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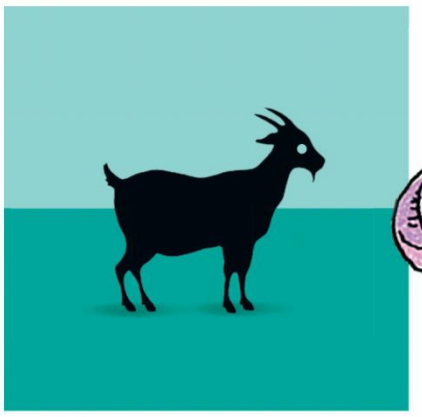

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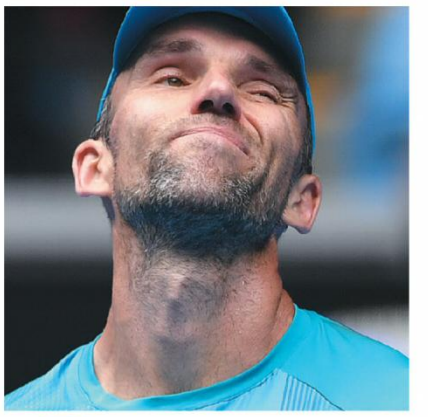

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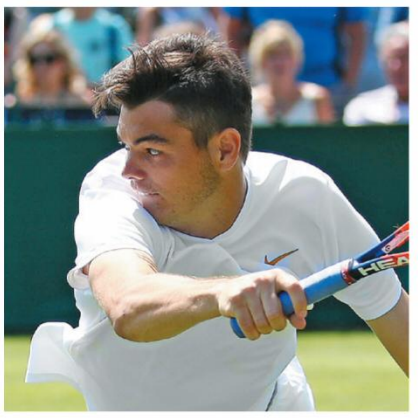

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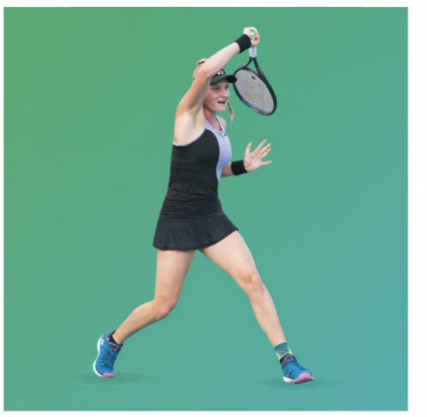

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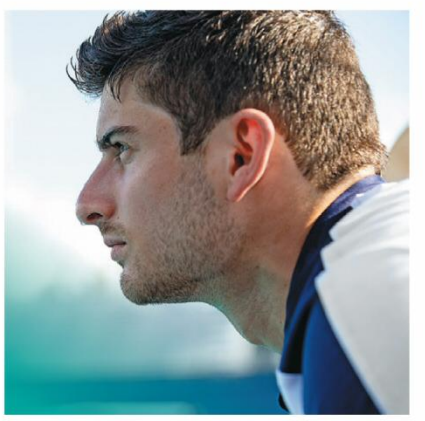

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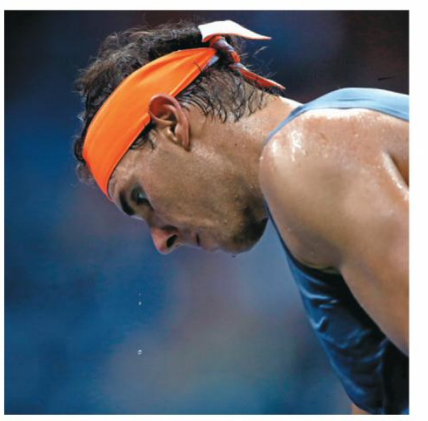

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The Kids Are Alright

The talent is there. For a while now, we've been waiting for a younger generation to bubble up and stake their claim on the top of the game. It has been an uphill battle thanks to four all-time greats—Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Serena Williams—refusing to give ground. And while we love the longevity and presence of these icons, there's something exciting about the arrival of fresh faces. We've been teased before, yet this collection of 21-and-unders seems to be the deepest and most talented in a long time. There are no sure things in sports, but it feels like this bunch is full of Grand Slam champions.

Naomi Osaka already has a couple of majors under her belt. Her power game, maturity and desire to top the rankings have separated her from the pack. But there are others who soon may follow.

I've always been impressed by Amanda Anisimova. I used to watch her train with the USTA years ago at my academy, and at an early age, her superb ball-striking and intensity were readily apparent. I've also known Sofia Kenin since she was 6 years old, and I can tell you this—no one is hungrier. She will do whatever it takes to win a match. And where the American men are concerned, Frances Tiafoe and Reilly Opelka have made impressive strides this year.

On the international front, there's a wealth of talent, including a slew from Canada. Bianca Andreescu broke through at Indian Wells, Denis Shapovalov's dynamic game already has him in the Top 20, and the sky appears to be the limit for Felix Auger-Aliassime. Marketa Vondrousova and Dayana Yastremska are works in progress, but keep an eye on both of them. Stefanos Tsitsipas is the youngest man in the Top 10 and not only has a flashy, charismatic game, but also a unique, soulful personality. These are a just a few of the burgeoning stars; to get a fuller picture, check out our entire *The 21 & Under Club* feature.

Ability, however, is not a guarantee for success. There are more parts to the championship equation than simply marrying a big serve with a heavy forehand. Finding your way in a demanding professional sport isn't routine: it's important to stay humble and down to earth, and to surround yourself with good people who are interested in your achievements—not necessarily your earning potential.

Intangibles can often be the ultimate determining factor. There has to be a nearly insatiable desire to win and a confidence that you're deserving to do so, even against the best in the world. Yet it must be balanced by a poise and calmness that aren't diminished by results. This isn't the juniors; the stakes are higher and victories more precious.

There will be mental and emotional challenges that these talented players have never faced before. Everything is magnified, and highs and lows must be taken in stride to have a long, decorated career. But from what I've seen of this crop of up-and-comers, I like their chances.

Chrissie

Chris Evert
Partner, TENNIS Magazine

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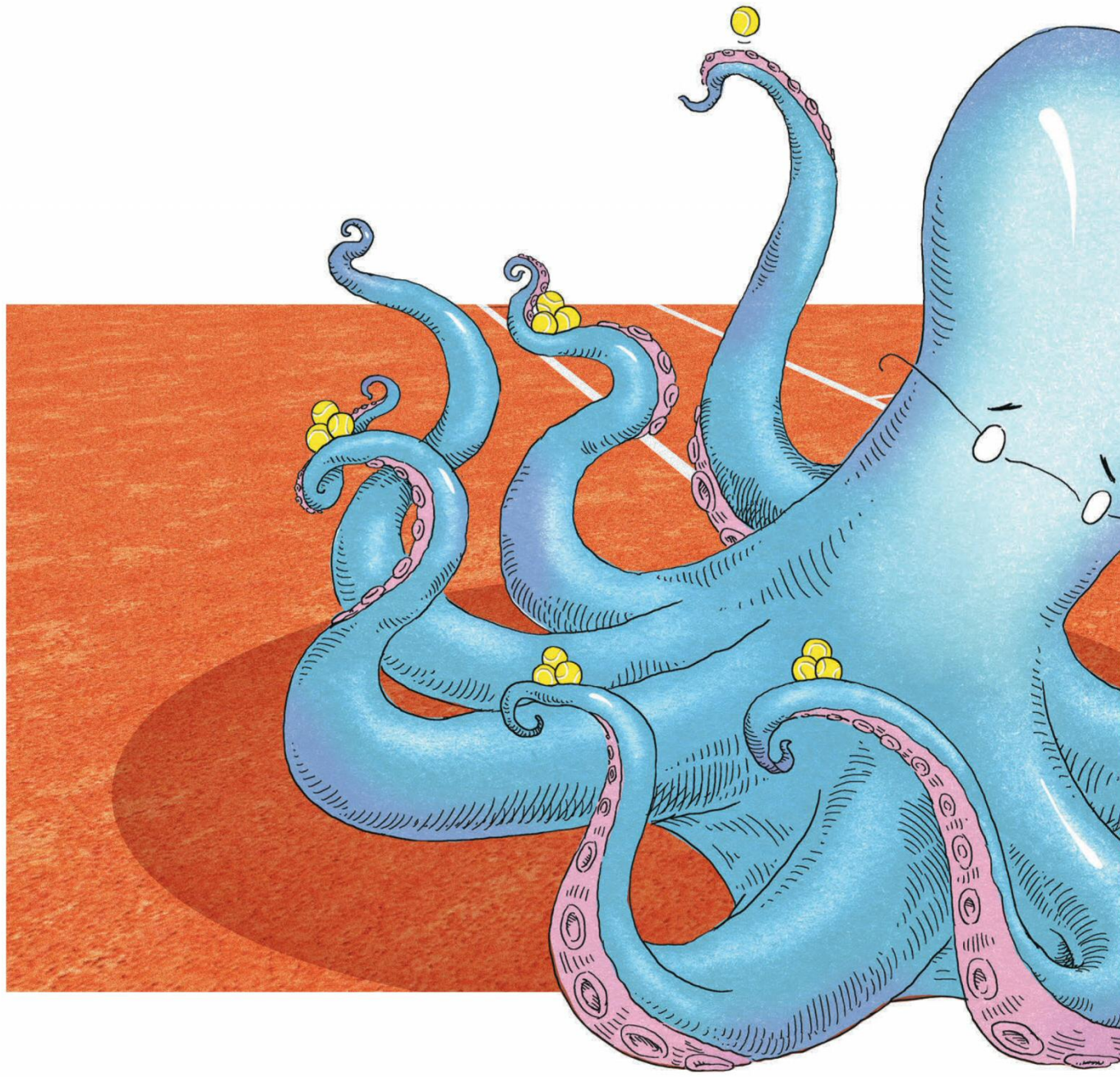


Two for One

Is there a rule against holding two tennis balls in your hand when serving? I've always done so, but in a league match, an opponent asked me to only hold one at a time. I did as he asked, but is this a rule?
—Peachie Elsas, Jacksonville, FL

Certainly not. Rule 16, on how the serve is delivered, says nothing about how many balls you can hold in your hand, as long as you're only tossing one of them. Your opponent may have been confused by *The Code*, #36, which says, in part, "a deliberate hindrance occurs when the receiver asks the server to stop discarding the second ball after serving, and the server continues" to do so. So long as you keep a grip on that second ball, you're OK.

Breaking It Down

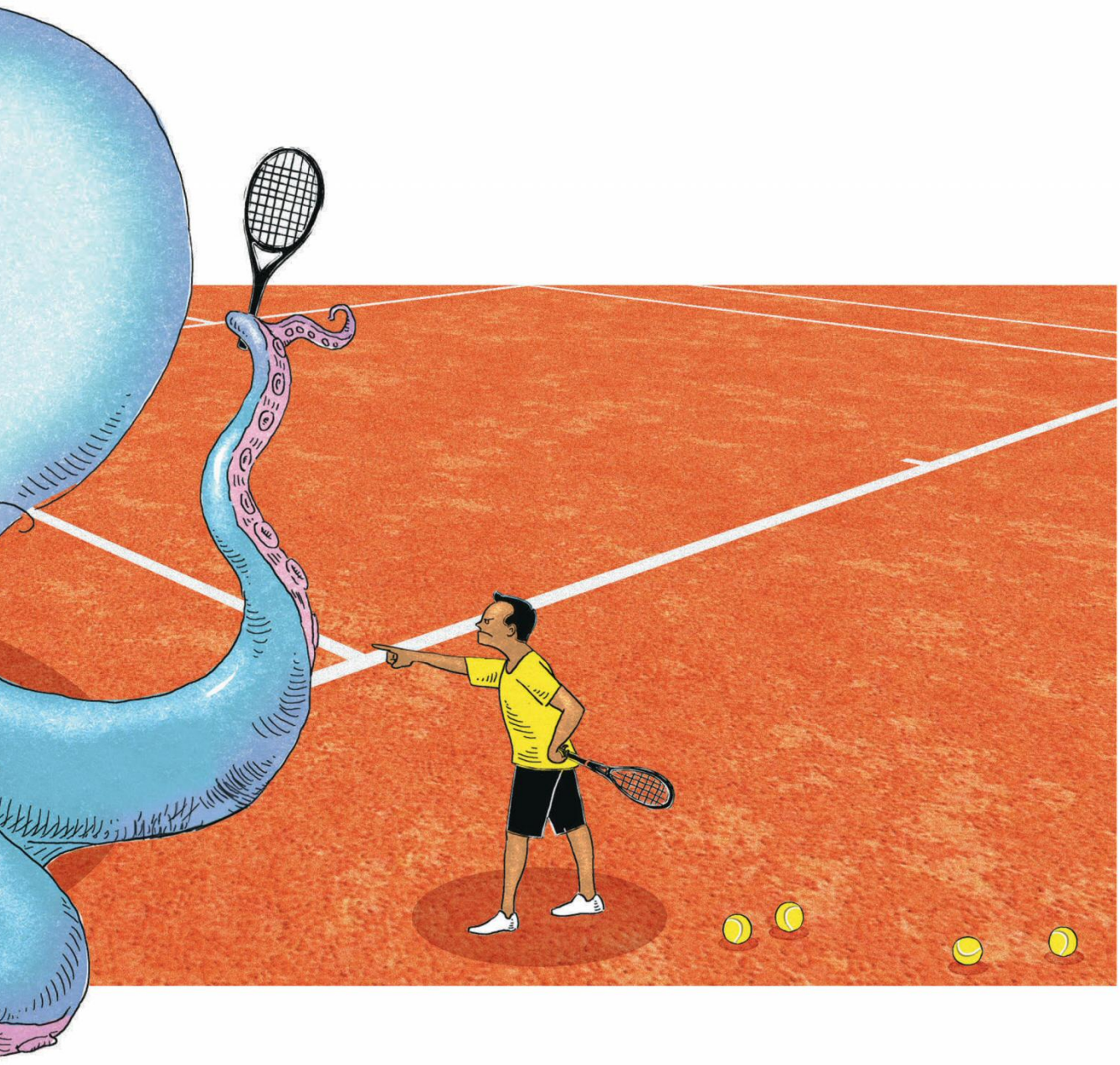
In a doubles match, we lost the second set in a tiebreak. For the third-set match tiebreak, my partner and I wanted to switch ends, and we also thought it should be our serve, since the other team started serving the previous tiebreak. Our opponents said you need to add up the games played to determine who serves first. Who was right?
—Cindy Cerise, Metairie, LA

We probably get more questions about this subject than any other, but figuring it out is easy if you remember these steps: 1) Players always switch ends of the court at the end of the tiebreak, before they start the next set. 2) The player/team that started serving the previous set will start receiving the next set. 3) If there is a match tiebreak for the third set, either doubles partner may start serving (and their opponents can switch their receiving order, if they like). All of this is covered in Rules 10, 14 and 15.

Tight Straps

We all know how high the net is supposed to be in the middle and at the posts, but is there a standard for the tautness of the cable that holds the net up? It seems that at some tournaments the cable is so tight that a let will ricochet off the top of the net, while at other tournaments the cable is so loose that almost all lets dribble over.
—Jeff Unger, Urbana, IL

Rule 1 says simply that the net is suspended between the 42"-high net posts and is "held down tightly by



WESLEY BEDROSIAN

a strap" at 36 inches in the middle. There is nothing specified about tension. The ITF and USTA (Comment 1.1) recommend the tension be "between 1.8 kN and 2.0 kN." The quick-and-dirty way to get the tension about right is to loosen the center strap and crank the net so it's 39 inches in the middle, then tighten the strap down to 36 inches.

A Return Fight

My partner was receiving a second serve. The server's partner called "net" as my partner returned the serve. Our opponents didn't return his shot. I said, "No let—I saw the ball pass a foot over the net." I said it was our point since they didn't return the ball. Was I right?

—Arlen J. Hall, Haiku, Maui, HI

by REBEL GOOD

You seem so positive about this, but you are positively wrong. Any player in a doubles match may call a service let (*The Code*, Item 27). Just because you didn't hear or see the let, you have no right to overrule the call. So the let stands, but it's now a first serve because you wrongly butted in, delaying the match (*The Code*, Item 30).

Rebel Good is a member of the USTA's Tennis Rules & Regulations Committee. He has taught rules to officials for more than 20 years.

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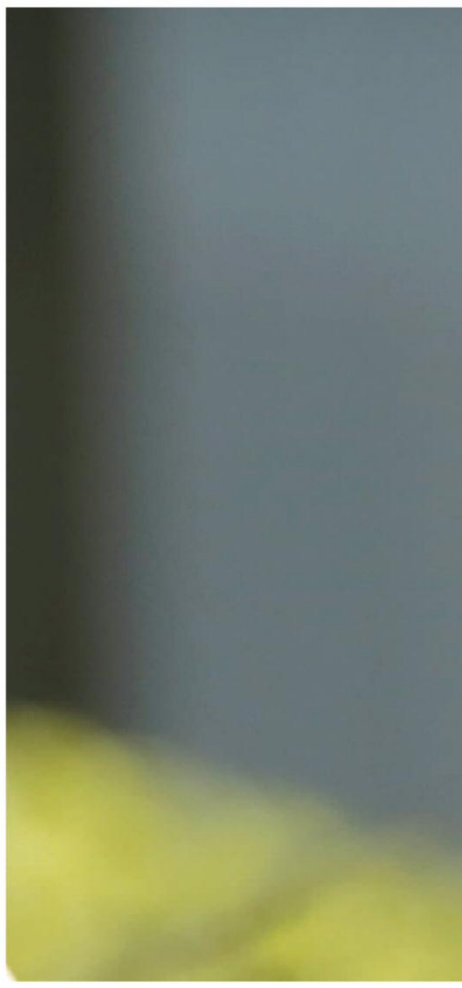
The Tennis Conversation

If anyone can relate to what tennis' rising stars are experiencing, it's this former teenage star



Who has caught your eye among today's crop of young players?

TRACY: I'll start with Felix Auger-Aliassime. He can already hold his own physically, but what stands out to me is his mental strength. He's said that pro-tour success doesn't feel like it's coming too fast for him, because he's had success at every level. I really liked that remark. So often players try to skip a level, and they might have a hiccup that can set them back. He's progressed by the book, and it's paying off. He waited until he experienced success, and then moved up.

How about on the women's side?

Amanda Anisimova. Like Auger-Aliassime, there's a calm about her—she can think her way through a match. She's a clean ball-striker. She hits the ball deep and to the sidelines, but she can also soften shots with her hands and use angles. She doesn't mind hitting a swing volley.

I get the feeling, though, that there's more to her game, which is exciting. She moves well, but there's still room for growth, both physically and tactically. She and her team have worked on systematically developing a complete game. There's a general belief in Team Anisimova that they can win matches by solving the riddle.

Why has it taken so long for a new

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WITH

Tracy Austin

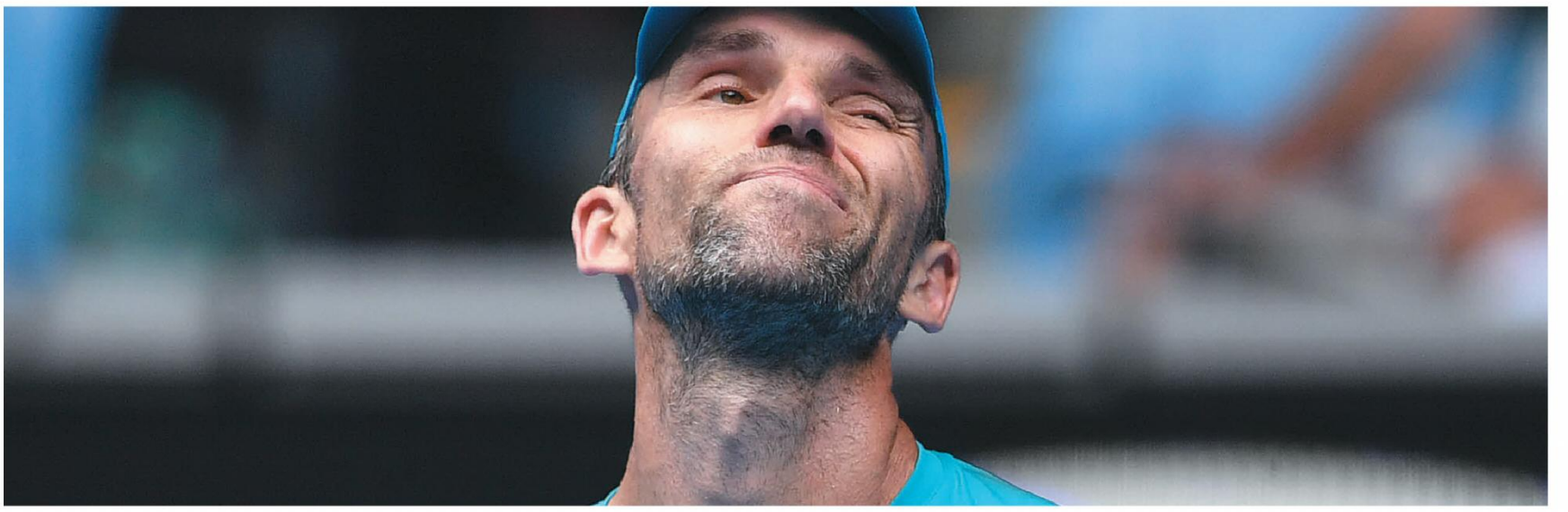
The American reached the US Open quarterfinals at 14, and won the title two years later. At 17, she became No. 1.

generation of players to seriously challenge the establishment?
Youth tennis is much more organized now, and that's starting to translate to the pro game. Look at Bianca Andreescu: she's from Romania, she came over to Canada, and tried out with Tennis Canada. She got into the program, and they made a commitment to her. From 10 years old, she has had a coach watching her every day, looking at her technique, her attitude and her scheduling. It's like grooming a champion, instead of haphazardly finding somebody special that comes along. These players are special, of course—but with the teams behind them, there's a navigation through their journeys, with well-thought-out processes and plans. The top young talents know where they're going, when to expect X, Y and Z to happen, and they can see how to get there, with experienced coaches helping them along the way.

We've seen some immediate and impressive results from this group of youngsters, but it seems like they are built for the long haul.
When you have people behind you who are process-oriented rather than results-oriented, it's huge. These 17 and 18-year-olds should be playing for another 15 years, at least. Success doesn't have to happen next year; these players can work on their games and become more complete professionals. When expectations are replaced by expertise, that removes pressure.

In the end, the biggest winner of this surge might be tennis itself.
Not only are we watching the emergence of some great new players, we're seeing some exciting new personalities. Frances Tiafoe is completely different from Stefanos Tsitsipas. In Denis Shapovalov, you've got a swashbuckler with an incredible one-hander and big ball-striking ability—and then you have more cerebral players, like Auger-Aliassime, who already has a sense of self and confidence. It's a great mix.

Roger Federer and Serena Williams are obviously getting older, and their generations have been around for a long time. You can see that there's a group of young players pushing in, and that's exciting.



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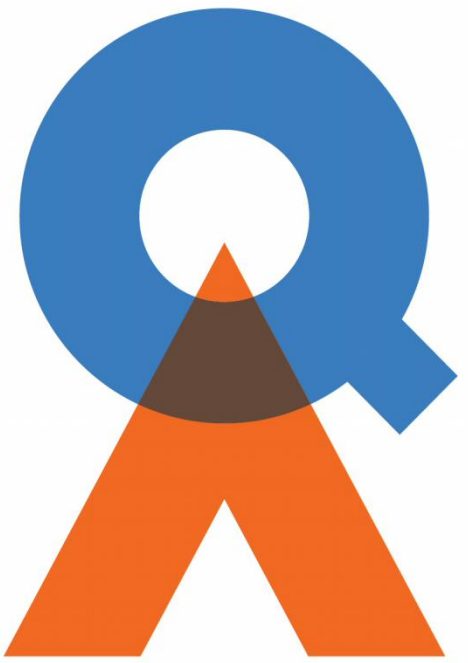
Ask the Expert

Young players are making their marks on tour, but this elder ace leader isn't going anywhere

by JAMES BLAKE



Ivo Karlovic turned 40 this year but shows no signs of slowing down.

What's the key to the Croat's longevity besides his amazing serve?

His hands are really underrated. Karlovic gets tons of free points on his first and second serves, of course, but he is able to back them up with good hands at net. With his size, it's difficult to go around or over him with passing shots and lobs, and his quick hands makes it difficult to go through him as well. Playing short points helps save his body.

"I think I am the fittest now that I have ever been," Karlovic told TENNIS.com in February. "In the last two years I have had almost no injuries, so I worked very hard. I don't see any decline in my movement. Maybe it is a little better right now."

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A former ATP No. 4, Blake has a 3–6 record against Karlovic, and played the final match of his career against the Croat at the 2013 US Open.

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Coaching in the Bigs

After working with two all-time greats in their primes, a coach transitions to a developing player

A Tennis Channel analyst, Annacone coached Pete Sampras and Roger Federer, and is now working with Taylor Fritz.

by PAUL ANNACONE

Pete Sampras said one of the smartest things to me when he was in his early 20s: "It's much easier to get somewhere than it is to stay there." It took Pete a while to be comfortable at the top, but once he did, it became routine.

That quote is the kind of mentally coaches need to instill in young players. But we're not talking about them climbing to the top of the sport; rather, it's reaching their potential—which is within every young players' capability.

It's important that coaches help young players sustain belief and composure, because no matter how talented the up-and-comer is, he or she is going to go through losing spells. Look at Alexander Zverev, who has been consistently inside the Top 5 but has heard so much criticism because he hasn't gone deep at a Grand Slam. Losses are necessary for growth—and at the same time, are one of the hardest parts of improvement. Players start to get emotional and question the direction they're going when they lose, and that doubt can be problematic.

In working with Taylor Fritz alongside his full-time coach, David Nainkin, that's one of my biggest challenges: making sure he grasps the process. Sure, we all hope for instantaneous, immediate and consistent success—but in all likelihood, that's not going to happen. There are inevitable setbacks. That's why when a young player does really well, really quickly, it's not always a good thing. Rafael Nadal might be the last player who made a big splash as a youngster and stayed there for good. You can see why in his approach to the game: all that matters to him is the next shot. He never dwells on anything or gets too far ahead of himself.

My big catch phrase to Taylor is that *there is no destination*. Otherwise, why are Rafa, Roger and Serena still playing? If you become caught up in a specific end, you open yourself to the possibility of a letdown and lack of motivation.

What do we do in our preparation that keeps us from just plodding along aimlessly? In the end, it's trusting the process so that you give yourself the best chance to improve, and to sustain a level of consistency that's commensurate with your talent. We don't know what exactly Taylor's peak will turn out to be, but for us, it's about getting there and then staying there. There is no ranking goal, but there is a clear understanding of the challenges both player and coach face.

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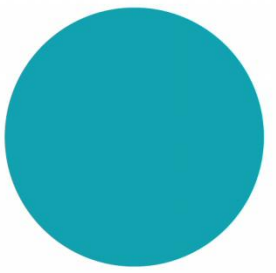

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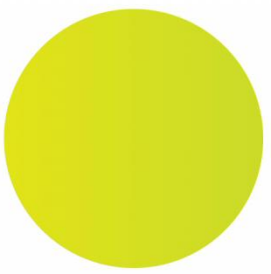

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Denis
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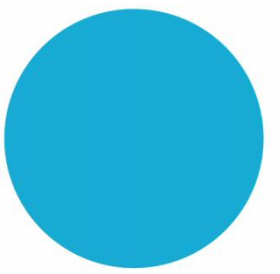

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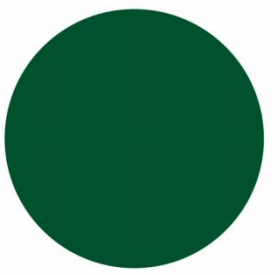

Naomi
Osaka

by Stephen Tignor

If this season is any indication, tennis is bracing for a youthquake. Here are the 21 players who will make the biggest tremors, all under the age of 22

How do you follow the Greatest Generation? It's a question tennis has tried to answer for at least a decade. Serena, Roger, Novak, Rafa: all of them are over 30, and they've combined to win 75 Grand Slam singles titles—but none of them are going away quietly. When they do, who will fill their very large shoes?

As you'll see in this issue, the future of tennis is still coming, and coming soon. While it may not produce a 20-Slam winner, it's clear that the game will be in good hands. Interesting hands, too: one thing we know for sure is that this new generation of players will infuse the tours with a wide and refreshing range of styles, personalities and backgrounds. When the Greatest Generation says goodbye, we can feel good about welcoming this cast of players to the courts.

NAOMI OSAKA stood out from the start. She had a memorable name, even-more-memorable hair, and a shyly deadpan sense of humor. She also had a sensationally unlikely backstory: Osaka was born in Japan, but raised in the U.S. by her Haitian father with the express purpose of becoming the next Serena Williams. She wasn't the first disciple of Serena, but when she bashed her way to the third round of the 2016 Australian Open at 18, it seemed as if she might be the best.

So it has proven. It took Osaka two years to make the transition from big-time hitter to big-match player, but no one could stop her once she did—including Serena, in last year's infamous US Open final. When Osaka backed that up with another major title at the 2019 Australian Open, the sport had a new No. 1, and a new future.

But Osaka wasn't finished surprising us. A month later, she parted ways with the coach, Sascha Bajin, who had helped launch her on her meteoric rise. Osaka's explanation was that happiness meant more than success. She struggled after the split, but however long it takes her to find her feet and range again, we know she'll get there. She may not be the next Serena, but with her seemingly contradictory, always interesting blend of confidence and diffidence, she's the first Naomi, and that's more than good enough.

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Part Old World, part post-millennial, Stefanos Tsitsipas is trying to scale the heights of the game, and see all the sights along the way

Thought Leader

by Stephen Tignor

"My life is like a speeding bullet that just hasn't hit the target yet," Stefanos Tsitsipas wrote on Twitter this spring. Accompanying his words was a photo of the 20-year-old Greek staring soulfully into the camera while taking a water break during practice.

The statement and the picture were pure Tsitsipas: sincere, self-dramatizing, restlessly unsatisfied—and expressed on social media.

In a word: youthful.

Of all the players who make up tennis' up-and-coming generation, Tsitsipas most fully embodies and embraces the often-thrilling, sometimes-painful process of growing up, both as a player and a person. More specifically, the Athens native embodies a generation of young male players who are attempting, so far without much success, to fill the very big shoes of Roger Federer, Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal.

As with everyone else in his cohort, life these days for Tsitsipas can feel like one long learning experience. Or, to use his words, it can feel like a speeding bullet that finds its target some weeks, but still flies well wide of the mark during others.

In January, Tsitsipas hit the bull's-eye when he upset Federer in the fourth round of the Australian Open. "Changing of the guard!" headlines around the world screamed. Tsitsipas was praised not just for defeating Federer, but for doing it with an updated version of The Maestro's game.

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In that moment it seemed as if tennis, after two decades of searching, had finally found an heir to Federer's artfully-appointed throne. Tsitsipas had the same elegantly lethal one-handed backhand; the same powerful, point-ending forehand; and the same instincts for how to deploy his many weapons to maximum effect.

"He could be my son," the 37-year-old Federer had joked when he faced Tsitsipas in Perth two weeks earlier. Tennis-wise, Federer may have been closer to the truth than he realized.

With his curly blond locks, purposeful strut and joyful celebrations, the 6'4" Tsitsipas also cut a distinctive, appealing figure on court. He manages to come across as Old World and post-millennial all at once.

"This young man is a young player on the way to elite status," Tennis Channel commentator Paul Annacone said. "It's exciting to see his flair and variety in his game style. He has the charisma, talent and mindset to be in many more final weekends of majors."

Fast forward two months, though, and Tsitsipas no longer looked or sounded like the happy-go-lucky new kid on the block. He had traveled and played virtually non-stop from Melbourne to Sofia to Rotterdam to Marseille to Dubai to Indian Wells. The tour grind had taken its toll, and when Tsitsipas reached the California desert, he discovered that his role as the ATP's Next Big Thing had already been usurped by an even younger player, Felix Auger-Aliassime. After Tsitsipas lost to the 18-year-old Canadian, he sounded less like the future of the game, and more like a kid who is still a little daunted by what it takes to be a top player today.

"When you do something with a lot of intensity and a lot of focus and a lot of will, sometimes your mind cannot keep up and you get tired," Tsitsipas said. "You cannot do the same thing over and over again. And that's why I admire the players like Djokovic, Federer and Nadal. They seem to be consistent in all they're doing."

Asked how he would rejuvenate himself, Tsitsipas could only shrug and say, "I don't know."

There's no reason to think that Tsitsipas won't find the answer eventually, along with the elusive consistency he craves. Tennis is deeply inscribed in his DNA. His father, Apostolos, has been his coach since he was 6, and his mother, Julia, was a Top-200 pro—they met at a tournament where she was a player and he was a line judge.

Like many natural talents, Stefanos grew up surrounded by the sport on all sides. He can't remember a time when the game wasn't part of his life.

"My first memory is being 3 and hitting balls with my father in the gap between [his] lessons," Tsitsipas told Greece's *Sport24* last year.

In classic Greek fashion, there's a mythic quality to Tsitsipas' rise. He grew up playing a variety of sports, but according to his family, he knew what he wanted to do with his life before he had turned 10. As his father recalled to Greece's *Tennis News* last summer, the legend of young Stefanos began after a junior tournament in France, when the 9-year-old "woke up in the middle of the night," came to his father, and said, "Dad, I have to tell you something: I want to become a tennis player. I like the competition, I like the challenge." Eight years later, he was the No. 1 junior in the world. This spring, he cracked the ATP Top 10.

Despite his sense of destiny, and his obvious gifts for the game, there were bumps in Tsitsipas' road to success. The Greek tennis federation had little money to spare for his training. Instead, he had to fall back on his family, who understood how tough it can be for anyone from a small country who has pro-tour aspirations.

"My parents were into tennis so they knew—my mom especially—how the whole thing works, and the sacrifices

It's been (pretty much) all smiles for Tsitsipas over the past 12 months, in which he's beaten Djokovic at a Masters event and Federer at a Grand Slam. In October 2017, the Greek was ranked outside the Top 120; in April 2019, he was inside the Top 10.

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With a versatile one-handed backhand and exceptional movement, Tsitsipas covers the court with a veteran's savvy at a young age. "I see him definitely being high up in the game for a long time," said Federer after his loss to Tsitsipas at the 2019 Australian Open.

you have to make," Tsitsipas told *The Telegraph* in March. "There are a lot of risks, but we also had a family member who helped us a lot economically—my mom's twin sister, Alla. She paid some of the bills so that I could travel during this difficult period from the age of 10 to 16. She was a big help, and without her I don't think it would be possible for me to be here."

If Tsitsipas is a throwback as a player, he's very much a member of his own social-media-savvy generation. His success over the last year has been meteoric, but we already know a lot about him. He tweets, he podcasts, he makes videos and vlogs, he takes photographs for an Instagram feed under the name Steve the Hawk. Rather than coming across as superficially self-involved, though, Tsitsipas appears to be the most thoughtful of the game's many Next Gen talents.

Tennis players, whether out of practicality or incuriosity, have traditionally allowed themselves to see little of the world as it zooms past them while traveling; their focus is on winning matches, not expanding horizons. Tsitsipas is the rare pro who can't help trying to do both. There's lots of downtime on tour, and he'd rather spend it creating than being bored.

Like a philosophy-spouting undergrad on a backpack trip around the world, Tsitsipas engages with everything he sees, and tweets the many notions that come into his head on his travels from Perth to Paris. A sampling of maxims from The Tao of Tsitsipas:

It's not the length of life. It's the depth of life.

Interested is interesting.

One thing that is impossible is to meet every single person on planet earth.

How do we stay human in an addicting technological world?

I pretty much operate on adrenaline and ignorance.

Living life is awesome!

As a junior, Tsitsipas split his training time between Paris and Athens, and those who knew him then could recognize his precocious interest in the outside world.

"He had a sophistication that you don't see in a lot of kids," says Sandra Harwitt, a veteran tennis journalist who interviewed Tsitsipas during his junior days. "He was educated and erudite, and he was actually interested in you. He would ask you questions like, 'What did you think of *To Kill a Mockingbird*?'"

"Just from the way he carried himself, you could tell he had something."

Tsitsipas' interest in others hasn't waned; he has been known to sit for hours with reporters, if the conversation is stimulating. But as with his game, Tsitsipas' communication skills haven't always come as easily to him as it may appear now. Life on tour has helped him come out of his shell, even though striking up friendships with his on-court rivals still isn't easy.

"I was shy when I was a kid, but not anymore," he said in Melbourne. "I learn to find comfort when I'm with people. I think I'm comfortable meeting new people and having a discussion with someone...I would love to have more friends on tour."

Whether it's making friends, avoiding burnout, seeing new places or trying to live up to the historic achievements of the Big Three, Tsitsipas has his work cut out for him—so far, it doesn't seem as if he would want it any other way. Federer himself took longer than most of his peers to forge his varied game into a coherent whole, and to find the consistency Tsitsipas is seeking now.

The place where Federer did it first, and where he has always done it best, is on Centre Court. Tsitsipas, who reached the fourth round at the All England Club last year, also has a game that should be built for grass. Wouldn't it be fitting if this speeding bullet found its target at Wimbledon this year?

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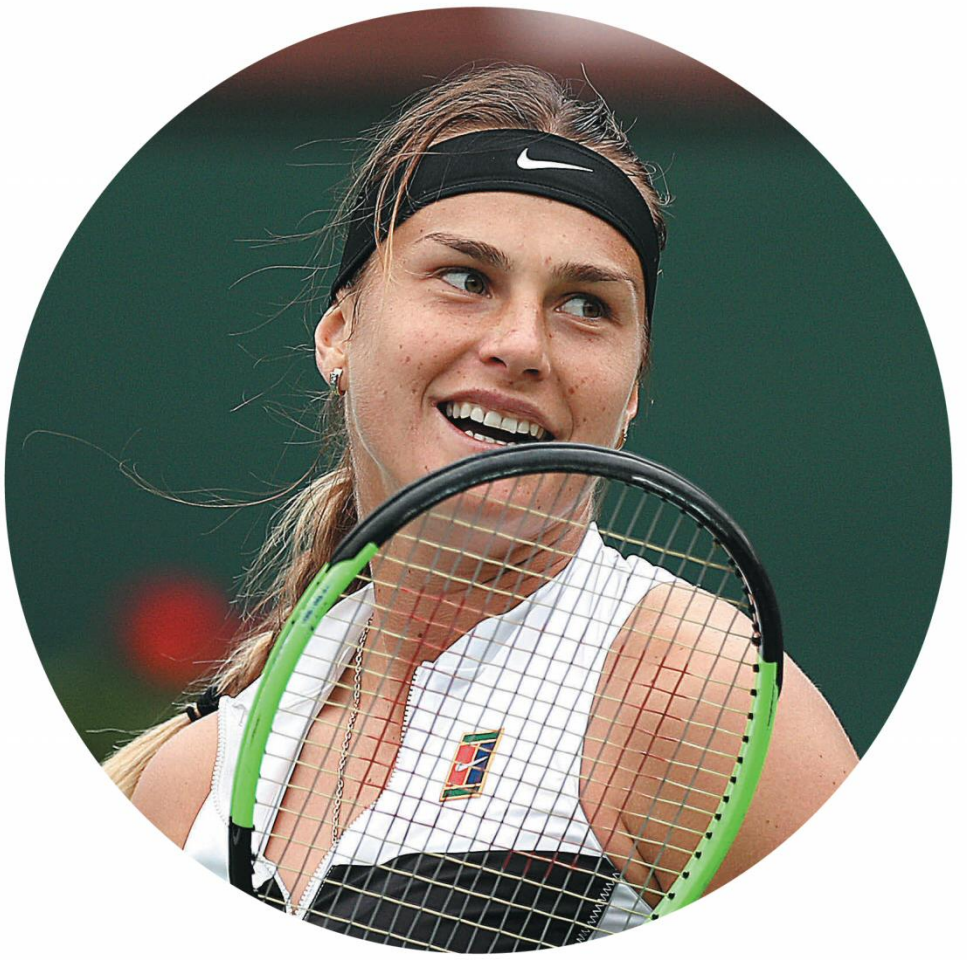

Title Time

Aryna Sabalenka already plays tennis like a champion. Now, she's trying to think like one

by Ed McGrogan

After prevailing in sweltering conditions on a side court at last year's US Open, Aryna Sabalenka met with a handful of journalists in a nondescript corner of the tournament's media center. The 20-year-old was running late for her interview, and she apologized for her tardiness.

When the interview began, it was as if Sabalenka was catching up with old friends. Unprompted, she told the gaggle where she was staying in Manhattan, and her review of the previous night's dinner. She let us in on her upcoming shopping and sightseeing plans. Laughs were plentiful in this decidedly informal setting.

"I was like, what the f--- is going on?" Sabalenka casually dropped, referring to a framed lob from her opponent that caught the baseline.

When the chat was over, Sabalenka kindly asked one of the journalists where she should go to next—this experience was completely new to her. There were no handlers or tournament staffers shadowing her every move; it was pure Sabalenka.

Given tennis' inverse relationship with off-court openness and on-court success, it's likely that Sabalenka will be a little more guarded at this year's US Open, and with a lot more attention surrounding her. By the time she exited last year's Open in the fourth round—after defeating Petra Kvitova in straight sets and giving Naomi Osaka her most difficult test of the fortnight—she was fielding questions in much larger interview rooms, and navigating the winding halls of Arthur Ashe Stadium like a seasoned vet. But this unfiltered peek at the Belarusian, who many feel could be facing Osaka in Grand Slams semifinals and finals someday, is a reminder that Sabalenka's expressiveness isn't just limited to her game.

"Her presence is very, very visible from just the naked eye," says four-time Grand Slam champion Jim Courier. "She's a great mover, a

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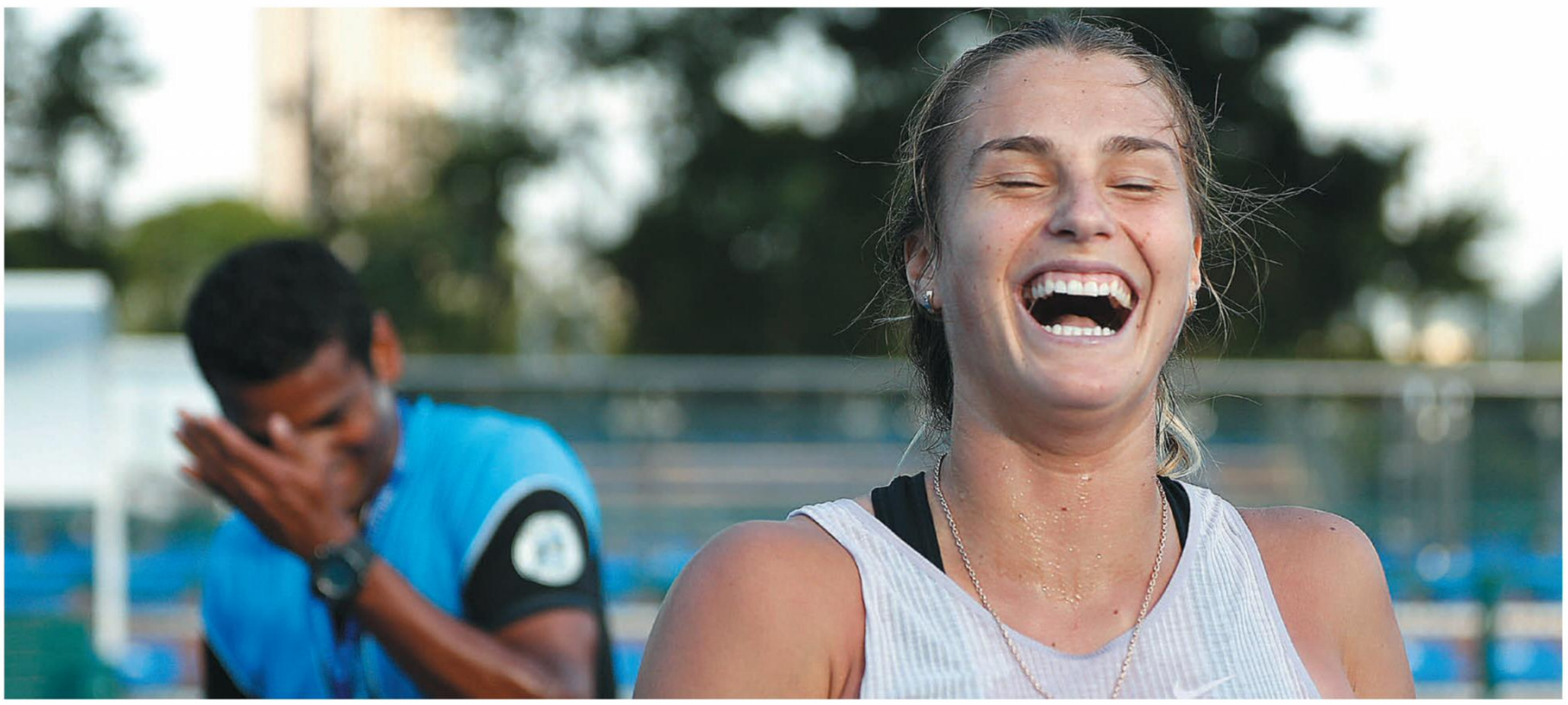

Sabalenka ended her breakthrough 2018 season in Zhuhai, at the WTA Elite Trophy. Her first tournament final came in Tianjin, in 2017, and she's won titles in Wuhan and Shenzhen. "[China] is one of my favorite places to play," said Sabalenka, who recently started a Weibo social-media account. "I really enjoy to be here. Always play well here. I don't know why, but I really play well here."

tremendous athlete. She reminds me a lot of Victoria Azarenka, actually, in her style of play, her ability to track so many balls down, and her propensity to create a lot of easy power."

Sabalenka may actually have a higher ceiling than Azarenka. When Sabalenka is on, her firepower can overwhelm all but her strongest opponents, and her forehand is already one of the game's best. Like Azarenka, Sabalenka's intensity complements her bruising baseline game. She's even got a little bit of Azarenka's grunt.

Physically, Sabalenka is already there. At her best, she can both control and consume the court, and she will only get stronger. Mentally? That's always the challenge for a young player. Sabalenka took a giant leap forward in that department in 2018 when, after dropping her first three finals on tour, she won New Haven convincingly. "A star is born," wrote Connecticut Open tournament director Anne Worcester, and it was the rare occasion when the phrase didn't feel hyperbolic.

"I'm so happy with my first title," said Sabalenka in New Haven. "But at the same time, you have to work more. The next year, I have to do it again."

A few weeks after the US Open, Sabalenka won the Premier 5 in Wuhan.

This year, at least through the early hard-court season, has been a mixed bag for Sabalenka. She began the season by winning her third title, in Shenzhen, but took earlier-than-expected losses in Melbourne, Indian Wells and Miami. She did, however, complete the Sunshine Double—in doubles.

"Now we are, like, keep going in the big tournaments, I think, yes?" a smiling Sabalenka asked her doubles partner, Elise Mertens, at the champion's press conference in Indian Wells. "So Miami we are playing, yes? Yes or no?"

"Yes," said Mertens. "I signed us [up]."

Sabalenka's commitment to doubles is another charm that should be enjoyed while it lasts. There are bigger things on the horizon for her, but whether she's playing singles or doubles, Sabalenka maintains the tunnel-vision mentality she first expressed in New Haven.

"When you [go] there, you switch," Sabelenka said at Indian Wells about the upcoming tournament in Miami. "You forget about last week. You're already in the next event."

While Sabalenka's focus is unwavering, fans and media are free to look back on what she's accomplished, and to hypothesize what she's capable of achieving. It's not hard to envision her going deep at a hard-court Slam soon, and given her preference for pace, a second-week showing at Wimbledon is also a possibility.

On that sweltering day in New York, one journalist decided to look back at Sabalenka's win in New Haven. Asked how she celebrated her first title, Sabalenka said that she couldn't, given the US Open's imminent start. Then, unprompted, Sabalenka went further.

"It's OK, this is our life," she said casually. This is the past. If you start to think about your titles, the future—it's a question."

Keeping It 150

What you see is what you get from the relentless Alex de Minaur, and early returns indicate that we'll be seeing a lot of him

by Nina Pantic

"There's a lot of stuff that happens off court," says Alex de Minaur, "but I think at the end of the day, what I really want is to be that boring guy that lets his tennis do the talking, you know?"

With caustic Nick Kyrgios and headline-generating Bernard Tomic as compatriots, it doesn't take much for de Minaur to be considered "boring" in Australian tennis circles. But as the 20-year-old says, the label suits him just fine—and it's working. The "boring" guy from Down Under happens to be one of his country's best. As of mid-April, de Minaur found himself on the verge of cracking the Top 20, and leading the pack as his nation's No. 1.

"It's really just about putting in the hard yards and training hard," de Minaur, all of 152 pounds, recently told Tennis Channel.

"I just want to constantly keep getting better. As long as I can keep improving each day, I'm a strong believer that the results will show."

Ranked outside the Top 200 at the start of 2018, de Minaur has quickly established himself as one of the tour's top young stars, with a foundation based on a stellar work ethic, lightning-fast footspeed and sky-high intensity. His toolkit recalls that of another undersized Australian, Lleyton Hewitt, who just so happens to mentor the Sydney native.

Hewitt, a former world No. 1 who is still competing in ATP doubles tournaments at 38, has not only helped de Minaur develop a similar baseline game; he's furthered the Aussie's inherent sense of national pride. Hewitt first took notice of de Minaur during the teen's run to the 2016 junior Wimbledon final, and their professional relationship has grown ever since.

"I think the biggest thing that impressed me with Alex was how professional he was," Hewitt told Tennis Channel. "How he was willing to always give 100 percent every time he stepped on to the practice court,

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Able to withstand the game's rigors, de Minaur reached the third round at Wimbledon and the US Open in 2018, and at the Australian Open earlier this year. In Melbourne, he outlasted Henri Laaksonen in a second-round five-setter. "This is why you do the hard work in the pre-season," de Minaur said, "for matches like this, to be able to feel strong and feel confident in yourself physically."

which he then would emulate going onto the match court."

Last February, Hewitt selected the 139th-ranked 18-year-old for a spot on the Australian Davis Cup team, making de Minaur the 109th player to earn the distinction. To commemorate joining legends like Rod Laver and Ken Rosewall in Australian athletic lore, de Minaur got the number "109" tattooed on his chest.

"Guys like Hewitt are doing a great job with Davis Cup and the young players," 1987 Wimbledon champion Pat Cash says. "He's getting the best out of them."

De Minaur won his first ATP Challenger title last June; a month later, he reached his second ATP final of the season, in Washington. This January, he won his first tour title, in Sydney, thrilling the home crowd by winning all 10 sets he played.

"It's surreal," de Minaur said in Sydney. "I couldn't think of a better place to get my first win.

"To finally be able to take that step further and get my first tournament win, it's something that's really special in front of friends and family and in the courts I grew up on. [These are] definitely memories that are going to last forever."

Not too bad for "that boring guy," who has a nickname that's quickly becoming familiar: "Demon."

"The kid I'm excited about is de Minaur," says Australia's Mark Philippoussis. "He's so fast. He's just got a good mind for the game. With his mind and his heart, he's going to squeeze every last drop out of his game. He's going to get stronger physically, which will only help him."

While de Minaur exudes Aussie green and gold, there's Spanish blood running through his veins. His father, Anibal, is Uruguayan, and his mother, Esther, is from Spain. He resides in Alicante, where he moved to when he was five, and splits his time between Spain and Australia. And while Hewitt is a frequent mentor, de Minaur is coached by Spaniard Adolfo Gutierrez.

When de Minaur earned a seal of approval from Spain's best player, Rafael Nadal, after their third-rounder at this year's Australian Open, it became clear that de Minaur is someone we should all be paying attention to.

"Today [he] is one of the best players of the world," said Nadal. "That's the real thing."

While there likely won't be any TMZ headlines dragging de Minaur's name around, there will be plenty of his highlights to enjoy and deep tournament runs to watch. In a time when it's cool to appear like you're not even trying, de Minaur is dedicated to putting his entire heart and body into every point. He wouldn't have it any other way.

"That's something that I expect from myself every time I step out on court, to just leave it all out there, leave 150 percent," de Minaur said. "That's the bare minimum. You want the players in the locker room to know you as that kid that fights till the end, has that never-say-die attitude, will compete until the end."

high 5

This handful of international hopefuls are showing the skills needed to climb the ranks

From the first player born in the 21st century to crack the WTA Top 100, to an ATP teenager who's risen 571 ranking spots over the course of one season—along with a US Open quarterfinalist, a dominant junior prodigy and a tour-level champion at 16—these five young players have let their racquets do the talking from the onset of their tennis careers.

There may not be glitzy photo shoots or massive social media followings for these five talents just yet, but make no mistake: each of them has the potential ingredients to cook up something to savor down the road.

by
MATT FITZGERALD

Dayana Yastremska

• Born in a country infused with a rich tennis tradition, yet green in shaping its identity as an sovereign nation, Yastremska is rooted with an appetite to succeed. The 19-year-old Ukranian's resolute demeanor, fearless fervor and laser-focused approach has vaulted her up the rankings and into the winner's circle—twice. As she works to harness her emotions, look for Yastremska to join countrywoman Elina Svitolina as a Top-10 threat.

Andrey Rublev

• An excellent baseliner who crushes the ball off both wings with clean striking, Rublev lifted his first ATP trophy two years ago in Umag. Two months later, he forced his way into the quarterfinals of the US Open. He ended his breakout year with a runner-up finish at the Next Gen ATP Finals. A nagging lower-back stress fracture derailed the Russian's progress in 2018, but the 21-year-old's resolve makes a strong comeback all but certain.

AP

Tseng Chun-hsin

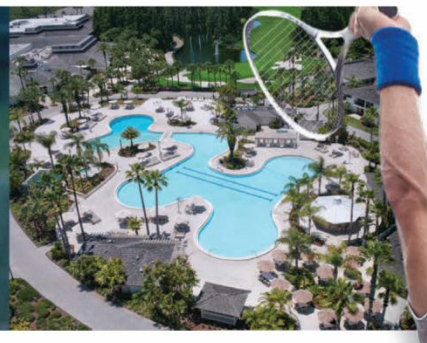
• A former junior No. 1 who shares his birthday with Roger Federer—8/8/01—Tseng could become Taiwan's most prominent player. With a working-class family background embedded in his DNA, Tseng won the junior events at Roland Garros and Wimbledon in 2018. Light on his feet, Tseng is inherently disciplined, dedicated and perceptive—qualities that will serve him well as he adjusts to a deeper, more physical pool of opposition in the pros.

Alexei Popyrin

• From what we've seen thus far, the big-serving Popyrin is poised for prime time. A calm character on court, the 6' 5" Aussie reached the third round at his home major this year. He covers a lot of ground with his long reach, isn't afraid to come forward to the net and has a variety of weapons with which to terminate points. If he can continue developing an all-court game, this 19-year-old is set to hear 'Oi! Oi! Oi!' for years to come.

Marketa Vondrousova

• The youngest member of the Czech Republic's next wave of talent (she turned 20 in June), Vondrousova mixes elegant craft and changes in speed with pockets of power to keep her opponents in check. With time on her side, coupled with heaps of invaluable experience on the singles and doubles courts, the sky is truly the limit for Vondrousova, as she ventures to follow in the footsteps of fellow left-handed compatriot Petra Kvitova.



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United States of America

These eight Americans are must-follows on the court and online

1. Caroline Dolehide

• **Instagram:** caroline_dolehide

• **Most-Liked Photo of 2019:** Enjoying Australian brekkie

It's impossible to watch Dolehide, just 20 but with a serve that may already be one of the game's best, and not come away impressed.

"She definitely has a lot of talent," said Venus Williams—double Dolehide's age at the time—after defeating her in Montreal last summer. "I'm sure it's just a matter of time before she's able to play even better than today."

While Dolehide may be receiving more post-loss compliments than she'd care to hear right now, time, along with a game-changing weapon, is on her side. She failed to get out of qualifying in Brisbane, the Australian Open and Hua Hin, but a return to home soil and to ITF-level tournaments helped the Illinois native regain her infectiously positive smile.

Outside the Top 200 at the start of May, Dolehide's ranking belies her unteachable abilities.

"I think it's important to realize that power players take a while longer to develop," says former doubles No. 1 Mark Knowles. "There will be stumbling blocks along the way, but she's an outlier. Everybody on tour moves well, and everybody defends well—but there's not a ton of players that play as offensively as Caroline does."

2. Taylor Fritz

• **Instagram:** taylor_fritz

• **Most-Liked Photo of 2019:** Holding a trophy—along with his son

For someone that already seems to have it all—married, with child, and a successful career—it's scary what the future may yet hold for Fritz.

"The best years are ahead of him," says Knowles. "He competes as well as anybody I've ever seen, and he has a tremendous attitude that's going to take him a very long way."

Fritz's second-round win over Gael Monfils at the Australian Open, a four-setter that featured three tiebreakers, is the type of grind the 21-year-old relishes. But he also has the shotmaking arsenal, including a shutdown forehand, that allows him to break through when the opportunity arises.

"I've seen him battle in matches he has no business winning," says Knowles, "and he consistently comes out a winner."

Having entrenched himself around the Top 60, Fritz will be in no shortage of main draws, and have no shortage of opponents—both younger and older—to test Knowles' theory.

"He needs to work on the transition game mightily to make the next step, as well as his defense," says Knowles. "I know those are two things he's going to continue to address."

AP (DOLEHIDE, GAUFF) GETTY IMAGES (FRITZ, KENIN, MMOH)

3. Cori Gauff

• **Instagram:** cocogauff

• **Most-Liked Photo of 2019:** Crouched on court in Miami, with hands over face

At first glance, Gauff's most-liked photo of 2019 seems like something she wouldn't like: disappointment. Rather, it was the moment she won her first WTA main-draw match—in her WTA main-draw debut—and she didn't quite know to react.

"I served for the match and I was like, 'Do I have to return again, or do we shake hands?'" said Gauff, who turned 15 just days earlier. "I didn't really think it was over."

Cori, who commonly goes by the nickname Coco, should quickly get used to victory at the game's highest level. Like many in *The 21 & Under Club*, she's thrived at every other level she's competed in. Gauff finished runner-up at the 2017 junior US Open, to Amanda Anisimova; the following year, at Roland Garros, she won her first junior Grand Slam singles title.

Touted as a can't-miss star since she was 12, Gauff might be the perfect player to assume the role of the Next Great American: She's already declared that she wants to become No. 1.

"The physical side seems there, as does the mental side," says Tracy Austin. "The hunger seems there. Not many young ladies are as strong as she is at 15. She's well on her way."

4. Sofia Kenin

• **Instagram:** sofia.kenin

• **Most-Liked Photo of 2019:** Holding a doubles trophy with Eugenie Bouchard

A scroll through Kenin's Instagram feed reveals a supremely confident player. She's holding a doubles trophy in Auckland, a singles trophy in Hobart, a runner-up trophy in Acapulco, and the U.S. flag after a Fed Cup victory.

Then there are Kenin's words. Yes, pictures can be worth thousands of them, but when Kenin spoke to the WTA website in April, her words seemed to carry even more weight.

"I really want to become No. 1 in the world," said Kenin, who reached a career-high of No. 33 in March. "I've worked so hard to get to where I am. The next goal is to win a Grand Slam."

Most young players have lofty dreams, but few express them as boldly as Kenin. How realistic are they?

"She's already got two Top-10 wins," says Knowles. "That gives you instant validation, and with that comes an incredible amount of confidence—the magic elixir that everyone's after.

"Then you factor in her attitude. She comes to play every single day; she's tenacious and doesn't go away. She defends really well and doesn't really have any weaknesses. When you put together all those ingredients, she's got things that validate her beliefs."

5. Michael Mmoh

• **Instagram:** michaelmmoh

• **Most-Liked Photo of 2019:** Standing on a deck with the caption, "The truth will set you free."

If we're being honest, we're probably wondering if this 21-year-old will take the next leap in the pros. Deemed a player to watch for years, given his junior success and incredible talent, could Mmoh find himself getting passed by in a deep American class?

"He has to redefine his game at the pro level," says Paul Annacone, former coach of Roger Federer and Pete Sampras. "Terrific mover, great counterpuncher, but I think he's got to get more comfortable being proactive if he wants to have a big impact on tour."

Last October, Mmoh won back-to-back ATP Challengers to crack the Top 100 for the first time. They were his third and fourth Challenger titles, to go along with four titles on what was formerly known as the ITF Pro Circuit.

Injured for much of this year, Mmoh will look to rediscover a winning formula upon his return, while also looking for something to push him farther at the game's highest level.

"He's such a good mover that if he makes good shot-selection choices, he's going to stay in rallies and will create plenty of opportunities to be offensive," says Annacone. "But when they're there, he's got to take them."

6. Reilly Opelka

• **Instagram:** reillyopelka

• **Most-Liked Photo of 2019:** Holding the New York Open winner's trophy

A tennis ball may never look as vibrant as it does at the New York Open, with the courts and surrounding arena awash in grey and black. The event's 2019 champion, wearing an aquamarine shirt and patterned-blue shorts, also stood out, but it wasn't just for the colors of his clothes or his 6'11" height.

The 21-year-old Opelka won five matches, including final-set tiebreakers in the semifinals and final, to claim his first tournament title in New York. His lethal serve, which can exceed 140 M.P.H., had a lot to do with it.

"When you have a serve like that, at some point you're going to be in the Top 20," says Annacone.

But while Opelka relies on his serve like few others, he prides himself on being more than just a single shot.

"He's pretty damn good athletically, and moves well for someone his age and size," says Annacone. "I think he's ahead of where John Isner was at that same age by a decent margin in terms of how he moves and rallies."

Opelka will touch most ceilings he stands under, but he hasn't come close to reaching his ceiling in the pros.

7. Whitney Osuigwe

• **Instagram:** whitney_osuigwe

• **Most-Liked Photo of 2019:** Action shots at the Miami Open

Like Gauff, Osuigwe made her WTA main-draw debut in Miami. Like Gauff, Osuigwe won in her debut, which came against Naomi Osaka's sister, Mari. And, like Gauff, insiders are bullish on Osuigwe's longterm tour prospects.

"I would be surprised if she's not a Top 10 player in the next few years," says Jimmy Arias, director of player development at IMG Academy. "She's the real deal."

The Bradenton, FL native has spent most of her young life at the IMG Academy; her dad is a coach. Her passion for the sport, years spent on court and innate talent took Osuigwe to the winner's circle of the 2017 junior French Open. This year, after turning 17 on April 17, Osuigwe won her second ITF World Tennis Tour title of her young career, in Charlottesville. Her upward trend is unmistakable.

"She has a very complete game," says Arias. "Her playing style is a little eclectic in that sometimes she defends, and then other times she looks to attack.

"Because she won in the juniors, Whitney has that confidence to know how to win, and she believes it."

8. Frances Tiafoe

• **Instagram:** bigfoe1998

• **Most-Liked Photo of 2019:** Celebrating in Melbourne, with sleeve pulled up

Rare is the player who loses a match in straight sets and comes away looking like a winner. But Tiafoe, who turned 21 during his breakthrough Australian Open run this year, made so much progress over five rounds that his potential—immense as it already was—needed to be recalibrated.

If Tiafoe can reach the last eight of a major at this age, odds are, he can go at least one round farther at some point in his still-nascent career.

"He's trying to define his game—and that's a good thing," says Annacone.

A fan favorite, Tiafoe imparts his physical gifts into every shot he hits. He can play with touch when needed, and the best-of-five set format at Slams may suit him best of all. Remember, he almost beat Federer in the first round of the 2017 US Open.

"He's so gifted that he can do a lot of different things," says Annacone. "He's got power, he can hit winners, and he's great athletically. "He's going to keep getting better and better."

#bigfoeonthecomeup, reads Tiafoe's Instagram profile. It's a warning his opponents would be wise to heed.

GETTY IMAGES (OPELKA, TIAFOE); AP (OSUIGWE)

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Andreescu, Auger-Aliassime, Shapovalov: Why are our northern neighbors producing so many great young players?

Woah,

by Stephen Tignor

Canadian tennis is having a moment. Lots of them, actually. At times this spring, it felt as if players from the Maple Leaf nation were having *all* the moments.

Felix Auger-Aliassime, 18 and seemingly going on 25, reached a final in Rio de Janeiro and a semifinal in Miami, and has made a comet-like race up the rankings. After starting the season at No. 109, he had cracked the Top 30 by the end of April. Along the way, Auger-Aliassime wowed fans and flummoxed veteran opponents with his technical proficiency and emotional self-control. A new FAA was suddenly vying for control of the airspace.

Bianca Andreescu, also 18, somehow managed to top Auger-Aliassime when she beat four Top 20 opponents to win one of the WTA's most prestigious titles in Indian Wells. She vaulted herself from No. 178 to No. 23, and showed off a canny, wide-ranging game and a theatrical moxy that led *The New Yorker*'s Gerald Marzorati to say that watching the rookie was "like watching Clayton Kershaw pitch."

Denis Shapovalov, 19, cheered on his two young compatriots while they

GETTY IMAGES

Canada

stole the headlines from him in Indian Wells. Then he stole them right back in Miami, when he out-gunned fellow Next Gen stars Stefanos Tsitsipas and Frances Tiafoe to reach his first ATP Masters 1000 semifinal. With that result, Shapovalov reached a career-high ranking of No. 20, and reminded everyone that he has the leaping athleticism to someday win major titles.

Milos Raonic, 28, could have been forgiven for feeling like the odd—and old—man out in this youth revolt. But the player who, along with Eugenie Bouchard, put Canadian tennis on the map earlier this decade, and who reached the Wimbledon final as recently as 2016, underwent his own resurgence to start the year. He beat Nick Kyrgios, Stan Wawrinka and Alexander Zverev to reach the Australian Open quarterfinals, then went a round further at Indian Wells. Ranked No. 16, Raonic remains his country's best player nearly a decade after his debut.

By April, Canada, a country of 37 million, had the same number of players—three—in the ATP's Top 40 as the United States, a country of 327 million. In tennis circles, "O Canada" had turned to "Woah, Canada."

Which might lead a fan to ask: Why Canada?

Before we try to answer that question, let's start with a quick quiz: How would you expect the head of Canada's tennis federation, when asked to explain his country's sudden rise to powerhouse status in 2019, to respond?

(1) By claiming full credit for it?

(2) By extolling the brilliance of the centralized coaching system he installed a decade ago?

(3) By deflecting all the praise onto the players themselves, and downplaying the federation's role?

If you chose answer 3, you have a pretty good idea of how things traditionally work north of our border.

"I think, before anything else, you have to acknowledge what the kids and their families have done," says Michael Downey, president and CEO of Tennis Canada, when asked about the successes of Andreescu, Auger-Aliassime and Shapovalov. "They all took their own pathways."

There's no arguing that. In customary Canadian fashion, the country's players hail from vastly different backgrounds, and they grew up on both sides of the nation's Anglo-French divide. Shapovalov was born in Israel and raised outside of Toronto, where he was taught by his mother, Tessa, a high-level player from Russia. Auger-Aliassime, whose father is from Togo, grew up outside of Quebec City and trained in Montreal. Andreescu was born near Toronto, but took up the game at age 7, at a time when she was living with her parents in their native Romania. Raonic was born in Montenegro, is of Serbian descent, and came to Canada at age 3 with his parents. Vasek Pospisil, a Wimbledon doubles champion and former Top 25 singles player, was born in British Columbia to parents who escaped their native Czechoslovakia during the Cold War.

If there's one thing that unites this diverse group, it's their status as the children of immigrants. To Downey, this is also what helps them thrive in a global sport, and what makes them truly representative of their country.

"Their parents came to Canada for a better life, and they've been shaped by the world," Downey says.

Auger-Aliassime *(left)* and Andreescu *(below)*, both just 18, have been two of the biggest stories in a season where more young players are breaking through than ever. Felix cracked the ATP Top 30, while Bianca won Indian Wells in just her second WTA final.

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"Tennis is a popular sport in a lot of the countries these kids came from, and they've kept up that tradition."

Shapovalov *(right)* has quickly become a fan favorite for his aggressive game and engaging personality. He's also developed a rivalry with one of his best friends, Auger-Aliassime *(above)*. "It's a healthy thing we have had since juniors," says Denis.

"I think it's a reflection of the mosaic nature of Canada. Immigrants hold onto their traditions, and we celebrate them. Tennis is a popular sport in a lot of the countries these kids came from, and they've kept up that tradition."

The playing styles of the Canadian pros are equally heterogenous. From Auger-Aliassime's textbook precision, to Andreescu's thoughtful versatility, to Raonic's serve-based attack, to Shapovalov's daredevil shotmaking, there's nothing cookie-cutter or one-dimensional about tennis in Canada. Yet at the same time, there's nothing unorthodox, either; all of the country's players are well-schooled in technique.

And that's where the other side of the Canadian success story begins.

Along with the cultivation of diversity, which comes naturally in such a pro-immigrant country, Tennis Canada also set out to install a centralized national coaching system. The initiative began 15 years ago, when the federation received government funding for a new training center in Montreal, and began searching for someone to run it. The logical choice, for cultural and practical reasons, was to look across the Atlantic to France.

"It's hard not to see the FFT [French Tennis Federation] as a best-practice example of a national training system," Downey says. "We thought, 'Why not go to a country that has done it so well?'"

France has long been known for the quality of its coaching. A high percentage of its population plays the sport, and instructors at all levels must pass a rigorous examination to be certified. The result is a deep well of technical knowledge, and an equally deep appreciation for the history and artistry of the game. While the FFT hasn't produced dominant champions, it has churned out a long line of stylish, crowd-pleasing, highly individualistic players, from Jo-Wilfried Tsonga to Gael Monfils to Richard Gasquet to Amelie Mauresmo to Alize Cornet.

The young Canadians have also benefited from the lineup of coaches that were brought in from France.

With that tradition in mind, in 2006 Tennis Canada approached one of the FFT's leading coaches, Louis Borfiga, about heading up the new national training center in French-speaking Montreal. Borfiga had been instrumental in developing France's Davis Cup-winning generation—and best of all for Canada, he was ready for a change.

"Louis is a man of few words, but he brings a quiet confidence to everything he does," Downey says. "He has built a phenomenal team-first culture with the coaches and players at the national center."

In an interview with Canadian tennis journalist Tom Tebbutt last fall, Borfiga explained his reasons for leaving Paris and starting over in Montreal.

"It was to have a new challenge," he said, "and also the chance to be the boss and to initiate a policy. As well, it's obvious that the attraction of Canada was the goodness of the Canadian people. That's what made me decide, because to have my job you also have to be sentimentally attached to the country."

But while you can take the coach out of Paris, you can't take Paris out of the coach. One of Borfiga's first and most important moves at Tennis Canada was to install European-style red-clay courts at the training center.

"They were on the second floor of a garage with open doors, and it was windy as hell," Downey says. "But Louis said, 'Hey, that's what the players need to learn to deal with.'"

GETTY IMAGES (LEFT); AP (RIGHT)

LEX

The veteran of the Canadian trio at 20, Shapovalov was influenced by another trio: Roger Federer ("I was always looking at his backhand"); Novak Djokovic ("How he returns, how well he moves"); and Rafael Nadal ("His fighting spirit is something that I tried to make my own").

Borfiga believed that clay, which teaches patience and gives players a chance to learn to construct points, was a good surface for junior development. Auger-Aliassime appears to be in the process of proving him right. This year, the 18-year-old clinched Canada's Davis Cup qualifying tie on red clay, and reached his first ATP final on the surface, in Rio.

The young Canadians have also benefited from the lineup of coaches that Borfiga has brought from France.

Has Canada hit upon a system that will keep pumping out world-class players in perpetuity?

Auger-Aliassime works with Guillaume Marx and Frederic Fontang. Felix and Bianca have both been taught by Andre Labelle, who has a reputation as one of the sport's best technical instructors. Andreescu is now coached by Sylvain Bruneau, who has been Canada's Fed Cup captain. When Andreescu looked like she was on the verge of a breakdown in the Indian Wells final, against Angelique Kerber, Bruneau found the perfect positive words to carry her through it.

Has Canada hit upon a system that will keep pumping out world-class players in perpetuity? That's hard to say. In the 1970s and '80s, Sweden also seemed to have cracked the junior development code; since 1992, though, the home of Bjorn Borg, Mats Wilander and Stefan Edberg has just a single major singles title to its name.

A system will only take a nation so far; ultimately, it depends on the talent of the players, and their willingness to make the most of it. Right now, Canada's young pros profit from an mix of competitiveness and camaraderie, which comes with playing for asmall nation (in population) that's striving to prove itself on a world stage.

"I think competition was a big thing," Raonic said this spring. "Me and Vasek being the same age, we always competed. And now we have Felix and Denis competing against each other."

Downey adds, "Felix and Denis trained in different places, but their friendship is what has helped them feed off each other's success."

Shapovalov agrees: "It's been kind of almost a rivalry with me and Felix," he said in Miami, "and I feel like we have been able to thrive on each other's results and push each other."

When Andreescu joined Shapovalov and Auger-Aliassime in the spotlight, Canada was no longer the nice little tennis nation up north; it had become a force. As Andreescu said with a grin this spring, "We're killing it." Canada's moment has only just begun.

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Verified Talent

Amanda Anisimova has found success in the pros at 17. Just wait until she realizes her full potential

by Nina Pantic

Tall and blonde; born in Russia with a game honed in Florida; a Nike dress-wearing teenager with the powerful groundstrokes and mental toughness of a veteran champion. It is a young Maria Sharapova, and the present-day Amanda Anisimova.

The similarities between the 17-year-old and her idol don't stop there. Anisimova is also represented by IMG, grew up training at a prestigious tennis academy, and has been coached on and off by her father.

"I have always looked up to her and was watching her when I was little," Anisimova has said about Sharapova. "She's a great person to look up to."

There are some key differences. Born in New Jersey to Russian parents, who moved Amanda and her older sister to Florida for better tennis opportunities, Anisimova represents the United States. She trained at Nick Saviano's academy, not Nick Bollettieri's. At 5'11", she's three inches shorter than Sharapova. And unless Anisimova, who turns 18 in August, wins Wimbledon this summer, she's not on the same track as Sharapova was at 17.

Still, Anisimova's rise is a compelling story all its own. She won the junior US Open title in 2017, then made her first impact on the tour just six months later, at Indian Wells. Given a wild card into the main draw, she reached the fourth round; the head-turning run included a straight-sets win over Petra Kvitova. Last September, Anisimova reached her first WTA final, in Hiroshima, as a qualifier. By year's end, she was the youngest player inside the WTA Top 100.

Anisimova's ascent has continued unabated. At this year's Australian Open, she became the first player born in the 2000s to reach the round of 16 at a Slam. A few months later, in Bogota, she won her first tour title, rallying from a set down in the clay final.

"I think it's been a really great year for me," Anisimova said in Miami.

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One of tennis' most popular young players, Anisimova is motivated by the American pros she watched growing up, along with fellow Americans in her age group. "Hard work is necessary to achieve the level required by the sport and the country," said Anisimova. "There is more competition, to the point where we have many players at a high level."

"Obviously, I'm motivated to do even more. I think that my training has been paying off, and it just keeps me motivated to get higher into the top level."

Anisimova handles questions from the media like she does groundstrokes from her opponents: efficiently. She answers diplomatically, in brief, predictable sentences—with one notable exception. After beating fellow big-hitting youngster Aryna Sabalenka at this year's Australian Open, Anisimova was asked, "If you could have a single dream come true in this sport, what would it be?"

"I want to win this tournament right now," Anisimova said, without a pause.

Had she done so, Anisimova would have become the first teenage woman since Sharapova to win a Grand Slam title. There's still time.

"I think that in this kind of age, to reach the second week of a Grand Slam is something really great," said Kvitova, who ended Anisimova's run in Melbourne. "That's something she can build on. She's playing very aggressive, which is I think the future of tennis."

After winning Wimbledon in 2004, Sharapova, filled with giddy teenage excitement, famously grabbed a cell phone to call her mom. It was a blocky, Nokia-esque contraption that's currently sitting in a museum, and is nearly as old as Anisimova.

Born around the time the iPhone was invented, Anisimova embraces the social-media lifestyle that has defined her generation. Take a look at her Instagram page and you'll see 60,000+ followers and snapshots of her practicing, lounging at the beach and spending time with her friends.

"The digital and social media landscape can create tremendous opportunities and connections to so many more people," says Tennis Channel analyst and former pro Chanda Rubin. "But it also makes staying focused and grounded more of a challenge."

The challenges of maneuvering through life on tour today are different than they were in Sharapova and Rubin's younger days. While there's greater opportunity to get noticed because of greater connectivity, there are also drawbacks.

"It's easier to get caught up in hype," Rubin says. "It's also more difficult to grow, make mistakes, and learn because everything is being recorded. And opinions on social media can be mean and unforgiving."

So far, Anisimova has held up under the increased spotlight, which could only intensify at Wimbledon. She'll make her All England Club debut this summer, and while expectations should be tempered, her play on grass will be one of the tournament's most compelling stories. Given her aggressive game style, it's not hard to envision a second-week showing, even for this Wimbledon rookie.

If Anisimova does just that, and then feels the need to let someone (or her 60,000+ followers) know that she made it to Manic Monday, she can simply update her Instagram story with her iPhone—or place a call, the old-fashioned way.

Pulling up the ladder

In January, Jared Hiltzik was spending a Sunday morning at his home near Orlando, FL. The 25-year-old former University of Illinois standout, who is currently ranked just inside the ATP's Top 400, knew there was a Challenger tournament set to begin in Cleveland, OH the next day. He also knew that, despite the fact that it was 1,000 miles away, he wanted to play in it.

What he still didn't know, roughly 30 hours before the event started, was whether he had made the cut to be in the qualifying draw.

As far as match preparation went, it left something to be desired.

"I found out at noon on Sunday that I made it in," Hiltzik says. That's when a familiar scramble began.

"I took a $500 flight to Cleveland, which got in at 1:15 the next morning," he continues. "I don't know when I went to sleep, but I had to play qualies that same day."

The trip proved to be worth the effort. Hiltzik would win his qualifying match, and win three more main-draw matches to reach the quarterfinals. The result was $2,200 in prize money and 17 ATP ranking points, both precious commodities for a young player trying to scale the increasingly steep mountain of professional tennis.

By the following Monday, Hiltzik was on another flight south to play a Challenger tournament in Dallas, where he won two more matches, took home another $2,100, and watched his ranking inch up five spots.

We've all read about the desperately hectic lives that pro-tour hopefuls lead as they crisscross the globe in

MAURICIO PAIZ

Tennis' officials tried to streamline the pro tours, but so far the process has thrown the sport's lower levels into chaos. Now players are speaking out

by Stephen Tignor

Players at Hiltzik's level now have two tennis rankings: one for the ITF World Tennis Tour, and one for the ATP Tour. Each ranking is determined by ranking points earned at tournaments on the respective tours.

search of ranking points, dollars and a semi-comfortable couch to crash on. But when Hiltzik arrived back home in Florida, he faced a different challenge, one that many of his fellow lower-tier tour-mates have also begun to face in 2019: he couldn't find another tournament to enter.

"You can't plan to play anywhere now," Hiltzik says. "I was going to play Challengers in India and Thailand, but with the changes, you never know if you're going to get into an event or not. I'm not going to fly all the way there just to play one tournament."

Instead, at the end of March, Hiltzik headed south to Miami. On Tennis Channel, he was asked if tennis was running the risk of driving guys like him out of the sport.

"One hundred percent, yes," he said.

Welcome to the tennis world of 2019. This isn't the one you see on TV, and it's not the one where Roger Federer and Serena Williams reside. Yet it's where most of the game's pros spend their days.

This is tennis' version of the minor leagues, a term that doesn't do justice to a vast, multi-tiered eco-system that spans the globe, and which few fans ever hear anything about. It consists of 14,000 players who are striving, often futilely, to earn a living with their racquets. These are athletes who just want to make enough money for their next meal, and their flight to the next tournament.

Since January 1, some have found achieving even those modest goals more difficult than ever. That's because the sport has determined that 14,000 wannabe pros is roughly 12,500 too many.

Starting in 2013, the International Tennis Federation (ITF) undertook a full-scale review of the sport at all levels. Perhaps the most striking finding was that "fewer than 600 players could cover their basic costs," and more than half earned no prize money at all. Around the same time, an investigation commissioned by the sport's governing bodies alleged widespread match-fixing at the game's lower levels. As the head of that investigation, Adam Lewis, said, tennis' bottom rungs were a "lamentably fertile breeding ground for breaches of integrity."

The possibility of corruption among low-paid professional players was obvious. For a player making no prize money at all, the temptation to try to fix a match, rather than win it, may always be there.

In 2019, the ITF put its Pro Circuit, Futures tournaments and Junior Circuit under a new umbrella label called the World Tennis Tour, and created a new ranking for players who participate in it. The goals were to reduce the pro-tour population to roughly 750 men and 750 women, increase the prize money available, and distribute it among the remaining players more efficiently.

According to the ITF, the reforms "address changing trends in tennis that include too many players trying to compete on the professional circuit; too few players breaking even, longer playing careers at the top of the game; and the difficulty for many talented junior players in transitioning to professional tennis."

In theory, all of that sounds logical and beneficial, even to a struggling pro.

"Putting more money in the pockets of 300 or so professionals and trying to help them make a living is definitely a good idea," Hiltzik says.

In practice, though, the way officials have gone about the streamlining process has been much less popular. Protests began in 2018, even before the changes were implemented, and have grown more vocal and widespread this season. Ana Vrljic, a veteran Croatian player, sent a letter of complaint to the ITF that was

MAURICIO PAIZ

A critic of the ITF's changes, Hiltzik has used Twitter to argue his points—echoed by many of his playing colleagues. The 25-year-old believes it's practically impossible for someone in his position to make meaningful ranking gains in the current environment.

signed by 700 of her tour-mates. Maria Patrascu, a 22-year-old Canadian pro, started an online petition called "Help save the future of professional tennis"; by April, it had 15,300 signatures. Even Rafael Nadal's uncle Toni voiced his displeasure, posting a video in which he accuses the ITF of "discouraging the players" and making the sport "only for the rich young people."

Critics contend that, rather than clearing a pathway to success, tennis has thrown more obstacles in the players' way, in the form of smaller qualifying draws and fewer ranking points.

On the men's side, the ITF runs lower-level Futures tournaments, which have traditionally been used as a way to gain ATP ranking points and climb to the next rung on the ladder, the ATP Challenger Tour. This year, far fewer ATP points are being offered at Futures tournaments, and qualifying fields—commonly used by players trying to rise from one level to the next—have been curtailed. In 2019, qualifying spots at Futures were taken down from a high of 128 to 24, while those at ATP Challengers have been cut from 32 to four.

According to Hiltzik, that has left players like him spinning their wheels.

"You look at a guy like Pablo Carreno Busta," Hiltzik says of the Spaniard who cracked the Top 10 in 2017. "He started 2013 by winning seven Futures, and the ranking points he got helped him make his way to the next level, and to the level after that. Now winning seven Futures would hardly get you anywhere at all."

"The line between a Challenger and a Future, there's almost no difference," Hiltzik says. "But now, to get your ranking up 10 spots, you have to win about 25 Futures matches, as opposed to three Challenger matches."

The new system may be particularly tough on collegiate players, who spend much of their time playing team matches instead of pro tournaments, and often have rankings far below their abilities. Players who participate in the ITF's junior circuit, on the other hand, should fare better: those in the Top 100 can gain automatic entry into World Tennis Tour events.

Dr. Timothy Russell, CEO of the Intercollegiate Tennis Association,

"I took a $500 flight to Cleveland, which got in at 1:15 a.m. I don't know when I went to sleep, but I had to play qualies that same day."

Critics contend that, rather than clearing a pathway to success, tennis has thrown more obstacles in the players' way.

supports the ITF's goals, but worries that the changes won't help the most talented players advance.

"We can agree that 14,000 is too many pros, but we still need a broad base for the tennis pyramid," Russell says. "The new system gives preference to the ITF's juniors, which comes at the expense of older players and college players. We should always try to have the best players in tournament draws. Sometimes the journey to becoming a Top 100 pro can take four or five years."

"I worry that this could be killing the dream," Russell continues. "Every young player aspires to be a pro, but even when they don't make it, these are the people who become fans and coaches and recreational players as adults, who are the lifeblood of the sport and its future."

The ITF has heard the complaints. In March, the organization issued eight revisions to the World Tennis Tour, including an increase in the size of some qualifying draws.

"Significant change is not easy, but significant change was necessary, and we recognize that it will take some time for people to adjust," the ITF tells TENNIS Magazine. "The current tour structure is a long-term project, so we are listening carefully to player feedback and carefully analyzing the data."

Are there changes that would satisfy all sides? Russell has advocated using Universal Tennis Rating (UTR) for entry into events, as a way to level the playing field. The ATP has contemplated creating a mid-level tour to try to bridge the gap between Futures and Challengers—"We are currently holding production talks with the ATP," the ITF says. At a broader level, many feel that tennis would benefit from a less top-heavy pay structure, where fewer dollars go to the stars, and more are spread among the rank and file.

"I hear about players who are thinking of stopping," says Tracy Austin, whose son, Brandon Holt, plays for USC. "They just don't see a pathway, they don't see an opportunity to even try and get on the roller coaster of the pro tour. They should have enough opportunities to at least play events. If they don't make it, that's up to them."

The ITF's mandate has always been to grow the game, but now it finds itself trying to make professional tennis smaller. No one believes that this will keep the future Federers and Serenas of the world from rising to the top, or that talented players won't continue to break through. But none of that is much consolation right now to Hiltzik and his fellow hopefuls.

Growing up in Wilmette, IL., Hiltzik dreamed the pro dream, and did everything you're supposed to do to make it happen. He became a highly-ranked junior, and played No. 1 at the University of Illinois. As of the middle of April, though, Hiltzik felt as if the ladder he had been climbing had suddenly been yanked out of his reach. He hadn't played a tournament in a month, and after raising his ranking from No. 754 in 2016 to No. 352 in February 2019, he saw it slip back to No. 381. Hiltzik has earned just over $6,000 in prize money this season.

"People are speaking out, and there's been some progress," he says. "But it can be hard to stay motivated."

For now, Hiltzik will keep practicing, and keep dreaming. The question may be: will future players like him continue to do the same?

"It's like the Web.com Tour with golf: There's a lower level and a higher level—the PGA Tour. It's what the ATP and ITF are trying to do, which is fair," says Hiltzik. "But unfortunately tennis is different than golf."

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Do best-of-five-set matches still make sense in our faster-paced world? We check in on the debate, and try to find a solution

the long & short of it

Rafael Nadal's run to last year's US Open semifinals was many things: thrilling, exhausting, seemingly endless and sadly anti-climactic. The Spaniard survived hard-fought four-set matches in the third and fourth rounds, then survived an even harder-fought five-setter against Dominic Thiem in the quarterfinals—a gruelingly brilliant contest that ended after 2:00 A.M. and was immediately lauded as one of the greatest matches in US Open history. But it was a triumph that came with a price: two days later, the chronic tendinitis in Nadal's knees flared again, and he was forced to retire in the second set of his semifinal against Juan Martin del Potro.

By the time it was over, Nadal's 16-hour on-court adventure had become one more thing: the perfect crystallization of an argument—with both sides' views equally represented—that has been growing more heated in recent years. The dispute can be summed up with a deceptively simple question: Should the men continue to play best-of-five sets at Grand Slam tournaments, or should they play best-of-three sets instead?

Those with a traditionalist streak favor sticking with best-of-five, a format that has been in place since the very first Wimbledon, in 1877. Supporters see it as a fairer measure of a player's skills than best-of-three, with the extra set (or two) giving the better, fitter competitor more time to prove his superiority. Because other events on the ATP are best-of-three, the extended format also ensures that the Grand Slams remain the sport's ultimate trials by fire, and unique events. If generations of past men's champions persevered through best-of-five, why can't today's?

Pat Cash, Wimbledon champion in 1987, states the case for traditionalists when he says, "The simple fact is, best-of-five sets is the ultimate test of mental and physical stamina; it's what's worthy of a Grand Slam event."

Those with a reformist streak are in favor of one of two changes, each promoting gender parity: (1) having the men play best-of-three, or (2) having the women play best-of-five. For many, though, the objective is to lessen the men's workload. Supporters say playing best-of-three would

by Stephen Tignor

lead to fewer injuries and leave players fresher in later rounds. It would make matches easier for spectators to sit through, and easier for TV networks to broadcast. And having the men play the same amount of tennis as the women would eliminate an age-old obstacle to the idea of equal pay.

Novak Djokovic, the highest-profile player to sign on to the best-of-three movement, stated the case for change when he said, "This new generation of fans and millennials, they don't have the great[est] attention span. They want things to happen very quickly. So for the players, as well as to attract more people—more viewers of a younger audience—I think we have to keep matches dynamic."

At the US Open, Nadal proved both sides' points at once. First, his win over Thiem was shown as evidence that epic, memorable matches are only possible with best-of-five.

"When things happen like this, the atmosphere and the crowd become more special," Nadal said afterward. "People get involved."

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Two days later, detractors pointed to Nadal's retirement as evidence that the lengthier format no longer makes sense at a time when tennis is more physically punishing than ever.

"Best-of-five is carnage," tweeted the *New York Times*' Ben Rothenberg.

Some in the sport agree. One of tennis' most tradition-minded events, Davis Cup, downsized from best-of-five to best-of-three, and the Olympics will do the same with the men's gold-medal match. Thus far, though, the Slams haven't considered following suit.

"At this point, the US Open has no plans to change the best-of-five sets format for the men," a USTA official says.

Roger Federer put it even more bluntly: "I mean, it won't happen," he said last summer. But he was willing to admit that "it's a fun debate to have."

So let's have it.

Would best-of-three-set matches reduce injuries?

Playing multiple lengthy matches over a two-week span comes with risks, but the more important question may be: is there an injury crisis in the first place, and would switching to best-of-three help solve it?

Injuries are unquestionably a hot-button issue on the ATP tour. Federer, Nadal, Djokovic, del Potro and Stan Wawrinka have all undergone surgery in recent years, and Andy Murray is contemplating retirement because of a chronic hip problem.

"With two of the majors on hard courts, and the amount of running the players have to do now, the wear and tear is greater than ever," Hall of Fame player Pam Shriver says.

But while that may be true, it doesn't seem to be hurting the players' longevity. All of the men mentioned are in their 30s, an age at which many past champions had already retired. Federer is the oldest No. 1 in history, and Nadal is the oldest French Open champion since 1968. The sport is more physical than ever, but the players have learned to handle its effects.

Djokovic aside, few men's players have expressed a wish to discard best-of-five, a format they play in only four tournaments each year. Of the 77 matches that young Alexander Zverev played in 2018, only nine lasted longer than three sets. If the men blame anything for injuries and exhaustion, it's the 11-month schedule, which allows little time to recuperate.

"It's not the amount of tennis we

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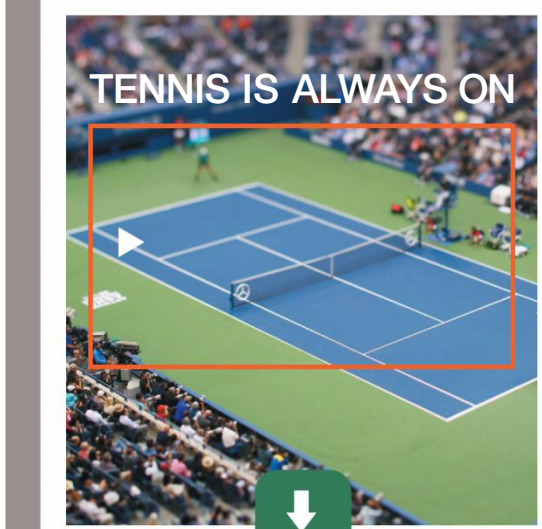

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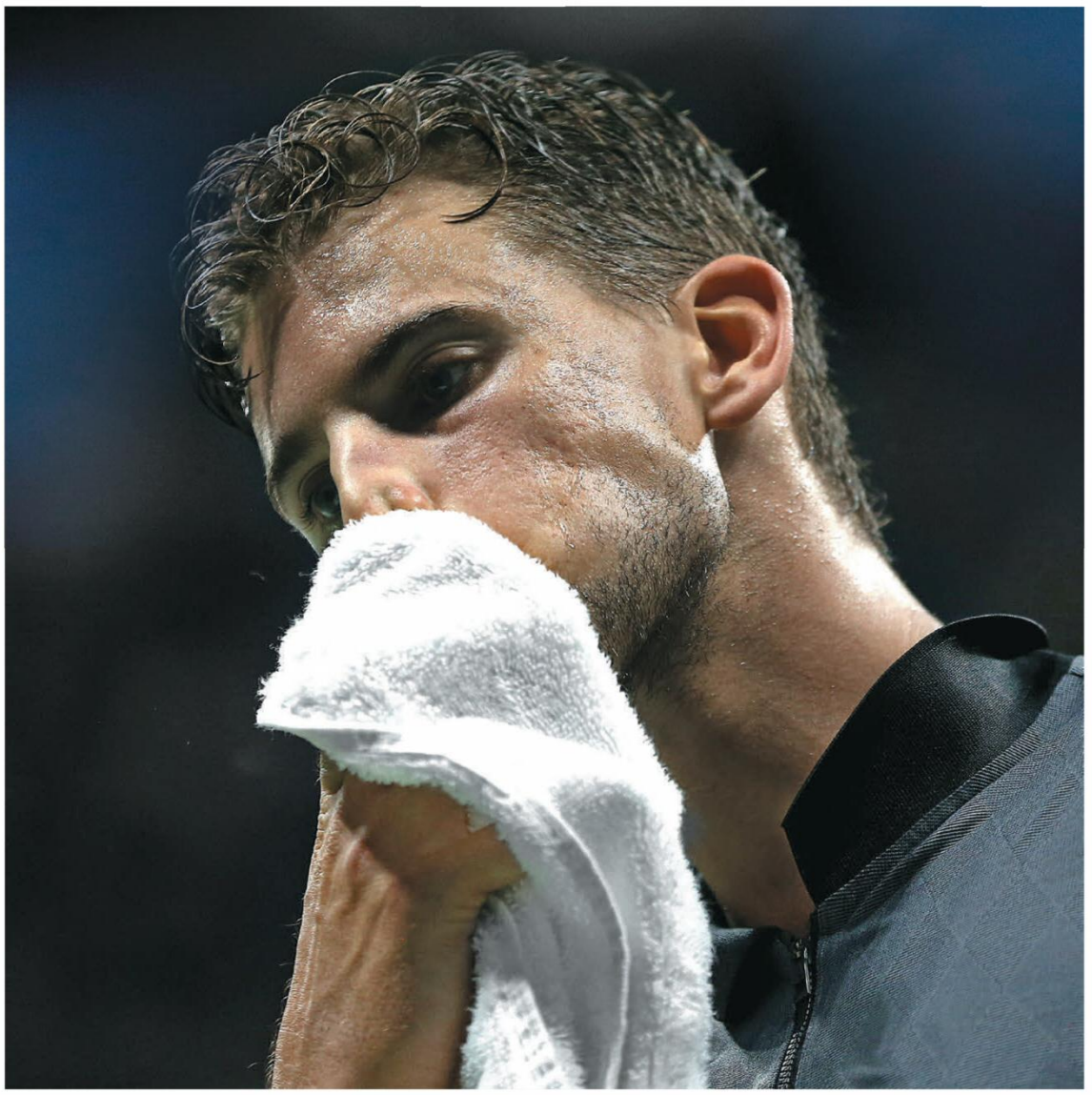

While Nadal's five-set triumph over Thiem at last year's US Open was lauded for its drama, it essentially ended Rafa's title hopes in New York. The physical toll of the late-night quarterfinal forced the Spaniard to retire in his next match.

play inside that year," Zverev said last November. "It's more about how much off time we can actually have. Even if you're not playing for a week in a tournament, you can't take that week off; you have to be training...We don't have time to give ourselves rest."

Do best-of-five-set matches take too long for the modern attention span?

After 15 years of grinding away on tour, Andy Murray had a sudden change of heart at Wimbledon last summer.

"As a player, I really like best-of-five," Murray told the *New York Times*. "I feel like it rewards the training and everything you put into that."

But that was before Murray was hired to commentate on the quarterfinal between Nadal and del Potro at that same tournament. The five-set match lasted so long—four hours and 47 minutes—that Murray missed a dinner reservation.

"It was an amazing match, it was a brilliant match," Murray said, "but it was really long to sit there as a spectator."

Most tennis fans understand how Murray felt; making it through an entire five-setter is difficult. Spectators at tournaments like Indian Wells and Miami, where men and women each play best-of-three, don't seem to miss the marathons of the majors.

"It's not easy to watch two people compete for a really long period of time," Shriver says. "Give me a hard-fought, three-set, two-and-a-half-hour match, which is about the length of a basketball game."

The downside of best-of-three comes when the matches aren't so hard-fought. While tournament directors dread five-setters that drag on, they also dread one-sided, best-of-three-set finals that barely last an hour. Last year at Wimbledon, the men's semifinals—Kevin Anderson vs. John Isner; Djokovic vs. Nadal—went on for 10 sets and nearly 12 hours, and spilled over into a second day. That may be too much tennis, but was it a worse ticket than the women's semifinals—Angelique Kerber vs. Jelena Ostapenko; Serena Williams vs. Julia Goerges—which lasted a total of 36 games?

The pace of life has quickened since 1877, and attention spans have shortened. But on most days, the Slams have you covered: if you get bored watching a five-setter, you can switch over—with your feet, if you're at the event; with the remote, if you're at home—to another match.

Isn't it time that men and women played an equal amount?

The most compelling reason for change may be the notion that, in 2019, we're past the days when we believed that women couldn't, or shouldn't, play as many sets as men.

"I see no reason why the WTA players can't play a five-set final for a Grand Slam title," Cash says. "I think it would create massive interest. Something they deserve."

What about in the rounds before the

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Serena Williams

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“The women put everything they have into best-of-three now; it makes those matches more intense. Every point feels like it counts, which isn’t true in best-of-five.”

final? Extending the women's matches to best-of-five would pit one desired change—greater gender equality—against another—shorter matches. With their schedules already close-to-overflowing, would the Slams really want to increase the length of women's matches throughout the tournament?

"I don't think the women should ever feel the need to play three out of five," Shriver says. "They put everything they have into best-of-three now, and that makes those matches more intense. Every point feels like it counts, which isn't true in best-of-five."

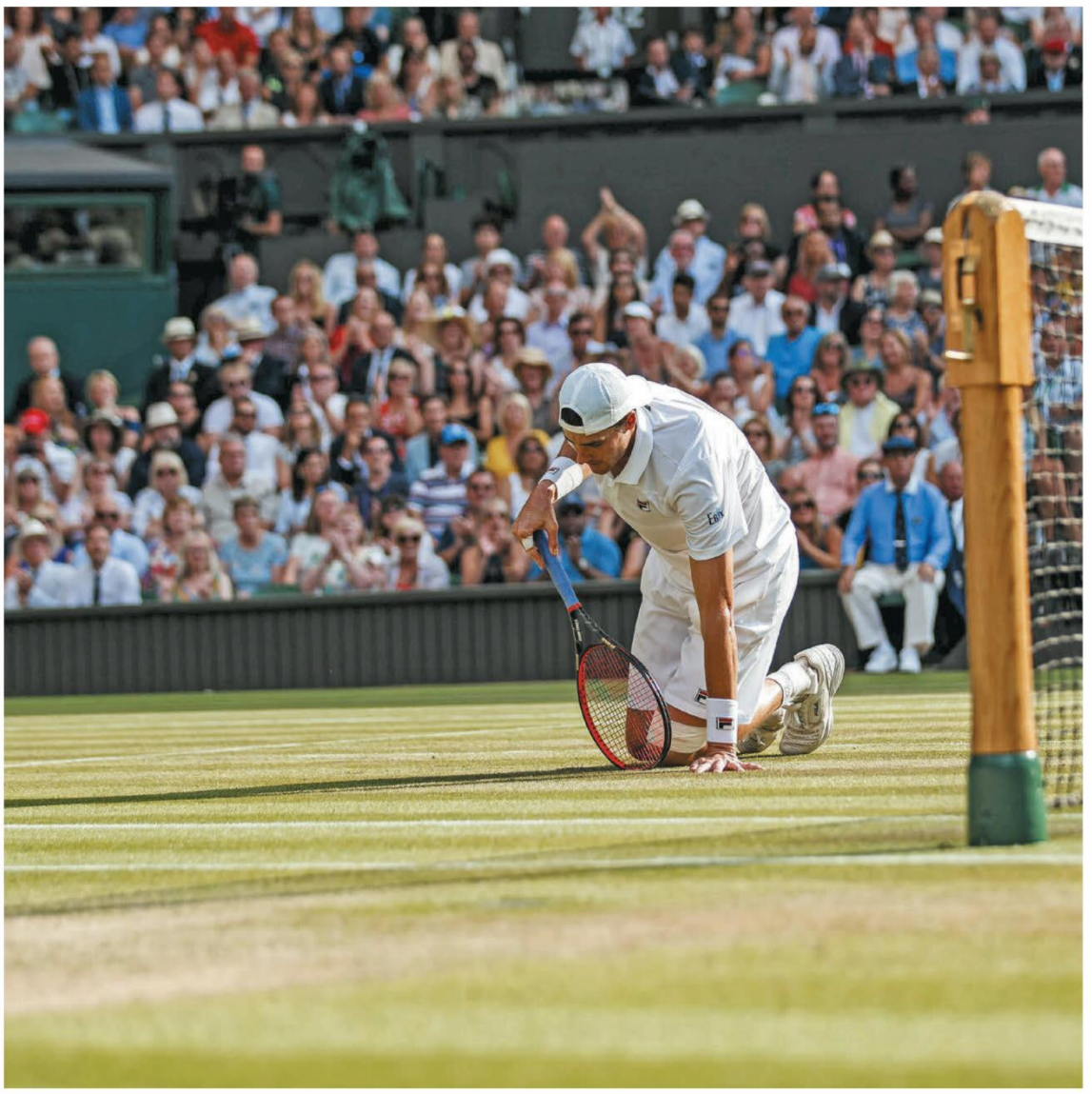
Is there a solution?

Even as the discussion continues, format change doesn't seem to be on the horizon. There isn't a groundswell among players or fans for it, and Grand Slam officials have at least one good reason to stick with tradition, as imperfect as it may be: it's working. Revenues, ticket sales, prize money and television coverage have been on the rise at the majors for years, and have allowed each of the Slams to embark on large expansion projects.

Still, two plausible compromises have been floated. The first would have men and women both play best-of-three through the early rounds, and best-of-five from, say, the fourth round until the final. This would create gender parity, lessen schedule overload in the early rounds, and give the women a chance to produce a historic final.

The problem? If top men's players started losing best-of-three-set matches early, there would quickly be calls to go back to the old format.

A second proposal would have the men and women play best-of-three in every round, with no tiebreakers in the third set. This would also be a step toward equality, and lead to shorter matches, while holding out the possibility of epic final sets.



No stranger to marathon matches, Isner endured a 50-game fifth set in last year's Wimbledon semifinals. Never again will we witness a match of that length at the All England Club—Wimbledon will now enforce a fifth-set tiebreak at 12–12.

AP

The problem here is that Wimbledon just added a final-set tiebreaker for the first time, in the wake of the interminable, 26–24 fifth set that Anderson and Isner played last year (total match time: six hours, 36 minutes).

But according to Courtney Nguyen, who writes the WTA Insider column at the tour's website, the shorter format would come with a potential benefit.

"You open up the possibility for the top players to play all three disciplines," she says. "I want tennis to go back to where the top players played everything. Mixed doubles would be a huge draw, as would the doubles. Fans would have two or three times as many chances to see Federer or Rafa or Serena. I don't see how that would be bad for business."

A chance to shorten singles matches, resuscitate doubles and put a star player on virtually every court: it's a concept that would probably only work if doubles was made mandatory, or if the rankings became a combination of singles and doubles results. But it's a tantalizing idea, and perhaps the only one that would satisfy traditionalists and progressives.

Until then, tennis will likely stick with another of its traditions: going with what it knows.

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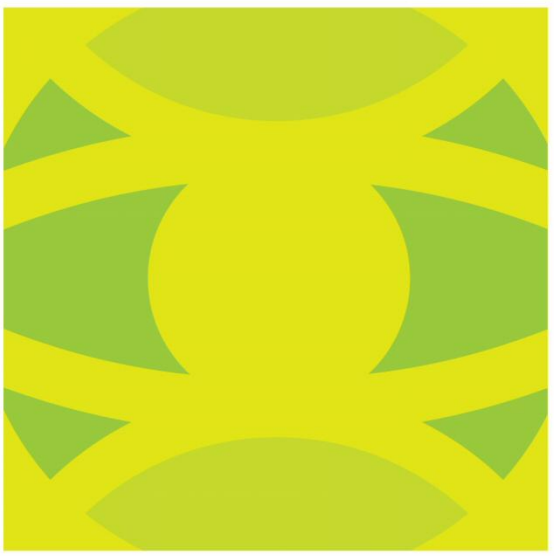

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Atlanta is ripe with fresh flavors, captivating culture —and plenty of tennis

by JON LEVEY

SOUND

1 / JAYBIRD

Run XT

- **PRICE:** $180
- **WEBSITE:** jaybirdsport.com
- **WEIGHT:** 6.8g
- **TOTAL PLAYTIME:** 12 hours (4 playback/8 in charging case)
- **SWEAT AND WATERPROOF RATING:** IPX7

Additional Features:

- Quick Charge: five minutes in charging case results in 1 hour of playtime
- Built to handle extreme conditions of rain, mud and outdoor adventures
- Fully adjustable equalizer via Jaybird app to personalize audio
- On/off and volume control button functions can be customized with app
- Eight interchangeable fins and tips options for custom fit and security
- Right earbud can function alone for greater surrounding awareness
- Available in two colors: Storm Gray, Black Flash

2 / SONY

WF-SP700N

- **PRICE:** $150
- **WEBSITE:** sony.com
- **WEIGHT:** 7.7g
- **TOTAL PLAYTIME:** 9 hours (3 playback/6 in charging case)
- **SWEAT AND WATERPROOF RATING:** IPX4

Additional Features:

- Digital noise canceling minimizes distractions
- Ambient Sound Mode allows background noise to stay alert during outdoor activity
- Three size options for an optimal fit
- Sony Headphones Connect app helps customize sound settings
- Extra Bass mode punches up low-end sounds
- Quick Sound Settings in Sony Connect App can customize button functions
- Available in four shades: Black, Pink, White, Yellow

3 / JABRA

Elite Active 65t

- **PRICE:** $190
- **WEBSITE:** jabra.com
- **WEIGHT:** 6.5g (right) / 5.8g (left)
- **TOTAL PLAYTIME:** 15 hours (5 playback/10 in charging case)
- **SWEAT AND WATERPROOF RATING:** IP56

Additional Features:

- 15-minute rapid charge gives up to 1.5 hours of playback
- EarGels in three sizes ensure a snug, secure fit
- 2-year warranty against damage
- Jabra Sound+ app personalizes music, phone call settings, ambient noise level
- Track fitness and performance with an integrated motion sensor
- Choice of one-touch access to voice assistant: Siri, Google Assistant or Amazon Alexa
- Available in four colors: Amazon Edition, Copper Blue, Copper Red, Titanium Black

Whether you're hitting the gym, the running trail or the practice courts, music makes any workout better. These completely wireless earbuds are designed to handle the most extreme conditions and deliver the perfect soundtrack to your toughest training sessions

4 / JLAB

Epic Air Elite

- **PRICE:** $150
- **WEBSITE:** jlabaudio.com
- **WEIGHT:** 10g
- **TOTAL PLAYTIME:** 38 hours (6 playback/32 in charging case)
- **SWEAT AND WATERPROOF RATING:** IP55

Additional Features:

- Custom earhook design for secure comfort during any workout
- Three EQ sound settings: JLab Signature, Balanced, Bass Boost
- Be Aware Audio permits background noise for safe listening when running or exercising outside
- Charging case includes phone-charging capabilities
- Upgraded Class 1 Bluetooth 5 connection for clear, bold sound
- Seven different-sized gel ear tips and a set of Cloud Foam tips for a custom fit
- Two-year JLab warranty

5 / APPLE

AirPods

- **PRICE:** $159 ($199 with wireless charging case)
- **WEBSITE:** apple.com
- **WEIGHT:** 4g
- **TOTAL PLAYTIME:** 24+ hours (5 playback/19+ in charging case)
- **SWEAT AND WATERPROOF RATING:** N/A

Additional Features:

- Second-generation with improved battery power and sound quality, especially in outdoor environments
- 15-minute charge results in 3 hours of playback
- Voice-activated Siri enables hands-free control over music volume and song selections
- Lightweight, comfortable design that promotes a universal fit
- Faster and virtually seamless integration between active iOS devices
- Charge with Lightning Port or wirelessly on a Qi-compatible charging mat

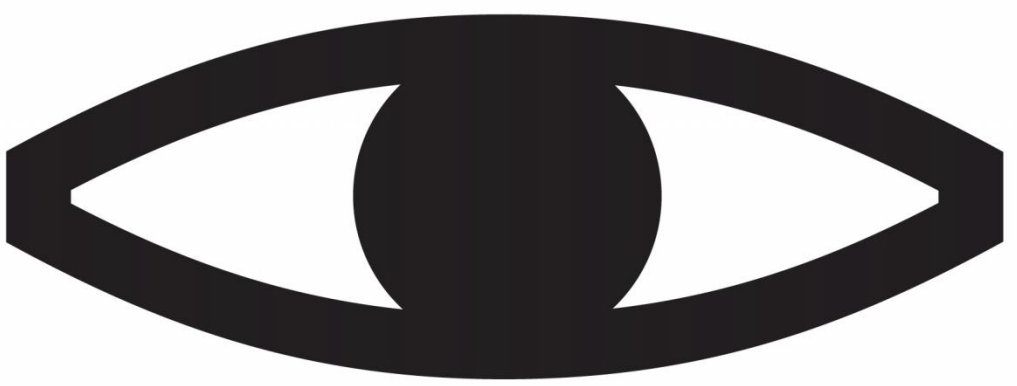
6 / BOSE

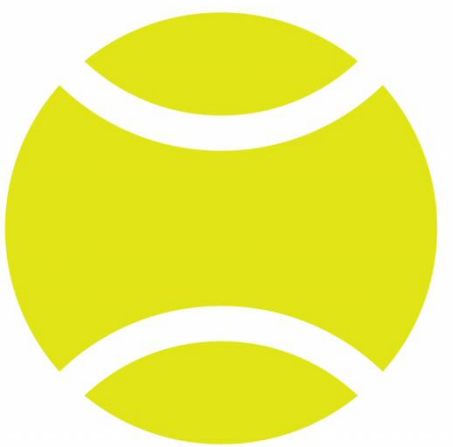
SoundSport Free

- **PRICE:** $200
- **WEBSITE:** bose.com
- **WEIGHT:** 9.1g
- **TOTAL PLAYTIME:** 15 hours (5 playback/10 in charging case)
- **SWEAT AND WATERPROOF RATING:** IPX4

Additional Features:

- StayHear+ Sport tips spread contact evenly around inside of the ear for a secure, firm fit
- Multi-function button can play, pause and skip tracks, or take and end calls
- Charging case magnetically holds each earbud in place
- Bose Connect App integrates with Apple Music and TuneIn internet radio
- "Find My Buds" feature on the app displays the last time and place earbuds were used
- Available in four colors: Black, Bright Orange, Midnight Blue, Ultraviolet





highdzn

Keep Your Eye on the Ball

It's a tennis saying right up there with "game, set, match." But you can't do it if your eyes aren't healthy

No matter what surface you play on, outdoor tennis is *warm*. The pro tours follow the sun, and recreational players crave the hot rays for ideal conditions to exercise and play.

There's one problem with the sun: too much of it isn't a good thing. And while you may have ample sunscreen in your tennis bag and wear moisture-wicking apparel from head to toe, there's another part of the body that must be protected: your eyes.

"I did a little survey from a lot of eye surgeons," a journalist once said in a press conference with sunglass-wearing Sam Stosur, "and a lot of them are wondering, why aren't there more tennis players wearing sunglasses?"

In October 2017, the WTA felt strongly enough about eye health that it ran a story on its website about the effects of prolonged sun exposure. The sun's harmful rays can lead to cataracts, macular degeneration, skin cancer, photokeratitis and other eye disorders.

But eye health goes beyond protecting yourself from the sun. Dry eye is another condition tennis players are susceptible to, particularly as they grow older. Women have also been shown to have an increased risk of dry eye—which, according to the National Eye Institute, "occurs when the quantity and/or quality of tears fails to keep the surface of the eye adequately lubricated."

Like sunglasses against UV rays, dry eye can be combatted with over-the-counter products. The simplest and most effective way to treat dry eye is with eye drops. Even if symptoms such as redness or stinging have already developed, eye drops are a players' best weapon against dry eye. Specially designed vitamins and chewables are also available at major retailers and pharmacies.

Other lifestyle choices can reduce the risk of dry eye, and are appealing for their own health merits. Increase your Omega-3 oils with more fish in your diet; boost your Vitamin A levels with sweet potatoes and spinach; increase your copper intake with dark chocolate. And, as always, remember to drink plenty of water.

"Dry eyes are extremely inconvenient," says Venus Williams, who uses eye drops to manage Sjögren's Syndrome, an autoimmune disease resulting from the body mistakenly attacking moisture-producing glands. "My livelihood and my joy and dreams rely on my eyes functioning."

Williams, who has used Systane products since 2011, recently partnered with the company for a dry-eye awareness campaign. Unable to wear contact lenses on the court, she finds the relief eye drops provide critical to her late-career success.

One of the best ways to deal with dry eye is something tennis players are already familiar with: exercise. The health benefits conferred from physical activity contribute to positive eye health; just be sure to take regular breaks and wear protective eyewear. And if your exercise brings you to the tennis court, remember: keep your eye on the ball.

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Venus Williams
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by JON LEVEY

racquet bags

The latest in function and fashion to keep your gear organized, and your game looking sharp

1 / BABOLAT

Pure Drive VS Racquet Bag

- **MSRP:** $120
- **WEBSITE:** babolat.com
- **RACQUET CAPACITY:** 9
- **DIMENSIONS:** 29" x 16" x 15"
- **COLOR:** Black/Blue/White

Description: Three main compartments to house racquets and gear; Isothermal Protection liner in one compartment to help shield frames from the elements and mitigate tension loss; see-through compartment with VS graphic call-out; large side accessory pocket with internal organization features; molded outer-side accessory pocket for smaller items and valuables; exterior ventilated shoe pocket; includes removable sack for wet clothes; optional customizable name tag slot; adjustable padded backpack straps and grab handles on one end and the middle of the bag for easy transport.

2 / DUNLOP

CX Series 9-Racquet Thermo

- **MSRP:** $109
- **WEBSITE:** dunlop.com
- **RACQUET CAPACITY:** 9
- **DIMENSIONS:** 31" X 13" X 14"
- **COLOR:** Black/Red

▸ **Description:** Two main compartments for racquets and gear, one with thermal insulation; two outer accessory pockets on the side of the back—one smaller, one larger—with molding for protection; middle of the bag features two deep ventilated pockets to keep sweaty gear separate; shoe tunnel at end of the bag; single grab handle on top and on one end; newly designed ergonomic shoulder straps for backpack carry.

3 / HEAD

Gravity Duffle Bag

- **MSRP:** $135
- **WEBSITE:** head.com
- **RACQUET CAPACITY:** 12
- **DIMENSIONS:** 31" X 14" X 19.5"
- **COLOR:** Black/Teal

▸ **Description:** Newest bag silo to coincide with Gravity racquet launch; one main compartment with removable dividers to customize racquet and gear storage space; outside compartment with Climate Control Technology protects gear from elements and holds up to three frames; integrated footwear compartment with ventilation; two large external accessory pockets; zipper and mesh internal pockets; backpack carry system with adjustable shoulder straps.

4 / PRINCE

Tour 9 Pack

- **MSRP:** $100
- **WEBSITE:** princetennis.com
- **RACQUET CAPACITY:** 12
- **DIMENSIONS:** 30" X 17" X 14"
- **COLOR:** Red/Black

▸ **Description:** Three main compartments, one with thermal lining to protect frames and strings from extreme conditions; dual-molded large external pockets with inner meshing to organize string reels, grip and other items; one end features a zippered vented compartment for shoes or sweaty gear; the other end has a thermal protected pocket to keep drinks and snacks cool; grab handles on one end and on the top of the bag; padded adjustable/removable straps.

5 / SOLINCO

Racquet Bag

- **MSRP:** $95
- **WEBSITE:** solincosports.com
- **RACQUET CAPACITY:** 15
- **DIMENSIONS:** 31" X 15" X 18"
- **COLOR:** Black/White/Green

Description: Three main compartments, two with Temprotechnology to shield racquets and strings from the elements; large middle compartment has two internal pockets for smaller items; two external accessory pockets on both sides of the bag; separate shoe compartment accessible on the bottom of the bag; elongated grab handles on the top of the bag; padded mesh adjustable/detachable backpack straps.

6 / TECNIFIBRE

Tour Endurance Rackpack XL

- **MSRP:** $120
- **WEBSITE:** tecnifibre.com
- **RACQUET CAPACITY:** 5
- **DIMENSIONS:** 28" X 14" X 14"
- **COLOR:** Black/White/Red/Blue

Description: Innovative "racks inside" design allows for customizable storage in main compartment; made with 100 percent Tarpulin; two zippered mesh accessory pockets; ventilated shoe tunnel; zippered external accessory pocket; all-in-one carrying system allows for transport over one shoulder, with grab handles like a duffel, or over shoulders with chest belt, like a backpack.

7 / WILSON

Clash Large Duffel

- **MSRP:** $99
- **WEBSITE:** wilson.com
- **RACQUET CAPACITY:** 3-4
- **DIMENSIONS:** 30" X 12" X 12"
- **COLOR:** Grey/Black/Infrared

Description: Bag line matches new Clash racquet franchise; smart interior organization system in main compartment keeps clothing, racquets and personal items separate; dedicated racquet compartment holds 3-4 frames; zippered external accessory pockets for smaller items; matte finish and coated polyester base for durability; padded grab handles for easy carry.

8 / YONEX

Pro Racquet 9-Pack

- **MSRP:** $120
- **WEBSITE:** yonexusa.com
- **RACQUET CAPACITY:** 9
- **DIMENSIONS:** 31" X 15" X 15"
- **COLOR:** Clear Blue

Description: Three main compartments, one with Thermoguard lining to protect equipment from the elements; large side accessory compartment for balls, drinks and smaller items; shoe compartment on one end of bag; grab handles on other end and on top of bag; padded adjustable backpack straps located away from zippers for easier gear and accessory access.

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1 / AME & LULU

Love All Court Bag

- **MSRP:** $136
- **WEBSITE:** ameandlulu.com
- **RACQUET CAPACITY:** 2
- **DIMENSIONS:** 16" X 6" X 14"
- **COLOR:** Natural/Navy

Description: Made with 18 oz. canvas and durable water-repellent finish; large zippered main compartment to hold gear; internal zip pocket fits two frames; smaller interior slip pocket for valuables and other items; exterior back zip pocket; dual side pockets for water bottle and can of balls; nylon liner; protective metal feet on bottom; 10" handle drop to allow for over-the-shoulder carry.

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2 / BABOLAT

Pure Aero Backpack

- **MSRP:** $75
- **WEBSITE:** babolat.com
- **RACQUET CAPACITY:** 1-2
- **DIMENSIONS:** 18" X 13.5" X 6"
- **COLOR:** Black/Yellow

▸ **Description:** Padded racquet compartment with extendible handle cover; large main compartment for gear with internal pouch and zip pocket for a tablet or other smaller items; dual side accessory zip pockets; vented compartment on bottom of the bag for shoes or sweaty clothes; adjustable quick grab handle on top of bag, padded backpack straps with chest buckle; headphone outlet for easier access to media player; customizable bag tag.

3 / DUNLOP

CX Performance Commuter Backpack

- **MSRP:** $79
- **WEBSITE:** dunlop.com
- **RACQUET CAPACITY:** 3
- **DIMENSIONS:** 29" X 13" X 6"
- **COLOR:** Black

▸ **Description:** Extra-long design allows for full racquet enclosure with an internal strap to prevent movement inside the bag; front accessory pocket large enough for shoes or other gear with a mesh zip pocket and pouch on the interior; dual side accessory pockets for drinks or can of balls; accessory pocket on top of the bag for smaller items and personal effects; grab handle on top, along with padded, adjustable backpack straps.

4 / FILA

Fully Loaded Tennis Bag

- **MSRP:** $65
- **WEBSITE:** fila.com
- **RACQUET CAPACITY:** 2
- **DIMENSIONS:** 20" X 13" 10"
- **COLOR:** Navy

▸ **Description:** Padded racquet compartment with handle storage on either side; large main compartment with smaller zipper accessory pocket; four exterior accessory pockets, one with felt lining for valuables and another with thermal lining for drinks and snacks; separate shoe compartment; ventilated air mesh back panel; large grab handle on top of bag; padded, adjustable backpack straps for transport.

5 / HEAD

Gravity Backpack

- **MSRP:** $95
- **WEBSITE:** head.com
- **RACQUET CAPACITY:** 1-2
- **DIMENSIONS:** 13.5" X 9.5" X 18"
- **COLOR:** Black/Teal

▸ **Description:** Padded racquet compartment; main compartment with padded laptop pocket; exterior accessory compartment with multiple storage pockets; integrated shoe compartment; adjustable side pocket for water or can; backpack carry system with chest buckle for added security.

6 / TORY SPORT

Convertible Perforated-T Tennis Tote

- **MSRP:** $398
- **WEBSITE:** toryburch.com
- **RACQUET CAPACITY:** 2
- **DIMENSIONS:** 18" X 6" X 15"
- **COLOR:** Ivory Pearl

▸ **Description:** Made from durable coated canvas with faux leather trim; spacious main compartment to house gear; removable, expandable front racquet pocket can be converted to standalone sling; dual side pockets; interior mesh zip pocket and wall pocket with card slot.

7 / VOLKL

Team Backpack

- **MSRP:** $90
- **WEBSITE:** volkltennis.com
- **RACQUET CAPACITY:** 2
- **DIMENSIONS:** 10" X 19" X 14"
- **COLOR:** Lava/Neon Yellow

▸ **Description:** Zippered racquet compartment; large main compartment for gear; open front pouch for quick access; dual side zip accessory pockets for smaller items; grab handle on top; mesh paneling on the back for ventilation; padded, adjustable backpack straps for comfortable carry.

8 / WILSON

2019 RF DNA Collection Backpack

- **MSRP:** $94
- **WEBSITE:** wilson.com
- **RACQUET CAPACITY:** 2
- **DIMENSIONS:** 13" X 10" X 18.5"
- **COLOR:** White

▸ **Description:** Padded racquet compartment with locking zippers; two additional compartments; white molded front panels, gold logo and Roger Federer signature; fleece-lined side pocket for valuables; Thermoguard side pocket; padded backpack straps.

Maestro Class

What Stefanos Tsitsipas has learned from Roger Federer—and what you can learn from both men

Roger Federer has inspired countless players to try to imitate his all-but-inimitable style. But is there an heir to The Maestro's baton? Stefanos Tsitsipas may have the strongest claim to it yet. The 20-year-old Greek spent his youth idolizing Federer, and he has the court instincts to show for it—not to mention a major win over the 20-time Grand Slam champion earlier this year. At some point, Federer will call it a career. But with Tsitsipas and his disciples, Federer's tactics will live on.

AP, GETTY IMAGES

by
STEPHEN TIGNOR

HE EXPERIMENTS

• Commentators often inform us of the myriad ways in which Federer can disrupt a player's game. We rarely hear that said about his opponents, who have more limited arsenals. That's not true for Tsitsipas, who has plenty of options, and is willing to experiment with them.

Tsitsipas' one-handed backhand allows him to draw his opponent in, or follow the ball to net himself. He can bomb a first serve, or surprise an opponent with a sliced second ball down the T. He has a powerful forehand, but he's adept at changing speeds with it. He never seems to play the same point twice.

Your Turn: Versatility isn't a God-given talent; it's learned in practice. If you have a two-handed backhand, work to add a one-handed chip. Master a hard slice second serve to go with your kicker. Practice flat drive *and* heavy topspin forehands. There's no shot you can't develop.

HE'S NOT AFRAID

• You can't win at the net anymore? Don't tell that to Tsitsipas. His willingness to come forward was key to his fourth-round win over Federer in Melbourne. Even after he lost a few points at the net, he kept coming in, and the pressure wore on Federer. By the end of the match, even Tsitsipas' most mediocre approaches drew errors. In the process, Tsitsipas also showed how a one-handed backhand works best today. Rather than grinding from the baseline with it, he used it to open the court, change the pace and attack the net.

Your Turn: Using a one-handed backhand can weaken your service return. To combat that disadvantage, try to exploit the one-hander's biggest advantage: it's a natural fit for approach shots, and helps you transition easily to a volley grip. Don't settle for rallies with your one-hander; propel yourself forward with it and be aggressive.

HE USES HIS SERVE AS A SET UP

• There's an interconnectedness to Tsitsipas' game that's reminiscent not just of Federer's, but of Ken Rosewall's. Tsitsipas doesn't try to end points with one risky shot when he can end them with three safer ones. He can blast aces, but he's just as likely to kick a serve in to set up his forehand, which will be used to set up a volley. Like Federer, Tsitsipas goes for percentage and accuracy rather than raw power on his serve. When his serves need to hit their targets, there's a good chance they're going to.

Your Turn: Instead of starting a match gunning for aces, get a high percentage of first serves in, and mix spins and locations. You'll keep your opponent guessing right away and gain confidence in your first serve, which will allow you to dial up the pace when you need it later. Getting into an accurate groove will also improve your second serves.

GA on our mind

by REBECCA WALLWORK

The home of the Braves, **Atlanta** is ripe with fresh flavors, captivating culture—and plenty of tennis

The summer is a time for exploring festivals, diving into the arts and relaxing in green parks and gardens—all of which are abundant in Atlanta. Whether you cool off inside for a spot of artistic immersion, or take to the great outdoors for a summer concert or festival, inspiration can be found throughout Atlanta's vibrant neighborhoods. Here are some of the best ways to enjoy a warm-weather visit to this beacon of the New South.

GREEN SCENES

You don't have to run or bike—though you certainly can—to get the most out of Atlanta's most beloved outdoor spaces. **Piedmont Park** hosts some of the summer's best events in Georgia, including the Atlanta Ice Cream Festival (July 27), featuring scoops from local and national vendors, and the Piedmont Park Arts Fest (August 17–18), which showcases works of painters, photographers, sculptors and master craftsmen and craftswomen.

For a taste of street art, head to the **Atlanta BeltLine Eastside Trail**. This three-mile portion of the 22-mile rejuvenated rail line connects the Midtown and Reynoldstown neighborhoods and is dotted with murals and graffiti art.

The **Atlanta Botanical Garden** makes for a refreshing retreat on a warm day, but it's also the site of some hot concerts. Pack a picnic from a local farmer's market and claim a spot on the Great Lawn for shows that include the John Butler Trio (July 26), Toad the Wet Sprocket (August 16) and Melissa Etheridge (August 17).

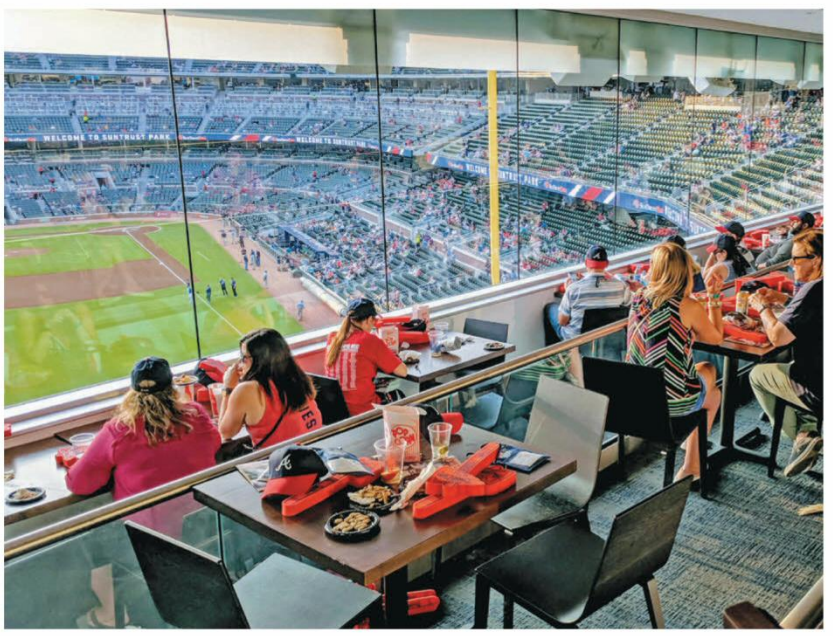
DO IT FOR THE CULTURE

Cool off between outdoor adventures with visits to one of Atlanta's excellent arts and cultural institutions. In Midtown, explore **The High Museum of Art**, where summer exhibitions include *Of Origins and Belonging, Drawn from Atlanta*, featuring the work of local artists. Weekend family tours give youngsters and parents an interactive way to learn.

Two other artsy hubs to check out are the **Museum of Design Atlanta**, which turns the spotlight on guitar design with the new exhibition *Wire & Wood: Designing Iconic Guitars*, and the contemporary art-focused **SCAD Museum of Art**.

Summer evenings are well spent catching a show at the historic **Fox Theatre**, the **Atlanta Symphony Orchestra** or at the **Alliance Theatre**, which just completed a $32 million renovation that puts the audience 15 feet closer to the stage.

History buffs can delve into the nation's African-American heritage at the **Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park**, in Sweet Auburn. For local history, visit the **Atlanta History Center**, replete with a new custom-built Cyclorama building to showcase the soaring, sprawling *Battle of Atlanta* painting.



Part of the city's sports fabric for generations, the Braves play ball at SunTrust Park. Atlanta is also home to the Falcons (NFL), the Hawks (NBA) and, most recently, Atlanta United FC (MLS).

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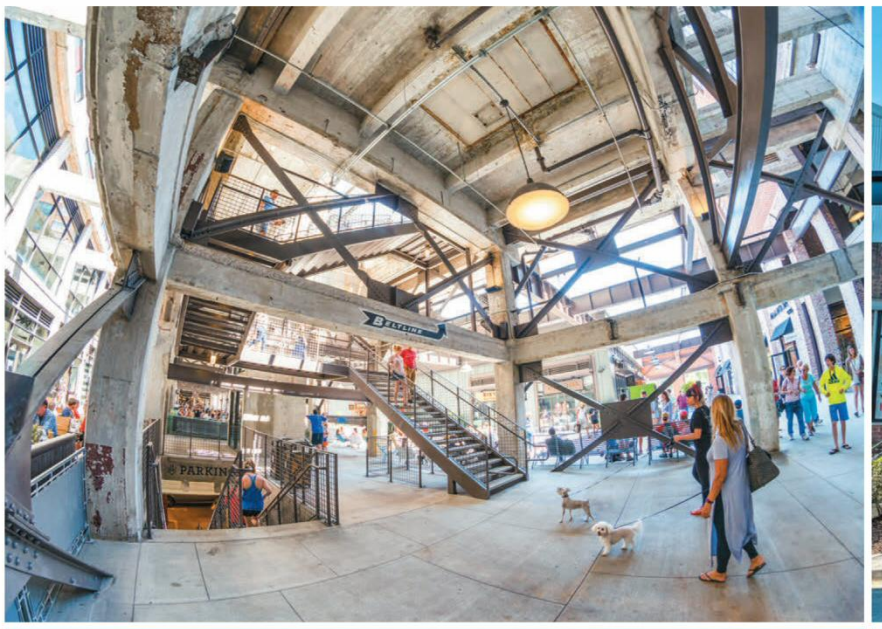

Take the stairway to the Atlanta BeltLine at Ponce City Market *(top left)*. The three-mile outdoor path is lined with impressive art and views. At Krog Street Market, enjoy baos at Suzy Siu's, barbecue at Grand Champion, and beer at Hop City *(top right)*. Wash it all down with a cool cone at Jake's Ice Cream *(bottom left)*. Then walk it off—and lighten your wallet—at The Shops at Buckhead *(bottom right)*.

MARKET WATCH

Atlanta has a thriving dining scene with a growing list of restaurants and bars that go beyond the obvious Southern staples. But the most enjoyable way to taste the town is to head to one of its vibrant markets. **Ponce City Market**, located just off the BeltLine in the historic Sears, Roebuck & Co. building, is a multi-use space with a bustling Central Food Hall that brings together bakeries, wineries, candy shops and a wide range of restaurants: Pancake Social, where sweet and savory stacks are available all day; W.H. Stiles Fish Camp, for oysters and catch of the day; and the King of Pops, for beating the heat with an ice pop.

Krog Street Market, in the heart of Inman Park, is another lively food hall where you can browse fresh produce and prepared dishes, or sit down for a meal of pho, sushi, Southern fried hot chicken—or whatever else takes your fancy.

When you're really hungry, though, you'll want to take your voracious appetite to Buford Highway, an eight-mile stretch between Buckhead and Buford that's home to the sprawling **Buford Highway Farmers Market**, a 100,000-square-foot paradise of fresh produce, meat and seafood, and more than 100 restaurants specializing in cuisine from around the globe. Its Asian offerings are a standout: Food Terminal, whose co-owner, chef Amy Wong, brings together ingredients and dishes from across the continent; Ming's BBQ for traditional Chinese Peking duck; and Dim Sum Heaven, open late and serving dim sum all day.

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Walk, bike, run: no matter how you traverse the BeltLine, something colorful will catch your eye. The Eastside Trail was the first section of the BeltLine to be completed, thanks to funding from public sources and private philanthropy. There are 19 access points, with 17 ADA-accessible. Open from 6 a.m. through 11 p.m., this old rail corridor has been given a second lease on life.

WHERE TO STAY

The newest hotels worth checking out include two properties in Midtown—**Canopy by Hilton Atlanta Midtown**, whose nod to local culture includes beds with signature headboards inspired by *Gone With the Wind* (which was filmed in Georgia), and **AC Hotel by Marriott/Moxy**, which combines the simple, stylish aesthetic of the AC brand with Moxy's millennial vibe and rooftop bar and pool. Both hotels are close to the city's best arts destinations; the AC/Moxy even has a pedestrian "Arts Walk" connector for easy access to the Midtown Arts District. The **Kimpton Overland Hotel** is also new this year, and while airport hotels may not be for your first choice, this one located near Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International is next door to the Porsche Experience Center and test track. The hotel includes Porsche-inspired art as part of its eclectic design, and features Kimpton's signature complimentary wine hour every evening.

WHERE TO PLAY

Atlanta is a true tennis town, with the Atlanta Lawn Tennis Association (ALTA) founded in 1934 to promote the sport and its health benefits. Today the non-profit organization has approximately 80,000 members and hosts a wide range of recreational leagues and tournaments. On July 22, ALTA Day at the ATP's BB&T Atlanta Open features Andy Roddick facing local ex-pro Robby Ginepri, in addition to the day schedule.

Three of the best public places to play in Atlanta are the **Sandy Springs Tennis Center** (500 Abernathy Rd. NE), the **Blackburn Tennis Center** (3501 Ashford Dunwoody Rd.) and the **Bitsy Grant Tennis Center** (2125 Northside Dr. NW). At Sandy Springs alone, there are more than 300 ALTA teams.

To get some court time in before or after your city getaway, head 90 minutes out of Atlanta for a retreat at The Ritz-Carlton Reynolds, Lake Oconee. Its **Reynolds Lake Club Tennis Center** is operated by Peter Burwash International and has two stadium-sized and six championship-sized lighted courts. Six are Har-Tru Hydro courts and four are hard courts. The resort has five golf courses, plenty of lakeside activities and a luxurious spa overlooking the water.

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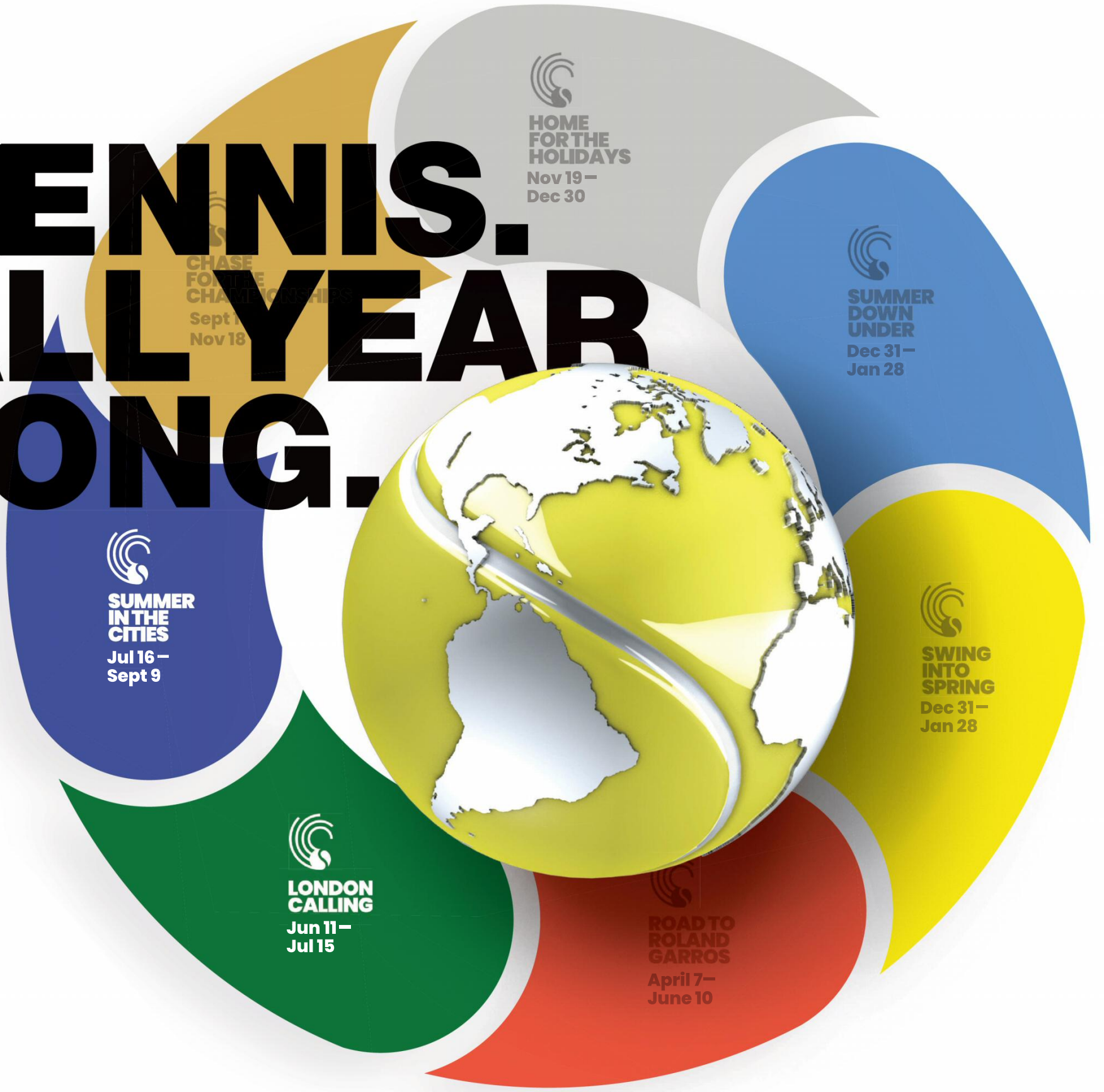

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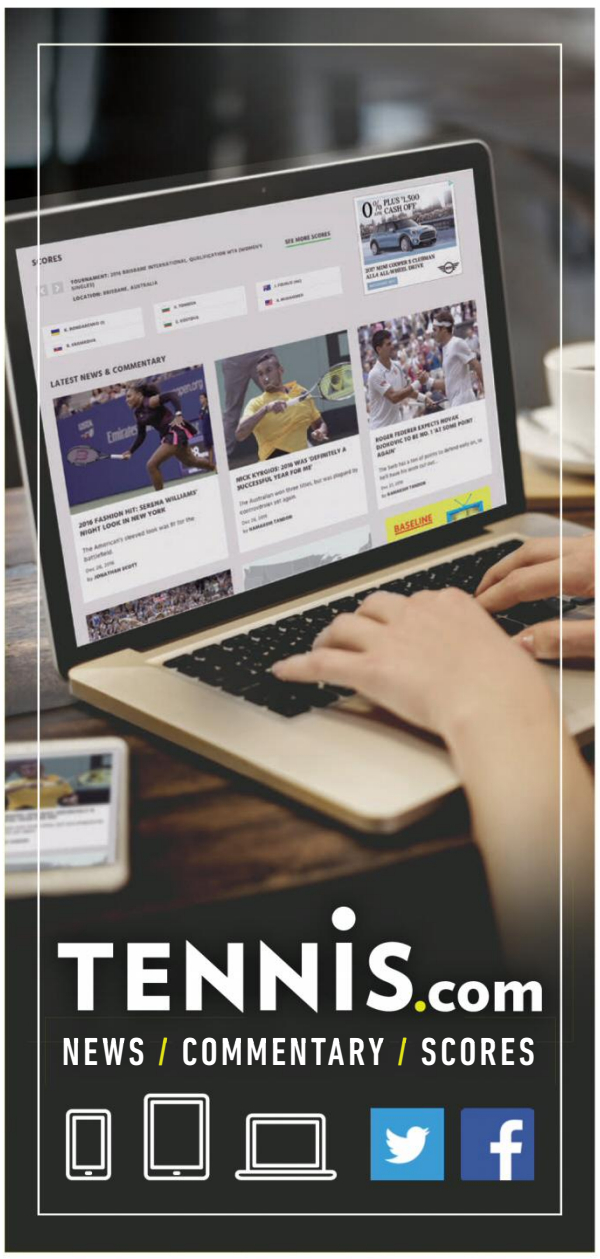

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A grass-court club is growing in a Michigan factory town. Can it become tennis' version of Augusta National?

SHUTTERSTOCK

Home Turf

by
STEPHEN TIGNOR

"The best thing is watching the players smile when they warm up," Bill Massie says. "They can't believe the surface they're on."

What's this magical material that brings such delight? It's the sport's original surface, but one that few of us have trod: grass. Specifially, perennial rye grass, the type used at Wimbledon.

It's also the type that Massie has grown on the 24 courts at his Wessen Lawn Tennis Club in Pontiac, MI, for the last five years.

Lawn tennis, on perennial rye, in a midwestern factory town? The unlikely idea was all Massie's.

An architect by trade and net-rusher on court, Massie fell in love with the grass game while watching his son play on the surface in 2008. At the time, Massie was head of the architecture department at Cranbrook Academy near Detroit. By 2010, he had constructed a grass court at home; two years later, he built 24 more at a century-old waterworks plant in Pontiac that he purchased for $300,000. It was a way for Massie to indulge his passion for grass, and contribute to the revitalization of Detroit.

"When I saw the structure, I thought, 'This was made to be a club,'" Massie remembers. "It felt like the right place for tennis."

If renovating the waterworks was in his wheelhouse, getting perennial rye to thrive in the heat and humdity of a Michigan summer was something new.

"Our turf management has been way over the top, but it has been worth it," Massie says. "I'm constantly blown away by the quality of the courts."

Last June, those courts were subject to their most stressful test yet: A $10,000 men's pro tournament. At the time, Massie's goal was to host an ATP event that would lead into Wimbledon.

But if this sounds like *Field of Dreams*, tennis-style, the happy ending has yet to materialize. Massie has built it, but so far members have been slow to come.

"I thought we'd get hundreds of people who'd love to play on grass, but the number has been lower," says Massie, who has put his own dreams of holding a pro tournament on hold. "We may have maxed out."

What's next for Wessen? Massie has contemplated, reluctantly, renting out the facility for weddings, raising dues, and reducing the number of courts. But he still holds on to his biggest dream: Making Wessen into a tennis version of Augusta National: a club with a nationwide membership. Massie pro-rates dues for out-of-town members, and he has the space—if not the money—to build a lodge onsite.

For now, Massie, a lifelong player who met his wife through tennis, is happy to be able to run around on perennial rye himself.

"There's nothing like playing on grass; there's a tactile and visual element that other surfaces don't have," says Massie, who maintains an all-white apparel policy at Wessen.

Some things are, like the rye, perennial. For past generations of American tennis players, Longwood and Forest Hills were the meccas of grass. Is it too much of a stretch to think future generations may find it in Pontiac?

"When you see all of our courts in use in the evening," Massie says, "it's the most beautiful thing you can imagine."

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