

National Bank Open

Friday, August 1, 2025

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Karl Hale

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the mid-tournament press conference of tournament director Karl Hale.

Karl, I'll take the first question. Why don't you reflect on the first week of the event so far for us.

KARL HALE: Yeah, I mean, the tennis has been outstanding. We have another three-setter on center court with Tiafoe running right now.

The staff has been here until 2:00 in the morning following the night matches. It's an electric atmosphere. Activations on the ground have been very well attended.

The players are having a great time the beginning of the week. They're golfing on the golf courses, and at the weekend concerts.

The fan experience has been second to none. I've been on the grounds all day, every day, and it's been a very successful tournament to date.

Q. Obviously one of the first conversations about this tournament, I mean, all the, most of the top players are here, but not the three top players, let's say, Sinner, Alcaraz and Djokovic. I want to ask you how that has affected the tournament. And also, like, the players kind of complain about the busy schedule of competition, but that's been something that's been there for years. What can you do, from your standpoint as the tournament director, to find a solution?

KARL HALE: Yeah, I mean, it's a really good question. The good news is that Sunday was sold out, and nobody knew who the matchups were. So tennis is doing extremely well in this marketplace.

We are obviously disappointed in the withdrawals, but we've spoken to the players. We have spoken to the tour, Andrea, the CEO of ATP, is coming this week, so we'll have discussions with him about how to improve situation.

It's a new 12-day model, so we'll work through the process,



but we're very happy with it to date, and we'll continue growing as we move along.

Q. I wanted to know what your reaction was when you heard that the domestic broadcast rights holder would only broadcast on site for about six days, offer on-site production for six days?

KARL HALE: Yeah, I mean, obviously what happened, we didn't want that to happen, we wanted to feature Felix. But they have the rights for the first week, and their domestic broadcast starts today.

So we had some discussions, and they said to us that, you know, going forward, Gabriel obviously will be the feature tonight.

But that's just what happened. You know, when a match starts, I can't recall which match it was, but once it starts you can't switch. So we had these discussions, and we're moving forward, and we'll have Canadians on for the rest of the tournament.

Q. Curious, you mentioned the 12-day tournament. From your perspective as tournament director, how has it been different for you for these first few days, how has it been the same as the old tournament format?

KARL HALE: Well, we're only halfway through it, so I'll tell you that at the end of the tournament. You know, just, I've been doing this for 20 years, and just to see the broadcasts will be in Canada again for two weeks essentially, and to see the increase in fans on site for two weeks. So it's just bigger and better for us in Canada to have more players, more fans, more wild cards for development, all of this is a great asset to the sport in Canada.

It's good to see on site so many kids on 407 ETR Family Day on Saturday, all of these things. It's the first year in this model, so some kinks to work out, but so far, so good and we'll continue to grow as we move along.

Q. Wondering if you have any numbers to share with us at this point of the tournament compared to a comparable number of days from two years ago when the men were here?



KARL HALE: Yeah, we know at the end of the tournament we're going to have record attendance, and we're moving, trending better than 2023.

Q. Are you confident that Sportsnet will offer a full on-site production for 2026?

KARL HALE: Yeah, we're going to have the discussion, we've already started it, so I think there will be a better solution going forward as we move along.

Q. Big opportunity for Gabriel tonight on center court against Taylor Fritz. When was the first time you heard of him, saw him play, and just like your early memories of him, and how he's grown as a player?

KARL HALE: Yeah, we kind of started really keeping an eye on him when he was in college at the University of Kentucky. When he turned pro, Marty Laurendeau has been working with him. He's a former great player in Canada, and also one of our best coaches. He was giving us updates throughout each month, and he was very, very high on Gabriel, and he still is.

So we see the ceiling for him as extremely high. And we think it's good for Denis and Felix as well, because they will help push each other back towards the top 10.

Q. Sorry, just to follow-up my previous question, well I include that in the second question, but I didn't formulate the question well anyways. Yeah, like I was saying, these are something that has been like sounding for years, like, you know, sometimes players complaining about how easy the competition schedule is. I would like to know your opinion, from the perspective of the tournament director, you know, what solutions could be to these kind of players' complaint or indication?

KARL HALE: Yeah, I mean, it's an opinion. I don't necessarily fully agree with it. As you can see, the competition here is absolutely outstanding, the best tennis I've seen on the men's side here with the matchups that we've had. The top seeds are all continuing to go through.

So, you know, we will talk to the players about their concerns and the schedule, and talk to the tours about what we can do to facilitate a better schedule for them, and do the best we can, and that's what we'll do going forward.

Q. How long will Andrea be here, and what other conversations are you going to have with them?

KARL HALE: A lot of the ATP staff are here, and a few

board members as well. That was planned previous to the event anyhow, it wasn't a reaction to what happened.

So he'll be here for a few days, and we'll discuss with the tour, going forward, how the 12-day model is working, and how the other rents are doing, and what we can do. We have meetings in New York and Turin coming up.

It's very important for us. The fans are number one, so we want to deliver the best product forward for them. We've shared that with the players, and with Andrea, so we'll work together towards solutions to make sure that we have amazing playing fields that are even better than this going forward.

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