

# Laver Cup

Wednesday, 21 September 2022

London, England, UK

## Roger Federer

### Press Conference

NICOLA ARZANI: We all know why we are here. We are not going to make an introduction, but please keep to one question at a time so we can have as many people as possible.

Questions.

**Q. Congratulations. Roger, what do you think Reto Schmidli, to whom you lost your first junior match 6-Love, 6-Love, would make of your career? And what would Peter Carter be saying today?**

ROGER FEDERER: Honestly, I think any junior that probably played against me back in the day, we would have never thought that I was going to be sitting here at 41 having my final press conference and looking back at all the many moments and matches that I played.

It's not just for one person. I think I could speak for almost any junior -- national, international, local -- because you do not think that far. You know, when you have a vision of being a champion you see yourself winning one tournament or maybe becoming World No. 1 but not many, many times in a row and staying there for as long as I did. That was definitely very special.

Look, with Peter, obviously it's so unfortunate that he didn't see me get into the top of the ranking and seeing so many of my most incredible victories, but at the same time, he was instrumental to my game, to my personality. He was not just a bigger brother but also a mentor and a great coach.

If I played the way I played with my technique, it's probably a lot to do with him. Then after that, all the other coaches that came along.

I have been so fortunate to have the right coaches at the right time. I felt I learned from each and every one a lot. It's been a great career.

**Q. Could you update us on sort of what your playing possibilities and plans here are today? If you do only play doubles, how will that kind of sit within the rules of the competition?**

ROGER FEDERER: Yeah, that was my concern as well a little bit going in. Of course this is an event, an ATP



# LAYER CUP.

event that I don't want to mess with, you know, but at the same time, I know my limitations.

This is why I asked Bjorn if it was okay if I play maybe just one doubles, and I guess that one would have to be on Friday night. Then I guess Matteo would come in for me and have to play on Saturday for me.

Bjorn said obviously, Of course, that's totally fine. Bjorn spoke to John, as well. They spoke to the tournament and the ATP if that was okay and everybody said that was fine.

So here I am trying to prepare for one last doubles, and we'll see with who it is. I'm obviously, I don't know, I'm nervous going in because I haven't played in so long. I hope I can be somewhat competitive.

**Q. There has been a lot more openness in the last few years about mental health in sport and in tennis as well. Wonder if you could share the mental strain that both the injury and then your decision about the retirement has had on you.**

ROGER FEDERER: Rehab was easy. Sure, there's ups and downs, and sometimes you're a little frustrated. But for the most part I enjoyed being home. I have been on the road for so long. So no issues there.

I get scared going into surgeries, because I know it could mean the end of my career. So that has always been, I guess, the most emotional and most scary moment for me before I go under.

Yeah, I mean, things are different nowadays with the pressure that the players feel. No need to feel sorry for us, but we have to deal with it one way or another. It's definitely not always easy, but I feel like for the most part I made it work, had a great team around me. I guess because it didn't change very often I had a really good, solid base. I knew I could always speak openly to everybody and everybody would tell me their honest opinion. I think that kept me grounded and kept me going.

**Q. Could you take us through a little bit the process that led to this decision, how it came about, and what made you decide finally that this would be the end of your playing career? I'd also like to ask, you used the word "bittersweet" in your farewell note. What to you is the most bitter part of this and what's the sweetest part?**

ROGER FEDERER: Yeah, I mean, I guess there was a . . . when all is said, we're done.®



certain process that started at the beginning of the summer, you know, where you try to go to the next level in training, and I could feel it was getting difficult. So obviously at that point I knew any hiccup, any setback, for that matter, was going to be the one potentially.

That you're going to have harder moments or where you push too hard and you have to pull back a little bit, it's normal in rehab because you always have to stay in that corridor of doing enough but not too much. I really like that challenge, because I really have to be in tune with my body and with my team of understanding how far can I go?

Then I think over the course of a few weeks and months there, we just have to really be careful and almost to a certain level too careful. Then I guess I was also getting more tired because you have to put in more effort into it to be able to sort of believe that it was going to turn around. You start getting too pessimistic.

Then I also got a scan back which wasn't what I wanted it to be. At some point you sit down and go, Okay, we are at an intersection here, at a crossroad, and you have to take a turn. Which way is it?

I was not willing to go into the direction of let's risk it all. I'm not ready for that. I always said that was never my goal. I can't believe, if I look back at the last few years that I went through, the surgeries that I had to go through, for me it was always clear that I was going to end my career with no surgeries. You know, before 2016 and even '16 was a tough year getting back from it.

Any suggestions there from my side would be don't have surgery if you don't have to and just take the necessary time to come back, because it is brutal. I think tennis is a tough sport to bounce back into, because you have to be able to play long matches, five matches in a row every week, different continents, different surfaces. There is no substitute for you. Obviously mentally you need to know you have to be able to get all the way back there, and it's hard.

Then maybe the hardest part after that one point, of course you're sad in the very moment when you realize, okay, this is the end. I sort of ignored it for a little bit almost, because I went on vacation and just said, Okay, this is it. This moment came shortly after I was at Wimbledon where I still truly actually believed there was going to be a chance for me to come back the next year. At what capacity, I didn't know, but I thought it might be possible.

Then on vacation, funnily enough, I didn't speak to anybody about it other than my team, my parents, Mirka. We knew. Other than that, nobody really knew, and it was perfect like this. Didn't talk about it. Just hanging with friends and other families. It was wonderful.

I only then at one point when I returned from vacation I really started to discuss the details of, okay, where, when, how, what. Honestly this period was quite stressful getting the letter right, the wording right, using words like "bittersweet."

The bitterness, you always want to play forever. I love being out on court, I love playing against the guys, I love traveling. I never really felt like it was that hard for me to do, of winning, learn from losing, it was all perfect. I love my career from every angle. That's the bitter part.

The sweet part was that I know everybody has to do it at one point. Everybody has to leave the game. It's been a great, great journey. For that, I'm really grateful, yeah.

**Q. We read a lot, have seen a lot of people listen to your career highlights these past few days. From your personal point of view, having had a chance to reflect, what would be some of your sweetest and best moments, memories, whether it's titles, finals, matches, or just reaching your best level?**

ROGER FEDERER: Yeah, it's funny. I haven't really gone into deep-diving thinking about what are those moments. You know, top of my head, obviously you think about first Wimbledon, the match with Sampras at Wimbledon, the 2017 comeback, winning Australia, '09 French Open.

But I know there is a lot of different little nuggets as you go along with and could be something as sweet as maybe a quarterfinal at a 500 maybe that I learned something from. Who knows what it was.

You know, I'm sure that I have to really go back to the memory bank and thinking, okay, where were moments that meant a lot to me?

Sometimes very often there were probably off-the-court conversations with team or meeting somebody. I can't give you a specific example. But I'm fortunate that I can almost pick and choose which moments were the best because there were so many. Again, was very fortunate to go through so many.

**Q. On a similar theme, how do you hope that people will remember you? When you look back on your career, not necessarily talking about individual Grand Slam triumphs, but what are you most proud of the way you played the game and with the way your career has unfolded?**

ROGER FEDERER: That's a good question. I think, and I mentioned this in interviews in the past maybe, and this is maybe an appropriate time to say this again, is the longevity for me. I was famous for being quite erratic at the beginning of my career. If you maybe remember, I

was famous for being not so consistent, you know, and then to become one of the most consistent players ever is quite a shock to me, as well.

That has been I think a great accomplishment for me personally that people can judge, if they think that's the case too, but for me, that is something I have really enjoyed and that I have been able to stay at the top for so long and compete for any tournament I would enter and really go out there and say, like, I hope I can win the tournament for, I don't know, let's say 15-plus years. That has been a privilege, sitting at the press conference and being able to say that and not just saying, Oh, quarters would be great. Those were the first few years of my career. But it was for so long of course that I also almost got used to it.

But I think looking back that has a special meaning to me because I always looked to the Michael Schumachers, Tiger Woods, all the other guys that stayed for so long at the top that I didn't understand how they did it. Next thing you know, you're part of that group, and it's been a great feeling.

**Q. What do you think you'll miss the most?**

ROGER FEDERER: I think it's how it goes in life. I don't want to say love-hate, but the things you will miss, you are happy you're not having to do them again. I love tying my shoes, getting ready, putting the bandanna on, I look in the mirror, Are we ready for this? Yeah, okay, let's go.

As much as I love it, I'm happy I don't have to go through it again. Having those knots in my tummy, waiting all day, eating breakfast, thinking about, okay, tonight, I've got another big match. Oh, I've got another 15 hours to wait for it.

It's fun but it's stressful, and it's slow days there. A tennis player waits a lot, wait for the moment for us to go out and entertain the people and do it again.

Of course I'll miss a lot of things, the little moments, you know, after matches when it's all said and done, and the weight drops and you can go for a nice dinner with your friends and team and talk about other things, you know, than just about tennis.

There are so many things I will miss. But of course the fans are at the center of everything, because I lived through the COVID times as well, like we all did, and it wasn't fun. It wasn't great. I didn't like it. I always thought back if we didn't have the fans, it would have taken away probably over 80% of my emotions, of my feelings of what it would have meant.

I will miss that, you know, just every interaction on the court, off the court, running into people, I don't know

where. Okay, that will probably still happen sometimes, but not at events as much anymore, signing autographs, even though some you have to sign again. There is those little interactions, and I know these people came from a faraway place, spent a lot of money, took time off from their vacation or from work and come watch me play. I mean, I'll miss that.

**Q. You mentioned that you haven't decided who your doubles partner might be. I suppose a lot of fans are hoping that you might play with Rafa because it's the oldest of your rivalries. Would that be something that would appeal to you?**

ROGER FEDERER: Of course. No doubt. I mean, I think it could be quite, I don't know, a unique situation, you know, that if it were to happen for as long as we battled together to having always this respect for one another, the families, our coaching teams, we always got along really well.

For us as well to go through a career that we both have had and to come out on the other side and being able to have a nice relationship I think is maybe a great message as well to not just tennis but sports and maybe even beyond. For that reason I think it would be great.

I don't know if it's gonna happen, but I think it could be obviously a special moment.

**Q. From watching all your interviews over the last day or so and reading everything you said and again today, seems like you're handling it all very well and you accepted it. Are you surprised how well you accepted it, given all your achievements on the court?**

ROGER FEDERER: Yes. I was in a very, I guess, worried, scared place to face the music, the media, the fans, and everything, being able to talk about it in a normal fashion without getting emotional, just because I know how much it means to me.

But I feel like I probably went through a lot of different stages. I don't know if you can call it grieving, you know, and then you get to I really don't want it to be a funeral. I want it to be really happy and powerful and party mode, rather than the other side.

That, for me, was the first thing. I said if I retire and wherever I announce it, it has to feel like it's going to be fun, and not everybody, Oh, I'm so sorry, are you okay? No, no, I'm okay, but I'm going to be happy.

For that reason, I think that was also the part where I talked about didn't want to think about it, because I was not ready in my picture, seeing myself speak on a tennis court was impossible at that moment. I think going through that has helped me a lot that I can be here today.

**Q. How do you feel when you see World No. 1 Carlos Alcaraz has said you have been his idol during his childhood, and he's very sad that he's never going to be able to play a competitive match against you?**

ROGER FEDERER: Yes, of course, it's disappointing I was never able to play against him. Of course I watched him closely what he did at the US Open and throughout the year. It's been fantastic, and I always said there will be always new superstars in the game, and he's one of them. The game is bright.

I know sometimes people don't tend to see that or think that. It was the same thing when Pete and Andre left. They thought, well, what do we have here now? Guys who win slams, there is never the same winner. Well, they got the same winners for a lot of years. It was Novak, Rafa, myself, Murray and Stan.

It was nice to see, because that's what I always thought. I have a funny anecdote with Carlos, because I practiced with him at Wimbledon one year when he was playing the juniors. I thought he played well. You know, it was good practice, whatever, just another warmup, I think it was. And Juan Carlos was there. I was more excited to see him obviously because he's my guy.

Then the next day, two days later or next day, on my day off, very often when you practice with somebody, you practice again because you just have, and if the practice was good it's just simple to call again and say, Do you want to do it again?

But I said, I want to hit with Juan Carlos, not with Carlos, just because I would like to practice with him and I'm super laid back in practice, anyway. I ended up playing with Ferrero. It was great. He didn't miss a ball. He could still be on tour. I'm really happy for him also in particular that they are being this successful.

**Q. You were saying you're satisfied with the decision. How much easier, if it was, was that made because of the last year where you hadn't played, you had been with the family and the kids all the time, that you hadn't been at tournaments, so did that make it any easier? Once this week is over, what's the first lot of things you're going to do?**

ROGER FEDERER: I mean, one, I'm not satisfied. I'm happy. I'm happy with the decision, because it's the right one. I thought about it. I have had a lot of time to let it sit.

I mean, it's been a few months now, been rather stressful not having it leak out and was more worried about everybody around me who knew about it, who was getting asked every single day, How is Roger, how is Roger's knee, and when is he coming back? They all

very well knew what the situation was. I'm sorry for them that they had to go through this. So I think we are all relieved at this point it's out.

I don't remember the question anymore. But then what I'm going to do next is I want to read a lot of what maybe a lot of you have written and a lot of TV stuff. I haven't seen stuff that have been produced and put together for me I haven't seen really, to be honest.

I didn't plan it through exactly every step of the way what was going to happen. I just said I think it's a good moment to announce it on Thursday last week, because it gives people the time to either travel to London or just give a bit of a heads-up instead of announcing it, like, say today.

I had no plans for Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday. All I had was practice, fitness on Friday, tennis on Saturday, and I said, we'll see if I have to do press, but apparently the letter had enough in it for it seemed like for everybody that I could push the press all the way to today and yesterday, which I'm very happy about, which allowed me to spend time with my kids, with going after my daily life and having wonderful dinners and looking back and celebrate, to be honest.

So that's what I want to do next is catch up a little bit, see everybody, and then go on vacation a little bit with the family. I think it's a perfect moment for me to then spend time with Mirka and get on the phone with the team and just talk a little bit about the Laver Cup, you know, how has this week gone and where do we go from here?

Did I miss anything at the beginning, or did I answer everything? You okay? Okay.

**Q. So many of your successes have come in this city, Wimbledon and two ATP Finals titles at this venue. How does it feel to close this chapter of your life in London?**

ROGER FEDERER: Yeah, that was clearly part of my thinking, as well: Where is the place? I contemplated a lot of other things. Before the US Open maybe, but this was before Serena announced it. But I said I was not going to be there. So I'm just going to announce it, not going to be around. People think I'm going to be a stranger to the game and to everybody, and I don't get a chance to properly say good-bye to the fans and everything.

So made me wait another month all the way to here. I wish I could have announced it earlier, but it all worked out. I'm happy to do it here in London. After then thinking about it, this city has been special to me. Maybe the most special place with Wimbledon down the road and here at the O2. Haven't played here and qualified for so many years and won here as well. I just thought it

was very fitting. I have always enjoyed the crowds here as well.

Having Bjorn Borg on the bench with me for my final game resonated also in a big way with me. Having all the other guys around just felt like I was not going to be lonely announcing my retirement. Not that I wanted to hijack this event or anything, but just felt -- I always feel sorry for players who sometimes retire on the tour, say, I'm going to play one more match, then at one point you lose and there you stand all alone. Obviously 99% of the time you will lose at one point because only one guy wins the tournament.

I just felt like this works very well here. But I always wanted to keep the integrity of the event alive. That's why I had a lot of conversations with everybody. I'm really looking forward to these next few days. It's going to be very special.

**Q. You have been telling you want to stay involved in tennis in the future, but do you also already have a little bit of an idea if it will be on the coaching side or director's side, if managing?**

ROGER FEDERER: Not really. No, I just wanted to let the fans know I won't be a ghost, you know. It's funny, you know, I talked about Bjorn Borg just before. I don't think he returned to Wimbledon for 25 years.

That, in a way, hurts every tennis fan. Totally acceptable, his life, his reasons, you know. But I don't think I'll be that guy, you know, and I feel tennis has given me too much. I have been around the game for too long. Have fallen in love with too many things.

I love seeing people again, and that's kind of what I wanted to let the fans know that you'll see me again. Not just never again. Now what it could be, in what capacity, I don't know. So I still have to think about it a little bit but give myself time.

**Q. I'm just wondering, we all talk about the beautiful shots and the footwork, but how important has resilience and grit been in winning the big matches that you have in your career?**

ROGER FEDERER: Yeah, people won't talk about that, that's fun. They will talk about the other things, which I'm very happy and very proud of, as well. But you need everything, especially grit and fight and all that toughness to come through and stay at the top for as long as I did.

I think it's logical. It's not gifted or handed to you just to have that. For some of the players, it's maybe easier to have that. It's like more ingrained in their DNA. I feel like I had to go and find it and take care of it, which maybe is harder in my position.

Me, I was more lucky to maybe, was more gifted with racquet head speed or that stuff. So, yes, I'm proud of how far I have come, because I know that this was something I really struggled with early on. I was criticized a lot, heavily maybe sometimes even, fairly or unfairly, whatever it is, why wouldn't I fight more when losing? Because they thought when I lost I didn't give it all I had, even though I care probably more than most players.

So I didn't quite understand what that meant. Do I have to grunt, do I have to sweat more, shout more, be more aggressive towards my opponents? What is it? It's not me. I'm not like that. That's not my personality.

A lot of people then told me, Well, you have to be tougher and not so nice maybe, you know. I tried, but that was all an act. And I said, Well, I will try it the nice way. Let's see where it takes me. Let me just try to be normal and be myself, and I'm very happy I was able to stay authentic and be myself for this long.

Of course I had to adapt to all these different curve balls being thrown at me, but I'm very happy I was able to have a good relationship with players, tournament directors, press, as well, and that's why I think I had as much fun at the tour as I had. I think it was probably a good mindset for me.

**Q. I just wanted to ask, first of all, can a legend like you have regrets now if you think about your career? What do you think about the new generation of players, like you mentioned Alcaraz, Jannik Sinner? How different it would be from your generation?**

ROGER FEDERER: I mean, yes, of course you have somewhat regrets but never really, because I do believe things happen for a reason, and if it wasn't going to be for mistakes made or wrong decisions, who knows? Those are what made me grow, as well.

I'm happy it happened the way it did. I'm probably famous for having some tougher losses, as well, but then also dealing with them and seeing it as an opportunity to get better, to grow from it.

I'm happy I don't have flashbacks at tough moments in my career. I see more the happiness, me with trophy, me winning, me winning moments, and I'm happy that my brain allows me to think this way, because I know it's not easy to push sometimes defeats and those things away.

I mean, obviously as a tennis player, you also have to take tough decisions on the outside of the tennis court, you know. I always believed I cannot let my team decide everything and dictate everything. I am in charge at the end of the day. I am the one at the center, and I am the one to blame. I'm not going to start blaming others for things I decided.

So that's why I don't feel like I have regrets. Sometimes my only one is I wish I was going to be more professional at a younger age, but I know this would probably backfire at me as well in a really bad way that I would have lost my hunger and fire way earlier, because I would have thought I'm not enjoying myself, too serious, and I didn't want to be so serious so early.

So I think I'm happy that my team, my coaches allowed me to be myself early on and dealt with my erratic behavior, super inspired for 10 minutes but shocking for another 30. But they knew that those 10 minutes made up for those other 30. Yeah, so that was good.

The new generation, I think it's going to be great. More athletic than ever I think again with the players you mentioned and many more: Zverev, Medvedev, Tsitsipas, Rublev, all of them. Not mentioning nearly enough, but the best movers are the best players. It's been like this for the last 10, 20 years already now, and it's going to stay like this, if you see what they are able to do. I think that is going to stay this way.

I'm not so positive about serve and volley. Just I think it's not going to happen, because I don't think players are willing to put their bodies on the line for a missed first serve and still sprinting for two, three steps, and having to walk back to the line and think that was for nothing. I think it's easier to stay at the baseline after the serve.

Then of course it's a full-on-blown mindset, the serve-and-volley play. But I think there is definitely ways to have an all-court game, a transition game, which I loved playing. I loved my half-volleys, loved my transition game. I learned from the generation before me, the Henmans and so on, Sampras. I knew if I hit it onto the service line, that is an approach opportunity for my opponent. They're coming.

So that's why I better play one meter to the baseline, and then I can keep them back. Anything short, they're coming in. Nowadays that's not the case, but that's fine. I still think tennis is going to be really exciting and we probably don't know in which way it's going to go exactly, but we will see some ridiculous defending, some unbelievable power, and great personalities. I'll be their No. 1 fan. It's going to be all good.

**Q. The greatest-of-all-time debate I guess will go on forever. Does it bother you where you stand in that debate, or are you just particularly proud that you were sort of the trail blazer that initiated this golden era?**

ROGER FEDERER: I'm definitely very proud and very happy where I sit. One of my big moments of course was winning my 15th slam at Wimbledon, you know, when Pete was sitting there. Anything after that was a

bonus. That was the record, you know, and then of course it was other records along the way.

But then of course nowadays, I think, and it will only increase, players will want to chase records. It's true at some point I kind of probably did as well, but not the first years until I got closer to Pete's record.

For me, it was about how did I manage my schedule, was I happy on and off the court, did I like my life on the tour? And I did. I think I had the best of times. Obviously the last few years have been what they have been, but I'm very happy that I was able to win another five slams from 15 on. For me it was incredible. Then I made it to over 100 titles, and all that stuff has been fantastic. Then just my longevity is something I'm very proud of.

Don't need all the records to be happy; I tell you that.

(Applause.)

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