GRSA INTERNATIONAL
ATW MAGAZINE

JUNE - 2025

ALCARAZ'S RAMPAGE

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Alcaraz didn't just win Roland Garros, he then went on to win Queens and prepare his Wimbledon title defence. Taylor Fritz made a serious statement in Stuttgart. We also take a look at some of the wildcards that await.

Section 2 - GRSA INTERNATIONAL

The GRSA Global Stringer conference is getting closer, only 5 months to go, time to get booking! Up close and personal with Kenneth!

Section 3 - Squash

Nick takes another look at the EXO O3 SpeedPort, plus he talks to Ashaway's Steve Crandall about strings and tendencies.

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Section 6 - Badminton

Machaxi Raises $1.5M, Daniel Chan Steps Up to Champion Global Growth of Para Badminton, Estonia Shine with Five-Medal Haul at VICTOR Latvia International 2025.

Fritz Masters Stuttgart to Begin Grass Swing in Style

Taylor Fritz made the perfect start to his grass-court season by defeating Alexander Zverev 6-3, 7-6(0) in a rain-interrupted final in Stuttgart to claim his first ATP title of the year.

The American was largely untroubled throughout the encounter, securing the ATP 250 crown without dropping serve all week. Despite a lengthy rain delay early in the second set, Fritz maintained his composure and wrapped up the match by dominating the tie-break, reeling off the last 11 points.

The win extends Fritz's dominance over Zverev, marking his fifth consecutive victory against the German, and will see him climb to a career-high No. 4 in the world rankings—just behind Zverev.

"I'm really happy, especially as it was not too great of a clay season," Fritz said. "To come here and start the grass season off perfectly, I'm super happy to win the title and do it here."

It's a first trophy for the American since his triumph in Eastbourne last year—also on grass—underlining his comfort on the surface. There was little time to savour the success, though. "I don't have much time to celebrate. I have doubles tomorrow in London, in Queen's," Fritz added.

Zverev, meanwhile, was left to reflect on another near miss on home soil. "I've had enough, stay away from me. Please don't come to Germany for the next two or three years," he joked. This was his third defeat in a grass-court final after losses in Halle to Roger Federer (2017) and Florian Mayer (2016).

Fritz broke in the eighth game to take the first set and, after squandering the only break point of the second, turned up the heat in the tie-break to seal victory in emphatic fashion.

Alcaraz Digs Deep to Defend Queen's Club Crown

Carlos Alcaraz held his nerve in testing conditions to defend his title at Queen's Club, overcoming a mid-match lapse and a spirited challenge from Jiri Lehecka to seal a hard-fought 7-5, 6-7(5), 6-2 victory.

The final looked to be heading Alcaraz's way in straight sets until a tense second-set tiebreak. At 5-5, the Spaniard blinked—throwing in a double fault under pressure and handing Lehecka the lifeline he was looking for. The Czech duly forced a deciding set, and for a moment, Alcaraz looked to be heading into choppier waters.

But as he has shown so often in his young career, the 21-year-old responded with authority. With a renewed sense of control and clarity, he dominated the decider, breaking twice to wrap up his 18th consecutive match win and a third successive title following his triumphs at Roland Garros and the Italian Open.

"I came here with no expectations," said Alcaraz. "My goal was just to feel great on grass again, to get used to the surface. I'm proud of how I've improved each day."

He becomes the first man since Rafael Nadal in 2008 to win both Roland Garros and Queen's Club in the same season—when the tournaments were held back-to-back—and improves his career record on grass to a remarkable 29 wins against just three defeats.

Alcaraz's shotmaking flair continues to dazzle, but it was the less glamorous aspects of his game that stood out. He broke Lehecka's serve through relentless pressure and error-free play, showing a new willingness to grind when the occasion demands. In key moments, he trusted his margins, favouring discipline over risk.

His serve, too, has taken a notable step forward. Frustrated earlier in the week with his performance against Jaume Munar, Alcaraz redoubled his efforts in practice—and it paid off handsomely. The decision to modify his service motion at the start of the season continues to bear fruit.

Having now reached five finals in a row and won 27 of his last 28 matches, Alcaraz heads to Wimbledon as the form player in men's tennis. He may still have the occasional dip, but with his blend of talent, toughness, and growing tactical maturity, he looks every bit ready to mount a serious title defence at SW19.

Carlos Alcaraz: The Comeback King of Roland Garros

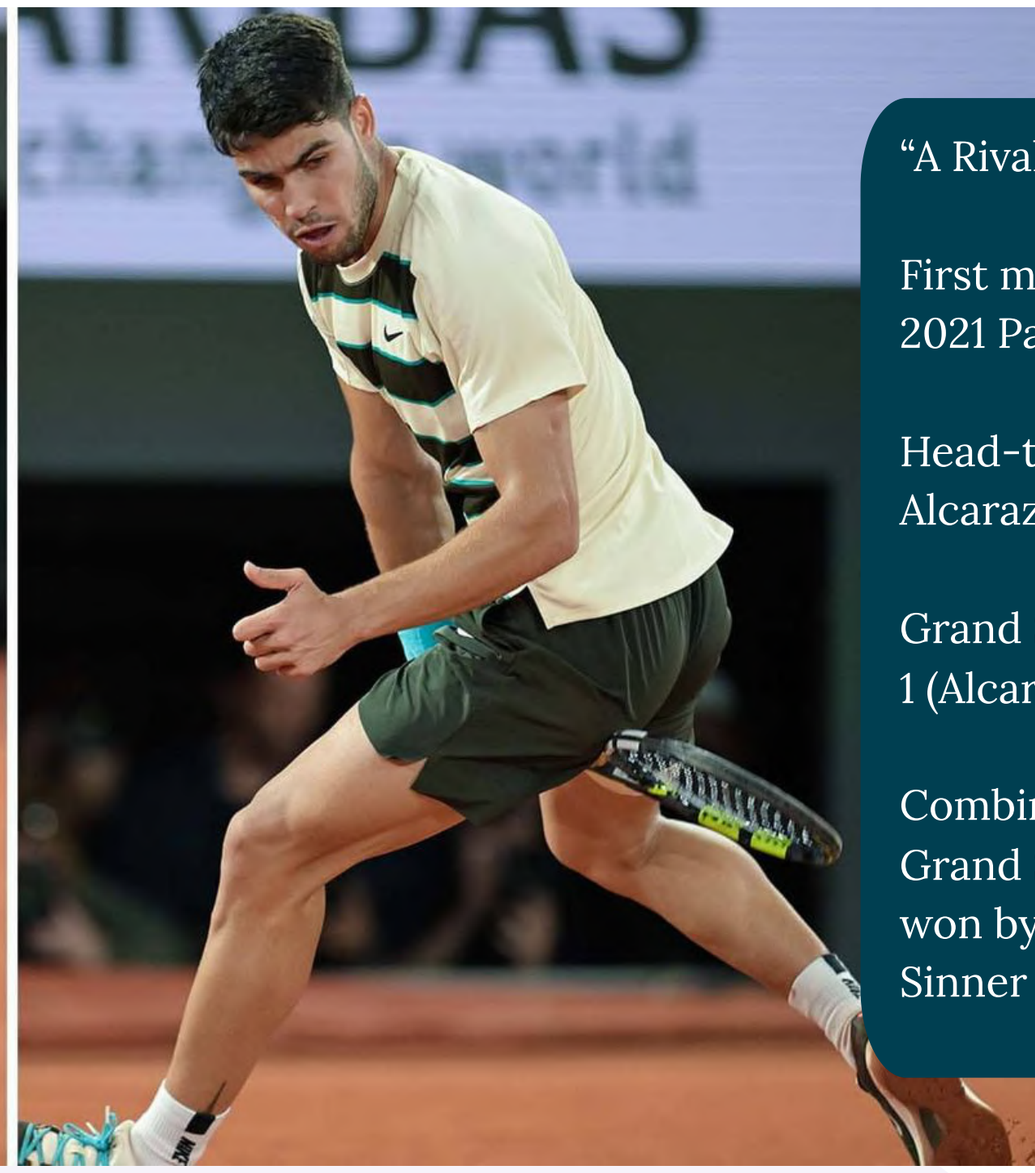
Spaniard saves three championship points and wins the longest final in French Open history against Jannik Sinner in a match for the ages.

Carlos Alcaraz conquered Roland Garros again—but not before delivering one of the most thrilling comebacks in Grand Slam history. The 22-year-old saved three championship points and outlasted rival Jannik Sinner in a five-set epic that shattered records, captured hearts, and solidified a generational rivalry.

In a pulsating showdown that pushed both players to the brink, Alcaraz prevailed 4-6, 6-7(4), 6-4, 7-6(3), 7-6(10-2) to become the third man in the Open Era to save a championship point en route to winning a Grand Slam final. The Spaniard joins elite company: Gaston Gaudio (2004) and Novak Djokovic (2019) were the only others to do so.

This was the first time Alcaraz had come from two sets down to win a major, and it happened in the longest final in Roland Garros history. Over five hours and 29 minutes, the two most exciting young players in the sport staged a clash worthy of legend.

Locked in: Sinner and Alcaraz produced relentless baseline rallies and never backed down.



"A Rivalry Reignited"

First met:
2021 Paris Masters

Head-to-head:
Alcaraz leads 8–4

Grand Slam finals:
1 (Alcaraz leads 1–0)

Combined last six Grand Slam titles: All won by Alcaraz or Sinner

Alcaraz's comeback began in earnest late in the third set. Down two sets and a break, he fought back to win four consecutive games and take the set 6-4. But the real drama unfolded in the fourth.

Serving at 3-5, 0/40, Alcaraz faced triple championship point. Each time, he produced his trademark magic: a gutsy second serve, a fearless forehand, and a calmness beyond his years. He held, broke back, and won the tiebreak to force a deciding set.

Under the lights of Court Philippe-Chatrier and amid a raucous Parisian crowd, the fifth set was a microcosm of their rivalry: full of explosive rallies, tension, and drama. At 5-4, Alcaraz had a chance to serve it out, but Sinner broke back. In the first Roland Garros final decided by a fifth-set tiebreak, Alcaraz hit a purple patch, racing through the breaker 10-2. The match ended with a running forehand winner down the line—a shot that will replay in highlight reels for decades.

With his victory, Alcaraz became only the third-youngest man in history to win five majors, behind Bjorn Borg and Rafael Nadal. He's also just the third man this century to defend the Roland Garros title, alongside Nadal and Gustavo Kuerten.

Sinner, meanwhile, remains the world No.1 and continues to inspire with his graceful attitude and fearless tennis. Though he missed out on a historic third consecutive Grand Slam title, his consistency and drive suggest his day will come soon.

This match, like their rivalry, is far from over. And if Paris gave us a glimpse into the future of men’s tennis, it looks every bit as thrilling as the past.

Wimbledon Wild Cards Handed to Youth and Experience Alike

British teenage sensation Hannah Klugman and veteran Dan Evans are among those handed wild cards into the main draw of Wimbledon, as the All England Club revealed its initial list of invitees ahead of this year's Championships.

Klugman, 15, has earned her spot after reaching the girls' singles final at Roland Garros, continuing a breakout year that has marked her as one of Britain's most promising young players. She will be joined by fellow teenagers Mingge Xu and Mika Stojsavljevic, both of whom have also impressed at junior level. Stojsavljevic, the reigning US Open girls' champion, and Xu, who has already posted wins over two top-100 players on grass this month, will both make their senior Grand Slam debuts.

The trio represent a new wave of British talent, all aged 17 or under, and will line up alongside Francesca Jones, Harriet Dart, Jodie Burrage, and Heather Watson in the women's main draw. Sonay Kartal also returns after a historic third-round run as a qualifier last year – the best by a British woman in over 25 years – while Emma Raducanu and British No.1 Katie Boulter gain direct entry.

In the men's draw, 35-year-old Evans receives a lifeline after slipping to world No.199. A former top-30 player, he will make his 10th main draw appearance at SW19, buoyed by a morale-boosting win over Frances Tiafoe at Queen's. He is joined by Henry Searle, last year's boys' singles champion, along with Jay Clarke, George Loffhagen, and Oliver Crawford. Debuts also await US college graduates Jack Pinnington Jones and Johannus Monday.

Two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova is the only non-Briton to receive a wild card so far, as she returns to competition following maternity leave.

With one men's wild card still to be announced, anticipation builds for a Grand Slam that looks set to balance youth, experience and sentiment when play begins on 30 June.

John Lloyd highlights ‘scary’ depth in men’s game as Alcaraz survives Queen’s Club test

Carlos Alcaraz extended his winning run to 14 matches with a hard-fought 6-4, 7-6(4) victory over lucky loser Adam Walton at Queen’s Club, but the performance left former British No.1 John Lloyd both impressed and slightly unnerved.

Returning to grass for the first time this season, the 22-year-old Spaniard found himself in a real contest under the London sun. Walton, who had come through as a last-minute addition to the draw, pushed Alcaraz to the limit in the second set and even held two set points at 5-4. But the reigning Wimbledon champion stayed composed, closing out the match in one hour and 42 minutes.

Speaking on the BBC, Lloyd praised Alcaraz’s display but pointed to the overall standard of the men’s tour as something “scary”.

“I would give him about an eight out of ten,” Lloyd said. “First match on grass and you come up against someone who has played some matches. But the scary thing for me is how strong the men’s game is, when Adam Walton lost in qualifying. That’s how good the standard is.”

Despite acknowledging some rustiness from Alcaraz, Lloyd was full of admiration for the Spaniard’s court presence.

“He just has to clean up a few things—movement, maybe returns not quite at his best. But for his first game back, at least an eight. I like the way he interacts with the crowd. It’s not arrogance—he just enjoys it. He’s fabulous as an entertainer.”

Alcaraz will look to build momentum on the grass as he continues his preparations to defend his Wimbledon title.

Taiwan's Tsao Chia-yi Handed One-Year Ban for Anti-Doping Violation

Taiwanese tennis player Tsao Chia-yi has been suspended for 12 months after testing positive for a banned stimulant, the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) confirmed on Wednesday.

The suspension, which runs until 28 February 2026, stems from a failed drug test in January this year. The 21-year-old had been under a voluntary provisional suspension since 1 March 2025, after the presence of methylephedrine was detected in her system. The substance, classified as a stimulant, is prohibited under the Tennis Anti-Doping Programme (TADP) unless the athlete has a Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE), which Tsao did not possess.

According to the ITIA, Tsao attributed the positive result to her use of Pabron Gold A, an over-the-counter cold medicine she purchased while in Japan. Although she does not speak Japanese, Tsao admitted she failed to verify the ingredients with a pharmacist or doctor before taking the medication.

The agency noted that receipts and supporting documentation submitted by the player confirmed her explanation, and it accepted that the violation was unintentional. Citing a lack of significant fault or negligence, the ITIA ruled that a 12-month suspension was appropriate, a decision Tsao has accepted without appeal.

During the suspension period, Tsao is barred from playing, coaching, or attending any events sanctioned by the ITIA or its member bodies, including the WTA and national tennis associations.

In a statement released on social media, Tsao said she accepted full responsibility and expressed regret over her lack of caution. "I would never have taken the cold medicine had I known it contained a banned substance," she wrote. "I promise to be more careful in the future and never seek an unfair advantage."

Sebastián Varela Wins 2025 Tom Perrotta Prize for Tennis Journalism

The International Tennis Writers' Association (ITWA) has named Sebastián Varela as the recipient of the 2025 Tom Perrotta Prize for Tennis Journalism.

Now in its fourth year, the annual award honours exceptional tennis journalism by a writer aged 35 or under. It carries a $2,000 prize and will be officially presented on the eve of the US Open in New York.

Varela, 32, is a Chilean journalist and co-founder of CLAY, a bilingual digital publication dedicated to in-depth tennis coverage, founded in 2022 alongside fellow journalist Sebastián Fest. Since its launch, CLAY has established a strong presence across the tennis calendar, offering interviews, features, and analysis from Grand Slams to the Challenger circuit.

A panel of seven prominent tennis journalists judged this year's entries anonymously. Varela impressed with two compelling features: one spotlighted a former drug trafficker who now transforms lives through tennis, and the other followed the redemptive journey of Chilean player Nicolás Jarry, who returned to the sport after serving an 11-month doping suspension.

Varela will donate half of his prize money to Fundación Futuros para el Tenis, a Chilean social initiative working with vulnerable children in Lo Espejo, one of the country's most disadvantaged districts. The remaining funds will support the ongoing development of CLAY as it looks to broaden its reach.

"It's a true honour to receive the Tom Perrotta Prize," said Varela. "It feels like a meaningful recognition of the work I've done and the love I have for journalism.

"I'm thankful to cover tennis with CLAY, the outlet I co-founded with Sebastián Fest three years ago, which has taken me around the world doing what I enjoy most — from exploring the minds of the sport's biggest stars to giving a voice to inspiring stories that would otherwise go unnoticed.

"I'm grateful to the Perrotta family for how they value journalism. I feel privileged to do what many colleagues in Latin America would love to do — but often can't – to travel the Tour and tell stories.

"Tom's legacy is a beautiful reminder of how important it is to keep bringing young journalists closer to this sport we all care so much about."

The award commemorates American writer Tom Perrotta, whose outstanding contributions to tennis journalism were cut short by his untimely passing at the age of 44.

ITWA extends its thanks to all entrants and nominees, and to the judging panel for their time, care and expertise.

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Community Campaigners Raise £200,000 to Challenge Wimbledon Expansion

Efforts to halt controversial expansion plans at Wimbledon have gained fresh momentum after a local campaign group raised £200,000 ahead of a key legal showdown with the All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC).

The group, Save Wimbledon Park, is opposing AELTC's proposals to build 39 new grass courts and an 8,000-seat stadium on protected open land within Wimbledon Park. The development, approved by the Greater London Authority last year, forms part of the tennis club's long-term vision to consolidate its operations and bring all stages of The Championships onto a single, unified site.

But opponents argue that the project would irreversibly damage a cherished green space and set a worrying precedent for London's other protected lands.

Legal Battle Looms
A judicial review is scheduled for early July to assess whether the planning decision was made in a lawful and rational manner. The legal action centres on whether Merton Council, which approved the application, failed in its duties to protect public land.

"We have massive public support," said Christopher Coombe, a spokesman for Save Wimbledon Park. "Merton Council did not do the right thing. The Supreme Court has recently reinforced the idea that public land must be looked after properly—and we believe they fell short of that duty."

The group's fundraising campaign attracted more than 1,100 individual donations, with many residents expressing fears over environmental destruction, increased flood risk, and pollution.

NEW SITE PLANS

A Vision for Wimbledon

The AELTC argues the expansion is vital to the future of the tournament. Currently, Wimbledon's qualifying matches are held 5.6 kilometres away in Roehampton. The proposed development would allow all matches to take place on-site—bringing it in line with the other Grand Slams—and enable the club to host up to 50,000 spectators per day.

"We're already very tight on space," said AELTC chair Debbie Jevans. "To maintain Wimbledon's standing at the pinnacle of the sport, we must evolve. This would also deliver economic benefits locally and nationally."

The club purchased the land in 2018 for £65 million and has pledged to create a 23-acre public park as part of the plan. Jevans insists most of the site would be open "in perpetuity" and that environmental benefits, including a 10% biodiversity gain, outweigh the concerns.

Divided Views on Public Access and Environment

Campaigners remain unconvinced. They highlight that access would be permissive rather than guaranteed, and argue the 1993 covenant on the land—meant to prevent construction—should still apply.

"The majority of this land would only be open when AELTC allows it," said campaigner Simon Wright. "There's no public oversight. A private members' club should not be given this level of control over public green space."

"Each grass court requires tonnes of concrete and pesticide-laced turf," said campaigner Susan Cusack. "The 'green' look is misleading."

Jevans acknowledged public concerns but emphasised that mitigation plans were in place. "We've carefully considered traffic, construction, and local impact. Much of the equipment will be brought directly on-site to reduce lorry journeys," she said.

Wider Implications

A recent survey conducted by AELTC claims rising support for the project, especially among residents under 44. But the project's opponents argue the issue goes beyond opinion polls—it's about principle and precedent.

"This is Metropolitan Open Land, the same as green belt," said Wright. "If they're allowed to build, it opens the door to developments on other protected sites across London."

In addition to the judicial review, a separate court case in January will determine whether the land is protected under a statutory trust for public recreation. AELTC maintains no such protection exists, but if the court finds otherwise, it could block the project entirely.

The Road Ahead

While Wimbledon remains one of Britain's most iconic sporting institutions, its vision for the future now finds itself under legal scrutiny. With both sides resolute and public opinion sharply divided, the outcome could shape not just the future of The Championships—but the fate of green spaces across the capital.

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This list was compiled at the end of 2024, and shows who was up in elite earnings table of all time

Rank	Player Name	Total Earnings (in Million $)	Major Wins	Endorsements	Active Years
1	Roger Federer	$1,100+	20 Grand Slams	Uniqlo, Rolex, Wilson	1998–2022
2	Novak Djokovic	$970+	24 Grand Slams	Asics, Lacoste, Head	2003–Present
3	Rafael Nadal	$850+	22 Grand Slams	Nike, Babolat, Kia	2001–Present
4	Serena Williams	$450+	23 Grand Slams	Nike, Wilson, Gatorade	1995–2022
5	Naomi Osaka	$350+	4 Grand Slams	Nike, Yonex, Beats	2013–Present
6	Maria Sharapova	$325+	5 Grand Slams	Nike, Head, Porsche	2001–2020
7	Andy Murray	$310+	3 Grand Slams	Under Armour, Head	2005–Present
8	Venus Williams	$300+	7 Grand Slams	Wilson, EleVen, Lacoste	1994–Present
9	Pete Sampras	$290+	14 Grand Slams	Nike, Wilson	1988–2002

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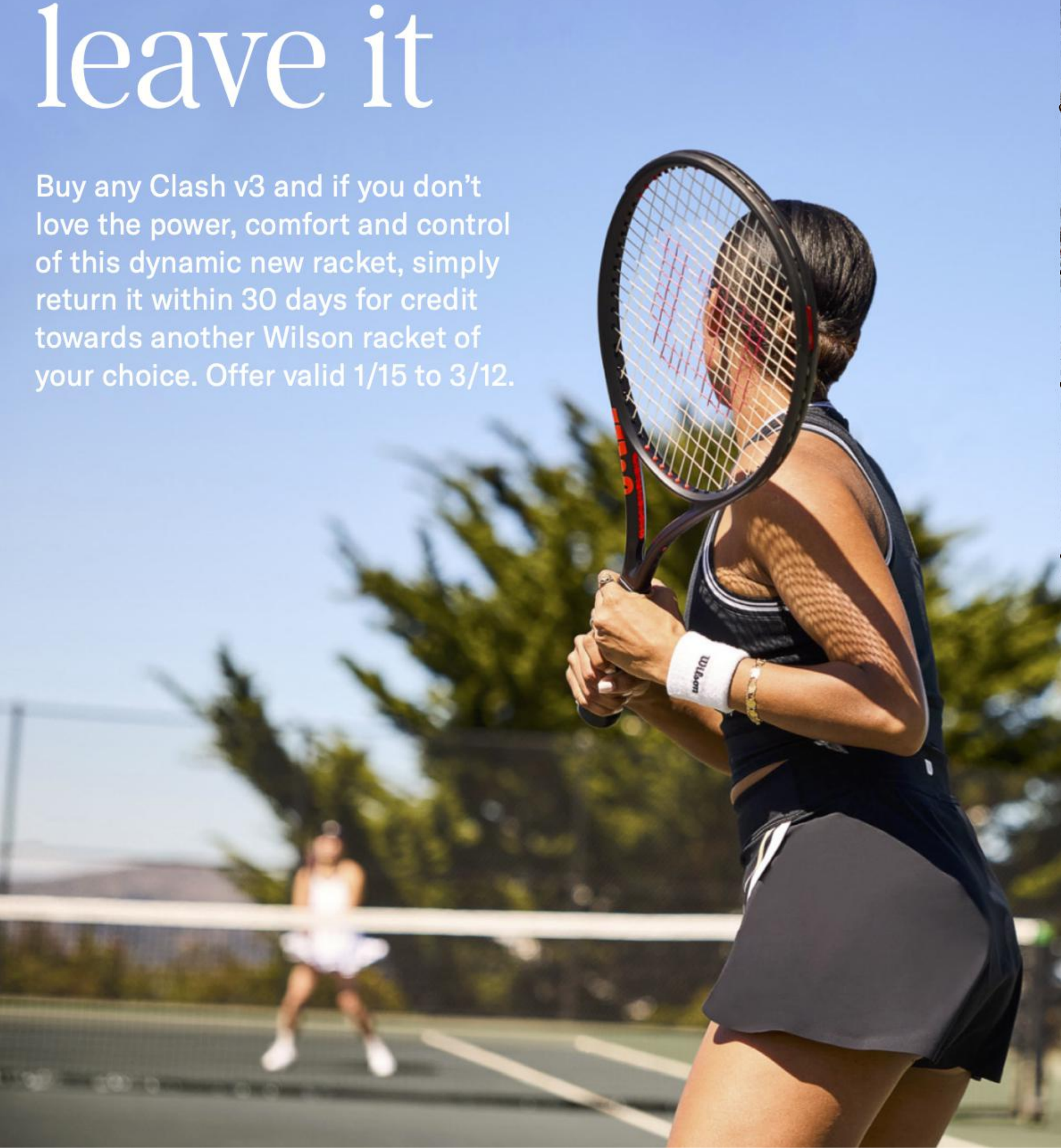

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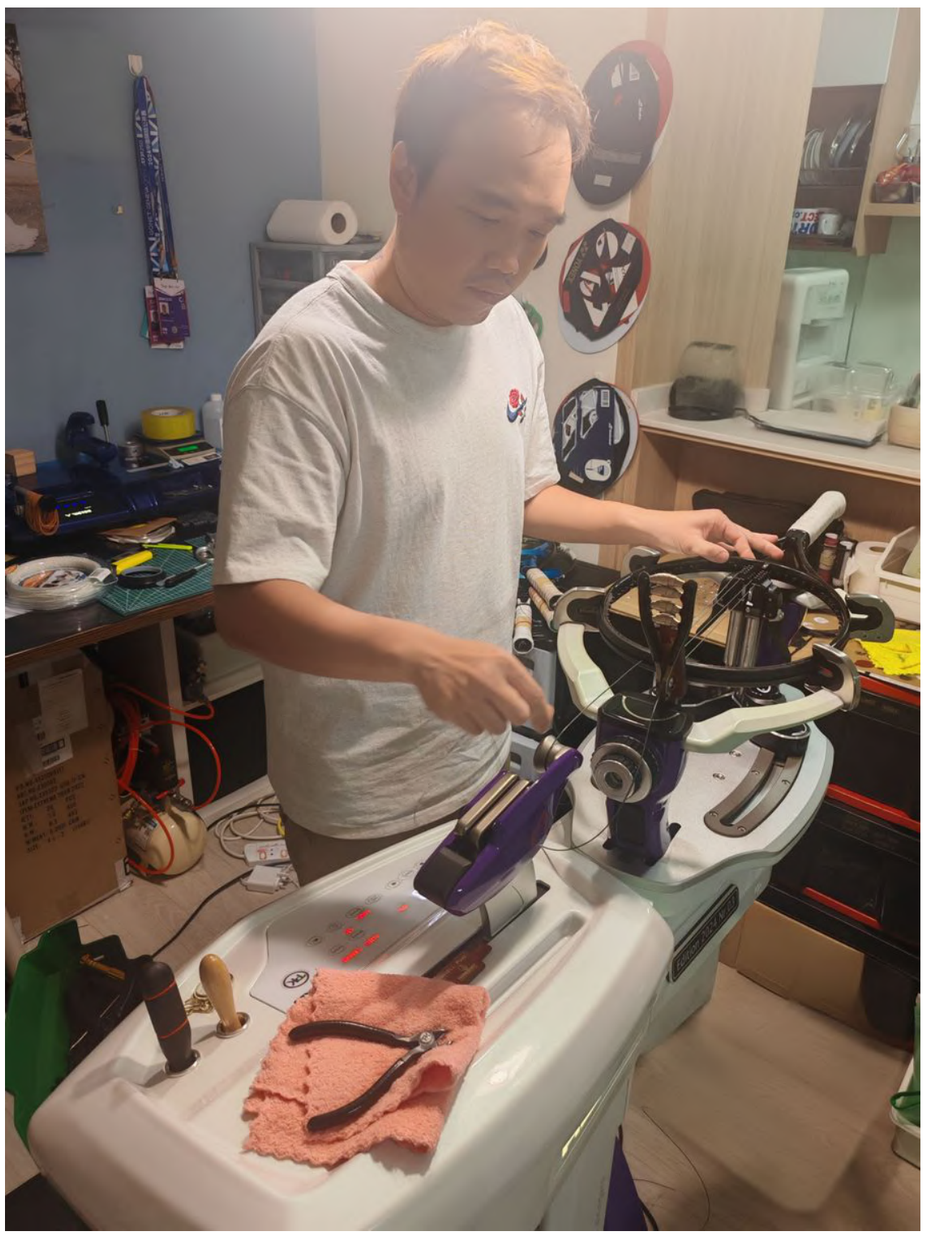
Kenneth Leong & Andrew Burhan in Singapore



Andrew Burhan has been running a tennis store in Jakarta, Indonesia, since January 2025. He recently made the trip to Singapore and had a private lesson and subsequently took the Pro Stringer examination with GRSA Chief instructor for Asia, Kenneth Leong. We welcome him to the GRSA family and wish him all the best in his journey of becoming a certified professional with GRSA.

If you're in Asia and you'd like to extend your knowledge, improve your skills and take serious steps in to making stringing an even more important part of your life, contact Kenneth: kenneth@grsa-international.com

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This is more than just a conference — it's a celebration of our growing global stringing community, where industry professionals, enthusiasts, and innovators come together to learn, share, and connect.

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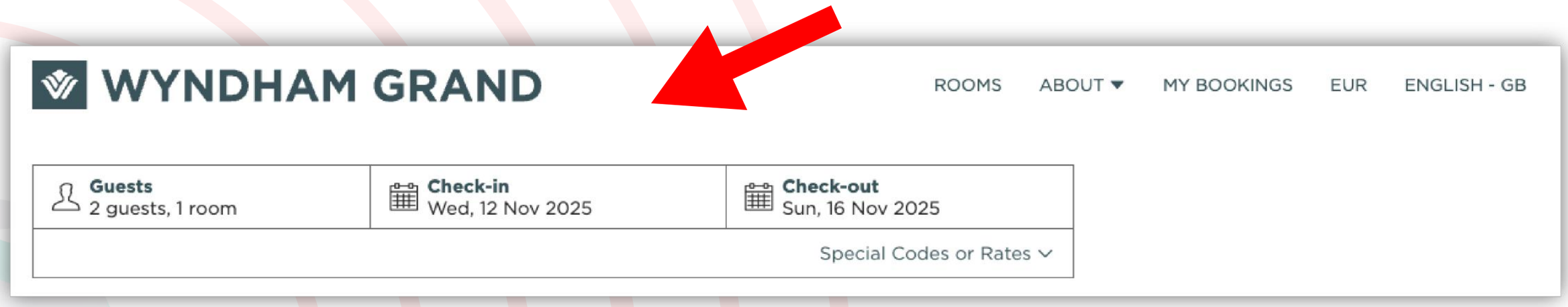

Activities for Families and Plus-Ones

This year, we're making the experience even more inclusive. Attendees' partners and families can join in on a range of optional add-on activities, including spa packages, excursions, and day trips around Málaga and the Andalusian coast. Full details will be released soon.

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Stringer Solutions

POWER PADS - WHAT IS IT? - DOES IT WORK?

Firstly, I think that an explanation of what exactly is a “Power Pad” and what it is used for, would be a good start.

What is a Power Pad? A power pad is a small square thin block of leather (rubber has been used before as well but isn’t common) that sits between the string and the frame. Certain players swear by them and have pretty much used them throughout their whole careers. Notably, Pete Sampras and Roger Federer are probably the highest profile “power pad” users.

What does a Power Pad do? – A power pad is used to round out the angles of the string going into and out of the grommets when using a very thin string at high tensions. Basically, it is there to help with shear breakage of the string, due to sharp turns in the grommets. A perfect example of the use of the power pad is the Babolat Pure Drive, from a few years back, the 4th main string had a sharp angle going up to the 5th main and we had a few instances where a player was popping strings on the outside of the frame in this area. Leather Power Pads were put between the string and the grommet strip and made the angle of the string less severe and solved the problem.

Power Pads were used a lot in conjunction with very thin natural gut, as gut is used less now, power pads are seen less as well.

Once a player gets used to seeing the power pads in his racket he often doesn’t change back and even if he may change frames for one that doesn’t have any angles that need “rounding out”, he will carry on using the power pads because of habit.

In the stringing room of a tour event, if a racket is handed in by a player, that has power pads, the strings holding the power pads are normally not removed so that the stringer can see the exact placement and replicate accordingly.

Remember – The difference is in the small details.

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

The GRSA Certified Competition Stringer and GRSA Certified Competition Master Stringer are unique to GRSA International. (Presential & Online)

There was a definite gap in the certification pyramid, between the shop stringer certifications & tour stringer certifications, and after much thought, GRSA designed a certification level that prepares a stringer for what they will find when they start stringing at different professional events. This certification level fits perfectly between the Pro Master (technique-based exams) and the Tour certifications (Speed and consistency exams). As this certification level includes information on how to act and approach a professional event, this certification level must be passed before moving on to the Tour level certifications.

There are two levels, in keeping with the other GRSA certification levels.

GRSA Certified Competition Stringer & GRSA Certified Competition Master Stringer

Here are the instructions for the Competition level exams:

BUY NOW

GRSA Certified Competition Stringer
This exam doesn't have a written part and is purely practical.
a) String a racket ATW with a monofilament string in 45 minutes – All strings are nice and straight.
b) Change the pallets & butt cap on a HEAD (or similar frame) in 30 minutes.
c) Install base grips (right-hander) and over-grips on 2 frames making them look identical (matched) in 20 minutes.
Apply the base grip to two rackets in an identical manner for a right-handed player (counterclockwise wrap). Then install an over grip on each of the rackets, again making them identical and wrapped for a right-hander.

BUY NOW

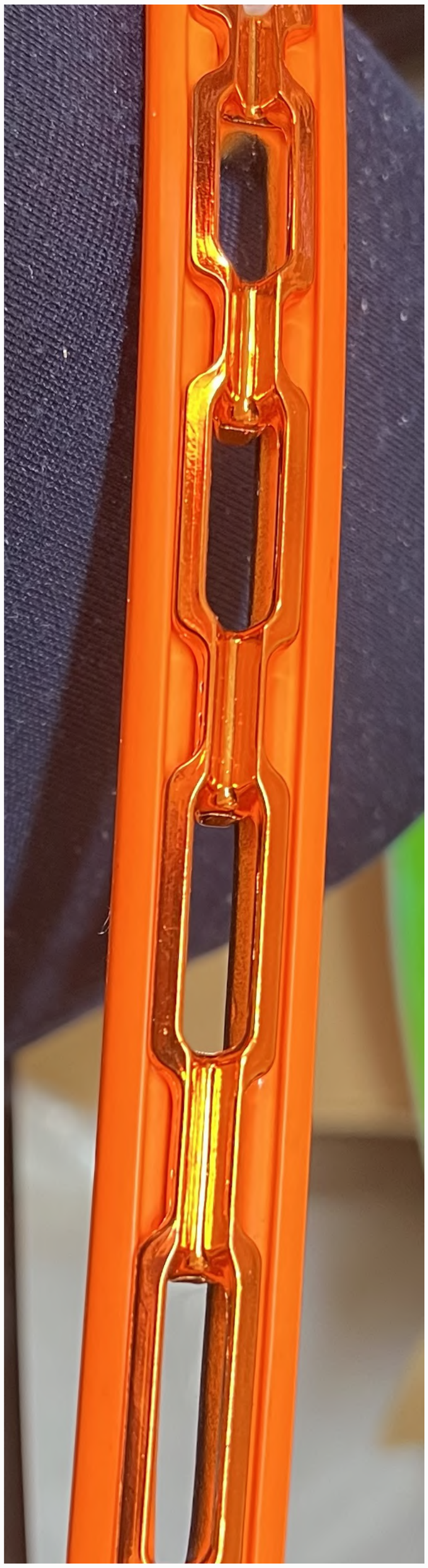
GRSA Certified Competition Master Stringer Exam
This exam has a written part and a practical part.
a) A multiple-choice written exam of 40 questions in 60 minutes.
b) String 2 frames ATW with a Monofilament in 60 minutes – All strings are nice and straight.
c) Install base grips (for left-hander) and overgrips on 2 frames making them look identical (matched) in 30 minutes.
Apply the base grip to two rackets in an identical manner for a left-handed player (clockwise wrap). Then install an over grip on each of the rackets, again making them identical and wrapped for a left-hander.

Both of these exams can be taken online and when you sign up for the exam, you will receive a study guide to help with the written exam. The exams will be marked from the usual MP4 format videos sent through to GRSA HQ.

Each exam can be done online and costs 120€, however, we have created a Competition Stringer Bundle for both levels, at 220€ - Contact us for the bundle!

nick@grsa-international.com

NICK DOWN talks about the EXO3 Pattern



So far we have had a second look at the Prince Triple threat Pattern, the Prince O3 Pattern and, in the last issue, the Prince O3 Speedport Pattern. This month we'll continue with Prince, with the EXO3 Pattern. All of the Prince Squash Stringing Patterns that we've looked at so far involve a powering at the throat, this is no exception, but there are three more Prince Patterns to go and only the next one has a powering at the throat.

The Prince EXO3 Pattern is almost the same as the Prince O3 Speedport Pattern featured in the last issue. The reason that I have included it alongside the other Prince Patterns is because the rackets have a different technology completely. That is the EXO3 technology (the same as found in Tennis rackets), which is a type of exo-skeleton within the bumper and grommets. It is a floating suspension system in conjunction with speedports that results in most of the string not being in direct contact with the frame of the racket (apart from normal grommets inserted into most rackets). I've currently got six in my worshop (pictured) all different models, except for one, but sharing the same pattern, I can think of a few more.

Nick's Nugget

About 50% of Standard Squash Rackets don't have a bridge; they must be strung Around The World (ATW) to string the crosses from head to throat.

nick@grsa-international.com

This is how to string it:-

(2 Piece)

Mains:-

LH1(Speedport LH1-right side) to below ring
Above ring to LH2(Speedport LH1-left side).
RH1(Speedport RH1 left side) to above ring
Below ring to RH 2(Speedport RH1 right side).
RH2(Speedport RH1 right side) to RH3(Speedport RH2 left side)
RH3(Speedport RH2 left side) to above ring
Below ring to RH4(Speedport RH2 right side)
LH2(Speedport LH1 left side) to LH3(Speedport LH2 right side)
LH3 (Speedport LH2 right side) to below ring
Above ring to LH4(Speedport LH2 left side)
LH4(Speedport LH2 left side) to LH6, LH6 to below ring
Above ring to LH7(Shared hole) RH4(Speedport RH2 left side) to RH6
RH6 above ring, below ring to RH7(Shared hole)
RH7(Shared hole) to RH9, RH9 above ring
Below ring to RH12(Shared hole) Tie off at RH9. LH7 (Shared hole) to LH9, LH9 to below ring, above ring to LH12(Shared hole), Tie off at LH9.

Crosses:-

(BEWARE the crosses start on the opposite side to the O3 Speedport Pattern), start at RH5(tie off is RH6) (soft weave to ensure a hard weave at the bottom cross).

Then weave all crosses (16 in Total) ensuring that you finish with a hard-weave at the bottom, then tie off at RT2.

There should be alternating mains at the powering and a hard-weave at the bottom cross and no crossovers!

If the Speedports don't line up correctly, you didn't start on the correct side, as instructed above.

Next month the Powerbite pattern.

Listen to my playlist on Spotify

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EMAIL ME AT:
nick@grsa-international.com

Ashaway Vice President Steve Crandall caught up with GRSA's Global Squash Manager Nick Down, one of the most knowledgable squash stringers in the industry, to find out more about some of the main practices within the squash stringing world.

Steve: Nick, thanks for accepting my offer to discuss the stringing practices of professional squash players. With your many years of experience in the professional squash stringing community, your insights will be very helpful to GRSA members. To provide some limited data to reference as a basis for our discussion, I have surveyed a few of Ashaway's global squash team regarding their personal use of Ashaway's string in their rackets.

Nick: Thanks, Steve, I am happy to share my thoughts with you and all GRSA members. It is always my goal to further the understanding of stringing for the great sport of squash.

Steve: From the data I have received from members of our sponsorship team it appears the common practice is for professional players to travel with a certain number of freshly strung frames which they rotate for practice and competition for a standard amount of time before restringing all of them. The number of rackets used in rotation seems to be approximately 3- 4 from my survey. What is your experience with this practice?

Nick: Generally, Steve, that sounds right I can think of a few exceptions to that; some players would have 5 or 6 rackets strung at the start of the tournament and you wouldn't see them again for the rest of the week! Presumably, they were confident of getting through most of the rounds.

Steve: Regarding string gauge, it appears that the majority of Ashaway-sponsored pros choose to use an 18 gauge (1.15mm) string. Some choose a 17 gauge (1.25mm) string as better for their particular situation. Is this your observation as well? Why is a thinner string preferred by many professional players? Why do some prefer a 17 gauge string?

Nick: I think Ashaway uses PEEK (PolyEtherEtherKetone) filaments for quite a few of their squash string range these days, but not all, by any means. PEEK, as a component in some strings, has made it possible to make 1.15mm (18 gauge), because it makes them more durable. Most players find thinner strings play better. A good example of a popular 1.25mm (17 gauge) string is the original SuperNick® XL, which doesn't have PEEK in its design. There is a SuperNick® XL Micro version at 1.15mm (18 gauge), without PEEK, which plays very well but isn't very durable. The 1.25mm (17 gauge) version of SuperNick® XL gives good feedback to the player and has been a popular choice for years.

Steve: Regarding string tension, the optimum range for pro players appears to be between 24-28 pounds. Is this consistent with your experience over the years? What is your recommended range for today's squash frames? Is this range recommended for amateur as well as professional players?

Nick: I'm not a fan of high tensions, as a player, but, of course, as a stringer, will do whatever is asked for by a player. Over the years the average tension has dropped by a couple of pounds, but I would say that the range would be as you've said, perhaps starting a bit lower at 22. Of course, there have been examples of extremes over the years, one player played very low at 14 & 1/2 pounds, another at over 30 pounds, although both had thin gauge strings. Both players were ranked #1 in the world at one time or another.

Steve: Regarding the frequency of restringing rackets at the professional level, the standard practice seems to vary from as little as every 2 weeks to as much as every 6 weeks. Certainly this would vary depending on the number of rackets used in a player's personal rotation. What other factors would lead to such a wide variation in professional restringing frequency?

Nick: The trouble is that not all stringers do a particularly good job. I've been told by one top player that mediocre stringing is ok for practice but for tournament play it makes a difference if the stringing is done well. I've had phone calls from players all over the world, seeking advice about stringing, nothing else, I hasten to add. Getting qualifications is a good idea, after all you're investing in yourself.

Steve: Regarding string types used by the surveyed players, there are three main string designs selected by our team members: Multifilament Nylon, Multifilament Nylon/Peek and Multifilament Polyurethane. How does each of these different multifilament string designs influence the performance and durability of the string in a professional player's racket and why is a monofilament design not really suitable for squash string?

Nick: Those three types are all good in their own way; the multifilament nylon plays well and gives great feedback to the player, the PEEK version means that thinner strings can be used without sacrificing durability. The polyurethane version is a durable, confidence booster, particularly when the player plays short, the string feels a bit harder than the others and is easter on the fingers from a stringer's point of view.

Steve: Thanks for your time, Nick, and for your great work elevating the understanding and appreciation for proper squash racket stringing!

Khafagy Denies Serme Storybook Finish with Santiago Open Triumph

Egypt's Malak Khafagy captured the biggest title of her burgeoning career with a gripping five-game victory over France's Camille Serme in the Santiago Open final, dashing hopes of a fairytale ending to the Frenchwoman's comeback season.

Serme, the former world No.2, returned to professional squash this year after a two-year retirement and the birth of her daughter, and had enjoyed a sensational run that included titles at two Challenger events, the British Open qualifying tournament and the French Nationals. The 36-year-old had lost just twice all season heading into the final and was chasing a poetic full-circle moment, having won her first PSA title at this very event in 2007.

However, 20-year-old Khafagy had other ideas. The Egyptian top seed, who had edged out England's Torrie Malik in a fiery semi-final, showed grit and maturity beyond her years to recover from a poor start and seize the most significant win of her professional journey.

Serme came out firing, racing to a one-game lead in under seven minutes. But Khafagy, despite heavy strapping on her leg following a quarter-final injury, dominated the second game 11-3 to level the match. The crowd, packed tightly into the shopping mall venue in Santiago de Compostela, roared for both players as the momentum swung.

Khafagy surged from 5-8 down to snatch the third 11-8, only for Serme to respond with a narrow 11-9 win in the fourth, despite a spirited late charge from her young opponent. In the decider, Khafagy appeared to have the match in hand at 9-4, but Serme clawed back to 9-9, setting up a dramatic climax.

A punishing rally ended with Khafagy earning match ball, and moments later, she sealed victory as Serme's forehand boast clipped the tin. She was awarded her trophy by Spanish football legend Veronica Boquete, capping a remarkable week inside the glass court nestled between high-street shops and buzzing cafés.

This triumph marks Khafagy's first World Tour title and a breakthrough moment for one of Egypt's rising stars—on a stage that gave birth to a legend, another may just have been born.

Elias and Gohar Triumph in Birmingham to Claim British Open Crowns

Peru's Diego Elias and Egypt's Nouran Gohar clinched the prestigious 2025 GillenMarkets British Open titles with dramatic victories at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre.

World No.2 Elias produced a composed and powerful performance to dethrone defending champion Mostafa Asal, while Gohar edged out long-time rival Nour El Sherbini in a gripping five-game battle to secure her third British Open crown.

In the women's final, Gohar and El Sherbini added another classic to their storied rivalry, with Gohar twice coming from behind before mounting a ferocious comeback in the decider. El Sherbini, bidding for a second British Open title, appeared on course for victory when she led 2-1 and 8-7 in the fourth. But a heavy fall disrupted her rhythm, and Gohar pounced, saving game ball to force a fifth before surging from 1-4 down to win 11-4.

"This is the best crowd I've played in front of," said an emotional Gohar. "Nour and I have been competing since 2016, and sharing this rivalry is such an honour. She brings out the best in me."

The men's final saw Elias fulfil a long-held ambition. The Peruvian dominated the opening game and showed great composure after Asal took the third. A slip early in the fourth left the Egyptian battling discomfort, but Elias maintained his focus to close out the match 11-4.

"I don't know what to say—this is crazy," Elias said. "Everything started with Miguel [Rodriguez], who showed us South Americans it was possible. To do this with my dad here, just the two of us, is amazing."

Did you know? Elias is the second South American man to win the British Open, following Colombian legend Miguel Rodriguez's historic triumph in 2018.

PADEL NEWS

LONDON, DOHA – Premier Padel and the International Padel Federation (FIP) have confirmed a series of major developments aimed at reinforcing the global growth of professional padel.

Three of the sport's flagship events – the Italy Major in Rome (Foro Italico), the Paris Major at Roland-Garros, and the Qatar Major in Doha (Khalifa Complex) – have all secured long-term renewals. These tournaments will remain cornerstone events on the Qatar Airways Premier Padel Tour, following new multi-year agreements. The renewed commitment reflects the sport's sustained international momentum, further supported by a 30% increase in global broadcast viewership during 2025.

In addition, Premier Padel has announced that Octagon Spain will oversee all Spanish-based tournaments through to 2032, reinforcing Spain's status as a hub of professional padel and ensuring top-tier organisation for players and fans alike.

These announcements follow the recent BNL Italy Major in Rome (8–15 June) and come in the wake of high-level talks between FIP President Luigi Carraro and both the current and incoming presidents of the International Olympic Committee, Thomas Bach and Kirsty Coventry, as part of padel's continued push for Olympic inclusion.

Premier Padel has also teamed up with FIFA to host a special padel event at PadelX in Miami, targeting international football figures ahead of the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup. Similar collaborations with major sporting bodies are planned for the coming months.

Progress is also being made with the Hexagon Cup, which is moving towards official FIP recognition, with discussions underway to expand into new and emerging padel markets.

Premier Padel Chairman Nasser Al-Khelaïfi described the renewals as "a clear sign of our long-term vision and global appeal," while FIP President Luigi Carraro hailed the stability and inclusiveness of the sport's growing ecosystem.

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Chingalan Strike Again in Rome as Triay Reclaims No.1 Spot

Rome continues to bring fortune to Fede Chingotto and Ale Galán – and so does Italy. Nearly a year to the day since they last defeated Arturo Coello and Agustín Tapia on the Premier Padel circuit, the "Chingalan" duo repeated the feat, this time in style at the BNL Italy Major. Their last triumph over the world No.1 pair came in Genoa; now, they've done it again at the Foro Italico, where they also lifted the title in 2023.

The men's final featured key breaks in the eighth game of the first set and the seventh and eleventh of the second, but it was a sensational recovery shot by Chingotto – played from outside the court – in the second set that captured hearts and went viral within minutes. The win draws the season title tally level between the top two teams, with both pairs now on four apiece.

"I'm delighted to win again in a place that means so much to me," said Galán, also a champion here in 2022 alongside Juan Lebrón. "We've enjoyed ourselves this week – and that's when we play our best." Chingotto added, "This one's for my father – it's Father's Day in Argentina. Thank you, Ale, and thank you to the fans who believe in Chingalan."

In the women's draw, Gemma Triay and Delfi Brea claimed the crown, with Triay returning to World No.1. Their 6-4, 6-4 victory – sealed after five consecutive games – brought Gemma her fifth title of the season and her second Major in Rome, following her 2023 success with Marta Ortega.

"A great match and a fantastic week," smiled Triay. "Pizza or pasta tonight? Both." Brea added, "Playing with Gemma makes everything easier."

33,000 fans attended across the week – a 10% rise from 2024.

IOC President Thomas Bach Attends BNL Italy Major, Hailing Padel's Global Momentum

International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach made a high-profile visit to the BNL Italy Major Premier Padel tournament at Rome's iconic Foro Italico, underlining the sport's rising global appeal.

Bach was welcomed by Luigi Carraro, President of the International Padel Federation (FIP), during a day that also included meetings with Premier Padel CEO David Serrahima and Italian Tennis and Padel Federation (FITP) President Angelo Binaghi.

The visit signals a strong vote of confidence in padel's international growth and its alignment with Olympic values such as inclusivity, youth engagement, and accessibility. President Bach took in the quarter-finals and met several leading players, including Francisco "Paquito" Navarro, who presented him with a special edition Bullpadel racket created for the tournament.

He also spent time with top-ranked stars from both the men's and women's tours, including Ariana Sanchez and Paula Josemía (both FIP No.1), Agustin Tapia and Arturo Coello (men's FIP No.1), Marta Ortega, Alejandra Alonso, Juan Lebrón, Miguel Yanguas, and Jorge Nieto.

"It was a true honour to welcome IOC President Thomas Bach and introduce him to our padel family," said FIP President Carraro. "His presence sends a powerful message of support for our sport as we continue our journey towards possible Olympic inclusion."

Padel, known for its fast-paced, doubles-based gameplay and community-driven ethos, has rapidly grown in popularity across continents. Its accessibility across ages and skill levels has positioned it as one of the world's most promising emerging sports.

Addressing fans, President Bach remarked: "Padel is a truly impressive and fast-growing sport. I wish all of you the very best on your journey."

It doesn't matter if you're an experienced player or just starting out, knowing where you can go to take part in open competitions is part of the fun of this forever growing sport, so here are some of the dates, visit the Pickleball Global website for more info.

COMPETIONS - 2025

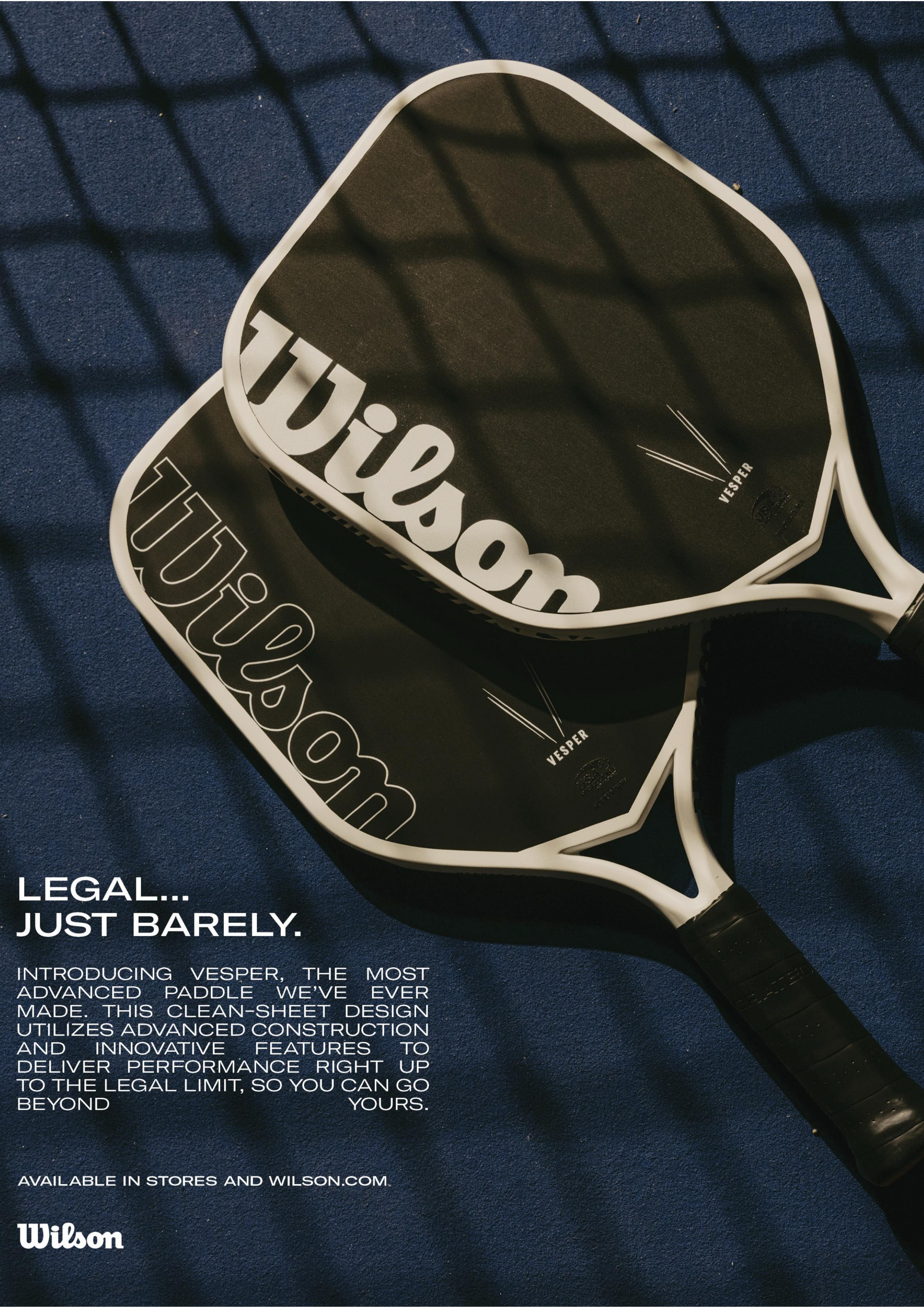
WPC SERIES - 2025 WPC ENGLAND
EID: 2031 **PRICE** GBP 45
Organizer: Michal Cicvak
EVENT - TOURNAMENT
Starting: October 03, 2025 to October 05, 2025
City: Leeds, UK
Tournament Venue: Game Set Match Jccs Leeds
Registration Deadline: September 07, 2025 (OPEN)
Tier Level: 3

1. Mittelhessen International Open Solms
EID: 1910 **PRICE** EUR 30
Organizer: Sascha Sandermann
EVENT - TOURNAMENT
Starting: September 20, 2025 to September 21, 2025
City: Stadionstraße 10, 35606 Solms-Burgsolms, Deutschland
Tournament Venue: Tv 1906 Burgsolms
Registration Deadline: September 08, 2025 (OPEN)
Tier Level: 1

WPC SERIES - Belgian Pickleball Open 2025
EID: 1888 **PRICE EUR** 35
Organizer: Pickleball Belgium
EVENT - TOURNAMENT
Starting: August 15, 2025 to August 17, 2025
City:
Tournament Venue: Hall Sportif Mounier
Registration Deadline: August 01, 2025 (OPEN)
Tier Level: 3

MORE INFO

Pickleball Global



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Zane Ford's On-Court Meltdown Headlines Orange County Cup Drama

Currently ranked No. 14 in the world in singles, Zane Ford added his name to a growing list of pickleball players whose tempers have boiled over on the professional circuit. His dramatic post-match outburst followed a surprising Round of 32 defeat to world No. 46 James Ignatowich at the Select Medical Orange County Cup 2025, a PPA Tour event.

Though often seen as a laid-back sport, professional pickleball is anything but. The pace is quick, the margins slim, and the competition fierce. As the sport grows in stature, so too do the stakes—and the pressure. This year alone has already seen its fair share of on-court flashpoints, from Ben Johns nearly striking Quang Duong with a shot at the Zimmet Biomet Masters, to Anna Leigh Waters and Hayden Patriquin's fiery exchange at the USTA National Campus.

Now, it's Ford making headlines for the wrong reasons.

After a 0-11, 11-1, 11-4 loss to Ignatowich, Ford's frustration boiled over. The match ended on a misjudged volley that veered wide of the sideline. In response, Ford slammed his paddle twice against the court, then attempted to snap it over his knee—not once, not twice, but three times. Each effort met with failure, leaving the paddle battered but intact and the moment awkwardly prolonged.

While the scene raised eyebrows, it also quietly highlighted the surprising durability of modern paddles. For Ignatowich, however, the spotlight belonged to him. The lower-ranked player held his nerve and stormed back from a poor first game to record one of the biggest upsets of the tournament so far.

Ford may have started strong, but it was Ignatowich who seized the momentum, and the match.

Pickleball Courts Shut Down Amid Noise Dispute in Berwyn, Pennsylvania

The fast-growing sport of pickleball has landed at the centre of a legal battle in Berwyn, Pennsylvania, where neighbours of the Upper Main Line YMCA have taken issue with the noise generated by the game.

The YMCA has temporarily shut down its outdoor pickleball courts following a lawsuit filed by residents living between 500 and 1,000 feet from the facility. The plaintiffs argue that the YMCA violated Easttown Township's zoning regulations by converting tennis courts into pickleball courts without obtaining the necessary permits.

The lawsuit, which also names Easttown Township, alleges that township officials failed to enforce existing noise and zoning codes, amounting to civil conspiracy in favour of the YMCA. At the heart of the issue is the distinctive sound of pickleball, which critics claim exceeds the township's noise ordinance limits.

"When people convert courts from tennis to pickleball, it's a shock to some people," said Dale Van Scoyk, owner of Pickleball Sound Mitigation Consulting. Van Scoyk specialises in reducing pickleball noise and explains that the game's trademark 'pop' occurs at around 1000 hertz — the same frequency as human speech. "Our ears are tuned to listen carefully for that particular frequency, which makes it more noticeable and irritating," he explained.

In response to the ongoing litigation, the YMCA issued a statement saying: "We strive to be good neighbors and thoughtful stewards of our shared community. We are currently facing civil litigation related to the alleged violations of local noise ordinances stemming from pickleball activities on the premises."

In an effort to address the growing concerns, Easttown Township's Board voted in April to update its zoning code. Under the new rules, anyone seeking to open or modify outdoor pickleball facilities must submit noise studies and demonstrate compliance with noise and nuisance standards.

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Daniel Chan Steps Up to Champion Global Growth of Para Badminton

Former Hong Kong Paralympian Daniel Chan Ho-yuen has taken on a new mission to improve the lives of para badminton players worldwide. The two-time Paralympic medallist was recently appointed chair of the Para Badminton Athletes' Commission and named a member of the Badminton World Federation (BWF) Council.

Though Chan's chairmanship is technically set to last until December's re-elections, there is confidence within the BWF that his position will be renewed without contest. He intends to use the time to advocate for better support and long-term development of the sport and its athletes, particularly in countries where resources are scarce.

"It wasn't even a Paralympic sport when I first started serving," Chan said, reflecting on the progress since para badminton made its Games debut. "It is now a sport, and people are learning more about it, but the resources are lacking and quite poor."

Chan, whose journey began following a life-changing car accident in mainland China in 2009 that led to the amputation of his left foot, won bronze at the Tokyo Paralympics and silver in Paris. Having been part of the athletes' commission for eight years, he brings valuable experience to the leadership role.

He notes that while players in Hong Kong are fortunate to receive full-time support, this is far from the norm elsewhere. **"In Europe, Africa, South America and even Oceania, where badminton isn't a prime sport or as much a part of the culture, players need to cover their own expenses to compete overseas, and this can be very expensive,"** he said. **"I hope the governing body can do more to fund those in need so that the sport can be better promoted."**

Chan is also passionate about improving post-retirement prospects for athletes. "A lot of athletes, particularly para athletes, after devoting their prime years to the sport, have found it difficult to transition to life after retiring... mainly because of their education levels," he explained.

To address this, he is proposing initiatives in collaboration with schools and institutions to offer language training and career development. **"If they can learn better English, say, not only will it help them to find jobs in the future, it will also help them to give interviews so that more people will know about them."**

Looking beyond para badminton, Chan is also mindful of broader challenges facing the sport. With emerging racquet sports like pickleball drawing attention, he believes it's vital for badminton's global leadership to act strategically. "We need to make our players, able and disabled, more popular, to make sure the sport won't be eliminated from the various Games," he said.

Machaxi Raises $1.5M to Scale AI-Powered Badminton Coaching Across India

Sports-tech startup Machaxi, which specialises in grassroots coaching and digital sports infrastructure, has raised $1.5 million in a funding round led by Rainmatter, the investment initiative of Zerodha. The round also saw participation from Indian badminton legend Prakash Padukone and existing investors.

The fresh capital will help the Bengaluru-based company expand operations into Hyderabad, Pune, and Chennai, and support its vision of building a nationwide AI-powered coaching framework, with badminton as the initial focus.

> "We've always believed in the power of grassroots sports to transform communities. Machaxi's tech-driven approach to coaching, combined with a solid on-ground strategy, aligns perfectly with our mission at Rainmatter to back sustainable and impactful ventures," said Nithin Kamath, Founder of Zerodha and Rainmatter. "We're excited to support them on this journey."

As part of its expansion, Machaxi has partnered with the Padukone School of Badminton to launch the 'Machaxi x Padukone School of Badminton' programme. The initiative aims to open over 1,000 coaching centres across India over the next four years, using AI to deliver consistent training regardless of geography or coach availability.

> I've always believed that the future of Indian badminton lies in structured grassroots development," said Prakash Padukone. "Machaxi's vision to scale coaching while maintaining quality through AI is forward-thinking and impactful. I'm thrilled to partner with them in shaping the next generation of champions."

Rather than replacing human coaches, Machaxi's AI coaching system is designed to enhance and standardise training, assist with performance tracking, and scale coaching capacity across diverse locations.

> "This partnership is a big step forward in our mission to make quality sports coaching accessible to everyone in India," said Pratish Raj, Co-founder of Machaxi. "With the support of Rainmatter and the visionary backing of Mr. Padukone, we're working toward a future where every aspiring athlete, no matter their background, can access consistent, high-quality training and infrastructure."

The timing is strategic. According to a MarketsandMarkets report, the global AI in Sports market was valued at $1.03 billion in 2024, and is expected to grow to $2.61 billion by 2030, at a CAGR of 16.7%. As generative AI and predictive analytics reshape how sports are coached, managed, and experienced, Machaxi is well-positioned to be a key player in this rapidly evolving landscape.

With new funding, strategic alliances, and a growing technological foundation, Machaxi is on a mission to redefine grassroots badminton in India—and perhaps in the future, other sports too. The company's approach is not just about discovering champions, but about making sure every athlete has a fair shot at becoming one.

Estonia Shine with Five-Medal Haul at VICTOR Latvia International 2025

Estonia produced a standout showing at the VICTOR Latvia International 2025 in Riga, collecting an impressive five medals – two gold, one silver, and two bronze – in a performance that underlined their growing stature in European badminton.

Golden weekend for Üprus and Co.
Mixed doubles duo Mikk Õunmaa and Ramona Üprus delivered a composed performance to claim gold, overcoming their opponents 21-18, 21-14 in the final. Üprus doubled her tally with another gold alongside Catlyn Kruus in the women's doubles, as the pair edged a tense final 21-14, 26-24.

Estonia's medal run continued in the men's doubles, where Kristjan Kaljurand and Raul Käsner secured silver, falling short in the final with a 10-21, 12-21 result. Käsner featured in both of Estonia's bronze medal-winning pairs, reaching the semi-finals in the mixed doubles with Kati-Kreet Käsner and in the women's doubles with Helina Rüütel.

The strong all-round performance highlights Estonia's rising influence on the badminton circuit, particularly in the Baltic region, and showcases a new wave of competitive depth across multiple disciplines.

Other standout performances
Finland's Nella Nyqvist impressed en route to the women's singles final, narrowly missing out on gold after a determined effort that saw her settle for silver. Meanwhile, Spain also made their mark, with Jacobo Fernández and Alberto Piris Perals claiming the men's doubles title.

The tournament once again proved a valuable platform for emerging European talent, with several nations making strides on the international stage.

QUESTIONS ANSWERED

GRSA INTERNATIONAL

Q - Why is a GRSA certification good for me?

A - When a stringer shows a GRSA certification, this is a clear sign that they have received the best training currently available and will provide a professionally balanced service.

Q - What makes GRSA stand out from the rest?

A - GRSA is a globally recognised association that includes some of the best and most knowledgable Professionals, Master Stringers and Grand Master Stringers in the industry, this means the knowledge base is incomparable.

Q - What does GRSA teach its certified stringers?

A - GRSA teaches the importance of looking after the player, from the basics to the most intricate of details. How to provide accurate information, how to help improve and guide each individual.

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