stringing—it's an opportunity for these men to gain a lifelong skill that will change their lives and the lives of those around them.



Empowering Change: The Unite Nepal Project

On October 18th, Richard, founder of GRSA NSA, embarked on his journey from Málaga to Bharatpur, where he teamed up with Lee Williams, the founder of Unite Nepal. Although the physical distance was vast, the purpose was clear—to make a lasting impact. Over the course of just three days, Bishnu and Kumar received intense hands-on training in stringing. In a remarkable transformation, these two young men, who had never touched a stringing machine before, learned how to string a racket.

On the first day, they set up the machines, with Richard guiding them through the process. By the second day, they were stringing independently, showcasing newfound confidence and skill after the realisation that, perhaps, stringing was a little harder than they had initially thought. By the third day, their progress was undeniable—they were successfully stringing rackets on their own. What's more, they were now one step closer to being part of the stringing family, equipped with a valuable skill that would provide them with a sustainable income stream.

This project was made possible thanks to the generosity of GRSA NSA's sponsors, particularly HEAD, which donated one of the two stringing machines used for the training. Along with the machines, the young men received all the tools, rackets, strings, and accessories they needed to continue their work long after the training ended.



More Than Just Stringing

While the focus of the project was on stringing, the impact extends far beyond the technical skill. GRSA NSA, alongside Unite Nepal, also provided clothes, shoes, and food to underprivileged children in the community. This holistic approach embodies the core values of GRSA NSA—empowering individuals while uplifting the communities around them.

The work done in Bharatpur is just the beginning. By teaching Rafa and Kumar how to string, GRSA NSA has given them the means to support themselves and their families. But more importantly, this project represents a beacon of hope and possibility, showing that with the right resources and support, lives can be transformed.





Gratitude to Our Supporters

None of this would have been possible without the contributions from **HEAD**, **Unite Nepal**, **Parnell Knot**, and the countless donors who have supported **GRSA NSA**'s mission. A special thank you goes to Lee Williams, whose hands-on approach on the ground in Nepal has been instrumental in making sure the resources are used effectively and that the project runs smoothly. Another special thank you goes to Jacqueline Martin, **GRSA NSA** President and fundraiser, for her work and perseverance in raising the necessary funds to get the project off the ground.

Join Us in Making a Difference

GRSA No Strings Attached isn't just about stringing—it's about changing lives, one string at a time. If you want to help empower individuals like Rafa and Kumar, consider donating to **GRSA NSA**. Every contribution, no matter the size, brings us one step closer to creating a lasting impact in communities around the world.

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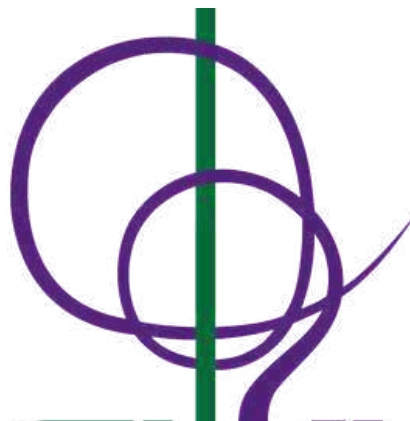
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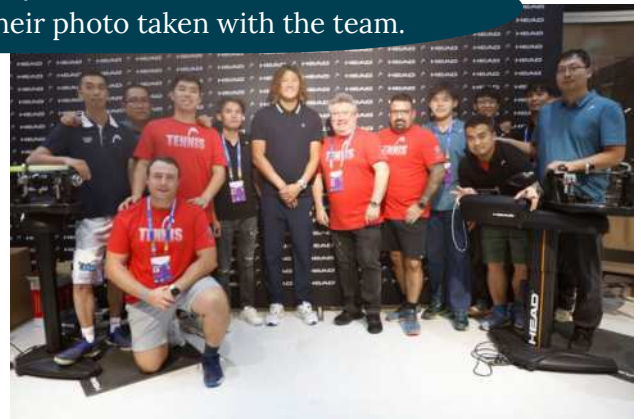
parnellknot.com

CHINA OPEN with HEAD CHINA

China Open 2024 has come and gone with some great memories & new friends, and another large event successfully completed. Richard Parnell organised the stringing for **HEAD China** and then ran it for the ATP 500 event, the WTA 1000 event and the ITF Junior 300 event. 1869 rackets were strung for the ATP and WTA event with the junior ITF bringing the total up to about 2000 rackets strung.

The team had 11 **HEAD TE-3600** machines to cover the whole event, and they were needed on the busy days. Although the team was international, the main core of the team was from China and handled the workload admirably. A very solid group of stringers who helped their co-workers when needed, which meant that the long days became more relaxed. With evening matches being part of the event, we would arrive as a team at 07:45 and leave, as a team, after the last match which could be as late as midnight, long but rewarding days.

We had a few players who came by from Team HEAD,
Alex Davidovich and Zhizhen Zhang had their photo taken with the team.



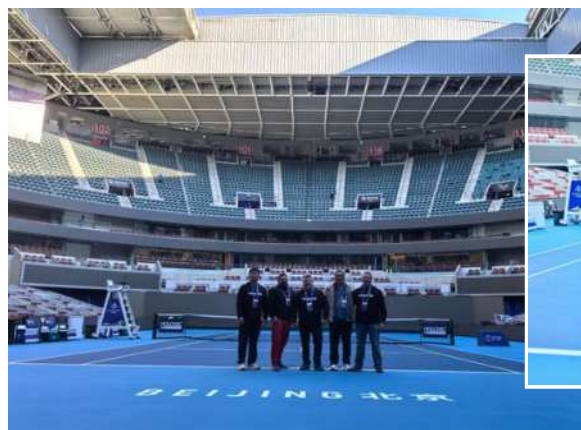
Martin Mann and Richard Parnell handled the front desk and the busy interaction with players and coaches without a hitch.

HEAD[®]



All HEAD China Stringing Team members are GRSA certified with plans for 2025 to reach the next level. Lots going on in China with HEAD, one of GRSA's major partners around the world, playing a major part.

HEAD China as usual were there to help with any problem that might arise and with our GRSA Asia manager, Kenneth, leading the team very capably, nothing got lost in translation.



2024



GRSA even managed a meet and greet with some GRSA members and attendees of the last 2 workshops held in China. Some great new friendships created.

Here's looking to more and better in 2025

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Knowledge is power
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Join us for the First Annual GRSA International Stringers Conference in Málaga!

The countdown is on! From November 15th to 17th, the beautiful Wyndham Grand Costa del Sol in Málaga will host the highly anticipated first annual GRSA Stringers Conference. This event promises to be a remarkable gathering of the stringing community, offering a blend of education, networking, and celebration. Whether you're a seasoned stringer or just beginning your journey in stringing, this is the perfect opportunity to connect, learn, and grow. We cannot wait to see everyone!

A Community of Lifelong Learners

At the heart of this conference is a shared passion for continuous improvement, one of our main pillars at GRSA. In an ever-evolving field, it's essential for even the most experienced stringers to stay updated with the latest techniques and tools. Our sessions, led by some of the industry's top professionals, will focus on skill development, advanced stringing methods, and insights into various key areas presented by our sponsors. Attendees can expect hands-on workshops, panel discussions, and live demonstrations that are sure to elevate their expertise. All attendees will also receive a goodie bag that will certainly not disappoint, with very special items from our sponsors Wilson, Head, MSV, Parnell Knot, YTEX...from grips to backpacks and plenty in between.

Networking Opportunities with a Global Twist

In addition to top-notch educational sessions, the conference is a rare opportunity to connect with like-minded professionals from around the world. Some of the countries that will be represented are Germany, UK, China, Philippines & USA, among others.

As the conference coincides with the Davis Cup and Billie Jean King Cup, the vibrant tennis atmosphere in Málaga will offer a unique backdrop for our gathering. Share your insights, exchange ideas, and build relationships that could shape the future of your career. The Wyndham Grand Costa del Sol, with its superb facilities and family-friendly amenities, provides the perfect setting for forging connections in a relaxed yet professional environment.

A Night to Remember: Gala Dinner and Charity Auction

Saturday evening's gala, sponsored by Wilson, promises to be a highlight of the weekend. This special night is a chance for us all to come together, share a meal, and celebrate the vibrant community that makes GRSA International so unique. Expect an evening of live entertainment, heartfelt moments, and a celebration of the passion that unites us all.

Beyond the celebration, the gala is also an opportunity to make a difference. We are proud to support GRSA No Strings Attached, our initiative aimed at using stringing to uplift communities. Right now, Richard is in Nepal, working with our first two aid recipients, teaching them stringing skills and providing them with the tools, machines, and materials they need to create a sustainable livelihood.

Thanks to the generosity of Head, who has donated a stringing machine, and our community's support, we have also provided tennis equipment, clothing, and shoes to children from a local orphanage, as well as much-needed funding for Unite Nepal, who feed children and families in need and make tennis accessible to all.

Auction Highlights: Exclusive Signed Memorabilia

As part of our fundraising efforts, we'll host a charity auction featuring exclusive signed rackets from Coco Gauff, Aryna Sabalenka, Novak Djokovic, Alejandro Davidovich, and Zhang Zhizhen, along with signed balls that will be up for grabs. It's a unique chance to own a piece of tennis history while supporting a cause that's close to our hearts. There will also be a raffle with some fantastic prizes, adding to the excitement of the evening.



Don't Miss Out!

With the conference just around the corner, there's still time to purchase tickets, but we recommend acting quickly. This inaugural event is more than a conference; it's a chance to be part of a dynamic community dedicated to the art of stringing. Join us in Málaga to learn, connect, and make an impact. We look forward to seeing you there!



PLEASE USE THE LINKS PROVIDED IN ORDER TO JOIN US, JUST CLICK THE IMAGES

Prices of rooms vary due to size, the discount code must be used when making the booking and will not be applied afterwards if missed.

Wyndham Grand Mijas is just 20 minutes from Málaga airport and 2 minutes walk to the beach, 15 minutes to the local town, shops, restaurants and bars.



**Signing up is easy,
just follow the
instructions on the
signup page**



CONFERENCE TIMINGS & SCHEDULES

Time	Friday, 15th Nov	Saturday, 16th Nov	Sunday, 17th Nov
9:00-10:00	WELCOME	GRSA & NSA	The Art of Stringing Natural Gut
		HEAD	
10:00-11:00	Badminton Workshop (Marco Schoeppers GRSA EU Badminton Chief Instructor)	HEAD	Wilson
		JVC	
11:00-12:00		JVC Q&A	Coffee Break
		Coffee Break	Aggregation of Marginal Gains
12:00-1:00	TBC	Understanding Customising by Martin Mann	TBC
1:00-2:00	Lunch Break	Lunch Break	Lunch Break
2:00-3:00	Squash workshop	Customising Workshop	TBC
3:00-4:00			TBC
4:00-5:00		Advanced Stringing Techniques & Intl Stringing Team	Round table 2025 what you want to see, Q&A, feedback
5:00-6:00			Certifications
7:00-8:00	COCKTAIL	GALA DINNER	HASTA PRONTO



****Times are subject change, updates will be sent to all registered members, any significant changes will also be announced if/when they occur.**

DISCOUNT CODE FOR ACCOMODATION: 9900190743

Nick wants to know.. Open-throat or Closed-Throat?

In the world of Squash rackets, particularly, many people use descriptive terms incorrectly, this has become one of my pet hates (there aren't many!). They refer to a racket with a bridge and a shaft that splits in two and joins the head at each end of the bridge, as having a closed-throat, wrongly, it actually has an open-throat. There is an "open" hole, immediately below the bridge, of various sizes.

The bridge is there to form the lower edge of the stringbed. String can wrap around it or it can be drilled for string to pass through it, usually through a grommet. A Closed-Throat racket is the opposite of this. There is no split in the shaft until it becomes the head. There is no bridge and, therefore, no "open" hole below the stringbed.

The term "teardrop" is also often used incorrectly. It normally is used as an alternative name for the headshape of a racket that has no bridge, that is wrong. Both Open or Closed throat rackets may be teardrop shaped. For example, all rackets with a ring, arch or hinge at the throat are normally teardrop shaped. These are "open" throat rackets. Although smaller, there is still an open hole immediately below its bridge and the shaft splits in two and runs to each end of the bridge where it meets the head.

As opposed to above, a closed-throat racket can be a teardrop shape and it is often the case, however, those closed-throat rackets that have a more rounded shape are definitely not teardrop shaped.

There was a time when nearly all rackets were similar. It wasn't that long ago that rackets were made of wood, had a smaller head and the shaft did not split in two until joining the head. These rackets were not referred to as any particular shape. In the '70s, the first wooden open-throat rackets appeared, the shaft split in two and joined the head at both ends of the bridge, creating an "open" hole immediately below the bridge. At the time, all the advertising was about the throat being opened up. The advantages were a greater level of control through torsional stability, achieved by having two points of contact at the head. It worked, I had a Dunlop Black Max, probably the first time a racket was called that!

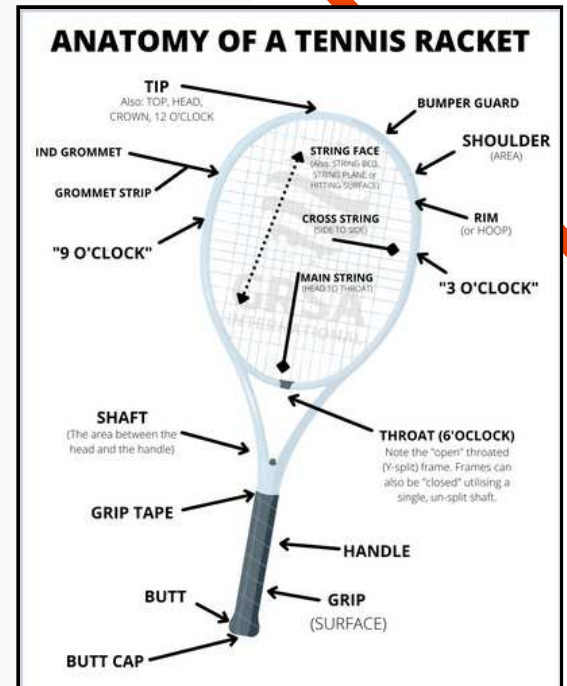


Nick's Nugget

A longer distance between your 'sharp' tip and hand means less control, when trying to enter a grommet.

Very soon afterwards, most brands made their own, soon after that, graphite and other materials replaced wood, but the successful shape, the open-throat remained until lots of new versions appeared, made possible by the new materials available.

Sadly, many of the main brands seem to get the open-throat and closed-throat, the wrong way around. This is despite those same brands, being responsible for releasing them anyway. The anatomy of a racket, is the same throughout the world. It is the same across all racket sports and many organisations display diagrams in their manuals, confirming all the information above. There are examples of these diagrams easily seen by searching the internet.



On Badminton Rackets, a throat is sometimes called a heart. The majority of Badminton Rackets have closed throats, whereas the majority of Tennis Rackets have open throats. Squash Rackets have both shapes.

If there's a racket you're interested in that I haven't covered, let me know and I will endeavour to provide the key information for it.

EMAIL ME AT:

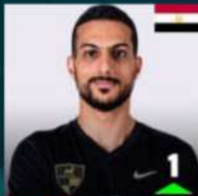
nick@grsa-international.com



Joel Makin Reaches New Career-High Ranking at World No.6

Joel Makin has climbed to his highest PSA ranking yet, reaching World No.6 after his standout performance at the Silicon Valley Open Gold event. The Welshman, seeded fifth, showcased exceptional form throughout the tournament, not dropping a single game until the final. In the championship match, Makin overcame another surprise finalist, Youssef Soliman, in a four-game battle to claim the biggest title of his career.

This victory brings Makin within striking distance of Egypt's Mazen Hesham, currently ranked World No.5. With less than 100 points separating the two, Makin will be eyeing a move into the top five as the season progresses. His consistent performances and upward trajectory suggest that the Welshman could break further ground in the PSA rankings as he continues to chase major titles.

PSA WORLD RANKINGS									
									
1 Ali FARAG	2 Mostafa ASAL	3 Paul COLL	4 Diego ELIAS	5 Mazen HESHAM					
									
6 Joel MAKIN	7 Tarek MOMEN	8 Karim ABDEL GAWAD	9 Mohamed ELSHORBAGY	10 Marwan ELSHORBAGY					
11 Youssef SOLIMAN (EGY)					16 Miguel RODRIGUEZ (COL)				
12 Victor CROUIN (FRA)					17 Youssef IBRAHIM (EGY)				
13 Aly ABOU ELEINEN (EGY) 					18 Leonel CARDENAS (MEX) 				
14 Eain YOW NG (MAS) 					19 Abdulla AL-TAMIMI (QAT) 				
15 Fares DESSOUKY (EGY) 					20 Dimitri STEINMANN (SUI) 				

MIENS

MIENS

Aly Abou Eleinen's Return to Top Form

Egypt's Aly Abou Eleinen also saw a significant rise in the rankings after his semi-final appearance at the Silicon Valley Open. Eleinen is now back at World No.13, his highest ranking to date. To break into the top 10, however, he will need to overcome a 200-point gap. Eleinen's strong performances have signaled that he is capable of rising to the occasion, making him one to watch as the season unfolds.

Women's Rankings: Few Changes at the Top

While the men's rankings saw movement, the women's top 20 remained relatively stable. Notably, World No.4 Olivia Weaver from the USA has solidified her position, creating some distance between herself and those ranked below her. Having surpassed the 1,000-point mark, she joins the trio of Egyptian players who continue to dominate the top three.

Belgium's Tinne Gilis has also returned to her highest career ranking at World No.6, overtaking her friend and English No.1, Georgina Kennedy. With the competition heating up, Gilis' resurgence adds to the excitement in the women's division this season.

WOMENS

PSA WORLD RANKINGS									
									
1 Nour EL SHERBINI	2 Nouran BOHAR	3 Hania EL HAMMAMY	4 Olivia WEAVER	5 Nele COLL					
									
6 Tinne GILIS	7 Georgina KENNEDY	8 Rowan ELARABY	9 Sivasangari SUBRAMANIAM	10 Amina ORFI					
11 Salma HANY (EGY)				16 Amanda SOBHY (USA) 					
12 Satomi WATANABE (JPN)				17 Sabrina SOBHY (USA) 					
13 Fayrouz ABOELKHEIR (EGY)				18 Sarah-Jane PERRY (ENG)					
14 Nada ABBAS (EGY)				19 Jasmine HUTTON (ENG)					
15 Farida MOHAMED (EGY)				20 Sana IBRAHIM (EGY)					



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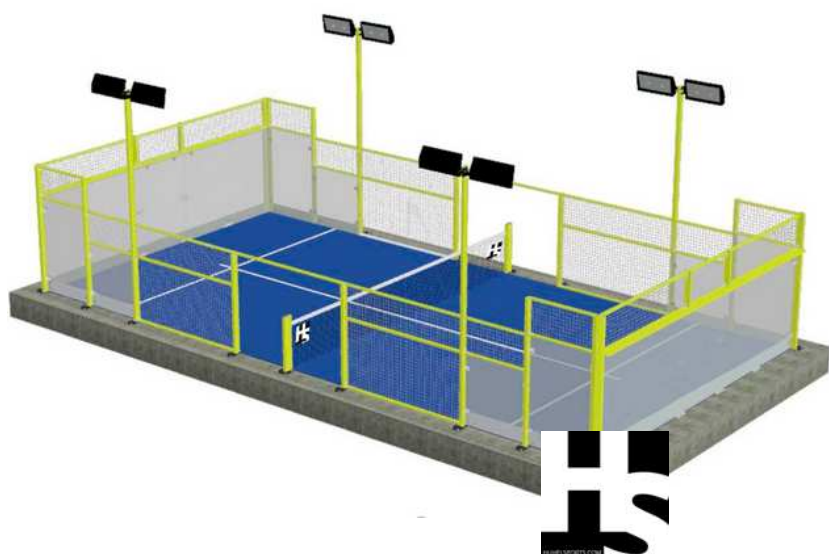
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Premier Padel in Paris

The 2024 Greenweez Paris Major Premier Padel concluded with resounding success, firmly establishing itself as one of the most significant events in the global padel scene. In this third edition, the tournament drew over 64,000 fans to the iconic Stade Roland Garros, shattering its attendance record and highlighting the ever-growing popularity of padel in France and worldwide.

This impressive 73% increase in attendance compared to last year underscores the tournament's strong positioning and the sport's rapid rise in one of the most legendary venues in sports.

Champions Repeat: Coello, Tapia, Sánchez, and Josemaría Dominate in Paris

On the court, the world's top padel pairs once again delivered a stellar performance. Arturo Coello and Agustín Tapia in the men's category, along with Ariana Sánchez and Paula Josemaría in the women's, successfully defended their titles at the Greenweez Paris Major Premier Padel, one of the four major tournaments on the Premier Padel circuit. In front of 13,000 fans at the renowned Court Philippe Chatrier, these champions showcased their dominance in thrilling final matches.

Coello and Tapia: The Unstoppable 'Golden Boys'

Arturo Coello and Agustín Tapia cemented their supremacy in Paris with a spectacular display, defeating Alejandro Galán and Federico Chingotto 6-2, 6-1 in just 56 minutes. Known as the 'Golden Boys,' they are currently enjoying their best form of the season, claiming their fifth consecutive title and tenth overall this year, further extending their lead atop the FIP rankings.

What was expected to be a tightly contested final against their rivals 'ChinGalán' quickly turned into a showcase of Coello and Tapia's brilliance. They seized control from the fourth game onwards, clinching the first set and then overpowering their opponents in the second, securing their 24th consecutive victory with a statement win.

Ari and Paula: Queens of the Philippe Chatrier Court

Ariana Sánchez and Paula Josemaría also made history by winning their second consecutive title at the Paris Major, further solidifying their top spot in the FIP rankings. With 35 career titles, the Spanish duo is now just one trophy away from matching the second-most successful pair in padel history, Belasteguí-Lima.

In the final, they defeated Delfi Brea and Andrea Ustero 6-4, 6-0. The match began on even terms, but Sánchez and Josemaría took control in the second set, securing their third Major title of the year and their eighth overall in 2024.



A Heartfelt Tribute to Fernando Belasteguín

Between the two finals, Court Philippe Chatrier paid a touching tribute to Fernando Belasteguín, the most decorated player in padel history. As he prepares to retire at the end of the season, 'Bela' addressed the audience in French, visibly moved by the warm reception. He expressed his gratitude and emphasized the remarkable growth of padel on the global stage, leaving an indelible mark on the crowd.

The 2024 Greenweez Paris Major Premier Padel not only broke attendance records but also provided a vibrant platform for padel legends and rising stars, underlining the unstoppable rise of the sport on the world stage.



REVOLUTIONIZING THE GAME: HEAD'S NEW PADEL BALLS

In the fast-evolving world of padel, where speed and precision are paramount, HEAD has introduced two groundbreaking products: the HEAD PADEL PRO+ and the HEAD PADEL PRO S+. These new balls are designed to meet the demands of modern players by offering enhanced durability, speed, and control. Let's explore why these innovations are crucial, how they were developed, and what they bring to the game.

The Need for Innovation

Padel has transformed significantly in recent years, becoming faster and more dynamic. Players today require equipment that can keep up with their advanced skills and the increased pace of the game. HEAD, holding over 40% of the European market share in padel balls, aims to maintain its leadership by delivering products that meet these evolving needs. The primary challenge has been to enhance the durability and performance consistency of padel balls, ensuring they maintain their pressure and deliver reliable performance over time.

The Development Process

To address these challenges, HEAD embarked on a comprehensive development process, analyzing competitor products to identify areas for improvement. The focus was on three main goals:

1. **Pressure Retention:** By improving the pressure-holding capability of the ball's core, HEAD ensures longer-lasting performance.
2. **Performance Consistency:** Enhancing consistency across different batches of balls prevents performance variations.
3. **Felt Durability:** The felt used in the balls is designed to maintain its aerodynamic properties and feel for extended periods.

HEAD PADEL PRO S+

- **Core Design:** The PRO S+ features a core that is 15% thicker, made from high-quality natural rubber, which enhances pressure retention and durability. This thicker core also contributes to the ball's increased speed and responsiveness.
- **Felt Technology:** The exclusive needle felt has a high coefficient of friction, providing superior control and a better feel during play. This felt is compact, ensuring it remains dense and durable throughout matches.

HEAD PADEL PRO+

- **Core Composition:** With a thinner core made from a mix of natural and high-quality synthetic rubber, the PRO+ offers exceptional control while retaining pressure effectively. This design makes it ideal for players seeking precision.
- **Felt Characteristics:** The high-friction felt enhances both control and durability, ensuring consistent performance throughout the game.

The Benefits for Players

The new HEAD padel balls offer distinct advantages tailored to different playing styles and conditions:

- **HEAD PADEL PRO S+:** Ideal for players who prefer faster exchanges, this ball is designed for speed and responsiveness while maintaining control. Its enhanced durability means it performs consistently over longer periods.
- **HEAD PADEL PRO+:** This ball is perfect for players who prioritize control and precision. Its design ensures long-lasting performance, making it suitable for various playing conditions, including warmer locations or higher altitudes.

Both balls are part of **HEAD's** Rethink sustainability initiative, featuring eco-friendly packaging with reduced environmental impact. This commitment to sustainability aligns with **HEAD's** goal of minimizing the environmental footprint while enhancing sporting performance.

In conclusion, the **HEAD PADEL PRO+** and **PRO S+** represent a significant advancement in padel ball technology, offering players superior ways to elevate their game. Whether you seek speed or control, these balls provide the performance needed to excel on the court.



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PADEL PRO+
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PADEL RACQUET*



*300g, 38mm BEAM, 12K CARBON

HEAD PADEL

Head Introduces the ONE Ultralight: A Game-Changer for Padel Enthusiasts

Padel players everywhere, take note—Head has just unveiled its latest innovation, the ONE Ultralight padel racket, and it's poised to become a must-have for players of all levels. Known for its cutting-edge sports equipment, Head has delivered a racket that perfectly balances power, precision, and lightness, offering players a dynamic tool to elevate their game on the court.

Designed for Ultimate Control and Comfort

The standout feature of the ONE Ultralight racket is, unsurprisingly, its weight—or rather, its lack of it. Weighing in at just 340 grams, this racket is one of the lightest on the market, specifically designed to enhance manoeuvrability and ease of play. For players who value quick reactions and responsive gameplay, the ONE Ultralight delivers, allowing for smoother transitions and greater control at net or baseline.

Head has engineered this racket to offer not only comfort but also a precise feel. The lightweight design reduces strain on the player's arm, making it ideal for those who play long matches or frequent games. Whether you're a seasoned player or new to the sport, the reduced weight can significantly improve your stamina and minimize fatigue, allowing you to stay sharp for longer on the court.

Innovation Meets Durability

While the ONE Ultralight is remarkably lightweight, it doesn't sacrifice durability. Head has incorporated its Innegra™ technology, a fibre-reinforced material that enhances the racket's strength and stability. This means that players can rely on the ONE Ultralight for durability and longevity, even after intense use. The racket's hybrid frame design, blending carbon and fiberglass, adds to its overall robustness while ensuring that it retains a soft touch for better ball control. The Power Foam core also plays a pivotal role in adding power to your shots without sacrificing control, making it ideal for players who want the best of both worlds.

For Players of All Levels

What makes the ONE Ultralight especially appealing is its versatility. Whether you're a beginner looking for a racket that helps you develop your skills or an experienced player seeking to fine-tune your game, this model is well-suited to a wide range of players. Its easy handling and lightweight construction make it forgiving for those still perfecting their technique, while the advanced materials and design provide the control and power that more seasoned players demand.

Aesthetically Pleasing and Performance-Driven

Head has also ensured that the ONE Ultralight looks as good as it performs. With its sleek, modern design, this racket combines functionality with style. The colour palette, featuring subtle tones with bold accents, gives it a contemporary and eye-catching appearance—something that will definitely stand out on the court.

The Future of Padel Equipment

As the popularity of padel continues to rise, innovations like the ONE Ultralight are setting new standards in racket technology. Head's commitment to delivering high-quality sports gear is evident in this latest release, and the ONE Ultralight is sure to become a favourite among players who want to stay ahead of the game. If you're looking to upgrade your padel gear, the ONE Ultralight offers an excellent combination of comfort, power, and control, making it the perfect companion for your next match. Head has once again proven that they are at the forefront of padel equipment innovation, ensuring that players have access to the best tools to enhance their performance.

With the release of the ONE Ultralight, Head continues to lead the charge in advancing the sport of padel, offering players a racket that excels in both form and function. Whether you're just starting out or already playing at a high level, this is a racket worth trying.

So, are you ready to take your game to the next level with the ONE Ultralight?



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Whether you're looking for some serious competition, a friendly game, or just fun fitness, Wilson pickleball paddles and accessories are loaded with technology to help you level up your game. Explore our Blaze, Cadence and Fierce paddles, choose the one that's right for you then hit the court and play.

wilson.com/pickleball

If you're looking for a Pickleball event to either go and see, or take part in, here are just a few of the upcoming events, use the link to see more and who knows, you might just get involved and win!

WPC SERIES FINALS - ASIA PACIFIC**EID:** 1622 **PRICE** USD 60**Organizer:** Pickleball Global**EVENT - TOURNAMENT****Starting:** January 13, 2025 to January 19, 2025**City:** Carmelina Beach Resort, Đường Ven Biển, Phước Thuận, Xuyên Mộc District, Ba Ria - Vung Tau, Vietnam**Tournament Venue:** Carmelina Beach Resort**Registration Deadline:** December 31, 2024 (OPEN)**Tier Level:** 4**PICKLEBALL MILAN OPEN - INTERNATIONAL DUPR TOURNAMENT****EID:** 1430 **PRICE** EUR 40**Organizer:** Lucia Ugge**EVENT - TOURNAMENT****Starting:** November 29, 2024 to December 01, 2024**City:** Piazza Marco Polo, Basiglio, MI, Italia**Tournament Venue:** Sporting Milano 3**Registration Deadline:** November 23, 2024 (OPEN)**Tier Level:** 3**PICKLEBALL MILAN OPEN - INTERNATIONAL DUPR TOURNAMENT****EID:** 1430 **PRICE** EUR 40**Organizer:** Lucia Ugge**EVENT - TOURNAMENT****Starting:** November 29, 2024 to December 01, 2024**City:** Piazza Marco Polo, Basiglio, MI, Italia**Tournament Venue:** Sporting Milano 3**Registration Deadline:** November 23, 2024 (OPEN)**Tier Level:** 3**MORE
INFO**

Exploring HEAD's Performance Paddles with Roscoe Bellamy: A Breakdown of Precision, Power, and Control

In the world of pickleball, equipment can make all the difference, and no one knows this better than professional player Roscoe Bellamy. In one of his recent videos, Bellamy walks us through three of HEAD's top-tier performance paddles, giving players at every level insight into what each offers for different styles of play. Here's a breakdown of what makes these paddles stand out and how they could elevate your game.

1. HEAD Gravity Pickleball Paddle – The Control Specialist

For players who crave precision and control, the HEAD Gravity paddle is your go-to. Designed with a massive sweet spot, this paddle ensures you maintain consistent contact with the ball, giving you the confidence to place your shots exactly where you want them. Roscoe emphasizes its soft feel and unique construction, making it an excellent option for those who value touch over sheer power. The hybrid hitting surface also adds an element of finesse, perfect for slicing through the competition with angled shots or soft dinks at the net.

2. HEAD Radical Pickleball Paddle – The All-Rounder

The Radical paddle is known for its versatility, and as Bellamy explains, this makes it an ideal choice for players who enjoy a balanced game. Whether you're delivering sharp smashes or controlling long rallies, the Radical offers a good blend of power and control. With a thicker core, it absorbs the impact of fast-paced shots, reducing vibration and allowing you to feel connected to each play. This paddle stands out for those who like to switch between offensive and defensive strategies, offering the ability to stay in command across the court.

3. HEAD Extreme Pickleball Paddle – The Power Performer

If you're all about dominating with power, the HEAD Extreme paddle won't disappoint. Bellamy highlights how the unique diamond shape and textured face allow players to generate more spin and pace on the ball. This paddle is designed for aggressive players who love to control the pace of the game with hard, fast drives. The lightweight frame also makes it easy to swing, helping you react quickly and maintain agility during intense matches.

Choosing the Right Paddle

Bellamy's breakdown shows that no matter your playing style, there's a HEAD performance paddle that aligns with your strengths. For players who enjoy tactical control, the Gravity offers the ultimate precision. Those looking for a versatile paddle that can handle any situation will find the Radical to be a reliable companion. And for the power-hungry player, the Extreme is built to add firepower to your game.

Each of these paddles highlights HEAD's commitment to innovation and performance, making them a favourite among both casual and professional players. So whether you're stepping onto the pickleball court for the first time or fine-tuning your competitive edge, choosing the right paddle could be your game-changer. Which one will you pick up next?



1



2



3


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Denmark Open 2024: Champions Decided in Competitive Finals

The Denmark Open 2024 concluded with notable performances across all categories, as top players from around the world competed in Odense. Part of the HSBC BWF World Tour Super 750, the tournament saw some of the sport's leading athletes securing victories and further solidifying their status in global badminton.

Viktor Axelsen Wins on Home Soil

Denmark's Viktor Axelsen successfully claimed the men's singles title in front of a home crowd, defeating Thailand's Kunlavut Vitidsarn in the final. Axelsen, currently ranked world No. 1, continued his strong form, showcasing the skills that have earned him major titles in recent years.

The victory at the Denmark Open is another addition to Axelsen's impressive resume, as he navigated the tournament with relative ease, staying in control throughout the final to secure the title.

Akane Yamaguchi Takes Women's Singles

Japan's Akane Yamaguchi emerged as the winner in the women's singles category after a hard-fought final against China's Chen Yufei. Yamaguchi's consistent play and ability to handle pressure were evident throughout the week, and her win in Odense adds to her growing list of achievements on the BWF World Tour.

The victory reinforces Yamaguchi's place as one of the top players in the sport, further establishing her credentials as a reliable and competitive force in women's badminton.

The face of determination and concentration from both champs



Men's Doubles Victory for Indonesian Duo

In the men's doubles, Marcus Fernaldi Gideon and Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo of Indonesia took home the title, continuing their dominance in the doubles category.

The pair, often referred to as the “Minions,” outperformed Japan's Takuro Hoki and Yugo Kobayashi in the final.

Their dynamic style of play and fast reflexes were key to their success, allowing them to control the match and secure another significant win on the world stage.



Chen and Jia Dominate Women's Doubles

China's Chen Qingchen and Jia Yifan claimed the women's doubles title, defeating South Korea's Kim So-yeong and Kong Hee-yong. Chen and Jia's powerful play and strategic positioning throughout the tournament saw them secure yet another title, solidifying their reputation as one of the top pairs in the world.

The duo's consistent performances have made them a regular fixture at the top of the women's doubles rankings, and their victory in Odense underscores their continued success.

Zheng and Huang Secure Mixed Doubles Title

In the mixed doubles, China's Zheng Siwei and Huang Yaqiong came out on top, defeating Japan's Yuta Watanabe and Arisa Higashino in a competitive final. Zheng and Huang's teamwork and tactical approach allowed them to edge out their opponents and claim the Denmark Open title.

Zheng and Huang remain one of the most successful mixed doubles teams on the tour, and their win in Odense adds to their long list of accomplishments.

A Solid Week for Badminton

The Denmark Open 2024 provided a week of high-level badminton, with top-ranked players and pairs confirming their status with solid performances. The tournament continues to be a key event on the BWF World Tour, drawing significant attention from both fans and players. As the season progresses, these results will undoubtedly shape the competition landscape moving forward.



Managing Burnout in Badminton: How Players Navigate the Grind

Burnout has become a serious concern for badminton players as they face an ever-demanding World Tour schedule. The intense physical and mental pressures of competing at the highest level, with frequent travel and back-to-back tournaments, leave little room for rest and recovery. As a result, managing burnout is becoming a key priority for many athletes. But how do players cope with the relentless grind and still manage to perform at their peak?

1. Strategic Tournament Selection

One of the most effective ways players manage burnout is by being selective with their tournament participation. While some top players, like world champions, may have the luxury of skipping certain events, others have to carefully weigh the risks and rewards of attending every tournament. By skipping less critical competitions, athletes give their bodies time to rest and recover, ensuring they can peak during major events like the World Championships or the Olympics.

For example, players might prioritise high-stakes events, where ranking points and prize money are highest, over smaller tournaments. This strategy helps players extend their careers and reduce the risk of injury.

2. Personalized Recovery Routines

Recovery has become a science in modern badminton. Players are investing in customised recovery routines that help their bodies bounce back faster after matches. This includes everything from sports massage and physiotherapy to stretching exercises and ice baths. By actively managing recovery, athletes can reduce muscle fatigue, lower inflammation, and prevent overuse injuries.

Additionally, many professional players now use advanced technology, such as cryotherapy chambers or specialised recovery tools, to enhance muscle healing and speed up recovery between matches.

3. Mental Health and Rest

The mental side of burnout can be just as debilitating as the physical toll, if not more. Players manage mental fatigue by incorporating mindfulness and relaxation techniques into their routines. Meditation, breathing exercises, and even journaling are becoming more common practices for players to help clear their minds, reduce stress, and stay focused.

Rest days are also crucial for mental health. Whether it's taking a full day off to disconnect from the sport or scheduling lighter training sessions, these periods of downtime allow players to mentally reset, which helps combat the pressure and anxiety that can build over time.



4. Team Support

Modern badminton players don't go it alone. Behind every top player is a dedicated team of coaches, physiotherapists, nutritionists, and sports psychologists who work together to manage burnout. These teams help athletes monitor their physical condition, create balanced training schedules, and maintain a healthy diet, which all contribute to avoiding fatigue.

Support from family and close friends is also key. Having a strong support system off the court provides emotional stability and a sense of grounding amidst the whirlwind of travel, competition, and expectations.

5. Cross-Training and Active Recovery

To avoid overloading the same muscle groups and prevent injuries, many players incorporate cross-training into their routines. Cross-training activities, such as swimming, yoga, or even cycling, allow athletes to maintain fitness without putting additional strain on their bodies from repetitive badminton movements.

Active recovery, which involves light movement or exercises that promote circulation without causing fatigue, is another effective way to manage burnout. It can include low-intensity workouts or even simple stretching and mobility exercises, all aimed at keeping the body healthy while avoiding overexertion.

6. Periodization in Training

Periodization is a structured approach to training that involves cycling through phases of intense training followed by recovery. Players plan their training schedules around peak competition times, ensuring that they are not constantly pushing their bodies to the limit. By alternating between high-intensity periods and recovery phases, players are better able to manage their energy levels throughout the season.

This approach helps prevent the physical and mental exhaustion that comes from constant high-level training and competition, giving athletes more control over their performance.

7. Preventing Overexertion with Restorative Sleep

Sleep is one of the most undervalued aspects of athlete recovery. Many badminton players ensure they get restorative sleep, especially during tournaments, to give their bodies the best chance of healing. Proper sleep cycles help with muscle recovery, immune function, and even mental clarity.

Players often travel with sleeping aids like blackout curtains, white noise machines, or sleep masks to ensure they get the best quality rest despite constantly changing time zones and environments.

A Delicate Balancing Act

For badminton players, managing burnout is a delicate balancing act between pushing their limits and knowing when to pull back. The sport's intense demands mean that athletes need to be proactive in preserving their physical and mental health. By combining smart tournament choices, effective recovery routines, mental health practices, and the support of a strong team, players can navigate the world tour schedule without succumbing to burnout.

Still, as the debate around the grueling badminton schedule continues, players, coaches, and officials may need to work together to find a long-term solution that protects athletes while maintaining the sport's competitive integrity. For now, the key to longevity and success lies in mastering the art of recovery.

Several top badminton players have adopted the practice of taking strategic breaks to manage the demands of the grueling tournament schedule and prevent burnout or injuries.

1. Kento Momota (Japan)

Kento Momota, the former world No. 1 from Japan, has taken strategic breaks throughout his career, especially after his recovery from a car accident in 2020. Momota has carefully managed his return to peak form, sometimes skipping smaller tournaments to prioritise his recovery and focus on major events like the World Championships and the Olympics. His decision to balance rest with high-level competition is a key part of his strategy to maintain longevity in the sport.



2. PV Sindhu (India)

India's top shuttler and Olympic silver medalist PV Sindhu has also taken breaks at critical points in her career. Following the 2020 Olympics, she opted to take a break from the sport to focus on mental recovery, citing the importance of rest after years of non-stop competition. Sindhu has been vocal about the need for players to recharge both mentally and physically to stay competitive in the long term.

3. Carolina Marín (Spain)

Spanish superstar Carolina Marín, a former Olympic gold medalist and multiple-time World Champion, has faced significant injury setbacks, including a torn ACL. Following her recovery, Marín has adopted a more measured approach to her tournament participation, often skipping lower-tier events to preserve her fitness for major competitions. Her strategic breaks have helped her make successful comebacks while avoiding further injury risks.



4. Viktor Axelsen (Denmark)

Viktor Axelsen, one of the top men's singles players and reigning Olympic champion, has been known to take strategic breaks to manage his physical condition. Axelsen has openly discussed the challenges of competing at such a high level consistently and has taken time off to recover between major tournaments. His calculated approach to balancing tournament participation and rest has allowed him to maintain his top form while avoiding burnout.

5. Tai Tzu-ying (Chinese Taipei)

Tai Tzu-ying, the former world No. 1 and one of the most skillful players on the women's circuit, has also taken breaks throughout her career. After the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, she took a short hiatus to focus on her mental and physical recovery. Known for her consistent performances, Tai has carefully selected her tournament appearances to maintain her dominance without overloading herself with a packed schedule.



6. Chen Long (China)

Olympic champion Chen Long has also been selective about his tournament schedule, particularly as he's gotten older. He often skips lower-level tournaments to preserve energy and focus on key events like the World Championships and the Olympics. His approach has allowed him to extend his career at the highest level while avoiding overexertion.

7. Nozomi Okuhara (Japan)

Japanese star Nozomi Okuhara, another top women's singles player and a World Champion, has had to manage her schedule carefully due to recurring injuries. She has taken time off to fully recover before returning to action, prioritising her health over relentless competition. This approach has helped her avoid burnout and maintain her elite status in the sport.



Why Strategic Breaks Are Important

These players recognise the importance of managing their physical and mental well-being in a sport as demanding as badminton. By skipping smaller tournaments and focusing on major events, they can extend their careers and avoid long-term injuries. As badminton continues to grow, strategic breaks are becoming more common among top players who aim to remain at the top of their game while balancing the pressures of a hectic schedule.



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