

Omnium Banque Nationale

Sunday, 14 August 2022

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Eugene Lapierre

Press Conference

EUGENE LAPIERRE: Many things happened during this tournament, as usual. When the tournament starts, we never know what's going to happen. Someone said, Would you sign for Felix to reach the quarterfinals? I would have signed.

Then there was Alexis Galarneau, that was very interesting against Dimitrov. There was the match against Kyrgios and Medvedev. Everybody talked about the seeded players that were losing. But when they lose, it's because a good player beat them.

Hurkacz and Carreno Busta, who were in the final, are very good players. I've been following them for a while and I'm happy to see new faces and new talents. This match this afternoon will be incredible.

There were disappointments. We avoided two in the press conferences: Alcaraz and another one. Of course, there was the rain. This is part of the tournament. I know that I will never be able to explain how we define the schedule. It would take half an hour to explain. Also you have to know doubles have an influence on the schedule.

But when I was walking around the site, I heard so many good comments, the quality of the tournament, the environment. I'm happy because we worked hard. I believe we put on a great show.

Of course, the attendance. We can announce a record, 237, 158, 12,000 more than the previous record. That was in 2019.

Q. You had rain delays on Monday and Tuesday. Many people were stressed. Were you stressed? You have a lot of experience, so maybe you thought it was normal.

EUGENE LAPIERRE: Nadal said when I play a player who hit aces and aces, he said I know it's going to stop. Well, rain is the same. We know the rain will stop.

We always played the tournament, all the matches. I've been here for 20 years. We always were able to play the matches. It makes things more complicated. The greatest



complication is financial because we have to create tickets for the next year for those who were not able to watch a match, but this didn't happen this year.

It's complicated because of the schedule. Often we use the Monday to get ahead with our doubles matches. We were not able to do that this year.

Q. After the pandemic, you have a record attendance. Is that a good thing financially?

EUGENE LAPIERRE: Yes. We lost a lot of money because of COVID. We have this tournament because we want to put money into the development of the game. Of course, there are expenses involved. We'll see what we can have.

But we are a non-profit organization, contrary to Miami or Indian Wells or Monte-Carlo. Our concern is to give as much money as we can to the development of the game. We'll know in October or November exactly how much money we will have.

Q. We know you are proud of the lights on the court, but some players made comments about it. Is it easy to fix that?

EUGENE LAPIERRE: I just had a meeting with the tournament supervisor. He was making many compliments about everything, including the LED lights.

I asked him, Did the players say something?

He said, No comments from the players.

Felix said that on one side he could see the light, but not on the other side. He just played one match there in the evening. So, of course, we'll look into it. We'll have someone go up and make sure it's all right.

The strange thing is that it's on one side but not on the other.

Q. With the favorite losing, do you believe Felix and Kyrgios saved the week?

EUGENE LAPIERRE: I'm not able to answer that

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question. I don't know. My opinion is that the players who win their match deserve to advance, and they are creating the show.

The worst match of the week was Felix's third match. People are saying, Why are the best matches scheduled in the afternoon?

I explained the schedule was complicated because of the doubles. But it's the evening matches that saved the show. They were excellent matches.

The fans who are here would like maybe the big names to go further in the tournament, but the sponsors were able to see extraordinary matches here.

Q. Who is the crush of the director of the tournament? I heard great comments about Hurkacz. Is that your crush?

EUGENE LAPIERRE: First I want to say a few words about Felix. I thought he would feel the pressure in the first match, and he didn't. Nishioka was playing well. It was not an easy match. But he was prepared. He didn't feel the expectations that he might be able to win the tournament at that stage.

Second match, same thing. He played incredibly well. I was happy to see that.

The third match, he can learn maybe some lessons from that because he was affected by all the expectations.

What he said after his match was I'm disappointed that I disappointed people. People were saying he should be in the final, so he was under pressure.

But he played two solid matches. I was happy. I'm sure he's going to do better in the future.

You're right about Hurkacz. I didn't know him much before. He seems to be happy about everything and he plays well, but he's very nice.

When he came, he said, What can I do for the tournament? Should I meet people? Should I play with the kids?

So it was refreshing to see an athlete like him making himself available. And he's good on the court, too. We'll see him play this afternoon.

Q. Without saying anything negative about other players, is it the first time that a player said, I would like to please you and do something for the tournament?

EUGENE LAPIERRE: Yes (laughter).

Q. Was this tournament one of the most complicated in your career? There were no catastrophes, but it seems every day had its difficulties.

EUGENE LAPIERRE: Oh, there were many complicated tournaments. Cedric Mourier, the supervisor from the ATP, we had an all French-speaking team with him as a Frenchman, then someone from Belgium, someone from Tunisia. I just had a meeting with him, and he was very complimentary.

He said it was the most complicated week of his whole career. So I told him, Your career is not as long as mine.

In 2010 we were not able to play one single minute and hit one single ball on the Saturday and Sunday on the last weekend. Semifinals were played indoors for doubles. The singles were played on the Monday.

Here, this year, we had some rain on Monday, a little bit on Tuesday. It was not too bad. We had good temperatures. We didn't suffer outside. People are comfortable. Today is going to be a wonderful temperature. We have to see all the good things.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in English.

Q. I know we're all feeling very warm and fuzzy here on the last day. Maybe you can talk about next year. How do you think you can improve the event?

EUGENE LAPIERRE: Improve the event? We get Leylah to win the event (smiling).

No, listen, it's interesting. Again, I'll refer to my meeting I just had with the supervisor. He was saying, Well, maybe you should have LED lighting and boards instead of physical boards all around.

But it was a question of interest for him because we had cameras on court that can create a problem for players running. We know Medvedev has run into a camera before. The position of the camera, if we happened to have an LED light, we could push them down. It would be easier to just clean the backboard. So we may very well go in that direction.

If I could just go by the report, he had nothing else to say. He had nothing else. Well, maybe one more thing which was a bit technical again. We wanted to use a fifth court when it rained to accelerate matches. We were ready. Just get a court. We have everything to do. But we didn't



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have the Hawkeye on the fifth court. Not because we didn't want to, but because they never told us.

We said, We have a spare court for matches.

They never said, If we need a fifth court, you're going to have to have Hawkeye.

I said, Well, we don't.

You can't now because it's in the contract.

Well, but it's raining.

No, no, it's in the contract.

We could never use a fifth court. It would have been better to help the schedule in that sense. So next year you can be assured we'll have at least five courts with Hawkeye ready to go. That's one aspect.

The rest? I don't know. Scheduling. We like two matches in the afternoon, two at night. Is it better to go three in the day, start earlier and everything? Anyway, those type of questions we'll be asking ourselves to put more matches on center court, things like that.

I don't know. The site to me looked great. It was good. We can improve maybe even more shade. We added a lot more shade this year. A lot more seating places for people.

We'll see. We're pretty strict with ourselves when we go to a postmortem. I know we'll have a long list of improvements for next year.

Q. In Toronto we know that some players had to pull out because they didn't get the visa in time, like Victoria Azarenka. Did you get any feedback from players that they had problems getting visas, those that needed them? Looking ahead at 2024, after 2023, when the ATP is going to be back to Montreal, it's supposed to be the first year of the expanded draw with 96 players. It's going to be 40 more players. This is probably the smallest venue of the Masters 1000s if I'm not mistaken. I was wondering how you are thinking about dealing with this.

EUGENE LAPIERRE: Yes. For the first question about the visas, I think from what everybody tell me that Canada takes a long time compared to other countries to get the visa, so you have to get ahead of the game. Some players did not and it was difficult.

It was too bad for Azarenka. She had her first meeting to

get the biometrics in for the visa in the middle of the tournament. So it was August 10th she had her meeting. She will get her meeting eventually. It took so much time. I don't want to get into the detail. But we followed that very closely every day.

There was a question here, we had sort of the same problem with Medvedev's wife. She was in France trying to get the rendezvous, the appointment, for the biometrics and everything. There was no place to go in France, Lyon, Paris, they were looking everywhere. It was red everywhere.

He was going to play the Mexico tournament, the Los Cabos tournament. We checked in Mexico City. It was green everywhere. So get your ass down there. Sorry (laughter). Go to Mexico City quick and we'll get you an appointment. That's what they did. Finally we were able to help in that regard.

But, yes, it is complicated. I think one of your colleagues made an article about that this week. We try to help. We work with the lawyers' firm to try to accelerate things the best we can, but we cannot do everything.

Q. Second question. 2024 will also be an Olympic year, just to mess this up even more. I was wondering how you're going to make everything kind of work together.

EUGENE LAPIERRE: Well, Olympic years are what they are.

For the expansion, we're looking at it with the ATP. It's pretty much set for other tournaments who want to move to the expansion, would be Rome, and Madrid is already there, and Shanghai on the ATP side.

But the summer is complicated. We still have a lot of topics to talk about with the ATP: the number of days, schedule, everything. We're probably going to get there. When we are ready, we will make an announcement.

But on the 96 draw, not too scared. It would be 12 days. We're looking at it. Just schedule-wise I would think it's easier. I need less courts for 96 guys on 12 days than 56 players on seven days.

Q. But you have 96 players.

EUGENE LAPIERRE: Yes, 96 players. I'll refer again to the supervisors.

Do you think it's big enough?



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It's plenty big. You can have much more players.

I don't think so. We need more space. We will create more space.

We're having a plan that we'll start, I think we can start soon, to do something inside this building here to create something like 15,000 square feet, additional square feet. We're doing that thanks to the federal grant that we got. I think we'll be good.

The players, they love it here. We keep it quite restricted, the area. I go to many other tournaments where it's a jungle where the players are. They just want to hide somewhere. They come here, they rest, they're okay, just with them, their family, nobody else. We like to keep it that way.

I want to make it better, and we will.

Q. Very simply, you broke a record in the amount of tickets you sold. Maybe you can reflect on that, speak a little bit about Montreal as a tennis city.

EUGENE LAPIERRE: Yes, totally true. I say that every time I have a chance. 237,000 people is a lot. I hear some people say it's a record on the men's side for one week, not combined event. I'm not sure. I haven't kept the score. We're very happy about that. On the women's side it's like, wow, so much more than anybody else. We're very happy about that.

We do a good job. The stadium, I can tell you since we built the tennis stadium, we were in a baseball stadium in 1995 and before, and it just happens so that we pay tribute to the lady that was very helpful in building this stadium. In '95, the ATP told us, before '95, We can't go in an old baseball stadium, that's it. '95 will be your last year with the tournament.

Jacqueline Boutet was a member of the board at the time. She became chair of the board later, first woman chair of the board of Tennis Canada. She got to work and gathered the money and the partners to be able to build this stadium. Then the tournament took off really at that time, '96. We never stopped growing.

With the crowd, with the Montrealers, with the Quebecers. It's the people in Quebec, the fans from here, that have constructed this success over the years. No matter what, they're there.

The communication guy with the ATP was watching in the room there, the players room, with other players around, the matches. I think it was on Friday night. I happened to

pass by and everything.

He said, Hi, Eugene. He said, Come here. I'm telling these guys, This is the only place we have this.

What match was it, the first match? It was Evans and Paul, Tommy Paul. A very good match. The place was sold out. The fans enjoying themselves. It was just a great atmosphere.

The players were like this watching. The communication guy from the ATP says, See, this is Montreal. That's what we get here every year.

It's the fans. I think they make the show. We should be proud, not me, but everybody should be proud about that. That's what we're exporting. When we say we're in 175 countries with ATP Media, reproduce all those rights that we sell everywhere. That's what they're watching. When they watch Montreal, they see the full stadiums. That's the show that we're producing for the entire world.

We're pretty happy about that to answer your question just in two words (laughter).

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