

Roland Garros

Sunday, 11 June 2023

Paris, France

Amélie Mauresmo

Press Conference

(In French.)

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: Thank you for being here this morning. I just wanted to say a few words on the three or four points we would like to talk with you regarding what we decided to implement for the 2023 edition about which we are quite satisfied and then of course I will answer your questions, if you have questions, regarding other topics that I might have not discussed.

So if we think chronologically what we had announced way before the tournament, that we really wanted to do a three-week tournament, and in the chronological order of this tournament, I'm very satisfied that this opening week, this qualifications week, was an incredible success.

Many people came. The tickets were sold out for that week. We really made the quality players, that they were part of Roland Garros, that it was not a sub-tournament, that they were part of the 2023 edition of Roland Garros. This was a great success. The players were very happy about that.

The audience was there. It was great. We'll even go further for 2024. We have possibilities for development for that week in 2024.

The thing or the promise we had made before the tournament was also to offer emotions, to make every person spending a day at the stadium, to offer them a unique day. The first thing we did for the general public was diminish the number of people in total, so minus 2,000 people, it's minus 2,000 of the top stands of Simonne Mathieu, and all the tickets had access to this part of the stands.

This enabled us to have less people in the queues, greater comfort, a better experience for the general audience entering the stadium. It was appreciated by everyone. We have tools to measure that satisfaction, and the feedback is exceptional.

So again, I don't say we'll go further in 2024, but it's something we will keep for 2024, because feedback is super positive.

Despite these minus 2,000 people per day, we have beaten the record of 630,000 people in total for the



ROLAND-GARROS

visitors, with better comfort, a better distribution over the weeks, and also throughout the site with the access to Simonne Mathieu, the court was more accessible.

The other thing that we were testing in a certain way is to start the night sessions earlier. It was a work in progress in this new slot for the tournament. We wanted to test and to learn. And the fact of starting the first point at 8:30 p.m. was more interesting for the audience, for the players. We had zero transportation problems after the matches as we had last year. So this really improved the situation. Even for the partners I had positive feedback.

Although it was a bit more of a rush to fill up the stadium, but it was well-perceived. So again, this is certainly something we will keep for 2024.

And the last topic I'd like to talk that was important for us, it was for this 2023 edition, was to celebrate the victory of Yannick Noah in this respect. It was very well-perceived in the right measure with the right emotion, both for Yannick, for the people who were present, his entourage at that time that were presented several times during the tournament who will be also presented for the trophy presentation or also on the court for legends match.

So it was something important for us, for me, for the tournament, for the Federation, and I think that he's set his mark in Roland Garros stadium, and it's something we didn't want to miss for us in 2023.

So that's the three or four topics I wanted to talk about this morning. And now I'm ready to answer your questions. I'll be happy to answer your questions.

(Questions in English.)

Q. Hi, Amélie. It felt like the fans were very excitable this year.

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: Excitable?

Q. Excitable in a good way and excitable sometimes in a rude way, some players. I just wonder if the players had mentioned any of this to you, whether you had any comment from players about that sort of thing?

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: Not that I know of. No feedback on this specific topic from our tour supervisors or even the ATP or WTA officials that are here on-site throughout

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

the whole tournament.

But yeah, I noticed that it was a good atmosphere this year. Also, I think the fact that the weather was good, I think it makes things a bit different. Last year, from what I remember, was a bit colder and not as, yeah, not as friendly maybe for everyone to come or to enjoy fully the experience.

Q. Just continuing on the conversation we had yesterday in the mixed zone, the night session has been promoted as the top-billed match of the tournament, the match of the day. Jessica Pegula described the scheduling of only one women's match in ten for the second year running as disappointing, and she said that she felt that women's tennis was undervalued against men's tennis.

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: Okay, she said that?

Q. She said "undervalued."

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: I didn't read that. When did...

Q. That was in a BBC Sport column of a few days ago. How important is it for you to change that message from Roland Garros so that the women are not undervalued, and if it is important to you, is that something that you would look to change in the future?

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: I will also get back to what I was telling you yesterday regarding the whole scheduling, because the focus is really on these ten matches where obviously we have plenty of more matches to play on also prime slots, not only this prime slot, that is the evening match on Chatrier.

Definitely this, in my opinion, and we have numbers to support that, apart from the night sessions, that the prime slots were this time rebalancing also on what happened last year much more balanced between men and women, so that is something for us that is important definitely.

I hear that she's disappointed with that. I just also want to say that some of the high-profile players, that are women's players I'm talking about, that would be our choices to put in the night matches are not really keen to go at night and are having different requests. We're not always listening to the requests, that's not what I'm saying, but we also try to arrange overall, whether they're men or woman player, we try to arrange everyone if we can.

So just, I mean, I think you know that, because I saw some players also commenting on this matter. So this doesn't make also our life easier in terms of...

Q. I appreciate that. Do all the men want to play at

night?

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: Not all, no. They also have requests. That's why I'm saying, it comes from everyone. Yeah, sometimes we can go in the sense of the requests; sometimes we can't.

But, yeah.

Q. Hi, Amélie. Just following up on that, it sounds in your viewing the schedule as a whole with the three main courts, does that mean with the adjustments that you say you have made to that this year, you are comfortable, as you described yourself last year as a champion of equality in the sport as a former women's --

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: I described myself as a champion of equality?

Q. A big fighter for equal rights in women's tennis.

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: Okay (smiling).

Q. That was on The Tennis Channel last year. Does that mean you're comfortable --

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: I think I've always tried to do that in the past.

Q. Sure. So given that, are you comfortable with the equality in the scheduling at the moment?

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: I'm comfortable with the scheduling on the day, but yes, we can do better on the night matches. I don't know if that answers your question? But because you gave me numbers last year also on the day, because it was more of an overall kind of statement or facts that you were giving me last year.

My point is this year that we put definitely way more woman matches on the prime slots in 2023. It doesn't make it perfect yet, because of these night matches that are unique, that are only one matches, and that's where I come to the lens, and we talked about it last year also.

Because when you look at it, a men's match that goes in straight sets, it's still around probably between one hour 45, two hours, maybe a bit more, depends, and I think when you have only one match, it makes it difficult to, yeah, to schedule something else, in fact.

Q. On Philippe Chatrier, in terms of the prime slots, the numbers are identical to last year.

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: Yeah.

Q. Are you comfortable with that?

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: I'm comfortable with both our two main courts. Two main courts, they are equal. Eight women started against six men started. Quite, we're almost the same, not 50/50 exactly, but... Much better than last year.

Q. Amélie, I want to ask you your thoughts on disqualification which happened in women's doubles.

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: Yes.

Q. I don't know if you see the video or something, but many current players or even former top player said it might be a little bit unfair for players to get disqualified.

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: I think the locker room is pretty divided on this. I have heard, yes, a lot of people or a lot of players actually saying that it's not fair. I have heard some saying that, well, if you make a ball girl cry for about seven, eight minutes or more, then it means something.

So, you know, I'm not going to comment, because when you see a video after you take a decision is always easier. The decision has been made by the tour supervisor and the referee. Without seeing the video, you come to the court. You have to make a judgment based on something that you didn't see, based on the fact that someone are reporting to you.

And when you see a ball girl cry for that long, I guess that's when you have to make some kind of decision. It's just facts. I'm not going to comment on whether it's good or bad. It is what it is. Then it goes to the Grand Slam rule book, which is pretty clear.

It was also the decision of the tournament to keep her in the mixed doubles, which I think was also something positive at least for her.

Q. Given the different length in the men's and the women's matches, as you pointed out, would you consider perhaps from next year having a women's singles followed by another women's singles or by a doubles match and a legends match in the evening session?

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: Okay. This takes me to why we put only one match in the evening. And maybe I should have started with this really. We think, I think that putting five matches on one court is too much. We don't want to finish too late.

So then what would it mean if we keep it to four matches, it would mean two matches in the day session, two matches in the night sessions. Then we would have to either keep the same times because we want to see the

stands filled, but then the second match, you don't know when you start and you don't know especially what time you're gonna finish. Here we don't want -- we take this option -- we don't want the players to finish at 2:00, 3:00, 4:00 in the morning. This is not something we want to see here.

So we move forward a little bit, 7:00 maybe, let's say, or 7:30 the night match. Then the stands are empty, because in Paris people finish to work, I don't know, 6:30, 7:00, maybe later, some of them.

So that's the problems that we have to make, that we have to address. Yes, putting a second woman's match, if we talk about length, why not? But what if the first match then ends up to be two-and-a-half hours? So there is no perfect plan.

I don't know if you hear what we have to choose from. I don't think we should be compared to what the US Open is doing or what the Australian Open is doing in terms of putting those two matches at night. We don't want to finish that late, in fact. So that's... Yeah. That's why we chose to stay with the one match in the evening.

But we in fact put four matches on Chatrier. That's basically what we do.

Q. I am going to ask you to comment on that situation where you said they come to the court and make a decision without watching a video. Because that's happened several times in this tournament, people were making decisions on the double bounce, on the situation with the girl getting hit, and clearly accidental, not even the ball hit in anger, and everyone in the world --

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: Sees.

Q. -- knew and saw what was going on, but for some reason the most important people making the decision do not have access to that information, which, I mean, it's bananas.

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: No, this is a question on the video, and that's for sure something that is probably already being addressed in terms of -- this is a big change in the rules, so I'm not the one that's gonna make the change today. But definitely put the conversation on the table to see how, maybe, I don't know, how maybe tennis can evolve towards something that is already used in other sports. That's anyway an interesting question for sure.

Q. Are people resisting? I mean, when you say that, are people saying, No, no, no, we can't do that?

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: No, I don't think so. I don't think it has been yet really fully addressed, to be honest. So I

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

guess... Yeah, well...

Q. Do you have any comment on the remarks of Ivan Dodig yesterday who complained about not being treated equally by the tournament in his speech?

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: Yeah, I do (smiling). I do. Well, maybe it's good to put a little context in this. I don't know if he talked about it in press after or I don't know what happened.

So the subject is that he cannot access the transportation from the tournament because we... Do you have the -- because maybe I prefer to speak in French on this, because there are specific words that I want to use.

(In French.) Right, I'm sorry about this. You see, we have a policy in terms of accessing transport that is five kilometers around the place, we have 19 hotels in a radius of five kilometers. Anybody can book transportation, all the players, if you're within these five kilometers. He's in another department, which is at the other end of Paris, to the east of Paris.

We have made proposals. We have said you can change your hotel, we can find you another hotel in the right area. We gave him solutions. But we have a fleet that's environmentally responsible. We have an area that's also environmentally responsible, because we want to serve everybody.

We don't have an unlimited number of cars. We have a given number of vehicles, and therefore, we have to be fair with everybody in the same area or zone.

Okay, he's not satisfied or happy because he has no transportation, but he knew what the rules were before he booked his hotel well before he arrived here, and he knew exactly. And he says people are not equally treated. This goes against the facts. Because otherwise, we should have made an exception for him, if you listen to him, and given where his accommodation was. These are facts.

According to me, this is not acceptable to have this type of language on the court. And in addition to this, to insult people when he left the court. This is certainly not acceptable.

Other questions in French?

(In French.)

Q. We'll agree to say that yesterday the women's final was fantastic.

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: Yes.

Q. Were you afraid this would go too quickly? And

by the way, something to think about, in the future do you think we could have a five-setter final match for women? Do we need an agreement from the four Grand Slams? Maybe that's what's difficult.

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: As far as rules are concerned, maybe we could. I'd have to check this point. You know, when I was playing myself, I always thought it could be something interesting to explore. I was very disappointed with the Masters final that was for the best-of-three sets.

It is something that's complicated. Well, you see, that's what we want when the finals are played very quickly, but then yesterday, after 2 hours and 40 minutes, I think, well, it was fantastic, you're saying. When it's this way, why should we do more? Last year, I can't remember the length of the match, probably nearing an hour, more or less.

It's not something simple. Not something easy to think about. We couldn't do this overnight. I think this is something that has to be prepared ahead of time.

Yeah, I think it will be very, very interesting.

Q. You were talking about the first week, and the atmosphere was quite crazy on Court 14, thanks to Lucas Pouille as well. We have the feeling this rock 'n roll atmosphere exceeded the first week and then sprawled during the second week and reached the Lenglen with Fritz. Do you like that, that is, this renewal of atmosphere? Sometimes wouldn't you say they go too far?

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: Yeah, that's true. There is only this evening, or maybe I have missed some, but I don't think so, there was this famous night when people were going too far. Everybody was really warmed up on the stands, as well. Well, there you go.

But apart from that episode, honestly, I think it's fantastic to have such atmosphere. The atmosphere during the quallies, also that continue and reach the main draw, and even on Court 14. And after the first week in the main draw, that's fabulous.

I'm saying we're going to do more in 2024 for the opening week. Yes, we want to continue and develop this, and we want this to be affordable and accessible to the general public. Because we know that in the last two weeks of the main draw, we can't do much more, can we? We're a bit stuck.

So if we want to have more youth, more accessibility, if we want to include more people who will be writing the history of Roland Garros, the Roland Garros adventure at prices that are quite affordable, then it's with this week that it will start. That's when we can catch the eye of

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

more youth, and they will be interested in tennis and Roland Garros, and that's the objective of the tournament, you see.

Q. You might repeat in French what you said in English about the night sessions. Could you perhaps tell us again what you think about this balance between genders. And more generally, you don't want to do the same as we have at the US Open and the Australian Open. Is this due to the fact that you have two broadcasters here and one who pays and...

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: To answer the second part of your question, I'd say no, and then one single match. The reason is this corresponds to the habits we have in Paris, that is for the night sessions, that's the crowd were interested in, the people in the stadium.

No. 2, we don't want the potential second match with no beginning time. This would be an uncertainty for the players, men or women. Who knows? We don't know when this could end. You never know when the match is going to end. But if we have two in the night session, there are more risks on the tournament, and it's even more risks for the players, men and women, in terms of recovery and in terms of sports equity or fairness.

We don't want to be in this situation that we've seen in other Grand Slams with the two night sessions. So you see, the Philippe Chatrier Court is a court where we're going to have four matches, two for women, two for men during that day. That's what we said before. And we made a choice.

I think the time it takes to play a match is something that we take into account. That is an input when we schedule these matches, and today, I think we have a better balance in terms of scheduling. For the two biggest courts, that is the Chatrier and the Lenglen, that is we've been looking for this balance, this gender balance on all the main slots.

There is still the night match maybe that we can adjust here and there, but the time notion is a bit complicated to manage for us.

Q. Now, the quality week, could we think that Simonne Mathieu could be used for the qualifiers, given the atmosphere, given the turnout?

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: Yeah, we could imagine that. Well, we can imagine we could do this. This is an avenue we can consider.

It's something we thought about on the Monday, to tell you the truth, but, you know, all the different professions have to tell us what they think. We need their feedback.

But we have seen that Court No. 14 was too small, so naturally we thought, okay, maybe next time we could use Simonne Mathieu court.

Well, we'll organize a seminar in a fortnight, more or less, and the objective will be to talk about this. We've taken due note of all these points, and we'll have a road map for 2024. We did this last year and it worked really well. All these novelties that you've seen is because ten days after the 2022 edition, we met again and we made headway this way. It's going to be important.

Q. There is a question I didn't have in English, so I will try and ask it in French. You've talked about many difficulties, that is, to have women matches for the singles match in the night session. But twice you managed to have women playing. So this shows that you can overcome these difficulties, if there's a will to have women playing. So this shows that the problem is not something that has to do with logistics or organization. It's the will that matters. What would you say about this?

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: This was no question, was it? It's a statement.

Q. Do you have this desire?

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: Yes, I have the will. I have a lot of will. I have a strong will. It's not always simple.

Now, I'm not going to give you all the details, all that we have to factor in before we can schedule the tournament, but I can guarantee that I have a will, but it's not simple.

Q. The semis between Alcaraz and Djokovic, was your choice based only on sports fairness, because the lower part of the draw will be playing before the upper part, or were there other criteria you took into account? How did you make your decision?

AMÉLIE MAURESMO: Well, it's for the fairness of our sport, this is what guides me, what guides us when we schedule the matches. Yeah, this was the biggest thing, the most important thing. That's why we made this decision.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports