

Omnium Banque Nationale

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Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Valerie Tetreault

Tournament Director

Press Conference



MARC-ANTOINE FARLY: Good morning. I hope everybody is all right. Welcome to this closing press conference after our tournament. Before giving the floor to Valerie, I want to take the time to congratulate you for your coverage of this week.

As you know, the profiles of Omnim Banque Nationale are a big part of the visibility gained by our tournament, and it is vital for us. Thank you for all your good work and your coverage. We appreciate it a lot.

We are going immediately to start with questions and answers. So if you have a question, raise your hand.

Q. Hello, Valerie. It's always easier to see the positive points rather than the bad points, but I'm sure you have two columns. What is there in those two columns?

VALERIE TETREAUULT: There are no columns. Well, if you start with the positive, in spite of the challenges this week, and of them those posed by nature, what I remember is the passion we felt for tennis in the stadium and for our event.

Of course, if it had not been for the rain, I would have been able to announce we broke our records. We would even have shattered the previous record. We were going to reach 255,000 people instead of 237,000, but because of the rain, we are going to end up with 227,000 because of the sessions that we canceled because of the rain.

We never had so many people for the family weekend this year. It's good for the future, and it was good to see that during a qualifying day or the first stages of the tournament, all the courts were sold out whether during the day or in the evenings. That was very early in the tournament already, and we didn't have many Canadian players. So this is really proof that people are very interested in tennis, and it's good for us.

Now we are turning to '25. There will be even more tennis sessions and more tickets sold. So it was good to see that

the interest is there, and this interest is favored by the fact that we will have different kinds of products, especially next year. So we'll have different crowds according to different areas of the tournament, and this is good because it helps us have more people join us.

Now, for the negative points you have always to see the positive in the negative. We had many challenges, especially with the weather. We had to totally review our scheduling, and we were able to demonstrate that we were extremely resilient. I congratulate my whole team.

It was not easy. We tried to navigate through all this, and ATP itself was saying that we were able to organize three sessions within one day. This is unprecedented. So we were very creative.

We showed we were able to offer tennis to the biggest crowd possible and the best experience also. Our approach is the approach that we are a big family, and we help each other. It's like when you have people coming to your home, and I hope this is the way the people felt when they came to see us here.

Q. If you were to use only one word, apart from rain, to sum up the whole week and what you felt during the tournament this year, what would that word be?

VALERIE TETREAUULT: One word? I might say adaptability because I really had the feeling that we were permanently in the adjustment mode. I think we did the best we could, given the conditions we had, so this is the word.

Besides the rain, I can think about our opening evening when Milos Raonic pulled out, and we had to have this crazy race through Montreal to get Bautista. We didn't know that at the time, but this was going to happen all along the tournament.

So every year we get this chance of discovering new players, so it happened this week too. Look at Popyrin playing the final. Most amateurs didn't even know him, so we like the Cinderella stories here. It's already a Cinderella story being in the final, but if he won the title, it would be his very big title for the first time. It would really be a beautiful story.

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

Q. Last year with all the difficulties you had you said, Next one will be a piece of cake, but apparently it was not a piece of cake.

VALERIE TETREAUULT: Well, after last year and before this tournament many people told me, It can't be worse than last year. So that's their fault. They shouldn't have mentioned it.

Well, now I expect anything. I'm ready for everything. I know that when you start a tournament, you have to be able to face anything that happens. Of course, I have experience, and I had experience for many years, although not as a tournament director, but I saw many things. I know very well that there are no easy tournaments, but this makes things interesting.

We just had our report done with the ATP, and it was very encouraging because our tournament has been highly appreciated. What I remembered from it is that what the ATP mentioned was that what is making this tournament is the people, the human beings that are working for the tournament.

This is what we say to the amateurs here. We believe the crowd is making this tournament. We have a very good crowd. They welcome the players very warmly, and this is something that the players appreciate here.

I believe this is extremely valuable, and I'm very proud of it. Of course, the biggest challenge is to be able to keep what we have already and to make sure that this signature will stay as it is even with the bigger format we will have next year with more days.

Q. Well, a question about this new format. How do you keep this quality for next year, and how are you going to continue being successful from the marketing point of view and with all the volunteers you will need?

VALERIE TETREAUULT: Well, what was special this year is that we had the impression that we were working on two tournaments at the same time because, of course, given the major change that will happen next year, we couldn't start preparing the day after this tournament. So we needed to work ahead of time already on next year's tournament.

So since the beginning of the year, we've been planning 2025 from the point of view of logistics, and on the scheduling too. We were able to announce a preliminary schedule in June.

Now we have to try to improve the details. We said to

everyone that we were going to upgrade the experience, so we need to identify the elements that will be able to cause the people to say, Wow, when they come to the stadium next year. We want them to really feel that Omnium Banque Nationale is entering a new era.

Q. Of course, you can't control the weather. Don't you think that the roof is essential to avoid players to have to play two matches on the same day, for example?

VALERIE TETREAUULT: We are talking more and more about a roof. When it rains, it has a positive effect because it means everybody talks about it even more. So it adds pressure for us to be able to get a roof.

Next year with a new format we will have more room for maneuvering because the players will have a day of rest in between each match until the semifinals. So if something happens like last Friday, the player will just have to play two consecutive days instead of having to play two matches in one day.

This year it happened sometimes for some players two days in a row. Of course, the beauty of having a roof is that we are also able to guarantee that a match will take place. We want to attract tourists. Well, a tourist who comes to Montreal specifically to watch tennis, when he buys his ticket, needs to be sure he will be able to watch a match on Center Court.

It's the same for TV, international TV, because they are helping us project the image of Montreal, but every time we miss a window because of the rain, it's a loss. The roof would help.

So about the roof, we compare with what the other similar tournaments do. Not all Masters 1000 have a roof, and not all of them are playing on 12 days like we will be doing, but more and more of them are adding a roof, and this is a pressure on our tournament.

It is becoming the standard, and we don't want to be known as the last one on the list. So we want our tournament to be one of the most appreciated tournaments by the players.

Q. On a more relaxing note, was it the first time you were using a blower to dry the court?

VALERIE TETREAUULT: Yes, you could see it was a first time. I used that blower for the first time because I just felt powerless given the situation, and I hate not being into action in that case. So it was a way for me to fight the rain and to be active against it. I will remember that little session with the blower.

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

As I said before, given the size of the tournament, our team is relatively small. We are lucky because we have almost 1,500 volunteers to help us for the tournament, but otherwise, the rest of the year we are a small group.

So all the other tasks have to be done, and it is normal for us to pull our sleeves up and get to action to make sure the tournament will be successful.

Q. We spoke about the roof with Mr. Fitzgibbon, and we're going to talk about it in the following months, but I know you said you were going to file a project this year. So what I want to know is, what do you dream of? When you think about the tournament in five years from now, in six years from now, when do you think the roof will happen?

VALERIE TETREAULT: My craziest dream would be to have it next year, but I think this is too crazy. But, indeed, this is part of the following steps. We were talking about carrying out feasibility studies and trying to study the structure in the south of our stadium mainly, and all this will help us to create a plan, a calendar. I would see that happen in the medium-term.

In my dreams there are many things, of course, to improve this tournament. An example is that we would need a third big court. We saw this week that you had top players that had to play on Court 5 or Court 9 with stands that were overwhelmed. Now you also have top players who play the doubles. So sometimes we had to send them on a court where there were very few seats, so it is a problem.

There are many things we can do to help the tournament grow even further. We also should try to get more physical space to be able to welcome more amateurs. Most of our sessions already are sold out.

So I was talking about the midterm. Let's say short-term is three years, and medium-term would be from three to six years.

Q. About the physical expansion, you mentioned having a third big court, but you would need for that to take land from the park. Are you having discussions with the city to obtain those pieces of land? So do you see in the medium-term the possibility of expanding the surface of the stadium?

VALERIE TETREAULT: We are, indeed, discussing right now with the people from the district and from the city to see what the options are. I mentioned this yesterday. We absolutely need to have more land and also to increase practice courts. We will need them for next year.

Some options could be to go somewhere else and have satellite sites that we could use for the players, but of course, in an ideal world it would be better to have everything on the same site. We are at the stage of having conversations, discussions, but nothing has been promised yet.

Q. About the attendance, of course, bad weather doesn't help, but do you believe the fact that the Canadian players didn't do well and were more or less absent had an influence on the attendance this year?

VALERIE TETREAULT: I don't know, but we are selling more and more tickets very early in the year. So we are less dependent on the sales on this given week. But, of course, when Canadians play, it's beautiful stories that come out. You have Canadians who are able to obtain fabulous victories.

I remember 20 years ago when you had a Canadian player winning a first round, it was a surprise. Now the surprise is when we don't have a Canadian player going through the first round. So things have changed a lot.

But if I think about my best memories of the tournament, when I was young, very young, I remember the victory of Sebastien Lareau against Richard Krajicek after Simon Larose against Gustavo Kuerten, and more recently Shapovalov and Felix, who had gone to the quarterfinal. I mean, we've had good results lately.

So these are very special moments, and the crowd I believe in that case are more involved in the match, and they play their role. So it was some kind of a disappointment for this year's tournament.

Q. So Montreal is going to become the biggest sports city in the world within 30 years. How can this materialize?

VALERIE TETREAULT: Well, it's difficult as a federation, as a nonprofit organization, to compare ourselves with the beautiful machines like Indian Wells, but because of the flavor of Montreal, because the tournament is so diversified, we are able to be competitive.

We have plenty of ideas to improve the tournament, to make it grow, but we need to find the resources to do all this. We will still keep dreaming.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks.

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