

# BNP Paribas Open

Saturday, March 12, 2022

**John McEnroe**

**Jean-Yves Fillion**

**Peggy Michel**

**Izyan Ahmad**

**Sebastian Sec**

Press Conference



happen because we kept it going and I believe that was probably the best way to prepare for what I already sense is going to be an exceptional 2022 BNP Paribas Open at Indian Wells.

For the bank, it's an amazing experience because while it's a great demonstration of what the passion for tennis is about, it's an amazing tournament, just we see hundreds of clients and partners and friends and we spend time with you, the media, because we highly value your views, your comments and obviously the way you can leverage what we collectively do.

I've had the privilege to be at the inception of this tournament. I'm looking at Peggy because she was there as well, with a few others. It was in 2009. And the tournament was, at the time, sponsorless, and I remember some of our friends here coming and said, Would you have interest? We flew to Paris. Paris is always a good place to fly, right?

JOHN MCENROE: Especially if you're married.

JEAN-YVES FILLION: Absolutely. And then good things happened because we started. We started this partnership with the contribution of many, including of Larry Ellison, became one of the biggest tournaments in the world. And I know this is not the right word to use but honestly Grand Slam quality. It's not a slam, but it's amazing in terms of what it has become and I think there is much more coming up.

It's pretty well-funded, to be candid. It's 17 million in prize money. But probably as importantly, since 2010, really since we joined, right, it's really equal prize money for men and women, which obviously is very aligned with everything BNP Paribas does any time we contribute or sponsor any kind of event, including obviously in the world of tennis.

Then in my position, my media team would probably give me a very hard time if I did not say a few words about the bank. But the bank, with tennis, it's been a longtime passion for many, many, many years. I should say decades. It started in 1973. I think you will probably

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the BNP Paribas press conference here. Obviously we have a number of dignitaries here with us. I'll let them get into it. They will have some things to share, and then we'll open it up for questions afterwards. So feel free to take it away.

MARIE-LAURE DE BAILLIENCOURT: I'm from the BNP Paribas USA team, so welcome here. Thank you for joining.

So we will be talking here about the way that BNP Paribas supports the future of tennis. Many of you are curious, social equity, sustainability, community, and responsibility.

Don't forget to stick around if you want, as we will have an exhibition session with all the speakers after this press conference. As a reminder, the event is on the record. Please feel free to jump after each speaker to finish the session to ask questions and we also have a Q&A at the end of the press conference.

So thank you very much and I'll hand it to Jean-Yves, who is here on behalf of BNP Paribas USA.

JEAN-YVES FILLION: Thank you. Hello. And it's a privilege to be with you all here today, obviously to be with my friends Peggy and John, and having Zizou and Sebe with us are so impressive in the way they play tennis and the way they're managing their life.

Just a few words on being here. It's just fantastic to be back. I'm saying to be back because obviously 2020 was a specific, we had to cancel -- remember this, Peggy? Pretty much the day the tournament was supposed to start, then eventually that was a big thing.

2021 we had to postpone, but I'm so glad we made it



understand it started with the French Open and over the many, many, many years expanded around the world, and it's a privilege to be sitting here with John, with all these amazing players, high-level quality tennis, but really the bank actually is very committed to supporting tennis at all levels, and when I'm saying all levels here, it's any dimensions you can think of of the game of tennis, which includes singles and doubles and team tennis, wheelchair tennis, family tennis, really ranging from beginners training to the top professional tournaments.

And a point of, I think, importance is we've being leveraging tennis even more over the last few years to support the communities we live in, and we speak about it a little later, to support what we call sustainability and obviously any social cause that we believe it is important, and I think John will have a lot to say because he's been so involved and he's done an amazing work supporting the tennis community worldwide obviously but in New York City.

And then just a few initiatives because nothing speaks better than examples, that in terms of supporting sustainability and communities, which are taking place at the BNP Paribas Open at Indian Wells in 2022, FAA Points for Change, I will say a few words about it. Aces For Trees, I will say a few words about it as well, I mean, Team BNP Paribas Mac 1, John will comment on it, and the BNP Paribas Open's scholarship program. And my friend Peggy, who's been at the really initiative of that, will speak about it. The two last items I have so much pride in with John and Peggy about what we have already accomplished.

And then just a word on Felix Auger-Aliassime. Obviously you know Felix is a young player, 21 years old. He's already No. 9 in the world, and what the program is, it's his program. The program he has developed, it really commits to donate five dollars for each point, for each point he wins, and then the bank basically triples his donation, then each point Felix wins we give 15 dollars. It's under social side of what we do, as I highlighted earlier, because the funds raised will actually be donated to an association, I'm sure you know the association well, John. It's called CARE. It's CARE for EduChange. It's really supporting the deserving kids and the most vulnerable children in Togo, an African country, by the way, of which over 60 percent of these kids are female and fighting against any violence they might be facing and gave them access to education, which obviously could be a life changer.

And then that's an example of what I mean by social action through tennis and Aces for Trees, hashtag, for the ones who are interested, #BNPOpenforTrees. It's really here, BNP Paribas and our Californian bank, Bank of the West,

coming together here, teaming up together to plant trees in areas affected by the California wildfires.

Basically three trees will be planted for every ace served through the tournament. And to give you a sense, last year we actually, through this program, planted 3,000 trees, and we tripled the contribution. Last year it was one tree for one ace, right? The three trees, then, we expect hopefully to double or triple the trees being planted through the program. And obviously this initiative is really to fight deforestation, which is actually something the bank does worldwide globally. It's a very strong commitment we've taken across and around the world.

Then now, it's time to, for me to turn it over to a program that is so amazing, which is Team BNP Paribas Mac 1. I will turn it over to John, but I just wanted to share an anecdote. This program started, John, probably six years ago. I mean, in a sense, in the concept. I was having dinner with John's brother, Patrick, and we were putting something together saying, listen, this is what John and Patrick already do for community, for tennis, for tennis in the City of New York, you know, through their academy, through your foundation, and we're like, what else can we do? As BNP Paribas, how can I help you further and better?

And Patrick said, I spoke to John last night, and that could be an idea. When we came up with this concept, we spoke to John. John's very selective. You know, he likes it, he doesn't like it, he loves it, and then from there it was a goal, and, John, nothing better than you can tell the story here.

JOHN MCENROE: Jean-Yves, thank you very much. BNP Paribas, you and I have been around tennis a long time and I want to personally thank you not only for Mac 1, obviously that is absolutely huge for us, what we're trying to do in the New York area, but in general the sport of tennis.

You obviously mentioned the French Open, Davis Cup, now this incredible event. This used to be sort of, I don't want to say an afterthought when I was playing, but I'll tell you, this event's amazing now. It's unbelievable. The players love it. They often say it's their favorite event of the year. Obviously the majors, they are hopefully up there, but they really feel like they're taken care of, but also the fans, the experience for the fans.

So for me I was headed here when -- we're two years late in a way. I was headed here a couple years ago. So normally I hate traffic and I freak out, and there was a lot of traffic around here when we were coming in, and I was, like, thank God we have people in the stands. I mean, needless to say, I think all of us that are involved with the

sport are very thankful that hopefully it seems to be getting back to at least a new normal.

And that is something that, I mean, I called the last two Australian Opens from Connecticut in my apartment in New York. I called the last two French Opens from Malibu. So it was getting to be a little of a bummer. I mean, it's nice to be able to be in your house, but it's a whole lot different when you experience it.

I remember last year Wimbledon was -- we called the US Open, Patrick and I and others, with no one in the stands. So this was horrible for everyone involved. But we are trying to persevere, "we" being the tennis community. So to see now people just flocking in is awesome. So everyone's excited about that.

As far as this Mac 1 program, anyone that's around New York, I am biased. I grew up in New York City and attended high school in Manhattan, had some success at the US Open, still commentating 40 years -- or God, I don't even want to think about it. 45 years was the first US Open I ever played.

So for me it's sort of like a full circle. I was given an opportunity because my parents were able to provide enough for me in terms of the cost of it and the ability to go and play events, which most people don't have that opportunity and can't afford to do that. So it became apparent that even 30, 40 years later when I was, finally got involved in having my own tennis academy that, if anything, it was as big a problem or bigger than it was when I was growing up.

I think everyone in the sport recognizes that, understands that. So to have Jean-Yves, you'd be, I think it's fair to say that you love the sport of tennis. You can tell by the passion in what you just talked about before and the times I've been around you.

So not only am I appreciative, but Zizou and Sebe, for example, the players we have, these are two great examples of the Mac 1 team. We have the younger guy, Zizou, here, who is currently the top-ranked 12 year old in the country in singles and doubles. Okay. So that's incredible. Doubles too, which is, so he's looking to round his game into form so that he can play on all surfaces and do anything, which would be incredible.

And Sebe has made steady progress. He's headed to Princeton. He's been working his way up the junior rankings, the ITF rankings and the U.S. rankings, doing a great job. Both of these guys espouse, for me personally, what I believe, which is the don't beat yourself theory, which I sort of push at my academy and feel it's important.

You don't see that too much in the circuit, but interestingly enough, the guy that's currently ranked No. 1 in the world, he doesn't beat himself too often. He gets a lot of balls back and it's sort of a little bit of a new type of tennis, which is the wham bam, thank you, ma'am. It's point's over in a couple shots.

And you see some more strategy nuances, something that me personally, I like to see, and I think the sport will benefit from it in the future.

In closing, we have an opportunity, I think, to sort of re-inject some energy. That's one of the big things for me. Full circle for me would be if this little guy next to me, Sebe or anyone else in our Mac 1 program, have scholarships because let's face it, it is way too expensive. There needs to be more accessibility for the sport, more affordable.

But if one of these kids could end up winning a US Open or Wimbledon, it would be, for me I would take great pride in that. I have a great team. I have a new executive director there, Ryan, she's just starting out in the last couple months, so she's very committed. She loves the sport of tennis. So we need passion. We need support, obviously.

And Jean-Yves, you've given a number of kids this opportunity because, as you well know, being around it, the cost of it, especially in the New York area, is prohibitive, so it is very much appreciated. But we, we're looking to sort of bring back the juice to the sport of tennis and I think there's an opportunity here with the new breed. We've had these legends play, obviously Serena and Venus in the women's, and these three guys that have won a couple things. It may have something to say for another couple years. It seems like they just keep going.

But this new breed coming up and sort of an exciting time and I look forward to being part of it in any way I can, particularly, hopefully giving as many kids an opportunity to play and change their lives.

So thank you, Jean-Yves, very much.

JEAN-YVES FILLION: Thank you so much for the very kind words. Zizou, welcome to the team. I think John spoke so highly about what you have already accomplished, that it's a long journey, but you're so promising.

And Sebe, Sebe mentioned to me before we started speaking, we met years ago, and when I met Sebe he was that tall (indicating), Zizou's size, exactly. And obviously I remember a conversation. He said, I want to become a very, very good tennis player, which he has. But in the

meantime, he's going to go to Princeton and it's just an amazing accomplishment, which this is what John and Patrick have been creating here. It's not only potentially amazing tennis players, but players who are actually building their own life in many different ways.

And that's another way, by the way, to think about sustainability, and I think that's very, very impressive. We will follow you, and we will follow you with all the heart we have for what you do and for the sport of tennis.

Just as John highlighted the partnership we have together, the bank is basically providing the program half a million a year. We've done it now for, you know, several years, which is millions contributed to this amazing program. It's 10 kids, 10. It's 50K per kid to pay for the training, to pay for everything a tennis player needs to be where they are. And it takes a long time to get there. That's just amazing how well and how fast and how diversified this program is actually developing into.

Then, John, thank you so much for building what I believe has a amazing future between BNP Paribas and BNP Paribas Mac 1.

And another story, Peggy, on the supporting the community, not only you've basically taken this tournament where it is today, but Peggy and I, you know, bottom line, I'm French born. I'm American. I live most of my life here, but I didn't know much about Indian Wells. I lived in Los Angeles for 10 years, but because of this tournament I discovered, over time, since 2009, this community.

And one day Peggy and I were chatting and I said, How can I know better? How can we contribute better? It's a beautiful place, Palm Springs. It's a beautiful place, Indian Wells. But the Coachella Valley is an amazing place where people work super hard and don't have much means and are in need. And Peggy came up with this concept, Jean-Yves, why don't I give you a ride in the real world. And we did the ride. And then I think you're in a better position to tell how the story developed, Peggy.

PEGGY MICHEL: Thank you, Jean-Yves.

Welcome everybody and congratulations to both of you gentlemen. John, thank you for all your contributions in tennis, not only on the court, but off. It's an honor to be here. I came up with the idea of a scholarship program from BNP Paribas about, this will be our sixth year.

But I had said to Jean-Yves, the community, the rest of the world needs to know that you not only sponsor tennis for two weeks here, but you give back to the community. So my thought was that we would start a scholarship fund, and

I came to him and I said, I would like to go to some of the high schools here in the Coachella Valley.

And I started out in Coachella Valley High School, and I said, we'll give two scholarships, if you don't mind, one for a girl and one for a boy. The criteria would be that they had to play tennis, and the other criteria is that they had to give back to the community, and they had to be very good students.

So the first school that I went to was Coachella Valley High School, and the other thing is I asked Jean-Yves how much would they like to contribute, and he came up with the \$15,000 for each student that would get the scholarship.

So I think that the first trip out to Coachella Valley was an eye opening for Jean-Yves, for Elias, for the rest of the staff. Angie, I don't know if you were there our first year.

But we went out to Coachella Valley High School and we're driving out there and it's about 22 miles from here and you look at the school and you look at the little tennis courts and they had four little tennis courts. Their fifth tennis court they didn't have enough room, so they had to only build a singles court. And there was sand on the court and the nets were, you know, in disarray.

And I kept looking over, and across the street was a field and there were the workers out there. And so we went into Coachella Valley High School and we talked to the principal, and she said that all of the students that are here they come to school, but there are a lot of the students whose parents are across the street working. Their parents, these kids that are in these schools, especially in Coachella Valley, their parents never were able to go to college. So we started it six years ago and we've been to Coachella Valley High School, we've been to Desert Mirage, we went to Indio and then we went to Palm Springs High School and then I decided that we needed to expand the program.

And we came up with the idea, I asked Jean-Yves, would it be all right if we came up with four recipients, two boys and two girls. And BNP was very generous and they decided to contribute \$20,000 to each student.

So it's amazing what we've done for all of these young individuals, it's amazing the community's finally realizing that BNP Paribas, yes, they contribute to the prize money for the tennis players, but they're giving back to the community, which is so important.

And on Wednesday we will go out to Coachella Valley High School again and they have this huge program that they're

preparing for us and we're going to take Jean-Yves and Nandita from Bank of the West and we'll go out there and we have an assembly and Jean-Yves and Nandita will speak to the students, we'll have the entire student body out there and they will speak to them about education, we'll speak to them about planning, we'll speak to them about their future.

And then we will present the four scholarships to the two girls and the two boys and they will come up and say a few words.

Then on the final Saturday we will bring those students with their parents and we'll bring them over here to the tennis and they will be guests of BNP Paribas and Bank of the West, they will have lunch, talk to Jean-Yves and Nandita and then we'll take them on to the stadium court and present them to hopefully 16,000, 17,000 people.

But again, I would like to thank you, Jean-Yves, because he got behind it. With these students they have to prepare these like scholarship books and they write all about what they have done in school and what they want to do and one of the things is that they always want to come back to the community and help their community. We give that information to Jean-Yves and he goes through it and he knows these kids. And so when he comes to meet them in person, you know, he starts talking to them and they're at ease and stuff like that.

But he, Jean-Yves has passion for everything I think he does. And these kids really appreciate it. We also watch how they're doing and we're trying to bring back some of the students that we had five or six years ago and we'll do that in 2023, to bring them back and to probably bring them here to talk about what they have achieved.

But it's a great cause and I just hope to continue it and thank you again for all your support.

JEAN-YVES FILLION: Thank you so much, Peggy, for the kind words. It's amazing and all of these kids have seen the stadium, but from the outside. And they see it from the inside as well, beyond the program itself.

They're amazing in terms of maturity, they're amazing in terms of, as Peggy said, in terms of their first objective, it's a common thread, giving back. And we make sure they go through the whole program of any colleges they have picked up. You know, some went to UCLA, USC, UC Irvine and Santa Barbara, San Diego, a lot of California universities.

PEGGY MICHEL: Excuse me, I just need to say one more thing. In October, excuse me, the year that we didn't play,

in 2020, Jean-Yves called up and said, you know, we can't do the program, but we want to contribute to their scholarship. So those young individuals from Palm Springs High School, they even though they couldn't come out here and we didn't have the tennis tournament, BNP Paribas sponsored them. So I think that's another great attribute. Thank you.

JEAN-YVES FILLION: That was the zoom scholarship for 2020. But it worked out.

**Q. Mac, can you just address the importance of the program as a grounding aspect for these young men and women. This morning on Bank of the West Radio we were talking also about the college route. And what I'm getting at is you starting off the way you do and then taking them through and then they go through the college system.**

JOHN MCENROE: Do we need this mic for something or can I -- we do? Okay. So basically I sort of modeled my academy after the way I grew up, I guess in essence, which was I played other sports, I played sports, soccer, all through high school, I played two years of basketball. My parents were always talking to me about how important it was to have an education in case things didn't work out. I think it takes away some of the pressure these kids feel to make, you know, to rise to the occasion as the best they can, the goals they have for themselves, but also feeling like they want to make their parents proud and all of that that goes along with it. And I found in particular that I felt like young kids and parents needed an option, you know. Of course some kids feel the need to go to Bollettieri's or Chris Evert's and move away, and people do that. I think that's a lot to ask of a young kid to leave their family and have to live, at 12, 14 years old away from them, that's not easy. It wasn't something that I wanted to do as a kid growing up.

So I was looking to provide that option, particularly in the New York area, because there's obviously, it's a big city, there's a lot of people that were looking to find a different path in life and this was sort of an opportunity.

Now obviously we all know, you've been around, Craig, this sport for a long time, a lot of these kids don't make it and so you're at least hopefully providing them the type of education that will help them in the event that that doesn't happen. And life experiences. And I think tennis is a microcosm in life in a lot of ways. You have to sort of learn from your mistakes, you're out there on your own, it's a character-building sport.

And so you mentioned college, you know, that's a particular pet peeve for me, because I did go to a year, I

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

only went to one year, but I think it was a very important one and I think it helped me a lot in my professional career. You're noticing that more and more players are having success coming from the college ranks. There's no question about that.

Now obviously the superstars, we haven't seen superstars yet and some of those kids won't go, but I think it's a great path, particularly when you look at tennis, that players are playing longer, maturing later, peaking later, so this to me is a perfect avenue for kids. In my day maybe it was 18 to 28 were your best years; girls was even younger, maybe 16 to 26. Now it's arguable it's 25 to 35 or at least 22 to 32.

So that to me takes, ramps the pressure off some of these kids that feel like they have to go right out there on the pro circuit. So I think that's going to become even more important, because they see the difficulty the sport's had in supporting the minor leagues, in essence, the satellite events, the challengers.

One of the things that the players themselves are understanding -- and this is in all sports -- is that you have to be able to feel like you have an opportunity to go out for a couple years, it's not unaffordable to try to make it.

A lot of kids come out of college now and they can't even, they need sponsors to even get out on the tour.

Now they look at the top players, top players have coaches and they have trainers and cooks and masseuses, psychologists, this, that. So the kid coming out thinks, I need at least a couple people with me and it costs money. So this allows them to be more prepared for that opportunity when and if they get it.

I looked at a number of studies, too, and it says that kids, the ones that focus at an early age on one sport totally I think it, not only mentally is that more difficult, but physically, that they have proven that the movement that's different in basketball or soccer, for example, or what Europeans call football, and you see a lot of players out there that do a lot of that. So that's something that I've long I've been advocated and will continue to advocate.

**Q. If you guys could talk about what this opportunity means for you.**

IZYAN AHMAD: Hello. Obviously, like, you have to, like, travel a lot to go for tournaments and stuff like that and so this scholarship really helps with that and also you kind of get like a certain amount of respect or like you get, you feel better about yourself and, you know, you're like part of a great team like this and, like, you get all these great things.

So I think being on the team is, like, really good, like, in that way, where, like, you feel good about yourself and you get to go to like all these places.

SEBASTIAN SEC: Yeah, I'm super grateful for the opportunity, I've been with the John McEnroe Academy since I was about nine and I've never thought about leaving or anything like that. And I've been asked, like, you never wanted to go to Florida or anything like that to really train. I'm like, it's a second home for me.

Without people like John and with his goals to have people come like kids come out of New York as really good tennis players that's really the only way I would be where I am right now. So I'm super grateful for it.

The BNP Paribas thing is obviously a little bit more new, but again, like, I couldn't do it without it. I was fortunate enough to play in this event and again that all goes to them.

So really grateful and you really don't get it anywhere else, so thank you.

**Q. Peggy, going back to the local scholarships, what does it mean for you to have these scholarships go to young women from lower income communities and to grow women in this sport and to be part of a tournament that has equal prize money for the men and women?**

PEGGY MICHEL: Well, thank you. This is one thing, I love that the young girls are wanting to go play tennis and wanting to go on and get an education.

I went to college, I went four years to college before I came on the tour back in the early '70s, so I think it really helped me.

The other thing is, is that many years ago when I came to work with Charlie and Raymond, that was one of the things I said, you know, we need to get equal prize money. And that was another goal too of the late Mark McCormack, that he felt that it was very important for equal prize money.

So we've come a long way and we just need to continue to grow and to encourage more and more young women to play tennis. And I'm with John, I think that the college education is very important, something to fall back on. You just never know if you're going to make it on the tour or not. So I'm just proud to be part of this. Thank you.

**Q. You guys mentioned a little bit how the John McEnroe program is like your second home and how**



**being awesome tennis players gives you confidence. And in an individual sport like tennis why is having something like that important for you guys?**

IZYAN AHMAD: Having confidence is really, really important when you play matches and stuff, because if you don't believe in yourself you never like play to your, like, potential, you never get better, if you're feeling down on yourself.

So having confidence is like key to like getting better and moving to the next level. So, like, this program's like great for that and that's why, like, everyone who is on this program is so talented because we all have confidence that we can get better.

SEBASTIAN SEC: Yeah, you might be on the court by yourself but off the court it's all a team effort. You can't do it without the people that are there supporting you. They make you feel like you can do it regardless of the situation. They set you into a mindset, they push you every day. And without it, like it becomes way too mental on yourself, it takes a toll on your body and everything and without them there, like, it's hard to push yourself. So off the court's a big-time team effort and you just can't do it without those people.

**Q. Think John's not sitting there. What's the best thing about being part of the academy?**

SEBASTIAN SEC: I mean, the best thing I think is just I think the just the whole setup. I mean you feel like you're really valuable, regardless of your level of tennis. Even if you're just starting out, I mean I think all the coaches put so much effort into you, especially in the beginning.

And if you kind of just follow along the path kind of how I did, like when I was nine I came in and you just follow the path, like, if you had told me I would have been sitting here eight years from now, I mean eight years, like when I was nine, I wouldn't have believed it. If you kind of just follow the path that the academy kind of let's you take you can do great things.

And I mean Zizou is a lot better than I was when I was 11, so the sky's the limit for him tennis-wise. So that's what I would tell him, honestly, now that's going to be a member of the team, to just enjoy the process because it's a lot of fun and if you just let the academy do it for you, you go step by step and you achieve great things.

IZYAN AHMAD: It's basically like two things for me. One is at the academy you play against like a lot of people who are like your level, better than you, and also you make a ton of friends there, like you can always have a good time

there, but you can also practice really hard.

And my other thing is the coaches and the staff there, everyone's really nice, everyone wants to make you better and basically it's like when you're there, nothing is bad, everything's good. I mean that's really the best part. (Laughing).

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you.

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