

Dear fans

I wish you all a Happy New Year! I would like to take this opportunity to tell you about the end of last year and my preparations for the 2008 season in detail.

The indoor season



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Unfortunately, in Madrid I just missed out on securing the no.1 title up to the end of the 2007 season. But that just made it even better to do so in my home town of Basel! Along with the fact that I always enjoy staying in Switzerland, it was also a real dream scenario in the sporting sense: in front of a home crowd, which gave me fantastic support right from the start, it was a special feeling to play so well and take the title for the second time. On top of that, the atmosphere surrounding the tournament was also fantastic and the funny on-court interviews with Heinz Günthardt (himself a one-time tennis pro) for Swiss TV were a lot of fun. After this eventful week and expansive celebrations with my friends and family, it was off to Paris, which I found pretty exhausting. That's because it was the first time in a while that I played three weeks on the run.

The atmosphere in Paris was very special for me, seeing that I hadn't been able to take part there for the last three years. The hall is really enormous and for that reason alone you need to get used to it. But the surface is different too – very, very slow, which is quite special for an indoor surface. Everything went fine in the first round against Ivo Karlovic and then in the second round, just as in Madrid, I came up against David Nalbandian. Once again he played very well and managed to perfectly turn the slowness of the surface to his advantage. Looking back, I have to say that I just didn't have enough time to prepare. It was still nice though to enjoy Paris and to take some extended shopping tours, something which is especially pleasant in such a wonderful city.

The Masters



© ATP

After that the next stop was Shanghai where I was the second player to arrive. If you have already been to this Asian metropolis you will know how enormous it is. There are fantastic restaurants there, and no end of ways to spend your time. I particularly like the intimate atmosphere of the tournament itself. It's amazing to stand on the court in a stadium constructed especially for this purpose, and I look forward to the event every year. The great thing about the Masters, which in principle is the Tennis World Championship, is the small and select list of competitors: instead of the usual number of up to 1,000 players in a normal Grand Slam tournament, for the tournament in Shanghai there are only about two dozen participants, including the doubles. This enables the organisation to look after the athletes on a very individual basis, and as a result every wish can be fulfilled.

Alongside the tournament, I took part in events put on by my sponsors. For example there was one quite funny event with Gillette called from boys to men whereby, under my instructions, around 1,000 18-year-old Chinese boys shaved for the very first time. Then I appeared at a further event by Jura, followed by a photo session for the new Wilson campaign. But above all I wanted to do some serious preparation and hard training to get into a good playing rhythm. After all those hours on the court during the



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tournaments, I felt I was getting behind with my training and I was happy to be able to do such good training with David Ferrer. And, by a curious twist of fate, in the final match of course I came up against him, of all people...

The Qi Zhong Stadium is also gigantic: the roof slides back in pieces like the petals of an enormous flower. The stadium holds 15,000 spectators with space for 3,000 VIPs in the most modern Sky-boxes.

But first of all the tournament got under way with a spectacular opening ceremony and a defeat for me, something which I had never experienced before in the round robin at a Masters. Gonzales served really well and hit an incredible number of winners. I lost the match in the end despite a good performance; quite a bitter experience. But this very system of the round robin means that you can indeed lose a match but still continue in the tournament. That's why I couldn't really understand all the hype in the media about me losing the second match in a row. The most important thing to do in a situation like that is to not pay too much attention to the reports, and to concentrate wholly on the next match. And in that I came up against Davydenko who had also lost his first match. It was most important for me not to waste any time and to win the match in straight sets, which I did.

Then the media started all their calculations: who gets through when, who would get through to the semis with a defeat or a victory and who would they play? So with the result of my last group match against Andy Roddick I could more or less influence who I would play as I had already qualified for the next round. And in fact all the speculation about whether I would prefer to play against Ferrer or Nadal left me cold. I just wanted to win whatever, and I was looking forward to the match with Rafa as it is also a highlight of the season when the number 1 seed plays the number 2 seed. And my fans were of course delighted that I got the chance to end the season with a result of 2 wins to 1 over my closest rival. I was also pleased with my performance: in the decisive moments against Roddick, Nadal and Ferrer I managed to activate my best tennis and get through to a top quality final against David Ferrer.

It is always terrific to be able to round off the year with a victory in the Masters – above all because you know that afterwards you can enjoy a fully-deserved holiday. And being able to look back on an extraordinary tennis year crowned with superlatives makes the satisfaction even greater.

For the tournament in Shanghai, all the players mobilised their last drops of energy because the moment the tension is released you notice that your batteries are empty. Accordingly tired, we celebrated the end of the season together after the final and in an intimate circle we enjoyed a meal with friends and acquaintances. The long season had left its mark on all of us, and we were all able to look forward to a peaceful end to the year.

Looking back at 2007, the number 200 is something that stands out. Being the leader of the ATP rankings for (meanwhile more than) 200 weeks is something I had never imagined in my wildest dreams and is absolutely indescribable. 161 weeks is a number only insiders would notice, but the 200 weeks marked an important figure which makes me proud and serves as a particular motivation for the new season.



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Asia with Pete



© KEYSTONE AP Vincent Thian.....

The first stop was Seoul, where I was to take part in an exhibition match as I did the previous year. In 2006 I played in a similar setting against Rafael Nadal: this year's opponent was none other than Pete Sampras. I was really looking forward to this encounter – Pete is a really nice guy even off the court, and he is one of my great idols. What could be better than to play against him in a public tournament? But it wasn't just one match that awaited me but three of them all at different locations. The idea was born as we were training together just before Indian Wells when I remarked, without a trace of flattery, how well he was still playing. The nice thing about matches such as these is that it is the joy of playing and the entertainment which are at the forefront, and not the result. And I find there's nothing better than being able to share this joy with the crowd; something which is made possible by these exhibitions. When I arrived in Seoul it was zero degrees and, soon after, the first snowflakes began to fall – wonderful weather! Pete came directly from USA and after the first match we went on to Kuala Lumpur. In contrast, there was a tropical rainstorm to welcome us there but that didn't stop the 10,000 spectators from coming to see the match and giving us a fine reception. A further highlight was the meeting with the Malaysian king who presented me with a trophy. Along with the honour, it is always fascinating to meet personalities like that.

After a short delay because the region had been hit by a typhoon, we finally travelled on to Macao. Like Shanghai, temperatures of 20°C were awaiting us along with lots of children who were going to get the chance to have a training session with us in Macao Stadium within the framework of a Kids' Clinic. It was a fantastic experience, above all because we could play with children who in daily life are disadvantaged or suffer from handicaps. In the evening, we played our last match together in front of a great crowd after I had appeared in Talk Asia on CNN. All in all, it was a fantastic week with Pete during which I really appreciated him, his dry humour and his companionable ways.

Holidays at last!



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As planned, now was the time for the holidays to start. This time the weather played along so we enjoyed a comfortable and relaxing beach holiday after all the capriciousness of the weather in the years before. We were so looking forward to having a few lazy days in the sun! Sunbathing, snorkelling, massages, spa, good food and sleeping in... we had brilliant weather the whole ten days which was a real treat after the rather more rainy holidays of the last years.

Honours



© L'Equipe.....

We then flew via Switzerland to Dubai to make preparations. Meanwhile I had been awarded various honours: I was voted the Overseas Sports Personality of the Year for the third time by the BBC. I was also named as the Swiss Sportsman of the Year and I was able to say a few words to the public there via a live transmission from Dubai. I think it is unbelievably nice to receive this recognition from my own country, as Switzerland is – after all – still my home even though I spend most of the year travelling around the world. The winner is chosen partly by votes cast by the public which makes it even more of an honour for me each time to be awarded this prize. And of course the 'Champion of Champions' title awarded to me by the French sports-newspaper 'L'Equipe' for the third consecutive year is a great honour. It is great to see such large interest in France, host of the only Grand Slam I have never been able to win so far.

Our 'training camp'



© Simon Kessler

Along with other players from the Davis Cup team such as Michi Lammer, Yves Allegro and Severin Lüthi the captain, I set up a sort of small training camp in Dubai to get myself ideally prepared for the coming tournaments. I also worked a lot on my fitness with Pierre Paganini, my fitness coach – especially in the beginning. This is certainly a key factor to competing successfully at this level. At the start of the hard training phase I ended up with incredibly stiff muscles. Oh well, you can't have a holiday without paying for it... but you need patience and hard work to reach your goals – every sports car needs to be run in before you can push it to the max. But as you know, sometimes you get sand in the works... After arriving in Australia, I came down with a nasty stomach bug which then proceeded to get worse. I made an attempt to train at the weekend and then resorted to medical treatment where a series of tests was carried out straight away. The doctors recommended that I take a few days' break to get over it. And then I would, in theory, be 100% fit for the Australian Open. Because of this, as a precaution, I had to cancel my plans to take part in Kooyong. And I would like to apologise to all you fans who were expecting me out there. I feel ready for the challenge now and I am really looking forward to the Australian Open!

A big THANK YOU

Finally I would like to thank everyone from the bottom of my heart for all the donations to the Roger Federer Foundation. These contributions will allow us to develop our worthwhile projects further and help us to make the world a better place. I would also like to say thank you for the countless greeting cards I received for Christmas and the New Year. That is certainly most motivating to get started on the new season!

Online-shop and auctions



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Most of you probably already know my online-shop, where you can buy my official fan articles: www.rogerfederershop.com. Keep popping in as we keep adding new products - and a surprise will be coming soon! You can currently find my US Open 2007 gear in the [auctions](#). My outfit from Shanghai 2007 will be available there in a few days, so make sure not to miss that!

Take care, bis bald, à bientôt

A handwritten signature in orange ink that reads "Roger Federer".

Yours sincerely,
Roger