

Rolex Shanghai Masters

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Shanghai, China

Benjamin Balleret

Mixed Zone



Q. What's the name of the fitness coach?

BENJAMIN BALLERET: Julien Wahl, who is amazing. He's with Val since Val I think is 13 or 14 years old. So, amazing job from Julien. We work as a team. Of course, all the credit goes today to Val, but we worked for many years as a team.

You have to be prepared. You know, you come to China, it's going to be hot, you have to play many matches. First of all, we came here and we were, Val wanted to come to play like six tournaments, like Challengers, after Shanghai. So he had to be ready. I said, Okay, you want to do that, you have to be ready.

So we took like one tournament off before Shanghai so he can prepare, you know, and be ready. Of course, we didn't expect at all to play eight matches here. It's not even unexpected, it's not possible. I mean, you say it's impossible. You just laugh about it if you say, Okay, you go from the qualifiers all the way to the final. Of course, no. So it's a fairytale, that's it.

Q. Lowest-ranked player to reach a Masters 1000 final at 204. And considering he's never played a Masters 1000 outside of Monaco, talk about that.

BENJAMIN BALLERET: Actually, he played Madrid, he played Miami in the qualifiers. He still had the experience. But, yeah, I mean, it's an achievement. I would say it's a fairytale.

He makes history for him, for Monaco. He's the first player from Monaco in the top 100 actually already, of course, being in the semifinals, in the final. I mean, actually, I have no words. I don't know what to say about it. It's like, as I say, it's not even unexpected, it's like kind of impossible. And he's doing it. Val is just unbelievable this week. I mean, as I say, all the credit goes to Val. It's unbelievable.

Q. How special is it to have Melanie coming over here from Monaco, and David Massey as well?

BENJAMIN BALLERET: Yeah, every round from the last

16 she say, Oh, I come tomorrow. And it's like, Oh, come on, Melanie, you don't need to, you know? We're happy if you come, of course, but it's a long way. So she find a plane ticket with David Massey, the tournament director of Monte-Carlo, and said, Okay, if he wins the quarterfinals, we'll come for the semis. She's like, Do you think I should tell Val, or he will have pressure because of this? I said, No, tell him. It's no problem. He will be happy to see you. It's no pressure, you know. At the end, I mean, if you're here, he's so happy.

Val is not someone superstitious too much. He kind of doesn't care what happens outside of the court. Even if you are one in the box or eight, he kind of doesn't care. It's something easier with him. Some players don't like things like this, like new people coming.

So, yeah, also Julien the fitness coach arrived last night, so he's just happy to share this moment with the people he loves.

Q. Last year he had pretty strong start, like 20 wins in the first 21 matches. This year, few important wins against top 100. We know that sometimes going from 110 to 80 is more difficult than actually playing on the ATP Tour. So I'm wondering, thinking about what will happen from next week, if he feels that this, the level that Valentin has already could be, could stay there?

BENJAMIN BALLERET: I don't know what happens the next weeks from now. We are focused on today and tomorrow. That's it. I mean, he had no chance last year to play when he was 110. We read about it, the injury, for seven months, from French Open to Australian Open he couldn't play. It was hard for him.

But Val basically is better against the better opponent. I mean, I'm with him every week. I know that when he plays, when he enters the court, that's the big problem he had lately is, when he enters the court, and he's the favorite kind of, he is going less for the ball. He just maybe, like, maybe I put the ball in, that's enough, you know.

It's not who he is. Who he is is he have to go for it. So when he plays those guys, Griekspoor, Bublik, Rune, he

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has no choice. He knows that if he wants to win, he has to go for the big shots. That's where he's the best.

So that's why also you see he beat Borges in Davis Cup, Borges is top 50. And those matches he has, like if he wants to win, he has no other way but to go for his game. That's the big difference when he plays those guys.

Q. Arthur is trying to follow in his footsteps. He's been doing it round by round here. How special would that be if he could get through and have an all-cousin final?

BENJAMIN BALLERET: I don't want to think about it now. I just want to go there in the box and support Arthur. It would be unbelievable if it happen. But right now, I mean, I don't even want to think about it. He has a tough game against Daniil. Right now let's go support him, and we'll see about that later.

Q. Can you speak a bit more about your family and how excited the wider family might be?

BENJAMIN BALLERET: I don't have time to talk about all the family. But right now, as we say already in the press, all the group chats are like crazy. Everybody can believe. Every day they say, Okay, let's take a plane, like 20 tickets, and let's go. I don't know what happens if Arthur won. Arthur is pretty superstitious. Maybe if he's even in the final nobody will come and we'll stay like this. We'll celebrate, we'll celebrate anyway with the family when we go back home, so that's it.

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