

Rolex Paris Masters

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Paris, France

Guy Forget

Press Conference



(Translated from French.)

THE MODERATOR: Hello, everyone. Welcome to the press conference of Guy Forget, director of the Rolex Paris Masters.

First question.

Q. Regarding Novak Djokovic, who is going to make his great comeback after the final of the US Open with a lot of emotions, this golden Grand Slam that he couldn't achieve. There was huge ovation, lots of love coming from the public. Do you think this will brand him? Do you think it will change him? Maybe he'll be less hungry and starving for love or do you think he will want to take his revenge and be a conquerer again?

GUY FORGET: He has arrived very recently in Paris. I think it's a very interesting question, but it's also a very personal question. Neither you or I can answer that question.

Novak has already spoken to you. He wants to beat records. He wants to be ahead of Rafa and all the other players. That's one of the reasons for which he's here today. He wants to make sure he's No. 1 at the end of the year.

It seems so incredible that three great players actually win 20 Grand Slams each. It seems incredible. 20 Grand Slams, it shows the three of them are one of a kind. Normally you would have only one in a generation.

It's not because he has won positive ovation that he will stop here. We know in general the public tends to support the older players, the challenger, the one that has more difficulties. We could feel how difficult it was for him at the time. The public reacted in this way because of this.

The public realized that even though Novak tends to be rigorous and always in control, there seems to be a huge wall that cannot be broken down. We saw him moved, affected, by this loss. The public showed that they admired

this resilience, this pugnacity. This is actually why we are watching sports and follow this, it's for the emotions that are conveyed by the tennis players.

Jimmy Connors, for instance, he wasn't very much liked by the public, but towards the end of his career he was loved by everyone.

Maybe we have here a tipping point. There's more sympathy towards him. But he's not at the end of his career, unlike Jimmy Connors, at the end of his career he was with less victories. It's incredible what Novak is doing right now.

We're delighted to have him among us for this tournament. He's won five times already. He's trying for a sixth title. It's not bad, is it?

Q. Following up on Novak. You said you're delighted to have him here. There might have been a doubt, this is what I presume, because he's really choosing his tournaments. Did you have any doubts about him coming here? Is he going to play singles and doubles? This is rare, apparently. Do we know with whom he's going to play?

GUY FORGET: He's going to play with Krajinovic, his buddy from the Davis Cup. He said he would commit himself to play for the Davis Cup for his own country. This is why he wanted to play doubles here.

We don't often see him play doubles, so we're delighted. It's rare to see a No. 1 playing a Masters 1000 in doubles. My analysis is the fact that he hasn't played since US Open, he's having a Masters and then the Davis Cup, I think probably he needs to have a lot of matches under his belt, he needs to have a lot of victories piling up, make sure that he plays well. This is part of the process, you know. He needs to fine-tune his game. He's playing with his buddy here. For all this, this is why I think he wanted to play doubles.

But knowing him, I don't think he's going to be playing here without a victory in sight. He wants to make sure to secure his ranking, so... Once he has NextGen players, I'm sure



he will want to show he's the one with the upper hand, that he still is a champion.

Q. There are two absentees, Ugo Humbert and Matteo Berrettini. Can you say the reasons for their absence? Why did they choose not to come?

GUY FORGET: I cannot say. I saw the press release, especially Ugo's press release. It's a pity because we gave him a wild card a few years ago, and he actually showed that he is a snowflake, he really has everything to become one day in this sacred category of champions.

I think he's got concerns. It's difficult for him to recover from a physical point of view. I cannot say because I haven't talked to him. I just know what I read on the social media, just like you.

But if he managed to have good victories in the past, he decided not to come here at home, it must be difficult for him. I think he has genuine difficulties and he might be embarrassed. I hope he recovers soon.

Maybe you'll know more than me in the days to come. Maybe he will speak.

As for Berrettini, I saw his match against Alcaraz in Vienna. Apparently there was a problem with the thigh. He gave it his all to win the last set. Maybe he doesn't want to hurt his chances for the future of the season for the tournaments to come. This is why I think he decided not to participate.

These are the ups and downs that we face in tennis. This is a problem with Paris Rolex Masters, it's at the end of the schedule, the players have played a lot. Roger Federer, for instance. They're often tired.

We rejoice in having Andy Murray. He had become No. 1 at the end of the season at the time. There were the qualifiers for the Masters. There are two places for Turin, for instance. Sometimes there are physical problems. This might be the case for Matteo Berrettini.

Q. As far as the fact that the public is returning, you must be very excited to have the public returning with great players.

GUY FORGET: Yes. Everybody is doing their utmost to make sure that we have the public back. I think we will sell many more seats than for Roland Garros or the previous Rolex. We have one main court. We are 100% here. We still have some seats to sell. If anyone is interested, if you're hesitating, you don't know what to do and you're in Paris, please come and see the crème de la crème on this

court and you can see very high-level players. We're very enthusiastic about this.

I remember Gael Monfils who said recently it was very tough for him to find the motivation to play week after week in empty stadiums. I think that he will be very happy because I hope that he will play in a full stadium. When it's full, there's so much energy and electricity. We can't see it anywhere else. This is why the Rolex Paris Masters has so much success. We're all very excited to have the public once again.

Q. We know that Bercy is not Melbourne. There are lots of discussions about vaccinations. Vaccinations might be required in Melbourne. What are the protocols for those that are not vaccinated? Do you have constraints you want to talk about?

GUY FORGET: Well, the players that are not vaccinated and those that come from red or orange areas, they need to be tested every day. They need to undergo a PCR test every day. We hope they will be negative.

As for those that come from a green area, from Vienna, for instance, from Monaco, from anywhere in a green area, they'll be tested every 48 hours, so...

We do not want to take any risks. We want to minimize risks as much as we can. As for families and coaches and players, they need to wear the mask. They're accustomed to it now, all these measures. They follow the rules. They're so happy to have the crowds once again.

Actually we made in small containers where you put saliva in it. It won't be inside the nose, it will be less traumatizing. Having your nose swabbed every 24 hours is not pleasurable. For those that are not vaccinated, we have that type of test that is scheduled.

Q. I would like to ask, the fans can come back, but how about the foreigners? We don't know what the future will look like. How will things take place? When we want to have an accreditation from Switzerland, there's no problem. But from abroad, it's hard.

GUY FORGET: It's a question that is hard to answer. We have to follow the recommendations from the government regarding accreditations, health passes. We have to comply with European laws. It may be Spanish, French, they will all follow the rules.

When people are vaccinated, and this is now the case of the majority now, when you arrive and you do a test, an antibody or PCR test to show that you're not positive, things should get back on track.

It's a touchy issue, I have to admit. But when you are in sports, may you be a player, coach, fan, partner, or media, we all evolve in the same kind of bubble. The protocols are more or less the same for each and every one.

For all these reasons, and to be more optimistic for the weeks and months to come, I would say that the trend is positive. Of course, carefully, but we are following everything by the book, everything that the government advises us to do.

Q. You were talking about Carlos Alcaraz's match against Berrettini. He seems to have a great future ahead of him.

GUY FORGET: I don't know if you share my opinion, but every tournament he seems to learn to become stronger, to be punchier. He makes me think of all these new players like Rafa, Mats Wilander, Michael Chang. He's so young and yet he has so much experience. He has so much willingness to win every single point. He's already very strong.

I saw him against Carlos Ferrero, playing the qualifiers. I watched him, the first thing that struck me was the noise when he hit the ball. I thought, Oh, my God, it's very loud. I could see this resilience, pugnacity. He was trying to win every single point. Nobody was watching him. It seemed every single point he wanted to win because life depended upon it.

Now he played Berrettini. He's breathtaking to watch. He's gaining a huge momentum right now. I wouldn't be surprised to see him very quickly play and beat Tsitsipas, for instance. He seems to be very interested in that kind of category.

Q. It seems that the French players are encountering difficulties. You have four wild cards.

GUY FORGET: You're talking about the wild cards, right?

Q. The French players are encountering difficulties. Do you consider that Murray is bankable, he can actually help you sell tickets and give you visibility? Was it hard for you to choose the receivers of wild cards?

GUY FORGET: It's always difficult. We had eight wild cards to give. We gave seven to French players. Murray was to have one at Roland Garros this year, the French Open. He was the one who declined. He said, I'm not good enough to play five-setters, so he declined having the wild card for the French Open.

In fact, he's made huge progress. It shows. In the past he's had a good track record. He's also won a lot of Grand Slams, the Davis Cup. I remember when he came here as the No. 1 player, I asked him to participate in some events. He said yes. He spent time with a lot of partners. He always had a kind word for everyone.

Is it not normal to give a wild card to Murray? I don't think so. Of course, we gave wild cards to French players. Sebastien Grosjean's asks were satisfied, Pierre Herbert, Richard Gasquet. We gave a wild card to French players as well, a lot of the NextGen players in France. The selection is quite logical.

You can tell me, Well, Murray, it's not normal to give a wild card to him. I think as the director of the tournament I had of course the consent and approval of the president. I think there are a lot of people who want to come to see Andy Murray because of his hip surgery, the fact that he has made such a huge comeback. I think it's incredible to see so much courage. He's played also against the top 10 last week. Not only Englishmen but French citizens are going to come here and see him.

We could have asked a junior French player to play here, but maybe they have more progress to make before playing such a tournament. I'm very happy to have Andy Murray among us. I hope that he will have a few wins.

Q. Your name came up in the papers. Do you think it has weakened your position or are you okay?

GUY FORGET: I'm fine. We're talking about sport, so I would like to talk about the Rolex Paris Masters and nothing else. My name was mentioned just like many other VIPs, well-known people. I don't think that it's time to talk about it. Maybe we can talk about it later. I would like to focus on those who are here, who are going to defend France, who are going to play this wonderful tournament.

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