



NATHALIE TAUZIAT

TAUZIAT DISCUSSES HER
EXPERIENCE AS A COACH

PHOTOS BY
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PF: More and more former players are rejoining the tour (both the ATP and WTA) as coaches. Your thoughts on that?

NT: Well, I think that this is good for tennis, and the main reason they are doing it is that they like tennis and want to give back. This is definitely my case. I've always wanted to coach and work particularly with younger players to help them improve their game. Even when I was still playing on the Tour I was trying to help younger players in whatever way I could.

PF: It took longer for the WTA Tour to encourage former players to start coaching...

NT: Well, the problem is obviously having a family, and it's difficult to do both things. At a certain level you have to travel a lot so it's difficult to manage both efficiently. For me I just have my first child

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at 37, and then the twins at 41. At that point I didn't travel or coach that much. Now I am older and the kids are a bit older too so I started coaching again, and I love it! Tennis is my biggest passion.

PF: How was the transition from player to coach?

NT: I always wanted to coach, and to coach young players. This was my dream job; to coach someone who loves tennis and to be able to help them help them out. The difference between being a player and a coach is that when you are a

player everyone is there for you to help you out. As a coach you have to take a step back because your player is the most important and it's a different story. But I have no problem with that because I am not that type of a person that likes to be in the spotlight. If the player does well, everyone knows who the coach is, so the main thing for me is that the player I am working with is successful.

PF: Would you rather work with a young up and coming player or with someone who already is established?

NT: For me it is better to work with a young player because they listen more, they want to learn. It's different with those who already play on the Tour. But I liked working with Eugenie (Bouchard) and Alex (Wozniak). Eugenie's ranking was around 400 when we started and

when I finished she got to number 32. I think we did a good job together, and I think it was a good experience for me not only because of the results. I didn't really have any problems working until she started winning a lot (smiling...) I did my job, and results are always going to speak volumes.

PF: What do you see in Bianca (Andreescu) as a player?

NT: I think she has good opportunities to be really really good. But she has to remember about the principles of the game and not to forget what she has to do and learn to get there. Because even being number 3 junior in the world does not mean that much (laughing). What I mean is that no one will remember her ranking as a junior. She has to be a good player on the WTA Tour.



PF: How difficult is the transition from a junior player to the WTA Tour level competitor?

NT: First you have to improve your game a lot, and I mean a lot! Bianca right now in my opinion plays at the 250 level and she is only 15. But you have to remember not to go too quick. You have to win Tier 1, then tier 2, then you can start thinking about big tournaments. Last year was a great year for her reaching finals of Granby – 25K, but she has to repeat that. She has to win 10K, then we will go to 25K, then 50 or 100K. What we really need to work on is how to construct her career. It's like building a house. Brick by brick, but the foundation has to be the strongest. Right now I am going to be in trouble with this building process. This is caused by the fact that now she is very good, so there is more and more

people that want to get involved in her career- agents, sponsors, and even parents. I am not sure if the parents know tennis very well. On top of everything she is injured so there is some sense of panic. People forget that injuries are part of the game, so I am ok with that. It's not a big deal. Maybe she will have a couple of months off this year, but when you look from the perspective of a career – it's really nothing. We don't have to be so stressed out about that. More important is to find a good solution for her to come back.

PF: All this noise around the game is that what stops good juniors from being successful later on?

NT: Yes, most of the time that's the case. I can say today, that this applies not only to junior players. Just look at Eugenie. She plays Wimbledon finals one year, and after that she gets so distracted by many things, and as a result ended up destroying herself and her game. The main reason for that was that she wasn't thinking about tennis that much. Everything around tennis was more important; like being famous, to go everywhere she wanted, this celebrity status. But what Eugenie forgot is that to win a Grand Slam you have to practice. You have to be on the court and stay really focused.

PF: Do you think she can come back to where she was before?

NT: She is really young, she can come back, but it will take a while. It will not happen overnight. She has to work with a good team again and I think she is on the right track with a good coach.

PF: But she still has a tough time beating anyone ranked above her.

NT: Yes, but that's exactly what I mean. She needs time. And this is also because she has lost more than a year with poor performance, and as you can see the other players they know that. And you know it's a real jungle out there. The other players know what's happening with Eugenie and try to take full advantage of this situation.



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PF: You've just said – jungle.

What's the state of the WTA Tour in your opinion?

NT: I am not really on the tour right now as I work with juniors, but when I was playing there were too many things outside of tennis that are distracting. Quite often good looks are more important than the game, there are agents, sponsors, contracts, etc. I found that totally unnecessary and frustrating. I think that the most important thing is the game itself. Sometimes I feel that the WTA and to a degree the media don't understand the game. But I am very happy that with guys like Federer or Djokovic people are talking about their game. And those top players are really focused on the game.

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PF: Are you trying to be cautious working with Bianca?

NT: Yes! Because of this

experience that I've had with Eugenie I am working hard with Bianca to focus on tennis first, and make it the most important thing right now.

PF: Were you trying to protect Eugenie from all those distractions?

BA: Yes, I told her many times when I was working with her. I was always telling her: tennis has to be a priority. You have to win first. If you win, everything else will fall into place. When we stopped working together she was number 32 WTA. She wasn't as famous as she is right now, she played very good tennis in 2014, and was working with a very good coach (Nick Saviano – PF). And we know what happened after. Everyone makes mistakes. Look what happened to Ana Ivanovic. After winning Roland Garros she lost her focus. And for her it was very hard to come back even though she has willpower and worked very hard at it.

PF: The competition for Eugenie is much tougher now don't you think? More young and good players out there....

BA: There are a lot of young girls and a lot of talent. Eugenie got where she was in 2014 because of her focus and hard work. She is a hard worker, no doubt about that. But it all went downhill because her entourage influenced her. Had she won a Grand Slam that probably would be OK. But she didn't and started to do many things around tennis and those things would not help her to play good tennis.

PF: What would you tell her now?

BA: I would simply ask her: what is your goal? To win a Grand Slam or to be famous? It's that simple!

PF: Is there a reason why so many girls go up and down in the rankings? From Top 10 to outside of Top 50. It happens way too often. What's your opinion on that?

NT: Some of them, like Ivanovic, didn't manage their careers well. You know: photo sessions, boyfriends, fashion shows, etc. Too many distractions. The question is: do they want to win a Slam or just to have a good

life. It's an issue of priorities. But you don't see that with Federer for example, because you know that his priority is to win tournaments. Everything else is there but you know that his main focus is tennis. And that's the difference.

PF: Who do you see from up and coming players to have a chance to be really good?

BA: Well, of course Bianca (smiling), Dalma, Galfi, Potapova. Bianca has a really good chance to be the best of that group.

PF: When you decide to work with the player what are you looking for, what's the most important for you?

BA: The most important is the respect. When I coach someone I want them to respect the game and myself of course. We have to have a good feeling working with each other, we have to need each other. It's nice to have a player to whom you give, but the player also has to give back. And as I say to whoever I work with – everybody on the team has to find their spot. There are so many people involved. Maybe it is not the most important to have a big team, but you have to be with the people you trust.

PF: How do you find the balance, young player with all the people around them?

BA: That's part of my job. Right now, the better the player is, you are dealing with more people around. Sometimes it takes too much time. The new coach today has to manage things around the player. This is so different from 10 years ago. We have to be careful with so many people around, and careful in so many ways. I have people approach me claiming they were the agents of the player and they were not. This can be dangerous.

This is also the reason why some coaches cannot put up with those distractions. I don't talk too much with Eugenie. She wanted me to work with her for 2 weeks (and actually her agent called me about that – which I found somewhat strange). When we were together the respect was mutual. Now I do not have the same feeling. So I prefer to stay away.