

BNP Paribas Open

Friday, March 14, 2025

Jose Placido

Tommy Haas

Patrick McEnroe

Peggy Michel

BNP Paribas Press Conference



MICHELLE SPROD: Welcome, everyone. We're really grateful that you're taken time out of play to come and be with us. We're going to get through this as quickly as we can so you can get back to the action.

My name is Michelle Sprod. I look after marketing and communications for the Americas.

This is going to be a short briefing. We have a quick lineup of speakers here. I will introduce them to you. We have my boss, Jose Placido, who is head of BNP Paribas USA as well as Corporate Institute Banking in the Americas.

Next to him is Tommy Haas, tournament director at the BNP Paribas Open.

And Peggy Michel, assistant tournament director and someone who we work with every single day.

And last, but not least, Patrick McEnroe, who is a big partner of BNP Paribas. We work with him through the John McEnroe Tennis Academy, some of the things we do with youth tennis there, as well as the International Tennis Hall of Fame.

Some housekeeping, this meeting is on the record. We encourage you to ask questions. Any follow-ups, please come and see us. I will hand it over to Jose.

JOSE PLACIDO: Thank you, Michelle.

Thank you for being here. We appreciate it. One of the things with BNP Paribas, have really close relationships with the media, and we do respect the fact that you report out the news and the facts on a regular basis. Today we are very excited to be here.

Just before I start, maybe for those who don't know us and BNP Paribas, I'm sure the local media know who we are,

but we are Europe's leading bank. We are in 63 countries, we have 183,000 employees, we have 3 major divisions that we supply services to. Obviously the corporate institutional division, which I'm part of, it's a global division, so we provide all kinds of services to large corporations and institutional clients.

We have a second division which is the retail franchise, primarily in Europe and various countries in Europe. And third is called protection services. A better word is insurance, wealth management, so on, so forth.

That's what we do and we are pretty good at it, because we have been growing very successfully over the last few years.

The thing that may surprise a lot of us is we have been in the U.S. for over 150 years, even though we are a French bank. We are in every major city in the U.S., and we opened an office just recently in Miami, but we are on the West Coast, New York, Boston, Chicago, and many other cities.

I think the news that you are here for is we did send a press release just before this press conference, so we are super excited to announce the fact that we are renewing our sponsorship with BNP Paribas Open for another five years. So that's very exciting news for us.

And the reason why is I think the collaboration between the folks that are here and the BNP Paribas has been a tremendous 17-year journey. We have been sponsoring this tournament for over 17 years, so it's a long relationship, like a very good marriage. We have bumps every once in a while, but we reconcile very quickly and we are very happy to be here.

The other thing I would say is that there has been a lot of firsts in the last 17 years, including record attendance. This has been a very popular and becoming more popular as a tournament. Becoming the players' and many fans' favorite in terms of coming here. You hear that in the media, hear that in interviews, you hear that when the legends come and speak to our clients at our suite that this is a tournament that they love coming to. So that's

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something that inspired us to continue this relationship.

Something I'm especially proud of and our bank is very proud of, is equal prize money for men and women that started in 2010. That is something that extremely reflects the values of our institution.

Now, renewing this contract today is proof that BNP Paribas and tennis are inseparable. Not just here but globally as well. We are a bank that supports tennis. Internally we have a slogan saying "We are Tennis," and we are very well connected.

I know (indiscernible) is not here, but he, in the U.S., he deserves a lot of credit of putting tennis within our institution front of mind and connecting the dots.

If you think about it, we started this commitment 50 years ago when the French Tennis Federation asked BNP Paribas to finance the renovation of Roland Garros in Paris. That put us on the map to a great journey and a great involvement that is something that we are very proud of and our employees are proud of and I would say our clients are proud of. When you look around this ecosystem, so are the fans and so is everyone associated with this. It's a great sport with great values and reflects the values of our company.

I think the other thing that's really important, I'm going to add, it goes way beyond the support just beyond professional tournaments. I have my notes that I don't miss anything, so I have mentioned in 2010 the beginning of equal prize money.

In 2023 we introduced the Points for Change, a program which launched with a donation made for every point scored during all professional tournaments sponsored by the bank. This year every one point scored during singles matches equals \$1 donation to the international nonprofit Girls On The Run.

So today I was asking the folks what the tally was to date. We haven't hit the finals yet, but we're at \$26,000. So hopefully we can get closer to \$30,000 by the end of the weekend. Last year we were at 25. I did ask that question, as well.

In 2019, the bank partnered with John McEnroe Tennis Academy to create Team BNP Paribas Young Talents, which provides financial support and training to talented youth who have the potential to become tomorrow's champions. There are a couple of folks that have gone through this program that I think everyone is watching very closely. They may be the future champions.

I had the pleasure yesterday of going to a local high school and granting four scholarships, \$20,000 scholarships, for local students that just need a little bit of kick start. They are passionate about tennis, really good at academics, and they come from a postal code that may be not as privileged as many of us.

Therefore anything we can do, I think giving back is part of who we are, and that's the great thing about being in my position and being a bank like ours that does care about things beyond just what happens in the tournament but the environment tournaments.

So we are extremely happy today to announce it -- it's out; it's probably the worst-kept secret, I think -- and continue this partnership with our partner and desert champions. I do have a couple of people to thank, as well. You see the lady on my left, Peggy Michel who has been a great partner and helped us navigate through all of the 17 years we have been here and has been an incredible partner. Tommy Haas, as well, for his partnership over the last few years.

We are excited. It's a good day for tennis, a good day for us, a good day for the fans, and a good day for everyone who loves this tournament. People say it's like the fifth tournament, but I won't say what I meant by the fifth, but you all know what I'm talking about.

Over to you, Tommy.

TOMMY HAAS: Over to me. Well, obviously super excited about the partnership, Jose, as I have been here, part of this great event now the past nine years. It is the history that BNP has brought to this sport, as a player myself, seeing them through so many years, and obviously the importance that you guys have here in this event.

It's been, like you said, 17 years, Peggy, the last 9 while I was here. So it's super exciting to have an extra five years going forward. These partnerships are so important for the great sport of tennis in general, and yeah, super, super excited to make the announcement today.

Yeah, look forward to many, many more years to come.

PEGGY MICHEL: Over to me? Thank you.

The one thing I'd like to say is that we received the Tournament of the Year, and it was really when BNP came on as our sponsor. I think it's about 11 or 12 years that we are the No. 1 tournament.

I think that just, you know, it's a great honor, but it's having BNP as our title sponsor. They are the backbone.



Everybody knows BNP in tennis.

So I'm thrilled. I want to thank Jose and Michelle and everyone. The scholarship is very dear to my heart. BNP has given over \$500,000 to local students here in the Coachella Valley, and we will continue to do that.

The nicest thing is that we went out the other day to visit the kids at Indio High School, and it was just like they brought all of the kids in for an assembly. They had a band, cheerleaders, balloons, they were so excited.

Jose presented every one of the students to the assembly and spoke to them about what they wanted to do later in life. Their big thing is that their parents might not have had the opportunity to go to college, but they are. The other thing is they come back every year to visit their community.

The assistant principal went to Indio High School, went off and got a degree at UC Irvine. She's back now as the assistant principal, and her kids are going. It's a great program. I hope to continue that for many, many years.

JOSE PLACIDO: Elise, can I give them the scoop?

It's my first time giving out the scholarships yesterday, and walking back, I thought four scholarships is not enough. So we're going to up the scholarships to ten scholarships next year.

(Applause.)

PATRICK McENROE: I'd just like to say that it's pretty awesome to be at this facility, because some of you old-timers might remember that this tournament started at La Quinta years ago, and then I was lucky enough to play for a couple of years when it moved to the Hyatt, to the Grand Hyatt, a temporary stadium.

And then to see what it's become here in the desert over the years, I have to give a shoutout to Charlie Pasarell and Ray Moore and Peggy for their vision of what this could become, and I think it's all come to fruition, which is amazing for tennis and for this event. For Tommy, for Larry Ellison when he stepped in and got involved, obviously the whole event took on another level.

To BNP, as you mentioned, not only sponsoring Roland Garros and many other tournaments around the world, around the entire world, but when they partnered with myself and my brother at our tennis academy in New York, the mission there was to how can we do more to help youth? It's awesome to be involved in professional tennis.

We in the tennis world certainly appreciate all that they

have done for professional tennis, but to be able to reach out to us, to other programs like BNP has done in Italy, in Poland, in Belgium, in France, of course, and recently in Canada, partnering with some current stars and some legendary stars like my brother in New York, I want to thank you for doing all you do to help youth around the world, and that's why I'm here to say thank you to BNP for all they do.

This is a day to celebrate this tournament, what it's become. These are the tournaments now that everybody wants to go.

You know, I have a lot of my friends in New York that, Yeah, I'm going out to The BNP.

So you know you have become part of the fabric of the tournament when people start calling your tournament The BNP Paribas Open.

So congratulations to everyone here. I'm happy to be here on behalf of the John McEnroe Tennis Academy.

(Applause.)

MICHELLE SPROD: We will open it up to any questions.

Q. This is for you, Peggy, and maybe Tommy. The tournament has had just so many incredible moments, three different stadiums, signing up BNP way back when, when the world was sort of falling apart. Then just saving the tournament from going overseas. If you had to pick out just one or two special moments in the long history, what would that be?

PEGGY MICHEL: I would say the one moment I have to say is back in 2008 when Charlie and Raymond and Steve Simon and I went over to Paris to meet with BNP. Of course that day that we went, the stock market dropped.

Antoine Sire was the gentleman that we met with, and Michele Sicard. We went to meet with him, and he said, Of course this has to be the worst day to come asking for money.

You know, so we left the meeting. He said, Well, we'll think about it.

We left the meeting, and Charlie and Raymond, they said, Oh, nothing's going to happen.

I said, No, no. Don't worry. Something's going to happen. We're not leaving here until we get a deal.

So that night we spoke to Michele Sicard. I said, Here's

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the offer. Please take it back to Antoine.

She did. Next day, Steve and I are in a taxicab going to the airport, had his cellphone. Michele called and she said, We have a deal.

I just knew that, you could just tell that it was just like two families coming together. I'm just honored to be a part of Indian Wells and to serve with BNP.

TOMMY HAAS: Yes, and for me personally, as Patrick mentioned, being a former player and playing actually the qualifying out at La Quinta Resort and seeing sort of the vision from Ray and Charlie Pasarell back in the day, and Peggy, having a tournament out here, playing at La Quinta, going over to the Grand Hyatt, having that familiarity of that hotel environment, the courts used to be right there.

Seeing the bigger vision of building this beautiful venue, this facility. And with the help of course of Mr. Ellison sort of elevating it to a whole other level and being part of this incredible team always pushing the boundaries, trying to get better every year. As Peggy mentioned earlier, ten years in a row being the players' favorite event, Masters 1000 on the ATP and on the women's side, which is obviously fantastic.

All the great matches you see here, the next-generation players coming in, the excitement with the fans is growing every year, you know, record-breaking crowd, that's why these partnerships with the sponsors are so important and the history with BNP in the past and with this event is of course super, super important.

One other memory on my end was obviously when I flew with the Blue Angels actually over the stadium back in the day while Andre Agassi was playing. That was one of my highlights personally, as well. (Laughter.)

Q. Mr. Placido, BNP used to have local banks here in Southern California. They aren't here anymore. Is it weird to have a major tournament named after a bank where it's not branded here anymore?

JOSE PLACIDO: I mean, the old branding was Bank of the West, so that's the first thing, which was bank related. We decided to sell Bank of the West three years ago, I think, and basically, because it's a consolidating business. It wasn't core to our strategy in the U.S.

For our institutional and corporate clients, I think having the tournament with our name and having 17 years of investment in this tournament just made a lot of sense. Also, it's a global brand. If you look at what we do at Roland Garros and other tournaments that Patrick just

mentioned, I think there is a global brand to institutional clients.

So we have the large institutional clients as part of who we serve. That global brand and that global awareness and the value that this tournament inspires is clearly on record.

We actually decided to put a business case forward, and we have over 500 clients that we do 10 business sessions that complement the tournament that we're in.

It works from a strategic perspective with the clients that we serve here in the U.S., post the sale of the retail business.

Q. This tournament has been very successful, as you mentioned. As you mentioned, ten years in a row being voted No. 1 by the players. But that's no guarantee of future success. So what is sort of the strategy going forward in order to stay on top as a Masters 1000 tournament? And also, if there was to be an addition of a tenth Masters Tournament in Saudi Arabia, would that be something you would see as competition or a good thing for the sport?

PEGGY MICHEL: Well, we like competition, but our motto here is that we're never satisfied. You know, so we don't rest on our laurels. So every year we'll start planning, as soon as this year is over, we'll start planning for next year. The most important thing is we take care of our sponsors, take care of the players, and take care of the patrons that buy tickets. We look at all of those different aspects.

My goal, I have always had this goal that, you know, the competition is great, but, you know, after a while, the other tournaments get tired of us winning, but we want them to come up to our level. We want all tournaments to be like the BNP Paribas Open and excel.

I think that we have the finest practice courts. Our stadium courts are excellent. You can see where we have the grass area for the players. We expanded the outdoor gym. We will make that even larger. We brought in Sodexo Live for food and beverage. It's just taken us to the next level.

So having BNP sign up again for five years, that takes us even higher. We won't rest on our laurels. We will look to find other ways to make this better. Better weather next year. (Laughter.)

JOSE PLACIDO: How can you resist that pitch? You can't.

Q. For Jose and Tommy, I saw that you guys said quotes about mentioning the Coachella Valley and

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hoping this tournament will keep affecting locals, people to Coachella Valley. What does that mean for you guys to have this extended contract and hoping it isn't just the four scholarships but upping it and helping out locals around here in the Valley?

JOSE PLACIDO: You know, ten years ago we started the scholarship program. I think we had a seven-year run, and as the tournament became more popular, well-known, and a destination, we continued with that, but as part of our value system, as Patrick mentioned, we do a lot of outreach, nonprofessional outreach to youth, and tennis tournaments, tennis academies in countries that we have tournaments in.

It just makes a lot of sense. I just thought, it was my first time giving out the scholarships yesterday, that if you want to have an impact, four doesn't seem like a big number. Ten seems like a more substantial number.

It just makes sense that we outreach to the local community and youth, especially, and give folks a kick start in their future around -- first of all, yesterday, they need to be passionate about tennis, they need to be strong academically.

So there is still a link. Therefore the kids we gave out the scholarships had both. We want more kids to share that experience and change their lives. That's what we're about.

TOMMY HAAS: Yeah, couldn't agree more. To be able to give back, to give kids the opportunity to pursue their dreams, tennis is a very expensive sport, you need an amazing team of people behind you, you need the finances in order to go after your goals and dreams.

To see what BNP has done over the years also worldwide to give back is something to be extremely proud of, and that's something I think everybody that's trying to pursue their dreams is happy to be a part of.

JOSE PLACIDO: The other program we do is the Points for Change that was mentioned earlier, which is Girls On The Run, which is a program for girls between 3 and 8, just to build early on some confidence, some self-value.

So we are very proud of that, as well. Just very impactful ages for both the seniors in high school and youth, especially girls, and I think we are pretty proud of that program. It's international in its flavor and has a local chapter here, as well.

Q. There are countless title sponsorships across all sports and sponsorships that have come and gone in

17 years. Why have you stayed here for 17 years and continued to support tennis all this time and go forward?

JOSE PLACIDO: I think when there is a good marriage, you stick with it. It hasn't been easy for the tournament in 2008 when they came to us during the financial crisis. I think we were there in the early years.

We have seen the tournament have brand value for our organization, a connection to our global organization, as well, Roland Garros. We have our partners here, we have the head of marketing and coms and the head of the global tennis sponsorship here.

This has become a destination, a destination for our clients. Working with Peggy and Tommy and the rest of the team, it's not work, right? We share in the same values. We want to make this tournament a destination, one that people want to come, and it can't be difficult.

You know, we may have bumps in the roads and so on and so forth, but they made it easy for us to be the title sponsor, and we want to continue.

Like any good marriage, you just renew your vows every five years. In this case, we signed a new contract.

MICHELLE SPROD: Thanks, everyone.

(Applause.)

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