



## **FANLETTER FEBRUARY 2005**

### **Dear tennis fans**

Looking back at all my achievements in 2004 a terrific sensation of joy still overcomes me. It was absolutely amazing to go soaring into such heights again after the low due to my injury in Basel. Not being able to defend my title at the Australian Open this year and bringing an end to my long series of match wins and victories against top ten players certainly is painful. The expectations prior to the Australian Open were huge and I must say that I am pleased with the result. It is more the fact of not having been 100% fit that bothers me. In any case, I have experienced once again how little it takes to decide on who is to leave the court as a winner on this level – and especially at a Grand Slam.

I have definitely made a good start into the new season. The year has only just begun and there are plenty of important tournaments to focus on before the next Grand Slam. The fact that Tony Roche and myself can work together makes me feel very positive. It is interesting to learn from him and I am confident to be able to celebrate numerous further victories with his support.

### **My diary**

In my last newsletter I told you all about the time before Houston. I had planned to spend a few days at home before the Masters but then there was a sudden change of plans: I was asked to participate in the opening ceremony of the UN's "International Year of Sports and Physical Education". The event was to be held in New York and I should be present next to Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations and Adolf Ogi, former Federal Councillor of Switzerland and now Special Adviser to the Secretary General on Sports for Development and Peace. It had been Adolf Ogi's idea for me to get involved in the event and I was fascinated by the idea on the spot! Being able to make a contribution to help others as an ambassador for sports is a very noble mission. As a result of my injury I was able to attend the ceremony and I was also asked to hold a speech. Believe me, I was pretty nervous before that – there were, after all, a lot of important people in that hall. But everything worked out perfectly well, certainly also due to the fact that I can identify myself excellently with the philosophy of this engagement: Showing others how many positive aspects there are to physical activity and being able to help others to find out of a miserable situation through sports as well as trying to overcome terrible experiences. It has been a great enrichment for everyone involved having been able to work together in this project. Adolf Ogi was thrilled about my participation and it was an honour for me to meet him.

My destination after New York was Houston where I arrived a week prior to the tournament. I felt that I needed to give myself enough time for moderate training after the injury. There were no complications whatsoever right from the start and I felt confident for the Tennis Masters Cup – what a relief! There

was a lot at stake, after all: First of all I did not know at what level I would be able to play after my injury. Secondly the time had now come to prove that I merit being the world's number one tennis player. And last but not least I did not want my record-series of victories against top ten players to come to an end.

And so it was an enormous satisfaction to show such solid performances at the Masters. Then, finally, the last big question arose before the final: would I be able to continue my series of tournament victories as well? Now we all know the answer. It was simply unbelievable – the perfect ending to an incredible season! Even without the title at the Masters it would have been a gigantic year. Only a couple of weeks further back it was uncertain whether I would be able to play in Houston at all. So being able to compete was already a bonus – not to mention taking home the title!

Finally it was time to relax in the sun with Mirka on the Maldives. It was a well-deserved break and we had a wonderful two weeks. We have been joking, asking ourselves whether I can permit myself such a break in the future should I not be able to reach such heights again!

Back in Switzerland I enjoyed a few days with my family and friends before moving on to Australia. I had to start preparing for the coming season and did so with Tony Roche in Sydney. Pierre Paganini, my fitness trainer, was also present and so the ten days turned out to be a very intensive training session.

I was one of the first players to arrive in Doha and prepared thoroughly for the first challenge in 2005. I felt well, finding an excellent rhythm right from the start. I spent a great time in Doha, treating myself to some quad-biking in the desert and simply enjoying nature's beauty. And obviously it was thrilling to start the new season with the title at the Qatar Open!

Then it was time to return to Down Under. I had just been on one of the longest trips in my career so far, not spending Christmas and New Year at home for the first time. Therefore I was not quite certain if I still had enough energy left to perform well in Kooyong. I decided to make a steady start into the tournament which proved out to be the wrong approach; I had a hard time in the first round. Fortunately I was able to improve considerably, showing great matches against Tim Henman and Andy Roddick. After taking home the title it was clear to me that I was now prepared for the Australian Open.

Suddenly the moment was here: After Wimbledon it was up to me to defend another Grand Slam title. It did not look easy as my first round opponent was Fabrice Santoro. He is a very experienced player and I had a rather queasy feeling before the encounter. But, to my surprise, the match turned out to be a great start into the Australian Open. I continued in a solid way and the clear victory against Andre Agassi gave me further confidence for the further rounds. It was only pain in my foot that had been bothering me since the beginning of the tournament that made me feel a bit uncomfortable. I felt well apart from that and looked forward to the semi-final against Marat Safin. The stadium was packed for the night session, promising a great atmosphere. And what a match it turned out to be! Unfortunately the pain in my foot increased constantly, forcing me to evasive movements and eventually leading to strong tension in my back. Despite the handicap I had a matchball which I unfortunately was not able to convert. I fought with all my will and almost managed to turn the tide after finding back into the game in the last set. But Marat showed an excellent performance, deserving to take home the match and eventually the title.

It was certainly a tough moment for me. I had been in a similar situation in Melbourne against Tommy Haas in 2002. Furthermore I lost the Davis Cup match against Lleyton Hewitt in 2003 after leading by 2-0 sets and 5:3. All of

this did not make it easier for me just then. As my last defeat goes back to the Olympics in Athens I am now confronted with a rather unfamiliar situation. But one thing is certain: I have learnt from this experience.

I would like to add that I am pleased with myself because I gave it all I could. I will definitely be back next year and who knows – maybe everything will fit together perfectly well again then. I will now have to show a reaction to this defeat and continue with the drive from Doha and Australia right up to the clay-season.

### **Tony Roche**

I already told you in my last newsletter that I had returned home after the victory in Bangkok. Well, in between that I made a short stopover in Dubai for a first training session with Tony Roche. We had a great time and I was – and still am - impressed by his qualities. Unfortunately Tony does not want to travel as much anymore and we were unable to find an agreement on our further cooperation. He did offer to work with me during two weeks in December which was a great Christmas present to me. As mentioned, it was a tough session and I was able to learn a lot and improve. Later, at the Australian Open, Tony accompanied me during the entire tournament. I consider our cooperation most enriching and I am extremely pleased by his further engagement. We will spend several weeks per year training together during the largest breaks between tournaments.

### **International solidarity**

The flood disaster in South-Asia was a tremendous shock for me and it is still on my mind very often. The enormous amount of victims is unimaginable. Contributing to the relief efforts means a lot to me as I have had the privilege of visiting some of the affected areas in the past. Next to my personal donation I had the chance to take action in Nike Town Melbourne during the Australian Open. I helped out at the till together with Cathy Freeman, James Blake, James Hird and other athletes. Every dollar spent that day – the proud sum of 100'000\$ - was donated to the World Vision Tsunami Relief Fund. Nike even topped that by adding material in the same value. I had a great time during the event also being able to challenge a few fans in table-tennis in the shop. Furthermore the ATP sold a set containing autographed rackets used by Andy Roddick, Lleyton Hewitt and myself by auction and we managed to gather terrific amounts by auctioning pieces of clothing and a racket from Wimbledon and Houston. It is a wonderful sign to see such a large amount of organisations and persons worldwide expressing their solidarity with the people who have lost everything.

## **Official Fan Calendar**

I can hardly believe it: the last few copies of my official fan calendar 2005 have just left the storehouse – despite having increased the number of prints by 50% compared to the previous year! I am overwhelmed to see your interest in the calendar and I would like to express my gratitude for your support. As every purchase also supports the Roger Federer Foundation you have also put a smile on the faces of children in Africa – I would like to thank you with all my heart.

Dear fans, my break is over again now. I had a very interesting time with various events and meetings. One of the highlights was certainly receiving the Golden Camera in Berlin which fills me with pride. I am now full of energy and look forward to the tournaments lying ahead.

Take care, bis bald, à bientôt

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Roger Federer', written in a cursive style.

Yours Roger