

# International Tennis Hall of Fame

Saturday, July 17, 2021

**Conchita Martinez**

**Goran Ivanisevic**

Press Conference

STAN SMITH: Welcome to the press conference here at the induction ceremony, or prior to it. We're fortunate to have our 2021 inductees. Unfortunately they weren't here last year. None of us were. It's one year late. But the 2020 inductees, sorry.

We all know your records have been great: Wimbledon champion, finalist at the French and Australian, Fed Cup player champion, Wimbledon champion again, finalist three times, Davis Cup champion.

The first question obviously is going to be, Conchita, now that you've been here for a day or so and you're starting to understand what's taking place, the great players that have been inducted, what is your impression?

CONCHITA MARTINEZ: Well, it couldn't be nicer. I heard a lot about the Hall of Fame, how beautiful it is, how special is to be here. Spend the weekend, seeing the museum and everything...

Once you're here, it's just amazing. You guys have been great. I felt very, very welcome. It's been just an amazing time. It's a beautiful town. You guys do an amazing job. So thank you and congrats.

STAN SMITH: One of my responsibilities is to connect with the players, let them know that they're in or they haven't won. We had some bad calls, but we had a great call. I remember we had lunch in Barcelona, Conchita didn't really believe she was going to get a chance to get in. It was great to be able to give you that call.

CONCHITA MARTINEZ: Thank you.

STAN SMITH: What did you think about before that? Did you really think you were going to be inducted or not?

CONCHITA MARTINEZ: Well, I thought I had my chances. I mean, I could see names a little bit similar than me and they were in. The way that it was working then, I thought,



Oh, well, I don't know. Some people are getting in before me, they're younger than me, so I don't know what's going to happen.

In the end it's great to be in. I'm very happy to share this moment.

STAN SMITH: That's great.

Goran, you've had a great career. Famous match at the finals of Wimbledon, but you also had a couple other matches you lost at Wimbledon. I lost in the finals myself, then won. Then your career playing for the country. Talk about that a little bit, playing for the country.

GORAN IVANISEVIC: For us that was special because we were one country. Unfortunately we split. Then was a tough times.

For me, playing for my country, actually I remember 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona carrying the flag for the first time. That was the biggest honor one sportsman can get. Winning two medals there. Always playing Davis Cup, even when I got injured every time I played Davis Cup. I didn't care. I just wanted to play Davis Cup.

It's a special thing. Some people, they don't like to play for their countries. But I was the one that really enjoyed to play for the country, being with the guys, making it better.

STAN SMITH: Conchita, you won medals at the Olympics as well. What was that like for you?

CONCHITA MARTINEZ: Is the same feeling. I was one of the girls that liked to play for my country a lot. I mean, I played many Fed Cups and many Olympics. I mean, that was, of course, once in Barcelona, '92, the most special because they're in your hometown. Very special to win medals, for sure.

STAN SMITH: Wimbledon, that Monday final. I was there actually. Pat Rafter and you were both playing great tennis. It came down to the last game. What was that like?

GORAN IVANISEVIC: I think I talk about that game last

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night (laughter).

I mean, that game was really bad game to be honest because we both were so tight. Me first time getting to this situation that I serve for the match. I mean, I made some terrible mistakes, double-faults. I could not put my first serve in. Then I see him cannot also put anything close to the court.

Then somehow on the fourth match point happened. Was probably the longest game in my life. It never end. I say, C'mon, you have to finish somehow.

It was a great atmosphere. Not the best tennis, but great atmosphere. Monday final. All these 14 days was strange. Something happen. Today on this day I don't understand how I won it. Thanks God I won it. That's why I'm here now. Enjoying every moment of that.

STAN SMITH: I'd like to open it up to the group for questions.

**Q. Goran, going back to Wimbledon and the '98 final specifically, you had two set points against Sampras there. Can you paint a picture of what your mindset was. If you won the second set, do you think you would have won the match? Given your success against Pete at Wimbledon, you beat him in '92, does that cement your legacy as one of the greatest grass players ever?**

GORAN IVANISEVIC: Definitely I don't say the greatest, but one of the greatest. That final was actually two set points. Pete was well-known for probably one of the best second serve ever. His second serve was very hard. I was waiting for the big second serve, but he choked little bit and hit a very bad second serve which I didn't expect.

Then I hit, like, a return which if he had the Hawk-Eye in that time, that ball was close to be a line, but she called it out before I even hit the ball. If I will go two sets to love up, no chance he will come back. First, Pete never liked to play me. He never liked to play lefties. Still we went to five sets. Still I thought I should win that match.

Somehow with him always find the way to lose the match. So I have to say he ruined quite a bit of my life (smiling). But I still forgive him. He was a great champion. We had really good matches. I'm proud that I played at the time that he played.

**Q. Conchita, you mentioned there were some younger players going in before you. You started wondering a little bit. Did you ever have any doubt that this day would happen? When it did happen, was it relief?**

CONCHITA MARTINEZ: Yeah, yes, I had doubts. I had doubts. I was nominated, I think this was my third time. Third time lucky. I was nominated against some recently, I don't know, retired or some other ones that probably won more than me, so I was like, Oh, maybe this year is going to be impossible if I'm running against these players.

Yeah, you start doubting a little bit. Years went by. I didn't know. I didn't know really. I think this was my last chance to get inducted. I think it was like that. The rules kept changing.

STAN SMITH: The rules have changed a little bit, but could have been.

CONCHITA MARTINEZ: So, yeah, I had some doubts. I was nominated many years, years ago. So years went by. Finally I'm here.

I'm relieved. I'm very, very grateful and humble, very honor to be finally inducted and to share this moment with everybody. So it's nice.

**Q. You have been players on both tours, respective tours, you're coaching. What changes do you want to see and expect to see moving forward on the ATP and WTA?**

CONCHITA MARTINEZ: What changes?

**Q. What changes do you want to see or expect to see for the future?**

CONCHITA MARTINEZ: First of all, I hope everything goes back to normal a little bit because, let me tell you, this past year and a half has been really, really tough on players, us traveling together, all these bubbles, long trips, not being able to have your families with you and stuff. I think that's really hard. So hopefully the world changes for the better and we're going to go back to normal without this COVID, although I think it's going to stay a little bit longer with us.

But I think the WTA is healthy. I mean, it has great champions there, I mean, players that are playing really good. It was nice to see Ashleigh Barty winning Wimbledon, Pliskova in her second final. I don't know. I mean, I think we have a lot of younger players, exciting moment for WTA.

Hopefully it's going to continue that way.

**Q. You see a lot of the top players coaching other top players now. You're with Muguruza and you're with**



**Djokovic. What is the one thing that you bring to the table for Muguruza, for instance?**

CONCHITA MARTINEZ: Well, I mean, whatever she's going through right now, I mean, I gone through before. I try to teach her my experiences from before. I'm hoping that I'm giving her peace, the work ethic to be really professional, other things that are hard to mention all of them. I'm trying for her to be very competitive, to try to be a little bit more stable. She was a little bit up and down. But I think she's got some good results. That's it, consistency.

STAN SMITH: I talked to Novak after the match when he came off the court. The thing I mentioned to Novak is, You're coming in, volleying so much better. When you come in, you're volleying better. Is that something you have talked to him about or one of the other coaches?

GORAN IVANISEVIC: We talk a lot about it. Novak is perfectionist who in one way is unbelievable for me as a coach, and Marian. He drives you be better every day.

In other way can be tough sometimes because he wants better. Today he was good, tomorrow has to be better, better. I mean, till when?

Yes, I always told him that he has a good volleys, but he never want to come to the net. Somehow in Wimbledon we saw semis and final on very important points.

STAN SMITH: Semis particularly against Shapovalov. Amazing.

GORAN IVANISEVIC: He's not scared to hit his second serve now. We saw in Australia he's at least 10 kilometers even more harder hitting his second serves.

I mean, little confident. I didn't change his technique. I'm not there. But just give confident for him to understand he can do it in the big points. I mean, he won everything there is to win. Still sometimes they doubt in themselves on the key moments.

STAN SMITH: It was a big change from my point of view watching him coming to the net, hitting a good backhand volley. I didn't think it was so good before, to be quite honest.

Other questions.

**Q. You were both such unique players yourselves. Now you're coaching players who maybe play a little bit different than maybe you played in your prime. Is the coaching role a surprise to you in how you**

**approach it in any way in this era, this kind of game playing a little bit differently?**

CONCHITA MARTINEZ: Well, yeah, I mean, but you have to understand the way they play. You have to adapt to the player that you're coaching at the moment.

Then Garbine is a very complete player as well. She's very aggressive. I'm trying to introduce a little bit of the slice here and there because I think it's very important that players have variety, that when they need to do something different and Plan A doesn't work, that they have Plan B or C.

That's a little bit difficult because especially in the women's side, they play very flat, very hard, not much variety. That's something that we work on. I ask her, like, to go to the net a little bit more because she has a great reach. With those powerful shots, I mean, I think she can do well there. She did really well at the Australian Open last year with that.

All of these things, trying to work on. But, yeah, you have to adapt as a coach and try to take the best from them or make them better.

**Q. The state of the women's game and the men's game. The men's game is top-heavy with players, the women's game there's dozens of players that could be No. 1, 2 or 3. Where do you think the state of the game is now?**

GORAN IVANISEVIC: I think men's game is in a good stage. Okay, you have Federer who is slowly out. I don't think he can be No. 1 ever again. So is between Novak and Rafa for the records and all the stuff.

But you have a lot of guys who in next five to six years be No. 1, going to win different Grand Slams. Medvedev, Dominic did last year in US Open. You have young guys, Russians. You have Shapovalov. You have Italians, Berrettini, Musetti, Sinner. I think you're going to see a lot of changes in rankings after these guys leave. I don't know when they're going to leave, but still they here is going to be still the same situation. You have Tsitsipas, of course.

But when they leave we going to have a lot of different Grand Slam winners. Maybe in one year four different Grand Slam winners like we used to have before sometimes. So is going to change.

But there are a lot of guys who are going to be No. 1. Going to change like that.

CONCHITA MARTINEZ: I think this year has been a little

bit of a strange year. There's been some injuries here and there. I mean, of course Halep also couldn't defend her title in Wimbledon this year. Some injuries here and there. New Grand Slam winners, Krejčíková, for example, winning the French Open. Younger players that are coming up for sure.

I think it's a little bit up and down, the women's side. You see a lot of players that are winning different tournaments. But I think we'll see what happens with Serena, if she's going to be able to make it at the US Open. I think it's getting harder and harder for her.

But it's good to see a lot of young players playing good tennis and winning different tournaments also. So it's...

**Q. Goran, do you think you would be there tonight if you would have won Wimbledon in '92 and lost the other three finals? Would you say in the end it was worth losing the first three and winning it the way you did in 2001?**

GORAN IVANISEVIC: I don't think was worth it to lose. It would be best if I won that three and that one (laughter).

But came back. When I was supposed to win, I didn't win. When I didn't supposed to even play, I was lucky to get a wild card, I won it. But was worth it to wait, worth it not to give up. It's easy to give up. I fought. I believed it. It paid back in the end.

**Q. Can you compare the feeling of entering the Hall of Fame with anything else that you experienced throughout your career or life in general?**

GORAN IVANISEVIC: You can't compare this to anything. This is probably the biggest. Entering yesterday to museum, seeing the tennis history, all these names, then seeing my stuff there. I say, What I am doing here? Okay, I have a ticket for museum, but then you realize, Okay, I made it.

This is the biggest. This is everything what you work for it, every practice, every match, every disappointment, every tear, every laugh is coming to today when I going to have this speech at 6:00 or 6:50, I don't know.

Thanks to all the people. Because of them I am here. This is the biggest. Doesn't get bigger than this.

**Q. Conchita, how do you feel being inducted to Hall of Fame with such a guy? Is he a good partner?**

CONCHITA MARTINEZ: Yeah, I couldn't be better accompanied. It's a pleasure. I mean, I'm very happy also

for Goran. Yeah, is very funny, I'm starting to -- I didn't know him that much. I love his sense of humor. It's been fun.

**Q. Walking through the museum yesterday, the experience that you had there?**

CONCHITA MARTINEZ: Yeah, no, I mean, it was beautiful experience. Also going up there, seeing all these great legends, champions. Also I feel the same way. To see your stuff there when I think it was one month ago I was in my living room. I'm like, Oh, I know this trophy, the medals and whatever.

I think you guys do a wonderful job. You have amazing stuff in the museum. To be there with all these great champions is for me great, great honor.

**Q. Goran, when you got that wild card to Wimbledon in 2001, you were 125th ranked in the world, did you truly believe you were the 125th player in the world or were you a lot better than that?**

GORAN IVANISEVIC: Actually I was a lot worse than that. Honestly, I mean, two weeks before was Queen's. I played really bad. I was just hoping. That day Wimbledon committee was deciding who to give a wild card. I was hoping they didn't watch that match that I lost in the first round.

But anyway, probably they didn't have eight English players to give a wild card so they give it to me. They made the biggest mistake, me beating Henman after.

I was really playing bad. It's honest. I changed the racquet one week before Wimbledon because I thought I cannot play worse than this. I can play same or I can play better.

What happened, I can't tell you what happened because nobody knows what happened on that Monday when they opened the gate. When I started to play, I felt something. I felt in the middle of the week something good is going to happen. I couldn't say because they would say, Goran is completely crazy.

I felt good. I felt my serve back. I found the sound of the racquet back. Two weeks after I made history.

STAN SMITH: What racquets did you change from?

GORAN IVANISEVIC: The same racquet, but they always say it's adjust the color different.

CONCHITA MARTINEZ: Never.





GORAN IVANISEVIC: Completely different racquet. I said to Thomas, he's still main guy at Head, Thomas, don't sell me this stupid thing.

But I cannot play worse. I tried. Actually it worked. It work. So I was really, really in a bad stage. But these 15 days probably the best 15 days of my tennis career, most exciting. Tennis, I probably played the best. Actually I play better tennis before in Wimbledon, but this was more special. Somehow everything I put it together.

STAN SMITH: You had to buy some new clothes after that match?

GORAN IVANISEVIC: Yes. Nobody believe me. Even my sponsor, they send me three shirts. After they send me the bag, which I send it back, I said, Okay, I going to wash after every match my two shirts. I have three racquets and two shirts. I won Wimbledon with two shirts and three racquets. I was not allowed to break any racquets or do some stupid things (smiling).

STAN SMITH: You gave the shirts away?

GORAN IVANISEVIC: Yeah, I gave one shirt away. I said, Man, stop it because I have only two now.

**Q. Goran, do you think this Hall of Fame induction for you is as much a tribute to Croatia as it is to you personally?**

GORAN IVANISEVIC: I think it's to everybody. But I started in Yugoslavia, to be honest. I learn how to play tennis in Yugoslavia. Then we split in '92. My first big result was even in 1990 I play semifinals of Wimbledon when it was still Yugoslavia. Is tribute to everybody who helped me in these 42 years to come here.

It's me, all federations, players, everybody. It's a bigger picture.

**Q. Goran, when we celebrate a career like yours, we talk about achievements. Growing up watching your career evolve, I enjoyed the rivalry with Boris Becker. Beat him in Paris, French Open, 1990. You played some of the greatest indoor matches ever. How do you look back at that rivalry? How did that help you evolve to become a world-class champion?**

GORAN IVANISEVIC: Actually we played 19 times, me and Boris. For me Boris is one of the best tennis player out there. We had some good matches. 1990 when I beat him in French, then I lost in Wimbledon serving for two sets to love up.

I learned a lot from him. He made me better tennis player. I'm happy that I could play in the time that he played because he change also a lot tennis because he was so big at that time. Playing with him in Germany during this Masters in Frankfurt was unbelievable. We had some really interesting matches.

**Q. Conchita, who was your toughest opponent? Who was the person you hated to see in the draw ahead that you just didn't want to meet?**

CONCHITA MARTINEZ: It was actually Seles, Monica Seles, a lefty (smiling). Very, very tough to play. She was one of the first players that came playing hard and flat from both sides. Amazing angles. Then that lefty serve was really, really tough for me to return, to do something with it.

I would say Monica was one of the hardest.

**Q. Did you prepare? How did you prepare mentally for meeting her?**

CONCHITA MARTINEZ: I mean, you try to prepare mentally, actually have a great game plan to try to hurt her. But my heavy topspin didn't affect her that much because she would take the ball so early. I mean, she was always there. I tried to mix it up a little bit with slice, everything that I could do to make her uncomfortable. I mean, she was just too good. It was tough, tough for me to play against her.

**Q. Goran, who was the person you did not want to see in the draw?**

GORAN IVANISEVIC: I mean, I didn't hate anybody. But I would say Sampras. He ruined quite a bit of my life (smiling). Finals, big matches. Still he was a great player.

**Q. When it was announced you were going to be inducted, did Novak get in touch with you? What did he say?**

GORAN IVANISEVIC: Actually, we had to wait for one year. I already know that. I knew if I get inducted, something will happen. Corona happened so we had to wait another year.

Finally we are here. We are happy to be here. Slowly is getting more and more nervous for the 6:00.

STAN SMITH: Thank you.

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