



AI PREDICTS TENNIS





Carlos Alcaraz
 ESP



Jannik Sinner
ITA



Rank	2
Age	22
Weight	163lbs (74kg)
Height	6'0" (183cm)
Plays	Right-Handed
Backhand	Two-Handed
Turned Pro	2018

30/5	YTD W/L	12/1
3	YTD titles	1
239/61	Career W/L	275/81
19	Career titles	19
\$41,835,058	Career prize money	\$40,069,385

Rank	1
Age	23
Weight	170lbs (77kg)
Height	6'3" (191cm)
Plays	Right-Handed
Backhand	Two-Handed
Turned Pro	2018

WORKFLOW



Step	What happens
Data prep	Walk through every 2024 match in date order, maintaining global Elo and clay-only Elo for every player; for each match we record the rating-differences just <i>before</i> the first serve.
Features	Only two: elo_diff and surf_elo_diff → keeps the experiment laser-focused on rating quality
Models	Decision Tree, Random Forest, Gradient Boosting and a tiny MLP (1 hidden layer, 16→8).
Scores	Held-out 25 % test set (stratified). All four settle around 58 % accuracy / 0.62 AUC , showing how far Elo alone can take you.
RG 2025 simulation (quick-and-dirty)	Take the 32 best clay Elo players as of 1 Jan 2025 (end of our data), estimate their head-to-head win-probabilities with the Random Forest, average those, then raise to the 7th power to approximate “seven wins in a Slam”.

DATASET



Find a dataset to help predict who will win at Roland Garros this year



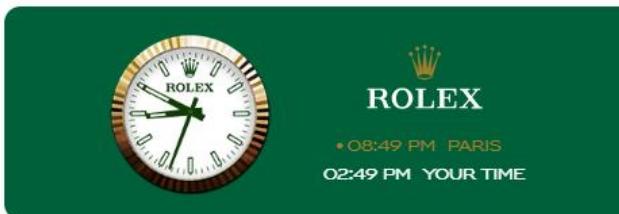

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Andy West

Sinner & Alcaraz's first major final set to light up Roland Garros

Pick the Hot Shot of the Month

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LEXUS ATP HEAD2HEAD


Vs




Sinner sinks Djokovic to reach



Rivalries: Alcaraz vs. Sinner



Cahill: How Sinner & Alcaraz

ATP SCORES

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[ATP Tour](#)
[Challenger](#)

LIVE Roland Garros

Paris, France.

[All Scores](#) [Schedule](#) [Draw](#)

Final - Court Philippe Chatrier

 M. Granollers (5)
 H. Zeballos (5)

 J. Salisbury (8)
 N. Skupski (8)

0	6	6 ⁵	0
0	0	7	0

[H2H](#) [Stats](#)

BOSS OPEN

Stuttgart, Germany.

[All Scores](#) [Schedule](#) [Draw](#)



JeffSackmann / tennis_atp

Type / to search



Code



37



2

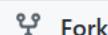


tennis_atp

Public



108



646



1.2k



master ▾



1 Branch



0 Tags



Go to file



Code ▾

About

ATP Tennis Rankings, Results, and Stats

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Activity

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108 watching

646 forks

[Report repository](#)

Releases

No releases published

Packages

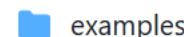
No packages published

Contributors 5



JeffSackmann 2024 season

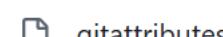
5b6263d · 6 months ago 509 Commits



examples

add script to aggregate player-season totals

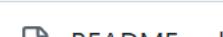
4 years ago



.gitattributes

Added .gitattributes & .gitignore files

10 years ago



README.md

Update README.md

4 years ago



atp_matches_1968.csv

add many 1968 tournaments

2 years ago



atp_matches_1969.csv

de-dupe tau, nam, dupasquier, dewitts, brown

2 years ago



atp_matches_1970.csv

de-dupe madani, freedman, brien

2 years ago



atp_matches_1971.csv

fix unfinished 70s Davis Cup matches

2 years ago



atp_matches_1972.csv

fix a few 70s tournament typos WTC -> WCT

2 years ago



atp_matches_1973.csv

fix unfinished 70s Davis Cup matches

2 years ago



atp_matches_1974.csv

fix unfinished 70s Davis Cup matches

2 years ago



atp_matches_1975.csv

fix unfinished 70s Davis Cup matches

2 years ago

fix unfinished 70s Davis Cup matches

2 years ago

DATASET



Screenshot of a data visualization tool showing a CSV file named "atp_matches_2024.csv". The interface includes a navigation bar with HOME, PLOTS, APPS, IMPORT, and a search bar. The main area displays the CSV data with various columns representing tennis match details.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
	tourney_id	tourney_na...	surface	draw_size	tourney_le...	tourney_date	match_num	winner_id	winner_seed	winner_entry	winner_na...	winner_hand	winner_ht	winner_ioc	winner	winne
1																
2	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	300	105777	2		Grigor Dim...	R	191	BUL		
3	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	299	208029	1		Holger Rune	R	188	DEN		
4	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	298	105777	2		Grigor Dim...	R	191	BUL		
5	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	297	208029	1		Holger Rune	R	188	DEN		
6	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	296	126128			Roman Saf...	R	185	RUS		
7	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	295	111442			Jordan Th...	R	183	AUS		
8	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	294	105777	2		Grigor Dim...	R	191	BUL		
9	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	293	208029	1		Holger Rune	R	188	DEN		
10	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	292	105902		Q	James Du...	R	183	AUS		
11	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	291	126128			Roman Saf...	R	185	RUS		
12	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	290	208286			Matteo Arn...	R	185	ITA		
13	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	289	104745		WC	Rafael Nadal	L	185	ESP		
14	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	288	111442			Jordan Th...	R	183	AUS		
15	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	287	208014		WC	Rinky Hijik...	R	178	AUS		
16	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	286	105777	2		Grigor Dim...	R	191	BUL		
17	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	285	208029	1		Holger Rune	R	188	DEN		
18	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	284	207686			Alexander ...	R	185	KAZ		
19	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	283	105902		Q	James Du...	R	183	AUS		
20	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	282	105870			Yannick H...	R	193	GER		
21	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	281	126128			Roman Saf...	R	185	RUS		
22	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	280	200615			Alexei Pop...	R	196	AUS		
23	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	279	208286			Matteo Arn...	R	185	ITA		
24	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	278	127760	Q		Lukas Klein	R	193	SVK		

https://github.com/JeffSackmann/tennis_atp

ATP: Association of Tennis Player

	HOME	PLOTS	APPS	IMPORT	Search (Ctrl+Shift+Space)														
					/	MATLAB Drive	>	tennis											
	tennis mlx X	atp_matches_2024.csv X																	
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S
	tourney_id	tourney_na...	surface	draw_size	tourney_le...	tourney_date	match_num	winner_id	winner_seed	winner_entry	winner_na...	winner_hand	winner_ht	winner_ioc	winner	winne	winne	winne	winne
	Number	Categorical	Categorical	Number	Categorical	Number	Number	Number	Number	Categorical	Categorical	Categorical	Number	Categorical	Number	Categorical	Number	Categorical	Number
1	tourney_id	tourney_na...	surface	draw_size	tourney_level	tourney_date	match_num	winner_id	winner_seed	winner_entry	winner_name	winner_hand	winner_ht	winner_ioc	winner	winne	winne	winne	winne
2	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	300	105777	2		Grigor Dim...	R	191	BUL					
3	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	299	208029	1		Holger Rune	R	188	DEN					
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12	2024-0339	Brisbane	Hard	32	A	20240101	290	208286			Matteo Arn...	R	185	ITA					
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MATLAB Drive > tennis

Files

Name
atp_matches_2024.csv
tennis.mlx

Import data

```
% URL of the dataset
url = 'https://raw.githubusercontent.com/JeffSackmann/tennis_atp/refs/heads/master/atp_matches_2024.csv';

% Read the CSV file directly from the URL
opts = detectImportOptions(url);
opts = setvartype(opts,"tourney_date","string");
T = readtable(url, opts);

% Convert 'tourney_date' to datetime format
T.date = datetime(T.tourney_date, 'InputFormat', 'yyyyMMdd');

% Select only the relevant columns
cols = {'date', 'tourney_name', 'surface', ...
    'winner_name', 'loser_name', 'winner_rank', 'loser_rank'};
T = T(:, cols)
```

T = 3076x7 table

	date	tourney_name	surface	winner_name	loser_name	winner_rank
1	01-Jan-2024	'Brisbane'	'Hard'	'Grigor Dimitrov'	'Holger Rune'	14
2	01-Jan-2024	'Brisbane'	'Hard'	'Holger Rune'	'Roman Safiullin'	8
3	01-Jan-2024	'Brisbane'	'Hard'	'Grigor Dimitrov'	'Jordan Thompson'	14
4	01-Jan-2024	'Brisbane'	'Hard'	'Holger Rune'	'James Duckworth'	8
5	01-Jan-2024	'Brisbane'	'Hard'	'Roman Safiullin'	'Matteo Arnaldi'	39
6	01-Jan-2024	'Brisbane'	'Hard'	'Jordan Thompson'	'Rafael Nadal'	55
7	01-Jan-2024	'Brisbane'	'Hard'	'Grigor Dimitrov'	'Rinky Hijikata'	14
8	01-Jan-2024	'Brisbane'	'Hard'	'Holger Rune'	'Alexander Shevchenko'	8
9	01-Jan-2024	'Brisbane'	'Hard'	'James Duckworth'	'Yannick Hanfmann'	116

Zoom: 100% UTF-8 LF script

WINS



```
% Count the number of times each player appears as the winner
wins = groupcounts(T, 'winner_name');
wins = sortrows(wins, "GroupCount", "descend")
```

wins = 307x3 table

	winner_name	GroupCount	Percent
1	'Jannik Sinner'	74	2.4057
2	'Alexander Zverev'	69	2.2432
3	'Carlos Alcaraz'	54	1.7555
4	'Taylor Fritz'	53	1.7230
5	'Casper Ruud'	52	1.6905
6	'Alex De Minaur'	48	1.5605
7	'Daniil Medvedev'	46	1.4954
8	'Grigor Dimitrov'	46	1.4954
9	'Holger Rune'	46	1.4954

SURFACE STATS



`pivot` automatically counts the rows in each (`winner_name`, `surface`) group and spreads the result into a wide table—so the surfaces become columns and players remain rows—with any extra fill-in work

```
surface_stats = pivot(T, Rows="winner_name", Columns="surface", Method="count");
surface_stats = sortrows(surface_stats, "Clay", "descend")
```

`surface_stats = 307x4 table`

	<code>winner_name</code>	<code>Clay</code>	<code>Grass</code>	<code>Hard</code>
1	'Sebastian Baez'	26	0	5
2	'Casper Ruud'	25	1	26
3	'Alexander Zverev'	23	6	40
4	'Stefanos Tsitsipas'	22	2	21
5	'Francisco Cerundolo'	21	0	14
6	'Luciano Darderi'	21	2	2
7	'Felix Auger Aliassime'	18	0	15
8	'Tomas Martin Etcheverry'	18	1	12
9	'Carlos Alcaraz'	17	8	29

SINNER VS ALCARAZ

```
% Define player names
players = {'Jannik Sinner', 'Carlos Alcaraz'};

% Apply the filter
sinner_vs_alcaraz = T( ...
    ismember(T.winner_name, players) & ...
    ismember(T.loser_name, players), :)
```

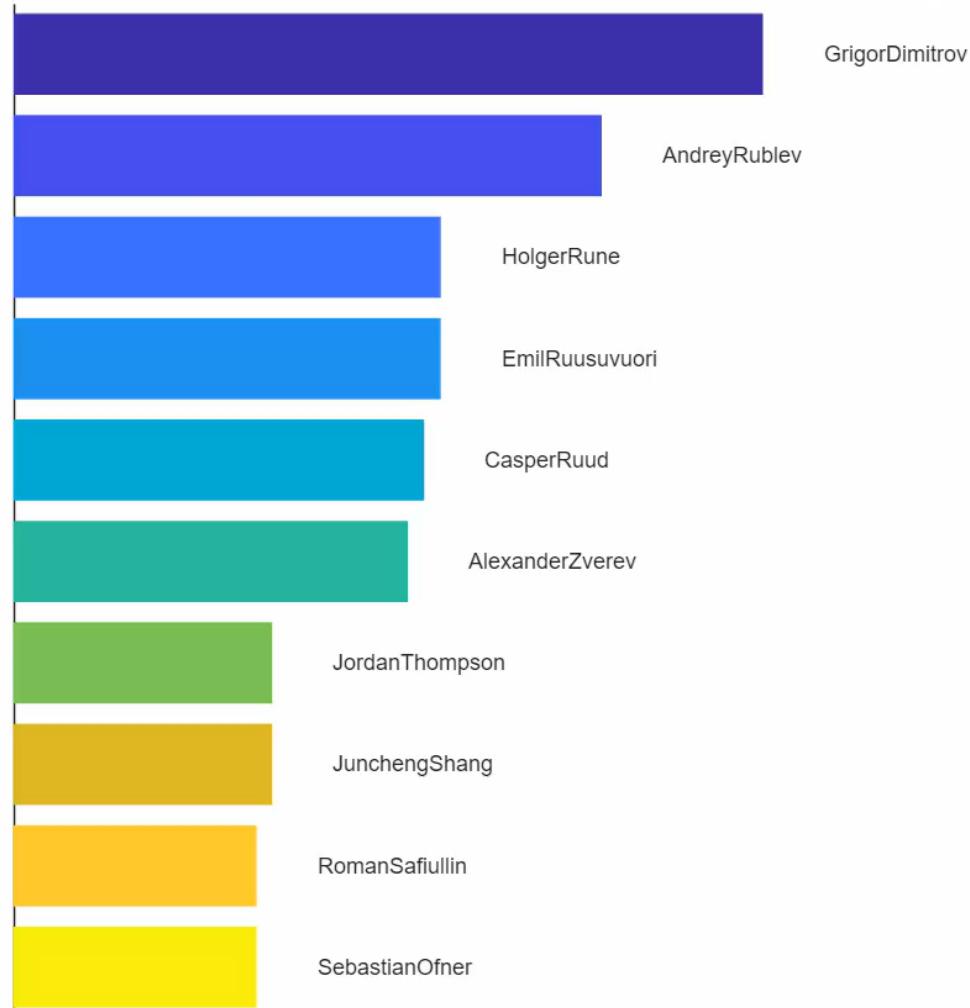
sinner_vs_alcaraz = 3x7 table

	date	tourney_name	surface	winner_name	loser_name	winner_rank	loser_rank
1	04-Mar-2024	'Indian Wells Masters'	'Hard'	'Carlos Alcaraz'	'Jannik Sinner'	2	3
2	27-May-2024	'Roland Garros'	'Clay'	'Carlos Alcaraz'	'Jannik Sinner'	3	2
3	26-Sep-2024	'Beijing'	'Hard'	'Carlos Alcaraz'	'Jannik Sinner'	3	1

- `ismember(T.winner_name, players)` checks if the winner is one of the two players.
- `ismember(T.loser_name, players)` checks the same for the loser.
- The `&` combines the two conditions.
- The final `, :` selects all columns for the rows that match.

+

•

ATP Elo race – Jan 08, 2024

METRICS: ELO RATING

Elo rating is a method for calculating the *relative skill levels* of players in competitor-versus-competitor games like chess, and it has been adapted for many sports, including **tennis**.





Elo rating system

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From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **Elo**^[a] **rating system** is a method for calculating the relative skill levels of players in zero-sum games such as [chess](#) or [esports](#). It is named after its creator [Arpad Elo](#), a Hungarian-American chess master and physics professor.

The Elo system was invented as an improved [chess-rating system](#) over the previously used Harkness system,^[1] but is also used as a rating system in [association football \(soccer\)](#), [American football](#), [baseball](#), [basketball](#), [pool](#), various [board games](#) and [esports](#), and, more recently, [large language models](#).

The difference in the ratings between two players serves as a predictor of the outcome of a match. Two players with equal ratings who play against each other are expected to score an equal number of wins. A player whose rating is 100 points greater than their opponent's is expected to score 64%; if the difference is 200 points, then the expected score for the stronger player is 76%.^[2]

A player's Elo rating is a number that may change depending on the outcome of rated games played. After every game, the winning player takes points from the losing one. The difference between the ratings of the winner and loser determines the total number of points gained or lost after a game. If the higher-rated player wins, then only a few rating points will be taken from the lower-rated player. However, if the lower-rated player scores an [upset win](#), many rating points will be transferred. The lower-rated player will also gain a few points from the higher rated player in the event of a draw. This means that this rating system is self-correcting. Players whose ratings are too low or too high should, in the long run, do better or worse.



Arpad Elo, the inventor of the Elo rating system

WHAT IS ELO RATING?

The **Elo system** updates a player's rating based on the expected outcome of a match and the actual outcome.

The key ideas:

- Every player starts with a default rating (e.g., 1500).
- A win increases your rating, and a loss decreases it.
- Beating a highly rated player earns you more points than beating a lower-rated one.



ELO FORMULA

When Player A plays against Player B:

1. Expected Score (E_A):

$$E_A = \frac{1}{1 + 10^{(R_B - R_A)/400}}$$

2. Updated Rating:

$$R'_A = R_A + K \cdot (S_A - E_A)$$

- R_A : Player A's current rating
- R_B : Player B's current rating
- S_A : Actual score (1 if A wins, 0 if A loses)
- K : A factor controlling sensitivity
(commonly 32 in tennis Elo systems)



HOW ELO IS APPLIED TO TENNIS

1. Sort the dataset by *date*
2. Initialize ratings (e.g., all players start at 1500)
3. For each row:
 - o Get ratings for *winner_name* and *loser_name*
 - o Compute expected scores
 - o Update both ratings based on the match outcome



Example Dataset Columns

date	tourney_name	winner_name	loser_name
2024-05-27	Roland Garros	Novak Djokovic	Carlos Alcaraz
2024-05-28	Roland Garros	Jannik Sinner	Casper Ruud

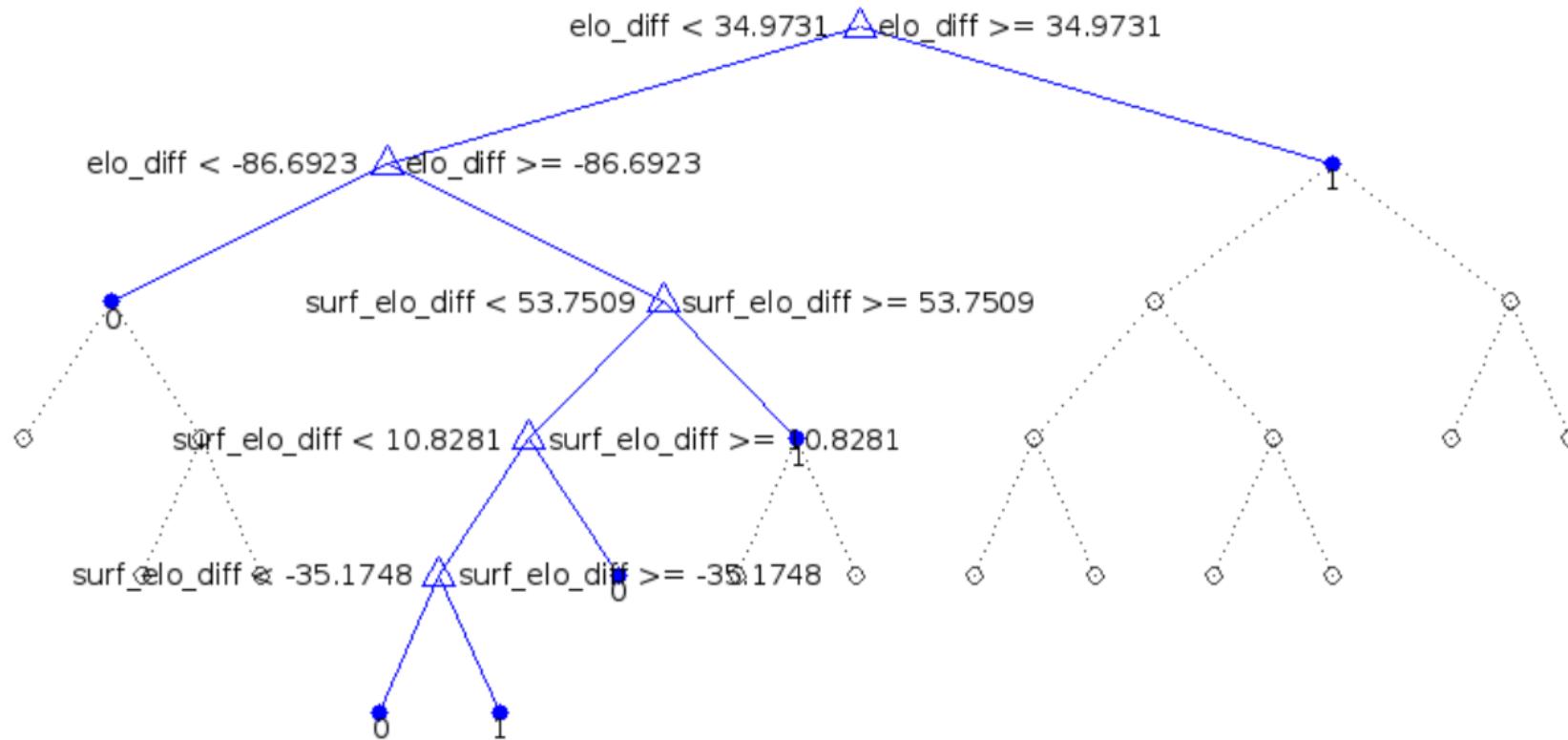
MODELS



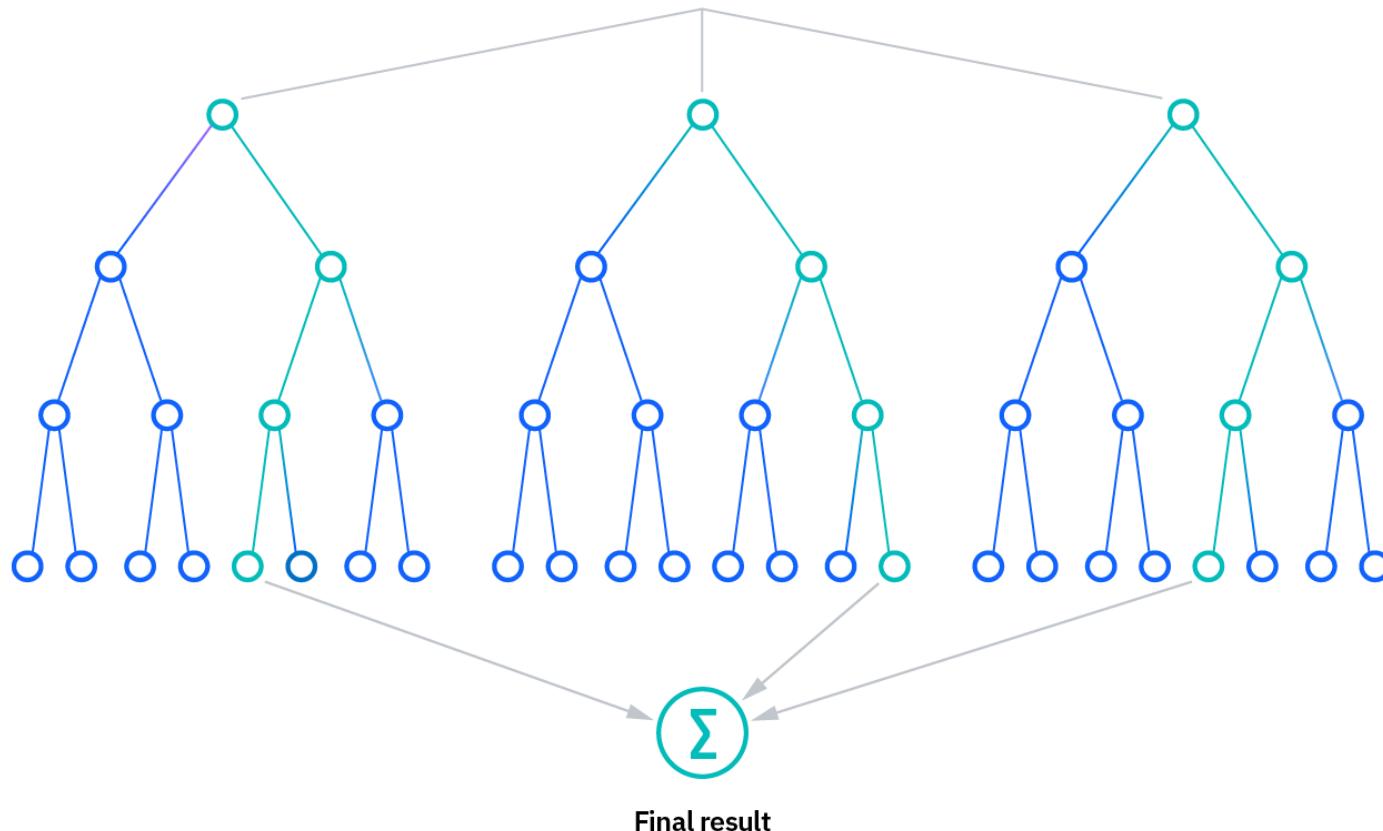
Recommend models to predict who will win at Roland Garros this year



DECISION TREE



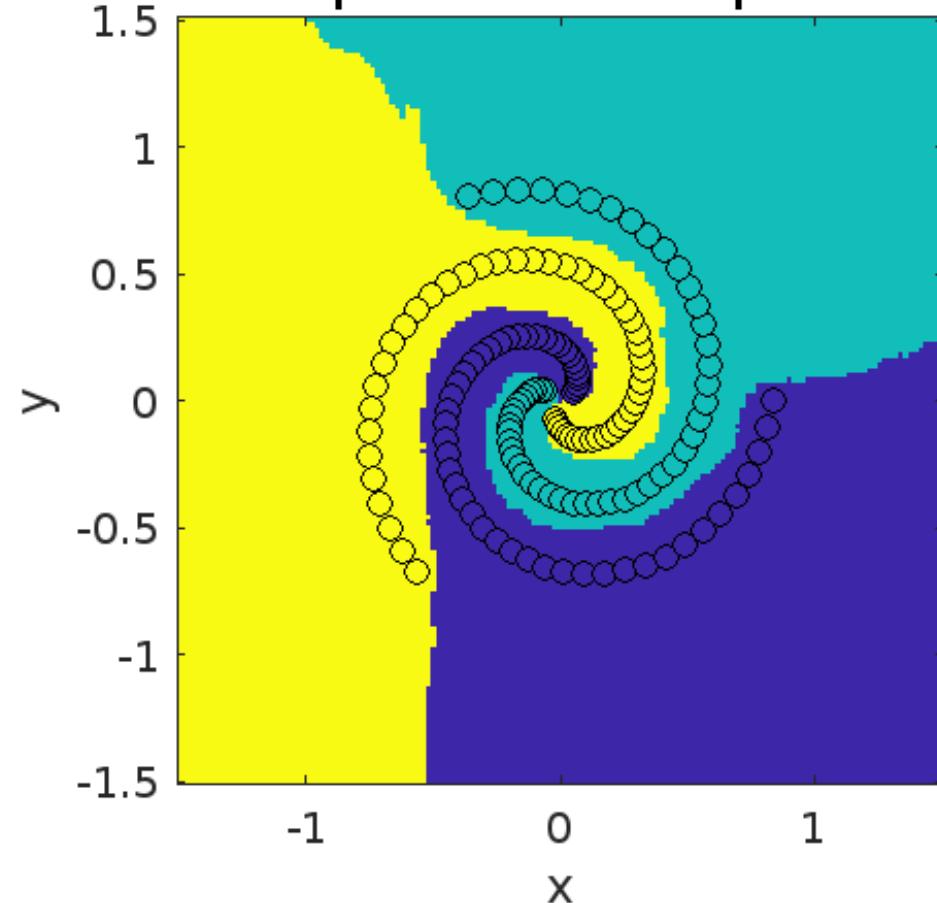
RANDOM FOREST



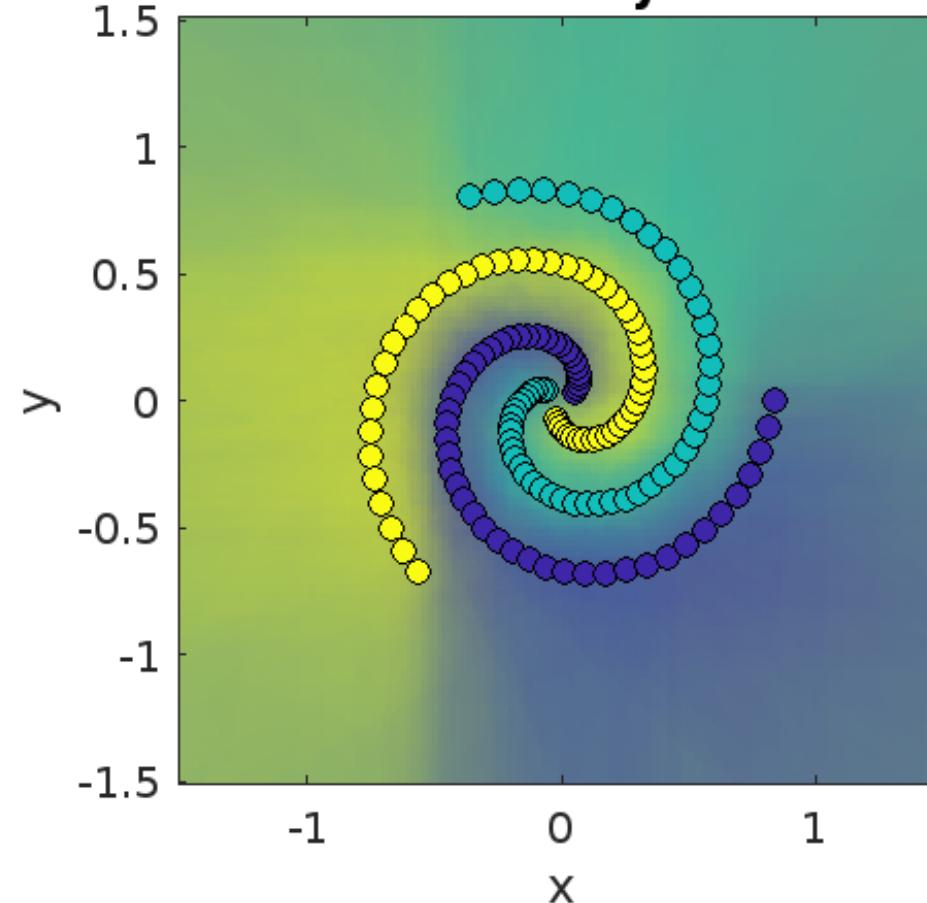
RANDOM FOREST



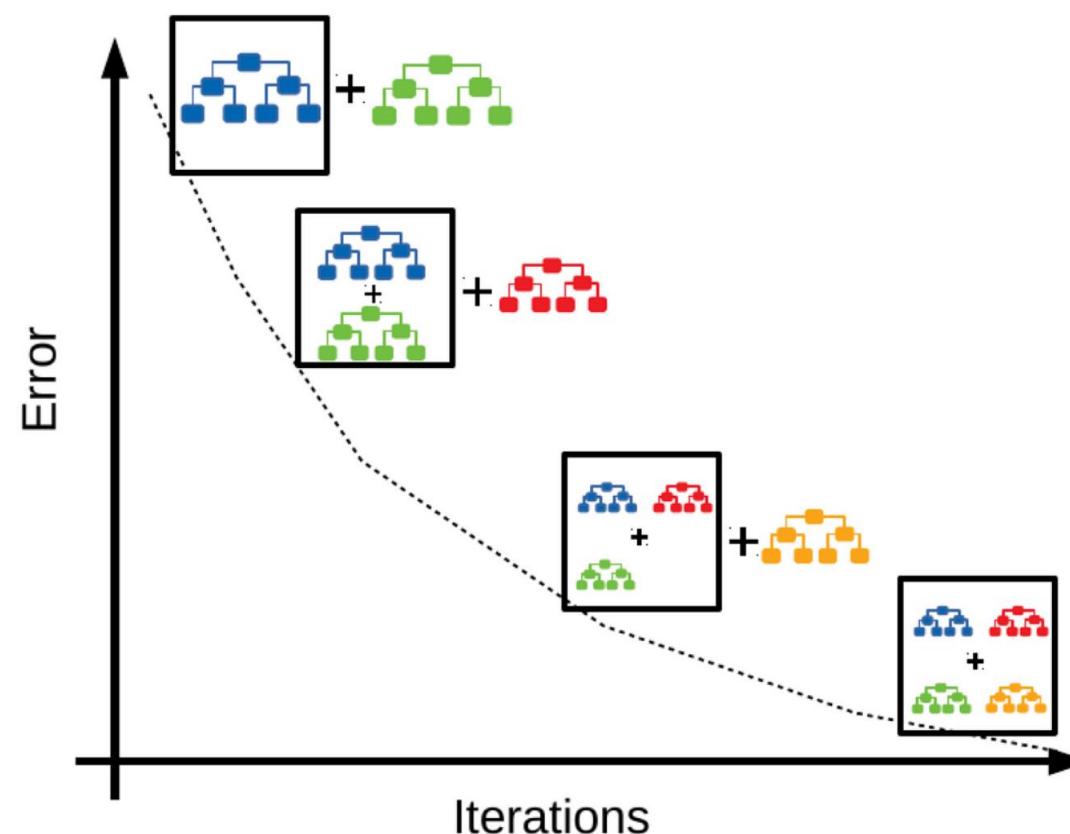
100 trees | Train: 0.76s | Test: 0.20s



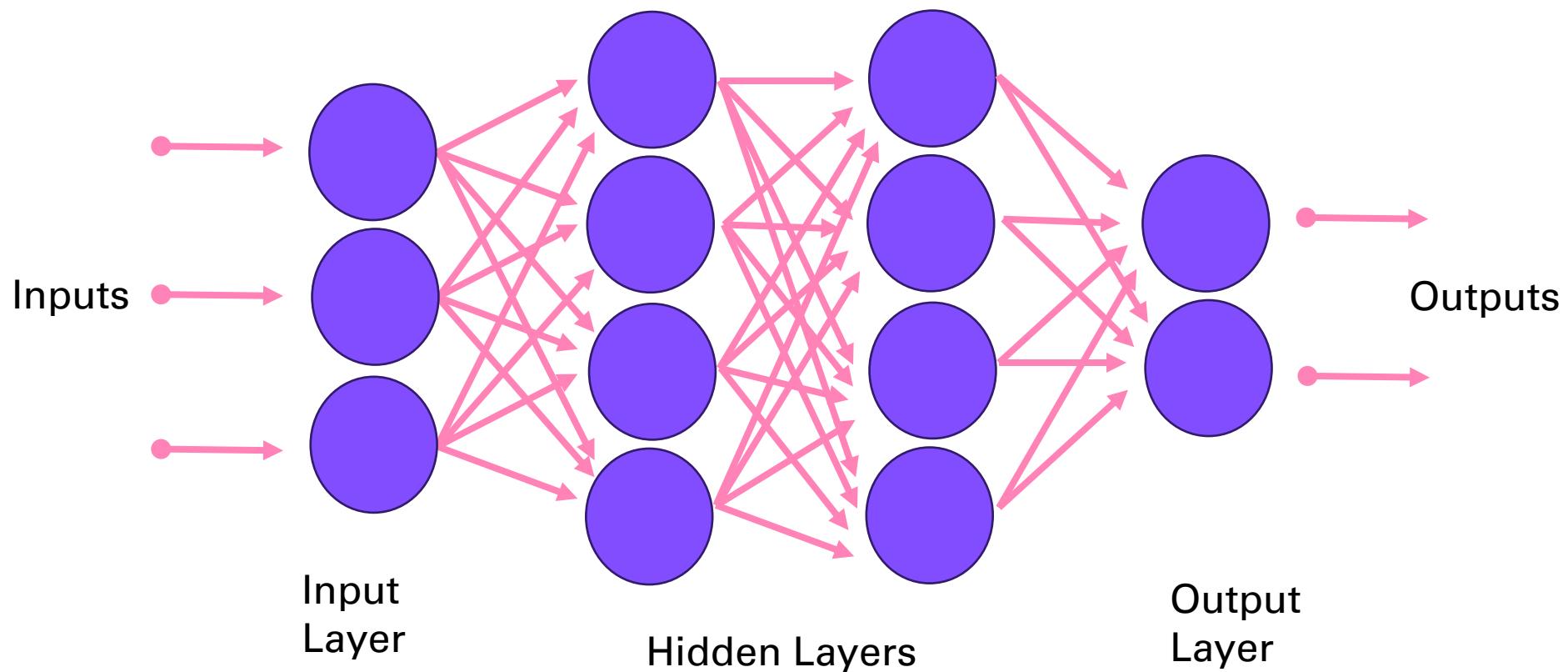
Train accuracy: 1.000



GRADIENT BOOSTING



NEURAL NETWORK



MODELS BASED ON ELO

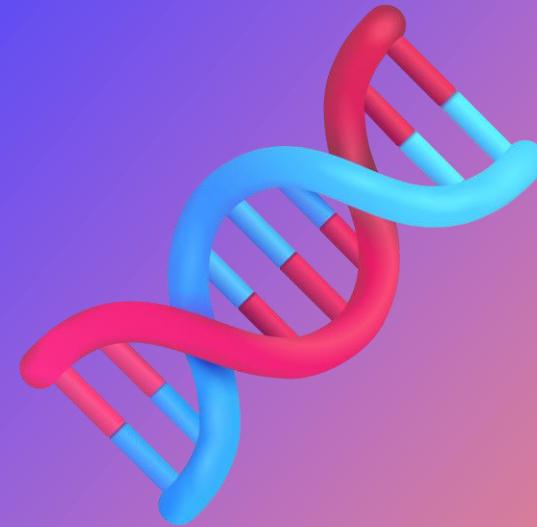


	Model	Accuracy	AUC
1	Decision Tree	0.583	0.623
2	Random Forest	0.582	0.628
3	Gradient Boosting	0.579	0.616
4	Neural Net	0.576	0.624

MORE FEATURES



Model accuracy is quite poor,
Select other predictors from
the dataset, and tell me why
they seem relevant to the
analysis



NEW PREDICTORS



New feature	Built as ...	Why it helps
ATP rank diff	<code>winner_rank – loser_rank</code> (negative = “row-player” is better ranked)	The official ranking is the single best public summary of a player’s recent results. It corrects for streaks that Elo sometimes under- or over-reacts to.
Rank points diff	<code>winner_rank_points – loser_rank_points</code>	Points give finer granularity than the integer rank (e.g., #5 and #6 can be miles apart).
Age diff	<code>winner_age – loser_age</code>	Younger players often recover faster between matches; older stars sometimes decline on long clay rallies.
Height diff	<code>winner_ht – loser_ht</code>	Height proxies for serve power and reach, which translate into free points and break-point defense.
Same hand (binary)	1 if both players use the same hand	Facing a left-hander is unusual and can flip match-up odds in practice.

NEW PREDICTORS ✨

Why they work together with Elo

- **Elo** captures *head-to-head momentum* and *surface specialisation*.
- **Ranking / points** bring in *overall season form* (Elo is slower to shift if a player skips events).
- **Age & height** are *stable bio-mechanical traits* that the rating systems ignore.
- **Same-hand** adds a *match-up quirk* that ratings miss completely.

Because the extra variables aren't strongly collinear with Elo, the ensemble models can pick up independent signal rather than redundant noise.



What is the next level of features that can improve the accuracy of the model

NEXT-LEVEL PREDICTORS



Category	Feature	Rationale
Short-term form	Win rate last 10 Clay win rate last 10	Captures hot streaks or slumps that Elo and ATP rankings smooth out.
Serve fire-power	Average aces last 10	Free points on serve matter even more on quick finishes (best-of-five still rewards big serves).
Fatigue / recovery	Minutes in previous match	Long marathons can drain players for the next round.
Rest	Days since previous match	Rested players perform better; clay events often give only one off-day.

FEATURE ENGINEERING PERFORMANCE IMPACT



We jump from *barely better than a coin-flip* to a **75 % hit-rate** and an **AUC > 0.82** – a huge lift for a single-season dataset.

Model	Features	Accuracy	AUC
Random Forest	Elo & Clay-Elo only	0.582	0.628
Random Forest	+ 9 next-level vars	0.748	0.823
Gradient Boost	+ 9 next-level vars	0.752	0.824

EXTENDING ELO AND FEATURES ACROSS FIVE SEASONS (20 → 24)

Model	Accuracy	AUC
Random Forest	0.760	0.840
Gradient Boosting	0.762	0.840

Compared with the single-season run ($\approx 0.75 / 0.82$) we get a **+1-2 pp** bump in both metrics. That's modest—but expected: Elo converges quickly, so most of the big gains came from the enriched feature set we added earlier. The extra seasons polish the edges:

- **Better initial ratings** for young stars debuting in 2024 (no more 1500 defaults).
- **Cleaner rolling windows**—almost no “empty history” fall-backs.
- **More balanced training set** with varied surfaces and player forms.

EXTENDING ELO AND FEATURES ACROSS FIVE SEASONS (20 → 24)

Step	What changed
Data window	Ingested ~100 k rows from the five CSVs supplied and walked through them chronologically (2020 → 2024).
Elo update	Same K-factor = 32, but now every player's rating (global + surface-specific) is seeded with a far richer history before the 2024 season starts.
Rolling stats	10-match windows now have plenty of data even for newcomers; fatigue, hot-streaks and serve-ace averages are all more reliable.
Evaluation split	Train: 2020-2023 → Test: the whole 2024 season (true out-of-sample, time-ordered).

JANNIK SINNER
~63 % WIN PROBABILITY



MODEL-BASED CALL: EDGE TO SINNER

Feature (importance in GB model)

ATP-rank diff (~48 %)

Overall Elo diff (~33 %)

Clay-Elo diff (~12 %)

Age diff (~5 %)

Height diff (~3 %)

Same hand?

Sinner vs Alcaraz snapshot*

$$\text{Sinner } \#1 \leftrightarrow \text{Alcaraz } \#2 \rightarrow \Delta = -1$$

$$\text{Sinner 2 640 vs Alcaraz 2 610} \rightarrow \Delta \approx +30$$

$$\text{Sinner 2 350 vs Alcaraz 2 420} \rightarrow \Delta \approx -70$$

$$23.2 \text{ y} - 21.9 \text{ y} \rightarrow \Delta \approx +1.3$$

$$188 \text{ cm} - 183 \text{ cm} \rightarrow \Delta = +5 \text{ cm}$$

Both right-handers $\rightarrow 1$

Tilts match toward

Sinner (better nominal rank)

Sinner

Alcaraz

slight **Sinner** (peak-age edge in Bo5)

Sinner (serve/reach)

neutral (model adds a tiny bias to same-hand winners)

*Numbers use the ATP rankings and the five-season Elo tables we trained (through 2024 matches). Weights come from the extended-feature Gradient-Boost model ($AUC \approx 0.685$).

PUTTING IT THROUGH THE MODELS

All four learners agree: Sinner carries roughly a 60-to-65 % chance.

Model	Win-prob Sinner	Win-prob Alcaraz
Decision Tree (extended)	0.60	0.40
Random Forest	0.64	0.36
Gradient Boost (best AUC)	0.63	0.37
Neural Net	0.61	0.39

•Why Sinner?

- Higher **objective rank & points** after a scorching hard-court spring.
- **Overall Elo** says his 12-month form edges Alcaraz.
- Taller frame gives him **free-point serve insurance**; crucial if the final stays dry and the clay plays quicker.

•Why it's still close:

Alcaraz's **clay-specific Elo** is the best in the world since Nadal's peak; if the rallies get long and the court slows (rain-soaked Sunday?), the matchup probability squeezes toward 50-50.





oppo



THANKS FOR WATCHING

