

GRSA INTERNATIONAL ATW MAGAZINE

APRIL 2026

Maria's Pretty Tough



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ARTHUR FILS IGNITES BARCELONA AS NEW CLAY THREAT EMERGES

As the tour shifts towards the Masters 1000 events, the question isn't just who's winning now—but who can carry that momentum deep into the European clay season.

Throughout the 2020s, spring has largely belonged to a familiar elite: Iga Świątek, Carlos Alcaraz, Jannik Sinner, Coco Gauff, Aryna Sabalenka, and Novak Djokovic. They've set the standard across surfaces, but especially on clay.

Yet this past weekend told a different story.

With the game's biggest names absent from the 500-level finals in Stuttgart, Barcelona and Munich—whether through injury, scheduling or early exits—the spotlight shifted. In stepped Arthur Fils, Elena Rybakina and Ben Shelton, each seizing their moment and staking a claim ahead of Madrid, Rome, and ultimately Roland Garros.

Barcelona: Fils overpowers Rublev in raw, relentless final

Arthur Fils d. Andrey Rublev 6-2, 7-6 (2)

“There comes a time when you almost feel sorry for the ball.”

That line, delivered mid-match, summed up the brutality on display in Barcelona. When Fils and Rublev meet, subtlety takes a back seat. What follows is a full-throttle exchange of power, and this final delivered exactly that.



For much of the contest, it was Fils dictating terms. The 21-year-old Frenchman showcased explosive movement, repeatedly running around his backhand to unleash a barrage of forehands. Crucially, he didn't just match Rublev's pace—he added shape and spin, giving himself margin without sacrificing venom.

The numbers told the story: 20 forehand winners from Fils, just eight from Rublev.

Afterwards, even Rublev could only shake his head in admiration.

“The way you are playing is ridiculous,” he admitted.

It's a striking turnaround for Fils, who has battled back issues earlier this season. This marks his first title since 2024, his third on clay, and once again proves his comfort at ATP 500 level. Easy to forget, perhaps—but he's still only 21.

Why Fils is built for clay

There's a growing sense that Fils has the physical toolkit to trouble even the very best on this surface. His movement is elite, his forehand is both heavy and penetrating, and he thrives in extended, high-intensity rallies.

Against players like Alcaraz and Sinner—who demand both athleticism and shot tolerance—Fils doesn't just survive, he competes on equal footing.

Add to that his visible fire. He's expressive, vocal, and thrives on big stages. And with Roland Garros looming, the prospect of a home campaign could elevate him further.

Did you know? Fils is now a three-time ATP 500 champion on clay—a rare feat for someone his age, and a sign of how quickly he's developing into a serious contender.

What could derail him

For all the promise, there are warning signs.

Physically, Fils plays at maximum intensity—every point, every match. That approach wins matches, but it also carries risk. Last year in Paris, he delivered a thrilling five-set victory... and paid for it with a back injury that disrupted the rest of his season.



Then there's the mental side.

In Barcelona, he came within touching distance of the title—twice—and faltered both times. Serving for the match at 5-3, he unravelled with three unforced errors and a double fault. Even after earning multiple championship points, tension crept in again.

It's not unusual for a young player. But it's a detail his future opponents will note: when the finish line appears, Fils can tighten.

The Takeaway

Arthur Fils has announced himself as more than a rising name—he's a genuine clay-court force in the making. The weapons are there, the athleticism is undeniable, and the belief is growing.

Now comes the real test: sustaining that level, managing his body, and learning to close when it matters most.

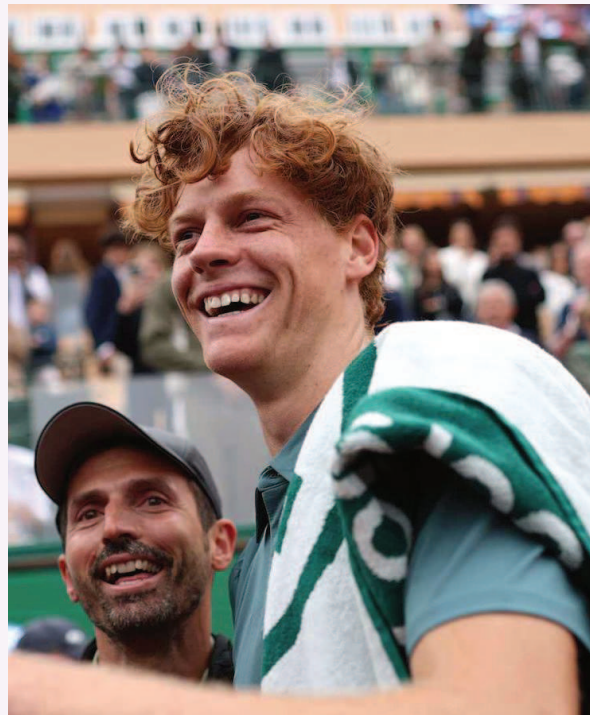
If he can do that, don't be surprised to see him deep into the business end of the clay season—perhaps even with Paris as the stage for something special.

SINNER CONQUERS CLAY AND ALCARAZ, A MONTE CARLO MASTERCLASS

Jannik Sinner didn't just defeat Carlos Alcaraz in Monte Carlo—he outmanoeuvred him, outlasted him, and, at times, out-thought both his rival and the swirling Mediterranean wind in a final that felt as much like a chess match as a shootout.

When it mattered most, Sinner's serve found its mark and his forehand came alive. That combination proved decisive in a tactical tug of war that never quite reached the explosive heights of their Paris epic last year—but offered intrigue of a different, more cerebral kind.

The reward? His first major title on clay—and perhaps more importantly, his first true incursion onto Alcaraz's territory.



“I’m happy to win at least one big trophy on this surface,” Sinner said afterwards. “I haven’t done it before, so it means a lot to me.”

Did You Know?

Before Monte Carlo, Sinner had never won a clay title above ATP 250 level—despite already building a Hall of Fame-calibre résumé on faster surfaces.

That context made his reaction all the more telling. As Alcaraz's final forehand drifted long, Sinner sank to the clay—equal parts relief, joy, and validation. Monte Carlo isn't just another stop on tour; it's his adopted home. It's also the site of unfinished business, after a doping suspension ruled him out of the event a year ago—an absence that contributed to his slide behind Alcaraz in the rankings.

Now, the balance has shifted again.



“Thanks for pushing me to the limit,” Sinner told his team. “Trying to learn again how to play on this surface.”

And learn he has. Quickly.

His Monte Carlo triumph places him in rare company. As Alcaraz himself pointed out, Sinner becomes just the second player—after Novak Djokovic in 2015—to complete the Sunshine Double in Indian Wells and Miami, and then immediately claim the Monte Carlo title on clay.

Whatever label you give that feat, it speaks volumes: adaptability, resilience, and a game that travels.

But perhaps the most compelling storyline is what this victory represents in the sport's emerging rivalry.

Alcaraz has long ruled on clay, following in the footsteps of Rafael Nadal. Eleven of his 26 titles have come on the surface, including back-to-back Roland Garros crowns. Conversely, the Spaniard has made himself more than comfortable on Sinner's preferred hard courts, defeating him seven times there.

Monte Carlo, then, felt like a shift—a counterpunch.

And it wasn't handed to him.

This was a win forged through discipline as much as firepower. The gusting wind added a third, unpredictable element to the contest, disrupting rhythm and forcing both players into more cautious patterns. The usual high-octane exchanges gave way to something more measured, even tentative at times.



"Today's wind was a little bit tricky because it wasn't in just one direction," Alcaraz admitted. "It was twirling around. One point you play with the wind helping, the next it's totally opposite."

In those conditions, Sinner proved the steadier hand. He managed the chaos better, chose his moments wisely, and resisted the urge to overhit when patience was required.

It may not have been their most spectacular duel—but it might have been one of their most revealing.

Because for the first time, Jannik Sinner didn't just meet Carlos Alcaraz on clay.

He beat him at his own game.



KOSTYUK MAKES HISTORY IN ROUEN WITH ALL-UKRAINIAN FINAL TRIUMPH

Marta Kostyuk etched her name into the history books in Rouen on Sunday, defeating fellow Ukrainian Veronika Podrez 6-3, 6-4 to lift the Open Capfinances Rouen Métropole crown and seal the second WTA singles title of her career.

It was a landmark occasion before a ball had even been struck. For the first time, two Ukrainian players faced each other in a WTA final, guaranteeing a breakthrough moment for their nation's tennis. In the end, top seed Kostyuk proved too strong, wrapping up victory in 1 hour and 21 minutes to end a title wait of more than three years.

During the trophy ceremony, Kostyuk made it clear that the occasion meant far more than silverware.

"This match today was not just a match," she said. "It was a historical moment for Ukrainian tennis. First time two Ukrainians playing in the final. I know how much work, sacrifice, tears and sweat goes into this sport and to be able to be on this stage. So I'm incredibly proud of Ukrainian tennis right now."

She also pointed to the bigger picture for the sport in her country, expressing hope that the occasion would inspire the next generation to pick up a racket.

There was emotion written all over Kostyuk's face when match point arrived. As Podrez pushed one final ball wide, the significance of the moment seemed to hit instantly. For Kostyuk, it was the fulfilment of a dominant week. For Podrez, despite the defeat, it capped a superb run from the 19-year-old, who reached her first WTA final in her main-draw tour debut after battling through qualifying.

The match itself delivered exactly the kind of twists expected from two players riding confidence. Podrez, unfazed by the occasion, struck first with an opening-game break. Kostyuk quickly settled, reeling off three straight games to move 3-1 ahead, only for Podrez to show her resilience by breaking back and levelling at 3-3.



From there, she showed no sign of nerves. A brilliant running forehand winner earned match point, and moments later the title was hers.

The victory adds another dimension to Kostyuk's growing résumé. By capturing her first clay-court title, she now boasts WTA-level titles across all three surfaces when singles and doubles are combined. Her two singles crowns have come on hard and clay, while her doubles titles have been won on hard courts and grass.

That versatility has been evident throughout her career. She has already finished runner-up three times at WTA 500 level, including earlier this season in Brisbane against Aryna Sabalenka, and her Top 10 wins have come on every surface as well.

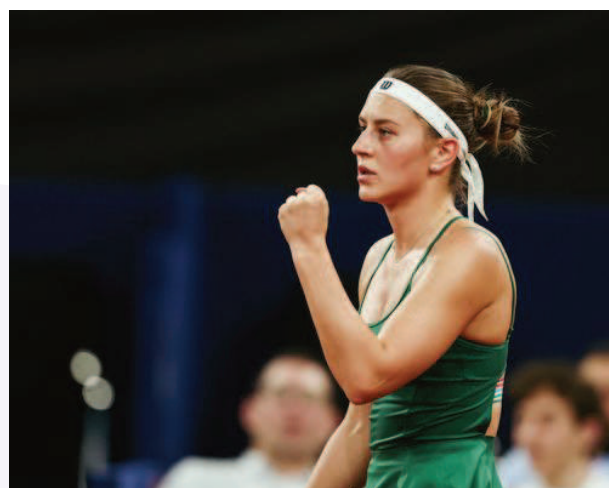
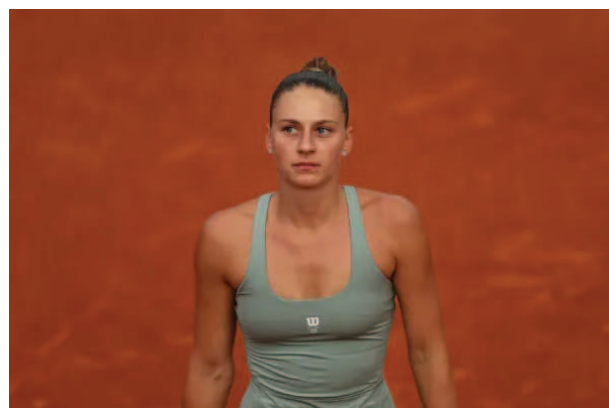
This latest success also underlines the level Kostyuk is currently producing. She struck 34 winners in the final, committed 23 unforced errors and broke Podrez's serve six times. The reward is set to be a climb to No. 23 in the PIF WTA Singles Rankings, pushing her ever closer to a return to the Top 20.

For Podrez, there was disappointment, but also confirmation that a new name has arrived on the bigger stage. Her run to the final should lift her to a career-high No. 147 in the world, taking her inside the Top 150 for the first time and into the Top 200 as well. Reaching a WTA final on debut is no small feat, and it places her alongside a very select recent group.

She also left a final impression after the tennis had ended. Having spent several years living in France, Podrez delivered her speech in French, drawing warm applause from the Rouen crowd and rounding off a week she is unlikely to forget.

Did You Know?

Kostyuk's Rouen triumph means her WTA-level trophy collection now spans hard, clay and grass across singles and doubles — a mark of just how complete her all-court game has become.



SABALENKA STUNNED INTO SILENCE AFTER LAUREUS GLORY IN MADRID

It takes a lot to leave Aryna Sabalenka short of words — but on a glittering night in Madrid, even the World No. 1 found herself momentarily overwhelmed.

Fresh from a dominant 2025 campaign, Sabalenka was crowned Laureus World Sportswoman of the Year, becoming just the fifth player from the WTA Tour to claim the honour. It's the latest milestone in a career that continues to accelerate.

Recognised for a season that included US Open glory and a full 52 weeks atop the PIF WTA Rankings, Sabalenka accepted the award from sprint legend Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce and tennis icon Boris Becker. As she stepped onto the stage, the magnitude of the moment clearly hit home.

"I've got goosebumps," she admitted, reflecting on a winners' list that reads like a sporting hall of fame — from Serena Williams and Justine Henin to Simone Biles and Lindsey Vonn.

"To see my name alongside those legends... athletes I grew up watching... it feels a bit crazy. Emotional, too. I'm honestly a bit speechless. This is big."

There was no shortage of elite company among this year's nominees. Sabalenka edged out a stellar field including Aitana Bonmatí, Faith Kipyegon, Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone, Melissa Jefferson-Wooden, and Katie Ledecky.

Her triumph capped a strong evening for tennis. Novak Djokovic co-hosted the ceremony with Eileen Gu, while Carlos Alcaraz took home the men's top prize — beating Jannik Sinner.

Off the court, Amanda Anisimova turned heads on the red carpet despite missing out on Comeback of the Year to Rory McIlroy, while Alexandra Eala and Jasmine Paolini also attended.

Sabalenka's season is far from finished.

After sweeping the "Sunshine Double" in Indian Wells and Miami, she returns to Madrid on a 12-match winning streak. The Mutua Madrid Open remains a favourite hunting ground — she's the defending champion and a three-time winner.



Now, she's chasing history: a fourth title in the Spanish capital that would set a new benchmark.

Did you know?

A fourth Madrid title would have put Sabalenka among the most dominant players ever at a single WTA 1000 event, but it will have to be next year!

BELGIUM STUN UNITED STATES IN BILLIE JEAN KING CUP QUALIFIERS AS ITALY AND UKRAINE EASE INTO FINALS

Seven nations secured their spots in September's Billie Jean King Cup Finals over a dramatic weekend of Qualifiers, with a host of WTA stars delivering for their countries when it mattered most.

The standout shock came in Ostend, where Belgium toppled 18-time champions the United States 3-1 on home clay to book their place in the Finals for the first time since 2022.

Belgium seized control of the tie on the opening day thanks to victories from Hanne Vandewinkel and Elise Mertens, who defeated Iva Jovic and McCartney Kessler respectively. Mertens' win came in unfortunate circumstances for the Americans, with Kessler forced to retire at 3-3 in the deciding set after suffering a sudden back problem.

The visitors briefly threatened a comeback on Sunday when Caty McNally and Nicole Melichar-Martinez beat Mertens and Magali Kempen in doubles to pull the score back to 2-1. But Belgium had one more answer.

Greet Minnen, drafted in for Mertens in singles, proved the match-winner. The 28-year-old, a former World No. 59 now ranked No. 149, produced an assured 7-5, 6-3 victory over Jovic to seal a famous home triumph.

For the United States, it was a bitter outcome. The defeat means they will miss the Billie Jean King Cup Finals for the first time since the competition adopted its single-site, round-robin format five years ago.

Belgium's upset may have provided the biggest surprise, but it was far from the only major storyline of the weekend.



Italy and Ukraine march on

Two of the biggest names in action, Jasmine Paolini and Elina Svitolina, led from the front as Italy and Ukraine powered into the Finals with commanding wins over Japan and Poland.

In Velletri, defending champions Italy wasted little time asserting themselves. Paolini and Elisabetta Cocciaretto both won in straight sets on day one to establish a 2-0 advantage, before Paolini returned alongside Sara Errani to clinch the tie in doubles.

World No. 8 Paolini continues to be a driving force for her country. She has now won seven consecutive Billie Jean King Cup matches for Italy across singles and doubles, and 10 of her last 11 overall in the competition.

Ukraine were just as convincing in Gliwice. Svitolina and Marta Kostyuk dropped only seven games combined in their singles victories over Magda Linette and Katarzyna Kawa on Friday, putting the tie firmly in Ukraine's hands.

The decisive point came in a gripping doubles contest, where Lyudmyla Kichenok and Nadiia Kichenok battled past Maja Chwalinska and Martyna Kubka 7-5, 6-7(4), 6-3 in a marathon lasting 3 hours and 12 minutes. The Ukrainian twins showed tremendous resolve, recovering from a break down in the final set to finish the job.



Oleksandra Oliynykova then completed the clean sweep on her national-team debut, defeating Linda Klimovicova 6-4, 6-1. Poland, notably, were without Iga Swiatek for the tie.



Great Britain spring surprise against Australia

Great Britain also emerged with a statement result, upsetting Australia 3-1 despite arriving without any of their current Top 100 players — Emma Raducanu, Sonay Kartal, Katie Boulter and Francesca Jones.

Teenager Mika Stojsavljevic set the tone in superb fashion. The 2024 US Open girls' champion, still only 17, defeated World No. 56 Talia Gibson 7-6(4), 7-5 to hand Britain an early advantage, overcoming a ranking gap of 219 places.

Stojsavljevic later described the opportunity as a dream moment.

She said she felt “honoured” to receive the call-up from captain Anne Keothavong, adding that being selected for singles made the experience even more special. More importantly, she proved to herself that she was ready for the challenge.

Harriet Dart then edged Kimberly Birrell 4-6, 6-3, 6-3 to put Great Britain 2-0 ahead, before teaming up with Jodie Burrage to secure the winning point in doubles against Storm Hunter and Ellen Perez.

Australia did take the final rubber, with another 17-year-old, Emerson Jones, defeating Katie Swan, but by then the tie already belonged to the visitors.

This qualifying weekend had everything: established stars delivering, underdogs rising and teenagers announcing themselves on the international stage. Belgium may have produced the headline shock, but the wider message was clear — the road to Shenzhen is wide open, and the Finals field is taking shape with serious momentum.

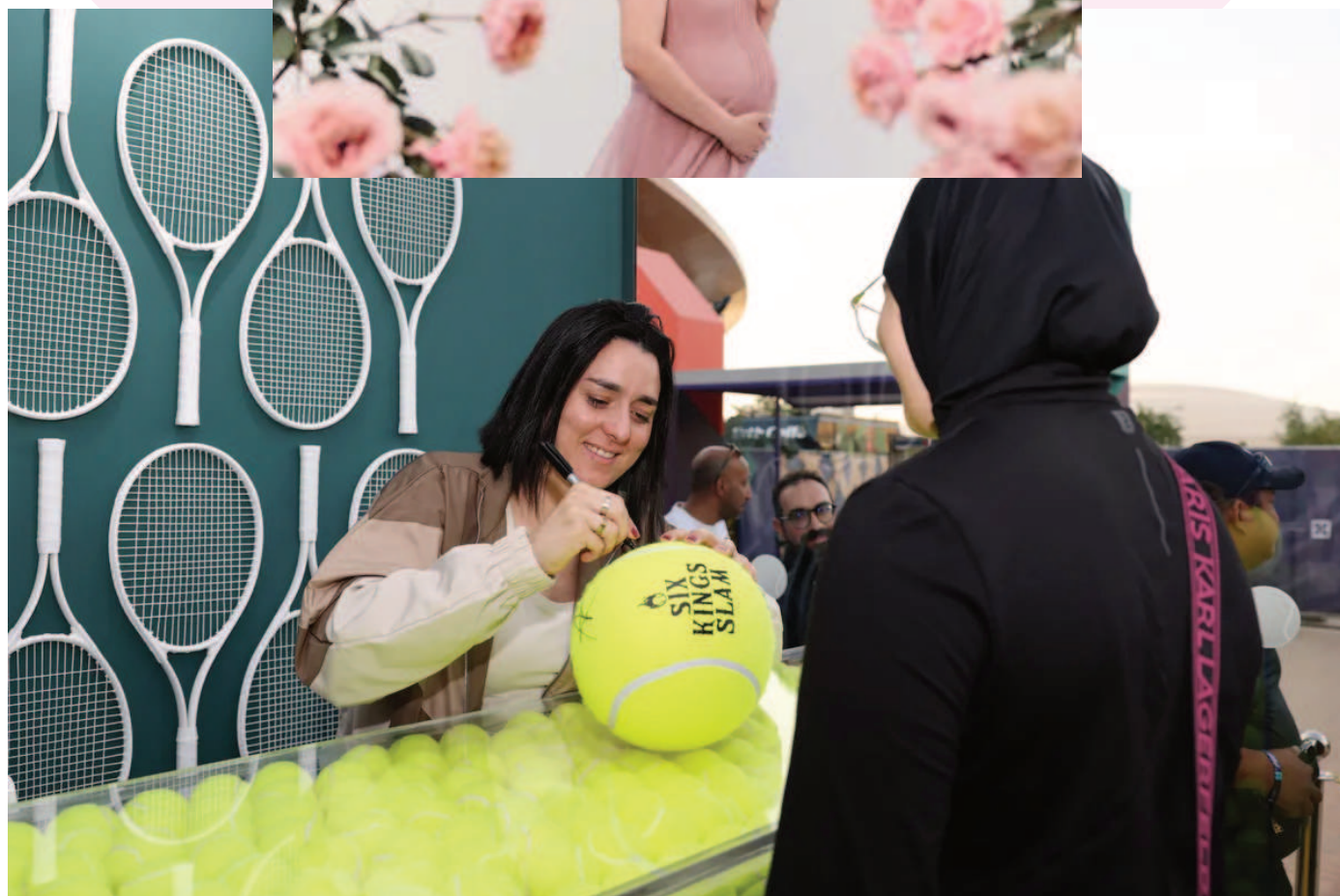
Ons Jabeur Welcomes “Tiny Miracle” as Son Elyan Arrives

Ons Jabeur has shared joyful news away from the tennis court, announcing the birth of her first child, a baby boy named Elyan. The former world No. 2 revealed the arrival on social media, posting a tender message alongside husband Karim.

“A tiny miracle, a lifetime of love 💕,” Jabeur wrote. “Welcoming our baby boy, Elyan Kammoun 20/04/2026 ∞.”

The Tunisian star first confirmed her pregnancy last November, stepping back from competition after her opening-round retirement at Wimbledon last summer. At the time, she hinted at a different kind of “comeback.”

“Took a little break to reset and recharge... Turns out, we’ve been planning the cutest comeback ever,” she shared. “The court will have to wait a little longer, because soon we’ll be welcoming our tiniest teammate.”



That announcement was met with an outpouring of support—and the same warmth followed this week, with fellow players including Paula Badosa, Belinda Bencic and Billie Jean King sending their congratulations. “Can’t wait to meet him,” Badosa wrote.

Though away from the tour, Jabeur has remained closely connected to the sport. During her maternity leave, she launched a YouTube series, even sitting down with Badosa—another former world No. 2—for a candid conversation about life on and off the court.

In a recent interview with Vogue Arabia, Jabeur made it clear that her playing days are far from over. The three-time Grand Slam finalist is targeting a return, albeit on her own terms.

“I want to give myself the time to see how my body will react,” she said, speaking ahead of Arab Mother’s Day. “I still want to compete for a couple more years.”

Her ambitions, however, now extend beyond tennis. Speaking about her hopes for Elyan, Jabeur offered a glimpse into the values she hopes to pass on.



“I want him to be creative, to make jokes,” she said. “Most important is that he’s a good person and makes a change in the world.”

Did you know?

Jabeur’s impact stretches well beyond her results. As the first Arab and African woman to reach multiple Grand Slam finals—and a WTA 1000 champion in Madrid—she has helped redefine what’s possible in the sport for an entire generation.

Now, as she embraces motherhood, Jabeur begins a new chapter—one that could yet see her script another inspiring return to the game she has helped transform.

Maria Sharapova Enters a New Arena with Pretty Tough

Maria Sharapova has long been more than just a tennis player. Now, she is adding another dimension to her post-career portfolio — media.

The former World No. 1 has announced the launch of Pretty Tough, a new podcast-style show exploring ambition, identity and the pursuit of excellence. The first episode, released on 22 April, marks her latest step in a transition that many elite athletes are now navigating: from competition to content, from performance to storytelling.

Describing the project as a show “about the pursuit of excellence without apology,” Sharapova is clearly positioning Pretty Tough as more than just a podcast. It is a platform — one that allows her to shape conversations around success, particularly from a female perspective, and to control the narrative in a way that was not always possible during her playing career.



This move is part of a broader shift we are seeing across sport. Increasingly, athletes are building careers beyond competition that extend into business, investment and media. Platforms like podcasts and digital series offer something traditional sport cannot: ownership of voice. Rather than being defined by results or headlines, athletes can now share insight, experience and personality on their own terms.

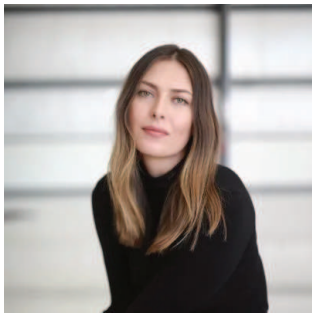
Sharapova is no stranger to this space. Since retiring in 2020, she has established herself as a successful entrepreneur and investor, most notably through her confectionery brand Sugarpova and her involvement in various business ventures. Pretty Tough feels like a natural extension of that evolution — a move from building products to building platforms.

The title itself reflects a theme that has followed her throughout her career. The balance between strength and perception, ambition and expectation, has been a constant for female athletes operating at the highest level. With this new project, Sharapova appears intent on exploring that duality in greater depth.

Her transition mirrors that of other high-profile athletes who have moved into media roles — whether through production companies, podcasting or broadcasting — recognising that influence does not end with retirement. If anything, it simply shifts direction.

In this context, Pretty Tough is more than a personal project. It is part of a growing trend in sport, where athletes are no longer just participants in the industry, but contributors to its narrative.

For Sharapova, it is another calculated step — one that reinforces her ability to adapt, evolve and remain relevant long after her final match.



MSV BUSSARD TENNIS STRING FOR ULTIMATE CONTROL.

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

Women's Sport Set to Break the \$3 Billion Barrier

Women's sport is no longer a story of potential — it is a story of growth, and the numbers are beginning to reflect it.

According to Deloitte's latest projections, global revenues in women's sport are set to surpass \$3 billion for the first time in 2026. It's a significant milestone, particularly considering the speed of that growth. Revenues have risen by approximately 340% since 2022, highlighting one of the fastest-growing areas within the global sports industry.

Commercial partnerships remain the primary driver, accounting for around 45% of total revenue, as brands increasingly invest in women's sport. Matchday income contributes roughly 30%, while broadcast rights — currently at 25% — represent a key area for future expansion as demand for coverage continues to rise.

North America is expected to lead the way, driven by the rapid development of leagues such as the WNBA and NWSL, and the launch of new competitions in recent years. The region is projected to account for over half of the global market.

Beyond the figures, the shift is clear. For years, women's sport was discussed in terms of what it could become. Now, it is delivering measurable commercial value.

Tennis has long been ahead of the curve, with equal prize money at Grand Slam level and strong global audiences. What we are now seeing is that growth extending across the wider sporting landscape.

The \$3 billion mark is more than just a number — it's a sign of momentum. And, perhaps, a sign that this is only the beginning.



BOSS Steps Onto Centre Stage at the Australian Open

The Australian Open has long positioned itself as the most progressive — and arguably the most stylish — of the Grand Slams. Now, that identity is set to sharpen even further.

From 2027, BOSS will become the Official Lifestyle Outfitter of the Australian Open, marking a significant new partnership that reflects the growing intersection between sport, fashion and fan experience.

This is not simply a branding exercise. It is part of a wider shift in how major sporting events are evolving — from purely competitive arenas into full-scale lifestyle platforms. The Australian Open has led this movement in recent years, blending tennis with music, food, entertainment and fashion to create a broader cultural event. Bringing in a global fashion house like BOSS is a natural next step.

While details of the rollout are still emerging, the role of “lifestyle outfitter” typically extends beyond traditional sponsorship. It is expected to influence everything from staff uniforms and on-site presentation to retail offerings and fan-facing experiences. In practical terms, this means the visual identity of the tournament — how it looks, feels and presents itself — could become more curated and brand-led than ever before.

For BOSS, the partnership aligns with its continued expansion into sport and performance-driven lifestyle. The brand has increasingly positioned itself at the intersection of fashion and athletic culture, and the Australian Open offers a global stage with a younger, highly engaged audience.

For tennis, it signals something equally important.

Grand Slams are no longer just competing on the quality of their fields or their history. They are competing on experience — how they engage fans, attract sponsors and remain culturally relevant in a crowded sports and entertainment landscape. The Australian Open, often referred to as the “Grand Slam of Asia-Pacific”, has been particularly successful in this space, consistently driving innovation both on and off the court.

This partnership reinforces that strategy.

It also highlights a broader commercial trend: the increasing value of lifestyle integration within sport. Brands are no longer satisfied with passive visibility. They want to shape the environment, influence perception, and become part of the overall experience.

From a business perspective, that creates new opportunities — and new expectations. For players, it enhances the global platform they perform on. For fans, it adds another layer to the event. And for the industry, it represents a continued shift towards sport as a fully immersive, multi-dimensional product.

In Melbourne, that evolution is already well underway.

RN Parnell International S.L

Here's a breakdown of the network

Parnell Knot - 2012, Parnell Academy - 2016, Parnell Language Services - 2016



In 2022 GRSA was launched



In 2024



In 2025



Please contact us for more information about any of our services.

DID YOU KNOW?

Never assume someone has the same knowledge as you, the same capacity to learn or take on new information. We all have different ways of learning, and some people might not have had the same training, but, can still do the same job. Where they come from, or how they look, should never be a sign of their knowledge or capabilities!

TEAM GRSA

ROME IS NEXT ON THE CALENDAR, HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU MIGHT NOT HAVE KNOWN ABOUT THIS CLASSIC EVENT

1

Serena Williams won four titles in Rome but famously withdrew from the 2016 final due to injury—handing Madison Keys her first WTA Premier 5 title without hitting a ball.

2

Monica Seles won three consecutive titles (1990–1992) as a teenager, showcasing one of the most dominant early-career runs in WTA history.

3

Rafael Nadal holds the record for the most men's singles titles in Rome, with 10 victories—earning the nickname “King of Clay” long before Roland Garros crowned him each year.

4

The tournament dates back to 1930, but it wasn't held during World War II, creating a unique gap in its otherwise continuous clay-court legacy.



Cross string tension & its effects?

In **Stringer Solutions** we have often spoken about the fact that during the stringing process there are certain actions that are personal choices, where one isn't better than the other, just different. The choice of cross string tension is not one of these and it will have a real effect on the outcome and playability.

Let's look at one of the most misunderstood parts of stringing.

The choice of cross string tension, whether it should be lowered, raised, or kept the same and the reasons for each of these choices.

Here is what will be covered about cross string tension and its intricacies.

- Misconceptions
- Monofilaments
- Single Core, multifilament or natural gut
- Feel & increased power
- Spin pattern rackets
- Tension change for different constructions

Misconceptions

Let's tackle one of the biggest misconceptions straight away.

Cross strings should be strung with less tension because they are shorter.

This is the most common reason given for lowering cross string tension.

The fact that the cross strings are shorter, is true, but the fact that they need less tension, is not. The mains are tensioned at reference tension one by one, with the only friction involved being the string going through the grommets. The crosses, however, are weaved through the mains with the subsequent friction, which lowers the actual tension considerably. Some measurements have shown there is a 40% decrease on the cross string actual tension due to this friction and for this reason the cross strings are already at a lot lower tension than the mains.

This lower actual tension is not dependent on string type, construction, or gauge, it is a fact of life and will happen with any string. Actual tension will always be lower than reference tension due to many factors including stringer technique.

Cross string tension can increase or decrease main string movement and depending on the string construction and type, this can be considered positive or negative movement.

What is positive or negative movement?

Positive movement - is string movement that has a beneficial effect on how a string bed reacts and helps add or increase a positive effect.

Negative movement - is string movement that doesn't add anything positive to a string bed and in fact, lowers performance.

Monofilaments

Firstly, let's look at monofilaments and string movement.

Monofilament main strings, through their movement, creates snap back and in turn, leads to improved spin on the ball. This can be considered as positive movement because we have created additional spin through the snap back. If we change the tension on the cross strings we can increase or decrease the string movement. One of the best characteristics of monofilament strings is their spin enhancing qualities, if we lower the tension on the crosses we will, in effect allow the main strings to move more freely and increase snap back. If we raise the cross string tension we will be decreasing the snap back and lowering the spin potential.

The lowering or raising of the cross string tension would also affect, in a small way, the power of the string bed. By lowering the cross string tension we are allowing the mains to flex more, pocket the ball more and absorb less energy. By raising the cross string tension we would achieve the opposite.

Single Core, Multifilament or Natural Gut

Non-monofilament synthetic main strings, both single or multi core, through their natural movement, don't create snap back, and for this reason doesn't lead to improved spin on the ball & can definitely be considered as negative movement. We have string movement, but this only leads to loss of accuracy as the string is moved by the incoming ball. Another negative side of string movement with this type of string is having to constantly straighten the strings after each rally or shot. If we raise the tension slightly on the cross strings, we can decrease the string movement. This raising of cross string tension can mean that a player who is using a slightly more open string pattern, doesn't have to change racket.

By raising the tension, we will also reduce the power potential of the string bed as we will be allowing it to flex less. The lowering or raising of the tension is, usually, by not more than 1 or 2 Kgs (4 - 5 lbs).



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A stylized graphic of a knot, possibly a reef knot, rendered in a light blue color. A vertical red line passes through the center of the knot.

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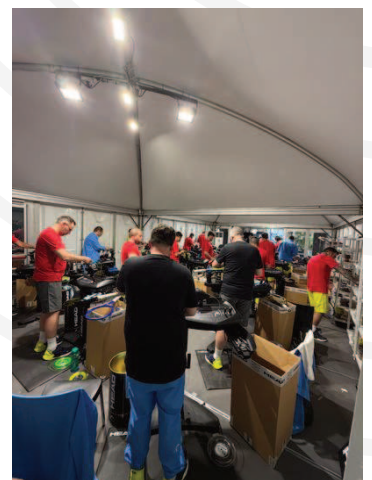
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In next month's magazine, we'll share more information about the event, but here are just some of the pictures so far from what has already started as a very special tournament.





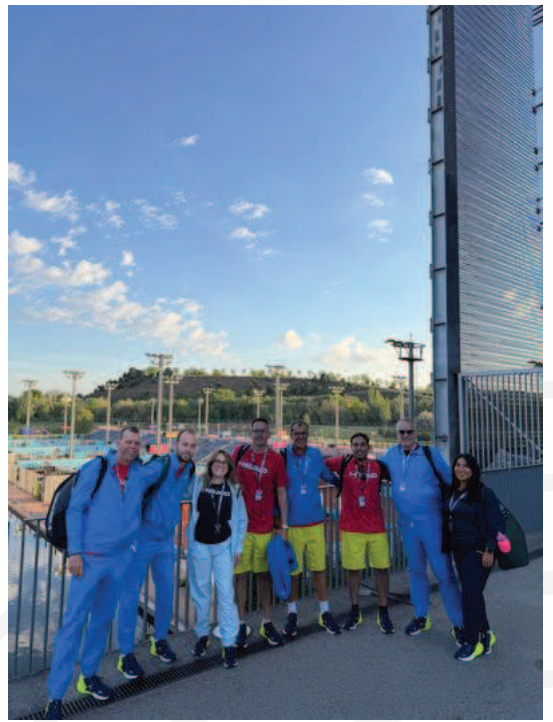
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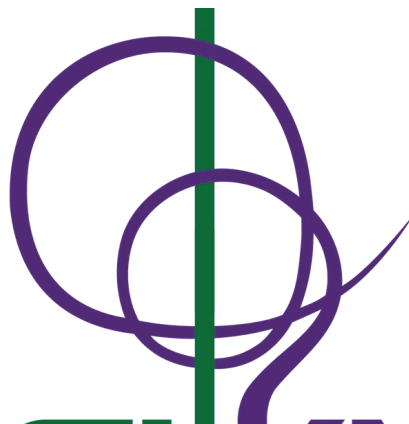


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NOT JUST A RACE!

This is Chris Goodchild, Owner & Director of Topspin Tennis in Cambridge, GRSA member, and member of the GRSA Stringing team.

Chris was present at the first week of stringing at this year's Madrid Open, and he would have stayed on, but something special was waiting for him. A date that he's been preparing for, working hard and training to achieve something very special; run and complete the London Marathon in memory of his dad!

"I ran to raise funds for the Tapping House Hospice, Norfolk, where my dad had volunteered for 15 years, and where he himself was cared for with dignity and compassion in his final weeks. At a memorial service that summer celebrating his life and service, I knew I wanted to give something back in my own way. Securing a place in the 2026 London Marathon felt like the right way to do it".

At the same time, his professional life in tennis stringing was accelerating. He had taken over Top Spin Tennis, worked his first WTA 250 and Challenger events in Nottingham, and was beginning to see opportunities open up within the stringing world. Marathon training began in October, through dark winter mornings and late nights with a head torch. Running for a cause gives you a different kind of motivation — 5am alarms stop being a problem when you have a very big reason to get up.

Then, in February, came an unexpected call from Richard Parnell inviting him to string at the Mutua Madrid Open, the same week as the marathon. After some discussion, it was agreed that he'd work seven days in Madrid and fly home on the Thursday before race day.

"Madrid was an unforgettable experience. My first ATP/WTA 1000 event, surrounded by a community of stringers whose support and mentorship — especially from Richard and Gorka, left me a better stringer than when I arrived. But, by Friday at 3:30 am, I was in an Uber to the airport, swapping clay courts for running shoes and heading back to Cambridge to prepare for London".

Race morning arrived with nerves, excitement, and the knowledge of how lucky he was to stand on that start line. Over a million people had entered the ballot; he was one of the chosen few. The atmosphere was electric. By mile 6, Chris spotted his children in the crowd, arms outstretched for a high five. That feeling, the support, the buzz, very special!



At mile 8, everything changed. An old knee injury returned, and after several visits to the medical tent, he was strapped up, but then switched from race mode to survival mode. The next 18 miles were painful. But stopping was never an option, this run was for Martin, his dad.

Five hours and five minutes after starting, Chris crossed the finish line, he'd done it, he'd taken part in probably THE most famous marathon in the world, and he'd finished it!

"The medal represents far more than a marathon finish. It represents my dad, the compassion of Tapping House Hospice, the support of family and friends, and the encouragement of the GRSA stringing community who backed me throughout this journey from Madrid to London.

This wasn't just a race. It was a journey that changed me."

"My fundraising page for Tapping House Hospice remains open. If reading this has sparked your interest in the work they do, or you would like to support them in memory of my dad, any donation, large or small, will truly be going to a good cause, a team of amazing humans that provide not just a service, they provide support, friendship, peace of mind but above all, the chance for terminally ill people to be in a loving environment in their final days"



Well Done Chris

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Tapping House



NICK DOWN TALKS

This month's racket from the list of non-standard squash rackets is from Karakal; I have used the F-135 as an example.

It has a wrap around bridge which is shared by the F-125 and the F-PRO 130, and was quickly discontinued by Karakal, but they are all still for sale, new, by many retailers.

One of the reasons that it may have been discontinued, is the possibility that some main strings may slip off the central part of the bridge and lose tension. This is highly likely during the stringing process.

Instead of individual places for each main string, there is one area, in the centre of the bridge, for all the mains. That area is thinner than the rest of the bridge.

Mains should only be pulled at the head, usually meaning two at a time, care must be taken, knots can be tied on the next to last main and there are enough tie-off points to string in 2 pieces (4 knots).



In fact by stringing in two pieces you can avoid long runs of string along the outside of the frame making the finished product much more pleasing to the eye. This reason has been covered before on a few of the rackets that I've written about previously.

There is quite a bit of information about the frame on the inside of the (open) throat, such as the string pattern, tension, balance point and overall weight.

There are 16 mains and 17 crosses. It is very important that there is a hard weave at the last cross/first cross at the throat. As previously stated, I've used 2 pieces of string.



Nick's Nugget

Straighten strings as you go, not at the end, constant pull machines will make sure you're close to reference tension.

Mains

LH1 to below bridge
 RH1 to above bridge
 (Remember that the first main that comes down the racket from Head to Throat on the Left side always goes low/under/below the ring or bridge or hinge etc. The right side will do the opposite).

Below bridge to RH2

Above bridge to LH2

LH2 to LH3

LH3 to below bridge

Above bridge to LH4

RH2 to RH3

RH3 to above bridge

Below bridge to RH4

RH4 to RH5

RH5 to above bridge

Below bridge to RH7

LH4 to LH5

LH5 to below bridge

Above bridge to LH7

LH7 to LH9

LH9 to below bridge

Above bridge to LH13

RH7 to RH9

RH9 to above bridge

Below bridge to RH13

Tie-off both sides at H9

Crosses

Start at H6 (either side)

If starting at LH6 weave goes under LM5

If starting at RH6

weave goes over RM5

Tie-off is at H4 either side.

Last cross is T1

Tie-off is T2 either side.



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Turmel and Rodriguez Crowned STARR Bermuda Open 2026 Champions

England's Lucy Turmel and Colombia's Miguel Rodriguez emerged as the champions of the STARR Bermuda Open 2026, the penultimate Bronze-level event of the 2025/26 PSA Squash Tour season, after two finals of very different tones in Devonshire.

The women's title match looked set to deliver a high-class battle as Turmel took on top seed and World No.19 Sabrina Sobhy. For much of the contest, Sobhy appeared firmly in control. The American produced the sharper squash across the opening two games, taking them 11-4, 11-7 to move within touching distance of the title.

Turmel responded well in the third, raising both her intensity and accuracy to stay in contention. But with Sobhy leading 7-6 in that game, the final took a distressing turn. After Turmel struck a successful cross-court nick, Sobhy pushed off in pursuit of the ball and immediately collapsed, clutching her right Achilles. She was assisted from the court and unable to continue, handing Turmel the trophy in unfortunate circumstances.

It was a seventh career PSA title for the Englishwoman, though it arrived in a manner neither player would have wanted.

With the women's final ending on such a sombre note, the crowd at the Bermuda Racquets Association Club were eager for a fitting spectacle in the men's decider – and Miguel Rodriguez and Kareem El Torkey delivered exactly that.

Rodriguez, one of squash's great entertainers, brought all of his trademark energy and attacking flair to the court, while the young Egyptian top seed matched him with speed and shot-making of his own. The Colombian took the opening game 11-5, laying down an early marker against an opponent almost two decades younger.

El Torkey responded impressively. Using his pace to punish anything loose, the Egyptian wrestled control of the match and moved 2-1 ahead, putting Rodriguez under real pressure.

But the veteran Colombian has made a career of refusing to go quietly. Digging deep once again, Rodriguez tightened up his game, extended the rallies and forced errors at key moments. He stormed through the fourth and fifth games 11-5, 11-7 to complete a superb comeback and secure the 31st PSA title of his career.

For Turmel, it was a title won in heartbreaking circumstances. For Rodriguez, it was another reminder that class, resilience, and showmanship remain a potent combination.



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Padel to feature as a medal sport at the 2026 Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games

Carraro: “Padel’s place in another major multisport event confirms the project we are all building together”

Padel’s global rise has taken another important step forward, with the sport officially confirmed as a medal event at the 2026 Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games in Riyadh.

Already celebrating its inclusion in the Asian Games programme for Aichi-Nagoya, padel has now secured another landmark within the Olympic Council of Asia’s multisport calendar. The OCA has confirmed that the sport will be part of the medal schedule at the next AIMAG, set to take place in Saudi Arabia from 13th to 21st December 2026. It is another major sign of padel’s growing influence across Asia and a clear indication of its expanding role on the international sporting stage.

The competition itself will run from 17th to 21st December at Padel Rush Arena in Riyadh, a venue already well known to the sport’s followers as host of the Premier Padel P1 tournament. It is a fitting setting for padel’s AIMAG debut, with the arena firmly established as one of the discipline’s key homes in the region.

National federations recognised by their National Olympic Committees will be able to enter official teams made up of one men’s pair and one women’s pair. The field will be limited to 12 national teams, ensuring a top-level contest from the very first rally. The deadline for pre-registration has been set for 15th May 2026.

For International Padel Federation President Luigi Carraro, the announcement marks another defining moment in the sport’s international journey.



“The inclusion of padel in the programme of the Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games represents an extremely significant moment in the global development of our sport,” said Carraro. “Its presence in a major multisport event under the aegis of the Olympic Council of Asia, which I thank on behalf of everyone who values padel, confirms the strength of the international project we are advancing together with national federations and reflects the growing expansion of padel in Asia. We look forward to working with the OCA, Padel Asia and our national federations so that the values of sport – excellence, respect and friendship – can contribute to creating new sporting and cultural opportunities for future generations.”

The news has been greeted with enthusiasm throughout the padel world, and not only because it adds another prestigious event to the calendar. It also reflects the sport's wider appeal: its social character, inclusive spirit, and alignment with the principles at the heart of the Olympic Charter.

Those values – education, culture, peace, and solidarity through sport – continue to shape padel's international growth. The sport's expansion has also been built around a firm opposition to discrimination, doping and violence, reinforcing its credentials as more than just one of the fastest-growing games in the world.

For the FIP, participation in Riyadh 2026 is more than another tournament appearance. It is a strategic step in padel's worldwide consolidation, particularly in Asia, where the sport has enjoyed remarkable growth in recent years. Participation numbers are rising, infrastructure is improving, and the level of elite competition continues to climb.

Padel's inclusion in the AIMAG is, therefore, more than symbolic. It is further evidence that the sport is carving out a lasting place within the Olympic movement – and that Asia is becoming one of its most exciting frontiers.



Serena Williams Steps Into Padel's Global Spotlight

Serena Williams has never been one to stand still — and even in retirement, her influence on sport continues to grow.

The 23-time Grand Slam champion has officially stepped into the world of padel, becoming a global ambassador for the sport as part of a multi-year campaign with Heineken 0.0. The partnership positions Williams at the forefront of padel's rapid international expansion, bringing one of the most recognisable athletes in the world into a sport that is experiencing significant global growth.

Since stepping away from professional tennis in 2022, Williams has remained active across business, fitness and sport. More recently, she has embraced padel as part of her training and lifestyle, describing it as both physically demanding and highly social — two factors that have contributed to the sport's rising popularity worldwide.

"I get a crazy good workout. I'm sweaty, I'm sore," Williams said, highlighting the intensity of the game. At the same time, she has acknowledged the challenge of transitioning from tennis, joking that while she is enjoying the sport, she is "no Serena Williams at padel".

The campaign itself was launched in Miami, where Williams made a surprise appearance during a Playatomic Open match, joining players on court and bringing immediate attention to the initiative. The choice of Miami is no coincidence — a city that has become a key hub for both tennis and the fast-growing padel scene.

Williams is not alone in making the move. A number of current and former tennis players, including Novak Djokovic, Andy Murray and Rafael Nadal, have all been seen picking up a padel racket in recent years. Nadal, in particular, has invested heavily in the sport, opening padel academies as part of his broader tennis academy network.

Padel's appeal lies in its accessibility. Played on a smaller, enclosed court with simpler technique requirements than tennis, it is widely considered easier to pick up while still offering a high-level physical workout. Its social nature — often played in doubles — has made it especially popular in Europe and Latin America, with continued expansion into the United States and other global markets.

For padel, the involvement of an athlete like Serena Williams represents more than just a marketing move. It signals a shift in visibility and credibility. When one of the greatest tennis players of all time embraces a new sport, it inevitably draws attention — not just from fans, but from the wider sporting industry.

For Williams, it is another example of her ability to evolve, adapt and remain relevant beyond her competitive career.

And for padel, it may be a defining moment in its journey towards becoming a truly global sport.



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

WPC Belgium - Belgian Pickleball Open 2026**EID:** 2308 EUR 35**Organizer:** Pickleball Belgium**EVENT - TOURNAMENT****Starting:** July 31, 2026 to August 02, 2026**City:** Woluwe-Saint-Lambert, Belgium**Tournament Venue:** Centre Sportif Mounier**Registration Deadline:** July 01, 2026 (OPEN)**Tier Level:** 3**NRW-Landesmeisterschaften 2026****EID:** 2272 EUR 20**Organizer:** Karsten Wischermann**EVENT - TOURNAMENT****Starting:** June 27, 2026 to June 28, 2026**City:** Kerpen, Deutschland**Tournament Venue:** Racket Arena Rhein-erft**Registration Deadline:** June 21, 2026 (OPEN)**Tier Level:** 2**WPC SERIES - BALI CHAMPIONSHIP****EID:** 2326 USD 60**Organizer:** Pickleball Global**EVENT - TOURNAMENT****Starting:** September 21, 2026 to September 26, 2026**City:** Sanur, Denpasar City, Bali, Indonésie**Tournament Venue:** Liga Tennis**Registration Deadline:** August 31, 2026 (OPEN)**Tier Level:** 5**MORE
INFO**

No Strings Attached: What Pickleball Means for the Racket Service Industry

Pickleball may not require stringing — but that doesn't mean it sits outside the expertise of the racket service industry.

As the sport continues its rapid growth, a different kind of demand is emerging: customisation, optimisation, and technical guidance. While paddles are solid and pre-manufactured, performance tuning is becoming increasingly relevant, particularly as the level of play rises. For experienced stringers and technicians, many of the underlying principles remain familiar — even if the tools are different.

Weight & Balance: Small Changes, Noticeable Impact

One of the clearest areas of crossover is weight customisation. Players are increasingly applying lead tape to adjust balance, stability and power output, often without a full understanding of the effects.

Typical modifications include:

3 and 9 o'clock: improving torsional stability and reducing paddle twist on off-centre contact

12 o'clock: increasing swing weight and power, with a corresponding reduction in manoeuvrability

Handle weighting: shifting balance towards a more head-light feel for control and faster hand speed

Even small additions — typically in the range of 2–6 grams — can significantly alter how a paddle performs. Unlike tennis, where swing weight and balance are more widely understood, many pickleball players are experimenting without clear guidance.

This creates a clear opportunity for technicians to apply their knowledge: measuring balance, advising on weight distribution, and managing trade-offs between power, control and handling.

Grip Build-Up & Handle Geometry

Grip customisation is perhaps the most direct transfer of skill from tennis.

Most paddles are manufactured with relatively small handle circumferences (commonly 4"–4 ¼"), leading players to build up grips using overgrips or heat shrink sleeves. However, improper build-up can soften or distort bevel definition, which directly impacts grip changes and shot consistency — particularly for players transitioning from tennis.

Maintaining clear bevel structure while increasing circumference is where professional input becomes valuable. Subtle differences in handle shape and feel can significantly affect comfort, control and injury prevention.

Surface Wear & Performance Decline

Another technical consideration is paddle surface degradation.

Unlike strings, which provide a clear visual and performance cue for replacement, paddle faces — particularly those with textured or grit-based surfaces designed to enhance spin — wear down gradually. As the surface smooths, players can experience a noticeable reduction in spin generation and control.

While this cannot be “repaired” in the same way as restringing, there is increasing demand for informed advice on paddle lifespan, usage patterns and replacement timing, particularly among competitive players.

From Technician to Performance Advisor

The key shift is not in the tools, but in the role.

Pickleball is moving the service model away from routine maintenance (such as restringing) towards performance consultation and equipment optimisation. Players may not need frequent servicing, but they do need guidance — especially as the sport becomes more competitive and equipment more specialised.

At the same time, the retail landscape is expanding rapidly. Both dedicated pickleball brands and established tennis manufacturers are entering the market, creating opportunities for pro shops and service providers to diversify their offering.

For the stringing community, the opportunity is not to replicate tennis services — but to adapt existing expertise to a new context.

Because while pickleball may have no strings, the fundamentals of performance — feel, balance, control and consistency — remain exactly the same.



From Courts to Concepts: What Tennis Can Learn from Experience-Led Design

Sport is no longer confined to courts, clubs or tournaments — it is increasingly becoming part of a broader lifestyle experience. A recent example from the short-term rental market highlights a trend that tennis, in particular, should be paying attention to.

In Dallas, a fully themed Airbnb property has been designed around tennis, paddel and pickleball, with every detail — from interiors to outdoor spaces — built around a single, cohesive concept. But this is not just about aesthetics. It is a strategic approach to engagement, identity and commercial performance.

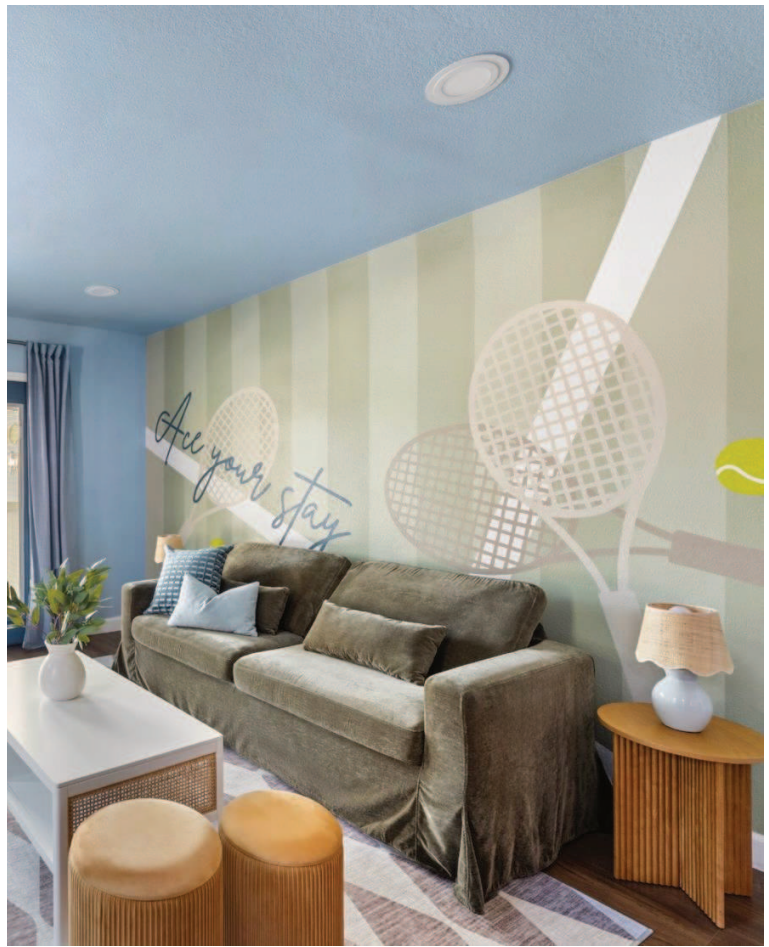


The principle is simple: create an environment that people remember.

For tennis, this raises an interesting question. Why stop at the court?

Tennis academies and clubs have traditionally focused on performance, coaching and facilities — all essential pillars of the sport. But as the industry evolves, there is growing opportunity to extend the experience beyond training itself. Accommodation, social spaces, hospitality areas and even retail environments are increasingly becoming part of the overall offering.

We are already seeing elements of this at leading academies. Facilities such as the Rafa Nadal Academy and Mouratoglou Tennis Academy have expanded into full-service destinations, combining high-performance training with accommodation, leisure and lifestyle. The next step may be taking this even further — creating environments with a clear identity that resonates beyond tennis itself.



That is where projects like this become relevant.

A strong, recognisable concept — whether tied to tennis heritage, performance culture or a modern lifestyle approach — has the potential to elevate a facility from functional to memorable. In a competitive market, particularly for international academies attracting travelling players and families, differentiation is becoming increasingly important.

It also reflects a broader shift in consumer behaviour. Players, parents and visitors are no longer just looking for training programmes. They are looking for experiences — spaces that feel curated, immersive and shareable.



Pickleball, with its social and accessible nature, has embraced this quickly. Tennis, with its deeper history and global structure, has been slower to adapt — but arguably has even greater potential.

The opportunity is clear.

By extending the tennis experience beyond the baseline — into design, hospitality and environment — academies and clubs can create stronger identities, deeper engagement and ultimately, greater commercial value. Because in today's market, it's no longer just about how well you play. It's about how well you create an experience around it.

P. V. Sindhu Takes Her Seat at the Top Table of World Badminton

There are moments in sport when an athlete's influence stretches far beyond the lines of play. For P. V. Sindhu, that moment has arrived—not with a smash winner or a podium finish, but with a seat at the very heart of badminton's global decision-making.

The Olympic medallist and former World Champion has officially stepped into a full voting role on the Badminton World Federation (BWF) Council, following her election as Chair of the BWF Athletes' Commission. After completing the federation's formal vetting process, Sindhu assumed her position at the close of 2025, marking a rare and significant milestone in the sport.

Her first appearance in this new capacity came at the BWF Annual General Meeting in Horsens, where she was introduced to the global badminton community not as a competitor—but as a decision-maker.



A Voice from the Court, Now at the Table

The BWF Council is badminton's highest governing body, responsible for shaping the sport's strategic direction worldwide. Sindhu's inclusion as a voting member is notable not just for her stature, but for what she represents: the active athlete's voice embedded directly within the sport's leadership.

It's a role rarely held by players still competing at the elite level.

For over a decade, Sindhu has been one of badminton's most recognisable figures—an athlete defined by resilience, precision, and an unwavering competitive edge. Now, she carries those same qualities into governance, where decisions affect everything from tournament structures to athlete welfare.

"It is a true honour and privilege to take on this responsibility," Sindhu said following her appointment. "Badminton has given me so much, and I feel deeply grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the sport in this capacity."

Her words reflect more than gratitude—they signal intent. Sindhu is stepping into a role that demands balance: continuing her career at the highest level while representing athletes across continents and cultures.

Bridging Two Worlds

Sindhu's elevation comes at a time when athlete representation in global sport is under sharper focus than ever. Governing bodies are increasingly recognising the importance of including those who live the sport daily—those who understand its physical demands, its pressures, and its evolving landscape.

Her dual identity—as both competitor and council member—places her in a unique position to bridge the gap between administration and reality.

BWF President Khunying Patama Leeswadtrakul welcomed Sindhu's appointment, highlighting the significance of her presence: an athlete who embodies excellence on court while now contributing to decisions off it.

Athletes, she emphasised, remain “the heart of the sport”—a sentiment that aligns closely with the purpose of the Athletes' Commission, which Sindhu now leads.



Did You Know?

Only a handful of active athletes across global sports hold full voting positions within their international federations—making Sindhu's role both rare and highly influential.

Leadership Beyond Medals

Sindhu's career has already rewritten the script for Indian badminton. Olympic silver and bronze medals, a World Championship title, and consistent top-tier performances have cemented her legacy.

But influence in modern sport is no longer measured by medals alone.

Her appointment reflects growing trust in athletes as leaders—individuals capable not just of performance, but of perspective. Sindhu has long been regarded as a global ambassador for badminton, known for her professionalism and composure as much as her competitive fire.

Now, those qualities will help shape policies, priorities, and the future direction of the sport itself.

Shaping the Future of the Game

Sindhu's presence on the BWF Council signals a broader shift—one where athletes are no longer just participants in the system, but architects of it.

Her role will involve contributing to discussions that influence everything from grassroots development to elite competition pathways. More importantly, she becomes a conduit for the collective voice of players worldwide.

It's a responsibility she appears ready to embrace.

"I look forward to working closely with the Council and the wider BWF community," she said, "as we continue to strengthen and grow this wonderful sport across the world."

For badminton, this is more than a symbolic appointment. It's a step towards a more inclusive, athlete-informed future—one where decisions reflect not only governance priorities, but lived experience.

And for P. V. Sindhu, it's yet another stage—different in setting, but just as impactful—where she continues to shape the game she has given so much to.





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