

# Rolex Paris Masters

Friday, 24 October 2025

Paris, France

## Cedric Pioline

### Press Conference



CEDRIC PIOLINE: Hello, everyone. I officially declare this Rolex Paris Masters edition 2025 open. Honestly, during these nine days to come, starting from tomorrow, I would like to be a journalist honestly because the facilities are breathtaking. The press room, the press conference room, is beautiful with beautiful shades of color. I'm sure you will work in wonderful working conditions. It was something important for us.

This is why I'm delighted to be with you today before we proceed to the draw so that we can know what the competition will look like, the main draw for the singles, before we deal with the quallies afterwards.

I am sure that you can discover these new facilities. I'd be delighted to answer any question you might have.

#### **Q. To go back to the wild cards, can you explain the rationale behind the choice of the four players for the main draw?**

CEDRIC PIOLINE: Well, the choice for wild cards is never an easy task. My feeling is that this year maybe it was a bit less difficult to choose.

All concerned by this choice have a lot of respect for players. We know that it's their profession, that they work very hard, fight a lot, trying to get to the main draw. Their profiles are different.

Obviously there were two groups out of the four wild card selections. There are two that were quite natural, to have Arthur Rinderknech, because he had a wonderful run during the Shanghai tournament. It seemed also natural to invite Valentin Vacherot. His run was more breathtaking because he won against Arthur Rinderknech. His was one of a kind. He climbed 160 places in the rankings.

Then there's a second group with Cazaux and Atmane. The choice that was ours was to choose from the young players. Arthur Cazaux was among the top 100. He dropped because he was injured. He went to a challenger, won a challenger in Asia. Atmane, as well, he's managed to make it into the top 100, as well.

I know it's always difficult to make such a choice because we want everyone to win and we want everyone to play. It's always heartbreaking to say no to some players.

#### **Q. Has the tournament director had some difficulties with the preparation of the tournament? How has the preparation been going?**

CEDRIC PIOLINE: As part of my duties, there's always stress. This is part and parcel of my job. Will the public come? Will the journalists come? What about the service providers? Will we be on time? There are a million issues to tackle and problems to solve.

We actually arrived on October 13th in the press room. The delivery was on Wednesday evening, the day before yesterday. The know-how of the French Tennis Federation to set up such events is actually something.

For those that have seen the venue in its raw form for the Rolex Paris Masters, and the result now, when you compare both, we can see that it was actually a real achievement.

We can see the type of collaboration with all the teams of Paris La Defense Arena. It's something that is incredible. It's the first time actually that it's happening. Everything was new to us.

What about the sequencing? Would it be well done? Of course, we came here several times, made maps and drawings, prepared as much as we could. Then there's a time when the tournament is going to start. It's going to start on the 25th, not on the 26th, not on the 27th. We have to deliver, as we say. This is the case, of course.

There are a few details to fine-tune, but I hope that you like the result.

#### **Q. A small technical question. Regarding the curtains, because we talked about the curtains as blackout curtains, soundproof curtains, if there's more sound than you expected, will there be a Plan B?**

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CEDRIC PIOLINE: Indeed, for a long time we have studied the different possibilities. We have nine thousand square meters of blackout curtains. It's a lot of surface. We've made tests. The outcomes were not good enough. Without getting into the nitty-gritty of everything, the cost was also quite significant.

What we decided to do was rather to opt for blackout curtains rather than soundproof curtains so that the sound could be absorbed.

Now, I think the way in which we will experience Rolex Paris Masters will evolve. We have a new venue with a new setup. Probably the identity of the tournament will be closer to events such as Roland Garros, where there's a lot of noise, a lot of life simply. This is direction in which we are going.

Ancillary costs will evolve in terms of capacity, in terms of standards, as well. There were some standards that we did not comply with, like the height under the ceiling. There are heightened courts. Four thousand square meters. It's actually an upgrade.

We're starting at the same place. We have to go our way. We have to make it lively. I'm sure it's going to be a wonderful tournament.

**Q. What about the first feedback from the players that practiced on the courts? What about the light? What did they say? What are your first focus points?**

CEDRIC PIOLINE: We are very much listening to everyone's feedback. We're trying to sort out what we can do. The competition hasn't started yet. We've had a few complaints from players that do not perform well. We managed also to sort out what we can do and what we shouldn't do.

The competition hasn't started yet. The surface is slower than last year. They have noted that. They have seen that. But it was our desire to make it slower, as well. They seem to be satisfied. We see that the players are quite satisfied. It is important for us.

As for the lighting, it's very good. I think that the light especially on the outside courts, because they can see that everything is wider, bigger, higher. They can actually make lobs, for instance.

Juan Carlos Ferrero was talking to me earlier on. His player was practicing on the central court. He was asking for the capacity. When I said it's 17,500 seats, it's actually the second biggest after New York. It's wonderful. It's their new playing field, our new home for Rolex Paris

Masters.

I think the mindset of all the teams, starting with me, it will be to be flexible. If we can make adjustments, small adjustments, if things do not work, we will certainly do so. Maybe there are some problems that we will not be able to fix today, but we will be able to do it next year.

**Q. When you said that you wanted to have slower courts, it's to align with Turin for the ATP Finals?**

CEDRIC PIOLINE: Yes, it's to be closer to the ATP Finals tournament in Turin. Players actually need to have similar court conditions for those that are concerned, of course.

ATP Finals is the last tournament. It's a very important tournament for them. So we try to have a speed that would be most suitable to as many types of play. Generally surfaces have slowed down actually all throughout the year now.

**Q. Are you in favor of this court being slower? Before in Bercy, the courts were actually faster. It was a different time during the season. What is your opinion?**

CEDRIC PIOLINE: When you're saying 'before', what do you mean? How long ago are you talking about.

**Q. Did you speak with the players? What is the stance and position of players on that point? Some are complaining because they always complain about courts being slower.**

CEDRIC PIOLINE: There's never a consensus, as you know. Not every player has the same opinion. So we tried to reach the widest consensus possible amongst as many players as possible.

It has been standardized recently, if we take into account the indoor, the grass and clay. Some are satisfied. Some are less satisfied. We try to listen to everyone.

We also listen to the ATP's feedback because this tournament is organized by the ATP. We speak with tour managers, as well, and organizers.

The feedback we got from 2024 was that it was too fast a court. We tried to adjust, to change. We'll see if we managed to find the right speed for this edition.

We also have a surface with resin that is actually getting smoother as we play. From before the beginning of the tournament until 10 days after, there's a real difference. We've made measurements.

Actually the court becomes faster towards the end.

**Q. There's a subject that comes up often. It's the quality of the balls. There was a tweet that was quite interesting. Shouldn't we change the balls faster because they say that the felt is actually not good enough, maybe we should change balls every seventh game?**

CEDRIC PIOLINE: Actually the eighth or ninth game. On this point we have no influence. It's up to the manufacturers. This has to do with the ATP, as you might be aware. There will be swings of balls from next year on so that players, three or four weeks, they can have the same playing conditions in terms of ball quality.

Will the speed change? Well, probably. The court speed will change. But in terms of ball quality, they will try to have the same.

It's up to the ATP to make the decision. They are in change of the regulations. We cannot say anything on the matter.

**Q. We saw the way in which Djokovic left during Roland Garros. Are you afraid that Djokovic will not be seen in Paris anymore? What is your reaction to the creation of a 10th Masters 1000 in Saudi Arabia?**

CEDRIC PIOLINE: What a disaster your question. I hope we'll see Djokovic again. He's a huge champion. He holds records in terms of titles in Masters 1000s.

As time flies, he's 38 years old. He's old for this profession. He says it himself. His body is 15 years older basically. To manage to be as competitive as he is...

I think he only played 10 tournaments. He was actually a runner-up in most of the tournaments. We could see that it was difficult. Especially this year in Shanghai, it was very humid.

I hope we'll have the opportunity to see him again. I hope that he will see the tournament in the new venue. But for any tennis player, there's a beginning and an end. His end, he's drawing closer to the end of his career. I don't know if he's planned it or not. It's becoming more difficult for him.

Of course, he's competing for the biggest titles, but maybe physically he is lacking somehow. For Shanghai it was Vacherot who won. There's also Alcaraz and Sinner. Maybe his level of play is a little bit lower than those players.

As far as we're concerned, we are organizing a tournament that is an ATP tournament. I have no comment to make on the new Masters 1000 tournament. It's a new thing that there are new investors, new entities investing in tennis, that want to be part of this sport.

It's all a matter of schedule and calendar. There will be the first edition in 2028 and 2029.

**Q. Are you relieved that Saudi Arabia is going to be on the calendar for 2028? We were afraid that Saudi Arabia could actually take away our tournament slot.**

CEDRIC PIOLINE: The question is interesting, but let's be careful. Let's say the truth as it is: Rolex Paris Masters was never threatened by Saudi Arabia. We have a contract that has been signed with the ATP that protects us, and will protect us for a long time.

We shouldn't give away and disseminate fake news and fake information for those that read and listen to you. This threat has never been a concern for us, for the French Tennis Federation. So there's no need for us to be relieved because there was no threat at all in the first place.

**Q. After a long season, what is the importance of this tournament, especially with this new identity for players, and especially for French players?**

CEDRIC PIOLINE: Well, we know that it's a new home for us. It's a new venue. The stakes are still the same for tennis players. Mathematically the No. 1 is still debated. We know that Alcaraz will be No. 1, but maybe Sinner can do something. There are also new ATP rankings to be taken.

What about Djokovic? Well, he qualified this year. Will he play? Shanghai is a wonderful example of what can happen. Vacherot cannot be a reference. I don't think this will happen often, to have such an achievement. Maybe Arthur, who was in the top 100, he's reaching the top 30 now. Maybe he could be seeded in Australia. That's quite important.

Everyone wants to play well. French tennis players want to play well. We saw what happened with Humbert. We saw how much the public cheered for him. It always is something that is important.

As a tournament organizer, we always want French tennis players to be supported by the French public because this adds value to the tournament, especially for the main draw, from Monday to Sunday.

**Q. A question on the tickets. Can you give us a little bit of information, how many were sold? The new partnerships, are you satisfied with the new partnerships?**

CEDRIC PIOLINE: As for tickets, I'm not going to make announcements now. We have to wait and see. We need the tournament to be finished before we can give you official announcements. We have to wait until Sunday evening. We'll save the date together and speak about it then.

Last year's figures have been already broken. We already have sold more tickets than last year. Everything is working well. Tomorrow we are actually nearly full already. On Sunday, there are a few seats available.

Qualifies seats are often sold last minute. We're confident. We know that people are going to talk about this place, about this new setup with these three courts, three in a row. I think people will like it.

Then also those that come for the qualifies, between noon and 5, they will have the possibility to watch the central court, to watch practice sessions. This is a wonderful opportunity. They can discover the stadium.

As for new partners, we have three new ones. It's wonderful. We can see that this tournament triggers a lot of interest. We have good momentum. The tournament is getting bigger. The identity of the tournament, which was already very strong, is becoming more and more vibrant.

There are new partners that want to join us. We're already very satisfied to have wonderful brands like Evian, which is joining us. In terms of activation, they're very present. This contributes to the outreach of the Rolex Paris Masters. This is something that is everlasting.

We have 14 partners. It's not forever, obviously. Having high-quality partners such as those, especially Rolex as the title sponsor, is wonderful for us.

**Q. You said that you have a long-term commitment with the ATP. Are we talking about 30 years?**

CEDRIC PIOLINE: It's until 2053 exactly, to be very specific.

Thanks to all of you. Thank you and see you soon.

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