

Rolex Shanghai Masters

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Shanghai, China

Andrea Gaudenzi

Press Conference



ANDREA GAUDENZI: Hello, everybody.

THE MODERATOR: Hello, everyone. Thanks for coming to the press conference of ATP chairman, Andrea Gaudenzi, who is here to celebrate the 25 years of ATP professional tennis in Shanghai.

First off, I would like to ask Andrea two things, if he remembers, this is only his second visit to Shanghai, if he remembers his first one in 2000 when he lost a tough first round match against Magnus Norman and how he found this amazing Qizhong Stadium today to celebrate together with us.

First off, your memory of 2000.

ANDREA GAUDENZI: Thank you, Nikola. Yeah, it was a great memory, although, obviously, I lost first round a very close match. So that's never a good memory when a tennis player loses first round.

I was really impressed coming back here 23 years later, first of all, with the development of the city. Last night, we went out and looked around. It looks incredible progress, innovation, modern. It's really, really impressive.

Also, here on site. The new stadium is something which is completely different from what I experienced in 2000. So the massive improvement in infrastructure, I think everybody has done a very good job. Thanks to Juss Event, thanks also, obviously, to the city of Shanghai for supporting. It's really stepping up the level of raising the standards of the Masters, which is one of the key pillars of the OneVision Strategic Plan that we rolled out three years ago.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up to a few questions. If you'd raise your hand, please.

Q. Hello. This is your second time to Shanghai. What's your remark to the city and to the Qizhong village? Do you think Shanghai has done a good job to this competition, for ATP, after three years?

ANDREA GAUDENZI: No, absolutely. We spoke to many players, and they're really, really happy because there have been many, many improvements on the site, especially on the player areas, but also on the fans area. It's obviously been a very difficult three years for Shanghai, I mean, for the entire world, but specifically for Shanghai.

I think the new comeback is very positive, not only because we upgraded the tournament, it's now two weeks and one week falls under the Golden Week, which is a great holiday here, but also because the Chinese players are a lot stronger today. We have two players in the main draw, of course.

So it's really a good trend outlook for the future having a much better tournament, a bigger and stronger one, also supported by strong Chinese players. I think it's a great combination.

Q. So this is, like, the fourth ATP tournament back in China, and it's the third week of the China swing. Is ATP satisfied with all the tournaments that's happening in China, like the attendance, the fans, and the players' reaction?

ANDREA GAUDENZI: Yes, very much so. I think it was also a very successful week last week in Beijing and the previous week, obviously. Players really enjoy to play the Asian Swing. It's obviously there's also potentially the comfort of traveling from Beijing to Shanghai via train. It's a great ride, a very modern train.

Generally, I think also the way we worked out the schedule with a late final in Beijing and also a mid-week start in Shanghai helps the players keep their time busy and continue and have a great three- to four-week swing. Obviously, it depends when you lose in Shanghai.

Then when you lose here, then you can go back for the European indoor season and prepare potentially for Bercy and then the ATP Finals. So I think it's a great swing. We're very, very happy, players are happy, so, so far so good.

Q. I was wondering if you could talk about the growth

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of this event and the impact of the upgraded tournament this year, the 96 players, the 12 days.

ANDREA GAUDENZI: Generally speaking, you know, we rolled out a OneVision Strategic Plan three years ago, which has been implemented last year. We really believe in the growth of the Masters. The Masters are our premium product. It is mandatory tournaments where all the top players have to participate. So it's really the stronger premium product of the ATP.

I think having tournaments like Shanghai elevated to two weeks, as well Madrid, Rome, and we're going to also upgrade Canada and Cincinnati in 2025, completely raises the standards and the level of our tour tournaments.

And Shanghai has already been leading that process in the last few years. I mean, the investment that we see from an infrastructure standpoint and how they treat the players, the player services, the fan zone, the entire player and fan experience is really moving into a different level, which is the main goal of our plan, obviously.

We've got the four Grand Slams as the pinnacle of our sport, but we really also need to elevate our Masters. I think especially Shanghai is doing a great job, and more to come in the future.

Q. Mr. Chairman, we just had an Italian won in Beijing for China Open, and he's going to pair with our top player for doubles in Shanghai. I'm wondering, have you met with Jannik, and then could you please talk about that, his development this season?

ANDREA GAUDENZI: I briefly met Jannik this morning while he was warming up in the players area. I had, like, a two- or three-minutes conversation. I didn't want to bother him because he was warming up.

But I basically was really positively surprised by his experience in China. It was his first time. Not only he was happy because he won the tournament, obviously, we talked about the hospitality, the infrastructure, the food, everything. So him and all his team were extremely happy, like many other players, so it's been a very positive one for them.

Q. We saw at this tournament, Chinese tennis, the players are really thriving as well. How valuable is that for the sport in general?

ANDREA GAUDENZI: Very much so. You know, China is a very big market and tennis is a global sport. Our presence here in China is really important for us because we want tennis to become a popular sport in the entire

world. Maybe we will never be the No. 1 sport, but we like to be in the top-5 sport in every country. I think having a premium event of this size and relevance is really, really important, also to get more kids to play tennis, more fans to engage, you know, and try to engage a global audience, which is never easy.

We are really one of the few true global sports, and we're really proud of that. You cannot be a truly global sport without a presence in China, so that's really important.

Q. Hello, Chairman. So it's 25 year past, so I think it's a new start between Shanghai and ATP, so I want to ask if there are some new plans in Shanghai, maybe more tournaments, more challenger tournaments, more 250 tournaments. So I want to ask that.

ANDREA GAUDENZI: Yeah, I think there's two ways. We definitely would like, you know, Shanghai to continue to grow and become bigger and better in terms of infrastructure, in terms of all the aspects around player experience and fan experience.

I think we can work with local federation also in improving the numbers of smaller tournaments, challengers and futures. That really helps you to raise more players. I think it would be ideal, obviously, if you had five, a few players in the top 100, maybe a few players in the top 20 and top 10. That would obviously be a dream, because I think then the entire Chinese population would be backing the sport.

I mean, we are a bit similar in Italy. We are a fan of the sport generally, but when we have somebody over-performing like we had in MotoGP or skiing, the attention of the entire population, obviously, drives it to a different level because we all want to see our own people strive in the sport.

So I think it's a combination on announcing the premium, but also working on the grassroots to actually being able to create more players because, ultimately, that's how you engage the fans, the Chinese fans of tennis.

Q. The first time you were in China you played a very close match with Magnus Norman. He actually wrote something yesterday, comments on the Grand Slam from 14 days to 15 days and the Masters become longer, and he kind of worry about not only the physical, but also the mental health of the players. Could you comment on that? What's your reaction?

ANDREA GAUDENZI: Sure. Who did the comment? Magnus?

Q. Yeah, Magnus.



ANDREA GAUDENZI: Okay. Look, this is the year one, obviously, that we're going through this period. This year we have upgraded Madrid, Rome, and Shanghai, but Indian Wells and Miami, they have been already two weeks, 10 to 12 days draws for around 30 years, even when I was around playing.

I strongly believe that players will get adjusted to it. Ultimately, yes, it is longer, but it is longer for the players who actually get to the end of the tournaments because if you lose first, second, or third round, ultimately, it would be a similar amount of days.

But what I really believe is important is now players can have a day off in between matches, and that in the long-term, I think decreases the chances of injuries. So they obviously have to adjust their schedule and probably take a few more breaks in between tournaments to spend a few more weeks home because there is potentially more days on the road.

But from a mental health and physical health standpoint, I think having 96 draw played over 12 days is a lot better than having to play six matches in seven days back-to-back because this is really where the injuries come up. So time will tell, but I think we're very confident it will work out.

Q. So the 2024 United Cup just announced this morning, and then we will have, like, 18 teams on the United Cup next year, so it seems like China has a really good chance to make the cut. Can you talk about the positive impact on both China, Chinese tennis, and also for the United Cup tournament?

ANDREA GAUDENZI: Yeah, it's big. We've already been in touch with Tennis Australia. They would obviously love China to participate. I mean, obviously, it's a close continent.

For the entire Asian market, having Chinese stars in tennis is something that we all would want, right? And I think it's heading the right direction. That's why I think the work that you have done also on the challenger side. I think Juss Event is organizing about nine for the moment, and we hopefully can grow that.

We've had a similar experience in Italy. If you look at the success of the Italian players in the last few years, you know, beginning with Fognini and then Sinner and Berrettini, a lot of it comes from having a lot of challengers in our home country, because the most difficult step is converting from juniors to professional, and you need a lot of local tournaments in your own country to be able to

compare yourself to that level.

So, yeah, I think it's going to be a good next 10 to 20 years for Chinese tennis, it looks like.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much.

ANDREA GAUDENZI: Thank you very much. Everybody have a good day.

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