

2024 REAL TENNIS FRENCH OPEN MAGAZINE

1st
OCTOBER
2024



Present and future
of the French Open

The 2024 edition
through the eye
of Noémie Rodrigues

Claire Fahey & Camden Riviere

MEET THE INVINCIBLES OF REAL TENNIS

Table of Contents

04

Present and future of the French Open

Conversation with Lilian Vimal de Murs

07

The Queen of Real Tennis

Meet Claire Fahey, unbeaten since '09

11

Camden Riviere, the invincible

30th Grand Slam for the American

15

Doubles finals

16

Amazing shots from Noémie Rodrigues

On the court, parts 1 and 2

Behind the scenes

Social

FROM THE Editor

A week into the
world of real tennis



Until a few days ago, I'd only seen people playing real tennis for a few seconds when I passed by the window to go towards the club house at the Jeu de Paume Paris, where I've covered many squash events. The club gave me the opportunity to work on the 2024 French Open and I have to say it's been a breakthrough for me. I am not going to lie, even after having reported on the

tournament for 8 days I still don't completely understand the rules, but there's something special, I'd even say poetic, about this sport. Of course the fact there are only 3 courts in France is a limit for its growth, but there are no doubt the people involved have a genuine love for the game. Isn't that what we want to see when we watch athletes on the battlefield?

Jerome Elhaik

PRESENT AND FUTURE

of the French Open



A conversation with
Lilian Vimal de Murs,
director of the
Société Sportive du
Jeu de Paume &
Rackets.





All the players, for example Steve Virgona, have praised the organization of the 2024 Real Tennis French Open

I see this 2024 edition as the beginning of a new era for the Real Tennis French Open. Last year there were a few hiccups which may have been the reason why some players didn't come this year. But we made some adjustments and I'm sure they will be here next year after hearing their fellow athletes say it was the best French Open they were a part

of. There's always room for improvement, and this year will serve as a basis for the future. We want the French Open to be a unique event of the calendar, both on court – we hope to have many more players in qualifying next year – and off court. To me, a professional event must be part of a broader sporting ecosystem. What I like is seeing the pros in

*For Lilian Vimal de Murs,
the time players spend
chatting with club
members is as important as
what happens on court*



the club house, chatting with the members not only about real tennis but anything else really. The functions and parties, the food and even the alcohol (laughters) are key components of the week. We are very happy to have companies like Adequancy being faithful to real tennis and having their function on the same day year after year. Besides, having a DJ set on the real tennis court was a gamble and it turned out to be a success.

I believe we are at a crossroads, the ways people consume sport have changed completely and we must adapt. As far as real tennis is concerned more specifically, hoping to grow numbers drastically seems unrealistic, I think the way forward to gain exposure rather lies in building new courts in countries where the sport is an unknown quantity.

THE QUEEN OF REAL TENNIS

BY JÉRÔME ELHAÏK

PHOTOGRAPHY BY NOÉMIE RODRIGUES

Meet Claire Fahey, winner of the 2024 French Open and who's been dominating real tennis for 15 years



FAMILY THING

“My sister Sarah used to be my biggest challenger, and my husband Rob was the best player in the world for many years. Our two kids, aged 8 and 6, play in the junior sections. Yes they watched the final, but they were more interested in knowing whether I’d bring them a small Eiffel Tower (she laughs).”

THE FINAL AGAINST LÉA VDZ

“I agree that the score (6-1, 6-2) doesn’t tell the whole story but I played well in the big points. In training, I play all the possible scenarios in my head, I am at 30-all and need to decide what to do. Anyone can hit a good shot, it’s all about being there in the moment. There is always a bit of tension in my matches with Léa but also a lot of respect.”

“We can’t change the rules but we can make them easier to understand with technology.”



DOMINATION

“Early on in my career I had a lot of expectations and put pressure on myself but not anymore. I understand some people might be bored and want to see me lose. I am not afraid to see my unbeaten run come to an end when I walk onto court, if someone is better than me on the day I’ll accept it.”

REAL TENNIS

“I’d say it’s an obsessive and addictive game. It’s a bit like golf, it can be frustrating but when you hit a good shot the only thing you want is come back the next day and do it again. As far as I am concerned, I think I have a tidy game, I don’t do a lot of boasting for example. I don’t have big weaknesses and I am rather strong physically.”

FUTURE

“I think there are ways to make our sport more popular. I have people in my family who’ve been following for some time and still don’t completely understand the rules. We cannot change them because they are the essence of the game but we can use technology: now that we have great streaming, we could go further and put some colored overlays on the court to explain the chases for example.”

RECORDS

“As any professional athlete, I look at numbers and want to leave a mark in the history of my sport, and I am aware it can be inspiring for the kids I coach – I am the Head of Racquets at the Oratory School.

I have a very successful husband at home so I can't brag too much about my titles (she laughs). We've been saying as a joke that we'll have a big party when I'll have won more Slams than he did."

LOVE OF THE GAME

"Would I like real tennis to get more exposure, of course, but we cannot complain about our lifestyle and we get to go to some amazing places. Switching sport takes a lot of work, people might think it's easy to hit a forehand like Rafa Nadal but it's not! At some point I played padel and could have been picked up in Team GB, but the truth is I wasn't passionate about it. Being world No.1 and world champion in real tennis was my dream since I was 12 years old,

I simply love the sport and you can't replace that."

CLAIRE FAHEY, A PIONEER

"I wanted to enter men's events because I needed the challenge. It was not easy, people don't like change... 6 days before the deadline at the 2014 British Open, I was told "maybe next year" but I didn't want to wait, I insisted and it paid off. I was as good or better than some men in the draws so it seemed unfair to me. I'd like to do as well as possible in men's events, but I am aware there is a limit. Now that I have children I can't train as much as I used to, if I won the lottery it'd be different (she laughs). Joke aside, winning a 2nd tier tournament could be a nice goal."



"Being World No.1 and World Champion in real tennis was my dream since I was 12 years old."

CLAIRE FAHEY

43 SINGLES GRAND SLAM TITLES

37 DOUBLES GRAND SLAM TITLES

7 SINGLES WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

7 DOUBLES WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

HAS NOT LOST A MATCH IN A
LADIES EVENT SINCE 2009

MADE THE SINGLES QUARTERS
AND THE DOUBLE SEMIS AT
THE 2024 MEN'S AUSTRALIAN
OPEN



CAMDEN RIVIERE

THE INVINCIBLE



Who can stop Camden Riviere, who clinched his 30th Grand Slam singles title in Paris?

BY JÉRÔME ELHAÏK

Photography by Noémie Rodrigues

CELEBRATION

“I didn’t celebrate after my singles title, there still was a doubles final to win! Singles can be isolating and it’s good to have the camaraderie, besides some people find doubles more exciting to watch. We’ll do something when I get home, it’s my 30th Slam title and it’s important not to take things for granted. I’d like to beat as many records as possible but we’ve had some great champions in real tennis and unfortunately some are unattainable!”

THE FINAL

“A match is never perfect and very rarely you go off court being totally happy with how you played. It

depends on the circumstances really, and I like to think my best match is yet to come! I was aware that Nick (Howell) had spent a lot of time on court in the previous rounds, but on the other hand you have to assume your opponent will start the match fresh. As I said before, it’s important to start strong to send a message, but it’s easier if you’re completely healthy and it wasn’t always the case for me in the past.”

STRENGTHS?

“People talk about my retrieving and my fitness, but I think what makes me the best player is my mental strength. I believe I make better decisions on

“I’ve been told I am the best at embracing the chaos that comes with real tennis.”



court, and I have complete trust in my game as a result of all the hard work. I think I am also good at finding openings, that’s what I call point efficiency.”

WHAT MAKES A GOOD REAL TENNIS PLAYER?

“That’s actually a great question! I’d say patience, and the ability to adapt constantly, in other words to expect to unexpected. Real tennis is unique in the sense that the same shot hit 10 times can lead to 10 different situations. With the ball not being perfectly round, the penthouses etc. you get more weird bounces than in any other sport. I’ve been told I am the best at embracing the chaos and I think that’s true, as I said before what I love the most is seeing people struggling on a court.”

NORMAL LIFE

“I started playing real tennis at 5 years old, I also had a good level in tennis but at some point size became an issue. Would I have liked to be successful in a more high-profile sport, yes but not for the fame, I am perfectly happy living a normal life. However, it would be great to have more financial resources to take care of our bodies with physios, etc.”

LEAVING ON A HIGH

“I actually almost retired a couple of times, because of injuries and covid. I used to think I wouldn’t go beyond 40, but I don’t know anymore. What I am sure is I don’t wanna overdo it, I’d rather leave on a high. Some people might get bored of me winning all the time, but I find they tend to forget it wasn’t’ always

the case, I used to get beat up! When I go on court these days, it's as much a fight against my opponent as a challenge with myself."

FUTURE

"At the moment, I am the business manager at the Tennis & Racquet Club in Boston. But in October, my wife and I will be moving to South Carolina (where I am originally from), I'll be taking a position in a club where a real tennis court has been built. In the US we do have new courts opening from time to time in sequences."

GROWTH?

"I feel like 50% of people want to see the sport grow, and the rest are happy

to play a mystery thing and introduce their friends to a hidden secret. There are ways to develop the game, I have a YouTube Channel where I posted a series of online lessons. We don't need to change the rules, but we can explain them better and online videos are also useful for this."

DREAMS?

"I am not sure I have any, to be honest I've accomplished more than I'd ever thought. My dream is actually away from competition, I'd love to build a real tennis court in a country where there are none. My wife is Hungarian and we are definitely going to go and live there at some point, so that could be great..."



CAMDEN RIVIERE

30 SINGLES GRAND SLAM TITLES

33 DOUBLES GRAND SLAM TITLES

3 SINGLES WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

5 DOUBLES WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

UNBEATEN IN GRAND SLAMS
(SINGLES AND DOUBLES) SINCE
2013

=> 53 CONSECUTIVE TITLES !



Doubles

[1] Claire Fahey & Saskia Bollerman bt Léa van der Zwalmen & Jess Garside
2-1 (3-6, 6-1, 6-2)



[1] Camden Riviere & Nick Howell bt [2] Steve Virgona & Leon Smart
3-0 (6-2, 6-1, 6-1)



On court, part 1

 Noémie Rodrigues



Vaughan Hamilton



Saskia Bollerman & Claire Fahey



Jess Garside

On court, part 2

 Noémie Rodrigues



John Woods-Casey, Levi Gale & Vaughan Hamilton



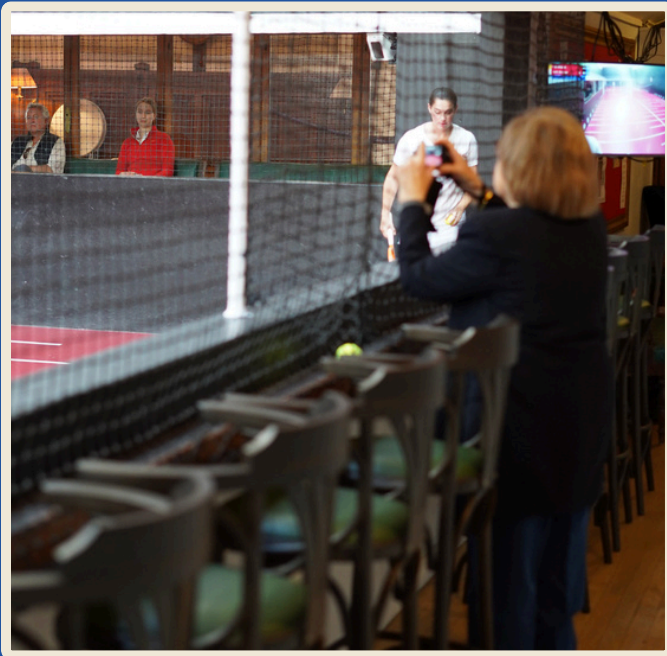
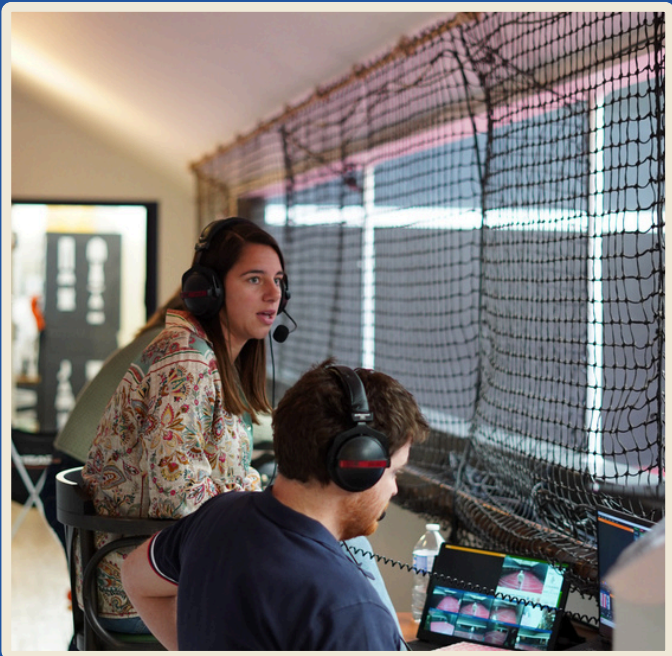
Nick Howell & Camden Riviere



Léa van der Zwalmen

Behind the scenes

 Noémie Rodrigues



Social





HUBERT DE MISSIESSY

2024 REAL TENNIS FRENCH OPEN MAGAZINE