

Omnium Banque Nationale

Sunday, 15 August 2021

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Eugene Lapierre

Press Conference



(Translated from French.)

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Eugene.

Q. What were the expectations before the tournament given the contexts we are in? What are the results of this very special week?

EUGENE LAPIERRE: Yes, indeed, we really wanted to hold this tournament with or without the crowd. We just wanted to hold the tournament, so we are happy because we succeeded doing that.

It was not easy to do it with the team. I can explain the details. It was complicated. We knew we couldn't have the usual crowd, but we wanted to end at about 50,000 spectators at the end of the week from the quallies until now. I think we achieved that and we are satisfied.

Financially we'll reach a balance, I believe, for the whole week. There again, we are satisfied.

We had beautiful matches during the week. We discovered new players. We will have a new champion this year. We are satisfied.

I imagine you're going to ask questions about the results of our Canadian players. On our side, we are very happy.

Q. Were there some fears or doubts before the tournament? You said you succeeded. When the week started, did you fear that some things might happen that you couldn't anticipate?

EUGENE LAPIERRE: Of course. We had a health protocol separating totally the spectators from the players. We had distance and everything. The fear was that there might be a spread of the virus. It could happen on-site with the spectators, but also there could have been problems within the bubble we created.

We already said what measures we put into place. We are close to a hundred percent success in this respect. So the mission has been accomplished. We are satisfied.

Q. You say you were relieved. Is that a general feeling after the tournament knowing that in spite of all the obstacles, the tournament took place? Are you really relieved within the team?

EUGENE LAPIERRE: Yes. We'll wait until tonight still, then we will meet all together on the terrace and have a drink together. But we are happy. During the whole week we had the feeling we were walking on eggs. We were hoping everything was going to go well.

My colleague's work within the bubble, I didn't see them. When they came on-site, they went directly to the player area. The officials, the technicians, I haven't seen them for the whole week. I chose to stay outside of the bubble for many reasons.

It was good like this. Of course, I didn't see them but we were talking. I was asking them how is it with the hotel, how is it with the laboratories for testing. We were keeping each other informed on how things were going.

Now it is Sunday and we only had one case, a young lady from Japan who came to play the quallies and was positive when she arrived. I believe she's still in a lockdown in her hotel. The fourth floor of the hotel was the bad floor that we saved in case there were cases of COVID. But it's the only case we had.

Here on-site we had one case with a waiter. But it was easy to do the tracking. Everything is under control. I'll have to say a prayer, but I believe everything went well. We are hoping for the last day to go well, too.

Q. You said earlier that you were going to reach a financial balance for the tournament this year. Can you tell us what the cost was of all the measures you had to implement this year with the testing and the fact of having fewer spectators, et cetera.

EUGENE LAPIERRE: We are still calculating. There was a program from the government for the economic development of Canada that helped us. We estimate it's between \$1 million to \$1.5 million for the laboratory, hotel. We booked the hotel for the whole week. It's supposed to be around that figure.

ASAP sports ...quand tout est dit, nous avons terminé.

Q. Another question about finances. We know that the Montreal tournament gives a lot of money for tennis development. Are you going to be able to give money to the development this year?

EUGENE LAPIERRE: Yes, indeed, we will try to be positive slightly. Of course, in the past years we were giving \$16 million to \$17 million to tennis development in Canada. We are far from that this year. Of course, last year we lost \$10 million. This year we should be able to give some money. I hope it will be more into the green than into the red because we had that help from the government.

We had good results with the number of spectators. We went beyond our expectations. We had modest goals, but we surpassed those. We hope we will be able to give money to tennis development.

Of course, during the year anyway many things didn't take place. We made forced savings, of course. There were not many competitions in juniors, in challengers. We were not able to organize them. Of course, the training of our national athletes was concentrated in one site.

But I hope next year maybe will be more fruitful.

Q. You said you had modest goals in terms of attendance. What was that goal? Secondly, we were not on-site ourselves. Can you describe what was happening on-site, what the atmosphere was, the energy.

EUGENE LAPIERRE: Certainly.

We had warned our spectators that their visit would be totally different this year from other years. We were allowed up to 5,000 people, but we had to respect some distance. That meant 4,500 or 4,700 spectators. We are supposed to be able to go beyond 50,000 spectators for the week. So given the circumstances, we are very happy. It is a good average per session.

Of course, the spectators knew it wouldn't be the same. Normally they stay five, six hours on-site. They have a drink. They have something to eat before the match. They walk around. They go to the shops. They go to see the players practice. They watch a match on center court, then go to other courts. It's a real outing with friends that is usually the success of our tournament. It's a good experience for the visitors.

This year was totally different, of course. There's nothing on-site. There was a whole area with secondary courts and Court Rogers that was totally separated to guarantee a

separation between the public and the players and everything.

This is the reason why our tournament was approved to take place by the health authorities. When we showed them physically on-site how it was going to take place, they were reassured there would be no contact between the athletes and the rest.

The athletes have a general area. We created a pathway for them to go directly to the secondary area where they can practice, et cetera. This is the only place where they could be a bit outside. From the hotel they were not allowed to go out and have a drink somewhere.

There was that huge pathway. The spectators were walking under the pathway. The only show was in the stadium. During the whole week we had runners that were bringing food to the headquarters. There were two shops open for catering for the spectators. That was totally different from the usual experience have when they come here.

But with the number of spectators we had, we are very satisfied. There was a good atmosphere in the stadium. It was very hot during the day, so I guess we had fewer spectators during the day because of that heat.

We had wonderful matches for the whole week and a great atmosphere. We are very satisfied.

Q. How many people did you expect attendance-wise?

EUGENE LAPIERRE: I was thinking about 50,000. That means 3,500 or 4,000 per session. I was told we would surpass 50,000. We'll see tonight.

Q. About the results of our Canadian players, it was not as good as expected. Are you a bit disappointed?

EUGENE LAPIERRE: Everyone was expecting Bianca, Leylah... Rebecca ended up with the best performance. I'm happy for her because she worked hard. I was happy to hear her say after her match that she proved to herself she was among the top players in the world and could compete with those players. That was very good to hear.

Leylah was not happy with her match. I think she was a bit hard on herself. She came back home playing in front of her home crowd on center court. That put a lot of pressure on her. Maybe she was too nervous for her match. But she's only 18. We'll see her again.

Bianca didn't play enough matches before. She doesn't have the same level as in 2019 when she won in Toronto

and New York. She needs to work. She has the game for that. She has to bring down the number of unforced errors, then it's going to be all right.

But she needs to play a lot more. She needs to play many tournaments back to back. If she does that, I'm sure it's going to go well. But we would have liked to have had her longer in this tournament.

Thank you.

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