

# Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Roma, Italia

**Angelo Binaghi**

**Ashley Keber**

**Nicole Pratt**

**Tathiana Garbin**

**Roberta Vinci**

Press Conference

ANGELO BINAGHI: (Through interpretation) In a nutshell, first of all he's very grateful to the WTA for this project, for sharing these goals.

He's particularly proud of the fact that since he became president of the Italian Tennis Federation, they changed the history of the development, the training, the formation of players as well as the coaches.

He made a few fun stories in reference to what used to happen in the past, such as coaches, just hard to wash cars of the federal consultants and so forth.

Yes, obviously this is the goal: the goal and the ultimate goal is producing coaches and players, the right person as well, great players, but well-behaved and so forth.

One final joke was in reference to Roberta Vinci's legendary one-handed backhand, which is apparently slice only. There will be prizes to eventual players that she's capable of teaching the one-handed backhand with the slice.

Ashley, can you have your say about this project to the audience.

ASHLEY KEBER: Thank you all for having us here. Thank you, President Binaghi, for partnering with us. I thank all of you for spending the time to make time in your busy day because this is a huge passion of ours.

Four, five years ago we had an idea, led by our coaches on tour, and with the WTA, to say we want to create more opportunities for women to compete in the tour.

Four and a half years ago we finally brought that idea, an actual program, so women could have the opportunity to



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coach on the highest level on the WTA Tour driven by Mercedes-Benz to give them that opportunity to really showcase their skills.

It started small. One tournament in the Americas, and we have since grown to Great Britain, to France, to the Middle East, to Australia and Asia-Pacific.

To be able to launch here today where we have that opportunity to work with a federation that has such a rich and deep and enthusiastic culture for tennis is really a blessing.

When we started the program, there were probably only 5% or 6% of the highest coaches that were women. In those four years, we have now close to 20% of the coaches on tour that are women. That is really in thanks to someone like Nicole. You invested greatly, inviting women and accepting them into the community, because of strategic partnerships like this where we are able to go into the community from the ground up and bring this program to life at the WTA Tour.

I want to say one more thanks to you in the room. Obviously it's doers like yourself who just say, How can I help? How can I mentor?

The players have been enthusiastic. It's a very real-life experience where the coaches come on tour with us, they stand side by side with another coach, and learn and test their knowledge. The whole community has been very giving of their time and knowledge.

For you to be here today, I'm now bringing you on to the team to help us shine a light on this program and spread the word. That's how we get more nations. We don't have a nation from Africa signed on yet. That's hopefully one that we can spread the program across the world.

THE MODERATOR: May I invite Nicole, do you want to have your words about this project, your side of the story.

NICOLE PRATT: No, it's a pleasure to be here. It's an exciting moment. I think just being here also with Tathiana, we were opponents, we were doubles partners, we were rivals in BJK Cup.

One thing I can say, and Ashley was speaking to it, is just

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the community of support now that women coaches feel on tour. When we first started, there were not many. So the fact we've had an increase in women coaches, it makes I think an incredible experience, not only for us, but while we're here ultimately at the end of the day is to elevate women's tennis.

For me diversity is really, really important. The fact that a lot of our women players have not had the opportunity to work with women coaches that can give so much. It's not to say that the men are not doing a great job also. But I think we also bring something a little bit different.

The other day, even one of my players was saying it's incredible to think when I'm speaking to you, Nicole, I'm sure other Italian players have said this to Roberta and Tathiana, when you're speaking about their life on tour, the fact that we've walked in their shoes, we've pretty much experienced everything that they've experienced, it really provides a lot of confidence and strength.

The other thing I think, the fact we're still here, is our passion. It speaks to our passion.

I just want to say, like, I think, and I can see some women at the back of the room here, so if you're thinking about getting involved in this program, I can highly, highly, highly recommend it.

When these women coaches first come into this program, they are just scratching the surface of their potential. It is amazing to see the growth and the elevation in their confidence, in their belief.

Often they feel like the door is closed. So this program really opens the door. I've seen firsthand and experienced firsthand where it's absolutely changed women's lives, their lives to then impact the other women and young boys and men eventually. We'll get more women across the line coaching men at some stage. It's a mission of mine (smiling).

Again, I want to congratulate the Italian Tennis Federation. You also do such a fabulous job in your coach development area. It's world class. I think this program will just take it to another level. So thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Can we have a word with the former world 25, Tathiana Garbin, captain of the Italian tennis team.

TATHIANA GARBIN: (Through interpretation) Tathiana mostly pinpointed the bravery and inclusion as you mentioned before, the importance of this program. The forward thinking, which lies behind it, which is great to see

from both of you, as well as for everyone who participates and is supporting this program.

She obviously also invited everyone to join in for the same reason. You mentioned before how important is your example.

Then they stole a few words from Michelangelo: In order to have talented players, you need to have talented coaches. In order to have talented coaches, you need to have coaches who studied and are well-trained and educated into the job.

That's the ultimate job to have, like Amelie Mauresmo, female coaches, women coaches, who are capable of joining the men's tour, bring that kind of passion and knowledge that they develop in the women's circuit within their career.

Can we please have a few words from Roberta Vinci.

ROBERTA VINCI: (Through interpretation) Roberta is extremely thankful to the federation for the opportunity. She said she represented Italy so many times, a US Open finalist, five time's Grand Slam winner.

One story is her life as a player, different stories, herself as a coach. She believes as a coach she still has a lot to learn. Only thanks to programs such as this very one, there will be that possibility for even an experienced player the way she is.

Obviously she foresees a great opportunity for up-and-coming players even in the moment to explore the different futures.

Obviously she thanked the Italian Tennis Federation for their support, such as Tathiana did previously.

I failed to underline that she thanked the president for being so open to women. He said that he never heard that before, nobody ever told him.

ANGELO BINAGHI: (Smiling.)

THE MODERATOR: I've invited the audience to ask questions.

**Q. I would like to know by Nicole Pratt, as a player, what do you think exactly you can learn to the new coaches, how you can support the new coaches, to avoid this strange situation we have many times in women result, 6-1, 1-6, 6-1. How you can explain that, how you can coach to the coach to avoid this?**

NICOLE PRATT: That's one of the toughest questions in tennis I think.

No, honestly I think one of the biggest strengths women coaches have - I generalize - is emotional intelligence, okay? So for players to be able to perform consistently from the start of the match to the finish of the match, for me it's about controlling their emotions and making sure that I think mentally they're in the state that they need to play each and every point, okay?

I think women coaches have a unique strength in the ability to really understand the person, understand what motivates them, understand that there are tough moments and how they're going to deal with those tough moments in the match that is presented.

Hopefully that answers your question. I mean, we as coaches, we are working on that every single day, creating the scenarios of different situations that is going to happen in a match, whether it's in the first round, whether it in the semifinals, whether it's at a 250 event or the semifinals of a Grand Slam.

You have to prepare your athlete mentally in order to cope with all the different situations that are presented. Tennis is one of the toughest sports in terms of particularly these Masters Series events and the Grand Slams. It's two weeks. You have to manage yourself for two weeks in order to be playing at your best each and every match.

THE MODERATOR: This is one of the myths you're most frequently asked to debunk about women's tennis, the ups and downs on the mental side?

NICOLE PRATT: Well, I think the difference is in men's tennis you can rely on two free points on serve. With the women, the serve is I would say overall on the women's tour not as dominant as in the men's game. You really have to fight, you really have to work.

If you lose momentum, which can happen very quickly, it's tough to stop that momentum, whereas in the men's game two free points a game gives you a very good chance of holding serve.

**Q. (Through interpretation) Where is this program happening? How many people are participating? Do you know any of this information that you can share thus far?**

ASHLEY KEBER: I can try and answer as much the detail as possible.

I think what's really exciting about the program is how

quickly it's grown. We started from zero. We started in one location. This year we have 44 graduates in 18 different countries. By the end of this year with all of our new graduates, we expect to almost double that number, add another 39 to the program, expand to 29 countries for participants.

I think to now include Italy, truly expand to Europe, we could double our numbers again next year. I think that's what's so special about this program, is everyone wants to say yes.

You actually stole my line, Nicole, which maybe I stole from you, is that we are changing lives, you are changing lives, you are changing lives, future inspiration and opportunities for girls. I think that's what's really incredible about this program.

It's just started here. It's exploded globally.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you all for being here.

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