

WTA Tennis Media Conference

Friday, June 30, 2023

WTA Legends

Press Conference



CATHERINE WHITAKER: Ladies and gentlemen, as you can tell, I think we are ready. I'd like to welcome you all here today and thank you all very much for being here at this very special occasion marking an historic moment and celebrating its history makers that you see before us here.

50 years ago, almost to the day, on the eve of Wimbledon championships in 1973, more than 60 players gathered right here at the Gloucester hotel for a meeting that would change the course of sporting history.

Just to set the scene for you, in June 1973, a woman in the U.S. could not get a credit card in her own name. She couldn't take legal action against workplace sexual harassment. She could be excluded from jury pools on the basis of her gender. She could get legally fired for getting pregnant.

We'll take a look at this cartoon from the "Daily Express," nothing personal against the "Daily Express" if you're here today, but this is from the "Daily Express" in 1971. For anyone that can't read that caption, it says, Ladies, let's keep our women's lib activities off the Centre Court.

Now, of course, Billie Jean and the original nine had already made feminist history three years earlier. They risked their careers by joining forces with Gladys Heldman to launch what became the groundbreaking Virginia Slims circuit for female players, signing iconic \$1 contracts in September 1970, thus creating women's professional tennis.

The risk, as we can see from the gathering in this room, paid off. The venture turned out to be so successful that the sports establishment decided they wanted a piece of the pie.

In short, by the spring of 1973, competing women's circuits had emerged, dividing the talent pool and weakening the overall product.

Billie Jean King knew that strength lay in unity, that it was time for women to find one powerful and harmonious voice.

Today we celebrate this moment with Billie Jean and some of the women who stood with her to create and grow what became the leading global sport for women.

The Hologic WTA Tour and the Grand Slams offer annual prize money exceeding \$180 million, with events on six continents, and more than 30 nations represented in the world's top 100.

Without further ado, I would like to formally introduce you to the women who started it all. We have Pam Whytcross. We have Penelope Moor. We have Sue Minford. We have Ilana Kloss. We have Helen Gourlay. We have Patricia Bostrom.

Up on the stage we have Ingrid Lofdahl Bentzer. We have Francoise Durr. We have Betty Stove. We have Rosie Casals. We have Billie Jean King.

I'd like to welcome you all here today, and thank you all so much for being here.

Anyone like to tell me how the journey was?

BILLIE JEAN KING: Windy.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: Spiritually and literally.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Spiritually it was great. You always want me to talk.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: They came on an open-top bus today.

FRANCOISE DURR: I think it was a great trip we took and I think we're very happy it turn out so well, see what women sport doing today, besides the tennis.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: I can't wait to hear your anecdotes, words of wisdom over the next hour. I'm sure everybody here feels the same.

Before we get started, let's take a look at this reminder of why we're all here today.



(Video shown.)

CATHERINE WHITAKER: Before we do get started, I'd like to tell you a little bit about the audience that we have here today because they represent a cross-section of the tennis family.

Firstly, a very warm welcome to Steve and Micky, CEO and chairman respectively of WTA. Along with them I'm delighted we have representatives here from the ATP, the ITF, and the LTA. Joining us from the AELTC today, Deborah Jevans, a former WTA player, and the All England Club's first-ever female chair.

We also have a very special group to acknowledge here with us this afternoon. I'd like you to raise your hands and wave. Yesterday 50 girls and young women from the Elena Baltacha Foundation took part in a tennis clinic mentoring session as part WTA's global outreach community program Come Play presented by Morgan Stanley.

Along with Nino Severino, cofounder and chairman of the foundation, and WTA ambassador Judy Murray, who led the clinic alongside Jo Konta and Heather Watson, and provided vital inspiration for young players.

The incredible work of the Elena Baltacha Foundation as well as the Murray Play Foundation is supported year-round by the WTA's foundation, whose mission is to empower women and girls through initiatives promoting equality, education, leadership, health and wellness.

It's these girls and young women with us today who will become the leaders of the next generation. Who knows, could play a role in shaping the next 50 years of the WTA.

It's my pleasure to extend a very warm welcome to you all.

Last, but by absolutely no means least, with us today are two representatives on behalf of current WTA players, who have taken time out from their Wimbledon preparations to be here with us today. I'd like to welcome 2022 Wimbledon semifinalist Tatjana Maria and her daughters, Cecilia, who I don't think knows too much about being here today, and Charlotte, two stars of the video we just saw.

I'd also like to welcome 2017 US Open champion Sloane Stephens.

Sloane is not only a major winner, but she's also been a member of the WTA's players council since 2019, and has been a powerful advocate behind the scenes and center stage for the WTA and its players.

She also makes an inspirational contribution through the work of the Sloane Stephens Foundation, which shares with young people the power of this great sport to transform lives.

With that in mind, Sloane, it seems fitting that you be the one to speak today on behalf of your fellow players. Please come up to the stage.

SLOANE STEPHENS: Thank you, all. I'm so honored to be here to represent my fellow players in this very place that 50 years ago our tour was founded, the tour that I'm able to play on, the tour that has given me so much in my life. I'm very grateful to be able to stand in front of you guys today and share just a little bit.

Sometimes I am on the players council so I can admit it's very hard to understand what you have done for all of us players, what it means to have created this tour, and what we would fight for. We had a players council meeting yesterday, and I honestly don't understand how you created the tour and then won the Triple Crown at Wimbledon. It seems almost impossible. I'm not sure how that was done.

To be able to be on this tour and what you all have created has made me be able to have the life that I have and travel the world and do all these amazing things along with all of my fellow players that I represent. If it wasn't for you all, we wouldn't have what we have.

We are so grateful.

With that being said, we are just getting started. I know that what you guys have built will continue to grow well beyond me, well beyond Charlotte, everyone that tennis represents as a whole for women's tennis.

One thing we are just getting started, but what we mean is that every generation must strive to carry the spirit of what you all started every single day, and that's what we're going to continue to do.

The world has changed a lot in the past five decades, in many ways for the better, but there is always more to do. We are living your dream, when you look at what you guys have created, we hope you feel very proud, because we do.

Enjoy the celebrations and thank you.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: Thank you, Sloane. Exactly as Sloane said, we are just getting started. I have a lot of questions for you. I know you have a lot of questions as well. We will have plenty of time for those.

I'm going to kick things off. Billie Jean, I have to come to you first. The founder of the WTA, without whom none of us would be here today, if you can, I would like you to set the scene for us. What was the landscape of women's tennis in June 1973? What led you to gather all of your colleagues together in this very hotel 50 years ago?

BILLIE JEAN KING: Well, I didn't gather them. We'd been trying for years actually to us be at one. What I did and what a lot of us did is we'd figure out who -- wait a minute.

Okay, anyway, thank you, Sloane, those words meant a lot to me and I know to all of us. That's what it was all about. As you said, you're living the dream. Continue to make that dream even better for future generations like Charlotte.

Times were very tumultuous. Tennis became a pro sport in '68. We were losing out on the prize money, it was terrible for us. Rod Laver made £2,000 in '68. I made £750. When I saw my check, I went... We fought so hard to get pro tennis, I was so happy, then I wasn't very happy. I knew that was going to be a fight.

What happened is we'd been talking, the original nine and others on the Slims tour, talking about we needed to be together. We had these two tours now. The top players were split. We knew the top players had to be together.

For instance, Rosie would lobby Betty, Frankie, Ingrid, we would be lobbying the other players to show up at the Gloucester. It was June 21st, it was a Thursday, before Wimbledon, in 1973.

One of the big reasons that everybody showed up was most of us were staying at the Gloucester. It was the first time we got a free room. We were over the moon. And that helped because everybody was in one place.

So we weren't sure if anybody would show up really that day. We were really scared. At least I was scared. I can't speak for everyone. We were very excited, but also very scared because what if nobody shows up or we don't get enough players and...

The big thing that happened is that Jill Cohen, who was CEO and chairman of Philip Morris, had made an agreement with the USTA that we would join the tours together as one. As soon as that happened, I said, This is it, this is our moment, we can get everybody together.

They did that earlier in '73. So it teed us up. We all came here. We had over 60 players. We were ecstatic that we had that many players. I cannot tell you. At least the group here and some of the others.

I went to Betty right here, she's our big, strong one, and I said, Please stand in front of the doors and don't let anybody out. I'm looking at her, Betty, don't let anybody out.

Everybody thought we were keeping the media out. No. We were keeping the players in, okay? It was hilarious what was going on.

All the media was out in the lobby asking about the boycott. I said, We're not doing the boycott. The men rejected us. So we're in here and just pleaded with the players we had to be one. It happened.

My former husband had the bylaws ready, which was major. If we get everyone to say yes, we need to have our officers and be signed in properly to have a proper association. So that was major.

Everybody basically said yes, and we asked for the vote. We pleaded with them. I mean, I did. I had this little podium like this, I remember. Rosie was sitting over here. I can't remember anything else. Larry was back there.

Everyone raised their hand and said yes. They came up and put their signatures down. We voted for our officers. We had an association when we walked out. So it was absolutely... I was ecstatic. I was just so -- since I'd been thinking about this since '64. For me personally, the reason I won the Triple Crown was I was so happy we had an association. Every day I'd wake up and go, We did it. We did it. So that that made a big difference.

I won the doubles with Rosie. That was great. Great friends. Also then with Owen Davidson, who just passed away this year. It was really great.

ROSIE CASALS: It was a good year, '73. The Battle of the Sexes, too.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Boy, a lot happened that year. And equal prize money at the US Open.

ROSIE CASALS: Yeah, a lot of stuff.

BILLIE JEAN KING: It was a turning point for tennis.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: A lot of celebrations this year coming up.

Rosie, did it feel like now or never? Do you ever wonder what would have happened if that gathering hadn't happened or people hadn't voted in favor?

ROSIE CASALS: I don't think we thought that way. We were going to get this done. I mean, we had been campaigning all year to convince, I mean, Frankie, with the European players, because they had more issues than we did. We had been playing on the Virginia Slims. We were successful with our new tour, making money, living the dream. Not quite as well as you guys, but living it nonetheless.

We were really on our way. We knew that we were growing, but we needed to talk as a unified body. ATP had been going in the same direction of forming their association. We knew we had to do something very quickly, so I think all of us here really tried to influence all our players.

I think they saw the writing on the wall because the doors were there, Betty was there, and the less of two evils was to sign on the dotted line, so...

BILLIE JEAN KING: Betty was a huge influence that day (laughter).

ROSIE CASALS: I notice they only have two sets of doors now. I'm joking (laughter). This is a different room, so it wasn't quite the same.

BILLIE JEAN KING: We needed a big room. Couldn't have gotten anybody in.

ROSIE CASALS: Nonetheless, I understand.

BILLIE JEAN KING: This is how we talk (laughter).

ROSIE CASALS: Many doors she had to cover. She did a great job, kept us going.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: Betty, you had an incredibly important role on the day, but you were elected treasurer that day. Not only are you competing for major titles, you're also a professional administrator. What was that process like? I imagine an incredibly steep learning curve.

BETTY STOVE: Well, it wasn't very difficult because before we had the WTA, I worked for my father at a shop, so I knew how to do the income and the outcome of the shop, so... It was very easy. If you don't get it in, you can't get it out (laughter).

We decided that we should charge everybody \$250 to become a member of the association. Good. Well, hammered it through. Then the next following day I went to the dressing room. I said, You and you and you, can you write me a check for 250?

Can we do half of it? It's a little bit a lot of money.

No, I said. For you I will do 125 and you can pay the next one in New York.

Okay.

Then the next question was, Can I have a receipt?

I said, A receipt, a receipt? I don't have a receipt.

Out of the Gloucester hotel to a stationery store, right, got a little booklet that said I received the money from that and that.

So that's how we started. It was not funny because on the tour I would collect more money. So I go to the next tournament, suddenly empty the dressing room. When I went in, they went out (laughter).

INGRID LOFDAHL BENTZER: It's true.

BETTY STOVE: It is true, Ingrid. I was strong and collected the money so we could have an office in New York.

BILLIE JEAN KING: We knew she would get the money. She's great with money.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: Sounds like you picked the right person.

BILLIE JEAN KING: We did.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: I don't know if you've noticed this in front of you, this is a press kit from the Virginia Slims circuit in 1975. Inside are all the player bios. This is just an example. There is you. Your nickname here is Frankie Durr the French Terror. I think this illustrates how much you all understood the importance of the media in selling your product to the people and engaging everybody.

Talk us through that process and how you sold the media and the public on the tour, on the WTA.

FRANCOISE DURR: Yeah, I was the secretary so I have to take note of everything and every meeting. Sometimes the meeting were in hotel room and we were little group of people. We make selection of things. I have to write everything down.

ROSIE CASALS: You wrote in French.

FRANCOISE DURR: No, no, no, I wrote in English. It was a little bit difficult for me at the time. It's still difficult now

(laughter).

Anyway, so I have to write what we did in the meeting and things like that. Sometime I have to say that was not very well done, things like that.

Most of the time at the beginning we were having a hotel room and we were all in the hotel room and we would discuss things what we have to do, thing like that.

It was very, very difficult at the moment. Some people say, Oh, no, I don't want to come at the meeting. What we have to do? I just want to play tennis.

It was a lot of problem with having a lot of people to make a decision. But it was fun to be part of that and see what we could do with the woman tennis association.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: Ingrid, this is your right of reply to Betty. I wanted to ask you, you were one of the only mothers in the room that day at the time. I imagine that gave you a pretty unique perspective on it all?

INGRID LOFDAHL BENTZER: Yeah, I had my daughter Helen in 1969. It's not ideal to have a child on the tour, that's for sure, particularly not at that time. She's also my big cover. I'm sitting here with a sore thumb here because I haven't won a Grand Slam.

We had 11 covers for me. I couldn't win a Grand Slam. I would have, plenty of them, if I wouldn't have had my daughter (laughter).

You have to take the positive. I think we were pretty good, all of us, with Betty, everyone fleeing the dressing room when Betty showed up. Get out of here, she's only after your money. It wasn't their money, we needed it. Billie and Rosie and Francois. To this day thinking back with my daughter sitting on the court, giving advice during the US Open, saying, Go more up to the net, Mommy, you are losing.

BILLIE JEAN KING: I love it.

INGRID LOFDAHL BENTZER: We did. Mimi Wickstead and I. Sorry, she's not with us anymore. We laughed so hard and actually relaxed and won the match.

I think I'm the only one that has had a five-year-old coach. I didn't have a coach because we couldn't have a coach at that time. It didn't exist. We didn't have an entourage.

ROSIE CASALS: It's a good thing you listened.

INGRID LOFDAHL BENTZER: I did at that time, Rosie,

but I would listen to you, too.

Also it's great to see the WTA has come forward and done what they've been doing to allow mothers two years and come back. We couldn't. I mean, I was playing in Sweden, actually Francoise in Stockholm Open. I was nursing my daughter, she was four months old. I was on the court.

Get on the court.

I'm nursing, I can't.

They had to delay the direct transmission until I was done. Then I went out and I played. Francoise would say she was terribly sick that day because I happened to beat her.

BILLIE JEAN KING: How do you remember the scores? I don't remember anything. You guys are great.

INGRID LOFDAHL BENTZER: There you are. Here we are, knowing each other from all those years, still being friend. Still we can spend hours together telling stories from that time, which was absolutely wonderful.

I've got my compatriot Christina. We camp together. We see each other here. We fall into each other's arms. We are family. Great that we have WTA keeping our family. I'm getting emotional now.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: That's lovely. Really lovely.

Penny, you have been kind enough to donate these incredible dresses. These are Ted Tinling dresses of yours from the Virginia Slims circuit. Could you talk about Ted and his significance in helping to build the brand of the WTA Tour.

PENELOPE MOOR: I think it was really important to create a way for group identity, which was really important at that time. Yeah, he was legendary in his attention to detail and to understand what we were trying to do. It was amazing. He was great.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: Thank you. They are incredible. Thank you for lending them to us for today. I might have to take one home. Never mind (laughter).

I have a question for Ann. You won junior Wimbledon in 1973, so you must have been one of the youngest players in the room that day. How much appreciation did you have for what was going on and the significance of it? Could you ever have imagined what it would all lead to?

ANN KIYOMURA: No. At the time no. I was 17 years old.

I had just graduated from high school. I did not have a chaperone. I came here by myself. I didn't know what to expect.

It was wonderful that we had leaders before us to make this path for us. Little did I know that there would be so many opportunities for young players, and the older ones, too, to do what they could do.

I was told in high school that maybe I could become a secretary after I graduated, if I were to leave high school, or even if I went to college. There were not college scholarships at the time. That was just the beginning. It started maybe a couple years after I graduated.

I came here. I took a chance. My parents said, Well, see how you do. If you can travel the world and go places, keep your expenses to be able to make those, it would be wonderful.

Little did I know that I would be coming back with 13 more Wimbledons. So thank you very much to all these leaders here.

I want to say to all the young people out there, it's always wonderful to look for the opportunities, and for parents, too, to see that their children can have these wonderful opportunities to take advantage of, so...

CATHERINE WHITAKER: Patricia, you went on to have a career in law after your career in tennis. How did tennis, the formation of the WTA, how did that set you up for life in the real world?

PATRICIA BOSTROM: I'll stand up as a lawyer (smiling).

In tennis you learn dedication, how to set goals, how to work hard. All those attributes transfer over to another career. It really helped.

But what I want to say is this group of women did something far beyond tennis. When I went to Wimbledon in 1973, women were paid, if you lost first round, \$300. The men were paid \$800. You were already in the hole. Men could cover their airfare and their expenses. You had to play singles, doubles, and mixed doubles in order to break even.

The work for equal prize money started, Billie Jean would go to the Grand Slam tournaments and say, We need equal prize money.

The Grand Slam tournaments would say, No, we can't do that.

With her support, all of us agreed, she went to the US Open and said, I will not play until I get equal prize money.

What is the US Open going to do? She's No. 1 in the world. Could bring in millions of dollars. The US Open said, Yes, we will have equal prize money for women.

Then she went on and got equal prize money with all of us supporting for Grand Slam tournaments.

This notion of equal prize money transferred into equal pay for women. So now all of a sudden people are asking, Why is there not equal pay for women?

What you've done, when you started in equal prize money here for tennis, I believe has gone on to help equal pay for women throughout the nations of the world.

Thank you very much.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: Another round of applause.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Motivate, motivate.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: Before we open things up to the floor, you brought me onto the subject of embarrassing Billie Jean a little bit. I wondered if somebody might like to explain what the qualities are of Billie Jean that made her the leader and the figure that was able to make this all happen.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Oh, man.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: Rosie, I'm looking at you.

ROSIE CASALS: You're looking at me?

I guess I would experience on and off the court. Obviously when we played doubles, things may not be going well, she would look at me, I'd look at her. She'd say, We're going to win this.

I said, Okay. I'm on your side.

We would. So I learned to believe in her very, very quickly. So she's always been somebody who's been a visionary, someone who's always led, someone who's thought very strongly about what she feels, says what she feels. You know basically where you are.

I think we are fortunate in our sport and our friendship as well that we found someone to lead women's tennis and more. She's still leading. I'm still following. But that's okay. I cover her back when that lob goes over her head.

BILLIE JEAN KING: You and I had a lot of lobs.

ROSIE CASALS: Nowadays I say, Yours (laughter).

It's been very special. I think you've gotten the gist that everybody feels that way about one another, that you just come back 50 years later, even if the room is not the same, even if you don't quite look the same. Who is that? Oh, I know that person. I've seen her before.

There's something that really binds us together, all the things that we did together. We believed in one another, supported one another, played one another, beat one another, lost, cried, ate, practiced. We did it all together.

It's been a great sorority. We see the younger ones coming along. This one other here we saw how long ago in South Africa followed us here and everywhere, now she's a part of us.

It's been a great journey, a great partnership, a great friendship. As she says, Relationships are everything. I agree. We all are still together in the fight for equality.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Yes. Why not?

CATHERINE WHITAKER: Before I start crying, let's have some questions from the floor. Anybody from the Elena Baltacha Foundation have a question?

BILLIE JEAN KING: In 2010, Queen Elizabeth honored us by being at Wimbledon. A few of us sat in the dressing room before we went out to meet the Queen. Elena was in the locker room then. We had amazing discussions. I knew she was sick then. She did talk about she wanted everybody to have a chance to play.

Here is her foundation. Isn't that what's it all about, letting everyone have an opportunity, particularly underserved young people? So I just wanted to thank everyone at the foundation for all you do to help others in all the different communities.

Elena was really special. She knew her time was short. She made the best of it.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: Now Billie Jean has made everyone cry.

BILLIE JEAN KING: I'm crying and I have makeup on.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: Would anyone like to ask a question? Raise your hand if you would.

Q. What would you say to your 18-year-old self if you

were able to talk to yourself, 18-year-old self, what would you say?

BILLIE JEAN KING: In life or on the court or what?

Q. Just about tennis, in general.

BILLIE JEAN KING: About tennis?

CATHERINE WHITAKER: How old are you?

Q. I'm 18.

INGRID LOFDAHL BENTZER: I think when you have a dream, doesn't matter what age you are, you should always try to get the best out of you, if it's in tennis, another profession. Absorb as much information you can get. Anything that's in your head, nobody can take away from you. That's what you're going to keep, keep following your goals.

BILLIE JEAN KING: The essence of life on the court or off is to stay in the present with the ball.

ROSIE CASALS: Maybe that's what happened to me, I didn't (laughter).

BILLIE JEAN KING: Yeah, you did. Yes, you did. This is Rosie (laughter).

Anyway, it's really important in life if you notice when you've been in the zone, if you just look back when you thought, I was just in the zone, it's usually when we're present the most, I've found. I don't know. Just looking and listening to others, knowing yourself, also believe in yourself no matter what the score is. It's one ball at a time, that's it.

ROSIE CASALS: I vouch for that. We were down 6-Love, 5-Love and we won 'cause you said so. That's when you said we were going to win.

BILLIE JEAN KING: No, I said, We have to win (laughter). It doesn't matter. This is hilarious, these discussions.

PATRICIA BOSTROM: I'm from Seattle, Washington, it rains all the time. I wanted to be No. 1 in the world, everybody here wanted to be No. 1 in the world. That was my highest goal. Then I wanted to play Wimbledon, all the Grand Slam tournaments, wanted to travel all over the world and play World Team Tennis. I didn't make my high goal. Chris Evert did, Billie Jean did. Because I set that really high goal, I made all of my secondary goals.

ROSIE CASALS: She's a emotional speaker, okay. I



didn't know that. Chris, okay. Hired.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Could I say something? I just want to thank the media. In 1973 we didn't have social media. Without you, the camera people, the announcers, just everyone who would be behind the scenes, you told our story. Without you, our story would have never been told.

I still think the players should talk to you a lot, because you also have social media, which people forget. Sometimes the players forget that most news outlets have social media as well, so you're hitting a lot of different people.

Without you, we would not be where we are today. It's because you told our story. I'm telling you, it was vital. Thank you to all of you. Appreciate it.

ROSIE CASALS: How come we were trying to exclude them? We were trying to keep them out of the room.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Only for a moment. Then we went out in the lobby. They only cared about the boycott that day. I kept say, No, we're not going in to do the boycott. We're going in to do an association.

They didn't believe me. I always asked the men to go with us. They rejected us. I always wanted the men and women to be together in the late '60s. You know what happened there.

The ATP started in September of '72, which was fantastic. If you can't have us together, that broke my heart in some ways. Still, I think we should be together because we're more powerful together. I know they work together, the ATP and the WTA, work together a lot now, which is really wonderful.

It's just that we're all in this world together. I mean, everyone has different power, different attributes. Let's use everything we've got to make this world a really better place. We have lots of challenges, as we all know, as everyone has alluded to on and off the court.

The media, we did a lot of media training, a ton of media training. The one thing we did is we didn't talk about our backhands and forehands. They were very insistent, the people that helped us. What I talked about is everybody on the tour, talked about the tour, you guys. I'd try not to talk about myself if I could help it. It was really collective. It's "we." It's not "I" or "me," it's "we." That's the reason we're able to be sitting up here today.

Everybody bought in. Talking about money, we ended up taking 10% of our prize money to start the WTA. You have to hire an executive director, these people. Where do you

get the money?

I said, We're going to give 10%.

The players said, What?

ROSIE CASALS: It came out of the top players.

BILLIE JEAN KING: 10%, we do pay the most. That's how I got them to say okay, the players.

I said, No. 1 is going to pay the most, No. 2.

They said, All right. Top players.

ROSIE CASALS: We had to train the media. They would ask us questions, if you were married, What does your husband think? When are you getting married? Why aren't you in the kitchen with Dinah? Why aren't you cooking?

We're trying to make a living. We're starting to want to have a career. We had careers, but not paid careers. So we needed to educate the media to start thinking a different way and accept us as sports personalities, so it was different.

Now I think the media understands pretty much all of that.

BILLIE JEAN KING: They're different, too.

ROSIE CASALS: New generation, it's all the same.

BILLIE JEAN KING: 84% of the media are still men, though.

ROSIE CASALS: That's true. It's just the way it is. Women journalists, you need to work in that department.

BILLIE JEAN KING: They are. Believe me. It's tough.

ROSIE CASALS: I know. We need to get more.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Just need to be transparent, need to help each other, get the best we can get. It's real simple stuff, but it's hard to do.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: Men are still allowed to ask questions, just to be clear (laughter). If you do have a question...

Q. So much has changed since 1973. So much progress. Sloane's life is different, Charlotte's life. When you look ahead 50 years, what are some of the biggest challenges facing the women's game today?

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What work still needs to be done?

ROSIE CASALS: I'm not going to answer that because I'll be dead.

BILLIE JEAN KING: So will I? We'll all be dead.

We're always dreaming of the future generations. When the original nine in '70, the birth of women's professional tennis, then our first tour in '71, WTA in '73. These three things were always running through everything, and that is that any girl born in this world, if she's good enough, will finally have a place to compete.

Number two, we be appreciated for our accomplishments, not only our looks. But our looks... The women who are making the most off of NILs and social media, they sexualize themselves, they make the most money. That is really tough to try to figure that out.

Then the third one was obviously to make a living playing the sport we love.

Those three things are always right in my heart and mind when I wake up every morning and go to sleep every night, that we want to continue.

I think what we did is we really set the pace for women's sports forever. The LPGA started in 1950 ahead of us. We started '73. We went ahead within one year, we were ahead of golf. We worked really hard to change things.

We didn't just think about women's tennis. We thought about women's sports. We thought about even beyond that, the workplace, like Pat was talking about, Patricia.

We're a microcosm society, sports are. We were an indicator of what's going on with women all over the world. Our relationship with men, all genders, we're not just binary anymore.

I think the young people have it much better in some ways as far as the way they think and feel. They're much more accepting, I think. They're not as judgmental, which I think is fantastic.

The challenge I think they have is the mental health with the anxiety, the loneliness, the depression they feel. I want them to put their damn phones down and look at each other and connect, because connecting, relationships are everything. Put your phone down, look at the person you're talking to, ask them questions, connect. It's about connecting with your fellow person and also the universe that way.

It really is important. I see the kids at the table looking at their phones. Then they tell me how lonely they are. You're making yourself lonely when you do stuff like that. Don't do that. Just look at each other, care about each other, look at the person there, look in their eyes, just listen, just care about each other.

I see them do the phone thing, then they tell me how lonely they are. I'll see them 10 minutes later, they tell me how depressed they are.

I know it's food for thought. Some families make the kids put the phones down. We want to be the leaders. We're still the leaders in women's sports but we don't get appreciated as much because we're not a league, we're not a team sport people think. I think we're both. I think we're an individual and a team sport, which I don't think we promote enough. I think we should have a team season.

I would call us the WTA League or something. I think the media go, Oh, I'll pay attention now, something. Something is not quite right there. But we are the leaders, there's no question.

ROSIE CASALS: Are you listening, Steve?

BILLIE JEAN KING: These are just questions I have to try to help our sport. That means men and women, all of us.

Judy, I want to thank for everything because you've been amazing for the UK, especially Scotland. I think they should do something for you. I think we should do a statue or something, a celebration. You make it fun.

I've been to your sessions with the children, and you make it fun. It's about play. It's about play. You have another book out though, now. I haven't read it. I'll be promoting it, but I haven't read it. The first one you wrote, "Keeping the Score," [sic] it's fantastic. You will say that play is in that book with the boys.

How many mothers have had a No. 1 doubles and singles player in 2016? Judy has two sons and both have been No. 1, in the same year, 2016. I think that's amazing.

ROSIE CASALS: Very impressive.

BILLIE JEAN KING: I want to thank you. Thank you so much.

Q. What happened to you 50 years ago was all about equality for more than half the globe basically. It set a tone for girls and women everywhere. You mentioned now having them have the opportunity to play tennis. I noticed your rainbow wristband on your watch.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Yes.

Q. One place where there isn't equality is Saudi Arabia for women or LGBTQ people. The men's tour, they've been in talks with not Virginia Slims, a commercial company, but basically the government agency about an investment in the sport.

BILLIE JEAN KING: The rich people.

Q. What do you think about that? What message does that send? We've seen it in golf, in British football as well. What message does that send if your sport were to engage in that kind of commercial partnership?

BILLIE JEAN KING: First of all, the WTA were the first to go to the Middle East in Doha I think in '08, where we had our championships. We got a lot of flack, but a lot of wonderment.

I'm a huge believer in engagement. I don't think you really change unless you engage. That's just me personally. I'm not speaking for anybody but myself here. I'm a big believer in engaging. I don't know what that really means in the end.

Just meeting people. I know the shaykhan in Doha was wonderful. She wanted to make Qatar the cultural center of the Middle East. I never would have known that unless I talked to her, engaged.

How are we going to change things if we don't engage? I don't know. It's hard, you're right. It's very hard.

Q. In particular with Saudi Arabia, homosexuality is criminalized.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Yeah, I know. I understand totally. I don't know. I'd still probably go and try to talk with them. But this isn't fair because I should let the WTA speak for what they feel.

Steve, if you want to, Micky, whatever. I don't know.

ROSIE CASALS: Give them the microphones.

BILLIE JEAN KING: They're the ones that should speak here. I gave you a tiny opinion.

STEVE SIMON: As everybody has reflected, it's a very difficult and very challenging topic that's being obviously measured by many, many different groups right now.

In February, which has been reported, I went to Saudi

Arabia to see it for myself the first time. We took a couple players and some board reps with us as well, because we wanted to see what the change was.

There is still tons of issues in Saudi Arabia. The advancement for women's rights and where they've come from is transformational right now as far as what they're doing in the space. They still have a long way to go, but they're making huge strides.

There are still real issues with respect to the LGBTQ community there that have to be done.

I think where we are right now, we've had conversations. We'll continue to have conversations. I think what Billie said is right: it's about engagement, learning in these situations. Sometimes when you're in the positions such as we're in, you need to support the change, okay? They need to make the change. But how can we work with them to support this change and keep pushing it further?

As much as Billie has said earlier, you've heard from the group here, this group set the pathway and the compass that's been followed. It is about equal rights for women and achievement for women and compensation and all those things.

Tremendous amount of progress has been made, but worldwide there's still a tremendous amount of progress that still is needed and still isn't there. We're seeing it from the economics of sport, for all women's sports, that they deal with, the difference between men and women.

I think these situations and what you're talking about with Saudi are certainly things that you have to look at very seriously. You need to evaluate them. We'll have to decide how do you take it on and involve them because you want them to do what they're talking about right now and advance the opportunity for women in the country, make it better. You need to support that. You can't walk away from it.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: Thank you, Steve.

Q. I'm not the media, but I'm a student at Stanford University and more importantly a fan of you guys. I think a lot about what you speak to about the idolization of celebrities, especially the sexualization of young women who are celebrities or even athletes. I think the most powerful people that I look up to are the athletes that have their own brands or businesses or media deals. I'm curious how we not only get athletes the prize money they deserve but how does the WTA work to promote female entrepreneurship to allow these women to have their own brands and craft their

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own narratives?

CATHERINE WHITAKER: Who would like that?

ROSIE CASALS: Steve can answer that.

BILLIE JEAN KING: I don't want to answer for all of us. Steve probably.

ROSIE CASALS: I think Steve or Micky can answer for that.

MICKY LAWLER: Thank you for the question. That is actually what the WTA is all about, is to give young women the platform to build that brand, to take control of their destiny, to be able to be entrepreneurs. They're not contracted to the WTA. They are masters or mistresses of their own businesses. We try to give them that independence to do with their future what their passion calls for.

You've nailed it on the head. That's what they started. We are still starting because they were the first to really have a start-up mentality. That's what we continue to honor today.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: Thanks, Micky. I think Ilana has something to say as well.

ILANA KLOSS: I think tennis is a microcosm of society because you learn a lot about life and business, it's not only about the sport. To be honest, you don't play that long. Your tennis career might be maybe 10, 11 years, maybe less.

For the most part I think it's really about the relationship you build on the tour. Because we're athletes, we get unbelievable access to incredibly smart people. I was lucky to be part of the beginning of the WTA, be on the first board. I learnt the business of tennis.

I think you just have a great opportunity to see the sport from the inside, and to understand not only what the players want, but also what the promoters need and the sponsors need.

I didn't go to university. I promise you my 11 years on the tour taught me more than any college education might have. We do stand on the shoulders of these women on the stage. They mentored us. They taught us. Most importantly, they thought about the tour as a global tour. They made sure that it wasn't just American or it wasn't just Europe. I think we're seeing the fruits of their labor now.

To be in the room is amazing. The education that we learnt just from experiencing and communicating, actually

running the WTA. At the time we didn't have a lot of extra businesspeople, so we learnt the business and we sold the sport and we sold ourselves.

I think there's no better way to set yourself up for the future. I know, Sloane, you're doing it with your charity. All the players also have their own businesses and brands. No better, I think, university than the WTA.

Q. Elena came off skipping and was so excited.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Very exciting moment for me, too. It was exciting to be with her and meet the Queen at the same time. We were so excited for that.

Q. I have a question, as well. The WTA have never forgotten Elena. They wrapped so much love around me and helped me through those really hard years, after I lost her. They continue to give our girls incredible opportunities. We were at Eastbourne this year, had a lovely discussion with Madison Keys, who is a fantastic personality, as is Sloane, had some great experiences with you as well at Wimbledon. But Madison said, she talked to girls, talked about the ups and downs of her time in tennis. I think that's what builds the strength in the ladies up on the stage, across the floor. Even with our girls at such young, tender ages, some of them have been through big ups and downs already, which builds their strength. But can you, as ladies up there, talk to them a little bit about coping with the ups and downs, what doesn't break you makes you and builds that strength.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Well, I'm big on asking for help. I've had therapy for a thousand years (laughter). Eating disorder, all those things. I asked for help with the people that can really help you, that are knowledgeable in the areas that they've earned their degrees in, they know what they're talking about.

That support, I'm just talking about me personally, I can't talk about everybody else, but I know that mental health is very big with the WTA. We started I think in the '80s, I started to talk to Kathleen Stroia then, whatever. When did that exactly start? What was the year?

ROSIE CASALS: I don't know. You talked all the time. I don't remember.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Friendship here (laughter).

No, I think we've done a lot. Everybody goes, You're not doing anything for mental health.

Of course we are. We have to keep it private. You can't

talk about it, it's got to be private. It's been very private.

But it's been going on for a long, long time. I think if you're on the WTA Tour, ask for help. Girls are not taught. We're taught to not ask for what we want and need. Girls are absolutely told that. Do not ask for what you want and need.

So we need to ask for what you want and need. Girls are supposed to be perfect, and men, boys are supposed to be brave. They can't be brave all the time. We are never going to be perfect. So don't try to be perfect, okay? Just stop it. Ask for help. Your friends will help you, too, sometimes, certain people.

I don't want to keep talking about this stuff.

INGRID LOFDAHL BENTZER: The funniest thing is the psychologists, they followed the tour in the beginning. They ask you questions, What do you think when you're 30-15 up? 15-30 down? What are you thinking? They take these notes.

Now we have sports psychiatrists, which didn't exist before. We created a new job for those people, as well.

BILLIE JEAN KING: I love it.

INGRID LOFDAHL BENTZER: When we were on the tour and my serve didn't work, I would go up to Billie, my opponent, and ask her, Can you help me on my serve?

We helped each other. There was nobody else. I got very jealous of people, when I was on my own on the tour, suddenly a mother came there. Tracy Austin traveled with her mother, right? My mother was somewhere in Holland, right? No one to travel.

You get over these people because we had friends on the tour. We could talk with each other. That's important.

BILLIE JEAN KING: We used to coach each other.

ILANA KLOSS: You were asking about these young kids, how they could deal with things that aren't always good.

I think for me, I didn't win as much. That's why you knew Chris and Martina and not me. But here I am. I think it's really important, as long as you try your best, all you want to do at the end of the day is know that you've given 100%. I think as long as you do that, that's hugely important.

The other thing I'd say, which I heard Billie say a million times, it's don't take anything personally. Just do your very best. That's all you can do. If you do that, you've

succeeded.

Q. I'm from the Daily Express, so hopefully attitudes can change. I just wondered, coming back to your personal experiences referencing Doha, have you experienced change from that engagement that you spoke about?

BILLIE JEAN KING: I'd have to ask the WTA, though. We're still going there, aren't we?

ROSIE CASALS: He wants to know whether you experienced anything personally.

BILLIE JEAN KING: With them?

Q. Attitudes have changed...

BILLIE JEAN KING: I can't answer that truthfully. I don't know.

Q. Do you hold out the same hope for the Saudis?

BILLIE JEAN KING: I always hope. I'm a total optimist. I try to think the best of everyone.

All I know is we have to keep trying. When you think about it, it hasn't been that many years if you look at history. History, a lot of history.

I don't know enough to answer this properly. But now you've gotten me piqued. I'm going to find out more now that you asked me the questions. Maybe the WTA can answer that. We're still going, which I think is fantastic. That shows consistency.

It can never hurt when you go, I think. You just have to keep trying, keep figuring out what you think what they want and need. When we're doing all this, I always think about, What do they want? It's like you go to a sponsorship meeting, it's not about you, it's about them. What do they want and need for them to say yes?

In '72 when I said we wouldn't be back to the US Open, I went and got a sponsor. Got Bristol Myers.

What can the US Open say if we've got the money for them? I said, I've got the money. That changed everything. You should have seen Billy Talbert's face.

It's trying to figure out, How can we help each other? It's really understanding them. The only way you understand others is listen to them, ask them questions.

Like, when I was in Doha, I wanted to do a clinic for both

the boys and the girls, right? They only let me do a clinic for the girls. I was not happy about that, but that's their customs and religion.

What I learned, there was a mother there who has a child that's left-handed. Being left-handed is considered sinister still. She said, I would give anything for my daughter who is left-handed to be a champion because she would help erase the stigma.

I would have never learned that if I hadn't gone there. I thought, Wow. First I didn't realize the left-handed thing. Secondly, this mother was dreaming for her daughter to be really great, to set an example. Like Ons Jabeur being Arab is huge for us, a huge plus. Any time we can get a girl of color, any time we can get anybody. We have wheelchair getting a lot better. Those are the things.

I just have so much to learn. I don't know. I really don't know. Do you have an idea? I don't know. What did you feel?

Q. I think there was a lot of noise being made by FIFA and how they were going to change things. Not much had changed.

BILLIE JEAN KING: It's not going to change like boom.

Q. Not instantly, of course not.

BILLIE JEAN KING: I wonder if there was anything that was laid down that will eventually go up and rise up? I don't know. I don't know. I'm not the right one to talk to. I'm not knowledgeable enough.

Title IX I know about.

(Comments off microphone.)

BILLIE JEAN KING: The reason the U.S. won soccer in '96, softball, synchronized swimming, all these different sports, was because of Title IX in '72. It took that long for them to start getting coaches, start having uniforms, start having all the things the guys had.

The real law was about the classroom, classroom quotas. In the old days before 1972 if you wanted to go to Harvard, get your doctorate, be a medical doctor, they only allowed 5% of the class to be women. That's what's changed. Now it's 60% women and 40% men at college and universities in the United States. That is not good either. We need some more guys again.

It's like, Hello. These poor guys now haven't been raised right to get used to these women who are so successful.

They're going, Hey, why aren't you going to college? What is going on? It's changed a lot. They're saying we didn't raise our boys right to get ready for the women feminists. I go, Oh, boy, whatever. It's all these discussions, really interesting.

But it really was about classroom quotas. They had the word 'activity' in it, as Patricia was talking about, how it changed sports. 37 with the word 'activity' in it. There's four co-authors and they couldn't decide whether to leave it in or take it out. Thank God they left it in or we would not have women's sports. That one word staying in is women's sports.

STEVE SIMON: Billie, I wanted to address Doha. I'm old enough to remember when we first went to Doha. I had hair then, but I don't now. When we went to Doha, there were a lot of concerns about going there. It was really a question whether we should. The Arab countries at that time were insular. Women had zero rights. They were nowhere in the environment but at home at the time. There were concerns about our players wearing their tennis outfits and competing outside in a dress. It was a huge issue.

They were in a situation where they were trying to make change. Part of this was being able to feature professional women's tennis at the highest level in their sport to foster and support the change that they wanted to make.

If you look at it from then, when we first went, to where it is today, now it's normalcy to see women wearing any level of clothing they want throughout Doha. They're involved in the full environment. They have women professionals in medicine, engineering, retail, every place that you want to look at.

Now our tournament is actually celebrated there. They can't wait for them to come back each year. So it is about supporting the betterment of women and creating a message that's coming in, that there is change coming, and we're a part of it. I think that would answer your question.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: Thanks, Steve.

Q. Would the Saudis meet with a woman as opposed to a man or will they still...

STEVE SIMON: Micky is a very, very special and strong woman to begin with. I can tell you that she is at the highest levels of discussions in Saudi, as well, and is welcomed through the front door.

They are making huge changes. I'm not saying that Saudi

is a place we should be doing business with or not yet, it's still being evaluated, but they are making significant changes.

Where they were five years ago and where they are today with respect to women's rights and the issues is significant. We spent time in Riyadh downtown. If you go through the financial district in Riyadh, you would think you're in New York City or another progressive Middle East city, Dubai. You don't see any of the burqas or any of that type of stuff there. You move out of the city center, you'll start to see more traditional things. They have a long way to go, but they have a commitment to do there.

One thing I'll say about Saudi, they have a law that nowhere else in the world has: women must be paid equal to men in every line of work in Saudi. That's a law.

BILLIE JEAN KING: I didn't know that.

STEVE SIMON: That's a law. So there are some significant commitments there. They have a long way to go.

The question is, should we support it and how do you support it, okay?

CATHERINE WHITAKER: Thank you, Steve.

I have a final couple of questions.

INGRID LOFDAHL BENTZER: I wanted to add to the Baltachatas, for you it's got to be really special to sit here and look at all these powerful women up here, what they've done, and they're champions.

Not necessarily do you need to be a champion to be successful in your life after your tennis career. So don't despair if you are not the world No. 1. I never was. Neither was Betty, I think.

BETTY STOVE: In doubles.

INGRID LOFDAHL BENTZER: In doubles. But I certainly wasn't, neither in doubles nor in singles.

However, I've had a great life. I have a great life. I've been successful in my career. So all young people, Sloane, your generation, good luck with it all. There's only one world No. 1, and a lot of us others soldiers I would like to call us, and we are contributing to the whole end product. So good luck.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: Thank you.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Amen.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: A last couple of questions. Pam, I know you have a particularly unique perspective, not only were you a WTA player but you've had a 40-year-plus career with the organization since being a player. I wondered your experience of that, how you've seen the organization evolve in that time.

PAM WHYTECROSS: Yes, not quite 40, but... I was a young 19-year-old here back in 1973 coming from Australia, wide-eyed, bushy-tailed, perhaps. Yes, I was part of this with this wonderful group heave.

After a 13-year career, I then joined the WTA. It's been fantastic. I've had, as you said, a unique experience being on both sides. I think that's helped me in my role as a supervisor dealing with the players, knowing what they need.

The difference, of course, the biggest difference, is prize money. Back in '73, it might not have even been \$1 million. As you said, now it's about \$180 million that the girls are playing for, which is phenomenal.

Of course, the WTA has just grown. I think also back in the day, there probably were 10 staff members. I think now we've got well over 150.

I can see many of my colleagues around the room. Cutting edge, especially I'm looking at Kathleen, sports science is amazing what they do for the players in this day.

We've got our first physio sitting right there in the front row, Connie. It was just a supervisor and Connie Spooner as a physio. Now we have maybe six to eight physios at every tournament, massage therapists, mental health, everything, dieticians. We had a dietician last week down at Eastbourne. It's amazing what services we offer the players now.

They really use it. It's made everybody stronger. I mean, for me personally I've been very privileged to be part of this group, this association, and the leaders from yesterday and the leaders from today, led by Steve and everyone else in this room, it's been phenomenal.

I just want to say thank you very much. I've had a fantastic journey. Hopefully I've got a couple more years to go.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: Thank you, Pam.

Ilana, you also have a very unique perspective not only as a founding member of the WTA, but a front row seat to all things Billie Jean King for the last however many decades.

I just wondered what that has been like seeing all that up close.

ILANA KLOSS: Wow, I was saving it for the book (laughter).

No, I mean, look, I think I have had an incredible perspective. Actually was a ball girl for Billie Jean and Rosie when I was seven years old in South Africa. When I saw them play, I decided I wanted to be a professional tennis player. There wasn't professional tennis yet, but...

I was very fortunate to be in the room here. I think the one thing about Billie Jean is that she really wants the best for everybody else. I think when we formed the WTA, she was earning a lot of money under the table, was doing just fine. But I think for her it's always important to bring everybody along and make it better for everybody because we are all in this together.

As she always says, she's not done yet. We look forward to the future. We're really excited to have been part of this special history. So thank you.

CATHERINE WHITAKER: Thank you, Ilana.

Thank you to all of you, to all 13 of the WTA's founding members that are here today. It has been an absolute treat to have you all. Thank you all so much for coming. Good luck with Wimbledon. Good luck to all the media in the room. Thank you for coming. Let's eat some cake.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Thank you, Catherine.

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