

International Tennis Hall of Fame

Thursday, July 18, 2024

Patrick McEnroe

Dan Faber

Kim Clijsters

Vijay Armitraj

Richard Evans

Leander Paes

Press Conference

PATRICK McENROE: Good morning, everybody. Thanks to you of those of you that are here and those that are here on Zoom. My name is Patrick McEnroe, president of the International Tennis Hall of Fame. Great to be here for our Infosys Tennis Hall of Fame Open, and of course enshrinement weekend.

Just to let you know who is here on the stage, Dan Faber, CEO of the International Tennis Hall of Fame. Kim Clijsters, who is co-president of the hall with me is on Zoom. Kim, of course, is a Hall of Famer herself, inducted in 2017. And our 2024 inductees: Leander Paes, Vijay Amritraj and Richard Evans.

Let me start with Leander. Former world No. 1 in doubles. Won 18 majors in doubles. One of only three men in tennis history to capture a career Grand Slam in both doubles and mixed doubles.

Leander, in a testament to his longevity, spent a total of 462 weeks inside the ATP doubles top 10, 37 weeks at No. 1, and in addition to the 18 majors that I mentioned, won 55 doubles titles on tour.

As he reminded me in an event we just did last week in London during Wimbledon, he represented India in the Olympic Games not once, not twice, I said I thought it was five times. Seven times this man participated in the Olympic Games, which is amazing. The most in tennis history. He captured India's only Olympic medal ever in tennis winning the bronze medal in singles in Atlanta.

Vijay Amritraj, his trailblazing success in the '70 and '80s,



popularized the sport and inspired a generation of new players throughout India and Asia.

He just reminded me that he won his first title here in '76, correct?

VIJAY ARMITRAJ: Yes.

PATRICK McENROE: Now the final year just of this version of the tournament, of course we'll have another bigger, better event in the future, now he's getting inducted in the final year of the ATP 250. He won the title three times.

He anchored India's Cup squad for many, many years and helped them reach the finals in '74 and then again in 1987.

Post retirement Vijay, has become the face of tennis, broadcasting in Asia, in the middle east, sharing the sport with millions in that part of the world.

In 2006 he launched the Vijay Amritraj Foundation, which provides education, resources and basic needs for women and children in India's neediest communities.

Welcome to you, Vijay.

Our third inductee this weekend is Richard Evans. For over six decades Richard has been a preeminent voice on tennis as a journalist and historian. He's reported on over 200 Grand Slam tournaments. Maybe we should add one more because I just saw you in London at Wimbledon, which was awesome.

He's been doing that since 1960. He's written 23 books, including anthologies on open tennis, the Davis Cup, and biographies on some of tennis' most legendary names, including two books on my brother John.

At 6 p.m. on Saturday, Leander, Vijay and Richard will receive the ultimate honor in tennis in our enshrinement ceremony.

Dan, who is our CEO as I mentioned, it's been an awesome week thus far. Both of us returned from Wimbledon, as so did these inductees. What are your

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thoughts as we get ready for our second year of induction?

DAN FABER: Second year, can't believe it's going that fast. I had the opportunity to meet these three individuals. More than what I just read on the paper, just watching what you have accomplished over your careers, but I've had an opportunity to get to know you as individuals in London. What a pleasure. What an honor it is to have done that.

Not only on the court clearly, what you've contributed to the game as a writer and so forth, has been a game changer in the sport of tennis, but you guys have really had an impact on the lives of a lot of people just because of the inspiration and your own backgrounds.

You had me teared up a little bit in that meeting in London when the two of you talked about how your mother had an impact on Leander. Super excited. Put pressure on Patrick and I because I said, we better get home as soon as possible, get this ultimate honor party going.

Our hope is you're going to enjoy it, you're going to feel it, live it, because you deserve it. It's all starts right now. You've earned all this. Have the greatest time. I know you have family and friends in town. Our job is to make that as special as possible.

We have some great things planned. It's going to be epic. I look forward to being part of that experience as you go into the Hall of Fame.

PATRICK McENROE: Thank you, Dan.

Kim on Zoom. You were enshrined seven years ago in 2017. You're a key part of what we continue to do here as a co-president along with me. How about as a Hall of Famer, what can these three gentlemen be looking forward to this weekend?

KIM CLIJSTERS: It's a very, very exciting weekend. After experiencing it up close, what it meant for Esther and Rick last year, really, really excited to have experienced my second Hall of Fame weekend on the sideline.

It's an amazing, amazing four days. Take it all in. You're going to meet a lot of new people. I'm just really excited for the first time this weekend to congratulate all three of you. I can't wait to do it in person in a few hours.

PATRICK McENROE: Thank you, Kim.

Vijay, let me start with you. Congrats, number one. This is a big moment for you. I remember the videos of you playing at Wimbledon on Centre Court against Borg, some amazing matches there.

You mentioned to me your history here at the Hall of Fame. Now sort of full circle you're being inducted. What does it mean for you, your family and also your country which you contributed to so much?

VIJAY ARMITRAJ: I think the first thing is truly amazement. When you come from a country like India, India in the '50s and '60s, certainly not what India is today. But coming out of India in the 50s, 60s, '70s, eventually seeing what the world looked like, it was truly unimaginable. My parents were flying blind when we got into this sport we call tennis. Never knew where it was going to take us. We had no idea.

I literally started the game of tennis because of my health issues. I've often said my greatest talent was really being born to the right parents. Everything else followed after that.

I think that when I look back when this was told to me the day before Thanksgiving, the day before my birthday, I didn't know what to think. My whole life kind of flashed before me from the time I was seven to 70, lying in a hospital bed wondering where this was going to take me.

My mother told me that, You're going to be the best in this country and you're going to play around the world. Indians are going to come watch you play in different parts of the world. It's hard to believe that they themselves are flying blind, not knowing where tennis was going to lead us.

So to be here at this moment, all of those flashbacks are on a regular basis from the time the announcement came to today, it has been constant.

My biggest sadness, I would say, is them not being here with me to be able to share this. But it has been such a monumental task and effort on their part to get me into this situation and make something of me, which I never dreamt about, what I would call miracle number one.

41 years ago, 42 years ago, when I met my wife, who's now been my wife for 41, 42 years, you look at it and truly that is miracle number two, that has been able to make this life journey more than special, not just the tennis part of it, but everything else that came with it.

The aspect of making sure that India was always represented every single place I played, whether it was the flag, whether it was the anthem, whether it was four people sitting there or 4,000 people sitting there, it was meant to be, India on the world stage in our sport.

To me, that was always a top priority because one would



look at me, Oh, he's Indian. If they know tennis, they might know who I am. I've always been aware of that fact, especially from the time I came here in the early '70s to today and where India has grown in the same manner through my growth.

So I feel that it's been a very close relationship between me and the country and the people, the 30 million or so people who live overseas, that have made an impact on the world and where India is today.

This is truly an unbelievable and special moment for me.

PATRICK McENROE: It's only just begun. Thank you, Vijay.

Richard, let me move to you. I've known you for a long, long time. As I said, you've been around tennis your whole adult life and maybe then some. It's pretty cool to see you here now as someone who is going to be a Hall of Famer because you've covered so many of these people for so long with so much passion for the sport.

What does it mean to you to be here alongside some of the all-time greats of the sport?

RICHARD EVANS: Well, Patrick, as you know, as you say, I've been around tennis a very long time. I've been on the International Tennis Hall of Fame nominating committee for a very long time, probably 20 years or more. I'd like to think it's the brains trust of the game, because we have 25 people who really know tennis, mostly players, but also journalists like Steve Flink and Chris Bowers serve on the committee.

So I know how it works. It is not uncomplicated, but it still came as an enormous surprise to me and I was very honored to think that my colleagues on that committee felt that I have my name put forward.

Then to pass the quite high bar of 75% approval rate that you need from the 120 voters, journalists and Hall of Famers. I won't get into the Brexit, but it would be nice if 75% of people needed to get Britain remaining in Europe (smiling). The prime minister didn't feel that was necessary, so we're out of Europe. Nothing to do with tennis or me, but anyway...

As you can tell, I've been interested in a lot of things in my life, politics being one of them, cricket being another. These two gentlemen won't need any introduction to that sport, nor here. Our driver yesterday said there were 22 cricket clubs in Massachusetts, something I didn't know.

Anyway, my career started because I was assigned to

write Althea Gibson's copy at Wimbledon. I'd already been a journalist for about 18 months before I went in the British Army, doing national service, came out and got that assignment. That really started my tennis writing career, because before that it had been all football, rugby and cricket.

I'd watched tennis. I'd played a bit of tennis. I remember in my uniform in a club in Piccadilly on a black and white television watching Alex Olmedo beating Rod Laver in 1959. Everybody forgot Rod Laver lost two Wimbledon finals before he started winning everything in sight. Nice to see him at Wimbledon, as well as Ken Rosewall.

I came into tennis very fortunately at that amazing era of Australian domination, helped by their coach Harry Hopman, the unbelievable array of talent from Lew Hoad to Frank Sedgman, to Ashley Cooper, Ken Rosewall, John Newcombe, Tony Roche. They were all brilliant champions.

I was their age, so I had this huge advantage of being able to travel with a group of players who had, apart from Hopman who stayed home, there were no coaches, no managers, no agents, no wives or girlfriends, except for odd occasion, traveling the world. You can imagine the Aussies knew how to travel the world. They knew how to enjoy themselves on court, very competitive, and off court less competitive.

It was great fun and an enormous introduction for me into tennis because I was living it. Sitting down to dinner every night, having Ken Rosewall trying to explain why he was able to slice his backhand to Roy Emerson, you found yourself being in the thick of what it was like to be a top-class tennis player. It was a wonderful school for me. It helped my writing.

Later on, I'd been doing it for about 10 years, when I asked the radio producer of BBC if I might try commentating. He said, Oh, yeah, that's a good idea. Meet me at Queen's.

I went down to Queen's. They showed me the commentary box and put some earphones on my head and said, Right, you're on. Nice introduction. It's called being thrown into the deep end. You can either do it or you can't.

I hopefully got better with it. I started off with Christine Truman as my summarizer that particular moment at Queen's. Then at Wimbledon, I had someone called Fred Perry sitting next to me for six years. That was another way to learn about tennis. Then someone who was nice to see in our party at Wimbledon, Frue McMillan, the great serve and volleyer doubles player. If you're a radio play-by-play commentator, it is really important to have someone sitting beside you who can interject with 10

seconds, 20 seconds of something that means something and embellishes what you've been trying to say. I think Frue was the best at that for me.

My career went on. I was writing about a lot of things. I had seven years as a foreign correspondent in America and Paris. But always tennis was there. I never let go of tennis.

Even when I was a foreign correspondent, I still managed to cover Wimbledon and the US Open and often Roland Garros. My life became very enmeshed in the game of tennis.

What I've derived from it and what I enjoy most about it is we really are a pretty amazing family. The United Nations do their best, but if you want an example of how men and women have every conceivable background, race, creed, color, can all work together, play together, compete together, and basically remain friends on some level or other, then the tennis tour is it.

To be selected to be part of the very special family that exists within that broader family, the International Tennis Hall of Fame, is something obviously that I'm very proud of and surprised by and delighted to be here.

PATRICK McENROE: Thank you, Richard. Those of us who know you are not surprised. Congrats to you. If it makes you feel any better, that's how I got my start at ESPN 28 years ago. Still nothing has changed.

Mr. Leander Paes, I had the good fortune to actually play against him a few times, but that turned out to be the misfortune because not only did he have incredibly quick feet and was an amazing athlete, but had arguably the fastest hands I've ever seen in tennis, and I've seen some pretty good hands, if you know what I mean.

How about for you being able to come here? You arrived last night. Give us your impressions so far. And congratulations to you.

LEANDER PAES: Thank you, Patrick.

First of all, a few of us are very blessed to be born into legacy. A few of us understand the pressures of being born into legacy. Today sitting here at the International Tennis Hall of Fame, I wouldn't have ever dreamt it, playing street cricket and street football barefoot back in Calcutta back in India. Never would have dreamt that not just one but two Indian boys get to sit on a podium with so much legacy around us.

Just sitting in this auditorium, one feels the amazing

history, both Vijay and myself having won the tournament here several times, singles, doubles. Getting to walk the lawns of the International Tennis Hall of Fame, getting to walk within the walls of the museum is just a phenomenal legacy.

I grew up in India to two parents who were Olympians. Mom in basketball, dad won a bronze medal in the 1972 Munich Olympic in field hockey. Mom and dad were at the Munich Olympics when a little mishap happened and the Games were shut down for four days. I was conceived in those four days. I was born in June of 1973 as an Olympic kid.

Football was my passion. Growing up to an Indian mom and Portuguese-Indian dad, football was the main sport in our household.

On the 12th of May in 1986, I gave up a European football scholarship and I moved down to what was known as Madras back then, to the Britannia Amritraj Tennis Academy. On the 12th of May, 1986, both these two young men on my right who I had the tremendous honor to sit on the stage with, were there on that day. Vijay and his wonderful parents welcomed me into an academy, gave all of us boys an opportunity that was very special back in India, and one is so grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Amritraj, to Vijay for giving us this great opportunity. I did my holy communion with his mother.

On the 12th of May, 1986, Richard Evans was there. He was writing Vijay's autobiography. I walked up to him as an 11-year-old and I stuck my hand out and I said, Pleasure to meet you, Mr. Evans, I'm Leander Paes.

He goes, what are you here for?

I was, I want to emulate my father in winning an Olympic medal.

On the 12th of May, 1986, Mr. Evans turned to me and said to this young 11-year-old kid, If you work hard enough, you might even get into the International Tennis Hall of Fame.

Well, here we are.

I wouldn't be who I am without my parents. I wouldn't be who I am without these young men. I'd like to say thank you to Vijay and his family. I'd like to say thank you to Richard Evans and his family. They're the ones who taught us how to do it. They're the ones who paved the path before and taught us how to do it.

I've got to look to my left because the legacy in the



McEnroe family is something else. I watched John McEnroe play on black and white TV back in India, sitting on the floor of my parents' house. I found his style and brand of tennis very interesting. He played serve and volley, he played quick tennis. For me, I wasn't as tall as Vijay, as most of the tennis players. I figured using my speed was a big advantage.

But then as I got a bit better, I met Patrick, one of the nicest human beings you could ever meet on the tennis circuit. Competitive, came to India. Beat me in Davis Cup in my own backyard. It's not very nice, was that (smiling)?

But what a gentleman. I always craved to have his double-handed backhand. I always craved on how he would hit it open stance and return serves so solidly.

For a few of you all who knew me, my tennis technique was nothing to write about, especially my backhand. But the one thing I really missed out on, because Patrick used to play with Richard Reneberg, played with a lot of other great American players, but out of the 194 men's doubles partners that I played with, several Grand Slams and tournaments with, I missed the chance to play with you, Patrick.

PATRICK McENROE: That would have been good for my résumé.

LEANDER PAES: I have so much respect for Mr. McEnroe, Patrick and John's father. He was a legendary man. To have two sons play at the highest echelons of our sport, and the way they conducted themselves, especially this one, someone I look up to a lot.

Captain Dan, as I called him, from my favorite movie Forest Gump. Captain Dan comes from an educational background. The conversations that we talk about is very inspiring. That's why I bring this up.

What the International Tennis Hall of Fame stands for is something that I am still learning. I'm so positive and so encouraged with the youth program that Dan and the International Tennis Hall of Fame are doing.

This afternoon and tomorrow and day after, I'm going to be on the tennis courts inspiring the youth program, legends program, how to be legendary.

From a young kid in Calcutta growing up, I needed inspiration. I needed opportunity. Today I have 29 million kids in my foundation who my father and myself use sport as a vehicle to educate them.

After speaking to Captain Dan, I'm so inspired by you and

what you're doing through the Hall of Fame platform to your own personal platform. I would like to partner you and collaborate with you in bettering the lives of young boys and girls around the world. I would like to take the International Tennis Hall of Fame around the world, to motivate young kids, to learn a vocation, to learn a skill on how to educate themselves better, on how to earn a living and put food on the table and roofs over our head.

In that, I am so excited to have my father here this weekend. My dad is in his 18th year of Parkinson's. He made the trip out yesterday, 27 hours all the way. He was hoping to be here this morning, but unfortunately he's not feeling great, so he's back in the hotel. I hope he'll be fine on Saturday to come and be here.

Without our parents, we're not much. Just as Vijay said earlier, we're all very blessed to be born into the families that we're born into. Our parents are our north star, our first heroes, first super heros that we want to emulate.

I cannot help but to congratulate Kim Clijsters on her wonderful legends women's doubles victory, along with one of my favorites, Martina Hingis. Kim, it was awesome to see you guys play.

As we met at Wimbledon, I wasn't sure how you were going to top off the fun exchange you had a couple years ago when you brought that young man off the stands and brought him onto the court and lent him your white shirt, white skirt, racquet and got him to play tennis. You are such a champion and inspiration to a lot of young girls and boys around the world.

I'd like to thank you for this honor. I'd like to thank you for your support. I would love to get you and Patrick and Dan and Vijay and Richard and a lot of our Hall of Famers where we can get around the world and inspire kids to be the best that they can be.

So, Kim, thank you so much for being a champion.

KIM CLIJSTERS: Thank you.

LEANDER PAES: This weekend is going to be great fun. I am so excited to share with all of you, representing every young boy and girl around the planet who has a dream in their mind and passion in their hearts and fire in their belly.

If this young kid who played street cricket and football barefooted in Calcutta is coming into the International Tennis Hall of Fame, then any kid with a dream, fire in their belly, you can be a Hall of Famers. I'm so grateful to who you are and what you can do.



PATRICK McENROE: I like that, too. Captain Dan, I'll use that (laughter).

We'll take questions.

Q. Vijay, back in 1976, you came here with a 16-player Invitational in September, and you won that. Then you won in 1980. '84, it was like an Olympics year. Could you tell me your feelings coming here. It seems you're a natural for grass because growing up in India, you seemed to be able to use that as a great asset for you. Talk about how comfortable you were on grass here.

VIJAY ARMITRAJ: Well, first of all, I think in 1976, you and I amongst this group might be the only ones who remain from that event here. It's nice to see someone from 1976 here at the event (laughter).

The interesting thing about coming here to play on grass was two things. One was the fact that I always enjoyed playing on grass. I had good years at Wimbledon, obviously some very good matches. The grass truly suited me at The Championships. The grass here actually stayed low for me. I always felt that I could have some good success here.

The second thing, of course, it was such a quiet and quaint town, especially in those days, that after Wimbledon of two weeks, you really wanted to come and go to a little Odeon Cinema in town and see any and all movies that came out. I think I went there every day after matches. Stayed at the same hotel. It just gave you a feeling of kind of going back in time, especially after the two weeks of The Championships.

Winning here in '76 was very special to me. It was the year Jimmy Carter won the presidency. Strangely I came back four years later when Regan became president, then reelected in '84.

As I was coming out here, I was thinking that this is the last year of the tournament as we know it. This is the year of my induction. Superstition in India is a big deal. It's always meant a lot. Leander and I know this very well. Oh, there's something to it. I said, No, no, we're fine, it just happened.

The coincidences of it...

But at the end of the day when I look back to where I started, started on clay at home, as I said earlier, because of health reasons is the reason I got into tennis. Never knew where I would get to. But to be able to then play better on grass as I got moving forward, though I did have some decent wins on clay, including a guy who won five or six French championships during my time.

I think the important aspect here was the fact we were able to play for the long duration of time that we did, playing singles and doubles for 20 years. Also 20 years of Davis Cup, so on and so forth. That kind of gave you a longevity. That was the most important part for me, to be able to represent my country for such a long period of time.

In the Open Era, we've only been to the final of the Davis Cup twice, '74 and '77. For me that was the be all and end all of tennis, The Championships at Wimbledon, the Davis Cup. I was very blessed for being able to do it for a long period of time, despite illness, so on and so forth.

It was an amazing aspect for me because growing up, that wasn't meant to be, when you grow up the way I did. My mother going to school and sitting and taking notes, coming and teaching me in the hospital, hoping I'd pass an exam, which I never did. It was one of those moments that is surreal, especially when something like this comes along. The most important thing you could possibly achieve in tennis, an ultimate honor.

I always feel that I stood on people's shoulders to be able to get here. Honestly it means more to me than anything else. As Leander rightly said, it is truly something that everyone should aspire to in any sport that you play, that the impossible is truly nothing, especially when you have parents like I did.

PATRICK McENROE: I'm not going to remind you, Vijay, that it's 2024, and another election year. So I won't ask for your prediction. I'm certainly not going to ask Richard for his predictions. Who knows how long we could be here.

Any other questions.

Q. I'd be interested in the views of any or all of the three inductees on how we can use the fame of tennis, the high profile of tennis, to really encourage youngsters around the world to make the best of themselves. Leander talked about his 29 million kids initiative. Vijay, you have your foundation. Richard was also part of the grassroots Inner City Challenge. Tennis is not just about generating new champions, in some places in the world it can be about giving kids an educational framework. How can we make best use of that?

LEANDER PAES: That's a fantastic question. This is the part that inspires me so much because I feel like when you look at all the 200-plus inductees who are Hall of Famers now, every single one of them have phenomenal brand value, not just in their country, but globally.

When you look at the sport of tennis, as well, you've got so many different governing bodies. You have the ITF, all the four Grand Slams, ATP, WTA to name a few. In each country you have an association.

This is what really encourages me with what the International Tennis Hall of Fame is doing with building young legends.

The reason I find your question so pertinent is that it's not just the top of the pyramid produce champions or produce Grand Slam champions or Olympic champions or No. 1s in the world. Yes, that will happen. But I feel like if we all get together as a group at the International Tennis Hall of Fame and look at the grassroots programs around the world and the feeder system.

Like you rightly said, for some kids to even have a tennis racquet in hand is a massive sense of inspiration. What inspired me was when I saw Patrick McEnroe and his brother, if I'm not mistaken, were in the Serengeti in Africa a couple months ago. They had gone out there and were actually playing tennis amongst the Masai tribe.

I was sitting in India with the crew of still getting inducted into the Hall of Fame. I was trying to figure out how I could make a difference.

I feel if you do take Richard Evans, Kim Clijsters, Patrick McEnroe, John McEnroe, Vijay Amritraj, Martina Navratilova, I don't need to name all of the rest of the Hall of Famers, and we take that under Dan's guidance and his structure of how we are going to do the legendary program, and actually get tennis racquets and balls and equipment and get some books out there, get some videos out there, I know that Infosys are doing a phenomenal job on the tech, you get these kids to have an education through tennis.

I believe that we Hall of Famers can make a big impact on the world to not only build champions but exactly as you rightly said to put food on people's tables, to teach them a vocation to earn a living.

Let's not forget that tennis was and is the only sport in the world that started with equal prize money for girls and for boys, the only sport in the world that had equal opportunity for boys and girls, thanks to Title IX and NCAA, you got equal scholarships.

I think tennis is a huge blessing for all of us to educate ourselves. We are part of the .1% who have won Grand Slams and have become Hall of Famers.

It's always a great sense of responsibility. I love that responsibility, to help kids. My dream is over the next 15

years to partner with such great people, to take the 29 million to 250 million around the world. I think that would be a life really well-led, to be able to encourage children to earn a living and stand on their feet.

In India we know how many kids are on the street with no opportunity. I played on the street with them when I was a kid. So I'm very passionate about that.

I think the International Tennis Hall of Fame, through the building legends program, can do wonders across the world.

Q. As a kid growing up in India, I watched and read about Vijay Amritraj and his triumphs at various major tournaments, Davis Cup ties representing India. As a college kid I have celebrated Leander Paes' Olympic medal. Obviously this is a very proud moment. I'm fortunate to see this in person. The question is both for Mr. Amritraj and Mr. Leander Paes. What message would you give to the young Indian tennis players from India and to the administrators of Indian tennis so we have more of these moments in the future?

VIJAY ARMITRAJ: You better go first on that one.

LEANDER PAES: Are you sure?

VIJAY ARMITRAJ: Go for it.

LEANDER PAES: Firstly, I think it's a very, very proud moment for all Indians across the world. Vijay has been a beacon of inspiration to every young kid in India, how with hard work and passion you can become a champion.

I worked hard over my 38-year career to inspire young kids that they can be champions, as well. Just on the eve of getting inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame, there is a reason why we wear our Indian pins on our jackets. It's a very proud moment to take 1.4 billion Indians into the Hall of Fame.

I've always been a person who believes in inclusivity and togetherness. I believe as much as three of us sit here representing ourselves, our families, our sport, we also represent the world. How we conduct ourselves makes a big impact to inspire people.

It's always a touchy answer when you talk about association and governance and things. But I always believed that if people work together, you can always have great, positive solutions. Big honor to take India into the International Tennis Hall of Fame.

There's a reason that I've put my Davis Cup jacket and

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blazer in the museum. There's a reason I put my seventh Olympic track suit in the museum. Most importantly on how humbled and honored I am to be a Hall of Famer.

I've always shared my Olympic medal, India's first tennis individual Olympic medal, is going to be sitting in the Infosys International Tennis Hall of Fame Museum because I think it will be in safe and great hands, and hopefully will inspire a lot of kids around the world to be champions, as well.

RICHARD EVANS: It gets into the whole business of publicity. I'm usually on that side of this kind of reception.

One of the things that has always frustrated me has been, especially in America, the lack of coverage for tennis. Obviously the New York Times now does a fantastic job at the US Open, and local papers generally do a great job, but without publicity, without getting people interested.

One of the examples I'm talking about that we are fighting all the time, I've been at it ever since the 1960s, is this idea in America that golf is so much more important than tennis.

One example was the Palm Beach Post one day took three quarters of a page to cover a seniors golf tournament in Florida. Fine. At the bottom of that page: Andre Agassi Retires. Now, I would take issue with the sports editor because I think Andre Agassi retiring is rather more important than a senior event of golf in Florida.

But this is an example of the attitude that doesn't give tennis breathing space. As Charlie Pasarell has said: Tennis doesn't punch its weight in the marketplace. It does in many ways, the four Grand Slams, four of the biggest sporting events on earth, and they all make a fortune, and that's wonderful, but it doesn't go down deep enough.

Tennis is the third most followed sport in the world, cricket being number two, thanks to the subcontinent. Tennis is behind cricket because of the subcontinent where you come in with a lot of numbers. We need to build on that.

One of the most promising things I've seen watching on television from Florida, Madrid and Rome this year, I noticed with the close-ups of the crowds, A, that the center courts were full. Hardly surprising because those two countries produce and are producing such a fantastic new wave of champion players. But also the crowds were young. In Rome in particular, hugely enthusiastic to the point of almost being like a football crowd. They were young.

There was a big percentage of the crowds in Madrid, and Rome in particular, other places as well, but those two I

noticed, were under 30. That is great for the future of the sport and necessary for the development of the sport.

But as Leander was saying, we need to take it into countries that don't have great facilities. We need to get into Africa, obviously India where more things are happening.

But tennis is a great activity, pastime, and profession for the next generation.

VIJAY ARMITRAJ: I wanted to add to what Richard is saying, the fact when I played in the '70s and '80s, every capital in Asia had a tour event, every single one of them. When I served as president of the ATP from June '89 for four terms, we ended up opening up the DCC countries in the Middle East and put the first event in Doha followed by the second event in Dubai at the time, which no one wanted. Today it's two of the best tournaments that we have on the calendar.

There is no other tournament in Asia, if you leave China out of the mix, that have something like nine tournaments between men and women. There is none in Asia. There is one license that is owned by Tokyo. Other than that we have none.

We had tournaments in Manila, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Singapore, Ho Chi Minh, including Teheran. Today we have none of that. We have no tournament in Africa. Perhaps Marrakesh is on its last legs, perhaps. The tournament we had in India that I brought there 25 years ago, we had it, was successful, moved it to Pune after Chennai, now that event is out of India as well. A country like India doesn't have a tour event at all. We were lucky to get a WTA event after two years ago, due to COVID and China couldn't run it, leased an event.

My whole point here is unless we have crown jewels, a 250 for our part of the world would suffice, would be great. I think there's enough room in India to have 250s in two or three cities. We have enough cities in Asia that want to have 250s, no question about it.

The growth of tennis cannot be determined only by North America and Europe. Last year's final in Turin, all eight finalists were from Europe, all eight. The reason, to add on to what Richard was saying about America losing traction with tennis going on to the lowest sections of a sports page, is because we don't have Americans in the top five. We never had the days of Stan Smith, Arthur Ashe, needless to say John McEnroe, Jimmy Connors, Pete Sampras, Andre Agassi, all the way down to Andy Roddick.

The days of the Europeans, when the courts got slower and the balls got heavier, the Europeans started to do a lot better in the singles. Not since the days of Newcombe and Roche, as we were talking about, Americans and Australians played each other in Davis Cup, those great matches.

I really think we have to reconsider the positioning of the global aspect of the sport. We are the second most global sport in the world after FIFA, football, soccer as we know it. There will always be local events. Cricket is magic in India. Cricket in India is a religion, it's not a sport, as it is here with the NFL.

When we played in the '70s and '80s, every major tennis tournament was on network television, ABC, CBS and NBC. Today we don't have one tennis tournament in the world on American networks. ESPN and TC carry it as Grand Slam tournaments.

I think it's important from a PR standpoint, from an exposure standpoint, unless you go into a country we don't know how well we're going to do. Nairobi and Lagos wants a tournament in the African continent. Cape Town used to have a tournament. J-burg used to have a tournament. We don't have those tournaments any more.

It's think it's important for us to concentrate and look at economies of the world always fluctuating. There's going to be times when Europe moves up, America goes down, vice versa. Same with Asia and South America.

I think it's important for us to be able to have a presence in all continents in the world as far as our sport is concerned. That is the only way we'll be able to develop more players.

Needless to say, not everyone can be a Federer, Nadal, Djokovic or Serena Williams. It's important for us to understand that sport is as important, as Leander said, for the rural areas. It's important to go out to the towns and villages and districts to be able to make that known to them with free tennis courts, free balls, free tennis racquets that are easily available that we can hand out. Make sure that becomes very much a part of the psyche of that particular country. That is the only way for us to do this.

In our part of the world, the Indian subcontinent is taken over by cricket, which is terrific. The rest of Asia is not. It's important for us to be able to expose our sport which is played in every country of the world.

If I'm not mistaken, all 192 countries of the UN play Davis Cup. That's not the case in the World Cup. With all due respect to the World Series, it's not San Francisco playing New York, or the Super Bowl between the Patriots and the

Chargers.

For us in the World Cup in cricket, it's the same thing. It's 12 countries. There are 192 countries participating in the Davis Cup in tennis, as they do in soccer. I would venture to say this is the two most global sports in the world. I'm not quite sure anyone else would say they disagree with me on that.

I think it's important for us to harp on that fact we are a global sport. It needs to remain a global sport. Not everyone can be the best like Djokovic and Nadal, as I've said before. But it's important for them to understand that the sport can be a part of your life still at my age and Richard's age. My father played tennis singles at 85. He enjoyed it so much. He only stopped playing when my mother told him he couldn't go out and play.

I think it's important for us to be able to harp on the fact that it is part of our psyche. It brings families together. It brings communities together and truly it brings countries together. That is exactly what we need to do with our sport.

RICHARD EVANS: Hear hear.

PATRICK McENROE: Thank you so much, everybody.

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