



FANLETTER JULY 2005

Dear tennis fans

Some incredible days and weeks lie behind me; my first Grand Slam victory of this year, my third Wimbledon title in a row, entering the list with the great Björn Borg and Pete Sampras – all this has become reality! I take pride in these efforts, and it is very satisfying to see the hard work pay off. I want to thank all those who have helped and supported me, including you, my dear fans!

My diary

The last time I wrote about my experiences I had just returned from the Australian Open. Shortly thereafter I was on my way to the Netherlands. Rotterdam awakens many fine memories of earlier years, which is why I enjoy playing there. I was satisfied with my performance at the tournament and it was a great sign for me to win all the initial rounds all the way up to the semi-final in only two sets. The final against Ivan Ljubicic would prove to be considerably harder. It turned out to be a narrow victory which was important to me - after my defeat in the semi-finals in Melbourne.

The start of the tournament in Dubai was rather hard for me this year. Unfortunately, I don't exactly know why. I only made it through the first two rounds with a lot of effort and I'm glad to have made it through them at all. Luckily, after these early troubles, I successfully made my way into the tournament and played some excellent tennis. The semi-final against Andre Agassi was a highlight which still remains vibrant in my memory. After all, I was able to play on an extraordinary tennis court with Andre, the helicopter landing pad of the hotel Burj el Arab. The surface of the pad was covered in a green carpet, converting it into a tennis court. We were playing at a dazzling altitude of 211m (!) above sea level. It was also great to spend my time in Dubai in this hotel, the only seven-star hotel of the world. Taking home the title in Dubai was a special experience. It was the very first tournament where I was able to win my third consecutive title.

During a short time off, I engaged in something entirely different than tennis. I visited the project of my Foundation in South Africa. We had the visit planned some time ahead, though only a small group of people knew of the trip I was taking. In any case, it was important to me to get a better picture of the situation of the children there, and to see the effort the people are making to help.

Thanks to the local organisers, as well as the Swiss project management, it turned out to be an unforgettable experience for Mirka, my parents and myself. We gained insight into the three schools that accommodate about 2,200 pupils in the Township of New Brighton (near Port Elizabeth). Ahead of our visit, we had asked the kids to create a slogan related to education. We then selected the winning slogan from the numerous, creative ideas: "I'm tomorrow's future". This was then printed onto T-shirts by Nike and distributed to all the children and teachers of the schools, who proudly wore their motto. Other good ideas for the contest were "Only you can

make the impossible possible", "Learning is the first step of life" and "Tomorrow is ours".

I was allowed to plant a tree on the grounds of the „Mvisiswano Primary School" in remembrance of my visit and my connection to the place and the organisation. This primary school was the first school to profit from the project "IMBEWU" (which is Xhosa and means "seed").

After enjoying a traditional Xhosa meal (samp with beans) together with the children, we were surprised by a number of performances. There were dances and songs in delightful and colourful clothes in typical African style (of course the South African national hymn "Nkosi Sikelel'Afrika" wasn't to be missed); 200 balloons in the colours of the South African flag conjured a magical, colourful bouquet in the sky.

After the celebration, we visited the home of a girl to get an impression of the housing situation of the children. In spite of the precarious situation of the families there we were welcomed with great warmth. At the end of the long, interesting day we also stopped at the "Empilweni" hospital, where we shared some nice moments with many children with AIDS or TB.

The whole visit was an important, personal experience for me. I could see for myself the importance of this project for the kids. The efforts of the people working there were most impressive and the reactions of the children to my visit were touching.

After visiting IMBEWU, we all treated ourselves to a little break on the South African coast and enjoyed observing African animals in their natural habitat. One day we went on safari in an open jeep with a guide and observed a nearby elephant. He strolled in our direction peacefully until he actually reached the jeep and even swayed his trunk between us, taking a sniff here and there. That was quite spectacular! But it would get even better than that. We spotted a pride of lions and were able to drive up to them as close as 3 meters. It was fascinating; we were able to see their every movement and even heard the noises they made. Believe me, none of us dared to move! It was great to be able to observe my favourite animal in the wild – not speaking of getting up so close. It was Mirka's first visit to my mom's home-country, and she also enjoyed the time we had a lot.

Shortly after my visit to Southern Africa I was on my way to the United States. Defending my title in Indian Wells was the clear aim. I was glad to make a good start into the tournament. I guess it was also due to the fact that I approached the matches in a rather relaxed way. It was not clear to still be in such good shape after all the exhausting matches in Rotterdam and Dubai. I was happy about how smoothly things came along throughout the entire tournament. To perform well at the first Tennis Masters Series tournament of the year is important. And what more could you possibly ask for than capturing the title?

I still felt the positive energy from Indian Wells upon my start in Miami and played well in the first couple of rounds. What was most important, though, was that I was trying to take good care of my health – and to stay away from the sun if possible. I absolutely had to avoid sunstroke like last year. Making it to the final round was going to be quite a task. The match against Rafael Nadal proved to be a downright tennis thriller and an extreme piece of hard work for both of us. At the beginning things didn't quite work out too well for me and the gusty conditions made it even more difficult. After losing the first two sets (2-6, 6-7) and trailing by 1-4, things did not look too good. But I knew I had to put all my effort into winning a couple of games and make the match just a bit tougher for Rafael. This moment of reconsideration showed its effect and I managed to make my way back into the match. The moment I won the tie-break in the third set I knew that I had to seize the moment; I also noticed that Rafael was slowly getting tired. I told myself repeatedly that I was strong enough, both mentally and physically, to fight back.

Going all the way and actually winning the tournament in the end in spite of all the difficulties was simply incredible.

It was, of course, amazing to win the two first Tennis Masters Series tournaments of the year! I had never won two in a row before and now I even managed to do so to start off with. It was a relief to begin the Masters Series - season with these victories after my defeat at the Australian Open. After all, Miami is the most prestigious tournament of the Masters Series – the most important tournament on the Tour after the Grand Slams and the Tennis Masters. I knew for sure that I was in good shape.

Back in Europe I decided to travel in a different way for a change. It was my favourite car that safely brought Mirka and me to Monte Carlo. I enjoyed the drive and was looking forward to the beginning of the clay season. I played a good tournament and am happy with my performance in Monaco. Richard Gasquet played impressively and deserved to win. On the way back home we made a stopover in Milan. I always enjoy spending time in Italy very much as I adore the people, the food, the fashion and simply the atmosphere. We enjoyed having two days off and spending them in a different way for a change.

Finally the holidays I had longed for had come. I needed some time off to relax and also to give my feet a break. Unfortunately the two weeks before Rome weren't quite enough to fully get rid of the pain and I decided not to compete in Italy. It is important to be physically fit before getting onto the court again – I'm sure you all understand that.

I now fully concentrated on preparing the second consecutive defence of my title in Hamburg. It was here that Tony Roche rejoined us. He had decided to accompany me all the way up to Wimbledon. At Rothenbaum, I did not drop a single set throughout the entire tournament. This level of play continued into the final match, where I once again met Richard Gasquet, however I gave the better performance this time. It was a good feeling to win in Germany again. Furthermore it was already my third Masters Series victory this season! Boris Becker was also present during the prize giving ceremony and he congratulated me on my victory. It was a special gesture, especially since the event took place in Germany.

I took a whole week's time to prepare for the French Open. It was great to train on the centre court every day from Tuesday until Sunday. This allowed for an ideal adjustment to the local conditions. Aside from training, we enjoyed the time before the start of the tournament with tasty food in various restaurants, small shopping tours as well as the celebration of Tony Roche's 60th birthday!

Looking back I must say that I am satisfied with my overall performance in Paris. It is, after all, the best result I've shown in Roland Garros so far. But I must admit that I was a bit disappointed about the semi-final. It wasn't my best day and I found it difficult to deal with the conditions of light as it was slowly getting dark. Rafael Nadal is nevertheless a worthy winner. He showed a strong performance and his qualities as a fighter were convincing. I am happy for Rafael that he went on to take the title. Being able to celebrate a Grand Slam victory at such a young age is great. I knew the grass court season was up next and had something to look forward to; that made the defeat in Paris less of a disappointment.

Settling into the small, village-like atmosphere of Halle after the bustling city of Paris was relaxing. I like the tournament; it possesses a certain pleasant charm because of its simplicity. We had travelled there again by car since it is only a short drive from Switzerland. It was pretty hectic, though, as we had only returned home on Saturday and were off again on Sunday ('we' – that's Mirka, Tony and me). Luckily I didn't have much time for preparation: after all, it meant that I had played better at Roland Garros than ever before! I tried to make the most of the time available to adjust to the new surface. On Monday, for example, I had a total of three hours of training. In addition to the singles, I had also decided to compete in the doubles with Yves Allegro.

I only narrowly escaped a defeat in the first round against Robin Soderling. The following matches went pretty well and making the final both in the singles as well as the doubles was great. And playing against Marat Safin in both encounters within only a few hours was rather special. I was most happy to seize both titles; it was the first time after Vienna 2003 that I had managed a double. The success in Austria had also been with Yves Allegro by my side.

Travelling home from Germany with a second trophy in my luggage certainly was special. I have performed very successfully on German ground in the last couple of years, winning my last 27 matches - 15 of which were on grass. I have taken home all seven finals which I've played so far (Hamburg 02/04/05, Halle 03/04/05, Munich 05) and my last defeat was over two years ago (R16 in Hamburg 2003 against Mark Philippoussis). All these are surely reasons for the great support I encounter in Germany – giving me even greater pleasure in competing there.

In previous years I had always captured the title in Wimbledon after my victories in Halle; it had been a kind of an omen. Now another title in Halle figured on my account, so my hopes were high. At the beginning of the week before Wimbledon the weather was rather unpleasant. I had to prepare indoors on carpet at first, luckily the weather cleared up towards the middle of the week, allowing me to train on grass.

We rented a different apartment this year, in walking distance to the tennis courts. Tony Roche, Pavel Kovac, Mirka and I all stayed there. I was happy to be so close to the event location and to be able to welcome people there. As defending champion my agenda was filled with numerous events and meetings with sponsors and the media. Mirka and I were able to enjoy the Player's Party. The event hadn't been held for 20 or so years and had its revival this year at the Hard Rock Café.

It was a particular feeling to play on the very first day of Wimbledon. After all, if you're the title holder, this is the only tournament where you already know about a year in advance when you'll be playing. I was a bit tense at first and I knew that I had to be careful. Paul-Henri Mathieu is a gifted player, making him a dangerous opponent on grass. Thus, I was relieved to start into the tournament well. Later during the week I played a good match against Nicolas Kiefer. I could have won the encounter in the third set but I was happy to be able to finish it in four in the end.

Competing against Juan Carlos Ferrero in the second week was great. After all, he had been the one Andy Roddick and I chased in 2003 in pursuit of the title as world number one. It was rather surprising to encounter Fernando Gonzalez in the quarter-finals; he is more comfortable on clay after all. With a solid performance on defence, I showed a good game of tennis against Fernando, moving another step towards the final. The fact of finding myself in the semi-final of a Grand Slam the fifth time in a row really meant a lot to me.

The match against Lleyton Hewitt was special. It was strange to meet the world's number two tennis player in the semi-final. He was seeded as the tournament's number three player and I would like to add that I support the system the way it is.

Naturally I am more than satisfied with the match against Lleyton. The victory was my ticket to a very important final: my series of wins on grass as well as my series of victories in the finals were at stake; furthermore, it was an exact rematch of last year. Being able to play so well against a strong competitor and under the enormous pressure was fantastic. I'm very proud of that sensational match I played and it was almost as if I was observing myself from high above, commenting: "There's that guy Federer in the final again, and he's winning it - again!"

After the match point I was once again overwhelmed by these immense emotions, just like after my first victory in Wimbledon 2003. It is important and nice for me to know how moments like these can still mean so much. At first, I just wanted to lie down on the ground; the relief of all the pressure that had weighed on my shoulders, as well as the exhaustion, seized me completely. It seemed to me as if I lay there on the grass forever; in reality, it had just been a couple of seconds. My third victory was surely a very special and important one, where I had to beat the players who are the closest to me in the rankings.

The overwhelming reception which I encountered upon my return to Switzerland was a very special gesture that means a lot to me. It was an indescribable moment to stand on the balcony of the city hall of Basel, enjoying the enthusiastic cheering of the crowd on the market square. I think it was the perfect time for such an event and it was an enormous experience that is very rare, especially for a single athlete. I also value the way the media made an effort to support the celebration and I would like to thank everyone who participated in the realisation of this unique event.

Laureus World Sportsman of the Year

It was now time for a special, short trip to a country that I had only visited once before in 1999 for a challenger tournament: Portugal. The sixth annual Laureus World Sports Awards, which honour the world's best sportsmen and women, were held in Estoril. It was great to have been nominated along with Lance Armstrong, Hicham El Guerrouj, Michael Phelps, Valentino Rossi and Michael Schumacher. It was clear to me that even the nomination meant a lot for my status as an athlete. I now had the chance of entering a very prestigious hall of fame, including all sports and not only tennis. As a tremendous year lay behind me I knew I had my chances of winning the award. As the moment came and I was announced World Sportsman of the Year, I was simply overwhelmed. It means a lot to me to have received the sports "Oscar", the most important award athletes can receive since 2000. Becoming World Sportsman of the Year and rising onto the same level as Tiger Woods, Lance Armstrong and Michael Schumacher is indescribable. It was also a special experience to be handed over the award by Cuba Gooding Jnr and Martina Navratilova. After all, Martina is the most successful tennis player the sport has seen (among both men and women!).

Roger Federer Fan Club

Since no official Roger Federer fan club had been founded so far, the Swiss radio-station "DRS 3" started working on changing that. They called for volunteers to found a club. Many interested people applied, whereupon a president was promptly chosen. His name is Leonhard Sprecher, he'll be turning 36 this year and works as a marketing manager for Swiss Post. "This task is a great honour to me and brings me a lot of joy already. It is a great challenge to build up this fan club with a clear structure and involving all the different interest groups", Leonhard said about his new job. He is already investing around 15 hours a week to get everything set up.

The legal formation of the fan club is scheduled for the end of September, while the actual launch is planned for the Davidoff Swiss Indoors in Basel. Leonhard is busy assembling the board with people who had applied to the radio request (the departments are international affairs, communications, back-office, actuary, finances and controlling, events and activities). It is important to him that fans who have already been organising and coordinating activities for some time being included in the organisation. He will try to converse with different fan groups and nationalities to gather the best ideas for the concept of the club. The appearance of the fan gathering at the celebration on the market square in Basel for example, was organised by a group of long-standing fans, who had written and held a welcome speech. Roger's team would like to see the fan club emerge in as many countries as possible. "After all, it's about setting up the worldwide support that Roger deserves." Thank you and good luck!

PS: We will keep you updated on the activities planned by the fan club and how you can become a part of it all. If you would like to receive information by email please visit www.fans4roger.ch (the official site of the fan club) and enter you email address.

European Juniors Klosters

From July 18 until 24, the European Juniors take place in Klosters (Switzerland). The international youth tournament, which is being held for the 12th time this year, hosts the best European junior tennis players. Roger himself took part in 1998 and made it to the semi-final, where he was defeated by Feliciano Lopez 6-4, 2-6, 4-6.

For three years now, he's been supporting the European Juniors Klosters by sponsoring one of the two Swiss teams. With his contribution, he finances the accommodation and boarding of 6 young players during their stay in Klosters. "It's great to have Roger support events like this in Switzerland and to see him showing so much gratitude towards them. We rely on help like that, and we're especially delighted that Roger is lending a hand to the future Swiss stars", says Sandra Hermenjat-Haensli, tournament director of Klosters.

It would certainly be great if other individuals (Yves Allegro also supports a team) – not just athletes – could support the event; you could help the team from your country, for example. Costs for this are at CHF 2'500.- for a team, please take a look at www.europeanjuniors.com for more information.

Dear tennis fans,

I will remain on vacation for a while longer before taking up my training again. My focus for the remainder of the season lies on the US Open, the Davis Cup, my home tournament in Basel and the Masters in Shanghai. I'm looking forward to all of these future milestones!

Take care, bis bald, à bientôt

Yours sincerely,



Roger